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Revolver

Translated from Croatian by Daria Torre

Filip

For his lovers - because he was old-fashioned he found enough time for such relationships - he was always choosing petite girls with purses. Small women - about 5.5 ft and 8 stone. Not those who only pretend to hold purses but really carry them as potato bags or those with straight hair, a bit more full-breasted, with backpacks on their shoulders; especially not the sportswomen who never put any make-up on and don't need a purse because they carry money and cinema tickets tucked in deep pockets of their down-filled jackets; he chose infallibly and only those who around their slender wrists, coiled around with a soft leather strap, carried a - purse. During the months after break-up (he never remembered the lovers with whom he broke up long time ago; he was after all too busy for that) he remembered only the colour and the scent of his last sweetheart's purse, because at the second, if not the first date, he always tried to have a peak among the leather leaves of her purse to see what silvery lipsticks and serpentine eyeshades were hidden between those folds. He avoided the girls for his silver Nissan was insufficient and those who would rush forward his books already on the first date. He wasn't ready to share such intimacy. And especially some of his more educated fiancée's sneer. His name was, namely, Latinović Filip.

Melkior Tresić would be better. And Đuro Andrijašević. Specially Đuro: it wasn't so well known. Sometime around the age of eighteen he was troubled by the intense desire to change his name. He was in the fourth grade of the secondary school and the whole class would laugh when he was admonished. At the university he realized that the interest in him had considerably lessened as well as the number of people for whom his surname evoked any association. Every now and then some acquaintance would have started a well-intentioned joke, but then he'd meet Filip's already practiced gelid look. He noticed that the girls from Split had almost never read Krleža. And they carried purses. That proportion of literary ignorance and leather seemed perfect to him. Except for the fact that an average girl from Split was 6 ft tall. A micro-Dalmatian girl with a purse of microfibra was to be found.

In October Filip was going to be thirty-four. As Jesus, one year after his death. He had a little ginger-coloured letter opener that he couldn't stand, a table lamp that he could stand because lately he used to write at night, and a silver lighter recently given to certain Helena whom he kept imagining bending over him with those slightly slanting eyes, taking the lighter out of the purse and uttering: *silver vessel*. Just these two words upon whose meaning he never pondered, but only upon the sound, that silver tone coming from these phonemes as from her dotted hazel eyes. Actually, October eyes. She wasn't from Troy, but from Trogir. 5'6" tall. Almost perfect. Almost: because she immediately asked for his surname and burst out laughing when she heard it. "I can't believe it. Latinović." He also laughed, but only because she had a purse. A black, roundish purse with a buckle shaped as a tiny silver sword that surely makes a *click* when the purse has to spread as a lovely salamander.

First of all he had heard her voice of uneven depth: first deep, then shattered in laughter, cleared up with cough, at moments even squeaky; it seemed that her voice was virtually demanding Filip's attention. The details of her outer appearance, the hair that trailed over her shoulders as it was alive, the raincoat with something red and woolly underneath that eluded the rational comprehension and gave away a heavy presage of breasts. "So what", he asked himself, "why am I troubled with the fact that she doesn't wear a bra? Maybe she went out in a hurry..." He knew that girls were too calculated for such self-forgetfulness. As if Diana would go out without her arrows. After all, there was also the purse: Helena's hand rested on it as on a cat.

Good breeding for Filip didn't mean holding doors, chairs and fur coats' sleeves but purses, where also

the origin of the systematic rudeness lied: peeping into somebody else's property. "I'll look after your purse", how many times he said that to those little fools who just went to take a pee in a cold and unsympathetic loo of a café. "No, no", the wretched girl would have said taking her treasure with her only to sit on the toilet with her knickers off and play undisturbedly with the tiny organs stored in that body: the heart of lipstick, the perfume of life and the wallet, the stomach of the purse. The square bags for men, how pathetic they are with those clefts for papers and documents, so polished and worn out at the edges because of too much leaning against chairs. He never had a bag, not even a briefcase; he rather shoved floppy discs in his pockets and the palmtop in the hip pocket of his jeans. He felt the strap of Helena's purse on his own back while she was pushing forward the bar in the company of her girlfriends. He wouldn't chill more even if he saw those breasts without the shelter of a freestanding, well-holding bra nor would he feel that silent, dark load in his lungs which always comes with flu and infatuation. After that Helena's hair, wavy and thick, dark with reddish ends, slid over his temple. Finally, he smiled at her. A stranger with a pleasant face in the *Bulldog* gave her enough cause to return the smile and after that he turned his head away. Not even for the purse with the sword he wouldn't talk with someone who doesn't know how to put the obstacles, lower the eyes, pretend indifference, flash the eyes at somebody else or at least at Filip's reflection in the mirror, his shadow, his persona. "I can't believe that my look was enough for her. I can't believe." He came close to the bar himself, irritated by the shoulders of sweaty football supporters from Scotland. "What's the score", he asked a tired waitress with the face of a sparrow. "One to one", she said apathetically. Helena would maybe fall into oblivion if something outrageous didn't happen then: a strong, balding, a bit too ruddy, sturdy man found himself near her and embraced her hips. He already knew that nose and thick eyebrows, but in the haze in the *Bulldog* even the supporters from Scotland seemed familiar. She kissed the ruddy one on the forehead and fondled the back of his head until he dragged her out of the café, stroking her behind, her raincoat, her purse. That almost served and digested Helena had her protector who was now going to drag her in the car, lean over her purse and blow his nose into her handkerchief.