

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

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IN/HALF

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Jasmin B. Frelih: In/Half

Poetrylitics

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In a cone of light, attention.

Her.

» ... some new, bad poetry.« And laughter.

break me

make some space

for you

Do you know which word I find interesting?

break me in half

Which one?

Kindness. In kind. He is kind (*because he likes me*), he is kin. I mean, it does not even matter how he behaves, it is not even about him ... You get it? In kind. We are kin. If I find him kind, he is near me, close to me, we form a kinship.

Break me in half. Do it, put your tongs between my ribs

»Or, you know what? What if I would rather ...«

Scissors! Cut my waist, over fifty, yeah, you know, the moon wanes

» ... because I'm thoroughly fed up with this, you know it all by heart, don't you?« A warm applause. Truly warm, you can see that they really care.

I can't see a damn thing because I planted my eye into someone else

now I wait for what will grow

Some of them came from far, far away to see her. Zoya is a star. They all know her. When it gets hard for them (»do you know how many people have it hard, I mean, really, really hard?«),

they read her. Her words do not function as words, her words are a part of nature, they came from the land, grew on the trees, she fished them out of streams, she took them from the sky. Her words are edible. I mean it. High-caloric. They make you fat.

I dry up, all rough and mangy, and slip into the cracks

»No, really, tell me, is this working out for anyone?« A tremendous response, fingers between lips, screams and spittle. Little cars have been making their way to Brooklyn for the past couple of days, and people are camping out because she said that she will read when they asked her, nicely asked her, and she stopped declining, and said that she will read. To hear Zoya! Live! Her vocal chords and her voice and the way she gasps for breath, with her lungs, and her heart just beats there in front of you, you can, if you try, if you try really hard, you can feel it! Her heart! Wow! And they came, oh my, if you could see them, their souls are sniffing, and their haircuts are funny, and they all seem kind of

tear me in half, or I can't breathe!

sad. Their breath is warm. They know nothing of violence. Who knows where they all came from, and they are so young. Their parents have finally abandoned them. Their parents are so goddamn scared, but they must not be scared, they want to open up to people, not run away from them, and they will have to suffer the crimes, because their parents refused to grant those crimes a single thought. A whole generation, again, opening up to the slaps of strangers, well, finally!

»Trust everyone! Be little puppies, little dogs, little trusting dogs, and force your way through with your paws, and bother them with your snouts, and pretend you are innocent, I mean, you are innocent, completely innocent, what I'm saying is, just be, you tiny jaws, just who you are.«

Caring, gentle, mild and kind. But the back remembers. Carious cuttle.

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At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a nail factory here. Following Black Thursday (the market crash of '29) the factory closed. 523 people lost their jobs. In the nineteen thirties a local branch of the Salvation Army (a protestant church founded 1865 in the United Kingdom by William and Catherine Booth) set up shop here. In the second world war, the place was turned into a bullet factory. 60.000.000 people died in the second world war. After the second world war, when the demand for bullets fell, the space turned into an animal sanctuary. They treated the animals cruelly. In 1975, a young activist by the name of Alex Pacheco (who will, five years later, found the PETA organisation) broke into the sanctuary and with a Leicaflex camera (35 mm SLR) took pictures of the impossible conditions. He sent the photographs to the editors of The Village Voice. The black and white prints caused a public outcry. The sanctuary was closed. The local authorities bought the space and then rented it to artist groups, who used its illustrious past to heighten their emotive powers. Annie Leibovitz, Andy Warhol, Gil Scott-Heron, Jean-Michel Basquiat were all visitors. At the height of the crack epidemic (by the end of

the eighties) the place was squatted in by drug dealers. When the crack business lost its spark (for some reason, which has yet to be adequately explained, the whole opiate market went bust), they left it to junkies. A social worker by the name of Edna Welquer visited the space (the junkies agreeably nicknamed it the Hell's Diner) for twenty-five years, helped the unfortunates and wrote her observations down in her diary. When she was stabbed to death by a junkie in withdrawal, her son edited the entries in her diary and published them in a book. The police came and dispersed the junkies, and the local authorities boarded up the entrances. Since then, the space looms empty.

The head organizer of the Poetrylitics festival, Max Adorcuse (his name is newly coined), who rented the space, has made all of this up and printed it on the backsides of flyers. Zoya is his star and her presence will ensure the presence of the NYC anarcho-intelligence, of all the hip, true, cool, real, down and fat people in town. He can hardly wait.

(but in the second world war there really was a lot of dying)

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A time stopping heat crawls along the city. Someone took a sledge-hammer to a hydrant and someone else sunk his head into a fountain. Tiny cardiac arrests are taking out pigeons from the sky. The streets have all melded into a single, panting tongue. The electricity is running out and old men are sticking ice in their armpits. Bang, a car crash and bang, another. People are going to lose it. The sewers rose up and crashed into the rivers of this cardboard leprosarium. Someone lights a cigarette. Someone flicks it out. A street-fight, fuck it, nothing comes free. The rays are whipping the asphalt, the heat is caught between walls, it bounces, it grows, it boils the soles off people's feet. Someone is blow-drying their hair. What an idiot.

Zoya's eyes are taut with suspicion. It gets hard to believe that it all even exists. Like this, from this position, drinking your coffee, looking outside. The heat will kill you.

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Ludovico Överchild is trapped into a decade old manic episode. It is hard to say what caused it. An electric breakdown, a conflict of matter-strings, or maybe a singular mill of contradictory quantum states. One is not one until you see it. Simple axioms break down when you watch them from the side, and if you pre-suppose them for a thousand times and then take the average of their echoes, the picture grows different. Some people are born into rampage. Others get ravaged by space. And through the day he seems completely sane, through the day he hustles just like everyone else, he paints and he cleans and he bangs with his hammer and he carries the pallets and churns out the pieces, his hands go where hands are needed, but he doesn't like words. The mystics grab hold of him late in the night. Dark visions, cut up signs. From chaos to order; heritage of the savannah dwelling Adam and Eve. When you're lying on the high, dry grass, and something moves there, it helps if you are able to see. Maybe it was just wind, or maybe the tiger picked up your scent. Those who were unable to fill in the blanks, make

conjecture, paint the whole picture from incomplete input, make the swaying of grass speak clear and coherent, those were devoured by the tigers. Those brains had no children. So today we are radical in precisely the opposite way.

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»Don't you, like, feel the difference between being alone and being with someone? Don't you feel how different it is, I mean, like, really physically different, on the inside? When you're alone, you're the total master, and you have it all planned out and the will carries you into action, I mean, whatever, you could be weak and destroy yourself, but the battle goes on in your own head, you know, you feel, you understand the field of battle, you know what you would have to do to force your will the other way, it's completely clear, and only laziness, or, as I've said, weakness, can stand in the way of you obeying yourself, but that is all so irrelevant as soon as you make contact with someone. Different rules, man, completely different rules, and me, I for instance believe that the field of battle just transcends to a different level, which is not even present in the individual, it somehow just floats there in the air, like some kind of a social sphere, I mean, I don't know how to express myself.«

»Like some kind of a holistic thing, or what?«

»Maybe, I mean, I don't know, it could be a holistic thing, the whole and parts, I get it, but even more different, not only is the whole different, but as soon as the parts interact, they change, like, physically, they're not that thing that entered the equation anymore, but the result of the equation, which reaches down and changes the parts, so they could result in it, I mean, you see what I'm trying to say? The result is already there and it absorbs you, it changes you, as soon as you begin to multiply.«

»Social contact at the heart of exponential growth. The engine of civilization.«

»Yes, but that does not necessarily mean that civilization was necessary, or that it already floated somewhere in the air and just waited for this contact to happen, and then unfolded like some kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's possible that we made a completely banal point.«

»It is. But doesn't this then put all the conspiracy theorists' claims, that we have like whole fleets of automated drones flying above us, drones that would, without hesitation, carpet bomb the shit out of any place where too many people gathered, in a, like, new and more possible light.«

»Why would they, whoever they could be, want people not to get together?«

»Because they like what they've made? They don't want it to grow? They have enough?«

»That greed is dead? Are you crazy?«

Approximately this type of communication is unfolding all over the parking lot in front of the 'ex factory of nails, bullets and forlorn fates' – sincere, mindful, capable of surplus, but in the end

irredeemably sown up. In this case (the speakers were Rupert 'Rust' Stiglitz and Brian Baedekker, fairly representative specimens) it concluded with the expression of skepticism, which is the more benign form of the manifestation of dialogue's impotence – the more malign forms of conclusions are, besides the barbaric »shut up, you literally have no idea what's going on!«, almost always concerned with ethics. Enlightened people are never silenced more effectively than by the possibility of evil.

»Bellow those ideas! Be loud!«

Max Adorcuse (he wants to be called Adorkúhze, but everyone calls him Adórkus) is completely enraptured. He is walking around, megaphone in hand, and shouting battle cries every thirty seconds. The visitors find him annoying, but afford him patience, since the word quickly got around that 'the tool with the megaphone got Zoya'. »Anomie never! Let society socialize!« He deserves a bit of benevolence – he sunk all his savings into the festival, it cost him his job, his girlfriend, his friends, and he spent three months working his mind off on the space, he cleaned it of filth, hooked up electricity, lighting, took care of the latrines, hauled in a large cistern of water and even played the part of an interior designer, a touch of aesthetics, so that the space would not seem completely empty even when there was no one there.

»Organize yourselves just to organize yourselves! Be your own intent!«

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»Good morning.«

»Good morning.«

Anwar met Zoia by sheer chance, a couple of weeks ago, in the public library, where they've both, almost in the same instant, come to borrow the Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test. A short discourse and a coffee later they've ended up in bed – both already too old to draw out the courtship longer than it was necessary. These days they are pretty much inseparable.

»Did you get some sleep?«

»The last two hours didn't work. Animal sounds.«

»They've been at it for two hours?«

»It started as soon as you left. This past half hour things calmed down a bit. In the beginning I thought he was skinning her alive.«

Zoya scratches her nose.

»You know what I thought about, watching them?«

»Tell me.«

»Why the hell haven't we found any pornographic cave paintings?«

Anwar chokes on his laughter. Zoya is thinking out loud.

»Where are the phalluses and coituses and cunnilinguses? All just buffalos and wild cats, all just violence and blood, but no sex. Cavemen were apparently prudes.«

He has finally stopped coughing, his eyes are teary.

»The cave of hands looks pretty erotic.«

»Where is that?«

»In Argentina.«

Marjorie knocks. Zoya opens the door. She is wearing a men's bathrobe.

»Ever since you said that you will read,« Marjorie tells her, »you have tons of mail again.«

»You're going to read?« asks Anwar.

Zoya nods. »Today.«

»Today?«

»You two want to come?«

Marjorie turns back and shakes her head with a smile. Her hand slips down the crevice of her robe, and you can't see what it's up to.

»When, where?« asks Anwar.

»Tonight, somewhere in Bed-Stuy.«

»That's a bad neighbourhood.«

»Oh, it's really not that bad anymore,« says Marjorie, »the new generation of squatters is surprisingly pacifistic. And in any case the whole north-west is coming. Brooklyn didn't see an event like this ever since Yoko burned herself for the tenth.«

»Shit, that was morbid through and through,« says Anwar, »how old was she then? Over a hundred?«

»Over ninety,« says Zoya.

»Eighty-nine, to be exact,« says Marjorie.

»Crazy lady,« says Anwar.

All three shrug.

»Well, I hope nobody burns tonight,« says Zoja, »it's hot enough as it is.«

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Great mill of light, that is time. Ludovico stands in front of the only window of his squallid apartment, with his fingers stuck between the blinds. Spread apart they make a slit for a tiny belt of sunlight on his fucked up face, and he observes the fried city in front of him. Bridges in the distance eat up sunsets. He wishes that someone would finally believe a word he says. Candescent steel prisms breaking light into a pink rainbow. He has succumbed to passion again. He went to get her, to take her, again, even though this always made him feel so small. It was too hot to go to work. The boss called, said, nothing. Okay, then nothing, good, then nothing. Then he sat on his couch and stared at his groin, until the floor disappeared and the phallus was all that remained. Before he gave up, before he, all sweaty and foul-mouthed, stormed out through the door to that place where he knew he would find her, he remembered his dreams. He was naked and powerful and those cats who loved him – he saw it in their eyes, they finally loved him – ripped his body apart into little pieces and ate him raw. As he remembered those dreams he knew that he will not feel small today. This wouldn't be losing oneself, it would be a ritual before the battle. Zoya stole his faith and stole his faithful. Carious cuttle. The cats in the freezer are completely rigid. It must go somewhere, all this light.

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At the top of the pile a message from the mailman. – fix yourself a post box, I'm retiring in two years and your mail will completely fuck up my back – greetings, Rudy. I was very good friends with Rudy, once. What happened? I can't remember. I think she fell in love with me. Did she try to kiss me? Or did I only dream that. I don't know. One morning she stopped coming for coffee. And that was that.

In the first days after my poems were published, the amount of mail was staggering. I piled it all in the bedroom, a flood of letters, the floors were covered with a ten-inch layer of paper, I took my shoes off and took a swim, I slept in the envelopes. Ripped them apart, read them. So much emotion. I felt like a conductor for the thorn that is stuck inside all our souls, that deeply hidden, golden thorn, which rips apart the veil of everyday and cuts into it a tiny crack through which truth then drips ... I mean, sincerity, that greedy, gorgeous, horrid sincerity. As we walk around the city, we take cover. We need an impulse, to truly lay ourselves bare. It poured out the windows. We don't know each other. We don't know each other's being. And so much effort, to plug the crack. The room moaned with hormones. Uncovered consciousness, it's hard to imagine the kind of insight I got then. I saw I'm not alone, not even close. And I haven't written a poem since. People don't need poems. All they need is an ear which will listen to them. But they have to be sincere, or it's all just a measure of illusion. Nothing natural. Simple art.

Dear Zoia,

I fear that the world is spinning in the wrong direction. Each of us carries a share of the burden, because we didn't allow ourselves to break apart from the ballast of a dictated existence. I hope I'm not already too old to do this. I want to see us all together in one place.

I am thirty-five years old. I was born on a certain ominous eleventh of September, I'm guessing you'll know the year. I grew up in a very strange world, and I understood its strangeness only later, when I got to know the past world a little better. Maybe it is just a projection. Maybe the world has always been very strange and our particular kind of strangeness is just another variation of this completely unfair world. But I can't know. I am attracted to the counter-culture of the sixties. I am attracted to the techno-madness of the nineties. I find the third millennium very frightening. And I think it's all our fault, because they've convinced us that the world is made up from a mass of people you can never hope to reach. Only when you manage to get a better view, you can see that this mass of people does not even exist. That there is only me, and you, and you, and you ... That this mass we are supposed to always keep in mind, as we try to explain the world to ourselves, is not even there. That in the crevices between us there are no thousands of silenced voices, trying to exert their wills, but only a gaping hole, in place of which an honest, warm, human relation should be standing, but was driven away by the phantasm of this mass. Everyone has a life of his own, they told us. But I shake a person's hand, we meet, and the world changes.

I've spent almost fifteen years at the bottom of the corporate ladder, overlooked, neglected in this hierarchy of seriousness. It grinds your soul, day in, day out in the same drab intrigue. But I had a job, and with a job there somehow came all things which modern life is supposed to bring you. I had a girlfriend. We were dating for eight years and we broke up with a pair of texts. It greyed out, you could say. I had a couple of people who were less than friends but more than strangers. Just some people, you know, with whom you can compare to get a faint idea on where you're standing. When I quit my job I proved to be inadequate for the procedures of envy, so they forgot about me in something like a week. I took Mike to the squash court for ten years straight every Thursday, and I've spent the same ten years listening to his misogynous ramblings. If I called him now, he would answer, who is it, and when I would tell him, he would repeat – who? I never asked my girlfriend to marry me, because I was almost sure she would say no. Maybe I had shitty luck. Maybe I should be hanging out with other people. But everything is already so made up.

This has to be transcended, somehow. I'm not intelligent enough to offer a convincing diagnosis on the causes of this particular state – was it the cultural production of individualism, which incessantly cultivated the demi-godlike sense of a public ego, false, of course, or was it the terror-tactics of the world-system, which turned the public relation into a much too important thing, swinging between the danger and, even worse, the tastelessness of the indiscriminatory, tolerant relation, or was it something else entirely – but I'm sure that there is enough of us here, who expect something more from life. Our hands must be held out. The self-enclosure into the bourgeois relational form leaves us lonely, weak, worthless and at the same time firmly convinced into the illusion of control over our own existence. The system is cunning and scheming, and our confidence is but a bitter joke.

So, we should come together. And I don't want to give concession to power, as in, together we can destroy and/or build and/or change the world. I just want to see who is alive and present in this point in time and space.

I hope this wasn't too long. I would like to ask you to come and read your poetry at the festival Poetrylitics, which will take place by the summer's end. I won't make a profit out of it, I expect no benefits from it. My motives are sincere and clean. If you come, a lot of people will come as well, people who found themselves changed by your poetry. There are many of us, and we dwell lonely each with our own failed fate. I know you appreciate solitude, but I beg you, there are so many of us who should not, can not, wish not to afford it anymore. Make us come together? I'll tell you more if/when you reply.

Filled with hope, with warm regards, impatiently waiting for your response,

another curious cattle,

forever yours,

Max Adorcuse

(Vaclav Smech)

I said yes, sure, why not. I spent so much time avoiding invitations like this, it all reeked of profit, or of some kind of an egotrip of a lame communitarian, corpo-commercial, fashionably elite circlejerk. And then this poor soul, Max. I observed the process, as much as I could be bothered to. He did everything himself, with no money, on pure will. If he wasn't so full of syndromes and so waywardly reflexive, I might find him attractive, but then I wouldn't want to read, maybe just ... He didn't want to be kissed. I can, I think, respect that. An inward soul, crying for disclosure. Or exposal. Is that the same thing?

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Ludovico's index finger is his longest finger. He was exposed to abnormal levels of estrogen in the womb. That's why his frontal cortex is poorly webbed with neurons. Since he can remember he always loved torturing animals. There's something attractive in their suffering. Their eyes, clueless to what's going on. They have no idea, no idea why. Something wells up behind his back. He gets drawn to it. The cats in the freezer are completely rigid. Sock-puppets in space ...

She is sleeping still. Her body is wrapped in a sheet, a distasteful little corpse. It rises, it falls. Ludovico never entered a human being in a way that was not intended. Designer holes. He never made new ones, yet. Patience is a virtue and good things come to those who wait.

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Carious cuttle.

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»Well, can Qu'ran, or any other holy book, while we're at it, tell you what you're supposed to do when you have a brother who is constantly fucked up on an unknown substance, and you don't know how serious it is, not even close, and you have no clue if it's just an ordinary fling or does this thing have, like, a dimension which is cutting into his essence, and you don't know how to approach him, what to say, who to tell, how to help, without him holding a grudge against you, because, hey, he looks completely fine, and when he disappears he always says he's got a date with a chick and he'll put it in her mouth and when he comes back his consonants are slurry, and his smile is bent, and you ask him if he's alright, and he says never better, never better, just, and then he looks to the left, or to the right, it's just that I'm tired, these bitches wear you out, these bitches, and you're just left waiting for it to be too late, for someone to stab him, or for him to stab someone, and end up in jail or in a coffin, and everybody is then going to say, well, gosh darn it, who would've thought, but you'll have to bite your fucking tongue? Do these holy books of yours have a FAQ? Or at least an index? I mean, what do I care about how to behave with slaves, and how to waste my time in a godly fashion in a tribal community in the middle of the fucking desert, if I'm living in the wildest city on this planet, where everyone is emancipated and selfish and hammered up to the stratosphere. These books should rather tell me about orgies, where someone's condom snaps, and another's ass snaps and the third's whole being snaps, so he starts yelling and hitting everybody around him, and you're there sitting in the living room, pushing fingers in your ears, does it tell you what to do, should you call the cops, or run away, where should you run, or should you simply take off your clothes and head into the pile of bruises yourself, your tongue out, screaming hit me? How should you feel about bullets, jamming into the wall two inches above your head in the middle of the night? All these books of yours are completely irrelevant, I think. I mean, I don't know, I didn't read them. Maybe they're good. Brother on drugs; turn to page 250. Men – beasts; read from the beginning to the end. Fear of death ... you know what, you just come to the mosque, or the synagogue, or whatever it is you guys have. Strawberries and peanuts, and take off your shoes. Can I wear flip-flops on my socks if I'm just jumping out for some bread? How do I stop smoking? Life gets more fucked up every year. And not even in the depths of it, it gets fucked up on the surface. I can listen to my heart, I don't need books for that. I am, for example, completely fine. Totally fine. But, dude, what the fuck is up with everybody else?«

He met Marjorie at the gym, on their morning workout, a few hours ago. His body is swollen with anabolic steroids. When Anward introduced himself he went silent for a moment, then asked him if he was a Mohammedan (used this exact word), and responded to the nod (»Baha'i, to be exact«) with a monologue. He has a distinctly spiteful attitude towards religion. He is living alone, with his brother.

»My faith does not instruct me how to live my life,« says Anwar, »my faith is my cultural identity. It makes me a better person. Once you experience the abyss, you get an appreciation for this sort of thing. To be honest, if it makes you so agitated, it is in fact your cultural identity that seems a bit suspect.«

»My ... did you say my cultural identity?«

Anwar is completely relaxed. When he is moving about the surface of the earth with great speed, with his feet five inches above ground and one foot firmly pressed at the metal plate separating him from them, he feels free. Adrenaline, which is rapidly released into the bloodstream of his fellow passengers, does not bother him. In a metal box, hardly of this world.

»Yes. Your cultural identity. People who have a relaxed presence in this world, who are comfortably situated in their identity armour, usually don't complain about the so called holy books.«

»Identity ... armour ...«

The words in his mouth turn thick and sticky, resembling something which was left in a drawer and forgotten through the summer, and is now slowly starting to emit a monstrous smell even if you keep the drawer closed.

»And the holy books are just, I think, it's often when someone says that, holy books, he means simply the religious component of a certain person, and even more in general, his attitude towards his own existence, by which I mean, can he exist as a fictional concept we call the human, accept himself the way he is, or does he have to, with relation to himself, always take a step backward, infinitely sliding in suspicion away from whatever he sees in the mirror.«

In Zoya's psychic constitution two things begin to mix: the primitive fear of speed and that slight intellectual buzz, triggered by the surprising revelations of people, whom you have theretofore held to be, let's say, a bit one-sided.

Marjorie is looking through the window at the ground, at the white lines painted on the asphalt, which are slowly losing their attributes – their discontinuity, their width, the variations in their hues – and melding into a beige-white line, bending inwards.

There is another monologue brewing.

»Cultural identity, you say. Man as a fictitious concept, even. I resent that! I simply resent it. My mother was born in Nieuw Rotterdam, my father in San-Seoul. On my best days I can't even begin to explain to myself why those two decided to have children. It would make some sense if it was just one, some kind of a mistake, an ill-fated passion and the slip up of contraceptives, you can manage with one, you stick him someplace and leave him alone so you can destroy your life on your own terms, no problem, but, but, two kids, you get it, which means that you're either completely retarded and just can't comprehend your body, it isn't clear to you that if you can't keep your pants on, and if you keep sticking your private parts into someone else's private parts,

that the crack will breed a whole new consciousness, which will have to make sense of the situation for itself, and that it would probably be easier for everyone involved if this consciousness didn't exist in the first place, but when this happens, damn it, for the second time, and you're still sitting on your chair, staring at your penis and you look at, now, suddenly, two pairs of bulging eyes, and on the other end her, also staring between her legs, from between which a watermelon slid out for the second time, and you still don't fucking get it that some things simply shouldn't be brought together, then you're maybe just an ill-natured piece of shit who is rubbing the head on the match-box on purpose just to, for a second, inhale the sweet scent of sulfur, and then throw the burnt out match away ... I don't know why I'm saying this. There was no fiction. Just stupid flesh, you get it? Some of us get born to idiots. The closest thing you get to what could be called instructions is a hysterical slap in the face or the absolute denial you actually exist as a complex thing, and the only culture is represented by the moldy yoghurt in the fridge, left there for months. We didn't get anything, my brother and I. Our parents were too poor to bribe us with mass culture and too stupid to think of anything else. Dad was wasting his time by participating in the most fruitless hustles, pyramid schemes, catalogue sales, absolutely unable to hold down a real job, my mom was a cleaning lady, and they left their kids to chance until they were both hit by a train, which took their legs, so they can now peacefully pretend to be vegetables in an immobilized citizens' home and imagine that they're still present in the world just because they have somehow, somewhen, somewhere, left behind a couple of brats. We were twelve and seventeen, then. I have no idea how we made it this far. But, what I wanted to say is, that I resent you, all you heirs of prophets, that you plucked a bearable figure from the confusion of time, and laid a cross, haha, over the holes left in you by living people. You have no right to a fictitious identity! You're all lonely, contradictory, desperate creatures, with sand in your hands and up to your ankles in water, sucking power from fairy-tales so you can keep your nose high above the pains of others. That's how I feel about the whole thing.«

Anwar is focused on the road. The traffic is getting denser and at this speed you have to carefully predict. Within the framework of road regulations anomalies happen – drunk drivers, Amish folks in coaches, near-sighted old guys, an impulsive maneuver. Driving is a demanding operation. Time runs on two levels (on the inside and on the outside of the vehicle), in two groups of chaotic interaction (in the brain and in traffic), with a quick exchange of intention and instinct, on the individual and the systemic level.

Zoya glances at the backseats. Marjorie has a sour look on her face. He seems ecstatically honest.

»Would you rather see,« she asks him, »if we were all hypnotized by our own imperfections? Humanity as a long line of mourning wrecks? Can't you intervene in reality even from a broken position? It's all projection, I think. You see yourself torn apart, standing next to the uniform. You could simply change perspective. Say that identity is a leaking ship and a person, by the act of intervention, the vehicle of coherence. You just have to let yourself intervene. Then it doesn't matter whether you're broken or not.«

»An act won't make my life suddenly whole.«

»Depends on the nature of the act.«

The tire explodes. Anwar is coolly precise in response, he was expecting this to happen, he was ready for this to happen, it might even be that he, with his focus on the possibility that something like this could happen, actually caused this to happen (for long years after taking it, the whole cause and effect thing stands on pretty shaky grounds). He turns the steering wheel, quickly turns on the blinkers, stays conscious of all the rear-view mirrors at the same time and, in between a honking truck and a nearly murdered biker, safely stops them on the shoulder.

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Anyone, who is anyone, has, it seems, appeared. Max Adorcuse is struck by stars. Medio Twins, Kavemen Kolektive, Sgt. 'Sange, Rufus Transparency, Obiton Tonga, Mme. Nadir, Zuck de Borg, Sisek, Lillion Flowerss, The Lost Children, Occram Wristcut, Beda Venerabilis Jr., Gadfly Ister, Synchro-step Teaparty, CEO Birthmark, Mypeace Pepé, OBGYN Aboriginal, Grotto Vergilius, Santa-Claude, Margharet & Maester, Some Marry Slaves, Lobano Bolano q-inc., Metatrololor ...

These aren't ordinary people. They are artists, techno-masters and lifestyle magicians. The name of each of them is spreading, or has spread, or will once spread in concentric circles along the city neighbourhoods, and out, over the borders, into suburbs, and beyond, through the countryside, and farther, to abandoned trailers and shacks and shantytowns and ghettos and woodlands, and fill the hearts of youth, who will catch it into their earlobes, with the promise of possibility. Anyway you look at it, even if it seems unlikely, and the sky sometimes pushes you down against the ground, cripples your limbs and stuns you completely, it isn't necessary that you will forever remain Joe, with parents and grand-parents and a bunch of relatives, caught in the caricature drawn for you by, let's call them, untalented hands. Come to the city, expose yourself, tell Joe to fuck off. Leave him to waste away there, among the postmen and pension plans. Among the boredom and apathy. Your body is a bowl. Don't forget it.

Zoya isn't here yet. The presence of an ever greater number of people Max hasn't seen before, but had heard of more times than he had the chance to appreciate their work, has robbed him of the courage to continue yelling into the megaphone. Candy Lipkiss, the fifteen-year old conceptual artist from Chattanooga, had took of all her clothes and climbed on top of a red hot roof of a car, where she is now playing the flute and breaks the tune with a primal scream each time her ass cheeks touch the metal. A couple of people gathered around her and they nod to each other with approval, even though they are careful not to let their stares linger on her body, since nobody is really sure that this whole thing isn't in some way morally or legally problematic. Zoya isn't here yet and Max is, admittedly, worried by this. The horrible possibility that he will come out of this as the organizer of the biggest scam since the debacle at tenth, coldly stabs him somewhere in the liver. She will come, don't worry, she said she would, 100%.

Gotham Syndicate erected a huge black tent in the middle of the parking lot. Someone very shy picked up a guitar. His voice sinks among the mass of aggressive talk. Max can hear it.

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Flames are shooting out behind Ludovico. His footprints evaporate into a black, wispy smoke. He bends light, a cosmic phenomenon. The air moves from his path. The vacuum he leaves behind is filled so rapidly that tiny flashes of lightning erupt and little men in kiosks crane their necks against the sky to see if a storm is coming. You trip if you just look at him, or you hit a traffic sign, or you venture onto the street right in front of an old Cadillac, whose break must then be smashed and a curseword or two flung out of it. Old ladies are dropping things from their hands, when he gets close. Shoelaces unlace, all by themselves. You step on horseshit. Those damned Amish.

He is dressed in a white tunic, which is flapping so fast in the self-created wind that the eye can't see it, like mosquito's wings. This emits a low vibration which drives bipolar people and certain of breeds of dogs absolutely crazy. Guard dogs and dalmatians, mostly.

He looks like a hermit who returned from the mountain with a set of brand new commandments. His every move is a cult in the making. Stronger minds just find him damn cool. That this guy is trouble is clear even from the 35th floor, where Maude and Larry secretly sip coffee on the clock, drag on cigarettes and simultaneously caress themselves where it feels the nicest. When they see him they shiver with pleasure.

His face is native American, because of the blood. Chief Ludovico. Three blocks away from Poetrylitics, sharper with every step he takes. He can already hear the constant beat of the crowd and he would lie if he would deny that he is drawn in the right direction by a divining rod – his titanic, imaginary erection.

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It's hard to say this in a different way ... The sun is setting.

Zoya isn't here yet.

Dirty brick. Layers and layers. In a million years, sediments, will they look upon the strata of the wider Brooklyn as we look upon the growth rings in the trunk of a tree? A rancid smell rises above the road. The breath of a dog that ate tar. We're just stewed grains of rice in a pan. Someone decants us. Anwar and Marjorie's boyfriend are changing the tire. They resolved their misunderstanding in a common effort. I told him it was possible. We all are what we are when we are changing tires. And anyway, when I think that I saw him this very morning in the act, clean of all that is superfluous. Marjorie won't exit the car. She says she is scared. Of what? She has bad premonitions, she says. Nothing to do with me. I packed all my premonitions in a suitcase and, how forgetful of me, deliberately left it at home. Facades are hidden underneath washed up, weather worn, forgotten economic propaganda. IRONWORKERS 40, red spray. They haven't built

anything here for decades. It is all just falling apart, brick by brick, constantly, unendingly. You can demolish a house by a clumsy mis-step. The intersections look like they've been forgotten by someone who was pretty helpless to begin with. Even the litter is eloping, with the wind, slowly. Unwashed teeth of a giant, all this construction. Red. I remember the idea of someone transient who wanted to start a project *Throw a Brick in the heart of the city*, so that people would look up more often, look to the sky, to the tops of all these buildings. He didn't make it. People weren't up for it. Not even if the bricks were made of foam. I don't know why I'm thinking about this, now ... A green graffiti ZOLA, when I look across the fence, downwards, on the steel bars of a closed store. What a crummy feeling of alienation, when someone takes your name to make a message of his own. They all know what he means by that, it's only me that's left without a clue. The road is corroded. Nobody makes an effort anymore. I find that just fine.

It's much easier in a white tunic, Averroes and his kind know this well. The hayrack is full, the camels not here.

»What time is it?« *This question is very old fashioned.*

Zoya isn't here yet.

I'm late. Anwar says, »it's really not that far, take a walk, I'll join you later.« Marjorie nods. Her lover is lost in thought. When Zoya gets out he tells her, »now I remembered that I've read your stuff once.« *I am printed with hay. Read through, like peas.* »Where are you going?« Anwar looks at him. »Didn't you hear me?« He doesn't respond, he jumps out of the car and starts yelling, »Tear me, tear me, tear me in half! That's you, right?« *No, not really. Sometimes meaning gets lost. Nothing bad about that.*

Zoya isn't here yet. Kavemen Kolektive are standing in a circle. As they murmur their farewell melody to the sun, mud-smelling sweat trickles down their bodies. Medio Twins finish each other sentences, completely off the mark. As-it-were got lost somewhere. Someone very unpleasant is selling synthetical drugs and people hiss at him to fuck off to where he came from. Max is turning slightly nervous. When the night falls, people will go in and he will have to turn on the lights. The guitar player doesn't shut up. Someone made it to the edge. Another one looks horribly lonely. There is hope in the air,

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as is lust. The culture of fame is healthy and in full swing. Nameless people are the filling between the tiles of stars, and they're not bothered by this, not even close, they're just happy they're allowed to hold it all together, that there are no cracks in between, that the landscape is varied, that no one is forgotten. Someone grabbed his chest in a show of surprise, another set his palms in applause. It spreads along the edges of the parking lot like fire in drylands. The line in front of entrance is snaking to the left and to the right, the heads are turning to the source of the applause and even though they are not completely sure what is going on, they automatically begin to applaud themselves. They care for her. They care.

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Her.

In a cone of light.