

BEING

B E C C

BORING

TOO





OLD

D - M E S

SOON...

SOON.

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| PHOTO BY ANA PERČINLIĆ

# THE SIEGE OF THE IVORY TOWER

TRANSLATOR

Ana Ćurić

## THE ILLNESS, THE FIRST TIME IT WAS SEEN

*The border is visible. Something is emerging over the border. It is slowly spreading, coming closer. It has its own sound and its own smell. As it advances, people are putting things away so that it does not devour them.*

Is that it?

We don't want to wait to find out, move what you can.

*The woman is packing a suitcase, throwing things in it, putting it away.*

It will be here sooner than we think, let's go.

*The man grabs his tools quickly, almost losing them to the Illness.*

What should I take, what's important?

*The man looks around, grabs a TV and takes it away.*

Here are some books and bread, this we need to take.

Chose whatever the f... you want.

*The man reaches out for a book.*

The fuck with the book, you can't eat it for breakfast.

*He changes his mind, he takes the bread instead, while the Illness is devouring the books.*

*The woman observes the arrival of the Illness.*

It is almost beautiful.

*The man is appalled.*

It's disgusting.

*The woman fixes her posture in front of the man.*

Yes, it's horrible, but it seems as if it's... flickering. It reminds me of better days.

The woman pushes away a wheelchair with the man sitting in it.

Take that child away from there!

This should be filmed, remembered.

*The journalist and the cameraman are approaching the Illness. Quickly, they set up the camera, trying to capture the dramatic scene.*

**THE JOURNALIST** Is it time?

**THE CAMERAMAN** Yes, wait...

**THE JOURNALIST** I am waiting.

**THE CAMERAMAN** No, there is something wrong with the camera.

*The Illness takes the camera. The cameraman is taken aback.*

**THE CAMERAMAN** We still have the sound, we can transmit it.

**THE JOURNALIST** Without the image?!

**THE CAMERAMAN** What else can we do?

**THE JOURNALIST** How pathetic are we? Ok, fast, let's do it with the sound.

*The cameraman signals they are on air, she can start with the news report.*



**THE JOURNALIST** We are now at the Bregana border checkpoint and even though we are only 30 minutes away from Zagreb, soon this border crossing towards Western Europe could be closed. Information from the neighbouring countries about the penetration and quick spread of the Illness have been reported daily and now we can testify to its dramatic breakthrough.

*The Illness grabs the microphone from the reporter's hands.*

**THE CAMERAMAN** The last sentence didn't come through.

**THE JOURNALIST** To hell with it.

*The cameraman pulls the journalist from the Illness, in the last moment, just before the camera gets swallowed.*

*Now, people are no longer moving things away, but each other, while retreating from the Illness. It is progressing. People are hiding behind each other, faster and faster, it all becomes a loop, the ones who are in the back are pushed up front, facing the Illness.*

Does anyone know what it is?

Curses and blessings.

The new things always are.

They change us and there is no return.

Don't talk nonsense. It's nothing other than...

*The space is shrinking. No more steps back. The Illness is here.*

## THE MIDNIGHT MEAL

**VIDA**, ER nurse

**MARTIN**, a doctor on duty

**SLAVEN**, a patient

**ZDENKA**, a patient

**GORAN**, Vida's husband

**PETAR**, Vida's brother

**ŠIMUN**, a doctor

**Doctors**, other staff, patients

*The Illness has settled down in Goran in this story and is making him wither.*

1

**VIDA, MARTIN, ŠIMUN, patients**

*In the hospital, ER hall*

*Vida is sitting in front of a computer, surrounded by doctors, an eager discussion is taking place. Vida has an old computer mouse that is making squeaky noise.*

**MARTIN** Check number two first.

**VIDA** I am. 9, 1030, 12, 13, 14, 1530...

**ŠIMUN** It's jam-packed.

**MARTIN** How is this noise not bothering you?

**VIDA** You get used to it. What about another room?

**MARTIN** I'd like number two.

**VIDA** But you can't have number two.

**ŠIMUN** Check number three.

*Vida scrolls the mouse down, the squeaky sound is unbearably enduring.*

**MARTIN** We must be able to squeeze it in somehow. Here you go, the carpal one does not take that long, it will be over sooner, and we can push the mastectomy back...

**ŠIMUN** Doctor Skoko's one? No way he'll allow it.

**MARTIN** Damn it.

**VIDA** And what about this slot at 6 o'clock in number five?

**MARTIN** Too late, there are no anaesthesiologists then.

**VIDA** And doctor Šarić? It's her shift.

**MARTIN** Only if I clone her.

**ŠIMUN** And Ivek, where is he? I can't find his name on the list.

**VIDA** He is on a sick leave.

**ŠIMUN** Is it his eyes infection again?

**MARTIN** Eye infection, nervous breakdown...

**ŠIMUN** Burnt out?

**VIDA** We have to go, we've kept them waiting long enough.

**MARTIN** No, find me a slot!

*The mouse squeaks again.*

**VIDA** It's beyond full.

**MARTIN** What about a swap?

**VIDA** Depends on you charm.

**MARTIN** And charm I have, so just find me the ideal candidate.

**VIDA** Solomun?

**MARTIN** No, a woman.

**VIDA** Well. Marijana has tendon ruptures in number three.

**MARTIN** Not enough time, Marijana hates me.

**VIDA** A cholecystectomy?

**MARTIN** Yes.

**VIDA** Doctor Kajić?

**MARTIN** Yes!

**VIDA** Number two?

**MARTIN** She has no idea what I have in store for her.

**VIDA** Poor woman.

*Šimun exits. As he opens the door, the patients are pouring in, lying down on the beds. Vida and Martin are accommodating them.*

**VIDA** I am afraid to even think how this will end.

**MARTIN** Maybe it will get better.

**VIDA** You're crazy.

**MARTIN** Maybe it all stops because of fear. It has happened before.

**VIDA** Maybe it will stop, but it won't get better.

**MARTIN** Is this why you are leaving? Because you think it will be better in Ireland. We'll be dying all over the place.

**VIDA** Not better, but maybe different.

**MARTIN** Different for you?

**VIDA** I don't care, my job is the same everywhere.

**MARTIN** Is he looking for a job there?

**VIDA** He'll work in a warehouse first.

**MARTIN** If they don't close everything down.

2

**VIDA, MARTIN, SLAVEN, ŠIMUN**

*Šimun rushes in pushing a hospital bed, Slaven is on it. Vida and Martin approach.*

**ŠIMUN** We have a fall from a balcony. Open fracture of the foot, upper leg, and left arm. Possible backbone injury, possible internal bleeding. The patient is conscious.

**VIDA** Name and surname?

**ŠIMUN** Slaven Robić.

**MARTIN** Are you with us, sir?

**SLAVEN** You're damn right I am.

**MARTIN** Which floor?

**ŠIMUN** Fifth floor.

*A moment of silence, they can't believe he is still alive.*

**MARTIN** A fifth floor?

**SLAVEN** Don't look at me, I don't understand it either.

**MARTIN** Do you feel pain anywhere?

**SLAVEN** Should I?

**MARTIN** That means no. Vida, take him to MRI, now.

3

**VIDA, SLAVEN, MARTIN, ŠIMUN**

*The sound of CT machine can be heard. Vida is standing next to Slaven. Martin and Šimun are in the background throughout the scene, getting dressed and ready for the surgery.*

**SLAVEN** The lights are too strong.

*Vida puts her hand over his eyes, to shield them.*

**VIDA** Do you have a headache?

**SLAVEN** No, I am in no pain.

**VIDA** Legs? Hands?

**SLAVEN** Nothing.

*Vida sees that Slaven is starting to tremble from crying, but she keeps holding her hand over his eyes. Slaven is crying, but soon he calms down and sighs.*

**SLAVEN** I'm sorry.

**VIDA** That's ok. It's all good.

*Vida is getting Slaven prepared for the surgery.*

**SLAVEN** I have six kids.

**VIDA** Really?

**SLAVEN** I was changing the window frames tonight. In the children's rooms.

**VIDA** So, you are you a carpenter then? My husband is one too.

**SLAVEN** Who is he working for?

**VIDA** For my brother. He just helps out a bit. It's not his occupation.

**SLAVEN** It's not mine either. It's easy to jump into it, from one thing to another.

**VIDA** Yes, my husband did that too.

**SLAVEN** I change everybody's windows. This evening there was not enough light. It was too late to do it.

**VIDA** Were you working the whole day?

**SLAVEN** Yes.

**VIDA** And then some moonlighting. And then a favour or two. And, in the end, a bit more around your own house.

**SLAVEN** Correct.

**VIDA** A day is not long enough for all the work that has to be done.

**SLAVEN** No, it's not. Life does not fit in...

**VIDA** The doctor will come soon. Don't be afraid.

**SLAVEN** My son is downstairs.

**VIDA** Yes, I have seen him. Don't worry, we'll keep him informed.

**SLAVEN** Nothing hurts... That can't be good, right? I can't live like that.

*Slaven starts crying again. Vida approaches him soberly.*

**VIDA** A human being inhales approximately 15 times in a minute, and if somebody upsets them, then the number of inhales increases. It is likely that the ones who will upset you the most will be your children, especially since you have six of them... so, I believe that you will spend the rest of your long life living to the fullest.

*Slaven is weeping quietly. He then stops and loses consciousness. A moment after, Slaven is dead.*

*Vida, Martin and Šimun pause for a moment, shocked. Then they perform CPR.*

4

**MARTIN, VIDA**

*Martin is writing down data on the computer. Vida is looking at her phone, holding it tightly and anxiously.*

**VIDA** Goran was reading a book.

**MARTIN** What did she just say, how many beers did she have? You are lying, my dear, it was not just a drink. What did you say?

**VIDA** What I wanted to say is, not that I understand it, it all seems vague, but Goran was reading a book that says all existence is pain.

**MARTIN** Nonsense.

**VIDA** You think?

**MARTIN** Of course. That one has tried his best to be unhappy.

**VIDA** But all those who come to us, they are all in pain. It is hard to watch sometimes.

**MARTIN** Well, yes, but that's what we do. They come to us because we know how to handle their pain. If our job was to move levers in a theme park, they would all leave dizzy with nausea from all the cotton candy and the feeling of absolute happiness from the adrenaline pumping around their bloodstream. They leave the hospital feeling dizzy with nausea from the hospital food and the feeling of absolute happiness because they are alive... or because their condition is drastically better than when they first came in.

**VIDA** But that happiness comes from avoiding terror. That's not happiness as happiness.

**MARTIN** But I still think each of us would choose that kind of happiness – the happiness of dodging death over the happiness of a great wheel ride.

**VIDA** And what about us?

**MARTIN** What about us?

**VIDA** Every time you saw somebody's wound, you are hurting them. How should we deal with it, with what we have to do?

**MARTIN** Are you joking? I hope we are not having some moral discussion on whether it is more right to not hurt and thus not help somebody or to hurt while knowing they will be better. We can have it, but you'll lose.

**VIDA** No, we are not. I am just saying, sometimes it is hard...

**MARTIN** Look, I know everything is strange now, and it always is when somebody... goes this way. But that is not our problem. We are trying to prevent the worst, but sooner or later the worst can't be prevented. It's over. No need to cry about it.

**VIDA** It's not just that...

**MARTIN** You better focus on your job interview because that's the future you can control.

*Vida remains silent.*

**MARTIN** What do they even want from the interview?

**VIDA** They want you to show up.

**MARTIN** The bar sure is low. And what do they offer?

**VIDA** A bit of everything.

**MARTIN** I hope it includes a new non-squeaky computer mouse.

5

**VIDA, PETAR**

*A phone call. Vida is obsessively cleaning the office while being on the phone.*

**PETAR** Gosh, you really are persistent.

**VIDA** Pero, what brings you here? Is Goran with you?

**PETAR** He was at my place, he left his phone.

**VIDA** Damn it.

**PETAR** He went half an hour ago. Is it something important?

**VIDA** Not really. Did you have work to do?

**PETAR** Nope, Lucija has some fair tomorrow at school, selling flowers, some shit like that. She didn't tell us on time, so we spent the whole evening, Mirela and Lucija and me and Goran making flowers out of crepe-paper, they sure look like crap.

**VIDA** Who looks like crap?

**PETAR** The flowers! The flowers look like crap. As if we chewed up the shitty crepe-paper and spat it out.

**VIDA** Pero, can you take the phone back to Goran?

**PETAR** Now?!

**VIDA** Yes, now.

**PETAR** No, Vida, I can't, it's 2 am in the morning. (pause) Are you really worried again?

**VIDA** It depends on how much you drank.

**PETAR** Not much.

**VIDA** Right.

**PETAR** Not much, I swear, a few beers.

**VIDA** He didn't drive that way, I hope, did he?

**PETAR** It's all fine. Why the hell do you worry all the time? Jesus, if Mirela kept on nagging like that, I'd throw myself off a cliff.

**VIDA** You are such an idiot, really...

**PETAR** I don't know how much he drank, I know how much I did. Here, I am counting the bottles, one, two, three, four, five, six, I had at least four, so... he had two, leave him be. We wanted to hang out, one last time, before the end of the world. (pause) I won't go and give him back his cellphone, he'll get it tomorrow. He went, he is not drunk, he is sober and ok, he is probably already in bed sleeping the sleep of the righteous, and righteous he is.

**VIDA** Ok. Good night.

**PETAR** Vida?

**VIDA** Yes?

**PETAR** Just so you know. The windows we installed at Šoićs' place. Goran did not want to take the money again.

*Vida stops.*

**VIDA** Ok.

**PETAR** I told him he was a fool.

**VIDA** Ok.

**PETAR** I love you sis.

**VIDA** I love you too, you little shit.

6

**ZDENKA, VIDA, GORAN**

**VIDA** They are all tiny, don't worry. Not one needs to be stitched, it will all heal naturally. It won't even show.

**ZDENKA** I put my hand in front of my face. My reflexes are still working... even if my sight is deteriorating.

**VIDA** Don't be mad. The body is what it is.

**ZDENKA** That's because you are young. Being old becomes boring soon... too soon.

**VIDA** That's what youth is for, to jump in and help.

**ZDENKA** I really hope you will not have to stitch me again... I hope this is the last time.

**VIDA** Whenever needed. I am glad to see you again, even if the circumstances are like this...

**ZDENKA** I won't do it again, I promise. (to herself) Stupid.

**VIDA** There, there. I am afraid to ask what you tell yourself when you do something on purpose. This is just an accident. I'll put some ointment on it. It will heal quickly, and you'll look like a girl again, you'll make the boys turn their heads on the street and whistle, you won't be able to get rid of them.

**ZDENKA** What do you think? Should I be scared?

**VIDA** Of everything that has just happened? One should be cautious.

**ZDENKA** Isn't it better to just let the old ones die?

**VIDA** No, it's not.

**ZDENKA** But look at us, look at me, I can't do it on my own.

**VIDA** You don't have to.

**ZDENKA** We're just a burden.

**VIDA** I know it's difficult to lose your independence, but it's just a body. Your family needs you for other reasons.

**ZDENKA** The body carries it.

**VIDA** And let it carry it for as long as possible.

*Vida finishes bandaging Zdenka, Goran comes in. Zdenka looks as if she's seen death itself. Vida follows her gaze.*

**VIDA** It's ok, he's my husband.

*Vida helps Zdenka leave the stage, then she comes back.*

7

**VIDA, GORAN**

*Goran is sitting and folding the paper flowers, red poppies. Vida is observing her husband while he folds the paper. Next to him is a heap of red paper and a plastic bag with a Tupperware container, which he takes out of his pocket and puts it next to Vida.*

*Goran is a tired-looking man, death is in his case a matter of decision. Vida refuses to admit it.*

**VIDA** Poppies?

**GORDAN** The easiest to fold.

**VIDA** And the most beautiful.

**GORAN** Yes. I don't really know what I'm doing. We watched some You Tube videos on how to fold it. We're all lousy, but when you put it all on one heap, it doesn't look that bad.

**VIDA** Are you all doing poppies?

**GORAN** Pero is making daises... Making... He cuts them out of paper and then Lucija paints the petals. Mirela is making roses, she is the only one not completely useless...

**VIDA** Why are you helping her in the first place? It's her own fault she didn't announce it on time.

**GORAN** Luci? C'mon, she is a child.

**VIDA** She is twelve. She can talk, walk, go to school, she knows her responsibilities.

*Goran seems indifferent.*

**VIDA** You left your cellphone at Pero's place.

**GORAN** Yeah, I figured it out when I opened the fridge.

**VIDA** I called you. For no specific reason, just to see if you were back home. I wasn't checking on you, just so you know...

**GORAN** (uneasily) I was looking for... Nevermind, I checked the fridge... I saw you had forgotten...

*Goran is giving her the Tupperware. Vida knows he is the only person in the world who would do such a thing for her.*

**GORAN** And then I realized I had forgotten the cellphone.

**VIDA** You didn't have to drive here, I'd figure something out.

**GORAN** I didn't drive.

**VIDA** You walked? All the way down here?

**GORAN** It's fine. Better to be outside, than inside.

**VIDA** Why didn't you take the car?



*Vida notices his embarrassment. It's clear to her now.*

**VIDA** If you needed money for gas, you should have told me.

**GORAN** It's not that at all, really, I just wanted to walk a bit.

**VIDA** Pero told me you worked your guts out, and that you again refused to take the money.

**GORAN** I'm not really working, I am just helping Pero, it's not my job, I don't do it very well and shouldn't be paid for it.

*Vida has heard it all before, but she still can't believe it.*

**GORAN** I am sorry... I am sorry I don't contribute...

**VIDA** It's not about that at all.

**GORAN** It's obviously a problem, but Pero is a trained carpenter, he does magnificent work and deserves the money for it.

**VIDA** Pero has no complaints about your work. On the contrary.

**GORAN** Pero talks nonsense, I just do the simple tasks, and if I could lift more, I would be more useful, so I failed as a heavy lifter too.

**VIDA** Have you had any sleep today?

**GORAN** I was just lying down.

**VIDA** I wanted to ask you to pick me up after that interview, but...

*Goran seems to have no idea what she is talking about.*

**VIDA** For a hospital in Dublin...

**GORAN** Yes, when does it end?

**VIDA** Nevermind. Stay at home and get some sleep.

**GORAN** No, I'll come pick you up...

**VIDA** You can barely keep your eyes open.

**GORAN** Yes, but I can't fall asleep...

**VIDA** Why don't you take a sleeping pill...

**GORAN** I don't want to, no more pills...

**VIDA** Maybe they'll help this time.

**GORAN** Nothing helps...

**VIDA** In a month, we could be in Ireland.

**GORAN** We could.

**VIDA** We will spend time with Kristina and Marjan.

**GORAN** They have a child now.

**VIDA** So what? They are still your friends.

**GORAN** They are, I am just saying, things are different now.

**VIDA** It will be different for us to.

*Goran gets unsettled by the thought of it.*

**GORAN** Is that what you want?

*Vida cannot believe Goran is asking her the question she thought was answered long time ago.*

**VIDA** Yes, and what do you want?

**GORAN** I don't want you to carry the burden of life for the both of us.

**VIDA** You just need to get some rest.

**GORAN** Not a single grown up should expect being taken care of. Not to be able to carry the daily burdens on one's shoulders. The blessing of life is that one doesn't really have to carry it all on one's own. But we have to be able to, if that is required of us.

**VIDA** I am not asking anything of you. And I don't really understand you when you talk like this.

**GORAN** You are too patient.

**VIDA** You can find all the excuses for everyone else, and not even one for yourself.

**GORAN** This has been going on for too long.

**VIDA** Is that so? Because I have not had enough.

*Vida takes him in her arms, as if she is trying to keep him there forever. But Goran is somebody who has not belonged to this world for quite some time, he cannot respond back, so she has to let go. She is shattered.*

**VIDA** I am sorry...

*Goran lights a cigarette. Vida takes out the Tupperware and looks inside.*

**GORAN** Is that dinner or breakfast? How do you call your midnight meal?

*Vida is not thinking about food, but about what she has just lost.*

**GORAN** I must go.

**VIDA** My break isn't over yet.

**GORAN** I have to finish those flowers. 37 to go.

**VIDA** Until when?

**GORAN** Until tomorrow.

**VIDA** How much time do you need to do it?

**GORAN** Two more days.

**VIDA** Fuck it. You didn't even finish your cigarette, did you?

**GORAN** I didn't even feel like smoking.

**VIDA** Will you come pick me up?

**GORAN** I will.

*Vida takes out some money from her pocket.*

**VIDA** It's for gas.

*Goran is looking at the money and his hands are shaking. He has no other option but to accept it. He takes it, puts it into his jacket, turns around in a ghostly manner and goes away.*

8

**VIDA, MARTIN, other hospital staff, a patient**

*Panic at the ER.*

*Vida is with Martin and the other staff. A patient is unconscious. They are trying to save her, Vida can barely see her with doctors blocking the view.*

*She doesn't seem well. Vida is looking at her long hair falling from the bed, with locks matted with blood. She has one shoe on one foot, the other cannot be seen from this angle.*

*Vida responds quickly to what she has been told by doctors, she seems gathered when they address her, she does her chores, but she cannot come closer because too many people are around her.*

*She is looking at their backs while they are frantically doing their jobs, fighting time. At one moment, Martin walks angrily away from the bed, takes away his glows demonstratively, and starts swearing. Vida sees the faces of other doctors, they are defeated. They all look at the clock at the same time.*

*It is already 6 in the morning.*

9

**MARTIN, VIDA, ŠIMUN**

*Vida is sitting gloomily, Martin is walking around like an animal in a cage, Šimun is eating cookies, distractedly.*

**MARTIN** I don't understand it...

*Martin screams from the bottom of his lungs, everybody else shudders.*

**ŠIMUN** What's the matter with you, you fool, you Dalmatian idiot?

**MARTIN** I need to go and run. I can't breathe here.

**ŠIMUN** Run where?

**MARTIN** Anywhere, I just want to feel the pain in my lungs. Like there is not enough death around. I don't know why we are trying to save them in the first place. If they want to jump off a cliff, shoot themselves... let them, no need to bring them here for us to fix them.

**ŠIMUN** It's not certain yet...

**MARTIN** You've heard what the policeman said.

**VIDA** The policeman said they didn't know yet.

**MARTIN** He said that officially they can't make any comments, but that it seems...

**VIDA** But, yes, you are so certain.

**MARTIN** You have blood all over your hands.

**VIDA** Get out.

*Martin is not moving.*

**VIDA** Get out!!!

*Martin and Šimun get up, both silent, they don't understand her breakdown.*

*Vida sits motionlessly.*

*A whimper comes out of her throat.*

*After some time, she hears Martin calling her from somewhere afar.*

*She stands up, washes her hands, holds on to the sink with her hands. She is trying to calm herself down.*

*She takes off her nursing uniform and puts on her own clothes. She stares at the uniform.*

*Martin walks into the room again, sits beside her and starts singing "Dirty Old Town". He kisses the crown of her head, like she is a child. Vida lets a sound out, half laughter, half mockery.*

**MARTIN** When is the interview?

**VIDA** At 9.

**MARTIN** Can I visit you?

**VIDA** Only as a tourist. We can grab a beer.

**MARTIN** Or five. Good luck.

*They say bye to each other, and she goes out.*

10

**MARTIN, ŠIMUN, an orderly**

*Martin goes back to work, into the operating room. He washes his hands. The orderlies are bringing in the stretchers.*

**MARTIN** What do we have?

**ŠIMUN** Unfortunately, it's too late. Actually, let's go downstairs, immediately.

*Martin looks at a man covered with sheets. He moves the sheets slowly away and as he does it, red paper flowers under them start falling out.*

## THE SIEGE OF THE IVORY TOWER

**VLASTA**, a nurse, in her late thirties  
**MIRJANA**, Vlasta's colleague from work  
**BRUNA**, Vlasta's colleague from work  
**ANA**, Vlasta's colleague from work  
**NEVEN**, a waiter working for a catering service and Vlasta's brother  
**RATKO**, Neven's superior  
**A PORTER** in the hotel  
**THE INTERVIEWER**, in the Ivory Hospitals panel  
**FIRST WAITER**  
**SECOND WAITER**  
**FIRST NURSE**  
**SECOND NURSE**  
**THIRD NURSE**  
**MR. LEARY**, the manager of Ivory Hospitals

### 1 NEVEN, RATKO, other waiters

*The hotel's kitchen. This time, the illness is in Neven, he is constantly on the verge of collapse.*

*Ratko outranks all the waiters, but he is not their manager. However, today he is in charge. Neven is the scapegoat of the day. The other waiters do not dare to say a thing.*

**RATKO** I don't know what you were thinking.  
**NEVEN** I don't know how they showed up so quickly.  
**RATKO** I never park there.  
**NEVEN** But there were no free spots.  
**RATKO** Of course.  
**NEVEN** We had to stop by...  
**RATKO** Do you think I care?  
**NEVEN** I still don't understand how the tow truck came so quickly.

**RATKO** They called.  
**NEVEN** Why...?  
**RATKO** Are you really so dumb?  
**NEVEN** But we are only doing the job we were given...  
**RATKO** And those guys weren't...  
**NEVEN** That's not our fault.  
**RATKO** Do you think I care about their feelings? You should have thought of that. So, what now, wise guy?  
**NEVEN** Josip has a friend who works at the impound, he will let us know as soon as the van arrives there, and we can go pick it up. It should be there any minute, so we can probably go straightaway...  
**RATKO** Are you going somewhere now?  
**NEVEN** It doesn't have to be me, maybe...  
**RATKO** It won't be you.  
**NEVEN** Ok, what should I do?  
**RATKO** Find something that needs to be done. Do I have to tell you everything?  
**NEVEN** Ok, I'll... I'll arrange the tables.  
**RATKO** What will the others do then?  
**NEVEN** They can't do anything, not until the van is back.  
**RATKO** Josip can go to the impound. The others, arrange the tables. And you, there should be a broom somewhere, take it and sweep the floors.  
**NEVEN** But that's not something we...  
**RATKO** Let the local boys see we mean well.  
**NEVEN** Makes sense.  
**RATKO** Don't be a wise guy. You think you are either too intelligent or too beautiful for this job.  
**NEVEN** That's not true.  
**RATKO** It was not a question, but an observation. I can see you are constantly making trouble... You like the money, without the effort...  
**NEVEN** That's not...  
**RATKO** It's not? Because now, because of you, nobody is working. We can just sit on our asses and let the time pass.

*Neven's knees twitches from weakness, he has to hold on to something to remain standing.*

**RATKO** You don't have to go on your knees, begging won't make any difference.

*Ratko comes closer so that only Neven can hear him.*

**RATKO** There is a list. If they start tightening the grip again, if they force us to stay at home, as far as I am concerned, you'll be the first one to go.

*Neven takes the broom and goes away.*

### 2 VLASTA, her colleagues

*In front of the hotel, Vlasta approaches her colleagues.*

**VLASTA** What's up ladies? You look as you are ready for a cigarette break, the only thing stopping you is your conscience.

**MIRJANA** I'll have one. I don't know about you, but I can't handle it.

*Everybody but Vlasta lights one.*

**ANA** Wait a minute, you've encouraged us to take a break, and now you are not taking one?

**VLASTA** It's not my fault you are easy to influence.

**ANA** C'mon, really, no ciggies? Didn't you stop breastfeeding anyways?

**VLASTA** Yes, I did, but I must admit, I don't miss the smell. And the girls are now old enough to understand, and I don't want to give them excuses for arguments we are going to have when they start smoking.

**MIRJANA** Yes, all of mine started to smoke too early. And I couldn't tell them anything...

The good thing is I can now borrow theirs.

**BRUNA** We'll see how long it lasts.

*She puts a cigarette into her pocket.*

**ANA** What do you think, how long will this last?

**MIRJANA** Not too long, I hope, I have to be there at 12.

**BRUNA** Wasn't Tomislava supposed to take your shift today?

**MIRJANA** Yes, but her kid got sick.

*They exchange a meaningful look.*

**VLASTA** Well, for her kid's sake, I hope she's not telling the truth.

**ANA** I would never lie about my kid being sick.

**MIRJANA** God forbid such a thing backfiring.

**BRUNA** Why the hell do they have the interviews in the hotel?

**VLASTA** They want to show how rich they are. Look at us, loaded, we can buy your entire labour force. They'll be underpaid but will earn more than in this shithole of a country. Let's go ladies, let's go.

**BRUNA** Do you think they offer poor salaries? Are their nurses low-paid?

**VLASTA** Their people are going to America and Australia. Something must be the problem.

**BRUNA** I've not heard anything about it.

**MIRJANA** They are going there because they are sick of the rain.

**ANA** They are going there because they can't smoke in bars.

**MIRJANA** Damn it, is that how it is?

**ANA** What do you think they will ask us?

**MIRJANA** How soon can we board the plane?

**VLASTA** I don't care.

**BRUNA** What do you mean?

**VLASTA** I'm not sure I want to go.

**BRUNA** So what, are you staying here?

**VLASTA** Yes, why not, what do I need that I don't already have?

**BRUNA** Everything.

**VLASTA** Money.

**BRUNA** So, everything.

**VLASTA** You sound like my Vlado.

**BRUNA** Vlado is right, you should listen to your husband.

**VLASTA** You have a good reason to go. Vlado thinks he will be welcomed as a king, they will bring the red carpet and say "thank you Vlado, for helping the Irish economy with your dilettante talents". Things don't work that way.

**MIRJANA** Why are you here then?

**VLASTA** I told him I'd go. I didn't tell him I'll get it.

**ANA** Anyways, what's the procedure if they take us? Who do we need to report it to?

**MIRJANA** You log into your e-citizen profile, there is a form there called "I am leaving this country," you write down your fiscal number, then you sign it and send it to the local police administration office... there are a few optional parts of the form, such as "list the reasons for your departure," there you can write down "is this really a question?"

**BRUNA** We could go inside.

**MIRJANA** You mean, out of this country?

**BRUNA** I mean, inside for the interview.

**ANA** Does anyone have a gum?

**VLASTA** I have some candy.

**ANA** Yes please.

*Vlasta is giving candies away. At one moment, she notices Neven. She freezes. The others leave, while Vlasta continues to watch Neven who is sweeping the floor in front of the hotel.*

### 3

#### NEVEN, VLASTA

*Neven is feverish and his temperature is increasing. He is sweating, despite being cold. Vlasta is watching him. He takes a break because he knows something is not alright.*

*She is watching him and when he looks back at her, she sings a melody. Neven is looking at her as if he is dealing with a crazy person, he is not sure if it is real. Vlasta continues to sing.*

**VLASTA** I forgot the rest of the tune. Do you remember? Do you?

**NEVEN** Are you ok?

**VLASTA** Are you ok? I think not, you're sweating.

**NEVEN** It's nothing.

**VLASTA** It looks like flu to me, or something worse.

**NEVEN** How would you know?

**VLASTA** I am a nurse.

**NEVEN** Who are you nursing?

**VLASTA** Good question.

*She is singing the melody again.*

**NEVEN** Are you driving the disease away?

**VLASTA** Most of what you have is not contagious. Except maybe the disease you've just mentioned, but that I can't really dodge because I have three kids.

**NEVEN** It's only a cold.

**VLASTA** It's probably something more serious.

**NEVEN** I can't afford anything more serious, so it's not serious.

**VLASTA** Because of work.

**NEVEN** Yes.

**VLASTA** A job is not everything.

**NEVEN** Other things are, and you don't have them if there is no job.

**VLASTA** And what's the point of work if you are not there? You should take care of yourself, go home, rest.

**NEVEN** Sometimes taking care of oneself is the last thing one can do.

**VLASTA** Yes, you are probably right. But who will then? And when? Our parents didn't look after us, we don't look after us, my kids probably won't, even when they will be able to. They'll send me to a nursing home, and I'll be ok because I know somebody will cook me three meals a day and give me the drugs I need when I start to forget the important things in life.

*Neven looks at her suspiciously because he is not sure what she is talking about.*

**VLASTA** Did you send your old mother to a nursing home?

**NEVEN** My mother is not old.

**VLASTA** I did with mine. She complaints but she's ok. She'd complain even more if she stayed with me. But I just can't, what can I do. You can't babysit both your kids and your parents at the same time. And if they forbid us from visiting the nursing homes when this illness starts misbehaving, nobody will be happier than me.

**NEVEN** I'm sorry, but I have to work...

**VLASTA** Where is your old man?

**NEVEN** That's none of your business, and I don't care.

**VLASTA** Yes, neither do I. But he died, just so you know.

**NEVEN** I'm sorry, but what?

**VLASTA** Your father died. Though, yes, my father died then too. Maybe your mother would like to know.

*Neven is standing, stunned, trying to remember. He might know who Vlasta is.*

**VLASTA** It's not that big of a deal. I'd like to hug you, but it doesn't seem appropriate until you remember me. You were a boy, it's understandable.

*Vlasta leaves.*

#### 4

#### **VLASTA, her colleagues and other nurses**

*The lobby of the hall where the interviews will take place. A small crowd. They are waiting.*

**THE INTERVIEWER** Dear candidates, first off, I would like to thank you for your patience and interest to attend this meeting. Unfortunately, you will have to wait a bit more because some of the committee members are not here yet. They are stuck in traffic jam, on their way to Zagreb from the airport. I would like to apologize for that on behalf of the Ivory Hospitals consortium.

**VLASTA** What did I miss?

**MIRJANA** Another 'please wait' announcement.

**VLASTA** Like we are waiting to see a doctor.

**MIRJANA** What about you? You just disappeared.

**VLASTA** I was trying to cure someone.

**MIRJANA** What from?

**VLASTA** Repressed memories. (after a pause) Do you think our kids will have it better? Better than us?

**MIRJANA** I think I will have it better and somehow that's what matters.

**VLASTA** I know, but... they can't complain, they are better off than we were. But some things can't be solved sometimes... And I don't know if better living conditions could help, if it's already too late. I'm curious, when a corrupted man goes to a good

place, does that place make him better? Or is it otherwise? Does he corrupt the good place?

**MIRJANA** Are you afraid we might ruin Ireland?

**VLASTA** Who cares about Ireland.

**MIRJANA** What are you talking about then?

**VLASTA** About my brother. About my parents. About family. If you bring a bad person into a good family, would that person ruin the family or would the family help the person.

**MIRJANA** From my years-long experience in soup making, if you put some cold water into a boiling thick soup, you lose both the cold and the hot, only the lukewarm remains.

**VLASTA** What do you get with it?

**MIRJANA** More soup.

**VLASTA** I will pretend that this was the answer to my question.

**MIRJANA** You turned out alright, despite your family... If that's what worries you. They didn't...

**VLASTA** Yes, you can't make a dull knife duller. They didn't affect me. But not all of us had it like that.

#### 5

#### **RATKO, NEVEN**

*The kitchen. Neven is sitting on the floor, with his back against the wall. Quite weak and catatonic.*

**RATKO** Boy, you are a plague. A bacterium that starts an epidemic. Today you are sick, tomorrow the other seventeen will be. I told Renato, I told him, don't hire this pussy, he'll be sick after a week.

**NEVEN** I hadn't been sick for eight months.

**RATKO** But now you are. Now we have a problem. Now when things need to be done. And tricks no longer work.



**NEVEN** It's not my fault...

**RATKO** It's never your fault. That's the way you are. That's your mother's fault. "It's not your fault, honey."

**NEVEN** Don't.

**RATKO** I told Renato not to take people like dogs off the street, he takes one because he has seven kids that need to be fed, he takes another one because his sight is not good so he can't drive and all that after he hit three people, he takes you because your mother is sick. When does it end?

**NEVEN** Why are you telling me this? You should call Renato and complain to him.

**RATKO** All of you here, you're all wise guys. To give unasked opinions – that's all you know.

*Neven is thinking about Ratko. He decides to give his honest opinion. But Ratko is not able to handle it because he expects resistance. He gets madder and madder with every response from Neven.*

**NEVEN** You are good at your job.

**RATKO** Are you pulling my leg, you little dog?

**NEVEN** You really are good at it. You could be our role model.

**RATKO** Get up!

**NEVEN** You are never sick.

**RATKO** Get out of here!

**NEVEN** You are always on time. Your shirt is always ironed.

**RATKO** I couldn't care less what Renato thinks, don't come back to work after today.

**NEVEN** You always do the right thing, no mistakes.

**RATKO** Get out of here!

**NEVEN** It's no surprise Renato put you in charge of us, I haven't seen you slack once.

*Ratko is now so livid that he cannot control himself. He kicks Neven.*

**RATKO** Go to hell!

**NEVEN** I will. Easy now.

**RATKO** Don't ever come back! Get out of my sight!

**NEVEN** I am going.

## 6

### THE WHOLE ENSEMBLE

*The nurses are waiting in the lobby of the interview hall. Nothing is happening and they are becoming impatient. There is a sound of buses arriving.*

**MIRJANA** C'mon, sit down.

**VLASTA** I won't, my butt hurts. Our friends have arrived.

**BRUNA** Dalmatian girls?

**VLASTA** I can't see the license plates.

**BRUNA** Which company is it?

**VLASTA** Kroacija Transport is the name of the company. Maybe they are from Slavonia.

**MIRJANA** Exodus.

*Vlasta sees Neven barely moving towards the toilet. She follows him, but he is already inside. She keeps her eyes on the toilet doors.*

*Two men in suits show up at the main entrance.*

**BRUNA** Our Irishmen are here.

*One heads towards the toilets immediately, the other one goes towards the interview room.*

**VLASTA** Aaaand they have prostate issues.

**BRUNA** C'mon already.

**MIRJANA** This interview is making me nervous.

**VLASTA** Why?

**MIRJANA** Well, what will they ask me?

**VLASTA** They'll ask you your name and surname. Education.

**BRUNA** Just that?

**VLASTA** They'll ask you why Ireland?

**MIRJANA** This all sounds simple. Ask me something difficult.

**VLASTA** What do you mean 'difficult'?

**MIRJANA** Something that makes me think.

**VLASTA** What defines your relationship with money?

**MIRJANA** Now, this one is too difficult.

**VLASTA** Is there something in your everyday life or at your job that defines what you are, which happens to be penniless scum?

**MIRJANA** Why would anyone ask me that?

**VLASTA** To check how desperate you are.

**BRUNA** What would you say?

**VLASTA** I'd say, sir, I am defined by the disgust I feel towards the food leftovers in the kitchen sink that I have to collect with my hands while it is soaking in water and because of this I dream of being able to afford a dishwasher, so that I never have to do it again. And you madam, what is your answer?

**BRUNA** Then I am defined by the working hours, morning shift from 7 am to 3 pm or the afternoon one from 1 pm to 9 pm.

**MIRJANA** Why?

**BRUNA** When my husband's shift overlaps with mine, then we see each other after work, but then there is no one to take our children to and from school. That's why he always asks for the opposite shift, so that I can take the kids to school and he can bring them back from school in the afternoon. But also, if our shifts are different, we say goodbye to each other at 530 am when I am taking the train, and we see each other at 10 pm when he gets back from work. If I have the afternoon shift, he is usually already in bed by the time I'm back. Then I want to shake him and

wake him up to tell him about the shitty, or sometimes, rarely, good day that I have had, or to eat something together at least, but it would really be selfish to wake him up just because I miss him.

*Vlasta and Bruna are waiting for Mirjana's reply.*

**MIRJANA** My kids. A fight over the house they'll inherit from me even though I am not dead yet.

*Ana is coming.*

**ANA** Something is going on with the waiters. I heard one yelling. The shit he said.

**VLASTA** To whom?

**ANA** I don't know, someone got fired. May I be damned, they are worse than the ones in the hospital.

**BRUNA** There is not enough of them around, how do they dare treat them like that. They should keep them in cotton wool.

**MIRJANA** Oh c'mon, why is this taking so long? This is really rude. Does taking a piss really require this much time? Maybe it's diarrhea.

**VLASTA** They are still in the toilet.

**MIRJANA** Who?

**VLASTA** The Irish guy and Neven.

**MIRJANA** Who is Neven?

**VLASTA** One of the waiters.

**MIRJANA** What are they doing inside?

**VLASTA** We should call the porter.

*Bruna knocks at the toilet door, while Vlasta goes to call the porter. The porter comes and tries to open the door with a key but fails.*

**THE PORTER** It's not possible to squeeze out the key on the other side. We need a locksmith.

**THE INTERVIEWER** What's going on? Where is Mr. Leary?

**MIRJANA** It seems like a waiter has locked himself in with him.

**THE INTERVIEWER** (confused) Why?

**BRUNA** He's obviously a psychopath, we should call the police.

**ANA** Can somebody knock the door down?

**MIRJANA** Why would they do that when they only need to dismantle the lock. The doors are expensive. I gave two and half fucking thousand for mine.

**ANA** Look, I don't give a damn, I just want to do the interview. Can't they do something about it?

**VLASTA** They are doing something, they called the locksmith.

**BRUNA** What are they doing inside, why aren't they answering?

*Ratko comes and knocks on the door. The other waiters are behind him.*

*Ratko starts to knock forcefully. He lets out a shower of swear words, he becomes difficult to listen to. When he starts kicking the doors with his foot, disapproval appears on everybody's faces. One of the waiters comes and pulls him away from the door.*

**BRUNA** (to the waiter) Let him knock the door down, why are you meddling now?

**RATKO** (to the waiter) Take your hands off me now! Would you like to get fired too?

**FIRST waiter** They called the locksmith, there is no point in kicking the door down...

**RATKO** As far as I am concerned, you can go home. Whoever wants to keep their job, better get back to work.

*Ratko leaves.*

**SECOND WAITER** What's the point, the catering is for them anyways... (points towards the toilet) If their boss is locked in, I don't think they'll be eating...

**THE PORTER** I called the locksmith, he'll be here in an hour, an hour and twenty minutes...

**FIRST NURSE** So take an axe and break the door down, we can't wait that long...

**SECOND NURSE** We have to go to work in the afternoon.

**THE PORTER** What the hell is wrong with you? Swinging an axe in the middle of the hotel. After all, where would I get one...

**SECOND NURSE** What a bunch of useless men.

**THE PORTER** If you want to kick the door down, go ahead.

*The porter goes away. One nurse knocks on the door.*

**THIRD NURSE** Hey, what are you doing inside? C'mon, let the Irish out. How are we supposed to get a job when there's a fool sabotaging us? (to the waiters) Okay, what's wrong with him? Is he soft in his head?

**SECOND WAITER** He got fired.

**BRUNA** What's that got to do with us?

**FIRST WAITER** What's anything got to do with you? When the drivers protest? When the teachers protest?

**BRUNA** Is this supposed to be a protest? What a bunch of morons.

**ANA** But he is your friend, why don't you ask him to open the door?

**SECOND NURSE** I'm calling the police, this is a hostage crisis.

*The nurse takes out her cellphone, enters a number, all the waiters jump on her, they are trying to get hold of her cellphone. She starts screaming. They take her cellphone away, she is upset, as are the other nurses. Mirjana is hitting one's back with her purse.*

**VLASTA** Calm down, please, calm down! Give her the cellphone back! Give it back!

*The waiters are watching her suspiciously.*

**VLASTA** Give it back, she won't call anyone.

**NURSE** The hell I won't.

**VLASTA** The hell you will. We'll wait for the locksmith and that's it.

*Vlasta gives her the cellphone. Ratko comes back again.*

**RATKO** Have I not told you to go back? Stop embarrassing me in front of everyone. (to the first waiter) Go and get me that Pulaski axe.

*The waiter laughs back, he doesn't move.*

**RATKO** If you don't, you can all take your things and go.

*First waiter moves a bit, it seems like he might head towards the restaurant, but instead he just slowly walks towards the toilet and stops right in front of the door to block the entrance.*

*The porter comes with a toolbox.*

**THE PORTER** We'll try to take the door down by removing it from the hinges, maybe that'll work.

**BRUNA** Finally.

**THE PORTER** (to the waiter who is standing in front of the door) I can't do it with you standing there.

**SECOND NURSE** They are protesting.

**THE PORTER** Against what?

**FIRST WAITER** (he points towards Ratko) I am not moving until our boss comes and gets rid of this fool.

**THE PORTER** I have nothing to do with this, I just want this chaos to stop.

*One of the nurses throws herself on the waiter who is still standing in front of the door.*

**THIRD NURSE** Can you just move away from the door!

*The waiter grabs her, but gets distracted for a moment, so the porter quickly approaches the door and starts unscrewing it, but the other waiter grabs him and pulls him back, the thrusting starts, but soon enough everybody manages to calm down, nobody wants a physical confrontation.*

*The porter is standing with his arms up.*

**THE PORTER** Boys, c'mon, hold your horses.

**ANA** Or, even better, fuck off.

*But now even more waiters are standing in front of the door, blocking it. Nobody can get closer.*

**SECOND WAITER** (to Ratko) Renato is on the way. Either you go, or the seventeen of us do.

*Ratko finally loses his nerves and jumps on him, the other waiters react and surround Ratko, they make him move away from the waiter at the door, they grab him around his neck, they try to retain him. The doors are now accessible again, the nurses take their chance and they go for it, they all start kicking it in order to break it down. Mirjana and Vlasta remain standing.*

**MIRJANA** Dear God, this is crazy.

**7**

**VLASTA, NEVEN**

*Vlasta approaches the bathroom from the other side, while everybody else is trying to knock the door down. They all – nurses, waiters – have gathered in front of the door, and in the background, in silence, Vlasta leaves the war behind.*

*Mr. Leary is unconscious. Neven looks exhausted, sitting on the floor, sweating heavily.*

**VLASTA** If the nurses get you, they'll tear you to shreds.

**NEVEN** I don't know what's taking them so long.

**VLASTA** Nobody thought of the window.

**NEVEN** They prefer demolishing the doors.

**VLASTA** They want everybody to know how angry they are. Simple solutions don't count.

**NEVEN** Naturally, I'd do the same.

**VLASTA** Would you? See, I am not so sure. How is he?

**NEVEN** He doesn't look good. I don't know what's wrong with him. The moment he came in, he lost it. I just helped him sit down.

**VLASTA** You should both go to the hospital. Just to get checked.

**NEVEN** We will, as soon as they break in. In a moment or two.

**VLASTA** They'll take you somewhere else.

**NEVEN** I deserve everything I have coming.

*Vlasta is singing her melody again, distractedly. Suddenly, she stops.*

**VLASTA** I would like you to go home with me.

**NEVEN** What home?

**VLASTA** I know they erased all your memories – which is better, who is to say – but I am still five years older than you and I remember what you forgot.

**NEVEN** I think you have mistaken me for...

**VLASTA** No, no. Your mother is not my mother, and my mother is not yours. But my father is your father too. That I remember. I remember our mothers are not the same person, but at the same time they could have been. There wasn't much of a difference. Mine would take that old rubber hose from the shower and beat us over our backs with it until we crawled out of the house. Your mother did the same. A coincidence. They didn't see it one from another, it came naturally to them. The things they did felt natural. Do you remember?

*Neven remembers.*

**VLASTA** Our old man died a natural death. He fell into a stream and drowned because he was too drunk to get up.

**NEVEN** How is this...

**VLASTA** It is natural for his kind. It would be very strange to see him die in a bed.

**NEVEN** Where is your mum?

**VLASTA** In a nursing home. Tit for tat. Yours?

**NEVEN** In a hospital.

**VLASTA** Is she dying?

**NEVEN** How can you...

**VLASTA** If you feel the need to cry for them, cry, but don't think that any of them would shed one tear for you.

**NEVEN** They wouldn't. I know they wouldn't.

**VLASTA** This means you remember, don't you?

*They recognize each other. Now they know who the other is.*

**VLASTA** I am taking you home to meet my family.

**NEVEN** Home? Aren't you going to Ireland?

**VLASTA** (looking at the Irishman) Am I?

**NEVEN** I didn't do it. I swear.

**VLASTA** They called the police.

**NEVEN** Maybe the Irish will tell them it wasn't me.

**VLASTA** He probably will.

**NEVEN** They will break in any minute.

**VLASTA** Yes.

*Vlasta is singing her melody and again fails to finish it.*

**VLASTA** Do you remember?

**NEVEN** No.

**VLASTA** Try.

*The door is broken. Everybody goes for Neven. Vlasta holds out her hand, she is trying to keep him from being taken away, she is singing the melody to him.*

**VLASTA** And now? Do you remember now?

**NEVEN** No.

*The mob has taken Neven and is pulling him away, she stays, still trying to get hold of him.*

**VLASTA** Please remember! So that we can go home, finally.

*Behind him only the Illness remains. Vlasta is observing it fearfully, she lights a cigarette. She watches the buses coming in, one after another, and another, and another...*

## FOUND AND LOST AGAIN

**MIRNA**, a young nurse, 19-years-old

**MATIJA**, Mirna's brother, in his late twenties

**KATARINA**, Mirna's colleague from work

**Other people on the bus**, the younger ones are part of Katarina's clique

**THE DRIVER**

**VLASTA**

**VIDA**

1

*Lights alternate between grey and green, as if the vehicle is going through a forest. It is fierce and claustrophobic at the same time, because there is no escape and also comforting as the light is always better than the darkness.*

*Mirna appears looking like a small black figure. The Illness is trying to take her over, but she has been resisting it so far. Matija is right behind her back.*

*Matija shrugs his shoulders.*

**MATIJA** That's what they said in the hospital.  
**MIRNA** But not a single case has been recorded.

**MATIJA** That doesn't mean nobody is sick. Maybe he was the first case.

**MIRNA** But dad never leaves the house.

**MATIJA** Maybe you brought it.

**MIRNA** Why me?

**MATIJA** Well, you work in the hospital.

*Mirna doesn't know what to say.*

**MATIJA** C'mon, I'll give you a lift to where you need to be.

**MIRNA** And where is that?

**MATIJA** What kind of question is that? Home, of course. Mirna, how many times have

we told you? Our folks are old, you can't expect them to work. They are falling apart.

**MIRNA** I don't expect...

**MATIJA** (he interrupts her) And to leave us now with all the shit that's been going on...

**MIRNA** It's not my fault.

**MATIJA** And now with this disease, what if something happens? What if somebody dies?

**MIRNA** It would be easier if someone else also found a job.

**MATIJA** You mean me?

*Mirna refuses to answer.*

**MATIJA** Are you really this selfish?

**MIRNA** I do what I can.

**MATIJA** And we don't? Do you think it makes me happy seeing everything fall apart, when it should have been wonderful?

**MIRNA** There are other options, they could...

**MATIJA** You live in a dream world, as if you don't see the way things are. We have to find some kind of a solution.

**MIRNA** Singular, not plural.

**MATIJA** What?

**MIRNA** I have to.

**MATIJA** (sarcastically) Holly Mirna, the mother of God, pray for us. To you we send up our sighs. Have mercy towards us, pay our bills. If only you were funny because of your jokes, but you are funny because you talk nonsense.

**MIRNA** If you want a joke, I can tell you one.

*Matija remains silent, so Mirna continues.*

**MIRNA** How many bills can one salary fit?

*Matija looks up at her quietly. Mirna's voice is trembling.*

**MIRNA** If electricity is 270 kune per month, water 150, reserve is 130, garbage 63, heating

600, TV 80, internet 150, cellphones 250, medicine 186, cigarettes 720, the loan 1100 kn, food around 2000, how many bills is that?

*Matija shrugs his shoulders.*

**MIRNA** It can't fit them all. They are too many.

**MATIJA** That's not a very good joke.

**MIRNA** It's not funny to me either.

*Matija is quiet. Mirna takes a breath, she is trying to keep the waters still.*

**MIRNA** I've been thinking. The only thing we can do is... stop sending money to Robert in Zagreb...

**MATIJA** Hey...

**MIRNA** That's mum's pension and dad's disability benefit. If we used it to cover all the utilities and food, we could make it work...

**MATIJA** C'mon, we'll figure it out somehow, but Robert has to finish his thing.

**MIRNA** He is 17. If a club wanted him, they would have taken him already.

**MATIJA** Shut up, Mirna.

**MIRNA** We send money to Robert, while Tajana is the one breaking records, nobody asks her what can be done about it.

**MATIJA** What record, what are you talking about?

**MIRNA** A month ago, the cadet one.

**MATIJA** That wasn't official.

**MIRNA** It still happened, and nobody was interested.

**MATIJA** Because it's useless. What can a female athlete get, nobody cares about that.

**MIRNA** She's really good. She just needs a good coach...

**MATIJA** We can't deal with them both, Rob is our hope.

**MIRNA** You are just hoping you'll be living off his money.

*Matija loses his nerves, he can't control himself, he smacks her in the back of the head. The gesture is more humiliating than painful. Mirna clenches her teeth and slams her fist on the table out of fury. But she must continue.*

**MIRNA** I'm going to Ireland.

*Matija starts to laugh sarcastically.*

**MIRNA** I would have three times more money on a monthly basis than I have now.

*Matija continues with his artificial laugh.*

**MIRNA** I could pay off all the debts, I could cover all the bills... Everything would be fine.

**MATIJA** You could leave, and we could never see you again. I would really miss you, sister.

*Mirna is anxiously looking at Matija as if she is done. Suddenly, she throws herself on the floor and rolls away. Matija is trying to catch her, but she is already out of reach, in a wild run.*

## 2

### **MIRNA, THE DRIVER, VIDA, VLASTA, PASSENGERS**

*Women and girls are standing and smoking. The seats are all pointed in one direction, two seats in a row. The driver comes up front and puts out the Ivory Hospitals sign. He takes his place and waits for the passengers to get in. He is watching them, but they continue to smoke.*

**DRIVER** Shall we?

**ONE PASSENGER** (continues to smoke with the rest of the group) Shall we what? You



were 15 minutes late and now you would want us to hurry.

*While the passengers are throwing their cigarettes away and are slowly getting on the bus, Mirna is running in circles on the scene, from wider to more narrow ones, faster and faster, like she is bewitched by some unknown force, only to stop suddenly right in front of the driver who lets out a piercing scream, and all the other passengers are shook around as if the bus has just come to a screeching halt.*

*The driver is looking at Mirna who is still standing in front of him, red-faced, like a cat caught in front of a car.*

**DRIVER** Girl, are you out of your mind?

**MIRNA** I'm sorry...

*The driver takes the list with the names of all the passengers.*

**DRIVER** Who are you?

**MIRNA** Mirna Ladić

**DRIVER** Yes, you are. (he raises his voice)  
C'mon, go on and sit down.

*Mirna sits down. There are silent murmurs everywhere. Mirna is trying to calm down, she is sweaty from running, she takes off a few layers of her clothes.*

*Vida and Vlasta are sitting close to her. They both look run-down, as if they don't belong to this group. They are not talking with anyone but Mirna.*

*Grey and green lights are again obscuring the stage for a few short seconds, everybody is hurt by their force, they are covering their eyes, but it all passes by quickly.*

*Mirna is taking her things out of the backpack, among them, there is an English language book. She is trying to make herself comfortable so that she can learn, but the book falls on the floor, Vida bends down and gives her back the book.*

**MIRNA** Thank you...

**VIDA** Smart move, taking the book with you.

**MIRNA** It's a study book, for English, not something to shorten the ride with.

**VIDA** That is still better than looking out the window. Only dark green and grey exchanging. Green, then grey. Mostly grey.

**MIRNA** Is that how Ireland looks?

**VIDA** Greener and greyer, I think.

**3**

**MIRNA, KATARINA, (EVERYBODY ELSE IS ON THE STAGE)**

*Mirna is immersed in the book. Katarina sits next to her.*

*Katarina is only a few years older than Mirna but looks more mature, while Mirna looks like she just got into high school, Katarina is dressed as a mature woman.*

**KATARINA** Be careful not to erase everything you wrote with your nose, all the effort will be in vain.

*Mirna is taken aback.*

**KATARINA** I was joking, you silly cow, you don't have to look at me like that...

**KATARINA** takes a cigarette from behind her ear and puts it in her mouth.

**MIRNA** You can't smoke here.

**KATARINA** Do you think we'll stop anytime soon?

**MIRNA** I doubt it.

*Katarina takes the cigarette, crossing over it with her fingers.*

**KATARINA** Fuck them, they have no mercy. What's that big book?

**MIRNA** English language.

**KATARINA** Jesus, you really are preparing

**MIRNA** They will check our English.

**KATARINA** If we go for real.

*Mirna doesn't understand what she is saying.*

**KATARINA** So, you work in surgery?

*Mirna nods.*

**KATARINA** When you go, I presume they'll need somebody else.

**MIRNA** I suppose so.

**KATARINA** Sure so. Is there a chance you might recommend me there?

**MIRNA** Why? Aren't you going to Ireland?

**KATARINA** I won't, I might marry in the meantime.

*Mirna looks at her hand, she sees a silver engagement ring on her finger, while Katarina is rubbing the cigarette between her hands.*

**KATARINA** So then, would you recommend me?

*Mirna is thinking, the world is passing her by. Grey and dark green, and she is sick of it.*

*Vida and Vlasta are observing her intently, they are waiting for her decision. Katarina has interpreted her silence well.*

**KATARINA** So, you'll stay the jealous piece of shit you always were. By the way, your brother was looking for you.

*Mirna now feels agitated.*

**KATARINA** He told me your folks don't want you to go. He told me he would have grabbed your greasy hair and have taken you back if he had found you.

**MIRNA** Luckily, we missed each other.

**KATARINA** Luckily, I have his number so I can tell him where you are.

**MIRNA** Go ahead, it will be too late anyway.

**KATARINA** It will be too late for many things, if you don't learn your place.

**MIRNA** As long it's not where yours is.

*Katarina stands up and goes back to her seat, surrounded by her clique.*

4

**MIRNA, VLASTA, VIDA, (ALL THE OTHERS ARE PRESENT IN THIS SCENE)**

**VLASTA** The courage to take care of yourself is the first thing your parents make sure you lose.

**MIRNA** Yes, for your own protection.

**VLASTA** Yes, for your own protection because you don't know, because you are not aware, because you haven't seen enough of the world to draw your own conclusions. And what about when you are and you have? How do you know when you have crossed the border to where your courage becomes more important than their upbringing?

**MIRNA** (thinking) When their protection becomes a burden.

*Mirna feels the weight of her situation on her shoulders, she's collapsing under it. She is trying to gather herself.*

**MIRNA** I don't know how you are tackling it, but I am tired of this Illness.

**VIDA** Some would say that you are too young to be tired of anything.

**MIRNA** But not you. Because you know there is no cure.

**VLASTA** Every decade has its own illness, and we need at least two decades to recuperate.

**VIDA** A break, that's all we need.

**MIRNA** (gives a paper to Vlasta) Tell me, do you know where this shop is in Zagreb?

**VLASTA** No, unfortunately, I don't.

**VIDA** (looking at the paper) Size 39?

**MIRNA** My sister Tajana is an athlete, a very good one. She needs some equipment.

**VLASTA** Long-distance runner?

**MIRNA** She sprints, I was doing long-distance running. I was not good enough. She is much better. She could win championships. I hope she will.

*The world is again comprised only of light.*

**MIRNA** I have four brothers, and Tajana is my only sister.

**VIDA** Won't you miss her when you're gone?

*Mirna is broken.*

**MIRNA** I will miss her... my sister.

*Vida holds out her hand.*

**MIRNA** My sister...

*Vlasta joins them.*

**MIRNA** My sisters...

*The Illness fills the space, slowly swallowing them all.*

5

**MIRNA, THE DRIVER, KATARINA, OTHER PASSENGERS**

**THE DRIVER** 10 minutes everyone.

*The passengers go out of the bus. Mirna with the others. They form a queue for coffee and pastry. Mirna is the last one in the queue. From the back Katarina approaches her with her gang.*

*Katarina grabs her hair and pulls it back, Mirna falls down to the ground. There is a stir, and the girls all grab Mirna's hair and pull her further away, they start hitting her. After they see Mirna is not getting up, they all move back and turn away. With them, all the other passengers disappear.*

*Everything is grey and green.*

*Mirna stands up and sees no one around, she is alone.*

*Mirna stands up on her trembling legs, she starts to move slowly, circularly, faster and faster, she starts to run again, faster and faster.*

*Grey and green.*

*Mirna disperses the Illness with her speed. She leaves everything behind.*

*She is struggling, losing her breath while running savagely.*

*She continues to run, she does not stop.*

*The Illness is almost gone.*

*Mirna slows down, she lets her muscles recuperate, she then stops.*

*She is breathing heavily, she is looking around.*

*Mirna shows people the paper with the name of the store, asking where it is.*

*Mirna walks around, still searching.*

**MIRNA** It's for my sister. She needs it...

*Mirna is standing, tired, on her trembling legs.*

**MIRNA** I hope she'll run faster than me.





