



EVERYDAY STORIES

told by Mima Mihajlović, an observer with a wide range of interests Translated from the Bosnian by Filip Paštrović and Žana Arnautović Edited by Maria Badanova and Ivanka Čizmić Illustrations by Elvis Dolić/Doliccommics © 2021, Mima Mihajlović Afterword © 2021, Medina Džanbegović Publishers Maxim Hodak & Max Mendor Interior design by Max Mendor

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Translated from the Bosnian by Filip Paštrović and Žana Arnautović

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"Boredom is endless," Titoslav thought and lit a third cigarette.

It should have been the last one of the day, since it was the thousandth time he had "definitely" stopped smoking.

He was sitting in his favorite café, trying to figure out what the hooknosed moron was telling the caked-up blonde, whose face wasn't visible under the three tons of makeup, which, of course, didn't match her wardrobe.

"Those women are really silly," he thought. "They probably get up at 5 a.m. to put all that makeup on so that at 7 a.m. they are battle-ready."

He imagined how that blonde looked in the morning when she woke up. She would certainly have black circles under her eyes because she took the makeup off too quickly.

Can you imagine the shock of waking up next to a zombie after you went to bed with a sex-bomb (thought hook-nose)?

Outside it started raining. What bullshit! His jeans would get dirty up to his ass again, and he had just taken them off the drying rack this morning. What is that God thinking?! Probably has a bladder infection!

"I hate rain!" he said out loud. He probably wouldn't have noticed it unless the blonde and hook-nose had turned around and looked at him questionably. Why did they have to sit at this table?! Couldn't they have barged onto some other table? When he looked around and saw that all of the tables were taken, he thought they should have gone somewhere else to chirp.



Salisfaction



The music was dreadful. The waiter, who happened to be a minor, was playing some mega-turbo-super cocktail songs which he was obviously enjoying. How he had just slammed the coffee on the table! To him! Ah, he is new, so he still doesn't know.

Ah, Sejo, a businessman, employs all kind of brats. But fuck that! Sejo is the only one from the whole generation who has made any real money. But also a lot of enemies. Ah, Sejo is a good guy, he does what he does best. School was never his thing anyway. He was always talking about how he would become the Boss. And he made his dream come true.

He used to turn his hand to singing, as well. Their first school band wasn't bad. They could have made something of it if Sejo hadn't snatched Melita, Muha's girlfriend, while he was in the army.

Melita got her cherry popped at Sejo's weekend house, while the January snow was falling. The rest of the gang, who were dead drunk, were making a snowman in front of the weekend house. And Muha, freezing on guard duty in some shithole, was daydreaming how he would write a ballad for Melita once he came home. Better than Brega's "Lullaby."

No one could drink on the tab in Sejo's bar, only Titoslav was allowed to, who knows why. Sejo probably knew that he couldn't be at war with the whole world, and Tisi was some sort of connection to the past, to those times when everybody had the same dreams, replaying "Satisfaction" for the millionth time and arguing who the better poet was, Jimmy or Bob. There, just when he thought his life wandering was over, when, fuck, his little chick dumped him.

Girls are cool until they turn eighteen. After that, they think too much. They don't unreservedly suck up your nebulous story, they don't admire your sexy ass anymore, and they don't find it great that you are a little bit older.

It's okay as long as it ends that way. But if they realize they're "nice girls" who are some class above you, they can't allow that, all the family members from the intermediate to extended family start asking:

"Who is that hippie? Sanja, darling, is he using drugs?"

You, of course, spit on that small town jabber, but your little girl has already cracked under the pressure. Chicks from your generation are quite a problem, too! They are completely in a mindset that if they gave you pussy, marriage is just around the corner, and the ones that are a bit more liberal don't want to grope in the parks anymore. They want a guy with a car who shops in Trieste or at least an empty place where you could bang properly.

Well, but that's Sejo's area. Although his wife keeps him on a short leash, so if he does snatch something on the side, it's in secret.

He really thought he had everything under control. He thought the girl had really snapped, and when the end of school came and she passed the entrance exam for the college of dentistry in a far-away town, she told him in a sorrowful voice that it would be best if they broke up because she didn't believe in long-distance love.

Ah, bullshit, love! A province girl got hooked on the big city, student life, new people, and the new gig! And now what?! There were fewer and fewer chicks (at least the ones that got turned on by hollow philosophical masturbation and ideal horoscope matches), and Tisi was 28 years old and had a good working record as a train dispatcher. And an eternal boy...

||

T. abruptly got out of bed, drenched in sweat. It took him a couple of seconds to come to his senses and look at the clock. Four o'clock in the morning.

This really was a fucking nightmare!

He had dreamt that guards in a madhouse were choking him in front of a mirror, and he couldn't erase the image from his consciousness, the image of his deformed face.

"Baby, stop playing with me! I know really well what you actually want!" "Leave me alone, you drunk idiot, you are disgusting!"

Music raised him from the dead for the millionth time.

Who gave a crap if the boss had met a friend from the past, Leila was late for the bus, Predo was back on heroin again, and mom had cancer. He wasn't even thinking of the mirror anymore.

Only Dandy was still harassing him. Nothing helped against him. Not even flipping movies, music, nor alcohol, nor sedatives.

Hopefully it won't go sideways again. Oh God! Again with the gibberish! He is not up for it! He is too alive! Boban told him long ago that he is not what he used to be. The only thing that was keeping him in his decadent deal was his hair. Although it cracked up halfway up the head (especially in the



back), still, there were no signals of baldness, even though he would lose 75 hairs after every washing (he counted them). And for that chick, he washed it twice a week. God, where had she taken him?! He hated her! Because of her nose. He hated her!

Dandy again. Like a scarecrow behind the curtains with the same story all the time:

- It is not the one who knows the truth and speaks it that is right, but the one who holds his lie for the truth! (M.P. writer)

- Yuck! The Arts Academy in Sarajevo is not as clean as it seems. It washes its hair once a month. Think how many hairs fall off then!

- Born to be wild! (4 ever)

IV

"Snap those fingers, snap 'em! If you continue like that, in a month you will end up without them. Who do you think you are?"

"A moron in a straightjacket with his hands free."

"You're diluted. You don't have the balls for it. You are a zero, man!"

"Dandy, fuck off! You know, just as I do, who is right here. Stay here, day in, day out, but you still remain a ghost, and I don't believe in ghosts."

"T., you are completely out of it. Weaker by the minute, though I have time. I'm waiting for you..."

The rain had finally stopped, so he could be on his way. It got colder, so he zipped up all the way. He bought cigarettes at Auntie Mary's corner shop and walked home. In his head there was a buzzing, he was shaking, and he put his cold hands into his pockets. At the bottom of his left pocket, he felt a forgotten coin from somewhere and automatically started flicking it through his fingers. He concentrated on that small, yellow coin. And just then, he encountered his high school teacher. So, like any other well-trained dog, he pulled his hands out of his pockets to greet her.

She went on like a wound up toy! About how terribly sorry she was that he didn't go to college. How he'd killed it in physics class, how she'd never had a student like him, and some other crap. It's like she lives in some stupid American movie. His dad is not a "Rockefeller"! His dad is like any other "father" in this fucking city, a failed drunk with failed ideas.

She took forever to leave, damned old bag.

The wind was blowing so intensely that he thought his ears would fall off. Ah, who cares about the ears, save the eyes, they are still the most important.

The morning decides the entire day.

Which means the day will be crappy. It's the way it is. The more you sleep, the sleepier you become.

You wake up in the morning with a swollen head, with a primordial thirst, and a burned up throat. And there is a buzzing in your brain:

Just let me get to the bathroom in time, so I don't piss myself.

"I should go somewhere... It got too stuffy in here. The air is so heavy that one can't take it anymore. And where on Earth should I go?! And with whom? Ah, she really got rid of me!"

Titoslav was one of those men who didn't care who they hit on. Wherever he found himself, he was constantly in between younger girls, searching for some undiscovered love of his life. He would pull every trick in the book and some killer smile or some move, and by some miracle, women loved him. But only for the first month. Tisi was completely and hopelessly trapped in the past, and he was amazed by the ones who weren't. He was hopelessly falling in love, enjoying his masochistic Goethe's acts on a daily basis. It was enough that a girl looked at him with a bit of interest, and he was done.

But Dandy spoke again:

"T., you are a sick person. No, you were born sick. Your mother carried you in her womb all mangy and rotten already. That's why she became ugly during her pregnancy. As if she was, even then, carrying a cancer cell in her body, not you! T., you are like the scabies, and whatever you touch, you cover that in scabs. You were born to be eaten by maggots! And for them to start doing that ahead of time, around your thirties. When everyone is at the peak of their life, you are already dead. You're dead! And such a pathetic masochist like you actually wants that."

Titoslav jerked as if somebody had given him an evil eye. But he said nothing. No, in five seconds he was already screaming, as if he was being butchered!

No, he just looked speechlessly into an imaginary dot.

No, cramping up from pain and screaming.

No! Still looking at the dot.

No, no! Screaming and cramping up inside of himself, but in reality, he was quiet and speechlessly looking into the same imaginary dot.

V

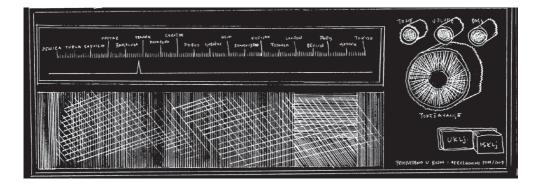
Why don't humans, on the day of their birth, have their fate written on the sky?

Because God made sure that the Earth has loafers and failed philosophy students. For Tisi, it was clear from the beginning. But like Dandy explained it nicely, a straightjacket with your hands free is a nice thought, and as each nice thought, it was practically unfeasible.

Titoslav's obsession was making flowers out of paper. He was very conscientious in that useless ritual, even managing to force the people around him, even if they didn't join him, to at least stare blindly at that stupid ceremony. Those flowers most often ended up in a flowerpot and often under the table.

They were stripping down slowly, in the rhythm of the music. They had put down the green blinds, so they didn't have to look at each other. Their intercourse was based on touches, not stares. There, another controversy! Although the eyes are the most important part of a person, with her, they were not needed. Stares brought down the general mood. Therefore, they were stripping in the rhythm of the music. They didn't see each other, nor were they touching, each were in their own corner; so that was pretty much it. Coming closer was not slow, like the stripping (which, to put it lightly, was full of fear), because the mood had reached a peak level of stress.

The binding was almost painful. It usually ended with her blubbering, that came from the bottom of her guts, which was followed by her getting cold feet. He would then put them in between his, and they would stay like that for a couple of minutes. In those moments, when it was all said and done, T. had no idea what to say. That was his tiny handicap in a way, because he knew chicks loved big words.





VI. The Rabbit Hunt

The last few days Titoslav had done a lot of running in the rain, because, as usual, he was late for work. The boss was infuriated! He would usually throw car keys at him, or the glasses pouch. And he used to be a lot worse! For example, it's New Year's Eve – why should you be hungover at work, when you can just stay at home in bed? He doesn't give a damn about all the trains of this world. Plus, his train left a long time ago. You simply lie in bed, pull the blanket up to your chin, and enjoy.

T. hated Sundays. It didn't matter if it was sunny or not. Although he was done with school a long time ago, he still had the feeling (like an atavism) of the hollow Sunday because of fucking Monday. In fact, Sunday was a silent capitulation of freedom. He was usually sitting at home the whole day, listening to music, putting together flowers made out of paper, pretending he didn't hear his dad, throwing up in the bathroom the whole morning, and mom coincidentally making a racket with the plates.

All the songs and albums that used to put him in a certain mood had no effect anymore, and there wasn't a place to get new ones. T. was absolutely ruthless when it came to newspapers. Days were passing, and he could feel his creativity slowly fading.

About the Author

Mima Mihajlović was born in 1974 in Kollbelmoor, Germany. Until she was eighteen, she lived in Zenica, Yugoslavia. Since 1992 and during the war in her homeland, she moved forcibly and not forcibly twenty-three times around the countries of the former Yugoslavia and the Netherlands. Since 2000 Mima has been living and working in Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. *Everyday Stories* is Mima's first book. In addition to writing, Mima is involved in singing, songwriting, vintage hairstyles, and human rights.

MEBET

by Alexander Grigorenko



Mebet concerns a man of the taiga, a hunter, in a moving narrative that blends ethnographic detail, indigenous mythology, and the snowy landscapes of the Arctic. The protagonist is a Nenets, a member of one of the peoples who call far northern Russia home. Dubbed "The Gods' Favorite" for his seeming imperviousness to harm or grief, Mebet earns the envy and derision of his fellow tribesmen. He lives that carefree and blessed life until his old age, when one day a supernatural messenger arrives to lead him to where the realms of the living and the dead meet. Now the Gods' Favorite must confront the price to be paid for his elevated position, and a series of dread trials that lie in store.

Called a dark and terrifying fantasy and the Nenets *Lord of the Rings* by Russian writer and journalist Sergey Kuznetsov, Grigorenko's *Mebet* is a powerful story about humanity, personal fate, and responsibility. Leading Russian literary critic Galina Yuzefovich welcomed *Mebet* as a true epic for the Nenets, a book that is profound, thrilling and vibrant. Whether the book will earn that lofty place within Nenets culture remains to be seen, but the very publication of the book marks a watershed event.

I Want a Baby and Other Plays

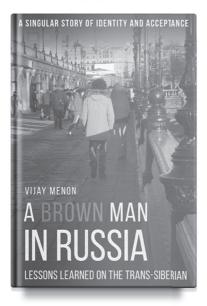
by Sergei Tretyakov



When Sergei Tretyakov's ground-breaking play, *I Want a Baby*, was banned by Stalin's censor in 1927, it was a signal that the radical and innovative theatre of the early Soviet years was to be brought to an end. A glittering, unblinking exploration of the realities of post-revolutionary Soviet life, *I Want a Baby* marks a high point in modernist experimental drama.

Tretyakov's plays are notable for their formal originality and their revolutionary content. *The World Upside Down*, which was staged by Vsevolod Meyerhold in 1923, concerns a failed agrarian revolution. *A Wise Man*, originally directed by the great film director and Tretyakov's friend, Sergei Eisenstein, is a clown show set in the Paris of the émigré White Russians. *Are You Listening, Moscow?!* and *Gas Masks* are 'agit-melodramas', fierce, fast-moving and edgy...

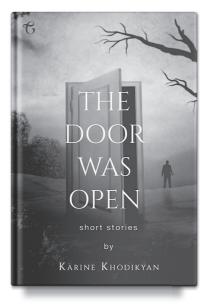
A Brown Man in Russia Lessons Learned on the Trans-Siberian by Vijay Menon



A Brown Man in Russia describes the fantastical travels of a young, colored American traveler as he backpacks across Russia in the middle of winter via the Trans-Siberian. The book is a hybrid between the curmudgeonly travelogues of Paul Theroux and the philosophical works of Robert Pirsig. Styled in the vein of Hofstadter, the author lays out a series of absurd, but true stories followed by a deeper rumination on what they mean and why they matter. Each chapter presents a vivid anecdote from the perspective of the fumbling traveler and concludes with a deeper lesson to be gleaned. For those who recognize the discordant nature of our world in a time ripe for demagoguery and for those who want to make it better, the book is an all too welcome antidote. It explores the current global climate of despair over differences and outputs a very different message - one of hope and shared understanding. At times surreal, at times inappropriate, at times hilarious, and at times deeply human, A Brown Man in Russia is a reminder to those who feel marginalized, hopeless, or endlessly divided that harmony is achievable even in the most unlikely of places.

The Door was Open

by Karine Khodikyan



The short fiction of Karine Khodikyan can be described as intellectual fiction for women. These short stories with a "mystical touch" tell stories about women – young and old, happy and sad; even when the protagonist is not a woman, the story will immerse you into the life of a woman, revealing her role in anything and everything.

This book was published with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia under the "Armenian Literature in Translation" Program.

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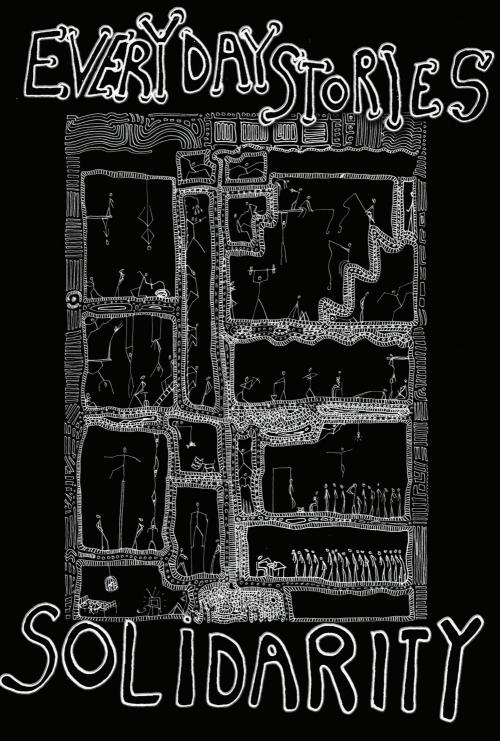
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