

LAZAREVSKA, Alma



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Alma Lazarevska živi i radi u Sarajevu. Objavila knjigu eseja *Sarajevski pasijans*, roman *U znaku ruže* i knjigu priča *Smrt u muzeju moderne umjetnosti*.

ALMA LAZAREVSKA

How we killed the sailor

1.

If I mention it, he'll say I'm being petty and that's unworthy of me. He'll close his eyes and, as though he were speaking of someone who wasn't in the room, he'll say:

"I'll count to three to make it go away. There, she didn't say a thing. One, two, three. Forgotten!"

That's what he did when I pointed out that he was spreading the margarine too thickly on his slices of bread; when I remarked that he had given away almost the entire contents of the packet which the inhabitants of the besieged city occasionally received. He had left us only a little bag of green mints. I once told him they reminded me of my grandmother who had died long ago, my mother's blueeyed mother who was never hungry. It's true that we still had the cardboard packing. It burns well, but we won't use it. The inscription on it and the list of contents may one day feed some future story.

He closed his eyes and counted to three when he noticed but I won't say what. Maybe I'll use that too, when the shame passes, to feed some bitter story. For the time being, let it be forgotten.

The room is losing its box-shape. The light of the thin candle doesn't reach its corners. It creates a dim, uneven oval which shifts lazily if an unexpected current of air happens to touch its tiny wick. There is a transparent, trembling film over us. The few objects that are bathed in dim light, and the two of us, make up the inside of a giant amoeba. We are its organs, pulsating in the same rhythm, but not touching. Is an 'amoeba' that single-celled organism

covered by a transparent film we looked at down the school microscope? If you touched the drop of water it was floating in with the tip of a needle, it would slowly curl up. Right now in the besieged city, where tonight no fiery balls are falling and no whistling bullets are being fired from the other side of the encircling ring, there are thousands of films hovering like this. The people in these bubbles of light are silent. Frightened, tired or indifferent, they are silent. Or listening. Hoping for sleep. To overwhelm them and spare them this vigil.

He lit five cigarettes this evening and each time he used a new match. He put the dead match down in the saucer by the candle. In the ashtray lay cigarette butts and the thin red band from the cigarette packet.

"Why are you doing that?"

I sense that sleep won't come for a long time yet. But, as I utter the question I'm aware that it's unworthy. He doesn't reply. Now I have a reason to be angry and speak.

"Why are you doing that?"

I don't care what's worthy of me and what isn't. He looks at me and waves his hand, as though removing invisible headphones from his ears. He'll put them down for a moment and focus on me and my impatience.

"Doing what?"

"Using matches to light your cigarettes!"

"What am I supposed to use?"

Now he is prepared to put his invisible headphones right away. He is interested in learning something new, something he hasn't heard before. He is expecting me to tell him where the sun could rise apart from in the east. That someone is killed every day on his daily route through town, that he already knows.

"The candle! You know yourself that we haven't enough matches. They're hard to find. As the candle's burning, use it to light your cigarettes."

There are already too many words in our mute bubble. Added together and expressed like this, they are all unworthy. Without them, we are just two organs pulsating to the same rhythm until they are overcome by sleep. He looks at me as though he had stopped beside a stupid child who understood nothing and who had to have everything painstakingly explained to it.

"I can't!"

"You can't what?"

"Light cigarettes with a candle!"

"Why not?"

"Every time you do that, someone dies somewhere in the world."

If he had said this in daylight, or had there been a light bulb burning in the room, I would have laughed. I like it when a room is lit up like an operating theatre. I would even have remembered some images from films in which He lit cigarettes from the candle illuminating a dinner for two. First for Her, then for

himself. Gazing the whole time into Her eyes while the audience sighed deeply in the dark, in unison. Besides, whatever he does, at least one person dies somewhere in the world every second. There are even cold statistics about that. In books that the candlelight doesn't reach. That is why, suddenly and unexpectedly, his answer began to engage me like a holy law whispered into the ear of an unwilling novice.

2.

Maybe one day I'll scatter all those matches into his hand and say:

"That's how many people you've saved from dying!"

Then red-hot balls will no longer fall on the besieged city and people in it will not die with tiny pieces of hot iron in their bodies. They will again die of illness and old age. There will be light bulbs again and no one will be obliged to light cigarettes with candles. That will only happen in films.

I've been collecting the dedicated matches for three days now. I put them into an empty Solea cream tin. It has "contents: 250 g" written on it. But even if it didn't, I can assume from its size that it can hold another hundred or so matches. Sometimes I miss one and it ends up in the ashtray. In the morning I dig it out from under the butts. After that the tips of my forefinger and thumb stink all day and the child frowns when I touch the tip of his nose.

The matches he lays beside the saucer with the candle don't stink. There is even something agreeable about the slightly piquant smell from the phosphorous tip which remains even after it's extinguished. When I take the lid off the tin and count the matches, I'm aware only of the left-over smell of cream. It is sweetish, like a woman's deodorised armpit in summer. In them, crouching, rest the souls that have been saved. There are twenty-five of them for now. When I close the tin, they come to life. I listen to the sounds they make while the tin rests on my hand. Twenty-five saved souls rest on my hand. Today in the besieged city fifteen people died from one fiery ball (sent from the dark hill where the bad people went). No one wanted to save them. I'll see their faces tomorrow in the newspaper obituaries. What about these saved souls in my hand? How old are they? What do they look like? How much good is there in them? Do they know that there is a besieged city somewhere in the world with the saviours of their souls in it?

3.

I found out where this thing with the candle and the cigarette came from. The morning was calm, but as though damned. At such times I reach frantically for books from the shelves. I open them, leaf through them, put them down. An old bill fell out of one of them. On the page it slipped out of, in the last line, it said that every time you light a cigarette from a candle, somewhere in the

world a sailor dies. This was a book by Dario Dž., our former neighbour. He smoked a lot, lighting each cigarette from the last. Now Dario Dž. is somewhere out there in the wide world. And the sailors are in a harbour, somewhere on the sea, in a ship, in a tavern, in the bought embrace of some lady of the harbour. Are there any sailors where Dario Dž. is living now? On the other hand, if you were to throw that sentence published long ago back at its author, perhaps he wouldn't remember he had written it.

Like in that film, was it called *Night*? A man and a woman come out of a house after a long, barren night which has made them strangers. They sit down on the grass. Dawn is breaking. She takes an old letter out of her handbag. She reads it out loud. Emphasising every sentence. Declarations of love, words of tenderness, swearing devotion till eternity. When she has folded the letter, she puts it back in her bag and looks enquiringly at the man. He asks:

"Who wrote you that?"

"You!"

Dario's "somewhere in the world" is now in America. Everyone has his troubles, even if he isn't in a besieged city. But he doesn't have to think about matches and candles. He can switch on ten light bulbs and turn the room into a dazzling operating theatre with no dim corners nibbling at the space, where painful questions nest. He lights his cigarettes with a lighter. The first one in the morning, and then through the day, each one from the last. When he uses up his lighter he buys a new one. He can choose a new colour and trademark every time. And he's left the sailors' souls to us. He has off-loaded all their weight onto our weary souls which even sleep no longer spares.

"Do you know Dario's address in America?"

"Which Dario?"

"The writer Dario, Dario the writer."

"The writer? No, I don't. Why do you need it?"

"No reason."

4.

This morning I put only three matches in the tin. All three stank of old ash. There's still room in the tin. When I toss it from one end to the other, I hear cheerful sounds, the sounds of tiny souls sliding and bumping into each other. They are enjoying their loss of weight. When he saw me playing with the tin yesterday, the boy said:

"You're a child now. You've got a rattle. A really ugly one!"

Now I have to find another tin. Until I find a better one, I'll use the empty box which once held long, thick matches with yellow phosphorous tops. It says "Budapest" on it. I was there once, but I don't remember the building in the picture. It isn't ugly. But it wouldn't be worth going back to that city to see it.

This box won't last long. It's already worn at the edges. For the moment, there's a little ball of paraffin nesting in it.

While we sit beside the candle, he makes three or four of them in the course of an evening. He collects the dripping wax with his fingers. The hot touch isn't enough to burn him, but quite enough to make the chilly room cosier. Some of the wax slides onto the saucer. He forms a little ball of what remains between his fingers, with the tips of his thumb and forefinger. When it's half-formed, he puts it on his palm and rolls it with the forefinger of his other hand. Taking my arm, he holds it by the wrist and drops the little ball into the palm of my hand, it's quite cold now and smooth. There's no trace even of the short-lived warmth it picked up from his hand.

He touches the little ball in my hand with his forefinger again. Now I feel the touch of his fingertip as well as the slight tickle of the little wax ball. In the morning I collect the little balls from the table and place them in a glass jar with the words *Kompot švetsky* on the label. Under the first word is a picture of two blue plums. When I have collected a lot of little balls, I melt them into a narrow candle.

But this morning I also placed one wax ball in the box with "Budapest" written on it. That's when it happened!

Nothing particular preceded it. It had been an ordinary day. He came home late. With no sign of particular tiredness. That mute film already covered the room. At around midnight he took a cigarette out of the half-empty packet, put it to his lips but before he had separated one lip from the other, he made the face people make when their nose is itching and their hands are full. He moved his lower jaw upwards and his lips moved towards the tip of his nose. His upper lip, comically pinched, touched his nose. Nothing special.

I don't remember a single film scene where an actor did that before killing someone.

He reached for the candle with his right hand. He raised it, on its saucer, to which it was secured by a broad wax base. The saucer has a picture of a rococo lady in three colours on it. Grey, violet, gold. The lady is sitting on a swing and a long arc separates her from the young gallant who has, presumably, just pushed her away and is now waiting for her to come back. The wax base covered part of the picture. Part of the lady's face was hidden. You could see her wig, with its comic curls. And the lady's legs. They are painted violet and grey. Her feet are separated one from the other and have little narrow shoes strutting on them. The little golden shoes of a rococo lady. When the picture is completely revealed and daylight reaches into the room everything looks somehow different. Deprived of colour and action.

The candle in his hand was raised to the tip of the cigarette. A trickle of wax ran down the thin stalk out of the hollow round the wick. It covered the lady's left leg. For a time the leg could be made out under the little transparent pool of paraffin, until it cooled, solidified and became an opaque blot. Musing on

the lady's leg, I forgot the sailor standing on the deck of a ship sailing from one continent to another. He was pressing tobacco into a pipe with his broad thumb. He had turned his back to the wind. Did he strike a match? He raised it to his pipe. And fell. As though struck down. Like when one player's pawn knocks out his opponent's and it is no longer in his way.

5.

He is smoking. He was away for three days and two nights. In the besieged city men have duties which keep them out of the house a lot. Should I tell him that the night before he left he killed a sailor? I'll tell him.

Tomorrow I'll tell him:

"Put out your hands. Palms up."

I'll put the tin on his left hand, and the box which once held long matches on his right hand, I'll step away and say:

"Those are the souls you've saved and one you didn't."

Will he feel their different weight?

God, in these giant amoebas, in their mute membranes, words and games acquire a weight which should be forgotten with the morning.

"Give me a cigarette!"

"Since when have you smoked?"

"Since this evening."

He taps his packet and a cigarette slides out of it. I take it with the fingers of my right hand, with my left I lift up the saucer with the candle. A trickle of wax runs down the thin candle and in an instant the rococo lady's other leg disappears as well. Just the tip of one little shoe peers out, no bigger than the tip of a needle.

The lady is completely smothered by the wax base. Besides, her smiling gallant who is waiting for her to come back to him on the swing, there, he's vanished. His charming game has been stilled by the hard wax pool.

Now we are tranquil. For a moment at least. I inhale the cigarette smoke awkwardly and cough. There are no more sailors whose lives and souls depend on our tiny actions and decisions, weariness and forgetfulness. There are no more ladies and gallants whose game is in our hands. Just the two of us, alone, waiting for sleep. Today more people died in the besieged city. Perhaps their names and pictures in the obituaries will one day feed some future story. Like wax which you shape into a little ball and when it cools drop onto someone's open hand.

I shan't throw away those two boxes. I shan't empty them. I'll leave them somewhere, in one of the dark corners which gnaw at the square shape of the room. When this is all once again brilliantly lit up one day, shall I find them?

Shall I ask: "Who left this here?"

Shall I be able to say: "I did?"

Translated by Celia Hawkesworth

ALMA LAZAREVSKA

Kako smo ubili mornara

1.

Ako ga upozorim, reći će da je to sitničavost koja me je nedostojna. Zažmirit će i reći, kao da govori o nekom ko nije u sobi:

“Evo, brojat ću do tri da zaboravim. Kao da ništa nije rekla. Jedan, dva, tri. Zaboravljeno!”

Učinio je ovako kad sam ga opomenula da po kriškama kruha maže suviše debeo sloj margarina; kad sam glasno primijetila da je razdijelio skoro cijeli sadržaj paketa kakve u ograničenom broju, povremeno dobijaju stanovnici opkoljenog grada. Nama je ostavio samo kesicu zelenih mentol-bombona. One me, rekla sam mu jednom, podsjećaju na moju davno umrlu nanu, plavooku i nikad gladnu majku moje majke. Preostala nam je, doduše, kartonska ambalaža paketa. Mada dobro gori, nećemo je izložiti. Natpis na njoj i popis sadržaja možda jednom nahrani neku buduću priču.

Zažmirio je i brojao do tri kad je primjetio da ... ali ovo neću reći. Možda time, kad mine stid, nahranim neku oporu priču. Za sada, neka je zaboravljeno.

Soba je izgubila oblik kutije. Svjetlost tanke svijeće ne dopire do njenih uglova. Stvorila je mutan, nepravilan oval koji se lijeno pomjera kad nenadana struja vazduha odnekud dodirne sićušni fitilj. Nad nama je prozirna, drhtuća opna. Ovi malobrojni predmeti preliveni mutnom svjetlošću, i nas dvoje, činimo unutrašnjost džinovskog paramecijuma. Njegovi smo organi koji ujednačeno

pulsiraju, ali se ne dotiču. Je li paramecijum ona jednoćelijska životinja prozirne opne koju smo gledali pod školskim mikroskopom? Vrškom igle dotakneš kap u kojoj lebdi i ona se lijeno povija. Sad u opkoljenom gradu, u kom noćas ne padaju vatrene kugle i ne oglašava se fijuk metaka ispaljenih s onu stranu obruča, lebdi hiljadu ovakvih opni. Ljudi u njima šute. Uplašeni, umorni ili ravnodušni-šute. I osluškuju. Nadaju se snu. Treba da ih svlada i poštedi gluhog bdijenja.

On je večeras zapalio pet cigareta i svaki put kresnuo novo palidrvce. Ugašeno palidrvce odloži u tanjurić sa svijećom. U pepeljari su opušci i tanka crvena vrpca skinuta sa kutije sa cigaretama.

“Zašto to radiš?”

Slutim da san još dugo neće stići. Ali, dok izgovaram ovo pitanje i samoj mi se čini nedostojnim.

Ne odgovara.

Sad već imam razloga za ljutnju i za riječi.

“Zašto to radiš?”

Svejedno mi je šta je dostojno, a šta nedostojno. On me gleda i čini pokret rukom, kao da skida nevidljive slušalice sa ušiju. Na trenutak će ih odložiti i meni, nestrpljivoj, pokloniti pažnju.

“Šta ... radim?”

“Pripaljuješ cigarete šibicama!”

“A čime bih?”

Sad je već spreman da sasvim odloži nevidljive slušalice. Zainteresiran je da sazna nešto novo, nečuveno. Očekuje da mu kažem gdje sunce može izlaziti osim na istoku. Da putem kojim prolazi svaki dan, dnevno pogine jedan čovjek – to već zna.

“Svijećom! Znaš i sam da nemamo dovoljno šibica. Teško ih je nabaviti. Kad već gori svijeća, pripaljuj njom cigarete.

Već je previše riječi u našoj gluhoj opni. Ovako složene i izgovorene, sve su nedostojne. Bez njih, bili bismo dva organa koja ujednačeno pulsiraju dok ih, nijeme, ne svlada san.

On me gleda kao da je stao pred blesavo dijete koje ništa ne shvata i sve mu treba potanko objašnjavati.

“Ne mogu!”

“Šta ... ne možeš?”

“Pripaljivati cigaretu svijećom!”

“Zašto?”

“Svaki put kad to neko uradi, negdje u svijetu umre neki čovjek.”

Da je ovo izgovorio pri dnevnoj svijetlosti, ili da u sobi svijetli sijalica, nasmijala bih se. Volim kad je soba osvijetljena kao operaciona sala. Tad bih se čak i sjetila i nekih filmskih slika u kojima On svijećom koja obasjava večeru za dvoje pripaljuje cigarete. Prvo Njoj, zatim sebi. Sve vrijeme gleda Nju u oči i publika iz mraka uzdahne jednoglasno i duboko.

Uostalom, ma šta radio, svakog sekunda u svijetu umre bar jedan čovjek. Postoji i neka hladna statistika koja govori o tome. Tamo je, u knjigama do kojih ne dopire svjetlost svijeće. To je razlog što me njegov odgovor odjednom i nenadano počinje obavezivati kao sveto pravilo izgovoreno nevoljnom iskušeniku na uho.

2.

Možda mu jednom prospem na dlan sva ova palidrvca i kažem:

“Evo koliko si ljudi poštedio umiranja!”

Tada neće padati usijane kugle po opkoljenom gradu i ljudi u njemu neće ginuti sa sićušnim komadima vrelog željeza u tijelu. Umirat će opet od bolesti i starosti. Svijetlit će opet sijalice i niko neće biti primoran da cigarete pripaljuje svijećom. Bit će toga još samo u filmskim slikama.

Već tri dana skupljam posvećena palidrvca. Odlazem ih u ispražnjenu kutiju Solea kreme. Na njoj piše: Vsebina 250 ccm. A i da ne piše, mogu po njenoj veličini pretpostaviti da može primiti još stotinjak palidrvca. Poneko promakne i u pepeljaru. Iščeprkam ga ujutro ispod opušaka. Jagodice kažiprsta i palca mi poslije toga cijeli dan zaudaraju pa se dječak mršti kad mu dotaknem vrh nosa.

Palidrvca koja odloži uz tanjurić sa svijećom ne smrde. Čak prija blago razdražujući miris fosforne glavice, preostao i nakon što je sagorila. Kad skinem poklopac sa limene kutije i brojim palidrvca, osjećam samo preostali miris kreme. Slatkast je, kao dezodorisana ljetna ženska pazuha. U njima, šćučurene, poživaju spašene duše. Za sada ih je dvadeset i pet. Kad zatvorim kutiju, ožive. Osluškujem im šumove dok mi kutija počiva na dlanu. Dvadeset i pet spašenih duša počiva mi na dlanu. Danas je u opkoljenom gradu od jedne vatrene kugle (stigla je sa tamnog brda na koja su se ispeli zli ljudi) poginulo petnaest ljudi. Njih niko nije htio da spase. Sutra ću im lica vidjeti u novinskim osmrtnicama. A ove spašene duše, na mom dlanu? Koliko su one stare? Kakva lica imaju? Koliko je dobra u njima? Znaju li da negdje na svijetu postoji opkoljeni grad i u njemu čuvari njihovih života?

3.

Saznala sam otkud mu ovo sa svijećom i cigaretom. Jutro je bilo mirno ali kao ukleto. Tada nasumice posežem za knjigama na polici. Otvaram ih, ovlaš listam, odlažem ... Iz jedne je knjige ispaao neki stari račun. Na stranici s koje je skliznuo, u posljednjem redu, piše da svaki put kad cigaretu pripališ sa svijećom, negdje u svijetu umre mornar. Ovo je knjiga Darija Dž., našeg bivšeg susjeda. Pušio je mnogo i cigaretu pripaljivao jednu na drugu. Sada je i Dario Dž. negdje u svijetu. A mornari su u nekoj luci, negdje na moru, na nekom brodu, u nekoj lučkoj krčmi, u nekom neplaćenom zagrljaju neke lučke dame ... Ima li jih tamo gdje danas živi Dario Dž.? Uostalom, da danas piscu poturiš njegovo davno objavljenu rečenicu, možda se ne bi ni sjetio da je njegova.

Kao u onom filmu ... zvao se *Noc?* Žena i muškarac izlaze iz kuće nakon duge i puste noći koja ih je učinila strancima. Sjede na travnjaku. Sviće. Ona iz torbice vadi nako staro pismo. Čita ga glasno. Naglašava svaku rečenicu. Ljubavne izjave, riječi nježnosti, predane zakletva, prizivanje vječnosti ... Kad sklopi pismo, vrati ga u torbicu i pogleda upitno muškarca. On pita:

“Ko ti je to napisao?”

“Ti?”

Darijevo “negdje u svijetu” ja sad Amerika. Svako ima svoju muku, makar i nije u opkoljenom gradu. Ali, ne mora misliti o šibicama i svijećama. Može uključiti deset sijalica i od sobe načiniti blještavu operacionu salu bez mutnih uglova koji nagrízaju prostor i u njima se gnijezde mučna pitanja. Cigarete pripaljuje upaljačem. Prvu jutranju upaljačem, a onda tokom dana cigaretu od cigaretu. Kad potroši upaljač ili ga izgubi, kupi drugi. Može svaki put izabrati novu boju i oznaku. A nama je ostavio sve mornarske duše. Svu njihovu težinu je svalio na naše umorne duše koje više ne štedi ni san.

“Znaš li Darijevu adresu u Americi?”

“Kojeg Darija?”

“Pisca Darija, Darija pisca.”

“Pisca? Ne znam. Što će ti?”

“Onako.”

4.

Jutros sam u limenu kutiju odložila samo tri palidrvca. Sva tri smrde na opuške. U kutiji ima još slobodnog prostora. Kad je prebacujem iz ruke u ruku, iz nje dopiru vedri zvuci, zvuci sićušnih duša koje se

kližu i lako sudaraju. Uživaju u gubitku težine. Dječak je, kad me je juče vidio kako se igram kutijom, rekao:

“Sada si ti dijete. Imaš zvečku. Baš ružnu zvečku imaš.”

Sad moram imati i drugu kutiju. Dok ne nađem bolju, poslužiti će ispraznjena kutija u kojoj su nekad bila druga, debela palidrvca sa žutim fosfornim glavicama. Piše: Budapest. Bila sam jednom u tom gradu ali se građevine sa slike ne sjećam. Nije ružna. Ali zbog nje ne bih vrijedilo ponovo putovati u taj grad.

Ova će se kutija uskoro raspasti. Već je iskrzana po ivicama. Za sada, u njoj počiva parafinska kuglica.

On ih, dok sjedimo uz svijeću, napravi po tri ili četiri tokom jedne večeri. Prstima prihvati parafin koji curi. Mora da mu tada prija vrela dodir nedovoljan da opeče, a sasvim dovoljan da prohladnu sobu učini prisnijom. Dio parafina sklizne na tanjirić. Od onog što preostane između prstiju, on jagodicama palca i kažiprsta oblikuje kuglicu. Napola oblikovanu je spusti na dlan i valja kažiprstom druge ruke. Uzme moju ruku, prihvati je u zglobu, na dlan mi izpusti kuglicu, već sasvim ohlađenu i glatku. U njoj nije preostala čak ni kratkotrajno primljena toplina njegovog dlana.

Kuglicu na mom dlanu opet dodiruje kažiprstom. Osim lakog golicanja parafinske kuglice, sad osjećam i dodir jegodice njegovog prsta. Ujutro pokupim parafinske kuglice sa stolića i odložim ih u teglu na čijoj naljepnici piše *Kompot švetsky*. Ispod prve riječi su nacrtane dvije modre šljive. Kad skupim mnogo kuglica, pretopim ih u usku svijeću.

Jutros sam, međutim, parafinsku kuglicu, jednu, odložila u onu kutiju na kojoj piše Budapest. Desilo se!

Ništa naročito nije prethodilo. Dan nije bio naročit. On je stigao kasno. Bez znakova naročitog umora. Već je ona gluha opna bila u sobi. Oko ponoći je uzeo cigaretu iz poluprazne kutije, prinio je ustima i prije nego je usne odvojio jednu od druge, učinio je grimasu koju ljudi prave kad ih svrbi nos, a ruke su im zauzete. Ništa naročito.

Ne sjećam se niti jedne filmske slike sa glumcem koji to radi prije nego nekoga ubije.

Desnom je rukom posegnuo za svijećom. Podigao ju je zajedno sa tanjurićem za koji je prionula širokom parafinskom stopom. Na tanjuriću je slika rokoko dame, u tri boje. Sivo, ljubičasto, zlatno. Dama sjedi u ljuljački i drugi je luk dijeli od kavalira koji ju je, valjda, odgurnuo pa sad čeka da mu se vrati. Parafinska stopa krije dio slike. Ne nazire se dio daminog lica. Vidi se perika, komično ukovrčana. I damine noge. Obojene su u ljubičasto i sivo. Stopala su odmaknuta jedno od drugog i na njima se kočopere

uske cipelice. Zlatne cipelice rokoko dame. Kad je slika sasvim otkrivena i u sobu dopire dnevna svijetlost sve deluje nekako drukčije. Lišeno boje i događaja.

Svijeća u njegovoj ruci je prinesena vršku cigarete. Niz tanko stablo slio se parafinski mlaz iz udubljenja koje okružuje fitilj. Pokrio je daminu lijevu nogu. Neko se vrijeme izpod prozirne parafinske barice nazirala, sve dok se ona nije ohladila, ukrutila i postala neprozirna zakrpa. Zabavljena daminom nogom zaboravila sam mornara koji je stajao na palubi broda na putu sa jednog na drugi kontinent. Širokim je palcem natiskivao duhan u lulu. Okrenuo je leđa vjetru. Kresnuo šibicu? Prinio ju je luli. I pao. Kao pokošen. Kao kad igrač pionom kvrcne drugog igrača i ovaj mu više ne stoji na putu.

5.

On puši. Tri dana i dvije noći je bio odsutan. U opkoljenom gradu muškarci imaju obaveza zbog kojih mnogo izbivaju iz kuće. Da li da mu kažem da je noć prije posljednjeg izbivanja ubio mornara? Reći ću mu.

Suradan ću mu reći:

“Izpruži ruke. Dlanovima prema gore.”

Spustit ću mu na lijevi dlan limenu kutiju, na desni kutiju u kojoj su nekad bila druga palidrvca. Odmaknut ću se i reći:

“To su duše koje si poštudio i jedna koju nisi.”

Hoće li osjetiti njihovu različitu težinu?

Beže, kako u ovim džinovskim paramecijumima, u njihovim gluhim opnama, riječi i igre stiču težinu koju jutrom treba zaboraviti.

“Daj mi cigaretu!”

“Od kada pušiš?”

“Od večeras ... eto.”

Lako potresa kutiju i iz nje klizi jedna cigareta. Prihvatam je prstima desne ruke, lijevom podižem sviječicu i tanjurić. Parafinski mlaz curi niz usko stablo i u trenu nestaje i druga noga rokoko dame. Viri tek vrh jedne cipelice, ne veći od uboda iglom.

Dama je sasvim zagušena parafinskom stopom. Uostalom, i njen smiješni kavalir koji je čeka da mu se u luku, na ljuljački vrati ... Evo je nestao. Njihova koketna igra pritisnuta je sada krutom parafinskom stopom.

Sad smo spokojni. Bar koji trenutak. Nevješto udišem duhanski dim i kašljucam. Nema više mornara čiji životi i duše zavise od naših sitnih postupaka i odluka, umora i zaborava. Nema kavalira

i dama čija je igra u našim rukama. Nas dvoje sami, iščekujemo san. Danas su opet ginuli ljudi u opkoljenom gradu. Možda njihova imena i slike u osmrtnicama, jednom nahrane neku buduću priču. Kao parafin koji oblikuješ u kuglicu pa je ohlađenu spustiš na nečiji otkriveni dlan.

Neću bacati one dvije kutije. Neću ih isprazniti. Ostavit ću ih negdje, u nekom od mračnih kutova koji nagrízaju četvrtasti oblik sobe. Hoću li jednom, kad sve opet bude blještavo osvijetljeno, na njih naići?

Hoću li upitati:

“Ko je ovo ovdje ostavio?”

Hoću li znati reći:

“Ja!”