

## Darko Lešoski

### Stare at love until you forget your own face!

My Grandfather already had Alzheimer's when out of his drawer fell a photograph of him and my Grandmother, taken somewhere when they were both young. I bent down and handed it to him to put it back. He took it and teared up. Who's this m'boy? – he said. You! – I told him with a laugh. "You..." – I repeated softly, having seen his face. He didn't ask about my Gran. Knew who she was. Never has he forgotten her.

### Things worth living for, that I never read about in any damn textbook

It was worth living for these things:

The window cleaners who got dressed up as superheroes to amaze and delight those children in that oncology ward

The English grandad who saved over six hundred Jewish children from going to concentration camps and for fifty years only a handful of people knew about it

Woody Harrelson when he coolly gives the million dollars from that indecent proposal by that wanker Redford to an elephant or tiger or whatever it was at an auction and leaves with his hands in his pockets and a perverse smile

Last June when 12 Japanese surgeons knelt in front of an operating table after a hundred hour operation in which they were unable to save a nine year-old child with cancer, who had decided to donate his healthy organs if he didn't survive the operation and they did just that after kneeling

Dennis Hopper when he holds up Christopher Walken with a ridiculous story in True Romance and spits blood as they beat him so that his son has more time to get furt-

her away

Isaac's face when he forgives his father for sacrificing him in the service of a God who nobody's ever seen

"Shoot if you want cousin, shoot!"<sup>1</sup> and the ease with which that line is said when one's conscience is clean

Priam when he goes to see Achilles

When the old man goes to the strongest man in the world and goes like: "give me my son's body so I can bury him, you little piss-ant!"

Getting up in the middle of a wedding to catch a bus and go 200km because she's got a temperature of 37.2

The hundred-year-old homeless man in Sofia who travels 50km each way to beg, then secretly gives the money to orphanages and children

The bread factory after the 1963 Skopje earthquake – a donation from... Ethiopia. Jesus Christ, the irony

My Uncle's hunger strike and the few against 20 million because of some fucking water and justice

The Swedish cops who helped that kid write his maths homework after he got scared that someone was breaking in and stayed with him until his mother came back from work

Nikola Tesla's coolness and benevolence

Kafka's letters

My Father breathing life into my Grandad as his soul was leaving him and his "your word is your bond" that makes a man

My Gran's "if they throw stones at you, you give them bread" – when I had no idea what she was talking about

1 From the final scene of the film *Before the Rain*

but now I understand

“If there is a God he will have to beg my forgiveness”, inscribed on a wall at Treblinka

That Bosnian woman’s letter to her kids (that bit telling her son to take off his socks before shagging, buy his girlfriend flowers and be good to her and he’ll get everything he wants for the rest of his life)

My other Uncle’s quietly serene silence like a cat purring even if there’s a war going on outside

Drinking heavily with a total stranger you met at the bar an hour ago – until the break of day

That feeling that tells you that he might commit suicide or do something stupid because a terrible thing happened to him last night or a few hours ago

His tears and that morning’s clutching embrace as if you had long ago stitched up a wound of his and hadn’t seen him since

Kipling’s If, every word of that poem

The covertly sent text to a girl: “You want me to say I’m going to the toilet and we get outta here?” at the packed out promotion of your first book

“For you, a thousand times over!” The last line from Kite Runner like an echo in Amir’s ears

The smile of my primary school teacher who never once had a go at me for being crap at maths cos she knew I had another gift

Sitting in the back of a cab with a bottle of vodka and gypsy music blaring having told the driver to just drive so that you don’t go fuck someone up, even though he actually deserves it – until your rage subsides

The verses my Father wrote for my sister “all jewels will be worthless to me and already dwindle in the brilliance of your eyes” when she was little. The thought that I’m going

to learn to teach other children to write with their hearts, not their heads!

My sister’s brief knock knock on my door and the steaming cup of tea left waiting for me, because without saying a word she knows I’m not okay and can’t even bear to see anyone

Those around me who know it all and have never left me in the mud

Vaptsarov’s poem for his wife, which I could recite in my sleep:

“Sometimes I’ll come when you’re asleep  
An unexpected visitor from afar...  
Don’t leave me outside in the street  
From the door remove the bar!

I’ll enter quietly, softly sit  
And gaze upon you in the dark.  
Then when my eyes have gazed their fill,  
I’ll kiss you and... depart.”

The last words of the three year-old Syrian boy before he died/his death: Everything! I’m gonna tell God everything!

The scent of rekindled love you thought lost long ago

The scent of her skin

The thought that one day you’ll be good, at least in part

At least a tad

And that nobody will find out.  
how? in whose footsteps? and when?

see, you found yourself once

Until you’re no more

Until you’re no more

Life was thus far worth living for these things.

One day if I have a kid I'll tell him about these things when  
he's grown up a bit  
I'll be telling him as we rip each and every page out of his  
textbooks if they're the same as today's and I'll teach him  
to make paper boats and planes

While schools grade only their heads and not their hearts

I'll tell him about Seagull beach and we'll release them  
through a dam on some river

Along the water

I'll also tell him the story of the boy who had the Sun on  
his left shoulder and the Moon on his right. He'll realise  
that boy truly existed – only after I'm gone.

### **The most wonderful perfume in the world**

We forgive those we love in the same way perfume used  
to be made.

We lace our forgiveness with perfume.

Perfume so that their soul smells nicer than our rotten one.

The procedure is as follows:

Place your heart in your palm like a red dewy rose and  
crush it.

Crush it with all your might.

The rose withers, dies.

But oil seeps out.

A few drops of oil which are then diluted with tears.

Thirty, fifty, one hundred millilitres, one twenty... depends  
how much you have.

Give it to them with a smile.

They say that one rainy day in ancient China a young  
monk chanced upon the emperor's daughter as she was  
being carried in a litter.

Her servants asked him to help them carry the litter over  
a torrent of water so that not even a single drop would  
touch the princess.

He helped them.

But in doing so he glanced through the sheet, through the  
curtains that covered the litter.

He saw her. And smiled at her.

She saw him. And smiled back.

The servants thanked him and gave him a gold coin.

The monk returned to his faraway temple and aged, his  
face becoming a crumpled up bedsheet.

One day he set off again and arrived at the place where he  
had carried the princess.

The younger monk that was with him tried to stop him as  
he swallowed the gold coin. The coin he had kept and not  
told anyone about.

What are you doing, he shouted as the monk choked.

What are you doing?!, he was shouting as the old monk  
took his last breaths.

I came to forgive myself he told him, I came to bring back  
the princess who I never lowered to the ground on this  
spot.

But carried her on my shoulders.

All my life since I saw her I've carried her on these sho-  
uld-ers.

Inside me.

In this soul of mine.

They say that place still exists and that it smells amazing,  
even though it's a dirt track without any fragrant trees or  
flowers around.

They say that monk's soul resides there and that it smells  
wonderful.

We forgive those we love as if we're making perfume.

That's also how we die, but it is not the scariest of deaths.

We die only once we have forgiven ourselves.

With difficulty.

Full of pain.

If we succeed.

If we know where and how to do it.

If we're lucky.

They say that is the most wonderful perfume in the world.

When a person, when a soul forgives itself.

They say Mary Magdalene smelt like that when they cru-  
cified Jesus.

They say that when Adam and Eve were expelled from He-  
aven, the Archangel Gabriel secretly tucked a small bottle  
of that perfume under Eve's lion skin dress.

They say she found it that night and closed her eyes after  
smelling it and thus made peace with herself, without God.

He's never been here for us anyway.