

Dino Pešut

His Father's Son

(Tatin sin)

Novel

Translated by Blaž Martić



WORLD RIGHTS AVAILABLE

192 pages

Hardcover

ISBN: 978-953358286-3

Date of publication: 2020

For my father,
who has, thankfully,
been alive and well
throughout the whole writing of this novel.
And for all our efforts.
Your loving son.

1.

I've received the news of my father's serious illness with near complete indifference. If anything, I found it slightly irritating, like roadworks, the news that an old neighbor has finally passed, or a rumor that your dysfunctional friends were, in fact, expecting a baby. And now, I'm starting to realize a growing gap, a pit between how I should feel and how I actually feel. Or, to be exact, how I don't feel. It will be a quick phone call; he won't bother me too much.

- I'm working - I hang up.

In front of me is an indifferent hotel lobby. The room is air-conditioned to a pleasant temperature. Sitting crossed are two extremely pale legs. I close my eyes, breathing in the scent in between disinfectant and cooked meat.

The news of my father's serious illness upsets me for all the wrong reasons. It's filling me with resentment, a feeling reminiscent of puberty; it's as if my plans for the weekend have just been destroyed. And with resentment comes discomfort. I'm brooding over my father's potentially terminal illness.

I've made my life to be incredibly simple, because there was a time when the needs and problems of those around me were making it awfully complicated and chaotic. And I've been trying very hard to avoid doing what I don't want to do - except for my job. I'm not bursting with potential, I'm not vibrating with positive energy, and I retain my right to have a job that doesn't fulfill me. I hate lying to myself.

My father's illness renders discomfort because I'll have to talk to him, and I want to avoid that. We've tried talking several times, we've tried spending time together, and getting to know each other a bit better and it didn't work out. It's like we've decided it's better if we talk once a month about the weather or how the government is shit. Or, I'd let him infer now and then that my employment, despite my degrees, was a clear sign there's no hope for young people in Croatia. I work at the front desk of an okay hotel because I majored in comparative literature and English language. It seemed like a good decision because I had no other

talents or interests as a young, pretentious gay boy. But with time, I realized I was never getting a job in the cultural sector because it's the only space where even the left found nepotism comfortable and necessary. The lack of privilege must be offset by incredible talent, which I don't have. It's fine though, I like people more than I like concepts anyway. My job is not demanding, in fact, often it's dull, but it keeps my curiosity alive. I'm especially fond of working nights and figuring out who did it with whom. I also get to read a lot at night, and write poetry in secret. My scant opus is hidden inside a black folder with *The Hotel Goodbye* written on it. I don't complain about my job. And I rarely ever complain about my life.

Still, because of the news of my father's serious illness, I feel the need for self-pity.

2.

Fuck, we'll get through this, to hell with everything! You need to enjoy life, you know. Be happy. Nothing else fucking matters, you know. That's a lesson I learned. You need to fuck around, like you don't give a shit about anything. Look at me; I don't give a shit about any of this. It's too late for me to cry and think about what I could or couldn't have done, what used to be, and all that bullshit. You know? It's too late for that. I don't give a shit about any of that, and so what? So what? Even if I die, fuck it. My life wasn't bad. I have you. And when I look at you, I know that I've done at least one fucking thing right. That much I know. You turned out great, you work hard. To hell with the government, it is what it is, and your job, it is what it is, but no job is fucking perfect. Every fucking job sucks. But you need it to make some money, so you could build a nice life for yourself, fuck everything else. It doesn't have to be much and what the fuck not. Having your own place is enough. Now I feel like shit because we didn't buy you an apartment. It'll have to wait for now. Shit, life somehow turns out this way, and there's nothing you can do about it. It was our priority. To get you settled down. So that you'd always have a place to go. But alright, whatever, you'll get everything when I die anyway. And when I die, you can sell it all and buy something else. Get a mortgage, do you understand? Are you listening to me? Are you okay? The only thing that matters to me is that you're okay. That's all. Hearing that you're happy and that everything is going well. I'm sorry you don't write anymore. You're a good writer. I don't know shit about that, but I know you're good. You should start writing again. Then it wouldn't matter even if you cleaned the streets, you'd still have something that's yours. It's important to have something that's yours; everything else goes to shit anyway. Everything. Friends go to shit, countries, politicians, schools... Everything goes to fucking shit. Except for what's yours. I mean, marriages go to shit, and so do the kids. I mean, you did. Having something that's only yours is important; it'll keep you sane when things get shitty. I don't know if I have something that's only mine. I don't know.

You're not mine anymore. Shit, you're a grown man. You're smart, you finished college, got a master's degree. I didn't study. I didn't like it. But my life was good, it was nice. It really was. Listen, I don't want to bother you. You have stuff to do. But fuck, you could really give me a call sometime. I won't bother you. Really, there's no reason for me to call and ask you if you've eaten, taken a dump, fucked. That's none of my business. You're an adult, but please call. Or come over, we could hang out. We could go somewhere. I don't know. I know that you have your job and all that, but think about it. I'll be home from now on. And we could hang out, fuck around. Alright, that's all. So, like, call me. Sometime. Alright, I love you. I love you very much.

He hangs up. Logorrhea occurred only recently, after many years of silence. The torrent of words, it's his fear he might hear my indifference. And it's his realization that I'm silent like him. The flood of words now swamps the call until it ends. He doesn't even breathe anymore. He keeps answering his own questions as if he's afraid I might, if he stops for a second, ask *who is this?* I can sense his fear.

My father doesn't know anyone like me. I believe I'm the only homosexual he's met in his whole life. Surely, the only one who lives openly. He doesn't know anyone who writes or used to write. He knows a few English professors, but only because he took free courses. He speaks three different languages. Clumsily, but with confidence. Slowly, but with precision. My father, before he had me, didn't know there were people who watch overlong movies and attend art openings. He had never been around a man who calls himself a feminist. He didn't know there were boys who didn't want to drive a car. None of my father's friends were cynical; none of them rolled their eyes and squealed as I did during puberty. My father didn't know there were people that read to fend off the world. And he didn't know boys could get along so well with girls. He never judged me for all these things. That, much like everything else in our relationship, I had to infer myself. My father has always been short for words. He rarely talked to mom. And mom would usually talk to him through me.

Tell him we're like strangers sharing the same house – she'd say like she was in a telenovela. Then she'd cry. Only later did I learn tears weren't supposed to smell like vodka.

3.

I have my coffee in an overpriced café downtown. The coffee is sour, the serving small, and the temperature always off. The coffee is *fair trade*, though I often wonder if I fully understand the term. I only started drinking expensive coffee since I quit smoking nearly two years ago. I also found the waiter attractive. I gave up my last vice, my pleasure, only to look at some, very likely, straight waiter, for three kuna too much. But to no purpose because I always take off even before there's a chance to start a conversation. Right now, I'm drinking coffee and thinking about my father's illness. I should call him and tell him everything's going to be okay. Just that. It's quite a small lie, a consolation, which I'm going to put off a little longer. My mom, her sadness and her loneliness, always stood between my father and me. I worked through that in therapy, who knows in how many sessions. And, though I managed to detach myself from her, my father was always a few steps too far, always restrained, sensitive, as if he were made of feathers, always on the verge of tears, made of ice and glass. My father and I have never had a fight. He didn't show me how to shake my dick after pissing. I don't know his mother's maiden name. I don't know what his grandparents were like. I have never met his father. I don't know how many women he has slept with. I don't know if he loved any of them. Or if he ever loved my mother, his wife. I know more about my parent's marriage than I know about my father. He delegated parental duties to mom, who then left them to me. We are two grown men who share a significant portion of the DNA, who never got the chance to get to know each other, and who fear each other.

I don't know my father's number by heart. My memories of him seem distant, muddled. Desperate, I dig into them to try and induce the feeling of longing, an emotion that would make me want to call him. He was almost never around. And even when he was, he'd only stay long enough to meet the minimum, for one family meal, for one episode of a TV show before bedtime. His role was to create an awkward silence after the question: *do you really have nothing to say for yourself?*

When I was younger, I thought my father had hidden away inside the white landline telephone through which he would warn me mom was sensitive, that I must be nice to her. I couldn't understand what he meant by that since she'd tell me I was the only one who understood her and my love was the only reason she was alive. She kept saying he was making her miserable. I couldn't have known back then some people were miserable for no reason at all. That was something I'd learn a decade later. I was raised by two frightened children.

My father started calling me more regularly in the past few years. More and more often, a shy missed call would appear imprinted on my phone. I pretended not to notice at first, and then I started blaming his age. Every phone call would leave me with a slight feeling of guilt. It's the same remorse I'm feeling now because I can't call him and ask him how he's doing. I'm a bad son to a bad father.

The toned biceps of my father's arm interrupt my stream of consciousness as he takes the coffee cup off the table. A feeling of loneliness floods over me.

- This one's on me. You look stooped like an IKEA catalog - you say.

4.

My life is surprisingly lonely and oddly fulfilling for someone my age. Most of my friends have moved out of Croatia. Most gay people I know had started planning their departure after the homophobic referendum. They are now scattered across great economic centers of power, earning big, buying apartments, and going on ten-day sailing trips. Hipsters, gay and straight, began fanning out with the end of the recession, gravitating mainly toward Berlin. I managed to live there for half a year. After six months though, I realized as long as I was poor and unhappy, it didn't matter where I was. So, I moved back to Zagreb, where my frustration was surely more comfortable, my commute shorter, rent more affordable, and the language Croatian. I realized growing up was, first and foremost, a matter of class. Only those who must grow up do, in fact, grow up. And my friends are still the same playful boys and girls, impervious to change, stuck on the playground of the lost children whose parents, though reluctantly, still pay the rent at month's end. I'm not jealous anymore. My independence might come with a price and compromise, but it's mine. There's no family fortune I must accumulate, no testament that can be held over me.

I live in a studio apartment downtown. Humidity is not an issue, the rent is still low, and my landlord is very old. Mrs. Slavica is the grandmother of my acquaintance Iris. The old lady from Zagreb knocks on the door. She is wearing a hat and always has a tiny smear of lipstick on her teeth. A smell of musk escorts her into the room. I tutor Mrs. Slavica in English whenever she comes to collect the rent. We're translating a letter for her great-granddaughter. With excitement, Mrs. Slavica repeats the words: *cat, cute, come, Copenhagen*. By now, she's learned to write the beginning herself: *My dear little*, and then she adds a noun, an animal usually. Her granddaughter Iris is a modern European woman, her husband is German, and they live in Denmark. So, for years, the kid has been bombarded with four languages: Croatian, English, German, and Danish. Naturally, each of the four must be associated with one person. However, in the life of young Rain,

only three people matter: her mom, dad, and her teacher. It made Rain confused; she'd talk to each of them in a different language, and eventually she grew frustrated and fell silent. So, modern parents had to eliminate one language. They decided on Croatian because these days, everyone speaks English, except the well off and resilient great-grandma, Mrs. Slavica. Once we finish the letter, we drink coffee and gaze out the window. It's summer. It smells of urine, from cats and tourists.

- This is a bachelor pad. People quickly fall in love here. I stayed here for less than a year or so, and I fell in love, and so will you, so will you. Ah, you have no idea what I'd give to have been born a fag. I'd never have married. I'd only fall in love, over and over again. The marriage, you had to do it, that's just how it was back then, right? So, once you'd fall in love, you'd get married, right away, so you wouldn't screw it up. Oh, if I had been a fag back then. And if the world had been the same as now. I'd never have married. I'd only fall in love. But it is what it is; I fall in love now, in my old age.

Mrs. Slavica is quite the player in the nursing home. She doesn't find anyone attractive in there. But since she isn't getting any younger, she isn't picky. She still likes to fool around, and by that, she means fuck.

Mr. Slavica always leaves at 11.15. She was a teacher, so her internal clock is set to 45 minutes, and then she's off. She doesn't care about the heat. The smell of Chanel No. 5 lingers after she leaves; it seeps into the old cabinets, the table, and the door. The apartment sometimes looks like timber.

"Every time I'm all alone" starts playing on the radio. I grab a booklet of Auden's love poems, take a sip of cold coffee, and start reading out loud by the open window. It's an exercise against cynicism.

5.

Silence. And the slurping of soup. Having a tumor is like holding a bomb hidden under the table, except everyone hears it ticking. So, the genre is a thriller, though it feels like a horror.

The dam collapsed under an onslaught of guilt. I came to visit him. This is what my Saturdays, my one day off, will look like from now on. I'll get on a train and watch my father languish. Pour guilt into shame because I'm not hurting more. Feel sorry because we didn't have a different relationship, one in which he'd be around, and I'd try to keep him around more. Every Saturday, my paranoia will kick in, reminding me I'm becoming like him. Every Saturday, I'll negotiate with my guilt over how much of my life I'll have to forgo to witness my father's decline. Every Saturday, we'll hold a reproaching competition. Every Saturday, I'll make a list of everything my father has done for me, and we'll both ignore the fact that fatherhood is a statutory obligation.

My father is looking at the soup, so he wouldn't have to look at me. The slurping of soup.

When I was younger, our family meals would often end in mom's tears. She'd retire to the other room. I'd usually go after her, and though I didn't know why, I'd be angry with my father.

Mommy. Then, she'd hug me. And not seldom, she'd say, *I wish I had gotten a divorce. Or, he doesn't get me.* I'd hug her back. *Don't cry, mommy. Don't cry.* And now this hug, the solace, stands between my father and me. I resent him for it. He got to choose his wife; I didn't get to choose my mother. And he thought it was okay for a boy, an emotionally manipulated five-year-old kid, to stand in place of a grown man who should've taken responsibility for his actions. As far as he was concerned, his job was done once he came. We could stay silent like this for hours. The slurping of soup. Only a commonplace, fascism on the rise or the corruption of political elites could break the silence. Yet, there hadn't been a scandal in months, one we could use to compensate for the lack of intimacy between the

two of us. And the slurping of soup. The scratching of the fork against the bottom of the plate; it's the soundscape of despair.

An iceberg stands between us.

My attention wanders over the socialist raster of the apartment. The walls are empty; there are no pictures, the benchmarks of good taste. We're sitting at a table in the corner of the kitchen. A light draft in the room is moving the curtains. We're not afraid of catching the cold. The central part of the room is a TV that's always on. Even now, the puffy face of a politician is watching our drama unfold. Around the TV, there are armchairs and couches, a set of furniture that exceeds the number of occupants. Around the TV, there are photographs, a small exhibition of my childhood. There's one with mom next to a stroller. Her jacket and the stroller are the same color. There's one of those triple photo frames with a photo of mom, then nothing, then me. It's as if we're divided by the blank. It's hard to find a photograph of my father and me, standing in the same frame, the same shot, long enough to be captured by a camera. My eyes rest on one of the newer photographs, a small emotional trap. It's a black-and-white photograph of my father holding me in his hands. I was a baby. The photograph was taken the same day my mother and I were discharged from the hospital. I know the story, the anecdote. A local professional photographer was waiting for us in the apartment. My father is in the middle; he's my age. He's awkwardly holding the baby as if he's trying to get away from it. The smile on his face is unconvincing, indifferent, and uncertain. The hands holding the baby seem like they belong to a different person. It's as if the torso, the head, the hands, and the baby are not the part of the same coordination, the same task of the body. Is this the only photograph of my father and me? I've never seen it before. Though, admittedly, I haven't looked for it either. My father and I, at the very beginning. And now, very likely, at the very end of our relationship. The photograph shows a father offering his son as a sacrifice to his marriage, trading him in exchange for his own freedom, putting him in place of partner responsibility. I see a young man whose body arches when it holds the baby, triggering a reflex to get away. I see a man fearing the baby, fearing he'll screw it up the same way he might've been screwed up, and fearing responsibilities that come with the baby. And maybe I'm projecting, inscribing all of it. Maybe he was truly happy, convinced it was the start of a new life for him too. There was no war yet, the future seemed bright, and there was plenty of room for delusion.

For the first time in my life, I recognize myself in my father. In his face, his smile, his fear, and his effort to get away.

6.

My long-term, but now also ex, fuck buddy is fifty plus. We fucked rarely, but properly. No unnecessary acrobatics. So, I wouldn't say I miss him. We've known each other for years, eight, to be exact. And in all that time, we knew love between us was impossible. So, we worked with what we had, phenomenal food and unspectacular sex, more of a formal gesture than an expression of passion. Goran is a successful lawyer, a real estate investor and an art collector. With every passing year since I've met him, his body gets a little softer, a little more rounded, and a couple of new hairs spring up on his shoulders. With every passing year, life catches up to him a little more. He sinks, with every passing year, a little deeper in nostalgia, in grief over a life he didn't have. Things might've gone south for him from the very beginning. He was born into a bourgeois family, the kind of provincial elite that can emerge only in Zagreb. He grew up in a family that allowed only two career paths, the law school or medical school. If a child were creative, they'd become a lawyer. If, however, the child was too creative, they'd become a priest. Goran might be an artist. The hints are hidden in the way he matches his ties, his shirts, and his socks. He makes a ton of money. Like any good lawyer, he thrives on working overtime. He never separated from his parents, never bit through the cord, the noose, and said the obvious out loud. Never have the words fag, gay, homosexual broken through the salon of the family home in Tuškanac. He never had the courage to drop the truth bomb in the house that hid the Ustasha, several dead Jews, a few suicides, violators, and pregnant maids. He carried on his family curse, and the curse of his class, the avoidance of the obvious truth. And so, nostalgia slowly dampens the walls, the shoes, the underwear, the Egyptian cotton, and photographs from his travels. Goran could've afforded himself to be free, but he didn't have the guts. Men who are in that big of a closet have little choice when it comes to choosing a potential partner. He must go for men who, as mistresses do, thrive in secret and shame. Goran is a gifted communicator, a lucid eccentric, and a terrific cook. But he's a poor lover.

He's the perfect husband-material for someone whose *daddy issues* take form of a sexual fetish that dips into the realm of class. Goran is jealous of my life, and he'd give up all of his apartments and a good portion of his art collection only to live in my world for a single weekend, a single week. He'd love not having to travel to a different city and pay for a sense of freedom in a vacation package. He'd love to go downtown and dance in a trashy gay bar or take his boyfriend to opera with his mom. Goran thinks I'm too dry, negative, cynical, and ungrateful. He's the only person allowed to read my poetry. He usually comes to me with notes, when he discovers a better word, small anastrophe, a better rhyme. He always finds a way to obscure the subject a little further, to uncover the lust a little more, to bring out the humor. He doesn't make value judgments, nor does he talk about quality or *where it has taken him to*. He opens a bottle of wine way too expensive for my palate. Someone rings the doorbell.

- I want to introduce you to my *partner* - says Goran. An exuberant twink enters the apartment. Antun, a twenty-one-year-old student of comparative literature and art history, though he'll probably drop art history because it's so outdated and it's not it, he's just not feeling it, but he's almost done, so maybe he'll finish it, and then choose something else for his master's, probably film, experimental film. It's not rare for men like Goran, at such age and in such crisis, no matter straight or gay, to try and turn back time by choosing a partner that symbolizes a point in their life when they got stuck, when the demands of their class, their mothers, their family businesses took over their life. In Goran's case, it appears that happened at the very beginning. Antun doesn't look a day over sixteen. He sits down next to me, takes a sip of my wine, and takes me by the hand. I'm getting anxious because it looks like I'm being tricked into having a three-way.

- Goran showed me your poems. Well, he didn't actually show them to me, I found them and read them. I couldn't stop. They're so beautiful. I've never read anything like it. And I really... I don't know. I hate poetry, I don't understand it at all. But it... I don't know. I think more people should read it. I don't know.

My heart is pounding, my mouth is dry. Shame is strangling me, wrapping itself around me.

- No, I'm being serious. I think more people should read it.

- I don't get it. I really don't get it. How did he find them? I gave them to...

- Relax. - Goran warns me.

- I'm doing an internship at Fraktura... They assigned me to find new voices... The new generation or whatever. There's an open call for new voices. That's really hip now, like abroad. Here, still not as much. But we have to scout new writers.

I think you should apply. I really do. I'm sorry I read the poems... But they're so beautiful. And as a gay person -

Shame tastes like stomach acid. Every family is invasive, even the ones we choose. Fuck. It's a three-way I could've never foreseen. The two of them will fuck with my head and come all over my fucked-up ego.

7.

I get mail so rarely that I wasn't even concerned when I lost my mailbox key. I push out an occasional flyer with my finger. Today, however, a nice-looking envelope is inside. I tug it out, causing minor crumpling and damage. A wedding invitation. Fuck. I don't have the money for perfect gay weddings. I run down to my ground-floor studio, what a romantic name for a basement. I grab my phone, running my finger over the gaudy typography. I call Zoja, my best friend.

Zoja had a baby a couple of years ago. The baby came into being the way most of us did. The relationship was in crisis, and instead of breaking up, being lonely, and independent, instead of facing reality – a baby came. The little boy now soaks up all the neurosis of the unstable couple. Zoja, of course, doesn't like being a mother; it makes her feel paranoid and thoroughly hopeless. The pregnancy made her calm for a while, and then the anxiety kicked in again. A baby is a sense of permanency. I told her early on I thought what she's doing was stupid and I no longer felt like watching her be miserable. Then our relationship cooled off. Now we started seeing each other again, as of recently – occasionally. The kid is cute, he likes me, but I feel awkward whenever I'm around him because I had advocated his abortion with so much passion.

The friendship between Zoja and me is based on gossiping, commenting, and belittling, cynical hissing, and mocking the lives of people we used to be friends with. The words gently drip, saturating our conversation just so we wouldn't have to discuss, confess, tell each other how we feel. Our friendship is one great diversion, an effort to stay off-topic. That's why it ended as soon as one quite simple truth came out. That's why we don't talk about ourselves anymore. Always, and only about other people.

Janko is our friend who now lives in London, who somehow became successful and even richer. All that's left of our friendship is a relatively active Viber group chat where we occasionally exchange a few jokes, memes, and selfies. Janko,

Zoja, and I were inseparable, a trio from the beginning. We spent the first two years of college waiting for Janko to come out. In that time, he managed to lose his virginity to Zoja. When he came out, Zoja declared herself the queen of faggots. The two of them paid for my therapy after my mom's accident. Their parents furnished empty rooms in their houses with beds when we realized I shouldn't be alone. We were a trio from the beginning, at every party, on every trip, during every exam week. We'd split every ecstasy, gram of speed, every secret into thirds. And it was an urban family we were all looking for. Zoja found brothers who weren't skinheads, Janko found fleeting freedom from the expectations of his nearly aristocratic parents, and I was given access to Zagreb, a new city.

Then, one night, Janko got beaten up because he was making out with a boy out in the street. The boy escaped. Janko got away with a broken nose, cracked front tooth, and two fractured ribs. A feeling of discomfort spread among us. Reality shattered our hipster world. Zoja never admitted how scared she was. I never admitted how terrified I've been ever since. All minorities walk the streets, knowing there's a chance they might die. At certain times, a greater or lesser. In certain places, a greater or lesser. Janko was getting better. But he decided he was leaving. And he said: - Keep fooling yourselves. But I don't stand a chance here, not me, not you. And one day you'll wake up and realize you're compromising, settling for less. With each day, less and less. Yes. It'll happen. With each day there'll be less hope and more shit.

It was his frustration talking, and his privilege. The fact he could afford to live and continue his studies in London. For the two of us, that was impossible. And he couldn't comprehend it wasn't a matter of compromises, but defaults of life. His parents were more comfortable with the thought of their gay son living abroad anyway, so they wouldn't have to talk about him with the extended family anymore. There was no doubt Janko would succeed, become a consultant or something similar with an English name, find a gorgeous fiancé, also a Croatian fleeing the *barbarism*, and beautifully decorate their first shared real estate. If he read something in the newspaper, he would call, worried, and ask what the hell was going on in Croatia, and when did we plan on waking up. He usually visits during the summer, and then we have to listen about how terrible Croatia is, followed by how both Zoja and I are not aware of the corruption, chauvinism, hate, unemployment, the weak democratic system, and cultural corrosion, as if we're not the ones living it. Right after, we have to listen about how beautiful Croatia is, and about every restaurant he and his fiancé dined in.

Now, Janko is getting ready to be the groom, the bride. Zoja and I had started mentally preparing for Janko's perfect gay wedding before it was even legal.

Neither of us is in the position to make fun of them too much. Zoja, because she has a baby. And I, because I fear relationships so much that a second date is a reason enough to have a panic attack.

And we'd love to make fun of them. But instead, we quiz each other, do we have enough money for a gift, and if he asks for one, a bachelor party. Zoja is trying to remember if there's a fee she's yet to receive; I check my scant savings. Her baby is crying in the background.

This is not how I imagined adulthood, maturity.

8.

I should shower, maybe even jerk off. I watch my body in the mirror. I should start working out. The genes have started doing their thing. I watch the wrinkles that etch when I smile, a proof I wasn't always this fucked up, that I once had a sense of humor. I'm not sure when I gave up on life, when the frustration took over me. Maybe when Janko got beaten up or when others started leaving too. At one point, everyone had a plan for their life, except me. It's as if all of my friends were following their dreams. Some to become successful artists, others to sleep with five thousand hot guys, some to never fear for their life again, Zoja to stop the agony of adulthood. At one point, everyone I know, or used to know, seems to have started realizing their potential, decoding the messages of the great universe, except me. I was the only one who saw the future as white noise. The only thing, it seems, that will remain of my twenties is a river of possible lives I've missed, given up on, or was late for. I stand naked, deferring both the showering and jerking off. And I just watch myself in the mirror, my body is just another unrealized potential. That's how it's always been. I'm lazy, with no work ethic, no self-esteem, unreliable and pessimistic. In the end, everyone was right, my old man, Janko, our professors. The world became efficient in one day. Everyone became a master of their own fate. In the world of crisis, everyone became their own small business, temple, and amusement park. All of a sudden, everyone started consulting tarot masters and astrologers, gurus and *coaches*, personal year numbers and numerology, practicing autogenic training, buying minerals and crystals, often filled with *energy*, discovering twenty-two past lives, drinking spirulina then turmeric then black cumin, swapping regular smokes with healthier, technologically-advanced e-cigarettes, microdosing LSD and macrodosing everything else, drinks became thick and green, fruits overripe, and bread was suddenly full of nuts, vacations were being spent in detox, everything was cleansed of negative energy, places and thoughts, and especially people. Except me. My energy is still blocked, I vibrate at a lower frequency, I didn't seize the

power of now, my goals are unclear, and daily affirmations missing. At the same time, I was too poor for all that, the courses, the workshops, the therapists, Berlins, Londons, and different, more practical, MA's. That was something I couldn't explain to my friends. The number of possibilities the future holds is not the same for every class. The fear, obesity, cynicism, frustration, pessimism, they now belong to the poor. I've tried and failed. Fate is an economic unit. And mine caught up with me. Failure means guilt to the poor, and a motivational social media post to the rich.

Frustration and mild desperation flood the bathroom. In my hand, a soft, semi-erection. In the mirror, a portrait of my father. As the years go by, his face rolls down my cheeks more and more, like a ghost. He was right. I became everything he'd warned me about. Things don't just happen; they don't simply take off for people like us. We've got no one to help us. We have to do everything on our own. And as such, we have our limit, our ceiling. That's what he told me when I got into college. He told me he wouldn't be able to help me, and that everyone out there would have someone to help them. And he was right. He told me Croatia was not a country for someone like me, that it was cruel and enraged, and he told me that people here were hungry for blood. And he told me to leave. But I stayed, in the country where the slightest display of affection in public could earn me a fractured skull, cost me my collarbone, or my life. He was right. I've turned into every one of my father's warnings. I became everything I rolled my eyes at, everything I blocked out and ignored for years. All alone, unambitious, unrealized, and a cynical fag.

A weak coming calms me down.

9.

After four missed calls, I answer the fifth. My father says my name.
- Goddammit, I really don't get it, I don't get that you can't pick up the phone and call me. I don't get it, I don't, what's so fucking hard about that. You know me, you know that I won't call and ask you questions and bother you. I mean, goddammit, you don't even remember to ask me how I'm doing once in every few weeks. I could be in a coffin, in the ground, and you wouldn't have a fucking clue.

He says my name again.

- What the fuck is that all about. I really don't expect anything from you. You don't have to go to the doctor with me. I don't expect you to wipe my ass if everything goes to shit. I've arranged that. I'll have nursing care. But, goddammit, you can't even call me to ask if I'm okay, if I'm okay! I don't get it. Maybe I'm stupid. What do I know? Maybe I'm stupid, so I don't understand, but I don't get it.

He says my name again.

- You know what, I don't give a shit. Really. You don't have to call me. If it's not important to you, if you don't care. Then fuck you. You don't have to call me. I didn't call my old man when he was dying. But let me tell you something. Listen to me.

He says my name again.

- You'll be sorry. If I die and we're not talking, you'll be sorry. Do you think I don't feel bad? But I can't force you. I won't; I don't give a shit. If you don't want it, I don't want it either. I have someone to talk to. But you...

He says my name again, a little softer.

- You have your own life. I get it. And your own routine. And your job. Everything. This is your time to fuck around. I get it... But goddammit, life gets so shitty every time. And I wish we didn't have to talk like this. It's forced. Anyways... Did you start writing again? You should do that. Yes.

He says my name again. Then we're both finally silent. Just like old times.

He says my name again.

- Look. I won't call you anymore. I really won't. Just come home when you can. If you want to. I'm sorry I yelled. I'd love to spend time with you. And talk to you. Just the two of us. That's it...

I don't know. I really hope you're okay. And that things are going well, god-dammit. I really think you could do better than that hotel job. But I'll stay out of it. I fucking hated when people tried telling me what to do. But I'd love to see you fuck around. And have fun. And that you don't giving a fuck about anything. That you're enjoying life. I'd love that. I think that's -

- Fuck off, dad.

I hang up quickly. Guilt grips my throat. Leaving me short of breath. I've spat out the remainder of puberty that's been on my chest for years. With one word, I've coughed out the rage, which I nearly forgot about. It's at least fifteen years too late. My father already escaped every responsibility that comes with a fertilized and unaborted egg cell. My father was always somewhere else, out of the country, out of town, or out of the apartment. He expected me to fill out the gap he's left in the apartment and his marriage. To show understanding for his wife, my mother. It's a fuck off for every time he told me I must understand her, that she was sensitive. It's a fuck off for every phone call he made to instruct me on how to fill his shoes. My father demanded the truth but didn't understand truth requires a relationship, one of trust. It's an avoiding method he probably learned from his father. The one he passed on to me.

Whenever you need something, come to me. And that's how he would ascertain he was there for me, and at the same time, that I'd leave him alone. Because, as I've realized much later, a child can't know when and why they need an adult. It's up to their parents to know that. And that requires talking. Memories with my father are made of long silences in the car.

It's a *fuck off* to his fear of responsibility, disappearing, sneaking out of the apartment. And most of all, it's a *fuck off* to signing away the guilt, almost as a part of his will.

It's a *fuck off* that makes the body shiver.

10.

Iopen drawers, cabinets, kneeling down. I'm groping one thing after another as if I'm playing Helen Keller in a B movie. I'm flipping through the pages, opening the files, as the administrative evidence of my life falls out. I know what I'm looking for.

Two years ago, I tried living in Berlin. But things weren't really going my way. I had an even worse job than here. And I wasn't earning enough to slip into the *leisure class*. My paycheck didn't give me access to unlimited weekends, organic brunches, and tight asses. But I had an acquaintance whose children I babysat now and then. She's the most liberal person I have ever met. When I was preparing to leave, she stuck a red file in my hands. She said my name with a funny accent.

- Look, we're in the post-recession world now. A job can be anything you can think of. Everything else will go away. You have your world. Hear me out. You have to find a way to work less and earn more. So, you can focus on yourself and your writing. You're too gentle for a corporate job. My best friend came up with this. I told her I'd give it to you. One day, when things get rough, read this, memorize it, and sell it to companies. The world is only getting more stupid. You're sensible enough for this. And you'll make enough money. There's so much money in the world, but it's going down the drain. There you go, it's my gift to you. And for everything... I'm really glad I've met you.

As with every other person from Berlin, I never saw her again. I have the red file in my hands; it got slightly dampened by humidity, the gift of the ground-floor apartment. The inside of the file says *I love you*, written in big letters. There are about fifty sheets of paper inside, mostly slides. This is gold - I think to myself. I skim through the materials. It's a training program for corporate employees, a combination of new age, self-help, horribly naïve psychological tests, and some psychodrama. One of the instructions says it's essential that the employee feels happy with their self-evaluation. The second; to always remember how lonely

those people are. The last set of exercises, which examine trust and intimacy, is mostly based on hugging. One time I slept with a freshman who studied acting, so I'm familiar with some of the exercises.

My name and last name, consultant, corporate trainer, growth for business wo/men. A wave of adrenalin, excitement comes over me, as if I've just snorted two fat lines of coke. Building a business out of yourself has never been easier. A website should be filled with *content*, fewer words, and more images; everything else is in a convenient template. Not so long ago, all of my friends were amateur and professional photographers. Proof of that is a folder on my desktop titled PORTRAITS. In the folder, besides my professional, and slightly retouched portraits, there are a few dickpics I don't want to delete.

All of the words are already written out, I just need to translate them. Fingers glide over the keyboard, coating corporate jargon in new age, then in popular psychology, and then cooking, deep-frying it in oil made of unhealthy ambition. These are the times when everyone can redefine, invent, and brand themselves. So, that's what I'll do. I'll finally take this life by the balls. I'll prove everyone I'm more than a whiny, wimpy faggot, poet. No longer will I be lost in time and space. I will not be cynical. I will believe in myself, in my message, and my mission. I won't put myself down anymore; I will believe in my worth. That's how it'll be. I will no longer live in a ground-floor apartment and settle for less. I will become a part of this world, wear CK briefs, download Instagram, and upload a display of wealth, men's cosmetics, my fresh set of abs, and my Gucci pillow. I'll work my ass off, rest after I hit forty, buy an apartment, leap over the class and my own shadow, bury my father, find a husband and the list goes on and on until it gets ripped by an intractable template. Kruno will finish it, I decide. He owes me a favor anyway, for translating something for free.

I look at the table. It looks like the red file threw up all those papers as it exploded with its potential. The black one, with a shyly written *The Hotel Goodbye* on it, rests tidy, unopened, hidden underneath the exciting business idea that will be, I'm confident, my new beginning.

11.

Hana's visit took me by surprise. I haven't talked to her in over a year, not even asked the usual curtesy questions like when she is coming back to our hometown, for Christmas or Easter. Hana and I shared a childhood. I can't remember a day spent without her. We went to kindergarten together, then elementary school, and then high school. I know the smell of her apartment and the sharp voice of her mother; they are a part of my childhood, my growing up. Whenever things got complicated over at my place, we would go to Hana's. Hana and I don't have to talk. It's the only privilege of knowing someone as a child. I might not know the new Hana, the way she lives her life, but I know her every mechanism, the history of her character. We don't even have to talk about the news that she's a lesbian. She's always been one, but now she finally lives with a woman. And that part somehow makes sense. I shrug my shoulders. She and her wife are successful and rich, and they've just bought their first house, with a very small mortgage. They are thinking about getting a cat or a baby. Stanko. She hangs out with Janko, but not too much. Hana talks too little and she almost never gossips. She notes they have a nice apartment, in the hipster part of the hipster neighborhood. Janko has changed jobs, so now he has more free time. Janko and his fiancé are thinking about getting a dog or a baby. London is cruel, she remarks, but it's easy to get your priorities straight. You work yourself to the bone to get a beautiful house, you settle down, and then you spend the second half of your life resting. She recites it like a definition, which I'm excluded from.

I work here and there, I'm renting a ground-floor apartment, I'm single, and well-rested in the first half of my life.

- I didn't mean it like that. You're an artist - she tries to explain herself poorly.
- I'm a receptionist.

I'm trying to sell her on Zagreb. I offer an expensive breakfast, this new restaurant that has three different types of avocado toast on the menu, I'm leading her to the street popular among tourists. The city seems to have lost its identity

completely in the past two years, accommodating the tourism supply of central Europe. The same hamburgers, the same thick ice cream, the same authenticity, and the same drunk tourists. Local kids have crowded into two small cafés and one nightclub. This are the times when cities had been transformed into studio backdrops.

Hana is going away to visit her parents in our hometown.

- Why don't you come with me?

And the excuses start flowing, up to my throat, and down my mouth. The first, then the second, then the third. I don't owe him anything, I keep repeating. Why would I change my life, I ask myself. What has he ever done for me? The question is rhetorical. Hana is just listening because that's the nature of our relationship, I ramble, and she just listens.

- I was just asking. I think you could do with a little responsibility in your life.

I roll my eyes. There's no hugs or kisses. We just stand there, at the train station. The trains are standing still.

- Have you ever considered being a father?

No. No. *Fuck. Fuck.* No. No. *Fuck.*

- No - I lie. - Maybe.

- I think -

- Hana... Take it easy.

- Look... I'll be at home... When figure things out... I'd love to have a little heart-to-heart with you.

No. No. *Fuck. Fuck.* No. No. *Fuck.*

She enters the new, low-floor train. The car is air-conditioned, and the temperature is pleasant. The new ones have Wi-Fi and electrical sockets. A one-hour ride now takes only 50 minutes. That cuts twenty minutes off the ride to visit my dying father. It's a chance to live in my hometown, to use that time to talk and connect with him, to get to know the man who's always been a lingering shadow in my life. It would be possible. I'd live in a big, airy apartment, on the third floor, with a balcony, with no roaches and mice, and with separate rooms.

The train takes off, disappearing on the horizon, in the vibrant ground.

I push through the flock of backpacks and greasy heads.

Time slows down in the summer, together with thoughts.

12.

People are disappearing from their jobs like it's '91. They usually vanish over the summer because they get higher-paying jobs. But now, they simply disappear to Ireland or Germany, always right as the frustration spills over the brim. My favorite coworker hasn't shown up. He sent in an email that he's moving away to Ireland and we could all suck his dick. He'd rather shovel shit than put up with all the bullshit here. That was his email in reference to the flagrant and rapid upward progression of our twenty-four-year-old colleague, the son of the local, naturally, right-wing politician. That's my guess. There's a long night of idling ahead of me, filled with similar thoughts. The city streets are nearly empty. The liveliest time is always between midnight and two. Afterward, the tourists slowly start giving up, and they finally make peace with the fact that Zagreb is a dull city and the internet had them fooled. Dating apps start bearing fruit, and local boys and girls become part of the authentic city attractions. Even the adulterers come out since they're less exposed after midnight, once the streets clean out. I usually write at night, playing, counting syllables, squeezing rhymes, grappling with the sonnet, allegedly. A poem is merely a thought that takes its shape. It helps me with anxiety, gives me a purpose; writing is a small victory over shame. But tonight, it's a losing battle. Discomfort saturates the paper; the pen leaks out of my hand. I feel uncomfortable. I think I might throw up.

Excuses.

That's what I would name my biography. Cynicism was an excuse. Nostalgia pays me a visit at the front desk of this nice hotel. I miss egomania and narcissism. I miss the ease with which I could make fun of someone, spit out a one-liner, a tiny insult, and watch it roll, like spit, down someone's face. Your twenties rob you of the lack of empathy away, life from a single angle, the unjustified confidence. With each year life seems to become a little more inert, I am heavier, time is slower.

Excuses.

If only I had the guts. I watch a flustered boy searching for the elevator. He needs to go to the fourth floor. To visit an American businessman. I look him in the eye, letting his adrenalin do its thing. And right as he reaches the elevator, I give him a little wink.

Excuses.

The word is still with me. It's taking up space. My house is made of excuses. I can write endless lists of excuses, for my father, for Berlin, Zagreb, for my career, for loneliness, for giving up, for getting a D in math, for each failed relationship, and each unpublished poem. I have an excuse for every day. I have enough excuses to last a lifetime.

Fear and shame, fear and shame, fear and shame. My two companions. Fear and shame are at the bottom of everything. And now the shame has erupted, spilling over the brim.

A group of tipsy tourists, a laughing pack of hyenas, enters the hotel.

Excuses – says a word written on a, usually blank, sheet of paper.

I receive an email. My friend Kruno, a designer who helped me launch my website, has recommended me to his friend. And I receive my first query for *coaching*. I recognize the name. He's a scrawny city boy turned serious businessman. He runs a small marketing company and a restaurant on one of the islands. I Google him quickly. Whoa, he's kind of ripped, he's wearing white socks pulled straight up, and his hair is cut really short. My stomach tightens up. Should I start a company? How much money should I charge? Is my bullshitting game good enough?

No more cynicism.

I respond affirmatively.

No more excuses.

13.

Vanja. Vanja is an ultramodern guy. Allegedly, we've already met, downtown, during a night out. I pretend I recognize him too. Vanja is cute, more than attractive. He's wearing a white tee on white pants, and I'm sure he has a tattoo somewhere on his thigh. Vanja looks like he had a glow-up after he turned twenty-seven, which is when most hipsters usually wither, go under and bald. Vanja is enthusiastic. And right off the bat, he starts explaining everything. He tells me a little about himself. I can barely concentrate. He is cute. I'm trying not to smile.

Vanja had a huge company, which took off straight away, well not actually straight away, but pretty quickly, he was twenty-three when he started it, and it went into orbit when Croatia entered the EU. Everything was in his hands; it was his vision entirely. And he just worked, twenty-four hours a day, nothing but work, and the business just grew bigger and bigger, and he thought, I could rest later, he'd go on vacations, but wouldn't actually get any rest, he'd always go to a new place, a new continent, he really travelled around the world, and there was so much he wanted to see, to discover, to photograph so he could share it with other people, my god was he overwhelmed, and the company just grew and grew, and the business was snowballing, and he was one of the first people to recognize the importance of everything digital, online, especially in business.

He felt he was becoming miserable, but who happy in business? Thank god, he didn't drink, and he hates drugs. They knock him down immediately. I mean, look at him. His personality is a gram of coke. He felt other symptoms too, but that's just how it is, twelve hours a day, work and more work. Each morning it became harder to get out of bed. And he'd cry now and then. But nothing to worry about. He thought he was just sensitive. Then he started taking some courses to work it out. That was a mistake. He almost lost his head. It was some new age shit, but with machines. It cost me a fortune, riddle me that. It's entirely based

on suppression. Fuck, I was suppressing every single thought. Everything. I became addicted to that hag. I'd call her every day. And then she'd say, meditate, plug into the fucking universe. And before I'd even start thinking, I'd already be plugged in, suppressing.

I want to kill myself. A thought would come to me, and I'd immediately call Mrs. Milica, and then we'd plug in. Into the universe, right? And this went on every day, every two hours. Every thought, I'd plug in immediately. My hands were shaking, I'd get rash outbreaks, and I'd start crying.

But I had to work more and more. And go through more and more séances with Mrs. Milica. I'd tell her, I work too much, I'll crack up. And she'd say, it's a transfer from the Universe, the Creator, it's an exchange. You're blocking yourself up.

- And I thought, she's right, I'm blocking myself up. And I took on more work. Bam. Bam. Bam. More, just two more clients. Half of my employees were on sick leave. And me, fucking Miranda Presley, all up in business realness and shit. I lost six pounds. But I thought I was fine. And I kept receiving memos about *burnouts*. And you know what's craziest of all?

I shrug my shoulders. I secretly adjust my penis.

- I was sure those people... I'm not sure how to put this. You must think I'm a total jerk. But I was sure they were all disconnected from the universe. And fuck it. I'm not sure why I'm telling you all this. I talk a lot when I'm nervous - he concludes.

Great, the exact opposite of me.

- Anyhow, one day I went to the store to get Skyr. Skyr is an Icelandic low-fat yoghurt and also my only meal. I went into the store, and there were five thousand yoghurts. The whole wall, nothing but yoghurt. And I started walking, and walking, and waking, and walking. And there's no fucking Skyr yoghurt. It just wasn't there. And even though I stood by the fridge, I was burning, on the inside, my skin was burning. I started crying. The last thing I could remember was some random granny. Not a single fucking Skyr yoghurt. And it pushed me over the edge. I couldn't breathe. I felt like I was trapped in a fire, burning at the stake. Like, burning and suffocating. I thought this was it. And that was the last time I plugged in. I woke up in the hospital. *Burned-out* as if I was from Salem, my thyroid was fucked up. I ruined myself completely. I don't know. Then I had a nice little chat with Mrs. Milica over the phone, and I told her she could go fuck herself, and I started going to therapy. I reorganized the company so that everyone was pleased. I kept almost all my employees, but I realized it's not good to constantly grow. And then I turned things around. I opened a restaurant on island Vis. Now I work less. I delegate more. And I'm finally happy.

And he looks happy, tanned, and healthy. I could grab a full fist of his hair, wrap one arm around his neck, kiss him, listen to his breath, bite his neck, his fingers, pull him by his waist, melt into his shoulders. Stop, I warn myself. You'll have to get up from the table at one point.

Instead, I blurt out a price, some random number. Judging by his face the price I said was too low. That's without tax, I add. That's the peak of my business knowledge. We schedule the first séance. And then we'll see how it goes.

14.

We're silent.

I went to the hospital, back to my hometown, as soon as I could. Shortly after I received the call he fell sick, that it was bad, and he wasn't responding well to the treatment. It's what the nurse told me. He's silent. I'm sitting next to him. I'm sleepy. I realize he's gotten older. Suddenly, I can see his wrinkles, his dentures. I can see at least thirty years standing between us. The treatment took his contours away, his cheeks, and the edges of his face. Or maybe the illness sunk them. I want to cry, but I feel more like throwing up. We're not talking, even though we should. Death stands between us, like a therapist. It might be saying: *Boys, it's now or never.*

- How have you been?

A long pause, too long.

- Ah, fuck it. Like shit.

I often forget my father is funny. Annoying, but funny. I shrug my shoulders. I can't tell him he'll get better. I don't know that, and it doesn't actually mean anything. And so, the shame joins the death. I should take care of him. And be there for him. He is not asking me to do that, and I'm not offering. I know people who dropped everything and came home to wait for their father to die. Years went by, and the fathers still haven't died. The sons grew old. The fathers would threaten them. And when the sons would finally give up on themselves, on their lives, the fathers decided to give up on death. My father isn't asking for that.

- Fuck it - he insists and coughs a little.

I'd love to tell him about myself. Tell him what's new. But he doesn't even know the old. He never bothered. He neither asked nor insisted. I guess that's why I don't owe him anything now. Maybe he feels like he doesn't have a right to ask. We've never talked about love, or sex. I don't know if he has been in love, if he at least fucked someone, since mom died. He probably did. I sensed it in the voice of the nurse who called me. My father is a charmer. We probably flirt the

same way. Make them laugh, and then buy them a drink. And since we're indeed annoying, small propulsion of humor works like a charm. And so it goes, back and forth. I'd tell him I liked Vanja. We could talk about that, but we can't. Bone in the throat. Both of us, for different reasons, are on the verge of throwing up.

I'd tell him about my job, but he might ask me if I've been writing. But then I'd have to lie to him again and say I've stopped. He feels guilty. Whenever we talked, he'd always say: I'm not the right father for you.

It's easier to say I don't write, I don't work, I don't have any plans, I don't know what I'm going to do, I don't go anywhere, I don't have anyone, I'm not interested in anything, and I haven't seen anything. Less questions, less words.

He can talk about the weather, and fascism, local and international, everything that's on the outside. Though with time, not much has left, neither topics nor words.

The smell of death is cold.

He says: - You know, I just remembered the bed. How it took you ten minutes to put it together. You know, that's when I realized you grew up. And I was old. My back was stiff, do you remember? And you got it done in ten minutes. It was clear to me then and there. You grew up. And you didn't need me. Maybe you never needed me. I realized, fuck, he could do everything by himself. It's too late. I don't know.

After mom's death my father insisted the double bed was too big for him, that it takes up too much space. I was hoping the bed was his excuse to spend time with me, a cry for help. He got frustrated reading the instructions, and then his back got stiff. He was lying on the couch while I assembled it. When I was finally done, thanks to a YouTube tutorial, I made peace with the thought that we couldn't or didn't know how to talk. I realized the bed was his way of saying he wanted to be alone. The next morning, I promised myself I'd never be like him. And I accepted Zoja and Janko's help.

- I always thought... I'll work. With my hands and all that. So that you can go to college and learn. I sucked at school. But you're different. With your writing and all that shit. I thought, I'd make it possible for you. I wouldn't butt into it. I couldn't help you with the guys. I'd... make myself so useful, so I wouldn't fuck up. Because I didn't know anything about those things. And then I realized, you could do everything by yourself. You work in that hotel; you live on your own. And yeah. You've built a life for yourself. I guess you like it that way. I don't know. But why the fuck aren't you doing what you love anymore? The literature and the writing... I'll never wrap my head around that. Never.

He's right. But I won't tell him that.

- I started doing something new - I change the subject.

I start explaining *coaching* to him, that I'm really into it and the money is good and that I might start a company. My father falls asleep. He leaves me with my mouth dry, slightly worried if he's still alive.

A nurse his age comes in. I can tell by her voice she was the one who called me. If my father survives, the two of them will have sex. And that thought, for a moment, brings me comfort and joy.

pp. 7-51



© Goran Jovanović

DINO PEŠUT was born in Sisak in 1990. He graduated Dramaturgy in Screenwriting and Playwrighting from Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb. His plays were staged in many theatres in Croatia and abroad. He won the national prize Marin Držić for the plays *L.U.Z.E.R.I. (L.O.O.S.E.R.S.)*, *(Pret)posljednja panda ili statika ((Pen) ultimate Panda or Static)*, *Veliki hotel Bezdán (Big Hotel Bezdán)* and *Stela, poplava (Stela, Flood)*, *Olympia Stadion* and *Granatiranje (The Shelling)*. He won Deutschen Jugendtheaterpreis award and Heartefact Fund award for the best contemporary engaged full-length play. He is a student of The Royal Court's International Playwrights Programme in London. His plays are translated into English, German, French and Polish.

His first novel *Bruised Knees* was published in 2018.