

# Sisyphus Skies

I.

Joce Brot (I/me):

Where do the ends of writing and reading meet?It's

never there, it's newer there: again, it begins.

We largely outnumber, but three dots are less capable of finishing a sentence than a single dot. Can't say why.

And end and end and end and end and,

nobody likes the red tape. The reading tape.

The writing type.

The typing right.

*That was Jose Brot - ex-assistant of one of the head of the Center of Proofreading in the failed and still failing state of Annimia. Now – an aging (already old enough) regular proofreader and prosecutor.*

*Rota (the last literary journal in Annimia):*

*Failure to write.*

*To write on.*

*To write on failure.*

*Failure to speak for – or against – oneself. Speaking against the state.*

*Against the wall.*

*“Where are you of?” – we don't write. One shall ask: “Where are you, form?”.*

*Streets are seamlessly sewn by invisible steps.*

*One is followed by another man's shadow.*

*Before I leave the wrong place, let me note some details – I want to revisit it and check if they are still there (they aren't).*

*These napkins look used, but used gently, as if someone laughing, sneezing, tried to remove wrinkles with them. They are wrinkled, these napkins.*

*They are ultimately white: everything but white, but white. And I think – if this paper is given me to start, what paper will I have when I finish?*

*They aren't following, - And who is? – anyone's writing these days. A new country originated last month (first letter of its name is still growing) – and a new problem seems to be testing our borders, trying to tacitly learn where the country aligns with its visible boundaries, and how they are overcome with a mental effort unshared with the uneven part of the world.*

*Capital is out of capital letters: first, they come for the Is, and dots are already there expanding in the dark as pupils, coinciding with it as coins coincide with their value; you weren't given wrong address (even if you were - letters always find their owners), but we did choose a street with two "Busways"; one is the place I described above – it's falling slowly down the stairs of letters, as the floor, as the ceiling, as the ground, as the skies. The other place of the same name – is to be filled with sense, but will it? We'll see (I will).*

*Outlets of a chain have to be lined up on a same street. Along with other measures (unlike the (re)current one, mostly disassembling), it's made in order to confuse gatherings.*

*This, however, confuses the confusers too.*

*Right now, I'm more concerned with funding issues: we're facing business and personal bankruptcy – and we used to think we were non-commercial! Where did we get money from, and*

*where did it go? Paper was getting worse each month – white today, it would become yellow tomorrow. This egg (das Ei in German) we eat.*

*We had to print on the purchased state papers and glossy magazines designed to shed light on the bulbs – before one day all the printing was banned due to the lack of paper.*

*Apart from our bittersweet Rota.*

*No one dropped by, or even called (either by name, or number). Even some of our staff members didn't come, so there are chairs for the honored guests to take.*

*You don't normally use flats as gathering spots, because sofas and beds deform the room beyond recognition. Grossly domesticated, they are unable to move back through the doors they moved in through. We need room for a 1:1 roadmap. We need to have it uncountable to be able to read it: sometimes it's bigger than a room, sometimes a room is bigger.*

*The uncomfortable uncountable.*

***Which man is the measure of all things? Our ruler is short.***

*My bowl – this upside down blow - is nearly finished; the print on the surface (the drawn bottom) is barely visible (as if unfinished).*

*I've dug long enough to reach the surface.*

*I'm leaving the table. The journal table. Inks are expensive these days, and the second bracket is unwritten. We're lost in the hugs of the world, falling and being caught. Never reach the floor we're given for the lasting of the words.*

*Never reach it in one piece.*

*Dry ration for a soldier: instant noodles.*

*Here's a man before his death in the act of eating, and he doesn't want just something to fill his inside with – it's mac-and-cheese he's after; what a collision – this desire comes from a*

*different world – different from this and only 10-minutes-brake world of his; thus –how deprived this man must be! He has nothing, he needs everything: the noodles give him a plastic fork and a plastic spoon, and the all over the place spices – all this is delivered from the top of the noodles' eternity. Noodles' expiration rate is eternity. His is not. Noodles wait. He can't wait. Noodles have no water. Water is alien for the noodles, unthinkable in the world of noodles, and still the water is everywhere. “Just add water”. Why no water in the noodles – because water is everywhere, and because it can't be. The impossibility of water comes with its commonness. Man resorts to instant noodles in the desert of the water. The noodles are eternity waiting for his 10-minutes break.*

*As a good Christian corpse waiting for resurrection and hoping that the eternity of eternal life will surpass the eternity of its waiting.*

*Our vaguely defined habitats are divided from each other by seven distinctive districts – they greet one another routinely by checkpoints (commas spontaneously transforming into fullstops).*

*First checkpoint blinds with night lights, last deafens with muteness – an gate open in the air for any sound willing to show up.*

*Standing on the roof of your house (not from your window, cause you live on the underground floor), I see mine.*

***There is a study with an unmade bed, a hung gentleman wearing a plastic coat and a battered hat, a switched on light, a plate of soup. Home, but I never enter it.***

*We read ourselves this way*

*Meanwhile – down there somewhere – a neglectable figure of Joce Brot is figuring out its way to my place amid constantly changing districts. He's already astray.*

*Are we safe?*

*What does writing conceal, and what does it reveal to the distracted – and the distractive?*

*We reveal ourselves beyond our existence. Overnaked, overfinished, overdone with.*

*I don't know – and don't want to know (and, you don't want me to know) – about your families, but almost all my real relatives have died already, and my invented relatives met them in the invented heavens with the bad news.*

*Death is a course book read in a poor class – it's scarred with bawdy remarks as love letters.*

*Friends disappear after the books we borrow them.*

*Don't know what best acts as monument to humanity, but I've seen a monument to a book. It was paper, and it didn't last long.*

*Man stands out. He's found in the middle of his second thought; he's turning back, but he's not what he was. He meets me on a charity concert in aid of Rota –it's free, so I don't know how they make money. He tells me of our new issue he's read, adding that someone should have published that article on found (and before – presumably lost) poetry anyway, so we were lucky to volunteer fast (after three months of reluctant consideration).*

*Found poetry is represented by a piece of luggage between two vacant benches. Benches around them become vacant fast, vacancy spreads as fire.*

*Soon, the entire place is vacanized by the police.*

*A policeman retrieves his luggage.*

*Why would they let us write (and publish)? What makes us different in the eyes of the state? Which state are we?*

***Writing is an action that wants to be state, and a state that fails to be an action.***

***Failed state, and failed action.***

*Liquid, vapor, cloud, mud.*

*State claims it is people.*

*State claims its people.*

- *“A forest fire combined with a drilling tornado”, “A devastating flood” (on the other side of Annimia), “Explosion of a chemical plant you didn’t know existed”?*
- *I’d managed a match, but who’d take the tornado part?*
- *Flood looks handmade. It’s on me.*

*Last decade (two weeks ago) they restricted our event scheduled in a used library (former apartment), because we had “placed a timer bomb” at the place of our slightly out loud reading.*

- *Possibly, between the two different copies of The Devils.*

To Joce Brot:

We share the beauty.

We share the park.

*The pond.*

*The water.*

Do we?

Unsend.

*Remember we received a submission from Joce Brot?*

*We hadn’t had an automatic rejection letter pattern before, so I was to compose one.*

*We were happy to read your... We were delighted...*

*We were...*

*We we’re...*

*I’ve forgotten the ending entirely. But we didn’t publish him, did we?*

- *We didn’t.*

*Failure to switch the light on, when it's daylight.*

*You notice a candle burning in daylight.*

- *Don't blow it out.*

*We are watched.*

*Let's not see each other.*

*Writing is for the blind. Writing is visual.*

*Last endless month I read that our humble troopers unit of 25 (plus/minus) people found some treasures arguably abroad, but in the next settlement they had to trade them for cereals. These cereals, they were unable to digest, and would shit wholegrain (the technology of peace is first tested militarily: today, our people get by through the perpetual consumption of trophy food that leave their stomachs as untouched as our prime minister's meal).*

*Year round yard kids – similar as washed socks – tell legends about chocolates found in mud.*

At home, the comrades heard their friend (unmissed in action) had been cheated by his long-haired wife/squared widow. They took collective revenge by hanging her lover, and raping her.

Letters submitted to soldiers keep coming back with proofreaders' remarks. Sky is the limit.

*One would ask – why whining? We've been let to publish Cervantes, Pushkin and Dostoevsky.*

*Who could complain?*

- *Shakespeare, perhaps?*

*We might restart exchanging values among each other – hoping each of us forgets who is whom and who they are. Exchange books, phones, notebooks, dishes. I want my belt back, I'm unable to wear Serge's extra large trousers without it...*

*Greg, Max, Leo, Serge, Lena.*

***First name is a close whisper, last name is a distant explosion.***

*Explosion is the name of each.*

*We removed ourselves from the university (with our names still hanging there in cool shaded spots of papers) five years ago just before the draft of students.*

*There hardly was a direct order from the director. You shouldn't read the initial goal as the ultimate sentence, even if in the end you're tempted to have a look at the darkened (always darkened), the starred, start.*

*Watch things. You cannot leave the place while the host is away (I am a housekeeper, not the host).*

*We exchanged places to avoid being caught called by drafts.*

*Once I came back to my place, I didn't recognize it at all. The furniture was recombined in a manner that I'm still in search of the wardrobe. I asked Serge if he had been visited by the police. He hadn't: he had done all this mess all by himself. He was trustful enough to lose his shit to my small flat secretly expanded by secrecy – the material shadows of boxes – so, the scent of the unfound is still present in each invisible corner of the overwhelmed apartment. Serge took things that I hid well and replaced them with his.*

*– I only took a bottle of oil, but I left much more.*

*To reply, use the letter you received.*

*We have no copies of our journal. All is genuine.*



*The tragedy's not about being watched – it's about being made to watch.*

*We used to have a graphic painter – a drawer from a drawer – but his ambitions far exceeded our humble needs; after leaving us, he changed his and a barbershop style entirely, and now when I visit our preoccupied art stores just to hide from the marching rain trying to grow things everywhere – including the forgotten craft of the roofs – to look at those different, competing rains and a single (well, maybe a hundred) sunrise above and the dethroned - below, I can't say which works are his. If we summoned him from these landscapes, he would be wearing shorts.*

*I would take a picture of him, and, smiling, he would go backwards and fall.*

*Underground – right where his sun set.*

*My handwriting has become better and moved firmly towards capital letters – NOW it looks like as if I was writing abbreviations all the time (or, as if a short-sighted person was hit by a bus), roughly packing the belly meanings into those blunt bags, loose irrelevant insides. But I also try to make my handwriting as small as possible, so a letter of mine – doesn't it, Greg? – reminds me of a landscape full of skyscrapers seen from above (and behind).*

*Am I flying up, or down?*

*- Well, I've been rereading notes of mine from around ten years ago, and I've got to say: it's not me.*

*- Don't tell me! Tell the lagging.*

*Speaking of which (which?): have you seen the new (old) coat of his? Don't let the second hand know what the first hand did (right?) He's given up on those jeans jackets from couple of decades ago, and now he's wearing cotton only. It might be a signal he's about to disappear, have a new name, start a new life as an old man.*

*There's a photo where he stands in a crowd waiting for an ongoing rock concert to start.*

*We go to one and the same second hand clothes shop.*

II.

*As it was said, noone knows the reason why Rota is still functioning, where they have film and paper from.*

A new issue of an old issue. This person doesn't even remotely resemble me. Who do you want to cheat? I haven't worn this for years.

I made a call to my superior – which wasn't that necessary since I see him almost every day, but I needed to outline that there was no fuss, there was fuss however, but I needed to highlight that we were about to discuss a different urgency swollen with the homemade dishes of the world's containment, slow with the unbuttoned outfits of evenings (his personal number was a digit or two different from the work number, but my phone was the same – as the clothes, as the socks) – to reach out for Knut, a former friend of mine who occasionally used my recommendation to the festive (in addition to our golf court, we've installed a football pitch) Proofreaders agency (meanwhile, I'm not sure why anything as ultimate would be called agency) – only to climb the overcrowded social ladder over my fucking head.

That weekend – the further weekend – no, the weekend after – we were standing on top of a gray hill wearing skis and looking at a dating couple: she was good at it, and he was approaching her in clumsy desperation, making tiny steps with huge amplitude.

- Any news? It's a matter of even more time, right?

Knut looked at his watch, which was slightly less easy than he'd expected (he almost fell).

- Forged, - He said, - This just stopped.

Our news agenda is so liberal we're unwilling to discuss the worst terrorist attack since someone shot a jester when he was giving the leader's annual speech parody.

There was another skier where the hill made a final effort and gave birth to another summit that happened to be the real summit (but who would tell?). That person was ready to slide down the dead grass.

I've been reading them a lot. What's different about them?

What difference do they make?

My warm up is finished. Now – proofreading: added a common, a dot. They're not even literate enough.

I made a difference, as if looking in the mirror and adjusting facial attributes. Looking close. I'm almost blind without my street lamps. They are stronger each year, stronger each night (I find it strange that a year doesn't have its "night" equivalent). My glasses are always too fine to last long, too close to things I look at.

I've found a coin.

It's mine.

It has always been mine.

This is all you should know about change.

Our new coins have the same face on both sides (not a criminal profile).

Our headlines feature a nice trend to use future tense. It's fair: past is no news, present is a blood sausage wrapped in a newspaper. My favorite is the perfect future.

We will have.

The bills toll! Lunchtime, however. A fish I'm eating. It was taken from a pond located in a park that's now closed for a fishing season.

This, I bought from an earlier fisher with a quarter of a coin and a limited amount of freedom.

Man is an animal, but what's an animal? A dirty golem made of dirt.

We're moving towards legal status of raw meat – we don't know where life starts and (especially!) stops. It's only logical that the unborn should receive no less care than the dead.

I'm concerned with a new rule introduced last year, when the last words in court became too repetitive. They also became very long, and can we clearly see where the length was replaced by recurrency? I can't.

The new rule suggests the last words should be replaced by a last question.

My answers, however, are limited and I need them for myself.

Annimia's sovereignty is based on the constantly broadened interior – hearts and guts of the people. Annimia is the ground of soul.

The soil of soil.

The salt of soul.

People used to conserve food with as much salt as you could hold in a handful of your imagination; pies would be upside-down bodies: edible core and rugged, irregular cover of clay.

Speaking of cold: not speaking of cold.

Memories of preservation. They are vague. And, the meat is rotting on the ground.

Hunger doesn't go when it's satisfied (when does it?).

Russia supplied our army with self-heating canned meat.

It expired a hundred years ago.

- *Cart blanche. The white cart.*

*Can I have a different vehicle, please?*

- *A coffin car. The times are too certain.*

*I've passed the circling fence .*

*My sight is slipping between the fingers as if they were themselves bars of the fence – this won't let me see who's with me here.*

- *I'm following you.*

*You're not alone.*

*This fence is long.*

- *I tried to bring Greg there. He seemed disinterested, and it was clear he didn't know quite where to look at.*

- *I was looking at you, mostly. Things instantly associated with you, things you love, would linger for a second and leave quietly.*

***My look is a feather tangled up in your hair.***

*You stayed. Now, when something stays – and stands where you were standing – I think of the remaining things (awaken slippily in the middle of their night of purpose) we still have to communicate. I used the daylight candle to tell you goodbye (as if it was something informative) from my departing window sill; we have to be more economic with our farewells (let me teach you: Fare fucking well, idiots).*

- *There's definitely light in the end.*

*But we're not even halfway. And here, we turn left.*

***A huge monument is placed here. Name field is empty.***

*I wish we could all read a letter as we read a map. I'd prefer seeing where I am. I'd also be happy if we published letters from time to time – old ones, but old handmade maps can still be applied, can't they? To search for the gold, perhaps.*

*Gold is old.*

*The writer is distracted at a different time than the reader.*

*Thunder and lightning.*

State is Midas who makes everything a gold of silence.

*The two meet at a place lonely with a black wallet lying on the ground. Writing it, I'm as far from them, as possible.*

*Not far enough: I reapproach this when writing, and I see what I didn't see – how spare parts of external world overlapped and folded into interior to hide the two.*

*I saw a bored waspon their wall, finally departing through a small window to the wrapped skies.*

*Serge, went skiing. Was it good?*

- *I hurt my leg, of course. Hadn't skied before.*

*None of us had. We wanted to flip a coin, but it hasn't yet grown a third side. So, Serge volunteered. He would tell us his only problem was a next to complete absence of snow. He was the only skier (was he?), the resort was open for horse-riding. Serge took two or three pictures of those horses neglecting their horsepeople a little bit, and a former horseman wearing a helmet, sitting on the grass in peace.*

*He shot Brot and Knut. They looked distracted, a bit. Knut was looking at his and Brot's boots as if he thought they were reversed. We can't see anything lower than their knees.*

*Everyone tried to adjust their business to the abnormally warm winter. Ice cream sellers would sell something I can't read properly.*

*Paper became luxury even more.*

*We started protesting against the weather. Meaning: against building the ice town.*

*Meaning: against the wall.*

*I've never seen you on those demonstrations. All the other people there – a few – I never saw again – but they keep exchanging that only photo of me made by a disguised policeman. Eventually, we all share the same old suit to disguise, but it is so worn that our body surfaces peek through it.*

*I'm holding an announcement: "All that melts becomes the ice". My hat is hiding in my pocket, and I don't even remember its color.*

*I don't know you.*

*I don't know them.*

*I don't know me.*

*Oblivion: live on.*

*- In summer, the river of mine – in the alleged countryside where I still tend to hide from you and your enemies – reclaimed itself and returned to the place it comes from. If I went back to where I come from, I would disappear.*

*Wouldn't I?*

*- I visited your birthday party before we knew each other. Like, before you were given a name, but already surrounded the surroundings with the inherent interior of self.*

*I ate mustard, I think. My invitor was mingling hard in the middle of a widening void. Music was stopping for eternity, it had the longest brake-way (which still didn't prevent the crash).*

*There was a terrarium with a holey clay castle inside, and the hostess told someone called Flaming was let out for a (probably exceeded) walking hour.*

***I played the piano.***

**- I played the violin.**

**You both lost.**

*“I don’t remember you, but I remember someone like you” – someone said with relief.*

- *I’m not sure this person would confirm your alibi.*

*For alibi is about being-there instead of being here. And – it’s about being-then, where About is more of a life saver than a boat, floating in the wide range of waters, looking for– and finding –reflections.*

*Max, how many fake names have you filled with pomes, sorries and asses of nonames?*

- *Serge only.*

- *I didn’t benefit from this at all, I must say.*

- *If you weren’t inclined to stealing the essence from our bare pseudonyms by editing and adding your funny remarks and rumors, you’d be more visible to our vaguely defined audience. But we’re not here to judge you – even when you finally get the name you deserve, even when we lose our names at last.*

**- Your honor, the honor is mine.**

III.

Is the city confusing, are pathways uncertain? A little bit.

I can’t find the way back. Something happens with these streets when I try to find my way home.

I don’t have to look for the losses: they surround me and shape my route. These gates of a central park were closed half an hour ago, that lane was blocked by a building wall (is there still a building?) twenty years ago, and a half-ready R&D district is restricted and restructured due to a long range (?) rocket we were unprepared to comprehensively study while it was approaching.



Electricity schedules and sudden open hours changes at institutions, restaurants and stores are meant to confuse gatherings of youths. Changes in city structure causes wandering of the old.

First addresses the liquid light of time, second – its solid states of stone and glass.

The changes work hard to heal the wound that past shares with the future – uncertainty of form and content. Coming home can be so tough that at times I go back to my friends' house – they've already got rid of other guests, and, changed, they reopen doors lightly: I always forget something at their places.

My things are everywhere.

*A worker is alienated from their work for a reason.*

*We're dangerously close to what we do.*

*Each your word is evidence.*

*Each my word is evidence.*

*We stand for you.*

*They stand for you.*

*I stands for R*

*I:AM*

*We are dangerously close to what we are.*

*We meet the latest possible at night not to see each others' faces, for partly hoping we're not who we are, and I want to know if we actually blew the ice town up.*

*You can't 4C the C4, I'm fucking told.*

*When we leave the empty apartment (the host is trusted to shoot himself afterwards), we are of the same number, informed left, uninformed came.*

*Past is edible because it is dead. It is edible because it's alive.*

*Your life to take.*

*Might we invert subject and predicate – dissolving all doubts in the inverted night of the paper. I used to read by the light coming from a street lamp. What did I read out of those pure distances – running fonts, ruining shadows, guesses good as mine?*

*I never stopped.*

*Light and sight are inverted in the latest letter (too late?).*

*Legitimate memory, general childhood: a rusty, forgotten bicycle lost its tie to a light post, sliding down the uncertain slope and still beating the standing cars of a rush hour in their chase of each other; it reached a thin, sensitive wall of my house.*

*This single knock knocked me out of my slumber. I got back to the endless homework of mine.*

***Night borrows a person, but gives back junk.***

*Man is a bubble-gum chewed by night.*

*Reach and stay.*

*Stay the same.*

I started proofreading because I've always been an obsessive reader.

But do I have to “look through” all of it again? Why don't we optimize the process by giving the books away to our decent labor force?

I've been pitching this idea for decades, but the only trial that took place five years ago in the capital (great success among the transparent skyscrapers), resulted in the detention of eleven builders who skipped tons of the unacceptable blablablashedemy (they were illiterate).

Still: why not delegating things that are estranged already? I'm tired of reading one and the same again and again – I'm a life person, not a machine!

And, I already know – the writing will be the same all the time, as if one day, spotted by spilled sun (as if someone in the dark stumbled at a bottle), the result could be different.

This repetition, however, makes no sense: if the first time wasn't perfect, what contributes that touch of imperfection into it?

Mortality, probably.

Oblivion is the soft power of death.

- *This recent quote of his sounds like a poster.*

- *Posters are silent.*

*It's raining still. Our attention is brought to the ordinary. We fail to write.*

*I'd love to read my works proofread, if this is the only way they could ever be read. I already came to the police station (why bother calling for the busy phones? They're ever occupied by one and the same small talk) and gave them my manuscripts.*

- *I think you gave a couple of mine as well, unfinished.*

*The precision of press: we're looking for words, things are looking for us. We often find words first.*

*Whatever we did, we're charged with something else.*

*Nero was something else than an actor.*

*The full stop – the column – of view: Nero's not the only musician in Rome. Nor he's the best. Why so much fuss, then?*

*An actor shall act.*

*The actor shall act now.*

***Man and history humiliate each other with their sizes.***

*We still receive letters of support – most of them are multiple copies, signed by different people, some are personal, unsigned. There's a guy – his name is now property of the editors (excluding you, Serge) – he sent us his writings anonymously. How do I know he is he?*

*I published this under my name.*

***We are writing about a fire, and the fire burns the writing.***

*We wanted to be firebugs, but nobody – both sides of before and after (when the firebugs are gone, and their back covers – Contents of their wings – are torn off).*

*He didn't want us to accept the responsibility, so we had to get him arrested. We wrote things on his robust back.*

*There was also a handmade (as we agreed) flood – the water running around with horror, running into ruins.*

*The flow was moving through the preliminary abandoned benches (with an umbrella left in haste, and a bag left a day before) – and – as if missing something – circulating like some sort of a new market currency (we've had those a lot); where had I been before that? There's no knowing.*

*The new street was entirely different, only the stones were the same – apart from a new one with a short history of hiding a hole in the ground (it was then found in solemn library behind the broken glass (well I had to break it to reveal the hole, but I couldn't have made this*

*hole myself, isn't it?). Nobody knew what caused the flood, so I made up a story where Leo would eternally turn the never found valve (as with all tools, this valve became the initial loss when things controlled by it went out of control), and, due to the grim rage developed in Leo inapplicably, the result would be the same regardless of direction (Leo could have).*

*Leo, unfortunately, next to ruined my story by his explicit and anyway undesirable presence on an open-space natural art exhibition where he was wearing a green (edible) hat and a velvet blazer. Velvet blazer in fiction is the analogue of a velvet blazer in life.*

- *I've never been there.*

*Unfortunately, artifacts themselves can neither prove nor disprove alibis. I was alone, reading a book. Who would confirm my loneliness? A sophisticated oak, former friend of generations almost reaching ground with branches, is still there – but ever-presence doesn't contribute much to memory (that's payed with passing – having memory is becoming memory).*

*It seems to me, any flood would be too soon: I don't see what we're supposed to do. We're as far from any action – or “inaction” – as those on the other side.*

*Reading and writing is one, but what is the other?*

*I'm writing things.*

*I'm reading things.*

*I'm seeing things.*

- *The place is wrong, or I can't recognize you hidden (could you be the chandelier, Greg? I doubt it. I tried to think what I wouldn't do at your presence, and of course, the only (well, rare at least) answer is: I wouldn't be writing to you).*

***Our letter voices, separated by months of expectation, overlap.***

*I get back to my wrong apartment. I'm about to leave it, because my neighbor is growing fast and is occupying the entire room; I'm always taken by surprise – by a comb, lipstick, skirt which I once took for a blanket.*

*Also, Greg, I realized that she had a barrette which looks exactly the same as the one I lost – the one you gave me for a present (as if they're not all the same!). How come, you fucker?*

*I try to remember which things are mine, and I hope I won't steal from her anything I won't be able to use anyway.*

– *We don't steal things, Lena: we watch them.*

*Can you see that wall between a doss house and a prison? It's there, thanks to us.*

- *Broken news: it's not there anymore.*

*They've come up with art of their own: "Bus stop is full stop". "Light is for everyone". They need all the city walls to write on them.*

*Inside and outside.*

*They'd love to see the inside matching outside, but not sure if they want it.*

*Paper is luxury for both sides.*

*Both sides of the paper are luxury.*

- *Our correspondence becomes a problem: each letter is already complete (overcomplete) with response. Each letter is a palindrome (dot in .N looks like a birthmark, but so does the dot in N, (though this birthmark is dry)). Speech became language too soon.*

*Brot's (archived) reports are complete with charges we don't know about and possible crime partners we'd love to know about.*

***We won't always be unaware of what we did.***

*Did we blow up the ice town?*

*What are we?*

*Let's figure this out rock paper scissors way.*

*With a gesture that indicates peace, you cut paper, and within each stone there is a blood covered piece of wool.*

*We won't always be unaware of what we wrote.*

*We won't always be unaware of what we did.*

*Did we?*

The things I don't quite get: the handwriting.

Response is written on the same piece of paper as the initial letter. However, the opposite side's handwriting is incorporated in the current lament, handprint of which is well reflected on the other side's celebration, as if a person was sitting at dawn on the back – the only – yard, and the night's lamps were still on. Choose one side of the road, and let the other take theirs! But these won't take it, they jump from one side of paper to the other and back as if winter grasshoppers – winter flies. Where are you, snow? Paper, where are you?

I have neither right nor obligation – chance spared me of the inconvenient discrepancy of not having right but be obliged to – to check their left inventory in the places of bygone being.

But a book was found in a studios hostel where I arrived anonymously (natural anonymity) to check the fresh prints. I was casually asked to provide the name, which I did in exchange to the other two names. Unequal barter, one might say, but the other would remain silent, and this second character is smarter.

I gave my real name (as if it says anything!), but the only name I had in response was the name of the previous shift watcher. Watcher is the one watching the watch. But in our common case he also watched the couple, sleepily guarding their awake silence. I will find his fired soul later, and in their perfectly clean room (bear in mind that these hostels don't keep cleaners) I found a book; almost as if all the trash wasn't quite taken away, but instead securely pressed into this book out of sight: it was complete with remarks, and I was unable to find out which book it was.

No cover (bare books look clothed, and vice versa), pages are holey from reading, almost nothing left.

Handwriting is now being looked into (cigarettes are being smoked, beer drunk, chess played).

Let them do the dirty job of inks and misspelling.

And I had to eventually initiate a house arrest for some of their family members, but I also seem to have overestimated the bloodline.

I easily come in terms with the subjects' family members – their apartments are always open for a public discussion. And – taking into account the age of those people (far from mine, but still very still), they've become coach potatfingers long before the house arrest. Does this relative grandma even know she's not allowed to leave the sultry, the fetid flat?

We've been discussing weather for some time, but then had to switch to more neutral topics (there was no ice to break, however).

I'm going out to bring her some milk so that we could continue that talk of (h)ours – the small talk that has grown bigger than the cloud we were looking at from her overoccupied balcony. I realize, however, that here I am – in the nearest grocery store, three miles away.

I buy nothing, I go home. It takes me an hour and a half to get home, but this includes two accidental and one deliberate hook just to avoid the third accidental. I would have never



found the road back to the old fool. I want this city smaller, or – I want new glasses that would make everything look smaller.

#### IV.

These damn mirrors are confusing.

Small things, however, don't tend to be less complicated, and that's another story, written in the matchbook of basic understanding.

The window is flat.

Larger than flat.

Larger than the house.

We didn't want anything to compete with pure history, on which we're reflecting unreflected – as if we finally switched off the light inside and went to bed (if only the third – the ultimate – light of the past didn't switch on between the bedsheets, wanting you out, out, out of the bed. Bed is evercomplete, as ground).

Back to fiction. “Haven't seen you”, four pages.

Here we go: they published my long story short under Greg's name.

Understandable: what could a humble proofreader do to the endlessness of copyright breach?

*The smooth surface of the bygone: the disarmed twist of an angle. Yet the flower store has now become a grocery store (too much food in the country). And – the ice rink: a roofed ice rink in the middle of winter, a skylless place specially to ski (skate). Can it compete with the pond, infested with numerous possibilities of access more than the abandoned building (roof under construction) which is each evening inhabited by the residents in the same manner – via the improvised front – former emergency – door (?).*

***Pond with its self-neglected inside keeps bringing skies where they belong.***

***Pond fails.***

*Skies fall.*

*The skies of Sisyphus.*

- *I've been there.*

- *I used to live there.*

- *Who didn't?*

*This is all that an abandoned building could resist a vigilant surveillance with:  
fissures, mold, rust – a never blending fusion, the final battle that never ends.*

*Is this already the end? The lasting day of Pompeii.*

*The unfinished big picture.*

*What is the Vesuvius?*

*What's more important: Herculanium, fully destroyed, was fully rebuilt. Now, it's on  
the posters.*

*This is all you shall remember about memory.*

- *Hey, wasn't it my idea we could exchange names at times?*

- *It was Lena's.*

*Lena took each of our names – everyone's but Greg's.*

- *Did you know that?*

- *I took your name once, Lena – when you didn't come. I wrote a restaurant complaint on  
your behalf.*

- *What did you write?*

- *About the butchery. Had not much to do with them (the place doesn't have meat to  
serve).*

– *I'm sorry I didn't come, but I had to find the name I took, jotted down on a sticker  
and lost. I never was good at remembering that name...*

*And then one asks about the bag's content, but the case is that the bag is ripped of its content and refilled. What kind of owner would know for sure?*

***This is my mother, but am I still her son?***

They keep playing with fire while I am playing with words and am seriously close to being fired.

I can't recognize some of the books from my childhood, read by the ages – ages themselves, but however changed an old book is, it won't become a new book; love is the same story.

But is it a story even? A repetitive story – same place, same time, same clothes and – one and the same – look.

Another question, written on a blanket (?): where do they have money from? I had to buy a coffee there, and now I'm broke!

Nothing like that I remember from my short youth and the youth shorts.

A wall falls and becomes an endless road: I follow the steps. Is this stairs?

(Skipped a stair).

A star?

Once, I couldn't find my passport for some time. Then, I found it posted on a street wall.

I see, you've changed my appearance a bit. Fine (posthumorous).

Wait, this is how I looked 20 years ago.

Rest, boy - father, brother, friend, husband, lover, enemy, soldier, asshole, arm, shoulder, leg, eyes, fingers, stomach, lungs, arm, shoulder, dick. Sorry for the loss.

*The hand reaches out for the handwritten.*

*Second hand of the first person, you sign with your left hand. My side is unsigned.*

*Our contract is ineffective.*

*- I used to be left handed when I was... three, I guess?*

*We all used to be able to put signatures on behalf of each other. This did help us resume business as usual with our very official partners (mostly printeries and textile plants), when certain figures got arrested – never for political reasons, mostly because of drinking. Sometimes – because of drinking in front of the monuments.*

*For these reasons of uniformity, I asked all of you to stick to a particular manner of signing. Vainly: I still can't see how these two documents – a confession of causing a downtown blackout and a poem collection "Handmade night" – are signed by the same hand.*

*(one – in haste, the other - in fateful, however doubtful, peace).*

*- All I want is to thank you that you didn't pursue the idea of a standardized signature for the entire group. Whatever that might have been, it wouldn't have been anything from the world of literacy.*

*- This was senseless in both senses.*

*- Meaning comes after: you see me running across the prolonged street to retrieve the previously stamped material, an unfinished story that reveals too much room for the reader to get back home (and find their house of time robbed). Printery is closed already, and I'm imagining those devoted spiders with the eternity of legs finishing their homework at night to – by the end of it – make it public.*

*This night might be longer than we expected.*

*Early, you wake up to catch the transparent silence of paper before someone spotted it. You catch, and then betray, the silence.*

*And all this time of reading you won't be able to tell where the light is on: it's only on on the other side.*

*Your homework changes what your home is.*

- Residents hate the readers: they cause fires.

- Last month, I was listening music in my headphones, and the police came to me. A neighbor made a noise complaint.

- I saw how this starts: when the hour is late (the place is closed), and the light is fire, it happens fast. Fortunately for everyone, I was there – couldn't let them do anything wrong with the manuscript (I don't remember, which thing it was), so I covered the starting fire with Serge's coat.

- You made it worse.

- Still, I would keep burning all things around me to be able to keep seeing in the dark.

- What will you see in the end?

- We'll see.

*I've been kissing you down there, and now I'm washing your blood covered hand with cold water (wish we could run that fast, but we're something else aren't we, water of a different state?).*

*Lena: silence.*

***I tell the dead: "You took everything".***

***The dead tells me: "I took nothing".***

*The cause might be tiny, but the destination point of the reaction is even smaller. Meanwhile, we're surviving the middlemarch of the uncertain – which can move either towards the cause or the consequence.*

- I'm in the tiny other end, waiting in the cold, wrapping in the tiny washed coat my enormous self.

*The bus is busy – it has its own reasons, and the (unclear) origin. Where might it come from?*

*Can I ask the driver to change the course (I'm the only passenger)?*

- *Impossible.*

*You must learn the land by heart.*

*It is your heart (with sick, dizzy cows inside).*

*Next time, don't get lost.*

*This doesn't expand: it grows inwards, to the inherent depth. The full stop is growing – a dot for the I.*

*To make the point.*

*To place the dot.*

*You are there.*

*Our subway was made – and is used – by dead men. They know the drill.*

*Here on surface, I can't remember my home, my phone number, my name.*

I'm drafting my first lecture at the Capital university, but I don't even know which course I'm going to read. They tell me that it's up to me. What is me it is up to?

I know that the floor above there is a current war veteran whose students are writing a test. He has no eyes, so they cheat.

What do we share apart from the audience? What does the audience (the hand raised furiously, dividing the newborn silence in half) share with us?

I want all of this, and more of this – the tiny full stop on top of the summary, the reversed bottom line. If it were a person, they would be terrified with how high they are, and would never see the bottom, never know their own gender.

Also, we're unable to measure the distance.

I want to bring that boy back to interrogate him. He saw them, they saw him. They didn't lift a finger to save him: he saw them. I want the dead to tell me what I already know.

In the meantime, the dead have nothing more to tell than the living. That's why they are silent.

How do we count the dead? Is dead a plus, or a minus? Life and death are electricity.

The borders are protected with the best stone, the best calcium and the best protein from the entire country.

The center is very different. It's not less fortified, but the materials are different: we use quartz for squares and cement for cemeteries.

Human remains human remains human.

We don't need a god.

Man can make a rock they can't lift.

However, we are to broaden our imagination beyond the monument stones. We don't know for sure which minerals might now belong to the barbarians (we must teach them how to use shovels so that they do not smash our heads with them), and our distracted spies might not be lying after all: we might not know how to use the new fuel and the renewable petrol.

Is speech renewable? Is language? There will be nothing to speak on once the speech is heard.

Repeated, it will fill the random rooms with the angles of misspelling.

We will watch the improvised window.

“Do you have children, Mr. Brot?” - They ask.

I have your children.

This matters more.

The loser is finally lost among his losses.

To those who have trouble following me, I've been leaving traces for all my life, but they're so different in shapes, shades and degrees of transparency that one would hardly say there was a single man going home in the evening.

The dead, in (t)urn, left no crumbs: they've eaten all the bread they had.

V.

*At night, the roads are empty and buildings look like their full-size models.*

*They are.*

*Without notice, buildings replace their facades with insides.*

*It's a sabotage.*

*So, what have you really seen, then?*

*What have you seen there? Who would separate these two questions?*

*We've seen each other.*

*Despite Serge deliberately occupying the room we'd booked for that day.*

*- It wasn't deliberate, I also need to sleep somewhere. The gap in the schedule was somewhat unusually white, sort of vanilla, but I risked and wrote my name there. It wasn't great pleasure to be there, you know. Water was cold.*

*A guy entered the room casually – I thought he was a cleaner before he spotted the floor with greasy mud. He occupied the only (almost absent) sofa in front of the blind TV and asked me to bring a glass with anything resembling water.*

*We talked for an hour and a half about my fame and his ambiguous anonymity (the unlikely modesty, rather), he couldn't write a thing, for his identical pens – going after each other – started to go before each other. I brought him my empty pen, and in his hand it became functional – for two minutes, but it was enough to sum everything up.*



*It was a journalist from “The Table”, and he wanted to know how we knew that the ice town would collapse. I had to explain how stories work. I think he learned the lesson well and summed up the entire story of our life, including how it ends (that illegible, shaky ending made with a tired hand).*

*The water is open for everyone: the ponds are constantly accessed by all sorts of people who are primarily interested in the shortcuts that mostly act as repetitive surroundings of the ponds untouched by any similarity with anything except for the skies themselves – trees are not permitted in these zones because of their disguising effects. So, the plain source of water when there is no wind around looks like a clean square, and a tear approaches my eye from an unknown direction.*

*This pond is not for swimming, but we do swim there at night when there are no lights around us. We all know of the electricity schedule, and we know it always changes, and we never know how and when, so if there is info about a certain pond-presented district having no light, we go there to swim, and at times I have no idea which shore I came from.*

*- That's because we leave, having got tired of waiting for you to come out of the water.*

*– That's fine: I come out of the water when I know for sure which shore I'm about to step on; most often, the shore is the same, but at times I reach the other one, and reach out for the forbidden – the forgotten – fruit of difference – a new window, establishing a long, but measured distance between us.*

*– You could swim on daytime sometimes.*

*– Writing is always night.*

*Writing is always negative: negation of its own background.*

*At times, I reach the bottom with my feet, and for once I've reached it with my fingertips-a vaguely desired third shore where I found an old coin with no sides.*

*The lot of mine.*

*There is a blind window. The reversed Braille font, windows address suddencripples with their eternity.*

*I'd like to respond similarly, but don't have enough ink in my pen.*

*- You shouldn't have written poetry, I told you.*

*- I'll never take you there, Greg.*

*I used to work as a guard there and have a small reading room that would shine through a window facing a deep underground parking place. At times it would get outlighted - briefly and tremulously - by the descending cars, as if they were entering cold water or something.*

*There, I was happy. Then, my hiding spot was found.*

*You found me.*

*I had a typewriter there. And, a manuscript. Once I went to the mirrorless room for the rest (neither F nor M) and when I came back I heard some noise – as if someone was slapped. Both manuscript and the typewriter were lost – I don't know who took them, were those you or after you. Instantly, I ran to check my employer's property – everything was there including the angrily wrinkled paper glass (I was a guard, not a cleaner). I felt relieved, and empty.*

*- I believe none of us has ever read a page of yours.*

*- Or anyone else.*

Where have the lovers gone?

Preparing myself – and the others are already prepared by a number of professors like me – for the first day in the audience. I asked the university management to ensure a tiny draft in the room – by opening a fig window leaf in the men's restroom (a stone that kills both the penguin and the eagle), and I will leave the audience door slightly open, of

course: nobody shall be encouraged to stay outside, however engaging the pictures of the dead professors might be.

Rota reporters are everywhere – while I'm hunting them with my glasses, they're hunting me with their black and white cameras. To be left alone, I need to be a number of people. The lecture of Dr. Victor Vinograd (I did choose the name, but not the list out of which I had to pick one) contains fourteen false claims that are craftfully mixed with genuine gems of Annimia truth.

Water is to reflect on – if there's anything to reflect, of course. The university lights are bleak as the university enlighters – and they are few. This corridor – the one I have access to – is supplied with a distant, corner window.

In the audience, there is a cleaner. I enter the room, and she takes her seat somewhere distant. There's no one else yet, and because of that the distance between us is measured by an unknown ruler, put on an unclear scale.

I tell a joke, and she writes it down in silence. Jokes have no end: their punchlines are read by a serious person.

The humble flood comes in 15 minutes, and takes nothing but a small slice of that silence. The young people restructure their presence – it's obvious that they have a settled order of sitting, but now they're recombining it as in a game when you're to guess in which glass the borrowed coin is (none). This is an instinct which enables when they see a new face.

The two girls don't talk anymore, and, moreover, the students between them become mute with this.

The nerd has mingled (not very well) between the uneven parts of a paintball team. A bubble-gum peaks a desk, its front side (*not mine*).

A fifty years student in a jacket – as if chilled by the draft – is sitting by the exit, as if just came in, always just came in.

What am I going to do?

- Your fathers, - And grandfathers, - are heroes of the past. Their courage served us well before, but now it's your turn to show them the future they were fighting for.

On our walls, we can't anymore read: "Watch missiles". The words are washed ("Wat miss es"), but we read letters out of this whiteness. We construct the future by filling the holey past.

He's looking at me in... well, he's looking at me – this is unsettling enough.

Fortunately, he doesn't come the next time, and the time after that.

He's not very studious, as I see.

Not sure how many jobs I'm going to have before my pensionless retirement, but I hope his memory (for faces, and otherwise) sucks like a newborn mammal.

*To write on the falling leaf. On the fallen.*

*Too late, write right on the ground.*

*The twofoldness. We need it when we're to separate our ways home. And, we need this to meet home.*

*We need a simple riddle to shake off the eyes of chance pedestrians. I'm your letter.*

*You are my name.*

*Someone third was following us, but I believe he was only afraid of walking alone in the dark.*

*When we enter, home in its darkness prolongs the empty street. When the light is on, it looks bleaker than expected.*

*Face is a screen in a dark, dark room.*

*Room 24.*

*- Paper glasses.*

- *A carpet.*
- *Wallpapers.*
- *Chandelier.*
- *Normal blanket.*
- *Plastic dishes.*

*Only the knives are iron (there are no plastic knives around).*

*On the balcony, the passed city is given to us from below. It's small, but heavy, and we are knelt by its downward weight.*

- *Go back inside and let's fuck already.*

***Love is lower.***

VI.

*Let's meet where we last met.*

*Easy to find: the bench with a bumble bee.*

You see a block of flats decorated by its own excessive volume, a fissure running towards the roof and disappearing in heaven. Door to the left leads underground, door to the right leads outside, but aren't we already outside? *You should be.*

It's been a good decade since we started interrogating subjects in their apartments, profoundly enriching practical meanings of simple things like pencils.

I see an abandoned piece of fully paid work.

This commonwealth lacks common sense.

I only see a single urn around, and it's almost empty (I checked).

This university town is so old it could have counted planes flying above it during the first war against the independence.

I was born late.

I come home late and must write an explanation.

I write an explanation that in no way reminds of what I'm writing here. In reality, I was followed.

And, it wasn't a hesitant bookworm who's finally eaten the letters through – or found a particular proofreading gap to appear from the other side of the robust cover – it was a persistent cripple – a rare guest on the streets!

I'm about to pitch an order to prohibit cripples wandering along the bussy paths. Or, should I lobby the waive of 40 km/h speed limit instead? Anything to prevent him from following me.

Of course, I already have an escape route, but it lies through a contraband bookstore, and they tend to shut their doors in front of strangers – if they don't look familiar or aren't fast enough. Do I have to pretend I'm even interested?

Well, in fact, there was a volume that drew my attention, but even when running through the last-not-the least – pastry – section, I managed to recollect that the book was legalized twenty years ago.

Perhaps it would have been better to stop and let him ask me the way – I wouldn't have lied, I just wanted to go home (but what if he asked which direction I live??). In reality, though, he wouldn't have patience to wait for any answer.

They want to speak. They want to be the first to speak (mouths wide shut), and they don't know the streets well enough to see that the first is the last.

The first is the last already: nothing there, this person faces nothing. There's nothing left on the shelve of the store.

They're the last to know they're dead already. But, they will. There is a chance they write long enough to learn this. One day, and one minute, they will stumble this death by chance, in the middle of their life sentence.

My teaching position makes me vulnerable: I have to hide, as a humble beggar. Is this what the teachers feel/look like?

Money issues aside: I know they don't own the numerous university buses they travel by – not only to work and back, but everywhere. Why can't I mingle with this enormous crowd already?

Why do I remain myself among the strangers (well, the good news, however, is that the photo the crippled one would look barely recognizable even to my ex wife (especially to my ex-wife))? When followed by a stranger?

We need more eyes around. More windows for outlookers.

My eyes are getting worse each night.

In the meantime – in the middle of night time – when they get occasionally sharpened by a passing car (of which only the tip is light, and the remaining – major – part is noise), I think of being pointed at by a long-ranged gun located in an impossible rain forest populated by small extinct predators, while I'm searching desperately for my reading glasses.

In daytime, my colleague from the previous shift (we considerably overlap) – the only one who can recognize me in the night's pictures (he makes ID cards), laughs to himself hoarsely, little fuck.

*We know for sure that he's after us, but aren't quite certain what takes him so long – considering that we've been following him everywhere he steps.*

*I know he has an (next to blind) eye on the art therapy classes Max's curating in one of the busiest university facilities.*

*- First of all it's a university public canteen, and their terms are clear – all paintings of my students must be torn apart when the class finishes (I mostly do this myself).*

*But never – burnt. Lessons learnt (I wish our proofreading centers learnt a bit from canteens and stopped causing neighborhood fires because they want porn gone).*

*I'm not much of an artist, so when I need to give an example of a shape or a tint, I borrow a central tower or a traffic light.*

*I don't know how to give them back.*

*It all started with an improvised still life – as it normally does – it was a plate of fruits. They asked if we really needed all those different grapes.*

*The most careful painter made a picture of an empty bowl.*

Today, I'm after him again.

I want him to confess and testify – don't need the names, only want the confession. After that, we'll take him to court around the corner by car.

We found a nice replacement for him at the university. This woman has been copying for all her studying period, and she'll now be reading from the book openly.

The problem is: I'm slow as the night.

I can run for the cripple, but I won't be able to catch him.

Government workers receive monthly updates of the city map, but with the increasing deficit of paper, they're becoming irregular.

Oh, this city changes so fast, and so unpredictably! Last year, we hid the central square in a secret place to avoid demonstrations there.

I miss good old dead ends – ends that stay dead.

I love persistence, I love the dead dead (there is a chance, however, that with each repeated "dead" the dead goes deeper into death, while the inks are certainly pailing). I understand complexity, though. Often, we can't prove that an act of killing involves an



act of being killed. Sometimes, only the killer's return to the blooming, blossoming scene of killing (to retrieve a lost credit card with his name on it) can prove there is a case.

And, it would be good if the killed was still there – for the big, endlessly narrowing picture of a murder(er)(er).

The dead is still there, but for now we're unable to retrieve him from the bottom of the city pond. In a way, it's good for the investigation to have an anchored crime scene, and good for the relatives: it's not so easy to find a vacant grave these days: the graveyards of our peaceful country wavy with ivy and roses (though roses are rubbing the wrong way) are ever getting smaller.

However, the parents have to express their grief by an entirely alien tiny forest of two and the same birches, couple of miles from the actual place of their son's accidental burial (the pond is now fenced).

These parents look different each visit.

- *Why not settle somewhere quiet?*

*I've considered this when having the time of my life in one of the pleasantly ruining village bordering the other country – the village rooted – and is still being rooted - into the land of the dead (all land belongs to the dead).*

*I thought, however, that this might be the place to run after all, and the other side of the reluctantly shallow river was cut from this shore permanently, entirely.*

*I'd add an uncertain kite between the two ends of this giant coin, dreaming of all the clouds and skies it could be exchanged for, knowing not about the different, the unknown (and yet inhabited by a glass bottle) side of itself.*

*I move along.*

*I see the road full of cars, barred by a single man holding a stop sign. We don't have unmanned road signs, and we don't need them. People leave their cars and look around for the way*

*to go round the sudden (blood)spot of gathering interest. They're unable to leave, pinned down to this point of interest.*

*Now, the road back is barred as well. Right and left – as well.*

*Cameras are instantly silenced – if there are lazy tourists around this mixed, vague forest. I'm not a tourist: I'm looking at it, and there's not much to look at: a policeman shoots, and someone is shot.*

*Another is shot as well.*

*If they had nothing in common, they now have.*

*A bomb exploded by a tree – into a tree – as if it wanted to replace the tree momentarily with explosion, as if the explosion could grow like a tree.*

*- Meanwhile, what's the right, what's the left side of the time? Does it give us this hard opportunity to look around the mess?*

*- Who's seen both dead ends?*

*Exit becomes the entrance.*

*The existstence.*

*We're following, fooling our own steps.*

*And, you say: bright as the day. And, I'm tired of holding the street lamp as large flower, hard to identify.*

***I tried to look for the point where writing starts, and my writing was the search.***

My fur coat was eaten by moths – in the darkness where they became all mouth in search – as I always feel – of a body behind the clothes. (by the moment they reach it, they will grow stomach to stomach it). And no, this is not the reason why I'm wearing a teacher's robe these days (my beautiful old-looking (*old*) jeans, my T-shirts and black

jackets – where have you gone, having grown your rudimental content which is a size smaller than you are...).

The question is: why would anyone want to read this now?

Do I remember the warm winter day – I do, or was it a chilly summer day, after all? A moderate spring afternoon?

Do I have to remember the day when the ice town collapsed?

The town was merely a model – a good model, but a model – of the bigger city.

However long you count, you end up with one – a category, a sack of being is carried away by a homeless. Who's to blame that the bag is full of similarities, and the hairbrush is rare, and the mirror's too big to (be) present?

I brought my son there. Of course I brought him with some other children – the boy needs friends. But he was there with the crowd, sharing all the risks.

And, when you say I wasn't among the parents who lost a child that day – how can you know that for sure?

*Some of those who died when the ice town collapsed because of the warm winter weren't killed by ice blocks.*

*Some of them drowned.*

*Clue is a witness: as a witness, it is buried underneath, from the bottom of its knowledge, where its meaning originated before it was roughly, brutally rethought and remade on the way out of the case.*

*Rooted in the existence already, body is constantly being rooted even more.*

*There wasn't anywhere else to go that day. Homes themselves were taken by some other power of the passive, overwhelming presence, and that power pushed us away from home.*

*Walls can't protect you from the inside.*

*I left your place as if I was leaving mine.*

*We left the places for the Black square.*

*Have we brought our places to the square, partially? Have we then brought the square to the places – partially?*

*Were the parts equal?*

*Has anyone actually looked for the victims' families?*

*I found a distant relative – an occasional, eventual painter who invited me to her place and showed me around the rotting canvasses.*

*The unfinished pictures were as if half-destroyed before my visit, in a fuss. However, the meeting was prescheduled long, long beforehand.*

*- T? – She said.*

*The window was uncertain: I saw a very non-representative, festive corner of the university. Location: downtown, but it was as if a respectable gentleman stumbled and was now rolling along a respective street, and, stopped, finds his suit resembling the morning glance, but not quite.*

*- Water, - I said.*

*The fresh water wasn't very good – it demanded special treatment.*

*- Have you claimed the body?*

*- Why would we?*

*I look around – I see the descending books spotted with paint of all kinds, except for white and black.*

*- I don't paint, - She said, smoking, - I just make frames.*

*There was a portrait resembling someone we all have seen in the papers, but with only half of the chin, and half of the forehead.*

*- I wasn't as brave as you, and interviewed a victim. He confirmed everything I told him, and I felt like I'm fitting the wadding back into a stuffy.*

*Others were silent as the gold.*

*The dead won't allow the living to speak for themselves. The floor is taken by them for good.*

*They've faced the depth.*

*Surfaced the death.*

*I want to go to bed, and am unable to find the blanket. Where is it? Where could it be?*

*I speak. I take the floor. I give the bed to the dead. I give the dead to eat my food and use my toilet. I give it my blanket, which I found under the bed. One day, the dead says: "You did well, you deserve to be dead as well".*

*My flat is a mess, but in the meantime – however messy it is and however spread the things are – there is always too much room in the room.*

## VII.

*Hell is always the other hell – the next door in the line of doors – they never shape the horizon, never reach out for the distance I maintain.*

*- This is – I say – a lake with untouchable fish. Here it is.*

*There are things that are entirely prohibited to collect. No one knows which things they are.*

*Things untouched by similarity, guarded by a general eye. Sniper's perfect outlook: much time to read. Not enough time – or overview – to recognize our common ground.*

*I was so, so wrong and foolish to tell you – let's meet there, Lena, in the forest. I should have known your deciduous forest is different from mine.*

*Do you have something to tell?*

- *Well, not much. You've told everything.*

*With everything told, the silence is expecting. The listeners – the silenters - are told twice:  
in the beginning – that beggar with a bag – and in the end.*

*In the middle, they aren't: they're distracted, they're disinterested, not there.*

The ice is melting, breaking, becomes the water.

This water is broken.

Rename your deads. The law was issued twenty years ago, and since then we don't have much confusion who died and who didn't.

We tend to think your deads have everything and live their humble lives in their small rooms. And, when the room is bigger, they can share this with the living.

- "Give bread to the dead"! There was a slogan, when I was younger.

- *When the dead really needed bread, you mean?*

*In the summer, I would place a desk in the yard. Then, I was unable to bring it back by the numerous stairs, and it's still where I used to write the letters to you – each of you.*

- *You never wrote anything revealing that you were writing outdoors. You could have told us a little bit about the green, and the brown, and the blue. You know we hardly ever see the out-side of ourselves.*

*How have the skies changed ? Any news from the bark, and the ground? Ground is twofold: any news from the other side of the thick paper?*

*Paper is a bad place to meet.*

*Something your eyes run into – preceding but not preventing the collision.*

*If animal is a mechanism, human is a mechanism too.*

*It thinks mechanisms. But can it prevent the stoppage?*

*The thirsty – the rusty – meat of reflection.*

***The dead have black paper to write on.***

The fun of strike! The poetry of a labor strike (to whom the bell rings).

Sign holders are showing the other sides of their signs. Illiterate, they think that the signs are the same. They are not.

In the evening, they abandon their signs and go homes.

The rioters go where they belong. ***Their fists are scathless, but their palms bleed with the fresh lines of life.***

*This former museum is the future museum.*

*This museum of modern art is half-empty and not even closely half-full.*

*This is where ends meet, and we meet as well. The ongoing corridor of which you're the unnecessary, the dead-end derivation, and yet the completeness, the enormity of the picture, makes me want to leave the place.*

*You're also irritated by me, as I see. The room is empty, the rooms are. We leave, but in fact we could live there.*

*We ask if this place is rented, and the guard says – correct, it was rented two weeks ago by a contemporary artist.*

*The artifacts are missing, but are replaced by text descriptions. When we came, someone turned on a fire alarm. We won't evacuate.*

*Outside, similar snowmen become more and more different while melting. Difference among them will reach its ultimate degree when they disappear completely.*

*Difference from the outside.*

*From the inside.*

*I used to be a guide as you know.*

*I'd show you around even now – if we weren't at such a hurry, if we weren't to go home.*

*If I wasn't to follow you via the different, the stray straight lanes.*

*Shall I tell you then what I saw when going to your place? Of an armless illusionist drinking water from a cup he was holding with his toes?*

*I'm in front of a blank, bottom remaining page, and I don't have anything to type with, to write or draw with. To tell you of it, you must be further, but you're not – you're neither further nor previous page. You're somewhere at a point where everything looks as close as the things in an apartment.*

*I'm outside, waiting for a bus – any bus that happens to pass by. At nights like this, when the capital reads the remaining letters, we cannot go back from where we started.*

*Meanwhile, nobody can.*

*Mingling, mixing up, confusing heads with tails. Traces are lost for a while, but the true problem is not about separation, but the impossibility of it.*

*We are one, and this is what brings us together to ourselves.*

*Draw a picture on the crushing wall. Not the big picture, but the smallest.*

*The minimal picture.*

*This street is borrowing people from all over the city. I'm also borrowed, and this seems to be the only way to be forgotten by the lonely counting patrols.*

*Bored, they count each other, and there is always one policeman missing – they forget to take themselves into account.*

*Your place has no indication of yourself. When I'm there – I've been there for two times, as you know, it has no indication of my self as well.*

*Your parents are travelling, both leaving themselves inside and taking the inside with them.*



- *They always travel to different places, but the same time. Still, they would always bring me similar gifts (I always wanted the same marmalade babies - I think they bought those locally). It's been like that long before they got married, so they managed to meet during one of those trips somehow.*

*After, hating each other, they would do short reunions to make guests leave the house.*

*We'll never make all this as easy as they do.*

- *You're blaming them for not making this easier for us, aren't you?*

- *They do what they can. To look away, they need to stay away.*

*This recurrent memory of the children, on the children.*

*Report on the children.*

*Report on the memory of the children.*

***Do we want children, Lena?***

- ***Do they want parents?***

*She's looking for something to fill her glass with. Glass is the problem: she's not thirsty.*

*Something won't let her put it away.*

- *The construction site, - She says, - It's unstable.*

*She says that by the window, says that far enough from the window.*

*I see, - I saw.*

*The construction site was a burnt house.*

*We got lost in the meetings, both delayed and unexpected – rooms are left empty, and streets are crowded.*

*I left him on a winter day, relatively late, and it was next to impossible to expect that a bus would come soon. I was thinking on heading home on foot, but that winter was the real winter: the ice town stood firm, protected by rare guards that failed to look similarly –*

*frost praised their uniform with improvised patterns that never repeated (booby prizes for those not allowed abroad) – which makes them sustainable material for short-range memory, not for the long-term.*

*Not for the term long enough!*

*Sexual mistakes aren't remedied by the time, but only a different sexual act, which in turn is capable of multiplying the initial mistake, which is what – being born, that (this) screamy background which never stays too much behind? I'm not spared by the spared moment – the hands don't meet, and there is no sound made.*

*Wet cold from below reached the back door of my mind.*

*I turned back to go back to his place, when I saw him on the other side of what was between him and me; he took me to a different bus station, showed me around the fragile place of the moment he called his home.*

*Traces leave traces. By leaving home, we construct it.*

*This, - he told me, - Is where I was born.*

*It's a block of flats, I say. We all were.*

*The yard is busy with the abandoned toys – the little monuments. Why don't we add to them?*

*We do.*

*VIII.*

*My wealthy parents equipped the house with two bathrooms.*

*We'll go to sleep in one of them (bathrooms).*

*Bothrooms.*

*- You might not have to – a lot of people are leaving (we don't drink on the Thirsty Thursdays).*

*Lena enters the room.*

*What's the news?*

*The news is love. The step from the inside of the previous step, jump in the flight. Saying not before, or after, but in the middle of language – from the tongue's heart.*

*Saying nothing.*

*You've already said too much of nothing, Greg.*

A public bathroom with no mirrors. Can you imagine this?

The mirrors! For sake! Right when I shut myself and the other for an interrogation privacy...

Why would they take the mirrors away?

Wait a second.

They don't need these mirrors indoors.

They want them outdoors.

The mirrors were soon found downtown – around the president's (the mother capital is looking for its only child around the square - and fails. President) monument – after two months of search.

But let us confuse our foes with our own confusion, let us hide the reflectivity of the mirrors.

Don't focus on the glassy side of mirrors: who's seen their surface?

*- I picked a large, large mushroom, untouched.*

*We part partially: as ones who read the big instructions, the literary background of the sun. We know that forever is short as the life of others: we see death that's reached the spatial limits of face and body – at the vanishing point where faces face the bodies.*

*True runners have so little to tell: running is doing. Cutting the way. And, even when I have something to tell, I forget it when I reach you: I'm overwhelmed with the novelty.*

*This is true that it's getting harder to recognize your signs. Yet the vanishing point is the meeting point.*

*So, let's meet at our previous place, Lena.*

*- I'm there, but there is not there.*

Tomorrow, it's medieval chivalry stories.

Today, it's science fiction.

But what was the yesterday's topic? I'm advised by a student of mine, but she's obviously wrong.

She says, we discussed Rota. Impossible.

And – these copybooks (a very accurate word), they aren't signed! How am I supposed to check the anonymous tests? They've been rotting here for days and weeks.

Tests is what I hate the most. On this, me and my students entirely agree, and if we survive a volume or two of upcoming history, we might meet again as even older people and reconfirm this agreement, and prolong it.

There is an art therapy club led by a loose member of the loose membership, and when I came there, it somehow slowed things down, as if I was the water.

I had to draw my cider bush, and this was better than I expected.

Author is camouflaged. Author is a stick bug.

Hope I was well hidden.

*I'd love to delegate all the memories – and what, apart from the memories, are we? – to someone else, but we already consist of public places and libraries. I remember – we all remember – one of the first meetings in the public garden (now – an open space foodstore), where we were looking for some public to confirm our presence – not for the days coming, but for the ongoing moment, in fact, for the minutes already passed.. We were scared, and those people were obviously dumb.*

*Lena pointed at a sophisticated tree and wanted to climb it. To say something? To jump?*

- *Is there a difference?*

*Lena: a line.*

- *I saw nothing. You stood still, looking around for witnesses.*

*If only self-witnessing was no treason!*

*I feel good when writing it though – each detail is given freely – every small thing – but why would it then struggle, after crossing this line of writing, and, giantly fed, burst away to where it belongs (?)?*

*I remember the tree exactly as it stood there, but now when I'm writing this it's growing and seems to occupy more and more space.*

*How far is the other hand?*

*Lena, where is the silver linen?*

*Meanwhile, if this garden is capable of expanding towards the entire world, can't it be folded into a matchbox to carry in my pocket?*

*I have a photo of the skies, and it's so hard to discern traces of a plane that I almost feel it's dissolving. This is the only movement given to us by a photo – descending towards the nothing, towards the noting. A scar that's never quite there, or out-there. This scar has to have a shape it can't help having.*

*Looking for a map that's going to be everything we need for now: the territory. Treasures are promised. For now – it's the dirt I'm after, the dirt I'm before.*

*The inertia of the soil is so strong that my thinking cannot but stick to the ground.*

- *And do we have to listen to all this?*

*You can't but keep listening: this is already nothing, the bottom line of silence. This is what silence sounds like.*

*<you hear a pile of books falling on the floor>*

- *Enough is enough.*

- *What's enough?*

*I'm looking for the exact place they had been standing – I can't find it. All shelves look too narrow. What do we do to put them back?*

*We used to expand our group by leaving marks on a book before giving it back to the library.*

- *Greg was the last, and he never brought it back.*

- *Thank me later, when this book gets banned.*

- *I'm more concerned with the following: we've agreed to mark the library books with a particular pattern we've agreed on.*

*So why the fuck would all these scribbles look how they look? Here, I borrowed 40 books specially for this reason – to discuss this, having proofs at my tired hand.*

- *I didn't take this book, Leo.*

- *Neither did I.*

- *Neither did I.*

*Time is left-handed.*

They've rewritten "Paths out of Glory", but they don't seem to be able to read each other's handwriting.

Have a look:

"None of us is to bear the responsibility of how enormously attractive the soil is. As a child, I used to dream of eating mud. My mouth is still covered with it, and I feel sick because mom told me this mud is mostly shit".

I can't find the original copy, wait a second...

Oh, assistants of my boss seem to have burned it by mistake.

Please don't burn my correspondence at least, would you? However questionable the names might be.

I must also notify you that the head line doesn't indicate the author of a letter: it is subject.

Don't judge a milk carton by a portrait of kid lost last week.

I'm out for a lonely dinner: wife won't let me take my son anywhere anymore.

My pockets are full of change. Will leave it as tips.

*I wanted that "History of the ice" badly – story of the whiteness, clarity when even the sun seems to be shining with its other side (who has seen it?). He was writing on the melting stages, that jump of a jumper when everything collapsed – as if a wet swimmer had returned into the invisible water by jumping.*

*The author wanted something different from the money we could give him by selling our fur coats that weren't necessary.*

*He wanted a watch that would show time different from the Central square clock (clock that hardly manages its rolling basis).*



*We gathered in half-abandoned flat of our left friend that was never quite an ally. Lena was drinking tea from an old cup she found in a cupboard full of manuscripts. So much for keeping manuscripts away from their means of production: try to hide these unstoppable coffee-stained thousands of pages, fail.*

*We gave him a noisy piece of metal that must have stopped soon after, revealing silence, letting weary sounds in and never – out.*

*He was okay with that.*

*This pond is now more about its depth than its surface.*

*That winter was all about the depth as well, and each day it's becoming deeper.*

*The rare reflected trees see to be reflected deep in the water, and the surface looks passed, abandoned even. The pond winter path connects multiple stores with the ten-storied blocks of flats.*

*Way around the pond requires you to climb over the ruined fence that with each climber becomes harder to climb.*

*If you make a larger hook, you encounter Central Press building that is much bigger from the outside than from the inside. I've been there once – I tried to retrieve my rejected manuscript (failed).*

*The other hook would let you see the central square.*

*I'm tired, exhausted. This is the measure of embracing the spatial: you run into a wall of your own back, dead end of your own body.*

*The owned body.*

*The owing body.*

IX.

*I'm writing you a letter. You is never singular.*

*Your response arrives scarred with bawdy remarks.*

*Body of the letter is elusive and rented, or somewhat rented. It has not much to do with the start and the end – they communicate over the body's head.*

*The ball is flying.*

*Whose signature is it?*

*- This is cross.*

*- This is zero.*

*The field is filled with blurred signs. But the problem is not about them being vague: it's about their other, distinctive side.*

*They value the graveyards in the middle of the city, where the humble combatants would proudly hide their broken bones.*

*Statues of the unknown soldiers. Forgotten soldiers.*

*What's interesting is that both friends and enemies of the government love them. They are the points where they occasionally meet (the other is a biannual event "Open your mouth for the Country").*

*- Not anymore – the state discovered oil underneath, and started digging. No remains are found to be harmed by the blast mining.*

***The signature itself – the sign itself – becomes the surface of writing.***

*Writing on the paper – on the properties of the paper.*

*How do we write on the lack of paper we experience? What surface would it be?*

*Inside writing is very different from outside writing.*

*Inside walls are very different from the outside walls.*

*I want to make sure we'll be able to still be in touch when the paper is gone or is finally converted back to the foil.*

*Foil of the shadows, scars of the leaves. They all resemble each other in the entirety of a shot. If this is it (almost?), what's left for the next?*

*Before the shot – before the deadline – things look focused like never before, never after (before and after come before and after each other), but the wound isn't there, instant ink of an eye, and relaxed is the hill, astray the lane is, and the oak, light with leaves, has better business than this expired suicide.*

*To be honest, I kept this place secret from you folks for as long as possible.*

- *We all have rooms where guests (and residents) aren't allowed.*

*Silence in the house. These houses hide their owners from their guests very well.*

- *I think it'll be easier to wait for his parents than to look for them, Leo.*

- *Assuming they come through the front door!*

*What do we share? The light, when the light is day.*

*What do we share with my parents? The sofa, the changed lemonade.*

*What do we share with each other? The dead boy.*

***Horror is in the eye of the beholder.***

*Jotted down in the bluish notebook where it's said that Greg saw the boy.*

*That the boy saw Greg.*

- *But it has your name on it, Serge.*

- *That's why we stay away from each other.*

- *Fine by me.*
- *Are we hiding from a dead person?*
- *We are hiding from each other.*
- *Are we the dead people?*

*The secret becomes the other side of each of us, but what makes us all think that the other side is the true side?*

*Some time was wasted on a bored game – nobody knew how to play it – before we started talking, first on today, then on yesterday, then – on the day when the boy drowned (it was late already, Lena was falling asleep).*

*After we agreed on what we'd seen, I had to leave you assholes be. Greg and Lena were sleeping in one of the rooms (I heard birds and waves behind their door).*

*I left the place to split with you forever, love. I try to shut the eyes of my memory so tight that I would never see Greg and Lena seeing each other secretly.*

*Never see their idiot disguises.*

***Memory is eternal night.***

*Language is a public place where we need to hide to see each other.*

*We woke up almost simultaneously, with no preliminary agreement – or had there been a sound of some sort that we both heard and then forgot? I went on foot, Lena took a bike.*

*Have you given it back, Lena?*

- *I've parked it across the street – not sure if it reached the destination.*

*- The bus took me to my place via the route that gave me some openness to consider: abundance of the barns, false meanings of the few trees, and the rare cattle.*

*Will this be continued by my living place?*

*What will it be?*

*In the middle of I don't know where – in the blankness – an old woman demanded to let her go. She persistently disappeared into the drowning sun. We were watching her for seven consistent seconds.*

*I left the bus to catch a car that took me farther than I needed.*

*Flood or fire – past is silent. No countdown possible.*

*No big bang. No small bang.*

*No bang whatsoever.*

*A sirence.*

Mold has seen a great success both in the kitchen and the bathroom – these colonies seem to know a bit about each other.

I tried to find some coffee, but gave up when found, and fetched for a glass in a cafeteria on the corner of nothing.

Greg's house softly floated into the arms of the state through the recently issued order. Orders normally leave chaos behind them, but even if I wanted, I'd hardly be able to contribute more mess to the place.

For now, it's clear that among the left trash and garbage (I take litter distribution seriously), there are things that used to be sharper than now. For instance, thick carpet is covered

with broken glass that's now for some reason is sort of blunt – as if these cells were the sea cells.

I move to the broken furniture and the only boot.

Clues, but wait...

First – cleaning: my working desk – working dusk - is bigger than before, but the order is an order. This junk, including especially this dirty notebook disgracefully thicker than when it was bought in the shut typography or current grocery, is out.

Back to the clues, now.

It's the second week of my investigation (the bedroom is filthy, but Lord, what a sofa!). I ordered to move my papers with their names all over the place (I didn't even have to submit an official claim to take them – that's how much I'm trusted!), and I'm starting to lose track of whether the things are mine or theirs.

Is this cup, I'm not sure (glasses, glosses) – is it dirty, or clean? I've found a letter knife. I don't have to report on all this right now – will draft it and report later, as soon as I find something among this mess. Speaking of drafts – there is an open window in this house, which I can't find.

*I looked for this, and I seem to have left more clues than I found.*

- *Have you seen much of Brot's presence?*
- *Not much more than on the Black square (two meanings: he's a hobo now, officially).*

*His presence on the streets, however, has recently faded – perhaps due to his housewarming business.*

- *The notebook, Leo, what about it?*
- *It's gone.*

- *Okay, what else do you have?*

- *I'm having hard times choosing between the given opportunities. I take the sheet of paper and cut my finger.*

*Anyone tears up if I tear up this love letter?*

- *I don't mind at all.*

- *We don't mind at all.*

- *Easier done, than written.*

*Greg, I appreciate you've found the doll house I installed for you in the park by the pond despite it was covered with piss, swearings and love confessions and carefully repainted by someone before that.*

– *I teach math in a countryside evening school. Go home at twelve, come at midnight.*

*Not waiting you here.*

*I will leave the place when my last, my worst student leaves the class. I'm now sitting in front of him, he's looking at something distant out of the window. Suddenly, he writes down the answer.*

*Wrong, of course.*

- *My mom said you're cheating, - He says, - She says you don't know the answer yourself.*

Today, I'm willing to pay all my debts. Who isn't? I know some of my creditors are dead or imprisoned, but even them I want to repay – the dead, especially.

I'm leaving to the distant memory of where we all came from – the literal woods and the illiterate wooden houses that look like a prolonged ambush amid the never-ending siege.

**When war comes, pictures replace the missing walls.**

X.

My house, my beautiful house, is empty: it has no trace of anyone's existence, it only welcomes bats and pigeons on the highest level – they do shifts above the ceilings and they don't just interrupt my writing – they want to do the writing themselves, with themselves.

Here, it's quiet, and I have nothing to write on – there's no one to write, basically. And, am to invent a literary teaching course for the village students. There is no such thing as literature for the illiterate. Thus – invent!

Our best workers, thinkers, butchers, soldiers come from places like this. It's time we repaid them with a visit, so they don't have to come visit us.

Welcome the capital! Welcome Joce Brot.

First – the library: it smells cookies and the autumn. I borrow a book that I'm not going to give back (it was banned last month).

I read on the centuries of prosperity and the ages of gold.

Ages (decades, years, hours, seconds) of mines (time's up, finally a coffee break).

Connections become closer, and closer to me.

I see reasons in their consequences.

A young inspector visits me weekly, bringing fruits (they grow here year-round in greenhouses that you can't visit without stepping on a tomato) – his pen is always empty when he comes, and I have to borrow him mine.

I try to persuade him to pass some of my Rota reports to the Boredom of Ministers, but he never takes anything.

This makes sense – they didn't send me for Rota, but to project our central policy to the deepest (holey) pockets of our farms.



My audience isn't uniform in terms of the color: the green glass of the window perfectly matches the pond over there, and won't let you see the neglected foil around it, and in fact all the way to it – from an uncertain point of where travel starts, below me (my audience is on the fourth floor).

Room is never clean enough, but I'm okay with cleaning things early in the morning before the lectures start. If there is nothing to clean, I don't know what to start with, perhaps with spitting on the floor?

My lectures aren't very popular, but younger people do drop by, and at least one of them – the most hardworking – does math somewhere in the middle of my audience. I'm not angry: I have a feeling he's got the point.

Also, this is a smart move – on the back, desks are always scanned twice (by lecturer and a sponsored hooligan), so there isn't much to do there.

But it's important to know that my tribune is so high that I need to make my voice louder than usual just to reach out for the ears (though an especially careful girl sitting on the front line is terribly stressed by my screaming). I'd see everything with no need to walk along the rows, but my eyesight is bad, my glasses are reading glasses, and I only know what happens on the back when I clean the classroom and find pieces of paper with modern, geniusly simplified, versions of oughts and crosses. One of these crumpled warfields has the last square unfilled, as if someone suddenly lost interest just before finishing the game.

And – here's my overfinished portrait. With a signature.

Wait, it's my name today.

*This huge, this enormous distraction from my work was deliberate. I'm now unable to start where I dropped off.*

*It could have been a bird, or a stone thrown at the window by a friend of mine, stone missing the bird.*

*Instead, it was the bloody massacre.*

*Unable to proceed in the past, into the past, root my existence into the existing.*

*Writing on the hill, am I writing on the hill I was running down, unstoppably, many years ago – from the water gathering above to the water gathered on the bottom – the thin river lying there as a liner?*

*Or – the hill I've never been to, at the place that I've never been connected to and that took more than time from me? The hill I'll never see?*

*That hill of someone else – why would the secrecy, the mystery of it look so fake to me?*

*Also, where is everyone? The basement where we used to hang out is now a museum.*

*- Try calling Greg.*

*- Yeah, maybe you'll be more lucky.*

***You need all your imagination to recall the past.***

*Read, till the sun goes down*

*<The sun goes down>*

Their poor inventory is never complete. I must lend them my pen so that they could write on – on and on, until their handwriting starts resembling the road we're on, till I know where they're heading.

We shouldn't have built these good roads.

I'm looking into the rural landscapes, unmarked, unroaded fields with houses and – slower than their mass-produced pictures – cattle, and I know that none of us fit here, and they do not belong anything they take. If they settled somewhere here, having forgotten the past, as I have (why keep in mind anything that surrounds you with its handiness – the hands having you?), unwilling to prolong the story of their meeting – prolong the meeting itself into the liquid night of the written speech – I'd let them go, as I'm letting Leo go, postponing my travel to the morning, cause he travels in an hour (he knows my face, so meeting would be a face to face meeting).

He's not the one (the two) I need currently.

I was lucky to be able to change the ticket free. This looks fading, as if they didn't have much ink in their printer (they probably don't). How to prepare oneself for the last, decisive step if your resources are becoming bleaker with each sentence?

I'm having an empty, a vacant day.

I represent the country. Metonymy suggests that I am the country. And, my name has easily flown to the bigger name of Annimia, unfelt, but metonymy works both ways. Shouldn't I be in blunt and sort of nonlocalizable pain when the land enters me?

Who'll see this seed when it becomes a power plant?

Is my course finished? It's not, but it ended.

My payment, by the way, doesn't depend on whether I've read the entire course or only a part of it, stopping halfway on Dante's Inferno (certainly undergone all the four circles of our censorship).

- *I have a suspicion that Brot finally included our writing in his literary course.*

- *How do you know?*

- *Leo was having an unsuccessful math course next heavy wooden door to Joce's course on the aging literature.*

- *Correct, more or less. Before one of the tests, I heard a girl in the corridor learning by heart the endless poem by Greg. She sounded miserable.*

Tell me what I already know. Please, tell me what I already know.

I have no mouth and I must shut the fuck up.

***To finish us, he must finish reading.***

***To do this, he must let us finish writing.***

*We share the same aging book. When the last of us, randomly chosen, having no idea of what the end is about (for Lena it's just a line among the lines – a tennis ball that has been thrown away by an unreasonable force, reaching a kitchen vase that barely handled it, but didn't crash), gets the book back to the library, this person tears the last page away.*

- *Can it be the contents? Please.*

*He's reaching out for the last remaining pen and the last sheet of paper (the tenth copy of his redundancy notice), for the other side of it, for any surface to write on.*

*He reports on us.*

*I'm sure this is what he's writing right now.*

My lord, my leader, my I,

Change is the tip of the tongue.

Stick bug.

Tip of the tongue sticks to the tip if the iceberg.

Glacier.

Snow.

Looks like your statue is melting, Mr. Precedent.

Man is snowman.

**When leaders die, their portraits change beyond recognition.**

- *I didn't recognize you in my mother's coat.*

- *You didn't recognize your mother's coat, that's all.*

*I feel cold, but this cold comes from the inside – it's a door that's never closed, and if closed, never locked.*

*If locked, I'm locked inside as well.*

*With the cold of mine.*

- *When I was back, I wanted to finish my writing on the birch park, but I was basing this on the black and white photos of it and the remains of the park. Now, the remains are not there. Though you assured me you'd keep the builder's prolonged hands out of it, I'm not surprised you didn't lift a finger to protect our common memory from extraction.*

- *I knew I forgot something!*

- *I told you you did.*

- *I also forgot something where I used to stay. Our absent minds have different alibis.*

*But I'm not going back.*

- *I'll fetch for it. When I have time.*

*Canned meat was invented 50 years before the opener.*

*They compare us with the writers of the past, confusing Leo with Tolstoy. Hollow dishes of the bygone are becoming deeper as tooth holes, and not the present – the presence is sucked out of the forming shell to feed the ritual fire of the past.*

*You quote Tolstoy a lot, Leo. Do you have a quote for this?*

*- I'm not responsible for what I leave in prentices, dear Greg.*

*Dear Greg! I write to you from the capital, starting with the capital.*

*I want – I am – to finish the letter with the capital letter as well. It'll have to be I.*

*Have to be me.*

*How to put a signature with a typing? I can't find this on my keyboard. We wanted to send you my letter, signed in the following order: Lena, Max, Leo, Serge.*

*We can't find Lena, and I'm running out of ink.*

*Max, Serge.*

*Who are these people? What are they? We keep mentioning them everywhere – journal we issue, books we publish, but I haven't seen them, ever. Their signatures never fade: they keep changing.*

*This one, the last, is shaky. It's written in a vehicle and it fails to resemble the road Serge's on.*

*Was anyone punished for the never found body? Government authorities investigated the pond when ice totally melted (in a couple of days), and I found nothing.*

*Is there nothing below?*

*Was there a crucified boy?*

I stood where they had been standing. The pond is so transparent that I can see the sky bottom.

Yet there was a boy there, a boy that drowned.

In our accelerated times interrogated suspects burdened (or relived) with cooperators don't have to remain silent for long; but, they would always keep silent when they need to talk and won't shut the fuck up when they'd better do it. I've copyrighted a torture for these silence lovers.

Two members of a family are paralyzed and lie facing each other. They're being dismembered in parallel by two different prosecutors (who'd distinguish good and bad cops in our country?) until one of them retains their ability to speak.

For how long shall we dig to reach the surface of the lives of the dead?

Fucking drowned boy is missing.

XI.

*Manual reply to Joce Brot:*

*While reading into a human, you want to look through the human, drill into the condensing dark till your eyes pass the inside of human and reaches surface of a new human in a line, thus making the previous human disappear.*

*However you look through a human, you'll never succeed.*

*The dark of content will condense beyond your very existence, and I promise you'll never see surface again.*

*I'm allowed to do limitless strolls along and across the tiny park equipped with an ice-cream booth. From each point, I can see my window. I'm able to look at my place from the point of view of my watchers (it smells shit here).*

*We should have invented a different way to transfer whatever you've left there, Leo.*

*But why do we even bother?*

*Just publish what you want while I'm having here the time of remains of my life.*

- *I don't remember anything, Greg. It was a long time ago.*

*I don't remember what I was writing there just as I couldn't remember what I'd written before I visited the place.*

*Something about a boat, maybe, arriving to the shore where no one's waiting anymore.*

*We've constructed a boat out of litter to deliver the message, but on the other side someone constructed the message they needed.*

*We've been separate for months. Leo (where is he?) is separated from his shit I'm now looking for.*

*Because it's not there, just letting you know. You've left this little unfinished (as always) notebook somewhere else.*

- *Leo asked me to tell you that he has it. He left the manuscript in his freezer, and forgot.*
- *Burn this manuscript before reading.*

*Punishment of the weekend: decipher your handwriting, that's never able to escape the page despite it's in a hurry.*

*Rewrite the draft.*

*My residence is prolonged, and the course I'm going to read there (math of course, what did you think, Leo?) is not yet given for me to read it.*

*The book is read. The drill knows me: unable to sleep, I reread the selected chapters.*

*I couldn't tell if I'd read it already. I read this twice, second time – out loud, scaring birds and attracting cats: rings all the bells apart from the right, the only.*



*Lena, I can't see you in my own handwriting.*

I want to see you tomorrow.

*- You will.*

*See me tomorrow.*

Reading is rewriting.

Sometimes they put left-handed signatures, knowing not whose identity they steal.

Our people move along the mirrors without looking at them.

Last month, Greg's parents died on the same day: he fell down a hill, and she was strangled in the confused arms of a burglar.

*I swear, I swear to you that we are two. I've heard of those scissors reflections, and the raw shadows, and that a person, while counting to 2, misses 5, and I also heard that a man cannot count to 2 as they cannot count to 0.*

*But I swear we are two.*

*I know what happens when from the inside you are folded twice, and then multiplied in the printery of the wind.*

*I've seen those fliers of blanks, white with the other side of night, which is as day as sugar is salt, salt is sugar.*

*This isn't the case.*

*We're two.*

*I tell you us.*

*You didn't do it.*

*We did.*

*While we were losing all the remaining influence in the Capital University, they did the impossible: they've found and arrested Max and Serge, people that we've invented.*

*Our imagined friends. Many, many more than two.*

*I don't quite remember who led whose column. Maybe we'll have to once again answer: who's the author of Max's stories? Who's the author of Greg's poems?*

- *I'd only take Max's experimental play with no actors he wrote in his yearly 20s.*

- *Deal!*

- *I don't remember the name of that enormous Max's novella – it was about fisherman who would repeatedly let the fish go*

*Soon, no fish would take a bait.*

*Nobody has read that damn thing.*

*Reading a book from its end is experience full of mystery – since you hardly ever reach out for the ending otherwise, this shadow of inaccessibility, of the next-previous page, is there however curious and careless you are.*

*Their phones are full of snow.*

*Their connection goes beyond their real correlation.*

*You think if you know where we are, who we are, who of us actually exists, what we do, why we wear hats in hot weather, you will be safe.*

*In reality, no alarm clock will turn off, no sleep will be spared. No comfort brought.*

*Even should you cut us open, you won't make head or tale of what we are: you will get*

*lost in our insides for good.*

*You will never see the surface.*

*Meanwhile, our bold crusaders are strictly advised to keep their Guts to themselves.*

*The dead boy, then. The drowned buy.*

*His hat was red, and his coat was blue.*

- *Do you keep your eyes open when kissing?*

*-I know you've seen him too.*

*I know he saw both of us, too.*

- *Are we going to tell his story?*

- *I think we did.*

*Even with no wind, the trees have sounds.*

*Silence of the dead is so deep that a kiss would sound like a Big Bang.*

*Where are the other students among whom I met you, Lena? Where are those among whom you met me?*

*Everything happens - and has happened – while we're jotting this down.*

*What prevents writing to become something that's out there apart from its infinite claim to become something else? Nothing differs while staying the same.*

*Nothing makes difference by staying the same.*

*So why not slide along the similarities of the window frames, draft the shallow forest with the watery brush? I've seen tens of dozens of landscapes recreating the park divided by the fenced pond, but never recognized it.*

*However, what do we know about the place we inhabit occasionally, eventually, ultimately?*

*This white vacant space in the middle of mess is the place. No one is to complete this outstanding gap.*

*In the defense of paper.*

*Defense of the park in its vague resemblance of the day when it meant rather space than time.*

*Needle trees are so true to their forms that in winter they serve as road signs, dividing highways moving along and across the village. Letting the sign holders go.*

*Stay safe out there!*

*What do I remember from the math lessons, naturally? I feel like a true, shameless liar, and, when some of my students doesn't come to the audience, my heart starts to move faster: this person might be letting me know I'm cheating, letting someone else know of this (would it be – by the same absence? Telling I can't tell a plus from a minus).*

*When they return, my gratitude has no limits.*

*For what else am I if not a damn math (mess) teacher? What is Brot if not a strict literary lecturer?*

*- You can't even count to I.*

*– I count backwards, friend.*

*Let losses be counted by those to whom they are gains.*

***One day, we will write on our own white flags.***

*Writing and reading is one.*

*What is the other?*

Cause of arrest isn't indicated in the news anymore. Not because we don't know them (the most careful and loyal of us don't).

Source of offense is source of everything else. Punishment is not in any way exclusion from everyday life. Similar to our uniformed vigilant soldiers (one of them was accidentally killed last week by a car), they're part of the blooming landscape.

I've seen the end of Annimia so many times. I've read the contents of my country.

***And they say: night of the writing will never become the day of the reading.***

*I have nothing to put in the end of what I'm writing.*

*The big book escapes my hands and falls on the ground (I'm reading on the run).*

*Joce Brot is the only person who's read our magazine to the end.*

*We watched the ice melting and the people throwing themselves under the wheels of snow blowers. We had luxury to finish the picture.*

*We are guilty.*

*In the end, Lena and Greg are arrested.*

By the people laughing on the top floor, I was summoned from home to bring my pen, so that the confession could be finally signed by the two little suckers chewing a bubble gum.

When going back, I think I counted fewer stairs.

*For the entire week, I've been doing exactly what I do. There is a stage by the fragile-walled library installed for a rock concert that took place few days prior to my arrival – the musical instruments are still lying there.*

*I'll give a speech there.*

*I'll refer to you in the third person before the actual third person arrives. I speak quietly.*

*Name is a quiet word.*

*She wants to blend with the crowd, wearing my mom's coat.*

*There is no crowd.*

*Hate to see you.*

*Love to see you.*

*Last words are the first names, Lena.*

They were delivered home and strongly advised to fuck. I can't stay due to urgent family business - my son disappeared from classroom during his math lesson, you have half a dozen of dozers at place. Can I be excused?

I just need a place to live and have my endless things stored (but, I'm still cold: noone to tell me where that tiny window is).

Do we still share the park?

The pond?

The water?

The beauty, as you write?

Don't we?

Lost my pen.

Never enough ground to bury the homeland.

Where have the guns gone?

How far have the dead gone?

I'm there, and I can't see them.

.