Senko Karuza - Tomislav Kuzmanović

Three Stories

The Scissors

It's summer and the beer keeps flowing down our throats, the music echoes from a club and every now and then we walk out on the terrace to catch a breath of air free of smoke, to meet someone and start something new, and if it doesn't happen, we go back inside and shake at the dance floor, at the bar. And when we get bored, we walk out again and look from someone.

We give up before the end, before sunrise, because we cannot stand the dawn that will reveal our impotence, we stumble and laugh along as if we've won a trip to the heavens in which no one lives, we give everything we've got to remain in this good trance, we imagine what we'd do if she weren't such a cow that got hooked on that good-for-nothing, and, after all, don't you think good girls always end up with the likes of him, we'll never understand it. Comfort is good, but not good enough to put an end to this night, to peacefully collapse into our bed next to the open window and fall asleep as if love exists, and tonight we just didn't get lucky.

We walk down the shore with those open wounds that tonight no one managed to stitch together. Gardens and houses tucked in under the pines, with their terraces and yards pass by us. The light is on in one of them. For some inexplicable reason, I just turn and, ducking as I go, jump over the stairs leading into the garden. Miki whistles quietly and spreads his arms by the gate. What's wrong with you, have you lost your mind? he asks. Shhhh, I give him a sign not to move, and sneak up to the window. From a safe distance, protected by the darkness, I see the two of them, a man and a woman, sitting on a couch away from one another, yet all it takes is a tiny turn of a body and they'll become one, but they don't do it, they're facing away from one another, each to their own side. I don't know what they are looking at. Quiet music fills the room, that's all I hear, but I can't catch what they are saying from time to time, exchanging very short sentences. I stoop down and, risking to be seen, I sneak up to the window to get a better look and see what's going on

eISSN 1847-7755; doi: 10.15291/sic/2.12.lt.6

inside, between them. But they are quiet now, each looking at their own spot, unknown to me. If they turned to say something to each other, their eyes would certainly brush against me. The thought makes me shiver and my heart starts pounding faster. Miki whistles again from the gate and just as I decide to step back and leave them in this wonderful silence, I catch sight of a pair of scissors sitting on the windowsill. I reach in with my invisible hand and silently pull in the scissors. The pair remains in the same position. Reassured by the ease of this effort, I stay and watch them for a while longer. I want to know the reason of their night silence. They are both remarkably pretty, they can't be more than thirty, and it's easy to assume some quarrel got them into this state. But it's so hard to imagine pretty people having a fight. Maybe it's some illness whose certainty left them sealed in their silence. Or maybe they're just enjoying themselves, each in their own world, after a strenuous love play. Maybe they're just sitting there, as one sits waiting for the morning haunted by insomnia. Their faces show peace, the kind of peace that tonight is miles away from me.

I squeeze their scissors in my hand until it almost begins to hurt, but that's all I can steal from them. I can't just snip away a part of that image and look at it as if it were mine. I stand up and retreat towards the exit, without fear of being seen. At the last step, I open my hand and look at the scissors. I'd love to have scissors that would just lie at the window, shearing nothing. I place them on the step as if laying down a priceless glass object.

Miki sits on the wall next to the promenade and stares at the dark sea. I wish I'm this darkness. I wish it never dawns.

Hello

A change, what a wonderful word! Other than everything else in this world, there's nothing I'd like more than to change my life. But I'm a skittish man, prone to safety, certainty, which goes against the idea of change. A change wants you to leave something behind, to give up on something, to have a brave heart ready to put everything on the line.

I got bored with my wife: always the same, yelling, screaming, dissatisfaction, she'd like this then she'd like that, look how other people live, and I, pussy-whipped to the bone, can't even put together a good lunch, make some good change or something, anything. Always the same. A surplus for her too. She had sex just for the sake of it, almost against her will, you couldn't call it love. It bothered her when the semen spilled over the bed. Who's gonna wash that? she'd say. Never did she laugh. And we weren't some rich celebrity couple to get a divorce and then ham it all up.

Robotics – that's what I was into: vacuum cleaners, washers, driers, driverless taxies. But I missed the sex, no question about it. For a short while, I'd even taken a lover, but she also nagged the whole time, she wanted me to get a divorce, just wouldn't let go, love wasn't enough for her. This is a strange world and everything in it.

Eh, robotics. I heard of a factory that released housewives and mistresses all in one. Not too many options, she just vacuums the floors and unlocks the door, never sleeps, she's made of rubber coated with artificial skin, she's always wet and tolerates walks. She talks, responds, communicates. She can even complain if what you ask is inappropriate. So, instead of a new car, I bought her. Expensive as hell, but only mine. What are you up to now? asked my wife and rolled her eyes. But I saw that she was glad, now we had something no one else had, as if we lived in the sticks or somewhere. But it was a real town, that's where we lived. You could hide from anyone, no one paid attention to anything.

She was at work, and I went up and down on the robot. I'd wear the living daylight out of her, so later, it was me, not her, who did all the cleaning, washing the linens, wiping the semen, vacuuming the floor, cooking. I pitied her as if she were a person. How was the sex? I asked. Good, she said, nice, I didn't expect it would be like that. Such was the program, very good, nothing to complain about. I wrote to the manufacturer, thanked him, praised the product, and lied a little about what wasn't true, but that's how I felt. He insisted to replace her with a different model. We've got a better one, he said, she menstruates, gets headaches, you've got more time for yourself. He even sent me pictures, but I was happy with this one, I wouldn't change her for anything in the world.

And the wife got used to her, she harassed her a little about the chores, but not too much, because everything was neat, spic and span, I polished all of it with ease. She preferred to chat with her in the evening, once or twice she even laughed: By god, what in the world happened to us, look at all this progress, who would've thought we evolved from apes. How is he treating you? she asked. Great, he's a good man, no violence in him, he's gentle, knows with things. He cleans me after we make love, but I don't mind it, discomfort is not built in me. Never once did I have the need to contact the manufacturer because of some irregularity, I almost need no support. We're so similar, you and me, my wife said, they would have a hard time telling us apart if they saw us from the street.

But it was only me who went out with her. We'd sit in the park or play on the swings, a real circus, as if we'd become children once again. We said nothing and just pushed each other on the swings, like in a dream. I'd help her get down and then grab her buttock, a nice, small, firm, leathery ass, I'd squeeze a bit and she'd shriek. That's how she was programmed.

It was a good life. And it was as short as any good life. The wife got squirmy, she wanted to have sex every evening, once, twice, thrice, then in the morning before work, sometimes even twice, she'd be running late, but little did she care. I had no might left for the robot. Not that I'd lost interest, but, brother, it was just too much.

And so one morning at dawn the police knocked on the door. We've got to take you in on account of violence. What violence, I asked, I've never forced myself on anyone, it must be a mistake. No, they said, the manufacturer reported you neglected his product, it's a sensitive matter, everyone knows you're cheating, and you signed the paper, here, see, black on white. You're worse than the hackers, you entered someone's life and then you ruined, abandoned it.

But, hey, it's a machine, what's wrong with you, are you nuts? And he stared at me sideways, you couldn't say if he was pitying me or laughing at me, nevertheless, he took out the handcuffs and glanced at my wrists. What machine are you talking about, man?! he said. What kind of a sick world do you live in?

Animals Are Beautiful People

What year it was, I don't know. The world, like always when we weren't blind, smelled of death and nothing could be done to bring back the feeling that it all makes sense. Such was the moment when I decided to give up, although that's a ridiculous claim, because giving up had already been in my blood. I was coming back from yet another unsuccessful drunken night, disappointed with myself, like always. An ocean of empty words and opinions clashing and penetrating the thick smoke that rose between speakers, company, friends, I don't know what to call them, spread in the endlessness of the night. A cold, dark street was shedding its scenery of fusty things from attic spaces and basements, the Gypsies had not yet arrived, and in those piles, you could see the wealth that had once, a long time ago, amused the dead, the long gone, and the obviously forgotten. The smell of the past those discarded objects emanated roused in me some vague image of nostalgic attachment to the city and even though they were pasted with the fog, the cold or the rain that drew the feeling of rot out of them, some solemn pride of gracious transience grew only stronger offering the image of a fortified sanctuary. The city. Civilization. Palaces and noble houses. Slums and shantytowns. Workers' blocks. Discarded objects in the deaf, thieving hours bore clear witness to all of them.

The night hygienist was tugging at the fat, swollen hose polishing the city; those who come back to life and in the morning start all over again, from oblivion, needed some freshness. I didn't care, I didn't pause, he could've whipped me with all his might and sent me down the sewer with the other waste, I'd be flowing just the same. He opened me a passage and gave me the opportunity that didn't offer all that much. I could care less, and I purposely slowed down to feel the impatient water on my back.

I arrived home wet, miserable as always. I busied myself about the kitchen, opening the fridge and forgetting my wife was disgusted with how fat I had become, I poured, I chewed, I guttled, thinking how could I be the only one in the whole world who wasn't able to find some good exit out of this life that was breaking me down, why couldn't I just close these shitty pages, burn, forget, take them out and start all over again, from the beginning. The beginning? Where was that beginning, with

whom, what was it like and where was that place, that heavenly place I'd been futilely searching for every evening.

My wife senses treachery, leaning against the doorway in her pink negligée, like in a movie, a conflict of alcohol and healthy food, I love her, I love her just the way she is, whole and certain, the woman with an attitude and opinion on everything, I truly love her, but what use has such divine creature of me? Her eyes are open when we hug, I saw it once in the mirror. How can I let myself go to a woman whose eyes are open? What can the open eye feel, what can it let itself go to, how to trust someone who doesn't imagine, dream, feel, someone who simply knows?

Humble and miserable, I escape her gaze. You're drunk again, she says. Not a word about the divorce. Like a dog, once again I will sleep in the living room. She loves me, but she can't stand my smell. How do you live with such a master?

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