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SARAJEVO ROSE / WAR RHYMES

O D D S A N D E N D S

(a chapter)

"Examine its pedigree carefully before you buy such an expansive pet!" there had been advising each other their owners, longing for the noble ancestry for them themselves.

.....

Only now when the nature of the War Rhymes has been fully disclosed,
I can call in peace,
as my witness,
a poor Math teacher.
A fellow, who'd made his home in a Marin-dvor's grave-like basement,
long before all remaining Sarajevo populace descended their cellars' stairs,
as fleeing from the grenades,
cascading from the sky;
round the clock.
I call on him,
whether dead or still alive,
to support my testimony that:

soon after the city's got enclosed
by the fence of the aggressors hate
&
world indifference
&
the Bosnian government's foxy policy,
Sarajevo streets got crowded,
instead with humans,
with their pets.

Cats and dogs, namely, wearing the plates around
their necks.

Not to be identified once when killed,
don't burble!

who's ever seen these tender quadrupeds going to
the front?

but to be recognised as the someone from the
chosen stock.

*Examine its pedigree carefully before you buy
such an expansive pet!,* there had been advising
each other their owners,
longing for the noble ancestry for them
themselves.

A throng of mongrel,
pure-bred,
thoroughbred,
dogs,

started coming out of their deserted homes,
when the mortal music notes began showering
from the hills.

And their unscrupulous masters left the broken
state for the stable - western,

in whose opulent shops they had actually
purchased them.

Hadn't we been the only meaning of their hollow
lives and the only objects worthy of their tender
feelings?!

there were murmuring for themselves,
as feeling up the vacant streets and parks of the
Olympic city of Sarajevo, the:

poodles,
Pekinese,
duchies,
spaniels,
collies,
greyhounds,
afghans

(behold! dogs, not humans),
alsatians,
Labradors,
Dalmatians
(again animals, not men)

...
Bewildered,

as much as Sarajevo war populace,
they had started roving the city unoccupied
districts; in quest of food.

Under constant,
must be a new sort of
rain.

Along with them there walked out,
still full of pride,
and well-dressed,
the cats.

Real dames.
If not all of them Siamese, but enough pretty to
deserve,
prior to this Doom Day,
a special clothe and meal, chosen according to
their own taste,
from the shelves of Sarajevo mini markets.

Who did care
at that fiddle-fuddle time
for some hungry children in dark Africa,
or impoverished Asia and Latino-America?!

Who could think about what did the Palestinian
kids eat,
if ever they did,
in their made-shift homes uglier than cans in
which there had been canned their beloved's
chow?!

Who could be bothered with suffering of the
oppressed, tortured, deprived, occupied,
molested...
in far-off Burma, Cashmere, Nicaragua,
Djibouti...?!

In all that troublesome Third World countries,
which
"Anyway,"
said she,
herself starving during the first Sarajevo war-
famine,
"haven't got used to better!"

And went on, the cheeks reddish with anger:
"All that humanitarian aid should be sent to us,
Europeans,

*instead of that
worthless
Somalia!*

(Where the Muslim girls have been raped,
and made away with,
not by the Serbian or Croatian or Russian or
Japanese or American... religious or national
enemies,
but by their own so-called Muslim,
countrymen.

(The renders of the local political evil whose
satanic rendering's also been directed by some
far-off-big-policy-makers, but the bitter seed of
whose devilishness resides not but in the heart
and mind sightlessness of their own.)

These are really some other times!
there had lamented the With pedigree.
Nowadays, only the American President's cat's
been privileged to be written to a letter.

And,
believe it or not!
She'd reply you
with her photo, signed in person;
by the majestic cat's own paw.

What a glorious frivolity, announced and pictured
with the promised shot,
all over the jovial journalist world.
Including Pakistani *The Muslim*.

And all these at the same time when the
remaining children of Sarajevo have been living,
and sleeping,
and playing,

and starving,
and trembling,
with the remaining mousses,
in the dark,
and damp,
and dirty,
Sarajevo's
old,
Austrian Empire-built
cellars.

But why am I taking for the eyewitness
a lone Math teacher,
and why is he ever worthy of a book's
mentioning
if:

he has never been asked to any Party convention,
in addition, he believes in God in his own,
obviously wrong
way,

then, he's not a father of any son,
he hasn't got any sister married to the Party
headquarters' door-keeper,

he's never raised his two fingers in support of
any election candidate.

Neither great B.B.,
the whole world animals' *maman*
or *grand-maman*¹
knows anything about him.

¹ In French, mother and grandmother.

He's been so entirely forsaken that neither the
residents from the upper floors of his own
building knew,
before his war appearance,
that,
down the stairs,
in the vacant basement,
where the normal people keep debris from their
comfortable dwellings,
was living a creature quite similar to them.

Two eyes,
by my God!

I do now testify for him,
the same number of ears,
and a nose,
and an orifice for feeding,
and so on.

Quite similar to those on the hills, too.

But almost nobody knew him.

Even Marindvor's cats,
abundant in their number,
were indifferent to him till the crucial point of the
war.

He came out to the daylight along with the above
listed,
forsaken,
favourites
at the time when humans,
pretending the best lineage for them themselves,
abandoned their bombarded homes;
aghast.

Betrayed darlings started starving.

For that reason solely,
the earlier well-bred,
cats and dogs,
the most expensive odds and ends of this
Olympic
city,
streamed,
in an incredible huge number,
out,
to the streets.
And,
mind you!
got mixed
with the smelly cats and shaggy dogs.

The strays at which,
only till yesterday,
they'd been taught to look down.
Reason for this indecent behaviour was a simple
survival.

Namely, dirty no-one's quadrupeds were so
skilful in finding a rotting bone,
or,
at least,
a dead pigeon,
that it was rather normal,
on the stated conditions,
to take them for the guides.

Haven't they had the best example among those
Sarajevo's creatures walking on their two legs?
Theirs,
the first-war-months leaders,
were only people with the pretty bizarre names,

and manners:

 Crni,
 or Krushka,
 or Juka...

Each one having a huge gang behind.
Wreckage and garbage were a real realm of these
valuable things.

Still!

But when even these reserves have got exhausted,
now united, all city's animals wondered
what to eat.

Only then the Math teacher came up;
the hands full of the old corroded cans,
the cans full of the makeshift food,
separately cooked for dogs,
and separately for cats:
due to certain differences in their digestive
systems.

I bear witness:
during the first war year, he was one of the
Bosnian leaders with the biggest number and the
most loyal followers.

Who were not leaving him alone,
neither was he them,
in any single occasion.

Grenades and bullets were showering,
sirens were warning, whatever goes on one's own
legs should run underground,
but this

Hyeronimus Bosh-like-painted caravan
was proceeding its way;
in all directions.

In order to none of Sarajevo's
God forbid!
 cat or dog,
from whatever family be,
 feels abandoned,
 neglected,
 forlorn,
 if ill,
 or wounded,
let alone to be left non buried,
 if killed,
 and not fed,
 if still alive.

In my eyes are petrified the tears
 from the witnessing:
bouquets of motley flowers lavishly poured over
 the richly crinkled pyjamas,
the overflowing palette of scarves,
 a crash of the vitreous voices,
 the Muslim women,
forced down to Sarajevo from their mountainous
 villages;
husbands and brothers and fathers and close
 relatives at the front-lines,
 if not in captivity,
 if not in the graves,
as massing the door of the Paediatric clinic's
 huge store,
 full of the best baby food,
a French gift; about to expire.
 In vain,

or with the portions for two days survival of their
infants, only.

Two hours of waiting for the doctor,
busy with doing nothing,

or with giving interviews to the ever massing
Western journalists,

who are to be sure, he'd never minded for the
people nationality or religion they have always
been one and the same to him he himself has felt
extremely uncomfortable about the presence of
some fundamentalists among them.

And in support of his being
nobody

and nothing

he was willing to abuse

a bit

his own

and his nation's

"Muslim"

God.

I was for a nuance better treated.

He believed me,

since their sharer of the bank in the court-room
and prison torture,

I must have been their sharer in the power too.

So, I managed rather much food for my
paraplegic brother's kids who'd
theirs

given away to some newly arrived Bosnian
fugitives.

But later on,
in Istanbul,

at the *Bosna-Herzeg Hastanesi*²,
the same living martyr was refused,
by the same doctor,
the admittance.

The first came to find a killer for his 24 hours' unbearable pains; a skilful sniperist picked him off,
at a run.

The second came to that hospitable city to repent a bit
to the "Muslim" God,
and,
plus,
to hide his head from Sarajevo
incessant
grenades' blasts,
ever increasing their death rate.

Doctor Primarius acknowledged our nobility, rare
at the front of the peoples defence,
even made a slight obeisance, but:
that was some other time.
Only the Bosnian Sultan,
or Sultana,
or Prince,
in the modern terms, democrats,
with a hint of Islam,
and their coterie-like government,
could give the proper admission papers,
or buy,

² In Turkish, "Bosnia and Herzegovina Hospital", organised under the same name during the Bosnian war in Istanbul.

like from their own pocket,
necessary wheelchairs,
baklava,³
or *burek*.⁴

That is, delicious Turkish food.
The hospital walls were fully decorated with the
photos of,
and slogans in praise
to these,
singular,
benefactors.

Before long, no rotten potato, no putrescent
kitchen food staff could be found in the city.
The only hope for the Math teacher and his band

there became the American
humanitarian
packages.

Which could be
more and more often
found
thrown away,
for the goodness of animals,
by the angered
starving

humans; once, when their initial excitement about
these richly overseas meals died down.

With them,
it became clear to every Sarajevo's starveling,
the USA Army authorities had cleaned up

³ A Turkish delight.

⁴ A meat-pie.

their food and medical stores,
after a too long delay in completing that
boring
chore.