



CRNOGORSKO NARODNO POZORIŠTE  
MONTENEGRIN NATIONAL THEATRE

*Montenegrin National Theatre prize for  
Best New Montenegrin Play of 2019*

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*The Sleepers*

*translated by Paula Gordon*



This play is a work of fiction, inspired by true events. Some names in the English translation have been changed to avoid the attribution of fictional acts, utterances, thoughts and intentions to living persons. In some cases, multiple people have been combined into a composite character.

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*If we are insensitive to the world, the world ceases to exist for us.*

**Bruno Bettelheim,**

*The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*

*I feel so well here that I do not want to think about what will be. I am living in a little old farmhouse, completely alone, in a wild, beautiful area known as the “burnt sea,” and I sometimes wish I never had to return to “Europe.”*

**Ingeborg Bachmann,**

from the island of Ischia, in a letter to Paul Celan (Ingeborg Bachman and Paul Celan, *Correspondence*, tr. Wieland Hoban, New York: Seagull Books, 2019)

## 0. PROLOGUE

### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*This play once resembled a fairytale. That's not "once" as in a fairytale beginning "once upon a time"—in fact, that "once" wasn't at all like a fairytale, or even all that long ago, but simply earlier, "at one point," when the title of this play was "Sleeping Beautiful." The previous title would have brought to mind a different fairytale, one that does start with the standard fairytale phrase "Once upon a time" and continues: "there lived a king and a queen, who lacked but one thing on earth to make them entirely happy: 'Oh, if only we had a child,' they said." If only, if only...*

*They wished for a child, but no child came. The king and the queen continued wishing, and waited and waited for a very long time. What if their wish had remained forever unfulfilled, like the wish that a girl be a boy remains forever unfulfilled—because a girl is not a boy and never will be. But in the fairytale of Sleeping Beauty, something quite different happened: The king and the queen gave birth to a child, and there's not a shred of evidence to indicate that the sex of the child was important.*

*Probably it wasn't important to them, but what if that fairytale had not taken place "once upon a time" but "now," and what if it had not taken place "in a distant land" but "right here"? That story, instead of being a fairytale called "Sleeping Beauty," might instead have been a play called "Sleeping Beautiful"—a play in which the queen discovers the sex of the child growing in her belly, quite unexpectedly, maybe from a little birdie. Certainly not from one of those illegal tests for discovering the sex of a fetus in early pregnancy, as might have been the case had the play been set in the here and now. In that case, you would never have believed the*

*fairytale ending, because, as you are probably aware, any story concerning an unwanted baby girl in Montenegro is less likely to end happily ever after and more likely to end in a bloodbath. So bloody, in fact, that these Stage Directions for the Apathetic would be unable to escape being bloodied themselves and would, in keeping with their name, have had to play a different role, most likely the role of the victim.*

*But these stage directions are not the victim, neither are they bloody—they are Stage Directions for the Apathetic. And this is not a fairytale, but a play. And not a play about selective abortions. That's not the topic because those take place here and now, and for that reason remain only a digression in these overly long Stage Directions for the Apathetic, so long that it wouldn't be surprising if some of you simply skipped over them, considering that stage directions, no matter their length, generally remain hidden from the eyes and ears of the audience.*

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*But in spite of such customary practice, these stage directions will be read, even if they themselves do not understand why so much time and space is needed to explain themselves to those who expect stage directions to be clear and concise, short and sweet, without beating around the bush, things these stage directions simply cannot seem to pull off. They go on and on despite being conscious of the risk that because of the detail, someone will not only not read them but will cross them out, cancel them, delete them and challenge their right to life on the stage. Which, okay, would not be anything unexpected for a set of stage directions, because stage directions usually don't have a right to life on the stage, and especially if they take away so much time and space from the dialogue, with which they were never on equal footing, because it is the dialogue that should come to life on the stage, not the stage directions. The role of stage directions is to support the dialogue. As long as they're supportive, they can be seen, but they are not to be heard. And that's that. The life of a typical set of stage directions is not a fairytale, and neither is this sleepily titled play with stage directions whose rather noncommittal name is a result of their struggle for emancipation. Their struggle*

*was long and exhausting, but it was worth it. They survived, even though they will not be memorized the way dialogue typically is—these Stage Directions for the Apathetic don't have such high expectations, because the status they fought for so zealously comes as a complete surprise for the majority of the dialogue. So unexpected, in fact, that the dialogue is in shock and has yet to utter a single word.*

## 1. SLOWING OF BRAIN ACTIVITY

*Duration: 10 to 25 minutes*

### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Somewhere far away from you, a four-figure-kilometer's distance away, in the kingdom of Volvo, the kingdom of prosperity, the kingdom of the furniture manufacturing giant IKEA—which doesn't have any stores in Montenegro but perhaps will in the future—in the kingdom by the name of Sweden, a drama is taking place that will reach you, sitting in the theater at 18 Stanka Dragojevića Street, only as voices. The voices travel at a speed of four thousand seven hundred meters per second, which corresponds to the speed of sound as it passes through copper, the same type of copper that travels somewhat more slowly than the speed of sound, but still too fast for anyone to react in time to stop it from being stolen from the roof over your heads.*

*Arriving at this very same address, enclosed in three separate envelopes, were these Stage Directions for the Apathetic, which had already crossed many borders, and if you are hearing them now, it means that they have also crossed the final border—the one between you and the stage, the boundary that in the theater is called the fourth wall, across which this evening, at the speed of sound, will travel the voices of the dramatis personae, which in fact belong to dreaming individuals portraying other individuals with the following names:*

**Georgi**

**Savl**

**Hippolyta Hultencrantz a.k.a. Doctor H.**

**Bo Bodensern a.k.a. Doctor B.**

**Husband of Doctor H.**

**Laszlo Toth**

**He** who gave this play its name

**She** who gave this play its voices

*The voices reach you from the stage, not from the radio, and that's important because the genre of radio play is somewhat passé and this play must not be passé—it aspires to be as au courant as necessary to win the competition for best domestic contemporary drama. It will be rough going for sure, and not only because, as you've already heard, this is a play that brings to mind a fairytale and it takes place in far-away Sweden.*

*Still, those who think that this is a Swedish play have another think coming. It's not Swedish, primarily due to the fact that not all the characters in this play are Swedish citizens. Some can't claim citizenship to any country at all, while He and She are Montenegrin citizens, which is important because that means that this text definitely fulfills at least one of the terms of the competition, even if it is still questionable how this play with a sleepy title plans to be "engaged." Because a domestic contemporary drama, to be the best, must play an engaged role... and not a sleepy role... in domestic current events. Couldn't it at least have a different title?*

**HE**

I tried to find a compromise between the real events described in the news article about the children who fell into a deep sleep...

**SHE**

Which you sent me...

**HE**

... and my personal reality, which at the moment is shaped by the following: (1) my debt to the lawyer who's helping me fight for permission to stay in Germany and for the return of my confiscated passport; (2) my debt to the library which, after two and a half years of not being able to find me, finally found me and sent a demand letter ordering me to pay my fine which has grown to 269 euros; (3) health insurance and debts to friends; and (4) the final sequence of Lars von Trier's film *Zentropa* in which the narrator intones, "You are in a train, in Germany. Now the train is sinking. You will drown. On the count of ten, you will be dead."

**SHE**

Which sounds totally unbelievable to me. As unbelievable as the premise of the article you sent, "The Trauma of Facing Deportation," which I'm reading now, far from you in Germany, and far from Sweden, and far from Montenegro, and also far from thoughts about residency permits, which also shape my reality, but which I choose to ignore. That is, I'm removed from my own reality reading this article and counting the days until our next in-person meeting...

**HE**

"One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine."

**SHE**

... which is not going to happen in the course of writing this play...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*... due to bureaucratic complications. So it seems, after all, that this play will not be about current domestic affairs, and not only because He and She are far away from you and also from each other, but also, and primarily, because Georgi is far away, living in a far-away kingdom by the name of Sweden. Ever since he can remember, Georgi has lived in Sweden, and he thinks of himself as a Swede. Sweden thinks differently. Sweden has decided to return Georgi to Russia, because Georgi's parents are not Swedes. They are Russians. Russians from Russia.*

**GEORGI**

You might as well say that my parents are from Pluto. Russia or the planet Pluto... they sound the same to me, identical, scary, unknown, foreign, far away, really far away. In the letter that was sent to our home address, it says that on the 6th of August I'll be sent back to Russia. When I think about Russia, I think about the fact that its surface is pretty much the same as the surface of the dwarf planet Pluto. I learned that in geography class... in Sweden.

### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*These stage directions, like you, cannot imagine what this means exactly. Georgi will be expelled not only from Sweden, but from his own life. That sounds like, well, what else can we say... like when you are speechless because your empathy toward Georgi lasts just as long as it takes sound to catch up to image, and not just any image, but the one documenting a dead Syrian child whose body has washed up from the sea on the beach at Bodrum, Turkey.*

### **GEORGI**

Before you toss me into one of the twelve deep blue seas or into one of the three blue oceans one must cross before arriving in Russia, about which, aside from trivia learned in geography class, I know nothing, I will hover on the border between life and death, falling into a deep sleep from which no one will be able to wake me.

### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*You will fall such that at first glance, your sleep will resemble the sleep from the fairytale Sleeping Beauty, which begins with the arrival of "her," she who fulfilled the wish of the king and queen, the long-awaited child. Although she who granted the wish might have been a good fairy, "she" was not, just as "she" was not a golden fish, even though she appeared from the water... not from the waters that drowned the Syrian child, nor from the waters of one of the twelve seas or three oceans into whose blue depths Georgi might be tossed upon his return to the planet Pluto... but instead from ordinary bathwater in the tub in which the queen was bathing.*

*Then, once upon a time, in the real fairytale, out of the water jumped a frog who whispered to the queen that in ten months and a day she would give birth to a little girl.*

### **SHE**

Maybe it's because of that frog, but for the longest time I'm thinking that the article you sent me is about a girl and not

about a boy. I'm thinking that even though the article very clearly states that Georgi is a boy, and the very boy around whom this drama revolves... a real-life drama in which there are no fairytale arrivals, not yours, not a frog's.

#### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*A fairytale frog, which is nevertheless somewhat different from a regular real-life frog, because the fairytale kind appears only where it seems certain that something will soon...*

#### **SHE**

So why is it that when I read the article, I don't remember the frog that announces the coming of a new life?

#### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Because pretty much nobody remembers that frog, because Sleeping Beauty is not a fairytale about a frog, but about a girl a queen gave birth to after a frog's prognostication. About a girl upon whom an evil spell was cast by the thirteenth witch, the one who was not invited to the girl's baptism because there were only twelve golden bowls in the royal cupboard, so she cast a spell that could not be undone.*

*After that, the only thing the other twelve witches could do was to water down the spell of death cast by the thirteenth witch with a different spell, the well-known spell about the deep sleep the girl would fall into on her sixteenth birthday. She would sleep for the next one hundred years, in that very castle. And she would not be the only one, the entire kingdom would fall asleep as well, that far-away anonymous kingdom, which certainly in no way resembles Sweden. Because at the moment Georgi closes his eyes and falls asleep, the kingdom by the name of Sweden carries on living its dream with its eyes wide open. It stays awake, even though these stage directions, but only for the sake of make-believe, like to imagine what would happen if after Georgi, the entire kingdom of Sweden fell asleep as well. At that moment the production of IKEA furniture would completely stop, which would put all your dreams of an IKEA store opening in Montenegro into suspended animation.*

*And not only that, but production of Volvo automobiles would stop as well, and all other products, and not only manufacturing, but the bureaucracy would freeze mid-procedure, all important bilateral meetings would be interrupted mid-sentence, as would the partially delivered speeches of parliamentarians, whose words would remain frozen on their lips while they slept quietly and without any sudden movements, like the deep sleep of the private lives of all the residents of the kingdom.*

*That's pretty much what it would look like if the kingdom of the fairytale were called Sweden, and if the main character in the fairytale were a boy sleeping in the psychiatric ward of the children's hospital, and not a girl sleeping in a fairytale castle waiting one hundred years for her awakening. But that's not what happened.*

## 2. FALLING ASLEEP or BLEEDING

*Duration: 20 minutes*

### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Immediately before reading the letter announcing the deportation decision, Georgi, Savl and their parents are sitting in the kitchen.*

*All kitchens, no matter how typical they appear, differ substantially in some essential detail, and that difference dooms every attempt at description, resulting in stage directions declaring that the scene takes place in the general and unspecific "Kitchen."*

*These Stage Directions for the Apathetic, despite their inability to describe with specificity the unique qualities of the space in which, in just a few moments, the prognostication will occur, are nevertheless more appropriate than all other stage directions that would attempt unsuccessfully to make the unimaginable kitchen even more unimaginable by filling it with elements such as a table, chairs, stove, pots, pans, lids, and plates, which are all accounted for and in their place, but are not the least bit important.*

*These Stage Directions for the Apathetic do not describe this "Kitchen," in which the family is gathered around a letter with an official seal, and that is because of the tense silence and foreboding that intimates that the Immigration Service letter, which Georgi is reading at this very moment, and which he will shortly translate for his parents, does not have a fairytale ending. Georgi reads, they wait, he translates:*

### **GEORGI**

*"... because the asylum seeker has not produced credible evidence that he would in any way be persecuted upon his*

return to Russia, or that he would suffer life-threatening circumstances as a result..."

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*After reading the letter, which ends with the sentence, "Your application for asylum is denied," Georgi feels a pain. It's not intense, not intolerable, just a passing pang that disappears before even calling attention to itself. Something like the prick of a pin or a thorn, something with an impossibly thin point, so small that the prick remains invisible to Georgi's eye, even though the slowing of his brain activity has already begun.*

**SAVL**

The letter falls from his hands. We watch him.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*They look at him as though waiting for him to continue reading, as if Georgi needs to translate one more sentence. A sentence that Georgi cannot translate, because it is not written anywhere.*

**SAVL**

You don't look strange. You look like... like you've come home from a match where your team has lost.

**GEORGI**

I don't see anyone.

**SAVL**

Because you're looking at the letter on the floor.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And Georgi gets up and turns to the door. After the prick of the invisible pin or thorn, Georgi exits from the kitchen, goes up to the second floor, up the stairs, which we cannot describe as steep or narrow, or in any way similar to the staircase that the princess climbed, after which he will, like the princess, open the door to his room... a door that we can be sure is not in the least like the child-size door whose lock the princess opened easily with a small key*

*before entering... and Georgi will enter and go to his bed upon which he will lie, and only then will there drip two invisible drops of blood, but they are not the same as the drops of blood from the fairytale, because those, unlike Georgi's, are bright red in color.*

**SAVL**

And you fall asleep. Mom and Dad tell me you're probably tired and that it's better I don't bother you. They decide we should let you rest, even though to me you don't look at all tired. You're mad, like I am, but I didn't fall asleep.

**GEORGI**

I'm not mad. I just don't feel like talking. Not in any language. Not with anyone.

**SAVL**

Before he fell asleep he was mad. Mostly at Mom and Dad because they're always asking him to translate...

**GEORGI**

Because even after twelve years they still haven't learned Swedish.

**SAVL**

That's why Dad thought he was tired after the letter, that translating it tired him out.

**HE**

Georgi's father needs to be called out in the stage directions, because it's precisely due to him and his actions that his family decided to leave Russia for Sweden.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*So that's how it is, the father's to blame. As always. Thanks to the father, this play is intertwined with Christianity. Because the father became entangled in Christianity.*

**HE**

Georgi's father is from North Ossetia, a Russian province bordering Georgia. He helped establish a pacifist religious sect that opposed the involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church in state government. He asserts that in 2007, the Russian intelligence service threatened to have him killed if he did not dissolve the sect.

**GEORGI**

My father "did not provide sufficient evidence to show his life would be endangered if he were to return to Russia."

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*In the meantime, for twelve years Georgi and Savl grew up among Swedish kids, unaware of the fact that their lives in Sweden were legally on shaky ground. Unaware of the constant threat that at any moment there might arrive on their doorstep an envelope containing a letter with an official seal. A letter with the power to seal their fate by returning them to a country in which their lives would be endangered.*

**HE**

You have to leave the country.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Of your dreams.*

**SHE**

You don't have much time left.

**SAVL**

Until August 6th.

**GEORGI**

Because our parents aren't Swedes, they're Russians, Russians from Russia, Russians who speak only Russian.

**SAVL**

I'm not going to translate for them anymore, either.

**GEORGI**

Maybe they'll manage to learn Swedish after all this is over.

**SAVL**

All this what?

**GEORGI**

All this that just now started. Going back.

**SAVL**

Going back where?

**GEORGI**

Where we're supposed to go back to. Pluto.

**SAVL**

You mean Russia?

**GEORGI**

Nowhere.

**SAVL**

What does that mean?

**GEORGI**

That I'll be sleeping for a while.

**SAVL**

How long?

**GEORGI**

A hundred years.

**SAVL**

So when you wake up you'll be 114 years old and I'll be 108 years old? What will we do when we're that old?

**GEORGI**

We'll die.

**SAVL**

I don't want to die.

**GEORGI**

Then I'll do it.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Or maybe he won't. Maybe he'll simply continue sleeping. How are they going to send the "sleeper" back where he came from? Will they send his fully electric hospital bed, his infusion stand, his wheelchair and all the other medical equipment, maybe his entire bedroom as well as the IKEA dishes?*

**SAVL**

Your classmates know about the letter. They all feel bad about it. Some even cried when they found out.

**GEORGI**

Who?

**SAVL**

I don't know, I wasn't there, I heard. They sent you a letter of solidarity. They say they want you to come back, that you've always been one of them, that nobody has the right to take you away just like that because...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*It won't make a difference.*

**SHE**

My life is here.

**SAVL**

I'm thinking I should start packing up my stuff. I'll have to pack yours, too...

**GEORGI**

Don't touch my stuff.

**SAVL**

You're not planning to come with us?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Georgi isn't planning anything anymore, because he's insensitive to the world around him. He's also insensitive to the anticipation of his parents who are letting this drama grind out in the stage directions. It appears that no one can wake him.*

**SAVL**

Maybe our neighbor, Mrs. Zapolskaya, can wake him, she's so... boring.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Making an appearance in these stage directions will be the next door neighbor, constant visitor, Russian compatriot and former doctor, Mrs. Zapolskaya, playing the time-honored role of "the neighbor," a character who knows everything about everyone in the neighborhood and is always the first to intuit an impending turn of events.*

**SAVL**

Every day since you fell asleep, she shows up with a new theory.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Mrs. Zapolskaya emphasizes that from the very first day she knew that Georgi sank into a deep sleep because of the prognostication about deportation. And she knew this not because she was a clairvoyant frog, but because two years earlier, the child of another neighbor fell into the same state, and in similar circumstances. Neighbor Zapolskaya will, after providing this insight, disappear from the stage directions, maybe even forever, because she, despite all her theories, cannot definitively describe the sleep-state into which Georgi has fallen.*

**GEORGI**

In which the world around me has disappeared, in which the lines that once marked the borders of the kingdom in which I fell asleep have become coastlines, in which the Kingdoms of Sweden...

**HE**

“Sehr geehrter Herr, ich beabsichtige die Verlängerung Ihrer Aufenthaltserlaubnis abzulehnen und Sie zur Ausreise aus der Bundesrepublik Deutschland aufzufordern.“ Or: “Dear sir, the extension of your residence permit has been denied and you are hereby requested to leave the Federal Republic of Germany.”

**GEORGI**

... Norway, Denmark, Austria, become islands surrounded by nothing.

**HE**

I am trying to avoid it.

**SHE**

Me too. while I wait for the customs agent to return my passport. He took it twenty minutes ago and went to check whether he was right when he told me just now that I don't have the right to enter the country I live in, because after three and a half years I don't even have permission for temporary residence in this country.

**GEORGI**

Your request is denied.

**HE**

It says in the letter that my passport will be returned to me at the airport when the police escort me to the airplane that will lift me up from the soil of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland into the air above the Federal Republic of Germany and, finally, set me down at the airport not far from this building at 18 Stanka Dragojevića Street.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Where you sit for hours waiting for Georgi to wake from the sleep he fell into in the kingdom by the name of Sweden, which did not, as in the fairytale, fall asleep with him. Because Sweden is not the kingdom around which rose a tall fence of thorns, upon which were impaled all those who tried to enter. Instead, the country of Georgi's dreams vigilantly monitored the wire fence on the solid ground of the borders of Europe, as removed from you as the time between the image of waves breaking on the shore and the sound of the waves reaching you. The sea has moved on by then, not only the sea that coughed up onto the Turkish shore the body of the Syrian child, but also the deep blue sea that laps at the coastlines of Italy and Greece, in which float the bodies of others who set out by boat to try to reach the continent by the name of Europe.*

**HE**

While I fly through the air above the Federal Republic of Germany, I will read the fairytales of the Brothers Grimm in the original German.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*"Dornröschen" is the original German title of the fairytale. Aside from the thorns, the title emphasizes the youth and immaturity of the girl who must be protected until she is ready for life. Thorns protect Europe, but not Georgi... apparently he cannot be protected even by the sleep that swallowed him up. And because the prognostication was delivered—signed, sealed and delivered, that is—Georgi must leave the country.*

**SHE**

I look at the customs agent walking toward me and think that I might actually succeed in circumventing my expatriation.

**SAVL**

We have to pack.

**SHE**

"You don't have much time left," he says as he hands me my passport.

**GEORGI**

Good luck.

**HE**

Thank you.

**SHE**

Even though he indeed predicted...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*That has a negative ring to it. It sounds like...*

**SHE**

... that I don't have much time left—not here, not anywhere.

**SAVL**

We don't have a hundred years! You have to wake up, so we can get going.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*On the long journey to...*

**GEORGI**

Nowhere.

### **3. DEEP SLEEP**

*Duration: 55 minutes*

#### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The long journey to nowhere continues in the psychiatric ward of the children's hospital.*

#### **DOCTOR H.**

Third day since falling asleep, my first day visiting Georgi. I write: On touch, eyes move under closed eyelids. Motionless. I raise his head from the pillow, then let go, his head falls onto the pillow. Makes no contact, none whatsoever.

#### **DOCTOR B.**

They brought him to me after Doctor H's first examination. He lies motionless on the examination table. I take his hand, raise it a few centimeters above his forehead, let go. His hand falls onto his forehead without resistance. I dictate to the nurse: No reaction.

#### **SAVL**

No reaction.

#### **DOCTOR B.**

The nurse inserts a nasal cannula for feeding, the child does not resist.

#### **SAVL**

Will you be able to wake him up before we have to go?

#### **DOCTOR H.**

I hope that no one will have to go anywhere.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Because hope is the last to die and when hope has died as well, Georgi will probably, in his very own ambulance with Swedish plates, be transferred to an airplane specially outfitted with all the necessary equipment to carry him under medical supervision from Sweden to...*

**SAVL**

Russia!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*They will deport him in any event, even asleep. If he by chance wakes up in the meantime, they will deport him awake. But for now it looks like Georgi will not wake up by chance, just like he did not fall asleep by chance. Everything must have a corresponding medical cause, on the basis of which a diagnosis will be made. After all, a person can't fall asleep just like that, can he, like in a fairytale?*

**DOCTOR B.**

Privately, among ourselves, doctors call these patients *de apatiska* or "the apathetic."

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And publicly?*

**DOCTOR B.**

For now we've proposed only a working diagnosis, which we call *uppgivenhetsyndrom*, literally, "giving up syndrome"—the English term is "resignation syndrome."

**SHE**

The article you sent me gives that name as well.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And that's it?*

*And now not a voice can be heard.*

*Silence at the border, the border marked by the footlights, which we call the fourth wall.*

*The silence in his hospital room lasts... A long time, a very long time. The only sounds are the ones made by machines measuring Georgi's vital signs. The machines indicate that his vital signs are good. Because if they were not, if Georgi's heart started to fail, at that moment the apathetic atmosphere in his hospital room would turn dramatic.*

*But that doesn't happen. For now nothing, nothing at all, points to drama, because his heart is good. Georgi's brain is in deep sleep, and his body is immobile.*

**GEORGI**

I'm in a bubble, an air bubble under water. If I make the tiniest movement, I'll burst the bubble and I'll drown.

**SAVL**

We learned in school that water makes up seventy percent of the human body...

**HE**

... and water appears in seventy percent of the metaphors people use when speaking of refugees: "refugees flooding their streets," "waves of refugees surging into their cities," "refugees watering down the national population."

**DOCTOR B.**

You don't have to be an expert to realize that these people's fear is based in reality. Because fears, in contrast with phobias, have a basis in fact. It's well known. Fear is healthy and it protects us.

**SAVL**

So my brother isn't sick?

**DOCTOR B.**

Sick or not, my job is to monitor his condition while he is here in this hospital...

**SAVL**

And when we leave?

**DOCTOR B.**

We have to accept reality.

**SHE**

“You don’t have much more time.”

**DOCTOR B.**

One must come to grips with...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Reality. We heard you. Thank you, Doctor. One must come to grips with reality even though it is so awful that it causes you to fall into a sleep you can't wake up from?*

**DOCTOR B.**

I am only a doctor...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And not a good fairy that can right wrongs. Not that fairy from the fairytale who held up under pressure even in the most difficult of circumstances while the others were caught in the spell, frozen in place, wordlessly following the action. You are only a doctor and not a fairy who takes things into her own hands and who, drenched in the cold, rank sweat of moments of great effort, transforms death into sleep, sleep that in fairytales is not never-ending, but instead ends with waking. And waking would not be the certain ending if the fate of the girl depended on others who not only did not lift a finger to restrain the evil witch from casting the capricious curse, but who, in the crucial moment... the moment—the moment that demands one’s all—remained “only.” Too flushed with fame, or too overcome with joy because of a long-awaited child, a topic these stage directions will not entertain. No, because these stage directions are entertaining the topic of the fairy-missionary who instead of a magic wand wields the ability to navigate life-threatening situations. But you are not that fairy. You are only a doctor.*

*In the absence of that fairy, or an official diagnosis, and despite the presence of doctors, can we at least say that there exists a possibility that Georgi is the victim of a curse? The curse when uttered goes like this: "Your application for asylum is denied."*

**HE**

"You must leave the Federal Republic of Germany." By April 24th.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Or is medicine not permitted to engage in such interpretation?*

**SHE**

You'll come stay with me?

**HE**

In the meantime, I wind up in the Berlin hospital "Vivantes am Urban." Luckily for more innocuous reasons than Georgi. Blind gut. Cecum. Appendix. A trifle. Put to sleep, with drugs, but only until a pretty nurse wakes me after the operation is over.

**DOCTOR B.**

An appendectomy is a routine operation.

**SHE**

How are you?

**HE**

I have only words of praise for the German hospital.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*If Georgi were in Germany and not in Sweden, aside from a specially equipped ambulance to escort him to the airport, upon his return "home"—that is, to Russia—he he would also get a stipend.*

**HE**

Because Germany gives money to those who go back where they came from: "Your country. Your future. Now!"

**SHE**

Or never.

**DOCTOR B.**

I heard about that German campaign. Are you in that program?

**HE**

No.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*We're not in Germany either. We're in Sweden. And Sweden has always fought for the "trygghet" of every Swede. "Trygghet" means security, tranquility, a feeling of belonging... But the problem is that Georgi is not a Swede, but a Russian, a Russian from Russia, where he'll be sent in his own ambulance with Swedish plates.*

**HE**

Without money.

**SHE**

Because that money is for the plane ticket.

**SAVL**

On August 6th.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Deportations are an everyday occurrence, but every deportation is not written about in a newspaper article or a play, which means that Georgi is indeed a rare case. Given that we're not in a fairytale in which an endless slumber is not an unusual occurrence, we might even say that Georgi is a medical sensation. That might be of interest to the medical profession. One imagines that experts are interested in how it is possible to fall asleep and not wake up for months, years... One imagines that they're not so indifferent as to let their sleeping patient go on a one-way journey, certainly not before they've tried to find a drug to wake him? Then he could be deported awake and alert, like so many before him and, presumably, after.*

**DOCTOR B.**

There's one more patient with the same symptoms, now two more, next week, five more...

**SHE**

When I count to ten...

**DOCTOR B.**

More than ten, many more. There are enough to fill all the beds. There's no more room.

**DOCTOR H.**

We'll bring in more beds.

***STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC***

*The psychiatric ward of the children's hospital in Stockholm fills up with beds, but not hospital beds, more like cots, folding beds made by IKEA.*

**DOCTOR H.**

There's more than enough room.

***STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC***

*And indeed there is. If by chance they run out of room in the psychiatric ward, they'll find more space elsewhere...*

**DOCTOR B.**

Until the whole hospital is full. It's becoming claustrophobic.

***STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC***

*If there's no more space in this hospital, there'll be space in others. There's got to be more children's hospitals in Stockholm, right? In Sweden?*

**DOCTOR B.**

A time will come when all capacity is filled and then I will ask you if the fear was imagined or real, and while you are in shock, I will ask you what do we do now...

**SHE**

"You don't have much time left."

**DOCTOR B.**

The epidemic is spreading. I am just warning of the possible consequences of a flood.

**DOCTOR H.**

Ah, my dear colleague, I see that you, too, have begun to dabble in forecasting the weather.

**DOCTOR B.**

The statistics will bear me out, when we reach capacity, when there is no more room for Swedish children in hospitals...

**GEORGI**

Sweden is a sparsely populated kingdom.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The children can be accommodated outside if necessary.*

**SAVL**

It's winter.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Winter? Winter? Well, put on a warm coat!*

*Even if it's winter, it isn't a Russian winter!*

*Winter, winter? Well, put on your warm boots!*

*No one in Sweden fears winter, whether sick or healthy, and that's because Sweden's winter is not, never has been and never will be as cold as Russia's.*

**SAVL**

They'll freeze.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Maybe, maybe not. Maybe before the Swedish children turn into ice cubes, they will be warmed by the springtime sun, because*

*springtime will surely wake them up. That is, unless they've been woken up sooner by those who took everything from them, not only the hospital beds, but also the cots manufactured by IKEA, which, because of increased demand—a real epidemic of consumerism—first had to move workers from all the other assembly lines to the cot-making assembly line, and then had to increase exports to other EU member countries ten-fold because demand grew as the sleeping epidemic spread to Europe, which very quickly began to follow Sweden's example, and began putting the sleepers who were taking hospital beds from European children into IKEA cots placed out of doors, filling all the free spaces everywhere.*

**DOCTOR B.**

This is not a question of free space. There is no more room!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And indeed there will be no room in Europe, whose every inch of free space is covered by IKEA cots occupied by sleeping children and upon whose borders stand fences through which no one can pass and so they pass instead into the kingdom of sleepers, just like...*

**DOCTOR H.**

Just like in camps where the suffering prisoners consciously withdraw from life.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Does that mean the doctor is about to propose an official diagnosis for those whom they unofficially call "apathetic"?*

**DOCTOR H.**

They've lost the will to live a life in which they no longer see any meaning.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*That diagnosis, which the doctor will—maybe—make official, is not new in medical practice or in the critical theory of fairytales...*

*as Bruno Bettelheim said, The mission must be to return to the child a belief in the meaning of life.*

**SHE**

Sounds like Frankl even though it is Bettelheim.

**HE**

The only thing I can remember about the connection between Bruno Bettelheim and fairytales is the red plush cover of his book on your night table, red and velvety, like the seats in the theater at 18 Stanka Dragojevića Street, and jammed under that plush cover, a purple 500-euro banknote.

**SHE**

My money.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Whose subliminal message might be characterized not only as arrogant, but also in bad taste, maybe even vulgar, especially considering all the tossing and turning that preceded the placement of said banknote.*

**SHE**

This money was set aside to pay my airfare. That's all.

**HE**

That was the first time I laid eyes on a 500 euro banknote.

**SHE**

And for me, it was the first time I...

**HE**

That's all I know about B.B. and his book, *The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The theory of fairytales in which this purple banknote was placed clearly needs to be updated for today's real world, which looks*

*more improbable than a fairytale and in which, due to the impotence of the theory but also of the medical diagnostic ability of these stage directions, despite the fact that we are not actively seeking a ray of hope in this apparently hopeless situation, turns to the heavens in which is found a long list of saints with Christ at the helm.*

**DOCTOR H.**

I keep religion out of the healing process. I explain to mothers that saints, unfortunately, will not help us.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Saints are too quiet, they heal by looking at you, touching you, in the best case praying for you, which isn't at all dramatic.*

**DOCTOR B.**

In every room a Pieta. The mother and her small, personal Christ.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*To Doctor B., favorably inclined toward the artistic cannon, the scene of a mother holding her child in her arms is reminiscent of the sculpture of Mary holding her dead son Jesus. The doctor did indeed make this association and the journalist recorded it in the magazine article. It will continue to live there after the curtain falls on this play—dare we say, happily forever after—and only because the doctor, in his interview with the journalist, decided to tout his knowledge of classical art. Instead of a diagnosis for Georgi, he proffered a reference to an artwork he happened upon during his most recent holiday in Rome.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

The body of this child is still warm and living. Michelangelo's Jesus, believe me, only looks that way.

**DOCTOR B.**

It really is lifelike. I had the feeling that Jesus had just been taken down from the cross.

## LASZLO TOTH

In contrast to the doctor, who only looked at Jesus in his mother's lap through glass, I actually touched him... with my left hand... and confirmed my suspected diagnosis: Jesus is cold. Cold as stone, and not as a corpse.

## DOCTOR B.

Well, of course, because it's not a corpse, and it isn't the actual Jesus, it's a work of art, and it doesn't have to be an actual corpse to look...

## STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC

*It doesn't have to be, but it might be... Should it be? No, in that case it would no longer be a work of art but reality itself. Reality that is nevertheless as unreal as art. But is art real or not real? Do we not expect art to be realer than real... and yet... nevertheless... or...*

## LASZLO TOTH

... or is art more important than life?! Give me a break! And at that moment my blood began to boil because I couldn't stand for the deceit. I hit him! I did it only to break the illusion that the respected maestro created, and for which he is known today. People believed what they saw, and what they saw was not the truth. That means: manipulation, or to be short and sweet: fraud. People, sheeple! But the maestro's deception is still a lesser problem than what the doctor is saying: that in his eyes, the living body of a sick child is cold like the stone carving of Jesus and his mother. At the very least, this is medically unethical, to put it in professional terms, because the aggression here is anesthetized...

## SHE

"Imagine you are me / Imagine I am you / I open my eyes and say / I'm leaving..."<sup>1</sup>

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1 Milan Mladenović (lyrics and music), Ekatarina Velika (arrangement), "Anestezija," *Neko nas posmatra*, PGP RTS, 1993.

**DOCTOR B.**

Miss, do you have any relationship to the sleepers?

**SHE**

No.

**DOCTOR B.**

Then what are you looking for here?

**SHE**

"A-nes-the-si-a..."

**DOCTOR B.**

Anesthesia? Why, something hurts?

**LASZLO TOTH**

Who cares?! She latched onto my association and started singing. Kookoo. Nothing out of the ordinary, considering where we are. The only thing odd to me is all these sleeping children here, because they're not crazy, they're just asleep. What can be done with them?

**DOCTOR B.**

We have to wait.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*How long?*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Until they are resurrected! Because the doctor already implied in newspaper interviews that the child is dead, even though he isn't. He and these other children, they're alive, all of them, but the doctor would make the living dead, unlike me... I wanted to bring the dead to life! And of your successful attempt to make dead of the dead and become world famous, well, what can I say? I can only congratulate you! You sold the world dust, and stone dust at that, and for that the world celebrates you still. And as we can see here, not just the art world, but the world of psychiatry as well.

**DOCTOR B.**

Who are you talking to?

**LASZLO TOTH**

What do you mean who?! With the maestro Michelangelo. And don't you dare ask me whether I can see him, because it's clear to me that you don't see him, and that you want to send me back to the same loony bin they sent me to the last time, also because of Michelangelo...

**DOCTOR B.**

So, Michelangelo is here as well, if I understand correctly?

**LASZLO TOTH**

He'll show himself... all in due time... Or as they say: He makes not a sound, but leaves footsteps in his wake.

**SHE**

Deep impressions.

**DOCTOR B.**

Let it be so.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Whirling around the sleepers this evening we have not only the living, but apparently also the late Michelangelo Buonarroti. Doctor H.—a Swedish ear, nose and throat doctor—could not be of help to his sculpture of the Pieta, because Doctor H. was still a girl when Laszlo Toth broke the nose of Mother Mary holding Jesus Christ in her arms. But perhaps even then she dreamed of becoming an ear, nose and throat specialist so she could heal noses, though probably only the noses of people, not of Renaissance sculptures.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

I warn you that the maestro's concentration requires absolute silence.

**DOCTOR B.**

I'm afraid he will not get that here. In every room, every mother speaks in her own language. They shout at me, then stop, then continue whispering to their children. They stare into the distance. Claustrophobia.

**LASZLO TOTH**

I didn't know that you, too, have a condition. Who diagnosed you? You yourself, or maybe a colleague who is a little too quiet. How did she arrive at your diagnosis? Were the two of you imprisoned or locked up in a room for a few hours? Maybe days? Or nights...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Months? Years?*

**LASZLO TOTH**

For years locked up in the overnight shift on-call room.

**DOCTOR B.**

That colleague is married.

**LASZLO TOTH**

You are a lovely couple.

**SHE**

Didn't he just tell you she's already married?

**LASZLO TOTH**

It appears only you heard this. The doctor was talking about claustrophobia.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Claustrophobia can result from a single event or it can occur due to repeated uncomfortable situations...*

**GEORGI**

"Your application for asylum is denied."

**SHE**

"You don't have much more..."

**LASZLO TOTH**

Maestro, I don't want to rush you, but this kookoo-bird is trying to say that you don't have a lot of time here. Maybe you'd better go now to look for a stone to work with, while it's still light out. Too bad you won't be creating another work of perfection, impossible to miss, not even in the dark, because the brilliance of stone polished by your own hand...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*All of Europe would reflect such brilliance if, instead of sleeping children, those IKEA cots taking up all the free space held pieces of precious stones polished by the hands of a master. Ten million one hundred eighty thousand square kilometers covered in stone whose unique texture, reflecting the moonlight, would be visible from outer space.*

**GEORGI**

And from the dwarf planet Pluto...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Polished Europe...*

**LASZLO TOTH**

If you don't have your tools with you, I can lend you my hammer. It proved itself in my hands, on your stone. Maestro, the ball's in your court until they wake up.

**SAVL**

Until when?

**LASZLO TOTH**

The doctor has no idea how to answer.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Bruno Bettelheim says, "If the family would create a sense of security for the child..."*

**LASZLO TOTH**

And here's the therapist himself. Therapist and suicide. Doctor Bruno threatened children in his school who didn't follow the rules, telling them that they would end up in a "nut house." And where are we now? In a children's "nut house"—where even stones would weep.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*But they're not crying. No one's crying.*

**SHE**

But they should be.

**HE**

Why?

**LASZLO TOTH**

In a place like this and in a situation like this, is there any sense in talking about sense, Doctor?

**DOCTOR B.**

There is always sense in...

**LASZLO TOTH**

I wasn't talking to you.

**DOCTOR B.**

Who then?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Bruno Bettelheim, presumably. Since we're still on the subject of fairytale theory...*

**LASZLO TOTH**

All right, finally someone says something intelligent. Theory is a problem. And it's a problem here. Doctor Bettelheim, despite all his theories about sense and meaning, did not succeed in ascribing a little more meaning to his own life... he might have

proclaimed himself a somebody. Just not Jesus Christ, that was me.

**DOCTOR B.**

"I am Christ, risen from the dead."

**LASZLO TOTH**

I mean me, not you.

**DOCTOR B.**

I was quoting you.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Plagiarizing, you mean. You learned plenty from Professor Suicide, who sounds wise, but was also inclined to copy others, so much so that an entire section of his Wikipedia entry is about accusations of plagiarism. Even I can cite passages that he copied from others without citing. It's obvious that you studied under Professor BB.

**SHE**

Bertolt Brecht signed his works with the same initials.

**LASZLO TOTH**

And now Brecht! Before you explain to us who he was, and what business he would have here, maybe you could tell us who the hell you are?

**DOCTOR B.**

That interests me as well.

**LASZLO TOTH**

If by chance you don't know who you are, could you at least tell us what you want?

**HE**

No.

**DOCTOR B.**

If you are not related to a patient, you must leave the hospital...

**LASZLO TOTH**

I agree. How many of us still haven't even been able to get a word in edgewise...

***STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC***

*... and how many more are there who won't utter a single word tonight and will be replaced by others who have landed in this play via...*

**HE**

The flow of free associations, connecting epochs and voices...

**LASZLO TOTH**

Madam Arendt, do you feel that we should bring in Mr. Brecht? No? Yes?! And what help could he be? What?! I can't hear you!

**DOCTOR B.**

Please, don't shout, the patients are sleeping!

**LASZLO TOTH**

Well, shouldn't we wake them?! Fine, I won't shout, I beg your pardon. I respect the rules. I summoned Madam Arendt, she's out by the hospital entrance, smoking. She's someone who can be useful here, in contrast to most of the others.

***STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC***

*As long as she only smokes and doesn't say anything, it's clear to everyone why she's here with us.*

**HE**

Not to me.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Then you don't get anything at all. Hannah Arendt was Bruno Bettelheim's friend.

**HE**

Well, so what if she's a friend? What does that have to do with the sleeping children?

**LASZLO TOTH**

Either you're stupid or playing stupid. You really don't see why Hannah Arendt would appear in a story about children who were put to sleep by a bureaucratic letter?

**HE**

Nope.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Then ask your girlfriend to explain it to you.

**SHE**

I'm not his girlfriend.

**HE**

I once saw a film about Hannah Arendt...

***STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC***

*She would have entered if we were still in the aborted ffairytale—she'd have looked at us, reconsidered, and walked out. She'd have stayed in the room only as long as it took her to realize that smoking is prohibited indoors and freak out.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

I am sure that after she chain-smokes her way through the rest of the pack, she will return, and then it will be clear to all of us why she's here.

**DOCTOR H.**

A battle—arduous, public—calling attention to each of the sleeping children and the circumstances of their illness, unseen anywhere else in the world.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*It would not be the first time that Stockholm doctors diagnosed a syndrome unique to Sweden that later spread throughout the world...*

**HE**

Stockholm syndrome has nothing to do with these...

**SHE**

No, but maybe it will.

**DOCTOR B.**

That's a manipulation of facts.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Fight!

**DOCTOR H.**

And a hard fight at that, for which the doctor has no time, because he is fully occupied in "monitoring the patient's condition."

**LASZLO TOTH**

There's no hate greater than that of two former lovers...

**DOCTOR B.**

Continue, please, I know what follows... that there is a cure for their condition and that you possess it, but "they" do not permit you to administer it. Of course they don't permit it, because it is not in accordance with medical ethics...

**DOCTOR H.**

But it is in accordance with medical ethics to warehouse children as if in a camp, while you entertain the nurses on your rounds with anecdotes of Rome...

**LASZLO TOTH**

It appears the madam doctor is jealous of the nurses. Now I've seen everything!

**DOCTOR B.**

What you are calling a camp is in fact a famous children's psychiatric clinic, from which you try to discharge the children to send them home, where they survive hooked up to tubes, for the sole purpose of avoiding deportation...

**LASZLO TOTH**

Madam Doctor, don't get upset. If I came to help anyone, it was you, because you are fair, truth-loving, honest, self-sacrificing, broadminded, empathetic, professional, human, uncorrupted, professional and...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*... and noble, so much so that she probably comes from the aborted fairytale, "Sleeping Beautiful," where she played the role of the resurrected twelfth fairy who was... well, she was everything! For the doctor in the fairytale to succeed, she would have to do something about the deportation law... if not rescind it, at least change it to allow families to stay in situations such as Georgi's. Even though the doctor is not a good fairy, she will still break a sweat in her efforts to transform the prognostication of deportation into a permission to stay, because the doctor believes this to be the only cure.*

**DOCTOR B.**

Nonsense.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Madam Doctor, do you hear what they're saying? You can do it! Yet you despair! If you think that's the cure, then why don't you simply write a prescription? What do you care if your colleague laughs at you? If anyone knows his weak point, you do, so why be concerned when you can see his complexes for what they are... he can't get over you, so he's acting tough. Everyone here can see right through him. To have a woman such as you in the palm of his hand, and then manage to lose her, only one person can do that: the doctor.

**DOCTOR B.**

With all due respect for my colleague, she is one of those doctors who appears out of every fifteen or twenty medical professionals: a woman with a soft heart, sympathetic to human misfortune, in short, a woman who, instead of a doctor, would have been better off as a humanitarian worker in Africa, a Greenpeace activist in Greenland or a guardian of the planet... or whatever those fools are called. I think all of us here know very well that there is a medical procedure to "wake up" these children.

**DOCTOR H.**

That's not the way.

**DOCTOR B.**

We'll see about that.

**DOCTOR H.**

We'll see about what?

**DOCTOR B.**

About the medical procedures which, in my opinion, we should not fail to consider in certain situations.

**DOCTOR H.**

You mean...

**DOCTOR B.**

Small, precise electrical shocks.

**DOCTOR H.**

You're crazy!

**LASZLO TOTH**

That makes sense, the idea of small, precise electrical shocks! I am here if you need help, I can tape electrodes on their foreheads, switch on the electricity, charge the battery, whatever you need. I await instructions!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*It seems that electric shocks are the only means of engagement in this situation.*

**DOCTOR B.**

The children are in a state similar to a coma, and if they are immobile for a long period of time, there could be complications. It's our job to prevent that.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Of course, we prevent it! Prevent rather than repent! Work beats worry! ... Look, everyone knows what kind of a worker Michelangelo was, he'll help too, if by some chance he doesn't see any sense in creating...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*A Europe of stone?*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Is it possible for someone here to say anything without you butting in and redirecting the stream to turn your own millstone? You don't know what I was going to say. Neither you nor anyone else can know what's going on in my head.

**DOCTOR B.**

Michelangelo?!

**LASZLO TOTH**

Look, the three of us working together—you, him and me—each of us do our part, you determine the voltage, I connect the leads, Michelangelo does something with a hammer... We'd wake them all up without using as much electricity as it takes to cook up a pot of Hungarian goulash! Although the maestro would definitely be more useful if we were doing an operation...

**SAVL**

What kind of operation?

**LASZLO TOTH**

Just a little blood.

**SAVL**

How much?

**LASZLO TOTH**

I don't know, a liter or two.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*A liter or two is not the same as a drop or two. It never was and never will be.*

**SHE**

This could be a fairytale...

**HE**

I wake up in the hospital thanks to a needle stick.

**SHE**

Without a kiss...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Which remained in the fairytale.*

**HE**

I read a newspaper article about the sleeping children the morning I went to the immigration office, at the end of September 2018. That's the day my bureaucratic problems started.

**LASZLO TOTH**

And where are you now? In the nut house. See how everything is connected? Here there are no accidents. I'm grateful for that, grateful to every plant, animal, child and, above all, bureaucracy due to which I was shocked in the head once upon a time in far-away Australia where I lived as an immigrant from Hungary, which is so messed up these days I'm embarrassed

in my second reincarnation that I was even born there... No. In fact, I'm grateful that I was born in Hungary, because Hungary was a part of my journey to Australia, whose bureaucratic mistreatment I'm also grateful for, because without it as part of my immigrant life in Australia, I never would have landed in Italy or gotten anywhere near the Vatican, whose bureaucracy kept me from getting a reply from the Pope, because had that reply reached me, I certainly would not have decided to break the nose of Mother Mary and then been met with the legal and medical bureaucracy that, needless to say, entailed the previously mentioned electric shocks, without which, in the bureaucratic sense, I would not have disappeared without a trace, after which the Italian medical and immigration bureaucracy sent me back to some other bureaucracy, no one knows which one. I'm grateful, because life requires one to be grateful to everyone, even bureaucracies, and remember that even the craziest fucked up bureaucrat is just one step forward in our journey to the dwarf planet Pluto, and so on and so forth...

**DOCTOR B.**

It is not our place to get involved in the bureaucratic details, our place is to heal.

**LASZLO TOTH**

And to not talk a lot. He needs quiet.

**DOCTOR B.**

You are absolutely right.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*A little quiet would do everyone some good...*

**DOCTOR B.**

Please leave the hospital.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Why just me, when everyone else is talking?

**DOCTOR B.**

I mean everyone, not just you!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And the hospital really does become quieter and quieter, not because anyone in the play—aside from Laszlo Toth—is trying to create the conditions Michelangelo Buonarroti needs to work undisturbed, but because the hospital is slowly emptying out. Parents, on the recommendation of Dr. H., are taking their children home.*

**DOCTOR H.**

It's more likely families will get a residency permit if their children are receiving medical care at home.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And as Dr. B.'s children's psychiatric ward empties out, the IKEA cots are dismantled and stashed away in storage.*

**DOCTOR B.**

Finally I can walk around and not get tangled up in the extra cots...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*... which will remain in storage, maybe forever, because there's really very little chance that the psychiatric ward of the children's hospital will ever again be turned into a camp for sleeping children who gave up on life.*

**DOCTOR B.**

I also hope that the hospital will never be so full.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Among the last of the sleeping children to be taken home is Georgi.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

You're taking him away too? What will I tell the maestro when he returns? Wait? Where are you taking him?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

Home.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Ge-or-gi!

**DOCTOR B.**

The family will bring him back home at the recommendation of Doctor H., who assured them that their fight would go better if they took him out of the hospital.

**SAVL**

That means you'll stop treating him?

**DOCTOR B.**

I am sure that Hippolyta—I mean Doctor H.—will drive the few hundred kilometers every day, at her own expense, to visit Georgi and all the others...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And so Georgi is being transported home in a specially equipped ambulance. The only sound coming from the psychiatric ward is the voice of Laszlo Toth, who is unsuccessfully trying to prevent Georgi from being loaded into the ambulance that will transport him home. Upon arrival, Georgi is carried up the stairs, those same steep and narrow stairs these stage directions failed to imagine earlier. He is carried down the same hallway, and finally laid to bed, the same bed in which he fell into a deep sleep after the two invisible drops of blood dripped onto the sheets following the curse, "Your application for asylum is denied."*

*It looks like this play has returned to the moment of the curse, but in fact, it's just an illusion that we ever moved off that starting point and traveled full, vicious circle. In the meantime, all that's happened is that an ocean of time has flown by. Yes, time flies despite no one making any mention of it, and everything unexpectedly calmed down when, for the umpteenth time, darkness fell upon the roof of the psychiatric ward of the children's hospital in Stockholm.*

#### 4. n-REM PHASE *Phase begins: After intermission*

##### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*A kitchen arranged in the style of Scandinavian minimalism, opening to the dining area and living room, which is common in Scandinavian interior design, in which particular attention is paid to the unity of the family and home. Almost all elements are made of natural materials, including the white table and four chairs in the corner of this kitchen.*

*The sink is against the window wall. Under the sink, a drawer that hides a small trash can, which opens when the drawer is opened. Adjacent to the sink are a dishwasher and sliding shelves, topped by a work surface. On the wall above the sink, there's a long thin horizontal magnet holding utensils: bread knife, kitchen scissors, corkscrew, coffee scoop. On the counter next to the sink is a brass water kettle. On the electric stovetop is a frying pan, next to the frying pan a salad bowl, in the oven a baking pan lined with baking paper. The oven is on, but there is nothing in it. It is preheating, waiting for the fresh, uncooked chicken, which is on the work surface. Around the chicken are vegetables—chopped garlic and onions, spices, etc.*

*On the wall above the work surface is a wine rack, which holds the bottles at an angle, corks down, and wine glasses hanging upside down.*

*On the table a half-empty bottle of white wine, Vidal Blanc, 2009, awarded the "World Wine Cup 2017." The wine critic of the Financial Times, Jancis Robinson, gave the Vidal harvest of 2009 16.5 out of a possible 20 points, which is practically unheard of, at least among readers of FT familiar with the high standards of this world renowned critic.*

*The husband of Doctor H. is making dinner.*

**DOCTOR H.**

The mother is sitting next to the bed. The father standing in the doorway. Ibadeta and Dženeta are in their beds. I have nowhere to sit. I ask the father for an ice cube, he says they have no ice. I ask for anything from the freezer. He brings a frozen chicken. I stand there, between the girls' beds, holding a frozen chicken. I feel like I'm going to vomit.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Now or then?*

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

I still have time to run out for something else, pop over to the store, toss the chicken out on the way and problem solved...

**DOCTOR H.**

No need.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Earlier today I found that recipe I liked. I planned to surprise you...

**DOCTOR H.**

And you did, thank you, it's just... I was standing there staring at the plate.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

What plate?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The plate of Oreo cookies that was on the table.*

**DOCTOR H.**

I'm not sure I can keep this up.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

You shouldn't get so upset...

**DOCTOR H.**

Sometimes I can hardly breathe.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

That's normal... you're stressed out.

**DOCTOR H.**

Today I could hardly wait to finish the examination, I said I was in a hurry, I ran to the car and burst into tears.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Now you're home, we'll have supper...

**DOCTOR H.**

I feel sick...

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

It was just a temporary crisis. These people know how much you're helping them. We all know... How did the examination go?

**DOCTOR H.**

Routine. Checking their blood pressure... today I did a breast examination.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Why so?

**DOCTOR H.**

Last week, a female patient was diagnosed with cancer, and since then breast examinations are required. Today, the father left the room while I examined the girls.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Why?

**DOCTOR H.**

I assume he was uncomfortable. I'm feeling every part of their breasts in detail.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

And was there a reaction?

**DOCTOR H.**

To what?

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

To touching their breasts?

**DOCTOR H.**

Their breathing sped up.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

And was that when you started to feel sick?

**DOCTOR H.**

I felt sick right away. I guess when I found myself in the middle of the room, between the two beds, holding that chicken. I just stood there looking at the table.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Which the parents took the wrong way. The mother apologized for not offering the doctor something earlier. The father left his place in the doorway, picked up the plate of Oreos from the table, and approached the doctor to offer cookies to her, while she just stared wordlessly at the plate.*

**DOCTOR H.**

I must have looked like I was disgusted.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Their apartment is small?

**DOCTOR H.**

Not small, not big, but their rooms are full of stuff.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

That's probably why you had trouble breathing.

**DOCTOR H.**

There was a smell from the kitchen. I didn't recognize the smell and it was driving me crazy, I don't why it was so important...

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

It was probably some kind of traditional dish cooking... where are they from?

**DOCTOR H.**

Kosovo.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

I'll look up their national cuisine online. Maybe we could cook something for them sometime, for you to bring to them...

**LASZLO TOTH**

Cut away the fat. He doesn't like it.

**DOCTOR B.**

I don't have a knife. I'm a psychiatrist, not a surgeon.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*That's got to be clear to everyone by now.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Here's the meat of some young heifers. If the meat comes from a cow older than fourteen months, it won't taste right. Everyone loves eating goulash, but they forget that preparing it is an art. At least you're trying to help, unlike the others...

**DOCTOR B.**

What others?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The smell of goulash wafts out into the darkness from the open windows of the children's psychiatric ward. First it spreads through the area around the hospital, then beyond into other neighborhoods, the industrial zone, the historic town center,*

*eventually spreading throughout the entire city of Stockholm. The smell is so strong that vegetarians close their windows...*

**DOCTOR B.**

I'm hungry.

**LASZLO TOTH**

That's a good sign. It means you're feeling better.

**DOCTOR B.**

The symptoms of claustrophobia have passed.

**DOCTOR H.**

The father stood in front of me with the plate in his hands, I stood there between the beds, and all of the sudden the nausea got worse and...

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

You threw up?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Into the plate? No, no, not in the plate. The doctor probably turned her head at that moment, reflexively turning away from the father who was standing right in front of her. But that means she threw up on one of the girls? Because she was standing in between...*

**DOCTOR H.**

It was so unpleasant that I ran outside.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Don't worry, they didn't take it the wrong way.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The pot the goulash is cooking in is so large that these stage directions have to conclude that such a pot cannot exist in real life. But despite this, here's the description:*

*The pot is so large that it does not fit through windows or doors. This is a pot that must have been here from the beginning, invisible to the naked eye. It was waiting for the Master Craftsman and revealed itself to Him.*

**DOCTOR B.**

They say that Hungarians are masters of goulash.

**LASZLO TOTH**

That's too strong a word. I would never describe myself that way. There's only one master here, everyone knows that.

**DOCTOR B.**

Who?

**LASZLO TOTH**

He who—aside from this goulash—is our only connection to each other.

**DOCTOR B.**

You never let up, do you?

**LASZLO TOTH**

Neither I nor the doctor.

**DOCTOR B.**

You and I are the only ones here. There's no third.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*That third would certainly exist in a fairytale, because that's the rule of the fairytale's golden triangle: victim, villain and savior. But here there isn't...*

**LASZLO TOTH**

There isn't, but there will be. Without the third, it doesn't work. And when the third arrives, a hot meal will be on the table for him. He'll have to eat well, because there's a lot of work to be done in a short amount of time. Luckily, Georgi keeps quite still as a model.

**DOCTOR B.**

He's been discharged to be cared for at home.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Well, so what if he's been discharged? I know he's been discharged, I'm not crazy. When Michelangelo returns with his stone, and after all three of us have eaten our fill, we'll pile into a car and make a house call. You'll be the driver. Driver and silent observer. Michelangelo will work, I can hand him his tools. I always work best in teams of three.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.*

**DOCTOR B.**

Hippolyta...

**LASZLO TOTH**

Can't get her out of your head?

**DOCTOR B.**

No.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*That's not what he meant.*

**DOCTOR B.**

Better that she drive you, she's the one who makes house calls. Every day she drives hundreds and hundreds of kilometers, in her own car, at her own expense.

**DOCTOR H.**

I was so beside myself that I couldn't remember where I'd parked the car. I was searching all over for it for ten minutes, and then when I finally found it, I realized that my keys were probably still...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Oh no, really? That means the doctor had to go back after all, back to where they were cooking something whose smell she didn't recognize, because it was probably some sort of national dish, if the doctor's husband's suppositions are to be trusted... She had to go back to where, just moments before, she had thrown up.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

As long as you're not busy, since you don't want to go with your colleague on a house call, you could at least rinse off this hammer. It served me well, but the maestro will not be pleased to see his hammer smeared with flesh and blood. And further, if you're not coming with us, then you can forget about getting a sculpture for your office. We'll give the sculpture to Madam Doctor instead. She can keep it in her office.

**DOCTOR B.**

She doesn't have one, only I have an office, because I'm the director of the clinic.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Then she can take it home. She has a home, doesn't she?

**DOCTOR B.**

She has a home.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And in the home—a husband.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

What can you do, that's life. You're better off minding your own business. You have plenty of work, and then some. After you wash this hammer, you'll have to serve us goulash.

**DOCTOR B.**

There are no plates here.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*No plates, no plates? Well, eat straight from the pot!*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Perfect... less time for it to get cold.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*They'll eat from the pot, even though the pot is huge and yawning, as if it has grown larger in the meantime. How is it possible that the pot got bigger?*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Seems to me I cooked too much. There's enough goulash here for half of Stockholm to gorge on. We could open a soup kitchen. You and me, tonight.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The smell of goulash continues to spread over the city, there's even a good chance that people who sleep in the streets of Stockholm, attracted by the smell, will grab a plate and head over to the psychiatric ward of the children's hospital, toward the pot that continues to grow larger and larger. So large that the fire department has to be called. The fire trucks will come with tall ladders so that everyone who wants to eat can climb to the top of the ladder. And when they get to the top, they'll jump into the pot, because it's more practical that way, then there won't be long lines on the ground below.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

That's a great idea. The flow of people will be faster that way.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Because people will be streaming toward the pot.*

**DOCTOR B.**

But then they won't be able to get out.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Let them swim.

**DOCTOR B.**

You mean swim in the goulash?

**LASZLO TOTH**

Why not?! If that seems too claustrophobic to you, we'll tip the pot, let the goulash pour out...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Rivers of goulash would not only flow out onto the floor of the hospital, but would flood all its empty spaces, and after filling these, would pour out of the windows, drip down to the street...*

**DOCTOR B.**

I'm going to throw up.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Feel free. But I'm a bit worried... what's taking Michelangelo so long?

**DOCTOR B.**

You're waiting for him in vain.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*He's not coming?*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Of course he's coming, he's just looking for...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The road?*

**LAZSLO TOTH**

This is enough to drive a person mad! How can it be that in a city as large as Stockholm there's not a stone suitable for a sculpture to grace Madam Doctor's bedroom?

**DOCTOR B.**

There will be no sculpture! There's no goulash either! There's nothing cooking here. There's not so much as a pot. We're in the psychiatric ward, not in a kitchen. All this exists only in my head.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The doctor sees everything clearly. For everything, it seems, there is a logical explanation.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

And your nausea?

**DOCTOR B.**

For that too. I shouldn't eat when I'm on the night shift. All of this is a result.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Of course. This kind of nightmare can result from eating so late.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

You are all correct and it's a shame that you don't have an appropriate medical means of waking yourself up, and are thereby forced to continue conversing with me and forced to wait with me for Michelangelo, who will indeed show up even though you think it's impossible. And when he comes...

**DOCTOR B.**

We'll pile into a car and go see Georgi... you're repeating yourself. This is getting tedious.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Because nightmares are indeed tedious.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

That's because you don't have an iota of courage to enjoy yourself. You're afraid to lose control. When he arrives, it will be such a real moment, such a special moment, that it won't matter at all that you're asleep—you won't want to wake up.

**DOCTOR B.**

I'll have to wake up at some point...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Nothing should be taken for granted. Maybe the doctor will never wake up from this claustrophobic nightmare.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Do you still feel sick to your stomach?

**DOCTOR H.**

I'm a little better now... Better not cook them anything. I wouldn't want to insult them.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

It's got to be clear to them that you're helping them.

**DOCTOR H.**

It seems like their mother has changed a little since the journalist was there asking questions.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

What kind of questions?

**DOCTOR H.**

She wanted to know if there was any chance that the girls saw their sleeping cousin and fell asleep because of it. As if it were some kind of epidemic. That's when I interrupted the conversation, but the mother still wanted to answer. She didn't understand why I interrupted. It was uncomfortable.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

And what do you think about it?

**DOCTOR H.**

About what?

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

About the journalist's question?

**DOCTOR H.**

That they're "contagious"? The condition's not communicable!

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Not that they caught it, but that they thought they could maybe help their family...

**DOCTOR H.**

By falling asleep for a year?

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Or by pretending to sleep, I don't know...

***STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC***

*Such an explanation would strip all the fairytale layers away from this documentary tale about the sleepers.*

**DOCTOR H.**

You really think that someone could fake a full year of uninterrupted sleep?! You think that when I leave they pull the feeding tubes from their noses and dance around the house, and then put them back in when they hear me coming? That's what you think?

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

No, of course not, only that maybe after they saw their cousin they thought...

**DOCTOR H.**

What, that they should try it too?

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Not that they should try it, but that maybe that's a way to stay...

**DOCTOR H.**

And?

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

And that then, thinking that maybe they could control...

**DOCTOR H.**

There's absolutely no control here! I sit with them every third day, measure their pulse...

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Calm down, we're just talking.

**DOCTOR H.**

I'm calm.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

And what's their pulse?

**DOCTOR H.**

A normal pulse for someone who's sleeping.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

But shouldn't the pulse of someone who's been sleeping that long be lower?

**DOCTOR H.**

What do you mean, lower? Yes it's lower.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

You said normal for someone who's sleeping.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Indeed that's what she said.*

**DOCTOR H.**

You don't get it! I put a fucking frozen chicken on their stomach today, their pulse didn't speed up at all. You think they could fake that?

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

No.

**DOCTOR H.**

I touch their breasts with cold hands. You'd think there would be some kind of reaction if...

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

You said their breathing sped up.

**DOCTOR H.**

Minimally! It's normal. Breasts are a sensitive area and just because the girls are asleep doesn't mean that they're dead...

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Okay, okay, I was just asking...

**DOCTOR H.**

More and more often people "just ask" the most ridiculous... sometimes I don't know myself what to think.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Maybe think about whether it's possible that some of these patients fell into a sleep that isn't the same kind of sleep Georgi fell into. Maybe the doctor is the sole victim here, and not the savior, as it seemed...*

**DOCTOR H.**

I can't eat. Pour me some more wine.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

You need to rest.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And sleep a healthy sleep, the same as the doctor fell into during his overnight shift, after a late meal.*

**DOCTOR H.**

And the guests?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Let them eat chicken.*

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

They'll understand.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Just like the husband of Doctor H. It seems that he really is full of understanding... for everything...*

**LASZLO TOTH**

That's what I'm talking about! Do you believe me now?!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*We hear a bell. We hear slow heavy steps.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Who's that coming now? Try to guess, doctor!

**DOCTOR B.**

Michelangelo?

**LASZLO TOTH**

No. ... Cough. ...

**DOCTOR B.**

Ms. Arendt?

**SAVL**

I started smoking, the day before yesterday. Two friends and I. Dad says that Doctor H. is crazy.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Because?*

**SAVL**

Because she's become obsessed with Georgi. She sits next to him for a whole hour, running her hand through his hair. I don't understand. I don't think Dad does either. Maybe Mom does. Or Mrs. Zapolskaya. She always understands everything.

**LASZLO TOTH**

It's normal that you don't understand certain things.

**DOCTOR H.**

It's not normal. Sometimes it seems like there's a wall between me and them. I come into their homes, try to move around like everything is familiar, but it's not, everything is different...

**LASZLO TOTH**

What's different?

**DOCTOR H.**

You don't understand. Sometimes I'm afraid.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Afraid of what?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*That she'll be accused in court of pedophilia because she runs her fingers through the hair of underage children, who are asleep besides and can't refuse physical contact? Because she methodically presses on the breasts of female patients whose breathing then speeds up? Those sorts of accusations are easy to imagine in the country the doctor lives in. And they could be costly to her. Because the courts in Sweden are not corrupt and, if the doctor is accused, not even her husband could help her because he, aside from being full of understanding, patience and love for his wife, is also a judge... whose reputation would be forever damaged if his wife were to find herself in the dock due to suspicion that she had sexually abused underage patients. But that must not happen in this play! The stage directions thought that up... we thought that up and we kept quiet, because the*

*possibility exists that the doctor is guilty... until the court proves otherwise.*

**DOCTOR H.**

Stupid fear, ridiculous, I don't know what kind of fear. Sometimes the whole house smells of alcohol...

**DOCTOR B.**

Maybe there's someone you need to report this to? Officially?

**DOCTOR H.**

Report what?

**DOCTOR B.**

What you just told me.

**DOCTOR H.**

I share things that are bothering me with you and you recommend I have an official conversation? With whom?!

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Everything you feel right now, it's normal.

**DOCTOR H.**

I don't know.

**DOCTOR B.**

Is there anything you don't want to talk about?

**DOCTOR H.**

No... I told you everything.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Everything? Really?*

**DOCTOR B.**

Those are the things that you should share with me.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

You shouldn't bear the entire burden...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Because that burden could cost you.*

**SAVL**

I'm sick of all of it. Why doesn't he wake up, for fuck's sake? On Monday I ran away from home for two days. Yesterday I came back, got a whupping and went to sleep. Mom thinks I'm taking drugs. All she does is cry.

**DOCTOR B.**

You think something strange is going on in their house, too?

**DOCTOR H.**

What do you mean "in their house, too"?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*She didn't say anything strange was going on in anybody's house!*

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

But I understood that...

**SAVL**

That he's a pussy... that he shits himself... that he left me alone to watch Mom crying every day and Dad coming home from work later and later... and watch my father cry, but before all this I never saw him cry.

**DOCTOR B.**

Have you seen the newspaper today?

**DOCTOR H.**

No, but I heard.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Your father, the founder of sects, likes to drink sometimes.

In the middle of peace-loving Sweden, he punched out a coworker. Hero!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Hero?*

**DOCTOR H.**

He was provoked!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Victim?*

**DOCTOR B.**

His coworker told him to pack up and go back where he came from. That's no reason to punch someone out...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*At least not in peace-loving Sweden.*

**DOCTOR B.**

... and then beat him over the head with an ashtray.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Swedish blood was spilled. A Swede wound up in the hospital, severe concussion. Maybe even a coma. Father of three Swedish children. That's messed up. Your dad has a heavy hand.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*In a word: villain.*

**DOCTOR B.**

When does this boy have to leave the country?

**DOCTOR H.**

Are you serious?

**LASZLO TOTH**

The way they're attacking you is disgusting.

**DOCTOR H.**

I don't pay attention to them anymore.

**DOCTOR B.**

I understand... but maybe you need to read them once in a while, in case someone decides to investigate you...

**DOCTOR H.**

Who would investigate me?

**DOCTOR B.**

Your husband, for example.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Who is simultaneously a public prosecutor. After which the matter will be transferred to the court.*

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

They write that you've violated the code of ethics... and that you're advising parents to keep their children at home hooked up to feeding tubes only so they can avoid deportation.

**DOCTOR H.**

The second accusation is correct, the first one is nonsense. Everyone knows who is violating the code of ethics here.

**SAVL**

You left me to go to school by myself and listen to them talk about you... to watch you drool while we sit you up at the table...

**DOCTOR H.**

I've lost my appetite. All I wanted to do when I arrived home was to eat that fucking chicken.

**DOCTOR B.**

Which your guests are eating now.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*While the doctor sleeps, not exactly peacefully...*

**DOCTOR H.**

And what do you mean by that?

**DOCTOR B.**

That your husband is an excellent cook.

**SAVL**

He shits in his pants and the whole room stinks... the whole house stinks...

**LASZLO TOTH**

Everything that happens here will in any event be forgotten. Feel free to hit him. Get it out of your system!

**SAVL**

I don't want to.

**LASZLO TOTH**

You don't want to or you can't? There's a big difference. Come on, go ahead, like your dad punched out that guy from work. I tip my cap to him!

**SAVL**

It's not the same. I can't hit him.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Why not? He's your brother, you guys certainly punched each other when he was awake.

**SAVL**

That's different.

**DOCTOR B.**

I'm against all types of violence, no matter where it comes from.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Of course the doctor is against violence, because violence in the country where the doctor lives is passive violence, visible only from the occasional newspaper article witnessing an individual coming apart at the seams. And when this happens, then it's clear it's best to leave Hannah Arendt alone to smoke in peace, because she already said everything she had to say about the banality of evil.*

**DOCTOR B.**

I repeat: I am against violence!

**LASZLO TOTH**

I call bullshit, Doctor, it's just not possible. Hit him, kid!

**SAVL**

How?

**LASZLO TOTH**

The doctor will raise the bed with the remote control. I'll give you the tool. And there you go! Don't be afraid. You have my support. Come on over here. You'll make it easier for your parents too. ... Grab hold of the hammer. There. ... Now position it near his chin. ... See what a fast learner you are. ... And now pull back... further... a little further for the wind-up. The hammer has to have acceleration. The greater the acceleration, the greater the force you can hit him with.

**SAVL**

"Acceleration equals the change in speed per unit of time."

**LASZLO TOTH**

Bravo! And to get acceleration, we need not only the initial speed of the hammer but also the final speed, which we currently do not have... because we're waiting for you. Come on. I'll measure the time it takes. By the time you count to ten he'll be dead.

**SAVL**

... six, seven, eight, nine ...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Breaking glass. Water from the glass on Doctor H.'s night table drips onto her slippers, which are completely wet by the time she puts them on. Wearing these soggy slippers, the doctor makes her way to the kitchen, from which laughter can be heard.*

**DOCTOR H.**

He's dead.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*In the kitchen, silence. Guests sit at the table drinking the Vidal Blanc 2009, for which the husband of Doctor H. paid a pretty penny. They look at Doctor H. She looks at them, while her husband...*

**DOCTOR B.**

He doesn't see her...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Because he's looking at the plate, on which are left only the bones of the chicken. The meat that was just recently attached to those bones is currently being digested in the stomach acids of the husband of Doctor H.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

What a strong stomach you have! You see, there was nothing to it. Maybe you'll become a doctor when you grow up, you'll operate on people.

**SAVL**

Is he dead?

**LASZLO TOTH**

It seems to me he is, but we have to wait for a doctor's official confirmation. Doctor, it's not hard to determine, is it?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Check his pulse, and it will be clear that Georgi's heart has stopped beating. If it happened, then it happened quietly. Without drama.*

**LASZLO TOTH**

Why won't you talk to us? Doctor?! Oh, Doc-tor!

**SAVL**

He's angry.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Can't you at least officially confirm the patient's death?

**DOCTOR B.**

The patient didn't die.

**LASZLO TOTH**

What do you mean?! I'm looking for a pulse, there's no pulse. It's over. You have to officially record the date as March 6th, and the time as 03:57 hours. Cause of death: assault by blunt object. You also have to call the police. It's apparent that the cause of death was an act of violence.

**DOCTOR B.**

You call the police.

**LASZLO TOTH**

And say what?! "I am Laszlo Toth, risen from the dead"?

**DOCTOR B.**

Why can't I wake up?

**LASZLO TOTH**

Because first you have to do an autopsy.

**SAVL**

Will it be bloody?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Up to your knees...*

**DOCTOR B.**

I'm not a pathologist!

**LASZLO TOTH**

Calm down! Take a deep breath and see who's standing at the door. Quiet. ... Don't break the spell. Sit back down where you were sitting. Now imagine that you turn toward the door, slowly ... that's right ... more ... a little more ... and now you see that there, in the doorway, it's really him, in the flesh...

**DOCTOR B.**

Michelangelo?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*If he really did come...*

**SHE**

His heart would stop.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Just as the heart of the sleeping beauty stopped at the moment she was kissed by the prince...*

**HE**

Without a kiss!

**SHE**

And with a lot of blood...

**LASZLO TOTH**

And how else?!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Without sacrifice...*

## LASZLO TOTH

Like hell! "No one has yet drunk a cup of honey / without mixing it with a cup of gall. / A cup of gall needs a cup of honey; / they are swallowed the easiest when mixed."<sup>2</sup> In other words, no pains, no...

## STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC

*Were it not for corpses, there would be no autopsies, without autopsies, there'd be no understanding of anatomy, and without that, there's no maestro, and without the maestro, there's no...*

## SHE

Meaning?

## DOCTOR B.

Shut up already!

## SAVL

I didn't know you had so much blood.

## STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC

*He has so much because the doctor is dreaming a bloody fairytale, one in which Michelangelo is using a scalpel to open up the body of a dead Georgi. For the purposes of this play, at the moment the maestro makes the cut, the body releases not a drop or two of blood, but enough to fill the entire room, so that the doctor has the vivid impression of being in a sea of blood, enclosed in a bed-bubble within which he doesn't dare move, because if he does, the bubble will burst and will be flooded with blood that will drown the doctor. An unreal image, but the feeling it arouses in the sleeping doctor is pretty real.*

---

2 Petar II Petrović Njegoš, *Gorski vijenac*. Vienna, 1847. Translated by Vasa D. Mihailovich as *The Mountain Wreath* (Belgrade: Serbian Europe, 1997).

**5. INTERRUPTION OF SLEEP or WAKING**  
*Phase begins: 70 minutes after intermission*

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Georgi lies immobile in bed. He has the feeling that speech or movement would cause vibrations that would break the glass of the bubble he's trapped in.*

*In the room, silence. No one is there.*

**SAVL**

We're following the doctor's orders.

**DOCTOR H.**

You followed them. For a while.

**SAVL**

He's been sleeping for eight months already.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*That means that even spring did not manage to wake him.*

**SAVL**

That means that we'll have to leave soon. It's hard for us to do some of the things...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*You gave up?*

**SAVL**

A few times each day we have to move you from the bed to a chair, then carry you down the stairs. That takes two people and at least half an hour, and that's only if you don't include changing your clothes because you've filled your diaper,

which is usually the case. And all that work just to prop you up at the table while we eat. Nobody even says anything.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*They eat without saying anything. It looks like they've given up. All of them.*

**DOCTOR B.**

Except the doctor.

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

You still visit him regularly despite...

**DOCTOR H.**

Despite what?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Despite the fact that you yourself don't know what to think anymore.*

**DOCTOR H.**

His pulse is gradually decreasing, his pupils react less and less to light, his skin takes longer to register changes in temperature, that can mean only one thing...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*That even the last glimmer of hope is fading?*

**SAVL**

We're going to have to leave soon, and instead of waking up, he just gets skinnier, skinnier than he was when all this started.

**GEORGI**

I don't feel any change.

**SAVL**

Your skin is getting, like... grey. And thin. Even Mom has noticed. When she changes him, she tries to look at him as little as possible.

**DOCTOR H.**

... that he is slowly sinking to the bottom, because his family has also fallen into apathy. When they have no more strength even to look at him, change him, make his surroundings as pleasant as possible, that's where it starts...

**SAVL**

I can't remember when it started. Maybe after the situation with Dad. Mom talked less and less, he took longer and longer to come home after work... what could I do, carry you down the stairs by myself? You think that's easy?

**GEORGI**

I don't know. I never tried it.

**SAVL**

I did. Now we bring you down only on weekends. It's easier that way.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*For everyone.*

**SAVL**

The doctor says that it will get worse and worse if we don't start fighting again. If he hasn't woken up yet, he's not going to now even though we have to leave...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Because it's already summer and there's no time left. On August 6th, Georgi will find himself on the road to...*

**GEORGI**

Nowhere.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*If only letters would not always arrive to so unexpectedly. And always signed, stamped and sent from... whomever it is whose hands sign, stamp and send... these stage directions can't begin to*

*imagine, because slowly, an overwhelming feeling of happiness...*

**SAVL**

All of us were there. Dad, Mom, Mrs. Zapolskaya. ... You're upstairs in your room.

**GEORGI**

They let you translate?

**SAVL**

No. Mrs. Zapolskaya's holding the letter and won't let anyone else touch it.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Really? Mrs. Zapolskaya, the neighbor, is really going to play the role of the frog in this drama?*

**DOCTOR H.**

"Due to the medical condition of your child, a permanent residence permit for your family has been approved."

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**SAVL**

Nobody expected that.

**DOCTOR H.**

I could just cry when I remember...

**SAVL**

We hug and kiss each other, Mom runs upstairs to tell you the news. We even call Doctor H.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And they begin to celebrate along with Doctor H., the heroine of this drama—the one who succeeded in the fight for a residence permit.*

**DOCTOR B.**

The only cure for the sleepers.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Exceptional woman. Saint.

**SAVL**

Mrs. Zapolskaya says that it seems to her that still nothing is getting through to you. Mom glares at her...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Maybe the doctor was wrong. If Georgi doesn't react, then a residence permit is not a cure for this illness. It did seem a bit too simple. The moment of happiness here was really just a moment of hope, ignited, but quickly extinguished, like the light bulb that just now burnt out in the doctor's office...*

**DOCTOR B.**

Shut up, already!

**SAVL**

... and Mrs. Zapolskaya shuts up.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Despite all this, Georgi will not be resurrected. I'm sorry.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*It's not only the neighbor who shuts up, Laszlo Toth shuts up. ... Everyone shuts up except...*

**DOCTOR B.**

You.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The doctor slowly opens his eyes. And sees a very familiar face.*

**DOCTOR B.**

A most beloved face.

**LASZLO TOTH**

Who is not the spitting image of Michelangelo.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And is not even the face of the doctor's late mother...*

**LASZLO TOTH**

May she rest in peace.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*... While the doctor remains lying in the bed in which he fell asleep during his night shift, next to him, on a chair, sits Doctor H. She sits and runs her fingers through his hair.*

**DOCTOR H.**

You have to be persistent.

**SHE**

To the death.

**DOCTOR H.**

Because of life!

**SAVL**

What else am I supposed to do?! I take you to matches where your friends from school are playing. It still seems like you haven't noticed any change. At the edge of a hockey rink or in your bedroom, ice cold or hospital bed, it seems like it's all the same to you.

**DOCTOR B.**

I know that you truly believed it but...

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*But one must face reality.*

**DOCTOR H.**

Georgi needs time to absorb the news, to again feel the life he has become insensitive to.

**SAVL**

And we're trying to show him that our mood has improved.  
Still it looks strange.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Will the situation really remain unchanged?*

**DOCTOR B.**

In my dream, he died.

**SAVL**

Mrs. Zapolskaya spends more time in our apartment than in her own.

**DOCTOR B.**

She watches and waits.

**SAVL**

When Mom's not around to hear, she says that maybe the permit arrived too late for Georgi. Dad usually doesn't answer, but he listens.

**DOCTOR B.**

I told you that would be too simple.

**DOCTOR H.**

He will improve!

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*When?*

**SAVL**

I remember the date. June 6th, exactly two months after we got the letter about the residence permit, he opened his eyes. Mrs. Zapolskaya was there, of course.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The frog is always there.*

**SAVL**

She's the first to notice that you opened your eyes, but it didn't last long. By the time we all gathered around you, you had closed them again.

**DOCTOR B.**

The light was too strong. It's painful.

**GEORGI**

But I know that I saw you all.

**SAVL**

And Mrs. Zapolskaya?

**GEORGI**

Her too.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Georgi's mother recorded the signs of Georgi's progress in one of his school notebooks. That's how these stage directions know all the following dates: June 6th, "waking"; three days later, "sipped water from a little spoon"; three days after the water, "ate a little ice cream"; five days later, in all caps, "TRIED TO TURN OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BED." He's really progressing quickly.*

**GEORGI**

I feel like I'm doing exercises that make my whole body ache. But I feel it. My body. Alive.

**DOCTOR H.**

He's alive.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*July 26th, an important day in the notebook: his feeding tube is removed, he can eat on his own.*

**DOCTOR H.**

I visit him that day and take a photo: Georgi in shorts and a

T-shirt. He's sitting on their sofa, resting his head against the wall, gazing down at the floor. He's absent. But still he's here, with us, awake, on the road to full recovery.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Who would have believed it in those days when he was hovering on the border between sleep and death?*

**HUSBAND OF DOCTOR H.**

Hippolyta believed it.

**SAVL**

By fall you're ready to return to school. You better not skip classes any more. You've missed a lot of time.

**SHE**

You didn't miss anything.

**DOCTOR B.**

Is she talking to us?

**HE**

That's a stupid question.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Especially now, when there are so many reasons for celebration. So many reasons in this play alone...*

**SHE**

And in real life, too, because Georgi did wake up.

**SAVL**

And then the journalist came. All the way from America.

**GEORGI**

I ask her if she knew, when she was my age, that there existed a country called Sweden. She says she didn't. I tell her it's obvious to me why not: Because Sweden is a chill, peace-

loving country, without wars. Why would an American girl my age know anything about Sweden?

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*While he sits and chats with the American journalist, it's clear Georgi is quickly tiring out. It's clear from the photograph published in the article, "The Trauma of Facing Deportation," which also has a photo of the two Roma girls from Kosovo. They appear only in the stage directions of this play, similar to their passing appearance in the article by the American journalist.*

**GEORGI**

I'm worn out. But it's not that kind of exhaustion. Now I have a need to get up and start running, to run for hours until I fall down from real, pure exhaustion. During my months in bed I didn't want anything.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*The American journalist, in an interview that's already becoming a bit tedious, asks him if he's aware that his family got a residence permit thanks to him. Doctor H. squirms in her chair. For good reason.*

**HE**

It's a stupid question.

**GEORGI**

When I think about it now, awake, I don't have the feeling that I wanted to do it. If I remember how I felt in that glass bubble, I know that I definitely did not want to feel that way.

**SAVL**

Even I feel like this interview has gotten a bit tense.

**GEORGI**

I say that I didn't want to end up that way. I didn't want to fall asleep. It just happened.

**DOCTOR H.**

It happened.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*And here the story about Georgi's slumber ends with a fairytale ending. It's August 6th, Doctor B. has just returned from his summer vacation in Rome. Here he is in Georgi's freshly painted room, helping Savi put together a new IKEA bed. While the two of them work, a celebratory meal is being prepared in the kitchen in honor of Georgi waking up. By Doctor H.'s husband, of course, making a Hungarian specialty.*

*The others drink and dance.*

*And these stage directions, the entire play in fact, take leave of them at this moment... at the moment of the apex of their joy, the fairytale ending, which, if allowed to continue into another scene, could only go downhill.*

## 6. INSOMNIA

*Phase begins: 105 minutes after intermission*

### **STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Even though these Stage Directions for the Apathetic have expended every atom of strength not to tire out and fall asleep, we have not succeeded... We remain awake for a time, while being completely overwhelmed with emotion...*

*That “for a time” doesn’t mean either a little time or a lot of time, it means an indeterminate amount of time during which, eyes wide open, we think about an epilogue we could be a part of, an epilogue that would find itself at a border where fairytales are stopped, where crossing the border would absolutely ruin the joy, at the border of the fourth wall across which you are listening to the story of Georgi, who was visited almost exactly five years ago by an American journalist, whose article about him and other sleeping children was published in a New York-based magazine under the title “The Trauma of Facing Deportation.” This play takes its fairytale ending from that article, and the fairytale ending of this play is really the only part of this story that actually happened.*

*And how Georgi might find out about a play using his name and his story, in a different part of Europe entirely—well, that remains for these stage directions to come to terms with.*

*Is there any sense in informing Georgi that his life story has been placed within the confines of a play?*

*And what about the girls? These stage directions are in the dark as to what happened—outside of this play—to the Roma girls named Dženeta and Ibadeta after we left them in the scene about their family home, in the middle of Doctor H.’s home visit,*

*in which instead of an ice cube she used a frozen chicken. Are they alive? Was it hard for them to fight for a cure? For these stage directions, Dženeta and Ibadeta will forever remain asleep in the cover photo of the article "The Trauma of Facing Deportation." In real life, Georgi is awake, but these two might still be sleeping, either in Sweden or in the country they left to come to Sweden. Should this have been a story about them, a story without end... without waking? A bloody fairytale with the standard triangles of victim, villain and hero? And how to untangle the triangle of Doctor H., her husband and Doctor B.? Because it probably is a romantic triangle... or not... Or did it only appear so to these stage directions, just as it appeared to us that this play resembled a fairytale, but then nevertheless turned out that there wouldn't be even one kiss in this play, in which He, the one who gave this play its name, was awakened by a needle... Should these stage directions have kept our mouth shut even before we began to speak? To remain forever a silent witness... a silent witness to selective abortions, which are not, and we repeat, are not the topic of this play... Maybe it would have been better to keep quiet and pretend nothing is happening. Because nothing is happening. Maybe nothing really is happening and these stage directions are imagining and inventing a reality which in reality doesn't exist, just like She invented the voices of this play... All the voices except OUR voice, which has to exist. Because that would make sense. It would have to exist. But it doesn't exist. And why doesn't it exist? Maybe there's no more room... Although it's not a question of free space... and not of distance... nor of separation... Maybe these stage directions, because of the insomnia we're suffering from, are inclined toward sentimentality, because no one in the world has gotten sick yet from a little separation... or separation isn't an illness at all, just like there isn't and can never be an illness of apathy that will never change the world, unless it has nothing to do with the fairytale theory which says that things arrive of their own accord, you just have to wait for them... because anyway, isn't that how Georgi's residence permit arrived, while he quietly waited? Or did the doctor fight for it... Had that not...*

**HE**

Try counting.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*One. Two. Three...*

**SHE**

Try counting backwards.

**STGDIRCTNS4THAPATHETIC**

*Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Zero. And the Stage Directions for the Apathetic continue counting, slowly, backwards, into the negative numbers, into infinity.*





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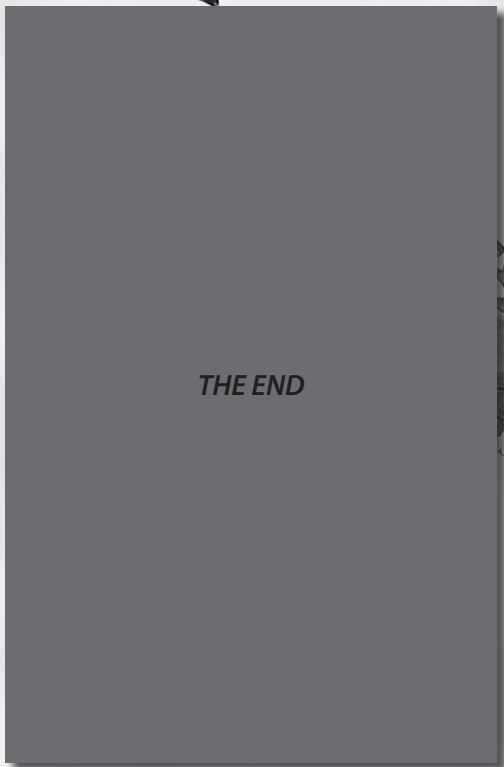
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*THE END*

