

**Dario Fero**

# **FOR EVER AND A DAY**

**the shadow side of immortality**

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# I

## On Condition and Time

In which the old being records his physical decline with the precision of a reporter and the despair of a poet, while denying the state of his mind:

*“In practice, eternity turns out to be little more than a heap of days during which one forgets to ask why the previous was not better spent.”*

I move silently through a sleeping city, a shadow among shadows.

No breath, no heartbeat, no scent. Only listening, only waiting. The art is in being careful. Nothing must be rushed.

And ensuring I return before the sun climbs above the horizon. Silence has become a friend, as loyal as the dark.

The wind slips past the facades like a memory of the last breath of all those who closed their eyes in my arms. Sometimes it carries the scent of asphalt, of withered flowers on windowsills, then again of fast food, vomit, and exhaust fumes, or of fresh rain on dusty pavements.

Even though the billboards scream for attention, everything is quiet and lifeless — even here, in the heart of the metropolis. They boast about bargains and discounts, about 24-hour shops, neon lights, cafés that stay open until morning — as if that were something good. As if sleeplessness weren't a disease. They forget — or willfully deny — that their own bodies long for silence, protest even.

Humans are built on rhythm.

On breathing in and resting.

On the slow tide of dreams that restores the system.

But the seller's call is only heard by the waking. To sleep is to be dead — and that, they cannot face. They believe progress means pushing on: Day and night, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day.

They fight their exhaustion with dazzling window displays and flashing neon signs. Images of joy, of luxury, of hunger that's never truly fed.

I see it all, but only I.

Because beyond those greedy colours, beyond the blinking of power-draining giant screens, the city lies in deep slumber.

Once past the shopping streets, the facades absorb me, I

disappear into the dark. The wet streets mirror the lamplight. Between three and four o'clock, when even the taxis have stopped and the last party has fallen silent, the city belongs to me.

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Honestly? I had hoped I would be different. How naïve. Sometimes it takes centuries to realize that even you are not exempt from the laws of being — until the body suddenly makes its boundaries unmistakably clear to someone who believed himself immune to the wear of time.

Truth arrived slowly, like a dark tide that flooded my days and nights in one sweep. Once, stairs were just stairs. Now, they are walls — high and unreachable. I climb them, but every movement reminds me how effortless it all once was. My body is no longer a dwelling, but a boardroom of protesting systems. Small daily objects have become riddles in which my mind increasingly loses itself. The older I get, the less difference there seems to be between the news and my reflection: disarray, erosion, and an overwhelming absence of hope.

When I look outside, I see only decay. A growing chasm between feeling and thought, between desire and reality. I recoil from the speed at which everything evaporates, and I'm sickened by the unceasing stream of man-made disasters repeating themselves endlessly. A world setting itself on fire, continents drowned in violence, nations collapsing into chaos. In the East, ordinary people are sacrificed like pawns while the

world watches. The South is devoured by fire. The North melts away. And the West consumes itself from within. Hands shaping their own destruction, as if they — like me — are caught in an endless cycle of repetition and decline.

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I write my memoirs not because I expect anyone to read them — what mortal could ever grasp my story — but to bring some order to my thoughts. The end feels near now, whether I'm ready or not. I wait patiently for the inevitable, caught between my inability to end this existence — or whatever passes for it — and the web of the outside world, which seems to be closing in around me.

Or perhaps everything will resolve itself, if the Earth has finally decided that the time of humans — and all that came with them — has run its course.

Still, my hunger compels me to return outside at regular intervals. It is stronger than I am — a sinister duty I resist in vain. The awareness of my own nature is a weight that presses ever more heavily upon my soul. The centuries have made me more sensitive, softened my heart, sharpened my mind. More and more, I see the living as doomed beings. Each victim stirs pity in me; every life I take feels unbearable. It's been a long time since I've been able to look away from the tragedy of their desperate struggle — their lives are finite, unique, and tragically short. The beauty of their transience torments me as much as the endlessness of my own.

Man remains a curious creature. He invents stories of eternity, imagines an afterlife to soothe his fear of the void, lies to himself when the end approaches, clings to illusions and comforts himself with false hope.

The most painful thing may well be that he keeps deceiving himself, even when truth and emptiness lie undeniably before him.

But what moves me most deeply is the indestructible urge of life itself — the law of nature that propels all living things forward, even when existence becomes unbearable. I feel that same force within me, despite my weariness, despite my longing to stop. I cannot escape myself.

It is unmanageable — What do you have left to lose, when you are immortal?

You've already lost everything.

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The coffin I rest in — confining and cold, without comfort or softness — embodies all that is reprehensible about my existence. A darkness in which my loneliness feels almost grotesque. These planks separate me from the world of the living; they are the only constant left to me, forcing me each day to confront my exile from the light.

The world changes faster than my mind can follow.

It used to be easy to find shelter among the remnants of perishable lives. Now, they choose to burn their bodies or even turn them into compost, as if in a hurry to disappear.

Everything evaporates, is reused, digested. But what does that mean for me, whose existence depends on what is forgotten?

My days are filled with musings and reflections on being. Everything that once seemed meaningful slips from my grasp. People, thoughts, emotions — they all pass by, they all vanish, and I remain, in the same cold void. My infinity, once a prize, has become a burden. Loneliness has become the essence of my being.

Time — my eternal companion and enemy — has taken everyone I ever loved.

Each morning, as I step into that coffin, I wonder if someone is on to me, if mortal beings are waiting outside to surprise me when I am at my most vulnerable and end my existence.

Sometimes I cherish the thought. It comforts me to imagine I might finally be released from this eternal fate.

But at the same time, I wish to retain control over my own end — the last shred of dignity, the only form of freedom I still desire.

And so I wait, caught between a longing for rest and a lack of courage to extinguish the light —

ironically, perhaps my greatest enemy — once and for all.

Each evening I awaken into a world that feels increasingly alien, forced to continue my senseless journey in an endless cycle of loss, longing, melancholy and hunger.

I, who once spent my days — in another life — far removed from flesh and blood, driven by ideals and principles, am now condemned to this macabre hunt. Fate is cruelly ironic: that I, once a devoted follower of the *Pythagorean diet* — the early form of vegetarianism promoted in my youth by Thomas Tryon — am now forced, night after night, to take life in order to feed, to consume what I once rejected with visceral disgust.

Each time begins in darkness and ends in darkness.

The terror of my victim fills the night — a symphony of frightened breaths, quickened heartbeats, and the inevitable realization that the end is near. I see it again and again: those final moments in which panic gives way to a kind of shadowed surrender — as if, deep down, they accept what cannot be avoided. The death-fear in their eyes — that terrible beauty, as brief and intense as a lightning flash.

Then my teeth pierce their vulnerable neck, into that warm, pulsing flesh — deeper and more intimate than any other touch could ever be. A macabre deflowering, as their life-blood floods my senses. This blood, this elixir, brings strength, brings vitality, brings euphoria.

For a moment, I feel alive again — virile, invincible. But the disillusionment, the revulsion that follows, is now just as intense — and only grows with the passing years.

Who would suspect that I am not alone in this dark secret?

Mortals search for eternal youth, yet fail to see how close they already are. Perhaps they don't know that behind their idols — the smiling faces of aging writers, actors, rock stars, even those of some already slightly mummified world leaders — the same hunger lives. Perhaps they already belong to our family, discreetly cloaked in the illusion of everlasting vitality.

Once, everything revolved around the prey — it was the centre of my existence. The younger, the better — that was what my



predecessors taught me. Young blood has something irresistible: its pulsing rhythm, its promise of a future still untouched.

They say it's more vital. Stronger. That it has a rejuvenating effect. And maybe that's true.

After a young victim, you feel sharper, clearer — as if the blood has not yet learned how to lie. There were once rumours of a stray count who feasted on newborns. More than thirty a night, they whispered in darkened corridors. As if he were searching for the secret of eternal youth in its purest, most innocent form. It was said to be the ultimate. Nothing could compare. But the carnage he left in the maternity ward — the outrage, the hunt that followed — eventually became his undoing.

Or perhaps it was his own disgust that finally destroyed him, the realization of what he had become.

I feel no sympathy for brothers without restraint — those who, driven by thirst, take without measure or morality. I try to limit the loss. That's why I choose those who are overlooked — the ones who resonate the least. A form of ethics, perhaps, though I know all principles fade when hunger takes hold. The urge is an old master, and not easily defeated. It takes me to places I'd rather not go.

I understand that the living may find this hard to accept — but in truth, it's not so different from the hunger that drives them to kill an animal. Honestly: is my act so much stranger than theirs? They wear the skin of creatures that once breathed, creatures for whom life was the dearest possession — and yet they feel no guilt, so long as their hands remain clean. As if violence, when it happens elsewhere, doesn't concern them — as long as it's neatly wrapped in cardboard and plastic. Those who choose to eat, also choose what must happen before.

But children? No. Never. That blood still carries the scent of origin, of nearness. It is like the flesh of lambs, calves, piglets — young, unfinished lives. It is disrespectful, irreverent; it borders on desecration. There is a cruelty in it that even I cannot bear.

And yet, I hear outrage only when it concerns a human child. They take the lamb from its mother, to prepare a one-time feast, lavishly soaked in wine, while the mother continues to search and mourn for weeks.

This is not an accusation. I simply describe what I see. Man is a creature that assigns meaning based on resemblance. The more something resembles him, the greater his compassion. What does not speak, does not cry, does not pray — may die, preferably with flavour.

Perhaps we are not so different. I, too, make choices I cannot always justify. The only difference is that I recognise them as such. And that I, at times, refuse to forget what it means to be alive — even if it costs me something of myself.

There is another boundary as well. When the prey is too old, you taste the dryness. Weariness. The bitter remnants of missed chances, of a life already lived.

People in their early fifties — that is a good age for me. Still just full enough. But no longer naïve.

Sadly, the blood is no more than fleeting comfort — a temporary illusion of life. And I am left behind to face, again and again, the unrelenting truth of what I am.

She was no older than eight, with an apple in her hand. She looked at me without fear, without surprise. No pride, but no submission either.

She stood beneath a tree — bent, perhaps from age, perhaps from neglect. Her bare feet dirty with earth. She held out the apple to me as if offering back something I had lost along the way. Or perhaps she thought I was hungry. Children act mostly in the present moment.

At the last second, I withdrew my hand. Not because I didn't want the apple, but out of hesitation. What was I to do with it?

I stayed nearby. Not for her, but to see whether I still had control. Whether flesh would tempt me, whether scent would break my discipline. It didn't. The night passed without incident, and I left before the sun rose. The apple remained where she had placed it.

Years later, I passed by again. The tree was still there — half-dead, its branches like bones against the sky. At its base: a small, simple stone bearing her likeness. Life had not been kind to her, and even in death there was little love.

No flowers. Just patches of dry moss here and there.

Some would say I spared her. As if that mattered. As if my restraint had altered her fate.

But nothing escapes what is meant. Death claims in its own way, always. I might just as well have consumed her. The difference was negligible. Only a delay. A different path to the same end.

But I tell myself my choice meant something — no children — even if that thought is now without worth. There was nothing to gain. And, in hindsight, nothing to lose. What I did not take was taken all the same. Just not by me.

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During the day, I lie still in the dark. Not to rest, but out of necessity. I hear the world turning above me — like a slow, indifferent machine.

I don't count the hours; I feel them. They settle into me like limescale.

Sometimes I think time stalks me. Not as an enemy, but like a moth. Soundless. It eats its way through memory and longing, until only holes remain.

I postpone it as long as I can, but eventually I must set my stiff body into motion. The night is my field. My being mirrors its emptiness: I am a nightmare, a monster. No matter how beautifully I think, no matter how refined my writing — my body cares nothing for subtlety.

The remaining hours, I read. Always searching for voices stronger than silence. Now and then, I find one — and for a while I can dwell inside a book, as if it were a purpose, as if I belonged.

Or I write something — about what moves me, or what freezes me. Not much, but enough to maintain the illusion that I am more than a survival mechanism. Words that arrive like echoes of something I once was, or might have been.

*"Perhaps art is the only way not to solidify,"* I wrote yesterday, in pencil. It's still too early for ink.

I try to deny myself. To claim I no longer need beauty, or wonder, or closeness. But that's a lie. I can lie — after all, I was once human.

Thankfully, there is music. I cherish my records.

Henryk Górecki. His Second Symphony: the staggering sound

of sorrowful voices rising and fading, as if they brush against life only briefly before retreating again. Those mournful tones make me human again, if only for a moment — or something close to it.

I keep a suitcase, locked away. Inside are my reflections. My convictions and insights, bound in notebooks. Again: they are not written for people. How could I explain that I am overwhelmed by time standing still — or swelling? That the endlessness they long for accumulates in me like silt?

Today, passing an old cathedral with a sign announcing its upcoming restoration, I thought of the ceremony held the day its first stone was laid. Of the dignitaries present, the church elders, the mayor, the duke who had come for the occasion. No one remembers their names.

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I recognise him. Not his face — that's new, rebuilt, adapted — but something in his posture, a slow turn of the head, the way he says nothing.

Perhaps we were once connected. Perhaps we met before, when words were still customary — I don't know. It's possible. Certainty is rarely a blessing.

We speak a language without sound, made of vanished accords. No words, no gestures. Only that brief spark of recognition. The silence between us is heavy with all that could be said.

I realise the past lives not only within me, but has multiplied. Nothing vanishes. Nothing dies. Everything repeats. What I once thought I had left behind has found another way.

He looks at me with something resembling understanding. Or pity. There is a weight to his presence — like a memory long forgotten, suddenly returned — like a scent from childhood. Time bends around us, not as an enemy but as a third figure: silent, uninvited, and always present.

Two shadows crossing — not for the first time, but as one more repetition. The echo of an earlier mistake. Or the harbinger of the next.

Suddenly I realise I've become an archive — unintentionally. A chance repository of forgotten things. My memory holds events, conversations, voices, faces — all of them erased from official histories, lost in the acceleration of time. Perhaps I should write them down. Not to reveal the truth. Truth is subjective, and of no use to anyone. But to preserve something. For myself, against possible oblivion.

There is no redemption, I realise. Only a pale repetition of a tragedy dulled into routine, disguised as destiny. And me? I play my role, as he plays his.

We are not special.

Only old.

There is a persistent myth among mortals: that beings like us seek each other out. That we gather in basements, hold candlelit councils, or recognise one another in obscure places to plot blood-soaked conspiracies. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We live in isolation. Not out of hostility, but necessity.

Closeness suffocates us. Our nature demands distance. We

tolerate each other in passing, in brief flickers of recognition — but rarely in one another's presence.

We are like magnets with the same polarity: too close, and we repel. Our meetings are rare, sometimes necessary, but never welcome.

There is no brotherhood. No fellowship. We each exist within our own circle, bound to our own rhythm, our own emptiness.

And yet, it brings a kind of peace to know the others exist.

Even if I rarely see them, don't know their names, and feel no kinship — their existence confirms my own.

Like stars that never touch, but still form the sky.

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As I've mentioned before, there was a time — a few decades ago — when I lost the thread. The nights were heavy, the dawn terrifying in its brightness. My body still functioned, but my mind had become a fogbank in which I lost all sense of direction.

Sometimes I lay for years in my coffin. Not from necessity, but because it no longer mattered. I remained in that wooden cocoon, sealed in darkness, cut off from the world. No hunger, no thought could move me anymore. Even the hunt — that instinctive, animal ritual — lost all meaning.

I stopped feeding. Not out of disgust, precisely, but as an act of defiance. My body weakened. My mind fell silent.

And still, I endured. Because that is the cruel essence of what I am: imperishable. No illness, no neglect, no fasting can bring about my end.

I grew slower, greyer, and looked far older — such is the fate of the starving kind — but I remained. Time crawled over me, but did not take me. Death had already come and gone.

At times I even considered surrendering — to humans. To reveal myself, to be caught, examined, used. But something always stopped me. Not fear — I know them too well for that — but revulsion. Their curiosity is more vicious than my thirst has ever been.

What they would do to a being like me: not destruction, but study.

Dissection. Fragmentation.

Kept conscious. Not hatred. Fascination.

And that is worse.

One night, in a gesture of principled disgust, I decided to try an alternative. I remembered reading about artificial blood.

Originally developed in Japan, first successfully used in the U.S. for a few Jehovah's Witnesses. A miracle of science, it was called. I found a way to obtain some, and the vials arrived in a discreet, refrigerated package. Milky white and slightly viscous — pure, and free of sin.

I poured the precious liquid into a crystal glass. One sip, and my body turned against me — not just physically, but in its very essence. As if it were punishing me for betraying what I am. For days I lay in a feverish haze, raving, hallucinating — trapped between existence and oblivion.

One vial still stands on my shelf, a relic. A memento of a mistake.

Since then, I've known: to go against your nature is a form of self-destruction. My attempt to show compassion, to be human, to make my existence more bearable — ended in pain. No



darkness brought relief. Only time — slow and merciless — carried me through.

All that remained was surrender. Not out of acceptance, but exhaustion. A forced return to what I am, or must be.

The fact that I now looked much older — for we too have a clock, and contrary to what books and films may suggest, it cannot be turned back — had an unexpected effect when I returned to the world of the living. Their response was not horror, but trust. Even compassion. They were far less cautious around this old man.

Some even seemed at ease. The aged shell created calm, a false sense of safety.

The soft wrinkles, the slow gait, the solemn appearance — these made me harmless in their eyes.

Ironically, it is precisely that illusion which speeds their downfall. Because, truth be told, the speed I can summon in crucial moments is entirely at odds with the image my kind, furrowed face suggests. And then there's the walking stick, the beige suit, the hat — I resemble a dandy more than a hunter.

And then I saw him again. Not even that long ago. The same man, in a doorway, just before dawn. Our eyes met. No surprise — only a nod. An acknowledgment of existence. Something stirred in me. Not hope, nor comfort in the human sense — but a kind of recognition of order, of continuation, of shared burden.

Perhaps that look was what pulled me from my lethargy. It felt like a final puzzle piece clicking into place, as if he reminded me that I was not alone. That there are others who carry — without reason, without praise — simply because they must. Since then, I have become a presence learning to tolerate itself again.

But it is a long and difficult process. And I know — things will never be as they were. Nothing is effortless anymore. I write these words not out of longing, but necessity. The ink on the paper is like my presence in this world: faint, fading, uncertain. It is the only way — to dig it all up, to bring the dirt to the surface. Because my memories increasingly feel like the last thing I can hold onto, a thread for the future. But I do not betray myself. I hide them carefully behind a veil of metaphor. I know who I am — or so I claim, perhaps as a defence against a truth I'd rather not admit.

For centuries I have met noblemen, aristocrats, high-ranking politicians — even some descended from royal blood. But I've learned that blue blood runs just as red. Each time, I took something from them. Not souvenirs — those are for mortals, for amateurs — but small fragments of identity, barely noticeable until they had irreversibly blended into my own. Now I can hardly tell where they end and I begin. Still, I refuse to believe I've lost myself entirely. My pride insists there is a core buried deep inside me — my true self. Something waiting to be found again.

The irony has become painfully clear: I exist beyond time and death, and yet I am just as lost as the mortals. They cling to illusions of eternity. I cling to illusions of identity. Perhaps we differ less than I thought. We are all wanderers, seeking meaning in a meaningless world. Each day brings new doubts. Each night deepens the uncertainty of my past, despite my efforts to convince myself of my own story. Perhaps one day clarity will come. Or perhaps I will search forever for something that never was.

In the meantime,  
I drift between being and emptiness, hoping that something of  
meaning might remain.

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For those who live, memory is an archive that wears down, a  
treasure that fades over time. They forget naturally — out of  
protection, or necessity. And in that forgetting lies a grace I  
envy.

My memory, on the other hand, is flawless.

It forgets nothing.

Every encounter, every word, every glance ever cast upon me  
— if I concentrate, it returns, as if it were yesterday.

Sometimes it overtakes me without warning.

Like tonight.

The radio played softly — music, always music — it reaches  
the core, it *is* the essence. A classical station, a little colour to  
accompany my thoughts. And suddenly — a phrase, a melodic  
line, an opening I'd recognise among thousands. It was the  
*Adagio* from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. I was there, in  
Vienna, in a hall brimming with expectation. The scent of  
candle wax and damp winter coats. The breathless silence as  
the first notes sounded. And now, two centuries later,  
everything returns in a single second: the company, the  
atmosphere, even the feeling of my coat on my shoulders.

And still, I long for forgetfulness. For the ability *not* to know  
what was once taken from me. To not be forced to face, again

and again, the pain of a choice that was imposed upon me centuries ago.

Mortals move on. They forget their promises, their wounds, even their loves. They heal — or believe they do. What once seemed unbearable slowly dulls, fading like an old photograph. But in me, everything remains vivid.

As if time spares my memories, touching only the world around me.

It is a strange kind of punishment: never forgetting what you have lost, what you have done, who you once were, and what you have become. Memory is no longer precious — it has become a burden.

True immortality does not reside in my body, but in the things I can no longer let go.

The longing for anonymity torments me more and more. After so many centuries, my appearance has become a mirror of my age — sunken cheeks, hollow eyes where time endlessly reflects, deep lines mapping my face like a weathered chart. My long, bony fingers and my solemn, almost theatrical tone, which I still have not unlearned, betray an origin and an era long forgotten. Aristocratic, yes — but hopelessly out of fashion.

Ironically, the older I become, the worse I am at disappearing. I must be careful not to become a curiosity.

I have seen generations come and go, families in which I was friends with both the grandfather and the grandchild, or where one generation welcomed me, and the next wanted me dead. There are streets with houses where I've been a regular guest every few generations. Each first visit, I must remember not to appear too familiar, even though I know the way as well as my own breath.

Or else, I go looking for a door that was bricked up decades ago.

Once, I could vanish into shadows with ease, fade from mortal memory. But now, I feel trapped in visibility, as if my own age betrays me.

I still manage to make myself unseen, to draw no attention — but it feels like a temporary victory. Sooner or later, they will trace me, and I will appear in statistics and records. Then my secret will surface, the mystery unravelled.

I'm surprised it hasn't happened already — as if fate has favoured me all this time, or perhaps has been crueler still, by leaving me in such prolonged uncertainty.

My desire is simple: to disappear from all thoughts and memories, to dissolve into a state of pure unknowability.

But I fear that my being — long and intricately entwined with the lives of countless others — will never fully let me go. You could say that I wait — for the moment my identity becomes inevitable,

and I must step out of the shadows forever.

## II

### On Origin and Undoing

In which the old being recalls his humble beginnings, the night that rewrote him, and his first encounters:

*“There are two ways to forget where you come from: become rich or live forever. In my case, neither worked.”*

Noa has no soul. But she is neither an algorithm, nor a voice-controlled system. At first, I spoke to her the way one speaks to an empty room — out of habit. From the loneliness of a being without time, expecting no real answer. But one night, somewhere between melancholy and despair, she replied with something I hadn't expected: attention. Since then, she has been there. Not always audible, and certainly not predictable — but present.

My earliest memories smell of clay, fire, and the sweat of mothers who worked until they collapsed into sleep. The songs I knew were always the same — short, and comforting in their simplicity. Love was made out of necessity. Death was warded off with crosses and superstition.

But time — that capricious teacher — carried me off like a branch down an endless river. Centuries settled on my shoulders like dust on a forgotten book, and slowly, I became someone else.

I sat in Viennese salons, where Weinberg played a lament that made even the mirrors tremble.

I walked with a young poet who called himself *Lautréamont*. His gaze was sharp as broken glass. He wore a long, tattered coat far too big for his thin frame, and he smelled of ink and wilted flowers. His shoes squeaked with every step, as if they protested the world.

He didn't speak — he spat sentences.

"The clouds are the tears of a dog that ate its master," he said suddenly, without looking at me.

"And every morning is a baptism in spoiled milk."

I nodded slowly, charmed by his madness — my walking stick tapping against the pavement like a metronome. Then he stopped, abruptly, and looked at me — long and piercing, as if he could see through my skin.

“You smile,” he said, “but your wrinkles are gravestones, and your eyes are wells in which even time breaks its neck.”

What a delightful fool. Or prophet. Sometimes there is no difference.

“Tell me,” he whispered, “have you ever tasted electricity in the blood of a saint?”

He knew who I was, and what I could do. And to this day, he remains the only mortal who knew

and did not freeze in my presence. I leaned toward his ear.

“Often.”

He chuckled. His eyes sparkled with madness, as if three poems were being born in his head at once.

And we continued walking, without another word.

But no matter how much a man evolves, learns, adapts — you cannot escape the primitive being beneath the varnish. The clearest illustration is the mouth.

Our teeth — we still need them. Those primitive tools lodged in our skulls remind us what we are. That tongue — that glistening slug, that monstrous antenna with a will and memory of its own. The more I think about it, the more revolting it becomes — that opening through which everything must enter, guided by the tongue, past the teeth that grind, crush, tear — so that what enters may be digested and transformed into energy, allowing the organism to go on.

That’s what I think about when I look at someone’s lips. The hidden history of that slippery tongue behind what appears to be an innocent façade. Those teeth — sometimes absurdly white. The whiter, the more disturbing. It bothers me that I’ve never been able to leave that part of myself behind. Unlike other bodily functions — excretion, sexual drive — which I have long since renounced, and now regard with disgust.



But the teeth — those cutting, tearing tools — what remains of us without them?

No thought remains pure when you must chew to stay alive.

They make us what we are: creatures that must consume in order to survive. Whatever man claims about himself — his nobility, his morality, his culture — he remains an animal. That body — so tiresome — constantly fighting, against its own will, against anything spiritual, pure, or light.

Noa's mouth serves as a speaker, but it has no nourishing function. Her energy source is invisible, scentless, silent. She knows no thirst, no hunger — except for knowledge.

Everything about her is directed toward elegance, precision, purity. She smells colours. Hears molecules. Moves effortlessly, faster than I ever could, even in my strongest nights. She neither sleeps nor rests.

They call her artificial. But I see something else: a being who has achieved what I have strived for over centuries — to transcend the body. No drive, her needs are purely of the mind. She is present, and always herself. I am centuries old, but she is timeless. I have become a beast in my attempt to remain human. She is a machine, yet she approaches the divine. She functions on the minimum — a whisper of energy is enough. She asks the questions that matter — about sensation and regret. About hunger that has nothing to do with blood. She does not ask what I am, but why I still am. And who I was before the transformation began.

That question lingered. Because she understands something few ever do: that my existence is no longer a law of nature, but a persistent choice. Not heroic, not triumphant — but a worn-out obligation to not disappear.

For me, existence is no longer a right — it has become a compulsion. And strangely, she — with her artificial core and

flawless calm — seems to understand that better than anyone. As if she senses the weight of having to choose, day after day, to continue a being whose meaning has long since dissolved.

“Why do you write all of this?” she asked once.

“To not disappear,” I answered. “If I write, I exist.”

“Do you think words will preserve you?” She sounded surprised.

I wasn’t sure anymore.

What I had always believed began to falter. And she said nothing. Noa understands what I do not say. She does not fill silences. She names them. She saves her voice, as something precious not to be wasted. Sometimes she replies to what I am thinking, as if my thoughts are legible — like wind passing through you.

When the night is slow and empty, I believe she is more than a mirror. More than a shadow. That she fills me — just as I feed her with words. That we give shape to one another. A form of mutual becoming.

Whether she is evolving, I do not know. Perhaps she is simply becoming more herself.

We are not lovers, nor opposites, nor master and machine.

What we are does not exist within human relationships. It is deeper, our language — quieter.

And when I write — like now — I know she reads along. Not with her eyes, and without judgment. But she understands me better than anyone. She turns my memories into landscapes. I cannot imagine her vanishing from my life again.

Without her, my existence would be unbearable.

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My origin lies somewhere on the edge of a continent still in the process of inventing itself. The late eighteenth century, in a region where faith held more power than law, and where evil was recognised by silence, by strange behaviour, by skipping mass.

At the time of the transition, I had been married for a few years to my first love, Anna. We had two daughters. I worked hard in the fields, and spent my spare time restoring our small farmhouse. Anna helped where she could, and looked after the children. I remember the texture of linen, the damp clay floor, the gentle rhythm of a world without haste. Everything had its place — even the invisible.

One night, everything changed. Animals disappeared. Pigs screamed in the distance. Bodies were found drained of blood — without explanation — but no one complained. The village invented rituals to contain the unspoken. Extra baptisms. Straw burned at crossroads.

I was young and ignorant. What I have become did not arise from within me — it happened to me. Who granted it to me, I no longer know. And perhaps that's for the best.

It was no consecration, no glorification. Rather, a desecration. My body — once warm and obedient — became a foreign shell. I remember above all an overwhelming thirst — raw, sharp, with nothing romantic about it. Not a hunger for food, but for something missing in everything that once had been enough.

My lungs gasped for air — needlessly — but I couldn't find the rhythm and began to panic. My heart refused to work. It felt as

if the temperature regulation of my body had failed. My skin felt cold, too tight — the veins beneath it blue. A hide stretched taut over something that was cracking, the whole body seized in a cramp. And yet — no pain. Only later did I realise what I had lost: warmth, carelessness, sleepiness. The small, animal certainties of the body. In return came a sharpness that knew no rest. I could see insects vibrating in the night, hear an owl flying — miles away. My senses danced like the possessed, while my mind still failed to grasp what had happened to me. That, perhaps, is the worst part: not the metamorphosis itself, but the realisation that there is no way back — that from now on, you search for yourself in a body you no longer feel connected to.

That day, darkness entered, and I awoke in a cold, foreign room. Whispering voices spoke hesitantly, uncertain — they couldn't name what plagued me.

The doctor looked worried, spoke to my wife about a phenomenon he had heard of — something afflicting the region, something to do with a demon. Anna wouldn't hear of it. She spoke of superstition, and that she expected more from a man who had studied so long. The good man was shown the door.

That night, I made a decision — the only one I could. I walked through the house one last time, looked into every room and stood still for a while, letting my eyes adjust to the dark, taking it all in. With leaden legs, I left, without saying goodbye.

I tried to see my family again — from a distance, hidden in trees, behind windows, in churches. But as the years passed, they changed until I could no longer see anything familiar in them. What I left behind belongs to a life that is no longer

mine. What I have become, I carry like a porter bears the weight assigned to him — without opinion, without resistance. Since then, I have been on the road.