

SERHIY ZHADAN

# DEPECHE MODE

Glagoslav





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By Serhiy Zhadan

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# Contents

Introduction No. 1 . . . . .	7
Introduction No. 2 . . . . .	22
Introduction No. 3 . . . . .	39
Introduction No. 4 . . . . .	59
Part One . . . . .	72
Part Two . . . . .	142
<i>Book No. 1</i> . . . . .	166
Epilogue . . . . .	182

*The referee's completely pissed  
he doesn't like our Metalist*

15.02.04 (Sunday)

When I was fourteen and had my own views about life, I first loaded up on alcohol. Up to the gills. It was really hot and the blue heavens swam above me, and I lay dying on a striped mattress and couldn't even get drunk, because I was only fourteen and simply didn't know how. In the last fifteen years, I've had more than enough reasons to dislike this life: from the beginning, from when I first began to become aware of it, it seemed a vile and mean thing, it immediately began creating lousy situations that you try not to remember but cannot forget. For my part, of course, I never made any special demands, my relations with life were okay, in spite of its clinically idiotic nature. For the most part, unless there was some new governmental initiative, I was satisfied—with the circumstances in which I lived, the people I knew, the ones I saw from time to time and had dealings with. For the most part they didn't bother me, and, I expect, didn't bother them. What else? I was satisfied with how much money I had, which is not to say that I was satisfied with the amount as such—I never really had any dough at all—but I was satisfied with the basic principle of how it circulated around me—from childhood I noticed that banknotes appear when you need them, roughly in the bare minimum required, and normally things worked out: they work out fine, of course, if you haven't lost all sense of decency and at least keep up some appearances—meaning that you brush your teeth, or don't eat pork if you're a Muslim; then the angel with black accountant armbands and dandruff on his wings appears with strange regularity to refill your

current account with a certain sum in local currency, just enough, on the one hand, to prevent you from croaking and, on the other, to stop you from screwing around too much and messing up your reincarnation by buying tankers of oil or cisterns of spirits. I was satisfied with this arrangement, I understood the angels and supported them. I was satisfied with the country in which I lived, the amount of shit that filled it, which in the most critical aspects of my life in this country reached up to my knees and higher. I understood that I could very well have been born in another far worse country, with, for example, a harsher climate or an authoritarian form of government ruled not simply by bastards, like in my country, but by demented bastards who pass on their rule to their children along with a foreign debt and domestic obscurantism. So I considered my fate not to be so bad, and I didn't worry too much about these things. For the most part I was satisfied with everything, I was satisfied with the television picture I saw through the windows of the apartments in which I lived, which is why I tried not to change the channel too quickly, because I had noticed that attention from the reality installed around me always resulted in some predictable nastiness or simply more of life's routine crap. Reality on its own is cool, but it's a complete bummer once you start going over the post-game statistics, when you analyze your own and reality's major indicators and see that it committed more fouls than you did but only your side got penalized. If anything really oppressed me it was the television screen's constant, insistent demands for unnatural sexual relations with me—to put it simply, to screw me by taking advantage of my social rights and Christian duties. I've lived my fifteen years of adult life cheerfully, taking no part in the construction of civil society, never turning up at a polling site, and successfully avoiding contact with the oppressive regime, if you know what I mean. I had no interest in politics, no interest in economics, no interest in culture, no interest even in the weather forecast—this

was maybe the only thing in the country that inspired trust, but I had no interest in it anyway.

Now I'm thirty. What has changed in the last fifteen years? Almost nothing. Even the external appearance of this... president hasn't changed much; in any case his portraits are airbrushed today in the same way as they were before, even I noticed that. The music on the radio has changed, but by and large I don't listen to the radio. Clothes have changed, but the eighties, as far as I can tell, are still in fashion. Television hasn't changed, it's still as sticky and irritating as lemonade spilled on a parquet floor. The climate hasn't changed, the winters are just as long, and the springs just as long-awaited. Friends have changed, meaning that some have disappeared forever, and others have appeared to take their place. Memory has changed—it has become longer, but not any better. I hope there will be enough of it for about another sixty years of extended pragmatic apathy and unshakeable equanimity of spirit, which is what I wish for myself. Amen.



17.06.93 (*Thursday*)

## INTRODUCTION NO. 1

16.50

June 17, near five in the afternoon, Dogg Pavlov tries to enter the subway. He walks up to the revolving door, goes straight up to the woman in uniform, and pulls a veteran's card out of his pocket. The woman in uniform looks at the card and reads "Pavlova, Vira Naumivna." "So?" she asks.

"My grandmother," says Dogg Pavlov.

"Where is your grandmother?"

"This," says Dogg pointing at the card, "is my grandmother."

"What of it?"

"She's a veteran."

"And you, what do you want?"

"She burned in a tank."

The woman looks at the card again. Who knows, she thinks, maybe she did burn—you can't tell from a photograph.

"Well, okay," she says. "And what can I do for you?"

"A pass," says Dogg.

"You burned in a tank too?"

"Listen," Dogg begins to bargain. "Maybe I'm bringing her something to eat."

"What do you mean, to eat?"

"You know, to eat." Dogg tries to remember what his grandmother eats when she is given food. "Dairy products—cheese, for example."

"You're a cheese yourself," says the lady in uniform without animosity.

Dogg understands how all this looks from the side: he's beating his head against an enormous endless wall that separates him from life, beating his head without any hope of success, and all life's pleasures, including a ride on the subway, are just not in the cards right now, that's the way it looks. He gathers all his willpower into his fist and says something like: Listen, lady—of course, he doesn't say it in those words, but the content is approximately the same. So listen to me carefully—he says—okay? Listen, listen, I want to say something else, listen. Well, in spite of—let's see, how can I say it—you, I don't know, you can take this in your own way, I agree, maybe it means nothing to you but still you have to agree: my grandmother cannot be allowed to die of hunger just because I, her beloved grandson, if you allow me, was denied entry to the subway by some lousy rear guarder. You have to agree, no? (Well, at this point they just lay into one another verbally, but we'll ignore that.) He concentrates all his willpower and suddenly dives under the woman's arms, waving the veteran's card in the air, and disappears into the subway's cool intestines.

"What does he mean, lousy rear guarder who never saw the front lines?" thinks the woman. "I wasn't born 'til 1949."

### 17.10

At the stadium stop, Dogg gets off onto an empty platform; in about an hour Metalist is playing its last home game, everyone is getting together, you know how it is, the end of the season, the rainy summer above, the clouded sky and the dilapidated stadium that stands somewhere just above Dogg; in the last few years it's started to come apart, grass springing up between the concrete slabs, especially after a rain, the stands covered in pigeon shit, there's shit on the field too, especially when our team's playing, the country's in ruins, the phys

ed movement is in ruins, the big chiefs have fucking wasted the main thing—in my opinion, whatever you say—because under the Sovs there were two things that you could be proud of, the soccer championship and nuclear weapons, and the guys who took these pleasures away from the people will hardly live to a peaceful and carefree old age, for surely nothing undermines karma as much as screwed-up national politics. Dogg stands on the platform a bit longer, his friends are supposed to come from the other direction, so he just has to wait for them. Dogg is tired and worn out, he's been drinking for three days, and the weather's bad too, obviously the weather is affecting him, the pressure or whatever it's called—what do you call the condition when you drink for three days and suddenly stop recognizing your friends and family? It's the pressure, obviously.

He can't even remember what happened—the summer had begun so well, the rains came, Dogg was successfully pissing away the best years of his life, when suddenly his advertising friends dragged the reliably unemployed Dogg into the bowels of the advertising industry: to put it more simply, they hired him as a courier in their newspaper's advertising department. Dogg suffered badly, but he held up and kept going to work. He wasn't much benefit to them, but at least someplace considered him human, although personally he has never been very concerned about this—well, what are friends for, if not to straighten out your social status through direct intervention. I said from the first that he wouldn't last long but they weren't listening, they said don't worry, on the whole he's a decent guy, a bit fucked up, but okay, okay, and I agreed, okay.

Dogg lasts ten days, after that he goes on a binge and doesn't come to work anymore, and so as not to be found he drinks at the homes of acquaintances; at 19 he knows half the city, one night he even sleeps at the railway station—there he meets some mushroom-picking friends who are

taking the early-morning commuter train to somewhere in the Donbas for raw material and spends the night with them under the columns on the street, where he is rousted three times by the patrols; he sticks it out until morning, listening to tales about mushrooms and other thermonuclear stuff, then he breaks down and takes off for home. Here he encounters a ringing telephone. Under different circumstances Dogg would never have picked it up, but cold silver trout are already swimming inside him after a three-day alcoholic binge and their tails are beating against his kidneys and liver so painfully that his world is getting hazy and so he automatically picks up the receiver. "Dogg?" they shout into the telephone. "Don't you dare put down the phone!" His friends the advertisers Vova and Volodia, who fixed him up with the job in the advertising business to their own detriment, are sitting somewhere in their Komsomol office tearing the receiver from each other's hands trying to convince Dogg to speak to them, occasionally drifting off into profanities. "Dogg!" they say, "the main thing—don't you dare put down the phone. Hey asshole!" they say, reassured that he is listening. "If you put down the phone now, you're dead. We'll bury you, you hear?" "Hello," says Dogg in reply. "What do you mean 'hello'?" say Vova and Volodia losing their cool. "What do you mean 'hello'? Can you hear us?" "Yes," says the frightened Dogg. "Good," Vova and Volodia answer, encouraged. "Okay, listen, it's now ten in the morning." "What?" Dogg is now finally terrified and lets the receiver drop. The telephone immediately crackles again. He picks up the receiver indecisively. "You!!!" roars the voice. "Asshole!!! Don't you dare put down the phone!!!" Dogg swallows with difficulty. "Do you hear?" "Okay," says Dogg uncertainly. "So it's like this," explode the advertisers. "It is now ten in the morning—don't you dare put down the phone!!! You hear??? Don't you dare put down the phone!!! It's now ten. At half past five we'll be waiting for you by the stadium. If you don't come, we'll rip your

balls off. If you come, we'll rip your balls off anyway. But it will be better for you if you come. Understand?" "Yes," says Dogg. "Do you understand!?" the advertisers cannot calm down. "I understand," says Dogg Pavlov, feeling the trout swimming cheerfully somewhere under his throat. "What's with you?" the advertisers finally ask. "Are you feeling bad?" "Yes." "Do you need anything?" "Some vodka." "Asshole," say Vova and Volodia and put down the receiver. Dogg takes a breath. Ten o'clock. He needs to change or have a drink, better a drink, of course. His granny comes out of the next room. This granny, he loves her and all that, even goes around with her veteran's card, you could even say that he's proud of her, not entirely, of course, but up to a certain point, he tells people that she burned in a tank, I have trouble imagining the little old lady in a tank wearing a helmet, although anything's possible. "How are you Vitalik?" she says. "Work, granny, work," says Dogg. "What kind of work is it?" worries the little old lady. "Yesterday, they telephoned all day, asking, 'Where is that asshole?' And I should know?"

## 17.22

Vova and Volodia jump out of the subway and meet up with Dogg, and they emerge onto the street. You alive? they ask. Dogg is completely pale, can't get it together; they drag him into the grocery store on Plekhanov Street and buy two bottles of vodka, don't worry, they tell Dogg, first we're going to bring you back to life and then we'll rip your balls off, there's no fun in ripping something off in your state, look at yourself; they take him up to the store window, the grocery is dark and empty, like most of the country's stores during this difficult time—they've brought the country to ruin, the bastards—look, they say to Dogg, look at yourself. Dogg is quite weak, he looks through the window and sees a waitress in a white coat who is also looking through the glass at a couple of jerks

who look like dropouts standing on the street directly in front of her. They're holding up a third guy just like them and are pointing at her. She looks at them with contempt; Dogg somehow focuses his eyes, recognizes his reflection and suddenly notices inside this reflection a strange creature in white clothing who is wearing a large amount of makeup on her face and moving with difficulty within the confines of his body, as though trying to break out from inside him, and he begins to feel nauseous. Of course, thinks Dogg, that's my soul, but how come it's got gold teeth?

*17.35–18.15*

They spend forty minutes reviving Dogg. They pour vodka into him and in accordance with some law of physics as Dogg fills up with it he floats to the surface, greets everybody, all present also greet him—welcome back pioneer and hero Dogg Pavlov, great to have you back with us, we missed you, and Oh, says everyone, meaning Vova and Volodia, we simply needed to revive you so we could look once more into your honest if drunken eyes, so that you could tell us why you hate the advertising business in general and us, Volodia and me—says Vova—in particular; what did we do to make you take off without a word, with, by the way, a very important piece of correspondence, on account of which we would, if we could, rip your balls off twice. In this way a kind of friendly conversation takes place between them, you know how it is, and Dogg fully returns to the world, after his own soul had almost pushed him out of it, look around and listens: the trout are lying somewhere on the bottom, the angry gold-toothed angel in the white coat and nylon stockings has also flown off, the advertisers Vova and Volodia have dragged him somewhere into the bushes behind some white metal kiosks and are giving him generous helpings of vodka. Compromises are required in the social mode of existence.

## 18.15

Why do they never make it to the stadium on time for the pre-game inspirational music and opening speeches by municipal clerks? First of all, as a rule they arrive less than completely sober and therefore lack a clear idea of the time; sometimes they lack any clear idea whatsoever, not just about the time of day but even the season of the year, they're invariably in warm sweaters under the hot sun or in wet T-shirts during the first snow. Second, there's always some kind of lottery draw before the game and they categorically do not believe in lotteries. Third, as you can understand, when you're 19 and you crawl into your section of the stadium and everyone—including the police—can see your wonderful, elated condition, what can be more uplifting? Later, when you grow up and start working in a bank or the offices of the gas utility, when you interact with reality through television, and with your friends by fax—if you have any friends, that is, and provided they, too, have a fax machine—then, naturally, you won't give a good God-damn about crazy drunk teenage hijinks that empty out your wallet and throw you into every plate-glass window in the world, a time when excitement moistens your eyes and the blood stops flowing under your fingernails because several hundred people are watching them entering their section, searching for their places, and carrying someone on their shoulders, calling him a dog for some reason, losing him from time to time among the benches, but then stubbornly and energetically picking him up and dragging him to their assigned places, away from the guards, away from the women selling ice cream, and in general away from the soccer, as they themselves conceive it.

## 18.25

Dogg Pavlov revives one more time at the stadium, it's good to sit like this with your friends, he thinks, on a bench somewhere under trees that rustle and sway in

every direction, no, he suddenly thinks, they're not trees, what are they then?

A few sections over to the left, the opposing team's fans stand under the heavy June rain. There are a few dozen of them, they arrived at the railway station in the morning and several patrols have been trailing after them all day. At the stadium they've been assigned their own section, where they forlornly wave their soaked flags. Just before half-time the locals, disappointed with the score and the weather, break through the fence and begin to beat them. From down below on the field, a company of trainee firefighters runs up. The police don't think of anything better to do than push everybody out of the stadium and so they begin to press the people toward the exit while the first half is still going on; obviously, everyone forgets about the game and begins to cheer for our guys in the stands, the players also take more interest in the fighting than in their own game, it's interesting, after all, and unpredictable, here on the field everything has been clear from the start—in the final minutes someone is bound to screw up and lose the game—but over in the stands, see, there's a real contest going on, a rugby game, now even the firefighters are taking a few hits, but then the first half ends and the players reluctantly make their way to the tunnel, the police drag off the last of the visitors, so when the game resumes their section is empty. Only trampled and torn banners lie heavily in puddles like fascist standards on Red Square, our survivors return delightedly to their sections, the most passionate and principled among them go off to the railway station to hunt for the visitors as they return home; and then, around the fifteenth minute of the second half, one visitor runs into the stands—some very young kid, disheveled and wet, where he was all this time is a mystery, he has definitely missed all the most interesting stuff—he runs in and sees the signs of a battlefield, the torn flags of his team and none of his friends; where are our guys?



he cries, turning to the suddenly silent stands, hey, where are all our guys?!—and no one can answer him. Everyone feels sorry for the kid, even the ultras are silent, having interrupted their endless “the referee’s a prick,” and look dejectedly at the visitor, feeling embarrassed in front of the kid—it wasn’t really very sporting, was it?—and the kid looks up at the now quiet sections, at the wet field on which the teams are churning up the mud, and he looks at the cold and almost motionless sky, and he cannot understand what has happened, where are the boys, what have these clowns done with them, and he picks up the bent plastic trumpet that one of his fallen friends had been blowing, and suddenly begins blowing into it, making a shrill, tearful and desperate sound that astonishes everyone: he blows with his back turned to the field, to the ultras, and to the now silent and shamed firefighters, he blows a note familiar to him alone, loud and false, breathing into it all his courage, all his despair, all his purely boyish love of life.

### 19.30

In the rafters above the last rows the sleepy pigeons have grown accustomed to our team’s defeats, they coo sleepily and live quietly, bothering no one, delightful wet flocks, but Dogg hears them through his dream, they appear to him in his alcoholic debility and pull him out of it; you know that strange condition in which you see the light ahead with one eye, and with the other—how do you explain this—with the other you see what can perhaps be called the other side of the light, well, you know, in a word when you are shown a lot all at once but are not in any condition to see anything. And you don’t want to. That’s why Dogg sinks to the cement floor and begins to crawl away toward the exit, crushing the husks of sunflower seeds, cigarette butts, and lottery tickets with his tired chest. He crawls up to the exit, gets to his feet, and shakily keeps going up and up, to the last row; he grasps onto the

metal support and hangs off it in complete exhaustion— don't fall off into the stands and on top of the fans, if you do you'll need to say you're sorry, to talk to somebody, to say something, and then everyone will immediately sense how bad your breath smells and will immediately guess that you've been drinking, so the main thing is not to speak to anyone and not to turn to anyone and if you fall then definitely someone will talk to you then you won't get out of it they'll say that your breath smells bad they will definitely smell it at soon as they begin talking to you even if you turn away and talk to the side they'll smell it anyway unless you turn completely aside and speak that way—what should I say? what should I say so they don't notice? what should I tell them? Quickly, before they notice and say something—what will they say? they'll say why don't you say something? why aren't you shouting? Why am I not shouting? I need to shout, otherwise they'll notice that my breath smells badly they will say that my breath smells because I'm not shouting or they'll think that I'm drunk because I'm not shouting what should I be shouting? what should I be shouting? well, what, what should I be shouting? I have to ask someone I have to turn aside and ask or turn aside and shout then no one will notice anything in any case they won't notice with all this noise alright I'll shout something to the side no one will notice how my breath stinks but everyone will notice that I'm shouting that means I'm not drunk everything's okay this is an okay plan only what should I shout well what should I shout what are they all shouting? about the ref about the ref only to the side so they don't hear and so they still notice yes I have to shout and definitely about the ref then everything will be okay—and here our forward breaks away one-on-one with the goalkeeper and shoots, he just fucking blasts it as hard as he can, several thousand wet supporters go still, hold their collective breath, you might say, and at this moment behind their backs in the damp silence a desperate cry echoes:



And here our team puts he the ball in the back of the net, and the wet throats roar: Sco-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-r-r-r-r-re!!!!!! Sco-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-r-r-r-r-re!!!!!!—they roar and from this roar hundreds and thousands of sleepy pigeons tear themselves out from their dreams and fly out like bullets from their perches nestled with feathers, earth, and lottery tickets, they fly out in a wave into the wet sky, and this wave breaks against Dogg Pavlov, and he can't hold on and goes flying down, dropping a few metres and flopping with a smack onto the bench right next to Vova and Volodia, who finally remember their comrade, turn and see him next to them, just where he should be.

“Oh, Dogg,” shouts Vova.

“Dogg, we scored,” shouts Volodia.

“Great,” says Dogg and smiles for what is the first time in the last three days.

*19.50–08.00*

Vova and Volodia are afraid to show their IDs and therefore are not allowed to approach Dogg, who is being hospitalized; they explain that they're friends, even relatives, distant but relatives all the same, but are told that they should be ashamed to admit that Dogg is a relative and he is placed—drunk and sleepy—on a stretcher and then quickly pushed into the ambulance, for some reason they all think Dogg is injured and not drunk, this saves him, he's not killed on the spot, as required by the instruction manual of sergeants, officers, and cadets when they are called upon heroically to defend sports complexes, places of mass relaxation for the laboring class during soccer games, political meetings, and other satanic rituals of the sporting-instructional type. Some sergeant with a bleeding heart even comes up to the driver of the ambulance, writes down his name and station number, leaves him his own office telephone number and orders him to immediately

rush the badly injured Dogg to hospital, and tomorrow, if there's nothing serious, to bring his patched-up body to them in the district police station for further laboratory tests, there they will establish what kind of Gagarin this is who has fallen out of the fucking sky onto their heads. The driver all but salutes, well, you know what I mean, and the ambulance disappears behind the stadium's green gates, its sirens scattering wet supporters in whose cheerful whirlpool Vova and Volodia disappear—victories require congregations and a joyful collective mass, toasts, and harmonious choral singing. It's only defeats, bitter personal defeats, that require nothing more than drunken medics and respiratory equipment that doesn't work, or, more accurately, works but no one knows how.

By morning Dogg has barfed all over the bedsheets he was wrapped up in and elicits a reaction of strong disgust from the medical staff. The nurses on duty attempt to telephone somewhere, to find those distant relatives who wanted to take this trash back at the stadium, but no one knows the telephone number, the only document they find on Dogg is a veteran's ID card in the name of Vira Naumivna Pavlova, everyone examines this document—ragged and burned around the edges—but Dogg, any way you look at it, doesn't resemble Vira Naumivna Pavlova, they also look in the files just in case and discover with astonishment that, according to their records, this same Vira Naumivna passed away three and a half years ago, but things like this occur with their files, says the senior nurse on duty, she refuses wholly to believe that this is not Vira Naumivna who is before her but some unidentified scum, so in the morning they call out the ambulance driver, who celebrated the end of his shift by boozing all night, at first he doesn't understand about Dogg, and says that he never picked up a Vira Naumivna at the stadium yesterday, swears that he is married and that he and his wife get on fine, they even

have sex sometimes when he isn't on duty, but, then, in the end he understands what they are talking about and gives the nurses the sergeant's phone number, the one who was interested in Dogg's fate. The nurses rush to telephone the sergeant, saying, as it were, we have a problem, comrade sergeant, there's a piece of trash lying here covered in barf; who do you say is there? asks the sergeant with an early morning zest in his voice and begins immediately to note something down, I am taking notes, he says: co-ver-ed-in-barf, and then what? worse than just covered in barf, say the nurses, he doesn't have a passport, yes-yes-yes, replies the sergeant, not so fast: worse-than-co-ver-ed-in, listen, he suddenly asks, it's not my job, is it? maybe he has suffered a concussion? no—say the nurses—he doesn't have a concussion, or a brain, he's some kind of deserter with someone else's documents, ah-hah, rejoices the sergeant, yes, with someone else's documents and also he has barfed all over everything here—the nurses repeat, unable to calm down, well okay, says the sergeant, drag him over here to us, but quickly, my shift ends at nine, and my partner likely won't have anything to do with him—he has high blood pressure. Of course, say the nurses, high blood pressure.

They immediately call out the driver on duty, take away this rubbish, they say, that has barfed over everything and take him to the district police station, there's something wrong with his documents, uh-huh, says the driver, just like that I'm supposed to drop everything and take this trash somewhere to put his documents in order, maybe even take him to the civil registry office? I don't have anything better to do—in fact he has only just started his shift and really doesn't have anything to do, alright stop making an ass of yourself, says the senior nurse on duty, whose shift is just ending, you'll drive him and come right back, we still have a sea of work, yeah, says the driver, the Black Sea, and

squeamishly taking the weakened and demoralized Dogg under his arm he leads him downstairs, opens the emergency vehicle's back doors, come on, he tells Dogg, climb in, sit on the stretcher, or better still lie down, or you'll fall on a turn and break some glass, or cut yourself, or turn over the paint, what paint? asks Dogg, any kind, says the driver, go on, lie down, maybe I should sit? asks Dogg anxiously, don't screw around, says the driver to him and gets behind the wheel. Dogg tries to lie down but immediately feels nauseous and begins to barf—over the stretcher, the walls, some paint, well, you know what I mean. The driver brakes in despair, runs to the back, opens the doors, receives his portion of Dogg's barf, and throws the half-cold Dogg onto Kharkiv's early-morning asphalt, and cursing everything in the world he returns to the hospital, where no one in particular, to be absolutely honest, is waiting for him.

## INTRODUCTION NO. 2

9.00

"You know, the worst is that I didn't know there were two of them. One was on the balcony."

"So?"

"So, I entered and she's there alone. I didn't know, you see? And she's lying almost totally naked, next to some panties and bras."

"What, several bras?"

"No, just various sorts of underwear."

"What do you mean?"

"Various colors, you know?"

"I don't even want to talk about it."

"That's my point. I don't like underwear in general. Women's underwear, that is."

"Well, sure."

"In short, I see that she's pissed, and start taking off my own clothes. I didn't know they'd been at it since that morning, you know, first swallowed some junk, then chased it down with vodka, just imagine? Drunken bitches. And I'm standing there with an erection."

"Amazing."

"And then the bitch, the second one, comes in from the balcony. And of course gets frightened."

"Naturally..."

"The one in the room is okay, she's used to it, probably."

"To what?"



"To me. She's already seen me like that, you know, with an erection."

"Unbelievable."

"That's what I'm saying. But the other, the one on the balcony, is completely soused, you see, they'd been drinking since morning, the bitches. You get the picture?"

"Yeah, broads. I have a neighbor. He goes out and buys two liters of vodka every morning."

"Two liters?"

"Seriously."

"I feel bad just thinking about it."

"I ask him: man, why the fuck do you need two liters? You won't be able to drink it all. And you know what he says?"

"What?"

"After I finish the first bottle, I'm afraid to go out anywhere. But I still want to drink, I can't stop myself."

"Seriously?"

"What the hell is he afraid of?"

"Well, I don't know, he's terrified. He starts to get this terror after drinking vodka. But he still wants to drink. So he takes two liters right away. Sits and gets pickled."

"Hang on, he downs one container then the second—hell, he finishes drinking it all. Then what?"

"What do you mean, then what?"

"He still wants to drink?"

"Yeah."

"But he's afraid to go out?"

"No, no way, they have this system, you see: when he finishes off two liters—"

"Two liters!"

"—right, two liters—some switch gets flipped and he's not afraid anymore."

"Seriously?"

"I saw it myself."

"Well, how does he feel?"

"What do you mean?"

"How does he feel if he's not afraid?"

"He doesn't give a damn."

"And so then what?"

"And he takes off for more vodka. He's stumbling, but off he goes."

"Yeah..."

"To get more."

"And you say—an erection."

"What erection?"

"You were saying—an erection."

"Well, yes, an erection."

"And then what?"

"Nothing. I'm standing there with my erection."

"Unbelievable..."

"And then?"

"Then this drunken bitch walks in off the balcony, can you imagine?"

"I can't imagine it."

"Well, she sees me, and, you know, thinks—who is this moron, and why is he just standing there?"

"What's standing?"

"Standing, she says to herself. She's thinking: probably a neighbor come to get laid. And so she grabs an empty champagne bottle and fires it into my skull."

"And you?"

"Well, I lost consciousness. I fell down, that is, all covered in blood. And this drunken bitch, just image, runs up to the other one and starts to wake her, get up,

she says, we have to tie him up—meaning me. She gets up and on top of everything they take the bedsheets and tie up my arms and legs.”

“But they knew you, at least the other one did.”

“Yeah, but they were both pissed since morning, the bitches, that’s what I’m saying! They ate some junk, and then drank vodka. How that bitch made it back from the balcony I don’t know. They could barely recognize one another.”

“And then?”

“So they tie me up and drag me to the bath, throw me in, and go to sleep.”

“Yeah—”

“And so in the morning one of them, the one who came from the balcony, naturally she has forgotten everything, and makes for the bath to wash. Besides, the beast doesn’t switch the light on but gropes her way in. She climbs into the tub, and there I am...”

“Vodka, you know, it jams a woman’s signals, they become like fish.”

“I once met a ticket controller in a streetcar, she was going around with her ticket punch.”

“Don’t bullshit.”

“What bullshit? Seriously, the broad was going about completely drunk, I give her my ticket and she pulls out a punch from her pocket, can you imagine?”

“Must be cool to have your own ticket validator.”

“Exactly.”

“Yeah...”

“I tried to rip one out of a streetcar once. I was traveling at night, there was no one else, so I start to break it off, cut my hand open, can you believe it, blood’s flowing everywhere, and then the controllers come in.”

“Bitches.”

"They went straight for me, I was basically the only passenger, there was no one else. Why the hell are you breaking the validator?"

"And what did you say?"

"Me? I said I'm not breaking anything, I wanted to punch my ticket and your fucking machine chewed up my hand. Here, look, I say."

"Cool."

"Yeah..."

Cocoa, sluggish and sweaty, feels pretty good in this company. The little room in which they sit is full of smoke and smells of coffee, there are not enough cups for everyone, they pass the first coffee around, then the second, transferring the cup from hand to hand, then they pass around pieces of white bread, after an hour spent in the room their clothes and hair and they themselves smell of tobacco and bread, even more of bread. Cocoa wipes the sweat off his brow with his sleeve, what's with you, Cocoa, they all laugh, that's your best suit, no trouble, Cocoa blushes, don't worry, I'll wash it, well yeah, they continue to laugh, you've promised to do that for over a year, take some bread, Cocoa takes some fresh white bread from the hands of his friends and continues to listen to the stories, he'd gladly spend all his time with them, he feels good with them, they share their bread and cigarettes with him, and the main thing is no one drives him away. Try in our day to find a group ready to put up for a few days with you and your sand-colored suit that hasn't been washed in over a year, or maybe two.

Cocoa is a bit too plump for this company, and in his suit he looks terrible, but he likes it—I don't even know where they sell that kind. Anyway, Cocoa found it somewhere, considers it stylish, he's up on such things, he's practically the only one of my acquaintances who goes to the hairdresser, uses some kind of gay gel, even shaves from time to time though this doesn't help. Six of





## Serhiy Zhadan

Born in 1974, Serhiy Zhadan is Ukraine's celebrated novelist, poet, essayist and translator. His own works have been translated into many European languages.

In 2008 the Russian translation of his novel *Anarchy in the UKR* gets shortlisted by the National Bestseller Prize in Russia.

Zhadan writes about his generation and the epoch he is living in, he is its witness and he neither cares about the weight of literary authority over him, nor about the impression his words might have on another; Serhiy Zhadan simply creates.



In 1993, tragic turbulence takes over Ukraine in the post-communist spin-off. As if in somnambulism, Soviet war veterans and upstart businessmen listen to an American preacher of whose type there were plenty at the time in the post-Soviet territory. In Kharkiv, the young communist headquarters is now an advertising agency, and a youth radio station brings Western music, with Depeche Mode in the lead, into homes of ordinary people.

In the middle of this craze three friends, an anti-Semitic Jew Dogg Pavlov, an unfortunate entrepreneur Vasia the Communist and the narrator Zhadan, nineteen years of age and unemployed, seek to find their old pal Sasha Carburetor to tell him that his step-father shot himself dead. Characters confront elements of their reality, and, tainted with traumatic survival fever, embark on a sad, dramatic and a bit grotesque adventure.

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