

Tone
Škrjanec
Skin

*Translated by
Rawley Grau*



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on transience

pain, suffering, death i feel.
a room full of soft warm bodies.
naked, giggling, picking with fingers at caviar
and watching the snowy mountain peaks
which glisten in the sun in slow procession.
i sit by the window and wait for snow. it doesn't come.
evening comes, arriving early afternoon.
the lake is peaceful and still as pudding.
on it a few black ducks with white bills are swimming.
everything is a sort of silver, with a light, cool weight,
and fast. it's a few minutes before midnight.
each one that goes past touches me.

hole in the sky

it must be written down since what comes today is true for tomorrow too. a soft burble of talking entwines with the rumble of an old tractor in the ambient music of morning. for just a moment, the birds fall silent and listen, hidden in the colossal green crowns of the trees that surround our yard. the girls, to every last hair, to that narrow arrow-shaped wedge which descends to the groin, rub fragrant oils and lotions onto their naked and mostly bronzed bodies until the taut curves of their contours (which our eyes follow automatically like simple machines) glisten like dewy bottles of beer in a television commercial. for there's a hole in the sky. between my folded legs i observe the island. small, bare, totally uninhabited. we went there by boat once. with great caution we stepped over the sharp rocks and gathered a bunch of wild garlic.

crows and seagulls

yesterday the day was cool and the evening cooler.
the north wind was blowing from somewhere north. a young
woman with a prominent jaw and a pink plastic flower
in her hair is sipping karlovac beer. i don't like her much.
we talk about grapes, figs, how three days ago they were still
green and firm, about nature taking and giving, and about crows,
which this year are almost as plentiful as seagulls.
the marvellous bush full of pink blossoms,
to which my eye often flees, we don't mention.

prague early afternoon

met a lip that got me thinking of a certain
train from my youth. slowly i remove
her panties, lift her skirt, so i can see
if my hands will still recognize
her warm hips. then the befuddled morning
and as ever prague in the czech republic.
it is quiet. i listen to my body pulsing. mid-afternoon
i sit in a totally empty pub on a side street. I am drinking beer.
dark leather, velvet and reddish gloom underlaid with dreadful music.
the waitress brings me my drink along with a bit of a view
of her left breast. time races slowly by. on the red wall hangs
a big black-and-white photo of marilyn monroe in a white skirt.
a woman comes in, concentrated and firm as an apricot,
like a small clenched pussy. then the road again,
slowly climbing, pulsing more and more. i want you to
one day put that friendly foggiess of yours on,
which is like morning in greece with a long walk uphill
to the first coffee and goat's milk yogurt. i love small occurrences.
let this be a poem today and let this poem be
for everyone separately, for the birds and for the stones.

dust

it was an average dream.
there were two long waves that were,
it was like they were slicing through the lake.
there was a bit of night, it was totally silent,
and in fact everything was closed,
there were no problems,
we were all healthy, no cancer,
no other similar lethal conditions,
just ordinary fucking, and none of that who loves who,
who put what into whom and where,
it was really beautiful, it was a long, smooth lake,
there were little coloured lights everywhere,
there were two greyish pigeons, a bunch of ducks, which were black
with white bills. And a flock of titmice on our balcony,
5 to 10 fluttering grams of them. my body is hurting.
i'm not saying anything, i won't speak,
my peace is the silence of the guilty, it is dark outside,
it is cold and who cares, well i care,
it matters to me, my muscles are hurting,
my body is telling me something,
an old story that everyone knows,
that i know too, or at least i sense
on some slightly metaphysical level.
nothing seems real to me, my body is what I am transmitting,
i don't feel like being anything.
i feel horrible, i sit in the car and feel horrible,
and there is total silence, which maybe is why,
nothing but the sound of the engine and breathing.
not a lot means very much to me. a lot of those self-satisfied giants
are nothing to me but a feeble arabic version of a saturday stroll,
to me sometimes a lot of things mean that i am small,
that in fact i am forever infinitely small,
it hurts me when people close to me think

i know all about electricity, all those unimportant wires,
that sitting silently and listening is not a 'statement'
and that I like to be pensive, taciturn, that my everyday vanities
are inborn
even if they are just a peculiar obsession,
that the dust on objects is a serious rebuke which is unforgiving,
that with every passing day the world becomes more of a fee-
ble-minded idea,
and sadly not just that the whole thing is something entirely in-
cidental,
a tiny quibble, a few camels, a few miniscule animals,
the barely meaningful perception of something that was never re-
ally real.
i am he who recently stood on a grave,
the same grave as years before when somewhere
inside myself I said stupid things:
look, look what is happening to me, but nothing was happening,
almost nothing in particular except that bit by bit we were dying.
we stood there and the world wouldn't wait, it was just there
somewhere,
like some fucked-up eternity that knows everything, understands
everything,
and doesn't actually have a clue. outside it is cold and snowing
and i want to be happy but somehow i can't,
something always gets in the way, always happens, always these
structures,
although we are always beautiful, always have our naked body,
which shines like a star.
always beautiful like a star.
and i don't want to go home.

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