



Josip Kirigin

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

Translated by Coral Petkovich, Perth, winter 2021-2023



At the End of the Rainbow by Josip Kirigin
[Split 1979/translated into English, Perth 2023]

Forty four years after it was first published, Josip Kirigin's biographical novel about migrant life on the WA goldfields, *Na kraju duge (At the End of the Rainbow)* has been translated into English.

Josip Kirigin, a celebrated Croatian journalist and author, was born in Boulder City in 1918, and spent his boyhood there. His father had arrived in the goldfields from Dalmatia in 1903 and, after a hard working life underground, died of silicosis in 1927. As a result, Josip (aged nine) then returned to Dalmatia with his mother Jelena.

At the End of the Rainbow paints a raw and engaging picture of life in Boulder through the eyes of Josip as a child. The Kirigin family lived opposite the infamous Cornwall Hotel in Dwyer St, South Boulder, a watering hole popular with local Slav and Italian communities. Their day-to-day struggles bore witness to a milieu of illicit activities and shifting allegiances.

Kirigin's novel also chronicles the tragic destinies of his siblings, who remained in WA eking out a living across the wheatbelt and in Perth. Filled with rich interior rumination upon the turbulent migrant experience and the travails of crafting a life, the narrative is fuelled by Josip's quest (including a 1971 return visit to WA) to discover missing family jigsaw pieces.

The novel's investigative genealogies and narrative arc reveal the real-world consequences for the children of migrant families split apart in the pursuit of a better life 'at the end of the rainbow'.

The English translation by Perth-based Coral Petkovich was initiated by Josip's son Dr Branko Kirigin in Split, Croatia. Contact Josip's great-niece Denise Corrigan (denise.corrigan@me.com) in Sydney for further information. An archive of Josip's work including unpublished novels, stories, essays, diaries and photographs is held at the Hvar Heritage Museum on the island of Hvar, Croatia.

Image caption Josip Kirigin with his parents in Boulder, WA, c. 1923.

AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

Dedicated to my parents
Author

GOLD, heavy, yellow metal (chemical symbol AU, atomic weight 197,3) known to man since pre-historic times. Played an important part in excavations, conquests, trade, science and many other human activities....

American Encyclopedia

*Cursed metal,
You, you common whore, seducing people
and nations!*

William Shakespeare, Timon of Athens

*Lusuri nummos animos quoque ponere debent
Those who intend to play for money, must dice with their
soul*

Carmina duodecim sapientum

Translator's note: Most of the communication between the Croatian people in this book, who originally came from one of the Croatian islands, is in a dialect which is considerably different from ordinary Croatian language, both with regard to individual words and also, the accent and rhythm of the speech. Mainly I have not attempted to translate this difference into English, but have indicated it by putting it in Italics and where possible, by adhering to the original rhythm.

We were expecting Perrin at any moment. According to the program she had put forward in her last letter from London, she should have been here in the middle of the week. It was already Thursday. If she had arrived at the border last night and if with Brian, her husband, she slept in some Slovene motel, we could hope to see her today in the afternoon or evening.

Perrin was to spend several days with us and then travel to the sea. She wished, so she wrote, to visit the coast and the islands, from whence her parents had set off to the far-away world, she wanted to visit her relatives, friends of her mother and her father, and I was to help her to best organise her travels and coordinate many of her wishes.

I didn't go to work today. I just didn't feel like it. I messaged my friends to excuse me, telling them that I would easily make up for lost time. I felt I needed some time to prepare myself for this meeting. I had been excited since early this morning, going from the kitchen to our two rooms and back again, suggesting first this then that to my wife, and thinking mostly about what I could do so that Perrin felt she was at home.

But....

- It's best you go for a walk, and I get everything ready! – my mate told me. When you come back, you won't need to do anything apart from putting the finishing touches here and there.

To be sure, that makes sense, I said to myself, took a pullover and left.

This meeting would bring me something unusual and it would be best to think about it by myself somewhere. Actually, this would be my first contact with someone close to me from so far away, not only in distance but also in time. It was forty years since Perrin and I had seen one another. Between us stretched over ten thousand kilometres as the crow flies. We really lived on opposite sides of the globe.

I followed my street to the *kafana* (café) called the “*Tri šešira*” (Three hats) and went across the boulevard to the nearby grove of trees. There was no-one around, because it was a work day, and children were in school.

Memories came back to me. Here everything was bright green, and over there the yellow periphery around Boulder had been all dusty. Perrin and I would get through the fence and find ourselves with Lester somewhere between our corrugated iron homes, in some backyard deserted by its owner. The house had been removed by heavy draft horses on a huge wooden triangle, somewhere further away, to the other side of the town or even towards Norseman or Esperance, and a new area had thus been opened up for us to explore. Perrin was the leader of our group. She was a bit older than we were, but daring and decisive, so that we, quite understandably, had accepted without even questioning it, that she be the leader of our prospecting three-some.

It's a bit strange, that in a child's world things happen that adults cannot even imagine. I don't think even one other group of three or five on the Goldfields or anywhere else in the world, looking for gold, had a woman as a member, much less as a leader. But so it was, Perrin was at the head of our three-some, and that was a special honour for us, because she knew the work better than any of us. And the fact that she knew was proven by the results of our digging. Always, with Perrin as leader, in all our exploits we always stumbled upon something. Sometimes a shilling, sometimes sixpence would end up in our pockets, and once something quite unexpected happened, maybe it had not happened before in all of Boulder or Kalgoorlie, or so it seemed to us – Perrin found a real, authentic pound sterling gold coin, *lira shterlina*; that's what our elders said, and that piece of gold excited us so much that first we ran to her house, then mine and then Lester's. The older people nodded their heads, tested the weight of the coin and said it was worth more than a paper note, because it was gold; even though, they said, gold was a deposit for paper. Of course, we did not then understand, although we could see by the expressions on their faces that our find was of great importance.

Actually, that all happened quite by accident. That day we were digging up mushrooms, little white mushrooms. They were well hidden in the desert sand, which was carried by the wind from the Boulder dumps

to abandoned fences or buildings. Dragging out some sheet metal, we found a whole bunch of mushrooms, and as usual it was Perrin who took a bag and very carefully, skilfully, caught up two or three mushrooms at once and put them inside the bag. And then, as she moved the sand with her hand, she could see something shining – Gold, gold! -- she cried out, like a true prospector. Lester helped me to shift the tin to the side, and in seconds our heads were close to that of our curly haired Perrin. Real gold, pure gold, not alluvial nor telluride, which are richest with this remarkable metal, but refined, rolled out, forged in the British mint with the likeness of King Edward the Seventh, predecessor of our then king, King George the Fifth, who was at the head of the Commonwealth of which Australia with its crest, a kangaroo and an emu, was one of the biggest and most valuable jewels: the British Commonwealth of Nations.

How happy we were with this success! And as was to be expected, we sold that big trophy of ours for a guinea, that is, 21 shillings, so that each of us received exactly seven shillings, or "*shellina*" as our people would say, exact to the penny paid into our hands, and that money went immediately into our piggy banks, so that, after it was fertilized with more savings, it ended up "in the bank", that is, in the safe of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, with that same crest of the kangaroo and the emu, in which our people had the most faith; while the bank book found its place on top of the chest of drawers pasted with flowers, in our kitchen.

Perrin was in her element those days, and so were we, with her. We behaved then like grown-ups, like our Baptismal fathers, uncles and older brothers. We would take our sack, (or swag), and an old broken miner's lamp, after first throwing our school bags on the bed or table, and then we would rush out, through the end of the back yard, where big and small goats were put to pasture, and wait for one another near Lester's fence and there we would cook up our plan of war for the afternoon. Other boys and girls would join us then, so that Perrin was concerned with them too, keeping them in line like a real, experienced prospector (or as we would say "*proshpetur*") in different places. However, she kept the original group tightly together, because we were her first team players, we made up the nucleus, who had some sort of special rights, which the others without any conversation or complaints, accepted.

Our excavations did not always go well, and after searching for a long time we would go on to new assignments; one routine being our evening gymnastic feat: sliding down a steel cable on a piece of wood which looked like a boomerang. We would climb the eucalypt tree near the tram line which led to the outskirts of Boulder, hold with both hands the piece of wood, and slide down the cable until both feet were on the ground. It was especially important to fall into the circle which we would mark out on our runway, and this was something not everyone could succeed in doing. Perrin usually came first in this undertaking.

Those were wonderful days. I say: they were at that time, even though I think now about how they meant something else as well; quite apart from our exploits - how we dug underneath where houses had once stood, houses which horses had taken somewhere far away, to the unknown; apart from those games we set up, sometimes to the anger of our parents who thrashed us thoroughly when we came home with shoes full of sand or mud. I still can't refrain from enjoying memories of all that I did with Perrin and my friends on the outskirts of Boulder in those early childhood days; I can't forget all that even with the knowledge of what happened later, when we became aware of everything that was happening and happened around us.

Perrin, do you remember that day perhaps – that's how I shall start one of many dialogues that I'll have with her in the time ahead – when we came in front of Erminio's yard and when he was singing a strange song, one we had not heard from Sister Mary Callistus, our headmistress and teacher at St. Joseph's school; the school built with a fence of corrugated iron, about a metre high above the ground, over the other side of the tram lines, in solitude, in among the pepper trees, like some sort of abandoned house out in the wilderness, where the signs of our town were wiped away, where the flat treeless ground was covered with red dust from the far-away mines over the railway line?! Erminio was sad that day, and we all came to stand around him. He was kneeling, plucking at the strings of an old zither he had brought from the old country. With his head raised,

gazing at the outlines of the Ivanhoe and Horseshoe mines, he played some tunes. We couldn't understand very much of it, but I well remember one verse: *Did you, Mara, plait the whips!* I don't know if you will remember the other verses when we meet, Perrin. I don't know if you will pronounce, after so many years, any words in our language! Actually, that's not important now! That's part of the other side of our view of life, and I want now to stay in the innocence of those moments; like when at Christmas time, which was in the middle of summer over there, we would buy at the Boulder market stalls or shops "crackers", as they were called, which were Japanese or Chinese firecrackers, which we like true miners, put carefully under kerosene cans, lit them and ran away in all directions, waiting for them to explode. You, Perrin, were very good at this occupation too. Your can would fly up to the clouds, if you can talk about clouds around Boulder, because today I've mixed them up with other clouds, clouds of dust, which arrived with the dust storms. Your can, full of smoke, rose up ten metres into the air, and then, to the satisfaction of all who were present, came down within reach of one of us. How carefully, how cautiously, you accomplished this! Like a true miner. And when we had to dig up the ground, we would put the bomb in the hole, set it alight, cover it quickly with the earth we had ready, and wait for it to break up the quartz so that we could sift it, like dust, through an old sieve! And then, those kites with red and brown tails, which our parents bought at Brennan Brothers in Burt Street, or else older children made them for us, because they couldn't leave us little Slavs with nothing to play with!

How could the sky be so high above? And how much string, how many knots, how many times we retreated, ran up and down the dusty road, then jumped across the canal which was running with water from the winter floods, then.....

Ah, Perrin, I'm all dusty, my shirt is sticky, I didn't take my tie off, it's got dirty, my mother will shake me well at the door, and my father is in bed, he's sick with the miners' complaint and chronic rheumatism, that's what they said, and I didn't know what it was. My mother was tired of doing so much washing. Single men from South Boulder and Boulder Block brought their washing to her and from that she made a few shillings. She did a bit of trading too, she sold oil, *bakalar* (dried cod) and pasta, secretly because the English would have fined her. Sometimes the police came to our yard and it would have been embarrassing for her if they had discovered that little bit of black market activity. One had to get by, to collect one shilling after another, to put some money in the bank, because as Mama used to say: One day son, one day we will need it, who knows what can happen.....

Miko, my half-brother who was called Nick, also got ready to leave at the same time as you, Perrin, had to go to Perth with your mother and your brothers. He went to some farm offered to him by the government, to get away from Boulder to a place where there was clean air, because he was coughing more and more. Our father was seriously ill, and we had to say goodbye to one another....

What have I started Perrin! I don't want to begin talking about all that with you. Actually, I've brought up that other aspect that non-stop clouds my childhood, that wants to deform it, to change it into something it was not, because at that time I didn't know much about all that, I was not an adult. I looked forward to every step with you, like when we got into the tramcar which came to the station between our school and our home and that took us to the meeting place at the eucalyptus tree, where we used to slide down the steel cable. Your brother Gregory took off my cap while we were hanging on the last platform and threw it away. I had to jump after it, because I was afraid of my mother who would have asked where it was. And you jumped down with me. But I fell awkwardly from the tram, which was picking up speed, and hit myself hard and made my leg bleed, above the sock. I remember very well how you brought my cap to me, and looked at the wound on my leg. You said it would be best to cover the wound with dust, that it would heal quickly, before we got home. We stayed there, sitting down, and it was hurting me more and more. Seeing my socks, which at the top, towards the knee, had those blue, white and red lines, you said I mustn't turn the red line towards the top, because those Bushmen, who from time to time came from the outback and could be found around our yards,

seeking bread or tobacco or a piece of cloth for a small piece of gold, could seize and take away such children – the red line had to be turned towards the bottom, with the blue line on top – you said this very seriously, and as quickly as I could I turned the top part of the sock like you had suggested, so the blue part was facing down. You then said: - *That's it, that's it, alright my boy! There you are!*

We slowly went towards home. You were holding on to me, because I was in a lot of pain. And then, and then, when we arrived at our yard, my mother – I can see her now! – rolled her eyes when she saw how I was limping, and then- *It's not his fault, it's not his fault!* – you shouted and stood up for me. – *Gregory took his cap off and threw it off the tramcar and he jumped after it....*

- *And who told you to climb up on the tram! You hopeless kids, you'll be killed like that, my Josip he'll be the death of me, look, look what he's done!* Mama said to my father, who was sitting on his bed, pale, with his long white moustache.

My wound, scalded with vinegar, which my mother poured on with the help of a white cloth, grew into a huge pain. I screamed, but I understood I was not to climb on the tramcar and shouldn't spread dust on a wound, because the damned vinegar that my mother put on me was worse than anything else. What else could be done, that's how it was. Dr Ervan came to examine my father, so he saw my leg too. He gave me two lollies. For a while he was consoling my father who was breathing with difficulty, and left him a little bag of pills. My mother then packed for the doctor two goat skins, which we used to keep on the floor between the beds, to stand on during the winter, like rugs. I remember they were soft and warm, that the hairs used to twist under my feet when we went out from under the tent that my mother made above my bed so that mosquitoes didn't bite me during the night or flies bother me in the morning.

Then, that sad parting. I shall never forget it. Only a year or two before my mother and I left my birthplace, Boulder City! You came to our house with your mother and siblings; Kathy, or Katica, as Father called her, your mother, my half-sister, went to the room where Father was and there they were whispering something. My mother was in the other part of the yard where the horse and cart were, and barrels, and the hen-house and two goats. When she saw you children, she came running with Jimmy, our little dog, and only whispered: - *What's to become of you, you poor things....* That hurt me, but I didn't answer. Why "poor things" – I asked myself, but later I realised why she had said that.

You were well dressed, just like in the photo which I still have today. Your mother, Kathy, was a tall woman, with a long face, sort of impressive one would say, with sparkling lights in her eyes and thick black hair. Thomas and Gregory had big bow ties over white shirts, they were in spacious jackets, with high lace-up shoes. And you, with big black eyes, long hair, in that silk skirt with the thick crocheted hem falling down to your knees, with a sleeveless blouse showing two white arms, as though you were saying: - Goodbye, my good friend, my dear companion and partner in our big digging events! And actually, I found out later, I was your uncle, as well as Thomas's and Gregory's, even though you were older than I, while Thomas and Gregory were younger. And there, we were friends, without all that formality.

Yes, that parting was a terrible blow to my childhood in Boulder. And I'll remember it until I die, because all that happened later, it all actually started from the moment you came to our house and into the yard for the last time. Maybe then I didn't give it much importance, but as days went on, I became aware that you, Perrin, had gone far away and that in South Boulder I no longer had anyone. On the other hand, events in my house began to take place rapidly. It all changed into trembling, fear, sadness. I know I kissed you on the forehead, and you hugged me tightly and returned my kiss, but on my neck. Your mother lifted me up and, up high in her arms, I watched all of you for a time. Kathy then said: - *This will be a big man, he's one of us, you can tell!*

My mother shrugged and after my sister's hug and kiss I found myself on the ground, in amongst you, shaking hands with everyone. And then you went towards your yard, a hundred metres away from us, on the well-trampled path across the fields, left there by the Italians and Bulgarians, who used to grow cabbage there,

so that grass soon sprang up there. Jimmy ran after you. I stood at the fence a long time watching you go away. I know my mother was later crying in her room, and my father said: - *Let the devil take her when she wants to go, she's stubborn and hot-headed, and maybe it will be better for her there, maybe God will give her back her reason, who knows.....*

The old man said that slowly, word by word, lying on his back on the bed, and I was thinking at any moment he would lean over and spit in the sink....

Why am I telling myself all this, now, in this grove of trees, after such a long time?

But Perrin, Perrin, what are you like now? Shall I find on you some sign of childhood, or have you changed completely, like many people do, so that you can't recognise anything from the past? From the letters I received from you lately, I could conclude that you have kept your determination, that you are a very good planner, that you want to know in advance where you are going, and that you are a good mother, because nearly always you take up half your letter talking about your children, with respect and admiration and love.

Only about your mother, my half-sister, there was nothing in those letters. Here and there Kathy was mentioned as part of the family, but more like the sick, older part, placed in an armchair in the house in Perth, probably grumpy and stingy.

Kathy's letters after this last war were very short but quite interesting. Here and there she would put, in her strange English language, one or two of our words, as though she was telling us that she had kept, after all, something of her parents and her childhood in Dalmatia. Kathy was somehow cold, maybe for understandable reasons. When she grew old it must have been hard for her, remembering all that happened decades ago between my father, my mother, her and her brothers, because, as my mother used to say, all sorts of things happened. But now it was Perrin's turn, she was part of her parents' fate.

- *She'll put the kids in boarding school....* – my mother said to my father. *The governor will pay expenses, and she will be free, free....*

How sorry I felt then for my dear Perrin! I imagined her shut inside some one-story school in town, surrounded by a high sheet metal fence, much bigger than ours at Sister Mary Callistus's school, St. Joseph's, which we together attended, she in the higher, and I in the lower class. Perrin must have been sad, unable to leave that constricted space to go outside in the open air, like we did in South Boulder, where we could play until evening, digging, dreaming, with never one moment when we were bored. Poor Perrin, I said to myself, poor Thomas and Gregory, who were also my friends, but somehow not so close, because they did not seem to stand out so much with their comradeship, and especially concerning our exploits to do with our prospecting visits to the edges of town.

It was terrible that these thoughts used to rack me especially before I fell asleep. I know I used to have nightmares after that: together with Perrin and Lester the Bushmen would chase us with their long sticks. I would run wildly over the low bushes, especially close to the school, climb up the small dumps, go down the holes that were left, and later I learned that the real prospectors, or *prošpeturi*, as the old people used to call them, used to dig there, trying to find gold, because it was all around. I fell into ditches where water still lay, and when I got out, covered in mud, I ran on until I could run no more and until some sort of power pulled me back, stopped me from running, brought me to the ground. All at once I would wake up, and see my mother beside me, stroking my forehead and saying: - *What happened son? What were you dreaming, my child?* – Turning over, I would again fall asleep, sensing the tent above me and that I was safe, lying next to my mother.

Everything happened quickly after your departure, dear Perrin. It all piled up at once, so to speak. Uncle Nick left for Perth, tall, pale, with his suitcase, packed by my mother. She loved him very much. He wrote us as soon as he arrived and told us the government would soon give him the farm he had been promised, because they especially wanted more wheat production. Father became weaker and weaker, Mother turned him in the bed, he coughed and coughed, and then I saw blood in the sink. Doctor Ervan shook his head, consoled Mother

and went away with a flask of *proshek* (a sweet wine made of dry grapes; not like Italian Prosecco), which we made ourselves in Boulder, saying: - Veri gut, veri gut!

And then that terrible thing happened with the police agents Walsh and Pitman. Some people in the bush, which was about fifteen miles from the main road towards Menzies, were cooking telluride, to get pure gold, and Walsh and Pitman found them in action. They beat them up and buried them. News of the crime spread quickly around Boulder and surrounding areas. The police nosed around and quickly found the trail to the perpetrators. Our house was bustling with people. Everyone was afraid. They were guessing one of our men was mixed up in it. Mother was all pale and anxious. She wanted to spare Father from the trouble.

The old man was groaning and sometimes murmuring incoherently in his bed. Someone would say the name Slabić, and he would shake his head and whisper: - *Don't let that misfortune come here!* Mother would answer: *of course not, they caught him, they caught him! Don't you remember?* I don't know which was worse, because Mother later repeated some things I didn't understand at the time. Whether more fear was generated in the eyes of people because of the murder, or else the way 1500 miners lost their jobs at the Horseshoe Mine, which was suddenly closed, or some foreboding that something terrible was happening, I couldn't then judge, nor understand. People were wandering around, coming to our house with worried, sombre faces. They would say: - *People have come from Korčula, three hundred of them from our country, and here they just shut the mine, what are those poor people going to do....*

Mother shooed people away from Father's bed, and then she thought of a way to get rid of them. She called her friends to come and help her. Mrs Sally, Kuma (Goodwife) Tona, Lena and Julia stood on the veranda.

And what can I tell you about all that, dear Perrin! What had to happen, happened. Father died in November 1926, right when it was the hottest. I remember, the air was foul, my singlet was wet, sticking to my body, and all the time I was going barefoot out to the veranda, getting myself out of the house round the back, in a hole I had dug in the sand, and there I spent hours while women revolved around Father's bed, with Doctor Ervan and Doctor Hourley (they called him Doctor *Orli*), our Catholic priest, who especially respected Mama and, I remember very well, gave me cakes every time she took me to him. Once he offered me a large tureen of biscuits and I took the whole thing in my hands, and my mother intervened saying to me: - *Son, don't take them all, just one piece!* And Doctor Hourley laughed with much enjoyment.

Doctor Hourley conducted some rites over my dead father. Everyone coming and going was serious, pale, and I was looking at them, and they probably thought they needed to console me, so they patted my hair, and some would put a shilling on my hand and close it over, adding: - *Keep it, my child, put it in your piggy bank!* After he had rubbed Father's forehead, chest and arms, Doctor Hourley put his white hands together, wrapped them in a rosary, went towards the exit and gently caught me around the neck. Be a good boy, your father was a nice person, pray for him!

How to pray, who to pray to? My mother had taught me to pray, and then Sister Mary Callistus in school. They used to take me to the church they called *Ol halovs rimokatolik cherch end konvent*, and on the postcards with a picture of the church was written: All Hallows R. K. Church and Convent, meaning Roman Catholic Church of all the Saints with Monastery, in Moran Street, where I had been baptised. The church was there behind the open-air cinema, where I preferred to go at three o'clock in the afternoon because they didn't allow children there at night. The church did not have a bell tower like that I had seen in an old picture of Hvar which hung on our flower decorated wall in Mother and Father's room. On the left was the monastery or convent with the sisters, where Sister Mary lived, and on the right in a smaller building, which was the parish office, lived our Doctor Hourley, who was presumably of Irish ancestry. There was a lovely wooden fence, always freshly painted and standing straight, while ours on the outskirts of town were cracked and rickety and looked as though they would fall at any moment or bend right over. Ours were missing pickets or stakes, while

this was beautiful, upright, smooth, so that I liked to run my fingers along from one picket to the other, and play with them like with a harmonica.

I don't know why, but in that church I was always cold, even in those terrible, steamy summer days when we celebrated Christmas and when we were especially meant to go to Holy Mass. I was taken there sometimes by my father and brother Nick, and on the way they would buy me a toy in one of the shops in Burt Street, and I liked something else I remember, more than toys, those little silk coloured "pocket square" handkerchiefs adults used to put in the upper pocket of their jackets. I have no idea why I liked these little handkerchiefs. Maybe I was impressed when Tom Topy, the tailor, put one in my father's suit pocket, in the pocket of a blue suit, which Mother carefully placed in a suitcase after Father's death so she could put it in the ground; or maybe because Uncle Nick used those pocket squares too, when he dressed up and went to the "*guveran*", that is, the Town Hall, probably in order to fix the papers necessary for him to travel to Perth to the farm.

One day I did something with that little pocket square which later I wondered how on earth it had occurred to me to do and why I actually did it. Those were the days of the First Communion, on Corpus Christi. In school we prepared for a long time, with Sister Mary Callistus, for that occasion. I went in company with Vinki, my good friend, who had replaced Perrin a little bit, and some other boys, into the church, straight from school, because we had gone there in the morning in order to get ready for the festivity. I stayed with Vinki at the head of the column and when Sister Mary Callistus couldn't see us, we ducked into Burt Street and there we were window shopping, slowly going towards the church a different way. I pulled the pocket square from my pocket. I remember very well that it was greenish, with golden flecks, and I put it in my mouth. Vinki said Sister Mary had forbidden that, because you were not allowed to put anything in your mouth before the Holy Communion. And then suddenly he got hold of the corner and pulled it out of my mouth. I thought he would throw it over the fence but to my surprise, he started to chew it himself and to laugh out loud. So I picked some leaves from a dense flowering tree that was hanging over the fence, and began to imitate Vinki. Vinki gave me back the pocket square and reached out for the leaves, probably thinking my new idea was better. We were chewing the leaves until we came close to the church, and then like good citizens, we spat them out (so no-one could see us chewing) and went into the church for the Holy Communion.

What does that have to do with Perrin, you might say! Only because it was part of my childhood. It happened not long after her departure from Boulder. Maybe it was some sort of reaction to the unkindness of the moment, some sort of rebellion against all that would happen.

The car came for my father's body. I know that it was a grey afternoon, that here and there those little hurricanes, called willy-willies, were playing, picking up the dust around the periphery and then disappearing. Mother and I did not immediately go to the funeral, instead we were taken separately by car, with *Kuma* (Goodwife) Klara who held my hand and my mother's. I remember we went across the road to our school, then we went a kilometre further towards the west, to the town cemetery, which seemed strange to me. There were big and small crosses there, made out of wood, and some lanterns on mounds, and flowers, and then we went down a narrow path for a long time until we came to a coffin and twenty or so men and women standing around it, with Doctor Hourley in front, dressed in a white coat with a black surplice around his neck. They dug a trench and after the ritual prayers they lowered Father into the grave. Mother was crying, and *Kuma* Klara and Mrs Sally held her. People watched her with sad faces, and some of their glances fell on me, even though I was peering out from behind, partly hidden by my mother's skirt.

That is actually where one act of our family drama ended, and I only then began slowly to learn all that had happened, because until that moment it had all been a game for me, naughty, naïve and innocent. You, Perrin, were only a part of my game, which at the same time was yours too, because neither you, nor Thomas,

nor Gregory were aware of the world of adults, from which came only muffled echoes of something else, which was not an integral part of our world. Our *shilinzi* and *sikspenzi*, our “*lira sterlina*”, were not the shillings,

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sixpences and lira sterling of the adults because we looked quite differently at that. We imitated the miners, we carried swags, lanterns, bags, picks, sticks; we dug holes, searched, put into our holes Japanese firecrackers instead of dynamite, ran away and came together again, spilled sand, went in a line, coughed, swore; but all of that was just an echo of that other world. Our truth, meaning and symbols were different. In our world, there was little sign of wealth, poverty, greed, power, a cruel fight for life and everything else that follows people who take on responsibility for the future. We were always in the present time, for us there was only what was happening right then. That’s how we created ourselves. But it all went only to a boundary in time. Somewhere there was a crossroad, where one and the other began to melt together, until the second caught the first completely and enveloped it with memories, while it remained great only in the greatness of a child’s imagination.

You for sure don’t know this whole story which I too do not know, but maybe in the afternoon, maybe this evening, we will find that we can fill in the gaps, to make a mosaic from which some sort of picture will emerge. I say “some sort” because I am not sure if we can put all the pieces together. It’s certain only that a lot will be missing.

I don’t know how much your mother told you about it, dear Perrin. My father, and your grandfather Joe, as he was called in Boulder, (though his real name was Josip, or *Osib*, in our dialect), came to Boulder in 1903, that is, two years after the death of Queen Victoria and the enthronement of the new King Edward the Seventh. How important these facts are I don’t know, but I know that in school with Sister Mary Callistus we learnt these dates, and I thought of that when my mother told me how my father had set off into the big wide world. She didn’t tell me how he got there, or who paid for the trip, and I forgot to ask her about that. As I learnt from some books and brochures, it was nine years after that famous prospector of Irish heritage, Paddy Hannan, with his two friends, staked his claim to about twenty acres of desert land, after finding the first gold nugget in this area. The fact that Hannan – the same Hannan whose bronze statue was erected in 1929, with a goat-skin waterbag from which people can drink water to this day, near the Town Hall in Kalgoorlie -- encamped to this place one winter’s day in 1893, maybe is more important than any other aspect of Joe’s fate, and the fate of many others from this country; those who came in the first decade of the century in the gold-rush which took place between Perth, Southern Cross and Coolgardie towards the Golden Mile. First there was that famous discovery of twenty-five year old Arthur Bailey in Coolgardie, which caused quite a sensation. Then the true gold fever set in, worse than any epidemic ever seen in the world. It was found that Hannan’s pick had made contact with the biggest deposit of gold in the world, which was situated in a narrow area of just one mile. Even then in 1903, gold fever still existed, there were still “*goldfilderi*” and “*proshpeturi*” walking for days and weeks through the desert, digging, shaking the gold out in earthen plates, thirsty and hungry, leaving their bones in a colony of the dead, but already communities were springing up like mushrooms around the mines, with grandiose names, like Ivanhoe (or *Ayvino*, as our people said), Lake View and Star, Perseverance, Great Boulder and dozens of other companies. The Golden Mile shook from the blows of heavy crushers – arrived from all over the world and especially from the British steel works. And below, under the earth, the moles were moving, who had put themselves at the service of the agents, managers, surveyors and bosses, who in the name of the company first removed the prospectors’ picks, then took over their discovery “with an honest recompense” and began with their “serious work”, which would be worth no less than “*three hundred million sterling lira*” as my mother said with pride. Nearly 1300 tonnes of gold would be removed from the Golden Mile, meaning riches per kilometre like nowhere else on this globe of ours

Ah, those stories my mother told, broken into a hundred parts, when we were sitting on the veranda of our house during the hot summer nights; actually they were Father’s, that is, Grandfather’s stories, which he did not succeed in telling you, or Thomas, or Gregory, and neither could my mother relay them to you, because

you had stayed in that world, you grew up far away from us; and your mother Kathy - who knows what view of life she implanted in you at that time.

Through my mother I am following Joe's life, reading into it signs and undercurrents, and who knows if I am getting the right impression. Maybe in all of that there is illusion and oversight, but still, I can't prevent showing this viewpoint, which has turned into emotion, to you, you who are coming here, in whom I feel part of my fate, even though our lives followed different paths.

I see with my father's eyes that world that opened to him when he stepped onto Hannan's soil, when he entered the abandoned hut on the southwest side of Boulder, in the area where the school called St. Joseph's School was situated, my dear teacher Sister Mary Callistus's school. He didn't come here like that true-blue prospector did; although not one of those goldfields people ever forgot that one day they might, like the prospector Tom Bull, find a hundred ounces of gold and "*get the governor's reward*" of 500 or 1000 lira, and that meant the recognition and at the same time, the lease of the property where it was discovered.

Joe at first dreamt of finding work; but feeling that unseen quickening of his pulse, which came in waves whenever he went out, he gradually got into the habit of dreaming instead about the deliverance which would come – after that lucky strike with his pick in some hidden place.

Between the magnificent scenery of Perth, which looked similar to the region of the country he had had to leave, and this gloomy new countryside, full of sweat, sickness and hunger, especially hunger for deliverance, there was a difference which almost every man, and especially those from the Dalmatian islands, had to feel. The door to Australia, the port of Fremantle, situated on the sea which had been his friend since childhood, even though here it was frightening in its huge expanse and depth, and then Perth, with its flowerbeds and lawns and trees, all of this dazzling splendour was indeed a fantastic precursor; but only that, because what came next after a long train journey through Kellerberrin, Merredin, and Southern Cross looked more like a battlefield, something impossible to imagine. But still, however much on this arena he needed to fight for his very life, this place where hundreds and hundreds of shanties, tents, shelters, so-called huts of kerosene tins and other rubbish, meant something else as well, something much more important. This unknown land where all of earth's misery had congregated, or so it seemed at first, was hiding in its bosom that awesome strength which moves mountains and valleys, which seems to turn the wheels of human existence on many continents. It was like some fantastic energy which had no equal in the whole world, and which was capable of making all those unfortunates, fortunate. Truly, a magical land which warmed the heart with one goal only – to secure a small part of it and to resolve forever the future!

But.....

-- *Your belly needs bread to eat*, my mother used to say. It's always been this way, since time immemorial. So Joe came with his friends to the mine, behind which was growing, more and more each day, that long grey dump, made up of small pieces of sand and dust left from the rock crushed under heavy mallets in the battery; and afterwards the smelting squashed out, hidden somewhere from the eyes of the curious, pure gold in heavy bars. Father was brought there by a *vatrogasac*, a fireman, a man he had got to know in the carriage of the train in which they had travelled together from Perth. The fireman had gone to Fremantle to wait for his wife, who had come from Europe on the same boat in which my father had arrived.

- First you have to find work with the company, because there is no other. Try to find a job as a trucker, that's better than being a boggler. And when you have earned a few wages, which are paid every fourteen days, then have a good look around and see what you want to do next. You have to start somewhere! Everyone starts like that Joe, except of course those who have deeper pockets, or a good friend who can put them into trade or help them to drive a car, carry water, chase camels. And so on. That's how it is, Joe!

That's how it was. Camels were then highly valued, and not to mention water, especially in the summer heat, when streams dried up, when everything in the gullies turned to steam and disappeared and only dried earth remained.

You needed to be brave and to have the knack, and especially the strength and endurance, and it was particularly important to always hope - that body and soul would hold together and finally one day a man could

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with miners' rights in his pocket, sink his pick into some place in the desert or bush. Much of the land had already been dug up, everywhere you could see traces of trenches and footprints. Every inch of ground around Boulder and Kalgoorlie was dug over, and those who had learnt their trade knew very well how to pick out the best place, where specks could be found, that is, little bits of gold. And where the veins went, thin as a thread, as a hair, those black, anthracite veins, where there was quartz, where alluvial, how the reefs spread out from north to south, four feet deep, how the loads went.....

Ah, Joe, of course, your ears were full of sound and voices, and your eyes automatically looked at the ground, noticed every little glimmer that shone there, and often you bent over when something caught your eye, and then you quickly straightened up again, because they had taught you that everything that shines is not gold.

So – firstly, down the shaft, underneath the ground, down there in the deep! Go down the shaft in the lift, ten, fifteen, twenty floors, go out onto the platform, creep into the dark tunnel, hold tight to the steel rod, the chisel, while your comrade strikes it with the mallet, make the hole bigger, bigger, six feet, two metres, so that you can put the dynamite in there. Careful, change the pointed rod often, it soon gets blunt, because that is hard quartz; and when you drill out lots of holes, throw the dynamite in, light the fuses, then run back through the tunnel, quickly before the explosion. Then back, into the dust, place the stones into the wagon with your comrades, then again drill holes, you strike with the mallet, he holds the chisel, further and further along the reef, twenty or thirty metres, follow the vein. I know, it all smells, it's all smoke, powder, sweat, and your comrades are your shadows.

Eight hours like that every day, with half an hour's rest next to the lift, where at least there is a small amount of fresh air circulating, to eat something in a hurry. You're not allowed to smoke here, you know; you only can chew tobacco!

The shift boss, the supervisor, is implacable, like all shift bosses in the world, not to even mention surveyors. Be careful Joe, don't mumble, don't say anything you don't have to, don't put your hands in your pockets, don't lean on the posts, on the plumbing..

What's that you say?! Silicosis!

But you're young, how could you lose all that strength. And at least that's income so that you can eat, sleep, send home to your family in the old country; and you can hope. Bread, clothes, then family, and a little house made of wood covered with tin; a roof over your head! Yes, you have two sons back on the island of Vis, and a daughter. You are responsible for them, they can't be hungry, you saw and experienced enough of that over there!...*Bloody bastard that Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was all their fault.*

And again, be careful. If they drive you away from here, you can go to another mine, to Ivanhoe, to Horseshoe, in Great Boulder, or you could go to Gwalia, to the Sons of Gwalia Gold Mine, where draft horses work, but maybe your name is written in the Chamber of Mines, you know, maybe you ended up on the list, so that if they shut you out twice, it won't be easy to find work again. What do you think?! It's no joke! And it would be better for you to give three or four shillings to the Miner's Relief Fund. You can't do that now?! You feel quite healthy! Good, very good! A good cold beer will clean your throat. And even that's too much. Because everything is expensive.

Ah yes, that's how I started too. That's how everyone starts. And then in your free time you organise a group of three or five. A man can't be alone, after all. Three years I work in the mine, and our threesome finances a second threesome, and we share what they find. They had already been before the warden, the supervisor, they signed up for thirty acres. Yes, there is work, Joe! There is strength! But again, be careful! Again I say, watch the shift boss, and bow down before the surveyor. The manager you will never see.

And that's how it started, dear Perrin. On the outskirts of town, amongst the Italians, Irish, Greeks, all the different nationalities who hurried here from all sides of the earth, so that there were Afghans, Japanese and former convicts from Beaconsfield in Fremantle, all sorts of people, lured by rocks, quartz, telluride. Joe

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was sucked in like this and after him came other Slavs and Dagoes, and he began to meet new migrants from Austro-Hungary, people from Korčula, Pelješac, Vis, Brač, Hvar, Makarska, Kozica and who knows where else, who had sensed that here there was work and food. Let's not forget about the Dagoes, who were not British, not under the British crown, they were outsiders, not as worthy, but still worth more, because they had strong arms and shoulders; they came to the offices, and then the next day they appeared with their bundles in front of the shaft, and went down in the lift to the lowest floors, to a depth of 30 floors for instance, that was the depth of the Horseshoe Mine; or as our people used to call it, the *Orshoo* Mine; they went down there like pigs into the tunnel and got lost in the dust and smoke lifted by the fuses, those damned fuses, which filled the lungs with poison.

That's how it started. Under the forest of crushers, with huge heads half a ton in weight which crushed the quartz into crumbs and made it into dust. Up above heavy bats were hammering, the noise travelling for miles around. Underneath echoed the blows of the mallets, lifts rolling up and down, squeals from the rails and the wagons.

Lower and lower into the ground, following the reef, following the chisels which sank into the meat of the quartz, slowly, slowly, centimetre by centimetre, while their hands swelled up, while rust bit into them, sweat mixing with the blood running down their hands and arms, together with the dust, getting inside the wet singlets and pants, in their hair, in their beards, their mouths.

How many times did that "bloody bastard" ring out in the smoke, those accursed words hanging over you: - "Take your sack, Joe, or take your time", that is, take your bundle, your swag, and get lost from here! Just a little complaint, a small indiscretion, opposition, a revolt against the impossible conditions, against such a swine of a life, just a hint of any of that led to loss of the job, because a line of other people were waiting outside.....

- Take your sack, Joe, - we used to say when we were children, rather than the other "take your time" because we liked the word "sack" better. And you, Perrin, you could especially emphasize when you didn't like something I or Lester did, our partner Lester. Take your sack, Cosmos, get lost from here! But for me, and for Lester, or any of our friends, that was nothing, it meant absolutely nothing; but my father had to gather together his belongings, get out of the shaft, greet the shift boss, take what he had earned, go up to the guard who searched him to make sure he was not carrying a piece of gold-bearing quartz in his pocket, and then look for work in a different mine. From the dust, through which with the group he had to fight his way, drilling down with chisel and mallet, he had to move to the dust of another mine with another group, if he succeeded in finding another job straight away. And again he would chew tobacco there, drill, strike, throw into the wagon the rocks broken up by the dynamite. Under the light of an ordinary tallow lamp or carbide lamp he watched pieces of quartz mixed with telluride splitting off and rolling further away, to the crushing and mincing in the gold battery, so that the chopped, dusty stone arrived at the smelting where gold was extracted, to be made into gold bars which travelled on a special railroad near our house, to Perth and God knows where else, but certainly across the sea to the Bank of England Treasury, to the steel safes where it was well guarded. And from that quartz, from that smoke and dust, was squeezed out his paltry shilling, which hid in his pocket, was kept in the sand near the hut, and then went to the bank, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. And from there it would continue its journey to Austro-Hungary, and later to *Shitoslavia*, as my father, I don't know why, christened the new country from whence he had come and where he spent his youth in misery and poverty until his thirtieth year.

"Bloody bastard!" or "Fucking mule" – often as a child I heard this sort of swearing; after which would come the sharp: *Shaddup!* from my mother who did not like swear words because she had served on the island

of Hvar at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century in the canon of Don Antonio, in whose house even the most innocent word, especially if it began with “*greben ti* (fuck you....).” was true blasphemy, something after which you could expect the end of the world. But “bludy bastard” or “bastard

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kuntry” and later “sunava bich”, was always rolling off the tongues of the miners, so that my father, sweaty, exhausted, sleepy, dirty, somehow had to vent his anguish and despair and in spite of Mother, to spit out from under his long moustache all that had painfully accumulated during twenty years on the Golden Mile, from whence he had not been able to escape or to get away, because fate had tied him to it, because never, in spite of all his economy, had he managed to save even a hundred sterling lira to start life anew somewhere else, out of this bloody bastard country, which supported far away over there tens of thousands of people who had never been anywhere near it; instead, son of a bitch, they wore top hats or bowler hats, went to the Ascot races, the boat regattas at Henley or the celebrated cricket champions, like for instance, the Yorkshire team.

--Haven't you seen them in the cinema, in the parade next to Buckingham Palace or Whitehall or on the Bank holiday, sunce in njihovo jebeno! (literally fuck their fucking sunshine....) And our people here in the Palace stuffing themselves and boozing. Never mind the managers, agents, shopkeepers, officials going all perfumed in their shiny cars and on their horses. And five hundred miles underneath the earth we're eating the dust, where they kept that pig for several months in our tunnel, until he died, and when they opened him, his lungs were full of lime, for Christ's sake

--Don't, Osip, don't Osip swear, God will punish you, you've become a freemason, you're a disgrace, you.....

He would wave her away, with his big fist, and go to get a glass of beer at the nearby Cornwall hotel.

Yes, “bludi bastard” would come out of our mouths too sometimes, when we were digging in the ground under some abandoned hut. But we were not allowed to say this in front of Mother. Once you let it slip, Perrin, and my mother straight away told your mother. I don't remember what happened to you then.

He listened in corners or sitting under a eucalyptus tree or a pepper tree, he learnt bit by bit...English, one word, two, three, ten -- from food, miles a shilling, bad sixpence, “gringrosher”, tomato, “tenkeeper”, manager, rickets, rising costs, fixed prices of gold, bowling center,-- to silikozis and so on.

--Do you know, Joe, what's happened! Some men found a rich mine near Coolgardie, they called it the Golden Hole....then they shut it down after they had dug out as much gold as they could. Then they started selling shares in London, started selling them in a big way. Six hundred and fifty million lira sterling, it was written in the news of the day, a big company was set up, they brought lots of machinery and hardware, had a celebration. They opened the mine again and started to work it, and it was empty! There was nothing in the hole!

Nothing in the hole! Those who had sold it for a lot of money, had taken what they found at the top and had tricked the new owners. Thinking they would make a fortune with that gold hole, they beat the drums in London and sold shares to the value of 650,000 pounds. And then it was found that there was not even a gram of gold in the hole. And when news got out in London that there was nothing in the hole, the directors kept this news secret for a time so that they could get rid of their shares, and after a month or two they announced a complete collapse.

That's how it was, Joe! You know, that's how it was! And that happened many times.

But Joe did not think often about such speculations, although later, and especially a year or two before his death, he cursed all managers, surveyors, bosses, agents, bankers, merchants. Those first years he knew only that gold was gold and that he had to sell his labour in order to earn his wages. He was not very interested in the story about the horse, which with its hooves uncovered a vein of gold, and slipped, and the horseman, who almost found himself thrown to the ground, turned and saw something shining, and dismounted. That's how the Horseshoe Mine, or the *Orshu* mine as our people called it, got its name, and that mine went down about forty floors in depth.

It was of no consequence to him at that time, whether the mine was called Ivanhoe, Perseverance Mine, Lake View or Star. He knew only that he had to be persistent, that he had to make sure he had the

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strength for the next day. Instead of renting a bed in a lodging place, he slept with a friend in a rickety hut made of tin and kerosene cans. And being from our part of the world, he knew there were things he must not skimp on, if he wanted to keep his wits and his health. He made sure he ate reasonably, that he had water, clean water, to wash himself, although that was hard because the pipeline that brought water from Perth to Boulder through Northam, Kellerberrin, Merredin and Southern Cross, had still not reached the edge of town where he was living. The miners talked about the pipeline as though it were some sort of wonder of the world, both the way it had been built and how quickly it had been built. And that water meant life for the mines, the gold, and for the people.

Yes, my Joe!

Paddy Hannan could have had no idea what would happen after his first strike with his pick in that earth. He started the Golden Mile, a huge vein of gold, over a kilometre long. That was the strike of the century, which was worth no less than three hundred million pounds sterling, in those days -- because these days....

And he was rewarded. The government gave him a pension and now he still lives somewhere in New South Wales, now while you spend your days digging, and put lire in the bank to send to your family on the island of Vis, so that later you can bring them here, because you can't live like that on two different sides of the world, without your Margarita, your wife, without Toni and Katica and Mikula.....

Paddy Hannan received that reward, and in November 1925, exactly a year before your death, Joe, he died in his 83rd year, and two years later they raised the bronze statue to him in Kalgoorlie and put a fence around the place where he had struck gold with his pick, planting a tree there, which grew crookedly.

Paddy was Irish. He arrived during the well-known march towards Southern Cross and Coolgardie, discovered by Arthur Bayley, who made heaps of money and died in the flower of his youth, when he was 28. Bloody bastard, did that have to happen? Did it have to happen that hundreds and thousands of those first goldfielders got stuck in the desert, ended up without water and perished, near tracks made by carts and trampled by feet. There were mounds everywhere.

They told Joe how they had been dying of typhus, how they had eaten canned food and biscuits for days, drunk water from the palm of their hand or from their caps. Who would have thought of having to wash themselves, in those circumstances! They only thought about "striking the right place", that is, striking with their pick and finding gold.

And when they did strike the right place and found gold?!

They would go to town. And everything belonged to them at that time. They would make up for the months of misery. A man would call girls to the bar and sprinkle them with gold dust, drink himself into oblivion, beer and whisky together....

-- *Give me a whisky chaser! Before someone drinks it all, before it all disappears.....*

Then when he woke up somewhere in a ditch outside the hotel or restaurant, hungover, he would remember that with his mates he had pushed in some stakes somewhere, that he had gathered together from the surface a bag of gold and that he should have gone to the warden, the mine supervisor, for his reward.... He would run to the place to see what remained of stakes and friends, and he would find there intruders, who in the meantime had prepared the ground and registered with the warden like true prospectors who had found gold and pegged their claim.

--*Fuck their whole families, alive and dead! Kurvinska ih mati okotila. Their whore of a mother whelped them.*

But it was too late to pray to God.

-- "Get out of town, get out before the devil takes you, you fucking mule; you think you can tell us what to do, you smelly old fart, you lousy piss-pants Dingo, you think you can prove to us that you were here and put in the stakes! What stakes, you drunkard, you dreamt it, I can still smell whisky chaser from that ugly mug!"

I hed a nice drim, yes, yes! I had a nice dream!

I read in The Kalgoorlie Miner how W. G. Brookman acquired forty acres of the richest land for his syndicate, renting from the prospectors areas marked out with pegs. That's how Mr Brookman got hold of the Ivanhoe hill with his colleague Sam Pearce, right there where you are digging now, down deep. After him came the company from Adelaide, and founded Great Boulder which in 1898 issued shares to the value of nine million pounds sterling, while the company was already lying on 17 tons of gold worth 24 million pounds, so that the "Board of Directors showed extreme satisfaction with the work that had been done under Brookman"

So Joe, what do you say to that, in this dusty Boulder, with your face running with sweat, like Jesus crucified, between boulders and quartz where friction from the dynamite throws in front of your legs the holy ore you are not even allowed to touch with your hand. Capitalisation! What sort of word is that? You don't know it, you never heard it, it never reverberated in your head; but I say to you that you have it in your stomach, in your lungs, in your blood, you're breathing it in and it's poisoning you, poisoning, bit by bit, from day to day! Eh, Joe!

You keep hearing that name "Brookman, Brookman!" you repeat it in bed, as soon as you open your eyes, when you're thinking how you must get ready for your shift which one week is from midnight, the second from eight in the morning, and the third from four in the afternoon.. You're getting into bed and your companion is getting up. And that was good compared with those who had one bed for three of them, and they fell into a warm bed just deserted, and in the summer it was devilish hot, devilish hot. You couldn't get used to the idea that Christmas was celebrated in the middle of summer. It seemed stupid to you that children in that heat, sang songs about Jesus who was born and shivering in the hay; the songs organised by the Christian Brothers organisation.

Hey, what sort of people are they, the English! In the whole wide world there are not such organisers! They have a good police force. They know everything that's happening, especially amongst little people like you, gold mine worker, little man! But did you notice: there are no English people down in the mine, in the tunnels, they are not bidders or truckers, they are not even shift bosses. They are surveyors, agents, traders, officials. They are not gardeners either. Which Englishman worries about public cleanliness, unless he is the manager there!

"Take your sack! You fucking mule!" To whom was that directed? To Greeks, Italians, Slavs! "Go to the trade union! Sue me"! Better for you if you drink! Go find girls, whores, with your miserable sack! There are hotels in Boulder, not to mention casinos. Whisky chaser, please! It hits you in the head and feet and then, outside! *Nogu u guzicu!* (Kick in the bum!) And what do you expect! You stay in the dust on the road and when you wake up in the morning, you feel in your pocket! If only you could have a Kalgoorlie Stout then! But there is not even a penny left in your pocket. Kick in the bum!

"Aj vil kik yu in de bum" - I said it too, when I was little, when I became angry, and those bigger than I laughed at me.

"Aj vil kik yu in de bum!" - you said it too, Perrin, do you remember? But neither I, nor you, nor any of us children ever did kick anyone in the bum nor threw them out of the yard, or away from what we were doing together. We just used to say that, but we wouldn't lift our foot up, like the owners of the hotel or restaurant did when someone drank too much and then began to criticise and complain in bad English, yell and shout and sing some sort of song in Croatian or Italian.

And non-stop they wrote from the old country.

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...There's a terrible drought here, we're going to lose everything. The vine-pest has come again, we're in trouble. There's a lot of hunger and a lot of trouble! They wrote to Morko that they can't send his fiancée, she doesn't want to go, she heard about the terrible dust over there.....lots of dust, willy willies, she wants clean air, clean air! Let her be hungry then, who cares, such evil people, here we are at death's door and to send.....

Sweat breaks out on his face. His eyes are sombre. Love is a long way away, far away across continents and oceans, and letters are full of woe, troubles, misfortune. Margarita took him into her house, it is true, on her land, for he had nothing on the island of Brač, because there were eight brothers and one sister, many mouths to feed. And he had to look for work somewhere. He went to the island of Vis. And came across Margarita. And love did its thing. Children were born. Toni, Katica, Miko. Three lovely children, my God!

Save money, work hard, there's nothing else you can do! Don't turn around, look straight ahead, don't listen to anyone or anything! Straight ahead, straight! Because if you hesitate, everything will go backwards!

He is wracked by desires! Sometimes he would go to town, to do some window-shopping at least! To see what that other Kalgoorlie looked like....to feel it at least. But, but.....

You don't have to do so much! – across the yard would come the voice of that sleaze Slabić. Straight away, the scoundrel, he got himself out of the mineshaft. Only six months he was a trucker in the Horseshoe Mine, then he started to work as a crusher, and then he became a tank keeper.

You don't have to do so much! You'll kill yourself!

What answer could he give him? What did Slabić know about his problems, his debt to his family, his desires. He brought some loose woman there, first of all kept her under cover, and now she trips around after work in full view, she's always at the races, betting on the horses, looks after the drunks at the Cornwall hotel on Sundays, so the police don't raid the place, sells on the black market and he doesn't give a fuck. Nobody, nobody back home. Without any responsibility! And already you can hear how he made friends with someone under the ground, who secretly gets gold for him.

So how do they get it out, how? You go naked through two checkpoints and change clothes, and then they stop you again when you get out. He must be friends with the surveyor, they don't bother searching their own people, they let them go, because they are friends! That must be it, must be! They're all devils, he is and all of them are. The gold then goes to be smelted; then under a bush somewhere, under the counter, and then to be sold!

How can he get around with that dumb prostitute! And now he's building a house, putting up a fence, planting fig trees, all in the space of three or four years! How can he, how?? There's something fishy somewhere. And they say he's mixed up with the police too.....

Joe does not answer. He just sits under the tree and looks at that friend of his who is always in his face, who talks about stuffing himself with good food, of washing down a good meal with a good drink, of life which for him is easy.

There's always something bothering him. Constantly something goes wrong in South Boulder. Bad luck is lurking everywhere. If only he does not hear the siren in the middle of the day, because that signals something no-one wants, it signals that someone has died, and other accidents in Boulder and further away. But how will he hear the siren when the misfortune happens to him alone, how will he hear it then? A big rock slips, the ceiling caves in on your head, the air ignites! Chew tobacco, that's all you can do, and with the tobacco you chew also the dust! And those geologists, as they call them, come with the surveyor across the platform and say only: You need to put boulders over there and push boards in, you need to drill in that direction, you have to put the rails in there, that's it, that's it, and off they go and you work with three or four colleagues for eight hours, eight hours in the smoke, the dust.....

S prekidom od pola sata! With a break of half an hour! For a bite to eat. And then you take refuge on that platform, unwrap your piece of bread, open your can, tinned dog, tinned dog, drink a little beer or water from your bottle – as warm as piss – and back to work again. You are not allowed to go out and eat in the open

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air, because that would waste time. To go by lift up there, have your food, and then come down again, there would be a crowd in the shaft, and the time it would take, the time! My dear sir?!

While Slabić is talking and talking, he is thinking.

---Hey Joe, how will you recognise gold?

He arrived after Joe and already is instructing him.

---You know Joe, it's hard in the mine, hard to recognise it in the quartz, it's gloomy in there, you can see the telly, it's black; but if you see it....

---If I see it, what if I see it!

Slabić returns to the interrupted thought. He is afraid to give advice too openly.

---It's much easier outside. Take a piece of alluvial rock between your fingers, directly under the light, and turn the piece around slowly. If the colour and the shine stay the same, that's gold, almost certainly, one hundred percent. Let's say you come across something that shines, and you have to establish whether it's gold or not, because there is pyrites, both iron and copper pyrites, which looks like gold, but it's not gold, they call it "fool's gold" because fools find it – you need to do straight away what I have said. And there are other ways too, for instance, you scratch with a needle in the metal, and on the scratch the colour stays the same as it is round about. It's easy to scratch gold, it's soft, and pyrites is hard, so that you can't make a mark on pyrites with a needle. That's how it is, Joe! You need to know everything! And there are other tests, heat for instance, live coals. Copper becomes black, and mica, – that loses its shine, but gold, gold stays the same, like the fire didn't touch it. That's how gold is, Joe, like that, my Joe! And that's the best way to recognise it. If you need to for some reason, ask me, ask me, because I know a lot about it, I know just about everything!

He knows just about everything! What does he want? If I need to! But for me it isn't necessary, I'm okay here, I work, I earn money, I send money back home regularly, put money in the bank, I wash myself and my clothes, I've got ink and soap, I get lunch for two others, one of us goes to the market in Kalgoorlie on Saturday, we get things cheaper there, the greengrocer swindles you here, brings oil that's twice as expensive, sells you smelly meat, and there you can get it fresher and cheaper! That's it, that's it. An honest man can find his feet.

--I was born honest, honest, I don't need anything, no no no....

And then to himself:

--Fuck your dirty whore of a mother, you hang around me and other good people, you want to catch them in your net, then you'll bamboozle them! You won't trick me, you won't turn me around, you and your scams! I know that! I know! He wants me to bring him gold, to get itand to steal from the company and then get it smelted! Just look at that swindler! What next will he invent so he doesn't have to do honest work! What a rascal, what a rascal!

So the years went by, following one another like wagons, like convoys going from South Boulder to the Horseshoe, Ivanhoe, Great Boulder, Perseverance and other mines, day and night, with lights twinkling between the clouds of dust, being carried from the dumps, they went wearily with their swags under their arms, with the bitter taste of tobacco in their mouths, they went with sweaty clothes, dirty socks and shoes full of holes, under candlelight in the dark! It was all the same there inside, in the shafts, tunnels, whether the sun was shining or the moon glowing on the tin roofs, whether it was stormy or raining or winter or summer. Christmas was hot as the devil, and in winter you froze.

--I think it would be best in the summer, to dig a hole in the sand, behind the hut, and to get in there like an animal, like some sort of beast!

And then Silic came with his wife Klara, from Pelješac, and Mr Groky appeared. That's what they called him straight away. He was one of us, but they turned his name around. Silic went to the mine, but Groky

quickly found his feet, and went into trading. Little by little, first as a helper in some small shop, then the owner died and his widow let Groky manage the shop. And he was good at it. He supported the widow and made a heap

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of money for himself. Mister Groky constantly came to see our people in Boulder. First one, then the other, where he would enter into long conversations, in which he always had the main word.

--If only I knew how it is over there, how it is in the old country. Nobody tells you anything. How many times I wrote to my sister telling her not to mention only hunger; to tell me what's happening. But they can't put pen to paper without crying about troubles. Nothing about how the neighbours are managing, how many fish they caught, who got married, who didn't, did the cops put anyone in jail, did any shop open up, do they go to church at all, nothing, nothing in those letters, and certainly not the big things like how Cesar Franz-Jozef is ruling, or whether the Italians are eyeing our Vis from the other side of the sea where the Re d'Italia was drowned...Ah, if only there was some of that brudet here, (the fish stew), or some fish to grill on the barbecue, spread with oil and pepper, and afterwards washed down with our bevanda, (home-made wine with half water). There's none of that here, none of that! Beer, beer and canned food, fat rams, lard

And Joe joins the conversation when he feels unlikely to be attacked.

--I'll build a little house too, I bought land, and then by God I'll make a fireplace!

--A fireplace, a fireplace, yes that's clever! And how much did the yard cost! Ten lira sterling?! No, that can't be!

--This is South Boulder Mister Groki, this isn't Kalgoorlie, it's cheaper here. I'm going Saturday to the bush, with the cart, I'll get a yard or two of wood. It's the same every week, every week. I'll put the posts in, put up the boards. And you can buy iron roofs here, yes they're a bit rusty, but they're good. I'll get them cheaper. And you already built a house in the city Mister Groki, and put a nice fence around it. You're saying the government gave you the land! Nah, nah, it's not that it actually gave it to you, you must have taken something out of your pocket! There must be a grateful official!

--Not one shilling did I give for the land, I tell you, by Jesus Christ, I swear!

--How, without even one penny??

Joe is doubting, because he knows you have to pay for everything. Who will do something for you here, for nothing. Maybe a relative, maybe a good friend, but.....

--And you know what came to me, Mister Groki, that two or three families could get grapes from Fremantle, a few tons of the nice dry grapes, the ones I saw a few days ago in the market in Kalgoorlie. I tried them, they were muscatels, muscatels, nice ripe grapes, does you good to see them. And it occurred to me that it would be good to get or to make a vat, a nice vat, so we can tread the grapes and squash them and make wine. And later we could get a wine press, there are plenty of iron-mongers here. A bit of work, a bit of work, and you have a wine press! And then you strain it, you strain our nice sweet wine into barrels, barrels. And you can make a barrel easily out of this wood. There are barrel makers here now. Someone called Gabelić came from Vrboska on the island of Hvar, so there you are.

--That's not a bad idea Joe! Not at all crazy! You have two grains of salt in your head....

And that's the way the conversation went on Sundays.

More and more of our people came to Boulder. They appeared overnight. How they came, through what sort of connections, in the beginning God himself didn't know. They would find a job, look for one another, get advice, help one another. And then usually on Sundays they would give their bodies a rest. Without thinking about it they knew they had to breathe deeply, get rid of one sort of energy to conserve another, to get rid of what they had imbibed during the working week. *Tugovor, tugovor*, ropes, on the open ground in front of Mister Groky's house. Tug of war, who could pull the best, seven on one side, seven on the other side, what strength, what passion was there....

In the white houses, to get beer to drink, you'll pay for a goat, and we'll get the skin! The police watched what they were doing; they didn't react. And the policemen would try it too, our food – it's very tasty; and they would say to the police: --*Veri gud, very good, tasty, Sargeant Makormik, ukusno Sardjent Vivijan, our food, good food! Nasha spiza, dobra spiza!*

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And that's what would happen of a Sunday. More and more Slavs would get together. At the same place, close to one another, near the huts and tents. Some Italians amongst them, from Chioggie near Trieste, poor wretches like Signor Sambardelli and his pretty little wife.

A good-looking pair, a real presence, when they go together arm in arm! A pleasure to see them...

Then they wrote to one another; brothers, though reluctant, started to bring brothers, uncles their nephews, neighbours their neighbours.

--*What can I do for them....I wouldn't....they think it's great here, because we send money, and they don't see how we live...and over there again it's hardship...you don't know what to do...men want to come, but not one girl...how do they know...they won't come here, the little sluts....*

People went to Trieste, to get some air, and they went to Genoa when there was no air in Trieste. Now you can see them here; they're from Korčula, those are from Pelješac, from Brač, Hvar, Solte, Vis, Makarska, Gradac, Vrgorac, there are even some from Dubrovnik and Mostar, even from Macedonia. Who brought them all here? First they go to Solun, (Thessaloniki) and then they get on board the ship and come to Fremantle, and then they come here, to us, in Boulder. Since the news went out that there is gold in Australia, that a man can get himself out of poverty, earn good money and leave. And leave!

But that last bit, the last bit, it's not quite like that! If only I had known! Who can go back now!

--*Oh come on, what, it's bad for you here? Over there you'd be six feet under, but not here....*

--*And who's to say whether you won't die! Who!*

Our man was spinning between hammer and anvil.

--*It's not quite like that, and it is like that, it depends....*

A good reputation is known far and wide, and a bad one, even further. It seems like the bad, in this case, didn't go as far as the good because, between you and me, in those first days there were few people who could see into the future, although some were worried. That shilling looked to be very big to most people, but in the general scheme of things it didn't mean very much later when final balance sheets were opened.

--*So there, so there! You can't say you never lived, you worked, you worked, sent most of your wages home....and the rest we'll discover later!*

I'd make a bet Joe, that there are already five thousand miners here!

- --*And our people? How many of our people?!*

--*If there aren't now, after eight years, five or six hundred, then take me to the Cornwall. I'll shout you two beers!*

--*Like we know a lot about this! When did our people go underground? Over there you could see the ocean, you dug in the earth around vines, around olive trees, and then when you come here....The others, they learnt all sorts of things in their lives. Their homes always smelt. They lived with goats, sheep, pigs; and you were always in the open air, for God's sake!*

--*You had to gobble up corn – if there was any! And salted sardines! And you want to say that that was great! Here there's work, and we can always eat something!*

--*A fat ram! Bacon!....My God, how the billy goats smell! Worse than those on Smokovnik!*

--*Well go and eat beef steak at the Palace then! Go and be served by a waiter in a white jacket, see what an appetite he has then; and if only there had been "polenta" (porridge made from corn) there....*

Yes, yes, they fired people from their job, if they weren't careful. You couldn't get on the wrong side of the shift boss much less the surveyor!

You couldn't get involved in things you knew nothing about. Complain then to someone, complain to the trade union. And on top of that you're a New Australian....

--Ver is yor naturalizashun kard – where is your citizenship card, my Dingic! Go outside, take your sack, and you can go into the foundry industry, in Silverthorn, in Forwood, and you can go bush, to the wood

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companies, in Lakeside, Kurani, Kuravang! Up to you! What's that you say, your wages are less, and isn't gold worth less too?? And you can see how sometimes it goes up, and sometimes it goes down! Don't get involved in things you don't understand! It's all the same to me, says the surveyor, it's all the same to me! There are always men waiting in front of the door. Wait, wait! All right, all right!

The Englishman was right! He's paying the wages and he wants the work!

Yeah my Joe, the tramcars are full of swags and black bags, you can see dungarees and thick towels, grey flannel underwear soaked in sweat and dust, poking out from those swags and bags. They are taking them to be washed, to the weekend "soak and wash", which like you they have to do themselves, and the clothes then hang on the fence two or three hours to dry before going again into the swag or bag, and you have to think, if you have pain in your back or something is stabbing you in your ribs, whether you can afford to go to the doctor so he can give you some pills and charge you ten shillings or lire for the visit. Think, and don't judge everyone badly, suffer a bit, you can't yet pay the Miners Relief Fund, because that's money indeed, my dear Joe! You say that yourself! Others suffer too, because it's better this way than that way, after all!

Why the devil did you go last weekend to the cemetery? And you saw, what did you see, actually –what did you hear? That they opened that cemetery in Kalgoorlie six years before the end of the century, that only five years later there were 1,100 graves in the graveyard. And that cemetery or pit in Coolgardie, as Mister Groky said (and he knew lots of things, because he was mixing with important people) hid no less than one thousand young men less than 26 years of age. They died of all sorts of things.....

From typhus, dysentery, scurvy, hunger, thirst. They were buried together in the same trench. No names to identify them. Nothing to say where they came from. It was known only that they came from all corners of the globe and they were different races, except for black people. There were upside down crosses, and someone – so help me God – had defecated on some of the graves. So there you are!

And Father Long, the priest, also died of typhus, so they said, and he was only 27. He made a name for himself on the goldfields, truly.

You hadn't heard?

It was a big joke. And actually it was not a big joke. It depends how you look at it. Everything has two sides, and so does this. This happened in Kanowna, a bit north of us, thirty kilometres or so. They had rich gold, like we do here....Kanowna was full of people then. Carts one after another. They built new hotels, houses, shops. It was a very gay town – very gey taun – very lively little place, people used to say. Then one day a rumour was heard that someone had found a big nugget of gold shaped like a sickle and that no less than fifty kilos of gold were in that nugget. People said a young priest who had just arrived in Kanowna had seen the nugget, and his name was Father Long. And that that priest had given his word that he would not reveal the name of the man who had found it, nor the place where it was found. And this went from mouth to mouth, until people were quite confused. They found out that no-one had registered such a large piece of gold, nor had they sought the so-called Reward Claim, and neither had the nugget been deposited in any bank. Who had found the gold, how could they conceal this from others, what right did they have to stop everyone from seeing it? Something like that on the Eastern Goldfields, had never happened before. And so amongst the people their confusion and revolt grew, and a deputation of miners went to see the warden, the mining supervisor, and officially asked him what was happening with that gold, where it had been found and who found it. But the warden could not tell the people anything, because he knew nothing. Many other people became involved, people from the bank and from the Town Hall, and the authorities went to Father Long, and talked to him for a

long time and finally convinced him to come openly before the public and explain what had happened with the gold. There was a crowd of people in front of the hotel, which was called the Criterion, and Father Long went out on the balcony. Miners had come, and diggers, prospectors from Kanowna and many more from Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie, with their carts, and horses, and bicycles. About five thousand people were there. Father Long

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addressed the crowd who were waiting impatiently and said he was willing to reveal the place where the gold was found, but on the condition that no-one ever again asked him anything to do with that gold, not now or ever in the future. He said he wanted everyone who was present to raise their hand and promise that no-one would ever say one word again. When they all raised their hands and said: Agreed, agreed, which meant they all were in agreement that no-one was to mention the gold to him again, he said loudly: - I think the gold was found a quarter of a mile from this side of the closest lake on Kurnalpy Road. He had hardly said this, when a terrible commotion and rush began. All mixed up together, horses, carts, people, bicycles. All tangled up together. And some who had waited with horses, went as fast they could to Kurnalpy Road. Others threw themselves on their bicycles. But it was a policeman who arrived first at the place. At once people started throwing the soil around with picks. They struck with them here and there and everywhere. They put up notices with names and surnames. There was a huge free-for-all. People fought one another for a place.

--We got here before you!

--No you didn't, we did!

And when they had driven in their pegs, again there was a big rush back to Kanowna, so that what they had marked out could become their workplace, because under the Mining Act they had to go first to the warden and register what had been pegged, in his office. They started to dig in the areas they had pegged out. That went on for five or six days. But not an ounce of gold was found. And then there was another revolt. People were angry, very very angry, *ljuti i zestoki*, aggressive, they wanted to eat Father Long for breakfast....But no-one could do anything to him. They had promised solemnly, officially, that no-one would ask him anything. And he was young, only twenty five or twenty six, and since he was a priest, they couldn't openly say that he had tricked anyone. And maybe it had to do with some sort of confession, and Father Long had had to keep his mouth shut. How could you bribe a young priest who knew only what he had been taught in the seminary? And then that big nugget, which only the priest had seen and no-one else, they called it the Holy Nugget, and to this day no-one knows what happened. And for sure something did! The rogues were milling around and Father Long must have been among them and he saw what they found, and they wanted to hide it and take it to Adelaide, where they could freely show it and get paid money for it. And then Father Long died of typhus. And that's what happened, because here all sorts of things happened and are still happening, don't you know!

That's how they informed the newcomers, in the graveyard in Kalgoorlie, where many of them would leave their bones, if they came here, nearby, because at least it was easy to move around in those days.

And that's not all – the old-timers used to say, looking at the flowers, red and yellow lanterns, little angels, iron and wooden crosses, oval photos and photos under glass, engraved names, date of birth and date of death, and names of places from all over the world that you can't properly read much less pronounce.

And that's not all! Do you know the story about Dave and Andy who got underneath the cemetery, because they smelt gold nearby? They rummaged around not far from the fence around the graveyard because they thought they could find a vein of gold there; they saw that the earth was in a certain formation, and like all diggers they knew how far that went down, how it was arranged in layers, they knew something could be there, that something could be found. The signs were all there, and they started to dig, in secret, and it happened that they came across little flecks of gold, and these led to the graveyard itself, to the fence. So on they went, digging up clay and sand, throwing it behind them covering over what they had dug, and finding more and more gold. What now? - they came closer to the fence, and right there a few days ago a well-known

prospector had been buried, one who had always been able to smell out gold in his searches, but others always ended up with it, and his wife, when he died, did not have enough to pay for a funeral. His friends had given the priest some money to sing the funeral prayers. What were they to do – the vein led there! They stopped to talk it over, now this, now that, and there was not much choice – gold was gold! They went deep into the earth,

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a bit further away from the fence so people would not think they were going towards it. But down there in the deep they did turn towards it, five or six, ten metres. They made sure, all in secret, that nobody else noticed, and they came right underneath the buried prospector and found he was lying on a golden slab. Well, that was not so easy to hide. They kept digging up and extracting, but word went around, like it always does. Some leaks out, and someone sees it being carried. Always there are people around, close by or further away. Always there are eyes to see and ears to hear, so the rumour reached the widow, who was a big woman, who with her sharp tongue had brought the late prospector, who was always trying to find gold and never found enough, finally, too early, to the point where he turned up his toes to God and went to his grave.

--What's that going on around my husband's grave? – she cried and forced herself into the mine, where Dave and Andy were digging. And devil take it, out she came without a word and directly to the police, and a fine uproar began. Dave and Andy had not registered their find with the warden, and quick smart found themselves behind bars. The vein apparently had gone down deep and the whole cemetery lay on gold. All hell broke loose then. One mother, a tough, strong woman, thought she had come into her own. But as the cemetery was a cemetery, that is, a public graveyard, where the dead lay, there was then great confusion about the law. The government was the owner, but the dead too were owners, and there were those for whom no-one knew where they had come from, because they had come from far away and died from gold hunger, eaten biscuits and tinned dog, come down with rickets, *rahitis*, or the miner's complaint, they dried up or else the sun fried them. So there you are! All sorts of things happened.

Joe and Tom listened to this. Jack listened. And Michael. And George. And Mat. And Mark. And they were all our people – Tome, Jakov, Juraj, Mijo, Matija, Grgur, Josip. To be sure they listened to all sorts of things, because everything went from mouth to mouth, especially in the gold rushes when people went from one area to another as soon as word went round that someone had hit upon a rich source of gold bearing quartz with their pick: tully or telly. How hard was it to take your swag and two or three tins of food, a water bag and go. Go, and hope for the best, hope that you too will be lucky!

What was all that about, Joe? You came here, you work, you work hard. Your money is growing in the bank. True, you send some home, to your wife and children, but you get ahead slowly and surely. Soon you will have enough to pay for their passage, so that they can start a new life here with you. You will have a new workforce and together you will work and earn money. They are coming next year. Your son works in Split, in the Croatian library. And here you will give him, God willing, a chance to go to the School of Mines in Egan Street, in Kalgoorlie, to get above you, to be a machine miner, or a sampler, a geologist, a draftsman, a surveyor, but not to be a bogger or trucker like you, who has to go down the mine every day, to drill, to pull the wagons, to strike with the pick, the mallet, to throw quartz in the bin and maybe telluride...

....Another year or so, and I'll have good money in the bank, and I get a percentage on what's in the bank, on top of that. And if you have a little nugget in your pocket, you bring home candles, and you bring wood on Saturday and Sunday, don't waste money, do your washing yourself, rinse the clothes, do your own mending, don't give anyone else even sixpence, (they'd swindle you), save on everything, but not on groceries, not on groceries, because food is everything. Be careful you don't get pleurisy, "because pleurisy can be the chronic illness that leads to tuberculosis". Go to the market in Kalgoorlie, where it's better, and cheaper too. I tako! That's it! And don't be a dick-head!

The yard is ready. You brought the logs in the cart, the boards are there, the fence, already the roof of corrugated iron is there, a bit rusty to be sure, but still good, there's a table and chairs, and cupboard and pots,

all slowly, from week to week. And soon we'll bring water, and start to plant tomatoes, lettuce and cabbage, and graft some fruit trees. Italians are nearby, they know how to do that. And we'll buy a goat, and have milk, and get a lamb to pet, and then we'll make barrels, *bacve napraviti*, a big open barrel and a jug for pouring....

How does it go, how does it go: you put string around the plug, when the must is thrown into the open barrel, so that the must doesn't come onto the plug and stop it sealing. The string stops the must so the wine is

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clear ...*Eto ti ga na!* And there you are. Three kinds of wine in the barrel, my old man used to say, black as pitch at the top, then in the middle red wine, and at the bottom is *opol* (a special pink Dalmatian wine). The wine gets clearer and clearer, the more sulphur you put. So there you are! The little bucket sinks, and the big bucket dries up And the diseases are poured off; God forgive me, they would spoil it if only they could.

There's all sorts of ironmongery, Joe, all over the place. People abandoned old machines, already rusted, and everything can be used if you want to, if a person is skilful. There are blacksmiths around. They didn't have work in the old country so they came here. There are coopers. *Filoksera* (the vine pest) cleaned out the vineyards, so there are more than enough coopers, and there was no work for them. I help you, you help me, he helps someone else, we give a hand, we help our own, friends help friends. Yes, we are all sorts of people, but you can't say we are worthless. And never mind those stories about Arthur Bayley, his find in Coolgardie, how he earned 36.000 pounds sterling, which he possessed when he died at twenty six. What use to him were those pounds when he went to his grave too early! Forget about those stories! And the devil take Mister Groky and his stories about the cemetery, about Father Long and the big nugget, Dave and Andy and the prospector who was lying dead on the golden slab! The house will be built in Dwyer Street, with three rooms, with kitchen and veranda....a front room and two bedrooms....and that's enough. There won't be too much room for five people, but it will be enough for the beginning, while the family settles in. Others had not even half as much! And anyway they are hungry over there, at least that's what they write, even though they receive the money regularly. Still, it will be better here, strength will be found, work will be found, it's necessary only to roll up your sleeves and to be honest. The woman will do washing. The girl can help. There are lots of single men. People will pay a shilling or two for three or four items of clothing. Some soap, water from the pipeline, wood on Saturdays and Sundays, a cart, horse, oil, pasta, *bakalar* (dried cod), wine, chickens and hens in the yard, tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage. And then we'll have something solid beneath our feet, then we can think about Fremantle and other things, how to get away from here and from this cursed dust. A few more years and all will be well...

That's how it went.

-- *Aj spik gud Ingliš nau, bledi bastard, I can hold my own in Bert and Pisi Street with anyone, if I go shopping. No-one can trick me easily. Neither the greengrocer nor the uniformed men. I speak good English now, and I have brains in my head, you want a nugget, give me two litres, you want to buy butiju uja (a bottle of oil), bakalar (dried cod), I have some, I'll give it to you! And I'll get tuppence, threepence, a shilling, a pound, all of it goes in the handkerchief, to the money box, buried in the sand, then to the bank, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, please money, please money, two hundred pounds sterling, there you are, please, thank you, very kind of you, good morning missus, si yoo agayn, meye deer!*

That's how it was!

Hey, these people give me a headache, do this, do that, but they don't mention work, they want to get money in the easiest way possible. First it's that one's fault, then this one's. The shilling in their pocket is itching to be spent, and the devil tempts them to go to the horse races and the dog races. They revolve around the race courses in Boulder and Kalgoorlie and there the dogs run between Federal Lane and Boulder Block Road! And whoever wins, you can't say no-one wins, but they end up losing the same amount. And when they win, they feel free, the beer goes to their head after the races. They pour into the Cornwall pub, and around them are agents, hey! put a shilling or two on Galant, he's sure to win, that's a good horse, he's already won ten races, and they put their money on, and Galant finishes third, and Eveready is first, so the operators eat up

their money or it goes into the pocket of those who know horses or who know the jockeys. Everywhere there are thieves and swindlers, rogues and evil people! On all sides cheats and con artists! Let the plague take them! They bring gold, either from the bush or they buy it, it's easy to find, how does it go in Italian: kvanto pilja tanto maca! (you win some you lose some!) And a man who is exhausted knows what hard work is, he knows what real trouble means and he does what needs to be done. Respect first of all your hard work, respect your

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shilling, don't give it away easily. Those that found a vein of gold, those whose horse's hoof scratched a big chunk of gold in the sand, those who closed the big hole and made millions sterling, or some rich person who killed himself because another rich person swindled him....for Jesus' sake....go to the devil all of you, unfortunates, wretches, who don't appreciate what you have, and back in the old country you didn't have even a bit of bread to eat, your underpants smelt! Spare me, God, from strangers' charity, free me from temptation, because the devil is everywhere, everywhere. And in church too

Like that Father Long, who couldn't reveal those who found the gold, while they, the scoundrels, escaped to Adelaide or else they hid the gold and took it to the Arabs or Afghans who came here with camels and armfuls of twigs, and one of them, Tag Mahomet they called him, assassins killed and buried in the cemetery in Coolgardie, that's what that fat ram Mister Groki said.

--Whenever you come here, it doesn't smell good --he would say to that Slabić -- because always something happens or it happened. You haven't even looked into my hut, and already that Vitaker Rajt turned up his toes. He judged himself, didn't he, the wretch, and now look what happened!

--You're still thinking about Vitaker Rajt --Slabić replies --and you know, he was a real man, he was all for the workers. He was driven mad by that main manager, what was his name? They tricked him, that's what! What do you understand about these things, Joe! What do you know about promotion companies! If it wasn't for them, you wouldn't be working! They provided the capital. They brought pennies in the millions, they bought those stamp heads and all the other machines, so we could go under the earth and dig for gold. What could one lone little prospector do? He could do nothing, because he had nothing, just his bare bottom. And the promotion companies took all the risks for the gold. And how much did they lose?! And if gold was not found, if there wasn't any, what then, what then?

--Yeah, yeah, Slabić, you know a lot about it, I can see that, just like your usual meddling, jabbering, gossip, gossip --said Mister Groky, who had come round the other side of the hut, without anyone seeing him.

--They for sure told you the truth about Rajt, just you, no-one else in South Boulder? What do you know?? You don't know what gambling machines are! What do you know about the big game! And Rajt was with them, yes, yes, he got ahead of himself, put his foot in his mouth, he wanted too much, it wasn't enough for him, how Ajvino and Lake View were going. He went into big business with other companies in London, and then the manager of Lake View Consols telegraphed to London that gold had been found, rich gold in Lake View, and he had kept this secret, started to speculate on the side with Lake View shares, yes, speculate with the shares, and the mine was giving thirty million ounces a month, and then he announced that the rich gold would last for a long, long time and he put all his effort into raising the price of his shares, and you see, how the manager tricked him, you see! That rich, black telluride disappeared, there was less and less of it, while the other professionals in that business, they call them bears, bears, went against Rajt, and they smothered him, smothered him. And then it was all over for him, he lost his last penny and got seven years inside and that brought him to the point where he took his own life. That's how it was, because it was a big gamble. A game, a big game! And what do you know about Horatio Bottomley! You don't know who Richard Hamilton is! What do you know about balance sheets! And when the operators in London manipulated the stock market? It would be better to shut your mouth. I'm sick of these big shots! What a huge dickhead you are! It's better to work, like Joe works, to put money in the bank, instead of, you barbarian, going around and making people crazy! Why are you turning back all the time to Rajt and things like that! That's not for you nor for any of us. What do you get from that? Leave Joe in peace. He's hard-working, a good man, he's doing something all day long for God's

sake. He wants to succeed here. And you go messing around with this one, and that one; and with that gossip, that blabbermouth, for her nothing is ever enough. She swallows everything and spits it out. It would be better to kick her out, kick in the bum, and then throw her out...

Mister Groky fired a big salvo at Slabić, who looked at him rather stunned. He intensely hated that way of his. Because he too had come here as some sort of bloody foreigner, and had found his feet unbelievably

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quickly! Slabić had struggled, because he wanted nothing to do with that fat ram...And he had connections, better than his; he went slowly but surely up the ladder of success.

--That's my business, Mister Groky, who I have or don't have. And don't ever mention my woman again. She's mine, not yours and she doesn't hurt you in the least.

--Yeah yeah, she does, she does! She's put horns on lots of our people in Boulder, so they say. And she'll do that to you too! Sooner or later! Hey, you have a rifle, and every morning, so we hear, you're firing in the yard, chasing cats away, cats, and....

--Leave me alone, Mister Groki, it's easy for you, you got your piece from Government House, you lend money around and get interest on it, you don't go down the mine, as I can see....

And Slabić looks at his round belly, over which was a silk belt with added braces.

--And you of course have gone down the mine lots of times! How quickly you got out onto dry land! You didn't like it down there, in the dust! But bravo, bravo, I hear that you look after those who play cards at the Cornwall, so you can drink and play briškula (a card game) for free. And on top of that they say you have contacts with the police. It's all known, common knowledge. Be sensible, we're all from the old country. We have to help one another. Don't go too fast. Look at the Italians and the Greeks, look at the Irish. They aren't ours. In any case people are always against the Slavs. Always Slavs are this, Slavs are that... Be sensible, Slabić, be sensible...

And that's how it goes. And that's what Joe listens to and connects the dots.

I heard long stories from my mother, those evenings when I was alone with her, because she didn't want to tell anyone else. I was her only child, so she felt she should confide in me, so that something of the past would remain. To be honest, she didn't know very much about those shenanigans, those agents, promoters, companies, managers, about balance sheets, but in my travels I had worked out some of it, so that forty years later I could put it into its original old frame.

Mother's stories were very uncomplicated, not overburdened with too many words, like games, like cuddles, like tears in suffering. She really added to them with her experiences and her own fate, because, as will be seen when we meet, all this was not so innocent and naïve as it seemed from my and her experiences in Boulder, or better said, we children were playing on a huge background. We didn't really even notice this background, and if we did, we rejected it, because it didn't accord with our world, in which we wanted to communicate.

So much had flown past while I was there under the trees, that when I looked at my watch, I was startled. It was almost one o'clock, and I had been there for three hours. I got up and hurried home.

The children had returned from school, and I found my wife to be a quite exultant.

--What happened?

--Nothing happened.

--But there must be something.

--Just think, that trumpeter came and brought the money. He sold your father's gold watch and got a good price for it.

--How much? -- I asked without much interest.

--Thirty thousand. It seems to me, it couldn't have been better.

--And Perrin?!

--Nothing!

I went into the room and found everything put in order, there were even flowers on the table.

... Father's watch, it had to be now, now, after all my thoughts. Why did I do that? Why? It was a worthwhile keepsake. Mother had kept it, and I....ah, after those thoughts in the bush, after that movie which had been a part of life, it all seemed somehow inappropriate. But how had that happened to me? Couldn't I

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have found some other solution? It all came back to one thing: we needed money, we didn't have it, we didn't want to borrow it....yes, there had been a bottle of vinjak involved (cognac), two bottles of wine, cheese, mortadella, Indian walnuts, tea, my wife had bought all of that....oh, my father's watch – Joe's watch.

We had lunch at three, and then I went to the room we had readied for Perrin and Brian, sat on the armchair and continued searching my memory.

And then, what happened then Mama?

Father had only been six years in Australia, he managed somehow, built a little house, got some furniture, and then a letter arrived, written by his older son Toni. Toni had been working for some time in the Reading Room in Split, so Father at first thought he was writing from Split, like he had been doing, but the stamp showed it was from Vis. And in it the news that their mother had died, that they were now alone.....

What could he do? He had intended to call them to come to Boulder, to pay for the journey. What could he do but see whether he had enough money. He went to Kalgoorlie, to the agency, to find out how much the ticket cost for the boat, and calculated he needed to pay only one ticket more for the journey, that being his own ticket back home. At that time one ticket cost thirty lira, altogether 150 lira. He had about 180 lira saved. But he needed to take things home with him, so he went to Mister Groky and borrowed fifty lira. Mister Groky added just a little bit of interest, because he thought highly of Joe and praised him as a hard-working, good man.

He left Mister Groky to keep an eye on everything he had built, and in a suit that had been made for him by Tom Topy, the tailor, who he had met one Saturday when his friend Silić took him there, he went to the Kalgoorlie Railway Station, and after a month of travel including through the Suez Canal and Port Said he arrived in Trieste, where he embarked on a boat for Split. There he found Toni in the Croatian Reading Room and travelled with him to Hvar, where Miko and Katica were living with Aunt Dina, Margarita's sister, who had been married in Hvar. His late wife had a brother on the island of Vis, but he had five children and could not care for Joe's. So Joe, reunited with his children, went to Vis to visit Margarita's grave. There he spoke with his wife's brother about the property, which was small and insignificant, and then he returned to Hvar, where he stayed for a time with his wife's sister and her family. And that sister of his wife, Aunt Dina, was my mother's best friend, my mother told me.

What sort of mix-ups life can cause! If Father had not gone to Hvar...for God's sake, what can we say in answer to this sort of consideration? But there, it happened, because all sorts of things happen in this world.

--Tereza, it will be nice for you – said Aunt Dina. *It will be nice, he's a good man, a good man, if you only knew how much he loved and respected Margarita! He was everything for her, everything. And how many pennies he saved! She didn't lack for even a needle or thread. The children had everything. We couldn't leave them there in Vis, because her brother had a full house. I thought it was better like this, to bring them here. Here it's a bit different. They'll have help from him, and from us, I calculated. And you see, he has come straight from Australia for them! Others would then have abandoned the children. And his children are fine, well-behaved, my poor sister Margarita brought them up well. And so, God rest her soul, she sweated and got a chill and caught the pneumonia. And she was sturdy, stronger than me, so there, Tereza, don't think too much! Why would you stay here to serve forever! Why would you just watch others and help that old Aunt Tada and her sister Mandina. And I won't say that the canon isn't good, I won't say that, he cares about you a lot, and he'll be sorry. But first of all, you are you! You've served him for fifteen years. You're a big girl already, you don't have to stay here all your life. You need to make your own family.....*

And that's how from day to day, for several days, Aunt Dina went round and round, God rest her soul, talking to me until she had converted me, until I agreed with her. My God, my God, how she did go on about it! And to him too!

Hey, my Osip, hey Osip, how can you go with those children over there, without anyone? They don't have a mother, they don't have anyone. And you say you work in the mine! How can you leave them in that strange place, in the town? How will you leave them home alone? Don't be a barbarian, for St. Roko's sake, or will your children wash and iron? Who will cook for you and for them? Yes, Toni is sixteen now, Katica is fifteen, and Nikola thirteen. Yes, they are on their way, but that's still up in the air, it's not finished it's still simmering. Look at young Katica, how can you leave her? She has blossomed, she looks like a girl of eighteen! But where is her maturity? All sorts of things can happen, Osip, I tell you, I tell you, be careful....

Be careful, Joe!

--And there you are, we were married on St. Tilovo's Day (Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ). And the canon blessed us. He was cross with Aunt Tada, thinking she had driven me away with her sharp tongue and the work. And he gave me fifty florins, and I had saved a hundred. And what about the dowry? And we prepared a big chest, and we all put winter clothes in there too, because Father said it was summer here, and winter there and that it was better that we go there, because we would learn by the time it was summer and it wouldn't be a shock for us, as he said, because those who went suddenly into summer from winter, they suffer shock, and their heads spin... We all went to Trieste, and I can't say it was not nice for us. Toni was completely beyond himself. Katica was jumping up and down, and only Nikola was rather indifferent.

Yes really, it was nice for them. Yes, they ate in third class, they were together in the cabin, they saw Port Said, Suez, the Red Sea, Aden, but when they were to come to Columbo, and then from Columbo to Fremantle, it all took a long time, and it became boring. Mother somehow became used to the new surroundings, she tried to become the new mother for the children, and on the other hand, she tried to get used to her new role as a wife, one who had decided so quickly not only on marriage but also to go far away, to a country unknown to her, a country she had never even dreamt of, and from which from time to time not exactly the best news had come. There on the ship, restricted, reined in, she was unable to show what she knew and could do, and actually she knew a lot, especially to do with home and food. She had taken to knitting and sewing straight away, that is, things she could do with her hands, because there was no sewing machine on the ship, so there was nothing too special that she could achieve. She tried to establish a closer contact with Katica, especially through the knitting and other crafts, but Katica didn't seem to care about this role at all. There was on the ship a small orchestral group which played music each evening, there were all sorts of games played on deck to while away the time, so she preferred to go on deck, so Father said, sometimes with her brothers, sometimes alone. Then Nikola noticed that she was starting a relationship with one of the young officers, and told his father, and Father immediately cut off that possibility, warning her brothers that Katica must always be with one of them when she went on deck.

Toni had brought some books with him, so he read them, and one day he found an English magazine in the salon and asked his father what was written in it. The old man couldn't help his son very much, because his English was restricted to spoken English, as to which, it must be admitted, he did very well indeed. In the ship's library Toni came into contact with the ship's financial officer, or purser, a middle aged man who, like Toni, spoke some Italian. This man gave him an English-Italian book with rules for grammar, showed him some of the basics of the English language and worked with him for an hour or so each day. Toni asked his father to pronounce certain words in English, and very soon he had more confidence, and at the same time was helping his brother and sister.

--You say it like this: *daj mi kruha - giv mi bred, a ovo ti je shiling – dis is a shilling; “si” je more, “oshn” je ocean, Indian oshn – Indian ocean, very gud boj, very gud gerl – vrlo dobro djecace, djevojko, ju spik very gud Ingliš, ser, jes aj du, aj du spik! Isn’t that right?*

And you know how many people used to come to the Croatian Reading Room Centre in Split! I used to give them books and newspapers to read. Once the police arrived, looking for something. They put the manager in jail, they didn’t touch me.

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Yes, yes aj spik Ingliš, tudey is e lovli dey, what a lovely day, but hot, very hot, very hot, indid! The police didn’t like our Croatian Reading Room. Do you have a Reading Room in Boulder?

Father looked at his son with a strange expression on his face, as though this question surprised him, and then he repeated after him: *A Reading Room in Boulder?*

--We don’t have a reading room there, what use would such a place be to us there!

--To read books and newspapers! Every town has one! Toni answers his father.

--There if you have to, you can buy a newspaper, and who has books there? Nobody! What use would books be? Over there you work, you work! People go to school, to be sure, they go, but they work too – he corrects himself, seeing the surprise in his older son’s eyes; who hadn’t been prepared for a different role from that which he had had in the reading room in Split, or something similar.

--So you’re telling us we are going to work over there! – Katica joins in the conversation.

--No-one said that to you! - the old man replies. But it wouldn’t hurt you if you helped Tereza in the household jobs.

--And what are those household jobs?

--Household jobs! There are lots of them, they are there for every woman and no woman exists who doesn’t know household jobs, isn’t that right, Tereza? – Father asks my mother-to-be.

--Every knowledge has its place! – Tereza carefully answers. To know is to have, without knowledge there is no wealth, so the canon used to say, where I was serving for fifteen years. It’s good for a woman to know everything, to knit, to sew, to cook, to fry, and to iron. You won’t be carrying an eighty litre bucket on your head, which is something I have done! Like your father said, there’s a pipe-line over there. You turn the tap on, and water comes out, and then it’s easy to wash and rinse five or six pairs of sheets, a few under-skirts, shirts and underpants. And for sure we will get a machine, Osipe, and we’ll sew, because you can’t buy everything, it’s expensive.....

So Tereza was thinking similar thoughts to Joe, who was realising more and more that it was not going to be easy with the children in Boulder. Aunt Dina had seen this very well, in Hvar. They had grown while he had been away. He had not been there during the years when they should have been getting used to him, when he could have followed their progress, to go step by step with them from their childhood into the teenage years. The three of them, more or less, had all shown signs of individuality, which had escaped his notice, because they had been little when he left, with their childhood games, their rags, their cars made of barrels, with *skurjama, triljama, s bobicama od karobela*, (hide and seek, board games; children’s games, some played with carob seeds) *tondinima and fulminima, trotulima, udicama, konopcima*, (fireworks and matches, carousels, fishhooks and ropes), and squares for jumping over, and so on. Toni was the eldest, already in primary school when Joe left “for America” (which included Australia), and now he was a young man, who had already had a job in Split, even though it was as an assistant, still it was a job, because he was earning his own money and supporting himself. Katica had completely changed. He had hardly recognised her. She had matured ahead of time. Miko seemed to have grown normally, as though he had remained about the same, a little introverted, quiet, obedient, loyal, without any special desires. Joe felt there would not be any problems from Miko in Australia.

--If only they could go to school! -- he said to Tereza. -- But over there you have to pay for school, it isn’t easy, there are the Christian Brothers school and the Protestant school and the Catholic school. I’ll see what can

be done, but first it's good to teach them to work, to work. And you must look after the girl. She is too daring. She's too passionate, and that's not good. Over there men are without women, alone, and anything can happen. They won't care if she's young or old. It's all the same. Urges have built up in them, urges, passion. And if you don't keep your eyes open, something bad can happen. And I'll see about the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie for him. They need educated people, and Toni is educated, he knows, he knows mathematics very

well, and he's willing, I can see that. He's always reading books and studying English. How is it going for him, how is he doing with it?

Although he felt rather uneasy, Father on the other hand was proud of the way his older son behaved, because he saw there a certain restlessness which had forced him to waste not a moment of time. Either he was reading, or he was talking to some young man or sailor, or he was asking his father questions: what was the word for this, how do you say that, how many people live in Boulder City, is there this or that school, this or that shop, how many mines are there round about, is soccer played over there, what is the name of their newspaper, do they get their food from Perth, and so on. Father was happy with all this, but on the other hand he was worried because he had imagined that Toni would work with him there. He did not intend to remain forever in Boulder, in the mine. He would save money, and then shift to Perth or Fremantle, find a farm there, close to the ocean, where he could work and also go fishing. And in order to accomplish that, he was planning to work hard for a few more years in Boulder, so that all of them, working together, could make a new start in Perth or Fremantle, because without starting capital you couldn't do anything on a farm. Some had already succeeded in shifting to Fremantle, those without families, who saved and saved for years and then bought land, built a house and planted a vineyard, and the vines had succeeded outstandingly. In this way acquaintances of his, Karmelo Kokandić and Jere Jaje, who had actually arrived a year later on the goldfields, had been successful and already had fine vineyards in Fremantle. Others had market gardens in Summerville, four kilometres from Kalgoorlie towards Coolgardie. Where the water had arrived, the desert had become a green garden. Some people from Korčula, called Laus, grew good vegetables there and sold them for good money, at the Kalgoorlie market.

On the ship he thought up a different plan. He would definitely push Toni into the School of Mines. There he would meet friends and acquaintances, and probably Mister Groky would help. Toni had his certificate with him to prove he had finished primary school, and he had made sure it was translated into English and had been verified in Split. In the meantime, Toni would in Kalgoorlie get some oil, some pasta, *bakalar*, sugar and other food and bring it home, and Tereza would sell it secretly, and in that way earn a bit more each month. As well as that, she would wash clothes for single men, and Katica would help her. Miko would dig in the yard so that they could have tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, beans. Miko would be quite capable of doing that. And little by little let him learn English, and if there is an opportunity for school or for some sort of job, then all will be well! And he, Joe, would straight away go down the mine!

So they arrived in Fremantle, in the middle of winter, but that winter was more like our spring, because everything was green. To avoid spending too much money, they needed to catch the first train to Kalgoorlie and Boulder. The children were tired after the long journey. They reached land and asked their father to let them all stay at least for one day in Perth. He couldn't refuse them. They went by train to Perth which was only a few miles away, and left their luggage at the station and went to explore the city. After their father's stories about Boulder, Perth was a lovely revelation. Its forests, its green expanses, the Swan River on which it was situated, the attractive streets with their tall buildings, the shops full of English goods, the cafes, restaurants, churches, this made such an impression on the family that Father had to repeat several times that they could not stay there because they had nowhere to live, they didn't have enough money even for one week much less any longer, while in Boulder they had at least some sort of a house, and there was a job waiting for him there. Altogether, that one day's freedom went well. They had lunch, then later dinner and went to the hotel, a cheap

hotel of course, in a side-street because the centre of the city was no place for them. They had to get up early the next morning, before dawn, to catch the train which took them to the final destination of their long journey. Father stared for a long time at the farms they passed in the valleys around Perth and then Northam. It was wonderful to look at these areas, his heart felt refreshed. There were houses surrounded by flowers, green lawns and gardens, and far-off recently turned earth showed forthcoming fields of fresh green wheat, which here turned gold in the summer and gave up their juicy fat grains to the owners. Here and there you

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could see a dry leaf in the vineyards, and Father's eye, trained from a young age to recognise vines and vineyards, could see that here there was a different sort of cultivation by the vineyard owners, who trained the vines up on fences, so that between one side and the other of the vineyard, there were posts with taut wires stretched between them, over which the vines climbed and made a lattice effect.

--And we, we keep them on the ground, on the ground, to lick the ground. This must be better, this lets the vines go up towards the sun, so they are more fruitful than ours. That's the way, that's the way, and not what we do, no. That's what I'll do, and we shall see, we'll see! I'm happy to be seeing this, because before I travelled by train at night.

Miko a bit more, Toni a bit less, joined in their father's comments, and the two females watched calmly, only saying one or two words from time to time.

Then began the game of pipelines and cables.

--And what is that? – asked Toni in surprise.

--That's the water pipeline. It goes right up to Kalgoorlie and Boulder, three hundred miles, three hundred miles. It's relatively new, they opened the pipeline in Boulder six or seven years ago. I heard it was a huge thing. They say there is no engineering feat like it anywhere in the world. They spent millions to bring water to Boulder, for the mine, because they need water for all sorts of jobs in the mine. Millions of litres go through the pipeline every day. It's pumped from several different places. And before, water was carried by camels. People used to die mainly because of water, because there wasn't any, only in holes, only in holes, when rain fell in the winter, like now.....

They all listened to Joe. He was now in his element, on well-known terrain. His lungs filled with every metre of desert that showed itself. He was passing a well-known area, with his own family, with those long never-ending stories which used to flow, especially on Sundays when our people gathered together around a game of bowls or tug-of-war. Suddenly Joe was a hero, because for them everything was strange, and now, the countryside was confirming that, like a background to everything that had happened and was happening and would happen, because that was part of the life into which they were going, in which they too would participate, to build its history, the history of this place, these deserts and towns and places which would spring up and then die, which blazed with splendour only to become towns and places of ghosts. Joe had found himself in all of that, and they too – Tony, Kathy, Nick, Teresa, as they straight away were called in English – became part of one big destiny, brought here like fresh flowers which would bloom, and then life would give them colour, form, soul, and that former self would slowly expire. Gold would dissolve in them too, like in the mine, like in the dumps, in the wagons, in the endless travels in the desert, like following the rainbow which would maybe, finally, lead them to the end, but completely exhausted, worn out, when it was no use to consider that rich dream, reached in the moment when it was worth nothing, nothing at all.

Joe explained to his family how, before the water pipeline was laid, people had died of typhus, hundreds of them in Coolgardie, in the dry season, because they were forced to drink from the ponds, from Coolgardie Gorge for example, and all sorts of things were mixed up in that water. The pipeline cost two and a half million pounds, and helped to make Kalgoorlie and Boulder green, so that Italians, Bulgarians and some of our people began to grow lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, beans, peas and other things.

--Gold brought the water, and water brought green vegetation, and then gardens and trees and food for people and animals. That black silver saved the world....

The silver-carrying pipeline twisted with the railway line, sometimes out of sight, but not for long, then appearing again on the other side of the train, and again disappearing. The gaze of one girl and two boys followed. Their eyes turned this way and that like the huge snake which carried gallons of salvation, beauty, budding life, happiness, existence. Because everything around that pipeline turned into an oasis. That could be seen very well from the train which gave them an excellent view, because it showed very well the difference. Over there a few kilometres away all was yellow and grey, and here, closer, especially around the train station

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and the pump stations where the pipes branched out, life was blooming, farms were cropping up, fences being erected, fields swung by, horses grazed, and around all the houses and villages were scenes pleasant to look at.

Kellerberrin, Merredin, Southern Cross were stops for these curious newcomers on the long journey, in the first year of the second decade of the century. Namely, they had arrived after the first big wave of people, which had been like no other rush on earth, except the one in California, when gold rushes had started, as described by the writer Jack London in "Gold" and filmed by Charlie Chaplin in "The Gold Rush". Truth be told, they had arrived when all was prepared, but not so late that it could be said: it's all over, because the drama still had a lot of acts to go, and maybe for some it would never be finished.

--This way misery went! -- Joe uttered suddenly. This way she sought wealth!

The children did not understand what he meant. Joe himself felt it, and had experienced it in his hut on his hard bed, that first year, when he had nothing except his own body and hands.

Misery! Misery!

However, misery had not disappeared so easily, because this water was not brought just because of the people, but to help with the getting of gold; because gold brought happiness, so it was thought and so it would be thought for a long time.

How many well-worn tracks were there, "old traks" as Joe called them, and Joe had heard this in Boulder, word of these tracks was heard far and wide, and in those days they were some sort of view of salvation, because they were actually leading somewhere. To find oneself on those tracks, deepened by the carts, trodden down by horses' hooves and camels' feet, to go onto these pathways after wandering for a long time in the desert, after digging and re-digging trenches, old and new mines, to find oneself far away and then come across such a pathway – meant continuing to seek, to continue looking for gold, to give way to one more desire, to tire you and to show you that one desire leads to another, if you start to give in to it, if you start with the billing and cooing: dear one, how much I love you!

Desire meant, in most cases, at that time, the desire for salvation, because gold was indeed salvation. To discover it meant the end of misery. If he knew what deliverance meant, if he knew what it meant to die and watch others die around him, a man should have nothing whatsoever against such a desire. But with the satisfaction of that desire, which saves, which makes life possible, come others - wanting to have power and will over other people, to accumulate assets, so that he can shout: I've succeeded, look how I've succeeded, I have this, I have that!

The train ran along the tracks and with them went the pipeline, and Joe's thoughts were muddled. He cared about only one thing, that the children did not disappoint him straight away in the beginning, that they did not fall into trouble, that they went in harmony towards the goal he had more or less planned, and which would take them and him out of Boulder, because he knew that Boulder was a station where they could stop, stay for a time, create the conditions for the next step; but not to die there.

Ballabulling came rushing up.

--What a funny name -- noticed Katica. --And there are lots of funny names here!

--They got them from black people's names!

--What black people? -- they all said at once.

--There, like those over there! -- Their father pointed out a black man, of an unusual appearance, at the station.

--*That's him!* – shouted Katica

--*Who 'him'?* – asked Tereza, surprised.

--*I dreamt him when I was on Vis!*

They wave their arms and their shoulders drop down, as though getting rid of some sort of burden; realising this was just a girlish foolishness.

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Yeah, yeah, it's him, he was just like that! –Katica does not give up, but no-one is taking any notice of her interruption, much less does anyone want to discuss with her a dream she had, which took place, in any case, on an island now far away from them.

--*There are lots of them, they go from place to place, they don't do any work!* -- Father continued. *They come to Boulder and Kalgoorlie when it's Easter and Christmas. They're given food and drink, clothes and blankets. A priest, Mister Kolik they call him, he takes care of them. Then when they have been given food and clothes, they go back to the bush or to the desert, with their spears, they hunt kangaroos....*

--*Hey kangaroos, hey kangaroos!* – cries Toni, because he has already heard something about these animals in the Croatian Reading Room in Split.

--*They hit them with boomerangs* – Joe continues, again gaining the attention of the boys and the girl, while Tereza stared, not saying one word. --*And that's a piece of crooked wood, you throw it. And if it comes back, then you didn't hit anything.....*

--*But how, how!* -- Miko was amazed, though he had been quiet and patient, like Tereza, until then.

Joe explained the system of hunting kangaroos with a boomerang, although in reality he didn't know too much about it as he had never seen or done it, only heard about it.

Coolgardie arrived, and with it the stories about the goldfields, of which Joe had heard so much, came thick and fast. He remembered Tagh Mahomet and his camel. He had to explain all the facts about this son of Afghanistan and his brother Faiza, who raised a monument to him in the Coolgardie cemetery; and then in great detail Joe spoke about the case relating to Modest Varischetti in the mine called Bonnievale, seven miles from Coolgardie, who was saved after a full seven days, and he was trapped four hundred metres below the earth. Water had broken through into the mine and the Italian, who knew only a little English, was lost down in the depths. They couldn't reach him, and they knew by some sort of signals he gave them, that he was alive, so they sent to Fremantle for divers who came and after a long time, pulled him out.

--*And when he came out they covered him with blankets so the light wouldn't kill him!*

--*So the light wouldn't kill him?!* –Toni repeated after his father.

--*Because he would have lost his sight, and that would be the same as killing him.*

The case of Varischetti was indeed very interesting. More was written about him than about anyone. The miners well knew about accidents in the mine, heralded by the siren, about the grief of families who lost their breadwinner, about the brief notice sent to the old country; but they heard so much about the rescue of Varischetti it was hard to believe how much attention had focused on this one natural disaster. Joe remembered the cemetery in Coolgardie, but he didn't want to talk about this to the children, because mention of such a big number of dead people, about which Mister Groky had spoken in Kalgoorlie, would have had the opposite effect of the Varischetti case.

And then there were stories about the nuggets. Toni had shown intense interest in the prospectors and their life outside the mine. He was always asking his father about the groups of three and five who from time to time left to search in the desert. His father had to give him detailed directions about how and where gold could be found, how you could recognise it, how deep you had to dig for it, where the veins of gold went. Joe knew something about it, more from the stories of others, and this he told his son.

--I'm going to have a nice broach made from a nugget and put it on a gold chain around my neck – said Katica, and then I'll get two small chains and two or three small nuggets to put on each of them, to hang on my arm.....

--Oh yes! – Tereza could be heard sighing.

And that was where it all ended for that moment.

Kalgoorlie could now be seen, a town which had emerged from the dust, with paved streets. They loaded their luggage on the cart on which they all sat. And along the main street, where trams went, they set off towards Boulder. On both sides of the wide avenue, called Maritan Street, were low wooden houses, with

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vaulted porches and verandas, where shops, newsstands, hotels, bars and pubs were situated. These colourful buildings were mixed with hessian and tin facades, with fences, yards, wires, and small trees which seemed as though they couldn't grow bigger. Here and there they could see green grass behind the houses, a golf course, a real soccer field, a race course, with white fences. Open tramcars travelled between Boulder Block, South Boulder and Kalgoorlie, and these would be the permanent means of transport for our newly arrived travellers who would get to know and appreciate these carriages and their baggage.

Their eyes were wide open. They noticed every foot of ground, every house, shop, advertisement, garden, tree, but their gaze went mostly towards the dumps, towards those grey-yellow hills.

--And what's that over there?

--They're dumps!

--So those are dumps, imagine that!

--And the wind brings dust from them?! – said Katica rather astonished.

--Yes when it's blowing! – Joe answers.

--And what is that we can hear, like a deep, hollow sound?

--That's the batteries. They're crushers, they crush the rock. Stamp heads.

--And they work all the time?!

--Always!

--They don't shut down?

--No!

--Even at night?

--Even at night!

They didn't even notice when they reached Boulder, because there was no real boundary to cross, except that the houses became smaller and further apart. They kept to the indents made by other carts, in the middle of wide, dusty streets, bending first to one side then the other. The cart was creaking, chains knocking together, cases sliding back and forth. Only the chest stayed in place, and on it were sitting the boys and girl. There were signs they had reached the periphery. Wide yards spread into the distance, in front were houses, and at the back were chicken coops, stables, carts and all sorts of other articles, as well as a small wooden building, in one corner, where people attended to the call of nature. There were sheds and kerosene cans.

No-one asked questions. They all simply stared. From Forest Street they turned towards Dwyer Street and then Joe said:

--This is our street, and we are number 12.

Crossing Chesapeake Street the cart stopped in front of a small house which showed all the signs of being unfinished.

--What, here? – sighed Katica.

--Here! – Joe confirmed and it seemed to him then that some sort of heavy weight was resting on his shoulders, a weight he would carry for a long time and which would be heavier and heavier. Miko and Tereza were the only ones who did not show any signs of agitation, as though they had arrived at a place long known

to them. Toni pursed his lips and started to chew them. Katica raised her eyes and began to breathe in through her nose in short bursts, as though she smelt something bad.

The first night fell in Boulder. The sound of the crusher was stronger than ever. The heavy mallets struck again and again, a hollow, intense sound. They all looked exhausted. Each had his or her own mattress, because Joe had made sure of that. Sleep overtook the new residents of the Goldfields, leaning quietly over them. Only Joe remained awake.

His thoughts went from Perth to Kalgoorlie, from Vis to Fremantle, back and forth, he connected events, trying to find some sort of hope from words and impressions for the time to come. He knew very well why he had come here the first time, and he knew very well why he had arrived the second time. His intentions were

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quite clear. He wanted only what was good for his family, especially the children, so he did all he could to save them from the bitter life he had had on the sea and in the fields, when so to speak he could not stay either as a child or as an adult. As for many others, the strings of life had entwined to make their connections for him too.

Joe thought about the fact that he would have the least amount of problems with himself. Probably he would not have problems with Miko either, nor with Tereza, but he was afraid of what might happen with Toni and with Katica. They were the source of his worries, they were the reason why he, although exhausted from his travels, could not close his eyes, could not call upon sleep to visit him, to rest him and open the new day for him.

The end of the journey was unexpected. There were signposts in their eyes, although hidden at first by the flood of new things. Joe knew that the first impression, which captured their hearts, was a momentary deception behind which hid something much more worrying, and which had to come sooner or later into view. He knew he would have to fight against these dark forces with his own goodness, because his intentions never had been and never would be to make life worse than it was. In the end, it was he who had to endure the strongest burden. He had strength in his arms, in his body. He was capable of doing more than any other bopper or trucker in his shift. They depended on him when things were tough. Friends had started to come to him to ask for advice. But would he be able to overcome what was fast approaching, not so much from outside but from inside, with his own creation, here on the Golden Mile, that he had raised with his own hands, and which to be sure, needed to be improved, because he could not do everything. He had not been able to support them in the old country; and he could not in only a short time build a house with only his wages, or furnish it completely. But that which was necessary, was there. No-one would be hungry, no-one could say they did not have a bed to sleep in. And we didn't come here to have a good time, but to work together for the future, to make sure we had something to eat and a roof over our heads – that was quite clear, he thought.

How could he stand firm, or better, how could he find the strength to put everything into the one objective, one direction; good teamwork to bring fulfilment to everyone? How on the other hand could he satisfy the individuality of each, their different ways of dealing with hardship, so that they remained happy with their togetherness? How could he give them at least a part of that which he wanted to give them, that which he was striving to give them?

But were they striving towards something? Toni, to be sure, is striving, he wants something. Can his something be fitted into ours, together, so that the wolf is full and the goat still in one piece? And then, all sorts of people are here. They can't be kept by themselves. They'll come into contact with others. Tereza won't be able to control them because she is not strong enough for that, especially she doesn't have the strength for Toni, who is more or less his own man. She will have to look out only for Katica because these days she doesn't have too much sense, she is already awakening, but self-supervision remains for her suppressed, undeveloped.

He was thinking far into the night, and then he remembered that in the morning he had to go to the mine to report to the surveyor Mister Franck, who would assign his shift for him and the level where he would start his job. Straight after that he had to go to the police and then to Mister Groky. Bravo, he'd forgotten, before that he had to help Tereza to buy food.

He fell asleep some time after midnight but even then he didn't sleep properly because he was twisting and turning non-stop. Early in the morning he heard a well-known sound which was mixed in with the boom of the crusher. Wind was whirling around in the yard, and that meant the worst was happening.

--Just don't come today, just not today! -- he said to himself. But what had to come, had to come....

Dust began to arrive from all sides. It got through holes, floated in the air, circled around nostrils, got into lungs, and those who were sleeping began to cough. And with that, the first awakening of yesterday's new arrivals in Boulder.

--What is this, Osip! -- First to get up was Tereza.

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--It's that cursed dust, a dust storm, it had to come today, didn't it, it will pass, it'll pass quickly...we'd better stick something up inside here! -- Joe showed his new wife the wooden walls – *Put cardboard over everything, you have to block every hole, make sure there are no cracks, then it's easier, easier, and I couldn't do everything, I couldn't....*

He looked at Tereza and saw in her eyes some sort of shine which encouraged him. She understood him.

At once she began to put things away and step by step to close the openings which were letting that cursed dust get inside. She did it with papers, newspapers she found there, and succeeded in reducing the first gush.

The first of the children to awaken was the youngest, Miko. He started to cough and shake his head as though trying to throw something away from himself.

And then Joe did something very significant: he woke Toni and Katica and told everyone how the cursed dust had come with the wind, how this happened here from time to time and could not be avoided, how they must immediately protect themselves from it. He had intended to go to the mine and start working there, but because of the dust he decided to go with Toni into town, to buy wallpaper and glue. He would show them how to do the job, and they would slowly, under his supervision, fix everything in the house and around the house. In Thompson Street he would visit Mister Groky, borrow some money from him, and then visit the police station and complete what had to be done with regard to registration.

--And me, and me! -- cried Katica, as though she wished to say she wanted to go with them.

--It's man's work! -- Joe cut her off. *You'll help Tereza, there is lots of work to do, lots!*

--The devil I will! -- murmured Katica.

--With God -- added Tereza.

And so Joe set off with Toni towards the centre of Boulder. They walked beside the railway line which went from Boulder over Kambalie, around the mine which could hardly be seen in the cloud of dust, and then along Richardson Street towards Thompson Street.

Toni felt his father's confidence and started working out with him how best to fix up the house. All the way they talked for a long time about the layout of the rooms, the furniture they needed to add, wallpapers, fireplace, veranda and other things, so that Joe got the impression that his son was somewhat interested in the house, that he was happy to start work in it; and this was very important to him. To get him to work as much as possible, so that he couldn't think too much, let him work, let him work, whatever, so that other things didn't occupy his thoughts, things he didn't at the moment want at all. But one thing got in the way – they didn't have money, but in the beginning they could borrow money, and then they had to earn it. And to earn money meant to go down the mine and to get your wages after two weeks, to work out how much was needed for food, debt, clothes and house, and apart from all that a little for entertainment for them all, but not too much, because there would not be much left from those earnings. Joe was counting how many people were in the family, he knew exactly how much they could eat and drink, but he didn't know the rest, because that

depended on momentary needs and desires. He needed to fight for the rest, but in such a way that everyone took part, so that the strength they had was put to best use; but of course, above all else, honestly.

--You have to live honestly! – said Joe. – You can't take from others....

It's good to live honestly...you have to live honestly here...where there are these differences...and the difference only shows how they came by it dishonestly...and poor people exist on this earth because it isn't arranged properly ...honesty among thieves...in the dust and the mines...between wages and shares...between surveyors, bosses and the miners...between this little house and that house, all flowers and greenery, and lawns, hidden by thick fences...you have to live honestly here...

They didn't go that far, because only a few thought this way. Their thoughts went in a sort of circle, which to be sure, created some resistance, some bad feelings, pushing you to do something even though you

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don't really want or desire to do it. They didn't go that far, but they had eyes to see and ears to hear. Joe thought within his own limits and his thoughts mostly coincided with those of Tereza, although they didn't speak a lot about it together. But Toni – could he, a young man, passionate, enterprising, articulate, educated, agile – could he limit himself? You could see on him and by his behaviour that he would not find it easy to go into the mine, even though he had never had anything to do with it. Maybe he would come close, maybe he would even work a little, but to enter in order to stay there, to work there for wages as a miner working for his daily bread, that would not happen....Miko was different. Somehow, he was destined to be a worker. He was uncommunicative, but he listened. He would do even more than he was told to do, but with even better results than one would expect. And she, she – that was a different case altogether and needed to be very carefully considered.

--Mister Groky, we're here!

--Here you are, and that's your son, good, good, what a big young man he is, I didn't think he would be so grown-up and – clever, you can see in his eyes. You're called Toni, bravo Toni, yes det is vanderful, aj see, that's great indeed, and the others are at home, in the house, and how was your journey, and what's happening in our country, is there a lot of hunger, are the vintages any good, are they catching fish, yes fish, if only I could eat a brudet (fish stew) of skarpina (groper), did you eat any, and drink that wine of ours, the one from Vis, called vugava, vugava, you could have brought a bottle with you, you could have, I'm sorry, sorry, and you didn't even think about it, you were thinking about your family, you said you got married, so quickly, so quickly, how come? Did you, did you, oh well now you will have fun in Boulder, now you'll fix your house, now Joe will go down the mine, to dig, and you, what work will you do, you don't know yet, you don't know, there's work here, there is, as much as you want, you just need to roll up your sleeves, roll up your sleeves, then everything is okay, with God's help everything is okay, that's it; you said how much, how much; we'll see for a start, that's good I know, you're a good man, reliable, and this son will be too, he's clever, clever, I can see in his eyes, his eyes, he'll be a big man, and it would be good to put him in the School of Mines, people need that, you thought of that, that's good you thought of that, save a bit, save a bit, put a few shillings aside, aside every week, so you have enough for him, then forward, forward, and how much, did you say? How much did you say, until when, never mind, it's all good, like I thought, gold up, gold down, you can't ever catch it, in Adelaide they are buying, here they spend everything, everyone gets it, everyone wants to bet on the races...

--And what's that, "resis"? – Toni asked his father when they left Mister Groky's house.

--"Resis" are...resis are...but Mister Groky wasn't thinking about horse races and dog races, not those races, he meant races between people, that there are many who want to start working, in his business...

--And what is his business! – Toni continued with the questions.

--His business is trading, and how he does that, I don't know. They say he buys gold in small bags to sell it, to lend it, so they add interest to it, to trade in shares, that he went into some contract with the mines manager, that they share the gold with him, smelt it in the bush, and others say he has a small company...see how he told me where to buy paper, string and other things, not in Peasey Street but...we'll go to Bert Street.

--*I can't understand most of what you're saying!* – Toni answers, but goes with him to Burt Street, where they find the shop in question and buy what they need.

On the way Toni went into the bookshop. There they bought The Temple Literary Readers, books 1 and 2, from which children learn to read and write. Toni was happy with this literature, to begin with.

The dust had settled down. Here in the centre there was not so much of it, as though it was saving up. Considerably weighed down, father and son set off for the periphery from whence they had come. Beside them, figures were advancing.

--*Gud dej, Joe! Yu just kem bek! Dets nice, dets nice! End dats yur san, izntit!...Vot a big boy...Dusti, derti here, my God! Didn't ekspekt dis.....*

--*And what did they say?* Toni asked.

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--*Um, they asked me how it was back home!*

--*And what's that: dusti and derti?*

--*Here there is prašine i šporko je....it's dusty and dirty here.*

They stopped talking. In front of them were fences, some of them crooked, falling over, some kept up with cans, sheets of tin. Opposite Dwyer's were two huts. From one of them came a woman.

--*Hi Joe, Nice to see you back! Haven't heard from John! Is he alive...*

--*Good day, Missus Merfi! Gud dai! You still here, you still here! Gud bye, gud bye...*

--*And why did you answer her like that!*

--*She's a bit cracked, she lost her husband, then she started roaming around and drinking, she lives there, in the hut, waiting for her John....*

--*And John doesn't come back...*

--*That's right son! He doesn't come back! And he never will...*

--*And how does she live, how?*

--*The government gives her a couple of lira, and she gets drunk and then she goes begging. She'll come to our door, if she hasn't already....*

--*And what are they: red lites??*

His father stopped and looked at him. The words stuck in his throat.

--*And who told you that? Who?*

--*I heard it in the bookshop. People were saying: red lights, red lights area...so I thought...*

My old man found it hard to believe, and yet he had to believe, because his son had come only yesterday to Boulder and had not met anyone who could have said anything about it. A "red lights" area was on the northern part of Brookman Street in Kalgoorlie. Not saying anything, thinking how to find the best solution to this embarrassing subject, Joe eventually found the strength to go directly to the point:

--*That's prostitution, women who stay in one street to do their thing, and since there are red lamps there, it's called the "red light" area. There are all sorts of things here in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, all sorts of bad luck and trouble, because everyone is intent on the gold, and people are human, there aren't many women, so they made these whorehouses....*

--*Ah, whorehouses, they were in Split too. But they weren't legal. Those women were hounded, but they worked in the doorways and the narrow streets of the ghetto at night....*

Joe felt better, but at the same time another thought occurred to him, how his son already knew about these things, and maybe would want to find out more, but here on the spot.

They continued in silence, until they reached home. The dust had settled, so it was easier to breathe and to work.

Joe began immediately. He showed his son how to put the wallpaper on the wooden walls, how to glue it in place. Katica surprisingly also joined in, she helped Toni, while Miko was in the yard and running backwards and forwards into the house, asking now this, now that. Since they didn't have a stove, they made do with an

improvisation made out of pieces of iron , which Joe had brought from somewhere, because everywhere there were the remains of strange machines which the previous miners had used or else they had been thrown away because they were not effective. Especially there were iron barrels and condensers for water which were no longer needed when the pipeline came through, so that people had taken them and used them for various things in the house, breaking up some parts and making stoves and fireplaces of strange forms and dimensions.

And then Joe went to the Ivanhoe mine to report for work.

And what shall I tell you now, Joe; you went to work, you went again in a line of people, you went over the railway line, which goes towards Kambalie, you went down the shaft, and there they were digging deeper and deeper. True, some things had been fixed, to protect the miners. They had brought in ventilation, some air

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pipes were wrapped in rags, but miners often tripped on them, and they became blocked. But still, the fuses, as you called them, our cords which would smoke, they had been and remained, the worst problem. When the fuses were lit, twenty or more of them, and when that was mixed with the dust, after the dynamite had broken up the quartz, you couldn't breathe from the foul smell. The pipes wrapped in rags did not help at all. You simply felt like you were suffocating. Your money which you received every two weeks, Joe, you certainly earned it. That's for sure! You earned those candles too, which you took (this was tolerated and not considered stealing). Those lire sterling of yours, they were full of sweat, like your underclothes the colour of dynamite which you gave Tereza to wash.

--*But what's this, how come?* – wondered Tereza, finding it hard to believe that anyone could in one day dirty their clothes to that extent. People sweat at home in our country, but not like this!

--*Yes well, back home.....* – Joe answered, tired.

Yes, previously you had washed your own underpants and singlet, you cooked for yourself, and now at least that problem was solved, you had more time, but you spent it at home, you brought the wood, sawed it, cut it up, and your sons helped. You noticed how young men were beginning to come around to your house. Barbaro came, Jardo came and Charlie O'Connor, those you had known before, and some others you had never noticed before began to come, who worked in the mines, but there were those who didn't like doing that, who spent their days there in Boulder in various ways, so that sometimes you asked yourself, how, for God's sake, did they survive? And you sensed very well why they came, probably not to see Toni and Miko, certainly not, although Toni had soon made contacts, at first with our people, and then with others – Irish, English, Italians. You asked yourself: how do all these devils attach themselves to me, and see, what sticks to me also sticks to her. A man never knows what to do, is it better to do this or that; and you actually made sure that she came. Well, how could you leave her there, at Aunt Dina's, sister of your late wife, and she recommended you take Tereza, and it was because of Kathy, wasn't it? And now, now some new windows are opening, which you are just realising, some you can clearly see, but you are afraid of them, because here in Boulder all sorts of things have been sown, all sorts cropped up, all sorts are showing their strange fruits, and when that is the case, all sorts of things can be expected, especially with female creatures, which are very sought after, because there are very few women, very few indeed. The usual practice in the world is to send males to new countries, and the males pave the way for the females. And here those paths are not yet paved. Here there is still hunger. You know yourself how it was for you. You saw and experienced resistance, the bitter grief of loneliness, without your own family, without a woman, so all sorts of things came to your mind, and those single men, left alone like that, those you saw around you, brought you thousands of their own sorrows and thousands of wishes, of course unfulfilled wishes, so that everything came to them like a revolt, like a protest; like whisky, or beer, mixed together, and then, like the red lights district. You showed, and at the same time you didn't show, understanding for that human sadness, for those sighs in the night, for those desires which were repressed, forced into some corner or other, shut away, cruelly destroyed so to speak. And all because they wanted to achieve something, to get money in the bank, to see the number in their bank book grow; to live with restraint,

in order to move forward to leave the life which was really no life, which was always hanging on a thread of hunger and poverty.

That's a horrible realisation, the thought that we all must fight like that in order to live is horrible, destroying ourselves, and any other way out of this situation doesn't exist. And there, in front of your door there are beggars, beggars I say, and in fact that's what they are when you look at it properly. They want to have a woman with them. And if they can't have her, if they can't grab her, and that often happened, then at least they want to look at her, to hear her melodious voice, because in the mine and in the desert there are no voices of women. There are women, in the red lights districts, but those women are well paid, they take your money, they give you some sort of sickness, they can leave a drunkard in the street completely robbed of everything; and then, try to sue her if you can....

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And nature is nature and who can resent the fact that it shows itself as nature. They probably do not have any of the thoughts that lead to the destruction of a person, but you feel that it could come to that, because the devil never sleeps, a man's thoughts twist and turn, and Katica has in herself something that can provoke.....Yes, it's hard to talk about that and hard to judge her. I guess you won't take her to the convent, you won't give her to the sisters? They are here, of course they are, all of them, priests and nuns follow their flock.. You can always find shepherds, they don't let the sheep wander by themselves, they even go in front to pave the way, isn't that so? You heard that, they told you! And then, and then – what to do? Slowly, slowly you tell yourself; and that's a clever thing to do.

Close the windows a bit, a bit, don't let too much light in, tell Tereza to take care, to open wide her eyes, but not to be too strict, because that would cause an unbearable situation, then you won't know where you are. You will come tired from the mine, and in the house from day to day there will always be the same scenario, and that will eat up the little life you have, and you don't have much, for sure.

Did you, Joe, talk to the surveyor in the mine about Toni, did he promise to help, did you go to Dr Hourley, the Irish man, Catholic priest, the one you met at Mister Groky's, to ask him to intervene, and did you try to persuade Mister Groky himself to do something for you? Yes, you tried, they said it wasn't easy, but they would if they could, if they could. You know, he is a citizen of Austro-Hungary, they know how to take in someone like that, to move their fingers sometimes, to look through them, when it's to do with a good man, and you're a good man, I understand, you did nothing in these six or seven years in Boulder to draw police attention to yourself, or any other powers that be who are here. So we shall see, we shall see! Did you get the certificate rewritten? You did! That's alright then. And you don't need the birth certificate, you don't need it, here they believe a person is born, they don't care if you don't have one, people are open when they want to fix things. We believe, we believe!

How your heart began to race that day when they called you to the School of Mines. To be sure, they asked you, does he know any English, and you said, merrily: -- *On de boat he vos lerning, of kors!* How did you say that, so that they all looked at you and said: -- *Bring him in, bring him in, vi vud like tu si him, we would like to see him!*

And so you had to pay every day a new amount, for the tramcar, and for books, note books, for all those damned school necessities, which you used to doubt were so expensive when they wrote to you from the old country, because you had to send money there too.

Bravo, bravo, you solved that problem too. As you can see, an honest man gets back what he puts out, for sure, you can see it all comes back to him when he works well, when he doesn't mess around, when he doesn't gossip about anyone, when he doesn't cause trouble, doesn't organise anything bad. People appreciate that, they like a hardworking, family man, neat, God-fearing, humble, who builds and works, who puts things together.

Your Tereza, she has hands of gold. How did you come to find such a creature? Look how she arranged the interior of the house, how she put curtains at the windows, how she sorted out the veranda, how she grew

flowers, how she improved the kitchen, so you didn't want to get up and leave it, all exemplary, and again, all simple, neat....

Paper decorations, cut with scissors, pierced, zig-zag, and the cupboards and the little shelves in front of the door, how did she think to put them there, and those bottles, and the demijohn, so you can't see them, but they are right there. And then the garden. And Miko in it, with her, as though they were brother and older sister, getting along so well, and then in the other half of the yard the goat, and ten young chickens, that's clever, so you will have little ones. And already you have planted vines, good on you, everything in order, and she has done the most, the most....Plus she does the washing, and sews, and all by herself. And how is the young one? How is Kathy?

--Good, good – you murmur.

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And Kathy has blossomed. She has taken to sewing with needle and cotton, started to gather together her dowry. And Tereza has shown her everything she knows and she knows a lot, indeed.

From the veranda Kathy watched the street, and behind the row of houses the railway line where trains passed from time to time. She knew that on Sundays many travellers were on the train, looking around or, as they said, going around the loop. And that "around the loop" meant seeing the mine, the dumps, everything people had dug out of the ground, seeing a bit of the bush, where the Bushmen came from. There was a hubbub of sound, mixed with the beat of the battery, the crusher, and the puff-puff of the train as it clattered along the railway line, carrying its human weekend cargo on the short journey there and back.

How she would love to go there! But, what could she do, dear Kathy, what could she do?

--The devil take pennies, the devil take the dust, the devil take all of this, just sitting, sitting, needle and thread and two or three words with someone and that's all, that's it...uh....if only I could go to the races this Sunday, the races, if I could go and see those camps, and the boutiques in Kalgoorlie, and then in the bar, the bar! When, oh when will someone come to take me away, to take me away? They just worry about how to put pennies in their socks and in the sand, and nothing else. I'll persuade him, I'll persuade him to take me out! But they won't let him go either; when he goes to school next week, then ... devil take it, devil take it, how this needle has stuck into me, how it hurts...I'll throw all this away...and I'll say to give me freedom, freedom, I'll learn English, ...aj spik iglish, eye spik iglish, eye lav ju Charli, aj lav yu, yu meye frend, meye med boy... like that, little by little, like that, two words here, two there...yu ar e byutifool gerl, byutifool gerl, very respektabl...I'll ask what that is, respektabl, how am I a respektabl gerl...and that other son of a whore, our Barbaro, he's a barbarian alright, they gave him the right name...it suits him, that cheating mug of his, imagine, he wants me...he wants me, the son of a whore, well he won't get to even touch me, if he holds his hand out, I'll spit in his throat...Charli is a good man...that word respektabl...here's Father, I'll ask him, no I won't ask him, who knows what that means, he could think the same way he did when Toni asked him, what was that again, "red light", red light, ha, ha, ha....

--What are you laughing at! What are you laughing at!

--What, you'll forbid me doing that too? You'll forbid me....

--You're a wild goat, I can't even talk with you...

--And when you ask me: what are you laughing at, what am I to say to you...I'm laughing because I feel like laughing, there you are, there, it's lovely for me here and that's why I'm laughing....

--Hey, hey, you shouldn't be talking to your father like that! – Tereza said in a conciliatory tone.

But Kathy takes no notice, she turns around on the veranda, puts one leg over the other, stretches, opens her arms, and nothing helps, she still feels restless....

--I want to go to the races on Sunday, he can take me, he can take me, me and Toni, and Toni can tell him, he can talk to Toni...and he can buy me some nice skirts and petticoats, like his wife has, and I'll get that nice silk blouse, I'll embroider it, it will all stand out, let them look at me, let the young men see how much there is, I'll turn someone's head, he'll turn in all directions...it will go to his head in the tavern and he won't see

anything else, he won't see anything...ah, they'll find me very expensive, very, very...they won't find it easy with me, not like Tereza, work work, now here, now there, get this, get that, wash, wash other people's underpants, singlets, somebody's pot, Kate won't do that, Kate won't do that...Keyti iz e butiful gerl, respektabl gerl...what a pair I have, no-one in Boulder has anything like it, no, no-one, I'll send you all to the devil, your bank and your gold and your church....they took me to the church the other day, and that Doctor Orli, Doctor Orli some sort of strange minister, opened his mouth and stared at me, like he was going to swallow me...he stared at me and those blue eyes like he was asking me something, and then he gave me a prayer book in English...in the name of the father and the son and the holy ghost...father son and holy ghost...gave me a prayer book, and it was like he wanted to swallow me up...and the old man stood up straight, and Tereza very calmly took the prayer book with two hands, with her rosary around her fingers, she opened her mouth and said instead of me: "tenk yoo, tenk

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yoo..." what a goat, I heard how Father muttered to himself...she'll embarrass me wherever we go....she doesn't know to say thank you, thank you Father Orli....and me and Toni laughed so hard after that, when we went in the yard, we thought we'd die laughing...it was crazy, crazy...it all got mixed up in my stomach that day...I ran away from Father and Tereza so they couldn't say anything to me...and if they had said anything, I would have started laughing again and I don't know what would have happened to me...they would have killed me, killed me...the devil, the devil from hell has come to this earth, how could you be born like that, who taught you to be like that, you goat, you wretch....that's how Father would have spoken, no he wouldn't have spoken, not out loud, he would have said it to himself, and I would have heard what he said to himself, it would have come out of his eyes, his eyes...I would have heard it all...and that's why I ran off, I ran off, and when they told me to come to lunch, then I said I didn't feel like eating, that my stomach hurt, and that wasn't true... yes, there's a devil from hell in me, yes there is, truth to tell, and what can you do about it, so there, so there...pinch me on the bum, if you can...

--Yes I think the full moon has hit you, my Kate, what you're going through, and there on Vis there was hunger, and nothing to wear, we had to be frugal, and here it's not like that, that's why you don't think about it...

--but there was clean air, clean air, not like this here, this dust, this dirt, this misery...

--Clean air is one thing, and hunger is something else again, hunger is worse than dirty air, and both are terrible, I know, but you can't have everything, you have to gain some things by your own efforts....

--What efforts are you talking about, what's wrong with you, you idiot, or have you lost the plot....

--I'm not crazy, Kate, believe me when I tell you: you can't have everything, because these days you have to give up on some things, you can't deny yourself everything it's true, but times are hard, can't you see that your father is using all his strength to get you all out of here...

--On the contrary, on the contrary, what are you saying, you fool; whose fault is it that he got involved with all this, couldn't he find anything else; why didn't he stay in Fremantle, it's clean there, and he could have found a job there, and why not learn a bit, and work as well....

--You don't know what you're talking about, you think it's easy to find a job, what's wrong with you, alright, maybe he could have made a mistake, for sure he could have, because he didn't know everything, and he wasn't able to, and do you have to say because of that: and whose fault is it that he didn't...

--You're full of shit saying that you always need to work to earn some pennies, there are those who didn't even touch a hoe with their little finger and neither did they put any nets in the sea, and they always grabbed lots more, and who told you you had to work like this, just look at that one with the googly eyes, Mister Groky, in Vis his parents didn't even know how to go to the toilet, and here he has water in the toilet, he has white tiles, he has a lounge room with glass on all sides, lamps, rugs from Arabia, he has, he has everything, and how much did he work, you can tell by his fingers he came from a labourer's family, they're round, fat, turned in, and the skin on them is thin, from counting his pennies, how he twists and turns them in that soft skin, a hundred lira, two hundred lira, you'll say he worked, that he takes care, but who does take care, these wild

ones, these goats of ours, Italians, Greeks, Albanians, all foreigners and some Irish, English, English, you think you know everything, go and sleep there, not like those rich people in Pisi Strit, and those in Beri Strit, and those in Kalgoorlie, what are they doing, yes for sure they are miners, miners.....

--Be reasonable, Ketí, you're still very young, how can you talk like that, like you know everything in the whole world, and you're only seventeen, you're so young, and you're messing with things that aren't for your age....

--Never mind, what do I care, I'm sick of all this, if I catch someone I'll straight away get married, I'll give it to him, I'll give him that thing, he'll take me and then he'll marry me, I'll just make sure he has money in the bank, that he thinks the way I do, and then we'll be together, together...and we'll talk, we'll talk...

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Yes Kathy, I totally sympathise with you. I understand your impulses. I like the way you're rebelling. But I'll still have to think about whether you are right, because with this sort of behaviour you cause pain to others, especially to those closest to you who fervently desire only one thing; that all is well for you. I know their view of the world isn't necessarily the right view, that they are people who grew up in a society which restrained their strength, which determined their fate in advance, so that they became what they are, but you can't say they are not people, that they don't have humanity. They show it every moment! Can't you understand that? Maybe now, in the heat of life, when your energy is at its highest, in the enchantment of your breasts and your hips, in the beauty of your face, you can't really understand fully their humanity. I understand you, they are restraining you, putting up boundaries around your world, but, be mature, understand them too....

To whom am I talking, dear Perrin! I've become so involved in that world of Boulder and our parents, that I simply forgot about you, forgot you are soon coming to visit me, that finally after forty years, we'll meet and exchange a few words about ourselves, and others, and things in general, and some in particular. Sorry, I completely forgot about you and your travels. Who knows what's happening to you? Maybe nothing, because you are coming according to your plan, and it doesn't matter to you whether you arrive this evening or tomorrow. Ah, I also forgot that I have my own family, that my wife and children are waiting for me to have lunch, to tell me about their happenings, their big and small worries, in school, on the street, the playground, everything I need to know or what they want to tell me so I can help them, or just for the sake of communicating together.

Sorry, Perrin! Here I am, after a pause, again on the path, it's big, wide, and I am called upon to show understanding for everything that has happened, not to accuse and not to judge, just to show how diverse is this life around us, how all of us are part of the natural world which thrives around us, blossoming with all its colours, all its tones and feelings and nuances, all its differences. Sorry, Perrin, where was I?

You have to understand them too....

That's your future mother, Perrin. She's already creating you. In that rebellion she is carrying you beneath her lovely breasts, she's drawing you into herself, you will become a part of her, everything she has and will have all her life, because motherhood is something big, unusual, it dissolves all the bad connections in us, it turns into love, which is irresistible, which knows no obstacles. And you'll see, Perrin, how things will start, how they will develop.....

You'll see! But until then, let me go again to the streets of Boulder, to move to my birthplace, because there is a beginning there for me too in that shadowy happiness that develops. It develops, I say, although I am still far off, because these are war years. A fire broke out, a long way away, in our Europe. Prince Ferdinand was fired on in Sarajevo, him and his Habsburg principles. Important people met, took council, and then the armies set off.

--What's happening over there! -- like I can hear my father's voice in that desert. It's boiled over, never peace, never any rest. What's wrong with this world? You just start to do something, you can see the sky. And already it's exploded over there far away, in our country; and then others are caught up in it. Never, never

peace nor rest. It's lucky, Toni, that you're not there, you would be taken in the army, you would have to go to Belgrade. Lucky, Tony! And I would go with you. And what would happen then?

And from that time newspapers were read regularly in our house. The Kalgoorlie Miner and The Sunday Sun. From then, everything that happened in Europe was tracked. And many people would come to our house and stand on the veranda and comment. Even Mister Groky came, who was somehow separated over there in Thompson Street. He too wanted to know what was happening on the island of Vis, what was happening on Hvar, Brač, Peljeca, and Korčula and under Biokovo, Mosor and Kozjak mountains. Mostly they came on Sundays. After their conversations they would play bowls and pull ropes, tug-of-war. And then somehow matters to do with the war in Europe came here and escalated.

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--Gold, gold, gold -- could be heard thousands of times in our house – I'll look for it now, I'll look for it, he who is richer, that's who will win the war, the richest, the richest are those who have colonies, my friends, they are working now for the British royal family, for King George the Fifth and his son the Prince of Wales. And Mr Minister President Gladson doesn't even have to think. Cannons are made from that gold, from gold, and for me it's good now, when will you hit the quartz if not now when the price will rise, strike new gold, go bush, bring wood, sell, make up a threesome, or five people, go far away to find gold, if you find it, good for you and for them, good for everyone. And let them fight their war, let them fight, fuck Austro-Hungary and her Franz Joseph and his princesses, long life to my George the Fifth, Long live the Commonwealth, when the English get involved in that war, all hell will break loose, and we had enough of Austria and the Italians and all the others....

--How can you talk like that, there was order under Franz Joseph, there was order in Austria, if you went from one place to another there, you got your pay the same day, you knew where you were there and you prayed to God and gave to our emperor

--...don't let anyone hear you swearing like that, how can you say that, and what forced us to leave our country to come here, what brought us here. Wealth brought us, yeah yeah; scarcity brought us and all sorts of trouble, there was nothing to eat, that was how it was in Austro-Hungary, that's what that Franz Joseph with the white beard and that Prince Ferdinand of yours on his white horse stood for, push him in the bum now, that will twist his whistle for him, he'll have a stroke in the middle of Vienna, God willing; it was miserable, miserable, hungry stomachs, go fishing, price of fish no good; as soon as you try in the vineyard, filokser (phylloxera) comes, peronospora (diseases to spoil the grapes), you kill yourself working, you throw rocks on a pile all day long, you look for soil under your feet and there is none, only stones, that, that was important and not his highness the king and czar of the Austro-Hungarian empire....

...it's all just a malady, a big disease, this war too, like all diseases, sickness, sickness in the chest and intestines, my dear Slavs, why did you get upset, your people and mine are dying there and there's even bigger hunger than there was before, and bigger scarcity, and how can you send money over there now to your family, they won't get one lire, you don't ask about that, you don't ask about that, you unfortunate ones, they're left without you, they have no one on earth, and if they have good arms and chests, of course, they get taken into the army, but you think it's not like that in England, and it won't be like that here? here, I tell you, I'm telling you, you will all come to the front of the queue, they'll take you, they'll take you, Australians, Chinese, you've all gone mad, fever got you all, you don't respect anything except that bullshit in the Kalgoorlie Miner, and here you're all uttering rubbish, and we'll all be fucked, fucked, I'm telling you, war is war, and war is bad for everyone, for both sides, for the whole world, for me and for you and for your family and for the English.....

Here there was a pause in this intense discussion. They all shrank inside themselves, they all started to think about the words, which had been harsh, depressing, pessimistic, just as was the war which had, thanks to one thoughtful person among them, now gained new dimensions.

Joe, who had said nothing, who usually just listened, got up first and went from the veranda into the house.

I can understand, Perrin, how that made them uneasy when they were told they would be caught up in it too, that they also would be included in the troubles that had overtaken the world. Even here, they would not be far enough away from the hotbed of war. Never mind about the gold, it has its false shine, in wartime too. War seeks something else, it seeks the blood and bones of people. That decides the outcome of wars, and there is never enough of that. Never mind about the gold and the metals that shine. Blood and bones are the best metals for war. They cook the iron for the cannons and they melt in the fire caused by those cannons. It's come to the division of the world and its wealth between the dark forces....

And what do you think, my dear Perrin, who among them they denounced that afternoon. They didn't pick on those who were defending Franz Joseph, which maybe would be expected. They picked on the one who

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spoke of the war as a sickness, and sent him to Coventry. He left Boulder and went to Fremantle and today no-one knows his name or surname, although my mother declared that someone somewhere said he was called Vinsent, so probably that was someone called Vitce, one of our people. But I can tell you that his speech remained, and that many things played out among our people which constantly reminded them of that day when that mysterious Vitce stood up in the middle of the group in our yard and with two or three litres of wine, told them the truth about themselves and the war.

--*Let him rest in peace!* – Mother used to say, repeating perhaps for the thousandth time one wish and thanks.

At that time people spoke cautiously with the police. Each Sunday voices were somehow subdued, they used words that could not be misunderstood, they were not for Franz Joseph, nor against him, and they did not talk about English or French victories, they spoke only of things written in The Kalgoorlie Miner, but somehow reluctantly, without irony, without much rivalry. And they made sure that among them there was not a spy...an apology for England, who had big ears and a small mouth... but in any case, some news, even that which was quite innocent, was related only among good friends. Someone who raised their suspicions provoked the contempt and disgust of everyone on the other side, which is the usual phenomenon among people. They didn't invite him when someone skinned a goat or obtained overnight from Fremantle some fish or a decanter of wine.

Scarcity....it was coming, even though the world sought Australian wheat, her wool and meat. But gold, gold all at once started to lose value, the price jumped around, and hunger for human flesh grew. And when the yellow peril appeared, among our newcomers everything all at once became confused, upside-down, distorted, bent, like the crooked old fences or the houses abandoned because the owners found work elsewhere. But for these people no new job was on offer, they began to dread losing the little they had, and began to think that they could be caught, taken away, forced to.....

Each day the war came closer, even though some thought it was still far away. And then they heard the news about the sixteenth battalion and its 84th infantry regiment, into which the goldminers had begun to merge. They called it the Voluntary Goldfields Regiment, and it was fear and trembling for the poor Slavs, Italians, Greeks and people of other nationalities, who had come rushing in from Europe to earn a living for themselves and their families, because they could see the possibility that they too could find themselves in the army somewhere far away on some battlefield because there was never enough voluntary human flesh.

In Boulder every moment someone would be pulled in as a volunteer. The shifts thinned out. Slowly but surely gold production fell, ounce by ounce every minute, police were hanging around, and the "other-siders" became the target of those whose families lost their breadwinner, because the foreigners were all at once in a better position than the sandgropers, the "real" Australians, that is, the English, Irish, Welshmen and other early settlers. While they were still strangers, the arm of the military did not reach them, they worked and lived well, in a foreign land. Plus "they send our money to Europe....."

At the time when the war became worldwide, Toni was finishing the school year at the School of Mines in Egan Street in Kalgoorlie, and then they called him and told him: You can go home....

--*Take yor time, Toni!* –he arrived in the morning around ten o'clock, which was unusual. *Take yor time, Toni*, he cried at the entrance to the yard, and Katica, then Miko, Father and Tereza, ran towards him.

--*They expelled me from school, not just me, others too, and they were all foreigners....*

Joe had suspected it would come to that, because the war situation didn't allow for the luxury of schooling foreigners, while young men of Toni's age went under arms. That would have been too much to expect.

Mister Groky then appeared in front of the gate to the yard, as though he had chosen just the right moment.

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--*It's not good, it's not good, all sorts of trouble have come, I took citizenship a year ago. I am a citizen of the British Empire, but it's not good, it's not good, they took my son straight away, to be truthful he went as a volunteer, first to Zvec and who knows where he'll end up, you see, how I made a mistake, and you are still Austrian, they don't count you, they didn't take you.....*

--*But they expelled Toni from school!* Joe adds.

--*That's nothing, nothing, he's here, with you, you can see him, and I can't see my son and who knows if he will come back, who knows, everything is up in the air.*

Mister Groky looked more than miserable, enough so that one had to feel sorry for him, even though he lived such a high life compared to those on the periphery, who had to skimp and scrape, and never could find enough money to afford even a small portion of that which he had.

Joe became even more careful. Who knew what could be hiding even in the most innocent word. He knew Mister Groky, who indeed had jumped to help him when it had been necessary, but who had not come off badly with him, because Joe had paid back the money, and he had received his interest plus other little favours, to be taken into account, for instance good goat skins, and a few litres of *prosek* (proshek – a sweet wine) because our people had already begun to use the grapes from Fremantle.

--*It's good* – Joe thought to himself – *they took his son to Zvec, and that's not near the front line, he must have arranged something so his son was sent further away. It's not really that hard for him....*

--*We need to get organised, we need to get organised now, I know it's not easy for you either, now they have sent him too out of school, and it would be better to go and work, because when you're not doing anything, you have to rely on strangers, then all sorts of bad things occur to you, you start thinking about this and that, you believe the newspapers, you go to the horse races or the dog races, waste your money when you get it, that's what happens, and why not, Joe, why don't you make a small company, and then let them go and search for gold, your son must have learnt how to look for gold, let them go and search here and there on the goldfields, let them go for three or four days and then come home, and then if they find any it will be good, I'll give you money for the job and then we'll share, you know – if it comes to the point when they take yours too, and here you don't have work, and they drive you out, because anything can happen, you're sure then, and you know, sickness can come and all sorts of bad luck, because this is war, this isn't peace....*

Joe listened and the best thing he could do was to say to Mister Groky that he would think carefully about his proposals, and that he wouldhave his answer in a few days.

Mister Groky actually expected this, because he knew Joe was a careful man, who would turn over every thought several times before deciding something.

--*It's easy for him, he made his son a volunteer, he knows what to do, and still he's crying, crying, some channels are no longer water tight, the route to take is not clear, people were lost from the mines, they left him, and new people haven't come, he can't trade, so he comes to us, he's not going to bamboozle me, not me...*

Toni, however, accepted the role intended for him by Mister Groky, with pleasure. Some perspectives opened up for him in this way, much better than changing places in the mine with some volunteer who had gone to the battlefield or to enter into some contract, on the basis of a system of tribute, which they had started to introduce here and there, giving a worker wages according to the value of the gold he dug up.

--Eh, no, they won't get me into that, aj em not so fulish to go endegraund, to catch the miners' complaint like others have done, including my old man I think, he's coughing more and more, I don't like it, it's not for me, and he's already started on that system of tribute, and doesn't come home for ten hours at a time, yes, there's more money in it, more, but still not enough to make it better, not enough to get a better price, but then, then some sort of work, it's necessary, because you can't just stay at home and look at the stars and listen to the cries and suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ when they put him on the cross....

God-fearing Tereza is a good woman, but she worships the altar, kneeling, hands crossed, and wants us to do the same; eh, they're not going to get me into the Golden Horseshoe mine, nor Perseverance nor Ivanhoe,

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even if it was all good like the grapes that grew on the vine on our veranda last year. Aj em not born intu det gaim, no aj don't lajk det lajf.....

He already knew what happened in the shafts. He knew how some people had buried a rich source of telluride and then after a certain time gone into partnership, taken work under the so-called tribute system, and when they had insured themselves with a contract, gone to search for that telly, found it and then, as though they had just discovered it, shared the profits between themselves and their company. Toni could quickly smell out tricks, but the work in the mines did not appeal to him at all. He simply did not want to go down into the hole. On the other hand, it seemed to him that it was necessary to have some other sort of idea for this sort of game. His father would never agree, if he understood what it was all about. This sort of system did not suit a miner who had an innate honesty. But if he did follow in the tracks of his father and learnt *to spit the fuse with a slice of gelignite*,...he would certainly and without any great forethought, have entered into this sort of job, straight away, especially if he came across the valued telly. He would not consider for a moment whether or not he should trick the shift boss, surveyor or geologist and send them over to the other side, to some other minor reef so that he could bury that which he had found and cover his tracks until he was able to make a contract on the tribute system.

--My father is a miserable wretch! Miserable and unwilling! He's not learnt anything about life! He'll die and he'll always be in the same place! I'll not follow him when I have already learnt where the veins go, where the telly is, where the alluvial gold, deposits, reefs, loads! Lucky that Mister Groky came! It will be best if I go to him by myself, by myself....

Toni and Katica talked at length in the bottom half of the yard, while Miko dug up the potatoes, tied the bean plants to the wire, which he had put between the stakes, and Tereza rinsed the sheets and pillowslips, and put lye for soaking into the second basin.

--And Barbaro, would he want to? -- asked Toni.

--I'd want to get married to him, and then, then... It's growing, growing, you see....

She pointed to her belly.

At once he frowned. He had suspected this for quite a while. They were close to one another, both by nature and because they felt differently from the other members of the family. However this pregnancy upset him because he never expected that she would do this with Barbaro, because she used to tell him that Charlie was her target.

--The devil take you, why did you get caught straight away! And with him! Don't you know he shouldn't come inside, that semen mustn't.....

--I wanted that, I wanted it, so there, I can't live like this here, I want to get out, to go away, it doesn't matter how, to my own house, I want my own children so there, and only you can help me, only you.....

She was determined and relentless and Toni could not risk going against her any longer because he knew she was unyielding when she got something into her head.

--And if I get him into a company haven't I helped you

--Yes you have, you have, I want to get married now, now, in a week

That's how Katica thought and that's how it had to be. She had left behind the idea of Charlie, who she actually loved, because Charlie was not persistent enough. Not knowing how to escape from her boredom, even though she had thought about finding someone wealthier, she had suddenly decided on Barbaro, who had been heartlessly insistent, and then one evening next to an abandoned house she had given herself to him to cut things short. She had waited a while and now she was pregnant.

They planned how Kate would go before the altar.

Then Katica confided in Tereza. And everything went on from there. Tereza first crossed herself; and then she began to think in already well-known boundaries: if that's the way it is, it's best to finish it as soon as possible, that is, bring the young people before the altar, so that everything is in order, especially since Katica

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wants it so badly. Toni met his father when he returned from the mine and told him openly what had happened. His old man seemed not to want to believe it. And then after a long drawn out back and forth, he bit his tongue and gave his permission for the wedding to be held immediately, as Toni had said and as Katica wanted. Faced with the fact which filled him with dread, (even though he had thought Tereza would guard against such a thing, which was what Aunt Dina had told him back in the old country), he could not see any other way out of it. When all was said and done, it was best to do what would cause the least harm.

But this did not console Joe in the least. He felt more and more discomfort in his heart. Again he had found that things did not go according to his plan.

Barbaro had built a house for himself, similar to the one Joe had built for his family before he went to his country to bring them here.

They needed help. Since there was already a certain sum of money in the bank, meant, it is true, to enable them to go one day to Fremantle to live, with a fairly heavy heart he put aside a certain amount for a dowry for the newlyweds, and then after two weeks, the wedding followed.

Neither Father nor Tereza liked Barbaro. But since they had no choice, they shrugged their shoulders and solved the problem temporarily. Barbaro was a personable man, already in his twenty fifth year. Father knew his parents, but not so well that he could judge Barbaro on the basis of "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree". He knew more about him from the way others talked about him, and from the few times he had seen him in Boulder. People said that he took life lightly, that he went to the horse and dog races and played cards, and that he was close to Slabić and helped him with his suspicious activities. True, Barbaro had worked in the Lake View mine, where the gold was very rich, ninety per cent gold extraction so it was said, and where, together with the Star mine, nearly 40,000 tons of ore were refined every month. That job had brought him a regular profit and so to some extent had softened the bad impression someone could get from the stories told by his acquaintances. It was possible to look through your fingers also, because he was young and thoughtless. But Joe could not so easily get rid of the suspicion that Barbaro was not exactly an honest man; like he could not forgive his older son either, for his behaviour.

--But it seems to me that they will manage, that she will calm him down, that he'll be better as a family man, that he will settle down. And who knows what can happen! No-one can know what will happen in these circumstances!

And that's how it ended. They had a wedding feast in Boulder. Many people came, including Mister Groky. The table was full of food and drink, and since it was the beginning of spring, there were young goats, not to mention wine and *proshek*.

Katica's wedding was indeed celebrated well, even though in the shadow of many happenings which were not very favourable, since the war was raging, although truth to tell, far away from them, but more and

more it was felt as a threat and as a disruption of the logical course of events. The price of gold fell, and this decline always meant depression, the rise of other prices, the possibility of loss of work, and already in some mines the shifts had been suspended. The reason was because many men had gone to the front, so that men were needed and dismissals were not so many, although the further fall in production could bring all manner of things to come.

Mister Groky carried out his transaction with Toni. In the end, although pretty reluctantly, even Joe agreed to his arrangement. In the meantime something else happened. Tereza became pregnant, but she could not carry the baby for long, and gave birth in the seventh month to a daughter who died immediately. In this way a certain uneasiness fell upon the family, like an omen of some bigger misfortune which threatened and which could happen.

With Barbaro, who had for a time left his job in the Lake View mine, and with Charlie O'Connor, who was otherwise a barber in Waverley Street, where Father went to have his hair cut, Toni left one day for his first foray into the desert. They took a cart and horse, loaded two barrels of water, a box of tinned food and

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biscuits, picks and other tools and left to seek their fortune. Joe saw them off and wished them a safe return. In the meantime Katica left Barbaro's house, where she had been living, and returned among her own family. Probably because she felt rather lonely, and I guess for other reasons too, which Tereza and Joe could not fathom. From time to time, she went in the daytime to her own yard, but she returned in the evening to sleep at their place.

Miko was growing up next to them in the shadows, almost unnoticed, but nevertheless very patient and willing to work. Tereza was like a real mother to him. She loved him above all the others and indulged him in all things. Miko became a young man with strong arms and shoulders, almost without anyone noticing. By himself, with his own hands, he fixed a cart, arranged a horse, went to the bush, brought wood, sold it at the Power-house, the electric power plant, tended the garden, succeeded in getting useful yields for the family, and when necessary, he would go with the cart to Kalgoorlie, to the market place, buy all that was necessary, and do favours for others, who would pay him. Of all the games, he liked only the tug-of-war, that is, when the rope was pulled to one side or the other, and in his group he was among the first. Miko was unusually moderate regarding drinking and eating. He never had too much and stayed late into the night with companions, or wasted time in the Cornwall Hotel, where otherwise all sorts of things happened. That was a "dropping-off place" for stolen or black-market gold, so that the police always had work to do, and since the house at 12 Dwyer Street was close by it often happened that a police inspector, like Sergeant Coulter, would come and sit on Joe's veranda and talk to those in the house, drink a little wine, to hear any news or to ask very politely if a certain person was prowling around in the vicinity.

Miko was always ready to answer delicate questions when Joe was working his shift in the mine, because neither Tereza nor Katica knew as much English as did he, who actually had not studied it, but had drunk in every word like a sponge, so that it came about that he knew more than would be expected.

But the time came when Miko, or Nick as he became known, had to follow in his father's footsteps. True, Joe did not want his youngest son to start straight away in the mine, so he found a job for him on the dumps, where he loaded the wagons and went with them to the hoists and back. One day however, there were not enough men in the shift, so that Miko too went down the mine, as a trucker, who would load, and then unload onto the wagons, the excavated ore. In this way father and son in different shifts shared the same fate.

The group returned from the bush from time to time with relatively thin results. Here and there they would pick up some specks, or find some sort of nugget, a few ounces, but it was very poor compared to what they had anticipated. The ground had already been searched, they had to dig into abandoned "mines" because it was said that they had been known to bring good fortune to some people. There was a story going around among the miners about how a certain number of amateurs had searched everywhere, knowing nothing about the various layers, nor where gold could be found. They had left their work at the moment when even the least

skilful prospector would have continued, and then later those more knowing had come across gold in the already well-dug holes with just a few strikes of their pick, and resolved their destiny. Toni knew all about these stories, but in the first searches for gold east of Boulder, he had not had a chance to find out if they were true. Used to life at home and in school, he found it hard to sleep in the open, and to have to put up with the scorching heat and the damned flies which attacked them and were very tiresome. What held him there was the wonderful way the friends got along together. It was like the three of them had especially found one another, better than anyone could have imagined. Clever Charlie established contact with the Aborigines and asked them where the nuggets could be found which from time to time they brought into town and exchanged for food and clothing. Charlie had taken with him tobacco and beer, and he offered these to the Bushmen, who led him here and there, but without any special success.

Barbaro had the hardest job. He dug and made holes with the pick while Charlie helped him. That had been his job in the mine. Toni inspected the layers, sampled, guided: *here now, over there...!*

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One time the group did not appear for several days, so that inside the camp of 12 Dwyer Street the temperature grew. Probably they had found something? That could be true, it could be true? But their hopes fell when Toni came and threw his little bag on the table. True, there were five or six ounces of gold inside, just enough to pay for the expenses of the operation.

But then Nick, the next day, working in the lower part of the yard with the horse and cart, noticed Barbaro on the veranda of the Cornwall hotel, which was only about twenty metres away from the corner of our yard. It was one of the many hotels that had sprung up on all sides in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, where newcomers and passers-by felt at home, but also many black marketeers and vagabonds. But among all these so-so buildings it stood out because it was well built, in stone with big wooden verandas, and it was adorned by a sign for the year 1898, which was especially valued. The hotel was only two stories high, with a few rooms, a restaurant, and that famous veranda, where groups of people from the periphery would gather to drink a jug of beer or to play cards on a Sunday, and also there were the activities which in the Boulder dialect were happening in the “dropping off place” for stolen or smelted down gold. The fact that Barbaro was drinking beer on the veranda did not seem very important to Nick because Barbaro, and also Toni with him, were often guests at this hangout, where all sorts of vermin used to meet, bloody bastards as Father used to say, even though he too, later, a year or two before his death, had a place of his own there, just like Slabić, and earned some money looking out for policemen, because alcohol was not permitted to be poured all day but only at certain times.

That day, Nick could see through openings in the boards which hid from view the lower part of the yard, how some sort of exchange was taking place on the veranda, with glances towards the house and yard on 12 Dwyer Street; which made him suspicious. They thought it was all clear on this side, but even so they surreptitiously under the table put little bags into the satchel, and a little later the “buyer” took from his pocket some papers and put them on the corner of the table, truth to tell, very carefully.

Nick said nothing, but one day he asked Toni to lend him some money, about five or six lira, because he had to buy tin in town, and Father had gone to work, and hadn't left any money. Toni took out his wallet from his back pocket and counted six lira from the larger amount he had there.

--And where did you get this?

--I won it on the horses!

--And when were you there?

--Barbaro was there, and I put one lira on and won fifteen.

It was a bit unbelievable. Nick was obviously quite troubled at that time.

Toni did not tell his father he had been betting; while Nick took every shilling home, never asking for even a penny more than the usual jobs for which he needed money, which Joe had at his disposal. But Nick did

not just shrug his shoulders and let matters take their own course. Barbaro's action, and Toni's subterfuge warned him about something deeper which had been going on lately, and it had started with Katica's sudden marriage and then the wished-for threesome which had formed under the patronage of Mister Groky. He waited for the moment when he would be able to talk to Toni and Katica about it all, in such a way that he did not give offence, but to let them know the overall condition of the family, which they should be taking into consideration. However, he did not succeed in doing this, because other things happened.

Few people in Boulder gave any thought to the request of William Morris Hughes, who was at that time the Prime Minister of Australia, who in a series of referendums sought that voluntary entry into the armed forces be changed to the mobilisation of people into the so-called overseas services. The referendums came to nothing, but they divided public opinion and political factors. However, one day it came to pass that the law about recruitment was passed. Our people in Boulder, who had got over their first fear that they could be sent to the far away front, had completely relaxed and no longer thought that anything could happen to them. Their shock was sudden. Toni one morning received a summons and had to report in Melbourne. A few days later the

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same thing happened to Barbaro, and to some other young men in Boulder, Slavs, Italians, Bulgarians. The whole periphery area was stirred up. People ran hither and thither saying: *How come, but we are....*

What came after that: "But we are"was spoken quietly and somehow timidly, if someone didn't already want to call it: shamefully. Those Slavs and Dagoes had names like "other-siders" and most of them had come later than the "sandgroppers" that is, the established inhabitants, who had come to Boulder in the earliest days of the gold-rush. They had founded it in the time of Paddy Hannan, Dan Shea and Tom Flanagan, who had been the first prospectors, and after them had come thousands, when it was heard that..."*Padi strak de gold*".

The sandgroppers, that is, the old-timers, felt they were in an unprivileged position. Their sons had conquered New Guinea from the Germans, they had been at Gallipoli, in Mesopotamia, France and other places, and news of the death of this and that person came all the time, of this or that person being wounded, while these foreigners, other-siders, had been hunkered down in their beds, working in the mines, in shops, in the fields, earning money, and some had even gone into various speculations, and the sons of the sandgroppers had been killed, families in Kalgoorlie and Boulder left without their support, without their breadwinner, on the small amount of help which the "gavrnment" was willing to offer as some sort of charity. And besides, who knew what else those Slavs, and those Italians, and those Greeks and Bulgarians, all of those scum from the old continent, were doing as well as what they did out in the open? Here they could very well be paid by someone from the enemy camp, because they belonged to the side of the war machine belonging to the countries against which the British were spilling their blood.

Therefore there was pressure, mostly because of the newcomers, and hatred of the Dagoes and Dingoes began to grow, and especially directed towards their houses and yards.

Among our people, and in particular inside the Croatian-Slovenian Club, could be found some strong representatives of the allied point of view, bitter opponents of Austro-Hungary and Germany, and they went so far as to help send some suspicious Austrians to forced exile in Liverpool, near Sydney, which increased the troubles of our world. Somehow it was easier to go against the contempt of the bosses, the foremen, and the surveyors in the mines, who had been known to spit in front of these foreigners, bloody bastards. It didn't help that the other-siders were doing the worst jobs, but in spite of that, were saving money and gold, to which the true representatives of the Crown had pretensions, and as well as that, these bastards were for sure transferring this money and that gold in some secret way to their own country, where the Krauts were fighting against the Allies, and that meant against our sandgroppers, who had already sent three hundred thousand men to the front.

Who could know what those scum were capable of! We have been taking chestnuts out of the fire for them! Well, God knows, we won't any longer!

Joe heard something like this, also, at first just by the way, from afar, and then loudly, openly.

And one day it came about as Morris Hughes had planned. It came, and brought relief to the crowd-eaters. The Slavs bent their heads still further and had to be even more careful with every word, every gesture. Because in answer to the innocent question: Why? a fist could follow, and the fist could break someone's head and someone's house could be burnt, someone's yard. The spirits were not at all inclined to be benevolent, to understand the woe and trouble of those who were trying to make ends meet, who had escaped from one misery and found themselves, through no fault of their own, in another which was becoming more and more threatening.

Joe was beside himself. They were taking his son away. A part of his strength was going far away, maybe even to Europe. And the same thing threatened Nick too, because he was in his nineteenth year, actually ready, actually fit for military service.

--It would have been better if those from our Club had spied on him – he thought, because then he would not be in danger of being sent to the front, far away, and it's easier to be in a concentration camp in Liverpool than to be in a bloody war, where you can lose your head at any time. From Europe came depressing

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news. The two forces were fighting, and the horror of that battle echoed in Boulder, and brought to everyone, British and other-siders equally, only trouble.

And Kathy was to give birth, now, when they had taken her husband away. Now at this bad time, when Joe had lost one strong arm, Toni's arm. And with that first thought was mixed a second:

--Let her give birth, let her give birth, it's better she has the baby to occupy her than that she is roaming around!

She was pregnant, and already it was rumoured that someone had gone over the fence when Barbaro was in the desert with the other two. Who could understand that, no-one could understand that, those are – those are unbelievable things...as Tereza said...*God will sooner or later punish her...we didn't see that in our country....*

--And now on top of that, all this that's happened with Toni, and tomorrow it will be Nick, and my husband is coughing, more and more. I tried to persuade him to go to see Doctor Ervan, to be examined, and he just won't. He says: it's only dust, it's from the smoking! He smokes a lot, he's more and more nervous, and in the mine he chews tobacco because he can't smoke there, they don't allow it. And they told me the dust and smoke don't harm the lungs, that it's not harmful when the dynamite fuses burn, that it only makes a man a bit giddy! But I don't believe it, I don't believe it! He was never like this, he was a tough, strong man, and now...and he wouldn't register with the miners' relief fund, he didn't want to spend that shilling from his pocket! I'll force him to do it, I'll force him! If he takes to his bed, everything will fall on my shoulders. They will go away, and I'll think then for myself.

Joe had no peace. His son had gone east on the Trans-Australian Railway, to Melbourne. He went to visit Mister Groky to seek advice...

And Mister Groky simply said:

--You're coughing, coughing, go to the doctor's so he can give you papers. Tell him your younger son is not old enough yet, that you're working by yourself, that your daughter is pregnant, that they sent her husband away, that you are sick now, that you have the miner's complaint...

--I told you, I told you, said Tereza, and you don't listen, you don't listen, you're all the same, stubborn, and I'm right, and now I'm preg....

--Again, again! That as well! – Darkness and coldness descended upon Joe. How much had happened all at once? Was it even possible?

--And Mister Groky said I have the miners' complaint, just like that: miners' complaint...and I should go to the doctor, so he can give me some sort of paper, to get Toni out of going...

Night followed night, with candles lit. Tereza could hardly close her eyes. Only Nick slept soundly. Some time around three o'clock in the morning there was a knock at the door. Mrs Lena Tresa, who had with her husband arrived not long after Joe's second arrival in Boulder, was standing on the veranda.

--Tereza, Tereza, Katica is calling you, she's in pain, in pain, she's bending and twisting, I think she'll give birth tonight, I think so....

Nick woke up and went with Tereza to Katica's house.

Joe continued to think. After all, he had done the best he could. Tereza had made camomile tea for him last night, which she had in the case, and he had drunk it with an aspirin; so he was calm in bed and thinking.

--I'll go to Doctor Ervan. I'm coughing, that will get Toni out, yes, but if it's bad, it will bury me, because...don't be silly Joe, slowly, slowly, you won't be ruined, you have a horse and cart, and you'll work for the wood company, you've got Mister Stanley there, he'll send you somewhere close by, and you'll carry wood to your cart and then to the mine, you won't have to cut wood in blocks, that will be payment for the horse and for the cart and for you, and if Toni comes back, he'll go with you to get wood, he'll go into the bush, make blocks, and you'll carry it and that's it. Enough. Everything hasn't gone to the devil. Miko will go down the mine

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by himself. And again we'll stay, we'll stay on our feet...It will be a bit harder, but I'll be in the fresh air and I'll get better, I'll get better, it hasn't got much of a hold on me yet, I still have my strength, my power....

Just then Miko brought news:

--Father, now you're a grandfather, dida, and the baby is beautiful, how beautiful she is, Father, I congratulate you, congratulations....

Nick embraced his father, and he, full of his own worries, all at once realised there were good things in life, and he burst into tears. And Nick cried with him. If someone had come then into the house, he would have seen something he maybe never saw before in Boulder: two men, one, to be sure, in his nineteenth year, and the other already forty five, crying like children and then all at once smiling.

--Take that bottle Nick, I want to have a drink....get it, the glass is over there!

Nick got the bottle, looked towards the candle with it and then brought it to the table.

--To your good health, my Miko, your good health, all sorts of things have happened, and now let's you and I drink a toast, lightning won't strike the nettles, no, it won't.

And glass after glass, and the two men, who very rarely drank to excess, went to sleep in the happiness which had in the bitterness of life, smiled on them.

And you Perrin, were born that night! What sort of night was that? And that other woman, who had helped your mother during your birth, was carrying me beneath her heart. That's how we found ourselves together, on one path through a wonderful childhood.

But I shouldn't start telling myself about you and your journey until you come here to my doorstep, I have to say something else about our mothers, fathers, uncles, half brothers.

Joe went to see Doctor Ervan.

--And why have you come here so late – Doctor Ervan asked when he examined him. You could have come earlier to see me. And you have a family, you have to work; you lost your health like that, very early....

Joe stood there rooted to the spot.

--But I don't feel bad.

--It's an individual thing. You still chew tobacco and you smoke a lot as well. From today that stops. And I would recommend that you take up an easier job in the open air, if you can't rest, because....

--You'll give me certification that I'm sick?!

--How can I not?

--And that I have the miners' complaint?!

--Yes, yes, Mister Joe! How can I not?

--I could leave my job, but who will replace me? They took my son into the army, my daughter is left without her husband, and who will replace me....

--Yes, yes, Mister Joe, I don't know how that will go, but it could, it could....

And Joe got what he wanted. But he went home to Dwyer Street, feeling that something had all at once changed in his life. Over that dusty road, which he came to after Richardson Street, beside the railway line which left Boulder Railway Station, he went with his head lowered, looking at his shoes and at the dust, and the yards in front of him seemed to be sort of swimming, as though they were suddenly alive, in a strange kind of fog. There on the corner of Chesapeake Street, and it was not quite a corner, there was a small square, covered with all sorts of kerosene tins and one fairly large abandoned water condenser in which the previous occupants had boiled water from Lake Charlotte because it was salt - on that corner was a small house made out of those tins and of corrugated iron, which had served the first newcomers. Mrs Murphy had moved into it, a woman of around sixty years of age, but dressed in rags, so that she looked as though she was at least eighty. Misiz Morfi, as the Slavs called her, barely a hundred metres from Joe's house, had found there her refuge after a very turbulent life, alone and rejected, left to the mercy of our people, Italians, Bulgarians and Greeks who mostly had come to live in South Boulder.

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--Vots nyu, Joe! – echoed from that corner right at the moment when the fences were swimming in Joe's eyes, which were open. Vots nyu!

Joe started and saw to his left the old woman, who was sitting on part of the condenser, throwing close to her some rags, which were drying.

--Joe, ja imala muza Slavsa, on krepao, I had a Slav husband, he died, he vent away for ever.....

Joe said nothing, turned his head away and walked on, because he knew the whole story of Mrs Murphy, of her last husband, or better, of her last husbands, who had found refuge with her, because there were no other female individuals in South Boulder to console someone in their loneliness. Mrs Murphy liked company. She didn't ask who she was with, whether the man had money or not, she was one of those beings who lived for the present day, and never tried to see into the future, instead relating to life in the, so to speak, best possible manner, letting all worries about past and future days fall away from her. But although this was the best solution for Mrs Murphy, while she stood for something, that is, while her appearance could attract to some extent even the "worst" creature, bit by bit she had to be satisfied with smaller and smaller crumbs, until she became just an ordinary beggar, forced to scrape by from day to day. Instead of a comfortable place to sleep in someone's bed, she found it convenient to move to the corner of Chesapeake Street, right across the road from the stylish Mrs Sambardelli and her husband, and two hundred metres away from the famous Cornwall hotel, where she had spent many really nice days, and especially nights.

--Meye gud frend, Joe – he heard behind him, while he was walking towards his fence, head bent, deep in thought; on top of everything that prostitute, (a good prostitute actually, one couldn't say she was bad, that she robbed people); greeting him, trying to stop him.....

--So there you are, she did what she did and now she's come here, living in the tins, God help me and help her, and is it her fault for what happened to her, is it her fault! If she'd been clever, if she'd saved money, if she'd wanted to work....she could have, could have....and what could she, we all say someone could have, if he'd wanted to, if...if it could be turned another way, we all come to a different judgement, we all have something to say, if it was right, if it was how we see it, that it's no-one's fault for what happens, or that it's up to him, his decision to go there, and....and it's not always like that, we all have rules for everyone else, but our laws don't work for them, don't work for us sometimes...there, for instance, me and my family, my law is good for me, I want one thing, and it doesn't work out, I want us to save money, so we can go away from here, from this dust, this work, but things don't go the way I want them to, it all goes upside down... see there, she got married, she grabbed the chance, and now she can't go to Fremantle any more, her husband has gone away to the army, and they could call up Miko too, and then also, also, Tereza is pregnant, and I am, I am....

He heard behind him that well known refrain: --*Dir Joe, darling!*

Mrs Murphy addressed everyone like that. For her everyone was "darling" she could coo sweetly to everyone and without any thought of eventual payment, without caring about nationality, or whether someone was handsome or ugly, it was all the same to her, who was there beside her, who had come, young or old, for her all that mattered was that he responded, that he take her hand, thatMrs Murphy didn't pick and choose. Being like she was, like she had become, in that hut made of tin and kerosene tins, in that ragged condition, she did not provoke any feeling of shame, or humiliation, it was more like a sort of pity, mixed with a certain respect. They did not behave towards her as they would towards a prostitute who was selling her body, who was cleaning out strangers' pockets. In South Boulder no-one ever said that she had stolen from anyone....

Dir Joe, hev e najs tajm!

Dear Joe, have a nice time, be happy, what do you care about the rest!

How can I be happy!

It's terrible, indeed terrible how life makes fun of people, how at first it coddles them, caresses them, and then it slaps their face, and then it steps on them! Mrs Murphy had become dependent on her former hosts, or even those zealous women of ours who could not refuse such a person, without offering her a piece

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of bread or a threepence or in the best case scenario, a sixpence. Mrs Murphy however saved the money for drink, and accepted the food and kept it in her house. Threepence or sixpence could not last long with her. She would go to the back door of the Cornwall from Hopkins Street, and there she would quickly swallow a beer or sometimes even a glass of whisky, because they did not allow her in the bar or on the veranda. And from time to time when she tried to find a corner for herself on the veranda, at once the waiter or the owner Mister Giacometti would pull the old woman by the hand, forcing her to leave her resting place, because of the other guests.

Terrible, indeed terrible!

Joe went into his home across the veranda.

He told Tereza everything, and she crossed herself, without becoming too upset and losing control. She knew she should not burden Joe with too much at that time, and she also knew she should not upset herself too much, because she was carrying a child, and previously she had given birth too early and the child had died after seven days. The little wick that burnt in oil, was lit, these days it was often lit in front of the icon for the Purification of the Virgin Mary, because Tereza was a God-fearing woman, who was communicating with the canon in Hvar and from time to time sent him money for the holy mass. True, during the war she could not do this, because all connections had been cut. Happily, she knew the canon would make do. In any case he lived as.....God commanded....and because he was honest, because he had dedicated his life to his faith, Tereza believed nothing bad could happen to him, even in the war, which was raging in Europe.

Listening to Joe, she decided to persuade Nick first of all to seek a different job, outside the mine, and to leave that digging in the tunnels and the dynamite fuses, which sent huge amounts of dust and smoke over the miners, dumping all their residue in human lungs. She had noticed that Nick had started to cough, that he ate reluctantly and without appetite, that he was somehow dejected. Although Nick was a quiet and calm man, who gave the impression that he was not interested in much that happened, Tereza had recognised a long time ago the signs of agitation, restlessness, reluctance, dejection, and she knew how to react in the right way. And this time too, before any of the others, she felt that Nick already after a few months' work in the Horseshoe mine was showing signs which made her wary. Joe had become ill more or less suddenly. Sickness had come quickly; while Nick was gradually getting weaker, descending step by step. She did not want to upset Joe because of what she had seen and felt; instead she said to Nick on one occasion:

--*You know, Miko, that your father has the miners' complaint, and it wouldn't be good that you get it too, because it would be terrible if you were both sick in bed, you know how it is, you know how it is....*

Nick looked at her and said:

--So what can we do then?

--A job....

--A job?...

--In the open air, wood, with the cart, trading, it would be good if something was found, and then you could leave.....

Nick did not answer. Tereza saw how he became thoughtful and how he went towards the lower part of the yard, where the horse and cart were.

Nick already knew something was wrong with him, and had been ready to go to see Dr Ervan, but had not found the time. When he heard what Tereza advised, he decided to go to Kalgoorlie, to go to Maritane or Hannan Street where there were some friends of his brother Toni he had met, and to try his luck. That's what he did, but when he was going through the Mutzig & Jarvis shops, Nick found himself face to face with Mister Groky.

--Helo boj! – Mister Groky started to tap him on the shoulder. *I heard you went under the ground. That's no good, that's no good.....*

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Nick stared at him, not knowing what to say, not knowing what he was getting at with his waterfall of words, which seemed to be without any special connection....

--You're a young man and it wouldn't be good that you're switched off before your time. I know, life is hard, your father is sick, money is necessary, and I would say to you that it's better to leave that job and go to something different, something better....

Nick didn't expect that.

--How better? – he said through gritted teeth.

--How better! – Mister Groky repeated after him – *Nicely, moy boy, nicely my son, you can do anything when you want to, you're clever, you've learnt English, and few people learn as well as you have when they come here, so you can, you can, for instance be in administration, or you can go into an office, or into trading, trading, you know how to count, you know how to look after yourself, you're honest, you know how to work hard, while others just open.....*

Mister Groky's face, which was red to begin with, became even redder. The wrinkles on his forehead stood out, a handkerchief came to his mouth, because Mister Groky always snorted, and every now and then he reached for the hanky in his top pocket....

--I know, I know, you get more shillings there, but still here if a man is lucky he can go further....Trade is trade, and sickness, sickness, you know moy boy! I have a job for you.....

Nick felt better. He had come to Kalgoorlie to look for a job, and he hadn't wanted to go to Mister Groky, because the family was always going to him. This way, it seemed that Mister Groky was asking him to work. Understanding this, he started to pull back a little, but not enough to reject Mister Groky, just to confirm what it was he wanted from him. He could hardly believe such an opportunity had presented itself, because there was war, and in wartime jobs played spiteful games with people. Many had been in fear of losing their job, even in the mine itself, where everyone worried that it would one day cost them their health. And to add to that, you're a Slav as well.

--Yeah moy boy, yeah my son, I have, I have, I have a job in a wool-sales place, in Kasidi Strit, my partner is looking for a young man, and he goes to the railway station and takes the goods to him on the cart and then he helps him in the shop. The pay isn't that bad, if you take it....

Nick looked at Mister Groky quite excited, but still restrained, as he always was.

--That's good Mister Groki, that's good, I'll just go and tell my father and then come back to you and we'll sort everything out...

--Go, son, go moy boy, yu are very nice, I'm happy I have found such an honest young man, my partner told me he was looking for someone honest, honest, he doesn't want a thief, who would steal from him, and my partner is an honest man, yes he wants work to be done, properly, but he'll give payment, he'll open his wallet when he sees you are honest, yes moy boy, I'm glad you said you will do it, come tomorrow to see me, because today I am very busy, you know I am always on the move, it's necessary to keep working, and how is Joe, how is Joe, I heard he had gone to Doctor Ervan, that's good, that's good, and I told Doctor Ervan that....

--It isn't necessary that Doctor Ervan knows I'll get a job in trade....

--And why not, why not....

Nick began to stutter.

--Because of Toni, because of Toni, Father wants to get him out....

--Oh is that so, is that so! Then I won't say anything, I won't say anything, and he gave your father a certificate that he is sick, did he?

--Yes, yes...

--Then that's good, it's good, I think Toni will come home, he is needed, needed. You know we work together...

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Nick left Mister Groki excited and happy that he had solved his problem so easily, and hurried with the tramcar over Federal Lane to Boulder, bought a few small items in Moran and Burt Street, and found himself on the way to Dwyer Street.

--He said he works together with Toni.

And Toni, Barbaro and Charlie seem to be dreaming up something different, and not a partnership. Who can know everything that's hidden in people.

Father and his younger son were in this way "cast out" from the system. In front of them now was a reflection of the panorama of the dumps which had arisen on the horizon of what was, to be sure, a small area which was called the Golden Mile.

South Boulder continued to live its own, strange life, finding entertainment in the shadow of the gold in hotels like the Cornwall or the Boulder Block, where Kalgoorlie Stout was poured, and Hannan's beer or beer for health and strength, and Scotch of various types; and drinking often meant forgetting what life at home and around the home, looked like, how it moved on strange pathways and twists and turns, how its fruits were decorated with different coloured lights, and its flowers were wonderful until the moment they started to wither. "Six pubs to the blooming acre!" – six pubs and bars to every five hundred square metres. And still that "dirty place" that "*prljavo mjesto*" or "that dirty, unfortunate den" swallowed up all that was alive in a man, like worms eating healthy plants, like it did with for instance, Joe, Nick, Katika, Toni, Tereza and many Slavs and Dagoes, and also with Italians and Bulgarians, who, truth to tell, were somewhat smarter than our people, because more and more they started working in agriculture and trading.

And then those women! Mrs Murphy was ideal compared with the others who were available to the unfortunate miners or prospectors, offering their charms after the terrible gloom of the tunnels that ran under the ground for 1500 kilometres and went down to a depth of 1200 metres; or else after a hundred kilometres spent in the desert, sometimes hungry, but mostly thirsty, because water had to be drunk drop by drop to last until their return.

--Lord God, what an ideal life – Toni was known to call out more than once; and then usually the answer he got was that he didn't care about anything, that he only wanted to get out of effort and work, how he wanted a life in the library or in a pub, with Kalgoorlie Stout – poured in "a pint, so that the foam settled nicely" – after Mister Bird with a wooden bat first cut it off and threw it behind the bar....

--Lord God, what an ideal life!

And because of this his eyes began to turn in other directions and because of that was born the conflict which would later turn into something ominous, grave, long-lasting like an echo continuing after his father's death and remaining for nearly fifty years.

Letters circled between Boulder City and Melbourne, and then one day the problem was solved. Joe had succeeded in getting Toni brought home. That was before Tereza's son was born, and after Nick obtained the employment in trading which Mister Groky had secured.

And then, upon their return, began the stories told by soldiers, long as many nights are long, long as weeks, months, under the bright stars of the Goldfields, in spring and winter days, but followed by those gloomy dusty waves brought from time to time by the north-east wind which consumed everyone's spirit, much less that of a young man, one who should be just starting to enjoy life, to appreciate all of its blessings.

Toni was the centre of interest. What was life like in Melbourne? If only I could live there, and not here in this dirty den, in the grey, disgusting, smelly periphery of town, with its toilets at the end of the yard, with the carts which every second or third day came to take away the contents, leaving behind the stink of Dingoes and Dagoes who had succeeded in devouring some lamb or maybe just some cabbage, because that was what they produced themselves, in their own yards so they didn't have to spend their shillings or sixpences at the greengrocer's in Federal Lane or somewhere else. What a life there was in Melbourne, what bars, what pubs, what carnivals, and dog-races, hippodromes, cinemas, streets, houses, ah bloody bastard country, fucking

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thieves, and here there is gold, here in the ground there are tons of gold, which go over there, and they take it, buy it, make villas for themselves, sail their yachts in Port Phillip Bay and Western Port, build weekend houses in Sorrento, slide down to the sea on toboggans, go to the circus, arrange gala parties....my God, if only I could get away from all this, away from this Boulder shit, from these flats and huts, these yards, fences, and first and foremost away from the stupidity and thoughtlessness in people....

These last thoughts were actually the echoes of the stories of military service and the wait to see if a boat would take him towards the Suez or towards New Guinea. And for him it was actually all the same if he went to war or not, because he knew he had to come back to Boulder, and the front could be more interesting than these idiots here thought it would be. So it happened that Toni did not consider his father's success in returning him home from Melbourne to be a big thing, while other parents of our Slavs were rather envious of Joe's feat, not to mention how much the sandgropers were envious of the fact that he had pulled his bloody bastard from the jaws of the war machine, so that he could ass around here and fill his bag with sterling and then send it home over there, to the devilish Austro-Hungarian empire, which had cooked up this whole thing and thrown the world into turmoil.

Joe had anticipated what would happen, but he had tried to ignore it. He tried to be kind, he tried to understand Toni. But could he really give his approval to this child, who sought more than he could give, especially now when he was strong and had all his wits about him, when he could use all his attributes to earn his own living, and not rely on his father's pocket. Could he??

Joe was struggling. He was tortured by his illness. Because he was coughing more and more, and the medications given to him by Doctor Ervan did not help at all. He took the cart, which Miko had brought with the horse, and he went with Jimmy the dog, he went into the bush to bring back wood and sell it round about. This was not such a good job, and few people took it up; everywhere there were houses which were empty, which could be bought for very little money. You could even order a house on the outskirts of Kalgoorlie. They would bring it into your yard loaded onto a big wooden triangle and put it onto four posts, and it would not cost very much, and then you had to fix the interior, to put metal sheets on the floor, to bring in pipes for water and surround it with a fence. Yes, actually those fences, wooden fences, brought the most money to Joe, but the worst thing for him was that he could not persuade Toni to saw the wood and to make small pointed half-slats, which could be tied together. Eh if he could have done that, Joe could have made twice as much lira sterling, and then his account at the bank would grow, and he would be well insured against what was to

come! Nick who had found work in the shop in Burt Street, regularly brought his wages home. Sometimes he could inform his father where construction work had begun, where there was a need for wood, but since it was war time, not much was being built.

Once a week Joe would depart for the market in Kalgoorlie, where he would buy cheaply olive oil, pasta, *bakalar*, tomatoes, figs, parsley, *mistrat* (then a popular drink made from aniseed and rakija), and vinegar, to supply Tereza, but in bigger quantities than was necessary for the family. Tereza would sell these things from time to time to our people, who found it convenient because it was more expensive to buy at the greengrocer's and you couldn't find our Dalmatian food there, which Joe, feeling the need our people had, made use of. At the market place Joe found an Italian man, Mister Picinelli, a trader who sold mixed goods, who had arrived from Bullabulling near Coolgardie and opened a little shop, so he made arrangements with him to get certain things from Fremantle, which were sought after here. In this way he found capers and shallots in vinegar, which caused much interest from Italians and people from the Balkans, who appreciated their formerly favourite foods. Through that Italian man Joe also received grapes from Fremantle, two or three tons at a time, and because he now had more spare time he began to make wine. The wine was thus fermented in the shed in the yard, and he made his own barrels, and then knocked together a larger barrel of three hectolitres. He offered the wine to our people, at a better price than that which was brought from Fremantle, which was expensive. Slav people never could forget their "*bevanda*" (half wine, half water), which they preferred to beer and

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whisky. This whole operation was carried out by Joe more or less illegally. Police came from time to time to see what was happening on the veranda, but there they were offered a little home-made cheese, which Tereza got from her three goats, and a glass of good wine. The police, and especially Sergeant MacCormick, were pleased with Joe's offerings, and Joe would himself call the Sergeant to come and drink a *bevanda* when he saw him in the vicinity of the Cornwall, where he often hung out.

--Good bevanda, good bevanda Joe, very good indeed – Sergeant MacCormick would say, licking his lips and emphasizing that "indeed". -- Anything new, Joe – he would add automatically, as though he were just making conversation, but secretly hoping Joe would speak to him, in confidence of course, when the English policeman was always ready with an answer.

--How nice that Sergeant MacCormick is – Tereza would notice, when Joe had seen off the tall policeman – A *real man* –towards the gate in his fence. And the sergeant knew that Joe was selling in a small way black-market food and drinks, he knew about Joe's "little activity", but he was more interested in those other, bigger activities, which he was actually paid to discover, the activities which through grumbling and propaganda led to other offenses which were more dangerous for law and order. These small jobs, which brought in day by day shilling by shilling, meant very little to him, even though he could have reported them to his superiors. But Sergeant MacCormick, who was known as a good policeman, who had learnt and discovered many things in South Boulder, and who was respected by the inhabitants, did not consider it necessary to hound the Slavs because of these small things, because he could see very well how they lived, how they worked and how much money they earned.

--How polite he is, he wouldn't say a bad word to you like these sneaky rogues of ours, always swearing and taking God's name in vain. He knows to knock on the door, and how to greet a woman properly, and outside in the street to say "*gut morning, gut ivning misiz*", he knows how to say thank you when you give him a glass of bevanda, and our young men, they are donkeys, uncivilised, without any decency; that Slabić, and Subjaca, where did they learn to talk like that, uneducated, bums, useless, blasphemous....

--You've started again – Joe answered, rubbing his hands together because Sergeant MacCormick had not asked anything about the oil, the pasta and other things, which Tereza sold in her house, slowly adding penny to penny, shilling to shilling.....

Tereza did not have much time to meet with her friends Klara, Lena, Julija and Tona. From time to time they came by to make their confessions to one another, to share somehow their good and their bad moments.

Kuma Tona lived across the road in Dwyer Street. That woman had four small children already and a fifth in her stomach, while Klara, who also had four children, was a bit further away, on the outskirts of the periphery, east, and Lena lived fifty metres from 12 Dwyer Street, in Oroya Street, near the meadow which a Bulgarian man had begun to cultivate. Julija lived with her husband in Hopkins Street, near the Cornwall, with three children. On Sunday around eight o'clock in the morning they usually met in front of the fence on the corner of Dwyer and Chesapeake Streets, because they all went to church in Moran Street, where the convent was, with the nuns, and Reverend Doctor Hourley at the head. Kuma Tona's husband went from Boulder to Fremantle, because his health was very bad in Boulder, and his wife was left alone with small children around her neck, hardly making ends meet, waiting for her husband to call her. Namely, he had found a job on a fishing boat and had started to earn good money, at least that was what he wrote to Kuma Tona, sending her a miserable amount, and at the same time getting ready the little house, which he had bought in Beaconsfield, in York Street. One morning Mister Makintosh, our postman, brought sad news to Kuma Tona, so sad that all the Slavs, men and women, in South Boulder were crying. Her husband had drowned in a storm which hit Fremantle and its surroundings, not far from the Fishing Boat Harbour.

A wave had carried only him overboard from the boat, while the others had managed to reach the shore. They looked for his body for several days, but found no trace of Kuzma. The government was good enough to determine a small amount of help for Kuma Tona, while our people in Boulder began to collect

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money and set up a fund to support the children, and Joe set aside from his savings ten lira, which was for him a substantial sum. No-one in the house objected to that, because Kuma Tona was a wonderful woman, respected by everyone and after her husband's death, much admired because of her bravery and strength to save the children, to bring them up to become good people. The woman was left, so to speak, alone, with four children, and with a fifth in her stomach, without a breadwinner, without anyone related to her, with only her friends on that dusty periphery, in that "dirty place", right at the time when the end of the First World War was coming close, when trouble was the worst, when earnings were small, when people were talking about "other-siders" and "foreigners" the most, who had bought their place here during the war and were living in clover ("like kidneys in kidney fat") at the expense of the inhabitants, who had come there years or decades before them.

But trouble usually follows trouble. Just when Tereza was already in the seventh month of her pregnancy, some sort of illness, which later they said had been dysentery, appeared among the youngest, and Julija lost her two children. Fear overcame the Slavs, they tried not to get too close to one another, to avoid infection, but still it was necessary to help Julija, and adult men were found for this, to take food to her and other things she needed. Julija's husband became ill, because he too had worked for several years in the Perseverance mine, and there was no help at all from him at that time. When the dysentery passed, there came a message from the Town Hall that the reason for the sickness had been bananas imported from India. They took, so it was reported in a statement from Perth which was carried by the newspapers, all the necessary measures of caution to ensure such a thing was stopped in advance, and among the measures was the control of products, their buyers and middlemen.

Julija was left without her children, so Tereza had to go more often to Hopkins Street and console her and help with her housework, even though she was pregnant. But human feeling is human feeling, and in Boulder, in that foreign country, among people who looked askance at Dagoes and Dingoos, she could not stand aside and not run to help one of their own, even if that one had come from a different island on our Adriatic.

And Klara, Tereza's friend, who lived with a sick husband and three children, was having a very hard time. Three of her children had died in infancy, and even so she had continued to give birth. Her husband was a strong man, but the pit in the mine had got the better of him too, so that every week he went to Doctor Ervan who gave him medicine, but without any great effect.

The worst thing however happened with Lena, whose husband had brought her to Australia thanks to letters, by proxy, as they said – that is, he became engaged to her through an agent. John, (that is, Ivan in our language), had come to South Boulder a little later than Joe, around 1908, and he didn't rest until he had persuaded his family in the old country to send the girl. He went to the Rembrandt Studio in Piesse Street and had several photos taken there, spending quite a bit of money, and then he chose the best, because he was not a particularly handsome young man. Lena was hooked by the photo and by the recommendations of his family, and thus answered John's letter. Communication by letter followed, and then the decision to come. John sent his future wife a cheque for 42 lire "for the ticket" and for clothes and she arrived at the station in Kalgoorlie after a month or two and saw her future husband for the first time. She nearly fainted.

It took Lena a long time to recover, and during that time she came across Tereza, and confided her woes to her. She was married in the All Hallows Roman Catholic Church in Morna Street, and Tereza was her maid of honour, and so began a life which was unhappy from the very first day, like many lives in Boulder.

John was a very strong man. In the local tug of war games, the young men would try their strength, but John was unbeatable. He would throw three at a time on the ground. Lena gave birth to three male children, and then came the fourth, a girl. Who knows for what reason, John was not happy with this and began to mistreat his wife more and more. Very distressing fights came about, which could be heard for several blocks around. In the stifling night, through the muffled sound of the crusher, cries rang out. John was taking revenge

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on Lena for her reception of him and because she wanted to go back to her old home, because he was not the man she had imagined him to be through the photos and letters. Lena came more and more often to Dwyer Street, and Tereza tended to the wounds on her face and body, putting bandages of vinegar on them and then baby-powder, and more importantly, consoling her in her hard troubles. One time Joe went to Oroya Street to talk sense into the "wild man" but he stopped half way and returned home, because he remembered it "*would not be good to meddle in other people's affairs*".

One day, a month before Tereza was due to give birth, Lena came, all in tears and just about crazy.

--*You know, Tereza, you know* – she sobbed, holding a white handkerchief to her eyes – *I can't tell you, I can't.*

Tereza gently took her by the shoulder:

--*My poor daughter, my poor daughter, how unlucky you are!*

And she pulled her close to her.

--*My Tereza, my Tereza, no-one will forgive me, no-one, it's his fault, his fault, he brought me here, he....I can't, I can't....*

It was a long time before Lena found the courage; she had to confide in someone:

--*I suffocated the child!*

--*What did you do, oh God, what have you done!* – Tereza repeated, not believing her own ears.

--*He didn't want it, he forced me, forced, and I resisted. He caught me by the hand, took me to the child, put my hands on its throat and squeezed, Tereza, my Tereza....*

The crying went from heavy sobbing and back again, tears fell down that miserable face, disfigured by pain.

What could be done? In a foreign country, with no protection, with a terrible feeling that only worse things could follow.

Lena had strangled her child, but her husband's hands were above hers....

--*And where is he now?* – blurted Tereza.

--*He went drinking, he went drinking, in the Cornwall hotel, and he'll come home drunk and start again. My children see all that, they hear it all, my Tereza, Tereza!*

What indeed could be done? Would it be right to call the police? Should Doctor Hourley be informed? How could it be resolved – and was there even a solution?? The child had not been registered nor christened,

no-one so to speak knew about the birth. Tereza simply could not cope in this dreadful situation and she could not advise Lena what to do.

--I just don't know, my poor daughter! It would be good to confess to Doctor Orli and see what he says, where is he now, where is he now, who will bring him, how can you go to Moran Street like that. And I can't, you can see how I am! My poor daughter!

And after much thought, Tereza persuaded her to go home and to find a wooden box. In the meantime Joe had been with the cart in the bush, Toni had gone to Kalgoorlie, and Nick was working in the shop. Tereza went in circles around the house, trying to think, but she could not think of anything useful

--Ne, ne, no, for God's sake, you can't bury the child in the yard, who ever saw such a thing, who saw such a thing, Doctor Orli should come, the child is not baptised and how can we take her to the cemetery and bury her, poor Lena, poor thing, what has she done, hell, hell, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, forgive me, my Jesus, what have we come to, what have we fallen into, hail Mary, full of grace....and my child is kicking, poor me.....

Tereza knew that an unbaptised child had some sort of different treatment from one that was baptised, that the rites were not the same, so if Doctor Hourley refused, the question would be asked why he would do that, and for that reason she realised it would not be a good idea if Lena went to confession before the child

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was buried. Let things happen normally at the cemetery, and then, then....but Tereza found herself in a quandary then too, because that would be a kind of deception, deceiving the priest.

--What have I got myself into – was her cry of pain and remorse.

But still, something had to be done; if not, Lena would be in a very hard situation, she would be convicted of child killing with her husband, and then jail would follow, courts. And her three little sons, aged one and a half, three and four and a half, what would happen to them? Tereza felt the British law and its inevitability, but did not know the details. For that matter, what did she know about how one thing followed another, only one thing was clear to her; only worse could come from what was happening now, nothing better, unless something sensible was done. But what was a sensible step to take? Where was the exit? If she advised Lena to tell the police about her act, or her husband's act, for instance Sergeant MacCormick, and if it happened that Lena and John went to jail and maybe even were sentenced to death, and the law here in the Commonwealth was very strict, she knew that very well, because our people used to talk about it, would she, Tereza, be advising Lena something bad which would bring even greater ruin, because she knew it was not Lena's fault. However, who could prove to the police and the British law that it was not her fault, that it was her husband's fault. He could then show how his wife had deceived him, how she had waited for him at the Kalgoorlie station, and then had not wanted to marry him. Her husband could say all sorts of things, and she would not have any witnesses, nor protection, because a woman is always without protection. That was how Tereza, at any rate, thought, not knowing that the law could after all be on Lena's side, if the whole thing was investigated properly. But awareness is one thing, and facts are another. And one of the facts was the huge shame to follow the event, especially when it became known, when the news travelled in Boulder, when it went further and reached Lena's family in the home country.

Tereza was torn, convulsed, bending in all directions, with the child in her stomach, but she could find only one solution: they must advise that the child had died suddenly, call Doctor Hourley and carry out the funeral.

--We need to tell Doctor Orli that the child should first be christened as dead, and then to do what needs to be done, and then have the funeral....

In the middle of these thoughts she heard the cart arriving, and hurried out to the veranda. She felt better. Joe had arrived, and her Joe was reasonable, even though everything did not go according to plan for him.

They stood opposite one another in the kitchen, put the facts one on top of the other, made combinations, twisted and turned, and came to the only conclusion to which Tereza had previously come, that is, that Lena announce that the child had died.

--So what will be, will be – Joe concluded. If it's found out, then what will happen, will happen. And if it's not found out, then the children are with Lena, and afterwards we'll see how things are with her husband, because she can't go on like this any longer.....

Tereza hurried to Lena's house, and Joe went to the Cornwall to see if he could find John there.

Lena had already made a small box. The two women fell into each other's arms, and then Tereza told Lena what needed to be done. Joe had found John at the hotel, but he was already completely out of it, full of beer and wine. Joe sat down beside him.

--John, it would be good if you got up and we went home.....

--What are you interfering for, who are you, I don't have anything to do with donkeys...

--John – Joe continued calmly – John, I didn't come because of that, I came to take you home. Be reasonable! You know what happened!

--What happened?! What happened?! That empty body came to you, did she ----she said I pulled her hair and hit her, did she....Go and mind your own business....

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--I can't. Be reasonable, Ivan! The police will come, and you and your wife will go to jail, and who will get you out, I don't know. Be reasonable, shut your mouth and come with me, I don't want a scandal, people are around, it's the lives of your children, do you want to kill them, Ivan....

--Why are you interfering, what does it have to do with you, it's not your business it's my business, let them take me away, let them....

--Ivan, the children, the children will be left without anyone, your Ljubo, your Vincent, your little Roko....how can you...

Joe was unusually patient, because he knew what could happen next, so he did all he could to get the man to stand up from the veranda. Luckily, only two other people were there, around the corner, and since they were talking loudly, they didn't hear the conversation, even though John began to shout. Joe appealed to his weaker side and pushed and pushed, mentioning Ljubo, Vincent, Roko, because he could feel that there was something in Ivan that would get him up on his feet and take him home.

--Ivan, your children, why let your troubles kill them, why Ivan, that's such a terrible grief, terrible, you can't get out of your own trouble and you're pressuring them, you'll suffocate them....

--Suffocate, suffocate, children.....

And John got up, staggering. Joe saw that he had at that moment won over part of the darkness.

They went home, with considerable difficulty. Joe was concentrated only on getting John at least somewhat sober until the funeral. Tereza and he succeeded in this.

All went according to the plan. John calmed down and sobered up by the afternoon, when Nick arrived. He called Doctor Hourley, and Tereza went home at that time, so as not to be present at what was for her a very distressing deed. The priest appeared and in fact, just as they had expected, he christened the child posthumously and conducted the funeral straight away. Some of our women were there, Klara, Julija, Tona, supporting Lena who was crying and sobbing, more from anguish over what she had done than the actual loss of her child to death. No-one knew, not even Nick, that something beyond the borders of unusual had happened, so they all went to the funeral by horse and cart, which Joe drove. John staggered along with Lena, and the company, after it was all over, returned home. However, John disappeared very shortly and again found his place before the table in the Cornwall hotel, drinking until late at night. Lena waited anxiously at home, but when he came to the door early in the morning, surprisingly he went to his bed, lay down and slept the sleep of the righteous.

Nothing unusual happened in the house on Oroya Street, until one day John coughed blood. And then suddenly everything went downhill. Only two months after that, John lay dead, stretched out on a white sheet, with candles arranged all around him. Since he had actually paid an amount of 2 and a half shillings every fifteen days into the Miner's Relief Fund, Lena was entitled to a pension, and could manage more or less with the three children, washing the clothes of some of our single men to help add to their modest meals. She could not return to her own country then because the war was still continuing; and if there had by chance been peace, the government would have given her severance pay and also paid for her boat trip. However, if that was the case, she would not have had the courage to do that, because she sensed what would be waiting for her back there after all that had happened with John. When the war was over, Lena experienced another misfortune. Her oldest son died of tuberculosis. A few years later Roko too died, and she remained on the goldfields alone with Vincent or Vinki, as we called him, who was a little older than I.

Since misfortune follows misfortune, only ten days before Tereza was due to give birth, something very bad happened in Joe's house. Joe was trying to get Toni to take part in the wood-cutting, which after a lot of persuasion he finally succeeded in doing. They went two or three times into the bush about twenty kilometres from Boulder towards the Lefroy salt lake. Joe had already cut two or three cords of wood, and they had to be taken in the cart to Collick Street, where an Italian man was building a house. And Toni took Joe home to Dwyer Street and continued on to the land in Collick Street, alone. He still had not returned home by the evening. Joe

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was wondering what he could be doing in town with the horse and cart. And when he appeared, Joe glanced at him from time to time, waiting for him to hand over the money he had got from the Italian, who had promised to pay for it as soon as it was brought. And when Joe asked him to hand over two lira, Toni answered that the Italian man had not given him anything, which Joe found suspicious.

--He didn't have it with him! -- said Toni. He said he'd come here to you and give it to you himself!

--Alright! -- Joe shrugged his shoulders and went to bed.

The next day he set off for town, doubtful that Toni had told the truth. When he came back, a scandal broke out. And Toni simply, without a word, went towards the entrance to the yard and out on the road. Three days he was missing. On the fourth day he came and threw onto the table ten lira. Joe gaped.

--And what's that now!

--That's the debt from the Italian!

--But it's ten "sterlin"! -- Joe gasped.

--I cheated you and it's only fair you should get that much! So you know I respect my father.

The money lay on the table, and father and son looked at one another for a long time. Tereza was in the other room. She lay there and listened, because everything could be heard through the thin wooden walls, which were so thin they were more like a screen than a wall.

--Where did you get the money? -- asked Father.

--I won it, at the races!

--You went to the races?

--I went, yesterday!

--And the other day too!

--And the other day!

And then Joe swung his hand. Marks of his fingers stayed on Toni's cheek. He turned around, went towards the exit, banged the door behind him and disappeared. Disappeared forever. So to speak.

Everything was upside down in Joe. He had done everything he could for his son. He had brought him here to save both him and himself, and his brother and sister. He had supported them back in the old country, sent money; here he had set up a home, gone down into the mine day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year; for fifteen years he had gone down into the smoke and dust in the pits and tunnels, changed from Ivanhoe mine to Horseshoe, to Perseverance, hearing that sharp: Take your sack, Joe; and since

they came here he had not been able to depend on Toni nor on Katica. He could not rely on them, because their natures made them go their own way, without regard for him; they mostly just pleased themselves, although he had tried to understand them, to comprehend, to offer them whatever he could. His son had gone to the School of Mines, he had learnt there how to become a man, Joe had made that possible from his miserly earnings. He had got him out of going into the army, and he himself had fallen ill, he had the miners' complaint. His son had come back from Melbourne full of stories of army life, and actually he had spent his time in bars and pubs, circuses and race tracks; and talked about how in Boulder people lived a dog's life. And whose life really was a dog's life? Who was making sacrifices? Who had spent his time like few people did, in South Boulder?

Joe bowed his head, sitting at the table in the kitchen. All sorts of things were spinning in that head. There was his wife, due to give birth. His other son, Miko, had got out of the mine, but it seemed that his lungs too had been infected. Even though he now had an easier job, in the shop, he was coughing more and more.

And her? What to say about her?

And right then, when everyone was celebrating the victory of the allies over the enemy, and the enemy was Austro-Hungary, Germany and Japan, in the house in Dwyer Street it was as though defeat reigned. It must have been strange for these people, whose lives had become so inter-twined that they could not react towards events, although their thoughts took them to the old country, where parts of their destiny had remained and

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were still living. The news that a new country was being created did not in the least excite the hearts of the former Austrians, although everywhere it was reported that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were now all in one country. Here and there, some of the friends of the Allies were happy, but more because in this way they could show their affiliation and attachment to the Allied cause, and the general happiness of all the sandgropers, than because over there a long way away, in their country, changes were being made, which supposedly were for the good of the people.

At this time, Joe's son was born. This was Kuzma or Cosmas, that is, I, myself. That was, my dear Perrin, a chance to rejoice, but it happened in the middle of a line of unfortunate circumstances which brought the family in Boulder into a very awkward and uncomfortable position, so that this joy somehow melted away and disappeared.

Katica's husband returned from the war. They had sent him towards Suez or Zvec, as Tereza said, but he still had not arrived there, when the capitulation of Austro-Hungary was announced. Barbaro returned home, where there was not much organisation. You, Perrin, grew, and in Katica there was another embryo, which soon was to become a person. Between the two of them tension and intolerance grew more and more. Barbaro was waiting for a job, going to bars and pubs, so that the money he had got from the army became less and less. Katica was more and more nervous, because she could not achieve what she wanted. After a few months a son was born. And when she recovered, there was a separation between her and Barbaro, right when Barbaro received the duty of "tankeeper" in the Great Boulder mine, which ensured a decent income for her and the children. An Italian man had been involved, someone Barbaro had known before and invited into his home.

Impossible arguments followed. Katica tried to escape, but the children tied her down. Then she would reconcile with Barbaro, but it never lasted long. Again she became pregnant. And then one day she went to the police and asked Mister Morley to protect her, because her husband had started to beat her. Mister Morley came to see the situation for himself, and advised Katica to take the case before the court, which she did. Therefore Barbaro had to leave the house, and later the Italian man moved in.

The family from 12 Dwyer Street watched all this take place, crossing themselves as was their habit, and especially Tereza who was carrying the little one in her arms, keeping him out of trouble, because she had had experience with her daughter who had died three years ago.

Sometimes Katica brought Perrin to see us, and that's how our friendship began, which would last all through our childhood and leave life-long traces. Joe watched his daughter and after the experience with Toni he didn't want to say anything, and did not have the strength to do so anyway. He let her say whatever was in her heart, herself, and refrained from any comments, although he suffered greatly in himself. Headstrong Katica would not have listened to him in any case. Even the most innocent comment she would have interpreted as an attack on her character or else she would turn his words around, reading into them some meaning they did not have. Therefore Joe decided on very restrained or no interference.

--The devil has turned her upside down! Jesus, she has absolutely no decency towards her father, she understands nothing, nothing, she does whatever comes into her head, like she's just being spiteful. My Tereza, my Tereza, what's happening, is it my fault? I watch, I watch, I think: you're ignorant Joe, you're a goat, you're making everything go wrong! As soon as you're involved, straight away, straight away, everything goes "arlemengo"! (everything goes to pot).

--Let it go! -- Tereza waved it away. Let them, dear God, do whatever they want. Both of them. Like Miko says, if they sink, they sink. Why are you upsetting yourself, you'll go before your time, let them go, let them go...I tell you it's better that Toni left. I don't believe he doesn't care about you, about us, I don't think he's that shameful that he won't be a man, because that's what you wanted. I don't believe it, so let him do what he wants. And let her do what she wants. You can't do anything to rectify the situation. Nothing, my dear Osip! They'll get over it. And times are hard, unfortunate. See, there's no work, and people are depressed, they drink,

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they drink too much, they don't know what to do, they fight, shout, quarrel, bite. The whole world has gone mad. The war has finished and again it's war!

It was not long before another item of news almost defeated Joe. Nick came home one noon to have lunch and told them he had heard that Toni had won about a thousand pounds sterling on the horse races.

--He threw me ten onto the table!

The slap he had given Toni, had hurt him too, but only until this moment. Upon hearing about this big money, Joe felt as though he had lost any sense of responsibility, because now he was quite sure that Toni had cheated him and that he had deserved not only that slap but much more. He had listened to Tereza's previous words: Let them go, let them go.....and they had become a part of his consciousness and his conscience. Such an act – ten pounds on the table – would never have occurred to him, the same way it would never have occurred to him to hide a thousand pounds from his family members, from those closest to him, with whom he was building a life. Even if the biggest misunderstanding happened between members of the group, Joe would never have thought to behave in such a way. Toni had known what his father was trying to do – Joe thought to himself --he knew how he struggled, worked, suffered and now at the end he had earned himself the phthisis – miners' complaint, an illness which had ruined many, many heads of families, no matter how strong their arms had been, it had driven them into their graves. And all of that torment had been in order to get them out of here, to realise the dream of going to Perth and Fremantle, to find a farm near the sea where they could settle and live, because the land around Perth was good land, and the sea near Fremantle was rich. Toni knew all that; no matter that his father had given him special attention, sent him to school, which had allowed him to choose, to separate himself from others in the family, even though Miko had a perfect right to that too, and maybe even was more intelligent than Toni, but he didn't advertise it.

How Miko had learnt English, no-one knew. It had happened so quickly and unperceptively that Joe had been surprised when his son had begun to discuss things with some sandgropers, in front of him. He was proud of Miko, of his modesty, his desire to help the family, his unselfishness, because Miko gave everything, everything, to him and Tereza, and many times he had to force him to take money, to go to the cinema or to the circus in town, and gave him lira so that he could buy a book and so on.

--What a difference between brothers! -- Joe was surprised when he saw how the children behaved so differently. And she? She had certainly got her share from Toni, because brother and sister had been close in a

way that for Joe was inexplicable. They had got along together, but in an unusual way. How many times he had been present when there were sharp clashes between them, and thought: now someone is going to give someone a good slap, but everything would calm down quickly, everything would be settled, and they would then in secret begin to forge their own plans. In spite of those occasional clashes, it was obvious that they confided in one another, that they told one another what they were thinking, what they meant to do. How could Toni otherwise know very personal intimate things about his sister, how could he defend her, how could he speak for her? For instance, to do with her marriage. She had told him everything, and he had come to confide in him, Joe, that she was pregnant, that she intended to marry Barbaro straight away. Then on the other hand, it was as though Miko had nothing in common with his brother and sister, although he lived with them very good-naturedly. He had somehow stood at the side, but had still been true and loyal to his family, he didn't have any passions, he was happy with a small amount, and he did everything he needed to do, without picking and choosing, without complaint, while at the same time he always found work himself, especially in the garden, where he sowed, planted, hoed, manured. Should he have sent Miko to school?

And then, after a year's work in the mine, it had seized him too.

--That disaster, that disaster, it all showed itself later. Who knew about the miners' complaint; just when people had been ten-fifteen years in the mines, it found them. It came all at once, and they started to get weak, to cough, to fall and to end up in their grave. And doctors couldn't understand it. Then came trouble, the war, the price of gold fell, and you couldn't have everything you needed because there was scarcity. Terrible, terrible!

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How many people had died across the world! And it was as though the war had raged in Boulder and Kalgoorlie, a strange sort of war which took over the insides of a person, which felled giants, because all of them were people in their full strength, strong healthy people, as it was said, and it had been a pleasure to see them, especially when they were competing with the ropes – the tug-of-war, as the English called it. Straining muscles, firm, well defined necks, big feet, strong legs, planted firmly on the ground in resistance, and strength in the arms to keep them balanced. Sometimes, especially in the more equally composed teams, it seemed as though the fight would last forever; until skill decided the outcome. Those men could have easily lifted a wagon! What was it to them, to carry a barrel of wine, to put on their backs a quintal of whatever load? Nothing, nothing at all! But after ten, fifteen years of work in the mine, they were not even a shadow of their former perfectly healthy selves. And what did they earn after that? What did their bank accounts look like? What did they have in their homes? Nothing, so to speak, because the illness began to eat them up; when they left the mine, they lasted a few years, with the help of drugs, with the help of food, so that their small savings were soon spent, until they died leaving behind them widows who, from the Miner's Relief Fund which their husbands had been paying every week (two and a half shillings), because there was no other social support, received a miserable amount which kept them and their children alive until they had to rely on themselves or on the mercy of good people, who started to collect money in order to help their fellow-countrymen. Such solidarity had to be respected even though it was often misinterpreted. Probably due to pride, probably because they thought it would be said that the help given was charity; or maybe because they were afraid that later on those they helped would in turn seek help from them – some refused the help, staying on their own two feet, not dependent so to speak on anyone.

A little later, when the young men had begun to return from the war in greater numbers and there was a big rush to find jobs, which were in demand, because of the many who sought them and because there was not enough gold, Mister Groky came to his friend Joe's house. In the usual way, with a glass of "bevanda", Mister Groky began his story, which made Joe think again about his own children. Already he was coughing badly and more and more he felt the need for a peaceful home, so that even the least remark not to mention news, concerning a member of his family, was hard for him to hear.

--And I tell you it's all good, all good – said Mister Groky – they've opened up new jobs. The government wants to put people on farms, the wheat-belt is getting bigger around Wyalkatchem and Merredin, because of

the need for food, wheat, because wheat can be exported, people in other countries need it. People are hungry after this war. New markets have opened and the price is going up, going up. I tell you Joe, that you can make good now on a farm, that gold isn't what it used to be. That's how things are changing! But after all, gold is still gold when someone gets hold of it, you can't say it's not worth anything any more. It's fallen in price, but it's still valuable, everyone wants it. We started with our company, we haven't been left with no money, because we've been saving, and left some aside.....

--How do you mean, you left some aside, Mister Groky?

--Nicely, nicely!

Joe looked into the restless eyes of Mister Groky and tried to decipher what he thought and what he meant to do.

--How do you mean?

--Nicely, nicely, Toni got his share.

--Mister Groky, -- Joe said seriously – I don't understand you, how has Toni got his share and I know nothing about it?

--You know nothing?!

--He put five or six ounces on the table and said: that's all!

--Five or six ounces – Mister Groky was surprised. But it wasn't just five or six ounces, it was

--How much was it?

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--I think there were fifteen for each of them...

Joe stood there unmoving...

--What are you telling me, he only gave me five or six ounces, and we said that fifteen belonged to you...I don't understand...

And Mister Groky began to put two and two together.

--Yeah, my Joe, I'm telling you the truth; I won't lie in bed tonight and get up tomorrow morning, so help me if I'm not – everyone got exactly fifteen ounces. They brought around 75 ounces of gold....

Joe could not talk any longer, and Tereza stood in the doorway unmoving and unable to believe her ears.

But is that possible?

Here every thought of the jobs Mister Groky had in mind, was cut short, because he decided there was no sense in talking now. Joe was too occupied with Toni's behaviour, and Mister Groky had to postpone his plans for another opportunity. They parted company at the fence, coldly bidding one another farewell and going their separate ways.

Joe lay down on his bed, his face white, like every drop of blood had gone from him. It had become plain to him then, that Toni had indeed won a thousand pounds on the horse races. Sometimes he had wondered and asked himself: how did he get the money in the first place, because for a gain of a thousand pounds he would have needed to have and to spend at least two hundred pounds to back a horse. Assuming the ratio to be 1:5, that is for one lira you get 5 lira when you back a horse to win, then for two hundred you get one thousand and two hundred. Or if the ratio was more favourable, that is when a man bets on a horse that is not the favourite, then the stake could be smaller, for instance 1:10. In that case Toni would have had to have a little less than one hundred pounds. However that too is money. Big money!

Joe had now started to believe that the gold they found had truly allowed Toni to get that big fat sum of money which could have meant salvation for all of them.

What now? And what now?

A thought occurred to him: hadn't he himself, Joe, started on this wrong path, hadn't he by choosing this path made a fatal mistake which had actually brought him to this point, which had resulted in his son's deception and his flight, his own illness, his daughter's indecent behaviour. Joe, you went the hardest way! You

picked the path of thorns, that is, the honest way! And what good is it to pick the honest way and then find yourself on the way of death, the way of destruction, the way of complete disintegration of family and life in general.

The thought was too heavy. It constituted a great self-accusation. He had tried to understand Toni's and Katica's actions, to comprehend that they were an attempt at escape from all that he himself had endured.

--Can I understand that? I am crazy, just an insignificant little man....

A little man, Joe, a small man, who works, from day to day, chooses his death in the mine; and the gold escapes, it goes away. Those people in Adelaide, Melbourne, London put stakes of fifty, a hundred, five hundred pounds, and maybe more if they have it, and then the money fertilizes itself, without any work, without drilling, mining, digging, without sweat, without death. He gained something and multiplied it in this way; you turn banknotes around in your fingers, and you hit your head on the wall only until you devise a good plan. Actually you sit reclining in the armchair, in your room and nothing excites you as much as a good plan. You watch the play of shares, choose partners and companies, listen to the pulse of the share market or study the horses, you follow all the combinations in the newspapers and play the lottery.....

--Ah, money, money, I didn't have money even for the beginning! – you, Joe, shout, you yell without any reason at all.

It's not necessary to yell, there are other ways besides going down the mine. Miners go down into the earth pointlessly; looking for gold, they find it and pass it over to the bosses, the surveyors, and for that finding

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they are given in a bag ten lira and a few shillings for two weeks' work, and the wagons carry the gold away, they take it all over the world, gold, whose gold, the earth's gold, your gold, Joe, and it ends up in the bracelet, in the earrings, in the ring, in some woman's teeth, it becomes gold lira sterling, becomes a bar, an ingot, it goes to the bank, as a deposit. On the paper pound note is written: this banknote has a deposit in gold, and those who invested ten, fifty, a hundred, a thousand ten thousand – and you, Joe, you pulled that gold out of the earth – get five, ten, fifteen, twenty times more than their investment. Then they separate from that a small amount for living expenses, that is, for food, clothes and shoes, and an amount for the house, for the playing fields, boats, trucks, entertainment, and another amount for buying shares, which will bring them new money. All of that from their room, from their couch, from a comfortable place at the stock market, in well-lit rooms, with a Havana cigar, beer, tea, whisky... And you, Joe, you are stupid, because your son has in fact, to tell the truth, if we are to be honest, seen through it all. He saw that your way was bad, that it was not leading anywhere nor is it now, only to disaster, so he went his own way, and you wanted to stop him, you actually wanted to ruin him....

He shut his eyes and did not listen to anything Tereza said. He heard only a series of words which were coming from somewhere far away, somewhere past the mines and the dumps, past the Golden Mile, further, further, from Kanowna or even Coolgardie, which had become a ghost town, inhabited by ghosts, the ghosts of prospectors, who had died in their 26th year, like Arthur Bailey, whose memorial they are raising and by whose name they are calling some streets. Bravo, bravo.....

Everything was mixed up in Joe's head. And he fell asleep; finally peace. Seeing how he was sleeping, Tereza crept around on her toes.

Her thoughts were going in a different direction. To herself, she cursed the moment when she had come to Boulder, or rather, the moment when Joe's wife died and her sister Aunt Dina introduced her to Joe on the island of Hvar, and when she agreed to be his wife. She had left her convent. Work had been hard there – she only had to remember the container of water she had carried on her head from Španjola fort or from the town square, in which had been up to eighty litres, she only had to remember scrubbing the floor on all three stories of the Canon's house, she only had to remember how Mrs Tade used to hound her, and all those cakes, *"kroshtule"*, *"fritule"*, *"pan de Spanji"*. True, true, she had plenty to eat and she could see the kind face of Mister Canon (forgive me God, I must not put my soul in jeopardy, I don't have to, don't have to say one word

against him, because he was a sainted man) and even though that was a hard life, it wasn't like this life here, not in the least....

--Everything here has lost its holy faith, everything has been left without God, everything upside down, no-one knows God's commandments, everyone wants to steal from you, they just want to eat, drink, smoke, look for hookers, fornicate, it's all without decency and shame. And these children of his! Not Miko, not Miko, he's a good man, kind, decent. But those others, that Bižac, Barbaro, Kacavid, Pazdripa. Poor us, poor widows, unfortunates, our hands have cracked from washing, from the lye, our backs ache from all the work, and we get headaches more and more. It's not right, it's disgraceful, because everyone just wants to please themselves. Oh my children, my children! That Lena, poor thing who ended up killing her child, now she is sorry, she has no peace, devils are chasing her by day and by night. Poor Julija, poor Kuma Tona, poor Klara, all of them unfortunate widows, and their poor defenceless chil.....Why did he have to take the gold, why did he have to go to the races, to cheat him like that, to throw that packet of five-six ounces to him, instead of telling him he had got a thousand lira sterling. My Lord God, is there any justice in this world, is there any justice? We have all turned away from you, we are all sinners. We are caught up in sin. My Lord God and Holy Virgin Mary, forgive these ungrateful people, let us live like human beings, so we don't bite one another like animals. Please, God, for this child of mine, don't let him stray from the right way, let him be a man. And, this world won't cheat him, I'll send him, I'll send him to school, and I'll ask Doctor Orli and Sister Meri Kalistus to help him, to look after him, to protect him....

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Miko came home that night, but unusually late. Joe was worried.

They were waiting for him at the door. They told him what had happened, and Miko merely shrugged and put his fingers to his forehead.

There was a long pause, and then after a few minutes came Miko's question:

--*And how did Toni's business with the German woman end?*

Joe got up from his chair.

--*What German woman? What sort of German woman? What business is that?*

--*Toni was to marry a German woman! Frau Elze Kronenberg... You don't know anything about it?* -- again Miko asked, seeing how both of them had turned to one another, and watching.

--*I thought you knew?! Forgive me....*

--*I know nothing!* --Joe answered. *That's the first I hear...and you think he has gone away with her?!*

--*When Toni went to school, they were always together, and she took him to the horse races. Katica went there too and Barbaro. I went this afternoon to see if Frau Elze was home, but no-one was there, just a notice on the fence: For sale!*

One more strange destiny had become entangled in Toni's life, as an unknown, which was obvious from her name, because even Miko knew little about her and Toni, except that he had heard that they had visited the well-known bar in the Palace hotel on the corner of Maritan and Hannan Street, about which in South Boulder people spoke sometimes in whispers, because few people went there, unless their pockets were full of money. The Palace had for years and decades had the reputation of being the meeting place for the well to do, business people, agents of various companies, high class black marketeers, important government officers, promoters, bankers, managers, that is, all the elites who were in Kalgoorlie and who came there from time to time. Banquets were prepared there in the style of Teddy's "Age of Enjoyment", Champagne Charlie was poured there, programs were created, plans were agreed upon, and there, with oysters and whisky, the powerful stood to toast one another after a well done deal; in any case, optimism manifested itself there, hinted at with millions of lira sterling in shares and millions in investments. Moustaches were trimmed with wax, gold bracelets were worn, and pearl necklaces for the evening balls. People who felt the delight of a gold discovery at some claim, fenced it with stakes and were assured of several thousand pounds, came to live there temporarily, only to lose it all in two or three weeks of high society life. It was a hazardous life they led there,

on the stock exchange with telegrams and telephone calls going around the world, hinting at wealth building on wealth. They ate and drank there, became engaged and got married, celebrated birthdays and holidays, met and parted ways, as the circumstances presented themselves, as bank accounts grew and fell, as shares were quoted. Every step, business step of course, honest and dishonest (Lord God, what honest and dishonest things there were at the Palace) was celebrated, glorified, in the smoke from the finest long cigars from Cuba or Florida, with the perfume of eau de cologne Balanciaga, with the faint aroma of garnished crayfish from Fremantle, and later from Esperance, with Russian caviar, beefsteak or roast beef from the abattoirs in Perth, coconuts, Indian papaya and mangoes, and who knows what else.

And there, only three blocks away from the School of Mines, in the cellar it is true, Toni felt the breath of his Springtime, where he found his one-time colleagues who were now mine officials, governors, sharebrokers and businessmen. The money was firmly in his pocket, and he could recount events with a glass of Scotch, learn secret betting, evaluate horses and dogs outside the so-called dust storm, invite Frau Else to dinner and surround himself with starched waiters, who smelt of polish and kitchen, and for whom under the serviette he left a solid tip when he paid the bill.

Strange things can be done with gold and with the places where it is found, there are a multitude of combinations, and a lot of time is not necessary, if a man is quick-thinking, and learns how it is done. Thus at the Palace, among the thick red velvet curtains, over which the tulle was drawn, and under the lights, which imitated the rich quarters of London and Paris, Toni too slowly learned his trade; for now keeping his account

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intact, because everything he had received could have been spent in one night. The German was a good counsellor. She was holding the reins of that still young and rather inexperienced horse, who had been known to turn this way and that, who did not pay too much attention to his movements, who still did not know how to decently put a handkerchief into the lapel of his coat, whose tie sometimes slipped down his shirt and showed his buttons. True, he had been “born intu de gejm” because in him they discerned the attributes of a gambler, who would very quickly get to know the structure and finesse of betting, and of course, it is understood, betting is not just on horses and dogs. It is a part of the big stock market on which grow and on which fall, those lucky and unlucky, that is, all of those so-called gentlemen, who aspire to become something immediately, and when that happens, passion pulls them further into the sphere of big new games which never end.

--*It's a sickness!* – Joe said once, when they spoke to him about the Palace, about betting and buying shares. He didn't know any other way to express that race to riches, so he described it as an illness, because a healthy man works in a different way. For him all of that was foreign; although deep inside himself he carried something vague, unspoken, mostly to do with the desire to create conditions so that he could escape from here, so that he envied a little those who came by their earnings in an easy way and created those conditions. But they did not know when to stop playing the game, which Joe, most certainly, would do.

It's a sickness! – Toni heard that too. But he did not take much notice. Something drew him towards large amounts of the “yeller stuff”, towards those who controlled its course, who had occupied stations on that big railway line, waiting for and seeing off the trains, excited to be there; trains flying their flags, tooting their whistles, moving and stopping and again moving the wheels of those huge compositions which carried all the different proofs of power, strength, and magnitude; which put into motion other wheels and the wheels of machines which took everything into account except those who did the most to actually fill those trains.

It's a sickness!

A cry from the Goldfield desert, where big activities had spread out and taken over the area from Kalgoorlie towards Kanowna, Ora Banda, Menzies, Kookynie, as far as Leonora, Laverton and Windarra, where at the same time human misery spread out too. It was actually the cry of a physically exhausted man, who was awaiting an imminent death, and realising his wagon had gone to a place of no return. A cry that no-one heard, because it came from an ordinary miner during a conversation with his nearest and dearest.

But the boom times had already passed and depression was already influencing jobs, so that Toni arrived at the Palace when the roulette wheel was spinning less and less and when smaller sums of money were involved. Nevertheless, it was never too late, if one knew where to turn. True, this was not the time of George Mayman, who at the Palace, when Charles Fraser became ill, led the negotiations about ending the strike of the wood workers at Kurrawang, Kurramia and Lakeside, which brought about downtime in the mines, so that Joe was affected. This was not the time when that same Mayman, an old prospector and a restless personality, who non-stop went from one adventure to another, who rose and fell and finally died as a poor man, in that same Palace was sharing the destiny of a lot of secrets around telluride, amusing the well-known Palace Cookie, aka Spencer Cook, manager, his wife Violet and other squatters, like for instance Bill Morris. Neither was this the time of the doyen of mines Richard Hamilton, nor the rebel Malachai Dwyer, after whom Joe's street was named, nor the speculator Billy Bray, nor Pat Hudgers, nor Thomas Bowen and his daughter, nor Pleiades of people whose children rode Shetland ponies or drove about in bedizened carriages. There, near the Palace, that is, around Maritan and Hannan Street in the centre of Kalgoorlie, following King Edward VII, who loved pleasure, they played a game worth two hundred million pounds sterling in gold, which the miners had dug up and poured into gold bars on the expanse known as the Golden Mile. All around, dumps making up ten million tons of crushed and ground dust were jutting out, taken by the wind into near-by towns and swallowed mostly by those who like moles had slunk along the tunnels 1500 kilometres in length and 1200 metres in depth. Through the dust crept shadows, and by night, when the wind was the strongest, when it was

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dark as a pit, weaving through the openings between clouds of dust were the lamps of those true torchbearers who with open hearts, and even not wanting to, gave the biggest share of their wealth to those who paraded at the Palace, offering the icing on the cake to their act of generosity. Actually these Palace-goers always emphasized how it was they who had made it possible for capital to be brought here, capital which had extracted wealth from the Golden Mile. If it were not for them, who would have created the conditions to enable going under the ground when it became necessary, after the surface findings; who would have brought all the machinery there, all those crushers, condensers, rinsers, smelters, boilers, all of that huge amount of iron-work, which in the beginning horses, camels, and carts had brought from Fremantle, where it had arrived by boat from Great Britain or other overseas countries, to become the springboard for the underground jobs. In their toasts they pointed out that it was their skill, their proficiency, which allowed those sandgropers and other-siders, those Irish, those jabbering Italians, Austroslavs, Croweaters, Dingoes and Dagoes to jump into their jobs, to satisfy their hunger, because they really had been hungry when they arrived in their tens of thousands, like grasshoppers, from all parts of the world. They rubbed the noses of those Brindisi people in the fact that with their networks and connections all over Australia, Great Britain, and Europe, they had made it possible for all that to happen, for it to start to work like real machinery, more precise than a Swiss watch. Their engineers had invented new solutions, put forward projects and prospects, because there were quite different conditions here from the mines in Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania or further away in South Africa and America. They brought here from all sides of the world, experts, the best specialists in all businesses, from geologists, used to mining and especially precious metals, to economists, experts in the stock exchange; from the most subtle political analysers to proficient newspapermen; from pedantic government officials to bankers and tomorrow's president of the USA as was Hoover; from tenacious, never tired prospectors to managers of boarding houses and hotels; from the owners of the best horses to skilful bookmakers; from traders wholesale and retail to tailors and barbers with magic hands, which decorated the heads and bodies of their clients, to waiters with special gesture and bow who received on their saucers added amounts for their own little accounts or tips simply thrown elegantly into their pocket.

Everything changed in the Palace, everything became a big parade, organised by His Highness Gold, which first was dug by hard, calloused, clumsy hands with dirty nails, and then found itself on smooth, clean, perfumed palms and shining on necks, arms, ears, heads crowned and uncrowned or else it would be a deposit

for paper which came into the hands, but in quite restricted amounts, of those who had first touched that gold with their ungainly fingers. Many merits here in the Palace were emphasized. Many trashy toasts were pronounced, and that toast which on the first night, modestly, in a corner of the restaurant, Toni sent to his Frau Else was a little, pale, poor beginning of an ascent which was to have all the traits in a small way, of that which paraded through Kalgoorlie in the decade of 1897 until now. But still, that was the time of those who stood at the dividing line, like Ben Leslie, well known mayor of Kalgoorlie or again, the elegant Claude de Bernales, otherwise called Mister London, famous financial operator and manager, who one moment was a millionaire and the next, practically a beggar, who was a lender and a borrower, showed signs of genius and desperation, according to crisis situations, his skill or else his wrong moves, or maybe the skill of others who would fool him.

It was still the era of the monocle, card games, white moustaches, goatees, bright walking sticks of mahogany with silver handles, and umbrellas, deer leather gloves and suits sewn in the latest fashion. It was the era when the echoes of Veste Tilley, London gaiety girls, were felt, and the regatta on Henley and races at the Derby. The wide cellars of the Palace supplied the saloons of the hotel, the reception rooms, apartments and bars with the finest products from all over the world, so that you could not even imagine what was not there and what they did not have, under the management of Mister Cookie and his charming lady Violet. It was the era of special cuisine, viands perfect, intimate bars, comfortable nooks, elongated couches, soft beds, all, to be sure, under the portraits of that wonderful royal pair George V and Mary; and so on. Toni could feel all of

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this in the background; on his way to the School of Mines he used to go through Brookman Street, Cassidy Street, Wilson Street and other streets nearby, and then he would stop at the corner of Hannan and Maritani, peering into the rich repositories behind the glittering shop windows or into the saloon of the Palace behind the red draperies, which hid the life for which he had in fact strived ever since he arrived here, but more and more as time passed and the house in Dwyer Street seemed to him to be a house of ghosts, people who knew nothing better than cash-boxes in which they put money, like offerings in church, sixpence at a time, shilling after shilling, pound after pound, and they had no idea that a faster way to happiness and success existed, rather than with their dirty, sweaty pants and underpants, bundles and pouches.

All of this intensified in him more and more. And actually when his father slapped his face, that was for him a sort of final reckoning with that world, with those Slavs, with those insignificant souls, who spent their time nibbling, getting crumbs, crawling, who enjoyed the small things, a little goat and a bottle of wine, children; widows and their stories of accidents that happened to this and that person in the Ivanhoe mine, broken arms and legs, damaged lungs, dysentery and rickets, malnutrition, wooden walls and holes through which the dust blew, mushrooms the children dug up in abandoned yards, underpants that were pissed on, inverted socks, torn shirts....And all of these stories bored him to tears. That dog's life which they had chosen for him (and whose fault is it that they chose it for him, and whose fault is it that they found it for themselves, whose fault is it that they lived that life persistently day after day); that life was not meant for him and from the beginning he had resisted it, true, sometimes pretending he had given in, that he was listening, doing something, but with an already firm resolution, from the moment when it started to come close, that one day he would be rid of all of that, that he would be free and that he would work according to his own instinct, without an intermediary, without a boss, without his family. All he cared about was to find some way to get there, some sort of pathway would take him to this Palace, which shone like a symbol of something different; something called fast climbing, fast spreading, fast getting to the surface, where life breathed a different breath, where things take place easily and without desolate jokes and exaggerations, where the game is plain, a big game, which multiplies your lire, your shares, your capital, and actually you only have to cock your little finger or at the most, *sučes desnog strana svog brka* (stroke the right side of your moustache). It seemed to him that that life which was before him would go smoothly, that there would not be any big obstacles to overcome, that it was all quite uncomplicated, if you followed certain rules. It was quite clear to him that first

he had to be a good observer, that he had to rein himself in, as Frau Else said, so as not to jump at every opportunity, and never to let anything escape his sight, to feel his way slowly, lira after lira, so that his “axe fell into the honey” exactly at the right moment. He knew that connections were a good starting point, so he began to look for them. He was successful because Frau Else was really very experienced. She opened doors for him, and his capital, which was the important thing, grew because others joined him of whom his father had never even thought. Going towards Norseman, south of Boulder, his prospecting group came across an abandoned mine which they dug over, and there they found and dug up gold which they divided among themselves, and Mister Groky, who was well informed, made sure that that mine was immediately sold to someone. How much he earned – even Toni did not know, but he too received his share, another two thousand pounds. He united this increased capital with Frau Else’s, which also was not to be underestimated, and that helped him a lot in the beginning.

And now we are at the beginning of a new phase, the old one lost at the Palace; because nothing more was known about Toni. The last time he was seen was in Kalgoorlie two or three months after the birth of Cosmas, that is, me, and then every trace of him vanished, at least for the remaining four participants in this story, that is, for Joe, Tereza, Nick and me – and I had just recently been born, and couldn’t know anything....

But to return to that yard, in which a new descendant was growing, who already in his earliest days felt your presence, Perrin, and the presence of your brothers, Thomas and Gregory. Kathy had then begun her new adventure with the Italian man, who actually was a modest man, without any special demands. He wanted to

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be part of a fairly big family, in which he had no children of his own - but actually because of the fact that there already were another man’s offspring in the family, somehow there was not much room for him. Kathy mostly took care of the children, who occupied her primarily. Very little time was therefore left for the poor fisherman who had arrived here from somewhere near Ancona.

--*You smell of fish* –Kathy would humiliate him when he began to complain, showing his inborn pride. – *You’re just an old fartier.. You need to think a bit about your wife, if you want to keep her, and find a better business than your plumbing which brings you only a miserable amount, barely enough for food. Change things, change things, you unlucky Italian, or you’ll fly out across the yard....*

And the Italian would then bend his head and go and stand in a corner, waiting for his Donna Caterina to calm down and ask him to help her with the children.

Kathy knew she had him under her thumb, because it was obvious that he had fallen madly in love with her. He brought his crumbs home every second Saturday, and she would give him enough for a beer or two or three glasses of wine, and put the rest in a jug, which he was not allowed to even look at. Between the wooden walls of the two rooms was the place where she kept the money, and only Kathy knew where it was and no-one else. There were twenty gold pieces there and a bank book with two hundred lira sterling, and part of this the sister had received from her brother as part of the partnership after the gold was found, which Toni had not reported to his father. Actually Kathy had received their father’s share as well as her own, because they had agreed upon this, and Barbaro was left without his, because Kathy simply seized it. From the sale of the mine, which Mister Groky had carried out, she had not extracted anything, because she knew nothing about this transaction, and still less did her husband Barbaro know. Thus the amount had become quite a sum, and in the house they spent what the Italian brought, that is....the “miserable amount, just enough for food” – as Kathy said.

In the house in Dwyer Street little or nothing was said about Toni’s disappearance. It was an embarrassing story, all woven of sorrow, suffering, disgust, discomfort. Toni was not mentioned when Kathy came around here. His name was not mentioned even in those few moments when Nick was alone with her. The two camps made sure this was the case between themselves and with others.

But with Nick, unpleasant things were happening. He was becoming thinner and thinner, and Tereza with all her strength tried to strengthen him, so she gave him....eggs beaten up in *proshek*...which she made

herself from dried grapes, and she chose better food for him, and made a late breakfast for him which he carried in his bag and in the afternoon she gave him different sorts of tea. It seemed to Tereza that Nick's illness was pointing towards something terrible, and she wanted at all costs to prevent the consequences. But Nick, in spite of all her efforts and the efforts of Doctor Ervan, slowly, so to speak from year to year, grew weaker. He became even thinner and coughed more and more. Doctor Ervan did not want to say what was wrong with him, but Tereza was not far from the diagnosis when she suspected it was phthisis made worse by the mine. Another worry was inflicted upon her, to save her child from infection, therefore she washed in hot water everything that Nick had had in his hands, all that he touched; but so that Nick did not notice. It was hard and tiring for her, but she put all her strength into it, so that as well as the child and the housework, and the sale of various articles to near and far neighbours, she did this too. Her son was in question, her only son she had carried below her heart and who meant everything on earth to her. Some sort of instinct, together with the normal maternal instinct, told her she must at all costs preserve and maintain that life, because her foreboding was indeed great. Nothing good took place for her in South Boulder.

Joe was not exactly in a good mood. Even though he was in the fresh air, he too was losing strength. Upon returning from the bush, where he had been cutting wood, he felt pain in his joints and the small of his back, and preferred to lie down in bed, or during the heat, to lie on the mattress which was on the veranda, and there, reading the newspaper, he would fall asleep.

And then one day Mister Giacometti from the nearby Cornwall came to him and said:

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--Joe, I need a man of your age!

--*And why, Mister Giacometti?*

--Because of the police!

--*The police?!* – Joe was surprised by this open proposal.

--You know, Joe, I know your family, I know you're an honest man, and there are very few honest men here. Everyone wants to bring trouble to me, but I still like what I do for a living. A few years ago they were questioning whether gold thieves were hiding at my place, because all sorts of rogues used to come there. I announced that I didn't want to see that sort of person in my hotel any more, so the police saw they were dealing with a man who wanted to trade in a normal way and sell my goods honestly. You know, I can't, and I'm not allowed to, look in someone's pocket...But since that damned war, since life has not settled down, since there is not as much work as there was before, and it's forbidden under my licence to pour alcohol, except during certain times, my business has fallen; and I have to live. And in confidence I tell you, I got the idea to find a man who can watch the streets to see if the police are coming, and I decided that in this way you and I can share the profit...Joe, I have to live, and apart from this I have nothing. Alright, Joe, all sorts of things have happened in my hotel, I admit! I didn't take enough care, but who did at that time, Joe, tell me that? No-one! Because there was money everywhere. Prospectors used to come, and to tell the truth, there was smuggling, speculation, but Joe, that was only very insignificant. It lasted for me and my wife and children until now and I still have enough for a year's life, but if it continues like this, you know what can happen. I'll have to sell everything. And when I sell, who knows, maybe all the mines will open again, and they're talking about new machines, ventilation, flotations and who knows what else, gold can be produced in bigger quantities again, and I will have given the hotel away for nothing and ended up with nothing. I don't know anything else to do. I was never a boggler or a trucker nor can I be, I can't go underground. And you, as I can see, you're not the best. You're pulling that horse and cart, bringing wood, cutting it, and it would be better for you to share with me....

Joe listened carefully and said nothing. The Italian continued in his imperfect English-Italian language.

--*Mister Giacometti, I'll know in a day or two what to say, let me think about it. You know, I have some jobs to do and I can't give you an answer now. Can you wait, Mister Giacometti* – that is, more or less, Joe's answer to the offer, but Mister Giacometti felt that Joe had given him hope that he would accept.

--And you try it, firstly for a few days, and if you like it then, then you'll continue, I'm not pushing you into it straight away, you know I'm a reasonable man...

Joe told him he would think it over for a day or two and then give his answer. Thus Mister Giacometti went across the veranda and disappeared towards the Cornwall.

Joe consulted Tereza and Nick, and they came to the conclusion, although reluctantly, that it was necessary to accept Mister Giacometti's offer. Let him try it out for a week or two and if he didn't like the job, it would be easy to stop.

Joe was hesitant, because he didn't like the role which his acquaintance Mister Slabić had carried out before him, and Mister Giacometti thought he didn't know that. To keep guard so that the police did not come in, and to follow such a loser at that job, a greedy man and at the same time a snoop as well, was not the most opportune thing. But on the other hand, it was a better solution for him than sweating in the bush and going far away, because all the bush near Boulder and Kalgoorlie had been stripped by the huge need the mines and power plants had for wood, with which they fired the ovens and made supports and other constructions both in and out of the mines. That was of course, the reason why the climate around the twin towns had changed. The wind had a free passage, so that it filled its heart with great amounts of desert sand and dust from the dumps.

Joe knew that Slabić, who had gone to a different job in a shop in the north-west part of Brookman Street, would come across him in the Cornwall, because that one could not survive without the hotel. How could he, first of all, explain to him what he was doing there? And then, how to connect all that with the police,

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because people said that Slabić actually worked with them. However, he was there as the Cornwall's man and at first Joe didn't even think about that strange merging of interests, which could catch him too in the garbage, and now that started to give him a headache. If he asked Mister Giacometti how that could be possible, he could answer that he knew nothing about it. Or it could happen also that he would say that everything about Slabić being a police dog, was simply imagination. Or maybe Mister Giacometti himself was unhappy with this role, and he had welcomed the fact that Slabić found another job. However, that could cost Joe dearly, because Slabić could then have him under his thumb, to do with whatever he wished, and Joe would not like that. What would happen if Slabić reported Joe to the police, and told them: -- Look, that man works for Mister Giacometti, he looks after the drunks and the card players for him and he shares the profit with him, and then the police, specifically Sergeant MacCormick, would knock on the door of number 12 Dwyer Street and ask: -- You, Joe, are doing that and that job...and then begin to search him and then it could happen that...

Therefore, after his decision to go to the Cornwall for a week or two, a huge uncertainty was born in him towards the whole job because of that loser, that glutton and snoop.

--The devil take him -- Joe said to himself -- he's always coming round; if he comes here, so help me Mother of God, I'll make him regret it. He'll go flying back to his own yard and that den with the spider webs, where in the morning he's firing his rifle at the cats. Like what happened when he insulted Kuma Tone and I showed him the axe. The devil take him, lying whore! How can the English work with that shit of a man? How can they? And he's wormed his way into their butts, God forgive me! And here he just sucks up to people, with nice words, hears something and then goes to Lejn Strit and reports people! Everyone avoids him, and he sticks like you-know-what sticks to the other thing, he gives a man no peace. Hey Joe, do you have any wine, do you have lamb, do you have a few drops of proshok! -- that's how it is and you have to give him, because you'll never get rid of him otherwise. Keep your mouth shut when you're with him; and our people crazy, idiotic, drinking too much, and he among them, swallowing every word they say, and when someone says something without thinking, something comes out accidentally and not spitefully, because that's how life is here, some boss has caught someone coming to work drunk, and they're talking about it, how he was fired, and Slabić all over him to hear what he says, is he going to blab something. And our people telling one another that they saw so and so how he got a package not long ago, how someone takes gold from someone else, or money, that someone took

someone else's wood, or that he, God forgive me, got hold of some widow and cheated her out of her money, her bracelet, or her necklace and escaped, and Slabić goes to the police with all of that, in Lejn Street, and then people are surprised when they end up there that the police know everything, that nothing has escaped them. They are surprised when they get fired from one mine and can't get a job in another, and they wait and beg or they go to others who give them, poor things, enough for food and for sleeping. Because it isn't possible that Sergeant Makornik or Sergeant Kolter or anyone from the Chamber of Mines gets that information any other way. They are English - who of our honest people would tell them that or how would they find out when they are with our people, when they don't know three words of ours, only: "dobro jutro, Mister Joe, dobro vino, good morning Mr Joe, good wine... tejsti, gud....."

Joe was afraid the police would put him into a so-called double service, that is to work for Mister Giacometti and at the same time for them.

--and then, and then, what does Mister Giacometti get from it, why did he come to me? If Slabić was like that before, how could he put up with him? I can't believe Mister Giacometti didn't know about Slabić's sneakiness. Either Slabić hid what he was doing for Mister Giacometti so he could in that way gather what he could, or I am caught in a net. I don't like any of it, it's not on the level!

That's how it went. Now I don't want it, now I do, now I don't, until Nick stepped onto the veranda before Tereza set the table.

--You're lost in thought?!

--Yes I was! – answered Joe, as though waking up.

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--About that?!

--Yes about that! I keep thinking about Slabić.

--Slabić?! Ah, Slabić! That loser, who was at Mister Giacometti's and spied on people. That chicken thief. Let him be, he's gone away, he's on a daily wage

--What daily wage?

--He's gone away to Fremantle!

--Again I don't understand anything!

--In prison!

--Prison?! How?

That was quite a little shock for Joe.

--You know – Nick continues – that the law here is written plainly:... "unauthorized possession of telly or telluride is illegal"...

--What, they found gold on him, and telly...

--Yeah, yeah, they got five or six packets and I think he won't get less than six months in Beaconsfield, in that prison where the harmonica is played...

--What, what! – said Joe, not immediately able to comprehend all that. – So the rat got caught in the trap...

--Yeah, that's it, that's it! – Nick laughed too, because that saying seemed quite witty to him:

"Dosla pantagana na gvozdice!" (The rat got caught in the trap – the chickens came home to roost....)

--They stopped them, I told you they would stop them – Nick continued. – The yellow stuff sticks to your fingers. Telluride is rich in gold and sells pound for pound, lira for lira. A man doesn't have to carry many rocks, and it's easy to hide. They cleaned it in the mine, and some would swallow a nugget and then have a shit, and find it in the shit; you see what they ended up doing; and some would put it in their mouth, in the middle of some egg, little by little, and it would mount up. Some made friends of the foreman, and I heard that the bigger ones could get a part of thirty kilograms of pure gold, and they smelted it down as though it had been found somewhere outside. They let them go with their sack, they get a big part, sell the sack, carry it outside, share it! You, I can tell, don't know a lot about these things!

And Nick had opened a new theme for Joe, who in his innocence had never wanted to hear the stories told by others, because they seemed impossible to him, but now when he heard his son, who he believed was good and honest, he could not fail to listen.

And Nick spoke of a manager from Comet who stole gold and gave it to a prospector who had his own small mine, his prospecting area, fenced off with stakes, that is, legally covered, to process it. And that took place like this: the gold was melted in the metal container to become liquid, *“pretvori se u tekucinu”*. Then a barrel was filled with water and the liquid gold was thrown in the water. In the water it breaks up into little pieces, into grains. This was then gathered up and mixed with soil, crushed rock. The prospector then in this state carried it like his own unearthed gold to the crusher (or *“kroshing”* as our people said) to be crushed and ground up, and then to be fired again. Each person, of course, considered that gold to be his. The prospector sold it legally and then shared the profit with the manager, half and half. Good for the prospector, good for the manager. A hundred ounces of gold is not a small thing—*You, it seems to me, know nothing?* – Nick said to his father.

--*And where would I find out? Out in the bush or here, at home, from Tereza and the little one. I don't go to the tavern, where pubs and clubs are, I don't go to the races...*

--*And have you heard this?* – continues Nick, who was all of a sudden talkative, which was not his habit. – *About non-liability shares?!*

--*Non-liability shares! And what is that, for God's sake?!*

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--*My father!* – Nick shook his head. – *I remember very well, when we came here and when you spoke those English words, which we didn't understand, and now...*

He stopped there and continued the story about Mister London, who had gone to the Palace Hotel and achieved a lot of somersaults in his life, going from being a poor man to a millionaire and back again.

His real name was De Bernales and he had on those non-liability shares made a profit of a hundred thousand lira. He bought the Emile Gold Mine in Menzies, a hundred miles from Kalgoorlie and announced the sale of the non-liability shares, the sale of the so-called optional shares. Therefore, no-one is accountable for these shares. A person takes the risk. He could gain many thousands, and he could lose the lot. However, it is not about those who know how the thing works, but about those who do not know the rules of the game, and they were the ones De Bernales appealed to. He got money from them for those shares. He proclaimed that the mine was rich, that there was gold in it, he began to buy machines, it seemed to be serious, and when the people rushed in and when there were enough funds, the money disappeared, the gold disappeared, the shares failed. And De Bernales's stakes...

--*Stop, don't go any further, don't go any further!* – said Joe and looked at his son. – *That makes me tired, I'm not up to that sort of thing....*

--*Now you'll know more about it, at Mister Giacometti's. Everything comes to the surface there. Not Slabić, he's gone to gaol. Dosla pantagana na gvoždica...* -- Nick quickly changed the topic and laughed.

And Joe laughed too, after a long time. Now he could go freely to Mister Giacometti, having heard this news. He felt relieved, but still was a little afraid, because he could not understand why Mister Giacometti had put up with Slabić for so long. Now, when they had put him in the lock-up, it would be easier for him to explain things. He had gained courage, and went to the Cornwall.

--Yes, yes, my dear sir, I did suspect, but I couldn't do anything. It was hard for me, and when Mister Slabić came and told me that he couldn't work any longer, I was relieved. And I knew very well that the yellor stuff, the telly, stuck to his fingers. True, I never saw anything, but people told me, and there was someone who reported it to the special police, who in the name of the company look into such things. That's how it happens, my dear Joe (Mister Giacometti then became a bit more familiar) yes my dear Joe, I didn't like it. It was going well for me, because people left their lira here, and business is business, you know, can I ask

someone where they get their money, is that my duty? He comes here and asks for Tom Mix or Hennessy Brandy with three stars or Scotch or Kalgoorlie Stout, “a pint of Hannan’s please with some nuts”, and what is my duty but to bring this to the man and then to charge him. That’s how it’s always been and that’s how it will be. And if some are smuggling, doing their business under the table – that, sir, I can’t see and don’t want to see. I put up a notice that I don’t want it to happen. If the police arrest someone, that’s not my business, that’s his business. And Mister Slabić was a weak character, he thought he could be here and there as well. My dear Joe, it isn’t necessary to live trying to sit on two chairs at once. I won’t do that. From the beginning that’s what I decided and no-one can say I was dishonest. Trying to avoid the police now, that’s a different thing, because business isn’t good for me now. They’ve closed off the ways gold used to get out, put good inspectors in place, agents go around the desert and the bush, many people have agreed to go on the so-called “tributing parties”, so that what is found is divided more equally, so the miners get more, and the mine has its profit; somehow they have become smarter. Some miners were wise on their own account, and they went into those contracts, because they had hidden in the tunnels of the mine veins of telluride they already had found. In that way they came into huge amounts of money. But all of that, dear Joe, is only crumbs. Those who get rich quickly, stop coming to me in the Cornwall. The little people come to me, the man with a nugget in his pocket, with an ounce in a small sack, and now not even them, because the Chamber of Mines has good police, a good gold-stealing detection unit, as it’s called, who creep around and have many of their own spies. Yes, it happens that a woman when police go into her home, quickly throws the gold into the soup, and they find nothing, but fear

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is fear and it takes over, and to tell the truth, it’s not nice or useful to go “on holiday” in Fremantle, like Mister Slabić will have to very soon. And then?!

The question came all at once. Joe, sitting on the veranda and sipping the proffered beer, shrugged his shoulders and said:

--Well if that’s the way it is, I’m at your service, but, please, I don’t want to be involved in anything else! I’m just a guard. I for you, you for me! Is that so, Mister Giacometti?

--Good, Joe! Very good! Thanks! You can start next Saturday. Sit up on the veranda, and then when you get bored, go for a walk around the block! Tell everyone you can’t work any longer, that you are resting, that the doctor advised walking in the fresh air, that it’s boring for you at home. That’s it! And I’ll give you in advance....

Joe went home satisfied, having got a new job, although of a secret nature, because no-one was to know about it. At least not for now. Besides the drunks, he had to look out for the card-players.

He was now in contact with other people. He learnt a lot, while drinking his beer, but he could never find out anything about Toni. Toni had simply disappeared. He had been taken away by unknown business, with the German Frau Else.

First Joe met there, the bookmaker Jimmy Hart. Actually he was not a real bookmaker, he was an agent who had gone around the Boulder pubs offering his services. Jimmy knew all about betting, and he was especially active before certain races, “*kaps*” as they were called. The Boulder Cup, the Kalgoorlie Cup - took place each August and then people came from all sides of the world. Jimmy knew it all: there would be this or that race, this or that horse would come, they brought from Adelaide or Melbourne this or that, fifty, seventy, one thousand lira is the stake – all of this Jimmy would say, describing how combinations should be made. Now he advised that the first horse should be backed, another time he would insist on the second horse, and on two for a place in the third, and often he was successful in his predictions, and even Joe would have a bet, but for a small amount of money. He didn’t have much to do except to inform Mister Giacometti if the police were somewhere in the vicinity, and then he would remove the stronger drink and put soda or tonic on the table.

People’s destinies were now an open book before Joe, who otherwise was a home-loving man, receiving news from friends who came to him, or from his own children who were very stingy with information.

What could he learn about Kathy, for instance? What could he learn about Toni? They never told him what they had seen, what they had experienced, what had happened to them, they didn't comment in front of him about the news in The Kalgoorlie Miner or The Sunday Sun. And Nick, except lately, had not been interested in all those happenings, because he thought it was all just gossip, as he used to say, "for old ladies".

Joe therefore had fun in one way, although he did badly with the horses. But illness weighed on him more and more, so that he would do his work reluctantly at Mister Giacometti's. One day he fell asleep on the veranda right when Sergeant MacCormick, his old acquaintance, came to the hotel. But Mister Giacometti noticed the policeman in time, because he went out onto the veranda by chance. Skilfully he withdrew two glasses of whisky and two beers and pushed tonic towards his guests. Joe apologised to his boss for his indiscretion. After ten months of loyal service he considered it necessary to tell him he was no longer able to do the work. Mister Giacometti objected for a long time, and Joe had to continue.

Mister Giacometti one day in a random, unimportant conversation by chance asked him if he was a naturalised citizen. Joe answered that he was now a citizen of Yugoslavia, since after the war it had become a new country, but that he still had not come into contact with the consul of the new country.

--Joe, that's not good – said Mister Giacometti seriously – not good! It would be best if you sought British citizenship. You've been here a long time, so it will be easy to get. Because, something could happen to you, and your wife will be alone with the child. Without citizenship or with a foreign citizenship, it's much harder to attain your rights.

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This gave him serious thought, and then he went to the police to ask what he should do. They told him to write an application and to send it to Melbourne. This he did.

The reason for seeking citizenship was also because he could no longer put up with the way the so-called native Australians heckled the Slavs and Dagoes that they had all the privileges without any good reason, that the war had particularly favoured them, that they had behaved like foreigners, who had even harmed the Commonwealth, because they had not participated in the allied war effort, only a little at the end. On the other hand, since there were many unemployed, every Slav, and to a certain extent, Italian, who was employed, was criticised by some, who loudly commented that those "bloody bastards" were taking jobs from the locals, never mind that some of the Slavs and Italians had come here a long time before these recently arrived troublemakers.

In order to stop these stories, Joe waited for the naturalisation card as some sort of reprieve.

--Just let someone abuse me now! I'll show him who has been here longer!

But it seemed that this did not do much to calm some people down, who always found an excuse to rebuke these periphery dwellers for their allegiance to some other side, even though some were already in the trade unions and had begun to gain the right to insurance. However, Joe made this step which to be sure, would not be of much use to Tereza and her child, but which could help Nick, and Toni if he appeared, while Kathy on the other hand was insured. However, the new citizenship, due to the circumstances, was of no help to anyone in the family, although it could have saved a life, if something unexpected had not happened, that is, if fate had not been involved.

Like Joe, Nick felt weak, so that in the house they began to talk about sending him to Fremantle, to the fresh air, because it was obvious that the air here did not agree with him. Joe spoke of this to Doctor Ervan and the doctor without hesitation answered that that would be a clever thing to do, because Nick was a young man and that could definitely help him.

--Excellent idea – said Doctor Ervan – if only you can help Nick to find a job on a farm. Yes, yes, there are ministries in Perth interested in widening the area of farms, and they give favourable credit....

For nearly a whole year the house in Dwyer Street hummed with news and comments about farming. They questioned every possibility. Nick wrote to Perth and Fremantle, to his former friends, wrote a request to

the government; until one day a favourable answer came, that the government would cede to him a piece of land, which was already partly cultivated, under the condition that he deposit a certain sum of money and in that way gain the leasehold for an established time, and could buy tools and machines for the farm and build a small field house. The farm was in Mandiga, not far from Bencubbin. It was necessary to go by train from Kalgoorlie through Southern Cross to Merredin and then hit Nungarin and Kununoppin, which meant a rather winding route, to arrive in Bencubbin and the village of Mandiga, which was not even on the map, and was part of the so-called new "wheat-belt", which was spreading towards the north and the west. Not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth, Joe began to calculate how much his long years of saving had accumulated. Nick already had his own bank book. Joe had persuaded him a year or two ago to put half his earnings in the bank, so that he had fifty something lira, which was enough to sustain him for a month or two, including paying for the journey and the deposit for the farm.

But before Nick left for Mandiga, Kathy arrived in the Dwyer Street yard and declared that she was going to Perth. The children would go to college, and she would work in a shop – so she had agreed with some friends. She would sell the house here and that would be enough to settle there and see what to do next.

Although one could always expect the unexpected with Kathy, this sudden decision echoed among the Dwyer Street residents like a small bomb.

--How come, so suddenly? – asked Joe. – You don't even turn around and already you're doing something no-one can understand.

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--The main thing is, that I understand -- she pointed out sharply – and that's already something! Isn't that so?

--My God, yes it is! – Joe answered, realising there was no point starting a discussion with her. However, this decision upset him. This woman had already sent the Italian packing, there was no male to support her, and with three children, all alone, she was embarking on a huge exploit. How could this be? How could it be? Toni had for sure packed up and gone to Perth – he thought – because that was a city, a real city, just what he had wanted. Nick was going, and now she too was announcing her departure. The thought came to Joe that his children were achieving that which he had once hoped to achieve himself, but with one difference: it would be without him, Tereza and the child. Everything was happening so that he would with his wife and the little one remain alone, and last of all. – Never mind, never mind – he said to himself – they are my family and even though there are two devils there and one angel, it doesn't make sense for me not to want them to get out of here.

Kathy was actually giving voice to his thoughts, and Joe with a heavy heart approved. However what she was saying, was said in such a way that Joe could see she really did not have any consideration towards him, that she thought only about herself and no-one else.

--What am I to do here, eh? In this desert, among these people, in this stink! What can I do! It's all cheap and nasty, dirty, doomed... I'm going with my children there, to fresh air, and honest people...I've had enough of everything, every day I feel like being sick, I see these idiots around me, these thieves, brutes always fighting one another, always drinking....

--Stop, stop! – Joe tried to cut her off, before she really got started, when her tongue would be too loose and a heap of words would pour out against him, against Tereza, who had brought her here. Because she had said all this before and it would not be long before it was repeated when she had started to describe her surroundings and the whole of the Boulder periphery.....

--The Italian has been sent away – Joe said to himself – and I don't think anyone else has come on board, because.....

--And I'll get married again! – At that very moment Kathy herself solved his puzzle, while Tereza at once crossed herself and whispered:

--My Lord God, again; in the name of the father and the son....

She hadn't finished speaking, and Kathy resumed:

--...and the Holy Spirit, amen, the stone kills you, the wood hits you, your insides fall out...you pray to God, and I'm going to the devil, so there you are, when that's what you want....

--But daughter, but daughter – Joe tried to soothe her; and then Nick gathered courage to say, emphasizing one word after the other, as though hitting them with a baton:

--Katica, until now I've only listened, and now it's time for you to listen a bit, isn't that right?

Kathy was not expecting that, because Nick was always very restrained. He had stopped her in the middle of a sentence, with her mouth open.

--Firstly, we all know, you came here today and **you** started talking about what's on your mind. Secondly, this is your father, who is ill, and neither he nor Tereza have said anything to you, as far as I could hear. Thirdly, no-one is stopping you, as far as I can see. Fourthly, if you need anything, I don't believe you'll be deprived...

Nick spoke slowly, but coldly, without any emotion. His father could hardly believe he could explain himself so well, to cut like a knife and to leave no spaces, which would have allowed someone to again attack. That's how it was this time. Actually, for the first time in the life of this family in Boulder, Kathy was cut down and felt that there was no point whatsoever in going on with her tirade, which would only bring new, sharp words and slamming of doors in the house and the yard.

Kathy was simply speechless, and then she shrugged her shoulders. Nick continued:

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--I'm going West a bit later, and these people will stay here. And he wanted to go there, you know, before he had all of us; you, and Toni, and me and Tereza. And the little one. We have to go our separate ways in peace, and understand one another. You can do as you wish, but you have to understand and respect others, and especially your own family. That's it!

Kathy did not answer. After a pause she shifted to another topic. The others also considered the incident closed and that they should avoid any chance of fuelling more passion. Joe was grateful to Nick and in that moment he would have done anything to heal him, even if it meant to his own detriment.

And then everything happened so quickly, so quickly, my dear Perrin, that it is nearly impossible to follow it all. Here my childhood memories are mixed completely with my mother's. Here that outer world began to clash with our world, forcing us bit by bit to leave ours. We became witnesses of something which at first was very strange for us. My mother told me, for instance, how in those days I would react very severely to various fights and arguments. – You've lost your minds, lost your minds – I shouted, and actually I didn't even understand those words. And once I blurted out, so they told me: -- You are bloody bastards, I wil kik ju in de bam! (*Vi ste jebena mulad, dat cu vam nogu u guzicu!*)

Those older people, Perrin, really upset our world; our searches, our games, our school of life, which had started so beautifully. Oh how you and I, Perrin, from our point of view, how we would have organized that world! It would have been so different, if that unfortunate series of events had not unfolded into our reality which was wonderful, full of fantastic magic created by our imagination. How come adults didn't have such imagination? More and more they mercilessly penetrated our world, until they completely demolished it, until it was destroyed and scattered along the way. Still we can find some scattered pearls along these pathways, but never can we create a complete picture of what we then experienced.

Then everything happened so quickly, dear Perrin!

You went to Perth and we never saw one another again. Nick travelled to Bencubbin, that is, to Mandiga, and I didn't see him again either. In Boulder we three stayed alone: father, mother, and I.

A world had disappeared, our world, and another had arrived, with hard circumstances and an uncertain future, not to mention the past, which was unfolding in front of me more and more. I had listened to that past more than I had seen it, sensed it more than touched it, in my mother most of all, and through her it

had become mine, to join with your past, to become the past of your mother, your brothers, to be Nick's, and then Toni's.

Ah, and Toni's, that past, which now supervenes during our meeting, on this side of the world. That past.....

How much I would like to say all at once, and that can't be done, because in one moment I would have to describe myself, my whole life, the life of my family, the life of those around us, all that which makes us what we are, and in that there are thousands of meetings, thousands of contacts with nature and with man, with the earth and with space. You see, a man, with those fifty to eighty or more kilograms, what does he not have inside him? What does he not carry inside, with what does he not take pleasure, have fun, be happy, unhappy, live? And still, you could find treasure in him, more valuable than all the gold that Britain took from the Golden Mile and all the golden miles in the world. One man is worth all of that wealth. And how much do we appreciate him? Sometimes we would not even give five miserable pennies for him. Because all of this that I'm saying, and I'm only on one part of it, a small, tiny part of the pathway through a long life, is proof of the price we have set. Take only the shining bar of gold in the Hainault Tourist Mine, once a real, authentic mine, which the experts have restored extraordinarily well; (it was one of the ten main mines on the Golden Mile and produced 200 kilograms of gold), take, therefore that golden bar and compare it to the observations of those who today tour that dead mine! How much light will shine in the eyes of those who look at that gold? And a man? Whose eyes shine when they look at a man? And he is thousands of tons more valuable than that gold. So you see, what sort of people we are when so simply, without thought, we perform the exchange of values?!

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But, Perrin, before you step across the threshold of my home, let me tell you something else about the days after your departure, but not in our words, because after our parting in our yard, in Dwyer Street, I began to grow and I have gone back as an adult man to that past.

My father, crushed by illness, took to his bed. Of course, he left Mister Giacometti and lived for the news that Tereza brought to the house. Mama's friends came to visit, Kuma Klara, Lena, Tona, Julija. They brought their world into our little world, and theirs was very similar to ours and could be reduced to completely simple facts, when a person received them like that, from outside, but inside there was something that could be called inevitable, a sad destiny, because those women were chained to the Boulder periphery, from which they could not extract themselves even if they had wanted to. Much strength, bravery, skill, dexterity was needed before they could take that step. Unseen threads tied those destinies from inside and outwards. They had to stay in Boulder, because the children had to go to school, because they could not sell their houses for virtually nothing, because in Perth or Fremantle or somewhere close to the seashore, where they all wanted to go, there was not a place for them, and even if there were, there were no friends there. Besides, they were women, admittedly appreciated, but they were not familiar with the Town Hall or the Police Force offices, or the Australian Workers' Union, they did not know how to complete an application, they did not know even, how to make use of the benefits which were due to them under many adopted laws and regulations, unless there was someone nearby to go to the offices to gain the benefit for them. Only in Doctor Hourley did they have a good counsellor, priest, pastor of All Hallows Church in Moran Street, because every Sunday they went there to the holy mass, for confession and communion or maybe Doctor Hourley came to them when someone needed to be buried or to be given the last rites, so that he could go to that other, promised land. There was Dr Ervan too, but he could not be occupied so much with private problems, except medical examinations and dispensing of medicines, even though Dr Ervan also, who, to be sure, was paid for his services, was often available to give people good advice or to send them on to someone he knew in Boulder or Kalgoorlie. Children, school, the yard, sown or sprouted vegetables, which those tireless hands cultivated, neighbours upon whom one could mostly depend, poverty in the land they had escaped from, all these things and many others kept these women in South Boulder and made their destinies tragic, without any special hope that things could turn around when the children grew up and began to earn a living. And that was actually what

they all strived for. They hoped that their daughters and their sons, and each of them had some of each, would arrive at maturity and that for them, the widows, better days would dawn, that they would somehow extract themselves from this state of living on the edge of life.

The fate of her dear, good Lena gave Mama the most sadness, Lena who had told her about that terrible incident with her daughter. She had had to bury a second child soon after, and then her husband, who in that way she got rid of (forgive me ungrateful one, God, for this thought) because he had been weighing her down like some sort of spectre, like something wicked which had caused all her troubles and the troubles of her children. Two sons had gone to school with me, and I liked Vincent or Vinki as they called him in Boulder, the best, so Vinki became my friend, and I continued to socialise with him after you, Perrin, went to Perth, to that boarding school, which put limits on anything you could do, at least that was how I imagined it.

I remember, it was the White City Carnival, or just an ordinary carnival, January 1926. It was terribly hot. Mama pulled me towards the centre of Boulder, leaving Father alone in his bed. We went past the shops, looked at the decorated horses and carts, with young men and women in multi-coloured clothes. I know, I kept stopping, and mother was pulling me, so that we only experienced that part of the carnival which was shown during the day in the street. Later I heard that that carnival was held in order to add to the funds for giving help to the miners, and the main attraction was a competition among our people, that is, Yugoslavs, and another team called Toohey's team, in "tugovor" or tug of war. They were "*konopasi*" ("*konop*" means "rope"; pulling the rope), and our people were very skilled. I still today have a photo of our team: six young men in white

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shirts, their arms folded showing well-developed muscles, with their trainer on the left side of the photograph, a towel thrown across his shoulders and standing in the front row with four of them, their vests clasped with thin chains and watches in their pockets, and they had neckties under short, hard collars, and the rope in two loops in front of them on the floor. The young men were indeed imposing. I don't know who won, but I am sure it was our team, because at home they always said there were none who could beat them in the whole of Western Australia.

That year started with the carnival and then there was Anzac Day, which is otherwise the biggest holiday in Australia, because every April 25th the defeat of the Australian and New Zealand army detachment at Gallipoli is celebrated. Then the parade starts from the army barracks, with the 16th and 28th of the Kalgoorlie battalion and the veterans, wearing their medals, passing the memorial raised to the soldiers who returned from the war. It finishes with drinking at the clubs. However it happened that in that year the twin towns almost halved their population. In the end there were only 15,000. I remember, I asked Mama while we passed Piessi and Burt Street, why the shops were empty or half empty, and she answered that many people had left, because there was no work. Even today, many times I remember those huge triangles which would go under the hessian houses and put them on the timber beams, and then a row of horses would pull them along the wide dusty street, who knows where. Then the price of houses fell very low, and only that stopped many from leaving, especially poor people, so that they did not sell their little investment, which for years they had been financing, for virtually nothing; even though it was all at once very hard for them.

A man would get for his wooden hut covered with tin instead of five hundred pounds, at the most one hundred, if not less. You could – as an immigrant said to me later – get the York Hotel, three stories high, in Hannan Street, for only 600 lira. And Peter de Boni, an Italian, bought it. The price of gold fell very low. The shares in Lake View and Star went down two shillings, and Great Boulder one and a half, while auctions followed auctions. "For Sale" was hanging everywhere, and horseshoes, which people put near the doors of their houses, believing in their magical powers, brought them nothing good, only trouble and bad luck.

In the middle of the year, on the 26th June to be precise, a true catastrophe happened for many people. One of the biggest and richest mines in Boulder shut, the one which had been found by a horseman, that is, the hoof of his horse. This was the Horseshoe Mine, or the "*Oshju-majn*" as our people called it. All at once a

thousand people, mainly miners from Boulder Block and South Boulder, were without a job. That which had already been indicated as a threat, better known by those who were better informed as to the stock exchange, the so-called shareholders of greater capacity, because the small players stuck to the periphery of the larger ones, and suffered the most, first came to general notice as shortages in the shops. The small shops felt the shock. But when the Horseshoe Mine was closed, the Slavs and foreigners felt a real threat. They had all heard about the so-called ghost towns, which were abandoned suddenly, so that the shock, in the middle of winter, came like an apparition, like a mirage, which foretold very hard days to come. No-one actually knew that all of this was an introduction into the cataclysm which the end of the decade would bring, and especially the beginning of the next, sights the world had never seen nor heard of.

The relocation began. Many went to Salmon Gums, in Esperance, south of Boulder towards the sea, where better days were promised in the wheat-belt, that is, the wheat farms which had opened up. The houses on top of the triangles, which people thought would do them nicely in a different place, began their legendary travels on the long yellow roads and tracks full of dust and mud. And that was actually one variety of the continuation of life which had received a new illumination.

And right at that time when everything had started to go downhill, here, in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, came new people who had escaped from trouble and hunger in their own countries, countries which after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian empire had promised a better life. They were coming here like a surplus in the moment when the glass had become too full. Among the people from Makarska, Vrgorac, Brač, and Pelješac all at once hundreds of new arrivals from Korčula could be found. People settled down with acquaintances. They

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lived by sharing their food, spending their small savings, and so began a long wait for work, which those who had lost their jobs in the Horseshoe Mine also awaited.

That year was set apart by other peculiarities. Together with the misfortune that people had to endure, some murders took place, news which hinted at nothing good, on the contrary, it made everything worse. First there were reports of an Afghan, called Sofi, who was found dead in the bush. A Bushman had killed a Mambo.

And then the whole of Boulder suddenly experienced a real shock. First there were whispers about a big murder. News spread about mounted men, that is, police on horses, who had come to Kalgoorlie, and this upset people even more, until The Kalgoorlie Miner informed them that two agents of the special police, members of the so-called gold-stealing unit, Inspector John Walsh and Sergeant Alexander Pitman, had disappeared in the bush north-east of Kalgoorlie, about fifteen miles from the main road leading to Menzies. The search started in Kalgoorlie. Police and agents began to question people, to call them in for questioning. This news quickly spread in Boulder City and its periphery, while the Cornwall Hotel, close to our house, soon became the centre of interest. That "dropping off place for stolen gold", as it was charmingly called, where my father, before he took to his bed, sat on the veranda and watched the drunks and card players, suddenly became the middle of all sorts of combinations, and its owner had to answer all sorts of questions.

Fear was hovering over Boulder. People slunk around, brought and carried news, with so much getting overturned and changed from one mouth to the next that few knew what was true and what was not. Some said Walsh and Pitman had been killed, that someone had found them "smelting gold in the bush", and some said these people had done them in or had brought them there. Some said the police had arranged the whole thing so as to keep people tense and anxious, because conditions were in any case terrible, so that it was necessary to get people concentrated on something else. Some completely negated this possibility, explaining the disappearance as just one more of the things that happen, because anything was possible when people had been hit by great misfortune..

--They were forced to smelt the gold; who was going to give them work, a man has to live, and they don't let him. They close down the work, and leave families without a shilling.....

--People who have nothing don't do that, little people, no, that was done by big bears, those who were movers and shakers in Kalgoorlie and Boulder....

But nobody really knew what it was all about. Word went around that some of our people were mixed up in it.

Then Sergeant MacCormick came by after a long pause, and asked Tereza about Joe. She saw on his face some sort of concern and at once took him to the bedroom. The Sergeant stood at the doorway and saw Joe, white as a sheet. He began to stammer:

--Ekskjuz mi, Joe...I herd ju are sik...vontid tu si ju and sej helo...

--Hello, Sergeant! – said Joe quietly, almost inaudibly, so that the Sergeant flinched, finding himself in an embarrassing situation. He saw in front of him a very sick man, and it seemed to him that he had acted extremely clumsily and impolitely, because he had come into his acquaintance's house at a bad time, when he was so to speak on his deathbed. Even worse was his encounter with Tereza's eyes, because he knew that all sorts of rumours were going around about the case of Walsh-Pitman, so he thought at once that Tereza would interpret his visit as an attempt to smell out some sort of information, and not to see a man he had heard was sick, but had no idea he was in the condition in which he had found him, lying in bed. On the veranda his excuses began:

--Missus, pliz, aj em veri sori, aj did not nou det...*Gospodo, vrlo mi je žao*...I did not know that...forgive me...I don't know...do you need anything...I always respected you and if I can do anything to help I would be glad to...again, forgive me...contact me...thank you and excuse me...

He was all confused. That young man understood things which others could not understand, so that in this case he found himself in an unfortunate situation, and he was right to think that his act could be

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interpreted as some sort of questioning of a man on his deathbed, about matters that were currently in progress in his official duties. Tereza however did not see his visit in this way. On the contrary she took the visit as an expression of his care. The sergeant had known Joe and it was understandable that he had come to see him at this difficult time. Tereza's friends did not interpret MacCormick's visit like this. They saw it as a part of the police plan, and that which had happened, confirmed their suspicions, even though on the other hand they did not have any good proof, so it would have been necessary in that case to take a peek into the sergeant's soul, which was impossible.

Then that afternoon Lena came with Vinki.

I could feel restlessness around me, but Vinki was my friend, so we very quickly found a common "interest" in the yard, together with Jimmy.

--*You know, Tereza, that they killed Walsh and Pitman* – her best friend said, trembling all over. She had confided her own one-time misery to Tereza, who had responded with much attention and understanding.

--*My God, my God! Unfortunate time, unfortunate time, my daughter, they'll do anything just to get their hands on lira sterling.....*

Lena could not say anything more, because she knew nothing else.

Then abruptly things came to a head. News of the brutal murder of the two special policemen and how their bodies had been mutilated spread around Boulder, but it was not known exactly where this had occurred, nor who had done it, although it was rumoured that some of our people were mixed up in it with some English people, prospectors and traders, who were smelting and smuggling gold and transferring it through different channels to Singapore and Arabia.

The Australian newspapers dawned with big black headings and sub-headings: Walsh and Pitman brutally killed, Murder next to hidden devices for smelting gold, Bodies of policemen dismembered and thrown in abandoned shaft, Flies uncover bodies, Many questioned, police strive with all their might to find criminals, Walsh and Pitman much respected in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, Hotel Cornwall searched – known for being a "dropping off place", and so on. The baton carried by the local and national press was adopted by foreign agencies and foreign press, so that all the newspapers, good and bad, took up the story in order to expand their sales. Just as all sorts of things to do with the situation were mentioned in Boulder, with everyone

thinking about it and guessing what could have happened, coming up with many different combinations; so the big words in short, careful sentences spread their own kind of sensation, creating an even more tenuous subject matter which professional imaginations had invented on the basis of human chatter and gossip. But the event was sensational in any case, and nothing really needed to be added. To get to the truth of the matter however, was a feat indeed, because many different channels twisted the course of the search and suggested their own versions.

Tereza reported the news to Joe, but he could no longer contemplate it, so that later she was sorry she had bothered him.

Kuma Tona, Lena, Julija and Klara, who were coming more and more often to our house, so as to be near at hand for Tereza, because her husband was very ill, bypassed with particular fear and trepidation *“that cursed hotel where all sorts of things happen and where our people find a place to park their bums and where whores congregate and do who knows what; free me from sin, my Jesus”*.

--One of ours is involved for sure, they can't not be! Our people used to be honest when they came here, you could leave everything in your house and go out and you didn't have to worry that someone would take something, and now all sorts of troubles have come, everything is corrupted, they all want money, money, without working -- said Klara all upset, because it was indeed hard for her with the small children as too it was hard for other widows. They were unable to understand and to follow what was happening. In their heads it was all turning around like some sort of punishment which had come about after people forsook God, because,

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see, they didn't go to church, instead preferring to go to bars, hotels, and there they make merry, drink, make big chaps of themselves, while at the same time their worries grow until they overwhelm them.

The next day Kuma Julija came with the news that the police had questioned her.

--They asked me if my husband knew someone called Prefin...

--I've never heard that name! -- I told them.

--He was a good friend of his -- the police said.

--Excuse me, but my husband never mentioned him to me...You know, Tereza, how he was! My husband and some Prefin, I never saw him nor heard of him, and he, and he, who knows what it's all about...

Kuma Tona came after that with the news that the police had asked about Barbaro too.

Tereza's blood went cold. Suddenly she could see Kathy in front of her, Kathy who had not communicated from Perth at all. And then Toni's face...Anything could be happening, because who could know what they were up to. When they had been capable of cheating their father, when they....

And she put her head between her hands.

Kuma Tona quickly realised the news about Barbaro had awakened thoughts which had upset Tereza, because some time ago she had talked about her fears.

--There's nothing wrong, there's nothing wrong, Tereza, you must have thought that she...But she's in Perth, they were saying....

--And he?

With that Kuma Tona shrugged her shoulders. And then said:

--I don't believe it, I just don't believe it! Savages must have done that, bums, losers, drunkards, those who sneak around the yards, those with jackets full of holes, those who have lost everything. That couldn't be done by....

She stopped there, because she saw that she had given Tereza some hope.

But doubt is doubt, and when it gets into a person, even though others give him all sorts of arguments and proof that it isn't true, still, a man, and especially a woman, who had experienced all sorts of things in her life and whose husband was dying, stubbornly stuck to her own opinion and continued to dig into that unfortunate rubbish dump, which brings many people to the edge of disaster. It was not easy to knock out of

Tereza that which had crept into her. The police report had to come; only that could disperse the dark clouds. And it came after a few days, after the funeral of Walsh and Pitman, which was indeed magnificent, to which half of Boulder went to say goodbye, among them large numbers of our people. And a heavy stone fell from Tereza's heart. The report said:

William Coulter and Paul Treffene have been arrested. Police have irrefutable evidence that it was they who liquidated Walsh and Pitman.

It happened – as reported by The Kalgoorlie Miner – that the police had slowly tightened the noose, firstly in the search for the lost members of the so-called staff which had been fighting against the theft of gold (Gold Stealing Detectives Staff), and which at that time consisted of Inspector John Walsh and Sergeant Alexander Pitman. Their whereabouts had been discovered by accident. One of the searchers had seen – so the newspaper report stated – how a large number of flies had accumulated at the entrance to the shaft of an abandoned mine, situated in the bush; like many round about. The flies attracted his attention and then he noticed the smell of the disintegrating bodies and went down the shaft. In this way the place was found where Walsh and Pitman had ended up. Since they were unarmed, it was presumed they had not been able to defend themselves when the offenders were caught in the act..

But the puzzle as to who had been the killer was solved immediately when a warrant was issued with a considerable reward. After several days the newspapers reported that one of the participants in the murders, someone called Clarke, who was not present when the liquidation took place, but had helped only to throw the mutilated bodies into the pit, informed on Coulter and Treffene for the police reward, and since he was

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protected by the giving of so-called King's Evidence, he was set free at once, given the reward and removed from the Goldfields. Coulter and Treffene were arrested (and not Prefin, as Julia had understood, when the police had questioned her, the latter found to be an ordinary Trefin who had come here from Boka Kotorska, that is, he was one of our men, known to be a degenerate and a non-worker); they described in detail how the murders had taken place. Walsh and Pitman had uncovered a rather primitive device for refining gold, and had waited in an ambush for the gang, who appeared after a time and began work. Unarmed, they approached the men to arrest them, not expecting resistance by force, because they were well acquainted with the gang members. But shots rang out, because the culprits felt threatened; they had a large quantity of gold, and did not want to go to Fremantle – on vacation. After the killing there was panic among them and they could not pay attention to the evidence they were leaving behind, and so it happened that the mutilated bodies were not buried, instead they were thrown into one of the many mine shafts, where the consequent swarms of flies were not taken into account.

Journalists came to Kalgoorlie and Boulder from all parts of Australia. They went from house to house, from hotel to hotel, looking for any possible details, and they spent a considerable amount of time around the Cornwall, which thus became famous world-wide, unlike any other hotels on this eastern "Wild West" of Australia. Some of them knocked on the gate to our yard, but Tereza sent them away with the words:

--*Here is a very sik man, sori!* – And so it happened that 12 Dwyer Street found itself in the centre of world-wide attention, being part of the well-known South Boulder, where, according to the newspapers, very strange and impossible things were taking place, mixed with theft on a grand scale, with gunmen who besieged certain houses by night, and black marketeers who were transferring piles of gold towards South Australia and New South Wales and further still, across the ocean, to Singapore and Bangkok, Beirut and Saudi Arabia, and with drunkards who drank Whisky Chasers by the gallon, and women who arranged bacchanalia in a grand fashion, and so on. Our Boulder, and with it Kalgoorlie, succeeded in climbing to fantastic heights, entertaining the civic spirits of middle-class families across Australia and the world with unending details about pistols and the sweet life, and actually everything that had happened in the long history of this town was indeed one big crime. It was necessary however, to deceive the spirits and turn their attention to incidental things, in order to

calm the miners and reduce their resistance. A new obsession had hatched. So they were given to understand that they must not expect too much, after all -- because these were not the best of times.

Many twists and turns were woven together in this messy tangle, especially after the trial in Kalgoorlie which was followed with great interest by our people. Afterwards there were many different theories going around, and new ones popping up like mushrooms. The truth was shining with its tiny light, and its barely visible flicker was chased this way and that, according to who thought what. Coulter and Treffene did not defend themselves any which way. They admitted everything. They explained in detail how they had cut down their victims, especially Pitman.

And then rumours began circulating among the public refuting the official interpretation of the murders, because, among other things, it became known that Inspector Walsh, who was a government official, possessed a licence for prospecting, and had even taken part in some underhand affairs. People began to hear that far from being flies which had pointed to the shaft where Coulter and Treffene had thrown the bodies, this was for some unknown reason just a false rumour published in the newspapers; that it was not Clarke who had reported to the police after the reward was advertised, but that his wife had been mixed up in it and wanted to get a thousand pounds, but the money eluded her and neither she nor Clarke had seen it. No-one however knew how to answer the question as to where Clarke, who had been the owner of a hotel on Boulder Block, had gone. He got away, so it was said, and had admitted only that he had taken the gold from the two who had murdered the police agents; he knew about the murder, but there was no proof he had been part of it. There was no trace of him – it seemed that someone especially wanted this to happen, perhaps most of all those with whom he had worked in the chain of events. Those anonymous people made sure of his – appanage. As far as

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catching the criminals was concerned, one version circulated widely, later said to be the true version, that Coulter and Treffene had two or three days later returned to the scene of the crime, that is, to the place where they had smelted the gold, and there they were caught. The threads were leading to “higher circles” and the chain broke in an inconsequential but awkward place, and much was done to preserve the innocence of the real drama which took place behind the curtains, and in which nobody, except the small fry, could be sacrificed, unless that took things too far. That’s how it was with some very well-dressed “fat cats” who were sent on a “short holiday” or like Wright, had to commit suicide to save the face of the families of the like-minded.

But with all the talk about the criminal act and who had perpetrated it, where the real roots were of the actors moving on the stage, where some were making the drama and others were suffering in it, nothing changed afterwards. There were more and more unemployed people, more and more people were emigrating, the pressure on the small family budget of the miners was terrible, because new mouths were appearing, with nothing in their pockets.

In addition even worse, even more complicated conditions were coming, because outlines of a heavy depression and crisis were becoming clear.

But Perrin, what am I talking about now? I have abandoned the main characters, those whose fate we have been following; we shall continue with them in the days to come.

Nick wrote from Mandiga. At first he showed satisfaction, being in a different climate which agreed with him, and because he had received a fairly well-kept farm which he had to cultivate. The only thing he found hard was that he was lonely, and had to cook for himself, because there were not many people around.

Not one word came from Perth. Only sometimes a traveller would bring news of Kathy, that she had been seen in some shop or other and how she had succeeded in putting the children into a government boarding school. And that was all.

There was no news of Tony.

Joe became weaker and weaker. He could no longer get up from his bed, and Tereza propped him up on the pillow. Destiny was coming closer, that was clear to her and to her friends. And when on the veranda of the Cornwall people read The Kalgoorlie Miner and talked about the death of William O-Connel and John Willis

who died in the Ivanhoe mine under a fall of earth, and when finally news came that Coulter and our Trefin from Boka had been hung, the end of the year brought also the death of Joe. It was a hot November, which left two lonely people in South Boulder, to follow the casket to the graveyard, because no-one else from the family was at the funeral. There was much discussion then of the law called Miner's Phthisis Act, but Joe had died and at 12 Dwyer Street another page of the drama began, which took place with all sorts of complications, in uncertainty, denial, hesitation and weariness.

The nights became terrible for Tereza. At first she thought her insomnia was the result of the turmoil surrounding Joe's death. Kuma Klara assured her this was the reason. – *It will pass, it will pass, the same thing happened to me* – But it did not pass. She went to see Doctor Ervan, who gave her some sleeping powder. But that did not help either. And then her hallucinations began. While she was lying in bed, first she would hear a knocking at the door. Then she would get up and open it. No-one was there. She would go back to bed and the knocking would start again. She would get up and go back to bed, again and again. And I would be sleeping like a log. I only learnt about her night time distress the next day when she would talk about it with Tona or Klara or Lena or Julija, when they came to visit her. – *Poor Tereza!* – would slip from their mouths in understanding. And then came the crosses, real crosses carried by some ghostly hand which carried them upside down, facing downwards.

-- *Everything goes black, and then a hand comes with a cross, and after that some more, and then all the crosses turn upside down, facing downwards. They want to tell me that Jesus has gone down. That makes me feel confused, it's trying to make me reject my faith.....*

After those crosses came other....*tantacijuni* (temptations).

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-- *All at once something explodes, like something bursting close by, and I sit up in bed, and a black devil with red horns dances closer and closer, coming to shut my mouth. I get up, go to the boy, stand in front of him, and it's squeezing me tighter and tighter, and then I cross myself and make the cross towards him and suddenly everything disappears. But not long afterwards, it comes again, again. And again I show the cross. Ah my Kuma Tona, I can't, I can't take any more, I'm so afraid. What is it trying to say.....*

They advised her to tell Dr Hourley everything. And she went to him in the convent, leaving me with Kuma Tona and her children. When she returned, she brought encouraging news. Doctor Hourley had instructed her to sprinkle the room with holy water before going to bed, and to hold the rosary in her hand and pray, and to try to sleep in that way. She was to keep the bowl with the holy water on the bedside table, and when the ghoulish came back, she was to sprinkle it with the water.

That evening she prepared everything like the priest had advised, and immediately, as soon as she lay down, she began to pray. In the morning she woke up and simply could not believe she had slept through the whole night without waking. An unusual feeling of joy came over her and lasted all day, and then that night, when she acted the same way as the previous night, again there began an awful performance, full of fear and horror, which lasted until the morning. She managed to drive away the apparition with the holy water, but only for short periods. She took instead of the small cross from the rosary a bigger cross, which had been hanging on the wall in the room, given to her by the canon when she went to Australia and with that she fought until the dawn - the devil from Hell - as she later said.

--*You know Klara, you know, last night it caught me by the hand and pressed the cross, and pulled my hand down, down, and I kept hold of the wooden bed and didn't let go, and I got the holy water and threw it in its face. Everything suddenly became light and then disappeared, like the room was clean, beautiful, and my child in the little bed covered with the veil, and above him I could see my baby girl, who died at seven months.*

The women had all sorts of solutions. It occurred to them that it would be good if she tried sleeping first at one of their houses, then another. Mother went first to Kuma Tona's home. Nothing happened there. She slept like a child.

--Ah, Just like an angel! -- said Kuma Tona -- My Tereza, maybe that house of yours is haunted. We should get it blessed....

Tereza stayed at Kuma Tona's for three nights. Nothing happened during these three nights.

Ah why, my God, why? I was always going to church, praying to God, giving offerings, holy communion, and I sent money for the church back to the canon in the old country, and also, a few days ago I gave Doctor Hourley a St. Grgur Mass for his recovery, I didn't regret giving the money, I didn't, and what happens, my God, my God, by the sainted heart of Jesus and the sainted Virgin Mary....

They advised her to try again to sleep in her own home. And indeed, the first night everything was fine. But the second night was worse than any that had gone before. The devil from hell tied up her legs....

--I was looking for rope everywhere in the house, but it wasn't anywhere -- she told the women -- and my legs were tied, ah, how tight they were tied to the bed, and then I grabbed the cross and got up and saw how I had touched him and he disappeared. And then he started knocking at the door, he hadn't gone....

--Poor Tereza, poor Tereza! -- the women sighed, not knowing what to suggest to her or what to do.

So I went from one wooden hut to another with my mother. And then the women tried sleeping with us. Nothing helped. One day Doctor Hourley arrived, inspected all the rooms and sprinkled them with consecrated water. A few days after that, peace ensued. Tereza tried at that time to resolve issues around her pension, because my father had been paying regularly into the Miner's Relief Fund for several years.

And then some of Father's friends came to our yard. These were Charlie, Mister Silich and Tortich.

Charlie began first:

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--My dear lady, we have come to ask you whether there is anything you need! Mister Tortich is from the Worker's Union, so if you want to fix the papers for the pension and for the dole, there you are, he is ready to do that for you. And then we decided to collect for you....

Charlie did not even finish speaking, and Tereza had immediately added:

--Thanks Charlie, thank you very much. For the Miner's Fund and the money they owe me, yes, do it. Here, I'll give you everything you need. But for the other, the collection, don't do that, I have enough. Charlie and all of you, thank you, thank you very much for thinking of me and my child....

They talked for a time, mentioning Joe, how he had been a worthy man, very honest, kind, how he had always wanted to help others in trouble, how in the mine he had always been first to save others from accidents and how it would never be forgotten when in 1913 in the Perseverance mine he put his back under a timber beam to stop it falling on a man who was already lying there covered with dirt.

That story about him holding the beam with his back, Tereza now heard for the first time. Joe had never mentioned a word about it. She had not heard about some other things either, which of course people were talking about two or three months after his death, when they came and visited us on the veranda. They were thankful to Joe also because he had interfered in a serious fight near the Cornwall, when between the opposing sides a knife had been drawn. He had ended up with a small scar on the joint of his forefinger, and she remembered how he had told her he cut himself on a nail, which had been sticking out of a plank of wood. Joe had actually prevented a murder, which would have happened if he had not come between the two angry roosters with their bristling feathers, who had been affected by alcohol, and who had tackled one another because one had stolen wood from the other, in the bush. Afterwards there was a true reckoning between the antagonists, but in the bush, on the spot. The owner of the wood went to the police and said that someone was taking his wood and that he would shoot him if he caught him doing it. He hid for several days near his logs and, indeed, the suspected person appeared, and without further ado the owner shot him with his hunting rifle, wounding him seriously. The court took into account the fact that the owner had reported the matter to

the police, and gave him the minimum punishment. The two parties in the meantime had each gone their separate ways, so that neither remained in Boulder.

--*Joe was a man of character* --repeated Mister Tortich, consoling the widow – *and we are all sorry this has happened to him.*

--*And you don't have electricity* – Mister Silich noticed.

--*Ah no, we don't* – Tereza answered – *Electricity is expensive, two lire you have to pay to get it brought to the house, and it's all wood here and could catch fire easily, and then?!*

--*It's not that expensive* – Mister Silich replied. – *If you want, we can put electricity here for you, without you paying a penny.*

Tereza refused this too. She had enough candles, which Joe had brought from the mine, two whole boxes. And Nick was always bringing candles, but he had taken some to Mandiga, when Tereza persuaded him to do so.

There, with a glass or two of *muscat* she had made the previous autumn, with grapes brought from Fremantle, all sorts of things were discussed to do with Joe and other Slavs. They talked about anything and everything, and especially the sad destiny of women who became widows. They talked about how Treffine's wife had gone with the children to the eastern states of Australia, how Clarke's wife had tried to cheat her husband and had not received the thousand pounds sterling she had naively thought she was entitled to, but how Clarke had actually been rewarded in another way, because the government made sure he got a good farm, but it was not known where.

Tereza had heard several days ago how Charlie had parted from the group which with Tony as leader had gone into the bush, and how Charlie had argued with Mister Groky about certain jobs. She tried to turn the conversation to that theme because it interested her to find out how the former partners had fared. Nick had

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mentioned something about an arrangement to do with a mine, which allegedly had been sold; but it seemed that he too did not know much about it.

How to find out something from Charlie? And did he actually have anything to do with it? He presented himself as a good friend of the family, but still, would he tell Tereza, if he knew it, the real truth? Looking at him, and listening to his words about big deals which had taken place in Boulder and Kalgoorlie, somehow she hesitated, and left for the next time the possibility that Charlie might mention the circumstance of the mine which apparently had been sold by Mister Groky, who had divided the money between the partners, among whom had been Tony, forgetting about our house of course, meaning Joe.

--*Charlie, you were a real character actually!* – Mister Tortich remarked, thinking of course, how Charlie had known that Coulter and Trefin had killed Walsh and Pitman but had not tried to get the money which had been offered and which Clarke's wife had aimed at getting. Tereza did not understand this interruption; it seemed to her that Charlie was being praised for his behaviour in general, so that she felt she could ask him about "that mine"; however before she could utter a word, Mister Silich changed the subject of conversation.

--*That wasn't necessary for Trefin! If he had wanted to work, he could have, but he was sucked in by the gold the first time he found it and sold his acres to the company, and then he began buying and smelting, got connected to some boss from the mine and the manager of a hotel in Kalgoorlie, and there you are! Then he found Coulter and.....*

--*It all happened like it happened!* – Mister Tortich interrupted Mister Silich.

The theme was certainly going deeper than the vein of gold or telly and it was hard for any woman in Boulder to make sense of it, my dear Perrin, much less my mother, who otherwise could tie many strings together but did not have the passion and skill of those who "knew how to play the game", and among those who were present obviously there was someone who was well versed in such things.

Much was said about Charlie; but that man did have one quality which was obvious to Tereza, even though she could not interpret his personality. Charlie, in spite of all the suspicious things in which he was

involved, was a good friend. He was ready to help when help was needed. She knew very well that he had brought these people to her home to give her as much help as possible, because he could feel that now when she had lost her man, when Nick had gone, when Kathy had left and when she was now alone with her child, she needed protection from someone, a hand from someone, to help her attain her rights. And Joe had liked Charlie, which Tereza knew very well, even though later what had happened with the distribution of the spoils from the well-known expedition into the bush, had been unpleasant. She had never been able to find out the real truth from Charlie. Either he was hiding something, or Charlie simply did not know some things. Tereza, who knew on the other hand a lot about men's work, especially to do with the threesomes and foursomes and spotting and smelting, and also smuggling, and in particular the way in which Nick had left up in the air the question of the sale of a certain mine, simply found it very awkward to bring the visitors or even Charlie himself, to tell her about it.

But, but.....

Finally she shrugged her shoulders and told herself: -- *And what would I get from all that, it's long gone, there's nothing to be gained from it. Why should I try to untangle those things? And where is honesty today! Who could make head or tail of it all?*

Indeed, there was a skill in coming to this conclusion. Because there was nothing to be searched for, except to find still more worries and problems, and already she had too many of them.

And those jobs, known as Charlie's jobs, the jobs of Mister Tortich and Mister Silich, although not necessarily dishonest jobs, were still part of a much more complex whole than that which Tereza preferred, she who lived in the darkness of her present days and future years.

Who among them could hit themselves in the chest and say: I never ever did anything that was not honest? Truth to tell, honesty was everywhere, but there was also....

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The police were honest, the government was honest, managers were honest, foremen, bosses, agents, businessmen, shareholders – they were all honest, all the way to the miners, and still dishonesty ruled at every step. But why talk about that, because that sort of talk didn't lead anywhere, isn't that so Mister Silich and Mister Tortich? You know that very well, but, there you are, you are a part of the machine which grinds things here and it's in your interest not to let that machine grind you up as well, like it ground Joe, and the husbands of many widows, the fathers of many sons and daughters, which is now grinding up Tereza, Kuma Tona, Julija, Lena, Mrs Sally, Mrs Matulic, Mrs Pecarevic, Poklepovic, Salinovic and tens and hundreds of them. Here in South Boulder and Boulder there were at one time over a thousand of our people, and their descendants filled the schools, where Sister Mary Callistus had the main word, Sister Mary who came to console my mother and brought her flowers from the convent in Moran Street. Yes, Mister Silich, your intentions are completely above board! And yours too, Mister Tortich!, and especially yours, dear Charlie, you who have been a friend in this house for a long time! You helped Tereza then and for sure you will help her again, when she tells you her main problem, when the time for that comes. What, however, did she gain from all that? A feeling of human solidarity? The feeling others cared about her? The feeling she belonged to the human race, that she shares her fate with others, thatI don't know, it's hard to talk about it! However, it seems to me, a lot more courage was needed, Mister Silich, Mister Tortich, dear Charlie, much, much more than all the help you gave to the unfortunates in South Boulder! But, can we blame you, such as you are, can we call you to account? It doesn't occur to me. I am small, small, like you once were, I am, you see, one amongst you, who is growing, who will one day be equal in some rights, who will assume some obligations, but I am not called upon to judge. Others will do that. Because my future travels do not depend upon me. They are part of the set of circumstances which have befallen Tereza, who has the decision in her hands. Don't you see how she is tortured. Can't you see how she is persecuted by forces which are outside her, how she is subdued by decisions that must come, because they are the result of all those impossible circumstances in which you live too and in which here, and there too, you lived. How can you, I ask you, make a free decision, when thousands of various conditions have

been woven around you too, and not one decision supposedly freely made, is really yours, but the result of everything in total, starting from the moment just encountered. What cause brought about this consequence; and with a new moment it could have been different, maybe totally the opposite of that which just happened.

Yes, yes, Slabić was known as a chicken thief, isn't that true?

You're saying that now. And he sent messages to the police, because he was tied to them by different threads. They knew, for instance, that he stole chickens, but they didn't punish him. Others would have got two or three months' jail for that, and a fine of five or six lira, and would have to give the chickens back to their owner as well. The police knew how to punish people, for sure! And how did they catch the thieves? They would bring the Bushmen, who would measure the footprints, and from that they would find the thieves. And they could sniff him out also. One time they found Slabić like that. The police knew how to do it. And not only did they know he stole chickens, they had proof in their hands that he had stolen from a woman. – *He would sweet-talk her* – as Tereza said, like Barbaro, like many of those on the Goldfields, who didn't have a woman, because there were not enough women, so he fell into all sorts of situations, and then one day he found an Irish woman, from whom he wheedled money and a gold chain. Stubbornly he repeated that she had given them to him, but she told the police a different story, that he had simply taken them. The police had apparently believed Slabić because they wanted him on their side and believed he was a "desirable person" for their affairs. He was not a man of any special character, so he agreed. But Slabić could not stop his hands going where they should not. He liked to eat and drink well, he liked to have a good time. He would buy young goats, bring them to Joe, before Tereza came here, to be skinned, and in this way Joe earned a goat and Slabić ate the goat meat in the Cornwall Hotel on Saturday night, with good drinks and company. From goats he went to lobster, and that had to be brought from Fremantle, and it was expensive, with transport added to the cost. Slabić also enjoyed his whisky, and fell into the network of black marketeers right in the Cornwall Hotel where

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he kept the police away from the drunks and card-players. The police sniffed out Slabić who became a "double agent" and then rated him perfectly capable of going to Fremantle on holiday after they found him with gold. You are now talking about that, Mister Silich, Mister Tortich and dear Charlie. So you see, how life gets tangled up and shows all sorts of variations on hundreds of themes of honesty, poverty, troubles, inhuman behaviour, murder, poisoning, dying, burial, of death of the body and death of the soul.

Yes, Slabić was known to be a thief of chickens, and to have a dirty mouth....

--*What a man for swearing* – Tereza commented on his rare visits, because Joe could not stand him. He used to feel nauseous when he had to replace him at Mister Giacometti's, but...

What about the packets of pasta, and the gallons of oil, and the tons of grapes.....

You have noticed that our *muskat* is full of flavour. Yes indeed, it is full of flavour, but do you know why and how that *muskat* is made? Because we wanted a drop of good wine and *proshek*? I don't have to tell you, we understand one another! At the same time that was one more item to add to our account, but that account of ours never succeeded in growing enough to be worthwhile, it was always shrinking, even though Joe, Nick, and Tereza all worked to advance it because it depended upon them, whether they would be rescued. And Tony had gone, Kathy had gone, Nick had gone, Joe had died, everything had disintegrated, only Tereza and her little son remained. Who would now trade, who would get the grapes and make the wine, who would do the washing for the single men? Certainly, they were coming more and more to our door, bringing their dirty clothes to be washed but offering something else as well.

And here I have to interrupt our conversation with the three men, dear Perrin, and say a few words about something else which Mama left for me on paper written in my handwriting, because from time to time I wrote down her memories.

-- *You know how it was. The whole world was crushed by trouble. Fired from their jobs in the mine, the newcomers who came to Boulder, people without jobs, they made us sad. The house was full of our people. Everyone helped as much as they could, squeezing up in the rooms. It was worst in the winter, and winter was*

when it was our summer, when people slept outside, on the veranda, in the yard. There were all kinds of people. They came to me too, knocked on the door. Missuz, would you take me in! And I was alone with you and my thought was always how to survive, how to make sure you and I survived. And how could I then think about other people. And you know how it is! To take in a stranger, and your husband dead, people would think I had forgotten about my family. And I saw that some wanted to take advantage of the little I had, the little house, the handful of lira. Like I was crazy, like everything was not already too much for me! That's how it was from day to day. Tanto je vrog, potezo me je u pakol i bi bi me navuka da nison imala Like the devil, pulling me down into hell and I would have gone if I didn't have strength and God's help. There was a man from Račišće, hanging about the yard, standing at the fence, my dear Kuma this and my dear Kuma that, I would help you a lot, I'm healthy, and you know how it is, no job, I'd dig the garden for you, clean up the yard, and it would be nice for you with me, too. I could see what he wanted, what he was aiming at, and I didn't want to encourage him. Not him, not anyone! They were miserable wretches, full of frenzy. They would cheat you without blinking an eye. And some of our women – widows – fell for it. They gave in. And the devil took everything. Once the savings were gone, then even worse trouble came. For a while after he died, I didn't think much about leaving Australia. I'd stay a few years more, save money, wash clothes for people, take oil, pasta, bakalar to the market to sell, and make ends meet with the pension. But when I saw what was happening, how people had become so poor, how some came and others went, how hard it was to gather together a shilling or two, how you couldn't do anything except look up at the sky and ask God for help – then I was afraid. Nights without sleeping, those devils from hell around about, and over there the trouble that came, I wondered how I could endure it all. And those poor widows who had many children, for them it was even harder. Who could just look at all that? And those who came to live in my house! It seemed as though they wanted to swallow me whole! What could I do? What was left? Just my child and nothing else. Nothing else, my boy!

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The story about the apparitions continued. Inexplicable for me, that story, outside all my experience, and there was no reason not to believe Mama. She didn't imagine it. I was a witness to her nightly shakes, her terrible screams, when I used to wake up and stand before her in fear. A long time after that, when I was an adult, when I was already a man and came to see her on my holidays, I could hear her in the other room, how she would be tortured and twisting in her sleep, breathing heavily, her breath stopping, and then I would go into her room and suddenly she would cry out and sit up in bed with her face panic stricken.

-- *Nothing else was left for me!* – I remember those words very well. In those days they often sounded like an echo, pushing into madness one human being, physically very strong, and you couldn't doubt her psychological constitution either; although she was very religious, she believed in that other world. That she lived to be very old, that she even lived to see her great-grandchildren, is a sign that actually all was well with her, and many of her actions were such that even today, one has to admire her.

But still, it was hell. It lasted almost a whole year. And when it seemed that she could not endure any more, she made a difficult decision, causing her much agitation but giving her a chance to flee from her present life into another which could be better; because everything that had happened had taken place in a strange country, in an enemy environment, apart from the small oasis created by her friends.

--*I'm going home! Home!*

She wrote to the canon. She explained her misery in her own handwriting, which ran words together and sometimes had no full stops or commas. She told him she was abandoned with her child, that her husband had died, that his children by his first marriage had dispersed and that she did not know how to survive in this world, that it would be best for her to return.....

The canon answered quickly. He said:

--You were always a family oriented person, Tereza. You can find accommodation in my home, for yourself and your son. Let God help you to come here with the child, alive and well, to our country.....

And she began to make frenzied arrangements. She couldn't wait for the moment when she would leave this foreign hiding place and begin a new life; full of uncertainty it is true, but surely without all the torments of the recent past. The canon's prompt answer had given her courage.

First she told Kuma Tona about her decision, then Lena and afterwards the others. Kuma Tona at first looked at her rather pityingly and dubiously, but when Tereza showed her the canon's letter, she was envious to think she too could not accomplish the same thing. Tereza's advantage was that she had one child. Who knows if the canon would have called her if for example, she had three or four, like her friends, except for Lena, who was alone with Vinko. Also who could have written to them from home: you'll find accommodation in my home, when they had nothing at home, and those of their family that they had left, carried big burdens on their own backs, so that they too needed to find a solution, in this promised land which was beginning to experience its own terrible moments.

Mister Silich and Mister Tortich visited her again. There were formalities, seemingly small but actually significant, which had to be completed.

For example, the house had to be sold.

And how much could be got for it, in this awful situation where prices had fallen so far that it was like a sin against God to give it for thirty lira when it was worth at least two hundred, three hundred.

--Ah, my Kuma, today you can buy a whole hotel for five hundred lira. And you can see how everything has gone to pieces. If you ask an agent, you'll find there are a hundred and one houses for sale, and the prices are no good, nobody is buying, everyone wants to get rid of what they have and go somewhere to a better place. And then again they can't, because that damned house holds them back. They don't want to sell it for nothing. It's hard, my Kuma, hard. A person no longer knows where to go or how to get there....

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Tereza found herself caught in a knot almost impossible to untangle. How much Joe had spent for that house, how much he had worked on it, all that she herself had done to improve it, how much work Nick had put into it – was all of that worth only thirty lousy lira??

--I don't know if you can even get that for it? – Mister Silich shrugged his shoulders. – My Tereza, I can't predict anything for you. If I help you sell the house for nothing, you'll say afterwards that I threw all your hard work and your husband's hard work into the wind for a pittance. And also, I know you want to leave, and you need every penny. You're going over to our country, and over there....

--Who knows what it will be like for you there? Mister Tortich put in.

It was easy to see that they really wanted to help her. Things were not going well for them either. Their pockets and their families had been caught too, although it could not be said that they had fared as badly as Tereza, Lena, Kuma Tona and others.

--I've just thought, ah – and Mister Silich stopped there, grimacing. These are bad times, who knows how long this will last....

--And it will last – Mister Tortich continued – it's going to last a long time, everyone will have to leave like from Kanowna; then again it seems to me the gold didn't disappear, but everything got tangled up with the companies, they went to the stock-market, the cake was being divided among the rich people, and here the poor people were sucked dry...who knows what was going on...it seems to me, it seems like the gold didn't disappear, there must be less than before, and new machines are to blame....

--I don't think so, I don't think so – Mister Silich shook his head – I read the newspapers and everywhere in the world they're saying the same thing....

Mister Tortich was, as the saying goes, union conscious, and he found answers to do with the organisation of the workers, so he was inclined to believe the big bosses had been "mixing the porridge", that they wanted to scoop up the cream in a hurry, and that things would settle down after a while.

--*I've thought of something*—Mister Silich interrupted that high-sounding combination of practical solutions which, to be sure, did not solve the problem, but dispensed hope....

--*Now is not a good time to sell, because you'll sell for nothing, and if you have confidence in us Tereza, and I think we wish you well, then go home, and leave the house to me, and we shall see if this will last or not, and then I shall.....*

She was covered for two or three years. She could survive, and who knew what the canon was getting ready for her? Maybe he would employ her again, because.....

Her thoughts were teeming. Mister Silich seemed to her to be a serious man. Surely he would not disgrace himself for one hundred lira. She knew his mother. Nothing bad had been said about him. And Charlie was full of praise for him.

They talked about it for a long time, and then finally decided: Tereza would leave the house to Mister Silich, and he would sell it when the price was the most favourable. If he got the chance, he could rent it out to someone, and when the time came, he would do everything to make sure the price was right and to send the money back to her.

Tereza's papers had to be finalised, and insurance taken out...

--*Bravo, bravo ... there is a regulation, that if a man is lost in the mine the company owes you help .. Your husband didn't die in the mine, if he had you would have received seven hundred lira immediately... But I'll see! Joe had the miner's complaint...The Phthisis Act was not in place, we'll fight that, we'll fight that, I'll see, because it can't happen that a woman's husband dies of silicosis, and everyone saying that it's the same thing as if he was buried alive in the mine. And Joe saved the life of that miner, and if he had died, the company would have had to pay....*

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Mister Tortich gave himself up to various combinations. He warmed to the subject there in front of Tereza, and she did not quite understand everything he was saying and what he wanted. She felt one thing only – that he was concerned about how she was to get out of all this in the easiest way....

After a few days the two of them came with an already established program. Mister Silich would take the house, and Mister Tortich had arranged for the company to pay for her and her son to go by boat from Fremantle to Naples, then by train from Naples to Bari, and then by a Yugoslav boat to Dubrovnik and Hvar. As well, she would get a hundred and ten lira which was owed to her from the Miner's Relief Fund, if she renounced the pension indefinitely. It was a solution of sorts. She had saved another hundred and fifty lira, and counted on arriving home with 250 pounds sterling plus some valuables in lira sterling, rings and earrings.

--*That will be good for the start! And then afterwards we'll manage. The canon is providing the apartment, and I can cope. We won't starve to death!*

Not even a year had passed since her husband's death, when Tereza with a big chest and some cases left for the Boulder Railway Station. Her friends and some of Joe's friends saw her off, Mister Silich and Mister Groky at the head of them. They all wished her a good journey. She was leaving Boulder City after a full sixteen years, and it seemed to her that she was leaving behind the most significant and the saddest part of her life.

She said goodbye to Doctor Hourley, who sent his regards to the canon; visited Sister Mary Callistus with me, and Sister Mary reminded her to make sure I didn't forget the English language, and gave her a book as a memento.

--Write to us! Write to us! – repeated the lovely Sister Mary – I'll always be happy to get news from you.

Tereza went to see Mister Groky too, who made a long speech, but in whom there was practically nothing else to be found apart from honeyed words. She thought it necessary to thank him too for the favours he had done for Joe and the family, even though she knew he had charged for them, plus interest. And so, after the visits to many of our acquaintances, we arrived at the station.

Nick had written two or three months previously that he did not feel well and had to go to the Wooroloo sanatorium. Tereza did not know if he had gone there or not, and had decided to ask in Perth about it and to visit him. Mister Groky had promised he would “ringati” in Perth and told her she would get the message from someone called Martinovich who would be waiting for her at the station. From Tony she had heard nothing. No-one had seen him or heard from him, as though he had disappeared into thin air. A letter from Kathy or Tony, only one from Nick, had not even arrived in Boulder with their condolences for the death of their father.

I know I woke up close to Perth, and then I went to the window and looked at the strange country which emerged as from a fairy tale. I had never seen so much green in my life, I had never seen such lovely hills, never such wonderful fields with cut grass, never so many vineyards and orchards. What’s that, Mama? What’s that over there Mama? – I admired it all and was asking my old lady, and she enjoyed my astonishment. I had begun, so to speak, a new life. In front of me were appearing scenes and people, which I was not to forget very easily. How refreshing it was after Boulder! We were actually experiencing a true Spring, when everything was in flower, in bud, when everything was especially fresh, when nothing so beautiful, I thought then, existed anywhere in the world. That panorama of beauty showed me that the world was not such a bad place, as it had seemed to be in Boulder, especially the past year, when so many bad things had happened to Mama, and especially those terrible sacred apparitions. And then, the lakes and the sea, towards Fremantle! What miracles there were in the world!

I could feel that Mama’s heart was lifting too. Where had we been living, where had she spent sixteen whole years, where had she left her husband’s bones, he who had lost six or seven years there even before she arrived?

But in Perth that happiness and that beauty was suddenly cut off and clouded by something that happened at the station. Mister Martinovich was waiting for us and gave us his condolences:

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--Nick died! On the Assumption of the Blessed Mary! Three days ago! In the Wooroloo Hospital!

It was a terrible moment. And I do not like to mention Mama’s grief. She turned away her face, flooded with deep pain, and cried. As though she had lost her own son.

Everything after that went its course. I understood her pain and I could no longer feel the joy I had felt in the two or three hours before we reached Perth. Mister Martinovich said that Kathy had been at Nick’s bedside and that everything Nick had owned had been spent in the hospital and on treatment, and still there remained some of his debts to be paid. Upon hearing that Kathy had been with Nick, Tereza had understood there was nothing to be done, that any further steps in Perth and on Nick’s fresh grave would be like a knife in her chest, which she could not endure.

--Mister Martinovich, I can’t go there, take these two lire please, and buy a bouquet of flowers and put them on his grave...

That was all.

And yet, dear Perrin, that was not all. I dare not speak, for fear of offending you, because it’s to do with your mother, the person you love, even though she may be sinful and could do what she did. Still, I shall keep it to myself, I won’t say it to you, there’s no sense in doing that, unless you bring it up.

While we were waiting for the ship in Fremantle, Mother met her friend Mrs Sally, who had left Boulder a few months ago, and she told her something very strange about Kathy. Whether it was true or not, Mother could not and did not have the strength to establish, so that it caused the final account between her and Kathy, which Kathy knew nothing about.

--You know, Tereza, -- said Mrs Sally -- she took all his possessions from Mick. Before he died, on the Assumption, he wrote everything over to her. What Mister Martinovich told you is not true. I heard that the farm was valuable, worth up to dvo mijora liri (two thousand lira). If we say Mick owed one thousand, there was still one thousand left. And where is that now? She was there at his bedside filling up his head. You know

what a devil she is? Yes, yes, the children are her first concern, you can't say she hasn't looked after them; well you have a child too! And you helped Mick, gave him money to get to Perth, and to start the farm, you did everything you could for him, and she got it all....

Tereza didn't believe it. She simply did not want to believe, but still, there were grave suspicions. She assumed that Mick was no longer in his right mind, because she knew how much he valued her.....

--And her younger brother, at least if she could have given him a hundred lira. She could have known! That would have meant a lot to us. We've got by even so, we've managed, thank God and the Virgin Mary....

That is, truly Perrin, all that happened before your arrival, and we'll talk about anything else later. Behind us is one more long pathway travelled by life, searching justification and legality in the world which is so rich, so beautiful, it's a real shame that we are all incapable of finding links which would tie us to different, more humane connections and convert that which was terrible in the past into a happy present, where there would be no competition, where a man would not live at the expense of another man. But.....

The hours passed. Perrin did not come that afternoon. In the morning, around eight o'clock, a car stopped in front of our yard and we knew the precious guests had arrived from afar. In front of me stood a woman of around forty years, with her husband who was of a similar age. I was so excited. I recognised my dear Perrin immediately and ran to embrace her. We hugged and kissed for a long time, like children, gazed at one another for a long time, stepped back and then forward again and hugged again. Perrin, Perrin! Cosmas, Cosmas! Is it really you? So big! So handsome! Yes Perrin, it's me, that little boy, your partner! Yes, yes! My prospector!

Something happened which crossed over all the memories, cancelling out the present, even the future. It was that wonderful impression which is impossible to describe, when not one word is necessary, when anything added is too much.

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But convention is convention and, as always happens, talk began first about the journey, then the weather and other not so important things.

And then Perrin? Five times older, Perrin!

And then Cosmas! Five times older Cosmas!

And again a remarkable joy overtook me. For the first time after so many decades, I heard someone call me: Cosmas, because that was how they spoke to me in Australia.

Yes, Perrin, or rather Perica, your Cosmas is here, or rather Kuzma. But what do names matter as compared to destiny? There is nothing in your eyes now that would lead me to believe that your life was a bitter pill to swallow. As there is nothing in mine either, although I cannot say I did not go through many trials.

You grew up in surroundings that were intended for me too. The only difference was that I was alone, and there were three of you at your mother's table. I have to be honest and say that it must have been harder for you...

--She loved us very much. Many things happened to her, but I can't say that we were not first in her life, first in her love. She would go without, even though she was very sensitive; everything had to be sacrificed for us. And in fact Cosmas, we went to Perth, to the city. We escaped Boulder and I lived at the boarding school, but that was very hard for me, because I wasn't used to that sort of disciplined life, and I felt the need for our wide open spaces, and never mind how much on the other hand I gained from the diversity of city life, I felt miserable. Today that sounds unbelievable, because we know what Boulder was, but for me, then, that's how I felt. Perth was wonderful. But I missed all that- which was ours! It didn't last long. Mama didn't have money for the boarding school even though the government gave her most of it. We had to leave, to complete primary school. That was different, more free. Today when I look back at all that, I'm sorry I couldn't finish my schooling because it would have been something much more certain than all the training I got with my brothers, afterwards. The youngest, Gregory, succeeded in doing something because the priests took him in, and gave

him the opportunity to educate himself. He was going to be a priest, but....something else happened, I'll tell you about it. Mama was selling blouses, skirts, mostly women's ready-made clothes, which didn't earn enough for the necessities of life. At that time she was not married, as they said, she was living with a man who didn't have much and who left to go his own way, I think to Brisbane, and we didn't see him again. I don't know how to explain, that man for us was neither nice nor nasty. He sometimes took us to Swan Lake, where we played by the water, among the black swans with their red beaks, and to that lovely place King's Park; he bought us balloons and kites, but somehow that was all spoilt because he had taken our mother. She had no benefit from him, just as she had no benefit from any of her husbands. And she was beautiful, remarkably beautiful! Wasn't she Cosmas, do you remember?

How could I not remember? Photos show that too!

--Even today she has wonderful facial features, which draw attention. It's strange that she didn't do better in life. She told me how she could have, so to speak, had anyone she wanted. Men used to be drawn to her, and she always chose the ones other girls had rejected. The only man who meant something in her life was Barbaro, but she separated from him in a very drastic way, although she regretted it. Later Barbaro, when you were already in Yugoslavia, died in the mine, and we were left without a father, although he didn't offer us much as a father. Here and there he sent us a few lira sterling, but never regularly. I have to tell you that Mama was not a very good economist in the house. Her money disappeared very quickly. She didn't have much sense about saving. She always put us on a pedestal, above what she could afford, I would say, so that in some things we were lacking. We were living in a little house on the outskirts of Perth, paying rent, which wasn't especially large. But Mama couldn't rest until she got a loan from the bank and bought a small house in Perth, close to the centre. It was nicer there, but we were short of some things. Sometimes there wasn't even enough bread in the house and we were hungry. I wasn't clever enough then, and Gregory and Thomas even less so, to give her advice, but later, when we were older, we tried to influence her, but she was too stubborn. She was of a very

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stubborn character. Whatever she intended to do, she had to accomplish one way or another, often to the detriment of our needs. On the one hand she made us happy, because she spoilt us, like for instance with the new house, which we loved, while on the other hand that exaggeration of hers affected our clothes, food and other things. And then, when there was money, she would pay too much for the best that she could find. That always created a gap between wants and needs, because she didn't have the sense to see all the possibilities, to put all income on the table and divide it up equally. So it happened that sometimes we ate extremely well, and then there would be a period of shortages, and one spring we would be dressed beautifully, and the next we awaited in rags.

Thomas became independent very quickly. First he was selling newspapers around Perth and making a small amount like that, which was welcome for us. But Thomas was doing this to the detriment of his schooling, so that he lost two terms, which caused him a lot of trouble later on because he always had to do so-called unqualified jobs. I was looking after the housekeeping, while Mama was in the shop from nine until five. So we were more or less left to ourselves. And you know what that means!

I had always been interested in painting and ceramics. I don't know how that was born in me. I liked to make patterns, to draw, to make shapes. In primary school that was noticed. And they encouraged me to work on it. And I was successful, it's true. I received prizes at some of the exhibitions. From time to time I would take up the paintbrush when I was at home, and I would paint the whole house with drawings and watercolours. People came and admired them, but I didn't succeed in making any money out of it. Then I started with the ceramics, and I made brooches, necklaces, plates. That went a bit better. But it took time, and I had to think about what Thomas and Gregory would eat, would their beds be made, their shirts mended. It was much harder with the ceramics than with the drawings, because I had to fire any good pieces, I had to go into town to get things finished. And then, Mama hated for me to make any mess in the house.

--You've piled everything up here, we can't move because of all your mess – she would say. – I work all day in the shop so it would be fair at least for me to find clean rooms and be able to rest. – Without doubt, she was right. But that took away from me my desires and my accomplishments. Sometimes even now I like to amuse myself with childhood inclinations, here and there I make something, but it's gone, gone forever.

Thomas went out into the world very quickly. He too ended up in the Goldfields.....

--Thomas, is that possible? – I cried.

--Everything is possible in Australia, my dear Cosmas. Everything! Including the hardest things to believe or even to imagine. Thomas went up as far as Coolgardie. For a time we didn't know anything about him. He didn't write us anything. He followed the rainbow – as he said later – but he never succeeded in reaching the end, where it shone the brightest, where he could find the cup of gold. While he was walking towards it, it would move away. He saw gold, but he didn't touch it. My good Thomas! He is a wonderful man, a wonderful friend! How many pleasant hours we spent together, and we never contradicted one another. He is now a barkeeper in a sporting club in Perth. He makes good wages, but you can't say he owns much. Thomas had some extraordinary experiences while he was looking for gold. He saw life at first hand and only then did he understand how hard it had been for the first “rushers” and “fielders” among whom was my grandfather...

Poor Nono! Poor Joe! Do you know, Cosmas, that Mama didn't particularly like him, but she respected him. I remember him only in his bed in Dwyer Street. Pale, long face, wide forehead, thick white moustache. Yes, yes, that's how he was, that's how he was, only he was paler than in the photo....And that's Tereza, your mother! And those lollies of hers on the shelf, on the *skancija* is what it's called, isn't it? Every time I came there with you, do you remember, she gave me lollies. I always knew I could go there for a sweet course! Ah, what times we had!

And to get back to Thomas! He was eighteen when he left to go to Coolgardie. He was there two or three years, and then he came back empty-handed, but with a full heart. What *didn't* he talk about? Coolgardie, where the race for gold towards Kalgoorlie and Boulder started from, when the Golden Mile was

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found, slowly faded away to become a ghost town or part of the stories of the descendants of the ghosts who once lived there, who hoped the good old days would return, that they would rise again from the dead. It happens that in towns like that some witnesses remain, who know the whole history, from birth to death, and who recount it with all the details. They are a sort of conscience of the generations who have come, built the town then gone. They are the remains of its most sought-after dreams, people who live in the clouds, and are persistent like foundations which are not so easily destroyed. Unshaven, with uncombed hair, wanderers, troublemakers, adventurers, beggars who nibble at the last remains of the town, petty, small smugglers, traders who bargain big and sell small, inn-keepers who control businesses that neither lose nor win, that just get by, but people full of spirit, full of humour, for whom you could say they have touched every low point in life that exists. I learnt in school the poem: No more our wheels will wake you / Old road, you wait in vain / The desert soon will take you / Back to her breast again! And then Thomas, just before I set off on this journey, recited that poem, The Old Coolgardie Road, written by Dorrie Doolette, who was a miner. And indeed, Thomas said that the bush had already begun to cover the old road towards Coolgardie, over which had passed tens of thousands of people with horses, camels, carts and many other kinds of transport at the end of the last century and the beginning of our century. How hard is it today to travel? Not at all! At that time seven to ten days were needed to get to Southern Cross from Coolgardie. What scenes there were on that road when Bailey brought news of the discovery of gold. What a nightmare! There were thousands of people on horses and carts. From that time, until the time around 1938 when Thomas was wandering there, history turned upside down. In a period of only forty years – as he said – a tremendous rise took place, and then a tremendous fall. Everything that could have happened in a small town in the world through several centuries, happened in Coolgardie in just forty years, maybe even less, because Thomas arrived at the time when the town was barely breathing among its ruins. I don't know what is there today, but I expect spider webs are everywhere, that rust has

destroyed the crushers and the boilers of the condensers, and that a person who is there must feel like a gravedigger who has nothing to do, except to bury some of the remaining ghosts of the inhabitants who are barely alive in the huts under roofs of corrugated iron, cooking the contents of tins, cutting up old planks from the floor or old wooden beams, to do so. In this way Thomas, with another boy who had set off with him, lived at the end of the once-famous Bailey Street, at a place belonging to a deaf old man who rented a room full of holes to them for two shillings a day and who also from time to time fed them, according to his mood and whether he had succeeded in making them join him to gather bits of old iron, which they took to the Railway Station and sold to some Steel Company or other. Otherwise, the boys wandered in the desert, poking into old shafts, finding the bones of former prospectors, whose bodies were scattered over these tracks without crosses or names; digging out small nuggets, shining among the stones, but never anything worthwhile. They sold these to the old man or otherwise paid for their rent in this way plus something to eat.

So, what can I tell you, Cosmas? Thomas got dysentery there. He was bed-ridden in impossible circumstances for nearly a month and a half, and his friend was bringing him food. He simply stole it, round about. He ended up once at the police station. They would have sent him to Perth if Thomas had been able to stand up at all. Luckily they came across two or three members of the Salvation Army who took them in until they recovered. If you could have seen him when he returned to Perth! Mama hardly recognised him. Still, that was an experience for him that he will remember for the rest of his life. They visited all places, from Bonnievale where Modesto Varischetti was buried in 1907 after a terrible storm, they even went to Widgiemooltha on the way to the salt lake Lefroy, under Boulder. Close to that lake, where Kambalda now is, recently they found nickel, and that gave new hope that Boulder and Kalgoorlie would again become wealthy. A big factory has been built already. Only ten kilometres from Boulder a nickel smelting place appeared, and both towns suddenly came to life. They went to the well-known Gnarlbine Rock and beyond that to the Queen Victoria Rock. They explored just about everything. But – most of all they dug out memories.

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Yes, Cosmas! Gregory was a bit luckier. A priest in our new parish took a liking to him. He took him first to sing the mass, then after finishing elementary school he was able to continue with secondary school, getting ready to be a priest. Gregory showed some neurotic tendencies from the beginning. Mama took him to the doctor's several times, and it was somehow covered up, but always it came out again. They took him into the convent, where he lived a very calm and organised life. He didn't have to think about anything except studying, but even that didn't help. He was too sensitive, he would become very upset all of a sudden, he would stop talking to us for ten, twenty days, go into his room and we wouldn't see him, so to speak, for days, so that we just about forgot he was there. The worst part was that he refused medication. And then it would all pass, and for a time he would live normally with us as though nothing had happened. We were always hoping that it would cease.

Gregory's behaviour was strange. He had some peculiar ideas. He talked about buried treasure, and machines that roar around the earth, even into the centre of the planet, and under-sea seekers of ore. He concerned himself with the other side of astrology. He knew the whole sky by heart, and he would focus on some galaxy or other, and then further still on some star in the galaxy. We couldn't talk to him about that, because we knew nothing about it, and he saved every penny, kept them, and bought books. He went to our observatory, he spent hours there, especially at night, so that Mama didn't know what to do with him, until they took him in to the convent. But he used to escape from there, too. And then he threw himself into the study of reincarnation. He read something in some brochure, I think it was called *The Middle Way*, a Buddhist society in London, about reincarnation, and so he delved into karma and darma. It was hard to talk to him at all. Strangely, that calmed him down somehow, but it brought him into conflict with Catholicism, so that he gradually lost sight of the idea of becoming a priest. One day he said to Mama: -- I shan't be a priest, I don't like them, they are too oriented towards themselves, they take, and they give little! We simply did not know what

to do with him. Thomas was then in Coolgardie, Mama was earning money but spending it inappropriately , and now Gregory was added to our burdens again.

I can't describe to you, Cosmas, how it all was. They were pushing people out of the Goldfields. There was no longer any work there. Gold was dying, new jobs had to be found. Farms sprang up with the water supply network, belts of wheat widened, and the rest was taken over by livestock farms. Perth had suddenly grown. There was pressure on accommodation. Speculation took place on all sides. And still in this country there was room for everyone. What a vast and at the same time, rich country! It needed inhabitants to fill it up, but "bez alata nema zanata" as we say – without the tools you can't have the trade. The government exerted itself to solve the urgent problems with its "schemes". They gave credit, but there was not enough money.

Mama was looking for a job for Gregory for a long time, but without much success. Gregory was already an adult, and didn't want to sell newspapers, and he was not suitable for farm work. She thought about sending him to Uncle Tony, but she didn't know where he had gone.....

--Tony, Tony – straight away I seized upon that name.

--I know, you'll ask me about him, but there's very little I can tell you. Once, I remember, a few months before Uncle Nick died in the sanatorium, Mama went to his farm, in Mandiga, which was quite a distance from Perth. It wasn't hard to get to Merredin, but to Bencubbin – that was bloody torture, as she said. Two whole days she needed to arrive in Mandiga, because first she went by bus, then horse and cart, then finally on horseback. It turned out that there was beside the farm, a much bigger farm belonging to his brother.

--But, how could that be? – I asked, simply not believing in such a combination, because Nick had never said one word about seeing Tony anywhere. Besides, how could that happen that one brother was next to the other, who had disappeared, every trace of whom had vanished, as we believed at home!

--I told you, dear Cosmas, that everything is possible in Australia. The impossible is possible too....

I resisted. Because my mother had convinced me that Nick was a wonderful man, and above all, honest, who had respected her, so I simply could not accept that arrangement whereby they had been next to one

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another, and Nick had never found it necessary to tell my mother that in a letter. Besides, how could the government have given Nick land next to Tony, when he didn't know where his brother was?

How, how?

--Let it be, Cosmas, that's how it was. I can't explain it either. I simply don't know. Mama couldn't explain it either. She found Tony through Nick, Tony had a bigger farm than Nick, fitted out with machines and horses, so Nick borrowed from Tony the tools and implements he needed. He found Tony with some woman.

--The German lady, Elsa?!

--What German lady? – asked Perrin, as though I had found her out in a lie. – Not a German, pure English, or rather, Welsh.

--They didn't call her "frau"?!

--Mama didn't say that. She spoke of the Welsh lady, Joan.

Yes, dear Perrin, life is very complicated, very complicated. But....

And then there was an intermezzo, filled with my story about Tony's pathway. Perrin knew he had disappeared from South Boulder one day, that he had won a thousand lira at the horse races, but that was just about all she knew.

--I'll have to, I'll have to – she continued – ask my mother in more detail about that. It's all strange, very strange! You go with your mother from Fremantle over the Indian Ocean and return to your own country. Kathy, to be sure, didn't like your mother. Nick dies in the sanatorium. The two of us don't ever meet, We never write to one another. Only after the Second World War you establish contact with us and we start to communicate more seriously when I decide to come here, how come?? And you ask yourself how it could happen that Mama found Nick next to Tony? What is that, Cosmas? She was telling us how surprised she was. She simply couldn't believe it, because Nick never wrote anything about it to her. And when she arrived in front

of his farm the first thing Nick warned her about was not to say anything to Tony in front of his wife, because he didn't want her to know who Nick was and who Kathy was. They would find one another and talk!

This was all starting to interest me more and more, actually here was the beginning of my decision to throw myself into researching the whole story. By some habit, stemming from my professional deformity, I had always made notes about the curiosities of life, including those regarding my family. I filled one big thick notebook with these notes. Especially, Mama's stories occupied me. When I was in London at the beginning of the fifties, I bought a book about the Goldfields and the mines, so that I did have some sort of contact with my former life, however it did not occur to me that it all had a sort of charm, which was then taken by my dear Perrin's story out of the frame of the ordinary and into the unusual, the mysterious. That other, that which is underneath everything, which surrounds our beings, the unknown to which we are all drawn, and often we don't know ourselves where we are going, into what sort of abyss we are falling, we just let ourselves be taken by unknown forces and then suddenly, strange new pathways open to us, shadowy, vague, hidden by a hundred veils, sprinkled with ash, which need to be lifted, sown and sifted to get to a spark, to the essence, to gold, -- all that affected me tremendously. Therefore in this little story about Tony, tying it in with stories my mother told, I have found a suitable place to dig out and explain some human destinies. Yes, dear Perrin, through you I have discovered everything I have written so far, and the decision became stronger and stronger in me precisely in the moments of our reunion....

--Do you understand? -- she asked me again, reminding me of that "possible in the impossible", or vice versa, "impossible in the possible".

--I can't say I understand everything! -- I answered, encouraging her to continue, to further explain.

--They would find themselves alone and then talk, but.....

--Yes, Tony didn't want his wife to know anything about anything -- that's what Mama said. And she was behaving as though she were Nick's acquaintance, and not his sister.

--What was going on with that man?

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--How many times we asked ourselves that! But, as you know, Nick died in the Wooroloo sanatorium near Perth. He arrived there pale, exhausted, extremely weak. He was spitting out blood. Mama went from time to time to the sanatorium, where he was lying for two or three months. There was no word of Tony. And when Nick died, Mama thought she should inform Tony of his death. She sent a letter to Mandiga, then some of Nick's things arrived, sent by Tony, and the letter was returned with the indication: unknown! True, Tony was not using his real surname, he made it sound more like an Irish name. Nick did the same thing, only he took a couple of letters out of his surname.

I was confused. I could see in front of me the face of Mrs Sally. And then I asked Perrin:

--But, in the name of God, how could my mother write to Nick in Mandiga, but....

--Can't you see what surname my mother used? Here surnames are changed so quickly, you just add two letters, take one away and you have a new name, and there you are, as you are or as the priest hears your name. For instance, they called me Perica, and over there I was christened nicely as Perrin. Don't be surprised, my Cosmas!

There, that made us laugh! Cosmas, Cosmas, and I am actually a plain old Dalmatian Kuzma.

--That's how it was with surnames especially. In Australia you can't tell any more, who is one of us, and who isn't. Even the last "ich" at the end of the word disappeared. Klaric became Klarie or Clarie, Orlić became Hourley, Mister Pecarević lost the whole "arević" and became Mister Pech, and then because perhaps that was too short, added to that Pech "et" and Mister Pečarević was transformed into Mister Pechet. So you see, all sorts of combinations are possible in our Australia.

--And did your mother try to tell us that Nick had died? -- I said, suspiciously.

Perrin said at once:

--I asked her, she said you must have gone back to the old country, because your mother had written Nick that you were getting ready to go. Mostly, it's all rather embarrassing and inconvenient and I try to understand, like you want to too, that whole unhappy cycle into which our parents were pulled, and our brothers and uncles.

You can interpret it all, Cosmas, simply in terms of the conditions in which we grew up....Yes, yes, Mama often said, and today she says it less and less, how her father brought her to South Boulder into the dust, into misfortune, into an apartment which was not any sort of apartment, which let the dust in, which had to be renovated for a long time. She felt that he had cut short her youth, stuck her in some sort of hole, away from everyone. She said the same thing about Tony, although Tony was able to study at the School of Mines, which in my opinion was a privilege. I told her that several times, but she was stubborn. She kept firmly to the first impression she gained of people she met, not moving an inch forward or back. If someone gave offence she never forgot, it was very hard for her to let go of that. Always in her idea of a person she upgraded his character, thought he was better than he was, and approached him with that opinion, and when she saw that that was not the way it was she simply threw that person out of her sight as though he didn't exist. Do you think she ever mentioned Barbaro? After that incident in Mandiga, where she had travelled under very difficult conditions, Tony lost the charm he had had. I understood that they had got along well together while they were in Boulder. She always said Tony gave her money when she needed it, and even when she didn't need it.

--How did Tony get the money, did she tell you that? -- I asked. He was going to school, he couldn't have money. Only his father and Tereza could have given it to him. Later for a time he was working, and then he was pulled into the army. After the army, which his father saved him from.....

--Saved him? How do you mean, saved him? Mama told me he had pushed him into the army, and taken him out when he realised he was ill and couldn't work any longer...Tony didn't want to come back from Melbourne. He liked it there. It happened that he didn't have to go overseas, to the front line. And his father's request and the government approval messed up his jobs in Melbourne.

--Do you know what sort of jobs?

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--He found some types there who dealt in horses and selling tickets. He was saying he was right at the start of some nice work and that his father stopped him....

--If he was working, why did he come back, he could have stayed there. He voluntarily left home after he won some money on the horses, and why couldn't he do that in Melbourne?

--I don't know! I didn't ask Mama all that. But to answer the first part. Tony was playing cards since he was in school. And he was good at it. Mama said he always had money. And then he crossed over to horse-betting.

--Father didn't know anything about that. My mother didn't mention him playing cards earlier on.

--What don't we hide from our parents?? However, in Tony's case, Mama always said he would go far. She praised him for being a lively young man, clever, who knew what he wanted, and who on the other hand was a cavalier...

--Yes, a cavalier -- I paused -- It's not my place to judge him. I'm trying to understand Tony, Kathy and Nick, like you. But how did your mother judge his escape?

--Like something quite natural. For him, same as for her, it was very stifling being in Boulder. They couldn't come to terms with the state of affairs. They sought a way out of that jungle, to a clear field. And then when they left, they clashed with a new reality. Mama was an unusually attractive woman, but she pushed everything away from her. She didn't know how to make use of her beauty, and on the other hand she wanted so much to have a home, to have funds, to bring us up. She was working right up until recently and I can tell you she worked very hard for her bread and a roof over her head. Thomas found a job in a club restaurant. Gregory was employed in an insurance office. And then things started to get better. Three wages mean something, in one house. But until then, until then it was drž - ne daj, look twice at every penny. And Tony, his

escape? I heard that your father was saying how he had tricked him, first to do with the wood he sold, and then how he didn't give him even a shilling from his win at the race track. But Mama, it seems to me, said that Tony paid his father the money from the wood, even gave him three times more.

--It's a question, how he did that...

--Maybe, because I believe neither of them was too choosy over what they said and did.

--I began to admire Perrin. She was very open. Although she didn't know everything. I felt we were simply continuing a conversation that had been interrupted, started in South Boulder somewhere in a flat yard in our vicinity, where the house had disappeared. But a conversation no longer led by children, but by adults, a natural conversation, not bounded by geography or by time. Nothing much had changed regarding our closeness. We had kept some of the innocence and naivety of children even though we had not seen one another for decades. Exactly that, - and I had not expected it because I assumed life would mould something else, something new, - again tied me to Perrin. We spoke without any barriers. Neither parents, nor brothers, nor sisters, nor surroundings, far and wide, in which we lived, mattered to us. We had gone our very different ways, our destinies played out on different sides of the world, in very different circumstances, we had read completely different text, seen completely different scenes, touched quite different people, customs, habits, and suddenly we had found ourselves on the same track, we had simply gone from one wagon into another without any prejudice or interference.

--Tereza, my mother, was a God-fearing woman, she loved the church, went to mass....

--Yes, Mama told me about that. It bothered her a lot. She couldn't stand the church or the priests. She never took us there. I ask myself how she could let Gregory go to the Convent! I think she was forced into it by scarcity. If it was anything else, she never would have come to terms with Gregory serving the church, but there you are, she accepted it when it was a question of a better life for her child, because she couldn't support him. She was unusually pleased when Gregory came with some theories that were the exact opposite of some of the church's teachings. Even though he was taciturn, Gregory used to become braver when Mama was present, like it was a challenge to talk about things he wouldn't talk about with us. That's how I learnt about his

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research. Otherwise, without Mama he wouldn't have said a word. He felt in her some sort of rebel spirit that could not be subdued, which was obstinate in a special sense of that word, although all of us, that is Thomas and I, interpreted that obstinacy of hers as a sort of stubbornness which was repulsive, unpleasant, even insane in some moments. It had to be like that in Tony's case. I realised that Mama was very similar to him, except that Tony fared better as far as school went, even though he didn't complete his schooling. He was somehow more refined, and that was what Mama respected in him, not really knowing what it was, but instinctively, without a concrete knowledge of the reason. It seems to me that both of them, if they had had the education they needed, would have been normal people, that education would have removed their rudeness and roughness, that it would have refined their spirits and their outward appearance.

You see, I have mentioned outward appearance. Never mind how remarkably she was built, Mama never knew how to dress. She went from one extreme to another. She was always dressed gaudily, always with some sort of unnecessary additions on herself, flowers, hairpins, bracelets, necklaces, gloves, and high, unpleasantly high heels with little tails. Ah, my God, what that woman would not put on herself and still today, puts on herself? I would say to her: -- Mama, take that off, make your clothes plainer, your hair, you'll look more beautiful, why do you spoil and violate your figure, your face, your walk when it isn't necessary! We were always arguing about that, especially in younger years. And then I saw that it was useless to argue with her about it, and I left her to do what she wanted. Sometimes then it would happen that she would come to me and ask me to help her buy a dress or shoes, but even then I couldn't reason with her. What didn't I attempt? There were some funny situations. For example, I would tell her that I didn't like at all some dress or blouse or skirt, even though it was to my taste, just to challenge her to say that it was nice. Sometimes I even persuaded her in this way to buy something, because, ostensibly, I didn't like it. I got my own way like that. Maybe that

was being stubborn from my side, maybe that was forcing my will onto her, but it seems to me that I was right. There exists after all a scale of value, doesn't there Cosmas? People have made it, perhaps tacitly, but it exists. Besides, you can see it. I, as some sort of unofficial so-called painter, maker of ceramics, I have that feeling that we must act according to the acknowledged rule, which certain people whose taste I respect, adhere to. I would say that that is the indefinite feeling inside us, that something is beautiful, tasteful, because it has certain proportions, certain lines, points, standing against one another in a wonderful balance, and we can't exactly explain that relationship which all at once breathes beauty. It is that thing which is the opposite of cheap, the opposite of kitsch, because a discerning hand has singled it out, put it in front of us, and it radiates a miraculous glow..

--Bravo, bravo, Perrin, I didn't know you had gone so far! How come, Perrin, that you didn't have the opportunity to finish school?!

--School indeed, don't be silly, although I'd love to have had that possibility! I understood that which neither Mama nor Tony could understand, and maybe they wouldn't have understood even if they had studied because for that you need a special training which you get in a completely different sort of school. True, I read a lot. When I couldn't take the courses that could have helped me, I went to the library and the book-shop and borrowed books. As a painter I am self-taught, but it's a pity, it's all gone.....

Suddenly I felt that I was in front of a very sensitive person, who had begun to put forward her philosophy of life. I, however, was interested in facts, simple facts of life, the behaviour of people, their destiny as woven by life, behind which I could see the streams of thought, that damned synthesis which announces itself as an overview of the general and results in philosophy or philosophising. I was especially interested in the inability to establish a balance, which for me was the basis of the quality of life but not the balance which makes life and its manifestations uniform, but which with its differences brings people to live together and to respect one another.

All our partners in these years and places truly could not find such a solution for their lives, which would at least to an extent satisfy them, and it seemed to me that Perrin had at once instinctively touched some

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threads we needed to follow to get to our goal, to equilibrium. That was already some sort of quintessence, a conclusion, and I couldn't get to it until much had been put together, before I could compact, like in a computer, experience, and then pull out the basic thread which speaks of existence, of time spent and then of the end. There was still a lot of darkness before my eyes, many visible and invisible shadows, much flickering where faces were not discernible, much less their feelings and impulses. And since I had started on this journey which was branching in all directions, I had to put things together to get some sort of picture of all these occurrences, a picture which of course would never be complete, because that would be impossible to achieve. Each person could create it, and it would escape similarity, because similarity would be the finish, the death of every survival, every goal of life, if you can indeed speak of purpose.

What shall I get in the end, from all of this? Maybe nothing, maybe just one big relief that I finally wrote the last word. And that too, truth to tell, is something worthwhile.

--Tony – Tony never got in touch again. It's nearly thirty years since the last moment Mama saw him. And I have a feeling he is somewhere close by, that he never left Australia, specifically that part of the southwest. Once there was an advertisement in the newspaper, with a picture of the members of the Northam and District Tennis Association. Among the young men and women, with their rackets in their hands, standing with two people dressed in black was Tony. Mama swore it was he. I can't say if she was mistaken or not. I tried to persuade her to write to the address of that Association. She didn't want to. She said: -- After all, it was his duty to contact me, at least he didn't have a disagreement with me.

--Wasn't there a way – I said to Perrin – to get in touch with him?

--Which way? I didn't know of any, and I wouldn't know now either. True, I'd be happy to find Uncle, but to look for him through the police would be awkward, to look for him through the newspapers even more so. And who knows if he is still alive?

We talked about other things, because we could see that there was nothing to be gained in digging up – the impossible.

I had the impression that Perrin was happily married to her husband. He was a teacher. They moved around a lot, from place to place. They had been in Narrogin, Collie, and Geraldton on the sea, where it had been best for them. But always they had wanted to get to Perth, which was closest to their hearts. Children were born, Mariette and Jack, and the family got tired of moving from place to place, not gaining anything from the constant travel. All they succeeded in saving for those several years was spent on a trip to London and then with a "rent a car" from London through France, Spain and Italy to us, with a return through Austria and Germany. They took winter holidays and that month was actually the only month which could be called theirs, when they didn't have to think about money, house and children.

--That was all!

--All?! What do you mean "all"! It's never all!

Perrin corrected herself. -- From your, and my point of view, it's not "all" but it is from the point of view of many of us

The difference is small. The important thing is that you are happy, and if something else happens tomorrow, you'll accept it as a gift of that day.

--Strange! That's what Gregory said: -- Take what comes and be happy like a child! Where did you learn that?

I stopped.

--Where would I learn it? To be sure, after the Second World War I was on the Indian sub-continent. I thought then about how it would be good to get to Australia, but it was only a thought. In India I soaked up some of the richness, but it seems to me I was close to her before I even got there. Is it necessary to build some sort of experience into a place? Some people think less, some more about some things, some people feel things more, some less. We are all exposed to some cosmic radiation, so to speak, because we are not just a part of

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the earth. That feeling of everything, far and near, is a property of the biped, but it's buried in him somehow by the products of civilization. I rejoice with you, Perrin, like we used to rejoice thirty years ago. It's a continuation of our happiness, an attempt to get out of the limits put on us on the side, and an attempt to ignore our own limits. Still, isn't the realisation that we are all equal, and at the same time different, and in our difference again the same, the best realisation we can have?

--I don't know how I can answer, but you tell me what makes people in certain conditions behave exactly how no-one expects them to behave? Mama was unpredictable, and that impulsiveness of hers meant a type of attack on other people's freedom. I tried to understand her. I did everything I could to comprehend, even when I didn't like her behaviour one little bit, when in a way she endangered me, but I tried to suppress her will without paying her back tit for tat, without hurting her. I assume Tony behaved the same way as she did. On the other hand I think your father and mother also carried, maybe to a lesser degree, some characteristics which challenged Tony and Kathy to behave the way they did.

It happened that Father died and not one of them came to his funeral. On the other hand Nick was alone too, at least posthumously.

Here I stopped. Should I reveal to her Mama's suspicion to do with the inheritance of Nick's property?! No, I couldn't do that. It was not the time for it, and it wouldn't be considerate for me to suddenly hit her with some facts which were not completely proven.. Therefore I said:

--Have you ever been to his grave?

--No I haven't – Perrin answered. -- But I thought about Nick. And as I grew up, he became part of me. I don't know how much my mother sympathised with her father. I think his image had faded so that in the end she was quite indifferent. Perhaps one day she will think about the fact that he is her parent, who didn't intend to ruin her. But Nick didn't ask anything of anyone. He lived next to everyone almost non-existent, but he still radiated strongly enough to cause memories which from year to year became stronger. He was young. He should have had something from life!

--And maybe he did have, in his own way, and others didn't notice. My mother says she didn't see any sort of alarm in Nick, that she felt a warmth, which she couldn't articulate. She loved him very much, and she used to say he seemed cold only on the outside. Nick had established a balance with his surroundings, even before he became aware of this. How wonderfully he used to work in the garden, with the flowers and vegetables. That balance was in him. Somehow it was born with him. And still, he lived only briefly. Only once Nick came into conflict with the other side, only once, but neither Mama nor I felt this as a conflict, rather as an expression of friendship and a call for respect. That happened when Kathy came to our yard and began to talk about how everything in Boulder was going to the devil and how she could not stand it. Then Nick, seeing that her comments could lead to an unpleasant quarrel, stepped in. But how did he do that, dear God? You didn't have any feeling at all that he was reproaching anyone, or criticising, or that he wanted to harm anyone or even just to draw attention to himself. He simply brought Kathy to the right place, while influencing all of us, especially Father, like a strange peacemaker, who with his voice, his gestures, eradicates passion and with some sort of balm heals wounds and injustice. That calming influence was the best of Nick's qualities. He spoke very, very little, but his presence was sometimes enough to change a conversation to another side, away from conflict, from aggravation, and to create harmony in relationships. Next to Nick there could be no diversion and I think that without Nick, the family would have been worse off, even though they could not resist temptations which did not depend on Nick. When he left Boulder to go to Perth, something was disrupted. It was as though the man who retained some sort of power had disappeared, even though he could not tame them. That which followed afterwards – Mama's apparitions, those difficult nightmares and self-punishment she had to endure, that life with no peace – it was as though with Nick's absence it all took on new forms.

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After the first days which passed in almost continuous conversation, because we were both very curious, Perrin was able to learn a lot about me and my life after I had left Australia. What I told her was part of a completely different story, whose content was different from that which she narrated.

Two wars had roared past us. They were two tragedies which swallowed tens of millions of lives. What could you expect from a system impregnated with the belief that looting was first and foremost on the list of values, looting which was covered by performances of truth, God, honesty? The First World War meant the redistribution of plunder between the warring parties and carried within it the germs of a new predatory enterprise begun by Fascism. We were occupied, and we went to war and to revolution to fight for a better world, for a more dignified human life. But of what use is it to talk of that now?

Perrin and her husband felt fantastic with us, in our environment, and now we had to make plans to visit the islands and the places where her parents had grown up. Together we marked the way on the map, and Perrin wrote every bit of information in her notebook, so as not to distract her from the path, as she explained.

--She's an excellent leader – said her husband. – We have to leave it to her.

Yes, Perrin, you were an excellent leader then too, on our childhood travels. What could escape your notice? There didn't exist a house or a hut that didn't attract your interest. And that golden lira sterling? I can still see the wonder of happiness and excitement on your face! How important we were that day!

--And as well as that, she is a good financier! – her husband continued, but that causes Perrin to smile, making her unusually beautiful.

--My minister of finances was my mother, who didn't really know how to manage money – she continued – and your shilling is safe in my hands, is it Sam?

Then Sam too burst out laughing.

--Okay, okay!

--Leaving Perrin in her element, I did my best to lead her into the skills she carried within herself, aiming to bring her back to the track she had left. I took her to our exhibitions. There I saw tears in her eyes, tears of admiration, but also tears because of unexecuted duties. I could read in her eyes how sorry she was not to have continued on her journey, which would have refreshed her, because she would have found herself even more, even though you couldn't say she had not given full attention to the best part of herself. But circumstances often take a person where that person does not expect, and somehow it happens that the feeling dies which still, at the first opportunity, awakens and again, finding incitement, comes to the surface. I cared about that, even though on the other hand, that internal collision, because I myself created it, caused in my Perrin a sadness which did not persist.

--Do you know, that painting and ceramics, they challenge me to a dual. I can't judge, because beauty is too much an expression of personality, that which is best, but I feel I should do something about it.

--Well who is stopping you?

--Actually no-one! We'll leave all that – she said and changed the subject. However, it was plain to me that she was weighing it up and that perhaps something would come out of my little incentive.

So Perrin left on her journey. She went to visit my mother and her relatives. She wrote to me from the island, expressing great enthusiasm.

--But how could they, Cosmas, go from here to that other world, how could they? There were riches here, and they sought wealth in far-away Australia. You're saying now that from your own work, you have a place like no-one else. How is it, Cosmas, that they couldn't organise their lives, find bread to eat, the basic necessities, and stay here? I believe, I firmly believe that there would not have been so many victims here as there were in Australia....

I hadn't thought of that. In other words, Perrin was saying that her mother's rebellion and Tony's rebellion were actually justified. And was that the truth? Was that the final judgment?

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Here, however, they were living beneath the dignity of any man. They had the police on top of them, trouble in front of them, the future was like an open book with nothing written in it, in which they had to write everything themselves. There was no hope. How could they have hope on the edge of starvation? How could they live in a country whose products sold so cheaply? How much effort had to go into getting just a very little food, to sell some, to make ends meet? And then that terrible plague called phylloxera, the vine-pest. Always there was something missing, always some sort of torment, always the question: shall we survive? The broker would come in front of your house. He represented himself as a money lender. He would agree to buy your grapes, and on the other hand he would make the loan, and the interest would rise up to heaven. Your job was to watch the land and not to get mixed up in other people's business. As a fisherman, you had to sell your best fish for nothing, and eat what was left, after a hard day's work, pursued by the wind and the restless sea. And then you would get married, you had the right to do that, and children were born, more things were needed, you were brought into an impossible situation and what else could you do but seek a way out. A friend would write from Australia or America that works were open, that there were jobs, that you could earn dollars or pounds, and so you did all you could to go there. You found yourself on the boat, which took you to the promised land, the land of hope. And then at first you saw the most terrible scenes. You didn't believe your eyes. But since you were healthy, whole, cut from this hard rock, used to the very worst, you thought you could survive, that the country would open up before you and enable you to work for your daily bread and send some across the sea to your family. You went deeper and deeper into the mine, swallowed the dust....

Really Perrin, why did they go? It's hard for me to talk about it and not to make judgement. But as a judge, who can I find guilty? Tell me! People who were not capable of organising life so as not to be victims? Or supreme commanders of the people and the army. Those who were living in milk and honey! Masters, money-lenders, bankers, traders, careerists, "k. und k." officials and administrators, police and finance, tramps, all the corrupt gentlemen and non-gentlemen, priests and friars, a whole complete brotherhood of all sorts of colours and shapes, which were mixed up under these unspoiled, innocent regions of ours, full of sun and serenity! Who, who should I pull by the sleeve and tell him: You're the one! That's a terrible realisation, because how many of them there were, without any need for it, who found death before their time, and they were called to live, because they were born and had a right to that, like me, you, he, she, all of us, who are now alive, have the right to live, and most important of all, to live decently, not to jump on one another's throats or to ride roughshod over one another, because there is enough room for all of us, just as there was a thousand years ago and ten thousand years ago. Yes, Perrin, precisely that which you said and which I said about Nick, that balance of life, balance between people, between people and nature, isn't that true?

You look at me with those big eyes, which have kept the shine of childhood, the shine of those steps we took in the sand, you look at me and ask, and neither you nor I know the true answer, or we only know a small part of the answer.

I'm imagining you drinking in today the colour of the sea, how you are stepping on the stones of my second childhood, (because I arrived in Hvar when I was eight), to sniff the salt air, and with your fingers to disturb the rainbows in the little cove you find before you. Isn't it wonderful, that small world, Perrin? And we went off into a big excursion through destiny, not finding the small places where there is harmony, where everything co-exists in the best possible way. The tooth-fish eats, dear Perrin, when it is hungry, and we do not eat when we are hungry. We just grab when we can, without any momentary need. If gold showed itself before us, we would consume it, and then, what then?

Let me for a moment admire the flight of insects spinning around my table lamp. What are they seeking, what do they find in that lamp, when their wings are more perfect than that colour, that glass, that light? How many fluttering wings, how many take-offs, how many rebounds, what speed, what twists and turns in the air! What are you looking for in this fake world, in the circle of things? You are curious, simply curious, and you don't know that your wings can be burned in that light!

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Dear Perrin, child Perrin, how was it at that time?

You write that you won't have time to come to my present whereabouts, where I have to earn a living to survive tomorrow. You write that you were delighted with our sea, that the islands enchanted you, that you can't explain how you feel, that you will sacrifice two or three more days of your journey, you want to lap up the beauty at its source, because that is where your parents lived, your grandfathers and grandmothers, you felt your roots there, something is planted deeply there, and it's yours, you feel that like a dream and like reality, like the far-away past, and the present and the future, you feel something drawing it all into eternity, lasting over all boundaries! How did you come to that?

I have nothing to blame you for!

I know it's hard for you, because right now when I read your letter for the second time, I see how you are packing things up, how your husband lifts the door on the back of your hired car in London, how you put your memories in those suitcases, how it will remind you for a long, long time of your roots.

You're going to London. You're going by sea through the Suez Canal, Port Said, you're going the way I came. Our paths cross now, I am here, you there, my father here and there, Tony there, Kathy and Nick there, how much of it is twisted and untwisted, how many paths and pathways and there you are, connecting the shores of continents, you come to Perth, you say hello to Mother.

You say: Mama, how wonderful it was, how wonderful it was! You can't imagine, Mama, such beauty! Those islands, the sunsets, the serenity, the vibrating colours, the reflections, the rainbows...dear Thomas,

there are no ends to the rainbows there, there aren't, they are there, they are inside you, they are a part of you, you are with them and cooing to them, loving them, dear Thomas....

And then you sit at the table and write to me and send me a piece of newspaper, telling me about the man who came to the end of the rainbow. But.....

I left the letter on the table. I couldn't read it again, I was too sad, and too happy. Tony, Tony, I said, you are alive, you are alive, you are in Kalgoorlie, you are near Boulder. Tony, you are close by now. Is that possible, is it really possible?

The impossible has become possible.

The heading in The Kalgoorlie Miner, the same Miner they used always to talk about in my childhood, which carried the echoes of life on the Golden Mile, stated:

The Prospector is more worried about his mine than his broken leg.

The subheading said: Almost buried under the earth – four days in the Juardi Hills.

In spite of enormous experience – was written in the section underneath – the veteran prospector was almost buried alive, with a broken leg and unable to move for four days; yesterday showing much more concern about his future mine than for his wound which brought him to the Kalgoorlie District Hospital. The man with the broken leg considers that of less importance than the chance of using in his mine the so-called diamond drilling, which the government would ensure. This man, Tony C. with his partner Ted Payne was at a depth of about 25 metres in his mine in Juardi Hills, 24 miles north of Coolgardie, when the earth buried him after a fall last Tuesday night.

--When I was taking measurements to put in a wooden construction, the earth fell on me – he said yesterday.

--I slipped nearly a metre under the support and about two tons of earth covered me up to my head. It took Ted three hours to pull me out. I felt too weak and exhausted that night to get to the surface, so Ted brought me a blanket and I stayed there until the next day.

With Ted's help, Tony needed almost an hour to climb the wooden steps about 25 metres to the surface. Payne was not skilled in driving the car belonging to his friend, but he tried on Thursday to transport him to Kalgoorlie.

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--I was in so much pain we had to come back after about a mile. I thought we wouldn't make it, because the vehicle hit something and the radiator began to leak. On Saturday, two days later, Payne proceeded on foot to Kurrawanga to bring me back some help. He left at 8 o'clock in the morning, and walked 20 miles in five hours. At two in the afternoon a St John ambulance arrived from the hospital at the prospector's camp and took him towards Kalgoorlie.

--The accident happened at a very awkward time – Tony told us. – We were working on the layer which went parallel to the old Pride of Jaurdi Mine and what we found confirmed that we could hope for success. We didn't hit anything less than half an ounce of gold. I estimate that there are at least five parallel layers there, and I can prove it. We hoped the government would go into the work and that it would use the so-called diamond drilling method, so we wanted to provide the best possible proof. I believe something very valuable exists there.

An x-ray showed that Tony C. had an old fracture on his leg. He said: -- Something similar happened to me about three months ago. I was limping for some time but it got better by itself.

How that piece of paper delighted me, and at the same time, sent me back to the routine I had left, long, long ago. Suddenly it was as though a piece of me had appeared from the dark, because Tony, although in my mother's memory he carried those painful echoes, in me there was suddenly a feeling of the same blood flowing in my veins, tying us together. Father's being was flowing through our veins and arteries. We came

from the same parents, and of course, I began to tremble, excited to find this trace of another part of my own life which I had not seen, or heard, but in some other way I had felt, like a part of me.

The arrival of my dear Perrin opened up, not long ago, strangely, a side of memory which together we had begun to explore. Step by step we went into its course, and after that started to list through other pages. And now, when I was thinking I had nothing further to seek, that the picture was perhaps complete with that which we had had at our disposition, which we had been able to perceive within the boundaries we had before us, all at once a whole new chapter of life had opened, which had remained somewhere suppressed, locked away, like a secret, since birth, together with that little bit that Tony had in 1927 told Perrin, but which had not explained very much.

I read and read again that report from The Kalgoorlie Miner, a paper my father had bought from time to time, a paper which had noted many happenings in Kalgoorlie and Boulder, which was a sort of witness of life, although often one-sided, it captured every little thing. I just could not believe that Tony had returned to that job which he had, a full forty years ago, carried out with that company in the bush and in the desert towards Norseman. That meant he had returned to the beginning, that he had experienced many things in between those two extremes. I asked myself what, apart from Mandiga and the mystery encounter of the brothers whose farms had at one time been next to one another, had happened immediately after his escape, until he was buried in his own mine.

I said – forty years. Yes, forty years indeed, and that's how old I was that moment when the letter arrived! I wasn't even born when all trace of him had disappeared, except for that small trace his sister had, which had served more to open new questions than to give answers about that span of forty years.

I read and re-read The Kalgoorlie Miner and I couldn't believe that man was Tony, my half-brother, suddenly appearing after decades of anonymity, with all those unknown courses of a life, which had begun violently and brought about the separation between son, father, half-brother, step-mother, and sister too. Was this newspaper clipping a sign that the lost connection would continue? Was this piece of paper the omen trying to connect us, who had been separated for so long, so that we could uncover in those close to us that flicker of life filling us with happiness that we exist, that we are included in that good course of destiny which was meant for us?

Forty years.....

It's assumed, with full responsibility towards self and others!

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That is, is it not, the period dividing Tony from those mad and irresponsible days and years of youth, when he is able to distinguish good from bad, worthless from worthwhile, beautiful from ugly, useful from useless. That period can make it hard to recognise a man if he earlier did stupid things.

Those forty years of his were indeed buried for me just as mine were for him. They were actually an integral part of his life in and around Boulder, which I, because of happenstance, could not have any memory of and which were missing from the mosaic I had somehow already shaped. Yes, there was an insight into the fate of my half-sister Kathy and her children, which my dear Perrin had provided. However, in that picture Tony did not appear, the lost son – Tony, with the greater and maybe the most interesting part of his life. That son, to be sure, no longer had a father to whom he could return, but he had relatives, who missed him, some maybe more, some maybe less.

That news, given in the language which I had used for quite a long time, simply provoked in me the greatest excitement. It confirmed once more, definitely now, the decision made several months ago, when Perrin was here, that one day I had to raise anchor and set off to search for my half-brother, because more and more I felt that my life would be empty if I did not. The question would remain to remind me constantly that I had not done my duty. Of course, there was also much curiosity involved, which is normal, but there was something else, something deeper, which drove me to try everything, so that I could put together the truncated record of the family we all carry, and which does not always have to be written down on paper. It

was obvious that my comrade in the newspaper report from The Kalgoorlie Miner had sought in Tony's case the spectacular side of events, to interest the newspaper and people who bought it. He, which was understandable, did not go far from "interesting" details for the everyday consumption of small-town people, who lying on their couches or deck chairs after lunch or dinner take a small dose of blown-up reality to put them little by little to sleep.

I tried to get to the bottom of that happening. News of the prospector who preferred to talk about his mine rather than his broken leg was not special news. It was like much other news to be found every day in the papers or on the radio, something to read and then throw away, or listen to and then forget, never to listen to or to read again even in the continuation which could be much more tragic than the event itself which the curious reporter had narrated to us.

From what I could deduce between the lines, that was an anguished cry from a man who was within reach of some sort of salvation, because he didn't just spell out these words. In this report, through this piece of paper, he is calling for help, isn't he? I could feel this cry, and you, dear readers? Please excuse me, if you think I'm exaggerating, because you don't necessarily know enough sounds, those special sounds that only a person who is intimate can know, even if there is a span of forty years and distant spaces, as far as half a world away, dividing us; because I am on the other side of the planet, if you try to measure it.

Together with the newspaper extract there was also a letter written to me by my dear Perrin. It was very short. In it she actually repeated what her mother had said. "I think that Cosmas won't get an answer if he writes a letter to the Kalgoorlie District Hospital. Tony's character is such that he won't even blink!"

--No, you're wrong, Kathy, to say that! -- I said out loud. You're wrong!

I knew how I would start the letter, and that was especially important. I knew that Tony would focus on the first words and that he would be remembering them while he read the rest of the text, and that in the end something would force him to take a pen and to write down on paper a part of his life. I simply felt his need to do that, even if I didn't mention some of his forgotten duties. I said -- duties, and, I think, I was right. They were not duties in the meaning of the word that I sought for him to complete them, but duties he had to carry out for himself. Forty years had passed since the time he left on his lost travels, forty years had passed since his brother was born, blood to blood was there, a connection which had never been made, which after all these years, when this was possible, had to be made because it was impossible for it not to be.

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Maybe I am wrong, maybe I am wrong! Who knows what human nature is like, who knows what circumstances can make of a man, who knows what he can make of himself!

And I began to write my first letter to my older brother, who had never taken my hand, who had never kissed me, carried me, bought me lollies, given me a kite or a Japanese cracker, taken me to the circus or to the movies, who had never stroked my hair or forced me to listen with a stick, when I didn't want to.

I wrote:

Dear Tony, circumstances led us in different directions and now, I'm getting in touch after forty years with my brother, who has never seen me and who I have never seen. Your and my niece Perrin sent me an extract from The Kalgoorlie Miner, which told me that you had an accident. It was hard for me to read that, especially since it was the first news I had heard after so many decades.

I don't know what to tell you about me. There is a lot I should say, and certainly there is a lot more that you could tell me. So, here we are now, several thousand miles apart from one another, each on his own life path, where we have found ourselves, but closer just the same due to something we brought from the beginning. We are brothers, I the little one, new-born, you the big one, a full twenty years older than I. You are experienced, I am of a mature age after many shocks, both before and after the war, which were raging in my country and in me myself too. I was.....

And in this way, my history was lined up before him. I gave him small facts about life, which could not be written easily on that paper, which I'm touching now, and which he, in his sick-bed, with a broken leg, but maybe more, a broken life, will read.

....Dear brother, I don't know if you will answer me, but I believe that there are today no obstacles to stop us getting in touch. Our two worlds have met. We are both adults and can communicate all sorts of things to one another. We can even make plans to finally meet. My home is open to you. You will always be welcomed here as a brother. My mother is still alive, though very old. She lives in peace, on the island of Hvar. I believe she would be very pleased to meet you....

That's how the first letter went. Written to Kalgoorlie District Hospital, to Tony C. And that hospital, or "oshpidol" as my mother pronounced it, was in Maritana Street, only four blocks of buildings away from Hannan Street, and on the corner of Maritana and Hannan was the well-known Palace Hotel, where Tony's trail had been lost, where he had been seen for the last time with Frau Else in the Palace bar.

In this way Tony had made a kind of circle. What however existed in that circle, besides the meeting between him and Nick in Mandiga, on the farm, and then the meeting of the brothers with their sister, which Perrin had talked about, and which explained nothing, because it too was wrapped in some sort of secret? There was actually a white sheet, on which I now, little by little, had to draw a lot of scrawls, which at this distance was not at all easy. However, a person who takes on a job, even though blind, must if he is persistent, get to the end and achieve, if it can't be any different, a small, limited goal. I set out on that uncertain path, and if my partner, that is, my half brother, wants to correspond with me, the task will of course be easier.

I waited for twenty days, not expecting a miracle to occur. But it arrived and it was indeed a miracle. I received a letter from Kalgoorlie, with a sticker saying "By Air Mail" and a two shilling stamp showing a crocodile, and on which was Aboriginal art. My address was very easy to read, I'd even go so far as to say it was written in ornate handwriting. I trembled and quickly opened it from the side.

At the top was written: Kalgoorlie District Hospital

April, 25th 1959

Dear Cosmas....

It was Tony, my lost brother. A part of his destiny had now come to me. This was his first message after forty years, the first sparks of love sent across the far-away sea, the first echoes of words I was reading, but without his voice, because I had never heard it, just as I had never seen his handwriting. But now it was there, in front of me.

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Dragi Kuzma,

I received your welcome letter a few days ago and it was very nice for me to hear how, after so many experiences, you succeeded in doing something worthwhile with your life. I am happy to hear you have a family and that your mother is alive at such a great age. I can never forget my mother, and when I think about her, I see before me the image of the woman who for me, represented the world. I sincerely regret not having known you all before, but, as you have written, circumstances were such that it was hard to control them. Indeed, I could write a thick book about all that happened to me. I could frankly be called a mystery man, that's what I am, you couldn't say that for even half a dozen Australian citizens. There are few who know my real identity. Even the government doesn't know. Maybe you will understand why I kept to the side. With the money and property I had for a time, I should have been a big millionaire. But money went through my hands like water. First I owned fields for the raising of cattle, around 7000 acres, which were clean, beautiful, well fenced. Today they would be worth 70.000 pounds. I also owned 400 acres on Scarborough beach near Perth, and today only a quarter of an acre is worth a thousand pounds. When I was young, I was passionate about horse races and dog races. I myself competed. I was the owner of purebred dogs and horses. I was also a bookmaker. I owned a good gold mine which I sold when the Second World War broke out. I also had another mine which was under

option for 40.000 pounds. The Second World War stopped me from getting that money, because the government didn't allow any sort of speculation above 10.000 pounds while the war lasted.

I could tell you a lot about all sorts of big speculations I made while things were going well for me. Some succeeded, and some, that promised wealth, didn't deliver it, simply because I wasn't lucky. I was a gambler, very reckless. Now I have a mine which seems promising. I think it's just the thing people would want, if the government were to help open it with so-called diamond drilling. I thought I had already done some of the work, and then this accident happened when I broke my leg. I've been in hospital for seven months already, and that has put me back several years. Today it's very hard to do anything even with a good mine. If I had found it several years ago, I would have been covered with awards and recognitions. Today people have turned their interest towards oil.

I've just started to walk a little, and I think I shall return to work in a month.

So, dear Cosmas, I have told you a little about my past. I was married and then divorced. I have a son who is now about 25 years old. He just got married. He works as a manager for the warehouse on a wheat farm. He wrote to me a few days ago to tell me he will soon have a child. He knows nothing about me or my family. Maybe that sounds very strange. But how things happened, it's how it had to be. I shall be very pleased to get another letter from you. My address is: T. C., Coolgardie, W.A. With many good wishes to you and your family and many kind regards to your mother, your brother

Tony C.

What could one think about such a letter, in very correct English? After the first shock, I began to analyse the style and content of those lines. I studied every sentence, looking for some sort of hidden meaning, that which Tony had not said. And he had said a lot, with a good dose of sincerity, criticism, and what is rather seldom seen these days, with a lot of self criticism. He said openly that he was a gambler and speculator, that money had flowed through his fingers like water. Therefore, my family had been on the right track with their evaluation of his character, but, it seems to me, a little harsh, a little exclusive towards the man who was seeking for something, but always repeatedly came across something opposite to his aspirations. Wealth, wealth – that was, to be sure, the leitmotif of his life, as could be seen from the letter, but was that the important thing? If it had truly been wealth, then he, when he owned those several hundred thousand pounds, in money or in property, would have stopped and thought hard what he would do with it all? He had the bird in his hand, and what more did he need?

The question is very slippery, if you look at it only from one side, that is, enrichment, and for him that was not the basic thing. Passion, it seemed, was what consumed him, a passion to overturn money, for it to slip

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like water in his hands. Have I said enough? It seems to me that I have not. Within those letters, within those words, I tried to uncover a human being. I had realised a part of the truth, but I could not take hold of the whole truth, because a lot more had to be explained. For example, why was he hiding, why was he running away from his identity, why did he not tell his son and probably his wife (his ex-wife), who he was. There had to be a deeper reason, which is just an assumption, because judging by what was known about him in the days before the end of the Second World War, you could conclude that he had been involved in jobs that were not worthy of him. But still, in spite of his sister's assessment, stating in no uncertain terms that he would not communicate, Tony had written, straight away as soon as he received a letter from me. In addition, at the end of the letter he had said he would like to correspond further. Was that some sort of premonition of the end, so that the obligation, the duty from those far-off days, had to be fulfilled, or was it simply an expression of repentance because he had been silent for so long with his half brother, not knowing even if he was still alive when he could, if he had wanted to, have got that information. If in his decision to reply to my letter there was hidden a different explanation, it would have to show itself sooner or later. Of course, it was clear to me that a man who had had nothing to do with me for forty years nevertheless today wanted to maintain the connection, now when for the first time there was an opportunity to do so. The fact was that after forty years

Tony had responded, that in front of me was a mine I could exploit, that that mine was richer than many of those I had dug in the past; that horse-races and dog-races, fields and horses, huts and scaffolding, gold and drilling, were less important (for me, and probably for him too) than our communion that we were establishing...

I didn't want to rush with assumptions and comments, which would be on shaky foundations. That unfortunate truth could show its duplicity. I could say: he is such and such a man, and shut the book, but was that the meaning of the search, was that the goal towards which we were striving, was that human cognition?

I had to take the second step, because the second step was sought from me. I let the emotions settle, I calmed down from the first impressions, left some time to do my own things, and then after ten days I wrote the second letter.

Dear Tony,

I have to say at once that I was surprised by how fast you answered, and that your letter very much excited me and also made me happy. I wrote to my mother in Hvar straight away, telling her everything about you. I believe she will with pleasure read all the news I got from you. Really, it must have been a heavy fall that you had in the mine and I can imagine how you are feeling....

That's how I began those lines. And then I told Tony some details of early childhood, from Father's death until arrival from Australia, Nick's death in the sanatorium, our boat trip from Austerley to Naples, childhood on the island of Hvar, secondary school, college, the war, renewal and so on. I wrote in detail about life, crises, hardships, dilemmas, about the terrible and bloody clash that had happened, darkness and light, slavery and freedom, mountains and sea in flames, blood and victims, pride and victory. I told the simple story of every one of us. And then I asked him to tell me more about himself. But still, as much as possible, it would be best, as soon as possible, for him to come here, because for now, I could not go there – so that we could meet. There was room in my house. And that was not so important, as much as the fact, that we had found one another. Everything else was, actually, secondary.

I wrote and wrote. I don't even know how much there was in that letter, but it at once triggered another letter, a rather long letter, because it consisted of two parts. The first part was a personal letter, the second part a text under the title: The day the Prince of Wales was at the races in Perth. First I shall quote the personal letter:

Dear Cosmas,

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I received your second letter. It was a huge discovery for me. I read it with enormous interest, I read about your life, about difficulties, about resistance, about hard paths and narrow passes. It seems to me that in the end, you won the battle. It looks like we have found ourselves on the same pathway, but that we behaved differently from early childhood. I remember so well for instance, my arrival in Split. Between my twelfth and fourteenth years. First I was a doorman, and then an official in the Croatian Reading Room in Split, where I welcomed the Prime Minister of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and members of parliament, when they came to visit. Then, during my stay in Split, my mother died. It was hard for me, not to mention the days before I went to Split. And when we came here, that was another story. I went to school, but what impressed me the most was the possibility of communicating with people. They called me a stranger; they said: you are a foreigner, you are an "othersider", a Slav. It all forced me to learn English properly. And when I had mastered it, I thought it best to change my nationality, so I became an Australian Irishman. Of course, I changed my surname too. No-one, therefore, except maybe a very small number of individuals, knows who I am or what I am.

But, something has come up that makes my life a little uncomfortable. The accident that happened to me has changed the course of my life. Unfortunately, my leg is not alright, although I do feel some

improvement. The doctor said I must not do any work for a few months. What's worse, I can't do anything with the mine. If I am not there, I can't supervise the work. Maybe I'll succeed in starting something, after these terrible nine months. I know, and I have a lot of experience, that I have a gold mine which I need to begin to exploit, that all the signs are good, but unfortunately – of what use is that when I can't be there in person, and to depend on others is to no purpose.

I think I shall need my birth certificate, because....I must thank you for your kind offer for me to be your guest if I come to the old country, but Cosmas, that would be a luxury for me now, which I could not accomplish until my luck turns which needs to be very quickly. I am very sorry I have no photo with me, I'll send you one another time, when I write again. Thanks for your photos. You remind me of an editor who could write my life story. I am enclosing here my description of a true happening, which would be worth printing in some magazine. It's something that happened to do with the racecourse, which changed the course of my life. Maybe it will be hard for you to follow this story if you are not familiar with horse races and betting. My plan was to become rich on account of so-called big differences in stakes, keeping things secret. I should have made a hundred pounds for every pound invested. I won the race, because my horse did indeed win, but the winnings were not given to me, but to others. That happened forty years ago when the Prince of Wales was at the races. Of course, that was not the Prince's fault. While he was in Perth, he was given the horse called Wonerup Laddie to ride and to exercise, and that horse was pronounced first at the race in question, even though mine won by a head and neck. The next day The Sunday Times wrote that there had been a strange controversy during the last race and that everyone had thought my horse had won. In the text I am enclosing, you can read about it in detail. Many warm regards to your wife, children and mother, and to you best wishes from your brother

Tony.

Text "When the Prince of Wales was at the horse races in Perth" reads:

When I was a young man, I went to a farm at the place called Mandiga, and my partner was the older brother of Doctor Basil Hallion. Even though work on the farm was going very well, I was passionate about horse races. I made a racetrack on the farm and bought three horses. At the same time a young man, named George Geneff, came to visit us and offered to train and ride my horses. I learnt that he had come from the biggest horse stables, of Paddy Connolly. They had told him there that he had become too heavy to ride horses. But for me George was welcome, exactly what I needed. We began to ride at nearby racetracks and every race was ours, and as I was a passionate bettor, we earned quite a lot of money. One of the three horses stood out especially, and Geneff said it could even win at the Hunters Cup in Perth. He claimed to be a qualified

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jockey for such a race. Even though he was heavier, Geneff was indeed an excellent jockey. He also told me that his brother owned 400 acres of land on the Scarborough beach and that he had a private racetrack on his property. As I listened to his extraordinary suggestions, I was simply thrilled and I talked my partner into selling everything, which we did very quickly, because the government was buying farms for the soldiers returning from the First World War. We got good money for the property.

So I had a good horse, a good trainer and jockey and I decided to go and consolidate an already good position. I bought from George's brother half of the property of 400 acres with a private racecourse. With that big estate we had all we needed to get as well a good price for our horse. We swore we would tell no-one the secret. We appointed Geneff, who weighed 9 stone 7 pounds, which was excellent, and qualified our horse, we just needed to find a light saddle. The horse was extraordinary and we put everything into place to get a big return. At that time bookmakers had no limitation. Together with Wonerup Laddie, which was ridden by the Prince of Wales and on which he exercised, our unknown horse, which no-one had even seen, entered the race, we were certain big sums of money would be involved, which of course was in our favour. I decided to put two hundred pounds on the horse, in two different combinations, that is, to play to win - first place and so-called place in the race. I hired a horse and began from Fremantle to the suburbs of Perth to invest two pounds (one

for first place, the second for a place in the race) in all the bookmakers', and so I arrived at the racetrack. There was still time and I asked Geneff if he could without my help manage the horse until the race. Since he said he could do that until I brought a light saddle (and I had ordered one from the well-known trainer Tom Stratton), I went to try out the market and at the same time decided to buy Tote tickets at Ledfer's.

There were twenty horses in the race. I calculated it would be a record dividend if my horse won. So, it followed that I could for every pound invested win another hundred, if I succeeded. I hurried back with the light saddle in my arms and was very surprised to see that the horses were already on the track, and my horse, of course, had ten extra pounds on his back. I nearly fainted. The race had begun, and as my horse was not used to the start barrier, he jumped back so that he was a few lengths behind. However, when the horses reached the ledger, my horse was ten lengths in front. It looked like no other could reach him. But those ten extra pounds on his back, due to my own carelessness, began to weigh on him. He fought extremely well and he was first at the finish line. Everyone was saying I had won. People came to congratulate me, among them the old trainer Mr. Thomas. We waited and waited for the results. It had never taken so long. And then there was a complete surprise and consternation. The Prince's horse was proclaimed the winner.

Much was said about this in Perth at that time. I took the train to Fremantle and in the carriage I heard people commenting on that strange happening. A provincial horse, called Mandiga, had won by half a length, they said, and tears were running down my face. The Sunday Times featured an article the next day about the race, emphasising how there was a surprise at the racetrack and how everyone had thought the horse called Mandiga had won. But they gave the race to Wonerup Laddie.

That, of course, changed my life. Immediately I got rid of the property on Scarborough beach, which today is worth millions. Again there had been bad luck, which has cost me dearly.

P.S. Dear Cosmas, I'd like to explain to you that for the first time in my life I started to work on my own farm. After this race I again took up work on the farm. It went well until the Depression, which hit us hard.

To establish some sort of logical sequence: From what I had succeeded in finding out and getting to know from what my mother had told me, the words of my dear Perrin and my own life experience, it seemed to me that in Tony's behaviour there was some legitimacy. The world around him was such that Tony could not escape that unfortunate aspiration towards affirmation at any cost. Just like his horses he too had been running a race which he had to win before someone else. If he did not do so, all went downhill and he had to start again.

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True, I did not understand much about horse races, so that my translation, although conscientious could not describe the true state of affairs. Therefore I used the encyclopaedia (I had the "American" available) and found the following about horse races so that I could explain to myself and others what it was about.

Horse races could not be held if there was no betting. That stimulates the owners to constantly breed and improve their horses. There are few spectators who come to the track only to watch the race itself, and a big number of those who only come because of making a bet. Betting on the racetrack is legal in many countries, however, and this is the case with England, so-called off-course betting is permitted too, which is done through bookmakers, or "bookies". Bookmakers sometimes secretly operate in unlawful places, in caf  -bars, bars and clubs, and this sort of "business" is classified as trafficking and speculation.

A bettor can bet on a horse to win, or to place, the place it may take, that is, to be first or second place or a general performance, a "show", that is, first, second, third and so on. If a person bets successively, the amount won depends on different factors. Generally, the bettor has the best chance of winning if he bets on a horse to come first, and progressively less if he bets on the place a horse can come or on the show, because his chances are greater if he bets on the horse that comes first, that is on the horse that wins the race. If a large number of people bet on the horse, which has prospects of coming first, the whole sum of money with which

they compete is divided amongst them if that horse wins, so that accordingly, they get a lesser sum. On the other hand, if a bettor puts money on a horse (long shot), on which not many people have bet, and that horse wins the race, the bettor gets a much larger sum.

One more thing has to be kept in mind. All the money gathered at bookmakers' is not returned to the bookmakers as winnings. A percentage goes to the racetrack, for those who upkeep it, and for government tax. We can presume that is ten percent of money earned and for example, 100.000 dollars have been collected. That means that 90.000 is left for the bettors, which of course, is divided among those who bet on the horse which won, the horse which takes the place foreseen by the bettors that it will take (that is, first or second place) or places taken by horses in the race (show). Some bettors, of course, will get their share and also the share to be divided among many who chose the right horse. He who bet the most money on the right horse will of course get the most money. He who constantly picks the winning horse, that is, he who correctly assesses the value of an individual horse, can hope for increased reward. That value is relative. Horses are not always consistent. Big money is put on those that are, that is, on the favourite, but therefore during the distribution, a smaller sum is shared out. The bettors can also be cheated. Dishonest jockeys who are working with the bookmakers, place setting and other unscrupulous actions are not rare occurrences at the races.

That, I think, is all that is needed in order to understand the procedure itself. It is, as far as I could learn, much more complicated than this description.

Betting becomes a kind of passion. It is a game of chance, I would say, the worst sort of game, which simply blinds a man. The gamble of believing something possible when it's impossible, against all odds -- or vice versa, impossible when it's possible, comes into play in this game of chance. That opium is worst of all. When a man succumbs to it, he becomes something that is led, controlled, without being aware of it himself. It seems to me that Tony was a victim of this sort of passion, but at the same time it would be too simplified to state that this passion was what had spoilt his life.

I was not really satisfied with the answers I had found in his letters, although I tried as hard as I could to get beneath the surface into the depths. It seemed to me that all his words, written in fine calligraphy as they were, hid something much deeper, into which I could not easily go. Maybe Tony was afraid to label some things more precisely either because his letters might fall into the wrong hands and he could be discovered, or else because it was hard for him to describe some conditions that had influenced his behaviour, and which I maybe would not understand or would interpret wrongly. From the letters and his additions it was of course possible to sense that his life had been rich and varied and that apart from the horse races, racecourse, betting, divorce, search for gold, broken leg and attempt to find a way out, there was a lot more that could explain his character.

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More and more I was haunted by the image of Mister Claude de Bernales, who was called Mister London in Australia, and Mister Australia in London. In some ways he matched Tony's personality. He was a big player, who played with shares and companies, who was a big mines promoter, obtained money from London, bought old mines and old machinery, issued non-liability shares, gambled in all possible ways on the London share market and the horse races, to build his golden empire of about 5 million pounds sterling and continually rose and fell, driving the shareholders and managers crazy, and especially the prospectors, who because of his operations could not access the acres needed for prospecting because he had bought them all, trying to impress his London colleagues. One of my acquaintances, an emigrant, who had returned from Boulder not long ago, told me how de Bernales had met him in front of the Palace Hotel in Kalgoorlie and asked him for a cigarette. He didn't have a penny in his pocket! – he said, telling me this bit of history about a man so overcome by the gambling passion that he had caused detectives from Scotland Yard to enquire about his embezzlements in Kalgoorlie, because the shareholders had rebelled against his transactions. De Bernales came to grief in this way, the money from the shares perished in the pockets of other "big bears". And who would ever search to find who on that stage remained in debt to whom or who took millions from whom in moments of carelessness or weakness?

I said: Tony in some ways matched But certainly in a lesser way than the man, whose fate my acquaintance had described to me in an accidental conversation, at least as far as one could see from the numbers he had put at my disposal in the letters about the extent of his capital, the mines, racetracks, options and other things. But that the same type of passion had taken over both of them except that one was a privileged scion of Uppingham in England and Heidelberg in Germany, and proud also of his French-Basque nobility, while the other was the son of an ordinary fisherman, labourer and by the power of God a true migrant-miner who earned the miners' complaint in the Horseshoe, Perseverance and Ivanhoe mines in Boulder – that was just as obvious as my passion to bring all this between the margins of these pages. My half-brother certainly had not worn a monocle, and neither was he dressed and perfumed in the latest fashion for men in London and Paris, but he too would certainly have reached the fascinating lobbies of the houses with arcades in Perth, which were fashionably christened with the names of residences in Europe, if only he had been just a little more skilled and as he says himself, luckier. But however much the difference in the intensity of the passion is the same, on the other hand it is obvious that Tony's feat, if he had succeeded, would have been bigger than the feat of Mister de Bernales, because his prerequisites for success were in the beginning nothing at all, while de Bernales' were much more solid.

But let's leave these comparative terrains, because it is too early for them to be taken into account as eligible. Both partners are still alive and their fates are uncertain.

Is that the simple explanation: a man began to gamble and....that was it; as it seemed to some, that was quite enough, because people like that always existed and always will. However, it is obvious that each gambler has his own variety of play, and behind these varieties lie myriad circumstances coming into play.

Three questions interested me the most after reading these letters: Tony's son, his divorced wife and the way of life he was living now with that broken leg in a house in Coolgardie, that well-known place from whence the famous prospector Arthur Bailey in the nineties of the last century began his passionate gold-rush and where in due time another member of our family, Perrin's brother Thomas, also prospected for gold. That Coolgardie occurs to me as a very interesting point in my brother's travels, because it is, as Thomas said to his sister, a town of ghosts. Why did my half-brother choose a town like that to live in, why did he not seek refuge with his son, on the farm where he was working, where was that farm and what was the name of his son; Tony did not reveal this in his letters; why did he still hope in his later years for a turn-around in life with the digging of gold in Juardi Hills?

There are many of these "whys"! And why, in the end, did he mention the birth certificate?

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The month of August had arrived. After Tony's letters I went to Hvar, to my mother's, for a holiday. It had been a hard year, and I relaxed, not thinking about anything at all. I would take a small boat, put my "Tomos" motor at the stern and go fishing around the island. Sometimes thoughts of Tony would pursue me. What should I do about his birth certificate? And then one day I met his first cousin, his mother's sister's son, with whom Kathy communicated from time to time. I learnt that she too had asked him about Tony's birth certificate. He said, to my great satisfaction, that he had received it from Vis and would send it. It was as though a weight had fallen from my shoulders. So, everything was alright, I thought. Returning from the holiday, I hurried to write Tony a letter:

Dear Tony,

I have come back from Hvar, where I was on holiday, and I can tell you I had a great time, because after a month's summer holiday I feel again capable of taking on new work. I went sailing, I rowed, I went swimming. Maybe I told you in my previous letter that I have a little house there, where my mother lives, who is over 80 years old but who practically does not feel the burden of old age. It's strange how much happened to Tereza in her life, she was in Australia, she suffered after coming back here, lived in Hvar, then in Split, then again in Hvar, supported me at the university, went to El Shatt during the war and today says that her legs are a bit

painful when she goes up our steps. Truly, I admire her! I met your cousin one day and asked him about the birth certificate. He said he had received it and was sending it to his sister.

I hope your leg is now okay and that you have gone back to your old work. I really admire your persistence. You don't know how to rest, you always have to be doing something. I can confirm that as far as that goes, you are not very different from your brother, who also cannot sit and do nothing, but is always constantly inventing something. As well as my usual work, now I have taken up photography, and wish to perfect that craft. Clearly, that all fills up my life and makes me happy.....

Further on in the letter I stated that I would like to get some books about Australia, especially books about mining, about searching for gold. I told him I knew about some books by Ian L. Idriess to do with the Goldfields, and that I have some stories by Henry Lawson. I sent the letter and waited for an answer.

And then I received a letter from my half-sister Kathy, in which she told me she too had got in contact with Tony. In her letter she sent me Tony's letter to her. But my sister's letter had not come by air mail, but by regular mail, and it travelled for more than a month. I read Tony's letter twice and concluded that it had been written later than the letter he had sent to me, and that that letter had some requests which I could fulfil. The letter said:

Dear Kathy,

I just received your letter and I was very sorry to hear that you had been in bed with the flu, which is very unpleasant. I truly hope you are better now. I have to tell you that I am constantly under doctor's supervision. I limp around without a stick, but to tell the truth, it's terrible. I can only move my knee six inches and I'm afraid that's how it will remain, even though they told me differently. I can only cry. I simply can't do anything and it will be a long time before it gets any better. It's stopped me from my work and especially in the mine which has shown all the signs of being worth exploiting. I'll have to find someone to take over my work. In that case they will give me a percentage which won't be enough for me to live on. If I'm lucky, I could get a good partnership, but I'm afraid. It isn't the same as when a man works alone. This situation has actually forced me to ask you to find my birth certificate for me. If I get it, I'm not sure I will get the pension. It never occurred to me that I would need it. I never sought nor got British citizenship, and I don't know if Father did. Please tell me, if you know, was Father naturalized. And then if I know he was, I don't know what I would do. I don't know one Yugoslav word. Did you need to be naturalized, to get the pension? In the meantime I would ask you to tell me everything. I'll do what I can here. I'm trying to sort things out regarding the mine. Since I don't feel well, I'll have to put off for some time my journey to Perth, so I'm asking you to send me the birth certificate as soon as you can, because I need to try to do something.

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I received again from Cosmas a wonderful letter and I am simply ashamed that my circumstances are not better so that I could do something for him because he, maybe, expects that from me. There is no doubt, it seems, that he is living on the top of the world. Things will get better for me in a month or two, I believe, if my leg gets better. I wish you all the best. My kind regards to all at home

Your loving brother
Tony C.

In her letter Kathy added that Tony seemed very troubled, but that she hoped that one day we would all meet, and she herself, after a visit to her daughter Perrin, wanted to see her country once, where she had been born and had grown up.

Things had become complicated. I was cross with Kathy for not sending this letter by air mail. I would have got it while I was on holiday and tried at once to do something. Father's Naturalisation card, that is, confirmation that he had become a British citizen in 1922, which he had sought after Mister Giacometti's persuasion, was at my mother's place, in a drawer, together with umpteen other papers, which she had carefully put away, and I could have sent that certificate to Tony straight away. I could see from the letter that

he was seizing upon the birth certificate and the other certificate like a drowning man clutching a straw, so I was ready to ask my mother to urgently send Tony the Naturalisation card, because it was not necessary for us at all and meant nothing much except that it was a long ago memory of Boulder and Australia.

The postman knocked on our door one of those days saying:

--Does Cosmas K live here?

First I was surprised by that question and then I saw in his hand an air mail envelope with Tony's address, and that envelope was open and on it was stuck a note. I did not at first understand what it was all about.

--So you are Cosmas, said the postman, looking at me a bit uncertainly.

--Yes, I'm Kuzma, I answered, but in English I sign as Cosmas, in letters I send to relatives from overseas.

--Aha – the postman looked at me and then held the letter out to me.

--Yes, that's my writing, I told him, that's a letter to my half-brother in Australia, but why has it come back?

--Probably they didn't find him! – the postman cut me off.

I looked at the envelope with the note on which was written: Opened by Commission by direction of the PTT, because my address was not on the back. I had not, because of Tony, wanted to put it there, however they had found it in the letter and printed: Cosmas K., in red, and with the sign of the street. Underneath was the note: Retour to B. and something written in the postman's handwriting in Coolgardie, which I read as: Deserved DLO, and I could not decipher what that meant, at all.

It simply was not clear to me why the letter had come back, because it was addressed properly, like my earlier letters. My handwriting was readable, there could be no mistake. Maybe something had happened, maybe Tony had gone away somewhere? All sorts of things went through my head. Bearing in mind his earlier behaviour, anything could have happened. Maybe he had gone to his sister's in Perth? Maybe again he had faded into anonymity? But why would the letter come back if he had gone somewhere? Surely his neighbours would know where he had gone and could have sent the letter to him when he returned!

I came back again for the umpteenth time to this: Deserved DLO, turned it here and there, looked it up in the dictionary, but with no result. First it was Deserned, then again Deserved; nothing pointed to the true meaning of the message. The confusion lasted for only two days.

Then a new letter came from Australia, which at first bewildered me completely.

--What is this? -- I said. It's becoming a real mystery.

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I turned it around and tried to decipher the unknown handwriting. And then I opened it. I didn't have to wait long to decipher the contents. After the first few lines everything became clear, as well as that word in the letter they had returned, which had worried me so much when I couldn't penetrate its meaning. But now, I was overcome with an awful feeling. I read those lines, and my heart was pounding, while tears came to my eyes.

A long time has passed since those days, but every time I take that letter in my hands I start to shake. Can you even imagine how it was for me. I found myself in front of a broken life. It was as though a part of me had gone forever.

--Fate – I said – Can you be so cruel? Couldn't you wait? Didn't you have enough victims?

Here is that letter:

Dear Cosmas,

Excuse me for calling you Cosmas, but that is the closest to your name that I could interpret. This letter is not at all easy to write. It tells you bad news, and I am the one to do it, because I am (I think) the son of your brother Tony C.

My father died on Sunday 20th September 1959, and I took my fate into my own hands.

I am very sorry I have to send you such a letter. I don't like writing letters, and it was a real shock for me to learn that my father had a brother and a sister. I found this out not long ago in letters, which were in his belongings and in papers regarding his claim for citizenship.

I'll try as best I can to explain to you how that happened. As you already know, my father was in hospital for nine months with a broken leg, after an accident in the mine. They discharged him from hospital, but his condition did not improve and he had to limp around, leaning on a stick.

He tried desperately to work, but he realised he could do nothing. I think that was very depressing for him. He bought on credit some cars, which were old, and he found he could not drive them. Even I who am healthy, could not deal with them.

He tried to get an old age pension, but because he had no certificate of citizenship, he did not succeed.

I tried to talk him into coming and living with us, but he did not want to, probably because he thought he would be a burden to us.

That is all I can tell you. I received notification from the police that he had hanged himself. I went at once to Coolgardie and arranged everything for the funeral, which was on the 22nd September at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

In your letter to my father I see that you asked him to send you his photo. I am sending one here, but it isn't very new. The gentleman in the middle, with a hat, that is your brother. I also see from one letter that you ask him to give your regards to his son, and therefore I am enclosing here a photograph of my wife and me on the day we were married.

I found the letter from his sister Kathy too, and will inform her of this terrible event.

Can you explain this mystery to me? I wish to know if my father had any other brother or sister, if his mother is still alive, and if you can tell me where he was born. He always said he was born in Cairns, in Queensland.

At the end of this letter, I express my condolences to you and your family in the sorrow that has befallen you. If you wish to write to me, I shall be very happy.

Yours truly, Michael C.

First I must explain that short message on the envelope, which I read in English once as "deserved", then as "decerned". It actually said: "deceased" which simply means: "dead". Such a thing never occurred to me, and also it must be understood, I could not decipher the hand-writing, which all at once, but after reading Michael's letter, became quite clear and legible.

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I thought I understood everything when I had read and reread Michael's letter. And then I took myself under the grindstone. How come, I said to myself, I didn't at once after the first letter think that I should send Tony his father's citizenship certificate? I put myself in a stupid comparison with Mister London and didn't think enough about his request, which, truth to tell, was not very explicit. It could have changed the course of this tragedy. Hadn't I been very thoughtless? Hadn't I been a very bad executor of his wishes, and so in some way influenced his fate, which had been written on those papers, and I hadn't been able to see it! I should have – remembered!

But....

Kathy, why did you send that letter by boat? Why didn't Tony insist that I myself send the birth certificate to him? Why did he ask for it through Kathy, and Kathy through her cousin? Why, why, why?

Thousands of those "whys" could be listed! And it wouldn't be worth a brass penny.

One thing was clear, that death had occurred, death by rope, which had resolved his fate once and for all. That's easy to say. Resolved! Michael was in Australia. It was he who now was looking for answers. He was second on the chain of tragedies, with his wife and child, because I, who had managed to get back here, far away, forty years away from my half-brother, could not suffer as much because of that death, although it was

very hard for me. It told me a story about a man who did not succeed in tying together the strings of his life, who had remained a mystery firstly for his own family because of what he did, because they could not know about it; and I knew a bit more, even though they lived closer to him. Michael must be corresponding with his mother. She, I assume, also did not know much about Tony, except that she had lived with him for a time, and then she had divorced. Maybe Kathy knew a bit more, but from her reactions, I think she had not taken his letter seriously, and it had been a lot more open than the letters Tony had sent to me, at least regarding his concerns about the future. The letters he sent to me had partly revealed his aspirations and his character, at least concerning horses, betting, wealth, mines and farms, but I had not felt in them any of the anxiety I uncovered in the letter meant for Kathy. She had thought it necessary to send it to me with a delay, because of her, I would say without accusation, carelessness; because probably she forgot to write "PAR AVION" or 'BY AIR' or else she had not put enough stamps, which meant she sent the letter the slowest way. Certainly, a shilling or two would not have meant too much of an outlay for her.

Perrin herself had revealed my sister Kathy to me in a rather different light from what I had gathered from my mother's narratives. But, I reflected, many years had passed since we met so it was understandable there had been changes. Kathy had grown older, and had become messy, careless. Plus she was ill. Tony had mentioned the flu, however I had not understood that to be the usual flu that infects people in waves and goes around the globe, but as an illness that attacks human beings in a bout, coming singly, like colds, migraines, headaches or dizziness, which was logical for Kathy and her age. So I could not blame Kathy, although that delay had meant that I did not react in the way I should have reacted, that is, quickly and efficiently. I believed Kathy's cousin when he had told me that he had sent my half sister the letter with the birth certificate. And now I was doubting the truth of his words, because if he had sent it, the letter would have reached Kathy and Tony too, and she would have notified me somehow that she had received it and sent it on to Coolgardie.

But what was I doing now? Was this important for the narrative? The fact was that Tony was dead, that he had taken his own life, that he could no longer withstand the blows falling upon him, that everything had turned upside down. It was a fact that much was unexplained regarding his death, that there were still many hazy places in his life and that my first duty was to tell his son all I knew about Tony and our family, so that his child would not suffer unnecessarily. I sat down and wrote a letter to Michael, as his uncle, a new uncle truth to tell because this was the first time we had been in direct contact.

The letter had to be long, several pages. Even though everything could not be said in it, I believed I had to say the important things. I was thinking about the letters I had sent to Tony, and didn't want to repeat the

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already presented facts. I started the story from the year 1900 until the present day, following my mother's narrative and the impressions I had brought from Australia.

What would the "child" say about his father after this, about me, my family and his? How would he react in his next letter?

For a few days I was beside myself. I was tormented by Tony's evil fate, together with the fate of my whole family, especially on my father's side. My friends could not recognise me. They were asking me what was wrong, was I sick, and I kept quiet.

That half brother of mine, even though far away from me, even though I didn't know him well, upset me with this sharing of his truth so much that I could not sleep and could not do any serious work. I had only just begun to find out about his life, at the junction of our destinies, and already the worst thing had to happen – death, a violent death caused by his own hand, but prepared by forces he could not govern, nor control.

Yes, it was a hard, inexorable judgement, which I had to figure out, to somehow understand.

I thought about it all for a long time and then once again I realised I should in some way travel to the shores of Australia and after so many years, arrive at the very place, to in the true sense renew memories of

childhood, and to meet Kathy, Michael, his mother and many friends and friends of my mother. My circle of interest had suddenly grown wider.

The story had gained enormous proportions, because I had remembered also the letters that Mama had received from her friends during the last few years, and in those letters the lives of people known to us had continued, after being stopped with my and my mother's departure from Boulder and Kalgoorlie, their fates had continued with all their big and small dramas, with all the lush variegation created by life.

I wrote to Michael and already numerous new questions were coming to me. I had to be patient and wait for his answer.

And one day it did arrive:

Dear Uncle Cosmas,

Please excuse me for not answering your long and valued letter which I read with great interest and pleasure. My wife was ill and I had to help in the house as well as my usual work. Your letter revealed and explained many things to me. I tried also from my mother, who lives in Perth, to get to the bottom of the mysteries in front of me. Firstly, my father did indeed own horses and when the Prince of Wales was here, my father's horse did win the race, but they determined second place for him. Secondly, my mother knew nothing about Tony's brother Nick, although she knew Nick, because he worked on a neighbouring farm and came often to Tony's. He was called Nick Carey. He borrowed tools and machines that he needed from Tony. My mother says that my father took Nick to Wooroloo sanatorium for people sick with tuberculosis as soon as Nick's illness developed. When Nick died, Mama remembers that Tony said he had to send all Nick's things to his sister. Mama didn't have a clue that they were related. As you perhaps know, my parents were divorced in 1953. They were living apart before that. They were married at the beginning of 1927 in Perth, in the registry office there.

My father was never capable of providing a home for us and as far as I remember from my early childhood, Mama was always trying to persuade him to finally settle us down in one place, to get a permanent job so as to earn money for the family and for my education. But as soon as he got any money, the first thing he did was to find a bookie and waste it all on betting. He bet on the horses and the dogs, played cards and lost it all. My mother had to find work. So she maintained herself and made it possible for me to get a modest education.

Probably, dear Uncle, you are thinking I am writing rather cruelly about my father, but I have to say that he thought about himself much more than he thought about anyone else. He was a very unpredictable man. I was surprised when I saw that he had answered your letter, because I know he very rarely wrote letters.

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And now to some better news. I was in Perth last weekend and met Aunt Kathy, and also Perrin and her family. Aunt Kathy showed me a family picture. I recognised my father at once, even though he was seven years old in the photo. His mother, and my grandmother, was then a very beautiful woman. I also saw a picture of the island where they were born. It all touched me very deeply, and I have to say, pleased me.

Enough about that. And now to tell you that I have a beautiful son. He was born 26th April and already weighs ten kilograms. He grows like "Jack in the box". Sending many regards to your family

Your nephew

Michael C.

Nevertheless, I have to go to Australia – I said to myself decidedly – because I can't analyse people's fates through a letter. I have to go to all the places where I was living, I have to see today's Boulder and Kalgoorlie, today's Perth and Fremantle, I have to travel from Perth to Kalgoorlie I have to follow the trails of my childhood and find my peers in their mature years, and the peers of my mother and my father, those who are still alive, I have to find out what happened to Tony apart from those lines in his letters which didn't tell me too much, but gave me a lot to think about, I have to talk to his ex-wife, to spend some time with Michael, to

see Kathy, to visit Perrin, my dear Perrin, who had explained a lot to me when she was my guest, with whom I was connected in a strange, spontaneous relationship, which started over there in childhood and had lasted until the present day, even though it was cut off for thirty years or more. I had to talk to Aunt Lena, to Vinki, to Kuma Tona, if they were still alive, with her children, I had to feel the odours of Australia, eat the food, drink the water, see the landscapes, I had to surrender myself to the experiences I had gained, to find the answers to many questions. I had to in this way show myself that I was, that I was alive, that I existed.

I had to fulfil a debt.

Time was passing. The winds were taking me every which way. I went around the world driven by professional duties. I was in Japan, I saw Burma, fell in love with India, touched Persia, found myself in Mongolia, cruised the Soviet Union, the devil took me all over North America, I visited South America, ate bananas in the Banana Republics, grew to love Costa Rica and Mexico, was bored in Tegucigalpa, admired Algeria, made friends with Egypt, was enchanted with Ethiopia, made war on the Suez, over my head Cambers were flying, I wandered around the streets of Damascus, went walking in Athens, argued on the streets of Rome.

Where had I not been? Indeed, the number was greater than a million kilometres in the air.

And then I heard about the first JAT flights to Australia.

Time was passing.

I received letters from Michael and Perrin. Michael had moved. First he was in Kellerberrin, on the railway line from Perth to Kalgoorlie, where he had been when his father died, then he was sent to Newdegate, in the back of beyond, to finally end up in Katanning and then Albany as a warehouse worker in a textile company. He went through all kinds of things, my Michael, or Mihovil, seeking his livelihood across the vast land, rich in bread and milk. After his son, his daughter was born. But Michael sounded wonderful in his letters. Always somehow bright and optimistic. That filled me with especial pleasure, because I sensed that there was none of his father's traces in him, that he carried within himself instead some deep lessons which perhaps he was not even aware of.

Things did not go as I had anticipated, with Perrin. I don't actually know what happened with her, but something strange happened. Perrin too wandered around Western Australia for a long time following her husband, who as a teacher was sent from one place to another, so that she was in contact with me from places I hardly knew, like Collie, and Bridgetown, which I had to look for on the map, and then for a time she lived at home, in Perth, with her mother. I didn't know where to write to her, because lately she was "unpredictable".

And then came news which stunned me: Perrin was divorced from her husband. Where now had the lightning struck – I asked myself. It would not have been so strange if I had not truly considered that marriage

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normal. It would not have upset me so much if Perrin had not begun to write despairing letters saying everything had collapsed, she no longer had any faith in people, she would be alone because her daughter was getting married, her son was already married and he was not close to his mother anyway. I felt, from those letters, that a sudden disintegration had come about, which had burdened my Perrin greatly, Perrin who used to talk so happily about the world around her, who always found understanding for everyone, who, it seemed to me then, had created for herself a sense of security, believing that problems came from depths inside a person that had not been cleaned out, that it was not necessary to blame others for her own faults. It seemed to me that Perrin had got into a situation like scissors cutting off important threads, cutting the wheels from under the supports in her life. All at once, so it seemed from those lines, she had fallen into apathy, which had taken her to the edge of hopelessness.

I had to do something, from this distance away, without having anything concrete to go by, because her statements had been very sparing, even generalised. How could I console Perrin? How could I find a medicine for her pain, which for me was actually of an unknown nature? Had her relocations from town to town, from one end of Western Australia to the other, been the reason it had come to this? Or was it that feeling that life

was at a crossroad from a quite simple reason, for example because of the separation of marriage partners, communication from a distance, the coming apart of the family, small blows because of economic reasons or personal things that suddenly flare up and because of constant denial there is a revolt, manifested by the seeking of some sort of satisfaction, maybe just in a small way, which interrupts and poisons interpersonal relationships. I knew something about the way families lived in the vast expanses of that continent. People did not keep their land, because there was a profusion of it, so they separated one from the other, creating small units which communicated with one another quite poorly. The marriage partner travels by car to his work place which is a long way away, returns late at night, children go to school and are away all day, the wife stays at home alone, in the evening the television comes between them, they do not go out, boredom sets in, fractures occur, there is a divorce, one of the marriage partners is stranded because they have been home the whole time, and there is nothing else to fulfil their life.

Was that what had happened to Perrin? Life is full of variations on the theme of boredom and guilt. A man collapses into himself because he was relying on external things, things that are closest to him, that even came from underneath his heart, forgetting he is a lonely elephant, as Buddha said somewhere, who has to push through the jungle.

But how could I write long distance, and how could I get to the bottom of it?!

Letters are never a true description of the state of affairs. I received letters from Tony, Kathy, Michael. They all conveyed parts of their truth, and they could never say everything. Because there are various concerns when letters are written. Concerns that they will not be abused, that someone will not find them, that they will not wrongly interpret their contents, that they could be used by some people for blackmail, to spy on someone, and so on. Letters are no longer an individual's private matter. Letters can open eyes, reheat curiosity, they become windows through which people who have no connection to you and your feelings can peer. From the crate in which they travel to the table in the post office, to their manipulation in wagons or boats or planes, until they arrive on new tables in the PTT service, and then into the boxes where they belong, letters lose their innocence in this present time. They are exposed to all sorts of examinations, especially being looked at by electronic machines, sending their contents to be dealt with further. Through letters, some people in America know you have arrived in their town or region and send you a newly written welcome. Through letters, they find you to tell you the number of your bank account or the address of a certain shop, which for instance, sells the best irons in the world, underpants or vibrators. Through letters, they can inform you by telephone that you could be the owner of a house on Sonny Beach, if you just fill in a small questionnaire. Through letters they send you expressions of love and hate. Suddenly, without any thought on your part, a

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newspaper enquirer quotes exactly one of your romantic or other reckless acts in the gossip column of a yellow tabloid paper.

And so on, I won't count up all the horrifying examples of depravity, which deprived ordinary, human letters of their intimate beauty.

Sometimes I wondered at the sincerity of those who write letters and I could never understand how they could have written them next to the existence of such a significant consumer item for words, as what we call in modern language, the telephone. You chatter, chatter on the telephone, say hello to a loved one, near and far, and there remains no sign of it. A letter is evidence, -- a big clue, but not meant for the police or spirits created in their image. I was surprised in this way by Tony, in some of his letters, because he revealed in those lines a part of his soul, he was sincere. He said, for instance: I was a gambler, money went through my hands like water. And much more, although he didn't finish speaking. This qualification by itself made me want to understand him, to empathise with him in his moments of weakness, despair and horror.

I don't know the quality of the effect my letters had on Tony, on Kathy, on Michael. I guessed from their answers that they received them as a sincere message from a man close to them, who loved them.

However, can you compare a letter to a meeting with a fellow human being? When it is written from the heart, it has its own unique charm, you can read it and re-read it. But a letter cannot say everything, it is after all limited in form. And by a person's talent in writing it. In an immediate encounter you can see the face of the person speaking. You can follow every movement. A person's soul becomes visible when they open their mouth, when words are followed by gazes, when as well, there are gestures added. A person speaks more openly in direct contact, and he needs less words, less descriptions, to explain what he wants to say. He is speaking with his whole self and it is very hard to hide anything there.

I don't remember exactly how much time went by after the last letter from my dear Perrin, but I felt how hard it had all been for her. She said she had been left without support, and by that I understood how she felt insecure, because she had been abandoned, because she was dependent on what her husband could now throw her. She had never worked outside her own house, and therefore could not get a pension, which would have secured her future. Her married daughter had gone with her husband to Melbourne. She had already provided her with grandchildren. Then her son was married, and he did not care much about his mother, even though she worshipped him. Her brother Thomas too had gone his own way. Created his own family. And Gregory too, whose wife had given birth to twins. Everyone therefore had gone on their way, and Perrin had remained alone, with her mother, who was more and more an invalid. She had written to me that her mother had been constantly going to the doctor's for examinations, tests, how she was diabetic, and this was accompanied by all sorts of other things. Kathy had been more often in hospital than at home, she was becoming completely apathetic when she was at home, interested in virtually nothing. Her memory was betraying her and she was babbling nonsense, first something about her childhood, places she must see again when she travelled, because she was always talking about that after Perrin came back; and then that she had to do something in Adelaide where her husband's cousin was living, that is Barbaro, the former father of Perrin.

One winter afternoon, when I came back from travels in Egypt (actually war had caught me there), I found a letter from Melbourne. Perrin had written after a long time.

... Mother died three months ago, we buried her in the cemetery in Perth, and I decided then to visit my daughter in Melbourne. It came to me like salvation. I broke away from Western Australia, where I had gone through so much, and now I take my little granddaughter and grandson on walks. Mariete has a house here just out of town, we need half an hour in the train to get home, but it's wonderful, wonderfulYou don't know how wonderful it is to be at peace with children in your arms, after all I lived through! I don't want to think about anything, in any case it's all gone its own way, I can't turn life backwards like a watch and start something new to get ready for what is to come. I should have done something different a long time ago. You were right Cosmas, when you told me to use my talents to look after them. How much I used to like working with clay! How could I be so thoughtless and dedicate myself to the house, that is, to others, and forget to nurture my own flower? I should have, shouldn't I, done them both together, because then if you lose one, then you still have the other. Now I have realised that that "other" was the more important, that life spins first upon its own axis, that a person does not remain alone when others abandon them, because the part they have created and carried in themselves, actually goes against that exterior solitude and it isn't then a burden, because it prevails against all storms and tempests.

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I understand, Cosmas, I understand, and I have to fix something, before it is too late...I don't want to die like Mama died, I don't want to die like Uncle Tony died, like Uncle Nick died, like Grandfather died, like many others die. They shouted in front of death that life had become boring for them, they challenged death and it mowed them down. I have to die quietly, satisfied. And for that to happen, I have to do something.....

I didn't believe those words. They came to me like a far away echo of some ancient life wisdom. At this late hour, however, could the pointer go in a different direction? Did Perrin have enough strength to break the boundaries that were imposed on her. There was no longer her mother, no husband, no uncles, no brothers, and actually they were all still there. They were all part of the heart that carried them. Their fates were already decided, because their life was over, but they still had influence, they were there in their messages, and now the important thing was to understand those messages.

How much I wanted to have Perrin by my side to continue our conversation started in our childhood. More and more I was overcome with the desire to see her and to share again that honest mutual energy that exposed new perspectives.

On the other hand, Michael was there too. From the letters I had received from him, it seemed he had sorted out his life. He had finally stopped moving from place to place, he was living in Albany, a small town 400 kilometres southeast of Perth, known for the factory where whales were processed, he had built a house, with the help of credit though, bought a better car than that rattletrap of his father's which he could never move. Even though he had experienced terrible discoveries regarding his parents, which were hard for a young person just becoming a man to deal with, Michael had got over all of that and had set out on a more solid life path, taking much more care about the future than did his ancestors. Perhaps that was not just the consequences of experience, maybe things just went well for him.

But there was his mother to consider. She did not live with them, to be sure. After her tribulations with Tony she had remarried and was now living in the suburb of Manian near Perth. That woman especially interested me.

And so, step by step the time came for my departure. I sent letters and made plans. I decided to go first to Perth, then to Albany, and then Boulder and Kalgoorlie, finally to return to Perth and continue my journey to Melbourne. And so, one September evening at the beginning of the seventies, after 23 hours' flight I descended with the old Aga (Boeing 707) at Perth airport. I watched the many lights of the town on the Swan River and felt with every moment a rising excitement. After 45 years, I was returning to the soil of my childhood, returning to the tracks I had left there, those innocent tracks left by my shoes and by my bare feet.

Yes, I got on board the boat Austerley in the port of Fremantle at the gates of Australia barely conscious of all that had happened, much less thinking about what could still happen. Mother was returning to her own country with her child, believing she would never again set foot upon this ground. And so it was. She never came back and she never would come back, because I had seen her, Tereza, off to the cemetery, but, unlike many of her relatives, at the age of 90. True, life in the past decade had not flowed evenly, there had been ups and downs, tears and joy, but there had not been dramas which turned into tragedy, with all those hard consequences, with all those cruel scars on the soul, which were left by feelings of guilt for all the missteps in life.

I was to meet Thomas first. How would he look? A few days previously I had received from him a short letter in which he informed me practically as a routine, that because of a child's illness Michael could not come to Perth, but would wait for me in Albany, where I was going in any case, and then he told me he would personally meet me at the airport.

I was, among many migrants, one of those who had visited their home country, their "old country" and then returned. I disembarked with my luggage on the unbelievably clean and bright surfaces of this aerodrome and looked around to find someone my own age who would be looking for me. Minutes went by, but there was no-one. I was left practically alone in the airport hall. And then I tried to telephone. I had Thomas's number, but no-one answered my call. After waiting for an hour I decided to go to a motel, which was close to Floreat

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Park, where Kathy's house was, in which Thomas lived. Just in case, I left my new address at the information desk at the airport so that if Thomas turned up, he would know where to look for me. I assumed something had happened and he had not been able to come.

The taxi driver took me to the motel, but since it was quite late, there was no-one at the door. We went around the building for a time, and then we found a back entrance and a cook who had remained there with a young man, because he had not finished cleaning the kitchen.

After the cup of tea they offered me, I went to my room, lay down on the bed and went soundly to sleep. In the morning the girl at the reception gave me a note. Thomas had come by during the night, sorry he had not found me and apologising for being late, because he had been wrongly informed as to the arrival time of the plane. My first steps in Australia, the land of my childhood, had begun with a misunderstanding.

I waited in front of the motel for the car and looked around, at first disappointed in the panorama, because while the plane was landing I had observed Perth in its majesty of light. It did occur to me that this

suburb was called a park and that, therefore, I could not expect to see buildings and expansive streets here. There were one-storey houses, houses with gardens, with a lot of greenery and flowers. After that, there opened before me a scene which would always remind me of something relaxed, beautiful, full of light, various colours and lines. I had admired, as a child, in passing from Northam to Perth, the amazing scenery which had captivated me. Until then I had never seen mountains, highlands, hills, fields, I had not seen rivers or the sea, so that my enthusiasm was understandable. But I have to admit, it all came back to me now, even though I had been around practically the whole globe and peered into many corners of the earth. What is that? – I asked myself. What is that illusion? What sort of illusion is that, in front of those huge open spaces, which were still to be revealed to me! Hadn't many people experienced the same thing, my old man included!

Firstly I was taken by the purity of the area, the clarity of the horizon and the sky, the sparkle of one colour changing to the other. Rainbow colours changed before my eyes. Of course, I was not in the city, in the centre of Perth, I was on the outskirts, but no matter the pretty houses, the wide boulevards, the shining grey roads, I felt the wonderful breath of virgin nature, which gave to this area such beauty. It was like part of my country, but crowned with trees and flowers such as we did not have. I walked around, because Thomas gave me some time, and I was always an early riser -- and I almost forgot, in front of those magic sights, the reason I had come there. Indeed, at this time of new knowledge I had turned a page that my parents had not been able to see. Something deep inside me told me: you are a product of the moment, and I flow through the centuries and millenniums, no-one knows how I begin nor how I end. I am the circle of beauty, eternal in my motion. I am an unending vision. Therefore, look at me, look at me!

-- Thomas, what is this? – I cried. And Thomas watched me in amazement after we had met and exchanged a few words in a rather conventional conversation, although my feelings, and probably his too, after such a long time were quite different from our worn out words. What is this, Thomas? Why, you live in such a remarkable world! It's impossible!

I felt I was at a big intersection, with thousands of paths. An intersection of regions, and also of time. I said the word: conditions, but I was still inexplicit, understated.

Thomas had spent more than three decades here and had simply become accustomed to the countryside, the climate, the colours, the magic. For him all of that was nothing special. But it powered me with a strange strength, which I could not resist. And when Thomas began to drive me around this town and its parks, I moved into another world, a world quite different from my world, quite different from the world of my imagination, a world which on the outside was not at all the same as that other which had provoked those terrible collisions and conflicts. However, this was a part of Western Australia, to which Boulder and Kalgoorlie also belonged, even though they were 680 kilometres away. As for the climate, these were two different worlds, but the man who transferred from one to the other was the same. Everyone who came here would first crowd at the door – and the door was Fremantle, whose port could have been dirty like most of the

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commercial ports in the world, but yet hinted at Perth, like something intoxicating, colourful, radiant and pure, like a great hope in front of great wealth, which was hidden behind those endless scenarios, sniffing out the newcomer and announcing to him straight away – better days to come.

I could understand much easier now that eternal thirst, born in South Boulder among our people, which constantly called them to give up that golden table in the desert and to come down here, in the regions where the sun shone magnificently warm both for the heart and for the breast. I could understand, after this view, how much people had suffered, because it was made impossible for them. I could understand Tony, Kathy, Nick, Father and Tereza.

I know, if I had stayed there, the same thing would have happened to me! After this magic I would have found myself caught in the clutches of the desert, and like Kathy, Tony and before them Joe, I would have asked myself where had I come after that wonderful first act in Perth.

Thomas spoke a language I found hard at first to understand. – “Will you, please, slow down a little bit?” – I politely asked him to speak more slowly. But Thomas was in a very good mood. I had never imagined him like that. He had quite simply made me forget all about my childhood. I liked him straight away, with the words he spoke, his accent, his gestures – he was very likeable. Something restful, relaxing, shone in his face. Thomas obviously lived in an element which was not strange to me, because in Britain I had found him among the bus-drivers, the dockers, the grocers and ordinary people. And with Tony, but in the form of letters only, I had found a similar mode of expression, but in a lesser way. It must have come from the way of thinking and living. In Thomas it was now distinct, direct, obvious, I don’t know how to explain it, something uniquely Australian, in which the vowels disappeared or else joined together. Somewhere I had read that indigenous words had infiltrated the language, which I had actually seen in the maps (Wagga-Wagga, Woolloomooloo, Yackandandah, Gringegalonga) or in the names of Australian animals (kookaburra, kangaroo, koala, brolga) but without any special influence on the language as a whole. That which characterised it more, and I noticed that straight away with Thomas, was the fact that it was the language of the so-called lower classes of the population.

Thomas came to my aid himself, surprising me however.

--Sorry, Cosmas, that’s the language of prisoners!

--What prisoners, for God’s sake?

--Well you know, first ten thousand or so criminals and vagabonds came here. That was our beginning!

-- Thomas smiled, seeing my surprise. Jokes aside, it is true that they did come here first, because they had to send someone. Britain set aside for this part of the world all its waste so that, like through the sewage system, they were cleansed. Cargoes of prisoners were unloaded – 10,000 of them. In this way they became “dinkum Aussies” that is, real, unadulterated Australians. Do you know what is “arvo”? That means “afternoon”. “Cobber” means “mate”, comrade, friend. “Chook” is “fowl” or poultry, hen. And “shiela” is a “girl”. “Zack” is a sixpence. “Tray” is threepence. “Half a mo” is “wait a minute”, wait a moment. That’s it! I swallow my words, you’ll learn. Another two or three days, you’ll see!

Thomas amazed me. I had heard his story through Perrin, his sister. Now I could understand why he began the search and why he was growing like this in front of me. Thomas’s directness and spontaneity spoke of something more. He was unusually loyal, and honest. We had only just met, and already we were firm friends.

Yes, my half sister Kathy lived here. Here in Cambridge Street, she spent a big part of her life. I went from room to room and out in the garden, where the lemons were turning yellow, led by her unseen hand. I had not managed to see her after nearly half a century. I had some photographs in my hand, only those from my childhood. I saw her in her simple beauty, dignified in her movement, with her two hands resting on her knees, with gold rings on her fingers. I saw her neck, her compact breast, her high forehead and it seemed to me I was looking at an unusual woman. Perrin had left out something in the letters she had sent. She had not

said that her mother ended up in a nursing home. Thomas had told me this. Maybe Perrin was afraid of something, thinking I suppose that I would not understand why Kathy had ended up there. But I did understand, immediately, because I had met many parents in America who had had a similar fate. The children had not had patience. They had gone their own way. It was easier for them as workers and consumers, to let their old people travel, to go to hotels and motels across the country and then to finish up in some poorhouse. I don’t know if I could qualify Kathy’s last home with that name, but for me those homes for old people have always meant something sad, miserable, depressing, like a last farewell, without wreaths, without attention, without respect. However, I knew that was how it had to be. I looked at Kathy in her last photos, all bedecked and bedizened. I was sure her hair had been sprayed with a blue colour, with light blond reflections in the front above her forehead. I looked at her somehow lost among the wrinkles, which somehow didn’t seem to belong to her. And I thought about a long life, the life she had led. She had indeed been beautiful. Everyone had said

so. My mother, and my father, and Aunt Dina and Perrin, and Vito, her cousin, and now Thomas was saying the same thing. But her beauty had melted away in her strange stubbornness. She had wanted a better life, she had wanted a man who was her equal, and she ended up with those who were unable to take her away from her problems. How many had wanted her hand in marriage? She had refused them all and then departed with those she had herself, wilfully, chosen. All her marriages had happened so to speak in a moment, to the surprise of all those who were sharing her house and home. And how did they turn out?

She tired of the husbands right away, and simply got rid of them, clinging only to their offspring, the children, onto whom she would pour like some kind of avalanche, all her love. Thomas spoke of his mother with admiration, but, he said, he didn't always understand her. Like his sister, my Perrin, he described her unpredictable features, her eruptions of love, which one moment fed the children with all sorts of things, clothes and shoes, only to deprive them of food the next day when there was not enough money left to buy it.

Kathy, dear sister Kathy, who looks at me from all angles, because part of you remains here, in pictures, in furniture, in the kitchen jars, pots and plates, from which I am now eating, since your Thomas has treated me to a nice juicy Australian roast beef with roast potatoes; so that, Kathy, for the first time I am in your house as part of you, I who was living somewhere far away, like Perrin a few years ago, as part of me, came to get the benefit of intimacy and friendship in my house.

I watched you growing, playing at life. And I saw in you offshoots of the mother and father who came here to build a home for you, because there was no house or home in our country, and today there are actually houses everywhere, today we are America, although we don't like to say so. We don't have to search the wide world for anything, but for understanding and friendship. We know how to help those in trouble. We know how to be generous. But, more about that another time, dear Thomas and dear sister Kathy!

I would like on this second evening, while waiting for Thomas to come from his sporting club, where he is entertaining club members, to chat with you, but I cannot find the proper words, your words, your feelings, to connect them with mine. You know, we did grow up differently. And I am not ashamed of that nor do I ask questions only to answer them, to praise my way of life. I simply would like to find a way to your soul.

Why, Kathy, did you not understand Joe, our father? He was not as you have labelled him. He simply could not behave any differently. He thought he would save you. And finally he died, doing exactly that.

You didn't understand, you say!

--Something was hounding me terribly in those days, I was all on edge because of my age. Everything was flowering in me. I felt like I was bursting. What passion! What ardour! Didn't you too feel your passion and your ardour in those youthful days? I just couldn't stand it. I saw all the wretches around me, those unhappy miners, full of strength, who had come here for a piece of bread, who wanted me, who discovered my breasts, who lifted my skirt. Their passion amplified and connected with mine. What else should we have thought?

--But Kathy, you are...

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--No, excuse me, I am not vulgar, least of all that. No-one showed any understanding towards me, and I could feel what others wanted. There were many, too many desires. Those desires were killing me. Their flames burned me. You don't understand that warmth Cosmas, it seems to me. You should have become a priest, to console people! I didn't for one moment want to console them. I took them, I drank them dry, because that's what they wanted, then when I was bored with them, I threw them away. There! Do you understand! Don't be cruel!

--Kathy, I have to go to Albany tomorrow, Michael is waiting for me there. What shall I say to him?

--Tell him, tell him that....I.....love him. I told him that when he was here, when he was surprised to find that someone existed in this world who he could call "Aunt". That brother of mine was afraid of the fear that his son would deny his heritage. Why was he like that? I'm afraid there was some other reason!

--You think there was another reason!

--Maybe more than one. I think he was most afraid of himself. He came to such a point that there was nothing else for him to do but to hide. He realised he could do that here. To raise himself up in the eyes of others, others he wanted as partners, he had to say: -- I am, you know, of Irish ancestry! He couldn't say: English, Welsh, because that would have been a bit too much. He chose Irish nationality simply because it suited him the best. Yet the Irish name gave a greater shine to a person than for example Slav, Greek, Italian. Those were people of a lower class. For his operation (you say: speculation; you are right, yes, because he said the same thing to you in letters) he needed a somewhat better façade. Our people could not easily penetrate with their identity places meant for people of a higher rank. An Englishman is after all an Englishman. He came here first, even though as an exile, who had broken the law. He was a member of the British Empire, powerful, big in those days. The empire of Queen Victoria, Edward the Seventh, George the Fifth, when half the globe was in British hands, and Irishmen were part of that empire, with one of her islands. Tony was realistic, he knew he could not aim for the top, but to be Irish was however better than to be a Slav or a Greek. That, I think, was one element of his escape away from us. He came to that in the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie, when he got to know his English, Welsh and other colleagues. He needed to be on a par with them. And I have to say, he was lucky to be there. However much I resented the old man for some things, making Tony go to school was an excellent move on his part.

--But wasn't that at the same time a sort of escape from people? He wrote me that he couldn't communicate with people!

--That must have happened later. While I was with him, he certainly could communicate. Maybe he was disgusted with the losses that came about after all his efforts to prove himself. That incident with the Prince of Wales and Wonerup Laddie was very characteristic. He was always trying to get on stage and always something stopped him when he made the vital step. – Luck didn't want to come to me – he told me in his letters. And luck was within easy reach. He even actually had it, if we understand luck as being money and property. But he was not happy with what he won. He wanted something more, something bigger, more comprehensive. What he actually wanted, I don't know how to say, just as I often can't say what I wanted myself! Many times I too thought I should completely isolate myself, stop all communication with people. They had become strangers to me. I couldn't stand them. They had nothing to say to me, they just wanted something from me. And Father wanted something too, and your mother!

--An excellent move, you said in relation to schooling in the School of Mines!

--Yes, the old man did do well there!

--But that cost him a lot of money, not to mention disappointment and suffering...

--Disappointment and suffering, you say! However much you try to be objective, Cosmas, you never are! Look at someone in the face, go into his eyes, peek into his soul! You can't judge people only from one point of view, not Father's nor your mother's. We had to collide, is that clear! We were at an age when we were not responsible. Was it our fault we were not responsible? Could I have been, in those days? Could Tony have

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been? After all is said and done, to speak in words of prerequisites and conditions, Tony had a good job in Split, and the old man simply took him away from it, promised him milk and honey in Australia, brought him to Boulder and plunged him into dust. He thought: we'll pack up all the gold and then we'll go to Fremantle, to Perth. And Tony was torn from his youth, he left the girl he had been seeing, cut off all his travels and it was so sudden, as though he was pulled up by the roots; he was thrown onto the Goldfields, into an environment he couldn't stand. So then at the first opportunity he went his own way, that is, to put it more precisely, he wanted to go his own way but, there it was, he didn't have – any luck. Tony was then put out of joint, disturbed, and the end had to come in such a terrible way. Everything went upside down....

--But Father even if he wanted to, could not fix it...

--And could I, as young as I was, volatile, exuberant, all my juices beginning to flow, could I fix anything? Don't be naïve, Cosmas! I believe you would have behaved in the same way if you were in my shoes, or Tony's.

--But Nick did not behave like that!

--Nick had a completely different character! Death had already begun to live in him when he stepped onto Australian soil. Didn't you ever think about that? Many times I was sorry I was not in his skin. He was older than us, though he experienced a premature departure. For sure, he didn't deserve that. Nick was part of our conscience. He made up for what Tony and I did. He was some sort of balance. That happens in families. Some pull one way, some the other way, and somewhere there is a middle way. Water becomes level in a pot. If Father had not had Nick, he could not have survived with us. But nature determined it like that. Nick with his behaviour, alleviated what we did.

--You believe what you did was not alright...

--Not at all, are you mad! How can you think that I could condemn myself for my actions, could think them bad?! They belonged to me. I sewed my own shirt, just as Tony sewed his, Nick his, and Father his.

--That means, what happened had to happen?

--Had to?! Had to?! Well, yes! Understand that I couldn't fix anything, because everything was irretrievable. I couldn't go back, and who, I ask you Cosmas, could? You, it seems to me, think it's enough to kneel in front of the priest and to say: I did that and that, and then everything is wiped off, like it never happened! Many people do that, they think: they got rid of it. I know I did not get rid of it, but I know that I can't just cross out anything that happened, that is, I can't make it better.

--But experience is experience! A person draws out lessons for the future!

--What lessons for the future, please! You're falling apart, Cosmas. You have something of Father's in you. He was always drawing out some sort of message. He would calculate: until now I behaved like this, from now on I'll do that, and it always turned out the same. Do you, Cosmas, think a man can change things from going their own way? What could I change of that destiny of mine? I am dead, can I change anything about that? I'm talking to you from this picture, could these pictures be any different? I'm talking to you from this house, could it have been in some other part of the world? Understand, I was brought here, and I behaved as I wanted to behave!

--You're impossible Kathy! Really, your Perrin is right, it was very hard to prove anything to you. You say: as you wanted to behave, but did others want you to behave like that, couldn't you think just a little about how some other person, especially your parents, did not approve, how your behaviour stopped them from doing something that would have been good for you too?

--You're talking nonsense! That means what he wanted had to win, what he intended had to take place, and I had to be subjected, to go the way I was told, to be led in other words, like some others want to do, just as they want! You accept such a role!

--I don't always accept to be led, because if I had agreed, I wouldn't be what I am today. Maybe it happened that I brought about some drama with my behaviour, that I curtailed the freedom of another human being, that I did them an injustice, but....

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--But...That damned "but" ...you were always your own man...But, to add my own "but", I too was my own woman, and I believe that with my behaviour I didn't do what others think I did. Understand that in the first place I was young, irresponsible, realise that things could not have been different. I was pulled out of one environment, and thrown suddenly into another, against my will, because of the will of my father, and whatever at the beginning of this century drove him onto the Goldfields, is nothing to do with me. I know what happened to me. It was burning in my chest. I couldn't suppress my nature. Nick coughed because he caught the tuberculosis, I coughed caught by a different sort of force, whose name I don't know. Sickness is sickness, both mine and Nick's. And Tony was sick in his own way. *Malatija, malatija!* Sometimes it can be cured, but only the external one that attacks. That one inside you, that is often incurable. I admit I was incurable, is that enough for you? What more do you want from me? Someone called it stubbornness. I don't have a name for that!

--You pushed me into this corner and now you say everything needs to be accepted like it was. You even include me in that!

--You're strange, Cosmas! I look at you and I understand. It was different with you. You have grappled with the real enemy and beat him. He had his own face, ugly, true. He was in your sight, clear. But you beat him. You came innocent and naïve out of that fight. And now you are going to war to fix people. I will not be fixed. Understand that, forever. I am dead.

Yes, I looked strange to myself that evening in my conversation with Kathy, challenging her to ask and to answer, based on everything I had heard from my mother, Perrin, and now, today, Thomas. I found myself in some sort of circle without an exit, but I left myself enough room to manoeuvre. I knew I would one day come out into a clear space, but I knew very well, I would come out only with one tool, one weapon: understanding! But was that by itself enough?

--I'll remind you, Kathy, of something very actual. I wasn't going to, otherwise. Tell me, why did you accept Father's share of the gold found in the desert? Tony threw on the table five ounces of the "yellow stuff", a small share, and the rest.....

--You're looking for sins?! You want me to confess to you. You came because of that?! But I'll tell you, when you want me to. I'm sorry I did that. I regarded Barbaro's share as mine. He owed me. Father less so. True, I reached out for that which did not belong to me, but with reason, because I had to get the means to take me out of the hell, which he had made for me. He brought me here, he had to pay the bill to take me somewhere else. I was sorry later. And I was sorry until the day I died. But of what use was my repentance? Tony believed I had a right to do what I did. That's the reason I became cooler towards him, even though I loved him very much. The two of us found a common language because our fates were similar, but he behaved a lot more cruelly than I, if I can put it like that. He was older and he should have shown more understanding than he did show. At least he could have been more considerate towards the old man. The old man gave to him everything he could under the circumstances, education for example, while he gave me absolutely nothing, except the possibility of sitting on the verandah, to be bored and to wait for the first man to whom I could give my virginity. Tony had better luck at first. He was happy with that win of a thousand pounds at the horse races. He didn't think about the fact that he had invested part of his father's capital, which he had earned with the wood and the gold. Then he divided up the gain from the mine with Mister Groky, although I didn't know that. It all went well and from then on he thought it was all his, that a loss would not happen, that there was no end. And then he suffered his first fall at the Hunter's Cup. I don't know what happened so that he shifted himself to Mandiga. Probably his wife influenced him. But when he escaped a bit from his wife's teachings, when he got better, he went further, his own way. And I am surprised, so surprised Cosmas, that he contacted you from the hospital. I would have bet everything I had that he would not communicate. But something, maybe, was worrying him. Probably that debt!

--What debt, Kathy?

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--Towards Father, because he felt he should give something back to you. He wrote to me that he felt obligated. But it was too late, much too late. Then he wanted to, but couldn't, and before that he could and he didn't want to. Are you happy with my answers? Am I fulfilling, as you expect, my duty? Am I coming clean enough before you and your mother? She has died, but I owe her something too. She wanted to be my tutor. She wanted to rule. She imposed herself on me. My Aunt Dina brought about that wedding with Father. And I couldn't forgive her, nor him. He married your mother, at the instigation of Aunt Dina it's true, so that we would have a guardian. He didn't have any faith in us!

--Kathy, you are unjust! I don't have the right to defend my mother if she was at fault, but I do have the right to defend my father, who was not at fault at all. He went to Australia hungry, to go into the mine, to earn bitter bread for himself, your mother, you and your brothers. He sent his hard-earned money regularly to Vis.

You were raised with this. In the poverty which was then ruling on Vis, you were fed and you had a roof over your heads. Remember Kathy, how you used to live!

--Cosmas, you're twisting things! The causes don't always exactly bring about the consequences. There are others who also had a decent childhood, and came to a worse condition, but they didn't behave as I did. It's different. A lot of things come together to make a situation in life. It's true I did well in the old country. I could show my dresses and shoes to others. But was that the main thing?

--If you couldn't endure the fact that Father was married before he left for Australia, why did you endure getting married twice and the third time, without marriage, living with another man? You always measure things differently, when you talk about your steps compared with other people's.

--I came here unhappy. I thought, I'll find refuge with my first husband. I didn't find it. Another came. He wasn't any good either. I went to the third.

--But Father didn't approve at all!

--What could I do about that? There were so many unhappy people there. They would offer themselves, accost you, they wanted you, desired you. If I had stayed home, in Vis, maybe I would not have had so many admirers. But in Boulder that happened. I was aware that I could pick and choose, as many women were aware. Religion didn't keep me back. I was not a slave to the church. I have never seriously prayed to God. How could I then be afraid? Your mother was afraid. I hated that fear of hers the most. She bowed down seeking mercy from Doctor Hourley, because that's what her canon in Hvar had taught her. Clearly, my freedom came into conflict with the boundaries around me. I got married because I hated shackles. I didn't get along so I went away to someone else. What could have stopped me! Could you have wanted me to be a slave? What, I was not allowed to find a refuge, I wasn't allowed to escape? Yes, yes I ran away and finally escaped from that smelly Boulder, I escaped from your mother, from my father, from all those unfortunate people who had gathered there, from their desires, their successes and failures, their illusions about gold and wealth, their promises. And if I could have, I would have escaped from this continent to a different continent, far, far away, if only I had succeeded in doing that.....

--You didn't succeed?! How come?

--I didn't succeed! If you really want to know I'll tell you about it. I had no intention of going from Boulder to Perth. I wanted to go to New York!

--To New York? Really, that's really something....

--That's really something big?! You're making fun of me, Cosmas, you're saying: You were aiming high... No, no! Mama's brother lived there! Yes, yes, the one who left a fortune to my cousins in Hvar, Aunt Dina's children; I was sending them packets after the war, to the homeland, because they were always complaining they had nothing, that hunger was paramount in the country, and only later, when Perrin was in her country, I learnt that they, while begging everywhere for mercy, had been better off than many others, including Perrin and me. Anyway they don't concern me now and your mother doesn't concern me, though she must have been cross with me because of that. I was wrong, but so what? I was wrong, because I was cheated. I added one

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deception to another, because we were in a chain of those deceptions. Do you understand? So, I wrote to that uncle of mine that I had been brought to Boulder to a hopeless situation, to live in the dust and dirt, that I had been unhappily married, had three children, and actually because of that I wanted to be rescued. And he answered that he was ready to take me in and would send me money for the journey. So it was all arranged and I left Boulder for Perth intending to stay there only until my journey to New York. And then, something unexpected happened....

--Kathy, keep talking, why have you stopped?

--I had never had such a shameful thing happen to me. Someone who knew me, your mother probably, wrote to my uncle in New York about my behaviour in Boulder and said all sorts of things, that I was a prostitute, that I was slinking around, that I was into all sorts of deceits, that I had deceived my father, that I

could bring him, my uncle, into an uncomfortable position. Of course, Uncle reacted. He wrote me a few lines explaining that he had changed his mind. So I had to stay in Perth and experience what happened to me with the children....

--But Kathy, please, my mother knew nothing about your plans. She never said one word to me about you going to Perth on your way to New York...

--It doesn't matter now. Someone did what they did. The wheel stopped turning and I was put in an impossible situation, with three children to look after.

--I understand you Kathy!

--What do I get from that? I got over it. The account is there before you, dear Cosmas! It's over! What happened, happened, and picking over the remains makes no sense. It suited me to behave like that. Other people stopped me, put their foot on my trip to America....

--I understand you Kathy, and at the same time, I don't understand you!

--I know what you want from me. You want an explanation, which I can give you, but I don't believe it will satisfy you completely. You don't know yourself, whether to ask me about it or not. You're in two minds, now you want to now you don't, and I believe it would make your travels easier. They convinced your mother that while living at Nick's I was a common criminal, that I took one thousand of his two thousand pounds. We need to clear that up, dear brother Cosmas, so we can part in peace. I did, I took that one thousand pounds, because I believed I had the right to do so. I didn't have any connection to your mother. I didn't know whether she had gone or not from Boulder. Someone told me after two or three months that you had all left. Like you could hear a little while ago, I sincerely believed your mother had written to my uncle in New York, I lived with that belief for a long time. Who else could it have been, I thought, because who else could have known about it?

--But how, dear Kathy, how? That was your secret!

--I don't know how, but I was convinced then that she was the one who had cut off my journey. Maybe it sounds unusual now, even unproved, but at that unfortunate time everything was possible. You must realise, Cosmas, that I was beside myself those days. I was dreaming of rescue, my uncle had promised me money, I was already on my way, and then his letter came. Who could have done it, who could have carried out something like that? She didn't like my way of life, like my father didn't either, I had remained as the sacrificial lamb, because Tony had gone, disappeared into the unknown, her religion told her she must fight against illegality, immorality – that's what she called my behaviour. The thought that she, through Aunt Dina or through some other connection, was standing in my way, no matter how illogical such a thought seems today, was quite logical to me then. I was so angry, I suffered so much because of that, that I simply could not judge things in a healthy way. And when Nick was dying, and he died losing his mind; in front of the nuns, who were looking after him, I accepted his offer to take the farm. Actually it all became the same to him. And it never even occurred to me to send anything to your mother. She'll have nothing from that – I said because I believed

a letter of hers had sealed my fate in Australia. That's how it was, believe it or not. Anyway, you didn't do so badly....

--Kathy, Kathy! So it will remain a secret, who messed things up for you!

--Let it be. It's not the least important now. I got what I deserved. Life has treated me badly enough. I thought I would get on top of it, but we wrestled and the end is here, in front of you. The only truth is that my family is alive. I didn't neglect them. Actually, when I became a mother, I started to fight for my family and I fought until the end. I even did stupid things because of them. They are alive, although with their own problems. Thomas is happy with his work, although his marriage is not completely happy, Gregory showed signs of illness more than the others, but he recovered. Perrin was very upset about the divorce, but she will recover too. She'll recover better than I ever succeeded in doing. She's a different kind of person. She didn't go

through what I went through....And now, let me rest. Nothing will come of all these questions. Conditions are equal, there's no winner, because we're all in the same place, except you who are still alive. You alone can settle accounts, and one day you will straighten yourselves out. We are persecuting you. We are on your conscience, isn't that so?

--Just a moment, Kathy! Tomorrow I go to Albany, to Michael. What will his truth be?

--Oh?! But he's a child. What does he know! Don't burden him with suspicions. He doesn't deserve that. It was enough for him, what he found out. Let him keep at least some of his innocence.

--But Kathy, I don't understand that!

The doorbell rang. Thomas was there and cut short the conversation, where neither of us had heard the other, but where we tried to tell one another something by thought communication.

--The plane is flying tomorrow to Albany. It's a six-seater. It's better you don't go in the train. You'd never get there, there's a reason planes exist.

I was happy with this suggestion, because I had myself experienced the advantages of travel by plane, even though I did like to look at the countryside from a closer viewpoint. In the air everything was somehow unreal, which, in point of fact, agreed with my psyche.

I went with Thomas to King's Park, not far from the big station buildings in Perth, and in front of the so-called Matilda Bay on the Swan River. We spent an afternoon there that I shall remember for a long time. Actually I was amazed by features I had never come across before in my travels. All parks all over the world have their own peculiarities. Brindavan Gardens in south India had enchanted me with their waterfalls and lighting. Hyde Park in London amazed me with its extent and its green meadows. I still, however, felt cramped in it. I knew that everywhere around the park was the city, a terrible city, which simply stifled that oasis of peace. But here, in Perth, it was as though I was in a seventh heaven, because the park rose up above the city, ruled it, simply conquered the city with its beauty. It was magnificent in its size and details. It was cultivated, and at the same time wild. It had fantastic webs of roads and approaches, and showed how it was part of a huge continent, which it was embellishing with its richness. Spring was reigning in these parts when I came to visit. I don't know how it would have looked in the autumn, but I assume the colours would have been even brighter because today, in spring, these trees, these meadows, bushes, cultivated areas, flowers, nurseries, nice little houses, restaurants, snack bars, were all in lavish garments which were enchanting to see, and when autumn came, when the leaves turned yellow, and everything was covered in red, purple, and dark green tones, a dying nature must have been magnificent also.

In this way I experienced Thomas mostly in touch with a world which was above the hardships of the city, the obsession with "things", the cramped conditions in which people lived. Thomas pushed me into the fields, the wide open spaces, so that I was very grateful to him for making this possible for me.

In this way Thomas's past and his present in an environment like this, received perhaps quite different colours than if I had spent the day in rooms or streets of the town.

There among the karri and marri trees, in the wonderful perfume of many myrtles and boronias, dryandra and calectasia which were shining with their velvety-purple and clear yellow and blue colours, there among the clouds travelling in their white clothes somewhere far away, perhaps to the edge of the desert, there in the song of multi-coloured birds I got to know a part of Thomas's life, which also had been stormy, full of many risks, but somehow cheerful as well, easy-going. Thomas turned everything into a joke, but I felt that deep inside were raging from time to time many winds of doubt and unhappiness. But somehow Thomas blocked that from himself. Probably he had had experiences in his youth, which had made him understand life differently in his mature years. At this very time Thomas was legally divorced from his wife. It was the end of a marriage that had vegetated right up until their child had grown, and then slowly disintegrated with the impossibility that the characters adapt to one another. Thomas did not want to talk about it very much. In the

first years their incompatibility had worried him, but later he left it all to time, which had finally showed the true situation. The couple separated practically without any upheaval. Thomas went back to live with his mother, leaving his ex-wife everything he owned. He knew he had to start again from the beginning, but since he was doing well in the Sporting Club, since he had his health and strength, which never left him, and since he regularly carried out his insurance obligations, that divorce, which meant material regression, did not worry him too much. Thomas got along wonderfully well in the company of his clientele which he served along with one of his colleagues, so that they divided the day into equal parts, and he took pleasure in his work. He was living now like a young bachelor, who even did his own washing at home, but took it to the service to be ironed, and made tasty meals for his guests, so that I too felt happy in his company. The time we were spending together abounded in many small surprises. I had given back to Thomas something of his ancestors, forgotten in Australia, and he had given to me a part of my childhood, that I had lost in new pathways. Thus in that short time we competed in searching for the little joys of life.

I was impatient. Perrin and her fate were in front of my eyes, and Thomas who was very miserly when it came to his own life story, spoke for a long time about how Perrin had come to the cliff-face, left alone, all by herself. They had moved around, because he had been a school teacher, first in one, then in another town. For Perrin that had become unbearable. She had come to Perth to her mother, with the children. She went from time to time to her husband, and he came to her in the same way. They tried in all different ways to find a job for Sam in Perth, but without any success. Expenses, to be sure, were less, because only Sam had to pay for an apartment. However Sam could not put up with the separate lives. He got tangled up with a girl in Collie and began to behave irresponsibly towards Perrin. He spent money, began to gamble, to bet on the horses and dogs. He sent her less and less, until one day Perrin decided to go to Collie to clear things up. She found the girl in a shared apartment with Sam. And what else could she do? She picked herself up and left. Sam then sued for a divorce. She didn't want to give it to him. She wanted to claim her rights, after so many years of marriage. It dragged on indefinitely. Financial difficulties occurred. Luckily her mother had some savings, and somehow they managed. Then Mariette got married and went to Melbourne. Their son was married and left home, unhappy, of course, with all that had happened. And then Perrin, seeing that she would never come to an understanding with Sam, decided after all to agree to the divorce, but with alimentation. The situation seemed to be improving. Sam was married to the girl, but after a year or two the inevitable happened. It was a big weight for him to carry. He was nearly twenty years older than she. He suffered a heart attack and nearly died. Of course, the small amount of alimentation dried up for understandable reasons. Perrin had to stand on her own two feet; she started to look after old people in their homes, because there was nothing else to be done. Life had to go on. Mama became ill. She was taken to a nursing home, because they simply did not know what to do with her. She had been in and out of hospital for a long time, being treated for diabetes, and then she began to hallucinate. We were afraid she would go out on the street one day and fall under the wheels of a car. We paid the expenses together. And then Perrin, who was very tired, had had enough. She could not bear to be in Perth, she got herself together after her mother's death and went to Melbourne. Now she is writing to tell

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me that it is nice there, that she is having fun with the children, going bowling in the evening and getting involved with ceramics. Ah, Cosmas, you know – she is very grateful to you for one thing! You went to museums with her back in the old country. She says she will never forget you. You brought back her belief in herself! How did you do that, Cosmas?

My dear Perrin!

I always used to ask myself how many ups and downs there would be before we could finally define to an extent a life in the present, which also has no guarantees for the future, because we all are building it, but there are those who have demolished it, showing their selfishness. It seemed to me that much that was unnatural had been brought into life, that some sort of force had created relationships, that they had not come about because of the beauty and harmony inside us.

Thomas was kind enough to take me among his colleagues, members of his club.

--“Hello Cosmas, how are you?” It was a simple question, as though we had known one another for years, as though we lived somewhere close by, in the neighbourhood. Thomas gave me across the bar a glass of Australian wine and everyone around the bar talked as though they were old friends. I don’t know how that happened so suddenly, but Bennie, Charlie, Jack, Christie, and Sam addressed me like I was a friend from long ago, who had been away for a time, travelling the world because of some sort of job – “And how is it in Yugoslavia, I suppose fine!” So, a question and then the answer.

I watched people who in white coats and white shoes played bowls on the lawn, and baseball and other games. They would drink their beer, go to have a shower, get changed quickly and then get back in the car. All in a period of two hours. And that was an ordinary club, so to speak a workers’ club, because many of them were from a factory, trade workshops, small shops. Mister so and so thought it obligatory to come here in the afternoon, to say hello to his friends over a game of bowls and then to leave. And another Mister so and so also did the same thing. They would exchange information in passing, make arrangements, Thomas would pour them a glass of beer almost without any question and offer it to them over the bar, and they, holding a pipe in their teeth or a cigar in their mouth, talking to me or to someone else, would simply swallow their portion, throw their money into Thomas’s hand without any tip, and quietly disappear through the door.

What a casual world – I said to myself – but still wound up like a clock. In their pockets or on their arms the seconds are ticking. You can’t be late even a moment. The telephone rings when you reach your destination. Amen.

--I am your nephew Gregory! – a short man introduced himself to me. --Do you remember Gregory?

I stood there and stared. Was it possible! Gregory! The youngest. The one sitting on his mother’s knee in the photograph. Gregory with the high forehead – indeed like a learned Jesuit. – Simply amazing.

--You say: simply amazing! I’m not surprised, Cosmas! That’s not the point. We are in the same time, that’s why we are both feeling things. I always find you, without stopping, I don’t look backwards or forwards. I’m always here, travelling and staying. I’m not staying nor travelling, I just am. I could tell you also: I’m not Gregory, like you are not Cosmas! But since we belong to time, isn’t that so, we behave with time.

The words sounded abstract, if not actually confusing. But whoever knew their essence, could penetrate into them, and know what was occupying Gregory through the period of twenty years. Clearly, he was into the science of dharmaTo do evil or to do good – both of these arise from adhesion to form.

That would take us far away, dear Gregory! I am not capable of thinking about that, although it would be better not to think, because thinking is also a category of time. You travelled far away. You are perfectly calm, I can see. You have reconciled the opposites. But, they are saying you are sick! I can’t work out what it is you suffer from. I would like to find a creature that does not suffer from anything, but I think in this world there is none. We are made up of disappearances and therefore we must somehow come to terms with the fact that we always have one leg in the grave. If we have come to the bottom of your thoughts, that means we have had to get over a chasm. And that chasm is the length and width of life, ours and our ancestors’. We admit that

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travel is a necessity and we travel on further. We cure sickness, but not with the negation of self. Because we negate our self if we want to jump over this century of time and space, we give ourselves in service to a power above us, which we have imagined ourselves, because we have not understood that we are only who we are and that it is not necessary for us to believe....

We went further, towards the truth, dear Gregory! However, I think you mastered some paths and that those feelings of your mother were correct, who didn’t want to see you as a priest, blessing your flock and giving them eternal rest. It is good that you understood that every institutionalization is a limitation on man, that dogma is a kind of suicide, that hierarchy is the destruction of freedom. To seek, but still in time and space, knowing that there exist non-time and non-space.

Gregory understood I had not come looking for culprits, that for me knowledge about culprits and guilt was more important. How, I asked him, could you live life without conflicts, and at the same time cultivate conflicting creative unrest? How could you make life better without collisions, how could you break the frames and respect the freedom of those who make the frames, how could you un-frame them.....

Night caught us with its long shadows. Had it been necessary to come here to learn these things too? In Gregory's company I felt calm, however. Indeed he radiated something, unknown to me until then. He overcame me with peace, and that was the unusual thing, different from other things, which gave a strange security, and to this a man could come who in some things had penetrated, or better said, lived his life according to principles which had been planted in him and become part of his essence.

I would usually see, of course, restlessness on the face of my co-speaker, I would feel his wishes, his urges, his endeavours, but in Gregory there was nothing. Nothing disturbed him. He listened and listened and behaved according to: who knows, does not speak, who speaks, does not know, but with the difference that he did not make his co-speaker aware of this, because far from it that he would want to insult a man by saying: you're chatting, therefore you don't know, it would be better if you didn't chatter, because with this he would have said: I know. Finally, at least with this mental remark, he would be saying that he was in the grip of opposites.

The forces are strong, Gregory, which brought the company of goldfielders on their journey. We must know that they existed and that they exist, we have to get to the bottom of them, dissolve some of them, some remove, some reconcile, some accept as good. People accepted gold as a basis for the exchange of goods. Who had more gold, had power as well. How could we steal the shine from gold, how could we take away its strength. I say that a man, whatever he was, whoever he was, had the right to live his life and to not become a victim. It hurts me that people were falling as though cut down, just because that was what gold wanted, power wanted that. Mister London and Mister Hamilton are deserving people, are they not? But, were they not harnessed to a cart which was running people down and making them victims? Your uncles were victims, your grandfather, your mother, your brother and your sister in a slightly lesser way. They were touched by those victims.

However, I must go, Gregory! I gave myself boundaries in the freedom I possess. I'm just playing. I want to be naïve and innocent. I like most of all to talk about childhood. Maybe Michael will speak more about that, take me further through the game, to the moment when it will be enough and I can fulfil my decision, my promise.

I'm flying to Albany through the play of light, lightning and clouds. There's a storm in front of me. I admire it. I had broken through all those dark and white clouds, after a short visit to Scarborough beach. I wanted to see it, the magnificent play of the ocean. That was where your father dreamt a dream of happiness, getting his provincial horse Mandiga ready for the meeting with the horse Wonerup Laddie, which before the race was ridden by the Prince of Wales. I thought during the time of the flight, through spaces lit up by lightning, how actually every man is inside himself a card-player and a gambler and how he loves to win something suddenly. Betting is in the blood of all of us, at least a little. Our Mandigas and our Wonerup Laddies

are always saddled. But some people are too impatient, and jab their horse, and quickly exhaust his and their strength, aiming for a goal at the end of the rainbow, as Thomas said so well. Really, if that goal is set, then restlessness comes into us, and then we go wild. Wouldn't it be good, dear Michael, to abolish goals and to bet on the beauty of the game. I'm not sure if you understand me? Actually getting to the goal is great, and not just the goal itself. We bet on the arrival. We ignore therefore, the beginning and the end. Because our problem is in them. We let the goal, if it so desires, arrive by itself, without us setting it up.

This is too much and too unreal for one Aussie or better, dinkum Aussie, who comes from the genus "other siders", who has passed the stage of sandgropers or sandowners! A man would get lost in that labyrinth of the world, it expropriates from him very efficiently the facts of his life. But in Michael's case, he was sent

back, into his starting point which was unknown to him. And in an uncharacteristic way, because his childhood as a Slav was cut short. They did not call him a Ding or a Dago; he set off on a hard path without the feeling of humiliation endured by Tony, his father, who hid his lineage and birth. When death cut short his life, his legacy uncovered his true identity. And now, dear Michael, tell me about that terrible scene.

... We were living in Kellerberrin, close to the station, on the railway line Northam-Merredin. One evening, while Letuce was washing small clothes, a policeman knocked at the door: - I have to tell you some sad news... -- My wife was pregnant, we were looking to the future. It never occurred to me for a moment that that could be the end of the line for my father. Even though his behaviour was very incomprehensible, because he could not control his actions, still, I could not accept that news easily. It must be a mistake! Of course, I went to Coolgardie with the first train. When I arrived there, at first I couldn't help but shudder. I couldn't believe that such a historic place which I imagined to be big and spacious, had become a little town with no special content except for the centre where the famous stone building is situated, the so-called Warden's Court, which was attacked by bushrangers, who marked their finds with stakes so they could obtain permits to exploit them. I heard, actually, that a few years ago they set up a museum there where there is a very good exhibition of the whole range of equipment from the time of the first days of the race for gold, and that they have also opened an exhibition of bottles which they used there.

But that other thing! The place where my father was living in an ordinary hut, on the periphery of the town, actually a little house patched from sheet metal and planks! It looked dreadful to me. I could just imagine how he felt there, and everything the same round about. It must have been a terrible come down both in the physical and in the moral sense, that brought him to raise his hand against himself in that unfortunate, smelly hut. You mentioned that hundred thousand pounds that he wrote to you about. By God, we could have lived like kings, and not suffered like that. My mother so to speak had to beg him for a shilling, and he was throwing it around, he gambled everything he owned. I almost cannot believe he owned a farm of 7000 acres for raising stock. You don't know what sort of wealth that is! And then those mines?! Is that just a figment of the imagination? You can certainly judge that better than I, since I lived here in Perth, Kellerberrin, Newdegate and so on. On the other hand I can't just say he didn't tell the truth. Why would he lie to you? You were not dependent on him, you were a long way away, you contacted him as a man who was not interested in his property; on the contrary, you offered him to come to you. I said it was a come down, and I really can imagine how he experienced that. He had broken his leg, he had hopes for the mine, he caught hold of that like holding a last straw, he tried to get his birth certificate, his citizenship papers, so he could live with some sort of pension, and it all fell into the water, because his steps before that were such that it couldn't be any different. For goodness' sake, to change your surname and not think about your old age, when you need certain documents, because you have to prove where you were born – isn't that irresponsible? Yes, with money you could do anything! Money guaranteed the extension of life, and when it disappeared, when it was lost in the hands of others who were more skilful, more agile, then a man had to go back to his beginning, to ask himself: Where do I come from? Is that not tragic?!

Yes, yes....they found him hanging behind the door. He didn't appear for some time, so the neighbours were asking: where has Tony gone? They went to his house, opened the door and felt that something was leaning on it. They pushed, but some sort of force sent it back. And then one of those people, who were in rags, unshaven, soiled (what sort of people were they, my God!) peered through the opening between the planks and metal and saw the terrible scene.

Do you know what happens in such a case?! Death had come to the neighbourhood, and the neighbours, especially the sort of neighbours that he had, are very careful. There are people who have had experience, so the first thought was: inform the police straight away! They came to investigate and confirmed the sad fact. They took the rope from his neck and put him on the mattress, made their report and left. They

must have rummaged through his things to find an address, so they could inform me, because those people round about were not the sort that Father would have confided in, regarding his history and his family.

I had to order a coffin and get Father ready for the funeral. I asked what I should do. I wasn't aware that Father had committed suicide and that therefore the Catholic church had their own interpretation of that act. I am not a Catholic. Mother is Protestant, and that's how she brought me up, although I never gave special importance to religion. Clearly, I had to bury him without ritual, because the Catholic priest refused to attend the funeral. We took him by car to a cemetery further away, somewhere west of Coolgardie, near the new highway, where the botanic gardens are across the road. They determined for us the place where we were to bury him, and my father in this way arrived, in the end, close to those thousands of goldfielders and prospectors, among them some famous names such as Ernest Giles, not to mention the thousands of young people under 26 years of age, who left their bones here without properly breathing the breath of life.

Oh yes, I nearly forgot. I think this will be important for you, because for me too it was a big surprise. I found in the hut a note on which was written: They crucified Christ on the cross, and that's how they have crucified me! I asked Mama what that could mean. She couldn't answer. And then in a conversation with my wife's parents we mentioned it and her father at once replied: -- Why, they are Jehovah's Witnesses! I didn't pay attention to that previously, but later I went to check his belongings, where nothing else of interest was found except for some brochures, documents and pieces of paper and there I found two publications of Jehovah's Witnesses, called "Awake!" Then I understood his, how can I say, his will. Strange, isn't it? Tony and Jehovah's Witnesses! How did he come to those Russellites? Still, it's impossible to connect his suicide with prophecies that say that Christ the King will destroy vice in the world fighting for Armageddon, where the last fight will be before the terrible judgement day. Those who have that warning in mind, who listen to Jehovah, will survive on earth and live forever in the new world -- so they say -- and what did my father get out of that? They crucified Christ and then they crucified me! And how is it that he did not write to you about these witnesses?

To continue the story about the hut. Certainly, I felt awful there, surrounded by those people with no names, no jobs, who lived in the nearby log cabins. One of them said that my father had stolen rope from him.

I saw, he said, one evening when I visited Tony, my rope. It was lying in a corner, on a sack. I thought it had been left there when I returned from his mine, so I took it and returned it to my hut. Another day I visited and again saw my rope. I thought, Tony had needed it, but, just in case, I took it back again. And when we opened the door, I saw that same rope around his neck. My God! He hung himself with my rope. Sorry, I burnt that rope at once when they took him away. It's unlucky to have such a rope in your house, isn't it?

And then his belongings, among the cans and rags. If I had known that my father spent his days in such a way, I would have come straight away for him. But he answered me when I suggested he come, that he did not want to, that everything was alright with him, not to worry about him. In a sense he was a proud man, he felt he might bother us, that his presence could become a burden to us. Now when I think about it, I believe he was most afraid that we would uncover the background to his behaviour. Pride was mixed with despair. He was

somewhere in the middle of those two stacks. He couldn't go any further when he knew that there would be no rescue which depended on him.

I began at once to read the letters and papers, but I didn't get further than the first. It was actually a request to the solicitor Fred Curran, to help him with his pension. His neighbours stopped me from reading. One of them came to me and said: -- Young man, it would be better if you leave here as soon as possible and forget everything! This is no place for you!

I found myself in an awkward situation. I could do nothing but leave the hut to the neighbours, and get out of their sight. I left them to share the spoils.

And when I got out of Coolgardie with the basic things I took with me, (and everything fitted in one case), there were letters there too, and I opened the case in the train and continued reading. Then I found one of your letters, Cosmas. I read it, turned it round, read it again. What can I tell you? I couldn't believe it, but there it was, first in one, and then in another, letter. A whole building collapsed in front of me. Can you imagine what it was like for me? In any case there was much that was murky, inconsistent and unpredictable in his life, but to uncover after his death that he was not Irish, that he was not born in north Queensland, on the Cape York Peninsular, in Cairns, opposite the island of Papua, that instead he was born in Yugoslavia, on the island of Vis - that I could not get into my head. But....what could be done, in front of me was solid and believable proof. And I had to come to terms with that. When I wrote you that first letter, dear uncle, I was still not quite sure. You know, it's very hard to face a new unexpected reality, and cross out that of yesterday. I believe every one of us wants our own truth, even if it isn't true, to somehow continue. Everyone wants to know for good that his mother is his mother, and his father is his father, that nothing is changed in the biography he grew up with, became a man believing. And then, that whole ritual about changing surnames, because this one of mine is actually, false. I know, there are many people who have done this. Some have done it so to speak, accidentally. So that it was easier to communicate here. And some were rechristened because no one could pronounce their names, their surnames. But why did he hide? Why did he behave like that in front of my mother, in front of me? Before the world? Did he perhaps believe we would reveal him or turn him in to the police, that we would be suspicious of his intentions, his previous life. Even today that is still incomprehensible to me, although there are some naïve reasons because of which I could understand why he behaved like that..

In Coolgardie he came to the end of his opportunities. That mine was actually a cover for a defeat. He didn't have a single penny in his pocket, he had nothing in his bank book, he had gone into his last exploit, trying to get out of an unpleasant situation. He found someone called Ted Payne, who after his death got lost somewhere, - with him he desperately tried to find gold and to finally resolve his eternal problem. They found hope there, promise, so to speak - but what was that? Nothing! The government didn't want to get involved in a hopeless business, and he thought he could easily persuade them to do so. They didn't fall for it. They have a lot of experience with gold and they can decide where to drill, and where not. From Coolgardie towards the east there is not a foot of ground that hasn't been geologically examined. Firstly the first goldfielders noticed the phenomenon that gold shines in the sunlight, and for years they always went towards the sun, especially after rain, looking at the ground hoping to find something shining. Yes, gold was unpredictable. It could be said: it's there where you find it! To find it today is quite an accidental discovery. It's like looking for a bean in ten sacks of beans. I heard in Coolgardie from a butcher how the first comers found three kilograms in a few hours. In a very small location six people got 250 kilograms in six weeks. The gold was simply hanging in the quartz – so they said. Today you need to be especially deft and especially lucky to come across gold on the surface of the ground, and if it is deeper, straight away you have to calculate: does it pay to dig, to bring expensive equipment, to pay workers and so on. And Tony was hoping. I know, he had to live in hopes, because everything else had collapsed. He simply was unable to settle in one place, he could not say to his passion at least one little charming: No!

At least, one little charming: No!

Fred Curran could not and did not want to help him. He had begged him from the Kalgoorlie District Hospital to help. Fred knew well what would happen if he lent him money. But Fred could have done something at least, to let him keep his illusion, to provide his pension. He needed to ensure he received an old age pension of 14 to 18 dollars a week. Every man who is older than sixty has a right to this pension, if he has been here for five years and if he paid an amount through the Association. He could have accomplished that! Fred was the one, I found out later, who had changed his surname, so he had to understand. You know how it is here: no money, no services! It's hard to have anything to do with hopeless cases, but those hopeless cases, before they became hopeless, had brought money to many people. I don't believe that no-one had any gain

from my father's activities, because I know he liked to entertain people. He came to money easily, but money easily melted away in his hands, because he gave it to bookmakers, and to his friends. I heard that an Italian man took from him several thousand pounds. He was his partner, but only until he was well lubricated, and then this man forgot him. Law of the jungle, therefore! You're a friend while you have some sort of benefit, and then you disappear when the kneading trough is empty, with no flour left. I can't stand this sort of person. They are, in my opinion, the worst sort of person.

Here, Cosmas, there was wealth for everyone, but what can you do, they attacked that virgin country like wild animals to get to a larger mouthful, sooner. It proved to be too much for many of them. When I was in Coolgardie those two days, I saw from the Ghost Inn a pitiful procession which looked more like a shadow than reality. Maybe I was in that sort of mood when everything looked black to me. I asked myself how many of them had gone by, how many stayed and how many returned. They were poisoned with spoiled food in tins and with dysentery, they died of thirst because in their lust for gold they forgot there was no water there, they went around broken, with sores on their mouths and faces, full of flies, they raised pistols at one another in front of their stakes, on the tracks they left their bodies, one after the other. Gold, gold, echoed between the skeletons, who were guarding it. And this continued right up until the day when my father took hold of that rope.

Truly, why did he need such a game? Today, when it was all over, when only the echoes of footsteps remained across the desert!

Michael left behind him the echoes of questions. It was clear that he was close to the mother who had raised him, who had borne the burden of his childhood and young manhood, because it was not easy for a woman to be left alone to find her own way in life.

In front of the house I played my old game with my nephew's children. And I showed them the games I had learnt in Hvar, after arriving from Australia. With them my childhood came back to me, because I felt it was important for me now, that only in this way could I find some sort of solace after this story.

My dear Michael, you reached your home after, it is true, an uneven and crooked path, but you did arrive. Your home is here, on the hillside, which is perfumed with the pollen of Australian flowers. This other side of life would not even be known to you if I had not from far away become involved in the fate of your father, my half-brother. If it were not for my curiosity, if I had not wanted after all to learn about my brother's fate, who knows if I ever would have met you? Who knows if you ever would have learnt the truth about your parents, about your own ancestry? Did I have to write that letter, so that you could find out how far we travelled. You have now turned from your path onto another, but then afterwards returned to the main road, but richer for one experience. I must say, even though I am sorry you have suffered, that your journey to Coolgardie was necessary. Maybe the pathway of your life would have travelled the same way as before if you had not found out all this. I don't believe too much in life's lessons, as the older people often teach us, but I can feel in your words a sort of security, which tells me you will be able to find your way in life better than did your father, whose desires were too great, who was blinded, because he did not see that one day he would be overcome. Nothing comes of wealth, just as nothing comes from poverty, if a man cannot find his measure.

Again I am amongst the clouds, clouds of white travelling in herds across the horizon where tombstones were reflected. What a fantastic picture that was, between Albany and Denmark. I had never in my life seen how trees could die standing up. Lightning had whipped through the forest and after the fires that devastated everything, left strange shapes sown over the sides of the hills. My eye was taken by a web of ghosts remaining in the burnt trunks, in the naked, twisted, intertwining branches, without leaves, in half-cut corpses, where ants and other insects nested, and it seemed to me that moonlight here would act like light which had long since gone, and left behind a horrible picture of man's weakness. You see, what happens after death! A trail on the green pasture of life in the form of ghosts.

Did I have to come here after Michael's story? And do I have to fly back to Perth, between these cliffs and stones, between these hills and gardens, between these fields and plains, where Dutch cows are mooing and herds of merino lambs are baaing, with their bright wool and excellent flesh? Gods, why do you give me such a scene as my goodbye.

Perth was again playing with its lights. Thomas was now in the right place. I didn't have to look for him in the colourful salons of the airport, among all the other people who were moving through the aisles.

I again went into the world of greenery, flowers and water and met my dear friend Kuma Tona in the yard of her house in Beaconsfield, there where the lighthouse at the entrance to Fremantle shows the way to many, including my father and my mother and my half brothers and my half sister and tens of thousands of my fellow nationals. At the doorway to Australia stood my Kuma Tona, like a monument to my mother and many widowed mothers of the Goldfields, who had left the bones of their husbands in the yellow sandy soil.

My dear Kuma Tona, I stroke your white hair now and you feel in my breast the heartbeats of my mother, who greets you from the cemetery in Hvar through me. How many grandchildren you scattered all over Western Australia. Thirty five – you say. Your friend disappeared right across from your house, swallowed up by the angry waves of this ocean and you have now stayed on duty between him and your children and your grandchildren. Truly, I am at a loss for words to describe such bravery!

And Kuma Tereza, how did she live?

Do you go often to her grave?

And Kuma Klara, Kuma Lena, Julija, Missus Sali, Missus Bižaca, Missus Matulić and all the others!

--Some died at a ripe old age! You, my son, have come after forty five years and found me, thank God, alive! What do you say to that? Alive! What else!

I couldn't resist that wide smile on her face. I couldn't resist hugging Kuma Tona, my mother's friend, who had shared many good times with her, and even more bad times in Boulder. I simply could not believe that after all, I was here at the end, and maybe at the beginning of many big destinies. What stubbornness, what strength, what love of life, what honesty, what love? They had all crowded together, all lived their lives, all....

I can't talk any more. I would insult all the memories. I rush further into my love. I have to get to the end, right to the end of the rainbow. I have to touch my goal, which keeps running away from me. That cup of gold! How many people rushed towards it? They all wanted to get to the end, they all wanted to catch it, to hold it in their hands, and it kept moving away, disappearing and always coming back somewhere else – like a mirage. But still, that was not actually it, because a mirage showed itself differently to the seekers and wanderers in the desert. Many imagined it themselves, and the end of the rainbow with that cup of gold was something quite different. The rainbow was just within reach, you could see it clearly, you just needed a bit longer to catch it. It was terribly bright, you couldn't describe that brightness. Actually you were inside it. You thought: wonderful, amazing, at last I have arrived at my goal. And you didn't finish saying that, and already the rainbow began to melt away, its colour disappeared, its charm disappeared and thus hope also disappeared. It said to everyone: what is that, my friend, durability? What is time? How many steps are there between birth and death?

The end of the rainbow is terrifying. Especially if it is double, and two ends can be seen. With two cups. A person then goes to one, he thinks that end is safe, he has arrived, and then all at once he goes to the other end because it has become brighter. Two hills of gold have appeared, brought the person to a dividing line, a crossroad. And after all it is the worst end of the rainbow. On this path the most people die. But they die in splendour, in the middle of two beauties, one at the left and the other at the right.

It is easier to die next to a rainbow.

And easiest to die at the end of one's life, without a rainbow.

And I am leaving to go to the place where the rainbow showed itself. There where Thomas was, who noticed it better than those countless goldfielders could even imagine. They looked only towards the horizon, but were not aware of what could follow. The rainbow went with them. Step by step. It did not leave them. It simply strengthened their loyalty. Thomas understood the sham.

Still, I shall not believe Thomas completely. I on the contrary wish to be deceived, I have again come to the beginning of my end in order to be deceived, actually I want something more, to deceive all the tricksters, I want to include all rainbows, I want to touch all the cups, I want to bow to them because in them are those who were deceived.

Then I went into Manian Street, in the suburbs of Perth, to hear one more variation of the deception. What am I saying? Deception! You can think of a different word for that which I shall say, because I do not want to leave behind the impression that I am aggressively seeking the truth against the man who aspired to it.

--My dear lady, you did indeed carry a great weight on your shoulders? – I said after a certain well-known story. – But, please explain to me, how did you recognise an Irishman in him?

--What? What do you mean, dear Cosmas!

Michael's mother Joan was stunned by the disclosures I had announced to her son. She had found it impossible to believe they could be true....

--Who ever thought about that? In the beginning we lived perfectly well. When I say, perfectly, I mean that in the beginning we got along okay; although later on the farm, not far from Mandiga, which is about two hundred kilometres north east of Perth, we did not live a particularly wonderful life because of the big crisis which came. I did know, it's true, something about my husband dealing with horses, but not to the extent you wrote about in your letters. He never told me he spent so much money. So, after that failure at the Hunter's Cup where he lost so much money, he came back straight away to Mandiga, where he began again to work on the farm, hoping to somehow rehabilitate himself....Yes, we met accidentally, as so often happens. In Perth. I was a salesperson in a Perth shop selling smallgoods, and he came there once and then more and more often. That's how it started. He told me he had a farm in Mandiga, and I had no idea where that was, and he persuaded me to go there with him to live. But then as days passed, I saw more and more that he was avoiding Mandiga. I learnt that he was telephoning Bencubbin from some shop, and that he was going there, to the hotel. That went on for some time until I discovered that our money was disappearing somewhere, that there was less and less of it. And then I learnt that Tony was going to a bookmaker in Bencubbin and that he was playing cards in the hotel there and betting. At first I tried very politely to distract him from that. I thought it was just a temporary passion. But every time there was any money in the house, he would be more and more restless. He just couldn't endure it. He would take everything, and then later we would be wasting away right there on a farm where we could have lived decently.

... You say Nick was his brother. I had no idea. Nick lived next to us on the farm and used to visit, usually for lunch, and Tony used to visit him. I know he lent him tools, machines, but I never thought that he could be his own brother. He introduced himself to me as Nick Cary, and truly he was very seriously ill. Since coming to the farm he was weak, coughing. I gave Nick what I could, some eggs, some soup, some fruit, but you could see he was wasting away. Tony went to see him more and more often, even wrote him letters, stayed beside his bed at night. And then he took him by cart to the Wooroloo Hospital, forty kilometres from Perth, and when

the nuns advised him he had died, round about the time of Assumption of Our Lady 1927, he said he had to go to the Wooroloo Hospital and send Nick's things to his sister, and I packed them up.....

Yes, they took those that were close to death to the Wooroloo Hospital. It was a very nice sanatorium, in a beautiful place. At that time tuberculosis could not be cured. It was some sort of white plague. Whoever got it, died, and especially if he already had the miner's complaint. And what can one say about tuberculosis in the time of depression, when there was nothing to eat?

I said that Nick was in a very bad condition. I cleaned his plates, boiled his glasses, forks, spoons in hot water...And then, there were no doctors. The closest was in Tryning, about fifty kilometres south of Bencubbin. There were no automobiles or tractors. You had to travel by horse and cart. You went on trampled, very bad bush tracks. Yes, it was terrible trying to reach a doctor. And Nick was so pale, as white as a sheet....

Yes, yes, that's he in the photograph, true, a bit younger when he was in Boulder. Yes, that is he, I remember that face very well. He was a very nice man, he spoke quietly, with a special soft voice. Poor Nick, he wasn't even thirty years old when he died. Such a pity!

In those days, when Nick came to see us, we had in the yard a quite big covered area, under which was a long table, which Tony had made with some workmen. There I used to give people their lunch and dinner during the time of work in the fields. Nick liked to eat something hot, like he knew he needed to eat good food. Yes, after forty years that face is so close to me, and I didn't know that in it was hiding Tony's brother. Many things could have been different, couldn't they, if Tony had had the courage to tell me the truth? We could have lived like a family, taken care of one another, not like just accidental acquaintances...And so, Tony went to Wooroloo to take Nick's things to his sister, that is, your sister...You say he only sent the things, that he didn't see her, but that's what he said. It's impossible he behaved like that?! You say his sister wrote him a letter and that it came back with the indication: Unknown! But we were in Mandiga constantly. We didn't move, as far as I know, until we left for Baker's Hill, and that was later, later after Nick died, several years later. These things are unbelievable....I can't remember if a woman came here. I seem to remember a woman. Michael said it was his sister, when after Tony's death he met her in Perth, she said she had once been to the farm in Mandiga, but that she had not introduced herself to me as his, only as Nick's sister. She was afraid, she said, that I might think she was Tony's mistress, so she sort of stuck to Nick...Strange, truly strange, how much life gets complicated! When affairs are not as they should be, then everything is contaminated. Tony wanted her to be only Nick's sister, like he wanted Nick to be just an acquaintance in front of me, and not his brother.

For me, it is all a huge discovery. Michael suggested a few years ago, when Kathy was alive, that I meet her, but I just couldn't. – But why, Mama, he said, but why, there's no reason at all why you don't see one another and talk to one another? I just couldn't go to her. I wasn't brave enough. So much had become complicated, so much harm from my association with Tony had come about, that it was very hard for me to think of meeting his sister and going over all I had lived through, but from the other side.. No, no, I just couldn't! If Michael had not spoken so nicely to me about you, if he hadn't read me your letters, Cosmas, if I hadn't felt something else in those letters something new I can't explain to you, I would have hesitated to meet you too. You must understand me, it's hard to dig around in the past, to bring out all that's dirty, especially when you were tied to one man for a quarter of a century, although, to tell you the truth, for ten or so years before and after the divorce in 1954 we didn't have much contact.....

How did he manage that with his sister when she came, did he write to her that she would find me at the farm and not to mention that she was his sister, or was it something else ... you say that he told her at the farm Yes...Maybe...My God, how can a person be so stupid and notice nothing....

Food, you say, what sort of food did he like? I never took that into account. You say *brudet*, yes, yes, he liked fish and he liked to make it in that way. I never thought to ask why he liked that particular way of cooking fish, why he liked olive oil so much, why he used vinegar. And you see, that was your food, your way of

cooking. Of course, what Irishman makes *brudet* for himself and cooks on oil so much and uses vinegar? But, I could assume that he learnt it all from someone and liked it, couldn't I?

You say, wine, how he liked to drink wine. We always had a barrel of wine. He used to drink, what was it called, *bevanda*. And you say that was your way. Interesting! Who could put all that together!

Cards?! Yes, there were some Italian cards. He played sometimes with Nick, how did he call it...*briškula*, *briškula*. And that game is played in your country?! Impossible, impossible... and yet, it is possible!

Truly, I was not aware of anything. He was a good man, except that he had that terrible passion for playing cards, betting on the horses, the dogs. I never could have thought he would do that, deceive me about his brother, his sister, oh God! You know, Italians and Slavs were not looked at kindly here. All sorts of things happened with them. They told me how people behaved towards them when the war broke out. They were with the Austrians, and didn't have to go into the army. I remember that on Australia Day 1934 all sorts of things happened in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. They burnt the houses of Slavs. You'll hear about it when you go to Boulder. It was terrible. Tony was in the Goldfields then. Maybe he was afraid they would reach him one day or he thought it would be better and safer to have an Irish surname, to escape all the unpleasantness! You know we had to sell the farm in Mandiga. The Depression totally set us back, and on top of that his betting and gambling. There was a man close to us who told Tony that he would take the farm, when we decided to move here, to Baker's Hill, sixty kilometres from Perth.

--I don't have any money, you know, he said, I'll give you three Scottish swine for the farm so you can take up pig farming.

And that's how Mandiga ended – for three swine. It was terrible. But you know, if you had a cow at that time, you could live. And we had a cow, and I made butter, cream, cheese, and we sent wheat to Northam to be ground, and they would send back two sacks of flour, and semolina for porridge, some bran, and here we would find milk and eggs, and people could survive. So, Tony wasn't lacking in essentials, I can say. But....he gambled on everything, two-up, cards, horses, dogs, everything he possibly could.

You say Saturday! He went every Saturday and he went two or three times a week, and sometimes every day. Even sometimes he was away from home for a few days. He had a friend there, who ran the hotel, I think his name was Fred Pollock, and he, I heard, later disappeared from the hotel with six or seven thousand pounds, which he wangled out of people like Tony. They caught him and he shot himself.

It's awful, I shudder when I think about that time. Hundreds of people were going around, no job, hungry, in rags so to speak. They even said that the Bushmen were getting along better. They were used to Australian adversity, they had hardened in it, and after experience with others the government had to act cautiously with them, they gave them food, but there were Italians, Slavs, and English too, Irish who went with their bundles from place to place, because they were driven from the towns. The police would simply give someone the order to leave in twenty four hours, and that person had to go somewhere else. How many beggars there were, unfortunate people, wanderers! It was very hard....

Tony didn't want to live in Perth. I don't know why! He always avoided Perth. He would go to the horse races anywhere, but he didn't want to live in Perth. Maybe that loss on the racetrack, when the horse Prince of Wales won the race, hit him so hard he just couldn't see Perth, except for its racetrack. Or maybe the presence of his sister? How do I know? Sometimes someone comes to such a point that everything turns around for him when he learns some things. Once upon a time we used to come to Perth, before the Depression to be sure, for the weekend, and then for our holiday. We would work all year and when we had finished the harvesting, like many farmers because then the great heat would come, we would be on the beaches in Perth. The first Saturday would come, there would be races and already the next day all our money would be gone. My poor mother would help us then....

No, never, he didn't want to live there, only stay for a little while, to go to the races, and then back, and I would stay in Perth, at my mother's. My mother, like all mothers, showed huge understanding, and then I had

the children too, you know, with my first husband. I wasn't only with Michael. My older son Johny was twenty years old when Michael was born. My mother brought Johny up, he was a good boy. He educated himself, so to speak, and now he's travelling the world.

It's all strange, very strange, when you ask me about Nick. You say he was loyal to all of you, that your mother loved him and that he loved her, but how come that not even in one letter to you in Boulder did he mention that he lived close to his brother, that his farm was next to his brother's in Mandiga. Besides, how did

they both end up there? Maybe Nick was in contact with his brother before he went from Boulder to Perth, maybe Tony helped him get the land near his own farm. But how did he write to him without you all knowing. And how did your mother receive his letters, with which surname, when here he was called Nick Carey.....

My God, so many puzzles! Did Nick do that consciously or unconsciously? We could assume then that he was in collusion with his brother in Boulder, so that Tony disappeared only for part of the family, and not for all members. You didn't succeed in asking your sister about that? Because, if he was in contact with Nick, then Tony must certainly have been in contact with his sister, because you say they got on well together....

Impossible, and again, possible...And then, you say, Father's funeral with no-one in the funeral procession. True, it was a long way to travel. You had to go first to Perth and then back to Kalgoorlie. It was not like today. And then, it was expensive. One pound for a hundred miles, something like that! Nick apologised for not going to the funeral, you say. He said he was not feeling well. I understand him, because he really was not feeling well. But if he was unable, if Tony hesitated, why then didn't the sister go, it was easiest for her to get a train from Perth? Perhaps she had to look after the children! Very complicated!.....

How long did we live together? We lived together for four years, and then Michael was born and we went to Kununoppin. In those days you had to go to Wyalkatchem through Trayning to Kununoppin, where the maternity hospital was. And there was a newly built hotel, and I was the first guest in that hotel. I had made a mistake somehow with the dates and I stayed there for three weeks. My old aunt then came to Mandiga and she helped Tony with the jobs in the house. My children were with me then. And when I gave birth to Michael, I went back to the farm, and that's around the time when the Great Depression began....

So we sold the farm for three swine and went closer to Perth, to Baker's Hill. And that was actually the end for us. I had had enough. I couldn't take any more. Tony just couldn't settle down. I tried everything, but the end had to come. I left him and went with the children to Perth. There I got another job. And he went towards Coolgardie....To work there?! You know, he never wanted to work under a boss, he just couldn't allow anyone to be above him. Since I met him, never for one moment did he work for anyone else. He said it himself: --I won't, I won't work for any boss, I never did and I never will. It would have been much better for us if he had worked, if he had some sort of employment, if it had been regular, but he wouldn't give in. And so when the bad time came, when he could no longer stand on his own two legs, when he had to demonstrate his work, to get a pension, he had nothing behind him. I don't know how he would have succeeded even if he had received the certificate from you confirming the citizenship of his father, how he would have proved he had worked. You know, you need to have some sort of papers in hand....

Yes, we separated at the beginning of the thirties, but still, still we met from time to time. I corresponded with him sometimes. Sometimes he called me to come. Once I went to Nula Nula, near Southern Cross. And left again. He always promised he would send money, but there was never any sign of any money, because you could never find it on him.....

You say he said in his letter that he owned a gold mine he sold when the Second World War broke out, that he also had another mine, which was under option for 40,000 pounds, but the war stopped him from getting that money, because the government did not allow any speculation above 10,000 pounds while the war lasted. I don't know what I can tell you about that! You obviously didn't imagine it, because it's in the letter. It sounds like a sensation to me. What did he do with that money? What sort of life did he lead? Couldn't he have put aside some of that and said: -- Here, dear Joan, I'm sending you five hundred, a thousand pounds to get

yourself out of your problems and to educate the child as he should be educated. And five hundred, a thousand pounds would for me have been enough to get myself out of the hole I was in.

And we're talking about tens of thousands of pounds! Did he imagine it, did he hallucinate in his hut in Coolgardie just before he decided to hang himself? And if that is true, then I was with a man in the grip of gambling fever, who gambled everything, including me and his son, who didn't know any boundaries any more. Now I understand the hesitancy of his friend, the lawyer Fred Curran, to help him at the end. How can you give

money to someone you know for certain has wasted tens of thousands of pounds, and before he even turns around, as soon as he gets your money in his hands, he'll be in front of a bookmaker and put everything, to the last penny on the ticket? Fred didn't reject his friend for no reason. He had to do that, because he knew where the money would go. But Fred could have done a favour regarding the pension.....

I just can't understand! It's terrible, isn't it Cosmas? You understand now why I refused to meet with Kathy? But since I have begun this conversation with you, I must tell you something else you perhaps do not know! Tony spent time in the gaol in Fremantle.

You are surprised, aren't you, and I was surprised when I found out. Why, you ask me? Well, he always did live sort of on the edge of the law. He got himself into a situation which led to a criminal offense. From all that we know now it's more or less logical. It was in Coolgardie, in the middle of the thirties. He got involved with some people who were smuggling gold. And to make a better profit, they had to clean the ore they procured from its component parts, that is, to get pure gold. That was done in a hidden place far away from prying eyes, because it was strictly forbidden. Of course, they caught him in the act and the police took him away to Kalgoorlie where he was convicted, and then to Fremantle, to gaol. To a so-called holiday. I knew nothing about it. One Saturday I went to Perth and there I met a woman I had known previously. She knew we had separated, though not formally. That morning she told me: -- My dear Joan, seems like someone got caught for something, that his luck ran out! -- How -- I asked her, because I understood nothing she was trying to tell me. -- Well, she continued, your Tony was always lucky! -- I said: I don't understand what you are saying! The woman couldn't believe I knew nothing about it. She told me what had happened and said: -- Go home and see what is written in the newspapers! When I got home I did indeed look at the newspaper. My God, I nearly fainted when I read that Tony C. was caught in the act in Coolgardie, that he had been smelting ore and that they had taken him to court in Kalgoorlie, where he was convicted and sent to gaol in Fremantle. On Monday I went to the police station in Perth and was informed about it all. They told me: -- Yes, Madam, he's in gaol, in Fremantle, you can visit him, but only once a month. I didn't know what to do. They let me visit him. It was winter, I don't remember which month it was, but I came in front of the door to the gaol and another woman was waiting there also. It was raining. We stood there in front of the gaol for more than an hour, frozen, waiting for them to let us go inside. That rain went right through my skin. And then they opened the door for us. When I saw him, that was a terrible sight. He was wearing an old army coat, it was all shabby and too big. He was shocked when he saw me. -- You know, he said, I wrote a request for social security, so they give you something...

Ah, that was horrible! How could I go and seek help, how could I tell someone my husband was in gaol? I was working then and somehow I made ends meet, although it was very hard. Of course, nothing came of that request of his. After that first visit I had pneumonia and I was in bed for three weeks. I went once more to see him, and then they shifted him to Burtons Mill, to the farm where prisoners worked. When he got out, he came to me, home. He stayed one night altogether. They gave him a railway ticket for Coolgardie. I didn't go to the station with him. I said goodbye to him at the door to the house. That was the real end. Everything was worse after that.

I didn't have any luck -- he said. I didn't have any luck -- that was his slogan, that was his excuse. We can laugh now, but he really did not have any luck. He would say it just didn't want him. He was always playing with it, always hoping, stubbornly he used to knock on Lady Luck's door, he was always trying, but unfortunately in

the same direction. I don't know how all that went on in his mind. Why was he running after that illusion? Yes, they carried their swags, they went for kilometres and kilometres through the forest, through the desert, searched every corner, every tree, every excavation, every pit, hoping to find their luck, hoping she would reward them. Many people did find her, but it didn't last long. And then they set off again, hoping they would meet her again. They went, they went, it was pulling them forward, they saw nothing, they felt nothing else, only luck, luck, luck, the cup of gold....and when again they found it, they were happy, but again only for a short

time, because they sold that happiness of theirs for nothing. Others made good by buying it, people who like them, were going after the rainbow, but not like the little people through trouble and unhappiness; like rich people who had waited for the moment to become even richer. They were lined up, one after the other, right up to the biggest beasts, those who had everything, wanting more of the same. The merry-go-round was turning. Glory smiled, warmed the heart, cried in them: luck, luck! The horizon was shining. The stars were twinkling. My God, what brilliance, how big they were!

Tony travelled after her, following Lady Luck, he climbed to the top, he saw the blinding radiance, he saw it, he fell, picked himself up again, fell again and so on without pause. How terrible it all is! How does a man lose sight of himself. How can he not find anything beautiful, anything dear to him in ordinary contacts with other people, instead always seeking something outside himself, something that supposedly will set him free, and he seeks it all stubbornly, but what he wants to reach is just a big illusion, a big vibrant picture which never ceases to come and then to go. Everything turned to longing, everything was blown away. Those tickets ended up spread around the corridors, the steps, the yards, on the green grass of the racecourses, and then the cleaners came and crammed all those bits of paper, which had been so important to people, into their baskets and took them to the rubbish tip, there to be burned. Some tickets bring wealth. Some people are shown the stars. They fall in love. Hold them in their hands. Think they have become immortal. They get their villas, their yachts, they are surrounded by new radiance, and then, unhappy with what they have got, again they begin to stick their necks out, looking to see if once again, once again luck will smile at them. Again on the same road. And then, then comes what must always come, a sudden fall. Crash, again a man finds himself on the ground. A new message has arrived, but just as it came quickly, so it disappears quickly. There are more steps. A new climb begins.....

He had a small yard, about twenty metres of space, he had, oh Lord, a small house of rusty sheet metal, kerosene cans, supported by beams. A real ranch for sure, a real Latin-American favela. And all around him the remains of a world. And again that dream came to him. It had never left. He would wake during the night. It was shining in front of him. And I came several times, tried to do the impossible, brought his child, Michael, showed him, told him there was nothing for him there, that he had to leave, to come to Perth, start afresh, get settled, work. But all in vain, ...all in vain....

I was in the Hainault Tourist Mine, one day when I visited Kalgoorlie three or four years ago. Lord God, do you know what the guard there told me! – Take that piece of gold, madam, I give it to you on one condition, that you, without any help, take it home yourself. I tried to pick up the bar, but I couldn't even move it. And it was in size just like a brick. I thought, that should be easy. Gold deceives you, deceives people in many ways, colour, beauty, shine, weight. Everything else pales in front of it. It is the embodiment of all desires. In it reside villas, farms fields, yachts, racecourses, horses, palaces, banquets, dances, coaches, Rolls-Royces, Cadillacs, castles, Indian silk, pearls, diamonds, travel, orgies, planes, rockets, art, pure-bred dogs, orchids, museums – everything can fit inside. Everything springs from gold. Everything and nothing. Nothing. Because gold shines, the same way everything else I listed, shines. Its shine makes a man completely dark. From it, in its shadow, nothing remains. Believe me, believe! Tony told me that. He told me with his life. He died next to gold. He hung himself, because it was shining with a false shine. I'm sorry, forgive me.....

Ah, once Michael, when he was young, said he would like to go to Kalgoorlie and get a job as a truck driver, for some wood company. – No, no – I cried – not near that town, no way. Michael was then twenty

years old. We didn't know anything about these things we are talking about today, but we did guess. Especially, I suspected, and that's what I told Michael. I screamed, I remember, as though I wanted to pull him out of a darkness that was threatening from there. I could feel the claws of gold, which have grabbed many people and carried them into the other world. He went, luckily, a different way. From Kellerberrin to Baandee, from Baandee to Corrigin, from Corrigin to Newdegate, from Newdegate to Katanning, from Katanning to Albany, where you met him. He worked as a manager on farms, he had many people under him, he was never at home,

the children didn't even see their father so to speak, but he gained trust and became what he is today. What a difference from his father! Isn't it?!

I left the house of Mrs Joan Audrie and went again into the beauty of greenery. I stroked the flowers in the fields and on the fences. I touched kangaroo paw pimeleas, the flaming banksia, silky blue orchids, dryandra, grevillea, hakea, a whole herbal empire which for me were more beautiful, brighter, clearer, shinier, more lively, more colourful than the whole empire of gold, on that big map of united beauty.

I went to rest for a while at the Swan Lake and for a long time I watched the black swans with their red beaks, waving their slender necks. I watched the geese and the ducks and fed them bread.

Where is Belmont Park, where is Ascot, where is Gloucester, Richmond Park, where are those racecourses bounded by fields and trees, where are those horses with their colourful jockeys?

I fly over Perth early in the morning and try once again to connect worlds. What is that green panorama? What is that beauty? I cannot turn away from it. I would like to take it with me forever. But I go further, further. I am going to the world of moon holes. Grenades fell there, did they? There the waters poured out? And there further away, further away are the rectangles of fields, thousands of them, woven into a great board of wealth, lakes running into one another, strange shapes, and sand seemingly defining their edges. Lord God, has Salvador Dali come here with his ribbon watches?. Isn't that, to the right, the railway line I travelled on to the sea, that morning? Isn't that the pipeline from Mundaring Weir, 600 kilometres long, which killed its creator C. Y. O'Connor?

When did I first see the hills? Exactly 45 years ago! It's all getting a little bare, it's getting to be that terrible grey-yellow colour. A half moon is hanging in the sky, playing with a long, white, fleecy cloud. The forest is fighting the desert, red soil emerges through sprinkles of green. My station is getting close, where I shall connect my birth to my life, because I don't want to die yet. Kilometres and kilometres of nothing, holes, bushes, yellow, red, tracks, cut lines, trees.

There's the Goldfield! That's Southern Cross underneath me. There is Coolgardie. Hello, town! In that cemetery, westward, near the new highway, lies my half brother among those who raised their hands on themselves. He is certainly not near the grave of Tagh Mahomet, on which is written: Died by the hand of a murderer! For him they should write, in the style of Jehovah's Witnesses: They put me on the cross!

My poor brother, who knows where your mine is? The one at Jaurdi Hills! Ted Payne has died – they told me.

That life was expensive, spent on gold, of which there is none. It was not worth it, to give so much for it. My memories however are worth more than all else..

The Golden Mile is now in front of me. But I can't see the dumps any more. Where did their ghosts end up? The wind has driven dust from them into my home, into the homes of all the poor of South Boulder. Yes, the dumps have been turned into big surfaces, one after the other like big shiny loaves of bread, for two hundred hectares. They called them the Tailings Dumps. Big pyramids have been changed for little, like rows of shining bags, which have tamed their murderous strength.

The town, which is under me, has to be clean today, washed, it must give us sunlight. My South Boulder over which I am flying, my school with Sister Mary Callistus at the head. She wrote to me in October 1927 when I arrived in Hvar: Exams are happening right now. Frank Salmon and Inas Azzola took first place in your old

class....We have founded the League for Clean Air and all the students will go to Bunbury or Esperance for Christmas. Last Thursday we had a big picnic at Lake Side.....

What beautiful letters you used to write, Sister Mary!

It's already two years since poor Jim Bizzaca was killed....

I close the paper, remembering. The letter is 45 years old, yellow with memories, and here I am with already new pictures in front of my eyes. I am here, on the runway, looking at the yellow earth. And then I sit in a bus somehow prepared for this occasion. It's nearly half a century since the day I sat one evening in the train at the Kalgoorlie Railway Station, just three blocks away from the famous Hannan Street, from that bronze but somehow stiff memorial to Paddy Hannan, offering water from his leather bag to thirsty passers-by.

Just a kilometre from the airport is the racecourse. Maybe here Tony won his first big amount of a thousand pounds? Everything tells me it is here. The racecourse is not far from the School of Mine, about six blocks away. The Kalgoorlie Cup is held here. We had our Boulder Racing Club too. We had our Boulder City Handicap. Do you remember the horse, Galant? Or Blue Spec, which won in Melbourne and then here? Do you remember that sum of 75.000 pounds that was paid out in total one day, and that was an Australian record. Our racecourses with barriers! Bravo! And our 34 hotels. And bookmaker Edie Cates. How many there were then and how many there are now, in the stands. Where is Claude Aldo De Bernales? Where is Ben Leslie with his moustache? Where is Jim Larcombe, a seventeen year old young man, who found the nugget Golden Eagle, 1,136 ounces in weight?

Ah, what am I saying to myself? There are the Shetland ponies and the goats pulling carts. My Shetland ponies, my goats! What a meeting at the first step! I didn't expect that.

And Hannan Street and its shops and verandas and colourful advertisements, everything opened up before me. They unloaded me in Maritan Street at the tourist Bureau and the first thing I did was to go a few steps towards Hannan Street and to see the Palace Hotel up close, because it was like a thousand drums echoing in me all at once. There, looking at the Palace, I woke up. I was part of its history, because my half brother used to go there. In one of its salons he got his first lessons. He felt that first glow. But I didn't stay there long, because something else was drawing me on which was stronger. I jumped into a bus which went to the boundaries of Boulder. After all, that's where I came from. That's where Tereza gave birth to me. I went on the former tramway line, which had disappeared forever, and began at the first crossroads to find my real, unadulterated childhood.

I became aware of myself in Moran Street; I'm standing in front of the Church of All Saints and St Joseph's convent. All Hallows Roman Catholic Church and Convent.

Zdravo Dotor Orli, hello Sister *Meri Kalistus*, you opened my eyes to the world. I'm sorry about those biscuits, Doctor Hourley. I was hoping and praying that you gave me the whole plate. And Mama said: No, son, just take one! And you, Sister Mary, thank you for that paper. We don't have dust storms in our country, we don't know what that is; here there were storms of dust, here, right here they were, and people were coughing, coughing a lot and much sickness followed after them.....

Everything is still here. And Burt Street. And Piesse Street. And Brookman Street. All my experiences here, together.

And silk *faculets*, handkerchiefs. And my half brother Nick, who once took me to the photographer in Rembrandt Studio, right here in Piesse Street, number 54. And my father, who arranged to have a suit made in Tom Topy's. Everything is here displayed. And my Communion with that little handkerchief in my mouth. And the cinema with the first movies...just below the Old Hallows Church, where there was a white sheet and wooden benches. My dear Popeye, my dear Mickey Mouse! I will kick you in the bum...you'll get a kick up your bum...Mama, buy me a little rocket, a little fire cracker...and police, police on horses, white horses at the corner of Federal Lane and Pisi Street. Is that the police station where that horse used to go with his master?

I knew part of the story of the man who was constantly fined for drunkenness. He picked up bottles in the hotels, but he was a lover of a drop or two, especially beer. It seemed he was constantly being taken to the police station, with his horse and cart. There the horse would eat, after being hungry a long time. And every time old Shak was drunk in his cart, the horse would take him on his own initiative, to the yard of the police

station. Shak to be convicted, and he to eat. Shak never did find out who it was that got him put in prison for drunkenness.

So many things are coming to mind. And now I am looking at the Boulder railway station. I know, if I go along the railway line, and turn a little I'll find myself in Chesapeake Street.

Yes here I am at the corner. Are you still alive Mrs Murphy, are you alive, in that kerosene can house, with its battery, in that sheet metal. Are you getting an exhibition ready to put on for me? And over the road, Mrs Sambardelli and her husband, in their nice yard. Arm in arm. Two worlds, one next to the other. But where are you now? Everything is flattened.

And here is my home!

Shall I find you here, Cosmas!

Joe, dear Joe, do you still dream of Fremantle and the farm on the coast? Tereza, my mother, do you still sell oil, *bakalar* and *manistra*? Kathy, are you brushing your hair on the veranda in front of the mirror all morning! And are you luring the unfortunate othersiders with your female attractions? Nick, are you growing tomatoes? Tony, are you dreaming about horses?

Mister Silich, how much did you sell my house for, to the firm of Muir and Stables? For 46 lira net, you said!

...I hope, Tereza, that you will be happy, because this is the best I could do for you. The agent had to get ten percent, and there was something for the tax too and payment to the shire, and a lawyer...There, 46 sterling lira were left, net money, and I'm sending it to you today.....

That was in March 1938. After ten years – the house was sold.

And my home then was the same as it is today. Nothing has changed on it, except it is small, small like all my paths today are small, like the canal, which I jumped over, is small. And in me over the years everything has grown, and with my growth the houses have grown, the streets, the yards, the canals that took away the water after strong, sudden rain. Everything is little, but everything is much the same, a little bent, a little buckled, a little shabby, moth-eaten. Seems like only yesterday I left this little house.

Missus so-and-so, let me come and sit on the veranda for a minute, let me into my former home! You've altered something here, haven't you? A little! Where are you, my Jimmy, my little faithful dog, who used to warn us of the column of miners coming along after their shift in the mines, Ivanhoe or Horseshoe or Perseverance or Great Boulder; where are you? How many times did I pull up these stakes, how many times did you and I, Perrin, go round all the nearby huts with you, smelling out mushrooms. And you used to dig with us, Jimmy! How much dust was flying between your legs! Sometimes we had to drive you away, because you were interfering too much in our important affairs.

Where are you, my dear horse Dali. Ah, your nose on my cheek....Will you take me and Father to the market in the carriage. I'll give you some sugar, sugar! Where are you, my dear horse Dali!

There were goat skins on the floors. Tereza would get them from our goats, Joe would skin them, put them on stakes dry them and then sell them. Three or four shillings for a kid, and three or four shillings for a skin. Which meant: free meat! And when sometimes Slabić came round, he had to pay for the meat too....*you're not going to gobble it down for nothing, you good-for-nothing. No way! Pay! Your fingers are long and you have to – you're not poor, like you pretend to be. And you'd take my tobacco and my wine on top of that! If you want to drink and to smoke, put your money on the table, and then we'll take out the bottle and the pots. And you insulted Kuma Tona once, deeply insulted her. What ugly words! Whatever came to your mouth, you spewed*

out. I took an axe in my hand then – and you flew out of the yard! Jesus, what an ending that was! Mister Dakometi wanted me in Kornvol, and Slabić was there before me, and then it became too much for him, they caught him and sent him to prison, in Fremantle....and now he's gone. He died. And his son Dani died too. And I

don't know if that other little child by the other woman is still alive....I told you: I'll kill you if you eat his figs, and if you find a penny in his yard, give it to him at once....I'm telling you! --- my mother used to say to me.

There are no more goat skins. The floor is covered with linoleum and carpet, there are no holes in them, you can't roll a shilling and have it fall on the sand, so that I or Lester or Perrin or one of the other boys, whose fathers drove them around in rickety old carts, could find it and proudly show their parents, brothers and sisters.

Ah, I can smell plum pudding!

I stopped for a moment. I couldn't resist. My whole childhood passed before me with that aroma of plum pudding, pudding cooked in a bag, with raisins. What do you over there in Yugoslavia know about plum pudding. You call that "*kaki-masa*" pudding.....Phooey! This, this – plum pudding is cooked for three hours in steam! Yes, yes.

Mrs So and so, let me try some!

The owner of this house must have seen me as a freak of some sort, standing on her doorstep. Plum pudding, and such a face, such enthusiasm, I've never seen anything like it in my life, what, for the love of God, is wrong with this newcomer who says he was born in this room??

Where are my pictures on the wall, where is my grandmother who sits with her sister in Pucisca , surrounded by palms, flowers and rugs, hanging up there on the wall! How did they get photographed then, at that time?

Where is my tulle bed canopy? So the mosquitoes didn't bite me, so the damned flies did not go into my mouth. I slept wonderfully well under that canopy, dear Mother! How thoughtful you were towards me! I dreamt of Father with his long white moustache and I grew up under him. I would stretch my legs to the end of the bed. And I was big, big!

And the commode made of boxes, and the wooden table, and chairs, each one different, and the cupboard, and the stove – nothing is here. Here is a fridge, a washing machine....here there is electricity, and we had candles that Father used to get in the mine.

--You could set the house on fire with that electricity. How many houses have been burnt! Enough to make a big bonfire for two or three blocks. And when a person has any sense, he always puts the candle out before he goes to bed. And on top of the risk, to pay so much for electricity, and money scarce, scarce! You know, other things are more necessary.....

....We had a big vat, and we used to crush the grapes. What good grapes they were! Two or three tons from Fremantle. Half the grapes used to dry on the vines. Nice muscat, that was. Started at Christmas and lasted right up until April. We used to get six or seven tolitor (hundred litres) of wine. Jesus, that was wine for the holy mass! We used to sell three or four tolitors, and keep the rest. Hey, you know, we used to get one and half to two shillings for a litre of wine, and you add up how much that was. And we used to make a few bottles of proshek too. How Sergeant McCormick used to lick his fingers! Very, very good, marvellous! Thank you, missus! And when we gave him a bit of the roasted goat or our chickens from the yard?! Once I found a goat that weighed ten-eleven kilograms. What beautiful wool he had! Then Slavić came, he always had a good nose to sniff out something worth having. And he gobbled it up and then he had a drink, he didn't buy it, and he was babbling about that goat all over Boulder. We ate it for three or four days, we paid seven shillings for it. That was how we lived! And the English were not used to eating goat meat, some of them came to learn from us when they saw how nice it was. They preferred the milk, and not the meat and the skin. And there were houses which had five or six goats. Pick it yourself, Missus! -- they would say when I came and asked if they would sell

one of them. Take it, take it yourself, they would say to me, and I would then take the best one. Like I didn't know, eh!

Where is my book The Temple Literary Readers, with my signature, Cosmas K., 12 Dwyer Str., Boulder City, W. A., bought at E. A. Adams', who inherited the bookshop Barclay and Sharland in Kalgoorlie?

Learn, says Sister Mary, the rivers of Western Australia are these: Ord, Fitzroy, De Grey, Fortescue Ashburton, Gascoyne...Good; you know!

Where is my Jack and the Beanstalk....There was once a poor widow, who had only the one son whose name was Jack...That's how the story began, about Jack who stole a hen from the giant which used to lay a golden egg, and that giant had earlier stolen from Jack's father....That story about Jack inflamed my imagination. It was a bit similar to my own story. I didn't like the story about the lazy snail nor the one about beauty and the beast. The beast with a pig's head in a long dress used to come to me in nightmares, especially when Mama was suffering from those terrible visions the year after Father's death.....

Mama, Mama, how quickly that world went by! Now there is no Kuma Klare, no Kuma Lena.....

.... *Jardo was a tall man. From Pelješac. If he could only go fishing on the sea, if only. He didn't like Boulder, he had some sort of shortness of breath, and then he got the Spanish flu. And he died....*Ah, I just remembered: where are you, my dear friend, my friend Vinko, are you still alive, I have to find you Vinko, because you are a part of me. I have to share your sadness for my brother, I have to spend time with you, because of all the time our mothers spent together in bad troubles.

--Do you remember, Vinko, how we took Holy Communion. We stripped leaves and ate them after you took my little handkerchief. -- And do you know, Cosmas, that they fine you now: if someone strips a branch from a tree, he goes to gaol, my friend! -- And that hole near the school, the one we filled with kerosene tins. - You're alone here, Vinko, why don't you go back home to the old country? -- How, how, when I have no-one there, Cosmas! They have all died. And here too, they have all died. Some are nibbling at their pensions and waiting. Who they are waiting for, I don't know!

I still have to see so much.

I have to...thousands of things, people.

My yard, my ropes, where you, Mama, hung the sheets, pants, underpants, sweaty underpants and pants belonging to my father. Nick's pants and underclothes, those of the Boulder single men, those single men who brought them to you so you could wash them for a shilling, so that they could go to the Cornwall hotel on Saturday, to Mister Giacometti, to play cards, drink beer and gossip – gossip “ebaut gerls and leydz vit a ful basket of flauers in deir arms” -- about girls and women with many flowers in their arms.....

Dear Perrin, I want to write a letter here about my boyhood loves. I'm looking, but I don't see Lester. I don't hear Ermine singing us those sad songs. They told us, you remember, that they had made wide roads, wide, like, boulevards, so that convoys of camels could pass through, because camels can't go backwards. I'm looking, I'm looking for the camels. Hundreds of them in a row, heads in tails, like a rope, and Afghans and Belugistans one for every thirty camels. I'm looking, and I can't see our silk kites shining in the sunlight, carried by the winds. Red kites, our fires mingling with the sun, taut on their ropes, where we added them. I'm looking, and I can't see our cans flying into the sky under the clouds. I'm looking and I can't see the Bushmen leaning over into our yard and shouting: -- Missus want a piece of gold, give money, give some food and tabak, missus I giv you gold.....

And my long socks, those with the red stripes. Two stripes and between them whiteness! Cosmas, be careful of the blacks, turn the socks around, they'll get you and take you out into the desert, if they find you with the red colour uppermost. They'll first spear you. And I ran, in my dreams I ran and no-one could catch me, and then some force would stop me, hold me back, I shouted, and then I saw the dear sweet face of my

mother and her white hand which pulled back the tulle and stroked my forehead....the precious hand of my mother.

Ah, childhood, surrounded by kites, crackers....wheat crackers too, crackers, childhood dreaming in the sand, in the smooth skin of white mushrooms, in the yellow of our big, huge sterling lira, childhood....

And Mister Silich sold that house. *And he got for it from Muir and Stables, I remember them, I remember, 46 lira. He did well, after ten years, and lira sterling had passed that crisis, come good. And the value had dropped, and when you worked it out, what did I get. Less than what I would have got if I had sold the house back then, for twenty lira. So there you are!*

So there you are!

And then when it happened, when the Horseshoe Mine closed, when around a thousand and a half men were left without a job, when the dark clouds of the crisis were forming, then some of ours, Budišelić, Starčević and others, put their houses onto the triangles and left Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and went south, to Salmon Gums and Esperance, they got a thousand acres of land and thought they had resolved their problem, when a new crisis came, the wheat crisis...It was terrible, my friend, you who have come from far away to connect that old time of yours in Boulder, with this new time. A bushel of wheat, nearly 35 kilograms, was sold for just a shilling and a half. And the man had had to fertilise his farm, to hire machines, tractors and combines, put up stables for horses and cows and other animals. And suddenly! You know what happened? The farm, and the horses, cows, sheep and dogs, and the house, all had to be left, because they couldn't meet the expenses because of those unfortunate prices. All left for auction, kaput, as the saying is, and they went to Perth and other towns. They became proletarians! Nothing could help. Not even the ingenuity of our Garbin, on the island of Šolta, who tried to organise the farmers to help them in their trouble. He told them that they, and no one else either, must not buy at auction machines which some companies were trying to sell in order to pay the debts owed. – No-one should take them – Garbin said. So the companies had to leave the machines with the farmers. Yes, yes, the battle was very hard, but the legality of the crisis was brutal, brutal. What can we say about that now?

Hey, childhood, surrounded by kites. Kites, kites and crackers.....

And there, and there? I walk from the veranda to the yard, to lean on the fence in the yard. Good Lord, what sort of people are these newcomers, thinks Missus So and So, what's with that fool who asks about everything, who is interested in the years of the crisis and the depression. There, I told him, I knew something about that!

And over the path to the gate in the fence I ran ten thousand times, ten thousand times. And Perrin and Lester and Vinko and Thomas and Gregory. And how many cries and shouts were heard in that area, little Slav boys and girls playing!

A wide street has spread out, and I can see on the corner the Cornwall Hotel. Mister Giacometti, are you alive? The palm trees have grown, they are big, eucalyptus or salmon gum I think. SAY HANNANS beer on the façade, the upper and lower veranda. There in that corner, near that post, Joe used to lean and observe the surroundings. Sergeant McCormick, you are my friend it is true, but.....

-- If only I could have had the gold that was in pockets –Lena said to my mother.

A little was enough for you. And that little, you would use so that nothing would be wasted. Everything lasted for decades. The sheets were half a century old, and I still have the serviettes today. And that aluminium pot, we still use it to get water out of our well in the summer time.....

And what do you know about pegging! That is when a prospector, or prošpetur as we used to say, finds gold and begins to write down the dimensions of the land. That is the first step so that he can make a request for ownership and reward. Every person over 21 years old, had the right to 24 acres, and that was called the "prospecting area". In order to "peg" it, you had to have four stakes each four feet high, and that is about a metre and a quarter in our measurements, and each had to be three inches in diameter, that is, five

centimetres. You push the main stake into the ground, then you fill in the form, you write: at such and such a time, I, so and so, at this or that position, pushed in my main stake, which faces north, south west, east,

according to the position you want to enclose. On that main stake you tie with string your form together with your licence, that is your mining rights. No-one can prospect without mining rights. When you have done that, you have to dig up the ground nearly two metres in length, thirty centimetres wide and fifteen centimetres deep from your main stake in two directions, in a rectangle. In this way you determine the square of 24 acres that you want to enclose. Then you put the other three stakes on the three remaining corners, but there you dig out less dirt, one metre on each side, in two directions towards the other stakes. Be careful, that main stake is the one around which everything is done, the most important, and when you have put those papers on it, your rights are ensured. Oh, you must remember something else too, you should not push in the stake at night, because it will not be recognised if there is a witness who can report it. And don't be fooled, there are eyes everywhere, they can see in the darkest night, and then the voice is witness at the warden's, and you lose your right. You have the right to "peg", that is, to put in the stakes, between eight in the morning and four o'clock in the afternoon. Some people are gridy, and that word comes from "greedy" and that means greedy and they would deceive even their closest family and friends, much less you. But if anyone takes the paper from your stake during the day and puts his own there instead, then the court would have a job to do, especially if a man has a witness that he pegged everything legally. There were some people who went alone into the desert. No-one was near them for twenty kilometres around, it seemed. The man lived in a small tent, he had his bundle, his swag, his plate, some tins of food, and when he found gold and put in his stake, he would be tricked by some charlatan. That's why one always had to be careful...when everything was finished with the stakes, then the prospector went to the office of the Mining Warden, that is, to the mining supervisor, to report his find, that he had pegged so and so place and encircled the area. That is how he leased the land, which gave him the right to work there...You know, in the first days, to stimulate the search for gold, the government gave a reward of 500 to 1000 lira sterling for the discovery of paying gold. That encouraged still more that big, huge hunger which drove people to the hardest imaginable efforts and temptations. A prospector usually carried with him a large plate, black if possible, because then alluvial gold could be better seen, mixed with soil and sand, and he would shake this, turn it around, as though he were sifting the contents, and then he would endeavour to blow away the dust. You know, it was better to do it with water, because the gold after rinsing would stay at the bottom, because it is heavier, but since you couldn't even think about using water out here, because there was none anywhere close by, it was done by blowing, so people invented the so-called "dry-blowers", to make the job easier. That's how it was done. In those days. I know very well.....

And as for telly or telluride, and we say "telerajd", that is black as coal, and in it there is fifty percent gold, it's so rich. When a man finds telly, "puna mu je šaka brada" as we say – he is very happy. There was a lot of telly in Boulder, especially in the Hamilton shaft and Great Boulder, and that was the same company. That blackness, which ran through the hard rock, like a vein, could be as thin as a hair, and it could also be several centimetres fat. Telly is known far and wide and everyone wants to find it. And what did the companies do when they found telly? They would close that place.....You are surprised, but nothing is surprising when you uncover their secrets. That gold mainly was used for speculation. Telly is rich, and that rock around it, that quartz, is not so rich. A ton of rock, so it was said, would yield six penny weights, which was good when it went on for months, years, but it happened that the quantity of gold in the quartz went under that ratio. And what did they do? They would open that sealed rich site of telly and repair that ratio, so that the six penny weights a ton remained for the whole output. In this way they made the average better. That suited them well, especially because of the speculators in shares. They would report that they had found a good site, the company would give out a stable production, the shareholders would rub their hands in glee, and that other gold, in the rock, it was falling by the ton, kept up by the telly while it lasted. Outside they were saying all gold was in the quartz, and it was not in the quartz, it was in that sealed telly. Telly was, therefore a big thing. Shares with telly were

quoted high, they were sold for big money. And some were proclaiming they had found a large amount of telly, and there was actually none. The price of shares would rise, and when there was no production, it suddenly fell. Some people bought a dud. That's how it was.....

And you ask how companies came about. Easily! A single man would find gold, but it was necessary to exploit it, that is, to get machinery and other equipment. When people heard a prospector had uncovered a good site, dozens of agents would surround him. One of them would give him so much, another that much, because the prospector would have no money, he couldn't buy machinery, he couldn't set up a company. What could he do but sell? They give him a couple of thousand lira and he is happy. Little people are happy with a small amount. And little people who had been hungry, who had worn trousers made out of sacks, who had been exhausted by the desert, found most of the gold in Australia. For a small amount of money they sold their leases to the companies. And the company would then invest money, bring machinery, and open the mine for the legions of unfortunates who were waiting for a job. They gave the prospector a couple of thousand, and with their shareholders they made millions. Money, money! And what do you think, I ask you, could the poor prospector have done anything else? Who would have given him those stamp-heads, the crushers, the lifts, the bine, the boilers, the smelters? He would have to carry his ore to the government battery to be crushed and smelted, but he couldn't see the gold. He got money for that. Only if he wanted to work on the black market, - and unauthorised possession of gold is prohibited, dear friend! Fines, fines, and they send you away on holiday, to Fremantle. And some were successful. And you know who – those who already had too much....

Do you know what Swan Bitter is? That is a beer from Perth. Now they call it Swan Lager. About a hundred and fifty kilometres from Sandstone, in a forest, two brothers in 1930 were prospecting and found gold. It had to be crushed in Wiluna, about 400 kilometres away. Those two brothers came to Wiluna with an old cart and agents gathered around them. Some succeeded in leading them into the tavern and getting them drunk. And then those agents around them were coaxing them: sell us that site, we'll give you 48 bottles of beer in a box. Backwards and forwards until they persuaded the brothers to go with them to Sandstone to sign the papers for the sale. In Sandstone they again got them drunk at Morris's hotel there. They offered the brothers Johnny Walker. And for God's sake – they signed for 48 bottles of Swan Bitter beer. And the mine, which was opened at that place, was called Swan Bitter. That mine was exploited for twenty years, it was very rich, and they got millions of pounds of gold for only 48 bottles of beer. And the brothers....the brothers set off on a new exploit. That's how it went!.....

And you say, what about smelting. That's when you cook the telly or the well crushed, mashed rock, the dust that settles. You kindle a strong fire, and in a pot you put liquid boracic acid, or *borna kiselina*, with quick-silver. When after about three hours it boils, a drop appears, a strong force pushes the acid out, and the gold falls down, because it is heavy, and it's poured out into a mould, and the quick-silver falls away when all of that is thrown into water. Yes, that's how it is! I know that. I worked at it. It was then sold to private individuals and.....

That was in 1936.

You know, up there in Port Hedland, you go two hundred kilometres south east to Marble Bar. That's the second hottest place on earth. And that's where Tommy Star found gold. How did he find it? He was prospecting around a hill, called Comet, and it was hard to climb up onto it, you needed rope to get up there. Tommy was going around the hill with a little plate, the one he used to shake the soil. He would pick up a little sand, two or three centimetres from the top, and put it in the plate and look for the speks and when he found them he knew there was gold somewhere close. And so Tommy went, slowly, first here, then there, picked up the soil, shook it, blew on it. Some people dig up millions of holes to find something, and often they don't find anything. Tommy found only speks, nothing else, and no gold. And that Comet hill was of the hardest rock and who thought to go up there, up the top, for gold. Tommy went round, only speks, speks, nothing else. He thought, gold goes down, and then something came to him and he decided to climb up. And he was hitting that hard rock. And what do

you think? There were forty or fifty ounces of gold per ton. It was that rich. He found a crusher for himself and then the company Western Mining Corporation took over. Tommy produced several million sterling. They dug for a few years and then it was all gone, disappeared. The reef disappeared and the rock, all of it. But some people became very rich.....

I put myself into a column of miners and think things over. What can I imagine today? I create pictures in my mind. I dig, I build dumps and destroy them. I go under the ground, I'm a bopper; then I'm a trucker, I push the wagons, I jam ore into their jaws, I push them to the bin, all by hand, all by hand, the ore is shining in the darkness. And I breathe, through the smoke from the fuses and the dust, I breathe, I breathe. My lungs are full of smoke. They brought a little pig here, left it for two or three months, fed it, and then the pig died, and they opened it, the miners opened it and they saw, they saw....But what could they do when they saw? What could they do? Make a report to Mister Hamilton? Go and find Mister Brookman, complain to Mister McLernon, write to Mister Forrest and his party in parliament, visit Mr Kirwan at The Kalgoorlie Miner and tell the story?....*a story about a pig, so people know, so people know, that the pig died in the mine and that they found his lungs full of, of, what is it called....minerscomplaint, silicosis, illness from the mines, illness from searching for gold, which made a man weak, which made him cough, wore him out, took him to the cemetery and buried him there, leaving behind him a widow and children, a poor widow and little children.....*

I imagine myself in the column of miners, with Joe at the head. And history passes by me. I am their child, the child of their history. I want to understand that "bloody bastard country", that sick gold. I want to understand their aspirations, their cards, their swearing (*unfortunate blasphemers, they are damned as far as they are long and wide, drunkards, ne'er-do-wells, whores by birth and by breed, spendthrifts, cads, freemasons, disgraceful wastrels, who would even drink the dowry of St. Ana*) I want to get inside their blood streams. Mister Bižac, how are you? And you Mister Silich? And you Mister Matulić? And you Mister Dres? And you Mister Poklepović, Bušanić, Ivanković, Dropulić, Bucat, Barbarić, Jović, Mateljan, Matković, Rosić, Marinović, Lalić, Sardelić, Tabain, Stela, Vukmanović, Katić.

And you, thousands of you! From Vis, Hvar, Pelješac, Kozica, Mljet, Makarska, Korčula, Brač, Solta! Where have you all gone? Where is your seed? Where is your dust!

After that great campaign!

With all those swags of yours! The Swagman's swag or pack! And I thought Waltzing Matilda was a woman! Good Lord, a woman, and it's a swag! Mister Banjo or Mister Paterson, bush rangers, you sang the loveliest song in the world to my miners. How can "God Save the King (or Queen)" begin to compare with it....The diggers took it everywhere with them, to all corners of the globe. And I thought that was a woman, a girl....How many illusions a man can carry with him, including that illusion regarding the song. And by day and by night our people kept you in your house in Melbourne. So what happened to you in the end? How could you Banjo, do that? How? Ah, dance the waltz Matilda, dance the waltz in my hand, under my arm, dance, my swag, my one and only hope! In it is my bread, my pants and underpants. And a small nugget of gold. Dance on the Goldfields and scatter around the globe, to become my miner's echo, to show how I was alone, how I dug, sweated, drilled, hit with the pick, chased, loaded, went hungry, swore, coughed and died. Died. Dance the Matilda waltz on my grave! Dance, "you fucking mule", "you bloody bastards", you "whores of all whores"! I carried nuggets from the mine in my mouth; they got into my arse and then I shat them out. Poor mother! And you were shouting: -- Slavs and Dagoes! You drank away your sadness in the Cornwall, in the Shamrock, in Lupez's belt, in the Golden Eagle of Jim Larcombe, in the York, Federal, Railway, in 34 hotels of my Boulder. You were drinking everywhere. And I was shouting: "easy come, easy go!"

And was it quite like that, was it? We came here easily and we went to the cemetery easily. After only fifteen, twenty years. And some not even that long, like my Nick. And you are amazed to see what we have all become, into what we turned. And you fought for the federation of the Australian colonies, you outvoted, pre-voted, under-voted, yes or no, for Australia, in the Colonial Office in London, against New South Wales, Victoria

and South Australia! You passed, supplemented, withdrew paragraphs of the Mining Acts, and we went on foot in a column and could hardly breathe. All in all what respect, what an example! What did we need with a petition of 28000 signatures to the governor of the colonies and the Queen, with a special post of pure gold! Our gold! Do you know why water came from Mundaring Weir, near Perth? Because we were very, very thirsty here in the Goldfields, because they wanted to poison us with water from the lakes, from Lake Lefroy! Because we ate spoiled cans of food! Tinned dog! Not to mention water being necessary for the mines!

Joe, dear Joe, do you feel in your nostrils that damned wind that will blow tonight from the northeast, how it will raise the dust from the dumps and strew the grains of sand around your room, in the kitchen, over the bed, on the plates, the cutlery, on the meat, the bread. You will eat dust in the morning, you will chew it: chewing, chewing! And Doctor Ervan will prescribe medicines for you.

--These things are unbelievable, how could it happen, I know nothing any more, my dear little Kuzma! Your father was a good man, a good man, the best in Boulder, and his oldest son Tony grows up into a vagabond. He wasn't like that when we were friends....No, you can't say any longer that the pear doesn't fall far from the pear tree. What people were saying wasn't true, I saw that. People can make a mistake, for sure! Why didn't he put that money in the bank, why didn't he get that loan, why didn't he buy shares from a good company like Lake View and Star or why not go partners with someone and open a business, and that would have doubled that win he got at the races that first time. That's how you do it here, that's how. I did that and it worked out well. I didn't swallow dust, I didn't get the miners complaint, and I was still working. I wasn't just sitting around, and I made a man out of my son. He, to be sure, has his own company of fine wool and it's going well. It's going very well. He got married, found a good wife and he has two fine children with her, not to mention the lovely apartment and villa he has in Esperance. Ah, my dear young Kuzmić, I got away too, I went to the cemetery, I have a fine grave, I ordered it made from white stone, and my photo and my wife's photo are on it. You know, I became ill when I was eighty years old, yeah, eighty years, and your Joe would have been the same age, but the poor man died before. And that shut me up, stopped me going out, some said it was that terrible disease, that cancer, but still, I lived my life, lived, and what else can one do nowadays. I was happy with my job. I left plenty of money in the bank for my wife, and then she ended up leaving soon after me. And so, now we are next to one another in a nice white stone grave. So there you are!

Thank you, Mister Groky. Thanks for the memories and for the advice. You gave a lot of it.....you couldn't say you were one of those who would take the skin off your back. *You were reasonable. Even though you did get Tony into some jobs. You needed to give to your own, and then again, you would help people. You were somewhere there in the middle. You didn't smell quite of perfume, but you didn't stink either. There were worse people than you.*

And that Jovan Spajić got the Victoria Cross, the medal for bravery, and the poor man didn't even know. He died and he didn't know. And no-one knew. No-one. And when he died, that's when people were saying he had got the Victoria Cross. His commanders from the First World War had suggested him for that big medal and the king assigned it. And it happened that no-one was informed, and it was not delivered to him. And when he died, that's when it finally became known. All the newspapers in Australia were writing about it. For shame, for shame! And Jovan Spajić went as a volunteer to the Solunski (Thessaloniki) front. He went with our people. There was Mate Lepina, the one they gave the land in Slavonia to, and Čedomir Bušanić, the one they called Charlie, who cut wood for the mine in Gwalia. The organiser of strikes, a very honest man....They all had a hard time at the war. What great people they were, my friends! And Jovan Spajić didn't know he had been awarded the Victoria Cross! What a shameful thing!....

And Gwalia? The sons of Gwalia Gold Mine, 240 kilometres north of Kalgoorlie. In Gwalia horses were pulling the wagons under the earth. Those horses were used to it. The horse simply lay on a big blanket they put down, they tied him to it and lowered him into the shaft. They kept the horses for ten, fifteen years. Only Gwalia had horses in Australia. That was the biggest mine after the one at the Golden Mile. The lift went

sideways, not vertically. And do you know that they knew exactly how much to pay a man if he lost a finger. Fifty pounds they gave for a finger, and for a life, if a man lost his life, they gave a family 750 pounds, and for a dead horse they gave more. A horse was worth more than a man. What social insurance, man?! What children's supplement! If you had been paying into the Miner's Relief Fund, you could survive, but if not.....

And you don't know about Kukura?! That's a funny story. All the children knew Kukura. He would stand in Burt Street, throw lollies into the air, and the children would jump around him. And Kukura loved to drink. He was always drunk. And he was a self-taught mechanic. He had no education, no diploma. Kukura worked in the Power House in Johnston Street, the power plant that supplied Boulder and Kalgoorlie and all the mines with electricity. Before the arrival of oil they used wood. People came there with full carts of wood. And Kukura had worked so much at the Power House he knew exactly how it functioned. He knew how to talk to the machines – that's what the English used to say. If a machine stopped working or there was something wrong with it, as soon as Kukura looked at it, it would start to work, by itself. Kukura used to get drunk and the police would shut him in the gaol. Four times a week he was in the pen. And when the machines stopped working, the manager would come looking for Kukura. Of course, mostly he found him in the gaol, at the police station. It was necessary to get him out. As soon as Kukura arrived at the Power House, there you were: the machines started working! A miracle of God, that was.....

From October 1927, when you left Australia with your mother, right up until the war three hundred thousand people out of six million Australians were without a job. You were lucky to have left. I don't know how you would have managed. I was then in Mount Magnet. That is 500 kilometres from Perth towards Cue and Meekatharra, and I saw how people were leaving. They would come to the station master and ask when the train was leaving for Cue. – There's no train for you! – the stationmaster would answer, because he knew they would not buy a ticket. They simply hung from the train, especially the goods trains. They would go from one place to another, looking for work, and there was no work anywhere. The police would chase them out of town or shut them up, and they were very happy to be shut in the gaol because then they got something to eat.....

And you know, many of our people hanged themselves then. A man comes to this country, thinks he is saved, that he will work and be paid a wage, to send to his family, to keep them alive, to pay back the debt he has raised at home at a big interest rate in order to travel, and then he finds himself in such a terrible situation here. No jobs anywhere. No work. He goes from town to town. Looking here, there and everywhere in Western Australia, but with no success. Hundreds of men waited in front of the mines. It was hardest in 1931, 1932. And then they started to give out tickets, "soupkitchen" tickets. You received a ticket worth six pennies. You were living with somebody, and gave him that ticket, and he gave you food, and he was refunded for the food. A little soup, a piece of bread and that was all from those damned six pennies. No meat. Some of our people kept these poor men giving them food and accommodation for that money. Thirty, forty of them. Terrible, terrible! I saw young women and girls selling themselves for just two shillings, to make enough for food. Two shillings for the whole night. And if the owner knew that one of them had done that, she had to give him six pennies for every man. Hunger and prostitution went together, hand in hand. People had to survive! I can't begin to describe it for you, I can't. And some people went voluntarily to their death. They couldn't bear it. From the country came pleas and begging for help. Grljušić, Maršan, Turić....Don't ask me about it! It was awful here. One man was working, and four would be eating on the wages of that one.....

...And I waited a long time for a job. Three times a day I went in front of the mine, in the morning, at midday and in the evening, when work was finished for the day. But there was no work. Then I went to Gwalia. And there I found 69 people at the doors of the mine. But my case was a bit different from that of those poor people. They threw me out of the mine for political reasons. I annoyed the shift boss, some "bloody bastard", I said he was political shit. Shit, shit! And he knew something about me being tied in with men from the Australian Worker's Union, although that wasn't much of an organisation of workers. I pulled the dog's tail, got

myself on the black list. And then through the Chamber of Mines it went to the offices of all the mines. You're waiting in line, they ask you: -- You want a job? You say: -- Yes I do! He says: -- What's your name, wait a minute! He goes into the boss's office and looks at the blacklist. When he comes out he says simply: -- Sorry, I looked to see if there was a place for you, but unfortunately there isn't! And you then have to pick yourself up and go to another mine. Where the same thing is waiting for you. I changed my name but they still found out who I was. It lasted for four years, my friend! Four years from mine to mine. From Boulder and Kalgoorlie to Wiluna, to Big Bell, to Cue, then to Mount Magnet. Nowhere any jobs. There was someone called Carolly, an American, the main manager for Lake View and Star. Some people I knew went to his foreman Wilkie to ask for a job. And he says to them: -- We aren't allowed to! And then I went again to Gwalia. I worked a bit, mainly prospecting without success. Foreman Billy Robinson met me and asked:

--Did you come here for a holiday or are you looking for work?

--What holiday, *kakvi praznici* – I said to him – a job, I'm looking for a job!

And he was just then going down into the shaft with a lamp.

--Come and see me at the office tomorrow at eight in the morning! – I don't know what was up with that Robinson, he actually gave me work. He must have needed a machiner-miner. Today it's rather different....

And what do think, that a bopper or a trucker could see the manager at that time. He had a better chance of seeing the Czar or the King. The manager lived apart in his own home, surrounded by all the benefits. He went to the Palace, and who among the miners could think of doing that? Maybe, when he felt his wallet was really heavy! The managers were not bothered by the dust, and the foreman was under the manager. The company would build a house for him. A shift boss, who was like a corporal, lived like other workers, it's true, but with better pay. The foreman was lord and master. He would take away your job immediately, if you made a mistake. "Take your sack! Take your time!" Just waving you off. You get your pay and off you go! Complain to the Australian Worker's Union! Yeah, good luck with that.....

And do you know that people have to change their clothes when they go underground and when they return. You leave the clothes you came in to the side, go quite naked to the other side and put on your working clothes. And the opposite, when you have finished your shift. They brought in having to wash after you return from the shaft. They know their job! No possibility remains that a man can take out a little piece of gold or some telly, that black, black as coal telly in which half is gold. And a nugget or two can rest in the mouth. And some would make you....God forgive me, all sorts of things happened, all sorts...

And someone called Vitaka, who had the Railway Hotel, near the station in Kalgoorlie, he was a big speculator. Those who were stealing and smelting came to him. And the manager of the Victoria Hotel, who was at the Palace. He was the biggest buyer. They could never catch him. And it was known that he sold gold in Singapore. They went there by plane. Once they got sixteen thousand an ounce for gold, and that gold was carried by Katler, who was the Leftenant Gavener. That pilot was declared a hero after the war. They caught him, but they didn't convict him. They wrote about the topic in the newspapers. Some of our people lost a lot of money then. They smelted the gold, then gave it to the manager of the Victoria hotel, who split it up. And it happened, it happened. The little fish were caught in the net, and the big ones passed through and all remained as before. What did they have to lose!.....

What profits those were, my dear friend! Especially when some prospector worked for the manager, who made it possible for him to smelt the gold he got on the black market. Half and half. Someone called Egan lived at the Federal Hotel at the top of Hannan Street. How many times was he gaoled? Every moment he was going for a holiday to Fremantle, to that fortress in Beaconsfield, to a cell. Music played for him there! Ha, ha! And he didn't hide the fact that he was engaged in the smuggling of gold. Everyone in Kalgoorlie knew that....

And that Rebo and Batain of ours, from Vela Luka. They had the Fairy Tale Mine. It was an old mine. They re-opened it, brought machinery, set up a mill. And someone called Zaninovic brought Mister Weiss to

the mine. In order to get the mine for the Adelaide Company of South Australia, Zaninović and Weiss bought the Fairy Tale mine from Reba and Batain for forty thousand lira, and they sold to the Adelaide Company for forty thousand lira. They had 300,000 shares, but they didn't want to give up the shares. When they had been paid back the outlay, the company brought much machinery, worth half a million. They didn't find even an ounce of gold. And that machinery remained. How did they work that out with the shares, with 300,000 shares? They succeeded in making 40,000 pounds with this trick, because the company thought they still wanted to use the shares, and they believed there was a lot of gold there.....

That's how it was. That's how it was.

And I'm looking for my childhood. There is nothing of my childhood at all on the Golden Mile. It's all just memories, long-ago memories. It's all the talk of new people, whose memories are big, strong, as wide as the desert, as its depth.

Yes, yes, by hand they deepened, dug those holes in the ground. And then after the First World War they brought big machinery, which bit into the quartz and made holes for the dynamite, and the noise was terrible. They didn't turn round and round like they do today. There was no water then, and clouds of dust flew around so that you couldn't see anything. They still have those machines in Gwalia, but they are not in use. They are the things most at fault for the silicosis. There was no air in the tunnels, there was no water. And those batteries up above, there were ten, twenty of them crushing the rock, the quartz, and water pushed it onto the plates where there was quicksilver, which caught the gold from the crushed rock. And now there are smelters there. The process with cyanide has been brought in. The extraction is better. And after 1926, when your father died, they brought in froth flotation. There are mine ramps, there are those black towers with rings, poppet heads, there is the zig-zag line of roofs.....

There are no dumps. There simply are none, the dumps of my childhood have been erased. My yellow countryside has disappeared. It has simply been flattened. And I never again will be able to see such a long hill, only what I saw towards Perth, I was amazed to see the green hills, I never had imagined something like that to exist. There are no dumps.....

Some German company took the dumps. More millions of pounds came out from them. You don't believe it Cosmas? You know, the old method of crushing and mashing left more gold in the tailings, in the mullock. The Germans analysed the contents and saw that in the dumps there was, as we say, four penny weights in an ounce. And you know, there are a hundred penny weights in an ounce. That was around the year of 1950, when the Germans bought those dumps. Hundreds of thousands of tons of dust they put through the machines and reworked it. They ground it and with a chemical fluid they caught the remaining gold. After that was left gunk, slime, which went as hard as cement. Those dumps of tailings occurred for 200 hectares. You saw them from the plane. That white, dirty yellow colour. That eerie moonlight shining on them....

There are no more of those dumps of mine in my countryside. No miners either. A few, a few. And they are not what they used to be. They are what they are not. Where, where has that time gone? It never, so to say, even existed! And yet, it did. My half brother Tony grew up then, Kathy grew up, Nick grew up. My father Joe supervised that growth, and my mother Tereza. And then nearly all of them disappeared at once, only Mama and I remained, Tereza and Cosmas, in the funeral procession.

We march into the future. Sheep have arrived for us. Nickel was discovered. New enthusiasts have been born. They are protesting now against the emptying of water from the surface diggings and small dams, because duck hunters don't have a job. They go to the bowling centre and the drive-in theatre, to bowling and to films. There are three golf clubs in my twin small towns. An Olympic stadium exists. There is soccer and basketball. There is a shooting range, for bows and arrows. There are Rotarians and Scouts and rostrums and Apeks. And over seventy years almost eighty million tons of ore have been smelted to gain three hundred and three million ounces of fine gold.

That was a very complicated business. Very complicated! I'm telling you! There was much sickness. The Othersiders were against the Sandgropers. The crushers crushed. That muffled sound in your eardrums. Day and night. Agents were riding on camels. Londondery swindled the fat shareholders. Two strong aces fell. Wright killed himself. The barmen preferred to give a bottle of whisky to go from hand to hand, rather than a jug of water....

How funny that was: in Burt Street there was a café called the Café Movealong, on four wheels, because it could move. A horse pulled it along. And they played a joke. While the trams waited, someone tied a rope from the café to the tram. And the café trundled off after the tram. Coal flew around, potatoes flew, water poured. The café hurried along with its customers. They were funny years, my friend! And the festivals! And the processions!....

And the special police in the mines! What do you say?! And the death of William O'Connell and John Willis in the Ivanhoe mine! Children with rickets, oh my God!....

August 1926 when Mama was getting ready to leave, the horse Maltean won the Kalgoorlie Cup. My Tony was not there? He was on the farm in Mandiga. But I bet that the day before, he visited the manager of the hotel in Bencubbin, Frank Pollock, and got advice from him regarding the tipping. Like a god, and he had such bad luck then!...

There were many honest liars in Boulder. They spoke about wealth. And Father Long? Do you remember Father Long and the stories about that huge, huge nugget of gold in one piece, that no-one ever saw? What a rush that was! If only I could have been present at that picnic!....

You know, the cinema in Boulder asked people to pay as much as they could, like going to church and giving an offering. But Jonathan Morris, and ex-Goldfielder, a shopkeeper who once sold peas, and then became the owner of the cinema, was not happy with people giving only three pennies to get in. He decided to buy up all the threepenny pieces in Boulder and Kalgoorlie, and then people had to give him silver money, sixpence or a shilling. Wasn't that a good idea of Morris's? What years they were!....

Indeed, what years they were.!

Two hundred and sixty million lira sterling in gold. You don't know what that is? The miners could have had gold graves, every one of them, and now they are crooked, with broken and dirty wooden crosses, without any inscriptions.

--Go, Mister Cosmas, to the Town Hall, you can find there the number of the grave where your father is buried, and then you can go to the cemetery and look for it!....

To go there! To bow to my father's shadow in that way!

Well, Joe, how could I show you a greater respect than this - you live now in the hearts of readers! Your grave is visited by hundreds and thousands!

And you, Cosmas, can't you see the cans of food or petrol sown here, that have lasted for eighty years? Can't you discover the meaning of that? Rubbish lasted in this climate, which treated it well. Today people are selling the empty bottles of beer that belonged to the first prospectors. They have taken on a new, antique colour. Our great grandchildren should admire them because they will continue to withstand time. A dry climate, a dry climate. And the bones, the bones? Those of our goldfielders! And suddenly a cloudburst. And that's all. All with Charlie Champagne!

Yes, Mister, once half of Coolgardie, that Coolgardie where your brother hung himself, buried the other half of Coolgardie. Just so you know! That was how bad the typhus epidemic was! What do you think of that?

And what I wanted to say, the miners got ten shillings a day, or *shelina* as our people said, and the shopkeepers had twelve and a half. In total, 90 shillings a week for the miners for 48 hours of work. You know, a brick of gold has 35 kilograms! Pick it up, pick it up! You'll break your balls! And one ounce of gold can be stretched into a thin wire of 30 kilometres. And what do you think of that?

I can't hear noises any more. As though some earthquakes shook up those wonderful days of ours. Isn't it so, Perrin, our ears were used to that noise. We just didn't feel it at all. It was there. As an unheard, unfelt, but existing concept which would remain with us all our lives....

If you want to look for gold it's better to try after rain. Go towards the sun. Only towards the sun. Take a magnifying glass with you. Results are better. And then, fill up your little sack.

Where are those girls....

They are still here. In Brookman Street. Towards the end. That's the girls' area. My God, the whore houses! Mostly they were Australian. Yes, there was one from Split. Her name was Borka. A teacher. She married a rich man, in Queensland, and escaped from him and came to Kalgoorlie. And maybe there were more of our people, especially in the time of the Depression. But who is going to tell you her real name or surname. She speaks English, she has an English name like Marge, Joan, Violet. The police know her real name, of course they do! Every week they had to go for a check-up or the doctors came to them. Pay the police, get a licence and....then they are there in hand, if she needs anything....

So I keep going, in the column. I go around all the areas. I go down, I go in. I listen I ask. I look. But I see nothing more, because everything is clean, washed. Childhood went through these darkened places and touched every fence and every yard. And disappeared.

I went, because I had a strong desire to see it, to look for the school. I didn't find it. I went looking for Kuma Klara's house. I didn't find it. I went looking for the house of Kuma Tona. I didn't find it. And your house, Kathy, where was it? The landscape has changed, but not very much. Some trees have grown tall after 45 years. The fields where the Bulgarians and the Italians grew their vegetables have gone. There are no more goat tracks....

--You know, the goats would go by themselves every morning out to pasture, and come back in the evening by themselves, what goats they were, strong, firm, it was wonderful to see them.....

Wait a moment! I can hear a siren. I know that sound, the tone! No that's not the siren that used to call my father, my brother to work. Those that informed of death in the mine, when the hearts of the women trembled.

You are waiting, Tereza, for Nick's letter! You want to know how he is, in Mandiga. Last time he wrote that he was okay, that he was working a lot, but that he was going to a woman's place for hot food....at least once a day.

But, Tereza, you don't have any idea who that woman was. That was Tony's wife! Joan Audrie! A very fine woman, I can tell you. And Nick is there, close to him. I found that out now! Why didn't he tell you that? Why did Nick have to hide that? And you ask yourself why? And that woman asks also: why didn't Tony say that that was his brother!

Look, you are leading me now by the hand and saying:

--Listen, we're going away it's not your fault my little one! We're going away...

And you take me far away, far away, to new places.

--Shall we see Perrin in Perth, Mama?

--No we won't see Perrin!

--And why?

How many "whys"!

Night was grudging in South Boulder. It was only starlit. And nothing else. It was grudging as far as the beauty of a man's life was concerned, but the sky talked. And I stood at the crossroads and watched and measured the distance.

I summoned ghosts.

And then?

And then, I tell you, dear Perrin, how it was before I left Boulder, and hurried to you in Melbourne. There was a young girl, her name was Sonja. And she was the most beautiful flower I saw then, not long ago in Boulder. Her father gave her hand to me, to be my guide into the present. I went like that into all the corners of Boulder and Kalgoorlie. And I was supposed to go to dinner before I had to fly back to Perth and to switch from being with you in Melbourne....Are you listening to me! And I went with Sonja that evening to dinner. Do you know where I went? I went to the Palace Hotel. I told everyone in Boulder, dead and alive, goodbye, who knows when we'll see one another again, stay healthy.

Sonja was a point in the universe. What a "poached steak in apple sauce" in that Palace, what a steak. The butcher had cut it well. Ah, how would my mother have prepared it? Sonja loved it, and I? I looked at the stars, I looked at her, Sonja, like a star. In the Palace. And I saw, I saw around me all the elite people. The tables were full. The women wore wonderful dresses. The Kalgoorlie Cup was held the next day. How had I come at this particular time? At the time of the biggest horse race! Tell me, Mister London, how did I arrive here just before the Kalgoorlie Cup. Hard for me to believe. I said: what, Tony, do you want from me?

--Do you know the story? -- said Sonja. -- about Ding Flat?

--What?! About Ding Flat!

I cut myself off from my thoughts! They had taken me to white smoking jacket events, with bow ties, sumptuous silks! And then -- Ding flat! What is that, Sonjice?

--It was in 1934. It was terribly hot. I hadn't been born. It started from the Home from Home Hotel, you know, that hotel that Jonathan Morris built, that Jonathan who bought up the threepenny coins, to force people to pay him sixpence or a shilling to see the performance. So, in that hotel, which was then held by an Italian man, Gianetti, and where usually Italians and other foreigners came, our people you know, Yugoslavs, it always ended up there with a fight. People still wanted to drink when it was illegal to do so. It wasn't enough up until the moment when the bar closed. People wanted more, they didn't want to leave. And a man called Jordan, who was known to have a dry throat, wanted more to drink, but mister barman didn't want to give it to him. He calmly threw him out. Jordan came back the next night and was thrown out again. But this time Jordan hit his head on the corner of the sidewalk, so they took him to hospital, where he died the next morning. But....but then it started. Some witnesses, and you can always find all kinds of witnesses, swore that the barman used a weapon. They said Jordan was set upon with a knife, that death was not the result of a fall, that it was the doing of the bloody bastards, foreigners, Slavs, who were aggressive, who never knew when to stop; who would simply walk all over peaceful citizens, if this kept up. You couldn't go into a pub or a bar to drink your beer in peace any longer, without some Ding seeing you there, and annoying you and interfering, coming up to you, pulling you outside, so they said. What was happening? And on Monday was Australia Day. Hundreds were going up Hannan Street, hundreds of those peaceful citizens, who were sick of those foreign hooligans, who would one day cost them their heads. The heat made their thoughts even more heated. And then some boy threw a rock at the window of the Home from Home Hotel. Glass flew everywhere and that was the sign for further action. The mass of people began their work. The hotel was set on fire. Flames took over. Word spread around Kalgoorlie. Half the town emptied, to come and take part in the drama. The fire brigade came, the police, people with watering cans. Water was sprinkling on all sides. Tires were torn. Policeman Sunter got a bottle thrown at his head. In the melee they drank, pushed and pulled, broke things threw things. The Kalgoorlie Wine Saloon found itself in the fire, and with it the International Club and then the Greek shops, and in them some British citizens felt the sweetness of fire. But this was not the main act. That started later. The crowd lost its head. They began their judgements in all shapes and sizes. Boulder Block! -- the cry was heard far and wide. They were jumping on the trams, and a long rope of angry people wound around them. There, in our Boulder, little people lived, "bloody bastard Slavs and Dagoes". The anger had been growing ever since the days of the First World War, when these people had all the privileges and they, the Sandgropers, had to send their children to the front. Austrians who were at war against us, found protection here. Beat them up,

fuck their mothers, the bastards! It's all their fault. Boulder was blazing. The little structures of hessian and wood and tin were friends of the flames. And then they tired of it all. The police locked the hotels, but the next day the rumour went around that the Dings were organising themselves, sharpening their knives, getting ready for an attack on Boulder and Kalgoorlie where they would kill everyone. Women and children with the old people escaped from their homes and found shelter in the forest. The politicians were alarmed. They came up from Perth. They tried to calm down the people at mass meetings. But reason could not prevail. In the crowds and the noise nothing could be heard. And there was an explosion, and after the explosion a burst from a rifle. There was a new conflict. But this time there were deaths. Charlie Stokes was killed with a knife. Montenegrin Kristo found death. Houses were set alight. And then suddenly everything stopped. An Italian was found asleep and they wanted to hang him, but the Italian made out he was crazy, and caused laughter. And the laughter ended the whole thing. Funny, isn't it? Funny! Yes, it all built up in people, and they exploded. I don't know the reason! And the more I think about it, the more I am in two minds. What is the reason? The twenties were hard years. The thirties brought us into depression and crisis. Who was making fun of us? I am Australian, you understand, Cosmas! I breathe here. I can't breathe over there! But still, but still! They picked me for Miss Western Australia. They like me here! But still, it happened, it happened to people of my blood, my name!

We, Cosmas, are dining at the Palace!

We go down into the Palace Bar.

I follow the tracks of my half brother. I look for his shadow here. The one which began his journey. Cookie, where are you hiding? Introduce me to Mister Kingsley Thomas. He reported that the shafts were very narrow and unsuitable, the facilities old, little money was spent on the renovation of machinery, social benefits for workers hardly existed at all, and relations with the workers were terrible....Isn't that right, Mister Thomas? Isn't that so? And Mister Thorn brought here an American man to show the British company what could be done with the new methods. And they brought in big ventilators, didn't they? So that the damned dust, which whitewashed the lungs, was thrown out of the mine.

We go down into the Palace bar.

And you are, Cosmas, Tony's half brother. I just can't believe it. How can you be his half brother? -- Easily, I'm his half brother! Strange, isn't it? He was living here in forty two. He was rich, rich. He had two gold mines. One he sold, and the other he couldn't. What a gallant man that half brother of yours was! Those were years that we should mention! True, it was the war, but...and I can tell you that your half brother helped people in the country, they were collecting money here for your people. I know, he gave several times ten dollars a time. Through Alać or Urlić, for the refugees. But no-one knew he was Yugoslav. People used to ask him, no special reason, seeing that he was a good man, they used to ask if he wanted to help people in the country which was in the war, which was fighting against the occupiers. And I know he gave to the Australian war effort too. And he gave, he gave several times. Now it's clear to me why he gave...That brother of yours was a true gentleman. He loved horse races, he loved horses, he loved to appear at the race course, in a dinner suit, with a bowler hat. And those waiters, Lord God, they say they had never seen such a fine man, not for a long time. And then all at once he disappeared, he disappeared, my dear sir! And he never was seen here again....No, no, he didn't have a wife with him. True, he was seen with certain ladies, but being seen was not of any importance, because many people were seen, and it would have been strange if he wasn't, it would have been suspicious, wouldn't it?...Yes, yes, that was your half brother. And you say he asked the government to help with the diamond-drilling. That is a new method. Diamonds are hard, four big ones and two small there were, like teeth, but it drills, drills. And you can get samples, my sir! It turns, turns like a drill and throws out the rock, and it can be seen at once if there is gold...That's it! He thought he could save himself in this way. And then disaster! Several tons of earth fell! So that was your half brother. And you say he hanged himself. Unbelievable! Really unbelievable!! How could he? And nothing written about it in The Kalgoorlie Miner?! Only that first notice, which they sent you, that the prospector was not regretting his mine, instead it was his leg.

Indeed, very strange! And you see, The Kalgoorlie Miner meticulously noted all the most important happenings in Boulder and Kalgoorlie including the wedding news and news about various parties, what was selling, what was being bought, and that Tony C. hung himself in Coolgardie, in a hut, they did not note. I don't understand! That paper, you know, nothing could escape its notice!...Yes, yes, my dear Mr Cosmas!....

We go down into the Palace bar.

...and there really is no more of that lighting of the fuses, like they did earlier. They brought in electric ignition, from afar, so that a man did not have to run, to have smoke all around him, and did not have to breathe that stink any longer. Conditions are better today. There are no crippled hands. They no longer pay 50 pounds for a missing finger and 750 for a life. Yes, yes, a man can be badly handicapped in that way, for the rest of his life. So, 750 lira sterling to the widow when her husband was killed, and to the owner of a horse, when his horse dies, something more. The death of a horse and the death of a man! A little more though, for the horse! A horse has four legs and in him there is more horsepower, horse power! We are living in the time of HP!

Dear Perrin, here in the Palace they exhibited the biggest nugget of gold, you know, not the one that Father Long saw, but the other.....Where is the boss's wife, the wife of the manager of this hotel, I shall tell her everything and complain if she doesn't allow me to access other memories. I would only want to listen in, I would listen in from that corner, to overhear the amount of digits through the decade, to read secret telegrams, to be filled with the spirit of the great share market. Tony, did you meet George Mayman here? And Mayman's partner Genini? Did you hear about their discovery of telly with the highest provision – ten thousand ounces in twenty months? That was their buried secret, with which they operated. And Hewiston resigned from the Ivanhoe Mine, because he refused to work with Wright, and he laid the foundations of the Congregation Church in Kalgoorlie, didn't he! Excuse me, did you ever see Ernest Williams, that little Welshman, who directed the Perseverance Mine! Mister Philip Collier, please, come to the telephone, they are looking for you, looking for you, a delegation of miners. Thank you Miss Bowen, you played the organ beautifully in the Tank Church. I bow to you! Ah, that movement for separation, who thought of that? The Auralia Federation. Hogwash!

It's a real Babylon here, Mister So and So, there are all sorts of names in the hospital. The Kalgoorlie District Hospital lists: Swedish, Irish, German, Italian Yugoslav, Greek...my God, where did they all come from? Many, many died of typhus, dysentery. And yes, the miners complaints. They all ate tinned meat and vegetables. And sometimes the mercury in the thermometer showed 116 degrees Fahrenheit. How did we endure it, how did we endure it! You know, here everyone could become rich over night. From one hole two metres by two metres, about two metres deep, a prospector extracted ten thousand ounces of gold. That's no joke, that's for sure! Lord Fingal came back from London with nominal capital of 700.000 pounds in shares of 1 pound for the Londonderry Gold Mining Company. Yes, yes, that was in Coolgardie. And that was outside all expectations. And then? And then?

I don't hear an answer.

I tell you, no-one knew geology better than Sam Pearce. He discovered Ivanhoe with Brookman. And our geologist Tomić! With a jiggers apparatus! Like an x-ray! It sees everything, Tomić finds everything. And didn't Tony know that Tomic? He could have helped him!

Can you hear, my dear father Joe, this story? My head is spinning from all the sounds. If I had seven pairs of ears I couldn't take in all that has been said here. Voices are mixing together. One comes from the end of the last century, the second from the twenties, third from the thirties, forties, and they all collide. Gold is in every voice. In every movement of bodies and faces. Gold is in the ticket for tomorrow's Melbourne Cup. Gold is also in the suggestion that Kalgoorlie be proclaimed the new Las Vegas of Australia. A casino, a big casino. Velvet covered tables. Roulette. And horses. And dogs. And cards. My God, Tony, what is this? Why did you

hang yourself? You can't see those women any more, the ones who spend fifteen days getting ready for this special day! You can no longer enjoy this magnificent scene of beauty and passion!

What do you say, Sonja? Our people have come! Let me introduce you. I am Mitke, from Valjevac! And I am Riki from Crikvenica. You're young, I can see! You look fine! And what are you doing here? Nothing! Truly, you're doing nothing!

My dear Perrin, I look at you now, because after that meeting with Valjevac and the man from Crikvenica I went from the Palace towards the Tourist Bureau to catch the bus for the airport and to go from Perth directly to you, you my dearest friend! My dear Perrin, you can't imagine what happened to me!

Valjevac ordered Scotch whisky for me and Sonja.

--You really are doing nothing here, are you? – I asked again. And then I added, I don't quite know why:

-- You play on the horses here, you gamble!

They both looked at me, wide-eyed.

--How do you know?

--I know.

And then I rested my head on my fist, took the glass with the Scotch and soda in my hand and slowly said, as though I were whispering to Sonja:

--It would be good if you went and bought two ropes.

Sonja shuddered.

Mitke and Riki looked at each other again.

--What are you talking about?

--About ropes – I said. You'll need them. You won't have to steal them from a friend.

--We don't understand you!

--How much did you lose last time?

--Nine thousand dollars!

--A lot!

--It's not a lot. Ten days ago I lost 17.000 dollars!

--You're joking!

--I'm not joking!

--Then I'm not joking either!

--But before that I won 30.000 dollars!

--Really, I really am not joking about that rope, my friends.

--Cosmas, what are you doing? – Sonja shoved me.

--Sonjica dear, nothing unusual. Isn't she sweet, our Sonjica! – I said as though I wanted to change the subject. – And now, my dear fellow-nationals, to tell you a story. I came from far away, from the country you too came from, but not to look for gold, instead to find the traces of my nearest and dearest. I came to finish one life so that I can live another, a happier life. And I start this story, just like this book, from which you are reading it.

From which you are reading! From the beginning to the end!

I don't know, Perrin, how long that lasted, two or three hours, because I had time until the bus left. I talked and talked. There, in the fog of the table, I saw two faces drowning in their own thoughts. They listened to me. And Sonja listened to me.

And Sonja listened to me.

And you are listening to me, writer, who will write this down. But don't judge me. Understand that I, Cosmas, otherwise one of us, Kuzma, did not want to judge, although sometimes it escaped from me, and it could have seemed that I was passing judgement. I didn't want to, believe me. I brought before their eyes the

imaginary rope. My half brother's rope, the one he stole from his neighbour. I wanted to give it to them before they punished themselves. The Palace whispered to me here its big story. I was charged with my mother's telling. My Tony wrote me letters. I listened to my father in the pauses when he wasn't coughing. I forgot the sound of Nick's voice. Michael's mother said it was soft, kind. And then, her words. And your words, dear Perrin, then when you were babbling to me in the days of our childhood and afterwards when you talked so seriously in my house, and now when you are singing in my ear about all the questions I keep asking. No, certainly not, I wanted to turn them away from their path, which was somehow the path of all who lived here. It wasn't even a path. It was a flash. It was a rainbow. It was the end of the rainbow. That verse, the one your brother Thomas told me: At the end of the rainbow there is a cup full of gold! Thank you, thank you so much, my dear Perrin!

Afterword

Dr Branko Kirigin, Split, Croatia 2023

To coincide with the release of this English translation of *Na kraju duge* – some 44 years after it was first published in Croatian – the author's son (who initiated the translation) looks back at his personal family history, and his father, from a contemporary perspective...

I spent my youth and education in constant movement ... from Zagreb to Hvar, again to Zagreb and then to London, again to Hvar, and again to Zagreb, then to Belgrade, and to New York and Belgrade again, places where my father worked (except Hvar) as a journalist. When I, as an archaeologist, started to work first in Dubrovnik and then in Split, Hvar was always 'home'. There I'd stay in the house that my grandmother (Tereza in the novel), a devoted Catholic, had built after returning from Australia in 1927. As a young man (aged 22) in 1969 I was with her during her last days and remember her ... her lonely and calm life ... with great admiration. Now and then she'd say something in 'Boulderian' English like '*water please*', accented in the local dialect. And then I'd take the aluminium pot she'd brought back with her from Boulder and fill it with water from our cistern. I still have the pot, along with some other things too.

The family would generally gather in Hvar during summer, but when in high school and as a student I went to Hvar every winter to be with my old school friends. I don't remember her talking much to me about her life in Boulder (as she had with my father), but I do remember that she once told me: *My son, don't be first and don't be last*. I was a somewhat introverted youth (feeling often in the shadow of my older sister) and my father was always very busy with and devoted to his work, so we didn't spend a lot of time together. But I do remember his trip back to Australia in 1971 (after 44 years' absence) and his excited preparations for it. He spoke so eagerly about our family members who were still there, and about how he wanted to understand what had happened over those intervening years.

As an experienced journalist he'd persuaded his editor to let him go and to pay for his trip; in return he'd pen his impressions of Perth, Albany, Boulder and Sydney, as he had on his many travels around the world. But his basic goal was to reconstruct the family's misty relations and to understand the nature of the distances between them. When he returned, he started to study documents he'd brought and to read as much as possible about WA history and early gold mining in Boulder (where he was to find his father's modest, abandoned grave). Although I wasn't paying much attention to my father's work at the time, I do remember that some of our Australian family members began to visit us – especially Benny Watson (Perrin in the novel), my father's half-sister's daughter with whom he spent his childhood in Boulder – and then Eric Corrigan (Michael in the novel), the son of his half-brother Tony. Eric came to Split and Hvar with his wife Alice.

In 1987 their daughter Denise, with whom I was to develop a close friendship (and with whom I've worked recently to realise this translation), visited. I found it interesting that my father changed all of the names of the main protagonists in his novel, and strange that he gave himself the real name of his father: Kuzma (Cosmo)! Was it because he lost him so early? And if so why hadn't he given his name to *me*? Unfortunately I did not ever ask him.

In 1985 I was invited by the Department of Archaeology at The University of Sydney, NSW, to offer a paper at the First Australian Congress of Classical Archaeology titled "Greek Colonists and Native Populations". It took me some time to find funds for the long trip and thankfully my family helped out. My wish after the Congress was to go to WA and Boulder City, but back home it was decided that I should go to New Zealand and visit my mother's father (who lived in a retirement home) in Ōtāhuhu, a suburb of Auckland. He had also emigrated in the mid-1920s, when my mother was five, her brother seven and her sister just about to be born. I was the first family member to see him - some 60 years after he had left Yugoslavia. He'd worked in the Kauri gum mines ... a long sad story not for this occasion.

I began to be interested in my father's literary work after he died in 1994. Having brought some order to his sprawling archive, my sister and I were thankfully able to hand on some of his materials to the local museum and library in Hvar town (just prior to the family home being badly damaged by fire). I am uncertain why my father showed no interest in publishing *Na kraju duge* in Australia, having published it in Split in 1979. Perhaps it was because of his temperament – he was an impatient soul forever working away on multiple projects, many of which failed to bear fruit – and when he finished something he lost interest in it almost immediately, expecting others to promote it.

On re-reading my father's novel recently (after Denise and her partner David Watson had visited us in Split in 2019) it became evident to me that the time was finally ripe to commission an English translation. Although *At the End of the Rainbow* was the first novel to emerge from the former Yugoslavia to deal with the country's massive waves of migration (especially from Dalmatia) in the early-20th century, due to the publisher's financial and structural woes, it was not ever reviewed or properly distributed. Only a few of the original Croatian-language copies survived.

I am delighted that this translation for English-speaking audiences is, after all these years, complete. I am especially grateful to Lada Martinac Kralj and Dunja Jutronic for their help in preparing the synopsis of my father's book so I could proceed towards the possibility of a translation. I am most grateful to our Perth-based translator Coral Petković, and to Denise Corrigan and David Watson and all our friends who contributed financially to its realisation: Liana Župevc and Ferro Anguissola, Snježana i Zoran Nevjestić, Ljiljana Cetinić, Chiara Bove Machiedo, Dragica Pilipović Chaffey, Michael McCombe, and Paolo Visonà. Having recently reached the age at which my father Josip died, for me the project is something of an *homage* to him, and to Australia.

