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**T H E F I F T H W A L L**

**. . . and death will pass**

*Prison, Focha, 27 September 1985*

Hear a Lady-guard. She's coming from toilette. Wet-hand, with the mouth full of laugh, which has, throaty, set out after her from the guards' for my deadly hushed room. I am contemplating her with a dried-out look, through the ray of sunshine compensating her for warmth. It's not difficult for me to recognise remembrance. That parallel reality. Who to deny it existence only because its scenery is, instead around us, in our reason?

Thus, reality. A Terezian house of correction in Slavonska-Pozega. A euphemism promising a special suffering to a political prisoner. I am stealing for myself that title, for it has always been a privilege of the glorious past of those in power. They are bringing me into quarantine where takes me in her hands the Chamber-chief, "éminence grise" among criminals, trusty of the prison administration, most reliable squealer of the Guard. Grotesquely sobered-up in front of a new task, she calmed even the wisp of her tin, dyed hair, which later I'll be seeing for days as rushes along forbidden paths between the prison sections. I am promising myself to put her in a film. Here has to be passed a kind of a qualification exam. Is being done a recruit to a criminal elite, or to, at the top-floor placed "C", a lumped-proletarian category. One Albanian "irredentist" thwarts my ascension, there informs me the Criminal, sympathetically. She's leading me to the bathroom and demonstrates how to, after using toilette, flash the water from the water-bin.

Thankful, I am bowing down my head, which she's lavishly pouring on with the lice-powder. Afterwards she pedantically binds up my head with a piece of a bed-sheet, which I'll be from now on wearing instead of my black silky scarf, upon the catatonic idea of the prison authorities. She's promising me, afterwards, to teach me how to shut the door "slow-slowly."

I am dying slow-slowly, seventy-and three days already. Only Chehotina-river reminds me that I am, besides this, living in parallel yet another prison reality. I hear it only when all hysterical hues and cries of the guard and criminals calm down. Again, there turns the memory round the dried-up cells of my thirsty brain. For about fifteen days then they have not fastened me, they have not pushed in, a force-feeding tube... Thus remembrance. Cité universitaire. Paris. An additional student stranger-ing. I am laying aside, tiredly, the Metaphysical Diary of Gabrielle Marcel; I am switching a radio on. Suddenly, in a Stockhausen's torrent of the sounds, I am recognising the beat of my mother tongue, melancholic composition of a folk-song; I am discovering for the first time the beauty of a rhyme unequalled in the history of the world poetry. Two waters have fallen out. I could not even surmise the landscape through which passes by that quarrelsome Chehotina, until they have settled me,

ten years later, at her banks, to dream, in the fertile prison nights, a certain timeless times.

Singing. Poetic. My hand, since long, serves not that making. Pricked, bluish, bloody, weaken of many a trying to, through its veins, keep up the life, in order to, afterward, after the rescue, furiously torture it. That they are not but a nameless police, I told them, while I myself already history. It was a good reason for their new wrath, and yet greater my torment. But they can do nothing to me any more. And death will pass. At a slow pace of sun in the sky, with the alteration of light and shadow, with the hushed voice of revolt, with the last humble flow of blood. Will they think that I sleep, or that, under a blanket, the only prisoner retreat, contrive a new rebellion? Or will they discover at once that my place has been occupied by death?

For a while, everything will be same. Fragile as a reed, my thinned body. Everything will appear same. The heavy indigo around the eyes, and the coarsen lips, and the bluish furrows of the veins on the thinned hand. It is hardest at the time of the guard's shift. They do bring with themselves a fresh breath of life, like a shiver, arrogant towards my death. Perhaps a bit feeling of guilt because of the involvement in the crime, sympathy for my body, but only by the end of the duty. Until their next turn, they renew in themselves loyalty to the post and dishonesty. One was a real gold.

I say, they can do nothing to me any more. And none of the memories calls me by my name. That means there is no longer any other reality but this instant pulling me, with the last powers, behind itself along imaginary circle in Time. Me? No! Only bone and skin. An iconic symbol of my soul, which already, by the last of its poetic inspiration, old as sky, has chosen azure for its final itinerary. I am reciting, even to myself hardly audible, 'ayats from the Holy Qur'ân:

*In the Name of Allah, the All Beneficent, the Merciful / He has made the two seas meet each other./ Between them is a barrier, they encroach not.* My death and my life, closer than ever, touch each other, and more and more I am feeling the power of what prevents them to merge. Haven't I already been, before life, in nonentity? Nothing new can happen to me. And death will, thus, pass.

#### e p i l o g u e :

At four o'clock afternoon, this trace, fragile as a smoke, of somebody's conscience ashes, is carried away on the brother's hands from the prison medical station. For about last ten days here had only to die her soul. After four and a half months of dark isolation, out of which two and a half spent in hanger-strike in order to preserve dignity of suffering at least, "freedom" is taken as a violent demolition of the last stair, over which one had only to step into the world From another side. A night before, the prisoner dreamt that she was gifted an open, light-coloured umbrella, such as she would have never chosen herself. The gift, which she accepted with a great caution. A gypsy from the next room predicted her exit from jail. Possibly the interpretations of life, are to be sought for not but with those who have learnt how to live in dream.