

The UnSimple

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SIXTY-EIGHT ACCIDENTAL FIRST SENTENCES

1. In the autumn of 1951, it would not have seemed at all strange to head west. At that time even the east had begun slowly to move in that direction. Nevertheless, in November 1951, Sebastian and Anna left Mokra and went east. There was, after all, a lot more of it. To be more precise, they headed for the eastern south, or south-easterly.

2. It wasn't the war that delayed the journey for so many years. The war could do little to change anything in their lives. Sebastian had decided on the bold step of breaking with his family's tradition of showing the children important places from family history when they turned fifteen. That was because when Anna turned fifteen, Sebastian understood that everything was repeating itself and that Anna was the only possible woman in the whole world for him. And not just that he could be only with her but also that he couldn't be without her. Meanwhile, in Ialivets, that place in family history that he was meant to show her, the Unsimple were waiting for her. And Sebastian knew that they would easily persuade his daughter to stay with them.

After all, at the moment of her birth they had predicted that she would become one of them.

3. In April 1951, Anna began to sense that her father, Sebastian, was the only man she could be with, and they began to make love. That spring there was no lack of wanderers traveling by hitherto unheard-of roads and carrying fantastic rumors. This was how Sebastian found out that the Unsimple had vanished from Ialivets. After that nothing more was heard of them.

Sebastian and Anna spent the summer submerged in their love-making, oblivious to the various armies flowing back and forth around them. Nothing blocked them from going east, south, or southeast. When it got really cold and the roads contracted into tight, well-defined lines, they finally left Mokra and planned to be in Ialivets within a few days. The journey had been put off for three years. But Sebastian feared nothing—he had once again found a real woman. Of the same kind as always.

4. He had no idea how he would actually show his daughter all the places in the mountains between Mokra and Ialivets. Instead of four days the journey would need to have lasted four seasons. Only in this way and at all times of day—by day, by night, in the morning and in the evening—would Anna be able to see how different this road looked in its collective totality. He looked at the map, read the names aloud, and immediately began to feel better. Even the fact that the map meant nothing to Anna could not dampen his

mood.

He was, however, a little disturbed by the trees along the way, which he hadn't seen for so many years: the growth of trees is what most often makes a landscape unexpectedly unrecognizable. And that is proof beyond doubt that significant trees should never be abandoned to the whims of nature.

And as for the actual trip—no journey knows what might become of it, what its true reasons are, or what consequences it may have.

5. Franz once told Sebastian that there are things in the world much more important than what is called fate. He had in mind, first and foremost, place. Where there's a place, there's history (if history has been woven, there must be a place that corresponds to it). To find a place is to give history a start. To invent a place is to discover a plot. And plots, after all, are also more important than fate. There are places where there is nothing left to tell, and sometimes it's enough simply to speak the names of places in the correct sequence to take command of the most interesting history, one more captivating than any biography. Toponymy can lead one astray, but it is also perfectly possible to rely on nothing more.

6. And something of that sort happened to Sebastian. He found Ialivets, which Franz had invented. He became fascinated by linguistics. Toponymy captivated him, and not just because he became fascinated by its details. Pleska, Opresa, Tempa, Apeska, Pidpula, Sebastian. Shesa, Sheshul, Menchul, Bilyn, Dumen, Petros, Sebastian.

Before there were any mountains, their names were already prepared. It was the same with his women—they had not yet come into being when his blood had already begun to mix with the blood that would become theirs.

From then on he cared only about keeping to this limited toponymy and curtailed genetics.

7. Franzysk met Sebastian on the top of a cliff beyond Ialivets. Sebastian was on his way home from Africa, and he was shooting birds. His sniper rifle didn't let him feel the kill. Through the gun's sight he saw only a kind of movie. The shot didn't so much cut the film short as introduce a new scene into the script. He had already shot a fair number of small birds, which were flying over Ialivets on their way, as it happens, to Africa.

Winter was to arrive soon. Winter has to change something. Winter gives a purpose—this is its defining characteristic. It closes the openness of summer, and this has to find expression somehow.

Franzysk was looking for something to make a new animated film about. And suddenly here, just before winter, a cliff above the town, right in town, a flock of birds flying over a mountain to Africa, to Asia Minor, to the fields of saffron and aloe and hibiscus sown between enormous dog-roses, a short way from the long, slender Nile, a pile of many-colored birds, shot through

the eye, laid one on top of the other so that their colors contrasted even more sharply with one another, in each right eye a reflection of their epic journey, in each left one a red stain, not a feather damaged, and a light wind gently brushing and tangling the ghostly down of the weightless little bodies, and the eye of the marksman at the other end of the sight. And the marksman. A red white African.

8. Sebastian's hands were frozen. He'd gotten frostbite one Saharan night, and from that time on he couldn't wear gloves. Sebastian asked Franz what a pianist would do in such cold.

They looked around and saw that they were surrounded by beauty. Because it was autumn, and autumn was sliding into winter. Franz named various mountains, without even showing Sebastian which was which. Then he invited Sebastian home. It had been a long time since he'd had guests—it had been a long time since he'd met any strangers on the cliffs. That may have been the first time they drank coffee together with grapefruit juice. When Anna brought their coffee out onto the glazed veranda, where vine branches burned in the copper stove, Sebastian asked her to stay for a moment and describe the view from the window. Anna recited: Pleska, Opresa, Tempa, Pidpula, Shesa, Seshul, Menchul, Bilyn, Dumen, Petros.

It was late autumn 1913. Franz said that there are things far more important than what is called fate. He suggested that Sebastian try living in Ialivets for a while. It got dark, and before bringing them a second pot (almost pure juice, with only a drop of coffee) Anna went to make Sebastian's bed—she couldn't yet do this in the dark.

CHRONOLOGICALLY

1. In the autumn of 1913 Sebastian stayed in Ialivets. He was twenty years old. He had been born on the other side of the Carpathians, in Borzhava, in 1893. In 1909 he had spent a whole month in Trieste with his parents, and a year later he went to fight in Africa. He returned home via the Black Sea and Constanza, then the Rodian mountains, Hrynyiava, and Pip Ivan. He crossed Chornohora, passing by Hoverla and Petros. It was late autumn 1913.

2. Ialivets, named for the junipers that grew there, had appeared on the map twenty-five years earlier.

This place had been created by Franzysk, who was more often called Franz. For twenty years Franzysk had lived in cities—Lviv, Stanislav, Vyzhnytsia, Mukachevo. He'd been taught to draw by a single artist (who had once worked with Brehm and later made and forged prints), and had to, wanted to, and was able to travel with him from place to place. Then he was shown a camera, and he stopped drawing. Soon afterward, however, near Morshyn, an illustrator died who had been accompanying a professor of botany from Krakow—they'd been on their way to Chornohora to study the plants of the Hutsul country. In Stanislav the professor had come across Franz, who several days later would find a place where he felt at home—comfortable and happy. A year later he returned to that place, and began to build a town. After five more years Ialivets became the most magical resort in all of Central Europe, and quite fashionable.

3. Anna, on account of whom Sebastian remained in Ialivets, had originally been named Stefania. The real Anna was her mother, Franzysk's wife. She was trying to conquer her fear of heights because she was a mountaineer. She had come to the resort with a friend of hers, a speleologist. They were both masters in their chosen fields—the only difference being that she would only climb up, and he would only climb down. What they both lacked most of all, however, was space. When Anna became pregnant with Franzysk's child, she decided to give birth there, in Ialivets. And by the time Stefania was born, Anna had no desire to go back to where she'd come from.

She died in a duel to which she had been challenged by her husband. Franzysk immediately renamed Stefania Anna. He brought up his daughter alone, until the day he invited Sebastian, who was on his way home to Borzhava from Africa, into their home. Franz realized then that from now on, she would either submit to some other man or to no one at all.

LETTERS TO AND FROM BEDA

1. The only person who knew all of them over several decades was old Beda. It was said that he was one of the Unsimple. In any case, he was acquainted with them. When Franz taught Anna to read and write (for a long time he hadn't wanted her to know how, because he realized that Anna wouldn't write but would simply record, and that she wouldn't read but would only re-read, and Franz considered this useless), she began to show an interest in learning about the beginnings of Ialivets, and about her mother. Old Beda was the only one who knew such things, and Anna would write him letters with questions. The answers would arrive either very quickly or would take so long that she would begin to fear she'd written the address incorrectly, that the letter had ended up in the wrong place, in such a place where there wouldn't even be anyone to write back and say that Beda couldn't possibly be there, ever.

Around this time Beda began living in an armored car, traveling from place to place but always within a certain radius of Ialivets. Once Beda told a story.

2. After the first year of living in the armored car, he was sure that he would remember its interior down to the tiniest detail until the end of his life. Then the car ran over a mine that had been left behind by the Italians when they'd been building a tunnel in the Iablunysky valley. Beda nearly died. He was found by some Hutsuls. He was badly hurt, not in the way that one is hurt by a knife, a saber, or an axe, but as if the earth had split open. They stuffed him into a barrel of honey and fed him goat's milk curdled in hot wine. A couple of gypsy violinists undertook the job of repairing the car. Nine months later Beda climbed out of the honey. The armored car stood in the garden, and children climbed on it to shake the autumn apples off the high branches of the tree next to it. Apparently white calvins. Beda thought that he'd memorized the inside of his vehicle down to the last detail. He climbed up the ladder to the hatch, tiring quickly, and realized that he couldn't remember how he'd climbed that ladder nine months previously. He closed his eyes and could not picture where things were in there where everything had once been so familiar. He tried to calm down by telling himself that his skin had simply changed. Or that during the repairs the fiddlers had discarded some parts. But he couldn't quite put himself at ease. That's what old Beda wrote.

Anna sent him letters with questions about her family. He replied, answering the questions and always adding something about himself, and although she never requested this she read it with interest.

3. Some of Anna's letters went something like this.

... I'm not asking you to tell me everything...
... I also have so much to tell you about Ialivets, Franzysk, my mother, the Unsimple. You're the only one in the whole world who knew all of them...
... I don't even know why I want to know all this, but I feel them without voices. I feel my own body, I'm starting to think about how it is. I realize suddenly that I'm not an island. That who I am is connected with all of them, because my body thinks through them...
... it's not something that makes me feel bad, this dependence, but I want to know which parts of me belong to whom: which belong to Franz, which to my mother, which to the Unsimple, which to Ialivets, and which are mine...
... hesitation is more than a mistake...
... tell me something more...
... I want to hear more...
... how did Ialivets look long ago...
... I say this: I love you so much, it is and is...
... I know that my mother arrived when Ialivets was already fashionable. There wasn't a resort like it anywhere in the world...
... my dad always spoke about all our ancestors using the word "maybe"...

4. Old Beda would write in reply (If only I could remember everything they said, what we talked about. Even without the things I've told you. If only they had told me then everything they had said. But they too remembered little, only a few phrases. When you don't remember how you spoke, how you were spoken to, then there is no one. You won't hear the voices. You have to hear a voice. A voice is alive and a voice gives life. A voice is more powerful than an image. Franz told me that there are things more important than fate. Say, intonation, syntax. If you want to be yourself, never give up your own intonation. Through the whole war he spoke with the same voice. I can't speak with you a second time only about this. I can't tell you everything you want to hear. I can speak. And then you can hear what you want. But not vice versa. But you won't remember everything anyway. What has been said passes. It feels good now, because we're talking nicely. I like hearing myself talk to you. No one in your family ever recognized standard syntax. You know what your family phrases are—it is and is, should and should, irresponsible consistency is total, I love you so very much.... Hesitation is more than a mistake, or less. But for longer. They say that your grandfather—your mom's dad, who wasn't from round here but from somewhere near Sharish—had a little garden. He dreamed of living there in his old age: lying on his bed of snail shells, smoking opium, and rolling glass balls with his feet. He walled off a scrap of land and sowed it with a single variety of high-quality grass. In the middle he erected an enormously tall pole on which he trained ivy, beans, and wild grapes. Alongside he dug a pit and filled it with snail shells. They said he had seen something similar once behind a high wall in Hradchane, when he had been

lost and climbed up into a cherry tree to get his bearings. He would lie on that bed of shells when he smoked. He would lay his head on a great, flat rock, on which only lichen grew. He wandered in the White Tatras, collected spores and infected or fertilized the rock with them. He himself made the glass balls, in the centers of which were living cyclamens. He would set the balls in motion, they would roll and come to a stop; the cyclamens would be upside down but slowly they would begin to twist, turning their bottoms to the earth and tops to the sun. The garden was destroyed when your mother was still young and grandfather escaped with her and the other children to the mountains. Franz isn't a local either. Nobody can say where he came from, where he was born. He decided to settle in Ialivets because he thought that there wouldn't be any sensations there, that no stories would take place there. He wanted nothing to happen around him that he couldn't keep up with, that he would have to remember. He was still very young. He didn't know that things just don't work like that—that's first—that life will seethe around you no matter where you are, and that even in its triviality and monotony it is unrelenting and constantly changing. And second—you don't have to remember anything anyway, forcing yourself to keep up. What is to remain arrives and takes root by itself. A sort of botanical geography—the exhaustive joy of germination. I know that the first Anna didn't appear until Ialivets had already become fashionable. Patients came from all around to drink gin. The town already looked just as it does now, except without your inventions. Small hotels and pensions with bars were built. You could drink by yourself in your room, in pairs or in groups; three times a day, on an empty stomach and at night, or all night, or they could wake you at a certain time during the night and serve you a shot in bed. You could fall asleep wherever you were drinking, or drink with a doctor or psychotherapist. I liked to get drunk on a swing. Anna was an excellent rock climber. She felt the weight of every fragment of her own expanse and could spread it across the surface of a vertical wall. You don't have to see anything grand there. The most important thing is: you're always with a rope. She thought that she didn't care about anything—but actually she started to be afraid. She started to go to Ialivets after a serious injury. Although she could climb well again, now she was afraid. She couldn't explain it properly, because she hardly knew how to speak, although she thought with every millimeter of her body. Franz was then twice the size he is now—you can imagine how they must have felt. Franz never told anyone this, but I know things were the best for them when Anna became pregnant. And there's no maybe about it. For some reason people believe that stories end with death. Actually, stories end precisely when someone is born. Don't be offended, but when you were born the story of Franz and your mother ended...)

Anna liked the fact that Beda wrote on wrappers that still smelled of various fruit teas.

GENETICALLY

1. Franzysk considered himself a superficial person. He loved surfaces. He felt confident on them. He didn't know if there was any sense in digging any deeper than what is seen by the naked eye. Though he listened attentively to sounds coming from any sort of membranes. And he would sniff the streams that flowed out of pores. He observed every movement, but in looking at someone he did not try to imagine what they were thinking. He was unable to analyze essence, because the overflow of superficial details provided more than enough answers. Many times he noticed that he was completely satisfied with those explanations for various phenomena that can be seen without access to knowledge of the fundamental relations between things. Most often he used the simplest figure of thought—analogy. He generally thought about what was similar to what. More precisely, what is reminiscent of what. Here he mixed shapes with tastes, sounds with smells, features with feelings, the sensation of internal organs with heat and cold.

2. But there was one philosophical question that genuinely interested him. Franz contemplated reduction. He observed how the immensity of human life, that infinity of infinite seconds, could be reduced to a few words, the kind which, for example, can be found written about a person in an encyclopedia (of all books Franz recognized only the Larousse Encyclopedic Dictionary, and his library consisted of a dozen or so editions of it).

One of his favorite distractions was to invent entries of just a few words or sentences, in the style of Larousse, about everyone whom he knew or had met. The ones about himself he even wrote down. Over the years he had amassed several hundred. And although each one contained something that distinguished it from the others, the fact remained that his entire—though, granted, as yet unfinished—life could be set down in a few dozen well-ordered words. This excited and never failed to amaze Franz, and gave him hope that his way of living was a perfectly good one.

3. Further proof of Franzysk's superficiality was that he knew nothing about his family history. Even about his mother and father he knew only what he himself had seen as a child. For some reason they had never spoken with him about the past, and it had never crossed his mind to ask them about anything. He spent his whole childhood in solitude, painting everything he saw. His parents died without him, when he already had his own teacher in a different town. Eventually Franz somehow realized that not once, not even in the first years of his life, had he painted his mother or father. The reduction of them was practically absolute.

It was probably fear of continuing this emptiness that drove him to tell his

daughter as much as possible about himself. Even about the structure of the world he tried to speak in such a way that she would always remember that it had been her father who had first told her about this or that. Though about her mother, his Anna, he also knew only from the time they had spent together—a little more than two years. But that was enough for the girl to know everything she needed to know about her mother.

All her life, except for the last few months, she hadn't spent a single day apart from her father. Even after she became Sebastian's wife.

4. In September 1914 she volunteered for the army, and after a few weeks' training was sent to the front in eastern Galicia. Sebastian and Franzysk remained alone in a small building not far from the main street in Ialivets. There was no news from the front. Then, in the spring of 1915, a courier arrived in the town and handed Sebastian (Franz had been beheaded the day before, and his funeral was to take place the next day) an infant—the daughter of the heroic volunteer, Anna of Ialivets. Sebastian never found out exactly when the child had been born, or what pregnant Anna had done in the midst of the most terrible battles of the World War. But he knew for certain that this was his daughter. He called her Anna, or to be more exact, the second Anna (it wasn't until after her death that he often referred to her simply as “the second one”).

5. The second Anna grew more and more similar to the first. Or maybe they were both similar to the very first one—only old Beda could know. As for Sebastian, he grew accustomed to comparing himself daily to Franzysk. He brought up his Anna himself and would let no woman near her. In the end, eighteen-year-old Anna, of her own free will, chose a man for herself. The man was, of course, Sebastian.

6. This time there was nothing he didn't know about the pregnancy of his woman. Indeed, only he was present at the birth of their daughter, who was at the same time his granddaughter. And Sebastian saw how the birth became the end of the story. Because at the beginning of the next, his dear second Anna died a moment before the third came to rest in his arms. Somewhere in the bitter depths within him Sebastian felt the turbulence and calming of underground waters, he felt worlds being sketched out and erased, the transformation of the previous twenty years into a seedling. There was no need of any of the Unsimple to realize, he thought to himself, that something like this had already happened to him once, and that with his new-born wife he would live to a similar end. That this wasn't a question of the strange blood of the women of that family but rather of his own unstoppable desire to be poured into it. That it wasn't that they had to die young but rather that he had no right to see them more than one at a time.

7. Sebastian went out onto the veranda. The Unsimple had probably arrived earlier but sat quietly on the benches there, waiting until the birth was over. For supper Sebastian had shot almost a hundred thrushes that had just eaten all the berries from the young rowan tree. He baked them whole, after plucking them and brushing them with saffron.

Two women—a seeress and a snake-charmer—washed Anna and wrapped her in colorful blankets.

The men, meanwhile, managed to feed the child and declared that they needn't tell her anything—because she herself was Unsimple. And they also said what Franz had said, that there are things far more important than fate. Apparently he was thinking of heredity.

After supper Sebastian could not get to sleep. He was trying to remember whether Anna had ever said anything about where she would like to be buried, and how he was to feed the child tomorrow. Then he began to think about Pastor Mendel's experiments with peas, and decided that the child was going to be happy. He tried to imagine himself in fifteen years' time—in 1951—and immediately fell asleep.

THE FIRST OLD PHOTOGRAPH—THE ONLY UNDATED ONE

1. A low wall composed of flat stone slabs irregular in shape. Furthermore the slabs also differ greatly in size—there are small thin ones, like closed hands, and also larger ones, long enough to lie down on quite comfortably. These are the thickest, but not one of them retains the same breadth along its entire length. The majority are in fact of medium size. If you were to hold one of these in front of you, with one end tucked under your chin, it would barely reach down to your waist. The wall has a singularly strange quality: although it looks solid enough and gives the impression of having no end—just as all marked boundaries are supposed to—the presence of unfilled gaps between the horizontally laid slabs arouses a desire to rearrange them, or to remove each one and make something new of it.

2. It's important that all the stones are completely clean. On the whole wall there's not a single scrap of moss to be found—not a single stem or blade of grass. Even if the leaves of the beech trees happen to fall on it (the wall is wide enough for that, the leaves are yellowing already and occasionally fall off in the dry wind, as commonly happens at the end of August—all this is evident even from a black-and-white photograph), someone has carefully swept them up from the stone surface warmed in the afternoon sun.

Between the trees beyond the wall there is a cubic building, also made of stone. The stone is impeccably smooth and polished. The whole building seems to be a windowless, monolithic block. The relief on the façade is designed to look like four drawers, so that the cube also resembles an enormous chest of drawers, with the top drawer protruding slightly. Engraved on a relatively small enameled metal plaque, in simple, thick, and squat script, is the word JUNIPERUS.

3. In front of the wall there's a fragment of a road, already paved with river stones. The road begins at the bottom of the card, in the middle, and leads up toward the top left-hand corner, skirting round a tall, inclined cedar pine before disappearing once again near the center—at the top, naturally. In the distance the road curves at such an angle that it serves simultaneously as a sort of backdrop for the rest of the photo. The wall is always on the right, and on the left is a narrow canal with bare concrete embankments. Further to the left in the picture, beyond the canal, is a sliver of a high wooden platform, on which stand several deck-chairs and some planters with slender junipers.

4. Franzysk, in a white linen coat with large buttons, stands on the very edge of the canal, on the bank nearest the road. He holds a bundle of clothes slung across one arm. The clothes are the same color as his coat, but it's

possible to make out a shirt and a pair of pants. In his other hand is a pair of black shoes. From his posture it's clear that he has just turned away from the water. And in it is the head of a person, swimming with the current.

5. The face is impossible to make out, but Sebastian knows it's him. It had been a habit of theirs: they would go for strolls through the town, Sebastian slowly swimming the canals and Franz walking along the bank.

All the streets in Ialivets were lined with canals. That way water from the many streams that flowed down the cliffs above the town was collected in a swimming pool at its lower edge. Sebastian could swim for hours in the mountain water, and the whole time he and Franz would converse. From the looks of it, the photograph must have been taken near the end of the summer of 1914. Only once did someone come with them on one of their walks—a young instructor of the art of survival whom they had invited to one of the lodging houses to give private lessons. A teacher of Esperanto and the owner of a hectograph had also been staying then. But only the instructor was invited to take part in their stroll through the town.

6. Immediately after the swim and photograph the instructor suggested going somewhere to drink gin, but Sebastian and Franz had a fancy for some light, fresh gooseberry wine, and so took the instructor to see Beda, to the armored car, which stood between two island-patches of mountain pines. Beda had been collecting berries of all kinds all summer, and he now had in his car several ten-liter bottles in which the different colored berries were fermenting, heated by the metal walls of the vehicle.

First they tried a little of each wine, and then they drank all the gooseberry. The instructor became extremely talkative and began testing Sebastian, to see if he could solve some simple survival problems. It turned out that the latter had a serious lack of knowledge in this field and could perish quite easily in the most innocuous of situations. But Sebastian had a clear enough idea of what survival meant. Such a clear idea, in fact, that he had in the end stopped worrying about it. And had survived all the same.

7. In Africa he had had plenty of brushes with death but survival had been more important—because it was interesting, because this was Africa. Eventually he realized—by looking at the ground anywhere, even when urinating in the morning—that he was on a different continent, on unknown territory. Thus he became convinced that Africa existed. Because before then the long list of place-names, the numerous variations—in architecture, in the positions of the stars, in skull structure, and in customs—had been neutralized by the unfailing uniformity of squares of ground and the grass on them.

8. It was when this grass began to burn around him that he first discovered

survival. The wind, which normally brought only psychological disorder, drove the fire in all four directions from the place where it had landed on dry earth. But then, outsmarting the fire (he may have run to the precise place from which the wind was driving the fire in all four directions), Sebastian found himself caught in a rain that had been gathering all year and that now flowed over the hard red earth in a multitude of parallel streams, to which a human being is as insignificant as the tiniest sand turtle and as significant as those millions of myriads of thirsty seedlings cast off by dying stems over many months without a single drop of water.

The instructor was indignant at Sebastian's ignorance. He couldn't believe that someone could allow himself to live so calmly, without a clue about how to avoid everyday dangers. Sebastian decided not to say another word about survival.

9. So, the only undated photo was taken on the 28th of June 1914. That date should be written on the back of the photograph, at least with a hard pencil. Thus even if the inscription were rubbed off—and anything written in pencil is bound to be rubbed off eventually, usually when no one cares any more about what has been written—the hard pencil will have left an indentation of the inscription, pressed into the surface of the paper by the hard lead tip.

PHYSIOLOGICALLY

1. Every man needs a teacher.

In general, men must study.

Outstanding men distinguish themselves not only by their ability to study and learn, but also because they always know and always remember from whom they learned what, even if it was by accident. And while for women remembering their teachers is a sign of benevolence, for men it is the most crucial element of what is learned.

The most distinguished men not only study their whole lives (to study is to be aware of what happens around you), but also very quickly become someone else's teacher, insisting on this awareness of what is experienced. This accounts for the continuity of schooling, which, together with one's family tree, ensures the maximum likelihood that the world will not change during one's lifetime to such a degree as to make life totally undesirable for this reason alone.

(Later both Franzysk and Sebastian saw how much some women know without teachers at all; how wise women become the wisest when they learn how to study; and how when the wisest remember those from whom they inherited experience, voluntarily making it their own, then they turn into something no man can ever achieve. If for no other reason than that no man ever learns anything from such women, besides the fact that such a thing can exist.)

2. The illustrator who taught Franz had studied with Brehm. Brehm had studied among animals. Over the years the illustrator told Franz many stories about Brehm's teachers. For years Franz had observed animals and drew their habits. Later, this special zoological education would become the foundation for the upbringing of his daughter. And, of course, he also taught Sebastian all this, when the latter made the decision to stay in Ialivets permanently and began to live in Franz's home. For this reason Sebastian's children in turn knew these stories equally well.

3. The second Anna interested the Unsimple precisely because of her ability to understand animals, to become like them, and to live with this or that animal without arousing an uneasy sense of otherness in it. As for Sebastian, he found it delightful that Anna would turn into a cat or a lemur for a few moments every day as part of her morning exercises. Their nights together included ones when he would find himself sharing his bed with such delicate creatures as spiders and bark beetles.

4. Franzysk noticed fairly early on that he had a somewhat extended physiology. Obviously, the physiology of every creature depends on its

environment, but nevertheless in Franz's case this relationship was somewhat exaggerated. He clearly felt that some of what should be happening in his body was actually taking place far beyond its shell. And vice-versa: in order to occur, certain external things had to make use of his physiological mechanisms.

It struck Franz that he was in some ways similar to mushrooms, interwoven into the fabric of trees, or to spiders, whose digestion takes place in the body of their prey, or to a shell mollusk with its external skeleton, or to a fish, whose sperm, once released, swims freely through the water until it impregnates something.

He saw that there was not enough space in his head for certain thoughts, and they dispersed themselves across fragments of the landscape. For it was enough just to look at a plot of land to read the thought that had settled there. And in order to remember something, he had to take an imaginary walk through familiar places, looking around and picking out the required memories.

And making love to Anna, he knew exactly what she looked like inside, because he was convinced that he had walked along her internal road.

5. His own physiology stopped bothering him immediately after his teacher repeated to him what Brehm had said: that dogs have a sense of smell a million times better than humans. This was inconceivable; no imagination could even come close to grasping such an idea. But Franz, reducing the number to ten, was fascinated by the way everything that happens externally is exaggeratedly repeated inside a dog's head and by the drafts that rush through the corridors of their brains (This he related to Sebastian, who afterwards always tried to be careful with certain strong smells, so that dogs would not be irritated by what was impossible to escape. Sebastian almost cried whenever he walked to his sniper's position and had to rub his boots with tobacco solution, so that the dogs, having once breathed in that smell, would lose the desire and ability to follow him). (Franz developed such a respect for dogs that on settling down in Ialivets he acquired several very different ones. Out of respect, he never trained them. The dogs were born, lived, and died free. And it would seem, especially considering the lives of the other dogs around Ialivets, that they were grateful to Franz for this. Actually, it was they who were the real intelligentsia in Ialivets).

6. Saying that, one of them, probably the most intelligent—named Lukach in honor of the Serbian forester who had taught the Unsimple to grow trees a little more slowly, like wild vines, and who had planted thickets impassable for soldiers around Ialivets during the war—had to be killed by Franz himself.

7. Lukach had been bitten by a rabid ermine.

He was already in a bad way and his final death throes would soon begin. As always with rabies, the convulsions could intensify at the sight of water, a breath of air on the face, light, loud voices, or a touch to the skin or the nape of the neck.

Lukach lay in the orangery, in the shade of a young bergamot tree. The flowers of the passion fruit had just come into bloom, with all their little crosses, hammers, nails and spears, and Franz had to cover the whole bush with the dampened cloth cover they used for the piano, so that the pungent scent would not distress Lukach (once he had loved that scent so much that when the passion fruit was in flower he would sleep for days underneath the tree, not leaving the orangery at all).

The bergamot grew at the very end of a long alley. Franzysk walked towards it through the whole orangery, axe in hand, passing the exotic plants one by one. The dog's eyes looked up at the face, hand, and sword, and then he slightly raised his head, stretching out his throat. But Franz did it a different way—he put his arms around Lukach, pressing his head down, stretching out his vertebrae. The blow began at the spinal cord but did not stop there.

Despite the speed of the operation, Lukach would likely still have had time to smell his own blood. Franz distinctly felt the tissues rip as the blade tore through them. It was as though these sounds entered his inner ear from inside his own neck (the way sometimes you hear your own voice when shouting under a waterfall).

8. The killing of Lukach affected Franz so deeply that later he often imagined that Lukach was looking at him through the eyes of the puppies he had sired, that Lukach's movements, posture, and expressions were at times emerging from under the fur of his sons and grandsons—that Lukach was immortal.

Franz had simply not lived long enough to realize that it wasn't entirely so. Because now Sebastian had many opportunities to become convinced that it is possible to enter one and the same river, living with his wife, and daughter, and granddaughter.

Sebastian saw nothing strange in the fact that Franz himself died the same way as Lukach (only perhaps he didn't smell the blood—but he certainly heard the sounds of tissues tearing from the inside), although he was not killed so carefully.

9. Similarly, no allusions came to Sebastian when, twenty years after Franz's death, right in the middle of a bridge over the Tysa, a trained army dog attacked him. Sebastian just squatted down a little, so as to counter the dog's lunging weight, and stuck his fur-clad elbow into the dog's flying muzzle. The muzzle closed around his left arm tighter than a pair of pincers, but with his right Sebastian pulled out from his coat pocket a long razor and

in one swipe cut the dog's head off so that it stayed clamped to his elbow, while the body fell onto the planks of the bridge.

10. With his elongated physiology Franz couldn't feel comfortable just anywhere. He most preferred places where, just like an embryo in the placenta, his physiology was free to grow in the greatest comfort.

Beda had been right when he wrote to Anna—a sort of botanical geography. Franz found a place that made travel unnecessary.

Before the premiere of one of his films at the *Juniperus Cinema* he even told the audience, which had come from all over Europe: "I live like grass or juniper, so as not to be anywhere else after the seed has taken root; waiting for the world, which will traverse me; to see it not only from the bottom up but projected onto the heavens, that is, enlarged and distorted enough to be more interesting; after all, my place will always end up at the center of European history, for in these lands history in its various forms comes to our doorsteps of its own accord."

11. In Ialivets, or rather in the place where Ialivets was yet to be, Franz began to live most genuinely. He was even somewhat ashamed of his constant happiness.

12. The day that he and the professor rested between Petros and Sheshul, Franz felt that he was wandering across islands in the sky. Only a few of the highest peaks peeked out above the clouds. The setting sun shone only for them. The reddened tops of the clouds flowed about them, forming gulfs, lagoons, straits, river-basins, deltas, estuaries. What was in the depths was of no consequence.

On the gentle slope Franz found berries. Because of the brief summer in this mountain tundra they all ripened at the same time—woodland strawberries, black bilberries, raspberries, blackberries, and red bilberries. Franz fell into a trance, became absorbed in some kind of cosmic movement, and couldn't stop himself from eating so many berries that he was forced to lie down. Then he felt that he was being lowered to the bottom of an extraordinary bosom: he could not bear it and poured everything out.

A little higher it was still spring, and the fragrant first flowers were in bloom.

Higher still the snow was slowly melting.

Franz ran down the slope and darted into the beeches, among which it was still autumn. During his run he ejaculated again. The professor in the meantime set up their tent. They ate a few Hutsul cheese horses, and brewed a pot of tea from the leaves of all the berries. Then the night began. In the moonlight everything seemed to be covered in snow. The Romanian mountains were like a distant strip of shoreline, and the ground unceasingly gave off a heat that smelled of vermouth.

WALK, STAND, SIT, LIE

1. If places really are the truest of plots, then the culmination of Ialivets as a town was undoubtedly the time when the town architect was Anna, Franzysk's daughter.

For the children of animators who never leave their father's side, becoming an architect is not difficult. Especially in a town that daddy thought up. After her first sketch, drawn in 1900 (when Anna was seven), the new Juniperus Cinema was built, in the shape of a chest of drawers, especially for screenings of Franz's animated films.

When she was still a child Anna drew plans for a swimming pool in the shape of a grebe's nest floating on a lake; for underground tunnels with openings like those of moles on various streets in the town; for a bar in which the exit was designed in such a way that, on leaving, patrons found themselves not outside as expected but in an absolutely identical room; for a four-story pine cone building; and for an enormous two-story sunflower villa.

2. Because Anna thought with her body. She could feel every movement not only in its entirety but also as a series of contractions and relaxations of muscle fibers, the bending of joints, pauses and explosions of blood flow, intake and expulsion of streams of air. For this reason the sentences of her thoughts were spatial constructions. Thus she saw buildings as if they had no covering, as a space containing the transpositions of other mobile and semi-mobile structures—fingers, spines, skulls, knees, jaws.

3. Franzysk noticed, however, that at first Anna's imagination could not escape the bounds of symmetry. He realized that being enchanted by the wonder of natural symmetry is the child's first step towards consciously reproducing the beauty of the harmony of the world.

4. Anna had a fairly restricted upbringing.

When she was still called Stefania, and Anna was only her mother, Franz understood that the most important thing about bringing up children was to be with them as much as possible. He probably took this too literally: for almost twenty years after the death of his wife there was not a single moment when he and Anna were apart. Always together. Either in the same room, or out together, or doing something in the garden within sight of one another. Even when bathing Anna never closed the bathroom door. It was important for them always to be able to hear what the other was saying. This became the sole principle of Franzysk's pedagogy. Strange as it was, she was happy living like this. From the time she began actually working as an architect, she trembled with joy when they sat working at different tables in

their large study—she annotating her sketches and making drafts, and her father sketching his animations.

5. All their life together Franzysk spoke not so much to her as simply aloud. Everything Anna heard—their dogs heard too. Anna rarely asked questions; instead she learned to speak constantly of her every perception, endeavoring to find the most accurate combinations of words.

Often she would interrupt Franz—tell me the same thing again, only not so briefly.

Anna couldn't read or write but every day she browsed through the illustrations in Larousse. She heard only the music performed by the resort band and by Hutsuls playing shepherds' flutes, dulcimers, zithers, and trembitas. She herself played only the jew's harp. She could draw a circle impeccably, though she formed it from two symmetrical halves. She could draw any ellipse with the same accuracy and could continue a straight line indefinitely, resting from time to time for a few minutes or months. About her mother she knew everything that a young girl should. She played with dogs and thus had contact with others of her own age.

6. She lived twice as much, every day experiencing both her own and Franzysk's lives.

7. Unexpectedly even to herself, Anna began to draw beans. The movement involved in doing this gave her the greatest physical pleasure. Thousands of repetitions did not diminish the pleasure. Anna began to ponder this.

She saw beans everywhere: in river stones and in the moon, in curled-up dogs and in the position in which she most often fell asleep; in sheep's kidneys and lungs, hearts and halves of the brain; in lumps of budz cheese and mushroom caps; in the bodies of birds and in fetuses; in her breasts and the beloved two pelvic bones that stuck out beneath her stomach; in the banks of small lakes and in the concentric contour lines showing the increasing elevation of mountains on geographical maps. Finally she decided that the bean alone is the most perfect form for separating a small space from a larger one.

8. Anna told old Beda about this when she brought a whole sack of large blue beans to his armored car. They hauled the sack onto the roof of the car and poured the whole lot into the top hatch. Anna looked inside and gasped—the interior of the car was filled with beans of different sizes and colors, and the beans at the top of the heap were slowly slithering downwards, like lava flowing down a volcano. Beda gathered beans from all over Ialivets to take to the market in Kosiv.

He must have said something afterwards to the Unsimple, because they came and had the very young Anna appointed town architect.

9. When Franz chose a place he always took care that it be good in all four states—walking, standing, sitting and lying—that a human being can be in. With Anna things were different. She lived in such a place from the very beginning. After becoming an architect Anna began coming up with something different. She remembered very well what Franz had taught her, and even better what Franz himself had learned. But at first she did not think that he had told her everything.

10. One can fall—and large air cushions were placed under certain buildings so one could jump onto them right from the balconies.

One can hang—and cables were stretched between two mountains, along which, holding onto special handles (Anna found them among her mother’s climbing gear), one could slide down to a central platform and hang there for a few moments over the roofs and lower trees.

One can swing—and trapezes were installed on the buildings, so one could fly across to the opposite side of the street.

One can also roll, jump up, crawl, and burrow—and all this was also taken into account in reconstructed Ialivets. More and more patients began to come to the gin resort. Sebastian was already fighting in Africa then, and the terrorist Sichynsky escaped from Stanislav prison.

11. Franz clearly saw that Anna could not think up anything new, because even while falling (or, say, during flight—if she could manage even that) a person either stands, or lies, or sits in the air.

But the innovations pleased him and he proposed pouring water over the streets before winter arrived. For a few months Ialivets became one large ice-rink. Only by gripping the railings along the streets could one manage to scramble somehow to the upper part of the town. But Franz knew how to walk on a slippery surface.

12. Wandering with Franzysk in the nearby mountains, Anna saw many different Hutsul villages. Looking closer, she understood what it meant to have one’s own house. Maintaining a house lends sense to the daily search for food. Having a house is like putting aside leftovers, or sharing food with someone. Or, sometimes, being responsible for finding food.

If the body is the gate to the soul, then a house is the terrace onto which the soul is allowed to emerge.

She saw that for most people a house is the foundation for biography and an express consequence of existence. And this is also where memory rests, for it is with objects that memory functions best.

She was enchanted by the Hutsul habit of building one’s house far away from others. In an unspoiled place. When a house is built, it becomes wiser than all prophets and seers—it will always tell you what you should do next.

13. There's also this characteristic of beauty. To be accessible, beauty must be capable of being formulated in words. And therefore, to be reduced. A house gives that reduced space in which it is possible to create beauty through one's own efforts.

For Anna, the basic conditions for beauty in a home were space, light, drafts, passages between the divisions of space. For this reason she designed several buildings in the style of the Hutsul *grazhda*. Separate rooms and parts of the house led directly out into a square courtyard, which was enclosed on all sides by those same rooms.

14. The sources of all beauty that human beings can command, of all aesthetics, are, undoubtedly, plants (and, in the end, food as well: here the ideal and the material are a unity as nowhere else). On the other hand, few things are as perfect an embodiment of ethics as caring for plants. To say nothing of the fact that watching the seasons of the year change is the simplest way to a private philosophy. It was for this reason that the Serbian forester Lukach planted flowering bushes brought from Macedonia in the courtyards of the *grazhdas*: barberry, camellia, heather, cornel, spurge flax, forsythia, hydrangea, jasmine, magnolia, rhododendron, clematis.

15. Anna ordered that the town itself be encircled by transparent zigzag Hutsul fencing made from long spruce strips—*vorrynia*. Entry to the town was through real Hutsul gates—*rozlohy*— with gate panels—*zavorotnytsi* that needed to be pushed aside.

There was no particular need for this, but Anna wanted to revive as many as possible of the words needed to talk about such fences—*gary*, *zavorynie*, *huzhva*, *byltsia*, *kiechka*, *spyzh*.

THE SITUATION IN COLOR

1. The main inhabitant of Ialivets (Juniper) was, of course, the juniper (*ialivets*) itself. Franz planned the construction of the town so as to avoid harming a single bush on any of the three sides of the slope. Since there weren't many trees, most of the buildings were made of gray slabs of stone, which in some places are known as *gorgany*. The principle colors of the town, therefore, were green and gray—even fewer colors than in Hutsul ceramics. But if the gray was the same everywhere, the green had many shades. Actually, it's not altogether right to say green. Better to say greens. There were so many greens that everything seemed unbelievably colorful. Without even counting the thousands of radically varying dots of purple, red, pink, violet, blue, azure, yellow, orange, white, once again green, brown, and even almost black flowers. Little Anna learned her colors from these flowers (Franz often thought of that time as being a perfect time. Naming colors became for him a clear embodiment of the idea of the creation of the world and of harmony). If one lives attentively, floristry in such a town is unnecessary. And that's how it was.

One also has to imagine the combined shades of color of the near, far, and further mountains that were visible from every point in Ialivets. And then also the sky, clouds, winds, suns, moons, snows, and rains.

2. Around this stone settlement grew so many junipers that the smell of their warmed, soaked, cracked, and crushed berries, branches, and roots grew into a taste.

3. It's hard to understand how Sebastian managed to talk so much with Franz that he could remember so many of Franz's individual phrases. For they had only a year and nine months. Yet most of what Franz said survived thanks precisely to Sebastian. It was from him that the Unsimple noted down those best-known phrases that were later reproduced on the various parts of an enormous dinnerware set made at the porcelain factory in Patsykiv. The second Anna once even joked that that all these sayings were thought up by Sebastian himself, and the words "Franz said" were Sebastian's word-parasites. Just like: whore, maybe, really, and simple.

4. In any case, Sebastian himself said that Franz said that life depends on what you walk past. But what you walk past depends on where you're going. So changing it is quite simple. It's harder with other defining elements—what you drink and what you breathe.

In Ialivets everyone breathed the etheric resin of the juniper and drank juniper vodka, whose relation to juniper was threefold. The water in which the sweet berries fermented had itself for years, from the very beginning,

flowed between earth and sky, washing over the juniper, touching and remembering it, and then it was also heated on fires of juniper logs.

5. Juniper vodka was distilled in every yard. Fresh shoots were boiled in pots with spirits extracted from the juniper berries. Steam gathered on the hearth, cooled and dripped down as a thick gin. Sometimes thick gin clouds hung above the roofs. When frost was imminent, alcohol would drip from the sky. On the already cooled earth it would freeze, and the street would be covered in a thin layer of ice. If you licked the ice, you would quickly get drunk. On days like that you had to get around by sliding across the ice. Although your foot wouldn't actually have time to slip if you moved fast enough—so that the sole of your shoe touched the ice as briefly as possible.

6. Anna first appeared in Ialivets when the town was already becoming a fashionable resort. Not long before she had seriously injured herself by falling from a cliff, even though she had been attached to a line, and for a long time she ate nothing. The experience had given her a terrible fright. Nevertheless the next day she had gone into the mountains and tried to climb. But it was useless. For the first time her body refused to be a continuation of the rock. Something there proved stronger. She came to Ialivets and drank gin. She intended to train, but drank gin. She didn't dare to approach the cliffs. And not long afterwards she met Franzysk. He made animated films, for which no fewer tourists came to Ialivets than for the gin.

7. Anna felt like lichen scraped off the barren shore of a cold sea. She had to just hold on in order to hold out. There was no other way. She really didn't want to be angry. "God, don't let me harm anyone!" she prayed constantly. The first time they met, she and Franz spent the night in a bar, where, having come just by chance toward evening, they couldn't help but stay until morning. The barman was so unlike a barman that they waited a long time for someone to take their order. There they gave each other gin massages, had three gin inhalations, set fire to strong gin on their hands and stomachs, drank spilt gin from the table, and drank from mouth to mouth. Anna couldn't yet imagine Franz in any other place.

8. That night they lay next to each other on chairs pushed together and understood that through a confluence of bone and flesh they were brother and sister. Or husband and wife. Even if this never happens again, thought Franzysk, it still feels good to touch one another. And she thought about various trifles and curiosities that happen or might happen at any moment. As they slept, fitting bone to flesh, and bone to bone, and flesh to flesh, their skulls constantly touched at uneven places. They turned over, squeezed closer together, twisted around and moved away, but their skulls did not separate for even a second. Sometimes their skulls scraped against each

other, catching on especially pronounced protrusions or cavities, and they woke often, afraid of their incomparable closeness, which was secured by their heads alone. Never again would Franzysk and Anna experience such intense enlightenment and lucidity.

Outside, dawn was breaking. The main street of the town passed by the closed bars, the dark courtyards overgrown with vines that never ripened, the low stone walls, and the high gates and made its way to the foot of the one-thousand-six-hundred-and-ninety-five-meter-high mountain, gradually turning into a barely noticeable track, which at that time of day gleamed white.

9. Anna's pregnancy was a time of shared happiness. Something that can truly be called cohabitation, a family.

They began their evenings early. They walked in warm autumn coats along the remotest streets among the as-yet-uninhabited villas. They pretended that this was not their town. He held her hand in his pocket. They walked, simultaneously taking a step with the leg to which the leg of the other was pressed so tightly that at times their muscles would contract and their hip joints would rub together in a funny way. She liked it that things were so simple. That the one she loved loved her. For the first time she felt the joy of not having to clear out in the morning. She told him things from the time before he had appeared, and she loved to hear him speak about how he knew her. In the mornings they spent a long time on the balcony breakfasting on honey, sour milk, dried pears soaked in wine, fried biscuits dipped in milk, nuts of various kinds.

10. On the table next to the bath stood an old typewriter with an immovable cast-iron base, and whatever they didn't dare to say to each other they typed on a scroll of the finest paper fed into the Remington. "I feel bad with people you don't know about," wrote Anna. "Are they comfortable now, are they comfortable with me, is he comfortable here. It's awkward and difficult with those who don't say what they like and what they don't." Franzysk typed something completely different: "Without doing anything bad, bad people can do us harm—we have to be wary of their existence." "Good people stop being good when they start to begrudge what they are sorry to give away," wrote Anna for some reason. And Franz: "Sense and pleasure exist only in details: one has to know these details to be able to repeat them."

After Franz's death Sebastian found the typewriter. The paper was still in it. Later he often imagined real dialogues between living people made up of similar sentences.

11. Franz tried to cure Anna of her fear. He led her up to the top of the cliff, on the side where you could go up through a dense patch of mountain pine,

from the rear. Then he took her in his arms and held her above the drop. "Fate is not the most important thing," Franz said. "The main thing is to fear nothing." But something in his method wasn't right.

He came to know her body better than she did. He could take Anna's hand and lay it on her body in a way she had never done and would never have been able to do. He touched her in a way that made her blood vessels, arteries, and veins tingle. He spent hours making her aware of her own beauty. From all this Anna began to understand that she was beautiful. Beautiful not for somebody, but for herself. And she became even more afraid that all this could be shattered by falling against the rocks.

"I love my life," she pleaded to Franz. "That's good," he insisted, "because besides that there is nothing. Not to love it means renouncing everything."

12. She did try again after all. When Franz blocked her ears. Because he suddenly began to suspect that Anna was afraid not of heights but of the silence that accompanies heights.

Secured in every possible way, her ears plugged, pregnant Anna climbed up the stone wall, feeling awkward because she was not sure what to do with her belly.

Franzysk ventured to climb alongside. He painted onto the cliff all the contour where her belly had pressed against it. They rappelled down so fast that they singed their palms on the lines. For some reason such insignificant burns often make it impossible to get to sleep. The next morning moving daguerreotypes silhouetting the movements of the fetus across the cliff were already finished. The film turned out beautifully. It didn't matter that it was short.

13. Franzysk paid no attention to time. All of his films lasted only a few minutes. He invented animation that was not yet possible. He got pleasure from the creation of satiated minutes that might never have been. If he hadn't. If he hadn't noticed something, if he hadn't thought through the method, if he hadn't matched things up, if he hadn't distinguished things—if he hadn't a whole lot of things.

"Life is so short," thought Franz, "that time has no meaning. One way or another it happens as a whole."

Franz dreamed of something radical. And he came to the conclusion that the most radical thing possible—was to wait.

14. After the birth of their daughter Anna decided to go into training again. She tried blocking her ears, but something bothered her again. Her inner ear was deprived of the vibrations without which it is hard to sense the limits of one's own body.

She remembered her father's garden and injected herself with morphine. The vibrations began immediately.

But sounds began to behave strangely. As though they had lost their dependence on distance. Sounds flew at great speed, tightly bundled together in clusters, not coming apart in the air. Sometimes one of these bullets would collide with another, changing the direction of flight in a completely unexpected way. In some collisions both clusters would give off aural splinters and dust. They flew independently. Mingling, separating, flying upwards, descending or driving down into the ground. When she reached a point some four times her own height, Anna found herself in the midst of a cacophony of opaque clouds. When she climbed higher still, the sound of tiny particles of rock falling from under her fingers and crashing to the bottom of the cliff became unbearable.

15. Anna stopped climbing. But she didn't stop using morphine. She would sit on the veranda for days at a time, listening in on the lives of the various insects that lived around the house. Not even hearing the cries of hungry Stefania.

Franz tried in vain to change things. The best he managed to do was to squeeze a little milk from Anna's breasts and feed it to his daughter. But the opium had developed a taste for the milk as well. It drank first, and Franz would squeeze the dried-out breasts pointlessly. Franzysk went to a witch who stole milk from cows, and asked her to take Anna's milk. The child began to eat properly. But together with the milk she consumed the opium. Franz thought the child slept for days at a time because she was so content at being well-fed. At last things were more peaceful. But when Anna's milk ran out and even the witch couldn't get a drop out of her, Stefania went through the symptoms of genuine morphine withdrawal. The Unsimple, boiling some poppy seeds in milk, barely managed to save her

Anna began to do the same thing. The child slept and had fantastic dreams (some of them—though she was barely six months old then—she would remember for the rest of her life. But maybe what she remembered was the feeling she'd had in those dreams, and the rest came later), and Anna listened to worms burrowing through the earth, to the cries of spiders making love in their tense webs, to the splitting of a beetle's thorax as it was crushed in the beak of a wagtail.

16. In mid-December Franz took Anna on his lap and told her to get out of lalivets. Anna got up, kissed Franz, and went to the bedroom to get the child ready. Then he proposed something different—he challenged his wife to a duel. For the little child's subsequent life required that one of her parents be dead.

Anna agreed and chose her weapon: they would go immediately to the snow-covered, windswept cliff and climb to the top by two different unmarked routes without taking any safety precautions. Whoever returned would be left with the little girl. Despite all her fears, Anna was sure that

this was the only way she could defeat Franzysk (it didn't enter their minds that they both might not return, and they said nothing to anyone, leaving the child in its cradle).

They barely made it through the snow to the cliffs. They took off their sheepskins, drank a bottle of gin between them, kissed, and set off.

17. For the first time Franzysk had to become a real mountain climber (“Is this my first first time?” he thought). Hence his descent from the top took several hours; it turned out that the hardened snow actually helped him—on bare rock he would never have made it. As much as it pained him, he could not bury Anna until June, when the snow in the ravine had melted.

THE SECOND OLD PHOTOGRAPH—ARDZHELIUDZHA, 1892

1. A naked female back ends in a wide leather belt. Below the belt there is only a strip of dark fabric. On the neck, sharply bent forward, is the fine line of a thick necklace. The head is not visible. The arms are lowered, though bent at the elbows. The torso is slightly twisted to the left, so only the four fingers of the right hand gripping the left forearm are visible. The back appears almost triangular—so broad are the shoulders and so narrow the waist. Between the upper edge of the belt and the white skin is a little empty space. Clearly visible are shoulder blades and the ends of the collar bone. Jutting out below the neck are the tips of four vertebrae. Where they end the lines of two tensed muscles running down the middle of the back begin. Nearer to the waist the distance between them is smallest, and the depth of the hollow is greatest. A keyboard of ribs shows through only on the left—and not on the back itself but on the side. But where the ribcage ends the concave of the waist begins, the line of which curves back out to its previous width at the top of the pelvis.

Observing the contrast of the white back and the black belt it's easy to believe that the light from the sun is at its most powerful. Though a barely visible shadow has appeared only between the muscles running along the spine.

2. The back is photographed from close up. To the right of it, in the background of the picture, stands a small horse, some distance away from the camera. The little Hutsul horse is quite old—the best horses had already all been taken away during the state requisition of horses to Bosnia—but all the same it is well looked after. In place of a saddle it has a long narrow covering.

3. During their first summer together Franz and Anna went to Kostrych to see the panorama of Chornohora. The day was sunny and they could see the entire ridge: Petros, Hoverla, Breskul, Pozhyzhevskya, Dantsysh, Homul, Turkul, Shpytsi, Rebra, Tomnatyk, Brebeneskul, Menchul, Smotrych, Staiky, and part of the Svydovets ridge—Blyznytsi and Tatulska, and further—Bratkivska, Dovbushanka, Iavirnyk. Behind them were Rotyla, Bila Kobyla, and Lysyna Kosmatska.

On the way back, just past Ardzheliudzha, Anna took off her shirt and bast shoes, which left her in nothing but a pair of men's trousers. They were walking along the Prut. From time to time they went down to the river to take a drink. The river was so shallow that Anna could put her hands squarely on the bottom, bend down to the water, and submerge her whole face. The tips of her breasts came close to the bubbling surface but stayed dry. Only her heavy brass crucifix, with its primitive depiction of the

crucifixion, rattled against the stones. At such moments Franz would place a ladybird on Anna's back, and the creature would run around between the drops of sweat, tickling her skin. Anna couldn't even move a hand to brush it off.

After bathing they kissed until their lips became completely dry. Because everything wet becomes dry. Their skin gave off the aroma of cold river plants in warm rivers between warm stones under warm winds blowing from beyond snow-covered Hoverla. If they'd been able to commit these physical sensations to memory, so as to be able to call them to mind at any moment, their feeling of happiness would have been constant.

Then they still talked a lot and with great enthusiasm. Franz thought about how everything that is worth looking at changes when you have someone to show it to.

The horse carried only a pear box containing a camera and a sycamore keg full of juniper vodka. Not once did it go into the water to take a drink.

4. When in December 1883 Franz returned from the cliff alone, the first thing he did, rather than feed the child, was to search for alcohol and in the process accidentally came across that very same keg. There was about half a liter of juniper vodka left in it, and he immediately finished off what they had not managed to drink together. Then he pulled out this photograph from the Larousse, slid it between two rectangles of glass, throwing out some old drawing, and placed the framed picture on his desk for good. He ground a handful of dried bilberries in a mortar, soaked them in warm water with honey, and began to feed Stefania. The next morning he went to the priest and told him to register his daughter in the church records under the name of Anna.

5. Sebastian decided it would be right to put the photograph in Franz's coffin (he could not know that there was already someone else in the world who would always regret its loss). For this reason, perhaps, the picture did not survive.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF SAINT ANTHONY

1. Little Anna was given a miniature figure of St Anthony by the Unsimple. Anthony, standing up straight in a monk's habit, in one hand holds lilies on long stems and in the other a child. Despite its size, when Anna laid her head on the floor and placed the figure a little ways away, or—still looking from the floor—when it stood on the very edge of a table, Anthony looked like a real statue. Especially striking was the expression of pure devotion conveyed by his facial features.

The Unsimple said Anthony had been cast from lead melted down from what had once been a bullet. The figure lived in a metal cylinder of the type soldiers use to store their nametags and the addresses of their families. Anna wore the shell around her neck on an overly long wire chain. The constant rubbing of the copper marked her skin with green stains permanently. Franzysk did not consider this harmful. When the weather was especially fine, Anna would take Anthony out for walks. She would take him out of his capsule and give him an airing somewhere in the grass. When she put him back in his cylinder she would also place inside a little flower—a violet or daisy, the blossom of a plum or linden tree—so Anthony would have something to breathe.

2. Anna herself had a lovely smell. What Franz liked most of all was when she fell asleep on his table. He would work on for a while, though his attention was drawn to his curled-up and sleeping daughter. Then he would crawl up onto the table, place a book under his head, put his arms around Anna, and lie for a long time breathing in the air she breathed out. He would stroke her head, and sometimes in the morning Anna would wake up with a net of fine, short scratches on her face—some hardened skin on Franzysk's fingers had scraped her body.

3. Franzysk was convinced that there could be no more worthwhile activity than watching his daughter. Every day he saw thousands of perfect shots but for some reason he never bothered to use his camera. As a consequence he dedicated so much energy to memorizing the images that he sometimes caught himself thinking that he couldn't possibly go on like this. Because very often by evening he could remember nothing of what had happened during the day other than those imaginary shots—although when Anna was a little older he could describe to her for hours on end how she had looked on any given day in her childhood.

4. Anna was six years old when she told her father that she could remember how she had once slept in a large box placed on a long wagon with eight wheels under a tree, from which hung a nest with an opening from below.

The little hatch was open, and from inside the nest the blue eye of a bird peered at her. And then flocks of little white owls from all around swooped down and landed in concentric circles on the ground around the tree on the haystacks, the dog-rose bushes, the well, and the hayrick. And also on the wires that were stretched from pole to pole.

5. Franzysk decided that a vision like this must be the result of morphine use and called on the Unsimple. They had a talk with Anna, and eventually the seeress said that the little girl had dreamed it all. She warned Franz that the little girl would begin to tell him all kinds of wonders more and more often, would begin to ask whether or not this or that had once happened to her. That she would be unsure about certain things until her death—what had happened and what was a dream—because for her things would not be real or unreal, there would merely be different types of reality. But dreams have nothing to do with foreseeing the future. They tell us how things could be.

6. Franz decided that his daughter should know at least one thing in the world perfectly and without any question. They started walking beyond Menchil hill near Kvasiv to Keveliv creek, which flowed into the Chorna Tysa, and Anna learned all the stones on its banks—how each of them looked and next to which stones it lay.

In the meantime all the Unsimple had crossed over the mountains and settled in Ialivets, and they stayed there, with some interruptions, right up until 1951. Then a special chekist unit disguised as UPA soldiers used flamethrowers to set fire to the mental asylum where the Unsimple, having been tracked down and caught, had been interned in 1947. They had to get closer to Anna.

7. A few weeks before the year 1900 Franz finished a very important animated film.

“To live is to untie and tie knots, with your hands and everything else,” he was once taught by an Unsimple snake-charmer, who gave him a whole bundle of snakeskins. Franz was to untangle the skins and weave his own pattern. Logic lives in the fingers, and its categories are defined purely by what the fingers are capable of doing. He turned the bundle over and over in his hands, like a rosary, for many days and nights. Eventually he untied all the knots, but when it came to making his own pattern his fingers found it terribly difficult not to follow the existing surface. But Anna tied such knots that the snake-charmer took Franz to the bridge where the Unsimple had made their home.

8. At one time they’d wanted to extend this viaduct from one side of the ridge to the other, across the place where Ialivets now lay. To build the

center first, and then extend it to the heights on either side. Franzysk imagined how eventually such a path would turn the whole way between Sheshul and Petros into an easy stroll. However, that project turned out to be the only impossible idea of Ialivets. Three arches, linked to one another but not to land—and much higher than the railway bridges at Vorokhta or Deliatyn—hung over the town along a diagonal, beginning and breaking off in mid-air. On top there was a fragment of wide road. This is where the Unsimple settled.

Franz climbed for a long, long time up a hanging ladder, which swung all the more violently because the snake-charmer climbed ahead of him. At the top it seemed that the bridge was too narrow, that if one so much as stumbled he would fall off, onto the small roofs, the short streets, the narrow canals, the froth of trees. But all around lay such beauty, as though in someone else's life. Everything was white, other colors didn't exist, not even in the distant sun.

The snow-covered Unsimple smoked pipes and looked out at Farkaul in the Maramureş Alps beyond the Bila Tysa valley. The conversation was simple—when Anna became a woman, let her be Unsimple. And for the time being they would always be close by.

9. And so the film that Franz finished resembled a necklace made of knots.

It looked like this. The whole screen seethed with a multitude of tiny, separate signs. These were all elementary symbols that Franz had managed to find on the patterns of pysanky from every corner of the Carpathians. Owing to variations in size, configuration, color, and speed, this mist of signs looked like an incredible mixture of different insects. One could make out ladders, wedges, half-wedges, triple wedges, forty wedges, yellow wedges, triangles, seams, pick-axes, meanders, semi-meanders, curls, spaces, crosses, scratches, curves, sparkles, stars, a warm sun, a half sun, the moon, half-moons, sparks, a shining moon, moon-lit streets, a rainbow, beans, roses, half-roses, acorns, marigolds, firs, pine trees, cucumbers, cloves, periwinkle, oat, orchid, barrel, plum, potato, branches, soapwort, horses, sheep, cows, dogs, goats, deer, cockerels, ducks, cuckoos, cranes, white-wings, trout, crow's feet, ram's horns, hare's ears, ox's eyes, butterflies, bees, snails, spiders, heads, spindles, rakes, brushes, combs, axes, shovels, boats, flasks, grates, chests, girths, straps, knapsacks, keys, beads, kegs, sheepskins, powder-horns, umbrellas, pictures, hankies, laces, bowls, a hut, small windows, pillars, trough, small churches, monasteries, bell towers, chapels, twisted sleeves, decorated sleeves, diagonal stripe, needles, beaked, crossed, toothed, braided, laced, princess, crooks, curves, dots, frayed, winged, eyed, spidery, flowery, flat, numbered, flask, secret, cherry, raspberry, flower-pot, sprout, damselflies, small windmill, sledges, hooks, honeycakes.

Slowly the movement of signs gained a certain order—like a powerful wind

gathering many light ones. The symbols whirled somewhat like a bath full of water draining out through a small opening whence there appeared a chain of signs, tied together here and there by knots. The chain curled itself into a spiral and spun like a centrifuge. From the chaos there flew toward it free symbols, arranging themselves in exactly the same order of signs and ever more closely following the turning movement of the first. Then both spirals flowed together into the vacuum, merging into each other more and more tightly and taking on the shape of the world tree. Calm descended. The tree produced flowers, the petals withered, the ovaries grew into fruit, which swelled and split, and thousands of the very same signs slowly and evenly descended onto the ground, piling up into a mound and losing form.

10. The premiere was delayed until Easter, 1900. It was the feature event in the opening of the Juniperus Cinema, built according to one of Anna's sketches, immediately after the reading of a pastoral message from the young bishop of Stanislav, Andrei Sheptytsky, to his beloved Hutsul brothers.

11. From that time on the Unsimple were in fact always nearby. It only seems that Chornohora is empty. In truth, there is actually too little space in the Carpathians. Thus people who live far away from each other are constantly meeting. To say nothing of the situation in a small town at the intersection of two ridges.

For a few Dovbush gold pieces the Unsimple bought a small plot on the Market Square and built a small building there. They covered the hut with weirdly painted tiles, so that it came to look just like a tiled stove. In each window they wrote one word—notary. But on the windowsills stood whole rows of bottles of different sizes and shapes, so it could be assumed that “NOTARY” was just the name of another bar. Lukach somehow saw to it that in just one week the whole roof became covered in moss and a green awning hung above the doors. Inside it was bare: opposite a small table (with one drawer) on high legs stood a comfortable armchair, upholstered in canvas.

In the armchair sat the notary himself, smoking one fat cigarette after another. The cigarettes were placed in a silver ring soldered onto a tin rod that hung down from the ceiling. Each cigarette was no longer than half the width of an average woman's palm. The notary kept busy by rolling the next cigarette while smoking the previous one.

While still young he had resolved somehow to control his own death rather than rely entirely on the unknown. Therefore he wanted to determine if not the date then at least the cause of his death. He had settled on cancer of the lungs and began to allow himself to smoke heavily in order to be destined for such a death.

12. But all it took was for someone to drop by and the notary would take a cigarette out of the ring, sit the visitor down in his armchair, open the drawer, and take out two red or yellow sweet peppers—always fresh and juicy. With one hand he would open a large folding knife that hung from a strap around his knee, clean out the peppers, and hold them in his palm, while asking what kind of liquor to pour—*palenka*, *rakia*, *slyvovytisia*, *bekherivka*, *tsuika*, *zubrivka*, *anisivka*, *ialivitsivka*, or *borovichka*. He would fill the two peppers, give one to the guest, stand by the table, take a sheet of paper and sharp pencil out of the drawer, raise his cup and, looking the visitor straight in the eye, say “God willing.” He would down the drink, take a bite of the pepper, immediately pour a second, relight the cigarette (he kept his matches in his trouser pocket right next to his belt, and the striking surface was glued to one of the table legs). Holding the cigarette in the same hand as his cup and in his left hand the pencil, he would take a deep draw of smoke and then be ready to listen.

13. The notary was called the French engineer.

The Unsimple found him in Rakhiv and offered him precisely this job because he looked modest and heroic simultaneously. He was the kind of man you want to surprise with some extraordinary tale from your own life. And the Unsimple needed as many such stories and tales as possible.

In Rakhiv the French engineer had been enlisting people to go to Brazil, writing out genuine tickets for a ship leaving from Genoa. Once he really had been a French engineer. For twenty years he had lived in Indochina, developing drainage systems and studying opium smoking, Thai boxing, butterflies and orchids, and Zen. At the same time he wrote articles on ethnology and geopolitics for big European newspapers. Several of his letters were translated by Osyp Shpytko. They were published in *Dilo*, where the author’s ancestral ties to the Orlyk family were emphasized.

The Unsimple visited Kryvorivna and advised Hrushevsky to bring the French engineer to Lviv. Having passed through Manchuria, Turkistan, Persia, Georgia, Odesa, Chernivtsi, Stanislav, Halych, Rohatyn, and Vynnyky, he finally arrived and got work in the ethnographic commission of the Shevchenko Scientific Society. He took a fee as high as that paid to Shukhevych and set off for Hutsul country. But the experience of having lived through several small wars in the course of his life would not allow him to betray himself as a folklorist. The French engineer made a detour to Budapest and managed to obtain all the necessary papers to exercise the right to enlist people for immigration to Austro-Hungary.

14. In Ialivets, the French engineer dressed in the same way every day from 1900 to 1921 (Even after 1914 the French engineer sat in his office listening and noting down everything that various people came to tell him. The storytellers received a decent fee, and the notes with stories, dreams,

insights, and insane ideas were analyzed by the Unsimple). A very wide white flannel suit made without a single button, striped white-and-green shirts unbuttoned at the chest, cork sandals. Only in winter did he wear a covering wrapped around his head like a hood.

It was the French engineer who taught Sebastian that self-awareness is found in the soles of the feet, and that one's self-perception can be altered by standing differently or on something different.

15. The idea for a whole new type of film came to Franzysk from the French engineer.

There was a small gallery in Ialivets. Its owner, Loci from Beregszász, was acquainted with talented artists—Munkácsy, Ustyianovych, Kopystynsky. He introduced Romanchuk to Fedkovych, and for Vodzytska—much later, when she returned from Paris and Zuloaga—he made a few photo-sketches for “Girl making pysanky.” He was close friends with Ivan Trush. Loci told him a lot about how plants can regain control of landscapes that people have ruined and abandoned. He even took him sketching near Pip Ivan, to an area that had been logged. Many years later Trush would return to this theme in his wonderful series called “The life of tree-stumps.” And it was Loci who first showed anyone Dzembronia, which later became a favorite haunt of many artists of the Lviv school. And he would regularly send the Didushynskys Hutsul rarities for their museum.

16. Loci himself painted the same thing his whole life: little wooden cowsheds—a separate one for each cow—on the Shesa plain, the wood walkways between them, and the giant overgrowth of sorrel that was gradually consuming its own environment.

Though he was a gallery owner by profession, he never displayed his own work. By contrast, he often fell in love with the work of others. He would take these lover-pictures home for a time and live in their presence, carrying them with him from the bedroom to the kitchen, from the kitchen to the study, from the study to the gallery, from the gallery to the bathroom.

And to a large extent Loci's life was defined by the picture that was living with him at any given moment.

17. In the gallery some unusual things were practiced. Every day Loci rehung the pictures, completely changing their dialogues. Often the buyers, having chosen a picture one day, could not recognize it the next morning. The roof of the gallery was a glass reservoir filled with rainwater. Loci changed the lighting of the room by covering different parts of the reservoir with spruce branches. But the most important thing was that the pictures could be borrowed, like books from a library. The orders from the most expensive hotels Loci put together himself, to suit each individual occasion.

18. Loci was the only one in Ialivets whose vines produced varietal grapes. His vineyard grew along a path between the house and the gallery. Each time he walked along the path, Loci would pick off at least one cluster of grapes. And that went on from when the grapes first appeared to their final ripening. By September there were only a few dozen clusters left, but they were as ripe as the grapes of Tokay, reaping the full benefit of the vine's strength no longer flowing to the bunches already picked. Although Franzysk was friends with the gallery owner, even he did not guess that Loci was working for the Unsimple.

19. The French engineer happened once to tell Franz what he had heard from Loci.

Loci had told him how a landowner from Teresva had come and asked him to paint a picture showing what was happening to the left—beyond the frame—of a scene depicting the battle of Khotyn that he had bought there a year earlier. The thought that a canon from there might be able to fire directly at the rearguard of the Ulans gave him no peace.

This is precisely where animation is better than painting, said the French engineer.

20. Franzysk came up with a more precise method. He shot an enlarged reproduction of some famous picture—this was the second part of the film. For the first and third parts he painted frames showing fifteen seconds before the scene in the picture and fifteen seconds after. As a test he used a recent landscape by Trush, “The Dnipro near Kyiv,” though Franz was thinking mainly of Rembrandt’s “The Night Watch.” Then he brought to life several still-lives of the old Dutch masters (although these he destroyed, all except a Jan van de Velde—the one with the deck of cards, a long-stem pipe, and hazelnuts) and the wonderful “A Fight” by Adrian van Ostade (an inn, drunk villagers, women are holding back two men who are waving knives and have a mad look in their eyes, everything is overturned, someone is running away, others are prone on the ground).

After this he started on Mamai images.

Animated painting was such a wild success that dozens of viewers from all over Central Europe would travel to Ialivets for every premiere. Newspapers in the capitals wrote about them, and Franz had no time to make more serious films.

21. Even before the Unsimple had discovered the unusual qualities of Anna’s dreams, one of Franzysk’s ambitions was to make a film set in a dream landscape.

He noticed that the mechanism of dreams is based on nothing more than unifying the familiar according to an unknown logic in a manner that could never occur in a single landscape. That meant that the key to this logic is the

unification of landscapes. In this, the consistency of the unification is decisive. If such a landscape is created, it will populate itself. And then all the characters will display incongruous traits. And—most importantly—the characters will occupy the space totally. Irresponsible consistency is total.

22. Then too, thought Franz, successful dreams are like good prose, with similes taken from different systems of coordinates, refined delineation of individual details in the flow of a panorama, transparent unlimited possibility, an unforgettable sensation of presence, simultaneity of all tropisms, the immutability of the unexpected and the thrifty rhetoric of restraint. And like good grass, which doesn't bring with it anything of its own but removes that which limits, and transforms the latticed proportions of time and distance from a crystalline state into a gas-like one.

23. However, daring to make such a film would be even more difficult than making "The Night Watch." So in time he even stopped saving dreams for later, instead enjoying them to the maximum at night.

24. In July 1904 Anna related one of her dreams.

"I'm standing on the level roof of a long two-storey building. The building stands in water. The water reaches right up to the top of the first floor. To the top of its high arches. In the water, three heads are floating, and a heron is standing. One head swims up under an arch. Another wants to swim out from there. Walking down the stairs from the window of the second storey is a naked, pudgy man. From around the corner a dry hand tries to stop him. I'm naked too. I'm standing on the very edge. My hands are raised up. They are joined together. I'm about to jump from a height into the water. Right behind me is a round table. And behind it, a barrel with a jug. Around the table sit a monk and a nun, drinking something. Stretched across a dry branch above the table, the barrel, and the monk and nun is a tent. On the side of the building there's a semi-spherical cupola built on, with a chapel at the top. Fire pours from the chimney of the chapel, and a woman looks out of the window. She is looking at me. Far beyond the cupola are a wide river, a green forest, and high blue mountains, like ours. On the other side of the building a round tower has been built. Little men have been painted on its walls. The little men dance, jump, and tumble. One is taking a book from the sky. On their shoulders two of them carry an enormous raspberry on a stick. The top of the tower is crumbling and full of holes. Among the ruins little trees grow and a goat grazes. The water in front of the building ends at a long island. The island is bare and made of red clay. At the end of the island stands a windmill. Beyond the island is more water. Beyond the water is a city. Two towers descend right down to the water. Between them is a stone bridge. On the bridge is a huge crowd of people with spears raised above their heads. Some of them stand along the railing and look across the

water in my direction. In one tower there are branches burning. Beneath the towers swim some kind of creatures. A man with a sword and shield is fighting with one of them. Farther on, beyond the towers, is an empty, sandy place. In the middle of it stands a two-wheeled cart. Farther still is the city itself. Buildings with steep roofs, the tall spires of a church, a wall. And in the distance, tall hills, or small, green, and bare mountains. On the horizon itself there is another large windmill. To my right on the shore, but beyond the water and the island, stand some figures. They have their backs to me. Some sit on horses or on strange creatures. One is in armor and a helmet, another has a hollow tree stump on his head. Between them grows a dried-up tree. Half the tree is covered with a red curtain. In a great crack in the trunk stands a naked woman. On the uppermost branch sits a woodpecker—an immensely big one. A man is leaning a ladder against the tree. Quite far beyond them, on a stone, sits a bearded man in a monk's cassock with a stick in his hand, looking at a book. He looks like my Saint Anthony.

“Through the window in the round tower, which I already mentioned, I see that behind the tower something important is happening. But I can't make anything out, which really frustrates me. But all the same it's really good to be in the midst of all this bustle. For a second I look over my shoulder and see a distant fire. It makes the skin on my back and on the back of my legs hot. Somehow it's clear that I have to escape from it into the water. I'm about to jump, but I look down and see a length of spiked chain stretched out below. I have no doubt that I can jump beyond it. But I still stand there. My hands are already a little numb, because they've been raised the whole time. Suddenly a shadow falls on my back and it gets colder. I look up. Directly above me a sailing ship covered in armor is floating past through the air. I see its underside. It's a flying ship. It flies past. The shadow disappears. It gets hot once again. Hotter and hotter. I want to step off. But I see a man with a camera.

“He's been hiding the whole time in a dark corner between my building and the tower with the paintings of the little men and the shutters. I don't want him to take my photograph, and I shout at him. The man waves his hands in denial and points at the flying ship. Everything in me agrees that this is all very interesting. The man hides the camera in the wall. He walks around the tower and disappears behind it. I stand up on my toes. I sway a little and then jump. I see the chain before me. I raise my whole body. I try to fly over it. But my body won't move. I am neither flying nor falling. I start to cough. I fly straight towards the chain at great speed. I hit it with the fingers of my outstretched hands. And at that point I woke up.”

25. Anna's dream seemed so picturesque to Franzysk that he immediately tried to draw it. Anna corrected the drawing as he drew. When they got to the people on the shore next to the tree and the man with the book behind them, Franz had the impression he'd already seen this painted somewhere.

Only the point of view was different. But it was enough for Anna to color in the drawing with coloring pencils, and Franz recognized Bosch. Without a doubt—it was “The Temptation of St Anthony.”

In Larousse Bosch was represented by “The Wayfarer” from the Madrid El Escorial collection. Anna could not have seen any other reproductions, Franz was sure, for he had always been by her side. No one had ever told her of “The Temptation” in her entire life, Franz had definitely heard neither mention nor allusion to it since the very beginning of her education. That meant the prediction of the seeress had come true—Anna’s dreams showed how things could be.

But Franz couldn’t let things lie. He ran off to Loci and asked him to order an album of Bosch’s paintings at his earliest convenience. Franz was prepared to wait a long time, so long as he was sure that eventually something would be done.

Loci promised to order the album the very next day. He also said that he had Bosch in his own library, but only one reproduction—“The Temptation of St. Anthony.”

Anna without hesitation pointed out her naked figure in the upper right-hand corner of the central part of the picture.

When they simultaneously recognized that two of the four main figures walking across the bridge in the left panel of the triptych were Unsimple, Franzysk promised himself he would make that film.

26. The work was harder than ever before. Franzysk was troubled by doubt. He constantly wondered whether he would be able to convey the mood, the color, the atmosphere; whether he would be able to decode all the secret meanings; whether it was right to show anyone something like this; whether Bosch wouldn’t look ridiculous and tasteless; whether it would be a sin to reproduce all this filth and sodomy, whether he would offend the Unsimple; whether he wouldn’t call down calamity on Anna; whether he hadn’t consciously or unconsciously done someone harm; whether art made any sense; whether he would live to the end of the work; whether something bad might not happen at the showing; whether he would die suffering; whether he would meet his parents after his death; whether his Anna was waiting for him there; whether his people would ever be happy; whether there was anything better in the world than our beloved Carpathian mountains; whether it was worth thinking so much; whether it was worth remembering so much; whether it was good to tell everybody all this; whether it was necessary to speak beautifully; whether plants think; whether tomorrow exists; whether the end of the world hadn’t already happened sometime before; whether he would hold out much longer without a woman; whether he wasn’t under the control of the devil.

27. A precise answer to the last question would have been the answer to

many of the others. Despite the fact that Franz was a devout Greek Catholic and in the frequent discussions in the gin resort he always attacked the Manicheans, the Cathars, and the Albigensians with unanswerable arguments, fearing nothing on earth, for he was convinced of the rectitude of God's plan—despite this, the devil appeared to him thrice during his work on this film.

28. The first time he did not show himself but only very laconically exhibited one of his traits. He was like a magnet.

Franz dreamed that he was lying on the floor. Suddenly, without making a single movement, not even tensing his muscles, he slid along the floor to the wall. Then—in the other direction. Then again and again, with intervals—now quicker, now slower. As though he were metal filings on a sheet of paper, and under the paper a magnet was being moved. Once he was even pulled up the wall—lying in the same position—and then delicately lowered to the floor.

After this the devil asked him to follow carefully what would happen. He dragged Franz into the corner. It turned out that his teacher was asleep there. Franz was shoved towards the teacher and then immediately pulled back. Without touching Franz's body or waking up, the teacher slid after him. "See," said the devil.

Franz didn't hear the voice, but somehow he knew what the devil had said.

29. In the second and third dreams the devil used different variations of one and the same method.

The second dream was the shortest one. Franz was standing in the street in Ialivets—the place was real, he knew it well. He was waiting for his Anna, who had already appeared at the end of the street. Suddenly Beda's armored car drove up to him. Beda looked out through the top hatch and said that he had brought someone with whom they would now go and drink gin. A fellow got out from the side doors and came up to Franz. Anna was getting closer. The fellow stood with his back to Anna and the car. He took a bottle from his inside pocket, pulled out the cork, and offered it to Franz. And then it all happened. In the few seconds it took Anna and Beda to reach them, Franz had time to see several thousand different faces pass over where the fellow's face should have been, several hundred waistcoats under his unbuttoned jacket, several dozen shapes of bottles, and more than a dozen varieties of drink. When the fellow and Franz were no longer alone, the kaleidoscope stopped. The fellow smiled; Anna and Beda smiled. Franz drank first. The taste reminded him of greengage plums. He passed the bottle to Beda, who returned it to the fellow (Beda hadn't actually introduced them to one another). When Anna's turn came, for some reason Franz blurted out that she didn't drink. Nobody, apart from Anna, was surprised, and no one insisted. Franz discreetly but tightly squeezed her

finger. He already knew who this was.

30. After the third dream Franz went to the high bridge and told the Unsimple about Bosch. “All the same, in the tower,” said the hill-wanderer. Franz asked whether he should show anyone the now completed film. “That depends purely on your own wishes,” answered the Unsimple. “Think about it, though. Maybe it’s not right to show our faces in those places where you imagined them. And for now, go home and look after Anna. We must wander some among the worlds, but soon she will be a woman and will know where to find us,” said the baimaker.

31. At home Franz burned the drawing that depicted Anna’s dream. “In order to be happy,” he told Anna, “you have to live without secrets, and as for the secrets of others, you must know only those that you can reveal under torture.”

He was very afraid that sooner or later the Unsimple might come for the film, and so he told Anna never to mention its existence. But if someone wants to find out something through the use of torture, it’s better to reveal everything they want right away. Without any attempt to deceive, just tell the truth. “Therefore you must know that I’ve destroyed it all.”

Franz put the film into a pouch and went outside the town, to burn it, throw it into a ravine or into a torrent. On the way he thought: no matter how they torture her, Anna will tell the truth—there is no film. It’s paradoxical, but that will be the only truth the torturers won’t believe, and the torture won’t stop.

In that case it’s a shame to destroy the film. Maybe it will be of some use someday. Let someone find it who will watch it, analyze it, think hard about it, and comprehend what these Unsimple are about, how they spin the world. For it always gradually comes to light how everything and everyone in the world is connected with everything and everyone else—by transitions, of which there are no more than four.

32. Franzysk entered a beech forest in which every tree had a hollow amid its roots. He threw down the cuff of his long broadcloth mantle over his eyes so that he could see only the ground directly in front of him and began to run blindly around the forest. Several times he collided with a tree, but without harm, because his eyes were protected. He ran uphill and downhill until inside his hood all the sounds of the world were replaced by the sound of wheezing from the depths of his lungs. It was only then that he stopped. Without opening his eyes, he reached out till he felt a tree, found the hollow between the roots, and stuffed the pouch with the film into the hole, at a depth of one and a half forearms. Then he slowly made his way out of the forest. In those places this is easy to do without looking: you have to walk up, so you can follow the slope of the ground. At the top Franz threw off the

ice-covered cuff and looked at the forest. All the trees were identical and unfamiliar; between them curled endless intertwined lines of footprints; his eyes hurt from the shameless light of the moon.

33. Of course, it was winter. Of course—snow was falling. You could spin round and catch snowflakes in your dry mouth.

34. At home Franzysk couldn't smell his daughter and thought that he really was living after the end of the world, which had happened recently. In the house he could hear only the sound of water flowing deep in the drain pipes, the contractions of the metal in the doors of the chilled stove, the ultrasonic vibrations of the panes of glass in the windows. It smelled of sulfur and coal—the pressure was changing.

Franzysk ventured a glance through the open doors of the balcony. A quilt spread out in the garden looked like a painful stain. On the quilt slept a little girl lightly covered by snow who had never yet fallen asleep without her father. It takes a while for a draft to be created. So it was almost a minute before it began to smell of Anna. Franzysk sensed that he didn't want her to become a woman.

35. After that night the Unsimple really did leave Ialivets, somehow managing to throw their rope ladder back up onto the viaduct. The French engineer remained, not stopping his work for even a day. Franzysk stopped creating animations. Now he, together with Anna and the Serb Lukach, who planted forests wherever he moved, occupied themselves with improving the town. He drank a little—mostly he would bisect the circular table in the bar with an equator of full shot-glasses and go nowhere until he'd emptied the whole row—but declined to take part in any gin procedures.

He built himself an orangery, where he cultivated tropical plants. He observed the fluctuating similarities among the offspring of the dog Lukach, which he was obliged to kill in the orangery. Sometimes he would take an axe in each hand and run with it all the way to Menchil. From there he would bring back fresh *brynza*, slinging an axe across his shoulders like a yoke with the buckets of goat cheese tied on either end. He gave interviews reluctantly but dutifully. In general he insisted that he made different films in order to live in different ways.

36. In 1910 Mykola Lahodynsky and Vasyl Stefanyk, deputies of the Vienna parliament, made a special visit to Ialivets with the aim of persuading Franzysk to return to his work. Franzysk objected to nothing and promised nothing. He received the deputies not at home but in the hotel “Ch. P. T.,” which stood for Cheremosh, Prut, Tysa.

Lahodynsky later recalled how Franzysk Petrosky said that a Ukrainian state would be possible only when the Carpathian vector became the basis of its

geopolitics, the Carpathian cosmogony the model for its ideology, and the Carpathians themselves a nature reserve (Franz did not particularly believe what he said, since he hated the Hutsuls' desire to cut down as much forest as possible in the course of their life and their failure to understand that more and more rubbish was now being created that could not just be thrown away into water).

37. As for Stefanyk, he told his Vienna acquaintances even more “In their lifetime every human being,” said Franz, “can make a book. I say a book although we began talking about films. Every human being—but only one book. Those who think they have written many books are mistaken—that’s just an extended process of creating a single book. You cannot escape your own book, no matter what you change. You can imitate, but not create. Your single book is defined by your timber, intonation, articulation. Fate is a way of speaking. Although there is an infinite number of books in the world, the number of genuinely good ones is finite. It must be finite, and there must be an infinity of those others. This is what plants teach us. If the number of good books was not finite, the world would stop spinning or take to drink. I’ve written my book. I don’t know whether it’s good or not, but I’ve written it. And with that, it’s like this: it’s already meaningless whether I’ve finished it or not finished it, whether I copied it or merely intended to. Your book is just the same whether it’s one page long or its volumes fill a whole bookshelf. The voice exists—that’s enough. Plots are necessary for your own curiosity. Plots are not invented nor do they disappear. There are, and are. They can only be forgotten. All that I’ve learned and memorized in my life consists of a few landscapes that signified the joy of thinking, a few smells that were emotions, a few movements that adorned themselves in feelings, a few things or objects that were the embodiment of culture, history and sufferings, many plants that offer access to beauty, wisdom and to all that, in comparison to which we simply do not exist in the world. And many, many intonations. Unique similar intonations, the significance of which I do not know. Perhaps they will help us recognize one another in the place where nothing but the voice remains.”

38. Stefanyk was also pleased when, after Lahodynsky had gone to rest, they began to call each other all sorts of different names—blind bat, free-loader, four-eyes, brat, whimperer, mumbler, stutterer, cock-eyed one, bandit, ne’er-do-well, intriguer, layabout, rascal, glass-peddler, incomer, you playboy, you nouveau-riche, you lowlander, you highlander, you Bukovynian, you Boiko, you Lemko, you Hutsul—and then fell asleep.

39. Two years earlier Franzysk had first taken Anna to the place from which he had returned alone fifteen years earlier. Anna never managed to visit the place again, not even once. Nevertheless, this was the beginning of the only

tradition their family had.

In autumn 1913 Anna was still not yet a woman. And at around that time the birds flew over Ialivets on their way to Africa. Franzysk sensed it: a little longer and he would cry. The most important things don't happen of your own will, he thought, and asked Anna to make a large pot of coffee and squeeze the juice from four grapefruits the size of small pumpkins.

Franzysk realized that when he closed his eyes he couldn't precisely recall the features of all the surrounding mountains, just as he had earlier begun to forget all the unforgettable breasts of women he had known. That was why he had to climb up the cliff to see what he had loved so much. And before leaving on his walk he wanted to make sure that the coffee and grapefruit juice would be waiting for him when he returned.

40. Having re-familiarized himself with all the peaks, he returned home together with Sebastian. Franz proposed that he try living in Ialivets. Anna made up another bed in the spare room. For some reason she had had the second key to the room since morning.

Franzysk felt that Anna's scent had stopped being a child's, and that the Unsimple may come very soon, because the blood of the guest, like an airborne disease, had already begun to mix in the air with the blood of the women of his kind.

Sebastian wanted to sleep so much that he gratefully accepted Franz's invitation to live in Ialivets for a while.

And Anna thought that it would be hard for Sebastian simultaneously to be a friend to the father and a husband to the daughter.

Bare branches of the grapevine tapped on the window above the bed. Sebastian noticed that the rhythm of their taps could serve as an anemometer.

ABUNDANCE OF DAYS

1. In the morning Franzysk was awakened by a completely unknown smell. At first he thought that a miracle had happened, and that instead of the expected winter, which was to bring some meaning, a season of June rains and overabundant greenery had arrived. But when Anna entered their room in the early morning, Franz adopted a new calendar of smells, in which the seasons had a different order.

Reality exists for those who lack Anna.

2. For the first and last time in his life Sebastian made love to a woman he had known for only a few hours.

Even in Africa it wasn't like that. Although he identified the women who would become his at first glance, he was nevertheless always convinced that they would not have enough time to get to love-making. Even though they would care for each other for a long time, talk about their childhoods, and retell books in a way that doubled the number each had read, give one another food, wash and warm their bodies, point out things they'd seen from different sides of the road. Only later would it become clear that such coexistence was based on an unconquerable tendency. Inasmuch as it indicates love not for oneself but for another, it implies extending one's access to the territory of that other. And one can reach a point where extending any farther is possible only by going inwards, only under the skin. Thus it was with Sebastian.

As for the women, on seeing Sebastian for the first time, none had an irrepressible desire to make love to him. The inevitability of that became clear gradually—it was enough to live in direct contact with him for a while. This is precisely how it was in Africa. In the end, Sebastian knew such things only about Africa.

It was only after spending the night in Ialivets that Sebastian became convinced that Europe exists.

3. Overnight it snowed and winter began, a winter which that year would last until the middle of April. Because of winter's capacity to be more multifarious than all other seasons of the year, each of its days was completely different.

And it was never good in the same way twice.

4. Anna couldn't believe that such an unlikely similarity existed: curved lines repeated one another, curving inwards or outwards, following exactly the bumps and dips, coming together in such a way that the two surfaces felt not themselves, not the other, but the appearance of a third, perfectly fine line, which curved around, through, and back of its own accord.

And such unities do not happen by accident. A sort of perfect delicacy, delicate perfection, which passes so easily from one to the other and on to several generations to come.

Love doesn't imply mutuality, said Anna, and Sebastian kept silent, because he was aware that she too did not need an answer. It seemed to him that something in the world had moved, that he had caused some disturbance in it. And although love-making has no future and does not allow for the use of future tense, only with Anna could he imagine himself in old age.

Anna opened the window. Now the grapevines could not be heard, because the swaying branches simply flew into the room. But the wind died down not for the lack of an anemometer—such a heavy snow began to fall that it gradually squeezed the wind down to the ground and covered it with itself. And the snow, equally measured and unhurried, drifted into the room and settled on the bed. In this way the room was ruled by six fluids—saliva, blood, water from the snow, sweat, Anna's moistness, and Sebastian's semen.

5. In the morning the three of them had breakfast together. They had to sit in a row along the long, narrow table, one side of which was pushed up against the window. Sebastian almost didn't smell of Africa. The smell of Anna's mucous was still on his fingers so Franzysk considered how they should sit from now on: he-Anna-Sebastian, he-Sebastian-Anna, or Anna-he-Sebastian.

Anna was brought a letter from old Beda. This time the wrapper was from the same tea as she had just made the men for breakfast. She wondered what she would write back to Beda if she no longer had any questions.

6. That winter Franzysk suddenly realized that he didn't have a photograph of himself for the article in Larousse. He could have gone to the Chameleon Studio and had a photograph taken, but Franz correctly decided that, since the article had several hundred possible variants, even the best photograph would be purely serendipitous. He would have to have his photograph taken each time the article was written anew. (He had once even had such an idea for a film: he had photographed one person in the same pose and in the same place every day for two years then played back this series of evolutionary changes at various speeds. Against the background of evolution details become very distinct.)

Thus Franz turned to a strange way not only of regaining the past but also of discovering something completely unexpected.

7. After breakfast (eventually Franz decided that it would be most correct for Sebastian always to be in the middle, and he accepted that Anna would sit always by her man, and that he would have to be close to Sebastian, so that they could talk about everything easily) Franzysk took from Anna the

second key to Sebastian's room, for the room would no longer be locked and he would no longer go in there. He read the letter from Beda and said that he had told Anna this once, for he had told her everything he knew, and he knew what old Beda had written. Evidently she had been too small when this very memory had been related, and it had been forgotten. If she wished, she could hear it once again, when he told—as he definitely would—their entire story to Sebastian.

And then Franz pulled from under the bedding the winter sheepskin coat that had been stored there for the summer and went to the Union Hotel, where for several years now Ialivets's only contract killer lived in a room on the second floor.

8. Shtefan was very surprised when Franz entered his room—in Ialivets Franz could kill anyone without any need to hire an assassin: he was too well respected for that. Shtefan had just returned from a successful job in Kosmach and had to do a little work on his rifle.

Before Franz arrived he had already managed to attend a church service and even take communion afterwards. But he did not swallow the sacrament. He carried it in his mouth to the hotel and put it in a hole in the wall he had made earlier with a drill. He loaded a bullet into his rifle, walked to the opposite wall, and fired, aiming at the hole. It's a good thing he aimed well. Franz heard the shot between the first and second floors while riding in the lift that was being pulled upwards by two workers turning a winch up in the attic. Shtefan laid aside his gun and started to collect the blood from the wall. Franz opened the door. Shtefan should now have lubricated the rifle with the blood, but he didn't want to do this in front of Franzysk.

9. Franzysk quickly explained his request.

He wanted Shtefan to do something he did extremely well—to follow him unnoticed. Track him like an assassin. Find a good place for the shot and the right moment to shoot. But instead of a rifle Shtefan was to have a camera. Franz would give Shtefan three months' time. After this he would take a hundred of his photographs and pay the rest of the money. The main thing was that neither Franzysk nor anyone else should ever notice him. Once he was told the amount of the payment, Shtefan enthusiastically agreed, unperturbed in the slightest that he didn't even know what a camera looked like.

Among other things, because of this irresponsibility on Shtefan's part, a lot of people were alive. Shtefan—as is typical of Ukrainians—was constantly taking on more commitments than he was able to handle. And so some contracts took years to be realized, and some were simply forgotten. But now Shtefan understood that with Franz, delays were out of the question. He had been told that Franz knew those eighteen words that made the rifle tremble, and the target show up of its own accord, in tears, and stand where

you could aim at it directly from the window.

Franz showed him how a camera worked and left. Shtefan quickly rubbed the blood from the wall all down the barrel. He knew it was a terrible sin and that he would belong to Judas, but he always did this, so that the rifle would never miss. Especially after the blood began to boil.

10. Every day Franz took Sebastian for a walk around Ialivets. The frosts were severe and the ice-rinks didn't begin to melt even on sunny days. Finally Franz had someone to talk to—it turned out that Sebastian, as a real marksman, was able to see just as much. It seemed that they should be having endless, serious conversations, because the problem of Central Europe is stylistic: but no—just a few words, pointing out things they saw. When they went into bars, they drank gin diluted with boiling water, with chasers only of fresh juice from slightly frozen apples that had been left on the trees in the autumn and were only recently picked from under the snow. Sometimes they went to the place where the first Anna had died, and Franz drew in the snow sketches of ever changing versions of the family history. “There are things more important than fate,” he said. “Culture, maybe. And culture is family, and a deliberate adherence to it.” Franz asked that Sebastian and Anna's children be sure to visit this place. And also the place where Franz had met Sebastian (he almost added the beech forest with the undestroyed film but stopped himself in time, because, after all, he didn't know a great deal about the Unsimple), and other places that would appear with time. For time is the expansion of family into geography.

11. There were days when Sebastian would take his African rifle with him. On especially steep slopes it provided good support. On one such day they spoke of their dreams. It's no surprise that Franz's dream was the more complicated.

Sebastian dreamed of being old, living on a small cliff-island in a warm sea, and walking around in nothing but canvas trousers all year round; but also of walking little, mainly sitting on a stone bench beside an empty white hut, drinking red wine and eating dry goat's cheese all day, and looking at a few tomato plants and not at the sea, in which he would bathe every night until the carnations began to give off their scent.

Franzysk, on the other hand, dreamed of a woman with several pairs of breasts.

Suddenly Sebastian bent down and butted Franz in the stomach with his head. Franz tumbled from the snowdrift while Sebastian did a somersault on the ground and, lying on his back, fired from his snow-filled rifle. On a distant hilltop something rang out. After lying still for a moment they made their way to the place and found Shtefan, wounded by a bullet and holding the smashed camera.

Sebastian had taken the light flashing off the lens for the reflection of an

optic sight. Shtefan had overlooked the most important point: "No one should ever notice you," Franz had said. And one has to know how to take responsibility for an oversight.

On the other hand, Franzysk ended up without a photograph for the encyclopedia after all. Fortunately, reduction still interested him.

12. After this accident Anna decided she wanted to learn to be a sniper.

13. First of all you have to grow to love your own body, said Sebastian. And the location where everything will take place.

For the body is the gateway to the brain.

If you want to think well and quickly, the gate should always be open.

So that thoughts can come in and go out freely.

Thoughts are merely what passes through the filter from a location through the body and then flows out.

The freedom of donor-acceptor relationships.

To lie in the water and not to hear its smell.

To look closely at grass and not to feel its taste.

To experience with a glance the taste of what you sense by touch.

The gate opens only when you love it.

Open up, you always open up so beautifully.

Nails can scratch, but they can also clutch.

Prolong your gaze, maintain your gaze, hold your gaze.

Transfer to the rifle your body's desire to be in a place you cannot reach.

If you grow to love a location, it will become the creeping extension of your body.

It is not you who shoots, but the contour of the landscape.

It is not the head that thinks, but the body.

It is not the bullet that hits, but the thought.

Every thought is a desire that was able to enter and leave through the gate.

What you can do alone, do with no one.

Say what you have just thought, and think as you have just felt.

Cry from tenderness, for otherwise you will never be so strong.

Watch your breathing, for it alone can dictate rhythm.

Always remember about trees: they disappear and appear most reliably.

When you are very tired, stop being unbreakable and fall asleep.

Reach inside with your lips to your center.

Shooting into a window is like looking into a window.

Try to understand how Blacks make jazz.

Openness. Generosity. Gratitude.

14. To learn these and countless other subtleties of the art of sniping, it is necessary to maintain a strict, uncompromising regime: to make love constantly, and that only in the open air. Long, lightly, forcefully, rapidly,

gently, stubbornly, clumsily, beautifully, wisely, carefully, very carefully, wisely and beautifully. On the earth, in leaves, on moss, in trees, under trees, on hills, in hollows, in wind, in snow, on ice, along the road, across the bridge, above the bridge, in the dark and in the night, in the light and in the day, before, after and during eating, silently and noisily. Stand. Walk. Sit. Lie. As much as was possible during that longest winter of 1914.

That whole, long winter, which lasted until April 1914, Sebastian and Anna barely came into the house. Anna said what she thought, and thought as she felt. She cried from tenderness, for never in her life had she been so strong. Sometimes, when Sebastian was inside her, it seemed he wasn't close enough, and sometimes he was extremely close across a couple of shirts. When she bent, he was convinced that something was making him bend too. As though around his skin another layer of tight membrane had been created.

Excessive days.

Translated by Uilleam Blacker

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Look for the conclusion of this novel (pp. 69–138 of the original publication) in the next issue of *Ukrainian Literature*.

