

FLORENTIN SMARANDACHE

Defeated Tree



2009

Defeated

Tree

(Short stories, children stories, short theatre, verses)

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SHORT STORIES

1-0 (?)

“Central Stadium” from Craiova ... fine weather ... 50,000 spectators pouring into the stadium from neighboring communes and villages ...”

Funseekers and spectators headed straight for the overcrowded grandstands with backgammon games under their arms, playing cards in their pockets and wine bottles hidden under a coat or stashed in a bag. The crowd sprawled on the stairs and in the center of the stands near the nation’s great seal, and also climbed onto the roofs of neighboring apartment buildings.

Cassette-phones leaked music – unofficial, of course – in counterpoint to the government-sanctioned anthems streaming from the stadium loudspeaker.

The teams had come out for a warm-up a quarter of an hour earlier. The fans applauded and cheered while the students flooded onto the grounds.

The audience, as always, showed its sympathy for the police team by hooting and whistling derisively. More than one person was thinking: How could anyone favor the cops when they beat you, persecute you, put you in jail ... ?

Sebastian Domoziņa spoke into the microphone: “The match began about two minutes ago with the furious attack of the home team ... Cîrțu dribbles, enters the penalty box, tries to shoot... keeps control of the ball ... there’s danger at the Dynamoviste gate ... Cîrțu into 6-meter square ... sho-o-o-o-ts ... and the ball goes sideways.”

A reporter, behind the net, shot a picture of Cîrțu’s right boot as it flew off his foot.

The gallery sang the “National Hymn” of Oltenia:

“Come on, Craiova; come on, students!”

“Come on and score!” (They had failed to score.)

The score was still close. The blue flags waved in the grandstands. The spectators made caps out of the newspapers – which they hadn’t bothered to read. (The papers, after all, had been specially printed for the match.)

“Get your roasted sunflower seeds!”

“Get your peanuts!”

At the central stadium the places were occupied three to four hours before the beginning of the game. The chief of the gallery, Ostrovski, set the tone:

“Go, go, Știin-ța [Science]!”

(To a spectator next to him): “Cheeky boy. Why don’t you yell? If you’re not going to show your support, then get out of here!”

Some spectators wore blue- and white-striped caps with “University” emblazoned on the peaks. The students screamed at an ear-splitting volume. The stand was like an erupting volcano.

“Go, Dynamo!” one screamed, as a bottle smashed over his head.

It was an unequal duel between the galleries. On the turf, the crowd boiled over with excitement.

“Huuuuu!”

The referee, Sever Drăgulici from Turnul Severin, was severe. The Dynamovists faulted, faulted and faulted again. Fans groaned, vocalizing their anger:

“Butch-ers! Butch-ers!”

The referee amiably handed yellow and red cards to players from Bănie.

“Huuu, referee!”

The match was broadcast on TV, but the Oltens couldn’t stay home. They were drawn to the blood on the field, needing to witness the battle firsthand.

The host team attacked.

“Come on, Number 10!”

“Kick it to Number 8! Can’t you see him, blind man?”

In the local newspaper a journalist voiced his opinion about the day’s meet: “*Prognostication 1*: It doesn’t matter who the University of Craiova would have played—even Bayern München! At football all inexperienced people are experienced: Uncle Stan Păpușe, uncle Castană, writers, journalists ...”

The cattle bell sounded: TA, TA, ...TA, TA, TA ..., TAA, TAA! The people in the stands rose.

Cămătaru failed beautifully at the five-meter line!

“Oaaaa!”

The referee gave the command for a corner shot.

“Go, go, you black devil!”

“Go, go, referee!!”

The trumpet blasted. The “national flag” of Craiova waved while the footballers breathed in unison.

“Hei, Hei! Come, Știin-ța!”

“Hei, Hei! Come, Știin-ța!”

Pregnant gypsy women with pleated skirts and flowered kerchiefs, barefoot, with bags smelling of roasted seeds called, “Come on, boys, we have sunflower and pumpkin seeds!”

Beldeanu succeeded in sending the ball into the opposite gate, but was out of bounds. The coach shouted hoarsely: “You’re supposed to be kicking, duffer! That was a shooting, you imbecile!” Ten minutes were still disputed from the first half. The hosts attacked with relish but the guests defeated them handily. The score was maintained.

Zero-zero ...

“Hey, just one more goal to the break!”

Players gathered. Quiet reigned in the stands, with outcries on the ground. Powerful autumn sun. The men undressed and sunbathing (might as well, since they couldn’t watch the game). One cracked seeds.

Comical teenagers, boys and girls, tied bluish ribbons and scarves over their windblown hair, and frolicked on the grounds. They stomped their feet.

The Dynamo team was now faultless, obstructing their opponents, and frequently beating them black and blue.

The referee whistled, signaling the finish of the first game.

“The cops should arrest him!”

During the break the lark-like voice of Maria Ciobanu sang out of the rusty megaphone of the stadium. Then, “Rivers of Babylon” by Boney M followed.

The perfumed and powdered chiefs sat in the shaded tribune section. Near the scoreboard sat the working people, the soul of the team.

The players were announced; at every name the audience applauded. Both teams' alternate players – the juniors -- entered the field and made a show.

The second game began.

“Știin-ța, Cra-io-va.”

“Today we want vic-to-ry!”

Oltenians subdued the Dynamovists in their own square. Dinu went into overtime.

“Dinu the dope! Dinu the dope!”

The guest team drove the ball to their goalkeeper.

“Dumb! Idiotic!”

The fight between students/undergraduates and police (Dynamovists) continued.

Ștefănescu made a few feints to Dudu Georgescu. The audience laughed: Haaa ... the ball went to Georgescu.

“Look at yourself, Dude! Look at yourself, Dude!”

“Come on, boot! (of gold) Come on ... silly goose.”

Țălнар's head passed under the bar, but his body slammed into the goalbox. Again an attack of the police (Dynamo) ensued. Augustin also sent the ball over the crossing bar.

“Augustine, go to Chitila: Hey, go to the bone factory!”

Anecdotes about the policemen were told.

The junior player of Craiova escaped from a counterattack.

“Go! Go!”

“Come on, Child! Come on, heyyyy!”

The hosts were timorous. The people in the stands, like a snake, swallowed them.

“It's goal, it's goal, it's goal, it's goal, it's goal!”

“Goo-al! Goo-al!”

Dinu mowed it from the back, like (Radu) Mower (Cosașu).

The line referee let the play go on, to the advantage of the Dynamo team (he is only human, after all ... and fears the police).

“Who's that camel? Is this all he's got to show us?”

“Go to hell, Mister Referee. You're a pig!”

Cămătaru launched into an incursion on the entire field. The attacking center ran, ran, ran after the ball as it went out of bounds.

“Come on, rocket!”

Donose slipped without the ball.

“Hey Costică, fall down like a horse!”

... The Oltenian footballers dominated. The Dynamovists scored, man by man. In a cascading series of blunders, the opportunities to score failed one by one. The players gathered near the Dynamo's gate. The attackers threatened Eftimescu's gate. There was a pass to Crișan. The ball veered sharply to the right. Crișan tried crossing into the defensive wall, but was entangled by a Dynamovist lateral back. He succeeded in penetrating the defense, only without the ball; the ball went out by the gate.

(Crișan was the man who passed through the wall.)

“Come on, Marcule, get out of the shade!”

“Come on, wings!”

The fans hoped their team would revive.

Tevi released the ball randomly. Beldeanu intercepted and transmitted a (d)effective pass. The hosts had the initiative but they couldn't change the scoreboard... a new position for an attack. Negriță raised the ball at the edge of the 16-meter line, but the toucher signalled from the side. And the Dynamovists escaped with clean hands ...

(The Craioviens didn't know that the laws of the country didn't permit the marking of a goal to the Dynamo team.)

The audience protested every decision of the referee – even the wrong ones!

The referees and masseurs for the two teams helped an alternate player warm up on the sidelines. There was a pause in play while the ball was removed, so that the players could be changed.

“Change the referee!”

“Spectacular technical execution by Balaci.”

“Ilie on the field!”

Irimescu kicked with his left into his right. He lofted the ball into a great beauty of an arc!

“Hey, block, OK? Shrug your shoulders, why don't you?”

Eftimescu again kicked the ball from the small corner (with the aid of the line referee.) (The government observer closed his eyes – must have been an eyelash that got into his eye.) The stadium clock showed 15 minutes to go.

The pressure was on from the Universitatea team. The Police intervened, increasing the pressure. The Dynamovists executed free strokes in the occupied zone.

Radios played at the highest volume transmitted the matches of the VIIIth tour during the first round of the A Division football league.

Rhythmical, cadenced, clapping, the gallery began again:

“Știin-ța! Ta, ta, ta!”

“Știin-ța! Ta, ta, ta!”

Cigarette butts, spit, seed hulls, torn tickets, fragments of glass, scraps of paper ... Craiovean sustained the attack, and Bucharestian mounted its defence.

“O le o le o le ooo!”

“O le o le o le o!”

Cheran slipped, and lost control of the ball.

“Huo, old timer!”

Sătmăreanu, the Camel, threw the ball into the stand.

“To the clubs, heyyy!”

A player launched the ball from the sideline in favor of the blue team.

“Come on, move! Move!”

“Ungureanu takes over. Giolgău escapes from the counter defender. The players exchange the ball, back and forth, again and again on the field. They shoot from the high center of the Bucharestian square. Eftimescu plunges beside the ball and unbelievably misses it – to the applause of the spectators. Cămătaru registers, marks ...Goaaaaaal! ...”

There was an uproar in the stadium, undescrivable joy, petards thrown on the grounds, hooting and hollering. Torches were lit from bundles of scrap paper. The volcano erupted.

“And I feel more Juvete”(Olteanian) than I have ever felt, and my soul embraces the whole stadium. It raises me like an ocean wave.”

“Gh. Minoiu, do you hear me? ... Register the change of score at Craiova from the 79th minute ...”

But nobody understood anybody.

In the stand it was noted that F.R.F. couldn't get a valid goal, because they kept ambushing the other team; meanwhile the Dynamovist team was caught in the wrong position.

The match moved again from the center as if the host team were exploring the grounds. Universitatea gained as a result. The Oltenians put their passing machine to work. Drăgulici, the referee, consulted his clock (not being ill). And then ... the final whistle:

“Fiuuu! Fiuuu! Fiuuu!”

The players went to the locker rooms.

GIONI

It was past midnight ...the sky was black with clouds—a starless dome. Quiet had settled over the Doctor Inn. A few drops of rain fell, prelude to a drizzle. Autumn was on the way.

From the inn, the noise of pacing and the metal door groaning.

“Don’t let me catch you here again!” the powerful voice of the waiter boomed, as he gathered the table cloths and turned the chairs upside down onto the tables. Then he swept up the glass pieces on the floor and used the broom to threaten those who remained.

They hadn’t answered ... they were used to such scenes ... their silhouettes vanished into the night, melting into the darkness that became the master...

“Do we go by car?” the bearded man asked, thinking that it was six kilometers to the city.

“There’s no other way to go!” Gioni said, swaying drunkenly.

“Well, but ...” Sonia wanted to intervene ...

The young men were looking at each other and laughed between themselves. They had been friends for a long time and they had had many adventures.

That evening Gioni had drunk a lot. His belly hurt. He had a splitting headache. He swore not to drink, but this wasn’t the first time he’d made that oath. His mind raced and dark thoughts shone through his big, green eyes: *“The Old Man” has scented something*, Gioni thought. Gioni had tried to find out what it was, affecting naïveté while he examined him closely, but meanwhile, the young man began looking for a better hiding place. After he left the house, “Old Crock” rummaged through the drawers. *How much longer would this charade go on? Gioni mused. If he finds the back drawer ... Maybe he didn’t look there*, he thought, trying to calm himself. He had seen him rummaging among the things, but he had pretended disinterest.

The chilled air, even colder now that it was night, enlivened him. Locks of hair, which he’d first grown long in his student days, fell on his shoulders, locks disheveled and sticky, dirty black. He tried to go to the right, but his legs seemed to be of wax. On his right, taller than he, stinking of drink, the Long-bearded Man was crawling – a bony individual whose lateral baldness was rimmed by curly hair; he wore a red-checked shirt, buttoned by a single button that allowed a view of his hairy and sun-burnt breast, and that hung down at back over the patched and worn-out blue-jeans with the partially obscured label that said “Brooklyn.” They supported each other, hardly moving forward. Their liquor-soaked heads swung to the left and right like pendulums. To and fro they staggered, stopping to cling to a tree or a pole so not to fall. After discerning where they were, they raised their eyes and started going slowly. At times they became entangled in their own feet and started muttering insults. They were pub people – people who lived on junk food, and frequented coffee bars and pubs. A few paces in front of them to the side, Sonia huddled, turning to look at them foggily from time to time. Large hips and thick legs supported her bulky woman’s body, her forceful shoulders, and she walked like a man. Her brown hair, parted in the middle and fastened with a barrette, covered the collar of her blouse; her blue jeans, soaked by the rain, were rough to the touch.

They had reached the lake. On its opposite shore, the faint neon lights reflected on the greenish-black surface of the water. The rain kept falling; drops of water drilled the pavement so heavily they formed parallel lines till they hit the street or were swallowed by the dirty mouth of the lake.

Gioni and Long-bearded Man were soaked.

The water was dripping slowly down their foreheads and noses, leaving on their faces the signature of time. They forgot Sonia, who, wet to her bones, walked as awkwardly as they did.

He remembered that very morning he had come by his Mercedes to the swimming pool from the airport where he had found the Long-bearded Man with a lady, and afterwards they went to the lake ... but he couldn't be sure where he had parked. He tried to remember: they had all gone to the inn and then –

Thoughts tossed about in his mind, but he sent them away.

The repetitive drumming of the rain drops slackened and after a while disappeared. They groped about, trying to find their way. In an alley that led to the main highway, the car was waiting. It was as he had left it. They were overtaken by a crazy gaiety. Gioni rifled through his pockets, looking for his keys. After several unsuccessful tries, he opened the car door. He grabbed the steering wheel. Sonia sat by the driver; in the back seat; the Long-bearded Man lay, stretched out his full length; he tried to rise on his elbows, but he was too weak. He gathered up his strength, and rested his shoulder against the left door. His head collapsed into the velvet of one of the seats; his legs, separated, extended out the door.

The street went up an easy slope and took a round-about route on the right. The driver started the engine. The great rattling noise deafened him and the bitter-tasting air from the car aggravated his headache; the road began curving and the trees tossed around him. In his mind, the Old Man appeared, saying to him: “You think that I don't know, don't you?” He put his head on the steering wheel. He wanted to get there as fast as possible. The highway seemed vast. He raised his head again. Next to him, Sonia was dozing. From behind, he heard raucous snores, punctuated by a nicotine cough. He tried to calm himself. He lit a cigarette. He had only “Carpați”; he had smoked the other two packs of Kents with Sonia and the Long bearded Man. He took a deep draw of smoke into his chest and puffed out a wreath. He put the cigarette in his mouth. He pushed the accelerator to the floor; the car jerked and started instantly ... it was in fourth gear. Scared, he jammed on the brake with his right foot. The back door smacked powerfully and opened. Sonia quivered. The jolting dizzied her.

“What is it? What is it?” Long-bearded Man mumbled in his sleeping. The driver couldn't answer. Nor did he try. Eyes wide, and dropping the cigarette, he shifted into first gear and passed on the right. In the yellow neon light the pavement seemed to go on forever. His face sagged from lack of sleep, with deep, dark rings under his eyes. It all seemed monotonous, absurd: they passed the telephone poles one by one; they ticked off the houses as if they were counting beads ... and then there was the silence, the silence as of a tomb. How many times had he driven this route? He knew every house; he counted the poles, too. He knew where he was even with his eyes closed.

The car drove slowly ... for a moment, he dozed. His body sagged against the steering wheel. His eyes were half opened. He forced them stay open ... the snoring of

the Long-bearded Man irritated him. He wanted to wake him so that he would talk to him and keep him awake. But in vain.

Would he ever reach home? He stared ahead, but didn't see anything. He was sleeping but his eyes were open. Far, very far away, the light of the city lifted onto the horizon like a balloon.

Inside the car a heavy stench hung in the air. Loops of smoke rose and fell in the air-tight compartment. He had sworn never to smoke again. Gioni tried to keep his head straight and his forehead up. Suddenly, with a shock, he saw ahead of him, about two hundred meters, a policeman at the entrance of the city. He jolted awake. He thought: *To stop, or not to stop...* He shivered. He was driving slowly so he could see better, but he couldn't grasp what was before his eye. He rubbed them. He rubbed them again but still his vision was blurred. He breathed more calmly. He rolled the glass down and felt the fresh, damp air against his cheek. It helped.

He entered the Bucharest Way. At the crossroad the car stopped. Long-bearded Man lived with a retired aunt. Both lived on her retirement; he didn't work. The aunt tolerated him because he was her only nephew.

Gioni muttered, bored:

"Get out of here!" he yelled at the bearded one, who had slept till then.

"Stay on your feet, cousin!" grumbled the Long-bearded man, as he scrambled to get out of the car on rubbery legs. "Hey, Sonia, aren't you getting out?" he demanded, and opened her side door.

"I'll get off in the center," she answered calmly.

"Hear, little strap, do you want to stay with that greenhorn?" said the Long-bearded Man, pulling her.

The girl resisted him; Gioni regarded him, puzzled. After all, why "greenhorn"? Because he was older than the other by a few years? He had thought of him as being a friend ... a member of the same tribe. And now for a woman ... Feeling offended, he retorted:

"Go away!" And unexpectedly, he pulled the girl who was half outside back inside.

Long-bearded Man slipped on his back.

"I'm going to flatten you!" Long-bearded Man cried to the driver hoarsely.

He dove through the back door, striking at Gioni. Sonia cried out while the men swore at each other. The driver accelerated and the car lurched forward suddenly. The bearded guy just had time to throw himself out of the way. He fell rolling and watched them as they went, eyes flashing with anger. "He stole her from me!" he muttered.

The doors rattled as the car sped down the road.

The girl mumbled something. Gioni didn't deign to answer. In his head, he heard the voice of the old man: "So it goes, if you keep company with someone like *him!*"

He felt a warm liquid on his forehead, dripping onto his lips.

Sonia took out a Marlboro from her purse and began to smoke calmly, leisurely. She started chattering, saying she was an undergraduate in Bucharest and she liked music; she liked to download Grunding, ABBA, Boney M, and the Bee Gees...

The driver wasn't listening. He kept silent. He wasn't attracted by this unformed mass of flesh. He struggled to hide the pain he felt.

At three o'clock he was in bed. The city had remained solitary and there was only the rustle of the persistent wind, which still troubled the peace of the night.

In the room where Gioni was sleeping there was perfect disorder. The Hungarian cards with sexy women lay in an organised heap on the table, along with empty bottles or half-full ones with brandy and bitters. The stifled wheezing of a soundly sleeping man drew Gioni's attention; from his room he could see into the next one, where a man's left hand hung easily off the bed, while beneath the filthy, cigarette-burned blanket, half spilling onto the dusty, threadbare carpet, two legs, stubbled with black hair, hung out. Next to the bed lay a demolished cassette and on the floor some empty packs and cigarette butts. On the night table, the tobacco-stained ashtray was spilling over with reeking cigarette butts.

He was chilled to the bone with cold. He stayed huddled under the blanket. On the chair, near the window, his clothes hung in heaps. They were his good clothes – the clothes he dressed up in – as well as his every-day clothes. He began to think obsessively about meeting his "Old Father." *Might he have known?*

"Nelule," came the strange voice of his mother. "Get up, dear, and drink your coffee!" Nelu stretched again, opened his mouth sleepily and turned on the other side. His mother shook him, trying to awaken him:

"It's late, Nelule, and we have to go to work. We'll have visitors."

"Leave me in peace!" the young man murmured.

The telephone from the next room rang suddenly, again and again. His mother ran to answer it. "Hello?" ... "Yes!" ... "Yes, immediately!" ... He heard footsteps. Nelu realised his mother was looking for him. He opened his bleary eyes. In a glass window of the bookcase, coloured bottles of Scotch whisky and cherry wine laughed back at him ... packs of Kent, Marlboro, Pall Mall ... they were laughing at him too. Above the bookcase, a clock ticked hurriedly, showing the hour to be noon. For years, Gioni went to bed in the wee hours and got up when the day was well advanced. He raised his head slowly, slowly so as not to feel giddy. His mouth had a bitter taste—alkaline mixed with spit. He went to the phone, groggy with sleep, sullen. Thinking it would be Jeni, his last conquest, he felt happier. But his joy flattened when he realized that the voice at the other end of the line was that of the Long-bearded Man.:

"Hey, I'm going to drop in on you this evening! Well have a beer and play some poker!"

Gioni hung up. He knew that Long-bearded Man was looking for an advantage, a way to trick him.

He doesn't have any money, Gioni thought, because he lost it all betting with the gypsy men.

The telephone rang again, but he didn't answer. He went to his room. His head was foggy and he was trying not to move it. He caught on to the bookcase, the table and finally threw himself on the bed. He remained a while without moving. In his ears the cassette recorder tape sounded in total confusion: "Shake, shake, shake, senora", mixing hoarsely with other voices:

"And another time, and another time..."

"Yes, we'll drink more next time!"

He closed his eyes to sleep a bit. He saw an amalgam of colours, but mostly a red spot that disappeared in a black background; the colours mixed and separated again.

He forced his eyes open. He saw himself in a pub drinking all in one draught a bottle of beer after betting with Long-bearded Man. He remembered hearing him say ironically:

“Bravo, Gioni, you will go far!”

Indeed he, he had gotten far from his dreams. Since he had been expelled he kept drinking. He drowned his troubles, as he liked to say. Images from his life were like slides in his mind. He wanted to go to the bathroom; he raised his groggy head and his belly churned as he tried to block thoughts of the night before. Suddenly, he vomited, spraying the blanket, the carpet. Once he was better, he walked unsteadily to the bathroom. He stared into the mirror. He looked so old. He tried to laugh, showing his carious teeth, yellowed by tobacco. His greasy, unwashed face was unshaven, sparse hairs of his beard growing long. He looked like a hippie. He began to scratch his head with both hands. He was in a lamentable situation. “No, it’s not possible that this is my life!” he said, staring into the mirror.

He made his “toilet,” hacking up some phlegm and belching powerfully. He threw some water on his eyes and went back to his room. The air was rank. He had stunk up the entire house with the smell of alcohol-soaked vomit and sweat. He held his breath. Puzzled, he was overtaken by a sudden fury and noisily broke all the bottles on the table. He fell flat on the bed.

From the other room, he heard the hoarse bass voice of his father, a fat old man with a thin moustache who came to the door and addressed his son with a mocking tone:

“Mister Neluț, can you tell me where you were last night?”

Nelu retorted shortly:

“Why are you poking around?” he demanded, but thought to himself, *Did he see something happen?*

But his father again sniffed at the cigarette stench, and, gazing at him through the smoke he blew out of his nose, said, “I see that you have a nicely coloured eye!”

“It’s none of your business; take care of your own problems.” *The old people poke their nose in everything*, he thought.

“And what do you say about this mess?” His father addressed him rudely, and two veins stood out near his temples.

Gioni knew that the old man would grow agitated in a hurry. Noticing that the old fellow was picking at a hole in Gioni’s coat, he blurted, “This is my room and I do what I want! I’m an adult!”

The old man’s expression darkened.

“Oh, yeah?” And in a flash, he punched him.

Gioni took a good look at him; he wanted to grab his shirt and throw him down. He could have, but he stopped himself.

“If you’re an adult, then you can work!”

The storm broke.

The young man blushed, red as a lobster. The wound on his lip had opened ... he knew the old man had discovered that he had been expelled from school.

“Vasile, what is happening, darling?” a woman’s voice broke in.

The contradictions swirling inside his head were suddenly calm ...

Gioni was ill all day long, inhaling the sick smell of the room, puking into a pot near the bed. Underneath it all, though, he felt sick of himself.

For a while the relatives and the neighbours gave him frowning looks and Gioni was ashamed to be seen by them.

Why didn't Jeni phone?

Jeni, the one he really loved. But she knew what he was. He wished he knew how to regain her trust.

His conscience attacked him. He wallowed in his ingratitude. He didn't want to hear from anyone. He couldn't sleep.

A few days later, Gioni entered the gate of the factory...

He hadn't seen the Long-bearded Man in a while. One day he received a letter from Constanța City, where he said he had a job working as a sailor.

THE GREEN SUITCASE

A woman in a grey overcoat arrived on a train from abroad. She hurried to the Information Office, picking her way carefully through the crowd on her way to the North Station as if she were trying not to touch anyone. She carried a green suitcase that she swung in front and in back as she skipped along. She smiled beneath powdered cheeks and a layer of lipstick.

Nae Pomaru looked curiously at the people around him, moving his colourless eyes as he observed the clothes of the passers-by and tried to hear the speaker's voice through the rumbling megaphone of the station. He forgot his old, colourless suit, as he dragged himself along apathetically through the crowd on the platform. He listened to the slow rhythm of footsteps on the hot concrete. From time to time he stopped and turned around, apologising mechanically, but he disturbed the others, who regarded him with hostility or scorn. He tried to move quickly out of the way of the travellers.

"Hey, are you still being bad?" a child in greasy, dirty clothing cried to a younger one, punching him on his chest with one hand while, with the other, he shook him by the shoulder.

"I've been good."

"Are you going to behave or not?"

"Cross my heart and hope to die, I've been good!"

Pomaru studied every man who passed by, judging them by first impressions.

A gypsy man, with a rolled moustache that grew past the corners of his mouth, walked haughtily, his shabby clothes hanging on him. He was followed by his wife and many children. The younger, naked, hung back, prompting his father to say severely:

"Go to the cart or else the bears will eat you!"

The young gypsy boy, barefoot, ran off in an ungainly way on his rickety legs, his bare flesh flashing.

Pomaru stared after him. Obscene images were forming in his foggy mind.

Near him, two stout peasants, with red-glowing cheeks, smelling of onion and fresh, black soil seemed serene. Around them were big handbags, holding full sacks and emitting a very healthy scent.

"How will the Arad market be?"

"Last year this time I sold out almost the minute I unloaded."

Nae was not an expert in commerce. Now he watched two beggars who were crawling on their crippled legs; they seemed to be a man and half. The old man with the beard was crawling; the other, hunchbacked, was nearly down on all fours.

"God bless you!"

He stretched his trembling hand out to everyone he saw. "Have mercy on those who never see the sun!"

He was sickened by it. He dug into his pockets in the too-large trousers, searching for a few coins. He hadn't any.

He was moony, thinking about the woman who was late.

"Got a light?" He was interrupted by an impudent fellow who peeked out at him from under the cap.

"No." He shook his head, indignant.

From a shabby denim jacket, the fellow took out a pack of Kents, flashed it, then hid it.

“Do you want foreign cigarettes?”

“I don’t smoke,” Pomaru said, weakly, fearfully, gazing after the fellow who sneaked away easily and got lost in the crowd.

Farther away, there was a great noise of tumultuous laughter ... it came from a crowd of boys and girls who, with long hair and dirty clothes, gave the impression of being clever students. They were loaded down with skis and rucksacks slung over their backpacks.

A variety of people were passing near him. Sweating from the summer heat, he stopped in front of a soda fountain. *Why hasn’t she come?* He stared vacantly ahead, and looked for her in the face every woman who passed by.

The air was stuffy, close – an amalgam of smells. The platform was full of luggage and people going to and fro.

Wearing the grey overcoat, all buttons unbuttoned, the woman paced slowly, balancing carefully on her high heels, wending her way through the crowd on the platform, followed at some distance by a tall, stout man with a big suitcase, who had gotten off the same train.

The man seemed to profit by the opening made by the lady, the way that a river cuts through mountains.

A musical tone sounded through the loudspeaker. A voice announced in a polite voice departures and arrivals,

“...please, get off the carriages,” was all that he could hear.

Pomaru, with dusty clothes and shoes unpolished since he had bought them, was perspiring, his sweat mixing with the oil on his face. He had forgotten that he hadn’t eaten lunch and he wondered why he wasn’t hungry.

The man with the big suitcase, dressed in a short-sleeved white shirt, his face freshly shaved, passed by. He wanted to be thought calm, and so focused only on the weight of the suitcase.

What kind of fool is this, carrying such a huge chest! Pomaru thought, staring after him. *What could he have in there? Nobody carries around a suitcase like that just to lug junk around.*

In the next few seconds, Pomaru witnessed something he would never forget.

The woman in the grey overcoat set her suitcase down and went in search of the information office. He saw the stout man with his black chest, a sophisticated-looking affair with metal joints, next to the woman’s.

The man, coolly and in a natural movement, pushed a button on the bottom of the chest, opening it up so that in one swift movement, it swallowed the woman’s smaller bag.

Pomaru was stunned. He stood there, frozen. What he saw unfold had seemed to do so as quickly and ordinarily as if it were an every-day event.

As if nothing were out of the ordinary, the man who owned the chest stood by, as if he were waiting for somebody. His face was calm and revealed nothing.

After some time, the woman with the grey overcoat returned and, not finding her suitcase, began to wail.

“My suitcase! My suitcase was stolen! I just set it by this big chest. You must have seen it, too!” she said to the man with the chest.

The man shrugged his shoulders and kept standing stock still on the spot, checking his wristwatch from time to time, as if to say that someone he was waiting for was late.

The woman cried in desperation, as people gathered around her, staring unabashedly and wondering what had happened. She began to weep bitterly, huge tears rolling down her cheeks.

Nae Pomaru, who meanwhile had realised with surprise what had happened, refused to think about it. He thought: If only you knew that your suitcase was in that big one, not two steps from you!

Just as he decided to go to help the woman, an odd-looking man caught his collar and whispered to him:

“Hey, fancy man, you saw too much. Go away, if you don’t want trouble!”

Pomaru wanted to pass on, but the man caught him by the flap of his jacket. Glaring, he said:

“Look back there at that pole!”

When he looked, he saw a man dressed in a white overcoat and black hat, leaning on a pole, smoking leisurely, like an Englishman. He gazed through the smoke at Pomaru. He understood. He felt powerless and as if he was looking at the scene from outside himself.

“Don’t mess with us!”

Pitying the woman, he would have helped her, but the impudent man meant business.

Swallowed from view by the gathering of people, the man with the chest sneaked away. Soon the station police came. But he remembered an old saying, something about catching a blind man and plucking out his eyes, how you’re not hurting anything because he can’t see anyway. The man was already hidden in the crowd.

Pomaru delayed a bit on the platform and entered the restaurant.

At a different table he noticed a black hat and remembered something about the guy; in order get a better look, he dropped a few coins on the floor and bent over to pick them up. He was not wrong. He recognized the guy. Meanwhile the train from Timișoara had arrived. He forgot about the black hat and thought only with throbbing heart of his wife who was due to arrive. On the crowded platform a few people were departing. His joy grew, as he saw his wife, who was approaching him happily, with only one bag in hand.

“I’m so happy to see you, dear!”

“Oh, my dearest, if you knew how much I’ve missed you!”

After some polite words and stilted kisses, they walked to the taxi.

He was joyous that, finally, they would have a few good days together, after so many hours working overtime in his office.

He was astonished anew when, in the taxi station, he saw the same black hat. He had a sense that the wearer was strangely afraid of him. He didn’t say anything to his wife, but tried to smile; he remembered some anecdotes told by some office colleagues. They had laughed together. His wife scolded him a bit, saying he hadn’t been taking care of himself. She advised him to buy another suit and perhaps a new tie. In turn, he praised

the cut of his wife's dress, but also told her she spent too much money. They embraced like young people.

They got a taxi and headed home to their quiet house on the outskirts of town, where the old deaf landlord presided.

"Sir, a black Dacia car is following us," the driver said.

Pomaru quivered, but he tried to pretend it was of no consequence:

"Maybe it's just a coincidence."

A little puzzled the woman asked:

"What has happened, dear?"

"Aaa ... nothing ... nothing!" He nodded.

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The landlord, dull-witted and dry as toast, glasses on top of his nose, was cleaning his yard.

The gate squeaked and the two people entered in turn on the tight path that wound around among the onion and flower beds. They blessed the preoccupied old man, who replied in a nasal voice. Julia looked around her, feeling sick. The old man observed her disdain for the setting.

"So, this is how it is, when you live on the outskirts of the city."

The old man: lisping, agile, talkative.

"Indeed it's tight here but it's clean," said Pomaru wanting to quiet her ... Julia sneaked with cat steps into the house and went down a dark and cold hall. The walls were damp and streaked with mould; the carpets were yellowed by the years.

"Oh, dear," she exclaimed, "how can you live this way?"

The man decided not to speak. His face, with bags under his eyes and a tangle of hair around it, revealed his weariness with the monotonous life of a bureaucratic loser. But he also hid a mystery.

The rusted door handle made a screeching noise, causing her to wince. From the close interior came the stench of tainted food and fetid old clothes – mainly dirty underwear. Pomaru made a pile of them between the stove and wall, and took them every month to the laundry. When he ran out of clothes to wear, he sometimes just bought another change.

In his modest room, there was no more than was necessary: a bed, a table and a chair. His clothes were kept in a chest with mothballs. It was all very simple.

He took off his coat and tie and hung them on wall hooks while Julia threw her handbag on the table and sat on the chair.

The man drew the curtain – a yellowed newspaper – letting in the sun. He thought that Julia was disappointed since he had moved to Bucharest.

It was getting dark and the cold of the night was creeping into the room. Minute by minute, the small room grew darker. The woman took a blanket and covered her naked knees. In a torn and dirty undershirt the man entered with an aluminium basin full of water drawn from the pump in the yard. He put it on the bed.

While he was lighting an old gas lamp he explained to his wife that the electrical installation was out of order because of a short-circuit.

With movements made easy by long practice, he prepared the foam, sharpened his razor on an old belt, and then began to shave, looking at his reflection in a small mirror that he held in one hand.

Julia was overtaken with disgust. She had forgotten how her grandparents once did the same thing – lit an old lamp. She thought: *This is how some people live!*

She kept still, watching with surprise as her husband wielded the razor in one hand and the mirror in another.

How did I get married to this man? she wondered. *He spends all his time at the office.* She felt keenly the difficulty of her situation, and yet she wanted to help him. She was happy because they hadn't had children. What would she do if they looked like him?

The man noticed that his wife was depressed and tried to divert her thoughts, speaking to her between two moves of the razor.

The woman thought it funny how he distorted his face in the mirror, swelling out his cheeks and wiggling his nose when he was cutting the moustache. In a few places he had cut himself and now the whitish foam was mixed with blood. He had many razor scars in addition to abundant traces of chickenpox. Remarking that her husband kept speaking, she turned her head to the other side.

She hadn't dared to speak. It all seemed strange, and the surroundings: so old and worn out. She figured out she would be obliged to sleep in this old bed with this vulgar man, no longer good-looking.

He was even beginning to go bald. She had no desire for him. Pomaru guessed as much and thought it best to curtail their time together.

"I'm cold!" she said, trembling a little.

"Would you like to have another blanket?"

She expected another dirty one and retorted with disgust:

"But what will you put on the bed?"

"I'll borrow one from the landlord."

She firmly refused.

"Would you like to go to Gina's?" Pomaru tried to comfort her. "Shall we get moving? Yesterday her brother-in-law arrived from Germany. We can listen to his stories."

"Well, if you want ..." Julia Pomaru made a pretense of resisting the idea.

The man had finished his weekly allotment of drudgery, obeying those over him as required. He covered his white flesh, draped over his bones as if he were a nocturnal creature, with a crumpled shirt, then with his overcoat.

They were in a hurry. The air outside was cooler and more pleasant than inside the house.

Pomaru came back alone in the dark, thinking as he walked the twenty minutes or so back to his house. He didn't wonder either. Julia found a few pretexts for staying with Gina, saying she hadn't seen her since they both were very young and she missed her, also that Bibi, Gina's husband, enjoyed her very much. He hadn't insisted on staying with her, but just offered his regrets that he had to go.

The old man's snores ripped through the quiet of the night. The hinges of the gate screeched, frightening Pomaru. He had a sense of some impending terror. He fell to his knees and groped through the flower beds. He stumbled up the stairs, his chest throbbing with fear. But soon his heart slowed and his fear abated. He entered into the quiet room, the room he was accustomed to. And there, right in front of him, sitting in his chair, was the man in the black hat. Pomaru couldn't believe it. He stood stock-still, terrified.

What kind of a thief is this? he wondered. *I'm poor – he stole from someone else and now he wants to hurt me?*

He took heart, though, and lit the lamp.

"What do you want?" he succeeded in stammering.

The man very politely asked him to take a seat on the bed. You would have thought he was in his own house.

Pomaru obeyed him. He was intrigued and curious about what he wanted from him. What could they want from him? Why should they seek to terrorize him? He couldn't do anything against them—and yet, he couldn't help but ask himself, *What if they want to rough me up?*

Maybe I am in danger! And the old man doesn't hear well. *Should I try to fight this guy?* He considered a moment. *I haven't any chance. Maybe they want to get rid of me.* His forehead dripped with sweat. He thought that in the darkness of the room it wouldn't be noticed. He didn't want to show that he was afraid. He wanted to seem indifferent.

"We appreciate your silence."

The man extended a handful of money. For that sum, he would have had to work many months. For a moment he was tempted to grab the pile of bills but he pushed it away. Probably they would expect something more from him..

"I don't take money from people I don't know!"

"What if I assure you it's not stolen? Hey, you're wise to question the source, but listen – you earned it!"

The man stood up; he was extraordinarily tall, almost reaching the ceiling. Pomaru remained mute, wondering, *What if he slaps me?* and thinking, *It's a good thing I came back home alone—Julia would have fainted.* He knew he was already a coward in her eyes and that she had a low opinion in general of his character. She thought he was nothing but a failed office worker. Wasn't Nae on the faculty like her? But because he worked a non-academic job, he was considered less than she. But he had more money like Julia and he lived in the city—he could have lived where he chose, but he chose the city. But why should she consider him a failure, just because she was a teacher and he had no title? Why was Pomaru to blame because only teachers, doctors and engineers were held in high regard and no one thought anything of the programme trade? When somebody would ask him: "What is your job?" and he would answer, "Computers" – there would be an inevitable pause.

He took the money and pushed it in the pocket of the tall man. But the man tossed it among the jugs and cups on the table and ran out the door, disappearing into the darkness. Shortly there followed from the window the noise of an engine starting, and the car driving away.

Nae Pomaru followed in the footsteps of the man, and outside, saw a car. He walked up to it and looked inside – he immediately recognised the big chest, which rested

on the backseat of the car. He had an urge to count the money. But no, the money was dirty. He was sure of it...

Should he go to the police? But there was the possibility they would put him under surveillance and further he was perspiring all over. He was obsessed. Ought he to telephone? But if he kept the money, what would he do with it?

Time passed and he did not call the police. But still he couldn't decide.

I'm a coward. If I call, I'll be caught up with the thieves; if I don't call, then the police will get me. He was in a perfect stew.

He put his hand on the telephone. He trembled. He raised the receiver but his hand shook. He dialled wrong. Finally he got it right and muttered, "Hel-lo?"... "The suit...case..."

The desk sergeant, sensing the caller's panic, tried to reassure him, while sounding him at the same time.

"Yes, yes, yees!...a—a—a ca-a-ar! A Fo-o-o-rd!" ... The line was suddenly dead. He put the receiver on the cradle and lay on the bed, overwhelmed. He became anxious. He locked the door and turn off the light.

Throughout the night, he wrestled with his agitation; no matter which way he turned in bed, he could not sleep. The blankets were cold and rough and the down feathers of the pillows poked him. The filthy, lumpish pillows were stained yellow and brown where his head lay.

Morning came, and he dozed off and on with his head down on the desk. From time to time he wet his face, refreshing his eyes and cooling his temples. He wiped his forehead and dabbed around his eyes with a crumpled handkerchief. After a few minutes he felt better, enlivened. Perhaps, he thought, he might sleep a little in the afternoon...

Yes, and what a sleep it was! He would sleep from four in the afternoon till the next day. Hadn't he slept this way another time? And the next day he was so well, everything was good. His boss had even noticed, his boss, who was so peevish and difficult. He hadn't slept, he had rested! He hadn't eaten, he had nourished himself! He kept focused on his work, and noticed little else. It was like changing glasses and getting another point of view. It was like grabbing the chestnuts from the fire with someone else's hands.

He climbed the tree and now I must cut the tree to get him down. If I hadn't done what the boss said, the work would have been OK. But, I had to conform to Article I: the boss is right. And even when he isn't right, you apply Article I anyway. So the fish is spoiling from the head first. On the other hand all the time he keeps holding meetings. If you know a thing you do it; if not you hold a meeting and teach others how to do it. The men called the boss Bitu, but he didn't know it. When people are afraid of you, you don't know your nickname. Bitu had a severe injury to his leg and had been going to the office with a crutch; how ironic, that the head of the office needed a crutch.

The failed man, the man without a passion, begins to drink, and becomes passive about everything. Pomaru was in another category. He had become ferociously indifferent. He was interested in nobody and nothing. Not his wife, certainly. He got married in the first place in order to be like the others and now, remarking on the difference between them, he created a greater distance between them, and it was difficult for him to get a divorce. Finally, what had he realised? Now couldn't he be called a bachelor? This was the longest time he had ever been alone...

Overwhelmed by these thoughts, he fell into a fitful doze.

The telephone rang loudly and Pomaru jumped from the bed undressed. He had slept with his mouth open and now it was dry. He swallowed a few times, and tried then to clear his throat, coughing. For a moment he thought to call Julia. Maybe she loved him a little. Maybe he could escape from this enervating trap of bureaucracy. Surely, he was deceiving himself; Julia hadn't thought of him at all. Not before, and not now.

Pomaru's voice left him again. His heart was flea sized. Why should he feel guilt? Surely the theft was unintentional. And then, what about Julia? Might she not be implicated? No, he shouldn't involve her. He considered again going to the police. He bounced back and forth between going and not going. He was, after all, only a man. An ordinary man. He thought, I don't have time for these kinds of complications.

Had he given false information? Had they found a suitcase? Should he go to the police? For what? It would only get him into trouble! He thought about fleeing town. Surely it would be better to leave for Vâlcea on holiday where he would speak to his relatives, to his godchildren. His old parents would ask him: When would they have grandchildren? And he would answer: There is still time.

But time had flown since he said this. And though he still tried to tell his parents that he and his wife were a loving couple, he generally avoided discussions of this kind and tried to change the topic.

Absent minded, he wandered onto the cracked and dilapidated stones that once made up a staircase, without realizing that the old man had gotten up a while before.

"You seem downcast this morning, sir!"

"Aaa ..." he felt a lump in his throat. "Oh, it's nothing! You know, just having trouble sleeping ..." he said, eyes down and without turning back his head.

At the gate he found an envelope in the post box. Who would be writing to him? He didn't write to anybody. He was curious. "Who thinks of me anymore?"

He touched the envelope and it seemed too thick. He opened it. A photo came out in his hand and, stupefied, he saw himself with the banknotes; in the background of the picture, his overcoat could be seen. "What is this!?"

He had the money, although he had not asked for it. When he read the letter he realised something serious was going on. "Mr. Pomaru, if you talk..." How had they found his name?

The tone of the letter was ironic and menacing, and the writer seemed to be making fun of him. He was troubled and grew pale; he turned his back to his landlord.

As he walked he became more and more downcast. Should he skip work? For ten years, he hadn't missed a minute. He remembered how his boss scolded and wrote the names down of those of his colleagues who were late. He would have to call by phone. Could he apologize, saying he was ill, or that his wife was coming for a visit? Calling in sick might not be believed; he settled on saying that his wife was visiting. And it was true.

As he talked, he could see the face of his boss and of course, could hear his colleagues whispering.

Walking on, he reached the bus station. He even got on a bus. He didn't know what number it was, but all buses went through the center of town.

There were a lot of sleepy young men with nylon bags and powdered, wrinkled women trying to look young and attractive:

“Why do you push, dear! Be careful or you’ll stain my dress with your dirty hands!”

“You, young man, would you like to ride on my back?” an old, fat lady called in a high voice to a modest boy, who drew back about half a meter, as if to put some distance between himself and her, as if he were embarrassed by her shameless insinuations.

In the front of the bus lots of sleepless young people, obviously on familiar terms with the driver, were telling him stories—stories at which he was laughing, saying, “What nonsense!”

“Hey, Uncle Bebe, drive faster!” they urged him.

The lights in the full bus dimmed. The driver turned them off so the travelers could doze. Pomaru tried to sleep a little. His eyes were swollen from insomnia...

“Put on the brake, Uncle Bebe — this is as far as we paid for!” Those in the front of the bus made as if they were rowing when the bus stopped in the town center, laughing uproariously. Quite likely, they hadn’t bothered to buy tickets.

He got out and walked past the police station, but he didn’t dare to enter. He planned how he would behave. How would it be? He hadn’t ever been to the police or tribunals—neither as a perpetrator nor as a victim nor as a witness. He glanced up at a clock and realized he was already late for work. Now it was registering. He could imagine his boss studying the sign-in register. “Aha ... this is not a real signature! We’ll find the impostor! Who is it? Pomaru? Why, he seemed such a quiet and serious man”.

He walked around the block many times, passing by the police station and wondering whether he should go in. He knew he would be questioned if he did. He had put his hand on the door handle nervously and entered the hall; he knew the office number he wanted from consulting Information earlier.

Pomaru didn’t tell them about the scene from the station. He didn’t remember to tell it. He told in detail the happenings with the unknown man who had come to his house; he told them he wouldn’t want that his wife to hear any of this.

The police told him they had stopped a car like the one Pomaru mentioned and inside they had found an ordinary suitcase, a driver without a black hat and without a beard.

“You will be kept under observation till there’s a new search. You’ll be punished for giving false information.”

“Yes...but, it’s only that ...”

“What is it? We don’t have time to investigate hallucinations from the mentally unbalanced.”

“But it’s true! I ...”

“Oh—oh, yes, of course it’s true. There, there, now – you are absolutely right!” A major sergeant intervened and whispered something to his superior. Suddenly they were treating him a bit kinder. He was sent to a psychiatrist. Pomaru hadn’t seen a doctor for a long time, and never had been to a neurologist. You know how that is. How many illnesses haven’t been discovered yet? Or how do many illnesses worsen without one even being aware one is ill – without even a suggestion of pain? He hadn’t seen a doctor; but he’d had some problems. For instance, he told the doctor, recently he had lanced a boil, and it hadn’t healed, but continued to swell.

The doctor gave a quick diagnosis: psychopath. What? This now, on top of everything else? He hadn't heard it before. And it must be right, if the doctor said so ... Now he had a reason for all his misery at the office, for all these years. And the doctor had insisted that he could heal him.

"If I didn't have this sickness, I wouldn't have had all this good luck," he said to himself caustically.

Pomaru became giddy. Was he really "sick" – really a psychopath? He touched himself attentively. His head flattened and swelled at the back. Somebody had said once: "You seem like you've been beaten over the head!" He was hurrying through the crowd; he didn't see anything.

He felt somewhat careless, despite the recent diagnosis. *Toni will burst out laughing when I tell him*, he thought. Pomaru liked to boast about being spiritual, too. He sometimes made bitter jokes, which his colleagues laughed at, not guessing at the bitterness. He enjoyed making them laugh. They also seemed to enjoy his naiveté. It was as if whenever he tried to enter their discussions, he didn't fit. Every time he was outside of the subject. He sometimes was upset with everybody and in those moments, he would lock himself in his room and read all day long. When he was young he had daring thoughts, but as he came to adulthood, they disappeared.

It was enough to be an inhibited failure.

He had tried hard to succeed, but always seemed to meet defeat, and the continuing disappointment compromised his efforts. He would start a new venture each time with the words, "I won't succeed," and his élan would disappear on the spot. On the other hand his wife considered him "absent-minded." But he had fixed thoughts and nobody could take them out of his head. It was his monomania.

Arriving at home, the old man told him a lady with dyed hair was looking for him. She had left furious and didn't leave a message for him.

How was it he managed to make everybody angry, he wondered. His wife had hardly arrived and he had angered her, too. It seemed as if he could hear her saying to him: "You aren't good for anything! You're like all men ... Another woman wouldn't have you! You only care about yourself." But she was wrong about that. Pomaru cared nothing for himself.

He entered the room and found a suitcase. His immediate thought was, *So she wanted to go to the country and she brought luggage.* Random, odd sentiments beset him. In a way, he enjoyed the notion, but he also felt sad like an abandoned man. He wondered how he could reconcile with her when everything about him seemed to irritate her.

But would he dare to ask for reconciliation? Julia was an incorruptible woman. His thoughts sagged as he muttered defeatedly, "Oh, well. Time will eventually solve everything."

He trembled, recovering from his despair. A thought dawned on him. "But she *didn't* come with a suitcase. Could she have bought one? It looks like the one that belonged to the lady with gray overcoat. Could she have brought it herself?"

He ran outside, furious.

"Old man, the lady who was looking for me, did she have anything in her hand?"

The frightened old man raised his glasses on his nose and stared at the lodger with a screw-faced expression.

“Aaah ...” he said, and then, putting his hand like a funnel to his ear, he screamed louder. “I don’t remember ... I don’t think ...” he broke off, looking with wonder at Pomaru through his thick, scratched glasses.

Pomaru, curious, and with a tightness in his heart, went back into the house and crept up to the suitcase. He began to study it.

He tried to open it, but it was locked. He took out a few nails with a sharp penknife. He moved attentively. The phone rang. He answered it. Once again, it was the same polite tone but cold and imperative.

“Please don’t open it ...” He was as still as a stone.

They guessed his thoughts. As if he couldn’t guess their intentions!

“Hello, who are you?” Pomaru asked. At the other end of the wire the calm voice didn’t acknowledge the question. “I warn you that you are party...”

“Me?”

The other didn’t seem to hear, going on loquaciously and with grinding deliberateness. “We are going to use you as a relay. Of course you haven’t any choice.”

The office worker figured there was no way out. Then he was asked to carry the suitcase to an address. Baggage man? Is that what he was? He became furious and threw down the telephone.

As the receiver swung from the table, he could still hear the voice: “This is just between us.”

“Damnation!” Pomaru exclaimed as he rushed into the street, banging the door behind him.

He headed for his neighborhood park and took a walk. He was unbalanced. If his wife divorced him, should he remain a bachelor, or should he get married again? But was he even capable of caring, of looking after a family?

But the women his own age already had children, of course. He should marry someone younger. But could he make her happy? No. Actually he couldn’t make anyone happy. He wasn’t interested in anybody, not even himself! Only the ordinary monotony of his day-to-day life gave him vitality.

He allowed himself bitter thoughts. What if the man with the black hat informed the police that the stolen suitcase was at his home? He would be arrested unjustly. It was better for him to carry the suitcase to the appointed address and he would then be free.

He wanted to turn back but he was thinking in signs and he thought that his returning was not a good sign. That afternoon he entered a café and ordered a glass of Pepsi. A man, sitting passively at a neighboring table, sipped delicately at a coffee, from inside a cloud of smoke. Pomaru was not used to drinking coffee as his colleagues did. Some of them drank two or three cups, one after another. Only his boss didn’t drink it because it made him sick. So sick, that he had a crisis of nerves, and wanted to sell his car – which he couldn’t sell because he was cheap and asked for the same price as a new one would bring.

Nae started going slowly, looking around at the passers-by.

He was walking and yawning. Sometimes he covered his mouth.

“Maybe I should just go to sleep. I don’t care who comes!” And then he turned around, and found himself nose to nose with the man from the cafe.

What a strange coincidence! He never liked people who hung out in these establishments, sipping coffee and Pepsi. But he had nothing to do with them and so he went on his way.

The sun was powerful and the people were perspiring as they hurried about, having finished work for the day. "I already passed by here earlier!" he said to himself, vexed at his carelessness. Pomaru was lost as he wandered through this crowd. It was a nice day, with a spotless sky and air warmed by the summer sun. Pomaru trained his bulging eyes at the green grass and round flowerbeds or stared into the windows of the shops in order to quiet himself. He looked at everything, but he didn't see anything.

He wiped perspiration from his forehead with slow gestures. From time to time he peeped at a plump, mature woman. He liked the large-hipped "ladies."

I don't know how they felt about him. But he didn't dare to accost any. He was too ashamed! And besides, he had no time for them. When he was a student he had preferred the clever girls because he knew beauty is passing. Now he wanted a beautiful wife and one who understood him.

He was afraid of women because they were wicked and they lied their way out of trouble. He knew that he had no success because women wanted important men and he was an office worker without a chance for advancement.

At a street corner he met a friend and talked a little. He said little. He remembered as he chatted how the man from the café had in his hand a briefcase.

He wondered who this man was and what he wanted.

Was he an agent of the police or of *the others*? He had to be on his best behavior with both the Police and the thieves. Or he had to be against both. Since he didn't really care which it was, he hastened back to his neighborhood.

At home he suddenly slept. Toward the end of his sleep, he dreamt

He dreamed that the suitcase was full of jewelry, but no one could open it except the woman with the gray overcoat.

Many tried and endured an electrical shock, some of them dying. Even the man with the black hat and that stout man from the station tried, both getting a shock and screaming.

When he looked at the clock it was already evening; in the middle of the room, still untouched, was the suitcase. He put his hand on it but he drew it away immediately as if it burned, although he didn't get a shock. Nothing happened. He didn't try to open it. Someone might think he had tried to steal something. He didn't believe in chimera, though he had heard many stories from his grandparents in Gorunești about people whose dreams became reality.

He decided to carry the "trunk" away as a means of escaping his trouble. But he remembered the man from the cafe. He took out the slipcover from his wood suitcase that he had had as a soldier and he put the green suitcase inside it. He looked at the window very attentively but he didn't see anybody. Thoughtfully, he got on the first bus. The place that he had been directed to was an old house with large iron gates. What if it was a trap? He had to be cautious. He looked quickly around on all sides but he didn't see anybody. He rang. And he didn't even show surprise when the person who answered the door turned out to be the woman from the station. By now, he expected the unexpected. All his plans had been in vain. He actually found comfort in his new situation.

He had forgotten that he had to go to work. He handed the woman the suitcase mechanically. She took it quickly and closed the door abruptly. Pomaru was waking up and he breathed more easily, as if a black stone that had been weighing down on his heart had been lifted.

*

Nae Pomaru wore a clean kerchief and walked joyfully through the tight and sinuous streets amid the old buildings with tall gates of ferro-concrete. He didn't even realize it when he arrived at the market, what with his poor vision and agitated breathing. He was accustomed to the smoldering air, but this didn't stop him from going to the country. He went to fill himself with wine, goose, and onions. What delicacies were there at the market! And, there were natural things to appreciate. The birds were livelier, the eggs larger. In the city all seemed artificial. He would see the putrefied meat of the chickens, flesh pallid as lime as they hung suspended in the plastic bags of the self-service shop, and become sick.

He ate at the worker's restaurant, having meat without broth or sauce. He walked past the booths and saw many people who bargained for five lei with the peasants. Arriving in front of the "Golden Cock" restaurant he read the advertisement from the window shop: "The Golden Cock opened its gates in a new old location." Pomaru smiled.

Absorbed in his thoughts, he hadn't realized that he was in the town center.

By chance he was again in front of the police station, but he didn't hurry to enter. He was interested only in doing this his way. He was quiet now. From behind him, an unknown man suddenly accosted him furiously.

Nae, immediately on the defensive, hastened his pace to get rid of him. He tried to lose him by entering the crowded shops.

The unknown man was sure of himself, but Pomaru pushed on, dodging the intruder by evasive maneuvers.

Nae went up to the top floor, losing his pursuer as he wound around the shelves. He realized that he was alone. He admired the sports items; he tried on a pair of Adidas shoes. He was interested in a football. Perhaps he could play football? No earthly chance. It was late in the day. He was too old. A few customers looked at him curiously when he tried on his shoes. He realized they were looking, but didn't know why. He looked around cautiously but he didn't notice anything suspect.

Close by a few children tried on some Chinese cloth shoes.

Outside he tried to slip away quietly but noticed that the same person was following him. He hastened in the direction of the police station. It seemed as if he couldn't escape going in. What did they want from him?

He felt exhausted, heavy-hearted.

He hurried into the building, his pursuer following him. Panic-stricken, he wondered if he had entered the wrong building. Impossible – the sign on the building proclaimed it was the police station. Could it have been moved? He passed by some mustached men dressed in uniforms. He recovered a little. An official invited him to enter a cubicle.

Pomaru was obliged to confess step by step, saying all the things he had told them were like scenes from a film.

Nedelcu looked at him, bored. The stories didn't interest him. He smoked a lot and peered at Pomaru through his eyelashes. Finally he couldn't endure any more nonsense. He lashed out in a high voice that rose at times to a near scream that echoed off the close walls and then descended quietly and almost sonorously, time and again,

The cabinet was full of smoke, and Pomaru sweated and coughed spasmodically. He became indifferent and lost interest. He didn't even think about possible repercussions, or about his job. It seemed he'd been away for ages.

He spoke absent-mindedly.

If he missed another day they would dismiss him. What would he do after that? He hadn't thought about it before. Maybe he wasn't interested. It was as if his brain were compressed in a vice.

"What can you say about the telegram?" The official handed him a paper. Pomaru thought he hadn't heard right. He looked at them like a deaf mute. He felt confused, strange. He saw that it was addressed to him. He felt his as if his blood had all drained out. His eyes were red from the smoke. All he could think was, *How stupid! What hypocrisy!*

"Would you like to read to us?"

Nae stared with a depressed air at the figures written topsy-turvy on the paper, intermittently alternating with letters and then some strange signs and at the bottom an odd signature. *How does he read this nonsense?* he wondered. He studied it and began to read:

"...17, 20 10 A BYD 8 100 42L, a sign...A".

"Enough! Don't be an imbecile. That won't work with me. You come here and recite thriller plots."

Pomaru blushed, sweating. He thought hard about who might want to hurt him. Among his co-workers were some who played tricks. Once he had found a live frog in a drawer of his desk. It had frightened him, and he never knew who had done it, thinking it might be Toni. In the end, he got used to their jokes. But this was different. It came from abroad.

A bad joke?

Meanwhile the officer received a call. He listened attentively and looked at the accused with greater interest after he hung up.

Nae Pomaru realized that a discussion about him had taken place.

"The story about the house on 31 Flowers Street isn't so convincing! Nobody lives there!"

"Well, I do ..."

"You're a liar!" The officer spoke harshly to him. "Tell the truth!"

Pomaru felt that he would die knowing the truth, and no one to believe him.

The officer murmured something to his underling, who seized the accused by his shoulders and threw him outside.

"Keep him under surveillance!"

Pomaru felt dizzy, and his mind reeled. He couldn't figure it out. Why hadn't they arrested him for that mysterious letter from abroad? Weren't they suspicious that he had some hidden instructions to fulfill? He had expected to find himself followed, find himself dogged step by step. Only he was alone! The puzzle obsessed him.

As he so often did, he lapsed into fantasy. Where was Julia now? Maybe she deserved a better man. His fortunes hadn't changed; it was even worse now that he was under surveillance.

*

The woman with the grey overcoat had fainted in the station; but she had awakened in a foreign country and hadn't had time for an emotional meltdown, because she had had to leave. She was still trying to sort out the bizarre series of events.

An unknown man had come and had given her the suitcase, but it seemed she remembered asking for him to bring it to her. How had she been courageous enough to go to that house?

She had done a daring thing – how was she able to do it? For a time, she had thought to renounce the suitcase with all things in it, rather than have any trouble.

She hurriedly, and with curiosity, turned her attention to the green suitcase.

She dropped it, picked it up and dropped it again. The suitcase opened on the floor. She rummaged through the contents until she found a paper where she had catalogued all the items in the suitcase. She ticked off the items, and found nothing missing. Under the newspaper at the bottom of the suitcase she found money. She counted eagerly: five hundreds.

She was astonished to find the money still there. She was happy that the items she had bought earlier were all still in the suitcase. She started to throw away the paper, but she discovered that on the back there were hastily scribbled traces of ink.

She stretched it out carefully and read:

“Who, damn you, gave you that grey overcoat?”

The woman didn't understand anything, but it wasn't her problem.

She put the crumpled paper in the trash.

WHEN I LIVED IN MY COUNTRY

On a Sunday during the fair in Oteteliș, a valley where the mill was located, my mother sent me to sell wheat.

I've always known that I am naïve, ignorant even, about commerce.

"Florine, go with Bibi. Otherwise, he'll get drunk and someone will steal the wheat. Keep an eye on how much money he gets, and keep it with you."

So I go not to sell, but to guard the salesman.

My father had gotten up, as he never did when it was still night, and he had changed. He was thin and tall, with brown hair, combed back. I don't remember a time when he wasn't drinking.

Whenever I saw him sober, I would wonder what was wrong with him. All day long, he drank homemade wine, prepared either by us, or by Profir, our neighbor who lived opposite us. All day long, he puffed away at a cigar: Mărășești of Tg. Jiu.

Once when I was a student, I brought him a pack of Kents from Craiova and he said he didn't like them, said they were bad "cigars." He smoked only Mărășești. He didn't eat at all, and he became lean as an aspen leaf. When he was dead drunk, he became amusing; he would sing all day long the same song:

"From the mill to station
Hop lass hop
All the carts go down
Hop lass hop
Only the cart of Marin
Hop lass hop
Is loaded with rosemary
HOP LASS HOP!"

And as he said "hop lass hop" he pushed powerfully against the floor, saying, "Ah, Bibi, you've been through hell in this world. Everyone regards you with wonder!"

Then he sang again from the beginning:

"From the mill to station
Hop lass hop ..."

These were the single words he knew and he repeated them like a babbling gramophone. He took a smoke from "mărășească" (a cigar) that he kept in a wood cigarette holder.

At forty, he looked fifty, and at fifty, like seventy. But he was very proud of himself.

He boasted in my presence, and in mother's and in Uncle Iulică's – a lodger – "There's only one Bibi in Bălcești!"

Indeed, the great Bălcești and the Great Bibi!

At the collective he went to work only when he wanted and many times the agricultural engineer even came to wake him. He jerked him and he answered without opening the eyes: "Leave me alone, I'm coming."

The engineer went away and came back again after an hour, maybe two. "Come on, Bibi!" and he shook him to try to get him up. I went to my room.

But he wasn't in a hurry. He shook the covers off and rubbed one foot with the other, then went to the toilet, coughed, spat, smoked another cigarette and took his time. "Let them go to hell with their collective!" he said to me.

He had a dusty old bicycle, almost beyond use. He took it as if he were grabbing a pair of horns as he walked beside it, easily, phlegmatically.

"Hey, Bibi, steady now. Don't drink so much! People are laughing at you ..."

"Shut your mouth, lass!"

"Look at Ghiu, your drinking buddy. He went to work with his wife making candles ... also there was Savu of Piscan – have you seen how he cuts wood at the sawmill?"

"Keep your mouth shut, lass! Savu of Piscan?"

I felt powerless, but I said to myself: "When I grow up, I'll be somebody and mother will be proud of me; the people will see what a drunkard's son can do."

"When did you see me drink?"

"You hear that, Florin? He hasn't been drinking," my mother would say nervously.

"So, you haven't been drinking, Father?" I would ask.

"What are you saying? You're always on your mother's side," he would say in his slurred drunkard's voice. "You, you both side with the devil. But I'm stronger than you," and he would slam the table with his fist.

"The devil drinks, you don't drink!" my mother would go on, more and more nervously. "You stay by the wine barrel all day long and you never wake up. You, listen to me, you will end up like Panca! Panca, a sister of my grandfather, Mandache, is brain damaged and palsied. May whoever drinks go to the devil, along with his mother and his father!"

"You go to the devil, lass ..."

My mother turned to me, saying, "I've never gotten any enjoyment, never gotten to travel like other women. I suffered the pain of bearing a child, but it's better I had gone into the wide world, where I would have had whatever God gave me. When I said, 'Please, Florin, it's better you leave this damned house,' you answered 'I won't leave my house.' You were very young then, a child. You weren't even five years yet. You went with a chamber pot to Leontina, because she looked after you while I was at work. I struggled and toiled to raise you, to make sure you were well educated."

"Listen to that, how your mother toiled with you ... she wanted to throw you to the thorn hedge. And I said to her 'don't get an abortion. Keep the child.'"

My father, when he caressed me, called me his "kiddy". 'Come here, Daddy's kid!' I went to him and he caressed my head. My tears fell. I saw him with tears in his eyes many times. He was drunk and weeping. My mother was laughing. I was laughing, too.

"I've had bad luck in the world," my mother cried so that I felt a cold shiver went down my back. (And again, I felt powerless as I said in my mind, "I'll grow up and I'll be

somebody, and my mother will be proud of me, and everyone will see what a drunkard's son can be.") My mother, crying, said, "I wasted my life with a miserable, diseased alcoholic who drank until he urinated all over himself. People had to pull him out of the ditch. My heart wept inside me when I saw the other women, damn them, who never had need of anything. Their men did everything for them. I'm the man *and* the woman of my house. This miserable wretch couldn't even hammer a nail in the fence. I struggled to make everything. It's a good thing that this child obeyed me and he was good and studied. I would have been destroyed if this child had been like his father. What would I have done with two drunks? When I saw he looked like his father, I said to myself that he might be like him. I forbade him to taste even a drop of wine. Then he grew up and changed."

The people say now that he looks like his mother.

When I was a young child my father beat us. He chased us and threatened us. We fled to the house of my mother's sister, Tina, who lived some hundreds of meters from us.

My father slept with a knife under the cushion. He said he wanted to cut mother. Another time we hid in the barn, and we waited until he dozed off, until, from our hiding place in the yard, we could hear him snoring, and after that we tiptoed into the house, and stayed in the guestroom.

My poor country origins showed as if a label had been stuck to my forehead. At school I competed against the security officer's son or the village doctor's for the best grades, but every time I got first prize.

When I was in the first forms and my mother went to the school, my teacher didn't pay any attention to her. She spoke more to the children of Bălă, Nicolaescu, Calangiu -- she gave directions and told them what lesson to learn ...

"You must learn, Florine. You show them what you can do." "Don't be unimportant. You must become a great man so that you can order the others, and they won't order you."

My mother was short and very active, with black hair and dark skin. All day she quarrelled and skirmished with my father, who never worked at anything.

She had to call our neighbours to help butcher the swine or to do something to the house. And then it seemed that I was as lazy as Father. All day long I was swimming in Olteț, or roaming around on the hill to steal grapes or eat blackberries with my childhood friends: Geonea, Cost, Bigioc, Covrig the Small, Mircea, Piciu, Chesa, Cârna, or Victoraș or Beca.

Though I graduated from the university with the highest Grape Point Average, I took an uninspiring job in a factory in Craiova, IUG. The workers made a play on words that was very apt for me: the plant was better called JUG (yoke). All my desperate efforts to change jobs, to find work as a teacher, failed. I would watch how my colleagues could move on to another place, some of them passing through more than one job, but for me it didn't seem possible.

I was condemned to work hard and to die under the JUG. Well, well, I was on probation, as were all graduates, who had to begin their careers in a factory, but the laws are not the same for all people. That is, for some everything is possible and for others, everything is forbidden. I went on interviews many times to many inspectors and to the ministry – but nobody paid any attention to me. "If you haven't someone to vouch for

you ...” Drăcea, a colleague, told me. For him the detachment and even the full professorship had been a simple formality.

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Therefore, on a Sunday during the fair in Oteteliş a valley where the mill was located, my mother sent me to sell wheat.

I’ve always known that I am naïve, ignorant even, about commerce.

“Florine, go with Bibi. Otherwise, he’ll get drunk and someone will steal the wheat. Keep an eye on how much money he gets, and keep it with you.”

So I go not to sell, but to guard the salesman.

26th of May 1984, Sefrou, Morocco

CHILDREN'S BEDTIME STORIES

THE SMALLEST YOUNGEST PIG

At Bălcești a sow farrowed nine piglets with round snouts, small as rats, one by one; and for the tenth she strained and groaned and wailed till the veterinarian pulled it out with forceps — more dead than alive. He was red like a devil, and stunted, so Maia (grandmother) thought the sow would slink the young pig. Taia (grandfather) had prepared warm bedding from fresh straw for the young pigs, where Lady Sow could snuggle with her newborn brood. The moment they were born, they began to cry for food. The last born pig (Prâslea) couldn't stand on his legs and had a gentle nap on the straw. He was the smallest pig, ugly and rickety. Although he had scarcely grown at all, he became the most loved. The townsfolk who saw him in the pigsty said compassionately, "What a tiny creature!" and grew fond of him. Tataia (Grandpa) petted name: "This is the tiniest, youngest pig!" "Look at him, Mihăiță, the tiniest, youngest pig ... see how he grunts as he runs through the sty!" he said as he approached him easily. The little pig squealed a little, then with the fingers, Taia scratched his little belly, through his little legs, and the suckling, though short, stretched his little legs and lay down anywhere, as any pig might do: in a bog, in a puddle. And then Taia left, and the tiny pig waited and waited, and, seeing nobody paid him any attention, stirred around a bit and feebly arose. He was so little and so mangy that everybody thought he was dying. He kept grunting as he crawled under the woodpile. His brothers hadn't paid any attention to him and when he wanted to suck, the smallest, youngest pig couldn't catch the teat of his mother. They all gathered to suckle and the poor tiny one was trampled under their feet and shoved away.

But one day the little pig disappeared. We all looked for him under the stacks of wood, under the hen house. "Maybe he fell into the latrine," Uncle Iulică suggested. "Perhaps he wandered off into a cave" Maia said. Taia eventually found him after rummaging around with a pitchfork in the wet straw. He wasn't breathing, and appeared to be frozen. It was March. The sow had sat on him and crushed him. All the people from the house had tears in their eyes. They loved him like an invalid child and were touched by his suffering. Now they were sad. Maia took him to a small room and, after giving him an injection, put him near the stove on a little carpet. And when it was dark, they lit the fire. The smoke came out the chimney.

For two or three days he lay at the mouth of the stove. Maia gave him goat milk in a bottle. You should have seen him drinking! It seemed he relished the bottle more than the udder of his mother. During the night he went under the bed, grunting in his loneliness. One morning, Taia found him lying on the bed on a quilt next to him. "What are you doing here, naughty boy? Have you revived?" The little pig had put his small nose under the cushion and snorted contentedly. "Are you now the landlord?" Taia asked. The little pig recovered his cunning; he certainly didn't want to leave his newfound place.

At noon on a frosty day, the sun appeared. The tiniest pig was forced to go outside. He was completely healed. If you by chance came near him, he would pull at your trousers until you brought him food or played with him. You think you could easily escape him? Nothing of the kind! You'd definitely be wrong. If you pretended that you

didn't notice him he would follow you around, grunting. He went to his mother to try to suckle, but the sow had already weaned her pigs and would no longer allow it. If they tried, she bit them.

The tiniest pig lived with two bigger brothers that had not been sold, sleeping with the kids and eating in the kitchen from the same bowl with tomcat Mannix. One day he got stuck inside the cast-iron kettle while he was trying to eat and he couldn't get out. He used to insert his snout into the food dish with his front legs at the same time. Now he put his whole body in and almost drowned. Mihai saw that the cast-iron kettle was moving on its own. When the boy understood what was happening, he began to laugh and clap. The little pig threw himself about, slinging the liquid all around. The hens, who had stolen food from the pig, began to peck at it. Luşa barked without understanding what was going on. Taia came and got the poor little pig out. He petted him: "You are the tiniest pig! My tiniest pig!" Taia petted him more than his own grandson.

Then the little pig became the living toy of Mihai. Michai tormented him by touching his feet with a stick. He irritated the little animal so much that he grew thinner and thinner. Finally the poor pig became yellowish, a bag of bones but still Mihai wouldn't leave him in peace all day long. The grandparents bought a toy rubber pig for their grandson, but he didn't like it. He "introduced" it to the tiniest pig, who sniffed it and turned it over with his snout. The little dog tore the toy in pieces. Mihai didn't care.

It was Easter and my aunt Georghîţa of Sabin came to us and when she saw the little pig exclaimed: "You, Mărioară, you will see how much the pig will grow by Christmas!"

The First of May passed, too. The brothers of the poor pig disappeared one by one, after being sold to the neighbours. The goat's kids already were also sold. The little pig was now alone, like a single particle of couscous. He was among ducks. Among geese. The fact he was alone made him that much more attractive to Mihai. He didn't want to play with the other children. In fact, he called them together to play with the poor pig. "Leave the pig in peace, Mihăiţă, he is too small," said Georghîţa. She asked Maia for him. "What has come over you, Mihăiţă? Be obedient!" He did the opposite.

Until, on a Wednesday, exhausted from the chase, the tiniest pig fell sad and died. Mihai kept weeping, but it was too late.

LICENSE (A FABLE)

The block where the ants lived was built in record time. At the entrance a Tree Frog was stationed as the doorkeeper. Whoever wished to call on a lady lodger had to politely ask the Tree Frog, who croaked in a bass voice on the steps till the lady lodger heard and came down to the first floor.

On the ninth floor, in the ninth sky, Anne the Little Ant cooked soup with semolina balls on the small red portable electrical stove. The little she-ant lived together with her younger brother, he-ant Relu. With unflagging energy, Relu played with his ball on the balcony. Anne looked after both the soup and her brother. "The devil take him!" she would cry, adding in frustration: "He really gets on my nerves!" Relu grew livelier and livelier; he threw the ball anywhere and everywhere! *Poc, boc!* The ball rolled off the lamps and from there down into the soup pot. The window curtain caught fire. Anne the Little Ant telephoned the firemen immediately.

Fănel the Little Elephant trumpeted *tim-tam, tim-tam, tim-tam*.

"Quickly, quickly! Come to Apartment 99!" Fănel blared. The Tree Frog doorkeeper snored so that the walls reverberated.

"Get up, lazy. You are not capable of taking care of yourself, either." Fănel shook him, taking his cap from his forehead.

The Tree Frog opened his mouth, which was as large as he was tall, and he began to croak on the steps.

But the fire kept burning. From the first floor the crackling of the fire could be heard, like dry, burning woods. Relu burned his little legs. In the National Championship for junior ants, Relu had been denoted the number one sportsman of the year. He kicked the ball with his six little legs at the same time, sending it off in a queer trajectory.

Anne cried desperately: "Oh, dear, the house – the furniture and – and me – all burning! What a pain it was collecting it all summer – and now ...!"

The Little Man Tree Frog stared with his onion eyes at the Little Elephant:

"Who are you?"

"The fireman on duty, don't you see?" Nervously, he stretched out his trumpet full of water.

The Little Man Tree Frog was not yet fully awake. Fănel blew a powerful water jet from his trunk. Sulking, the Little Man Tree Frog put out his tongue in front of him and said, "What are you doing here?"

"Don't waste my time," the Little Elephant retorted harshly. "Apartment 99 is burning ... The lady lodger Anne and the Little Tree Frog called me to put out the fire ..."

"Do you have a license?" the Little Man Tree Frog asked officiously, giving himself airs and glaring at the Little Elephant. "It must be signed by the Ladder Chief," the Doorkeeper stressed. "I don't want to have any problem from you."

And so Fănel the Little Elephant ran to the Ladder Chief, a Horned Hedgehog, who had rolled himself up into a ball of indifference.

"Don't disturb me. I'm dreaming," the Horned Hedgehog mumbled.

“Sign fast. Anne and Relu are burning, and the lift for the ants is out of order.”

Fănel was agitated. The Horned Hedgehog hardly moved.

“Hurryup, hurryup!” the Little Elephant screamed.

“Be calm, youngster. The more you hurry, the more mistakes you’ll make!”

The Horned Hedgehog took out his fountain pen and wrote a neat signature.

“It’s my autograph – you may want to hold on to it for posterity,” he said pompously.

Fănel seized the paper and ran as fast as he could to the chief of the apartment complex, a Fox of Box. “I need your permission to put out a fire.”

“After I brush my tail. Don’t you see that I’m busy? Imagine! Disturbing me for a trifle!”

The Fox of Box looked in the mirror, and while smoking a pipe, took the fountain pen. He dropped it. Despising the young creature, he said:

“Write my signature for me,” and spelled out his name: “F-o-x- of B-o-x.” Fănel was obliged to write. “OK, so now you have it.” The fox yawned. “That was exhausting. Why am I so tired? Are you happy now? Off with you!”

“It’s just as well that I wrote it for him,” sighed Fănel the Elephant, at long last on his way.

All out of breath, Fănel arrived at the ants’ apartment. He immediately presented the signed license.

“Bravo, you acted according to the law,” the Little Man Tree Frog congratulated him.

Not waiting for the hugs the frog wanted to give him, Fănel rushed up to Apartment 99 on the ninth floor. But as he arrived, he saw Anne the Little Lady Ant and Relu the Little Man Ant, who both suffered third degree burns, and who were being carried on a litter by the four Little Bugs.

“Keep the license,” said the Little Elephant to the Little Door Keeper. “You protect the apartment complex – I haven’t put out anything. Everything was burned!”

The Little Tree Frog faded away, turning green.

But outside, around the block, the masses of ants met and exchanged advice and concluded thus: “We don’t need chiefs. We can take care of ourselves.”

The apartment complex remained only ashes. Nothing else was built. From time to time a lady ant or a man ant might come out of the ruins. Perhaps they were resistant to fire. At any rate, they were survivors. Probably there were others that came out. Certainly, the sleepy Little Tree Frog was pushed out by small beings in the ruins who were annoyed by his croaking.

“Go away, and don’t roll up, like the Horned Hedgehog,” said the ants to the Hedgehog.

“And you, Fox of Box, keep away from us, and for all we care, you can run to the end of the forest!”

THE LADY NEIGHBOURS

Tufted-hen suffered very much because she couldn't find a husband. She wore silver earrings and a bead necklace. All day long she cackled with a lady neighbor, Freckled-hen, about the hard circumstances of her exile from a better roost and optimum period for hatching. While Freckled-hen was at her job as an incubator attendant, Tufted-hen was casting sheeps' eyes at a male neighbour, Spurred-cock. The plump and too well made-up Freckled-hen had just come back from her job with the bag under her wing, steadily clucking, where she found up on the fence her friend, the young lady Tufted-hen.

Spurred-cock had just sung three times and now, lowering his head, pecked his way up a pile of manure and began to rummage through it nervously. Tufted-hen was looking at him with a loving eye; afterward, she began to cluck in pleasure, her heart spilling over with emotion.

Freckled-hen sulked, sad that her lady neighbour was violating the marriage place.

"What are you doing in my household, my lady friend?" *I could hold her feet to the fire, and she'd never own up*, thought Freckled-hen.

Tufted-hen opened large, mascara-accented eyes. She gathered her dress round about her, and she hardly touched the fence as she flew closer to Spurred-cock, until she was between his wings.

That was enough for Freckled-hen! Feathers puffed and flew as the two ladies mixed it up in the dust. What was Spurred-cock suppose to do? Poor cock, how could he separate them? He hadn't seen this sort of wrestling before. He watched as Freckled-hen attacked with her claws and then as the lady Tufted-hen managed to run away, featherless – but out of danger. Venomous Freckled-hen, like a betrayed wife, discharged her spite and anger.

"I was faithful all my life to you," the hen said reproachfully. "How dare you destroy my house with this dissolute woman with dyed feathers."

And then she went after Tufted-hen again. Puzzled, the cock hung back at first when the fight resumed. Tentatively, he flew cock-a-hoop in the middle of the fight, trying to calm them. But he had hardly entered the fray when one of them gave him a powerful blow and his feathers flew up through air like an explosion of snow. If he tried to stop Freckled-hen, his lady neighbour Tufted-hen attacked him and when he wanted to calm Tufted-hen, his wife Freckled-hen trained her savagery on him. When two ladies are quarrelling, the third, the man, knows he can win with his fists – so the women were certain not to let the pitiful-looking troubadour get the chance.

"It's only your guilt," Tufted-hen accused him. So many feathers had flown that he was almost naked.

If he tried to break away from the right, he would be pummelled from the left, and vice versa. So he was forced to stand his ground in the middle, where he tried to deflect their blows.

“What happened to our Don Juan, ladies?” Alba asked as she came to lend her assistance. Alba was the neighbour from the opposite side of the street. She had just put on her flower kerchief and was wearing her sunglasses on her comb.

Seizing the opportunity, dishevelled and his tail feathers between his legs, Spurred-cock slinked away from the battle and into the kitchen.

“What—has he also visited your yard?” Tufted-hen asked Blanca-hen. But she guessed the answer.

But Blanca-hen in the meantime telephoned the police. Klaxoning, a Drake, appeared, with a cap on his head and a gun at his waist. He asked them for their passports.

Freckled-hen and Tufted-hen were refugees from the Ostrich Country, where they were a flying minority group wandering in the desert, in search of grains, and had been victimized by authorities in Bird Country. They preserved their language but had trouble adjusting to the customs of their new country.

“I’ll put you through the drill – you’ll have to learn the customs of our country now and learn to behave,” he said harshly, deafening them with the noise of his Yawa motorcycle.

The wind from the motorcycle ruffled Tufted-hen’s “hair.” Freckled-hen lowered her voice. Blanca-hen drew the shutters and listened behind them as would any curious woman.

“Please, don’t quarrel anymore!” the policeman said. “There are ten women for every man, but polygamy is permitted.”

A cock has the right by Constitution to have a gaggle of geese/hens. “Peace, peace, between you two beasts,” the Drake said again.

And then the cock was crowned the king of hens.

GITCH THE LITTLE BITCH, CIG THE LITTLE PIG, AND DAT THE CAT

When it was getting light, Gitch the Little Bitch woke up first, stretching on her front paws, whimpering slightly, and then, with her round muzzle, she announced breathlessly:

“Ham! ham! awakening! ham! ham!”

Cig the Little Pig was sleeping on his side, his legs at his chest for warmth with his snout hidden in his straw bed. He squeaked a bit, turned round his tail and started to yawn.

The laziest of all was Dat the Cat. The lady cat mewed one time through her whiskers:

“Who is disturbing my sleep?”

When curly-haired Gitch the Little Bitch heard the impudence, she set out in the direction of the lazy and disagreeable mewing:

“Ham! ham! shame on you!”

“Old cat! Ham! Ham!”

Terrified of the screams and threats from outside his house – the house that he had just decorated with different-coloured weeds, hung on the wire fence – Cig the Little Pig whined “grootz” and began to scream and run in a circle with frantic, short steps, his body curved until he resembled a ring-shaped biscuit.

Dat the Cat, with half-opened eyelids, thought that Cig the Pig was being scolded by Gitch the Bitch and for that the poor pig was growing agitated in his cage. Dat shifted positions, making herself small as she curled into a ball, laying her head on her back paws as she fell again into sweet morning sleep.

Gitch was running forward, her mouth open.

Dat felt the barking very near, opened an eye and saw in front of her a black hole, bristling with sharp glassy teeth like those of a killer whale. She drew back and, shivering and growling “zvrr!” she climbed up a pole. Her pulse raced and she panted for breath. She climbed with her back paws, advancing up the pole, and then halting to balance on her front paws.

Gitch stared. Cig remained in place. They regarded Dat enviously and couldn't believe their eyes. When they looked around, all the chickens had gathered near the pole, amazed, and were standing in a circle. Moved by her performance, they clapped not only with palms but also with wings, hooves, spurs and paws. Indeed Dat was also known for her talent of climbing on a rope or a pole. She even won some Olympic medals, one of which she wore around her neck.

After a few minutes at the peak of the pole, she grew quieter. Like a queen or a cinema star soaking up the adulation of the crowd, she went down in the same manner she had gone up. Her dismount was accompanied by the applause of the audience; as she drew near the poultry, she fluttered her silky tail under the noses especially of lady Gitch and Mister Cig. Her paws touched the sand. Again the audience applauded and congratulated her.

The Gander Vander opened the lock of Cig's house with his beak.

Dat strutted among the spectators, who parted to let her pass. Gitch and Cig followed her. When they reached the middle of the yard Gitch the Little Bitch, Cig the Little Pig and Dat the Cat started a large ring dance. All the chickens were caught up in this folk ring dance. There were Len the Hen with Bock the Cock and Huck the Lady Duck and Roat the Little She-goat. Also Sove the Dove entered the folk ring dance, like a great hero from the stories, and they finished the dance in a universal "Peace, Peace, Peace" among the beasts.

Since that time, all the animals of the house have lived in harmony and friendship.

SHORT THEATRE

NO EXIT!

Characters:

1st Mountaineer (Uncle Jean): employer, mature;
2nd Mountaineer (Cajon): vacillating, youth;
Megaphone: official;
Policeman.

Scene 1

Setting: A stark precipice, barren mountains all around. Darkness – and a sensation of a chasm. There are two mountaineers equipped with rucksacks, belts, helmets, ropes, and pitons.

MEGAPHONE: Attention! Attention! Let nobody leave the county! Attention! Attention! Let nobody leave the county!

1st Mountaineer: Come quickly. The weather is clear. We can climb the Black Stone. The rucksacks and the rope are ready.

2nd Mountaineer: I'm afraid. What if it crashes? And, maybe there isn't really a stone. Maybe it's just our imagination.

1st Mountaineer: We have to try. Don't you understand? We must try. If we don't, the stones could fall and bury us alive right here. Stones are falling down right now. (*Rattling noise of falling stones.*) Do you hear? (*The falling begins again.*)

2nd Mountaineer: And how do you mean to climb amidst all these falling stones, and for *them* not to see us?

1st Mountaineer: We will sneak away ...

2nd Mountaineer: (*Makes the sign of the cross*) God help us!

1st Mountaineer: We worked all night long, ironing out the details, sleep walker. I haven't forgotten anything. Put on your climbing boots and your cleats so you don't slip.

Megaphone: Attention! Attention! Do not leave the county! A very important official statement will be transmitted ...

1st Mountaineer: The devil with it. I wish that thing would shut up!

2nd Mountaineer: Sssh, it might hear you. Don't you know they're everywhere?

1st Mountaineer: They try to steal people's souls.

2nd Mountaineer: Once they start talking about you, it's very difficult to get rid of them.

1st Mountaineer: Take your anorak. It's freezing up on the ridge. I bought a hammer from the chateau keeper for the pitons.

Megaphone: Attention! Attention! Suspicious individuals stole into the Valley of Happiness, troubling the peace of the inhabitants. Don't let them escape! They are a great public danger.

2nd Mountaineer: Listen—they're on our trail.

1st Mountaineer: What are you waiting for? There's no time!

2nd Mountaineer: They have accused us of high treason. They are capable of doing anything.

(A policeman appears with a gun in his hand.)

Policeman: Stay where you are! Nobody move!

2nd Mountaineer: *(Whispering)* All right, we're done for ...

1st Mountaineer: I humored you by climbing up fast and now, Cojane, you want to wait for an invitation to proceed?

Policeman: Turn your face to the wall! *(The mountaineers do so.)* Hands up! *(The two men are searched.)* What are you doing in the forbidden zone? *(Falling stones are heard again.)* So, nothing to say?

2nd Mountaineer: *(to Uncle Jean)* Why did I listen to someone like you!

Policeman: Stop your muttering! Turn around! Haven't you seen two suspicious persons wearing anoraks and hunting boots, getting ready to climb the mountain?

2nd Mountaineer: *(scarcely audible)* Y-y-y...

1st Mountaineer: No, no ...

2nd Mountaineer: Mmm ... No...

1st Mountaineer: We're looking for them too. We're disguised like sportsmen so we can find them.

Policeman: Be very careful! The most insignificant information should be reported immediately to the nearest police station. Do you understand? Don't keep keep back anything!

2nd Mountaineer: What?

1st Mountaineer: We understand. Long life to you!

(Policeman goes away.)

2nd Mountaineer: Ufff! That was tense!

1st Mountaineer: Stop complaining. It's time to get going. Pick up your rucksack and let's hit the trail. No time to lose.

(Policeman reappears.)

Policeman: Where are you going? *(The mountaineers freeze.)*

2nd Mountaineer: We're going ...

1st Mountaineer: After the delinquents. *(In an aside to Cojane)* Idiot!

Policeman: But who sent you?

2nd Mountaineer: Who sent us? Well ...

1st Mountaineer: Who sent us? Well, you did.

Policeman: Oh, I forgot. *(He leaves.)*

1st Mountaineer: Be careful, now. *(They tie the ropes around themselves and begin to climb.)*

Megaphone: Attention! Attention! Be very careful! Anyone who doesn't present moral/political guarantees and show evidence of material debts to the institutions where they work will be arrested and searched.

In every locality there are investigative committees. We cannot tolerate anybody. Any exception from domestic discipline must be discovered and corrected in time. We make an appeal in this manner, seeking the cooperation of the whole of community from the Valley of Happiness ...

(Each mountaineer lowers himself halfway down the precipice. Noise of falling stones. Cojane is injured, slips and collapses. Uncle Jean slips, also. They hang by the ropes.)

1st Mountaineer: Don't look down. There's a river down there and if you look at it you'll lose your nerve.

2nd Mountaineer: Ah, I have a headache.

1st Mountaineer: We're in training, we're in training. Nobody is going to rescue us. Be patient!

2nd Mountaineer: It's an impossible situation. A dangerous game.

1st Mountaineer: We must see what is down there. We have to keep going. *(He reaches for the stone and grasps the rope.)* Don't swing!

2nd Moutaineer: I can't go on. I'm exhausted.

1st Moutaineer: We're slipping. Try again. The pitons are coming loose.

2nd Mountaineer: And the Police will be back ...

1st Mountaineer: Maybe we're out of luck. Why should I continue with you? After all, I promised my wife ...

2nd Mountaineer: That's enough. Don't remind me. Do you think it's better above? I was used to being down there with the fish. It's quiet. Sunlight has never reached down there, although the old people suppose that there is a sun. They remember plants with nostalgia.

1st Mountaineer: You keep a low profile, that's true. How do you go on like this?

2nd Mountainer: Because this is the way it's been since I was born. All societies create their rats. Not grasping what they see, because in their mole hill there is forever mist, and the moles don't need eyes. And when they come to the surface, they are blind.

1st Mountaineer: How will they become blind if they haven't ... ah, you also are afraid of daylight.

2nd Mountaineer: If the people haven't wings, this means that God created them not to fly. Should we renounce this effort, Uncle Jean? We cannot pass over the crawling beast at the bottom of the abyss.

1st Mountaineer: I understand, Cojane, a thesis of theirs: circumvent any change. But I learnt in anatomy that the function creates the organ. Why don't we persist? Look: these ropes and the mountaineer hammer and pitons make up part of our "wings". With them, we can fly.

2nd Mountaineer: Uncle Jean, it was living in this country that inspires you to talk this way. The mountains surrounding us, abruptly sprouting from the earth, and a black cliff at every cardinal point, and that surrounded us ... it made you feel alive. You felt humbled by it all. They turned the valley into a hill, and a respectable height into a valley. The height, at which the country had arisen turned into an abyss. But the abyss formed a frontier with the sky ...

1st Mountaineer: The mountains of society shade us with their artificial ridges. They keep us stunted, and in darkness, Cojane.

2nd Mountaineer: But in summer they keep us cool. You have to acknowledge that. *(Noise of stones. Incomprehensible words, other-worldly. The mountaineers fall heavily to the earth.)*

1st Mountaineer: Do you see how they treat us? How they roll over us with their power? What contempt they have for us, flinging harsh words at us like stones and gravel

...

2nd Mountaineer: Don't listen to them! They speak, they hear only themselves, but we mustn't listen to them!

(The Policeman comes back, dogging them.)

1st Mountaineer: For myself, I cannot be deaf to people's sufferings. We must transmit beyond the mountains, too, to let others know how "happy" we are in the "Valley of the Happiness."

2nd Mountaineer: How? Don't you know that the telecommunication service cannot function outside of here? The cliffs are too high.

1st Mountaineer: Of course, of course. But if we install an antenna on the west slope of our illusions?

Megaphone: Attention, Attention! Two suspicious individuals, disguised as mountaineers, are trying to climb our ideals to the peak of the Black Stone that has been supervising the borders for centuries. Stop them! Stop them!

2nd Mountaineer: Alas -- alas!

Policeman: Ha, ha, ha! Now you can't escape! To the control post for interrogation. Go! You will be condemned for ideological crimes.

The Mountaineers: *(Puzzled)* How...? What...? Who...?

Policeman: Shut up! To prison with you!

1st Mountaineer: Sir, there must be a mistake. You don't know us.

Policeman: Well, I'm about to get to know you right now! *(He pushes them with his rubber stick.)* ... Assassins! Bandits! Mountaineers! You will die in prison!

2nd Mountaineer: I'm certainly not guilty. I was persuaded by him. *(He points at Uncle Jean.)*

1st Mountaineer: He is right. Don't involve him. I'm the malefactor, the instigator. I incited him to insubordination. I initiated the amateur mountaineer course and I built the four tourist chalets, rest stops on the climb to spiritual ridges. *(To the Policeman)* Are you content?

Policeman: Yes. You confessed. That is, no, how can I be content when somebody tries to climb the mountain of the desires?

Scene 2

In prison, the Mountaineers are blindfolded and their hands tied. The policeman is not present.

Mountaineer: *(Repeating)* In the country of all freedoms we fulfil all our aspirations. We are joyous to be contemporaries of the shady mountains and deep valleys. We live moments of profound gratitude and greatness in the achievements of this glorious epoch. The Valley in which we were born is our mother and father is the tall Mountain. We don't want to come out from this place. We are happy.

1988 (Romania), 1999 (USA)

DESTINY

(A play without actors, without scenery, without dialogue.)

The gong is replaced by the whimpering of a baby.

The curtain is opened slowly on the side.

There is a very powerful Light on the stage, which then dims more and more till there is a dead darkness – lasting seven minutes and thirty seconds.

Absolute quietness.

The noises, words, moves of spectators from the hall (whether or not deliberate) are considered to be part of the spectacle.

(The inside of a phenomenon assumes by paradox an extension of its outside.) In other words: It belongs to what it doesn't belong to!

There are perceptible but vague laments.

Then the curtain is closed slowly, slowly.

The tape with applause can be heard, with sounds such as “encore ... encore!” and whistles.

The curtain is opened again quickly and then closed and again quickly opened. Again, there is recorded applause, and the same synchronic play of the curtain, opening and closing again more and more quickly and easily (as if actors were bowing to the audience).

CONVERSATION
(onomatopoeic play)

: Offf!
: Whooo?
: Iiii?
: Haaa?
: Nooo.
: Aaa!
: Ahaa.

FLORENTIN LYRIC THEATRE
PERFORMS
IN ABSOLUTE PREMIÈRE

Spectacle
of

verses into verses-----

LOVE ADVENTURES

play in an act
-of conscience-
and five scenes
-in different colors-

With great actors in small roles

DISTRIBUTION (in order of appearance on the stage):

SIGNOR ALFONSO.....GEO DUMITRESCU
INGÉNUÉANA BLANDIANA
A TROUVÈRE.....CEZAR BALTAG
THE SNOW GIRL..... CONSTANȚA BUZEA
THE POET.....ADRIAN PĂUNESCU
THE PHILOSOPHERION GHEORGHE
THE SLEEPY PRINCESS..... ILEANA MALĂNCIOIU
THE KNIGHT ERRANT NICHITA STĂNESCU
THE SQUIRE GHEORGHE TOMOZEI
THE TROUBADOURE..... MARIN SORESCU
THE WOMAN FROM THE DREAM..... NINA CASSIAN

Entrance is free of any context.

SCENE I

(An empty room with a window on the right and a door on the left, Signor Alfonso, a Trouvère, Ingénue.)

SIGNOR ALFONSO (*approaching*):

I'm sorry that I've never loved a girl
(God is my witness that I meant well.)

INGÉNUË:

Don't come any closer, don't touch me,
My body's bitter and possibly fatal
With setting sun under my arm
With drunk butterflies by my skin
Enlivened from larva shivered of longings
Not being able to begin them, It's better to go!

SIGNOR ALFONSO (*stops*)

I'd sometimes like to be older
than your fourteen years
and less intelligent and would rather
you were cast
in our kitchen walking barefooted
called by somebody, vulgarly, "wife" –
but I, kneeling, lowly, before you.

INGÉNUË:

I always was loved by all,
Those that hated me loved me more powerfully
Passing between both hate and love
I often was covered with love.

SIGNOR ALFONSO:

You like to be in front of me,
Often you make love, in front of me

A TROUVÈRE (*whispering to Signor Alfonso*):

Her nerves are like a beam, her heart
a wooden knot
around her drought spreads
Inside her a fountain rose
Here a master snake drowsed.

INGÉNUË (*near the window and more to herself*):

My beauty does me harm,
More unknown than the moon
Passing from mirror to mirror.
From water to water
Always iconic
Without undoing,
But without entirely
falling into sleeping

SCENE 2

*(A winter landscape, a little sunny.
The Snow Girl, The Poet, A Trouvère, The Philosopher.)*

THE SNOW GIRL:

I'm quite the wild
Beast that doesn't understand angels.

THE POET:

I bow to the hot ankle of the wildest women

THE SNOW GIRL:

Once I had an ice profile
Soul impulses were musical
We must be sad when we are alone
And gay when we move outside of that aloneness.

THE POET *(as the girl goes away)*:

My love will be responsible for all,
For this human grief
And for the mountain that comes down
To render justice to the plains.

A TROUVÈRE *(horrified, to the Poet)*
How your soul is shaking
as a sieve shakes when handed
from one hand to another
to another

The PHILOSOPHER *(speaking as if at a lecture)*

Who knows others
Is wise,
He isn't afraid when brothers
Embrace him, and keep him close to their chests.

The POET *(being among men only)*

Ash of this love is sparking
Entire nothingness, female images

SCENE 3

(A medieval castle. Medieval costumes, Sleepy Princes, Knight Errant and Squire.)

SLEEPY PRINCES (lying on a white bed, to Squire):

God, how his soul appears to me like steam

rising from the wet earth, coaxed by the burning sun

(The KNIGHT ERRANT appears because he heard the monologue.)

THE KNIGHT ERRANT *(a little sad)*:

I don't think that the birds fly

that their wings are uplifted by what can't be seen

that you will love me

unless I become like a dog to you

SLEEPY PRINCES *(lying on a spotless bed speaking to the knight)*:

Make a safer border safer than

the border that was between us and is now gone;

I want to approach without seeing you

I'm afraid and I go about, glancing upward nervously, as if I'm being watched

THE KNIGHT ERRANT *(jovially)*

Come, you, and just you,

like a wheel

Come, you, without yourself

to be with me, me.

THE SQUIRE *(speaking slowly to the knight)*

She has knees like two

Perfect apples,

Her hair trails through the sea waves

and with hands just emerging from childhood

looks for nests of shell.

THE KNIGHT ERRANT *(to the Princes)*

Large-eyed, you know you are princes,

you have an errant knight

and you have a song, and a divine service, and see

above the battlements the weeping moon in a corner

SLEEPY PRINCES:

It's as if I were alone at my wedding

You are silent and your hand rests

On my arm fearfully, and I am like a groom

Marrying a dead bride

SCENE 4

(Half-darkness. Music can be heard behind the scene. Ingénue and Troubadour.)

INGÉNUÉ:

My lover whom nobody

Sees except in a dream

Father of inner words
And king of those not yet said
Uncertain son
Born of entreaty
Sent to you
I'm so tired; I sang
So many countless thoughts,
So many angelic words.

TROUBADOUR (*a little passive*):
No, dear, don't disturb yourself to love me.
Keeping on:
A black coffee I'll take, however,
From your hand.
I like that you know to do it
So bitterly.

INGÉNUÉ:
You are merciless,
I haven't seen, I haven't heard
How long have I been telling you—
You are.

TROUBADOUR:
Come,
From these two hearts
Shines a bright light.

INGÉNUÉ:
Why should I go back among the fruit trees
Among the trees scorched by the hot wind.

TROUBADOUR (*hesitating a little*):
Well, we'll go together,
A good piece of earth,
A good piece of sky,
A good piece of moon.

SCENE 5

(The same décor from SCENE 1. All the characters who passed through the previous scenes are gathered. Signor Alfonso tells the others a love story. It is almost the end.)

SIGNOR ALFONSO (*Looking at the men with enthusiasm.*)
You're nothing, I shouted with disgust to myself, and said,
turn off the light, love is here!

(The light is turned off and like in a dream a female silhouette appears.)

THE VOICE OF THE GIRLS FROM THE DREAM *(speaking warmly to Signor Alfonso):*

With you the snow is deeper,

having a sense of the woods in decline
and disturbing signs that still send
themselves to unknown planets.

(after a few moments, as if understanding his thoughts):

Then, so that you wouldn't be offended by my boldness,
I should wrap myself modestly in a fog, till,
There is so much love, your ring would melt in my hand
and would stain with gold, my cheeks, my eyes and mouth.

SIGNOR ALFONSO

But we couldn't love so much, my dear,
It's too late -- death comes!

THE WOMAN FROM THE DREAM:

How is it I was predestined to abandon love
When I have yet to love ...

(She comes out the door on the left.)

TROUBADOUR *(to the other women):*

Go away, all of you,

Too beautiful and lovely Anne(s);
Please forgive me that I don't wall you in alive
My trust would be better placed
In bricks.

The curtain falls. The end.

ANTIQUÉ TRAGEDY

(Night time in an Athenian temple.)

Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles have been engaged in dialogue since long past dark. Their timeless message has reached us through the ages. They wear on their heads white sheets and in their hands they hold torches in front of their faces; from the darkened auditorium, they seem to be mummies.

Elderly Aeschylus is on the left of the stage.

Euripides and Sophocles, both younger, are on the right.

From time to time, the retorts, especially the poetical ones, will be accompanied by lyre.

AESCHYLUS: I, like all poets, am excited by the creative furies, and my passions burn inwardly like fermenting wine.

EURIPIDES: ... fine observers and non-observed...

SOPHOCLES: ... fencing their minds ...

AESCHYLUS: I like all poets who don't try to trick you with their poetry. Oh, wicked shamelessness, be ashamed!

The falsification of love poetry will be punished according to the law.

EURIPIDES: *(to Aeschylus)* Ah, you are greedy for yourself. You, who are so ... you ... as if there wasn't enough of you.

SOPHOCLES: You have shaken off your fear of heights, Aeschylus. Your sentiments have become sleep-inducing.

AESCHYLUS: I killed everything – life, love, friends, family. I am a criminal.

EURIPIDES: You are guilty without guilt. Your point of view is flat.

SOPHOCLES: *(to Aeschylus)* The true artist has to create the non-created. You attained that by yourself.

AESCHYLUS: Time squeezes me. And every part of my dying self gives birth to another, and to another. I have my days, Euripides, counted on the calendar. I'm cold, I'm rain, I'm drought. Today I was afraid of death. Zeus said loudly to me from Olympus, the poets don't have a very long life.

EURIPIDES: I see how the sea is dying in darkness. The sandy tornado has its claws in your eyes. The waters, drawn as if through a sieve, roar as they fall.
(Specific noises by loudspeakers as if they were coming from the bottom of the earth.)

AESCHYLUS: If we aren't astronomers who can read the zodiac in constellations, we are trees.

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: *(with admiration)* A poet who is rich in words.

AESCHYLUS: I do daily greying exercises. I bitterly love my bitter love. Weeping washes my insides. Far from me is the thought of seeking rest for the spirit. It's a game we play in life. We must know to wait, and to wait, to wait.

EURIPIDES: *(to Sophocles)* His secret weapon is ...

SOPHOCLES: *(to Euripides)* His secret weapon is ...

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: *(whispering)* His secret weapon is genius ...

AESCHYLUS: I have the impression that everyone is angry with me.

EURIPIDES: He is drunk. He is drunk on poetry.

SOPHOCLES: The intimate freedom breaks the canons ... resulting in intimate freedom. Every time he's obsessed he starts reciting verses. He is an obsessed man.

AESCHYLUS: I want to touch the infinite. Art is the reality drawn from the imagination of the Greeks. I propose that we all become sworn brothers.

EURIPIDES: A small beginning for an important endeavour.

SOPHOCLES: A WHITER black.

AESCHYLES: I need to fail for future successes. Because, brothers Euripides and Sophocles, how many defeats haven't I suffered for getting a single triumph!

I'll give you folks advice...

...erect a great culture house.

EURIPIDES: We were born too late, and we leave too early.

SOPHOCLES: Since we came into the world we have been condemned to death.

EURIPIDES: We often ask each other, Sophocles and I, in the moment when we weren't, who was instead of us and turned into us?

AESCHYLUS: Apollo the God of Light ...

(The image of Apollo appears in the sky ...)

SOPHOCLES: Or when we were before our births ... ?

AESCHYLUS: *(repeating mechanically)* ... Apollo, the God of Light ... I must stand aside for him. *(He comes out.)*

EURIPIDES: Aeschylus thinks about what was before. Aeschylus thinks about the inverse.

He listens to sweet words with his ear. His terrestrial body has an extraterrestrial thought.

SOPHOCLES: We take account of the sounds that he transmits. He was drunk with sadness, he was drunk without drinking.

EURIPIDES: He turned his sin into a quality.

SOPHOCLES: This is a scientific story. A literary algebra. The language of music.

EURIPIDES: Non-substance has been since before the beginning of the world. The past is not like a legend ...

I don't love poetry, but the poetry of poem.

SOPHOCLES: By denying a powerful thing it's possible to affirm it more strongly, Euripides. *(Apollo disappears. Aeschylus enters again.)*

AESCHYLUS: I look for the darkness of the soul with burning candles. Ah, if only the papyrus could sing what I hear and what I can't find words for!

SOPHOCLES: *(to Euripides)* "What Aeschylus does is well done, though unconscious." His guilt is that he writes poetry.

EURIPIDES: *(to Aeschylus)* "To be nice, all must be conscious."

AESCHYLUS: My critics tear up poems as if they were yanking flowers from vases. My thoughts find inspiration in drink and the god of ecstasy ... down here on earth, the spirit is higher ...

I give you an example. Take Homer, a blind man with a great artistic vision. He sees without eyes what the sighted can't see.

Please let me live!

EURIPIDES: All day long you, Aeschylus, stayed all night at pubs. You enjoyed yourself with Dionysus. You were good looking like a God.

SOPHOCLES: Euripides, Aeschylus is a man who is implied only in his appearances ...

Transparency ...

AESCHYLUS: I am a great Absent.

EURIPIDES: Only after death does immortality come.

AESCHYLUS: I waited in vain for the visa to enter dramaturgy. I am totally alone. The best literary circle was for me the library ... your Apollo is too rational. A man is a genius in his lucid moments. Long live the madness!

SOPHOCLES: *(to Euripides)* Aeschylus died. A long time ago. Then a dead quietness spread. The museum that has preserved his work is concentrated time.

AESCHYLUS: *(recites)* Look. *(He shines a little light in the night.)* The dawn appears, the darkness turns off like the light of a street lamp.

In the morning air the bird soars in its natural state

The grass opens its hands to the plains.

The wind swells on the waves, reaching for distant white sails

In Ellada it rains frogs and snakes.

Greek sculptors insert their souls in stone, in wood

The green concert of nature is for me fruit. Poseidon puts obstacles in our souls.

(He gestures toward the two.) I feel these children are a continuation of me. Not me halved, de-tripled...

EURIPIDES: Any writer is at the beginning a poet.

SOPHOCLES: *(to Aeschylus)* We have buried ourselves in a tomb of manuscripts. We strove to wrench ourselves away from the time of oracles.

AESCHYLUS: You were witnesses to my writing. But I'm tired of singing!

EURIPIDES: Take a seat, Master, down there.

AESCHYLUS: Why do you tell me to sit down? Are you tired of seeing me up? I sat down in my heart ... *(to Euripides)* It's well judged, you are a good judge.

EURIPIDES: You are heartsick. Your nerves are frayed. The countdown has started. Aeschylus, you cannot stop it. The countdown is relentless, and will not be stopped.

AESCHYLUS: I eradicate, in cold blood, the cold-blooded reptiles. *(He tries to strangle them. The two men defend themselves.)* They kill all that is not poetry. I swear by my lack of oaths.

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: We have been enjoying all this ... But in this moment this is like an insignificant confirmation, that is, a non-confirmed confirmation.

(They escape from suppressing.)

AESCHYLUS: Do you put my non-boldness on trial?

I hand you this poem with my seal of identification. *(He takes out from his chest a parchment scroll. Euripides and Sophocles unroll it impatiently.)*

EURIPIDES: *(showing the scroll)* This spontaneous appearance is disappearing

... SOPHOCLES: *(to Aeschylus)* How long have you troubled your head and body about your impatience?

AESCHYLUS: A moon and a sun.

SOPHOCLES: What have you gotten out of pace with?

AESCHYLUS: With patience.

EURIPIDES: We say much in a few words. *Non multa, sed multum.*

SOPHOCLES: (*to Aeschylus*). You dream quite enough for us, verbose poet that you are. Give birth to yourself again and get wise yourself.

AESCHYLUS: What you do, Sophocles, is not good. Something else is necessary.

And if you do something else, it's also not good. There must be something else.

SOPHOCLES: Why do you remonstrate with us, Aeschylus?

AESCHYLUS: Well, shouldn't I remonstrate with somebody every day?

EURIPIDES: You were attentive to cares and this night you expressed them to us.

AESCHYLUS: (*to himself*) The old Aeschylus, prince of beggary, making his entrance ... coming out of the field of letters ...

You must be tireless in the future, under the intellectual fervour of Critias, the tyrant.

EURIPIDES: (*about Aeschylus*) His face is old but his soul is young ...

SOPHOCLES: Aeschylus has no eyes. Aeschylus has no eyes. Aeschylus has no eyes, other than Dionysus, the god of vegetation, of wine.

AESCHYLUS: Go. Leave me. The main thing is to reach somewhere. I will keep going the way I began. Without seeing, without seeing. I looked at the time, I listened to the space.

EURIPIDES: With the stillness of a bronze sculpture I waited in your olive orchard. You were for us a right rich shade. An umbrella against Apollo. We were fleeing from the mind as water from a fire. We were running from the weather on a Dionysian wind.

Ehee ... now we don't love colourless old nuances anymore.

AESCHYLUS: Uh, this science gives fixed laws like some axioms that you respect.

SOPHOCLES: We like the white from light, a single colour without colour.

EURIPIDES: Our thoughts tend to the zenith.

Our endlessness is limited

but our limit is unlimited.

The absolute is relative, too, relativity

more relative also.

SOPHOCLES: The extremities are reached between madness and genius. We are on the bridge, you at the antipode.

EURIPIDES: Genius isn't normal.

AESCHYLUS: (*dreaming*) Once there was a beautiful rain.

... Memory like a sculpture in stone at a funerary

tomb. In front of beauty I remain

sometimes voiceless...

Once a beautiful girl was

Coming in front of the sky kneeling

We saw the absence

Emptied by myself.

On my tongue a dream increased

And all my life I looked for it

And then the dream of a dream

Alone, independent of myself, I existed and

Am myself vibrating.

The face, with immense eyes of ego's colour.

Enjoyed my lips.

Growing younger, letters were running on my chest...

EURIPIDES: (*interrupting him*) We were killed by a thought.

AESCHYLUS: You must learn to be at the height of sentiment. Out

Of love for poetry, I recited a poem.

SOPHOCLES: Euripides and I incline our forehead to thoughts. We were killed by a thought.

EURIPIDES: Doesn't matter if we feel or don't feel what we write but that we inspire others to feel.

AESCHYLUS: Naturally, your work is artificial.

EURIPIDES: (*to Sophocles*) Aeschylus plays music for us. Abundant lyre music.

SOPHOCLES: He is at least unserious.

(Euripides and Sophocles smack Aeschylus on the top of the head.)

AESCHYLUS: You attack my work in vain with your abstract poetry. Do you think that if I regress, you progress?

Together, we can persuade the country to be more at home in the world: a culture that progresses on the bones of the other culture, that progresses on the other culture on the other culture and the other culture, and so on.

We shall defeat the words ...

EURIPIDES: To be freed of your memory!

SOPHOCLES: Heal us from you!

AESCHYLUS: In poetry I was an anomaly. An error of nature.

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: He was frequently wrong! We haven't anything to say.

EURIPIDES: You were an ordinary man, common, we can say; you were distinguished by your simplicity, your ordinariness ...

AESCHYLUS: Would you like to offend me?

EURIPIDES: Master, you wanted to reduce us to unconsciousness. Full of glory, you hardly walked, but stopped and you shook yourself free of airs and glory to make your body thinner. "The inaccuracy" about which we were speaking has proved to be exactly true. There wasn't a place for us at all in dramaturgy. The worm of our envy turned into a butterfly ... as we gazed up at Your Highness.

AESCHYLUS: Why do you prejudge me? I hate the hatred. I invalidate the value. I, singly, formed a couplet, I and me – I'll cope with you and I'll be your self-esteem.

SOPHOCLES: Shall we turn light into words?

AESCHYLUS: My poetry has variability of senses. I fell in love with my lines, reading them very agreeably.

EURIPIDES: May we keep the moral clarity of these lines!

SOPHOCLES: The poets are gifted; they pass the words through the sieve of feelings and choose those that match perfectly within the matrix of the poem.

AESCHYLUS: It often seems that I don't exist, that I have only the impression of existence.

EURIPIDES: Light the wick to see, to think!

AESCHYLUS: To understand the language of things!

SOPHOCLES: From my mouth a word fell in mud. After that I gave it over for cleaning.

EURIPIDES: Sophocles washes his feelings.

AESCHYLUS: I am/ I shall be non-being, non-being. Amen! Amen! My memory. Without wings, but with winged spirit.

SOPHOCLES: You nestled, Aeschylus, in a poem. And words flourished in poetry. You became a myth for future generations.

EURIPIDES: *(to Aeschylus)* But the time came to draw a line between us. This line separates us so we are united.

AESCHYLUS: Euripides, and you, Sophocles, have a tendency to not respect the rules of tragedy.

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: We both learned not to trust anyone.

AESCHYLUS: But to not respect the rules, you must first know them. Be attentive to me: Do not create tragedy for the sake of the tragedy.

EURIPIDES: Today isn't recommended for giving recommendations.

SOPHOCLES: Anyway, everything that is asserted has to be verified, so verify even what I am saying.

EURIPIDES: Our convention is not having conventions, rules. Our traditions: not having tradition.

AESCHYLUS: Dionysus was my love but was not loved by you. I am constant in my lack of balance and this obliges me to be in balance ... I disturbed my quiet.

SOPHOCLES: When we follow your plays, such as "Seven Against Thebes," and "The Persians" ... we participate by not creating in the same way. We try to do the inverse.

AESCHYLUS: You write mathematical tragedies. Too much logic is not good.

EURIPIDES: Where are the laws of the Hellenic tragedies? Let's violate them!

AESCHYLUS: You are anti-dramatists ... have you suffered any psychic ill?

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: Unfortunately, not. Maybe we should understand better ... We apologize, a hundred eighty four thousand and four apologies.

AESCHYLUS: What you understand is that you don't understand anything.

Have you heard with my ears? Have you seen with my eyes? I have to write for mankind. My life for all lost night ...

Sacrilege of accursed words...

My maladjustment at adjustability...

I feel like a saint.

EURIPIDES: *(joking)* Devilish angel, and tamed devil.

SOPHOCLES: *(joking)* A saint of the devil!

AESCHYLUS: Euripides, Sophocles, have you souls?

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: Yes, we have.

AESCHYLUS: And what have you done with them?

(Both look at each other.)

EURIPIDES: We practice the poetical science, religion.

SOPHOCLES: We study a great deal.

AESCHYLUS: Regarding the readings, my apologies, but whoever considers himself learned is only half-learned. To affirm that you haven't a lacking in your

knowledge means you have great ones indeed. It's very difficult to affirm that you are fully capable at doing something, today.

I am orthodox and paradox.

EURIPIDES: I know. I learned from you. Studying the past, we know the future, the traces of Apollo's light ...

AESCHYLUS: I am going to keep going my own way. Between me and you what kind of link is there?

SOPHOCLES: None. This is the link – that there isn't any ...

EURIPIDES: Yes, there is: the tragedy. It united us in an upset of the rising of the sun. (*He points his finger at Aeschylus.*) Though we preserve the traditional style: ... to be non-traditionalist.

SOPHOCLES: (*to Aeschylus*) Euripides develops a psychological analysis of the characters, the independence of the choruses as action, making them look younger than myths ...

For example, "Hippolyte," "Andromache," "Iphigenia in Taurida," "Elena" ...

EURIPIDES: (*to Aeschylus*) Sophocles introduces the free tragedy. See "Oedipus the King," "Oedipus to Colon," "Antigone" ...

AESCHYLUS: You're both very gifted, very smart!

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: We are hungry for ourselves.

We go because our time is coming. After your disappearance we will give birth indeed.

(*They start to go. Aeschylus stops them.*)

AESCHYLUS: I know that in this lie there is some truth. Since you were very young I rocked you like babes in arms and baptised you in the water of a crystal river that was running through the precious poems. Wouldn't you sleep with me in the same dream? my little heart asks my blood. My blood is imprisoned.

EURIPIDES and SOPHOCLES: I have been sick of you, Aeschylus, since we were children. Till recently you only lived to develop you in us. Now we have healed. We are free of you.

EURIPIDES: I'll take you out of my mind.

AESCHYLUS: Who says if I deserve myself? May I exist? Through the brambles of so many ideas I translate myself into objects. I translated myself into rhymes and rhythm. I melted. I was exhausted by myself ... ! It's my turn to leave. And your right. Perhaps I should withdraw into the fountain of the soul. Take care of yourself. I entrust the baton to you – carry on the race. My name calls me. (*He goes down into a tomb. On the threshold he waves to them.*) Euripides and Sophocles, I wait for you. I hasten; eternity awaits me.

He draws on the lid of the tomb, where, in Greek, is written:

AESCHYLUS

Tragic poet

SOPHOCLES: Listen, the olives trees have stopped bearing. The branches droop like a bosom. The earth sleeps. The poetry breathes. (*Pause*)

EURIPIDES: It is the Victory of our defeat...

They turn off the torches. They come out on the left. End.

THE BLOOD OF COUNTRY EARTH

(Lyric play in one act)

THE CHARACTERS:

THE PEASANT (an old man, older than 70).

THE POLICEMAN (a moustached man, middle-aged).

MĂRINICĂ

VASILE (boys, peasants)

GOVERNMENT (a fat, short, bald man of about 50 years)

AUDIENCE (in the auditorium) people.

SCENE I

(A poor village. Far beyond a river, flames and traces of smoke can be seen. The Policeman shoves the peasant, who falls then tries to stand up.)

THE POLICEMAN: Go, you bumpkin. Go! *(He prods him with his gun.)* Get moving, you clodhopper ... go to the devil!

THE PEASANT: Easy, young man, take it easy! *(He holds his hand to his bleeding shoulder.)*

THE POLICEMAN: Go on. You're wasting my time. *(He kicks the peasant with his boots.)*

THE PEASANT: Hey, Sonny, what's the rush? Give me a break ... *(trying to stand up, he falls. He sighs deeply, stifles a cough, and spits up tobacco-stained phlegm).*

THE POLICEMAN: Shut up! Shut up! Go to hell, stupid bumpkin.

THE PEASANT: *(dreaming)* Let him take me ... he's taking me up ... there.

THE POLICEMAN: Oh, sure ... you really think that all the ignorant hayseeds will make it that far?

THE PEASANT: I know. You want to kill my dreams too ... I am going where I can go, where destiny sends me ... I go after my buddies Ionică and Mărinică, Vasăle ... they came to me and called me to them. But I didn't want to leave. They said they were in a place where the lands were theirs, and that all was well there. And there wasn't any boss there ... and they didn't pay any taxes ... and ...

THE POLICEMAN: Hey, Peasant, are you cracked in the head? Have you been nuts since that man hit you?

THE PEASANT: ... and the people are good and they don't quarrel. It's said the waters would be of milk and the lands of honey.

THE POLICEMAN: *(surprised)* Well, then maybe I should go there, too, so I don't have to be ordered about by a worthless fellow.

THE PEASANT: Well, at the gate two angels stand guard and no one is permitted

...

THE POLICEMAN: *(coming back to reality)* Nonsense! ... *(but still curious)* But who gets to go inside, Peasant?

THE PEASANT: And whoever enters there ...

THE POLICEMAN: Hurry up and tell me!

THE PEASANT: It's none of your business. You won't get in.

THE POLICEMAN: Am I not a man like the others?

THE PEASANT: Heavens! You are but you have a gun ... not all people have guns ... and what a gun!

THE POLICEMAN : *(wonderingly)* What about my gun?

THE PEASANT: Dirty.

THE POLICEMAN: *(He looks at it, puts it down near him. He laughs.)* I haven't cleaned it since it was issued to me. Ahaaa ... although not cleaned of late, I can say it used to "sparkle" in the past ... poor gun.

THE PEASANT: Poor?

THE POLICEMAN: I have only one bullet ... I'll clean it till it sparkles like the moonlight...

THE PEASANT: Bloody moon!

You can polish it as much as you want. This thick, black blood of the peasant springs forth all the time. It cannot be easily cleaned up.

THE POLICEMAN: *(He takes out a bullet.)* I am keeping one clean. *(He displays it.)* I don't want to use the rusty ones.

THE PEASANT: The clean bullet is faster dirty ... it slips beyond the river and is heard by the woman Maria. And she will say, "Well, this bullet knows that lad Gheorghe. Shall I take it myself?" ... She will take it ... She will see on it traces of blood, and Maria knows her husband from a great distance. Gheorghe will tell me, "Be careful – don't give your blood to foreigners."

THE POLICEMAN: I am a peasant, too. My father is from The Great Valley and my mother is from a place beyond two hills, right through the grove, to Păcureni.

THE PEASANT: Why do you stain your blood?

(He starts to strangle the Policeman. The other tries to defend himself with his gun, but without success. The Peasant seizes him by the collar and shakes him. Then he lets him go, disgusted. The Policeman lingers, amazed.) At least you have regrets?

THE POLICEMAN: *(Hitting him with the butt of the gun.)* Dullard! Low-down dog, how dare you raise your hand against me? I'll show you!

THE PEASANT: *(Growing pale under the blows, the Peasant falls in the water.)* What are you doing, buddy? What have I done to you? What do you want from me?

THE POLICEMAN: Keep your mouth shut, lowlife! Scarecrow! *(He kicks him wherever he can, screaming with agitation.)* You think you can beat me? Me, I am an organ of the state, of the central authority. Get up!

THE PEASANT: *(with effort and falling again headfirst in the river like a drowning person):* Biii... Ppp... Vivivi...Aaa...Juuu...

THE POLICEMAN: Shut your mouth, you mangy dog! You're faking, aren't you?

THE PEASANT: Biii...Ppp... Vivivi... *(He raises a hand, and slips into the water again. The scene must be real. The actor has to enter the water.)*

THE POLICEMAN: I didn't understand anything! What are you speaking, Turkish?

THE PEASANT: (bleeding as in "Golden Age," the film by Luis Buñuel) IAA...oho...

THE POLICEMAN: (He bows and falls on the ground.) Ao leo, ao leo! (A ridiculous scream at which the audience should laugh.) I killed him!

(With his hands to the sky like a Muslim who prays in a mosque.)

Good! Good, forgive—me! *(He gives the gun to the peasant, who takes it.)* Keep it! Free me! Free me of my mortality! *(He weeps. The Peasant doesn't move.)* Please, take it! Shoot me! If not, I'll shoot you! *(The Peasant recovers his senses, takes the gun instinctively, opens the chamber and studies it attentively. This scene must be like a spiritual gap, with nervous pressure.)* Shoot, man! Shoot once! *(The Peasant puts a finger on the trigger, without strength.)* Fire! *(There is no sound.)* Fire! *(The Peasant throws the gun with disdain. The Policeman hurries over to it. They struggle. The gun fires. They both fall in a faint. The Policeman touches himself to see if he is hurt. He takes the gun and he stands up. (He points the gun at the Peasant.)* Get up, coward! You cannot kill me!

(The Peasant remains where he was.)

THE PEASANT: (recovering). This bullet will say to Maria that I'm here. When she comes she will say, "Gheorghe, Gheorghită ... I see you haven't tainted our noble blood. You are not like those others." Leave me in peace, Mărie, let me be with God!

THE POLICEMAN: Stand up, man, immediately ... don't make me angry!

THE PEASANT: *(planting himself on the spot and staring into the eyes of the Policeman)* My friend Ion is waiting for me ... my friend Vasălie ... I will go with them, too ... Măria wouldn't let me ... so I didn't tell her I was going ... But I leave her my blood and my memory ...

THE POLICEMAN: *(as if hypnotised)* My father was called Gheorghe, too. *(The Peasant is rising ...)* and my mother Mă ... Mă ... ria.

Of all the names in the world it could be! Only Gheorghe and Maria and Ion and Vasălie and Mărinică ... and Uuufff, mother, why did you give birth to a policeman?

THE PEASANT: *(gently)* My son, why have you interfered with a lowly peasant and his destiny?

THE POLICEMAN: *(suddenly awake.)* Go to hell, churlish peasant! *(acting like a lawyer)* Tell me, dirty dog, who set that fire in that Government office ... in the Government Manor?

THE PEASANT: Ah, back in the Time ... the Time, the Time. The Time when the manors were on fire, and ran with blood ... the year was 1907 ... the future shows you the bloody past.

THE POLICEMAN: *(like a ghost)* You, you, you ... you started the fire in the Government yard ... at the corn barn ... you set the hay on fire ... at the house ... at ... at ... at ... the hill was a sea of ... flames ... flames that rose in the darkness of the night. They climbed the hill ... they covered the manor ... they covered everything ... the wind was roaring ...

THE PEASANT: The blood from the earth was flowing into the earth ... at the candle of the flames ... the dead had light for the first time ... now the peasants have no light...

THE POLICEMAN: ... the other way!

THE PEASANT: ... I saw with my ploughman's eyes, you shot bullets at us ... I am a messenger from far away ... you killed my children ... you killed your parents ... with this gun ... you are cursed! ... you should throw it away!

THE POLICEMAN: What are you mumbling, man? Whom did I kill?
You are the first person I have an order to execute.

THE PEASANT: Kill me, but you won't be able to forget this. It will be on your conscience. You will kill all my successors who haven't been born and who you won't let be born ...

THE POLICEMAN: If they turned out like you, it's better they weren't born. If I shoot you, it's for the good, and you should give thanks.

(to the Audience). Poor unhappy unborn children!

THE PEASANT: You shoot me in vain, because I can't die ... I see you before me and I mock you. You cannot defeat all of us ... oh, it smells!
(He points to the ground. The Policeman hesitates; then, curious, he bends to the earth.) It is wet ... wet with sweat. *(The Policeman, puzzled, looks at the Peasant. He meets his eyes. The Peasant again signals that he should look down.)* What colour is it?

THE POLICEMAN: *(He shrugs his shoulders and raises his eyebrows at the same time.)*

THE PEASANT: It's black. *(The Policeman looks attentively and is quiet. The peasant takes a fist full of earth and dribbles some of it in the river. Then he eats some of it.)* Iiii! How good it is! Aaaah – my mother, God forgive her, was right ... This earth is sweet. Taste, too, our blood – the blood the Government tastes!

THE POLICEMAN: Be quiet, you!

THE PEASANT: No matter what you become, no matter what you do – the earth is always the same ... If you eat earth, you will be more quickly earth ... and in this case you will have earth aplenty ... You don't own it. It embraces you.

(Sick with fever, shivering, he begins to ramble.) Mărie, get the cows away from the alfalfa. Be sure to take them to the cattle pen ... Look at the white cow, Blanca. Haven't you seen that the calf is still nursing? He still isn't weaned, damn it! Lubricate the udder with cow dung, damn it! ... What? He's still trying ... Confound it! Tie it to the pole ... Pick up some thistle weeds ... Take a sack with horse thistle, too ... *(He begins to sleep. He snores.)*

THE POLICEMAN: *(shaking him)* Go, old man! You have driven your pigs to market, haven't you?

THE PEASANT: *(waking)* Iii?

THE POLICEMAN: Get up. We have work to do!

THE PEASANT: *(He raises his sleepy head.)* What?

THE POLICEMAN: We must go to ...

THE PEASANT: *(interrupts him)* ... may I go home ... may I kill a chicken for supper ... seasoned with garlic ... a mug with wine from the three-gallon ... an azym(e)* baked on the kitchen range and a sliced onion and salt ... *(very enchanted)*. And fiddle music! *(It's getting dark outside. Heavy clouds lour above, and it thunders and flashes.)*

THE POLICEMAN: They're not playing a dirge for you, Hayface ...

THE PEASANT: *(pointing at the sky and listening to Saint Ilie crack his whip.)* But what is this? Nature is on my side, preparing to take me ...

The POLICEMAN: Man always wants what he doesn't have and to do what he cannot ... *(after a pause)*:

I will help you reach your house in the sky. I understand you are in a hurry. *(With a natural gesture, without remorse, he empties the gun, killing the Peasant. He picks up the body and throws it into the river... he rolls a huge stone after it.)*
May the stone not weigh him down! *(He disappears around the corner.)*

SCENE 2

(The scene remains empty for a few minutes. The following scene opens on the other world. The same décor but lighted confusingly, as if in a cave. Two shadows of human forms can be seen.)

MĂRINICĂ: What are you doing here, lad?

THE PEASANT: I am looking for myself. I am looking for myself and I can't find me.

MĂRINICĂ: How is that, old man?

THE PEASANT: This is our place, old boy. We're all here together ... I hurried to see you all ... Should we speak about tomorrow? ... Hey, old man, who started that fire?

MĂRINICĂ: We did, old man, all of you. You and I ...

THE PEASANT: Why wasn't I told about this – you? Why?

MĂRINICĂ: You should have seen how nicely it burned! Tall flames, old man ... a sea of flames, all red. They sprang from the earth, old man! It was hellish ...
(The echoes of an uprising are heard. A great uproar. Mărinică looks in that direction.)

THE PEASANT: Who brought you all here?

MĂRINICĂ: Time, God ... our days...

THE PEASANT: What bright eyes you have, my boy! *(stares into his eyes)*

MĂRINICĂ: My father Ghiță gave them to me. He also gave me an axe.

THE PEASANT: Măria lived, didn't she, Mărinică?

MĂRINICĂ: She did, old man.

THE PEASANT: And I did, too, didn't I?

MĂRINICĂ: You, also, old man.

THE PEASANT: Me, too – I was there too. *(He speaks joyfully.)*

MĂRINICĂ: *(stressed)* And your mother, of course.

THE PEASANT: *(He stares. He raises his voice.)* Louder ... I don't hear you clearly ... I light the fires ... fires that have nothing more to consume. Nature is bleeding. The red flames are put out.

MĂRINICĂ: Yell, you old man ... me, too, old man ... us, too, old man ... Everyone! *(He falls into a faint, and his head hits the earth. He weeps. Vasălie appears.)*

(The following scene is like a poem uttered by several voices. It should be accompanied by sounds of guitars, and there should be a campfire in the foreground.)

VASĂLIE: What do you see there, old man?

THE PEASANT: Mountains ... the green branches take root.
The Time is coming ...

VASÂLIE: The Time is watching us, old man. It hasn't eyes for us: What a terrible face he has ... his mouth twists. He is breathing bad air.

THE PEASANT: That man frightened me.

MĂRINICĂ: Leave him in his absurd time. Now he is sick ... sick from a sad heart.

VASÂLIE: (*staring toward him again*) He keeps going on like a blind man. The manor stays in his heart: a dead palace. He doesn't see the future reality. Măria takes a dig at the Government, a child gives it a fist.

The PEASANT: Leave him with his grief!

VASÂLIE: He retreats in peace. The present devours him. He keeps a lamp in his hand.

MĂRINICĂ : His light is raw.

VASÂLIE: (*going on*) He stumbles and falls.

MĂRINICĂ: He used to see only the sun and now the darkness makes him cry out with pain.

VASÂLIE: Please, Mărinică, help me see clearly what darkness is.

THE PEASANT: It is cleaning the dust from the books. The war chooses its heroes – the brave will emerge.

THE GOVERNMENT: (*A sound of someone falling. A more powerful sound that is stifled. A desperate yell from offstage.*) Mercy!

MĂRINICĂ: Mysterious signs. Messages of desperation. (*Another sound of falling*) He fell! Ready! He was hallucinating and talking to himself.

THE PEASANT: Life is life. If the foundation is poor, the building will not stand.

THE GOVERNMENT: Mercy, my People! The earth suffocates ... suf-fo ... suff

...

THE PEASANTS: I suffered in quiet till the quietness swelled and burst. It was made in pieces ...

(*To Audience*) You lived during a special night.

THE AUDIENCE: (*to the Peasant*) You deserve your monument for your loyalty to your Country.

THE PEASANT: I ask the Earth if he has pains because of my blood flowing through his veins ... a great and mysterious sign in the sky ... hot ashes are gathered on my bones ... vertical time.

A gong sounds loudly. The light is interrupted suddenly.

A brief flash on the stage: FATE,
and thunderbolt: CURTAIN.

UNKNOWN CAUSE

(play in an impossible act)

Characters:

PROFESSOR X (an old man)

ASSISTANT A (a young man who teaches at a University)

ASSISTANT B (a young man who teaches at a University)

VOICE OF DESTINY (ageless)

THE POSTMAN

(The décor: A room with two doors: one on the left; another on the right, the last having the inscription "The Room of Destiny." Behind, a little on the right, is a terrace. Professor X is sitting at the desk absorbed in papers, with glasses on his nose. Assistant A appears.)

ASSISTANT A: Professor X, they are waiting for you at the conference!

PROFESSOR X: *(flummoxed)* What conference?

ASSISTANT A: About inner points...

PROFESSOR X: *(wondering)* Inner points?

ASSISTANT A: Your famous work "Inner Point Axiom," published last year in the gazette.

PROFESSOR X: I don't understand, what gazette?

ASSISTANT A: The flyer, entitled "Mathematicus" ...

PROFESSOR X: I haven't heard about any gazette with this name ... I am a physicist.

ASSISTANT A: Well, you have been working for ten years. You are the Editor-in-Chief.

PROFESSOR X: I think there is some mistake.

ASSISTANT A: Aren't you Professor X?

PROFESSOR X: Yes, I am.

ASSISTANT A: Well, and then?

PROFESSOR X: I haven't ever been an editor of a newspaper or journals...

ASSISTANT A: Perhaps a sports editor then.

PROFESSOR X: I don't remember. *(The postman rings the bell and gives the Professor a letter. Assistant A reads it enthusiastically.)*

ASSISTANT A:

"Dear Professor X,

I have the honour of announcing to you that your paper 'Inner Point Axiom' has been accepted for publication by our reviewers. Lately a great many materials have come for editing, and 15 percent of them are being accepted. Your paper is ingenious and clear, and should therefore be to the liking of our readers. We thank you for your constant interest in our journal.

Anita Johnsonescu / secretary..."

PROFESSOR X: So you say I wrote those axioms?

ASSISTANT A: Certainly, but I was inspired by you. (*Professor X swoons. Assistant B appears.*)

ASSISTANT B: The audience is waiting! Come at once, Mister X!

ASSISTANT A: Let's go!

(*Assistants A and B take Professor X by his arms. They see off him towards the terrace. From outside the noise of the conference is heard. The three characters remain standing up with their backs to the audience.*)

ASSISTANT B: (*addressing the invisible crowd.*) Professor X will lecture on the importance of the Axioms. Let him speak!

PROFESSOR X: (*looking uncomfortable*)

ASSISTANT A: He is very timid and doesn't dare ...

ASSISTANT B: You see how modest he can be, a scientist of his reputation! Though the importance of his discovery is overwhelming, Professor X doesn't think it's anything special.

PROFESSOR X: I haven't anything to say. I don't know what you're talking about ...

ASSISTANT A: Sensational! He wants us to understand now that what he has published so far is only a trifle; his researches are just beginning. (*ovations*)

PROFESSOR X: I say sincerely, I don't know anything.

ASSISTANT A: Of course, nobody can affirm that anyone knows anything, because this "something" is complex -- and there isn't a possibility of knowing anything entirely.

ASSISTANT B: Every second a discovery is made. Therefore you cannot be current with everything, because while you are knowing something about something, another thing appears so that you cannot know the cause of the other. (*Ovations*)

PROFESSOR X: I don't even know what those axioms mean ...

ASSISTANT B: Indeed, the term is both multivalent and multilateral in order to be caught and tightened with the tongs of a definition. (*Ovations*)

PROFESSOR X: I don't even understand the notion of "point."

ASSISTANT A: Professor X studied this term thoroughly, penetrating it and reaching beyond it. (*Ovations*)

PROFESSOR X: I have another speciality ...

ASSISTANT B: We will have an opportunity to speak about the encyclopaedic culture of the scientist Professor X ...

PROFESSOR X: ... and especially about non-special forces...

ASSISTANT A: It's difficult to affirm today that one is a specialist in anything. Only an ignoramus would claim such.

ASSISTANT B: The points for which Professor X has always pleaded are inner ones, you must have known!

PROFESSOR X: So they would be, but I cannot make a determination on this.

ASSISTANT A: What exhausting work! Professor X doesn't make a determination on these points unless he clarifies the problem definitively.

ASSISTANT B: He gives proof of special zeal!

PROFESSOR X: I haven't worked on this paper at all.

ASSISTANT A: Unbelievable! Without a bit of effort, he gives birth to a paper of genius! *(Ovations)*

PROFESSOR X: ...and I'm not even interested in it!

ASSISTANT B: Of course, a minimum of work is sufficient to finish it.

(A and B assistants bow to the imaginary audience; then all three turn to face the spectators. The postman comes with a newspaper.)

ASSISTANT A: *(turning over the journal)*

"Dear Mister Professor X,

Your scientific conference was published on the front page."

ASSISTANT B: *(reading)* "Today in the Lecture Room of Science University of our city, the refined Professor X pleaded in favour of Axioms of inner points. We give below the succinct speech of the much appreciated professor."

ASSISTANT A: Please, read slowly.

ASSISTANT B: "The Inner Point Axiom?!" *(Long pause)*

"I haven't anything to say, I don't know about he is saying..."

Sincerely, I don't know anything! Neither do I know what these Axioms mean ... Nor can I infer how either notion of the point is necessary ... I have another speciality than this ...and it's about non-special forces. So they would be, but I cannot make a pronouncement on this. I didn't work on this paper at all...and I am not interested in it in the least!"

ASSISTANT A: Your speech was presented in its entirety. You demonstrated to them what was necessary.

PROFESSOR X: Nonsense!

ASSISTANT B: *(He holds out his hand to the teacher.)* The most respectful sentiments!

ASSISTANT A: And the crowd applauds at the empty stage.

PROFESSOR X: I think you are joking!

ASSISTANT A: Maybe it's YOU who are joking.

PROFESSOR X: It was not a farce ...

ASSISTANT B: We believe that you are tired after so much research and we advise you to rest a few hours.

PROFESSOR X: I'm not tired at all. You continuously mistake my meaning.

ASSISTANTS: Please excuse us. *(They retire.)*

(The doorbell rings. The Postman appears with another letter.)

PROFESSOR X: *(reads with a bored air)*

"Dear Teacher X,

"Regretfully we announce that your work, 'The inner point axioms,' didn't receive a favourable notification for publication from our reviewers. Lately the editorial staff has received a great many submissions, and I have the unpleasant duty of rejecting more than 85% of these.

"Your work is non-technical and narrow; for that reason, it would probably not be to the liking of the readers.

"Thank you for your continuing interest in our newspaper.

Anita Johnsonescu /secretary, etc...etc...."

I think somebody is making fun of me ... I must go to the dean. *(He leaves. He knocks at the door on the right.)*

VOICE: Enter!
(Professor X enters. The following dialogues will take place in back of the stage.)
 VOICE: Man, come in!
 PROFESSOR X: I did.
 VOICE: Enter again!
(Professor X goes out, then he enters again.)
 PROFESSOR X: I entered once again.
 VOICE: Get out! How is it you enter twice when others have never entered?
 PROFESSOR X: *(baffled)* But you know I went out and then I entered again.
 VOICE: Leave again, but this time, definitively!
 PROFESSOR X: First I should like to confess to you the vicissitudes that convinced me to come to the audience.
 VOICE: Get out of my life forever!
 PROFESSOR X: I should.
 VOICE: Get out!
 PROFESSOR X: *(very normal)* I thank you. *(He leaves but returns to the stage. He hurries and sits down at the desk, exhausted. Assistant A appears again.)*
 ASSISTANT A: Professor X began an interesting scientific university lecture.
 PROFESSOR X: *(indifferent)* What kind of lecture?
 ASSISTANT A: About non-special forces ...
 PROFESSOR X: *(satisfied)* Yes, non-special forces.
 ASSISTANT A: The famous work of Professor Y: “Linear Vectors of non-special forces,” published last year in review ...
 PROFESSOR X: That is my work ...
 ASSISTANT A: Excuse me. I have to contradict you because you are a mathematician, and this work is on physics.
 PROFESSOR X: I, a mathematician?
 ASSISTANT A: Oh, always.
 PROFESSOR X: I can’t believe this. It’s possible there’s a mistake.
 ASSISTANT A: The review is called “PHISICUS.” You are not a subscriber.
 MISTER PROFESSOR X: Yes, it seems I was.
 ASSISTANT A: Well, it’s thirty years since your father died.
 PROFESSOR X: I don’t remember. *(Assistant B appears again, hurrying.)*
 ASSISTANT B: Hurry, gentlemen! We will miss getting a seat.
 ASSISTANT A: Is Professor X also invited?
 ASSISTANT B: Of course, as a spectator.
 PROFESSOR X: Spectator at my own realisation?
 ASSISTANTS: Let’s go! *(They take Professor X by his arms, exiting stage left.)*
(The décor has changed. A and B fetch a number of chairs and take out the desk, creating an improvised amphitheatre for university lectures on the left half of the stage. The three enter at the same place from which they exited and sit on the chairs facing the audience. They then pretend to give lectures. Nothing can be heard; neither of the actors gesture.)
 From time to time Professor X stands up and proclaims, “It’s not true, I discovered this theorem!”
 or:

“Mister Y is a plagiarist, an impostor, a juggler!”

or:

(Pointing with their fingers at an invisible speaker.) “You’re a shameless liar! The result belongs to me. I have a Patent as well as an ‘Apparatus of measure and control of the non-special forces’ “ and other speeches improvised on the same theme.

(Assistants A and B are dozing, and are startled when Professor X intervenes in the debate.)

“Shhh! Please be quiet. Don’t disturb us with your ideas.”

“Sit down, Professor X! You’re a cripple.”

or:

“You protest in vain because nobody trusts you. ‘Alea iacta est’/ the die was thrown - however the authority wanted!” *(and other retorts improvised on the same theme.)*

(Professor X grows nervous from his seat in the amphitheatre, and is torpid, upset.)

PROFESSOR X: *(to himself)* Should I go to the dean? *(He goes to the door on the right and opens it halfway.)*

VOICE: Get out!

PROFESSOR X: To get out, I must first enter.

VOICE: Don’t bother me! Get out!

(Professor X closes the door, and falls down flat. The assistants stand up and rhythmically applaud the lecture, which seems to end.)

VERSES

EXPERIMENTAL POETRY

COMPETITION!

You run alone
And get second place!

TO THE ARTIST

After glory
The decline comes

NEUTROSOPHY (TRI-ALECTIC)

I don't combat Hegel
But I have another opinion than his

ANTI-TALENT

You paint very nicely
Ugly figures

NON-CONFORMIST

Appointed
To those not appointed

IN FASHION

It doesn't match
How it matches you

SELF-DEFENCE

If I don't kill you
You kill me

CREATION

State of mind
Non-state of mind

TOMFOOL

He thinks with his mind
That he will keep it in his trousers.

PARADOXIST DISTICHES

Paradoxist Distich is a poem in which the second verse contradicts the first, but together they make up an entity defining the title.

Here are some examples:

SPIRITUAL

Becoming old
He has, however, remained young in his sole

METHAMORPHOSIS

From that ugly caterpillar
What a beautiful butterfly came forth!

PIECE OF ADVICE

When you speak
You had better shut up!

MISCARRIED

Dead
Ere born

WHAT A DAMNED NUISANCE

When you don't look for it
You find it

DISPLEASURE

He punches the nose
Of the snub-nosed man!

DISCREPANCY

That's right
Isn't that so?

THOUGHT

Wit is winged
Though uninspired

DISTURBED

Inadaptable to
That which is adaptable

UNFORESEEABLE

You expect
Whom you don't expect

VICIOUS CIRCLE (II)

An endlessness
However finished

THE REVERSE OF MEDAL

You want to do the good
And you get the bad.

DEFICIENCY- law of paradoxism

Nothing is perfect
Not even the perfect

MULTIPLICITY

Unique matters
Are those non-unique

SUBJECTIVITY

The absolute
Is relative

LOSS OF MEMORY

Forgetting
That does not forget

PROLONGATION

Which, if it is finishing
Doesn't ever finish

TAUTOLOGICAL DISTICHES

A Tautological Distich is made up from two lines apparently redundant, but together they give deeper character to an entire poem, defining the title.

The two lines have a notion in common or one is synonymous to the other.

AMBITION

When I want something
Surely I want!

PERFECTION

Better
Than better

ATTEMPT

At least I try
To try

SUPERFLOUS

Too much
Is, of course, too much!

CORRESPONDENCE

That's right –
Isn't it?

CHANGE

Mutatis
Mutandis

AXIOM(SHIP) I

Science(ship)
Scientific work

AXIOM(SHIP) II

Geometry(ship) of the
Geometry

AXIOM(SHIP)III

Mathematization of the
Mathematics

SCHOPENHAUER:

I know that
I know

IMITATOR

Discover what
The other already discovered

VIRTUALITY

Reality
Out of reality

NO COMMENT

That's
What it is

ROUGUISHNESS/NASTY TRICK

What don't you do
When you have nothing to do!

POLITENESS

Thank you for
Thankfulness

DECENCY

I see
What I see

SING ANOTHER TUNE/SWITCH

Change
The changing

AUDIENCE

Another time I am told
May you come another time

FAIRY TALE

The story of the
Stories

DEMAGOGY

Pleading for
Pleadings

Pit of Words

I've mustered up courage, yelling
"Lions, I'll not leave you anything!"
I gave up the tinfoil verb
and the cruel deeds, it's enough!
daily life is measured in any minute
by flesh from top to toe.

Fate Irony

before I was "me"
my destiny was made
from geometric
Lobachevsky's signs
moulding my face but not looking like me
in dropping of time

Defeated Tree

defeated tree by the sunbeam
i place my soul in your crown's palm
for our uninterrupted ways
into myself
through darkness of my inner heart
overcoming the shower of leaves
being melted into feelings

THE HISTORY OF THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE

There were discovered in lands
that great fragments of words
since Thraco-Getae have been living
These words for making heat,
we broke them
and set them on fire
near the temple.

They whisper stars, plants, animals,
mingle tears with dew and smile with buds
They keep silent the quietness, sing ouzel
and turn up grass
and keep the breeze from the East Side
of the heart.

EWE LAMB

The shepherds come down to the plains
even from the ballad
Ewe lambs come back to their doinas¹
And sound from the sheep bells
They sound from the sheep bells the ode of the Romanian language

The dogs bark at the sheepfold
the quietness, quietness, qui-

The shepherds come down from the mountains
Straight away to our hearts.

¹*Doina* is a specific Romanian grief song.

²*Hora* is a specific Romanian round dance involving many people.

POEM

Calling from depth to ground
Bees cover the earth round
White sparrows are coming from me
Through blood, hearts soundly laugh

Day bathes itself in hours
It sows sparks of light
Hyacinths flood the entire garden
With rivers of doinas¹ and horas²

THE FIGURES BEGAN TO VIBRATE

I loaded my pockets
with figures and squares
and I walked-sailed
in the streets
at every corner of the curved line
of life
I was throwing circles and triangles
into the mob and they resounded
with figures I paved the highway
and under my steps
they began to vibrate
when I filled my lungs
with them
they turned into letters
and I was going
the way of poetry

1979 („Năzuințe”, nos. 26-27, 1980)

THE POETRY DIED! HURRAH! HURRAH!

(Parody)

As a horse is the man
And the ass takes its flight
The books sing with a twang
The cliff is of wax

Idea is anything
and anything is idea
the mute man speaks,
the blind man rains,
the wood loves
the thoughts lay eggs

abyss chimera diaphanous
machine celestial four
diabolical tricks impious

Among figures and robots
(drawing the curtain from the backstage)
we need ourselves,
we need dreams!

GOING ON

Our old people spun from the bone flute
the endless tress of Romanian language
and tied a cord, from which fluttered the tricolor banner.
The barns are full of ancestors' time

The cold hours of time past are rushing
To worm limit of summer day
Long springs of caught arms
In the power station of our country.

(“Ora planetei”/ Planet’s Hour, 1980)

SPIRIT SAVING

You have been chosen to build temples
especially from birds,
for bricks.
You put bird over bird and
hammer their wings.
But it doesn't matter
you will fly with
bricks.

EMINESCIAN LINDENS IN PALE CASCADE

In memoriam

Eminescian¹ lindens
Fading. Falls
of leaves
In the arch of the sky the stars go
tiptoe
The 'bucium'² sounds flat
from the great bell
of the silence
And she doesn't come
Doesn't come yet.

¹From *Eminescu* (1850-1889), Romanian national poet.

²*Bucium* = Romanian shepherd's instrument.

THE LATIN MOTHER AND THE DACIAN FATHER

The return of the baby into the mother,
the return of the mother to the mother
and on, mother to mother
all the way back to the Latin Mother
and the Dacian Father

Here is
the reverse way of the light
eastward,
here is the flight of the bird
again into the egg.

THE GREAT ROMANIAN WALL

Our standard of coinage
is flight

Man by man,
flower by flower
we work at the Great Romanian Wall
of Elevation

UNKNOWNNS (Cycle)

X
Symbol of the ignorance
of the cognition

Y
Hermetic poetry
or
an exegesis of *it*

EPITAPH FOR A POET

in his grave no one rests
because
nobody died
because everyone
was born from poetry

BECAUSE

Sky isn't further sky
because it
has too many stars,
sky is sky
because it has only
 a sun
for us

THE PROPOSED PROBLEM

Enunciation.

One knows the verses
of a poet
of unknown X greatness (measure).

May one determine the value of this

Hint. (One chooses a method from all the methods.)

Firstly one finds
the parameters of which X depends on
and in any relations it is with them,
then one determines the measures unit
with which it is standardized.

Remark.

Using different methods
you could reach (find)
other solutions

I WAS CRUSHED BY THE SKY

I landed in a voyage
Of mine
Through the Lilliputian empire
Joined by white sights
I entered into a Lilliput cast,
Some time
I lived there,
But I take off
Again
Terrestrial
Tentacles
Moved downwards from sky
Crushing/crushed me

defeated tree by the sunbeam
i place my soul in your crown's palm
for our uninterrupted ways
into myself
through darkness of my inner heart
overcoming the shower of leaves
being melted into feelings

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