Venus and Patrick (from “City sketches” stories)

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To cling tight to the wall… It is such a reliable prop in the world where everything flies and crumbles and all of a sudden everything turns out to be as brittle as a dry leaf. The dry piece of paper thrown into the fire is the way eternity burns searing with its fire glittering stars, words and prayers which turn into tiny grey butterflies that fly through the storm and die. On finding them, we see black spots on their bodies and cry. The spots are the holes in space. The heavenly flame scorches our hair and it turns pale. The eyes become blue like ashes. And the lips covered with ice crystals sparkle.

A telephone rang and for a moment one could hear a Gabriel Faure. Pavan. Guitar and orchestra. His melody is like a wonderful glass ball inside which there are tiny figures in elegant clothes, they move and bow to one another. And instead of snow the white sparks are falling.

She stretched her hand to a luminous device, the room was being taken away in the insane rush of movement. There was a voice resembling yellow oil paint of the warmest colour. The voice was more tangible than matter and much closer than the smell of milk.

-Hello… Yes, I was waiting for your call… I’ll come… Shall I call a taxi? Is it so urgent?.. Ok, agreed.

To go. It means that she will have to light the lamp and take medicine. However, can these wisely made pills cure me form the wind that settled in me and slows down my motion whenever he feels like it and then it hurls me forward as if I were a bird?

Let my name be Gwendoline that from this day forward means the toll of bells and the kings’ wrath. I will cry, run and fall. I will. I will grovel before the heavens! I am the one who gives birth to initial darkness and chaos that create light and harmony. I am the fruit of eternal life. Rejoice, rejoice all earth creatures!

She dialed a number.

She has forgotten how it feels when you want something. Obeying the charter of necessity every single hour, every single minute, she was getting older and turning into porcelain. Once someone kind and clumsy made her heart from a juniper twig.

* Taxi service.

 “I need a taxi to the city with seven churches, the city that is always covered with snow. I need to get to the highest house in the suburbs where monsters live and the invisible takes its shape.

* Your order has been taken.

And there is another call, she seems to have lost a single moment.

“You will be given a gold star with stained-glass windows and a license plate painted in coal.

* Thank you.

She switched on the light. She set in motion a thousand invisible slaves that are rushing through the wire and running their legs off. She switched on the light and looked in the mirror.

Her face used to bear some resemblance with faith and determination that characterized the faces of some poets of totalitarian countries, soldiers-liberators and political prisoners. However, now… she recollected tired faces of the people in suburban trains. Their eyes were big and sad, small and sunk deep into the bodies in order not to see anything.

She watched them this morning through two pairs of dusty glasses. When you go in a compartment the difference cuts into your throat and is absorbed into your blood so much. But we shouldn’t mention it now. It’s so strange… Last night she was in another city and in another April day filled with the songs of the birds, the screaming of the cats and the rapturous outburst of tree flowers… And the shake of the train is like the first pollution of a live boy who is live deep in his bones. His first timid shouting, “I will live forever!” and the first understanding of the mortality of this body.

Yesterday she was hurrying across the paving stones by the cathedral where people had been hiding not tlong time before. Every century they were running here barefoot and in boots and they were chased by the people with arms. The arms that were created to deafen, cripple and make stab, incised, deep, and perforating wounds that can kill you forever.

All of them knew what arms were meant for, however, they did not believe in everything happening with them as history cannot repeat each time in the same way and in fact, I cannot be its participant. However, they could not stop, as they were overwhelmed with insane pursuit.

Angels in human form separated two crowds with gates. Someone probably failed to escape and was caught, but now nobody could say the exact number, there were many of them. One of them ran to the bell turret and one could hear the bells toll loudly, tunelessly and at the wrong time. The passers-by stopped as they could feel involuntary horror burning inside them. The bells were tolling the way the angels’ trumpets sang. Nobody dies here, however, there are so many corpses. She, along with others, was hurrying across the paving stones to the stage so that to speak. People were running and running. to play with a plastic packet up and down, up and down, ploughing the sands. There was a tall grey depressant building with columns in front of the cathedral. That was the way the Romans used to build - it was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with plenty of colourful flags, flags, flags. It was also looking at the pursuit and its windows must be trembling with indignation. But everything went to rack and ruin and there is no sense in recollecting. A couple of kilometres form the ministry one could see a dump beside the river. The water seemed brown in the twilight sunlight and brown grass and brown trees grew there.

However, the building has nothing to do with it and how can we blame people that they are not angels in human form. They are just those who got tired of running and do not have forces any more, and oil in the lamps is running out – and that is a much more serious problem.

But! I hear the night coming on. There are no lights outside the train. Only black plants stretch upwards flowing into the darkness. Cognus constellation is drifting above you, it looks like crucifixion, like a shaman’s boat in winged sandals with a double-headed stick. To dissolve and move together with heavenly light inhabitants not by the law of gravity but in the joy flow.

She opened the window blinds. There in freedom a bright day was playing with its rays of sunlight, and the lamps grew sad and she switched them all at once and burst out laughing.

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Fresh dust falls on her shoes, the car is waiting for her. Its sides are glittering in such a selfish way like the sun, like somebody’s reflection portrayed in the mirrored surface of the black lake somewhere in the Czech Republic or Norway. “Fall into my arms and let’s go to uncertainty!” The tired smell of the upholstery which experienced a great number of touches of huge, medium and small hands. The smells of sighs, whisper and mint gum.

She was feeling hunger being born deep inside her, the way a parasitic plant is growing on a tree taking its strength.

I am looking for a path leading to the sea.

Je cherche un sentier qui descende a la mer.

So that to hunger at the seaside like a gull locked in the open sky.

The soul is winding.

If I were a snake, I would dance amid pine-trees with my fiancé. If I were a cat, I would sharpen my claws on the bark of an old oak and having jumped on top I would argue with the moon till the dawn. If I were a swallow, I would fly straight to the point of exhaustion. However, I am only a man who is gradually killing himself day after day.

She looked at a driver. There was sunlight on his skin. From the back seat she could clearly distinguish his chin, cheek and his earlobe form which blood would slowly drop if it were bitten through.

She noticed by chance her reflection in the rearview mirror and she felt sick. It was the same feeling like in childhood when she used to eat in public. Such a wild, barbarian and absurd custom.

The trees were stirring outside, they were the creatures that were the first to learn to love and forgive.

Plenty of houses surrounded the square, which they were driving along, and it would not end.

There was also a square in that city. People fought there so thoughtlessly and mercilessly. Was it a year ago? The help arrived to those who were the minority. They were running through snow and fog along the cold road and streets, kilometer after kilometer, crushing on their way those who tried to stop them, and they were turning into an unconquerable army. Falling on his knees, the leader was thrusting his gun or a two-handled sword into the ground, the sword was glittering as if archangels had given him this weapon, though everything around him was in smoke.

Please, forgive me, my king, we were the whole night late. And there are tears in king’s eyes because of teargas, because of fatigue and because of the thought, “I will die not alone”.

“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child”\* with closed faces and barehanded. My children, cover your eyes with black crepe, you shouldn’t see how you shed people’s blood. Do not look into my soul, my brother, let me kill you like a lamb to sacrifice.

* I am blind, I am blind, mother!

The unconscious bodies are falling on the hot pavement, on Holy Saturday the God is moaning about his dead children and trees planted in a line are crying, and a house is burning.

It is only the beginning.

Where are women who will stop the fight between their husbands and fathers?

Where is the woman that will go out with a child on her lap, stand in the middle and say,” I am a woman in whose veins there is the blood of all the nations, spirits, gods and animals, and this is my beloved son. In the name of my son, I conjure you to leave the weapon forever and all your sufferings will be reckoned. Go home and there will be mercy for you and let the wounds heal”.

The sun is running around the Earth, the Earth is turning around the Sun creaking its way like a rusty wheel. My darling, please, forgive me, I have been created from dust and I will turn into it.

Mothers are cursing, daughters are crying – sores and wounds open on their bodies and pain flows out of them. What will you find when you come back? You will find the barren land covered with salt and your grief will grow.

And it will pass off.

Once everything will pass off, and there will be only Venus and Patrick left. I will be called silence and you will be called wind. And after making love we will give birth to a new Demiurge that will again create his own world and we will become his clay.

I love you initially and infinitely.

* It’ll be 40 banknotes.

Oh man, what does it mean for you to respect money with such significance?

* 10 - here is your change.

She thanked and said good-bye.

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Now she was standing on the square as if it were the skyline and she was watching the sounds wake up and sink in space.

You are here, Patrick.

* I called you to have a walk with you along the bronze street today at midday. Venus.

Patrick, Patrick, young patrician, why have you left your servants and who have you left your warriors for? Your name dooms you to wandering, to slavery and to revival in spirit.

Am I a heathen goddess for you? Sometimes it seems to me that once you should touch me with holy shamrock and I will die like the princesses Etna and Fidel, like Cinnia and Ulstera, like Monina. Oh, flaming Patrick, your face is true alive and your figure looks like that of ancient kings, as if you, Patrick, an exile of the Moon, ruled all the nations.

The road finished and they were climbing a hill. Venus despised stairs except stone ones that were made by somebody’s hands in another eternity. Except the footsteps that were slippery, trampled and polished by lots of feet the way the sea did it.

Patrick, a faithful guard of soldiers and a meek novice in the temple of rain.

“Have you ever stood at the edge of a great wood on a high ridge when a wild south-wester broke over it in full fury on an autumn evening?”\*\*

Have you ever had a desire to fling a shuttlecock so high so that it could recall the origin of its feathers and would fly away flapping its wings after migrant birds?

There on the fields when you lie among herbs and breathe with freedom, time seems to lie upon you with its rings twisting in an invisible but powerful funnel.

It’s time we left, we should be gone.

They took a bus, Patrick fell asleep on her shoulder, and she looked at the reflection of her frightened face in the glass and saw the windows of other people’s houses pass by.

A year ago she saw in her dream a dead silence as if he was leaving slowly with his back turned.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“I am dead” he replied making his way into blackness.

They haven’t separated since then.

She remembered that lots of months ago Patrick brought her to the third floor of some building. Through the cracked glass of closed doors, she could see a stairwell that was bleached, broken, littered, quiet and dismayed.

-This is the way a battlefield looks like,” Patrick said. “The soul of a dead person is so obvious and unreachable, and the body is so unnaturally tangible.

Not a cloud can be seen far away,

But the smoke of funeral pyres,

And the night sky would appear so close\*\*\*

They were going to her place passing by the wonderful lion cats and children’s playgrounds.

Sviridov war waltz… Spin, spin, red and white, as fresh as a daisy, like doves united in the air by a kiss, slaves of corsets and curved sabres. Spin the way I will spin once when I turn twenty again, spin like violins, spin like trumpets, together with the planet spinning.

The swings are spinning creaking like an old man’s voice and squealing like children. Swinging up and down the whole eternity, hair is tamed into a tight stub of a ponytail. Listen, listen to me, brutes, I am a man! I am mad and I am going crazy about the match of colours and about the willow that grows upwards in the reflection among the clouds of river lilies. Here, just a couple of metres above the ground, holding only on the rope, any other dependence looks funny and useless.

I’m falling down.

I’m flying.

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The house received them with softness of sounds. It was good to hide and rest here. Patrick did not live at her place, but he moved much of his stuff here. She played in the theatre in the evening, but her movements got the sleeping atmosphere of her house and she was doing everything so slowly as if she were in bath steam. She loved water and spilt it whenever she touched it.

The sun was gradually slipping away and when she was changing her clothes preparing for the entrance she stood motionless for a moment dreaming about something.

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It was noisy in the theatre but the solemnity of mystery could be felt through the gaiety.

Sitting on the edge of the stage in the chamber, in the daytime, when nobody comes here and even light only slightly diffuses the darkness – it was the queerest thing she has experienced in her life.

It was as though in a bedchamber of spirits, on the altar, on the bottom of a will.

The one who was born here, favoring but incomprehensible, generous and unsociable, the one who is watching you with curiosity, slipping away, appearing to only me?

Can I dare to ask you? But hush…, let it remain a mystery.

Forward, to the stage! Three steps to the right, a turn of the head, the voice. I see you, I hear you, I am acting, I desire.

Like a storming forest,

Like a traveler caught by a shower in an unknown town sleeping during siesta-time,

Like a drop of fresh water falling down into the ocean,

Like a bumblebee inspired by nectar,

Like a mask falling down from a face.

Patrick was making evening-flavored tea. The wind dressed-up with petals of blooming apricot trees was turning the curtains into sail.

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And then, they were lying under a warm blanket, like a brother and sister, keeping silent. She had a feeling that she was on the verge of finding something lost. And she saw a couple of young people holding a child’s hands. All the three were facing the sea, and the little girl was laughing loudly as she saw so much water for the first time in her life. Είμαι, Venus, Πάτρικ, γελώ, πιο τολμηρή. \*\*\*\*

Narwhales break through a tremendous block of ice with their corns, gigantic boulders drag through a desert, the moving turns into music, paper gains a voice, a candle revives adjoining fire, a prayer turns into a dove, flesh revives. Narcissus blossoms into a myth, and in the pupils of his eyes you can see Maya creating new fairy tales like a chain of labyrinths overgrown with fragrant gardens. Eros closes eyes and puts his finger to the lips, and his lips are nearly smiling. Through gauze of the dream, clearness which can live til the morning appears.

\* [New Testament](http://www.lingvo-online.ru/ru/Search/Translate/GlossaryItemExtraInfo?text=%d0%9d%d0%be%d0%b2%d1%8b%d0%b9%20%d0%b7%d0%b0%d0%b2%d0%b5%d1%82&translation=New%20Testament&srcLang=ru&destLang=en), The Gospel of St Mark 13:12

\*\* C. S. Lewis Prince Caspian  Chapter: 14

\*\*\* Genji Monogatari

\*\*\*\* (New Greek) I, Venus, Patrick, laugh, braver.