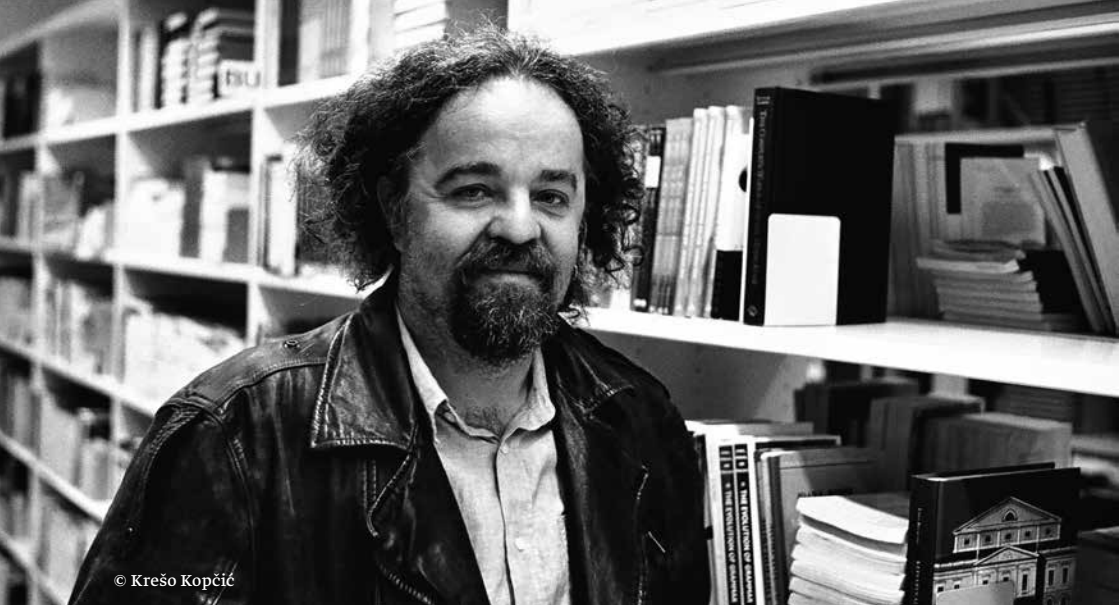
Miljenko Jergović

Wilimowski

Novel

Translated by Ivana Ostojčić



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MILJENKO JERGOVIĆ (Sarajevo, 1966.), writer and journalist, lives in the country near Zagreb. He published his first article in 1983, and his first book of poetry *Opservatorija Varšava* (*Opservatory Warsaw*) in 1988. He wrote several collections of short-stories, *Sarajevski Marlboro* (*Sarajevo Marlboro*), *Mama Leone*, *Inšallah Madona, Inšallah* (*Inch'Allah, Madonna, Inch'Allah*) and a dozen novels, *Dvori od oraha* (*Walnut Mansion*) and *Ruta Tannenbaum* among them. Polish translation of his novel *Srda pjeva, u sumrak, na Duhove* (*Srda Sings, at Dusk, on Pentecost*) won Angelus literary award for the best Central European book in 2012. Miljenko Jergović won Prozart award in 2017 for the contribution to Balkan contemporary literature, as well as German Georg Dehio-Buchpreis award 2018 for his complete prose opus. His works have been translated into more than twenty languages.

RIGHTS SOLD TO
Poland, Ksiazkowe Klimaty

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In his novel *Wilimowski*, the master of narration Miljenko Jergović is spinning a tale of a disabled boy, his father, a university professor from Krakow, a German woman who owns a hotel in the Adriatic hinterland, and people living near the hotel. Set in the eve of the Second World War, in early summer of 1938, with World Cup going on, this is a novel about important existential matters, about illness, about Others and Differents, about our relationship with the near and the dear ones and, of course, about football. This is also a story of Ernst Wilimowski, the only attacker who scored four goals for Poland playing against Brazil in this championship. But equally so, writing about a hotel in the middle of nowhere, about its owner, guests, illness and hope, football and looming war, Jergović more than ever writes about our time, our everyday heroes, about optimism and serenity.

Praise

"*Wilimowski* is one of those small books about truly big existential issues. A magnificent tale of a quest for identity and the birth of hope in a time striving to rob one off any hope."
– Jarosław Czechowicz

"Jergović subtly and delicately shows that hope can breed even in the times of hopelessness. And that the apocalypse can also be beautiful."
– Maciej Robert, poet, literary and film critic

"With his novel *Wilimowski*, Jergović confirms two things – that he is the most important contemporary Balkan writer and that the Polish people are not the one who speak best of the Polish soul."
– Krzysztof Cieślik, *Rzeczpospolita*

"The world created by Jergović is a landscape just before the apocalypse. *Wilimowski* is quite possibly the wisest book I read in the past few months. The book that best speaks about the world today, in the strict sense."
– Piotr Bratkowski, *Newsweek*

Wilimowski

It was early on a Saturday morning, 4 June 1938, when a strange procession appeared on the road going up to the village.

In the lead, supporting himself with a long shepherd's stick bent at the end, resembling a crazed apostle, went a tall, bulgy peasant, stern and moustached, the only one that seemed to know the road and all the obstacles the procession might encounter along the way.

Behind him was a lean and petite, strangely dressed man, obviously a foreigner, in a black city suit and a bowler hat, an outfit seen around here only at funerals or in open caskets filled with heads of wealthier houses. Of an uncertain age he was, he could be forty-five or seventy, as it is occasionally hard to tell with city folks. He walked fast and upright, the way tiny men hurry to make up for the lack of physical domination with speed.

The most unusual thing followed, without which this story would never happen: a palanquin, like the one seen last winter in a newsreel about Laurence of Arabia, supported by four men, three youngsters and an old guy, almost eighty, later to be recognised as people from Crikvenica.

What was in the palanquin remained unseen, covered in white gauze. Only a sitting silhouette could be seen, with a huge head and narrow shoulders, who only occasionally stretched, giving the impression that it had no arms or legs, only tentacles, thin and fragile, like a dried out octopus.

A young girl, no more than twenty-five, went behind the palanquin and quietly, in an incomprehensible foreign language, talked to the persona beneath the gauze and then, louder, in German, made arrangements with the skinny gentleman.

Six peasants followed, known to everyone, from neighbouring villages or from Crikvenica, carrying suitcases – huge and bulky, as if storing an archive of a famous company that went bankrupt or was running away from a war, or as if belonging to rich people who never travel alone by rail, but rather always have

beside them a myriad of porters and assistants taking good care that every single thing reaches the destination and that it is finally put, set and arranged like at home, so that no one even notices that they ever travelled, and that every reached destination looks like the starting point. Perhaps that is why rich gentry always seem as though they are slightly bored wherever they go.

In the back of the procession, neither alive nor dead, an old man dragged himself. Henrik.

The first one whose name was heard, since the skinny gentleman turned back several times and asked him, first in his incomprehensible language, then in German, probably to be understood by the locals as well, without thinking he has something to hide: "Henrik, are you alive?" The old man would nod in confirmation, repeating always the same few incomprehensible words.

The day barely broke when the procession with the palanquin passed through the village and on, to the hills, to the Kraut House.

Although everyone seemed to be sleeping, there was no one in the road, or on the nearby hills and in vineyards, half the village swarmed to the church even though it was only Saturday. People came to hear what happened at dawn. But no one dared ask first, everyone just kept their ears to the ground, hoping the others would talk. They were either unsure whether they just imagined it, or they wished to hide the fact that they didn't know something that they possibly should know. Everyone was at on their toes and frightened, not only that Saturday, but for months and years now. Times of turmoil were upon them. The people's leader Maček, like them, only kept his finger on the pulse, prime minister Stojadinović played a Yugoslav Hitler in Belgrade, with the people cheering lea-der, lea-der, which then transformed in a sound mirroring cacophony into dea-ler, dea-ler, and one needed to be careful, very careful, and not rush to pick sides, careful not to tell everything they know. And finally, it seemed to everyone as though it is their side that they picked and put their heart and soul into, but so quietly that the other, their opponents, don't notice that and so that – when the former ones are not watching – they could prove to the other side that they belong to them, heart and soul.

In this silence, among the questioning looks and narrating faces, rough peasant hands and fat sluggish fingers, a speech that cannot be translated into universally comprehensible words, although it apparently did mean and signify something to these people, so their language of fingers, ears and faces, in in their own way, retold and explained this morning's strange events, the only one to dare speak up was Aldo, known as the American, who came back from the foreign lands, from Pittsburgh, last year after thirty years of working in a steel mill.

"Karađoz is here!" he said and laughed.

"Karađoz is here!" they repeated confoundedly on the inside, trying not to forget this name, so that they could pass it on when they get home to the older and wiser; a bedridden grandfather, grandmother, or uncle, who will surely know all about the unwanted guest, including if this is good or bad and how bad for the village, why did he have to come to them and their place, here in the boondocks, away from the sea and a decent road, planted and built here of all places so that no man may like it and no conqueror should feel a need to pay a visit, ransack and burn it. What could the arrival of the person in the palanquin mean to such a village and its people?

Everyone pretended to understand Aldo the American and to know well who and what Karađoz was. They nodded, concerned, but without asking a thing. Questions hurt more than answers. Questions are usually telling as to what someone knows, what their weak spots are and how they could be cheated on.

By late afternoon, when the June sun suddenly sinks and disappears behind the hill, giving way for comfortable sitting on a porch or under the awning in front of the pantry, a word will spread across the village about Karađoz and his entourage, mixing popular beliefs with latest news read in *The News* from Zagreb or *Politics* from Belgrade, or brought home from travels, from Rijeka, Opatija or Trieste.

The story will finally tell the most lasting truth of this event, borne in memory and passed on even some seventy years later over a single word, when everything else that really happened is forgotten and no one in the village remembers the strange procession towards the Kraut House in the early morning of 4 June 1938. The only thing left of the house are ruins and a well in which, in the midst of a large blackberry bush, only rattlesnakes live, while in the large white rock where they used to keep olive oil, today, in the little soil left in it, a small but rather old fig tree grows, which because of the lack of soil and light never ripens, but instead every August miscarries tiny, feeble fruits. A light-winged butterfly only rarely flies through the thorns. Nothing and no one lives here anymore. Everything is forgotten today, except Karađoz's name.

Tomasz Mieroszewski, that was the name of the tiny emaciated gentleman, was a retired professor at the Krakow mining academy. Last summer his wife Estera died and he was still deeply mourning her loss. He had a hard time coping without her so perhaps this arrival to the Yugoslav boondocks, miles away from the famous Opatija, was a result of this wandering in the dark.

He got married late, when he himself had already thought he would remain a bachelor, to her, a Galician beauty, whom he nearly snatched away from her parents, taking her away from Czerniowce with a promise he would take care of her as the most precious thing ever. He fell in love out of the blue, on a business

rather than a pleasure trip, at an age when one is already making their peace with the realisation that love has missed him and when he is accustomed to living alone, accompanied by all the social prejudices and gossip proverbially attributed to single people.

He must have been caught off guard, the guard that kept him to his senses and away from other people, especially women, and in a flash, in three days in Bukowina, from a professor in Krakow and an aristocrat, well aware of his consequences and impacts of his actions, turned into a tightrope walker, who – in plain sight of a crazy town ready for all sorts of comedy, in which everyone knows everything about everyone, although they all speak at the same time in a dozen different languages, no less – is crossing the thinnest rope across an abyss, carefree in the sight of the fact that he might lose his head.

For Estera, a seventeen-year-old, he was ready to renounce his faith and everything – from material wealth to personal reputation – this faith guarantees and ensures, and at an old age, and in ages much perverted for this world, to embrace Judaism, but her folks would have nothing of that; after a lot of scuffling, tears and threats, having already realised that they would not be able to keep their daughter, instead they let her go her way, hand in hand with this foreigner, as though this way they were paying the price of her excessive beauty. They did not accept him as a son-in-law – equal in all aspects – they simply let him take her to his world, even though they knew that, once this happens, they would never see or hear from her again.

He promised, without them asking, nor trusting him in the slightest, that he would keep her from all evil in this world, but ten years later she was killed by a mere tick in a park below Wawel. Her illness was brief, her death was painful, shrouded in screams and dementia caused by an inflammation of the brain.

On her deathbed, over two long days, she was speaking in a foreign and unknown language. He brought in rabbis from Kazimierz to translate her words, but they only shrugged and confirmed that the language Estera was speaking was neither Hebrew, nor Aramaic, nor any of the languages she could possibly hear in Czerniowce. The language of death is always unknown to the living and always different. Always individually special. That is what a rabbi said to the distraught Tomasz, but he could no longer understand or remember it correctly.

Then she flung herself across the bed, cried and ripped the shirt off her back, and suddenly, naked-chested, she soared to the sky.

The bed was empty for a moment. Only a mark where her body used to lay left. Tomasz turned to call a doctor, because a miracle happened, his wife disappeared, but when he looked back, the body was there, only there was no Estera

in it. It was a corpse or someone else's, an unknown woman's, whose nakedness seemed somehow shameful.

He covered her up with a sense of disgust.

He did not know what to do. He was convinced he was guilty of his wife's death.

He was left alone, with the fruit of his love for the beautiful Estera, carried by four peasants in a palanquin covered with white gauze, not because his father was hiding him, but because he was scared the boy might be fatally stung, across the former Habsburg monarchy, by infamous Dalmatian mosquitoes.

David Jan Mieroszewski, that was the boy's full name, was eight and suffered from bone tuberculosis.

The illness appeared out of the blue, when he was three. He was playing with a mechanical toy, a wind-up clown, brought by his father from his trip to Vienna. The clown was walking across the hallway, the boy following him. The clown went over the edge of the stair, the mother ran to catch the boy, but it was too late.

He rolled all the way down to the foot of the stairs, and then looked at them both with a smile. There was something angelical in that scene, something insanely sentimental.

If a grown man had fallen that way, he would have broken his neck and died, but children know how to fall. It is an art, lost when one grows up, they consoled themselves. They were happy, praising God for the boy's survival.

The same evening mother carefully examined him and found no bruises. Only a small lump on the boy's left shin.

The lump would keep growing over the following weeks and months, and then, gradually, the boy's body would become deformed, like a wax doll left near open fire, and in vain the doctors would be telling them that the illness would appear even without the fall.

Quietly, never mentioning it, they blamed themselves for what happened. The guilt was distributed equally: he bought the boy the mechanical clown, she did not catch him before he rolled down the stairs.

With his wife's death, Tomasz Mieroszewski's guilt multiplied.

Henrik Miller, the old man in the back of the procession, was David's private tutor. The girl, named Ruža, was his caretaker. The two of them, next to his late mother and father, were the only ones David got to know better, with whom he was friends, and whose feelings, hopes and fears he knew all about. He was intelligent, as intelligent can be a child who would not live long. He thought about their actions and feelings, he was concerned over their lives as though he, in a way, lived them himself.

Every spring and early autumn, when Ruža went to her folks in the country and remained there for two or three weeks, David travelled along in this thoughts. He worried about everything: he bought a ticket with Ruža at the central station, a round trip, cheaper, he accompanied her to the first car next to the engine, always free of drunks, pickpockets and wastrels, only decent and nice family folks. He worried what Ruža would say to each of her six still single sisters and would she kiss the hand of her father, the blacksmith Daniel Roszak. She will kiss it if he is sober today. She will not if he was drinking. That is how Ruža punishes her father. If he was drinking, tomorrow she will take him to the cemetery, to kneel together on her mother's grave. If he welcomes her sober, she will open all the windows, take out the bed linen, roast a goose with potatoes and they will all be a family again...

David watched her every step. Ruža's life played in his head and in it he inscribed everything she once told or just mentioned him, or what he found out when he was eavesdropping on her conversations with Henrik the teacher or with his father, usually behind closed kitchen door, whose stained glass gave out only a view on their silhouettes, and imagined words and sentences he had missed, as they were spoken quietly.

Once father said to Ruža and Henrik he was afraid the boy's days were numbered.

David heard him, but he did not understand what it meant – his days were numbered.

Ruža burst into tears.

Pan Henrik asked father: "What's to become of us then?"

He felt important, although he still did not understand what father was talking about and why Ruža was crying. But he remembered this event as something beautiful and pleasant. Suddenly he was in the spotlight and had to be serious.

The next morning he had the impression he had grown up since last night and all three were looking at him as a grown man, facing an important and responsible task.

After several months, when he realised what it meant that his days were numbered, he marvelled at Ruža's tears, at all the despair and domestic hysteria. He did not understand why his days were important to anyone. Why were they important to them, or why should they be even to himself? When he dies, they will all find some other sort of entertainment. And he will be dead and will not care anyway, he will be gone and living on the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

Ruža and Henrik saw David as a boy like all others. A life ahead of him and a long history, wife, children, profession, social status, finally, perhaps, a tragic

sacrifice for the country. They worried about him, just like one worries about all healthy children before the deep, dark abyss called future.

It made it easier for them. One cannot look at a boy and see the empty face of death. Instead of living in accordance with the imminent, but still unrealised, Ruža and Henrik played. In their game nothing was real. He taught the boy French, as if one day David would travel to Paris or study medicine and literature, or meet young Chopin, his fellow Pole, and have a conversation with him in the language of freedom.

The old man played, just like the boy played and they both helped each other in that game.

The only one who did not play was professor Tomasz Mieroszewski. He waited for time to run out.

On Tuesday, father made a snap decision – tomorrow they will be heading south.

No more waiting, the boy's condition is deteriorating, and although there is no cure for his illness, they will go where the air is warmer and where the sea breeze alleviates every pain and suffering.

"It is easier to wait for death where vineyards grow and basil smells than on a soil growing only potatoes!" he said before the departure.

David was euphoric on the eve of his first big adventure.

He bounced in the armchair, ordered Ruža what to pack, and only at one point did it occur to him that he might never return to Krakow, to this room and this armchair. He felt it as a light and transient sorrow. It streamed through him like a shudder before a chill. He trembled and it never appeared again. But he never forgot this sorrow.

It was stupid to look back and say goodbye to his home.

When Ruža suggested, just for fun, to give him a ride though all the rooms in the house, even the forbidden one, where father kept his plans and drawings and where the horrible Baščelik lived, according to the story *pan* Henrik told him when he was little to scare him off, after which he kept asking him to tell it over and again and to just take him in front of the forbidden room, David refused Ruža's proposal with a smile, the same smile grown-ups refuse unreasonable childish ideas or games at unsuitable moments. Ruža felt a bit embarrassed.

They travelled to Zagreb by train.

Tomasz Mieroszewski bought a whole car to make their trip pleasant, but to the boy's disappointment, without excitements of any kind.

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Around noon, when like every day, guests or no guests at the hotel, the lunch bell sounded, the Kraut woman took the freak in her arms and entered the house. All other followed.

The radio blared on.

The music was more serene. Someone was playing the piano. One after the other the melodies poured, quiet and dismal, but they nevertheless echoed in the nearby groves, in shrubbery and bushes of blackberry and hazel, and the last, already faded olive trees that sprouted and grew on these, for them excessive, altitudes.

The piano played on in the grove below the Kraut house, and even more below in the village – where older women arose on windows, shuffling the embroidery in their hands and listening, crossing themselves and fidgeting, loudly mentioning the Evil One who, quite doubtlessly, aboded in the Kraut radio device.

During these hour or two, Mirila was overcome with melancholia like a morning mist, followed by resignation with the events to come. For a moment people stopped imagining Karađoz in different situations in life. They forgot about the intelligence operation that began this morning and stopped lying to one another and inventing all they saw and were told. Instead, men and women, old and young, like those hags at windows, attuned their ears to the piano, whose tones were carried by the gentle, summer northern wind, like those that usually around here anticipates the changing weather. But who would, on such an eventful day, even think of the sun and the rain?

And so, on the early afternoon of the fifth day of June 1938, Radio Warsaw's programme kept playing; as if a war has started and patriotism was infesting the lot, as if a great writer died, so it takes music to portray the magnificence and power of the departed genius's imagination, or as if the Judgment Day is upon us, so the citizens need be reminded that they are knocking on Heaven's door as

Poles, the radio broadcasted Chopin's polonaises, etudes and scherzos; the music that would, as Aldo the American said, "make the Devil cry".

Tomasz Mieroszewski sat on the chair opposite the radio and once again, to the final beats of the *Revolutionary Etude*, shook David's right hand.

He was proud of his son and of himself, of the historic moment he took part in just by constructing the radio device and designing the antenna.

If there was a childish trait in this eagerness, the professor consented and gladly agreed to this.

Life strayed off course, derailed from reality, and continued somewhere between dreams and illusions, where he never spent much time, not even as a child. If things were different, the pain and horror would make life unbearable.

Father and son relinquished themselves to the adventure of the great world.

The radio host's voice announced the beginning of the match in Strasbourg. The Polish team had the honour, or the misfortune, in the crucial battle – for whoever loses, says goodbye to the World Cup – to stand up against the mighty national team of Brazil. And Brazil suffered the humiliation caused to Latin America by the president of the international football federation Jules Rimet when he decided that, contrary to the established regulations, the World Cup should twice in a row take place in Europe. Instead of boycotting the championship, like real world champions, the strongest national team in the world, Uruguay, and the neighbouring Argentina, the Brazilians came, set on defending the honour and dignity of their continent.

This is what the radio host said, with a commanding voice of a high priest who, at least for now, utters only undebatable truths.

Father grew serious and frowned.

He was not keen on all this caution and pessimism. He could not imagine Poland's defeat. In fact, he could not imagine himself and David in this defeat.

When they set out on their journey, he promised him the radio transmission of all the Polish games in the World Cup. They arrived to a place to which no road leads only because, or mostly because, father imagined that his would be the place where Poland should defeat Brazil and fight for the world champion title and honour. And so, in the next two weeks of their famous Napoleonic quest and national triumph, unparalleled in the tragic and uncertain Polish national history, the football team made it easier for a father to solve what he had to with his son.

Naïve was his idea, however on such naïve ideas great and crucial life decisions are usually based on. This is how people separate and forget about each other. And all is well in the end. Tomasz Mieroszewski conjured up how to separate

from his son without a guilty conscience. Regardless of all the naivety, this was the great plan. Worthy of the World Cup. The greatest in the history of mankind.

The boy got agitated.

The Brazilians, he thought, fought against a great injustice. And Poland was fighting Brazil. Is the Polish fight just, he wondered. But an answer to such a question does not and cannot exist.

The boy knew, but kept quiet, because it seemed a shame to him to talk about something that raises questions with no answer. A shame to talk about something nothing can be told about, because none of the questions, asked or unasked, have an answer. A shame to talk about what is just in a match between Poland and Brazil and what is not, just like it is a shame to talk about shit and piss.

"Poland found itself in a terrible place at a terrible time," yelled the host.

All other competitors will be playing ordinary, less important matches, matches that do not decide on honour and dignity, on justice, on history and on the dignity of continents. All others will be playing football, and Poland will be fighting for justice or against it. The others will be doing sport, and Poland will be confessing its intentions before God and the entire football audience of Latin America…

The gravity of the moment made David's head dizzy. It was, as Ruža said, a big human drama. He felt sick of the drama, but he enjoyed it.

It was somehow an adult feeling. Enjoying one's pain and concern.

Now he thought about it all differently, suddenly it seemed to him that he had grasped Sienkiewicz and Stefan Zweig, Jesus Christ and Napoleon, and all those soldiers, alive and pewter, fighters for good and fighters for evil, who, not knowing what they actually were fighting for, because the reasons and motives of their fight will be determined by history, gloriously fell dead and wounded across the fields and plough lands of Europe and the Persian kilim rug of their salon in Krakow where Ruža, to David's instructions, laid out the armies and set the battlefield and then, right before the beginning of the battle, retreated quietly in the kitchen to make plum noodles.

As always when important decisions are made, he thought how good it was to be the way he was.

His illness and monstrosity were God's blessing and a confirmation of a special task and mission meant for him: to decide who is more entitled, Brazil or Poland, to win today.

Poland, the boy decided.

For why would the Brazilians defend their honour before the Poles? In what way did the Poles dishonour them?

Poland might as well not be in Europe. If only the maps were charted differently or blue and green-brown segments rearranged on the globe.

Poland might as well be in South America, just like Brazil, so Jules Rimet could dishonour it as well. He did not know the man nor had ever seen his photograph, but he imagined him as an evil old man who exploits children and forces them to beg, like the Oliver Twist novel.

Someone charted the maps like this by chance, David thought, and painted the globe with tempera, placing Poland in Europe. Brazilian people ought to know that and it is not fair of them to think that Poland is in Europe of its own free will and has thus offended their honour.

Like an old priest, who faithlessly all his life utters the same litany, the radio host read the players' names.

"Brazil: Batatis, Machado, Hercules, Lopes, Leonidas, Martim, Peracio, Romeu, Zeze Procopio, Domingos Da Guia, Afosinho.

Poland: Madejski, Piec, Scherfke, Wilimowski, Wodarz, Szszepaniak, Dytko, Piontek, Gora, Nyc, Galecki."

The Brazilian names sounded like the names of heroes from ancient mythology, read to him by Ruža before bedtime, before he learned all the letters, from father's old big book.

Ordinary people, Poles, among whom a Mieroszewski could be found, because all the other names were similar, played football against demigods and heroes and you can never, all until the end, know what they will do and how they will outsmart, outclass and outplay the powerful enemy.

"Terrible..." he uttered, but he did not know how to continue the sentence, or to express what is terrible.

Father laughed and patted him on the shoulder, careful not to touch the hunch.

As though he was afraid of it or as the hunch was not a part of David's body. Sometimes, if he touched it accidentally, so wooden and hard, or felt it while he was carrying the boy, how it presses and rubs somewhere above the rib all the way to the heart, to the professor it seemed that he did something shameful, something that cannot even be uttered, something sick and perverted even as a thought.

If David turned entirely into the hunch, I would easily reject him, he would think then.

"It's not terrible!" he said, without even knowing what was supposed to be terrible.

"It is terrible!" David repeated, this time with conviction.

A murmur came from the speakers and gradually became louder and louder,

and then it slowly quieted down and grew distant. The sound swung in an irregular and unpredictable rhythm, but with a seeming illusion of order.

He thought these were interruptions in the transmission, a radio wave noise, spreading across the sky, mixing, colliding and confronting God's will and God's decisions, the trajectories of angels and heavenly bodies, the way he imagined it when father, long time ago, tried to explain what are radio waves and how a radio works.

But the noise then, all of a sudden, grew into a song sung by a large and out of tune chorus and David realised these were not radio waves, but countless people, thousands and millions, right where the host was. At the stadium in Strasbourg waiting for the game to begin.

Imagine the size of the stadium if all those people can fit in there?

Once, last autumn, father took him to a match between TS Wisla and 1. FC Kattowitz.

The entire auditorium cheered against the Germans, as only the Germans played for FC Kattowicz, they wanted Silesia to be joined with Germany and, at least so he heard, their greeting was a raised right hand, just like Hitler greets his officers, so father and him also cheered for TS Wisla and half of Krakow seemed to be at the stadium. David was deaf from all the noise and racket, but it nevertheless did not sound like the murmur of the thousands and millions from the radio, who waited for the 'mythical duel' (as the host also said and David wanted to remember and use at the right moment) in Strasbourg, 'a bordering city'. That was all he said – bordering – and it somehow sounded ominously.

The game began, the Swedish referee waved the Poles to start stacking the Brazilian goal, and the host's voice trembled as though he would burst into tears.

So this was our life.

This was what we had been waiting for all these years, working in factories and offices, suffering humiliations, hiding our dark passions and infidelities, carrying the burden of time on our backs which drew us down and below like quicksand; this was the point of all our pain and suffering, this whistle and the Swede's hand in the air, pointing the road we were finally supposed to take.

David was afraid the host would cry.

Father sighed, raised his eyebrows, and did not understand what was happening.

He was not truly interested in football. Football was only a substitute for something more important, for something he could not have. Football was a metaphor. And metaphors are not spoken about, they are not examined and interpreted, because if they were, life would become torture and trouble no metaphor could embellish or fix, because it would itself be analysed and interpreted

as soon as it appeared as a metaphor. Pan Henrik was proud of the boy for understanding what a metaphor is.

As the ball went from one player to the other, the host uttered their names: "Willimowski to Piontek, Piontek to Dytko, Willimowski again, Willimowski, Willimowski, but the Brazilian back player kicked the ball out. And now Leonidas, Romeu, Peracio, again Romeu, Zeze Procopio..."

The first minutes of the game passed in this monotonous series of names. Nothing seemed to be happening. Somewhere high about this southern sky, where our only God reigns, a heavenly host is uttering the names of all the living people from the green grass of Strasbourg, lest they should be forgotten. His voice is caught by father's antenna, placed here in front of the hotel, and they are listening to this voice like in a church.

David was carried away by his new game and stopped thinking about football.

The host occasionally got excited and started yelling, but in vain, as the very next moment he went back to his dreary catalogues of God's creatures: "No, not going to happen, it was a faulty pass... Piontek, Galecki, Scherfke, Dytko, Galecki, Piontek, again to Galecki, to Scherfke, Wilimowski, Dytko, double pass with Wilimowski..."

The silent, resigned procession walked slowly, attuned to the rhythm of his voice, to the gallows...

No hope anything would change or improve.

Waiters, quiet as cats and seemingly uninterested, two young men from Crikvenica, Antiša and Đino, carried lemonade jugs and changed ice buckets. Ice melted faster than the patrons could drop it into their glasses.

The rattle of ice colliding with round glass walls sounded ceremoniously. It aroused interest in the boy. David raised the glasses, first his own, and then, one by one, he shook each one, careful not to spill the lemonade, but nevertheless to hear in whose glass the ice cubes sound nicest.

The waiters kept casting odd glances at him, convinced Karađoz was retarded and that the villagers were afraid of him and alarmed for no reason. The poor fellow should be shot out of mercy, like a hound dog that lost the sense of smell, put him to sleep forever so that he would stop tormenting himself or these hapless people...

They took sneak peeks at the father and then at the white-bearded old man Henrik, as they, petrified and blank-eyed, as though they suddenly turned blind, were listening to the broadcast from Strasbourg.

The waiters understood nothing. They just felt trepidation, as though any moment now a bomb would explode nearby.

If professor and pan Henrik's world collapsed before his eyes, David thought, crashing ice against the glass in vain because no one admired it, or if Messiah jumped out before them here, in the garden of the Orion Hotel, with a crown of thorns on his head, they would not move because they would not even notice him. They see nothing. It was easy to think that they would never again regain sight, but would rather keep sitting like this, blank-eyed when the host is over and Chopin's music starts playing again.

In the 18th minute of the match, when the host desperately cried: "Leonidas, Leonidas, yes, yes, yes, Leonidas," it sounded as though he was cursing this wretched king of Sparta.

The stadium roared again, millions of voices blended into one, into a chaotic music of the spheres.

Father hit his fist on the table angrily.

David was scared. Small terror overcame him, but he could still easily control it. This little terror was barely worth mentioning.

Something he knew nothing about was happening, something that never happened before, of what he was never told, what never appeared in the books...

The father raged and David did not know why he was raging.

A Brazilian scored a goal with a stroke of genius and magic the host could not even describe. He outsmarted the unfortunate goalkeeper Madejski and he was now, desperate and lost, sitting in front of the goal he could not defend, with the ball still in the net and no one to pluck it out.

The host repeated that someone should have already taken the damned ball out. The dead should be buried, not left lying around in the battlefield.

And so, in a dreary instant, Poland died a less than heroic death.

Father, unable to think of a different swear word, angrily shouted: "The Germans!"

It was the German's fault.

Although football, as we know, did not interest him, or it interested him as a metaphor, in which the two of them were healthy and normal men who, like all other fathers and sons, visit games together and then, as most distinguished gentlemen, holiday on the Adriatic coast and listen to the World Cup transmission.

Katarina roused.

She heard him and understood this Polish word well, not very different from the one the Yugoslavians utter when, mostly derogatorily and too often derogatorily with a reason, speak about the Germans. She understood that half the Polish football players had German names and last names and suddenly felt – although football was never a subject of her interest until now – a conflicting feeling.

What if the Germans again now really betrayed Poland?

And what if they did not, and professor Mieroszewski was accusing them in a blind loser's rage, just like the Germans had for years been accusing all their nearer and further neighbours?

The former idea was dearer and closer to her; it was easier to think ill of the Germans that of one such refined and kind gentleman.

Nevertheless, the professor offended her. He made her feel German by saying something ugly about the Germans.

She will pretend she never heard him.

She poured some lemonade, dropped in three ice cubes. Then, casually, wishing something good to happen, she tried to catch the boy's eyes, and then laughed, cheerfully and without a need to explain her laughter.

She showed him she was happy they met and were here together now, one big happy family, gathered around the radio for such an important event whose meaning, true, eluded her, but would not lessen its importance.

All is well, she thought, and they were all well. Probably no one even heard what professor Mieroszewski said. They were so excited over the goal that they did not hear each other. And if they did, they forgot all about it.

The host was back to his mantra: "Machado, Hercules, then Martim. Martim to Zeze Procopio, Romeu, back to Zeze Procopio, then to martin, Martim to Leonidas..."

But his voice was no longer so serene.

It was imbued by a profound disdain, perhaps a sudden loss of faith.

In church, in the middle of the Sunday service, after his knees dented and shaped the finely polished wooden kneeler for fifty years, a man lost his faith. Prayer words were empty and sounded like empty tin cans. Out of tune, out of rhythm.

David was having fun imagining him catching his chest and losing his breath while repeating in vain: "Romeu, Romeu to Zeze Procopio, but Piontek. Piontek makes a mistake, Zeze Procopio has got the ball, back to Machado, Machado back to the goalkeeper. Batatis is playing with the ball in his part of the field, ready to send to the other end..."

Poland seemed to be ready to wave the white flag.

A word once uttered cannot be taken back. Cannot be forgotten. It was hanging here, above them, above this table, no way to erase it or annul its consequences.

Tomasz Mieroszewski sank in the lounge chair, defeated and miserable, ten years older than this morning.

It happens to the people his age. In a single day, well-kept men, full of

ambitions, plans and desires, break down and grow old, turn into their own shadows, birth certificates from the previous century, they lose all interest in life and die soon. Just because a meaning, the mainstay of his existence vanished, evaporated, scattered. Perhaps this was something tiny at first glance, something almost imperceptible to others, something unspeakable or unexplainable, something people are quiet about at the funeral. They just shrug, marvelling the ease with which death again did its deed, and cast commiserating glances at the casket with the one whose life was taken by a tiny thing.

People find such easily explainable deaths almost comforting, thinking they could never die of something similar. And then their time comes and they perish from an even tinier thing, from a wrong look, an unreturned greeting or just like that, from a breath of air. They choke on a breath and they die.

Tomasz was hence rubbed by the spoken word. Almost killed by the offense he so easily and recklessly uttered in his rage. And he did not even know the reasons of it.

He will never again, he thought, be able to look the German woman in the face. He will avoid her, look at her from his supposed aristocratic cloud, treat her as a well-bred aristocrat treats hotel staff. No Katarina for him. But this will do harm only to him. Not at all to her. She was offended.

He regretted the decision to take this journey on Tuesday.

Destiny cannot be fooled – he said to himself in pity.

And all of a sudden he no longer cared for the memory of the Yugoslav diplomat, the Bosnian young man with consumption, whom he helped to survive many a year ago. He will erase him and several good student years of meeting and helping him.

All this will be in vain, a surplus in life, a trouble, like a stomach ache one gets in the company of people, not knowing what to do. He will only wish the upcoming weeks to pass as fast as possible.

The journey from Krakow to the sea also now seems a nuisance. The journey ahead of him as well, still uncertain how long it will last and where it will take him.

All this now turns into a senseless misery, a sudden aging pain, without comfort and meaning, lasting all the way to the end. To the death – he thought, feeling sorry for himself – to the death!

Old and disdainful, he woke over the wrong word as if it were his biggest sin.

But the thing that a human life takes years and history takes centuries will happen in the football field in mere moments.

In the 23rd minute a young man from Katowice, Ernest Wilimowski, rushed to the Brazilian penalty area, passing one, two and finally three defenders, the

Polish radio host, completely beside himself, yelled Ezi, Ezi, Ezi – as Ernest was called – and by that moment Katarina had already almost forgotten about the offense.

The fourth Brazilian, the inert and stocky centre half Hercules, overthrew Wilimowski to the ground.

That scene the host in his ecstatic and fragmentary monologue could barely describe could be seen seventy years later in short excerpts from old newsreels, scattered all over the internet, documenting the football match that opened the World Cup in France, the last before the Second World War.

We see Hercules, in the spirit of the then notion of football, grabbing Wilimowski around the waist and wrestling him to the ground.

Ezi falls down, performing a perfect dance figure not seen often, worthy of the era of tango and Charleston. He falls down a few steps off the goal, right before the aim, ready to swing his left leg and send the ball to the Brazilian net, which would take his alluring dance, long forbidden in Hitler's Germany due to lasciviousness, to the peak of the final beat.

The ball, untouched, rushes somewhere beyond the camera's eye, destroying and demeaning a powerful artistic gesture, before the brutal surge of the rival centre half. That is the meaning of football. The centre half's brutality, not Ernest Wilimowski's artistry.

David will never see this record. To him this fall remained what the Polish radio host described. When David lives, image was still not as important as the word. Especially if it is invisible. A story is believed, even if it is clumsily told.

In this story, Ernest Wilimowski was the hero of the 23rd minute. Everything of importance is kept in words. Words remember what people forget.

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Everything was visible from this spot: every part of the world where professor Tomasz Mieroszewski aboded these last days, everything that mattered and everything that could yet matter. He was excited, as if he was attending a secret ceremony to which he was invited by mistake.

A vast sea expanse stretched out before him. From one end of the horizon to the other. The sea he could not embrace. He outstretched his arms and stepped back to embrace it. He moved back all the way to the stone bench, but the sea was wider still.

"Outrageous!" he said and laughed. The only thing that fit into his arms was Katarina.

Land could be seen above the sea horizon.

Or it couldn't be land?

A fine, light blue line of the other shore.

Is it Venice, he thought, but dared not ask. He did not want to be disappointed when Katarina told him it was not Venice, only some other land. An island he never heard of. Or just a trace of fog resembling land.

"This is Rijeka," she pointed her hand to the distant city, "that is Kraljevica, that is Novi Vinodolski, and that thing down there, the most visible, is Crikvenica. Who would recognise it from this point of view, from above and in entirety? It looks like a town in Tuscany. Don't you think so?"

Indeed, Crikvenica was not as he saw it the other day: claustrophobic, dark and somewhat damp, with a lonesome empty coast and a senile old man who went from one end of the town to the other in tiny steps, trying to remember which town this was, where his home was, who awaited him and what his name, in fact, was. And all of a sudden, a beefy young woman in black, with a stained apron and fish scales all over her tanned hands, grabbed him by the arm and led him to the side, yelling: "uncle Frane, uncle Frane!" Professor did not know what these words, or word, meant, so he bolted to the pharmacy, where he would meet

the strange pharmacist who will help him enormously, that Buddha Gautama on morphine.

Everything was different now: the distant, slender belfry in the sun, the clock tower, red roofs before the pine tree canopy, hiding a barely visible town square. Only the western end of the coast is seen, with a few palm trees, large and luscious, from this place akin to an Icelandic geyser.

"What does unclefrane mean in Serbo-Croatian?" he asked.

She did not know.

"We'll ask Ilija," she said, "he knows everything, even the strangest words. This is his language and homeland."

He turned to the hotel.

It all opened up like on the palm of his hand. Even the place where they installed the radio antenna. They had to move two giant rocks. Ilija rolled them to the side. Now even the stones were visible, and two earthy traces in the middle of the gravelled yard, where they used to stand. The soil was red, as though soaked in blood.

But there was nothing tragic or martyrlike in the bloody soil.

It was the blood of the living. Out of pure fun, or out of some artistic, avant-garde reasons, they painted the soil red, to distinguish it from the black one in which other Europeans will be buried.

A figure stepped out of the Kraut house.

Tiny as an ant. A vertical human ant, but still an ant, whose life is not worth thinking about, because it is an ant without destiny. Too tiny to have it.

He tried to recognise the figure in front of the hotel, but it was too distant.

Then another appeared, looking quite strange: as though pushing a bread crumb.

He focused his sight and realised it was them two: Ruža pushing David in the wheelchair.

Ruža placed David at a table, braked the wheels and removed a speck from the corner of his mouth.

Ilija put two glasses and a lemonade jug on the table. From his pocket he took out a metal flask with grappa.

The boy was happy for a while. Then he would become bored. He felt important and adult because Ilija invited him for a drink. Just him, although with pan Henrik – who is now sitting in his room, at his desk, translating medieval troubadour poetry from French (that was what he said and it was not easy to remember) – he could talk about more things because pan Henrik, like Ilija, travelled across Europe and met many important people and because pan Henrik, like Ilija, felt sorry he never visited America.

But only to him, to David, Ilija wished to tell his life. That is what he said.

"It is important," he said, "very, very important to confide in someone, timely, about where you lived, what you thought about, what happened to you before, whom you lost, whom you met. If you fail, it will all be in vain. A man forgets, and in the end he dies. Untold."

He continued where he last stopped, when he fell off a cherry tree and a rake stabbed him in the back.

He was telling his tale chronologically, trying not to leave out any important events, anything he remembered.

David was listening carefully, but without a true interest in his story. All the adult lives are similar. It is that or they all remember the same thing and forget everything that would make their lives different from other people's.

He was looking at Ilija's hands, his fingers playing with the hem of the tablecloth as if they were free, shaping it and folding it as if it were a pancake.

Now he will bring it to his mouth and take a bite.

And then his fingers grabbed the lemonade jug, poured the liquid first in one then in the other glass, and returned to the play.

There was nothing interesting anymore in Ilija's tale.

When he noticed the boy was not listening to him, he started fabricating. His biographic details became more and more fantastic, different wonders occurred, he flew between life and death, saved by fairies and dragons, went on a journey around the world, climbed down Tibet and up his grandfather's attic, but it was all in vain. Time ran out when he could no more narrate about himself and his life. It was simply impossible.

If he just went quiet in the middle of a sentence, David would not notice.

Or he would pretend not to notice.

"Why don't you look for them?" he suddenly asked.

"I have no reason to look for them. They will come back. Are you worried?" Ilija wondered.

"No. Are you worried?"

He looked at him with surprise, but answered nothing. He seemed in an ill mood and sad.

David did not know why: because he would not listen to what happened after Ilija fell off a cherry tree, or did he seem in an ill mood and sad because he indeed was worried?

It was their last night at the Orion Hotel.

In the middle of their dinner, between the main course and the dessert, professor Tomasz Mieroszewski announced they would be leaving tomorrow and had to pack tonight. He said there would be no problems with the porters, who

will see them all the way to Crikvenica, because he had already arranged everything with reverend Antun. At the crack of dawn, reverend Antun will send his people to the Kraut house, so they can be back from Crikvenica before the morning service.

Pan Henrik was so surprised that his glasses almost fell into his compote.

Ruža looked at him as though something horrible happened and she wanted him to explain what.

Professor pretended not to notice any of this. He made a decision, equally strictly and whimsically, just like last Tuesday, when he told them they would be going south.

He ate happily, crunched and munched, expecting the boy to ask him something.

But David was silent, as though it was all clear to him. Or he took part in a conspiracy, so he was keeping a secret trusted to him.

Immediately after dinner, the big preparations began.

Everybody took part in them, even the hotel owner and her husband.

Although quite soon, in less than half an hour, the luggage was ready and all the things they came with packed, the hustle and bustle continued well into the night, because no one wanted to be the one to stop first and say it was all done and the end came, but instead they kept hurrying up and down the stairs and around the reception, colliding in the hallways and rooms, peeking under beds and behind closets, making sure every tiny thing was arranged in its place.

Finally, not a trace of their presence there was left.

The owner's husband and two waiters dismantled and packed the antenna parts and the radio in two wooden cases, filled them with sawdust, closed them and riveted them with eight metal wedges. As if he was riveting a casket.

"All done!" he said and shook off the sawdust of his trousers. Several times he rubbed his hands, as though after a job well done.

And so everyone else could stop.

It was the end.

No one asked professor Tomasz Mieroszewski what forced him to make such a snap decision. And what happened to him in the Venetian tower.

Before the day would break, in pitch dark, on Thursday, 9 June 1938, the procession with a palanquin containing Karađoz once again passed through Mirila, this time downhill, on its way to Crikvenica.

Just like Karađoz and his entourage came unannounced and suddenly, so they left.

They could be seen only by those who woke up early enough, or those from whose houses reverend Antun engaged the men to carry the luggage to Crikvenica

and earn a good wage. The others learned that Karađoz had left only in the morning, before the service, and could only regret not waking up on time and offending almighty God with their sloth, and even more themselves, for they could not tell tales about how they saw Karađoz leave, what they saw and felt, and what it all meant, they will have to listen to others and keep quiet. There is hardly a worse punishment than keeping quiet while the others are talking, than life passing in hearing always the same old story in which one cannot take part.

Some will, truth be told, lie that they indeed were awake that morning and saw Karađoz under the white veil, but all such stories will soon dissolve because no man can lie about important things and occurrences so well not to be caught red handed by the villagers. And in the history of Mirila, of which indeed no books were written, but this does not mean that there is no history, no greater or more important event outshone the arrival and departure of Karađoz.

In front of the church hall the procession was greeted by reverend Antun Masatović.

He shook hands briefly and seemingly without a word with professor Mieroszewski, and then he saw the parade go, blessing it with his hand in the air as if he were a bishop blessing a procession or an army going in the field.

He did not say goodbye to Karađoz, nor took a peek in the palanquin, beneath the gauze.

He retreated swiftly to his chambers to prepare for what awaited him in the morning service.

No one can look into his soul nor should even if it were possible, but reverend Antun was, undoubtedly, happy how it all ended. Never will he speak about his role in these event with any of the villagers. To all questions, which will surely arrive, he will answer with a silent smile. He will wave his hands as though he were chasing away evil spirits and burdensome summer flies, but he will be evidently proud of himself and somehow glad that the people thought his actions, with God's help, avoided a great evil.

When the next great war breaks out in the autumn, the next year of 1939, someone said: "Thank God Karađoz did not stay here."

No one knows who said it, because many people claimed these words or attributed them to someone from their household or family, nor anyone knows what they were supposed to mean and what trouble more horrendous would befall the world, or only Mirila, if Karađoz had not left so quickly.

It was like this and the story lasted as the war lasted, until people's government was established. On every occasion and in every trouble, during wartime winters and hunger, or as the news of people of Mirila perished in the partisan, Italian and *ustashe* uniforms arrived, they underlined the happy circumstance

that Karađoz nevertheless left on time. Times were horrid, but imagine how they would be if he had stayed.

Reverend Antun will not approve of these stories, nor will he deny them.

He will only smile, the only one to know the real truth. Such a position is blasphemous, but nevertheless distinctive of a priest, a trait typical of priesthood. Reverend Antun was no different from his fellow brothers.

Time and again people will ask him if in June 1938 the Prince of Darkness aboded in Mirila.

The last one to ask, late in the summer of 1949, would be Ivan Miculinić, a volunteer partisan who lost a leg at Sutjeska, but reverend Antun would not answer to him just like the ones before. He will instead pretend to know what the others do not.

When the following year, in 1950, the bishop transferred him to Sušak and soon afterwards – out of insubordination or some other reason, because the real truth never came out – to his native Bosnia, this story will close over reverend Antun Masatović, God's faithful servant. Nothing will be known of him, and together with him a journal will be gone missing, the journal he, to the testimony of those who served under him in the parish, kept on a daily basis, for hours each evening, sweating and toiling over the record of the day behind him.

Although they did not plan to do so, but instead said they would accompany them only to the end of Mirila, the hotel owner and her husband followed professor Tomasz Mieroszewski and David all the way to where the road collapsed and cars could not go through.

There they said a long goodbye and this goodbye was bursting with the unsaid words they should have uttered to each other and how they knew nothing about each other that they should know. They did not have a chance to get to know, let alone befriend each other.

Ruža burst into uncontrolled tears, louder than common decency would allow. This petrified and somewhat frightened them.

They stood there for a while, by the ravine, not knowing what to do, as the villagers moved away step by step, but it did not even cross their minds to leave or escape, whatever happened, since they wanted to be paid for the stint.

Ruža's cries were heard far and wide.

Crazy and inconsolable, this foreign woman scared people, as she was different from their women.

And then Krađoz took her hand and held it for a long time, all until she calmed down. Her chest shook and swayed with each cry.

Professor paid the porters and they slowly, with a series of short and senseless curtsies, left their way. Some to Crikvenica, others back to Mirila.

Finally they were left on their own.

Professor once again shook Ilija's hand. He looked at Katarina, not knowing what to do and then, just like the porters, he too briefly bowed his head.

For a while the two of them watched the black Mercedes drive down to Crikvenica, which finally, together with the side car with all that luggage, turned into a cloud of dust which it will never leave.

This cloud is the end of the story.

The opinions of the reasons why professor decided to finish his holiday so suddenly, although it was supposed to last until the World Cup finals in France. Everyone had their own version. Him and her both had finished stories in their heads, logical and consistent, which they will remember and live with until their deaths. In serenity, without a hint of bitterness. But they will never talk about it because there are things two people, no matter how close, cannot talk about, just as there are things no story will ever write. As long as it is kept quiet about – it is the truth. And a lie as soon as it turns into words and is spoken out loud.

Kristina and Ilija kept the Orion Hotel open until April 1941 and then closed it for a short while when the villagers, to the news of the German attack on Yugoslavia, smashed all of their windows. They reopened it several months later, after the Italians occupied Mirila and set camp below the Venetian tower.

That was the time when the Kraut house swarmed with all kinds of people, fascist officers, adventurers and smugglers, entire Jewish families who miraculously arrived from Zagreb, Varaždin or Karlovac and escaped to the Italian zone, thus saving their heads.

Katarina welcomed and sent off all of them, aware of the temporariness which befell her and which, she knew, will last only for a short while and then she ought to take the two bags packed long ago and rely on luck.

With the fall of Italy in autumn 1943, the Kraut woman and her husband were gone.

The Orion Hotel was occupied by the German army for their mysterious needs.

These two were told to have arrived all the way to Brazil and were living in the city of Belo Horizonte. No one knows if it is the truth or it only became the truth because of the city's lovely name.

The first thing the partisans did when they liberated the entire area in one forceful surge, after pressing on the Rijeka and Trieste, was to burn down the Kraut house. Young men from Mirila did that, the only ones to know why. The reasons should sooner be sought in folk superstition, rather than revenge.

The Kraut woman and her husband never did harm to anyone. (The ruins of the Kraut house still stand, seventy years later. Whoever sees them for the first time will think this is a building hundreds of years older than the Venetian tower.

Overgrown by weeds and blackberry, teeming with snakes, with a large oil stone, still lying where it was placed before the house, this ruin is a mystery to today's population of Mirila. The only thing they know about it is that for some reason it is called the Kraut house. Everything and everybody else are no longer remembered.)

No one knows if professor Tomasz Mieroszewski, fearing the advent of difficult times and his own feebleness and old age, placed David into a princely sanatorium, as he was readying to do, and what to a large extent was the real purpose of this journey, or, looking at the world from above, he decided against it and took the boy home to Krakow.

When the cloud of dust settled, there was nothing left.

From the books of the dead it is evident that professor of French and Latin Henrik Miller died in 1941 in Krakow, buried with the usual funeral ceremony of the Catholic Church, which leads to conclude that his death was natural and peaceful.

The other three do not appear in any of the books of the dead. Therefore, they are considered missing. If they ever lived in the first place.

At the cemetery in Kraljevica, where during the war and shortly afterwards the patients of the children's sanatorium were buried, where David was possibly placed, no grave carries the boy's name.

Since his illness in the summer of 1938 already quickly progressed and was incurable, nor cases of miraculous recovery were registered, it is almost certain that David Mieroszewski did not live to see the end of the Second World War.

But the love story he probably did. From the beginning to its logical end.

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