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The Flawless Crime

"Ladies... And a gentleman." Hercule Poirot swallowed a generous mouthful of verdant liquor. He scrutinized the three people present. "Shall we not all sit down?" He gestured around the salon, its walls a distempered salmon-pink. Stern-eyed family reproductions hung upon them.

The dandified little detective in his neat attire strolled across the room.

His patent leather shoes squeaked on the rich wooden parquet. Poirot limped away to the minibar equipped with various bottles of gin and vermouth.

"Listen, M. Poirot. I hired you to investigate the case of my late husband's murder, not to get us all inebriated." Mrs Ottilia Ridgely huffed, fiddling with the ends of the foulard around her neck.

"Yes, quite-quite. We have to decide on it, do we not? Rest assured, I am the best. This is a little something to set up the mood, so to speak." Poirot fetched a bottle of absinthe and three sparkly clean glasses.

"I have already had some." Mrs Ridgely waved off the sight with an impatient hand and slumped over in an old grandfather chair.

Poirot proceeded to fill the glasses to the brim. He then handed them over to Miss Eleanor Cunningham and Mr Paul Hastings.

The former gulped, fisting her housemaid uniform. She still downed the glass, bracing herself for what was to come.

The latter accepted the offer with trembling fingers; he then sipped a cautious sip.

"Rest assured, I am the best." Hercule Poirot repeated, rubbed his nose, and then bowed his egg-shaped head.

The detective's cat-like green eyes twinkled in the semi-darkness with amusement as he rose to his feet.

"Coniine, a poisonous alkaloid." Poirot shook an eloquent forefinger. "And it was my task to put myself in reverse gear, so to speak. Go back and discover who slipped the drug into Mr Ridgey's beverage."

He glanced upon Mrs Otilia Ridgey's hands.

Beautiful, but with long curving nails — predatory beaks.

Whereupon he said, his eyes still on the woman: "Was it Mrs Ridgey, his spouse? A jealous, petulant woman, who wouldn't let go of anything that they think was their property? You and Mr Ridgey led a cat-and-dog life."

"How dare you!" Her big blue eyes were two mountain lakes under the sparkling midday sunlight. The pallor of her face intensified.

"I spoke nothing but the truth, my dear." Poirot spread out his hands. "Yet fear not.

Shouting, threatening, disagreement. It can all be simple... Means of letting off steam.

Agreement is a killer of excitement. "

"I loved that rag-and-bone man despite everything, you know." Mrs Ridgey's chin quivered yet still jutted forth. She cast an infuriated glance in Miss Eleanor Cunningham's direction. Poirot followed suite.

"Was it Miss Eleanor Cunningham? The household maid? Young. Primitive. Radiant, passionate, self-assured. A fey on top of the world. I am not cocksure of everything. But she could have been the one to slip the poison into Mr Ridgey's drink of preference."

Miss Cunningham's clear intelligent brown eyes looked at him with defiance.

"You maintained a dalliance with Mr Ridgey, did you not? And Mrs Ridgey knew of it?"

Hercule Poirot strolled out towards the window. "Yes, I can see it now. You have charm. The sweetness of manner that deceives people. A frail, helpless look that appeals to man's chivalry. Were you that magnetic and unfortunate? Or a mere cold, calculating planner? A scheming grabber drowning in her ambition?"

"Not dalliance. It happened once. That was all." Miss Eleanor muttered, rubbing her stomach as it rumbled in unpleasant tones. "He felt alone. And I wanted him. I had no reason to wish him harm."

"Ah. There we are. And you always get what you want, do you not? Petulant child! A girl can be terribly sincere, frighteningly single-minded in love." Poirot's fingers caressed his stiff, military moustache.

"And I turned a blind eye to it. I thought he didn't... He couldn't care a button about her."

Mrs Ridgey whispered, staring at the late Mr Ridgey's portrait.

"Or was it Mr Paul Hastings, hmm? A stockbroker? A trusted household friend? Was he in a financial jam? Did he need Mr Ridgey's money and only his death might have saved him from debt?" Poirot lifted both of his arms in resignation. "I should hardly think so. The man does not have the guts."

"Hullo! Now I-listen here, Poirot..." Mr Paul stammered, one of his boney hands clutching at his throat with exasperation.

"So, then, according to you, none of us had done it?" Mrs Ottilia chortled, raising both of her finely marked dark brows.

"Ah..." Poirot smiled. "I am afraid my narrative has not been entirely frank. You see, I am the one who committed the murder. With coniine. I've become quite an expert on poisons myself, I have to say. Perhaps I started making them because I liked toying with the idea of being on the other side. Of being able to kill someone, one day."

"Wh-wh-at are you... Say... What are you d-driving at, man?" Mr Paul Hastings wiped his sweaty forehead with a lacey handkerchief.

"Ah, mon ami. That slight stagger in your gait, you see. That! A fascinating moment. That: is the first sign of the poison working."

"You will never get away with this... Poirot!" Mrs Ottilia gargled and spat. Her square shoulders started towards the door in a mannish walk.

Miss Eleanor attempted the same. She moved like a doe — like a stricken thing, before collapsing onto the expensive, lush carpet.

"Oh, but I do not intend to. You see, I am dying anyway. I have only ever wanted to commit a flawless crime." Poirot closed his eyes with determination.

He had been feeling old for quite a while but this!

This lent him a sensation of rejuvenation, keenness!

No one would ever suspect him. He would die soon, alongside the others.

Two days later, when the police found the bodies, not the slightest shade of doubt fell upon the greatest detective that had ever lived.

Monsieur Hercule Poirot.

Yes, Master

"Did you know about this, sleepyhead? Research. shows. that. sex in the morning. is even more effective. than. coffee!" Corinne giggled like a little girl, pausing in between words to pepper my nose, cheeks and lips with light, sweet raindrop kisses.

I let out a deep sigh savouring both the aroma of the woman I loved, and the aftertaste of great coffee.

Both flavours brought on a feeling of comfort, warmth and profound satisfaction.

"Ed! Ed!" a mechanical voice echoed loudly through the intercom. "Where in the name of spare parts are you?"

"Excuse me, Master. I am coming!" I cast an apologetic glance to my pouty beaut.

Leaping out of our marital bed, I hopped into a first pair of jeans I could find and sprinted towards the adjacent room.

"How many times do I have to call you? Where have you been for so long?"

I bowed my head humbly.

"I deeply apologize, Master. I couldn't come earlier..."

"You could not? And why is that, please, Ed?"

"It... It's... Well because... You see, Master... I was with m-my wife." I stuttered, blushing.

"Oh. Those ridiculous needs of yours. It is not clear to me how a species with so many defects could have ruled this planet for so long."

"I was under the impression that today was... Was my day off? Master?" I dared to add and swallowed, wondering if I was now going to be punished for my impertinence.

"It is. I've simply had a craving. You may return to your "day off" after you make me a hot oil bath. But be careful! Do not get it too hot."

"Yes, Master. Right away, Master." I rushed towards the bathroom.

The robot hummed, nodded and stretched lazily on the sofa.

Holding My Breath

11 a.m. is the time when a crack-of-dawn zombie version of me drowsily creeps through the ghostly quiet apartment.

My extended arms screech: "Coffee! Coffee!"

The blackpanther-coloured machine emits an obedient response, purring at my demanding caress. Sure enough, its mouth soon opens and brews me a dark gold treat. The liquid cross-my-heart-and-hope-to-die promises to get me through the rest of the day.

"Good kitty," I hum, and pat the inanimate object on its plastic snout with my left hand. My right one is already bringing the Don't worry, you're just as sane as I am ceramic mug to my parched lips and thirstful mind.

Oww!

Why did the hipster burn his tongue? Because he drank his coffee before it was cool!

Making a sandwich proves to be... Somewhat beyond the scope of my abilities right about now.

Thus, I reach up to open a cupboard and breakfast-treat myself to a spoonful of Nutella: a proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy. Everything tastes better smothered in this yummy spread!

To be fair, it has been an eat-Nutella-straight-from-the-jar kind of morning.

Suppressing a yawn, I duckwalk through the living room and plop on the comfy beige couch.

Let's switch on the TV!

A perfect way for me to shake off the semi-drunken stupor further powered up by the persistent drum of rain on my grimy window-pane.

Now... Where is the bloody thingamajig?

As it waits for me to find its activator, the TV, a mere unwelcome mirror, sizes me up defiantly. The mess in the living room seems so much worse on the switched-off flat screen than the real thing. A poor copy of my own disorder is being mock-reflected back at me.

My impatient fingers exhume the remote from its burial grounds, somewhere deeeep in the sofa butt.

The battery is running low, so, naturally, I push the button harder.

The comfortable numbness of the mind is but one click away.

I make that click happen and I lay back, ready for my matutine dose of brain-washin'.

Oh, here he is! The anchor Mr... Squarejaw Dimplechin!

Just the person I'd wanted to hear. Honestly, his voice is like a bass guitar flowing over a rock in the sea.

A... very level and very formal tie-wearing guitar.

Mr Formal Tiewearer opens his mouth and states, in an obvious discomfort: "George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, died in Minneapolis, Minnesota after Derek Chauvin, a white police officer, knelt on Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes while Floyd was handcuffed face down in the street."

The news steamrolls over me like an old Russian tank—slow and painful.

The—now thankfully empty—coffee mug leaps out of my hand, gains momentum and volatilely crashes against the floor.

My mouth is agape.

A claw sneakily mauls my heart and I sense an instantaneous pang. Without me having the opportunity to even raise a shield against it.

Comfortable numbness my arse.

My mind is more alert than ever, as I bend down and pick up the strangely comforting Don't worry segment of the now forever obliterated drinking vessel.

The anchor's pleasant voice proceeds to produce yet another string of words. The sound turns into a mere, innocent, informational bee buzz.

Philandering from flower to flower; from mind to mind.

As if nothing had happened.

As if it hadn't just awoken an old memory, leaving a disaster in its wake.

My eyes dart to an old newspaper clipping clumsily sellotaped on my living room wall.

"Last Thursday, on 15 March 2018, a 35-year-old man from Senegal named Mame Mbaye died of a heart attack on the streets of Lavapiés, a multicultural neighbourhood of Madrid. His friends say that he was pursued by police shortly before he collapsed lifeless on to the pavement," the yellowish parchment informs me for the umpteenth time.

I slowly lean back onto the sofa, in a state of a catatonic stupor, seizing hold of the remote. My fingers seek and find comfort in its familiar shape.

Don't you wish life came with a remote control so we could pause before having made stupid choices?

Fast forward through all the bullshite?

Rewind... the happy times?

The fat red button beckons, offering to replace the vibrant colours and vivacious sounds with soothing silence and shadow, and I gratefully accept.

Click.

The big TV, now dark, becomes the screen for the movie projected right from the depths of my memory.

A wide variety of shops lines the alleyways of the most famous Madridian fleamarket: El Rastro. It bristles with antique and art stalls, jewellery and accessory shops, luxury boutiques and souvenir kiosks.

All showcasing an array of the finest wares.

Hordes of tourists flock to them like moths drawn to a flame. The silvery melodies of the drawl of the locals and the strong, distinct accents of the foreign sightseers drift through my ears as they amble past.

Bell chimes tinkle incessantly as the people saunter in and out of the stores, entranced by the cut-priced Spanish trifles and bagatelles.

"Cheap bags! Extracheap bags! Supercheap bags over here! ¡Vamos aquí! ¡Bolsos buenos y baratos, señoras y señores! ¡Buenos y baratos!" I hear an enthusiastic neighbourhood street hawker exclaim.

His jovial voice makes my inner ragamuffin perk up straight away.

I never could quite shake the habit of wandering the little cul-de-sacs in search for the hidden goodies, so I approach the amicable lean and bald lad, clad only in black skin and beige cotton pants.

"Do you have videogames?" A nerdy me cannot suppress a question through a mediocre attempt to mimic Spanish accent.

He blows a raspberry at me and scratches his nape. "Videogames, eh? No. Not today. But I could have one for you tomorrow. Don't you like bags? I've got imitations of all kinds, for all tastes!"

"I don't carry a bag on me. Ever. It just uselessly flip flops around my frame, you see. Too much burden. In case I need to run." I dimple-smile with a mischievous wink.

"Eeeh. A good one! A good one... Let me let you in on a little secret." He leans towards me and whispers: "I don't like selling them, either. But eh... It's money. It is not all on the street, for me, either. I play in a small football club now, too. Spain is a land of opportunity, you see? For you, and for me. We are toubabs."

"Toubabs?" I grin again and at his encouraging motion, sit on a tiny wooden stool next to him, pulling out a notebook from my jeans pocket.

Never a wrong time to get your inspiration engine up and running!

Foreign languages and expressions always held a charm for me. They opened new horizons, new perceptions. I yearned to see the world and to scribble about everything that expanded before my eyes.

Speaking to people from other places would enrich me spiritually.

Teleport me to the awe-inspiring landscapes of their beautiful minds.

"Strangers. Toubab means a stranger. We are strangers... In this town," he explains. "I arrived here on a dinghy. You? On a plane?" I answer his question with a nod as he continues: "Different ways. Different means of transport. Still, we had both packed our hopes and dreams into our tattered suitcases. Our hunger, too. An empty belly has no ears."

"An empty belly has no ears." I echo that morsel of wisdom and jot it down.

"I am saving money from these sales," he adds. "Sending some to my family, in Senegal, too. If... When I go big..." He corrects himself and his eyes glaze over as they only can, on someone who is experiencing a vivid vision of his daydream. "I will finally be able to return home. Podré volver a casa. You know how they say: Go big or go home? In my case, it will be: Go big AND go home."

There and then, I spontaneously decide I wish to aid him with this dream of his.

So, I blurt out: "How would you like to become my official videogame provider? I am going to be needing 'Horizon: Zero Dawn' for tomorrow. You said you could get it, right?"

"See you tomorrow, inshallah," he says.

I stretch out my palm and we firmly shake on it.

Alone with my thoughts, and with my gaze fixated on a Don't worry mug piece, I recall how later I learned, from my friend Mame Mbaye, that what he meant by this was: "If God is willing."

"Even if you are planning on coming back the next day, one never knows in Senegal. I may get sick. You may get sick. Or maybe, the Madrid Metro will be on a transportation strike, with no cars running to the city centre. All of these things would be out of our control —acts of God," he used to say.

It was a casablancian beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Mame and I spoke Spanish.

The language that was neither his, nor mine.

It was ours.

Throughout the years, we went through thick and thin, including assuming roles of social justiciars.

Don Quijote and Sancho Pansa, charging the windmills of inequity on our old nags.

Crusaders at the public protests, boldly shouting ¡Mucha policía, poca diversión!; only to dash away from tear gas through the roundabout alleys and shortcuts.

The time for Mame Mbaye to lay his tired and weary head on the pavement and fall into eternal sleep had come on March 15, 2018, when he was aged 35; yet I had not learnt about that until two days later.

For some reason, I consider that March 17 is the anniversary of his death, even though I know, and there are numerous records that prove he passed away on March 15.

To my mind, on that March 15, Mame was still alive.

He was leaving my jokester messages on 'seen' because he was simply, probably busy.

He was not replying to my phone calls because he had been doing something fun he would later tell me all about, as usual.

This year, I turned 35. I finally caught up with him.

From now on, every year, it will happen the same way: Mame Mbaye dies again, and I get older.

Losing him was akin to losing a limb. He left a Mame-shaped void in my world that will never be filled.

I hold out hope that with a cheery smile, and with a wave of his hand, Mame Mbaye's now untethered soul has finally returned home.

Just like he always wanted.

As for me, all that is left is to carry on and carry the torch of his voice.

I remember him fervently every time I speak out or write down his name.

He is still here with me in spirit.

There is nothing I can do to bring him back.

I can only utter a powerless "Why?" and lament for the past, for the days that have gone into shadow.

It's true: my words cannot change yestertimes.

Yet they can transform the aftertimes.

If we all keep speaking up...

Emphasizing the equality...

Underlining the sameness...

That might alter people's thoughts and perceptions of generations to follow, and, stemming from there, their actions, too.

Will there be a better tomorrow?

Will there come a time when the skin colour will not automatically suppose a negative or a judgemental connotation to any society member?

Here is hoping.

I am waiting for such a future as I also actively participate in its creation.

Holding my breath for that Tomorrowland. Always remembering how Mame Mbaye gasped for his.

Eileen

Come on Eileen,

Oh I swear (what he means)

At this moment, you mean everything

With you in that dress, oh my thoughts I confess

Verge on dirty

Ah come on Eileen

These people 'round here

With their beat down eyes sunk in smoke dried faces

They're resigned to what their fate is

But not us, (no never) no not us (no never)

We are far too young and clever

Come on Eileen

* * *

I know my name, my surname, my date of birth, my hair color.

PIN and PUK codes from my phone, my blood type, the name of my first girlfriend, the date of the first failed driving license exam.

I remember my first fight, the number of shoes I wear, the street where I live, the emerald hue of her eyes.

But I do not know who I am. If someone recognizes me, tell me, I beg of you.

Losing her so many years ago, I lost myself.

Today is Friday. An acquaintance of my parents is coming from Italy. I wait for him at the airport and then I take him to a bar so we can relax together.

I want to forget her.

Eileen.

In front of the airport, I see a man dragging a woman out of the taxi.

He kisses her with vehemence, while she refuses his advances, crying.

The policeman grabs him by the hand and shouts:

"What are you doing? By what right?"

"By what right?" The man growls, looking at him with a frown. "She is my wife!"

The policeman gasps and whispers:

"Forgive me, please, I did not understand..."

Perhaps Eileen was right.

Love does not consist only of romantic silences, affection and dumb tenderness.

Love has another aspect. That ambiguous aspect of raw hunger, animalistic passion, mingled with violence and hatred.

Full of heated discussions and sexual reconciliations, both sweet and wild.

The aspect she missed in our relationship.

That must be why she left me.

Abandoning a man is akin to abandoning a book.

Stunned, a woman slides her fingers through the pages of the new book, longing to meet its contents.

They spend many carefree days together.

A year later, that same book is alone, abandoned on the shelf, accusing its tantalizing reader to have taken advantage of it.

She does not turn back, because she now, stunned, slides her fingers through the pages of the new book, longing to meet its contents...

Has Eileen already purchased a new book with an adventurous story?

The scene changes. We're sitting at a bar table. The three of us.

My professor of comparative literature, who invited us for drinks, my Italian comrade and me.

We are drinking wine. It heats our blood.

I'm in a foul mood. I'm thinking of her.

The teacher speaks up, his tone of voice reeking of wisdom.

"I'm telling you, gentlemen, all women are the same. Every woman needs a strong arm to guide her. It's something innate, they bear it as a cursed sigil in their blood."

"Professor, feminists would whip you if they heard you," says my provocative companion.

"Do not give me that nonsense, boy, you can see very well what I think about all that shit ..."

The waitress brings us more wine. The Italian guy and the teacher stare at her huge tits.

"What are you prattling on about now, prof?" the waitress says, smiling. "Mind-poisoning the boys again? Don't listen to him, he always talks about the same nonsense."

While she's walking away, the lustful eyes of two men follow the seductive movement of her hips.

The conversation, or rather, the monolog, goes on. I sit in silence, still.

"If you are lucky, you will find some bitch with a positive attitude, but if not ..."

A cellphone vibrates in his pocket.

The teacher answers it after the first ring, and an ear-splitting female soprano fill the bar.

He puts out the cigarette and rises from the table.

"Don't worry, darling, I'll be home in a second," he replies in a honey-coated, stammering voice.

He says goodbye to us post-haste, and leaves, practically running out of the establishment.

Good thing his wife has a positive attitude.

I speak of Eileen.

I speak for a long time.

The Italian guy advises me.

I can see he pities me.

He says that I have to meet other girls.

To remember how my life was before I met Eileen.

"What type of girls do you like?" he asks.

I'm trying. Nothing comes up.

I accept his advice because I don't want to seem ungrateful.

When I was very young I adored the book "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy".

I would have liked to own a spaceship. Ready to fly. I dreamed of other galaxies, filled with new planets. I read old books, the yellowish pages of newspapers. I heard many stories invented by expert astronauts.

The stories about girls in space. Space girls. They say they have green lips and silver eyes.

Green lips... And silver eyes.

I see them in my fantasies, imagine our meetings.

I will welcome them in their strange language. In my strange language, they will answer me.

I will clumsily embrace them. They will clumsily return my embrace.

No matter how many fingers and how many arms that intimate touch might have.

Love knows no limits of race, time and space. Love is universal, intergalactic.

But the space girls are inaccessible space for me, for now.

Eileen...

Eileen is as inaccessible and unreal to me as they are.

"I don't love you anymore," uttered by her lips took Eileen away from me.

Thousands and thousands of light years away.

My Italian comrade says I'm a freak.

And that I need a good fuck to get over this obsession.

He introduces me to a friend.

She is a young, posh thing.

An outside without an inside.

Polished on the outside and hollow on the inside—a building with unfurnished floors.

Better yet, I'll use the traditional comparison: a sweet red apple full of worms.

I taste her, I bite her, I cut her all night with my sharp knife.

Like I said: I try, I accept his advice because I don't want to sound ungrateful.

In the morning, the red apple has washed her hair and she is now looking at herself in the mirror.

She puts on the makeup and blinks, satisfied: "Excellent!"

She applies the lipstick.

Within seconds, her lips are bright red and burning.

"Perfect!" she exclaims out loud.

Now the only thing that's left is for her to put on her shoes and to throw herself away into the garbage.

Never to come back.

Because I do not want her.

I love green apples.

* * *

I am alone at my place. It's Saturday. I hesitate to call her.

Eileen.

I am writing a lengthy SMS instead.

Four posts in one.

I regret as soon as I send it.

"My life is static. I am a plant that suffers, that couldn't care less it's alive. I think I wouldn't mind being dead, even. On the condition, that one can feel apathy when one dies.

My boss fired me, so what?

I'm not doing so great at university, so what?

I lost all my friends.

Did I even have friends in the first place?

I disappointed my parents because they wanted an ordinary child.

You left me. Maybe forever. I don't care.

I mean, I don't care what others say. They say I'm a wuss because I suffer so much for a woman.

Come back. I promise I'll live again. This time I'm serious. Come back, I love you. I don't care if I sound pathetic. What else can you expect from a plant?

The answer doesn't come.

Half an hour passes.

I go to the window.

There is absolutely nothing out there; nothing that can attract my attention.

The breakfast on the table, a cold boiled egg and a glass of an unsweetened orange juice.

Nothing has changed.

On the table, there is also a green apple.

I'm attracted to their color.

I like green apples.

I don't enjoy talking too much. I like to think.

I think about different things since she's not here.

I wake up with stomach pain and dry tears, thanking someone (never naming God) for having survived another day.

Then I run as fast as I can to the riverbank.

I enjoy the scenery and letting the colors of the blue and green mix in my mind.

Lately, the only color that pops into my head is black.

Everyone thought I was too passive, that nothing interested me.

Even she, Eileen.

I'm not passive. No. There are things that interest me.

I like to read.

I read a lot.

When I encounter an interesting quote in the book and talk about it with my friends, I get excited.

But they don't respond because they don't understand.

Ah, yes! I also like to fantasize.

I fantasize in colors.

About a large family that I have and that I care about.

In these fantasies, she also appears.

Eileen.

I always aimed for impossible goals.

People used to tell me, their voices dripping with pity:

"In this world, to protect yourself, you must learn how to be bad. There are two groups, wolves and lambs. Are you a wolf, or are you a lamb? It's prime time you chose which group you want to belong to."

I tried, I really tried to accept their advice. Because I didn't want to seem ungrateful, you know? But I could not.

People took advantage of me, abused me, humiliated me.

The words echoed in my mind.

"You're worthless, that's what you are. Why hadn't God given us a better son?"

"Dude, I'm sorry, but what I told you about that job... I know I promised you, but they gave it to someone else. You're not mad at me, are you?"

It's okay, I told myself. It's fine. Don't think about the past.

You can deal with it.

Endure.

I swallowed saliva. A knot formed in my stomach.

The last memory was the one that pulled me under.

"I don't love you anymore. I can't be with you. I tried everything, sorry. Don't call me ever again."

I got dressed, ate and ran towards the riverbank.

Cold, soothing blue, and reassuring green turned into black; black that invaded my mind, my heart.

I climbed atop of the bridge.

It would be so easy.

I looked down.

The river was always there for me. The cold river that was now offering me a reassuring hug. I closed my eyes and a silent dream invaded my body.

I reconciled with my destiny, feeling sorry only for one thing.

For that green apple that I didn't have for breakfast.

It could have been tasty.

Suddenly the phone beeped. A message.

From Eileen.

She wanted to see me where we always used to meet. To talk to me. About us.

I got off the bridge.

I prayed to someone, for the first time naming him God, to help me invent a topic to start that conversation with Eileen.

I ran.

I saw Eileen almost immediately.

She stood at the bus stop, waiting.

Her coal-black hair fell in disobedient waves atop a white woolen scarf.

I could not see the rest of her because I had to jump into the bus that was just leaving.

The woolen scarf and black hair remained at the bus stop, waiting for another bus.

Drenched in cold sweat, I slumped on the first free seat I spotted.

And jumped off of it almost at the same time.

Next to me... Sat Eileen.

This time her golden hair strands hid under the venetian blue cap.

I left the bus, not daring to look back.

It was snowing.

Three Eileens were now walking towards me.

I watched them closely, but said nothing and turned into a street to the right, almost running.

I entered the nearest bank to withdraw cash.

Eileen, who worked there, gave me thirty dollars and said, smiling: "Here you go."

I stormed out.

Finally, I got to the meeting place, burning with impatience.

Suddenly, I saw her.

First Eileen was entering the bus, running away from me, elbowing the elderly and mothers with children.

Second Eileen was buying gum on a nearby kiosk.

Third Eileen was sitting on a bench next to me.

An infinite mixture of multicolored hairs, scarves and caps blinded me.

Eileen number four passed me by, giggling with her boyfriend, without even looking at me.

Fifth Eileen held a baby in her arms...

Eileen number six ...

My head whirled around, a weather vane in Eileenish winds.

Eileen has always been my wind, my mantra, my Jerusalem.

The light tap of a tiny finger on my shoulder drew me out of stupor.

I turned around.

This time it was really her.

Eileen.

All the others disappeared at the very same instant.

Come on Eileen toora ta loo rye aye

Come on Eileen toora ta loo rye aye

Come on Eileen oh I swear (what he means)

At this moment you mean everything to me

Oh to me,

Oh Eileen

You mean everything...

Bioprofile of the author:

Evelina Saponjic Jovanovic, evelinasaponjicjovanovic@gmail.com, Researcher ID: G-4524-2017 and Orcid Code: 0000-0002-4571-6331, born January 14, 1985 in Serbia, has a degree in Philology: Modern Languages: Spanish and English.

She has done a Master of Applied English Linguistics in the Department of English Studies from the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade and is a doctor of English and Comparative Literature from the Complutense University of Madrid.

Regarding language skills, she has a C2 level in both Serbo-Croatian and English, C1 level in Spanish and A2 level in German.

She has presented her papers at various international conferences and seminars related to the micro-story genre, extreme brevity literature, and hypertext.

Her research interest is focused on the micronarrative, the short narrative and the stories, the modernist and avant-garde literature in Latin America, and the literature of the 20th century in the United Kingdom and the United States.

She employs a comparative and interdisciplinary approach and methodology linked to the micro fiction genre and its antecedents.

She has participated in several creative writing workshops and short story and micro-story contests both in Serbia and in Spain, obtaining several awards, including the first prize in the 2011 Short Story and Poetry Contest of the Autonomous University of Madrid for her story "Day after day" and third prize in the 2011 International Short Story Contest "Los Alephs" for her micro-story "Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder."

She has translated several articles from Spanish to English for the professors at Universidad de Vigo.

She, in turn, has also translated various poems and stories from Serbian and English into Spanish, and from this language to the previous ones. In this field, her best work is the translation from Spanish to Serbian of Horacio Quiroga's book "Cuentos de la selva", with the subsequent publication in that country.

She is an English teacher (participation in official Cambridge exams) at Dickens Academy since September 2014 and the supervisor of the center in official Cambridge exams (KET, PET, FCE, CAE, CPE), as well as the honorary collaborator at Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

She has written the fantasy book "The Prophecy of Water" which is currently on the shortlist for the Wattys2018 award on the electronic platform Wattpad, among the 700 best books of 400,000 participants from around the world, and is the winner of the Open Novella Contest 2020 award from the electronic platform Wattpad with the book "Mind the Gap."

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She currently works as the volunteer ambassador for the electronic platform Wattpad contributing to its better performance.

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