

## Spadò's Game

MMXV

by Augusto Scano, english translation by Chloé V. Ercoli Bannister

1

If we decided to understand that the only way to really travel is to travel in time and that this starry sky and all these galaxies and universes that we have everywhere around us are nothing more than the image of our past and our future and that we, from all those worlds, are doing nothing but looking at ourselves in the mirror...

2

-Alberto, can you hear me?

-Yes, but...

-But?

-But I can't see you...

-Never mind

...I can't see anything but this white light...where am I?

-In hospital.

-In hospital?...Am I sick?

-Don't think about it now, Alberto, just think about relaxing now...

-Relaxing, ok...but how? What do I have to do?

-Tell me about something, if you want...

-Something?

-Yes, about your life, for example. The life of Alberto Spadolini...

-Alberto Spadolini...that's me, but who are you? I can't see you...

-Really don't you recognize me, Alberto?

3

"Into your eyes gazed I lately, O Life: gold saw I gleam in your night-eyes, my heart stood still with delight" Thus spoke Nietzsche. "Twice only moved you your rattle with your little hands - then did my feet swing with dance-fury." Thus spoke Nietzsche, once again. While Alberto Spadolini, lying in bed in his hospital room, in Paris, in 1972, with his liver cancer and his sixty-five years of age, muttered a few words from his mouth and these came out as a whisper, through his anaesthetized lips...

"My feet swing with dance-fury...

my feet swing with dance-fury...

my feet swing with dance-fury..."

Thus spoke Alberto Spadolini, together with Nietzsche and with Zarathustra, and he thought he could smile, to have been able to repeat those words and their echo inside the memory and the mind of someone, constantly, somewhere in some distant time. Unattainable. At the age of fifteen he arrived in Rome. Alberto Spadolini, in 1922. In September 1922. Why. Fifteen signs of the zodiac. Fifteen knights. Fifteen apostles. Fifteen...

4

-I was fifteen when I arrived in Rome...

-Well done, Alberto, there, tell me about your life...

-I was fifteen...

-In 1922?

-In 1922...I'm fifteen. In Rome.

-I put my feet in shoes that are too big on legs already covered in muscles. The derangement. The body undergoes a disfiguring push, irresistible, enlivening. Painful adolescence. Vertigo of hope.

Scary age yet mourned and dangerous. Changes. A long instance made of many violent instances. A chemical revolution...enough...

5

In the afternoon there was a rehearsal for a show on Pasolini. I wrote the text for Paolo. Paolo is the director. And he's a friend. The rehearsal was held in the theatre of an old abandoned religious centre. Correction: nearly abandoned. Everything is nearly abandoned. Waiting for the Barbarians? Once again? Maybe. Or maybe we are the Barbarians. Almost. I call Paolo "The Ferrari Engineer" because he sits there trying to get this engine to function, which is not a Ferrari engine, but that of a runabout (when he's lucky). He tries and he manages to get the theatre "machine" working, in a world where nobody gives a toss about the theatre, not even those who actually do it. Imagine the rest. But he tries. And, sometimes, incredibly, he even succeeds. This is the reason why, whenever I can, I write scripts for him and his troupes, scripts such as that on Sciascia, Francesca from Rimini or this one on Pasolini. Melodramatic. The rehearsal. Pasolini is melodramatic. And I flee from everything pathetic. For as much as my human being allows me to. You need courage to consider yourself a poet. And to say so without embarrassment. You need modesty to discover the beauty of things. Beauty, no, she doesn't have modesty. Dressed or naked she's always a beauty. So at least, let it be us to blush when we uncover her or when we cover her... I get home way after midnight and stop in the garden, looking around. The phone rings. It rings, rings, and rings again. I go and get it where I left it: on the table, and it stops ringing. Whoever it was, called with a restricted number. And wasn't patient enough. I go back out again. I must mow the lawn. One of these days. I have to mow it again. Once again. The grass is really high. It grows. And it grows quickly. Pasolini, the pop icon, like Marilyn or Che Guevara, try to explain to the public the difference and the significance of the three...the phone rings again. I go back inside. I get there in time. I slide my thumb along the screen and listen...nothing. Someone's on the other side, but doesn't speak. I sigh. And (whoever it was) hangs up.

6

-Alberto! Come here. Get off the road! It's full of carriages, can't you see?

Rome, eternal city of disappointed promises. History's prostitute. Of all histories.

-Alberto! I told you to get off the road! Are you listening or not?

Alberto is fifteen years old. He's looking at the horses, their wet nostrils, the veins visible through the skin, they pull the wagons and the wheels make noises along the cobbled streets. He sees the trail of the various scents. Pungent. And very sweet. The colours of the scents. Clangs in the ears as well as the breathless hoarse shouts of the wagon drivers. Voices of women selling fruit, vegetables and eggs on the sides of the road blend in with the noise, next to stands with wooden roofs and men drenched in blood driving away flies and cutting meat butchered just a few hours earlier. Livestock up until a few hours ago. Big hands. Cut up by many wounds. Scaly. And one butcher had a big scar on his cheek. Alberto notices it and is even more enchanted. Along that white road that marks the man's red face, Alberto loses himself and forgets... remembering, he instinctively opens his hand. The hand of a boy that is turning into the hand of a man. Chrysalis. Who knows what strange fate. The scar on the butcher's face and the line on Alberto's palm. The line of destiny is between the heart and the mind, parallel to the life line. A twin line, yet another.

-Alberto, I said; come away!

Everything reaches Rome from the countryside. The countryside can be seen at the end of the boulevard sided by trees; down there. Far away. Yet very close. One can reach it in a run. Voices. Shrieks. Neighing. Percussion of wheels on the ground. Percussion of words fill out the air that...is all sky. No noise. But rhythm. Pulsation.

"My heels reared aloft, my toes they listened, - you they would know: has not the dancer his ear - in his toe!" Always Nietzsche; obsessive and compulsive!

-Alberto, come away! Don't behave like a child!

*Child.*

*Child.*

*Child.*

The words pronounced by his father echoed in his head and woke him up...no; they put him asleep again and Alberto moved away from the road. Alberto reached in two steps, two long swift leaps, the banks of the river he swam in. The river christened him to a knowledge that he had not yet realized, but that would present itself again, obsessively (as well)... he's fifteen, for heaven's sake! Fifteen signs of the zodiac. Fifteen knights. Fifteen apostles. Fifteen... "I am truly weary of it, ever your sheepish shepherd to be. You witch, if I have thus far sung to you, now shall you - cry to me! To the rhythm of my whip shall you dance and cry! I forget not my whip? Life!" Nietzsche always repeats, always hidden, damned loony, somewhere out there, out of time...

-Alberto, what's wrong with you?

-Nothing, I was distracted.

And his father's hand squeezed Alberto's. They walked together. Inside the crowd at the market. Inside that morning of September. Inside 1922. So Alberto lets him be, once again, just for a little longer, for a few very short hours, the guardian of his destiny.

7

-...Child.

Child.

Child...

The words pronounced by my father echoed in my head and woke me up...no; they put me back to sleep again and I moved away from the road...

-And then? What happened after? Alberto, can you hear me?

-It happened that my father took me to the artist Giambattista Conti and told him "my son Alberto would like to become your apprentice", this is what happened...

-Was it there where you learnt to paint?

-Yes, I learnt there as well, but right now...why can't I see anything other than this white light, where am I?

-I already told you Alberto, you're in hospital...look at your life...as if it was painted on canvas... "in a painting one must see the freshness of the air, the lightness of the clouds, as if looking out of a window..." you said that, right?

-Yes, I said that.

8

Thus spoke, once again, Alberto Spadolini, lying on his bed, in the room of a hospital, in Paris, in 1972, with his liver cancer and his sixty-five years, and once again, he thought he could smile while remembering when he swam in the Tiber, feeling he was swimming, once again, against a strong current that was pulling him towards the sea...once again.

9

A poetess called Margherita Guidacci. I met her when she was old and dying. She got up all hunched on the stage of a theatre in Trastevere, where in an afternoon of far too many years ago, Paolo Perugini decided to read her verses. Today, my memories drift towards her because the hospital rooms where we might end up dying in, if the Gods aren't generous enough to allow us to die in the centre of the moment in the midst of our battle... the hospital rooms where we could end up dying in, are all the same. And could have the same curtains from which a slight ray of light passes until our darkness arrives, the same curtains that Guidacci resembles to Jesus's rib cage: flypaper on which all the pains in the world, all our pains, die... despite tossing and turning slightly.

10

To be accepted, the artist must play along. The artist must recognize towards the world dignity in civilization. And this, if the artist is honest, which is the only way for an artist to be, he can't do.

Therefore, the world forgives the true artist only after he is dead, better still if he's been dead for a long time, because if we were to meet him alive; we would either be scared or feel horror. The true artist sends out to the world an objective image of his nothingness and of his hypocrisy, dull and also guilty hypocrisy.

So when you bump into the usual "idiot" who raves about or lavishes contrite ecstasy or static contritions and begins by saying, just before speaking about an artist that has been dead many years, even centuries, the unmissable "I loved him" or the inexorable "I love him", do the artist in question a favour and tell the "idiot" to fuck off. It is not possible (and maybe it should not be allowed) to love a true artist. You may admire him, honour, venerate, but not love, no. True artists, in the best of cases, are hateful beings. And always glacial. If you've met Dionysian ones, don't be fooled. It is a fire of ice. They are indeed fire, but not the sort of bonfire one would sit around singing stupid songs during a boring summer's night wasted with trivial people who have fuck all to say...no, the Dionysian are volcanoes, unpredictable volcanoes that burn you suddenly or poison you in your sleep... with their deadly breath...with their fire of ice.

11

-What a bore these fags in love with their mothers are!

Dario Punzoni used to say. He was my mentor during my youth. The first and the second youth. My philosophy professor at high school. My blind friend. Who used to walk about the house avoiding piles of books, which I used to borrow from him and then we would discuss them. Unusual books. Hardly read and much less studied. Forbidden. But too beautiful and rich for the ignorance of our times to be able to destroy them completely. So then. 30 years ago. Today I have less faith. I start believing that ignorance of time, and more so the scholarly one, is winning by far its "dirty" war. The one everyone called Daredevil. Dario Punzoni. Daredevil was also a bad teacher for me. Can it not be that way for a true teacher? But not only. He was politically incorrect, that's true, up to the most painful truth of things, capable of making you look at the world in a different way from that which conformism imposes at every period. Conventional bigots, however this may be. And always warm. Sloths. Always moderate. Because of their common sense. For concrete and not admitted cowardice. Fierce and caustic sarcasm had our Daredevil. Desecration of every taboo. Free thinker. Son of the Enlightenment. Truthfully and not just as a pose, like everybody else does nowadays. Fascists of antifascism. To say it exactly in Pasolini's words.

In short: Daredevil, a Man and, a man without fear. His funeral is today. And I'm sitting here waiting. I'll go after the ceremony in church. Directly to the cemetery. I don't like churches, I prefer theatres, they are more sincere. And cemeteries, regarding sincerity, have no rivals.

12

I'm plagued by the gloominess of the world that despairs me, irradiating it towards anyone who tries to comfort me; Lucifer's gloom can suck my dick, but it's not even that good at it.

13

What a bore these fags in love with their mothers are!

One of his lessons at high school started like this. And then he explained to us the recipe with which Atreus, father of Agamemnon, had cooked the sons of Thyestes and had served them at dinner for him to eat. The sons of Thyestes and the brothers of Aegisthus. Let alone Hannibal Lecter. And he continued to tell us few about it, those of us who went to visit him at home, in the evenings and...

-...So Aegisthus, shags Clytemnestra, the wife of Agamemnon, too Cretan to be his wife, as the Italian saying goes "wife and oxen from your own town" and helps her kill Agamemnon, but, soon after Orestes arrives, son of Agamemnon, who without indulging too much, without philosophising too much, kills his mother and her lover Aegisthus...

He told us that time, and we all listened holding our breath, even the most stupid had "listened"...those were lessons, fuck it! But why have I remembered them just now? Right now, after all these years? Maybe because Dario is dead, why otherwise?

-Nothing to compare with Hamlet, too modern, his approach to the problem is tragic, but too modern. When you become a man, after having overcome the forest, and you go home as a worrier, you cannot but hate your mother who reminds you of the inauspicious times when you needed her womanly care, sticky and sickly care... And even the same Aeschylus, my boys, is already too modern. He speaks of a world, the Achaean world, which had past eight centuries earlier. A world that he, almost, does not comprehend any more. Theology has already become aesthetic. Greekness, my boys, don't trust fifth century Greekness before the Christian era, admire the 13th century one, before the Christian era. And the same goes for Romanity. Admire the archaic one. Of the Greeks admire the Greekness before their philosophy. And of the Romans, their Romanity before their laws. Philosophy and law, are the crutches of an already dying and decrepit civilisation that limps plaguing the world with modernity...

He used to say. The bad teacher. He used to say. The good teacher. And we, and I, we used to listen. But what now? We no longer exist. Now... After all this life passed? There is only me. The telephone rings. I go to get it. I answer but I stay silent. On the other side as well. Silence. I hang up again.

14

To restore my situation, at least the economical one, at least that one, I often thought about trying to sell to an eccentric millionaire the idea of a funfair, where visitors could choose to live for a brief period of time or a long one of their life in a precise historical period. I'll explain: the reconstruction of each "pavilion" and, therefore, of each single period, would've been taken care of, with scrupulosity and maniacal vigour, by teams of historians, anthropologists and psychologists to rebuild, not only the appearances of those past worlds, but also the mental shape, what they used to feel and the individual and common beliefs, the laws, costumes and superstitions, anyway, everything that would have determined the thoughts and the way of life in which these people would have moved their hands... Real worlds, in the flesh, where actors would've been obliged to study and be professional, a rarity today, and to stay *in situ* for many years. But I didn't manage to persevere with this project either, maybe because I never met a millionaire to suggest the "invention" to; certainly because no millionaire is eccentric enough to listen to a loser like myself...

15

Writing with a pencil. While waiting for the morning. After all this time. Just like at the beginning. I listen to Debussy. Incense. I look at the smoke. The dog sighs next to me, we are sitting together on the same sofa. We are floating on the waves of this music. As if on a boat. The open windows and the curtains filling like sails with each gust of wind. Sails. The curtains that cover the portico of the garden. Coloured sails covered in elephants. Yanez de Gomera. And silence. Between the rarefied notes of the piano. Suspension, epiphany of rain mixed to the vapour of humidity and everything... for an instance... Stops without wind, without movement. Then, cheerful, but not too much, surely from afar, the chirp of a sparrow next to the roses and... the noise of the washing machine that starts its spin-dry cycle. It will be a funeral with rain and sun. The funeral of Dario Punzoni. I already know. The small mirrors of the infinite drops of rain hitting the rays of the sun going down will reflect the faces, even my own, the faces of the many and of the few friends. I already know.

16

After many years, on my bedside table, appears again "The Morning of the Magicians". The other dog, my favourite one, growls. Just slightly. Must have heard something. I would like it to be Dario's ghost who has come to give me his last private farewell, the intimate one, only ours, before I go and give him mine, exhausted, in public. It stops growling. "The Morning of the Magicians" talks about a better intelligence of humanity. I don't see it. All I see better is the deficiency. Talk about the Age of Aquarius. A demented Aquarius, arrogant, ignorant and thick, ah, and I was forgetting, without fish. But Earth doesn't seem round to those who walk on the planes, let alone to those who are at the bottom of a valley.

That book ("The Morning of the Magicians") always made me think, who knows for what analogy, about synchronicity. Jung. And I would really like to see it, at least once, even just the shadow of that world which we have around us that we can't see, that world that shows clearly all those connections that in appearance are not connected between them, beyond suspicion, enigmatic, with all the correlations they have, and instead, without any other possibility, the necklace of this life of ours, that world that clings, precious jewel, around our neck, although, irredeemably separating this way our head from our heart, that world that will remain in the dark, a drawing illuminated only by the flashes of lightning of the storms that unsettle our spirit and that, out of fear, we persist in denying. While, instead, the mystery is all around us. And, in truthfulness, it's actually not a mystery at all. We are the geometry. Agamemnon, Aeschylus. Or even better: Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. The heads. The heads of the myth. The forest of symbols. The forest that Jung tries to explore, tracing unsuitable maps, but plausible of synchronicity. The heads of the myth. I: a dickhead...

17

Mind and heart, friends, Holmes and Watson. The head and the dick. Or the monstrous Phalliccephalus! Who is between the two the faithful secretary of the other?

18

Synchronicity. Debussy. Debussy dies in 1918. But what does it mean?  $1+9+1+8$ ? 19? So? Enough! It doesn't work like this. No, really. It doesn't work here. Not now. My hands smell of dishwashing soap after I finished washing the plates just a few minutes ago. Lemon: it takes the grease away. Time is rarefied. Very long. After the funeral I have to go and look at two houses. I have to leave this one I've been living in for the past three years. Money. Dammit! I light up my cigar again. I'll have another few puffs. Italy. She still needs her Literature. Italy isn't even 200 years old. And she is already 3000 years old. Italy, the heart of Europe and the mind of Africa.

19

I think of a tragic comedy. An Agamemnon that returns from Troy and finds Aegisthus in bed with his wife. He closes the door. Goes back into the living room. He pours himself something strong. Aegisthus comes out, wearing a dressing gown. He goes to sit on a stool at the bar.

-I'm sorry.

Says Aegisthus.

-No tragedies, we're civil people. I hope you manage to give her the happiness that I didn't manage to.

Agamemnon says. And adds:

-Shall I pour you some?

Rain gives in. The sun comes out. It will be a sunny funeral after all. A sunset inside dawn. Horizontal rays. That enhance and give a soft colour to everything. And the colours are beautiful, even more beautiful... The noise gets closer and closer, in the garden, and further away, from the road and the buildings that surround mine. I'm smoking. The wood of the library lights up with some rays of light caressing it with "grace", not too overstated or vulgar. It takes me out of the darkness. I look at the books on the shelves. I have to put them all in boxes, for my relocation. Once again. Looking at them one by one, while I sort out the boxes, to reorganise them, once again, for the umpteenth time, in a new house, with a new criteria, neither alphabetical, neither by author or by subject, neither by period... So how? By synchronicity. Come on! There they are: my books. I know them and they know me, they know everything about me and me about them. They are all marked by my reading their pages, by my studies, notes and highlights, squeezed for their last truths and, maybe, the most hidden. The truths that aren't stated directly in the lines of the book, but in the others, in the lines of that other world that I don't want, that we don't want to see. And how much they belong to my thoughts and how much the shape of my mind is now based upon them... I

look at them and of each one of them I remember an image, a mental image. As if they were not books, but paintings. Better still: sculptures. Sculptures live. Statues of gods. Statua Dei. The Sun. And I look, how much I looked for without finding... I look for similarities in those "sculptures" with my own life. The significance is not evident, the absolute truth of things that has always been in front of my eyes which then I didn't want to see. The phone rings again. I don't even bother going to pick it up. I leave it there. To ring on its own. Until it gets bored and forgets...it stops, in the end all is silent...yeah right...it starts again...

20

Drops of piano. Debussy. I'm full of debts. One must loose everything to find oneself again. Mystical truth and truth of mysticism. I have debts with the State, unfair, considering how much I gave it up until now and what I got in exchange...and with the Banks, and here the injustice even becomes philosophical. But, especially, I have debts with life that, as the song goes, gave me a lot and still, I haven't been able to thank her enough the way she deserves. I'm always too distracted by myself and by my "longing", by my "dreaming" and by my "regrets". I would like (I would like-I would like) at least to settle one of my debts with life. I will not kill my last hope. Not her. I don't want to concede the stupid glory of sanctity bought through martyrdom. The dog, my favourite, starts barking again. Its louder. The other, the female, sits next to me on the sofa and lifts her ears up. It starts raining again, this time really heavily. Finally. My cigar has gone out. It will be a funeral with rain. I get up from the sofa. I look outside. In the garden a flower has blossomed on the magnolia tree. It's like wax, perfect and fragile, similar to heavily exposed life. Maybe the rain will melt it, as I wish it would also melt all the ideas I once loved and all the philosophies in which I lived in with devotion, because now they all seem so far away; something of which to smile about when I remember them with tenderness, and now they look like those loves that saw us young and that, despite pretending, we can no longer stand. I look at the clock. It's always late. I like it like this. I go and get dressed.

21

I get home drenched by the rain. I hate umbrellas and they know it. In fact, they break every time I need one. The appointment with the estate agent fell through because of the bad weather. The weather is too bad to judge a house, the estate agent decided, and I agree with him. The funeral was beautiful. Can there be beauty in a funeral? The funeral of Dario Punzoni. Daredevil. And if I learned something from that blind man, permitting that us men are really capable of learning something, permitted but not granted, then I learnt that you can find beauty everywhere: even in places and times and in the most unexpected beings. I'll explain. Even the most disgusting being, even the most squalid situations, even the most unhappy moments, have the potential of being beautiful. It's always about...being able to recognise it, and then, if we feel like it, we have the ability and the competence to measure its "level"; the hierarchy level to which that specific beauty belongs to, referring to a scale of absolute beauty. Judgement. It's the strongest software man has. One must have acquired knowledge of things to be able to formulate a judgement. Otherwise it would be just an opinion and someone a columnist, like cretins, which the world is full of. Have fun trying to distinguish one from another, I'm even fed up of cleaning my own salad! We must learn again to mistrust those who invite us to "not judge". Either they are cowards or in bad faith, two things that, in the end, are practically the same thing. To burn an heretic or crucify a messiah or stone to death an unfaithful woman can certainly not but create a better world, or mature a consciousness deeper in itself and its heresy, both of itself and its ridiculous yearning of salvation, its own and of its hypocrisy. The real law, admitting that any law should actually exist, should say "don't judge if you don't know". That would be acceptable. I could take that.

22

I feel tenderness for humans' pathetic being, especially when they dream of finding a purpose for their nothingness.

23

I take a hot shower. Under the jet of water I think about the funny old man that stopped me underneath the arch of the open gate at the cemetery. Less rain reached that place. However, you could hear the thunder and the vibrations of thunder, and the lightning striking the air with electricity. And there, slightly covered from the storm, underneath the writing which read "SCHOOL OF BETTER THOUGHTS", he said:

-Dario loved you very much. He was proud of you. And placed a lot of faith and hope in you.

-Who are you? Were you one of Dario's friends?

-Yes, we've been friends forever. In 1992 you gave a book to your brother, didn't you?

-What?

-Take this. It's my business card. You better go now, because I think that for today you've been christened enough with all this rain.

And, since I remained there, dumbfounded, under the rain, he ran out into the raging storm between the invisible sun-rays behind the purple clouds. And with two fast leaps (talk about an old man!) he jumped into a black Mercedes with a diplomatic numberplate. Bosnia, I think. Faith and hope. Who uses business cards nowadays? I mean personal ones. The accent... Impossible to guess, while usually I'm always capable of recognising the provenance of someone. Or better: he spoke Italian without any inflection of dialect. Only actors speak like that or foreign people who speak Italian very well. Angelo Cocles, the name written on the card. Oh come on! He might as well have written directly Gabriele D'Annunzio. How about that?

24

In 1992, I indeed gave a book to my brother. It's true. He decided to read it after 23 years, and in the end, he forgot it here at my house three months ago, when we last saw each other. Wearing my blue dressing gown I walk towards the largest bookshelf. Hermann Hesse. His books are on the third shelf from the bottom. But "The Glass Bead Game" isn't there. I turn the lamp on. No, it's not there. The thunder outside is really strong. The anger of Thor or someone else's. The point is, everything is trembling. Even my dogs are a trembling. We know how dangerous the anger of the Gods can be. We have learnt to pretend we don't know. In the other bookshelf then, that's where it must be. The one next to the window. I run through all the shelves with my eyes. Then with my finger, slower. It's not here either. I walk towards the library in the corridor. The cement shelves are closed with glass doors. It's where the older books are. Here they are more protected from the dust. As if books ever cared about dust... No. No Hesse and no Glass Beads. I go and look at the shelves in the bedroom and even the ones inside my daughter's room. It's empty now. My daughter is grown-up: at university, in another city and has another life. That's good. I care about my relatives only when I speak to them on the phone and I speak to them very rarely. Anyway, nothing of nothing. That book is not in my house. It's not here any more. I'm sorry because it was a present and because, at this point, my brother will never know how it ends... and because of the dedication...the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1992.  $5+4+1+9+9+2=30$ . What does it mean? Synchronicity. The structure of the sets. Drawing invisible circles that group things, things that have the same sense... The number 30. A magical number for Giordano Bruno... The disciples of John the Baptist were 30, Leonardo da Vinci paints the first "Virgin of the Rocks" with an Angel pointing at John the Baptist...the "Virgins of the Rocks" and here, we come back to Gabriele D'Annunzio... Angelo Cocles, but what does it all mean? It means that some arsehole, under the form of a friend, has stolen my book. Yes. But why? How can someone get in here? What with my molossers? My dogs... They look at me yapping and they're right. They're frightened. But the storm seems to be moving further away. So? What's wrong with them? They're hungry. When one's hungry, one's hungry. I go and get dressed and prepare dinner for my faithful friends. *Fedeli et impudichi...*

25

Anyone like me who is more than 27,000 years old can smile at all the bollocks told in school



books. Analgesic and narcotic sub-culture is taught and foisted from childhood to the most horrific old age.

26

Me and my dogs. In the garden. The ground is wet from the rain. Raindrops still dripping down from the leaves of the trees. There is a nice smell. Me and my dogs. They're eating. I'm not. I fill my glass with some red wine and that my friends Walter and Federica gave me the other evening. They are dear friends. Good wine. Strong wine. I drink, but I don't eat. I'm not hungry. The funeral and the lost book have taken my appetite away. I light another cigar and look at the sky and at the stars of the Big Dipper. There's nothing vague. Quite the contrary. I would say: with a wink! They seem ready to be courted. And to give in nearly immediately. It would be about time that at this point in my life, I decided to conquer the love of a star, or even more than one, and to possess it, or even more than one, and maybe, why not? Get one pregnant. Or even more than one. It would be interesting to see what the stars would be able to give birth to with the seed of a man with all my problems. Genetic problems, spiritual problems and economic problems. I don't have a penny, and I'm not even interested in finding any. I look down. The bowls are empty. The dogs have finished. I wash the bowls in the sink that's on top of the washing machine outside. I look at the stars again. They already seem less available. Now that they know about my economic situation they seem less interested in me. What about the moon? No, not the moon. She keeps smiling down at me. With a large white and full face. She seems to have got small ears. Slightly jugged ears. Had she been a squaw, her name would have been "moon-with-ears". In any case, ears or not: one can always count on the moon. Whether for one night only, or for a lifetime. She is always there. I finish the bottle. Good wine. Dear friends... Dogs... Moon... and I end up snoring on the bed.

27

I wake up when it's still dark. And it's not a way of saying of a spiritual master. It really is still night: deep darkness. Dark, very silent darkness. I try to turn the light on. Fire... what a gift or invention, think about it whichever way you want. Nothing. Black-out. The storm has done its job. Outside in the garden, water continues to flow through the grates of the drain. It's raining hard. But no more thunder. A well mannered monsoon, respectful of peoples' sleep. More bourgeois. I move into the obscurity. Towards the kitchen. Just like Daredevil used to. Well, I really wouldn't like it that my dead friend should manifest himself as a ghost right now. No. I'd rather not... The light comes back in a flash that suddenly illuminates the room... the first thing I see on the wall, making my hairs stick up on ends, is the head of man... wearing...underwear? Inside the mirror... It's me. In the end, I'm the only one, who rightfully so, I should really be afraid of.

28

I look for my coat. There it is. It's still wet. I take Angelo Cocles's business card out. Via Claudia... I try to read the civic number which the water has nearly made illegible... 30. Why am I not surprised? I put on a pair of trousers, a pair of shoes and a shirt. I take the house keys and the car keys and go out. It's stopped raining. The heat outside is torrid. I reach the car, I get in, turn it on and go. I look for a bar to have a coffee. It's still very early, but I find an open one. A really kind old man greets me.

-Good morning Sir, what can I get you?

I look around. Two policeman are having breakfast with a croissant and a cappuccino, standing up at the counter. A pimp is reading the newspaper sitting at the table with his whore who, standing, is looking at her watch eager to go home. A pensioner is playing at the slot machine. There are all the social types that still keep this country standing, the others, the less important, are either still sleeping or haven't gone to bed yet.

-Good morning. A coffee, please. - I reply.

I arrive in via Claudia at 6:00. On the dot. The sky is still covered with clouds and so the light of dawn does that usual mix of pearly grey colours which drown every other colour in the world. It's

like mist painted by painters when painters paint mist. With imperceivable tiny scales of gold. I can't even try to imagine the outline of the Colosseum at the end of the road. If this city is actually really Rome... For as much as I can see, down there, behind the milky screen, there could still be Nero bathing with his Poppaea in one of the pools of the Domus Aurea. I search the name on the door-phone. I really don't think that old man, that Angelo Cocles, seems like the type who gets up late. Angelo Cocles isn't written on the door-phone. And I'm not surprised... But maybe there is something... I mean: "maybe"...IMAGO is written on one of the plates. And I press on the brass button that's next to the word IMAGO. One, two, three, four, five... Someone opens the door. I push it open and walk inside the doorway. I don't bother taking the lift and I start walking up the stairs to the first landing where I start reading the names written on the doors of the various apartments. Nothing. I continue to go up. IMAGO is on the third floor. The door is ajar. Open, but ajar. I push the door and widen the ray of light that comes through from the house.

-Good morning. Mr Cocles?

I send my words through the opening of the door without actually putting my head through it.

-Mr Cocles?

A little bit louder. Not too much. I don't want to wake up the entire building. I push the door open, then open it completely. The corridor is lit with spotlights set inside the wooden floor. Wood that creaks as I put the first foot down. It looks like the deck of a boat. A boat for who knows what voyage. Deh! Used to say the poets. People from Livorno still do. Second foot. I'm inside. For a moment I'm sorry I'm not armed. But it's only for a moment. "Every object can be a weapon." My memory is the echo of the teaching I learnt by an instructor many years ago. Too many years ago. In fact, I rather miss not having a weapon, I feel nostalgia. Shameless nostalgia. But it immediately leaves me. Forwards. I continue. The doors are all shut, apart from the one at the bottom of the corridor which is open, so, creak after creak, I walk along the entire corridor. And I remember that it's not true that labyrinths can't also be in a straight line. Sometimes they are. And those are the most dangerous. The room is a library. It's covered in Pompeian red fabric and ebony panels. The rest are books. From floor to ceiling. And on the only armchair next to the only console resting on the only wall with no books, where the window is, is Angelo Cocles. He doesn't look like he's very well. Indeed, quite the opposite. I get closer. To understand the evidence of things that are not evident it is better to look at them from afar, but this time is an exception. I walk in front of Cocles and put two fingers on his neck. As I expected. He's dead. Even from the mathematical point of view. And I'm not surprised at all: with this metal wire tied tight around his neck anyone would have died. A very unimportant jewel, not at all precious, and not even desirable. Poor man. And poor murderer.

29

All the lights in the apartment are on. I walk around the rooms. Somebody must have opened the door from inside the apartment. But there is nobody inside. Apart from the body of Angelo Cocles. Whoever opened the door, the possible murderer, had the time to go up to the next floor, wait for me to get in and go down again, to then disappear through the streets of Rome, where everything has been disappearing for millennia. Or nearly everything. Providing that this city is really Rome. Permitted but not conceded. Everything is starting to look like everything else in an embarrassing manner. Even cities. I walk back to the library. I start observing the shelves. The volumes are not organised in alphabetical order, neither by subject, nor by any criteria that may result evident. I look at least for some relation or symmetry...nothing, only chaos...apparently profane. By chance, by fortunate chance, but probably not even that much, indeed, probably not at all... I find my book. "The Glass Bead Game" is here, sitting on one of the shelves, right at the height of my chest, of my heart, it's sitting between two philosophy texts: more precisely: mathematical philosophy. Books by authors that I don't consider at the moment, but that the eyes notice and the memory records, because this is what it does: it records everything and keeps everything in store, inside my little head that, one day, if needed, will produce a visual "document" and will show me, proudly just like

a dog that brings back the stick wagging its tail as a reward. *Vagheggiator d'encomio*.<sup>1</sup>

30

On the upper shelf, perfectly in line with Hesse's work, there is D'Annunzio's *Secret Book*. The last work of the *Orbo Veggente*<sup>2</sup>. The one published by D'Annunzio's alter ego, his last mask: Angelo Cocles. I pick it up and run through the pages. Looking for those last and always deserted square knowledges. But mainly looking for “who knows what” sign that I still can't guess. And, even though this book I have in my hands is amongst other things, the book of “the mind that comes less”, as the same poet describes it, I tried to make my mind not come less and to not give in to the obsessive feeling that I should hurry and leave as quickly as possible, before someone arrives and finds me next to the corpse of this old man... This book, apart from hiding the mystery in the rhythm that D'Annunzio gives to mysteries, to poetry and magic that he declares “not dissimilar”, already contains in the title “One hundred and one hundred and one hundred and one hundred pages...” the Tetrakis sign of the good Pythagoras (?). As a boy, I read D'Annunzio, but mainly I used to read Guenon. And even this is wasted in the study and the analysis of the protean symbology of Tetrakis, and with good results. So my mind, which still has not come less, at least not for now, drifts off to look for numbers. And finds them: the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1922. The date in which D'Annunzio was thrown off the balcony of his own house. The fascists? The famous “flight of the Archangel”. Difficult to believe that he committed suicide. D'Annunzio wouldn't have done that. He indeed loved Death and even searched for her, but never really falling in love with her, if not aesthetically, as he always did in his life, with everybody and everyone. And anyway, it's difficult to believe it (suicide) in a moment in which the political fever and its plots were more or less outlined and much less audacious. They would have lead to that fake revolution that was fascism. The flight of the archangel was certainly what “pushed” D'Annunzio to place inside his museum his last wishes to affect Italian history in a direct and immediate manner...But, apart from the numbers and Pythagoras, the direct line that from the top runs down from Hesse's book to that of D'Annunzio's, is the same that, still looking down this time towards the bottom, connects “The Glass Bead Game” to the “Virgins of the Rocks” also by D'Annunzio. I pick this book up as well and leaf through it. On page 30, I find 30 circles drawn with a pencil in an apparent chaos (them as well). With their perimeters intersecting and forming other figures. Every circle is connected with each other. One way or the other, they are connected. In certain cases, they only intersect in one point. But they are all connected. On the last page of the book, on the last two lines, the ones that read: **HERE ENDS THE BOOK OF THE VIRGINS AND THE BOOK OF GRACE BEGINS:** there's been written in capital letters, in what seems to be ancient black ink, the word: **SPADO**! I put the “Secret book” back in its place. I take “The Glass Bead Game” and the “Virgins of the Rocks” and I put them inside my coat and leave the place. While I descend the stair-case swiftly, I feel a strange night growing inside my soul, invading it and distancing itself from its usual nothing, tying it to something extremely concrete and dangerous for man. Inside my head I keep hearing a hymn that I can't recognise. An unusual melody, beautiful, but disturbing. As if the voice of a Demon sung words written by some God.

31

A friend of mine, a so called parapsychologist, for years worked as a consultant for the Police who use him for the most difficult cases. His characteristic was that he was able to communicate with the deceased. The dead spoke to him. They used to do it during a seance organised in the presence of the police and institutions. The weirdness (and not the only one) was that the women present were made to sit around the table on chairs that had holes in them. This was because the deceased usually spoke through the vagina of the women present. Chatty hairy mouths. More than one enigma found a solution this way. Until one evening a deceased spoke, as always, but as he had never done before, through the arse. The fart was not welcomed. Some of the notable people present were very

---

1 Translator's note: *vagheggiator d'encomio* means “one who yearns for praise”, in italian

2 Translator's note: Gabriele D'annunzio was also known as Orbo Veggente (one-eyed clarvoyant)

offended and my friend fell in disgrace. He was forced to go back to his old job: being a politician...

32

I'm sitting here, in the living room, trying to still my brain over the number 30. With Giordano Bruno, his Lullian works, I start hypothesising on the Clavis Magna, his lost work. I get to Leibniz, I go back to Anaxagoras, Nietzsche and arrive to John Dee and the Clavis Angelica that he writes for... the door-phone. Not categorical. But anyway imperative. The dogs growl. I tell them to shut up. In an imperative manner. So what now?

-Who is it?

-The bee's knees.

I recognize the voice. He is not called *the bee's knees* even though he thinks he is, since he became police commissioner and sorted out a few enquiries that had been on hold for quite a while, he even ended up on TV in some of those really sad programmes full of criminologists, psychologists, criminal lawyers, magistrates, journalists... dwarfs and dancers...

-I'll open.

-Hurry up.

He's aged a lot. I haven't seen him for about two years. Fame is devouring him. I remember him since he was a kid... He didn't even know how to build a bomb. I taught him everything. I was assigned to him and the others. I was sorry when he decided to "serve the State out in the open" as he said... entering in the Police. Maybe he was tired. Maybe he wanted a normal life. I saw many decide and choose a normal life. And then be disappointed, always too late, when they discovered that no life can be normal.

-Coffee?

-Thank you.

He replies. We go to the kitchen. I prepare the coffee machine. I twist it on. Turn on the cooker and put the coffee machine on it. Its arse is getting burnt! I prepare two coffee cups. Without spoons. Without sugar for both.

-So?

-What were you doing at that guys house this morning?

-Angelo Cocles?

-Okay, let's call him that...

-Look, he gave me his business card with that name written on it.

-When?

-Yesterday.

-Where?

-At an old friend's funeral.

-Did you know him already?

-No, never met him. Who was he?

-We've been following him for a while. He was trying to sell something big in the last few weeks...

-Was he a dealer?

The police officer shakes his head smiling. That's what he does. The coffee is bubbling inside the coffee machine. I turn the cooker off and fill the cups. We drink.

-The guy you call Angelo Cocles is an art trafficker. Quite a character. Mysterious and cloudy past. I believe that in his time, he used to work at the castle of Von Stauffenberg.

-During the second world war?

-No. Afterwards.

-So when Junger used to live there?

-I don't know about that. We're not interested in this aspect. We aren't investigating on the Cold War. I need to know if he spoke to you about something. Did he give you anything? Or did you take anything from there.

-I'm glad to hear that you didn't even consider the fact that I may have killed him.

The police officer shakes his head and smiles. He always does that. Again. He's always done that. Habits. Humanity's bad habits become inflexible in selfish and demented old age. Our habits devour us. Mine are devastating. They should make one think, had one the will to do so.

-If you wish to turn yourself in, or, to give me a hand, you know where to find me. Thanks for the coffee.

He gets up and walks towards the door. He stops and turns around. He hesitates for a moment then hugs me.

-Be careful, my friend. I can't help you more than this.

He warns me. He's sentimental. He hasn't forgotten that I saved his life twice. Or else, just like me, he must have had a sleepless night.

33

Six years have passed since Alberto Spadolini's death. We are in 1978. A crucial year for Italian history. And which one isn't? The opportunities... Lost in poetry... Found again in prose. Not even particularly pretty prose. Copied and full of rhetoric. Conventional, lawful, and very bourgeoisie. Banal and mediocre. And even more so, hypocrite and corrupted from the constant exercise of bad faith. So what? There is no chance of seeing a "representative of the people" different from the minister that Benigni depicts in Johnny Stecchino. When Benigni was still a comedian, satirist, before he also began to be himself copied, rhetorical, conventional, lawful, and very bourgeoisie... Anyway, to say it like Arbasino (another arsehole champion of cowardliness): the usual arsehole. In 1978 Marco Travaglini helps his aunt Georgia move out of her old house. And it's in the loft of the old house that Marco finds the box. The box with written ALBERTO SPADOLINI. SPADO'. His painter uncle, who died in Paris in 1972 from liver cancer, Marco doesn't really know much yet. In fact, when Spadolini dies, his house in Paris, an apartments overlooking the Champs-Élysées is "robbed of its furniture, books, documents, sculptures... an entire existence deleted!": Travaglini writes in his book "Spadò the naked dancer". Inside that box Marco finds "photographs, bill posters, books, newspaper articles, music scores, ballet show and art exhibition brochures from every continent...". To say it in his words. The loft. Lofts and their treasures. Memory treasures. Lofts where we used to play as children, and not without being afraid of the shadows of the old objects that were used every day by those who are dead, touched by their hands, and, with morbid curiosity, touched by our curious childish hands as well, that morbid curiosity. I say and I repeat: that curiosity given from life observing death...

34

I get my computer. I look for the email I received from Marco Travaglini a few months ago. There it is. November. During the days I was going around presenting my novel "in the name of the Rose and other flowers". Marco found a passage in my book where I spoke about some of his uncles' works and he wanted to know if those works were real or if they were fruit of my imagination. I replied that I had invented everything. So we thanked each other, said goodbye and that was that. Even though, looking at the last email better, it also has something weird. 30<sup>th</sup> of November. 30. Synchronicity. I send Travaglini another email. I ask him for an appointment to have a few extra biographical notes on Spadò. I tell him I intend to write a novel about his uncle. And arrived at this point, it's not at all out of the question. Travaglini is an exquisite person, very friendly. He expects me in Riccione, in two days time. More than tiredness, that state of somnambulism that I like calling "assonance" reaches me, and I fall asleep on my notes.

35

Gabriele D'Annunzio fell asleep and dreamt of waking up in a garden very similar to that of Villa Falconieri in Frascati, similar in everything, besides reality. Because beyond the final vegetable garden where he had imagined to build a school for supermen, a gym for holy and unique artists; an Art seed for a world governed by Artists. To resemble the substance of the soul. Beyond those walls are the Alps. The plateau of Europe. The promontory of the last age. Before the desert. In the

middle of the desert. And the tips of the peaks are the higher tribunes of this immense theatre. Blind and old he climbs up, he climbs up the cutting rocks with hands streaked in blood and reaches a rock moulded by the wind that welcomes him like a throne, it finishes him like a coffin finishes a body. And Gabriele D'Annunzio sits down and looks at the valley in the centre of the Alps and sees without seeing with his eyes, he sees the sea at the end of that scene. In the centre of those mountains he can see the sea; in the centre of that sea, that he sees without seeing with his eyes, he can see a young man dancing on that sea that rises on the horizon like a huge tall wave petrified in the dark blue and silence of dreams... So Gabriele D'Annunzio fell asleep and dreamt of waking up.

36

The phone call arrived at midday. Before answering, I noticed that there was a lovely sunshine outside. The phone keeps beeping and vibrating. An anonymous number. The ringtone starts its crescendo. I can't imagine anything else. No points of a record player inside my brain manage to get inside the trace of the vinyl LP on which my memory has recorded the best and the worst songs of my life, one of those where there could be a resemblance with this particular light of this particular midday, these perfumes and these sounds, and this horrible taste I have in my mouth... or any of these things mixed with others, passages of songs and rhythms that my memory, at this point, reproduces without truce, or piety.

The phone continues ringing. Insistently. And I give in. I run my thumb on the display and answer.

-We want the documents.

Voice of a woman.

-What?

-We want the documents that Angelo Cocles gave you.

-What are you talking about? What documents?

The woman hangs up. I receive a text message. A photograph of my daughter laughing outside her university. I recognize the background of the city of Pisa. My phone rings again.

-So?

Asks the woman. Or rather, at this point: the bitch.

-So what? He didn't give me any documents.

-Don't be stupid.

-How much are you willing to pay?

I try. Let's see what happens. The bitch laughs. A loud laugh. The laughter of a bitch, obviously. -We don't have to kill her.

I think of a Fantozzi film. It's funny how in the most delicate moments I think of films either by Paolo Villaggio or sketches by Giorgio Bracardi. The count Bracula. She shouldn't be so polite, she's talking about my daughter.

-Okay. But I need a couple of weeks to go and get them.

-Three days.

And she hangs up. How rude. What a bitch. Admitting that this thing of becoming prostitutes may still be considered as an offence. Given that the only thing left to legitimise is incest and paedophilia... Regarding cannibalism, I confide in the next encyclical. We are at stake again here. One of those stakes where I did everything to not be at stake. Now all I need to do is understand which documents these friends of this telephonic bitch want. Friends. It's easy to say friends. A real friend is one of those where you can turn up during the night, covered in blood and be sure he won't call the police, but he'll give you time to wash and get your breath back, without asking anything. The rest is just people whom to go and eat a pizza with, and talk about boring predictable things, otherwise they become alarmed. The Police. Maybe they're keeping my number under control. Maybe. I call my police friend.

-Who is it?

He asks. He hasn't recorded my number in his contacts. Obviously.

-The bee's knees.

I reply. I ask him if I'm already "under attention" and if he can tell me anything about the phone call

I received 10 minutes ago.

-I'll let you know.

I go and take a shower and bring my phone with me. I put it on top of the toilet seat. It stares at me while I undress and wash. I stare back at it. We keep an eye on each other. I cover myself in soap. White musk. I rinse and turn the water off. Get my dressing gown, put it on and go out. Friends. At the end, if I consider those I can really call friends, after all these years and after all this life, I have a very bizarre list of friends, extremely bizarre. My real friends are:

- 1) a Mafia boss with large interests in Las Vegas;
- 2) An ex BR<sup>3</sup>;
- 3) A Nazi who I believe being a Mossad agent;
- 4) A CIA agent who I believe being a Nazi;
- 5) A Police commissioner.

This synthetic and cruelly sincere list does not console me. In fact, far from it. But that's the way it is. The door-phone rings.

-Who is it?

-The bee's knees.

-Come up.

-Is everything okay?

He is referring to the fact that I'm still wearing my dressing gown.

-Yes.

He insists.

-Are you sure?

-Of course. I haven't sliced anybody up. I just took a shower.

-Ok, sorry.

I invite him to follow me to the kitchen for another coffee.

-So?

-So, as I expected, it's a big deal.

-So you couldn't access the data?

-Exactly. It's all secret. Orders from above.

-The ministry?

-Don't talk bullshit. You know that the ministry doesn't account for anything.

-The Americans?

-Or the British.

We drink our coffee. Before he leaves, he can't resist and says:

-If you want me to help you in this business, you have to tell me something.

I look at him in the eyes.

-Let's do this! I won't tell you anything, also because I'm convinced we're already on Big Brother...

And I move my index finger as to draw a spiral in the air.

-...But I'll write everything down and if I die, before dying, I'll leave everything I wrote in a place that only you know, do you remember?

He thinks about it. His eyes light up. He remembers.

-When you find what I'll be able to put together before they kill me, you can decide whether to destroy it or make it public and, after that, you will commit suicide.

-Okay. But you try not to die.

-I'll do my best.

37

Claude Debussy fell asleep and dreamt of waking up with a butterfly on the tip of his nose. Beautiful. As if made of silk. Japanese. And the butterfly whispered right between his eyes: "It's

---

3 Translator's note: A member of the Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse), the Italian terrorist group founded in 1970

nearly 1889.” And flew away. And Claude Debussy got up and started following it through the halls, the great halls of the museum... Until he thought he had lost the butterfly and rested disconsolately melancholic on one of the walls, the same wall where the painting of a beautiful happy girl was hanging, and she, seeing him, immediately stretched out of the picture frame as one would lean out of a gilded balcony from the sky, as one would lean out through a golden aura of corresponding light...and she told him to go and look for the lilies that grow on the sea.

“But; what about the butterfly?” Debussy would've asked the happy girl if the wind had not insisted in pushing him towards the main door of the museum which opened on the sea. A sea in the centre of very high mountains. At the centre of the Alps. A sea that was the centre of a theatre carved in rock. On that sea, Debussy saw a young man dancing to the perfect music and he seemed to be jumping so high that Debussy would have sworn the young man was capable of flying... And Claude Debussy fell asleep and dreamt of waking up...

38

I feel like phoning my daughter. But I resist. I call her so rarely that she probably wouldn't even notice. And thank God they didn't blackmail me over my dogs. They are the only ones who I allowed myself to feel anything that resembles anything like a human feeling. If you exclude the moon. The one with the ears. I would love her, if I was capable of loving. However, in some way that I ignore, I feel affection for my daughter. Despite the fact that she is not what I would've wanted her to be. But which son or daughter is? I feel compassion. A little bit Buddhist and a little bit Christian. Mainly extraterrestrial. Compassion is the only feeling that, when I am in a good mood, I managed to give people. It's funny. Despite all my exercises to desensitize and my own nature, which is already rather unaffectionate, there is however, even inside someone like me, something human. I can't do anything about it. It depends on the body. The fact that we have a body in bone and flesh. When we will be able to move inside a machine or in an artificial neural network, then this problem will be solved as well; at the price of creating other problems which will be far worst, and will never be resolved. Anyway... I want to find a way to get out of this situation. Especially without anybody getting hurt or worst... Especially if this anybody has my same DNA. If not a spiritual one, a biological one. But I would even do it for someone I didn't know. I've already done it. In fact, today I am alone. A loser. But that's okay. I can't stand it when they involve people that have nothing to do with their business. They always do it. I've always been irritated by arrogance. Arrogance of the stronger towards the weaker. Arrogance of weapons. Arrogance of power exercised with the complicity of cowards, codes of silence, corrupted, and cowards, codes of silence and corrupted are the majority. The majority that decides for the government, the superficial government, obvious, fake; not the secret, real, concrete one of a Country.

The majority. Free elections. Taking advantage of the incompetents. Free will. The serpent is too intelligent for the woman who just wants to eat an apple. Maybe it wasn't always like this. Maybe it will not always be like this. But that's enough. I must concentrate on something to resolve this mess and give those pieces of shit what they want. Concentrate. To do it I need to distract myself. That's the way I work. I must “empty my balls to fill my mind”. I'm sure this is not what the poets say but for sure, poets don't tell the truth. I'm going to go look for a prostitute.

39

And Hermann Hesse fell asleep and dreamt of waking up. He looked at the backpack on the bed and touched his legs. His legs were hurting him. He was too old. He could never make the trip on foot. Up to the feet of the Alps. Then he saw the wardrobe and remembered the gift that his good friend Carl Gustav Jung had given him. He opened the dark wooden doors and smiled. There they were. The two new legs that Jung had given him. Oh dear: not really that new. In reality, they were two old tree trunks on which sorcerers had carved the faces of the Demons and of their Gods: totems: wooden totems. Oh dear: not really that wooden. Because Jung, his good friend, before giving them to him, had had them reinforced. He had taken them to that old teaser of Einstein, who had put inside the two tree trunks, inside the two wooden totems, a nice pair of atomic engines. But Hesse



didn't stop to think too much about that. He took those beautiful carved legs and put them on as one does with a nice pair of elegant trousers. He put the backpack on his shoulders and left the house running. Younger and stronger than he had ever been. With a few strides, he found himself on top of the Alps and here, on one of the highest peaks, he sat contemplating the sea that was down there, and right at the centre, he immediately saw a young man dancing on the sea, in the centre of the sea that was in the centre of the Alps and Herman Hesse fell asleep and dreamt of waking up...

40

While I return home, on foot, I walk along the river. I walk slower to look at it better. Smoking my cigar. I avoid looking at my watch. The river is beautiful. Despite everything they've done to it. Suddenly, neither eternity nor the dead seasons occurred to me, but rather, it occurred to me that the Filipino housemaid, Dario Punzoni's caregiver, the other day at the funeral told me to make sure I went to pick up a present he had left her to give me (how many things to make sure about around a dead man!).

41

I should be like Ron Hubbard or like all those that accept the stupidity of the world and put up with it, taking the piss out of it and giving it a religion or a political ideology. Therefore, many, always more, become the disciples that invent derivatives from the "analgesic products" of the masters. Gurdjieff pasta sauce and yoga of laughter. Where we try to rehabilitate the "disabled" of this unhappy society, incapable now of even carrying out the action of laughing and breathing correctly. What sadness! I must do something as well, something in this direction. Invent and predicate, I don't know? Yoga of wanking. Or re-teach the art of "jerking off". You need hairs on your chest to take for a ride people that are suffering, and I can't to do that. I'm sorry.

42

Dario Punzoni's caregiver opens. She says hello and welcomes me inside the house. She locks the bulletproof door again turning the key three times. She overtakes me along the corridor where I was waiting for her. She gives me the sign to follow her towards the studio. Daredevil's studio. The same one where many times and with a lot of reason we loved thinking together.

-You seem nervous Madam? Is there something wrong?

-No, but I still have to get used to the idea that Mr Punzoni is no longer here.

-I understand.

But there's something else. There is an unusual confusion in the studio. A different confusion from that which I was used to when I came to visit him. It's also true that I haven't been here for years. And maybe, getting older, he got used to this new type of confusion. Confusion that however seems weird to me. Unusual. Maybe. Or maybe not.

-First the burglars and then the death of Mr Punzoni. Just like that. All within a few hours.

She says and stands still.

-Burglars?

-Fortunately we were out, at the gardens...

-Was there nobody in the house?

-No, nobody. When we came back we found everything in a mess. They looked everywhere. I was up all night trying to put everything back in order again.

-What did they steal?

-Nothing. There was everything. Incredible, isn't it?

-Incredible... incredible...

I repeat as a mantra, to support her.

-Incredible...

I repeat. And my gaze goes where it shouldn't. On the shelf of the library, the one that has always hosted the empty fish tank. I always remember it empty. I wonder if that fucking aquarium ever contained any fish at all? But this is not the point. And it's not even the aquarium. The point is

above the aquarium. On the shelf in front of the books. The picture frame. And the picture. I shouldn't look there, but I can't help it... It's stronger than me... of who? Of me. I mean. I look and see the picture. The girl is there. Just as I remember her. Her face is really the same. Marta. The usual story. It depends. No story, in the end, is the usual story. They are all different. Even though they all the same. She is Daredevil's niece. She's beautiful. I met her the first time by chance, the first time I met her here, by chance, right here in Dario's house, right here, by chance, in this studio, right here... And from then on, every time I came to visit Dario, she was here. And it wasn't by chance. Not at all. Nothing is by chance. She listens to our dissertations on the maximum and minimum systems. And she studies. Yes. Marta studies and better than me. I understand many things, but she really understands them, she sees them, Marta sees the larger picture and connects everything to everything else. She tries to teach me, but I, at that moment, couldn't see the larger picture... That picture that I'm still looking for. Which I no longer wish to find any more. Or rather, at this point, I hope not to manage to find. And every time of all those times, while I and Dario speak, Marta says something of what she thinks. She says a lot, despite the fact that she doesn't speak to much. And I understand this way, that apart from being beautiful, she is also intelligent, and she is wise.

-Intelligence in a beautiful woman is usually a curse.

Dario told me when he understood that we were in love. And he knew it long before we found out. Me and Marta. We love each other. We promise each other promises that we can't keep, we wish for dangerous dreams and tell each other lies that youth invents to distract itself from the truth of two youngsters in love. We bet on life. We lose. She dies. With a motorbike. My motorbike. Against a tree. At night. While I am at Dario's house discussing... Anaxagoras. They tell Dario on the phone. He gets up from his armchair. He looks for me. With his hands. I smile as I get up. I don't understand. I think it's one of his jokes. I get closer and he hugs me. He hugs me very tightly. Tighter and tighter. He strokes my head. And I start crying. I understand that Marta is dead. And Anaxagoras, Giordano Bruno's favourite philosopher, is no longer likeable to me. Indeed. He is now coloured by a patina, a livid-greyish-purple-corpsy film that, even after many years, many many years, I have not managed to remove. Me crying right here, in this studio, many many years ago. While Dario Punzoni, Daredevil, hugs me tightly. Right here. Remembering the past in the same places where it was once present is like a time dizziness, an immediate seasickness that flutters inside my head, each time, every time.

43

-It was the day after that Mr Punzoni decided to prepare the package for you.

The cleaning lady reawakens me.

-The package?

-Yes, this one.

And points towards a shoebox on top of the desk on the right...

-Would you like a coffee?

I continue to keep looking back at the photograph on the bookshelf and she asks me: again. She reawakens me: again.

-Would you like a coffee?

-Yes, thank you.

She disappears into the kitchen. I walk back towards the photograph. The girl inside the photograph isn't Marta. She's Marta's grandmother. But since Marta always used to tell me she was identical to her grandmother and since it was true: looking at this photograph has always been like looking at Marta. And still today it's the same. Marta's grandmother was sitting in front of the profile of the Alps. I know that photograph well. Marta used to tell me about it all the time. Her grandmother was on the Alps in 1943, with Herman Hesse. There we go again. "the Glass Bead Game". Marta's grandmother was an admirer of the writer and she had managed to get a photograph with her idol. Identical. Truly identical to Marta. Yet, I don't have a photograph of the only illusion of love in my mortal life, although, at least I know her name. Every time I think of Marta I can't remember her but

beautiful and young; and that's fucking obvious: she died when she was 20. Ghosts never grow old. Ever.

44

Behind the photograph there are some books. Which? The Satires by Juvenal. With all their anger. And how can a satirist, a true satirist, not a brown-nose humorist, how can a satirist not be angry with the way the world goes? Satires. Juvenal. And therefore: *Vitam impendere vero*. Meaning: to give one's life for the truth. And inevitably I think of Ugo Foscolo. I look for him. Between those shelves. And I find him... by chance? In the bookshelf underneath the photograph. Perpendicular to the photograph. The very small volume is a rare edition that Barbera had printed in Florence in 1893. I take it and browse through it. Nothing: not even on page 30 nor at the end of the book. But. On the sides of the very small volume with a black cover there are another two. I don't understand why they look so strange to me. Then I understand. I remember. Which is the same thing. The dog has bought the stick back. And is wagging its tail for a reward. I repeat: *il vagheggiator d'encomio*. Those books there, next to Foscolo's poems, are philosophy texts, mathematical philosophy. The same books I saw in Angelo Cocles' library. There, next to "the Glass Bead Game"; here at the sides of Foscolo's poems. The same books. Of course: copies, but they same. Identical. Just like Marta's grandmother is identical to Marta. Even though she is just a copy. But who is the copy of who? The authors are the same. Two great mathematical philosophers, even better: two great philosophers, better still: two theologians of Nothingness. Brouwer. Godel. Godel: "Proof of the existence of God". Brouwer: "Life, art and mysticism". I leaf through them, both of them. Quickly, but at the same time carefully. Not Brouwer. But. On page 30 of Godel's book I find them: there they are: the usual 30 circles drawn by pencil with all the circumferences intersecting and making out other figures. I look at the end of the volume, and also here, like in that of "the Virgins of the Rocks" by Gabriele D'Annunzio there's written Spadò. Above, instead, perpendicular to the photograph, on the bookshelf I notice "So spoke Zarathustra" by Nietzsche. You wouldn't believe it. On page 30 the same intersecting circles and at the end of the volume, as if written with the same ink, the word "Spadò".

45

I take the picture frame with inside the photograph of Marta's grandmother with Herman Hesse, Godel's and Nietzsche's books. I put everything inside the shoebox that is nearly empty, apart from the padded sealed envelope. The inheritance that Dario Punzoni wanted to leave me. Which I suspect to be very heavy, full of oppressing mortgages and debts with not very patient, greedy creditors, without any respect for human life. I shut the cover of the box and the maid comes in with a tray with on top; a coffee cup, plate, teaspoon, sugar bowl and a glass of water. She looks at me, still standing next to the box. She smiles and puts the tray on Dario's desk. She looks at the bookshelf where the picture frame with the photo of Marta's grandmother was. She smiles and sits on the wicker armchair in front of me.

I drink my coffee slowly. I say a phrase that seems to me to give an account of the situation rather than out of circumstance.

-So, now you'll have to find another house and another job, won't you?

-No. I won't. Mr Punzoni left me as his only heir. Not much money, but I won't need to work like I've always done since I was five years old.

-In what year were you born in Madam?

-I was born in 1954.

-In Manila?

-No, I'm not Filipino. I'm Vietnamese.

I finish my coffee, it was very nice. I think about Vietnam and Godel and how "chance" has also played with the name of this exceptional thinker, arriving to the point of putting in his name two names of God: the one pronounced in the last language that was spoken at the end of this worldly cycle; and that pronounced in the first language that was spoken at the beginning of this worldly

cycle. God-El.

46

The Vietnamese tells me she is convinced that Dario committed suicide.

-It's really difficult for me to believe that he took the wrong dose of medicine, don't you think?

She asks me. And I don't reply. I agree that it's difficult to believe something like that, but I'm sure that Dario was fed up of living, why I don't know, but it doesn't matter. I can only imagine it. Maybe he was already dying of something and he didn't want to leave his body to become the bridge towards pain. Or else. Maybe he knew that he didn't have much time before somebody would come and kill him. This convinces me more. Even though, this somebody could have been the Holy Father in person... This is because Dario Punzoni was old and his time was up anyway like everybody else's, or nearly everybody else, and Daredevil wasn't the type that would have allowed somebody else to get rid of him. So he did it on his own. Maybe. In the face of God, of Kingpin and of those shitty burglars that came inside his house...

-It's late, Madam, I must leave...

I take the shoebox. I put my hand out to the Vietnamese who squeezes it tight. And I add.

-I have to take a train.

She stares at me in the eyes, as only oriental women can do, and whispers:

-Bon voyage.

47

So, Kurt Godel fell asleep and dreamt of waking up in a cathedral where he had lost the exit. So he starts looking for a path that could take him out of that fatal labyrinth. There was not much light. The windows were historiated but they were either black or white. And the stories depicted didn't seem to him anything more than common christian mythology with some square crosses. Godel went upstairs to find himself further down; and when he would go down he would find himself further up. So he took notes, he was drawing to understand the geometry of his situation, but not having any other support apart from a carbon rock, he decided to write on the palms of his hands what he wanted to remember. He went so far up that he ended inside the crypt. From here, he guessed he was at the feet of the walls, because he could hear the roar of the water, the two canals that united deep down in the waterfall under the erected altar built with black rocks that had fallen out of God knows what sky. Desperate, Godel dived inside that rapid and the water deafened him and the water blinded him and the water took him to the shores of the sea where Kurt Godel, without breath and scared, rested his elbows on his still stretched out legs between the waves, just in time to see at the centre of the sea, at the centre of the Alps, a young man dancing... And Kurt Godel fell asleep and dreamt of waking up...

48

It's night outside. Inside as well. The train for Riccione leaves at 6:30. I have three hours to reason. To rest. And an hour to reach the station and get a ticket. I put the alarm clock on my mobile phone. Two hours. In case I fall asleep. And it's a good job I did, because I do fall asleep. I have to rinse my face twice to remember who I am and what the Gods want from me. The Gods and their henchmen. Badly paid, but diligent as usual. Servants of power. I reach the station in time to have breakfast twice, waiting for the ticket office to open at six. This is because, as usual, the automatic machines, those ones where you just have to touch the screen, don't work. THERE'S NO CONNECTION. Where does the connection go when it's not there? Does anybody know? Does anybody check? Is there anybody responsible for this? Anyone? Not at all... Croissant with jam and cappuccino. The television is passing the news. These are mass distraction means. Scratch and win cards and slot machines. The ticket office opens. The FS official has a lovely red tie and prints my ticket. I take it. I validate it. I reach the platform from where my train will depart to take me towards the Adriatic coast. The Empire of Venice. The doors of the Orient and the hopes of the West. Byzantine heritage. Marco Polo. Othello. Lepanto. Vivaldi, Goldoni, Casanova, and again, yes, Foscolo. Neglected

hope and sealed door. Seals put by the authorities. Judicial authority. At this point. The train arrives, announced both in Italian and English. It brakes. Whistles. It screeches so hard that not even a group of witches would've been so loud and stops. The doors open: someone gets off, someone gets on. Like I do. I bought with me, on the train, my backpack with inside the books "the Virgins of the Rocks", the "Glass Bead Game", "Zarathustra", and "the Proof of the Existence of God" and of course, the photograph inside the picture frame. The train leaves. It penetrates completely as it is, and without any delicacy whatsoever, inside the fresh pink thighs of dawn. And I put my dark glasses on to display discretion. Good manners. At least to the world who seems to forget them. I sleep just under an hour. But it's enough to dream. I dream a world like one of those out of the "Lord of the Rings", but also one where the Achaeans have never stopped dominating the Aegean, the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian Seas, up to the land of the Ligurians. I dream of crossing, on a carriage transporting iron weapons, the land of the Gauls, the same ones that imposed their tribute on Rome, humiliating her on her most sacred hill. And I dream, at the end, to wake up in a state of sleepiness in which the narcotics work intermittently sweetly and I have moments in which the room is filled with a bright white light and others where my body and my brain are gathered in transparent containers connected between them by electric wires with intervals to PCs and tablets scattered everywhere together with my scattered self...everywhere. I guess that the three men wearing a white coat, presumably are doctors, inside the room with me, they observe the room inside a great monitor hanging on the ceiling.

49

And I really wake up. We are so funny when we say it really believing it. I'm on the train. A spider or something that looks like it has bitten me on the back of my left hand. Three red spots. They're itchy. I scratch them. They get even itchier. A spider bit me. No superpowers. Just a really annoying itch. Just like a western country during elections. Instead, out there, outside the window is the sea. And a stretch of beach protected by the wave-breakers that contain the water, they know they will always lose their battle, therefore, they are even more heroic. Heroic wave-breakers. At every station and every landscape and every city and every town the train runs through, I see the decay of Italy: the rubbish, the forgetfulness, the negligence that marks the abused souls and the tired bodies by every day life, souls and bodies wearing youthful make-up that doesn't exist even amongst the young and have the only chance of being pathetic before being ridiculous. What is persistent, hardly ever really is. It really isn't over until the end. Until death. And this Italy is dying, but it isn't dead yet. Incredible.

50

Marco Travaglini and his wife Emma receive me with a gracefulness that belongs to this earth, but not to the times we live in. These are vulgar and distracted times. And this makes them even more dear to me. We dine together. Their son is with us. He's a quiet youth with a clear smile. They tell me anecdotes. We talk about the Italian cultural situation. I start my usual dissertation on the hypocritical silence of the last intellectuals left. I declare the connivance with the cultural "shadiness" and sometimes, not only cultural, of our Land, the last intellectuals left fake banal arguments avoiding to put light on the real tragedy that our Country has been going through during these years. The last intellectuals left are guilty. The last intellectuals, I mean the real ones, the others don't even know what we're talking about. They just think about making it big; because this is what this bad government has taught them... I think about this "shameful nostalgia" the one told by Pasolini regarding Fascist Italy and the Italy destroyed by war. For the love of paradox, or for whatever you want, under this dictatorship, amongst one of the most ridiculous of our history, art and culture, lived, by contrast, high peaks, just like during the high tension of the following decade, despite, or maybe thanks to the military defeat and consequent devastation, which then was only physical and moral of our Italy, the spiritual one would arrive in due course, having had a cultural genesis and the vision of possible worlds, of much better worlds, and then... My hosts listen to me and offer me a coffee. We watch together a video of Alberto Spadolini dancing on a gigantic drum.

And another video in which he dances after the Gypsies have danced or sung. I admire Alberto Spadolini's way of dancing. He's like a statue to which the Gods granted the gift of movement. A statue that offers the world his symbol. Statue of Gods? Again? Marsilius! Where are you? Maybe and with the peace of all the alchemists of the underworld. Marco gives me some books he wrote on his uncle. And tells me about a strange dream; a dream where three men wearing a white coat stare at a monitor... and he gives me a marble, a glass bead, shiny and pearly. A glass pearl.

51

It's evening by the time I take the train again. It's not evening immediately, but it's already evening. Which is another thing. Let's try and put everything into the picture. Let's try. Alberto Spadolini has been discovered just over 10 years ago. By his nephew Marco Travaglini. Nearly by chance. "Chance". Indeed. Of his uncle, Marco knew that he was mainly just a painter. Nearly. Apart from the box in the loft. But Alberto Spadolini seems to have been more, much more. Let's see. In 1972 when they were informed about the death of Alberto Spadolini, relatives arrive in his house in Paris, finding it empty, rather: completely emptied of everything. Six years go by. 1978. Marco Travaglini helps his aunt move out. And he finds the famous box. Inside there are objects that tell the other life of his uncle Alberto. A small part of that other life. A ray of light in the dark. Then, after this discovery, of course: darkness. Complete darkness. Until 2004. During a journey with his family to Paris, Marco goes to visit the tomb of his uncle. In the cemetery of Saint-Ouen. He sees flowers. Fresh flowers. He writes his phone number on a card and puts it underneath one of the flowerpots. After one week he receives a phone call. It's a friend of Spadò. An old friend. For Marco Travaglini a whole universe opens bigger than he could ever have imagined. It's a domino effect. One contact generates another. All linked by the usual invisible thread, many places and many different times where Alberto Spadolini left a lover, friendship, a conspiracy, a show, a painting, a letter, a photograph... I repeat: of his uncle, Marco, for years, only knew about his activity as a painter. But Alberto Spadolini was more, much more. For sure he was a decorator and painter, a choreographer and dancer, an actor and director, an esoteric scholar and a spy. Let's go in order. Let's try. At least. Spadolini's mother was born into a poor family. We are in a small town in the province of Bologna. Crespellano. In the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She was sent to the service of a wealthy family in Ancona. Here, as it happened to many poor and good girls before her, she got pregnant and was sent away for unworthiness, which instead, should have been attributed to the incontinence of the wealthy male. Prince Charming if he exists. The tale of Prince Charming isn't a tale at all. Prince Charming really exists. I swear on it. But, too often lately, unbelievably, he marries whores making himself ridiculous, more than he already looks like in his turquoise leggings... and cool ways. Alberto's mother doesn't meet Prince Charming. And it's probably better that way, since she isn't even a whore. She ends up living an even worse fate. There is always something that makes an already bad situation worst. Impossible? Blessed is he who does not know.

Blessed are the poor in spirit? The Sermon on the Mount? Jesus? The Beatitudes? You know that the Sermon on the Mount has been dubbed incorrectly. The subtitles are better. May the burst of misery of dubbers, with their shamelessly enlarged families with too many fathers for just one mother, come to an end! Failed actors! As if an actor could be otherwise. The mother of Alberto Spadolini meets a "good man" that marries her and gives her another two daughters. The sisters of Alberto Spadolini. The aunts of Marco Travaglini. This "good man", understandably, can hardly stand a son that is not his. How can he be blamed? Had he been a male lion he would have killed and even devoured poor Alberto. But primates at this point of "evolution" disown similar ways to guarantee their genetic victory. Legally they disown these ways, but, sometimes, instinct prevails, one cannot overcome certain things. One wouldn't even know who to blame. We saw what happened with Saint Joseph. And still wasn't that enough? Alberto is an illegitimate child. Just like Leonardo was. Leonardo: "the Virgin of the Rocks", the first version, the one that is... in Paris, the one where John the Baptist indicates the angel, number 30. Paris. Alberto Spadolini. There is a lot of Paris in Alberto's life. It's in Paris that he becomes Spadò. But let's go in order. Let's try. At least. Very young, in 1922, he arrives in Rome. During the same years when Herman Hesse was in

contact with Carl Gustav Jung. On the Alps. The photograph. Marta's grandmother, even though 20 years later. In Rome, Spadolini is staying with some relatives. Even they don't love him and he finds his real family in the workshop of Conti. And, even more so, at the Teatro degli Indipendenti, Bragaglia, slivers of Futurism, sparks of a different hammer, and there's Cambellotti and this means the Vittoriale and Gabriele D'Annunzio. From there to Paris. Paris in the 30's of the 1900's. The city that had already forgotten in the cellar the mummy of Proust. With engraved the words in that dead language that had become art after the First World War, its curses written on strips of bandages in which the last decrepit priests had wrapped it in. The city that is preparing to stand to Celine and Junger. The city that was furnishing the loft to host Sartre and Cioran. Paris during periods. 30's. Europe during periods. The city where Alberto Spadolini became Spadò. He meets and loves and dances with the most beautiful woman, the most desired women, which often is the same thing. He puts on scene and dances "the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian" by D'Annunzio on the music of Debussy. Admired by high poets such as Valery. By art money-grubbers like Cocteau. The murder of the saint awards him a bed and statues. Felix Yussupov, the man who killed Rasputin (poisoning him, shooting him, and throwing him into a frozen river). Yussupov vs Rasputin. 20<sup>th</sup> century wrestling! Go and find out who really is the saint and who the murderer... Paris: He made Picasso jealous for one of the many photos that depicted him naked. The 30's. The roaring years. Why were they roaring anyway? In '34, '35 and in '37 Alberto Spadolini was in the United States. He is so successful that in 1940, in Berlin, he dances in front of Hitler and all the Nazi hierarchs. In Germany, Spadolini stays for six months, from September 1940, until February 1941, when the outcome of the war is still uncertain. Afterwards, he goes to Scandinavia where he continues dancing. Emblematical tours. Compromising. Yet: it's not at all strange, actually, it's rather significant that once the war was over Spado' did not suffer the fate of other "collaborators", and instead, was welcomed back to Paris with every honour. It's significant regarding the spying activity that he undertook at the service of the French Resistance and the Anglo-Americans. He returns to Italy in 1946. More than 10 years away. He does a show in company of Marisa Maresca with a very young Walter Chiari, returning from the Italian Social Republic, as Raimondo Vianello and Dario Fo. Only, the second one received a Nobel Prize. "A Nobel to Dario Fo? Simply ridiculous": Harold Bloom. New Yorker. In 1947 Spadò, heading towards South America, incredibly has a stop over right in New York. In 1954, Spadò attends his painting exhibitions organised in Vietnam. He hangs out with the American physicist Philip Kearney. We can easily imagine Philip Kearney in contact with mathematics and some physicists sheltered in the USA such as Brouwer and Einstein. Einstein, later, used to take long walks with Godel. And the circle closes itself. The circles. The 30 circles. No. Not yet. In the 60's, Duilio, one of the greatest loves of Spadò dies committing suicide. Pain does not only scar you, it often kills you, and Alberto Spadolini dies, in 1972, due to liver cancer. Where? In Paris, but he starts feeling ill in Chamonix, in the Alps.

52

The train is nearly empty. On the seat next to me, separated by the corridor is a coloured man. A peddler, with his enormous sack of goods and a backpack. Behind me, I can hear chatting a few Romans returning home. They're coming back from an adjournment. They say. I can't see them. I just listen to them and that's it. That's enough for me. They talk about immigration. The topic the media want us to talk about. Mass distraction means. The system works! One of them declares he is very preoccupied. He's afraid that with so many "poor people" arriving, some "terrorist" will get here as well and it will be easy to place a bomb... He hesitates and then he doesn't resist, he says: "It's not that I'm racist or anything, but you know"... The peddler's eyes meet mine. In his very white eyes on his dark cheeks I can guess a sight. I resist the temptation of explaining to the invisible people behind me who it is that puts bombs in Italy and around the world. Who it was and who it will be. I resist. One must be brave to be afraid of those caricature terrorists on big jeeps. And it's really funny when they threaten to want to conquer Rome. Them as well! This city has always attracted flies like... Like Jerusalem... One must be brave enough to admit the evidence of things. Because the only real thing about wars and terrorism, are the dead. Unfortunately. Only they

are real. And I'm ready to swear that even in this latest version of exotic terrorism there must be much more intelligence than there has ever been in the BR<sup>4</sup>. "Poor people, for the love of God..." The Romans echo behind me, those who are coming back from an adjournment course held by the Ministry of Public Instruction. Because these people are also teachers. They are more dangerous than terrorists, for sure. "Ministry of Public Destruction" is what Dario Punzoni used to call it. I remember, and it wasn't pretty, when he used to say the truth... Dario. Even he is dead now. This would solve everything: that all the "poor people" in the world should realise that they are "poor people" because somebody put them one against the other. And instead of thinking how to reform the system, they should try and imagine a different one, revolutionised. In one's heart, mind and in the courage of dreams. Because, as I already wrote somewhere, there is no worst nightmare than that of living in a world that can't dream of another one. I get off the train and it's already night. I leave behind me all the bullshit and academic ignorance. The train station is deserted. Four platforms. The lights float. Shadows. The station floats who knows in which invisible sea. A fixed point in the nothing. The theorem of the fixed point. Brouwer. I'm tired. In every sense. Even the sixth.

53

I place some derelict hope right in the migratory flows that are hitting Italy. Seeing how the people have completely gone mental in the last hundred years, first with that crooked Mussolini (corrupted by the Church, the Crown, the fake national Finance, never really national) and then from cultural colonization and "atlantic" propaganda; now, therefore, thousands of migrants cannot but be an energising tonic for our worn-out, rickety and frail cultural identity. A forced rejuvenation from which to hope for a real, total, pyrotechnic and bloody and regenerating Mediterranean revolution. As already happened with those Turk refugees; the Trojans and, previously, with those asylum-seekers from northern Europe; the Latins.

54

And Friedrich Nietzsche fell asleep and dreamt of waking up in a brothel on the high plains of Tibet. Alexander the Great had left 15 days earlier and had left him there because that is where the Tamerlane ambassadors, of the Tartar Tamerlane, would have arrived. What Nietzsche could not remember, however much he tried to, was what he was supposed to discuss with those diplomats; if peace or war. The night was very cold and Nietzsche hid under the blankets with a beautiful prostitute from the brothel, but when they re-emerged from the blankets their faces were illuminated by torches, even by those underneath the bushel, obviously. Friedrich realised that that bitch was his sister Elizabeth and he felt shame. He retracted and came out. She started becoming very old, her skin wrinkly and she hugged Nietzsche before he could move away and she enveloped turning him into a cocoon while he was trying to push away, while he was resisting, pushing up his arms, higher and higher until Nietzsche noticed that he was flying and that skin had become his wings filled with icy wind and he was flying over the sea: a sea between the mountains, a sea where a young man was dancing in the centre... And Friedrich Nietzsche fell asleep and dreamt of waking up...

55

I get home and put my backpack on the bed. My beautiful molossers wag their tails. They are stones of flesh. Bones of the earth. I pull out the books, all of them. And the box that Dario left me. I pull the lid off and take the picture frame with the photo. I put it on the bed. And I go and wash. Shower. Shampoo. Gabe. And with my hair still wet I take everything to the living room. The books, the box and the photo. I go back to the bathroom. Turn on the phone. And I starts drying my hair. Damned tekné! Impossible to forget you. Bitch! Noise. Noise inside my ears. Noise that goes through my thoughts that go through the noise. I turn it off. I get dressed. I get a pen and paper. A lot of paper. At least 20 pages. And I put Debussy's music on. The sea. And I lower the volume. I fill

---

4 Brigade Rosse, see previous note



a glass with red wine. One. And I put it next to the paper and pen. Somewhere, it's starting to light up down there, in the night. Dawn does this. Every time. Now, all I'd like to do is to decide to look inside the padded envelope, the one inside the shoebox that Dario left me.

56

My grandmother. My grandmother used to have fun scaring me. She used to tell me not to look at the shadow of dawn, into that first light that fills the room from the dark grey light, inside that obscurity that confuses and gives substance to shadows. She used to tell me to keep my eyes shut and stay under the covers, otherwise God knows what I would've seen... My grandmother, a fatal crossing of races. We have blood legacies and spiritual legacies. I owe my grandmother the blood legacy. The blood of the Vikings that descended to Sicily to confuse the memory of the Saracens and build the modern Sicily on the ruins of the Achaean palaces built on the foundations of forgotten temples, built by the first Sicilians that descended crossing the Alps and stopping in the valley of the Tiber before proceeding south, before the Latins arrived from the North. The blood that my mother took with her to Rome, again, and offered to the calyx, to the Nuragic sword, for the honour of the arms belonging to a warrior of the Sardinian people. This is blood legacy. And you can't do anything about that. Lord of totems and taboos! But spiritual legacy is even more invasive because if only DNA was enough to make the destiny of a man, that obscene principle of hereditary monarchies would be valid... Spiritual legacy; invasive and ancient of at least 27,000 years of memory... My grandmother (may she get tanned whenever she feels like it next to the fire of her own hell!) used to have fun scaring me. And I used to obey her and keep my eyes shut, hidden underneath the blankets. I used to wait for Dawn to become stronger and lighter, illuminating my bedroom, before opening my eyes, but once I could not resist temptation and I opened my eyes. And I saw him: sitting on the chair at the feet of the bed. The Angel of Melancholy. My very personal Angel of Melancholy. He was looking at me, extremely sad, and I looked back and it was like looking inside a mirror. Because that angel had my face, my same face as a child, as an adult and also as an old man, they melted into each other interchanging one into the other, without truce... eternal and immobile... The Angel of Melancholy has a trace on his face of the smirk of the devil, the sneer of the beast that seduces with sweetness and sadness, that shows itself in the poses of voluptuousness to promise us pain and auto-commiseration, but, after it has conquered us, it manifests its abjection and throws us down in a bottomless pit with slimy walls, in the bottomless pit of impossible gloom; and life, all our life, becomes only pain and hell and we can't stop gaining pleasure out of that sufferance... So I, nearly immediately, started beating with a cane that shitty angel and sent him away from my room, out of my view, out of my sunrise that immediately become brighter, out of my life which became free again... But I know that he, the Angel of Melancholy, that shitty angel, is waiting and follows me hiding, never showing himself, even though sometimes I turn around suddenly and I can see him or at least I can make out his shadow... He waits for me to be weak and ill to come out and take his place again, next to me when I'm awake, at the feet of my bed when I'm asleep. Saying his rosaries of sacrifice and obedience to others' rules. The price I paid was very high. In fact I live without fear, but also without joy. Losing both things took away every warmth out of my life, which stays strong, owner of time and space, high and deep like an ice Cathedral... Why. Living without joy and without fear of dying is the condemnation of those like us... Isn't seeing those that loved us die without us being capable of loving them back enough? Isn't the regret of seeing consumed beauty and youth offered in sacrifice to us enough, we who have not loved this life, and all they wanted was to give us this gift, a gift which we didn't take into account...

57

My grandmother. The grey sunrise. The padded envelope inside the shoebox. Inside the envelope there are four pieces of paper. Three A4 format and a postcard. That's all there is inside the transparent envelope. The postcard is a handwritten document. Written in... English. The second and the third sheets of paper contain two different reports that certify the authenticity of the

postcard. The authenticity referred to the dating (1921) and the place where that determined type of paper was usually used. The postcard is the smaller part of another larger piece of paper which it was ripped out of. With every possibility, to eliminate the logo present on the heading of the sheet of paper itself. The logo that, evidently, even though partially, is a portion of a larger water-marked design not visible to the naked eye. Or at least not immediately visible. Specifies the expert. A piece of evidence that the author of the message may or may not have noticed either for negligence or sloppiness that often denotes the ways of the intelligence in every century and latitude, or may have noticed it and purposely left it, so that it would be possible for someone more careful, to later trace the origins of the paper. The first sheet is a translation from Italian of a text written on the postcard sealed in plastic. Here it is.

*Our dear collector informs the son of the owner of the gallery to have found who could paint the white eagle inside a red shield on the façade of your old house in Europe. If De Salis will decide to take the exhibition around the world, I can always use for the job the usual young artist that we discovered hungry in Munich, who we already used to copy some still lifes by Abraham Mignon. The young man you know very well, keeps his name of fanatical artist within his clique, nevertheless, he does come from a village that, throughout the centuries, gave birth to many possessed and mediums. I say we can trust him. The jewish grandfather buried in Bucarest was just as good a painter, already at the service of your family.*

58

Now, the letter in itself says a lot. Maybe too much. This is the only deficiency. But I learned on my own skin that one must not consider false a truth just because it is too obvious. Especially if the following story made it so. With the “science of later” everything becomes easier or more difficult: it depends on the cases. Anyway. The fact that the paper was that in use at the Castle of the Von Stauffenberg stimulates me to connect it with nothing particularly enigmatic. Von Stauffenberg: the castle where Junger stayed after WWII.. “At his time he appeared to have serviced at the Von Stauffenberg Castle.” My commissioner friend told me, speaking about poor Cocles. The mind starts crackling analogies one after the other, like new year's eve firecrackers, that leads me from Tom Cruise-Von Stauffenberg-Operation-Valchiria-GottfriedBenn-FinisInitium-Lord of the Rings-GoldenDawn-Yeats-Eliot-VirginiaWoolf-Churchill-AleisterCrowley-Scientology-Ron Hubbard up to Pessoa-Artaud-Hitler... But let me stay on the letter. The possessed painter and grandson of the jewish painter buried in Bucarest could, reasonably, be Hitler. The citadel where mediums were born could be, in fact, reasonably, Braunau. The white eagle inside the red shield is also the symbol of the Rothschild family. Originally, at least regarding its more recent wealth, from Frankfurt. And Abraham Mignon was a German painter of still lifes born in Frankfurt. Lastly, De Salis was an important British diplomat, that I think, but I'm not sure, was accredited in those years (1921) at the Holy See: Rome. And it is especially mentioned that it must be him, John Francis Charles De Salis to give the “ok” for the tour of the “exhibition” all over the world. Hitler, from September 1919 to March 1920 is paid by the police to spy the German Working Party, the one that will become the Nationalist German Working Party (Nazi party). The letter that Dario Punzoni left me inside the shoebox, testifies, therefore that in 1921 the same Hitler could have been employed by the Rothschilds to lead Europe towards another war and to a final collapse of its culture and identity. Of course, the same Dario had often lead us to reflect on why Adolf Hitler had speared for neutrality Switzerland for all five years of the war.

59

-There are two categories of revolutionaries. The real ones and the fake ones. The real ones are those who want to destroy the restaurant because they hate that type of cuisine, the owners, the cook and the waiters and wish for a different one; another completely different, but like that: they denounce and shout and fight until they don't manage, until they don't die...

Dario always used to say, standing, in the shadow of his studio, while we listened:

-And then there are those, instead, that just want to sit down and eat, and that as soon as they are

offered a place at the table, they immediately stop denouncing, shouting, fighting, in fact; they become the strongest defenders of that restaurant, the most stubborn, indeed, faithful as dogs... He used to say... then, theatrically, he would pause, take off his dark glasses, move his stick in front of him to meet our knees and guess where we were, and then, he would conclude:  
-Try to understand, as soon as possible, to which of these two categories you belong, do it quickly. The quicker you do it, the less pain you will give others and yourselves.

60

I put the four sheets of paper back in the padded bag and into the shoebox. I drink up the red wine all in one go. And I fill the glass again. Debussy has stopped playing. The silence and the millstone of the brain minces the rosary of sad thoughts crushing them: one by one he silences the complaint.

-Is this the document they want?

I ask myself out loud. Because I want them to hear me, those who are recording everything somewhere outside. I drink the second glass of wine. I take the picture frame. I look at the photo. I can feel warmth on my cheeks. Tears. It's the wine. I turn it upside down. I move the little tongue and open it. I take the picture out. That well of memories. A very fine well between wood and glass. Fine like a fine film that separates universes. Shreds. Glass. Wood. A very deep well of time both of the same story and yet a different story... on the back of the picture of Marta's grandmother is written:

NIETZSCHE DEBUSSY D'ANNUNZIO HESSE GAME IN 30 MOVES

I take one of the books that Travaglini gave me. I look on one of the pages where there is the letter of Alberto Spadolini. Even though my graphology study days are long gone, I don't need them to understand that the words behind that photograph were written by Spadò. I'm thinking as I feel my eyes closing. It's not tiredness and the wine was not too strong. It's induced tiredness. Chemistry. Somebody has drugged my wine. Paraphrasing. I say it out loud, my mouth already dry.

-When there is no other proof...

I stagger to the sofa. I could not reach anywhere else. The dogs move out the way to avoid being squashed.

-...apart from the evidence...

And I think that somebody is coming in and out of my house as they wish. With or without the dogs. They bug my house and drug my wine. He has the keys: the bastard. He knows me and he knows my dogs. He's a friend. I think while... While my last step fails and my face smashes against the cushion slobbered by the dogs.

-...I can't but accept...

I think that the culprit is always, nearly always someone who we know well. Investigative self-evident truth.

-...the most plausible hypothesis...as the only truth of things.

I fall asleep. And I dream.

61

I am outside a theatre. People keep arriving and going inside. People that have crossed my life. From the first days up until now. Some people I can't even recognise. But I know they've had something to do with me. My memory knows it. It has recorded them even when they were pushing the pram with me inside; a baby of just a few months. Or someone that I just met by chance, sitting next to me in the underground for example, or in some city of the world or in some future or past time. Some are dead, others alive. Relatives, friends, lovers, people I am indifferent to, extras and passers-by. They all appear as I saw them the last time I ever met them. They're all hurrying and they don't even look at me. They're going inside the theatre and crowding it. I can hear the noise coming out of there. Through the open doors facing the empty road where I am. The road is covered in white gravel. Round little stones massage my naked feet. I'm not wearing any shoes. Suddenly all is silent. Out here and in there. I decide to enter. And what I see is different and surprises me. The theatre is deserted. There is not a living soul. Beautiful expression. Quite accurate. It's a theatre built

in a Greek-Roman manner. The cut of the seats is quite sharp. Very modern. High-tech. I go down to the scene. The scene overlooks the sea. So much so, that the soft waves stretch into geometric mosaics up to my feet just like the shadows of trees around the highest ring of the theatre do around my head. In the exact centre of the sea. The exact centre is placed between me and the horizon. There is the statue of a man or a man made of statue. Erect on the water. Still. Without a shadow. Perpendicular to the sun. He slowly moves the perfect body and creates a figure. Evoking substance through shape. And the sphere finds here it's matter, next to me, on the scene. A glass sphere, as large as a football, that seems transparent, very light, but looking inside it, it isn't. It just reflects my face. Jagged and deformed and more beautiful. The man in the exact centre of the sea keeps moving and gives life to another figure. And a different sphere, but the same as the previous one, materialises here. And so on for many times, for each different figure, for many different matters. I count thirty spheres arranged like constellations that I can't recognise next to my centre. Thirty glass beads. The dizziness lasts just one instant. And I can see coming towards me, towards my centre that very statue, that very man, that very dancer. He lands on the mosaics and I recognise that face, the face of Spadò. I observe him while he melts into a cascade of water that the waves, with a foamy crest, stretching out like silver and golden claws drag, once again, to the centre of the sea. The steps of the theatre are now full of beings and while I approach them, I can see their faces, I can guess their names. Certainly, I recognise the faces of Nietzsche, Debussy, D'Annunzio, Hesse and Godel. The dizziness comes back even stronger and I close my eyes and wake up in a more sensitive world in the dim light of my house.

I sit on the sofa. I hold back the impulse of vomiting. I hold my head between my hands. I breathe in deeply. And again. And again. I get up. I drag my legs towards the bathroom. I open the shower. I turn round the cold water tap and put my head, only my head under the frozen jet. Then I put a towel around my head and turn-off the water. I return to the living room wearing my turban. The shoebox is gone. I can see my dogs beyond the glass doors of the French window. They're in the garden. They're playing with a lizard. No, the box isn't there. And... They even took the document Dario left me. Only that. They didn't take anything else. Better that way. Worst for them. Worse because I know. I know that Dario Punzoni, Daredevil, always enjoyed, more than anything else, to take the piss out of others. Sometimes the piss was quite ferocious. Most of the time cruel. And rather demanding. Not only from the economical point of view. He'd work on it for years. Involving professionals of different sectors that often collaborated on one part of the project without knowing the full picture. As we do every day going to work. Once Dario made a document, a map and relative technical appraisals. Put all together, these clues would have demonstrated the donation on behalf of a Norman leader to the Roman Church of some Viking colonies in the bay where today stands New York. Needless to say that all those papers were false like the donation of Constantine as well as much of the history written in history books, but Dario had had fun. That was the way he was. A true scholar. So knowledgeable to be able to play with knowledge. A game. A glass bead game.

62

Paraphrasing. When there is no other proof apart from the evidence, I can't but accept the most plausible hypothesis as the only truth of things. Therefore, Nietzsche, Debussy, D'Annunzio, Hesse, Godel are only five of the many players that, throughout the centuries, have played the glass bead Game. In thirty moves. A game that today we believe we ignore. But the game is always open, around us, inside us and we just have to try one move to wake up the game and start the match again. Winners of the matches are the champions of the Game. And, at the end of the cycle, of this age, there will be only one champion amongst the champions of the Game. Then another cycle will begin and other matches will start with other matches and other rules even though the Game is always the same. Alberto Spadolini was a player of the Game. Maybe a champion... The phone rings. It's my daughter. She's worried because this morning she has a difficult exam and she tells me that she's not sure she's studied enough.

63

Humanity in the end will decide to become something else. Bio-robotics is a possibility. The ego that many philosophies has tried to silence for millennia, failing, has been annihilated by the beehive mentality of social networks and global connection.

64

Regarding youngsters, one cannot but agree with Pasolini. "Pasolini is always right even when he's wrong." claims Sciascia. But his judgement is partial. Because; I say; instead, at least for the last past five generations these youngsters have been more and more nervous and fragile and weak and intelligent and mentally quick, but too superficial, honest and politically correct and hypersensitive and clean and healthy and ignorant, because they have a degree, in short they are like, a means of "dementocratic" and "educastration", the System wanted them so, to achieve the "kingdom of evil" nearly undisturbed. Nearly. For now. And it's sweet for me to look at these youngsters. I feel joy and have fun because, even though they don't know it, they, precisely they, are the ancestors of the players that will play the new Game and that will be the future champions...

65

I calm my daughter down. I tease her joking around. I overturn her binocular. Pirandello. Puppet master! As I say goodbye she's still laughing. I make a coffee. I'd like to jerk off. But I decide to have a coffee instead. I'm too tired. With a fishbone Talos invented a saw<sup>5</sup>. And Daedalus, a great jackass of tekne, got offended. Even him! Get offended that I get offended! He sustained he had invented it. The saw. Of all the wankers I met in my life, only a few, like those two, contended the primate with so much tenacity. My coffee turned out good. I sip it and go out into the garden.

66

Am I being satirical with ferocious bites, towards a society that throws away food while it starves the world, pollutes, plagues, fights wars and commits genocide, destroying every possibility of real culture? A society that pretends to believe in that obvious joke called free market? And in that other, even more bizarre, which they call democracy? No, my friends, I could never...

67

-I would like...

-What would you like Alberto, tell me?

-I don't know if... here, in the hospital...

-Don't worry, Alberto, tell me what you want... Do you want to continue talking about yourself? About your life? Do you still want to remember your love escapade with Renoir's wife? Picasso's jealousy? Josephine Baker?

-No, the only thing I remember is the sea.

-The sea?

-I'm here on the beach with Rossellini and two girls. We are very young and we're roasting some squid that we've just fished... we're very young and I want...

-Do you want to dance, Alberto?

-Yes. I want to dance.

-Come, then, come. Give me your hand. Get up.

-But who are you? I can't see you... With all this white... light...

-Really, you don't recognise me, Alberto?

-No, but it doesn't matter, does it?

-No, it doesn't matter. The truth is so different from what we imagine, it's as simple as that...

-Yes, it's true.

-Dance Alberto, dance as you've never danced before, here, now, dance on the sea...

---

5 Translator's note: in Italian saw and wank are the same word

68

What was the dinosaur civilisation really like before the asteroid destroyed them? And was it really an asteroid or were they victims of a nuclear war? If we, in 3 million years, arrived from Lucy to space rockets, then why couldn't the dinosaurs, with much more time at their disposal, have organised a society like ours to then end up, like we will, destroying themselves?

69

In the very blue sky of the afternoon it's easy to guess the stars. And the moon. I know the stars won't care about my economical situation any more. Bitches! I can see them. They're excited. They know that I have something they don't. The old bitches are disposed one by one all in weird acts on which prostitution sustains itself, to have from me what they don't have... But I don't want to go with a bitch. Not this time. I don't think I will give them the satisfaction. I look at the moon. With ears. I love the moon with ears and if I really have to give what I have to somebody, I'll give it to the Moon. And, I was nearly forgetting, I love the sun, of course, the sun. The moon and the sun are both my children and I love them both. No differences between them. It seems yesterday that to stabilise Earth they put the moon there. And I remember, when, I was really small, we turned the sun on. What times! Seems like yesterday. What nostalgia. And I think...

70

If we decided to understand that the only way to really travel is to travel in time and that this starry sky and all these galaxies and universes that we have everywhere around us are nothing more than the image of our past and our future and that we, from all those worlds, are doing nothing but looking at ourselves in the mirror...

**THE END**