# ILLEGAL DOG IN A WORLD OF SELF-UNDERSTANDING WEEKDAYS

**Michal Kodnár**

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*Obviously, our social problems aren't about a lack of science or information. We have so much information that huge computers can't store it all, and you couldn't learn even a fraction of it in a lifetime. Wisdom is what is needed. It isn't new technology or information, but the proper application of the sciences and awakened, aware living that is the key to our prosperity, both personally and as a species. In other words, we need guidance to steer our research and the resulting technological innovation. And that should supersede the decision to create more or bigger, newer versions of the same.*

*– Aaron Fisher, The Way of Tea*

*What has been stolen from reality and the present we can reclaim in dreams and fictions.*

# PROLOGUE FOR ALL TEXT AFTER THE PROLOGUE

*You are now holding the "Illegal Dog in the World of Self-Understanding Weekdays" in your hands.*

*This Illegal Dog is a reminder of the recurring times in which we have the opportunity to see minds and tongues in such tangles in which entire ecosystems break down.*

*A proud and foolish mirror reflection of what we want to see and what is seen.*

*The disheartening misery and the breathtaking loneliness of knowing that everything that is created is a pain in the ass.*

*There is nothing to be proud of here. There is only everything to be ashamed of.*

*– The Thinker*

# ALL TEXT AFTER THE PROLOGUE

# CHAPTER 1: Poor Preparation

The European jungle is an interesting place, no doubt about it. It is impossible to find a living person in it, or at least no living person that one knows of. It is a place so extremely unexplored that people prefer not to enter it for a sense of their own safety. They congregate in a civilization they call “Graveyard”.

The Graveyard is civilization and civilization is the Graveyard. One without the other doesn't work unless one wants to be confronted with the European jungle.

And at the end of the Graveyard's cadastral territory, standing in the middle of the road on a cold evening, shortly after 8 p.m. on March 19, stood Fanatic. And who was Fanatic? Fanatic was a man. His real name was Anti-Fanatic, but he liked to shorten it to a simpler variant. Everyone always called him "Fanatic", he liked to introduce himself to others that way, and yet, over the years, he had become fully accustomed to that name. That name was his identity as much as anything else. It was the emergent fact of defining oneself by sound and its mind-altering meaning and processing. His name. His creation. Simple symbolism.

So who was Fanatic except that he was a man with a willingly reduced name? What is actually known about him? Why is he written about as a man worthy of a few lines of text that a few actual living people might read?

Among other things, he was a man in black trousers and a white T-shirt, with a falsely serious expression hiding his constant need to smile too faintly. This was a man who was constantly in himself. And to a great depth. Maybe he did, maybe he didn't. But at least that's exactly how he seemed to those who spoke of him. To such people, he was a man of immense interest, atypical and unusual. With differently wired brain regions, a different appearance, different movements, and a different smell. He was a stranger both to others and to himself. And he was able to acknowledge his strangeness at all times. It was a strong identity almost as strong as his name, only with a different symbolism.

Fanatic then, on March 19, at the edge of Graveyard, stared at an old, cracked metal plaque. The sign said, "Graveyard Ends. Watch out for (your own) life!". Meanwhile, the brackets around the words "your own" were scrawled in some kind

of red paint – terrorist graffiti that someone had dared to grace a weather-beaten old piece of metal nailed to a two-foot pole encased in concrete.

Fanatic liked to go to places like this. The only point of such activity was that no one else went to places like this. And whoever went there could always be alone and think without disturbance. It was isolation from Graveyard and entry into the jungle, but not really. The smell from Graveyard still lingered in such places. It reminded him of something between the smell of fermented fruit and the smell of urine. A smell that could be smelled in musty, unmaintained train stations where homeless people took up residence and urinated on the walls, or merely maintained the characteristic stench in the rooms by their presence. With their soaked clothes, from which the sour smell of old oxidised urine radiates. That was exactly the smell of Graveyard, and it could waft out into the wide expanse of the open areas.

On March 31, a group of people, numbering in the low hundreds, gathered in one of the squares in the centre of Graveyard. It was the day after the Air Conditioning hit Graveyard, and multiple variations of panic and fear could be felt in the air. The sky was darkened with steam from the crater left by the Air Conditioning in the Mills, causing many to focus on it hypnotically, or, conversely, avert their eyes. Air Conditioning was in people's heads, as much as any horrifying shard that drives its wearer mad with the excruciating pain of exposed nerve endings in agitated tissue can be in one's head. But people didn't talk about the Air Conditioning, even though its impact was pervasive. After all, such things don't usually happen, and even when they do, they happen so subtly that they fade from the significance of the plot. People don't usually talk about shards. They wear the shards and cultivate them, let themselves be hypnotised and painfully paralyzed by them, but do nothing with them. They deliberately ignore them so that they can use their hypnosis and paralysis to put shards into the heads of others. Horror-inducing shards that drive their bearers insane from the excruciating pain of exposed nerve endings in agitated tissue.

People use shards in their behaviour so that it is not visible. And even the Air Conditioning is present with them in an invisible form – in the form of a concept – the Air Conditioning takes the form of an idea of the Air Conditioning exclusively. It

is present in the way people speak, in the way they move, and in the choices they make. All these actions and movements are called "Air Conditioning", but no one knows that they are not the work of Air Conditioning. This is because Air Conditioning in the form of the concept and in the form of the idea of Air Conditioning cannot be selected, materialised and separated from the people, their behaviour and their movements. Air Conditioning takes the form of a smell whose source cannot be found and which cannot be seen – but whose presence is unquestionable.

And that's just what happened on March 31 in one of the Graveyard's squares! A continuous movement of constant shards being replaced and stinking. Noisy crowds of people who smell among themselves, but who deliberately stay in the smell because they have become accustomed to its chronic proximity and chronic intensity. Young men and women, in suits, jeans and dresses, spoke primarily of alcohol intoxication, or of being intoxicated by alcohol right there in the square. They talked about the basal emotions they had once experienced interacting with other people, probably also intoxicated by alcohol. It seemed at the time that while they were reminiscing and planning in their stinky swirls of intoxication, people were experiencing emotions similar to the ones they had just talked about. They were putting themselves in the action, travelling through time and space as they talked. Regardless of whether they had their eyes fixed on the Air Conditioning's steam or on the dull faces of the others. They laughed and enthusiastically emphasised every word that came out of their mouths, reminiscent of young children trying to get the attention of all their peers while performing acrobatic stunts on the climbing frames of a playground. In short, the people were interested in what was happening to them; they were fully entranced by the imaginings of their lives. It was like mouths opening and closing, trying furiously to take a bite out of a fruit, which, however, melts away after each snap of the teeth. Schroedinger's fruit.

Everyone there knew that what was going on was nothing but brain-eating boredom. Exhausting exchanges of sounds and movements, conveyed in simple symbols and paralyzingly replicating themselves. In short, a colossal outpouring of repetitive mundanity, with everyone in the crowd expecting someone to leap from a pile of human bodies and heads to some elevated spot and shout something like, "I have a pool table in my apartment on which fifty thirteen-inch-tall pink elephant

babies are jumping rope, doing flips, and pulling themselves up on a trapeze bar!", but none of them had their expectations fulfilled.

After all, people trying to communicate in all sorts of bizarre ways and sticking to established habits can be quite comforting objects to observe, despite their many awkwardnesses and unaesthetics. With a little sympathy, one might say that they are almost poetic. Whatever poetic genre with whatever artistic intent, it will always be merely a form that has arisen from that which seeks to preserve itself, not from that which seeks to conform to some prescribed aesthetic. Aesthetics, after all, more or less arises from forms and not the other way around – just as a need arises from available supply.

Most importantly, the world was there as it was. Poetic or unpoetic. Real.

Fanatic. He was fully captivated by the occasional observation of others and the occasional air conditioning steam. He tried not to think too much about himself and his emotions while observing, as he was uncomfortable under such conditions and found it led to nothing. However, if he happened to catch himself in such mental activity, he always felt like a person with an extremely elevated glycemic index, whose heart was racing, he was irritable, and no thought of a potential quantum state of the future comforted him. It made him feel unfree. He had a tremendous restlessness within him that he had no idea what it stemmed from, but it was undoubtedly present. He was like Air Conditioning and its smell in the minds of others, but he was quite different with it all. It was an individual form of imagination; as individual as any other.

"And the intensity of this awareness overwhelms me whenever I observe other people in the performance of their activities. When they are drawn into the action and when they are captivated by life. I wonder if most of the people I observe also feel as unfree as I do. After all, they are like me; people sitting through a mostly rehearsed screening of their thoughts, locked in the cinemas of their heads," Fanatic thought to himself as he stood there amongst them all. He thought of Schroedinger's fruit metaphor as he did so.

He tried to write down his thoughts in his head, feeling like a desperate poet trying to jot down a few lines of his poetry in a notebook on a crowded, shaky train, but not wanting to be seen by anyone and not wanting to end up on the ground due to the centrifugal force of the curves just because he wasn't holding on to the metal

bars in the interior. He found it very useful, despite all the complications. He strolled across the square and soon disappeared from there. He didn't even realise that he had completely missed the Tourist, an old acquaintance of his, during his walks.

Tourist watched Train Driver arguing with Surfer. They were shouting and swearing at each other. They insulted each other's relatives, mocked each other's hobbies, and compared their heads to syphilitic genitals. They spoke of crusted brown earwax, of bloody snot in the corners of their nostrils, of rusty pipes causing anal orifices to rupture. They talked about it in the context of themselves and their lives. They were totally mesmerised and drawn into the action. Just like everybody else, except these guys were drawn into their own form. And the setting of the form was nothing other than their absolutely individual storyline. As individual as any other. Or yet, in all modesty-perhaps only a less collective plot than the one all around them.

Tourist was a grey-haired, carefully shaved and coiffed man. He dressed differently all the time, yet very uniformly. He wore sweaters all the time, and he wore them in the summer too. The only element he regularly changed on his sweaters was their colour. He always wore the same trousers. Wide trousers of a pale grey colour.

*Tourist was constantly preoccupied with ideas about himself. He invented his own worlds and his own happenings, in which he himself had a certain (significant) role. Mostly he imagined himself to be a policeman or an employee of the Mayor's Office, currently in a white sweater and black trousers solving some serious criminal case. It allowed him to make his existence a little more bearable and less painful. Fantasies were his smell, which could be smelled with every interaction with him. He was mentally absent and no one could see through why that was the case. The truth was that he had always allowed himself to be carried away in fantasies and self-aggrandisement in parallel universes, so much so that he was incapable of any life in reality other than a life of degradation and a life of attracting the proximity of death. Interactions with him were extraordinary, and he had most of the majority of his dialogues with himself. Sometimes he even repeated the dialogues to himself so that he could practise all the conversations of his scenarios very well. He didn't regret not being able to practise all the conversations in real life. His role in reality was nonexistent. He didn't perceive himself as a policeman or a clerk in a white sweater and black trousers. He*

*was nobody and nowhere, either to himself or to others. No one even called him "Tourist." No one addressed him by anything but pronouns.*

"You know what? I'm so sick of that animal. But horribly! FUCK THAT CAT!!!" snarled Train Driver, kicking the crate with Surfer's cat in it.

The cat purred hysterically. Not so much in pain as in fear, disorientation, and helplessness.

"If you do anything to that cat, I'll cut your throat!" Surfer threatened with a sly grin and unblinking, bulging eyes.

*Train Driver was a shorter, bearded fellow with the image of a Hollywood actor from the seventies. His hair was as black as his beard, and his cheeks sported massive and thick sideburns. He always wore a white and grey shirt with vertical stripes and brown trousers with a heavy metal belt.*

*Train Driver was an extremely aggressive and argumentative man. What's more, his verbal expression was many times more ostentatious and expressive than his aggressive outbursts in the physical world. He lived in a modern villa with Matilda, his roommate, who, as he says, "looked like a tranny." She was obese, had a coarse voice and an extremely high forehead, which she compensated for aesthetically with extremely high tattooed eyebrows. In addition, probably deliberately to accentuate her obesity, she wore a tight red latex dress.*

*Matilda made him incredibly mad just by her appearance, and he made her mad as well. For some reason, though, they often spent time together, though their interactions almost always ended in profanity and hysterical arguments. Perhaps none of them found it strange, as Train Driver maintained similar types of relationships with more or less everyone. And probably Matilda as well.*

*Train Driver liked to sit by the pool of his villa and drink orange juice. He often went to a Graveyard district called Ladder, where he bought revolvers from his good friend the Philharmonist (the Philharmonist was perhaps the only person in his immediate vicinity with whom he didn't quarrel). Although he was a big fan of firearms, he never used one in his life.*

"Whatever!" Smiled Train Driver, and in a sign of friendship, he hugged Surfer violently, driving his fist full force under the Surfer's ribs in return. The action was so theatrical that it attracted the attention of the surrounding dumb faces, who allowed themselves to be disturbed in their pursuit of the Air Conditioner's steam, as well as in their eagerness to get intoxicated with alcohol, or to converse about alcoholic intoxication.

Surfer dropped to the ground, still managing to say a few badly articulated words to Train Driver, and got to his feet. He grabbed the overturned cat crate and walked away. Train Driver was still standing still, but his aggressive bias towards Surfer had transformed into an acute disregard for everything. Meanwhile, he was talking to Tourist like a wild man. But still ignoring everyone and everything. So much so that he didn't even notice as Surfer and Tourist shook hands and walked away, each in their own direction. Train Driver kept talking and talking, and it was only after a few minutes of his colleagues leaving that he noticed that none of his fellows were in that time and space. He shouted a few vulgarities up in the air, under the influence of anger at his own ignorance, again attracting the attention of not a few dumbfounded faces. Eventually, in a constantly angry mood, he went home as well.

*Surfer was a black-haired Graveyard man who liked flowered shirts and shorts. He wore them all year round, regardless of the weather conditions. He worked for the Mayor's Office and carried thank you notes from the citizens of the Graveyard to the officials and the Mayor in his grey-coloured car. Admittedly, Surfer had encountered complaints and threatening letters many times during his working career, but in the entire history of the Graveyard, none of these writings had attracted any extra amount of attention. Surfer fed all the letters, which coincidentally were not thank you letters, to his cat. He loved his cat more than anything. He gave her no name and regularly let her roam the streets of the Graveyard while he was behind the wheel of his car. Her motivation to return to Surfer's dwelling was always immense. For the cat was addicted to the consumption of leaves, and if on any given day she did not happen to receive any, she made her disapproval known by an excruciating acoustic manifestation.*

*Surfer was a man who always tried to force attention through humour. Or, more accurately, by what he himself considered to be humour. He loved to mock other people, especially their appearance. He knew how to laugh hysterically and tease all his acquaintances, who were an audience for him to show off in front of. However, he always suffered from loneliness outside of his work. He felt much like the people he made fun of. He found himself worthy of hysterical laughter and ridicule. In that, he and Train Driver and Tourist were exactly the same.*

# CHAPTER 2: Sanity on the Mezzanine

Fanatic had already returned from the edge of the Graveyard to his home and slept on his broken bed. Horribly, as usual. The next morning, March 20, he went for a walk out to the local pond. He liked to watch the pigeons and waterfowl there.

"Oh, for heaven's sake," he muttered to himself with morning exhaustion and the bitterness of a poorly regenerated body, spitting a load of bitter phlegm onto the broken sidewalk. His nasopharynx smelled like a disgusting and unmaintained hospital toilet. A rancid, putrid waste that couldn't trigger anything but a gag reflex in any living person.

Dust swarming over the lofts of the cerebellum and evergreen rusty dreams. Wiping their assholes with dirt and clicking an ergonomic mouse on posters of ideal murders of psychiatric patients by psychiatric patients. Morbid stupidity and a dying dog – the skeletal remains of walls and barriers of lives! An uplifting war of double-sided obesities and violin bows on the edges of glass window frames. The drifting of whistling!

Graveyard was an extremely unaesthetic place, and especially during morning sunlight you could see all of its ugliness. The ugly broken sidewalks that one cannot avoid if one wants to walk. The shabby dilapidated buildings that one cannot avoid if one wants to go out and if one wants to find a place to live. Disgusting dull people, looking exactly as if they were about to cough up bitter phlegm at any moment. And everything in the Graveyard was drenched in the atmosphere of the local sidewalks, buildings, and people. Only the trees and ponds exuded a kind of serenity. They weren't rotting and they didn't look disgusting. They attracted life, they attracted animals, and they attracted certain types of people who were perhaps, with any luck, disgusted by the Graveyard's ugliness.

Incongruity.

As if someone had suddenly said they'd had enough.

Fencing vacuums that are slathered with salt and pepper. The vague intervals of terror and agony of a window pierced by a gargoyle wanting to call the customer service of his mobile phone operator. The spurting of a toilet directly into the anus of a priest with mouldy feet and his internal re-encounter with the virtue of his own excrement! Leaking intestinal gas and exploding poop. Blood and shit. Vomit and sewage.

Marginal efforts to microwave a fly.

Paved banks with obtuse angles at the bends, pensioners standing, walking, straddling and sitting on benches. Occasionally children shouting. The extraordinary atmosphere of something that has come to a complete standstill, yet is not rotting internally. The strange quiet emptiness.

And right by the edge of the pond is a pub; its wall is also the wall of the shore; with wooden tables connected to benches and roofed with gigantic parasols with beer producers' logos. But the atmosphere of the pub is completely different – it doesn't relate to the pond. It's a disconnected separate system that just thinks of itself as part of something it's not really part of. The pigeons and ducks are untouchable. And not only that. There's a whole network of artificial ponds that just any one pub can't cut through. Blind bays can be found among them, concreted into various angular formations, flanked by spray-painted benches. Ten centimetre high stone waterfalls, stagnant water without ducks, here and there with some pigeons. Hidden nooks, invisible as they include land without people.

At around ten in the morning Fanatic was already sitting on a clean, unsprayed bench, watching the ducks and pigeons bathing in the pond. Huge numbers of pigeons were puffing and fluttering in the shallow water. They shuffled and shook like electrocuted rats and were very pleasant to watch. Flocks of ducks moved in the shipping corridors, diving and greasing their feathers. Multitudes of two-sexed pairs, as well as gangs of females and gangs of males, or females with ducklings.

"These are the happiest inhabitants of Graveyard!"

Bathed pigeons lay sprawled on the grassy area. Determined and swinging on all axes, they resembled hens sitting on eggs. Some had thrown their wings apart and looked lame and half-dead because of it.

About three or four pigeons were courting the females. However, all were unsuccessful. They clucked, munched their neck feathers, twisted their necks, and chased the females, who tried to avoid them all at all costs. And when they got tired of it, they flew away, leaving the males in existential frustration.

And their grief was truly evident in all of this. Their ruffled feathers instantly drooped, and their preoccupied strained necks and gazes intently staring at the females were replaced by acute staring at the ground. It wasn't that they hadn't thought to follow the female and catch up to her in flight. They simply stopped moving. They looked distressed and begged all living things with their body language for acute compassion, the way deeply wounded creatures with brains far more complex than those of the pigeon family of birds do.

"These are the happiest inhabitants of Graveyard! Really?"

Fanatic then thought how he had never seen male ducks showing off to female ducks the way pigeons do. Male ducks were passive, but as soon as another male duck walked in they immediately attacked it. They never fought with each other, but once one of the male ducks got angry, he would chase the other one for a solid twenty yards, trying to bite him and rip out his feathers or something. Male ducks were much more obsessed with their appearance than with the instinct to breed, and if a fellow duck made it clear to them that he was willing to fight, they would immediately retreat in fear for their exterior pride, their plumage. In the swirl of water droplets and the noise of fluttering wings and duck squawks, it was never even possible to see properly what was actually going on. In any case, it was just some male duck wanting to save his butt from some other, attacking duck.

Fanatic pulled a turquoise water bottle from his turquoise backpack and took a sip of water. No matter what he did, he could still taste his bitter mucus in his throat. It was like the entire hospital toilet was stuck in his throat, rotting inside. He would have coughed up tonsil stones from his throat, but the smell was so overwhelming that he was sure he would have vomited with a high probability while doing so. At least he would have scared all the people around, which was a bonus, but he would have scared the pigeons and ducks too. And that wouldn't be good. Maybe some people trying to help him would come to him after all, thinking he was suffering from some serious illness. Or maybe pigeons and ducks would come to feed on his vomit. Maybe the grazing pigeons and ducks would puke from the smell, too. Maybe they would just come to feed and the smell of the hospital toilet would immediately turn them back, since after all they do have some nutritional standards. Maybe the ducks have standards and the pigeons don't. Maybe it's the other way around. Even so, the standard of a particular bird cannot be judged by the species to which it belongs.

"Theories, theories, theories. None of the possible quantum states caused by these theories are worth the risk."

Fanatic sobbed at his own obtuseness. He blew his nose and was relieved as soon as he saw the yellow-brown lumps of crap in his handkerchief. These were lumps of concentrated putrid stench. The stench of the tonsils that had been forced out of their run-down places by intense pressure and had flowed up through the nasopharynx and out through the nostrils. Total relief and satisfaction of a magnitude that even a well-loosened sacroiliac joint does not have, which shifts a few millimetres with a mighty pop when the pelvis is properly stretched after a long and exhausting walk.

One duckling hopped up onto the wall by the pond and ran across the grassland towards the bushes, passing a group of wet, sprawling pigeons. It was soon

joined by another. And then another. The ducklings were seized by a crowd psychosis and all of them suddenly wanted to go in one direction without even knowing why. But their mother noticed and immediately jumped up the wall after them. Her strides were much longer than the ducklings', so she caught up with them quite quickly, and even with a big head start. First she chased them ahead of her, and then she overtook them in the bushes in the tall grass. And this time they were already following her.

As soon as the male duck saw her duck partner protecting the young duckling, he jumped up on the wall and ran after her as well. He ran perhaps faster than the duck following the ducklings. It should be noted, however, that he was far from acting like a caring parent – an instinctive protector of the offspring. He was embarrassing. Like some kind of dummy trying to look like he was doing something. Like a person who doesn't want to look at you during a random interaction while you're walking, so he'd rather tap on his smartphone and pretend to text someone, even if he's just unlocking the screen and clicking on random apps.

One of such male ducks was Fanatics. He got up from the bench and ran over to the pair of ducklings. He just wanted to see if the ducks would attack him in an attempt to protect their babies, and since he didn't want to come across as a malicious villain, he pulled his smartphone out of his pocket and pretended to take pictures of the ducks. He was taking pictures of them for real, by the way, but the resulting photo wasn't really important to him. The ducks weren't attacking. They fell into step and ran away from him.

Fanatic then squatted down next to a crowd of resting pigeons and started taking pictures of their bathing mates. Some of them were just strolling in the water, but some of them were really great gourmands, savouring every drop of water with visible relish. They were frolicking and picking their feathers with their beaks.

While doing so, Fanatic was spotted by an elderly gentleman. A truly archetypal old pensioner, carefully coiffed, with a white beard and supporting himself with a bent wooden stick.

"Do you like pigeons?" asked the old man.

Fanatic turned and focused on the old man's appearance, which fascinated him immensely with its uniquely pensioner's kindness.

"I like ducks too," said the old man, smiling, "they're awesome."

Fanatic smiled too and put his smartphone back in his pocket. That old man didn't look anything like one of those typical sour-faced people one sees near shabby buildings and sidewalks. He didn't look like the kind of man who urinates in a cornfield at night with his eyes closed while smoking a cigarette. He looked nice and friendly. Retirementally kind. But who knows. Maybe everyone who left the

sidewalks and shabby buildings and spent a few minutes by the pond watching the ducks and pigeons looked nice and friendly. Maybe the old man was a former civil servant, police officer, or just an actual sexual abuser after all. Maybe he kept a fridge full of jars of formaldehyde at home, in which a pile of severed human fingers or genitalia floated bravely. Why not.

"I love pigeons," replied Fanatic, "and I love ducks, too. And chickens and geese too, but they're not here. I'm a pigeon, duck, hen and goose fanatic..."

Strange words. Both artificial and mechanical.

It is 12 March shortly after 2:30 PM. Train Driver is sitting by the pool, sipping juice. He gets up, lifts his trousers above his waist and is about to walk away when a false wave of thirst overtakes him. The kind that overwhelms anyone who drinks a drink full of simple carbohydrates. A feeling whose authenticity cannot be perceived, but whose need must be obeyed.

None of the hints are present in the eyes shooting at incredible speeds across the filtered blue-red sky created by the atomic explosion of hot iron. A reminder of the hard work of the workers as the soot flies up into their faces and depresses their bodies with an unbearable heat in the same way that Nazi pub brawlers do among mentally retarded people, whistling in public like trampled dogs with squeaky toys in their mouths.

Singing Nazi songs and hammering away at the vicissitudes of teeth!

Train Driver went back to the juice table and sipped again with a deep euphoric sigh. The juice was very colourful.

Huge quantities of colourful flowers were planted all around the pool. They bloomed and flourished, towering to unimaginable heights and taking on enormous densities.

The flowers were interesting. If these particular flowers, located by the Train Driver's pool, could communicate in human language, they certainly wouldn't be talking to each other very much. They'd just offer people oral sex and shoot them on the basis of their refusals. At most, the flowers would bite each other and aggressively kill each other by biting off their petals, in the name of competition for their sexual clients.

The sky around was very colourful. Everything was very colourful. Train Driver felt exactly as if he were a part of a living expressionist painting. Colours everywhere and intensities everywhere. It would be unimaginable beauty if one could even enjoy it and not be preoccupied with the guns, the juice, the fake thirst, and the clinging to enjoying the thick smell of oil and vanilla.

He climbed into his yellow and brown car, the thick smell of oil and vanilla enveloping him as he did so. Otherwise. He started the engine and shortly drove his car down the hill on which stood many houses similar to his own. He drove down the highway for a few seconds, then turned off in the direction of the Ladder and drove his car up the hill. His ears pricked up from the constant elevation gain.

Ladder was a seriously interesting place. It was mainly inhabited by people from the Mayor's Office who didn't want to make their wealthy disposition too publicly known. It was a place of absolute architectural tastelessness. A Potemkin village designed to inspire disgust, with the disgust being merely a cover. What tastelessness one makes, one has. But tastelessness is a condition. If a place is not tasteless, it has no place at Ladder.

A two-way whacking stick!

A hundred-man corruption cabinet, in which pigs and crocodiles eat fat cakes and chicken wings. The expected arrival of a chimney sweep who shouts foreign jokes at random passers-by that no one understands, while popping his bubble gum bubble with a pin. The tone of the joke, which carries atmospherically and colours the air like a brush soaked in watercolour paint, churning up the water in which it is dipped.

There was a wad of cash on the passenger seat. Train Driver parked in an alleyway of Ladder, a row of terraced houses, switched off the engine, picked up the money, slammed the door and locked it. Before ringing the massive white door of the house, decorated with a pompous glass front, he turned behind his car and stared directly at the ten or so centimetre drawing of a pink dinosaur placed in the corner of its bonnet. He wondered if anyone even noticed that kind of decoration. Decoration on the hood of a car.

The bell rings. It plays a very squeaky, drawling, repetitive melody. It plays for a very long time and it's very annoying.

After about thirty seconds, the Philharmonist opens the white door. Philharmonist, a gentleman of about five feet seven inches tall with black curly hair. He is wearing a red shirt and beige three-quarter pants.

"Train Driver!?" Philharmonist narrowed his eyes and addressed his friend in a strange tone.

"No, I'm just a visitor," replied the Train Driver.

Philharmonist invited him inside and thrust a glass of orange juice into his hand. He led him up a wooden staircase covered with beige carpets. The carpets were the same colour as the Philharmonist's trousers (but the carpets were undoubtedly dirtier).

There was plenty of light in the house, but it still looked gloomy. The black and red and black and green wallpapers, whose toxicity in the space was not even saved by the ubiquitous gigantic windows. But still, that's what the whole Ladder was like. Both outside and inside. The only room of the house that didn't make one want to commit suicide was the room on the top floor where Philharmonist had taken the Train Driver.

"So Arsenic?"

"Sure, Arsenic," replied the Train Driver, placing his empty juice glass on the bedside table, immediately handing the Philharmonist the money he held in his other hand.

Arsenic was a nine-millimetre double-action revolver manufactured in the Graveyard's district called "Linoleum". It had been sold since 1935 in various versions from those with a three-inch barrel to those with a ten-inch barrel. Arsenic usually had a six-shot drum, but since 2008 it has also been sold in an eight-shot version.

"You're some kind of undiplomatic motherfucker," laughed the Philharmonist. The Train Driver laughed too.

The Philharmonist wiped his nose and began his short but heartfelt monologue about guns: "Arsenic is good stuff. Everybody uses it, men, women and children. It's a sure thing for shooting bastards," he cleared his throat and pulled a briefcase out of the closet which he handed to Train Driver.

"Women like the smallest things, it fits in their handbags," continued the Philharmonist as he watched Train Driver open the briefcase and pull out a brand new black revolver with a three-inch barrel, which he himself had taken out of the briefcase, "but interestingly, men like it too. The only ones who buy the big-barrel crap are people from the suburbs. Although, people from the suburbs deliberately indulge in completely different pomposities..."

"In what?" Train Driver asked. With a squinted eye and focus on his aim, he pretended to be aiming at a fictional target with Arsenic. He imagined Matilda or a sitting pigeon in the corner of the room. Anything that asked for a bullet to the head.

"Xenon!" Philharmonist bellowed. "They're beasts..."

Xenon was a double-action 15.7 millimetre calibre revolver made in a variety of versions, from those with ten-inch barrels to those with twenty-inch barrels. The smallest model of the Xenon, meanwhile, weighed more than four kilograms.

Massive explosions of dirt. People walking with double-sided drumsticks stuck in their backs into bars deliberately resembling plastic latrines and explosive gunpowder that any non-owner of life can threaten. And all the quotes these people cry into fifty-year-old stinking vomit-stained sinks and washbasins.

"People from the suburbs have always been beasts. They get their heads out of the woods, out of the European jungle," Train Driver replied, wiping his moustache as he spoke. "Could you get hold of a Xenon?"

"Of course I do! On the twenty-second of this month, you're bound to have it!"

"Awesome!!!" Train Driver exclaimed with excitement, until he spit up his moustache and had to wipe it again. "I brought money with me on the twenty-second."

"Well done," smiled Philharmonist. "Otherwise, do you like this design?"

"What do you think?" Train Driver replied uncomprehendingly.

"Arsenic!!!"

"Well, I know, but what the fuck do you mean by that particular design? After all, a three-inch barrel is exactly what I wanted."

"I mean the surface finish," Philharmonist's voice softened as much as his face, "some people prefer nickel plated revolvers, so that's why I ask."

"No, that's not my case," Train Driver immediately responded, shoving his revolver back into his briefcase. "Or more accurately, I like my small revolvers to be black. I can't explain it, the colour black just has the soul of a small revolver. If you've got some big shit, it's just supposed to be silver. It's supposed to be nickel plated. I can't imagine a black Xenon, for example. I don't even know if it's even made in black."

"No, it's not manufactured," replied Philharmonist, "and I understand. I feel the same way."

Train Driver picked up the briefcase containing the Arsenic from the ground and raked his black moustache again. "I should be on my way. I have a terrible craving for carrots and onions..."

"I beg your pardon?" sputtered Philharmonist. "Is this some kind of joke? What the fuck is that combination?"

"Hahahahaha," Train Driver laughed violently, looking very cheeky as he did so, "carrots and onions is the best combination. I eat it every day. I eat it in the car, by default..."

Philharmonist shook his head. Train Driver patted him on the shoulder as a sign of farewell and they exchanged a few words about carrots and onions on the way down the stairs. And about the Mayor's Office, and the suburbs, and Arsenic, and Xenon, and nickel-plated finishes, and all sorts of things. But mostly about carrots and onions, because it was the carrots and onions that resonated the most in Philharmonist. It was the most shocking thing he'd heard in days. Or maybe even in years. Moreover, the way Train Driver phrased it was so unexpected and presumptuous that Philharmonist was completely thrown off by it. It felt surreal and

he would like to keep that feeling. He'd hoped he'd be able to do that by exploring the carrot and onion theme with Train Driver, but it just wasn't happening anymore. It wanted a shock, it wanted something unexpected.

In the evening, Philharmonist fell asleep in an upstairs room of his house, fearful that he would never experience a similar situation again. That never again would Train Driver tell him some Dadaist culinary combination that would shatter his perception of reality. That he would never again in his life be shocked by anything to make him feel as beautiful as he did on the twelfth of March.

Philharmonist had become a broken man.

A few streets away from the Philharmonist's house standing on Ladder there was a club called *The Randomised Sunflower*, and from time to time one could hear shouting or loud moaning from it. The people of the *Randomised Sunflower* were very interesting. They undoubtedly had a fetish for rotting human flesh.

*The Randomized Sunflower* was always dark and the only interior furnishings there were mattresses placed directly on the floor (so the whole place gave the impression of a shelter for drug addicts, for the homeless, or something similar). And these people were tied up on these mattresses, and they stayed tied up there for a couple of days. They fed themselves food, replenished their fluid supplies, or had glucose infusions. But their flesh was rotting. Their bodies couldn't withstand the constant pressure of the mattress for so long, and bedsores began to form.

After the necrosis began, some members of the *Randomised Sunflower* untied the recumbents and had sex with them. They inserted their penises into their anal orifices while squeezing their partners' rotting and consistently soft flesh with orgasmic pleasure. And the partners were also enjoying themselves. They moaned or screamed loudly as they did so. They loved it as foreign hands tore apart the structurally disturbed parts of their bodies. Among other things, the rotting flesh stank, and it stank all the more if someone squished it.

Some of the visitors of *The Randomised Sunflower* also had a few of their fingers removed while lying down, which they deposited in a jar of formaldehyde. A few people from Ladder and the surrounding area bought these classy jars. They were collecting different jars with different types of fingers in the same way someone collects different genres and shapes of tea pottery.

# CHAPTER 3: Gardener and the Lunch

On the very periphery of the graveyard suburb called "The East" there was a neighbourhood that had no particular name. And on the very periphery of the periphery of the periphery of the suburban district there was a street that had the name "Canal Street".

Canal Street was a small lane that primarily consisted of small garden houses. Very few people actually lived there. It was the alley where many cemetery dwellers went for recreation when they wanted to take a break from the hustle and bustle of the city and get lost in the hustle and bustle of the periphery. One of the garden houses on the street was also owned by Fragrance, Fanatic's aunt. And right next door was one of the few houses on Canal Street that were inhabited permanently. Mr. Gardener lived there, together with his wife. They lived in a shabby two-story shack, the greatness of which was apparently increased by the high red roof the house had. There was a lot of rubbish in the yard, several sheds, a chicken coop, and a small and fairly well-kept garden.

Gardener was indeed a very interesting man. He was a former teacher or something like that. He constantly wore ragged beige clothes smeared with dirt, and his image of a dishevelled man was complemented brilliantly by his baldness and the long straggly hair on the sides of his head. He had a huge sharp nose, wore glasses, and was always carefully shaved. He probably didn't grow much facial hair either.

But most importantly, Gardener's personality was specific in an unimaginable way. If we were to say that he was merely inappropriately choleric, vulgar and aggressive, we would not be telling the complete truth. The Gardener was, in fact, mentally ill. He was paranoid and if something irritated him, he would threaten someone with death. He threatened people with all sorts of horrific things. Cutting off heads, chopping them up with a brush cutter, killing them with knives, or calling an ambulance and the police for the fact that it was snowing outside. Strange situations whose appearance, shape and form nobody could have predicted at all. And it was not only on Canal Street that he was known for this, but on the entire periphery of the Graveyard.

"FUUUUCK!" was often heard from the Gardener's yard. Often a vague clatter and sheet-metal clanging could be heard from the yard due to the Gardener throwing an object into the shed, into the sink full of dishes in the kitchen, or at his wife.

Fragrance thoroughly enjoyed her interactions with Gardener. She complained to everyone about him and told them what a psychopath and horrible person he was, but the truth was that she had an incredible time with him. At least most of the time. Gardener, in short, was an extremely unusual and unique element of reality. He was an avant-garde distraction that no one anywhere ever expected. Like a dynamic axe in a precipitous fall down a chimney. His mental instability and danger attracted Fragrance in a certain way, and she found all his aggressive outbursts and vulgar catchphrases so incredibly ridiculous and surreal that she reserved her own notebook for them, in which she wrote them all down. Her first experience recorded in the notebook (and also marked in large coloured print) was something very unusual. Something that both frightened and amused her extremely, and something that she returned to many times in her thoughts in retrospect. Gardener, in a fit of rage, had stabbed the pot with a knife one day.

When Fragrance could no longer endure the horrible intervals of screeching sounds, she shouted after Gardener something like: "Mr. Neighbor, what are you doing!?"

Mr. Neighbor immediately raised his scraggly head and, with his nose wrinkled, his glasses half-lidded, and aggression in his eyes, bellowed, "I AM FUCKING THIS SHIT!!!"

Fragrance always knew how to have extreme amusement at that. If she happened to forget an incident, her notebook always saved her. It augmented her memory and allowed her to go back into memories and laugh again. For example, she remembered an incident when the Gardener had complained to her about his wife.

"Last night that cunt of mine greased that bathtub with something. It was all lubricated and I told her it was slippery and asked her if she couldn't be mentally fucked!" Gardener recalled his experience, meaning of course by "cunt" no one else but his wife.

Fragrance even remembered her further experience with slipping and lubricating! This time, however, she didn't interact with him directly, but only heard

him scream loudly: "WHAT THE FUCK IS THISSSSS!!!???? It's slipping like a FROG'S PUSSY!"

She also remembered her own father's interaction with Gardener. He'd spoken to him in a completely calm and composed manner, perhaps inserting a vulgarity into his speech from time to time, but still within the bounds of emotional neutrality. Suddenly, however, his wife approached him, asking him to come to lunch, on account of the fact that it was already cooked and she didn't want it to get cold. And Gardener flushed with aggression and growled in an absolutely disgusting and grating voice, "I'M COMIIIING!"

Immediately afterwards, he went back into his emotionally neutral mode and said to Fragrance's father with incredible calmness in his voice: "I have to go, we've got some sour puss again..."

And by "sour puss" Gardener understandably meant the lunch his wife had cooked for him.

# QUANTITATIVE HARVEST I. and II.

He still remembered her reading that book to him. A yummy reddish paperback book that wasn't very long or very complex, and yet every page was like an electric hand massaging his brain stem. And he remembered every word of it, even the sound of the pages being turned with great tenderness by old and smoky fingers with fingernails painted reddish. And he even remembered devouring her every word the way a hungry sexual fetishist devours all the food that won't kill him at any given moment. It was incredibly vivid.

The first chapter began with a description of a place called "Inmaria" or something like that. Some very dramatic and ancient sounding fictional place. And there were a lot of such dramatic and ancient-sounding places and names in the book, by the way. Maybe the author was serious and maybe he wasn't. Maybe the author hadn't given it much thought and just needed to quickly create some names and titles, and so he created what first popped into his head.

The plot of the book began on the fourth of February, and at that time the place was supposedly being plagued by severe frosts.

He remembered every single word at that time. Every single one.

Each time she began, her voice was soft and gradually grew huskier and huskier.

It was the fourth of February.

Inmaria, or, if you prefer, Inmarland, was at this time plagued by frosts that quietly reached twenty degrees below zero. To make matters worse, there were also winds blowing, the speed of which in places exceeded the sprinting speed of the slender cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*). However, despite such inhospitable weather conditions, the country, with its 76 625,34 km2 of land, had a total population of 11,065,419.

The Inmarians were a very special people by the standards of terrestrial western civilization; their culture is perfectly characterised by an Ooyan proverb that is also a saying: "The most important thing is to emerge from the shores of the island - it doesn't really matter how much you slave on the island, as long as you emerge from its shores and appear to be the master, not the slave."

Half of the Inmars, moreover, live crammed into the city of five-and-a-half million, Oojan, along the coast of the open ocean of Yomma, and the other half live in the dense forests of the local mountains, in half-timbered houses clustered in settlements resembling scattered mountain hamlets.

One of the typical members of the forest-heritage stratum of the Inmar population was Dormanitrivanius, whose full name was Dormanitrivanius V. (the fifth). The village in which he lived was called Trinchkeldt and was located in the northeasternmost tip of Inmaria, deep in a pine-mixed forest. It had a population of 2,460 and was one of the most remote Inmarian towns that was permanently inhabited.

Dormanitrivanius was a man of about one metre eighty-five centimetres tall, with short brown hair and grey eyes, about thirty or forty years old. His age is unknown, but his story, which takes the form of Quantum Harvest, begins on the fourth of February with him taking a breath of the icy cold air.

The sensor on his skin showed a total of four readings:

*February 4*

*04:40 PM*

*-25.0151 °C*

*1,903.6522 m above sea level*

He exhaled the properly heated and thick steam and watched its characteristic ripple, which was still visible even after he inhaled and exhaled a second time.

He was returning with a backpack full of wood shards from a tree called *"Albis albis"* from a clearing called "Meteorrys".

As soon as he had walked a few yards from his initial inhale and exhale recorded in the story about him, he inhaled again, exhaled, and checked his readings:

*February 4*

*04:46 PM*

*-25.0260 °C*

*1,906.6459 m above sea level.*

The path he was on felt very slippery to him. For the snow he had made had melted quickly and efficiently during last-week's thaw, and had frozen over again in the unpleasantly cold temperature. The multiple and dense snow tongues gave the impression of ground fog in these places, interrupted only by looming brown lumps of frozen slush, forming symbolic stone monoliths of anthropogenic disturbance of the snow-cover's colouring.

The light had mostly diminished considerably after 4 PM in these places, but the pine forests around were never so dense as to make visibility here completely impossible. On the fourth of February the sky over Trinchkeldt was almost cloudless and incredibly clear due to the strong icy wind, and at the sunset just underway it was an extremely unrealistic, blue-orange colour. The conifers shivering in the wind looked to Dormanitrivanius as if they were made of gelatin.

That time, about a metre away, in the direction of the well-trodden path surrounded by stone monoliths of anthropogenic disturbance to the snow cover's colouring, Dormanitrivanius saw a clearly visible and fresh bloodstain - he deduced that it must have been really fresh, as otherwise the snow tongues would have buried it immediately.

Parallel to its discovery, he also felt a strong rush of remembrance. At that moment he remembered that he had seen blood in roughly the same place sometime in late January, the last time he had been to Meteorrys. At that time he was still thinking about the predatory forest animals; which theoretically could have torn up a bird, or some rodent; which would explain the appearance of that bloodstain. He wondered mostly where the remains of their prey had gone then, and tried in vain to deduce the tracks around the stain; or rather - the chaotically bombarded snow - that the tracks resembled.

This time, however, the blood did not merely keep him mentally occupied and leave him as motionlessly cold as it had left him then, at the end of January. He wanted to go take a closer look, to know exactly what it was and how compatible the

thing was with his theories and ideas about it. Even so, he was more comfortable walking on deep, cracking snow than on bumpy ice enriched with the stone monoliths of anthropogenic distortion of the snow-cover's colouring.

The bloodstain was even more interesting on closer inspection than Dormanitrivanius had thought. It was more or less a blood puddle. The snow in it was burrowed perhaps ten centimetres deep, which undoubtedly indicated that there must have been a lot of spilled blood in that particular spot to be able to melt such a large mass of frozen water in minus twenty degrees.

There were no visible signs of animals, people, or anything else around the stain. The whole thing looked very unnatural, even deliberately surreal - a straightforwardly artistic constellation of a man who had just taken the long view to dump his excess blood in the middle of the forest, along a well-trodden path flanked by stone monoliths of anthropogenic disturbance of the snow-cover's colouring.

Dormanitrivanius took a deep breath, savouring the currently atmospherically romantic-tinged moment of the setting sun. He blinked one eye at the bloodstain and was about to make his way home, when, with his peripheral vision, he spotted what looked like another bloodstain at a distance of about five metres deeper into the forest; and which he had undoubtedly overlooked until then. Then he recognized in himself a sort of gradually forming impulse of childish curiosity, which took full control of him. Under its influence he even crawled under a few branches of the thorny vegetation, and, approaching the second stain, saw that it contained something which he could as yet make no further identification. Intuitively, he would have sworn it looked like a human hand.

Curiosity spurred him on even more to come closer and bend over the stain.

Whether it was possible or not, it was a human hand and nothing else.

Nor could it be anything else, because nothing else could look like it. Only a bloody and dead human hand, numb with frost, torn from the joint, fingers crooked and flesh frayed around the wrist.

Instead of an automatic reflex to the stimulus of the severed hand in the form of instant horror, Dormanitrivanius felt a subtle rush of adrenaline wash into his blood, noticeably raising his heart rate.

A great shiver ran down his spine, however, as in response to that stimulus he remembered his grandmother telling him stories of witches in his childhood; what

she called witches; who "bite the throats out of their victims and tear off their hands, which they then take to their dwellings." He also remembered his grandmother telling him that in the event of a confrontation with a witch, one had no choice but to "pray to the Great Dehydrated Man, patron of the nutritionally impoverished, emotionally distressed, physically unhealthy, or otherwise indisposed people whose indisposition had an internal cause."

His unpleasant childhood hallucination almost materialised for him at this moment as an acute stomachache, for its intensity made him almost identify with it. He stared at the bloody hand lying on the ground as he did so, replaying in his head all the alternative scenarios of how that hand had gotten there, and not one of them appealed to him. Each of the alternate scenarios was soaked in some weird dreamy optimism in the same way that train station newspapers tend to be soaked in cigarettes and urine.

Another wave of a very unpleasantly chilling sensation passed through him when, a short distance, about three metres away from the severed hand, he spotted clearly visible traces of bare human feet; with both the distinct foot arches and the impressions of all five toes; which he had undoubtedly overlooked until then.

By this time, a wild and consuming feeling of animalistic panic horror had begun to seize him. He looked around, paranoid that he was being watched by someone, and the extremely cold weather and the fading light only heightened his anxiety.

He cleared his throat loudly and spat. He decided to breathe deeply, feeling his heart rate calm down a bit with his deep breathing. Dormanitrivanius's fear was slowly morphing into curiosity, and his panic was transforming into movement - though he didn't know how, he was already chasing human footprints using some sort of subconscious and (partially) adrenaline-fueled autopilot that took full control of his self, identified with the terrifying thoughts, in a crisis situation. He walked, breathed, maybe even babbled a few times to himself, but he did it absolutely subconsciously.

In the fading sunshine he saw that the footprints led to some kind of flickering light source in the middle of the forest. Reaching it was the only plausible way out for him at the time. It may not have been an idea worth the greatest

rationale, but any light in that place at that time gave the impression of anything solid and graspable.

He had been afraid to walk on the icy path after finding the human hand, and he told himself that there must be some living people wherever there was light. And it was living people who were the ideal potential subjects for him, to whom he could confide his terrifying experience and, moreover, hide from any danger in their proximity.

Dormanitrivanius did not get rid of his goosebumps, and certainly not after listening to the intensifying rhythmic sounds, reminiscent of some kind of drums, emanating from the same place along with the approaching light. The closer he got to the source of the sound, however, the more intense the impression became that it was merely something resembling drums, but certainly not the drums themselves. A drum-like sound, but not classically drum-like. This sound was too wobbly and too deep for the drums. He'd never heard anything like it in his life and initially thought he was just dreaming, but the longer he perceived the sounds, the more certain he was that they existed.

The source of the light was, in fact, a clearing, in the centre of which a fire was burning. Around it, people were either standing or sitting, playing musical instruments. And it was these that made a sound similar to drums. It was clearly visible, with all the photon bands emanating from the fire.

He slowed down and began to approach more quietly and cautiously. The adrenaline was wearing off its dominance and the rationalised reaction pattern of vigilance, or better said, respect, was taking control of his body.

He stopped at the edge of the clearing, hiding behind a network of thorny undergrowth and a smaller pine tree. He'd never known the clearing was there, and he certainly didn't recognize those drumming people.

There were about a dozen of them in all. It took him a moment to make up his mind to look beyond the pines and beyond the network of thorny undergrowth, but when he did so and saw the faces of the drummers in question, a flood of anxious thoughts swept over him.

He could see, in fact, every single one of them blank, dumb, inhuman expressions, staring dully into the fire with open mouths. Their eyes were milky, saliva visibly oozed from the corners of their mouths, and their hands were statically

slamming into their musical instruments - as if they were being moved by someone entirely different from the body to which they were anatomically attached.

It was an absolutely horrible scenery for Dormanitrivanius. As it was happening, he felt really strange courses of thoughts, related to a misunderstanding of what he was actually perceiving. He began to lose touch with reality, and although it was unclear to him whether what he was experiencing was an experience caught in waking life, he was certain that he wanted the experience to end and to be quickly forgotten. He wanted to become a bio-structural part of the smaller thorny undergrowth, or the pine tree he was hiding behind. He wanted to blend into its xylem and phloem, aiding its transpiration and assimilation in the spring, and meanwhile be ensconced in it during this time of year, like the callose that clogs its sieve tubes, a static, immobile, and unconscious entity - and, above all, inconspicuous and of no interest to anyone.

However, he couldn't look away; not because he found the ongoing situation amusing, but rather because he feared not watching it even more than watching it.

As he watched the whole thing in dismay, a naked figure suddenly appeared in the clearing, presumably a human who had come straight there from the surrounding forest. He couldn't identify it, he couldn't focus too much on the figure as he was too close and didn't want to stick out of the bushes. But it was a figure standing on two legs, human in a way.

Dormanitrivanius's feeling of losing touch with reality was heightened even more.

The humanoid figure turned and faced the fire, turning its head upwards. An uncharacteristically inhuman and hoarse roar could be heard, the source of which could not be determined at the time. Whether it was the figure by the fire, one of the strange people playing musical instruments, or someone else entirely. It was impossible to tell for sure.

Dormanitrivanius was one hundred percent certain at the time that no human could make such a sound, and it must surely have been some animal. The first thought that came to his mind at the scenery was that of a snake's mouth devouring its invisible prey and screaming with the squeal of a pig at the slaughterhouse - that was exactly what the sound that was currently occurring evoked to him.

The drumming people began to drum even harder and faster. Their hands moved as fast as the hands of any living non-flying vertebrate could move - they looked like spinning airplane propellers in motion, and their drumming no longer sounded like drumming, but like a continuous noise.

Moreover, the faces of these people had changed. They began to grin grotesquely, wrinkle their noses and eyebrows, stick out their tongues and suck their teeth. The arches of their eyebrows dropped and their eyes sank deeper into their skulls.

The strange human-like figure undoubtedly flew into the air.

Dormanitrivanius's leg muscles suddenly stopped working and he fell to the ground. He watched it all through the thorny undergrowth, due to which, however, he couldn't see absolutely all the details.

Something was falling off the levitating figure, like a giant eggshell or something. The drumming people, or whatever they were, no longer had human faces. They were the faces of monsters, distorted and twisted, with sharp teeth and distinctive animal-like lips. Their fingers were also elongated, and they looked as if they had slightly more joints as well.

Dormanitrivanius was seized with a crash dose of unleashed adrenaline and the associated urge to move. He suddenly felt a greater connection with his own body and decided to take advantage of it immediately – he stood up and ran through the pine forest as fast as he could. He couldn't understand how it was possible that his leg muscles had spontaneously started working in such a situation, much less that he was able to take such large strides and strategically calculate a place to step on without falling or slipping.

He expected to be relieved as soon as he reached the icy beaten path lined with stone monoliths of anthropogenic disturbance of the snow-cover's colouring.

He wasn't feeling relieved when he got home, either.

Back at home, he pulled a shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition from the storage net over his futon and sat down on the floor. He could feel himself trembling, and this time he could feel his muscles giving out, not just in his legs, but all over his body.

The last time he'd felt like this was when he'd been hit in the head with a steel bar by the village butcher as a child. Everything felt like a dream to him and he

couldn't believe that what was happening to him right now was as real as everything that had happened to him before. Nothing actual was appealing to him.

He turned the crank on his shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition, took a deep breath and let it out, and looked down at his skin sensor. He was showing the following readings:

*February 4*

*07:29 PM*

*22.1651 °C*

*2,609.9099 m above sea level.*

Outside, the wind was blowing very hard and the trees began to bend towards the ground. Dormanitrivanius then remembered his grandmother saying:

"Whenever a witch dies, a strong wind blows and the trees bend towards the ground..."

He also remembered "praying to the Great Dehydrated Man, patron of the nutritionally impoverished, emotionally distressed, physically unhealthy, or otherwise indisposed people whose indisposition has an internal cause."

## II.

On the night of the fourth to the fifth of February Dormanitrivanius did not sleep.

She was then, in her lulling tone of voice, describing all the foolishness of how Dormanitrivanius had been marked by the events of the previous day, and how, in spite of his frightening thoughts, he had decided to leave home in the morning and visit the woman after whom she was named.

*5 February*

*06:55 AM*

*-29.1907 °C*

*2,840.2688 m above sea level.*

This was the reading from the sensor on Dormanitrivanius's skin as he stood at the fence of the house of a woman named Tamiga, who was also nicknamed "Egg Woman".

(The function of Tamiga, the Egg Woman, was the same in Dormanitrivanius's life as her function in the life of every other inhabitant of Trinchkeldt. Tamiga was, in fact, the commodity broker of a drink called "Eterusairiu".

The internal ingestion of Eterusairiu allowed its consumer to induce a state of bitterness on the tongue.

As a result of Tamiga having come into contact with Eterusairiu undoubtedly more times than the average inhabitant of Trinchkeldt, her genome mutated. Moreover, the molecules of the drink were most likely found individually in each of her cells, being secreted into the environment by diffusion. Hence, the bitter effects of Eterusairiu could have been experienced not only by those who consumed it, but also by those who were in the immediate vicinity of Tamiga.)

*(Tamiga, among others, was one of the so-called "untwerelists".*

*The Untwerelists were distinguished by the fact that whenever they served Eterusairiu to someone, they performed a ritual called "Bagha" on him. The Bagha ritual consisted of an attempt to invoke Agwyl Untwerel, whose presence, according to the religion of the Untwerelists, was attributed to the intensification of the perception of the thoughts of other people and animals, or the perception of the purposeful qualities of objects, and the associated dilation and synesthesia of all the senses of the person who had consumed the Eterusairiu.*

*According to the Untwerelist belief, Agwyl Untwerel was transported to another dimension after his own death, from which he could only arrive back to his home dimension during the performance of the Bagha ritual.*

*The performer of the Bagha was called the "Baghaist".*

*The Bagha began with the tying of the Eterusairiu consumer by the Baghaist, who read to him several specific chapters from a book called "The Epizeuxis of the Holy Man"; supposedly written by Agwyl Untwerel himself; which tells the story of a man who, for the sake of unrestricted access to food, cut off and ate the thumb of his own severed hand, with*

*the consequence that for the rest of his own life his intestinal secretions produced chickens, which he subsequently ate. Baghaist then chewed up about ten chicken heads, spat them in the face of the bound Eterusairiu consumer, and finally peeled several fruits, which he mashed and drank their juices. Towards the end of the Bagha ritual, Baghaist untied the Eterusairiu consumer, lent him the Epizeuxis of the Holy Man and sent him home, where the consumer was supposed to read a chapter called "Umuntuarius U-375". The consumer, having completed his task, then left the house and returned the Epizeuxis of the Holy Man to the Baghaist, thus automatically ending the Bagha ritual).*

The fence, standing in a symmetrical circular array around the house, was made of some stone blocks stacked in a checkerboard pattern, between which various vegetation grew in the spring and in the summer. Occasionally an animal bone protruded from a stone block; just as Dormanitrivanius had visualised it in his imagination

The half-timbered house was not particularly different from a typical Inmarian village house. It was just overall below average in size (no larger than five by five metres) and chaotically draped with various digital meteorological devices or bone or stone pendants in some places.

Above the front door of the house, some sort of inscription was carved into the wooden beam, but it was impossible to remember what it meant exactly. However, in the performance of her voice it was always very beautiful.

He took a deep breath, but the act felt supremely unnatural given his significantly accelerated breathing rate. He put down his backpack with his shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition and placed it on the ground, just as the heavy, overly damp front door of the house opened.

Dormanitrivanius instinctively picked up his backpack from the ground and straightened himself into an alert stance within a second.

The Egg Woman was standing in the doorway, half-naked to the waist, wearing only a short but thick skirt.

It was a hypnotic sight for him in every way. Despite her multiple wrinkles and unquestionable old age, Tamiga looked incredibly vital and young. Her eyes were clearly the sharpest of the contours of her entire body, and gave the impression of

having about ten times the resolution compared to everything else that existed in Dormanitrivanius's universe, or rather, his vision was able to focus on her eyes ten times better.

The open door to the house evoked to Dormanitrivanius the open door to the vault containing the gold bars. With every moment that it wasn't closed, and with every moment that the Egg Woman stared at him, he felt strange. He himself had called this feeling a "pleasant death" at the time.

He didn't know how long they had been looking at each other like that; it could have easily been two seconds, or even two hours; with such interpersonal cooperation, the concept of time and space had completely disappeared for him. He didn't even feel the slight sense of coldness that had surrounded him until then, and it didn't even occur to him to think about something like coldness. It's quite possible that at that moment he didn't even know what that coldness actually was - all his previous memories and all his thought structures had vanished.

The longer the two looked at each other, the stronger whatever Dormanitrivanius was feeling became. In no way, however, was he uncomfortable. He let himself be carried away by it, and began to register some sort of ecstatic weight on his physical body. It was a dreamlike scene, where one could smell something like the odour of mushrooms sautéed in butter. His eyes tightened, and as his head rolled upwards in a semi-hypnotic state, his vision left its fixed channel connection with the Egg Woman's, and his gaze rested on the sign above the front door.

# CHAPTER 4: The Graveyard Surrenders

On September 16, Fanatic had recalled eating in the hospital while infected with a very unpleasant combination of the Epstein-Barr virus, manifesting as infectious mononucleosis, and the *Streptococcus pyogenes* bacillus. Both of these things are, of course, big motherfuckers in their own right, which are fond of destroying the liver and, in worse cases, deciding to wear out the kidneys and the heart in a pretty lovely way as well. Anyway, the combination of the two is really nothing pleasant.

Fanatic was bothered by a fever last night, so this was very relevant. Nostalgia shows itself exclusively in the language of feelings. It is evoked by places, objects, times and states of mind, but these are all just precursors. The only thing that reaches a person as something he calls "memory", "nostalgia", "flashback", or anything that names one and the same phenomenon, is exclusively a feeling. A couple of neurotransmitters playing with the brain. A washout of a chemical in the present state of similar composition, number and concentration than in the past state – or more accurately – the state one thinks one is remembering.

And even if a man tries to slow down the phenomenon of nostalgia so that it doesn't run away so quickly and he can enjoy it as long as he wants, unfortunately he doesn't get his body to obey him. It's a wonderful example of the paradoxicality of controlling one's own brain over one's own brain, reminiscent of the elections, laws, or primitive tribes of modern troglodytes who think they cause the sun to rise and set with their daily dance ritual, and are immensely proud of themselves for always getting it right, and that the sun rises every morning and sets every evening "only because of their efforts." But whether they are minds controlling themselves, enthusiastic regulators of emergent phenomena in politics and the universe, or modern troglodytes, all such entities will always be merely entities that fancy themselves as doers of action, unaware that the action is happening outside of them just as much as it is happening within them. They are all ignorant to what is real, trapped in the orgasmic pleasure of their contrived falsity.

Fanatic then, during his depressing illness, sat at a table covered with a flowered tablecloth. In front of him was a green box filled with potatoes, avocado and chicken covered in tomato juice. On his left hand was a white mug of mineral water. Apples, an unfinished hospital breakfast, a loaded container of gluten-free rice and corn bread, acetate masts, and glasses of liquids rolled across the table. All around

were green tiles, chipped and papered with a kind of ornamental foil that, in combination with the tiles, was meant to give the impression of a unified ornamental object. It was, however, a mere atypical paralysis of all aesthetics. He turned to his right to the window, beyond which a storm was raging. A proper summer storm, with lots of water and electricity. He looked once more at his food and at the infusion flowing into his left hand. He stood up, walked towards the window, took a deep breath, and thought something like "What's going on!?" or something like that.

He walked back to his table covered with a flowered tablecloth and to the chair he was sitting on. He sipped from the mineral water in the white cup. He looked very unobtrusively ahead of him, as if someone was there, trying to strike up a conversation, but there was only a white, once-white wall. He felt like pretending something was going on. That he was having a conversation with someone. That there was some eye contact going on. But there was no one there, and it was better that way. He didn't want anyone to see him like this. He was horrible.

He grabbed the fork with the skewered potato in his hand. It was an orange potato, a sweet potato, a yam. He popped it into his mouth, swallowed it, though swallowing was disastrously difficult. It hurt. It drove thoughts of fish stuck in assholes and mouths and vaginas, shoved tails and heads forward. It impaled them the way a fork impales a sweet potato. Intense, but to no avail. He put the fork back down, took another sip from the mineral water in the white cup. He looked at the wall in front of him again and thought: "If anyone was here, I'd punch them in the face with my fucking fist!"

On the night of September 16, Fanatic again dreamed a very strange dream. The previous day his body had been plagued by a fever, and he remembered very well the terrible discomfort it had caused him that night. He also remembered the nostalgia of the hospital that had infused him with nostalgia of nostalgia. He copied some of the neurotransmitters tweaked with a whole new addition. That night he had elevated temperature as well, but not as much. Most importantly, his dreams weren't so much jerky and metaphorical, but rather matter-of-fact, graphic, and plot-driven. Classic dreams that drift the dreamer in a very gradual and relaxed way. He was dreaming about a shopping mall at the time. A place where everything from groceries to garden accessories to mechanical machinery could be bought. Of a huge shack made of blue and white brain-destroying sheet metal that screamed with its mere setting in space for the scant attention of all the shoppers. The food department was in a windowless section, shrouded cleanly and only in the toxic white light of overhead spotlights. The lobby with the checkouts and the garden section, however, was blessed with an abundance of massive windows through which

a sort of gloom shone through. The atmospheric natural orange colour of the warm morning was dramatically conquered by the synthetic white enclosure for the shopping organisms leaning on shopping trolleys. From the exterior, another source of light could still be seen - the red and blue logo standing at the very top of the building just above the entrance hall. The logo, a pointer pretending to be a symbol and the symbol pretending to be a pointer.

People were shopping there. Understandably so. Fanatic was among them. Understandably. He found the whole activity incredibly beautiful and nostalgic, as it made him feel exactly the way he used to feel when shopping as a child. It was a feeling familiar from the days when he found shopping an extremely unusual and interesting experience. Seeing all possible and impossible products, curiously looking around and examining them, feeling incredibly joyful at the possibility of choosing any of them, or also watching other people choosing any of the products. Childlike nostalgia, an incomprehensibly beautiful perception of the mundane. Nostalgia that he himself had forgotten was being nostalgic - that is to say, a completely new, beautiful and wonderful feeling! Significant sausages, hams, yoghurts, candy bars, chainsaws and lawnmowers. Oh, for heaven's sake, lawnmowers!

Then something happened. We don't know what, but everything was different. The quiet atmosphere of the morning shopping mall changed and suddenly there were a lot of people in it. They were not buying goods, but plundering. They were opening candy bars and eating them. They were throwing groceries around and smashing them on other people's heads. Colliding with shopping baskets and spraying each other with raspberry juice. They ate, drank and committed violence.

It was very strangely horrible! Watching the decay, at once horrified and at the same time thrilled with panic. The excitement of what was going to happen next. The emulsions of ordinary days, of everyday life. There are no more days like that and there will be no more days like that. Such days will become the respiratory impediment of every hag polishing her jewellery with the blood of her own corrupt children and grandchildren. Almost radioactive bursts of excitement and motivation, snippets of life that can't decide for themselves whether they will intimidate their bearer or cultivate the maliciousness within him.

Fanatic was quite amused by the mass chaos, but after a while he stopped enjoying it. He wandered among the shelves and among the tangle of human tools and their users until he finally reached the gardening tools department. And that was the moment he had been subconsciously very afraid of. People were using gardening machinery that was, for some reason, loaded with gasoline and oil. They were mowing down immobile pensioners with lawnmowers and they were swinging

chainsaws. A rugged quintessence of human bodies, goods and garden utensils. Blood sprayed through the air and severed limbs, kicked piles of shredded flesh, and corpses from which spades, planting stakes, and mattocks stuck out lay scattered across the ground. In the collision of two chainsaws, which two men were wielding between them, a chain had loosened and ripped the throat out of one of the men.

"Oooooh, God, so this is your fucking orgy!" shouted theatrically some black-fashioned Catholic priest, whose head was then sliced in half by a large orange and black axe.

Someone ran after the Fanatic with a circular saw, but he managed to grab the nearest shopping cart and knock his attacker to the ground. Fanatic quickly escaped from the gardening section and headed forward towards the cash registers and the entrance hall.

People in the food section were cutting themselves with knives and smashing their heads with sledgehammers. Fanatic at that moment was already feeling overwhelming anxiety and fear. All the fun of the chaos had completely disappeared. He subconsciously begged someone who controlled this dream world to help him out of it unharmed. As he did so, he remembered an excerpt from his notebook.

That's why everyone calls. He calls from his dreams. He seeks a collar for his hardships, but the more he wants to move, the more it hurts, because the more the collar strangles him. And everyone is playing status games to see who has the crankiest neck. Me or you? Whoever has the crankiest neck is doing something better. But what, nobody knows anymore. Life? Death? What? What is it that most people want? Want? Who? Why? Why not?

Towards the entrance hall and the cash registers draped in an atmospheric natural colour of orange, the number of people thinned and so did their activity. At the checkouts, people didn't even interact with each other anymore, but just rummaged through the unloaded merchandise, occasionally throwing something in their mouths and spitting it out, or scooping something into their pockets. There was a bloody melee between the shelves a few metres away from them as they did so, with pieces of plastic packaging flying off and splashing splashes of water and juice. At the windows, people were just walking around. Some of them were looking in the direction of the store at the milling crowds between the shelves, and some of them, in turn, were looking out at the atmospheric natural colour of orange. Those who were at the door to the photo booth just stood and stared out. Occasionally one of them ventured outside the store. And then another. And another. Even when they did come out, they were extremely few in number, and they walked very gradually. Fanatic watched them all at the checkouts. They looked so extremely passive in their

actions and facial expressions that it was surprising they knew where the door was. That they were not bumping against the glass.

There were about two dozen of these people standing in the parking lot in front of the store who dared to come out. They were variously scattered and not moving at all. Their idle facial expressions and movements were brought to the absolute singularity and existential pinnacle of their being in that form. They were as rigid as nothing living can be rigid. Not even their eyes moved. They did not blink. They did not move their chests, where otherwise the manifestations of breathing could be seen. One of them had a plastic bag blown directly into his face by the wind. It was an absolute freezing of everything that was trying to come to life.

Then Fanatic heard a voice. A very strong and penetrating voice, his voice, speaking from the deepest recesses of all the various recesses of his own body and the space surrounding his body. A slow and emphatic voice. It spoke precisely of the people standing outside, and it spoke precisely this: "See that? Once a man leaves the store, he loses the meaning of life..."

"Nostalgia is the only path to emotion," Fanatic thought to himself on March 32.

If it were not for the memories and if it were not for nostalgia, he would have forgotten what it is like to feel something with the mind of a classical man whose brain responds to stimuli with playful dynamics and appropriate responses. He would have forgotten what it is like to feel something at all. Whatever was going on in his life, whether he was lying on the ground or travelling to the end of the world in an airship, it would always be the same. Like being the message in an empty wine bottle tossed in a sea of battery acid. It didn't matter what was going on. The only emotions were the memories of them. And it was wonderful. The magic of the process, like a tiny atmospheric gust, a good meal, an interesting snippet read in a chat room or online news, or a conversation with people, could trigger such a supermassive and variable range of brain movement. Focus, motivation, dynamism and the will to live. And now nothing is happening. The greatest harm is undoubtedly the instinct for self-preservation, whose sadistic nature makes people stay in misery. Had it not been there, he would have killed himself and would have had peace at last. The disgusting energy-gathering inertia of life.

The bestselling revitalising catalysis of the inhaled entrails of transformed diesel vans. One eye is bigger than the other and the hilly terrain of the head. The proverbial double vees and interruptions of taxis in the height of the intelligence quotient of an aristocracy dying in barrels of fermented cabbage and thundering molten rocks! The ruthless rhythms of the reverse current!

Fanatic opened his old notebook, in which he had jotted down his thoughts back when he was someone else entirely. Someone living in a time of feelings and their most exuberant variations. He jotted down a short text in it:

The world tends to be a very changeable place, at which it is often impossible to pause with a good dose of paranoid wonder. You are born here, and it is your ability to recognize the different variations of mutability that seems particularly mesmerising. To be present with all that is happening and all that is changing, until you realise that you are changing as well. As subjects of change, you recognize things that are born as you are. All but you, in turn, are recognizing you as the subject of change. There is change everywhere. There is movement everywhere. Even in stagnation and decay there is undoubtedly some kind of movement - but perhaps it is not visible, because the movement in stagnation and decay is mostly an inner movement, not an outer movement. Internal movements, however, are not noticed by most of those who have been born and who observe changes.

He closed his notebook, took a sip of water from a blue glass, rubbed his eyes, and buried his nose in his memories in the same way that a person working long hours at a computer and addicted to energy drinks buries his nose while lying on the ground, which he then comments to his friend sitting in a rocking chair by saying, "I wanted to sniff the stink of my booger while I was lying on the ground, but it fell into my nostrils." A deep rummaging in the recesses of the spasm.

If he was thinking about his past self, he was becoming it. But only partly. The other part reacted to everything outside of it only with a strange mixture of pity and anger. Somewhere on his lips the word "movement" lingered, and he remembered Fragrance as he did so.

Fragrance died last year. The reason for her death was that she had overeaten linoleum. Chronically. She had always had a very unpleasant and conflicted personality, she liked to argue and pick at everyone in an attempt to strike the deepest and most painful blow at any cost, but her seemingly cynical way of dealing with living beings was just a cover for the unimaginable suffering she herself had been going through practically all of her life. Fanatic had had a very good relationship with her, especially in the last few months of her life, they had discussed a great deal of personal matters together, and even seemed to have dissolved a great deal of her cynicism and need to hurt, but in the end, the toll of her horribly unhealthy life thus far had caught up with her. She pumped up her body by overeating linoleum. When Fanatic found her dead in her own apartment, she was green from the oxidation of all sorts of possible and impossible chemicals. There were purplish-yellow after-death stains all over her body, gases were being released from her asshole, and dried blood around her mouth was evidence of death in a

painful spasm causing her to bite her tongue. The look on her face was terrifying. Her eyes were bulging and her teeth were bared like the teeth of a mummy being strangled alive. Seeing her made one want to slice her open with a knife and a bone saw. Just to be sure, just to be sure, that she wouldn't accidentally come to life as an undead spectre of active evil and horror.

Fanatic opened his notebook again and flipped through the text:

Whatever happens stays the same. Old artefacts in the form of notebooks, memories, thoughts of death, and dead Fragrances. Old artefacts with subtly altered appendages and surface forms, but with persistent cores that replicate sadistically over time. A symphony of life and death. An observation raped by the vibrating settlements of the spasmodic discharges of the brain and its butterfly-winged impact on action; on the encroachments of all that exists. Metaphysical words that wander from nowhere to nowhere. Territory that stands still. And from time to time, it permeates everywhere.

He took a breath and closed the notebook.

"What a fucked up life. What a fucked up life..."

Meaningless words, hissing into the void like leaking frosty butane.

All the while, he remembered his grandmother reading to him from the book Quantitative Harvest. He remembered how he had addressed his grandmother as "Grandma" but called her "Egg Woman," after a key character in Quantitative Harvest. Egg Woman, also known as "Tamiga".

On March 31, Fanatic stood on a hot street full of crumbled buildings and sidewalks with no greenery. The scene of radiating waves of vibrating heat, oppressive low-pressure mugginess and stench. A stench that resembled a cross between the stench of fermented fruit and the stench of urine. A stench that could be smelled in the musty, unmaintained train stations where homeless people took up residence and urinated on the walls, or merely perpetuated the characteristic stench in the rooms by their presence. With their soaked clothes, from which emanates the sour smell of old oxidised urine. Fanatic then, with great reluctance, rejected the woman in beige jeans and a white and red striped T-shirt who invited him onto the linoleum.

"I don't even want to see the linoleum! Not now..." replied the Fanatic to the offer with absolute sincerity and humility in his eyes despite the emphasis on his words that indicated he was upset. And to further emphasise his seriousness, he looked the woman straight in the eyes the entire time. He may have looked almost insane, but it ultimately didn't matter. He looked absolutely convincing in the first place. The gently smiling expression of the woman in the beige jeans and

white-and-red-striped T-shirt turned into an intense parabolic scowl. The kind of scowl that only a sedentary elementary school teacher with a brain fermented with a combination of sugar and mouldy old coffee can sweat out of herself. A sour expression, unbecoming of human beings. An expression belonging to the disgust that remains of human beings. Personality morbidities, all sorts of traumas hiding behind different variations of facial expressions.

Linoleum! Almost all the people in Graveyard went herding into the skyscrapers to look at the linoleum flooring and crumbling wooden tiles. Everyone else did it with great fervour and enthusiasm, or at least looked like it, or tried to look like it. But Fanatic didn't. If he went into skyscrapers, he only did it because others went there. A common trap of memetics.

"Couldn't they hang me for that if I say I don't enjoy it? Or couldn't they at least shoot me for it?"

The world around seemed to have been flushed with acid.

Mud everywhere. Shivering jelly in gummy bear cups being nibbled off by school psychologists. And a toy machine playing pool, without which it would be impossible to cross the street except by using the toxic pedestrian crosswalk. A pedestrian crosswalk where the rifle-wielding hoodlums lurk, mercilessly shooting every pedestrian and stuffing their corpse with plum bullets coated in cocoa powder and sugar and melted margarine. And the bastard who stuffs as many corpses as possible in this way gets an award worthy of a distinguished orator and a great philanthropist. A very unexpected rule.

Fanatic despised skyscrapers, crumbling wood panelling and linoleum. Heavy airs and heavy thoughts. He found it so incredibly annoying and contemptible, like a homeless man with an empty bleeding eye socket asking a random person on the street how much it costs to see an eye doctor at the nearest hospital, and eating an old dry bread roll as he did so, blood and pus dripping down from where his eye once was. Terrible thing.

And on top of that, there was extremely intense news of Air Conditioning that day. It was exactly twenty-four hours after the fall of the Air Conditioning, and nothing seemed to be the same as before. The ugly shabby decayed buildings and broken sidewalks remained ugly, of course. And the disgusting dull people, looking exactly as if they were about to cough up bitter phlegm at any moment, remained disgusting too. People. There was no difference between their eyes and their tongues.

But everyone and everything was already disgusting in a different way. Everything was disgusting in the name of the kind of disgust dictated by the interaction of the environment with the Air Conditioning, or more accurately, the

interaction of the environment with the ideas of the Air Conditioning. Conditioning was everywhere. It was in Graveyard and it was in the heads of the Linoleum worshippers. It was in the heads of the worshippers of crumbling wood panelling, and it was in the heads of the worshippers of skyscrapers. In the heads of all those who moved around and got used to the radiating waves of vibrating heat, the killing low-pressure mugginess, and the stench.

Houses and apartments, whether in skyscrapers or in low decaying boxes. Seen from the street, they are of course all cosy, but once one enters them and even gets used to them, they appear as disgusting as the sidewalks and exteriors. The flats torture their inhabitants. Their inhabitants, eager eaters of unpeeled nuts, alabaster-faced palm leaf pickers, dying because of their own miscalculations about the frequent presence of shuttles in the bypasses of evergreen concrete. Residents with no future and no present, residents with a conceptualised past that, with its static, intensely permeates everywhere in the places that happen to them now. Residents tortured by flats, who because of their torture know only one kind of movement, which is static movement. The static movement of history, which pierces its outstretched palm through the human mind and tries to absorb all hints of dynamic movement. A dynamic movement that can set off a cascade of everything with consequences, but at the same time a movement that is too frightening for all these inhabitants to indulge in. It is the Stockholm Syndrome, afflicting everyone who is tortured by their own apartments. The paradox of living in too many places for too long.

"Where are the fucking rulers? I need to measure my nose while I'm eating pasta here!"

Totally unconscious beings, sucking the fog from their heads and recycling their own desires and worries in a soup of oozing stench and steaming shit, from pressurised pots of mediocrely coexisting brains and half-empty cerebellums.

Creepy creeps who paint children's rooms with faeces and make their surfaces lick their own children. They wear prankish, deliberately crooked flowered hats and go to cafes. Cafes!

Cafes! Cafes that did nothing but urinate on the floor and drink disgusting mouldy wannabe coffee with hormone-packed milk and tons of beet sugar in such a disgusting way that anyone who didn't want to vomit had to walk out of the cafe in question.

And in the cafes, with the smell of urine, vomit and mouldy coffee, the severed heads of animals hang cheerfully, roaring and grimacing at their own pain caused by having to look at everything going on around them.

Overdoses of rice and corn syrup. Oxidised oils, overcooked soups, and the accumulating crap in people's livers – in the barely walking livers on their feet that have devoured people long ago, just as the dynamic movement in their minds has been devoured by the outstretched palm of their history.

Obesity, diabetes and cirrhosis. These are all pure and true tickets into the tunnel that connects the past with the present. History with the present. Palms and minds. A strange retrograde rotation of the temporal flow, in minds and in livers, in glycaemias and in hardened solidified organs.

"Have you been on a pilgrimage of resistance and even tried the Ferris wheels of disgust, the centrifuges of fear and the autodromes of violence? Not yet? Then come out immediately! Come out of your habitations to the outdoors and breathe deeply of the garbage and the stench!"

Some of the Fanatic's dreams evoked strange intimations of what in human language could only be described by the phrase "total necessity," or in the language of the dreamer, whose brain functions purely by association, it could also be described as "war on thunder and lightning!" A war of consciousness on one's conscience. A war during sleep that arises because of the myriad disputes in the waking state.

Fanatic in his dreams walked in strange underground rooms resembling school or restaurant bathrooms. He would meet random people there, pulling various inedible items out of cupboards and shelves and eating them. He ate sheets, pieces of wood, pencil cases, shoes, iron things and scraps of paper. He ate it for the sake of real sexual pleasure, which guaranteed him the feeling of a full belly.

In his dreams he had a courage he didn't have at other times. He was himself in the most controversial parts of his entropic brain, darkened by the manifestation of his shame and the obscurity of all the delinquent excesses of his person.

A particularly significant part of these gluttonous orgies in his dreams was the passage in which Fanatic locked himself in a toilet stall with two people with whom he had sex. The identity of one of the inches could not be determined, but the other was undoubtedly an Eastern type of human being. The kind of human that in the European jungle, and even in the Graveyard, most likely lives only in the gated communities of the suburbs anymore. It was a situation so pure and unspecific that Fanatic had come to associate it with the phrase "perfectly cut glass."

It was a total necessity, total and clear, of which there was no doubt.

# CHAPTER 5: Air Conditioning

Tourist was not alive. He didn't think so himself. If what most people did was called life without remorse, then Tourist could not say that about his own actions in self-reflection. He lived on a kind of intermediate station between life in the physical world and life in the world of fantasies and ideas. In neither world, however, could he find anything that felt real to him – something to occupy and absorb him. Something that didn't make him feel like a lump of matter flying through a vacuum, trying to grab onto imaginary blades of grass. He seemed to himself as extremely synthetic, like a wig for a balding man who thinks his new "hair" looks one hundred percent real, or like makeup for an obese, wrinkled and sickly woman that makes her feel attractive again. Tourist was not alive and was aware of it, as one of the few. He stood somewhere between himself and the deepest depths of his interior, and his only tool to enable him not to go mad from this strange position was nothing but waiting. Waiting for something to come along that would disrupt his patterns of existence. Waiting for the benefit of something that wouldn't end up being just a superposition of his previous ideas wedged into a tenuous body shell. Waiting for blades of grass that he accidentally grasps and discovers to his surprise that they are not imaginary, but one hundred percent real.

He was constantly aware of how his waiting was leading to nothing and how unhealthy it was to rely on something to save him, but he did it anyway. What else was left for a man to do if it was the only thing known to him that could make him live with less pain. This is ultimately the only reason for the existence of voluntary living in illusions. A life that everyone has fallen into for at least a little while and therefore knows very well what is at stake.

*On the evening of March the 34th, Tourist was reading the newspaper.*

*Air Conditioning had killed 14 more people! Seven Graveyard residents died from starvation, four from dehydration and three as a result of mental illness. Air Conditioning kills!*

He sat down in a chair covered with a shaggy red blanket and took a sip of old instant coffee doused with commercial milk, one teaspoon of sunflower oil, and topped with seven teaspoons of beet sugar.

On March 30, shortly after seventeen o'clock, the Air Conditioning fell on Graveyard. The overwhelming impact of a massive change, a sickening rumble and stench, a vast change in atmosphere and light penetration, full of phosphorescent

colours, fog, and existential noise. The ultimate beam of light took on deviant textures.

Purple-yellow tinges of flashes and concentric geometric lines carried through interiors and exteriors, crashed into broken sidewalks, shattered buildings, skyscrapers full of crumbling wood panelling and linoleum floors. Greenery, ponds, ducks' heads, pigeons' heads, and even the heads of Graveyard residents were disturbed. Heads of people who didn't dare to drink a full sip directly from that experience. The transcendence of something that rewrote structures so unusually, as only massive nuclear bomb explosions, sadistic conquerors, or catastrophically replicated fetishes usually could – symbols, set problems, and created set problems. A massive amorphous object transcending all dimensions of space and time has invaded space and time and disrupted their forms. Of length, breadth, depth and duration. Cycles of laws and rules were shattered by the entry of Air Conditioning into the atmosphere. Reality was stained, purple and yellow. Pink. Smoky and clean. An explosion of the world!

A war that sucks in not only the background, but living objects as well. Eyeballs, eye-legs and eye-hands. A man turned upside down and walking with his own hair. Some call it "god", but no god is inside the mind. It's just a mind, an artefact, an archetype, and a morph. The concept of a concern competing for the most perfect idea.

The interesting thing is that nobody took much notice of the course of events. But everyone undoubtedly reacted to its presence. Everyone dealt with the Air Conditioning before it fell or after it fell. It's a curiosity, yet it's not unusual. It's only interesting, perhaps, if someone points it out. Then all the pointing out of obvious uselessness becomes a symbol. And symbols tend to captivate more than a few human beings.

The Air Conditioning fell about four kilometres northeast of the Ladder, in a valley between two residential neighbourhoods called "Mills." It left a crater about one hundred by one hundred metres wide and forty-five metres deep at its deepest point. An eighteen-lane highway ran through the Mills, through which herds of Graveyard residents regularly sped in their overheated cars, not so they could get to work or the mall, but so they could get to the several-kilometre-long tunnel, in which they could forget about their usual work and shopping hardships, the stench that resembled a cross between that of fermented fruit and that of urine, and the acidic, carcinogenic, and energy-stealing heavy meals that offered themselves to them in their homes when they came home from work. Mills were a labyrinth of salvation for these people; an oasis of calm and an agglomeration of cerebral escapes in the form of fantasies. In addition, a few pine trees were planted in front of and behind the

tunnel, with an unusually deep green colour that managed to evoke the far tundra interior of the Nordic countries. No work, no shopping malls, no smells and no heavy energy-stealing meals. Just long tunnels and the dark green of the tundra. And that was exactly why Air Conditioning killed so many people on March 30. They were all people who wore brown leather boots, drank milk, and their overheated red cars had raised chassis by default. There were an unimaginable number of such people. They were typical Graveyard people, moving between the city's residential neighbourhoods, living their lives on the edge of what they had escaped from and what would await them again when they returned from their trip of fantasies and their physical agglomerations. Large masses of them perished then, but along with the pressure wave that spread beyond the Mills and knocked down a few houses, shattered a few windows, and downed a few power lines, the Air Conditioning killed a total of 272 people in its fall that day.

On that very day, March 30, perhaps all of the people who represented Graveyard reacted to the Air Conditioning. The ground was hot. So hot that the soles of shoes melted on it like a slice of cheese on a hot pan. People were shutting down, stopping going out. They took the children out of the nurseries and schools, they took the children out of the playgrounds. They plundered the groceries and barricaded themselves in their homes. They closed the windows and stopped to ventilate. They breathed their own unique air in hermetically sealed rooms and occasionally watched the air-conditioning haze from opened blinds. It was a wonderfully archetypal time of blaring metaphysical trumpets and forest horns wailing in the relationships between all living and non-living things. And this time was occasionally prodded by someone who opened a window to their house or apartment and stuck a rifle out of it to, for some reason, threaten the people in the surrounding windows with it. The head is always the temple of the church of the mind.

"That's it. The pitfalls of immaterial stock markets and the catatonic borreliosis of decomposing swine. This must occur to anyone who views the course of events in Graveyard with rational form and intensity..."

And that is exactly what came to Fanatic's mind when he learned of the fall of the Air Conditioning. It was a thought with a bizarre reach into himself. A fragrant glimpse of pure transcendence that transcended itself in the name of nothing but its own barren existence. The head is always the temple of the church of the mind.

And what was the pinnacle of this thinking was nothing but the pinnacle of the thinking of a wonderfully despondent common man.

Fanatic was in the rapture and near death of many of his intentions. It reminded him, no doubt, of a certain half-mad European king who, in fits of brutally

intense manic-depressive psychosis, rants nonsense for fifty hours without pause, until at last he asks for paper and pen and begins to write his grandiose, nourishing epitaph:

*"Evaluation of water vapour quanta flattened against the sky. Yellow lights, pink reflections and dead birds amongst it all.*

*Huge bouquets and flowery hugeness.*

*The damp grasses and the damp words of occasional permanent institutions that speak with great grace in a way that seems to crack the notion of the quantity of elemental contexts.*

*Begotten.*

*A massive influx of the world in the eyes of multicoloured strips, streaks of fragments of time and space that seem continuous in emulsions of ideas of a dismembered yet intact mass.*

*Begotten.*

*Into a world vibrating in the vibrations of vibrations themselves.*

*No noise and no taste. Only geese, cows and other animals, buildings and sky.*

*The occasional pieces of mice, sclerotic clouds and fantastic figures.*

*A dysentery of unnamed aristocracies in an evergreen world of leading hands.*

*Ornamental religious monoliths shining a harsh light in your eyes and stabbing you in the chest the way hysterical dogs stab you in the chest with their screams.*

*Transitions of road signs into pots filled with artificial plants and their primitive and superficial bending at the waist in waves of alarming and enormous emergent facts of reflection.*

*Deterministic files spewed out through the mouth of a human-squirrel hybrid that can fly, but only over houses and over streets. Over cadastral territories, inhabited and built-up, in which it can frighten the living inhabitants by rattling cans and slamming forks on metal surfaces in flight. And with knives. And spoons. It's a creature called "The Outlaw." That's what it calls itself, and that's what it's called.*

*Trees of vengeance and vengeance of trees. Meadows of grasses under orange sun and pink clouds, lit by romantic meaningfulness.*

*An euphoria of joy and beauty! That is it!*

*The purple moon and the symphonic roar of the feathered ones. And the float of the never-ending walk. The contraction of muscles and a plethora of the softest cerebral thunder.*

*Trees growing upside down! Rooting with fruit and fruiting with roots. A rose-purple mass of joy on the border of all absurdity. The light is dead! Long live the light.*

*The roaring swings of the trees. Hard clouds! Branches, leaves, and grass underbushes smashing against the ground inhuman glass of unknown origin! Unknown reasons.*

*Vibrating vibrations!*

*This is the forest. The space in which more than a few interior designs of the brain end up in superpositions of regularly disappearing fractions and the immune doctrine of them. The death of silence and the silence of death. The vagaries of vagaries. Synesthesia.*

*Why? Why not."*

On March 12, at seven PM and forty-five minutes, Tourist was sitting in the bathtub. Protecting him from the aggressive glow of the toxic blue bathroom lamp was a turquoise and white curtain with a deliberately soaked underside, which stuck perfectly to the surface of the tub and thus prevented a single ray of lamplight from making a direct impact on Tourist's skin or the tub in which he was currently ensconced.

People tend to feel much more intimate and more "with themselves" in showers than, for example, in toilets. In many ways, showering resembles dreaming. An interesting phenomenon.

The yellow tiles in the bathroom almost pulsed with comfort. They were honoured because they were an unmistakable part of the closed society. Tourist was letting a stream of hot water into his mouth, the intensity of which he was dampening by holding the shower head. It was one of his rituals that allowed him to be in neither of the worlds. One of the rituals that allowed him to somehow, miraculously, distance himself from both himself and his waiting for change to come. Perhaps.

With his mouth clogged by the hot shower, he was thinking.

"Who is it, that man?" Butcher pointed up at the suspension bridge and gently nudged Detective. Detective in the white sweater and black pants.

*Butcher was Detective's friend. A not very tall, stocky man with a bald head, broad shoulders, and dressed in an even broader blazer. Whether he was a police officer, or what his role actually was, Tourist hadn't thought it through. He was simply a side character with a side role. Too little visible for it to make sense to characterise its details.*

*Detective was a police officer. He wore white sweaters and black pants, had grey hair, and was always carefully shaved. He didn't talk much, and his voice was very monotone most of the time anyway. Detective looked almost like Tourist. He was prettier, though. He always looked very serious and a smile could rarely be seen on his face. And even then, that smile was always somehow painful. It is very difficult to describe, but there was something very unconvincing about the Detective's smile - something that could only be found with great difficulty on a man as calm as he was. It was the smile of a principle. An annoying activity of the same nature as going to school, to weddings, to funerals, or to the authorities on principle. A strange facial expression indeed.*

The city breathed with a strange atmosphere. After all, it was a very atypical town. The atmosphere of futuristic suspension bridges, glass covered skyscrapers and hipster container cafes was punctuated by poor neighbourhoods reminiscent of a patchwork of Brazilian slums, or European neoclassical shanties, or vast mediaeval ramparts encircling all the hilly terrain in the centre. In the city was everything that there could be in a city. This city was inspired by the whole Earth.

And the sky, the sky was indeed earthly. It was an even grey, as if someone had just freshly concreted it.

"Is that him!?" urged Butcher.

"Where? Who again?" Detective didn't understand, looking annoyed. He hadn't eaten anything all day, and since he was in the habit of drinking coffee with lots of milk and sugar every morning, the sharp drop in his glycemia was showing in his mental grumpiness.

Butcher took Detective by the arm and pointed to the suspension bridge again.

"It's him!" Detective exclaimed, pulling his pistol from his belt and running along the riverbank to the suspension bridge.

"What are you doing!? Are you fucking kidding me!!!?" Butcher yelled, trying to stop him. However, he couldn't keep up with Detective's pace.

Detective was already on the bridge, but the man he had run out after was, after all, someone completely different from who he had originally thought him to be. His drawn pistol had become useless in the moment of discovery, so he rather dramatically tucked it into his belt over the river, staring at the flowing masses of water with his eyebrows raised almost horizontally as he did so. The man on the bridge was not Racker. It was a disappointment.

Detective continued on across the bridge to the other side of the river. He was absolutely free; Butcher didn't even try to catch up with him. Detective was a nobody nowhere and everybody everywhere at the same time. That was exactly how he felt in the world created for him by his parallel double enjoying the ritual of showering.

In a short time he reached the shopping mall on the waterfront. With his grey hair, white sweater, black trousers, and gun at his belt, he felt very noble in the interior. He felt like the centre of attention, and although the people around him didn't fix their eyes on him too much, he undoubtedly felt worthy of it. He was viewing the flowers in the florist's shop and was having a discussion with the saleswoman at the instant coffee stall.

"So impossible is the world that guesses the nothing-telling words!"

Meanwhile, in a barber shop with a checkerboard floor inside the mall, a man was preparing to be shaved with a razor. It was Squealer. He had warm cloths placed on his cheeks and chin. He then had a foam applied to himself.

Barber seemed to be slightly nervous. Besides him and Squealer, there were two other men in brown hats in the barber shop, who were giving all their attention to the spread-out black-and-white newspapers in their hands.

Detective was just passing the barber's shop with a paper cup of disgustingly over-roasted and badly ground coffee of a peculiar taste. He glanced inside the barbershop, where a man in a chair immediately caught his eye. He looked like Squealer, but he wasn't quite sure of his identity. He decided to wait on the bench outside the barbershop until the gentleman in question comes out. He didn't want to make a fuss with unprofessional gawking and sniffling.

Once Barber was done applying the foam, he washed his hands with warm water, wiped them with a gaudy red cloth, picked up his razor, and walked up behind Squealer. He cut a small trail of beard from his left cheek, leaving a trail of bare skin on his cheek without the foam. He didn't even wipe off the razor and buried the whole thing in Squealer's throat in a second. Slicing his throat from left to right, while Squealer tried to quickly break free of his death chair, but Barber grabbed his shoulder firmly with his left hand, allowing him to finish his clean cut all the way to the other end of his throat. Squealer couldn't even scream, as his vocal cords had been sliced open. Blood was pouring onto the checkerboard floor, and the few people behind the barber shop who had the privilege of noticing this bloody cut began to scream. The men in hats inside the barber shop continued to idly read their outstretched black newspapers.

Barber was someone hired by Racker.

Detective wouldn't have noticed anything if it hadn't been for the surrounding panic. He was too preoccupied with his shitty coffee. He glanced around and his gaze rested on the barber shop only seconds after registering the human screams. It was an embarrassingly slow reaction. However, as soon as he saw it, he spat out the coffee and dropped the half-empty cup on the floor. He stood up and pulled his pistol from his belt.

Squealer writhed on the ground, trying to plug the hole in his neck. But it was too big and he was losing blood too fast to be able to control his movements and not panic. He flopped on the ground in his own blood like a fish out of water.

A shot rang out. Its source was a Detective's pistol. The bullet shot through the glass of the barber shop door, hitting Barber in the neck, and he collapsed onto the table. Struggling to keep his balance, he reached for anything that came to hand and managed to stain the mirror with his own blood because of it. Three more shots

punctured Barber's lungs, heart and liver, leaving him motionless dead on the ground. The puddle of his blood mingled with the puddle of Squealer's, and there was clearly more nothing than glass in the Barber's doorway.

During the shooting, the men in hats reading the black and white newspapers spread out managed to stand up quickly, jumping up on the bench to avoid being hit by bullets. They drew their pistols and tried to return fire at Detective, but he shot them down shortly after killing Barber as well. He fired at them perhaps seven times, not knowing how many times he actually hit them. One of them, after just two shots, had his head split open, the contents of which splattered the wall behind the bench. It was already clear that he was not going to get up. The other dropped his weapon after only a few shots, paralyzed by the ballistic shock, but already shot, he was still trying to get to his feet, crawling in the puddles of the blood of Barber and Squealer. Detective, however, walked closer to the barbershop and with three shots to the torso, killed him once and for all. This time it wasn't just the door that was shot through, but all the glass walls.

Detective didn't tuck his pistol into his belt, but still held it in his hand. He passed his hand along the length of his body along with the gun and stepped through the splintered hole in the glass wall into the barbershop, stepping directly on the puddles of blood of three shot and one slashed body – there were more bloody puddles and corpses on the floor than there were the checkerboard floor. He inhaled, smelling a strong metallic aroma as he did so.

All the time was suddenly gone. It was a wonderful hypnotic moment, the equivalent of an inter-sensory bliss akin to a glass of magnesium water after a gruelling few kilometres of carrying a heavy backpack up a hill, or a cold shower after being on hot asphalt under a sharpshooting sun. A body shiver marking the release. Maybe not quite a shiver so much as a subtle trembling. Only silence, shards, blood, corpses, plaster, glass and a strong metallic aroma. The strong metallic aroma of blood.

March 33 was the day Surfer was significantly promoted in his work for the Mayor's Office. Of course, in the name of the air-conditioning crisis and harnessing its personal transformations in the heads of the transforming transformers. It was a job of total and absolute necessity. He no longer carried letters in his classic grey car, but was assigned a white automobile with a two-and-a-half-metre-long bonnet, round headlights, and chrome fenders. The upholstery inside the car was as well white, made of leather. Except for the roof, which was interwoven with something that resembled ordinary white cloth in its appearance, but evoked moleskin, or the fur of some other silky insectivore, in its consistency. The car was even given a name.

It was called "Bumper" and was named by the man who had custom-made it for the Mayor's Office services.

A panoramic view of entire periods of mystical and spiritual illusionary progression seeking definitions of the massive defecations and urinations of their own thoughts. This is something in which more than one promoted Graveyard clerk gets stuck, and in which only a tiny percentage of the clerical population will realise their position in relation to themselves. The torrential booming voice of self-reflection and analysis is nothing compared to the fist-pump of stimulating self-aggrandisement.

The triumphant leap of the heart through the rib cage. The prideful exclamation of a proud monster digging its way through the cave to the surface, and as a result of its first contact with sunlight, the pigment in its skin instantly becoming cancerous.

Surfer together with his cat was accommodated in a villa in the Resort district – a villa with marble walls, antique pillars and ten-metre-high windows, with a massive dome on the facade. Fountains, palm trees, red carpets and historical paintings everywhere. Baroque decoration in minimalist monochrome white marble. A residential and working building, a peak of kitsch and tasteless existential pomposity. An abstract killer of experiences.

Surfer was content to live there along with many other employees of the Mayor's Office.

And the Mayor's Office! The Mayor's Office – an institution that comes from the surface of everything in between everything! It was an institution like no other! A sleek mafia pretending to be boorish. And the people employed by the Mayor's Office, they were very easy to spot. Their necks were nonexistent, their suits were overly present, their fingers were fat, and their voices sounded like bubbling sewers. Surfer didn't fit in with them. He was the exception.

Mayor! What an archetypal figure! The mayor; a template-like caricature of the institution and the people representing it within the human body. Hierarchically, although in the highest post, functionally, existentially and visually the same as everyone else in office. Mayor. No living creature has been marked by such an enormous amount of eagerness and greed. However, these qualities the Mayor himself knew very well how to hide behind a laziness and passivity that seemed to be calm and deliberate. Mayor was not a tall man. He was not obese, nor was he thin. He was a bone encased in fat. The archetypal figure of a man who lives only out of a conviction of his own importance and who is incapable of surviving without others constantly creating an environment for him. He was a man who lived mainly on letters. He had hair all over his body, just not on his head. He was greasy and his eyes

were very small and swollen, like the eyes of a fat sick pig. In every activity other than sitting or lying down, he panted like someone whose heart is failing. He was constantly sitting in his office in the villa, right under the roof of the massive dome, talking on the telephone and laughing loudly as he did so. He was always talking, even shouting, out loud. And if any drops of liquid dripped from him during his powerful vocal utterances, it was almost never possible to tell whether it was sweat or saliva.

Mayor was a nobody nowhere. Some figure with the highest political-authoritarian status in Graveyard, is just moving like a lump of matter among the offices, laundry rooms, bathrooms, toilets, kitchens, and dining rooms. Columns, paintings, vases, domes, laundry rooms and bathrooms. Laundry rooms and laundry rooms. Dining rooms and dining rooms. Dining rooms that smell of something that stinks like overcooked socks and laundry rooms where the staff no doubt make tea and pasta. All the tension and violence of the marble villa is determined by the laundry rooms and the dining rooms! Atrappiness of the coarsest grain and of the highest level of tastelessness.

"Aristocrats who ride motorcycles and fuck coniferous trees in their mouths!" often occurred to Mayor just as he saw people in the laundry room making tea. The atrappiness of the marble house annoyed him immensely, as did the atrappiness of all the relationships and the system that related to him himself, but he compensated for his frustration just by going to the dining rooms and laundry rooms more intensely. He tried to convince himself that the world created for him had some kind of daunting value and that it had to be made use of. If it is not used, its artificiality and atrappiness comes out publicly. This was the philosophy of Mayor, and perhaps the philosophy of the entire Mayor's Office. Or, with a small dose of realistic pessimism based on the application of the course of events in the laundry rooms and dining rooms to larger geographic models, perhaps that was the philosophy of the entire Graveyard.

On the morning of March 34, Train Driver didn't take any orange juice. He wasn't even lounging by the pool. He jumped straight into his yellow-brown car, where the thick smell of oil and vanilla enveloped him. He started the engine and soon climbed down the hill on which many houses similar to his own stood. He drove down the highway for a few seconds, then turned off in the direction of Ladder and drove the car up the hill. His ears buzzed from the constant elevation gain.

Ladder was an interesting place. And especially now. It had been quite four days since the Air Conditioning had fallen on the Graveyard. And since the Air Conditioning had just fallen about four kilometres from Ladder, the havoc it had

caused was very visible in these parts. What's more, Ladder was now no longer just the place of a nice romantic view of the Air Conditioning havoc, or the proverbial place that housed people from the Mayor's Office who didn't want to make their wealth disposition too publicly known, and so they just swarmed in a shitty Potemkin village of architectural tastelessness. Ladder was from now on a place full of police officers who enthusiastically enforced the city-wide curfew. People violating the bans had their House Passports taken away and were arrested. Preschoolers, people of productive and post-productive age ended up in handcuffs and there was nothing they could do about it. It made them feel like chickens in a locked hen house painted white and nordic red, which a fox visited and started to gradually bite their heads off. Air Conditioning in people's heads produced both the law and its enforcement, but it was still nothing that a smaller amount of money couldn't solve. And that was exactly where the clever people differed from the clever chickens, and that was exactly where the forest edge of the European jungle differed from the white paint and the nordic red. After all, the mentality of laundry rooms and dining rooms – of overboiled socks and teas – ruled through and through the whole city. Massive and deadly vibrations of tangible stench, spreading faster and more intensely than miracle pills of inhumanity. Overfed police officers, civil servants, or civilian preschoolers, people of productive and post-productive age. They were all overfed at the very beginning of when it all started. It was an emphatic and graphic death of minds. Rotting in its most annoying and passive-aggressive form, akin to the bitten off head of a chicken which death caught up just after it had stuffed its craw full to the brim with wheat and millet.

There were two packets of money on the passenger seat. Train Driver pulled up to the police patrol, turned off the engine, rolled down the window with the mechanical crank, and handed first one of the packets of money and then the House Passport to a stocky police crew member with uniform and helmet through which his eyes could not even be seen.

"Here you go!"

"I see your circumstances of the expedition are indeed special," the police officer said right after he shoved the packet of money into his jacket pocket and flipped through the House Passport like a small child pretending to read a leporello, only not to be disturbed by his uncultivated, noisy peers.

Train Driver grinned, started the car, and slowly began to drive off with the car up the hill.

"Thank you, we'll definitely meet again. I lead a really special kind of life."

"Have a safe trip!" The police officer shouted in a strangely rough voice and returned to his position. To his beach chair with the parasol. How else but on a beach chair with a parasol in green and white colours of the Graveyard Police.

Train Driver drove about 50 metres and then immediately slammed on his brakes, put the car in reverse and came back to the police officer. This was because the man had forgotten to give him back his House Passport.

"Hey! What the fuck about the House Passport!?"

The police officer may have looked extremely amused, but nothing could be seen through his helmet. All that could be heard was a loud, ironic and strangely rough laugh. He got up from his beach chair, pulled the Train Driver's House Passport out from his jacket pocket, and handed it to him through the rolled-down window.

"I thought you were going to leave it to me!"

Train Driver laughed roughly as well, loudly and ironically, but only out of a sense of false social belonging. In reality, he was extremely annoyed and fed up. This whole situation was extremely restrictive and unnecessary. It was passive-aggressively rotten, like overripe oranges with sharp teeth eating each other, shouting vulgarly at each other and licking each other with pointed tongues.

In the back of his mind, he imagined how all the police officers on Ladder, sitting on their beach chairs, would end up with their helmets and their contents shredded, in the name of a precisely aimed fired Xenon bullet. Paralleling his fantasies, he drove his car up the hill and parked in one alley of the Ladder, comprehending many houses of the terraced housing development, switched off the engine, picked up the money, slammed the door and locked it. Before ringing the massive white door of the house, decorated with a pompous glass front, he turned behind his car and stared directly at the ten or so centimetre drawing of a pink dinosaur placed in the corner of its bonnet. He wondered if anyone even noticed that kind of decoration. Decoration on the hood of a car.

A church that screams aggressively, scrubbing its asshole with a toilet brush and clenching its teeth with such intensity that they snap! And a shouting market vendor who smashes himself in the crotch with a blacksmith's hammer while ordering passing shoppers around and telling them: "Do not hinder in the name of God!"

The bell rings. It plays a very shrill, dragging and repetitive melody. It plays for a very long time and is very annoying.

After about thirty seconds, the white door is opened by the Philharmonist. Philharmonist, a gentleman of about one metre seventy-five centimetres tall with black curly hair. In red shirt and beige three-quarter pants.

The house is still the same as it was on March 12. The wooden staircase is covered with beige carpets. Carpets of the same colour as Philharmonist's trousers (the carpets, however, were undoubtedly dirtier compared to Philharmonist's trousers). A house that has a lot of light, yet still looks gloomy. The black and red and black and green wallpaper, not even saved by the ubiquitous gigantic windows.

Everything was the same, but Philharmonist was different. Yes, he still greeted Train Driver with the same quaint tone as usual and also offered him orange juice. With his usual motions, he led him to an upstairs room, took his money, and handed Train Driver a briefcase containing a revolver, a four-kilogram nickel-plated Xenon, 15.7 millimetre calibre, with an eighteen-inch barrel. He even said his usual goodbyes to Train Driver. Something was undoubtedly rotting inside him, however, and had been continuously since the March 12 carrot and onion incident. Philharmonist was a broken man and he knew it very well. He subconsciously suspected all the time that he would never again be told by Train Driver some dadaist culinary combination that would shatter his perception of reality. That he would never again in his life be so shocked by anything as to make him feel as beautiful as it had been on the twelfth of March. Like that wonderful and magical time when reality had treated him to a fragrant cold shower of cerebral changes. Yet he still counted on the fact that the 34th of March, the meeting with Train Driver in the name of buying the Xenon, could theoretically bring something similar. But it hadn't. No emotion of the same existential shock came, not even when he himself brought up the subject of carrots and onions in front of Train Driver and made it clear that he was interested. No emotion of the same existential shock came, even when he and Train Driver conversed about carrots and onions again for a good couple of dozen minutes. Nothing came and there was only emptiness. A sickening feeling of devouring hopelessness from which there was no escape. A hyperbolized pleiad of sharp blade blows to the nerve endings of an entire system all at once.

On the evening of March 34, Philharmonist sat down in the bathtub in his bathroom and committed suicide. He cut his veins with a razor blade.

He never told anyone in his life that he actually had a garage full of guns, and he deliberately lied to his clients about orders and wait times because he was amused when they simply waited. He never told anyone in his life that he chopped his father's head off with an axe and hanged his mother in the barn shortly after he had knocked her unconscious with a blow to the head with a kitchen pan. He never told anyone in his life that he loved peas and his garden was dotted with them every year. He never told anyone in his life how he liked to drive his car around Graveyard for no reason – just so he could soak up the stinkingly dystopian atmosphere of the city streets. He never told anyone in his life that he had a huge closet in his basement full

of jars of formaldehyde and severed human fingers that he regularly talked to. He never told anyone in his life that he loved goat cheese and always had a fridge full of it at home. He never even wanted to tell anyone. Philharmonist, a gentleman of about one metre seventy-five centimetres tall with black curly hair. In red shirt and beige three-quarter pants. Sitting in the bathtub, his veins cut, not living.

At the moment of Philharmonist's death, a couple of people passed under the bathroom window of his house, holding rulers. They were mass-measurers; those who measured the length and mass of their reflections. They were people who just walked around with rulers and measured. They measured and measured. They didn't sleep, eat or drink properly. If the Philharmonist had not been dead and had had the chance to see the faces of these people with rulers, he would certainly have been offended. Their faces were set, ugly and unreal. They were rotten and swollen, like the faces of Russian miners fed on alcohol and sodium nitrite. They were the unsoothed faces of addicts to the measurement of matter. Perhaps they were under Philharmonist's window precisely because they sensed the reflection of their mass; they sensed the bleeding human body. They were unable to locate it and so they left.

On the way home, knowing nothing of severed fingers, measuring with rulers, goat cheese and peas, Train Driver took a different route. He took a scenic drive past the semi-dilapidated Mills Hospital, which was currently in the immediate vicinity of the Air Conditioning crater. Due to the pressure wave caused by the explosion, it had many of its windows blown out.

Hospital! It was a place with an incredible reputation! And, of course, as well in the days when it didn't have its windows blown out yet. Blown out windows, clutter and nesting birds inside. It was nothing. Back in January, there was a situation in the delivery room there, when during one prolonged and painful delivery, Doctor stuck a spade into the head of a baby sticking out of the mother's vagina and killed it. To make matters worse, Doctor smoked a cigarette during the entire affair, which she eventually put down by shoving it into a hole in the dead baby's skull. And since Doctor became apparently hungry, she then ordered a pizza directly to the delivery room, during the consumption of which she smoked another cigarette. By the way, the delivery room was being renovated at that very moment and was being painted by several painters who were scraping off the old paint with a scraper, not caring where it was falling – it was falling practically everywhere; including on the delivering mother. The mother eventually died within half an hour after her baby's death, screaming massively under the impact of the excruciating pain and extreme psychological trauma. Doctor was apparently undisturbed by her screams; according to witnesses to the affair, according to the fact that she was smacking unusually loudly, she was enjoying her pizza. However, it is also possible that Doctor's

unusually loud smacking was a deliberate attempt to interrupt the mother's screaming, which she found annoying.

The hospital was a crazy place. It was frequented by policemen. It was not uncommon for policemen to burst into a patient's room out of nowhere, destroying the equipment there, acrobatically showing off by practising flips and cartwheels, and afterwards shooting the patient. In such a situation, the doctor usually came to the room, shot the cops, and as usual, lit a cigarette, ordered a pizza, or ideally; both.

Last December, in the infectious diseases ward, a doctor came to the room of a patient suffering from hepatitis A, chopped off his arm with a machete and poured boiling coffee on his face. The patient stood up in a panic, ripped out his IV and fled the room down the hall, with bleeding remaining of his arm and with severe burns, and was shot by security guards as it was against the infectious disease ward rules to leave the room.

Doctors, by the way, often chopped off patients' limbs to make minced meat for hamburgers in the hospital kitchen. However, such food was only for the hospital staff. Patients were exclusively given old tea, carrots and onions, or onions and oil. And no cigarettes.

Train Driver returned home. He parked his yellow and brown car, lay down by the pool, and sipped from a glass full of orange juice, gazing at the flowers and the sky with overwhelming pleasure. Matilda was not at home. He felt great. As full as a glass of juice. With an in-body bliss like more than one vorarephile who is just devouring passersby.

Bumper was speeding at 120 kilometres per hour on a road located in the immediate vicinity of Ladder. A white car with a two-and-a-half-metre-long bonnet, on the edge of which was a bloodstain. Round headlights and chrome fenders. One fender and one headlight stained with blood. Leather upholstered seats, leather driving wheel and leather dashboard. A roof interwoven with something that resembled ordinary white cloth in its appearance, but evoked moleskin, or the fur of some other silky insectivore, in its consistency. Well, behind the driving wheel of all this, this pure, juicy and oversalted havoc of defiance to the commercialised concepts of aesthetics, sat Surfer. His flowered shirt and shorts were covered in blood. His face and his hands were covered in blood. And his expression, his facial expressions, were unforgettable. A calm face, but a face full of the desire for screams. The face of someone about to have the top of his head blown off. An aggressive and intense explosion of emotion, a tingling of cerebral electricity of unimaginable energy. Hands on the driving wheel, strangling rather than gripping. Left foot poised ready near the clutch and right foot on the gas. Both feet crushed themselves. They clench

their fingers and flex their calves. And eyes that stare at the road both for vigilance and because they'd most likely eat everything. That was Surfer. No man working for the Mayor's Office and delivering letters. No man owning a cat.

Dust in the ass that never ends and a pavement cobblestone of hopeless scream into the darkness. And an echo between two walls, a floor and a sky without colour. That was reality.

Bumper began to slow until it stopped altogether. He stopped right across the street from where a truly extraordinary event was taking place. Some sort of pompous Mayoral celebration to which several hundred members of the Mayor's Office had been invited. Real kitsch and disgust. Buffet tables overflowing with snacks and bouquets, servants in tuxedos and ice sculptures. Red carpets. White tablecloths. And the people! Those people! The white, black, yellow and blue suits. Tuxedos. Red, yellow and blue robes. Moustaches twirled and hair combed with pomade. Eaten-up faces that can reach their mouths to the nearest sandwich and can talk about their disgust and contempt for certain people, and who alone have an unbearable need to shout out loud "Oh my God! Get that shit out of my head!".

One of the hags at the party was conversing with other hags about how she once stomped on her dog's head. Or more accurately, she was having a monologue punctuated by sipping from a bottle of champagne. Disgusting.

"As I stomped on that head, the crack of the skull reminded me of the kind of sound you hear when you start munching on a properly old and hard butter biscuit. Gross. And his eyes squirted out. Blood and some weird pink mixture, I don't know what it could have been, spurted out through his eye sockets. Probably squashed brains. It came out through his mouth too..."

Disgusting.

Between Bumper and this disgusting, depraved and pompous celebration, this adoration of unacknowledged and apparent tastelessness, stood about forty metres of road and a hedge. Surfer began to rev the engine in the stalled car. A couple of people in suits, robes, and tuxedos, strolling merrily across lawns, red carpets and sipping from champagne, turned at the sound of the engine. Surfer pondered in that deeply-shallow way that only a bullied elementary school student can ponder before consuming something he himself has named "a juicy greasy bagel stuffed with butter and lard" and presented it as such in front of his annoyed classmates. And he released the brake. Bumper shot out and crashed through the hedge. It broke through the buffet tables. It punched through the hags and a couple of louts. Surfer's foot was still on the gas, and more and more people ended up under the car's wheels. Surfer was crushing them with bumper of Bumper!

Panic rose among the people and a loud scream started. They tried to run away, but there was nowhere to go. There were too many of them in too small a place. All they could do was drop food on plates and champagne in glasses on the ground and crowd each other like a horde of sewer rats. Many of them flew over the bonnet, or were torn apart by the bumper, and only the upper halves of their bodies flew over the bonnet. Some ended up under the wheels and were instantly crushed by the massive force of the moving machine. Bumper weighed over two tonnes. Bones cracked and blood gushed. The two-ton white Bumper was already largely red after only a few moments of moving in the space behind the hedge.

Some people tried to fight back. They pulled out guns and started shooting, but Bumper was impenetrable. And Surfer was ruthless. He drifted and kept turning so he could knock down as many bodies as possible caught in the claws of the Mayor's Office. The creatures were getting on his nerves in unimaginable ways. Disgusting bought meanings and institutionalised roles of glorified actors, like menstruating vaginas stabbed with crucifixes. Fortunately, their lives were disappearing thanks to the white car in great style. Sputtered heads, squashed torsos between car doors and fenders and buffet tables, motionless human bodies flying over the roof like rag dolls. The situation had reached the point where the car had buried itself in a human body in the blood-soaked grass. By then, there were fewer than ten survivors left on the scene. Surfist vigorously stomped on the gas, and the faster the buried wheel spun, the deeper it dug into the human corpse. Blood and flesh spurted. Finally, the car ploughed through the corpse, pushed itself off the ground, and was able to merrily take the lives of more and more.

Maybe the corpse on the ground that Bumper had buried himself in wasn't even a corpse. Maybe that human body was still a living person at the time the car wheel was crushing it. Maybe that human body was still a living person at the time the car wheel was spinning and ripping chunks of clothing, skin, fat, and muscle from his torso. Maybe that living human body only became a dead human body at the time when the car wheel, with its crushing turning force, plucked out his entire rib cage and invaded the very depths of his body. Maybe.

Bumper was unleashed and continued to kill uncompromisingly.

The head splashed against the glass roof of the chimney, preventing the smoke from escaping. Boar hair and the odd polyps of onions that make their way into the drains of garbage dumps and landfills, from which more than one member of the fire department or Masonic lodge eats. Or even the average teacher who, in his spare time, is fond of slipping on a wet sponge and compensates for his head injury with four bananas bought in an underground supermarket with a mole attendance. Deviants and the horrible faintings of glass and metal, in which the convulsion lies

and which hold back life. The blocky buildings and the blocky heads that fit together like fish up asses. And the massive penis of Jesus Christ on display in the museum is like an artefact from a bygone age, the dirt and acid raining into it!

The last survivor was a gentleman in a tuxedo with grey hair and a French crutch, which he managed to throw away during his escape. He crawled between two buffet tables brimming with food and flowers, leaning his back against a wooden fence. Bumper parked head-on about twenty metres away. The engine began to rev, and parallely with it one could see great fear and unease on the expression of the grey tuxedoed gentleman, an instinctive averting of his eyes, a freezing and stiffening of his body in the name of his cerebral acceptance of the coming of inevitable death.

Bumper brake released and the car rushed off straight ahead. It perforated through the grey tuxedoed gentleman, tearing his legs off, smashing through the buffet tables and the upper half of the gentleman's body through the wooden fence. The upper half of the body ended up under the wheels and the buffet tables ended up overturned on the ground with considerable damage. The car continued on, still picking up speed. It crashed through three other hedges and one chain-link fence before ending up on the road again.

Surfer slowed down and heading for the nearest car wash, was enjoying the atmosphere of Graveyard from the unusual perspective of the metallic smell and taste of blood. Sightseeing in the style of blood and flesh.

"I'd like to have an inhuman form. I think it would be very beneficial," Surfer said to himself driving the bloodied Bumper. He said it to himself, but it was a verbatim quotation of a phrase uttered by a friend of his, Tourist, a few years back while removing a chicken and mashed potatoes from the microwave on a cold February evening. Surfer wasn't too familiar with the context of Tourist's utterance of those two phrases, but they resonated strongly within him. And especially now. He almost had the impression that he suddenly understood them completely. Somehow esoterically-telepathically, on the level of a shared experience of the phenomenon from the other person's point of view. Based on memories that he had never really had.

As soon as the employees of the car wash saw the blood-stained car arriving, they immediately fled. But perhaps what ultimately scared them wasn't so much the blood as the fact that the car belonged to a member of the Mayor's Office. Or maybe both. Who knows. But the truth is that the car no longer belonged to a member of the Mayor's Office, not at all.

# QUANTITATIVE HARVEST III. and IV.

## III.

*February 19*
*07:59 PM*
*-29.9515 °C*
*2 690.2911 m above sea level*

This is what the sensor showed.

Dormanitrivanius fled on this cold February evening, shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition, along the icy beaten path to the home of a family; whose members collectively called themselves "The Othekains"; from which he had heard a loud and piercing child's scream a few moments before.

Another strange sounding name invented by the author of the book. When she read it, she may not have even pronounced it correctly.

For some reason, moreover, he felt tingling in his lower limbs, which made it especially difficult for him to use them actively in the snowy terrain.

The first innovation Dormanitrivanius saw on the Othekain house during his run was its punctured roof.

Although he tried to devote himself to observing his own body (through concentrating on the dynamics of his own running) for the sake of making his experience a little more pleasant, the thought of the childish screams that could be heard at the time kept flashing through his mind.

(Such children had always been highly desirable prey for witches or other mutated humanoids living in the Inmarian forests – there was even a legend among the inhabitants of the local villages that the young sapients were said to have the most delicious flesh in the minds of these creatures. Moreover, it was true that witches or other mutant humanoids living in the Inmarian forests explicitly delighted in torturing young children, regardless of whether the torture was physical or psychological in nature.)

Dormanitrivanius walked up the three tall wooden steps to the porch, which he nearly slipped on several times as they were extremely icy. He stepped through

the jagged front door, but his shotgun, fully loaded with explosive ammunition, had the honour of being the first to enter.

At this point it started snowing very heavily outdoors.

(When it snows in the Inmarian forests during the winter, the flakes, or rather systems of flakes, are sometimes over three centimetres in diameter.)

The first thing that Dormanitrivanius, with the help of his olfactory cells, smelled in the house was not the typical whiff of a classic Inmarian half-timbered house, which he had also expected, but it was a pervasive smell. It reminded him of the smell of rotten flesh mixed with the smell of an old man's urine. If Dormanitrivanius had his eyes closed at that time and had guessed from the smell where he was, he would have deduced that he was in a nursing home in the same room with the decomposing carcass of a man of at least 80 years of age, whose body had released urine and faeces in a considerable stage of putrefaction.

The children's screaming in the house grew very loud and became physically uncomfortable to Dormanitrivanius's auditory system. But it was very easy for him to locate its source - he ran down a long dark hallway (characteristic of these types of houses) and headed for his rearmost room, where the screaming was coming from.

Approximately in the middle of the corridor he passed the house debris, including a hole in the roof from which it was falling (the hole was about a metre by a metre in size, and as a result of its existence it was snowing heavily on the corridor). He looked through it at the sky and noticed that all the thermal insulation, steel reinforcing roxors and wooden battens were frayed at the jagged edges of the hole, so it was obvious that whatever had created the hole must have broken in from the outside.

The barrel of his shotgun, fully loaded with explosive ammunition, was still at the head of the line, cutting through the air molecules and heading for the rearmost room. The wind carrying through the roof hole whined and howled intensely, getting under Dormanitrivanius's clothes and combining with his cold sweat to cause searing pain everywhere it went.

Standing about a metre from the room, the child's screams resembled squeals rather than shrieks. Aroused by the pervasiveness of its acoustics, he strode in in a flash and without a further thought.

The first thing that struck his eyes in the dark room was the opposite window, through which almost no residual light shone through because it was completely smeared with faecal matter. The thing that stood next to the window – or more accurately, the visible outline of the thing that stood next to the window – he didn't notice until then.

It was a completely naked woman, about two metres tall; or more precisely, a being, resembling a woman in her physical appearance - holding a child in her arms. She had the child turned to her face, with his feet squashed under her claws, and her hands encircling his forearms, into which she dug her sharp claws. She smiled broadly, her half-collapsed, pointed fangs grinning down at him. The petrified child wailed hysterically, pulling away from her face with all his strength, not minding at all that he was tearing his own forearms deep into the flesh against the claws of the inhuman humanoid with that movement. All things considered, it was surprising to Dormanitrivanius that the little sapient was not unconscious from so much pain and from such an overwhelming shock.

The more his eyes adapted to the darkness of the interior of the house, the more details he could make out in it. The creature, resembling a woman in her physical appearance, had thick, foamy saliva visibly running down her chin. Her entire body was covered with various accentuated veins, cracked blood vessels, warts, and tiny tumours. Her loin area was completely smeared with excrement, some of which was still running down her bony thighs and calves. Her hair was yellow, almost yellow-white, and resembled the elongated bristles of a domestic pig rather than hair. Her eyes were quite black, and their cutico-muscular surroundings were crinkled into strangely distorted shapes, the visuals of which evoked the eyes of some mystical, unreal being.

The witch turned to look at him, meeting his eyes with a deadly clouded gaze.

Her morbid face, under the influence of Dormanitrivanius's distorted perception, stretched, shifted, and distorted variously in the darkened room, until it began to remind him of a static theatrical mask, or something like a demon – at least, the kind traditionally portrayed by South Asian or Southeast Asian cultures. Around her head, the apparent space variously stretched, contracted, and pulsed. It all looked clearly frightening and disgusting to him, to the point where he himself would have said at that moment that what he was seeing was exclusively negative energy, which in its final form was bending the space into two- or three-dimensional formations, resembling something that cannot be described, but which can be intensely felt nonetheless.

The witch, however, only stood still and silent for two or three seconds. Then she gurgled disgustingly, dropped the child to the floor, and along with another, even greater dose of intense cacophonous sonic expenditure, her entire body broke through the faeces-smeared window and leapt out.

The child fell to the ground in a shower of her own blood, shards and excrement. This time he had already fallen unconscious.

Dormanitrivanius immediately reacted by firing a shotgun loaded with explosive ammunition into the empty window frame (there was nothing stopping him from shooting now as there was no danger of hitting a human child along with the inhuman humanoid). The deafening shockwave bounced off the walls of the enclosed space in the room several times, causing both of its occupants to have their hearing perception temporarily diminished.

He wasn't sure if he had hit it right, as the witch's body immediately disappeared behind the cover of the thick snowflakes that were busily raging outside. Suddenly, a massive snowdraft formed throughout the house, sweeping from hole in the roof to hole in the window and back again.

Dormanitrivanius ran to the window, crunching up glass shards and congealed excrements, checking the child with a glance as he moved. As he watched him in that brief moment, he wondered if he might want to move him to some safer place in the house. But he immediately shook off this dilemma as he answered himself in his mind that it would be a "useless expenditure of time" – the child was indeed bleeding, not conscious, but still breathing. It didn't look like it was in life-threatening condition.

Dormanitrivanius stood on the ledge with his heavy winter boots and jumped out of the window onto the opposing street, directly into the snowstorm that was now in progress. The nearly two-metre fall was effectively blunted by the snow, into which he dug himself almost up to his knees. Upon impact, he nearly dropped his shotgun loaded with explosive ammunition.

As soon as he straightened his back, he spotted the body of a witch about twenty metres from the house. Because of the snowstorm, it was hard to recognize, but on closer inspection (made possible by his walking through the deep snow towards the body), he could see that it was lying face down. The main features that stood out were the matted yellow-white hair; looking like the elongated bristles of a domesticated pig; then the disgustingly sagging dirty bottom and, most of all, the massively bleeding, shot through back.

When he was quite close to her, he poked her wounded back with a shotgun loaded with explosive ammunition to see if she was still alive.

But there was no response.

So he tried again, and harder – slamming the barrel into her exposed muscle in the shot hole until about half a deciliter of black blood rolled out of the wound, but even then no reaction could be seen.

He glanced behind him at the broken windowpane, and shortly returned his gaze to her body, which he then squatted down to get a closer look. He noticed that the huge snowflakes immediately melted when they made contact with the fresh

black blood on her back, forming a small lake in her wound, trickles of which flowed from the sides of her body and melted the surrounding snow.

The whole inhuman humanoid looked not only more disgusting to him up close, but also more terrifying. He also noticed that even though it was almost minus thirty, the humanoid's body smelled extremely foul.

In a fraction of a second, the witch rose from the ground and in one swift motion knocked the shotgun loaded with explosive ammunition from Dormanitrivanius's hands, slicing open his cheek with her claws and then knocking him onto his back with a mighty leap from the ground.

"Praying to the Great Dehydrated Man, patron of the nutritionally impoverished, emotionally distressed, physically unhealthy, or otherwise indisposed people whose indisposition has an internal cause," the aforesaid thought emerged in his mind in the form of an ironically absurd monologue.

However, Dormanitrivanius tried to react to the situation as adequately as his biological determination allowed. Instinctively he kicked the witch in the face with a heavy winter shoe, but at that moment it did not matter to him whether or not it had hurt her at all, as she had just at the impulse of that kick pressed against him even harder and, moreover, had begun to strangle him.

His cheek was bleeding and his own blood was running down his neck onto the witch's fingers.

Rivulets of black blood from her back in turn trickled down Dormanitrivanius's coat, making him nauseous. Her claws tried to dig into his throat and he pulled them away with all his strength with both hands, realising that she had physical superiority over him and he wouldn't be able to keep her hands at a safe distance from his own blood vessels for long.

The shotgun lay dumped a few metres away from him and so its use was out of the question. Dormanitrivanius had alternative weapons at his disposal, however - he had a revolver and a dagger holstered on his shin, but he was unable to reach them as he was encumbered by the massive weight of the inhuman humanoid that was trying to slash him, strangle him, or perhaps both. Stinking, thick saliva dripped into his eye socket from her toothy muzzle, making him nauseous once again due to the enormous stench coming from her mouth.

Dormanitrivanius flicked his head violently with all his might, resulting in his own forehead striking the witch's nose and breaking it. Black blood rolled out, paralysing her for a moment as she instinctively jerked backwards in a rush of pain, loosening her grip.

This strategic action gave Dormanitrivanius the necessary freedom to take up his arms. For a moment, though, he anxiously doubted the possibility of performing

this act under the illusion; that his own forehead was more wounded than the witch's nose; but he quickly realised the illusion, and resumed the actions whose performance might have aided his survival. He stooped for the handle of the revolver on his shin, pulled it out, and fired, not even attempting to look exactly where he was pointing in the flurry of chaotic thoughts. Regardless, he hit well, as he blasted off the entire left side of the witch's lower jaw and a chunk of her left ear.

In response to the acute disruption of her own tissue, the witch hysterically hissed and jerked herself further backwards. Probably under the influence of the adrenaline shock caused by the ballistic shock, she managed to rise back to her feet with a clumsy movement.

She was no longer interested in Dormanitrivanius at these moments – she was clutching her jaw and measuring her wound with her hands. Black blood poured from her open oesophagus, her tongue just hung loosely, and fragments of fangs were scattered all over the corners of her torn muscles and ligaments.

He fired a second, and then a third time. The two sonic blasts spread out harmoniously into the open expanse of the village in a cyclical time lapse.

The first shot struck her directly in the heart and the second in the abdomen.

The witch involuntarily let out a faint gurgling sound and fell to her knees – her body spilling snake-like black entrails as it hit the ground, steam rising from her flesh in the freezing cold. The huge mass of organs and bodily fluids chittered as it melted through the snow, chunks of tissue, and limbs.

Her body finally collapsed helplessly to the ground.

She went on to say something about how Dormanitrivanius watched the witch for a moment longer, still lying on the ground, but when he was one hundred percent sure that the inhuman humanoid was dead, he slipped his revolver shotgun into its holster on his shin, let out a deep breath, and let the back of his head fall completely into the snow. He pulled some sort of regenerative substance or something from his breast pocket, which he applied to the bleeding wound on his cheek, and then just watched the giant flakes falling onto his face without moving.

She spoke about how, after some time, Dormanitrivanius had also met a certain Mr. Haudena, alias the "Shaman" of the village.

*(The title "Shaman" was, along with "Ekesilius", the title for the supreme leader of each Inmarian village.*

*Anyone who was a so-called "Cognician" became a Shaman; a person wealthy enough to afford to buy a so-called "Forest Trumpet" with his own funds; a special traditional Inmarian musical instrument that induced acoustic anomalies; and who could also play the Forest Trumpet.*

*Haudena's musical creations in relation to the Forest Trumpet were above-average in performance, and as a result, he became an above-average popular Shaman.)*

*(Anyone who was wealthy enough to afford, with his own funds, to build a temple bearing his name, in which visitors could pray to a gilded statue depicting his likeness, became an Ekesilius.)*

*(Shamans and Ekesilians, as well as Cognicians and Ekesilians, were characterised by their constant rivalry – the Cognicians perceived the existence of the Ekesilians as a threat to their own existence; and vice versa).*

She also talked about how Dormanitrivanius didn't specifically feel uncomfortable with the visual of the Shaman, as in his perception he looked rather friendly and harmless; perhaps even ridiculous. He wore a flowered coat, a striped shirt, and on his head was a massive, branching headband called a "Keteliini", traditionally worn by Shamans to protect their ears from the cold. The headband controlled his light brown hair into the shape of a hedgehog's bristles.

Most importantly, Mr. Haudena and Mr. Dormanitrivanius exchanged a few words together, and then each of them went his own way. The plot then resumed a few minutes later.

Dormanitrivanius, meanwhile, took a slow, deep breath of the ice-cold air. His sensor showed four readings in total:

*February 19*
*09:45 PM*
*-30.0966 °C*
*1,908.2787 m above sea level*

Haudena carried himself with ease through the icy streets of Trinchkeldt. At one point he even tried to whistle, but soon stopped.

(There may be two reasons why Haudena stopped whistling at that time and in that area. One is that whistling in thirty-degree frost is not only extremely difficult, but also uncomfortable. And the other reason may be that Haudena, in the backyard of the home of a married couple calling themselves collectively "the Tarrhassins," spotted a young boy, about 3 years old, playing in the snow and leading an elaborate monologue based on his own script for his play.

As soon as the little boy saw the fellow in the flowered coat, striped shirt and strange headband, he stopped fooling around, stopped chattering to himself, became alert, started staring into the fellow's eyes and frowning. No doubt this distracted Haudena from his whistling.)

## IV.

*February 20*
*04:10 PM*
*-22.6055 °C*
*2 709.9090 m above sea level*

Dormanitrivanius was deep in the woods this time, but in the immediate vicinity of his dwelling. Breathing deeply, he poured a hundred millilitres of Eterusairiu, his daily dose, into a ritual cup from a portable calabash alongside Tamiga, the Egg Woman.

He took a sip and exhaled euphorically. He stowed the drink accessories in his bag, settled into a Turkish sitting position, and let Tamiga tie him to one of the nearby trees, beginning the Bagha ritual.

(According to the beliefs of the Untwerelists, the performance of the Bagha ritual in the dimension of that ritual invoked the Agwyl Untwerel, whose presence was - also on the basis of Untwerelism – attributed to the perception of the thoughts of other humans and animals, or the perception of the purposeful properties of objects, and the associated dilation and synesthesia of all the senses of the person who consumed the Eterusairiu.)

After about ten minutes, he began to feel a slight fluttering in his stomach and the back of his neck; the first signs of the effects of the drink. Throughout the process, Tamiga read him specific chapters from the Epizeuxis of the Holy Man; supposedly written by Agwyl Untwerel himself; which tells the story of a man who, due to his unrestricted access to food, cut off and ate the thumb from his own severed hand, resulting in chickens being produced from his intestinal secretions, which he ate for the rest of his life.

Then came the main effect – bitterness on the tongue.

Once Dormanitrivanius was at the peak of his disgust at the bitterness of the drink, Tamiga began to chew up the twelve chicken heads, which she spat in Dormanitrivanius's face. She then peeled several pieces of hard-to-identify fruit, the flesh of which she mashed between her palms and drank the juice.

As soon as Dormanitrivanius fell asleep under the influence of such bitterness as one cannot stand while awake, the Shaman dreamt to him. He was depicted with black eyes - the kind of eyes that witches have – and also with a pure white coat smeared with mud that billowed in the wind. The image of Haudena stood on one leg, with an antique-looking figure depicting a half-sun and half-moon shining from the right side of his head, and a figure reminiscent of an outdated travel agency logo

design representing a globe with parallels and meridians shining from the left side of his head. Haudena's likeness grabbed the logo with both hands and bit off a piece of it with sharp, metallic-looking teeth.

After this audiovisual performance, Dormanitrivanius woke up out of nowhere. How else was he supposed to wake up but directly to a bitter sensation on his tongue that shot all the way down his spine to his tailbone and into his loins. Once Tamiga had untied him, he slowly breathed through the bitter experience and gradually, non-violently, began to rise to his feet.

While he was making his way home with the Epizeuxis of the Holy Man that the Egg Woman had given him, he was still feeling a bit bitter. However, he couldn't locate it. It didn't feel like it was on his tongue or any other specific place. The bitterness was just there and it was noticeable, but it was impossible to determine where it was coming from. His legs, which had been curled under him for a long time during the dream, ached, and he had the feeling that the bitterness was coming from them. Soon its very centre was quite different again. Who knows where the bitterness was coming from. Perhaps it was everywhere.

Immediately after returning home he opened the book, found the chapter *Umuntuarius U-375* in it, read the whole of it carefully, and then just sat motionless in silence for about fifteen minutes as he analysed its meaning.

This was the content of the chapter:

*Umuntuarius U-375*

*When Xavier Umuntuarius wanted to reach the other side of the Shore through the so-called "Gate of Destiny" on January 29, 2954 in dimension 123, he had to go through a great dilemma in his life. Namely, according to the regulations of the Gate of Destiny, no one could get through it who did not have his two front teeth pulled out by a member of the local private security service while crossing between the Shores; the so-called bovine bears, carrying their own excrement in their hands.*

*(The reason for the bear's wearing its own excrement was its belief that wearing excrement protected it from "segeshis" – "segeshis" was the word used in the bovine bear culture to describe a cruel and ignominious death.)*

*Umuntuarius decided to shoot the bovine bear while passing through the gate and so he did. The knight-helmeted beast's head instantly exploded, its excrement flew into the air and immediately slid into the bloodied headless bear's gullet, immediately triggering a gag reflex in the bear's body.*

*After this act, Umuntuarius was immediately arrested and brought before the Supreme Court of the Bovine Bears on February 1, where he was tried by the Supreme Judge*

*and Chief Meteorologist of the Bovine Bears, called "Avamora" (as in the bovine bear culture, each Supreme Judge was also the Chief Meteorologist).*

*(Among other things, Avamora was characterised by advocating chauvinistic ideologies – he was convinced of the superiority of bovine bears over all other animals in dimension 123.)*

*However, Umuntuarius's accomplice, who was nicknamed Franz, attached a red-hot iron to the judge's chair during the trial, which penetrated his body through his anus to the stomach area during the session. As a result of the multiple and massively devastating internal injuries, Avamora decided to sentence Umuntuari to death through sexual abuse by bovine bear.*

*On February 4, Avamora died as a result of his injuries, and later that day at his funeral, Umuntuarius was brought before the sexually abusive executioner, a bovine bear. But Umuntuarius then managed to take a loaded pistol from the belt on Avamora's body in the coffin; with which, according to the cultural practices of the bovine bears, all supreme judges and meteorologists, who were also chauvinists, were traditionally buried. He shot the executioner twice in the body, killing him on the spot, and also shot himself in the heart and head. In spite of such serious injuries, he was still able to stay on his feet for a while and recited his famous quote:*

*"And back!"*

*He then fell to the ground and died a few minutes later.*

*( His death, however, was no ordinary suicide. It was an ascetic death and marked a protest against life.*

*Umuntuarius's death can be understood in no other way than as his explicit command directed to higher astral entities, which even Umuntuarius himself verbally requested to be transported back to another world. Specifically, in his case, it was a world that an organism can only reach after overcoming its own biological death.)*

After analysing the purposeful meaning of Umuntuarius U-375, Dormanitrivanius walked out of the house along with the Episeuxis of the Holy Man, which he returned to the Egg Woman, thus ending the Bagha ritual. After saying goodbye to her, he was able to fully realise how unusually high spirits he was in, as he was captivated by the likeness of the book from which he had read the chapter. He saw a clear character correlation between himself and the character of Umuntuarius – he identified with him not just as a fictional hero, but as a dimensionally-parallel organism of similar existential values to his own.

# CHAPTER 6: Gardener and the Abortion

Fragrance once told of how the Gardener's granddaughter, or the partner of his grandson (the exact identity of the person is not known, but let's call her granddaughter), became unwillingly pregnant and subsequently wanted to have an abortion. As soon as Gardener found out, however, he became hysterical and aggressive. His verbal expressions were full of vulgarisms and original sentence compositions in exactly the style that was befitting him. He threatened her and emotionally blackmailed her so persistently and sophistically that she cried intensely for days in fits of tearful amok. He was even more angry with her for this, and in fits of aggressive outbursts he called her a "filthy fucking cunt".

The night before the abortion, the granddaughter spent the night right in the room of the Gardener's house on Canal Street. As soon as she woke up the next morning and wanted to go for the rumoured procedure, she found that she could not get out of the room with all possible or impossible efforts, because it was locked. Shortly, Gardener locked her in the room so that she couldn't go for the abortion.

She didn't talk about how the situation turned out. But it certainly wasn't the only time Gardener had locked someone up somewhere. One day he is said to have exploded with rage over the fact that his wife had been sitting on the latrine for what he himself most likely found to be an excruciatingly long period of time. At the top of his lungs he shouted questions at her like "what are you doing there for so long?", but she deliberately did not answer. She was probably ashamed of her husband, as his screams were heard by all the neighbours around. Eventually Gardener barricaded her in. He wrapped the latrine with several metal chains and secured them with a lock. When his wife tried to open the door and found that she was not free, she first started screaming and begging for help. Then she began to curse the Gardener directly. And at the very end she burst into tears.

Gardener was unusually rude to his wife on a daily basis. He often scolded her precisely for the form and timing of the food she cooked. He would obsessively check the refrigerator and complain about what all was in it and what all was not in it. Fragrance once recalled an extremely loud verbal reproach she heard coming from

the Gardener's house (given the context, it was most likely from the kitchen), delivered in a particularly aggressive tone of voice.

"What's that!? EGGGSSSS!!!??? It stinks! Throw that in the garbage as well!"

Even Gardener's non-vulgar speech managed to sound unusually aggressive and offensive. His suffering in the world was unbearable, and his words always tried to dig into the very root of what he was experiencing and to slap everyone around him as hard as possible in such a way that those around him could suffer even more than he was suffering. After all, it is always good for a man to preserve and cultivate suffering, because it gives him tremendous vitality and motivation to pass on suffering to others.

The high point of any record of Gardener's "transferred suffering," or better said – Gardener's brutality – was how he once, with the words "You cow!" threw a sizable stone at his wife. But of course he knew how to torture his wife in many other ways. And sometimes in a really genuine way. One day on 25 December (the very next day after Christmas) he threw the Christmas tree out of the window, along with all the decorations and lights, shouting, "We don't need this anymore!"

The wife burst into tears as a result of this act.

And what about Gardener's favourite dishes? For example, the so-called "fish pudding", consisting of sardines, milk spread, grated coconut, parmigiana, crackers and dried banana? Or his dream dish "mouse mishmash", which he never actually prepared but always dreamed of? Gross food, looking like a risotto with mice of unknown composition. Just the chopped bodies of mice with legs and tails in a strange thickened porridge. Something that only a die-hard vorarephile or feederist with a pure sexual pleasure of filling his stomach would fit in.

# CHAPTER 7: Ostracization

On March 33, Surfer woke up a little earlier and exchanged his flowered shirt and shorts for a black shirt and long black pants belted with a belt. At twelve minutes past seven o'clock he was signing a total of seven A4 pieces of paper committing him to a promotion in his job with the Mayor's Office. He was signing them in an office located directly under the roof of a massive villa dome in the Resort district. Under the roof of a villa that had four floors. A villa with marble walls, antique pillars and ten-metre-high windows, with a massive dome on the facade. Fountains, palm trees, red carpets and historical paintings everywhere. Baroque decoration in minimalist monochrome white marble. A residential and working building, a peak of kitsch and tasteless existential pomposity. And that building was called the Mayor's Office!

Surfer was ecstatic. He was no longer to carry the letters in his classic grey car, but in a few hours he was to be assigned a new car. It might just be the white car with the two-and-a-half-metre-long hood, round headlights, and chrome fenders that he had always wanted. He couldn't wait for it. He couldn't even wait to live with his cat right in the Mayor's Office building. And to bring her letters. And batting the white leather steering wheel. And to walk on the red carpets.

"Well done! I'm very much looking forward to our future collaboration," the Mayor bubbled out loud, spittle bursting from his mouth.

"Likewise. I look forward to it."

And the Mayor's Office! The Mayor's Office – an institution that comes from the surface of everything in between everything! It was an institution like no other! A sleek mafia pretending to be boorish. And the people employed by the Mayor's Office, they were very easy to spot. Their necks were nonexistent, their suits were overly present, their fingers were fat, and their voices sounded like bubbling sewers. Surfer didn't fit in with them. He was the exception.

Mayor! What an archetypal figure! The mayor; a template-like caricature of the institution and the people representing it within the human body. Hierarchically, although in the highest post, functionally, existentially and visually the same as everyone else in office. Mayor. No living creature has been marked by such an enormous amount of eagerness and greed. However, these qualities the Mayor himself knew very well how to hide behind a laziness and passivity that seemed to be calm and deliberate. Mayor was not a tall man. He was not obese, nor was he thin. He was a bone encased in fat. The archetypal figure of a man who lives only out of a conviction of his own importance and who is incapable of surviving without others constantly creating an environment for him. He was a man who lived mainly on letters. He had hair all over his body, just not on his head. He was greasy and his eyes were very small and swollen, like the eyes of a fat sick pig. In every activity other than sitting

or lying down, he panted like someone whose heart is failing. He was constantly sitting in his office in the villa, right under the roof of the massive dome, talking on the telephone and laughing loudly as he did so. He was always talking, even shouting, out loud. And if any drops of liquid dripped from him during his powerful vocal utterances, it was almost never possible to tell whether it was sweat or saliva.

Surfer had taken a sheaf of papers with him and was already leaving the office. He was opening the door that led out of it, when the Mayor yelled at him one more time with a loud "Hey!".

"If there's a problem, contact the Complaints Department downstairs!" The Mayor boomed.

"Of course, I'll take note. But honestly, I don't think there'll be any problem," Surfer smiled a friendly smile. He saluted the Mayor recessively with two fingers on his eyebrows and left the office with the culmination of an extremely gentle closing of the door. So very soft that it was barely audible from the Mayor's chair, which was about six metres away from the door. And even at that, the door was heavy, old and creaky. With a historic doorknob, historic hinges, and historic everything that should and shouldn't fit together.

Surfer was ecstatic. He had become a bureaucrat like no other.

He also had in his hands the book "Para Pravum", which obliged him to the knowledge of the Nomads.

*Para Pravum, the second chapter of the Quaraath; a fictional book, which is also nicknamed "The Book of Contextual Interspaces", existing only in the concept of the Knowledge of Autophagus Modiceum AM01; claims that at one time there existed in the dimension 11 095 a planet called Exhauriebat-7004. On this planet lived a civilization of sapients, or other humanoid beings, numbering approximately three billion individuals. They called themselves by the plural noun "Nomads".*

*According to Para Pravum, an unknown male humanoid, who called himself "Uriah," appeared among the clouds of water vapor in the planet's atmosphere. After doubling the population of Exhauriebat-7004 using a polymerase chain reaction performed on his own DNA double helix, he wanted to take the name "Uriah" to refer to himself by his planetary descendants as well. However, the new inhabitants of the planet, the New Nomads, called Uriah by the name "Solomon the Second" or "Chammurappi the Second", and he disliked such naming of his person to the extent that he used it as a pretext for the complete extermination of the entire New Nomad species and the re-creation of another species, the New Nomad the Second (also created by means of the polymerase chain reaction performed on Uriah's double-stranded DNA helix). Even the new generation of sapients did not address him by his desired name, but Uriah; also called Solomon the Second, or Chammurappi the Second; decided to leave the New Nomads the Seconds alone and not impose the dogma of his established verbal names on them. He made this decision on the basis of his extermination of the previous generation of New Nomads, as he later found its influence to be entirely unnecessary, since he himself perceived the absence of the New Nomads to be considerably worse than their presence, conditioned by their need to address him by names he himself did not wish to be called.*

*The planet's remaining new inhabitants, New Nomads the Seconds, existing thanks to the biplane, were unlike the others – the Nomads – characterized by their ability to physically hover anywhere in the local atmosphere (for pragmatic reasons, however, they mostly settled exclusively among clouds of water vapor), and they used their aviatic ability to intercept photons sent from Agakkis and Yuween; two stars that were also natural satellites of the planet Exhauriebat-7004. The captured elemental particles were then locked by the New Nomad Others into devices referred to as "Xylophones", in which the stellar photons from Agakkis and Yuween were transformed into the final product of production – an entity called "Kuvbuus elwewi".*

*Any individual who spent time in close proximity to the Xylophones that conceived of Kuvbuus elwewi was entering a state called "Ex-Arribi", which loosely translated means "Process of Becoming". In this state, the physical body responses to its own internal thoughts disappeared for each individual left in it, being replaced by internal thoughts responding to the physical body responses of its body, which were carried out by the Kuvbuus elwewi collective consciousness program controlling the bodies of all individuals in the Ex-Arribi state. With regular and prolonged exposure to the Ex-Arribi state, an individual in that state could reach a more advanced, final state, called "Arribi Ini", which loosely translated means something like "The Becoming" (the consciousness of an individual in this state is, however, already completely dead, with his body serving solely as a physical host for the Kuvbuus elwewi collective consciousness program, which completely controls it).*

*Exposure to Kuvbuus elwewi was only possible among the clouds of water vapour of the local planetary atmosphere of Exhauriebat-7004, as the Xylophones that conceived it were located there. Thus the Ex-Arribi state, or the Arribi Ini state, was only accessible in the local conditions to the New Nomad the Seconds, who were the only sapient subspecies with access to the Xylophones. As a result, the Xylophones, and the associated Kuvbuus elwewi, became a very powerful diversionary memento between the Nomads and the New Nomads the Seconds, and as a consequence the two sapient subspecies on the planet Exhauriebat-7004, the Nomads and the New Nomads the Seconds, ceased to interact with each other almost entirely.*

*After a time, when the entire civilization of the subspecies of the New Nomads the Seconds had reached the state of Arribi Ini, all its members, subject to the program of collective consciousness of Kuvbuus elwewi, mutated together and moved their habitat underground – their new bodies resembled in their physical structure the animals created by the crossbreeding of the terrestrial Homo sapiens sapiens with various species of insectivores, and also with the Alpine marmot (Marmota marmota). The Nomads, however, no longer called such creatures "New Nomads the Seconds", but "Octavians", since by such a different nomination they automatically wanted to express also a different species character of the given biological subject.*

*The Octavians used to enter the lands of the Nomads, whom they ostracised from there – if a Nomad didn't want to comply with their demand to leave his land, they locked him in an iron cage, where they starved him to death.*

*Once the sapient inhabitants found it impossible to fight the Octavians with the skills and tools available to them, as the Octavians were outnumbered and outgunned, they decided to flee to Idiostolas, the only habitable rocky mountains on the planet. There, these animals, resembling hybrids of the terrestrial Homo sapiens sapiens with various insectivorous species and also with the Alpine*

*marmot (Marmota marmota), could no longer reach the rocky surface of the mountains, as they were unable to dig into the rocky surface due to their subterranean way of life.*

*As the Idiostolas (covering an area of approximately 36 000 square kilometres), and their adjacent rocky islands, currently contain the vast majority of the local population of three billion, they are understandably a very densely populated place. The architecture of the buildings here automatically had to adapt to the extremely rocky and unstable surface environment, which is why most nomadic settlements are located on concrete terraces of varying heights.*

*Para Pravum, the second chapter of the Quaraath; a fictional book which is also nicknamed "The Book of Contextual Interspaces", existing only in the concept of the Knowledge of Autophagus Modiceum AM01; contains in its conclusion an appendix which characterises the religion of the most widespread planetary religion of the Nomad civilization.*

*The supreme and only goddess of their monotheistic religion was an unnamed entity whose visual resembled an elderly woman with a hat-like headdress. Her greatest curiosity was that she was said to have traditionally appeared to her worshippers as a portrait likeness in the sky, formed by blowing clouds of water vapour. Somewhere in the midst of this likeness was said to be the goddess herself (carefully hidden from the view of all worshippers), who danced in this spot and, in parallel with her dance, provided her worshippers with food - mostly cooked birds. Nomads believed that the goddess deliberately made these birds invisible so that the worshippers could not find and consume them under the impression that they were actually fit for consumption. This bird, according to them, was in the state of Ex-Arribi, or Arribi Ini (since it flew exclusively in places localised in the immediate vicinity of the Xylophons conceiving Kuvbuus elwewi), and by consuming it, that state could very easily be transferred to its consumers.*

Actually, Surfer was ecstatic even many hours after his promotion, and it was due to Para Pravum and his knowledge of the Nomads. Everything about it was very dark in a way, but also very true. It reassured him of something that he couldn't say for sure what exactly it was or what exactly it would do for him. It was just a strange melange of words, but its associations were stronger than the metal sawdust that had been inhaled.

Wooden beams that bite off kitchen counters with a deep mew and kick refrigerators in the ass with steel-toed boots! And their relative shelves, who drape their gloved hands over their room's curtains and masochistically hammer nails with their own bodies so they can scream in ecstatic orgasms and listen to the echoes of their own roars for as long as possible!

Train Driver opened a pale brown door with a peephole shaped strikingly like a Cyclops pig and entered the room. He closed the door behind him as a matter of habit. Classically, with his shoulder cocked and his gaze not on the handle, but ahead of him. A look that immediately glazed over with despair and anger once the brain guiding him came to the conclusion that, as a result of the casual closing of the door, the handle had slipped out of his hand and would have to be grasped again and the door closed again. A pale brown

door with a peephole shaped strikingly like a Cyclops pig. The horror of doing the same action on the second attempt due to the first attempt having failed. But in the end, that casual closing of the door paid off statistically for Train Driver. The ratio of those occasions when he succeeded in closing the door immediately to those occasions when he succeeded only on the second attempt was approximately nineteen to one.

And how was the room behind the door? The room behind that creepy pale brown door with the peephole shaped strikingly like a Cyclops pig? High ceiling, a couple of paintings, two doors on the left hand, one door on the right hand, and opposite a massive arched opening in the wall (no door!) leading to another room with a terrace. With the terrace behind pompous doors, windows and walls that were a random jumble of glass panes and baroque twisted wood painted white. The floor everywhere was made up of brown and red tiles with a natural-looking pattern of molten rocks spilling over. Between the tiles were unusually snow-white spars. Everything breathed and smelled new.

And in the middle of the room stood Matilda. In her right hand she holds a nickel-plated eighteen-inch Xenon of 15.7 millimetre calibre and stares at the shot corpse of the Philharmonist lying on the ground, directly next to the door located to Train Driver's right hand. The fact that the corpse is shot through is truly nomenomenal, and it's definitely worth pointing out. The hole in the Philharmonist's body was a hollowed out area of perhaps the entire left lung and heart, rather than a mere hole. Thirty by thirty centimetres of missing tissue from neck to abdomen. The left arm was not in place. Didn't know where it had been.

Terrible! The consequences of the aftermath!

The driver frowned incredulously. Anger boiled within him, and he wanted to resort to some very sophisticated and constructive vulgarism with which he would have at that moment honoured Matilda and put her into a state of transpersonal paralysis, but he could only manage a simple "YOU!!!!".

Matilda picked up the heavy Xenon, grasped it with both hands, pointed it at Train Driver and fired. A massive, deafening boom echoed through the room, its shockwave nearly scraping a few miniature paintings of flowers and landscapes of streams and woodland from the walls. The bullet flew through the Train Driver's chest, leaving a huge hole in it. It nearly tore him in half - his chest and abdomen were suddenly connected only by two pairs of false ribs and chunks of flesh from his diaphragm, the inner and outer oblique muscles of his abdomen. The bullet continued on and shot through the pale brown door with its peephole shaped like a Cyclops pig. It left an unidentifiable circular hole in it, measuring perhaps a metre by a metre. It then slammed into the wall behind the door and froze, accompanied by the sizzling sound of plaster being scattered.

The Train Driver's mangled body flew backwards. It travelled two metres through the air until it confronted the hole in the pale brown door. It flew through it and brushed its head against the top of the hole. The body flew another two metres until it slid to the pavement with a loud thud in a mighty fountain of blood-meat-wood.

Matilda dropped the revolver to the ground. It was so heavy that it shattered one of the brown and red tiles. Train Driver was on his feet, unhurt. He opened the leaky door and ran after Matilda with a fury he had perhaps never experienced in his life.

"YOU!!!"

He picked up a revolver from the ground, and Matilda, meanwhile, ran through the massive archway into the next room and opened the door to the terrace. The bus driver fired, but missed. The massive shot had pierced the window, and, besides leaving a huge hole in it, had also torn it out of its frame. From a frame of baroque twisted wood painted white.

Matilda jumped off the terrace. She flew four stories until she landed in the fountain, knocking over a concrete duck statue in the process.

Train Driver was already standing on the balcony. His face was red with anger. He grasped the revolver in both hands and fired at Matilda trying to rise with her obesity and wet dress in the fountain. Train Driver, however, only destroyed another concrete duck with the shot. Or, more accurately, he destroyed part of the fountain. The 15.7-millimeter Xenon took a much larger part of the concrete sculpture with it than just the duck.

Matilda climbed out of the fountain and clumsily ran away with her wet clothes. Train Driver took aim again. This time he tried to reduce the red colour of his face. He tried to reduce his anger. He tried to aim very accurately. This time, with his eye narrowed, he stared at his aim, trying to correlate the eighteen-inch barrel of the Xenon with the target. He allowed himself to hold it with only one hand as he did so.

War on the birds directly in the rooms, kitchens and bathrooms! The bodies of dead birds and the bodies of dead dogs in soup pots in the cracks between the tiles, tumbling down the spouts with the rainwater flowing from the gutters and ending up recycled in pots, in soup pots in kitchens and in bathrooms, with the bodies of dead dogs and dead birds, smashed by shelves and wooden beams! They are being chewed off their asses and nails are being hammered against them! Bathrooms, homes, apartments, kitchens, rooms, and all of these together! Terrible things!

Train Driver woke up. It was the morning of the 32nd of March, and Matilda stood sprawled over his body in bed, pointing a nine-millimetre Arsenic at him. It was very early, dark everywhere, but Matilda's presence was initially very easy to decipher even without visual perception based on the extreme congestion of the bed and the sagging mattress. After a few seconds, when the Train Driver got a better focus on the mass towering in front of him, it wasn't at all difficult to distinguish the three-inch barrel of the black-on-black Arsenic.

"Get out of bed immediately! Get out of bed right now or I'll shoot you!" Matilda yelled.

Train Driver disarmed her instantly. He grabbed her revolver and pointed it at her. Matilda immediately jumped off the bed and fled to a corner of the room, leaning against the wall.

"Please don't do anything stupid. Are you completely out of your fucking mind?" Train Driver responded in a very calm tone. He examined his revolver in the dim light of the morning twilight and tucked it into his belt.

Yes, Train Driver had slept with the metal belt as well. He also slept in double underwear, jeans, and a wool shirt. After practising such an activity, as Matilda herself said, "he smelled like goat's meat; and especially under the armpits and in the crotch." Train Driver did it deliberately. He always undressed in the morning in a confined little room - usually the bathroom - in close proximity to Matilda, and the stench from his body was always so overwhelming that it made Matilda almost nauseous. It always amused him greatly to see her rush to the bathroom to throw up.

"And every time that tranny bent over to vomit, her dress would burst under the onslaught of her obese ass..." was somehow how the Train Driver described the situation to his friends. Back then, when he met his friends just like that, or in a certain establishment over an alcoholic drink and orange juice.

March 34 was the day Fanatic decided to leave Graveyard. He didn't know for how long, and he had no plans, but he simply felt that going into the woods was exactly what he needed to do at the moment. Whatever hadn't seemed terrible about Graveyard seemed to have died out with the advent of Air Conditioning and it's influence. The final resonance of a hard hitting atmospheric noise that was beyond any tolerable level. It was, in short, the moment when one had to take full responsibility for who one was. Unless he wanted to suffer. Unless he wanted to suffer more than he had been suffering.

The slides and slides of the elevators of privilege, and the heaving watery mattresses of non-ergonomic doggie thunder salesmen. A face that screams because it doesn't know itself who to complain to. The movement of a fist hitting the table meeting the movement of a kicking leg. And all this everywhere and all at once. There is no elegance in this process, but there is a great norm behind it. This thing is omnipresent.

People. They cut their nails, trim their blisters, and tear their skin into their flesh.

Beating hearts of severed nodes and huge gavels of grating gravel making it impossible to swallow. They burrow down their throats so they can fill up whatever is beneath them. And they are swept away by water, gasoline, and everything that gravel may or may not go with. And it's bringing the broadcast. Huge clouds of tornadoes and volcanoes slamming into each other, erupting and pushing each other around like elephants afraid of mice. They radiate heat, cold, darkness, light, giving the impression that they are because they are. Or at least they are trying to be. Why, why not?

They need to leave. Now.

Great waste of a little life.

Fanatic had felt very uncomfortable during his first day in the woods, but he still carried a revolutionary vigour about leaving the city that gave him some of that drive. The élan necessary for physical movement.

The fog, the fear, and the humidity. Sinking boots into the mud, overflowing bogs, fallen pine needles and sputtering liquids of all sorts, animal squawks and birdsong. Annoying birdsong! The cries of birds!

The landscape was monotonous and gloomy. Deciduous and coniferous trees of all kinds, irregularly scattered. Arranged the way nature had told them to be. Endless meadows of infinity. Fog, fear and humidity. One easily forgets oneself in such an environment. It wasn't Graveyard full of broken sidewalks, crumbling buildings and horrific institutions. It was not Graveyard in which one had to be constantly alert and stressed. It was a place of absolute emptiness and nothingness. An endless expanse of infinity. And in that infinity, Fanatic managed to catch a glimpse of a flying duck! And it was about the duck that he had once written a short note in his notebook!

*Duck!*

*A duck is someone who is always the same. A duck is a person who stays until other people leave. It is possible to distinguish her uniqueness from other people, as it is also possible to see that she stays. A duck is inalienable.*

*A duck has a lot of mud, water, and gravel in it. A duck knows and a duck acts.*

*A duck eats silently and complains loudly. The duck says nothing, only makes its displeasure known.*

*The duck is the messenger. And if anyone claims that a duck is anything else, they certainly don't know a duck.*

*A duck is a messenger and a messenger is a duck.*

*Duck!*

Sleeping the first night wasn't worth much. It was full of cold and damp, intermittent dreams and jerky movements. More of a wakeful night than a sleep. In the morning, however, Fanatic at least managed to eat something.

Fog, fear, and dampness. The landscape was monotonous and dreary. Deciduous and coniferous trees of all kinds, irregularly scattered. Arranged the way nature told it to be. Endless meadows of infinity. Fog, fear and humidity. One forgot oneself there and felt like going mad.

And indeed, the 35th of March was a great mental test for Fanatic. A test of independence and sanity. Terrible thoughts, horrible conspiracies and paranoid monstrosities were running through his head. Now and then the surrounding forest morphed into all sorts of shapes that made him stay alert. One stayed alert there, however, in a decidedly different way than one stayed alert in Graveyard.

People grinning, people pointing fingers, figures running away. Laughing mushrooms. Mushrooms sucking their teeth and sticking out their tongues. Figures between whose eyes and tongues there is no difference. Figures holding various objects in their hands. Fog, fear and humidity. And the culmination of all this, of all this horror and mysterious transcerebral chaos of playing with reality, was a materialised figure. A figure with clearly visible features. A tall, thin woman with short hair, draped in rags and politically crooked. And unfortunately, for all the material horror, also the inevitable interaction with her. It was an extremely frightening experience. Reality within reality. Fantasies interpreted by reality, and reality interpreted by fantasies. The woman was not only talking, but moreover, she was communicating directly with Fanatic, but he was trying not to answer her.

She introduced herself to him as "Mrs. Birdface" and talked about how he should "shoot himself in the ass with a revolver!". She was saying absolutely bizarre, confused and horrible things. Occasionally she would just scream loudly for a few minutes and that was unbearable. Fanatic tried to run away from her, but she didn't move at a human pace. She was randomly appearing in random places at random times. And she appeared perhaps twenty times during the day. It was horrible. And horrible not in the way that people refer to something as "being horrible." Horrible in their language means "mind-numbing", "tedious", or "annoying". But this is not, Mrs. Birdface has not let a person's brain come up with any thoughts of dullness, tediousness, or annoyance. Instead, the whole brain was occupied by terror. Pure fractal fear seemingly emanating from one source, but once the brain rationalised the source, another source emerged. And once the brain rationalised that one, it went back to the original source of fear again. A cyclical panic of unending terror. To some, perhaps humorous. But in reality, it was truly horrifying.

Despite the horrible experiences with the mirages, the fear and Mrs. Birdface, the night of March 35th to 36th was much better than the last one. The weather was warmer and Fanatic was more tired. He slept through all his body's efforts at intermittent dreams and jerky movements. An exhausted body regenerates more efficiently after all.

The next day, the humidity was slightly less, but the fog and fear were still present. Terrible thoughts, horrific conspiracies and paranoid monstrosities recurred. The imagery that made one stay alert was repeated. People grinning, people pointing fingers, figures running away. Laughing mushrooms. Mushrooms sucking their teeth and sticking out their tongues. Figures whose eyes and tongues are indistinguishable. Figures holding various objects in their hands. Fog and fear. There were repeated encounters with Mrs. Birdface. Conversations about "shooting a revolver in the ass" and screaming for several minutes. Persecution. Fortunately, however, on this day Mrs. Birdface only came four times. Or maybe five times. No matter how many times she came, it was a respite compared to the previous day. Almost a restorative stay.

In the evening, however, Fanatic saw a second figure. It was very stocky, approaching from a distance and moving very slowly, so that it was not immediately recognizable. It was a very ominous and sickly movement. One felt like running away or defending oneself. To scream, or beg for solitude, if fear were not present within him.

That was the first time that Brush Cutter had appeared to Fanatic. Brush Cutter, around one metre and seventy five centimetres tall, a sixty year old man with a massive chin and a gigantic, unshapely gut. A man afflicted with a truly morbid obesity, balding, with a parched look in his face. Sagging, pale, with sunken cheeks and violet colour around his eyes. He looked like someone afflicted by multiple blocked blood vessels, preferably both coronary arteries. He looked like he could barely walk and that he was barely alive. He smelled like shit. He never introduced himself to Fanatic, nor did he introduce himself to anyone else, but his name was Brush Cutter. It was clear and obvious. The name implied everything the man was.

Perhaps Mrs. Birdface had never introduced herself to Fanatic either.

A delirium of multiplying sons of wooden hell, stiff back muscles, aches and pains, and dissociative outlets from traumatic experiences of mocking existential forms. Long noses and long ears, such and such hair, or a body pose that seems an unformed abomination in the eyes of any self-absorbed evaluator. The electric spasm when looking in the mirror and the acute need to die smothered in a dissociation that seems to be neither death nor life. The familiar stomach-on-the-water feeling that comes whenever one consumes a piece of shit and that completely crushes even the most sincere joy that can spice up the nervous system. Hell of a hell of a hell. A supervisor under supervision and convulsive stabbing and brandishing of something hiding behind convenient improvisation. The reboot button, pressed over and over again, leading to the complete unusability of the entire system. A hell of a hell of a hell.

"Mrs. Birdface is right!" Brush Cutter barked at Fanatic. As he spoke, he could be heard to have a stuffy nose. He stank even more, and he also snorted and sniffled until he made one want to vomit.

"Excuse me?" Fanatic asked in astonishment, his voice shaky. He was pretty scared, but he didn't want to let it show. He managed to have an emphatic voice, but unfortunately he didn't avoid his shakiness.

"Mrs. Birdface is right about shooting you in the ass and the revolvers. But Mrs. Birdface is just her pseudonym. One of her pseudonyms. They also call her Mrs. Birdcage, Mrs. Nose-Head, Mrs. Oligosaccharide, and the like," Brush Cutter started, sputtering spittle and ashes, "and it doesn't make any difference."

Fanatic watched him closely, but stepped back a little, careful not to be drenched by all the possible and impossible fluids shooting out of the Brush Cutter's body. And to keep him away from the horrible stench of shit. And to be safe from a man who could be potentially devious.

"Her real name, though," Brush Cutter breathed with a deep grunt, "is Mrs. Brush Cutter. And she's my wife! Mrs. Brush Cutter is right about revolvers and asses, as I said before, but her intention is to hurt you. Mrs. Brush Cutter is going through your head like some fucking truck on the highway. And she does it to everyone. Just don't everybody call her Mrs. Brush Cutter," the obese smelly guy began, with a vulgar drawl, "because by naming her they separate her from themselves. Brush Cutter is your brain. It's your brain, Fanatic."

Fanatic cleared his throat into his wrist and immediately looked directly into Brush Cutter's face, so as not to give the impression of someone who was bored and unwilling to give the man a moment's attention. He found the clearing of his throat then almost as embarrassing as the yawn.

Brush Cutter spat, baring his sparse brownish-yellow teeth as he did so. He grunted and snorted a few times and then immediately started, "I'm a revolver and all of the forest has revolvers! That's why you're here and won't admit it!" Brush Cutter shouted like a pig, until for a moment it looked like his heart couldn't take it and would stop at any moment. "And Mrs. Brush Cutter, or excuse me. My wife! My wife does not exist. I made her up. Just like you made up all the other women of the forest! Just as you invented Mrs. Birdcage, Mrs.

Nose-Head, Mrs. Oligosaccharide, and all sorts of other whores! Or didn't you!? I don't know, it doesn't really make any difference..."

Suddenly, Brush Cutter was standing right next to Fanatic, holding a massive nickel-plated revolver. Fanatic was wearing no clothes and was completely naked.

"I'll kill you!" Brush Cutter roared. Fanatic froze in terror and wanted to gather some remaining strength to make a run for it, but Krovinorez prevented him from doing so by grabbing him by the forearm. He crushed him with a massive, thick, hairy buckle, blue with a horrible bloodshed. The stench of manure was even more unbearable than Brush Cutter's intense grip.

Brush Cutter grabbed Fanatic around the ribs and leaned him back against his disgustingly obese belly. Fanatic's breathing quickened in a way that made him expect to pass out in a moment. Brush Cutter picked up the revolver and shoved the entire ten-inch barrel into his anal opening in a split second.

"Haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Fanatic shouted in an unimaginable voice. A deep groan that wanted to be a grating scream outward, but became a gasp inward. It was the scream of a being who was sinking into himself in agonising pain and despair. The singularity of suffering dissolves any sense of wholeness.

Brush Cutter fired.

A sputtering mouthful of faeces! Poop, blood and fat! Littering rats and urges to make mound-like necklaces hanging from drenched urinals and fucked up shitholes. The vicious hooves of ogres, the limp tablecloths and the dislodged teeth.

And the little schoolboy who shouts "Fuck!" at the memory of a polar bear, as he takes a bite out of a soggy bagel smeared with old mayonnaise. And a colonoscopy performed with a dildo! With a special dildo that bionic-telescopically penetrates the intestines like a shower hose! And inside it is a vacuum cleaner that sucks the shit out and also a propeller that cuts the shit up. And nothing but a turd in a turd that plays oriental tunes on a clarinet!

Fanatic woke up in his home in a sweaty and wet bed. In Graveyard.

He immediately stood up, left the house and ran back into the woods. It might have been a few minutes after midnight. It was fortunately a time when there were no more checks on the streets of Graveyard. No officials, no policemen, and no stamps. Everyone reckoned that people didn't dare to come out. That they were being intruded into the story. Surrounded by their thoughts in their own dwellings.

And it was the intrusion into the story and the encirclement by their own thoughts - the confidence of the Mayor's Office in themselves - that was the only thing that allowed Fanatic to leave the Graveyard premises undisturbed and enter the forest again. An hour or so after waking, he was gone, leaving behind him an entire town living its life in the soft misty haze of night. In the stench of the Cemetery, which reached to the very outskirts of the city and which resembled something between the stench of fermented fruit and the stench of urine. In the stench that can be smelled in the musty, unmaintained train stations, where homeless people take up residence and urinate on the walls, or merely perpetuate the

characteristic stench in the rooms by their presence. With their soaked clothes, from which emanates the sour smell of old oxidised urine.

The moment he saw his reflection in the blackened glass of cars and doors, he felt nothing but a violent terror that gnawed at his insides in an extremely aggressive way. It gnawed extremely deep, to the point of a hopelessly unending singularity of despair.

He didn't miss Graveyard at all. Although, watching it under the cover of Air Conditioning steam had something to it. A bit of romance. A little nostalgia. Nostalgia was a strange phenomenon, after all. Fanatic liked to use it because it always reminded him of how he wasn't in control of things. Nostalgia was almost like Mrs. Birdface. She appeared in random places at random times. But at least she wasn't so terribly scary. Mostly.

On the evening of March 35, Tourist was reading the newspaper.

Air Conditioning killed 29 more people! Four Graveyard residents died of starvation, seven from dehydration, and eighteen died as a result of mental illness. Air Conditioning kills!

He sat down in a chair covered with a shaggy red blanket and took a sip of old instant coffee doused with commercial milk, one teaspoon of sunflower oil, and topped with seven teaspoons of beet sugar.

Those days were really strange. Not as strange as typical strange days tend to be. They were strange in the way that the mass murder of civilians in an elementary school on the strange days of an unexpected bloody war currently underway can be strange. A bloody war, a black swan that dared to make the repetitiveness of unexpected events occurring in the repetitiveness of expected events a little bit louder.

From March 33, among other things, House Passports were established in Graveyard. Passes with name, date of birth and with birth number, which were given to each resident of Graveyard on rationing from the Mayor's Office. Since there was a curfew in effect, random checks were made inside the houses by police officers to see if the citizens were really at home. And if they were, the officers put the official stamp of the Mayor's Office in the Home Passport.

The Mayor even announced a raffle to motivate the citizens of Graveyard to stay at home - after the Air Conditioning crisis was over, five hundred House Passport holders would be drawn to receive a voucher to have ten kilos of linoleum delivered directly to their homes.

Of course, the enormous problem with the organisation of the House Passes was clearly visible whenever citizens wanted to leave the premises of their dwellings. And this was especially the case if they wanted to buy basic foodstuffs essential for survival. Any such action had to be reported to the Mayor's Office, and the police patrol called in was to stamp the House Passport of each shop visitor right in front of the shop to officially verify the authenticity of the reason for their visit. Since it was virtually impossible to manage to organise such a system with the entire population of Graveyard, citizens preferred to volunteer as police officers, who did not need any House Passports or stamps, or simply

suffered from hunger in isolation. These were difficult times, full of irony, suffering caused by it, as well as ignorance and suffering caused by it. Hard and very strange times that were slowly but surely becoming routine. They were becoming an inflating meme; a withering black swan and the effects caused by it. A terrible and total disruption of the ability to gain access. It was a crime. And absolute unfreedom.

On the morning of October 28, Surfer was petting his cat in his room at home. The cat was laid on a carpet equipped with many ornamental patterns, colours and different geometric designs. A living arrangement of a post-synthetic moment of seeming insomnia. It was in the Resort district, on the top floor of a huge, four-storey high house with marble walls, antique pillars and ten-metre-high windows, with a massive dome on the front. Fountains, palm trees, red carpets and historical paintings everywhere. Baroque decoration in minimalist monochrome white marble. A residential and working building, a peak of kitsch and tasteless existential pomposity. Surfer stroking his nameless, black and white cat there. A classic domestic cat, only with a slightly atypically elongated body and a tail. The cat was then devouring a bowl full of letters and greatly enjoying his daily ration of food. It made a very funny mewing sound, reminiscent of a human " yum yum yum yum". Cats do this when they are enjoying something very much and it is very amusing to watch and listen to. But what no one knew anymore was what horrible noises Surfist's cat made when she didn't get any letters. If she didn't get her daily dose. Her centrally determined quota. They were horrible, horrible, unimaginable noises. A combination of intense baby crying in a hermetically sealed room and the dimensions of one cubic metre; then the barking of thousands of hysterical Pomeranians seeing a free dog without a leash; a few frilly baboons scratching at the blackboard with their long reddish painted nails and the explosion of hundreds of frogs being trampled by the heavy boots of inattentive hikers crossing the wetland. That's how bad it was. However, a situation where there would be no letters left for the cat was very rare. Surfer, however, deliberately chose days when he let his black and white pet fast. He did this perhaps because he was himself a kind of perverse acoustic masochist, sexually aroused by the torture of his own eardrums, yet still maintaining his perversion at a curiously deeply subconscious level - a level that was not so much sexual as existentially training. He never touched himself while doing it - rather, it helped him focus. And the only one who had an orgasm from the annoying cat squirt was Surfer's brain - separated from the rest of his body. He got pulses of pleasant electrifying shivers when he did it, much like his body-bearer scratching the thickened callused bellies of his fingers on rusty cutlery or rusty teapots. They were ecstatic rushes, but rushes channelled into the creation of whatever could be created. They increased the incidence of the quality called "productivity" in the language of ordinary people.

Surfer drank a two-litre glass full of water, took the keys to Bumper with him, and opened the window so the cat could come out. To go out and hunt for something other than leaves. Or just walk around and enjoy the atmosphere of the Graveyard like Surfer did when he rode in the Bumper. Enjoying the solitude, quietly observing the surroundings. The scenery, the broken sidewalks, the dilapidated buildings, the sky, and the fresh breaths of

enjoying controlling one's own movements. And most importantly, no cops, no House Passports and no stamps. No dying of hunger, thirst and involuntary psychological isolation.

The Bumper, despite its considerable size, drove very well. A pleasantly soundproofed interior, the smell of newness and a stunning leather steering wheel that made one want to squeeze it with all his might. The car was every car guy's childhood fetish, a combination of modern pompous luxury and the elegance of classic cars from the 1930s. A piece of art on wheels, pleasant to drive but impractical to use.

Surfer was just passing by a kindergarten in the Linoleum district.

Ah, the kindergarten! It's perhaps not even possible how much morbidness has happened there!

Kindergartens have always been shitty places on principle, just like schools, hospitals, and offices. But this kindergarten in the Linoleum district stood out from all the ugliness. It was not unknown for the teachers, or more accurately, the governesses, to lock the children in the toilets so that they could whip them there. In March of this year, a child suffering from diarrhoea, who had a minor defecation "accident" while sleeping, was again thrown through a closed window by a teacher. The child had previously been vulgarly scolded for being a "fucking whore" as well as many other derogatory combinations of adjectives and nouns. The child, of course, did not survive the fall from the window or the glass shards and was dead on the spot.

In the kindergarten canteen, on the other hand, all the children are forced to eat wheat porridge and spiked milk, no matter what stage of decomposition the imitation food was in and whether or not it was mouldy at all. In May, a child refused to drink milk, as a result of which one of the teachers in turn plunged a knife into his hand with such force that she pinned it against the wooden dining table. Two weeks later, a child vomited under the table after drinking old, crusted milk. As soon as the kindergarten cook noticed this, she put out a lit cigarette against the eye of one of the children, partially depriving him of his sight. The child, who vomited, was hit over the head with a frying pan by the cook so many times that she crushed his skull and mashed his brain to a pulp. The child, understandably, died.

As if that wasn't enough, a child committed suicide a few years ago in kindergarten by stabbing both blades of a twenty-five-centimeter pair of scissors into his eyes in the toilet, penetrating his brain and killing him instantly. Once the child's body was found by the teachers, the parents were informed of the child's death immediately after they lit cigarettes right in the toilet and threw the child's body out of the building window straight into a large container.

Ah, kindergartens. Surfer stepped on the gas and gripped the white leather steering wheel of the Bumper even harder. Who knows what his cat was doing at this very moment.

Surfer at that time was regularly accompanied by recurring dreams. Peculiar dreams in which he moved to new houses. Or rather, to new houses that were to be his homes. A sort of seaside utopia with traditionally Mediterranean architecture, and the houses Surfer moved into were quite distinct from that architecture. They were futuristic and modern, but

over time their interiors began to take on the look of the classic Mediterranean brick half-ruins given to them, with cute shutters, high arches, and modest furnishings that mostly consisted of a small pale blue table in the kitchen and an even smaller white table by the front door.

One of the main features of this architecture was its adaptability to the warm and dry climate. This was reflected in the use of open spaces, large windows and terraces that allowed air and light to flow in.

Another typical feature of this architecture was the covered courtyards, which provided shade and protection from the sun and also often served as the centre of family life. Tiles and cladding were also often used, as well as coloured plaster on the exterior walls of buildings.

These houses included beautiful and intricate geometric designs on the facades, extensive use of stone and wood elements, and the use of water features such as fountains and water springs.

It was unnatural and crazy, but at the same time pleasantly nostalgic, full of happiness and fulfilment. A dream with architecture and landscape, associated with memories that like to recur in sleep because they want to be preserved. They fear death as soon as their bearers feel that death is coming.

Incidentally, this is precisely how the sensations of "anticipating the future" or so-called Déjà vu arise. It's nothing more than stupid people worrying about themselves and trying desperately to parasitise themselves in their heads before they collapse with the whole system. It's not normally talked about because the people themselves are afraid of such talk, as they only consider death to be when their little body ends up in a coffin. Therefore, they don't even want to hear about death.

# QUANTITATIVE HARVEST V. and VI.

## V.

On February the 23rd, Dormanitrivanius, through the window of his own house, noticed his neighbours; who collectively called themselves the "Skoppeys"; shovelling snow nearby. A woman could be seen shovelling snow standing upright at a distance of about thirty metres from her house, while her husband was shovelling snow sitting on a wheelchair just near the front door of the house.

It is worth noting that Dormanitrivanius only remembered the time when the man was walking on his own feet - this was the first time he had seen him sitting on the wheelchair.

The neighbours eventually captivated him so much that he decided to go outside to observe them at closer range.

He opened the front door of his house. His sensor at that moment showed the following readings:

*23 February*
*10:23 AM*
*-19.1591 °C*
*2 609.9098 m above sea level*

He hopped down a few steps and nearly fell as he stepped on the ground, expecting to sink into the snow. But the snow cover was extremely stiff and his feet sank into it with a crunch, ankle deep at most.

When he was standing about five metres away from the Skoppeys and contemplating the idea of greeting them, the woman suddenly turned to him and greeted him first.

*(Her name was Phleema. She was a woman about six feet tall with thick red curly hair and slightly overweight, currently dressed in a thick brown coat with black, Middle Eastern-looking ornaments.)*

It was impossible to determine if the character in the book was named "Phleema", but that was somehow how she had pronounced the word when she had read the book to him.

"Can I tell you something, please?" She asked as soon as she recognized him.

"Of course," he answered her, letting the word out of him only on the basis of some unconscious reflex response to the suggestion of a polite question, and not on the basis of being truly convinced of his determination to listen to anything that Phleema might tell him.

"You see, my husband and I now go to the Society of the Adorers of the Forest Trumpet," she went on, and there was a palpable measure of assurance and confidence in her voice, "where we educate others in things that they don't normally come into contact with. For example, if children who are stillborn grow horns, they will subsequently come to life and die alive at the age of ten or so, because their bones and muscles will be deformed – their tissues will swell and bulge..."

(The Society of the Adorers of the Forest Trumpet was an Inmarian organisation made up of Cognicians who were in the business of creating as many arbitrary illusions and deliberately misjudged elements of reality as possible, which they sought to communicate to as many people as possible in such a way that they would be believed by those people as quickly as possible.

The members of the Society of the Adorers of the Forest Trumpet were characterised, among other things, by the fact that during their interpersonal conferences, because of the increased secrecy, they transferred their own consciousness into the bodies of forest animals – mainly foxes, wolves, bears, badgers, deer, lynxes, and hares - and thus met in the local forests.)

"May I ask what happened to Kothgool? For what reason is he in a wheelchair?" Dormanitrivanius asked, deliberately interrupting Phleema's monologue because he didn't feel like listening to it anymore.

(Kothgool was Phleema's husband, a burly man of about over two metres tall with a bald head and short growth around his mouth, currently dressed in a thick black coat.)

"Go ask him yourself, because he's very fond of talking about how he came to be a non-walker," she replied.

He duly listened to her advice, came up to Kothgool (while they greeted each other), and before he could ask the cause of his paralysis himself, Phleema came out from behind his back with words addressed directly to her husband:

"Tell him, please."

Immediately after she had spoken her message, she ran up the porch steps and disappeared into the house with her snow shovel, leaving Kothgool and Dormanitrivanius alone. Kothgool had just started at her request in front of Dormanitrivanius:

"I had a very strange experience. While walking my dog, a man from his own yard shouted at me and asked me if my dog could eat dumplings. I replied that the gluten in them certainly wouldn't do him any good. He replied that he was going to give them to him for lunch the next day, to which I advised him to keep the dumplings for himself for lunch tomorrow. Our conversation seemingly ended when the man suddenly ran out of his yard a few seconds later with an armful of dumplings, shouting that he had to give them to us at all costs. I told him that if he wished, I could throw the dumplings in the nearest dumpster because my dog and I would not eat them under any circumstances. Then, probably in response to my answer, the man threw all the dumplings on the ground, pulled out a shotgun, and shot my dog. He subsequently shot me and himself as well. He was shot in the head and therefore died, but I was only paralyzed. It was like when you dream about sitting in a room with your eyes closed in complete stillness and you hear a fly buzzing somewhere behind you. When suddenly, you hear huge powerful jaws with sharp chelicerae snap and eat the fly. The jaws of something you can't believe is sharing space with you in the same room. And you just feel a huge sense of horror..."

As soon as Kothgool had finished, and Dormanitrivanius was about to reply to his recitation with the word "interesting" or "impressive," Phleema came out of the door, this time without a snow shovel, and ran down the wooden steps from the porch to Dormanitrivanius.

"Do you know Mrs. Darmaris?" She asked him. Dormanitrivanius wondered for a moment if the name meant anything to him, but came to nothing.

"No," he replied, "not really."

"It's important," Phleema responded lightning-fast, "because it should go without saying that you haven't heard of her. She is, after all, a fictitious woman, about whom we in the Society of the Adorers of the Forest Trumpet educate others in such a way as if she were real. For she is said to be a woman from the lower part of the village. Her eyes were swollen and swelled up while she slept. She woke up in terrible pain and had to cut her throat," she took a deep breath and continued, "when her husband, Uerfyrros, saw this, he hung himself straight on the barbed wire in the stable."

Dormanitrivanius thanked both of them and, with a genuine smile on his face, told them that he was very happy to listen to them. Immediately afterwards he started off down the icy, snowy path towards the Square of the Crosses, and casually checked behind him the pair of the Skoppeys, who were at that moment conversing with each other near the veranda of the house.

*(Apart from the fact that the Skoppeys were Cognicians in the Society of the Adorers of the Forest Trumpet, they also belonged to the so-called "Ko'khalians".*

*Ko'khalians are, in traditional Inmarian culture, sexual communities whose members live in a partnered monogamous union, but transform their consciousness into other bodies for the sake of achieving their own sexual arousal - to the margins of their multiple paraphilias. And they do this both with bodies of their own, but also with bodies that are completely different; mostly synthetic and anthropomorphic-animal, or grotesquely deformed.*

*Ko'khalianism was particularly advantageous to the Skoppeys, since they could expose themselves to it whenever, during their interpersonal conferences, in the Society of the Adorers of the Forest Trumpet, for the sake of increased secrecy, they transferred their own consciousness into the bodies of forest animals - mainly foxes, wolves, bears, badgers, deer, lynxes, and hares – and thus met in the local forests).*

She also mentioned something about the House of Arranyi, or something similar. It was impossible to determine exactly how the "Arranyi's" were really called. Her hoarse voice faded in time, and far more penetrating than her voice were her painted, preened nails.

The house of the Arranyis was located approximately 200 metres from the Square of Crosses. When Dormanitrivanius passed by it, the shouting crowds of thousands of people were so intensely audible here that even a normal conversation between two participants would have been impossible in these areas. Despite the considerable acoustic commotion here, he remembered very vividly his friend Ymys, who had disclosed to him two years ago in this very spot, near the Arranyi house, that he wanted to end his life in such a way that Dormanitrivanius could throw him out of a tree onto the frozen surface of the lake. He also recalled telling him while doing so that his "death would not be an assisted suicide, but only a transmission in space..."

During these moments, Haudena stood on a podium, on a wooden elevated platform in the middle of the Square of the Crosses, enjoying the actual proceedings of a social event he himself had organised. As always, he wore his flowered coat, striped shirt, and the branching Keteliini headband that Shamans traditionally wore to protect their ears from the cold. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of villagers around him shouted and chanted.

*(The social event that Haudena organised in these places was called the "Penetration of Lusitania".*

*The Penetration of Lusitania was, in traditional Inmarian culture, a mass conference of the inhabitants of the local villages who came to hear a monologue given by the Shaman, who organised the whole event just to give the monologue.)*

At the moment when Dormanitrivanius appeared at the edge of the crowd, Haudena took to the stage a sort of cloth bag from which he handed out; or, more accurately, threw out; invitations to the so-called "Immortalization" – a ceremony which was supposedly to take place on the twenty-fifth of February at eleven o'clock and thirty minutes in the evening in the Temple of Lo-Videus, in the Square of the Crosses.

*(Lo-Videus was the Trinchkeldt Ekesílius, who worked in his own temple bearing his name – just like any other Ekesílius.)*

Dormanitrivanius was still taking in the whole situation with his eyes. He noticed that entities other than humans per se could be seen in the crowd of people - for there were various anthropomorphic animals, modified animal species, and all manner of visually very difficult to identify organisms – all in all, they were either Ko'khalians or members of the Society of the Adorers of the Forest Trumpet.

He looked at his sensor. It was showing the following readings:

*February 23*
*12:01 PM*
*-19.0641 °C*
*2 532.0050 m above sea level*

Beside him, at a distance of about five metres or so, he spotted a man with short hair and a closely shaved growth around his mouth, walking while carrying in his arms a severed cow's head, which was so fresh that the blood on its jugular hadn't had enough time to oxidise. He stopped his steps at an older man; balding, with snow-white hair, waist-length, and an equally long, slightly greyish beard; whom he began to stare intently in the eyes. On closer inspection, Dormanitrivanius found that the older man with the bald head was no one but Ikwaren.

*(Ikwaren was reputed in Trinchkeldt as a so-called "corrupt smuggler".*

*Anyone who paid a corrupt smuggler the equivalent of a five-hundred-gram bar of twenty-four-carat gold was taken by the smuggler to a place where he was one hundred percent likely to die. That is why he was also paid in the form of a five-hundred-gram bar of twenty-four-carat gold only by those who were seriously interested in his services.)*

The younger man stared into his eyes for about ten seconds, and then he held the cow's head up above his own head with both hands, no doubt forcing the attention of the crowd members in his immediate vicinity. There was undisguised emotion and determination in his gaze.

*(If one man held up a severed cow's head in front of another man, he was, according to Inmarian cultural traditions, symbolising that he was having sex with the other man's wife without the other man's awareness.)*

Ikwaren immediately drew a shotgun mounted on his own shin and shot the younger man with three shots, killing him instantly. At the same time, he also accidentally hit the cow's head.

As soon as the man's body fell to the ground, dozens of curious members of the crowd in the immediate vicinity flocked to him. Some of them, after checking the lifeless body, ran up to Ikwaren to congratulate him.

Shortly after the mass congratulations, he got into a conversation with a woman who looked as if she were experiencing some sort of psychotic break, her visuals and speech creating an exemplary concept of a person whom Dormanitrivanius considered to be an archetypal member of the Society of the Adorers of the Forest Trumpet.

"It is my fault," Ikwaren began, "I refused to cook for my wife so that she could not compare my culinary performance with that of others. I refused to speak to my wife so that she could not compare the colour of my voice with that of others. But once I refused to have sex with my wife so that she couldn't compare my sexual performance to the sexual performance of others, I probably triggered in her a need for functional substitution. That's how stupid I am," Ikwaren sighed.

"Sure, I understand." The woman replied to him.

Ikwaren continued:

"The only thing I can do now is to give my wife a live goose."

*(According to Inmarian tradition, a man gave his wife a live goose when he shot the man who held up a severed cow's head in front of him.*

*The goose in this case was a metaphor – the last meal of the goose before it was killed and consumed was, according to Inmarian tradition, sunflower seeds. Likewise, according to Inmarian tradition, the husband offered his disloyal wife sunflower seeds just before he killed her and consumed her flesh.)*

Dormanitrivanius had already stopped listening to them and moved away, intrigued by the conversation of the two men who were lingering near the dead body of the man who, only a few minutes before, had been holding up a severed cow's head in front of Ikwaren. One of the men was moreover interesting for his atypical appearance – his face showed a long beard, which was carefully curled upwards, making the tips of it almost touch his eyes.

"An interesting thing happened to me yesterday," said the one of them who didn't have a beard. The bearded one listened to him attentively. "Because I shot

another man who was making footprints in the snow with severed dog legs. Isn't that amazing?"

*(Making footprints using severed dog legs, whether in snow or mud, was considered one of the most common, and most serious, crimes in Inmaria.*

*Indeed, dog footprints were used by thieves to mark points of entry into the least secure and easiest to rob houses and properties.*

*This was always done during the period when deer migrated into the populated areas of Inmarian villages due to a lack of food. Interestingly, this is exactly why the Inmarian language has the same word for "deer" and also for "severed dog's leg.")*

The bearded man just smiled at him and seemed to have no intention of even replying to his report.

She then said something about how Haudena had welcomed everyone solemnly at the "Penetration of Lusitania". How he convened the so-called "Cognicium"; a fellowship of his cronies.

As Mr. Haudena said, "You will be the members of my personal Cognicium, which I am convening at this moment. The ten Cognicians of my personal Cognicium will fulfil the role of representing my personality, which cannot be represented by unarmed individuals. I call upon all of you to come here, right here, right now. Soon you will have weapons at your disposal."

Almost every single member of the crowd of villagers was now facing directly onto the stage, where the ten summoned people could be seen pushing their way through the surrounding human masses and piling onto the wooden raised platform in the middle of the Square of Crosses at the Shaman's side. Two minutes later they were all standing there, and Haudena called on the audience to applaud them.

After a loud round of applause lasting about a minute, all ten people were led by the Shaman's assistants to a drone parked behind the stage, where they were assigned various weapons (as revealed by the Shaman himself) – sledgehammers with sharpened points, halberds, axes, bows and arrows with detonating points, knives, bayonets, machetes, revolvers, and so on.

Haudena then walked to the edge of the stage, where he talked to indeterminate people about indeterminate things, after which an elderly woman put a child of about four years old on the stage (presumably the woman was the very indeterminate person Haudena was talking to about indeterminate things).

The Shaman took the child by the hand and brought him to the centre of the stage. Meanwhile, the child listened attentively and not only smiled and enjoyed the situation that had arisen, but also felt extremely honoured.

Haudena let go of the little man's hand and grabbed him by the hair instead. With his right hand, he pulled a dagger from the pocket of his flowered coat and slashed the child's throat from behind. He plunged the entire blade, about twenty centimetres long, deep to the hilt into the child's tissue, slicing him open from one end of his spine to the other in a matter of seconds. The child was seen to be suffering extremely, but apart from the chaotic flailing of his arms and legs, he did not express his displeasure in any other way, as he was unable to cry under the influence of the massive body shock and could not scream because of the cut vocal cords. During this act, an abstract spray of red liquid sprayed far beyond the edge of the stage, densely sprinkling the crowd of onlooking villagers. Haudena then bluntly struck the child's neck with a dagger, damaging his spinal cord and also his intervertebral discs, managing to sever his head from his body. He left the child's body lying in a pool of about two litres of deep red blood – which gradually seeped into the wooden floor of the stage – and kicked the child's head towards the audience.

He deliberately paused for a few seconds, presumably to heighten the drama of his public performance, wiped his bloody hands on a towel handed to him by one of the (already armed) members of his personal Cognicium, and then spoke aloud:

"By this act, I condition that the population of Trinchkeldt will not live in Astacia..."

*(According to Inmarian cultural customs, a society is in a state of so-called "Astacia" whenever it does not tolerate the murder of children by a Shaman, or Ekesilius.*

*According to the Shaman and the Ekesilius, the state of Astacia is a clear indicator of a regression of social morality, and it therefore goes without saying that Haudena, by publicly cutting off a child's head, automatically and publicly eliminated the social regression, the concept of which existed for him in Trinchkeldt.)*

As soon as he had finished, he climbed down from the podium and let himself be encircled by the surrounding crowd of people who had so much respect and reverence for him that they would only move out of the way so as not to impede the smooth flow of his walk. They acted like a school of fish circling the shark, creating an empty bubble around him.

It was noticeable that the crowd gradually began to clap and chant – some participants of the Penetration of Lusitania even euphorically shouted unintelligible words and jumped hysterically with joy. Spurred on by this mass reaction, Dormanitrivanius decided to go home. At first at a quickened pace, but later with a traditionally slow step, he left the Square of Crosses, carrying in his mind a very unpleasant feeling, or more precisely, a very unpleasant overall impression of the event of the Penetration of Lusitania. Moreover, he was aware of the cause of this

unpleasant impression, as he was also aware of the simple fact that he himself had never been accustomed to public executions.

Haudena suddenly decided to stop his walk across the square, took a moment to look around the human bubble (which morphed into a near-perfect circle around him), and his gaze finally rested on the sky. He spread his arms wide and began to spin clockwise, just like that, out of pure joy and euphoria. His flowered coat and hair, pinned back by his Keteliini headband, fluttered under the influence of both wind and centrifugal force, making the ground plan of his body a visually very interesting phenomenon, which made the people around him smile, as he visibly amused them. The sky in Haudena's eyes pulsated, stretched and formed all kinds of patterns, the speed and variability of which he regulated with his own full-body spinning. He himself seemed to be a kind of metaphorical subject – a communicative instrument, which by its mere existence connects the dimensions of gravity (the planet) and empty dilated space (the cosmic vacuum). He then ran on stage again, where he summoned the so-called 'Obesitium'; a political coalition made up of extremely obese people responsible for proposing the murder of arbitrary inhabitants of Trinchkeldt.

On the night of the twenty-third to the twenty-fourth of February, Haudena had a very unusual dream.

He dreamt of the future. Of a time that he visualised as a temporal archetype for a culturally bizarre fundamental quantity, incomparable to the one in which he was currently living. Everything in his dream was indescribably alien to him, including himself - he was now a visibly elderly man of about eighty, and some local very prominent Shaman from a neighbouring village had just invited him to his home in some strangely dark room to discuss various topics with him in the course of a conversation.

Haudena, upon waking up, did not remember exactly what they had talked about, but he remembered very well the very last question he had asked and all the details related to it.

"What would you do if you had a catfish in the Forest Trumpet and you had to play it?" Shaman asked Haudena in a completely offhand manner, making no reference to the previous topic they had been addressing together up to that point. For some reason, he knew exactly how to answer:

"Well, it depends on whether the catfish would be visible in the Forest Trumpet," he held up his left hand, his forefinger on it for emphasis, "because if it were visible, I'd just pick it out and play it without the catfish present. But if it wasn't visible, I would first blow the Forest Trumpet and, based on the realization of

the non-bearing sound from it, I would look inside to find and then retrieve the catfish," he stretched his speech acoustically in a dramatized manner, noting that in addition to the two of them, there was also a live goose in the room, walking between their legs.

"I see a goose!" Haudena exclaimed in existential astonishment.

The other Shaman smiled narcissistically in an attempt to say something. But Haudena continued, not letting him speak - for elaborating on his own thought seemed more important to him at that moment than hearing the Shaman's reaction to the presence of a live goose in the room.

"But I've experienced bigger problems with the Forest Trumpet than a catfish existing in it. Such problems include, for example, the schools of small fish that take hold inside the Forest Trumpet - you can't take them out as easily as that infamous catfish, and moreover, you can easily inhale them when blowing the trumpet, which is very dangerous," Haudena seemingly finished his line, but he still felt the need to add a final additional sentence just for his own assurance that the other Shaman had understood him perfectly:

"That's why it's a good idea to hose down the Forest Trumpet before playing it every time."

As soon as he finished saying this, he noticed that the other Shaman had suddenly changed into a lobster or some other vague crustacean, but in appearance he seemed as ordinary as before. For some reason, a lobster, or another vague crustacean, in connection with the conversation regarding the Forest Trumpet, seemed quite natural to him. What was slightly disturbing to him at the moment was the greater number of geese present in the room, which, besides completely inundating the floor with their presence, were also walking on the ceiling.

By the vague transcendental abstractness of his own dream, Haudena suddenly found himself in the presence of a quartet of Forest Trumpets, lobsters, and geese, which were gliding along with him on a toboggan-like slide, situated in a hardly identifiable environment resembling the terrestrial sky.

## VI.

Directly on the Square of the crosses was the temple of Lo-Videus. It was a small building with a main hall of about 1,000 square metres, dedicated to Ekesilius of Trinchkeldt, whose name was "Lo-Videus".

*(It's worth mentioning that Lo-Videus's temple looked really unusual to an ordinary Earthman. It gave the impression of a mixture of several terrestrial architectural cultures.*

*Its staircase and entrance door were flanked by majestic, eleven-meter-high stone columns reminiscent of Corinthian antiquity. Above them, a gothic-looking dome rose to a height of sixteen metres, around the perimeter of which a dozen or so grotesque gargoyles stood out, depicting the likenesses of physically deformed human bodies in various stages of decomposition. The dome was topped with a gilded, twenty-four-metre-high pagoda-like superstructure evoking Burmese Buddhist architecture.*

*The temple had quite traditional, classical-European double-hung windows, but in the main hall there were a total of seven four-by-two-metre windows inlaid with abstract stained glass.*

*Inside, there was a main hall featuring church pews and a gilded statue of Lo-Videus, then a dining room, the offices of the five Ekesilians, and the private apartment of Lo-Videus, which was called the "Ekesilius's Habitat"; consisting of a living room, a bedroom, a kitchen with bedrooms designed for temple cooks located directly above it, several bathrooms and toilets, a playroom, a gym – which was also a room designed for performing sexual intercourse with Ekesilius – and a gallery; as well as a landing pad for drones on the surrounding grounds.*

*Every person entering the temple had to comply with a strict moral code when visiting it, as is the case with other, terrestrial structures designed for the worship of existing or non-existent entities. For example, one could not consume drugs or alcohol, talk loudly, eat, drink, smoke, turn on various telecommunication devices, etc.)*

On the twenty-fifth of February, at nine o'clock and twenty-third minute in the morning, Haudena entered the Temple of Lo-Videus. On the staircase leading into the building he took the steps two at a time, balancing on their icy surface, and looked as if he were about to fall, as the billowing flowered coat on the visage of his figure gave the impression of a shifting centre of gravity to onlookers' perception. However, his balance was very well calculated. He pushed open the heavy wooden door, as was not proper according to the moral code of the building, stepped inside and took a drag from his pocket inhaler fully loaded with the bark of a tree called "Imiskus". The particular variety of Imiskus that Haudena was consuming was called "Anaesthetic Fructose".

(The bark of the Imiskus tree was traditionally inhaled by the Inmarian Shamans from their pocket inhalers to counterbalance the toxic effects of inhaling the dried bruised heads of a local bird called "Yeemen Eemen", which translates loosely to something like "soul catcher".

However, in terms of the toxicity of the inhalation, there was a reciprocal relationship – not only did the inhalation of Imiskus counteract the toxic effects of Yeemen Eemen, but the inhalation of Yeemen Eemen counteract the toxic effects of Imiskus.)

While walking inside the temple, Haudena threw his arms out in all directions, his own microchoreography seeming to play with the air molecules, which he gently swirled and caressed with the movements of his hands, fingers and forearms.

On the church pews in the main hall of the temple, five people were seated at different places, praying to the gilded statue of Lo-Videus, which was placed at the very end of the room. Everyone present turned to look at Haudena's grand entrance, but eventually returned to their established neuro-illusory patterns, pretending not to be disturbed.

Haudena, meanwhile, drew heavily from an inhaler fully loaded with Anaesthetic Fructose. He exhaled the absorbed vapor and then inhaled deeply through his nose.

"I've come to declare resistance to Ekesilius!" He bellowed at the top of his lungs, until it was visibly very difficult for the people in the main hall to pretend that they hadn't been disturbed in any way.

Haudena was extremely pleased by the nervous jerking of everyone in attendance. It appeared to him that they would have preferred to kill him if they weren't in the temple. He took another drag from his inhaler and exhaled the vapor with a deep sigh, expressing his enjoyment of its existence as bluntly as he could - he even cocked his head haughtily as he did so. The plume of exhaled substance then seemed to him like a morphing atomic mushroom, symbolically demolishing and destroying all principles of temple etiquette.

"I've come to make a resistance to Ekesilius!" He shouted once more, taking one last drag from his inhaler fully loaded with Anaesthetic Fructose, switching it off and shoving it into the left pocket of his flowered coat.

Shortly thereafter, a light brown shiny wooden door opened in the right corner of the room, leading into a hallway that gave access to the temple dining hall, the offices of the five Ekesilians, and the Ekesilius's Habitat. Two burly, bald-headed men over two metres tall with massive rings under their eyes – the Ekesilians – stepped out. With a quick step and stern expressions on their faces, they walked up to Haudena.

She then said something about how Haudena had been thrown out of the temple by the two Ekesilians after they had politely asked him to leave and he had vulgarly scolded them. How they threw him onto a slippery stone staircase, causing him multiple painful contusions.

All that remained were painted fingernails, the sound of pages, and a fading raspy voice.

# CHAPTER 8: Praising the Mummies

On the morning of September the 16th, Train Driver was standing by the pool, looking at the massive colourful flowers, the deep blue sky, and the deep orange orange juice he was holding in his right hand. In his left hand he held a fully loaded Arsenic.

He sipped from the juice and set the empty glass on the coffee table. He stood up, wiped his massive black moustache and grabbed the revolver in both hands. He cocked the hammer and flicked the Arsenic into his right hand. He felt then a strange sensation, which he himself used to call "a rumbling in his head," and it was nothing else than a sort of transcendental whiff of omnipotent certainty, mingled with an absolute need – that is to say, an absolute desire – which obsessively prowled through reality, seeking in it the object of its interest. He pointed at the sky, hoping for some pigeon or other feathered creature to emerge and be shot. But something unexpected happened. Something that not only completely crushed the whole "rumbling in his head" with its intensity, but brought an entirely new kind of feeling into his head – fear. And moreover, a fear that is not so much a desperate burrowing into the depressing emptiness of a tormented mind, but rather an aggressive anxious situational prick that can painfully clutch one's chest and throw one's shoulders up in the air.

The revolver slipped out of his hand.

Train Driver was completely overwhelmed by the sympathicus and its defensive and evasive forms – the consequences of consequences (!) – which atomically alternated within milliseconds. He tried to catch the revolver falling to the ground quickly, but immediately drew back his hand, fearing that he might by some clumsy movement on the falling weapon accidentally pull the trigger and hit himself. He was frightened both by his carelessness and by his careless need to resist carelessness.

The Arsenic landed on the slip-resistant exterior pavement and fired. The deafening boom reverberated through the garden, kicking up everything that was standing on the property. It carried across the water's surface, slapping the flowers and even touching the juice glass on the table. And she gave a good shake, especially with the Train Driver's moustache, sideburns and all the other exterior pavements of his mind – the gateways to his mind.

A nine-millimetre bullet flew through the window of the Train Driver's dwelling. Or, more accurately, through the glass patio door that allowed the villa's occupants to gaze out over the pool and flower garden. It left a nice and aesthetic hole in them. A crack in the glass with shards scattered both inside and outside. The clatter of the falling and shattering pieces of glass was almost inaudible due to the lingering echo of the spreading sound effect of the gunshot.

At the same time, Train Driver was sickened by his own clumsiness, but at the same time relieved that he had not hurt himself. He quickly picked Arsenic up off the ground and

shoved it behind his metal belt. In a flash, he noticed how the fall from the height onto the pavement had left an unsightly gash on the revolver, when he saw Matilda in the doorway examining the hole in the glass. This time, however, any sense of relief was suddenly absent. And that was in no one. Not even in Train Driver, and not even in Matilda.

Train Driver felt the same as if he had shot himself.

Matilda scrunched her high forehead and her high painted eyebrows and flushed with anger. Her pork face looked even more porkish now. Pink and fat, with a wrinkled nose. However, without any humorous uplift, Matilda looked objectively very frightening. She ran straight for Train Driver as fast as her own obesity and the mobility of her red latex dress would allow. At the same time, she looked like she was going to actually shoot Train Driver at any moment, or at least give him a proper punch in the face.

"I've seen all sorts of horrors among the interstellar monstrosities in my life," Matilda huffed and launched. Train Driver was quite frightened by her offensive tone and took a step back. "I've seen all sorts of horrors, all sorts of collaborations of the most vile and disgusting atrocities that space-time can produce! I've seen hairy Down's Syndrome children with anal ruptures smearing bloody black sludge oozing from their assholes all over themselves! I've seen bloody scabs and festering overgrown fingernails, smelling like a shitty toilet! I've seen vaginal discharges and necrotic penises, clogged blood vessels of obese monsters smelling sour like fermented manure! I've seen tongue coatings so massive that if a man wiped them off his tongue, he could coarsely coat an entire slice of bread with them! I have seen nasal polyps that trapped hard gunk and turned into cancerous growths! I saw my mother, my father, myself, and everyone else on Earth! But there's nothing like you and your feats! Nothing compares to your grossness and your disgustingness! It's something no one will understand until they see it with their own eyes!"

At that point, Train Driver didn't understand what was going on. His impression of the actual situation was similar, but not as personally destructive, as the Philharmonist's impression of the Train Driver's description of the culinary delights of the combination of carrots and onions. It felt surreal and strange. Matilda was unrealistically spontaneous and quick, and if her monologue hadn't been prepared in advance, she couldn't be human. It just would not work. She was a surreal fat bitch.

Visions of obelisks, temples, domed buildings and building-like domes. Luminously delineated ornamental facades coexisting in the presence of bursts of masses gushing out of newly emerging interiors. Revitalization and transformation of shapes. Wrapped edges and angular arcs – spatial nonsense and apparent perceptual illusions that are in fact interdimensional tesseracts, illuminated by just one three-dimensional source. Insects, duck beaks and mole claws protruding from still non-existent holes in the ancient folds of geometric planes bent perpendicular to the flow of currents. Grey curtains and blurred patches that deliberately obscure the emerging fields of action and feign absorption. Humanitarian aid to quivering jelly and sharp liquids. Edgeless thoughts and decubitus old formulas transmitted through pipes and scattered like scraps of paper around the room!

Train Driver heard a voice inside him saying something like "I'm scared...". He walked up to Matilda and slapped her with all his might. And he slammed it into her in such a way that the punch smeared her massive makeup and vibrated the mass of thick lard on her face. Her fat pig-pink face turned even redder. It was no longer a pig face, but just a red mass of fat painted in bold colours. Far more disgusting than all the disgusting things Matilda had described.

Train Driver was crying. Matilda lay on the ground and cried. Her latex red dress was ripped and folds of fat were pouring out of the holes in her buttocks and hips.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" Roared Train Driver in a loud guttural tone that bore no resemblance to a human voice. It was a purely animalistic tone, desperate and aggressive, the kind only Train Driver could make, or an old sick ape in excruciating pain, cornered into a wall by zoo attendants holding a euthanasia syringe. His brain has exploded.

"Why are you still doing this!!!???" the Train Driver bellowed, still in his guttural tone. "You motherfucker!!! You fat bitchhhhh!!! I'll smash your head you fat pig!" Train Driver was gaining in intensity.

"If I chop you up with an axe, gallons of fat will pour out of you and cause a flood of grease, you fucking obese whore!" He yelled, spitting up his moustache. Looking at the weeping Matilda, however, he stilled, and at some point in the gradual release of his own aggression caused by the relaxing vocal outburst, he even came to feel sorry for her.

He picked up his glass of juice from the poolside table and took a deep breath. He looked up at the sky. He wanted to take a sip from it, but as soon as he realised the glass was empty, he placed it on the coffee table, pulled the revolver from his belt, and watched the fear in Matilda's eyes as he did so. In her little pig eyes, accentuated by makeup. She was afraid he was going to shoot her on the spot, and her fear for her life was very obvious.

Train Driver grabbed the Arsenic by the barrel and placed it on the ground with the handle facing Matilda. This time, he would have sworn that surreal and strange - just like the Philharmonist – must have been how she actually felt. She looked astonished, and her fear turned into an emotion she might not have known before. Her crying ceased, and so did the cries of Train Driver.

"It's yours, you bitch," Train Driver addressed her, "and that's not all. The firearms are yours. The house is yours. Everything is fucking yours! Do what you want with it!" Train Driver cleared his throat into his palm, took another deep breath, and looked Matilda straight in the eye.

"But the car is mine, if you'll indulge me... ...Have a nice day, you obese cunt... ...And a tranny to go with it..."

Matilda rolled her eyes in shock for a few seconds and opened her mouth. She thought for a moment about grabbing Arsenic and shooting Train Driver, but didn't. She watched him walk away, staring one last time at the empty orange juice glass, wiping his black moustache and disappearing in sight behind the curtain of the glazed door to the villa's terrace. He got into the yellow and brown car and drove away.

"Fucking Matilda! Fucking fat bitch! And a tranny! And a tranny besides! Fucking Air Conditioning!!!" Train Driver yelled from inside the car, but no one heard him.

And that was Train Driver. A man who needed to end his life. A man who needed to end the way of life he'd been living, because otherwise he'd go insane from the long-felt restlessness, a kind of psychological knot in his head that festered and grew into more and more innocent places as time went on. He realised that this restlessness was the opposite of the uniquely surreal sensation he felt, not the Philharmonist, not Matilda, but himself. A very real feeling that kept knocking into him, trying to convince him that what he was doing was not sustainable.

What he was doing was crying out for change. Crying out for change like the flower around the Train Driver's pool, which, if it could speak human language, would offer people oral sex and kill the surrounding flowers by nibbling off their petals. A disgusting decadent flower that needs to be replanted in a secluded spot or killed off completely before it shoots anyone.

"Oh, fuck, thank the universe for all those accidents. Oh, fuck the Air Conditioning!" Train Driver thought aloud to himself as he drove his yellow and brown car.

He also thought something about getting on a train and going to the completely opposite end of Graveyard. But not out loud this time.

The netting of the seats filled with on-board service leaflets, holding back the anxious cries of swollen faces. Adverts for rainwater and solid earth tremors everywhere, or trees that resemble houses, warming the ground eating away the quintessential phantoms of granite-like rocks smashing against the supporting cavities. Evidence of thunder and lightning, in the discharging battery of a laptop placed on the heaving chest of a rabid train conductor smoking two cigarettes at once. The sense of a pot, a giant tin pot in which all ideas are boiled alive. And above all – the sophistication of it all.

These were all processes that made more than one person, including Train Driver, contemplate internal war. Over the ruler-wielding metre maids who walk the streets and don't eat, drink or sleep properly. Suddenly, somehow, one could understand it, and one could understand their suffering. A mass, a bleeding body and a ruler. What more does one need for inner happiness? What more is enough for internal war?

Fanatic saw a small restaurant in the woods on September the 15th, but after a couple of glasses of cold water, which suited him very well at the time, he left immediately. It was sad. He didn't like these types of restaurants.

Restaurants that serve exclusively overgrown cold, sour, overcooked meats covered in jellied masses. Restaurants where the smell of beer merges with the smell of urine and the smell of burnt oil with the smell of faeces. Restaurants in which it is impossible to tell whether they are tapping urine or beer. Restaurants in which it is impossible to tell whether they are frying on poo or shitting burnt oil. And cigarettes everywhere. Restaurants and their cigarettes. And their patrons. Oh, my God, their patrons! The patrons, gnarled navel-gazers with hard beer bellies who tell their similar-looking friends about how they don't like to use

sanitary napkins and prefer to blow their nose into their wives' long blonde hair. Visitors, overgrown navel-gazers with hard beer bellies, who tell their similar-looking friends about how it's not enough to pee in the bathroom sink at home to live a comfortable life, but it's necessary to pee in the kitchen sink. Then there are the visitors, the pork bastards, who hitch a ride on anything they can get their hands on, just to get plastered. The pork bastards who, right after they've been chopped, point their finger at the bouquet of flowers on the table and ask the waiter something like "Are you still going to eat that?".

Pork Lobes, who arrive at the restaurant with sausage in hand. PORK LOBES who will go eat raw urban pigeons as soon as they find out the restaurant has closed!

To be a dog in the park means to be an illegal dog. And where everyone likes their behaviour and the environment they create with their behaviour, the behaviour they create with their environment, the environment they create with their environment, the environment they rot in and the environment they rot in with their environment and themselves, they all become mutually understanding of each other. They are aggressive towards each other, and in practice they don't really understand each other in anything, but in reality they do understand each other. They understand each other on a level that they cannot express. They can't communicate it and they can't even be aware of it. They understand each other simply because they behave the same way between their thoughts and within the breathtaking knot of limitations and dogmas of directions.

That night Fanatic had an increased temperature. He slept very shallowly, his movements were very jerky, and his dreams were almost unimaginative. The dreams were metaphorical. In them, Fanatic was fully becoming what was going on in his head. He was fully experiencing the change in his sense of "I am" depending on the jerky thoughts his boiling brain was producing. The "I am's" were just intense bursts of jerky electricity and accumulated energy. Annoying clusters of spasms of both brain and body that randomly released themselves into knots of nervous sighs and cries of a desperate organism begging for help.

He dreamed he was a voice then. A voice that screamed very loudly at regular intervals and was very proud as it beat its chest. It was a very strong and very brave voice.

But suddenly there were more voices and they were beating each other up. The strong voice beating its breast came into conflict with voices of different frequencies and intervals of shouting. However, these voices were no longer beating their breasts, but instead were throwing their arms around. Some of them in turn pounded their fists. They pounded their fists together, they pounded other voices, or they pounded their fists casually, randomly, all around them.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" Fanatic shouted in a state of semi-sleep. He was trying to wake himself up with his screams so he wouldn't have to resist the annoying clash of voices and their consuming energetic temperature. And finally he succeeded. He woke up drenched in sweat and appropriately

irritated. His head ached horribly and his throat was on fire - like being sliced open with razor blades and burned by a blowtorch all at once.

In such a state, one cannot rest in peace for sleep, as one is wet all through with one's own sweat, and is also terribly poisoned by pain and energy deficiency. He cannot even go or do anything as he is too tired! It's like frying oneself on a hot frying pan with no way of escape!

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" Fanatic screamed in agony and pain

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" He screamed over and over again.

On the September the 17th, Fanatic was walking through the woods. Everything was again represented by darkness, fog and strange sensations. Among other things, that day his body was again seized with fever. A fever whose warmth seemed to move not with heat, but with suffocating clenching and friction. Like a man dehydrated to death in a forty-degree-hot concrete jungle taking a sip of a hot drink full of caffeine and capsaicin. There was something very wrong with it all. If the Earth could express itself, it would grow horns and smoke from its cracks.

He stepped in his own footprints in the mud, deep and plastic, talking to him. Dirty to the points reaching far above his ankles. The footprints were so very deep, in fact, that if one looked closely into them, one could hear the swishing sound of mud sinking inward - of matter moving in a curved space. A sound that can only be heard by someone falling from a height of several tens of metres in a deep cave. And that sound morphs. It morphs into voices. Not human voices, but voices that speak the human language. They talk to Fanatic, they talk to each other, they shout and deal with things.

The footprints are talking!

"I stink. I smell like hell, do you have any fragrance?" spoke the first of the footprints.

"And wouldn't that be kind of like perfume for a pig?"

"Someone's here."

"Yes, someone's here and getting closer. He wants to hurt you."

"Don't you want linoleum? Just like that, a little linoleum to taste, to go..."

"Watch out!"

"Who says?"

"Someone's talking!"

"Yes, for the very person who is approaching and wants to hurt you is talking!"

"Don't catch that!"

"Run!"

"Open notebooks fall into wells."

"Wasn't that the police?"

"Turn around!"

"There's a lot of people here and they all want to hurt you."

"Imperfectly balanced ballpoint pen."

"Hey! Hey, you! Turn back!

"Blocked roads. Marble windows."

"Autopsy of a human corpse!"

"Your hand itches. Your hand itches and it's dangerous! You have to cut it off!"

"Bewareeeeee!!!"

Moloch mummies and obese wonders of disgust, embodied in everything anyone has ever done! The abominations! Abominations! Abominations!

It was deafening to Fanatic. He began to scream, scream in extreme anger and despair. He ran deep into the woods. Away from the footprints, away from the noise, and away from all the swishing sounds of the caving space that surrounded anything that was alive and that had any sense of hearing. A sickening torment of the mind from which there was no escape! Footprints, one's own footprints in the mud that gave one no rest and deliberately destroyed one's world by pushing one away both physically and mentally. No suffering is like this. As exaggerated and dramatised as it may sound, this was the exact peak of the loss of all that a person can have. Without biologically dying at one of the levels of one's wanting. Overwhelmingly a peak of loss of what one didn't even realise one had and only unconsciously recycled it in the dimensions of exploitable causes and effects. And it was about loss that Fanatic once wrote a short note in his notebook!

*Loss. Most people think of loss fundamentally in two forms – death and panic – not realising that panic is only a response to death. It is fear; an anxious response to death from all that has survived death and remained alive. Loss only ever means death. Death in some particular area of loss, as well as the death of all relationships with which the area of loss is connected. It is an unfathomable cluster of exploding certainties and the death of all static affirmations. If one experiences loss complete, one must become, as a rule, dead.*

And while it may have been just some deliberately wise-sounding precept designed to make any ordinary idiot clutch his head at the hint of ecstatic intellectual enrichment, it meant something quite different back then. It represented a new dimension for which the meaning of this wise-sounding precept was hitherto hidden, but still very relevant and valid.

However, it was no better in the forest. On the contrary, it was much scarier. No, there was nothing that spoke the human language, but there was something present that rumbled into one's soul. It was in the head. A dark tone of pure monstrosity, a buzzing infernal roar. The faster Fanatic ran, the more the rumble transformed into concrete words, audiovisually interpreted thoughts so powerful they shook his perceived reality. A bizarre and wondrous tangle of words. No birdsong, no mud underfoot, no forest and its scent all around. But... The penis of a dead bear, a rotten bloated carcass that speaks with specific movements of the foreskin. It speaks of traffic accidents, injuries and corpses. He talks to Fanatic, but Fanatic doesn't listen. Fanatic is gripped by fever and tries not to be poisoned by the consuming pain that makes his life unbearable. Pain, why are you here? Why aren't you in the penis of the dead bear that speaks to me? Why are you attacking the defenceless and the vulnerable?

Madness! And abominations! The abominations of madness and the madness of abominations!

Fanatic ran out of the dense forest again among the talking tracks. His swift run, however, was suddenly halted by Brush Cutter.

"Brush Cutter! BRUSH CUTTER! BRUSH CUT-TER!" Fanatic heard a loud and deep echo in his head, causing his knees to buckle and he nearly collapsed to the ground.

There was nothing real there, and everyone didn't care.

A sixty-foot tall, sixty-five centimetre or so, with a massive chin and a gigantic, shapeless gut. A man stricken with a truly morbid obesity, balding, with a parched look in his face. Saggy, pale, with sunken cheeks and purple colour around his eyes. He looked like someone afflicted by multiple clogged blood vessels, ideally including both coronary arteries. He looked like he could barely walk and that he was barely alive. He smelled like shit and was standing right there, ankle deep in mud. And the sun was shining behind him, making it impossible for Fanatic to get a closer focus.

"Hey, you!" Brush Cutter shouted. A strange shade of combination of meaning and stench skipped over lucid reality.

A strange shade of combination of meaning and stench skipped over lucid reality.

"Me?"

"Oh yeah, who else!!!??? Come here!"

Despite his considerable discomfort, Fanatic didn't feel the same way with Brush Cutter as he did with most of the grotesque figures and metaphysical objects appearing from the forests. He walked closer to him and swung around to face him from an angle that didn't allow the sun to shine directly into his face, but rather illuminated Brush Cutter's face.

"Greetings to you!" Brush Cutter bellowed in a powerful voice.

"Greetings."

"I know I'm here for a lot of things, but the main thing is that I want you to ask me a question."

"What question?" Fanatic sniffed, annoyed and angry. This time he was feeling really strongly poisoned. He'd had enough of all this. Disgusting forms and shapes of every conceivable variation of circumstance, grouped together in such structures that perpetrated horrors and monstrosities.

"'Dreadful reality,' any sentimental pensioner in Fanatic's situation would have said to himself.

"You know the question. You can ask whatever question you want and whatever interests you!"

Dreadful reality.

Fanatic recognized himself in a strange state reminiscent of the cynicism of a martyred monk. He felt like amusing himself and ingeniously insulting his surroundings, much as a gibbon leaping from a tree pulling a tiger by the tail would do.

"All right then, I know already. What kind of bastard are you and why are you so fat and sick?" He snapped aggressively and ironically.

"I don't believe that," Brush Cutter blushed with suppressed fury, "I don't believe that. Ask something real. Something that's around. Not something you're making up. You can answer such prissy questions better yourself than if I were to answer them for you."

Fanatic thought for a moment. Brush Cutter was a hideous apparition, but at this moment it was possible to sense a kind of calmness, or perhaps even intelligence, in him. There was almost a piece of Badger within him.

"How long will the Air Conditioning last?"

Brush Cutter laughed out loud, until spittle and snot were spurting out of him. His bronchial passages rattled as he did so.

"Ah, that's it, that's the question! That's something! Look at this!" Brush Cutter pointed his chubby and badly bloodied finger at the classic red drum mower with a four-wheeled collection basket that he had brought with him. He pointed and paused annoyingly.

"What about it? I want to know how long the Air Conditioning will last!" He urged in his head, not voicing his thought aloud.

"Oh wait! It'll be right up. You should just know that I'm leaving this mower for you," Brush Cutter boasted excitedly, shifting his brownish-yellow flared teeth in his oral cavity and hearing Fanatic's thought.

"And what's the use of that!?" growled Fanatic with feigned despair, for it was clear in his mind that he had no intention of taking the mower with him, and would leave it lying about.

"Don't worry, you'll see." The Brush Cutter winked one eye very conspicuously, "wink wink. Mrs. Birdface, wink wink."

Fanatic didn't understand, but something in Brush Cutter's eyes made him think. It was a very strange introspection, comparable, perhaps, only to an absolutely analytical understanding of a problem – some problem being solved. But Fanatic didn't understand anything. He didn't understand anything in the world, but he was doing something in it nonetheless. So why not. He took the mower. He felt up to it.

A significant reworking of the meaning of smell.

No answer. No question.

Brush Cutter spat and loudly snorted the contents of his nasal cavity inward. So deep that it slowly but surely flowed down his throat through his nasopharynx.

"I don't know if I answered your question, but I've had enough of everything," he cleared his throat. He pulled out a massive nickel-plated revolver and pulled down his pants. Fanatic backed up a few steps. Brush Cutter squatted down, shoved the entire barrel of the revolver into his anal opening, and fired. His obese stomach exploded in a roar of massive pressure waves, and chunks of flesh flew out of his rotten muzzle full of brownish-yellow teeth, and blood spurted out, full of numerous small particles of cholesterol.

Brush Cutter was dead, and Fanatic had taken his mower right after he had mowed down Brush Cutter's body with it. An ugly, obese, unhealthy body full of osteochondrosis,

clogged blood vessels, stagnant body fluids and visceral fat. On a pile of fleshy mush this time.

Fanatic then pushed the lawnmower for several miles until he finally rested and sat down on a stump somewhere in the dense bowels of the misty forest. It was then shortly after five PM.

A beautiful poetic moment and silence. He sat there, eating something and drinking something, his eyes catching the exceptionally blue sky, the colour of which pierced towards him through the almost light-impenetrable treetops. A beautiful poetic moment and silence. A slight portion of a kind of quiet stillness that hadn't been felt in a very long time. Slight, but undoubtedly present. A little of Brush Cutter's blood, fat and flesh, as well as the pleasant air, the sun's rays and the blue sky. Divine silence and peace.

Yes. And it was precisely this divine silence and peace that was interrupted by Mrs. Birdface, who came into the woods to see the Fanatic shortly after five PM. A tall, thin woman with short hair, draped in rags and scoliotically crooked. The experience was again extremely frightening. Another reality within reality. More fantasies interpreted by reality and reality interpreted by fantasies. Terrible things.

Mrs. Brush Cutter, alias Mrs. Birdface, began to scream. Screaming. No monologues about shooting herself in the ass with a revolver, just a few minutes of ear-splitting intense screaming.

Fanatic was desperate beyond belief. But he endured. That was all he had left. He didn't stay sitting on the stump for long. He stood up and looked around. He noticed a trunk of some kind of conifer lying on the ground, about two metres long and badly spiked at the end. Moreover, with its pooled branches, it resembled an old Christmas tree ready to be thrown away.

Fanatic picked up this mystical instrument and was not afraid to use it under any circumstances. It was a deadly instrument. A tool of salvation. With all his might, he thrust the pointed end into Mrs. Birdface's mouth until it came out over the top of her head. The excruciating scream instantly ceased.

A spurt of blood. A splash of fluid that signified nothing but the escape of life. A shattered skull and a splattered brain. Fanatic kicked Mrs. Birdface in the chest, knocking her off the pointy trunk of the coniferous tree. The body collapsed to the ground with a thud.

He looked at the bloodied lifeless conifer, that mystical instrument, and threw it to the ground. He stared at Mrs. Birdface for a moment, and after a few minutes he was sure that she was no longer alive. Not a chance. The brain had been pierced through with wood about five inches thick, and a massive puddle was forming on the ground, indicative of severed arteries by its rapidly increasing volume. He would have liked to have had the honour of ending this creature's life with his own hands and puncturing its head with his own fist, but that was impossible. He had to use a tool. The pointy needle was his extended arm.

The lawnmower roared and mowed down Mrs. Birdface's body. Massive piles of flesh, bone and blood flew from the edges of the tumbler. Fortunately, the collection basket had

been removed from the mower, and the space left by it had been carefully plugged with a plastic wedge used for exactly that purpose, otherwise all the fleshy gunk would have ended up on Fanatic's face. After all, Fanatic was decently splashed anyway, but more or less only with liquid. No flesh.

About a minute after 6 PM Mrs. Birdface's body was completely mowed down. A sacred pile of flesh, blood and entrails, a sacred activity and a sacred mower. The tools became extended arms and an effective augmentation of the means for achieving the desired ends. The magnificence of mowed flesh, a dead creature, pierced by a tree and mowed down by the blades of a machine designed to mow grass. If pieces of flesh, bone, and blood could talk, they would be grateful and show their pride. Perhaps too much so, and they would become vulgar and arrogant.

Fanatic left the pile of flesh and the lawnmower in place and wiped himself clean of blood. He ate and drank something and walked away in search of a serviceable place to sleep. He was so deep in his head that no forest could disturb him.

On September the 16th, shortly before noon, Surfer was sitting in his car. White Bumper, moving at about seventy miles an hour, with a trunk full of letters for the Mayor's Office. And the country around. A dangerous melancholy in all weathers, even on ultra sunny and cloudless days like this one. Graveyard depression. Broken sidewalks and crumbling buildings, with some attempt at a bit of nature here and there in sight in the form of trees, dry grasslands, and duck ponds.

At all times, the power lines on the poles resemble raw pasta, shakily metamorphosing into their own shadows. Pasta that communicates with birds, with trees, with the sky and with flying suicides. They mostly communicate about the ballistic trajectories of the excrement that flies out of human mouths in the form of words at precise intervals, but at other times they also communicate about sex, drugs, and even how grandmothers used to spend time with their grandchildren. The interconnected metamorphosed pasta shadows that crisscross the entire city, spreading the latest information, slander and space-time transformed delusions and half-truths, at the precise speed of an electric current.

Unfortunately, missing from each of the pasta shadows of the power lines is a clown balancing on a unicycle. A clown who holds a bouquet of flowers of different kinds, shapes, sizes and colours in one hand and a black umbrella in the other. A clown, from whose red-inked-red-inked mouth comes a sound similar to a human voice, which resembles the proudly uttered sentence "I am not afraid!".

The shadows of the pasta power lines and the ground beneath them. All manner of exploited, reshaped, deformed, filled in and destroyed. Synesthesia of the soil under several layers of artificial surfaces and large paraphrases of natural art, scattered according to the keg of applied aesthetics. The paraphrases of paraphrases and the dummies of atrapes are clearly not synthetic enough.

And everything else. The dirt and deformities of the shy faces of the universal design of the city, the neighbourhoods, the streets and the houses in them. The retreats of thought, the dusty crows incapable of flight and the spirals of shit. Dust buried in the cracks and crevices of the pavements, getting into shoes and socks. And into noses and brains. Vulgar clusters of stony rushes of desperate erosion and decay that seed all greenery and all neatness and newness. The stench of exhaust and excrement. Columns, lamps and other haze piercing the air, in a rusty decomposition of exposure to the excretions of the canine urinary tract. The filth of god and the god of filth. Earthmen, sufferers of gravity, in epicentres of fear and loathing, ecstatically consuming with mouths wide open all the filth from which they came and all the filth to which they are coming.

At approximately one minute past twelve o'clock the collision occurred. A Bumper, in the graveyard district called "Passes", at a speed of approximately eighty kilometres per hour, struck a cat. It struck the left fender, its body was torn apart, and the pieces left a bloody smear from the left headlight, across the fender, to the top of the hood. The event happened at such speed that Surfer didn't even have time to register what actually happened to the remains of the cat's body and where exactly they went, but the fact was that they flew right over the windshield and through the roof.

"Aaaaaaaa, fuck!" Surfer roared, in shock and in fear for the cat's life, as well as in fear of being sued for damaging someone else's property. He slammed on the brakes sharply, until the tires smoked with an intensity no car in Graveyard had ever smoked.

The Surfer looked in the rearview mirror and his shout of "Aaaaaaaa, fuck!" suddenly drastically changed the direction, form, and intonation of the utterance as the reason for its occurrence drastically changed.

"Aaaaaaaa, fuck!" Surfer roared, not in shock and fear for the cat's life, or in fear of being sued for damaging someone else's property, but from the paralysing terror of hitting and killing his own cat. His nameless, black and white cat. A classic domestic cat, only with a slightly atypically elongated body and a tail. He was so terribly paralyzed with terror that he didn't even notice he was squeezing and prying the arches of Bumper's white leather steering wheel with such force that he nearly broke it.

The torn cat was lying on the road some twenty, maybe twenty-five metres away from the car. Because of the deformations caused by the impact and because of just that distance, it was not very identifiable. It was also impossible to determine its colour.

Detective was walking with a plastic cup of disgustingly over-roasted and badly ground coffee with a strange taste in the zoo.

The city was breathing a peculiar atmosphere. For all that, it was a very atypical city. The atmosphere of futuristic suspension bridges, plate-glass skyscrapers and hipster container cafes was punctuated by shantytowns reminiscent of a patchwork of Brazilian slums, or European neoclassical shantytowns, or vast mediaeval walls. The city had everything a city could have. Indeed, this city was inspired by the whole Earth and its multiculture.

But the sky, the sky was truly unearthly. The sun was setting, and the soft twilight was turning into a juxtaposition of pinkish-red poetry in rays breaking through the clouds, spilling over the heads of all Earthlings like the scenery from a clichéd watercolour painting from the Romantic era.

Fluctuations of wet eyes in the lights of the unintense and soft illuminations of the folds of silken infinities of persistent stillness.

Detective was not in a very good mood. He hadn't eaten anything all day, and since he had finished his coffee with lots of milk and sugar two hours ago, the sharp drop in his glycemia was showing in his mental grumpiness. He tried to compensate with another coffee with lots of milk and sugar from the zoo, but it didn't help much. With his grey hair, white sweater, black pants, and pistol at his belt, he casually swayed, paced, and hobbled. It was Saturday and he wasn't on duty, but the gun at his belt always came in handy. And so did the nostalgia and intense sentiment at the sight of a gorgeous watercolour sky. And also the coffee in the plastic cup, which was moreover disgustingly over-roasted, badly ground and had a strange taste. No surprise.

"So impossible is a world that guesses at nothing-speaking words!"

Detective threw his plastic cup in the trash. He was enjoying the atmosphere of the moment on some kind of overpass, an unaesthetic beige concrete structure of something whose only function was to allow human beings to transport themselves from one place to another in an elevated position, overlooking a zoo, or maybe overlooking something else. He walked and even leaned against the railing, taking in the sky and the deliberately asymmetrically arranged walkways and greenery. He continued on, down the winding concrete staircase - impossibly beige and brutalist. Everything on the overpass was the same colour and the same texture. The overpass and its stairs were a sand sculpture made by architects playing children. Architects who must have had cigarettes in their mouths while doing their work and were grinning at how impossibly and uniformly beige the whole flyover would be.

It was on the stairs where Detective spotted a familiar man. A brown-haired, short-haired man in his forties. Carefully shaved, wearing a white shirt and black trousers. Slim build with good posture, with an extremely dreamy expression on his face.

Racker?

Dream shuddered at his own building structure.

Detective paused on the stairs in adrenaline paralysis.

The familiar man turned on him at that moment. It was Racker. They were staring eye to eye.

Racker's eyes lit up. He was as paralyzed as Detective, but he recovered from the paralysis fairly quickly. He reached into the holster at his belt and pulled out a pistol. Detective was so dazed by the coincidence that had just taken place that he was unable to react promptly. As soon as he reached for his pistol behind his belt, Racker already had the gun loaded and pointed directly at him. Racker's adrenaline paralysis was definitely not paralysis and was just plain delusion. Or maybe it was just an ephemera from which Racker's

fresh brain was able to recover dangerously quickly and transform it into an adrenaline attack reaction.

There were about three people on the stairs, but there were many more on the flyover. Maybe dozens. No one noticed the drawn gun, but as soon as the shot rang out, the three people on the stairs immediately reacted and ran away screaming. The people on the overpass became alarmed and turned to follow the source of the noise. However, there was no panic.

Racker fired first, but missed. The bullet flew somewhere in the space between Detective and the beige concrete pylon. Detective drew his gun, but before he fired, Racker fired a second time. This time it hit Detective squarely in the left hip joint, but despite the inconvenience of the wound, he registered no pain due to the adrenaline frenzy that had completely taken hold of his hormonal system. This time he managed to transform into attack mode as well. Well, this was the exact moment when the people on the flyover noticed the guns in the Detective's hand, as they were all facing his direction. It was then that a massive panic and shouting started. They all ran for the opposite concrete staircase in a rush of instinctive self-preservation.

Detective leaned one hand on the beige concrete railing, if one could even call it that. And he shot at Racker.

The bullet hit him squarely in the chest and narrowly missed his heart. Racker's legs buckled and he leaned against the wall with a yelp, but he was still standing. Detective fired again, but missed. The bullet buried itself in the beige wall just beside Racker's head. Racker fired too, but missed as well. The bullet from his gun again flew somewhere in the space between Detective and the beige concrete pylon. Racker fired, hitting Detective in the right shoulder, causing Detective to nearly drop his pistol to the ground. However, he managed to react by firing immediately. He fired three times, hitting the half-dead Racker once in the neck and once in the chest. One bullet ripped into the beige concrete wall. The dead Racker's body slid down the wall to the ground and rolled over onto its right side. Blood poured from the carotid artery, but it poured in a continuous stream, not at intervals, since the heart that once powered the blood no longer beat. Racker lay dead on the ground, a pool of blood pooling beneath him, but Detective was unable to see it as he slumped to the ground as well. Or, more accurately, slumped down on the stairs.

He still held his pistol in his right hand, the hand whose shoulder joint had been devastated by the gunshot. And this time he already felt the pain. An excruciating pain that made him writhe and shake on the stairs, at least to a degree that wouldn't cause him even more pain from the friction of his wounded knuckles.

He was all right. Fine in exactly the sense that he wasn't in life-threatening danger. Two gunshot wounds to the knuckles was a horrible and painful injury, but Racker was dead. And Detective will survive.

He writhed in pain, gritting and gnashing his teeth. He dropped the gun on the stairs, because he really couldn't tuck it behind his belt. It hurt like hell. Occasionally he would

throw his head up to the sky, the beautiful, watercolour sky of a painting from the Romantic era. And watched rivulets of his own blood slowly trickle down the stairs.

Waterfalls of life. Waterfalls of death. Waterfalls of beige concrete stairs.

And Tourist never woke up from his fantasy. Sitting in the bathtub, running hot water into his mouth, he died at about nine PM on September the 15th.

The reason for Tourist's death was very complex. The neighbour above him was drowning a pig in the bathtub, and the bathtub, together with the pig, overflowed and fell straight onto Tourist. This curious situation was also brought about by an equally curious coincidence. Tourist lived not in reinforced concrete but in a plasterboard tenement. The neighbour, who lived above him, periodically flooded his home because of a poorly sealing pipe. The cause of the leak was not obvious, but the fact was that over a few years of chronic waterlogging the structure of the plasterboard had weakened considerably. On the 15th of September, at approximately nine o'clock, a neighbour decided to drown a pig he kept in his flat in his own bathtub. This was a critical moment when the weakened plasterboard could not withstand the weight of the bath with the pig and gave way.

As mentioned earlier, Tourist didn't have time to wake up from his fantasy. He did not even notice the falling plasterboard, because even before the plaster hit the ground, the Tourist's body was crushed to a pulp by the falling heavy tub, which of course fell much faster than the plaster. Death was instantaneous. After all, a two-hundred-litre tub, filled to the brim, in which lies a one-hundred-and-twenty-three-kilogram pig, and which falls from a height of nearly three metres, is a very effective instrument of death.

Incidentally, the neighbour's pig survived the drowning attempt but did not survive the fall. The neighbour committed suicide by jumping out of the window about fifteen minutes after the incident. The television was left running in his apartment for several hours. A buzzing old television that played childish shows with titles like 'Show me your ass and I'll find out if for the next twenty thousand years you'll be suffering from cancer caused by exposure to being too close to a hybrid of a centipede and a mole, whose lungs have excessive radiation due to chronic smoking of radioactive cigarettes in crematoria" and similar silliness that entertains old tired alcoholics, sugar-philes, bread-philes, carpet-baggers and admirers of mouldy coffee after coming home from work.

# QUANTITATIVE HARVEST VII. and VIII.

## VII.

On February twenty-fifth, shortly before five PM, a man about one metre sixty centimetres tall in a modified synthetic body resembling something between a great anteater (*Myrmecophaga jubata*) and a bristle armadillo (*Chaetophractus villosus*) stopped at the staircase of the Lo-Videus Temple. He had a small portable counter in front of him, on which he displayed a hypodermic syringe and a couple of vials of some kind of red liquid. His left hand was resting on the small counter, and in his right hand he held a huge golden bell and waved it above his head.

"Buy cherry juice!" He yelled at the top of his lungs, his roar amplified by the molecular megaphone he had attached to his slack-jawed, or perhaps even completely toothless, jaws.

"Buy cherry juice and inject it into your veins! Inject cherry juice into your veins!" He yelled throatily, his eyes bulging as if he was going to die at any moment and this was the last and most important piece of information he wanted to convey to the outside world.

On February twenty-fifth at 5:03 PM, three cargo drones arrived near the Lo-Videus Temple in the Square of Crosses. These were small vehicles, light brown in colour, about five by two metres in size. They were parked so very incongruously that some onlookers in the vicinity had the impression that someone had deliberately scattered them in front of the temple so as to block the square's passage as efficiently as possible.

As soon as their powerful turbines fell silent, a molecular loudspeaker flew out of one of the vehicles and began to play a penetrating piece of music in the square, which was called by all its listeners "Bayaeria Ekgi Segawa", which means something like "deep-penetrating bustle", or even "deep-penetrating noise" in Inmaric.

A man about one metre sixty centimetres tall in a modified synthetic body, resembling something between a great anteater (*Myrmecophaga jubata*) and a bristle armadillo (*Chaetophractus villosus*), was startled by this unusual commotion. He quickly pocketed the syringes and a couple of vials of red liquid, folded up his portable counter, strapped it to his back like a backpack, and scurried away at lightning speed.

The back door of the drones opened. Mr. Haudena emerged from one of the vehicles with his pocket inhaler (fully loaded with dried crushed heads of the *Yeemen Eemen* bird), accompanied by two of his staff Cognicians holding shotguns in their hands. A total of eight other Kognicians emerged from the other drones, armed with knives, daggers, revolvers, assorted bayonets, axes, halberds, and sledgehammers with sharpened points.

A man about one metre sixty centimetres tall in a modified synthetic body, resembling something between a great anteater (*Myrmecophaga jubata*) and a bristle armadillo (*Chaetophractus villosus*), took one last look behind the parked drones in the square and screamed at the top of his lungs, his molecular megaphone set to what was probably the highest volume:

"Inject cherry juice into your veins! Stick it in your vein...," he cleared his throat, deactivated the megaphone, and ran even faster than before. His eyes were bulging in a rush of adrenaline, the intensity of the release worthy even of his current fear for his life. The straps carrying the counter nearly slipped off his shoulders as he ran fast.

None of the men who stepped out of the drones took any notice of him. Perhaps none of them even bothered to think about the reason for his actions. Haudena, meanwhile, merely smiled amusedly, took a drag from his inhaler, moved with a semi-danceable, albeit peculiarly slow and shuffling step between the tones of Bayaeria Ekgi Segawa, and, at the head of the throng of personal Cognicians, strode up the stone staircase directly into the temple.

An Ekesilian stepped out of the double doors, as the blaring song made him look outside at what was going on.

Haudena instinctively braked on the first step. It is even possible that, reading the Ekesilian's aggression from his displays of emotional facial expressions, he probably backed up a step.

One of the armed Cognicians automatically shot Ekesilian on the spot with his shotgun. The deafening shot spread with immense sonic impact across the entire open space of the Square of Crosses.

The burly bald man with massive circles under his eyes immediately slumped to the ground with his head split open.

Haudena was still standing on the first step, waiting for the entire ten-strong crowd of his personal Cognicians to pile up at the door. The man who had shot the Ekesilian held the door to the temple open until Haudena was the last one through it.

The gunman holding the door then pulled a dagger from his own breast pouch and plunged it into the neck of the dead body of Ekesilian. This seemed very comical to most of Haudena's men, since in this deformed state, Ekesilian's body no longer contained a head, but only a lower jaw, from under which now protruded the stabbed dagger.

Together with Haudena and his cronies, the molecular loudspeaker moved into the temple with Bayaeria Ekgi Segawa.

There were a total of five people in the main hall. The armed Cognicians decided to eliminate them all on an existential level without hesitation.

The Shaman stood at the very back of the room, and all his men were already well ahead of him, as a result of which he felt his own self-importance to be very significant, since at these moments he subconsciously referred to himself as "the antagonist of the altar" – the gilded statue of Lo-Videus – and he watched with great pleasure the whole destruction of the temple, laughing, dancing, twirling in place, and inhaling with delight the vapour of the dried crushed heads of the Yeemen Eemen bird.

The first to perish in the hall was the praying man in the rearmost pew. Fearing for his life, he jumped to the floor under the seat of the pew in front of him and covered his head with his palms. However, one of the armed Cognicians pulled him from there by his hair and cut his head open with a machete, also cutting off the halves of his palms with the fingers of both hands covering it. He then spat on his lifeless mutilated body.

Shortly thereafter, a light brown shiny wooden door opened, leading into a corridor that gave access to the temple's dining hall, the offices of the five Ekesilians, and also to the Ekesilian habitat. Eagerly, one Ekesilian, another bald and burly man with massive circles under his eyes, ran out of them. But he only managed to take three long strides, as two of the armed men instantly executed him with four shots from their revolvers, after which he immediately collapsed to the ground with dead weight – his face hitting the stone floor. The massive impact crushed his nose and jaw.

The three of Haudena's men proceeded through the door further down the hallway, into the offices of the other Ekesilians and into Ekesilius's habitat.

A loud panicked shout went up in the main hall at these moments. It was strange and hard to believe for Haudena and his fellow armed Cognicians – the people there, because of their delayed reaction, gave the impression that they had only now registered the emergent threat.

Seven of the men (not including the Shaman) who were in the room directly killed two of the hysterically screaming women by shooting them, one elderly man had his head cut off with an axe, and a third had both arms and one leg chopped off with machetes before his head was blown off.

Thus the only living souls in the hall were now down to seven men, along with Haudena, who began to walk among the bloodied, chopped and shot bodies. One of his armed Cognicians handed him a machete, and so with it the Shaman occasionally stabbed or slashed at a body - just for the pure pleasure of it. But his greatest pleasure undoubtedly came when he was able to kick triumphantly at the splintered remains of the head of an Ekesilian with a dagger stuck under his chin, whose body rested by the door. He realised that this was the same man who had told him he was forbidden to enter the temple on the morning of the same day.

After that mighty kick, he took one last hard pull from his inhaler, turned it off, and stashed it in the left pocket of his flowered coat. He then returned the machete to the man who had lent it to him.

At the same time, a second group of three armed Cognicians arrived at one of the offices, where they shot three Ekesilians at once. In addition, one of the Haudena's men used a machete to mutilate and dismember their bodies and scatter their remains around the room. Another of the men, in turn, smashed the double-hung window in the office with a severed Ekesilian's leg and then threw it through it. In addition, he threw its head against the wall (where it left a copious, greasy-blooded maul) and then smashed it on the floor with a sledgehammer.

The group proceeded to Ekesílius's habitat and found two female employees of the local culinary staff in his kitchen. One of them was shot in the chest with a detonating arrowhead and the other was shot in the head with a shotgun. Both were killed instantly.

The three armed Cognicians then made their way into Ekesilius's bedroom, where they found Lo-Videus himself hiding under the bed. From there, one of the men forcibly pulled him out by his hair and slammed him to the floor, after which he kicked him in the stomach with all his might. As the man was wearing heavy winter boots with a metal toe, the man-operation was accompanied by an audible acoustic blast.

Lo-Videus was on his knees in pain, begging for his life. Haudena's men took very deft advantage of this and tied his hands behind his back. One of them even drove his fist into Ekesilius' face, greatly amusing himself at the expression of his pain.

The Shaman walked around the main hall a few more times. He was enjoying the destruction that was currently taking place and inhaled the air, marked by the smell of blood, urine and feces. He noticed that when he breathed too deeply, he felt a severe stabbing pain in his intercostal muscles caused by lingering injuries from his fall down the temple staircase earlier that morning. He straightened his back, moved his shoulders and shoulder blades further back – roughly where they had been before his accident – and took another breath. This time it was pain-free, thanks to proper posture. He sighed contentedly, enjoying the sound of Bayaeria Ekgi Segawa still playing. He looked around the hall, and finally, with the rest of his seven personal Cognicians, he stepped through the corner light brown shiny wooden door and trickled into the bedroom of the Ekesilius's Habitat, where the tied up Lo-Videus Ekesilius himself was already waiting for him. In the corridor, Haudena took one last twirl and danced to the tones of Bayaeria Ekgi Segawa, and then turned the song off.

Not coincidentally, he turned it off at the exact moment he'd stepped into the bedroom. It was clear, then, that he wanted to enjoy the presence of its occupant in a specifically private atmosphere.

Suddenly all ten armed Cognicians, Haudena and Lo-Videus were in Ekesilius's bedroom. He was kneeling on the floor with a large swollen black eye and a bleeding lip.

"Aaaaaaaaaa" Lo-Videus let out an animalistic squeak as soon as he registered the Shaman's presence in the room, and then cleared his throat and spat soundly. His natural and characteristic courage motivated him to say something, but he didn't do so because he

was having great physical difficulty speaking. Every breath he took was painful, as he had broken at least three ribs and his own blood was bubbling in his lungs.

Haudena smiled. One of his men handed him a stabbing implement that resembled a roasting fork in appearance. With a tender physical touch, he examined its tip carefully and patted his flowered coat with it.

"Lo-Videus Ekesilius. Ekesilius of Trinchkeldt," the Shaman addressed him, thrusting his own hand with the forked weapon into Ekesilius's face, stabbing it with a great flick into his eye sockets, up to his collarbone.

Thus he gouged out both of his eyes.

Lo-Videus began to roar and snarl hysterically. Under the influence of the immense pain, he fell on his back, and due to the fact that both his hands were tied behind him, he automatically twisted both his wrists and broke the joints of some of his fingers. Finally, he began to convulse on the ground; he kicked his legs and shook his shoulders. He also banged the back of his head on the ground, and with each impact, fountains of deep red blood spurted from his eye sockets. For Haudena, his image evoked a fish that had been caught and was thrashing against the ground with itself after being carried onto dry land.

One of the Shaman's personal Cognicians handed him a shotgun. He loaded it and shot the blinded Ekesilius with it, first in the groin and then in the chest, whereupon he died instantly with a deep, gurgling, hoarse groan.

Lo-Videus's body was then placed on its knees again by Haudena's men, who cut off his head with a dagger. The Shaman then sliced chunks of tissue from the head, which he threw against the wall with a violent swish. The body was dragged by the Cognicians into the main hall of the temple, where some of them quartered it with machetes and smashed it with sledgehammers.

On February twenty-fifth at 11:30 PM, the *Immortalization* took place in the main hall of the Lo-Videus Temple, just as Haudena had proclaimed on February twenty-third at the *Penetration of Lusitania*.

She liked to leave that part out and it was no wonder. It was a section full of decadence, blood, sadism, masochism, sexual gadgets and reproductive organs. That sort of thing adults don't like to read about to young children. Violence is not frowned upon, but sex is generally taboo.

At about midnight, after stopping the Immortalization, Haudena went into Ekesilia's bedroom, where he found the Epizeuxis of the Holy Man. He looked up a chapter in it called "Orumvaarius O-375" and read the whole of it carefully.

This was its contents:

*Orumvaarius O-375*

*Certain people used to interpret the Legend of Orumvaarius among themselves in their spare time.*

*The Legend of Orumvaarius is about a man named Orumvaarius, and in particular about his pilgrimage to Mount Jomuun, which he wanted to get to because of his belief that when he got to Mount Jomuun, the feeling of being able to leave it would be the most referential feeling of his life.*

*Throughout his pilgrimage, Orumvaarius is constantly confronted by various customs officials and clerks who, through his services (mostly consisting of enduring homoerotic intercourse directly with them), grant him access to otherwise tolled geographic areas that are under massive bureaucratic control.*

*In chapter 24 of the legend, Orumvaarius got into a scuffle with a customs officer who was known to be nicknamed "Joseph Ce-Hitler" by the other pilgrims. Moreover, his customs house was the last building containing potential customs officers or officials who stood in the way of pilgrims going to Mount Jomuun. A condition of being able to pass through the customs house was, according to the customs officer himself, "taking a bite out of your ass and taking a bite out of the ass of a mouse." Orumvaarius was extremely put out by such entry criteria, as a result of which he got into a scuffle with the customs officer, fought with him, and even accidentally took out his eye as part of the fight. After a few long and exhausting nights on the run, however, Orumvaarius returned to the customs house, agreeing to the customs officer's terms - so he bit off his own buttocks, and also bit off the entire back half of the body of a still-living rodent that the one-eyed customs officer handed him. While he was wiping his mouth with his handkerchief from the spattered blood mixed with the contents of the mouse's intestines and waiting to see what would happen, the one-eyed customs officer, to his disappointment, pronounced a curse and summoned all the deities that have ever existed in all the universes to punish Orumvaarius:*

*"For an omnipotent, godless existence! May I have eternal freedom in this place, caused by the destruction of the life of Orumvaarius, this placeless organism, by bringing his body to a hundred metres above the surface of the Lake of Life, where his eyeball will be pierced by a telekinetically controlled sharpened turkey bone, killing him. Let his body then be ritually submerged beneath the surface of the lake, where it will be taken with gourmet relish by Rhodymënia, a mermaid with the head of Tutankhamun, whose appearance evokes the microscopic form of the Egyptian sphinx to many terrestrials. Let the nymphomaniac marine echinoderms crawl through his digestive system, and let his blood boil and fill with air bubbles! Instantly let that filth perish in eternal agonising mould, scab, and putrefaction – this planetary refuse of the interstellar garbage dumps! Let his flesh and his bones be indebted to nature and decompose in a fraction of a second. Let the dog-like beasts secrete the contents of their large intestines into his ruptured rumen and rib cage, and let all terrestrial species of stinging insects lay their eggs there. Let all those insects perish after laying their eggs and be eaten by other canines along with pieces of his putrid flesh!"*

*Orumvaarius's body, with the gluteus muscle bitten off, flew fifteen metres into the air, and he succumbed to an anxious panic. His bowels and blood vessels began to fill with air and increase in volume. His organs inflated, causing him to scream in pain. His stomach and intestines burst. His brain inflated so much that it shattered the cranial cavity with its pressure, completely devastating the*

*shape of Orumvaarius's head. The heart ruptured and poured its contents, along with the contents of the aorta, into the body. His individual cells and the spaces between them inflated. In the final stage of decomposition, all of his bodily fluids spurted and spurted out of his body like a fountain. The whole organism finally exploded, and some of its contents splattered the customs officer's face.*

*This brings the legend of Orumvaarius to an end.*

*(To this day, it has not been possible to ascertain what the Legend of Orumvaarius's theorem, or lesson, actually is. Nor has it been determined whether it has a theorem, or a lesson, at all.)*

Haudena stood silently for a moment in the middle of Ekesilius's bedroom, holding the Episeuxis of the Holy Man in his hands, analysing the meaning of the chapter he had read.

"Couldn't the cause of Orumvaarius's explosive death have been the fact that instead of biting off the mouse's ass, he bit off the entire back half of its body?" He monologuously asked himself this question.

The sleeping Dormanitrivanius had a very interesting dream on the evening of the twenty-fifth of February, to the morning of the twenty-sixth of February (while the Immortalization was taking place in the main hall of the temple of Lo-Videus).

He dreamt that he was physically a very small man, about one metre tall, and he was on a sandy shore. His short legs were then washed by the waves, and all around him were quanta of tourists, umbrellas, inflatables and deck chairs. Beyond the beach he could see huge hotel complexes, from which a great acoustic bustle resembling the mass cheering of children playing could be heard.

All of a sudden a large wave, about two metres high, swept over Dormanitrivanius. He tried to escape it, but it enveloped him and swallowed him whole. It splashed a few people sunbathing in the front row of deck chairs and took with it several rubber flip-flops, towels, inflatables and other equipment that unsuspecting tourists had left critically close to the water. Dormanitrivanius then managed to swim out and catch his breath at the last moment – feeling that if he had remained underwater even a second longer, he would have drowned.

When the water level dropped again, he managed to get to his feet again. He was knee-deep in water and let the waves wash over him, each one of which was already a bit bigger than the ones that had hit the shore before the arrival of the tidal wave that swept away the rubber flip-flops, towels, inflatables and other equipment that unsuspecting tourists had left critically close to the water. For some reason, however, he found it very fun and enjoyable to resist these waves. He learned to stand on the bottom like a chained man, and even though occasionally a bigger wave would cover his airway, his feet still didn't break contact with the bottom. And strangely, he also had no problem breathing underwater, but he preferred to retreat a little closer to shore just to be safe.

In a short while, he was the only one of all the people on the beach to spot another approaching wave, its size several times larger than any waves Dormanitrivanius could ever imagine. It was at least a hundred metres high and approaching the shore at breakneck speed.

He noticed that not a single tourist panicked, from which he deduced that no one else saw the wave but him.

By the time the wave had reached him and swept over him at full speed, it hadn't moved him either. He kept his feet planted firmly on the bottom and watched from nearly a hundred metres deep as the mass of water destroyed everything in its path. The wave swept away people, umbrellas, deck chairs and inflatables, continuing inland where it swallowed cars and devastated huge hotel complexes.

Dormanitrivanius took a deep breath underwater (it didn't bother him) and strode along the bottom towards deeper water; further away from the shore. This part of the dream was starting to become a little more abstract and harder for him to grasp. It was a classic dream environment in which he had trouble determining who he actually was, where he was, and which direction he was moving in.

He soon saw some architecturally unidentifiable underwater network of buildings in front of him. It looked very old-fashioned; it consisted mainly of various tangles of rusty pipes and tanks covered with a number of round windows with brass trim.

Through the vague transcendental abstractness of the dream, he was suddenly teleported inside the building. He was in a room resembling a tank, containing terrestrial air, breathable even to an ordinary mortal. Beneath the latticed floor of the tank's interior flowed a fine rust-coloured, iron-corroded, seawater. He noticed a mirror standing there side by side, about a metre wide and stretching in a circular pattern across the entire perimeter of the tank room, from one end of the rusty water surface to the other. He recognized his reflection in the mirror very well, but it didn't occur to him at the time that it was very different from his real appearance. Dormanitrivanius's reflected form consisted of his true visage, with his legs and arms covered by two pairs of wings. From the left nape of his human head protruded the static head of a lion, and from the right, in turn, the static head of a buffalo, or possibly the head of some other ruminating artiodactyl (which he, however, defined in his dream exclusively as a buffalo). Above his forehead towered a halo glowing with golden flame, with a jagged rim covered with a pair of hundreds of eyes.

Shortly after being charmed by his own appearance, Dormanitrivanius looked in front of him, where he spotted a gaudy blue couch on which lay (in his mind) an attractive-looking young woman. By some further vague and abstractly dreamlike teleportation, he was transported to the couch, where he and the woman began to kiss intensely and passionately out of nowhere, under the influence of a desire emanating from an indeterminate bodily source. For some reason, he not only felt a strong physical affection for her, but it even occurred to him that he had never felt such a strong and authentic romantic-sexual connection with anyone in his life. He and the woman began to speak to each other vaguely, and by this time they were halfway undressed and caressing each other.

Suddenly, another vague teleportation occurred in Dormanitrivanius's dream. This time he was kneeling straddled on the couch, putting his trousers down. He noticed that he had a single pair of tracked genitals between his legs and was surprised at the authenticity and perfection with which both his organs felt, realising that in reality he did not possess such a unique pair of genitals. He even felt the two penises in the same way that he felt his hands in reality – it was similar as if they were a natural part of his body.

The woman put both limbs in her mouth in a pleasurable manner. Dormanitrivanius's erection, paralleling his sexual arousal, instantly intensified several times over, and as a result he felt that he was going to ejaculate at any moment.

Before he could withdraw both of his genitals from the woman's mouth, another teleportation intermingling occurred in his dream. This time he ejaculated a gigantic load of male semen onto the collar of some sort of brown and grey turtleneck, in which the woman had her head completely wrapped up to the nape of her neck. With tremendous force, impossible in reality, he squirted about two or three litres of cum on her collar.

At that moment Dormanitrivanius awoke and immediately upon waking felt the euphoria caused by the orgasmic pleasure of the dream.

"Was this the transmission in space that Ymys was talking about?" He asked himself monologically. The rhetorical question resonated so intensely in his head that he didn't know if he had only asked it in his mind or if he had actually said it to himself.

It was strange that she was reading this particular one. Maybe it wasn't taboo because it was only a dream. Just another meta-story – just a fiction of some kind. A kind of fiction similar to what violence used to be.

## VIII.

At six o'clock and ten minutes on the morning of the twenty-seventh of February, Dormanitrivanius awoke in his house to a brief and intense noise, the source of which he could not specify. As soon as he opened his eyes, he automatically looked at his sensor, which showed the following data:

*February 27*
*06:10 AM*
*21.9823 °C*
*2,609.1099 m above sea level*

He stood up, straddling about the width of his own shoulders as was his morning habit, put both hands behind his head, and rolled his torso so that its plan formed a more than ninety-degree angle with the plan of his pelvis, stretching the trapezius and widest muscle of his back. He went into the kitchen, where he took a drink of water, and finally returned again to his bedroom, through the window of which he saw the Skoppeys' house,

upgraded by a huge hole in the roof. It occurred to him that it looked exactly the same as the Othekains' house had looked on February 19 – the cinderblock edges of the roof sagged inwards, so that it was obvious that the hole had been caused by something that had forced its way in from the outside.

Dormanitrivanius sighed deeply, paralleling his own bodily observation, which made him aware of the increased frequency of his heart under the influence of the adrenaline released. He holstered the revolver in his shin holster, gripped the shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition (which he had retrieved from the storage net above the futon) in his right hand, opened the door, and stepped outside.

Outside, he looked at his sensor again. It showed the following readings:

*February 27*
*06:12 AM*
*-10.2609 °C*
*2,609.1505 m above sea level*

He descended down the steps and scrambled at speed over the shallow; and, because of its material texture, crunching; snow. At the Skoppeys' house, he thoughtfully slowed his steps, grasped the shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition in both hands, and placed it before him perfectly horizontally, so that the opening of its barrel would be the first subject to pass through the door.

He spotted Phleema's body immediately in the lobby. A six-foot tall woman who was slightly overweight with thick red curly hair lay on her back in a pool of blood. Her entire left arm was completely missing from her wrist joint, and she had a huge hole gouged out of her throat with a jagged edge, filled in with blood oozing from her own carotid arteries. Her eyes were wide open; just like her mouth.

Dormanitrivanius felt like throwing up. Under the influence of mental confusion caused by physiological disgust, he leaned his shotgun against the wall – a few metres next to Phleema's mutilated corpse – because he was no longer able to hold it in his hands.

He continued with slow steps deeper into the interior of the house, passing a large hole in the roof through which a cold wind blew. A large smear of splattered blood was visible in the corridor. The blood still hadn't oxidised in it, so he guessed that the whole situation must have really happened only a short while ago – at some point around the time he had just woken up in his futon to that intense noise.

Dormanitrivanius moved to the bedroom and then to the children's room. He scanned both rooms with his eyes, but did not observe anything suspicious in them. At the same time, while perceiving the strong memories of his confrontation with the inhuman humanoid on the nineteenth of February, he wondered what could hypothetically have happened to the child of the Skoppeys, whom he knew to have a daughter of about four or five years of age. He also wondered if such a young person might already have been part of the Society of Adorers of the Forest Trumpet.

He then walked out of the children's room into the hallway and re-entered the last room of the house; the living room connected to the kitchen. There was another corpse waiting for him – Kothgool Skoppey, Phleema's husband. About two metres tall, a burly bald man with short hair around his mouth, he lay with broken ligaments and his head twisted in a similar pool of blood as Phleema's. However, this puddle seemed smaller in comparison to Phleema's, as it was soaked into a tiny furry carpet. A chunk of tissue had been gnawed out of Kothgool's left cheek, revealing his teeth, and his eyes were wide open and bloodshot. His entire arm was missing from his wrist joint as well, plus he had some sort of sharp metal object embedded in his back, presumably a fireplace poker.

About a metre next to the body lay a massive pile of sparse, pale and sour-smelling excrement.

As Dormanitrivanius inspected Kothgool's corpse, he noticed himself automatically focusing his eyes primarily on the exposed teeth and open, bloodshot eyes of the lifeless body. However, after hearing the intense inhuman screech, all thoughts of his own childlike curiosity that allowed him to revel in everything that was dead and disgusting were completely dropped.

Abruptly, he bolted from the direction of the living room and ran down the hallway, passing the hole in the roof, the shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition, and also Phleema's bloody body. He ran out the door, skipping almost the entire staircase in the process. With long, mechanised strides, he rounded the house and found the witch there; the source of that hideous screech. She was facing him, and would almost have been staring him in the eye if she hadn't been busy cooking soup on the fire in the metal cauldron.

Dormanitrivanius paused and focused his gaze intently on the inhuman humanoid, whose visage evoked the same creature he had killed on the nineteenth of February at the house of the Othekains. Beyond that, however, he carefully analysed the appearance of the soup – it was a milky green mass in which floated two severed human hands. Moreover, while the witch was stirring this liquid with a wooden stick, the naked, boiled body of a child, which undoubtedly belonged to the daughter of the Skoppeys, floated to the surface. It was badly disfigured and bloated – Dormanitrivanius could see very well how the muscles on the body were separating from the bones due to the effect of the boiling liquid.

Just then, the witch noticed Dormanitrivanius looking on. She hissed in disgust, flicked the wooden stick into the cauldron, and ran straight towards him. Dormanitrivanius was about to draw his revolver from its holster, but didn't have time. All he could manage was the dagger, which was tucked a little higher up on his shin.

The witchl bit into his left hand. Its sharp fangs immediately sliced through his tissue, crushing the tiny bones of his wrist, his ulna, and all five of his metacarpals. Dormanitrivanius plunged the dagger into her throat, but it made no difference.

His own ability to deal with the problem at hand was severely hampered by the excruciatingly intense pain emanating from his left arm. Still, he tried to react as soberly as he could, and so he pulled the dagger from the witch's throat, watching a massive gush of

black blood rush from the hole it had caused. He immediately stuck the dagger in the same place again and pulled it out again. This time even more blood gushed out.

The witch screamed loudly and instinctively let go of his hand. He noticed immediately after allowing her aggressive squeeze that she had his entire palm and fingers in her mouth, making it obvious that she had bitten his left hand off.

The absence of his hand, however, did not frighten him in any way, even though blood was pouring from his bare knuckle with disturbing intensity, staining all the surrounding snow in the abstract. Quickly, he drew a shotgun from a holster on his shin and shot the witch once in the head and twice in the body.

The headless, perforated corpse, which had been a living organism only seconds before, immediately slumped to the ground. Black blood gushed from the scruff of its neck, and the black and stinking remains of its organs spilled out of the huge set of two holes in its ribcage with a squelch.

As soon as the body rested with its entire surface on the ground, Dormanitrivanius sat down in the snow. He pulled some sort of regenerative substance from his breast pocket and rubbed it on the bleeding exposed tissue of his wrist joint. When the wound had completely healed and stopped bleeding, he considered lying completely down in the snow, but ultimately decided against it, as he remembered his shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition lying in the hallway of the Skoppey house.

With a deep sigh, he stood up and felt his head spinning violently at the act, due to the great loss of blood. Slipping his shotgun back into its holster on his shin, he shoved his buckler into his coat pocket and staggered into the house. There, trying to avoid resting his gaze on Phleema's body, he grasped the shotgun, fully loaded with explosive ammunition, in his single, right hand, with averted eyes, and made his way home.

Immediately after closing his front door, he lay down on his futon, staring intensely at the sphere of empty space that had contained his hand in the time before its absence.

On that day, the evening of February twenty-seventh, at 8:37 PM, Haudena stood in the Square of the Crosses in front of Lo-Videus's temple, savouring the taste of the Anaesthetic Fructose vapour, sucking it from his pocket inhaler. He gazed at the various ornaments of the temple, the waving branches of the surrounding trees, and most of all, the uncharacteristically deep blue sky covered with scattered cotton candy clouds and clearly visible constellations.

Finally, he turned the inhalation device off and tucked it into the left pocket of his flowered coat. He took a few deep breaths of fresh air, feeling a severe stabbing pain in his intercostal muscles caused by lingering injuries from his fall down the temple staircase two days ago. He straightened his back, moved his shoulders and shoulder blades further back – to roughly where they had been before his accident – and inhaled again. No pain this time; thanks to proper posture.

While he was contemplating leaving the square and returning inside the temple, he saw something in one of the bushes of the Square of the crosses which, by its appearance,

made him think it was a live goose. After prolonged observation, accompanied by physically approaching the potential live goose, he discovered that the live goose was not a live goose, but a larger-than-life-sized statue of a hen. In a way, he was relieved by this discovery (though he was not sure for what reason) – for he perceived the presence of a live goose in reality as a phenomenon he did not wish to occur.

Consequently, he took a few glances around the area and made his way to the temple. He ran up its staircase, on which he had inflicted multiple contusions two days before, and just as he was about to open the double wooden doors and enter the main hall, he saw a live goose to his right.

Whether it was possible or not, it was a live goose and nothing else.

It couldn't have been anything else, because nothing else could look like it. Only a live domestic goose, staring right into his eyes, standing on the last step of the temple forming an extended platform in front of his door.

# CHAPTER 9: Gardener and Murder

Fragrance was once telling a story about how she was visiting Gardener one day. It was not obvious for what reason, but briefly she was on a visit, right in his house. It was after his wife had died of cancer and was found dead in the bathroom at the hospital. So Gardener lived all alone, exposed to all the triggers of the aggressive outbursts of Canal Street. After his wife's death, however, something inside him broke, and the once constantly shouting, vulgar and aggressive Gardener suddenly tightened up. He was calmer, at least externally. And if we take into account how the whole situation with him actually turned out, we can safely say that the Gardener's inner world was even more turbulent then than in the period when he was characterised by his shrillness and aggression. But no one can see the inner processes. No one possesses insights into the movements of thoughts so long as they are muffled beneath the mask of the bodily shell. Gardener this period used to snort something now and then, even to make vulgar remarks, but always very quietly. There was less life in him, and all his vocal expressions were hidden behind a veil of melancholy.

On that day, Gardener might have settled Fragrance on the couch in his living room and offered her an inferior cup of coffee with beet sugar and milk, maybe even some tea or a cookie. The highlight of the program, however, was when Gardener began to bring all sorts of stabbing, slashing, and cutting instruments over to the living room table. He brought before her small and large knives, envelope-opening knives, vegetable knives, and meat-cutting knives. Machetes, sickles, and one bayonet. Like a cat carrying a dead mouse to the porch. He used to say at the time who all he would "slash, cut, slice, pierce, stab and chop." He spoke while doing so with an incredible amount of resignation and calm. A truly frightening and disproportionate monotone calm, given his usual temper and associated vocal delivery. Fragrance was then left in wordless shock, hoping that Gardener would move on to another subject, but the moment he brought the rifle into the living room and began to talk about "who he was going to shoot and who he was going to hit," she quickly finished the liquid she had poured in her porcelain cup – maybe tea, maybe coffee – and ran away.

These were all situations in which Fragrance's typical rhetorical question, "What are your feet doing swirling around you!?" came in very handy. It was a sort of less offensive substitute for the classic "What the fuck is wrong with you!?", or its less vulgar variant "Are you kidding me!?". In short, a phrase one would say exclusively in a situation where one considers the other person's actions to be extremely odd, inadequate, illogical, or dangerous.

Gardener, in short, has always had a bit of a psychopathic nature within him, whether he was an active noisy aggressor or a withdrawn melancholic. Many times he got angry over monstrous little things. Even the small, subtle moments of unfulfilled expectations - like the time his TV broke down, which he commented on with the rhetorical question, "What am I supposed to do without a TV, you dickhead!?" - have remained etched in the memory of those who weren't there. To those who only heard it from someone in the form of a quaint story. Or the time he bellowed "I'm going to smash that window with an axe!!!" in his kitchen, with unknown cause. Or that time when, as the knife flew through the window, a cry of "FUUUUUUUUUUUUCK!" was heard from his living room.

Of course, some of his expressions of complaints about reality were more complex than just screams and reflexive one-sentence curses, no doubt about it. Fragrance still recalled with amusement the occasion when Gardener had parked his car in his yard and complained to his wife in a sophisticated manner.

"I had a terrible desire to hit those kids. Fucking bitches, how they were getting onto my nerves, they're fat, their navels hanging over their belts."

In addition, Gardener also did a lot of strange activities that also verged on schizophrenia or some serious personality disorder. Fragrance's father said he once saw him eating chicken with scissors. The most serious thing, however, was probably when Gardener was talking to Fragrance's father about the weather, at which point his brain suddenly reverted to the past. Or at least to what he himself thought the past was.

"I threw a shoe in the shed, and there was such a noise and smell from the goat's cunt cock that I had to go take a shower right away."

And that was exactly what Gardener said at the time. A sentence so utterly nonsensical and surrealistically Dadaist that it radiates a palpable recession, but in the case of its nonsense it radiates at most schizophrenic delusions and a complete loss of contact with reality. But only maybe. Gardener was just plain weird. No one knew what was going on in his head.

# CHAPTER 10: Ejaculation

September the 15th was a very special day for Fanatic. Again. Badger was still present. Although he was not visible, his energy and his existential message could be felt in every circumstance, bending Fanatic's thinking. However, the delirium was also present. Emerging figures and metaphorical messages of audiovisual space-time shifts, appearing in spontaneous intervals of terror, horror, disgust and euphoria. Every possible state at once.

Delusion! And it is about delirium that Fanatic once wrote a short note in his *notebook!*

*Swirling spirals of swallows' nests and ship propellers. They cut through the seabed to extract all the land corpses. And the causes. And the consequences. They frighten not with their spikes but with their dented surfaces into which any unsuspecting visitor can slip. They are not like anal orifices that either let something in or shoot something out. They are traps and their job is to devour. Sensation. Gutturals and anal orifices.*

Delusions!

A total test of psychological strength and the ability to rationally interpret the symbols offered and symbolism as such. But Badger remained a pretended god. Badger is inside and Badger is also outside.

The devilish and strange half-baked or compassionate consequences from the remains of canine beauty parlours.

The dinosaur of the seven continents – he walks, talks and stomps! Jump out the window right onto the barbed wire!

Changing, transforming groupings of matter and meaning! Total chaos. Chaos of elements, chaos of parameters and chaos of quantities. Irresponsible handling of the products of the mind will always come back to haunt its bearer.

"Heavy xenophobic headphones, shoved up the asses of xylophones. Oh my goodness, who's going to fix this!!!???" an aggressive thought flitted through Fanatic's head, carrying with it a contraction of the triceps calf muscle.

The evening, however, was a little quieter. Fanatic left his delusions and ravings and managed to fall asleep in relative peace. He dreamed a very intense dream.

A dream like a dream. In the dream he found himself in a huge modern elevator. Perforated metal-with-shiny-surfaces and no padding. His other self was standing there with him. The same self he was, only dressed differently and with a slightly different hair style. It was very possessive and very confident. In fact, it resembled Fanatic only in appearance.

His self spoke to him in the elevator with a smile. He was saying something about how he was very happy to see Fanatic, as he was collecting versions of his self. And that he was glad for having found another version. He wants to have as many versions as possible. He wants to create children of his own. In the name of strange circumstances.

Somehow, Fanatic and his self found themselves in a strange bathroom at the time. The bathroom was very peculiar because it was a very narrow room, with one very long bathtub across the entire width of the room. And in that tub sat Fanatic's other self. It was naked, and Fanatic was naked too. It was quite obvious that the two of them wanted to have sex together. And it wasn't just Fanatic who wanted it. His other self asked him very openly, lying in the bathtub, whether he wanted to be the dominant or the submissive individual in sex – that is, someone who would be happy to insert his penis into another person's anus, or someone who would be happy to have another person's penis inserted into his anus – to which Fanatic replied very clearly that he wanted to be the dominant one. He didn't want to miss the opportunity to dominate himself. His other self sitting in the tub, however, responded in a flash that if Fanatic really wanted it, it could be the dominant one. And to this, Fanatic had already reacted very vaguely. He didn't say anything at all, but he was inwardly confused and felt that he didn't understand his other self, as well as his needs - he wasn't sure if he or his other self was telling the truth. He found the whole interaction strange, contextually incorrect and autistic, and no sex even happened in the end.

Fanatic suddenly found himself somewhere else entirely, in a large room with windows, overlooking a stately and pompous garden in which the servants were working. The other self was gone. Such leaps in space and time tend to be terrible in dreams; especially if they don't make something happen that one desires very much. It's like throwing a cod liver in someone's eye.

There was a maid in her fifties with red hair who worked in the garden. She could be heard swearing terribly at Fanatic, calling him vulgar combinations of adjectives and nouns, and criticising especially his conceit and narcissistic sense of superiority. However, she wasn't swearing at Fanatic, but at the other guy. She was swearing at the other self. Fanatic therefore opened the window and didn't hesitate to engage her in conversation. He is upstairs, she is in the garden. He said something about how he wasn't the man the maid thought he was, and talked about how he agreed with her and how much he understood her. They understood each other. They understood each other.

And that's when Fanatic saw Fragrance. It was a shock. Fragrance was working in the garden.

He was shouting at her and wanted to make small talk with her. And she was receptive. In a typical dreamlike leap in times and spaces, she made her way into the room with him.

He didn't hesitate for a second and immediately addressed her with an emotional outburst.

"I'm so happy to see you," Fanatic blurted out and began to cry.

"I'm so terribly happy to see you, because where I'm from, you're not anymore. You don't live. You've destroyed yourself," Fanatic finished, his voice shattering into a vibration of articulate unintelligibility towards the end. He wept, not heavily, but with deep sorrow. With grief as deep as grief can only be.

The next morning, September 16, Fanatic quickly awoke from his sleep, got up, and even managed to eat something. He was additionally fortunate enough to see a pigeon fly in the misty woods. And it was the pigeon that he once wrote a short note about in his notebook!

*Pigeon!*

*Pigeon is still someone else. A pigeon is a person who stays until other people leave. It is impossible to distinguish his uniqueness from other people, one can only see that he remains. A pigeon is inalienable,*

*The pigeon has many rocks, bushes and walls within him. Pigeon knows. The pigeon acts.*

*The pigeon eats bread and cries out loud.*

*"Eat your bread and cry aloud!" shouts the pigeon.*

*The pigeon is a god. And if anyone says that god is something else, he does not know the truth.*

*The pigeon is god and god is the pigeon.*

*Pigeon!*

September the 17th was a day when people in Graveyard were already violating the curfew en masse, and it was virtually impossible for the local police to legislate against them.

It was a time of seemingly great reform, yet everything remained exactly the same as during the whole air conditioning crisis. Yes, Mayor abolished the stamps and he abolished the House Passports. He lifted the curfew, and the police checks that at other times stood at every turn, at every end of every street, were also lifted. So-called "at your own risk" curfews were introduced, the importance of which was verbally emphasised by recordings played into megaphones emanating from the mounds of police cars driving freely through Graveyard. And people were coming out. They were coming out and they were the same people as before. Air Conditioning, or more accurately, the air conditioning crisis, had left in their minds only as much as isolation, loneliness and anger can leave in the human mind. And yet everything remained exactly the same as it had been throughout the entire air conditioning crisis. It's hard to specify what exactly it was, and maybe it wasn't even anything precise. It was just the atmosphere. And the measurers with rulers. An idea that has no material form, but which somehow, unstoppably, seeps into and affects the material form. An idea not human, not inhuman, not air-conditioning or post-air-conditioning. The idea of an atmosphere that makes a person feel a certain way, and in the process he doesn't even know himself why he feels that way. He doesn't understand it and either ignores it or searches in vain for the causes. And it is precisely the immaterial that seeps into matter.

People were meeting in the streets and chatting. They were trying to do that. Idle talk about other people, expressing opinions and judging qualities. Thinking about the implications of characters. People in rushes and clusters, surrounded by searing pain. People waiting in solitude for other people to have idle chats with them about other people, expressing opinions and judging traits. Loudly bleating, mewling, laughing and spitting out chunks of saliva and food in the same vulgar way they spit out their words. Idle talk of utter

stupidity, shouted aloud. A disgusting form of primitive life, noisy and highly visible, from which everyone who is not a cattle has a need to move away.

People whose larders are full of jars of pickles and whose mouths are full of words about pickles and their quantities.

The financial valuation that destroys all conundrums. People! They brandish excuses like the owner of a Siberian halal restaurant with his belt.

Their smoky curtains, fluttering in the wind at the open window like the genitals of a ninety-year-old man, standing and clinging to all possible and impossible orange-coloured rods in a rickety public transport vehicle from the eighties.

The hideous shadows of the shadows of their thoughts and untended ideas. The nooks and crannies of the flats of heartless bastards who mistake their friends for waiters and ask them "What can you offer me?".

And the toxic matter called "food" that these people suck into themselves. Guts and their apoptosis programmed by the brain, which is like the gluten in bread and beer. Bread and beer, the fuel of these people's character. Plus the morning influx of sugar heaps. And why not the lunch, afternoon and evening ones too? And why not also something old and oxidised, which takes away energy and brings disgust, dullness, grumpiness and loathing into minds? For that is the fuel of men, and men are the fuel of loathing.

And if anyone complains about health problems, that's what Mr. Doctor from the health commercials is for. High cholesterol, sugar, or blood pressure? Lots of this and not enough of that, high this and low that. That's where the famous redemptive phrase comes in, "Take this much of this and that much of that a day. With or without a meal." Doctors are not interested in brains, beers and breads, morning, noon, afternoon and evening heaps of sugars. And neither do the oxidised gunk, the toxicities of human behaviour, or the three-dimensionality of health and its complexities. The doctor doesn't heal, he doesn't have time for it. The doctor is a machine that is taught to prescribe a learned cure for a learned problem. And nothing else. No treatment. The doctor from the health commercials is just a machine whose job is to give people the impression of a solution. Shifting responsibilities, yet staying in the same shit. A samsara of shit. Substitution therapy of shit with shit.

People don't have time for healing either. They don't have the time or the inclination, because they're gorging themselves on shit that robs them of time and inclination. Something that takes away energy and puts disgust, dullness, grumpiness and loathing into minds? For that is the fuel of men, and men are the fuel of loathing.

And human dwellings. Human houses. Spaces through which they burrow their bodies. Through which they, as they say, "move". Spaces that reflect the objects that pass through them. Atmospheres and energies, broken sidewalks and crumbling buildings. The smell of linoleum and the stench of old treads. A seemingly new Chinese restaurant in which one cannot conceal one's delight at the smell of wood and aromatic sage scented sticks, but immediately after finding a hidden secret door in the corridor between the toilet and the kitchen and opening it to discover the mystery it holds – disgusting pipes, water metres, and crumbling panelling of unknown substance – one is overwhelmed by a rush of aggressive

stench and disgust at the whole and its superficiality and atypicality as such. The question "Why?" is imposed, to which the garrulous waiter may reply pointedly, peering out of the doorless frame, with the counter-question "Why not?".

Curtains and blinds with dust that has already absorbed different layers of different densities, colours, consistencies and odours. Dust blinds are already geomorphological units, with their geological history and cultural heritage. There has long been more dust on the blinds than there are blinds, but human language is still maladaptive and antediluvian. It does not allow itself to respond dynamically to changes in the environment, as people keep saying "I'm going to go pull the blinds" instead of "going to pull the dust".

The cupboards also have proper layers of dust on them, the shelves in the pantries bearing jars of pickles, pickles that are to food what mother-in-law's tongues are to vegetation. From time to time, someone dusts, eats the pickles and drinks the liquids from them, while watching TV and having bread and beer. But only the most concentrated of them, the most prominent and singular, wipe the dust with bread and boil the pickles in beer. This is the one true discipline of the simultaneous dance between space and the life within it!

If something is too sour, sugar is added, and if something is too sweet, vinegar is added. And this is true everywhere, both internally and externally. Both macroscopically and microscopically. Prenatal considerations born of the synergy of the bottom of the cucumber and beer glass into which the dust slowly sinks.

Overfed dogs and overfed children, enclosed in their tight little enclosures. In the enclosures of grown-up people who are so very short-sighted that they can only see the bottom of a bottle or the end of their unfinished work, which they noisily adore with sizzling and loud laughter, with the bottle and the energy-sapping oxidised food, inside their enclosure. Children and dogs learn in a new way, by picking out the movements of adults from their enclosures. And questions like "what's wrong?" or "how are you feeling?" are, in their case at most, outdated phrases that are replaced by the command phrase "Here you go!", at least for the sake of seeming to increase the efficiency of the performance of the enclosure.

The older offspring of enclosure victims, slightly less plump and hiding behind dark hats, coats, diagnoses, and toxic and addictive anti-diagnosis medications prescribed by the doctor from the health commercials, make their way through the enclosures, past the dilapidated buildings and broken sidewalks, occasionally accepting the garbage that someone offers to lure them into their enclosure.

Oh, the enclosures! Enclosures are everywhere! They all smell different, but very similar!

Terrifying institutions, centres of decay and decomposition of all living and non-living things, they imprison everyone, regardless of age. Old and young alike, they are obliged to suffer on mouldy beds destroying lungs and the will to live, and on rotten chairs destroying backs and natural curiosity. They are enclosures in their most demonic form and the question "Why?" seems at most futile and foolish with them, since demonic enclosures

are always and everywhere. "Why the broken buildings? Why broken sidewalks? Why boiled pickles? Why the loaves of bread? Why the beers? Why dusty blinds? Why people and their enrichment of pain?"

Multiple rows of buzzing lamps emitting alabaster light, under which notebooks, computers and mobile phones slouch. Bending cables and intermittent signals of inadequate strategies, in the sparks of branching wraps of duct tape and uselessly large holes in the walls.

The same alabaster glows in the screens behind couches, display cases, or the screens we hold in our hands. Advertisements for toothbrushes and fast food that catch the attention of any onlooker only as a dead Israelite on a piece of wood can catch the attention of a die-hard Christian, or as a naked ninety-year-old pensioner hoeing a turnip can catch the attention of thousands of laughing gulls who want to feast on the worms living off his harvest.

Majestic balconies with views of everything around, everything that one can only look at through dream glasses without a decent dose of cynical humour, and through their apparent transparency, which makes the torture of living beings remarkably innocently interesting. The revision of obscenity is a little easier to practise from elevated positions, but one must have a particularly thick stomach for it. And that can be challenging, unless the stomach is in dreams. Unless it is not in dreams and is active on balconies.

"What do I do!?" asks the man with painfully high lifted eyebrows, who answers his own question by throwing a hammer into a meat grinder.

The attempt to kick the ball is completely useless but so powerful that not only the ball flies, but with a big and deep "Aahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh" the whole leg, torn from the hip joint, flies straight out.

Buses full of excrement and urine. Full of empty bottles and empty souls staring at the galls of spongy growth between the seats of the vehicle, reeking with the stench of sourness and decay. A stench that burns holes into every living thing. And a stench that forces everything alive to leave, until it has become accustomed to the stench and learned to be leaky.

Roads crossing buildings and buildings crossing roads. A tangle of constructed emulsions of coexisting chaos, in which the question "Why?" is forced upon one, yet no talkative waiter in a Chinese restaurant peeking out of a doorless frame answers with the counter-question "Why not?".

People, sufferers of gravity! Chained and bound in the shackles of the Earth. Imprisoned on the surface of limited resources and creations.

And human environments and creations! Created under the influence of Earth's shackles and their powerful grip. Created under the influence of the desperate and hopeless cry of "what else is left!?" and deprived of the divine "why not?".

Shortly before noon on September the 16th, Train Driver was speeding in his yellow and brown car in the direction of his house. Or, more precisely, from his former home,

which, in the name of all his sanity, he had left to Matilda, whom he had called names like "bitch", "obese cunt" and "tranny" as he drove away. He gave her all his firearms. A scratched black Arsenic and also a massive eighteen-inch nickel-plated Xenon.

Everything was Matilda's.

An affectionate gigolo and sensible crab humanoid who boils himself alive in a pot and delights in popping boiled corn into his mouth with his claw.

Train Driver raked his black moustache with his left hand and again gripped the steering wheel of the yellow and brown car with both limbs with an aggressive, vulgar force. As always, he was wearing his favourite white and grey shirt with vertical stripes and his favourite brown pants with a heavy metal belt. At that moment, he was recalling an accident that had happened to him two years ago. Namely, one day he stood up too quickly after a caffeine spike in his body and a related sharp drop in blood pressure, and subsequently lost consciousness. He hit his seventh cervical vertebra hard and kept regaining consciousness, seized by intense pain and spatio-temporal disorientation. He was confusing internal and external stimuli, and his sanity was being toyed with by an impulsive neocortex. He could see and hear his mother screaming at him and scolding him for rolling on the floor. It was a moment of excruciating agony, but it passed after a few seconds, leaving behind a painful internal wound that lasted for months. Nothing unusual. However, the interesting context of this incident was that his intimate friend, Philharmonist, shared a similar experience with him. He talked about passing out in the bathtub one day while getting to his feet after a hot shower and masturbating. He lost consciousness for a much longer period of time than Train Driver did during his post-caffeine accident. He was hit in the head with a shower faucet at the time, and during his shattered mind's pilgrimage out of reality, he "saw" some sort of primordial civilization of beings that were not humanoid. They were strange non-terrestrial creatures that were evolutionarily adapted to be able to hide in their chest cavity much like turtles can hide in their shell. They were able to put their head and upper and lower limbs in there. They had multiple sharp growths on their legs and calves and on their foreheads to protect their exposed parts that stuck out from the shelter of their rib cage. They had developed such protection from the predators that plagued their entire civilization. Where these creatures lived, predators were everywhere. However, these creatures were highly intelligent and appeared to be more advanced than humans; at least in terms of tool-making abilities. And beyond that, Philharmonist saw not only the civilization of these creatures, but the world they lived in. A strange and diverse world that he couldn't describe and couldn't even understand its laws, which seemed too different compared to the laws of Earth. Train Driver recalled the Philharmonist's deeply felt words at the time: "I looked at it with some strange appetite for I don't know what. For some food, drink, nourishment? I looked around and tried to find out what it was, but I couldn't. Unidentifiable objects of various shapes, forms and movement variations in a strange world of structures unknown to me. A very strange experience..."

Train Driver's car was entering a neighbourhood called Passes. He had just passed the city office building. A building that Train Driver remembered very well. A brown and red

building with lots of windows and faded canvas aprons acting as awnings. In it, a few years ago, he had witnessed a memorable interaction with a man who called himself "Bicyclist the Second" or something like that. He couldn't remember the exact name. He was some sort of darker-skinned guy in an unbuttoned shirt who looked Hispanic or something. But the main thing was, he must have talked to him for over two hours at the city office that day, until the little man realised that Train Driver had been trying to get to the Alien Police the whole time, and had only been asking for the location of that particular department building and the direction to take. The gentleman probably did not understand human language, and Train Driver, in spite of his choleric nature, bore the whole situation with immense patience, but was carried away by his black moustache and massive sideburns, which he bravely tore off in anger. The little Hispanic man then paraded him through the entire office, as if he deliberately wanted to drive him into as many times and spaces as he could reach at the moment. He led him through all sorts of smelly musty corridors, offices, bathrooms and toilets, kitchens, rest rooms, laundry rooms and dining rooms. Laundry rooms and laundry rooms. Dining rooms and dining rooms. Canteens that smelled of something that smelled like overcooked socks and laundry rooms in which staff no doubt cooked tea and pasta. The highlight of it all, though, was being taken by a little Hispanic man to some obscure restaurant that was definitely not a diner, since it didn't smell like overcooked socks. It was filled entirely with Hispanic employees, conversing loudly and quietly about various things and ecstatically inhaling cigarette smoke. The room was dark, black and brown, filled with cigarette haze and an atmosphere of the tiresome aural contents of human mouths. A room on whose tables stood, outside the ashen ashtrays, not pepper shakers and salt shakers but red plastic bowls full of mouldy stale pistachios. Mouldy stale pistachios that smelled exactly like the cupboards in which they had been left. And the pistachios were eaten by pensioners! That was the biggest shock! The room was filled exclusively with two ages! Pensioners over the age of sixty and children under the age of ten. The pensioners were munching pistachios. And the children, the future clerks and employees of the obscure restaurant, were the only ones smoking cigarettes.

And they do so with a relish that even film-noir actresses playing proud rich women who despise the person who will undoubtedly become their life partner after the climax of the predictable storyline don't smoke them.

Children and their cigarettes. Cancer in, cancer out. Cancer in, cancer out, cancer in.

Passes were a nice neighbourhood, though. Nice, of course, in proportion to the depression of the graveyard dystopia and in proportion to the resurfacing memories of Hispanic men. There was a lot of greenery in it.

Indeed, Train Driver had just passed a tiny little park, about thirty yards wide and a hundred yards long, with grasses and a dozen or so smaller trees. Two streets separated the little park, and from one to the other one could see very well.

And as he watched the little park, he also noticed that about a block away a sort of white car was parked in the middle of the road – a very luxurious and fashionable white car, with a huge hood and massive fenders.

What's more, there was blood on one of the fenders! You couldn't see it very well, but there was a good smear of blood and a guy in shorts and a flowered shirt, probably the driver of the car, was looking at it. Some kind of familiar guy.

Train Driver felt his yellow and brown car over-jump, and his heart over-jumped with it. The inattention of his chauffeur spirit caused him to forget to turn the curve and the car ran up the curb at about hundred kilometres per hour. Unfortunately, just less than two feet beyond the curb was already the wall of an apartment building.

There was a rumbling noise of deforming material, the crumpling of a massive mass hitting another mass. The hood of the car rolled up like folded paper. Train Driver, a man who never strapped himself behind the wheel, flew out of his seat at the moment of the massive stop. His flying body scalped the interior of the roof, broke several fingers, punched through the windshield, and then broke and twisted his ankles against the steering wheel and dashboard. The car's rear end bounced in inertia and in the sake of the law of conservation of energy. Meanwhile, as the car's rear end plummeted to the ground again, it slammed the Train Driver's half-dead body headfirst into the wall of the apartment building.

The head split open in a juicy spaghetti-like splatter on all sides. And whatever didn't end up on the wall, in the air, on the pavement, and on the hood of the car was pushed inside the Train Driver's lifeless body by the impact. It was primarily the lower jaw and the remnants of the olfactory bone.

Train driver was dead. A motionless body on the wreckage of what had once been his vehicle. A deformed hood and a punctured windshield. Broken arms and a grotesquely twisted torso. The bloody mess of a human head, spilling down both sides of the hood.

On the evening of September the 2nd, Tourist was reading the newspaper.

*Air Conditioning had killed 177 more people! Eighteen Graveyard dwellers died of starvation, forty-seven from dehydration, and one hundred and twelve died as a result of mental illness. Air Conditioning kills!*

Garbage cans and garbage bags being killed with hammers and axes. They open their mouths, drooling and screaming, leaning on wooden beams and wooden parquet floors polished by their predecessors. No electricity in the dimension of flying faces and feathered saints that would otherwise power the meadows and locomotives that interpenetrate each other and form moisture-proof barriers. The deep angel of the religious post will rot in the festering gutter of a swelling wound! The depth of the eyes! Depth of eyes that will recede from the mind!

He sat down in a chair covered with a shaggy red blanket and took a sip of old instant coffee doused with commercial milk, one teaspoon of sunflower oil, and sprinkled with seven teaspoons of beet sugar.

# CHAPTER 11: Gardener and the Machete

One day Gardener ended up in the psychiatric ward at Graveyard. This happened after he walked into a seedy pub on the nameless outskirts of Graveyard with a machete and threatened to kill everyone.

After about six months, Gardener returned from psychiatry. His arrival at his home, however, was an extremely subtle and quiet event. No one knew his exact date. Gardener was silent, completely silent. And he only went out occasionally.

One day, the residents of Canal Street found, either in their mailboxes or in plastic bags hanging on their fences, home-grown eggs and home-grown carrots. It was said that it was brought by Gardener and that the carrots came from his garden and the eggs came from his chickens. It was said that he had cut himself. Or slashed, cut, pierced, sliced, or shot. Or shot.

No one has ever seen him since.

Gardener was always a very interesting man indeed.

Gardener was indeed a very interesting man. He was a former teacher or something like that. He constantly wore ragged beige clothes smeared with dirt, and his image of a dishevelled man was complemented brilliantly by his baldness and the long straggly hair on the sides of his head. He had a huge sharp nose, wore glasses, and was always carefully shaved. He probably didn't grow much facial hair either. His character was a work of art that only a few people from the outskirts could appreciate in the artist's lifetime.

And all of that remained after the artist's passing. An indelible and lasting relationship that has transcended the Graveyard's outskirts by orders of magnitude and spread in minds, memories, and stories among people who never saw Gardener in person. *The Gardener* became a concept, a culture and an idea. A quoted abstraction and atmosphere that had no material form, but which somehow seeped into and influenced the material form in an unstoppable way.

# QUANTITATIVE HARVEST IX. and X.

## IX.

On the third of March Dormanitrivanius was walking through the streets of Trinchkeldt. On the bare stump of his left arm he wore an artificial hand made of carbon fibre and innervated by synthetic motoneurons linked to his peripheral nervous system. He felt a very unique itching sensation at the point of connection between the synthetic hand and his living body, and in connection with it he also perceived an unusually low level of energy within his organism, which at that time was manifested mainly by the chaotic nature of his own thoughts, as well as by the physical trembling that accompanied his every movement - all of which was the result of the intense stress that the loss of the hand had caused in him. Moreover, as part of his general weakness, the dagger and the revolver holstered on his shin were causing him considerable limitations when walking.

Any snow had melted by this time and there was a strong dampness in the air. There was a light and not very cold wind blowing, which swirled turbulently in the narrow streets of Trinchkeldt. All the current meteorological phenomena were a clear memento that the climatic winter in these geographical places was already over.

In one of the alleys near the Square of the Crosses, Dormanitrivanius found a damp but relatively well-preserved wooden bench, located next to the back door of the municipal butcher's shop. He sat down on it, rested his elbows on the backrest, took a deep breath and let it out. He looked at his digital sensor. It showed the following readings:

*March 3*
*12:03 PM*
*09.0259 °C*
*2 526.5065 m above sea level*

As various forms of stress were weighing on him at these times, he was aware of the importance of reducing the dominance of his own sympathetic nervous system, and as a result he tried to bring his mind into a meditative state. The breathing exercise he was practising at that time in that place helped him to do this –

he would breathe in, wait a few seconds, then breathe out and wait a few seconds again. During the cyclic breathing, he would occasionally close his eyes and try to take in the sounds around him and the sensations of his own body, but the intense stress always forced him to open his eyes after a while and identify with his own chaotic thoughts.

Eventually, he just sat idly with his legs outstretched, watching the deep blue sky and thinking about standing up at any moment as the moisture from the bench slowly seeped into his clothes.

All of a sudden, however, he heard a very familiar voice coming at him from a distance. It sounded like the voice of the Shaman, Mr. Haudena. Clearly he decided to turn towards the originator of that voice, but before doing so he wanted to check his sensor. It was showing the following readings:

*March 3*
*12:37 PM*
*09.0360 °C*
*2 526.5499 m above sea level*

As soon as he looked towards the horizon of the trinchkeldt alley – where the source of the voice was – he found that he had deduced correctly. It was the Shaman, the honourable Mr. Haudena, accompanied, moreover, by two members of his personal Cognicium. He moved with his characteristically slow, shuffling stride, and wore his flowered coat, striped shirt, and a massive, branching headband called a "Keteliini," which Shamans traditionally wore to protect their ears from the cold. The headband regulated his light brown hair into the shape of a hedgehog's bristles.

Dormanitrivanius stood immediately, both feet planted firmly on the ground with a straddle the width of his own shoulders, both arms (or rather an arm and a half) extended beside him, never taking his eyes from Haudena. He waved him off from a distance of about fifty metres and, along with his Cognicians, increased his stride at the same time to shorten the time it would take until the confrontation with Dormanitrivanius.

Dormanitrivanius noticed at that moment the flying shreds of three papers swirling in the wind in the space of the alley between him and the three other men. He watched their entropic wandering through space (which helped to reduce his

internal stress overall) until the wind blew them all over the rooftops of the surrounding houses.

"What a beautiful day!" Haudena exclaimed, already standing about five meters away from Dormanitrivanius. Along with his personal Cognicians, he turned his shoulders along the street so that he had the wall of the municipal butchers' shop at his back. It was a strategic move he had thought out in advance – the Shaman was aware that if he and his men faced Dormantrivanius not across the width of the street, but along its length, it might look offensive.

"Magnificent," he retorted, "truly magnificent."

Haudena laughed loudly and shrugged his shoulders in an unnaturally choreographed affectation, unbuttoning his flowered coat. He was actually very pleased that Dormanitrivanius had responded to his efforts at verbal communication. His personal Cognicians, however, barely smiled; and even then, probably only so as not to appear bored in front of the Shaman; and stood a few feet from Haudena's left flank to give him some space to move around. All the while, they kept their eyes fixed on the two communicating men, and spent their own energy only in observing and assessing the current situation.

"Well, then, if you don't tell me anything else, I'll take the liberty of continuing," Haudena lowered his voice and rolled his eyes as he did so. "You alright, man?"

"Oh, of course," Dormanitrivanius replied, noting that a certain amount of absent energy had returned to him during his conversation with Haudena – though he didn't know how it was possible.

"Yes? Well, that's amazing! And I mean that really sincerely. Being okay is sometimes harder than most of us think," he replied, his eyes bugging out even more.

"Sorry, you don't have to worry about me at all. Feel free to continue on your way," Dormanitrivanius jumped in, trying to get rid of the Shaman's presence. Suddenly, he was registering that he was beginning to feel slightly uncomfortable while conversing with him.

"Oh, but of course I'll go, I don't want to cause you any distress," Haudena promptly responded, "I'm sorry to have ambushed you like this. But I didn't have time, I want to fill you in on something else. Only then will I work myself off." He took a deep breath and let it out.

Dormanitrivanius snapped to attention and began to take deep, regular breaths as well.

"You know," the Shaman began, "do you think you can withstand the selection pressure that is around you?"

"I have no idea," Dormanitrivanius replied after a pause of about three seconds, during which he stared intently into the man's eyes in deep thought, trying to read some emotion in them. All he could discern in them, however, was something akin to childlike curiosity or bias – a feeling that was very familiar to him. "I guess I don't really understand what you mean. Try to elaborate," he added.

"Of course," Haudena responded. "I'm talking about humans, who to me are like geese – waterfowl, evolutionarily adapted and evolving to an aquatic environment. But you are like a goose with water-repelling legs. If you knew what's under the water, maybe you'd stop avoiding it."

Dormanitrivanius thought again for a moment; taking his eyes away from the Shaman for a second or so and looking at the Cognicians standing to his left, who were watching the discussion motionlessly; and then he responded:

"And what do you think is under the water?"

This part of the Quantitative Harvest could be very tiring. The dramatic, unnatural, and almost overly Shakespearean dialogue between the two people made little sense to him, though there may have been some essential symbolism in it. Maybe it was just that her voice was already too hoarse and lullaby-like by this part of the book.

He remembered very well, though, how it had all culminated.

Dormanitrivanius looked around him spectacularly. Beside him, at the street, at the Shaman, at the members of his personal Cognicium, and also at the garish blue sky.

"Do something," Haudena continued, "within your physical and intellectual abilities. Believe me, it will make me and you very happy. Do some great deed that will free your mind. Indeed, I have the feeling that you are constantly bogged down in the search for results. Such resistance must be depressing you..."

Dormanitrivanius took a deep breath and looked up at the garish blue sky again. He pondered for a considerable moment exactly how to reply, but after some time he was absolutely certain of the future content of his own words.

"You're right, resistance does make me depressed."

"Free your mind!" Haudena immediately responded, suddenly seeing something in Dormanitrivanius' place that made him think, by its appearance, that Dormanitrivanius was not Dormanitrivanius, but a deck chair and parasol. After prolonged observation, accompanied by a subtle physical approach to the potential deck chair and parasol, he discovered that the deck chair and parasol was not a deck chair and parasol, but Dormanitrivanius. Somehow he was relieved after such a discovery – for he perceived the unjustified phenomenon of the deck chair in reality as a phenomenon whose occurrence he did not wish to see.

Dormanitrivanius, instead of Shaman, saw in those moments the same deck chair with a parasol that Shaman had seen in Dormanitrivanius's place. The unwarranted phenomenon of the deck chair with the parasol, however, was not just a phenomenon he did not wish to occur – it was even a phenomenon whose occurrence he felt so threatened by that he immediately crouched down and drew his revolver from the holster on his shin, which he pointed at the deck chair with the parasol. He soon realised, however, that the deck chair with the parasol was not a deck chair with a parasol, but a Shaman. At the same time, he also noticed Haudena's terrified expression (caused by the registration of a revolver aimed directly at him), which represented no more than a purely animalistic fear for his own life.

His personal Cognicians were equally terrified, and in an attempt to pull away from Dormanitrivanius's reach they instinctively backed to the side, scraping their backs against the wall of the butcher's shop.

Dormanitrivanius decided that at this stage of the situation, it would be wiser to fire his gun than to have to slide his revolver back into its holster on his shin and explain why he had taken it out of there in the first place. He kept the gun pointed at the Shaman for about five seconds and then pulled the trigger.

The sonic boom bounced loudly off the walls of the building-isolated narrow alley and could be heard for miles. A set of buckshot entered Haudena's right abdominal cavity, shredding his diaphragm, liver, stomach, gallbladder, duodenum, right lung lobe, and crushing three of his ribs. The ballistic shock forced the Shaman

backwards in such a way that it looked as if he had been thrown backwards by some unseen force, but his hardy body somehow stood up to it and was still on its feet. All his limbs were trembling, and his face wore continually the same intensely animal, terrified expression. The Cognicians, meanwhile, stood motionless, their backs against the wall, watching the situation.

Dormanitrivanius was still aiming, his hand shaking under the acute stress.

Haudena clutched at the wound on his bleeding flank. His wound was so massively devastating that blood flowed even through his tightly pressed fingers, staining his striped shirt and even the sleeve of his flowered coat red. Raising an eyebrow, he opened his mouth in a vain attempt to say something, but just cleared his throat and spurted droplets of blood, which he sprinkled on the Dormanitrivanus as well.

"There," he managed to get the words out, in addition to a trickle, or rather a proper torrent of blood spilling from his mouth and running down his chin. His voice trembled and so did his entire body, his skin visibly losing its natural colour.

Dormanitrivanius fired again – twice in quick succession. The first shot struck Haudena in the neck, severing the right clavicle of his head, the carotid artery, and crushing a chunk of his lower jaw. A mass of blood and flesh sprayed onto the butcher's shop wall, leaving a red blur. The second shot penetrated his ribcage just as he was falling dead weight to the ground, for he was no longer alive. The ballistic shock from the final set of buckshot penetrating his system devastated most of his ribs, crushed seven vertebrae, and shattered both lobes of his lungs, including his heart muscle. His body hit the wall of the butcher's shop, and the impact additionally sliced the flesh on the back of his head with a loud crack. Then the whole, dead Haudena slid helplessly down the wall, leaving a thick, flesh-and-blood smear on it.

Dormanitrivanius lowered his shotgun and looked at the two members of the Shaman's personal Cognicium. He thought about killing them before they could kill him, but they had no such plans – both of them merely opened their mouths in shock and tried to back out of the area in an inconspicuous manner, one of them stumbling awkwardly and falling to the ground. The other started to run away, and a second later the first joined him as soon as he lifted himself off the ground. They looked behind them a couple of times during their flight to check if Dormanitrivanius happened to be chasing them. A moment later, however, they were lost in sight, and

he slipped his revolver back into his shin holster. He reflected that even if the two had tried to kill him, he wouldn't have shot them, since there were far more armed Cognicians and killing two of them would automatically be pointless. So for a moment he just stood dumbly by the corpse of the Shaman, tracing its contours; especially the huge set of two holes in its chest and the large cut on its neck. The fleshy lump had its legs splayed out on all sides, one hand resting on its crotch and the other unnaturally twisted beside it, the back of its hand on the ground. A pool of blood was forming beneath the body, seeping into the flowered coat. The Shaman's face no longer contained any smirk or even animal terror – it was, in short, obvious that he was dead.

He looked at his sensor. It showed the following readings:

*March 3*
*12:49 PM*
*10.9650 °C*
*2 536.4985 m above sea level*

Dormanitrivanius then crouched down again, drew his revolver from its holster on his shin, and went inside the building through the back door of the butchers' shop, where he killed Lafyrreng Remaen, the village butcher, with three shots, right at the counter.

*(One had the right, according to Inmarian cultural custom, to kill the village butcher whenever he killed the village Shaman.)*

After searching several drawers and cabinets of the butcher's shop, he found a ritual cup and a portable calabash filled with the drink Eterusairiu in one of them, located near the cash register. He poured about a hundred millilitres of the drink into the cup, took a sip, and smiled euphorically with an acoustically intense sigh. He flung the butcher's drinking accessories at his bloody corpse, then settled himself directly on the floor into a Turkish sitting position.

After about ten minutes, he began to feel a slight fluttering in his stomach and the back of his neck; the first signs of the effects of the drink. Later, a feeling of extreme bitterness came into his consciousness, which made him lie down on the floor and fall asleep.

On March 4, at seven o'clock and thirty-fifth minute, Dormanitrivanius saw in his dream conditioned by bitterness something which he associated with the term "future". A future whose fundamental quantity could not be identified visually or in any other way, but which in Dormanitrivanius's consciousness was automatically associated exclusively with the quantity of future time, depicted in the form of alternating patterns that looked like successive frames of a film.

The film depicted a variety of flourishing nature – lotus flowers, slow flowing rivers with wide beds, deep green grasslands, ferns, mountains, gurgling streams, frogs and also dinosaurs munching on all kinds of vegetation. Eventually, all the flora and fauna in the vision passed away, the alternating frames transforming into a single, solid, static image that conveyed the image of a relaxing Dormanitrivanius sitting on the gaudy green grass, around which rafflesias bloomed and all sorts of higher spore-bearing, or parasitic, cryptic seed plants grew in bloom. This scene was finally interrupted by a huge blue bolt of lightning that pierced Dormanitrivanius's skull and killed him.

It was not very clear from the dream's visual cues that the lightning had killed him, but contextually it was conceptually understandable in terms of meaning. His body lay on the grass, grew grey, and eventually decomposed and merged with the garish green grass – becoming its fertiliser. After his organismic decomposition, a new Dormanitrivanius's body suddenly popped out of the ground, giving a much more alive and active impression than the previous one. It was an unnatural deep orange, his once-brown hair turning white and his lips glowing reddish. This 'new body' even smiled widely, and it was also possible that it had slightly larger eyes compared to the 'old' one.

It stood on both feet, plucked a rafflesia from the ground, which came to life, grew limbs, and began to do some kind of dance with it that was very difficult to classify. During the dance, an intensely humming, yet very harmonious music could be heard. The sky above the dancing scene created colourful combinations of turquoise blue, white and green triangles that changed positions and varied in grain between each other. Soon Dormanitrivanius's new body let go of the rafflesia, it jerkily returned to its original place and took root again.

After this audiovisual spectacle, Dormanitrivanius suddenly awoke. How else but to a feeling of bitterness. He immediately sat up and then jumped to his feet, as if a few electric shocks had been thrown into him by the awakening from sleep.

On his way home he stopped at the house of Tamiga, the Egg Woman from whom he had borrowed the *Epizeuxis of the Holy Man*, and immediately upon returning to his abode he drenched the book with an unknown concentrated combustible and set it on fire. He waited until it had burned completely to the ground, and he loaded all the ashes resulting from it into his own portable calabash, the contents of which he then emptied around his house.

## X.

Dormanitrivanius drank clean water as soon as he awoke, put on his brown coat, slipped his revolver into the holster on his shin, packed a half-pound bar of twenty-four-carat gold into his knapsack, and picked up a shotgun fully loaded with explosive ammunition, which he had carefully prepared in the storage net over his futon. He opened the front door to the porch. His sensor then showed the following readings:

*March 4*
*08:23 AM*
*11.5191 °C*
*2,609.9098 m above sea level*

Outside, the sky was a cloudy grey-blue colour and a gusty cold wind was blowing, drastically lowering the local sensible temperature. Dormanitrivanius walked down the stairs, glanced behind his half-timbered house, and with a quick stride made his way towards the Square of Crosses. On the one hand, though, he was still registering an unusually low level of energy in his system; manifested mainly by the chaotic nature of his own thoughts, as well as the physical tremors that accompanied his every movement; but on the other hand, his overall stress was markedly less than it had been in recent days.

The movement, in spite of its difficulty, pleased him very much, and as a consequence he duly enjoyed his whole walk.

There were about a dozen people standing by Lo-Videus's temple. They gave a very tired and exhausted impression, and only two of them were talking to each other – and then only in a low whisper. But one person stood nearby, and was explicitly different in his speech and appearance compared to the others. He was a man about one metre sixty centimetres tall in a modified synthetic body resembling something between a great anteater (*Myrmecophaga jubata*) and a bristle armadillo (*Chaetophractus villosus*) stopped at the staircase of the Lo-Videus Temple. He had a small portable counter in front of him, on which he displayed a hypodermic syringe and a couple of vials of some kind of red liquid. His left hand was resting on the small counter, and in his right hand he held a huge golden bell and waved it above his head.

"Buy cherry juice!" He yelled at the top of his lungs, his roar amplified by the molecular megaphone he had attached to his slack-jawed, or perhaps even completely toothless, jaws.

"Buy cherry juice and inject it into your veins! Inject cherry juice into your veins!" He yelled throatily, his eyes bulging as if he was going to die at any moment and this was the last and most important piece of information he wanted to convey to the outside world.

Dormanitrivanius walked about thirty metres past him and also past the other people landing. His gaze rested subconsciously on the sky, the surrounding trees and the temple, but occasionally he would stray into the faces of the people he was watching with rapt attention.

You could tell from her voice that the end was near. The incessantly hoarse voice suddenly softened, as if it wanted to non-verbally indicate to the reader that he or she should pay attention.

In this section, Ikwaren, a corrupt smuggler, transported the Dormanitrivanius by an unknown means of transport (probably a drone) from the Square of Crosses to the clearing of Eferrys. Dormanitrivanius's destination was the Myzothep clearing, but as Ikwaren said, "I don't land on that clearing".

Dormanitrivanius paid Ikwaren with a gold bar, and Ikwaren described Myzothep as follows:

"Your target is the clearing of Myzothep," Ikwaren started the moment Dormanitrivanius' ears pricked up due to the sudden change in pressure." That one is twenty kilometres south of Trinchkeldt. On the clearing is a lake resembling a

miniature island where the witch Kathleema dwells in her cabin. I have never dared to go anywhere near her, nor even to kill her. The closest I have come to her dwelling is within a hundred metres. And if you think it is necessary, kill her."

He even added an interesting piece of advice to Dormanitrivanius:

"When you get there," Ikwaren began, "be careful. The things you will see, hear, and feel will be of a very different nature from what you are used to. You will be dealing with a tremendously ancient and powerful entity, and it is quite possible that you will not be able to believe what you will experience there. But whatever happens, do not succumb to the thoughts that will suggest that you are in a dream. It will not be so. Everything that will be there will be as real as the two of us, even if it doesn't seem that way to you. The dream is still..."

And so began the part of the book that made the reader's sleepy brain start to pay attention out of nowhere. After all, no matter how boring the book and its presentation, no one should let a climax slip by.

Dormanitrivanius has presumably landed, and Ikwaren's strange appearance has been described, as well as the curious change in temperature that occurred between the Square of Crosses and the clearing of Eferrys.

He looked at his digital sensor on his skin. It was showing the following readings:

*March 4*
*10:13 AM*
*-26.9844 °C*
*1,905.4111 m above sea level*

He took a deep breath and placed the shotgun, fully loaded with explosive ammunition, on the ground so that he could put a glove on his only hand; for the chill was immensely sensationally heightened by the strong cold gusting wind. After a few seconds, though, he immediately took it off, as he realised that he needed to see the sensor on his hand, as it was his only indicator of direction. From the basic function of showing temperature, time, date and altitude, he switched it to an alternate display of cardinal directions. Overall, he has arranged himself so that he can step northward indefinitely. He was aware that he had about a three-kilometre trek through deep snow through the woods in minus twenty-six degrees.

Once he reached the edge of Eferrys, thick darkness engulfed him. Not that there was any extreme amount of light in the clearing, but the forest was much denser in these parts than around Trinchkeldt, and for that reason there was an

incomparably greater amount of darkness. Moreover, Dormanitrivanius found the forest to be sort of visually shapeless and abstract. Probably under the influence of the reduced visibility caused by the darkness, he acquired the feeling that the contours of the trees in these places formed certain patterns, trembled and morphed. If he had not been guided by the compass, he would certainly have been lost.

Another remarkable thing he noticed at the time was that the surrounding trees were in no way alive. Everything there was either mouldy or rotten; it was beyond belief that the whole growth, with its mould, rottenness, and dustiness, was so very tall, and that it stood at all. The tree vegetation in particular evoked a symbolic idea for him, which he interpreted in verbal form as "trees in the form of living corpses." Moreover, what was also very interesting to him about these places was that during his arduous walk he had not met a single animal and had not heard a single sound.

Dormanitrivanius was getting tired after some time. He kept heading north; the route he was supposed to take; but there was no visible change in space. He found it difficult to walk in the deep and thick snow, and as he could not see where he was ascending through it, many a time he stumbled with his foot against some root or stone which he tripped over.

Slowly he stopped noticing the stereotypical dark forest environment, and just as he was wondering if he was even going in the right direction, or if he would ever get there, he noticed that the light was suddenly getting dimmer and dimmer. What's more, it was coming from the north.

A sort of mixed emotion ran through Dormanitrivanius in the form of relief and fear for his own life at the same time. He realised that this had to be Myzothep - and on it had to be the lake on which the miniature island existed on which Kathleema had her cabin.

He immediately put on a glove on his only hand, gripped his shotgun tightly in it, fully loaded with explosive ammunition, and increased his pace (by the time he reached Myzothep, he had stumbled and fallen three more times – there were rocks and branches under a thick cover of snow at every step).

Once he was out of the dense forest, the first thing that struck him was the sheer vastness of Myzothep. Despite having seen a vast number of different clearings in his lifetime as a resident of a traditional Inmarian village, he had never seen one that even approached Myzothep in size. It was a wide space of about ten square kilometres, ninety-nine percent filled with water from the lake. The lake was frozen through-and-through, and at its approximate geographical centre stood a small island, about a thousand square metres in area. And on it stood a cabin, the outline

of which he couldn't quite make out yet, yet he felt a kind of revulsion at the idea of its visuals.

The atmosphere of the whole place was very gloomy and dark, in spite of its over-lighting. In those moments it occurred to him that "if anyone claims that there is no such thing as "black light", he should come and see Myzothep at any cost, which will clearly challenge his claim".

Dormanitrivanius took a breath, waited a few seconds, then exhaled and waited a few seconds again. He was using a method of a breathing exercise of some sort that was reducing his stress level. He had his shotgun gripped tightly in his hands, and with determination, he started to step onto the frozen surface of the water, heading towards Kathleema's cabin.

The lake was as firm as any he had walked on that winter. He deduced that the layer of ice must have been several feet thick.

He wondered for a moment how he could possibly know that Kathleema would be in the cabin. He also couldn't quite predict what the situation would be when he shot the door with the shotgun; because that was exactly what he had planned. However, he stopped letting his thoughts consume him (due to their characteristic chaotic nature caused by stress) and continued on his way. He burrowed into the snow, and this time he didn't stumble, because the only thing waiting for his feet was a horizontal layer of ice beneath him – no roots, rocks, or smelly tree branches.

The snowfall was slowly dying down.

The closer Dormanitrivanius got to the island, the more he began to doubt whether he should set foot on its surface. Nevertheless, he found the proper resolve within himself and dared to step from the frozen surface onto solid ground.

The relief of the place was deformed into the shape of a steeply sloping hill, about five metres high. Around its perimeter stood a fence made of various branches, among which stood skulls, rib cages, complete children's skeletons, or even whole limbs and body parts with the remains of flesh still attached. Because of the frost, they were perfectly preserved and did not decompose. But they did not look alive or fresh in any way – to Dormanitrivanius, the sight of the human flesh reminded him of frozen goose flesh, stiffened and deformed by the cold and mass storage. As a result of his own presence in such a daunting and hostile environment, it was clearly a great challenge for him to enter the closed circle of the fence.

He gripped his shotgun, fully loaded with explosive ammunition, even tighter in his hands. Slowly, he began to raise its barrel towards him, allowing it to cut through the air molecules before any living part of his body did. It was in these moments that he noticed that it was no longer snowing at all, and he was struck by

the strange way in which he himself sensed the surrounding space, as every single sensation seemed somehow vaguely muted, as if subject to the influence of some external suppressant. It occurred to him that this might be a manifestation of the effect Ikwaren had spoken to him about – he remembered specifically his advice that he should "not be subject to thoughts that will suggest that he is in a dream".

There was a small cabin at the very top of the hill. Its presence could be seen even from the shores of the frozen lake, thanks to the fact that from its single chimney on the roof rose a clearly visible and strangely thick white smoke, which in some places turned yellowish. From a closer look, it was already apparent that it was an aesthetically disgusting and brutalist building made of a variety of natural materials; mainly moss, dirt, cloth and branches. Bones and limbs were also peppered in the walls of the hut, but unlike the fence, not only bones and limbs of human origin could be seen here, but also bones and limbs of animal origin. Various rotting birds, rabbits, rats, and also a few foxes and wolves were hung by their legs around the perimeter of the building's crooked sloping roof.

Even though it was nearly minus thirty outside, Kathleema's building still reeked of a rotten, sour smell, reminiscent of something between the stench of faeces and the stench of rotting flesh.

Dormanitrivanius stood at the front door of the hut, which he had at first expected to be almost immovable due to the frost to which the material of which it was made was subject. But to his amazement they looked rotten rather than frozen. He raised the shotgun, fully loaded with explosive ammunition, perpendicularly in front of him and pointed it at them. As he did so, he thought intensely about what all could potentially be going on behind them, inside the structure. He tried to listen for any identifiable sound, or to find any definite outline through the cracks in the imperfectly sealed mud-and-timber-and-bone masonry. He could detect nothing, however.

His hands shook gently. He took a deep breath, waited a few seconds, then exhaled and waited a few seconds again. Then he fired.

The acoustic blast spread with tremendous speed and deafening intensity in the open expanse of the clearing. The smelly and rotten door flew open in a second in a shower of splinters flying inward and stirring all around. It was clearly visible at this point how the door's structure bore no material sign of succumbing to the effects of the frost.

Dormanitrivanius focused his watchful eyes on the interior of the hut, accessible to his sense of sight this time, but still not visible.

He shot once more blankly inside.

He was unable to focus on the effects of the second deafening shot this time, however, as he heard a familiar gurgling grating from the interior of the cabin, which grew hysterically louder in intensity.

Just then, in the receding pool of splinters and with more and more daylight filtering in, it was clearly deducible to him that Kathleema was standing at the far end of the room.

It was probably the most terrifying confrontation with a living entity Dormanitrivanius had ever had in his life. She was a woman at least two metres tall, naked, physically old, with long sparse hair and sagging skin. Her breasts reached almost to her knees.

Outside her, he also noticed that around the edges of the single room that made up the interior of the cabin, hung cauldrons about the height of Kathleema's head, in which a liquid was simmering-probably the same milky-green glob of human flesh that he had first come into contact with on February twenty-seventh.

The witch was clutching at a wound in her side caused by a shotgun blast, and spittle ran down her sharp fangs set in her crooked, asymmetrical jaws. Her eyes were completely black, and among all the elements of her entire body, they were clearly the most terrifying. As he watched and assessed the situation intently, never ceasing to take aim at the inhuman humanoid, he also felt another unusual sensation that Ikwaren had probably warned him about - with every second that he stood in the doorway looking at Kathleema, he felt as if his body was physically wasting away in some strange way, and as a result, he was losing his usual connection with it, which manifested itself in a strong dissociation and depersonalization. It had a similar progression, like a kind of inflammation; he felt an intense, stabbing pain coursing through his entire body, destroying his nerve connections and making it difficult for him to control his striated muscles with his own will. He felt as if he was in a dream in which he was trying with all his might to escape from danger as quickly as possible, but under no circumstances was he able to move his own body, and so he merely stood still.

It seemed to him that it took an eternity before he finally had enough strength in him to pull the trigger again.

He hardly noticed the sound of the gunshot at all anymore. That's how much his sense of hearing had been dulled.

This time it hit her just below the neck. The witch almost fell to the ground as a result of the ballistic shock, her head hitting the hanging cauldron, which overbalanced and spilled about two and a half litres of boiling milky green liquid directly on her head. She struggled to somehow stay on her feet, grunting and screaming horribly due to the extremely intense pain caused by her multiple, bleeding injuries.

In fits of aggression, she pounded her fists on all sorts of pieces of wood, which were scattered and strewn around the cauldrons.

Dormanitrivanius's "inflammatory" feeling intensified in direct correlation with the intensification of Kathleema's aggressive and hysterical expressions. He began to feel fear for his own life as a result. His body was already so weak that he could barely stand on his feet, and just as he was trying with all his remaining strength to pull the trigger to finish her off, he suddenly noticed that something was flying towards him.

At that speed he couldn't identify exactly what it might have been. But it looked similar, like someone was throwing some sort of net at him, or like he was being attacked by some snowflakes packed into multiple singularities. As soon as it stopped flying as it hit him, he felt a sharp pain emanating from his chest and spreading with numbness throughout his body. It didn't dampen his 'inflammation' or his fear, it was just another element that he felt, and unlike his fear and 'inflammation', he also found it a little more authentic.

In painful agony, he pulled the trigger more or less by accident.

This time he heard the shot. He didn't even know how, but he perceived it very clearly and without auditory muffling; as authentically as he perceived his own pain.

It struck Kathleema in the chest. With a loud, deep, gurgling crack, she fell on her back, punching through the wall of the cabin and tumbling out into the exterior.

Dormanitrivanius cleared his throat, tasting the distinctive metallic taste of blood on his tongue. He lowered his head, tensing his right and left sides of his head,

stiff with 'inflammation' and fear, and looked down at his body below. There were several objects protruding from a single spot on his chest - pieces of wood, pieces of handcuffs, and sharp knives. These were dug in pretty deep, as it was clearly visible that only the unusually large handles were sticking out of some of the knives in his body.

Unusually large, so that there would be something to grasp even a given, unusually sized, cutting/pointing tool by.

He was still holding himself up, his feeling of both 'inflammation' and fear fading and being replaced by a pure and authentic pain shooting from his chest. Blood flowed from his mouth. The shotgun had almost slipped from his hands, but he was still able to catch it with the only non-synthetic one he had. He inhaled, but not too deeply, because outside of the immense pain he was feeling, with each inhale and exhale something inside him whistled heavily and droplets of blood sprayed from his nostrils. In his massively injured, exhausted and dying body, he gathered his remaining strength, turned around and moved away from the blasted front door. A thought of the word "telekinesis" subconsciously ran through his head.

He walked around the cabin. His footsteps in the snow were extremely tiring and painful, so he leaned on his shotgun loaded with explosive ammunition.

It was still not snowing.

Dormanitrivanius noticed the shot Kathleema struggling to get to her feet behind the cabin. She was face down, kneeling on the ground, supporting herself with her arms, blood dripping from her jagged mouth and wheezing and hissing as she breathed, much like him. She didn't even notice he was standing behind her at the time.

On the verge of an organic collapse, he raised his only crutch, a shotgun loaded with explosive ammunition, with his right hand and propped its barrel with his left, a synthetic one. Despite his entire body shaking and vibrating in agony, he was still able to point the weapon directly at the witch's head.

And fire.

The huge mass of the contents of her head exploded into a mush of deep red liquid, a slimy heap of bone, flesh, and fatty cerebral tissue, thick steam rising from it in the freezing cold.

He fired two more shots into her body, which exposed her insides. These spilled out into the snow and began to melt it. Kathleema was thus definitely no longer a living organism, but an abstract puddle of separate parts of her own body.

Dormanitrivanius trotted around her body and stepped at a snail's pace from the little island onto the frozen surface of the lake, supporting himself with his shotgun. He could feel how each step became more difficult and painful, and how with each breath some fluid in his lungs, probably blood, splashed more and more. With each exhalation, he expelled larger amounts of the familiar red liquid along with smaller volumes of air.

Practising a breathing exercise was no longer an option for him; now he had to breathe quickly, short and without pauses in order to keep his currently decrepit body alive for as long as possible.

When he was about ten metres from the shore, he was unable to go any further, so he just fell idly to his knees. He pulled a dagger from the holster on his shin, grasped it in his synthetic left hand, and began to use it to cut off his right arm. First, he completely sliced through all the tissue around the circumference of his wrist from the back of his hand to the palm of his hand, and then with massive stabs of the dagger's tip into his wrist bones, he separated his hand from the rest of his own upper arm. From this separated mass he cut off his thumb – this anatomical operation was much easier for him (in contrast to the separation of the whole hand) because it did not require the removal of such a large piece of the body and because that piece of the body was no longer connected to his nervous system, so that the blow to it did not hurt him in any way.

He took his thumb in the fingers of his single, synthetic hand, put it in his mouth, and ate it whole.

After consuming his own thumb, he finally collapsed belly down to the ground. The protruding buckets of knives, guts and handcuffs dug deeper into his body. He lay on his right cheek, and with his final exhalation he coughed up about twenty millilitres of blood at once, the thought of his friend Ymys, whom he had helped end his own life two years ago by knocking him out of a tree and onto the frozen surface of the water at one of the Inmarian lakes, subconsciously running through his mind.

In connection with Ymys, Dormanitrivanius's very last thought was the idea of the phrase "transmission in space".

It was twelve o'clock and twelve minutes.

There was a strong wind in the clearing of Myzothep, and the trees were bending towards the ground. Around 1 PM it also began to warm up gently, and by about 3 PM the local temperatures were already reaching plus values.

The Dormanitrivanius's sensor did not show any readings because it no longer had any power source.

Over time, his corpse released faecal matter, which formed three chicks that immediately began eating the surrounding snow after their emergence.

## Addendum to Quantitative Harvest

She never read this part because she probably thought it wasn't important. However, in his opinion, the Addendum to Quantitative Harvest was the most important part of the whole book.

"Egg Woman," as Fanatic called his grandmother, had, in short, omitted this short compendium of words altogether. At least, that's how he remembered it. But who knows. Maybe it was just a false memory.

Beyond the Square of Crosses, near the Temple of Lo-Videus, there was a cemetery, hidden in the bowels of the local forest.

Two of the freshest graves lie side by side there. One of them bore the body of the Shaman, Mr. Haudena, and the other one bore the body of Dormanitrivanius the Fifth. Between them is a wooden sign in the shape of an arrow with the Inmar inscription "Tonaaria no otok gaa de utta 3-nikki 3-gueeth de tzugush", which translates as something like "The one beside shot this one here, on the 3rd of March this year".

On the tombstone of Dormanitrivania the Fifth, Tamiga, the Egg Woman, had the inscription "Eeetmar Groooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooosund" engraved. No

one has yet figured out what this inscription means, and no one has even managed to decode what language it is in.Nor does anyone know why it actually contains such a huge number of "o" letters.

Mr. Haudena was exhumed by his fans at five o'clock and sixteen minutes on the evening of the third of December, and due to the considerable degree of decomposition of his body, he was also synthetically regenerated.

Haudena officially returned to his position as Shaman of Trinchkeldt two weeks later, and that same day killed a total of twenty-seven people, whose murder he called "explicit compensation for having missed so much during his own absence."

The Shaman also made a public statement on stage in the Square of Crosses that he would like to organise a second *Penetration of Lusitania*, at which he plans to execute a man about one metre sixty centimetres tall in a modified synthetic body resembling something between a great anteater (*Myrmecophaga jubata*) and a bristle armadillo (*Chaetophractus villosus*), who regularly showed up on the streets of Trinchkeldt with his little portable counter, on which he displayed a hypodermic syringe and a couple of vials of some sort of red liquid, while yelling at the top of his lungs into a molecular megaphone; attached to his slack-jawed, or perhaps even completely toothless jaws; encouraging people to buy what he called "cherry juice" and then inject it into their veins. However, this modified human has been permanently missing since Dormanitrivanius's death in Trinchkeldt, and the Shaman has therefore publicly promised a reward of a half-kilogram-worth of twenty-four-carat gold bars to whoever brings that modified human alive to the *Penetration of Lusitania*.

# CHAPTER 12: Badger

On September the 13th, Fanatic was a little more tired than usual. He felt faint, he felt some strange trembling within him, and he felt his throat beginning to ache. Or not. His throat was burning. Pain is a very different sensation than burning. A throat hurts when it's being crushed, or when it's being struck. But not when there's a disease crawling on a man. And yes, there was certainly a disease crawling on Fanatic then. He was one hundred percent sure of it. His throat was burning like mad.

Nasty flu in the forests. They're all the harder to bear when the humidity is around.

Moisture, perhaps, is the parameter that characterises throat-burning as much as stones in the throat characterise swollen lymph nodes during mononucleosis. Humidity, and especially humidity combined with cold, is the synergistic exciter of all internal discomfort, perhaps even more annoying than the blazing sun. One can at least escape from the blazing sun by moving into the shade or cooling oneself in water, but there is nothing a poor man can do about the omnipresence of cold dampness. It is the final disease, for which the only remedy is waiting. Just as waiting is the only cure for a mononucleosis patient afflicted with several weeks of forties. Nothing really helps in such cases, and especially not if one is helpless and alone.

But in the evening, at about six o'clock, something unexpected happened in the woods. Another figure was present in the wide basal space there. Not Mrs. Birdface or Mr. Brush Cutter, but something quite different. Something that was in space, but it was clearly out of time. Something that didn't correspond to spacetime as a whole, and something that had an opposite quantum rotation. And that something presented itself as "Badger". For all intents and purposes, it was a real created being, rather than just fantasy and delusion.

Badger was different from everything that was real and unreal in the forests. He was hard to describe, but he was part man, part animal, and part something else. But he was neither man nor beast. And he barely existed. But he was undoubtedly present and visible. In space, out of time.

Badger. He had a form. He was smelly and fat, there was nothing appealing about him, but he had a certain charm of his own. The charm of a thing inhuman and unanimal. It had a transformation in it that only decaying human bodies, black holes, or ritual wombs have.

And, the transformation! The transformation! Badger was changing form! He was present as a creature, stinking and fat, inhuman and unanimal, but his energy, which was so terribly irresistible, could scale in every possible way. That was what made the Badger so special. That made him so terribly different from anything Fanatic had seen, not just in the forests, but in his life as a whole. Badger knew how to bend between layers. He knew how to become both the feeling and the absence of feeling in a human head. He was something that

must have come from some ancient structures that had remained over time in the crushing oblivion of the murmuring unconscious. An energy that lived naturally outside the Earth.

Was Badger the thing most people call a god? What do most people call a god, and by that they don't mean the bare structures and skeletons of concepts that are the only forms that have withstood the ravages of time's attempts to replicate a truly personally transformative experience? The end of self, a sense of unity of unimaginable dimensions and magnitudes? The idol of all syntheists, atheists and theists who are desperately seeking a universal symbol to express their pseudo-intellectual sense of reconciliation with their own dullness? No way. Badger was a hum and a buzz. Something overwhelmingly vague. But for all that, it was an overwhelming force of an unimaginable nature, the unimaginable nature of the end of escapes. Indeterminacy, strangeness, and annoyance all at the same time. But Badger was exactly what was wanted. Fanatic vomited mightily then. And whatever he was throwing up, he felt like he was throwing up something that tasted like linoleum. Tons and tons of linoleum. Stinking and sour heaps of both the orange liquid and the white and brown solid chunks in it. Linoleum! And stomach juices!

"Linoleum! Graveyard!"

Huge ruins of attempts to put a name to unnameable feelings, gushing from head to head like a chain explosion.

A mixture of deep frustration and pain shooting up in random snippets of moments of nostalgia and newly emerging variations of predictions of futures and doubts of contextual perceptions of pasts. A strange feeling; joyous and melancholic.

Nothing in reality resembled Badger. Its omnipresence bent all existing physical structures. Energy layers giving way to their own interconnections and coalescing under the influence of a force field that sustains flowers and plants around them, growing, fruiting, and withering right at the epicentres, the energetic epicentres of life itself.

Manoeuvres of flowers! The spectacles of the whole world woven into the windows of hundreds of thousands of buildings bent beyond the normal capacities of times and spaces, the flora and fauna of forgotten regions of the Earth. It's like watching a fire that gives birth to itself, consumes and defecates on itself. Great moods and strong emotions, vibrations of seizures and seizures of vibrations, massive cumshots of impulses and improvisationally appearing tangible chunks of ectoplasmic flesh. Flowing fluids and boiling gases, phenomena of visible echoes, under the influence of which the brain becomes sound and emerges from the space of physical matter.

The brain is ectoplasm! Mystical states in the air, flying glows, appearing and disappearing lights of ephemeral parts of an abstract biological unit of systems of

constantly changing abstractions. Gusts of luminescence and aggressive colours that shake the living flesh with a rhythmic buzz! Extinct species, procreating and giving birth to their descendants. Badger's mouths, crisscrossing sky and earth, never-ending parameters twisting into themselves, relativising their own positions, mixing the inputs and outputs of histories and all possible futures, all happening at once. Badger's ears, from which sounds and other energies gush forth, taking on surface textures, colours and disguises. And his eyes, embedded in arrays of rhythmic electrifying light pulses, in columns of coloured rays shooting out in three-dimensional geometric arrays of concentric recursive patterns, speak in a well-audible voice and they speak: "I am the man who swallowed time!"

Whatever Fanatic did, it left a mark on Badger, just as whatever Badger did left a mark on Fanatic. Neither of them felt like they were making a decision. There was divine action and reaction everywhere, the present and absent emulsion of two minds. Learning and consuming their fruits, in a synergy of different spaces and times, creating temporary fleshy compartments of interpenetrations of mutual consequence and causal implications of the interactions of parallel components of jointly unconfronted residues of atomically separated concepts of brain electricity. Tremendous explosions and shifts of meanings and contexts. Connections, hard knocks of reasoning and random thoughts and ideas.

Waving trees, twisting into the ground and erupting rocks from swiftly flowing streams, estuaries into seas that bubble up not with plastic waste but with entirely new products of plastic material. Toothbrushes glowing with all the colours of the rainbow and geese on motorbikes that can't fly and so only scream, scream in an almost human voice. Vibrant blue houses with deep orange pitched roofs that have mouths for windows and a giant lit cigar in them, which they smoke and blow the smoke out through a chimney. Red skies under which storks fly, having turquoise saxophones instead of their heads, from which glasses full of water and rolls of socks fly out at every note.

An apple pie that pierces the windshield of a Boeing 737-800 at ten thousand metres above sea level explodes and destroys the entire front half of the aircraft. A clock with human hands, stabbing itself with a knife. Folding phones and laptops flying through the air and eating birds, taking bites out of buildings, trees, and power poles. Re, the Egyptian ruler of heaven, earth and the underworld, worshipped in the form of a falcon, plays football, consuming sausages and drinking coffee before leaping two hundred metres high. A toddler buying cigarettes in a newsagent's, holding a candlestick with lit candles in one hand. Carp hanging from a tree, throwing an axe into a toilet. A giant dog dancing in an art studio with a woman in a white dress, but at the same time with a woman who loses consciousness and falls to

the ground. And this disturbs the dog greatly. He rolls his eyes, wrinkles his eyebrows into an inverted "V" and feels guilty.

"A mixture of heads and head mixtures! Badger has my thoughts and my thoughts have Badger!"

So palpable was the swing of thought that one could smell the scent of everything around in the woods, including the smell of fog. Including the smell of berries, miles away. Including the smell of birds' nests and eggs on the highest, fifty-metre-high treetops, and including the smell of everything that was hidden and undiscovered. The internal organs, the wood inside the trees, the water at the bottom of lakes and puddles, and the rocks piled in the depths of the earth. So very palpable was the swing of thought.

In the course of all this happening, in the course of this whole majestic episode of consciousness, Fanatic ate about two kilos of meat and half a kilo of fruit. Overfed, he had his belly stroked and rubbed by Badger, had his bowels filled to bursting through his anus with water, in snaking pulses of ecstatic orgasm and energetic muscular contractions caused by pleasure, pain, and annoyance. Powerful synergies of water of food and cum, pressurised blood flowing through the entire body to the brain, saturated nucleus accumbens, exploding bellies, slimy tongues crawling out in ecstasy with dripping saliva, and pulsating anal orifices singularly plunging into the deepest possible body recesses. Validation that something is alive right now. Material energies and energetic masses in a collaboration of fluids and pressures, masses of fluids and fluids of masses, in a tremendous cycle of trance of extraterrestrial externalities and internalities.

Penetrations, screams and dark prayers for the persistence of masses and fluids. Fluids and masses. The purest voice of the present that says "There is nothing on Earth..." and yet is quite silent.

And as with Badger many things have come, many things have gone with him. What did not go away, however, was the strange trembling, nor the burning of the throat. Gone were such things as were not visible, and things came that will be visible but aren't yet. Not for the Fanatic in the woods and in the mist. Neither the mist nor the dampness has gone. And where Badger had gone, that too was impossible to trace. The greater the density of the clusters of guesses, the more difficult the reasoning became.

In the evening, Fanatic went to bed considerably weakened by immune expenditure as well as energy expenditure.

Mental acrobatic feats and mystical coitus. Fetishes, fetishes, fetishes! It's like going for infusions and occasionally forgetting the length, height, width, and layout

of unfamiliar buildings, with the moment of confrontation seeming to be an unreasonably harsh existential slap of the Earth.

And shortly before sleep, or more accurately, already in the stage of half-sleep when dreamlike thoughts penetrate reality and reality penetrates dreamlike thoughts, a monologue popped into the Fanatic's head.

"We are always facing something. We face something. Because it is possible. And when some extremely primitive fool asks you the question "Why?", shove any action he takes and any decision he makes into his mouth and make him think and answer with the question "Why not?""""

Who said that? The Fanatic's brain said it. The monologic thought was so strong that it made him completely wake up. He said it, or rather he thought it. But he connected it with Badger. Or rather, in his head, Badger was saying it. And outside of Badger, there were also some vague blue square objects and green two-dimensional circles. All against the brownish-yellow backdrop of a darkened mind peering into the space of closed eyelids. A common, but each time a very strange experience.

The mind in this case was again only a victim of the intersection of pure chaos. The mind of a sufferer, a traveller, and perhaps the minds of a few other people who competed to the death with the ruler-wielding surveyors looking for bleeding human bodies and other reflections of matter. It was nothing more than a head manifesting to itself how it was no longer willing to let in any more symptoms and tongues of decay.

Fanatic was tormented by many strange dreams. Or, in fact; they didn't so much torment him as occupy him - as do many other findings and personality shocks of the body crying out for change. His eyes were physically present in his eye sockets, and he was only looking inward at himself.

And in his dreams, the principles of mesonychia – the Paleocene canine carnivorous beast – were invoked. And indeed it was so – during his dreams he felt exactly like mesonychia.

In one of his mesonychic dreams, Fanatic was a man in a kind of white wig and with a kind of artificially posing, yet extremely natural expression on his face, especially around his mouth. But it was him; he was purely and only himself. His head floated on a casually strutting body like the head of a jocular bobbing figure that used to be placed on the dashboards of cars. The expression in his eyes was deliciously serene and dimensionlessly present. He was climbing up the stairs, but his head was down. It was surreal and bizarre.

He carried himself with a casual, head bobbing stride in a space with totally different laws of physics. You could clearly tell, as neither his hair nor his clothes

were moving in the "right" vector of gravity, as both his hair and clothes were bending to where his legs were. Into the places he walked. It was an unfamiliar experience for an Earthman accustomed to a single source of gravity.

Fanatic walked very carefully. To more than one observer of this wondrous scene, something like "what exactly is this thing supposed to teach us about?" might have come to mind. It was, after all, just some strange bipolar way of gravity trying to explain something to itself. A hidden and misunderstood symbol.

A white-haired man and a parallel Fanatic, this reversed-polarised man arrived on the floor where the other people were following him. It was impossible to determine whether Fanatic himself had jumped to the "correctly re-polarized" mezzanine, or whether people from the "correctly re-polarized" mezzanine had jumped after him. The important point is that once Fanatic was confronted with people, those people were always just sort of exotics by default. Exotics who looked very excited and honoured to see Fanatic. They were matching him up with his old friends, the admirable but still respectable and confident people he had once had the honour of meeting in person at a shipyard bar in Graveyard.

It was a bizarre dream, but he felt a very distinct sense of pleasure in it all. A kind of extreme self-fulfilment. A kind of orgasmic enjoyment of existential and purposeful identities and personality preferences creations of one's own person that could not be real but had to be dreamed.

Surfer got out of the Bumper and slammed the door loudly. With one eye, he glanced at the blood on the left fender and left headlight and spotted a chunk of flesh on it as well. Fresh cat meat, ripped from the cat's body by the violent impact. And then he heard what sounded like an explosion. A thudding noise of deforming material, the crinkling of a huge mass hitting another mass.

Surfer's car was parked in the middle of the road on Passes. And the source of the "explosion" was just down the street. Between the Surfer's and the explosive street was only a tiny park, about thirty metres wide and a hundred metres long, with grass and a dozen or so lower trees, which made it possible to see very well from one street to the other. And Surfer could see very well how one yellow and brown car had forgotten to turn and had driven straight into an apartment building. What's more, the man who was probably driving the car broke through the glass, flew out, and most likely collided head-on with the house as well, as all that was left of his head was a bloody mess, spilling down both sides of the hood. Surfer also noticed that in the corner of the hood of the deformed car there was a drawing of a pink dinosaur about ten centimetres long. He wondered if people even notice that kind of decoration on the hood of a car. It occurred to him that it was a similar decoration to

the one he currently had on his Bumper. A bloody hell of a fender, with flesh as a bonus. Almost like a pink dinosaur.

Surfer stared hypnotically at the dead man with the disfigured head and the yellow-brown car with the pink dinosaur, the deformed hood and the broken windshield for a moment, but then he recovered and returned to his original intentions. He ran behind the Bumper and took off after the body, or more accurately the remains of the body, of a cat about twenty metres away.

It was a moment that shook his body and mind. A twist in the plot of a picaresque novel that struck at the ease of a comfortable mind in the same way that cold mud and grit between the toes can do. A paralysing terror, a stab in the heart and a kick in the chest, freezing neck and skeleton in horrifying intervals of stabbing pain and thought-conceptual destruction. Surfer killed his cat. His nameless, black and white cat. A classic domestic cat, only with a somewhat atypically elongated body and a furred tail.

He immediately collapsed to his knees and, because of his shorts, nearly smashed them both on the sharp, unmaintained asphalt road. He stared at the cat's body and retched with disgust, despair and pain.

The cat lay in a pool of blood, torn in two linked by a thread of small intestine. It looked as if some old hag had grabbed it by the tail and swung it over her head until it broke apart. Its eyes were bulging and clouded with blood. Its paws were jagged and broken, and its atypically furred tail no longer seemed atypically furred, as it was all glued together and licked with blood. Surfer got up from his knees, wiped away the emitted stomach juices running down his chin, and ran over to Bumper. He picked up a chunk of flesh from the hood and ran after the cat's body again. Honestly, he didn't know exactly what he was doing, but neither did Jackie Kennedy as she picked chunks of flesh off the hood, not of her cat, but of her husband. It was probably instinct that told the desperate man to gather up all the pieces of his beloved object and somehow patch it together so that it wouldn't roll around in multiple places at once. Surfer, however, with a piece of flesh in his hand, suddenly stopped. His fixation with the panic-compulsive glueing together of the dead cat was interrupted by the fact that, at a distance of about fifteen metres from the bloody corner of the Bumper's hood, he spotted a newspaper lying on the ground. His attention was so disturbed that he actually dropped a piece of flesh on the ground, which he was vigorously squeezing in his hand so hard that he could sensibly feel the crushing of its muscle fibres.

A peculiar experience, to see a real black and white A3 newspaper. Nowadays.

"Only pensioners who don't have the internet read newspapers," said every man who didn't have his head immersed in a deep fryer and was meanwhile cutting

wool-coloured animals on a table where others like him were chopping kale and boiling eggs into side dishes so disgusting and unhealthy that no one but them would eat them.

Surfer picked up the newspaper with his bloody hands and sabotaged its ingrained black and white with the deep red of cat's blood. It was the newspaper of today, September the 16th. On the front page it said:

*Air Conditioning Killed Three More People! The victims are a Mountaineer, a Pigman and a Tourist! Three Graveyard people died as a result of mental illness and riots caused by the Air Conditioning. Air Conditioning kills!*

Surfer had a voice in his head at that moment. The voice that screamed "Leave me the fuck alone!" while in a fit of rage he searched for a megaphone and a club.

It was a moment when he wanted to scream and cry, but he didn't do it through all the explosions of emotion and the cumulative variations of anger, disgust, and loathing that crashed into each other like the waves of a raging sea in Surfer's brain, bouncing off the walls of his skull with deep tremors. That cat was nothing. This was a moment of transformation! A revolution and a great reboot that completely rewired the operating mechanism of the human being's nervous system. Yes, the official was transformed into a human being. Your own fist punched in your own face. A true revolution of a man, a revolution in a man. An explosion of the mind. An explosion of the mind of exactly the nature of the aggressive ass-kicking of a bus driver in microsleep, plunging into the dark depths of his dreams on the highway as he approaches the guardrail.

At that moment the call to the Nomads could be felt. The Nomads from the book Para Pravum, who at that time and in that place could be ascertained with one hundred percent certainty that they did not exist. And not only that. Not only did they not exist, but they didn't even exist in the minds of the people in the Mayor's Office. They existed only in Surfer's head, and they seem to have ceased to exist there as well at this point. But when they existed in his head, he was their only confessor. He was the sole confessor of the elderly woman with the hat-like headdress who traditionally appeared as a portrait-like image in the sky, formed by blowing clouds of water vapour.

But after all, what was he supposed to do when a Nomad appeared in his head from time to time? Whether he existed outside his head or not, it was eminently reasonable for Surfer to obey the Nomad. But now there wasn't a single Nomad left. And there never would be again.

Surfer almost fell to the ground. The revolution and explosion of his mind was a physical thing. He dropped the newspaper from his hands, got quickly to his feet, opened the trunk of the Bumper, and threw every letter out of it right onto the road.

Letters for the Mayor's office, some of them stained with blood and others with the dirt of the asphalt road. Strewn on the ground, blown about by the wind and scattered by crows and pigeons. Scattered by cars, sealed with tyre tread and littered by a handful of those who don't like to see the mess in the middle of the roads and prefer to keep it in their own heads, or put it in the heads of others. This was Graveyard and the Graveyard People, in the full glory of their own externals. The cataclysm and substitution of the most superficial parts of the most superficial surfaces.

The Bumper set off in the direction of the Resort. Towards the villa. Toward the huge, four-story-high house with marble walls, ancient columns and ten-metre-high windows, with a massive dome on the facade. And the Surfer's expression behind the wheel was extremely intense. A smile with lowered eyebrows marking a repressed explosion of passive aggression. Hands, completely cleaned of blood by rubbing them into leaf envelopes, pressed carefully on the steering wheel. Left foot ready to depress the clutch and right foot deeply rooted in the gas pedal.

He arrived at the villa shortly after one PM. Fountains, palm trees, red carpets and historical paintings everywhere. Baroque decor in a minimalist monochrome of white marble. Residential and work building, a peak of kitsch and tasteless existential pomposity.

Once inside, he was immediately confronted by the staff members who milled about. People employed by the Mayor's Office.

The people employed in the Mayor's Office were very easy to spot. Their necks were nonexistent, their suits were overly present, their fingers were fat, and their voices sounded like bubbling sewers. Surfer didn't fit in with them. He was the exception.

On red carpets and a multitude of stairs, he passed a multitude of laundries and canteens, canteens and canteens, laundries and laundries. Canteens that smelled of something that stank like overcooked socks and laundries where the staff no doubt made tea and pasta.

All the tension and violence of the Marble Villa is determined by the laundries and canteens! Attraction of the coarsest grain and the highest level of tastelessness.

He walked into the kitchen, which was located next to the staircase. Truly an incongruously grand place for a kitchen. If one walked out of it, one had a view of the entire main hall of the building, complete with fountain, palm trees, and a crystal chandelier.

Kitchen. It was full of guns, submachine guns, pistols, and all sorts of other things, but so far he had only picked up a small knife with about a fifteen centimetre blade that resembled a small sword, or a mail envelope knife.

The kitchen staff guessed the Surfer's expression in his eyes and his motives very well, but they showed him instant sympathy with their glances. They were not, after all, officials. They were tired and stressed people who had had enough of everything, just as he had had enough of everything. They had had enough pasta, enough bread and enough oil. Enough of coffees and roasted meats, of repetitive soups and cyclically cooked sauces, without a pinch of humility or bodily calm. The kitchen was a place of tension, just as the laundry or the dining room were places of tension.

Enter the unknown. Pig heads challenging dancing ostriches to a fistfight, impaled on baseball bats made of aluminium. Electric cigarettes committing suicide by jumping out of an airplane in a handbag. Chickens sending cats to concentration camps for not paying their pub voucher instalments on time. A bassist who is in jail for raping a child, playing bass and singing an operatic solo while doing it. And his companions, aromatic tealights, leaping out of the fridge straight into wet beds.

Just as Surfist walked out of the kitchen, with the knife carefully concealed in his hand behind his back, one of the officials walked right across the hall from him. They knew each other, but he had forgotten his name. He was a typical neckless stocky creature with fat fingers. And this time he greeted Surfer. He smiled the glad-handing smile of a dishevelled pork faced human being and held out an open palm to Surfer, intending to shake his hand in a sign of formal greeting.

But Surfer didn't shake his hand.

The mind has landed. With a lunge, Surfer kicked the neckless clerk in the knee and plunged the knife into his neck, slicing his throat open.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!" the official yelled in pain. Surfer began stabbing him in the throat, slicing it apart. He also stabbed him in the back, shoulders and chest. His massive, stocky body collapsed to the ground in a pool of blood, writhing in pain on the red carpet in agonising pulses of fear and despair. Surfer dropped the knife and re-entered the kitchen, where one of the staff handed him two machetes with great humility and hope in his eyes. It was not surprising in any way. Surfer was no longer an official, but he was one of them. One of the inhabitants of the kitchen and one of the disgusted observers of the world of the pompous villa as well as the world beyond it.

"Oh my God! Oh my God, stop! I don't want to die!" Screamed the stabbed official with his throat slit, thrashing and writhing in his own blood on the ground as soon as he saw Surfer approaching with two machetes. For some reason, the official was lucky enough that despite the slashed arteries in his neck, his vocal cords hadn't been cut and he was able to speak quite fluently. But talking was something that was not his primary intention. What was important to him was holding his split throat

with both fat hands and all ten fingers to minimise the risk of bleeding out as much as possible. If he talked, he did so only out of a naive belief that it might help save his life. A simple prayer. Why, why not.

"I don't want to die, please! Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

The official's begging and screams ceased the moment one of the machetes sliced the cerebral part of his skull in two.

Surfer pulled the chopping tool from the corpse's head and took a slow, confident step down the corridor, aiming to visit one of the fully occupied rooms. And so he did. In one of the offices, he heard the distinctive noise of greedy stomachs, the voices of the fat-fingered, and the humming of the neckless, which made him open the door and step inside. He stepped inside, locked the door behind him, and stuffed the key in his pocket.

Twelve officials died in one room that day. A thirteenth died after he jumped out of a window and splashed in a fountain once the fountain's marble statue smashed his head to pieces as he flew. The others died in an explosion of blood, flying pieces of flesh, bones, organs and human clothing, as well as screams and begging for their own lives. Severed human limbs falling to the ground. Fingers flying through the air. Brains shooting out. Blood pouring from arteries onto the floor and tables. People desperately trying to climb on cupboards and shelves, but always ending up as a fleshy pulp splattered on the floor, on the walls and on the ceiling.

Surfer unlocked the door, leaving behind a room painted with the contents of human bodies. He was splattered with blood on every possible inch of his body. He dropped both machetes to the floor and walked down the hallway again with a slow, confident stride, but once he was in a spot by the kitchen overlooking the staircase and the main hall, he noticed something very unpleasant. Downstairs, in the main hall, officials were clustered together. And there were a few dozen of them.

One of them noticed Surfer passing by and shouted: "There he is! There's the son of a bitch!"

Surfer ran over and was already in the kitchen. All that could be heard from the main hall were booming voices trying to organise the positions and strategies of their body-bearers, as well as the sounds of weapons being reloaded. All the officials had the same weapons. They were some sort of submachine guns of the same manufacturer and model. Surfer didn't know his way around guns. But he could distinguish the same from the different.

In the kitchen, the staff had put in his hands an armoured cart on wheels, about a metre and a half high and two metres long. It had drawers in it, into which the staff had placed two compact submachine guns with box magazines for fifty

rounds and a 7.62 millimetre calibre light machine gun, weighing ten and a half kilograms, with a cartridge belt holding about three hundred rounds.

Surfer thanked with his perfectly pitched facial expressions. Maybe a few words, but he wasn't too sure of them. His mind was going to explode. He felt very out of place, like he was in a spinning carousel of a random sequence of coincidences and causal implications of his own making that had just rocked in his head and was forcing him to take acute physical action just to keep him from throwing up. He pushed the armoured cart out of the kitchen, hiding behind it.

The shooting started unexpectedly quickly and in an organised manner - from all the officials at the same second. The officials opened fire like a synchronised chorus, each one in his place with his own task. They sprawled across the great hall, on the carpets, on the cobblestones and on the staircases. Surfer just idly hid behind the armoured cart, pushing it farther and farther, until it finally came to a stop in roughly the centre of the space above the main hall, nicely in everyone's sight and range like a very easy target. Bullets whizzed and drilled into the walls, into the armoured cart, shattering statues and marble decorations, gnawing away at marble columns, shredding paintings, splintering vases, and shattering the crystal chandelier. The shooting lasted about twenty seconds and was a mighty ecstasy of a whirlwind of flying plaster, wood, ceramics, glass and marble. A dense symphony of dust and shards, directed by flying chunks of uncompromising metal.

Surfer emerged unscathed. Who knows, maybe he would have escaped unscathed even if he hadn't been hiding behind any cart. In the spinning carousel of the random sequence of coincidences and causal implications of his own actions in his own brain, he felt like a very lucky man.

The officials were about to scatter to a sort of mahogany cabinet in the main hall, to their backpacks with more and more magazines for their submachine guns. Surfer couldn't permit that, however. He opened a drawer on the armoured cart, pulled out a light machine gun with a cartridge belt holding about three hundred rounds, and unloaded the bipod of the weapon directly onto the cart. He loaded the weapon, angled it down a little towards the persons who were already removing magazines from their backpacks. And he opened fire.

This time, the massive barrage of bullets not only shattered statues and marble decorations, gnawed away at marble columns, splintered paintings, cracked vases, broke a crystal chandelier, and drilled into walls (and windows), but also killed people. Officials had their lives snuffed out in a barrage of frenzied gunfire. It was a massive deluge of chaos and flying inorganic and organic material in which no one present could actually load a weapon. A few officers saved their lives by taking cover behind a marble fountain.

The chaos among the flying objects was extremely intense. Every head that could observe it reached an orgasmic climax in exhilarating sine waves of pure ecstasy of dislocated presence and recomposed space at the boundary between reality and reverie. The people who were dying there at the time were dying in this very same blissful trance.

Chaos above all, present and absent in all possible and impossible layers of microscopic subrealities of fantasy desires and hopes of dying ideas. The massive and insistent splash of stale, stale chlorinated water full of heavy metals and sulphur, which with a wistful "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!" or other proverbial cries, hits the face of every tea enthusiast and floods his carefully guarded crop. An unexpected but welcome explosion. Welcomed by all that welcome can be.

Applied ideology without a beta test.

A denial of all that is sacred. A sacred orgy of blood and personal war of interests and beliefs. Dancing chunks of splintered bone, plaster, wood and striated muscle tissue. Remembrance of past capacities and the causes of the consequences of actions in the disjointedness of post-traumatic flashbacks and exits from the cynical monstrosities of an oculomotor muscle that always rests on the source of movement. A spun-out privilege without compassion or self-reflection, armed with decisiveness.

The most wondrous concert in the world with the wildest and most merciless audiovisual show.

Surfer, at an approximate cadence of five hundred and fifty rounds per minute, soon shot the entire cartridge belt and dropped the machine gun to the ground. He pulled two identical compact submachine guns from his drawer, both loaded this time. He held each in one hand and slowly walked down the stairs. In the receding churned plaster in the air and in the settling dust, a pair of moving bodies could soon be seen. Surfer had shot them all. One official ran in panic from behind the fountain, heading away from the building, but Surfer killed him instantly with three shots. Another, also hiding behind the fountain, ran to his backpack with magazines, hoping to reload his submachine gun quickly, but ended up dead on the red carpet with two bullets in his back.

Suddenly, someone shot at Surfer. The shooting official with the reloaded submachine gun. About seven bullets passed about thirty centimetres beside Surfer and buried themselves in the marble behind him. He was lucky. Raising his right hand with one of the submachine guns, he fired, coincidentally, seven rounds as well. Only two hit the firing official, but killed him instantly.

Surfer strolled around the main hall and carefully looked around all the nooks and crannies, searching for surviving officials. He had one of his submachine guns raised with the barrel pointed at the ceiling at eye level and the other pointed in

front of him, ready to fire. Of course, he switched between the submachine guns so as not to overload the hand that was aiming. Holding three and a half kilos in a limb stretched out in front of him wasn't so easy after all.

Surfer was only finding corpses. He was satisfied. He noticed the kitchen staff curiously peeking out of the kitchen in a full-body tilt, watching the situation anxiously. So he bade them farewell and waved them off. With a submachine gun in hand.

He felt very sorry for the two shot up palm trees that stood by the entrance gate. One had been shot so that it had split in two and only a bare limb remained. Maybe something would sprout from it and the plant would ultimately survive, but there would be no room for it in the building. It has no aesthetic form. In all likelihood it will be thrown away and die. The other palm tree fared a little better. It had a few bullet holes in it, but it retained its form. After a few months, no one might even recognize that this palm tree had been shot by machine guns and submachine guns, but on the other hand, its life would be meaningless. After all, the palm tree will have to survive with the fact that she has bullets lodged inside her. She will continue to grow and flourish, but with metal in her body that bothers and interests no one. It will be the cruellest punishment that can befall an organism. To live and die with an irremovable heaviness that bothers and interests no one else. A cruel punishment. And that is a terrible shame.

And all around was the biblical fraction of everything that was intentionalised. Collisions and destruction, the creativity of war. And that was all that was going on, not just in the Mayor's Office or in Graveyard. This was what it was about absolutely everywhere and always, just somewhere and sometimes it remained hidden. Surfer was a man of inordinate courage, since he had chosen to manifest his relationships within himself.

Surfer had a kind of strange feeling at that moment, which he associated with a kind of phrase "perfectly polished glass". He didn't really know why, but it was there. A strange sensation, during which his experience was surmounted with a lightness that a waking person could have no chance of experiencing. It was simply a pure dreamlike and unspecific sensation, in which was all that a man could demand from the most controversial parts of his entropised brain, darkened by the manifestation of his shame and all the obscurities of the delinquent excesses of his person.

He felt like Mesonychia, an ancient carnivorous dog from the Paleocene era, who had suddenly been inserted into the French countryside of the seventeenth or eighteenth century in order to terrorise the local population.

In his head was also Brush Cutter, a sort of disgusting, smelly, old, obese and sickly fellow. Brutal tastelessness and viciousness in human form, which only makes it obligatory to vomit. A person who dares to give advice to young people and thinks that old age, cynicism and decrepitude makes him wiser and more evolved. A disgusting creep who loathes his surroundings.

And among other things, it was obvious from Brush Cutter's persistent need to continue to rot alive in life that this man, in his own way, did not feel alone, and there were more like him. It was very obvious because such people drown and support themselves in their own characteristics. They don't do it intentionally or even consciously, but it happens. And you could smell it so much from people like Brush Cutter that it stank even if they were just pure thoughts. They didn't have to stand by anyone or talk to anyone. All one had to do was think of such people, and one immediately went from feeling "perfectly cut glass" to feeling perfectly rotten and hopeless. A truly unpleasant state where it is impossible not to be ashamed of existing and of being exactly what we are.

However, Surfer didn't let what he was at that time and in that place ruin what he was then. His destiny in that time and place was not to think of a man who had blown his brains out over his ass. He was like a man in a dream, wafting with his inhale and growing heavier with his exhale.

His mind was the mind of a saint. It was the mind of a sober and intelligent being who was never allowed to enter space and time. The mind stepped out and it was delightful.

Surfer walked out of the building, climbed down the stairs, and got into the Bumper. He smiled to himself in the interior rearview mirror, started the engine, and headed out. As he did so, he thought back to an incident that had happened in his life about two years ago. He recalled it with all the gore that couldn't help but remind him of it and leave a distinctive fog in his head that cut through the fatty tissue of his brain the way a hungry graveyard unemployed pensioner cuts through an unguarded service fridge in an abandoned kitchen. What happened then was simply that his previous cat, a black castrated male, had been killed by some random dog on the street. The aggressive and mean German Shepherd, without a leash or muzzle, ran after the cat carefully anchored to the leash that Surfer was in charge of. It wasn't even clear what had happened, but the cat was chewed in half in a second and the contents of its body splashed around. On the sidewalks, on the fence, on the ground, and all over Surfer. The dog's owner could be heard snarling hysterically from about a hundred yards away, and her screams grew louder and louder as she struggled to catch up to her dog in a futile effort to stop the massacre.

Surfer was responsive. He kicked the dog in the stomach with enough force to fling him into the air. The dog landed backwards on the spikes of the ornamental fence, pierced through-and-through, and died instantly. Surfer literally kicked him to the fence. A fence whose spikes looked like some kind of screwed-up arrows. As soon as the dog's owner saw this, however, she started screaming even more hysterically and became vulgar. She lashed out at Surfer with words like "what do you even dare to do" or something similar, shouting, spitting and throwing her arms around more and more intensely, until it looked like she was going to chop everyone around her into a pile of meat with her gesticulation. For a moment, Surfer stared cynically right into the screaming woman's eyes, his explicitous cynicism only heightened by the dark sunglasses he was wearing at the time. He then kicked his leg so high that he looked like a grotesque cartoon character with a deliberately satirised and surreal gait. He drove his heel straight between the woman's eyes, silencing her forever. He literally kicked her to the fence. She impaled her chest on the sharp arrowheads and gasped her last breath right next to her dead dog's side in a mighty bloody splash.

And that was the whole plot he remembered at that moment. Cats, dogs, people and blood. All of them in a life and death struggle, in a dramatic confrontation with himself. And then all sorts of things.

The bounties of anger.

Bumper was speeding at 120 kilometres per hour on a road located in the immediate vicinity of Ladder. A white car with a two-and-a-half-metre-long bonnet, on the edge of which was a bloodstain. Round headlights and chrome fenders. One fender and one headlight stained with blood. Leather upholstered seats, leather driving wheel and leather dashboard. A roof interwoven with something that resembled ordinary white cloth in its appearance, but evoked moleskin, or the fur of some other silky insectivore, in its consistency. Well, behind the driving wheel of all this, this pure, juicy and oversalted havoc of defiance to the commercialised concepts of aesthetics, sat Surfer. His flowered shirt and shorts were covered in blood. His face and his hands were covered in blood. And his expression, his facial expressions, were unforgettable. A calm face, but a face full of the desire for screams. The face of someone about to have the top of his head blown off. An aggressive and intense explosion of emotion, a tingling of cerebral electricity of unimaginable energy. Hands on the driving wheel, strangling rather than gripping. Left foot poised ready near the clutch and right foot on the gas. Both feet crushing themselves. They clench their fingers and flex their calves. And eyes that stare at the road both for vigilance and because they'd most likely eat everything. That was Surfer. No man working for the Mayor's Office and delivering letters. No man owning a cat.

# CHAPTER 13: Increased Alkalinity

On September 27, Surfer got up a little earlier and swapped his floral shirt and shorts for a black shirt and long black pants with a belt around his waist. At seven o'clock and twelve minutes he was signing a total of fourteen A4 pieces of paper committing him to return to his job at the Mayor's Office. He signed them in an office located directly under the roof of a massive dome of a villa in the Resort district – a villa with marble walls, antique pillars and ten-metre-high windows, with a massive dome on the facade. Fountains, palm trees, red carpets and historical paintings everywhere. Baroque decoration in minimalist monochrome white marble. A residential and working building, a peak of kitsch and tasteless existential pomposity. And that building was called the Mayor's Office!

Surfer was ecstatic. He no longer had letters to deliver in his old Bumper, with its two-and-a-half-metre-long hood, round headlights, and chrome fenders, which ended up as a pile of battered, crumpled sheet metal. He didn't even have to deliver the letters anymore. He was going to be paid to create new restrictions and orders on people who were supposed to be subject to restrictions and orders. And he was going to pay people to carry letters in their cars. This function of the official was called "The Porter" and Surfer was extremely satisfied with it. He couldn't wait to get a new cat and live with it right in the Mayor's Office building. And letting his staff carry the letters for it. And to squeeze a wooden stamp and a ballpoint pen in his hand. And walk the red carpets.

"Well done! I'm very much looking forward to our future collaboration," Mayor bubbled aloud, spittle bursting from his mouth.

"Likewise. I look forward to it."

And the Mayor's Office! The Mayor's Office – an institution that comes from the surface of everything in between everything! It was an institution like no other! A sleek mafia pretending to be boorish. And the people employed by the Mayor's Office, they were very easy to spot. Their necks were nonexistent, their suits were overly present, their fingers were fat, and their voices sounded like bubbling sewers. Surfer didn't fit in with them. He was the exception.

Mayor! What an archetypal figure! The mayor; a template-like caricature of the institution and the people representing it within the human body. Hierarchically, although in the highest post, functionally, existentially and visually the same as everyone else in office. Mayor. No living creature has been marked by such an

enormous amount of eagerness and greed. However, these qualities the Mayor himself knew very well how to hide behind a laziness and passivity that seemed to be calm and deliberate. Mayor was not a tall man. He was not obese, nor was he thin. He was a bone encased in fat. The archetypal figure of a man who lives only out of a conviction of his own importance and who is incapable of surviving without others constantly creating an environment for him. He was a man who lived mainly on letters. He had hair all over his body, just not on his head. He was greasy and his eyes were very small and swollen, like the eyes of a fat sick pig. In every activity other than sitting or lying down, he panted like someone whose heart is failing. He was constantly sitting in his office in the villa, right under the roof of the massive dome, talking on the telephone and laughing loudly as he did so. He was always talking, even shouting, out loud. And if any drops of liquid dripped from him during his powerful vocal utterances, it was almost never possible to tell whether it was sweat or saliva.

This Mayor was new – the old one resigned right away on September the 16th – the same day Surfer had his famous bloody incident with the clerical party and the officials right in the office – but he looked exactly the same as the old one. He didn't resemble him in the slightest, but with his distinctive physique and cartoonish features, he was practically identical to him. The new mayor was like weekdays; each one different, but in its own way the same.

Surfer had taken a bundle of papers with him and was already leaving the office. He was opening the door that led out of it when the Mayor yelled at him once more with a loud "Hey!".

"If there's a problem, contact the Complaints Department downstairs!" The Mayor boomed.

"Of course, I'll take note. But honestly, I don't think there'll be any problem," Surfer smiled a friendly smile. He saluted the Mayor satirically with two fingers on his eyebrows and left the office with the culmination of an extremely gentle closing of the door. So very gentle that it was barely audible from the Mayor's chair, which was about six metres away from the door. And yet the door was heavy, old and creaky. With a historic doorknob, historic hinges, and historic everything that should and shouldn't fit together.

Surfer was ecstatic. He had become an official like no other.

Matilda became engaged after the Train Driver's death. She did so specifically on October the 3rd. Her fiancé, Captain, was a very characteristic member of the male subspecies of toxic machismo. A strange man who is also capable of being actionable and quick-witted in many situations, but sometimes there was too much

of him and too much at once. He spammed the air much like Train Driver spammed it with his stench.

They took long walks together around town, during which they got along very well with each other, but they could not be together indoors for more than five minutes without threats or physical violence. That's why he sometimes slept outside by the pool, sometimes she did.

However, with all the possible perspectives of all sorts of parties, the reality was that Captain was unfortunately only interested in Matilda's money and possessions, which in a fit of pique had been bequeathed to her by Train Driver before his death on September the 16th.

Immediately after the wedding, which was to take place on the thirteenth of December, Captain planned to kill her by adding a lethal dose of hemlock (Conium maculatum) to a three-litre glass of orange juice; a plant that contains poisonous alkaloids that can cause paralysis and ultimately death due to respiratory failure. Matilda, of course, suspected this and therefore practised mithridatism in order to build up a tolerance to the spotted hemlock, which, in theory, means that the Captain's dose would not necessarily kill her. She drank the hemlock every day in microdoses, injecting it into her veins, her forehead, her muscles, and her fat folds. She added it to her food. The fact that he wanted to kill her didn't bother her. She was glad, after all, to be able to spend time with someone. Or something along those lines. Maybe she didn't even know what she wanted herself, and was just reacting to the entropy that life had brought her as best she could. And by the way, Captain did also call her a 'bitch' and an 'obese cunt' just like Train Driver, but never a 'tranny'. But of course, there are no excuses for any form of hell. And Matilda knew that, too. Her hell was suddenly nowhere – it was everywhere outside of her, and she knew nothing about it. It didn't concern her. She would call herself happy at last. Like a rat that can only live two years in captivity, but before it dies it at least gets to enjoy some of the food its compassionate owners put in its bowl.

September the 19th was the day Fanatic returned to the city. He left the woods and once again, after a long time, visited the concrete of Graveyard, which he had decided to ostracise back on March the 34th. He had carefully considered returning to Graveyard for the last twenty-two days, but had only now made the final decision to return. After all, among other things, he had noticed that the fog and dampness had slowly begun to leave the woods. And it wasn't the same without the fog and moisture. No amount of shivering and pleading meant no asceticism.

No amount of shivering and pleading is no respite from the overwhelm of disgust. At least not for the endorphin-inducing sense of satisfaction that drives the

human brain in the same way an old hag with a perm drives her red hatchback fully loaded with bags of the morning's groceries from the hypermarket.

It was bizarre and unusual. Very familiar and very alien. A strange nostalgia of indifference and indifference of nostalgia. Memories coming out of nothing and flowing to nowhere. Maybe some emotion after all? Perhaps. But only maybe. Maybe it's just an emotion coming from nostalgia that doesn't know it's nostalgia.

"What fucking city am I in? What fucking world am I sleeping in!?"

Terrible abnormality. Terribly little greenery. Streets that haven't seen life in a long time and probably won't see it for a long time.

Concrete meadows and prison lamps that hit you in the face like flying chunks of manure. And the faces of the people around you. Concrete more than buildings and sidewalks. Mummy sweeps in the exterior and mill wheels in the interior.

Carnivorous bacteria feasting on the contents of fresh graves, as well as on creatures pretending to be alive yet long dead, decomposing under the alabaster light of lamps and screens in the embrace of human-cattle hybrids. Poor people who have managed to evolve to this point. They will never know Badger and they will never leave for the forests. They will never know the hardships of the mists and humidities or the euphoria of their departures. They will never change the internals, and for their misfortune they will never even hope for changes in the externals, for they have lost even such hope as appears to be openly false. Poor slaves to their own rottenness who, if they don't want to suffer, can only bite off their own asses and end up eating themselves straight whole.

And the presenters of TV shows, with their fingers up their noses, throwing around telekinetic sleeping pills! Oh, not those! They open doors to unknown corners of streets torn in time and littered with uncarried garbage thrown out of the windows of tin shacks whose interiors haven't known daylight for centuries (well, outside of throwing  garbage out of windows, anyway).

Windows and doors, open and closed wide. Closed with the same force as a closed laptop in an ultra-modern café, belonging to a religious ephemerist suffering from microcephaly. Closed and idle as an educational overkill by the deity of the deity, the deity of the deity of the deity.

The air of the unknowable. Disappearing from the visible sources of the imprisoned prisons of absorbed development. Breathable sectors of paradoxical annihilations, field carriers in lost cages of ever-emerging radiation.

A pile of pots full of crow's beaks, human teeth and sauerkraut. Bon appetit! Bon appetit to the slimy heads of stuffed hippopotamuses chopped up in risotto and served to anyone who can't find a handkerchief to exchange a few words with in the atrium!

Pumps of oil, natural gas and the black blood of poison-soaked whales in the underworld of underbelly storms. Storms that swirl in their heads slower than all the viscous time outside them, squeezing the remnants of life out of the poor soft machines, constantly kicking them in the ass with an invisible foot.

Walls that talk. Shaking lamps and moving furniture. No delusions or even earthquakes, but equipment and parts of buildings whose eternity drives their materials mad. The movement of thoughts is the movement of objects, exclusively in the crash of discontented moments.

Taxonomy does not exist. It is an illusion of warring processes. Warring processes of a whirlwind of self-destruction, kicking and screaming. A slap to the stager and the stager to the slap.

A thirst for Cyrillic and a threatening syllabary. Threatening letters and pictures, or outright whole pages, that threaten children with fist bumps as well as unexpected deaths in their sleep.

The blast is coming back and everyone will be awaiting it with a finger up their nose, or a cigarette in their mouth. But either way, everyone will be expecting it, above all, with a raised middle finger in their head and a boot on their right foot ready to kick anyone in the face who doesn't intend to turn their back on any object they observe. A very visible shoe on a very visible foot.

"Eat your bread and cry out loud!" as the underdogs say.

"Kick down the door and run!" as the underdogs say.

Fanatic was ready to puke, but he didn't. Forest made him a slightly bigger plot creator. His flesh was more warm and pliable. His electricity was milder and more coordinated. He could almost have said he was more alive. Or at least he was beginning to realize when he was more alive and when he wasn't. There were only intense reflections of the past through time.

"Hello, would you mind coming with me to the crumbling wood paneling?" Fanatic was asked by a woman in a white flowing dress in exactly the same way that a woman in beige jeans and a white and red striped shirt had asked him on March the 31st, inviting him onto the linoleum.

At least that's what he thought. But it wasn't. The woman had actually asked him to go duck-watching with her at the pond. And that was a shock that must have made more than one person to swallow air.

Fanatic politely declined her invitation. He loved ducks, but he wanted to be alone. And the woman's smiling face, surprisingly, did not change to a parabolic frown. The kind of frown that only a sedentary elementary school teacher with a brain fermented with a combination of sugar and moldy old coffee can sweat out of herself. A sour expression, not belonging to human beings. An expression belonging

to the disgust that remains from human beings. Personality morbidities, all sorts of traumas hiding behind different variations of facial expressions. No. The woman merely smiled and walked away.

Wonderful synesthesia and contrasts. Ducks and pigeons in ponds, linoleums and crumbling wooden tiles in skyscrapers. Two different worlds, the black and white of inner worlds of inner worlds. The ashes of dust and the dust of ashes.

As time, steps, breaths and even turns of the head for the observed objects increased, Fanatic reached the legendary duck-pond. A beautiful place full of greenery that attracted life, attracted creatures, and attracted certain types of people who were perhaps, with any luck, disgusted by the Graveyard's ugliness. Children and retired people too. What's more, there was a woman in a white flowing dress who, until about two hours ago, had been inviting Fanatic to go duck-watching. And there were other women in flowing dresses. And young men, too. Duck and pigeon watching was an activity of extraordinary style, no doubt about it. But Fanatic was currently pursuing it from a considerable distance. Unobtrusively, away from the scene of all those people who were at the pond fully absorbed in the action. He was under the influence of a strange form of what he had once dared to call euphoria. Very strange. A feeling of some sort of accomplishment of something, but what exactly, it wasn't clear. Maybe it was just more nostalgia. Maybe it wasn't.

Huge numbers of pigeons were puffing and fluttering in the shallow water. They shuffled and shook like electrocuted rats, and it was very pleasant to watch them. Flocks of ducks moved in the shipping corridors, diving and greasing their feathers. Multitudes of two-sexed pairs, as well as gangs of females and gangs of males, or females with ducklings.

"These are the only real inhabitants of Graveyard!"

The bathed pigeons lay sprawled on the grassy area. Determined and swinging on all axes, they resembled hens sitting on eggs. Some of them had thrown their wings next to each other and looked lame and flabby because of it.

Tears sprang to the Fanatic's eyes at that point. They began to run down his cheeks and drip down his chin. Then he heard himself saying something like "I'm crying!"

"I'm crying!"

"I'm crying, and I'm crying because of a piece of paper with a drawing of a fish on it that my mother put away when I was in kindergarten and that I crumpled up in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry over an elephant figurine I threw into the sea."

"I cry over the destroyed teddy bear from my grandmother's apartment that I dragged with me to the crematorium and which I eventually cut up with scissors."

"I cry over the miniature plastic yoghurt information board that served as a packaged product gift designed to grow tomatoes from seed, which I eventually scribbled on with a pen, broke, and threw in the trash."

"I cry because of my cousin's pillow, which I loved very much, yet tried to tear apart with my bare hands."

"I cry because of the balloon shaped like a green one-eyed monster that my father bought me with good intentions and I let him know that it was childish and that I didn't want it."

"I cry over a plastic model train with double-gauge tracks and a freaky bearded train driver that I smashed on the ground in an aggressive compulsive rage on the same day I visited the Museum of Transportation."

"I cry over the 3D construction kits of the world's great buildings that I have uncompromisingly vandalised."

"I cry over a plastic sheep with a flower on its belly that I called a creep and then threw it out the window in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry over a miniature bust of Socrates that I smashed on the ground in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry because of an oil painting of flowers which I failed to paint in a burst of impatience and which I then subsequently destroyed with great anger, disappointment and sullenness."

"I cry because of the Egyptian hand drum that Fragrance brought me from her travels around the world, which I destroyed in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry because of a toy pistol that I deliberately smashed on the ground on a seaside holiday because, like a proper perfectionist, I wasn't satisfied with it."

"I cry because of the model airplanes I destroyed in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry because of one particular expensive metal model airplane that I destroyed in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry because of the model motorcycles that I don't remember exactly what I did to, but most likely destroyed in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry because of a keyboard I was particularly fond of, which I smashed on the floor in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry for the carnivorous plant sarracenia, which I threw in the garbage in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry because of the model cars I destroyed in an aggressive compulsive rage."

"I cry over an expensive collection of pipes and over a brown glass ashtray that I destroyed in an aggressive compulsive fit."

"I cry because of one person who annoyed me and I expressed my annoyance to her, but then all of a sudden she treated me like a cunt."

"I cry because of all the drawings, texts, papers and maps that I tore up, crumpled up and threw away in an aggressive compulsive rage shortly after they were finished."

"I cry. And I cry for every obsessive-compulsive thing I've destroyed that I've been lovingly obsessed with."

"I cry!"

He moved, wiped his tears, and walked on, but his spirit did not leave the pond with the ducks and pigeons for a very long time, just as he did not leave his thoughts of crying. He walked on.

All the while he remembered his grandmother reading to him from the book "Quantitative Harvest." He remembered how he didn't address his grandmother as "Grandma," but called her "Egg Woman," after a key character in Quantitative Harvest. Egg Woman, also known as "Tamiga".

He remembered that he, too, had experienced the Quantitative Harvest!

A sickening, mechanical and agonising feeling, but there was only so much truth and wisdom in it, as much truth and wisdom can be found in a feeling!

Was Quantitative Harvest about Air Conditioning? No one knows, but Quantitative Harvest has undoubtedly been in the lives of everyone you can think of. It was everywhere. This repetitive cycle of boring and weird plots that make no sense. Circumstantial twitches spinning counter-clockwise, quantitative harvests and all that awaits the pending meanings stepping into the role of the engineers of all that is meant to come. Quantitative harvests and fictional stories. So many words and so useless. So many decisions and so useless. So much nothing and so much overlooked. It was everywhere and it was excruciating to realise it.

Only streets, roads and shacks could be seen everywhere. Railway bridges, on which houses once stood, but have now been removed. And not the houses, but the railway stations that the houses were supposed to resemble. Pointy roofs and here and there some columns – miniature palaces.

A breathtaking and harrowing tangle of concrete, iron and glass.

"The colour-blindness of old photographs that once captured all this!"

Suddenly the pitched roofs were gone and the sloping railways were added.

Now that Fanatic was almost at the edge of town, it occurred to him that it might be an interesting experience to look out into the woods again after all. What they looked like, after this brief hiatus. How they had changed and what they were the same. Where his own place resided in this brief change. How he feels and what is in his head. How time and space flows through him.

Fog, fear and humidity have long ceased to be a reality of the forests. Boots digging into the mud, overflowing bogs, Brush Cutter, Mrs. Birdface, fallen pine needles and sputtering liquids of all sorts, the screeching of animals and the singing of birds. Of all this, only the birdsong now remained. Annoying and beautiful. And apart from that, it was dry everywhere and, despite the density of the trees, beautifully bright and sunny. It was a majestic dome and a pompous baroque villa of escape from nature. An ecstatic quintessence of retrospective strangeness. Familiar, alien and also new.

The landscape had long since ceased to be monotonous and bleak. It was colourful and beautiful. Deciduous and coniferous trees of all kinds, irregularly scattered.

Scattered around just as they had let themselves be scattered around. Endless meadows of infinity. No fog, no fear, no humidity, just a bit of nervousness about what would happen next.

Fanatic found a spot in the forest where the vegetation was a little thinner. Something of a forest clearing, but not quite. The trees were still there, just fewer of them. And there was more light. Oh, and he had a voice in his head that screamed. Screaming so hard it made him scream too. He uncrossed his legs, threw his arms out, and looked perpendicular to the sky. Dramatic theatrics staged by whispering his own life into empty space.

So many words and so unnecessary. So many decisions and so useless. So much nothing and so much overlooked. It was everywhere and it was excruciating to realise it.

"No! Not this world again! Oh, Air Conditioning! That wasn't you! That was me! That was us! Not this world again! Oh, Air Conditioning! May you be within me! May you be within us!"