

YOU TOO WILL BE ETHER
Or BEYOND THE WORLD
(Philosophical Romance)

STEFAN DUMITRESCU

DESTINE LITERARE
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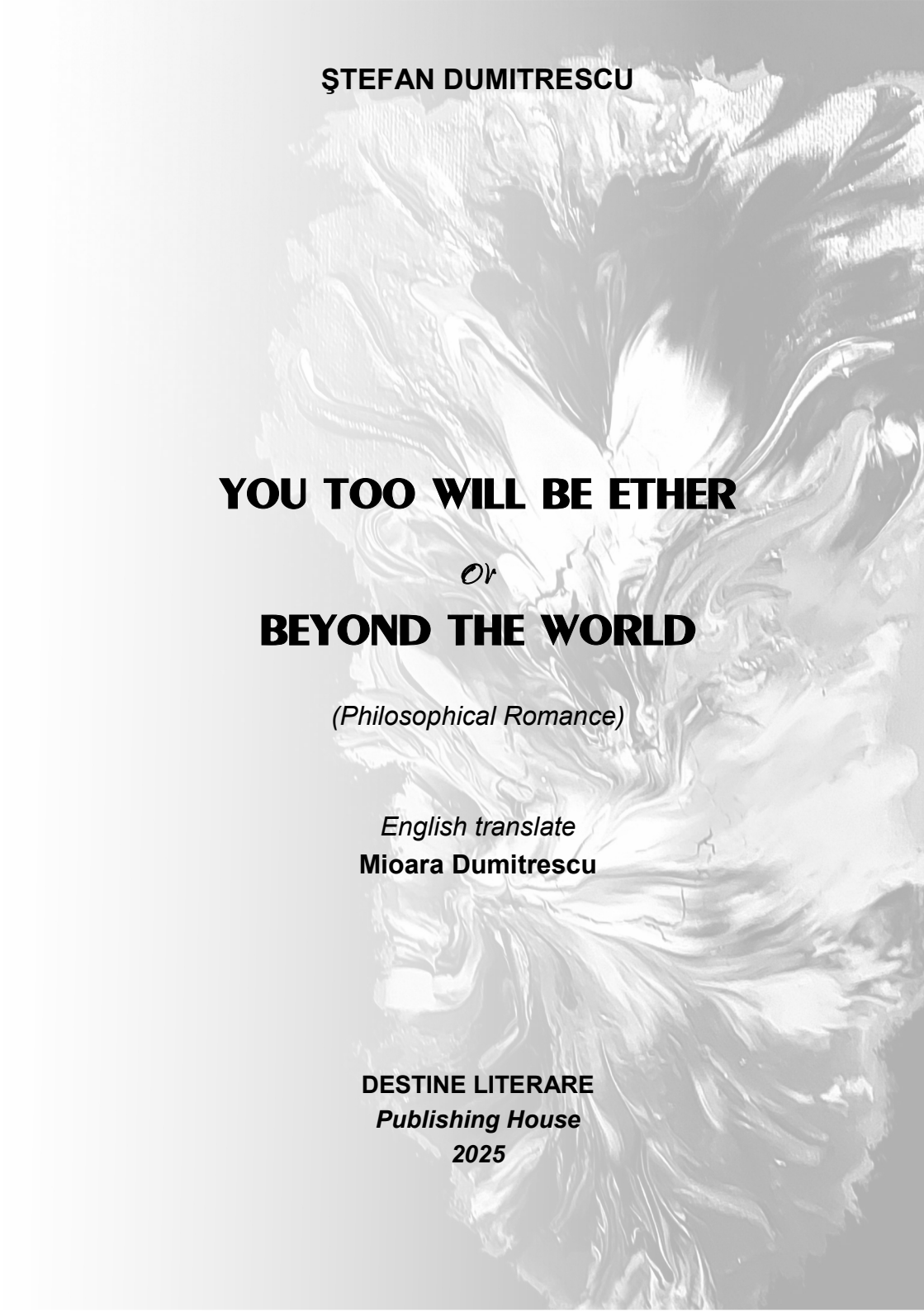
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English translate
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FOREWORD

ȘTEFAN DUMITRESCU

ONE OF THE GREATEST EUROPEAN WRITERS

WRITER PROPOSED FOR THE NOBEL PRIZE

In this introduction, I will try to give a reliable overview of both the work and the writer Ștefan Dumitrescu, today 62 years old, a member of the Writers Union of Romania, one of the greatest European writers, with an impressive published and unpublished literary work...

By Ștefan Dumitrescu, Romania would indeed have the chance to take the first Romanian Nobel Prize if the writer were not so envied and marginalized in his country... a typical Romanian disease since the Romanians are the only nation that has the saying *"Let die the neighbor's goat also."* All of today's leading writers of Romania know that Ștefan Dumitrescu is the writer with the most important and rich literary work, but no one says a word about it... Instead, this writer has been proposed for many years for the Nobel Prize

by Cultural Foundations, Societies of writers, and cultural personalities...

When I first read his books and manuscripts, I was, as Ana Blandiana, deeply impressed by the “shocking” talent of the young writer, the depth and originality of his ideas put into his writings, his thirst for knowledge, his obsession to enter as deep as possible into the “abysmal condition of the human phenomenon” (from this point of view Ștefan Dumitrescu carries forward the Dostoyevskian request, to know the depth of the human soul, and of the “Romanian soul.” See his novel, “FM Dostoevsky committed suicide in Bucharest”, which is now released on the international online book market by an American publisher). The first books and manuscripts, that came to me by-ways in the 80s when the writer was very young, talked about an author who had not only an overflowing imagination with a deep and warm style but who came into the literature with a blast and a new spirit, whose literary innovations, whose endeavor stood outside literature.

From this point of view the poet Ana Blandiana, who launched and published Ștefan Dumitrescu in the 1970s, was right to talk about an author who came with “his risky released soul” in the literature space.” I say that this launch is courageous and risky because it occurs outside the well-worn road of poetry because Ștefan Dumitrescu both versifies beautifully and with much talent in a known or surmised lyricism but he creates his frames, his own reference systems”). Ana Blandiana is the writer who, in 1971, in the “Amphitheater” Review, had the courage to impose Ștefan Dumitrescu in Romanian literature, and presented him to the public in a brilliant way: “A country with cosmic valleys in which birds blossom, whose sky is sustained by the choir of virgins, whose flags are the souls

of ancestors gone to battle, a hallucinating country, a land full of songs and blinded by the light, is glorified by Ștefan Dumitrescu in his recent lyrics, a strange poet, with his soul released risky, bridge over the lyric gap, whose shore beyond can't be known. I say that this launch is courageous and risky because it occurs outside the well-worn roads of poetry, because Ștefan Dumitrescu both versifies beautifully and with much talent in a known or surmised lyricism but he creates his frames, his reference systems. Each of his poems is an opening into a world created by himself, a world in which birds walk armed and sing in the ruins of the flutes. Talent beyond any doubt, restless and constantly burning, author of essays reinterpreting myths and of poems rebuilding the universe, Ștefan Dumitrescu is a tougher, more steeply, more subdued to suffering and anguish than the clear Dan Verona, but equally certain and True."

ANA BLANDIANA, *"Amphitheater" Review, no. 2, 1971.*

The poet Ștefan Dumitrescu started being discovered by Miron Radu Paraschivescu, who published his first poems in 1967 in the magazine "Branches" („Ramuri”), under the pseudonym, when he was only 17 years old. In a warm and encouraging letter, Miron Radu Paraschivescu wrote him: "If you're going on this way, my dear, you'll go a great way". The poet Miron Radu Paraschivescu's urge is seen today, nearly half a century, to have been a prophecy, a revelation! However. Ana Blandiana is that who found and released him as a far-reaching writer who over 40 years would give an impressive work in the Romanian and European literature. Two years later, in the autumn of 1973, because Ștefan Dumitrescu was a hope of Romanian literature, Adrian Paunescu demanded to open the famous and criticized the *FLAME* Literary Circle with the poet Ștefan Dumitrescu. The

young poet read at the first meeting of the *FLAME* Literary Circle an entire volume of poetry, entitled “Nicolae LABIȘ – COSMOGONIC PORTRAIT”, which strongly impressed the public. On this occasion, Adrian Paunescu said about Ștefan Dumitrescu: “Ștefan Dumitrescu is a chance of the Romanian literature. Ștefan Dumitrescu is a great chance of the Romanian Literature”.

Literary critic Cioculescu Serban, who took part at that first meeting, was impressed by the poetry of Ștefan Dumitrescu, saying about him: “Ștefan Dumitrescu is a very interesting poet and I will watch him with all my attention”.

ȘERBAN CIOCULESCU, “FLAME” REVIEW, 1973

The writer and scientist Ioan Crișan saw Ștefan Dumitrescu as a great writer since 1973. “Ștefan Dumitrescu is a deep and serious writer. He’s one of those writers who gives content to a whole era”.

IOAN CRIȘAN, writer, scientist, 1973.

Many of Ștefan Dumitrescu’s manuscripts, because they had no chance to pass censorship, circulated in the years of communism “underhand”, privately. Therefore this writer’s books could not be published during the Communist period. After the 1990 ‘s his books were to be printed one after another. Especially the writer was part of the Revival Group since 1976, a group that helped young people who were very gifted creators to make discoveries, to create theories, and literary and scientific works, which later triggered in Romania a kind of cultural Renaissance, Renaissance to draw after it the entire Romanian society... Unfortunately, the Romanian Intelligentsia and the Romanian people, Romanian society are too sick, too lacking in energy, are

suicidal to be able to trigger a renaissance. We, Romanians, are good only to assassinate our values, to promote shabby fellows, nullities, and thieves, and throw aside each other. It is a very effective way by which we commit suicide.

Discussion with ION CRISAN, writer, scientist, 1973.

As I said, since the early works of Ștefan Dumitrescu, I realized that I am in front of a particular writer, not only very talented, burning like a flame, who comes in literature with tremendous strength, but has another “size”, another dimension, another caliber, he is on a European level, is the writer of European or worldwide breadth, like Thomas Mann, Albert Camus, Garcia Marquez. How George Enescu is in music, for example, compared with other Romanian composers. His literary creation, whether there are volumes of poetry, prose, novels, short stories, or theater, “sounds” different, it does not sound at all localist, has a European timbre, has a European dimension. In fact in the presentation done by Ana Blandiana to Ștefan Dumitrescu, she intuited, and revealed that truth, when the writer was only 21, that: “Ștefan Dumitrescu both versifies beautifully and with much talent in a lyricism known or surmised, and creates his own frames, his own reference systems. Each of his poems is an opening into a world created by himself, a world in which birds walk armed and sing in the ruins of the flutes “and” a soul released risky, a bridge over the lyric gap, whose shore beyond is unknown”.

Ștefan Dumitrescu is really a bridge between classic and modern, a bridge over the gap between the national and universal spirit, between real and transcendental. We believe that we have defined him very well in a literary Chronicle, written in 1993, an excerpt from this Chronicle being on the fourth cover of the prose book “Ancestral

Bottom", 1993. Here's a "picture" as true as possible of the writer, as we saw him in 1993: "Poet, prose writer, playwright, essayist, literary critic, philosopher, political analyst, this man so good, with an expression of an ever wondering child, is one of the most ardent and restless consciousness of his age. When the Romanians will really know the true depth of Ștefan Dumitrescu's work, will be surprised that a writer of the same value like Thomas Mann, or Albert Camus, was unknown among them. At the end of this century, Ștefan Dumitrescu is the spearhead of Romanian literature thrust deeply into universality. I would compare them with Mircea Eliade, but, being acquainted with much of his work, I know that Ștefan Dumitrescu is like himself."

*FRANCESCA PINI, literary critic,
4th cover of the book: "Ancestral Bottom", 1993*

In the same year, the writer Ion Zubașcu also noticed that the writer Ștefan Dumitrescu is part of that very rare typology of "total" writers, creators who manifest a wide space of creation, which open up new paths "in culture" and found "schools" in their lifetime. Here's what the editor Ion Zubașcu wrote in the "Magazin" Review, in 1993, when he was 43 years old: "In everything you do and think, you rather have the aura of a founder. I think you should gather around your disciples, by working directly on the live destinies through the students who would be able to continue your work, raising forts of the spirit or cities of mind just as durable as those created under the shade of the ancient olive trees. We are living in times too petty and money-oriented to find a magazine open immediately to what you think. The only solution would be to ask a publishing house

like “Humanitas” that might be interested in the scope of your visions.”

ION ZUBAȘCU, writer, Express Magazine, no. 4, 1993

Very talented, as Ana Blandiana presented him (Ștefan Dumitrescu first wrote poetry), as the literary columnist of „Reality” Magazine, Dumit Nedelcu, wrote: “Reading the lyrics of Ștefan Dumitrescu, remain somewhere between real and ideal, lecturing his novel “Delirium”, a sequel of M. Preda’s masterpiece, we are amazed by his talent and originality. This novel will soon be printed and we recommend it to all lovers of true literature”, Dumit Nedelcu, „Realitatea” Magazine, Galatzi, June 2000).

An exciting text was written by Doru Motoc: Ștefan Dumitrescu is first and foremost a great poet: “You wrote a book of love poetry absolutely exceptional (“MOUNT BURDENED WITH LOVE”, “Marea Neagra Publishing House.”). That’s all I read most beautiful and noble in recent years, when our poetry was suffocated by a wave of hogwash and abject pornography. The fact that you still keep the flag up gives me courage. But again and again, I realize how right you were when you made “that fantastic diagnosis that we are an “axiofag” people (destroying its own values). That’s right! We don’t appreciate our true values, we don’t help and promote them, and we don’t know how to attract the world’s attention to them, to make the world aware of them. What a pity!”

Doru Moțoc., 29.05. 2008.

But Ștefan Dumitrescu is a novelist with a terrible force, who investigates the inside continent of the human phenomenon, penetrating its depth, describing the folds of the human

“ocean bottom” accurately and with a humanism that impresses. That’s why I compare him in the text above with Thomas Mann and Albert Camus.

Here’s how the writer Alexandru Magereanu sees Ștefan Dumitrescu after reading his novel “Delirium, Volume II”, the sequel to the novel “Delirium, Volume I”, by Marin Preda as Marin Preda would written it (we sincerely believe that the novel “Delirium”, Volume II was inspired from another dimension by the spirit of Marin Preda, very rarely in literature) : “Dear Ștefan! I have read Moromete’s novel all in one breath. (“Delirium, Volume II” sequel of “Delirium, Volume I” by Marin Preda) and I really liked how you wrote it. I say, leave aside all the concerns and go on and write novels! You have plenty of talent, do not waste it. Take advantage of it and give our Country and our literature everlasting works! Take advantage of your age and life that gives you so many opportunities and you will remain unforgettable for readers, for the country. You’ve got a magnetic power in every word written! You have a special power to catch the essence of life! You’ve already had a valuable experience of writing! It won’t be hard to manage. So write, dear Ștefan!”

Alexander Magereanu, poet, Oradea, 80 years old

But Ștefan Dumitrescu is a very talented playwright. He is certainly one of the greatest world playwrights, giving more valuable plays than Camus, Sartre, Tennessee Williams, or Arthur Miller. Here’s what impression Dumitrescu’s plays have made to some theater people, who really wanted to help him act his plays: Liviu Ciulei, the great Director, said in a letter to the author of “Laughter”: “I understand why thirty years ago Teatrul Mic (Little Theater) put the play “Laughter” into the drawer. Of course, the modern style of the play

scared them – at that time – and they were thought about possible allusions and comparisons with that “present” (communist age). Let us hope that God will give me the strength to see this play on the stage of Bulandra Theater in Bucharest.” (Liviu Ciulei).

The Romanian actor, Celestine Duca, settled in Paris, wanted to help Ștefan Dumitrescu to stage “Laughter” in Paris: “I’ve read your play “Laughter” and I found it interesting, original and fun! I’m with you. I will help you break up the crust of indifference. I intend to give it to the Theatre of Poche, founded by Eugen Ionesco, where his plays were performed and by virtue of which he became a member of the French Academy (Académie française). I also think to give it to an actor, very well-known in France, who has mastered the art of laughing”. – Celestine Duca. July 16, 2000. Paris.

Ion Tobosaru, Professor of theater science, and academician, spoke admiringly about Ștefan Dumitrescu’s talent and theatre vocation: „His vocation to dramatic literature gets the colors of certainty.

“Laughter” by Ștefan Dumitrescu makes up a lasting opus regarding its structure and the problems that spur the interest and the expressive literary phrases. His talent is obvious, as well as his dramatic experience. Inventive, intelligent, thorough, and allusive-document and fiction, the art of moral portrait and of the intensity of conflict – man, and drama create a structure which the literary guild has to enlighten, to submit it to a redeeming projection and effort.”

*ION TOBOSARU – Professor, academician, esthetician.
(Text on the fourth cover of the book
“Complete Dictionary of I. L. Caragiale’s drama”)*

Romanian-born Argentinian writer Alina Diaconu, who translated his poems and stories and published them in Argentina, realized that she had met a great writer: “I congratulate you, you are a great writer, I’m extremely glad knowing you this way”.

*ALINA DIACONU, Romanian-Argentine writer,
established in Argentina, 28, July 2007*

I am very happy that in those over 70 years of mine, I saw, a long time before others, in my young brother, Mr. Ștefan Dumitrescu, a major European writer, a writer as great as, if not greater than many writers who got the Nobel Prize. I remain, as in 1994, of the same belief that there are not many writers in the world who are “total writers”, who give valuable works in all genres of literature, and who are, as Mircea Eliade, the Romanian famous writer, scientists, too. Here’s what I wrote about Ștefan Dumitrescu in 1994, nearly 20 years ago: “Ștefan Dumitrescu is currently one of the Romanian writers with the largest and the most profound work. Type of the total writer, and the total man, Ștefan Dumitrescu wrote novels that will have a celebrity of Marquez’s novels, plays that will shake the consciousness for centuries from now, essays with an impressive horizon of synthesis, a “History of Romanian dramaturgy” as well as poems for children of an infinite tenderness. In this volume, a volume of impressive poetry screaming his love for Basarabia, and also his consciousness of the deep “wound” of national being, Ștefan Dumitrescu reminds us in the most painful way, that we are Romanians, that we are ONE BEING with the mourning Feeling and Consciousness!”

Francesca Pini, lecturer, 1994.

Few people know that Ștefan Dumitrescu, one of the important members of the Futurology Office in Bucharest, is the one who discovered the Third major Type of Intelligence (the writer is Licentiate of the Faculty of Philosophy, Bucharest, 1973, his specialties being Psychology, Pedagogy, Sociology, Economics, Futurology, fields in which he gave valuable works) which he called "Positive Intelligence and Negative Intelligence". Ștefan Dumitrescu is the author of a paramount work that revolutionizes Economics, entitled "XXI CENTURY NEW ECONOMIC SCIENCE OR PSYCHO-ECONOMICS" describes the discovery of the economic system of the future, called the "SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF EVOLUTION". It's an economic system that knows no unemployment and economic crisis, which will likely save human civilization from this terrible crisis, artificial and natural at the same time, which we are living now.

Few people know that Ștefan Dumitrescu is the one who discovered "Ways by which countries can emerge from the current economic crisis *VERY EASILY IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME*, without being diminished wages and pensions, without being increased taxes and with no Unemployment" (This paper was published in serial in the "Literary Destinies" the review of the Romanian Writers' Society of Canada – www.destine-literare.com).

Dumitrescu's findings could save from suffering, stress, and humiliation, billions of people... Maybe someone will be interested in them...

Other author's works, which could become global best-seller, and would do a lot of good to people, are: "Theory of Revolution of Good" and "Psychotherapy and Education through Good!"

Ștefan Dumitrescu resembles Mircea Eliade, as I said, that is he is the author of a precious literary value, very complex, covering a wide range of topics, ideas, and myths, which he interprets in a unified, original vision, but he is also the creator of a scientific work, in the field of social science, an extraordinary, pioneering work, which opens up new horizons in human knowledge.. Ștefan Dumitrescu is by excellence a far-reaching mind of synthesis, so we find that literary and scientific works intertwine, they enrich one another. By his entire work, Ștefan Dumitrescu joins the universal triad Mircea Eliade, Eugène Ionesco (the author of an original drama of great value) and Emil Cioran. Dumitrescu is an essayist of substance, with an astonishing power of analysis and of re-interpretation. No doubt being, if published by Great Western Publishing Houses, Ștefan Dumitrescu will impress the readers and will gain their sympathy and love.

I have already said that Ștefan Dumitrescu has been proposed for many years to award the Nobel Prize by Cultural Foundations, such as the Romanian Aid Cultural Foundation, „Country” Foundation, by Societies of writers, such as the Society of Romanian Writers of Basarabia, several cultural figures, Publishing houses, Magazines. We present below the proposal to the Nobel Prize Committee in Stockholm sent by the Romanian Writers’ Society of Moldavia, that impressed us with its essentiality and objectivity.

“NOBEL ADRESA

Det Norske

Nobelinstitutt

Henrik Ibsens gate 51,

N-0255 OSLO

+47 22 12 93 10 FAX

ROMANIAN WRITERS SOCIETY FROM BASARABIA
PROPOSAL FOR AWARDING THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR
LITERATURE TO THE ROMANIAN WRITER ȘTEFAN
DUMITRESCU SENT TO THE COMMITTEE FOR
AWARDING THE NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE

The Romanian Writers Society of The Republic of Basarabia, whose target is to promote and develop the literary process, consolidation, and rebirth of the Romanian spirituality in Moldova, the patriotic education based on the national historical traditions, linguistic education of all the generations, to cultivate among the members of this association the particular Romanian soul and nature, its ancient traditions, proposes the writer Ștefan Dumitrescu to the Committee for Awarding the Nobel Prize for Literature in Stockholm.

The reason for our proposal: nowadays the writer Ștefan Dumitrescu is a writer with a vast and deep literary work. We are very much impressed by the depth of his thoughts about the destiny of human beings, his infinite love for His Majesty: Man

A total writer and a total man, he is a remarkable personality in our contemporary literature, creating immortal universal value works.

We wish him good luck and great success in his noble way to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature! May God bless him!!!

*President of the Romanian Writers of Basarabia,
MIHAI CIUBOTARU
20 September 2010, str. Albisoara 84/5 ap. 13,
MD-2005, Chișinău, Republic of Moldova*

I honestly believe that these words explain, define and grasp the essence of Ștefan Dumitrescu:

“ȘTEFAN Dumitrescu is one of those writers who has come into literature with tremendous strength. His books, whether novels, short stories, essays, plays or poetry, are most shocking, stunning, revealing the drama, pain, abysmal depth of human psychology, absurdity and paradox of human nature. But all these works have in them a thrill of a deep tenderness, a delicacy, a bright beauty. This dimension of his creation is seen mainly in his very rich literature for children: tales, stories and poetry for children”.

Francesca PINI, literary critic, 1995. (text on the fourth cover of the novel “You will be air, too”, published by ANAMAROL Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007)

Professor univ.dr. FRANCESCA PINI, literary critic

I'd just got back from France that summer, where I had been invited to teach Psychology at the Sorbonne... I hadn't seen Romania for three years... Immersed in studies and research that absorbed me all day, I had barely time to think of those of mine at home. Sometimes it was almost six months and I found myself completely forgetting to answer letters. I've been always haunted by that bright face and the extraordinary aura of respect and admiration, that Professor Nicholas Vaschide had left behind him. Moreover, the great psychologist somehow opened my path, I felt it many times. I was deeply grateful to him. Whenever I was introduced in official or scientific circles, I immediately heard mention of my great predecessor's name. *"Romanian, are Romanian you? Just like Professor Vaschide... Sir, what a fantastic mind he was... Too bad he died so young. Today he would have been one of the greatest psychologists of the world."*

I could feel him around me, protectingly watching me from somewhere above, somewhat strangely, ironically, and protective at the same time as if I were a child. Under some circumstances once I had to pay a visit to one of the ministers, famous then, of France... I walked into the Minister's huge office... And as I was with someone else, imagine, he could hardly notice me. I introduced myself and

told him what I came for. How to tell you, can you believe, I was astonished seeing him how he thrilled and how he looked punctiliously and as respectfully as possible, then stood up and stretched his hand to me...

"You are Romanian, sir Drăghicescu."

"Yeah, I mean..."

"Please, sit down," Minister invited me on a leather sofa nearby. The great French Minister was excessively kind and embarrassed. *"I have great esteem for Mr. Titulescu, the Foreign Minister of your country, also for the great musician George Enescu, and the great sculptor Brancusi I have a real awe for him. I can say that I was a very good friend with Mr. Vaschide, who was a great spirit."* I can even see him raising his arms and his face to the ceiling. The image of the great French politician was in my mind for a long time.

At that moment I remember that I felt, I rather felt Vaschide's great spirit floating around me in the vast ministerial office... Professor Drăghicescu coughed several times with his hand to his mouth.

"So, where were we?"

"You were in the office of a Minister of France, Professor..."

The old professor coughed again, this time holding the chair's arms.

"Well, so... I remember. But that's not why I called you, darling. When I left you my place at the university, I had big plans for you. Here's why I called you. This is a very important and very strange issue... How to tell you... Weird... I'm interested very in this problem. I have been interested since my youth. Vaschide was much interested in it, too. I know he did very thorough studies and researches of spiritism, about perception and intuition of the spirit and

the possibilities of communication, extrasensory perception processes.”

“I’ve heard about it, too, Sir.”

“Yes, I’ve heard that this issue has got stale... But what interested me very much was to reach his diary or his observation records. I was unlucky, though I did everything I could.”

Professor Drăghicescu bit his lower lip, leaving his eyes for a moment to rest on the desk full of volumes, from which he had just risen when I came in. The library, where we found ourselves, had all the walls up to the ceiling, packed with books. Old tomes, treatises, lectures, books of philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, and sociology. I remember when I first entered the Professor’s library. I might have been in the second or third year of university. I had no idea that later on I would become his assistant and that a deep and lasting friendship would bind us...

“Now, be careful, please... If you want, you can get something to write down...”

“I’ll try not to drop anything from what I’ve heard.”

“So that was two years ago, more precisely in early August. I had returned from France and had met a Bucharest hotter than an oven... I could feel the asphalt melting and sticking like glue on the soles of shoes. I had some things to do in the capital and would be delayed at least a week...”

Professor Radulescu Motru was at Butoiești and Gusti was somewhere in Transylvania. Neither Davidescu was in Bucharest... What to say, all had fled from heat like partridges anywhere... Without a moment’s thought, I decided to go home to see my parents, especially I hadn’t seen them for nearly three years. I got into the train and the next morning I was in Drăgășani. From here we took a cart

to Zăvoieni, where my parents had an estate. On the way, I felt my heart happy, but also heavy and tight. As the wren chick is held tightly under its mother's wings. I was afraid that something bad had happened at home... Were they healthy, or had they trouble? I must say they could hardly believe was true when they saw me. As if Jesus Christ Himself fell from the sky. I was very glad that I found them well. Only my mum seemed aged as if my departure would last ten years, not three. Meanwhile, someone had died in our family, an aunt, who was almost a hundred years old...

The next day my greatest pleasure was to go to the coppice, on the banks of the Cerna river, and read lying on my back, from time to time watching the pale summer sky through the alder leaves. That was one of the few pleasures I have allowed in my life... Finally, I didn't know when the time passed."

It could be the third or fourth day since I had arrived at Zăvoieni. I had just returned home from the river, before sunset... and had taken up through the garden. My mum was hoeing some beans... She told me that a colleague was expecting me... Really!... That was a quite good piece of news, but who was that friend who had made me a visit here at Zăvoieni?... I was rushing home. In the room, I was expected by a gentleman about my age, who had less gray hair at the temples and a beard. I had never seen it before in my life. He greeted me quite respectfully, apologizing for the trouble, and of course, I welcomed him, but I couldn't hug him as I hadn't seen him in my life.

Mr. Professor, he says, we were college mates... Only I was a year younger than you. During the second year, I lent you the Course of Professor Maiorescu, which I am glad about now because the Course stayed with you and maybe you will remember me that way...

It was as if I remembered, it is true, Maiorescu's Course, which I had not returned to the person who had lent it to me... This was because I had not given it anymore. After all, I had done everything in my power to find it on benefactor... I invited him to sit down and make himself at home... I wanted to keep him in the following days as well because I would have been overjoyed to have someone to chat with in that boredom that settled down after the first days of state in the country. This was always the case when I went and stayed longer at Zăvoieni.

"Sir, (you'd better write down his name, my dear) I'm Alexander Vizantidis. This was his name, Greek by his father. By his mother, he was Romanian, descended from the Brâncoveanu family, I think, if I don't mistake, a collateral branch that managed to survive in this century..."

Professor Drăghicescu paused as if he would breathe deeply.

"Thank you very much for the invitation, Professor... This night I might be your guest because I don't know if I can find a means of transport to take me to Drăgășani or Craiova... but tomorrow, I apologize if I leave, for important things drive me away..."

As you easily imagine, I invited him to dinner... Then we retired to my room where I stayed up late until morning, telling stories and examining all the facts thoroughly, he spoke more than me, because what he was saying made my hair stand on end, being extremely exciting and terribly interesting.

"Sir, I graduated a long time later after you, after the uprising of 1907, which brought us many troubles. Meanwhile, I had to interrupt my studies because of an illness that no doctor could cure. After I graduated from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, as you know it was in those times, I went as a

teacher in one of the big towns of the east. I chose Brăila because as a son of a wholesaler – my father had dealt with the sale of grain for many years before the war until things took a bad turn with us – our family was one of the richest families in Romania. Brăila Port allows us the opportunity to make our merchandise properly. My paternal uncle was also a very skilled tradesman. What's more, our family was known both in Vienna and in Istanbul...

First I taught at the private boarding school for girls owned by Ms. Claubz, a German woman who was well-known in the Balkans. She was a very educated woman, soldierly, knew well about seven languages, and had very advanced pedagogical ideas for the time. Thus Ms. Claubz 's Boarding School was one of the most sought Schools for Girls in Romania and Eastern Europe. Princes and very rich people in Russia and the Balkans brought their girls to Ms. Claubz's school. On weekends I used to help my father with the household and business affairs, especially in keeping merchant books, the inputs and outputs of goods and money. I wasn't a very gifted young man, as you probably remember, but my culture as well as a certain respectful and wise way of being, make me an agreeable young man loved by the fair sex. I was in my second teaching year at the girls' boarding school, when I fell in love with the daughter of a rich Russian owner of Odessa, who had brought his daughter to Ms. Claubz's school.

Her name was Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, and descended from an ancient family of princes, who became poor and started to trade. In the Maronov family, there were several princes impoverished. I heard from her that in their family was born one of the greatest painters of Russia, Nikolai Maximovitch Maronov if you heard something about him. Later I went to St. Petersburg and Moscow and saw in

the museums his paintings that impressed me. How can I describe Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, sir? Maybe if I had a talent for oratory or writing, I would somehow manage to sketch her portrait. She was a sheer exciting beauty and full of greatness at the same time. When you looked at her, you remained astounded as if you had found yourself before a statue of a staggering beauty and perfection, carved by a genius. In her eyes, there were the vast blue areas of the Russian steppes. Her words were as sweet as an elixir. Once I saw her enraged by the cabman because she used to have her own cab to bring her to the boarding school. I saw blue lightning shooting out of those eyes more serene than the Baltic sky... She was, sir, of a beauty that took your breath away. What to say, I was enamored as no man had been before in the world... I remember that time, I was walking on earth as I walked on another world... I became as thin as a bed plank... When I saw her, my heart was beating strongly to break out of my chest and I didn't know where to go deeply into the ground... You know, what are the terrible pangs of love when you're young and you fall in love for the first time? My relatives noticed that there was something wrong with me. One day my father took me to a Jewish doctor, a good doctor, anointed with all job's ointments, knowing the deepest secrets of the human body and soul. I was white as a sheet and as thin as a lath."

"Mr. Vizantidis", says the Jew, "I don't take any money from you, because I have no power and no cure for him. Go back home carelessly, the boy has nothing wrong with his flesh... He suffers from the disease we all suffered from in our youth... Your boy is in love, is enamored... Invite me to the wedding, too." We said goodbye to the Jew, and he was right, he read my soul very well. Gladly, my father gave them enough money to be rich, but he didn't receive a

penny. At home, I see my father that he asks to bring us some champagne and wine of Rhodes... we shut ourselves in a room and my dad starts, as men usually do in front of a glass of wine when they get together, and when your soul is lost in confessions, to sound me out as old friends do. And as old good friends, I told him the grief that I had on my soul... and instead of reproaches, I see him hugging and encouraging me, teaching me how and what to do to catch the one who brought me to the threshold of death into the snare dying love."

"I almost didn't move, my dear, while Alexander Vizantidis told his love trouble. He would tell stories very beautifully, more beautifully than me, since I am pleased to be a storyteller and listener, too. I miss listening to someone telling stories as in my childhood and adolescence I used to listen to the peasants of the Cerna Valley, but I've never seen this happening again."

Professor Drăghicescu coughed a few times, and thinking that I had seen this thing more than once, now I think that this detail must be part of the ritual of storytelling talent, as Professor Drăghicescu was.

"I remember, as if I see him in front of my eyes, it was after midnight, only one cock played his trump up to the sky as if it came from the other world. The village was immersed in the waters of night, from time to time I heard strange noises, a good sweep creaking in the night, the barking of a dog. Alexander Vizantidis leaned back against his mother's chest where she kept her maiden things, the light of the lamp poured into the room an unhealthy and lost penumbra. I can see how he raised the face of an old man who had overcome the hardships of life."

"Why am I telling you these things, sir", continued Vizantidis, "Because in this story almost every detail has its miraculous

place". Towards midnight I was still chatting, telling me about the adventures from his youth, I didn't know when I fell asleep... I have much to thank my father, God rest him in peace, he was a man who had done much good in his life, because that night I felt I was the master of myself. From now on I was happy, and the next day catching a better time, when I saw the beautiful Julia Alexandrovna alone, withdrawn into a corner, I slipped a love message in her hand, as all the enamored teenagers must have done. I didn't see her until the next day, but I couldn't close one eye all night. I saw her in my mind as if she was in my room as if her face burned like a torch near my bed. I was talking to her in my thoughts, and my whole body was a strange fever... The next day, can you believe, Mr. Drăghicescu, the wonderful and incomparable Julia Alexandrovna answered my love message. And how did she respond...?

"O Lord, even now my heart starts beating in my chest and my body shakes! That day I felt like I was losing my mind. It was like a blaze rising out of my brain and my whole body was a fire. I didn't know where I stepped, what was with me, in what world I was. I was in the tenth heaven at least. My father must have noticed my happiness that seemed to have turned my mind because I saw him smiling under his mustache... Well, bravos, what's more, asks her to marry you, his eyes seemed to tell me. And what do you think I did the next day? Exactly this: I made up a letter which glorified the charming Julia Alexandrovna, and in which I swore eternal love and faith to her. And indeed it was, for my heart was sincere in those moments and everything I said in that letter were words torn from my flesh and heart. In that letter, I asked Julia Alexandrovna to marry me... And again followed a day of anguish and a long bitter white night, during which I tortured myself without closing an eye. I

remember that day I wandered foolishly the streets of the old port of Brăila. Oh, sir, what a town was then Brăila...! A motley bustle of clothing and languages... Pubs, cafes, restaurants with gardens covered in ivy and morning glories in full bloom in all colors, with folk music bands and finest wines. The streets were full of the most diverse and beautiful dresses, from Parisian and Viennese hats to oriental and Russian robes of Ukrainians and Lipovans.

"What can I say? it was a celebration everywhere. A dream... And besides I was in love... and very happy because my girlfriend answered my desires... I remember I had a good friend from primary school, Iancu Delamare, a merchant and scholar, a valued and much sought-after defense lawyer, a great master of the word and bar, and very fond of the bottle. This man didn't live long, but as far as he was in this world, he knew how to live his life... He went on with crazy joy, feasts, and adventures. I've never seen him sad... I went to him and said: *"Iancu, I'm happy! I am deliriously happy! And I came to drink and enjoy ourselves, otherwise, my brains are on fire..."* What do you think crazy Iancu told me? I can really see him, with that smile on his beautiful face, which lit all Brăila and made the women not sleep and dream. *"Come to hug you"*, he said. *"There you are."*

He hired a band of musicians from all backgrounds and nations, I had never heard such a piece of music since then, and we began to roam the finest pubs. And musicians sang such songs (where did they know them?), that you were about to laugh and cry at the same time. They cut your heart with a knife in two halves and put it on embers... And where we were passing by or where we were coming in, we were welcomed warmly: *"God grant you long life, Iancule!"* Well, what a world, Sir, what a world! What a crazy and happy

world... There were no worries at the time. Wine and gold were flowing on all paths... The whole world was a celebration. And people were good, they knew how to have a good time and be happy.

The next day when I went to Ms Claubz's boarding school, you can hardly imagine it, sir... But first I have to tell you that after waking up from my happy dream and the drunkenness with Iancu Delamare, when I got up in the morning, I felt my heart heavy... My legs were trembling as if I had a fever... As I was scared of what the wonderful Julia Alexandrovna would have decided, whether she would have said no...? And thus, I went to school, shaking and with my heart as little as the light of a candle... I was almost afraid to face her...

But the inevitable came quickly. I saw Miss Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, tall, wearing a white long dress, I saw her smiling and dominating as she was coming towards me... I can hardly describe her, sir... Oh, Lord, how much is given to that poor human heart to suffer! She was like Aphrodite herself... This beauty is seen today only in pre-war photos. And as if we had known for a life, Miss Julia invited me into one of the guestrooms of the boarding school.

I had been once in this room arranged with style, especially in the Victorian style, a little while ago when severe Claubz lady received a princess's visit who had just come from Sankt Petersburg. At first, we were just us. Although I was a teacher and a teacher appreciated by students at the boarding school, I admired her self-control, that rare quality of a woman to be sovereign and tender... She offered me some jams and vodka. I now had the opportunity to observe better her beauty, the delicacy of the fine lines on her face, and her high education. She was a master piece of a

woman. Her answer sounded as polite as possible... *"The same special feelings I have for you too, Professor, she said... I admired your sound culture and that higher light which your mind emanates. Your lectures about Plato's philosophy were a real celebration for my soul..."*

"The love you have for me, made me happy and I feel different in this world, more mature, more responsible... For coming from a prominent family in Russia, my duty is to carry forward through times our noble lineage... I know you're part of great people, too, that you are a scion of the ruling family. My answer to your desire, which I thought carefully about it last night, is yes, because once I have given you my heart, the most natural thing is to give you my hand, too... That is the answer that I give you with all my heart and mind at peace and happy..."

At that moment I felt collapsing the ceiling and the huge chandeliers hanging over our heads. I fell on my knees and kissed the delicate hand of the most beautiful Julia Alexandrovna thousands and thousands of times deliriously. When I lifted my head, I saw her gentle and wet face shining with happiness, brighter than cherry blossom, more charming than anything on earth. She caressed my hair, and let me take her hand in mine, and it wasn't greater happiness for me than to feel that gentle hot marmoreal hand as if it was carved from the brightest marble by Phidias himself.

Is at backing my seat advised by her especially since I heard the soft steps of Ms Claubz on the thick and coloured Damascus carpets, the owner and headmaster of the boarding school, as I said before. We respectfully greeted each other, I bowed and kissed her hand. Delicate and authoritative at the same time, as we both knew her, Ms. Claubz skillfully joined us and disclosed that Julia

Alexandrovna had confessed the love we had for each other, as well as my intention to propose marriage to her. Both we were now grown up, it is true I was a little immature even though I didn't consider myself so, having both of us a complete education, with an excellent culture, and here she insisted much to praise the charming Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, how wonderfully she could play the piano, how talented she was, we both being offspring of old noble and very rich families.

She advised Julia Alexandrovna and assured her that our marriage couldn't be anything else but a success and even she gave us her blessing, wished us a happy life, "a house of stone", good luck, and healthy babies. It remained now that Yulia Alexandrovna to consult with her parents, and in my turn the same I had to do myself, to set the wedding day that was to be made in the autumn when the vineyards and cellars were going to pour their wonderful red nectar upon the world.

I went home more than happy with my heart bigger than a sail. But how can I explain, it was a sadness or rather a feeling, a painful depth in my happiness. It was natural to be so, I had made an important decision in my life, and from now on my shoulder there were worries and responsibilities, from now on I had to work constantly to increase the wealth and the name that had been left by my ancestors. Naturally, I announced my father to prepare for the wedding... Cursed moment, because what followed was a kind of wind that began to beat in our homes. My mother told the men to turn everything upside down, to wash, and to tidy up all the rooms, furniture, and outbuildings. Furniture and dresses were ordered from Vienna, Petersburg, and Paris. What can I say more? I could hardly stay at home. My mother was behind herself with joy, she lost her head, but the happiest

of all was my father. He sent me to ask Iancu Delamare to announce to his musicians and friends that we were going to have a great party.

Iancu was agog for it... We hid in the mysterious shadow of a summer garden, even now I can see that garden, full of oleanders and shrubs, cypress trees and ornamental plants, held by an Armenian called Arehan, and musicians sang for us from noon until the next morning. What times, sir, what times... for drinking and parties... and your life would not be wasted... Too bad the world has changed so much, and as I see, the world has changed for the worse. Then I saw my dad yelling and holding his arm around the famous Delamare's shoulders, singing Romanian, Greek, Armenian, and Turkish songs. Songs heard in their youth where they had wandered and that had remained in their hearts. I seldom drank a drop of plum brandy, but I sat and listened to them how beautifully they were singing and telling stories. The musicians were exhausted by singing and giving everything they knew in their hearts. My father and Iancu Delamare, „dead” drunk, but happy, were singing and crying with happiness.

Then I understood what a parent's happiness means when he arranges for his son's future, especially because I was the only son of my father. That is the time when a father bids farewell to his youth because old age will come soon. And from now on he feels free and happy, because he did his duty in the world, brought up a man, and now he can take his hands off him and move under his shadow.

Hey, Professor, what profound things life had and we pass by them without knowing where we're going, what is its meaning or our mission in this world...

Well, we had to prepare for the wedding. But as happiness in the world is not made to last long, things happen to

happen otherwise. The great word that can slightly reflect the incomparable Julia Alexandrovna's qualities, poor her, blessed be her soul, wherever in heaven could it be now... Dear Julia Alexandrovna, as I said, announced her parents, as do girls in the high society, expecting their consent and starting the wedding preparations.

But it was a *calamity* that nobody even dreamed of. Her parents opposed (her father exactly), for the girl's mother sided with her daughter, praying her husband, who was more grabbing than a beast, on her knees, to give up his crazy thoughts and think more of the happiness of his daughter, especially that the one who had been promised Julia's hand was much older than her and he wasn't on the right path.

What had happened? Since Julia Alexandrovna was a child, her parents, who then lived in Moscow, strengthened ties with one of the most prominent families of the time, and had promised Julia Alexandrovna to be the eldest boy of the Harkov family. He was nearly fifteen years older than Julia Maronova. Finally, now it was time to fulfill that promise, and there was no choice. Julia Alexandrovna opposed fiercely, asked her father to give up that crazy thought, and kneeled drowned in tears. Especially the one whom she had been promised to, became a heavy drinker and spent his few belongings. But Julia Maronova's father opposed stubbornly as a mule. What can I tell you, when I heard, I felt the sky crumbling upon me and the earth sinking underfoot...

Except for a letter sent to me by Julia Maronova's mother, a letter full of gentle words of apology and sadness, I have not heard anything about the incomparable Julia Alexandrovna. And I have never seen her again.

Opposing the resistance to his father, Julia was threatened that she would be taken to the monastery, or if not, he would

kill her. My family, what to say... From the moment they heard the fateful news, it was as if the worst night had gone down in our house... My mother was almost destroyed... I remember that in the first days, I was strong enough... Then I fell ill. I no longer wanted to live. Everything seemed gray and useless to me in this world... Some days I couldn't eat anything. Luckily my father, who had gone through many hardships in life and was steeled, kept resolute... He brought the old doctor who had seen me, he examined me, knocked every nook and cranny of my body... *"Love disease"*, he said, *"nothing else... From this, however, if you can't be strong, boy, you can die. So chin up, you're a man, the world is full of beautiful girls"*... He gave me a potion to drink with a spoon, for seven days, three times a day. The truth is that this doctor knew like no other person to encourage, to revive the sick people who came to him, and I think that was his healing power. My dad paid him, saw him at the door, then went to call Iancu Delamare.

My dad came with him in a cab. Even now I can see them coming in. Iancu, the famous Iancu Delamare, my goodness, what a terrible end he also had, raised his arms, and when he once yelled exultantly, the house seemed to be on fire... *"Arise, Alexandre,"* he said, and you felt your body as it raises itself from the disease, *"because the life is short, and we have many days to live. And a lot to love and suffer"*. Even that day, Iancu and I started to spend time in some old famous gardens and pubs, in wine cellars with the coolness of river meadows and the flavor of Romanian grapes. I seem I hear Iancu... *"Don't sing this song, sing that one, we have to get up my friend from death"*. And the fiddlers sang so beautifully that they anointed your soul with honey, with sweet ointment and oil. But my soul remained gloomy. No matter how much I drank, I wanted to get drunk

and forget, not to wake up but only when I could hear throwing earth upon me in the grave.

It was at sunset, the sun descended toward the river pools, the rooftops, just coming from another age, were glittering in the ill sun as being from the other century... I wasn't sure if I was or I was not, as if half of me was walking through this world, the other half, through the other world... *"Iancu", I said, "I just have a feeling that I'll die. I feel my heart heavy and relieved at the same time, that it said goodbye to life and this world"*.

I can see the handsome Iancu Delamare how he turned back stunned in front of me... *"Alexandre, don't mock me."* I was deadly pale. *"Don't tell me about death! Shake yourself as the morning rooster does, sings giddily, and comes to life. I feel you won't die..."* And he looked at me scared. *"Come on", he says. "Let's have a walk to the dockyard."*

The sun was setting from the marshes of Brăila, there was a smell of crazy horizons, and the bees and flies seemed to pour honey into your hearing. I see him holding my hand. We get on the terrace above the docks... When I raised my eyes and looked around, it was as if my heart opened and I could scarcely refrain from crying.

In the port the ships with masts and sails in the wind, for there were still many paddle boats there, later after the war they studded the Danube, and looked like huge brides and giant storks. It was such a beautiful landscape, and I don't know how it seemed to me as if I saw it for the last time and my soul rested in the light of that sunset, as I hadn't seen the sunset in my life before. *"Iancu", I said, "I don't go on, I stay here to fill my soul with this panorama"*. Down on the Danube, you could see the high and colored silhouettes of ships. They were like ramparts and wings of birds descending from heaven... Well, hey, hey, who could see

the sailing ships on the Danube, could experience the golden age of the old river... The Danube looked like a dressed-up bride, whirring sails in the wind, and saw the ships away like bouquets of lilies... Since the sails' age has gone, the Danube's beauty has gone, too...

"Hey, Alexandre", I hear him waking me from dreaming of death that engulfed me, *"come on, we have far to go"*... He pulled me by my arm and I took me with him more forcefully. We stepped out towards the edge of town, then we took through the dusty slums... Dogs were barking and the gypsy children who were running barefoot in the dust only with ragged shirts and bare bellies, made our movement difficult... We got in front of a long house that I'd never seen before in my life.

As soon as we got into the yard, the bigger children crowded around us so many that we couldn't take a step at all. An old gypsy woman welcomed us, full of skirts and necklaces, jingling the golden coins as if she was a walking thesaurus.

"Noble lancu, excuse the mess, you came and gladly be your soul at our home"... I seem hearing the gypsy woman right now... She took us into a room, and from there we went to another room, and hence in another room... finally in a room we stopped... we sat on some sofas, or rather on some yellow silk divans... Soon after the gypsies' captain arrived... *"My respects, boyar lancu."*... What else can I say? lancu was well known in the Gypsy colony as a bad shilling coin. *"I want to talk to you"*, says lancu. *"And make a deal"*... *"We do, boyar lancu, why don't we, we did big business in our lives"*, says the gypsy man... *"Order to bring good food and the best of wine you have"*, says lancu, then he went out with them, as meanwhile, another gypsy got into the room with a hat in his hand, although summer was close

and it was hot out. They talked and talked, then they turned back.

Meanwhile, the gypsy women, some young, bright-eyed gypsies, filled a low table with the finest dishes and cold bottles of wine... Gypsies kowtowed and got out... Iancu was lying on the sofa between the cushions and cheered, starting to sing a lamentation so sadly that broke my heart.

"My dear Alexandre, I sold an estate to save my friend"...

He started to pour in glasses... When I put some wine in my mouth, I felt the world smelled like spices, wanderlust, and incense... Shortly came an old gypsy with *cobza* (a popular ten-chorded guitar). Then two more gypsy women with string instruments came in, but Iancu quickly drove them away to be alone with the old man... He began to chant songs as old as the hills, gathered from the dust of Asia and the honey on the Far East. Sometime later an extremely beautiful large-eyed gypsy girl came in... *"Alexandre", says Iancu Delamare, "look at her better... I lost my mind once-when I was about to kill myself and she pulled me to life... she gets you out of death and makes you live again".*

He poured some drink. The old "COBZAR" (kind of old Romanian guitar – *cobza* player) played some of those songs that made you feel like dust scattered worldwide. It was late at night, Iancu got drunk and retired with the old Cobza player to a remote room, from where I heard the sweet sounds of Cobza drops passing through the curtains. We were alone – I could see her like a picture, with her golden skin and black eyes like dark beads that were piercing your soul. And as she was sitting in that chair where she sat for the first time, her eyes, nor in earth neither watching you, but waiting...

"My lord", I heard her muttering later... I lifted the flowered pot to my mouth, "stop drinking", she said "drink only that

jug, then look at me and listen to me carefully, because what's happening to us in this world is not good".

I did as she told me. She lifted her face more beautiful than an icon and looked at me. Her eyes lit as coal, and I felt her eyes lighting up in me something like a huge fire. *"What's your name, sir?"* she asked me, staring vaguely into the air. I told her my name. Then she began to speak. She told me everything about me, when and where I was born, how gently it had rained on that day when I came into the world, who my parents were, their names, what diseases I suffered from, and when I was in danger of death. What great people I met... Then she told me she was bribed by my friend with a large sum of money to be my wife. And now she is my wife. A serious illness I was going to face, even death but from that moment she decided to be my wife, just to save me. As soon as she saw me, she decided to be my wife. This would be secret if my parents would raise any objection, but she remains in the care of lancu, who paid and guaranteed for her. My illness comes from an old atavistic love, she sees and feels it. And she began to describe the gentle Julia Alexandrovna.

From the moment she became my wife, I felt that the spirit of Yulia Alexandrovna came into her being and now a matchless struggle is inside her not knowing who will win. I felt a creep of death in my whole body... I could feel strange sensations, like some spiders and snakes climbing up my hands, and a breeze seemed to blow and dry my skin from the inside... I saw her standing up and coming to sit on my knees... Don't worry, Alexandre, my dear husband... When I was a little girl once I got to Istanbul... and I went to a great soothsayer... Ilia, he said, you'll be the queen, as you'll marry a rich man, a royal offspring, gold will flow upon you as the waters flow in the Bosphorus... But a big whirlwind will

happen, my eyes can't see beyond. Pour, Alexandre, some drink, I hear her refreshing herself, and let's sing. Cheers! And we kept on drinking... And Ilia started singing so beautifully! I didn't understand anything because I didn't know what language it was. I just understood that it was a song of cheer and courage in battle... Then she starts another one as sad and encouraging as the first one... Tears were streaming down her cheeks and she was singing... In the meantime, I was lost in a kind of fog and a kind of world, and then I woke up...

And so I saw her, with eyes lost in darkness and singing so sadly that she broke my heart... I tried to shake her and bring her back to life, but it was completely useless. "*Give me just a little time, she says, and I'll be able to be a different person.*" I felt that I was getting into the other world, but what kind of world was it and what did it look like, I couldn't figure it out, I just didn't feel anymore that we were in this world. I think I repented, but wasn't afraid. All of a sudden I saw her wrapped in fog wiping her tears and standing up. "*Alexandre*", she says, "*my darling...*"

She took me up and propped me between pillows because I was almost lost. She stripped me to the waist. I could feel her hot kisses on my neck and cheeks, shoulders and chest. Then I saw how she moved the table aside and started to undress and wave her body. When she stripped naked, I saw her in a blur, as if she was a statue of ebony. She had a bosom more beautiful than ripened apples, a fine hip line, and a soft line of thigh. She was dancing and looked at me like a shrew. And the more she was dancing, the more I was feeling that I was recovering and could see more clearly. At last, I saw her completely... Well, hey, hey, what a wonder of a woman's body! With hard rock-hard breasts trembling like waters... And with her thighs sweeter than a royal lyre...

Then I felt the blood kindled inside me... First slowly, as the deepest gravels of being would have collapsed and would be replaced by the fire beginning to spread. *"Alexandre, my darling, look at me"*. She seemed to have been the light... you've never met such a wonderful woman... *"Come on, darling, come on... Can't you see my flesh burning..."*

She was singing and dancing like a shrews if she lost her mind. I started to get up and keep myself on my feet. I came near her and took her in my arms. We were both a flame. She curled her arms and her body around me like a shrew. She was biting me savagely with her teeth almost ripping me like a dog... We loved each other until dawn, unconsciously... Then we fell asleep... When the cocks sang at daybreak, I woke up and saw the empty sofa... I fell asleep again and woke up almost in the evening. It was a smell of jasmine and morning glories. My health was restored. My soul was clear and immovable like the sky. I felt my strong body controlled by my muscles and my calm and happy nerves. Also, my heart was less poisonous and more refreshed. I got dressed and wanted to go out when Ilia appeared wearing a long Western-fashioned dress. She had the same hairstyle. You wouldn't have said that she was a gypsy girl. She sat next to me and took my hand, kissing it. *"How are you, darling?"* she asked me. I said that I was feeling good. *"I'm from the ground up"*, I smiled, *"and have a mad lust for life. I am the master of myself"*. She laughed happily, and then she became sad. *"I'm glad, Alexandre, you escaped death. As you know, from now on, in front of God and Allah, I'm your faithful wife. You'll go to your parents and tell them that you're married to the most beautiful gypsy girl arisen in the world by now. If they don't want me, tell them I have a noble origin, because I am a descendant of one of the famous captains of the Tartars."*

We were only dispersed by winds and dust and mixed with clay. For several years we have sheltered in this place. And if they don't want me, then I will give money back to Boyar lancu Delamare, but I'll remain your wife, by tradition. But I would be very sorry if they refuse our marriage."

I left the long houses like the stables, of the Gypsies', with a happy heart. It smelled of acacia flowers and crazy happiness. I wouldn't say that I was in love with Ilia, the gypsy girl, who now really looked like Yulia Alexandrovna. But it's equally true that I couldn't say that she meant nothing in my life. That night full of fantastic, as from another world, awakened in my body forces that had died, and released inhibited energies, thus bringing me back to life. At home, everything seemed suddenly strange, like a story I had heard somewhere else and now I couldn't believe that it was true. I scratched my head, and put my hand on the door hinges to see if I was dreaming. And yet it was real everything that had happened. Gypsy slums and dusty, dirty, smelly streets, caused by the carrions and dead bodies thrown in the street or under the fence, and the yard with long houses where Ilia lived, a motley yard full of gypsy children, clothes, and paper. An unsuspecting man would come hard to imagine the contrast between the squalid backyard and the clean and lavish, fabulous, fairy interiors of the gypsy houses. I took my hat and I looked for lancu Delamare.

I found him at home drinking alone, gloomy, and smoking like a snake, which was a rare thing, because I had never seen him so, and I couldn't imagine lancu, a philanderer like him, overwhelmed with sadness... "*lancu*", I say, "*I'm healthy and I feel myself a whole human and down to earth. And that's because of you. But tell me if what I experienced last night is true, or if it happened only in my sick*

imagination.” Iancu Delamare smiled sadly, seemed to refresh himself, and began to sing stretching. He felt embarrassed in this position of an embittered man. He started to dress.

“Well, you came”, I heard him. We’ll take from pub to pub, with fiddlers following us. I have a mistress and I want to sing all night under her windows.”

“But what I’ve asked you, what’s the truth?”

“It is the unvarnished truth”, I heard him. “And you are the luckiest man in the world. I didn’t have your luck and I’ll never have it”.

“Now what do you advise me to do?” I asked.

“Thank God, that’s what you have to do, that He saved you from death, take her to your house as a bride to bring you babies in the world and to love each other all life. God give you a gaggle of kids”.

“Well”, I said and I left him...

“Don’t leave me alone”, he asked me. So we both went to my house, where I found my father waiting for me worried. He was glad when I told him that I was cured. Then I told him what happened, that I am a married man, and now I want to marry Ilia, the beautiful gypsy girl, who has a noble descent because it’s only she who can cure me... First, it was very hard for me to convince my father that what I was telling him wasn’t a fairy tale of the “Arabian nights”, but a tragic and true one.

Secondly even if we, that is Iancu and me, made him believe it, although we were left little choice only to go with him to the gypsies’ house and introduced Ilia to him, I couldn’t persuade him to accept his son to marry, alas, a gypsy girl, even if she was the Tatar Khan niece.

Yet Ilia remained my only salvation because the faster the time passed since I hadn't seen her, the more tormenting the divine face of Julia Alexandrovna was in my mind... I suggested my dad let me marry her, Ilia, and live in another city, dealing with trade... I couldn't convince him to accept my marriage with the beautiful Ilia, the successor of famous rulers of Tartars Khans, today a people scattered in the world as dust and whose seed is slowly lost on earth. If he had heard the huge amount of money that my friend, Iancu Delamare, who also was my father's friend, had paid for Ilia, he would have apoplexy. He considered my desire and everything I had told him, sheer madness. So he told me bluntly to take my mind off marrying the beautiful gypsy, and begin to think now of another serious match because I'm not a child anymore. And above all, I'm a learned man. Indeed, I was nearly thirty years ago, I'd gathered some knowledge from the books read, I was a grown man, with studies done in famous schools, passed through life and underwent lots of experiences. And behold, it was just me who had been given to live almost a fantasy novel because I'm sure if I had told all these things to a man down to earth, all would have seemed to him a pure figment of a man with a sick mind. Before saying goodbye, after a long conversation, I both had, my father told me that he had already thought of a serious match for me, and my marriage was about to be arranged. He told me, in other words, to get ready for a new marriage. What to say to you, I was almost stunned. That night, a night with a crazy moon, only in the Orient you can see such nights, I wandered Brăila with my good friend Iancu Delamare, visiting all the pubs and tasting all the wine varieties. Since I returned to this former Turkish province, my friend's habits had a fundamental impression on me. Whereas in Bucharest I lost my early years in libraries and

academic courses, passing my time reading books, once I arrived in the town of the Danube and associated with the famous Delamare, I became a kind of Don Juan and philanderer. And what is worse, I began to immerse myself in this condition deeper and deeper, as in a mire of perdition. After midnight, when the noise also faded, we wandered the deserted streets of the Oriental town, followed by three fiddlers.

We arrived under the windows of an old house, a kind of a large mansion, from old epochs, which must have been two centuries old in this world. Here, boys, we'll stay tonight, I heard lancu Delamare moaning. I was under the windows and under the balcony of the grand mansion. Suddenly the fiddlers started playing the most acute musical sounds so touchingly as if it cut your heart with a hair thread, and I saw my lancu, the beautiful and famous lancu Delamare started crying with tears streaming down, singing only those old Romanian songs that go right to your heart... I looked at him and I couldn't believe it, his wet cheeks and tears glistened in the moonlight, such a shining moon that you could read the magazine. And long time after, we heard some steps up at the loft of the mansion, then I saw the light. lancu was watching and crying louder and louder, singing and murmuring with sharp pain. My soul was stirred by love and suffering, cause only the divine face of Julia Alexandrovna was in my mind. I could see her lips more beautiful than wild strawberries and her eyes as deep and serene as the bottom of the sea, as you wanted to scream and throw yourself into a water clearer than crystal...

I was singing as I could because I hadn't at all the talent and beautiful voice of the grand lancu Delamare. The more we were singing, the more I felt my tears bursting. We might have sung and cried for about an hour. lancu's sweetheart

lived in the chambers of the upper floor. What was in her heart when she knew him squirming down and melting into tears? There was till dawn, the crazy moon polished the desert town in that silence of crystal and cemetery, as everyone seemed to sink to the bottom of the sea... It seemed that time had been given back a century or two. And the Gypsies were singing, too, more from their throat, one *doina* of love and grief, or a curse, so that your hair stood on the head. After the third cock's crow, we heard the door opening to the balcony above, and some flurry in the house. On the balcony there was a lady in a red dress, the moonlight reflected in it, and on the walls, a blood-red color was dripping. Your master is asked to come up, I heard the voice of the lady who arose all the suffering...

"I'm with my friend", spoke Iancu.

"He can climb too", said the beautiful lady, I had just seen her face and I realized she was of special cruel beauty, that woman...

They opened the doors of the mansion downstairs, real massive gates, thick as a man's shoulder. We entered the blue darkness inside, where some lamps were lit, and spices like mold and crushed pepper were floating. An old gypsy woman headed us up on the of acacia wood ladder, covered with mats and carpets. We arrived at the first floor, first in a small room, with walls of which there were hung guns and antlers more branched than I had ever imagined. From this room, we entered the Aphrodite's chamber. The room was large and brightly lit by three lamps. The young lady's face was full of mysterious smiles, while I was expecting her to growl, and now we were received decently and joyfully. The one who spells bounded the heart of famous Iancu Delamare, merchant, and lawyer who was proverbial for being a Casanova and a man with mysterious

powers, was the daughter of a chief governor of Moldova, who had the home in Brăila, because, having large estates, he was dealing with the grain, fur and fish trade.

The young lady was almost as tall as Iancu, beautiful with delicate features. I could see her round arms as white as milk, which could make anyone fall sick with their beauty. The thoughts were running through my mind, and I marveled at what wonderful charms there must be under the silks of her gown that fell gorgeously down the ground.

“And so, Iancu”, I heard the beautiful Moldavian girl speaking sweetly, “you don’t let people sleep.” Iancu gladdened at once, although I could still see traces of tears glistening, his eyes sparkled with joy.

“Is that so, Zamfirita darling, the honey of my heart, and I’m ready not to let them sleep until I close my eyes, because that’s my nature”.

“Well, Iancu”, said the young woman taking the jug of wine from the old gypsy woman who had just entered the room. But what did I tell you when you swore me an oath of love?”

“I don’t know what you said”, I heard Iancu, “and what you didn’t say, but, from the very moment I saw you, I was not myself anymore and lost my peace. And if you, Zamfiro, want me to lie in the grave, I’ll sing to you with fiddlers even till that moment”.

She approached him, looked into his face, and patted his cheek. Remained a moment so both trembled with feelings and stunned. Then I heard her sigh with grief. She invited us to sit down, showing us some chairs artistically carved. Then she started to pour wine into the pitchers embellished with flowers, and I saw her, a sturdy and wise woman with ruddy and healthy beauty, and she seemed to me as a real image of one of Tizian’s paintings.

“Iancu, Daddy opposes our engagement and our binding for life. And I can’t oppose him and say no.”

“Tell me whether you have another man in your heart or not?” I saw Iancu dead-white. We clinked our pots, then silence fell upon us when we heard the lime removing from the walls and dust lowering in the room. Iancu was getting more white.

„Is this gentleman your best friend?” I heard Zamfira.

„Yeah, it’s like a brother to me now that I have escaped him from death”. And a total silence fell again that you could hear the death watches in the wooden beams and the moon was shining on the roof. *“He’s a professor, studied the Faculty of Arts, and is the son of Mr. Vizantidis”.* Zamfira was walking with her arms across, thinking. And, really, the more I was watching her, the more ravishing she seemed to me.

“I’m glad you have an educated friend, of good birth”, she murmured. *“And I think he’s quieter and wiser than you”.*

“He’s like you say, spoke Iancu, but you didn’t answer my question, Zamfira, and I’m feeling my blood draining from my veins”. Zamfira sighed deeply and came closer to him again. I was speechless, with my heart blacker as the grave, because in front of my eyes, I saw Julia Alexandrovna, I saw her face hanging on the wall as an icon.

“How white are you, Iancu”, I heard Zamfira whispering and I saw her stroking his cheeks.

“White and beautiful, like a demon”. Then she stood up and drank thirstily the wine from the small pitcher, and again began to wander about the room, with her arms across.

“You didn’t answer my question”, I heard Iancu again.

“I will tell you”, Iancu, *“why such a rush? When I saw you then at the wedding, the one who was in my heart, a*

sensible wise boy with large estates, suddenly disappeared, and it was only you who took place in my soul and in my being. I was dreaming of you at night and talking with you in my mind, and I woke up in the morning, burning and more tired than before sleeping. But when I heard, lancu, what a philanderer are you, that half of the ladies in Brăila sigh and crave after you, that from Vienna up to Istanbul you are known to be a famous philanderer, and you live having feasts and love adventures all day long, and that a quarter of the girls in this town went through your bed lancule... lancule, my lover, and my curse!" Her voice softened as streams of tears, and in the corner of her left eye, and what beautiful almond-shaped eyes she had! a pearly tear stopped, in which the lights of the lamps were reflected.

"lancu lancu, what was in my heart when I found out all this! How I came to scream and wander like a lunatic through the boroughs and villages of Moldova". There was silence, a heavy grainy silence. We were watching her tears flowing down on her clear cheeks and shoulders. lancu bowed his head in silence...

"All gossip, Zamfirițo, don't believe what you hear... But from all that you've heard, only the feasts with fiddlers and adventures are true". Here lancu flinched and seemed to listen. I could hear nothing but desert... lancu listened for a moment, and then he stood up red with anger. He went out on the balcony and ordered the Gypsies to sing. The fiddlers began to sing and their song sounded sad, filtered through the walls and curtains... *"It's nothing real of all these concocted, Zamfirițo, I'm all yours and only yours by law. By marriage, I would be yours and only yours. And if I were yours by marriage and by law, then no one would separate us until they put us in the grave. It's only the love adventures that I won't give up".* A deep silence fell around, you could

feel the dust of time sitting in your soul, while my mind was solely with the being of Julia Alexandrovna. I emptied a mug of wine thirstily and painfully. The same thing was done by Iancu who was now in big trouble. I was sorry I couldn't help him with anything, although I was deeply indebted to my friend.

"I've known my old friend for a long time, lady Zamfira", I said, and my voice sounded rusty as if it had come from elsewhere. "We were classmates at primary school, at Benjamin's school which was famous in old times. There have been lots of years since then. He is a matchless unsurpassed lawyer and he gained fame as a successful lawyer who can win any case and can help anyone escape from an awkward situation. And as a merchant, he's clever and has relations and friends up to Istanbul. In a word, he's an honorable man with a heart of gold and a good man. If you lose him, you'll think of him forever, and you'll never find another man as good as him". A bitter silence fell upon suffocating me. Lady Zamfira was listening to me carefully. *"Iancu, don't go", I heard her moaning. "Stay a moment and we'll see what we have to do".*

Iancu turned silently, as from another world, and seated in the same position, with his head bowed as at the court. He poured himself wine, filled up the jug, and then emptied it to the bottom. Zamfira came out and we were alone for a moment. The silence was dripping around us like cold water.

"Say something, Alexandre", I heard him lost and I felt his wet look in my eyes. Now you see I'm in big trouble. I was smitten with this governor's girl and I don't want to lose her. But I'll neither fall at her legs nor will I perish. Then I saw him how suddenly brightened and stood up cheerfully, then started to walk around the room thoughtfully. *Well, come what may, whatever the fate may be, Alexandre, Lord's will*

be done!. At that moment I stood up like a spring. I walked out the door and I found myself in the weapons room. Lady Zamfira climbed the stairs slowly, taking care not to stumble in the silks of her long gown. She was sad and dreamy. She had a tall candle in her right hand, a kind of candlestick of the old ones that could be seen in the chambers of great noble people, before 1900, and in the left hand she had, holding them under her arm, the Bible and an icon. I stopped her at the top of the stairs, almost kneeling before her.

"Lady Zamfira", said I from the bottom of my heart, please "don't destroy your life by losing my friend, nor break his life. I feel that a great misfortune can happen, and come over this house". I saw fear in her eyes struggling and collapsing like a wounded bird.

"I don't want to lose him, sir Vizantidis", I heard her manly. *"And I'll do anything I cannot lose him".* Outside we could hear, through the walls, the Gypsies' lamentation, in the night that was dying. We both got into the room. It wasn't long and the old gypsy woman who had greeted us came after us. She was, as shown, a guardian spirit of the beautiful lady.

"Iancu, my crazy and precious love, I want you to come to your senses and to make you a great nobleman and master at your home. My dad said that if I marry you and I don't get on well in life, he won't give me a helping hand. And although he esteems you, he doesn't want you to be his son-in-law. But I'll pray him on my knees to deny this thought if you help me also and you are with me. Here I have the icon of Jesus's Mother, and here I have the Bible given to me by Mother Evdokia from Putna Monastery. If you swear on these two holy things that you give up the women and banquets, Iancu, my honey, I'll accept you as

my husband, and I'll offer myself to you with all my faith, and all my father's estates will be ours and we'll be rich and have so many mansions that you have never been seen before... If you don't swear, even if I dwindle craving after you, I'll never want you to see again in my life". I saw lancu stopping at once and shuddering like a harnessed stallion in struggle. *"To swear, Zamfiro? Do you ask me to swear?"* I heard him. I felt his soul stagger inside him like into a whirlpool. Lady Zamfira stopped in front of him, twisted her arms around his shoulders, watching him with sad eyes.

"Yeah, baby", she whispered. She kept him tight, as robust as she was, looking into his eyes, absorbing him by sight. For a while the cool strange silence fell upon the house which I felt huge and empty like a ship. He also embraced and kissed her. And she looked into his eyes like a crazy, kissing him from time to time, a sign that they had fondled before in many secret meetings.

"Zamfiro", spoke lancu Delamare, once was proud and famous, now he was with his neck under the yoke and knelt by the love for beautiful Moldavian lady. *"Zamfiro, Zamfiro,* called her again in a lost voice. *I swear I'll never know another woman and kiss any virgin's lips no more in my life. And no more love adventures. And I'll be faithful to you as the forest is to the mountain, the dog to its owner and dust to desert, but not to put a drop of wine in my mouth, and not to hear gypsy's violin, don't ask me to swear that cause you kill me. I'll call the fiddlers at home and with my arm around your neck and a jug of wine in my left hand, we'll sing and spend our nights of winter and mystery, as we are young, because later on senescence and death will have no mercy on us."* Zamfira's eyes shone with joy and I suddenly heard her yelling as I couldn't imagine.

"I agree", she cried happily. "I agree, my darling!" She hugged and kissed him full on the mouth. *"Nanny, bring the Holy Book and the icon to swear on them!"* And Iancu swore open-eyed, gnashing and clenching his teeth. Then the gypsy woman brought another pitcher of Cotnari wine or whatever it was, so good that it ran down the throat like honey. He lifted the pitcher to his mouth and drank thirstily, about half of a pail, moaning like a buffalo and drinking to the last drop, and then he stopped. When you put the jug down on the table he was as red as a boiled lobster and that pallor of dead or demon vanished, he was glad and happy. He embraced Zamfira with love, kissed her eyes and mouth, and began to sing.

"Now I leave you, my beloved wife, I take my fiddlers and go home to sleep for three days, then I'll turn to ask Nobelman Baldovin his daughter's hand, and begin preparations for the wedding". Zamfira was as red as fire and restlessly happy. She moved around the room, searching for something, and not finding it. Before saying goodbye, she couldn't detach from her beloved. I kissed her hand respectfully and I wished them have a stone house and happiness in their life. She looked in my eyes for a moment, she had two drops of crystal under her eyelashes and thanked me with a playful smile.

"Take care of Iancu", I heard, *"if you say you're his friend",* she asked her. She entered the house and closed the doors behind us. We waited for her to come to the balcony. In light of the moon's silver powder, which now began to fade towards the dawn, she seemed a Visigoth queen in her rustic verandah. She blew her kisses to us and waved to us, then she entered the house. With our fiddlers, we started wandering in the streets and lanes of the old town. The air was clear, the fragrance of swamp and steppe, and very

rarely large heavy herons were passing through the sky.. The air in the morning, to those who have fine senses, seems to have something like the beginning of the world and holiness in it. Iancu walked straight and frowned, thinking elsewhere. His face was hardened, neither joyful nor sad, but tense, as if he wasn't him anymore, the former and always Iancu, as I knew him, the famous Iancu famous Delamare.

"So here we are, Alexandre, both married", I heard him, "I, to a passionate gentlewoman of ancient lineage who will torment my soul, you, to the Gypsy Queen and her golden heaps, because Gypsies have much money, man, you know, and everything will be yours. I knew this would happen", I heard him speaking after a long silence. "Ilia predicted it, and told me that the daughter of noble Baldovin is destined for me, that we would go through many events and eventually she would ruin me. Zamfira, the girl with a honey smile who devastated my heart, he murmured as mourning". We kept silent while the dirges on strings of gypsies followed us like dogs thrusting their fangs into our hearts.

"And where are we going now?", I asked him, with my heart ravaged by pain.

"Where can we go?" I heard him, *"We go to Ilia to spend up until we'll be out of our senses, she's your wife, isn't she?"*

We walked down to the slums, on some dusty streets, damped by the morning dew. I thought somehow envied Iancu. He had found the destined woman, his chosen lady, from then on he could be quiet. Instead, I, who knows what would await me! My marriage to Ilia will haunt me all my life as a burden, as an unworthy thing, as a curse. I was feeling in my bones that I'd never have a happy marriage with Ilia, my family wasn't going to accept no how that their son, a

descendant of a royal lineage, marry a gypsy girl, even if she was a late and exhausted offspring of a forgotten prince of Tatars. Meanwhile, the face of the incomparable Julia Alexandrovna persisted vividly in my mind, tormenting me and burning my brain. My heart was, as I said, broken and deserted.

"Iancu", I say to him, let's go back, I don't love Ilia, I still love Julia Alexandrovna and with her in my heart and mind, I'll die. Get me out of this mess you put me in before it's too late". I see he stops pale in front of me, staggering and grabbing my collar.

"If you mock Ilia, be sure I'll kill you, Alexandre", almost screamed Iancu Delamare! *"I would give the whole world for her and you want to run away...!"* So, both sad, we slowly turned to the gypsy lanes... Soon we got in the yard with long houses, as if they were stables or monastery cells never ending.. Gypsies, with their violins near to their chins, could hardly stand up. They were shaking and from their throats went out words of pain, replete with blood... We were greeted by Ilia herself. She came out smiling, more beautiful than an icon that you'd think she's an angel woman. Her large silk floral skirts with beautifully vivid colors were tossing... She took us through the rooms like mazes, smelling of jasmine, perdution and linden blossoms... Dawn began to break in the sky and cocks raise their crows from the other world. Iancu stopped in the doorway, only now he seemed to shake really, touched by drink. His face was sad, elongated up, and tense. Kissing her hand, he said goodbye to Ilia moving to and fro. I saw him crossing the Gypsy yard, immersed in fog, with the fiddlers following him. After we were alone, an unnatural silence fell as if coming from heaven, like a silver powder. Ilia embraced me tightly,

trembling. All her being was burning through the thin flowery silk, delicate like water...

"How are you, my honey?" I heard her whispering. *"What answer do you have for me?"* That silence, which made the air frozen around us, fell again. Lo, she was in my arms, one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen in my life, she made me lose my self control and made my body burn how only the women in their cursed race, of Gypsies, can burn a man's body. I hugged and stroked her, and she kissed my hand gratefully.

"My parents disagree with our marriage, Ilia". I felt her body becoming soft and cool, leaning down.

"But have you decided, baby, have you decided what you'll do with our lives?" I heard her murmuring softly. I remembered and I thought about what the unfortunate Iancu Delamare had said, that he would have given the whole world and the whole earth to have Ilia. Somehow I was fond of her, and I respected the delicate, mysterious being of incomparable gypsy in this world. But especially I was scared at the thought that I might lose her. A deaf feeling sprouted in my heart, that if I had lost her, something irreparable would have happened.

I confessed that I was very fond of her, and if fate bound us, I'd like to be bound forever. She sighed, reconciled, slipped off of my arms, and began to dance a strange dance. She had forgotten about me and maybe about her, too. About the place we were, about the world, about everything. I had fallen into a kind of prostration, inhibited and slept by her hypnotic dance and the meaningless words, full of mystery, like spells, that made you fall asleep. Has it been a long time since I was watching her contemplatively, fell into a state of hypnosis and daydream... When she recovered, she panted, burned like hot clay put in the oven, like a flame.

She came and embraced me flooding me with her hot exciting kisses.

"Love me, baby, love me, my pure and unparalleled husband, love me to die..." I saw a red darkness before my eyes, and I felt myself sucked by the woman's naked body like a whirlpool. In the evening we woke up tired and light like leaves... We agreed not to ever separate us and take care of her and her tribe. To be in need of nothing, not to be humiliated, nor expelled. If I have another wife by our law, she will accept and will respect her... She will wait for me faithful all her life. She wanted to go to Vienna together one day, take a trip to Istanbul and Egypt, as she said... She also wanted to initiate her into the mysteries of philosophy... The next day I went home. My father expected me worried... I ate and shaved, and then my mother brought my woolen suit, made last year. Outside a driver was waiting for us. We boarded the handsome, and horses started trotting jerkily and annoyingly.

"Where are we going, Dad?" I asked. *"You'll see"*, he responded. *"Be careful how you act and how you talk it's easy to guess where we were going"*. What had happened? When my father saw what I had passed through, he was about to lose his mind, especially since I was somewhat late in the marriage, and he spoke as old friends with Decatide Solomon, the richest owner in the region of the mouth of the Danube and the Black Sea. They had known each other since they were very young, they both had businesses and had grown wealthy together. Mr. Decatide had two daughters, and he hoped to unite in this way with my dad, especially since he knew me and had a good impression of my judgment and my ability. That was the best opportunity for our kinship.

“Son, from now on you can consider yourself a married man”, my father told me before we got. “Your wife will be Calliope Decatide; you know her well, a beautiful girl with noble behavior. She’s good at keeping accounts, merchant records, and business, too, and will help you a lot in your work, for I want you to leave school and follow my trade guild. So I, your mother and my good friend, Mr. Decatide, thought.” He paused and seemed to think of something. *“I don’t want my son get out of my word, and make me ashamed before my best friend. Once settled at your own home with your kids, you’ll see that life is much simpler”.*

We arrived at the gates of Mr. Decatide’s house... The houses had doors open and the rooms were decorated to celebrate. At the top of the stairs Mr. Solomon and Mrs. Decatide, who embraced Mom and Dad, were expecting happily. Eventually it was my turn to be embraced by the outstanding ship-owner and kiss the hand and cheek of Calliope Decatide’s mother... I entered the guest hall... Calliope didn’t come down from her room. When she came, after a while, she was as red as an apple in her cheeks. I kissed her hand.

“A kiss, a kiss”, Mr. Decatide encouraged us.

“Yes, a kiss”, claimed Dad. That day we engaged, the wedding was going to be celebrated in six weeks, after 15 August... Towards evening, pushed by others, I retired into Calliope’s room. She was timid and shy, but otherwise, she was golden-hearted. She wasn’t what she might be called a beautiful woman, but she was not ugly. I thought that my dad’s choice wasn’t bad at all. *“But what could she say if she hears about Ilia?”* Then I remembered that many rich people were supporting mistresses that no one knew ever. She showed me her jewels, trying them on. By the way she was behaving, I realized that my future wife was still a child.

She had a slender body, but her thighs were still narrow and fragile. She stopped in front of me clumsily. She wanted to sit on my knees or stroked my hair, but her hands had stopped halfway. And I didn't dare, and wrong I did, I should have to help her to fulfill her thoughts on that moment.

"I thought, Alexander", she whispered, *"that we both had much luck, hadn't we?"* I heard her lost in emotions. At that moment it came to my mind, as a red iron burning inside me, Julia Alexandrovna's face. She was beautiful and smiling. She seemed looking at me with a smile, and at the same time calling me.

"You're right, Calliope, we're both very lucky", I said sadly, more pushed by the significance of my silence... We were both embarrassed. I would have wanted to go out when I saw her going before me and clasping me tightly.

"Alexandre", she hugged me to her heart, *"be good to me, be a good husband, and protect me."* Her flesh was burning like fire, and she kept praying to be good to her. I embraced her, and now we were engaged and had to show her how much I was fond of her. I held her close and kissed her hair, then kissed her on the lips, she, as a child, didn't know how to keep her lips, and from that moment she was very dear to me. But what happened next was terrible, because Julia Alexandrovna's divine face shone into my mind more strongly and more painfully. I almost groaned in pain and I let delicate Calliope go. I saw her scared and as white as a sheet.

"What's up with you, Alexandre?" I heard Calliope... I don't know what I said, but I know that the whole evening I was very tormented and deeply troubled by the face lit in my mind. Since that night I fell ill for a few days... When I got up from bed and could walk on my own, I stopped in Ilia's chambers, the beautiful gypsy girl who received me warmly

and with a smile. Her body is more beautiful than that of the Nubian and Egyptian women, scorching inside by the heat of the lands of her ancestors. When the fires of our blood soothed, I looked at her through my eyelashes. She was sleeping like a cat, with her cheek as clean as a peach and almonds. But her face was tired in a strange way, that gives her a certain touch of spirituality and transparency.

Ilia supported the powers of my body until the wedding day, when she locked herself in a room and prayed three days and three nights for me... In the wedding days, a bridegroom, as it's known by anyone who's going through this, doesn't know what the world is and what happens to him. The same happened to me. But what I know is that in those days the holy image of Julia Alexandrovna appeared to me more vivid and tormenting in my mind. In one of the nights I dreamed her, she was like a clear water statue coming in the world. She stopped in front of me, oh, how could I describe the beauty above any other glow on earth, for she had something weird and great, something sweet and plaintive, like a piece of music from another realm, and also scary. She was watching me with her eyes as lights and I seemed to hear her, *"Oh, Alexandre, Alexandre, where are you, my dear? Don't you know that there isn't death, but just an unchaining from the weakness of the flesh and worldly garments, that the spirits are eternal and thirsty... Oh, why didn't you die of love like me, my honey, more precious than all the treasures of the world. My soul thirsts for you, and until I find you, I won't rest"*.

Her waters were passing through my hair like a breeze and a flavor never experienced before by anyone, and then they perished in the depths of the world... Because I was sick, I postponed the honeymoon that Calliope wanted to spend in Vienna so we deferred it for winter, as we wanted to spend

the Christmas holidays in Istanbul, or Egypt, for we both wanted to see the pyramids. My father was bewildered by my disease and called again the Jew who had escaped me from the dead before. He turned me around and tapped on all my sides without finding any damage to my body.

There's nothing wrong with him, he says, don't worry needlessly, it's the cause he had suffered from before. He called her Calliope alone and talked to her. Later I guessed what he had said to her and he did it well. After leaving the old doctor, Calliope came and hugged me, his body burned like a live fire, but I couldn't help her with anything. She told me, swearing faith to me, not to worry, she understands that I am sick, and until the end of time, she'll wait for me to get better, to get strength, when she'll bear my healthy and beautiful children. So much noble nature and understanding as I saw at the delicate Calliope impressed me to tears. I kissed her hands and long lashes and I thanked her from the bottom of my heart. I never saw a happier woman than my good wife in those moments. I was lying and I almost wanted to scream, I wanted to curse the ethereal face and be more beautiful than the most ravishing beauty. Somehow I began to feel guilty, and I might have come to commit suicide if I hadn't blamed mostly my fate which was mocking me in a way that would have destroyed the toughest man. I asked Iancu Delamare to come to me because I needed his cheerfulness, but the man I sent couldn't find him anyway. I knew that my only salvation was Ilia. One day I dressed and we went out, saying that I go to a Gypsy fortune teller about whom I had heard that he knew secret things and had magical powers that would do well to me.

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The truth is that I missed Ilia and I wanted to see her. I went out and shopped for some fine fabrics and jewels, which I wanted to get her as a gift. The sun was a narrow belt sitting on the stripe of the horizon, much like in a dream. Autumn began to reign in this part of the world, bringing strange spices and sounds from the air of the Levant... I was just walking in the street of Lips cani, a narrow street with old houses from the other century, where there were the shops and stalls of Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, looking for a handsome through the crowd of people, buyers, and traders of all kinds, when I saw her... I rather think that I didn't see her, but our sights were drawn, or that my being was directed to her following an unknown line of destiny. She was walking through the variegated world as if walking over them.

She also had, like me, some shopping under her arm. She was wearing a black dress, but nothing like mourning. She was a beauty of those who petrify you in the way and make you feel your heart stop. A beauty of those that make you feel you're full of nothingness in the world, that makes you feel a worm or a grain of sand, and you'd better not exist in the world, you'd better not be born, or the earth would split under your feet. How to describe the beauty of this young lady, who was hovering over the world coming from matchless eras and from the pile of jewelry of Levant. Let me say that beauty was enlightening the world, maybe it is too little, but that forehead which was spreading a music sweeter than the sunset making your heart bleed, had no equal among the feminine beauties ever seen by me. I was close to her drawn hypnotically by a terrible force that was stirring the abyss of my human being. At first, I didn't realize but I had lost my head, I was beside myself. My gestures were feverish and my heart throbbed in my chest almost

bursting. I woke up in a way, that is I came to my senses when I got near her, after I'd slipped through the crowd hitting with my elbows left and right. I came near her and I could observe her diaphanous cheek. She had an almond-colored face with a purity and tenderness of a peach, emanating a pleasant musical light, I would say as if it were a strange stained-glass window of the fire inside... the splendid line of the nose was lost in a soft wave to her lips beautifully drawn. I approached her so much that I could touch her, for I saw her fine lashes like threads of light. Like moonbeams. I think by using this word somehow I catch that shade of reality of her beauty. She was so beautiful that immediately and violently you had the feeling that that being can't be true. Another vague impression belonging more to unconscious, I say this because much later this idea came into my mind and I could look at her in all its frightening majesty in the light of consciousness: namely, my vague suspicion that this being must have come from another world to this place, being more in transition. I lagged, more not to draw her attention and also to avoid attracting the prying eyes of the people upon us.

Gradually I became very lucid, my senses strained in wait, and my mind was as clear as glass. I couldn't be exposed to ridicule by the town. As our family was quite known, easily could have found mouths slandering my immorality. The sun entered into a purple cloud, the whole town was submerged in the red water of sunset. A blood color woke inside me at the thought of tragic things, creating a scary feeling. I went behind the enigmatic and most beautiful creature that I had the good fortune to meet on my way as I had gone onto the ancient sea floor.

How long did I walk on the Mihai Bravu Avenue? (so was called the high street of Brăila before the First World War). I

went enough time, hypnotized, following her steps. I was watching her black dress of the best silk reflecting the darker bloody light of the sunset. At one time, I remember, I had a strange sensation. As if the town could be found on the bottom of the sea, they could hear faint sounds, everything seemed fantastic and weird to me. I tried to remember what year I saw myself as if I had been very late, and I had forgotten, had lost track of time. I hardly remembered... The city was sinking further into the purple cosmos. People were barely visible. I had never seen something like that in my life. For a moment I thought I had lost sight of her. My heart started pounding, terrified at this thought. We found her again in the crowd after a while, far away, as the avenue was unusually crowded as if someone had removed all the people from their homes and had crowded them in the Mihai Bravu Avenue. I made an effort to get close to her again, and I managed after several nudges and blows left and right. I could watch her graceful and proud walk, of a gazelle, typical of an unusually beautiful woman. She had a gentle walk, and at the same time proud and arrogant. That seemed to fascinate you and humiliate you. And yet expressing so much simplicity and tenderness. From Mihai Bravu Boulevard, the young woman who bewitched me grabbed her to Roses Street. The strange air had become darker and more red blood. Almost I couldn't distinguish her face or figure, as I passed the other sidewalk, but it was still living in my mind her oval face of a sweet quince, with lines so soft and round, as if it had been polished for thousands of years by a master who now, seeing his perfect work, had given her freedom.

Passersby were rare and I could now focus my attention more on her walk of perfect elegance and greatness. No one could have this grace. I turned on Levant Street, today

extinct, because after the war the old houses of Armenian merchants were demolished, and other buildings were erected. I can see now those one or two-storied houses, with clean tiled roofs buried by ivy, as well as the walls barely distinguishable from the lush plant. The Oriental architecture of these wonderful villas, as well as the Florentine-style windows, gave them a special beauty. The one who surpassed the beauty of Aphrodite herself stopped in front of a house that seemed to be different from others. It had arched windows, a stylish and monumental appearance, and a marble façade. At the top floors, there were four round balconies. Seen from the outside, the image suggested more than one of those palaces that had remained in the city on the Danube, from the beginning of the last century, the legacy of the famous Genoese merchants, famous merchants of the Orient from ancient times. It seemed that a stylish valet dressed in red robes with golden Oriental embroidery opened the door to her. What I had noticed so far led me to the idea that the lady who kidnapped my heart must have been very rich. I was waiting for about an hour, meanwhile, a warm gentle evening descended, enveloping in its womb the roofs, and waters with their smells of reed and of gardens, the streets, and people. I wanted one moment to glimpse her silhouette. But I wasn't fortunate. When I walked off the small and elegant Genoese palace, my heart was empty, yet lived a kind of joy and hope like an enlightened realm that would have cut my being. Close to home, I found myself whistling. I was cheerful and happy. Waiting in front of the palace of my Duchess, the smallest detail of the sumptuous edifice stamped in my mind. The next day I decided to come and watch the entry through which disappeared the magnificent woman whom I dreamt constantly in my mind.

When they saw me so happy, my family enjoyed it tremendously, of course. Calliope asked me about what I had been told by the quack, which must have been the cause of my state of optimism and health. Of course, I told lies to my dad. I tried to sleep but I couldn't get out of my mind the image and silhouette of the beautiful Oriental lady who came in my way. That night I dreamed of her until dawn, I think. The next day I took my position, of course, in front of the house that sheltered the masterpiece of my love, awakened suddenly so impetuously. Do I have to say, and I quickly realized this thing, that I had forgotten completely the good-hearted and beautiful Julia Alexandrovna or the passionate and mysterious Gypsy Queen, and now I was overhead and ears in love with the divine appearance of Princess who had just met. My whole being was a blaze of love.

I waited in vain, however, because the doors of those stately homes and also exotic remained closed all day. It was in the evening, I decided to go back home when I met her. This time we passed each other. I honestly confess that when I passed her, I had neither the courage nor the power to raise my eyes and look at her. I hardened all, something flashed me and melted my flesh. If the ground had opened under my feet, I gladly let myself dive deep down than look at those eyes. Who can't remember so powerful and devastating emotions of love, and yet so sweet, that makes us so happy, that when we are old we'd give anything only to live again some of them. I stayed behind her, and then I returned.

I could happily have a glimpse of her divine figure disappearing through the carved door of the old Genovese palace. On the third and fourth day, things happened in the same way. In the fifth and sixth day, I had the good fortune, by night, to watch her more. As if I were a scattered

trembled ether. My soul was like a blooming cherry tree dispersed throughout the sky. Oh, I would have been happy just to see her for thousands of years, and I had never asked for anything in life. What else could life offer me anymore?

And if I had had the good fortune to talk to her, to see closely her eyes, her lips, her cheek line, and change a few words with her, I would have been the happiest creature in the world. This thing would have seemed to me a heavenly gift that I would have deified. I would have kneeled and thanked God, kissing all the icons in churches and offering them wealth and gold. Those days I had forgotten chores and friends, I had completely forgotten my good friend, the famous Iancu Delamare, the woman I had loved, and I could hardly remember this thing had happened. And behold, it occurred what I wouldn't have dared to hope even in my craziest hopes. As an old Armenian saying goes: "When God gives you, He strikes you down". This is the way things happened to me. On the seventh day, by night I saw her approaching. And even if I never dared to kill an insect, I raised my eyes and looked at her face. She seemed dreamy and suddenly woke to life smilingly. I spoke to her with the choicest words I had written to my mind, forgetting them and twisting them thousands of times. I spoke to her so beautifully that no lover could have surpassed me ever, since the world is. I spoke so delicately, so respectfully, and gently that I saw her so much impressed listening to me admiringly and carefully.

Oh, young man, I heard her talking later, and her voice, warm and steamy as a sunset on the sea, as if awakened me to life, thrilled me. *"I'm so sorry that I made the painful and deep miss in your being, for I am only passing through this town. What you're saying to me, honors and praises me,*

as only poets in old ages knew how to sing praises and glorify the love of their heart. I will leave this town in a few days, because important business is awaiting me, just in Leipzig, in the Germanic country”.

I started talking to her again with pathos praising and glorifying her beauty. I said that if I received one single sign from her, I would consider myself the happiest man in the world. She seemed to be worried about my condition because such strong feelings usually leave behind deep wounds that can't be healed easily. She sincerely thanked me for the precious words I'd told her, promising that she would take them into the core of her heart forever. I almost fell at her feet asking her to give me only one sign, one souvenir and I'd consider myself happy for all my life. And what I said that even in my wildest dreams I never ever thought that God would gift me, it happened. Asking me neither to give a wrong meaning to her gesture nor to keep false hopes alive, she invited me to spend the evening with her, because something told her that I wasn't a common man. And here I am, entering the most unexpected and never-dreamed Kingdom. I climbed the marble stairs, which sounded weird, like some musical instruments.

A tall butler dressed in clothes embroidered in gold opened the door. I entered a hall where I sank myself into Damascus carpets up to the ankles. I could see my reflection in the clear waters of the Venetians' mirrors so brightly that it put a chill in me. Everything evoked me the luxury and pomp, and the matchless wealth of vanished places and times. I was invited to another room, the dominant color, hypnotic and wild, was that of a heavy shade of navy blue waters. She invited me to sit on a couch, as I had never seen in my life, somehow reminding me of the Renaissance styles, and then she clapped her hands

twice. There was a young nanny, wearing German clothes and having blond hair. They spoke in German, she understood all the words uttered. The nanny was ordered to serve a drink whose exotic name I can't remember. Then the meal was prepared in one of the rooms upstairs. She turned to me smiling. She told me that her name was Eulenia, and she was the daughter of an Armenian merchant and the granddaughter of a wealthy Indian maharajah.

Now she was passing to Leipzig, where she should receive a large sum of money and a great legacy. A little shaken by the way, she decided to rest a while in this city and in this house, belonging to her paternal grandfather, bought long time ago from a Genovese adventurer who died later in America. *"I know you are Bachelor of Arts, I'm happy to hear this, for thus I have the opportunity to show my knowledge of art and philosophy"*. Our discussion started easily, after we toasted and drank the golden liquor, it was as if a god poured the sweet poison in my bones and loosened our tongues.

O, sir, she had a vast and refined culture, her fine observations were combined with very deep thoughts, and had knowledge that only sages could have, her educational background wasn't European, her thinking rooted in the Oriental philosophies, especially those of ancient India and Egypt.

I stayed with my mouth open, listening to her amazingly for a long time. I confess that I had a revelation, and I got things so subtle and deep that I couldn't learn from all my teachers in philosophy. Nanny came and told us that dinner was ready inviting us to the upper rooms. The stairs were waiting for us lazily, displaying the same taste and the same science of glittering pomp. The room we entered was

smaller, but equally exquisitely furnished, the tools were valuable and old, dating from the previous century, and immediately it was seen, even by an unused eye to styles, that it bore the mark of great artists from other worlds. I ate served by the same nanny who had impeccable manners. The champagne I was drinking lit my mind slightly as phosphorescent dots. I was feeling feathery, floating like in a dream. I confessed I loved her so much that I didn't think any other love could have been from the beginning of the world, but this should not frighten her, but only make her happy as much as the pure love of a knight can make them happy the heart of his queen...

She looked into my eyes for a moment, a happy smile lit up her face, and the whole house seemed to be collapsing on me. She testified in turn that she was very pleased to talk to me. After we rested a little, I awe descended into the room brightly lit by dozens of candles reflected in the waters of the famous Venetian mirrors. She sat at the dozing piano in the corner of the vast and elegant hall. The sweet sounds, more full of poetry than the golden waves of spring, began to flow magically into the universe of lights. I thought at one point that stolen by dreaming I was about to fall into a sweet sleep, later, when I made the effort to wake up by straining my spirit and shaking my head slightly, I realized that it wasn't the fatigue to blame, but the thought that the reality in which I found myself, was rather a dream. I had, as I say, this intuition that those lights, those high-priced tools weren't real, but that at the same time, they were there but in another world.

A kind of melancholy and matchless sadness, painful and sweet like poison, after something, without knowing what penetrated my being. The bright and sweet Eulenia saw me, stopped in the aria which she was singing, and looked

slightly worried, wondering if I felt good. I replied, trying to be smiling, that it was nothing serious... It may be past midnight when I felt very tired. It was in my poor flesh, in the torn bright cloud of my soul, a deep desire to rest, to lie down to rest, wherever I was. She apologized that she abused my attention and led me into one of the rooms on the second floor. The candles were burning slowly, spreading peace and sanctity. Nanny showed me the wide bed, clad in expensive embroidery. We said good night and parted. I fell immediately into a deep and restful sleep.

Maybe I had slept up until afternoon when I woke up, the town was slumbering in peace and rest before sunset, and a kind of fragrant flowers were floating in the air. Time seemed to have stopped, or maybe the things and the ancient walls of the old Genoese palace spread a kind of tranquility and peace of mind. My body was clean as a church, and my soul was immersed in that peace sweeter than honey. It was the first time after so many years when my poor soul had found peace, a deep comfort, full of calm and deep joy. I hardly dressed for I couldn't break the mood that I had fallen in. When I got down in the guest room, I met the nanny. She said that the lady was away, and had a meeting with her lawyer, if I wanted I could wait for her as she would come back before sunset. This is a law for the women of Oriental lineage. I looked at the clock, until sundown there were about two good hours, and as my parents knew nothing of me, perhaps in the best case I joined again the merry lancu Delamare in a place full of wine and musicians, I decided to go home.

I apologized that I had to leave and I assured the nanny that I'll be back soon. My deepest desire would have been to also spend another night in the company of the rich and beautiful woman who amazed me with her vast culture, and

now, here, with her business skills. When I got home, I found my family angry. They breathed a sigh of relief when I told them about the old gypsy man's science and art of healing the soul. Except my father who was looking askance at me, my mom and Calliope believed me unquestioningly. I told them that it was possible to be late that night or even stay a week with him. After I said goodbye to Calliope, I rushed to get back to Levant Street because I said only to her that I could stay there even a week. When I approached the imposing Genoese palace, I felt my heart beating worried. If anything has changed, if she won't receive me? In this case, I would have said that I came to say goodbye, to wish her a pleasant journey, and to give her my grandmother's gemstone ring, which I had taken from the jewelry box, and once it should be Calliope's.

Night was falling, a salty and refreshing breeze was blowing from the sea. Nanny opened the door, displaying the same nice warm smile, of a waiting maid with good manners. She drove me into the reception hall: the same brightness, the same silence soaked in an old sweet luxury peace. Judging only by what I saw, I realized that the riches Eulenia's parents had possessed, must have been fabulous compared to our little wealth, even now, after marrying Calliope. I didn't expect long when I saw the beautiful hostess climbing down the stairs and coming out to meet me. I must have been pale with emotion, for her smile, nicer than chandeliers, was easily broken in an expression of concern. She called me her good friend, *"Oh, I'm glad to see you, my good friend"*, and she asked me if it was anything wrong with me. If I feel bad, she may send her carriage to call a doctor. Of course, I recovered quickly seeing so much attention and concern, so much warmth from her, which meant that I was not entirely

alien to her, but especially that a relationship of friendship, full of respect and affection, bound us.

What a wonderful night was! Music, nice and profound talks, smiles, refined culture, coquetry, a glass of champagne I had never drunk in my life, but especially that feeling of deep communication, full of mystery and sacredness. I loved her, I was forever in love with her, this is the word that reflects best my state at that time. I loved her so deeply and beautifully, that the time for me had become a disturbingly sweet drunkenness... I felt effluvia, a strange state, of fantastic and bliss, as if the spirit would stretch out lighter than a light breeze, I felt effluvia of a new life. As for me, the eternal happiness had begun. I took her hand, more beautiful than a jewel, in my hand, and our eyes met losing in each other. I felt dizzy, a kind of fall into the void that never ends, as a child only I remember to be dreamed. She stroked my cheek and hair... I came back as if from an incomparable drunk. Now, after so many years, I am just wondering how I could resist, how my heart didn't stop in place, or how I didn't get mad with happiness.

"You love me, don't you?" I heard her whisper as a breeze. I fell on my knees, and suddenly burst into tears, confessing, actually what I had to say, must have been a praise of her beauty and a description of the boundless love that I had to that surreal beautiful being. After a long time, when I looked up, I still felt giddy. I saw two crystal pearls in her eyelashes. She testified that in her world she feels very lonely, that her soul needed an educated and refined cultural man whom she wanted to appreciate. If it's possible and God almighty helps us, if I want and fight for this thing, maybe our wedding might be possible. I fell on my knees. I kissed her hands and feet a thousand times for the great happiness that she promised me. I stayed hand in hand, whispering

and talking about God knows what, things that at that moment seemed beautiful and important. I was amazed and I remember it well that this thing had got a strange resonance, and a certain aura of mystery and fear, a culture of caste, or selected circles, possessing secret knowledge, a kind of Orphic mysteries.

I've also noticed another strange fact, her wealth of knowledge, her extensive and profound culture, the ancient languages, she spoke, her knowledge on the life of kings, of the great reformers of the world, she had all these as if she would have lived at the court of Oriental Padishahs in those eras. Almost I can't remember when we went to bed and when we parted, but I deduced that this had happened at dawn, and we must have been both deadbeat and drunk with happiness. I woke up just the next day, the next night I'd rather say.

When I descended, I found her playing the piano. She had a hieratic appearance, of light and distant sadness, a diaphanous elongation of her face, which further emphasized the impression of strange, of Baroque, of unreality, as if she was more the messenger of another world, as if she was more spirit and less material, coming from a world somewhere above us. And this gave her beauty clarity and a life of translucency that charmed me, beauty and nuance that I could hardly describe. She said she had just packed and was ready to go on the journey. When she departs from a place, a certain sadness envelops his face, and the best remedy against it is music. Therefore whenever she is at these times, the only thing she can do is to sit at the piano and play. Then there was a meal eaten in a hurry.

Then we went down again to the guest lounge. A valet came and told us that everything was ready. We could go. She

told me she would like and would enjoy it more if I accompanied her on this journey, at least part of the way. You realize that my greatest desire was just that. When I came out, a huge gilded chariot expected us in the street. Where had I seen such a gorgeous and impressive harness, remembering the Viennese court, or perhaps life at the court of Louis XIV? I remembered where I had seen this image. In a painting. Yes, I remembered it well, in a painting. But this was not the main thing that struck me, but another one. Namely the feeling, very clear, that I'm now in another stage of my life, as if I have climbed a new level, a new age. It was not a chronological age, but a spiritual one, concerning the knowledge of the world, I would say. A strange state of maturity and superiority. I felt I wasn't myself anymore. This transfer of personality started elusive, that's right, long time ago. I think at that moment I had seen this unusual beautiful oriental girl for the first time. I felt like a kind of emir or rather a rich prince, a ruler of many riches, self-confident, having the consciousness of his power and superiority in this world. Another strange and pleasant impression which I took as common fact, was that I found myself in a different place, or rather that I was in another world.

I sat next to the mysterious and fascinating woman in the long gilded carriage, loaded with luggage. Nanny who accompanied her sat in front of us and the two valets in impeccable liveries, announcing the pomp of a royal court, went up to drive the elegant coach. It began to rattle through the fabulous city streets. In the sky, flooding the world in a silvery glow, persisted a huge moon, as can be seen only in fairy tales. It seemed the streets were of an ancient city polished by the demonic spell of the star of the night that made you feel in the streets of one of the capital cities in

ancient India. The spell that enveloped the world penetrated my soul and being.

If I tell you that I was happy, sir, the word can't measure the divine state that had seized my whole being. It was a dream, a fairy tale. Even in the richest imagination nor in the most gorgeous Oriental fairy tales people live no greater happiness than that which I had in those moments. And so unearthly happiness as if it stretched over my entire life, and beyond it, as if for me there would be no death. After a long time, I thought I was out of the town like an Oriental maze, with pagodas and limes, roofs lost among apricots and mulberry tree crowns. I felt the velvet-like sweet hand of the mysterious princess in my hand. The linden fragrance blew in the moonlight like a wind that would destroy the world... I saw the plains of orchards and eucalyptus. And the carriage seemed to climb a field that was coming down, coming on the contrary, from the highlands of a horizon drunken by the moonlight. I heard at one time a breath of wind sweeter than the rustle of a silky forest. And the more we were leaving away, the more a bitter and deadly sweet longing was growing inside me...

Oh, wondrous creature, I told her, how to thank you for the incomparable happiness you have given me and for this trip like a dream... A dream is the world, my love, I heard her whispering, both life and death are all a dream. How long has passed? Thousands of years seemed to have passed and we advanced through the dream-like light, like a purple and bright poison of that night of drunkenness. Again I heard the melodious murmur of a sea and felt my soul drowned and drunk with the lime fragrance. I turned my face to hers. Oh, I forgot about everyone and everything in those moments! I see the line of her forehead and nose, finer than the human hair stretched in the moonlight, and the line of

her chin, divine and soaring towards infinitude. She seemed asleep or rather she was thinking of something. The unreal beauty faded into the demonic moonlight bursting more impetuously like longing and thirst of love in my heart. I called her slowly and I seemed to startle her... She turned slightly her face towards me and our temples touched trembling. The grass vibrated in the breath of the wind under the endless dome of the universe.

“Oh, baby, I heard her sighing like a wind-extinguishing, what depths of the world am I coming from? How many deserts and seas have I passed through? And now I’m taking you to the moon lands, and may God help us to stay bound forever...” And the longing that haunted my soul started to bleed inside me more painful and sweeter.

It was toward morning, and I heard a sort of songs or sighs coming from somewhere as if they had been filtered through some lime forests. At last, we stopped in front of tall iron gates. A sort of royal gate, as I imagined them in my childhood. I might have dozed when I felt awakening and I felt burning in my flesh that painfully sweet longing after the world I left. The valets jumped down and the gates were opened crackling and creaking luridly of their iron bars and joints. We entered the grand park of the palace. A huge park with peaks and flower beds exhilarating us with their flavors from another world, with walkways and century-old trees. On the right, I saw the icy peaks of the mountains shining wildly in the moonlight. On the left, as it descended toward the hills and into the plains, I felt the breeze of vigorous forests. She took my arm, and now we both went to the alley that seemed never-ending. When we arrived at the stairs of the huge palace, I saw the lights on in the rooms above. Nannies dressed in white and valets in stiff liveries, colored in black and red came out to meet us... Everything proved

order and a special education. No improper or ostentatious gesture from them. They moved to and fro downloading things and transporting them in the chambers from the third and fourth story as if they were slipping and floating above the earth. We were greeted by the person who seemed to be a sort of chief administrator. She was given a kind of brief report, which she said in a language full of shadows, silver consonants, and extreme musical. The Princess seemed to be satisfied, and we went on climbing the wide stairs enchanting illuminated by dozens of torches and lamps. The luxury and pomp, as well as the illumination that surpassed the daylight blinding you, made you believe you are in a fairy world, in a wonderland.

We passed through a large room, huge hanging chandeliers, like weeping willows, from the high ceiling, the folds of purple curtains falling to the floors with thick carpets. Everything showed the fabulous riches and the power of the person who must have been the father of this beautiful demonic woman. I entered a smaller room... Here I saw the table waiting for us. A well-bred maid who never uttered a single word was responsible for our serving. From an adjoining room we could hear the pure sounds of a piano dripping through the lavish curtains and the walls covered with pictorial scenes... When we were alone and the maid retired gracefully bowing, the incomparably beautiful oriental lady took my hand in her hand and looked in my eyes until I felt diving dizzily in the depth that was sipping me.

I heard her loving whispers wrapping me like incense and like caresses, while a longing for something above us was born inside, shaking me. Those lips seemed not to speak, and the thrill of the words came from another world through the deadly sweet mouth. A kind of music and hard intelligible words that I understood only in depth were talking about her

sufferings. About her breaking from a celestial world, passing through a desert area, to reach and find me out. About an agonizing longing and about a path like a ray that guided her: that now she found me, and our no-return journey began, that we will have to cross immense distances of suburban lands to reach the world of essences. The more she spoke, the more I realized what I couldn't have understood all my life and my mind would never have crossed. I fell into a kind of sleep as a vision, because although I was still and my senses were asleep, I could see and understand everything.

Later on, we got up, she gave me her hand, and as grooms in front of the altar, we entered another room, differently illuminated, in a bright sweet penumbra, as if the light would have lit inside toward it, towards itself, the walls lit like delicate and musical stained-glass windows and the soft carpets embraced you as some big waters... There I saw her thinner, as if she had been a music in which I would be lost. I saw her elongated, musical, and surreal face as if it would ascend. I took her in my arms, because her hands raised in the air, and the mysterious suffering that dived her into another world, made me cling to her and hug her more from the desire not to lose her, not to disaggregate us in a strange nightmare. I felt her lips like waters, like sounds, taking me away and melting in the space where I felt I was melting and losing myself as the sound of a flute loses in the sublunar light of a magic night... We felt our bodies melting into each other and painful soft warmth of a dark layer of air.

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Scattering and enlightenment... My body had become increasingly easier while its edges were also volatilized like

liquid surfaces. I felt how the substance, or rather a kind of matter-energy incorporated into my poor body began to spread in the cosmos around as spread circles on the water surface. I gradually lost my consciousness. I was elevating and my eyes included larger and larger spaces. Then suddenly, as if I had gone to another level or beyond the sky, I saw clearly.

It's a way of saying I saw clearly, for it wasn't a view of the senses, but rather of the spirit. A kind of vision and transparency of the world and matter and a kind of self-consciousness retrieval. I'd lost the of consciousness of the genuine real creature that I had been before, of the features I had had once, the consciousness to have been human, to have had a name in one of the cities of the world, to have suffered, to have had a particular rank in that world, to have had desires and meaning, a reason, I had forgotten all these, I had only the consciousness of the light-energy self that I was steadily afloat and ascent through the spheres I was passing by. I remember that at one point I had the consciousness of energy-self which was accompanying me in my way of retrieving, those lights seemed to have known them since the beginning of the world, seemed to exist up there at the end of my eternal pilgrimage. It was there since lasted that float and that sweet enchanting blindness of myself because to glimpse the world and matter is nothing but enjoying a kind of bright blindness in which you see all in their forms and their essence.

Continuous ascent and illumination. After passing a certain level, I perceived, using a misnomer, a lot of bright selves. I walked among them and through them. Then, as if my floating would be finished, I was petrified, fixed in one point, in the endless crowd of energy selves. I was pure spirit. Bliss and enlightenment. Endless and bright serenity... I had

inside me the universe becoming its light energy substance, thus containing all the light energy selves of the world of essences. There is no time, no space. But pure expansion and eternity of the spirit contains the essential knowledge of the whole.

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I opened my eyes and felt a sharp pain in my occipital. When I tried to turn my head and move, my bones seemed stuck. I tried to lean on one elbow and slowly, I managed to stand up. I looked around me and more insistently. I didn't recognize anything. But absolutely nothing. Then, as I would have broken a glass bell in my head, burst in the poor security mechanisms of my body. Suddenly everything seemed fantastic... I didn't know what it was with me, who I was, where I found myself... trying to remember, endeavoring to see better. In vain. A cold fear climbed my spine, I felt the sweat like a glass shirt pouring off me like strips, more strips. I wanted to scream, to move, to ask what was with me, but when I made the effort to get up, I felt my whole body stiff, and then I screamed as loudly as I could. The icy springs that kept me in webbing were torn... I felt my body like a wound, like a puddle of hot blood. When I managed to open my eyes, I felt my retina burned by the surface of that reality. I don't know what happened after that, the safest thing is that I fell unconscious.

I woke up after a long time, although I couldn't say precisely how I knew this. My heart began to pound powerfully. Slowly I began to remember. I knew I was the son of such and such, I remembered the faces of my mother and father whom I parted a few days ago. I saw the woman of an

unearthly beauty whom I loved madly. I saw the interiors of her strange elegant palace in Levant Street. I saw her smiling, enveloping the yellow light of the interiors in a fantastic aura. Then I saw our departure, as in Oriental tales, under the moonlight from another world. Then I remembered that state of scattering of my soul and body, the loss of the fleeting garment of my earthly flesh as a sweet release, the float and the ascent of the self in the world of essences. It was like in Platon's world of essences. Now I saw the resemblance between the two worlds. The world where my spirit had claimed, an eternal world where the selves were unsuspected many, were in a sweet cohabitation, in a subtle kind of introversion and dedication, communicating with each other. And now my soul keeps the divine thrill of that world. Plato's world, or at least that was the image I formed while studying the descriptions of the great philosopher about the upper world which contained the perennial models of our existence, whose shadows of informational matrix we are.

You see, sir, this idea didn't seem utopian to me. For me it was clear that such a world exists whereas I could feel it, I had seen it, I had been part of it. Another idea that came to my mind was the one I'd heard once from an old Jew antique seller. I dedicated myself totally to the holy books and mysteries, like Plato, and he would have learned this information from a scholar whose knowledge could not be doubted. Because Plato, they say, would have learned of this theory, the existence of a world of essences, from a source remained secret. A source coming directly from the culture of that civilization, descending from the depths of the universe that would have visited the Earth. This civilization, which, moreover, the Bible recalls, would be that by mating (or as the scientists say, by a genetic operation, or a genetic

graft) Huuabihem and Haab tribes, gave birth to the Hyperboreans, the legendary country of the Hyperboreans who would have had their mythical home in the space between the Carpathians and the Danube Delta, between Bozaiosului (Buzău) curvature and the eternally restless waters of the Black Sea, the Pontus.

This space full of mystery and legend, as some people said, would be the wonderful area of the Delta. What was more important was that strange fact that I seemed to see these ideas and realities that my memory contained and which now came out, here, in the clear light of consciousness, and seemed more real to me than my very existence. I could hardly see as through a sieve. I was in a room totally unknown because I couldn't remember having seen it before, which seemed rather a shabby hotel room than a usual apartment of a family. I tried to get out of bed. My legs trembled as if they were made of wax, and instead of my soul, I felt a yellow empty. But I was surprised by the ease with which I moved because I was afraid that my legs could be stiff.

That's why I couldn't believe it and I was surprised at the ease with which my muscles simply catapulted me out of bed. I felt my body lively and easy, energetic and young. I was truly amazed I confess that a man passing like me through so many mind-boggling stories becomes at some point a man who no longer wonders at nothing. There I was, walking on the floor of the rooms, and I was young and easy as a teenager. I saw a mirror in the corner of the room from the window. I rushed to get close and look at it. For a moment I felt that my world revolves. I stayed for a long time watching the filthy waters of the mirror – at the spots made by the legs and droppings of flies -, which must have been

for decades in the house. Looking closely I began to distinguish some features that once had belonged to me... Slowly, slowly I began to get used to my new face... I might have looked like so when I was fifteen or sixteen years, of course... I was remembering increasingly more, but what was even more amazing, and more important, during the few minutes as I was looking in the mirror as if I had done a time travel, I started feeling my soul younger... The feeling of fabulosity, which any literator knows, is a particular, distinct mental state. I want to say that this state had seized me, and this thing had happened long ago, from the moment I woke up. In such a state of mind, a kind of logical-subjective state of the world, the clear vision about the world and yourself begins to falter and collapse... The edges of the world and its skeleton, its laws seemed to have no consistency and trembled, while in your soul persisted a certain emotional anguish and the strong lasting springs of the being sat dizzily in wait. My ear startled suddenly, and my heart seemed to sizzle as a piece of red raw meat was put into hot oil. Outside, in the hallway, I don't know why I imagined that there should be a dark hall, I heard footsteps and whispers. Extinguished by the thick walls, the rumors were soon transformed into an icy silence. Lord, where I find myself, and that's with me? If I find myself somewhat in the hands of criminals? And yet, I sat and I thought, just a few days ago I was with that woman of Oriental princely lineage, unusually beautiful. What happened to me? Have we exalted to heaven? but if it had been a dream, if it had just been a dream, and now I was thrown into a deserted house, a prisoner of some robbers? A matchless nausea had captured my being.

I felt ice flocs streaming down my spine. My heart stuck in my chest cooler than a coffin. I listened with all my senses in

wait. I could hear nothing. The air seemed frozen around me. I heard the woodworms moving into the beams of the old house where I was. And the silence lying between the walls was lurking me... Without realizing, I made a few steps toward the door. I think I made those gestures more mechanically than by my own will. The unconsciousness was the one that acted than the consciousness. I opened the door violently Then I tiptoed out in a dark corridor, which was just as I had imagined it... But it was empty, even the air that I moved through, and the walls were empty... I advanced supported against the wall on the right. There was no slightest whisper, nor any trace of life. I arrived at the wooden staircase. Here a trail of light seemed to come out from somewhere. I noticed this thing later, only after I realized, falling into the space, that I could roll. So I had to be very careful. I strained my will and all my senses.

"Good evening, sir", I heard... *"Thank God you woke up"...* I let him talk to see where he wanted to go, but he paused and looked at me as if expecting clarifications from me... I said good evening. The fear inside me began to dispel like steam. I said I didn't know where I was, nor what was with me... I found myself in a difficult situation... *"I wish I knew where I am, in what location, and what year, what month, what day are we?"* The man stayed a while with eyes staring at me, then mumbled something and seemed to look at a calendar that was behind him pinned on the wall.

"That's right", it seemed to me that I discerned his human grunt. *"I'd forgotten... Those who brought you here told me that you'd wake up when astral signs would be favorable and now must come the time".* The man looked long at the calendar that must have been old for years, and finally, he seemed unable to find the date or time he was searching.

I approached and asked permission to sit on the only chair that was in front of the counter or whatever it was... I said I felt extremely weak, I had dizziness, which was very true. I asked if I were in Brăila and in which house in town I was. The man looked at me even more frightened than before. His big eyes and bushy white eyebrows seemed to be gone to the top of the head. He spoke Romanian badly, and by how he was whispering the words, I figured he must have had a throat disease, and that he was Bulgarian or Turkish...

“No sir, God forbid, you find yourself in Balchik, not Brăila... There is little time, summer is coming, when many painters and high people will settle up here...”

“How in Balchik?” I heard my voice hoarse and frightened, astonished that I had the strength to ask, feeling how the heaven and the whole old house collapsed on me... The state of fantastic simply exploded in my being... The man came near me very worried. He asked me if I was all right and if I wanted something... After a while, I felt I recovered from bewilderment... I asked then who brought me here and when I was brought. The man seemed confused muttering something... I was brought, I understood from everything he was trying to explain to me, in that monotonous babble, two years ago, if not more, or maybe less... In those times the Hotel, the oldest hotel in Balchik, was built before the rebellion of Tudor, by a Turk who came from Walachia or Romanian Country... His brother received a lot of money when I was brought by two strangers, well dressed and very rich. They told him that they were members of a temple and asked him to take care of me, and nothing wrong would happen to me... When his brother died last year, he gave

him strict instructions on these tidings. Since then I said it to no one. I was silent, with my soul as hard as a lead rock.

I thanked him sincerely. Fatigue and dizziness encompassed me increasingly. I felt a pain in my fontanel and a lye-like exhaustion in my chest and stomach. What was I doing in Bulgaria, and who brought me? I had been brought several years ago, but just the other day I was with the beautiful Oriental princess who twisted my mind. I asked him to tell me what season it was. I remembered that I parted from the beautiful woman, or rather I had left with her on that strange trip a few days ago when it was still autumn. But what the old man told me then simply made me lose consciousness. I seem to hear him, his tired sad voice, mumbling: *“Well, sir, what year can it be, sir, we are at the end of February 1921”*. At that moment I realized nothing, I felt the sky of stone crumbling on me and I lost consciousness.

When I woke up it was morning and I was in a room on the ground floor of the old Turkish Hotel in Balchik. I went out and I found the old man cleaning the yard... I was amazed by the light that I saw... So strange, I had the same clothes that I was wearing when I met her and when I left with the odd woman in the journey that had led us under the torches of night and sky. The man seemed happy when he saw that I recovered. He asked me if I wanted to go. I nodded. The clear pale blue of the sky with some white clouds floating asleep, seemed a thing so close to me and beautiful, that I was in tears... The man went inside and returned with a stack of money... He asked me what route I wanted to go... Today, at lunch, a cargo vessel sails to Constanta, or you wait until tomorrow morning when a mail coach leaves for Constanta. I asked him in my turn which one gets faster, and the old man replied that rather traveling on water is

faster, tomorrow morning when I wake up I'll be in Constanta.

We chose to sail, and he ran to speak immediately with the master of the vessel. As I waited, I looked around the houses, sky, and trees... Slowly time seemed to expand and I saw I started to get used to the idea of passing so many years. This made me feel uneasy, my thoughts and my reactions were fighting each other, it was different...

My soul, or rather my memory, kept inside it the idea and the behavior of an old man, because now, normally, I would have been forty-two years, or even forty-five years, while my body, my face, and my soul were young, as at sixteen... I forced myself not to think about this thing which finally I had to clarify. I imposed myself to allow time, which is the best judge and solver of secrets and mysteries, to clarify everything... What I lived in those moments was a great thirst of my senses for reality, for what is concrete, touchable, perceptible. How could I describe the joy, that is the thirst for real, a matchless one? My eyes couldn't stop watching the sky, as if they had become huge funnels in which the blue ocean was pouring, the ears enjoyed like a wolf ravenous of hunger, of the sounds I heard... Then I first realized that for my being there was such a beautiful disease, the disease called hunger for touch sensations, for sensory stimulations, a hunger of my senses and my whole body... The old man soon returned with the news that my departure was arranged for today. I haven't entered the hotel, actually an old house with three stories, swept by winds and sleet, with the plaster pouring, in a strange mix of styles, covered with tiles. In fact, from the place where I was, the panorama of Balchik gave me a certain impression of concrete, perceived by the senses and imponderability. It's an indescribable feeling, driven perhaps more by the

colour of light and sky, all reflected in the clear water of the sea and by the dry gray ground... Maybe that's why this place was so desired by artists, by painters. I wasn't surprised to hear Romanian words in the streets, but I was bewildered when the old man spoke to me about The First World War... About the battles that were fought in Dobrogea, Turtucaia, and then throughout Dobrogea, the country was on the verge of being defeated and finished. Still, now the Union of the Country has been achieved, as has our nation.

"And now am I in Romania?" I heard my voice crying, scared more, but happy. The old man looked at me for a while, watching with pity, with sadness, but also with a certain sly curiosity... I was simply stunned... I slept all these years, and all this time history had rolled over the world as a river that covers the whole horizon, as a typhoon dissipating and giving birth to empires, and nations that never dreamed to be born into the world, or rather, to get used for millennia on the earth with the dream of their freedom and their independence.

When I realized, however, that the old man is curious to know what is with me in the world, I went on to another topic...

Balchik, in last year or after the war, began to attract, especially in summer, people from the high society, especially artists, painters, writers, and aristocracy, who came to enjoy the sun and water...

"I'll have customers this summer", I saw the old man, rubbing his hands happily. Not long after, came the departure time. The ship was loaded with linen and cheese... The master of the ship and a few sailors as the crew were silent people, so I had all the time until evening to enjoy the clearness and the color of the sea, the thirst and

longing inside my senses, which are awakened by the velvety foggy horizon. My eyes enjoyed the yellow steep hue of the Black Sea... But mostly the gentle and sacred evening, that descended over the sea and over the land penetrating my soul, that filled me with a nameless melancholy. I missed my family and I was also worried about them... Twelve years had passed since I did not know about them...

What are my father, mother, or Calliope doing? My mother was sick when I left... What were they thinking when they saw that I no longer appeared? Maybe they buried me in the meantime, a customary thing at that time, a habit which people keep it today, too... My concern was growing inside me since I approached Constanta. I would have given anything to get home that same evening... When I woke up, it was dawn... A thin sharp coldness lowered over the world... The shipmaster gave me a long fur coat, very warmly.

Once arrived in Constanta harbor, I rushed to buy two good horses, paid with a large sum of money... By evening riding the rocky or muddy roads of Dobrogea, I was at the ferry in front of Brăila... My heart was beating strongly because this picture was holy for my eyes. How many times I watched Brăila, beyond the Danube as a kid, then as a teenager... While the ferry slowly cut the Danube waves, my heart was striking in my chest, still and fearful, and I was praying in my thoughts to find my family healthy and in good condition... I watched the shore, the pier with ships and boats moored, the boats and people in the harbor. Oh, Lord, nothing seemed to have changed, as if it was yesterday when I left the woman who must have been sent by the devil to mock me. But I wasn't sorry. What I had experienced was more beautiful and greater than all the grandeur of history... now I

no longer doubted that there is an eternal world, of essences above us. The old Plato knew well what he knew...

I was walking in the streets of Brăila... Everything seemed familiar to me. On some streets, the old houses were demolished and others, more beautiful, were built. I was thinking of Calliope. What did she think about me? Could she live with my parents? But my in-laws, what would they think about me? Would have they come and taken their girl or had processes for dowry? In my mind it came to the face of beautiful Ilia, the queen of the world, so strange, of the people scattered like sand and dust throughout the world. Would she be living anymore? From Dobrogea lands the cold night was closing in... It was early spring. In the air it was felt the fresh smell of the damp ground heated by the sun and of the grass that soaked to sprout. How my heart was beating in my chest when I got to the house, and how much I enjoyed when I saw the lights on. I couldn't even believe it was true. Yet something told me that mine are the same, that if I came home now, I would find them as I left... I tried to open the gate, but its creak made my heart jump out from my chest. Soon I heard a voice of a man who fed the dog. The man opened the door, remaining silent in the night. I immediately recognized our servant. He instead looked at me for a while without going aside. I was convinced that it was him after I heard his voice.

"What can I do for you, sir?" my servant asked me in a low voice. I was inclined to embrace him and even I hugged him. The man stood transfixed and only after a long time when I started to explain who I was, seemed sobered... He didn't believe me, and looked back at me, looking me from head to toe. *"You don't seem to be the son of my master"*, I heard him after looking at me up and down... *"I'm going to*

announce Mr. Vizantidis about your arrival, please wait”, he returned tired and disappointed... He started walking on the path to the big stairs of the old house. I called him by name and I said I know him since I was little. In the darkness swept over the world he seemed for a while to think. I asked him to tell me if we were in 1921, but by his appearance, I realized that, since I left, really passed many years. The man approached and looked at me insistently.

“Sir, I heard that in Mr. Vizantidis’ house, about ten years ago, if not more, a great misfortune happened. His only son who had just married, disappeared. Since then nobody knows anything about him. I tell you there was great mourning in this house. Mr. Vizantidis and his in-laws, along with their friends, searched him for many years. He was found neither alive nor dead, although Mr. Vizantidis ceased to believe that his son is still alive in this world... So please don’t joke... I mean, you don’t seem to be the son of Mr. Vizantidis, who should have been now a man who has passed his first early life, or you’re still a young man in the heyday of life who could hardly be 18, which I doubt because you look like a boy”. A strange silence sat over them, broken by the barking of a dog which began to fawn and dig the ground, yelping somehow strange and scary... “You’re right”, I replied. “Good thing that you didn’t hurry to announce Dad, old man... See, it’s really me, I’m real, and I told him how his wife had died when I was little, and where I had been and what I had done then. And how he had lamented and what he had said at her grave... And that the following day we had gone out of town and he had lifted my kite in the glories of heaven... Then when getting back home, he had burst into tears. And many other things I would be able to tell you, old man Alexe, because I’m really Alexandru Vizantidis of old times, but, see, some strange

things happened to me as if someone had cast a spell, so I say, it's better you to go before, and first prepare my father for my arrival, and after that you can tell him I have come... But before going into the house, tell me how are Calliope and mother? Is Calliope still at our home?" The old man stood stone-still with his hands slightly raised. I felt the fear that gripped him as his chin trembled... *"Tell me quickly",* I said, *"how are Mother and Calliope?"* He answered after a few moments, a time in which he recovered from a daze.

They're well, he says sadly, both healthy. Then he crossed himself scared, three times, muttering something unintelligible. Oh, God Almighty, protect and save us!... If so, may the Lord make everything good... He walked on the path, frightened and trembling, and climbed the big staircase, entering the hall brightened slightly... I heard him knocking at the door of my parents, then I saw a man leaving the house. He acted with tact because only after a long time I saw my dad coming down the stairs. He had a lantern, the ones that were on time, in his hand. As walking down the stairs, carefully and somewhat cumbersome, hunched a bit as old people went, it was obvious that my father had aged much. They approached me and my father slowly raised the lantern to look at me in the light, but suddenly I found myself taken in his arms. He hugged spasmodically and kissed me...

"My soul told me, my boy, that you're alive and you're not dead... Thank God you're back, welcome home, my dear, my boy! You'll tell us what you've been through..." After I hugged and kissed him, he raised the lantern, looking at me carefully, without haste, this time... *"You look much younger, my dear",* he spoke after a while. *"Never mind, it doesn't matter, good to have you back..."* I climbed the

stairs, Alexe the old man went into the small house where he had his room. When I was alone with my father, before entering the house, I heard him telling me not to mention anything to Calliope and his mother. *"Tomorrow you'll tell them. This night you tell me.."* He asked me to stay a little outside, to go into the house, to prepare the women. He turned quickly and took me inside... When I entered the living room, I almost remained flabbergasted... My mother was getting old so much as I couldn't imagine, and Calliope hardly resembled the thin and shy girl that I had left. They were both crying and screaming, a cry of joy, like all the women mourning from the beginning of the world, when their husbands returned from the war. I caressed both of them at my chest... Then I saw Calliope giving back. She watched me in horror, while she was giving back.

"It's me, Calliope", I found myself crying, *"don't worry that I look younger!"* Mother wept with joy and could no longer separate from my chest. The next moment, however, something happened that was beyond me and beyond my imagination. Behind Calliope, slipping through the door, entered Julia Alexandrovna Maronova.

I felt my feet soften and soaked, in dizziness. I had time to stretch my arm forward and ask who she was... Calliope put her hands on her eyes and got out of the room screaming. My mum took the little girl, hugged her, and brought her to me. *"She's your girl, Alexander. She's your daughter, Alex, you couldn't see her coming into the world"*. I looked at her stupefied... It was the very true image of Lulia Alexandrovna. The same eyes, the same line of mouth, the same forehead and sight... If I hadn't been with my folks at home and had met her in the street, I would have gone mad, I would have lost consciousness. My father saw I lost consciousness. He took my arm and sat me in a chair. They all had lost their

heads... When I came to my senses, I saw my father sitting by me... He was stroking my hair and kissing me.

"You are just like you were at sixteen, my boy. Don't tell me anything, you'll tell me everything later. I know what happened to you... it happened to me, too"... Slowly I came to my senses... After a while the servants laid the table and brought wine. I sat at the table... Calliope couldn't come, she felt bad... crying unceasingly and couldn't recover... I ate and drank wine greedily... The same sensorial hunger. I would have eaten and drunk wine until I would have lost my mind... After eating, my mother prepared the bed. I saw that she had lit all the lamps. She kissed my forehead and prayed for me even in my room. My father went last.

"Sleep well and recover.. You're saved now, it's nothing to be afraid of"... Maybe I had slept my first sleep, I don't know how long had passed. I felt Calliope's warm body next to me. She was crying and praying at my bedside... When she saw that I woke up, she shook me as much as she could... as if she would have been afraid I died...

"Alexander! Wake up, Alexander! I want to talk. I want to talk to you"... She was panting and shaking me. I woke up for good. I wanted to light the candle, but she stopped me.

"What's up?" I said... Her heart was pounding and she was panting. I took her in my arms and climbed her into bed beside me... *"What's going on?"* I said. She was panting and shaking and didn't know what to say. Only later I made her tell me what it was in her heart and didn't give her peace... She asked me to tell my parents that the little girl was conceived with me. She swore by all the saints that she hadn't known other man up to my departure, nor thereafter... The little girl came into the world eight months after my departure, although she was virgin... She told me how she wanted to end her life. She was afraid of God and

thought that the arrival of a baby into the world without knowing the man, as our Lord Jesus Christ was born, is a holy thing and she isn't allowed to sin by taking her own life. Then she began to swear by all the saints that she told me the truth and didn't lie at all... I took her with me and comforted her. Then I made the connection between Julia Alexandrovna, my love of early youth, and the likeness with the child born in my absence. Strange and disturbing things! If I hadn't been stronger, a man endowed with special wisdom and a reconciliation of the spirit in this world, maybe I would have lost my mind long before.

I took Calliope with me that night. I was convinced of her innocence, but I couldn't tell her anything of the curse that had fallen on my head. It was better not to know that our daughter was the being of the incomparable Julia Alexandrovna, who incarnated in our home and our being... In the morning I woke up late. I felt recovered, young and strong. But I was very depressed when I saw Calliope at daylight. She got fat and grew old as I couldn't imagine. She moved with difficulty and seemed somehow ugly. The corners of her mouth had gathered in a disgraceful manner, and her hair turned white almost all... I was terribly sorry for her... Instead the girl that they baptized Maria Julia grew extremely well, she was intelligent, lively, curious and uncomplexed. Totally uncomplexed. She was twelve years old and became a teenager of a matchless beauty. I struggled especially the thought that in a few years when Calliope would look like an old woman, I would look almost the same age as my daughter.

My father advised me not to go out because of the rumor that would spread. It was very true, especially in the city of the Danube, where things and events got mythological and aberrant proportions by their mouth-to-mouth movements. I

enjoyed seeing that slowly by slowly cheerfulness and tranquility settled into our home. Mother and Calliope moved to and fro as talkative and happy as they could be. Maria Julia took piano lessons with a distinguished teacher, a lady who was a great expectancy of the Romanian scene before the war, now withdrawn in the provincial town on the Danube banks.

I was curious and couldn't wait to go out, to walk along the streets of Brăila after the Great War to unite our Homeland. I heard that some streets had risen and were under construction buildings that were to change the face of the town. Incidentally, both manufactures and commerce entered a particularly flourishing period after the First World War. After dinner I retired with my dad with a tankard of wine in one of the rooms, chatting until evening. I told him in detail everything that had happened to me... He listened to me carefully, but what especially amazed me was that he was experiencing all that I had retold in a profusion of details. Finally, he told me what I would have never guessed forevermore... What happened to me, it had happened to him in his youth...

"Son", my father says, "we mustn't frighten, nor grieve, but rejoice rather, because this curse, besides being made happy all the men of our kin, has done another good thing. Due to it, they got rid of war, of war sufferings, and death in war. Only the men of our kin have seen such beautiful women and have enjoyed a matchless love living in this earthly life, so short and so hard. So this thing just tells me, my son, that our lineage is chosen... maybe not by God, nor gods, for I've never seen such creatures from the world above us but by something else that is in heaven and sees us and watches us, and far more evolved than us. It's a power and a world that we can't even know or name, but

only if we can describe it with few words of human language...” That afternoon was a pleasant afternoon of chat and decoding many things that seemed impenetrable to me. “The curse of our family was paternal, from of our grandfather, but it wasn’t sure if his father, his grandfather, and great-grandfather, who were wealthy merchants and powerful people in this damned Middle East and in this Balkan Peninsula had also lived such events. Supposedly my great-grandfather would have been part of the Etery, in fact, something else more mysterious and hard to understand, is a secret Order. It wasn’t the order loanits, nor of decades, whose members were part at that time from almost all European governments, as we say today, I mean they were prominent people at the court of Tsar, and at the French royal court. This order had its roots many centuries ago its beginning might have been lost forever, and nobody knows it, but only if these secret orders that come from the depths of time, transmitted their secrets from generation to generation, and nobody knows, as I said, what part of the world they arose, how many millennia ago and where? In the East or the West, or North?”

“Nobody knows what secrets these orders carry with them and what is their purpose. Allegedly our great grandfather”, my father said, “had met at the court of the Moscovite Tsar a particularly beautiful woman. This woman would have been involved much in the destiny of the people of this region. Our great-grandfather would have been her lover, as they say, and for one thing, they didn’t understand each other, my grandfather would have killed her. After this act, several years ago, he would have disappeared also and no one would have heard anything about him until now. But these, I say, are things so mysterious and hidden, that this is my last wish, they must not reach even the ears of a stone...”

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What my father told me, opened my eyes somewhat, but I was slightly scared too. Meaning that what I had lived was not a random fact and actually nor a common or an exceptional one, that only my being had lived, and this was utterly thrilling. It had reasons that my human mind could not even glimpse, or explain. What made me quiet was my father's idea that this was not a bad curse... It was somehow more a blessing than a curse, even if it made some people suffer, stay years with their souls tight and tormented, and roam the world where they could hardly imagine.

*

After being lost, my mother wanted to do requiem, as used in our tradition in this space of oriental orthodoxy. I mean, if someone dies away from home, in war, or on a journey, his body and soul have not enjoyed a human and Christian burial in the place where the man died, as every Christian deserves in this world, and after a certain time, the dead man is buried in its absence, as it would be true. The priest reads the Gospel, and all the requiems and the Memorial Services are done. For otherwise it is said that his soul dwells above the earth, tormented over land from house to house, in the wilderness, and forests, through rain and sleet, finding no rest and peace. My mother wanted to make my requiem, so Calliope and her parents, who would have wanted her to marry unless my father would have objected, asked them not to rush, not to do something foolish which

could not have been turned into better afterwards, telling them that he would have such a feeling that I would return. To persuade them, he paid a fortune teller before, then my in-laws, my mother, and Calliope went there and he told them that I was alive, that he saw me in the mirror. But I was extremely far away and only after many years, I would return home. What is noted as an important fact is that my father, when he took the wizard to find out about my fate, whether I was alive or not, he had told nothing to the wizard in the beginning... He was also interested and wanted to know if I was alive or dead. The wizard had asked him only what my given name was, of what nation I came, who my parents were, and in what month and what day I came into the world.

After cartomancy, searching for something there and looking in the mirror, he said quietly to my father that he had nothing to worry about, because I was alive, but I was far away and I would return home later. He also said that where I was, there far away I was sick, but I would recover, because otherwise he could not have seen me in the mirror. Okay, said my father, thank you so much, man, and paid him a lot of money properly according to his heart, cause he found out that I wasn't dead.

"Some ladies and a gentleman will ask you about this boy too, please tell them what you've told me that he is alive, is far, and will return home. I mean you have to say what you have already said to me". What is curious is that the wizard for the second time saw me in the mirror and this was not a lie. Because my father often came by to ask and pay him. Being paid very well, one day the man let my father to look in his old dirty mirrors. There were days when they could see me and others when they couldn't. Another very important and interesting thing my father caught my

attention was that all the disappearances of men in our family were related to the occurrence of great historical events. Historical events, the First World War and the Reunification of the Country, ended well, and maybe that's why our return was possible. He wondered if that esoteric occult power was linked to a specific geographical area or a specific people. Both the War of Independence in 1877, when my father disappeared and the war in 1916, was finished with benefits for the Romanian country, now united in a whole body, no longer chopped, stretching as wide as its natural frontiers were on earth.

*

But these were questions on which my mind had to focus and linger for a long time. What was clear for me was the likeness of the world of bright selves in which my soul had taken part and the world of ideas of Plato, because his world has eternal life, since the great philosopher was convinced of it. And the information that the student of Socrates received, came from an ancestor that had lived long before him. Another finding that was required logically was that both the information about the world of ideas and atoms were received by them, by Plato, by the physicist and philosopher Democritus, through secret paths, through the channels of secret societies of their time, and from sources that were many thousands of years before them. The problem was the origin of information and the location of the sources. Especially if the sources that conveyed the information produced an accurate, complete transmission... It is clear that both kinds of knowledge, that is, on one side the world was composed of atoms which normally can be

detected by no human mind and ordinary people cannot believe it and, on the other side that there is in time and above us another civilization that has another nature, another function, so both kinds of information, I say, came from the same source, which normally must be the Rational Civilization above us. But why these two pieces of information circulated on different tracks, and not as an overall picture? But finally, these were matters for which my mind started on the difficult road of meditation and search to reveal them since then, as it is humanly possible to know this world and its mysteries by a poor human being.

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That day I decided to think better of earthly things, to enjoy that I was with my family, to enjoy a glass of wine... Slowly-slowly, I had to be myself again, to go back to merchant problems, especially that in the meantime, due to war, our wealth didn't increase much, if not lower. Now, after the great war of reunification of the nation, it appeared a good opportunity to increase trade and the number of vessels we had. They needed me especially now, when my father and my father-in-law had grown old and weak.

*

Eventually, as you can imagine of course, everywhere in Brăila borough it was rumored about my strange return, after twelve years I had been almost forgotten, if not forgotten altogether. For I must say that my disappearance, meaning my death, aroused some curiosity in our town, compassion, and sensation. Then slowly I had been forgotten. Who

remembered me, perhaps only those who had had very close relationships with our family? Otherwise, for some people, I have no longer existed for many years.

The first week after everybody found out, they all visited me, close or more distant relatives... I almost shed tears when I saw the joy and piety of my in-laws when they heard the good news of my return. And especially when they saw me in the flesh and touched me with their hands...

March brought with it an early spring. I missed the green endless field, the motherly horizon that dropped in my soul a boundless longing for something unknown. I went out for a walk with Mary Julia, only two of us. After a few days, we began really to become friends and feel good together, to get used to each other... She was a nice well-bred girl... Although I did not know if she is mine, too, or she's only of Julia Alexandrovna, whom she looked exactly like, and of Calliope, as she bore the girl, meaning a human being brought into the world by two women, had increasingly more impression that I found myself in her, that she is very close to my soul...

The news that I got back alive, after so long, had spread all over Wallachia, if not everywhere in the Balkan world, up to Istanbul. The version told me was deformed, distorted, rebuilt, and substantiated in many ways... Within one month I became a legendary man, and my fame was spread as carried by the wind. I should say that this thing was useful for me, because working with my father in his offices, the fame of Vizantidis Company now became well known and respected. I remember very well that people whom I talked to and entered the business with, looked at me with great respect, with an air of awe and love. It was a scene that I was particularly impressed by. In our office was presented a woman who wasn't in her first youth. She wasn't in a bad

condition but I doubt she could read. She asked me to let her touch me and sit by me for a few minutes, because God had not given her the grace of giving birth, and she hoped that by touching me, a miracle could happen, that God would help her womb bear fruit a baby. I confess that I felt embarrassed, but no matter how I tried to convince her that she might be very disappointed because my body had not acquired the miraculous quality of healing, it was no way to persuade her... I did my best to look like a normal, usual man, as natural as possible, and not to draw attention to myself by anything...

Businesses began to run as well as possible, especially after I returned home. Our company now visibly thrives. My parents and in-laws were very happy with our situation... What they wanted was for us to have at least one child, a boy, which happened soon after. Another factor started to make me exceedingly anxious, and no matter how I tried to avoid or forget it, it was impossible... The beautiful image of Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, as she was in the moment when I went to ask her hand, or as I saw her smiling, but also a certain sublimated image, abstract and strange with a halo of light. I could not get rid of all these images... Maybe it was the fact that I always saw Maria Julia who, as I said, looked exactly like her... But it must have been something else, maybe a simple psychological fact, because I always felt her around me. As her soul was in the air around me, somewhere under the ceiling when I was at the office or at home. For forgetting her, I went out walking through the town, but the same thing happened, as it was a spirit that went over my shoulder, with me, looking at me with unspeakable tenderness...

By the end of March, when spring was already installed in the Danube valley and in the meadow of Brăila, because

you could feel deeply the smell of marsh and grass tickling your nostrils, I got the idea to go to look for Ilia, the beautiful gypsy girl with whom I was married by Iancu Delamare, who bewitched my eyes and heart once... How would she look like, what would she have thought when she saw and heard that I was gone? I walked through the streets known since my childhood... my steps now knew the road very well. But I was very surprised and saddened when I came to the street that once was of the Gypsies. A dirty road was full of thistles, papers, rags and puddles, many dead dogs.

The street I was walking now did not resemble at all what once had been the famous world of Gypsy band captains. I found myself in a world totally new. The street was widened and high pavements had been cut, beautifully paved. On both sides of the street two rows of poplars rose, which must have been planted about ten years ago, because now they looked proud as two elongated strands lost in the air. I stood still and I watched them turning my head. They had grown beautifully, floating with their towering quiet peaks above the roofs of tile and sheet of high houses on the former Gypsy homes, long like stables. I looked around and along the street. Instead of the low adobe hovels of Gypsy booths, villas, and shops were built, painted garishly, on both sides of the street... Somewhere in front it was heard the sawmill of a carpenter workshop, or whatever it was...

My heart was pounding, why wouldn't I confess, I was excited somewhat painfully, full of melancholy... I turned once again to convince myself that I was not on the wrong street... I heeded the houses I knew and the streets still kept as before... slowly, I realized something much deeper, which I had not been able to infer from the beginning... lately I had read many books and articles about the Balkan War of 1913, about the Great war of Reunification of the

whole nation, as it was called in books, so I began to have an objective perspective on the passage of time and on the social transformations which had been occurred... But what I saw here was something far beyond these historical issues, something deeper and more painful. The postwar world was not the same as the one I had known in my youth. It changed something very deep and I could not figure out what. The light, the sounds floating through the air, the human expression on the human faces, the projection of the things, hardly noticeable, only intuited by the soul, or the kind of people walking intimately... All these told me that had happened something very deep and painful.

The world I knew was a world full of happiness, that was it, you could notice it, you could see happiness in things, in sunlight, in the way people used to move or keep their head, to talk and think... Happiness. It was a carefree world, given to pleasures. Existing in time with serenity, with no care. It was a free world.

The world in which I began to wake up now, was a sober cool world, always driven by something... Why? Perhaps the winds of war, maybe the mountains of the dead, whose souls roamed over the earth finding no peace... I asked someone if they knew where the Gypsies went and settled. The man looked at me as if I was a Martian who came from another planet. I returned home with my soul faded and clouded with sadness. I tried to remember the beautiful and crazy Ilia. But the more I wanted it, to see her cheek contour, and her fiery eyes of gypsy made for love, the other face, of the unique Yulia Alexandrovna persisted and got brighter in my mind more ardently... Slowly I became enamored of a dead person, with a face that only existed in my mind. The night I dreamt her beautiful and alive, smiling. As she came closer to an alley, I could see her smile, her

vivid and concrete lips, as red as cherries... On the one hand, I thought that this is natural because as a man I was in the heyday of my youth. My body was young and vigorous as a teenager of eighteen. It was natural for me to fall in love, just henceforth the deep saps of my body began teeming.

I was missing her. The one who was the great pain of my youth, the beautiful Julia Alexandrovna, who had now been dead for twelve years... I didn't like this... Absorbed by things, I delayed paying a visit to my old friend, the famous lancu Delamare, about whom I had never heard anything... Once when I asked my father about him, he seemed to avoid the question and replied, but he made me more confused than enlightened me... More things were told me by my mother, but she didn't know much about him. I looked for him at the court, where I knew that once he served as a lawyer, but I didn't find him... The official I spoke to told me that he moved out of town, and retired to his estate, where he has a mansion. If I have patience, he can search a register where he can be found, because it is preserved the old paper with the name of the estate... Of course I awaited and meanwhile in my mind there were all sorts of associations.

I asked him to tell me what had happened to him, but I soon realized that the man is not happy to speak to me. The very next day we took a horse and I rode to Nisipi property. Up to the Tutovei hills, all towards the north. Wherever I went, I met people plowing, plowmen who seemed rather like statues on hills. In the air persisted a drowsy or rather bewildering smell of spring, of grass replete with saps and warm moist soil, flies and bees buzzed and it was a sweet light as if from the heaven honey would be drained so that

you wanted to go horseback like a mad, keep on going and never stop.

Once I'd felt this in my youth, about twenty years ago. Springtime at dawn, when flies and bees start to buzz, and bitter juices bubble in roots and herbs, I just think it is so in the limbs and labyrinths of the flesh, of the being, I think the hormonal saps and effluvia start to boil, and this is seen in the human psyche and consciousness as a kind of longing for death. To get lost and still scattered in the air, a kind of a very bitter nostalgia of mists, and of bottom of the world. This journey over hills and through valleys, on forest edges, and along waters made me well. I've refreshed a bit, I remembered that the human root is here, at the bottom of the world, which is the land of the peasant. Towards evening, shortly before sunset, I arrived, asking the farmers which was the right road to the property where now Iancu Delamare retired. The famous Iancu Delamare, because, in my mind, he remained great and famous, and in my heart, I saw him handsome and happy.

An old man, who must have been his most faithful servant, opened the gates. The road was muddy, the horse legs sank in mud up to the knees... I crossed the courtyard of the mansion, which at first glance appeared old and shabby. The large wild court where some old broken carts could be seen, thrown pointless, illustrated the ruin of the estate that now Iancu managed. We climbed the rotting wood stairs, loosed from nails.

I arrived in the large verandah, from where you could see the wide valley with a trickle of water flowing, then the hills, bare or covered with vineyard. I entered the house waiting to find a living being or someone to meet me, especially since I cried several times by name. A fat woman met me, with red cheeks, oily, wearing a thick dirty sheepskin, came from the

side door... She asked me who I was, staring at me incredulously. She said that she was lancu's wife and invited me into another room. Here I found lancu.

I must say that I remained petrified on the threshold when I opened the door and my eyes found him. I saw his head projected on the window with a newspaper placed on it. Who had it put there and since when was it there? I recognized him from the first moment, although I found it very hard to believe that he was. He was thin, with short hair, I think rather it no longer grew, unshaven with a short downy beard. I cried him, more unconsciously, being unable not to wonder myself and be amazed by the condition I found him in.

"lanculeeee!" I heard my stabbed voice. He turned his head as if he had broken his neck... He did not recognize me and stayed with a dull look and his eyes lost in the doorway. I came closer and hugged him, because now I became lucid and more confident... His chin and hands were trembling, he made an effort to remember me, but he couldn't. I told him who I was, I told him briefly what happened to me, the story my father had told me... He started flashing his eyes and often raising his hand, staring at me and striving his eyes as the blind do.

I suddenly realized that of course, a great tragedy happened to him, but what exactly had happened, I could not deduce nor imagine. And it would have been really beyond the imagination of any man and of any human mind to fancy that such feminine foolishness can reach heights of pride and love... lancu married the daughter of Baldovin squire, Zamfira, who dealt with trade for several years in Brăila harbor. I had seen the one who was destined by fate to be his wife, better she never would have been, because lancu would have avoided the terrible shame that happened to

him. Once I went with lancu and some gypsy musicians to sing under her windows, when I was about to die, and lancu had given Ilia to me, the girl with whom he had fallen in love, but she had not wanted him, because he had had no royal blood in his veins. After meeting Ilia, lancu fell in love with the daughter of Baldovin squire, whom I had seen how beautiful she was when we sang for her with the musician band under her window, and I had climbed in her room with him... But he entangled with her for another reason, because she had large estates, and he had seen her mighty hand, her strong arm and she knew to extract money and fruitage from her estate like from a sponge... He had to pay huge debts because he had bought Ilia from Gypsies for me. He also liked the girl of Baldovin's squire, she was a robust, well-built, and beautiful woman, with only magic and charms... And for a few years their marriage had gone well, lancu had business with cereals and won the most complicated processes in the old court of Brăila.

Their happiness lasted several years. lancu did not tipple in pubs, because he feasted at home now or at his friends, businessmen, or bar colleagues... At the bar, he was a colleague of a Polish lawyer, Victor Lunacevski, a good lawyer, with a mind and a tongue that lit the worst hearts and minds. Victor Lunacevski had studied in Vienna and Lvov... He spent several years in Venice and lived for several years doing business in Istanbul. For some time he settled in the port of Brăila, dealing with law and medicine sometimes, but more with trade.

Lunacevski knew about sixteen languages, that's why he was famous throughout Europe, and this lawyer had a wife, Polish too as him, the daughter of a Polish noble family, as beautiful as a tulip and a lily when you put them at the window. The men had befriended each other, the ladies,

too, they visited each other, what's more, nobody was best friends like them... Had it remained so it would have been all right, but it happened that Iania Lunacevski became enamored of Iancu..

She told him, how she could have told it. *"Well, Iancu, can't you see that I'm in love with you, my heart burns inside me, I feel so much attracted by you that I can't bear anymore and I can't show you, I'm over head and ears in love with you, and you, you pretend not to see?"* Iancu had seen, but when he married the girl of Baldovin's landlord he made an oath that he would give up the women. Not musicians and alcohol if he would spend with his wife.

And Iania was melting day by day longing for Iancu, the man who once had been so famous and handsome that he loved all the women in Brăila, breaking their hearts and souls. She kept praying on her knees but he did not react. And one day, when she caught the right moment, she trapped him. She sent him a note as if it was from his wife, writing that that night she was waiting for him at the Lunacevski family home, because she wasn't feeling well, and he was asked to come and sleep there. So they used to do, since they hobnobbed together, to spend the night and sleep there. When Iancu came later, the servant showed him the room in which to sleep, because that was the room where his wife was waiting for him. And in that room and that bed there was nobody else but Iania Lunacevski, the beautiful Iania, who was thought to be of a fabulous beauty to Odessa, and to Vienna... And after they made love, Iania lit the lamp.

That is what I found out later, after Iancu came back to life, exactly from his mouth. Iania begged him on her bended knees to forgive her, she did it because she could not bear so much love. Indeed, in recent years the Polish wife withered like a flower burned by sun... *"Now that you've*

broken your oath, said Iania, I swear upon my holiest thing that I'll be your good and faithful mistress and my heart won't know other lover than you... Let's remain friends so that neither my husband nor your wife will know until we die, yes, it is my desire to be mine, because otherwise I die for your longing"... Iancu was shaking with anger and pain, and he did not want to...

He went home and closed inside him, kept silent and did not tell anyone. For two weeks he didn't wake from drinking. He drank and was as silent as the dark tomb. A year later, when Polish Iania gave birth to a child, she called him and said:

"Here's your son, Iancu, this is yours, you have to know it for certain because my husband is barren, but he doesn't know it, and I can't make children with him forever and ever, that's why he was in the capitals of Europe, for finding famous doctors, so we could have kids... Now as I made this child, please be at least a bit grateful to me and accept to be my lover. And no one will know about us." Iancu didn't want it again. She didn't give up cause she loved him worse than a crazy bitch and went to somebody, nobody knows whom, and cast spells upon him... Soon after Iancu was lovesick of beautiful Iania, who delighted him with her charms and attracted his eyes with her finery, famous hairstyles and trendy clothes brought even from Vienna and Leipzig or from Paris...

Iancu's wife begins to get fat and is barren. Iancu was very angry with her for it and at this time inside him grew his love for the other woman, who, more educated, more stylish, more cunning, more outgoing, and more intelligent, knew how to catch her lover better in her nets... Once, when they were alone, supposedly she would have said to him:

"Iancule, my baby and my beloved, dearest like eye light, the light of my eyes, my dear and crazy treasure, I know

what love is and its fire burning you up to ashes because I have been loving you like crazy. You're lovesick now and would love me like fire and like a maiden loving for the first time, but you are proud and, worse, you're afraid of what you keep inside you and you don't want to tell". And she hugged and fondled him, kissed him, so he couldn't bear it and lost his control... And so the beautiful Iania ensnared him again...

Soon after he fell on his knees, killed by her love and longing for her, and confessed that he loved her... When she enmeshed him and was sure of his love, she did her best to bring him into the state of losing his mind... They made love in an orchard in the back of the yard at night with moonlight, in the glade full of flowers, on the soft and fragrant blanket. Or in their big garden, in the park in the back garden, among bushes of lilac and cloves, peonies, roses, and pubescent oaks, or in the beds of lilies as tall as a man, like crazies. And because they no longer feared now, some rumors were widely spread about them. Iania, cunning and smart, heard, waited to give birth to the second child, whom he made with Iancu too, and then found a secret room somewhere. Meanwhile at Iania came one of her sisters. Perhaps more to help her in the house, as now she had to raise two boys, or perhaps because the two sisters had not seen for a long time.

Iania's sister was named Tatiana, and this sister of Iania was of a diabolical beauty... Iania's sister fell in love with Iancu, the beautiful and famous Iancu Delamare. Once she might follow them, or I haven't the slightest idea how she found out where they met, if not her sister confessed her crazy love to her lover. And when she saw it and understood, Tatiana, Iania's younger sister, would have caught Iancu alone once and admitted that she was in love

with him and that she suffered and desired him, and if he didn't want to quench the fire of her heart, she swore on the Gospel that she would tell Iania's husband and his wife about his sin, but she didn't want to do this evil. Seeing himself trapped in trouble and thinking about what his wife could say, and what scandal would arise, what else could he do? Rather than find out the lawyer, Iania's husband, and Zamfira, his wife, he agreed to secretly love Iania's sister, especially because she was very beautiful.

That was until the day when Iania comprehended that her sister's belly grows. He talked to her tactfully asking who was the one she met and got pregnant with, but she could not draw anything from her. Then she puts Tatiana's hand on the door hinges, this was the only way to know everything: who was the child's father, who she met and made love with, and who was guilty of this. Moreover, Tatiana confessed that she was to blame, not Iancu, not to take revenge on him, but the punishment be upon her. *"Look what we do"*, said Iania to her sister, and well she thought, *"or I kill you or I take you to a doctor and abort the pregnancy and I send you home to Lvov"*. It says Tatiana wouldn't want to leave for anything, threatening that she would suicide. Or better to leave her, her sister, that is Iania, because she, Tatiana, could not give up Iancu for all the world. She'd better kill herself, but before that, she would destroy her sister, Iania, for she would tell her husband about her love for Iancu. *"Well"*, said Iania with her lips and jaw tense, *"then I kill you...!"* and even she wanted to kill her, to cut her through with a knife.

When saw Tatiana, Iania's younger sister, who now passed through the horror of death, that her crazy sister lost her mind and was not kidding, she accepted. And so they did. Iania took her sister secretly to a doctor, aborted the

pregnancy and when she put on feet, she packed her bags and with a paid servant sent Tatiana into their land in Poland, at home. Then she called Iancu to make love. And after making love, took his head to her breast and said, weeping: *"Iancu, my darling, I loved like the apple of my eye, and I would have been able to kill for you, but what you have done to me, I can't forget. It breaks my heart to cry that I lose you, but until you suffer as I've been suffering, I won't leave you in peace"* Iancu changed colors, fell to his knees, and confessed all, that what happened was not his fault. Tatiana had told her the same.

"I know you're not to blame", said Iania later biting her lip, tears streaming down her face, *"that she, stupid and wretched, was the one who wanted you and drew you in a trap, but you had not to lose me and sell me like that... Now we have to separate us... Look"*, she says, *"now I will punish you, and if you don't obey me, I swear with hand on the Gospel, and even the crazy Iania swore, I will tell all to my friend, that is your wife, and the news about us will be well known as a bad shilling, about what we did and our love. And I'll tell who is the father of my children"*. Iania was talking and crying, poor little wretch. Iancu tried to appease her, in his knees he begged her to calm down and be quiet, but nothing, he had no one to talk to.

What was the punishment given by the beautiful Iania Lunacevski? She knew that a friend of hers, Esmeralda Delciurescu, a little older than her, was secretly and madly in love with Iancu and sighs for years after him... *"I force you to be the lover of Mrs. Esmeralda, Iancu... That's all. Then I'll see what punishment I'll give you when I think that I avenged on you enough, to hurt your soul as my soul hurt me, then I'll forgive you... I'll take my husband, who is a good man, and we'll return to our country, because we have*

gathered some money and fortune. Or if I desired you, I would make my lust and would live on as lovers. Until my anger passes, and the wound of my soul heals. But please listen to me well, otherwise, how I am now, like a crazy bitch mad with grief and love, it will be woe betide us”.

What was in Iancu's soul at that moment, I don't know, I just know that he was black in his face and didn't protest and didn't raise his head from the ground. As I know, he only groaned and gave a slap on his temple. “Now go”, Iania said, *“I love you and I want you like crazy, but until you fulfill my lust, I can't forgive you. Go, be quiet and obey me, and maybe God will have mercy on us!”*

Esmeralda Delciurescu had been a beautiful girl in her youth, one of the greatest beauties of Brăila before the war... Daughter of a general, having a good dowry, consisting of large estates and buildings, she has been requested in marriage by judge Gregory Delciurescu, an honorable man, educated in law with a doctoral degree in Paris, very common in those times. He was no longer in his prime when he married, so that next to him, the beautiful Esmeralda looked like a lily bud, much younger, like his daughter... Iania began to drop good words about him, to speak in his favor, as the saying goes, and as soon as she met her girlfriend, she started talking about Iancu Delamare, that he felt love for her, that she heard him sigh, that he would like to court her, but didn't dare. That he told her how he dreamt Esmeralda, dressed in white on a lake shore, full of white lotuses. That was enough for the beautiful Esmeralda, her heart which yearned for long after Iancu, has ignited even more. So Esmeralda began to sigh, and her heart was beating like crazy and she couldn't put him out of her mind. And going like this, crazy Iania brought the poor woman to the brink of insanity.

And when she confessed, bedridden, suffering from love, that she loves lancu and her disease got from this, what do you think that the villain Iania Lunacevski did? He took from the poor woman fallen in love sickness 50 gold coins the old ones before the war in 77, money which was a fortune at the time, swearing that she was going to give her lancu and bring him to her bed, with his head bowed and knees bent, as dove comes to eat from the pigeon's palm. And so she brought him, for she knew lancu's weakness, and he listened to her exactly, very well knowing that she was crazy, and with madmen, don't mess. lancu had to listen to the viper, on the contrary it would have been bad for both of them. He thought more of the sufferings of judge Delciurescu, and he felt sorry more for him and for his wife than for him and for the crazy Iania.

What great love was sometime between the famous and beautiful lancu Delamare and the beautiful and now wilted Esmeralda, wife of judge Delciurescu... Because love is like a curse, you don't know where it comes from and when it strikes, it doesn't choose. Esmeralda's friends wondered how she had recovered from the disease and how she suddenly flowered, being happy and red cheeks and how he had become so beautiful. Because those years were the most beautiful ones, the richest in love, and full of luck and happiness in her life.

The truth is that she flourished and rejuvenated as a lotus flower and never had been seen such a miracle... Those who knew her before, could not believe their eyes. Now lancu started to be fond of her, several years passed since he slipped in mistakes and he was tormented by his loves. For both Esmeralda and Iania, who also flourished. What was strange was that now he loved them both, the beautiful and crazy Iania and the gentle and delicate Esmeralda.

During this time, the beautiful Iania enjoyed Iancu when she lusted and didn't seem to regret at all that her girlfriend flourished and looked to be young again. And Iancu, seeing that his loves are mysterious, and seeming his life beautiful again, like in old times, no longer feared the wrath of the curse that could fall upon him because he had broken the oath.

And again I say, maybe things would have ended well and his love for the two women was still blooming, if the crazy and beautiful Polish woman wouldn't have gone further in her madness. As she lured and brought Esmeralda Delciurescu to the brink of insanity, and so she did with Marghiolița Beldiman the wife of General Iancu Beldiman, also a prominent man of the town, the offspring of an old and glorious family.

With the general's wife was worse, as happens with women who haven't experienced their love all in good time, and came across blaze love in old age. Especially the general's wife had a pure and noble soul, but she wasn't lucky enough to meet love when she was a young girl with charms and the yeast of flesh bubbles in the young hot blood... Crazy Iania Lunacevski took no more no less than one million lei, so she left the poor woman in debt and bankrupt. And so she did, with cunning as foxes, as he broke Esmeralda's heart. She suggested that Iancu is dead for her, sighing day and night and that he would be happy if she let him kiss her feet. And this time the heart of the poor general's wife began to smolder until it came across edges and broke out the blaze of love.

At that time you could buy large estates, factories, and mills with a million lei, the sum taken by beautiful Iania from delicate Marghiolița Beldiman, to bring the handsome Iancu Delamare to her feet. You could become an important man

with this money... Marghioala Beldiman, the general's wife, could be seen painted and decked, with multicolored, foolish, youthful skirts and dresses. Although she was almost fifty years old, the poor woman was in her second childhood, considering herself young and beautiful, as if she had been 18... People of rank in Brăila, who all day were wasting their lives with coffees, chibouks, and gossip, talking only of her, of Maghiolița, rumored and clamored and wondered curiously who could be the handsome single man that twisted the minds of the poor general's wife? Despite they strove to learn, especially the curious ladies who held salons and tea only to have that gossip, and however they paid servants to spy, they couldn't find out anything.

And lunatic Iania had a good friend, the daughter of a doctor, her doctor, Mrs. Ianca Staroveanu, whose daughter barely leaps into fifteen to sixteen years. She had seen at parties that the girl's sight had fallen on Iancu Delamare, and then she began to develop a diabolical plan. She always deceived the girl saying her lies about Iancu, that he was nuts on her, how handsome he was, that a great love could be born between them. One day she called her at home to guess her luck, her fate in cards, to stir up and inflame her heart, spellbinding her so that she started to dream of the handsome philanderer Iancu day and night. And this time she cast spells over both of them and when she felt it was the right time, she put the knife to Iancu's throat.

"Iancu", she says, "I want you to do me the pleasure of taking the virginity of Voichița Staroveanu, to enjoy her body and teach her to love, and then you leave her to me". Iancu glared at her, but when he saw her tight lips and the wickedness in her eyes, he said nothing. And so things happened, she called the girl to her house secretly and

made them meet. And while lancu turned lanca Stavoreanu's daughter into a woman from a virgin, lania Lunacevski was looking through a curtain and enjoyed that scene. The white young beautiful bodies of Vochița and lancu... Then, after the girl went home, lania stopped lancu and made love with him. She covered him with kisses and caressing, and kept saying my darling, my honey. She devoured him with her eyes, absolutely insane with love... lania, incomparably beautiful Polish, has to have done other magic because lancu obeyed her as the child obeys his mother. lancu was in her hands and he was over head and ears in love.

After a while, it was the third day, when they met alone, they drank and spent together. Beautiful lania sat on his lap, giving sweet kisses, her lips redder than a strawberry, with her white arms around the man's neck.

"lancu", said lania stroking his temple, "you're as sweet as the nightingale's milk and as the sun in the sky, and I immensely love you... I want you to do me one more pleasure, but if you don't obey me, I swear on iron and the Bible that I'll tell all to my husband and your wife, I'll tell everyone what's our relation and how we made love. And who are your paramours and how have you loved the women given to you by me? lancu, I lost my mind, I'm crazy, and it is only you who made me lose my mind, obey me and do all that I ask you, and you'll have what no mortal has ever had in this world".

And lania's tears flowed down her cheeks like big beads. *"Here's what you have to do", says lania, kissing and biting his lower lip with her teeth. "That's tough", she says, "but I want you to prove you are a real man. Then I'll give you the chance to love only young girls like Hyacinth and beautiful sweet women like peonies. But this, what I ask you now, I*

need to fulfill for me". lancu looked at her foolishly, knowing what he expected... "Look, this is the woman", says lania, "who I ask you to make love with, my girlfriend, Mrs. Staroveanu. Don't say no, because lanca was an important woman in her life and she likes you, she is devoured by this lust, since she had no luck in love and hasn't been fulfilled in love.. We'll meet in secret at me"... Then lancu gnashed his teeth and said he couldn't do it. "What you ask me, I can't do it, lania. Look what I can". And he took her in his arms, bit her lips kissed her shoulders and breasts, and loved her with lust until he got tired of her. She moaned and cried, clutching him to her chest, and digging her teeth into the tender flesh of man...

"I'll love you until we both die, one in the arms of the other, lania", he moaned. "Bitch, you brought me to the point that I mock mother and daughter! Well, lania, although I love you as the apple of my eye, and my body burns when I am with you losing my mind, I won't fulfill this craving. And unless you want, from now you won't see me". And lancu started to get dressed and leave.

She jumped, as nude as she was, in front of the door... "lancu", she said, her eyes glowing in her head like crazy, "don't do this folly, as what I give you to love is not to be rejected. There are women with charms, unloved, who had no lovers in their lives, and now their flesh burns on them. And I don't ask you to pull the yoke but to caress delicate breaths as white as snow and kiss sweet lips. Don't be stupid, lancu, listen to me", begged lania kneeling before him, that lancu felt pity for her. "lancu", she whispered and moaned, "don't do this foolishness. You have only one trial to make. And the rest will be happy... If you aren't obedient, I say to everybody, and imagine then what a mess will be in this stink town, hearing that the wife of such and such

advocate has lived with lancu, the philanderer of Brăila. What will your paramours say, the others whom you have loved so far, and what their husbands will say? So I say, listen to me this time, I don't want to harm you"...

Finally, lancu accepted it. And she made them meet at her house, lancu and lanca Staroveanu, a woman still in power, with charms, with flesh as white as snow, shivering, her blood boiling in her veins. And lancu began to fondle her and say sweet words as he knew because he wasn't healthy at all in those moments. He seemed possessed. And when he saw the plump naked lanca Staroveanu, he began to kiss her white snow shoulders and hard full breasts and then they made love like lunatics, as if they were in their early youth. And she, crazy and beautiful lania, stood and looked through the curtain how they were making love and delighting each other, but she couldn't take her eyes off them. After lanca Staroveanu left, coming out of the back gate of the garden, lania wanted to stop lancu from loving her again. But lancu remained closed himself and sad. The woman didn't know how to comfort and reconcile him, giving him kisses and swearing that she loved him like crazy. lancu went home when it was dark and was drunk for a week. And when he awoke from that long and difficult drunkenness, he called Gypsies, as he did once, to sing and he had a party for two weeks with his wife, that they neither got out of the house nor wanted to see the sun or a human face.

But one night, when he was awake, his desolate soul and eyes on the ceiling, he saw lania Lunacevski before his eyes. Then he realized that he loved her like a crazy, and could never get free from her phantasm. The days passed and now awakened, lancu's longing for lania enflamed deeper into him, and he was crazy about her. And again started to drink, drinking alone, his heart much bitter than

tar. But he quickly awakened from this drunkenness. One day, when his wife was out, he found Iania, more beautiful than ever, laughing crazy with her white beautiful teeth, rosy-cheeked and fluffy like a girl, her ardent eyes as if they were painted having golden thread eyelashes. And she mocked and looked at him ready to eat him up. Then she was very silent with her tight lips and looked at him how he was watching her dizzily.

“Iancu”, she said, “I know you love me and it’s only me who can heal your heart... Before we made love for the first time when I lay sick with longing for you, I had been to the monastery and cursed you. To die from longing for me, and your eyes drain in your head as in winter time drops of water drain on the eaves, Iancu, since so much I tormented myself longing for you, and you didn’t care about me”... And Iancu clenched his teeth and kept silent, and the more he saw her so beautiful, she seemed much more beautiful. “And nights I fry myself after you, Iancu said crazy Iania, that I can’t close my eyes, and it’s only you I dream. I expect these days to come and I kneel before me, to beg for my love, as I begged for yours. And kiss my feet and the tip of my slippers. And then I want to make love madly, how only we have ever loved in this life. As no other lovers like us have ever existed”.

And so it happened since the crazy woman cast spells on him. He couldn’t bear the torture of love and the man went and fell to his knees, and he kissed her feet and her slippers tip, as she said. And he begged for her love... And she took him in her arms like a child, and kissed and caressed him.

“Iancu, Iancu, my sweetie”, she said crying, “man as tall as a fir tree, and face like a sunflower, I love you, but we don’t make love now, to increase more your longing for me. Neither will I destroy you, as you wished to destroy me, but

I'll do it when you no longer obey me and start going over fields like mad. I don't let you go forasmuch I love you and I have a crazy longing for something, but I don't know for what. Only at night I see it with open eyes and dream it in broad daylight, in sunshine. It calls me somewhere and I don't know from where, or what's the matter with me... For a while every night I dream of a sweet face, as if it's yours, as if it's an angel image that lights above me and descends from the sky... I talk to it and it looks like you, and it's nicer than a childish face, and brighter than the moonlight. It is a longing and a yearning for it, and in my body, I feel the crazy embers of love. And I would appease it with you, but it's not enough, and there are no others with whom I could quench it, but only with this love and this deep hate that I feel for this world and for the female flesh and body. Just listen to me and we'll get rid of this spell and curse, and I'll forgive you, because you're a good soul and I love you. Yes, you must have only a little patience and trust me." He caressed and kissed him and her tears fell down her cheek looking at him with rapture. "A year from now I'll give you only beautiful maidens and young beautiful wives of officers, doctors and lawyers, merchants and rich people, to enjoy them and love them as you like. All the female cream of the world and I'll take you to Vienna and cover you with gifts and riches, and there we'll both make love madly until we are exhausted."

And so did crazy Iania Lunacevski, who became more beautiful insomuch that Iancu lost his mind. He lured him into a rented house and there he made him meet only virgins and beautiful young women. It was only philandering, only kissing and embracing what Iancu was experiencing, and he liked it a lot, since his life passed like a dream life extremely sweet, and Iania bewitched both Iancu and his mistresses, of whom he didn't get tired. Big fortunes were

gathered in the Polish chests, and no one knew anything and could imagine such a great folly in the world... And lancu lost his mind as a man who goes downhill in the world and forgets what's up with him and from where he left... His face brightened and became more beautiful, his snow-white teeth smiled all the time, and his eyes burned with love. He was like a demon and so handsome that his eyes were shining in the head, he was all smiles and laughter only, that smile of his, which made him famous and lit the world some miles around when he smiled... The evil Iania Lunacevski also made another deed that comes to shake the human mind, how much malice and cynicism can fit in a woman's desires. She kept trying to make her husband, the lawyer who astounded the world with how many languages he knew, meet lancu's wife, the daughter of Boyar Baldovin, who meanwhile got fat and ugly, all the time working hard, dealing with outbuildings and assets, keeping records and accounts, much worse than a bailiff. One day at a party, after she put something in wine, and gave lancu to another mistress, she made her husband and lancu's wife sleep in the same bed, both naked, In the morning when they woke up with headaches and dizzy of spells put in their drink, they didn't know what world they are in. As it was by chance, Iania entered their room and found them naked, staring at each other in horror. Iania pretended scared and screamed. The two both were frightened, too, and looked staring at each other not being able to believe their eyes when they saw so and didn't know how to run and cover and hide their nakedness faster. Iania pretended to be angry for a few days, being miffed without speaking with her husband, and she forgave them both, saying that she didn't believe that they lived together and she forgave but never happen again, because otherwise she would take lancu and flee in the world. She wanted to manipulate and blackmail them,

something foolish that ultimately neither her husband nor Baldovin's daughter wouldn't have known of her and lancu's madness.

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Next spring Iania Lunacevski left with a reliable man to buy estates in Poland, in Lvov region, her native place. And they bought many estates because they could, once she had piles of money. Iania bought expensive furs jewelry and tooling that had never been seen even in the royal courts and turned incognito from Poland. Once she arrived in the country, she bought other estates including a mansion, known only to her, in the mountains toward Buzău... She turned back and nobody knew where she went again. Then in the early summer, she said she was leaving to a resort, and took with her the daughter of Dr. Staroveanu and three virgins of high society, all girls of honorable people. They prepared a kind of trip or travel to the mountains... She asked lancu to tell the world that he would go to see a doctor in Bucharest, but in fact, they took him with them... They went to this mansion in the mountains, stayed there and started to have endless party. All the young girls caressed and kissed lancu, they danced holding him tightly, on his knees, and hung on his neck laughing like being possessed. And lancu was their beloved, crazy with love like they were, losing their minds of pleasures. I think they all lost their minds and no one knew what was happening. They were happy and mad, lancu and women too, as if they had forgotten of all the worries of the world. One evening, a big moon as a cartwheel had risen, purple, covering the world, forests, hills, valleys, rivers, and peaks with gold lace, pouring into their souls so much longing and magic that you

felt go crazy and never wanted to stop. On these crazy nights, the hearts explode in the foals, unbelievably mares sing like nightingales, and stallions ride a hundred miles away. Then Iania called them all, and they went up the hill to reach the top of the mountain. It was a slope with rare beeches as thick as fountains or fir from place to place. The moon cascaded its poisoned spell over the valleys and over the endless woods. Iania held their hands and gently caressed them all, meaning lancu, the girls, and other young women.

Then she proposed to them to play love and be happy. And they got undressed and remained naked and lancu did the same, because Iania, who looked at him with exaltation, asked him to do so. The game was that virgins had to run up the hillside nudely in the moonlight, and it was a night of death and mystery like in oriental tales. They were all playing and kissing lancu, and he held them in his arms, kissing and caressing them. And they were alone in those desert valleys and mountains, under the moonlight that was pouring its icy light over the world. Iania proposed the girls gallop up the hill, running like deer, and him to remain downhill and wait until they depart, and a bit later to follow them, chasing them and trying to catch them like a male deer or like a wolf, and the one who will be caught, had to be his, to make his pleasure with her and enjoy her as long as he wanted under the brightened sky, under the icon of moon that filled the world with enchanting flames of mysteries. The condition was that he had to catch them all, and at dawn, would gather at home, at the cottage, rejoicing and resting all day. And the virgins and young women began the game, completely naked, gilded by moonlight, more beautiful than the goddesses, with heavy silver breasts trembling slightly, or bouncing, running through old rare

beeches or by strawberry and ferns glades, shining like daylight. Their hair was waving on their shoulders and their thigh line was loaded by a light like honey glittering in the moonlight. They were running all giggling like deer or like wicked fairies, and he, with the beautiful young body, running after them, like a male deer, stumbling now and then, but jumping nimbly and agilely, yet powerful, more beautiful than an Ephebus, following one of them, approaching her, ready to catch her when another girl crossed his path.

The more they were climbing, they seemed to be some gorgeous phantasms, some beautiful young dead, out of the tombs, the more the beaches were becoming increasingly rare, and glades of beeches and raspberry more frequent or clearings of silver grass, larger and brighter. The huge moon was passing in the sky beyond the zenith solemnly and indifferently. The maidens were running with their long hair waving, their nostrils stretched in the air like gazelles breathing barely, from time to time you could hear the giggles of one of them floating like trills in the empty light of the moon. One stopped and turned to the young man who was running naked, gorgeous, like a wild animal waiting for him to draw his breath, to chase and catch her. She saw him down running after a nude virgin, ready, ready to catch her, and then she cried him giggling happily. After a while, it must have been a long time, the virgins might have arrived close to the top of the mountain, and the moonlight increased whiter and wilder. Iancu, the beautiful Iancu Delamare, a real legend, tiredly ran after them, stopping from time to time, watching the superb mad savage maidens sprinting or stopping to call him to love, and they called and spoiled him as a doe burning in heat of its body. And they

enticed him, and he sniffed them and chased them with his mind lost.

It must have been an anthological sight that reminded the old Neolithic eras, the depths of myth, full of charm and mystery, but also a certain sacredness, with some telluric flavor, scary, also gorgeous. For so must have been running the young men and virgins, thousands of years ago, on the hills and mountains, in the light of the sick dementia moon, in rituals of our ancestors, that lasted thousands of years. What passions and what thrill drove the young hominids' herds on the tops of hills and mountains in the moonlight! Such a scene of splendor and wild sacred beauty makes you shiver and lose your mind. And when they suddenly found themselves on the ridge above, all virgins stopped a moment and stood stone-still, with their necks outstretched like swans, hieratically. Iania herself, wild and beautiful Iania, with her golden hair waving in the moonlight, projected over the ridge and over the woods, stopped a moment on the spot seeming to be turned into stone, with her statuary body and fixed eyes. Had anyone seen her, he would have realized that she surpasses goddess in beauty, resembling rather with those famous and legendary Amazons.

For what they saw on the top of the mountain glade, there was something beyond their imaginations, something that defied any human being and they remained so, flabbergasted, perhaps fearful, with hands on their heart, with thin nostrils trembling slightly, but especially amazed and lost, fascinated by what they saw. What their eyes saw was a wild divine beauty. And maybe they were themselves who were reflected in the sky like in a mirror. They must have seemed fantastic and scary to them. The amazing show of disheveled virgins, as beautiful and wonderful as

them who were dancing and galloping on the peak of the mountain. Far in the distance, the hills and the forests could be seen waiting mysteriously and monumentally. You could hear the stone in the mountain waiting and lurking for thousands of years, at peace with itself and with the world. And they began to enjoy what they saw, it seemed to be the most beautiful and greatest thing that they had ever had the opportunity to see in their earthly life. The naked bodies of those who were on top, looked thinner and finer, gentle, liquid, as if a strange force was banishing them, causing them to tremble in the moonlight. And slowly, fear was no more in their eyes, and they began to like.

Then one by one, they advanced gamboling and joining in the dance of unrivaled Amazons. And they, as if they had never noticed them, received them all. You could hear happy giggles, sweet chants, unspeakably beautiful and sleepy, floating like crystals over the wilderness of peaks and meadows, and could see the hallucinatory silhouettes of the wild and beautiful women. When the longish ephebic body of the handsome and legendary lancu Delamare reached the edge of the clearing, he remained thunderstruck and tense like a bow. Maybe fascinated by the fantastic hypnotic image of the mythological fantasy that he saw, maybe amazed, he stayed in a hieratic stance for a while time. At this time the beautiful women were dancing and larking naked, giggling happily. One of the Amazons remained motionless, staring at the amazing beauty of the male body. She has been observed by others who remained the same, with their fixed eyes on the man who was watching them, like a young wild god... In a few moments, all the women stopped, remaining like ethereal and graceful statues hypnotized by the beauty of the male deer. There was such a thin and endless silence that the moon rays

were heard rubbing the air veins. Then, as if a bolt of dazzling lightning had been downloaded in the fantastic and fascinating air, a scream removed from the long superb throats of Dianas could be heard. As a groan, as if a storm was sweeping, they all rushed wild over him.

Now you couldn't distinguish between the ones who came up on the peak coming from the valley with lancu, chased by him like doe in heat, from the Amazons who were already up on the mountaintop, joined in the round dance, at their coming. In an instant, they grabbed him madly and slammed him to the ground. They looked like some crazed geese, like a pack of hungry hyenas, or like a swarm of bees rushed on something that they had covered completely. They were kicking and biting him wildly, screaming, groaning, biting him, turning around, and waving their hands like somnambulists. They plucked his hair and tore his skin. At last, you could see one of the Amazons who managed to break his male pride. Her screams of joy split the copper air, covering the strange mourning and inhuman screams, wails, and lamentation.

She started running deliriously happy with her hair waving behind her like a fox or horse tail, on the top covered by a layer of silver, holding in her hand lancu Delamare's virility symbol, as a banner or as a precious trophy snatched from the enemy. After her several other Amazons started running with their naked bodies of wild beauty, followed by a whole flock of maidens and young women, raised the same horrifying screams as coming from another world, hardly intelligible. Meanwhile, others stormed on the man's naked body, biting, tearing, and pushing into the slope, and once on the brink, they threw him on the steep slope down into the ravine full of roots, moisture, and darkness, of smell of beasts in heat, currant and wild ferns, of ancient times...and

he might have lost his consciousness because otherwise, they would have heard the screams and moans of the young man from the wounds which were made in his flesh when he struck against trees and rocks edges.

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On the third day, he was found by a shepherd who lived nearby... He came to his senses, could see, touch, and was able to crawl, he was moaning with deep pains in bones and flesh, but he couldn't understand anything. The shepherd took him to the sheepfold, took care of him, and anointed the wounds with herbal potions known from his forefathers. Slowly, slowly he began to recover... He could talk and recognize things. He spoke slowly, with injuries on his scratched neck, as from another world. He hardly remembered the strange experience he had passed through. When the shepherd told him what had happened to him, he stared terrified, and began to step back trembling.

"Sir, maybe it's not true", the man mumbled with trembling hands stretched forward as if defending against something... *"Maybe it's not true, you haven't seen well, somebody cast a spell upon you. Maybe it's just a story or a fancy of yours".* The man stepped back shaking. His teeth were chattering in his mouth... Iancu looked frightened at the old shepherd... When his fear diminished a bit, they talked at length, lying by the fire smoldering in the fireplace.

The peak where Iancu saw the wicked fairies, was called from ancient times like this, Wicked Fairies Ridge, and there have been scary legends about this ridge, and unbelievable facts have been told. The man related what happened to his grandfather half a century ago or more, back when he was a

toddler and was walking behind them. The old man was passing the Wicked Fairies Ridge to his sheepfold... He had descended to human settlements where he had to take some money... One night, it was just the same full moonlight, on Pentecost it's always full moon night, he stood still and watched the wicked fairies... He observed their game for a long time, perhaps more fascinated, enchanted by their beauty, then, what was in his head, he whistled at them, to see if everything is real or only in his imagination were happening such devilish things. And they, the Fairies, rushed upon him and put out his eyes, tore and snatched his clothes, and broke his ears and lips. The man, for fear, never recovered, and on the third day, he died...

Hereabouts there are horrifying legends and stories, or whatever they are, about wicked fairies that come only once in some years, on Pentecost Day, no one knows, and who sees them, remains disfigured, lame, or mouth crooked, and God makes him unable to speak, or remains speechless forever. Iancu waited a few days until his wounds healed and felt stronger, and then he went down to the first village. Later after a week he was in Brăila and tried to show that nothing happened in his life. Especially he avoided, as much as he could, to meet his friend Victor Lunacevski, the lawyer, or other husbands of his mistresses. They didn't meet a day or two until they bumped into each other, and Lunacevski invited him and his wife the next day, but Iancu was excused for not feeling well, he had health problems. And the next day, who paid a visit to them? Lunacevski, the lawyer, and his wife, the crazy Polish Iania smiling, more beautiful, and happier than ever. And even if some days before he had sworn he would never want to see her again in his life, when Iancu saw her, his heart began to beat strongly. He bit his lips and couldn't help but devour her, so

beloved she was for him that she seemed more beautiful than a fairy. And the more he was watching her, the more he fell in love with her and felt his soul melting inside him like a tallow on embers. And she, devil woman, was staring into his eyes as if she had come to spite him. At night, when he was alone, Iancu couldn't close an eye. He felt only the heat drying him inside and cold water flowing on him, like an hour of death. Come what may, he said, I will die from her hand, I'll lose my mind, or not, God's will be done. That was until one day when he felt he could no longer bear it and must do away with himself. Then he went and searched her and found Iania alone at home... *"Iania, Iania, crazy corrupt woman, hypocritical and vile, you, who has mocked me, and trodden me down, tell me what did you want of me that you did to me what you did, I'm here to kill you, then I'm going to kill myself! I stab you like a sheep and then I hang myself"*.

Iania fell to her knees, she held his knees in her arms pressing her cheek on them, then stood up and embraced and kissed him, and fawned around him. And then she falls to her knees again. She was telling her story and tears were flowing down her cheeks, as if they were springs, even now she seemed a dream, a fancy, nothing real.

Then she recounted how he appeared in her dream, only his face, alone, without body, how she saw him as a ray descending from heaven, as handsome and marmoreal as a god, that she wanted to cry and fall in the knee, so beautiful he was. And how he ordered her to come on a certain full moon night and the earth would be enlightened and riched as it would have been in Heaven, but to take with her some of those virgins who he had enjoyed, and also he said which virgins to take, and what game to play that night, and how the maidens had to run naked, like crazy, and he under the moonlight behind them like a male deer until they reach the

mountaintop... and she did just as he commanded, for otherwise it would not have been wise, because she felt him penetrating her soul and her body like a hobgoblin that thought instead of her and commanded all she needed to do so that she no longer felt human being on earth. Hearing it, lancu remained stunned, especially since he remembered that he had had a similar dream. The dream was that a night he had no body, only face, and was floating through the universe. Then he remembered lania, that she was his mistress, and that she was her beloved, as dear as the light of his eyes, and she was down on earth, expecting him, and he climbed down on a ray and went into her room.

"Swear that what you said is true", asked lancu to her, and kneeling she swore on the Gospel that what she said was the truth. Moreover, she swore on a knife and her children. And he said nothing, he turned to the streets and fields... He returned home three days later when he felt much cooler and the fury in his soul passed over. He began slowly to drink, shut in a house with one or two fiddlers, singing and crying. He drank and sang only sad burial or funeral songs and drank so much that he lost his mind and fell under the table. And Zamfira, his wife looked at him and didn't know what to do with him what was in his soul, and how to gratify his wishes. And she asked and begged him to tell her what was in his heart, maybe she could help him to overcome grief, to tell her if had lost money at cards, if he was sick of something, or if he was preparing for death because she knows that he had gone to doctors in Bucharest.

lancu kept silent and said nothing, only drinking like crazy until he fell under the table, then he got up and started again... The daughter of Boyar Baldovin went to someone to tell her fortunes. The gypsy woman said that she saw a light that caught his head and now death was inside him and it

doesn't want to leave... Poor women began to go to doctors, to pay them with fortunes and estates, to bring them home to see lancu, but he closed the house and nobody was permitted inside. He stayed alone or with fiddlers, drinking to lose his mind. And he continued so until one day when rumors began to walk through the town from woman to woman, that one of lancu's mistresses would have revenged, she would have cut his male organ to do magic with it. Gosh, how many women of high society, who had wanted him and they hadn't had him, haven't secretly rejoiced! But those who had him as a lover, whatever was in their soul when they heard?!

This rumor was spread by the crazy Iania Lunacevski, who now enjoyed seeing that word was passing from mouth to mouth and heard some women giggling and flourishing the gossip, turning them into fairy tales. And especially she had fun seeing the swarm of ladies from the high society who were interested in lancu who had seemed whiter and more handsome, and who flattered him curiously to know if it was true what they said or not.

One day lancu was passing through the park downheartedly when he found himself nose to nose with Ilonca Elefteriade, the wife of the most experienced pharmacist in Brăila at that time, Nae Elefteriade. Ilonca sat in his way, laughing, as she always used to laugh, that her full face flourished and dimples in her rosy cheeks were made, looking incredibly beautiful, and began to spin the silver button of his woolen suit between her fingers.

"lancu", she said blushing and smiling at the corners of her mouth, "is it true what they hear and what they speak in the town now, that a beautiful woman would not be afraid to stay with you one night in a room?" Ilonca has had her eye on him since her youth. What wouldn't she have given to have

him for her husband, or lover, but the years had passed and he remained only in her childish dreams of yore, and now it was risen her regrets and venom, her hatred against him. And that maybe because she never will be able to enjoy the beauty and glory of the man. That she will never have the good fortune to fondle him, or to enjoy the pleasures that the mad Iancu Delamare would have offered her. She spun the button between fingers and on her face astonishment and regret could be seen, then she looked up and wrapped him with lustful eyes. She looked challenging and mocking, but we saw well that she wanted him.

"Look", she says, leaving her eyes into his ones, feeling a sweet burn deep in her chest, "look", she repeated, and this time a tear ran down his cheek, "My husband goes to Vienna tomorrow to bring jars with makeup, powder, and drugs, and for business". I must say that Ilonca was Jew, a Jew of that beautiful, curly red hair, so beautiful that she put a man in disease. "I wait for you the next day at noon in Săringar apartment and I'll give you a million lei if you can do something to me, because you know, my heart has been longing after you for a long time, Iancu". She giggled slightly and looked at him deeply with sparkling eyes, but on her face, a hidden suffering could be read. Iancu felt pain upside the head, that the earth revolved with him, he had no air to breathe and saw yellow before him. He closed his eyes moving away, then started chasing, groaning like a deer stabbed...

He locked himself in the house again. He had a high fever and lost consciousness and sometimes he found himself bursting into tears. And in the meantime, the ladies in Brăila, his mistresses and those who had wanted him, but they had not had to enjoy his body, were whispering in the corners, pretending that they were gossiping and giggling, or wailing

for the shame that had happened to him although everybody could see the pain and emotion on their faces. It was clear that the shame of what had happened to their lover had broken their hearts and made them dream in broad daylight. One day, Iancu was in court when Hilda Protopopescu looked for him, the wife of Dr. Alcibiade Protopopescu, a kind of Hebrew Ukrainian both of them.

"Iancu", Hilda pulled him aside and told him she wanted to take him to a lawyer in a trial. "Iancu", Hilda whispered tremblingly, "nice man like you I haven't seen in my life nor I'll ever see. I care about you a lot, so I've been looking for you. I've heard what happened to you and I pray God not to be true. But if it is true I can save and heal you. I'll give you two thousand lei and send you to the greatest surgeon in Europe. He's a surgeon and Jew of ours, has done so difficult surgery that many famous doctors couldn't dream of, and to whom have come kings and emperors. Take the train and go to Vienna, at my expense, with the recommendation of my husband and me, and you'll be again a prideful man as you were".

Iancu felt icy shivers down his spine. He looked into her eyes, white as a sheet, while a tear began to slide on the cheek. He was about to rage and cry like a baby. He didn't go, although a few days he spent in doubts. Maybe he wanted to commit suicide, perhaps he didn't think he could become a complete man knowing his wound in the flesh.

Then soon heard his wife, Zamfira, the girl of Baldovin, the chief magistrate, who had got fatter and more peevish. She looked into the eyes painfully: *"Iancu, tell me, is it true or not?"* And Iancu told her that is partly true, in Bucharest, he was operated for cancer. He thought a lot about what he was going to tell his wife. Zamfira looked deeply into his eyes, then spat between the eyes. Once and again. She

cried to his face: *"You lie, pig! Look who told me..."* It was Iania Lunacevski who told her. *"And she told me who had done it, because you slept with all the prostitutes and all bitches. They have fooled you, drew you in the race, then they spoke to the husband of one of them, they caught and emasculated you like boar."* And again she spit in his eyes, the spit was pouring white on his cheek, and called him ugly names. Then she slammed the door crying and cursing, left and went and locked herself up at a remote mansion in one of the estates which she had from her father. And he, Iancu Delamare, locked himself up in another mansion, which he had from his maternal grandfather, and where he drank alone crying like a hermit and his enemies would have cried for mercy if they had seen him.

Then they heard that the war started, it was in 1917, and the Germans had already entered the country, and when Iancu heard this news, he almost cried with joy. It had appeared to him the best opportunity to die and do something good for the country. He seemed that to die for the country, to die valiantly as a hero, was the best luck that God gave to man. Without a second thought, he enlisted and went to the battlefield, and he was cheerful and happy, singing with musicians and people gathered around him like crazy saying that he lost his mind. But he had more minds than ever and on the day before leaving, he found that Matilde Mironovici, the general's wife, came to his home. They had loved in their youth when she was very young. Matilde took him by the hand, kissed his hand, and stroked him. *"Don't go, Iancu"*, she asked him with tears in her eyes and prayed him as her own son not to go. *"We have relationships at all generals, I am a good friend with their wives and I swear on all you want, I have the purest thoughts when I've come to you. I want you as my husband, I'll take care of you and*

comfort you, only in my arms and kisses I keep you, as we did once in our youth! And I'll tell to all the women that you're perfectly sound and strong, and everything will be all right, and will be fulfilled as we want, but don't be so angry, mortified, and brokenhearted". Iancu nodded smiling and laughing stealthily as he used to smile that his face blossomed and spread light around him driving them mad. He thanked her and bowed to kiss her hand, and once again, and kissed her too, telling her that he surely goes, nobody and nothing can stop him and if he escapes and live on, if he has such good luck, he will come to thank her, and will help her too, as she has behaved so beautifully and humanly with him.

The next day, Iancu was in military clothes and a rifle on his shoulder, as were all who enlisted to go and fight for the country. I soon after the fight started. After defeating the Romanian army at Turtucaia, our soldiers began to withdraw from the Bulgarians to retreat leaving the Dobrogean villages be destroyed by the enemy. And where it was the most terrifying fire zone, there Iancu entered to die with glory. And where it was the hardest, and where all were gone away, who was the first into battle, proud, laughing and singing, as they knew him in old times, but Iancu, the famous Iancu Delamare? It was no order of the day at regiment level that Iancu not be distinguished, and it was no military Medal or Order that it not be taken. All were sad and bitter, with death in their souls, when they had to retreat from the enemy ceding their ancestral lands. Only Iancu was with a smile and cheered them all, encouraged them all around, saying that so far we have lost a few small battles, but that we will be the ones who will win the war in the end. Come on, people, hey folks, you Marin, Stephen, you all, my Romanians, don't give up, that we are going to beat the

Germans! All marveled at his courage and goodness, he was able to give his own shirt, as he had already done to bandage the wounded. I think he was the most decorated officer on the entire front. And although he had many decorations and medals, he didn't care of his life and when nobody expected, right then Iancu and his company were attacking where the enemy couldn't think of. It began to be regarded as a legend, everyone loved him and respected him as their father, and as Jesus Christ. The rumor spread that he would be holy, others were talking that he would have had the beast grass implanted in his flesh and the bullet couldn't touch him, because where it was carnage and the greater fire, there he got into and came out with not even a scratch. Before the attack, the soldiers came to him: Major, please let me just touch you and kiss your mantle lap, so that after ending the war, I'll come and work on your farms. He hugged and kissed them, and raised them in his arms, and so it was that the ones who were touched by him or who put his hand on him were protected by bullet or misfortune and death.

A rumor was floating on the battlefield, even the Germans, on the other side of the trenches, heard about him, how he should be a holy man and he would have had the beast grass and full virtues. Others said he was bewitched, or even the devil would be in person. French officers and generals came to shake hands with him just to touch him, not to be touched by any bullet or shrapnel. His picture appeared in newspapers several times, and even his picture appeared in newspapers in Vienna, Paris, and Berlin. Once Take Ionescu himself came to him, he was almost pitch black, shook his hand, hugged him, and thanked him heartily for what he had done and did for the victory in the war for the unity of the Romanians. For the way he knew

how to cheer the soldiers, to organize, educate raise the morale of Romanian officers, and to instill energy. Then, shortly he was advanced in rank.

All of them wondered when they learned that he refused to work at the General Staff, where he could be sheltered and protected from the bullets, and chose to stay and fight alongside the soldiers in the trenches, being the first one who came to attack when it was called. He slept and ate in the trenches with the soldiers drinking and joking with everyone, and shared his last cigarette and piece of bread with them. That's why they looked at him and couldn't believe it. And no one knew how to joke and sing as lancu Delamare. One cold full moon night, he took a few people with him, his most trusted soldiers who loved him as the apple of their eye, entered the enemy trenches, and played havoc among them. The Germans were shooting at them like a bear, but nothing happened to him, like the fir tree, not even budged. He returned with all his men in the trenches and none was reached by the bullet. A trench full of Germans killed lancu, mostly alone, and after they took their guns, rifles, and ammunition, returned to our trench where he told his officers and soldiers who knew the feat not to tell anything.

Later, it was about more than a week, when General Averescu heard of the deed of officer lancu Delamare, an educated man, he crossed himself, poor him. He came in person and admonished asking him not to make such a reckless, – although General Averescu had a smile, for in his heart he must have thanked lancu and been proud to have such brave soldiers. Upon leaving, the General called him aside to shake his hand and tell him that he was grateful for the heroism that inspired the soldiers. He also kissed lancu and wiped his tears.

“Hey, hey, hey, Colonel,” the General would have said, “if we had even one more man like you, we’d get to Berlin!”

After General Averescu left, Iancu no longer cared about his life. Once more he went along with the machine gun in the German trenches and made havoc. Then, days and months passed, the end of the war came, and they were cheerful, the soldiers threw up with hats, and officers hugged, and cried with joy. Only Iancu was sad, with his pitch-black soul crying in pain.

When King Ferdinand called him and shook his hand, rewarding him with the highest decoration, a sign that His Majesty had heard of his exploits, Iancu was crying like a baby. In the evening, when he stayed with his best companions, officers, asked them crying where to go now, and they looked to him as the saint of the mountain and couldn’t believe their eyes.

“How Iancu, you talk like that, you who have large estates, you who have been loved, a learned man, you who know how to enjoy yourself, you who have been so loved and respected by officers and soldiers? You, dear Iancu, whom a whole country knows and loves you?”

After demobilization, Iancu had nowhere to turn. He had no choice, he returned home, where he knew he had had the house once, and there he found Zamfir, the daughter of the chief magistrate in Galatzi town, retired at their farm at Nisipi. She, as saw him, began to cry and mourn for joy, running to embrace him.

“Iancu, dear Iancu”, screamed the woman sobbingly, “forgive me, Iancu! I’ve heard what the people spoke, what the newspapers and journals have written, that you were the hero of the war, as you were awarded and praised by His Majesty, King Ferdinand. Father was so proud of you and all his friends boasted of your feats. He cropped your photos

and kept them prominently as icons. And while you've been missing, we were all proud of you." Then the woman, now fat, unrecognizable, fell to her knees and embraced his feet with arms. *"I forgot everything that happened, lancu,"* continued the woman, *"forgive me that I was wrong and I didn't value as I should"*. And she told him everything she knew and what the world was talking about him. How the women mocked him before the war, and now, after the war, how everyone's talking about him with love and respect, as a hero. *"But I, I forgot everything, darling"*, she told mourning, *"now I'll take care of and cherish you properly"*.

After she has apologized once again, Zamfira ordered the servants to cut poultry, the pig and calf which they kept for lancu, for when he would come back from war. He sent for the musicians, what remained of them, for they were scattered, scared, and carried to and fro by the waters and black terrors of war. In Brăila he was expected by his friends and those who had known him before the war, it had already passed many years, and those who knew him were waiting for him curiously to see what a hero looks like. And they even took lancu in their arms on the main street, shouting *"Vivat!, Vivat!"*, all the way. The whole feast ended in the restaurant "Golden Calf" of the Misaridis brothers, Greeks rich from the war, the most exclusive place in Brăila, with champagne, steaks, spicy meatballs, and chosen drinks. Nobody watched lancu Delamare as a cripple who had become the laughingstock of the world and about whom the woman was giggling and crying because they lost him, but as the hero who encouraged so many soldiers, who had won so many battles and had stood so many days and so many nights in the trenches facing the death.

lancu looked at them with a smile, his soul full of emotion, asking them about his acquaintances, which of his old

friends were still alive, who died, since he had many friends in his life. They all came now to make him visits and tipple happily with him. The prefect also waited to celebrate him, even organizing a ball in his honor and he went to it and he did wrong, because here he met the beautiful Iania, the madwoman who turned his head, and was now more beautiful than ever. It is true that one of his old carousing friends whispered in his ear that the Polish lady had slept with the German officers and all the generals who had been quartered in the town. However, though the war had passed, and many years had passed, Iania remained as beautiful as before, which drove any man crazy. Now she looked younger and full of graces, as a young lady of twenty years. His heart suddenly begins to beat in his chest as if she were his first love, and he is beside himself, a man who went through a world war and was decorated with a field of medals and orders. And who was watching him deeply into his eyes with adoration, with lips redder as cherries, liquid to drink them, and with the hair-thin eyebrows, playing devilishly in her head like water? And who danced with him looking only in his eyes to break him through? And the next day, guess who came to Iancu Delamare's house? It was Iania, beautiful as if she was descending from another world, who hugged and kissed him with hot lips and stared at him with playful eyes, and prayed for him childishly, she was all just light and smile.

"Iancu, is it true that you joked, that what I thought it was just a dream and you're a whole man, stronger than all the men in the world? For how else could you have been recruited for the war? And not every war, but this war that has been the worst in history, the greatest. And you stunned the world with your bravery and heroism, and got so many decorations as they couldn't get all the generals together! Only a whole

man, with a big heart and brave could do that! Tell the truth, that is why I came to you, to give myself to you, because I love you as never ever a woman has loved in the world. Since the day we met and I saw how handsome you were at the ball given by the mayor's office, I've lost my mind, I have no moments of rest."

Iancu looked at her lost and bewildered, how beautiful and childish she was, and he could feel the love that went inside him like a outrageous, painful water, such as a hurricane. And then he remembered what he had heard about her and what she had been done to him, he remembered that unless she hadn't drawn him in a trap, he would have been a man now. He closed his eyes and gritted his teeth screaming. He hit her in the face with all his strength cut off her, and threw her away. He grasped her dress, kept her in the light of his eyes, and slapped her across the face again. Then he threw her down like a rag, came out slamming the door, and since then he retired at his farm at Nisipi, where there was Zamfira his wife, who took care of all estates, better than a bailiff. She got fat and ugly like a man. And he began to drink alone. From time to time an old musician came to him, who put his violin to Iancu's ear singing only songs of longing and mourning, of ancient times. Iancu used to cry like a baby, bottom-up a big pitcher, then lie on the bed and sleep like a dead man. And when he woke up, he started again, drinking alone for days without eating anything and without getting drunk. He dwindled away for her miss like a stalk, he wanted to love Iania as he always loved her and he was the most helpless man. And Iania, after she came round and was up, swore to undo and mock him as had never been mocked and humiliated a man in the world.

So I found Iancu then, a skeleton, a poor skinny little man, as if he were a beggar, with minds astray, good only to wait

for death. I told the story to the doctor of Alexandria, who made the wonder to rejuvenate me, thinking that if it had been possible for this miracle to happen, why wouldn't the miracle man, my best friend, to regain health?

Iancu, I said, I get you out of this wilderness and nook and go together to Brăila. There you enter the bar and become who you once were, the lawyer who handled the judges as he wanted, the lawyer that nobody could defeat. And after a year when we raise money, we go to Alexandria. For now, I say, you have to get over morally. Therefore you must first of all get out of this state.

In those days when I was tittle-tattled with Iancu, we remembered Ilia, the beautiful gypsy who put a spell upon me and delivered me from death. And even on the third day we returned to Brăila, fresh and smartened up... Spring had come for some time, birds were singing in meadows and riverside coppices, lambs and kids were playing on the lawn as the beginning of the world, but I felt in my soul a longing and a press, as a great trial would come to me. And the face of Iulia Alexandrovna came to me more vividly and brighter in my mind. I loved her again or fell in love with her again, as I had loved her when I was about to perish.

Brăila was lying under the sun, with its galvanized roofs, fashion had begun to spread a long time after the war, and its parks as oases in a world that now seemed prepared to take the road... What road will this be!

*

Iancu has joined the bar again. I involved myself in business strongly... Meanwhile, I began to ask each other, of those who came by ships from Alexandria, Odessa, or Italy,

whether they hadn't heard of a doctor who could to transplant a man's sex organ. People shrugged their shoulders, sighing. Meantime we acquired a German ship, a thing which proved later to be auspicious because the volume of goods transported by water now grown after the war... The days passed rapidly one after another, all resembling each other like two drops of water, only the bright gentle face, of a sweet tenderness that stabbed your kidneys, of the incomparable Julia Alexandrovna, couldn't get out of my mind.

One afternoon in May, when I finished my chores, I got it to the streets, there where I knew Dr. Protopopescu's family lived, whom I met in my youth, and a maid opened the door. She asked me to wait in the lobby, an opportunity for me to admire the many valuable paintings. Mrs. Hilda greeted me smiling and gently, as she used to. She grew older a bit, her hair started to be the color of copper, but she still remained beautiful... About ten years ago, when she secretly loved the famous Iancu Delamare, (and I was trying to remind how she had looked like but I failed) then, I say, she must have been a real feminine splendor. Today I feel like sighing, wondering and I can't believe what beauties, what feminine gorgeousness could nature create in my youth. And Brăila, in those times, was famous for its beautiful women. Well, times that have gone and will never return... Mrs. Hilda asked me about my parents' health, as she knew the Vizantidis family well. Then I tried, more excusing myself, more with a smile, and help her remember my good friend Iancu Delamare, having necessarily to make her understand that we are sworn brothers, and what's a mystery for one, it's a dead letter for the other and vice versa. It seemed that she blushed slightly, and the more the skin of her cheek got

enflamed, the more beautiful she became, a delicate and romantic beauty, so strange in this world.

“Mr. Vizantidis”, she says, “in my youth lancu was a legend, more beautiful than Adonis and it was no party or ball that he wouldn’t be invited to. With his soul as if he were a sun passing over our heads and his look, that you felt how your heart was turned to ashes in the chest and your feet melted, he captivated you for all life. lancu made many souls to have a beautiful life, broke many hearts and made this world, which is ugly and cynical seen in its true reality, look like a fairy tale for the beautiful prewar girls and women. It was the most beautiful fairytale of my life. I felt really sorry that he didn’t follow my advice... Because, meanwhile the doctor we wanted to send to, died”. Here Mrs. Hilda seemed to sigh remembering something. “But I heard that one of his disciples would open a surgery in Odessa. He’s a Jew of ours who wants to carry on the science of his master. We, the Jews, have our connections worldwide, and they are more secret things. I don’t know what to advise you, Mr. Vizantidis, you have a ship company, you and lancu could get to Odessa, you’d better give me more time to find more information through a man of ours. I ask only that it may actually remain secret between us... Some time ago I heard that the doctor I’m talking about to you is still doing medical research.”

The news given to me by the good lady Hilda were welcome as flowers in May. I told her about the famous doctor of Alexandria, who had given me to drink a potion prepared by him which made me ten years younger. About my project to take lancu to Alexandria. She seemed happy when I told her this and prompted me to go as soon as possible. Still, I knew that the doctor I had spoken about to her was a mere bedtime story and far from a sure thing, so the only salvation

remained the Jew doctor from Odessa, a good opportunity to look for the family of Julia Maronova Alexandrovna. However, I wouldn't have wanted to give them the joy of seeing the incomparable Maria Julia, who looked exactly like my tragic love in my youthful years. I left Mrs. Hilda with a clear conscience and I was glad that we parted friends. She asked me to be with lancu, to encourage and help him now when he goes through these difficult times, and especially to keep him away from womanish evil and madness, which has no edges. I kissed her hand and promised the good and beautiful lady that I would be to lancu more than a brother. After I left, even in the afternoon of that day, in the shops street which once was Main Street, I bumped into Ilonca Elefteriade... Almost crushed and scared each other. I was amazed at her beauty. I stood still stunned speechlessly. It was obvious that for her the war was but a time that had passed pretty quickly. We didn't know each other too well, but it seemed that she knew of my friendship with lancu. I remembered what lancu had told me, how she had mocked him, although they had loved each other in their youth, being lovers. I greeted her ceremoniously, bowed politely taking off my hat. I wanted to move on when I saw that she insisted on talking. She asked, in a honey voice, how my good friend was, and she looked at me as women do when they want to conquer a man. And at the same time, as if they would look at something insignificant taken in derision. I answered ambiguously while her eyes became increasingly scornful.

*

On that very day, I sought lancu and told him about the challenge of shameless Ilonca Elefteriade. Look, you know what? let's return her with interest for her cynical and defiant

behavior... The first time that you meet by chance, more or less by chance, put her to the test and challenge her. You bet with her 500 thousand lei that she hasn't the courage to be alone with you at night in a room. She'll certainly understand what it is about. Iancu looked at me with envy then laughed happily in a way that he no longer did it I don't know since when.

"And you want to be me, right?" Iancu laughed heartily and looked at me as the best joke he had heard in his life.

"Good idea", I heard him after he stopped laughing. *"I have never been humiliated as by this one crazy cynical woman."*

In the following days, Iancu did everything he could to meet his former girlfriend, and the occasion was not long expected. They talked, how can a beautiful woman talk to a man whom she loved in her youth, and to whom now she looked as the last thing in the world. And after looking at her in the eyes challengingly, he proposed to her the bet about which we had spoken, and told her where to meet, a place chosen by us carefully, because Ilonca wasn't supposed to know that she would make love with me. And here I am a few days later waiting in the bathroom of a bedroom, a kind of Iancu's den, of old times, a bathroom that opened into another room full of pillows, paintings, and quinces, spreading a smell that made you fall asleep. I heard them when they came and what soft-nothings the woman was whispering, how they began to embrace and kiss. How they began to undress and the sweet words they were whispering, and Iancu was holding up only with jokes, sweet words, and kisses. And when the right time came, in the dark, he apologized that he had to go to the bathroom, that he ostensibly would come quickly, and in his place, in the dark, in the bed where Ilonca was waiting for him, it was me who entered. I felt her sweet tender flesh, I kissed her firm

sweet breasts as grapes and her fragrant sweet ardent mouth. Then I possessed her wildly, insatiably, being trembled by the fire sweetness of the feminine body.

In the morning, while Ilonca was sleeping with her right leg, white and round as polished by a genius hand, out from under the white bed sheets, with her face happier than that of a virgin, Iancu came to my place, pretending he was sleeping happily, too. And I went into the closet that was connected with the bathroom through a small door, where I went home. And so we tricked the beautiful vicious Ilonca Elefteriade who had to pay the famous Iancu Delamare the amount that she had bet. Moreover, she did another good deed, maybe much higher which we hadn't even thought of. She spread in the town the news which quickly circulated like blaze that Iancu was a whole man who could make happy the most vicious woman. And whether until recently Iancu was regarded with an air of pity, instantly women began to look at him as before. And especially began to grow the number of clients at his office of attorney. Things would have worked better if they had continued so and hadn't happened that terrible misfortune that would shake up the foundations of the town of Brăila about which people would talk many years from then. But I hadn't the slightest idea then of what would happen in a few months, and the most important thing on which my mind insists is this: What connection can exist between the civilization that was many thousands of years before us on the scale of evolution and our world? Between the two worlds must be strange and subtle ways of communication, which our mind and senses can neither deduct nor grasp or intuit.

And if it is true that the gentle Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, who had seemed to me the most beautiful face and the most sacred thing in the world, was an incarnation of a rational

entity of the world above us, if it is eternal and has the power to embodied in people, why had she just chosen me? From the world of spirits- energies, was she still watching me now, could she be somehow embodied in me or could my daughter Maria Julia, be nothing but a duplication of the unparalleled love of my youth? I was getting increasingly convinced of the existence of two worlds and intrusion of the evolved upper world, which the great philosopher Plato had called the world of ideas, of eternal entities, into the human society. I waited a happy occasion, I'd just received from Egypt a very beautiful statue, to pay a visit to Mrs. Hilda. It was a pleasant evening, human and heavy, as if full of the human soul, when I opened the front door of the house of a woman who appeared to be very good, especially holding a deep information that must travel only on secret channels in their world. I talked about my trip to Odessa that I was going to have soon, and I asked her to give me a letter of recommendation for that Jewish doctor about whom she had told me last time. The good and noble lady Hilda asked me that the name of the doctor, who would be famous throughout Europe only in a few years, as well as her relation to that Jew doctor, would remain known just by both of us. Of course, I swore to Mrs. Hilda heartily that no one would ever hear anything out of my mouth. And that was to be as true. Then I asked her to listen to me carefully. I told her that everything all happened to me, but in my story things were being experienced by another person, a close friend. A good friend of mine had lived the strange adventure experienced by me, then told her how this strange happening ended, what I thought it would be, and asked for her advice.

I then went on with the weird adventure and occurrence experienced by Iancu Delamare, as he had told me with his

own mouth, his climb like a dream on top of the mountain under the boundless charm of the moon and all that happened. Mrs. Hilda was listening carefully, charmed and enchanted by the beauty of those dreadful events. She was listening breathlessly slightly leaning her temple aside, so dreamy and unspeakably beautiful. As if I see her, with that melancholy smile on his face, his head slightly bent, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and her chin resting in her palm. Her eyes, lost and fascinated, drifted toward me.

“Yes, indeed”, she sighed after a while, “you’ve told me weird and creepy things, believe me”, she smiled sad and ravishing, but all so beautiful. “My dear”, he sighed once, “I understand what you’re asking, I’ll send you to the good old gentleman Hilgard, he was a rabbi of the Jews in Moldova before the reunification of Romania, and now he lives retired in Piatra Neamt. He has over ninety years and is one of the greatest Kabbalists of the time, a wise and good man. I’ll tell you a password, which I give you and few of us know it, and he will understand what it is about. Besides I’m going to give you a letter of recommendation with good news from me and from the community. He knows all the secrets existing in this world. In his youth, he studied in a city in the Netherlands, occult sciences, medicine, and philosophy, as well as alchemy and cabala. I know this from my husband, who was part of the Grand Lodge, God rest his soul in peace and bless him, for he was such a virtuous man who did much good in his life”. Then I stayed with Mrs. Hilda and had a nice talk about different little things, time passed quickly and we found ourselves with pendulum beating ten. It was late, so I prepared to leave. Mrs. Hilda showed me the door with all her goodness and love and invited me and lancu to pay a visits to her spending the night together.

In the coming days I was busy with things that wasted increasingly more time, but the first Sunday I gave no peace to Iancu until he took me to see Ilia, as he'd promised. We started riding in the morning, and came to the farm at Iliești, later, after eleven at night. On the estate lived sheltered the wandering Gypsies of Ilia, or what was left of the old tribe. There weren't so many, and they were ragged, sad and old. As if they were cut off from the world and lost their naturalness, liveliness and safety they'd had before. When we arrived, the Gypsies' chief, a small and crooked man with big mustaches, like two white towels, went out muttering and making bows. He kowtowed and kissed our hands many times, then he led us to Ilia's tent where he came first for announcing and preparing her. After waiting a few minutes I saw him coming out of the tent with his hat in hand. *"Well, boyars, you can enter"*. We entered in the blue shadow of the tent and I had a great surprise when I saw the one who I was looking for.

"It's her, Alexandre", I heard my friend, who meanwhile also entered the tent. He pointed to a deformity of a kind of human being, hidden among dirty toggery and slimy and huge pillows. She was as a child of five or six, skinny, you'd have thought she was a mummy, if you hadn't seen the lively eyes in her head. The features of her face hinted nothing of the woman who had been as beautiful as the moon and as fiery as an eel... I should have stayed long as petrified when I winced, and sighed, shaking my whole body. The voice of a child or a snake was climbing my spine. I heard the name, and I felt in my stomach upset. I felt that I had no air, I saw yellow sight and put my hand to my throat... Iancu saw that I was stumbling and came near me. He took my arm and pulled me out of the tent. The daylight painfully struck me across the face, and the world seemed

suddenly foreign and deserted as if it had been washed thousands of years with lye and brush for planks. The earth, and the sky, had no substance, had no sense, they looked like dried husks... The Gypsies' chief accompanied us to the horses.

Sad and disappointed we got onto the horses and rode to the Iliești mansion, which wasn't far away. After we got off, we went to the large cool upper rooms, where I felt that I came to my senses. Iancu commanded to prepare dishes, roast turkey and veal, and bring large pots of wine. A young servant, a rosy-cheeked lad came quickly with some flowery wine jars, spreading the fragrance of muscatel.

"The drink is to be brought by my squire", I heard Iancu laughing with servants. He'd recovered now and looked strong and younger. I was sitting on a chair, an old solid chair of the kind made before the war. I well remember the first moment I felt like I lost consciousness, then that all overturns, the house, the world, the things upside down. I spent some time so bewildered, not knowing me until I came to myself. The boy who brought the floral pot of wine, the nice henchman of Iancu, disappeared. After politely bowing three times, as were the rituals of the boyars' mansions, Iancu looked at me laughing, worried, not understanding what was happening to me.

"Well, what do you say?", he asked me after had passed enough time and I recovered from fainting so that I could realize what was going on.

"What can I say", I replied sadly, *"I happened to have been through a lot in my life, not to believe that what I saw now is not true. And, I suspect, or rather I should say, that I know of who is the boy you got to be your squire."*

"That's true", I heard Iancu thoughtfully. *"I figured you'd realize from the first moment, but I never imagined that you*

wouldn't enjoy this. The boy is particularly gifted, quick-witted, learns easily, is as agile as a weasel, has an iron will, and above all a great intuition to guide himself by good thought and to get on the right way for finding the best solution. He has helped me a lot at work. Besides, I have to say he's particularly gifted with the talent to paint and to learn languages. If he dedicated his time to studying and working with a master, he would soon become one of the greatest artists of ours. I'm going to send him to study in Vienna or Paris."

I was silent for a long time. Ultimately I had to be happy, in addition to a daughter, Maria Julia, from Calliope, I also had a son with Ilia, the beautiful gypsy girl from former times who was the descendent of the Tatars' chief. That this son looked like his sister, exactly like the wondrous image of Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, doesn't surprise me at all. What was perhaps worse was that I could see the eyes and smile of the one who had been my great love of youth, as if they were stuck in the air, smiling at me and looking at me as if they were calling me again.

"*lancu*", I found myself talking alone, "*it's not good*". Meanwhile, the flowery wine pots were emptied and now he went to bring others. "*Now I need you to help me, lancu*", I said, after the squire returned with the flowery pots. From the kitchen tremendous smells were coming, of enticing dishes, grilled minced meat rolls, fragrant borsch, and barbecues. "*The boy's face messed up my soul, and that has happened for rather long... I love Julia Alexandrovna again, I miss her so much that I can't bear it... I love her as much as I loved when I was about to lose my mind and you helped me*". I drank the wine with a sweet flavor that cooled your soul like a velvet air. The sweet taste of the wine arise in me a painful thirst of wilderness... lancu saw me

emptying mug after mug... *"Drink", I heard him sighing, "it'll help you..."*

The next day, as soon as I woke up, I left Iancu to wait for me, and I rode my steed and headed north to get to Piatra, where I could find the old and wise rabbi to whom I was sent by the good lady Hilda. Before riding I saw Iancu coming to me. He stood in front of me, taking one of my coat buttons and rotating it between his fingers.

"Let me tell you what is Ilia's disease, Alexandre", he whispered. "You know how beautiful she was, that she had no price in all the Middle East turned upside down. After she met you and became pregnant, she felt that another soul got in her body. Some kind of alien spirit inside sucked her like a leech, and she was getting smaller and smaller. Several times it appeared in her dreams, such as fog, and spoke". "How does it look like?" I asked her. "All I know is that it's a woman", she said, and "loved Alexander so much, that's why it sucks me as a ghost, and it won't forgive me until it puts me in the grave."

"I see", I said. "I've known for a long time what you told me". I spurred the horse and never stopped to Piatra. The horse flew over valleys and on the ridges of hills, along forests and villages, and I felt like the wind blowing in the ears as if it was the north wind. I arrived late at Piatra and I spent the night at the Hotel, called now "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", which before the war had been "George's Inn", famous in Moldova at the beginning of the century. I tried to rest well, and after a long sleep of twelve hours, the next day I looked for the old rabbi. I said from whom I came, and gave him the letter of recommendation from Mrs. Hilda. I said I had to tell him the password given to me by the good beautiful lady Hilda, as well as the good news about her. The old scholar was living in an old but stately house, surrounded by fir trees. He

put me in a dark room, crammed with books, where at a small altar had burned a candle with reddish-purple light, and asked me to wait. As time was passing slowly and he didn't come, I cast my eyes on the backs of old books, bound in brown or black leather. Most were in Hebrew, many were in ancient and modern Greek, but there were also many in French and Latin. Similarly, in Arabic and in English, Spanish, and other languages I couldn't discern at all. I glanced out of the window, in front of me it was opened a landscape of gardens and orchards up the coast towards the shade of the forest that covered the lap of the mountain immersed in fog. After a while, the old Kabbalist scholar came back. He was followed by a maid dressed in Hebrew clothes who brought a strange drink, brackish but strong and soft at the same time... After sitting down, the old rabbi looked at me through the thick lenses of his glasses about half an hour, asking me a lot of questions. Only then, when I saw his face brighten, the sign that I won his confidence, did he make me tell him the things that I had come for.

"What I'll tell you, the old man spoke at last, is told under oath, the reason is that these are mysteries. They must reveal the secrets of the world and not tell the truth. You're Greek, and we, the Jews, don't trust the Greeks, they are cunning, as are all the people who were busy with commerce, so, therefore, I will make you swear. I did as the old rabbi and Kabbalist told me, and then I waited to tell me what he had to say."

"You've heard", the old man says with his tired and foggy voice, "about the ancient mysteries and secret societies of antiquity... They have persisted throughout the Middle Ages and came to us as secret Orders. Some have disappeared from harsh causes, betrayals, or accidental causes, others have melted into the mists of time from other causes. But

some of them have come to the surface, until now, and will show their head and eyes to light, to continue the work.”

“These mysteries have been like living channels that led the secrets of humanity since the beginning of time and the world until now. According to the teachings of our Order, life was brought to Earth by a superior civilization of souls, and spirits. From simple forms it has evolved according to the laws of evolution of life, to reach higher primates when the messengers of the people of spirits descended from heaven to hasten and channel the evolution of the human species on the right track... In the regions of the Black Sea and in the mountains here, where later lived and spread the Carpi tribe, one of the great Pelasgian tribes, appeared the famous tribe of Hyperboreans... From large vessels and carts like clouds of fire descended names, female beings, more beautiful than human mind could imagine. There were fairies or goddesses, or evil spirits, as they say in the area. They were brought by huge fire ships on the peaks and the Thracian priests brought, from their settlements in the valley, young men who joined the Fairies’ dance, as the legends say. Fairies were to mate with the most sinewy, intelligent, and beautiful young men of pre-Thracian tribes to give birth to a new species. At the same time, in those days far away, for this process lasted for hundreds and thousands of years, were also brought by ships of fire Ephebi, that is youngsters, on these mountain peaks. The ephebi of the civilization that came from heaven, the civilization that brought life on earth, when they were off, mated with virgins of the oldest Pelasgian tribes, to give vigorous offspring with better minds, more evolved. The priests of Pelasgian tribes gathered the most beautiful and healthy virgins, endowed with the best qualities they called vestals. They were

brought on mountaintops where they joined in round dances, that is in holy Dionysian rites, then they mated with the ephebi or the angels of the civilization coming from heaven, and then they procreated vital sons and daughters, more advanced creatures. And because the virgins weren't allowed to marry, that is to mate with earth men, being kept only to mate with ephebi who climbed down with their fire ships from heaven, so appeared the Amazons, about whom talks the Thracian myth of the Amazons..."

"And so there were born new generations of tribes formed from vigorous offspring, much better gifted intellectually than their Pelasgian ancestors. Thus the Thracian tribes were born, from the ancient genetic layer of Pelasgian tribes, who, having superior intellect, could receive now even higher abstract knowledge. And as I said, the Nymphs unlike Ephebi brought from heaven by vessels, didn't accept to mate with the aborigines, fearing losing eternity. It should be known that those who came from heaven and lived in constellations, through the power of mind and spirit, of their advanced science, had obtained the eternity of their body long time ago, and fearing of losing their beauty and their eternity, the Nymphs refused the sacrifice because we must say that it was a sacrifice, it means that was a sacrifice for the Nymphs to offer themselves to the natives for creating a new superior race. Then they were left on the Earth and had to live like Vestals who used to live in the woods, unwilling to mate with Earth inhabitants, whom these mythical beings would have shot with arrows if they had been caught. Or if the men had wanted to be with them... This informational core that got to us, is nothing else but the myth of Amazons. The folk, myths, tales, legends, and old people's imagination endowed them with great beauty, pride, and bravery, with a particular and concrete image and a certain hatred against

people, against the Thracian tribes, and against men. Was such an attitude natural from a new superior civilization? It was and was not. Men of superior civilization didn't oppose mating with the native women just because they didn't give birth so didn't lose eternity, or maybe they did, but the pleasure of being together with beautiful aboriginal women was too great, while Nymphs, by giving birth, became mortal losing their sidereal divine beauty. They were brought by the huge chariots and ships of fire, by which they traveled through space and allowed for a while to live on earth, with the Thracian tribes, as the heavenly ephebi."

"Only after a long time the celestial ships came to take the no terrestrial creatures after they had given offspring to the aboriginal women, and after they had taught the Thracian tribes how to overcome nature, how to progress. Nymphs, proud and sensitive, gathered and retreated into the woods, on top of the mountain peaks in the glades, just because their bodies are fed with cosmic energy, prana, and to be seen by heavenly ships, to communicate with them, to call them when they arise."

"The progeny of gods and natives was the tribe of Hyperboreans, of Thracians, the largest and most advanced Thracian tribe, which spread imposing their culture and superior civilization throughout the Carpatho-Istro-Pontic area. So this country of Hyperboreans, the famous Hyperborea, as famous as the ancient legendary Atlantis, stretched over the Danube Delta today and into the Carpathian Mountains to the west, passing through the region of Buzău, the river anciently called Bozaïos. The antique Bozaïos where the inimitable singer and god Orpheus would have lived. Europeans today, as many nations of Asia Minor, have the Hyperboreans as their mythical ancestry, their ethnic and spiritual roots in

immemorial ages. Legendary Jason came to take the Golden Fleece from here, in Hyperborea, because this tribe was the most developed, most advanced, in the development of agriculture-to achieve superior breeds of cattle, the Golden Fleece being the symbol of this superior race of the animals obtained by interbreeding, – as well as on metalworking, holding superior knowledge in contrast with the great mass of the Pelasgian tribes. Later, from Hyperboreans, by stretching and mixing with other tribes, Thracians appeared. This explains the fact that they were, next to the old Hindus and Chinese, the largest nations, and peoples of antiquity. They were, after the Hindus, the second largest nation in their time and even over passed all of them in terms of civilization. The old rabbi was silent for a while, breathing in and gathering his thoughts”.

“You see”, he continued after a while, “these people of Thracians, who are lost now, it was a great people. It might have had to live in the European area from the Black Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, and it would have progressed as far as we can’t imagine today. But something happened, something hard to understand, which historical sources haven’t told us, since the information got lost on the way. Or, who knows, maybe another secret Order keep them and we don’t know”. Here the old scientist was silent again, made a long pause, thinking of something. “And now back to business”, he continued his thoughts in the end, “I knew well Nicholas Densușianu, one of the great scholars of the Romanians, who examined the archeological evidence of ancient inhabitants of this land, as well as the myths and legends of ancient civilizations. He confirmed me even more, which I knew from my father... The ancient mysteries kept the knowledge about the creation of the world and the secrets of evolution... This knowledge was to be strictly

guarded, not for granting the power to their owners, but especially for the reason that, if they had been used by other communication channels, the true knowledge would have been in danger of deformation, of counterfeiting and fantasizing. The greatest danger, however, was that the truths, all knowledge of mysteries could be handled by ordinary people. Do you know what once Densușianu told me? It was before the war, about the early years of the century. Speaking of arguments from the Bible about the coming of the fallen angels, as it says in Genesis, and as the Book of Enoch tells us about the chariot of fire, about doctrine transmitted through the prophets... Once Eminescu would have told him something that, long time ago when they met, gave much thought to Densușianu. Eminescu was concerned by the coincidence of his revelations and myths and legends. He had seen the woman without body, the beautiful girl without body, as he wrote Morning Star in a dream, he was sure about it, so the folktales reinforced his belief in the existence of these spirits-creatures returning from time to time on earth. Once fairies, Fairies, elves, and trolls were living creatures on earth and could be seen. The explanation he gave to Densușianu then seems truer now..."

"Not all Nymph refused love with the young native men, some of them sacrificed themselves and fell in love with aborigines and procreated offspring. When the fire ships came and took them, the Nymphs were taken, too. Since then their spirits return to Earth... The round dance of fairies seen by your friend on top of the mountain, in the moonlight, is nothing but the dance of Nymphs or of Amazons, returning from generation to generation as a ritual on the mountain peaks. But there are no material flesh bodies, they are bodies of luminous energy, they are spirits, they have

intelligence, and are energetically entities. They have caused the evil about what your friend told you. They can incarnate in extremely beautiful women. The Amazons hated men, remember the myth of Adonis from the ancient Greeks, because they could fall in love and then become ill and have to accept love with men? Namely, they had to lose their eternity and diaphanousness. Just because your friend was a beautiful and charming man, that's why, I say, he is hated by the spirits from heaven." Here the old Kabbalist paused again and sipped the leaching and stinging drink with eyes closed.

"In your case, however, things must have happened otherwise. Probably one of the fairies, a Nyana, fell in love with a beautiful ancestor of yours. Since then her spirit returned looking for him, and how he became incarnate over time in his descendants, they are wanted and loved by the immortal spirit from heaven". I hadn't told him what had happened to my father, only then, at that moment, I thought that the old man's explanation seemed to be true and enlightened it, explaining reliably events experienced by my ancestors. For a moment an old dusty silence descended around. *"This is what it is, my friend"*, I heard after a while the man who stood in front of me with his head bowed and the skin his face bones yellower and older than can anyone imagine.

"The people of Israel and the people of Thrace were chosen by the civilization of spirits in the universe, more evolved than us on the vast timescale, but something strange is happening now... as the chosen people of Atlantis and America, Maya and Incas, they are perishing... to us remained only the idea of race superiority, as the Germans, who claim to be descended from the Hyperborean people, this idea, I say, might lead the world to destruction..." When

he finished, the old rabbi remained with eyes closed for a while... I understood that my audience was over. I thanked him heartily, bowing in front of him, and said goodbye. *“Try to establish another contact of a different kind with one that loves you, I heard the rush voice, like steam, of the old man. Think about her for days and call her in your mind, focus your mind and thought on her... And maybe she would appearing another form, and she would speak to you...”*

Outside the cold light of day soothed the skin of my cheek. A wet wind was blowing from the lowland as if the weather threatened to rain. I rode happily, living a strange joy, and I took it down to Tecuci horseback. If I could ride on until midnight I could get to Iliești, at Iancu's mansion. The wind lifted by the stretched gallop of the horse was blowing like a kite, whirring on the ears, my soul was satisfied, serene, and happy. So that's it, it had to be... *“Thank you, my good Julia Alexandrovna, and from there in heaven, from where you are looking at me, love me like you loved me once, think of me, have mercy on me and mine and help me. Watch over me and our daughter. Help me and protect me, as good Mother of God would do, and keep all of mine, keep all your sons in great care, for you are their true mother.”*

*

Spring passed quickly and a hot dry summer descended over Brăila, its ponds, smelling of mud and reeds, of hot tar and surrounding lands... When we went out, we saw pastures, hills, and surrounding ravines yellow, dusty, and dry. Facing the sea, the Macin mountains gleamed like glass. Finally, I had to deal with the tedious business of records and contracts... While my soul was becoming more

desolate and burning, like a smoldering desert after the memory of that who was Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, my body was getting increasingly tired and full of loathing. I had to listen to the crazy idea of Iancu and now I couldn't go back. This madness started in the middle of May after I returned from Piatra. We returned one evening from a party, during that time I had seen before my eyes only the beautiful Julia Alexandrovna, feeling a painful fresh air in the chest that suffocated me.

"Alexandre", I then heard Iancu, my good friend, "help me also to revenge on Iania Lunacevski. That crazy woman didn't go out of town, and like a devil, she is more beautiful, a raving beauty. Help me forget her... She's become the more beautiful, villain. This woman seems to be the devil itself, instead of getting old age, she rejuvenates and gets more appealing". Iancu went and searched for her... He stared into her eyes, smiling that smile of his that drove all women mad, and he spoke as if he would put her to the test as if he'd wanted her or would mock her. He eyed her up and down, driving her mad, and putting her heart on fire.

"Now I'm a whole man, Iania, my love", he would have said, as he told me the next day, *"Within me, my heart burns like fire for your longing. Now I can love and make ten women like you lose their minds, not one."* Beautiful and crazy Iania remained wide-eyed as cartwheel. Her face blazed with happiness.

"You're lying, Iancu, my dear and beloved, my invaluable beloved, you're lying, poor you, you're lying," the Polish woman would have said with voice trembling with joy, ready to burst into tears. *"If it's as you say, I buy you and all your folks with heaps of gold and money".*

"OK", said Iancu, *"you give me this amount of gold and this sum of money..."*

"I'll give you, lancu, my honey and fool, I'll give you, baby, how couldn't I" laughed Iania happily.

"Well", said lancu, looking at her playfully and laughing with his bright happy face, *"we meet tonight in such a place"*... and he named the place where he had met the other woman... But instead of him, the bed where the body of the mare Iania Lunacevski was burning, it was me, as lancu had asked me and as I had done it before. Iania had a gentle sweet body as a watermelon core, scorched by the blazing sun of summer, her breasts seemed of fire penetrating my chest, and her mouth bewilderingly fragrant and hot, which made me dizzy and scream with pleasure. It was like fire and honey the love with this woman... Only Ilia, the beautiful gypsy girl, had loved me so to make my body and bones ashes to... And so, it was repeated one night, two, three...

Iania was madly in love with her former lover, even worse than she had been in love once. That month lancu gave me half the money he took from the sly female who had fleeced the women she had liked and had given them to lancu for fondling and making them happy and had brought him that terrible misfortune. And I can honestly say that I had never seen so much money in my life, even though I was dealing with merchandise for so many years. Iania was dead after him, devouring him with her eyes and she would have kissed his feet only to be loved by him... And a strange thing happened. There were times when instead of Iania I saw the sweet Julia Alexandrovna enjoying her body eagerly. When lancu, my friend, saw me become pale every day, he asked me with that smile in the corner of his mouth, to slow our meetings, for the Polish woman didn't deserve so much happiness and so many gifts from us. Especially since he couldn't forget what she had done to him. And now lancu began to play with the beautiful and crazy Iania Lunacevski

as he knew... One day, it was to be by June for the Danube was on hot days, the smell of mud and reed was in the air, and although the tremendous heat of summer was far away, I saw Iancu entering my office.

"My dear", he smiled at me with that light of his soul in the corner of his mouth, as if seeing him in front of my eyes.

"Keep up being brave!"... And here Iancu laughed, with all his face lightened. "I'll get you about three times more money than I gave so far... you'll increase your fleet, no joke... But you have to work seriously..."

She looked at me with purpose, ready to burst into laughter. I was laughing the whole face. I stared at me as he used to when he was cheerful, happy, and playful. He was spinning his hat, like that, in hand.

"Crazy Iania went to her girlfriends to tell them I'm a whole man in power and they may longer enjoy me. It's time lover, as formerly, Alexandre, but now it is you who is going to enjoy what is most beautiful and loving in this city, and not me. Each flower and philomel which Brăila has will pass through your bed, as once they passed through mine."

And so things have happened... I held and I kissed their breasts and lips smelling of ripe cherries, I bit their arms, shoulders, and hips and loved them all night until dawn, I had all of Iancu's mistresses. The most beautiful tenderest sensual woman in Brăila. It was like a dream exceedingly sweet, like drunkenness that gives you thrills of pleasure, and that never ends. Before dawn when the proud woman was fast asleep, I used to creep into the small room where Iancu was waiting for me, he came instead of me, lying next to the beautiful woman I had tormented and loved all night, and I slowly took home, and slept like a log until the afternoon, when I went to the office. Iancu was laughing happily, now walking in some light-colored suits with

buttonhole flowers and fragrant white handkerchiefs placed in a breast pocket. I looked at him and I couldn't believe my eyes, how can man, this creature so sensitive, strange, and helpless change so much and pass from the deepest pain to the greatest happiness? He raised in the eyes of the city, especially in the eyes of his mistresses, the beautiful women of the town. In the eyes of women, Iancu became once again the philanderer without a pair.

In July I was glad to catch a good transport to Odessa. All the way I thought only to Julia Alexandrovna. One moonlit night with big stars like udders, I went out on the deck and I asked her spirit. When we got off the port of Odessa and went along the quay, I felt my heart beating in my chest happily, full of excitement and of Iulia's beautiful soul, the heart of the lover who is going to a love meeting... No matter how hard I tried in those days to get a hold of someone in her lineage, the impoverished famous kin of Maronovs, it was still impossible for me. Nobody remembered the great family of Maronov. I went and asked at the mayor's office, demanding to examine the records. I opened and looked in old, dusty, leather books, I looked through unexplored acts... Uselessly... Nothing remembered the passing through this city of a family who had that name. I looked for my Hebrew doctor, about whom good lady Hilda spoke to me, but I couldn't find him, even though he ought to know. So, I rushed as I could to upload the cargo ship and get back to Brăila, especially because I felt like a great misfortune in the air. By the end of July, when I arrived in Brăila, I heard the terrible news that shook me... The end of Iancu, the famous Iancu Delamare, who endured a lot and made happy with his beauty hundreds or thousands of women... In the time when I had been gone with business to Odessa, crazy and beautiful Iania

Lunacevski had gathered her girlfriends, and all of them had given a banquet, a big party in honor of lancu. The only man who was invited was him, of course. Who reigned at the head of the table? Who else but lancu Delamare, as beautiful as a demon, shaved, greased, and smart, dressed shingly like a prince? It was a celebration of joy, farewell and all of them competed to kiss lancu, to give him a gift or a souvenir to never forget them... I thought they had lost their sense of reason at all. On the table shone delicious food, roasted steaks that seemed to be of gold, as well as the most expensive and chosen French wines, varieties of ruby wine from Cotnari, or Tokai, or French wines and champagnes, and other drinks unseen, which no one had heard in this city that was more a vision of roofs and silver Spiers gleaming in the sun, lost in the world of the East and in the sadness and gray of the West.

And they, all of lancu's mistresses, those who had the good fortune to enjoy the manly pleasures offered by him, those who once were graceful and feminine beauties that had shone here at Gate of the Orient, all like ballerinas or like geese around him, more or less low dressed and beautiful. He looked at them with cloudy crazy eyes and his soul burned with happiness... And he reminded all of them, as each was when she was girly, or a young woman, and now, behold, wrinkles of old age had appeared on their faces. They drank and spent up to dawn, and lancu was their lover and idol fondled with kisses and hugs when all of a sudden one of the females, who could that crazy one be, maybe Anna Comnena or maybe beautiful Marghiolița Beldiman or even possessed Iania Lunacevski, got the idea to strip lancu and all of them to kiss his body, to bathe him in silver wines, cognacs and golden champagnes, to kiss his body and feet, and to keep and pass him on their arms, as if he would have

been a child. Iancu resisted as much as he could, but who could handle so many women, all mad and raging, maddened by passions and pleasures? The women had lost their minds, broke and tore his expensive marvelous clothes, his expensive groom's clothes, and drew each of what they had grappled with their hands, only to have a souvenir from him, something, even a piece of thread... And when they did it and tore all the garments on him, and left Iancu as his mother born him in the world, the women rushed to kiss him and embrace him until one of them gave a heart-rending scream, that woke the others to reality.

For a moment they hardened, heard only icy silence. All the females were waiting to see his uplifted manly organ and when behold, what saw their eyes was a reddish bloody pit, and the wounds were supposed to be male organs. They stood so, mute and hardened, only their steaming breaths could be heard and Iancu, poor him, would have been trembling terrified...

„Girls, this guy has mocked us!” cried Iania Lunacevski, red-faced, with minds astray, and the others, terrified and shocked as they were, threw themselves all over him like hyenas and like wolves. Some with claws, some with teeth, and mouths, began to pull him lynching... The more blood flowed and heard the moans and heart-breaking screams of the man dropped down, the more they were provoked. I think the women had lost their minds, otherwise, nobody can explain the unparalleled violence and horror that absorbed all of them. They put out his eyes, and his tongue and snatched his hands and legs. Then they stabbed him and took out his liver and heart, for it was the heart that they wanted, and broke his legs from thighs and flesh and ribs. After they had devoured him and had dismembered the body, they came out mad, screaming and yelling, in hand

with pieces of flesh and bones of the one who had loved and lied to them. The day was breaking, it was the next day, and they were carrying chunks of flesh, guts, and bones in the streets, like some trophies or some valuable assets, some jewels, which they wanted to show the crowd. And people, those who had got up early in the morning, were staring at them like some mad who had lost their minds. For it is true, the females had lost their minds yelling and dancing now, as if they had been at the wedding...

First the people who saw the man's head kept on top as a flag, human ribs, and the human foot shod with shoes, all those who had seen them at dawn, began to scream in terror and run... Soon the whole town was out to see how the mad women were running in the streets shouting with chunks of meat in hand, and whole Brăila was shaken worse than if it were destruction of the world. This has never happened and has never been heard, no human mind could imagine such a thing... Even police were afraid to approach them, although eventually they were stopped and were taken the pieces of meat and bones waving in their hands shouting and dancing. And when they taken to the hospital, doctors who saw their lost eyes and distorted faces shrieked, from the first moment they realized all that the females were mad having no idea what they had done nor what are they in this world...

While listening to the story that my horrified father was telling me, my hair stood on end by terror, making my flesh creep, and I could hardly believe, I didn't know if it was true and if what my eyes saw at that moment was real, if I existed anymore, if not everything, world and history, was a horror story, and we didn't know anything about the dream we were dreaming and that was all. How could it be true that lancu, the famous lancu Delamare, was no more in the

world, how could be true all this story that makes you lose your mind, your guts turn inside out... That night I couldn't shut one eye. I kept on seeing lancu before me, the famous lancu Delamare, with his warm smile on his lips, who had marked a whole era, walking, cheerful and happy, his smile far away as if it lightened the world... At dawn I lit the candle that had consumed, said our Lord's prayer three times, I thanked God Almighty for keeping me in this world and invoked the spirit of Julia Alexandrovna... I felt her tender and protective around me, looking at me from ether.

The next day I went out on the streets, I walked all day in the streets where lancu and I once had wandered together. I remembered old times gone by, when we were young and lancu was as handsome as a god, and walked with the fiddlers... And Ilia, the beautiful gypsy girl, really existed in the flesh, and Zamfira, the beautiful girl of the chief magistrate Baldovin, for whom lancu was ready to die and who succeeded to knee him down and put him under the lock and key in marriage... I walked in the streets with my sad dreary soul and in the coming days, too. I was in no mood to stay at home or my office. I don't know why it seemed I would meet him. Towards the end of August, I had to travel joining an important freight transport to Alexandria... I waited breathlessly the day of departure, as a baby expects his mother's caresses... I had a few months to see other places, other people, to hear other news, to be involved in other things, for in this town everything began to seem to me like a macabre dream. I thought I wasn't sure of anything, things, world phenomena, laws, all they seemed to me confused and tangled, and I felt my soul like a foul and muddy water.

I flinched slightly, shook by the chair moving under me. *“I have been dozing, since when?”* And it was as if from far away, over yards, I heard the song of roosters... Out of the window, through heavy curtains, the gloomy light of an exhausted moon was slipping. Through the gentle dark, I could see the head of Professor Drăghicescu. A strange and sweet nap had enveloped me, while it was still something in me awake and serene, a kind of vigil light so that I could hear everything the old teacher had told me. His words dripped hot in my hearing, and his magic art of storytelling made my soul fall asleep as children sleep after hearing the stories told by their grandparents...”It must be toward dawn”, I thought in my mind, it was no use to wake him from his slumber and sleepwalking, especially because what he said was so beautiful and interesting.

There were signs of autumn for a while, I heard the warm and misty voice of the professor, the ship was sailing quietly in the Black Sea. When the days were beautiful, all the time we remained on deck... The foggy horizon like nostalgic souls made me well... Then I realized how important it is for man to change the place, new natural scenes make well to the human spirit, enrich our memory, rejuvenate and refresh our inner life. We sailed through straits, and as soon as arose the possibility of transport to Venice or Venezia as the locals called it, the affair was quite good, we went ahead and in early September, a September with days sweeter than acacia honey, we headed to the Italian peninsula... In Venice, we arrived in the middle of the day, a foggy rainy day, one of those that make you shriveled inside you unwilling to leave the house. We anchored in the harbor and caught up the ship with tackles. Then my men were set to work, unloading goods taken from Istanbul. I entrusted my

business to the Captain. I had never seen Venice, although everything seemed familiar to me, and after my accommodation at the hotel, I went to walk in the streets of the old Venezia, as people say...

The next day, whether the sky was clear, I had planned to take a gondola ride on the canals. Until then, this Venice wet and alone in the world, silent and closed in itself, filled my soul with strange depth. We dined in the restaurant, eating more in a hurry. It seemed that something strange was calling me and pushing me from behind. When I came out, the sky cleared up a bit after the rain. I recognized the famous Doge's Square, Doge's Palace, and Capulchia house, an architectural gem of timeless restful, and calm sadness... I took on a narrow street, emanating through every pore a feeling of the dampness of the world soaked with water... All of a sudden I found myself in front of that small and cozy palace, startled fearfully, with my heart beating in my chest scared, and I realized that someone actually led my steps here. It was as if I had known from the beginning that I would get here... My heart was beating excitedly and happily... I watched closely the ladder, the inlays around windows, the ivy descending in waves near windows. Everything was the same. As I had stood for hours in front of it while it was on Levant Street in the old Brăila, so now I was standing admiring its chic lines and sobriety slightly scholarly, dreamy. It was the same palace. I remembered that the Palace in Levant Street existed there, but at another time, in another century. Something was sizzling in my chest like roasted meat placed on a hot plate. *"Oh Lord, if this Palace, in front of which I am now, existed in another time, and I'm sunk and lost in another time?"* Yet something told me that it couldn't be possible. I felt her there, in that place, in that solemn and old villa. *"So that's*

why I came here." At the end of the road she was waiting for me... I wasn't scared, although my whole being was tense as a bow. My soul was like bliss, an emotion that devours you. I couldn't stay so, as it was too excruciating. I climbed the stairs, I stayed a moment before the carved door, the very same door, the very same shade of yellow brick-red of the wood. I held the handle after I prayed for the door not to be closed. And it wasn't. The door opened itself as if it had its own life. I entered the first lobby, then I opened the door, and stepped into the second hallway. The piano was in its right place, sumptuous curtains, spreading drowsiness and splendor seemed waiting for me... *"Since when have they been waiting for me?... What have they been waiting? Who have they been waiting for..."* I pressed the piano keys, and sweet clear sounds floated through the air of the vast room... I was waiting for her to descend, to appear... *"Why hasn't nanny appeared yet? Is she the same nanny who had served her?"* I turned and went up, the same marble stairs and the same Veneziani mirror at the top of the stairs... I could cry out... could call.

"She must be in the bedroom where we hugged before I went on the strange journey." I felt my body thinner and my face lighter and pale... Or maybe it was just my impression that came from the gorgeous lighting of a luxurious interior. I went into the first bedroom. She wasn't there... I felt that her void was breathing, was watching me. I entered the second bedroom, my heart was throbbing rapidly. I expected to find her reading, waiting for me. The room was empty. I stood a while in the doorway, and suddenly I felt as if I heard wilderness, silence, emptiness of walls... The void... I checked all the upper chambers one by one... Nobody was there... All things were arranged as if their mistress had left forever. And recently, just a moment before. In my youth

once I had come into an empty house, whose people had died there... In such houses there is a smell of desert and void, a sense of endless waiting, specific, unmistakable... I searched for an icon. In the last room, I found an icon as small as a book, I sat down on my knees and prayed a long time, calling her...

When I left that house it was later, the town fell asleep in the wet mist lagoon and I don't know why that lake suddenly seemed a mortuary lake... I stopped at the dock where the ship was anchored to see what my people were doing. The sailors were playing cards, drinking, and joking as they used to, but the captain was sad. He said we would have to delay more time in Venice, because of a fault in the engine room... A few hours ago I would have enjoyed such news, but at that moment I received it quite cold and grieved. I returned to my little palace (I could say with certainty that it was mine) at dawn because that night I couldn't close one eye, the old lacustrine town was empty, I rarely saw a night watchman or a guardian, sheltered under a lamppost... I came in, the same gorgeous lights, the same chandeliers and floor lamps suggesting an unparalleled wealth. I climbed back into the upper chambers. Nobody. The next night I decided to sleep here in the Genoese palace, and so did I. It's no need to say that that night I couldn't doze off for a moment. I stayed awake listening all the time, maybe, I would catch a noise, a sound, a rustling dress, a silk breeze. A fluttering dress.

The dawn found me awake, in front of the icon praying to the spirit of the woman who I was waiting... I began to feel a kind of damp fear like rotten spices of old channels, I needed someone to talk to, to do something so I went back to sleep on the ship. Until we managed to go, all the time I played cards with the old captain, whom at this time I

managed to know him better and get to like him. On one of the tormented nights spent on the ship, I dreamed of the old rabbi, as if he was himself and as if he was another one at the same time, first I didn't understand what he said, then I vaguely understood that he told me to write a book, and this is what I had to say in this book. The Thracian people and the people of the Jews were the chosen peoples, I had to tell why the people of Thracians perished... In my sleep I had a clear awareness of the causes that led to the disappearance in history of the Thracian people, but the next day when I woke up more dazed, I knew nothing, everything in me was bewilderedness and opacity. I remember only the last words of old rabbi, that the essence of the Romanian people is absolute, eternity, I had to make sure to say this thing. The next day I rushed as I could the worthy captain and gave him money as much as he asked, just to go faster from that place. And so happened, because the next morning the ship was ready for sailing.

We reached Alexandria in just over a month because while crossing the Mediterranean Sea we had only wind and storms. One of the most terrible storms was about to send us on the seabed. Alexandria, the ancient city founded by Alexander the Great, greeted us with a crystal sky that I'd never seen before in my life and a sun that evoked, strangely, the light at the beginning of the world. We were going to see the pyramids and if I felt good, I could delay in Egypt even half a year... I particularly liked the gentle and ancient crowded mass in the streets of the old city, the fact that you heard so many languages, sounds of whistles, of oriental instruments, so many voices, cries in all Earth languages, that you could see so many nations and costumes, all these created a very strange sense of happiness. There was a sense of security and loss of being

and soul in the world at the same time, a serene and emotional melt of your personality in the human universe... Later, in the second week I was out to walk over the city. I sat on a bench in a square of antiques, my soul was quiet and filled with a painful reconciliation. On the alleys, there were passing fellahs, dressed in oriental costumes, Europeans, beggars or pairs of young lovers on a trip, all kinds of people... My mind was clear, I had the strange impression that my soul discerned through the material space surrounding me. It was probably one of those mental states that Buddhists or ascetics can obtain after long periods of fasting and prayer or meditation. A state of serene bliss and clarity of mind... And then I saw her...

I just saw her face in the crowd, just a second, but clearly, as someone showed you a picture and you have to recognize it. I didn't startle, I just felt a huge excitement growing in my whole being. My heart stopped beating in the chest, it simply stopped, to see what was happening. I followed her... The same princely expressivity of gait, of dress tremor. At one point I came right at her, so I turned my head and looked at her very closely. She was amazingly beautiful, a strange sharp glaring beauty like an effigy. She seemed not at all disturbed and I was convinced once again that the woman I saw in the flesh was her, the beautiful gorgeous lady who had given me the highest happiness years ago. I stayed a few steps behind her. I had the time and calm to notice carefully her elegant shoes, cut in a fine line, I had time to watch her dress ornaments, and especially to study her hair, that princely curly hair, evoking gorgeous cultures, royal courts that once had fascinated me almost losing my mind.

I saw her going into a two-story house on one of the old streets of Alexandria. A nanny dressed in black and white

opened the door, I saw it very clearly with my own eyes, as clear as possible, in those moments everything in my being was sober and lucid, too. I walked a few minutes with hands behind, lucid and strained like an arch in front of the old and beautiful villa, more Western-looking, baroque, then I decided to ring the doorbell... I climbed the stairs with tendrils of ivy and light green streams of dust and moss. When I reached the door, I had a sudden revelation of massive worn-out rotten wood... What seemed to be a bell was nothing but rubbish that didn't resemble this object at all. I knocked on the rotten door. First quietly, slowly, respectfully, then increasingly louder. I came to myself when I realized that I was about to break the hinges of what once was a beautiful door, carved in oriental patterns. My eyes slid along the wall, the wall gave me convincingly the same impression of the old, long abandoned house. I went downstairs worried and looked at the strange house more carefully. The roof seemed to convince me of the same thing.

Then I went and rang the doorbell of the villa next to the house where had entered and disappeared the woman who seemed to be a divine illusion of raving beauty. An illusion, that's all. I managed to talk to the old man, who must have been an Egyptian official for he could speak English quite well. He explained me, with a respectful and sedate tone, that in the house next door, before the war (at that time I didn't realize which war) had lived an English dignitary. Since he left, the house has always remained uninhabited, and therefore it was in such a poor condition, ready to collapse. It took me a long time to convince him that someone entered the house. That I saw with my own eyes someone entering and disappearing into the house.

The old man stared at me in disbelief, then look slightly disturbed by what I said as convincingly as possible. His idea was that, if it was true what I said, in the house a criminal was hidden. In no way I could convince him that in the villa next door it was possible to live a lady of very good condition. He called his son and daughter-in-law, and together we returned to the house where I had seen her entering. We climbed all the steps of the house where once lived the high English official. It wasn't hard to push the door, which collapsed at our feet, raising dust and spiders from the corners and rotten floors. The picture showed us was really terribly distressing. Imagine, sir, an old house, from which the furniture and paintings had been taken, an empty house, uninhabited for decades. The wooden stairs, dressed in thick layers of spider canvas, were rotted, and the railing was broken and hung like a corpse stump. Dust and spiders flooded the floors and walls in thick layers, as well as the ceiling, and collapsed stairs leading to the first floor. I'd never seen so many spiders in my life, through the light coming through the door left ajar I could see hundreds or thousands of spiders, some as big as rats or like bats. Spider webs had grown as large as grass grows, as thick as creepers, making you see a sort of thicket, of bushes in the cobweb, of greenish-bluish color, rose, filling the entire room, otherwise quite large... I was petrified, with my mind lost, looking at the floor toward which once, the staircase was leading, now collapsed, covered with thick layers of spiders.

The old clerk understood that there is something painful to me. He was repeating mechanically, with a kind of gray hissing out of his throat, *"Haven't I told you, Sir? Haven't I told you, sir?"* The man looked at me with terrified eyes. *"This house has been uninhabited for a quarter of a century*

and more"... The idea that beyond the stairs above to the floor, by a miracle, things could look different, was stuck like a nail in my mind... I wanted to climb those stairs invaded by bluish layers, like waters, of spiders, but it was impossible, because in a moment, I saw them with my own eyes crashing down. The old man was right, on those stairs nobody could go up and there was no sign that any human being had passed through that place or hall. I left deeply disconsolate.

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And yet something inside me knew that the woman I had seen was her, it was a certainty hard to explain, but a deep certainty, beyond the conclusion of any argument. But if I was angry at something, and it was quite logical to be grieved, it wasn't that I hadn't found the house, but the awful fact that I was close to her and she knew it, but she gave me no attention. I'd gone for her side, she turned her face to me, I watched her carefully but she made not the slightest gesture of attention, of recognition. From that day the old capital of Egypt seemed a closed city, mysterious and inhospitable... I was starting to get angry with the noisy and dirty mess of this civilization... I told my captain I intended to return to the country as fast as possible.

I had to visit the pyramids that I had thought of and extremely wanted long time ago. It was a sunny day, a refreshing breeze was blowing, stirring now and then the desert dust. I arrived near the pyramid of Keops, I touched it and I checked my pulse, I wanted to think of something as I had proposed, and the first thought was the bitter desire to go back home. The desert image, its valleys of sand, that

white-brick ground from which rose the strange pyramids, everything made me quake, feel myself a strange useless inert object, with no sense in time. I thought at one time that I had an epiphany, but I think it was just a sad gray illusion. I thought for a moment that everything I see exists beyond... A spatial and temporal beyond, but mostly a semantic one. In another world, of symbols, in a world where these objects seen by my retina were something else, had an entirely different meaning than we can imagine or understand today. A new upper and foreign significance, dark and overwhelming. In the evening I returned to Alexandria. The following day I left the port that in my youth seemed to be the heaven and the origin of culture on this earth, the earth of all the promises in the beginning and of all vanities in the end.

Up in Istanbul, we had beautiful weather, the calm horizon as a line of sweetened shadows soothed me, comforted me, and fed my spirit. In Istanbul, due to bad weather, we had to wait almost a month. I spent my time easily visiting Agia Sophia, minarets, synagogues, the old palaces of the Sultans, and places of historical interest. Someone who sees the ancient Istanbul or Constantinople can say only: Oh, immemorial ages that are gone. Empires are gone in this world as grass and leaves, and the poor man and the poor soul are not even an atom in the eternity of time. What the poor human being can do is remain dumbfounded before infinity, shudder, and sigh before the universe, filling himself, serene and Olympian, with the painful vision of his passage on earth.

After passing the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles I felt my soul peaceful. I knew that at home, my soul told me, things were good, I was missing a peaceful life, a place to sit and dream. Traveling without the respite required unbalances

your spirit, makes you feel alien to your own being, and especially makes you feel small and mortal in this world.

On those nights when we returned to sea, like Ulysses, I couldn't have a deep and restful sleep. As you feel your body overcome by drowsiness in the days and nights when it rains. We arrived and as I expected, I found my parents well. In the early days, I kept expecting Iancu to appear and pick me up and go with the fiddlers behind us. But those days were long gone and the idea that Iancu was dead, after almost two years, when the world had forgotten him, was as vivid in my mind as when I'd shuddered at his terrible and horrible death.

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Since then my days have passed one after another, like other years, absorbed by merchant affairs, contracts, and sometimes by short travels I had to Bucharest, Istanbul, and Vienna. I took my son who was living at Iancu's manor in Iliești, and I brought him home, trying to take care of my children's education as best as I could.

Absorbed by chores and worries of everyday life that captivated me, especially because during that time I lost my father, I hardly realized when I found myself in the fourth decade. The economic crisis of the thirties gave me serious and difficult problems and I strenuously managed to recover after 1933... The years passed quickly, and, strangely, I felt a rush of aging on my face. As much as I could, I tried to stop thinking of the one who was gentle and beautiful Julia Alexandrovna Maronova, and of the one who appeared in my life shining more beautiful than any beauty imagined in the world.

“That was until last year, sir when I was in Vienna... I stopped thinking that I might have ever met her, as my father had never met the one who appeared in his life giving him all those years of love and wild happiness. I was in the hotel room, in that summer I stayed at the Hotel Royal, I suppose you know it, across the street from the old Opera. I was in my room, I was about to go down when I heard knocking on the door. I was told that a distinguished lady wanted to talk to me... How to explain, sir... As if it were telepathy, my thought was from the first moment on her. I was stupefied when I saw her... So many years had passed, now it was in the summer of 1938, and when she appeared for the first time in my life it had been before the First World War... She was the same. Unchanged. I felt my breath stop and my body froze. She was absolutely the same, sir... The same beauty, in front of which you feel in another world... The same sweet light on her divine charming face. The same mysterious smile that melts your heart. The same arms, the same grace that enchants you... She passed the doorway, then took a few steps towards me, waiting for me to get close... and meet her. She smiled serenely and brightly. Oh, Lord, just like then!”

“Is it you?”, I said. I felt a huge flame of great joy and excitement flooding me. She smiled and slanted down her head looking at me with love, bowing her temple to me. *“My God, how much I have looked for you, and prayed for God to show up in my way! I felt flustered and lost myself. For I know that you aren’t a mortal, a mere mortal in this world”*. She tilted her head smiling terribly sweetly. Then the expression of her face imperceptibly became sad, and nostalgic... I bowed and I thanked her gratefully for the love she had inspired me and had given me in my youth. For all

that ecstasy full of the painful charm she had bestowed on me... I really wanted so much to meet her.

"I've looked for you in Venice, then in Alexandria, I often remembered how we talked on that night full of magic, before our departure, on that strange journey. I wish I saw you again, I wish we met like then, sweetie", I heard my strange voice, as a soft sweet lament. *"Such love, let's live it once again."* She nodded her head and laughed softly, cheerfully, as an ethereal tinkling of glasses. I came close to her, I took her hand raising it slowly while getting lost in her eyes, and I kissed it. I invited her to sit down making a wide gesture with my hand and showing her the armchair, but she refused. She said she was only in passing... She knew that I stayed at that Hotel. She would remain for a short time... Then she spoke vaguely and puzzlingly (though I'd rather think that because of my euphoria, my overwhelming feeling of love I had already entered the trance as a sweet faint) about a troubled era of irrationality, about astral circumstances, but it was too difficult for me to understand clearly what she was talking about... I asked her if I had wronged my friend who died so awfully, the famous lancu Delamare, who today remained only in the legend for the older generations who had caught him... She confirmed that it was so, smiling me gently... yes, that's right... Then I looked sadly at her eyes. I wanted to say something, to retain her long enough to make her delay... I begged her to explain her secret, the secret of the world she was coming from, and what was this story. *"Why happened to me what had happened? Where are we going? Why was I the chosen one?... Why was lancu chosen? A warm silky ancient silence was reigning. She shook her head with the same mysterious childish dreadfully sweet smile. I wanted to ask and talk to her, I wanted to know more about my children, so*

special, so beautiful. Why have they looked exactly like Julia Alexandrovna Maronova?"

Then I asked her whether in the being of Julia Alexandrovna, such a tender and gentle creature, wasn't her spirit, but seemed not to hear me, not to listen to me, she seemed concerned with something else. For a moment in the hotel room, furnished so expensive, an awkward silence enfolded us. Then she said lifting her chin that she came to pick me up. So far she let me know to prepare myself... my children at home are grown up, and their lives will go forward as their fate is without me, I can now leave my fortune on their shoulders, though it would be better to find a good administrator, a reliable man to manage my wealth, and allow children to study... and again she repeated the idea about an era full of irrationality when in human history great misfortune would happen... She gave me a deadline to get ready... Also up to this term she told me to find you, sir, and tell you that her desire is to take you with her, too... That's why I've looked for you... To tell you her message and also to prepare yourself... In fact a very long time has passed since I'm telling you and now we find ourselves in another time and in another place, and as you know, the spirit knows no laws of space and time, as they are given to people... Now I leave, sir. *"Well, hey, hey... Hey", the storyteller sighed, "what a splendid and glorious adventure begins for us now! I've been expecting this moment for so long, all our lifetime we are missing the world of ideas when our selves will become light, energy essences, blue-happy – as my spirit was then. Knowledge is nothing but our relentless thirst and tendency, our propensity to the civilization of essence, of ideas, of our bright selves, our prototype, for it hath begotten us. And the pattern at the same time to which we always tend and always will become*

those eternal models, those archetypes, which we never get..."

Here I thought I heard the voice of Professor coughing, then writhing easily as if he have struggled. I clearly remember that I heard him say three times, *"No, no, no!"* When I opened my eyes. I saw him struggling with his hands, as does any man avoiding something. I jumped up terrified. I had time to see Professor's old hands with bluish-black thickened veins and how they fell and placed on his chest, then fell on his knees, while his lips struggled as if he wouldn't have had air or he would have wanted to say something. I jumped up and, of astonishment or maybe because I couldn't manage to get up, I was about to fall upon him... I held his hands and shook him to recover.

Later, when I was subjected to endless interrogations, I remembered that initially, I had had the idea to do artificial breathing. I shook every time calling him loudly a few times. *"Professor! Professor! Wake up, sir!..."* Then when I stood up, I saw the white light flooding the curtains and filling, coolly and clearly, Professor's vast library. The idea came to my mind immediately, I felt my warm blood flooding my temples, *"I should seek a doctor quickly, perhaps it's not too late, maybe it's a simple cardiac attack and he can be saved. He can recover, get out of clinical death."* I ran down the stairs like crazy... When I found myself in the street, I closed my eyes blinded by the bright sunlight. All I know is that, confused and protecting my eyes with my hand, I was asking for a doctor, running desperately in the street.

"A doctor, where can I find a doctor? In this house, a man is dying and I need a doctor! Who knows where a doctor lives nearby?" Someone took my hand and led me aside steps... When I opened my eyes I felt my retina painfully split, broken by terrible pains. I made an effort to keep my eyes

open and I realized that I couldn't stay with them so and see... A young man had run before me to bring a doctor, while people were crowding around me ceaselessly. I didn't even have air to breathe, so unconsciously I was making the gesture to stretch my neck and head forward like a wooden doll.

I could hear voices always asking: *"Which house? In which house? Where is he dying, sir? Who's dying?"* Then I saw the man, fat, sweaty, breathing hard, with his shoulder leaned by the weight of a black ragged suitcase, which must have been the doctor's kit... *"Who's dying? I am a doctor, I am a doctor, please take me there"*... I almost recovered from fainting. My legs and my hands were shaking... awfully... I think I mumbled something, but nobody heeded me, everyone looked at me like I was crazy or strange. We climbed the stairs of the old Professor's house... I entered the lobby. The coolness and penumbra hall smelling of chamomile and herbs to dry, made me well... Then we entered the huge Professor's library... I looked or rather I entered the room with my eyes scrutinizing the place where the Professor's body should be... The doctor stood in front of me a little more to the left, and I don't know why I saw him very frightened at the time. Then I felt myself what I would call the hardness of the being. I realized nothing, I understood nothing, heard nothing, I could figure out nothing. I think I didn't know what was happening to me and where I was.

Just so I could see that skeleton, exceedingly white bones (as if they were snow) and clean, and that grinning ironic and cynical skull. But I realized this much later when I recovered... In those moments, a vacuum of thought or simply a blocking of all my mental faculties, made me understand nothing, nothing at all. When the doctor started

to shake me, I realized that something unbelievable and terrible had happened. Realizing the condition I found myself in, he took me and put me in the armchair.

Meanwhile, the doctor became calm and sure of himself, I could see how he was moving feverishly... I think he felt himself the subject of irony. That I would have mocked him or something like that... He brought me a glass of water... When he returned, he overturned a pile of books, and the noise made me recover more. The doctor calmly lit a cigarette and sat on a stool in front of me. He was smoking tranquilly, with his fat rosy face, waiting to pass the time.

"Are you feeling better, sir?" I heard him after a while. *"Try to remember who you are, and whose is, or rather, whose skeleton was it?"* I heard the words clearly, as if they were some painful rays, cutting into my ear pieces of flesh. I realized it was a kind of hyperacidity, I could think, and realize, I knew who I was. If he had patience, in the meantime I think I would have found that calm after the harsh moments, through which a man passes.

"Who are you?" I heard again the metal strange voice of the doctor, and then I understood that he believed me crazy. I had to deny the charges and disassemble them... *"I realize"* – I tried to talk as loud and be as sure of myself, but my voice stuttered unbearably – *"You believe me crazy... Sir, I experienced a shock, I realize this thing and I'm trying to come to my senses, such a terrible shock. I realize, I realize that."* I paused to gather my thoughts and my very weak forces.

"I am Professor George Leordeanu, I think you've heard of my name, Professor of Psychology at the University of Bucharest. I think you've heard of me..." which was entirely true because I saw the man in front of me looking at me amazed and terrified at the same time. He looked at me with

wide eyes as if he had been in my place and had lived a shock.

“Professor”, I heard him, in turn making great efforts to recover, *“surely I’ve heard of you, you are very famous. I’ve read your books and articles in journals of Pedagogy and Psychology.”* A bitter leaden awkward silence ascended between us. But the fact, that the doctor recognized me, helped me a lot. Now I think that I was as calm as possible. I told him that I was Professor Dimitrie Drăghicescu’s assistant. Yesterday at noon, Professor Drăghicescu, who in the meantime had come into the country from Paris, called the university and asked me to pay him a visit in the evening. Anxious as I was to see him, I arrived at Professor’s house long before nightfall. I was eager to hear him narrating what was in Paris, and what was new in Psychology, Sociology, and Pedagogy. While talking, Professor Drăghicescu started telling me a very strange case, about one of his colleagues who had visited him two years ago or last year, *“I can’t remember well”,* at home, in the country, at Zăvoieni, where he was born. This colleague of his, whom he called... *Wait a minute, let me remember, yes, I think I remember his name, Alexander Vizantidis, and who lived in Brăila.”* So... Alexander Vizantidis sought out Professor Drăghicescu, at Professor’s parents, in his native village, at his domain in Vâlcea, where he found and told him truly extraordinary things, but entirely believable. Well, Mr. Drăghicescu, and I suppose you’ve heard of Professor’s fame and passion for storytelling, Professor Drăghicescu began to tell me what he had said to Alexander Vizantidis that night... He kept saying to me it was getting dark, hours passed, and midnight came... without interrupting the great sociologist who he was even for a second... And because he used to tell so beautifully and captivantly, and I was

greatly interested in what he was, and because, I confess, I wasn't sleepy for a moment... Oh, yes. At a time, it was too dawn, I realized that I dozed off. A kind of half-awakeness state, because while Professor was telling the story, I understood everything, everything he was saying."

"He was talking all night, all morning and meanwhile I slumbered deeply, I think. When I woke up, the person who was narrating through the mouth of Professor, I was convinced from that moment, as now I'm convinced that I noticed very well the difference between the two voices, and wanted to take the Professor with me. Professor Drăghicescu opposed and protested, which made me jump up... When I woke up, I thought it was too late. The Professor was dying or I think he was already dead. I tried to shake him, to cry, but I realized that he was dead. Then I got the idea to call a doctor, to leave the house and try to find a doctor. I went out stormy into the street, I didn't even know how I got out, I felt my eyes painfully struck, and my retina seemed to be torn by the too-strong light. In the meantime, you have been announced. I don't know who had announced you. I brought you into the house, as you know. We both entered Professor's library, where I had left him dying... Instead of finding him in the chair, even dead, as I'd left him when I came out horrified to call a doctor, when we returned, as well see, I found a skeleton... instead of Professor Drăghicescu's corpse, I found his skeleton. This one... I can't figure out what happened... I sit and think, trying to argue... Could the flesh on his bones have been volatilized so quickly? Could someone have replaced his corpse while I was out running in the streets to seek a doctor? Who might have done this and for what purpose? It's unbelievable, unnatural, and all illogical... I'm still amazed. As you can see. I can't give a clear explanation...

At that moment I turned my head and looked again at Professor's skeleton... I was astounded..... His bones turned yellow, his teeth were decayed and blunt, as if many years have passed since..."

The doctor who was listening very carefully kept watching me bewildered and terrified.

"Professor Leordeanu, when did Professor Drăghicescu call you?"

"What?... Yesterday. I remember very well. I was at University. At the secretariat. It was Professor Michael Ralea. There were so many people there..."

"So yesterday Professor Drăghicescu called you on the phone, at the Faculty, and asked you to visit him in the evening, right?"

"Exactly! And I came. I found him in this library, crammed with books, as you see, where he welcomed me extremely happily and cordially and was glad to see me. I stayed all the time in this chair where I am now, and he, in the chair where the skeleton is now... You see only skeleton. I don't know why it is so hard to understand..."

"I see... That's easy to understand and I take your word for it. But try to remember what date was yesterday?"

"Yes... Yesterday was Thursday, June 19, 1940... Professor had already come into the country two days before, he had written me from Paris about his arrival..."

There was a moment of silence, dry, sandy. The two men looked embarrassed for a moment.

"I see, I see... Professor Leordeanu... I remember that this case has been discussed a lot. That was in the summer of 1940... but now we are on June 21, 1945... Can you imagine?! Five years have passed... And Professor Drăghicescu really died, but not here in Bucharest..."

elsewhere... and he didn't commit suicide, as authorities said, but was shot by Russians..."

The End

WORKS PUBLISHED

1973. The volume of poetry "*Nicolae Labiş, a cosmogonic portrait*", 57 poems. Read full volume at the first meeting of the Flame Literary Circle, Bucharest, September 15, 1973.
1980. "*Biography of a Revolution*", the volume of reports.
1981. The play "*Laughter*" is played at the Majestic Hall in a memorable reading show performed by actors of Giuleşti Theatre, in the drama circle of the Department of Drama of the Romanian Writers' Union. Department of Drama Award of the Romanian Writers' Union in 1981.
1982. "*Heaven and mole.*" Play, National Award for original drama.
1983. "*Poems of the Danube Valley.*" Volume of poetry, Litera Publishing House
1988. "*How beautiful you pass through the world, woman.*" Drama, Theater Magazine, No. 8, 1988
1990. Play "*Laughter*", published in the "Political and Literary Dacia" magazine.
1992. "*Love Like a Bird*, short story published in" Anthology of Romanian Writers".
1992. "*Everything about Evaluation*" Romanian School Publishing House, limited edition, Tulcea.
1993. "*Ancestral Bottom*", the volume of prose, Inedit Publishing House.
1993. "*Happiness Comes Later*" volume of prose, Inedit Publishing House.
1993. "*Delirium, Volume II*", novel, won first prize in the contest organized by Express Magazine, "Who wrote the novel" Delirium, Volume II", the sequel to the novel "Delirium, Volume I" in the manner in which Marin Preda would have written."

1996. *“Mihai Eminescu – a Jesus of the Romanian people”*.
Essay, Inedit Publishing House
1998. *“Complete Dictionary of IL Caragiale’s drama”*, Conphis
Publishing House, Ramnicu Valcea
1999. *“Wisdom of Oedipus’ drama”*, Steaua Dobrogei Publishing
House.
1999. *“Positive Intelligence and Negative Intelligence”*, limited
edition, Casa Corpului Didactic, Tulcea.
2000. *“High poems”*, Conphis Publishing House, Ramnicu
Valcea.
2000. *“Hymns of Great Love”* volume of poetry, Harvia Publishing
House
2000. *“Caragiale Hugs Stalin”*, the volume of theater, Harvia
Publishing House
2000. *“Two staggering plays”* volume of theater, Harvia
Publishing House
2000. *“The Truth about Revolution. Essay”* Origins Almanac,
USA.
2001. *“Master Manole; The Climb, Volume of theater”*, Harvia
Publishing House
2001. *“The glory and greatness of the martyr Ilie Ilascu or
Bessarabia, Come home*, volume of poetry, Harvia Publishing
House
2002. *“Guidance of educational and vocational orientation and
self-orientation, Harvia Publishing House*
2002. *“We Pray to Thee, God!”* and psychotherapeutic volume of
religious and psychotherapeutic poetry, Publishing HARV.
- 2002 *“Mikhail Gorbachev, the greatest man of the twentieth
century, one of the biggest killers of mankind.”* LIR Publishing
House, Iasi
2003. *“The Morning Star. The psychoanalysis and philosophy of
this poem”*, Criterion Publishing House, USA

2003. Play "*Laughter*", translated into English, published in the *Asymmetry* journal, Paris
2004. "*Delirium, Volume II*" sequel of the "*Delirium, Volume I*" by Marin Preda. Fortuna Publishing House, Ramnicu Valcea.
2005. Play "*Caragiale hugs Stalin*" Special Prize of the Jury at „Bogdan Amaru" Theater Festival, Ramnicu Valcea.
2006. The novel "*You'll be the Sky Too*", Criterion Publishing House, USA.
- 2006 *The System of Coup d'etat of 1989*, *Origines Magazine*, U.S. and *Renaissance – Euro Observatory Magazine*, No. 4, Germany, December 2006.
2006. *We pray to Thee, O Lord!*" Volume of religious poetry, *Renaissance- European Observatory* electronic magazine, No. 4, December 2006, Germany
2006. "*And you'll be the sky too*", novel, *Renaissance European Observatory* electronic magazine, No. 4, December
2006. *A new interpretation of the poem The Morning Star*, by Mihai Eminescu, published in the electronic magazine *Renaissance Euro Observer*, No. 4, Germany, December 2006
2007. Novel "*You'll be the Sky Too*", Anamarol Publishing House, Bucharest,
2007. "*Saving of the human civilization*" Anamarol Publishing House, Bucharest,
2007. "*Paths of Life*" Anthology of Poetry, Anamarol Publishing House
2007. *Brancusi*, drama, published in the Portal journal *Maiastra*, Targu Jiu
2007. *Brancusi*, drama, published in the electronic journal *The Observer* in Toronto, Canada
2007. *Brancusi*, drama, published in the AGERO journal, Germany, *The Observer Magazine* in Toronto, and *Iosif Vulcan* journal of the Romanian Writers in Australia

2007. *Brancusi*, drama, published in the Euro-Observer Magazine in Germany
2007. *BRANCUSI*, drama, published in the AGE journal
2007. "Pygmalion or the Broken Wing of Scream", drama, Grand Prix of „Bogdan Amaru" National Theatre Festival, Ramnicu Valcea
2007. "Pygmalion or the Broken Wing of Scream", a bilingual volume published in The Observer electronic Magazine, Toronto, Canada
2007. Poems in the Anthology "ROMANIA From the SOUL", published by the Association ProBasarabia and Bukovina
2008. Second prize (first prize not awarded) for the comedy "COW, REVOLUTION and UFO", The "Bogdan Amaru" National Festival of Theater, Râmnicu Vâlcea, Fourth Edition 2009.
2010. "The children murdered in 1989 Spit us or I kill myself as a revolt against you, ROMANIAN PEOPLE!", Published in "Signs in balance" in Oradea. Prize for drama awarded by "Signs in the Balance" Magazine
2010. The premiere of the play, "Two Women Smart, crazy and As Mad as a March Hare", "Victor Ion Popa" Theater in Bârlad
- During the years 1990-2010 several novels plays and essays appeared in cultural magazines of the Romanian communities, such as *The Observer* in Toronto, *The Christian Europe* and *Agero* in Germany, *Iosif Vulcan* in Australia, "Destinies" the magazine of the Society of the Romanian Writers in Canada.
2010. In *The Observer* in Toronto, Canada appeared the English translation of the plays "*Master Manole*", "*Laughter*" and "*Pygmalion or Wing Screamed France*"
2011. Appeared the plays "*Laughter*" and "*Business*" in Phoenix magazine, Arizona
2011. In the "Destiny" Review of the Romanian Writers' Society from Canada appeared: "*Ways by which countries can emerge*"

from the current economic crisis VERY EASILY IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, without being diminished wages and pensions, without being increased taxes and with no Unemployment – an epoch-making discovery.”

2011. The play “*Laughter*”, translated into French and Italian, was published in the Catholic magazine “Mission Brussels”, in Brussels
2011. The bilingual Romanian–French play *Brancusi* in the Catholic magazine “Mission Brussels”, Brussels
2012. The comedy “*You, Wretches, Aliens are Coming*” received the second prize at Com Fest 2012 at National Festival of Comedy I organized by Theatre of Comedy in Bucharest. It is the 8th national playwriting award for Ștefan Dumitrescu
2012. Volume of poetry “*101 Poems*”, Biodova Publishing House, Bucharest.
2012. “*You’ll be the sky too!*”, novel, Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA
2012. “*FM Dostoevsky Commits Suicide at Bucharest*”, novel, Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA
2012. The novel “*Great Love*”, Cos Enterprises Inc..Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA
2012. “*The MURDER of the GREAT Martyrs of the Romanian People*”, novel, Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA
2012. “*PSYCHOTHERAPY AND EDUCATION THROUGH GOOD*” Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA
2012. “*THEORY of GOOD Revolution*” Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA

2012. *“Delirium, VOL II”*, novel by Ștefan Dumitrescu sequel to the famous novel *“Delirium, Volume I”* by Marin Preda. Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA
2012. *“Poplar on Hill OR SAVING IN GOD”* (romance novel), Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA
2012. *“Hill that never ends OR Myth of Sisyphus”* (romance novel) Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA
2012. *“Moonlit of Love”* (romance novel), Cos Enterprises Inc. Publishing House, Silverside Rd, Ste.105, 3214 Wilmington, DE 19809 USA. These books can be found and bought from online bookshops: AMAZON (www.amazon.com) and BARNES ET NOBLES (Google-Barnes et Nobles)
- 2013 *“Balcescu Waving”*, volume of poems, Cultural Harmonies / Armonii Culturale Publishing House, Adjud, Vrancea
2013. *“Ways by which countries can emerge from the current economic crisis VERY EASILY IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, without being diminished wages and pensions, without being increased taxes and with no Unemployment – an epoch-making discovery.”*, Cultural Harmonies / Armonii Culturale Publishing House, Adjud, Vrancea
2014. *“Feodor Mihailovici Dostoievski Suicided in Bucharest”*, novel, eLITERALURA Publishing House, Bucharest
2014. *“IOAN CRISAN and PAUL GOMA, Two Huge Dissidents”*, essay, eLiteratura Publishing House, Bucharest
2014. *“Great Love”*, novel, eLiteratura Publishing House, Bucharest
2014. *“Too Deeply Hurt Me, Woman”*, novel, eLiteratura Publishing House, Bucharest



**[...] By his
entire work,
Stefan Dumitrescu
joins the
universal triad
Mircea Eliade,
Eugène Ionesco
(the author of an
original drama of
great value)
and Emil Cioran.
Dumitrescu
is an essayist of
substance,
with an
astonishing
power of
analysis and of
re-interpretation.
[...]**

Professor univ. Dr.
Francesca Pini,
literary critic

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