Triptych

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He

He drives through the night, he will be home late, but his wife is used to that. She has ceased waiting for him a long time ago. He wonders if she had ever waited for him. Sometimes, when he comes home and sees how taken she is by the television, or how much fun she and their two daughters have without him, he feels like an intruder. He is not quite sure, but a few evenings ago his wife and the older daughter changed a look that seemed to say, "Daddy's home now, fun is over."

He drives fast, he loves his car, a black, solid Mercedes E 320. Secure and accountable like his whole life. The engine is very quiet even at 240 km per hour. He enjoys driving fast, although he is in no hurry to actually arrive at home.

"Home," he wonders with a bitter smile, "where or what is home?"

The other night, with his head lying on the chest of a young blonde he barely knows, he felt at home, kind of. He felt in peace, and tired, and he didn't think about his office or his wife. He smiles, remembering how he started talking about his years in the army, and in college. He was not sure why he came up with that stuff, but it felt good, lying there and talking, and she listened, and laughed and caressed his head.

She is not his first adventure; he has cheated on his wife before. He has a feeling that this time is different, although he is not sure why. Is it the girl, or has he changed?

"Getting old," he thinks, smiling again.

He stops at a gasoline station, to smoke a cigarette, and because he feels no urge to return home. He walks into the small store to get coffee. The heavy lady behind the counter looks up from her newspaper, as he grabs a coffee.

"The later the night the stronger the coffee," the woman shakes her head, laughing. The pink lipstick matches her sweater, and her hair is too black to be true. For a moment he thinks that he could start a conversation with that motherly woman, at least he would spend some time, but he just clears his throat and asks,

"How much?"

"Two fifty. That's it Mister? Nothing else, cigarettes or a nice sandwich?"

He answers in negative and walks out into the night; no romantic stars above his head, Frankfurt and the smog are too close. He wonders when he ceased loving his wife. He searches his mind for a specific occasion, for a trigger, but there is only emptiness, and a certainty that waking up one morning, he stared in wonder at her, thinking,

"I don't love you anymore."

He still remembers her motionless body, carried away by dreams unknown and unimportant to him, and how she suddenly meant nothing to him. He tried to recall a moment of love, or such thing, but he remembered only the fumbling under the blankets a couple of weeks earlier. As usual she was lying on her back with a blank stare, groaning, not very convincingly.
As usual he came too quick. All in all it must have looked more like a not very well done job than an act of passion.

It is a warm night; carefully he sits in front of his car, paying attention to keep his expensive suit clean. He spent the whole day sitting in his car and in meetings, but the dark gray suit still looks fresh and cool. Every morning he wakes up early, washes away the tenderness of sleep, and puts on one of his dark suits and a serious face.

He likes his job. The numbers and statistics are reassuring, and he likes to be important. Success came easily. He worked his way up, and people must think of him as a happy person. He has it all. But if so, why does he feel so empty? Lately he often has a certain feeling, as if something is missing. He tried to augment the speed of his work, but it doesn't help.

Now, that girl gave him some rest. And a lot of trouble. Anyhow, he likes how she is looking up to him. He likes how she enjoys herself and apparently his body. He is able to love her for a long time, and that gives him a good feeling too.

It was nice and easy. They met in hotels, had nice dinners, nice talks, nice sex. She never asked for anything and seems quite happy. But now his wife found out, and tonight he must go home and do something, say something. The kids, the house, the mortgage, the relatives, the neighbors, the list goes on and on.

She is blonde and very soft, and she has a way of twisting her leg around his when she falls asleep.

She

Yes! I am angry, and yes I'm crying, and Yes! I'm drunk, very much so, and don't you tell me how I should behave! You! Of all the people. What? Are you afraid that I'm too loud? You mean the kids could hear me? They should, for Heaven's sake they should. And if they wake up now and come downstairs YOU can explain to them what happened - again!

Tell me, if you are so afraid of what the kids will think, why did you cheat on me in the first place? Why? Is it because she is younger? Does it make you feel younger? I saw her pictures! How dare she give you these photographs! Naked and laughing and you keep this in my house, how could you do that? Did you take these photos? Did you tell her what a great photographer you are?

Is it for her tits? Her puppy fat? You like that? You told me all the years you like slim silhouettes, and now you sleep with puppy fat? I never lost my figure, I still have the same size I had when we got married, did you know that? All my friends became fat, but not me! Yes, I'm proud of that, I take care of my body, I won't let myself go, I have a discipline.

Oh my god, my mother always told me, but I didn't listen. I said, "No mother, not my Jeff. He is different, he cares about his family."

Now you listen to me carefully. You going to end it, now. You won't see her again. Why must I suffer so much? I've done everything for you, I raise your kids, I wash your shirts. Without me, you would never have made such a career. It was my support, and now after everything, you think you can put me away like an old shoe? On no, I won't go. We will stay together, and next month is Fride's wedding, and we will go there together. Go there and smile.

It

I'm so happy. Happy! Happy! I could roll the word over my tongue like a big bubble gum all day long. I can NOT stop thinking about him, uhhuh, little tremble over my skin, I flush every time he jumps on my mind, I can feel the heat in my cheeks right now, crazy, crazy.

He is the dearest, kindest, with eyes like tender buttons, sometimes green and sometimes brown. And I do NOT want to listen to my friends. I do not want to listen, I just want to lay
here, and dream of him and stare into the sun, getting a nice tan which he will like, and think what I will do with him the next time. Look at the geraniums, they are of a different red today, so bright, and the sky above, and my future, all light and shiny, or is it me? No, I won't listen.

And yes, I know that he is married, and no, I do not care about that either. Patricia told me that she disapproves, and I know why. Her husband is his age and could run away every day with a little something like myself. I know her fears, but what can I do? And Frieda told me that she disapproves, and I know why. She had a husband-lover, and he told her all the time "Wait wait" and "I will tell her", but he never did, and Frieda spent her Christmases and Easters alone, and waiting, and hoping, and hoping less, and being more often alone, she knows! Well, I don't want to know, at this point. Sure, it is very possible that I might cry on her shoulders in a couple of months when the summer and my tan are gone, and it will be all,

"Sob, sob, why didn't I listen..." and "I told you, I told you..."

OK, I'll take the risk because it is too nice now, it is exciting, and I CAN NOT stop, I don't want to. It feels so good, and I lost four pounds already, just like that, and he sees me beautiful and therefore I feel beautiful, and I will make it last forever, or until tomorrow, I don't care. And Manuela,

"Well, you are not 18 anymore!"

What is that supposed to mean? I do feel like 18, alright? Look at the flowers, how they stretch their little heads towards the sun, thirsty ballerinas in red dresses, and he is my sun and I'm so thirsty and his hands are the best, and in his arms I feel like an embryo in a big sea shell, so protected.

I will see him a week from today, so many hours. And when we meet at the hotel, I will bend his eyes and make him lay down on the bed, and I will buy a new dress, a little something made of a different fabric, cool satin maybe, or one of these tiny net things, I will see, I have the whole week. And a different perfume, I must smell different, I will surprise him for good, I imagine lemon and grapefruit right now, not vanilla. And I'll tell him that he cannot touch me, and then I will feed him. I will buy cheese and grapes and cherry tomatoes and olives and little salty brioches, and sweet ones too, and bittersweet chocolate, and strawberries, I think he likes strawberries. I will mix it all together, he won't know if something salty or sweet or a kiss will touch his lips, and I will bring music, and a different wine, maybe a dry Gewurztraminer, maybe he cannot even tell if it is a red or a white wine because I think it's hard to tell from a good Gewurztraminer, if you don't see the color. He will like that, I know, he will be like a piece of butter in my hands. It is so strange because I used to be the butter and now all of a sudden I am a bread and I like it and I love him.

I am not really a bread, I am a cake. Yes, that’s what I told him the last time we met. When he was wondering about liking me so much, and not feeling anything for his wife, and how it had come. Because, he said that he used to be kind of happy, or at least he didn’t feel unhappy and now all of a sudden. And right there I told him,

"Listen, if you eat bread all the time, and you never try anything else but bread, you won't know what you are missing because you don’t know any better, how could you, right? And some day, a piece of cherry-cheesecake ends up on your plate, and you try it and it is delicious. It is so good, you can't get enough. And the next day, you go home to your bread and it doesn’t taste anymore. You don't even want to try because you still have the taste of cherries in your mouth, that's how it is."

Yeap, I'm his cherry-cheesecake, and I will make him happy and he might get a stomach ache who knows, oh look at the little bird!