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UNLESS THE TOWN IS
FURNISHED WITH COCAINE

A Narrative

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A Narrative

Kathmandu 2054

Nobody remembers when the town was founded or who the first settlers were. It is the sun alone that the townsman remember for he was always cherished them with his warmth and made them argued against their foreign roots and believed that the town-dwellers were first-comers, this meaning that it was here that they and their ancestors were born and then duly trained to be worthy archers.

The town was little and its dwellers were no more skilled in aiming at a mark with a stone, much less in archery, for the Stone Age and subsequent stages of history had imperturbably passed. Though there were some dense and handicapped denizens, one can safely say that the general level of development evinced a considerable stage of technical progress. The town, however, had an oddity and incredible as it may seem, the fellow-citizens were familiar with one another perfectly well and happily disposed of such titbits as to be able to fill in any sort of questionnaire.

And it was a little town with a gateway, where once a gate was erected and a spacious square in its centre. It was round this square that the majority of the population lived. The square was commonly referred to as yard. Probably they were right to do so. In the middle of the yard or square some Chinese were - with amazing zeal - constructing a wall (they

had begun to build it many year before) and the town council was but all in vain trying to cool the Chinese off the undertaking. And the mayor insisted on detecting the person (of the town council, of course) who let the Chinese lay foundation of this immense beginning, but all was in vain: no one of the town council was reported to have given his consent. Moreover, nobody remembered when the construction had begun, for the inhabitants of our little town along with their oddities shared an incredulous trait with one another: they did not register time. Besides, they never made use of clocks and calendars and that was why nobody knew which year or century it was and when the end would come, for they did not know the simplest truth of everything having its beginning and end.

The end lasts but a day, or even a second and until that day come, the townsmen lived as they used to. They wantedly met the sunrise and never thought it a miracle, as there was no doubt that the sun should usually rise from the east and leave the ungracious dwellers of the earth in the evening. And before that day came our little town lived the life of our envenomed planet.

They woke in the morning and slept at night, then woke again and no one got up earlier than Ismail-Alli, and that was no wonder: he never slept at night, making grandees. As soon as the sun showed itself, he would put out his portable tape-recorder and huge loud speaker into the yard. Notwithstanding the fact that there was no Muslim except for Ismail-Alli in the town, he would raise the volume to the top and Mullah's voice was joined by his fellow-citizens curses and swearwords. Father Joseph (and not he alone) was especially vociferous on the occasions. He claimed to be a descen-

dant of the Scythians and an orthodox priest. For some reason or other when fuddled he stubbornly tempered the version of his origin with Russian steppes that have, allegedly, nursed him. He begotedly asserted that the salvation is in Russians. The more placid and merciful he was when sober, the more impossible (to put it mildly) he was when drunk. No matter drunk or sober he had the same reaction to Ismail-Alli's radio-prayers and every morning he would perseveringly term the parents of the loyal servant of Allah buggers.

The most amazing thing was that at dusk (no matter how drunk he was) Father Joseph would swayingly come downstairs, cross the yard and gravely knock at the window of the ground floor. This was Ismail-Alli's flat, unrivalled adept in grenade production, and who but Ismail-Alli could Father Joseph commission to produce explosives. The greater part of the product was directed to the end of expanding his alleged motherland. As for the remaining part, Ismail-Alli - why, he himself confessed the fact while standing his trial - exploded them as a preventive measure in the centre and occasionally in the suburb. He treated the frightening of Jews as a preventive measure, which was quite an otiose step to take since the Jewish family was scared as it was. There was a single Jewish family in the town, but large and what is more trusted in God. Yitzhak, the head of family, notwithstanding his fears was painstakingly reading Pentateuch to his children and he brought them up to respect the precepts of Torah. Sarah, Yitzhak's wife, having experienced a corrupting influence of the feminist movement refused to bring her children up and occupied herself with social activities. In the evening however (it is common knowledge, that a mother's

heart is made of special stuff), she could not help standing aside the didactic process. In the dead of night, when the townsmen were asleep having sustained the toil of loafing of the day, Yitzhak and Sarah would turn the light on in the room that did not face the street and wake the children. The descendants of Abraham were especially afraid of Ismail-Alli living across the yard and were cautious lest any of the neighbours should know what the members of the Jewish family were busy with at night. As soon as Yitzhak and Sarah woke their children, they picketed them in front of the white bed-sheet and turned the light off; they would show their offspring, whose eyes were all illuminated, various magnified banknotes by means of a projector. They tried to diligently guide them through the banknotes, telling them which of them was a dollar or a pound, a frank or a peso.

The children were no less perseverent in remembering the nocturnal lessons and as soon as they went to bed, they dreamt of real high-value bonds, and ultimate victory of Zionist movement. Sarah, as we have noted above, was busy with social activities, which definitely was no pledge of supporting a large family, and if Yitzhak had no income the family would be in need, bound to constantly be in debt. That which We Give, Makes us Richer, International Alliance of Jews, paid him a salary so that they should not emigrate and should retain a Jewish heart with dignity. It was entirely for Yitzhak, that despite Ismail-Alli's intensive terrorist manoeuvres and fear, his family lived in this queer town, where their ancestors came twenty-six centuries ago. They lived in a three-room flat on the ground floor of a two-storied house on the left of the entrance. It was the sole family where time was registered and they foreign roots were argued

against. They lived on the ground floor lest someone should smack of luxury and end up the twenty-six-centuries history of tolerance.

As for the other houses, they were mainly two-storied and some well-off instoreys, and the town definitely looked like a yard where construction is under way.

And the Chinese were building a thick wall and kept a still tongue in their head. It was the brigade-leader alone who was vociferous, declaiming slogans like: None but death can take the fruit of labour away, or: What is that created a man, or: If you want to be noble.. so as to raise the rate of production. And the Chinese were working and smiling and working. It was the brigade-leader only who did not work. He had Chou En-Lai's black-lace-trimmed photo and never once answered Toto's insistent question who Chou-En-lai was. Toto was a fool of the yard and no wonder he did not know when Chou En-Lai was committed to the high mission of the Chinese Foreign Minister. Toto, however, knew lots of things (including the information about Mao Tse-Tung); he knew why the Melitopol train was destined to be missed; or who gave Khashuri its name; he knew where crabs hibernate and who would saddle the horse; he knew why salmon swim up stream and why Cathargo fell; he knew the solution to Pierre Fermat's theorem, and why Bjork was born in Iceland; he knew (for sure) whether Shota Rustaveli was in love with Queen Tamar and whether Tamar responded to his feelings; he knew exact date when sun and moon would again cloak themselves in eclipse; Generally, he knew plenty of things, but nevertheless was called a madman and he did not take it as an offence. He reacted only against the vain expectation in fasting and prayers, in which he adobe, following the

advice of Father Joseph in hope of salvation. "Don't deceive me, Father" Toto would plead with him. "I'll be your parishioner if I'm saved."

"How can you be saved!" Father Joseph could not help concealing his astonishment and called him to fasting and prayers. And Toto prayed, but he preferred creeping up into the attic to kneeling in the church. Why, from the attic of the town was so clearly visible as if spread on the palm, and he could continually peep at the fair couple, who have not yet even kissed each other, for they still were very little. Though little was Nickie and little was Nick, they loved each other very dearly and not for them there was no place in the world calmer and safer than the attic. It was in the attic that Nick, when hardly a mite of a boy, decided to fly away and he went through thick and thin to make his dream come true. He tried to be attentive at physics and mathematics lessons, but it was of little avail. It was according to the steadfast physical laws (and partly mathematical) that the earth's gravitation banged the soaring Nick along with his flying machine down to the ground, and ruined what he had done for months. There were troubled faces to begin with, but little by little the neighbours put up with Newton's ideas and even did not look out of the balconies. The only one who sympathised with Nick was little Nickie, Senior Salvador's younger daughter. Fair Nickie was taken to school in the limousine that served her father. No one, however knew for which deserts he was so served. Nor did anyone know what Senior Salvador was or where he worked, why he was usually kissed on the hand when coming out of the house by serious men in black suites and glasses, who would open the door of the car with such homage as to intently make any mortal envy. This was why

young Nickie could in no way stand her driving to school in limousine. Young thought Nickie was, she knew perfectly well what made lovers of Indian films grieve, and one day when abony-suited serious men opened the door for her as they did for her father, Nickie insisted on Nick's getting into the car and the grave men were gravely puzzled: according to the instruction nothing of the kind was stipulated, and they looked at one another, frightened. It was during the those seconds of perplexion that Nickie ran up to Nick, held him by his hand and smiled at him. Senior Salvador did not even see the smile and of course, no one dared to tell him of the fact. But Nick's father did see the smile. His real name was not known, and he knew much better why the lovers in Indian films sing so dejectedly, especially if the scene is laid out against some thick-trunked tree. Nick's father had the simplest name, Khoja, which in fact was his battle nickname, reminiscent of his youth and underground activities: Sir Khoja had been unflinchingly fighting for the welfare of the peoples of the world and step-by-step triumph of communism in the Universe at the time. At some stage of the fight he parted with his co-combatants (under the pretext of their disloyalty to the veritable teents), and virtually severed himself from the cause of felicitating peoples. The party name, khoja, however, was not forgotten and he had hopes that Marxist-revolutionaries of the coming generation would call him and offer him if not the post of chairman at least that of a deputy chairman. But the new generation kept silent. The three revolutionaries of the coming generation, however, would enter the yard with a sanguine banner in hand and vigorously clear their throats. All three of them were wearing boots and riding-breeches. They had the gird-

les, heavy with gunpowder, fastened round the loins and the shortest of them had a Maxim machine-gun across his shoulder. As soon as they entered the yard, they would hastily pass along the Chinese wall and go upstairs; then they would unceremoniously and without a knock open the flat, where Matador Luke lived and loom large in the mind of the perplexed Matador, who was still in bed. And every morning Luke felt three revolvers pressed against his forehead and had no way out but make himself ready in no time, which sometimes takes matadors even an hour. Luke would only say "I don't want," and they would almost at breakneck speed take him downstairs. Then hastily they would cross the yard with Toto, the only protesting man, making the whole yard hear his fuck your mother.

There were no more sympathisers in the yard and the shortest of the three revolutionaries would aim right at Toto with his Maxim machine-gun.

"Don't fire, he is crazy," Luke would yell and again save him from the revolutionary vengeance. Luke, nevertheless, was taken away, accompanied by the flutter of the sanguine banner, and nobody could know what the bull-fight would be over with. Fortunately, the matador was coming out of it all safe and sound, and in the evening he was proudly entering the yard with the stabbed bull's bloody ear in hand. He would march round the yard and throw the bloody year towards Madam Mimosa's windows, the fact was normally followed by her screaming and regret, uttered out loud, at the fact that it was the bull that died and not the matador. Mimosa dreamt of such an end because her flat adjoined Luke's room and were he killed, she would stand a fair chance to enlarge her flat at the expense of the vacated room.

Madam Mimosa was famous for her austerity and cruelty, and any child was necessarily guilty to her mind. This was why she used an immense iron ruler more often than a piece of chalk. She used to unsparingly strike some inattentive pupil with it, and parents naively believed that such training was the sole way to make their children fulfilled members of the society.

Having borne the heavy burden of thoughts about the children in the day-time, Madam Mimosa sat writing reports addressed to the Mayor. Certainly she put forth an ethic for living and persistently and desperately demanded fair Roza's banishing from the town. Roza the fairest of the fair, was a trollop awaiting customers at any time of the day. As one could tell from the satisfied faces of the customers, Roza was no tyro; nevertheless she made extraordinary decisions, trying to gratify impecunious (but fidgety) customers at the expense of the rich. There's no concealing the fact that she loved money. What but money could urge her to lie with some swinish men! Roza loved money, but once she happened to host a man that she could not compare even with a hog and alarmingly feigned to see her husband. The man jumped out of the ground floor window barefooted and ran away. Roza made Toto a present of a brand-new pair of shoes left at her bed. And Toto was euphoric for joy. He was fond of Roza as it was, and used to visit her in his shoes and what is more, as a friend. Toto loved Roza in friendly way, unlike Gabriel, who for some mysterious reason was Negro (while having snow-white parents), favoured young Ray Charles and claimed to be Georgian. "Georgian as I am, I was born in Georgia (one of the countries of the world)," Gabriel proclaimed from the house-tops and all day long tried to throw a

ball into the basketball net for Roza to see. He was infatuated with Roza. Try as he would, he could not throw the ball into the net, besides, Toto did not believe that Gabriel was Georgian. "There are no Negroes there," Toto said.

"How do you know, you are a madman, even haunts are frequented by Negroes in Tbilisi," Gabriel iterated and reiterated.

Toto, however, shrugged his shoulders, unable to conceal his unfeigned astonishment as to why they were mistrustful of him. It was true he was not sound of mind, but he was much better at geography than any of his fellow-citizens. Incidentally, even Madam Makvala, Gabriel's mother, was astonished at her son's vagaries as to his nationality, and for his unsuccessful attempts to throw the ball into the net, she encouraged her son - it is common knowledge that mother's heart is made of special stuff - as vigorously as she could: "Gabriel Batistuta himself cannot always score a goal, neither all songs of Peter Gabriel are masterpieces" The encouragement made out Gabriel's the most poignant sorrow abide:

"Why am I a Negro then?"

"We could not help it, darling!"

"Why could I not master basketball? Why, Father says that it is for Negroes to master basketball and jazz."

"Don't be afraid, darling, you will master them in the long run" mother encouraged him: her heart was the kindest of all mothers' hearts. Gabriel felt it and he could not choose but tell his confident of his love. He revealed his feelings before bedtime, and after a month a tear rolled down his cheek and he said that he was going to marry. Makvala felt her son's pining with love (mother's heart overlooks nothing),

and neither she could restrain tears. The next day Gabriel was moved to tears again and insisted on his marrying. Mother let some tears roll down her cheeks again and shook her head, denying his request (how could she tell him that his sweetheart Roza was butt a trollop and she could not let a woman of unhard virtue into their family)!

Having not been presented with adequate reasons for denial, Gabriel resorted to the perniciousness of racist views and incredibly flared up: "Will she not marry me because I am Negro?"

"Who can ever wrong you because of the colour of your skin" his mother said, "Don't we have Vienna and Helsinki conventions here!" she cried out in exasperation and opened the drawer. The remembrance of Vienna and Helsinki documents soothed him a little, but not finally, for he was determined to marry Roza and could not choose but be lovelorn. Nor could he escape Roza's eyes when the easy beauty of the yard alluringly smiled at him and asked him how he was. Gabriel had no idea of how she lived or what was the portion of her income she shared with Enver of police.

Policeman Enver, who was in charge of delinquencies in the yard and town, unlike Enver Chijavadze, could easily reconcile himself to injustice, and willingly visited the wayward - as he termed her - Roza once a week. Nevertheless, he took his weekly percentage of Roza's income with pleasure.

Certainly Enver himself, like the majority of cops did not like to work. He left his native village and estate as soon as he grew up, thinking that he was to live in town, and declined to take another plot granted by the authorities solicitous for his welfare. He bade farewell to his aged parents and went to town. Town and the townsman manacled and impri-

soned by him provided the focus of his dreams while living in the village.

"If I cannot make a townsman, I will at least imprison them," he thought the same as he dreamt of on his way to town. He did not remember how crucial it was for agricultural development to make use of the hoe cast under the fence.

Having learnt the taste of money and seeming luxury he dreamt of catching someone red-handed rather than of imprisoning culprits. He looked forward to witnessing a fact and getting money for hushing it. And time after time he was offered some money and was content. To this end he disturbed the other dwellers of the yard, including Simon - an aged man stupefied by computer, who had a bald head and jaws drooped listlessly.

When young, Simon was quite handsome and had a normal leg instead of his wooden one. Unlike Enver, Simon was a true townsman and the fashion of the time took his right leg away as a sacrifice. The vogue that was current in the town and its surrounding areas in his youth proved to have very tragic outcomes. There was a tram-line right in the vicinity of the yard and a stop right in front of the yard-gate. It was here that the youngsters of Simon's generation stood while waiting for a tram, comely Simon among them. He, however, did not make hurry to get on the stopped tram. Simon jumped into the tram only when it started and the enraptured girls gave out a forced yell of excitement. But all that was not dangerous, but vogues change and presently only who jumped with backward movement into the tram tearing along were termed swell guys. Simon's right leg was the victim of his first unsuccessful jump, and the relatives from the village were obliged to send him their hornbeam

ready for sawing. It was entirely for him that he soon put up with his new leg. But his hornbeam leg brought its specific problems for him to sustain. If he happened to be out when it rained the ex-worse nightmare of trams felt shoots along his peg leg in spring it even sprouted. This was why he could not stand foul weather and little by little got used to staying indoors. And Simon welcomed the computerisation of the world with his wooden leg. First, he mastered the keyboard and then revealed such computistical mysteries for himself as to feel preoccupied. Simon excitedly confessed to Enver the policeman that he might come into the possession of the great deal of money.

“Certainly you should share the money with me” Enver the policeman came to the point at once.

The same day little amount of money was quite imperceptibly taken off a certain account of certain bank. Imperceptible was the course of the removed money but not the fact itself. The amount of the money was little indeed. They did not increase the amount of the removed money later, as Simon insisted on doing so. Enver the policeman, however, urged Simon to remove a large sum. Simon was still cautious, afraid for their mystery to be divulged. Meanwhile, he was coming into possession of other's property. But he like all the others in the town was afraid of Enver the policeman. The only exception was Mansur, who was a man-of-arms and had a real armoury at home. Incredible though it may seem, but despite the fact that many iron governors ruled out town-yard, none of them was able to confiscate Mansur's weapons: suffice it to say that Macedonian, Napoleon, Stalin, Den Xiaopin and Fidel Castro were at the helm.

As nobody could take his weapons away, every morning Mansur jauntily came downstairs, armed cap-a-pie and his face illuminated, crossed the yard and went his way with sabre-rattling. What the way had in store for him he did not know, nor did he know whose side he would have to take or what the ultimate or temporary end of the war would be like. It did not make any difference for Mansur to know what he shed the blood for. He had to fight, and for him there was nothing more important than that, and thus he lived from war to war.

And it came to pass that Mansur brought three German captives from the former Volgograd front and stalked into the town-yard as invincible and victorious Julius Caesar was wont to return to Rome. Mansur was infinitely proud: the whole yard watched how the German captives were immured in the public cellar of the house. The occasion was attended by those as you already know and those (other townsmen) that have not been mentioned so far because of the prosaic reason that they lived in a prosaic way like the majority of the earth's population, and each of them lacked the most essential virtues - love and sincerity. There's no rule however, without an exception and Nickie and Nick, that wonderful couple, sincerely loved each other. It was Nick who thought of taking food to the German captives, and they marvelled at the thing, but to explain his noble act Nick said, "We communists' offspring, are in fact fascists." This happened at dusk, but until then, In the afternoon, when the sun was declining, a binocularized man, with one eye bandaged, entered the town-yard. He held an unfolded map and was followed by a medium height binocularized monkey with a folded map. They greeted all, unfolded the map and meas-

ured the distance from the entrance of the yard to its centre. Then they drew two circles with a piece of chalk, hoisted a flag of unfamiliar colour and form and erected a tent in one of the circles. The monkey shaded his eyes with his right hand, looked round the yard and motioned the eye-bandaged man to start. The man took out a folding-spade and began to dig, and the monkey took a photograph of Charles Darwin as a young man out of his breast-pocket, and fixed it on the outer wall of the tent.

The first one, who took a keen interest in the pit-diggers' identity was Toto the madman, but he was given scarce answers, and the monkey pointed to Darwin's photo with his index paw (or finger) and uttered a historic maxim: "Labour created a man!..."

Thought a madman Toto was, he realised at once that the guests were digging the pit not only for the sake of ennobling and obviously had another intention. Enver the policeman succeeded in discerning what they intended to do only when he jumped down into the pit and bade the group of monkey and man to surrender.

This particular violence yielded particular results and it turned out that the above-referred group was seeking for the money which had been buried somewhere in the area by Kako, a Greek highwayman, before the town-yard originated. "Aren't you taking him for Arsena the highwayman," Enver the policemen tried to specify details, but the monkey put on such a face as to make it clear that the question was obviously otiose.

They agreed to share the money equally among themselves and the receptacle (in which the money was supposedly

kept) should, of course, be given to Enver the policeman as a material evidence for a further investigation.

When the monkey, content with the negotiation with the police force, winked at the representative of the force, Toto the madman looked down into the pit and apprised the underground summit of Sarah's death and their wish not to start obsequies without them. Toto meant Enver the policeman, of course, but the funeral ceremonies were attended by the monkey-and-man group as well; moreover, the entire yard acted as mourners, and all of the neighbours including Ismail-Alli offered their condolences to Yitzhak. It was Ismail-Alli who upraised a black-laced inscription: "Aids is our common enemy!"

It was not quite clear, however, how Sarah (of blessed memory) could get infected with Aids, and the population of the town-yard reduced to minimum their intimacies. Madam Makvala (Negro Gabriel's mother) refused to have either oral or moral sexual intercourse (with her husband of course).

The funeral repast was duly held and pilaff was in such abundance served in the middle of the table (and not round to the guests) that even the German captives were able to taste it. The Chinese drank to the repose of the soul, and there was nothing more to change the course of everyday life. The man, who had his eye bandaged, and the monkey went on digging again and Toto the madman ensconced himself at the pit. Hardly he had decided to ask the diggers a question so as to wheedle the dope out of them, when a camel entered the yard quite unexpectedly (even for Toto) "What a camel has to do here?" Toto the madman thought and Carefully and thoroughly rubbed his eyes. But that was no apparition:

a camel stood in the centre of the town-yard and did not spit. It was clear that the camel was lost. It looked round the yard with its eyes unusually prominent and was too perturbed. That was ailed him soon let to know itself when it emitted a strange sound, winked at Toto, and shamelessly defecated in the middle of the yard.

This was no mirage, and Toto rubbed his eyes once more. He took several steps to the camel and a closer look at the new product. One could easily discern a white package in the excrement, which first aroused Toto's interest, then it giving way to astonishment. The thing was that the package clearly favoured the white dry substance of his childhood, which his mother used to put on his tongue with her fore finger. This she did when little restive Toto was exceptionally excited. The white dry substance was termed cocaine which made him imbecile in his early childhood. He had never come across the substance since then, although he pined for putting cocaine on his tongue or at least feeling its smell. He was certain that what had retarded his mental development the same would accelerate it. This was why he pushed his hand into the excrement hastily and ran with the package of uncertain colour upstairs, where Jimmy the dope -friend lived in one-roomed isolated luxury. Jimmy was a regular drug-addict and this way we haven't mentioned him. Jimmy, however, had the Mendeleev (of blessed memory) table of chemical elements hung on the largest wall of the room, and what could he do but brew dope (...brewing night and day)

Toto the madman found Jim at the gas-stove and that day there was no one in the town and world happier than Jim, for Toto was quite right: stray camel's excrement contained cocaine.

First and foremost they reliably tied the stray camel to the parapet and Toto was commissioned to provide it with food, and Jimmy set himself to providing those who he had to provide or thought to be worthy with cocaine. Senior Salvador and Enver the policeman got their due without any hesitation whatever. Jimmy did not care a damn. As the strange camel free of charge and disinterestedly (several tomes a day) excreted the cocaine of their dreams in broad day light. As for Toto, he distinctly felt lights gleaming through his brain and as there was plenty of cocaine he decided to let others experience the joy he had experienced. Toto designed a plan without Jim's knowledge: he intended to make the rest of town-yard population happy with cocaine, and he found a remedy against those who would shy at the idea. He furtively crept into father Joseph's room and spread cocaine over the edge of the icon which his victim kissed several times a day; he spread the dope over the keyboard of Simon's computer, as Simon was wont to put fingers into his mouth, and Toto knew that perfectly well. Then he put cocaine-stained sheaf of money at Yitzhak's porch, as he always put his flexible fore finger into his mouth when counting money. Toto explained to Robertino, whom we haven't mentioned yet, the one who had lost his voice when a boy of twelve, that he should heavy-neck cocaine if he wanted to recover his voice, in an ordinary language it denoting intensive taking of drugs. Roza the trollop did not need any explanation. As soon as she saw the cocaine, she folded Toto in her arms and promised to give him another pair of shoes.

Meanwhile, Toto encouraged himself, thinking that in the last resort they could administer the milk mixed with some purgative and then enjoy as much cocaine as they could dre-

am of. Such measures, however, were not necessary to take, and one of the neighbours with a spade in hand kept vigilant watch on the approaches to his posteriors.

And there was nobody on the town-yard who did not taste the cocaine. The eye-bandaged man and the monkey (who were in fact seeking for oil) asked Toto themselves to make them happy so that they should discover the treasure more easily. To those who did not wish to be felicitated of their own accord Toto administered cocaine in salt-cellars and tooth-power containers or even on toothbrushes.

To cut a long story short, there was no Gogi Tushurashvili * and the yard-dwellers turned into real cocaine-addicts, and the wonder was that their life was fictitious and artificial, overflowing with desires and terrible relations, let alone the lack of sincerity which they all suffered from. And they all grew sick with the longing to be sincere, and the miracle was wrought for the town: Robertino, who had experienced the bitterness of no more having voice and an ear for music, could sing again; Mimosa, that unsparing preceptor, ultimately decided that teaching is but ostentation and retired on pension; Enver the policeman made an application of retirement to his boss and bought a hoe so as to return to his village; Mansur the warrior solemnly incinerated his kit and exchanged the German prisoners for a puppy of Alsatian; Salvador, the redoubtable head of Mafia, along with Kirile Kalmakhidze took vows of Gelati monastery; Negro Gabriel learned how to throw a ball into the net and married Roza the trollop. Incredible as it may seem, Roza was virgin, and Makvala, Gabriel's mother, hung the blood-stained bed-sheet out to illustrate the fact.

The happy couple were the loveliest as well on the wedding day. Gabriel wore a white shoulder-belted choha** of his grandfather and Roza's adoring was painstakingly completed by Giani Morandi, the holding company. The wedding feast was given in the yard and the newly-married bade the entire town to it. The feast was fabulous indeed and it was the time that Robertino sang at the wedding in his good voice after several years of vocal inactivity.

Toto, who no more was a madman, prepared a soupplateful of cocaine and left at Jim's. On the wedding eve the population unanimously decided - no matter how revolting it may seem, we have to say - to kill the camel. The reason for doing so was simple: long-suffered camel virtually ceased to excrete cocaine and despite purgatives and other means the experiments proved not to yield desirable results. This was why the camel was killed. The meat they used for the wedding feast, and the cocaine scraped out of its stomach and dried intestines they kept for desert.

As Robertino began to sing Toto thought that he was to serve the cocaine round the guests and ran upstairs.

"The dessert is first due to newly-married!" Toto declaimed and rushed into Jimmy's room with a soup plate in hand. He, however, could not find cocaine and stared at Jimmy with childish eyes wide open in surprise, who obscurely and with heavy smile curtly retorted:

"No more buddy..."

Toto restrained a tear and shuffled to the balcony.

"No more..." he said below his breath, but there was a deafening silence in the yard and all of the expectants of desert heard the two words.

"No more?" Mansur uttered and cast a glance at the people gathered round the stairs.

"I felt it on the table and there's no more," Toto repeated.

"Look round properly," Gabriel encouraged him and swept his sweating forehead with his handkerchief.

"Let those that do not believe come and see themselves" Toto's voice cracked for good and no sooner had he said it than a number of neighbours ran upstairs.

"There's no more indeed," Gabriel looked out from the window and let those in the yard know of the fact.

"Look for it properly," one of the wedding guests shouted in exasperation, and awfully indignant, Gabriel cried, "Come and see!"

And in no time the entire town gathered in Jimmy's room, and in no time the room could not be treated as a room, but the cocaine was nowhere to be seen. Jimmy was environed by the people whose eyes were glittering with frenzy, and the circle was narrowing around him. Jimmy saw those eyes and realised that the people around him were quite serious and the awareness of the fact made him sober.

"I know nothing," he said in everyone's hearing and looked straight into the eyes of the unwelcome guests. "I was downstairs, singing along with you. Don't you remember that I sat beside you at the table?"

"Who came upstairs?" Makvala asked all of a sudden and looked at the neighbours, who were half a step away from Jimmy, and Jimmy answered the question, crying out:

"Yitzhak did"

His name made everyone but Yitzhak think for a second:

"But I am Jew," he said and looked around, but the neighbours' faces showed no traceable signs of thought, and it was

evident that only instincts would guide their further actions. They all implicitly believed that someone stole the cocaine, and thought of nothing but finding it. Yitzhak felt it, and forthwith realised that his neighbours, beside whom he lived many a year, would ravenously kill him for cocaine, for ravenously did they seething blood hanker after it, and blood does not know how to spare one. And everywhere where blood is thirsted after the first and foremost Jews are remembered, and no matter how guileless they are, the thirsty are slow to believe in their innocence.

It was too hard for Yitzhak to answer the neighbours, who asked with their bloodshot eyes and voice trembling where cocaine was. He did not know where cocaine was, nor did he know how to answer them. And no one could ever predict what assault of the frenzied fellow-citizens would be over with, had not the Rockers rushed into the yard on their Harley Davidsons and deafened the yard with the rattle of engines. Almost naked up the waist, they went round the wedding table and somehow felt that something out of the ordinary was happening here. They stopped engines and looked round the yard that was ominously silent, interestedly. And Yitzhak, doomed to be butchered (and not killed), pointed at the Rocker and roared. He roared very convincingly, as he had the last chance of saving himself. The yard turned into a mob which believed that the motofanatics took the cocaine, and no one of them had asked himself how and when could the Rockers steal the powder of their dream.

And the violence found a ford. The Rockers only managed to start their bikes, as it was no more possible to leave the yard. The people assaulted the Harley Davidsons with everything they could lay their hands on, and in no time all the

Rockers were scattered on the ground. Everyone beat them, beat them unsparingly and violently, with kicks and spades, bricks and fists, and the more blood there was, the more impossible it was to calm down these people for a second as they in nightmarish fright and despair recoiled from the cocaineless tomorrow. They could not do without cocaine, and there was no point in living without it. And that was why it would be impossible to stop the mob, had there not been an unexpected shot, which petrified everyone. The entire town looked at the ex-policeman, having his finger on the trigger. Enver was an ex-policeman indeed. He had already returned his revolver to the authorities. The townsmen stood astonished and soon they questioned the lawfulness of his having a revolver.

"He exchanged cocaine for it!" Simon shouted in despair. "Stole and then exchanged!"

Simon made a step to Enver and others followed suit. The circle around Enver narrowed, and the ex-policeman shot away all his ammunition to frighten the neighbours. But a sham shoot could not frighten the people (or rather a mob), and when they were about to put Enver on a Lynch trial, the ex-policeman employed a purely policial method and resolutely pointed at Toto: "He knew where it was and how could anyone steal it?"

Some of the people (now ravenous wolves) cast a glance at Toto, and some of them turned to the former madman, firmly holding their weapons, which they beat the Rockers with.

"I knew ... then what?" Toto was unfeignedly astonished and felt the callous hands grabbing his throat.

"Are you killing me now that I came to my senses?" Toto cried out even more naively, wheezing. He looked into Sir

Khoja's eyes, who along with the neighbours most zealously tried to strangle him, and gathering his last strength, cried out: "twas he." And they let go of him for a second and he uttered two words: "He stole."

Dismayed, sir Khoja looked at the neighbours: "What did I need cocaine for?"

"Perhaps, you sacrificed it to the socialist ideas!" it sounded like Mansur's voice, and it was the first time in his life that Khoja did not care a fig for the socialist ideas. He evidently felt it was now that his life (despite his long suffering experience) was in jeopardy and resorted to that which the majority of people deigns to do when in predicament: "I will tell you all I know," he said as convincingly and gravely as he could and gave Robertino a kick. "He stole a cocaine, sold it and paid for the operation, and thus recovered his voice. Don't you believe me!..."

The people did not know whether they believed or not that what suspects accused one another of, but they did know that they were pining to unearth the person they could charge with all iniquities. They, once genial neighbours, were ready to unsparingly punish one, two or three of them with bare hands. Violence needs nothing but find a ford, and this is why the violent are quick to believe any lie, and need no logical arguments; or they want to believe and that is why the violent are quick to believe any lie, and need no logical arguments; or they want to believe and that is why believe that it was the logical arguments; or they want to believe and that is why believe that it was the matador who stole the cocaine and voluntarily decided to go to fight bulls so as not make his neighbours suspicious of him. Or why it was hard to believe that Mansur the warrior did not go to war as a

pacifist that morning in hope to steal cocaine. Violence allows for no logic and thought, and makes one feel dubious and anyone, even about those whom Sherlock Holmes himself would not dream of suspecting. But then it is the sacrifice that counts and not the object of sacrifice and the neighbours assaulted any one of them: Mimosa the preceptor and the Chinese builders, Roza and Gabriel, Father Joseph and Ismail-Ali, Khaker Simon and Madam Makvala...

And they assaulted everyone together and separately, and their mind's eye was shut, and as they were doubted, they reflexively named anyone to save themselves.

Every one of them, however, felt that they might not find the cocaine. And they could not tell whether someone stole it, or they themselves consumed the substance. But now that was nowhere to be seen, they could not but think that they had the powder of their dreams and someone stole it.

...But they needed cocaine, it was of vital importance to them, for they were appalled in the sight of tomorrow, which they loathed because once they had felt their real self and did not wish to go back to the fictitious and artificial world of their false relations. The falsehood itself derives its strength from the chaos created and named differently by the man. Then he attempts to ruin the frame and chains created by himself and to escape. He seeks ways to attain that end. Though by chance, our town found the impetus necessary for that, and was incomparably felicitous for one day, and the possible end of that happiness brought fears to brood over everyone who did not have any idea how to live further in the uncognizable world or return to that what is termed yesterday.

They were ready for that what happened in the yard; moreover, they had no other option, and the people who had lived side by side for so many years slaughtered one another. First they killed the man with a bandaged eye and the monkey, and the very instant oil welled up from the pit and made the tragedy even more horrifying. They no more were people and died the most direful death. And when the rest of the world could learn about the bloody wedding, were there not little Nickie and Nick, who returned from school and found a real slaughter-yard instead of a wedding feast! The town overflowing with life and celebrations was strewn with mutilated corpses, and a deafening silence was brooding over it.

The Sun was immense and baking. Slowly and imperceptibly they made for the light that reaches all of us and can be joined when one has yearning, need and aspiration for doing so. And then no wonder is even a wonder: you close your eyes and merge into light. How, you ask? Just in a simple way: one has to yearn to fly, then spread the arms and soar aloft.

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