

love is

blind

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I

On August 5th at eight o'clock the city started submerging into fog. It was unusually turbid, seemed to be dark-blue colored, and didn't hamper breathing at all. It was falling with a parallel layers: first, foamy hanging low, went about 5 centimeters up, hid from passersby their own legs. The woman from house №22 in Saint-Bracmar street couldn't find a key lost in front of the hall-door. Six men, including a suckling, came to the help her — at this moment the second coverlet settled: they found the key, but lost the suckling, who had crawled away under cover of the foggy trail. He couldn't wait to get rid of a feeding bottle and learn the modest delights of adult life. One thousand three hundreds sixty two keys and fourteen dogs were lost this way in the first morning. Fishermen neglected useless, henceforth, floats, got mad, and went for the hunting.

The fog was tightly choking up the streets in hollows and at the bottom of slope; was clouding rainwater and ventilation pipes with a long strips; was conquering subway's underpasses, which stopped functioning after the milk stream had gone up to the red traffic light level; in the meanwhile, the third screen fell, and a one upstairs had to make his way knee-deep in the white shroud.

The inhabitants of the upper blocks, believing that they are more lucky, were ridiculing those ones who lived close to the river, but one week later peace and harmony triumphed; beginning from this point everybody was able to hit against furniture in his flat the same way, since the roofs of the highest buildings had been clouded with the fog too. For the longest the top of the bell tower lasted out, but the next turbid tidal wave flooded it too.

II

Orver L'tuil waked up on August 13th. He had been sleeping for no less than three hundreds hours or about; recovering of a mighty drunken feast slowly and initially he thought that he had become blind — evidently, had taken something very strong! It

was dark, but darkness seemed to be unusual somehow; such a sensation as if electric light gushes with all its strength out at the closed eyelids. With an unsteady hand he groped for a radio-receiver's handle. The radio was alive, but the last news reached not fully come Orver with difficulty.

Taking no notice of the chattering newscaster's comments, Orver L'tuil became thoughtful, picked his navel and, had smelt a finger, decided, that it wouldn't be a bad thing to have a bath. But practicalness of the fog, plunging everything into thick darkness just like a cloak Noi, poverty beggary, Tanit's sail Salambo or a fiddle which a cat was put in, - convinced him that there is no need to have a shower. Moreover, this fog exhaled the delicatessen fragrance of consumptive apricots, which must have killed all human odours. Audibility became even better, and sounds, shrouded by this foggy cotton, got a funny echo, clear, but colorless, like a lyric soprano, which owner's palate punched out during an unfortunate fall upon a plow's handle was replaced with a hammered iron prosthesis.

Before all Orver dismissed all arising questions; he decided to behave as if nothing had happened before. In the issue, he dressed up without any trouble, since clothes were in their right places: something on chairs, something under the bed, socks in shoes, one shoe in the vase, another one under the pot.

- My God, - he told himself, - what a strange stuff this fog is.

This not very special remark saved him from singing the praises and primitive enthusiasm, on the one hand, from sorrow and deep melancholy on the other hand, moved up the phenomenon into the category of easily stated facts. He was getting accustomed to the unusual situation, was adapting and soon dared to such an extent, that decided to carry out some psychological tests.

- Will walk down to the landlady with an unzipped fly, - he uttered aloud Will see, is it actually because of the fog, or I have some problems with my eyes.

The point is, that a Frenchman's inherent cartesianism casts

doubt on the existence of the fog as such, even if deepness is quite enough for corking his french sight; whatever is said by radio, his french opinion would not be changed, and he won't believe in miracles. They have dolts only at radio.

- I'll take it out and walk down like this – decided Orver. He took it out and started walking down like this. First time in his life he noticed creaking of the first step, crackling of the second one, rustling of the fourth one, mumbling of the seventh one, slapping of the tenth one, gritting of the fourteenth one, chirring of the seventeenth one, squeaking of the twenty second one and buzzing of the copper handrail felt down from the end bearing.

Someone was walking up the stairs, holding on to the wall.

- Who is this? – asked Orver, stopping.

- Leron! – the landing neighbor's voice replied.

- Hello, - said Orver. – This is L'tuil.

He stretched out his hand, wrung something hard and in full perplexity released it immediately. Leron confusedly giggled...

- Pardon, - he said, - but anyway no one can see anything, and moreover this damn fog...

- Yes, sure, - echoed Orver.

Thought a little about his unzipped fly, he even felt insulted: it appears that the same idea had crossed Leron's mind too.

- Well, see you, - said Leron.

- See you – replied Orver, on the sly loosening a belt by three holes.

He took the lowered pants off and flung it at a stair opening. The fog is sultry, like feverish partridge, and it is the fact, and if Leron is walking with his property revealed, then Orver just cannot keep dressed! All or nothing.

A jacket and a shirt flew away. Only shoes remained.

He walked down and quietly knocked at a concierge's window.

- Come in, - the housekeeper's voice reached.

- Do you have any post for me? asked Orver.

- Oh! Mister L'tuil! giggle the fat woman. Still laughing matter... Have had enough sleep, at last?.. I didn't want to disturb you... But if you saw this fog the first days. Everyone was running like crazy. And now... it's ok, getting accustomed...

With poignant smell of perfume, breaking through the milk barrier, he understood that she is coming nearer.

- The only thing - it is inconvenient to cook, - shared she. But it's even funny, such fog... it, I would say, satiate; you know, I've never complained of a bad appetite... so, during three days a glass of water, a bit of bread, and I don't need anything else.

- This way you can lose flesh, - remarked Orver.

- Ah! Ah! - stifling her laughter, clucked she, like a bag with nuts, got down from a seventh floor.

- Feel it, mister Orver, I've never been in such good shape. Even my paunches have risen... Feel it...

- But... e-e-h... - mumbled Orver.

- Feel it, I'm telling you!

At random, she seized his hand and and pull it up to one of the paunches mentioned above.

- Strikingly! said Orver.

- And, you know, that I'm forty two years old, - the concierge was going on So? Now you cannot say that! People like me slightly big - in some respect are winners...

- But, damn you! exclaimed dumbfounded Orver. You are

absolutely naked!

- And you? retorted she.

“Well, - thought Orver, - here I’m original”.

- It was said by radio, - added the concierge, - this is a stimulant aerosol.

The concierge moved up to him and started breathing more frequent.

- Oh! sighed Orver; it’s even seemed to him, that this fucking fog rejuvenates as well.

- Listen, miss Panush, - begged he, - we cannot do it this way, like animals. Even if it’s true and this fog is really stimulant, we should keep away from an offence, - added he, moving aside.

Miss Panush moaned, exhaled sharply, like chopped off, and unmistakably placed her hands directly on...

- I don’t care, - said Orver with dignity. - You’ll be the judge of that, count me out.

- Yeah, - whispered the concierge not being confused in the least, - for instance, mister Leron turned out a more courteous than you. Dealing with you I gotta do everything by myself.

- Look, - started making excuses Orver, - I’ve just got up today. I haven’t got accustomed yet.

- I’ll explain you everything right now, - said the landlady.

After that some incidents took place, which would be better to have hidden, like poor folk are hidden under a cloak, Noi’s poverty, Salambo and Tanit’s sail inside a fiddle.

Out of the concierge Orver rushed exulting. In the street he harkened that’s what was missing the noise of cars. In return, everywhere songs were being sung. From everywhere laugh was being heard.

A bit deafened he went into the roadway. His ear haven't got used to the sound range covering such a long distances; he was getting lost in it.

Orver caught himself at thinking aloud.

- My God, - said he The stimulant fog! As we can see, the thoughts about that were not very various. But put yourself into place of a man, who is sleeping for eleven days running, wakes up in pitch-darkness at the moment of everyone's indecent poisoning and states the transformation of his fat shaking concierge into Valkyrie with high, elastic breast, what Circe thirsting for a sea of unpredictable delights.

- Great, - uttered Orver, making his thought more exact.

Just at that moment he realized that is still standing in the middle of the street. Got frightened he moved away to the wall, passed hundred meters and stopped in front of a bakery. Sanitary-hygiene standards recommend to take food after considerable physical activity, and he decided to buy some bun.

There was very noisy inside the bakery.

Orver considers himself as a man without prejudices, but when he realized what exactly the baker's wife demanded from each male client and the baker from each female one, his hair stood on end.

- If I serve you the foodstuffs weighing 2 pounds, - the baker's wife was arguing, - then I have the right to require a proper format, damn it!

- But, madam, - the weak old age voice was opposing, by which Orver identified mister Curpip, elderly organist living at the very end of the quay, - but, madam...

- And you play an organ! - the baker's wife reproached.

Mister Cucpit protested.

- Ok, then I will send you my organ, - he fired up, rushed to the exit and ran into Orver standing by the door. The blow

was so strong that Orver couldn't take a breath for a long time after that.

- Next! - the baker's wife squealed.

- One loaf, please, - Orver forced himself to speak rubbing his belly.

- One loaf of 4 pounds for mister L'tuil! - the baker's wife screamed out.

- No! No! - Orver moaned, - a small bun!

- Boor! - baker's wife bellowed and added appealing to her husband: - Hey, Lucen, attend to this seignior so he doesn't do it again.

The hair on Orver's head started moving. He dashed off as fast as he could - right into the shop window. It resisted.

He reached the door and ran out in the street. The orgy in the bakery was going on. Children were served by the baker's apprentice.

- Oh, fuck, - Orver was grumbling standing on the sidewalk. - And what if I prefer to choose myself? No, but the baker's wife, what the bitch? With her mug...

Suddenly he remembered the confectioner's shop across the bridge. The baker-girl is 17 years old, a mouth like a Cupid's bow, a patterned apron... maybe, she has nothing else except for this apron right now...

Orver quickly walked towards the confectioner's shop. Three times he stumbled over and fell down upon twisted bodies. He was not even interested in poses of the partners. Only at the last collision he noted that there were five of them.

- Rome, - he whispered. - Quo Vadis! Fabiola! et cum spirito tuo!* Orgy! Ohh!

He was rubbing his forehead; the reminiscence about a shop window swelled up to the size of a pigeon egg, moreover well

hatched out. He was quickening his pace – the intimate pal, drawing reins, was pulling him along, asking to give it up.

He decided that the object is near and orientating himself by touch went along facades. By a plywood circle with a screw which supported one of the cracked mirrors, he detected the antiquary's shop window. Two buildings down the street – the confectioner's shop.

At a full speed he bumped into an immovable body directed with its back to him. He screamed.

- Don't push me, - the harsh voice said, - and take this off my arse far away. Otherwise you can be whacked in the face...

- But... hmmm... don't worry, really? - Orver got confused.

He made an attempt to pass the man round on the left side and bumped into someone again.

- What's up? - the other male voice asked.

- Wait for your turn, like everyone else.

The loud laughter resounded.

- What?! - Orver got perplexed.

- Listen, - the third voice said, - you, of course, has come to see Nelly.

- Yes, - Orver mumbled.

- Wait for your turn, - the man said, - you will be number 60.

Orver didn't reply anything. He felt pretty unhappy.

He left even without knowing was she wearing a patterned apron.

At the first crossroads he turned left. A woman was approaching in the opposite direction.

Both of them fell, then sat down on the ground.

- I'm sorry. - Orver said.

- No, it was my fault, - the woman said. - You kept the right side of the road.

- Can I help you to get up? - Orver offered. - Are you alone?

- And you? - she asked. - Wouldn't five or six of you pounce on me?

- Are you really a woman? - Orver specified.

- Have a look yourself, - she said.

Still standing on the knees they moved up to each other, and her long silky hair touched Orver's cheek.

- Where could we find a quieter place? - he thought.

- In the middle of the street, - the woman said. And they moved there finding their way by the sidewalk border.

- I want you, - Orver said.

- And I want you, - the woman said. - My name is...

- I don't care, - Orver interrupted her. - I'm interested only in what my hands and body can learn.

- Learn, - the woman said.

- I hope, - Orver said, - you don't have any clothes.

- I hope you either, - she said. He lay down next to her.

- There is no rush, - she said. - Start from the legs and come up.

Orver was amazed. And he announced that immediately.

- This is the only way you can imagine everything yourself, - she explained. As you said yourself, we have only one means of cognition - the sense of touch. Don't forget that your look cannot plunge me into confusion anymore. You have got into a mess with your monopoly of erotics. Lets be simpler and more honest.

- You speak smoothly. - Orver was surprised.

- I read "Tan Modern", - the woman said. - Please, start teaching me sexual manners.

That was what Orver did many times in different ways.

And she had a real inclination and indubitable talents for. The borders of what is possible expand when you're not afraid of the light which can be turned on. And then it cannot be worn out, can it? The theoretical explanations given by Orver about 2-3 rather interesting cases in conjunction with multiple practical using brought to their partner relations more confidential nature.

And that was just that simple and pleasant life fostering people in Pan's image and likeness.

III

In the meantime, it was announced on the radio that scientists are observing a gradual neutralization of the phenomenon and the fog level is going down every day.

They convene a global meeting because the danger seemed to be really serious. But the solution was found very quickly because human inventiveness is versatile. When the fog had lifted which was registered by special detectors the happy life could keep going on because everyone put out his eyes.

* Here: Why stick to the beaten track when spirit is bright (lat.).