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„Come il Fiume“

Rain. The bus for Trieste. It's half past five in the evening. "Mi chiamo Alma. Ti voglio bene", I repeat sentences from fear that I'll forget them. The sun slowly sets down, providing the last benefits before it falls asleep. After 1425 days of siege, fear, hunger, grenades, snipers, sickness, sadness, horror, emptiness and pain that followed - the last boon.

Night. We are sitting and watching TV, eating popcorn and laughing. Amra and Senad will spend the night with us tonight. Mother and father are happy, we are together as it was before Amra got married. She is smiling, and her eyes glitter. „Senad and I will have a baby!" Mother is embracing her. Father is clearing his eyes. I'm proud as I was the one who, after nine months keeps her child in her arms. I am endlessly happy because I'm going to tell him: „I am Alma, your aunt." I'll play him while it is in the mother's womb, so it knows only about love, let beauty to form its being. I will protect it, as it is my own child, from the evil eyes and injustice. God, let it know about good. I'm embracing her, my tears were wetting her cheeks.

A candle is burning low. Darkness. Next to me, there are no my sister, brother in law, father, mother. There is no that little being that already should come to the world. Just nine months ago, we were together. Now, I'm here in surrounded Sarajevo, they are in Srebrenica and Zvornik.

Now, everything is only night.

A van full of wounded people arrives to the ambulance. I feel no distressing, horror, fear. I am doing everything I can to help, but I do it mechanically. I'm afraid of myself, what kind of person I became. During the first year of medicine I felt weakness in performing experiments on rats. Now I'm used to work with human corpses.

War. A mankind companion. A reaver of youth. A homeland destroyer. A killer of parents. Cut-off from the world. Sarajevo under siege. I'm sitting hungry, in the dark basement of a building in the NN Street, listening to the sound of sirens and imagining everything what we could...

On summer afternoons mother and father were used to sit silently on the terrace. Actually, they were talking without words. How that is possible, I'll find out years later, in an Italian town. Mother was a firm and gentle woman. Strong and warm, as only a mother can be. Connect incompatible, get the best. To tame wilderness, melt ice, reconcile enemies, raise a child. Mother is like the sun. No better, no another.

Amra and I went to the piano school when I was six years old. Amra was 9, but quickly showed more talent than me. She was gentle and firm. Like mother. She practiced for hours. I have not had the strength of will. She became a teacher. I was enrolled in a medical school. None of us opted for music.

I do not know whether it's good or bad. My sister advised me by wise words of one writer, "Love is a world for itself. You are either in, in its essence, or outside it, in longing."

- Maybe we'll like it more, Alma. Do not give up! You have to go to it, to stretch your arms, and even longing will be sweet ... So you will exist.

Amra got married when I was fourth grade of a high school. She married Senad, an engineer from Zvornik. Next year, I enrolled Medical Faculty in Sarajevo. The city is beautiful. My mother and father live together in harmony. My sister was expecting her baby. Student life is beautiful.

And then my country became a small dam on a great river of madness for which you know neither the cause nor end. Sound of shells. Call to my mother and father. Sniper shots. Classes at the faculty are interrupted. Bombing. Sister, how are you? Shelter. Fear. A neighbor from the third floor was killed this morning. By a sniper. She went out onto the balcony to spread washed clothes of her two year-old girl. I heard a scream. Her daughter cries. I saw her bloody corpse. Lines are broken.

Frantically I learned from my thick books, expecting cease of shelling every day, every hour. Every minute sirens and sniper shots assured me in contrary of it. Everything is changed overnight. Mother becomes voice over the wire, electricity is science fiction, poet became soldier, a child became a man. The sound of a shell awakes me. I got up, and imagined that I had breakfast, brushed my teeth and went to the faculty. Instead, I did not eat anything, swapped toothpaste with water and registered myself as a nurse in the infirmary two streets below. Wounded arrive. Mother, father, sister, they are far away, and what am I doing here? Son in law, he is a soldier. He fights. Me, I'm a nurse. I fight. My place is where I can be most helpful, I convinced myself, tearing my heart by longing to see loved ones.

First time I came out from Sarajevo to meet my family. I saw my mother and father, and they have never been like that. My father was silent, mother scared. I felt responsible, adult, at the age of twenty! I wanted to take them in my arms, to hide in my little student bag and go far, far away in the universe! "To the universe," I whispered, dazed in disbelief while holding my mother's thin hands – hands of a skeleton. "What do you say, daughter?" asked me, hiding in her voice fear and pain and anguish and uncertainty, and showing only maternal warmth and love. "Nothing," I said quietly, continuing initiated idea of ?? only salvation that my intellect could produce at that moment: to the universe, where we would soar like birds, fluttering and free. Instead, I could only spread my hands and run towards them. It was our last hug.

Three months later, I'll find out that they were killed in our family home.

I want to go, to run, to the exhaustion, scream, cry out!

Sarajevo under the siege. It is impossible to get out.

Pain.

My sister should give birth soon. I want to be with her. I want to reach that universe, elusive for so long, to relax after this spasm of pain and horror that govern our being! I go to the headquarters. I leave the city via Igman, and then travel three days to Zvornik. I found her village. I do not recognize almost anything. I meet an old woman who catches my sleeve and speaks to me.

- Patience, my child, just have patience.

I suspect affliction. What patience? What happened? 'Ajša, a fifty year-old woman who says that we met when Amra moved tells me by trembling voice: "There was no one, I was at my son, I came back and she was already ..."

- I do not believe she's dead!

- He bled and died in childbirth, there was nobody to help her, and the baby died.

I do not believe it! I run to her house. There is no house. Everything is burned. I go to the cemetery. Is here your eternal home, my sister? You weren't even thirty years old, let them your black eyes be eternal darkness.

Snow cover covered the lawn in front of our house. Flowers swing in the wind and its heads are like human heads. Mother and father are sitting on the terrace, they open their mouth, but there is no voice. At the top of the hill, Amra is sitting and playing the piano. Some white creatures with wings of light caressing her grown belly, speaking

How gentle and fragile you are / And how beautiful and clean you are / As every child after being born / Your hair just become silky and condensed up / As leaves of a young stalk in April / Your lips are like a rose bud, still unformed / Hands are like blue hint of dawn / The legs, oh the poor things like that you do not have / These are just two lilies for pampering / So how do you go in the world so small / How so unprotected / (...)How gentle and fragile you are / And you should live / You have to live among the people and you do not have words / You have to live among wolves and have no teeth / And how do you distinguish man and wolf / man and wolf / Your legs are just two lilies for pampering / But I'll tell you the most beautiful story of this and another world / That you are ready for dreams / For berceuses and insomnias / At the heart of the narrow circles / In thorns of long roads / Your mouth are the young buds / I'll feed you with water from a swallow beak / To sharp teeth for the curse of evildoers / To start cackling for a kindhearted traveler / In life, you should have the wisdom to be silent // But if you say a word / Let it be as difficult as any truth / Let it be said for the man // You came here / where to come is the thankless task / Here where the craziest task was arrive / Here where nevertheless is the most heroic task was to sprout / Because here we do not live just to die / Here we also die / To live / (...)

(„Cradlesong“, Mak Dizdar)

My mother's eyes were fixed on the sky, rising palms high in the air, soil is under her nails, mother! I'm calling you, but I have no voice, mother! I'm crying, you do not hear me. I do not have strength to call you, mother! I scream out ... I wake up. The bed is wet from the nightmare. Summer night. Crickets. Sister, are you alive? Who is in your grave?! Forgive me because I didn't believe that you are not on this world anymore, sorry! I will find you wherever you are. I leave you as behest to myself.

Morning. The bus for Srebrenica. A difficult journey I started mother. I seek my dead sister. Am I alone in the world or some of your flesh and blood remained to relieve my suffering and that we talk to each

other in father's and yours silence? To look at her eyes, brown, yours, and she at mine blue, father's ones. Even that my life lasts for a century it would not be enough for me. Just one moment that it lasts I would not complain even to die.

Wind and sun. Heavy odor filled my nostrils, and sickness started in stomach. For the first time since the war ended. After the corpses, torn bowels and torn children. It hurts me insides by mixed images of childhood, warm rain and mother's bread; a vast field of white tombstones and golden names. Ademović... Ademović... Ademović... fifty times. Alić... Alić... Alić... fifty times. My mind stopped, breath was gone, is there, my God, more grief than this?

- I want to start the process to exhume my sister. She's buried in Zvornik. I think she is not in a grave.

- Go to the room number twelve.

Bis'millahir-rah'manir-rahim!
El-hamdu-lillahi Rabbil - 'alemin,
Errahmanir-rahim,
Maliki jev-middin.
Ijjake na'budu ve ijjake nestein.
lhdi-nessiratal mustekim,
siratallezine en'amte 'alejhim,
gajril-magudbi'alejhim ve leddallin.

Amin!

I'm standing over your grave my sister. I disturbed your bones, because of desire that you are alive.
Eternal peace upon you!!

Snow began to melt away. White doves fly in flocks over the hill, and a voice, so beautiful that comes not from this world, whispers gracefully and slow:

How gentle and fragile you are / And how beautiful and clean you are / As every child after being born
// (...)You will live even when your eyes are closed forever / You will live in your children / In your
children and children of their children / You will live / Live / (...)You came here / where to come is the
thankless task / Here where the craziest task was arrive / Here where nevertheless is the most heroic
task was to sprout / Because here we do not live just to die / Here we also die / To live / This is the end
of the poem now / It's my word now / The whole and finished / Sleep / Dream // We will never separate
my dear / Never, you body of my body / Never, you soul of my soul / Never / Because you have to
extend life / The life on Earth you have to extend.

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falls asleep. After 1425 days of siege, fear, hunger, grenades, snipers, sickness, sadness, horror, emptiness and pain that followed - the last boon.

You came, where to come was the thankless task, and you should live because you have to extend life. Your mother died in childbirth, bringing you, your father was killed a month before you were born, mother and grandfather were killed, aunt, in the besieged Sarajevo. And you, you have found your way from a Home for children, via a humanitarian convoy to Italy. I promised your mother that I will teach you love, nourish by song. I promising her that you're my behest. Because you are the body of her body and soul of her soul. I passed half of my journey. I struggled for a year to find you from here, from Bosnia. Now I know you're there. My soul, soul of our soul.

Trieste. We used to go there for jeans. Once. I sit on a plane for Rome, I have a meeting with a government representative and service for rights and protection of children. After that, I'm going to Milan. There I'll find a girl Alma. She has got that name which her mother wrote on a white diaper which she was covered with in one morning before down, twelve years ago.

„Dici che il fiume trova la via al mare / Che come il fiume giungerai a me / Oltre i confini e le terre assetate / L'amore giungera, l'amore"

(„You say that the river finds its way to the sea and like the river you will find your way to me, across borders and thirsty earth will come love, love “; „Miss Sarajevo“, U2 and Luciano Pavarotti), we are singing together while you are playing a piano.

You've got blue eyes. Mine. Grandfather's. You have the persistence of your mother and her mother, courage of a Bosnian women. You call me Zia. I'm your aunt, I told you when we met for the first time, a year ago. You are in the seventh grade and I teach you Bosnian, and you improve my Italian that I started to learn on a day when I found that you exist, when my doves singed a song for you. I study medicine, and you are finishing a primary school. We have our deal. When you finish a high school and your Zia graduates we'll go back to Sarajevo. You want to study music, I want to help people. You are my love, you are my firmness. You are my courage, you are my resistance. You are my fight. We exist again, since we walk together.