

**Text Deleted from First Czech Edition
of *City Sister Silver***

by Jáchym Topol

translated by Alex Zucker

Book page 15 [after fourth full paragraph], Galley page 13 [after third full paragraph]

You're part of it too, a creature in the bush, a root maybe, twisted, you could be ginseng. No limits here, it's a free country, stranger. If you don't play straight, though, I've got a bayonet up my sleeve. And if I'm the one guarding the aces, then it goes without saying, I've got one too. That's free choice, direct from Bog, every child of democracy knows that. Fine then: let's all the families call a truce and nail a bat to the barn door so his demon wipes out the bugs and we keep our hands clean.

Book page 73 [after first full paragraph], Galley page 72 [before break]

At Galactic I ran into a certain perpetually plastered thirtysomething, still miraculously firm of body. The next morning I was lying in bed with a cute young redhead. When she spoke, I didn't understand her at first. Where you from? Osdrava. You pick slag heaps there or what? She burst into tears. I fell back asleep, and when I got up that evening I discovered she'd stolen my jacket with six thou in it and an important piece of paper. The boys told me it'd be a pretty good idea to find her because of the paper. I knew it too. I cruised the clubs, the dives, the discos, peeking under every sprouting skyscraper in sight, turning over stones, scouring snack bars. I found her with a crew of Yogurts at the train station. Drunk, laughing confidently: you could of been dead. Gimme the papers. Since when ja get yer kicks offa papers, dicklet? Djeme, said one of the Yogurts, giving me a shove. Wait! Don't kid around now! The Yogurt shoved me again, twisting my arms behind my back with the strength of a bull, and banged open the bathroom door with my head. Pič! Here is bath for cunts! Tyepyer chuj! the Yogurt said in Slavic, and shoved my head down into the trough. When the foamy urine touched my lips I just about puked. Firget im, knucklehead, the redhead yelled, knocking us both to the tiling. He got up first. Jebemetiboga, he patted the alkie's ass a while, then cleared out. I decided to stay down. She helped me up, I concentrated. Aright, it's cool, I tried to smile, I just need that paper, it's for my place. That's an old word, an old need, one everybody understands. So take it, she gave me a drunken look. Whipped a piece of paper out of her beat-up purse. You gotta be kiddin, I said in a fatherly tone, this is one a your report cards. Weeaaaa, she screamed, jumping into a stall and locking herself in. She started sobbing again. Oh boy, I said. C'mon, make it fast, I thought to myself. I was afraid the Yogurts would be back. I stretched up on my tiptoes, a thousand-crown note rolled up in my cold dancer's fingers, tossed the loot into the stall. If it didn't fall on her head, I hope she cries with her eyes open at least, does that even work? A hush settled over the bathroom. Filled with anticipation? I tossed some more cash her way. She could easily've torn up that important piece of paper, just for the hell of it, like tearin wings offa butterflies an legs offa flies back home on the slag heaps, slimy wench. The sobs ceased. She blew her nose. She was enjoying it. Waiting. I plucked her another flower. Something came crawling across the floor. A familiar white envelope. That was it. I stuffed the documents in my pocket. Now I could kick in the door, take back the cash, an brand her

so bad she'd shit her guts out right there on the pot just thinkin about what the rest of her life'd be like. I could take my wallet and dump ten times as much in on that pitiful misguided creature. I could walk up to the Yugos and stick my tormentor in the belly so bad he'd be on the road of pain for a long time to come. But then again, they might not let me get to him. In other words it was freedom, about ten p.m., and I could do this or that or just as easily something else. I split. Picking my way through the swamp of the station, through all the areas necessary to make my way out, I looked over my shoulder, changing corners and walls. She'd had plenty of time to tell em I had cash. When I got back with the paper, my roomies said, yeah, yeah ... and cool, cool, and Bohler declared: Praise the Lord.

Book page 76 [before last sentence in first paragraph], Galley page 75 [ditto]

Tego? Helena, wait, did you just say *tego*? *Prečo?* I probed in Slovak, you said, *Niechaj tego, suka*, I heard you! My mom was Polish, said Helena. Vash the stai's, gi'll! Lady Laos yelled from the hallway, snapping a rag. Put a plug in it, Helena shouted back, don't feed me that carp! It's *crap*, not *carp*, I coached her. Yeah yeah, aright aready, she said Prague-style. Bohler was also fascinated by some of her words, *cintorín* is "cemetery"? damn, that sounds like a healthy place to rest your bones, in *citrón*, in lemon, how bout that, bodies in a lemon lake, white bones in a yellow rind, he babbled. *Konárik*, "twig," I was moved, and it sent David straight to la-la-land. *Konárik, konárik*, it's kinda like *Miluju tě*, "I love you," the strategist spoke the good old forgotten words of love. Probly read em in some obscure weekly under some color photos of couples an groups, I figured. *Konárik!* When Bohler saw how taken we were with Lady Slovak, he tried to break the spell: Branch, that's so you dogs don't forget that deep down in the darkness of your poison-pocked hearts you're *miles Christi*, soldiers of Christ, an the wood of any tree could become a cross at any moment!

Yeah yeah, aright aready, y'old hoodhead, we would reply in those brief moments of rest between byznys and pleasure, comfortably plopped in our club chairs, in our flat, in our building, with our flickering computers ...

Book page 85 [before break], Galley page 84 [before last full paragraph]

At the briefing we decided to postpone our stay with Hradil, and I went on having dreams about She-Dog, mostly disturbing ones. But the trade was going fabulous, Sharky traveling, always on the move, and David sinking into hypnotic slumbers, dates and names and contacts tumbling out of him in the order we fed them in, but arranged and assembled into tentacles by the magic of matrices. And the metal flowed. Micka was usually glowing, and Bohler charged Vasil with performing odd jobs around the buildings and monitoring their occupancy, drank himself silly with the Laosters, made a nuisance of himself in the metal shop, and took from us and gave to the poor. I hawked the last BMW on consignment, leaving me free to concentrate on my job in tandem with Bohler's Laotian lady, because the computer samurai were waiting at the borders of the fast-crumbling republic and we wanted to be ready for them.

Book page 105 [before first full paragraph], Galley page 104 [ditto]

And Bohler says, there's no way, all this, that old bag a bones ... it's gotta be a trap ... set by Bog, I mean why would he send us here ... this guy's gotta tell us why ... this skeleton's insane ... but then Shark Stein joined in: In the midst of confused words, even the smallest word may be the hidden Truth, so speaks the Talmud, he said gloomily. But Bohler, still kneeling, got a glimmer in his eye, and said: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom ... isn't that what you meant to say, Sharky? And the Talmud goes on to say, Sharky added, describing with his hands a magnificent arc across the sea of bones on which no sun would set ... and those crushed in the press shall be like precious olives, for they give forth what is most valuable ... and they may beat you and torment you and spit on you and torture you, but in your worldliest of hearts you shall endure and live in eternity ... mixin up your Book again, Sharky, the priest said combatively, holding a bone in his hand ... and stood up ... and I saw Sharky groping around behind him till he caught hold of a skull ... and I left them to argue and trudged off after the others, who were following our guide.

Book page 108 [after "I jus plain forgot" in third full paragraph], Galley page 107 [after third full paragraph]

Mr. Novák, David inquired, you were sayin that you're in ... the wild blue yonder? Yep, sure am, gentlemen. So what do you do there? David asked, good soul that he is. Wull that depends ... I got a goat. Liza. An that's the least a my problems, pardners. Roun this time ... course out our way it's diffrent! ... she's useda me havin a talk with her, might seem strange da you young boyz ... wull out our way things're diffrent. An like what do I do in the wild blue yonder? Wull I got my pipe, puff on that, an me an the ole heflinks play cards an chess, specially Wolfie, an I go fishin wid Hanuš an ...

Excuse me, Mr. Novák, Bohler said with a cunning flash in his eyes ... you mentioned somethin bout a copacetic zoot suit ... would you kindly tell us how old you were when you got thrown in the clink ... that is ...

Like when the krauts heisted me, sonny, like, right? Yeah, I was nineteen ... an that suit was copacetic aright ... birds flipped over it ... an Adinka called me: My little blacktop, which, I mean ... I was a blond barboy, an escort, get it, pardners? an Adinka ... she was a goddess!

Well, what I'm getting at, Bohler drew himself up straight, is here you are layin this stuff on us bout some pipe in the wild blue yonder, an goats, like some old actor or somethin, but I mean if they hauled you in when you were nineteen ...

Yep an killed me four years later, said Novák the skeleton, but cha know, out in the wild blue yonder ... course things're diffrent for us ... what I mean is ... things're how ya want um, when ya want um ... wull an I got to likin this ... granddaddyhood. Course ... I mean when I'm wid Adinka an we're holdin hands ... kept me goin a long time in the lager, that thought, that notion ... that someday I'd be sittin here wid Adinka ... she was a goddess! ... I tell ya, even the minister a propaganda himself fell for her! ... boyz ... sokols! when I sit wid Adinka an we hold hands an I fall inda those blue peepers a hers ... an we coo like doves ... but that's as far as it went! she was a goddess! now don't choo go thinkin ... ballsy little buggers! I mean that notion right there's what kept me alive ... I mean I'm tellin ya! so when I'm wid her, I'm young again ...

An ... Mr. Novák, in heaven you, like, go fishing ... with Mr. Bonn, like, right? Bohler went on.

Wull it's only natural, sonny. First ya go mushroomin an then ya go fishin! Wull but ... all

depends what cha like ... there's all kinds a water sports ... slides ... aeroplanes ... depends what cha like, yeh. An that ole Hebe Poláček comes wid us too, he's sweet on the spinner, an this young Jewboy, Pavel somethin or other, he paints his lures for bleaks ... yeah this one time we're half-crooked comin oudda The Secret Agent, an Pavel starts tellin Poláček bout him an some ole fella poachin deer, an Poláček, he's a sensitive gentleman, yep, killed im when they found that book a his ... one he wrote up there in the office ... Poláček he gets ticked off bout them catchin that deer ... so he's all mumblin an grumblin ... an that young Jewboy Pavel says: Fish don't bother ya, eh ... an they start pushin an shovin each other ... alla us half-crooked ... I mean I'm tellin ya! an they fall inda the water ... an then ole Bonn went an condemned em ... all sorts comedies in that fishin crew a ours ... yep!

Mr. ... Novák ... Ota ... Pavel, moaned Bohler the literary expert ... wasn't ... Auschwitz ... Poláček ... office ... book? ... secret agent! Bohler couldn't sob anymore. Micka lay on the ground gnashing his teeth, Sharky, smiling scornfully, wriggled around in the ashes, David and I gaped openmouthed at Novák the skeleton, spitting the ashes stirred up by Sharky out of our teeth.

Wull now, shtudents ... seein as yer so innarested ... Pavel wasn't here in the lager like ... by accident ... nobody's takin that away from im, now hold yer horses, we know all about it ... us ole heftlinks ... was some docktors in some nuthouse got im, but it's like all the same, my sokols, kapisch? ... See, people ... course things're diffrent out our way ... people can chum aroun wid whoever they want in heaven ... yeah, all kindsa fradernizin ... yes sir ... me an Wolfie got us a crew, he was here too, the yid ... yeah we awways yuk it up wid that book a Poláček's ... only place it got published a course was in heaven ... no way you boyz'd know bout it ... from alla those paypers an rekerds a yers back home ... you don't got diddly! I mean I'm tellin ya! ... Name they call it's *Men on the Sidelines* ... that book a Poláček's ... an I mean it is one big s ... what I mean is a hoot, a scream's what it is ... an they're still writin away up there, those Jewboyz, Ervine too, an ole Brodster ... yep, comedy, that's their thing ... an alla them that got brutally slaughtered an never got a chance to write up their storees back in the lagers ... or in hidin ... an whatnot ... wull now they got lotsa time ... course time, things're diffrent out our way! course only place it gets published is out in the wild blue yonder ... those brochures a theirs ... you boyz, beggin yer pardon, but you donno diddly!

The sun didn't set over the sea of bones and, O my skippers and chieftains, apparently Josef Novák the skeleton had forgotten about his nanny goat and was getting into the groove.

Wull now boyoz ... ole Brodster, the bag of bones rattled on ... there's some funny storees go wid that one ... yes sir ... the Israelite gentlemen useda come round our honky-tonk ... roun Mincík's like, I mean I told ja before ... ole Rouba'd bring um in ... he was the kellner, an we had that thing wid the invoices goin ... esteemed patrons ... Adinka she'd bring um in too ... an Mr. Longen, now there's a smart looker for ya, yes sir, yes siree ... an they'd booze it up wid the hookers ... alla those comedies an storees a theirs, they had plenny a dough, yes sir ... but ole Rouba he knew how to squeeze it oudduv um, hookers too ... all went ta the bar, heh heh ... I could've sworn, O my brothers and skippers, the skeleton winked ... but Ervine an them, him specially, had him some savvy, yes sir ... he knew how to count ... had a touch of a fallin-out wid Rouba, so they went an set up their own honky-tonk wid their own hookers ... jus to get even! Green Seven, they called it ... cabaretiers an rentiers, heh heh ... the customer is our esteemed guest ... know that one, don't cha, boyz? heh heh ... wull first name they called it was Red Seven ... but ole Longen caught wind from police headquarters ... that there was Bolsheviks like meetin there ... pinko sociablists ... like, yep ... Kladno ... Kolář ... heard a that, sokolites, haven't cha? ... so quick as a jiff they changed it to Green ... an just to be safe they had

this like subtitle ... kinuva slogan like: We're not revolutionary, we're fun ... but then along came the Protectinit an they were dead meat, kapisch, pardnerz? Wull an Longen, he an Ervine had this like fix, yeh? Paid these young boyos ... brawlers! from the Fifth District, wull now that cha wouldn't know ... That's how come the councilmen wrecked the place! An these ganefs they stormed the police stations an made off wid alla their gunz ... an Longen he winged um in ta the Serbs ... an aroun ... an when Ferdinand got killed ... Ervine took off down there wid his notepad, an he knew from Longen where the rifles were goin so he awways got the scoop ... an they'd split the take! They were in cahoots! Had a handshake on all kindsa stuff ... an Ervine, Raging Ervine, they called im, he'd get in these like states from drinkin, oh yeah, boyoz! An he never wrote the stuff, couldn't no more, no sir! He'd awways be first on the scene a the accident an go an pluck up the tagblatts there, pick up the local papers ... an then get someone to translate it, some innocent shtudent type ... an they'd split the take, yep ... awways keepin an eye out for a way to make some dough ... an then Richard an Longen got this surefire idea, an they're bustin Paul's chops: That's nuts, you can't have Josef Lada do the illustrations for *Severin!* Don't be stupid! An put some stiffs in there, have the broads die ... put in some ghosts ... some poison ... insanity! ... identyty! Go see Gustav, he'll tell ya what ta do ... see, they figured out that tourism's where the dough's at ... Gustav was in big on that one! We gotta make filthy Praha out ta be some kina Majikal City! So the tourists'll come! ... an spend! Thunk it up just like that! Rouba was all in favor! How could he not be! Wull an so Brodster drags in this goggly Jewboy, wide-eyed kid ... an the two of um patch together this funny storee wid Adinka ... wull an me, at the time, I was an escort like, yeh ... get it, sokols? ... the ladies'd like hire me, like, yeah? wull sometimes ... all the niceties ... a baroness even ... ole carcass ... but on the other hand there was times ... heh heh, pardners! and right then, O skippers and warriors, I could've sworn the skeleton clicked his tongue, it sounded like: klik klik ... an this bunch was not happy wid Franzie ... they'd go out raisin hell, then come home an write their comedies ... an Franzie he tried too ... wanned so bad to be like them ... an write bona fide storees ... but he was sorta like traumatyzed, yep ... an ole Longen an Brodster an Ervine an Paul an Richard an Gustav, none of um could read a word a his stuff ... those killjoy storees a his ... lousy, all of it, lousy, frowned ole Brodster, boring, said Artur, an Ervine too ... kid drove um up the wall ... an then ole Brodster, who'd gotten in tight wid Franzie, he walks inda our place one day ... they came back to Rouba, every one of um, yes sir ... even ole Jok Kohn an that Bashevis fella, yids too ... yeh, yeh ... I mean I'm tellin ya! it was a cosmopolitan environment ... nothin but yids ... down at Mincik's ... back then! Course Paul, he was a kraut! hadda join the NSDAP afderwards, make up for fraternizin wid subhumans ... ended up dyin a loneliness ... an ole Singer says to Kohn: Were you there with im? ... like at the brothel, yep, at the fancy house, heh heh ... they divvied up the assignments ... Brodster he somehow wormed his way inda Franzie's private mental quarters ... I mean I told ja, didn't I! an they found out that Franzie was still a virgin ... an since those dramas a his weren't worth squat, heh heh ... even the almanacs wouldn't take um ... alla that castle stuff an whatnot, stuck it in some series for maids, hired help ... an nothin happened ... an Longen he says to im: Chuck alla those castles an tarantulas an Jackass hunters, alla that stories-for-boys stuff, Franzie, do a piece on some trial, or what it's like in some penal colony, that they'll publish, you blockhead! Wull an so Kohn he takes Franzie roun da some real whores ... see, those boyz wrote mosta their storees while they were recuperatin from the clap, an that meant they were quarantined, like Katz ... nother one of um ... useda take mermanganate ... priest like you, boy, only he was army ... Blubberin again already? ... don't blubber, sokol! what cha all boohoooin on me for, sokols? Haven't seen the bunkers yet, so save yer sniffles ...

atten-chun! chest out! fall in! an follow orders! ... Haven't even seen the appelpats yet! Yep, sokols, an this Singer fella's questionin Kone as ta whether that wide-eyed Franz is still ... y'know, if he like, yet? An Kohn plops down in his chair an says: No! So what'd he do, then? Brodster wants to know. An Kohn goes: He puked all over an started babblin about his dad. That knocked em out pretty good ... those Jewboyz ... an Ervine says: It's all over ... an Longen goes: That schlemozzle's gonna be stuck in that insurance office, writin nothin but garbage, till the day he dies ... an ole Singer whips out a notebook an hollers: I'll write it, I can make a story out of it, an Khon, I'll put you in there as a warning to beginning writers! That Singer fella was testy an he believed in ghosts ... yep, so did Gustav, an Longen too, only wid him it was from the cocaine ... my sokols ... where'd I leave off ... oh yeah, so young Franz is still a virgin an they were afraid he was gonna be a disgrace to Jewish Prague ... an then Adinka says: Maybe he's ... maybe that Franzie a yours is into boys ... an it got quiet! ... those poets they'd been jabberin on ... but then it got quiet, an Brodster starts snifflin, an Longen's havin a breakdown ... but Ervine, he was a tough one ... went down to Mexico later on, pardners ... he says: That's what we were thinkin, Adinka, only none of us had the nerve ... an they were so crushed they decided to set up this storee ... an hired me for it ... I objected, pardners, yes sir, cause I mean I was an escort, but only for ladies ... a pro, not a prostitoot, like, jus so we're clear ... an when I got it inda my skull that Longen was like hirin me da get Franzie all jazzed up, I says: Slow down, compadre! Yes sir, I know howda turn the tables ... like the time this Fluser fella walks inda Mincik's, nother one a them Prague types ... an says: What's this idiot know about Leibnitz's nomads? Nothin. An he's all happy, the moron ... So I jump all over im: Hey, Vilémek, slow down, compadre, or I'll give you such a straightenin out yer own Yaga won't recognize ya, heh!

Aw, baloney! Bohler roared ... Flusser ... Vilémek ... hookers at Mincik's ... NO!

Aright, aright, boyoz, I mighta mixed it up, that wasn't Mincik's, that was out in the wild blue yonder, all blurs for me ... Well Vilémek he just got here, so he stops by Rouba's an kicks in the door, an first thing he says in heaven is: Everything's different! An starts right in wid ole Huserl, he's another one a them types, sits an stares ... an stares ... well, sokols, but what was it I was ... oh yeah ... so Brodster hides in the closet an the rest of um're behind the curtains an whatnot ... out in the hall ... peekin through the window ... this is out at Adinka's cottage ... let us borrow it ... an Franzie's sittin there, starin at me ... an I'm pacin around ... Sázava's murmurin ... kina like dance steps ... wull my colleague here knows what that's about, don't cha, boy! ... an Franzie's turnin red ... it's dawnin on im ... an I guess he's unhappy bein so all alone ... keeps gettin redder ... an the way I'm flittin aroun it's gotta be obvious to im ... but then he starts in wid his bleatin: Herman, why are you so cruel, Herman ... first thing tomorrow I will write you a letter ... a very long one ... you've got your shop, but you've always neglected me ... I'm so lonely, even if I did invent the Odradek ... Odradek, my little spool ... can you roll for me, Odradek? Good, now roll along ... well pardners, that threw a bit of a scare inda me ... an then Brod busts out laughin an falls oudda the closet ... an the rest of um came out too ... an they start laughin an go: There, you see, Franzie? ... cheer up ... but he blew his top an ran off inda the woods ... an they all started partyin ... cept for Adinka, she ran off after im ... what a gall! ... an they came back together that night holdin hands, an Franzie was glowin ... we could all tell ... includin me, pardners, but I was rootin for the kid ... Adinka she wasn't for me ... a blond barboy! I mean I told ja all about it! ... she was a goddess! it's jus that now an all ... wull now things're diffrent ... an Franzie danced all night an then stayed there wid Adinka ... gave up writin, completely ... comes inda Mincik's one day luggin this big ole trunk an he throws it at Brod an says ... you

rescued me, I have begun to live ... drunk on happiness ... living with fire and passion ... so now finish the job an burn this! I tell ya, pardners, luggin alla those paypers a his aroun in that trunk, kid was a mayniak! But they snapped im out of it ... an Brod an the boyz down at Mincík's tossed it all inda the fire ... they were plastered ... Longen playin the piyano ... singin raunchy tunes ... Adinka an Franzie hoppin aroun on the tables ... what a night! Wull an I tell ya then when Franzie went an vanished inda thin air ...

Mr. Novák! one of us cried.

Now now, sokols, ya don't hafta stand there at attention like yer in some kina graveyard or somethin, arms out, count off, at ease, an quiet in the ranks! Wull then Brod, cause he wasn't doin too well ... nobody was readin his storees either, an Ervine ... he went to work for the newspapers, but it didn't pay hardly nothin ... sposedly horoscopes an recipes was all that he was good for ... stole his stuff from Gustav ... wull so one day Ervine gets tossed from the papers ... so him an Brodster thunk up some storees ... slapped em together ... course they were plastered an couldn't come up wid a title ... bad case a writer's block ... but then they remembered Franzie's tayls ... an folks fell for it! An then when they shot Franzie down in that hedgehopper, Brodster he started up big-time ... wid Ervine ... Singer ... some Nabokovsky fella an the rest of all of um ... only one he wrote imself, sposedly, was some *America* thing, told us other day in the canteen ... wrote it over in Israel, cordin da him da get revenge cause they wouldn't let im inda America, seein as he was a communist ... an he put Franzie's name on it, seein as it had recognition ... brand name like ... so it'd sell better, kapisch? Well an accordin da him he got bored there in Israel, wouldn't a written otherwise ... had imself sacks a dough offa that brand name a Franzie's ... Wull an Franzie they say headed off through the woods inda Slovakia an joined up wid some bandits ... wanned to do the Reich some damage ... seein as Adinka went an dumped im for that goverment minister ... Franzie leadin a robber band! ... Even now when he gets delirious, he gets these fantasies bout Slovak girls ... wid big tits ... beggin yer pardon, those're his words, pardners ... but that was no fun either ... so he flew the coop ta England ... an joined up wid the fliers ... kid was covered in medals soon, like alla the resta those eagles a ours, plus the Slovaks an a couple a Jewboyz ... Battle of England, kapisch? Wull an I was belly-up by then ... belly-up, what I mean is ... here in Auschwitz things were diffrent ... yep, Odradek's what he called that plane a his ... that he flew ... an he made it oudda that pee-oh-dubya camp to Australia ... What cha all mooin an mumblin for now, boyz? Wanned ta know how it goes in heaven, dincha? Wull then here I go, galoop galorm, momma's moppin up a storm! Franzie got inda diamond prospectin big-time down there ... but he was awways stealin ... so the bushmen stabbed im! An the bell tolled! An yoohoo yodelayheehoo, movin right along!

Pardon me, Mr. Novák, David said respectfully, you said something to the effect that you didn't understand German, or, err, Jewish, but the literati you mentioned spoke ...

Wull now, sokolite, aren't chou the brain! Maybe I was puttin ya on, silly boyz, maybe I was scrapin yer clams, pullin yer schnozz, chompin yer gum, heh heh heh!

Fine ... Mr. Novák sir, but in what instances? Bohler asked.

Book page 114 [after last paragraph], Galley page 114 [before first full paragraph]

Líza must be waitin now, huh? It looked as though Micka had become anesthetized to it all.

Yep, said Bohler, Well, Mr. Novák, thank you very much then ... he offered his hand to the skeleton, then immediately drew it back.

Wull, my boyz, it's been super-duper havin ya here, you boyos're sharp, Líza can have a chat wid Wolfie, I mean I'm there presto chango ... yep, things're diffrent out our way ... an Wolfie he might like da talk ta ya too ... wull but that won't work, he wasn't advised ... plus the only language a yers he knows is Daynish, nother one a them golden boyz, little nipper had three of um ... yep, Wolfie doesn't wanna be young again either ... I herded that one off the ramp at a gallop! Three of um he had! I'm tellin ya ... my heart skipped when the oberst picked him out, yes sir, yes siree!

Whoever you are ... thundered Bohler, and all of us but the skeleton nearly jumped out of our skins ... an even if we're merely wretched worms of the human world, I challenge you ...

Book page 115 [after "I mean you know, boyz! ...", fourth line, final paragraph], Galley page 114 [ditto]

So we're like chewin the fat there a while an I see this one buckaroo that's espeshully done for, chest bashed in, all bandaged up, an he reaches in there an whips oudda butt! Hadn't had me a cig in years! An I look, fella's gotta be one tough customer, pulls a match oudda his stump! Wull so I go down the line a stiffs ta him an I give it a shot: *Nazdar!* Where'd jou roll in from? An he goes: Belzen, *vole!* Wull a course, Czech fella, some Pazika from Košire, had a paint shop over there ... we're puffin away ... but then I hear: Novák! So I tell Pazika, ciao, gotta bail or could be trouble, an he says, all right ciao, maybe some other time ... yep, he's workin the canteen now ... when he feels like it, that is ... things're diffrent out our way! Gets some paintin in once in a while ... wull, boyz, so as not ta break my train ...

Book page 117 [after second sentence in last paragraph], Galley page 116 [ditto]

Wull the boyz're probly out fishin, tellin those gruesome Jewish storees a theirs ... all sorta dizasters ... an Poláček, him an Lopatka too now, they take notes, like, anecnotes, yep, an laugh at it afterwards, boyz, wull that you dunno ... or maybe they went ta hell for some sightseein ... don't go down there much ... jus Wolfie maybe, he goes down there every so often da peek in on the oberst ...

Book page 118 [after first line], Galley page 117 [after third line]

So up there's some Able fella, an he goes da see Khain an lies down under the knives steada him ... an suffers! ... What a champ! An Khain meantime he cools off, two of um're bruthers, love each other, I surmized! So Able there makes it easier on im ... course easier, boyz, things're diffrent down there ... an there's these two Merikins, fella an a broad ... an they got their spits nexda each other ... Bonnee an Klide's their names! An what they do's each of um reaches over an sticks their hands under the other one's knives ... takes the other one's pain for um ... yep they love each other too ... makin it easier ... they take turns, though! Things're sharp! Girl's got gumption, I can tell ...

Book page 142 [before first full paragraph], Galley page 141 [ditto]

Hadraba was a musician, before striking out on the byznys path after the explosion of time his field of expertise had been loud bass. During his stay in Bory prison he had dipped into the inexhaustible treasury of poems, choosing one it was popular to quote from among certain circles at the time, and setting it to music. In order to round out the picture of the Northerner's cruel, yearning soul, I present it here. This will save it from being devoured by racing time so that when we're all over the hill, assuming we get there, we can hum the tune to our grandchildren, assuming they emerge from the land of Prebeing:

Where is my homeland? in the welding shop at Minkovice
Where is your homeland? in the nutcracker suite at Bory
Where is our homeland? on level three at Kartáč
Where is your pop? kicking back in Rejnovice
Where is your godfather? digging a hole in Bytíz
Where is your bro? slurping tiles at Vinárna
Where is your bro-in-law? dancing with snakes in Boleslav
Where is his pop? in the yard at Ilava
Where is his bro? on ice in Bělušice
Where is your bro's bro? turning the lathe in Oráčov
Where is your buddy? in high security at Mírov
Where is his pop? in X-block at Ostrov
Where is your son? in Libkovice sucking pricks
Where is your second son? in the gulpers' ward at Pankrác
Where is your third son? waiting to dangle there too
Where is your mom? informing in Pardubice
Where is your sis? in Opava kneading bread into members
Where is your sis's sis? on the nest at Apolda
Where is your sis's daughter? sighing with the clap there too.

Book page 145 [after last full paragraph], Galley page 144 [before the break at bottom of page]

Fewer and fewer of the little mother's inhabitants went to the tabernacles to lay down their packs. Most of them had fallen prey to sects, cash, and vitamins ages ago. Or they were so far under the wheel they'd forgotten about it by now. Maybe the churches were closed because of thefts. Bands of people lost to the spit hustled the defenseless saints to the desirable states along with old cobblestones, teenage girls, and statues of the killer Leninovich.

Book page 149 [after next-to-last full paragraph], Galley page 148 [after last full paragraph]

It was still early but the bar was filling up. Here and there a Name passed through, nodding to the hoi polloi, some artist type on his way up, sponsors came to hunt here too, needing a way to sail through taxes they made deals with the artistes, tribes and crews intermingled here. Černá's was one of the mixing spaces, the talk at the artists' table reached my ear: Kolář was the best, he had that Group an

there were forty-two of em ... Yeah big deal, there were nine a the Magnificent an they whupped that whole bolshevik posse ... The post days are gone, man, we're livin in pseudo times, look around, it's nothin but pseudomensch, pseudoart, pseudodroogs, it's a pseudoworld, I'm tellin ya, there's no turnin back! Yeah, and? That's just it, I donno ... Here and there you could also spot a reticent lady, or a gentleman with a discreet escort, venturing out of their vitamin neighborhoods after *Reverence*, a weekly exposing the ills of society, ran some piece about sex and violence ... and if that's what they were after, they didn't even have to try too hard to get their fill ...

Book page 155 [after third ellipsis in first full paragraph], Galley page 154 [ditto]

Who's right is the old fundamentalist Ayatollah aba Vaculiah: He who eats frozen strawberries in winter is violating the law of the natural cycle an deserves to have his hands cut off! So true, so true, an in his *Commentaries*, aba Placiah says he can't sleep at night for the weeping of the murdered ants, an he who kills a fly must hang! Apparently that was the table of the Warriors for Flora and Fauna, I agreed with them, their views sounded more than reasonable.

Book page 159 [after first full paragraph], Galley page 158 [after second full paragraph]

Why are you being so polite, father?

Well you are buying me drinks ...

I bought you the first one too.

That was just to get rid of me.

Book page 206 [after last full paragraph], Galley page 206 [after first, partial paragraph]

What they didn't know was that that home no longer existed. They didn't know the white spirits had erected hundreds and thousands of billboards promoting assorted pointless products. They didn't know about the highly toxic smoke that trails across the horizon like the smell of burnt skin when the wheel turns full circle. They didn't know the earthworms' days were numbered. They didn't know the ants had ceased to be a free nation, and cringed in fear at the yellow-green compound. When it came to derricks and oil and the mobiles they fueled so the white spirits could race down the highways, they didn't have a clue. Most likely they would've thought it was stupid anyhow. They didn't know beans about Coca-Cola, or peanuts and baseball bats. They hadn't read Kafka. Weren't interested in Warhol. They did meet Josiph Švejk — he's everywhere — but they killed him. They had no idea lands and people could turn into nothing but photographs. They weren't the sharpest people.

They were so ignorant, they didn't even know that the telegraph, which in the wake of the massacre called up squadron after squadron of new cavalry, usually guided by people too, but people from enemy tribes, was not a Talking Wire but an ordinary telegraph, plain and simple ...

Book page 209 [after second full paragraph], Galley page 208 [ditto]

I believe the metal in Bloody Knife's chest actually worked in his favor, declared Yellow Woman, the sound of his voice was as mighty as water against the walls of a pail. I, on the other hand, Armadillo Sister countered heatedly, maintain that neither was Thunderbolt's voice without strength. The two would have come to blows for the sake of their husbands' glory had Wolf Cub not interrupted. Both of his arms were broken. Dear sisters, I believe it is my turn now, and my truly manly voice can outdo both of your braves' froggy croaks. Before the women could lay into him, Necklace and Dull Knife rode up and said they thought it might be expedient to dig a ditch and get inside it; that way in the morning they could greet the Wasichu with a little surprise. I won't be much use digging, said Wolf Cub, let me compose you a song instead.

Book page 212 [before break at top of page], Galley page 211 [before break in middle of page]

Yes, comrade principal, roared the pupils in the gymnasium, walking away from another one of Sharky's riddles and fairy tales with a colossal case of psychosis ... Bohler, meanwhile, with a solemn look on his face, opened the drawers and brought out needles, dye, and scalpels. And thread. For afterwards.

I stood in the gym with the others, holding a few minutes of silence in memory of Brezhnev, our bosses' boss ... and then we went back to the classroom and Mrs. Poselová began quizzing us ... I sat next to Milena, let her name be preserved, we protected each other, because we'd begun to suspect what was going on and what it was all about.

It was a school like any other. Except that this old grade school accepted a lot of children from reactionary families. Partly to prove to the rest of the world that everything was all right and every little nipper was allowed to study Euclid's axioms, but also to keep track of the kids. The world gave us a microscope, a tie, and a double desk. Me and Milena, let her name be praised, had to watch our step, make the right moves, and keep our eyes peeled.

Sometimes I would tie her to the desk by her long black hair, or throw her into the water. She would stab me with her compass, swipe my lunch, and sneak off to the girls' room to eat it ... we were always hungry back then, back in our wild adolescent years, changing perilous snares into textbooks on justified self-defense. We waged our war imbued with the same insanity with which other minors progressed through the ranks of tai chi. We had to fend for ourselves.

And as for the other nippers ... whether they're in the stock market or under the wheel now, whether the spirit settled into them or they went to hell ... I don't know. Mrs. Poselová taught languages, she owed her life to them ... even the most perverse and totally coldblooded nippers knew that wasn't her phone number tattooed on her left forearm ... and they kept their mouths shut when she talked.

She had unusual teaching methods. Hard to say why they didn't kick the old rarity out right away. Ahem, ahem, hm, yeah, well, so what, she grumbled standing under the statesmen's portraits. The best was when the whole class gathered around the TV set, all decked out in our Sunday best, for the great day when Remikin, our hero, became the first Czech in outer space! Side by side with the Soviet pilots he returned to Earth unblinded by paradise to testify to what he had seen: Now it's proven, Remikin told us, there's no God up there! he said, stuffing himself with dumplings and washing them down

with beer, relax! I'm the proof an I'm tellin you earthlings, there's no such thing as God. I was up there an I saw it with my very own shifty Czech peepers! There's nothin up there! Nobody! So relax! Upward an onward! And on that day, when the heroic Czech of Czechs, that Know-It-All Runt and Master Spy, the nation's telescope and periscope, returned from the heavens and set everyone straight on the way it is and what it's all about, joy reigned throughout the socialist world. Sirens wailed and cannons blasted, Czechs bowed down as they danced around the New Year's tree, TV ran an extra hour, and criminals let out a heavy sigh. What a geroy an geniyus that Remikin is, the MPs and other bolshevik asskissers gushed, he went all that way an now we know! It's A-OK! Everything's fine and nothing matters!

Mrs. Poselová calmly leaned against the blackboard: Mm, mm, good, good ... all right, it's over, get that thing outta here. And even the most hardened and totally cynical nippers realized she'd been much farther than some stupid Remikin, and she'd come back ... she knew more.

She never told any shocking exploits. I visited her place a couple of times, on the walls there were photos of relatives who hadn't come back, leaving her alone to pass on the message. Milena, let her name be uplifted, wore a protective menorah, I had a kreuz, and before long we and our teacher were exchanging charged objects, books ... good, bad, stupid, read it all, Potok, she told me, but make no mistake, G is just one of many letters in the alphabet. But, Teacher, I thought it was like a rotten tooth, it only takes one ... baloney, there's all sorts of things. Stand up straight! And hand me my grade book, I'm giving you a D for doubt. Life is not a sewer. Mend that coat! Wash your face. And your hands too. Slack off. Watch. Learn! And give my regards to the reaction.

Why did they put up with her so long? I myself heard her tell the inspector: Baloney, I'm not from the rightist camp ... or the leftist one either, I'm from the concentration camp.

There were times we couldn't stand it there, me and Milena, let her name be pronounced with affection, bringing in fake notes with a gynecologist's stamp, stealing time. Learn! Mrs. Poselová said, you don't have much time ... she quizzed us hard but left elements, fractions, and minerals to the experts. What did we care anyway about some stupid fractions ... Potok, to the board!

Fluorescent bulb or eye, aqua regia or gold, tanks or paper, valley or pickax?

Both!

Vole, wires, gyrating, sweating, leap, huddle, lady, wheel, grass, gale, asphalt, sun, flank?

All of em!

Why?

I donno!

Excellent, dear pupil, you get an A. And for your homework, add the words *yet* and *maybe* to your last answer. You've got about, well, maybe 15 years. Give my regards to the reaction.

And when the cops, let no one praise their names, started picking me up and I finally had the perfect excuse for being absent, totally rock-solid and iron-clad, and for several days at a time no less ... Poselová said, you must be well rested, dear pupil, to the board! And the quizzing got under way.

And when the cops, let their names be greatly disgraced, started coming around more often, and Milena, let her name be the name of respect, began losing weight and wasting away without my lunches, on my way over to the black automobile I could hear Poselová sending out a signal ... have a nice rest in the clink, dear pupil, and don't forget, after any antistate activity you can always go hide in the annex ... the woods ... and just in case it starts, in the cellar of the Old Synagogue there's still a few machine-gun nests left from old Bar Kokhba, and never forget the conspiracy! ... and look out

for yourself ...

One day as I was having another one of my rests, planted in iron and concrete like some exotic shrub, it dawned on me what the conspiracy was, I grasped the plan of international Jewry ... it really did exist ... a truly great and secret plan ... and its objective was to survive. Seeing the light, I reported straight to Mossad regional headquarters ... but they wouldn't take me ... on account of my flat feet, just so we're clear. And the kreuz swung from around my neck, and I adopted the plan as my own, though with a slight intertribal modification, extending it to all humanity. That's good for an A, the teacher said ... just make sure you finish it later ... and she clapped her notebook shut. They threw her out anyway. Now she's dead. Not long ago she was telling me: There's various things, many possibilities, and two in particular ... take care when you slack off ... there's masochism, the road to slavery ... the human instinct for self-preservation ... there's pitiful sniveling and necessary lament ... well? Just one and then one again, I replied. Good, I heard the notebook slam shut, the sound lingering in the dry air around me.

Book page 212 [after first full paragraph], Galley page 211 [after second full paragraph]

I didn't know which way to go either. Gasworks. Or maybe stay in the buildings. From here to downtown was a short distance. The bells weren't ringing, but hardly anyone noticed. No doubt the city was the same today as it was on any other, I've checked it out a little. New sidewalks ripening and then hardening like old arteries, crumbling to pieces. The streets' straight lines and curves sometimes forming unexpected snares. Some buildings friendly and laughing, others you'd just as soon not visit. Down in the tangle of pipes, a dark sigh bubbling up from the searing belly and winding its way to the surface, the rat platoons right behind. Some people good-looking, others less so, all of them used to electricity. Now that fiberglass insulation and thousands of kilometers of pipes, thick and thin, ensure that it won't kill anymore. Sometimes you're alert, and always things happen all at once: The mirror woman makes love with herself, and the iron trap snaps shut, and the whore gulps down the sperm, and the moon pokes through a cloud, just like every other day so far. Think about it. Try it. The iron, the whore, the moon. Think about it. Want it? It's none a your business.

I watched from below, but sometimes I flew and it all sped up. What's this? And what's it about? Why? And why not? Always the same story. Old Capulet gawks into his looking glass and it tells him: Only you're a stud. All the rest're dogs an idiots. Kill em! Now. And the monster grabs an axe. Old Montague is meanwhile engaged in a similar talk with his shiny surface. He whips the gleaming steel out from under the grindstone and dashes into the street. Jokes aside! he shrieks. An all the resta you too! Then J&R shattered their venetian glass. The price they paid was pretty high. But they were together. No one could mess with em ever again.

Book page 258 [after sixth full paragraph], Galley page 257 [ditto]

I got out and started walkin, air my brain out a little at least. The first street I came to was Jahodová, Strawberry Street. Shoulda thought a that. Lotus. By cruel irony, every street in this cementorama, this architectural phantasmagoria, was named after a plant. All the better to make people here crave the unknown. I went down Pelyňková, Wormwood, then Topolová, Poplar, all of em were beautiful.

And then there I was: Lotus Street. Which flat though? I could be runnin around for days. Meo. That's what he said. I checked the mailboxes. Nothin. I waited. After a cruel minute or two, I spotted a girl wearing silver. Wouldn't even answer me. Then I ran into a kid with a whole display of protective powers slung around his neck. A girl? Eva Černá? Or Mary ... c'mon, spit it out. What's she do? Yeah, there's some girls wrestle for Meo over at Floral Hall. You donno it?

He brought me to a box that used to be the local House of Culture. I walked into the hall by myself. There was a ring with ropes around it. Probly mobile just like that altar. I watched, intrigued, as some guys lugged in sacks. They tossed em into the ring. Some other guys slashed em open, and out poured ... mud ... they doused it with hoses. So this is the kina wrestlin they got for the residents of Flower City! I said to myself. Actually I musta said it out loud. Cause a voice from behind me said: So what? People wanna have fun. You from the paper? You from Meo? I asked the guy. Yeah. We been expectin some folks from the press. C'mon into the office.

He gave me the rundown. If you're gonna take pictures, wait'll they get a little muddy first, it's a hoot. Then, at the end, we drench the one that wins. Guys go nuts. We always pick the one with the biggest tits. To win. But don't put that in there, that's just between you and me.

Of course, I said. I won't. An on Lotus Street?

He balked. Who sent you, Pečorka?

Yes.

You work for Meo?

Sure, I said, that's what I'm here for, I'm in PR.

Oh, I see, he said. One never knows these days, he went on. But hey, it's legal, right?

See, I'm lookin for this girl I know, I said cunningly, man-to-man.

One a them? he gave me a funny look. Friend a yours?

That's right.

Sorry, but I can't send you over to talk to em just like that, he said. It's gotta be set up ahead a time.

So I'll set it up when I get there.

He started to hand me a folder but suddenly yanked his arm back.

Let's see, I grabbed it away. Interesting, we could use that, I said. It was a photo album of girls in T-shirts in various stages of muddiness, and one ... reminded me of her, her face was covered in mud, but the figure ... he grabbed it back from me, stood up. If you'll excuse me, he said leatherly. I've got work.

Goodbye then, and thank you, I courteously took my leave.

Book page 289 [after third-from-last full paragraph], appears in galley

Oh sure, a car could've run me down, Smoothy's stories could've made me puke, they could've locked me up even, for impersonating a cop, that one worked too ... but at the moment of my death I think I would've gone back to Sister.

Book page 290 [after last full paragraph], Galley page 290 [after first, partial paragraph]

Smoothy laughed when I told him he'd be playing an embassy official in our nonexistent film project. But surely they will call to verify it, he said. So what, meanwhile we get in the dorm and you talk to your man. Excellent ... hah, the embassy, of which country? said Smoothy. Up to you. Try Angola. Very funny, Mr. Potok, truly. And did it ever occur to you why we never get any information from the workers we talk to? Cause they're stupid ... No, as a matter of fact it is precisely because they think we are from the embassy. Ah-hah. Well then, Mr. Smoothy, why don't you hook up with them? Gild some spook ... Smoothy just laughed. And on we drove.

Book page 306 [after fourth ellipsis in first, partial paragraph], Galley page 305 [after four ellipsis in fourth paragraph]

motherfucker, shithead, asshole, dipstick ... I peeked at him outta the corner of my eye, because even this educated man wasn't familiar with all the vulgarisms, as the papers conventionally and confusedly refer to some words, and I'd get him every now and then ... he fell silent, thinkin it over ... then he goes ... dipstick, yes, now I get it, truly Czech is a resplendent language, dipstick, how apt, in Chinese it is *shí t'ín*, and in Mongolian *hutan nagor*, yes, Mr. Potok, Czech is, how shall I put it ... said the linguistician and maybe a killer ... yes, Czech is *obezlita*. Isn't it lovely, ah, Neruda, Jirásek, Placák, the greats! I am delighted that ...

Book page 306 [after first sentence of first full paragraph], Galley page 305 [after first sentence of fifth full paragraph]

Dipstick, how intriguing, and yet Hanč claimed it was impossible to invent any more dirty words, Smoothy rambled,

Book page 306 [after last full paragraph], Galley page 306 [after first line]

suddenly I felt a strong urge to pull over and rest my head on the wheel, yeah right, the wheel ... the trees along the roadside bowed in the wind, reminding me of Černá, I don't know why, I stared at the bark on them, so intently it was dangerous, in this landscape of metal and movable figures the trees seemed alive to me, bending with each old touch of the wind, and suddenly it made sense ... they swayed to and fro like a real person in a story, in a gale, the proud reed, thinking: He invented the lightning rod to prevent man from being killed by the brilliant flash, like the wildest scar, a scar so raw it's almost bliss ... no, thanks to the lightning rod, the bolt missed him so he could pass away later on ... preferably in the hospital, secluded in the midst of plastic and machines that change shit into food for artificial cactuses with pricklers that don't even prick anymore so some other morons can come along and domesticize them in electric pueblos, day and night, no, the flash in the grass didn't kill him ... I went on like that a long time, reciting Shakespeare to myself ... to imagine everything that's the opposite of death and then end up fascinated by suicide, what else ... the trees seemed to go on and on, extending into a deep forest, there's still a few left, out of human goodwill, I wish I could walk through them with Černá, somewhere, towards the light in the distance, and until we reached it there would be hope of suicide, she would probably drag her feet, annoyed, in those boots and habits of hers,

but then she would get it, I know she would ... we would walk through the woods, and then Gretel would say: Hans! I see a light! And she would climb down from the tree, and we would walk up to the cottage, and its roof and walls would be made of living, pulsating flesh, and inside by the oven would be our ... mommy. And we would know what had to be done. We would know what ... mommy ... would do to us if we weren't very strong. Let her cut open her thumb, let her lop off a fingertip, let the old Yaga have a taste. I knew that Černá would be on the alert, that I would see her unruffled eyes through the bars of the cage. I could lean on my sister. Then I would jump.

Book page 312 [before break], Galley page 312 [ditto]

The whole time, though, I kept close track of our route. And if they'd had anyone in that shop it hadda be obvious, especially from the phone call, that I was a total moron. Not even worth knockin off. All that stuff about one more guy, I didn't buy it. The way I saw it, my work was at an end and they didn't need me anymore.

Book page 321 [after next-to-last full paragraph], Galley page 321 [after first full paragraph]

Then I fled: Enough! I said to myself. This land ... in some spots it looked completely untouched, but then I came to a furrow ... from up close I saw it was a trench, moldy wooden planks bridging it ... rusty barbwire, saggy with age ... maybe it's from the war, I thought. Which one, I whispered to my inquisitive self, but the flee-er in me covered the question mark with three dots in a row, which is what runnin's all about.

Book page 324 [after next-to-last full paragraph], Galley page 324 [after first full paragraph]

Factories glowed to either side, I saw forest trails of packed earth, inviting me, I could've tried them, every path leads to her ... to me, somewhere, there's many ... and the sky above them darkened.

Book page 324 [after last full paragraph], Galley page 324 [after second full paragraph]

That's how I used to be, once upon a time, on buses and trains, indulging in the most childish dreams, peacefully rotating along the golden edge where life and its reflections meet, on the far side of the story's fourth wall.

Solitude induces dreams, in mild doses it's even more intoxicating than liquor, no jumbo portions, not for me anymore ... any path, a joke path, say, the song of the railroad ties and their dark drumming, the drone of air through a tunnel, fatigue, the very center of the universe ... a self-spectator, a sensitive receiver, and above all: on the wings of the birdwoman, in other words my dear manias, perhaps to pluck these things out of motion: the paths of the exhausted yet triumphant jungle expeditions, of the adventurous stay in the steppes and mysterious cities at the end of the world, everyplace where barbaric princesses coil around me like vines, and where in the spasms of seemingly terrifying shaman dances I welcome the spirits of water and earth, my spirits, spirits of the imperium, my nourishment, the charge always leading to another path ... you can even stand to be alone when you have her inside you, a sister ... to savor that long night, not long ago still in the belly of the beast,

I sleep with a globe beneath my pillow. It doesn't spin.

From time to time along the way, totally forget yourself, watch the tree branches as they chop into the wind at a safe distance from the train, you can also spit out the window, look into it at your blurry face, watch your mug. It moves.

Book page 364 [after fourth full paragraph], Galley page 364 [after fifth full paragraph]

No one can ever tell what's at stake. The world, yeah, an I had my buddies: Kral, smell; Helmsman, sight; Bohler, hearing; Sharky, touch; Friday, taste, and Bog's island servant, well, I said to myself, hope I'm not scandalizin any relatively religious folks.

Book page 406 [after fourth full paragraph], Galley page 406 [after fifth full paragraph]

This one here's a real dope, said Tomáš, patting the white dog's head. Horák, ever heard of him?

No, think I'll go for a little walk, see how it feels.

Be my guest.

Book page 406 [after fifth full paragraph], Galley page 406 [after sixth full paragraph]

I spent all day draggin my guilt around with me, an if I hadn't let go of it I probly would've ended up dead. But I didn't want that anymore. Not there.

Where'd you say you met Milkman? No way, that musta been ages ago ... my new pal said ... but it's no coincidence, man, the paths a those that drop out've been joined since time outta mind. Not a lotta places around a guy can hole up ... Get this, these two kids volunteered, help him pickin flowers, but then ... guy just stayed out there in some cave, by himself. Just him an the trilobites. An that's all she wrote! Now it's Grygar Valley, useta be a dead zone, now they're puttin up government villas. Yep.

Book page 408 [after first, partial paragraph], Galley page 408 [after first full paragraph]

Horák here, now he's a different story.

How long you gonna be here?

Till winter for sure. Then I got a contract.

What do you do?

Videos an stuff. TV.

Oh yeah, I said to my new companion. You know, for me, TV, I was gettin so I couldn't stand it ... I told him how we had torn down our tenants' antennas, and about the warehouse with the TV toys ... I was going to tell him about the market too, but there was a hole in my head when it came to Černá, I couldn't do it.

I was gettin so I couldn't stand it either. Yep, that's why I'm here. Hey, I came out here with all kindsa ideas ... just look at that shelf, all those books, hauled em up from the valley, all sorts a technology ... but there's only one thing I came here for. Wanna know what it is?

What?

You gotta get used to TV the way I got used to that bush.

Aha.

Least the videos I make're good, I mean anyone else'd make even worse crap. Well, what can you do.

Smash it all to smithereens.

That's the one thing you can't do, hey, get a move on, here comes Suka ...

Book page 409 [after first full paragraph], Galley page 409 [after sixth full paragraph]

Know what Varhola useta say? Somethin along the lines of, the mountains'll never be full of ugly girls. What he meant was it's only the dumbest wenches that don't get married out here. An since the guys all go to the cities, they're the ones that'd hafda do the herding. An that won't work, cause cows won't take orders from women, jou know that?

Nope. Put it in a video.

Already been done. I'm gonna make a movie bout Horák here. You notice he never barks?

Yeah, an I see you got a silver dog around your neck. I don't wanna pry ... but what for?

Horák here got me. I thought I knew stuff ... that I knew my way around. But Horák! It's those golden Czech hands an brains ... movin on up, I tell ya! Horák's lab dog, ring any bells?

Nope.

Not that I'm not pseudohumanist or anything ... but! They invented it, whipped up this mutant monster right here at home. Horák, c'mere! Thatta boy! See, he doesn't react. He's totally out of it. Suka just ignores him. Shorty goes after him every so often, gets irritated. An Horák doesn't fight back. Ask me, I'd say he doesn't even know he's a dog. Invented him for their experiments, HLD they call him for short. No vocal cords, so he can't bark no matter what they do to im, get it? Not a whimper, no hassles. Just looks at cha. But eyes don't bother these people. Before, they useta hafta operate on the pooches, cryin disturbed the scientists, so this is what they came up with. HLDs, right off the assembly line. Even export em. When Suka's in heat, I gotta tie Shorty up. An he's her son, that's dogs for ya! But Horák, nothin. An that researcher ... even named him after himself, now that's what I call contempt ... absolute ignorance. Like they didn't realize this stuff counts.

I'm with you.

Lots of em don't realize ... but I'm goin after em. Finish up here an I'm gone. I got their names, alla those doctors. I know where the labs are.

What good'll that do? Leave it to Him.

Oh sure, you better believe they're marked down for the big guy below, I won't mess with that ... it's just that I don't wanna miss out on makin this movie.

Book page 409 [before break], Galley page 409 [ditto]

And in my dream, suddenly ... a colorful cloud came floating up from the valley toward me, and rolled over, and I saw cottages and cabins bathed in sunlight ... sure, there was mud everywhere ... but the way those people carried on, I mean I like my humor more subtle, but ... still I had to laugh, and sometimes I woke up with a smile on my face ... they were little people, many of them in caftans, which I had seen before ... but they were laughing and drinking and carrying on ... one had a wagon

tied to his roof, another one had a green cow walking around on his ... the children skated around the pond, paying no mind to the fellow with the violin soaring overhead, coattails flapping, all of the men there had beards, goatees, black ones, red ones ... and the old ladies wore funny wigs, and the girls were also dressed in black, but dancing ... laughing, the men clinking glasses ... and the moon overhead ... they were fiddling away, violins and bass, and whistles too, and the music went right along with the honking of the geese, the ducks waddled across the village square ... importantly, like penguins ... it was a merry scene.

During the day I kept my eyes peeled, but even when the mist lifted there was nothing in the valley, not a single village. Still, every night I had the dream, similar yet always different. Brightly colored pranks and antics, neighborly revelry, Potok, if that's your idea of fun ... I shook my head ... go an herd the cows!

When Tomáš got back and began gearing up to describe his trip, I stopped him. I didn't want to hear it ... he stared at me, eyes bulging ... hope I didn't offend him, not drunk, is he ... no, he was looking past me, stretched out his arm, it was shaking ... I turned around. That dopey Horák was racing downhill, wagging his tail, in the blink of an eye he was on Tomáš, jumping all over him, licking his hand ... Tomáš gave him a pat on the head and the dog lay down on his back, still wagging his tail like crazy ... It's a miracle! said Tomáš, going down to the ground ... he snapped out of it! He threw his arms around Horák ... and then I heard a thundering sound and barking, so I hustled uphill ... and I was glad, cause this was between the two of them, no one else had any business bein there, I think. The One Who Herds was quite moved, actually.

This is unbelievable! But it happened! You saw it!

Yep, believe it, I assured him. An it'll keep on goin.

I guess so, now that he's snapped out of it ... won't bark maybe, but before he didn't even recognize people. Maybe just by smell. But he couldn't tell who was who.

There's your happy ending.

We'll still see about that.

Book page 415 [after second full paragraph], Galley page 416 [ditto]

Sometimes the darkness in my head was, how to put it ... jagged, it had sharp edges. If I called my motion at the market a fall, here I got the feeling sometimes if the bottom came any closer that I wouldn't be able to see it. By the border, at the market ... there had been space. We felt like we were trapped, but at least there was a town there. Somewhere to leave to. Escape to. Here there was just one path left. I thought about it often, the path to the place with the sign. I would imagine every corner, every street. Every building along the way. And just as often I would hang around the trains arriving from the east and watch the passengers. Maybe a spark still smoldered inside me ... of hope of her, for her.

Book page 471 [after last full paragraph], Galley page 475 [ditto]

The air was alive with twittering, old shrikes and titmice, and new city species too, dappled thrushes, rustinals, sparrows. The daytrippers would surround the refreshment stand, spending oceans of time on the nearby benches, there was paper all over the park. But there were also sweet and nimble

squirrels hopping among the trees, collecting the leftovers the daytrippers would toss to them. In the sparse woods nearby there was a thicket or two, I found a few lairs, foxholes from the look of them. Occasionally I'd go there to sit. It was quiet. Feels pretty good to be happy for a while.

Put your white dress on, Sister, and we'll go for an outing, Daddy'll break the map out of his old tailor-made, you'll take the basket with the bread Gramma baked, I'll tuck a knife in my belt, feather in my cap aflutter ... we can let down our hair and lurk by the roadside.

Book page 472 [after first full paragraph], Galley page 476 [ditto]

I searched for you, Sister, and now I'm writing my letter to you, a letter-book, a madman's letter, a letter in Year 1 of the Holy War, the Jihad, the War on the Media, the war in Year X after the explosion of time, which suddenly doesn't exist anymore, nobody's got it ... losing battles are the only ones that're interesting, they cover up their meaning, victory, now even wastebaskets tilt at windmills, victory, I pick a scamp's tin-can weapon out of a trash heap and scrabble around in a Rainy, victory, maybe you fell in there, my dear, victory, I choose from an endless supply of words, and I believe the chance reader has long since laid down my message to you, maybe left behind a few crumbs in the pages and walked out to the garden to finish eating his pastry, out where the critics and psychiatrists sit in their elegant wicker armchairs, Sister, the stony head of the Boss stands watch over the pool, and that's not water in there, it's filled with Jack D. ... or maybe my reader's a housewife and she suddenly threw down her mop before the remarkable plumber arrives, it might even be me, I walk in and see the cabbage cooking, seemingly all by itself ... walk in, with a lecherous smile perhaps, wearing a Harlequin costume ... there are various possibilities ... and the water suddenly bubbles over, so many words I've bound together, and some of them're yours, and when I type the final period nothing will change, there's only one hope, that at that instant I'll raise my head ... and you'll walk into the room. Hey, Gretel, come down off that tree ... come to me, I'm going mad ... but how many horrors lie in wait for sisters in the world, under each and every rock, around each and every corner ... how many rapists and producers, how much pain lies in wait for my straight-haired sister in the rain beneath a stormy sky, even this moment could suddenly turn brutal, look out all your life, and hold onto it ... not to worry, we'll meet again, here or there, we'll be together, the reunion will most likely take place in an old abandoned garden backed by a forest of petunias ... it will be a forest night, an owl night, loving the unseen, wrestling with nothing, the Devil its maw, its music ... we will tread carefully on the trembling moss ... we will meet in the light of a frenzied moon, with humility in our hearts embrace ... amid willow trees and fake graves, the set achuckle with eagle owls and weeping and yowling with cats in heat, and then we'll hear mysterious music, the foxes setting out on the hunt ... we'll be reunited, Sister, and only then will it end ... the apple boughs will be sprinkled with blossoms quivering with insects, and at night as cool as a bridal gown ... so come back, you scorching body, I don't care if you sold your body for cash in Alaska, come back to me pregnant by a beaver, by all of the dwarfs, by the Medicine Man, we can break the spell ... we can do it, to hell with our families, I'll take you by the hand, Sister, I'm scared to death with worry for you, where're you bummin around, you tramp, I failed to keep the watch, our nighttime watch, honey ... an a shadow creeps toward me along the wall, another meaningless day's gone by, I don't even count em anymore, an what's goin on with you? Is my sister surrounded and outnumbered, her heart seized with fear? Is she all alone with an arrow pointing at her? Have the tree branches turned into spider legs? Is she under the wheel in this

life among idiots? Does she still have the strength to smile? Has she fallen ill, is she resisting in vain with feeble arms? Is she boldly walking alone through the hair-raising night? And what if some cunning monster has slipped a sleeping pill in her tequila? There are certain practices I could use, little sister, but I hesitate to ... you're wise, you know the evil would turn against us ... you're a gifted woman, that's why nothing comes for free for you, out there, wherever you are ... all I can do is sit here, lie down, be, do a little uneasy dance to the litany of Cain, I can send energy to you across nine mountain ranges, but what if my sister's in some city hole ... in the next street over, even ... maybe she's coming up the steps with the key right now, turning the handle, and walking in ... even that's possible, our stormy relationship, my dearest, is total uncertainty.

Book page 472 [after third full paragraph] page 476 [ditto]

By the window, here on the bed one morning, a metamorphosis took place, paralyzing us in such a way that all kindness and every brutality merged into a single flow against the flow of time, which is dying, we were frozen in motion in time out of time ... and with each shared gasp I still had the strength to explore your hair of raven-black, the contrast it made with your strikingly white complexion ... including the freckles, it was fall, so many times we'd listened to the weather through the jackhammers ... back then.

Sister, listen, I got an idea on the tram, stop lookin out the window, look at me! I grasped the word *but* and extricated it from grammar, it has to be feminine because it absolutely doubts, it's a word of possibilities, *but* is a she, the grammarians're wrong, get it, Sister, no, wait! they aren't wrong, they did it on purpose because humanity couldn't take it, and then I got off the tram, you hear ... I had to think it through!

Hey, there goes a St. Bernard.

As I got off, I realized without a doubt that Bog ... as some of us refer to God ...

That's weird, I don't think I've ever seen a St. Bernard ... strut.

That Bog's a woman! It's gotta be, not just kina, but in essence, it hit me like a lightning bolt, Sister, by Anděl, at the intersection ... the intersection. It's obvious!

That St. Bernard is lookin at me. Whose could he be?

Nobody's!

Book page 474 [after second line], Galley page 478 [after first, partial paragraph]

Look ... the guy at the warehouse soaks the lardlings in water overnight, that's three kilos more on the scale for you, so you gotta sell it for more, you gotta ... an he's gotta do it too, cause the factory sends it to him double-wrapped ... it's a merry-go-round. Yep.

It's probly not that interesting, I'm just ... sketchin out the situation, I don't mean to complain. Kasel wasn't interested either ...

Book page 484 [after next-to-last full paragraph], Galley page 489 [ditto]

Despite all the jabbering and quick sidelong glances and constant wiggling, she's clever and solid, no mere cute little fledgling ... no. And she's got her Son. We quite value the calm that we share with each other.

Book page 486 (after sixth ellipsis in first full paragraph), Galley page 491 [ditto]

but popping up everywhere was ... “the familiar figure of the fanatic Bohler, alias Mandelbaum, alias the Idolator, agitator and instigator of unrest,” a couple of times they’d broken his windows while Lao and Vojtěch hid in the basement ... and meanwhile Karlovice’s town councillors declared it an independent citizens’ state, a few parts of the republic broke away like that at the time ... the opposition objected heatedly, but some got their windows broken, others got their heads bashed in in front of the local pub, while still others were accused of Pragocentrism, depravity, and copropragy, they were intimidated and eliminated ... true, there was a petition or two, but then the Karlovice militia occupied the township’s borders and the voting got under way ... a majority was secured with the help of a few dead souls registered just in time, an old-model new method, and the independent citizens then democratically adopted a decree prohibiting Gobs from crossing the township lines, requiring them to register with the police, banning them from certain establishments, and so on ... the *Karlovice Courier* reported that the government behaved atrociously, sending its troops into the township, but curiously enough they declined to intervene to stop the Gob hunts ... the newspaper wrote that the Gobs were conjuring up another flood, so sanctions were also introduced against citizens suspected of harboring Gobs or giving them food ...

Book page 486 [after ninth ellipsis of first full paragraph], Galley page 491 [ditto]

from the *Courier* accounts I gathered ... some Gobs sought refuge with the werewolves and the witches, though most of them just scooped up the Gobs’ provisions and jewels and turned them in to the police ... and yet the first amendment to the Karlovice decree said it applied similarly to other beings ... and the *Courier* ran a very revealing children’s supplement titled “Ghost Buster” ... under the headline IN THE DEADLY GRIP OF GOBDOM they wrote, “werewolves is a term mistakenly used to describe those who shun welfare, sanitation, and hospitalization,” there was a cartoon of an old foggy with a cap on, lying in bed, and some snickering kids in colorful clothes were carrying him out the door on their shoulders as he clung to the door frame, pipe in his teeth, and over him in a bubble it said: “Idiots, I’d rather die at home,” and one of the kids, Peewee Courier, who appeared throughout the series, was tickling the old foggy’s armpit so they could get him out the door, and in the kids’ bubbles it said: “Sorry, pops, you stink of death, now be nice and go to the Hospital, they’ll take care of you there.”

They wrote that the various old-timers who preferred to live what was left of their lives alone in their hovels, instead of freeing them up for demolition, restitution, or reconstruction, weren’t werewolves at all, that was sheer superstition ... the befuddled old beggars and poachers who preferred to dwell in thickets and gutters weren’t actually werewolves ... but stinking antisocial drunks who ought to be put in an ambulance and carted off to a Home ... and the old ladies who skulk around the trash cans pickin out scraps of bread, the card-readers and fortune-tellers and black cats’ friends, weren’t witches at all but merely diseased antisocials, and the best thing they could do was go wither away in a Home ... as it is, they clutter up the streets and the countryside, not like Mecklenburg, Dorset, or Provence ... “old ladies livin alone, your days’re numbered,” the charming Peewee Courier chortled like the king of the imps, the supplement had a relatively high print run ... “persons engaging in inane practices, speaking irrationally, and leading disorderly lives,” was how they classified the Gobs, the campaign’s original targets, only ... only then something happened ... and the *Karlovice Courier* was stingy on this ... Lao told me that in the forest hideaways, where the werewolves and the witches holed

up, a little bit of ... went on, she made a gesture for mating, only coming from her it wasn't obscene ... truly just a little, since it tended to be more the hurried result of various coincidences than a pure catharsis of spiritual and physical friendship, and the discovery of oneself through the other and vice versa ... when you're hidin in fear from people an dogs, I guess it's different ... but anyway, some witches gave birth ... to creatures, something ... Lao blinked, tossed her mane, making claws with her fingers and wings with her arms, webbed, I filled in the rest ... and that something began to do real damage, the people's cleansing effort boomeranged, and it broke out all over the township: poisoned wells, flaming granaries, blood from the clouds, and general demonry ... and then I had to hold her again, she broke into mournful tears, soaking the hair that fell into her face ... as her shoulders convulsed ... the *Courier* gave it two lines ... something about an attempted escape and heart failure, the ancient gothic song of terror, the old tape job, basically ...

Book page 486 [after third full paragraph, "Mm-hm."], Galley page 492 [after second line]

They dragged him off and drowned him, militia, volunteer brigades, adults and youths, she remembered them ... An how come they let you go ... oh, you know, I'm jus' a yello' who'e ... she and Vojtěch survived it down in the basement ... they paid no attention to her, even though she was on the lists, which had come out before everything else ... and when it was all over, the army finally rolled in and hung a few of the stupider councillors and tacked the township back onto the republic, and to the nation's great astonishment it was democratically approved by the entire township, almost unanimously, and afterwards the State Court was flooded with denouncements, to this day they're still trying to unearth who was really in charge ... because the extermination of the Gobs and their allies lasted a mere nine days, not one day more, as the *Karlovice Courier* proudly trumpeted, before it was stubbed out ... by law.

Book page 487 [after first, partial paragraph], Galley page 492 [after fourth full paragraph]

maybe her byznys too could somehow, somewhere, somethin ... nashti vashti, Lao, g'bye!

See, I spoke to her sometimes in Indian too, our inheritance from the tribes ... she understood ... we piously planted our megaspeech with various words from vanished breeds, integrating them in our vocabulary ... by force if necessary. Little Vojtěch loved it, Sredni Vashtar, Vojtěch, know that one yet? Yep! ... and then I flew through the ancient streets like a meteorite ... I really wanted to see my pseudodroog's new wrinkles and hear what and how.

Book page 488 [after last full paragraph], Galley page 494 [after first line]

And then I went to the buildings and took a little walk with Vojtěch ... and when he said ... hey, dude, a worm, heavier than a mouse, kina wriggles like, dude, know what it is? ... it didn't seem right to me ... and then he goes: Mom's awesome, an I'm totally glad that you're porkin her, uncle ... so I said ... for Chrissake, who taught you that crap ... I roared, he gave me a look, got scared, made a face, and it hit me.

And one day Lao sidles up to me in the kitchen, winks and says: ... dipstick, dude, plus one other thing I won't tell, and I realized another mistake of mine, a culpa. And instead of going to the Press

Center to look into my buddy's fate, I asked Kasim ... he gave me the address for the Ancient Museum, I picked up a couple a tomes there and started puzzling through em.

Book page 489 [after first, partial paragraph], Galley page 494 [after first full paragraph]

but Kasim was on a roll, an he goes: Hey Mr. Burda, you know the one where the lady goes to the doctor's ... I wanted to run away, but Kasim let loose: An she says, hey boss, I got this like tingling all over, somethin's the matter, I get this heavy sweat, an I'm all like ... an the medicine man looks her over an writes her a referral for a psychiatrist an goes: Ma'am, this is the first time in all my years of practice, I'm callin a conference, lady, guess what, you're pregnant ... an she goes: You pig, an slaps him in the face ... Kasim fell flat on his back, I wriggled with laughter ... Burda looks at us an says: I know that one too, but a different version ... and Kasim says through his tears, grinning ear to ear ... yeah, boss, but this is a joke from next century, she didn't know ... that it was still possible ... we hiccuped.

Book page 489 [after second ellipsis of first full paragraph], Galley page 494 [after second ellipsis of last, partial paragraph]

he was chugging down the Fiery ... me too ... and suddenly on TV ... a perfect ad, kick-ass ... the one with the Battle of Lipany, they used it after all ... I rode right behind Jan Čapek of Sány, we were hightailing it ... the clip was called "He Who Runs Away Lives to Fight Another Day!" ... they played the Czech national anthem and "Ye Who Be God's Warriors," and then a big emerald slogan came up: "Invest in Žižkov!" ... and the Orphan Army came pouring in ... I entertained Kasim with stories from my shoots ... that was great, check this out, my horse bolted, I had on this wool cap with a pom-pom, an I hid behind a pavis so the director couldn't tell who I was, just stuck my eyes out so Sister could see ... wherever she is ... an the horses were flyin past, mine was a dapple-gray! an we rolled right over the nobles, those crusaders an Praguers ... Prokop, when he sees, yanks the arrows outta his body as he's dyin into the camera an goes into hysterics, the women were layin their scarves down in the mud like at Sudoměř, we seriously brutalized em, the film crew too, we won, man, the Orphans won it all the way! Yeah, they hadda leave it like that, didn't have the cash to reshoot, we herded the Praguers into the barns ... so now it'll stay that way for eternity, now that it's down on film ...

Book page 494 [after tenth ellipsis of first full paragraph, "if you ever want her to find you ..."], Galley page [after tenth ellipsis of last, partial paragraph, "if you ever want her to find you ..."]

what do you know where she is ... in a mystery anything's possible, I blathered, she's under the ground ... no, wait! the thought terrified me ... the heart, the soul, the body is the underground ... I totally get it, Kasim said, me too! I met this one ... and in my dreams she's naked and golden and black ... I started strangling him, someone tore us apart ... and what is she? Kasim declaimed majestically, fleeting youth, lurking death, or the unattainable Muse?

I picked myself up off the ground and corrected him: or lardlings, or scrag ends, or veal, or nothin ... borne aloft on eternal womanhood, the poet said, head flopping, I lifted it up for him ... let's go somewhere else, c'mon ... I'm leavin tomorrow an I donno if I shall return ... see, Kasim, this is how

I'll find her, spread-out ... she'll get in touch, cause ads coat the earth like a condom these days, like
veal gristle on a tooth, she'll see it ...