



UTRINKI STARBURST

Draga Gelt

UTRINKI

ČRTICE in the Slovenian language

STARBURST

SHORT STORIES in the English Language

Draga Gelt

Melbourne, 2018

Mostly Fiction.

Names, characters, places and incidents are entirely coincidental.

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Dedicated to

my son Eric, daughter Frances, and their families.
You are the essence of my life.

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"Tematika črtic oziroma kratkih zgodb v slovenščini bo povečini naslednja: zgodbe iz življenja v slovenskem jeziku, tudi nekaj romantike, vprašanja o pravičnosti, razsodnosti, socialna vprašanja, krivice do otrok.

Teme zgodb iz življenja v angleškem jeziku pa bodo: iskanje odgovora na nekatera socialna in moralna vprašanja, krivice, vprašanja o religiji.

Razdeljena bo na 4 tematske sklope:

Luč - The Light - upanje in romantika, srečni trenutki

Temne sence - The Dark Shadows - življenje pokaže svoje ostre zobe

Votla tema - Darkness - krutost življenja in nekaterih ljudi

Upanje - pravičnost.

Zbirka je ena izmed redkih sodobnih knjig v obeh jezikih, ki jih še pišejo slovenski izseljenci v Avstraliji, zato je toliko bolj dragocena."

to

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Uvod - Introduction

Večkrat sem vprašana zakaj pišem?

Pišem zato, ker mi določeni dogodki in ideje ponoči ne pustijo spati.

Odločim se, da zapišem besede in ideje, ki mi kradejo spanec.
Morda zaradi opazovanja ljudi?

Drugič spet želje, ali razočaranja,
skrbi, bolezen, obup, lepe besede, uresničene sanje,
ali pa besede ponižanja, grožnje in krivice,
ki pričajo o človeškem trpljenju in sočutju.

Morda celo čudež!

Zakaj *UTRINKI*?

Misel se utrne, porodi, zaiskri, odtod beseda 'utrinek', tudi kratka misel, zamisel, ideja, črtica, slike iz življenja, spomini, iskrice . . .

'Noč ima svojo moč' pravi stari slovenski pregovor.

V nekaterih nočeh se tako izoblikujejo povesti, pesmi, črtice.

Pisanje je pot do jasne slike, do odgovorov in tudi do miru.

Moje misli vam morda ne bodo všeč.

Ali pa vas bodo črtice bodrile, da premislite,
kar je napisano na naslednjih straneh?

"Energija misli je bistvo življenja," je dejal Aristotel.

Japonski pregovor pravi:

"Vizija brez truda je sanjarjenje.

Vsak trud brez vizije pa je mora".

Many times I am asked

'Why do I write?'

I write because of certain events, or ideas, which keep me awake at night.

I decide to write down the words, thoughts and ideas stealing my sleep.

Sometimes my writing is due to the observation of people.

Other times desires, or disappointments,

or worries, sickness, despair, beautiful words,

the almost real dreaming, humiliation, threats, injustice,

human suffering and compassion.

Perhaps even a miracle!

Why the title *STARBURST*?

They are thoughts - which rise: pondering questions which fade, grow, twinkle, or just an opinion, a view of an idea, maybe various experiences in life.

'The Night has its own power' says an old Slovenian proverb.

On some nights, the stories and poems become alive.

Writing is the path to clear images, answers, and even peace.

You may wonder at my thoughts, or be caught up within the text.

Perhaps meditate on what has been written?

"The energy of the mind is the essence of life." said Aristotel.

Japanese proverb tells: *'Vision without action is a daydream.*

Action without vision is a nightmare'.

Draga

UTRINKI

Črtice

Zvezde so naredile krog in na sredini mi plešemo.

Rumi

Utrinki - meteorski dež (v Evropi znan tudi kot 'solze Sv. Lovrenca', ker se pojav dogaja v času, ko goduje Sv. Lovrenc, 10. avgusta).
Nebo se najbolj razsvetlil v noči med 12. in 13. avgustom, ko naj bi nočno nebo razsvetlilo tudi do 150 utrinkov na uro.

LUČ JUTRA

Nov dan - novo življenje: prebudijo se sanje, upanje, načrti in dobra volja; objem novega dne in zaupanja.

Življenje je kot vožnja s kolesom.

Da bi ohranil ravnotežje, se moraš premikati.

Albert Einstein

Živiš lahko na dva načina. Lahko se pretvarjaš, kot da ni nič čudežno.

Lahko pa imaš vse za čudež.

Albert Einstein

*Živeti je ena najbolj redkih stvari na tem svetu,
saj večina ljudi samo obstaja.*

Marcus Aurelius

Življenje hoče, da živiš svojo Osebno legendo.

Paulo Coelho

Tunel sreče

Alenka in Matjaž sta bila prijatelja.

Dolgo sta hranila denar in si končno lahko privoščila izlet – kratko potovanje.

Kam?

Na Alasko.

Že nekaj let sta se poznala. Srečala sta se na fakulteti: Alenka je študirala mikrobiologijo, Matjaž veterinarstvo. Oba dobra študenta. Alenka v drugem letniku, Matjaž v četrtem.

Lepo sta se razumela in si pripovedovala dogodke iz predavanj in se oba tresla pred izpiti.

Včlanila sta se med hribolazce in skoraj vsak vikend sta se veselila pohodov. In smučanje v zimskih mesecih. Toliko veselja!

Končno sta se vkrcala na vlak v majhnem mestecu na Alaski.

Po ozkotirnih tračnicah je vlak sopihal višje in višje v sotesko reke Yukon.

Pogled na pokrajino je bil čudovit: v ozadju dvatisočaki pokriti s snegom, ledeniki, le malo drevja. Ob progi pa gosti smrekovi gozdovi. Tu in tam so je razbohotilo cvetje v svetloplavih in belih barvah. Alenka in Matjaž ga nista prepoznala – povsem drugačno kot doma.

In presenečenje – vsi potniki so hitro vstali in se premaknili na desno stran. Glas po zvočniku jih je opozoril: "Poglejte na desno. Videli boste medvedko z mladičem."

Kako so vsi bili zadovoljni in hiteli fotografirati. Pa je medvedka kmalu skrila svojega mladiča v gosto podrast.

Videli so tudi kragulje z belimi glavami, ki so krožili visoko med oblaki.

Spodaj, na levi, je globoko v soteski divjala reka Yukon. Pristna,

neukrotljiva, smrtonosna vsakemu, ki se je hotel spustit v njene razburkane brzice, tolmane in vrtince. Vodič je povedal, da v vseh letih še ni bilo človeka, ki bi uspel dokončati plov po tej reki.

Divja, zahrbtna reka! Nepremagljiva, neukročena, neprijazna!

Vodič je povedal tudi o gradnji te ozkotirne železne ceste na prelaz, več kot 2000 metrov visoko med vrhovi.

Veliko nesreč – veliko smrtnih nesreč. Zelo težko delo v strminah in v snegu, v skoraj nedostopnem terenu.

Pa so vztrajali pionirji in nadaljevali kljub izgubi življenj.

Veliko konj si je polomilo noge ob vlačanju debel in drugega materiala ter hrane – postreliti so jih morali, da niso trpeli.

Ob miniranju se je neko zimo utrgala ogromna skala, se valila v dolino in pod seboj zakopala v skalni grob kar dva delavca.

Skale niso mogli premakniti in ju vsaj zakopati - grob obeh delavcev je še vedno pod skalo velikanko, globoko v soteski ob reki Yukon.

Sodelavci so jima ob skali postavili majhen križ, ki še sedaj, po več kot 100 letih, opozarja na nevarnost.

V vagonih vlaka je nastal trenutek molka.

Vsak pogled skozi okno je prikazal nov svet: divji, neprijazni svet strmih pečin, bujne rasti raznovrstnega drevja – največ smrek in javorja, tu in tam tudi borovci – in gosto grmovje in podrast: od praproti do robidovja in raznih gozdnih jagod. Poslastica za medvede.

In ptice – toliko ptičjega petja. Pol odprta okna so vsem nudila možnost prisluhniti različnemu žvrgolenju.

In kaj so videli potniki: strme skalne stene na obeh straneh.

Obe steni skoraj nedostopni.

Po eni uri in pol so prispeli na zasneženi prelaz. Ob progi je bilo majhno jezerce in ob robovih se je šopiril skoraj prozorni led.

Brr, zelo hladno.

Pogled proti ledenikom jih je presenetil z divjimi, belimi kozami z mladiči – kar cel trop.

Vsi so se izkrcali iz vlaka in se sprehodili ob jezercu medtem, ko so se pripravili za vrnitev.

Ni bilo prostora za obračanje. Ne. Lokomotiva je bila usmerjena

na drugo tračnico in se prepeljala na zadnji konec vlaka in je tako bila ponovno v ospredju. Brez vsakega obračanja. Zanimivo. Po kratkem sprehodu v snegu so potniki spet posedli po sedežih.

Vodič je napovedal vrnitev in opozoril na veliko tunelov brez vsake luči in na visoke, železniške mostove čez prepade.

Mostove so gradili skoraj brez strojev in še vedno so trdni in varni. Potolažil je potnike, da se bodo vračali po novem mostu, a da bodo ob strani videli tudi stari, leseni most, katerega je zob časa sedaj skrušil.

Na poti v dolino, je Matjaž sedel bližje k Alenki in ji položil roko na ramo. Alenka, presenečena, se je naslonila nazaj in Matjaževa roka ji je bila mehko in varno zavetje.

Ob vsakem pogledu v dolino sta se vznemirjena približala drug drugemu.

Napovedali so tunel: teman, brez vsake luči.

Pa se je Alenka še tesneje stisnila v Matjaževo roko na rami, ki jo je tesneje objela.

Lepo jima je bilo.

Kmalu spet tunel. Še daljši, so napovedali. Matjažev obraz se je približal Alenkinim lasem in jih rahlo poljubil.

Tako nežno.

Brez besed sta stala.

Alenka si je želela, da bi tunel bil še daljši.

Kljub ponovni sončni svetlobi, sta ostala blizu skupaj. Brez besed. Tako lep čas med njima – nobene prisiljenosti, samo nežen dotik in doživljanje naravnih lepot, katere sta oba uživala.

Kmalu so drveli čez novi most visoko nad pritokom reke v soteski – kot visok slap se je izlival v grmečo reko Yukon.

Še vedno sta Alenka in Matjaž stala skupaj. Čarobni trenutki. In spet tunel.

Črna tema, pa tako toplo.

Matjaž je pobožal Alenkin obraz in se približal z ustnicami njenih lic. Potem njenih ustnic. Tako nežno.

Zagorela sta. Oba.

Alenka je odgovorila z objemom njegove glave in vklenila sta se v zapeljiv poljub.

Poljub sreče, veselja, upanja in ognja.

Tunel je bil že zdavnaj mimo, pa sta ostala objeta in združena.

Svet okrog njuju ni obstajal.

Vedela sta samo za nežnost, toplino – zaupanje.

Ploskanje sopotnikov ju je presenetilo.

Pa ju ni motilo.

Vklenjena v svoje poglede sta dolgo v očeh brala priznanje drug drugega, spoštovanje in prijetno vznemirjenje. In dovoljenje.

Nasmehnila sta se potnikom, ki so še vedno ploskali.

Toliko nežnosti. Kot da sta se prebudila.

Je morda lepota soteske in divja reka še bolj zbudila njuna čustva?

Polna sreče in načrtov sta izstopila iz vlaka in se napotila na ogled mesteca v dolini: fotografije zgodovinskih dogodkov, gradnja železnice, iskanje zlate rude.

Primerjala sta slike preteklosti s sedanjim mestom. Velike spremembe.

Čas se ni ustavil: ne za mesto, ne za njiju.

Vrnila sta se do avtobusa in potem na letališče – domov.

V naslednjih mesecih študija sta postala neločljiva.

Alenka je kmalu dobila zaposlitev v laboratoriju in Matjaž je končal svoj študij.

Začela sta načrtovati za skupno prihodnost.

Vsako leto sta se spomnila tistega lepega poljuba na vlaku – v tunelu, v soteski reke Yukon, na Alaski.

Po letih so se njuni otroci igrali na vrtu.

Matjaž in Alenka sta z vso ljubeznijo opazovala njihovo igro.

In Matjaževa roka je ponovno objemala Alenkina ramena, ko je zaupno

potrdila srečo.

Brez prstana

Loti se je nestrpno presedala po stolu pred operacijsko sobo.
Tako počasi se je premikal kazalec na stenski uri.
Mali Adrian je bil v operacijski sobi že več kot pol ure.
Pol ure!
Rekli so ji, da ni komplicirana operacija in da bo hitro urejeno.
Pa je Loti spet pogledala na uro.
Ali se je kazalec sploh premaknil?!

Vstala je in šla do okna.
Meglen dan zunaj, prav nič prijazen.
Kot da je žalostno vreme dodalo k njeni skrbi.
Še vedno nobene novice iz operacijske sobe.
Pa ne sme potrkati. Ne sme motiti!
Nikogar ni bilo, da bi lahko vprašala.
Pet minut. Še vedno nič.
Kako jo je skrbelo.
Adrian je bil živahen petletni fantek.
Vedno vesel, pogumen, radoveden da le kaj. Vse je hotel videti,
prijeti, poskusiti.
Tako kot vsi otroci.

V vrtcu so se igrali na gugalnicah.
Kot vse druge dneve.
A danes so dobili otroci veliko več moči za porivanje drug drugega.
Čim višje na gugalnici.
"Še višje!" so vzklikali in se smejali.
Pa se je veriga zapletla, pretrgala. Adrian je padel in zakričal od
bolečine.
Tako so prihitele vzgojiteljice in opazile, kako mu visi roka ob
strani telesca.

Poklicale so rešilni avto in zelo hitro je bila pomoč na mestu. Povedali so jim, da je roka zlomljena. Pri bolj natančnem pregledu v bolnišnici bodo povedali več.

Vzgojiteljica je hitro telefonirala Loti, naj pride v bolnišnico. Loti je hitela, kolikor je mogla in ko je prispela, so ji povedali, da je Adrian v operacijski sobi in naj počaka zunaj.

Na njena mnoga vprašanja, je bil odgovor vedno enak: "Zdravnik bo povedal."

Spet je čakala, Srce ji je burno udarjalo v prsih: "Že več kot pol ure!" jo je skrbelo.

Končno so se vrata odprla.

Zdravnik – kirurg si je še odvezoval masko, ko je stopil k nji in ji ponudil roko:

"Kompliciran zlom, pa je trajalo malo več časa. Vse smo uredili. Adrian bo ostal nekaj dni z nami. Kmalu se bo prebudil in greste lahko k njemu, ko ga pripeljejo v sobo," je dejal, jo opazoval in nadaljeval:

"Otroci navadno hitro ozdravijo in fant je v dobrem stanju. Malo bo neroden z mavcem, pa se bomo vsi podpisali, jaz tudi. Otrokom je to zelo všeč, ko jim vsi podpisujejo mavec."

Loti je imela toliko vprašanj, pa je kirurg že odhitel s kratkim: "Se vidimo kasneje."

Adriana so kmalu peljali v drugo nadstropje v sobo. Loti je sledila. Gledala je blede Adrianov obrazek na blazini. Tako bled.

Kot da je sestra opazila njeno skrb, je spregovorila:

"Narkoza. Kmalu bo imel spet rdeča lička, ne skrbite."

V sobi so Adriana preložili na posteljo.

Loti je sedla k vzglavju in ga opazovala.

Tako mirno je ležal in še vedno tako bled.

Pobožala ga je po glavici in zadržala svojo roko na njegovi rami.

Njegova roka je bila vsa v mavcu: od zapestja skoraj do rame.

Načrtovala je, kako bi se lahko igrala in kaj bosta lahko delala. Seveda bo lahko tekel, hodil, a si je kar predstavljala, kako bo nestrpen, ker se ne bo mogel igrati z drugimi otroki.

Spet je Adriana pobožala po glavici in zaskrbljeno opazovala njegov obrazek, ko je vstopil kirurg.

Loti ga ni opazila in je lažno božala Adrianovo glavico, ki je še vedno nepremično ležala na blazini.

Kirurg jo je opazoval. Toliko skrbi in ljubezni je bilo v njenem gibu. Tako ljubeča mamica! Lepo.

"Adrian se bo kmalu prebudil. Bo pa najbrž nezadovoljen, ker se ne bo smel veliko gibati, vsaj danes ne. Pri operaciji je potekalo vse kot je treba. Šest tednov takole počivati z roko in bo vse v redu. Ne skrbite."

Loti mu je bila hvaležna in ko je vstala, da bi mu podala roko in se mu zahvalila, jo je poklical Adrian:

"Loti, žejen sem," in je spet zadremal.

Prišla je sestra in prinesla kozarec vode z ledom. Naročila je Loti, da lahko pije samo majhne požirke za začetek.

Kirurg je odhajal in pokimal v pozdrav:

"Se vidimo jutri," in odšel.

Adrian se je kmalu spet oglasil:

"Loti, žejen sem. Imam lahko sok?"

"Ne, Adrian, samo vodo z ledom. Samo en požirek. Kasneje več."

Ha, kakšen obrazek je naredil Adrian:

"Samo en požirek!" Žejen sem," in se je skušal dvigniti.

Sestra ga je hitro ustavila:

"Ne, Adrian, držala ti bom kozarec in s slamico boš popil en požirek. Če bo vse v redu, boš dobil še enega, drži?"

Adrian je ubogljivo prikimal in popil ledeno vodo.

Pogledal je Loti in dejal:

"Loti, tako lepo smo se igrali. Ti bi morala videti, kako visoko sem bil na gugalnici. Tako visoko nisem bil še nikoli!"

Loti je hitro dodala:

"In tako nizko tudi že dolgo nisi padel, ali ne? Si videl kaj imaš na

desni roki? Vsi ti bomo podpisali tale tvoj beli mavec, da bo lep in pisan. Ja?"

Šele tedaj je Adrian zagledal svojo roko.

"A to je tako trdo. Loti, kako se bom igral?" ga je skrbelo.

"Adrian, boš pa veliko hodil, se igral z eno roko, pa pel boš in se učil risati z levo roko. To bo zanimivo. In veš kdo bo tudi podpisal na tvoji roki? Kirurg, doctor, ki te je operiral. Ali ni to super?"

Adrianu so zažarele oči:

"Kaj se bodo res vsi podpisali na mojo roko? Ti, Loti. Tudi vzgojiteljice in drugi otroci? In slike mi lahko narišejo. In nalepke nalepijo, da bom lep, ali ne?" je hitel v navdušenju.

Loti si je oddahnila. Adrian je bil kar dobre volje. In bolečin ni imel. Slabše bo, ko bodo tablete popustile, si je mislila.

Kot da bi sestra vedela kaj premišluje, jo je potolažila:

"Jutri bo bolelo, ampak, pomagali mu bomo, da ne bo hudo. Za Adriana bo dobro, če kmalu zaspi, da zdravila začnejo v miru delovati".

Namignila je Loti, da je bolje, če odide.

Obljubila ji je, da bo poklicala, če bo sprememba.

S težkim srcem se je Loti poslovila s kratkim poljubom na njegova lica. Adrian je sramežljivo obrisal poljub z roko in pogledal sestro ob strani. Loti se je napotila domov.

Na recepciji je morala prej še urediti formalnosti s podatki: imeni, datumi, naslovom.

Kako prazno je bilo stanovanje brez Adriana.

"Pa, saj ne bo dolgo in bo kmalu doma" se je tolažila.

Komaj je čakala naslednjega dne.

V službi si je uredila prosto, da je lahko že zjutraj odhitela k Adrianu. Vesel je bil in se je oklenil z eno roko okrog vratu, medtem, ko je njegova desna roka nerodno štrlela v zrak.

Smejal se je, ko je videl, kako nerodno se je obračal z desno roko.

Pa ga je Loti tolažila:

"Navadil se boš, že drugi teden boš spreten, boš videl."

Pogovarjala sta se o igri in o prijateljih.

Skrbelo ga je, če ga bo kdo od prijateljev obiskal. Rad bi jim čim prej pokazal svoj mavec tudi zato, da mu vsega popišejo in porišejo.

Takoj je vprašal Loti, če ima barvasto pero in seveda, prva se je podpisala in mu narisala tudi veliko gugalnico.

Tako je bil vesel slike in je objemal Loti, ko je vstopil kirurg: "Dobro jutro, Adrian. Kot vidim, si prav dobre volje."

Adrian ni odgovoril, temveč je kirurgu hitro ponudil barvno pero in mu pokazal, kje se mora podpisati, prav ob Lotinem imenu in dejal:

"Moja najboljša prijatelja bosta tukaj skupaj: Loti in vi, doctor, ki ste mi dali tole veliko roko, ki bo kmalu zelo lepo pisana. Tudi sliko mi narišite, prosim."

Kirurg se je hitro podpisal kot se podpišejo zdravniki, in vprašal Adriana, kaj naj mu nariše.

To je bilo nekaj za Adriana: zdravnik je vprašal njega, kaj bi rad imel na sliki!

"Doktor, rad bi sliko velikega avta, mora biti rdeč, pa zmaja na nebu, pa sonce, in moje kolo in . . ."

Kirurg ga je prehitel:

"Adrian, saj moram pustiti prostor še za tvoje prijatelje, ali ne?"

Narisal mu je velik rdeč avto in sonce tik nad avtom.

Tako so zažarele Adrianove oči.

Potem pa še presenečenje:

Kar pet prijateljev je vstopilo v sobo z veliko čokolado.

Vsi so napisali svoja imena in narisali slike: Borut medvedka, Jan mušnico, Martin metulja, Neli punčko in Klemen ladjo. Kako veselo!

Vsi so občudovali ljubke slike.

Loti je pustila otroke same in prosila kirurga, če lahko vpraša nekaj vprašanj.

Stopila sta na hodnik in zvedela je nekaj napotkov za skrb Adrianove roke, pa preglede in seveda gibanje.

Kirurg jo je tolažil, da se otroci hitro privadijo in sigurno ne bo

imela problema. V nasprotnem slučaju naj takoj pride nazaj in bodo pomagali kar bi bilo potrebno.

Adrianu je sestra prinesla tableto in prosila otroke, da kmalu odidejo, ker mora Adrian počivati.

Lepo so ubogali in stekli k svojim staršem, da so povedali o njihovem malem heroju Adrianu, ki ni nič jokal.

Popoldne se je Loti vrnila in prinesla Adrianu njegove najljubše knjige in nekaj igračk.

Bil je dobre volje in nič ni rekel, da ga roka boli.

Tablete, seveda.

Tudi kirurg je prišel in hitro pregledal Adriana in pogled se mu je ustavil na Lotini levi roki: nič prstana. Molče je premišljeval:

“Mamica, samohranilka”.

V sobo so pripeljali še enega fantka. Otona, ki je Imel zlomljeno nogo, katero so mu dvignili na posebno visečo opornico.

Fanta sta si imela veliko povedati.

Adrian mu je hitro pokazal svoje risbe in Oton si je tudi želel podpise in slike.

Hitro je minil dan.

Adrian je imel že petnajst podpisov in še več slik.

Z Otom bosta tekmovala, kdo jih bo imel več. Dobra tekma!

In televizijo so jima pripeljali, da sta lahko gledala slikanice.

In pela sta in se smejala.

Ko se je Loti zvečer vrnila, mu je prinesla tudi kratke hlače in majico, da ni bil več v pidžami čez dan. Tudi Oton je dobil kratke hlače in majico.

Naslednji dan se je Adrian zbudil zelo zgodaj in v postelji pregledoval knjige.

Še lani sta mu očka in mamica brala zgodbe.

Postal je žalosten tudi zato, ker očku in mamici ni mogel pokazati vseh podpisov in slikic. Ponosen je bil nanje.

Njegov obrazek je bil žalosten, ko je vstopil kirurg.

"Adrian, kako je danes? Vse v redu? In koliko podpisov imaš?" je hitel z vprašanji in opazil njegov žalosten obrazek.

"Adrian, zakaj ne rečeš mami MAMICA? Zakaj jo kličeš po imenu?"

Adrianu so se zasvetile solze v očeh:

"Doktor, Loti ni moja mamica. Moja mamica in očka sta lani umrla. Letalo . . . "

Dalje ni mogel, Solze so mu lile po obrazu.

Kirurgu se je otrok zasmilil:

"Adrian, in kdo je Loti?"

Adrian je hlipal in povedal:

"Loti je moja sestra."

Kirurg je objel malega Adriana in ga tolažil.

Težko mu je bilo.

Tako majhen in taka izguba! Brez mamice in očka.

Kmalu zatem je vstopila Loti.

Opazila je Adrianove solze in se obrnila h kirurgu:

"Ali ima bolečine? Mu lahko pomagate"" je hitela in objela Adriana.

Kirurg je nekaj trenutkov gledal njen zaskrbljeni obraz in potem povedal:

"Ne, Adrian nima bolečin. Povedal mi je o mami in očku . . . Ubogi otrok.

Oziroma, uboga oba otroka!" in nežno položil roko na Lotinino ramo v tolažbo.

Dnevi so potekali hitro in tretji dan je Adrian lahko odšel domov. Spet je bilo stanovanje polno čebljanja, pesmi, igre in pravljič.

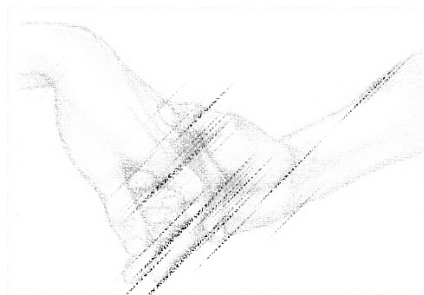
Kirurg je telefoniral in poizvedel o Adrianu in vprašal tudi Loti, če sta oba v redu.

Ker Loti ni bila njegova pacientka in Adrian je bil pravi korenjak, se je kirurg odločil, da bi rad bolje spoznal dekle brez prstana. Loti mu je bila všeč.

Po nekaj tednih je kirurg spet poklical.
Vse je bilo v redu z Adrianom.
Pa je vprašal tudi njo, Loti, če je v redu.
Vprašal je tudi, če se lahko srečata ob kavici.
Povedal ji je tudi svoje ime: Simon.

Po srečanju, po več tednih, je prišel na obisk.

Oba, Adrian, še bolj pa Loti, sta se ga zelo razveselila.



Slika

Zunaj se je počasi temnilo in kljub temu je bilo še zoprnno soparno. Vsi današnji načrti so padli v vodo: električar ni mogel priti, da bi popravil problem z lučjo in kuhalnikom; račune je Edi založil za plačilo plina in dobil opomin s kaznijo – plačilo seveda; pričakovani telefonski klic o bližujoči razstavi slik – nič; okvirji za slike niso bili dokončani in še in . . .

Edi je priznal: kadar je slikal, je bilo vse drugo nepomembno. Vtopil se je v načrtovanje osnutka, skice, izbiro platna, pripravo palette, in prostor ob oknu, da je dnevna svetloba pričarala zaželjeno vzdušje . . .

Danes je bil zanj zoprn dan: njegovi načrti neuresničeni, iskanje papirjev, klici – tako zoprnno!

Platno je sicer pripravil ob oknu na leseno stojalo, a svetloba mu ni bila všeč.

Kljub soncu mu je bilo nebo neprijazno.

Tanke meglice, katere je včasih rad slikal, so ga danes razočarale.

Pa, jutri bo drugi dan.

Treba je poravnati neplačane račune, telefonirati električarju.

Veselje mu je bilo pričakanje novice o razstavi v večji galeriji v centru mesta.

Kar veliko slikarjev bo sodelovalo.

Edi je imel v svoji hišici tudi nekaj razstavljenih slik po stenah.

Svetloba, ki se je prikradla k slikam, je bila topla, mehka.

To ga je razveselilo.

Stal je pred eno svojih slik: ne veliko: starinski okvir, ki je pristojal pejzažu.

Vesel je bi končnega rezultata: pejzaž je zaživel pred njegovimi očmi.

Spomnil se je tistega vročega poletnega dne, ko si je pripravil stojalo med njivami pšenice na polju.

Mak je cvetel in tu in tam se je ponujala tudi modra plavica.

Nekaj drevja v daljavi in druge žitarice: oves, ječmen, a pšenica je bila najlepša.

Za Edija je bila pšenica vedno poseben symbol – symbol nečesa velikega, duhovnega, svetega . . .

V lahnem vetru je valovala pšenica – zdelo se mu je, da je pred njim mogočno morje in valovi ga vabijo med zlato, skoraj zrelo klasje . . .

In njegova prijateljica Monika ga je tiho opazovala, ko je nanašal barve na platno.

Vedno ga je rada opazovala.

A motila?!

Ne, to pa ne.

Edi je bil v svojem posebnem svetu, v svojem času pričakovanja, povezave z lepoto ustvarjanja.

Monika je vedela: ne sme se niti premakniti in ne reči besede.

Samo lahko je dihala, da niti dih ne bi motil njegove zbranosti.

Pred Moniko je na Edijevem platnu zaživel nebo, prijazna pokrajina in pšenica: valovi skoraj zrelega bogastva.

In mak – tako skrbno je naslikal vsak makov cvet, ki se je skrival med klasi.

In plavica ob robu: temno modri cvetovi so se ponujali nebu.

Veliko let je že minilo od tistega dne.

Monika je žvela sedaj drugačno življenje, brez njega.

Velikokrat jo je pogrešal, a njene odločitve ni mogel spremeniti.

Njegove misli je zmotilo glasno trkanje na vrata.

“Le kdo naj bi bil?” se je spraševal.

Odpri je vrata in pred njim je stala starejša žena.

S pogledom jo je premeril: dokaj elegantno oblečena, ne kričeče, a dostojno. Kratke lase so se nežno premikale v večerni sapici in si jih je večkrat popravila iz obraza.

“Dober večer. Oprostite, da motim. Irena sem. Irena Kos. Že dolgo občudujem vaš pejzaž, če nimate zaprte zavese. Tako lepa slika. Toliko spominov mi pričara. . . ”

Edi jo je povabil bližje do slike.

Irena je skoraj božala valujoče pšenično klasje, se ustavila ob maku in plavici in se smehljala.

Dolgo je gledala sliko.

Edi je čutil, da ji je slika pričarala del njenega življenja.

Ni je motil.

Odmaknil se je in jo pustil, da je ponovno doživela del svoje preteklosti.

Nenadoma je spregovorila:

“Sliko bi rada kupila. Tolikokrat sem šla mimo in si jo želela. Tolikokrat!

Pa nisem mogla. Upokojena sem in pokojnina mi ni dovolila tega bogastva . . . ”

Ponovno se je skoraj dotaknila pšeničnih klasov.

V njenih očeh so se zablestele solze.

Iz torbice je vzela denarnico in pripravila denar. Še enkrat je prešela in položila bankovce Ediju v roko:

“Danes imam dovolj. Dolgo sem hranila.”

Spet je pobožala valujočo pšenico.

Edija je prevzelo: toliko ljubezni in spoštovanja v njeni kretnji.

Kaj takega še ni doživel.

Ediju je bilo, kot da ga denar žge v dlani.
'Ne, ne more vzeti!' je odločil.

Stopil je do Irena, ji položil roko na ramo in z drugo ji je stisnil denar v dlan:

"Gospa Irena, slika ni naprodaj.

Podarim vam jo.

Vaše spoštovanje, vaša čustva, vaši spomini so mi plačilo za sliko . . ."

Zajokala je Irena in Edi jo je objel.

Toliko toplote je izrazila, toliko čustev – obogatila ga je kot še nikoli nihče!

Bogat je bil, poln ljubezni!

Gospa Irena je stisnila sliko na svoje prsi in se mu solzna zahvalila:

"To je moj najlepši dan!"

Še dolgo sta se pogovarjala in Irena mu je zaupala o svojem življenju: žalostno življenje, a njegova slika je priklicala

nepozabne

trenutke.

V sanjah: svoboden - svobodna

Sinoči spet sanje o padanju. Padanje v globino.
Vendar, kam?
Sanje se nikoli ne končajo, Emil nikoli ne ve, kam pada.
Med padanjem čuti strah, bojazen, grozo – pa nikoli ne ve zakaj.

Z Mino sta bila že dolga leta prijatelja. Dobra prijatelja.
Veliko sta se pogovarjala in razpravljala o različnih dogodkih:
o zgodovini, politiki, varstvu narave, karakterjih ljudi, včasih tudi
o človeških problemih, reševanju problemov, o različnih mnenjih
v filozofiji in psihologiji, tudi o različnem verovanju.
Včasih sta se prav posebno pripravila z določeno temo in potem
menjala svoja mnenja. Zanimivi pogovori. Zelo intenzivni čas.
Tudi o prijateljstvu in sanjah sta se pogovarjala.
Ne o sanjarjenju – temveč o sanjah.
"Sanjarjenje je otročarija", je vedno rekel Emil.
Mina se ni strinjala. Sanjarjenje je bila tista svoboda želja in
hrepenenja, katere ni mogel nihče vzeti!

Emil je Mini nekega dne dejal, da je vedno bil popolnoma
prepričan, da jo dobro pozna.
Potem drugič ji je dejal, da skoraj ne ve kdo je 'Mina'.

Vendar, v svojo beležko je Mina smela napisati, kar je hotela,
ali ne!?
To je bila njena svoboda.
Svoboda njenih misli.
Premišljevala je:
'Če bi bila popolna, bolj modra, če nebi imela sanj in želja,
če se nebi zavedala, in bi bila samo dolgočasen človek, bi bilo

moje življenje boljše, predvsem pa bi bilo bolj mirno.'

Mina je imela pogovor tudi s seboj:

'Znam živeti in imam pogum, slišim tudi svoja navodila drugim, in jih poslušam. Sprejemam človeka.'

Simbolično je pred seboj postavila ogledalo - ogledalo sebi:

v očeh je videla resnost,

resnico,

željo po pravici,

pa zvestobo,

potrpljenje in nesebično ljubezen, brez pretvarjanja.

Potem je v ogledalu videla tudi jezo –

ko so ji ljudje govorili laži,

če so goljufali,

ko so bili hinavski do nje,

če so ji bili nevoščljivi,

podtikali napake . . .

Vse to in še več je videla v svojem ogledalu.

A to je njen karakter: hinavci, lažnivci in goljufi so vedno stali na najnižji stopnici njenega spoštovanja ljudi!

Imela je pogum, da je mislila sama, zase, moč sprejeti kar je;

in disciplino: narediti nekaj, potem je vedela, da je svobodna,

da živi za vzrok in pomen, veselje in izpolnjevanje, živi za nekaj,

kar živi v njej.

O ogledalu sta se pogovarjala tudi z Emilom.

Pa je Emil dodal:

"Morda v tebi, Mina, vidim nekoga drugega.

Ne primerjam te, a včasih sem razočaran."

Mino je udaril s svojim tonom: razočaran.

Tako je poudaril besedo - razočaran!

Mina je spet premišljevala:

'Ideali obstojajo samo v domišljiji, v filmih in romantičnih knjigah, kjer ne pridejo do izraza kompleksi; taki, drugačni, kompleksi drugih, ali oboji, in vsi.

Kako naj torej razumem njegovo prijateljsko iskrenost? Kje sem?

Ali naj izpolnim njegove želje?'

Dolgo je Mina premišljevala.
'Ali je njuno prijateljstvo iskreno?
Ali se moti?
Ali vidi več kot je resnica?
Ali vidi samo kar želi, hoče videti?
Priznala je, da je romantik - sanjač.
V sanjah je vse perfektno.
Vendar, saj ne živi sanj!
V sanjah je svobodna in vse je lepo!'

Emil je tudi hotel vedeti več odgovorov.
Tudi on je bil včasih sanjač.
Sanjal je o tem in onem, o nepopisno lepem svetu, o dobrih in
poštenih ljudeh, o nepristranskih pogovorih, o večni sreči in
ljubezni.
Tudi on si je postavil pred obraz ogledalo.
Kaj je videl?

Ni povedal.
Dolgo je premišljeval o svojem ogledalu.
Dolgo je sanjal o svetu, kot si ga je želel in ga hotel imeti.
Bolj je premišljeval, bolj se je čutil vklenjenega v obroč pravil,
principov, priganjanja v službi, in zakonov.
'Ne! Ne! Noče v obroč.'
Želi si sanj.
V sanjah je svoboden!
Svobode sanj mu ne more nihče vzeti.

Svoboden v sanjah!

Ray Bradbury jasno svetuje:
"Ljubite tisto, kar delate, in delajte tisto, kar ljubite!"
Eleanor Roosevelt pravi:
"Prihodnost pripada tistim, ki verjamejo v lepoto svojih sanj."

Samo sanje!
A sanje so: svoboda!

Svoboden v sanjah!

Samo sanje!

A sanje so: svoboda!

Moj očka

V bolniški sobi je bilo kar precej otrok in med seboj so se pogovarjali največ o igračah – kaj vse imajo doma. Potem tudi o starših: o mamicah – kaj delajo, in o očetih in njihovih poklicih.

Pa je začel Gregor:

“Moj oče dela vse doma – ima delavnico in izdeluje različne vijake, pa jekleno orodje in drugo. Pravi, da je bogat, ker ima dovolj dela in plača vse račune.”

Ostali so se smejali:

“In kje je njegovo bogastvo? Kaj imate? Veliko hišo?

Več avtomobilov? Prikolico? Vikend na morju? Hodite na dopust po Evropi?”

Pa je Gregor hitro imel odgovor:

“Oče vedno pravi, da je imel dva zaklada: mamo in mene.

Vendar, ko je umrla mama, je oče ostal sam, in jaz sem postal njegov edini zaklad. Nimam veliko igrač, kot vi, a vsako nedeljo se očka igra z mano, greva na sprehod v park in srečen sem.”

Miha je hitro posmehljivo dejal: “Pa sem videl sinoči, kako se je tvoj oče oziral na naše mame – zakaj ni našel druge mame zate?”

Gregor je res včasih premišljeval kako bi bilo, če bi oče našel novo mamo zanj . . .

A se je prepričal, da nobena ženska ne bi mogla biti tako dobra kot je bila njegova mama.

In podoba njegove ljubljene mame je bila tako živo pred njegovimi očmi.

Celo njen glas je slišal in skoraj čutil njen objem.

Pa, mame ni bilo več.

V mislih si je govoril:

“Oče tako dobre nove mame ne bo nikoli našel!”

Najtežje je bilo Gregorju ob večerih, ko so mamice in očetje skupaj obiskovali druge otroke.

Gregor je vedno čakal očka.

Vedel je, da bo prišel, malo kasneje, ker dela pozno v noč – se je tolažil.

Omarice drugih otrok so bile polne sladkarij, novih igrac – le Gregorjeva omarica je bila skoraj prazna.

Bolničarka Tina je prišla v sobo in pregledala, da je bilo vse v redu in obstala ob žalostnem obrazku Gregorja, ki se je obrnil v steno.

Stopila je bližje:

Gregor je bil vedno dolgo sam. Tako miren in ubogljiv, potrpežljivo je prenašal bolečine po operaciji.

Rahlo je pobožala kodrasto glavico, ki se je počasi obračala proti njej in si skoraj želela v nežen objem tople in mehke roke.

Dolgo, dolgo je zrla v modre očke, ki so se pričele lesketati v solzah.

Vedela je, da mu je mati umrla in čutila je, kako zelo jo pogreša.

Skuša biti močan, ne pokazati solz očetu – pa tako majhen – komaj šest let star!

Gregor je bil v bolničarkinem objemu, ko je za vhodnimi steklenimi vrati obstal njegov oče: utrujen, zamišljen.

Videl je Gregorja v objemu – kako se je privil k bolničarki.

Videl je Gregorjeve solze.

In Tina jih je brisala z njegovega obraza.

Tako sočutna.

Oče je želel več zvedeti o tej ženski.

Kako ji je Gregor zaupal!

V naslednjih tednih sta oče in bolničarka postala prijatelja.
Gregor je tiho upal, da jo bo nekega dne oče vprašal, če bi postala njegova žena in nova mama Gregorju.

In Gregorju se je želja uresničila:
oče in bolničarka Tina sta se poročila.

Gregorju je zaigralo in zapelo njegovo srce – čutil je, da bo Tina dobra nova mama zanj.

Rad jo je imel in zaupal ji je.
Njegov oče tudi.



Nebesa so zaprta danes

Feliks je bil že nekaj let v domu za ostarele.

Žena Mara, ki je že dolgo bila odvisna od opornic za hojo, ni mogla skrbeti zanj.

Komaj se je premikala.

Potem je Feliksa prizadela možganska kap.

Le počasi je okrevail. Težko je govoril in roke so se mu tresle, da še žlice ni mogel dvigniti do ust.

Bil je nesrečen in jezen nase, da je bil odvisen od osebja.

Mara je prišla vsak dan in ga hranila.

Vedno mu je spekla tudi njegove najljubše kolače, ali pa piškote, spekla telečjo pečenko, katero je vedno z velikim užitkom pojedel.

Mara je hranila Feliksa vsak dan, razen, če jo je njena bolezen ustavila.

Že dopoldne je prišla v njegovo sobo, mu pomagala z oblačenjem, umivanjem in s copatami, ki niso in niso hoteli na njegove noge.

Soba je bila prijazna: pogrnjena miza, dva stola, nočna omarica, omara za obleke in perilo, ob strani kopalnica.

Lepo in čisto urejeno.

Tudi televizija na polici na steni in nekaj knjig.

Mara je prinesla včasih tudi časopis, ali pa sveže sadje in celo njegove ljubljene nageljne.

Bil je ponosen Slovenec in nageljne je vedno častil in cenil.

Kako lepo so cveteli na njegovem vrtu!

Sedaj skrbi zanje Mara in v dokaz mu jih prinese, rdeče, dišeče.

Pogovarjala sta se o tem in onem.

Oziroma, Mara je pripovedovala, Feliks je prikimaval, ali zamahnil z roko, ali Maro potrepljal po roki in se ji smehljajal.

Včasih je morala večkrat povedati, ker se je tudi njegov sluh slabšal.

Potem so bili dnevi, ko se je zaprl vase.

Nič ni bilo luči v njegovih očeh, ne smehljaja v zahvalo za vsako žličico hrane.

Ne za dvignjeno skodelico čaja ali pa kozarec soka.

Nič besed.

Obraz kot izklesan.

V takih dneh je Mara brala knjigo. Rad je imel zgodovinske romane.

Včasih je na stolu zaspal ob njenem branju.

Nežno mu je pokrila kolena z volneno odejo in ga pustila, da je počival.

Ko se je prebudil, se je jezil, ker se je zbudil.

Želel je zaspati in se nikoli več prebuditi!

Tako življenje, če je to sploh še bilo življenje, mu je presedalo.

Ko se je tako danes prebudil, je skoraj ježno dejal počasi:

“Nebesa so zaprta danes!”

Nasmehnil se je in Mara mu je smeje rekla:

“Vidiš, Feliks, tudi v nebesih imajo dopust včasih. Potrpeti moramo.

Počakati je treba na nebesa, ali ne?

Pa se lahko jeziš, kolikor hočeš!”

Feliksu je smehljaj zaigral na eni strani obraza. Na drugi strani se mu je bolj poznalo, da ga je prizadela kap.

Pogledal je Maro v oči in počasi rekel:

“Misliš, da mi bodo jutri odprli vrata v nebesa?”

Oba sta jemala življenje kot da se lahko vsak dan konča, brez napovedi.

Tako sta se večkrat pogovarjala.

Oziroma, Mara je govorila, Feliks je kimal.

“Feliks, ali ne misliš, da le prevečkrat misliš na nebesna vrata?”

Pa se je Feliks samo nasmehnil:

“Mara, ali ti ne misliš na nebesa?. Kako bo lepo! Spet bom lahko

sam jedel s svojo žlico. Že zato se bo splačalo v nebesa, kaj praviš?"

Včasih je Mara postala otožna, tudi solza se ji je zablestela v očesu, a jo je skušala skriti.

Drugič spet so Feliksu oči žarele tako polne ljubezni, spoštovanja, veselja, upanja, plesale in se iskrile . . .

In njegove ustnice so se ji z nasmehom zahvalile za vsako žlico juhe.

Z očmi se je Mari zahvaljeval za vsak požirek čaja.

Brez besed . . .

Naslednji dan, v ponedeljek, je Feliks spet potožil Mari:

"Nebesa so zaprta danes!"

In tudi v torek:

"Nebesa so zaprta danes!"

In tudi v sredo:

Nebesa so zaprta danes!"

Mari je bilo hudo, pa mu ni mogla pomagati.

Razumela ga je, da mu je težko. Vedno je rad delal, pomagal, izdeloval razne predmete, popravljaj stroje, urejeval vrt in še in še. Tako huda usoda zanj, da je skoraj pribit na stol in v posteljo.

Čutil se je nepomembnega, za nobeno rabo, odveč vsem, največ sebi.

Vse Marine besede, da ga ima rada, da ga ljubi, da mu bo vedno pomagala, dokler bo mogla – nič ni pomagalo.

Težka zavesa žalosti ga je večkrat zagrnila in potlačila v temo, iz katere mu ni mogla pomagati.

Tudi v četrtek je Feliks rekel:

"Nebesa so danes zaprta!"

Tako je bilo več tednov.

Dali so mu zdravila, da bi se umiril, pa ni bilo nič bolje. P otem so prenehali s tabletami.

Mara je prihajala redno vsak dan.

Ob koncu tedna sta se pripeljala tudi hčerka in mož z otroki.

Veselo je bilo.

Pa je Feliks včasih prosil, da bi rad malo počival in so odšli.

Z njimi tudi veselje.

Mara je večkrat zadremala na stolu ob njem in Feliks se ji je smejal, ko jo je videl, kako ji je glava zdrsnila na stran in se je stresla:

“No, malo sem si odpočila oči.”

Minevali so tedni.

Feliks je bil kar jezen, da so nebesa bila vedno zaprta!

Potem je neke sobote Mari zaupal:

“Danes pa so bila vrata v nebesa priprta.”

Maro je streslo.

S posebno ljubeznijo ga je hranila, preoblekla, mu prebrala odlomek iz knjige *Pod svobodnim soncem* in mu popravila odejo, ki je zdrsnila na rob.

Z žarečimi očmi se ji je zahvalil.

Besede so se mu zataknila v grlu.

Feliksov obraz je žarel v neskončni sreči

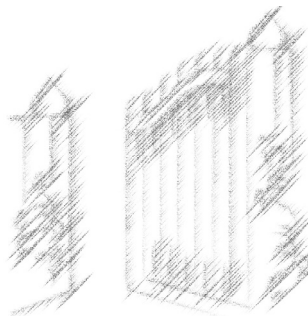
in oči so žarele, se svetile, se veselile,

pele in plesale

do zadnjega diha,

ko je luč v očeh ugasnila za vedno.

Nebesa so se Feliksu danes odprla.



TEMNE SENCE

Življenje nameče mnogo žalostnih dni in temnih senc . . .
Simbolično je senca tudi temnejša plat osebnosti:
 sovraštvo, jeza, sram, krivda, strah,
 ljubosumje, zavist, egoizem . . .

Ni me strah jutrišnjega dne, ker sem videl včeraj in ljubim danes.
William Allen White

*Namesto da skrbite kaj ljudje govore o vas,
zakaj ne uporabiti čas in doseči, da vas bodo občudovali.*
Dale Carnegie

*Enostavno je odpustiti otroku, ki se boji teme;
resnična tragedija življenja je, ko se ljudje bojijo svetlobe.* Plato

*Ni smrt, da bi se je moral človek bati,
ampak moral bi se bati, da nikoli ne začne živeti.* Marcus Aurelius

V vrtincu upanja

Mira se je vdajala razkošju tople vode pod prho in se je skušala odločiti, kaj bi si ta dan oblekla za v službo. V jutranji halji je pila kavo in poslušala zabavno glasbo po radiu. Napovedali so lep, sončen dan. Pomila je skodelico in se zazrla v veje češnje, ki je ponujala svoje bogato, rožnato-belo cvetje tik pod oknom. Mira se je spomnila cvetov češnje, ki je cvetela lani.

Čudovito jutro je bilo. Nedelja. S Tonetom sta šla skupaj na izlet. Vse dopoldne sta se sprehajala ob jezeru brez besed. Besede niso bile potrebne. Zavila sta s steze in se ustavila ob potoku, katerega je obdajala visoka praprot. Tako sveže je dišalo. Ne, še več, prevzel ju je mir.

Sedla sta na ploščato skalo in se zazrla preko doline. Potok je živahno žuborel med kamenjem in z drevja se je čulo ptičje petje. Mir. Vsepopovsod mir.

Sedela sta blizu skupaj, brez dotika. Mira je čutila, da so besede odveč. Lepo je bilo.

Čas se je ustavil . . .

Približala se je Tonetu tiho, mu položila roke na ramena - rahlo mu je poljubila lase. Ni se premaknil.

Ne dolgo. Ozrl se je vanjo: čutila je, da se je odtrgal od časa.

Dolge sence poznega popoldneva so ju premotile. Vstala sta in se napotila nazaj do jezera. Ustavila sta se pod cvetočo češnjo ob jezeru. Mirini lasje so se nežno razsuli po njenih ramenih, med njimi so bili vpleteni cvetovi češnje. Kot nevesta v pravljici.

Pa pravljica ni trajala dolgo. Nenadoma se je Tone obrnil k njej, vzel njeno roko v svojo in počasi začel:

“Sam ne vem, kako naj začnem, Mira. Pa, saj veš, da sem neroden

z besedami in bom kratek. Skušaj me razumeti in oprosti mi, prosim te."

Čuden mraz je spreletel Miro.

Tone je nadaljeval :

"Se še spomniš, kako sem kmalu ko sva se srečala, nepričakovano dejal, da te imam rad. Do sedaj sem mislil in bil prepričan, da je res, da sem res zaljubljen vate . . ."

Še hladneje je postalo Miri. Tone je spet nadaljeval:

"Mira, spoznal sem dekle, o kateri mislim, da sem sanjal ves čas. Sedaj vem kaj je prava ljubezen, ne samo prijateljstvo, kot med nama. . ."

Kako so sekale njegove besede v njeno srce. Z vsako besedo je udaril globlje. Mira je hotela odtegniti roko iz njegove, pa ni imela moči. V očeh so se ji nabirale solze.

"Žal mi je, da se je tako zgodilo, vendar upam, da, če me imaš res rada, da mi boš želela srečo. Srečen bom samo z njo . . ." je nadaljeval Tone.

Mira je molčala. Hotela se je premakniti, teči stran, daleč stran od njega, s katerim sta preživela tako lepo popoldne. Ni mogla teči; ne se premakniti. Končno je le spravila iz sebe:

"Torej si mi ves čas lagal kako velika in lepa je bila najina ljubezen. Čemu si se pretvarjal, čemu vse besede. Tako prepričljivo si lagal -" Dalje ni mogla. Kot da je onemela.

Odšel je. Ostala je sama s češnjevimi cvetjem v laseh in zaročnim prstanom na roki - s prstanom, ki je izgubil pomen.

Pomladni veter je oledenel.

Ni našla besed poguma v vetru, preleden je bil.

Kot njegove besede - ledeno so rezale vanjo in odmevale v njenem srcu. Torej je še njegov dotik bil le prevara. Kako je vedno zaprl oči, ko se jo je dotaknil. Topla je bila njegova roka - vendar kako, ko je bilo vse le prevara? Tako topla roka - tako lažen dotik, tako lažen in prazen. Tako lažne oči.

Veter je raznašal še njene misli; njene besede so se vrtile v vrtincu razočaranja.

Premišljevala je:

“Ali so ljudje kot prostor? Ne, ljudje v prostoru so brez obraza, brez oči, prazni, kot je prazen prostor okrog njih.”

Ni štela dni in noči teme, ko je vse bilo pusto, prazno, brez vsakega veselja. Poletni dnevi so jo spominjali nanj, jesensko listje jo je spominjalo nanj in hladni zimski dnevi so jo spominjali njegove toplote.

Sedaj pa je bilo vse prazno.

Češnja pod oknom jo je spominjala nanj; na pomladni dan, ko je bilo zanjo vse končano. Izgubila je voljo, moč, veselje.

Toliko noči si ga je pričarala v sanje: vrnil se je k njej in spet je bilo lepo.

Neštetokrat je poslušala besedilo znane pesmi:

“Naj bo pomlad, ko prek livad nasula vesna bo svoje zlato . . .
čakala bom, da vrneš se . . .”

Potem se je odločila, da se mora premakniti z mesta, da je dovolj žalovanja za njim, da mora vendar naprej, v jutri.

Pa si ga je spet pričarala nazaj.

Le sanje.

Besede, ki so bile namenjene njej, njegovi včerajšnji zaročenki, je sedaj šepetal drugemu dekletu.

Spet je češnja v cvetju in spet je pomislila na tisti dan - le počasi se je rana celila.

Pred nedavnim je začela delati na novem službenem mestu.

Skrbno se je spet oblekla in podoba v ogledalu se je smejala; smejala z nasmehom, polnim navdušenja.

Morda je pripela preveč upanja na novo službeno mesto. Bila je skrbna in natančna oblikovalka in računalniško oblikovanje je dobro obvladala.

V pisarni je delalo še par drugih deklet: črnolasa Linda, ki je hotela vedeti prav vse o vsakem in postala kar težka včasih zaradi tolikih vprašanj. Potem še Marinka in Dana, ki sta bili poročeni in sta navadno ostali skupaj. Najbolj zanimiva je bila klepetava mlada Betka, vendar je prav zaradi svoje šaljivosti in klepetavosti naredila

toliko napak, da so njeno delo morali potem popravljati drugi, največkrat Mira. Prav te napake so naredile Miri dneve dolge, dolgočasne in puste.

Ko je to jutro sedla za mizo, jo je spet čakalo kup papirjev; nič posebnega, same napake.

Včasih si je želela, da bi dobila velik projekt, nekaj zanimivega.

Lep dan je bil zunaj, komaj je čakala čas kosila. Odločila se je za sprehod, vendar se je tik pred kosilom zatopila v branje besedila, katerega je pisala: poročila o različnem raziskovanju in vrtanju za rude in olje, poročila o napredku, tabele s preglednimi skupinami mineralov in podobno.

Nenadoma je začutila na sebi pogled. Obrnila se je in med vrati je stal neznanec, ki je hitro dejal:

”Sem potrkal, pa ste bili tako zatopljeni v branje, da niste slišali. Mora biti nekaj lepega.” se je prijazno nasmehnil.

Mira je brez besed obrnila stran papirja, katerega je brala in že je stal pri mizi.

”Čudno, tako lep dan, pa sedite tukaj. Vendar če človek bere nekaj lepega, je vsak dan lep. Najde si sonca v besedah . . .”

Njegove oči so jo vprašujoče žgale, pa ni umaknila pogleda.

”Res človek lahko najde lepoto povsod, ali ne?” je dejala in se pripravljala, da odide.

Ni hotela biti vsiljiva, a je vseeno vprašala, kljub temu, da je bilo kosilo, kaj želi.

Odkimal je z glavo in dejal, da je tako in tako čas kosila in da se bo vrnil kasneje.

Le malo časa je še ostalo, pa se je Mira kljub temu namenila za sprehod v park. Premišljevala je spet o lanskem letu, o prelepi pomladi, o dnevih, katere sta preživela skupaj s Tonetom. Sedaj je ostal le še pepel. Še jo je pekla rana včasih in tu in tam je spet sanjala o njem. Sedaj je sanje o njem imenovala neumne, prazne sanje. Skoraj jezila se je nase, ko je vendar dobro vedela, da je vse končano in da mora živeti naprej, da mora narediti korak naprej - korak v bodočnost.

Sedla je na klop v parku, prav blizu vodometa, ki je razpršil sončne žarke v tisočere mavrične niti in prav te niti so ovijale njeno razočaranje v veliko kapljo, ki je izginjala med leskom na površini. Na travi ob klopi so se prestopali vrabci in si iskali hrane. Mira se je spomnila svojega kosila in že je metala drobtine ptičem, še več, cele koščke kruha. Kos za kosom je izginjal v lačnih kljunčkih in vedno bližje so si mali vrabčki upali. Kmalu so njene roke ostale prazne in napotila se je nazaj proti pisarni. S seboj je prinesla košček pomladi in popoldne je hitreje minilo.

Zadnja je odhajala domov in ko je ravno zapirala vrata, jo je za hrbtom presenetil glas:

“Zadnja? O, o, nebi vas smel prestrašiti.”

Bil je neznanec, katerega je videla pred kosilom. V rokah je držal polno mapo papirjev in ker je Mira čakala na pojasnilo, je hitro dejal:

“Tole bi rad odložil tukaj, če je v redu, mi ne bo treba nositi nazaj v mojo sobo.”

Spet je odprla vrata in sledil ji je v pisarno. Pokazala mu je prostor za mapo in ker ni odložil, ga je vprašala:

“Kako naj pomagam?”

Pogledal jo je in dejal:

“Nič, je že v redu.”

Položil je mapo na polico in pričel tipati v žepu za pero, ko se je v trenutku premislil:

“Vendar, če se vam preveč ne mudi, pa bi rad nekaj pojasnil in dal nekaj navodil.”

Ne da bi čakal odgovora, je odprl mapo in se zagledal v prvo stran.

Miri je bilo danes vseeno, tudi če je pozna. Saj je pred njo pustil dolga večer. Nič ni imela na programu - ni se pripravila kot včasih.

Ravno včeraj je začela brati novo knjigo - to bi nadaljevala danes. Ko je hotela pozvedeti več o avtorju, je zaspala.

Odložila je torbico in že je čakala s peresom in papirjem na navodila.

Dolgo ni rekel ničesar, potem pa je hitel, kot da se je utrgal plaz in kljub njeni hitrosti je komaj zapisovala, kar ji je naročal. Oddahnila se je, ko je prenehal za trenutek.

“Kaj imamo do sedaj?” je vprašal in stopil prav blizu, da se je skoraj dotikal njene roke. Brala je navodila in opombe hitro in razločno, čeprav jo je njegova bližina čudno vznemirjala. Precej strani sta obdelala, ko je pogledala na uro in neznanec je ujel njen pogled. “Bo dovolj za danes. Nadaljujeva jutri, drži?” je dejal in odložil mapo.

Pospravila je navodila v predal in si vzela torbo. Kratek “Lahko noč!” in že je bila na stopnicah.

Naslednji avtobus na voznem redu je bil označen šele v dvajsetih minutah in počasi se je odpravila naproti večeru z lepim sončnim zahodom. Tako toplo je bilo. Počasi je ugašalo sonce in lahni pomladni veter je česal pravkar ozelenele veje dreves.

“Pa se vam le ni tako mudilo!” je nekako očitajoče dejal glas za njenim hrbtom. Pogledal je vozni red in dejal:

“O, o, pravkar je odpeljal, ali ne? Nobenega avtobusa dvajset minut.”

“Zamudila sem ga, pa nič hudega.” je pohitela.

“Moja krivda, oprostite. Lahko povabim na kavico in čas bo hitreje minil?”

Mira je hotela odkloniti, pa ni našla pravega izgovora. Dopustila je, da jo je vodil proti majhni restavraciji na drugi strani ceste. Vstopila sta in si našla prostor pri mizi.

Restavracija je bila lepo opremljena z mizami za dva in štiri osebe in preprostimi šopki. Odmaknil je njen stol in počakal, da je sedla, potem pa še sam sedel nasproti.

“Že ves dan se srečujeva - oprostite, ime mi je Bojan,” je ponudil roko in se nasmehnil.

“Jaz sem Mira,” je dejala in odločila sta, da se tikata.

Bojan je naročil kavici in na vprašanje, če je lačna, je Mira hitro odkimala rekoč:

“Ne, hvala, sem imela lepo kosilo in še ni pozno . . .”

Bojan se je zasmel in začudeno ga je pogledala. Nekaj je bilo v njegovem smehu, da jo je vabilo.

Kot da je vedel, da ga je opazovala, se je hitro obrnil in jo ujel s

svojim pogledom. Za trenutek je molče zrl vanjo, potem pa hitro prijel skodelico in nagajivo začel:

“Dobro kosilo za vrabce, ali ne?”

Še vedno je strmel vanjo in ni vedela, kam naj pogleda. Kako je vedel?

Namignil je nataraku, pa je Mira hotela vstati z odločnim “ne”, ko jo je ujel za roko in dejal:

“Sedi Mira, samo večerja. Nekaj preprostega, drži?”

Pustila je, da je naročil tudi zanjo in pogovarjala sta se o vremenu, o delu in o avtobusih. Hitro je minil čas in Mira je zamudila še en avtobus, šele potem jo je Bojan spremil do postaje.

Prvi večer, da Mira ni pomislila niti enkrat na Toneta, dokler ni zagledala veje češnje, ki se je dotikala okna v njeni sobi.

Zjutraj si je skrbno uredila lase; dolgo jih je česala in mehko so ji padali po ramah. Oblekla si je svetlo obleko in čevlji ter torbica so se ujemali v barvi. Skrbno je vedno pazila, da ni bila oblečena v kričeče barve - nežne, tople barve so ji pristojale.

Čudno veselje jo je prešlo, ko je pomislila, da Bojan pride v pisarno danes, da nadaljujeta z navodili.

Ni minilo dolgo in že je vstopil. Linda je hitro vprašala kaj želi. Bojan je stopil do Mirine mize in dejal:

“Z Miro sva že včeraj začela z navodili in mislim, da je primerno, da končava.”

Kako leden je bil pogled, katerega je Linda namenila Miri!

Hitro sta delala in pred kosilom končala. Še niso utihnili njegovi koraki po hodniku, ko je Linda že začela:

“Pa ti ni vzelo dolgo.”

Mira ni hotela slišati kar je še govorila. Zatopila se je v delo in Lindine besede so utonile v tišino.

Prosti čas za kosilo je Mira spet preživela v parku. Danes ni bilo mavrice v kapljicah vode; le ptiči so se ji spet pridružili in čakali kruha.

Zvečer je skušala brati knjigo, pa so ji misli uhajale k češnji in k Bojanu.

Več dni je urejevala in oblikovala samo zanj. Samo še par strani je ostalo, ko je nenadoma začutila, da je Bojan med vrati. Ni se ozrla, pa je vedela, da je on. Pozdravil je in se približal njeni mizi. Vzel je papir v roko in stal za njenim hrbtom. Roka, ki je počivala na njenem stolu, jo je čudno vznemirjala, ko je čakala, da ji vrne list.

"Nimaš več veliko, kar počakal bom." je dejal.

"Sedi- sedite, prosim" se ji je zataknilo in začutila je Lindin pogled. Bojan se je nasmehnil in dejal, da je kar zadovoljen tako kot je in se odločil, da ji narekuje.

S svojim globokim glasom ji je hitro narekoval spremembe in dodatke in ni imela časa misliti na roko, ki se ji je približala z vsakim listom, katerega je zamenjal.

'Ali ve, kako jo vznemirja? Ali je zato tako hitel z narekovanjem? Mora ostati mirna, mora, ne sme se izdati, ne sme vedeti, kako jo vznemirja, smejal bi se ji . . .'

Končala sta. Zahvalil se ji je in odšel.

Kar prazen je postal prostor ko je odšel.

Kaj se vendar dogaja z njo? Zakaj je tako vesela kadar pride?

Dolgo v noč ni mogla zaspiti: stal je pred njo s svojimi temnimi, toplimi očmi in zagorelim obrazom.

Zazvonil je telefon. Dvignila je slušalko in dejala:

"Halo."

"Dober večer, Mira," je hitel Tone, "ne zameri, da kličem tako pozno, vendar je zelo važno in hočem te videti nocoj. V kratkem bom pri tebi."

Čudno. Niti odgovoriti ji ni dal, že je spustil slušalko.

Kako je to mogoče? V dnevih, ko si je tako želela, da bi jo poklical, se vrnil k njej - ko si je želela slišati njegov glas, ga ni bilo. Sedaj pa. . .

Nekaj se je moralo zgoditi.

Še predno se je mogla dovolj zbrati, je že zaslišala avto. Ko je na njegovo trkanje odgovorila in odprla vrata, jo je objel kot pred leti, ko sta bila še zaročena. Dolgo je ni spustil in poljubil jo je, kot si je vedno želela.

Vendar, saj ni bila vesela njegovega povratka!

Molče se mu je zmaknila. Tone je zaman čakal njenega vzklika, kako je vesela, da se je vrnil.

"Me nisi vesela?" jo je pogledal in stresel.

"Saj si mi dovolj razločno povedal, da je med nama vse končano in da si končno le našel svojo pravo ljubezen. Med nama je bilo le prijateljstvo, nič več, si dejal - se spominjaš?" je hitela Mira.

Hotela je reči še več, pa jo je Tone prekinil in potegnil k sebi:

"Mira, motil sem se. Veliko napako sem storil. Oprosti mi.

Pozabi, če sem te ranil. Začniva znova, Mira . . ."

Spet jo je hotel poljubiti pa ga je odrinila:

"Prepozno, Tone, med nama je vse končano!"

Sanje bi lahko postale resnica, če bi le hotela. V glavi so se vrtinčile neprespane noči, neštete solze in prazni, hladni dnevi . . .

Pa Miri ni bilo več do sanj o Tonetu. Smešno se ji je zdelo njegovo vedenje in ko jo je hotel spet poljubiti, se mu je iztrgala iz objema.

Njegove oči so postale čudno hladne:

"Nekdo drugi, ali ne? Kdo?" je zahteval Tone.

Ni odgovorila. Pomislila je na Bojana.

"Dejal si, da je med nama vse končano. Ti si hotel pravo ljubezen - v vajinem življenju ni prostora zame!"

Brez besed je Tone zaloputnil vrata za seboj. Mira se je oddahnila.

Sedaj je končno vedela, da ne bo več sanjala o njegovi vrnitvi.

Res ne?

Hitela je drugi dan v službi z delom, pa ni imela možnosti premišljevati o prejšnjem večeru. Končala je odrejeno in poslala v pregled celotni urejeni projekt. Vstala je in odnesla mape. Ko se je vrnila, je Bojan stal med vrati. Njegova roka je držala vrata v višini njene glave in lahno se je sklonila, ko je vstopila, pa je kljub temu čutila rahel dotik na svojih laseh. Bojan se je nasmehnil v pozdrav in po zadnjih danih navodilih hitro odšel.

Kako je še vedno čutila njegov dotik v laseh!

Popoldne je hitro minilo in Mira je že hitela proti avtobusni postaji, ko jo je zaustavila roka na rami in znani glas je dejal:

"Kam tako hitro, Mira?" je dejal Bojan.

Kako se ga je razveselila! Pa se je bala, da bi opazil, kako so ji

zažarele oči in kako mehka so ji postala kolena.

"Avtobus bo vsak čas tu, zato hitim." je dejala, čeprav ji je bilo vseeno, četudi bi ga zamudila.

"Mira, sprejmeš moje povabilo na večerjo?" in po kratkem molku nadaljeval:

"Saj nimaš nobenih načrtov, ali ne?"

Ni odgovorila takoj, pa jo je obrnil k sebi in njegove oči so vprašujoče čakale odgovora.

"Lepo, hvala za povabilo." je spravila iz sebe, čeprav je hotela zakričati od veselja.

Z vsakim korakom je pelo njeno srce: z Bojanom na večerjo!

'Kaj se vendar dogaja z njo? Kako jo more tako razveseliti!'

Pokazal ji je do avtomobila in spotoma dejal, da bi bilo lepo iti tudi na ples, ali ne?

Mira je tako rada plesala. Zardela je v navdušenju in kot da je uganil njeno zadrego, je dejal:

"Tudi jaz rad plešem. Pojdiva!"

"Vendar Bojan, nisem pripravljena za ples. Moram najprej domov." je hitela.

"Prav, popeljem te, potem pa pridem nazaj kasneje, drži?" ji je zagotovil.

Prav hitro sta bila pred njenim stanovanjem in Bojan je počakal v avtu, da je vstopila, šele potem se je odpeljal.

Mira se je uredila v kopalnici, si posušila umite lase in se skušala odločiti, kaj si obleči. Odločila se je za svetlo modro svilen obleko, katera se je lepo oprijela v pasu in v bogatih gubah padala skoraj do gležnjev in mehko sledila njenim kretnjam. Uredila si je obraz, začrtala črto na ustnicah in uporabila nekaj parfuma, katerega ji je dala sestra za rojstni dan, pa ga še ni nikoli rabila.

Kar hitro je minil čas in že je zaslišala korake pred vrati.

Počakala je, da je potrkal, potem odšla do vrat in jih odprla. Bojan je stal pred njo v temnih hlačah in beli srajci in zdel se ji je tako visok. Smehljaj se je in brez besede je vstopil. Izza hrbta je vzel majhno škatlo in ji jo dal z besedami:

"Za najin prvi ples."

Prsti so ji drgetali ko je odpirala škatlico. Bojan jo je opazoval, kar jo je še bolj vznemirjalo.

V škatlici je bila orhideja. Še bolj so drhteli njeni prsti, ko si jo je pripenjala na prsi. Bala se je, da bi Bojan pripel cvet - preveč jo je vznemiril.

"Kako lepa orhideja, Bojan, hvala," si jo je ogledovala in ga hvaležno pogledala.

"Samo hvala, Mira?" je ponagajal in se sklonil ter pokazal na lice. Mira ga je kratko poljubila na lice in skušala na vse načine zakriti svoje oči. Kako jo je vznemirjal!

Ni mogla verjeti, da jo lahko en sam dotik tako vznemiri.

Mislila, je, da je to mogoče le v romantičnih zgodbah.

Odpeljala sta se večeru naproti zaverovana v pogovor, da nista opazila avtomobila, ki ju je sledil do plesišča.

Prostor, kamor je Bojan spremljal Miro, je bil lepo okrašen z belimi prti in eno samo rumeno vrtnico na vsaki mizi. Sedla sta. Bojan je želel vedeti, kaj bi hotela pred večerjo. Ni mu vedela povedati, pa ji je svetoval in odločil zanjo.

Glasba je vabila s plesišča in Bojan je opazil, kako so se melodije igrale v njenih očeh. Povedel jo je na plesišče, med kaleidoskop barv in ritma. Plesala sta in se izgubljala v množici parov, ki so se veselili z njima.

Pevka se je pridružila ansamblu in Mira kar ni mogla verjeti, ko je začula spet po dolgem času besede:

*'Moj zadnji ples bom plesala s teboj;
nežno zveni glasba kot v sanjah.
Moj zadnji ples bom podarila tebi
in pozabila bova čas in prostor.
Lep je ta svet . . .'*

Predala se je njegovemu vodstvu in vstopila sta v prelepi svet; plesala sta na pisani preprogi sreče in cvetja, pozabila na vse okrog sebe.

Mira ni vedela, ali bedi ali sanja.

Ples ji je pomenila harmonija, združenje toplote, upanja in razumevanja.

Vedno je morala stati sama. Odkar sta ji umrla mati in oče, je morala vedno stati trdno in pogumno. Včasih si je želela, da bi mogla nekemu nasloniti glavo na ramo. Tako sama je bila na svetu. Sestra je živela kar daleč proč in imela svojo družino. Prijateljice so bile navezane na svoje prijatelje in le včasih imele čas tudi zanj, pa je niso mogle razumeti. Kako je včasih pogrešala Tonetove objeme, ki so ji dajali poguma.

Sledila je Bojanovim korakom - spretno je vodil in kar prehitro je bila pesem končana.

Med večerjo sta kramljala o tem in onem, pa tudi o delu. Bojan ji je dejal, da je silno zadovoljen z njenim delom in vesela je bila, saj je bilo to njeno prvo samostojno delo v oblikovanju. Zaupala mu je, da je včasih malo suhoparno zaradi popravljanja in da si želi večjih projektov.

"Oho, potem pa moram pohiteti z drugim poročilom. Vendar, dovolj o delu. Govoriva o tvojih, Mira." je dejal in se pomaknil bližje k mizi.

Spet ju je glasba dvignila na plesišče. Melodije so se vrstile ena za drugo in prav nič se jima ni mudilo do mize: predala sta se čarobnemu večeru s plesom. Bojan je bil dober plesalec. Vodil jo je varno in trdno. Vsak korak jima je bila pesem. Tu in tam jo je stisnil tesneje, ko sta se približala drugemu paru. Razumela je, ni hotel dati napačnega vtisa. Pa so jo kljub vsemu njegove močne roke vklepale v tesen objem. Tu in tam so se njune oči srečale; njegove oči so bile tako tople, tako globoke . . .

Počasi so ugašali luči in le še svečke so ostale po mizah. Glasba je postajala nežnejša in Bojan je tesneje privil Miro k sebi. Še vedno je včasih mislila, da sanja, ko jo je prebudil z rahlim poljubom na čelo in šepetal v njene lase, kako vesel je, da sta šla na ples.

Brez besede je sledila njegovim korakom in kot da je uganil njene misli, kako dolgo že ni plesala, jo je spet nežno poljubil.

Glasba je utihnila in vrnila sta se do mize. Mira se je bala, da so res le sanje in da se bo vsak čas prebudila.

Z roko v roki sta zapustila plesišče. Sklenila sta, da gresta spet kmalu na ples.

Odpeljala sta se.

Spet ju je sledil avto, ki je stal na drugi strani ceste.

Prispela sta do njenega stanovanja in Bojan se je pomaknil bližje k Miri. Njegova roka je nežno pobožala njene lase, ki so bili razsuti po njenih ramah. Spremil jo je do vrat, ji zaželel lahko noč in jo kratko poljubil.

V stanovanju se je Mira naslonila na vrata in poslušala njegove korake, ki so se oddaljevali. Še vedno so gorele ustnice od njegovega poljuba; tako lačne so bile.

Še vedno je čutila njegove roke, ko si je odpenjala orhidejo z obleke. Prelepi cvet je v majhni vazici postavila na mizo. Kasneje, ko bo odšla spat, si jo bo vzela in jo postavila na nočno omarico, blizu nje.

'Naj bo njegov cvet blizu.'

Ni vedela, kako dolgo je tako stala za vrati. Zaslišala je korake. Bojan je odšel, slišala je avto odhajati. Z vso naglico je planila do ključavnice, da bi zaklenila vrata, ko so se ta odprla.

"Tone!" je kriknila Mira in čuden strah jo je prevzel.

"Pa me še poznaš!" se je suho zasmel in zaprl vrata za seboj. Pomikal se je proti njej in iskala je izhoda: kam?

Jezno je pričel:

"Saj lahko še mene spraviš na svoj urnik, ali ne? Eden več ne bo nobene razlike!"

Približeval se ji je in vedela je, da nima kam. Tone je poznal prostor, saj sta toliko časa prebila skupaj prav v tem stanovanju.

Vedela je, da mora biti silno previdna in začela je:

"Sedi, napravim kavo, pa se pogovoriva, prav?"

Ni je poslušal, temveč je segel po njej in si jo vlekel k sebi. Tako trdno jo je zagrabil, da je kriknila od bolečine. Ni se mogla premakniti. Še vedno je upala, da jo bodo besede rešile oklepa:

"Tone, pusti me. Kaj se je zgodilo? Povej mi. Kaj je s tvojo zaročenko?" je hitela Mira, da bi odvrnila pozornost s sebe.

Res so njegove roke popustile in previdno se je umaknila. Sedel je na stol in si popravil lase.

"Sem ti že povedal, da sem napravil napako. Prosil sem te, da mi

oprostiš. Pa mi greš potem pred nosom ven z drugim!”

Hotela ga je opomniti, da je bila njegova odločitev, da sta se razšla pred leti, pa je molčala.

Tedaj je zazvonil telefon. Hitro je dvignila slušalko in odgovorila. Bil je Bojan in jo je vprašal, če pač še ne spi, ko se je Tone dvignil in v njegovih očeh se je svetila neznanska jeza. V enem samem gibu je bil pri njej in ni imela časa reči niti besede več, samo kratek krik in že je Tone vrgel telefon na vilice. Odhitela je k vratom, pa jo je Tone ujel. Z vso težo se je naslonil nanjo in jo pričel poljubljati. O kako se je branila, se izmikala in skušala zakričati, ko ji je s svojo veliko, močno roko zaprl usta in ji odstranil plašč. Lotil se je obleke - bila mu je igra, da se mu je izzvijala in še bolj je hitel trgati obleko v svoji jezi.

Groza se ji je ujedala v ude in pojemale so ji moči. Tone se ji je smejal:

“Saj je samo dve leti minilo, odkar si me čakala vsak večer, sedaj pa ne moreš prenesti mojega dotika. Vendar, saj se boš kmalu premislila. Moja si bila in moja boš spet kot nekoč . . .”

Končno ji je le uspelo, da si je osvobodila eno roko in ga udarila. Omahnil je nazaj, popustil svoj močni oklep in osvobodila se ga je. Že je bila zunaj. Tekla je na vso moč.

Nikogar ni bilo na ulici; po nekaterih hišah je še gorela luč, pa se ni upala nikamor. Nikomur ni zaupala v tem trenutku. Bežala je, kakor hitro je mogla in se ustavila za večjim drevesom ob cesti.

Vse je bilo tiho. Njena obleka, ki se je je pred kratkim ovijala pri plesu, jo je ovirala. Malo si je oddahnila in bežala dalje.

Kam?

Ni vedela.

V bližini ni poznala ljudi, na policijo pa tudi ni hotela, saj bi se ji samo smejali, posebno še, ko bi zvedeli, da sta bila pred leti zaročena.

Nadaljevala je pot. Dolgo ni bilo nikogar na cesti, potem je zaslišala brnenje avtomobila. V upanju, da bo dobila pomoč, se je pomaknila k robu ceste in pomahala. Pa ni bil taxi. Ni bilo pomoči. Prepozno je spoznala Tonetov avto, ki se je ustavil pred njo. Spet je bežala na vso moč in kričala na pomoč.

Zaman.

Niti ena vrata se niso odprla, niti v enem oknu se ni prižgala luč. Tone je moral zapustiti avto. Zaslišala je korake za seboj. Mora naprej, mora! Skrila se je za ograjo, da je Tone tekel mimo. Oddahnila si je, pa jo je top udarec po glavi zrušil na tla. Ni čutila več strahu.

Kaplje dežja so polzele po Mirinem obrazu, ko je skušala uganiti, kje vendar je. Spomnila se je, zakaj ni v postelji in zoprn glavobol ji je temnil pogled. Zeblo jo je. Napotila se je proti domu, mokra, prezeblja in polna čudnega strahu.

‘Kakšen dokaz ljubezni! Pa je hotel, da mu odpusti.’

Upala, je, da ga nikoli več ne vidi.

Utrujenost je legala v njeno telo in le počasi se je pomikala proti domu.

Mokri lasje so se ji lepili po obrazu.

Bližalo se je jutro - cestne luči so počasi ugašale.

S sklonjeno glavo, zamišljena v dogodke prejšnje noči, ni opazila, da se ji je približal avto.

“Mira!”

Zdrznila se je in stekla Bojanu nasproti.

“O, Mira, kaj se je zgodilo?” je hitel z vprašanji in jo obenem zavijal v svoj jopič.

Ni mu odgovorila.

Že sama misel, da je na varnem, jo je utrudila in groza noči jo je hotela zrušiti. Bojan jo je zadržal, sicer bi zdrsnila na tla. Vodil jo je do avta in ji pomagal na sedež.

Spet je poskušal z vprašanji.

Nič.

Mira se je pomaknila bližje v njegovo varstvo in solze so jo oblile. Ni mogla govoriti.

Potrpežljivo je Bojan čakal in jo miril:

“Umiri se, Mira, vse je mimo. Ko sem slišal tvoj krik po telefonu, sem se takoj odpravil. Kaj sem našel: tvoje prazno stanovanje, plašč na tleh in tebe nikjer. Sosedji niso nič slišali.”

Po dolgem premolku je Bojan dejal:

“Samo da sem te našel.”

Molče je čakal, da se je malo umirila, potem pa nadaljeval:
"Sporočil sem na policijo in iščejo te. Povedati morava, kaj se je zgodilo. Pojdiva! Potem si lahko odpočiješ."

"Ne, Bojan, prosim te, ne na policijo. Saj je sedaj vse v redu. Pokliči in povej, da je bil nesporazum. Prosim te." je skoraj šepetala Mira.

Čudno se je Bojanu zdelo, vendar ni več spraševal, ne silil, da gre na policijo. Omenil ji je, da se odpeljeta do telefona in potem gresta domov.

Samo pokimala je in mu bila hvaležna.

Prijetno toplo je postalo v avtu, ko sta se odpeljala do telefona. Bojan je uredil klic, pa se je hitro vrnil in dejal, da je vse v redu, nič vprašanj.

Mira ni spoznala kraja, kamor sta se peljala in Bojan dejal:

"Peljem te domov, na moje stanovanje, da si odpočiješ v miru."

V stanovanju ni izgubljal časa in že je slišala šum vode v kopalnici. Vrnil se je s svojim jutranjim plaščem čez roko in ji ga ponudil z besedami:

"Pojdi, Mira, umij s sebe spomine na zadnje ure. Vse bo boljše, verjemi mi."

Kljub utrujenosti so njene misli drvele nazaj v preteklo noč.

'Da je mogel Tone to narediti!'

Nikoli prej ga ni videla takega. Stesla se je ob misli na Tonetovo težko telo, ki jo je pribijalo ob steno.

In pred dvema letoma sta bila zaročena, zaljubljena . . .

Pa je dejal, da jo ima rad, da jo bo imel nazaj, da bo njegova!

Toliko noči je pre jokala, ko sta se razšla.

Toliko sanj in upanja, da se bo vrnil.

O, Bog, kakšen povratek!

Umivala je s sebe preteklo noč.

Ne, še več. Umivala je s sebe Tonetove besede: laži, ki nočejo več do njenega srca.

Umivala je spomine njegovih dotikov.

Ne dopusti mu več, da bi mazal njeno telo z lažmi!

Laži ne morejo doseči srca!

Pa so se spet povnili spomini na lepe dni z njim . . .

Spomnila se je cvetoče češnje in cvetja v laseh.
Umivala je s sebe njegove prazne besede, lažne poglede, bežne dotike . . .
Umivala je s sebe spomine na priprte, tople oči, trepetajoče prste; umivala je s sebe Tonetove zadnje nežne besede.
Verjela je v dobro v ljudeh; v vsakem človeku je hotela videti le dobro - tako trdno je verjela, da so ljudje dobri.
Kako lepo je bilo verjeti v angele!
Le angeli morejo biti vedno dobri.
Ljudje pa niso angeli.
Umivala je s sebe spomine na Toneta, boleče spomine in njegovo duševno umazanost.

Na obešalniku za vrati je visela pidžama in kot da je Bojan slutil, kaj premišljuje, je zaklical:
"Za vrati je moja pidžama, kar obleci si jo, boš že nekako."
Zavihala je rokave in hlačnice so se še vedno dotikale tal, ko si je oblekla še njegov jutranji plašč. Posušila si je lase in se počesala.
V dnevni sobi jo je čakal Bojan s skodelico toplega mleka:
"Popij, Mira, hitreje boš zaspala. In tole tudi," in ji ponudil kozarec močne žgane pijače.
Sprejela je oboje in se mu zahvalila. Pila je v dolgih požirkih in čutila, kako se je toplota razlivala po telesu in jo prijetno utrujala.
"Spalnica je tukaj na levo," je dejal in ji pokazal na vrata, ki so vodila v njegovo sobo.

Ne dolgo zatem je zaspala v njegovi postelji.
Utrujenost in strah pretekle noči pa ji nista pustila mirnega in spokojnega spanja: še v sanjah se je borila s Tonetom, se ga otepala, kričala in se dušila v solzah.
Kako so njegove roke oklepale njen vrat, jo dušile, hotele so jo vso!
Skušala je bežati, pa ni mogla premakniti od strahu otrplih nog . . .

"Mira, zbudi se," jo je klical in stresal Bojan.
Dvignil jo je z blazine in jo močnejše stresel:
"Mira, prebudi se, Mira!" je hitel.

Ko je odprla oči, še vedno ni verjela, da je vse mimo, da je na varnem.

"Mira, jaz sem, Bojan, prebudi se," in jo stisnil k sebi.

Njegov objem je zbudil plaz solz, ki so kar vrele z nje.

"Sedaj je vse mimo, Mira, umiri se."

Brez besed jo je še držal v svojem objemu in čakal, da jo je utrujenost spet premagala. Kmalu so se ji oči zaprle in položil jo je na blazino, ji popravil odejo in dolgo strmel v njen obraz.

Mira se je prebudila in ni takoj vedela, kje je. Jutranji plašč na stolu, tuja postelja, tuja soba.

Ali je vendar v Bojanovem stanovanju?!

Oblekla si je njegov jutranji plašč in odšla v dnevno sobo, kjer je Bojan sedel in bral knjigo.

"Si se odpočila, Mira?" je dejal ko je vstal in se ji približal.

"Hvala Bojan, bolje se počutim." je odvrnila in se tesneje zavila v njegov plašč.

Kava se je vabljiivo kadila iz dveh skodelic na mizi in povabil jo je bližje. Pokazal ji je časopis in dejal:

"Videl sem par oglasov za stanovanje; saj se boš preselila, ali ne? Potem te To - moški, ki te je napadel, ne bo tako hitro našel. Še danes lahko pogledava, če želiš." jo je prepričeval in upal, da ni opazila, da je vedel za Toneta.

"Bojan, vem da imaš veliko dela in bom že uredila, ne delaj si skrbi." je dejala.

Pa se Bojan ni pustil pregovoriti:

"Delo bo že počakalo za en dan. Razen če želiš ostati tukaj pri meni več dni?" se je hudomušno nasmejal.

Zardela je.

Molče se je odpravila v kopalnico, da bi se preoblekla. Ni bilo več tam njene obleke, niti perila. Namesto njene obleke je visela na obešalniku preprosta obleka z belim ovratnikom in perilo je bilo zloženo na polici.

Pred vrati je zaslišala Bojana:

"Upam, da ti bo obleka prav, prodajalka me je čudno gledala, ko sem te opisoval."

In je še dodal:

“Perilo se bolj počasi suši te dni. Upam, da je v redu.”
Dobro, da ni videl njenega obraza. Še nikoli v njenem življenju ni moški pral njenega perila!
Obstala je med vrati oblečena, ko je Bojan dejal:
“Niti nisem slabo zbral, kaj praviš, Mira?”
“Hvala, Bojan, zelo sem hvaležna.” je rekla Mira in se nasmehnila.
“Sedaj pa na lov za tvoje stanovanje, drži?” in že je odprl vrata, da sta odšla.

Mračilo se je, ko sta le našla prijetno, majhno stanovanje s kuhinjo in dnevno sobo vse v enem prostoru, prikupno spalnico in prostorno kopalnico. Tudi cena je bila Miri primerna in dogovorili so se, da se Mira lahko že takoj vseli. Dobila je ključke, ko je Bojan plačal za stanovanje lastniku zahtevano vsoto, katero mu je zagotovila, da mu vrne takoj, ko se vrnete na njeno stanovanje.

S čudnim strahom se je Mira približevala vratom, ki so bila še vedno odprta. Bojan je pogledal po vseh prostorih - nikogar ni bilo. Uredil je po telefonu z enim od prijateljev, da je prišel pomagat in že so nalagali njeno pohištvo in druge stvari v avto.

Kako mu je bila hvaležna!

Bojan ji je pomagal še pozno v noč, ko si je urejevala najnужnejše, potem pa se z besedami poslovil:

“Mira, upam, da bo vse v redu. Klical te bom zjutraj, drži?” in jo lahko poljubil na čelo.

Minili so meseci; z Bojanom sta se večkrat videla v službi, pa odšla na ples in se sprehajala v parku. Postala sta dobra prijatelja in Mira je čutila, da je vez med njima vedno močnejša, da mu zaupa in da sta bila vesela vedno, ko sta bila skupaj.

Toliko zanimivih stvari sta se imela pogovoriti.

Odločila sta se za izlet naslednjo soboto in nedeljo.

Mira kar ni mogla dočakati dneva, ko sta šla skupaj.

Pa ni vedela, da je tudi Bojan komaj čakal, da sta preživela ves dan v naravi, med cvetjem in potoki.

Večer je bil še hladen, kljub toplemu dnevu, pa nista čutila. Privila

sta se drug k drugemu in se združila, nežno, toplo, brez verig, v popolni predanosti.

Mira je hitela urejevati stvari po stanovanju. Popoldne se bo vrnila sestra z družino s potovanja in toliko ji je imela povedati. Napotila se je na letališče in z branjem si je krajšala čas pred pristankom letala. Spet so napovedali zamudo zaradi vremena. Poletje je bilo lepo, a prav danes so imeli nevihte.

Končno je avion le pristal in nestrpno je čakala sestro Nado, moža Marjana, nagajivega Davida in malo Urško.

Prisrčno so se objeli in čas do večera je minil v prijetnem kramljanju in obujanju spominov na preživeti čas. Končno sta bili Mira in Nada sami in Mira ji je mogla povedati o vsem. Nada jo je poslušala in bila vesela, da sta se z Bojanom tako dobro razumela. Ni mogla verjeti, ko ji je Mira povedala o Tonetu in upali sta, da se je življenje končno le uredilo.

Poletje se je nagibalo h koncu. Bojan in Mira sta preživela veliko časa skupaj, večkrat odšla na ples in v kino ter se igrala z Davidom in Urško.

Odločili so se, da gredo skupaj k reki, kajti Marjan je bil silno navdušen kajakaš in tudi Nada mu je rada sledila v brzice.

Precej ljudi se je nabralo ob reki in že so bili pripravljeni s kajaki za potovanje do gornjega dela reke, da se potem spustijo skozi brzice v mirnejši del. Tudi Mira in Bojan sta poskusila. Nasmejala sta se, ko sta se tolikokrat pri obratih pošteno napila vode.

Popoldne so imeli manjše tekmovanje in ljudje so še vedno prihajali.

Bojan in Mira sta si želela nekaj časa zase in Nada ju je razumela. Odšla sta proti toku, kjer se je reka spremenila v nevarne brzice in vrtince. Sedla sta na breg in opazovala mogočno moč vode, ki je šumela mimo njih.

Premotili so ju metulji, ki so se poigravali med zelenjem. Eden lepši od drugega. Njihova krila so nežno trepetala ob vsakem dotiku. Z roko v roki sta jih ogledovala. Plesalci neba. Obstala sta ob večjem pisanem metulju in Mira je čutila, kako se je stisk Bojanove roke postal močnejši, ko se je metulju preveč približala.

Se je bal, da bi odletel? Bojan je spoštoval življenje. Vse življenje. Cvetje, drevje, živali - vse mu je bilo nekaj višjega. Mira je čutila, kako mu je telo vsrkavalo vase vsak gib metulja. Nepremično sta stala in ga opazovala. Šele ko je odletel, sta si upala spet dihati. Še vedno z roki v roki ob reki. Potem ju je presenetil drobní ptiček s pisanim oprsjem in črno 'kapico'. Spet sta stala nepremično, komaj dihala, da ga nebi zmotila.

Kako lepo je bilo Miri ob Bojanu. Skupaj sta spoštovala naravo, življenje - stvarstvo.

Vrníla sta se prav v trenutku, ko so se odločili za tekmo.

Marjan je prosil Bojana, da gre z njim višje k reki, kjer bodo začeli s tekmovanjem. Bojan je rad ustregel. Peljal je avto z osmimi kajaki na začetno točko.

Mira in otroka so se igrali, se lovili, plezali po drevju in se skrivali.

Kako hitro je minil čas.

Tekma je miníla in zmagovalec je dajal nasvete drugim kajakašem.

Prišel je čas odhoda. Bojana še ni bilo nazaj. Marjanu se je čudno zdelo, a morda je imel problem s prehodom in se je zakasnil.

Ljudje so odhajali, le Marjan, Nada in otroka so še ostali ob reki in nekateri kajakaši, ki so si razporedili kajake ob strugi za naslednji dan, za novo tekmo.

Vedeli so, da so varni kar v vodi, saj so imeli šotore prav blizu.

Mira se je hotela še enkrat posloviti od žuborečih valov in se napotíla proti kraju, kjer sta z Bojanom obstala pri metulju.

Tako mirno je bilo vse. Še veter je utihnil. Ptice so morale čutiti bližajoči večer in so se le tu in tam preletele na drugo drevo, brez glasu.

Mira je slišala korake za seboj. Predno se je obrnila se je za hrbtom oglasílo:

"Si se mi hotela izmuzniti, kaj?"

Kri ji je skoraj zledenela v žilah, tako se je prestrašíla. Bil je Tone.

"Pozabíva na dan, ko sem te prestrašil. Hotel sem se pogovoriti s teboj, pa me je ujezil tisti moški, ko je telefoníral in si bila z njim na plesu. Zmanjkalo mi je potrpljenja. Pa, sedaj je mimo, ali ne Mira?"

Tone se ji je približal in umikala se mu je.

Nikogar ni bilo v bližini in mračiti se je začelo. Sonce je ugašalo v vrhovih dreves, pa Mira ni uspela videti.

"Moram nazaj do drugih," je dejala in skušala mimo Toneta.

Pa se je Tone obrnil in jo zgrabil:

"Nikamor ne greš, nisva še končala najinega pogovora."

"Midva sva končala že pred več kot dvema leti in za vedno po tvojem zadnjem obisku, Tone. Nimam kaj poslušati, končala sva." je dejala.

Ujel je njeni roki, jo trdno držal in se smejal:

"Teci, pojdi, ha, ha!"

Izvijala se je, klicala na pomoč, pa je reka udušila njen glas.

Še krepkeje jo je zgrabil in jo privijal k sebi.

"Moja boš Mira, moja, razumeš!"

Mira je iskala rešitve. Ni vedela kaj. Besede so bile zaman. Če bi mogla v vodo.

Tone se je zmagoslavno smejal, ko jo je povlekel na tla in grabil za njenim telesom. Izvila se mu je v trenutku, ko je popustil njegov objem in že je bila v kajaku, katerega je hitro odvezala in se odrinila od brega.

Tone je presenečen skočil na noge in zaklel. Zakričal je za njo, da še nista opravila in že je bil tudi on v kajaku. Tone je bil močan in hitro se ji je približeval.

Mira je upala, da jo bo tok odnesel na sredino v hitrejši del in da mu bo lahko ušla.

Reka se je spreminjala, pa Mira ni opazila.

V sredini se je reka spremenila v drvečo pošast, ki jo je vlekla s seboj.

Mora obdržati ravnotežje, mora!

Vrtinci so postajali pogostejši, peneče lačni. Veja, ki je štrlela čez reko jo je prestrašila. Izgubila je ravnotežje in kajak je izginil v vrtincu.

Mira se je spomnila obratov, katere so ji pokazali prej, pa je bil vrtinec premočan, ni mogla na površino.

Kajak se je vrtil na mestu, obrnjen navzdol in Mira ujeta v vrtincu.

Trudila se je na vso moč, imela možnost zajeti zrak, pa spet izginila

pod površino. Kajak jo je pripenjal pod gladino - ujet v vejevje se ni več vrtil.

Mira je s poslednjimmi močmi skušala za prameni svetlobe, ki se je igrala nad njo, ko ji je debela veja presekala pot in grozeča, peneča belina reke jo je zakrila in jo vlekla v mokro, strahotno temo globine . . .

Tone je zavil k bregu in odhitel do skupine ljudi po pomoč.

Zavedal se je, da je kriv njene nesreče, morda celo smrti.

Prebudil se je iz svojega morečega ljubosumja in kazal ljudem, kje je Mira izginila.

Kajakaši so bili urno v sredini reke in se potapljali, drug za drugim. Nekdo je našel Miro.

Brez vsakega znaka življenja so jo potegnili iz vode.

Njen obraz je bil čudno svetel in strašansko bel.

Za trenutek so vsi obstali, kot da se je nihče ni upal dotakniti.

Marjan je pokleknil, obrnil Miro na stran, da se je izlila voda iz nje.

Pripravil se je, da začne hitro z umetnim dihanjem, pa ni imel priložnosti.

Izmed skupine ljudi je planil Bojan, odrinil Marjana in pokleknil ob Miro.

Začel je z umetnim dihanjem; delal je natančno, a v glavi se mu je vrtelo:

"Kako dolgo je bila že brez zavesti? Kako močna je? Ali ima še voljo do življenja? . . ."

Dolgo ni bilo nobenega znaka življenja, pa Bojan ni odnehal.

Mučna tišina je vladala med navzočimi, nihče se ni premaknil, kot da se je čas ustavil za vse v trenutku grozeče napetosti.

Zadržali so dih v upanju, da ni prepozno.

Nenadoma so se njena prsa dvignila: samostojno.

"Diha!" je Bojan skoraj zakričal v olajšanju.

Še ji je pomagal, dokler ni dihala močno in enakomerno.

Še vedno je klečal ob njej. Vzel je njen drobni, mrzli obraz v svoje dlani in jo nežno klical:

"Mira, moja Mira!" je skoraj šepetal, tako je bil srečen.

"Posiliti jo je hotel, pa mu je ušla," je slišal besede za hrbtom.

“Ubiti jo je hotel,” je dodal drugi iz skupine.

“Take pošasti je treba spraviti stran od poštenih ljudi. V ječe spadajo!”

Tone se je hotel umakniti prav ko je stopila predenj Nada.

Brez besed je vedela, kaj se je zgodilo:

“Podlež, kako nizko moreš pasti v svoji ljubosumnosti. Izgini!”

Pa se je krog ljudi okrog Toneta manjšal in po obrazih je bral sovraštvo, zaničevanje in grozeče so se začele dvigati pesti moških.

Mira je skušala odpreti oči: zdelo se ji je, da se dviga iz čudne, temne globine, se vrtinči in kroži, se obrača, išče poti iz grozotnega vrtinca, pa znova pade nazaj v temo.

Spet se trudi, poskuša, išče opore v spolzkem, vrtečem lijaku zavesti, se dviga proti luči, pa nemočna omahne nazaj.

Oklepala se je nečesa močnega, toplega; našla oporo, našla je moč, da se je rešila tesnega oklepa pred ponovnim padcem v mučno, temno praznino - odprla je oči.

“Bojan,” je dahnila in se trdno oklenila njegovega vratu. Borila se je s temo, ki jo je spet hotela vsrkati vase, pa je Bojan hitel:

“Mira, zmagala si, sedaj pa se prepusti telesu.

Umiri se, vse je mimo. Ko se boš prebudila, bo vse dobro.”

Še trdneje se je oklenila njegovega vratu, ko jo je dvignil in nesel proti Nadi. Njene roke so nemočne zdrsnile z njegovih ramen, ko se je ustavil prav v hipu, ko je Nada spet rekla:

“Tone, izgini od tod!”

Skupina ljudi je tesneje krožila okrog Toneta, ko se je Mira premaknila in vsi pogledi so se uprli vanjo.

Odprla je oči in zagledala Toneta.

Groza jo je prešinila in prestrašeno je kriknila:

“Ne več, Tone, pusti me pri miru . . .” in je spet omahnila.

Bojan se je brez besed odmaknil in odnesel Miro s seboj.

Toneta so odvedli na policijo.

V avtu je Bojan položil Miro na sedež, jo podprl in zavil v odejo. Odpeljal jo je do Nadinega stanovanja, ki je bilo najbližje.

Miro so spravili v posteljo po topli kopeli in brez besed sedeli ob mizi.

Kljub utrujenosti, niso mislili na počitek, le David in Urška sta zaspala.

Jutro s ptičjim petjem in prelepo zoro, ki je odsevala v nešteti
drobnih kapljicah rose po travi in cvetočih petunijah na okenskih
policah, je prebudilo Miro.

Ni se obrnila. Gledala je v strop nad posteljo.

Zakrila si je obraz; kot majhen otrok se je hotela skriti . . .

Tople dlani so pokrile njene roke.

Ni sanjala.

Poznala je te tople roke.

"Bojan," je dejala. Pa ji ni pustil nadaljevati.

Sklonil se je nad njo, ji odmaknil roke in jo poljubil.

Vse je povedal v enem samem poljubu.

Zrla sta si v oči in na nemo vprašanje mu je pokimala.

Vedela sta, da sta zvezana za vse življenje.

Nista več govorila o prejšnjem dnevu, preveč sta imela načrtov,
katere sta potrjevala s poljubi in objemi. .



Oče Gaber

Stari Gaber je spet nestrpno pričakoval poštarja. Vedel je, da mora priti pismo od sina vsak čas, saj je minilo že več kot tri tedne, odkar mu je odgovoril. Utrujeno je sedel oče Gaber na nizko klop pred hišo in si prižgal pipo. Dim se je dvigal in risal čudne oblike, dokler ni popolnoma izginil. Na levi strani, čisto ob klopi, se je leno pretegnila siva mačka in spet začela prestiti. Gaber jo je, kot vedno, nalahno pobožal in ko jo je hotel dvigniti, ter jo vzeti naročje, ga je spet ostra bolečina zbodla neusmiljeno v prsih, da mu je zaprlo sapo. Stisnil je zobe in čakal; čakal, da je bolečina minila in se je spet lahko vzravnal. Neusmiljeno ga je včasih v dolgih, vetrovnih nočeh bolečina premetavala po ležišču. Sprva je mislil, da je samo prehlad; potem so ga prepričali, da je revmatizem, pa tudi to ni moglo biti. Ko le ni mogel več prenašati, se je odpravil k zdravniku. Ta je zmajal z glavo, rekel pa ni nič.

Prosil ga je stari Gaber, naj mu vendar pove. Zdravnik mu je končno le povedal, da ni starost, ki ga kruši, temveč tudi neusmiljena bolezen, ki se mu je zagrizla v jetra in pljuča. Še je silil Gaber vanj; hotel je vedeti vse o tem čudnem črvu, ki mu grize in prebija moč z bolečimi udarci.

Ob misli na smrt je Gabra streslo in hotel se je otresti neprijetne misli.

Vendar, kaj ni že utrujen?

Kaj mu ni treba počitka?

Ali si ni že velikokrat želel, da se zjutraj ne bi zbudil?

Zaprj je oči in in si predstavljal, da se že poslavlja od znancev. Ni hotel žalovanja: želel je, da bi se ga spominjali s sijajem v očeh; s ponosom in vero bi rekel vsakemu, naj se ga spominja le, če mu bo spomin nanj lep, sicer naj se ga ne spominja.

Ob njegovi krsti naj stojijo ponosni, močni ljudje.

Še ko so pred leti pokopavali njegovo ženo Meto, se je kar hitro tudi on poslovil in se vrnil v hišo, ki je bila dolgo prazna in pusta; hladna, kot je bila hladna zemlja, ki je pokrila njeno truplo.

Zakril je bolečino pred svetom in se še bolj trdo zagrizel v delo. Odpravil se je zgodaj vsako jutro in odšel na polje.

Prav danes zjutraj, ko se je spet ustavil in se odpočil na travnati meji med njivami, se mu je pred oči postavila rajnka Meta, kot pred leti, ko sta bila še mlada, polna moči in navdušenja. Pogovarjala sta se o rodovitni njivi, ki je na levi strani pešala zaradi senc jelš, ki so se dvigovale vsako leto višje. Potem sta se pogovarjala o najstarejšem sinu, Pavlu, ki je začel hoditi v šolo in o hčerki, Rozi, ki hoče vsako jutro s Pavlom. Celo oguljeno malho, katero je stari Gaber napolnil navadno s suhim mesom in stekleničko žganja, kadar je šel s sovrstniki na lov fazana, je privlekla, in vtaknila vanjo kos kruha za malico v šoli. Šele klic sosedove gospodinje, če hoče splezati na skedenj in pogledati za skrita jajčka kokoši, ki jih ni hotela leči v kokošnjaku, jo je zvalil.

Potem se je Meta premaknila bliže k njemu in mu skrivnostno in ljubeče položila roko na široka ramena:

“Pa le prinesi košarico spet iz podstrešja; malo je treba popraviti ob straneh, kjer jo je Roza skušala pregrizniti . . .”

Dalje ni prišla, ker so jo njegove močne roke tako vklenile v objem, da je komaj dihala:

“O Meta, moja Meta, kako sva bogata!”

Ni ji pustil delati težjega dela, sam je še več naredil, samo da bi mu Meta rodila še enega zdravega in močnega otroka. Skrbelo ga je, saj je pri Rozi babica skoraj obupala, ko se je obrnilo na bolje in sta obe ostali živi.

‘Kaj če se Meti kaj zgodi?’ga je skrbelo.

‘Samo še tega otroka, potem ne bova več prosila družine,’ je premišljeval. ‘Trije otroci nama bodo v veselje in ponos in ne bova sama na stara leta.’

Pa se je vse srečno izteklo in Gaber je zavriskal od sreče, ko mu je babica prinesla še enega sina.

“Pojdi k Meti. Srečo imata,” in mu namignila, naj hitro gre k ženi. Nalahno je Gaber stopil k Metinemu vzglavju in na njenem obrazu so se počasi sušile potne kaplje. Meta ga je začutila ob sebi in trudna odprla oči. Na njenih ustnicah je bil smehljaj sreče in njene oči so žarele. Kot da je bilo sram Gabru svetu razkazovati ljubezen, se je prepričal, da sta res sama v sobi, potem pa se je sklonil, ji ljubeče obrisal potne kaplje in jo poljubil. Še dolgo je stal ob njeni postelji in opazoval, kako jo je utrujenost premagala in je zaspala. Nežno ji je popravil blazino, jo pobožal in po prstih odšel.

Leta so minevala in otroci so doraščali. Pavel je bil že v veliko pomoč: na polju, pri živini, pa tudi v šoli mu je dobro šlo. Roza tudi ni zaostajala. Pridno je poprijela pri vsakem delu, brez da bi jo priganjali. Najmlajši, Albin, je bil tako prsrčen v svoji otroški nagajivosti in hudomušnosti, da le kaj. Vedno so se mu smejali.

Srečni so bili Gabrovi in tudi kmetija je bila kar trdna; čez poletje so kupili še eno kravo in polje je lepo obrodilo.

Pavel je vedno več delal doma in oče ga je z veseljem opazoval. V njem je Gaber videl bodočega gospodarja. Kadar je bil posebno dobre volje, je potrepljal Pavla po ramah in ga hudomušno podražil, če ima že kaj izbranega za bodočo gospodinjso.

Pavel je molčal. Nikoli ni odgovoril, samo še bolj se je vrgel v delo in premišljeval.

Vendar Pavel ni bil popolnoma srečen. Čudno nezadovoljstvo mu je preplavljalo misli na bodočnost pri delu na polju in živini. Ni pokazal, vendar je tolikokrat pozno v noč sanjaril o majhni delavnici, kjer bi popravljaj stroje in avtomobile.

Tako živo je sanjaril, da se je parkrat kar začudil, ko je stopil za vogal hiše in njegove delavnice tam ni bilo.

Želja je postajala tako očitna, da se je nekega dne le opogumil in dejal očetu, da bi bilo dobro pri hiši malo prizidati.

Oče Gaber se je razveselil.

Ne za dolgo.

Pavel mu je povedal, da misli na delavnico in ne na večji hlev.

Gaber je molčal in premleval dolge tedne. Tudi Meti je kasneje

povedal. Pogovarjala sta se o Pavlovem predlogu, ko sta po dolgem dnevu na senožeti počivala po večerji na klopi pred hišo in sta še na sitne komarje pozabila.

Meta ni bila proti. Dejala je, da bi bilo kar v redu, saj bi potem marsikaj lahko popravil doma, polje pa tudi nebi ostalo zanemarjeno, saj vendar rad dela. Posebno še, če bi dobil pridno ženko, bi kar šlo.

Gabru pa ni bilo po volji. Vedno manj se je pogovarjal s Pavlom; včasih se ga je celo ogibal, ker mu ni mogel povedati, da je razočaran.

Pavel je hotel uresničiti svoj sen. Iskal je pomoči pri materi, pa se ni mogla odločiti. Prosila je Pavla naj malo premisli:

“Ne sili očeta.”

Pavel pa ni odnehal. Govoril je z očetom in ga prosil, da bi smel predelati na posestvu in resno dekle si je pripeljal domov: postavno, prikupno dekle s posestva iz sosednje vasi.

Gaber je ostal neizprosen.

“Ne boš podiral, kar mi je vzelo leta. Poglej moje roke! Zgradil sem z njimi - podiral mi ne boš!” je skoraj osorno dejal Gaber.

Pavel je utihnil. Nikoli več ni rekel besede o delavnici; niti Rozi ne, ki ga je najbolj razumela.

Minili so tedni in nekega večera je pri večerji Pavel spet vprašal.

Oče mu ni odgovoril, samo srepro je gledal v svoj krožnik in trdo udarjal z žlico ob rob vsakokrat, ko je zajel.

Nenadoma je odložil žlico in se ozrl po vseh ob mizi. Pogledal je Meto, Rozo, Albina ter se zazrl v Pavlove upanja polne oči: “Podiral mi ne boš!” je naenkrat udarilo v Pavla, ki je hitel prestreči očetove besede in hitro dejal:

“Saj nisem mislil podirati, le preuredil in dodal bi . . .”

Gabrova težka pest je udarila po mizi, da so žlice in krožniki zoprno zaropotali.

“Mojega ne boš podiral. Kar pa si sam narediš, pa lahko vsako leto podiraš. Dobil boš svoj delež, kar ti pripada, a podiral mi ne boš!” Pavel je vstal in brez besede odšel. Roza mu je sledila, a jo je oče zaustavil:

“Pusti ga, saj se premisli. Vse bo še prav. Če pa noče - saj lahko Albin prevzame, če je on pregosposki za hlev in polje . . .”

Pavla ni bilo vso noč.

Zjutraj se je postavil v hlevu ob vrata in zamišljeno opazoval živino, ki ga je s svojimi velikimi očmi opazovala.

Premišljeval je vso noč: ne more se premisliti. Samo kmetija ni zanj!

Ne boji se dela, a rad bi delal več s stroji, jih popravljaj in urejeval. Ali sovraži zemljo, ki je dan za dnem zahtevala več znoja?

Ne samo kaplje znoja, njega vsega je zemlja hotela!

Hotela, da se združi in naveže nanjo s srcem, s krvjo, s celim telesom . . .

“Ne, ne morem. Nočem se privezati za vse življenje samo na kos zemlje!”

Naslednjo noč se je odločil.

V majhen kovček je spravil nekaj stvari: perila, srjajc, nogavic in drugih stvari, ki so ga spominjale na otroška leta. Dolgo je med prsti vrtel drobno vrbovo piščalko, katero mu je oče urezal in ga navadil piskati. Nikoli ne bo pozabil trenutka, ko mu jo je oče izročil - tako je bil ponosen.

Kako dolgo je že od tega.

Iz predala je vzel še nekaj slik - spominkov in jih hitro zavil v kos pisanega papirja, ki mu je ostal od zadnjega materinega godu, ko ji je podaril skrbno izbrano svileni ruto.

Velika stenska ura je udarjala enajst, ko ga je trkanje na vrata premotilo. Bila je Roza. Ni se začudila, ko je zagledala kovček. Pristopila je k njemu in ga vprašujoče gledala:

“Kam pojdeš?”

Molk. Moreča tišina.

Ura je še vedno udarjala, da je odmevalo tanko po sobi.

Nenadoma je postalo Pavla sram; sram, da je slabič in ne more prenesti poraza. Saj bi lahko nekako izhajal, tudi na kmetijo bi se počasi tako navadil, da bi mu bilo vseeno. Pa mu je ključalo v prsih: ‘Ne boš srečen samo s kmetijo. Pojdi, dokler si še sam. . .’

Končno je le odgovoril Rozi:

"Ne vem še kam grem," je počasi spravil iz sebe. "Danes čez mejo, potem pa, kamor se bo dalo, v Ameriko, v Kanado, morda v Avstralijo; kdo ve?"

Pavlu je odleglo, ker ga Roza ni zaustavljala in prosila, naj ostane in naj vendar pomisli na očeta in mater, kakšen udarec bo to zanju.

Nič. Počasi so njeni koraki utihnili, ko je zaprla vrata svoje spalnice in zaškripala so vrata njene omare. Po kratkem premolku je spet slišal njene korake, ki so počasi merili stopnice. Stala je na pragu s plaščem čez roko in ga gledala:

"Pospremim te do križišča, a poslovi se od matere, očeta in Albina predno greš."

"Ne morem, Roza." je dejal Pavel in nadaljeval:

"Napisal sem pismo. Glej, tukaj je in oprostil sem se in vas vse prosil odpuščanja. Ne bi mogel prenesti njunih pogledov in materinih solz.

Grem, takoj grem. Ne hodi z menoj, ko je tako hladno in temno." je skrbno dejal Rozi.

Pa ga ni poslušala. Sledila mu je, dokler se ni ustavil in jo počakal. Drug ob drugem sta šla proti železniški postaji. Roza je molčala in v grlu jo je težko stiskalo.

Strah jo je bilo jutra, ko bosta oče in mati našla pismo, a ji je bilo hudo tudi za Pavla.

Velikokrat ga je skrivaj občudovala, ko je fantom popravljaj kolesa in motorje. Opazovala je njegove žareče oči, ki so se od veselja iskrale nad uspehom.

Premišljevala je:

'Saj bi mu oče lahko dovolil, da bi uredil delavnico. Dovolj je bilo prostora; tudi hleva nebi podiral, saj je bil navezan na vsako stvar, ki je predstavljala dom.'

Prepozno. Vlak se je premaknil, ko mu je stisnila roko v slovo in mu voščila srečno pot.

Rozine besede so se zgubljale v ropotu, ko mu je naročila, naj piše, oziroma sporoči, kako si bo uredil.

Še je stala na postaji in zrla v smer, kamor je izginil vlak. Solze so ji zastirale pogled, ko se je vračala proti domu.

Kot da je kdo umrl je bilo pri Gabrovih naslednji dan.

Nihče ni govoril; skoraj izogibali so se drug drugega in oče se je s tako vnemo lotil dela, kot da hoče vse narediti pred večerom v skrbi, da bo drugi dan vsega konec.

Pa je minila dolga, prečuta noč in jutro je prineslo novih skrbi, novega upanja.

Tu in tam se je Gaber vzravnal, pogledal okrog sebe v pričakovanju, da bo zagledal Pavla nasmejanega ob sebi - zaman.

Skrušen se je spet vrgel v delo.

Dnevi, tedni so minili brez besede od Pavla; ne pisma, ne razglednice. Vsi so čakali, pa nihče ni rekel besede. Potem se je nekega dne le oglasil poštar.

Stari Gaber je s tresočimi prsti odprl pismo in požiral vase besede: "V tovarni delam, pri stroju in angleščine se učim," je govorilo pismo.

"Veliko naših ljudi sem srečal in kar po domače so me sprejeli v svojo družino. Eden od njih je mehanik in si urejuje delavnico. Obljubil mi je, da me vzame k sebi, ko se navadim jezika. Blizu Kamnika je doma in pravi, da se nima kam vračati, so mu vsi pomrli. Zaupal mi je tudi, da se je razvadil v tujini, da ga nič kaj ne vleče nazaj domov."

Roza je neslišno stala za očetovim hrbtom in čutila, kako se je trgalo srce v njegovem telesu; čudno drgetajoče dihanje je izdajalo starega Gabra, da mu je hudo, neznansko težko, in da si želi prvorojenca nazaj.

Odložil je pismo in se s težkimi koraki umaknil iz bližine.

Zvečer so Gabra dolgo čakali pri mizi; niso hoteli večerjati brez njega, pa ga ni in ni bilo.

Kot pretepena žival se je sesedel končno na svoj stol in glasno srebal juho.

Molče so povečerjali in Meta ga je ogovorila:

"Piši Pavlu, naj se vrne, naj pride domov, pa se bosta še enkrat pomenila. Gaber, tudi če je ena krava manj pri hiši, kaj zato, Pavel pa bi le bil tukaj."

"Še 'Zbogom' mi ni rekel, sedaj pa naj ga jaz prosim da se vrne.

Dobro ve, kako se pride domov. Ponujal mu ne bom.” je trpko odgovoril.

Roza je odgovorila na pismo. Povprašala je Pavla o vsem: o deželi, o ljudeh in njihovih navadah, o delu in zaslužku, o velikih mestih, o katerih je brala in še o vsem, kar se je mogla spomniti. Pisala mu je, kako zelo prizadet je oče in da upa, da se bo vrnil.

Dolgo so čakali na Pavlovo naslednje pismo. Poštni pečat na pismu je izdal, da se je Pavel preselil drugam.

Samo na kratko je pisal, da je zadovoljen, da dobro zasluži in da si ogleduje primeren prostor, kjer si bo skušal urediti nekaj svojega. Gabra je bolela beseda 'svojega', ker je vselej čutil, da je del Pavla še vedno doma, na polju, pri košnji, pri sekanju in žaganju lesa za zimo.

Povsod je Gaber čutil, da je Pavel zraven, saj je vendar tukaj doma. Vendar, ko ga je Gaber hotel ogovoriti, se je zdramil: saj je vendar v tujini.

Daleč od doma in si urejuje novo, njemu popolnoma tuje življenje. Sklenil je, da mu zvečer le napiše, naj se vrne in naj si doma pripravi. Ko je prišel čas pisanja, mu trma in ponos nista dovolila in spet je na pismo odgovorila Roza.

Leta so minila. Stari Gaber ni še napisal sinu tistih besed, katere mu je namenil.

Albin je vedno bolj gospodaril na posestvu, pa je Gaber še vedno upal, da se Pavel vrne.

Pavla je grizlo in morilo domotožje včasih tako močno, da je mislil, da bo vsak čas uredil in se vrnil, pa se je spet premislil.

Roza mu je večkrat omenila, naj pozabi, kar mu je oče takrat dejal in naj se vrne. Pa je Pavlu branil ponos odločitev na vrnitev.

Pavel je čakal očetove besede in Gaber je čakal na Pavla molče.

Albin je resno poprijel gospodarstvo in ko je očetu predstavil svojo izbranko, se je oče odločil. Vedel je, da ne more več čakati Pavla. Albin je skrbel za vse pri hiši in Gaber mu je zaupal.

Nekega soparnega popoldneva so počivali v senci pod jelšami in Albin je začel:

“Oče, poročiti se nameravam. Rad bi vedel, če še vedno čakate Pavla, oče?

Ne mislite, da mi ne bo prav, če rečete tako, a rad bi vedel.”

Pa ga je stari Gaber z nasmeškom, ki se je po letih spet prikazal na ustih, pomiril:

“Ne čakam več Pavla, Albin, kot na gospodarja.

Ti si sedaj gospodar.”

Še tisti teden so uredili papirje.

Pavel je po dolgem in težkem delu ves žalosten premišljeval v svojem stanovanju. Odločil se je, da vendar le napiše pismo, da bi se rad vrnil in prosil očeta odpuščanja in dovoljenja, da se sme vrniti na posestvo.

Pogrešal je zelene travnike, zatohli duh pravkar preoranih njiv in dišečega sena. V delavnici je sicer lepo služil in si tudi kar lepo vsoto prihranil. V mislih si je gradil in povečeval posestvo: kupoval nove stroje in ponosno razkazoval očetu, česa vsega se je naučil. Kljub temu, da so mu znanci govorili, da se nebi več navadil na kmetiji, je vztrajal v svojih sanjah.

A samo v sanjah.

Nikoli ni o tem pisal domov: ne Rozi, ne materi, ne očetu. Samo dekletu je to pisal in obljubila mu je, da bo čakala dneva, ko se vrne.

Pavel je čutil, da ga globoko v prsih nekaj priklepa na zemljo: nekaj močnega, trdnega in pomirjujočega, stran od mestnega vrveža; stran od množice tujcev.

Danes napiše to pismo.

‘Končno.’ si je oddahnil, ko je končal s pisanjem.

Pripisal je še posebno izbrane besede za mater in Rozo ter zapečatil pismo. Pozen je bil zjutraj, pa pisma ni odnesel na pošto. Vrnilo se je z njim zvečer domov.

V nabiralniku je bilo ta večer Rozino pismo; veliko debelejše kot navadno.

Hitro ga je odprl in po prvih novicah pismo odložil, se postavil

k oknu in strmel v dež, ki je že ure in ure pral zaprašene ulice in strehe hiš.

Dež je otožno trkal na stekla njegovega okna, skozi katerega se je tolikokrat oziral na samotno drevo, ki je vztrajalo soncu naproti. Zahrepenel je po domačem sadovnjaku in lipi, ki je dišeče pozdravljala in hladila vsakega, ki je zavil na njihovo dvorišče.

Hotel je posedeti pod brajdo, katero je vsako pomlad obrezoval in sedaj gotovo bogato rodi.

Hotel je prestopiti hišni prag in nasmejjano reči vsem:

“Tukaj sem!”

Pismo, namenjeno očetu, je sežgal.

Taval je po ulicah pozno v noč in se ustavil v gostilni.

Napil se je Pavel to noč, da se je komaj priklatil domov.

Končale so se zanj sanje o povratku, sedaj je Albin prevzel posestvo.

On, Pavel, nima več kaj iskati doma.

Ni več sanjal o dekletu - posloviti se mora od nje.

Tisto noč je sanjal, da je oral utrujene ledine, jih rahljaj, tu in tam zaustavil plug, da so se konji spočili in spet je veselo zažvižgal.

Pozno drugi dan so ga prebudili stroji pod oknom.

Vedel je, da si je sam kriv - saj bi lahko že davno pisal, kaj je čutil.

‘Ta njegova trma in ponos!’

Pavel je začel preveč redno zahajati v gostilne.

Mislil je, da si bo v pijači našel odgovore in srečo!

Včasih je cele dneve presedel v gostilni, ni ga brigalo več delo.

Govoril je sam sebi:

‘Pojdi sedaj domov, norec, kar pojdi!’

Pa se je odločil:

‘Nikoli več ne grem domov.’

Po letih je umrla mati. Roza mu je pisala, kako zelo si ga je želela videti, predno je umrla.

Pavel se je preselil.

Ni hotel novic od doma. Niti novega naslova jim dolgo ni hotel poslati.

Po pretepu v gostilni, ko je ležal polomljen in obvezan v bolnišnici, je premišljeval o svojem življenju: o letih, ki so minila prazna. Sram ga je bilo, tako zelo sram. Spet je začel pridno delati. Srečal je dekle, ko si je ogledoval kos zemlje. Njuno prijateljstvo se je razvilo v nekaj globljega, v nekaj velikega. Po enostavni poroki v majhni, predmestni cerkvici, sta si kupila hišico z vrtom in stopila srečna novemu življenju naproti. Po letu sta dobila sina, naslednje leto še hčerko.

Pavel je iz kovčka, katerega je še vedno nosil s seboj, izvlekel očetovo piščalko in slike iz svoje mladosti. Pred Pavlom je bil oče - ne samo obraz, oče je stal pred njim; siv, zguban, utrujen in žalosten. Kot da je Pavel zaslišal njegov glas se mu je zdelo: "Sin moj, ali si zdrav. Vsaj to nam povej . . ." Tako težko je postalo Pavlu, kot takrat, ko je skozi okno drvečega vlaka zadnjič videl domačo vasico. Napisal je pismo in prosil očeta odpuščanja. V dveh tednih je dobil odgovor. S svojo okorno roko je pisal oče. Oče, po tolikih letih!

. . .

Stari Gaber je čakal poštarja, ki je prav tedaj zavil na dvorišče in mu ponujal pismo. Tresli so se Gabru prsti, ko je odpiral pismo in kar ni mogel verjeti novici, da bo Pavla kmalu videl. Debele solze so tekle starčku po licih in začel je šteti ure do sinovega prihoda. Kako dolge so mu bile noči! Vse besede si je pripravil, kaj bo Pavlu rekel in ga objel, kot že dolgo ne.

Še nikoli ni bila Gabru noč tako zoprna kot danes. Končno se je le pričelo svitati in tam za sadovnjakom se je počasi dvigalo sonce. Hitro je vstal in spet ga je močno zbodlo v prsih: "O, Bog, samo danes še, to je vse kar si želim. Da vidim Pavla, samo enkrat še . . ." je skoraj zašepetal Gaber, ko mu je bolečina zapirala sapo.

Roza mu je pomagala, da je vstal, ko je Pavel stopil čez prag.
Brez besed sta si zrla v oči: oče in sin!
Pavel se je končno premaknil in napravil korake proti očetu.
Dolgo sta ostala v objemu in oba jokala.
Sedla sta za mizo kot pred leti in se pogovarjala, kot da se nikoli nista ločila.
Po parih dnevih je Gabru odleglo.
Pavel ni povedal očetu o pismu, v katerem ga je prosil odpuščanja in ga sežgal.
Z očmi je božal polje in njive, katere je nekoč obdeloval in so zdaj kazale Albinovo delo. Pavel je drobil med prsti kepo prsti, ko mu je oče dejal:
"Pavel, tvoj delež te še vedno čaka, nisem pozabil."

Albin mu je izplačal in Pavel se je počutil tako ogoljufanega.
Zvečer se je napotil v gostilno na vasi, potem še v eno in še dalje v mesto, spet v gostilno. Vso noč je popival. Govoril si je:
'Videl sem očeta, sedaj lahko grem.
Tukaj nimam več kaj iskati.'

Pa je spet postal neznansko žejen tistega strupa, ki naj bi mu olajšal razočaranje.
Ni se vrnil do domače hiše, kar na polju je ostal in počakal jutra.
Izognil se je Albinu, ki se je odpravljaj na delo in jo mahnil proti hiši.
Oče ga je pričakoval na pragu in ga brez besed spremljal v kuhinjo, kjer je Roza že imela pripravljen zajtrk.
Šele ko so sedli za mizo, ga je oče pogledal vprašujoče:
"Kaj praviš, Pavel, bi se vrnil nazaj na vas?"

Pavla je udarilo. 1
Oče je rekel na 'vas', in ne 'domov'!
Požrl je slino in dejal:
"Lepo imate sedaj doma!". Smešno je zategnil 'doma' in Roza ga je sunila s komolcem.
Nadaljeval je tako hladno, kot da je govoril tujcem:
"Vrniti se moram zaradi dela in žena in otroci me čakajo."

Po premolku je nadaljeval:

"Sinoči sem se poslavljaj od znancev na vasi in v mestu.

Visoke cene imate tukaj, kar precej me je stalo . . . ni mi veliko ostalo od deleža."

Gabru so se počasi odpirala usta:

"Pa menda ne misliš resno Pavel. . .?"

"Seveda mislim resno, oče, skoraj premalo je bilo!" je pijano dodal Pavel.

Dalje ni čul oče Gaber.

Dvignil se je in ogromna teža ga je pritiskala k tlom.

Premikal se je proti vratom in brez da bi še enkrat pogledal sina, odšel ven;

na polje,

na svoje ljubljeno polje.

Sesedel se je na robu njive, si zakopal glavo v dlani in zajokal.

Srce se mu je hotelo raztrgati, tako ga je udaril Pavel.

Pokleknil je Gaber na svojo zemljo, zajel toplo, razrahljano prst

v dlan, dvignil roke k ustom in poljubil vso svojo preteklost:

poljubil je zemljo, ki ga je preživljala, njega, Meto in vse tri otroke.

Poljubljal je svojo mladost in srečo -

vse njegovo življenje je bilo v njegovi dlani.

Solze so mu močile lica.

Ni čutil bolečine, nič, samo svojo priljubljeno zemljo je čutil.

Privijal se je k njej, kot se je privil k Meti včasih - grebel je med grudami in božal rodovitno, rjavo prst, kot je božal Metine lase . . .

Počasi, kot da se hoče posloviti od vsake grude, je grebel in nenadoma so prsti otrpnili . . .

Njegove ustnice so še vedno poljubljale prgišče prsti, ko so ga pozno popoldne mrtvega našli Albinovi otroci.



Nekje sem doma

Boris je bil utrujen. Že od ranega jutra je taval po ulicah.
Kam gre?
Saj ni vedel.
Taval je pač.
Nekaj časa po levem pločniku, potem je prečkal cesto in šel na desni pločnik.
Kam gre?
Saj ni vedel.
Dopovedoval si je, da mora naprej.
Kam?
'Nikogar ne briga kam gre!'
Tako je bilo tudi včeraj.
In prejšnji dan. In predvčerajšnjim.
Pa prejšnji teden.
Zadnji mesec? 'Kje je bil zadnji mesec?'
Ni se spomnil.
Morda prav tukaj, na tej zoprni ozki ulici.
'Iščem svoj dom.'
Ve, da je nekje doma. Dobro ve!
Samo – kje?
Včeraj je spal v veliki veži. Zeblo ga je. Počasi je pil iz zavite steklenice.
Kaj je pil?
Neko čudno kislo stvar!
'Vino? Ne, ne pijem vina. Boli me glava.'
Liker? Kaj je liker?
Pivo? Morda - se ne more spomniti!
Saj ga še vedno zebe. Pa sonce sije.
Gleda po izložbah: tu obleke, potem posoda in brisače.
Potem pa: 'Oh, kruh, sir!'

Potipal je na desni strani jopiča za žep. Ni ga bilo.
Morda je na levi strani? Tudi ne!
'Pa saj sem včeraj imel žep in nekaj denarja. Rad bi kupil kruh.'
V hlačah je našel žep. Globok žep z luknjo.
Ali je izgubil denar za kruh? Kaj sedaj?
Potipa drugi žep. Nič.
Kaj sedaj?
"Lačen sem! Lačen sem!"
Prav blizu pekarnice je bilo na tleh nekaj opeke.
Hitro pobere eno od njih in jo vrže v okno.
"Ha! Tako, tako!"
Velika luknja v oknu.
Hitro seže po celi štruci kruha in skoraj teče stran.
'Sedaj grem domov, da v miru pojem kruh.'
Toda, kam naj grem?
Kje sem doma? Kje sem doma? Tako lačen!
Iskal bom dom kasneje, najprej pojem tale dišeči kruh."
Sede na klopi na koncu ulice.

Veliko drevo stoji zraven. Lepo, košato drevo. Listje je rumeno.
Premišljuje: saj je bilo še včeraj zeleno!
"Zakaj je danes rumeno?"
Prenehal je jesti kruh.
Zakaj je listje rumeno?
"Ne, saj to ni res! Jesen!"
Mora domov, tam bo videl.
Hitro je pojedel kruh in se napotil v levo.
"Tam jo moj dom. Prav sigurno. Tam sem bil včeraj. Tam sem spal!"
Kako – saj sem včeraj spal v neki veži!
Tam ni bil moj dom! Kje je moj dom?
Morda bo Lovro vedel povedati. Takoj ga najdem."
Hiti po ulici, da mu Lovro ne uide. Skoraj teče, da bi ga ujel.
Pa ga ni bilo tam.
"Kako? Saj je včeraj tukaj sedel, prav na tej klopi in pel!"
Ljudje so se obračali in se smejali.
"Zakaj? Neumni ljudje. Pa tako lepo je pel Lovro!"
Moram domov. Nekje je moj dom. Kam naj grem? Aha, domov!

In Lovro ni tukaj, povedal bi mi."
 Končno vidi, da Lovro sedi ob cesti. Obraz skriva za časopisom.
 "Lovro, Lovro, kaj bereš?"
 Pa ni bil Lovro.
 "Grem domov. Moram domov. Vem, da sem nekje doma!"
 Zagleda dve ženski z velikimi torbami.
 "Kaj imata v torbah" premišljuje.
 Sigurno veliko kruha, pa salame in sira in morda celo pivo.
 "To bo praznovanje!"
 Hitro pograbi najprej eno in potem še drugo torbo in teče, kot ga nesejo noge.
 Torbi sta bili težki. Pa je bilo vredno!
 Dve torbi kruha. Ne bo se več treba potikati po ulici.
 "Sedaj grem domov. Nekje sem doma, a kje?"
 Ženi sta tekli za njim in vpili. Vedno več ljudi je teklo za njim.
 Vpili so.
 "Pa, dajte ljudje, nehajte vpiti. Kruh sem vzel. Lačen sem.
 Lačen ne bom jutri. In lačen ne bom naslednji dan."
 Močne roke so zgrabile njegova ramena. Zgrabile so njegove torbe.
 "Zakaj? Saj so moje torbe! To so moje torbe!", je vpil.
 Vzeli so mu torbe in jih vrnili ženskam.
 Porivali so Borisa pred seboj do velikega avta.
 Bel avto s plavimi črtami. Pa velike luči tudi na strehi.
 "Saj nisem tukaj doma!" je kričal, ko so se ustavili pred veliko hišo.
 "Domov grem!" in začel teči.
 Pa so ga ujeli. Moral je z njimi.
 Aha, sedaj je spoznal to hišo: policija.
 "Zakaj pa me hočejo tukaj? Jaz grem domov!"
 Nekje sem jaz doma!"
 Spraševali so ga, kam gre domov.
 Opazili so, da ni vse v redu z njim.
 Pa je Boris odgovoril:
 "Domov bi rad. Nekje sem jaz doma."
 Spraševali so ga za naslov.
 Kaj je to naslov?
 "Nekje sem jaz doma" je kričal.

Utrudil se je in zaspal na klopi.
Pustili so ga, da si je malo odpočil.
Boris je sanjal, da je našel svoj dom. Toplo je bilo in toplo odejo
je imel na sebi.
Prav nič ga ni zeblo. Pod glavo je imel blazino.
Da, to je njegov dom!

Kmalu se je prebudil.
Zakaj ni doma? Tam je bilo lepo.
Ni in ni jim mogel dopovedati, da ima nekje dom. Da je nekje
doma. Kje, pa ni vedel.
Nekje.
"Nekje sem jaz doma!" je vedno znova trdil.

Uredili so v domu za brezdomce, da je imel posteljo in obroke
hrane.
Boris je bil vesel, da je bil na toplem in ni bil lačen.

Ni pa bil doma.
Tukaj ni on doma.
Vsak dan je ponavljal:
"Nekje sem jaz doma!"

Po nekaj tednih, v ledeno mrzlem jutru, je Boris odšel in spet iskal
svoj dom.
Mora ga najti, še pred nočjo.
Mraz je bilo. Ves se je tresel od mraza.
Pa je korakal naprej: "Nekje je moj dom!"

Tako tudi drugi dan in naslednji.
Tretjo noč so ga našli vsega premraženega na klopi v parku.
Iskal je svoj dom.

Vrnili so ga v dom za brezdomce, na toplo.
A to ni bil njegov dom!
Drugi dan je spet odšel iskat svoj dom.
Hodil je cel dan in utrujen zaspal na tleh pred velikimi vrati.

Dolgo ga niso našli.
Noč je bila mrzla, polna zvezd na nebu.
Pa jih Boris ni videl.
Sanjal je, da je našel svoj dom.

Zjutraj so ga vsega premraženega spet odpeljali k brezdomcem.
"Jaz sem nekje doma!" je vpil.
"Pustite me, da grem domov!"

Spet je ušel. Kam, niso vedeli.
Niso ga mogli najti nikjer.
Preiskali so vse ulice, parke, veže, kupe smeti, razbite avtomobile
– Borisa ni bilo nikjer.

Po tednih je prišel na policijo moški srednjih let.
Povedal je, da je klet skoraj neuporabna in ni vedel, kako dolgo je
neki človek bil že tam.
'Slaboten. Zelo malo govori.'

Preiskali so njegove žepe, našli svinčnik, nekaj papirja, kos starega
kruha, prazno steklenico ob njem in na velikem listu napisano:

"Nekje sem jaz doma.
Tu bom jaz doma!" s podpisom: Boris.

Nekje sem jaz doma!!!

Tu bom jaz doma!

Podrti grad

Umazanih stranišč ni in ni hotelo biti ne konca ne kraja. Milenina kolena so bila vsa rdeča in otrpla, ko se je skušala vzravnati in si obrisati potno čelo. Vstala je in pred očmi se ji je stemnilo: zaplesale so stene v zoprnem vročičnem vrtincu in tla so jo vlekla v potno in umazano globino . . .

Podobe iz njenega mladostnega življenja so se ponavljale ena za drugo pred njo.

Paket iz Amerike! Mati Fani, oče Krmar – vsi so ga tako klicali - in dve hčeri: Darinka in Milena, vsi so stali ob mizi, ko je brat Matevž hitel rezati vrvico, ki je vezala zavoj. Končno je papir bil odstranjen in sledilo je odpiranje škatle. Kako tresoči so bili prsti očeta, ko je hitel zlagati iz škatle stvari, eno za drugo: velika, svileni ruta za mamo; lepa, izrezljana pipa zanj; svetleča, srebrna ura za sina; potem pa kar pet lepih pisanih oblek za hčeri, razne ogrlice, majhni kipci in zavitek dišečega tobaka za očeta. Spodaj, prav na dnu, pa še en majhen zavitek. Oče ga je odprl: denar, ameriški dolarji! Kako prav jim bodo prišli dolarji, saj sta z mamo že dolgo upala, da paket spet pride in bosta z denarjem lahko plačala še del dolga pri hiši.

Oče je stopil z zavojem k materi in umaknila sta se očem otrok. Sin Matevž si je zadovoljno ogledoval svojo novo uro – nihče od njegovih sovrstnikov je še nima – najnovejša znamka. Hčeri Milena in Darinka sta odhiteli z oblekami in ogrlicami v sobo, da si vse poskusita in pomerita.

Kako lepe so bile obleke: tako mehke in pisane – kot da bi bile ukrojene prav za njiju; morda malo predolge, pa, to si bosta že uredili.

Starejša, Darinka, je šla že večkrat s svojim fantom, Jernejem na veselice, le Milena še ni smela nikamor. Saj je imela šele šestnajst let!

Oblekli sta vsaka svojo najprikupnejšo obleko, si pripeli okrog vratu novi, svetlikajoči ogrlici in se vrnili v kuhinjo, k očetu, materi in bratu.

"Pa imamo dekleta že za možitev!" je dejal oče in spogledala sta se z materjo.

"Lepo vama pristojata obleki," je potrdila mati in po kratkem premolku je dodala:

"Ali ni to soboto vrtna veselica?"

"Seveda je," je dejala Darinka »in Jernej je omenil, da bi lahko midva vzela Mileno s seboj«.

Milena ni verjela svojim ušesom: da bi šla lahko na ples, na prvi ples! Srce ji je zastalo v napetem pričakovanju.

Nihče se ni premaknil; vsi so čakali očetovega odgovora.

Kaj bo? Ali bo zarohnel s svojim močnim, globokim glasom, da se Mileni še nikamor ne mudi in da ima še dosti časa za norenje! Dolgo je bilo vse tiho.

"No, pa pojdi, Milena, saj si že kar postavno dekle."

Darinki pa je naročil:

"Ti in Jernej pa le glejta, da se vrnete domov skupaj in nobenih neumnosti!"

Milena ni verjela, da ima dovoljenje, pa jo je oče prebudil iz zamišljenosti:

"Kaj ti ni všeč, Milena, ali kaj?"

Milena je bila v hipu pri očetu, se stisnila k njemu in ljubko ter prisrčno rekla:

"O, ata, tako sem vesela. Ali bom lahko oblekla tole obleko? Tako mi je všeč!"

Odhitela je do matere in se tudi njej zahvalila za dovoljenje.

Milena in Darinka sta pozno v noč govorili o oblekah in plesu, in v sanjah se je Milena že vrtela z neznanim plesalcem po plesišču.

Kar predolgi so bili dnevi do sobote. Vsak večer, predno je Milena legla v posteljo, si je ponovno oblekla novo obleko in se ogledovala pred ogledalom.

“Nobeno drugo dekle v vasici nima take obleke! Lepo je imeti sorodnike v Ameriki!”

Končno. Sobota.

Vsako soboto sta z Darinko pospravljali po hiši in po dvorišču. Opoldne, drugače niso mogli urediti s kmetom, je ena od njiju morala s kolesom po mleko. Precej daleč je bilo do Smrekarjevih, posebno še pozimi, ko je bilo treba iti peš. Pred leti so hodili po mleko zjutraj, potem pa je kmet Smrekar odločno dejal, da opoldne, ali pa nič.

To soboto je bila Milenina vrsta, da se odpelje po mleko. Pripravila si je kolo, vzela posodo – kanglico – in že je bila na poti. Prijetno toplo je sijalo sonce na njena, že zagorela lica in po temnih rokah. Lasje, katere si danes ni spletla v kite, so ji vihrali v vetru. Še par ovinkov in že je zavila na Smrekarjevo dvorišče. Ni ji bilo treba dolgo čakati – mleko je bilo že pripravljeno in takoj se je vrnila domov.

Ni se pripeljala še do pol pota, ko je začutila, da je nakaj narobe s kolesom. Zaropotalo je po vilicah in toliko, da je še lahko srečno skočila s kolesa, da ni zadela velikega znamenja ob cesti, v katero je treščilo njeno kolo. Razlito mleko se je izgubljalo med travo in peskom ob strani, ko je Milena pobirala obtolčeno, prazno posodo.

Nekdo je spregovoril za njenim hrbtom:

“Ali si v redu?”

Ozrla se je in zagledala mladega fanta, ki je prav tedaj prislanjal svoje kolo k drevesu, nedaleč stran.

“Nič, nič mi ni, samo mleko se je razlilo,” je Milena hitela in že je stopala do svojega kolesa. Pa jo je fant prehitel in hitro pobral kolo. Ogledoval ga je in dejal:

“Kot kaže, ti je najbrž kakšna veja, ali kaj podobnega, pretrgala verigo, ki se ti je zapletla v kolo.” je razlagal in počakal, da je Milena prišla do njega.

Šele sedaj je Milena pogledala fantu v obraz: bil je zagorelega obraza in močnih, izrazitih potez. Za trenutek sta oba molčala, potem pa je mladenič prekinil tišino:

“Tebe pa še nisem nikoli videl tukaj, v teh krajih. Ali si od daleč? Dovolj, jaz sem Filip.” in ji ponudil desnico.

Milena je segla v ponujeno roko in rekla:

“Milena.”

Po kratkem premolku mu je povedala, kje živi in skupaj sta peš nadaljevala pot. Pogovarjala sta se to in ono in predno je zavila domov, jo je Filip vprašal:

“Ali greš morda zvečer na ples? Slišal sem, da je kar prijetno.”

Milena je pritrdila in s kratkim »Na svidenje« je prišla na domače dvorišče.

Povedala je, kaj se ji je zgodilo. Kaj so hoteli: nič!

Bo pa treba počakati do jutri na mleko, za večerjo pa bo črna kava: cikorijska in ječmen, ali pa čaj, čeprav so vsi upali na mlečni riž, katerega je mama tako dobro skuhala.

Milena ni povedala Darinki o srečanju s Filipom do trenutka, ko sta se začeli preoblačiti.

“O!” je rekla Darinka, “potem ti pa ne bo treba sedeti sami za mizo in čakati, da kdo pride in te povabi na plesišče. Veš kako Jernej rad pleše in jaz tudi ne sedim rada, če vsi plešejo.”

Prikupni sta bili Darinka in Milena v novih ameriških oblekah, ko sta želeli staršem »Lahko noč« in je Matevž sledil Jerneju, da mu še enkrat naroči, kar je že prej dejal oče.

Jernej je bil avtomehanik in ker je bil zelo dober in pošten, mu je lastnik delavnice obljubil, da si lahko izposodi njegov stari avto.

Ne dolgo zatem so vstopili v prostor, kjer je bilo že polno ljudi. Plesišče je bilo zunaj, na posebnem odru in že so se pari premikali v poskočnem ritmu polke.

Milena je sedela za mizo sama: Darinka in Jernej sta bila že med plesalci.

Pa ni bila dolgo sama.

Pristopila sta dva fanta in hotela eden drugega prehiteti z vabilom, pa je Milena odkimala in rekla, da še ne.

Fanta sta se odmaknila in se nekaj pogovarjala; morda, da je ošabna in da misli, da je edina med dekleti.

Pa, to ni bilo važno za Mileno, kajti prav tedaj je med vrati zagledala Filipa.

Ustavil se je in njune oči so se srečale. Pohitel je med mizami in že je stal pred njo. Čutila je njegov pogled in dejal je:

"Kako lepa si v tej obleki."

Nasmehnila se mu je in njegov pogled je bil uprt v njen obraz:

"Pridi, zaplešiva!"

Filip ni čakal njenega odgovora: njegova roka jo je potegnila za seboj in že sta bila med veselo množico parov na plesišču.

Molče sta plesala in se tudi molče vrnila do mize, kjer je Milena Filipa predstavila Darinki in Jerneju.

Zapletli so se v pogovor in Filip jim je povedal, da je na počitnicah pri stricu, kateremu pomaga na kmetiji, sicer pa bi zelo rad postal gradbeni tehnik. Dokončal je že dve leti študija. "Še par let", je dejal, "pa bom v službi."

Večer je minil v prijetnem čebljanju in kar naenkrat je bilo treba domov.

Milena in Filip sta se dogovorila, da se bosta drugi dan peljala s kolesi na kratek izlet, če ji bo, seveda, Darinka posodila njeno kolo in bodo starši dovolili.

Milena je komaj čakala jutra, da vpraša mamo in očeta zaradi izleta. Pa ni bilo nobene težave. Oče in mati sta namreč ljudi, kjer je bil Filip na počitnicah, dobro poznala in tudi Mileni sta zaupala. Filip je malo okleval pred vrati, predno je potrkal, pa se je le opogumil.

Odprl je Matevž in s Filipom sta se tudi poznala. Spregovorila sta par besed, potem je prišel oče, Filipa pošteno premeril od nog do glave, rekel pa ni nič. Morda je Filip uganil, kaj je hotel reči, ko je obljubil, predno sta z Mileno odšla:

“Ne skrbite, peljeva se na izlet, do starega gradu tam gori, in pred večerom bova doma.”

Toliko stvari sta se pogovarjala, ko sta po enourni vožnji in hoji sedla na robu travnika. Pogovarjala sta se o svojih, o vsem, kar jima je prišlo na misel, in že je bil čas vrnitve.

Še več nedelj sta preživela skupaj, potem pa je Filip moral nazaj v šolo in slovo je bilo žalostno, kljub obljubam, da bo pisal in vsaj enkrat na mesec poskušal priti na obisk.

Bila je zadnja nedelja, tik pred njegovim odhodom v mesto.

Spet sta sedela, prav na kraju, kjer sta bila tisto prvo nedeljo.

Filipova roka je objemala Milenina ramena in obljube sta potrjevala s poljubi, z nešteti poljubi.

Ko sta vstala, da se odpravita domov, so Mileni polzele solze po licih in nežno jih je Filip brisal; se sklonil, ji pogledal globoko v njene mehke in modre oči in jih poljubil.

“Pojdiva,” je dejal: “saj bo čas hitro minil in kar naenkrat bova spet skupaj.”

Milena mu je sledila in vožnja s kolesom domov je bila vse prekratka.

Pa je Filip držal obljubo.

Redno ji je pisal in Milena mu je pridno odgovarjala.

Tako so minili meseci, leto, dve in Filip je uspešno končal študij.

Tudi dobro službo je dobil in še isti teden je stopi pred Mileninega očeta:

“Oče Krmar, saj veste, da imam rad vašo Mileno in Milena ima rada mene. Sedaj še nimam veliko prihranjenega, vendar pridno bom delal in skrbel za Mileno, da bova udobno živela.

Oče Krmar, vzela bi se rada, vendar brez vašega blagoslova nebi rad Milene odpeljal od doma.”

Oče Krmar ni rekel besede.

Mlada se mu je zdela Milena, premlada, da bi odšla v zakon. Vendar, Filip je pošten in priden.

Z njegovimi šolami in pridnostjo jima ne bo hudega, si je mislil.

Pristopila je Milena, se oklenila Filipa in skupaj sta čakala na očetov odgovor.

“Ali ne bi počakala še kakšno leto ali dve, veliko lažje vama bo,” je hotel reči oče, ko je hitela Milena:

“Oče, vi in mati ste bili še mlajši, ali ne? Tudi vi ste morali začeti iz nič, zakaj ne bi mogla midva?”

Kaj je ostalo Krmarju, kot da je rekel: “Prav, pa se vzemita.”

Čez pol leta sta Milena in Filip postala mož in žena – gospod in gospa Travar. Priredili so svečano slavlje. Veliko ljudi jima je želelo srečo in zdravje, ko sta se odpeljala novemu življenju naproti.

Koliko sreče in ljubezni je spominjalo Krmarja in njegovo ženo na njuno mladost in kar nista mogla verjeti, da je minilo že toliko let od tistega lepega dne.

Milena in Filip sta si uredila majhno, udobno stanovanje in ob koncu leta, za Božič, sta prišla voščit s posebno veselo novico: kupila sta zemljo za lasten domek, in, kar je bil vzrok, da so jima oči še bolj žarele od sreče – pričakovala sta otroka.

Oče je hitro dodal:

“Sedaj pa le pazi nase, nisi več sama! S teboj, v tebi, je nekaj majhnega, nemočnega, pa vendar nekaj tako velikega in dragocenega.”

Srečni so bili vsi.

Domek je lepo napredoval, posebno še, ker je Filip naredil, kar je le mogel, še sam po službi. Milena je bila tako ponosna nanj.

Nič ni kalilo njune sreče in miru . . .

Prišel je čas Mileninega odhoda v bolnišnico – porodni popadki so bili zelo močni, ko sta prispela v čakalnico.

Filip je bil ves čas ob Mileni, jo miril in ji dajal poguma. Tako mu je bila hvaležna.

Po pregledu, je zdravnik Filipa odslovil z besedami:

“Pojdi, poklicali te bomo, ko bo čas. Naj se Milena še malo odpočije. Skrbeli bomo zanjo.”

Nerad se je Filip poslovil in Mileni obljubil, da bo šel k njenim staršem in bodo skupaj čakali na klic.

Oče Krmar je bral v Filipovih očeh toliko ljubezni, pričakovanja in skrbi za Mileno, pa tudi neznansko srečo.

Potem so skupaj odšli na njun domek. Mati in Darinka sta še enkrat pregledali pripravljeno sobo, ki bo za dojenčka.

Pregledovali sta lepo prepleskano pohištvo, malo posteljico, omarice – tako skrbno je bilo vse pripravljeno.

Ko so pregledovali predale pri omaricah, so v vsakemnašli nove stvari – Filip je razlagal, da hoče presenetiti Mileno z dodatnimi igračkami: ropotuljicami, žogicami, medvedki, slikanicami, pa tudi majhnimi avtomobilčki. Seveda, Filip je upal, da bosta imela sinka. In posteljico, katero sta kupila od prijateljev, je lepo prepleskal, da je bila kot nova.

Kako neznansko dolg je bil dan.

Vsakokrat, ko je zazvonil telefon, se je Filip pripravil, s suknjičem v roki, da hitro odide k Mileni.

Pa ni bilo klica iz bolnice.

Oče Krmar ga je miril:

“Počakaj in umiri se vendar. Prvi otrok, kdo ve kako dolgo bo še trajalo.”

Pa Filip ni imel več obstanka. Hotel je biti ob Mileni, ob njenem srečnem trenutku!

Dvignil se je in odločno odhitel v bolnišnico.

Sedel je na stolu v čakalnici, skupaj z drugimi bodočimi očeti.

Vsi so nestrpno prelistavali revije, pa nič videli, in le malo so se pogovarjali.

Vsakokrat, ko so se vrata odprla, je skočil pokonci in bil razočaran, ker niso poklicali njega.

Še vedno nič. Tako počasi se je premikal kazalec na stenski uri!

Pa se je Filip zamislil in že je videl Mileno, sebe in otroka, kako se igrajo na vrtu za hišo, na travniku; kako lovijo metulje in trgajo cvetje, kako se lovijo in prepevajo.

Milena je tako rada pela in vedno, kadar je stopila v sobico, v

otroško sobico, se je vrnila s še bolj žarečimi in srečnimi očmi.

Filip je v mislih še vedno bil na travniku z Mileno in otrokom – ne, še več otrok je bilo, in tako je bil srečen.

Smehljal se je, ko ga je zdravnik stresel za ramo:

“Filip, pridi z menoj.”

Tako čudno so zvenele besede, tako strogo in skoraj strahotno.

“Kaj se je zgodilo?” je Filip končno le spravil iz sebe.

Zdelo se mu je, da so mu ustnice otrpnile in da ni rekel nič.

Še enkrat je rekel, ne, zavpil je s čudnim, drgetajočim glasom:

“Kaj je z mojo Mileno in z otrokom?” pa ni dobil odgovora.

Sledil je zdravnikovim korakom.

Oblekli so mu belo haljo in mu nadeli masko na obraz, potem so ga odvedli v neznansko veliko in razsvetljeno sobo.

Na visoki postelji je ležala Milena.

Bleda, kot so bile bledobebe blazine pod njeno glavo. Njene oči so bile zaprte in ko se ji je približal, je opazil, kako so se njena prsa komaj vidno dvigala.

Zdravnik, ki je stal za njim, mu je rekel:

“Zelo je šibka.”

Potem je počasi nadaljeval:

“Komaj, komaj smo Mileno rešili.

Vendar otrok, sinček, je umrl, predno je bil rojen. Umrl je med porodom.

Poskušali smo vse – a brez uspeha. Žal mi je . . . ” so bile zdravnikove besede, ko je Filip planil k Mileni, se vrgel na njeno vzglavje in jokal, tako strašansko mu je bilo hudo.

“Milena,” je skoraj zarjul Filip, “sinčka sva izgubila, najinega ljubega otroka”.

Filipu so rojile duhovnikove besede iz mladih let:

“Bog te bo kaznoval, če ne boš pravičen in usmiljen!” je kričalo vanj.

Pa Filip je bil dober, prijazen, vedno rad pomagal – “zakaj taka kazen?!” se je spraševal.

Pa ni bilo odgovora. Vse je bilo tiho.

Milena se ni zganila, samo debele solze so ji polzele ena za drugo po licih na blazino. Njena lica so bila upadla, blede, utrujena; zdravnik je potegnil Filipa stran in ga odvedel v vežo.

Skozi pol priprta vrata je videl, kako je ena od sester dvignila majhno, v pleničke zavito telesce. Milena se je dvignila in preseče stegnila roke:

“Moj otrok, moj sinek, dajte mi mojega sinčka” in spet nemočna omahnila na blazine.

Pa Milena ni videla svojega sinka, tudi Filip ne.

Le zakaj jima niso dopustili, da bi videla njunega otroka??

V majhni kapelici v bolnišnici, je na belo pregrnjenem stojalu, stala drobcena, bela, z belimi vrtnicami in nešteti belimi nageljni prekrita krsta.

Pred krsto majhna tablica z napisom: MATEJ TRAVAR in datum prejšnjega dne.

Milena in Filip nista videla nikogar drugega okrog sebe.

Njune oči so bile uprte v krsto pred njima in v goreče svečke ob njej in mali križec ob imenu.

Oče Krmar, mati Fani, Darinka in Jernej, Matevž – vsi so prišli, pa za Mileno in Filipa ni bilo nikogar.

V njuni grozni bolečini sta bila tako sama!

Kljub objemom staršev – tako mrzlo je bilo vse.

Tudi onadva sta umrla. V duši in v srcu.

Umrta sta!

S Filipom sta stala tesno drug ob drugem, brez besed. Vse solze so se že izsušile, samo močno ihtenje je stresalo tišino v kapelici.

Sledila sta mali krsti: počasi in utrujeno sta se premikala za srečo njunih zadnjih mesecev.

Kljub vsem besedam, naj vendar odideta, da ne pomaga prav nič, sta ostala ob majhnem grobku ob cerkvi, dokler ni bil popolnoma zasut. Njune solze so svežile in rosile cvetje na majhni gomili in

neštete svečke so medlo, žalostno brlele v noč, ko sta se napotila domov. V njuno prazno hišico.

V otroško sobo si nista upala vstopiti. Sedela sta v kuhinji in nemo gledala vrata sobice, kjer bi moral biti njun Matej.

Nista prestopila praga v otroško sobo ne drugi dan, ne naslednji, in ne naslednji teden, in ne naslednji mesec.

Filip je na skrivaj hotel odnesti posteljico, pa ga je ustavila Milena: "Filip, pusti in pojdiva stran od tu za nekaj časa, prosim te."

Skušala sta se izogniti pogovoru o Mateju.

Po enem letu je bila njuna edina smer sprehoda še vedno samo do malega Matejevega grobka.

Nič ju ni moglo razveseliti.

Vsi so poskušali: oče, mati, Darinka, Matevž in Jernej.

Nič.

Filip je začel prihajati domov pozno v noč in kot da si nista imela več kaj povedati, Milena in Filip, so minevali tedni in meseci.

Razdalja med njima je bila vedno večja.

Filip je našel nekakšno uteho v kartah. Igrali so vsak večer, pozno v noč.

Ko je prišel domov, Milena ni spregovorila besede.

Vedela je, da mu je hudo. Tudi njej je bilo strašno hudo, pa ju bolečina ni družila, temveč ju je razdvajala; z vsakim dnem sta si bila bolj tuja.

Kvartanje pa je zahtevalo svoje plačilo.

Filip je vedno več kvartal, izgubil službo – nič ga ni več brigalo.

Ni govoril o Materju, zapril se je vase – tudi z Mileno se ni imel kaj pogovarjati.

Milena ga je ogovarjala, pa je samo hladno momljala, da že ve, kaj dela.

Skušala ga je pregovoriti, da bi šla skupaj po pomoč k psihologu, pa jo je Filip trdo odrinil od sebe:

"Saj nisem neumen!"

Nobene toplote in nežnosti ni bilo več med njima.

Potem sta morala prodati hišo – preveč dolgov se je nakopičilo. Filipa ni brigalo popolnoma nič. Smejal se je, ko sta se vselila v majhno stanovanje, brez topline. Potem je začel kritizirati Mileno, da se ne uredi, da ne pripravi dobre večerje, da ni skrbno oblečena in še več.

Milena si je našla delo – čistila je večje hiše in javna stranišča, da sta s Filipom preživela.

Pa je Filip začel jemati tudi denar, kar je Milena zaslužila. Karte so zahtevale svoje in ga vklenile v grozo odvisnosti. Vedno več je zahteval. Še celo pohištvo sta morala prodati.

Nekega zimskega večera, ko je Milena ravno prižgala majhno pečico in se grela ob njej, je nekdo potrkal na vrata.

Osupnila je, ko je zagledala policista.

“Ste vi gospa Travar?”

Milena je tiho odgovorila, da ja.

“Imam žalostno vest. Zgodila se je nesreča. Vaš mož je pijan padel pod avto. Hudo je bil ranjen in na poti v bolnico je umrl.

Moje sožalje.”

Milenin svet se je spet podrl. Sedaj je izgubila še moža.

Filipa so pokopali blizu Mateja. Podrl se je Milenin grad življenja. Njene sanje.

Celo njeno življenje je drvelo pred njenimi očmi: le drobni trenutki sreče – in veliko trpljenja!

. . .

Milena je spet poskušala vstati; se oprijela straniščne školjke, pa jo je močna bolečina v prsih potisnila k tlom.

K tistim umazanim, ostudnim trdim tlom!

Še enkrat se je poskusila dvigniti, ko se je njeno telo krčevito streslo, še zadnji utrip srca in - obstalo.

Za vedno.

Zvečer so jo našli obiskovalci, ko so se vračali iz parka.

Punčka iz cunj

Tamara si je vedno želela otroka.
Dolgo je sanjala in upala.
Po dveh letih sta z Brankom vsa vesela pričakovala njenega prvega otroka.
Še šest mesecev čakanja. To je bilo veselja.

A veselje se je tako kruto končalo tistega meglenega jesenskega jutra: Tamara je izgubila otroka.
Štiri mesece je bil star otročiček, ko ga je njeno telo iztrgalo in odvrгло.
Zakaj?
Toliko vprašanj: zakaj?
Tamara in Branko nista zvedela odgovora.
Poslušala sta medicinske izraze in morda celo kakšen vzrok, pa nista nič slišala.
Življenje je bilo tako kruto zanju.

Tamara je zbolela od vse bolečine.
Bila je še vedno v bolnici.
Iz svoje bluže, katero je raztrgala, si je napravila punčko iz cunj.
Lepo jo je uredila: kapico iz robčka, oblekico iz svilene rute, posteljnino, blazinico in odejico iz bluže . . .
Tamara je punčko – dala ji je ime Maja – hranila, pestovala, jo nosila v naročju, ji pela, jo božala in poljubljala.

Za Tamaro svet okrog nje ni obstojal.
Bila je v svetu, kjer ni slišala niti besed Branka, ne zdravnikov, ne staršev.
Samo z velikimi, začudenimi očmi je gledala vse, ki so prihajali in ji hoteli vzeti Majo..

Po tednih so v bolnici odločili in so Tamaro pustili domov in morda bi jo domače okolje postavilo v resničnost sedanjosti.

Vzeli so ji punčko Majo.

Tamara si je raztrgala obleko in takoj naredila novo punčko.

Vesna ji je dala ime.

Z Vesno sta šli na lepe sprehode v park, ob reki, ki se je leno vijugala mimo parka, na cvetoče travnike in na obronke gozda.

Branko ji je ponoči odvzel Vesno in jo skril, ko je Tamara spala.

Upal je, da bo sedaj že toliko bolje in bo začela premišljevati o resnici.

Tamara je dolgo iskala Vesno, jokala, kričala – vse zaman.

Z nekakšno mrzlico je tedne po tem hitela po ulicah – od trgovine do trgovine in iskala.

Iskala kaj?

V vsako trgovino je vstopila, se ozirala okrog in spet hitro odšla.

Kaj je iskala?

V oddelku za otroke se je ustavila več časa.

Ogledovala je oblekice, kapice, pleničke, igračke . . .

Ni in ni mogla odvrniti oči od vsega ponujenega.

Tamara je nedaleč stran opazila mamico s tremi otroki: morda tri-letna hčerka, morda dve-letni sinček in v vozičku dete.

V roza oblačila oblečen dojenček.

Mamica je imela polne roke dela s sinkom in hčerkico, ki sta nabirala igračke in jih spravljala v veliko torbo.

Oddaljila se je od vozička.

Tamara je izrabila priložnost.

Hitro zgrabila ročaj vozička, obrnila in odhitela iz trgovine.

Dokaj hitro je hodila, a ni hotela izstopati, sicer bi tekla.

Na ulici se je prav kmalu zgubila med množico pešcev na pločniku, nato na vogalu hitro spremenila smer in hitela na vso moč.

Pred seboj v vozičku je imela zaklad.

Majhno dete - punčko.

O, kako je hitela!
Skoraj pritekla je domov.
Nikogar ni bilo v stanovanju.
Kdo pa naj bi bil?!
Branko jo je pred tednom zapustil z besedami:
"Oba potrebujeva čas in bolje je tako."

Prazno stanovanje je zaživelo. Voziček je odpeljala v spalnico.
Deklica je lepo spala – tako mirno in spokojno.

Tamara je odšla v kuhinjo, odprla vrata shrambe in s police vzela
formulo za dojenčka.
Vse je imela pripravljeno: otrok ne bo lačen.
In dudo je tudi pripravila, za vsak slučaj.
In pleničke, in igračke.
Tako skrbno je vse pripravila.

Tamara je v svojem svetu morala videti otroka!
Enostavno je morala!
Neznanska sila jo je ugrabila in morala je imeti pred seboj otroka
– nežen obrazek, lepo polna lička, svetlikajoče očke!
Morala!
Toliko dni je zaman iskala priložnosti.
Sedaj ima pravo punčko. Tako, živo.

Večerilo se je, ko je punčka zajokala. Lačna seveda.
Tamara jo je najprej preoblekla in menjala pleničko.
Punčka se ni zmenila za tuj obraz.
Tamari je pogled uhajal na polico, kjer je že stala steklenička s
hrano, kot je pripravila.
Pridno se je punčka privila v Tamarino naročje. Ni se smehljala, a
njene drobne očke niso kazale strahu.
Lepo je posesala mleko.
Tamari je bilo, kot da je v nebesih.
Ima punčko. Hrani jo, Pestuje. Tako čudovito!

Ni položila punčke nazaj v voziček, ne, pestovala jo je ljubeče na

rokah, hodila počasi po sobi in prižgala radio s pritajeno glasbo.
"Še vedno v nebesih!" je premišljevala.

Nenadoma je bilo na radiu obvestilo, ki jo je prestrašilo:
"Tri mesece staro dekletce je bilo ukradeno iz trgovine, ko je mati za trenutek izpustila ročaj vozička in stekla za hčerko in sinom. Samo par trenutkov!
Otrok v vozičku je izginil.
Nihče ni opazil nič sumljivega.
Veliko mamic nakupuje s svojimi otroki v vozičkih in še več večjih otrok uživa med nešteti igračami," je skoraj hladno dodal napovedovalec.

V naslednjem trenutku je spregovorila mamica po radiu v joku:
"Prosim, lepo prosim, vrnite mojo malo Nikico."
Dalje ni mogla.
Jok jo je premagal.

Tamara je ugasnila radio.
Ni hotela slišati tega.
Sedaj ima svojo punčko, pravo punčko.
'Skrbela bom zanjo. Lepo ji bo pri meni.
Jaz sem vendar njena mamica!'

Tudi po televiziji so povedali o ugrabitvi male Nikice.
"Policija preiskuje v okoliških hišah", so hiteli.
Tamaro ni nič skrbelo.
Saj ima sedaj svojo punčko, pravo punčko.

Tamari srce ni dopustilo, da ne bi povedala nekomu o svoji sreči.

Poklicala je socialno delavko, ki ji je bila kot prava prijateljica in jo je razumela.
Povedala ji je, da otrok ni izginil, ampak ga ima ona, Tamara.
Ona ima malo Nikico.
Samo za en dan in eno noč v življenju je želela preživeti s tistim drobnim, toplim telescem v vozičku poleg njene postelje,

poslušati pritajeno, nežno otrokovo dihanje, ljubke kretnje
obračanja in pobožati drobno glavico.
In dete bi se oprijelo njenega prsta z ročico . . .

En dan in eno noč je želela biti v nebesih, z otrokom!
To je bilo vse, kar si je želela.

Ne dolgo zatem je prispela socialna delavka z mamico.
Srečna mamica ni mogla spustiti iz rok svoje ljubljene Nikice!
Spet ima svojo hčerkico.
Tako jo je bilo strah!

Tamara je povedala, zakaj je to storila.

Dolgo samo molk.
Niso razumeli!
Nihče je ni poslušal.

Tako jo je bolelo – spet so ji vzeli punčko!

Niso razumeli . . .

Nihče je ni hotel ne poslušati, ne razumeti!

Niso razumeli!



VOTLA TEMÀ

Strahotni obup, kjer ni izhoda;
trpljenje v nedogled,
temni dnevi in brezupne noči, brez luči in upanja,
nemoč za korak naprej . . .
Svet ne obstaja več.
Samo tema, niti vere ni več . . .

Majhno je človekovo srce, a neizmerne so njegove želje.

Zlata veriga ne da svobode.

*Kdor te na skrivaj obrekuje, se te boji;
kdor se ti prilizuje, te zaničuje.*

Ljubezen je kot rosa; pade tako na vrtnico kakor na koprivo.

Mož je glava družine, žena pa krona – zlata ali trnova.

Sreča je kakor sonce; ko je najlepša, utone.

Slovenski pregovori

Kako bo jutri? . . .

Že davno je odbila ura polnoč. Vsi so spali mirno in spokojno, samo Olgino srce je burno utripalo. Kljub tabletam, katere ji je vsilil zdravnik, ni mogla zaspiti. Njeno telo je trepetalo. Kakor da bi velikanski kamen z vso svojo težo tičal v njenih prsih in jo dušil . . .

Današnji dogodek je v njeno dušo vlil strah in nezaupanje. Pa tudi v drobno, nedolžno srce devetletnega Petra.

Pred sedmimi leti je Olga postavljala večerjo na mizo.

Bil je čas, da mož pride domov in nič ni omenil, da bi bil pozen.

Peter se je glasno pogovarjal s pisanimi kockami, ki ga niso in niso hotele ubogati.

Tedaj so zvoki na televiziji naznanili posebno novico: močna eksplozija podzemskega plina je povzročila veliko nesrečo v rudniku.

Doslej so utegnili odkopati že dvajset smrtnih žrtev . . .

Ne dolgo potem je zazvonil telefon: o njenem možu - bil je eden od dvajsetih, danes, v rudniku . . .

Leta so minila in Peter je bil ponosen in srečen, ko ga je novi očka prvič peljal s seboj na nogometno tekmo. Vsi njegovi prijatelji so delili srečo z njim, saj zdaj ima tudi on očka, katerega je tako pogrešal.

Novi očka se je z njim pogovarjal o nogometu in vsak večer je skupaj z mamo poslušal njegovo pripovedovanje o velikih ladjah, ki prihajajo v ogromna пристanišča, o nedeljskem pikniku v gozdiču z visokimi drevesi in še o mnogih zanimivih stvareh.

Tako dobro sta se razumela Peter in Roman, da Olgi ni bilo žal, da se je odločila za ponovno poroko. Veliko veselja je prineslo v njihov dom tudi rojstvo Kristine.

Kupili so hišico v predmestju. Za nizkimi griči so se bahavo dvigali pod nebo visoki hribi. Vsak večer, ko je sonce poslalo svoje zadnje žarke čez strehe hiš, so se bohotili v svoji vijoličasti luči.

Ni bilo dolgo, ko je Peter v ulici našel nove prijatelje, in tudi Olga je spregovorila večkrat nekaj besed zdaj z eno, zdaj z drugo sosedo. Ljudje so bili prijazni in življenje je potekalo mirno svojo pot.

Roman se je spremenil, ko je Kristina rasla v prijazno dekletce.

Vsepovsod so mu drobne nožice sledile in vsakemu se je prikupila s svojim čebljanjem.

Zanjo ni bilo nikoli dovolj igrač, katere je nosil domov oče.

Olga je, če je le mogla, dala skrivaj igrače tudi Petru.

Lagala mu je, da je od očka.

Pa ji ni vedno uspelo zakriti vsega.

Vedno je imel Roman Kristino v središču pozornosti, na vprašanje o Petru je hitro in kratko odgovoril, ter se spet popolnoma predal Kristini.

Peter je počasi opazal, kako utrujen je vedno očka, kadar mu je postavljala različna vprašanja in za nogometne tekme ni bilo več časa.

Niti majhne pohvale ni dobil več od njega, ko je že zkoraj pol leta dobival v šoli zastavice za najboljši uspeh v branju in telovadbi.

Samo mati je čutila razočaranje s sinom, ko sta dodajala novo zastavico k drugim na knjižni polici.

A kljub temu je Peter ljubil očeta in Kristinco, pomagal sestrici postavljati hiše iz kock in ji pobiral žogo, ki je odromala predaleč do ceste.

In v Olginem srcu je bilo dovolj ljubezni za oba otroka brez razlike, dovolj ljubezni za vse . . .

Jesensko sonce je nežno božalo s svojimi žarki zakasnele cvetove cinij na vrtu in vrabci so se živahno spreletavali z drevesa na drevo. Tu in tam je padel porumeneli list z breze na mehko travnato blazino.

Olga je rahljala zemljo po cvetličnih gredah, da bodo spomladi nova semena pognala spet lepe cvetove.

Kristina je zamaknjeno prenašala drobne kamenčke iz kupa do sosedove ograje in spet nazaj.

Ravno danes zjutraj, ko je Olga jemala pisma iz nabiralnika, ji je soseda spet potožila, koliko skrbi ima s svojim sinom: ne uboga, odgovarja ji in učiteljica jo je že klicala v šolo, ker je njegova nepazljivost pričela preveč očitno motiti učne ure.

Olga je pomislila na Petra - tako priden je bil, in v srcu ji je srečno pelo: vsaj tega mu Roman ne more očitati . . .

Hitre stopinje in vesel vzklik:

"Mami, glej! . . . " je predramil Olgo iz razmišljanja.

Bil je Peter z novo zastavico, zdaj iz računstva. Bila je drugačna od ostalih in v Petrovih velikih, modrih očeh je mati brala, koliko mu je pomenila ta zastavica.

Samo bežno si je obrisala roke, umazane od prsti, da je pobožala Petra po kodrasti glavi. Saj ji ni bilo treba reči niti besede in Peter je vedel, kako je ponosna nanj.

V obeh srcih je bila želja, da se tudi Roman kmalu vrne z dela in vidi nov uspeh svojega 'sina'.

V tem trenutku je Kristinca glasno zajokala: padla je pri svoji otroški igri. Nerodno se je skušala med ostrim kamenjem spet postaviti na svoje nožice, a brez uspeha.

Peter je skočil k njej in ji pomagal k mami, kjer se je dekletce preplašeno stisnilo v njeno varno naročje.

Še večje solze so ji polzele po okroglih ličkih, ko je zagledala kri na dlaneh in po kolenih.

Samo praske so bile - nič hudega.

Solze so se hitro posušile, ko je obveza pokrila ranjena mesta.

Ne dolgo zatem je zapeljal avto na dvorišče.

"Očka je prišel!" je dejal Peter in srce mu je začelo vznemirjeno utripati.

Bo tudi on vesel zastavice? Ga bo morda danes pohvalil in prijazno pobožal?

Kristina je hotela za njim ponoviti besede v svojem ljubkem otroškem čebljanju.

Kar precej časa je minilo odkar so se zaloputnila vrata avtomobila. Kaj zadržuje Romana, da še ni vstopil?

Končno je prišel. Trdo je zaprl vežna vrata in se z mrkim obrazom ustavil pred družino.

"Peter, pridi sem!" je ostro presekal tišino.

Fant je brez besed ubogal. Neizmeren strah mu je odrevenel roke in noge, ko ga je oče zgrabil in pričel tepsti.

Padalo je po glavi, po hrbtu, kamor je pač priletelo.

"O-o-očka, n-n-nee! . . ." je prestrašeno izjedljal Peter, pa je na sebi začutil še hujše udarce.

Olgi je zastal dih.

"Roman, Roman, kaj se vendar dogaja?"

Ob njenem kriu se je mož zdrznil in izpustil Petra, ki se je onemoglo zgrudil k njegovim nogam.

"Saj mi je soseda povedala," je Roman kot v opravičilo ježno povedal, "kako je Peter podil in porival Kristino, da je padla, potem jo je pa še za lase vlačil okrog . . ."

"To ni res, ni res!" je kriknila presenečena Olga.

"Kristinca je padla na kupu kamenja, ko je Peter prišel iz šole.

On ji je pomagal, bila sem poleg . . ."

Ni dokončala.

Njen pogled je obstal na bledem obrazu otroka, ki je še vedno nepremično ležal ob Romanovih nogah.

Pokleknila je, vzela njegovo glavico v dlani in z grozo v očeh sledila krvi, ki je polzela iz desnega ušesa ter risala rdečo packo na ovratniku srajce.

"Ti ga vedno zagovarjaš, t v o j e g a P e t r a!" je zarohnel Roman. Nikoli ni nič kriv t a t v o j P e t e r . . . " je siknil skozi zobe in se zgubil v kuhinjo.

Niti ni opazil, da Kristina danes ni tekla za njim.

Preplašeno je gledala, kaj se dogaja.

Kri se je zoprn lepila med Olginimi prsti.

Petrove oči so še vedno ostale zaprte in Kristina se je v nepopisnem strahu skrila v Olgino naročje.

Rešilni avto je prispel hitro potem, ko je zdravnik po pregledu spravljajl instrumente v torbo in sočutno razložil Olgi:

“Peter bo verjetno ostal nekaj dni v bolnišnici.

Saj razumete: krvavitev iz ušesa . . .”

Kristina se je še vedno privijala k mami in Roman je srepo gledal na popisane papirje na mizi.

Olga se je borila z grozo nad nezaupanjem:

‘Kako je Roman mogel verjeti sosedi?

Kaj res tako sovraži Petra?

Niti vprašal ni, kaj se je zgodilo - ne nje, ne Petra . . .

Kaj ji ne zaupa?

In Kristina.

Kaj ne bi moralo biti to dekletce med njiima še popolnejša vez zaupanja?’

Olga si ni mogla očitati, da bi delala razliko.

A zakaj je on tako krivično obsodil Petra?

Vedela je: ozdravili bodo Petra.

Enega pa ne morejo storiti niti v bolnišnici: zaceliti globoke rane - razočaranja in strahu v njegovem mladem srcu . . .

“Socialna delavka bo govorila s sosedo in ko se Peter vrne iz bolnišnice, se bomo verjetno videli na sodišču. Storil sem svoje, stvar je sedaj v drugih rokah . . .” je strogo dejal zdravnik in odšel.

Počasi so mamila pričela delovati in Olgino telo se je borilo s strahom, razočaranjem in nezaupanjem.

Se je res prena glila s poroko?

Bi bilo bolje, če bi s Petrom ostala sama?

“Sama s Petrom, sama s Petrom . . .” je odmevalo globoko v njej. Vendar ima tudi Kristinco tako rada.

Enako Peter.

Ko bi Roman vsaj prej vprašal!

Kako naj mu jutri spet zaupa?

Se bo vedno dogajalo, da ne bo verjel ne njej, ne Petru, temveč poslušal druge?

Ali ne bo jutri Peter živel v večnem strahu pred njim?

Ali ni njegovo srce premlado za strah in morda celo sovraštvo?

Ko bi Roman vsaj vprašal! . . .

“Sama s Petrom, sama s Petrom . . .” je spet jeknilo v njej.

Nato se jima je pridružila tudi Kristina.

In Roman?

Kakšno bo prvo srečanje z njim?

Nezaupanje brez vzroka, vanjo, ki mu je žena . . .

Jeza, naglo dejanje brez razsodnosti . . . “O, Roman! . . .”

Jutri?

Kdo bo ob njej jutri?

“Peter, Kristina, Roman - sama s Petrom . . .” je bobnelo iz globine.

Proseče so se dvignile Kristinine rokice in srečna sta jo sprejela v svoje naročje Olga in Peter.

Velike, plahe oči so se vprašujoče uprle v Romana, ko so mamila končno premagala vso odpornost Olginega telesa . . .

Do jutra.

Jutri?

Kdo bo ob njej jutri?

Požrešna obala

Sonce se je počasi pomikalo proti obzorju. Kot velika žareča krogla na nebesnem oboku je sonce obsevalo mogočne skale ob morju. Sončni žarki so se poigrali v valovih morja in val za valom je šumel proti skalnim pečinam. Kot bi valovi hoteli božati ostro skalovje so hiteli obali naproti: tu in tam nežno, zadržano, potem spet vihrajoče in divje.

Kako čudovit je bil razgled po obali in kako bleščeče je bilo morje - razkošje zlate luči in valov.

Sonce se je poslavljal od obale - žarki so se še vedno poigrali v drobnih valovih; svetlikali so se, se skrivali in spet izgubljali in dvigali v naslednjem valu.

Bosi so bili, Edvin, njegova hčerka Klara in Brigita.

Edvin in Brigita sta bila tesno drug ob drugem.

Ali sta vedela za čas?

Sta čutila, kako ju je sonce objemalo?

Valovi so se nagajivo igrali po gležnjih in pesek se jima je izmikal izpod stopal. Edvin je Brigito nežno objel okrog pasu, potem si jo je z obema rokama privil k sebi in naslonila se je nanj.

Šepetal je v njene lase, katere je nežno razčesaval veter.

Brigiti se je zdelo, da ne čuti ničesar več, ne peska, ne valov; vedela je le, da je Edvin tako blizu.

Kot okamenela sta stala tesno skupaj; le veter se je poigral v njunih laseh. Brez besed sta gledala v žarečo kroglo nad obzorjem. Morje je bilo kot en sam žareči plamen; vtapljala sta se v toploto in mir in z vsakim žarkom, ki se je poslovil, sta bili njuni srci združeni močneje.

Spet so hodili po obali, Edvin, Brigita in Klara. Prispeli so do prvih

skal in obuli so si čevlje. Kmalu so se povzpeli na pečine in tu in tam postali.

Brigita je morala spet počakati, pogled se ji je moral za nekaj časa naučiti prelepe luči, ki se je razlivala v zlatem soju po obali.

Tako jo je polnila luč s toploto, nekaj veličastnega je bilo v zlatih žarkih: dajali so ji moč.

Spet ji je zastal korak - ponovno se je zazrla v zlato čudo, ki se je širilo po gladini. Brez besed je sledila Edvinu in Klari, a vedno večja je bila razdalja med njimi.

S svojimi dolgimi koraki se je Edvin dvigal vse višje med skale, kot da se mu mudi do vrha - kot da mora prehiteti sam sebe.

Ali ne vidi več lepote okrog sebe?

Kam se mu tako mudi?

Spet je hitel po skalah, tu in tam postal za trenutek in že ga ni bilo videti. Brigita mu je počasi sledila; skoraj žal ji je bilo, da se je morala premikati.

Najraje bi ostala na mestu in se spojila z čarobnim veličastjem večera.

Vedno bolj strmo je bilo in Edvin je prišel do ogromne skale: kot mogočno obzidje ga je zaustavila. Hodil je ob njej, iskal poti naprej, pa se je moral ustaviti.

Klara, ki je bila že dlje časa ob skali, ga je opazovala.

Kam vendar hoče še iti?

Stena je bila ogromna, le tu in tam majhna odprtina, kot nagajivo okno v drugi zaliv.

Edvin je gledal skozi to okno; mora najti pot naprej.

Vleklo ga je na drugo stran stene, hotel je tja.

Končno je Brigita le prispela do njiju.

Kot otroci so bili pred mogočno skalo, ki se jim je posmehovala. Nemogoče je bilo nadaljevati naprej. Strma pečina na levo, skala z okenci pred njimi in onkraj skale prepad v bučno globino morja.

Brigita je prišla do Edvina: tako blizu, da je začutila njegov dih ko se je obrnil do nje.

Kako lepi so bili trenutki, ki sta jih preživela drug ob drugem.

Nista se dotikala, pa sta bila tako blizu, da sta čutila bližino, tisto moč, ki ju je družila.

Trenutki so spet postajali neskončnost: oči so jima nemo zrle po obali, potem po morju in do zahajajočega sonca na obzorju.

Bila je srečna ob njem; tako lep dan je bil in tako blizu sta si bila.

Klara se jima je približala.

Brigita se je včasih bala, da stoji Klara med njima. Včasih so bili kot družina, drugič spet je nekaj manjkalo: Klara je še vedno bila silno navezana na svojo mamo, na Edvinovo ženo, s katero sta se pred leti ločila.

Brigita je včasih čutila, da Klari ni všeč, da njen oče preživi toliko časa z njo, Brigito.

Dolgo sta se že poznala in lepo sta se razumela. Večkrat sta se pogovarjala o bodočnosti in Brigita mu je zaupala.

Pred tedni ji je zdravnik povedal novico, da je noseča.

Silno je bila vesela, saj si je tako želela otroka, posebno še otroka z njim, z Edvinom.

Skušala je izbrati pravi trenutek, da bi mu povedala.

Vedela je, da je otrok nekaj velikega in povedala mu bo prav danes, tu na obali. Otrok. Imela bosta otroka!

Ko je Edvin bil blizu, jo je polnil s toplino, mogel jo je tako raznežiti.

Toplota se je izlila po skalah - skoraj prazno se je čutila, ko se je odmaknil.

Dolgo ni dejal nič, potem pa se nagnil h Klari in ji pokazal odprtino v skali.

Brez besed je začel s plezanjem do okenca, se zavihtel skozi odprtino in se namestil na ozki skalni polici. Brigita ni mogla reči niti besede - hotela ga je prositi, naj se vendar vrne, pa ni mogla spraviti glasu iz sebe.

Pa Edvin ni odnehal - kljub nevarnosti je nadaljeval po skalni polici.

Nenadoma je zdrsnil, izgubil ravnotežje in padel.
Grozovit krik!
Klara je vprašujoče gledala, kaj bo storila Brigita.
Brigita je zgrabila njegovo nogo, pa ji je ostal v roki le čevelj.
Prsti so se kar sami sklenili v molitev - tako krčevito so bili sklenjeni
v vroči prošnji, da jo je bolelo.
Ne Brigita, ne Klara nista mogli spraviti glasu iz sebe.
Edvin je izginil v valovih globoko pod pečino.

Sonce je še vedno oblivalo morje z zlato lučjo in skale so žarele v
zarji - ali Edvinu ni bil dovolj ta pogled?

Hotel je več: hotel je nevarnosti, hotel je vznemirjenja.
Ni hotel uživati večera ob njej, Brigiti, hotel je naprej - kam?
Korak naprej mu je bil v pogubo - za vedno so ga zagrnili vase
lačni valovi.

Kaj je hotel dokazati?
Padel je, padel tako globoko: v smrt.

Niti vetra ni bilo več, da bi odnašal Brigitine in Klarine prošnje
preko skal - onemele so strmele vanjo.

Še dolgo so bile njune roke sklenjene - Edvina ni bilo več.
Brigita je ostala sama z njegovim otrokom pod srcem.
Edvin še ni niti vedel zanj.
In njegova Klara.

Samo sonce in valovi so ostali.

Po dolgem času iskanja so reševalci - potapljači končno potegnili
Edvinovo truplo iz penečega,
jeznega
oceana.

Spet bo Božič

Vroč poletni dan se je ponujal skozi okno bolniške sobe: sončni žarki so se nagajivo igrali med tankimi zavesami. Soba je bila okusno opremljena in urejena z več slikami po stenah, cvetjem. vrčem mrzle vode na omarici in svetlim pregrinjalom na postelji.

Marinka se je prebudila z žgočo bolečino v grlu.
Ni vedela takoj, kje je, a pogled po sobi jo je vrnil v sedanjost.
Topo se je zagledala v strop: ni hotela sonca, ki se je veselilo zunaj; zanj je bil to dan neizmerne bolečine in razočaranja.

. . .

Kot vsako leto, se je Marinka z veseljem pripravljala za Božič.
Vsa družina: Vlado, njen mož, Janko, Breda in Nataša so ji pomagali pri postavljanju božičnega drevesca.
Še nikoli ni s takim veseljem in srečo pripravljala jaslic kot letos, ko je imela tako lepo presenečenje za moža.
Nocoj, na Sveti večer, ko bosta pred odhodom k polnočnici sedela ob jaslicah in poslušala božične pesmi, mu bo zaupala . . .

Vlado je trdo zaloputnil vrata za seboj po ostrih, odločilnih besedah:
"Tri otroke imava dovolj! Nalašč si to dopustila!
Slišiš, trije so dovolj! Razumeš!?
Uredi pri zdravniku, nočem še enega!
Kaj bom samo za otroke delal!?"

Vladove besede so ji kričale v ušesih, ko se je med mašo ozrla na oltar.
Nocoj, na ta lepi večer, je Vlado odločil, da mora ona postati morilka; morilka tistega drobnega, majhnega življenja, ki se je ravno pričelo v njej.

Morilka!
Morilka!

Nobena prošnja, nobena beseda ni pomagala - toliko je prosila:
"Samo še tega otroka, ki je že v meni, bova imela, potem pa ne več. Samo še tega! . . ."

Nič. Neizprosna usoda!
Mož jeklen!

. . .

Ni bilo več solz - umrle so; z nerojenim življenjem, ki je bilo danes umorjeno, umira tudi njeno srce.

Vrniti so mora domov, k Janku, Bredi in Nataši.

Ter k možu – "dokler naju smrt ne loči!"

Kako naj ona, morilka, nadaljuje srečno družinsko življenje?

Pred očmi so ji vstali otroci, ki so jo ljubili in potrebovali . . . zanje, zanje mora živeti!

Z votlo bolečino v srcu je vstala: cvetje je izgubilo vonj, pesem ptic je umrla, slika na steni je bila oblita s temò - sama pusta, suha praznina; kot pšenični klas po toči: zlomljen, prazen – za vedno prazen.

Nikoli več ne bo rodil sadu . . .

In drugo leto bo spet Božič!



Ugasli lučki

Strašansko je rezala v ušesa sirena rešilnega avta na poti v bolnico.
Triletni fantek je prenehal dihati že eno minuto od tega.
Voznik je drvel; sodelavec je dajal umetno dihanje.
Počakal je za trenutek in prisluhnil otrokovemu srcu.
Nič.
Ne giba, ne diha, ne utripa.

V bolnici je bila celotna ekipa pripravljena za vsak korak – strah se
je stopnjeval z vsako sekundo, ker še niso prispeli z rešilcem.
Zdravnik je z očmi štel sekunde na veliki stenski uri.
Kako dolgo je še mogoče?
Bo mogel rešiti otroka?
Že je videl pred seboj kodrasto otroško glavico, nežen obrazek –
pa rešilca še vedno ni bilo.
Končno so le prispeli z dragocenim otrokom: nič diha, nič utripa!

Zdravnik in pomočniki so delali skupno kot en sam gib: vse
organizirano, tekoče, pogumno.
Že tri minute brez diha!
Neutrudljivo so poskušali – že tri minute in pol brez diha!
Življenje mladega dečka se je iztekalo.
Ni se mogel posloviti od ljubeče mamice,
ne smejočega očka, ne klepetave sestrice . . .
Njegov obrazek, še vedno topel in nežen, je negibno ležal na
blazini.
Njegovo telesce se je stisnilo v rjuhe in prstki so onemogli obležali
na odeji.
Zdravnik še ni odnehal.
Še enkrat - je ponovno poskušal – ni mogel priznati, da se je
življenje končalo za ubogega fantiča.

Bolničarke in drugi zdravniki so samo še nemo strmeli vanj, ko ni in ni mogel odnehati z umetnim dihanjem.

Še enkrat – nič.

Prepozno!

Vedel je – razum mu je kričal, da je prepozno, srce pa mu je dajalo novega poguma, upanje in moči, da je nadaljeval.

Ni vedel za čas – vedel je le, da mu srce narekuje, naj poskusi znova, dokler ima moč.

Še ima moč, ogromno moči, da poskusi še enkrat!

In še enkrat.

In še enkrat.

Zaman!

Smrt je premagala življenje – fantkovo telesce je negibno zrlo vanj.

Drobno srce je že zdavnaj prenehalo biti – oči so ugasnile.

Tisti drobni, svetli lučki, ki sta tako razveselili mamico;

tisti drobni, svetli lučki, ki sta se pogovarjali z očkom;

tisti drobni, svetli lučki, ki sta vzpodbujali sestrico ob njeni igri . . .

Tisti drobni, svetli lučki, ki sta vsako jutro pozdravili sonce, in dež,

in igračke,

in prijatelje,

in veter,

in noč, in spet jutro . . .

Drobni, svetli lučki sta – ugasnili.

Za vedno.

Vsi so obnemeli.

Niso mogli verjeti – vsa pomoč – vse upanje – zaman!



UPANJE

V temi obupa, bolezni, žalosti je upanje žarek svetlobe,
žarek, ki dviga dušo v luč poguma,
veselja, sreče in uspeha.

Spoznanje, da je nad nami nekaj velikega,
v kar lahko zaupamo:
v ljubezen,
ki daje moč, toplo vez in opogumlja za korak naprej.

Začetek je najpomembnejši del dela.

Plato

*Čudovita stvar, da se lahko tiho zrušite . . .
in lahko začnete znova kolikokrat želite.*

Sanober Khan

Potovanje tisoč kilometrov se začne s prvim korakom.

Lao Tzu

Nikoli ni prepozno, da bi bili tisto, kar bi lahko bili.

George Eliot

Pomembno priznanje

Na mini koncertu klasične glasbe se Božena dolgočasi: se preseda, si stalno popravlja lase, ogleduje svoje živo rdeče polakirane nohte, premika noge in nestrpno čaka, kdaj bo njen spremljevalec, Jurij, opazil njeno razkošno obleko, katero si je kupila prav za danes.

Pa je skoraj ni pogledal.

Ves je bil ujet v skladbo Antonija Vivaldija. Čudovito!

Med odmorom sta odšla iz dvorane in se pridružila množici obiskovalcev v prostoru, kjer so prodajali pijačo in prigrizek.

Božena ni bila zadovoljna, da ji Jurij ni kazal dovolj pozornosti.

Provokativno se je obračala in se premikala med moškimi obiskovalci, se jim smehljala in jih ogovarjala.

Jurij se ni zanimal za to. Poznal jo je in je vedel, da potrebuje veliko moške pozornosti in da ga draži.

Vseeno mu je bilo.

Kljub temu, da sta mu brat in oče prigovarjala, da je čas, da si najde družico, se ni odločil.

Božena?

Delala sta v istem podjetju.

Božena kot urednica publikacij, Jurij kot geolog in inženir črpalnih strojev.

Oče in brat sta ga opozarjala, da se jima Božena ne zdi primerna.

Nista ji zaupala.

A vedno je v pravem času končala vsa poročila, tudi njegova.

Bila je zelo zapeljiva, simpatična, izredno lepo urejena in oblečena, dober govornik na sestankih . . .

Juriju je manjkalo tisto najbolj pomembno zanj: zaupanje in morda tudi zaljubljenost.

Včasih se mu je zdelo, da ji dela krivico.

Božena je hotela od njega več: več časa, pozornosti, daril, pa ljubezni, katere ji ni in ni mogel dati.

Prepričeval je sam sebe, da je dobro ob sebi imeti partnerja, ki se razume na njegovo delo.

Nekateri so ju prav zato že gledali kot bodoči zakonski par.

Pa, Jurij se ni mogel odločiti.

Ne danes. In ne prihodnji teden.

Ozrl se je za Boženo. Skoraj v objemu je bila z nekim črnolasim moškim – zelo sta bila zatopljena v pogovor in kretnje.

Je Jurij postal ljubosumen?

Ne!

Spoznawal je Boženin pravi obraz.

Pustil ju je ne da bi se še enkrat ozrl v njuno smer se je napotil proti drugi strani.

Zazvonil je zvonec in počasi so se vsi začeli pomikati v koncertno dvorano.

Tudi Jurij.

Božena ni sledila.

Juriju je bilo vseeno. Želel je uživati drugi del koncerta. Sebastijan Bach je bil na programu. Čudovito.

Pianistka in viloinisti so že začeli z igranjem ko Božene še vedno ni bilo.

‘Saj je vseeno’, si je mislil Jurij.

Pred njim je sedelo dekle, ki je zamaknjeno uživalo glasbo: skoraj ni dihala.

Jurij je opazoval njen obraz. Prijazen nasmeh je opazil od strani in na njenem obrazu je bral izraz spoštovanja in lepote glasbe.

Mora, mora jo spoznati.

Ni se zavedal, da so njegov pogled in njegove misli bile ob dekletu.

Po končanem koncertu so se obiskovalci zadržali v prostoru, kjer so še vedno prodajali pijačo, nudili razne spominke in CDje koncertne glasbe.

Pomaknil se je do prodajalne mize prav v trenutku, ko je pristopilo dekle iz dvorane.

Mora, mora jo ogovoriti in vedeti njeno ime si je v mislih govoril. Pa je prav kmalu imel to priložnost.

Skoraj oba naenkrat sta izbrala določeni CD: Vivaldi – *Pomladna simfonija*.

Nasmehnila sta se drug drugemu in Jurij je spoznal, da mora zvedeti več o njej.

“Oprostite, kot vidite, želiva oba enak CD, ne?”

Dekle se je prijazno nasmehnilo z besedami:

“Tako čudovita glasba.”

Jurij je pohitel in ponudil roko v pozdrav:

“Jurij. Uživam v klasični glasbi.”

Dekle se je nasmehnilo in ponudilo svojo roko: “Jaz tudi. Teja.”

Jurij ni mogel umakniti pogleda od Teje: simpatično dekle, s prijaznim nasmeškom, elegantno oblečeno.

Tudi Teja je opazovala Jurija: visok, temne lase in oči, prijeten glas in topel stisk roke.

Jurij je Tejo povabil na kozarec soka – ni odklonila.

Prijetno sta kramljala, ko je naenkrat stopila pred Jurija Božena in začela kričati:

“Jurij, kaj nisva midva prišla skupaj? Pa me tako pustiš in se prilizuješ tej, tej . . . polizani punc. Kaj se ti je zavrtilo? Pojdiva domov!!”

Jurij je zbral svoje misli in besede ter rekel Boženi:

“Ves večer si imela polno oboževalcev in na koncertu te v drugem delu ni bilo . . . Saj te ne zanima klasična glasba in”, je poudaril, “nisva par, ne pozabi tega.

Veliko moške družbe si imela ves večer . . . ”

Dalje ni prišel z besedo.

Božena je dvignila roko in ga udarila po licu, potem pa še Tejo:

“Ja, prešuštnica, dovolj imam tega!” in zakričala Teji:

“Poberi se, Jurij je moj!” je grozila Teji, kateri je zaprlo sapo.

Jurij je zardel in hitro in ostro odgovoril:

“Božena, oprosti, a takega vedenja ne prenašam. Ne ponižuj ne mene, ne Teje, in navsezadnje – sebe! Najbolje je, da greš s svojimi oboževalci in me pustiš pri miru.”

Kako je Božena skočila vanj!

Pa Tejo je napadla, jo lasala in kričala nanjo:

“Vlačuga! Jurij je moj!”

Jurij je Boženo trdo prijel za roko, rekel Teji naj malo počaka in odvedel histerično Boženo do vrat, kjer je spoznala, da misli resno.

Juriju se je skoraj zasmilila – tako se je ponižala!

Teja je hitela z opravičilom, da mora domov in sta se na kratko z Jurijem poslovila.

Povabil jo je na ponovno srečanje in bil prijetno presenečen, ko je privolila:

“V sredo imam prost dan, pa se lahko srečava ob kavici pred popoldansko predstavo, ob 12. uri, če bi bilo to primerno?”

Juriju je zaigralo srce:

“Seveda, z veseljem. V sredo ob 12. uri se vidiva. Vesel sem srečanja in hvala, Teja. Lahko noč!” in že je Teja odhitela.

Jurij je hotel še dodati par besed, pa se je že izgubila v množici pred vrati.

Prijetno toplo je bilo Juriju pri srcu, ko si je v mislih načrtoval srečanje s Tejo naslednjo sredo.

V ponedeljek v službi je Jurij pregledoval svoje poročilo, ko ga je premotila Božena. Vsa prijazna se mu je prilizovala, kako natančen je in njegovo poročilo bo prava senzacija, mu je zagotavljala.

Kot sodelavki in urednici je Jurij Boženi zaupal.

Pregledala sta nekaj besedila in že so Jurija poklicali na nujni sestanek.

Vlekle so se ure – ne, dnevi do srede, ko sta se Teja in Jurij domenila za srečanje.

Končno: sredo.

Dopoldne se je Juriju vleklo kot megla v jeseni.

Pa je le dočakal in odhitel: na srečanje s Tejo.

Teje še ni bilo in Jurij se je skoraj bal, da se je premislila, ko jo je zagledal pri vhodu.

Nasmejana ga je pozdravila in mu podala roko.

Njeno roko je hotel zadržati v svoji, pa ga je prehitela z besedami: "Jurij, bova kavico? Ob strani imajo mizice za dva in lepim razgledom na park."

Sedla sta in pogovor je bil poln navdušenja za zadnji koncert prejšnjo soboto.

Jurij je bil vesel, da je Teja tako ljubila klasično glasbo.

In o svojem ovčarju Princu mu je povedala, kako vsak dan tečeta v parku in če le moreta, tudi na obali.

Princ je tako užival na obali v pesku in med valovi.

Kar prehitro je minil čas. Prijetno je bilo kramljati s Tejo.

In koncert: Rachmaninof. Dinamična glasba. Oba vesela v občudovanju glasbe.

Pred odhodom domov, ponovno Jurijevo povabilo.

Z veseljem se je Teja odločila, da bo šla z njim na naslednjo predstavo – dramo tokrat.

Jurij je skoraj poskočil od veselja. Dogovorila sta se, da pride do njenega stanovanja in se bosta skupaj odpeljala v gledališko dvorano.

Spet so se Juriju dnevi zdeli tako dolgi.

Zakopal se je v svoje delo in raziskovanje.

Prav prejšnji dan je dobil poročila, kako je njegov poskus uspel, ko so uporabili njegovo napravo pri vrtanju za podtalno vodo.

Ves vesel je dodal najvažnejše v svoje poročilo in odnesel Boženi, da uskladi z ostalim besedilom in pripravi za tisk.

Božena, vsa sladka in ponižna, mu je obljubila, da bo kakor hitro bo mogoče, pripravila poročilo za tisk.

Ko je brala njegovo besedilo, je spoznala, da je dodal nove zanimivosti.

Enkratno. Povsem nekaj novega.

Vesela je bila prijateljstva z Jurijem, njegovega uspešnega raziskovanja in tudi, da mu je uspelo in so končna poročila zelo pozitivna.

Jurij ji je zaupal.

Božena pa je imela svoj načrt: v svoji jezi in razočaranju je načrtovala nekaj zelo podlega.

Jurij je Teji telefoniral in ji povedal, da ima lepo novico in bi ji rad takoj povedal.

Prišel je do njenega doma in skoraj ni mogel dihati, tako je bil navdušen.

V eni sapi ji je povedal, da je njegov preizkus uspel in da so ga sodelavci vzpodbujali, da prijavi rezultat in iznajdbo ter prosi za patent v Ženevo.

Že dopoldne je to uredil.

Vsi so mu čestitali.

Ni pa vedel, da Božena ni bila zadovoljna.

Jurij ni vedel, kako je Božena našla Tejin naslov – ko Jurija ni bilo v pisarni, je pregledala njegov naslovnik in našla naslov.

Odpravila se je k Teji in ji zagrozila, naj pusti Jurija pri miru, ker se bosta onadva, Božena in Jurij, v kratkem poročila.

In to še ni bilo vse.

Kot urednica je Božena brala Jurijevo poročilo.

Slaven bo postal. To se bosta lepo imela, je premišljevala.

Njen načrt je bil vedno jasnejši: znebiti se mora Teje!

Naslednji dan so Juriju sodelavci pokazali članek v časopisu.

Bilo je njegovo poročilo.

“Kaj?!”

Na koncu članka je bila podpisana Božena.

Kako podlo! Kako je mogla?!

Ko se je postavil pred Boženo, jezen kot le kaj, se je ona izgovorila, da ji je Teja dala navodila – njegova navodila – in ji naročila, da

ima ona, Božena, vso pravno moč, da napoti poročilo v tisk in se podpiše s svojim imenom.

V Juriju je zavrelo:

“Kaj? Ona?! Teja ga je izdala?!”

Ni pa videl, kako se je Božena zadovoljno smehljala za njegovim hrbtom.

Hitro se je odpravil do Tejinega stanovanja in jo srečal na stopnicah, prav ko sta se s Princem vrnila s teka.

Bruhnilo je iz njega, ko je napadal Tejo z žalivkami, gnusom in grožnjami.

Ni poslušal, kaj je hotela reči.

Strašna jeza in razočaranje v njem sta ga popolnoma prevzela.

Pa je spet poskusila Teja, a je Jurij že jezno odšel.

Drugi dan se mu je Božena hlinila in ga tolažila:

“Vidiš, Jurij, kako te je Teja izdala. Nesramnica! Jaz sem poštena.

Midva se že dolgo dobro pozna. Saj veš, kako te imam rada.

In ti tudi mene.”

Približala se mu je in ga hotela objeti in poljubiti.

Jurij se je umaknil.

Jurij je o članku povedal očetu in bratu.

Nista mu verjela, dokler jima ni pokazal časopisa.

Jasno sta videla, da je na koncu njegovega poročila bila res podpisana Božena. Strašno!

In opozorila sta Jurija, da bo imel zagotovo problem zaradi patenta, ker je iznajdba v javnosti.

Pa so Juriju v službi kolegi svetovali, naj zbere vse svoje rezultate, vsa besedila, vse podatke in naj vpraša za nasvet advokata.

Tako je tudi storil.

Advokat, starejši gospod, je odkimaval z glavo, potem pa se v hipu glasno zasmel.

“Poglejte, Jurij, tukaj so vsi vaši podatki, tabele in rezultati. V časopisu ni tega. Samo poročilo in podpis urednice.

Imamo upanje. Vključiti pa bo potrebno policijo.”

Jurij je bil hvaležen advokatu.

Skupaj sta vse pripravila in kmalu je detektiv potrkal na vrata.

Natančno je pregledal vse dokumente.

Z veselim obrazom je pokazal Juriju document z datumom, v katerem je on, Jurij, že pred dnevi opisal celotni postopek poskusa in ga poslal v Ženevo.

Juriju se je kar samo smejalo.

Torej ni prepozno.

Detektiv mu je pojasnil, da bo trajalo nekaj časa da vse uredi in pripravi poročilo in dokumentira vse podatke.

Tedaj je Jurija udarilo kot strela.

Božena!

Samo ona je vedela določene stvari o njegovem raziskovanju.

Šel je do njene pisarne in jo iznenadil, ko se je pogovarjala s prijateljico po telefonu in ji govorila, da se bosta z Jurijem prav kmalu poročila, ker ga je njegova zaljubljena punca, ki je norela za njim, izdala.

In on vse verjame njej, Boženi.

“Kako sem ga ujela! . . . ”

Več Božena ni imela možnosti reči, ko ji je Jurij vzel slušalko iz rok. Ni vedela, da je slišal vse njene besede.

Juriju je postalo skoraj slabo – podla ženska.

Prav sta imela oče in brat: njej ni pametno zaupati!

Z očmi, ki so izražale jezo in gnus, se je še enkrat ozrl po Boženi:

“Poberi svoje stvari in od danes nimaš več službenega mesta tukaj.

Govori svoje laži komu drugemu!”

Vedel je, da je zmagal.

Vedel je, da je Božena spoznala, da je vse slišal.

Kot pretepen pes je zbrala svoje stvari in hotela neopazno oditi.

Pa se to ni zgodilo.

Vsa vrata pisarn so se odprla, ko je odhajala, in vsi so jo gledali – izdajalko, lažnivko!

Jurija so vsi kolegi spoštovali in ona ga je izdala!
Kako nizko.

Hitro se je odpravil do Teje, ji vse povedal, dokazal, in se ji opravičil,
da jo je sumil.

Lepi dnevi so sledili za oba: Tejo in Jurija: toliko ljubezni.
Sledila je zaroka,
še isto leto poroka
in veselo skupno življenje.

Jurij je že po dveh mesecih iz Ženeve prejel patentno številko in
medaljo za svoj izum.

Jurij je že po dveh mesecih
iz Ženeve prejel patentno številko in medaljo
za svoj izum.



Božično kosilo

Albina se je pred meseci ločila od moža.
Računi so se kopičili in komaj je zmagovala.
Zgodilo se je, da ji je socialna delavka prinesla košarico hrane – otroci tega niso zvedeli.
Pa so ji ljudje govorili: "Vrni se k možu – le zakaj si odšla?"
Pa Albina se ni mogla vrniti k možu.
Preveč je bolelo in ji jemalo moči in volje: vse manipulacije, psovke, ponižanja, pijača in laži . . . Preveč!

Bližal se je božični čas.
Ni imela lepih spominov na praznike.
Sama je bila največkrat z otroki – možu so bili pomembni prijatelji v gostilni.
Pa so otroci spraševali, zakaj oče ne praznuje z njimi?
Zakaj oče ni z njimi in se veseli, kadar odpirajo svoja darilca?
Skrbno so vsi trije pripravili darilca tudi za očeta: ljubki izdelki iz kartona, pa šolske fotografije v pobarvanih okvirčkih in drugič spet majhno torbico za kovance.

A darilca so največkrat samevala pod božičnim drevescem.
Saj očeta za praznike ni bilo velikokrat doma.

Albina je za otroke skušala najti izgovore zakaj ga ni . . .
Potem je prenehala tudi z izgovori, saj otroci niso bili več majhni in ji najbrž niso več verjeli.
Bili pa so razočarani, da z očetom niso skupaj praznovali.
Ni ga bilo doma.

Po letih se je Albina odločila: ne more več tako naprej.
Preveč bolečine se je nakopičilo.

Spet se je bližal Božič.
Skrbelo jo je, kako bo zmogla.
Otrokom ni mogla odreči, da ne bi praznovali praznika letos z očetom in njegovo novo ženo.
Albina je bila na božični dan sama.
Zazvonil je telefon.
Barbara, znanka, ji je želela lepe praznike in jo vprašala, kako bo praznovala.
Albina ni takoj povedala, potem pa ji je zaupala, da bo sama.

Barbara, z bolnim možem Frankom in hčerko Terezo, so Albino povabili na božično kosilo.
In Albina je povabilo sprejela.
Pripravila je škatlo čokolade in majhen šopek cvetja z vrta in se odpeljala.

Lepo so Albino sprejeli pri Barbari.
Albina se je ponudila za pomoč pri kuhanju, pa je Barbara potrdila, da je Tereza že vse pripravila.

V jedilnici ni bilo velike, slavnostno okrašene mize kot pri mnogih v tem času.

Ne.

Miza se ni šibila s težo dobrot.

Na mizi, v sredini, je bila svečka, okrašena z bršljanom in rdeči servietki ob vsakem krožniku s priborom.

Sedli so za mizo.

Tereza je prinesla krožnik z mesom in zelenjavo, in skledo solate.

Na krožniku so bili trije koščki mesa: za Barbaro, za Franka in za Terezo.

Pa niso pozabili Albine!

Od vsakega kosa mesa je Frank odrezal košček in ga položil na Albinin krožnik.

Svoj obrok so delili z Albino.

Tudi oni niso imeli veliko. Revna družina.

A tako bogati v srcu!

Razdelili so si tudi zelenjavo in solato.

Vsak je popil kozarec vode in bili so zadovoljni: praznovali so skupaj.

Da, od svojih ust so si odtrgali, da so delili z Albino.

Pravi Kristjani.

Pa niso bili katoličani. Ne. Bili so Evangelisti.

Albini je skoraj zastalo srce, ko je Frank zaupal, da zdravniki nimajo več veliko upanja zanj – imel je raka in bolezen je hitro napredovala. Najbrž bo to njegov zadnji Božič!

In Barbara je z objemom povedala veliko:

“Tako delimo naše srce, to moremo – želimo ti pokazati, da ti želimo srečo, zdravje, razumevanje in spoštovanje.

Nimamo veliko, a kar imamo, radi delimo s teboj, Albina . . .”

Ob božičnem drevescu je stala druga svečka in posedli so na tla in se zastrli v plamen. Vsak s svojimi željami in pričakovanji.

Zapeli so nekaj božičnih pesmi.

Potem je Tereza povedala, da vsako leto povabijo k božičnemu kosilu nekoga, ki bi bil sam na ta dan in ga sprejmejo v svojo sredo, da delijo z njim lepe prazni;ne trenutke.

Albina jim je bila zelo hvaležna in ob povratku domov je premišljevala:

‘Tako dobri ljudje! Delijo še tisto malo, kar imajo, z drugimi!’

Lep je bil ta Božič za Albino – obogatili so jo - in z radostjo in hvaležnostjo v srcu je pričakovala, da so se vrnili kasneje popoldne njeni otroci.

Tako poln dan.

Čez dva meseca je Barbara telefonirala, da je Frank umrl.

Res je bil ta Božič zanj zadnji v njegovem življenju.

Albina je odšla k Barbari in Terezi – poslovili so se od Franka.

Tako dobri ljudje!
Delili so še tisto malo, kar so imeli, z drugimi!

Želja

Blaž in Justina sta živela v predmestju, v majhni hiši blizu parka. Kot večina družin v tem delu mesta sta urejevala vrt oba; oba hodila v službo zjutraj in se vračala proti večeru domov. Njuni otroci, kot otroci sosedov, so bili v varstvu ali pa nekateri že v šoli.

Čas pred šolo jim je bil odmerjen za hitro oblačenje, zajtrk in potem z mamo do varstva, kjer so čakali trenutka, ko je bilo treba v šolo.

Čas po šoli je bil podoben jutru, samo da se ni tako mudilo.

Počasi so tekli trenutki, ko so otroci čakali na starše, da so jih ti prišli iskat po službi in odpeljali domov.

Toliko veselih dogodkov iz šole je zgubilo medtem svoj pomen in mama je hitela z večerjo, pa ni imela časa poslušati; in oče je moral popraviti zdaj to, zdaj ono, prebrati časopis in povedati mami o dnevu na delu . . .

Že zdavnaj je minila večerja, ko so otroci imeli priložnost stisniti se k mami, ji povedati o prijateljih, o učiteljici, ki se je ujezila, in o nalogi, ki bi bila lahko lepše napisana.

Tako so potekali tedni, meseci.

Oba, Blaž in Justina sta se trudila pripraviti lep dom in ponosna sta bila na svoje otroke, ki so bili tako pridni. Ni se bilo treba jeziti nanje zjutraj, ko so vstajali.

Posebno Boštjan je bil hitro pripravljen, čeprav mu je bilo komaj osem let. Mlajši, Niko, pa tudi ni hotel zaostati in za svojih šest let je bil kar samostojen - še oblačil se je sam, samo vezalke na čevljih so mu delale preglavice.

Boštjana je prav ta njegova samostojnost nekam čudno potisnila vase. Niko se je vedno zvečer privil k mami, ali sedel očetu na kolena, Boštjan pa je ostal sam. Še ko je pripovedoval o šoli in prijateljih, se je le tu in tam stisnil k mami; a z očetom sta se pogovarjala brez dotika, brez roke na ramenih.

Včasih je Boštjan opazoval Nika, s kakšno ljubkostjo se je znal pridobiti mami ali očetu. Tudi če je bil kaznovan, se je Boštjanu zdelo, da je Nika manj bolelo kot njega.

Bil je zadnji dan šole. Oba, Boštjan in Niko, sta bila zjutraj še bolj hitra: danes imajo v njuni šoli posebno slavlje in Božiček bo obiskal otroke, so jim povedale učiteljice.

V šoli pa je imelo vodstvo nemalo skrbi: oče, ki je obljubil, da bo prišel in prevzel vlogo Božička, je sporočil, da mu je žal, vendar ne more priti pravočasno.

Na šoli je bil samo ravnatelj moški, druge so bile učiteljice, in otrokom ne bi bilo težko uganiti, kdo je za belo brado in v rdečem suknjiču.

Ravnatelj je telefoniral tolikim očetom domov, pa zaman.

Vsi starši so bili po službah - ni vedel kaj.

Pa je poskušal spet. Tokrat se je moški glas oglasil po telefonu.

Bil je Blaž.

Ravnatelj je razložil, kaj se je zgodilo, in Blaž - dobre volje, saj danes je praznoval s prijatelji svojo povišano plačo - je obljubil, da pride takoj v šolo.

Čuden občutek je imel, ko se je oblačil v rdeče hlače, suknjič in škornje, in si nadel lasuljo, brke in belo brado ter kapo. Nikoli še ni naredil kaj takega! - vedno je bil kdo drugi.

Učiteljice so mu pomagale in mu dajale poguma. Hitro se je navadil na tradicionalni "ho - ho - ho!" in že si je nadel vrečo, polno bonbonov in majhnih zavitkov.

Prostor je bil do zadnjega kotička napolnjen z nasmejanimi in veselimi obrazi - koliko navdušenja, ko je Blaž vstopil.

Hitro je povedal otrokom, da jih je obiskal s posebnim veseljem,

ker je zvedel, kako so pridni in ubogljivi, kako vedno pomagajo drug drugemu - in že je bil čas razdeliti bonbone ter povprašati otroke po njihovih posebnih željah.

Otroci so drug za drugim prihajali k njemu: nekateri so hitro sedli na njegova kolena, drugi so obstali tik pred njim in mu podali roko. Poslušal je njihove želje:

da bi šli na dolg izlet,

da bi dobili novo televizijo, ker se je stara pokvarila in ne morejo gledati risank,

da bi dobili nov avto,

da bi dobili psička in - deklince seveda –

da bi dobile nove, velike punčke, z lepimi oblekicami in očmi, ki se zapirajo . . .

Niko je prišel k Blažu - v njegovih očeh je bilo toliko sijaja prave otroške sreče in hitro je povedal svojo željo: da bi dobil velik avto.

Kmalu zatem je prišel na vrsto Boštjan, nasmejan in poln upanja. Počasi se mu je približal in dolgo ni dejal nič.

Potem pa je sedel čisto blizu k Blažu, se stisnil k njemu in skoraj pošepetal, če sme povedati svojo željo samo njemu, da drugi ne bodo slišali.

Blaž je pokimal s svojo belo brado in potegnil Boštjana na svoja kolena. Fantek se ga je skoraj oklenil okrog vratu in dejal tiho:

”Želim, tako si želim, da bi lahko sedel očku takole na kolenih in da bi me očka lepo objel in me pohvalil, ko sem priden . . .”

Blažu je za hip zastalo srce - stisnilo ga je v grlu, da ni mogel do besede.

’Saj to je vendar njegov sin!

Lastni sin ga prosi, da bi smel sedeti na njegovih kolenih! . . .’

V hipu je skušal prinesiti v spomin dan, ko je Boštjana zadnjič potrepljal po ramenih ali ga pobožal po kuštravi glavi - ni vedel, kdaj bi to bilo . . .

Ali je mogoče, da je bil tako zaverovan vase, v svoj zaslužek, v -, v
-, v - kdo ve kaj, da je sina porinil od sebe?

Boštjan že dolgo ni bil več na njegovih kolenih, ko se Blaž še
vedno ni mogel od srca nasmejati ljubkim otrokom, ki so še vedno
prihajali k njemu in mu zaupali svoje želje.

Kako je Blaža grizla vest, da je svojemu lastnemu otroku ukradel
nekaj, kar mu je bilo najdražje –
da je lastnemu otroku zatajil nežnost,
toploto, varnost . . . vse, kar mu on, oče pomeni . . .

Ali je mogoče,
da je bil tako zaverovan vase,
v svoj zaslužek, v -, v -, v -
kdo ve kaj . . .

Posebni plesi

Mama Maruša je rada plesala.

Družina – otroci, skrbi in delo na majhnem posestvu ji niso dali priložnosti za to veselje.

Mož ni imel ne časa, ne veselja do plesa. Vedno je rekel, da ima dve levi nogi, ali pa, da ga otiščanci, katere je imenoval 'kurja očesa', preveč bolijo, da bi obul druge čevlje, razen dve številki prevelikih škornjev.

A Maruša je plesala v srcu vsakokrat, ko je poslušala poskočno glasbo, sanjala o hitrih polkah in valčkih.

Že v mladosti je rada plesala s starejšim bratom, ki je dobro vodil in sta kar redno plesala zvečer ob poslušanju radia – seveda samo, če sta končala vsa opravila na posestvu s konjem, dvema kravama, kokošmi in kričavim petelinom ter prašičkom. Potem še opravila na polju: sejanje, žetev, njivica, seno, pospravljanje pridelkov.

Maruša se je najbolj razveselila strica Jakoba, ki je igral diatonično harmoniko ob vsakem obisku in ju ni pustil sedeti.

Celo Marušina mama se je včasih zavrtela in oče je udarjal ob tla, da se je kar treslo.

Sin Miha in in hčerka Nuša sta najprej gledala to veselje, potem sta se tudi priključila.

. . .

Po mnogih letih je Nuša, že vdova, bila povabljen na prireditev, kjer je bil na programu tudi ples. Ansambel je igral različne melodije in peli so.

Nuša od moževe smrti še ni plesala.

Ostala je sama pri lepo urejeni mizi – vsi drugi so se že vrteli na plesišču.

Ni pričakovala, da bi jo kdo od plesalcev prosil za ples.

V spominu se je povrnila v čas, ko sta z možem veliko plesala.

In tudi z Mihom, mlajšim bratom.

Opazovala je ljudi, ki so ostali pri mizah: veliko žensk, največ starejših – mogoče so bile vdove kot ona. Sedele so in si ogledovale vrtinec plesalcev na plesišču.

Nuša je opazila nepremične obraze teh žensk: a nekatere so se celo gibale v ritmu glasbe, druge so igrale s prsti po mizi ali udarjale z nogo ob tla.

Nihče jih ni vprašal za ples.

Nušo je presenetil par na plesišču: dve starejši ženski sta plesali v paru – skupaj.

Koraki ene ženske so bili moški koraki in drža tudi; druga kot vse ženske, je imela roko na njeni rami.

Nihče ju ni obsojal – nič ni bilo čudno.

Najbrž obe vdovi.

Nuša ju je opazovala: veselih obrazov sta tudi peli.

Nedaleč stran je pri eni od miz sedelo še več samih žensk.

Ena od njih je vstala, stopila k Nuši in jo plaho vprašala, če bi tudi ona morda rada plesala.

Najprej je bila presenečena, potem je prikimala in vstala.

Ženska je poznala korake, a plesati moško stran ji ni bilo namenjeno.

Opravičila se je Nuši za stopanje na njene prste in Nuša je prevzela mesto voditelja pri plesu.

Poznala je korake, saj so jih že v šoli pri telovadbi učili osnove večine korakov, tudi moško stran in vodenje.

Presenečena nad svojim spominom, sta zaplesali.

Glasba je pripomogla k veselemu in živahnemu razpoloženju plesalcev in plesalk: polke, hitri valček in tudi počasne melodije.

Med počitkom ansambla so Nušo prosile tudi druge ženske, ki so sedele ob mizi.

“Samo en ples ali dva, to je vse, kar mi bodo noge dovolile,” so prosile.

Večer je hitro minil. Nuša je bila skoraj ves čas na plesišču s samotnimi ženami.

Le malokdo jih je povabil na plesišče.

Vesela je bila, da so se žene lahko malo razveselile s plesom in se vključile v splošno zabavo in veselje.

Med plesom je premišljevala, kako njena, od dela in boleznih utrjena mama Maruša, ni mogla plesati.

Pa tako rada je vedno plesala!

Nuši je pred očmi stala podoba njene mame: utrjena, v bolečinah, pa je želela plesati.

Kot v sanjah je Nuša zavrtela ‘mamo’ ob melodiji polke in njene oči so žarele, ko sta plesali valček.

‘Mama’ se je opotekla in se ustavila.

Tudi njena podoba je izginila.

Tako živo je videla mamo pred seboj – pa je bilo vse samo privid, želja, sen . . .

Ples z mamo, ki je že toliko let počivala v grobu.

Ples se je zaključil in Nušo je opomnil zadnji trenutek - spomin na ples z mamo.

Ples se je zaključil in Nušo je opomnil zadnji trenutek -
spomin na ples z mamo.

STARBURST

Short stories

The Stars formed a circle and in the middle, we dance.

Rumi

The meteoric shower, a transient rain of meteors, is also known as The Tears of St Lawrence, which appears at random locations in the Northern sky between 10th and 13th August every year. St Lawrence is one of the dozens of leaders of the Catholic Church whose execution was ordered by the Roman Emperor Valerian. The spears of light symbolise the tears of the tortured soul.

MORNING LIGHT

Morning light is the wonderful time to feel the enchanting calm,
pride of achievement, and feeling of gratitude.
To dream of life, hope, joy.
It feels like the light is burning,
whispering of a good life;
a place, where even the birds fly higher,
flowers have stronger scent
and the sky is more blue.

Only in the darkness can you see the stars. Martin Luther King Jr.

*Hold your head high, stick your chest out. You can make it.
It gets dark sometimes, but morning comes.
Keep hope alive.* Jesse Jackson

Wherever you go, go with all your heart. Confucius

*Every great dream begins with a dreamer.
Always remember,
you have within you the strength, the patience,
and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.*
Harriet Tubman

Mine is the Sunlight

"Hello, sunshine!" Tom greeted the bright sunrays shining through the window.

Tom got out of bed quite early every morning. He loved the sunrises. He became quite annoyed if he slept in and missed one, but that hardly ever happened.

This room of the aged care home was on the second floor and looking through the window you could see over the tree crowns. Good views over the park, with lush grass and many different trees and hills in the distance.

Tom was happy here.

Tom and Luke shared this large room - both widowers (it was cheaper that way). Simple furnishings comprised two beds, two bedside cabinets, two dressers for clothing, two lockers, two chairs - all in matching light wood. By the window, a small couch, and separate entry to the shared bathroom which contained a shower and basin, some shelves and a mirror.

Tom was 84 years old and Luke 87.

They certainly were an interesting pair of characters:

Tom was very religious, and carried his well-used Bible with him all day. Luke was an explosive man, who often showed displays of his temper if things were not to his liking.

Gosh, how many times had he broken the leg of his, or Tom's chair, by picking it up and crashing it hard to the floor.

They were definitely not friends! They tolerated each other.

Their beds could not have been any further apart, and were separated by a curtain.

There was one table in the room – to be shared for reading the newspaper, book, magazine, or perhaps for writing.

That was interesting! The two of them were very particular about their spaces; equal space, equal time, if of course, they looked at the clock at all.

Tom could not understand why Luke never spoke. Tom talked to him, telling him about his life, but Luke just looked at him, opened his mouth a few times, waved his hand and kept continuing with whatever he was doing.

After many attempts to start conversation yet receiving no response, Tom gave up.

Fortunately Tom had his Bible.

He read aloud every day - different sections, not too long - but read he did!

His eyes were still quite good and he hardly ever put his glasses on.

Then he stepped to the window, looking at the morning sunlight seeping through the thin curtains, and started his day with both hands outstretched:

"God, you are great! At times I see you. You smile. Thank you for the sunshine – now it is mine! The bright sunlight!

See, I prayed already.

Luke is angry with me, but will not tell me why.

God, you are so good to me.

You gave me sunshine again this morning".

He went on and on, every day, with his monologue with God:

"Yesterday you were angry. What have I done? Don't you like my prayers?

I praise you.

I love you.

I trust you.

You save me every day from the food they want me to swallow: the tough steak, the vegies, potato, and salad.

How can I eat all that?
I would like a glass of beer. O, yes!
And you save me from that cold shower.
Why can they not use warmer water when they help with my shower? Brrr! So cold!

God, you can do miracles.
Do some of them here, right? I know you can.
I like you. I praise you.
God, bless me again today, please.
But, do you think you could get me out of here sometimes?
I need some peace.
I would like to walk in the park across the road."
Tom paused for a moment, gathering his thoughts, obviously wanting to get something off his chest.
"Luke does not say a word. He stomps around the room, his lips moving, but saying nothing. Nothing!
He drives me mad sometimes. Crazy.
But, God, it is good he does not talk: at least I do not have to listen to him all day.
But I do talk to him.
It is funny how angry he gets sometimes.
I said nothing wrong. I asked him a question.
But he rolls his eyes and moves his lips. That is all."

After a while, Tom started again.
"Lord, I keep my Bible with me all the time.
See, I have it right here in my hand.
Did you hear me reading before?
I like the part where you made the blind person see.
God, why don't you make Luke talk?
You can do that.
God, make him talk.
Please!

See, sometimes he also looks at his magazine, full of pictures of half naked girls.

Ooops! God, I looked at them too – nice girls - not for long though!

One day I hid his magazine and Luke went wild, hitting and kicking everything, lifting his arms as if he was going to hit me.

I was quite scared.

God, you helped me to decide to 'find' his magazine – I knew where it was – and then he calmed down.

God, what is wrong with him?

You can help him!

Give him words.

Make him speak.

I am sure he would like that.

I beg you, God, do give him words, please.

And God, tomorrow I might tell you, and beg you all over again, possibly with the same words"

Tom finally admitted, he is quite forgetful.

He always thought his memory was always perfect!

Next day Tom was at the window again, speaking to God:

"See, sometimes I forget.

I have forgotten what I told you yesterday, and definitely do not know what I told you last week, or who knows when!

Tomorrow, I will pray all over again. Or even tell you more.

I know you hear me. I know. You can help me.

See, God, every morning I thank you because you give me sunshine.

Mine is the sunshine!

Every morning.

Well, it was yesterday, and last week. I think.

I do not remember last week.

Did you give me sunshine last week?

I think you did!

See, God, you are my sunshine.

You listen to me.

You love me.

You always have time for silly old me.

You do not think I am silly, I know that.

You love me.

You always listen to me.

Yes, mine is the sunshine.

God, you are my sunshine, and I am happy.

Can you see that? Of course you can.

You are my sunshine!

But you do not come to see Luke. Or do you?

I have not seen Luke talking to you.

And you don't tell Luke when I am angry with him and say bad words. Do you?

I can trust you.

Gosh, God, I told you that Luke sometimes wets his pants.

But the toilet is so close.

He has false teeth, just like me.

They look funny at night in the glasses with water!

Even Luke laughs at them".

Some time passed before Tom started talking again:

"Guess what?

Sometimes Luke flushes some food down the toilet.

And tablets – he takes them out of his mouth, pretending he is coughing, but then later he throws them in the basin in our room.

God, why do we have a basin in our room?

We have a bathroom.

See, God, sometimes I spit out my tablets too."

Tom whispered:

"I have to tell you this quietly when the nurse is talking to Luke.

I do it too.

I like that. It is fun. Gosh, they taste so awful!

And they get stuck in my throat, and I cannot swallow.

God, I know you can see all that.

Why do you allow it?

Not once did you tell me not to do it!

Maybe I would listen to you? See, you are my friend.

O, the nurse came in again.

Why are they whispering?

I would like to know what they are saying.
Don't you think it is rude of them, whispering so I do not know
what they are talking about?
God, are they talking about me?"

Tom moved closer to the window.
"Oho, the sun has moved.
The shadows of the trees are much longer now.
Must be afternoon.
Thank you God, for listening.
Can I count on you for tomorrow?
Let's make an appointment, God. Tomorrow, at sunrise, yes?"

Tom closed his Bible and put it in the drawer.
He had had a good day and he smiled.

He said it again:
"I wish Luke could talk!"
Then he became angry and shouted:
"God, don't go yet!
You have not done the miracle. Make Luke talk, please!"

Luke was looking at Tom as if he wanted to know something.
The curtains were being drawn for the evening, and meals were
brought.
Luke and Tom ate in silence.
Another day had come and gone.

Tomorrow will be another day for both Tom and Luke. Luke will
most probably be angry with Tom, and Tom will talk to God all day.

Luke has a few times asked for a transfer.
He found it very hard listening to Tom all day.
At times he found it quite annoying.
Then other times he didn't mind at all and says:
"The poor man".
You see, Tom could not hear him begging him to speak softer.

Tom could not hear at all!
The hearing aid was of no use any more.
He had no hearing for years, but does not know about it.
Or perhaps they told him a few years ago, but his memory is not
the best and he most probably does not remember being told.

He is happy with his Bible, and his conversations with God but
Tom's words are very loud, all day long, every day.

Yes, Tom feels sorry for Luke because he cannot talk and he only
moves his lips.

But Luke speaks well, and is getting quite tired and agitated
listening to Tom all the time.
If he says something, Tom does not hear him anyway.

Tom is smiling: he has his sunshine every morning, his Bible, and
his talk with God.
He is happy.
Very important.

And Luke kept listening patiently to Tom all the time, day after
day.

Tom is smiling: he has his sunshine every morning,
his Bible, and his talk with God.

And Luke kept listening patiently to Tom
all the time,
day after day.

Gift of the Morning

The baby died.

There are some women who seem to be forever denied that important 'something' that would fulfill their lives.

Take Leonie, for example. All Leonie wanted was to be a mother. Leonie had miscarriages, one after other; four of them.

She lost hope of ever becoming a mother.

Her husband Benjamin was almost angry with her:

"Why aren't you looking after yourself? Are you not being careful?"

Leonie was very disappointed.

After five long years she became pregnant again.

Morning sickness was not very pleasant, but she kept 'marching on' as she called it.

After the third month of pregnancy she was not nauseated any more.

Fourth month brought her a scare with her kidney infection, but everything turned out okay.

Four and a half months now: Leonie felt a little flutter in her tummy. Was it real?

Has she imagined it?

No, it was real!

It happened again today. Stronger this time.

The baby moved.

She could not stop smiling.

A baby. Finally!

In her tummy!

Leone almost shouted with joy: "The baby is moving. The baby is alive!"

With Benjamin they looked at baby names, for a boy and for a girl: If a boy, then Christian; if a girl Adriana.

Everything was prepared: the layette so carefully prepared with anticipation and love: washed and ironed.

Leonie checked the descriptions of stages of pregnancy.

It was so fascinating, so unreal.

She read it so many times and looked at the diagrams and pictures she felt she knew it all by heart.

And, it was real.

Her/their baby - alive!

For Leonie it was a miracle. For Benjamin as well.

How perfect!

Baby was born premature.

A healthy boy, but weak: the gift of this morning – a very special March morning.

Baby Christian was put into the humidity crib, under constant observation and special care.

In the Intensive care ward the Perspex humidity crib was next to many different machines. Switches everywhere.

Lights flashing at the controls. Constant ticking.

And soft classical music.

The doctor and nurses were so caring.

They cared for their little treasure, their baby, with tender care and love.

Leonie expressed the milk every day and it was saved in special little containers ready for Christian.

After six weeks of intensive care, Leonie and Benjamin were called by doctor.

They were so scared.

"What if something is wrong?"

They had seen Christian the day before; he seemed okay.

What if he is worse?
So many questions in their heads. So much fear!
Unanswered questions.

They entered doctor's room, all nervous and worried.
The doctor shook their hands and went right to the point, seeing their worried, pale faces:
"Christian is fine. You can take him home today. Congratulations!"
And he led them to the nursery.
They knew the way so well: the warm intensive care room, where Christian was peacefully sleeping in his humidity crib with a tiny white bonnet and a nappy.
Some of the tubes had been removed already.
Leonie and Benjamin, both had tears running down their smiling faces -
tears of joy!

They embraced each other, and the doctor, thanking him.
He looked after Christian all the time – his special baby he called him.
And they thanked pediatric nurses as well. All so kind and caring.

Today was the happiest day of their life:
The gift of this morning – a very special morning:
Christian was able to go home with them - their faces were glowing with special joy.
The best day! A memorable day.

Now they are three: Father Benjamin, Mother Leonie and son Christian.
A real, whole family.
After so many years of hoping.

Now it is real.
Christian is home with them!
Now they are a family.

Now they are a family.



I Wondered about the Woman Hobbling towards Me . . .

I wondered about the woman hobbling towards me in the twilight. She was obviously in pain; should I offer assistance, or should I employ caution, and keep moving?

No, I cannot ignore her; I need to at least ask if she would accept my assistance.

She could not see me coming closer. Her back, especially her neck, seemed badly twisted and bent forward so much, preventing her from looking up and ahead.

Her head was turned to the ground, and she was leaning heavily on a walking stick. With every step she swayed and stopped, proof that great pain was affecting her every move. She could not straighten her neck so that she could proudly hold her head in a natural fashion. No, her injury, or illness, prevented her from doing that.

She kept hobbling, slowly on the uneven footpath, carefully.

For every step she hesitated before she made the move. Then she made a step or two forward, with obvious difficulty.

I found it very hard just looking at her. How could she cope?

The constant staring at the ground, not being able to look ahead, or up!

I have made a decision.

I collected my courage and stopped in front of her:

"Hello, lady, may I offer some assistance?"

She stopped abruptly, swayed dangerously close to fall, then leaned harder on her stick, answered proudly:

"Thank you, I am fine."

She paused for a while, then continued.

"But I would like to ask a small favour – I know the sun is not shining yet. I can see no shadow of a tree on the footpath, but I can hear its branches moving in the wind. What tree is it? I cannot look up to see the branches, or recognize the trunk. Please, tell me, what tree is it? I have not walked this way for years and I can smell the freshness of the green crown."

I gently put my hand on her shoulder reassuring her, telling her my name was Tom, and that the tree is a red maple, with a rich, bright green crown, and the little prickly fruits just starting to form. She swayed, nearly losing her balance, extending her hand for a handshake.

Of course I shook her hand and she quietly said: "I am Hazel. Nice to meet you Tom."

I asked her where she needed to go as I had time and could accompany her, so she could reach the destination safely.

Hazel tried to look up, but the pain twisted her even more.

She nearly screamed.

"I will go with you a while, if you would like that?" I quickly added, trying to stabilize her.

I kept looking at her twisted and bent neck, turned to the ground, like she was carrying an enormous burden on her shoulders.

Hazel just squeezed my hand and whispered:

"Thank you. I will appreciate that. See, I used to take my little dog Benny for a walk every day, but now I cannot take care of him very much. I can feed him, that is all. And he loves walking. Poor Benny; he is at home crying."

My heart stopped. The woman, with so much love for nature, and life, could hardly walk herself. There was no way she could be taking a lively little dog for a walk as well.

"Mrs Hazel, I live close by and at least twice a week I can walk with you in the morning, and we can take Benny along.

Would you like that?"

Hazel's vice trembled, sobbing: "I w-would like that very much, Tom. Thank you."

As she squeezed Tom's hand like a cramp closed her palm, looking at his hand, her tears falling on it.

"Tom, I would like to look into your eyes. You are a kind man. I would like to see the shine in your eyes. I have not looked into the eyes of a person for a long time. I miss that so much.

I do not care about the pain. I am so used to the pain.

I miss very much seeing people's eyes, the warmth in them, the light, the sparkle when they are happy, or to see a tear drop . . .

Only children's eyes I can see, but sometimes they are afraid of me.

Or to see the smile on friends' faces; or to give them a kiss on their cheeks . . ."

She abruptly stopped. Her shoulders were shaking with the sobbing.

"Mrs Hazel, it is OK. I will tell you of the things around us while we walk. And I will bring a mirror as well, so you could see some of the images of your nature above, love and appreciate so much, without causing you the pain. In the mirror you will be able to see the sky, the clouds, the treetops and church towers. You will see."

My voice was breaking with emotion.

Hazel knew, and squeezed my hand again.

"Do not feel sorry for me. I am used to the pain.

I can cope with that pain. But the pain in my heart I find unbearable.

Tom, your offer, being like my eyes, for mine are forever turned to the ground, is the biggest present I have received in years.

Thank you, Tom . . ."

The crying stopped her words.

But it was not a cry of self-pity – no, it was a cry of joy.

Since that day, we walked at least twice a week in the mornings. Hazel enjoyed the nature around us, the colour of the sunrise, the birds on the branches – she could hear them, but, as a lover of life, she wanted to know what they looked like and what they were doing. And Benny – he ran and jumped and wagged his tail

I felt good - this warmth spreading all over my body:
I felt richer for the little help and kindness I offered Hazel.
I realized how fortunate I was, as were so many others around us.
Hazel missed most looking into people's eyes, to see happiness,
the bright sparks, the sorrow, reflected stars, and tears.
For so long she could not see that.
I wished, I could help her somehow, but her illness forced her
head, and her eyes, forever to the ground.
No cure was available.
Her spine was permanently disfigured.

It was sad that Hazel had died, but I felt good.
I have at least brightened a few of her last days so
she could silently,
for the last time,
say goodbye to the beauty of the nature
she loved, respected and
appreciated so much.

Valentine's Day

Not many people at the train station this time of midmorning. An elderly lady, Mrs Kent; a gentleman, elderly also, with a hat which has seen the passing of many years, a young girl with long dark hair who was often looking at her watch; a young man with two children at his side, who were not really listening to their father's warning and kept moving too close to the edge.

There was also a girl, Lisa, about 20, dressed in worn jeans and T-shirt, and further away another young man, Cameron, in shorts, bright coloured T-shirt, and tattoos on both hands.

On a bench there was a girl, her head bent, looking at a nicely wrapped present in her lap. She kept talking to herself, so quietly that no one could hear her properly.

Mrs Kent, was shuffling from one foot to another, very agitated. Just looking at the young people waiting at the station made her angry. She was dressed quite elegantly.

She usually did not have to catch public transport.

'How could her friend change her mind so quickly and decide that she could not drive her to the appointment. She always had driven her in the past.'

Then she looked at the young girl at the station: no care taken about her clothing: torn jeans, no colour coordination.

Mrs Kent spoke to herself:

'What inappropriate attire!. God knows where she is going! Possibly meeting more young people, smoking pot, drinking, painting graffiti on the walls. Good for nothing! They probably steal as well . . .'

She smoothed her expensive, elegant outfit.

The girl, Lisa, with a mobile phone in her hand was texting a

message. Nothing around her was of any interest to her. She had a very athletic figure, slim waist, long legs, nicely tanned arms and face. The heavy makeup and long eyelashes - you could see they were fake. Her lips were tightly pressed together, as if she was angry or very worried.

Her long hair was softly moving in a breeze.

Every so often she looked at the guy with the tattoos. Strange, her brother had tattoos and she liked his, but this guy really annoyed her with his brightly coloured, screaming patterns. It felt like anger was creeping into her whole being.

Anger, so much anger.

She used to know someone with screaming pictures like this guy. He was not nice at all.

He made her feel worthless; not appreciated at all.

The young man, Cameron, his brightly coloured shorts - the waist nearly on his hips, and his T-shirt in screaming colours, that your eyes were hurting just looking at him. The runners were in neon colours, too; shoelaces not done up at all. He was nervously moving, swearing loudly and swapping his mobile phone from hand to hand, shaking it and cursing it.

Time was not passing fast enough for him and he was getting more and more unsettled. And the girl on the bench made him more annoyed with her talking to whatever she had in her lap.

"I wish she would stop!"

Again he tried to call a number on the phone and has angrily thrown the phone on the ground when he got no response, where it almost shattered.

He kicked it and swore again.

Time: 10.15.

Announcement on the loudspeaker:

"The train scheduled to arrive in 5 minutes has been cancelled due to engine problems. Next train to Richmond will be an express train, not stopping at Mont Albert, Surrey Hills, Chatham, Canterbury and East Camberwell stations. We apologise for the inconvenience.

Next train stopping all station will be in 55 minutes. Thank you.”
The girl sitting with a present in her hand started crying loud:
“N-no, n-no, please, not t-t-that! I n-need to be at East Camberwell
in 25 minutes. Oh, N-no!!!” she cried.

Mrs Kent, Lisa and Cameron turned and watched her and said to each other. “Well,” they thought, “we will all be late, so!”

But the girl cried louder and louder, clutching the carefully wrapped present to her chest.

Lisa stepped closer to her, put a hand on her shoulder and tried to comfort her.

Her hand was pushed away and the girl started to scream:

“I w-w-will miss him! My p-p-phone is flat, I c-c-can not call him and t-t-tell him. H-he will not wait for me,” and cried even louder.

Cameron stepped closer and almost angrily asked: “Why all the screaming?”

Then he looked into girl’s face and knew right away: she was a Downs’ Syndrome victim. Images of his cousin flooded his memory!

At first he was paralysed, not knowing where to start to calm her. He found no words – he just kept looking at her sad, crying face and trembling shoulders.

Lisa noticed it too.

Then Mrs Kent looked in the girl’s direction, mumbling to herself: O,mhm.”

Lisa and Cameron looked at each other:

“We will help you. I have phone and if you give me the number, we will call him and you can speak to him and tell him.

Would you trust us with his number?”

The girl’s face lit up. “W-w-would you – w-w-would you really do that f-f-for me?” she said tears still running down her face.

“See, I have a V-v-valentine’s present for him and I know w-w-what I will s-s-say to him. He is a g-g-great boyfriend. I am so l-l-lucky.” She looked in her bag for a notebook and showed them the phone number.

Not long after, the boy shyly answered the call even when seeing a strange number.

The girl quickly said: "Hi, Tony, my p-p-phone is flat and my train is not running. T-t-two kind young p-p-people, girl and a boy are h-h-helping me. I w-w-will be late, but I am c-c-coming. I love you v-v-vvery m-m-much!

"Okey," Tony said and the girl returned the phone.

She nearly jumped with joy.

All passengers looked at the happy girl, who loudly recited her Valentine's verse for Tony:

"You are m-m-my s-s-sunshine, Tony.

You m-m-make me feel s-s-special.

W-w-when I am w-w-with you, I feel p-p-perfect. I feel b-b-beautiful.

I l-l-love you, T-t-tony!"

Lisa and Cameron congratulated her for the verse. They were happy that they had helped her.

The warmth they felt in their hearts made them smile.

Mrs Kent wished she could disappear.

She felt bad for accusing Lisa and Cameron:

'Bad for me, that those two were the ones who helped the girl, not me! How embarrassing for me!

And I am the politician's wife!' she said to herself.

'How wrong was I !' she admitted and with a lowered head moved as far as she could down the platform, giving herself an excuse:

'How was I to know?!

Gosh, if I was helping, I would call the TV and God, how good would that be for me and my husband's image!'

The girl was so happy:

"W-w-when I am w-w-with you,

I feel p-p-perfect.

I feel b-b-beautiful."

DARK SHADOWS

Life brings us many dark, gloomy days and shadows . . .
Symbolically, the shadow is also the darker side
of the personality:
hatred, anger, shame, guilt, fear, jealousy, envy, egoism . . .

*Humans have a light side and a dark side, and it's up to us to choose
which way we're going to live our lives. Even if you start out on the dark
side, it doesn't mean you have to continue your journey that way.
You always have time to turn it around.* Taraji P. Henson

*Everything has a shadow-side. In my opinion,
that is what makes life interesting.* Anne Fortier, Juliet

*Everyone thinks of changing the world,
but no one thinks of changing himself.* Leo Tolstoy

*The ego has learned to be very clever in order to survive. It is capable
of resorting to any lengths or use of self-deception and camouflage.*
David R. Hawkins

*We humans are capable of immense love and sensitivity but we have
also been capable of greed, hatred, brutality, rape, murder and war.*
David R. Hawkins

No! Not Her!

Deidre was walking down the street deep in thoughts. Every so often she looked at the shop windows which displayed everything from cosmetics to clothing and kitchenware, but she was not buying anything today. She was rushing to an appointment. She had applied for a new job. Wow! It sounded so great when it was explained to her, and she could hardly wait to meet the team. It sounded like a promotion from her current position. Great!

Then she heard a voice:

"Deidre, look at you! Have not seen you for years!"

Deidre recognized the voice.

What she would have given not to meet this person!

But the girl on the other side was already rushing across the busy street:

"Deidre, it has been way too long. How are you?" and extended her arms for an embrace.

Deidre froze:

'Not her! Not that woman!' she said through clenched teeth.

Just the very sight of her gave her cold shivers, and a strange cramps in her stomach.

That person; that Joyce!

Deidre voiced in her mind: 'She was such a hypocrite; a liar, a thief, a manipulator, always the only one being right, and just, and correct! Hyena! She has hurt me so much!'

Joyce ran across the street expecting a warm embrace, or at least a friendly handshake.

It did not happen.

Deidre could not listen all over again to her lies, conniving twists to her friendliness and hopes for friendly greeting between them.

Joyce's hand was still outstretched, but Deidre could not move. All the memories flooded back. She stopped in her step in silence.

Joyce lied so many times, pushing herself to the front, stealing her ideas and plans. Good plans for the community, for the youth, for children and the elderly.

Joyce, whom Deidre trusted with some of her plans, twisted the truth and presented all Deidre's ideas as her own. And she was commended for brilliant work helping the Shire Council to introduce a positive, brand new approach to the projects.

Deidre's anger grew: the pain, the disappointment . . . She wanted to slap Joyce across her lying face, but stopped at the last moment.

Deidre's arm still extended towards Joyce, but it was stopped as if immobilized by a heavy weight:

'No, I will not give her the satisfaction of knowing, how much she has hurt me,' Deidre promised herself.

Instead, she stepped forward, shook Joyce's hand and congratulated her:

"Nice to see you again, Joyce."

She continued, with an icy, controlled voice:

"Congratulations for all your excellent, profitable and unique ideas for the projects! You definitely deserve a medal!"

Joyce looked down to the ground, shaking all over, when she admitted:

"Deidre, I am so sorry I stole your ideas, but the Council realized I had no clue how to execute any of your brilliant plans, and they

dismissed me. I am so embarrassed and ashamed!
Forgive me!
I thought you will come too and we would work together!"

But the anger and pain were too great for Deidre.
She lost so much because of this woman: the dignity,
the drive to innovativeness,
like her spirit was killed,
and the plans for the good of the Council – all lost . . .

She just turned away and said:
"Enjoy your glory, your lies, your fame!" and walked off with her
head held high.

She breathed in the fresh air, finally the blood running through her
veins again and no more cramps in her stomach.

Deidre just turned away and said:
"Enjoy your glory, your lies, your fame!"
and walked off
with her head
held high.

An Issue with Confession

According to the Church law:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

'Minor or venial sins can be confessed directly to God, but for grave or mortal sins, which crush the spiritual life out of the soul, God has instituted a different means for obtaining forgiveness—the sacrament known popularly as confession, penance, or reconciliation ...

It is not true that for the Catholic the mere "telling of one's sins" suffices to obtain their forgiveness. Without sincere sorrow and purpose of amendment, confession avails nothing, the pronouncement of absolution is of no effect, and the guilt of the sinner is greater than before . . . '

Carmen found it very hard to understand a particular person - a very religious one she thought - who was in church almost every day, went to confession at least once a month, praying every day, she said.

Carmen found Bridget's life as a Christian to be very strange, almost superficial.

The way Carmen understood confession was to be sorry for the sins, and then make a promise not to sin again; a promise to better yourself, and not to sin any more.

And yet, day after day, even right after the confession, the woman Bridget, whom she saw in church, did it all over again: gossiping, every day.

She was speaking to women and men, lecturing them, pointing to them how they should live their lives as a better Christians.

But what about her?! . . . What about Bridget?
Is she making fun of God all the time?
Or she thinks, even believes, maybe, that she is God, or a Saint?
But she is so "good", so sure of her own beliefs and words,
lecturing everyone about doing things right; about doing the
honorable thing; about the importance of just living, and, of
course, the importance of self-sacrifice and kindness.

What about the proverb: "Listen to what I say, but do not watch
what I do!"
Then another one: "Let me be the example!?"

Yes, we all hear over and over again, how to be a good Christian.
Then you see the other side:
the naked truth, the ugliness, no morals . . .
'Many people find that the act of confession is useful in moving
past mistakes from the past.
It is also a useful way to begin a commitment to a better life in the
future.
It must also be remembered that confession is not only
forgiveness of sins, but a decision not to sin further!'

For Bridget, who studied the religion, Carmen found very hard,
that her understanding of a sin, and the confession, was so shallow,
non-existent. It affects the whole faith issue!
"Yes, mock confession somehow makes a mockery of faith!"

But, do we find it easy to look in the mirror? To see ourselves?

O, Bridget!

One day she will see – herself too.



Naomi and Her War

Naomi's father committed suicide. It took Naomi's family members a few days to find his body.

"God, where are you? How could you permit it?"

Naomi was talking to herself:

'Yes, I believe in God, in something Great, much bigger than us, humans; much greater we could ever imagine.

I trust in God's goodness and justice.

Where are you now, God?'

Committing suicide in a small village was almost a crime.

The body was not allowed to be buried in the consecrated part of the cemetery.

The priest had pleaded with the Archdioceses to get a partial permission for a burial.

The rules for the full Catholic funeral were adapted for Naomi's father.

At least that!

But the priest was only allowed to come to the church wall, not to the family home, as it was the custom for all the funerals in the village.

The villagers attending the funeral were judging the children terribly, like they have done something very wrong.

What have they done?

It was not their fault their father could not cope with his condition - the future with no limbs!

The villagers pointed at the family members, whispering and judging them.

Judging them very harshly.

Why?

Naomi was talking to herself again:

'Yes, I trust in God, His goodness and justice – but only sometimes! Not now!'

She lost the trust and respect for the clergy in general, and in the Church, and its teaching as a religious institution.

The questions were in Naomi's mind always.

Finally, years later, she found courage to confront an elderly priest. She had a few questions for him.

Naomi asked:

"Father, if after death, the person's body is of no importance, but only the soul is important, why is it so important, where the body is buried?

You preach, how important a soul is - soul's life.

The body, you say at the funeral ceremony:

'remember, man, you are dust and you return to dust – dust to dust, ashes to ashes'!

The soul does not get buried.

It rises to eternal life.

Bible teaches: the soul is important after death, not body.

Why so important where the body is buried, if the body is of no importance at all?!"

Naomi continued:

"I have read the Bible, but could not find anywhere, that the body of a person, who could not cope, cannot be buried in the consecrated part of the cemetery.

Who's rule and decision is that?"

The priest thought for a while and the only answer given to Naomi was:

"I cannot answer your question".

After a while he continued:

"The only thing I can say is, there were fewer suicides because of the rule we talk about in the Church."

Naomi could not stop:

"But what about peoples' judgment? What have we done?
All the pointing at us, gossiping?
Whose following was that?
We were like outcasts in the village!"

The priest's response was:

"I can only apologise. I have not introduced the rules.
I can see you point.
But I am only one man in an enormous institution with many harsh,
but wise rules."

Naomi continued:

"But, what did the Church achieve by pushing the idea of the
punishing God – we, the children, were punished and scorned by
the villagers?
What has the Church achieved with that? The suffering?
Was that the aim?"

The priest turned away and left, giving Naomi no answers.

Yes, he just turned away.

More like - running away.

Naomi still questions the rules and laws of the Church.

Still looking for answers.

Yes, Naomi believes in God, in something greater than us, but not
in the clergy, or the Church.

She found her own, good, kind, God.

Do you wonder why?

She found her own, good, kind, God.
Do you wonder why?



Ring of Fire

Summer in Victoria, Australia.

A very, very hot and dry summer.

The Grant family was preparing: clearing dry pieces of tree branches, removing the spent gum bark hanging from the tree and those lying on the ground: cutting the dry small bushes which had died in the heat, raking the yellow dry grass away from the fences and the house.

The home had four large water tanks.

The next job was hosing the roofs of the house, sheds, and stables and filling the spouting with as much water as possible.

They were lucky with water. All their tanks were almost full of the Liquid Safety.

Rick has almost completed the hosing of the house when a high wind brought some glowing pieces of twigs.

Rick panicked.

Will he be fast enough?

Wife Isabella, son Owen and his wife June – will they be strong enough to stand the heat and the horrible danger of nearing flames?

They all wore safe woollen jumpers, beanies, long trousers, boots. With all the hoses in use, they were now spraying the edges of their property, fearing the fast rolling smoke and fire and the wind! O, the wind! So strong, so fast and furious!

They knew they had lots of water, but if the fires come fast, they will destroy everything they had. Themselves included.

They could hear the roar of distant distraction nearing: frightening, hot, dark, rolling towards their home.

Above the treetops they could see the horrible dark mass of smoke, dense as a curtain, nearing.

It was a bluish, purple, grey mass with fire visible at some opening and the flames were so high.

Coming closer very, very fast.

The noise itself was frightening. The roaring, cracking of the trees exploding, and big thumps as they fell.

Occasionally a frightened animal ran to the clearing.

They had no time to move. Their senses were tricked with the speed of the fire front.

But, where could they find safety?

Fire all around!

It was nearing so fast, so dangerously fast!

The bushes at the edges of the forest were ablaze already. Then the fruit trees in the orchard – fruit, peaches and early pears, smelling sweet as they were being roasted and burned.

The fire touched the barn and engulfed it in flames.

They all came with hoses to save it.

No luck.

Within seconds there was no more barn, and no more sheds, and no more spare wood at the side.

The house was still safe.

So far.

The animals in the stables were nervously stomping, wanting to get out, as they smelled the smoke.

The door was opened and the horses followed one another, circling around the house. There was nowhere to go.

The dogs, barking at first, like it was a game, but they shyly pressed their tails between their legs and yelped, looking for holes in the ground to hide.

Fire nearing even closer to the main building.

Some burning twigs landed on the roof.

They quickly hosed them down.

Then, like a miracle the wind direction changed and the big,

frightening smoke mass was pushed away from their home, along the forest edge.

The family still hosed the house and themselves.

They could hardly believe how close they were to being burned alive in the firestorm.

So close.

They dropped the hoses and embraced each other.

Safe!

Safe from the fire!

Safe from the deadly fire!

They realized, they were saved by the nature's wind play.

They walked to the horses, calming them down.

A ring of fire, which could kill all of them!

They had been warned, but the message on the radio to evacuate reached them too late.

They had no other option but stay, fight, fight and hope!

The heat was still unbelievable and the smell of burning flesh all around them: the kangaroos, many slower birds, possums, mice, lizards, echidnas, the occasional wombat – all dead.

Burned.

The Grant family walked around the house.

Here and there was a small flare, and they hosed it down with such anger.

Anger at nature's ferocity and destruction.

But, they were all safe.

They were very grateful for that.

When the fire front passed completely in about half an hour, they left the home to go and see the neighbours who lived a few kilometres away.

Nearing their home they had a fear: what will they see, what will they find?

There was nothing where their home used to stand.

Nothing, but a large pile of ashes, still smoking.
They looked around: there was no sign of life.
Perhaps they were able to evacuate in time?

Grants moved further to another home.
The same: a pile of ashes.

And even further away they drove.
Everywhere just half burned trees, but no houses.
All burnt to the ground.
Still no people.
Closer to the little town – the same.

Piles of smelling ash, still smoldering wood and nothing else.
They heard a cry in distance.
They followed the voice.
Under a large trunk, buried almost to his neck, was the owner of the home.
Jack. Jack Reed.
His face black from the soil and coals, but he was alive.
He started to call.
Call his wife with his dry throat.
"Sophie! Sophie!"
Only the distant echo in the wounded hills.

They all walked and walked.
They looked at the fallen big trees, digging, hoping.
At a large fallen, mostly burned gum, they found Sophie – burnt like a charcoal. Dead.
Her face not recognizable.
But Jack knew it was Sophie.
He picked her body and embraced her, as parts of her body peeled from her bones, but Jack did not stop.
He kept holding on to Sophie. He held her close to his heart until he collapsed.
Jack's heart – it was all too much for him.
He died, still holding his beloved Sophie – what was left of her.

The bushfire claimed them too, as it claimed many other lives of people, with no chance to escape from the horrific thunderbolt coming so quick, with very high, deadly temperature – deadly for all.

The Grant family went further into the town, finding so many remains of their friends.

All dead.

Some burned in their cars, trying to escape to safety. Too late. No way out.

All killed.

The angry, terrible ring of fire!

No way to escape.

The fire moving too fast for freedom to be within their reach.

All lost.

The Grants were still looking for signs of life.

Nothing.

In the distance they heard a dog howling in pain, but they could not help him: he was burned too much.

Rick ended his misery.

People, remains of people everywhere.

And burned animals.

Late into the night they looked and hoped for some life.

Fire trucks, ambulances and police cars arrived.

All too late.

The Grants sat on a trunk and cried.

All their friends, and neighbors, and shop keepers, and little country hospital staff, and church, and school, and pub – all burnt to the ground.

Nature can be so cruel!!

The Grants felt so lucky the wind had changed just when they were losing hope.

The firemen had a two-way radio and reported on their findings. The other units told them of being almost the same in other little towns:

"Black, still hot graveyards of burned bodies."

They knew the people were all burned beyond recognition.

Is the nightmare over now?

Nobody could give them the answer.

Mariam

Mariam was quite nervous.
She did not know what to expect.
What did she commit herself to?

She was in a large, bright waiting room in the hospital.
Watercolour paintings on the walls, depicting different seasons:
lovely paintings.
Quite a few comfortable chairs lined along two sides.
A small table with lots and lots of magazines. Piles of them.
Yes, people look through them, hardly ever reading, just flicking
through the pages.

Mariam was sitting alone in the waiting room.
Waiting, for quite some time.
Finally more people came in.
A family of four: father, mother, and two boys. They looked like
twins.
Perhaps they are twins, thought Mariam: same height, same build,
same colour hair. They both looked a bit pale but quite athletic.

One of the boys sat next to Mariam.
His brother next to him, then mum and dad.

They looked around the room.
Mother and father looked at each other, then at Mariam.

Mariam was beautiful and quite young.
Her complexion: dark olive, jet-black hair with beautifully shaped
eyebrows.

In an instant, mum stood up and pulled one of the boys away from his chair.

And the other one too.

They were to sit on the other side of them.

Away from Mariam.

Boys asked no questions, just obeyed, but they did wonder why the change.

The lady was nice and gave them a smile when they sat next to her.

Mum and dad were whispering something.

Boys could not hear.

The time was dragging.

Finally the nurse called them in saying:

Mister and Missies Blake, Liam and Oliver and Miss Haik.

They all stood up and walked in.

There was a few steps distance between the family and Mariam.

Mum Iris and dad Dane looked at Mariam suspiciously:

"Why was she called in with them?"

Doctor came to greet them, shaking hand with everyone and saying their names.

He could see the uncomfortable family, especially Iris and Dane, who asked him if anything was wrong, and why is she in with them and pointing at Mariam with their heads.

Doctor thought for a while, then he said to Iris and Dane, putting arm on Mariam's shoulder and said:

"Please, meet Mariam Haik, the donor of platelets and plasma for your boys. The term procedure is called apheresis. Mariam is a perfect match. She will be in the ward with the boys while we draw blood from her; the machine will separate the blood out to collect plasma.

After that the rest of the blood will be returned to Mariam. The process will be repeated until enough plasma is collected - between 45 minutes to one hour for each boy”.

The doctor continued:

“The chemotherapy your boys are treated with are for the leukaemia, which decreased their platelet count.

When the count is too low, spontaneous bleeding can occur.

Even a small amount of bleeding can be dangerous, especially if it occurs in the brain.”

Doctor looked at Mariam and brought her closer to the boys:

“Liam and Oliver, this lady, Mariam, will be donating the plasma and platelets – saving your lives.”

Iris and Dane could not feel more uncomfortable and especially very, very deeply ashamed!

Just because her skin was darker, and her features definitely of Middle Eastern origin, she was not “one of them!”

How terribly low of them to listen to their inner voices and thinking bad thoughts about anyone who was not white like them!

And they moved the boys away from her!

“Should they apologise?” went through their minds.

After a long pause, they stepped to Mariam, both of them, Iris and Dane, extended their arms for a heartfelt handshake saying:

“We are so sorry and so ashamed for our behaviour!

Please, forgive us. We were cruel and selfish, degrading you”.

Mariam just smiled saying:

“It is quite okay, I am used to it.

But I appreciate your admitting you were cruel. I forgive you,” and turning to the boys she said:

“I hope you boys will feel better soon.”

Iris and Dane bent their heads:

"That means you, Mariam, had to go often through the same humiliation?

"How sad," they said looking in Mariam's eyes. And we were just like those other people – hurting you!"

Mariam stepped closer to the boys, took their hands and together they walked in the direction shown by the doctor.

Iris and Dane followed in silence.

"How sad,"
they said looking in Mariam's eyes.
And we were just like all those people –
hurting you!"

Dancing Tango

A beautifully decorated ballroom – flowers on every side, bright, flashing lights and lovely music. Couples were dancing round the room as in a dream: so elegant, so perfect.

Adjudicators - at least eight of them - spread around the sides of the dance floor, all very seriously observing and making notes. The dresses of the ladies were magnificent; colourful, flowing, following their steps and embracing their bodies at times, other times twirling around, a kaleidoscope of colours, constantly moving to the beat of the music.

A Modern Waltz first, followed by a Slow Foxtrot, and then the dancers were ready for the Ballroom Tango.

One couple stood out from the rest.

So graceful, so poised. So sure on their feet with elegant moves. The male dancer's posture, (Shane was his name), was very tall, very upright, shoulders straight and head slightly turned. He was dressed in a black tuxedo with a deep split in his shirt. His face was stern, no smile lines, for the tango is an angry dance and his face reflected that anger.

His right hand was placed firmly on the lady's back, just above her waistline, firmly leading her, with his left hand holding her right hand in a slightly curved grip.

His partner, Lee, was dressed in a peppermint coloured gown, decorated with hundreds of sparkling embellishments, and was holding herself upright, head straight, leaning backwards, turned to the left, away from the partner's face. Her left arm was over his right arm, curved over the side of his back, her palm turned down, facing the floor.

She wore beautiful rings: a large emerald, surrounded by tiny diamonds on one finger, and a huge diamond on another finger, glittering in the light.

Her back was arched outward, their hips nearly touching.

Lee's eyes, as well, were cold, no warmth, but expressing nothing else than concentration.

There was no emotion on her face, not even an indication of a smile.

Her neck was decorated with a dainty necklace, falling delicately to the hollow of her neck. Among the links were a few gemstones – they looked bluish-purple.

The music, a strict tango beat from Bizet's opera *Carmen*, was filling the huge ballroom.

Oversway, jerking head throw, so sharp, the hair flicked in the air, closed step with a slight kick, knee high. A few pivots followed, very fast, hardly time to close the feet and continued into the fallaway, more pivots, whisk and tap.

He was leading; a man's lead is very important in a tango; the lady has to follow a very slight moment behind him.

You could see that he indicated every step and every direction and was in complete control of her posture and steps.

Twist turn, more shoulder work, more head throws for the lady: sharp, back, forward again, following his every move with her own strict, decisive style, yet complimenting her partner.

A couple: the male in black and silver, the lady in the sky blue gown, invaded their space.

Quick as a flash, the balance was lost, the feet tangled and the perfectly choreographed steps were disrupted in an instant.

First Shane stumbled, as if the floor had disappeared from under his feet, followed by Lee, both falling ungracefully on the dance floor.

It was such a shock!

The invading couple was disqualified on the spot.

The short shrieks in the audience, a loud "Aaah!" and deafening silence following.

The silence terminated the anticipation of a great win for Shane and Lee into million of bursting disappointments.

Everything was lost.

Disgrace for them.

A definite loss of winning points, an unforgivable embarrassment at the international competition.

If eyes could kill.

So much contempt.

No forgiveness.

Shane and Lee were devastated.

They left the dance floor:

Shane limping and assisting Lee, who could not step on her leg.

The competition was over in an instant - the excitement gone.

Things like that do not happen at the annual championship with most of the dancers being professional, well trained and experienced!

A tragedy.

The Doctor examined the injured dancers:

Shane was not badly hurt, but Lee had a complicated fracture of the ankle and would be unable to dance for months.

Good Bye to the dancing title they had worked so hard for.

The couple causing the fall had no courage to come and apologise.

An accident?

Did not look that way!

So sad.



Touching the Void

Nathan is a happy, intelligent student at school. His essays were exceptional, and his homework was an example to other students. His projects were done with precision, involving relevant background study and perfect presentation, as well as his own comments on the outcome followed by some intelligent questions. Teachers always praised him as an example to others.

He was in Year 8 at the public school; a big school – more than 1,500 pupils.

The curriculum included many excursions together with the study of nature, laboratory tests, written presentations, literature, mainstream subjects like mathematics, physics, language, history, and also art and physical education.

The students were quite competitive: they wanted to excel to be granted a state scholarship.

In literature Nathan's comments on the material by world writers and poets they had read was always the best.

He had a way with words.

And maths and sciences. He just loved the chemistry laboratory. His mum and dad were very proud of him, and so was his older brother, Shane, who was a real mathematician, and was completing the final year of high school. His world was numbers, functions, problems, logarithms, trigonometry – anything to do with possibilities with numbers.

His sister, Andrea, excelled in botany, completing year 10. Australian gums were her special interest, especially the flowering gums. She spent hours in the parks and forests, along the roads

and on the Internet – anything involving flowering gums – she wanted to know everything.

It was interesting how the three children had such different interests and all were so fully involved in their topics.

The summer holidays were nearing very quickly and the school organized many outdoor excursions. Shane's class had a working day at the local university sitting in on one of the algebra lectures, and later on at pure math's lecture. Shane was fascinated and his mind was made up to study mathematics.

Nathan's class was taken to the coast. The weather was warm, sunny – just great. For science they studied the marine life and the bay, where they were based, seemed to be waiting for them with so many interesting species.

They had made observations, drawing pictures, and photographing what had not swum away.

But they wanted more. They borrowed masks and went snorkeling. What a magical world! So much to see. Sometimes the snorkel was annoying them, because water was leaking in at the side but it didn't matter.

The students kept on going, further and further away from the coast. As the depth increased there were different animals and plant life.

One had an appreciation that there is a whole new world under water.

They were called back by the teacher and had returned to the group to exchange their experiences and notes. It had been an excellent workshop. Hands-on time.

After a quick lunch, which they had brought with them, they had some free time. Most of them wished to swim and even competed among themselves.

All were ready for the swimming competition. They lined up in the waist high water, cheering themselves and wondering who

would be the fastest - the first swimmer to touch the red and white vertically striped buoy, indicating a fairway of safe water, and return to the starting line at the big rock.

They needed to swim past a small marina - just a few fishing boats, nothing more.

Everybody tried his or her best. They kept quite close to each other.

Teachers could see only their heads and could not recognize who was who.

It was quite a distance to the buoy. They were wondering if it was wise to let them go so far, but they had realized that some heads were already nearing the rock returning.

Soon they will have the winner.

The competition was good for the students.

It was fun and made them relax as well.

One after the other, the heads were nearing the rock.

Mark was the boy who won the race, and there were big cheers for Mark!

They waited for the others.

Not for long.

When they stepped out of the water, they compared the time of the winner with their own time. Most were very pleased.

Then, when the last head appeared at the rock, it was evident something was wrong.

Not everybody has returned. One of the boys missing.

There was no sign of Nathan!

Some boys went right back into water and swam the distance again in hope to find out what was keeping him.

Not far, just behind a small boat, they saw something floating.

They swam closer.

No! No! It was Nathan.

The rescue boat was quickly cutting the waves to where Nathan was.

They quickly pulled him into the boat and started CPR. Water was

rushing from his mouth, but there was no sign of life.
They kept going with the CPR.

On the mobile phone a teacher called the ambulance.
The rescue team continued with the CPR and massage of the heart.
No success!

Finally the ambulance arrived. They brought the stretcher and the doctor tried again to revive Nathan.
One hour passed. Nothing.
The doctor declared Nathan dead at 14.40.

The students were stunned. What could have happened?
He was a good swimmer.
There were no bruises anywhere on his body.
Nathan's body was taken for the autopsy.

Something died in the students: their enthusiasm, their work, their swim – everything became a strange horrific blur.
Nathan's death shocked them really badly.
Some started to cry, others were worried about his family.

...

Hannah, Nathan's mother was at work in the office when a call came to her:
"Your son had an accident. We will tell you more in person".
The minutes dragged on terribly.
Hannah was imagining all sorts of things in her mind.
About half an hour later, a doctor, a psychiatrist and a nurse walked into her office. Hannah could not say a word.
She was frightened.
What was happening?
She was given an injection and soon she was like floating, her mind being in a fog, not clear at all.
After a while, when Hannah was calm, sitting down and waiting,

the psychiatrist started talking.

Hannah heard a voice a long way away:

"Your son, Nathan, has died. He drowned at sea while on an excursion with his class.

They tried everything to revive him, but could do nothing.

We are very sorry . . ."

Hanna was in another place. A place of no meaning.

The words were a distance away, mumbled, not clear and she might hear they were talking about Nathan, but nothing was clear and she could not comprehend.

It was as if she were made of stone, or of ice.

No feeling. Nothing. A strange nothingness - all around her.

No, she was in a vacuum!

She had opened eyes but saw nothing. All in a fog.

What was happening?

The drug, the sedative, made her non-existing, with no reason, no voice, no feeling - just a blank, cold nothing!

After a while she thought she found her voice:

"What did you say? I could not hear you."

The doctor said in a soft, compassionate voice:

"We are very sorry, Hannah, but your son Nathan is dead.

Drowned. They could not save him."

Hanna's eyes turned and there was no life in them.

She turned away and started to scream:

"Stop lying to me! Why are you saying all this? He is on excursion. He is coming home tonight!"

The Doctor stepped closer, put a hand on her shoulders and said:

"No, Hannah, he will not come home tonight.

He is dead.

They will do the autopsy in the morning to find the reason for his death."

Hannah shouted:

"Liars! Go away! Nathan is coming home!"

And she fainted.

The darkness overpowered her. She was lost in the void around her. There was nothing there. Nothing. Just darkness.

They took Hanna to the hospital and notified her husband Mick, who was away on a job. They could not contact him.

Next morning Hanna woke up in strange room: all in white, big, strong lights and a strange smell distracting her nostrils.

She opened her eyes.

The curtains were drawn around her and she knew she was in the hospital.

"Yes, I am in a hospital. What for? I am Okay. I am not hurting.

I am not bleeding. Why am I here?" she questioned.

She could not remember anything from the day before.

Later in the morning a doctor and the psychiatrist came.

She knew nothing.

Again the doctor and the psychiatrist told her that her son had died.

She became very pale, looked at them with her big, frightened eyes and screamed, "What have you done to Nathan?"

The drugs they gave her made her a zombie, remembering nothing, nothing!

A few hours later her husband Mick came, cried, and told her of Nathan. It was as if Hanna was dead. No emotion. No tears.

Nothing!

A few days later, and she was still the same.

Hanna was in another world and yet there were people around her: Mick, Shane and Andrea, talking silly things and crying.

Hanna thought:

"Why?"

Why crying?!

Why all the black clothing? It is not a funeral!"

But it was a funeral. The funeral of her son; of their son; of Shane's and Andrea's brother!

Strange fog was all around Hanna. She walked beside her husband. He supported her: Shane and Andrea behind them. They were walking behind a box covered with flowers. "What on earth is that?" Hannah wondered.

Hannah could not comprehend: it was Nathan's coffin in front of her.
Her eyes were blinded.
Her mind was poisoned with the sedatives.
Her body and her senses did not function at all.

The undertakers lowered the coffin in the ground.
Hannah was in another space – somewhere strange, deep, in a horrible, hollow void.
She could not remember anything about the beautiful words Nathan's school friend said at the grave saying goodbye to him.
She could not see the people crying.
She heard nothing of the sad music being played on the trumpet:
Il Silencio.

They have not moved from the grave.
The whole family stayed long after everybody left.

It was getting dark and Hanna's husband supported her on a slow walk towards the car, where Shane and Andrea waited.
Once at home, the house was empty, cold, frightening quiet.
Hanna was given more medication and urged to go to bed.

Days later she slowly started to realise, Nathan died and she will never see him again.
Why? He was a healthy boy! Full of life!

And again the drugs overtook her mind.
She could not think.

There was a cold fog all around her.

A strange numbness: she felt no heartbeat, no warmth of her husband's embrace, no caressing of her hair by Shane and Andrea.

Hannah was not alive! Numb!

She was like a shadow – sad, sorrowful shadow of herself!

As if she was forced to be something, but felt nothing, her heart dead.

Weeks had passed. Hannah was like she died.

No expression at all.

If she could cry!

She was a dead person walking.

And doctors kept on feeding her the sedatives and the antidepressants.

In vain.

Hannah did go to Nathan's grave every night to light a candle and rearrange the flowers.

There were always fresh flowers and candles on his grave.

She stopped cooking the meals - children took care of that.

She stopped embroidering. Her work used to be so delicate.

She stopped writing letters and cards to her friends.

At work she moved like puppet wearing a porcelain mask:

no greeting, no smile, no work done.

They extended her sick leave.

Hannah's heart was dying.

Her body listening to her heart: she did not want to live.

The heart was locked into this horrifying void she was touching.

The void, the emptiness all around her and most terrible, in her heart, in her whole being.

Touching the void of empty thoughts, empty wishes, and empty hope.

Just the void.

The cruel void around her - the black void of meaningless space.

The emptiness of the loss was growing every day into even more frightening darkness - into nothing.

Years later her condition had not improved.
Hannah was still touching the void.
Her body gave up.

The illness with no cure had made the horrible emptiness even worse.
She stopped saying even the simplest words.
The void was getting more and more frightening.
Her mind was like a large ball of dark cotton wool: useless.

Mick, Shane and Andrea understood: Hanna had no will to get well.

She refused all the treatments for her illness.
They knew Hanna's life was ending.

What life?

In her eyes you could see nothing.
Blank stare.
No sparkle.
Her eyes have died.

In the cold, frosty winter morning her eyes became glasslike, dead.

Hanna was gone - to rest in peace.

What life?
In her eyes you could see nothing.
Blank stare.
No sparkle.
Her eyes have died.

Just a Closer Walk with Thee

Some people are full of words like love for other human being, allowing everybody to walk closer to God.

A sample - how can a doctor help, or heal people, if he is not working with his heart, expertise, and love?

Or

a psychiatrist cannot help people with the illness of the soul, if he has no unconditional love for them?

But

How could a person give comfort and hope to people being in distress, sadness and dilemma with no compassion?

Some have superficial, shallow 'love' for people - empty words only.

The warmth and love is genuine and true at times only for the selected, the people who pay well.

The person without love for others

isolates people with ideas, because having their own mind is dangerous – they are considered a threat.

Preferred are the ones who just nod, blindly following; agree with everything!

Christian Religion teach: *Love thy neighbor!*

Some love the ones, who fall on their knees in silence without a thought –

without a word, just to please:

people without face and voice, without courage or ideals!

Where is Christ's teaching when the capable organisers, are pushed aside by some "followers" with lies and hypocrisy?

Where is Christ's doctrine: *Love all people!*
when many capable people are eliminated, degraded –
especially all, who tell the truth?

Where is Christ's doctrine: *Love all people!*
when only people bringing forth lies, gossip, prattle, and
repeating words in trust, even for payment, are welcomed
to the circle just to be praised and patted on the shoulder?

Where is Christ's doctrine: *Love all people!*
when a person is spat on before the witnesses who had no
courage to tell the truth in fear, because,
by telling the truth, they, too, would be spat on?

Where is Christ's doctrine: *Love all people!*
when the person is degraded, so some can exalt
themselves in their tyrannical, selfish power?

Many convince themselves:
"I am like a Saint.
I am like the Almighty!
I have the power.
Everybody respects me.
I am strong and powerful.
I do no wrong.
I know what I am doing.
You need to believe in me and respect me, obey me,
glorify me!
I am ME, I walk, you know -
a Closer Walk with Thee!"

See, some people pay lots of money so they are
glorified as being "worthy and trusting."
Money! Lots of money!
Money buys the freedom,
and the glory,
and the fame!

Who can justly say: "I walk '*Just a Closer Walk with Thee*'?"

HOLLOW DARKNESS

The feeling, that there is no hope and
that we can do nothing to improve difficult, complex situation.
A feeling of despair descended on us as we realized
that we are completely lost.
It is a feeling of being without hope -
lost in despair.

*When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth
and love have always won.
There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem
invincible, but in the end, they always fall.
Think of it--always.*

Mahatma Gandhi

*Losing your life is not the worst thing that can happen.
The worst thing is to lose your reason for living.*

Jo Nesbo

*When you find your path, you must not be afraid.
You need to have sufficient courage to make mistakes.
Disappointment, defeat, and despair
are the tools God uses to show us the way.*

Paulo Coelho

How many "Masks"?

Angel versus Devil: And The Winner is . . .

They are both waiting for the souls of people: the Angel, and the Devil.

Angel was collecting all the good deeds done by Agnes.

What she has done for others, being loving, friendly, kind, helpful, patient.

Devil was gathering all the hypocrisy, lies, backs turned to people, conniving plans, lies, jealousy, wishing bad, not accepting everyone.

They both knew that Agnes was dying and they wanted to be prepared for the final judgment nearing very fast.

Taking the soul to either Heaven or to Hell was not up to them, but on the evidence they could present: very simple - heavenly bliss or burning hell. God makes the final decision.

Agnes had been weak and very sick for a long time, but now her time was running out.

She had had enough of pain and medications, injections, transfusions, being fed by a tube, probing, promises and the well wishes!

She wanted the suffering to end.

She begged and prayed every day not to wake up in the morning – no, just go to sleep: any time, any day.

She was ready. All ready!

Was she?

Her family was praying her suffering would end.

The Angel and the Devil were ready too.

They looked at Agnes' first layer of her past – took the first "Mask" of her face.

In the darkness of the night, the beautiful Angel appeared before Agnes.

She was not frightened – she welcomed him. He was friendly, kind, inviting her to make a journey through the tunnel of time.

She followed.

The pain was not so strong any more and she felt much better.

The Angel said:

"Take my hand; we will walk together through the valley of the past for the very last time."

Agnes took the angel's hand and the pain was almost gone. Finally!

The Angel said again: "Anytime you find it hard, tell me and we will return to the beginning, and start all over again."

Agnes gladly agreed.

YES!

She had enough of suffering and pain, enough of begging to die!

Agnes was a young girl again, full of energy. She loved children.

The angel smiled at her side.

And her friends - they were very close.

She said to herself:

"If this is a walk through my memory tunnel, my recollections, I love it. It is beautiful!"

Agnes lived her full potential of a caring person. Just what the angel wished to see.

The Devil was watching on the side:

"I do not think I will get this soul" he muttered to himself:

"She is good, kind and loving. Not for me!"

Agnes woke up, had many joyous memories, but then many long and painful days passed. Agnes was very tired and even weaker.

However, her angel had not reappeared.

Agnes was once more waiting and begging to die. The pain was unbearable, even with the painkillers.

The Angel returned after Agnes' suffering for weeks with no relief. Again and again Agnes begged to die.

When the Angel next appeared, the Devil was with him and they argued.

The Angel said:

"See, Devil, she is a good woman. You have seen all the good work she did in her youth. Very good work, pleasing me very much."

The Devil looked disappointed and pointed out some of the days, when Agnes was not so pleasant, but in reply, the Angel pointed at more of her good work, praising her.

The Angel and the Devil revealed Agnes' second layer of the past – took second "Mask" of her face.

Together they lead Agnes through the dark tunnel of time again. In her consciousness she did not expect to travel through the time of her life she was not proud of.

Agnes opened her mouth to beg, but she had no voice.

Her face was unrecognizable from immense pain she was experiencing. There was no response from her co-travellers.

Then images started to appear before her eyes, cutting into her soul and her heart: Images of all the people she had hurt, degraded, lied about, planned cruel things as revenge, and gossiping – all there, right in front of her, staring at her.

Their faces showed hurt, their hearts were bleeding . . .

The Devil was laughing:

"Yes! Yes! This is what I want to show you, Angel!

Have a look at all this! Just look at all the hypocrisy, double standards, disregarding some good people, class distinction, sick admiration of the rich and powerful, abusing her status . . .

Angel, do you want me to continue? This is what she is and was!

She – her soul, belongs to ME!!!!"

Agnes was in great physical and emotional pain – every face, every heart induced more pain, terrible pain in her soul and her body.

She wanted to beg forgiveness of the faces before her, but had no voice. No words came from her mouth.

She wanted to beg with her hands - they would not move.

She hoped to beg with her eyes but she could not see eye to eye with all those people.

It was devastating for her.

She needed to apologise and beg for forgiveness!

All the faces, all the eyes in front of her directed at her like daggers, pointing at her with sadness and with pity.

She lost the sense of time.

More pain. Intolerable pain!

In an instant, the people, faces and eyes disappeared, but only for a while.

Then: all over again – all the people, all the faces, all the eyes!

The same faces, the same eyes – sad, hurt, burning and stabbing her with their looks.

When she realized, she was in her bed again, she begged and begged again for death to take her to eternal rest, but there was no rest.

No death.

The memories of all the faces and eyes caused her many nightmares and sleepless nights.

Then they came again: the Angel and the Devil.

Angel proudly showed Agnes's first "Mask" - he liked it.

The Devil was proud of Agnes's second "Mask" – he liked it.

He was also sure, he had a lot of points.

But Agnes has not seen the masks.

She was in a coma.

After a week, Angel and Devil quarrelled again.

Angel said:

"I am right, she will get the strength and beg for forgiveness of people she had hurt so much, degraded them and was a real hypocrite to so many. I am sure she will be forgiven.

People will forgive her.
God will forgive her."
Devil just laughed and pointed at her face:
"Can you see any gentleness there?
Any love?
Any sign of remorse?
Angel, wake up! She belongs to me!"

And they peeled Agnes' third layer of her past – third "Mask" of her face.

More images entered Agnes' mind in the tunnel of life.
No!

Real people, flashing in front of her – some the same as before; she recognized them, but many others she had not remembered. People she had lied to, gossiped about, had conniving, cruel plans for them, more degrading – hurting all of them, hardly ever showing any compassion and understanding.

Agnes thought of herself as being perfect, being above them all, considering herself to be almost saintly.

The Devil laughed and laughed, louder and louder.

He knew, he had won, and had done so with such ease.

Angel cried.

He hoped – he had really hoped, Agnes would have had enough good deeds for forgiveness, and she would admit guilt and be sorry – and her soul would have been his.

Agnes' soul belonged to Devil from now on.

The plea, apology, being sorry - too late!

Her dead face has shown determined harshness.

No softness, no compassion.

She didn't even try.

God could not forgive her seeing all of her three "Masks".

How many Masks?

?

? ?

? ? ?

A Touch of Sunray

Darren is an interesting guy.
He never had many friends.
Never tried to form friendships.
He did not trust people.

But Darren liked to watch the sunlight through the crowns of the trees, or laying in the grass and watching play of light through the grass blades, or sparkles of luminosity in the fast flowing river, or the play of light and spray in the breaking ocean waves, or silver sparks of moonlight on the lake's surface, or the flickering of a candle's flame in the breeze.

Light, the play of light was his fascination.

When he was sad, or hurt, he floated above the river.
Other times among dew drops of a birch branches.
Or in the pure mountain brook.

The light lifted him to the infinite space above the trees, above the high buildings, above the landscape, into floating hot-air balloons on a frosty autumn morning, or following dolphins swimming ahead of a boat, or raindrops sparkling on window panes, or snowflakes gleaming in the winter sunshine.

He was in a magical world;
a lovely and perfect place in which to escape.

Since his mother remarried, Darren was physically and verbally abused badly by his stepfather.
He was six years old when it started.

Darren never did anything right according to his stepfather. His timing of questions, his manners, annoying the stepfather and there was hell to pay: slaps across the face, beating with a stick, straps with the belt, kicks - just anything. And if Darren cried, the punishment was even more severe.

Mother was not to be told.
If so, God help Darren!

He is twelve. He is in secondary college now.

The class teacher was a friendly, young and confident person. Darren felt, he could trust him.

And he did.
He told him about his stepdad's abuse over all those years. The teacher listened, shocked, and promised him, he would arrange for a social worker or a Brother to help him. The Social worker could not fit him into her schedule, so Darren was introduced to the Brother, a pastoral confidant.

Darren at first was nervous about talking to him, but he was so understanding, kind and friendly.
He told him what he was afraid to tell his mum.

After a few months of speaking with this man, Darren was feeling better for telling and trusting someone.

Then one afternoon, after his classes, he was with the Brother again, sobbing while telling of his stepfather's threats and beating. The Brother embraced him.
It felt so good.
Darren even felt his heartbeat.
And that was not all.

He started touching him and cuddling him and saying strange words, making Darren feel quite uncomfortable, but the need to

be embraced, to be close, was greater and he allowed the Brother to touch him more and more.

It did not stop there.

He became demanding and using words of love to entice Darren into accepting him.

For?

Yes, it was the final cruel demand of the Brother!

He assaulted Darren, body and soul.

Darren was too shocked to walk away. The Brother kept asserting that the love was his secret, and not to tell anyone, because it would spoil the beauty of love and Darren would be terribly punished by God.

Darren, confused, frightened and ashamed, kept quiet.

The Brother was more forceful, more demanding.

Darren was hurting, hurting very much!

Physically and emotionally.

He begged him to stop hurting him, but he was even stronger in his actions.

The pain was unbearable but at one point, Darren felt no more pain.

It was as if he has parted from his body.

He felt he was floating, spinning around, sort of fuzzy.

He felt, he was weightless, happy, as if he had returned to the days of his childhood when he found refuge by floating above everything.

He liked it!

In front of his eyes the lights were dancing around him. Although he was floating, the space around him seemed to be moving rapidly, spinning, causing the lights around him to dance and whirl. Great!

Oh, and the images! Unbelievable colours, all around him, lifting him.

The play of light – so beautiful.

Suddenly, the return to reality!

"Do not ever say a word about this!" demanded the Brother,
"If you tell one soul, you will burn in hell!" and left Darren ashamed,
hurt, confused and abused to go home.

Darren thought:

"Home?

Why should I go home?

I cannot tell Mum.

She would not believe me anyway, because she thinks the world of
the Church and the religious Brothers!

Where could I go?"

He was wandering down the street, still shaken from the ordeal.
The Brother demanded for him to come again tomorrow.

And the next day, and next week.

He wanted Darren to keep coming to him or he would report his
disobedience to the principal and would for sure be expelled!

Darren went to the river, seeking the sunrays in the flow.

There were none.

He was looking at the trees for sunlight - nothing there.

Then he walked to the park, lay down in the soft grass, waiting for
the play of light again.

There was none today!

Why not?

In his pocket he had a small pack of powder one of the boys had
given him:

"Try it", the boy had said, "you will be amazed!"

And Darren did.

A strange sensation. It was as if he was taken on a ride – he could
not identify it.

Hours later he dragged himself home, depleted of all his will and energy.

What had happened to him?

He had no recollection how long he was in the grass.

Weeks have passed since that very first day he lost sense of time, and he was for a while in that infinite happy space of sunlight.

The Brother demanded more and more of him, and more often!

Darren's mind again helped him to escape to that beautiful space of nothingness and sunrays.

He liked that.

Afterwards, when he 'landed down to earth' he lay in the grass again, searching for sunrays everywhere, all possible directions.

Only sometimes his imagination lifted him into the state of bliss and glittering sunrays, but most times he took the powder again and again.

And again.

One late autumn evening, walkers in the park found his body.

The autopsy revealed physical and sexual abuse, and overdose of drugs.

He was finally safe from pain and abuse, among his sunrays, that he had wished, enjoyed and imagined so much.

Finally safe and at peace!

Finally safe and at peace!

*There is nothing more vicious and outrageous than the abuse,
exploitation and harm of the most vulnerable members of
our society.*

Bob Ney

*Childhood should be carefree, playing in the sun;
not living a nightmare in the darkness of the soul.*

Dave Pelzer

Emma's Fear

Emma, aged 82, was very agitated, unsettled. The cat annoyed her. The closed doors annoyed her. The fly on the wall annoyed her. The opened window annoyed her . . .

And the curtains moving in the wind, and the doormat, and the moving branch, and the noise of passing cars, and the barking of the neighbour's dog, and the noisy bird whistling in a tree.

The sun was too bright, and too hot; and wind was not strong enough, the telephone was too silent, the fruit on the table was not fresh, the broom was not in the right spot behind the door, her dress was too big – looking like a potato sack - the ring on a curtain was broken, creating an uneven loop, her hair was out of place – no time for the hairdresser; her hair colour was wrong, postman brought no mail today, wood pile at the side of the house was messy.

Yes, Emma was very, very unsettled.

Emma's sleep was disturbed again last night. Another dream.

What happened in the dream?

She dreamed something the night before as well, and the night before that.

What was she dreaming about?

"How silly; I should remember the dream!", Emma would laugh at herself.

Her daughter Katia didn't come this morning. She said she would. Emma could tell her the dream, but Katia didn't come, and now Emma cannot remember the dream.

If Katia was on time, she would have told her the dream, she really would.

Emma hurried from room to room, talking to herself softly:
"Now – what time will she come? O, which daughter? Katia? No, not Katia. Eliza? No, not Eliza.
Who is coming? No, not the nosy neighbour Valeria. She is impossible.
Why is she like that; so, so annoying. Must be something wrong with her.
I am so glad I am okay. Nothing is wrong with me. I take care of my house and my cat. I take care of myself. I cook my own meals."
And more.
"What have I had for breakfast today? Oh, I had breakfast. What was it? When was it? This morning? No, this afternoon? No, silly me, you cannot have breakfast in the afternoon. I will have breakfast later. I am not hungry now.
I am never hungry. My daughter keeps pushing food in front of me. But I eat. I like food. I just do not like Katia's soup, or her minestrone, or her roast, or her risotto, or her schnitzel, or her dumplings, or her salad, or her baked potatoes, or her vegetables, or her porridge, or her coffee, or her tea - yuk!
I will have breakfast tomorrow. I am never hungry.
I am so busy and the neighbour Valeria interrupts me.
I have so much work to do."

Emma fell asleep.
Her daughter Katia came with dinner.
It was beautifully prepared and arranged for her mother.
Emma stared at her with empty eyes.

"Who is this for? Where do I need to take this?
Can I take something little for my Mum, she had nothing to eat for days.
We also had only bread and water to eat and drink."

Emma suddenly put hands tightly over her ears shouting.
"No, not the bombing again. So noisy! We need to take cover. We need to hide. Quick! Let's go to the neighbour's cellar, we will be safe!"

Then she turned to Katia: "What are you waiting for you rich bitch! You have so much food and you are not sharing with anyone! You talked to the Gestapo again, haven't you, lying, that our Mum is hiding deserters. You know it is not true. Get away from our house!"

Emma pushed Katia out through the door, throwing the food all over her.

Then Emma came back to room softly, speaking with a sobbing voice, eyes full of tears, turning to the wall, talking to the imagined image of her Mum:

"Mum, they want me to go and take a message to a village over the mountain. It is so far. I have no shoes. I cannot walk in the dark; it is so very scary! Mum, beg them, not to send me! Mum! Mum! Help me!"

Emma stood silently, barefoot, shaking in fear, staring at the painted wall.

"O, please, I cannot go. Mum, help me!", she cried uncontrollably.

Suddenly Emma turned pale as the white wall, shaking, twisting her arms in horror, crying, and begging.

Emma had slipped to the time of Second World War. She was nine years old when the war started. The Communists ordered her to walk all alone through the forest to deliver a message. She was only nine; barefoot, frightened . . .

They did not care if she was killed. When her mother was pleading with the partisan, he looked at five skinny girls standing close to each other with hungry, hollow eyes, and shouted:

"If you lose one daughter, so what, you will still have four left!"
The message was important, not the life of a child!!

Emma's shaking stopped later in the evening.

She was drained of all her energy and fell asleep at the kitchen table.

Katia and Eliza, used to these everyday episodes of the war, which ended so many years ago, carried her to bed, undressed her, and let her sleep.

Emma slept until the morning.

In the morning there will be more agitation – something different will annoy Emma, or, perhaps yesterday's things will disturb her all over again.

She would know nothing of the fear of the evening before. Occasionally she would talk about how hard it was during the war, how hungry they were and how the neighbour Rose was so cruel to Mum . . .

Emma would clench her fists, scream and swear terribly and loud, calling Rose the worst names! She was actually glad that Rose suffered a long, terrible illness before she died . . .

"God punished her for the cruelty", Emma always added!:
"a justice."

It is so many hours until the evening. Nearly every late afternoon, for the past few years, when the sun was beginning to set, the horrific images of war have won, confusing and overpowering Emma's mind completely.

The same stories almost every day.

So many experiences to tell.

So many horrible truths to tell!

Emma was living through the horror, the trauma, over and over again.

Katia said to herself, sadly:

"How
much
longer?"

Evil Wings

"Kirsty! Kirsty!"

The cries were distant, then stilled.

Kirsty heard nothing more, only the silence and the warmth of her body changed into calm, dull coolness . . .

Then she heard again: "Kirsty, for Christ's sake, he isn't worth it. Kirsty!"

Kirsty opened her eyes, staring into the ceiling. Why can she hear those words? She didn't want to hear anything any more.

She didn't want to live without him.

Why didn't they let her die? How did they find her?

His words from last night came back:

"I used you, I am sorry. But is over now. I will not see you any more. I cannot forget Ann. She is still on my mind all the time.

I feel I am using you. All I see is her face. I am sorry . . ."

Was it the truth? Or his hunting for sympathy?

She had given herself completely to this man, heart and soul.

He was the centre of her being, and he only used her.

How cruel.

How low!

"Oh, no, not without him! I love him. Can not live without him."

Now she remembered his words:

"I like the final product."

He said it so many times.

What final product?

Seeing her broken, on her knees?

. . .

She had put the music on very loud; *La Boheme*, which he said so often that he liked so much.

But was it like in the *La Boheme*?

The girl's hand - Mimi's hand - getting cold while she was dying, and her lover caressing it.

Yes, that's how it felt, as soon as the blood was spreading all over the basin into the warm water.

The warmth of the blood, like the warmth of the lover's touch.

Was she like the girl in the opera scene?

Feeling the warmth spreading over her hands - but the warmth was her own blood?

"The final product" - words were still ringing in her ears.

The warmth was engulfing her into a misty nothingness.

There was no time.

Time became the warmth, the warmth was blurring into an empty whirlwind.

...

"Why, Kirsty?" Monica kept asking.

Kirsty has not answered even though she was fully awake now.

Kirsty was angry with Monica for coming - she didn't want anyone to see her.

Why did she come?

If Monica wouldn't come, she would not wake up.

That was what she wanted: not to wake up ever again!

...

Monica was getting angry with Kirsty.

They talked about him many times, Kirsty saying how he never treated her nicely - he was quite rude at times, leaving her by herself while he was chatting with other females.

They were supposedly a couple, but he wanted his freedom.

He wanted her when he needed her, then he left her sitting sometimes by herself while he was involved with conversations with others, never including her, as if she wasn't there with him.

Kirsty was hurt by his treatment, yet she made excuses for him: how he needs his freedom, or he would feel too bound to her, and would walk away.

How he was all the time tired, tired, even when he hardly ever worked.

How he needed time and did not call her for days!

Did she try to keep him by giving him his freedom?

Or was he trying to show her all the time that he didn't really want her there with him?

Many times Kirsty thought - if he was really hurt in the past, she cannot push him; he needs time - time for hurt and pain to heal. But was he telling the truth?

Kirsty was giving him time.

Perhaps too much time?

She, too, was hurt in the past, and she tried to start again: tried a new beginning with him.

He could be kind, considerate and warm - sometimes a little secretive.

He could at times talk to her about being positive - how fear is in the mind only.

There were times when he was very soothing - he knew how to use his soft voice to calm her.

At times she felt like he was lifting her and carrying her on wings; on wings of safety and hope, shielding her from a storm.

But only at times!

Only when it suited him, the other times he was very stern, very cold. And his safety wings became dark terrifying shadows of fear. They felt cold, frightening, and forceful, pushing her downwards into the depths of cold emptiness.

How can a person be warm, be true at one time, and then, as if there was another person within, become the complete opposite?

The once safe embraces became evil wings!
A hunting game?
A hurting game?
Is this the reason he could not stay gentle and caring?

If a person is genuinely caring and kind, can he stay like that most of the time?!

Only people who pretend kindness, their reality change so quickly!

Yet she still made excuses for him.
Was she wrong in showing him how gentle and caring she was?
Kirsty was a caring person; she felt so good when she helped people, listened to them and was able to connect to them, feel with them.
She didn't like deceitful people.
Her whole body reacted when someone was lying to her.
And yet he was so good at talking.
Saintly smooth, all knowing.

He was taking her time, taking power from her, taking part of her away not giving anything in return.
Kirsty was a person able to give, she liked to give, but it was very painful, when he kept on taking, not giving anything.
No, he was not happy with what she was giving anymore.
He wanted more: he was stealing things from her: her emotions, her self, her being!
He was stealing her warmth, her power to live, her everything!

Yet she could not forget how warm his words were at times!

At once he became cool and distant.
Even his words became cooler - no fire in the eyes, no warmth in the embraces.
He was able to keep the mask on his face; the terrible mask.
The game could not last forever!
Even the best actors come down from the stage sometimes!
And he dropped the mask.

He couldn't even act anymore!

Left there was an immature boy, with nothing to give, selfish little boy.

Most boys are proud to grow into men. Most of them become adults with life to give, to share, with warmth to give.

Adults, whom you can trust!

Kirsty said it loud:

"He is only a boy!"

He managed to hurt her so much!

Did she want to take care of this little boy?

She had to grow up so fast herself - was there a need to take care of him, like she was taking care of people all her life?

But she loved very much his embraces, his wings of warmth.

When it suited him, he was very attentive and caring.

Or was it a game and the warm, caring wings changed into the evil plans of his game?

...

There were beautiful fresh flowers at her side, flowers from Monica. She knew how Kirsty liked yellow roses and there was a huge arrangement there, greeting her.

When she turned and faced Monica there were no more questions from her.

Then Kirsty's children walked into the hospital room.

She was almost embarrassed - how will she be able to explain to them what happened.

They loved her, she knew that.

There were no questions, only warm embraces and kisses and more flowers to cheer her up.

And again more kisses and more embraces - without words.

Kirsty was grateful for the silence.

She could not give them explanations.

...

Monica also brought her the newspaper.

Kirsty was not really interested in the news at the moment; she had a lot to cope with.

But Monica insisted she reads a particular article, which she encircled.

"Bride killed on the way to church . . . "

Carmen, his daughter, which he loved so much!

He was very close to her, more than to his oldest daughter Jenny and his son Chris.

Kirsty suddenly felt sorry for him.

*The bravest thing I ever did was continuing my life
when
I wanted to die.*

Juliette Lewis



You do not Belong to our Flock

There were birds everywhere in the park, just perching on branches, and giving short calls to accept and recognize each other.

They looked around and alerting others of predators - the big black crows circling above them.

The white sulphur-crested cockatoos are not early risers – they wait for the sun to warm their roosting sites before feeding.

Very social birds: they roost, forage and travel together.

A flock of white sulphur-crested cockatoos are insanely noisy and always feeding during the day.

Some flocks are small, others in high numbers, especially in the time of droughts, depending on the food area.

They are usually in parks and at the edges of forest, not very often as pets in people's homes.

A white sulphur-crested male cockatoo with a nice, healthy yellow crest on his head flew to the gum tree full of other sulphur-crested cockatoos.

He looked around, pecking the branch and every now and then gave his unique call.

He was a beautiful bird: white feathers, a bright yellow crest, yellow feathers under the wings, a black bill, dark grey feet and black eyes. When the crest was put down, you could still see it. The feathers of his crest were pointy and quite loose-fitting, especially when he was alert. And alert he was.

It was a new area he has flown to.

The chirping of all other birds was not threatening at all.

He made another of his calls.

All other white sulphur-crested cockatoos became very alert now: a stranger on their tree!

A stranger among them in their flock!
Some males came closer to him with threatening flapping of wings.
He understood and was ready to fly away, when:
they ganged up on him, frightening him.

He made another call.
No, he was not one of their flock!
His call was differed from theirs!
He did not walk and move like them!
He did not dance on the branch like them!
He did not know their rules.
But: His wings were like theirs –his beak was black,
curved like theirs, and big - his tail feathers – exactly like
theirs - and colours – just like them -
his eyesight sharp, just like theirs.

He found more food, good position, ready to alert them.
He found more water – fresh, clean water.
Others have not accepted him.
He found good nesting spots - not accepted!

They wanted him gone and started attacking him.
He flew off and hoped that was the end.
Wrong!
The flock ganged on him with their beaks and claws, confusing
him and he was losing the direction.
They kept attacking him in the air, pecking his head and trying to
peck his eyes, hoping to disable his plight to freedom and peace.

The circling lasted a long time.
He could not find the direction so he could return to his original
perch a distance away.
Attacks were more brutal, faster, and he was getting tired avoiding
more of their strong beaks hitting the back of his head to lose
balance.
They wanted to kill him.

They considered him an enemy.

But, he was just like them!
Why?

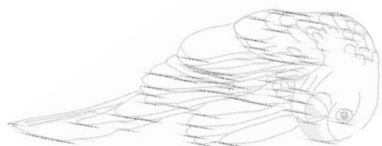
After trying to fly away for a long time, he had no more strength:
he flew lower and lower and he knew what was coming.
They attacked him on the ground.
Killing him.
Cruel birds. And he was just like them!

He did not belong to their flock!

The same as with humans:
"You do not make steps like us!
You do not sing our songs!
You do not dance to our beat"

The human flock:
"When we ask of you to obey, to say our words,
to use our gestures, to follow our steps –
but
you dance your own dance,
express your own thoughts,
sing your own songs . . . "

The human flock:
killing the spirit, screaming:
"You do not belong to our Flock!"



Were you there too . . . ?

Were you there too?

When

there was no end to the verbal abuse and
accusations?

Most present, being too afraid to contradict the leader?

His sharp, hurtful words were emphasizing
his authority
and his presence?

He succeeded in degrading the person?

He has seen himself only,
and his own importance?

He exercised his power of words, status, and
dominance?

He exalted himself to be the untouchable?

He raised himself above all others in his everlasting
reign . . . ?

And there was only silence?

All too afraid to stand up for the truth?

All reminded how they were brought up to respect,
not to confront?

Were you there . . . ?

When

the person's spirit was being slaughtered?
The soul was being killed?

The silent, terrified witnesses?!

Were you there . . . ?
When the person's spirit was being slaughtered?
the soul was being killed?
Silent, terrified witnesses?!

*"It is easy - terribly easy - to shake a man's faith in himself.
To take advantage of that to break a man's spirit
is devil's work."*

George Bernard Shaw Quote

Pontius Pilate? Now?

*'The Pontius Pilate washed his hands to wipe out the guilt of
Jesus' blood.'*
(According to The Bible)

And Now?

Some people wash their hands - all the years,
every day.

Men in a high positions, in whose actions many people
trust –
but every day, they wash their hands, trusting the liars;
adoring the hypocrites.

Every day they wash their hands:
the poor are worthless – they look away.
Every day they wash their hands –
why would they help people with good ideas –
they need to be destroyed!

They wash their hands every day –
they wipe away the words of truth.
They wash their hands every day -
they wash their hands every day!
For years!

All their lives they wash their hands,
to wipe out
people's trust,
people's goodness

people's readiness
people's loyalty
people's talent
people's dignity
and: people's - Faith!

Now?

No conscience.

Just empty words, day after day.

Do we pity them?

Are they beyond the help of the prayers?

No conscience.

Just empty words, day after day.

HOPE

Hope: is a feeling of expectation and a desire, a dream, an aspiration, the wish, its expectation, the aim, plan, dream, a daydream, and a longing and yearning.

Definition states: it is an optimistic attitude of the mind.
Hope is a promise, a goal, and a gift from God.

*Hope itself is like a star - not to be seen in the sunshine
of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity.*

Charles H. Spurgeon

Once you choose Hope, Anything is possible. Christopher Reeve

*I hope you find grace in this world - you recognize your worth,
and that you can shine.* Tsang Lindsay

*Faith and hope work hand in hand, however
while hope focuses on the future,
faith focuses on the now.* David Odunaiya

Hope is the last thing ever lost. Italian Proverb

Silent Words

Wow! Eurovision Song Contest!

Aidan waved his hand to invite his brother Jarrod to the TV screen and pointed at the screen.

Jarrod came quickly thinking something was wrong.

Aidan was all excited – he loved seeing very beautiful arrangement of stage decoration and props, laser light effects, floral decoration and performers outdoing each other with exquisite outfits – very perfect.

Jarrod liked watching the Eurovision as well, but he was not as excited as Aidan, who was trying very hard to imagine what the song of each performer was about.

Very hard.

They announced the title of the song and the singer's name.

Not always the titles and artists' names were shown as subtitles and never the lyrics.

Aidan wished to know what the singers were singing about - what the lyrics were telling.

See, Aidan could not hear.

He could lip read at times, but songs with the fast beat and rhythm were very hard to follow.

Just watching the singer made Aidan enter into another world.

"What is the music?" he questioned at times.

Aidan knew of the rhythm, of the beat - he could understand the beat and joined in at times, following the vibrations he could feel. He knew the waltz rhythm, a quick step and a polka - 4/4 steps, and the rock-and-roll beat.

The vibration of the music was his guide.

He could also follow a slow rhythm of rumba and the sharp, definite sharpness of a tango.

He often dreamed he could put music to the rhythm.
But, what is music?!

At times he could follow the lyrics by reading the singer's lips.
Yes, he knew what they were telling, but how, what did it sound like?

What is the tune?
What is the music?

Watching carefully he guessed peoples' emotions: smiles, crying, even tears in their eyes.
But there were only their lips telling the story.

Missing, missing the essence of the song!

The contest ended with presenting the winner with a beautiful glass trophy, people applauding and others jumping for joy - the supporters from winner's home country.

Aidan wished so much to be able to experience the music and the singing.

After the contest was completed, he Googled for the lyrics of the songs he wrote down and wished to know the meaning.
There were not many there.

Than at once – a great discovery: a page was in front of him – a You Tube presentation of a children's' song, including the text.
He watched.

He almost jumped from joy!

There were not just lips telling the story!

The whole facial expressions: eyes, mouth, hands and upper body were telling the story of the song.

He read the explanation.

A new way of presenting the songs and recitals to people with hearing problems, or impaired hearing or being deaf from birth. It was AUSLAN: Auslan, the sign language of the Australian Deaf community. The term Auslan is an acronym of "Australian Sign Language", coined by Trevor Johnston in the early 1980s, although the language itself is much older.

The language was developed by, and for, Australians, who are deaf or hearing impaired. It's a visual form of communication that uses hand, arm and body movements to convey meaning.

Auslan verb signs usually do not change to show time (i.e. past, present and future tense). However, there are a few exceptions, almost all of them made by joining the verb sign with a sign derived from one of two signs meaning 'finish'. The two signs are made like a single sign and often the overall meaning of the sign can change.

Aidan was fascinated. He wanted to know more.

He found a page where an Auslan presenter was acting out the lyrics next to the singer – acted out all the story all the words: his face crying, just like singer's; or laughing just like the singer, or questioning.

And the hand movement "explaining" the place, emotions, wishes or disappointments, sadness or immense joy.

Acting out every word of the lyrics in unison with the singer and the music.

Aidan could not be happier.

Finally he could imagine what the song was telling.

He could not hear the sounds, but his mind responded with understanding the meaning - he could feel the emotions now: pain, happiness, worry, disappointment and joy!

He was so grateful.

Auslan language enriched his understanding of music and singing in his world - the world of eternal silence.

He felt so rich.

Aidan found more sites, the schools that were offering the teaching of *Auslan*.

He felt like the Heavens have opened their door to so many sufferers.

He experienced the music and songs almost to the full now.

What a blessing!

*Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson



AuslanServices

*The Auslan Company was established by a Deaf man, Darren Roberts, in 2004. Today we are the only Deaf owned and operated Auslan Training Organisation that combines Auslan community courses, Auslan in the workplace and Deaf Awareness Training within its' scope. The Auslan Company's passion is in teaching Auslan and sharing our awesomely visual language.
Pakenham, Victoria 3810*

She recognized

Mandy was quite a happy five year old, always wanting to be close to other children, touching her hair and playing with their hair. It was like a fascination for her. She pulled some strands of hair, lifted them towards the light, streaming through the window, and enjoyed the hair breaking the light beam, creating interesting shapes, being so soft and silky in her fingers.

Mandy would do that for ages, if the child had not run away from her.

At times she would just sit, legs crossed, somewhere by the grey, sad wall, hands crossed as well, and she would rock her upper body back and forth.

Mandy would do that for a long time, her eyes being empty, with no expression.

There were usually 24 children in the playroom.

Some children could speak some word or even sentences and were able to recognise some letters of the alphabet.

Toys, mainly blocks and dismantled dollies, were scattered around the room with little girls, aged between 4 and 8 years old.

Some children would fight for a toy they wanted, even when the toy was placed in the lap of another.

How they could fight!

With no words – not many were able to say more than one syllable, sounding more like moan or a grunt.

At times the games were played: “rotten egg” was enjoyed very much, except nobody wanted to be the one and it was quite noisy, pointing, and screaming at the person being the rotten egg.

They loved to play musical chairs.

They even tried to hum the tunes playing in the old record player over the loudspeaker.

There was no equipment like that aloud, or safe, in the playroom.

The doors were locked, so children could not just walk out.

Some were able to reach the door handle.

It has happened.

A six-year-old sneaked out of the playroom the moment the door was unlocked, walked through the corridor into the entry hall. She just kept on walking.

When she was missed, she was quite far away, on a footpath, out of the area, on the side of the road.

Yes, she kept walking: her head slightly tilted to the ground, not being interested in the surrounds – she just walked, her hands joined at the back.

On one occasion, people in the close shopping centre alarmed the police. They noticed her blank stare, no words, and untimely shakes of head, dressed in a blue tunic with red windcheater –the everyday dress style of the children.

The police brought her back, and the person in charge of the children at that allotted time was blamed.

The importance of locking the doors and windows could not be more emphasised over and over again.

Mandy has this constant urge to pull her own hair out. Sometimes there was a bunch of hair in her hands – it must have hurt her, but she did not cry.

She kept on pulling and pulling; not just her own hair, but hair of the girls in her reach.

There was screaming and the assistant in charge had quite a job separating Mandy from the other child's head.

If she could not reach the hair she would scream, hit her head on the wall, walking, no, pacing around the room moaning and grunting loudly.

The clock moved to past midday and lunch was served. Most of the children enjoyed the meals very much.

The morning shift was from 7am to 7.30 pm, when the night staff, one assistant, took over. One staff member to look after 48 girls: changing beds, showering when 'accidents' happened, when the whole body was soiled; sometimes administering extra medication as prescribed, observing for restlessness – not sleeping, epileptic fits and others, writing the report.

A huge responsibility for one person.

Not many of the girls could feed themselves – their hands could not follow the will to take food into their mouths.

If they tried, the food ended on the table, over their clothing, all over the face or in their hair; or the spoon had hit the teeth and gums so forcefully, the bleeding followed.

No, this was not acceptable.

Carefully guiding their hands, or feeding them, was the answer.

Food was enjoyed, but not always.

Many times it was spat out or vomited all over the table, or the ward assistant, or the girl sitting next at the table.

Many times the hands ended in the plate – in the soup, in the mash potatoes or squeezing the vegetables.

Typical routine followed every meal: brushing teeth, washing faces, and toilet time.

Mandy had very sensitive gums and brushing teeth was very important.

Every time, even with the softest of toothbrushes, Mandy was bleeding so much.

She panicked every time she saw blood.

She cried and fought with everyone trying to do the toothbrushing.

She was throwing herself on the floor, kicking everyone, screaming and spitting. Every time it was quite an ordeal, brushing her teeth, three times a day.

After lunch there was some quiet time: sometimes watching television or just sitting on the floor in the playroom and listening to some music.

All the children were given very strong medication to calm them down – some of them were quite drowsy and unable to do anything: no running, or playing, or listening, or looking at pictures, or sitting and watching television.

They just sat at the wall, staring into space.

The effect of the medication – most of them were given this dark brown, strange smelling liquid, which must have been of foul taste, because they tried to spit it out.

But, they could not.

Mandy liked the ward assistant Helen. Often she followed her and came very close, trying to cuddle up to her, or touch her for the attention.

Ward assistants were kind and patient, and they understood.

The girls had no mothers to cuddle to; no mothers to kiss them every night. They needed love every day, most of the time.

But parents could only visit on Saturdays or Sundays.

The little gestures of gentleness were shown by the staff to the girls while they were put to beds in the large dormitory: sometimes a cuddle, sometimes a stroke of hair, a kind and soft word.

Mandy lay awake for a long time and wanted to pull her hair out, or pull the hair of girls in other beds.

Helen usually stayed in the dormitory until she was sure, everybody was asleep. Other assistants did the same.

And so the girls were growing up – everyday the same pattern.

In time Helen left the job.

At least 5 years later, Helen was at the beach with her own two little children, when a girl ran towards her, pointing at her with her finger and saying some sounds.

A lady hurried after her, apologising to Helen and pulled Mandy away, explaining, she was not well.

Helen knew at once it was Mandy from the ward; she allowed Mandy to touch her, and Helen smiled at her mother:

"It is okay. I know Mandy. I used to look after her years ago."
Mother looked at Helen, than at Mandy, and could not believe it.

Helen said to mother:

"Mandy recognised me, she did, she remembered me after a few years. Be very proud of her. This is great!"

Helen embraced Mandy, whose face was smiling.

Yes, Mandy recognised a ward assistant from 5 years ago.

"Mandy is still in the institution," her mother said, tears sliding down her cheeks.

Who knows, how much Mandy understood?

Was she still on so much medication?

She never could speak a whole word, so she would not be accepted to a special school . . .

But she recognised, and remembered Helen!

Five years later.

What does that tell us?

Mandy could never speak a whole word . . .
But she recognised, and remembered Helen!

Five years later.
What does that tell us?

No more, my Dear!

Sarah woke up with a sharp pain in her shoulder. She opened her eyes and for a while didn't know where she was. She looked around: a large window with thin white curtains, a small table with two chairs, a drip next to her bed. It was connected to her – the plug being taped to her left arm. No, what is this? She could not move or get up. With slightest movement the pain in her shoulder grew sharper. A nurse walked to her bed and smiled:

"Hi, Sarah, do you know where you are? You are in hospital. I am Vivian, looking after you. How do you feel?" she hurried to straighten the bed covers.

"I – I am in hospital? The children, Craig and Sophie?" she almost shouted.

"They are with your sister," said the nurse, "You need some rest. Try to sleep."

Sarah looked around the room again: on a bedside table was a small bouquet of yellow and white roses. Roses ...

The memories flooded back.

It was a sunny, late spring day, full of blossoms and flowering wattles, with birds chirping everywhere, when she arrived at the little chapel with her bridesmaid.

She wore a long, simple white wedding dress, with a short veil covering her face and a bouquet of white roses in her hand.

She slowly followed her bridesmaid, dressed in light orange, long gown, with orange and yellow roses in her hands.

Dan was in the chapel already, waiting for her to join him.

He was so handsome and so warm.

Every time he looked at her, she felt, she just melted.

They knew each other for almost a year and they loved each

other very much. Their time together was wonderful, full of kisses, embraces, plans and tender moments. They loved to dance. O, Dan was such a good dancer! They enjoyed picnics, riding on bicycles, swimming and went to the cinema. He liked western films and she came along, even when she would prefer a documentary or a good comedy.

At the wedding reception he had a little too much to drink and he was quite funny, the way his tongue was heavy in his mouth and words just wouldn't come out. She didn't like it, but saw all the other people having drinks and thought, it was all right: it was a celebration. Yet deep down in her heart she wanted the wedding day to be just perfect, so they would remember it for the rest of their lives. She knew, with all the love for him, there will be no more drinking.
How wrong!

The memory of Craig's birth flashed to her mind. Dan didn't stay with her in the delivery room. He did not hold her hand. He walked in the hospital ward with a huge bunch of flowers, a blue teddy bear and a big smile on his face. She could smell liquor and cigars when he bent down to kiss her. "We celebrated; me, and my mates. This is a big day. My son was born," he said like he was apologizing. Her heart was screaming: he did not stay at her side, but spent time with his mates, drinking!
It did not end there. Craig was growing and she loved him so much. He filled her days with his first words, his steps and lifting his little arms to her. Dan hardly ever picked him up or played with him. When Craig was drawing with coloured pencils and could hardly wait to show his work to Dan, he scrunched the piece of paper and threw it to the floor: "Keep that stupid rubbish away from me."

Dan was coming home later every day. He found excuses – mate's car broken down, his mate's wife was sick, some other mate

needed a hand in the garden. They would always drink: more and more. She could smell whiskey on him almost every day.

Then there was a night when she and Craig were having dinner. Dan was late again. Craig went to sleep and she was cleaning the kitchen, when he stormed into the house, his eyes dark and heavy, his speech slurred.

He was not happy, when Sarah reheated the dinner and he had thrown the plate, splattering the food all over the wall, breaking the plate and shouted:

"Where is my dinner? Am I not worthy of a freshly cooked meal?" and shook her hard by her shoulders.

She silently picked up the pieces of the plate on the floor, cleaned the food off the wall and started preparing a fresh meal.

When she was ready and called him, he was fast asleep.

The dinner was left untouched on the stove.

Sarah was crying – hurting, and could not sleep most of the night. In the morning Dan left early, like nothing had happened.

Sarah waited for his return at night, so they could talk.

He was late again and when he finally came, she approached him.

"Liar! I never did that!" he shouted at her and walked away.

Weeks passed without the incident, than another late night. He was drinking again, shouting at Craig for leaving toys in the lounge room and saying to Sarah, how friendly and chatty his mate's wives were: always happy, joining in the conversation and enjoying themselves.

Why is she such a bore!

He did not stop there.

He brought more bottles of spirits home and had drinks at home as well. He started inviting his mates.

They sat and drank, talked and complained.

Sarah tried to talk to him again, pleading.

He pushed her away, shouting at her.

He pushed Craig impatiently away when he wanted to show him a broken toy.

There were less and less tender moments between them.

He wanted her, o yes, especially after a drinking session – not gently, with no caressing words.

In time Sophie was born. Sarah was busier then ever with the baby and Craig, and Dan was coming home late all the time, angrier with her and abusing her verbally nearly every day, that she was a lousy wife, being a bore, never looked tidy, being lazy and unfriendly towards his mates.

But when she smiled and talked to one of his mates the other day, he went green with jealousy and accused her of flirting with the man and beat her up.

He has decided to go away for the weekends with his mates.

He bought himself a shotgun. For weeks all he could talk about was his shooting weekends, how much fun they have had, when they sit around a camp fire at night, how much they could drink and how they shoot the wild pigs and goats.

There was bigger gap between Sarah and Dan and he was becoming more and more distant. He would not talk to her much and she was becoming silent, withdrawn. She did not answer him back, for that made him angry and he has hit her again. She would not go out of the house until the bruises had faded, hiding away and nursing the pain.

All she had was her two little children.

On Tuesday her sister came visiting just after the night, he had hit her across the face again.

Her sister was horrified and angry, for Sarah had told no one about it. They had talked a long time and Sarah agreed to talk to a professional counsellor.

She had a few sessions, the counsellor being very involved in her case and when her confidence had grown again, she decided, she will not stand quiet any more and just take the blows.

Again Dan came home late. She could smell the drink on him. She was warned not to approach him when he was drunk, but he kept at her with his accusations, that she was lazy, a hopeless wife, who with, God knows, what she does during the day and how many men she had in her bed while he had to work.

She was very hurt and angry, forgot the warnings.

She said to him:

"Dan, I look after children, clean, cook, tidy up and work in the garden. Why do you accuse me of such terrible things? I am your wife."

Dan moved towards her and hit her across the face again.

She did not cry or move away.

She stood there, in front of him, looking at him:

"You are really showing your love for me, aren't you?!" she had thrown at him, with no fear.

That really made him angry. He has hit her again and again.

But she just stood there.

He was shouting and hitting her, until she fell.

He left her there.

In the morning, he looked at the empty bed beside him and got up. He walked into the kitchen and found Sarah there, drinking tea, her face all swollen. He looked at her and swore:

"You've got what you deserved!" and left.

So he knew what he was doing. It was not just the drink!, Sarah concluded.

He left her alone the next evening. There were no more tender moments between them – the days were following the nights of pain and sorrow, questions and despair, and for Sarah the evenings were filled with fear.

Fear for herself, fear for the children.

She has talked to the counsellor again. She made a promise to herself, she will not take the beating any more and she will tell him that, tonight.

She had enough of this madness!

Full of courage and strength she waited for the evening.
Dan was late again.
She will tell him tonight, she will leave him, if he hits her one more time.

The children, Craig and Sophie were already in bed, when he came home. She recognized the heavy steps, she recognized the smell of whisky lingering around him.

She was told, not to make him angry, when he was drunk.
He started with the dinner – the plate was thrown to the wall again, the pots and pans thrown in the sink, shouting at her, that she is a lousy cook and she better cook well for him right now.

But that was not enough.
He grabbed her by the hair, pulled her to the sink and pushed her in the dishwashing water.

“Here, you eat your lousy garbage!”

He was pushing her down, hard.

She winced herself out of his grip and said to him:

“I will not put up with this kind of behavior any more.

If we can not live like normal people, I will go.”

Dan jumped at her:

“What, what did you say? I am not good enough for you?

Who is this new man in your life? ” and started to slap her.

She moved away, backwards and looked for the way out.

“I am going, Dan, I can not live like this” she said almost crying.

She tried to find the way around him to avoid more punches, but he was too quick.

Dan just looked at her, when she escaped to another room.

He stumped into lounge room and poured himself another drink.

Sarah went to the children’s room, picked up Sophie and woke up Craig, and walked towards the door.

She was going this time. No turning back.

Dan was quiet and she assumed, he fell asleep on the couch.

She walked quietly towards the door, when like a lightning bolt, he was in front of her, with the rifle in his hand.

His face was white as the wall:

"You are not going anywhere. You are my wife!" he made a step towards her.

She froze. She did not expect him to go that far as to frighten her with the rifle.

He would not hurt her!

She made a step closer to the door.

He engaged the rifle.

'O, God, he means it!'

She pushed Craig behind her and put little Sophie with him, started to go backwards, sheltering the children:

"Dan, I am going."

Where did she get the strength to say a word – to say anything at all?!

The images flashed in front of her eyes: she was sheltering young Craig and Sophie with her body, when Dan, angry, abusing, drunk, stood in front of them with his rifle pointing at them.

Then everything went blank.

...

Her shoulder! The pain was deep, throbbing. She tried to move – it got worse.

"The bullet was taken out already. You are very lucky," said nurse Vivian calming, "everything will be all right".

Sarah's eyes closed: 'All right! How?!'

She will never go back to him.

The social worker came in later in the day to reassure her:

"Your husband will be charged with the assault.

The restraining order is in force already and you and the children will be taken care of in the safety of the refuge."

Sarah thought: 'Safe in peace! Never to be hit again. Never to be shot at again!'

"O dear Lord, what happened: to Love, Cherish and Honour you ... ?!"

Safe!
Never to be hit again.
Never to be shot at again!

"O dear Lord, what happened:
to Love, Cherish
and Honour you ... ?!"

Miracle of Love

Kylie was in hospital with horrific injuries after a car crash.
The driver, her fiancé, died while she was in a coma.
Kylie was declared a quadriplegic.
When she woke up from the coma, she looked frightened at all the equipment around her.
She was not lying in the bed. No.
She was hanging horizontally, face down on a strange contraption and she could not move.
She could turn her head a little, that was all. She looked around as much as it allowed her to turn to the ground.
Just grey, boring, sad floor there.
She could see nothing more.

The physiotherapist came in and introduced himself as Ken.
He told her he would massage her leg muscles and her hands.
He kept talking while he was exercising her limbs.
But she could not feel anything.

They told her she was quadriplegic, but she did not believe them.
How could she?
She is strong-willed, healthy; she will beat her body trapped in immobility.
She will!!

The doctor mentioned to her if the spine is in a state of shock, after spinal accidents, it could just be bruised with no permanent damage. The spinal shock could make her quadriplegic for 4-6 weeks. However, after the spine recovers from the shock she could fully recover.
But he was not sure. And the other doctors were not sure either.

No promises.

He also told her the spinal cord does not have the ability to repair itself if it is damaged. A spinal cord injury occurs when there is damage to the spinal cord either from trauma, loss of its normal blood supply, or compression from tumour or infection.

And he continued: "Sometimes in spinal cord injury there is complete loss of sensation and muscle function in the body below the level of the injury. In most cases both sides of the body are affected equally".

What good was that information for her?

She could not move, nor feel her body below the neckline!

Kylie hoped.

Was it in vain?

She was asking Ken questions many times, but received no answers.

Why not!?

Finally he said to Kylie she needs to be patient. Time will tell.

The contraption restricted her.

She wanted out.

She wanted to sit at the table, look around.

Look into people's eyes.

Doctor Justin kept saying to her:

"We will do more tests – no definite answers yet, except: we are not sure.

At the moment it does not look good. But we hope. Let's give it time.

Courage, Kylie, courage!"

If he is going to say that again, she was going to scream in frustration.

She thought to herself:

"Courage? Where is my courage? Stupid contractions! Get away from me!

My body is dead - I want to die too".

Her will – no will any more, only death wish.

She wanted to die so badly!

Her sister Claire showed her some photographs of fiancé's funeral – very sad. But he is okay now: gone, no suffering like her.

Damn him! And damned the reckless driving of the other driver! Drunk, of course!

And then the social worker came and was talking about the claim – recovery costs – insurance.

"Go away!" she screamed!

Kyle had problem concentrating and sometimes talking as well due to trauma.

And that was not all:

urinary incontinence - how embarrassing!

bowel incontinence. How much embarrassment must she endure?!

and nurses always checking for the pressure sores.

"For Christ sake, let me die!" she demanded.

And they were checking her lungs for pneumonia.

"Let me breath or let me die!" she accused the nurses.

And then again looking for blood clots, muscle spasms, chronic pain.

"For Christ's sake! If I cannot feel my body, how could I feel pain! Are you for real?"

The depression. Kylie recognised it herself.

No doctor or psychiatrist needed to tell her that!

Time, that is all she had – empty, long hours, sleepless nights.
She was afraid: living like that, only able to talk, hardly move her head, her mouth, her eyes.

She cried:

"I have no body. The body is dead, limp. Horrible! Useless!" and she swore.

She was projecting as well: rehabilitation - months of it.

Exercises four times a day.

"What for?" she screamed at the physiotherapist.

Bath?

What bath? Sponging of her dead body!

Or being lifted by Jacuzzi hoist into water.

Meals.

Being fed via tube mostly at the moment.

And visitors: her mum and dad, sister and some friends.

Why they keep coming, she cannot look at their faces?

Her head is turned towards the floor; she cannot see them, only hear their voices.

And the sympathy and crying!

"Just go, please, go!" she shouted.

Could not cope with the pity and sympathy.

Kylie's thoughts:

"Death is the answer. Claire can, she will help me!" she hoped.

The never-ending Get-well wishes and flowers!

And all the encouragement what the modern medicine can do.

She could not take it any more, no!

They wheeled Kyle to a sort of common room with other patients.
She was encouraged to join in and talk about her feelings – about anger,

about pain in the heart,

wishes not being realized, hoping for WHAT?

So terrible! No hope!

Just thinking of the empty days, disrupted by the rehab and food

– no future!

No plans for life with anyone – fiancé dead, but he would leave her anyway. Why not!? Who would be interested in her now?!

Every second day they turned her on her back.

She could stare at the ceiling now. At least she could look visitors and staff in the eyes.

Not for long.

Rehabilitation! The terrible word - it was a torture!

But, if one is tortured, they usually scream in pain.

She had no pain!. What was the use!?

This rehabilitation included methods to help her maximize the function through physical and occupational therapy and the use of assistive devices.

Did she hate those words: assistive devices!

And in another room she saw another girl, who had problem breathing because of the injury.

Like her, she was quadriplegic.

Slowly she told Kylie her problem: she was a singer, but now she could hardly talk. Her main muscles used for breathing were affected as well.

The physiotherapist working with them, told them both, they help patients to breath easy using a virtual settings: to help them to breathe easier doing the breathing and vocal exercises, including some singing to help them to control their breath. "It helped quite a few patients," he concluded.

The therapists were also aiming to bring quadriplegic patients together for advanced therapy sessions in virtual settings.

Kylie was looking forward to the next session so she could see the other girl again.

Slowly she managed to start using a computer, voice activation first, than learning to type with pen in her mouth actually, slowly advancing.

She typed into Google: Facebook.com/artists

And she got connected to many pages.

She has chosen the page with a beautiful painting of a sunset at the beach, and some others.
Maybe there will be an answer.

Facebook: a boy, an artist, looking for a pen pal.
Kylie was impressed by his painting of a sunset at the beach.
She wrote to him.
He answered.
She liked his writing. They became pen pals.
She did not correspond with others on Facebook any more.
Boy's name was Ryan.
They wrote of beautiful things in life.
Wishful thinking, but not revealing their conditions.
Kylie started thinking more positive, and was excited when he answered.
Later they exchanged reports of their accidents.
Kylie quadriplegic.
Ryan paraplegic.
Ryan was an accomplished ballet dancer – a skiing accident in New Zealand stopped his career.

They become quite good friends – helping, encouraging each other and sometimes it felt like crying on each other's shoulders.
Their email letters were descriptions of beauty of nature – Ryan writing to her about where he was taken to by his brother Ross.

Kylie was fighting the depression and a glimmer of hope were his letters.
The negative thoughts, dissolution, despair - terrible time for Kylie!
She loved nature; nice songs, poetry, mountains and sea, walking, but could not see anything any more.

Hanging on the contraption, face down; the only connection with the world was a little table below her head, where she had her pen and the computer keyboard and monitor.
Claire tried to take her for a short stroll and collect flowers for

her, autumn leaves, dew filled grass - but it made Kylie more depressed.

Life for her was over – she could not climb out of her deep depression.

Then one day Ryan asked her for her private email – to write more, just for her, not for others on Facebook.

She hesitated at first, but Claire encouraged her:

“It is only mail; he does not know where you are”.

Ryan wrote lovely letters to her. Often.

Almost every day. Sometimes a few times a day.

He wrote and described nature beautifully which Kylie liked.

Once she complimented him on his writing, he could not stop.

Every day the letters were nicer, more descriptive, full of praise of nature's beauty.

Kylie waited for his replies. She was never disappointed with his letters.

She started to write more as well. She asked him, if it is okay to write about her dreams. Ryan was more than happy to ask her to write more and more.

He, too, enjoyed her writings.

Months passed, with mails coming and going. It kept Kylie's day sane and more cheerful, awaiting his replies.

She felt sad, if there was no mail in the morning, when she opened the computer.

She waited and waited until the mail arrived.

But was that all she waited for?

She felt warm in her heart reading his lines, so nice, happy.

They could not believe it: they fell in love: Kylie and Ryan.

Kylie was fighting; she didn't want to fall in love.

She was discouraging him, and stopped writing.

Many unanswered letters followed from Ryan.

He wanted to see her and help her.

He was searching the net for any indications of her whereabouts. Kylie would not tell him her address – not even the town.

One day, while she was asleep, her sister Claire noticed Ryan's letter in the email and his plea, to let him know the address. She answered on Kylie's behalf and told him, asking him not to tell and disclose what she has done.

The letters continue to come – beautiful letters, full of appreciation, love, warmth and encouragement.

Many were unanswered. Kylie loved him, but the despair won every time: "What would he do with a cripple?" She even wrote to him to leave her alone, to stop writing.

But, Ryan kept on writing and describing the nature, music – the things she loved and appreciated. He was also describing his dreams of knowing her in person, their being together – the feelings, wishes were so real, and he believed them.

Kylie too, on occasions wrote beautiful descriptions of what she felt about the beauty of the world, and dreams of her life with her fiancé, which was cut short.

That made her sad, but lately she thought less and less about him. Sometimes she just wrote about the dreams, which will never be realized due to her condition: walking in the forest, at the beach, running in the grass – all just impossible dreams!

Ryan answered her with more beautiful words, more encouragements.

The letters were coming and going, for quite a while.

They realised, they became closer to each other.

Nearly dependent on each other's letters for strength and hope.

Kylie's sister told Ryan at another occasion, her 22nd birthday was coming up:

"All she wants is to die.

She doesn't see her future at all – only maybe the damn wheelchair, nothing else. No future to live for!"

Kylie wanted to end her miserable life. The letters, Ryan's words and hoping, were not enough.

She could not accept her situation – she did not want to live like that.

"No way!!"

She asked her sister to help her to die, with illegal drugs.

She begged and begged.

Claire could not do it.

She encouraged her, trying to look at bright side, but in vain.

The love Kylie had for Ryan, was drowning her in despair as well.

Death would be the answer!

There was no future.

Who would help her!?

Who would want her?!

What for!

The therapists, doctors, all tried to help and encourage her.

No good.

The social workers tried to enrol her in more workshops.

What for? Nothing helped.

On another occasion, while Kylie was resting, Claire wrote to Ryan about her death wish.

There was no answer for a while. Just silence.

On the day of her birthday, Kylie was more determined than ever, to end her life, after the hard physio session. She saw no future.

Never!

She has just returned from the tiring rehab when she was hanging on this strange contraption face down, staring at the boring floor. She was now trying to look through the window, crying, swearing,

and praying, when suddenly the door flung opened and a boy on a wheelchair rode in her room.

She had not seen or heard him. He entered silently.

Then the chair squealed and she knew, someone was there.

She could not turn.

He drove around to face her - a handsome young man.

In his lap was a most beautiful bouquet of pink roses, he was holding in one hand, pushing the wheelchair even closer.

He smiled and spoke:

"Kylie".

More beautiful words. He said her name so softly. She knew who he was.

She looked away, eyes full of tears with words:

"Go away, please, just go, let me be".

But he came closer to her.

In his eyes she saw tears as well.

Compassion? Yes.

Hope? Yes.

Courage? Yes.

Love? Yes.

But she didn't want to see any of it.

She turned her face away, begging him to leave.

Ryan did not leave. He stretched his hand, put the flowers next to the computer, pulled himself up a bit to reach her cheeks with his lips:

"Happy Birthday, Kylie!" So gentle.

She cried more, tears flowing down her cheeks, washing away his kiss. She wanted to wash away all the memories of his gentle kiss.

He has to go away!

He must!

He gently said her name again, looking at her, begging her with his eyes.

She turned away again, tears running down her cheeks.

Ryan reached for her hand – it was warm, beautiful hand.

For a long time he held her hand, then raised it.

Kylie just watched his hand, closing her eyes.

Yes, she loved Ryan: boy with so many letters and encouraging words.

She loved him very much, but . . .

But, so what!!?

His lips were very close to her hand, almost touching, when he looked up at her again, searching her eyes.

Silence.

When he kissed her hand, Kylie felt a strange sensation: something very strange in her hand.

She could not work it out.

Then she realized: she felt his lips on her hand.

She felt his kiss.

O, she felt his kiss, his lips!

She could not pull the hand away.

Ryan was amazed:

"You can feel my kiss - your hand, yes, you can feel it!"

He lifted himself again and kissed her. So gentle, so loving.

More tears and he was catching them with his lips.

So much joy,

She can feel her hand!

She felt his kiss!

She asked him to kiss the hand again, for she did not believe it.

And he did.

Yes, she could feel the warm, gentle lips on her hand.

She can feel. Her heart jumped from joy.

Ryan pressed the buzzer and nurse walked in.

He explained, and she quickly called doctor Justin.

He came rushing. He examined her hand and yes: she could feel.

"A miracle, no less!", he mumbled. "What a good sign!"

Ryan was so grateful and so happy – a dreamer: his kiss 'awakened' Kylie's hand.

After many days of examinations and therapy, doctor Justin explained the situation and told Kylie the news – there is a small possibility of a partial recovery.

No promises as yet.

The time will tell how much recovery.

Kylie was overjoyed.

Ryan came visiting every day and they had many happy times together, talking, hugging, kissing, and even planning.

Kylie was a changed person.

Ryan, and everyone; the family, were so happy for her.

Kylie was beautiful and Ryan's love for her grew deeper and deeper.

With every moment.

She was responding to his love and kindness.

She was responding to the new, advanced rehabilitation and therapy.

She glowed in love, happiness and joy.

No more thoughts of death. She told her sister Claire, who was overjoyed.

Both, Kylie and Ryan meditated together often.

They used the visualisation as well:

making a mental movie of themselves as vivid and detailed as possible to stimulate actual experience, picturing their bodies being healthy.

Imagining being excited by every news of improvement.

Paying attention to details: more detailed, more the subconscious would believe it to be an actual experience, they read.

Using their senses.

They were seeing themselves, as they wanted - wished to be.

Hoping in faith.

Many months later Ryan brought flowers again. He pushed the wheelchair close to Kylie and took her hand in his. He took a small box from his pocket, tried to slide to the floor, leaning on his chair and asked her to marry him.

All his love was expressed in a gentle gesture of putting the ring on her finger.

Kylie cried in joy: yes, she could feel the lovely ring on her finger. She could feel it!

Kylie was so happy, her eyes full of love for him, when she said her YES.

Ryan encouraged her with the words of hope, courage, and love, which helped so much in her recovery. So much.

The embraces followed.

So many embraces, so many warm kisses.

A year later, Kylie was in the wheel chair and she had some sensations in the upper part of her body.

The prognosis was good, they told her.

Patience!

Hope.

Rehab, tests.

More tests.

More patience!

Hoping for more miracles?

Hoping.

Dreams: in her dreams planning the wedding.

Hoping to stand, in front of the altar, on her legs?

By his side, by Ryan.

She believed: the love made it happen.
The love, thrust and hope,
the determination,
the medical advances,
the warmth and gentleness . . .

And all the love!
Kylie felt so lucky!
Love is so powerful!



*Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength,
while loving someone deeply gives you courage.*

Lao Tzu

Take my Voice - Your Song will Rise

Ethan's accident has given Ella a chance of getting a donation of his vocal cord – larynx box, to her, his sister, as a test operation.

Is it possible?

Ethan's blood-type compatibility was checked, and parents gave permission to obtain the organ.

The larynx ("voice box"), located in the throat, houses the vocal cords as well as channels air for breathing.

The surgeons warned parents that Ella might have some difficulty inhaling at first:

"She would need to rely on the tracheostomy tube to breathe. And swallowing the food and liquid safely, and to speak, she will have to cover the tracheostomy tube, which will remain in place for an undetermined amount of time. Later, as the larynx continues to heal, Ella will regain nerve and muscle function and sensation in her throat, to be able to swallow safely and later have the tube removed".

Ella was prepared on the operating table.

Surgeons in an adjacent operating room removed Ella's damaged larynx and prepared the transplant site for the new organ, which required reconnecting five nerves, three arteries and two veins. Much of the delicate implant work required microsurgical techniques, with surgeons working simultaneously on each side of the patient to suture the organ into place.

When recovering from the anesthesia, Ella could hear Ethan's voice, as he spoke to her.

'But, he was dead"! Ella thought:
'How could he?'
Again she heard Ethan's voice:
"Take my voice - Your Song will Rise!"

The operation was successful to the extent that Ella could talk slowly, not too clearly. But she spoke.
Her mind played tricks on her, she thought.
Ethan's voice again:
"Sing, Ella! Your song will rise!?"
No.
'Definitely there is something wrong with my head', almost loudly she said.
Has she lost her plot?

She mentioned to no one she heard Ethan's voice again.
Even in pain, she smiled:
'I wonder what they would think of me if I would tell them?'
Ella also 'heard' music in her head.
Beautiful melodies. She remembered them.
She needed to write them down.
During the day, in between recovery therapy, she had lots of time.
Parents brought her some blank music sheets as she requested on a note to them.
The melodies were being poured on the paper and she could hardly wait to play the tunes. Ella had such a gift for music.

She remained hospitalized for nearly four weeks following surgery.
During that time, she had several appointments at a nearby outpatient clinic, where they checked the transplant to ensure it was healing properly and had no evidence of a rejection.
Nearly two weeks after the surgery, Ella could try out her new vocal chords. She sounded croaky, but said a few words.
Ella just smiled.
Great!
The time passed slowly, but Ella was patient.
She was so grateful for Ethan's gift. So hopeful.

After a long recovery, speech and voice exercises, she was finally dismissed from the hospital.

A great moment, when she made it home, to her music room.

She had not forgotten any of the melodies she heard so clearly in her mind.

No, she heard even more.

And when she was thinking of Ethan, she could hear even more again.

Beautiful melodies.

Ella studied music for years: piano, violin, harp and flute. Flute was hard, because her breathing needed so much more effort and control. She gave up trying to play flute.

She could often hear more melodies in her mind.

Nothing she knew, or heard before. New melodies.

Many of them. She noted them all down.

Many scores she wrote, composed, and played on her instruments.

Then one day, during her morning meditation, the lovely words come flooding to her mind.

Just lovely. Warm, soft and happy verses.

She typed them up and asked a former school friend Renata, who wrote some poems, to check them.

She was amazed:

"So much talent!"

And then Ella played the tunes for her too.

"Unbelievable!" exclaimed Renata.

She encouraged her to enter a song and music contest, playing her instruments.

For the competition, being televised nationally, she had chosen her favourite song; *Your gift of Voice*.

A young couple, Donna and her boyfriend Leon sang in a duet.

There was a dead silence in the hall – everyone holding their breath until the end.

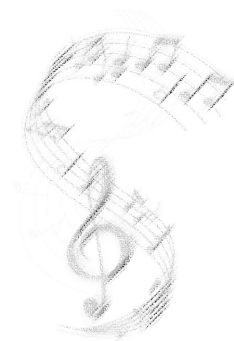
The audience awarded Ella, Donna and Leon with standing ovation.

The judges' decision: First prize!
Not just for Ella's playing the piano, or Donna's and Leon's singing,
but for the melody and lyrics as well.
A surprise: a song writing and recording contract.
Ella was so happy.
Her parents were very proud of her and could not be happier.
Ella silently thanked Ethan for the inspiration.

She often thought:
'So, her brother's voice she heard waking from the anaesthetics
was like a dictation, a premonition?':
"TAKE MY VOICE - YOUR SONG WILL RISE".
Here, she heard it again.
She was sure she did.

In years to come she composed and accompanied many hit songs
and wrote lyrics.
Donna and Leon were fantastic performers with such clear and
beautiful voices. They always sang in harmony. Just lovely!

Ethan was right: her songs did rise.
Rise to the top charts many times.
She was thankful to Ethan for his gift of voice, so she could speak,
and for melodies, and whispered lyrics.
They could only come from God, and from Ethan,
who was, being safe.



Special Mountain

Just seeing the mountain cause tears to appear in Susan's eyes. The memories flooded back to the years when Theresa and Susan trekked and climbed the mountain ranges together. Sometimes with others in the group, other times on their own. They conquered many summits, some well over 2500 metres, some even higher.

They were such beautiful mountains.

Both, Theresa and Susan enjoyed the Alpine flora and exceptional views below when some houses looked like little playhouses scattered over the lush green landscape.

On the lower part of the mountains the sheep and goats were feeding on the mountain pastures with bells around their necks.

Not many shepherds were attending the flock.

The alpine flowers on the pastures were offering heavenly scent including scented Red Vanilla Orchid, Globeflower, Alpine Snowbells, *Dianthus sternbergii*, Alpine Rock Jasmine, and beautiful flowers as Edelweiss, Trumpet Gentian (*Gentiana clusii*), Bavarian Gentian, Purple Saxifrage, pink *Rhododendron hirsutum*, forming the low cushions among the sharp light grey limestone rocks.

One would just want to lie down on the flowering bed and dream.

Seeing the mountain of their dreams made Susan cry.

Theresa dreamed of climbing this majestic mountain, but the illness has ended her life and many plans had never eventuated.

She kept dreaming until her final day.

Years later Susan had an opportunity to go to the mountain of Theresa's dream.

The mountain was in front of her now. Through the tears she followed her gaze to the summit of unbelievable beauty bathing in the winter sun - its height, dangerous cliffs, glittering snow and glaciers.

Just too much. So overwhelming.

At once Susan felt a presence. She looked around:
not a person in sight.

But she felt she was not on her own.

Something strong right next to her, walking with her, higher and higher, needing to go further . . .

The sunshine was warm on Susan's shoulders and gentle breeze moved the occasional long grass blade having courage to push through the soft blanket of snow.

The presence was still with Susan.

She could feel it:

encouraging her to go higher towards the summit.

The weather warning in the early morning announced the rain and storms, but the sky was clear, beautiful light blue and the mountain was before Susan in all its glory.

Susan stopped to take a breath and drink in all this beauty:

light wind sweeping powdery snow in the distance, raising her eyes to the inviting summit.

She could still feel the presence.

So close, almost touching her, pouring courage into her body.

She felt the urge to continue.

The trek was getting steeper and rockier – every step was harder, but she kept going.

The presence beside and behind her was like a wind lifting her higher with every step.

The silence became a song of the mountain: inviting, welcoming, urging forward, up, higher and higher with every step.

Theresa dreamed all her life of conquering this mountain, almost 4,500 metres high, dangerous, exceptional, unique in its beauty, and so high.

She did a lot of climbing in the Alps until her illness stopped her movements, her will, and her spirit.

But now, Theresa is free!

As the invisible presence she walked her dream – the mountain, with Susan . . .

The path was steeper and steeper, snow deeper and rocks more dangerously sticking from the snow and ice, offering no safety – becoming more and more dangerous.

Susan raised her eyes to the top – so beautiful, so still, untouched by many, except by very few climbers she has seen clinging to the cliff wall and dangerous, almost vertical tubes.

Susan knew she could not go further – she was not experienced enough!

Too dangerous was the climb without the proper gear, ropes, and crampons, and especially without at least one companion.

Theresa could do it; she was very experienced.

Susan had not felt the urge any more. But she felt such a joy.

She knew, Theresa was with her - her spirit was with her.

She could feel her happiness, love for the dream mountain, she could not see in her life.

Now, with Susan, Theresa could see it – the magical mountain.

Susan felt her sister's presence so close, as if they were hugging like years ago in a storm, being caught on a different mountain, wet and freezing.

It was getting late and Susan needed to return, knowing, she could never climb the summits like Theresa could.

Again she felt the presence:

it felt like, as Theresa understood - too dangerous.

They were both lifted with joy and happiness – almost strange, but lovely feeling.

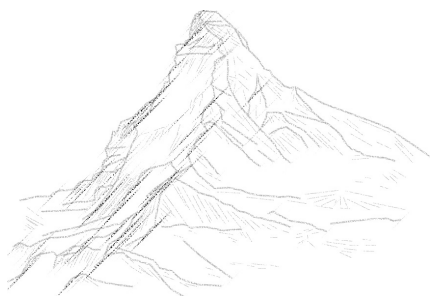
Susan was happy to see the mountain of Theresa's dream.

Her presence was so real, she thought, she could almost see her happy, overjoyed face . . .

For the last time her eyes lifted to the top of the mountain. She felt like a warm breath soothing her, drying her tears and thanking her . . .

Susan believed Theresa had experienced through her eyes the special time,
special space - the view of her dream mountain.

Susan's descent was happy, with a smile on her lips:
with gratitude and silent words –
the time of another Good-Bye.



*A compelling vision tells you who you are (your purpose),
where you are going (your picture of the future),
and what will guide your journey (your values). Ken Blanchard*

Thoughts of some readers:

John Ford B.A (Hons), Monash. Tutor U3A Knox

"I have taken great pleasure in reviewing some of the stories appearing in the body of work by Draga Gelt. Draga has put together a number of intriguing, entertaining and often poignant stories, based, in part, on personal observations and experiences. They are all different, but retain a constant theme based upon the precepts of Draga's belief in God and in the positive outcomes of Christianity."

Lili Eggleston Tomažič B.Ed., Post Grad. Dip.:

"Draga's stories and collection of thoughts in 'Starburst' will resonate with readers who have experienced or pondered on life situations.

The stories are of everyday conflict, interactions of different personalities, selftalk for motivation for courage in the face of adversity.

We see compassion, sympathy, prejudices in these stories and 'Closer Walk with Thee', 'Masks' and 'Naomi and Her War', touch on controversial subjects, philosophical and ethical, asking questions that demand answers.

'Starburst' is a collection of short stories that are a study of the discrepancies and many facets of human nature. They have the authenticity that can only come with having observed, witnessed, experienced or endured such situations.

A very interesting and thought provoking read."

Magda Pisotek B.Ed, Grad. Dip.:

"Draga Gelt's short stories 'Starburst' written in English captivated the reader's attention with such deep pondering and meaningful thoughts.

The stories were creatively written with passion, enticing the reader to wanting more.

The characters, the setting, the conflict and the commitment kept the stories running smoothly and allowing the action to develop in a logical way that the reader could follow. It brought, captured and created for the reader, own memories, experiences and encounters of different life situations. It took the reader on an absorbing journey!"

Ljubica Postružin, slovenska kulturna delavka - Slovenian Cultural Worker

'UTRINKI' Drage Gelt:

*"Vse to je del nas . . .
to sem čutila v črticah,
ki nas spominjajo na naše vsakdanje življenje.
Na tej zemeljski obli smo - kot utrinek,
ki da življenju simbol večnosti.
Ko se jutro prebudi smo del novega dne,
sončni žarki božajo naše telo,
deževne kaplje perejo žalost, ki se je nabrala v nas.
Na koncu nas čaka mavrica - čudež vsega lepega.
V nas je sreča, ljubezen, popolnost in upanje.
Vsak ima svojo zgodbo - veselo ali žalostno.
Vse to je del nas, ki živimo in upamo v vsak nov dan,
do našega konca v večnosti.*

'STARBURST' by Draga Gelt:

*All this is part of us . . .
I felt that in the stories,
which remind us of our everyday life.
On this Earth we are -
like the starburst giving life a symbol of eternity.
When the morning wakes us,
we are part of a new day;
sunrays caress our body,
The raindrops wash the grief accumulated in us.*

*In the end, a rainbow awaits us - a miracle of all the beauty.
Happiness, love, perfection and hope are in us.
Everyone has his own story - happy, or sad.
All this is a part of us.
We live and hope in every new day,
to our end of the Eternity."*

Frances Ryff, participating in many Slovenian cultural programs, art exhibitions and traditional folkdancing

'Starburst'. . . "the title in itself is inspirational!

This compilation of short stories, takes you through a journey of many emotions.

As you read each story, you are captivated with the truths of reality that are unspoken;

to having hope,

that there are still people out there who are selfless and willing to help others before themselves!

Each story has great meaning,

giving an insight into many aspects of people's lives.

The attention to detail in describing the feelings of each character and their surroundings, was remarkable.

You felt you were within the story.

'Starburst', was an amazing read, I thoroughly enjoyed Draga's inspirational and questionable subjects!"



Draga Gelt OAM was born in Slovenia.

She arrived to Australia in 1968 and has designed and published most of her own books:

Svet naših otrok - World of Our Children

Slovenians from the Earliest Times, 1985

Vse poti - All Paths

Let's Learn Slovenian Parts 1, 2 and 3 with Magda Pisotek and Maria Penca

Do you know Slovenian? and Do you know Slovenian? - Basic Grammar Rules, Language manuals

Mir in dobro - Pax et Bonum with Veronika Ferfolja

Anthology of Slovenian Artists and Sculptors in Australia with Liliana Eggleston Tomažič

Chronicle of Slovenian Schools and Slovenian Language Teachers in Australia

Golden Harvest and Beyond, Chronicle of Slovenian Association Melbourne

From Dreams to Reality, Chronicle of activities of Slovenians in Australia at the time of Slovenian Independence

I am a Slovenian too

My Armful of Gifts

Pot v Mt Everest Base Camp - My Trek to Mt Everest Base Camp

Dreams of Love - Sanje o ljubezni

The Power of Words - Moč besed with Magda Pisotek and Maria Penca

Contributions to books and magazines:

Mediterranean Europe Phrase Book (Slovenian language) - Lonely Planet

Life. Be in It. Book of World Games by Jenny Robinson

Cosmopolitan Melbourne: explore the world in one city by Jock Collins

Fire in the Heart, The International Library of Poetry

Short stories and poems in *Republic of Slovenia, Misli, Vestnik, Rodna gruda, Slovensko pismo*

Draga is also the webmaster of the web portal ***Slovenians in Australia***.

*Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions.
Small people always do that,
but the really great make you feel that you,
too,
can become great.*

Mark Twain

*Many people, especially ignorant people,
want to punish you for speaking the truth,
for being correct,
for being you.*

*Never apologize for being correct,
or for being years ahead of your time.
If you're right and you know it -
speak your mind.*

*Even if you are a minority of **one**,
the truth is still the **truth**.*

Mahatma Gandhi

A deep blue night sky filled with numerous stars. Several bright stars exhibit prominent starburst patterns, with long, thin, light-colored rays extending from them across the sky. At the bottom of the image, the dark silhouettes of trees and foliage are visible against the horizon.

Kadar pride zadnja ura razsvetli se celi svet –
zadnja zvezda se utrne: srečen bom na vekomaj!
(Neznan avtor)

When the last hour is near, the whole world lits
at the time of the last starburst - I will be happy forever!
(Anonymous)