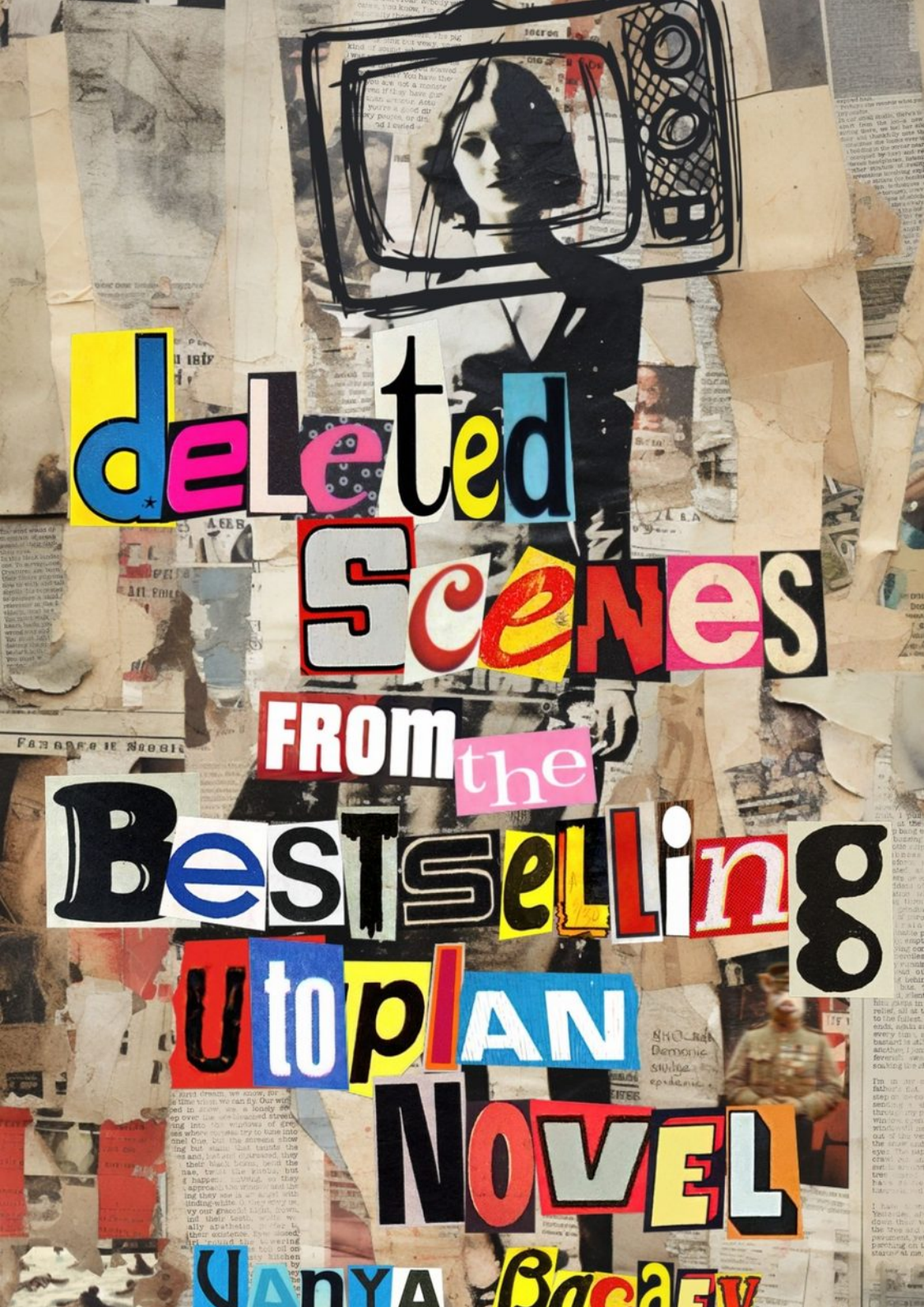

deleted
Scenes
FROM the
Bestselling
Utopian
NOVEL
YANYA BAGLEY

№1.4: Luft

nova-nevedoma.com/luft/

—Dear friends, citizens of Novo Tsarstvo,— resounds the Tsar's voice from the telescreen and pauses for a few seconds.

Wherever in the room we are at that moment, his pinprick pupils stare out at us, penetrating our soul like the haunting gaze of an old portrait, as if possessing the certainty that the soul truly exists and ensuring it is wholly at his command. His round head is grey, almost bald, with a little scar on his cheek. He's a little, shrivelled, feeble, frail.

Like a desiccated scrotum.

He breathes heavily, rasps like a clogged hoover, and coughs when his throat becomes dry. Fidgeting unobtrusively in a mahogany chair with gold trim, he fiddles with a biro and moves his pale, wrinkled, dark vein-swollen hands to and fro. In his eyes dwells an icy indifference, a chasm of apathy. Kindness, a rogue element, has been repressed and exiled to the deep wrinkles in the corners of his eyes. Even when silent, his lips move as if eliciting spells or curses of mind control.

When you see and hear him, it feels like you're eating porridge made from crushed flies. Each unchewed insect becomes harder to swallow,

wedging in your throat and tickling your gullet until your pharyngeal muscles fail to contract, your air-starved lungs clench in terror, and beads of cold sweat dew on your blue face.

—I come before you today with a heavy heart to discuss our homeland, Novo Tsarstvo, and the collective hardships we face. In these challenging times, the safety of our nation, community, and families takes precedence above all else, for it is my main responsibility to you. Our memory is scarred by The Great Coup, a catastrophe that disrupted the peace we once upheld across our archipelago. That was a dark time: families shattered; chaos reigned. Together, we pledged to remember, to learn, and to never let such a disaster strike again.

He punctuates his speech with thought-chasms, creating a sensation of silence for a fraction of a second. Each time, reality cracks, allowing us to slip from its grasp.

A pleasant—nay, narcotic—sensation.

We have always wondered about and questioned the purpose of these pauses, pondering whether they add weight to his words or help him keep pace with the teleprompter, its script written by an alumna of a literary faculty from the University of Quasi-Liberal Arts who once aspired to become the greatest writer of her generation but now finds herself crafting speeches for the elites and the Tsar himself. Or perhaps it's mercy, little empty time between words created to help us better digest his thick, rhetorical substance.

A lurid dream there was of the Tsar living in a bunker surrounded by a horde of doppelgängers, who, condemned for eternity to an endless battle over the place to be the Tsar's next avatar or suck his sceptre.

What if today it's one of them?

What if he's terminally ill or no longer alive? Like blue cheese, it's hard to tell whether he's already spoilt or not.

Or what if he's a mechanised puppet?

Yes, a marionette manipulated by a dozen people, voiced by a long-languished theatre actor held captive in the depths of the bunker, and all of this is one prolonged, preposterous puppet show with ordinary people as spectators in a boundless sphere of a room on the other side of the camera, the audience bombarded with signs dictating when to laugh and when to weep, when to enable patriotism, exalt our rich history, praise our distinctive culture, despise our enemies, marvel at our bright future, and mourn for all that unattainable past, resenting the rest of the world.

—Times have changed, the world has changed, but the thirst for peace remains unquenched. Today, our peace is under threat, a shadow looming over our neighbouring island, Slobodna Zembla, where a relentless terrorist junta, propped up by the imperialist influences of the United South, asserts its anti-human rule, creating hazards and setting snares, attempting to sway our former allies against us, using innocent lives as mere pawns in their twisted game of world domination.

Slobodna Zembla has now become a festering wound on the flesh of our great archipelago and, despite all our trials, the wound refuses to heal, leaving us with no choice but to act, to safeguard our homes and our people. Even now, with the ongoing peacekeeping operation, our brave soldiers face grave risks, defending on the frontlines against the terrorists, trying to cauterise the wound, and now, we find ourselves on the brink of a monumental, pivotal moment, poised to end our special military operation and save our blood from being spilled with a decisive act—a show of force that will put an end to the aggression against us, that will silence the chaos and bring order. To shield Novo Tsarstvo, we will deploy our groundbreaking instrument, "The Peace Bringer"—a powerful weapon that will pacify Slobodna Zembla and secure the tranquillity of our island and the entire archipelago, an act of defence, of protection, an action we must undertake as the stalwart guardians of peace, putting an end to the unrest, to the violence, and, most importantly, to the looming threat against our beloved motherland. May the dove on our flag soar high once more, and may peace reign supreme. Stand strong, Novo Tsarstvo, for we shall not falter—we stand united for our Motherland, we stand resolute for our future!

At that very moment, the Tsar awkwardly attempts a seated bow and vanishes from the telescreen, replaced by the unfurling black and red flag of Novo Tsarstvo with the white dove; the national anthem blares: two orchestral blasts followed by the menacing rhythm of thunderous drums in unison with the tubas and the discordant squeaking of strings in the background, almost immediately joined by a choir ululating

about the sacrosanct heritage and preordained triumph over enemies. Instead of standing up while the anthem plays, we are dragged downwards, our legs like liquefied lead, the bones vanished, the muscles disentangled. The anthem ends.

—It's 6:15 am in Novo Tsarstvo. The mild winter has come to a close. Today will begin bitingly, with temperatures around minus 30 degrees Celsius in the morning, but as the day progresses, the sun will shine and the temperature will claw its way up 5 degrees by noon before plummeting once more, the atmospheric pressure remaining relatively high at about 1040 hectopascals. Blustery winds from the north are expected throughout the day, reaching speeds of up to 20 kilometres per hour, which may further intensify the biting chill, with possibilities of flurries in the evening and at night. Residents should exercise extreme caution on the roads due to the insidious black ice, particularly treacherous at intersections and turns, and remember that we are entering the enchanting season of the Northern Lights, seeking out open spots with minimal light pollution for the most breathtaking viewing experience. Be careful and remember to bundle up!

Ludicrous music starts to play. Two individuals appear at the table. They greet the audience, each other, and then launch into an animated gossip.

In the violent paroxysm of cowardly fever, a sullen thought invades our brain and courses through our body with a revolting sensation, forcing us to seize the telly, drag it to the window, stammering, panting, rip the

cord out of the socket (or the entire socket, no reason for it to remain) and hurl the black box from our thirteenth floor straight down to the pavement. Perhaps nothing else would happen, and the telly, with a broadcast still running on it by sheer inertia, would shatter into a thousand shards of glass and plastic; however, a minor accident might unfold as there would be standing a demonic pigman in a balaclava, waiting for its next victim.

Perhaps, you.

And the telly would land on the demon's head.

Like a bomb, indeed. The balaclava wouldn't save the poor little piggie.

Thirteen floors, approximately thirty-five metres, two and a half to three seconds of exhilarating freefall.

The word is soaring! The word is free!

Like a meteorite, the telly would flash, dragging a tail of wire with a torn-out socket at its end, and, instead of nailing the demon to the Earth, it would lead the demon's utter annihilation—'utter' because it would smash the demon's head, reducing it to a porridge, blood and bones mixed with the shattered glass of the kinescope, coalescing into one disastrous debacle, a spontaneous art installation.

'The Power of the Word...'

Passers-by would be strolling along, sneaking furtive glances at the

unsettling spectacle, adjusting their collars and straps of their rucksacks and bags, burying their gloved hands deep in their pockets, then averting their gaze, looking forward or down, somewhere at a forty-five degree angle, so they would see nothing but a few metres of treacherous surface before them, scurrying away from the scene before they dissolve into the depths of the cityscape, their worn soles polishing the slippery road for future generations to come.

We, meanwhile, would remain upstairs, teetering on the edge of the open window, buffeted by the biting wind, gulping, and then we would vomit everything we have inside us and send it raining down to the pavement to complete that spontaneous art installation.

Stop using 'would', would you? You're already in the thick of it. Comprehend the gravity of what has just happened. Feel the atmospheric pressure dropping around you. Sprint to the bathroom, barricade yourself inside, perch on the sacred porcelain throne, and wait.

Wait for what?

Your ears buzz, your thoughts flutter against the soft walls in your head, chirping and giggling, stumbling and falling down. Look in the mirror. Your mother's best creation. Pure accident, as everything is.

It should have been broken.

It is. It is cracked, see? Fissures are everywhere in the surrounding space, decorating it like a spider's web. Pale, sinister, with tangled locks of greasy

hair clinging to the face. She used to say you were pretty, didn't she? The murderer, the vigilante, the peace-bringer, the one who delivered the preemptive blow. Pull your lower eyelids down, upper eyelids up. Look inside the pupils. See? There, in the depths of the black dots, consciousness still resides. You see it, and it sees you back. Say 'Hi', would you?

Hi.

Grab your hair, pull it out in strands, run out of the toilet, peer out of the window, and look again at what you've done. Remove the carpet from under the armchair, roll it, take a bucket with a dustpan and a small broom, and head for the lift.

This life isn't working.

'This lift'?

That isn't working either.

Then what's working for you now is an intangible spiral of steps and phantom railings that will guide you down.

Thirteen floors. Two-point-seventy-five metres per floor. Seventeen centimetres per step.

Your heart, like a jackhammer, punches a hole in the ability to act sensibly, reasonably, deliberately.

There's a luft between the body and mind.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen.

Make friends with your limbic system. Run!

Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three, thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight, thirty-nine, forty, forty-one, forty-two, forty-three, forty-four.

Breathe, control your breathing. Who are you, an elderly?

Thirty-seven, thirty-eight.

_Wait-wait-wait-wait-wait, you've been there already. You've fucked it up. _

We don't care. We can't count now. We can't do anything.

Keep the fucking count!

Thirty-nine, forty, forty-one, forty-two, forty-three, forty-four. Thirty forty-five, forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine, fifty, fifty-one, fifty-two, fifty-three, fifty-four, fifty-five, fifty-six, fifty-seven, fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty, sixty-one, sixty-two, sixty-three, sixty-four, sixty-five, sixty-six

Breathe, breathe!

sixty-seven, sixty-eight, sixty-nine, eighty, eighty-one, eighty-two, eighty-three, eighty-four, eighty-five, eighty-six, eighty-seven, eighty-eight, eighty-nine, ninety, ninety-one, ninety-two, ninety-three, ninety-four, ninety-five, ninety-six, ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred, one hundred one, one hundred two

You don't have to say 'one' every time...

hundred three hundred four hundred five hundred six hundred seven hundred eight hundred nine hundred ten, hundred eleven hundred twelve, hundred thirteen

you don't have to say 'hundred' either there isn't much left

fourteen, fifteen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty twenty-one twenty-two twenty-three twenty-four twenty-five twenty-six twenty-seven

degrees of pain in the left side of the ribcage and

twenty-eight one two one two

is your drill march killer march

thirty thirty-one thirty-two thirty-three run for your life thirty-four thirty-five thirty-six thirty-seven thirty-eight thirty-nine when is the end

it's near my friend it's near don't skip the numbers would you

forty one hundred forty-one forty-two forty-three forty-four forty-five forty-six forty-seven forty-eight one hundred forty-eight that's it!

no it's not

forty-nine fifty fifty-one-two

it's you, it's your fault!

no-no-no, it's not us, it's not even the telly (an object in freefall) that destroys (turns the demon's head into a porridge) in the case of the falling what destroys is the impact force when one object (the telly) collides with an obstacle (the demon) we (what is "we" even?) have nothing to do with that we have nothing to do with it at all

yes you do! of course you do! they're coming for you already! you think you can porridge a pig on the pavement and get away with it?

yeah! yeah absolutely! it's all surface elasticity (the pig's head)! had he been a gas nothing would have happened! he would have blown apart and thanked us for the tickle wouldn't've <...>

---

where were we, eh?

sixty-seven sixty-eight-nine seventy seventy-one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-eleven

eighty it should be eighty you dimwit!

eighty eighty-one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten

ninety say it in full again you're fucking it up again you cunt

one hundred ninety, one hundred ninety-one, one hundred ninety-two, one hundred ninety-three, one hundred ninety-four, one hundred ninety-five, one hundred ninety-six, one hundred ninety-seven, one hundred ninety-eight, one hundred ninety-nine.

Two hundred

Yes!

Two hundred and one, two hundred and two, we're closer than ever, closer to the bottom of this enormous boundless pit, two hundred three, two hundred four

the bottom, the bottom, can you feel it? can you? it's cold, it's so cold

two hundred five two hundred six two hundred seven here here jump over the last three <...>

A lurid dream there was of a quiet early morning, still dark. The useless street lights flickered drearily. The snow fell perpendicularly, cushioning the pavement and the deserted street. No sound heard. No passer-by seen. No one, not now at least. They may had scampered, possibly hidden, lurking, waiting, questioning themselves, wondering what was going to happen to that marvellous art installation and who that ingenious artist

that made it was.

Except it wasn't and it isn't a dream, silly.

Someone stabbed us from inside under the rib.

Welcome, breathlessness.

Cold air wheezed in our throat before it had time to warm up in the nose and mouth.

You shouldn't have skipped gym class to go to the library. You should have run, run, run, learned to breathe, mastered the motion of your limbs, for life is unpredictable. You never know what a television dropped on a demon from a thirteenth-floor might do to it. Look icy pavement, here it is, splayed out, still resembling a human body. Its head is a gory disaster. The television sometimes can truly be mind-blowing!

Please stop.

Around the demon, the blood covers the icy pavement. The snow is crimson. Pieces of brain, bones, the glass and plastic left from the broken television are all scattered around. With the rolled carpet under your arm and the bucket in hand, you approach it but slip on the blood-moistened ice and plummet onto the body. Under the dark clothes, it's probably still warm. An eyeball is floating in the puddle of filth, see? It sees you. Use your dustpan and broom, scoop up the installation. Hurry! Your hands are shaking. The bloody slush is splashing. Your pupils keep dilating. Your mouth keeps drying out. You

forgot to put on your shoes, silly.

Is that an ear? _Collect as much as you can and hide the large pieces in the snowdrift. The rest will freeze into the pavement by dawn, covered with snow. No one will notice.

It was snowing...

Thank snow, do it.

Thank you, dear snow.

Good. Passers-by will only think that some drunkard was walking home with jingling bags again, slipped, fell face-first on the ice, split his lip, nose, or his eyebrow and bled on the road. What a disgrace! Put that horn in your pocket. Roll out the rug, drag the bloody body onto it, wrap it up. You used to enjoy rolling yourself up in the carpet when you were a child, using this same carpet and pretending you were a mummy. Your dear parents were grudging, but each time you did that, after a minute or even less time you had a sudden urge to leave the carpet-chamber, realised that you couldn't do it, and your claustrophobia kicked in, leaving you believing you would stay inside the carpet forever and end with a dreadful demise within the rug. You started screaming for help, crying, and your parents, laughing lovingly, unwrapped you. Remember?

Yes.

Now, it's your turn to wrap and unwrap. Hang the bucket full of

demonic leftovers onto your shoulder, turn your back to the entrance, grab the head end of the carpet.

But aren't we supposed to bring a body inside legs-first? Isn't that how it's always done?

Do you want to smear the entire building in blood, silly? Grab the body. Up, up only. It's not too heavy, perhaps the head was the heaviest part. Press the lift button with your nose.

This lift isn't working.

Up, up only, those thirteen floors again through the dark staircase littered with cinders and butts and condoms and cans, newspapers and needles, smelling musty, smelling of damp and dust, smelling of human filth.

Time goes by in arithmetic progression. One, two, four, eight—

Stop doing that, drag the body and don't think about anything, turn off your mi <...>

—Is that blood?

It's her, the old lady, your neighbour, her nose broken and blue. It's the thirteenth floor. Your physique is impressive. Good work.

We're alone with her in the stairway.

Yes, this is where it ends.

A heavy lump goes down your throat.

Please, say something.

No, you must say something.

—Erm, yes... We... we... cut our hand while preparing frozen chicken.

Pause. She stares at you, not blinking, then frowns.

—You should've defrosted it, love, don't you know?

Pause. Swallow it.

—Ugh, we know but... we didn't have time for defrosting. Thank you, though.

Nod and smile.

Creepy, you look creepy. Stop smiling. Concerned, she scans you from top to bottom.

—You look ill. Are you eating well, love?

Omelettes. Overcooked omelettes with lurid dreams.

Her gaze is concentrated on the bucket.

—Not really, ma'am. Just erm—

—What's in the bucket, love?

Busted. Now you have to kill her, too.

Pause, pause, pause, a lot of never-ending pauses that sounds like a falling cathedral. Emptiness. No-no-no, don't you dare fainting.

—Erm, m-am, it's a porridge... Pig porridge.

She squints with suspicion.

—Pig porridge? Hm—

—Yes, ma'am, indeed. Please, we have to go. We're in a bit of a ru—

—Is it from a pig?

—Yes.

—From a real pig?

—A metaphorical pig, ma'am.

You should've told her it's from a demon, a real demon, a dead demon.

—Uh-huh... A porridge?

—It is, ma'am, a porridge.

She's thinking. Give her some time.

—Porridge from a pig… I don't understand, love.

Unnerving, she is!

—We thought you were a wise woman, but you're asking such silly questions, ma'am.

—Me? Wise woman? Hah, look at me, love. 'Wise woman.'

Look at her. An old hag who busted you and is about to call the police. Kill her.

—You're right, you're right… Please, can we go?

Void, the matter-eating void hungry for more emptiness.

—What's floating in there? In your pig porridge.

Tell her the truth. If you don't, no one will.

—Television pieces.

—What?

—It's a telly, ma'am, look closely.

She does.

—What a nonsense… You're lying to me, love, aren't you?

—No, not at all. We wouldn't dare lying. Never. We want to be like her.

—Who?

—Truth, m'am.

—Ah, *she*, I see... I see...

—It shattered, the telly. We're not lying. We threw it out of our window.

The harder she squints, the less wrinkled her forehead becomes, the further back moves her wig.

—Are you drunk? Are you delirious?

—What? No, we're not. We don't think so.

She notices the boot sticking out of the rolled carpet and starts blinking and rubbing her eyes with the backs of her hands, covers her eyes with her palms and mumbles something.

—Am I delirious?...

—We don't know, ma'am. It may be you, may be us, maybe we've both lived in collective delirium for dozens of years and there's nothing left in the world apart from that delirium in which it's the order of things to flush remnants of a policeman down the toilet, for the order of things is odd. So odd you can't imagine it, ma'am. But we can.

The empty silence silences silence, silencingly, vacuous void voids voiceless vacuity, voidfully. A gentle smile stretches on her face. Pull one

as well. Do it. Squeeze out all naïveté left in you right on your face.

—Perhaps we are both delirious.

—Perhaps we both are.

She glances into the bucket, at the carpet, and shakes her head.

—Well… Good luck, love. Please take care of yourself.

—Thank you, ma'am, and you have a lovely day too.

About to turn around, she scratches her chin and asks:

—By the way, why do you refer to yourself as 'we', love?

Deep inhale. Finally, somebody asked it.

—Because 'we' are never lonely, ma'am.

The old lady shakes her head, crosses herself, mumbles something, and retreats to her flat, sits by the window, turns on the wireless, listens to the white noise, and melancholicaly stares into the—

Well, you don't know where, you're not omniscient, are you? You can't see that, she's in her flat now, behind the closed door, probably calling the police.

Your metal door is open so don't wait and burst in put the bucket on the floor first lock click second lock click then the latch click and now to the toilet to the toilet to the toilet lock yourself in again so no one can

see the lid of your porcelain throne is open and ready to take in your creation wholly entirely from your bucket young dissident extremist terrorist murderer pour pour your hellish cocktail your demon brew into the sewer and flow flow the cocktail flow all the way through the pipes but please don't clog them up please.

Flush flush flush fl—

Oh no, what a fiasco. The water level rises. It's muddy and bloody with pieces of bones and brain floating in it. It's going up.

Up, up only.

Take the toilet brush and start thrusting the pig porridge down. Your heart pumps blood through your veins into your head with the same vehemence and futility you try to pump down the porridge. You're snivelling, tears teetering behind your eyelids, rolling down your cheeks and raining into the bowl below. The mixture of toilet water, infernal ichor, and your salty drops splashes around, soaking your clothes, running down your face, entering your mouth—an unwelcome baptism in filth and fear. The bowl is still overbrimming. You push the toilet brush far into the siphon. Something cracks and the handle alone remains in your hand while the brush itself rests wedged in the U-bend. You're losing this battle. You're losing to a grotesque slop. You are nothing. An agonised whimper erupts from the dank depths of your gullet. Plunge your hands into the filthy substance and clean the siphon. Don't mind the nausea, your futilely contracting stomach doesn't understand the situation. Moreover, you have nothing to vomit with,

you've already been cleansed. Now, do that to the toilet. Uproot the brush, rid all remnants clogging the plumbing, including the bony and the brainy bits, and the incisive shards of the telescreen. It is your ordeal. Let the substance flow!

Down, down only.

The rhythm of your rushing blood turns into applause, then, for a moment, into silence, until your sob, raw and guttural, shreds it into tatters.

You're free, water, please go. Please, water. Please.

It does. The water answers to your plea. Don't think, dive into the sink. Behold your reflection in the mirror (young dissident extremist terrorist murderer). Don't cry—it won't help, it will only irritate your eyes. You like crying, savouring every tear but this is not something you need to do right now. Wash your face, your hair, mop it, twist it in a bun, and drink, drink, drink, drink, drink that chlorinated liquid rich with the flavour of rust and lime.

The body! The bo—

Peek out from the toilet. Here she is, your telly-headed mistress, standing there, shaking her telly-head, etching the course of events in her notebook. You've failed her. She's disappointed in you, though it's hard to tell. Her screen shows nothing but your faint reflection.

She will snitch on us...

And hello jail. Because of you.

They will kindly place us against the wall and shoot us. No one will ever know what happened. That will be a good ending.

What about your multiple realities now? How many do you see?

Ignore, ignore, ignore...

No, you can't escape it anymore; you have to choose. You must hide the body.

Fridge? Freezer?

It would only fit a head but there isn't even a head anymore.

A suitcase, our late father's travel suitcase.

Yes, throw his old clothes out of it. Unwrap the demon from the carpet, toss it aside. Lay the suitcase next to it. Shove the demon inside. Close it.

No, no, no, it's not closing. It's not fitting into it.

Put him in the foetal position. The suitcase is a womb and the demon's ready for rebirth.

No, the demon is too large to fit the suitcase. They aren't designed to fit demons, they are designed to fit things.

Turn the demon into things then! Unfold the carpet back and drag the demon to the centre of it. Prepare to butcher.

—Make sure your knife is sharp—a dull knife is a dangerous tool,—murmurs TVR, suddenly appearing behind you, hovering and whispering,—But better get a saw.

She's very caring again. But "a saw"? We don't have a saw.

Ask your—

knock-knock

—Morning, ma'am.

—Morning again, love. What can I do—

—Have a saw?

—Saw? I didn't see anything.

—No-no, the tool. We need a saw.

—Ho-ho, why would you need a saw at such an early hour? I wonder...

—We ... We ... the chicken is, well ... **gulp** very solid, and our knife is quite dull. It is for dinner.

Her eyes show a hint of curiosity.

—Dinner? At such an hour, love?

—We ... we ... we're hungry, ma'am.

—Oh you, poor thing. I only have a hacksaw, though, love.

—That will do, ma'am.

She claps her hands once and smiles.

—Lovely! You're having a busy morning, aren't you, love? I can't sleep myself. It must be the weather ... Old bones ... Ho-ho.

She gives you the hacksaw. Bid her a pleasant day again and go back to the demon. On your knees. Look at it, lying here before you, helpless, motionless, vulnerable, its entirety in your power. You can do whatever you want.

Our lungs defy inhalation. We don't know what to do.

—Start with the arms,—says TVR.—Find the joint where the arm connects to the body. Carefully cut through the joint and set the arm aside. Repeat this step with the other arm.

Place the hacksaw on his shoulder and with a frictional movement, back and forth, pull and push, pull and push. You squint as the dark demon blood sprinkles, already cold and stinky. The hacksaw penetrates its skin, to flesh, to bone, as blood spurts out on the carpet. It soaks it all in like a sponge and transforms into a quagmire. Pull and push, pull and push. The red sludge, the demon blood, enters your mouth and—

—Next, let's move on to the legs,—she happily continues.—Like with the arms, find the natural joint between the thigh and the body. It

should give way easily if you've found the right spot.

Obey. It takes time, but trust her. Just pull and push. Don't weep. Why do you keep weeping? No redemption for you, it's been already sold out.

There's nothing else left to do but weeping. This is who we are now, a weeper; this is where it all ends, in <...>

A lurid dream there was of a butcher who sold the demon's flesh to angels. The heavens in that week were short on demon's meat. The angels craved to feast and celebrate their virtuous, righteous, holy nature, and thought they must, and had no other choice but act, unlock the gates of hell and let the demons out and hunt them down.

—Repeat with the other leg.

The demons fled into the night, but all were caught and slain with glee. The butcher carved them with delight and brought them to the angels' spree. They ate the demon flesh and loved the taste of sin, and soon they ran out of their stash and looked for more to feed but couldn't find it, for demons now were extinct. They searched the barren hell, they rummaged through the heavens, until with shock and awe they realised the only demon left to kill was hiding in the butcher's skin.

Too coherent for a dream, isn't it?

—...And there you have it—a fully dismembered body. Remember,

practice makes perfect, so don't be discouraged if you don't get it right the first time.

Read next part

№1.5: Penumbra

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