



ALAN LEZAN

# Agape

Between Closeness and Madness

*Novella*

## Prolog

I am never bored. It is Sunday, and I sit on the balcony for hours. I gaze into the void, into the infinite expanse, and find a strange joy in it. Even the bus stop across the street holds something fascinating. There he comes again – the man who stands there every Sunday at the same time. Always in the same spot. And waits.

He waits until the brunette woman in the red dress gets off the bus. She lives across from me. She looks as she looks – that is enough. She walks past him, and just before she reaches the door, she turns around. A fleeting glance. He stands there, as always, saying not a word. She disappears into her apartment. He remains on the street.

Then something falls from the window. A small object. He picks it up, smells it, and leaves.

## Subway

I ride the subway. Often. Mostly without a destination. Where should I even go? Today, it is not crowded. The train arrives. "Please exit. Please enter." I step in.

I stand by the door in the direction of travel and look through the glass into the tunnel. Darkness. Cables. Nothing else. I don't know how many stations I've travelled. It doesn't matter.

To my right, the oncoming train stops. A woman stands directly opposite me. Between us are the fully glazed doors. Our gazes meet. An electric shock runs through me. It's her. Yes, it's her – a voice inside me says.

The train moves. Hers? Mine? I don't know. Was that real? A mirage? Was someone really standing there?

I get off at the next station, walk to the other side, and wait.

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The train comes. I get on again. Where am I going, really? Should I get off at the next station? Who was she? Did she smile at me? And if so – what does that mean?

There she is again. I can hardly believe it. She's traveling back. Why? And now what? Should I go back too? Why is she running away from me? Or me from her?

Okay. I'll get off at the next station. And then? I have no idea.

*Coincidence or Fate?*

The moment I step out, she is standing in front of me. Right in front of my nose. She looks into my eyes. Then she takes a piece of paper from her bag, slowly and carefully writes her number and name on it. She hands it to me and says: "This fits."

I read: **Agape**. It's her. Yes, it's her – I tell myself. **Agape**. A beautiful name. Where are you, Agape?

She is gone.

## Evening 9 PM

I call her. She is not surprised. Normally, I wait a few days before calling a woman who has given me her number. But with her, it's different. It's fun to talk to her. She tells stories; I listen. 4

She talks about her men. With Person X, it was like this; with Y – well. After about three hours, we hang up. It's her, I tell myself. And I go to bed.

Monday, 9 PM again. I call her again. This time too, she is not surprised. We talk about her men again. Sometimes I lose track. One moment the first boyfriend is Alex, then it's the second or third. I don't know. A jumble.

Tuesday. I suggest we meet. She says: "No, no. It's too cold for me. Unless you visit me." I don't hesitate and just ask: Where and when?

## At Her Place

I ring the doorbell. She comes downstairs. I am nervous. It is cold. I see her shadow behind the glass door. The door opens. We look at each other. From top to bottom. And back again.

I like her outfit. There are clothes I don't like – that I actively hate. What if she were wearing one of those? Would I like her then?

"Shall we go upstairs? I forgot my gum."

"Okay," I say. "Let's go upstairs."

The light is still on upstairs. It smells of lavender.

"I love lavender," I say and sit down on the sofa.

She lives in a two-room apartment. In the front, a large walk-through room with a kitchenette; in the back, a small bedroom. A nice, medium-sized apartment.

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"Would you like something to drink?"

"Water," I say. "Tap water."

We make ourselves comfortable. She shows me her poems. Hundreds of them, on white DIN A4 paper. Written with an ancient typewriter, so that the paper is pierced. I am not allowed to touch the poems. Not to read them. Only the ones she gives me.

I read:

*To feel you.*

*Your hair on my body.*

*To stroke me.*

*Tasted happiness for a brief moment.*

*Saw eternity in your eyes.*

*Drank love for the first time.*

I remain calm. I pretend I haven't read anything.

"It's beautiful," I say. "Truly beautiful."

She hands me another one.

"You can understand them however you want."

I read:

*I open myself to you,  
As the blessing overflows,  
I love you until the end of life.*

"Wonderful," I say. "Did you write them?"

She looks deep into my eyes. Sits down next to me on the hard sofa. Out of embarrassment, I look at her one moment, at the poems in my hand the next. Then I suddenly say: "Okay, shall we go?"

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## Café

We go to a nearby café. It belongs to a cinema that shows ancient films. In the course of time, I find out that she is an actress. She has eight siblings. I get Goosebumps.

Seven sisters. One brother. All involved in art. The brother has been in prison for a year. At 18, he slit a classmate's throat. One sister takes drugs. Another does something or other. The rest – nothing at all.

We are supposed to order something. First, she wanted wine. Then tea instead. Then nothing again. The waitress comes for the third, maybe fourth time. Agape waves her away. "Oh, I don't want anything... Not today." Her voice sounds like a curtain closing.

Okay. It's late. We leave. In front of the door, I want to say goodbye, but we look into each other's eyes for a long time. Too long. Then we go upstairs, to her place.

She lives on the first floor. The stairs creak. Her steps are restless, almost nervous. She runs back and forth, suddenly starts cleaning the room. I sit on the hard sofa and watch her. What I see before me is a pretty, lively girl. Exactly my type. And precisely because of that, I am twice as shy as usual.

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Apart from her face, I haven't seen anything of her yet. She always wears the same long coat, as if it were armor against the world.

She turns off the light. Two candles are burning. She seems frugal. I decide to do the same in the future. I like the candlelight. It softens everything.

"So, shall we sleep?" she asks.

"Why not?" I say and lie flat on the sofa.

"But what are you doing? Don't you want to sleep next to me in bed? Besides, the sofa is far too hard... Come here!" Her voice is demanding, almost tender.

"All right," I reply. "Why not?"

She jumps back and forth. Me too. She opens the window, looks at me in the semi-darkness and says: "Huh! What's that? You look like my brother..."

Then she comes back, lies down in bed and says: "Maybe I should love you like my brother."

I have no idea what she means. I place my right hand on her back. It's as if I had plugged her into an outlet. An electric shock runs through me. My hair stands on end. It is six o'clock in the morning. We cannot sleep next to each other. The tension between us is too great; it is waiting for its explosion.

We continue talking. She speaks like a waterfall, without punctuation. Her only topic: Love. Love. And love again.

When she goes to the toilet, I am not allowed to look after her. Her butt is sacred to her, she says. I must look away. "Look away! Look away!" she always says.

Why not, I think. Asses are everywhere. But then I look anyway. Because her butt is truly beautiful.

It is about 2 PM. Instead of going to work, we walk along the Spree River. The weather is incredibly beautiful. Afterwards, we go to my place. We talk, have fun, drink water. In my kitchen, we eventually stand in front of the cabinet and look deep into each other's eyes. No one says anything. Minutes pass.

I have the feeling she wants to say: "Come, kiss me."

I don't move. I am like stone. I am afraid.

Then my lips touch hers – just a tiny bit. She stands there like a sculpture, cold and hard as bronze. We continue to look at each other. The water boils. Then the tea. Lemon Grass.

She continues telling stories. Still about Marcus. She loves Marcus. She can't imagine anyone but him. She knows, one



day they will be back together. Marcus does not love his girlfriend. Marcus only loves her. That's how it's meant to be.

In the evening, we go to the cinema. We only eat bread, potatoes, fruit, and vegetables. She is vegan. No meat, no dairy products. When we pass a butcher's stand, she says: "Look, those are all **corpses**. How can one eat a corpse?"

Later, we are at my place, in the big room. I also light two candles. Strange that I hadn't thought of it before.

"The candlelight creates a beautiful, warm, and romantic atmosphere," she says.

The room is about 35 square meters and has no furniture. Just her, me, the mattress, and two candles. A red one for her, a blue one for me.

She continues her stories. Men. Men. Men.

Agape is 26. According to her account, she has been with over 24 men. The youngest was 20. When she slept with him, she was 15. She doesn't reveal the age of the oldest. Maybe later. When she felt him, she was 20.

She tells me about a man she had mistaken for God. He owned a pub. When she walked in, she knew: That's him. The atmosphere was so intense that she had to get to know him. She worshiped him like a god. Perhaps because she was smoking a lot and reading the Bible a lot back then. Her narrative is disorganized, chaotic, but full of fire.

Eventually, we want to sleep. It is late. About three in the morning. We lie on our sides, holding hands tightly, as tight

as possible, and try to sleep. She pulls my hand toward her, places it on her heart. We look into each other's eyes while doing so. We are tired. We didn't sleep last night.

Tuesday. I am still lying in bed, dreaming. Someone is standing in front of me. It's Agape. She is dressed. I think she wants to leave.

I get up, hug her, give her two small kisses on the cheek. One left, one right. She leaves. I go back to sleep and hope it wasn't a dream.

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In the afternoon, the doorbell rings. She asks if I want to go out to eat with her.

"Sure," I say. "Why not?"

She knows an Asian snack bar downtown Berlin. We meet there. It's a station diner. She's been there before. The food is great.

Eventually, it's our turn. Behind us, a long queue. A nervous guy, small as a duck, serves us. The queue makes him nervous.

Agape asks like a detective what is in the food. She is vegan. The guy hardly understands her. If she says "31," he understands "13." We say "19," he replies "90?" The people behind us are getting restless. Some make strange noises. Others leave.

The guy disappears into the kitchen. Next to us are the cutlery. Agape stands in front of me. I am right behind her. Opposite us, behind the counter, is the open kitchen door.

Suddenly, I see Agape fling something lightning-fast toward the door. The knife whizzes past the man's right eye, missing by just a few centimetres. I don't register what happened. She pulls violently on my arm. "Hey! Come on! He's an asshole!" Then she runs off.

A commotion. I run too. Somewhere. I can't run anymore. Zero condition. I stop, throw up. Then to the nearest subway station. I want to go home.

Agape is standing outside the door. We go in. No one says anything. We drink tea, eat fruit, boil potatoes. She talks about Marcus again. She loves him more than anything.

Late evening. The tension between us is high. Agape goes to the window, even though it's cold. She opens it. A woman across the street is half-naked, changing her clothes. I close the room door. Agape deals with the light, opens the windows. That's her specialty. She believes negative energies must be released before sleep.

It's freezing cold. But so what? We both stand at the window. She observes the woman across the street, who takes off her clothes and puts on something else. Sometimes half-naked, sometimes fully dressed.

"Wanna bet? She must be a **whore**," Agape says.

"Does she have a boyfriend?"

"I don't know," I say. "Maybe."

"What, maybe? You don't know?"

"No. Should I?"

There is a lot going on in the street. Agape wants to know if I've been to her apartment. I say: no, not yet. We are calm.

No one says anything. She closes the windows, stands in front of me. Our gazes meet.

And suddenly, we lunge at each other like two **wild animals**.

A night that shouldn't end.

Two weeks have passed. It feels like paradise. I am in love. Incredibly in love. How is one supposed to explain that? Only those who are in love themselves understand it.

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Agape starts talking about her men again. Far too much. I say nothing. I don't care. She can talk about whatever she wants. Marcus was this, Marcus was that. She deifies him. One day, she says, they will be back together.

I wanted to ask: "And what about us?" But I let it go. While she lives in the past, I enjoy the present. Her stories no longer interest me. I listen to her out of politeness. Actually, I don't like listening to her anymore. But I pity her. Sometimes I sink into thought while she is talking.

I look at her. She is pretty. And I like the way she tells stories.

We have been at home for two days. We order food by phone. It is exactly as I always imagined it: being with someone with whom you are "ONE." Just her and me. No one else.

We sit in the kitchen, drinking tea. She talks about her men again. It's as if she's talking to herself. She delivers monologues. Fine, I think. She should talk. At her age, there are apparently many men in her life. I can hardly believe it.

Friday. We are in the big room. Suddenly, she tells me about her first love. He was twenty, she was fifteen. She didn't love him. But through him, she could finally get out of the family. She hates him. He was her cousin. He insulted her, oppressed her. She was with him for three years. Three years of hell.

At eighteen, she goes to Munich. Lives with an old man who owned a pub. She mistook him for God. She tells everything so fast that sometimes I don't know who is who. She has so much energy. It's incredible.

Then silence again. No one says anything. Our eyes meet. For minutes. Tongues are silent. Eyes speak. The silence is interrupted by her texts, her phone calls.

And suddenly, she says: "Don't you have any friends? I've been with you for two weeks and haven't met any of your friends."

I answer: "Yes. I have an email friend. She is eighteen now. When I met her, she was sixteen."

Agape stands up, slams the teacup onto the floor, grabs her things, and leaves. There I am, standing like an idiot, with no idea what's happening. I met Dorothee by chance in a chat. We emailed back and forth. It was a purely platonic friendship. Nothing more. But with Dorothee, everything was always harmonious. It was as if we were soulmates.

Later that evening, I call Agape. I want to know what's wrong. She says: "You don't know? Either me or her. Do you understand?"

I try to make it clear to her that there is nothing between me and Dorothee. Who knows who she really is? Maybe she's an old granny who sends me youth photos.

Agape says: "Why did you say she is sweet and beautiful? If she were here, you would one hundred percent go to bed with her. Is it like that or not?"

I say: "No. If that were the case, then I would be with her and not with you."

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"No! No! No!" she yells. "I saw it in your eyes. They were no longer innocent."

"Fine. Have it your way," I say and hang up.

On Sunday, she comes to my place. We make love like gods. It's as if nothing happened.

Monday, I go to work. I hope this was our first and last argument. I am a peaceful person. I expect my partner to be peaceful too. If people love each other, why should they fight? One has to be understanding and tolerant. Disagreements are normal. But I need **harmony**. If it's not there, it's the wrong partner. Yelling, cursing, humiliating each other – I don't need that. Anyone who wants that cannot be with me.

In the evening, I come home. Nothing in my room is where it was before.

"Feng Shui," she says.

I say nothing, go into the kitchen. She follows.

"There's a lot of negative energy in your apartment. That's why I had to change everything."

She talks a lot about energies. Positive. Negative. And she forbids me to write to Dorothee.

"Either me or that elephant ass. You have to decide."

The next day, I go to work. Barely an hour passes, the phone rings. Agape. She is screaming and shouting as if she has lost her mind. She read my emails with Dorothee.

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I go home. She has deleted all emails and pictures. With a marker pen, she has crossed out all female names in my address book.

I can't believe it. I don't know what to do.

Why is she doing this? We've only known each other for a month.

I get angry. I yell at her. "Get out of my life!" She packs her things and leaves. I go back to work.

Agape doesn't work. She lives on social security. She always has more money than I do. She knows a "rich" guy who gives her money occasionally. She didn't care if I worked. She treated me as if I didn't work either.

For her, there were no weekends, no workdays. Every day was a holiday. But that didn't suit me. And what did she even want from me if she loves Marcus?

Since I met her, I have never been alone. We are together day and night. That does me good – if only she weren't so strange. I have a lot to do. She has nothing to do. That can't end well.

She plays loud music, dances wildly, talks and talks. It never ends. She barely lets me sleep. She doesn't care if I have to sleep. Even if I say: "I have to go to work tomorrow," she is not interested. I often go to work without sleep.

In the evening, we made love again. Everything seemed fine. Only my back wasn't cooperating – a slipped disc. The next morning, I went to the doctor with Agape. I got an injection and painkillers. In the pharmacy, the assistant was conspicuously friendly. She smiled the whole time. Agape was silent. Her face changed. I immediately sensed something was wrong.

"Everything okay with you?" I asked.

"Everything okay," she answered shortly.

Arriving home, I could barely move. Every step was agony. I lay on the sofa, trying to rest. Agape gave me no peace. Suddenly – **a slap across the face**. I saw stars.

"You're thinking about the pharmacist," she said. "That's why you don't want to sleep with me."

"What? No! My back hurts. How did you get to the pharmacist?"

"And why were you flirting with her?"

"What are you talking about? Me flirting? You are greatly mistaken."



"No, I'm not mistaken. Why did you forget your credit cards?"

"I just forgot them."

"And why were you so nice to her?"

"Man, I'm always like that..."

No sooner had I finished the sentence than she struck again. First from the left, then from the right. She cursed, she raged. And me? I couldn't even defend myself. My back paralyzed me. I lay there, helpless. She grabbed her things and vanished. I hoped it was for good.

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But hardly had I finished that thought when the doorbell rang.

"Who is it?"

"Who do you think? Open up!"

She came in as if nothing had happened. Hugged me. We went into the kitchen, boiled water for tea. Everything as usual. If she had something in her head, it had to come out.

"Tell me: Was the woman in the pharmacy pretty?"

I could barely remember her face. I hadn't seen her body – she wore a white coat. I didn't understand what this questioning was about. She wore me down with her suspicions.

"We don't understand each other," I said. "Please let's separate peacefully."

No sooner said than she struck again. A slap on the left, one on the right. It didn't stop. I didn't defend myself. I regretted

saying anything at all. She was like a detective. She examined everything, every detail, every gesture, every look. And yet – there were days with her that were so beautiful it was hard to believe.

Now it was midnight. And we were arguing about a woman who meant nothing to me. A pharmacist. Just anyone. I didn't understand Agape.

Separating would be the easy way. But I didn't want to separate. Not really. What bothered me was her mistrust. This constant controlling, as if I were a criminal. I couldn't walk normally with her on the street anymore. Every woman who passed us became a threat.

"Why did you look at her?" she would scream then. And me? I walked with my head down, staring at the floor, as if I were guilty.

In the last few weeks, I had forgotten how to walk straight ahead.

What happened to her, I didn't know. She no longer spoke of her former men. Only of Marcus. She had been in bed with him twice. It hadn't been nice, she said, but he knew what love was. I didn't. In my head, there was only sex. Love – that was something else. Pure love. I should be like Jesus.

I didn't understand what all this was about. It was the middle of the night. The world was sleeping. And us? We were fighting.

I had enough. I was tired, annoyed, exhausted. I stood up, took her head between my hands – and wanted to slam it

against the wall. But I couldn't. She kept talking, saying everything that came to her mind. Suddenly, I noticed my hands were on her throat. I lost control. With a jerk, I threw her to the floor.

She was petite, weak. It wasn't my way to hit anyone. But in that moment, I didn't care. I wanted to hurt her. I wanted it to stop.

Then I looked into her eyes. My knees went weak. My hands let go. I heard her breathing. Our lips touched. Kisses, wild, incomprehensible. I didn't know what was happening anymore. Was I a **pig**?

If so, then she should leave me. But she didn't. She clung to me, like glue that won't let go. And everything was back to normal. We understood each other, as if nothing had happened. We went to sleep.

She drove me crazy. She pushed me to madness. I often told her that I couldn't live with her. Yet she said she loved me more than anything.

"And what about Marcus?" I asked.

"I was mistaken there. I only love you. No one else."

I should be like Jesus. Only love her. Desire no one. Not even look at them. There is only her. For me. Forever.

She was capable of everything: Kung Fu, Karate, Kickboxing. Muay Thai. At every little thing, she would raise her hand and say: "Do you want a punch in the face?" Like a cheeky boy. And me? I took a step back. Out of fear. Out of

caution. Even though I knew she couldn't hurt me. She was smaller, weaker. And me? I wasn't a muscle man either. Perhaps that's why she thought she could hit me.

Yesterday it was quiet. Beautiful. Harmonious. It felt like everything would be fine. Today, she saw an old photo of a friend of mine. She didn't come all day. I hoped she would never return. But in the evening, she was back at the door. Cursing. Saying whatever came to her mind.

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I didn't know what to do. I was helpless. Desperate. Stranded. Every day she found something new. I asked myself: How do I get rid of her?

And yet – I loved her. Despite everything. Sometimes I didn't want to break up. But she made my life hell. With her insults, her blows. I couldn't defend myself. I didn't know how.

We had to break up. I thought. But it didn't work. We argued. She left. The next day, she came back. The more I cursed her, the more she said she loved me.

Maybe she was masochistic. I didn't know.

If two people don't understand each other, it doesn't matter how much they love each other – they have to separate. Agape believed the opposite. We fought because we loved each other, she said. And in everything that happened, she looked for the positive.

On the weekend, I was in Hamburg on business. Agape called constantly, as if I would never come back. After three weeks, I was alone for two days for the first time. I had forgotten how beautiful solitude could be.

On Sunday, I came back. She picked me up from the station. Despite the negative energy, we came back to my place. And again, she started with her favourite topic: Love, Love, Love. This time, Jesus was also involved again.

She said she was a Christian. She deified Jesus.

"Jesus never slept with a woman," she said. "One must be like him."

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I replied: "Maybe so. But if people don't sleep together, there are no children."

"See!" she says. "You are typical man. You only think about sex. I love Jesus solely and exclusively because he is not like you assholes. He never slept with a woman."

"How do you know that?" I ask.

She gets angry, becomes loud, trying to explain to me how terrible it is to cheat on your partner even in thought.

"And if you saw a beautiful woman in Hamburg and desired her, you are a pig!" she yells.

I try to stay calm. "It's completely normal to desire others, even if you are in a relationship."

She strikes me. First from the left, then from the right. She screams: "You pig! You asshole! You idiot!"

I don't defend myself. I keep walking. Luckily, she has a cell phone. When a call comes in, she forgets everything. Then she talks as if nothing happened. She receives several texts,

several calls. Who is not among them? René, Beat, Oliver, Remi. She flirts with all these guys right in front of my eyes. And me? I say nothing. Absolutely nothing. And she makes my life hell, just because I am honest and share my thoughts with her.

She could just leave me and go with one of them. What does she want from me? Damn it.

She doesn't have a single female friend. Six sisters, but she doesn't spend time with any of them. All her friends are men. She is allowed to have infinitely many male friendships, but I am not even allowed to have one email friend. And she calls that justice.

All our conversations are interrupted by calls and texts. I get up, go to bed. I am dead tired. But there is no peace for me. She follows me, and the discussion starts over. It's maddening.

I stop talking. I stay silent. I just want to get rid of her. But how?

Her phone rings. It's Beat. She wants to go to the cinema with him. I am happy. Hopefully, something happens between them, and she stays with him. Then another text comes in. She laughs loudly, shrilly, like a cow with BSE. And finally, she leaves.

The next day, she tells me about a performance that is supposed to take place next week. The theme is still open, it will develop spontaneously in a gallery during the show. The pictures of an artist would be exhibited; the vernissage and

performance would take place simultaneously. Her partner is René.

I am happy. Truly. Finally, something that fulfills her. But she says: "You don't need to come. Who knows what all I'll be acting out with René there."

I stay home. She invites René for dinner. The meal is only meant for him so that she can feel his positive energy – for the evening, for the show. 23

Around midnight, she comes back to my place. She tells me that she made love with him on the long table.

"And? What's the big deal? I'm an actress. I'm allowed to do that. That's completely normal. But you are not allowed to desire anyone but me."

She is drunk. And when she's drunk, all hell breaks loose. Sometimes she dances, sometimes she sings, sometimes she opens the window and screams. What all doesn't she do? Most of all, she gets upset with me.

I remain silent. Nod occasionally. When she gets too loud, I wake up. Whether I listen doesn't interest her. She is loud. Always. Whether I'm sleeping or the neighbours are listening – it doesn't matter. She acts as if she were alone on an island.

She talks like a radio. Then she laughs. Loudly. She loves to laugh loudly. It is five in the morning.

I am exhausted and sleeping deeply. Suddenly she screams: "We don't suit each other! Do you hear me, you damned asshole!"

I ignore her. Try to continue sleeping.

"Hey! Do you hear me?" she screams.

I hear everything, but I won't let myself be provoked anymore. She reveals that she has cheated on me with two men since the beginning of our relationship.

I say nothing. I don't sleep either. I get up, get dressed, go outside. She comes with me. We walk side by side, silently.

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In front of the church, I say: "We have to break up."

In that moment, she hits my head repeatedly with her umbrella. It hurts. I run away. She runs after me. I hide behind parked cars. She searches for me frantically, asking passers-by about me.

I have no stamina. I go to the playground and throw up. She arrives. Sits down on a bench. Waits.

I am helpless. Should I call the police? What would they even do?

I stand up, walk slowly home. She follows me. I stand outside the door. My key is inside the apartment. She opens it. Lets me in.

We are in the apartment. She wants to hug me. I don't let her. She apologizes. Wants to kiss me. I don't let her. She does it anyway.

I am stupid. We end up in bed. It doesn't matter if I want it or not. The main thing is that she wants it. What I want is peace.



After we sleep together, there is usually peace. Then she tells me excerpts from her life.

When Agape was fourteen, her father fell in love with her. Perhaps that's why she lost faith in men. At fifteen, she married her cousin. Before the marriage, she was with him twice against her will. She didn't talk to anyone about it. Out of fear that no one would believe her.

"And why did you marry him?" I ask.

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"He was the only one who wanted me then," she says. "I had to get out of that apartment. Because of my father, I couldn't stay with my parents anymore. And my mother wanted it that way too. They all liked my cousin."

Her parents were religious, underdeveloped, and loved the cousin.

In the first six months, he cheated on her. They lived like cat and mouse for three years. At eighteen, she finally divorced him. She had waited a long time for that moment.

Afterward, she fled into the nightlife of the big city. Worked in pubs, consumed drugs, slept with everyone she considered "good."

At twenty, she met the club owner she adored. He was sixty-five. She smoked a lot of marijuana, believed he was God. The man took advantage of the situation, took her as his woman.

Before that, she had worked in one of his clubs and knew his son. She fell in love with him too. But the son said: "No. Nothing will happen between us. You're with my father."

To get revenge, she slept with his friend. The relationship lasted six months. After that, she slept with the son two or three times. He developed a bad conscience, didn't want any more. To hurt him, she slept with the father again.

She tells all this like a flowing stream. She needs help. Professional help. But she won't listen to me. She says everything has a reason. Maybe everything had to happen this way.

I suggest we spend a weekend apart. She accepts it. I go alone to an island.

Since Monday, I've been working again. Agape constantly sends me texts. It's annoying. I wonder how to get rid of her. When I have these thoughts, I feel sorry for her. Somehow, I do like her. But it's not working. So why suffer?

In the evening at my place, she tells me about Beat. She met him in a club. She tells everything very detailed. We've been together for three months, and during this time, she was also with three others. She kissed a few, flirted with many. With every man who looks reasonably good.

I keep saying: "It would be good if you went to therapy."

She says: "I'm completely normal. You are sick. You should go to therapy. If you were as holy as Jesus, we wouldn't have any problems."

I understand neither the world, nor God, nor anything else. Why me, of all people, with her? What kind of fate is this?

She was here again yesterday. I don't visit her anymore. Not out of principle, but for self-protection. She is very erotic. When I see her, my knees go weak. I could just collapse. It's as if a higher power is forcing me to sleep with her. I can't control myself. I don't understand what this is.

Sometimes we love each other infinitely. We smell each other, kiss each other, feel each other, do everything two people in love do. And yet – we don't understand each other.

To this day, we have never been to a club together. She always goes with other men. That doesn't bother me. The main thing is she leaves me in peace.

Saturday. I have visitors; we want to go to a party. Agape wants to come along. But she doesn't have sneakers – she can only dance in sneakers. So we first go to her place, then to the party.

Hardly had we arrived when she began to dance, as if she hadn't danced in years. I stood with my friend on the edge of the dance floor and watched the people. Suddenly, Agape came up to me, slapped me across the face from the right, then from the left. I saw stars. I didn't know what was happening.

My friend intervened. "Run!" he said. But I wanted to know what had happened.

"Please, let's go home," she said.

"No," I said. "You can go. I'm staying here."

She hit me again. I hid in another room, among the crowd. She walked past me, didn't see me, and disappeared into the basement. I took the opportunity and rode the subway home.

No sooner had I arrived than a taxi pulled up outside my door. She got out. We went upstairs without saying a word.

Upstairs in the apartment, I asked: "What happened? Are you slowly losing your mind?"

She got angry. "Yes, yes, I'm losing my mind. And what about those bitches next to you? You think I didn't see them? You were staring at their asses the whole time."

I had no idea about any women. Sure, there were many people. Apparently, a few girls were standing next to or behind me. Isn't that normal? I had nothing to do with them.

She's drunk again. I've never liked alcohol. Especially not in people who get drunk and then talk nonsense. I hate those types. She is one of those types.

She talks without punctuation. Then she vomits in a corner somewhere. Disgusting.

I want to sleep, but I can't. She's on the phone: "Hi Felix! ... Hey Alex! ..." It's four in the morning. While she's talking, I try to sleep.

Suddenly, the doorbell rings. I go to answer it.

"Agape? She doesn't live here."

At that moment, she comes out of the bathroom stark naked, takes the receiver from my hand, presses the door opener, and says: "That's Alex. He's coming to visit me. You can go back to sleep."

I am annoyed. "What does he want in my apartment at this hour?"

"What men want from women at this hour. Got it?"

29

"Okay. Take him and go to your apartment. You can do whatever you want there. But not here."

I lie back down in bed. She laughs loudly, shrilly, like a mad cow.

Alex is upstairs. They go into the kitchen. I stay in bed. I don't understand everything they're saying, but I hear them. She invited him to sleep with him next to me – to test if I would stay cool. She doesn't like that I don't care who she does what with. Neither she nor Alex interests me. And that drives her crazy.

After a few minutes, they come into my room. They go to the window. Agape opens it, tells Alex confused nonsense about the street, the houses, the universe. Alex doesn't understand anything, but still says: "Yes, yes. You're right. Very interesting." He tries to grab her from behind. He is so fixated on her that he doesn't even notice me in bed.

She is wearing a blue, transparent nightgown. One can guess everything. I suddenly get up and throw them out of the room. They go into the adjoining room. The rest doesn't interest me. I try to sleep.

That drives her insane. She comes back, holding her ridiculous lecture. I try to throw her out again. Then Alex comes. He is tall, well-built, but nice. He says to Agape: "Let's go to my place."

## Saturday, After Midnight

30

I can't sleep. I go outside for some fresh air. She comes too. I say nothing. Even if I said, "Don't come," she would come.

We walk side by side. I am in a bad mood. Two pretty women come toward us. I look down as always. They walk past, and I pretend I didn't see them.

"What are you thinking?" Agape asks.

"Nothing."

"Come on, come on. Didn't you see those women? If they wanted to sleep with you, would you say no?"

The moment I said "yes," she hits me with her bag. She curses like crazy.

"You're lying," she says. "All men are the same. It doesn't matter whether they want it or not. You're ready right away."

"What man says no to a woman like that? You wouldn't say no either."

She goes crazy again. I tell her I only love her. That I know there are many pretty women. But because I love her, I say no to everyone else. Out of love for her.

But she doesn't understand anything.

"What is this?" I say. "Either now or never."

I have to end this relationship. I can't do it anymore. I am only human, too.

31

I go home, take the spare keys from her hand, and lock the door. She says she has to go up to get her bag.

"No," I say. "You've lied to me often. You stay here. I'll bring your bag down."

In the rush, I forget to lock the main house door. She rings all the neighbours' bells. It's one o'clock at night. She runs after me. I go into the apartment, lock the door. She stays outside, on the landing in front of my door. She screams loudly, whining like a cat.

The neighbours call me. I try to calm them down. Then I call the police.

Sixteen police officers arrive. Some are women. They treat me harshly. They believe Agape is my wife whom I have beaten and locked out.

"No," I say. I explain the situation. They take Agape away.

Ten minutes later, the phone rings. She wants to come back into the apartment. Even though she has been banned from the house.

My God. What kind of person is this?

She says she has no money for a train ticket. She never buys a ticket. She thinks I'm a fool. When she takes a taxi, she gets out, says she forgot her wallet, goes upstairs – and never comes back.

32

I hang up. She keeps calling. I unplug the phone and go to sleep.

It has to end. This time, I have to succeed.

## Sunday

I love Sundays. When I'm alone, I go to the Tiergarten in the afternoon, sit by the lake, and muse to myself. Solitude is something very beautiful.

Sometimes I meet Roman there. To me, Roman is like a psychologist. I know nothing about him. He knows everything about me. I trust him. I believe he trusts me too.

We are not friends. We only know each other from this park.

Roman has a problem. He wants to die. And this, even though he is not old yet. He retired two years ago. Since then, he says, life has had no meaning for him. He asked me to kill him.



I have never killed anyone. There has never been a reason.

"When should I kill you?" I ask.

"As soon as possible. I am suffering greatly."

"And how? Why don't you take heart pills?"

"No. That won't work. I don't want to survive disabled. I want you to shoot me in the brain from behind with a pistol. Quick and painless."

33

I am still considering. Roman is a very friendly person. But if he wants it this way – then so be it. It is his life, after all.

I haven't heard from Agape for three days. I had gotten used to this woman. Despite all the arguments, I miss her. I feel an emptiness within me, vast and deep. I miss her. Is that love?

Besides all the negative memories, there are also beautiful ones. Where is she now?

While on my way home, I see her. She is also walking toward my apartment. I follow her, meet her not far from the house. We hug as if we haven't seen each other in years.

I have a visitor from Hamburg. Vivien. She is only a friend. There is nothing between us but friendship. As soon as Agape said "Hello" to Vivien, she grabbed her things and left. I wouldn't have called her because of Vivien. Sleeping with her in my thoughts? Utter nonsense.

I am not sorry that she is gone again. Because I know: she will be back tomorrow.

What is this woman thinking? It's self-evident that one desires others. What does it mean: sleeping with her in my thoughts?

She says pornography is only for men. Women have their fantasies. Just as a woman imagines everything with a man in her thoughts, so do men.

"Men think with their penises. I can be anything, but you can't!"

34

"Why?" I ask. "Am I not human?"

"Yes. You are a human being. But a different kind of human being. You will be as holy as Jesus."

"Then I won't sleep with you either."

"Okay. Then you don't have to sleep with me. It's enough if you love me."

She had an open relationship with Marcus. Everyone did what they wanted. But Marcus's girlfriend didn't accept that. And Marcus didn't want to leave her to be with Agape.

"An open relationship?" I say. "You do what you want anyway. From now on, I'll do what I want too."

"No!" she says. "There will be no open relationship with you. You are not allowed to desire anyone but me. God will forgive me all my sins. I'm allowed to do everything. And you are like Jesus."

"Okay," I say. "You are not my property. Your body belongs to you. You can do with it what you want. But please – leave me alone."

"No. I can't leave you alone. You were intimate with me. And I thought you loved me."

"I do love you. But I don't want a love like that. You love Marcus, don't you? Go to him."

"No. I have decided. You will be Jesus for us. And I will stay with you. My heart is big. There is room for you and for Marcus."

But first, I will kill Roman. I'm meeting him tomorrow. In a bar in the red-light district. I'm going to become a criminal. No – a **murderer**. I'm going to shoot two people out of necessity: *Bang!* And another *Bang!* Then they're gone. And I'll finally have peace.

Roman sits coolly in the bar. Drinks his drink. He has a serious problem. He is sick. At least, that's what he says.

He is attracted to dead women. Living ones are too stressful for him, I think.

"No," he says. "It's called **necrophilia**."

He has it naturally. He can't help it. It is like cancer. That's why he never had a girlfriend. He worked for years, lived lonely – like God. He tried everything: therapy, talks, medication. Nothing helped.

So he moved from brothel to brothel. For people like him, there are special rooms, called "Special Service." A prostitute lies in a coffin, pretends to be dead. He does what he wants with her.

He also abducted and desecrated corpses from the crematorium. He was young then. Today, he loathes himself. But he can't do anything about it.

I have been trying to console him for years. To me, he is not sick. He has never harmed anyone. It would be bad if he killed someone to satisfy himself. That would be too much.

One shouldn't kill someone for an orgasm that can be had faster and easier with five fingers.

Opposite us sits a guy with a strange face. A "super mug," I would say. Sunglasses, gum or toothpick in his mouth, a weird hat. Definitely a dealer, I think.

Roman says:

"That's your man."

"Why my man?" I ask.

"You," he says. "Everyone here knows me. I can't buy a weapon. Understood?"

"All right," I say. "Hand over the cash."

He gives me the necessary money. What must be, must be.

I sit down opposite him. Look at him. Suddenly, he looks to the left, then to the right, says: "We're leaving." And stands up.

I follow him. We are outside, in front of the shop. In front of a huge car. He comes up to me, blindfolds me. I say nothing.

We drive. Straight, then left, left again, straight. After about fifteen minutes, we stop.

He carefully takes me out of the car. We go down into a basement. Hopefully not a trap, I think. Roman wouldn't pull any shit. It was his idea to have me kill him. Not mine.

It smells musty. We have arrived.

On the right wall stands a life-sized Barbie doll. On the left, a Bauhaus table. Probably expensive. Blood is splattered here and there. It stinks. Musty. Perverse.

He sits down in the armchair like a bank director. I take the seat opposite. Between us, a table, on which there are small bags – filled with pills, white powder, maybe flour or sugar. I wonder what he actually does with it. He looks at me as if he wants to devour me. Oh God, what a face. A mix of dealer and washed-up pimp.

He pulls a briefcase from under the table, opens it, and places it on the table. Inside is a pistol. A beautiful one. I take it in my hand, as if I were a professional. It feels good. I've always wanted one like this, but never knew where to get it. It's the first time I've touched a weapon.

He places cartridges on the table, loads the magazine, calmly, without looking at me. Then he hands it to me. I take it, push the magazine in from the back – pretty good, I think. I examine the pistol as if I understood something about it. My gaze remains consciously fixed on him.

"A thousand," he says. "In cash."

"In cash?" I ask again.

He grins beneath his raised lips. Then – a **BANG**. His brain slides down the wall. I must have pressed the wrong button. It hit him hard.

I quickly grab the pistol, the cartridges, the briefcase, and leave the room. I have no idea where I am. I look to the left, then to the right – and see the Astra Bar. Okay. I go inside.

Roman is still sitting at the table, drinking his drink, looking at women. He is dreaming. He's probably wishing for their death right now so he can penetrate their corpses.

We go to his home.

His apartment is beautiful. Pictures of women hang on the walls. He seems very lonely. He brews coffee. I drink water.

At some point, he shows me his favourite room. I am the only man who has ever seen it. Otherwise, he has confided his secret to no one.

He opens the door. And I think: Oh, holy shit.

A **graveyard**. The room looks like a graveyard. Trees, flowers, tombstones. He used to have it set up as a "Room of the Dead." Black walls, flickering candles, gloomy light.

Roman often gets upset about other necrophiles. The really perverse ones. He himself has never killed, but he has abducted and desecrated corpses.

There are people who kill only to violate the corpse afterward. Some go even further – they eat parts of it. Vagina, butt, breasts.

39

Roman takes off his jacket, lies face down in the coffin.

"Go on. Kill me," he says.

I pull the pistol out of my pocket, aim it at him. Then I think.

"No, my friend. I can't do that. Please don't expect that from me. You are a nice person. You haven't hurt anyone. I cannot kill an innocent person."

He stands up, brews coffee.

Later he says: "You should really hurt Agape sometime. So she knows what it's like to be hurt. She hurts you immensely without realizing what she is destroying. Maybe she even loves you – but she destroys exactly what she loves. And she is not aware of it."

I remain silent.

"If she truly loved you," Roman says, "she would treat you like a rose. Care for you, respect you, admire you. But not hit you, humiliate you, or degrade you. That is not love."

I haven't seen Agape for a few days. It does me good. I have recovered. I hope she never comes back. I don't want to go to her place anymore. Her apartment is chaos. Boxes everywhere, full of junk. It looks like a flea market or like she's moving out. I didn't perceive it that way on the first visit.

She has to be careful. She has stolen a few times and is on probation for insult. If I report her now, she will go to prison. But not for long. Three, maybe four months. Then she's out again.

Just as I am brewing myself an espresso, the doorbell rings. Who could it be at this hour, if not Agape? It is three in the morning. If I don't open, she will ring all the neighbours' bells. I could call the police. But they won't do anything. They take her away – and release her a few minutes later.

If I don't want this woman anymore, she has to die. There is no other way. But how?

I have only killed that one guy in my life. And that was an accident. Agape has seven siblings. They all know what's going on between us. If they find out about her death, they won't leave me alone.

She comes up. Now she's with Beat. They were at a party.

"And why are you coming to my place?" I ask.



"Just because," she says. "I wanted you to meet Beat."

We are sitting in the kitchen. They brought a bottle of wine. They drink, talk about trivial things. Neither Beat nor Agape interest me. She notices that. She takes her glass and throws the wine in my face.

I don't know what to do.

"You're thinking about Vivien, aren't you?" she says.

41

I say nothing. I take a cloth, wipe my face, drink a glass of water, and go into the living room.

She follows me. Insults me with everything that comes to her mind.

"Enough," I say. "Enough is enough."

I grab my jacket and go outside. After an hour, I come back. She is lying in my bed with Beat.

I take the weapon, carefully walking toward the bedroom. Suddenly, I hear a voice inside me: "Calm down. You are making your life hell because of her."

I go into the kitchen, drink water. Another glass. Like a lunatic. Then I go out again. It's five in the morning.

Walking through the streets in the morning, looking at shop windows – that is just as beautiful as sitting by the lake on Sunday and reflecting. I don't understand anything anymore. Even though I haven't drunk anything, I feel drunk.

What should I do? Maybe I should talk to her sister.

The next day, I take her phone, find her older sister's number, and call. She sounds nice. But I am afraid of this family.

"What are you doing to Agape?" she asks. "When she comes to us, she cries for hours and says that you are hurting her."

"No," I say. "I'm not hurting her. I just want to end the relationship. And I need your help."

42

"That's not possible," she says. "You are two adults. You have to sort this out among yourselves." Then she hangs up.

For me, the matter is settled. When Agape comes, I will tell her. With Beat in my bed – that was the straw that broke the camel's back.

In the meantime, I have resumed contact with Dorothee. If Agape finds out, she will flip out. I don't care. Relationships are fleeting. Friendships are not.

I value friendship greatly – even if I don't have many. Dorothee is perhaps the only friend I've ever had. Everything I've written so far, I've sent to her.

Dorothee says: "Just don't kill her. You could get into trouble. Or wait until she leaves on her own."

I sometimes think that too. But when she comes, it's disgusting.

How can you love and hate a person simultaneously? I don't know. I can't explain it. Only those who have experienced it themselves will understand me.

## Sunday, 3:00 PM

I go back to the Tiergarten. Roman is there as always. Perhaps he is waiting for me. It feels like a silent rendezvous. We sit down on our bench; we don't beat around the bush. It's about his death. 43

Roman has decided: He must die.

"Okay," I say. "How much money do you have?"

"Are you going to do it for the money?" he asks.

"No. I'm curious."

"Three, four hundred thousand Euros. I don't know exactly."

"Let's go to your place. I want to see it."

We go to Roman's place. He shows me his bank statements. I calculate: exactly **364,587.79 Euros**.

"Good," I say. "We could travel with part of that. Just you and me. The world beneath our feet. And when we come back, I'll kill you."

"No," he says. "Right away, please. I've traveled enough. I've seen enough."

"Fine," I say. "What do you think about getting a killer for the money?"

"No," he says. "I want you to do it."

"Why me?"

"You're my friend. Aren't you?"

I remain silent. Then I say: "Okay. How do I get the money?"

"If you want, I'll give you a check immediately. But it stays with me. After you've killed me, you take it out of my pocket."

"A check for that much money? No. That won't work. I only accept it if you transfer the money directly to my account."

44

Roman accepts. He agrees to transfer the money to me. And I – I will kill him. Just as he wishes. To free him from his suffering.

The money has not been transferred yet. We go to my place. Who is there? Of course – Agape. She is sitting in the kitchen, eating. Alone.

I introduce Roman to Agape. Both are surprisingly cheerful. For the first time in months, I talk properly with Agape again. We joke, discuss, tell stories. I am pleasantly surprised.

Agape asks Roman directly: "Have you ever killed a woman?"

Roman answers calmly: "No. I have never killed anyone in my whole life. I couldn't even do that."

The two get along as if they were old friends. That makes me happy. And at the same time, my mind is occupied with other thoughts.

Roman wants to die. Agape – I want to kill her. Couldn't I bring both of them to Roman's place and send them to hell together? A kind of double suicide. But I don't like the idea. It wouldn't be easy to kill Agape. And if I kill her first, Roman won't allow it.

Besides: Apart from Roman, no one will know that I killed him. I have to handle this professionally so that I get the **364,587.79 Euros** – without mistakes.

The problem is: I have zero experience. Whenever I get nervous, I black out. I get dizzy. I am at a loss. I've seen so many movies, though.

It was a beautiful day with Roman and Agape. I can finally breathe deeply.

Towards evening, Roman goes home. Agape stays in the kitchen and writes poems:

*Oliver, my Oliver!*  
*Oh! You Sun God!*  
*You God of Beauty!*  
*Missed you so much.*  
*Your laugh, your leg, your feet,*  
*WHICH I LOVE TO KISS SO MUCH*  
*Please send me at least a few greetings!*  
*Please, my sweet darling!*  
*Your closeness and warmth – WHICH I MISS SO MUCH*  
*Anus! Anus! Anus!*  
*Come!!! Kiss me!*  
*You are a rebel, beautiful to behold*  
*With your hair,*  
*Your face*

*And your figure  
I will always keep you  
In my heart  
Like the music of Mozart.*

Agape writes poems like that for every man she knows. Oliver is a friend of Beat's. If she leaves me alone, she can do whatever she wants. I don't care at all.

The next day, I call Roman. I suggest we meet at his place for dinner. Roman agrees.

46

"Bring Agape with you," he says.

That pleases me. We settle on next Sunday.

I no longer sleep with Agape. That drives her crazy. I have no desire. No physical, no spiritual desire. She sits in the study and writes her poems, as if we were a happy couple.

I leave her alone. They say if you don't provoke the snake, it won't bite.

The phone rings. It's Laila, a good friend. She has moved into a new apartment and wants to give me her new number. In the hallway, on the small table, lies a notebook. I write the number down and put the slip of paper into the pocket of my jacket, which is hanging on the coat rack. If I entered the number into the phone book, Agape would cross it out with a thick marker pen – like all other women's names.

I withdraw, listening to music on the sofa in the living room. The door suddenly opens. Agape is standing there, the slip of paper in her hand.

"Whose number is this?" she asks in a threatening tone.

"You know," I say.

The argument begins. I know she called Laila.

When I go to work, she searches the entire apartment. I have no idea what she is looking for. She says she wants to find out the truth about me. What truth? I don't know. It's as if I committed a crime, and she is the investigator trying to prove my guilt.

47

The discussion about the phone number lasts a long time. So long that I feel like grabbing the pistol and putting a bullet in her forehead. I can barely control myself anymore. Again, I hear the voice: "Calm down. Calm down."

I stand up, go into the kitchen. In such moments, changing rooms helps. But she follows me.

Something is lying on the kitchen table. Still wrapped.

"A gift for you," she says.

I am surprised. She has never given me anything. I open it. It looks like a dead hedgehog, smells of earth. It is the **Rose of Jericho** – a plant that never dies. That's what the leaflet says.

Is there anything that never dies?

The legend says the Virgin Mary blessed it on her flight from Nazareth to Egypt and granted it eternal life. It is said to have healing powers. A decoction of the plant is supposed to aid childbirth.

Shit. Did she trick me? What if she stopped taking pills and gets pregnant by me? That's all I need.

I place the dry plant on a plate, pour water over it. After a few minutes, the seemingly lifeless bulb opens, fills with life, shows its green splendor – as described in the leaflet. It is supposed to improve the indoor climate, purifying the air.

Is she pregnant now? Maybe I shouldn't have poured the water. I'm not religious, but what if it's true?

48

No matter what happens – I have to get rid of her.

## Sunday

We are at Roman's place. The first thing Agape does: She lies down in the **coffin**. Roman laughs. I feel anxiety. Distress. I go out onto the balcony.

They are preparing dinner in the kitchen. They ask me for help. I go in, but my hands are trembling.

"Everything alright with you?" Roman asks.

"Everything's fine," I say. "Don't let me disturb you."

But nothing is fine. When Agape was in the coffin, I should have shot her. Now they are standing in the kitchen, both with knives in their hands.

My inner voice says: "Courage. Courage. Be brave." But my body shakes.



Around 3 PM, the food is ready. Agape and Roman chatter like two birds. They get along well. Sometimes they talk for hours. I just listen and think: How do I shoot them?

First, they talk about ecology, then about the Kurds. Roman is understanding. He says it is not easy to fight against four despotic states without outside help. Agape, as always, talks about the disunity of the Kurds. They are too scattered. If they were peaceful and united, they wouldn't be so oppressed.

49

The weather is beautiful. The sky is cloudless; the sun is shining. Roman says: "Let's go out. What do you say?"

Agape is immediately ready. I say nothing. Even if I said, "Let's stay here," it would be strange.

"All right. Then let's go," I say.

We walk to the car. Roman drives. Agape sits in the front, I'm in the back, directly behind her. Roman and Agape talk like two mad people, as if they haven't seen each other in ages. Roman doesn't concentrate on the traffic. I warn him a couple of times. After a few minutes, he is again lost in conversation.

While overtaking, we enter the blind spot of a much faster vehicle. Our car is rammed, flying off the highway. Thank God no one was on the right.

It happens in seconds. Like a lightning strike.

Roman is instantly dead. Agape is injured in the leg and head. I only have a few scratches. But I am in shock. Just like her.

Agape is crying. Because of Roman. Incessantly. I feel sorry for him. But nothing could be done anymore.

At home, I immediately check my account. **364,587.79 Euros**. Transferred to the last cent.

Thank you, Roman. I will never forget this kindness.

The next day, I tell Agape I have to go to Cologne for a week for work. She believes me. There is no furniture left in my apartment anyway. I terminated the lease, packed everything necessary into my backpack, and drove to Lisbon.

50

Since then, I haven't visited Berlin.

Now, here in Lisbon, in this beautiful city, I live in a small two-room apartment. Far away from everything. And I enjoy the solitude.

## Epilogue

**A**gape – a name that in Christian tradition stands for the highest form of love: unconditional, self-sacrificing, pure. A love that gives without demanding. Yet in this story, it is borne by a woman who seems anything but saintly. She is beautiful, unpredictable, obsessive. And yet: whoever loves her loves not only her but also the chaos she brings with her.

This novella does not tell of salvation but of the yearning for it. It is about a man who loses himself because he tries for too long to save someone else. About a friend who is ready to kill

because the life of another seems more important to him than his own conscience. And about a woman who loves by destroying.

What remains is not a moral. What remains is a question:  
**How much pain can love endure before it dies?**

P.S.: Jealousy knows no gender. I am a man – and I wrote this story because she was my girlfriend. Perhaps that was my way of getting closer to her.

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