

The Goat Bridge

There it is—Sarajevo.

—

The story, Ado said. I am afraid you will be ashamed of me.

Nonsense, Stephen said.

You will have to change my name. You should change it to Mujo—*Muy yo*, like that. Like a Tom Dick and Harry.

I'll change your name, Stephen said. But not to that. No American could pronounce it. How come all your names always end in *O*?

You will not like me. After. I have told nobody.

Jesus—

First, my father was atheistic. I am atheistic. Only my mother is religious.

Ado spoke these words like a Central European.

My mudder, my fadder . . .

—

The story Ado tells is hardly believable even by Balkan standards. It begins before the war. The civil war? Ado says, mockingly. The evil rebellion of the Muslims?

It begins like this, before the war:

Ado is writing freelance for the magazines. He has a heroin problem. A junkie, but he is also writing for the magazines. He is a freelancer, which means unemployed in any language; he is writing for the magazines in Slovenia about Yugoslav rock and roll. He is living with his mother and his father in Ilidža, a suburb ten kilometers west of Sarajevo—the way, say, Webster Groves is west of St. Louis; or Park Forest, just down the road from Chicago. He is living with his father who is an engineer at Energoinvest—a utilities company, an

electrical concern—and with his mother who is religious, and he is having a difficult time keeping his habit in check. The good thing about the war, Ado explains, is that the junkies either died or cleaned up, but at least they stopped using. After the war begins, there is no supply.

Ado has cleaned up. He has become a responsible citizen and member of the territorial defense. But this story begins before the war, when Ado is living with his parents and loading up the magazines in Slovenia with rock and roll.

One day he receives a telephone call from a woman. The woman has a nice voice. She sounds pretty, he says. If you know what I mean. So she says hello and this and that and things (*tings*, he says) and she says she has been recommended to Ado by some friends of his. Who, she does not mention. But she has heard good things about Ado. He is, for example, strappingly tall, a cut chin, a devotee to Tito's memory and all bone and muscle. He can walk for days, like a camel, without food or water. He has been known to walk for days like that.

The woman says she would like to meet him. She is older than Ado, in her mid-thirties. She says she would like to meet him but that nobody must know. She is engaged soon to be married. Her fiancé is an importer for Panasonic—VCRs, CD players and stereos: he is a big potato importer and makes frequent trips back and forth to Belgrade and to Zagreb and to Ljubljana and to Split. He drives a new Volkswagen Golf made in the Sarajevo factory. He carries wads of cash. And it is not her future husband she is concerned about knowing about this—*This entanglement?* Ado says. *This engagement?*—but rather her mother, who is very religious. The woman on the phone with the pleasant voice is deeply concerned about her mother finding out, and so Ado is to meet the woman only in secret. The woman will not tell Ado her name. The woman instructs Ado, on account of his various recommenders, to stand on the bank of the Miljacka River. She explains, repeatedly, that she is not a hooker.

You don't need to give me money, she says to Ado. No buying of the meals at restaurants.

Jesus, Stephen said.

No, wait—

So Ado goes to the banks of the Miljacka River and stands beneath the pretty lindens. The building the woman lives in is in Grbavica, on

the river, a pink and modestly storied apartment complex, one of several. Not the high-rises. It's right across from the bridge—

The Bridge of Brotherhood and Unity?

No, that is further west. No, this is the bridge Suada and Olga were killed on. That one. Right behind the State Museum.

Got it.

So Ado goes to the river in the dark and waits for the signal. The dark, it is a pretty night. After ten, maybe eleven, he can't recall, a woman stands on the balcony, silhouetted by the lights behind her body, and waves.

The wave, Ado explains, is the signal.

Ado, he has not been laid for several months, living with his parents as he does, and being a junkie, and therefore not a particularly responsible type eligible for romance. He strides with those camel legs of his, briskly, across the bridge to Grbavica, which is now controlled by the Chetniks, riddled with snipers like worms in the abandoned apartment towers. But this is before the war. It is a warm October night, thanks to a minor change in climate, and by the time he arrives at the apartment, taking the stairs two at a time, he is in a heated sweat.

The woman answers the door. The lights inside the apartment are out. Through the windows behind her he can see the pale light trembling on the river. It is a small river which rushes gently through the city. He can smell the woman's perfume, all flowers and lust. The woman takes his hand and leads him to the sofa. He can tell by the feel of the sofa that it is made of soft leather.

She says, You cannot see me.

Uh-huh.

No. I mean, you must never see me. We can only be in the dark.

The dark.

She says, removing his jacket, The dark. Then she lifts the sweater off his shoulders, over his head. She runs her hand across his chest. She pinches a tender nipple. She places her free hand along the length of his cock.

Then she removes her clothes, in the dark, and she unravels a condom—with her mouth!—and they fuck.

Like that, Ado said.

I don't believe it.

Neither would I, Ado said, nodding. Who would believe such a thing?

So you fuck?

Uh-huh. She is very hygienic. Clean. Which is good.

And you don't know what she looks like?

Well, I can tell, with my hands. Like somebody blind. I mean, I know what her body feels like. I can see her like that. By what I can feel. You see?

I guess. So then what?

So, after. I thought I should smoke. I thought I should smoke so I could, you know, light a cigarette. I could light a cigarette and see what she looked like!

But you don't smoke.

Too unhealthy. No. Only the smack. But not anymore. Even when there is no water, the war makes me clean.

As a whistle.

Clean. It is better I think to be clean.

Then what.

Well, this is the hard part. You see, it goes on.

On?

For like—six, seven months. Twice a month. She calls, I go to the river, she gives to me the signal. Never when the moon is full.

I don't believe this, Stephen said. You are so full of shit—

No! I would not lie. It is Balkanesque. It is positively true. She likes the younger guys. She likes to fuck. Fucking, she says. It is an art. We are like the bees fucking in the honeycomb, she says. The Art of Fucking?

So you never look for her?

How would I look for her? Sometimes, on the streets, sometimes I wonder if she is nearby. I pay attention to the perfumes. I listen for the women's voices. You never know. At the bookstore. At the clubs. And now, with the war, in the water queues. Maybe that one there is the woman who likes to make the Fucking Arts in the dark.

So—

It is very odd, Ado said. Odd. I never know. And then, the last time, she said, Please, you must be more quiet. But after. After the fucking. We were having the *after* conversation. Why must I be more quiet? She said, Because Mother is in the next room.

That is when I thought this is too wrong. She was most afraid of

her religious mother finding out and she invites me to do the Art of Fucking with her mother in the next room? Some people want disaster, I think. Something inside wants to be ruined. I don't understand it, really, but I know what it means. Being a junkie, you know you are ruining yourself. I don't mean to sound moralistic. I know what it means to want to ruin yourself without wanting to. Anyway, this was April. You know what happened after that.

The referendum. The war.

The war, Ado said.

Stephen said, So why didn't you try and find out who she was? I mean, it wouldn't have been tough. Would it? I don't believe this.

I would not lie about such things, Ado said. It is not a point of honor, this fucking. I am not Italian. I am not even Slovenian. No. I thought about finding her. I am not the idiot. I knew what building she lived in. I knew the company where she worked. But then, I don't know. I didn't *want* to know. Can you understand that? I did not want to know who she was.

I guess.

It was better like this. In the dark. It was better just not knowing.

Plate #3

A naked man's torso, his penis fully erect. The pubic hair is lit like steel. There is a drop of fluid on the head, pre-seminal.

Stephen has certain rules. He will take no photographs of dead bodies. He will take no photographs of people—especially citizens—being shot at, and killed, while they try to cross the Eiffel Bridge or Sniper's Alley. The alley is the main boulevard which leads to Ilidža, to the airport and to the western front. Ado is typically positioned at the western front, in front of a meat-processing plant on the banks of the Dobrinja stream. Ado's father was shot and killed several months ago—a soldier in camping gear off duty gathering wood, caught by a random bullet while sitting in the back of a truck filled with wood.

Other things Stephen will not photograph? People in obvious physical pain, such as those engaged in the act of amputation without the benefit of anesthesia; gravestones; or landscapes of the city under fire at night, the tracers lighting up the sky like luminescent spider webs.

These are images he is more than willing to let others take. There is a market for these images. There is a market for the photographs of the mutilated: those images, say, of victims of a surprise mortar, delivered into a headline. The mortar—it takes only a piece of it, the size of the head of a screw, or nail, to tear your heart—eviscerated dozens in a single blow. These are the images which make one famous; these are the images which are presently being broadcast across the globe; and these are the images Stephen prefers to let others take for themselves—which they can't, given that the image takers are not the victims of that which makes the image. One may lean on another's agony, but one cannot claim it as one's own. In Zagreb, having unloaded his 80–200 millimeter zoom, and having purchased from a recently blinded photographer a tenderly cared for Hasselblad—that crisp, Carl Zeiss glass—Stephen decided strictly on portraiture and figure studies. The Hasselblad, it has a portrait lens which eats light; and so at times Stephen relies on his rangefinders—the Contax and the Leica. What's the difference between a Leica 35-millimeter and a Zastava 7.62 semiautomatic? Nomenclature aside, Stephen will neither poach nor snipe, and he will take photographs in Sarajevo only of those who ask him to. In Sarajevo it is simply impossible to purchase a tripod. There are none to be had unless one borrows from the press corps. Chemicals in the city are equally impossible to locate, as are film, condoms, batteries, fresh fruit and vegetables. And having decided he understood he was going to follow through: he would take portraits of those living—and not dying—in the city of Sarajevo.

He carries with him certain things: his gear, a sleeping bag, a flak jacket he purchased in Split from Terrance the Armored Guy, who also wanted to sell him a barely damaged armored Land Rover with two spares. Business was business and business was booming. Messinger had insisted on the jacket: Messinger, who had been flying in and out of Sarajevo on UN relief flights, depending on the weather and the current state of the alleged cease-fires. While Messinger insisted on Stephen locating a flak jacket, Messinger rarely wore one himself. Choice, it seemed, was the central issue. The Bad Guys—Ado's insistence, *not* Serbs—controlled the perimeter of the airport on the western side of the city; by controlling the perimeter, and then Ilidža, they were able to support the tail of their troops, originating in Belgrade, and circling the northern side of the city. From a military

point of view, Ilidža had become a central pivot, which explained the ferocity of the fighting on the western MLR. The eastern front, which terminated at the Goat Bridge, demarcating a three-kilometer neutral zone, was relatively quiet. The roads there leading in were complicated and narrow, and nobody in the war wanted to fight, anyway. While the Bosnians held Vratnik and the old Turkish fort, the Bad Guys held Trebević, the territory above the Jewish cemetery, and then a portion of the city—Grbavica—which bulged to the banks of the Miljacka like a pregnant mule. The boulevard ran parallel to the river, and the residential towers on the banks of the river occupied by the Bad Guys gave their snipers their various points of view. If a sniper could see you in his scope, he killed you, or your friend, or your cat. As for the flak jacket, there was something faintly repellent about wandering around the city in a two-thousand-dollar flak jacket—enough to fund a year’s worth of an American IRA; enough to heat your Sarajevo flat through the winter with black-market fuel—when others all around you wearing sweatshirts and blazers were being shot at. Stephen was required to wear the flak jacket on UN flights in and out of the city, which he did, but mostly he kept it folded in a corner of the flat in which he was staying. Nights, he used it for a pillow.

The safest corridor through the city was a road now referred to as the Road to Life. By the time Stephen had arrived, the Bad Guys had taken out the National Library, torching it with incendiary shells. They had taken out the post office which housed the telecommunications for most of the city. The Bad Guys had targeted the Unis Towers, by the Holiday Inn, and the newspaper, *Oslobodjenje*, and the Parliament building. Next to the Parliament building, across from the Holiday Inn, stood the Faculty of Philosophy, which was *not* targeted for demolition. Despite the burned-out buildings, it was not a war: an army could have taken the city in an afternoon, albeit not without a few thousand casualties, a political cost neither side could bear. While the world’s attention focused on Sarajevo, the Bad Guys were free to cleanse the rural landscape—Croats in the southwest; Serbs in the east. Cleanse, that polite euphemism for genocide, as if you could put it in your dishwasher.

In the Balkans, everybody looks the same, like trees. Rape a woman and fill her with your seed and it’s possible to make your own tree. Even a dog will fuck a tree. This, all of this—it was a kind of barbarism enriched by ignorance and malice, the bread of greed, and in

the cities, like Sarajevo, things were a bit more sophisticated, what with all the television networks listening in. Still, the Serbs fired on the hospitals filled with others tending to the wounded the Serbs had already fired upon. They fired on the schools and the parks and the funerals and those waiting in line for bread, and water, and they fired on the old quarter of the city, Baščaršija. In general the Serbs—the Bad Guys? the Chetniks? Those Who Bombed the Maternity Hospital?—were pretty well fired up with all their firing. Light it up, look at all the pretty buildings burn.

The word *top* in Serbo-Croatian means *cannon*. Bosnia, which had at one time been occupied by the Ottomans, carried traces of the reign, its cemeteries littered with gravestones—phalluses, each—of the previous Ottomans. Legend has it the old White Fortress halfway up Vratnik—the *Top*, Ado always called it—once housed a cannon which was fired during Ramadan to indicate the end of each day’s fast; some also say the cannon was fired each time the Ottomans killed a prisoner. Stephen is weak on the history of the Balkans, not having heard of them until the winter Olympics of 1984, but he does know, having read his Keegan and Clausewitz and the memoirs of Sherman and Patton and Grant, that artillery belongs to the heights surrounding any battlefield—which in this case had become the city, Sarajevo, now cut off from food and water, electricity and gas.

Q. How does a Bosnian woman keep her money safe from her husband?

A. She puts it in a book.

Stephen lives in a little house: a flat, in a small building housing three others, one for each floor, in the Mejtas district. The neighborhood sits on a northern hilltop above what is called the Big Park. His own building, if one follows a narrow street, leads to an ancient mosque with a wooden minaret and an equally ancient graveyard beside it. He lives on the third floor with Ado and Ado’s uncle, Jusuf, and with Ado’s mother and an old friend of Ado’s mother and Ado’s younger sister who are scrambling to find a way out of the city. Ado won’t leave; and Ado’s uncle, Jusuf, will stay to look after Ado. The fewer they are, the more easily they eat. Ado’s mother and Ado’s younger sister, who is seventeen, are packed to go.

They can’t fly out on an empty UN relief flight because that is ille-

gal, violating either the Geneva Convention or Rules of Engagement. They can't drive out because there are no cars available and because they would be killed within thirty seconds of their departure. They can't leave by train because the beautiful train station—and the track leading to it—has been destroyed. They can't drive out on a bus with a UN escort because the Serbs no longer permit any buses with UN escorts to go. They could try cutting across the airport, at night, like hundreds of others, cutting across the runways to try and escape to the Bosnian-held Mount Igman, but like hundreds of others they would be caught—lit up with UN searchlights mounted on UN armored personnel carriers. Then on the airport runways they would be shot, and killed, by Serb snipers, the UN peacekeepers having spotted them so conveniently.

The question, then: how is one to leave when one is not permitted to leave? Just how are Ado's mother and sister to get out?

The only way out is through the Serb-held part of the city, Grbavica.

Plate #7

A naked woman, pregnant—six to seven months along, the baby having not yet dropped—in the standard pose. Her arm is lowered so that her hand, curved at the fingers, may politely conceal the point of entry between her legs, and which draws attention to the sunlit wedding ring on her finger; the other arm permits her forearm to conceal her chest. The second hand, here, open, reaching across to counterbalance the pose—the hand here is spread like a fan and the ring finger of this hand is missing above the first knuckle so that the tip of her nipple fills its place.

This is how they got in:

Ado, his mother and father and sister, lived in Ilidža. They had a nice apartment. Inside, you could have been in Rome or London or Paris, or Stephen's apartment in Chicago—a television, a stereo, books on the wall. Nearby a neighbor had a dog which always barked. When the wind shifted, you could smell the sulfur in the water from the thermal springs. Ado's mother and father learned the Serbs were taking Ilidža. His mother was a childhood friend of the local police

second-in-command. He was Serb, but for many childhood friendships held sway: one day she received a telephone call from the friend, who instructed the family to depart for Sarajevo immediately—the family being Muslim. They were to take no more than a suitcase each, lest they appear greedy and conspicuous and ungrateful; their flat, it seemed, was now required for the use of others; to stay would be to die. They were instructed to arrive at the checkpoint leading into Sarajevo by three P.M. the next day—their names already on a list—and told that, should they arrive after three P.M., all would be lost. That night Ado and his father removed the wheels from their small car to keep it from being stolen in the night. That night they packed. They took things like socks and underwear, they took a Canon AE1—Ado liked to take photos, too, like Stephen—and they took a plate, manufactured in prewar Dresden, which had been a wedding gift; they took a copy of Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*. They left: a stereo, Ado's rock and roll magazines, posters, the television and washer and dryer and all their furniture, not being able to fit these items into their suitcases. The Sarajevans have a derogatory word for peasants carrying suitcases—*papak*—to indicate ignorant country folk. Like *hillbilly*. And thus they carried their suitcases to the checkpoint, their wheelless car having been stolen sometime in the night by thieves traveling with their own spare set of wheels. A man behind sandbags—definitely a *papak*, Ado explained—looked for their names on a list of names. He checked them off with a ballpoint pen. He waved a semiautomatic rifle—Zastava, the same caliber and thirty-round magazine as the Kalashnikov—and then the man with the semiautomatic instructed several others to let the hillbillies pass. It was two thirty P.M., and the family caught a ride on a truck, a cease-fire being in effect, and moved in with Ado's uncle, formerly a welding instructor, now a munitions expert and guard on the eastern front. They learned several weeks later that a new family liked their old home very much, which was how they left it.

In the flat below Ado's there live two girls. One girl, the Married Flirt, is married and very modern. She speaks often about her husband's jealousy. She reads the popular magazines from Italy and France whenever she can find them and keeps up on points of fashion. Her husband, who is rarely home, serves as an interpreter and guide for foreign visitors—typically journalists staying at the Holiday Inn in need of a crash course to bring them up to speed. Her husband, the

girl says, asks her too many questions. She does not know how long she will stay married to him because of all the questions! She met him—her husband—while driving her father’s car and colliding with the man on a narrow street; at the time, she had no permissions. For Stephen, living in the Balkans, things often get lost in translation. Her father might have lived in Visegrád then? The man she married, he told her not to worry, because he wanted a relationship—a very American word, and not money to fix his car—and now they have a four-year-old daughter with pierced ears living with her parents in Budapest. The girl, the Married Flirt, has dyed black hair, plucked brows, a striking figure. She has a pretty laugh. She has a little girl and a jealous husband and she flirts with every man she meets.

The other girl, the Soulful One, comes from a religious family but is not religious and, consequently, she feels separated from and ostracized by her family which now resides in Frankfurt. This girl is fleet of foot, wearing thin sneakers of the type fashionable among American women in the 1960s—Keds. She sings with a choir which rehearses—*repetitions*, she calls it—in the basement of a Catholic church. She invites Stephen often to these repetitions where the choir sings music of all religious faiths. Her favorites are the Negro spirituals. It seems important to her, this showing and introducing to Stephen something beautiful and otherwise not associated with this hideous war which is destroying this once beautiful city. She, like the Married Flirt, is not from this city, but it is hers now. Also the Soulful One likes to read Paul Auster novels and says things like, *We are each a book, and even if you cannot read your own book, because it is too dark, or even if you get lost in your own book, you can always read another person’s book in order to find your way out.* Though the Soulful One does not flirt, she is obviously lonely and longing to be loved by a good man. Ado might be a good fit, but Ado is young for his age—randy and horn-dog—and, lest Stephen forget, a former junkie heavily influenced by rock and roll. This girl studies—when she can—French literature; she sings hymns by Brahms; she likes to read novels in translation.

Matchmaking is a dangerous sport. Still, it warms Stephen to see how they all check in with and care for each other. There is also an elderly couple living on the first floor with a handsome dog. Ado is attracted to the Married Flirt, always offering to carry up jugs of water; and now, now that the cold has begun to set in, as has the com-

mon understanding that this will not be over next week, or possibly month, now Ado brings the girls wood when he can. Sometimes the girls share things from the husband tour-guide: canned fruit from the Holiday Inn; or whiskey. Once they shared a few spareribs, delivered from a complete rack, which the elderly couple's dog had pilfered from the market. The dog, an Irish Setter, walked into a market, went directly to the counter, pinched the meat, and then carried it home in its jaw for three miles. It had become a legend—this dog, stealing the ribs, and bringing them home.

Stories here fly. In Serbo-Croatian, the word for *quarter*, or neighborhood—*mahala*—provides the metaphoric root for *gossip*. The Married Flirt loves to gossip. The Soulful One pretends not to listen.

Stephen, said the Married Flirt. Do you have a lover?

No, he said.

That is too bad for you, said the Married Flirt.

Ado said, standing tall, Neither do I.

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Elise was on her way back to the city. She had been everywhere she could interviewing women and children. She'd interviewed a man—it was famous, the story—who'd watched another man who had been forced to bite off the penis of a third. She'd been to Omarska—the concentration camp on the cover of the magazines—when the press pool broke that story open. She was writing about rape and ethnic cleansing; she was writing about the use of rape as a governmentally sanctioned instrument of war. Her articles were appearing in Berlin and New York and Paris. She was due soon to arrive.

Partially to take his mind off her, he spent the afternoon—the good light of the afternoon—at the western front with Ado. First they walked to the looted Blue Winged fashion mall, what Stephen called Neiman Marcus, and then they cut west, hugging the small building, and then on Tito Street they caught a ride with several others inside a small car: the driver, uniformed, turned behind the Holiday Inn. The Blue Helmets—UN peacekeepers—were out driving around in their white APCs. They passed a man on a bicycle with a metal cart hitched up behind him dragging what looked to be hundreds of gallons of water in jugs. Riding his bicycle uphill, the man made slow progress. They were then delivered to the sausage factory—that's

what Ado called it, though it could have made bologna, or hamburger. Dead meat. From here they hoofed it, staying in the shadows of the buildings—and these buildings here were blasted to hell, being fringe to both an industrial sector and a residential area of small houses—until they reached the basement of a burned-out house. Somebody had once lived inside this house with notes and pictures on the fridge. In the basement were mattresses, rotting; a cache of assorted weapons, though apparently not enough to go around: M16s, Kalashnikovs, shotguns, and two ten-round PAP semiautomatic rifles—each fitted with a scope. We have snipers, too, Ado said, giving him the tour, introducing him around. There was also a stack of Soviet-inspired girlie magazines and sandbags. The home base—three days on, three days off, with the men working in shifts at the front. The magazines were for jacking off to ease the stress. One arrived at the front by following a trench, cut to and under the road, leading to another blasted-out house, inside the basement of which were placed two men on guard. The second house faced the stream which crossed before it. Here was the very point of the territorial defense. Ado, not unlike most members of the territorial defense, being a city boy with a former drug problem, had no idea how to be a soldier.

Ado dressed his feet in sneakers. On Ado's sleeve was a sticker, the kind one places on the bumper of a car—a fleur-de-lis.

Stephen said, gazing at the stream in front of him, I've never been to war.

No, Ado said. As I explained to you, this is not war. This is imitation of war. There will be no fighting today. Ado looked over at his teammate, who did not speak English, and said something, and the man, who elsewhere could be teaching high school geometry, or selling cars, retired to the other window. He sat on a wooden box and looked dully out the window.

Ado pointed to a large metal building with corrugated metal sides the size of a Wal-Mart. He said, They have tanks in that building. We keep trying to destroy it, but not with a rifle.

Mortars?

It would take two thousand. It takes thousands to destroy a building. Buildings are hard to blow up. You have to want to. You can make a building burn with one shell—like the library—if you have the right kind, which we do not. Generally factories do not burn any-

way. They are places prepared for fire. Anyway we don't have the right kind. We have a tank, you know. Some say two. But I know for sure one is parked in the brickyard tunnel to protect it.

The tunnel?

No no no. The tank. It would be too embarrassing to lose the tank. Stephen said, pointing to the factory, So what do you do?

We are safe unless real war starts. This concrete is thick. I have two Molotov cocktails and this shotgun for the tanks.

Would they send tanks?

No. You cannot send tanks here without infantry and they would die. If they were going to they would have. They won't send anything or anybody who might be hurt. Mostly this is very boring. Sometimes I am scared. At night. At night I get scared. I am not brave and you cannot do much with a Molotov cocktail. It makes some light, that's all. I am here because my father is dead.

A reward.

It is much worse south, by the residential towers. That is where my father was killed. That is worse. The towers are death traps. Dobrinja, the Olympic Village. What you say the Al Pacino. Fucking snipers everywhere. You are in range of the mountains. It is better being closer to the ground. He said, pointing his finger at a plane, Not like that.

They watched a huge lumbering cargo plane—Hercules—sail into view, cutting horizontally across their line of sight. It had the belly of a whale and, watching, Stephen felt as if he could reach out and pluck it from the sky, he was that close.

Ado said, nodding, Relief flight.

The other soldier mumbled something, to which Ado laughed and said something back.

What?

He said, No pork chops tonight.

Stephen had had no idea they were this close to the airport. He'd thought it was miles away. He said, I have no idea where I am.

Ado said, Half of that food will end up with the Chetniks. We get the MREs from Viet Nam. Powdered eggs. Lemon drink. They get the cans of Dinty Moore stew and cheese and vegetables and gasoline and beer.

And then you buy it back?

War profiteers, Ado said. The war is good for the profiteers.

A story circulating: the formerly bankrupt Holiday Inn had grossed a quarter-million *dollars* in just two months. Stephen measured the light with his selenium meter—a rotating dial, no batteries to run out. The Holiday Inn was a place where he could always get food. Have a *burek*, a nice expensive drink.

Don't smile, Stephen said, setting the aperture. But Jesus, don't try to look like Clint Eastwood, either.

The light fell indirectly from the window. Stephen said, Don't look at me. No. God no.

Fuck you, Ado said. Cheese.

Okay, okay. He slid his camera into the pocket of his coat. He removed a packet of cigarettes and lit one. The tobacco was left over from the destroyed tobacco factory—Marlboro country. The government issued cigarettes instead of currency to its soldiers. Stephen offered one to Ado's partner but the man had fallen asleep. The packet was wrapped in paper from recycled textbooks.

Stephen, Ado said.

Yes.

Can you give me a thousand marks?

It struck Stephen odd that Ado did not use the word *loan*, or *borrow*. They'd had banks here once. Car payments? Then Stephen understood only a rich American would pretend to repay a friend when he knew that he could not.

Yes, Stephen said. If you need it. Of course.

It is not for me, Ado said. I would not ask for me.

I know that. And then Stephen said, trying to assuage Ado's evident discomfort, It's money. It's just fucking money, Ado. You can even burn it.

Plate #9

Two women—one middle-aged, the other her seventeen-year-old daughter—and a middle-aged man wearing a black beret. It is night. Behind them runs a body of water, evident by the ribbon of light from the sky reflecting on it. The women and the man are dressed in winter clothes. The man has one eye closed, as if he has something in it.

Wars are traditionally measured in figures.

Numbers representing those Killed or Missing in Action; those Wounded. But there are other relevant figures in 1992: to wit, 400 grams of food is the amount awarded to each citizen a day by the humanitarian relief agencies; 10 DEM is the cost of a 30-liter container—empty—for water; 200 DEM for a cubic meter of wood; 50 DEM to have that wood delivered; 120 DEM for a kilo of garlic; 20 DEM for a pumpkin; 5 DEM—or a pack of cigarettes—for a liter of milk; 2,000 DEM for safe passage across the Miljacka River and on to Mount Igman, other tolls along the way to Budapest or Split to be determined later.

This is what the Married Flirt tells Stephen. In the First World War, which began in Sarajevo, the ratio of casualties was 15 percent civilians to 85 percent military personnel; in this war, 1992, the ratio is reversed: 85 percent civilians to 15 percent military personnel. So much for a century of progress. She explains to Stephen her husband learned this fact while listening to diplomats talk to each other at the Holiday Inn. She explains this does not at all appear to be news to her. She explains she wants to buy new clothes and party shoes. Like most people who know Sarajevo, she does not like the Holiday Inn.

To begin with: it is monstrously ugly. Yellow, like pus—it is made of metal, square and squat. Local people refer to a local joke. The Holiday Inn, they say, is the only yellow building on the entire planet viewable to aliens from outer space in search of *burek*. The rooms are decorated with a dog-shit brown tile. The cocktail furniture—low-slung chairs and low marble tables streaked with purple veins, like an alcoholic nose—is purple, apparently to coordinate nicely with the yellow and green theme. There is a bar in the center of the atrium, a silver moon of a bar, inside of which stand the nattily dressed and surly waiters. Ado has explained that the hotel was built on an old circus fairground, which accounts for some of the ancillary decor. When the press is on full display, certainly the hotel has the feel of a circus. Writers, camera crews, producers, recognizable personalities and talking heads: to enter the ring, one either comes up through the garage or takes the back door.

He found them, his friends, and they all did an odd combination of American-style embrace and European cheek kissing. Stephen could never get the kissing part down: it seemed something to be done on the TV—at the Grammys, or one of those White House pop concerts—and he had no idea how people ever figured it out. Being raised in the

Midwest, he had been instructed not to kiss people he was not related to. Which cheek were you supposed to start with? Did you let your lips touch the cheek, or was that considered messy? Why in God's name would you press your cheek to another's only to make a kissing sound in that person's ear? Wasn't that loud? And then there was the dreaded kiss-on-the-mouth situation, which terrified him, deeply, and to which he typically replied, being the kissee, by always hesitating before smashing one of his cheeks, probably the improper one, into the oncoming lips of the kisser. Typically he liked to shake hands: there were ways to do it properly, with midwesternly middle-class aplomb. Anna, she kissed him—one of those lips-turned smashed-cheek debacles—and stood back and shook his hand. Then she hugged him. Then she laughed, and Stephen shook hands for twenty-seven minutes with Peter Messinger. He shook hands more briefly with Elise—who kissed him, swiftly, on the mouth.

Stephen said to Anna—partially to change the subject, to suppress a blush—Remind me. I have a photo for you. From the airport. It's very nice.

Okay, Anna said, beaming. I'll remind you.

It's not for you, Stephen said. It's for your family.

For your *loved* ones, Elise said, teasing her.

I'll need to make a proper print, Stephen said.

He waited for people to resume their seats. He took one of his own. So, he said, sitting back. So.

Scotch on the table. A waiter brought him a glass. He poured only a quarter-inch, knowing it would go right to his head by way of his empty stomach. Then it went to his head, like that, and he permitted himself another quarter-inch.

Two photographers approached and introduced themselves to Messinger, who was polite and kind. Do you know Stephen Brings? Stephen understood that in Messinger's presence his own had become inflated. It was not unlike standing next to a senator, or general—the less you said the more cachet you seemed to have. It was nice sometimes not to feel snubbed by the important journalists and waiters. The photographers and Messinger talked for a moment about Michel, the French reporter Stephen had met with the others on Biševo, and who had been killed in the Krajina by his guides.

They found his body, Messinger said. Shot in the back of the head.

Stephen felt his stomach turn. The reporter had been murdered for

his supply of emergency cash—strapped to a leg, the small of his back. Stephen had thought the guy was back in Paris playing with his kids. It followed that the guy's family was . . . what? Your husband dies, father of your two kids . . . what? Explain that. Apparently his wife had been pregnant. The wife was going to name the forthcoming baby—a girl—after her father.

Eventually the conversation began to break apart into separate groups. Anna asked Stephen a question about the government. There was some talk about the Canadian General who insisted the Muslims were shelling themselves to make the Serbs look bad. Very naughty, those Muslims. There was talk about the trees, the water queues at the brewery and the supply of flour at the bakery. General laughter at the incomprehensible incompetence of the United Nations. Also, sometimes there was gas; sometimes there was not: what was important was that you never knew if there would be gas and, thereby, heat for your home. People were making stoves out of metal crates at the technological institute, and ordnance—a generally hit-or-miss proposition.

The photographers made to leave, and everybody paused politely to say good-bye. Messenger smiled, demurely, and said, I'll see you again soon, I'm certain—meaning they could leave now and he would not take offense and that, further, he really wanted them to leave now. Enough already.

Then Stephen heard a voice, calling—Stephen! Stephen Fucking Brings!

Summerville, striding across the atrium in his boots, a sheepskin vest—the Marlboro Man. He strode up, half-cocked, drink in hand, and clapped Stephen on the back. His breath was a flamethrower absent the spark.

Hey, Stephen said, recoiling. How's the spy business?

Spy schmy, Summerville said. I am a reporter for an important daily. I am a writer! Give me liberty or ring me a bell!

Okay. How's the daily business?

Beats the dog out of me. God's truth, Stephen Brings. I have no idea. He said, taking a seat, Where's the hootch? Elise? Pass me the hootch, s'il vous plaît. Stephen, he said. Fill 'er up?

A pinch, Stephen said. Really. Whoa.

Whoa, Summerville said. You've passed the Palomino Hotel!

Excuse me?

Me, I like that *šljivovica*. Helo vitz ya? That stuff, Steve. From pears?

I thought it was plums.

They make liquor from grass, too, you know. Grass. Like ethanol, you ask me. Put it in your tank and go. He said, When's this beauty pageant? Got to see the Beauty Pageant. Grass hootch, go figure—

Have you tried it? Stephen said.

Elise said, taking Stephen's arm, I brought you a tripod. And film. She said, pulling him close, This time I am staying.

I'm glad, Stephen said. He said, looking at her, Really. Now he looked at Peter Messinger and felt clumsy, and so he stood, and walked to the bar, and Messinger rose to follow him. At the bar Stephen overheard an American woman explaining to an American man the way she felt. *I feel he's just not listening to me*, the woman said. At the bar Stephen asked the nattily dressed waiter behind it for several rounds of *travarica* and paid for the drinks.

Stephen, Messinger said. While we are alone—

Stephen looked at him.

Elise has asked me to deliver to you a message. She is staying.

I feel, the woman was saying, *that he doesn't care at all about the way I feel*.

Okay, Stephen said, stepping back.

No. You misunderstand. She does not want to come between us. I am here to tell you she cannot come between us. Do you understand?

No—

I am a married man with two children. I love my children. Shit, I love my wife. It has been over between us since Zagreb. Before Dubrovnik, even.

Your wife? Stephen said. Oh God, Peter. I didn't know. I'm so sorry—

No, he said. No, of course not my wife. Ahh, Messinger said, shaking his head. A joke. You had me.

Well, Stephen said. Not exactly.

Maybe, said the man who had been listening to the woman. *Maybe you should try and stop feeling so much?*

The waiter presented a tray filled with several shots of viscous liquid. Stephen said, taking the tray, Isn't this embarrassing? Faintly?

Messinger said, properly serious, But that is why I am speaking to you.

Okay, Stephen said.

She is like a sister to me, that is all.

Got it, I think.

What about me? said the woman. *Me!*

This is not a permission thing, either. It is not a thing like that.

I understand. Well, no, actually I don't. But I'm on the page somewhere. It's a big book. Stephen said, holding the tray, Are you free tonight?

Yes. If it is not cold out.

Bring Elise, he said. Bring Anna. Don't bring Summerville, okay?

At the table they passed the drinks; they made a toast, and Summerville said, What kind's this?

The herbs, Stephen said. *Travarica*. Cheers.

Anna said, rising, not touching her drink, I need a toilet.

There was shelling now, incoming: it was always incoming, but it looked to be incoming in a distant part of the city. Ado would have been able to tell you where down to the block. Now a tremendous noise from the street, metal on metal, and they ran with several outside to the barrier protecting the lobby from sniper fire. Facing the State Museum a UN APC sat like a water buffalo. There was an overturned Volkswagen Golf on the street, its wheels spinning, the engine stuck in gear. From beneath the car were scrambling two journalists, their ID tags flapping in the breeze. They left the car where it stood upside down and raced to the barriers. There was no fire whatsoever.

Above the ridgelines a pair of F-14 Tomcats ripped open the sky as if it were a cotton sheet.

—

A half-moon. The enemy had intensified the shelling and the sky was deeply reddened from several buildings having caught fire. The smoke drifted thickly. Stephen listened to the clatter from the people clattering at the bar. He said to Messinger and to Anna and to Elise, We are going to meet my friend Ado.

Okay, Messinger said.

They crossed the street in the dark past the overturned car. On the sidewalk of the Faculty of Philosophy they passed a dead dog. Once across it was less dangerous; they had only a little way to go to the State Museum—the airport side. There was a bunker there, right

before the river. Ado met them and led them to another bunker. In the bunker Ado introduced Stephen to the commander: a big man with a Kalashnikov and radio set. The man said hello with a British accent, and then there were other introductions, and Stephen introduced his friends to Ado's mother and sister and friend of the family. The girl's hair had been shorn, her chest bound in order to flatten it. By tomorrow morning they might be on Mount Igman. The friend of the family carried a suitcase, inside of which he said he had a flashlight. They waited nearly an hour, smoking, sitting in the cold dark behind the bunker and then the radio fired up, and the commander did some talking, and then there was talking from the other side. If you looked you would have seen nothing on the other side. They could hear the river rushing, and the branch of the river, to their right, also rushing. Then two men went to the stream on the right and passed through a culvert running beneath the road in front of them: they watched a man with two jerry cans scramble down the bank on the other side of the river. In the dark they all looked alike. The man representing the other side carried the jerry cans across the river, which was cold, the man obviously cursing the cold water which ran to his knees. Now he turned back and picked up two more cans and returned. Then there were boxes to be carried across. A fire line had started and the supplies were being passed man to man, and to Stephen and Anna and Messenger and Elise, up into the bunker and now to a trench leading eventually to the bed of a truck. This went on. Ado appeared and said to Stephen, They want to say good-bye to you. Stephen went to the culvert, in which he could stand freely; the water was ice. He made out Ado's mother and sister, the friend of the family, who could have been any man. The sister was crying, and she hugged Stephen, and Stephen hugged her mother, Ado's mother, who said something to the man. The man said to Stephen, She wants you to tell Ado not to be stupid and get killed. Tell him not to do the drugs when this is over.

Okay, Stephen said. I'll convey the message.

She wants me to tell you thank you. He said, rubbing at a speck of dirt in his eye, So I am telling you this. Thank you.

Be safe, Stephen said.

And then the man said to Stephen, We've said good-bye to Ado. The man said to Stephen, touching Stephen's arm, God bless.

They turned and walked to the river's edge. At one point Stephen

took their photograph. Having made their farewells, there came the anticlimax of more waiting. Nobody stood now on the other side. Ado arrived with Messinger and Anna and Elise, and Elise wrote down some last-minute contacts; she made a duplicate set, one for the man. A rule of the trade, the sharing of contacts with those traveling to foreign lands. In the cold water their feet had turned to ice. There was more shelling in the old part of the city. Somewhere a machine gun, large caliber, was having its say. *Wa wunka wunka wunka*, sliding like a metronome on its hinges, counting out the beats, legato. Then a burst of rapid return semiautomatic fire. Another house on fire. Then a man, a different man, stepped out from the shadows and stood on the opposite bank. He put his hands on his hips. He did not carry a weapon. The man looked right at the place where they stood, and nodded, and Ado said something which must have meant, Go.

His mother looked at him.

Ado said it again. He was crying, which made him say it more harshly than he intended.

And then the friend of the family and the woman and the girl made their way across the cold water.

Plate #12

A large window, interior, shot from below. The window is covered with plastic which, in the light, casts a white glow. A naked woman—muscular, lean, with short-cropped hair—is standing on the sill, her feet stretched out to each corner of the sill for balance. She is on her tiptoes. Her hands, too, are stretched to the far corners of the window. Thus her body is a silhouetted X and toward the center of the photograph one can see the light shooting through the cleft of her genitalia and the fine hairs surrounding it, lit like steel.

Bosnia is among other things a study in bridges. There is the Bridge on the Drina, which later became a book. There is the Stari Most Bridge, or Mostar Bridge. In Sarajevo there is the Goats' Bridge.

These ancient bridges, Ado tells Stephen, were built by the Ottomans. They were built with eggs in the mortar, Ado says, proudly, which explains why they have lasted for hundreds of years.

The bridges, the mortar mixed with eggs. In Serbo-Croatian, the slang for testicles is eggs. *Jaja*.

It is the Soulful One who tells Stephen the story of the Goat Bridge. Though there are two versions, the official version illustrating the uses of philanthropy, the other is the story everybody loves to tell. It is a story of possession. It is, she says, the poetic story.

Once, the story goes, there were two billy goats. The goats stood across from each other—the Miljacka River between them. Each wanted to pass; neither wanted to give the right of way. This was when Sarajevo was known as the Golden Valley. Probably the goats knew there was gold nearby, awaiting two philanthropic brothers to discover, given that all wars are about money. The goats, like men, they refuse to give the right of way. Like men, they begin to fight, like spoiled goats: they hurl themselves at each other in the middle of the river. They hurl their bodies into the bodies of each other. The battle lasts for days. Neither wins, each dies. The goats die with their horns locked, each to each, and become the bridge itself.

It is like all of Bosnia, says the Soulful One. We are turning ourselves to stone.

In the early morning Stephen went to a funeral at the Lion Cemetery, which before the war had been considered all filled up. Across the way a soccer field had also been made available to accommodate the newly dead. Behind the cemetery, just up the road, the few remaining animals in the zoo were starving. For the cemeteries no stones were being cut for the fresh graves. After the funeral Stephen made his way to the Holiday Inn; he was hungry, not having eaten for two days. At the Holiday Inn he entered the conference room and joined up with Messinger and Summerville. Elise and Anna were doing something on three UN diplomats flying in. Then the diplomats were flying out. The traffic in the conference room was light, and Stephen had stale bread and salami. Water. He ate and drank slowly, lest he cause his stomach upset. The more slowly he ate, he was learning, the more quickly he could fill himself up.

Summerville said, removing a laser pen from his sheepskin vest, See this?

Uh-huh, Stephen said. It was one of those things rich people bought in mail-order catalogs for their equally rich partners: the kind of gift one gave to one who could not possibly be in need of anything.

Here, Summerville said, his eyes lighting up. Watch this.

He turned it on and pointed the laser to a group at a table across the room. People there were talking heatedly.

Just look how far this sucker goes, Summerville said, pointing it.

He landed the red laser dot on a man's chest. The man was wearing one of the twinkly blue UN flak jackets. The dot lingered on his chest—

Jesus! somebody screamed, diving for the floor.

Two others at the same table looked up and saw the dot and tackled the man in possession of the chest Summerville had located.

They threw the man on the floor, who was oblivious to the reasons why, not having seen the dot.

Snipers!

Where?

Which was a good question, given that there were no windows. Summerville tucked the gizmo into his vest, patting his chest, and then others saw him, and some laughed, and others expressed their disgust. One glared to prove he could. The men at the table across the room resumed their places.

Honest, one of the men was saying. I swear to God.

Messenger said, yawning, I need something to do.

Me too, Summerville said. Before I get killed.

You aren't getting killed, Stephen said. Everybody likes you too much.

Messenger smiled, broadly. The luxuries of coffee and tea, of tobacco—his teeth needed cleaning.

—

All wars are about money, which is to say, *currency*—the pound and the yen, the dollar and the crown. The mark. On the way to the Goat Bridge, in a borrowed armored Land Rover, they pulled to a stop behind a tunnel. They left the Rover there with two guards, behind the tunnel, beside a place where two mortars were stored for safe-keeping. They began hiking a steep, narrow and snow-covered road. It was hard going, but then it began to decline: Messenger, Summerville, Stephen. To their left there stood a giant stone, like something out of Monument Valley, the kind climbers would spend a day on with hundred-dollar ropes and brightly colored carabiners, only

this giant stone was white, like marble in the light, and Stephen said, They call that Granny's Tooth.

The rock? Summerville said.

Yeah.

Summerville said, You ask me, looks more like Grandpa's schlong.

Summerville began a story about a steer his father once told him to castrate. Ah duh, Summerville said. I kept looking, you know?

All around them were hymns—natural and fabricated—to the penis: the metal posts around the presidency, what Ado called *dick-heads*; the minarets; the ancient gravestones, sprouting in the parks like genetically engineered mushrooms cast in stone. Freud, apparently, had spent some time in Sarajevo. No surprise there. The newspaper building, now burned to the ground, with only its elevator shafts intact—it resembled painfully a giant stone dildo. But beneath it, every day, the people there still brought out the paper.

Rock, Scissors, Paper . . . what was the name of that game?

Or did you just call it that? *Rock, Scissors, Paper*.

The name of the paper was *Oslobodjenje*, just another word for *Liberation*.

Serb, Croat, Muslim; *Rock, Scissors, Paper* . . . Each, Stephen thought, is capable of killing one but not the other. To build the city, the city had required each; and now to destroy it, too. They walked on through the cold snow. Bosnia: the Land before Time of Identity Politics. In Sarajevo multicultural had actually meant a part of the city's design—the *mahalas*, the streets all leading in to the center. The celebration of the common ground. Here in the valley there were rocks and snowcapped mountains and forests. It was the landscape of a fairytale, Narnia or Middle Earth; it was something rich, and magical. Alpine without the familiarity of chocolate and watches. It was beautiful and cold.

Messinger said, I think Yugoslavia is doing now what Western Europe finished in '45. Establishing the borders. Identities. The history of Europe requires that each nation have a dominant group.

This history of Europe, Summerville said. This history of yours *requires* the US of A to come over here every twenty years and fix it. It's getting old.

He's got a point, Stephen said. This is Europe, not Kansas.

Messinger said, Everybody has to be able to get along? How is that?

No third world? No Middle East? Africa makes Gaza look like California. The world's a toilet and there are always too many people taking a shit all the time.

Pretty goll-dang pessimistic there, Summerville said.

This, Messinger said, sweeping his hand across the landscape. This is nature's way of clearing the ground. The twentieth century is the century in which man makes his own plagues.

Condoms, Stephen thought, might help to check the spread. He had no condoms. Perhaps a word with the Pope was in order? What good was technology if you couldn't improve people's lives? A little food. Employment. Not so many mouths to feed by way of a rubber satchel full of sperm. As the *New Democrat* had reportedly said a few thousand times in the past three weeks, *A place called Hope*. Stephen was hopeful about the new president, who promised to do something about the war; who promised to provide health care—about time; who promised to make the world a better place and to lay off the chicks.

Is that where that expression came from, *getting laid*?

And what, really, were the antecedents of the phrase *blow job*?

And where did *come* come from, anyway?

He had sex on the brain. This is your drain; this is your dug on drains.

Stephen said, shaking it off, How do you make a person want less than he or she doesn't need?

So, Messinger said. You are a socialist, Stephen Brings.

Maybe. I know what we have now, this unchecked free-enterprise firestorm, isn't working. Where there's a Will there's an A-Plus-Plus. What, we're suddenly going to get smarter?

Well, Summerville said. I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy.

They approached the command house, which Stephen had been told belonged to a Serb to explain why it had not been shelled. Its set-up was similar to the command center in the west, though much quieter and, thereby, more cheerful: a place to sleep, a place to light a fire, snow on the roof. The obligatory stash of porn. Dozens of stacks of wood, each neatly bound up with twine. Nobody was inside, so they walked down the hill to the Goat Bridge.

The bridge stood sparkling white in the sun—at each base a hollow circle, one for each side of the river, architectural conduits. If the river flooded, the water would rush through the bridge and not wash the

bridge away. The two circles in turn quoted—the figure eight, toppled to its side—the arch of the span. You could lie down in the center and stretch your arms across its width. The design, so simple, so elegant, leading the way to Istanbul. The thing about an arch—it wants mainly to come full circle, to complete its revolution, wherein lies the secret to its strength. Beside the bridge was a plum orchard, long since plundered, and across the way a stand of apple trees. A blasted-out house across the bridge. During pleasant times people came to picnic at the river.

Q. How does a Slovenian woman keep her money safe from her husband?

A. She puts it between her legs.

There were five or six soldiers arguing over something. There was a mortar set up. Jusuf, Ado's uncle, was speaking loudly and holding a shell in his hand: fresh gray paint, narrow, long as the hand which held it. He was telling somebody something who was making adjustments on the pipe. Seeing Stephen, he waved, and then returned to yelling. Now Jusuf stepped over and made introductions.

That's a bunker there? Summerville said.

Yes, Jusuf said. The front line. Cross that line, you go to Serbia. Ha ha ha.

Really?

Well, you know, he shrugged.

Summerville said, Where's the enemy?

Asleep, drinking. Who's to know? We cut wood this morning; sometimes they cut wood, and we buy it, and then we sell it. Free trade, Bosnian style.

I saw it, Summerville said, removing his knapsack. The wood.

Ah ha, Jusuf said, pointing to his eye. Very keen. He said to Stephen, Now we are making a test. You are in time! We had to bring the pipe.

It was a test because nobody was certain how to make a shell work. Over the past two weeks they'd been having a lot of experiments. It was thought best to test here, in a neutral zone filled with mountains and woods. So, okay?

No Man's Land.

Somebody wearing a Bon Jovi T-shirt said something. Another kid

had a mohawk and two Nike high-tops and pieces of metal in his nose and lip. They were ready to go, tapping their feet. Jusuf went to the pipe. He said, turning around, First you hear the *wump*. Then the *ssshhhh*—the whistling. Then the *bang*.

Okay.

But we should hear only the *wump* and the *bang*.

Messinger said, Not the whistling.

No. Jusuf said, pointing to the bunker, There. Not the whistling.

The others had taken their places in the bunker. They knelt there, in the bunker, eyes wide.

There there, Jusuf said, smiling. Please. His teeth were in need of fixing. It was the kind of thing an American took for granted: an adequate supply of munitions, decent dental care.

They joined the others in the bunker. Somebody called out something, loudly, and Jusuf called back, grabbing his balls, laughing, and then another in the bunker said something—What? Summerville said—and Jusuf said something, pointing to the bridge: serious now, checking the projectile. He had a wooden box full. He set a shell in the box, closed his eyes, and picked another. *Eenie meenie . . .* Having made his choice, he grinned, shrugged his shoulders, and dropped the shell into the pipe.

The projectile detonated, *wump*, and Jusuf ran and dove into the bunker with his hands over his head. Once there he scrambled, smiling, clapping Stephen on the back, and they began waiting for the *bang*. They waited some more. Messinger was taking pictures. Somebody farted, the silent deadly type. Ugh! said another, and Summerville said, *One who smelt it dealt it*, while they waited for the *bang*. And then came the *ssshhhh*, the whistling, and then everybody ducked headfirst into the floor of the bunker as the shell exploded some fifteen meters in front of them—taking out, among other things (like Summerville's knapsack), the pipe which had fired it.

Plate #16

Two women's faces, in the dark, illuminated by a single flame.

He met Elise at the Eternal Flame. The Eternal Flame had long since gone out, its eternity presently cut short by a lack of gas, but still it was a good meeting place in the center of the city. By way of the Eter-

nal Flame the city honored the dead from the Second World War—just another sequel. If only those in charge had waited a bit to build it, the Eternal Flame might resemble something else. The Eternal Bonfire, say. The Eternal Furnace.

He took Elise for a walk, which today was dangerous on the open boulevards, given the snipers. He told Elise how Ado liked to call the snipers *snoopers*, which he pronounced *snooper*. Ado called them snoopers because they were always snooping into your life, get it? Stephen pointed out to her the various ridgelines marked by cut timber. He took her to a small café which was open but which today had only tea to serve. The thing about Sarajevo, he said. Everybody shows up for work. It dulls the edge of boredom.

I can imagine, Elise said.

I can't.

Elise told him a story about two girls. She kept her voice low. They were blond and pretty, the girls. Blue eyes. They were abducted, their names having been on a list, and taken to a barracks, and locked in a room with twin beds. Probably, the barracks had been a hotel. That night men came to rape them. One of the girls, the oldest, seventeen, would not stop screaming, so after the tenth or eleventh time, the man then raping her stood up and drew a knife and stabbed her in the mouth. She didn't die right away. Her younger sister, silent, listened to the men raping her—grunting, cursing, spitting. They smelled like brandy and goat shit. Her sister was bleeding from the mouth and throat and she was bleeding from between her legs. After a while it stopped. Her older sister died. In the morning a man old enough to be her father came and put the younger girl in the front seat of a truck and drove her home. Now the girl is pregnant and wants to die.

Elise said, They can't gas the populations. So they humiliate them. When you rape a girl you rape her family. It is obscene.

He nodded. He lit a cigarette. Ado had said to Stephen once, Why don't you ever ask if I have killed somebody?

Elise said, What are you thinking?

Nothing, he said. It's awful. It's just awful.

She said, leaning forward, What is the worst thing you have ever done?

Excuse me?

You know. The most terrible thing you have ever done. What is the worst?

He thought a moment.

Elise said, If we are going to be lovers I should know.

He said, You mean on purpose. They're little things in this light. They're just stories.

Everything's a story.

Not over here.

Elise nodded. She said, I have to tell you something now. Before we continue. I had an affair with a married man.

Peter.

I should have told you. She said, It is over. I told him to tell you.

He did.

After Dubrovnik. I told him then. I knew *in* Dubrovnik but I had to tell him first. To be right. But I was not right to you. I should have told you.

It's okay, he said. I knew.

Because I did not want to hurt his feelings. Later. I should have told you.

Okay.

She said, leaning forward, Do you believe in Evil?

I didn't used to.

But you do now?

Yes.

I have a theory, she said. About the big things. I don't mean the small things—the shameful things, sleeping with your friend's lover, or husband. That's venal. That's a lot of soup spilled in your lap. I mean the evil things. The Hitler-Milošević things. She said, taking his hand, I know why the big things happen.

He sat there and felt the warmth from her hand. She withdrew, slightly. Now she took his hand with both of hers.

They happen, the big things, because we don't forgive the small things. Because we don't forgive ourselves.

Pride, Stephen said.

Mm hmmm.

Pride always carries a mirror, Stephen said. Like vanity.

Mirrors break, Elise said. She said, I am the mirror. She said, pointing across the room to a young woman reading a book, She is the mirror. Those girls in the room reeking of goat shit: they are the mirror. The mirror is the other person we don't forgive ourselves for looking through.

Welcome to hell, Stephen said.

Stephen, she said. I want you to be able to tell me everything.

Are you certain?

Everything, she said. Everything in time.

Plate #19

A boy—he could be anybody’s—sitting on the steps leading to his building. He is wearing rollerblades; the plaster of his building has fallen off in sheets, the walls are riddled with bullet holes. At the boy’s feet are thousands of pieces of shattered glass. He is staring right into the lens.

Names, like faces, change. They met Ado in front of Egypt, across from the Ferhadija Mosque. The street was filling with people out for a walk. Anything to get out of the house. Ado kept watch of the women, the Sarajevan women, who reminded Stephen of blooded horses: chests out, eyes straight, lifting their proud hooves. They were women proud to be admired by the men who pretended not to look. As it grew dark, Ado took Stephen and Elise to a club on the Obala Boulevard, which kept changing names. First it was the Obala of the Franz Joseph, then the Obala of Stepa Stepanovic. The Obala of Fill-in-the-Blank.

Yugoslavia, Ado said, shaking his head. In America, when the Democrats win, do you change the Boulevard of Davy Crockett to the Boulevard of Daniel Boone?

An F-16 passed low overhead—a bully on the playground, pulling at a girl’s hair. They cut through a courtyard where there was a water queue. Overhead somebody had written on a wall a message not to drink the water. This water was for washing, not for drinking, but that didn’t stop the thirsty from drinking it. The bar, which they entered from the back, was already filled. There was a generator roaring on the outside, and inside the music pumped like a dragon’s heartbeat.

In the bar there were soldiers in their rock and roll T-shirts and actors and professors and former students and a handful of journalists; there was beer, as if by magic; there was a man dancing on crutches, having recently lost most of his leg; there was a bald kid with a shotgun; there was smoke in the air, and dance lights cutting

through the smoke. Stephen told Ado to tell Elise the story of the Unknown Lover of the Dark.

No, Ado said, blushing deeply. I cannot!

Stephen said, Of course you can. Who else are you going to tell?

After more prodding, and beer, Ado told Elise the story. He had to shout the details which Stephen pretended not to hear.

What? Stephen said.

Oh shut up. I am telling to Elise.

Elise put her hand in Stephen's pocket, listening. All around them people were dancing in the dark while Ado told the story.

Elise said, laughing, Oh Ado. I don't believe it!

Ado said, looking hurt, Who could believe such things?

I don't believe it either, Stephen said. But God it's a good story.

Maybe she is here, Elise said. The woman?

Ado made a joke. He said he could go to all of the women in the club and ask them each to make the certain sounds: *ahh haaa* and *oooh*. *Eeeh*, Ado said, swaying. Things such as that. He could run his fingers across their faces? Smell the perfumes? By curfew Ado was too drunk to stand. The doors locked, and the party went on, given that nobody could leave now until dawn. Consequently they danced and they drank and they ripped it up. Elise danced with her arms in the air, her sweater lifting, revealing the flesh of her pale stomach. Later, Stephen stood behind her, his body pressed into her by the press of the crowd. He could smell the perfume on her neck, sandalwood and lily of the valley, and the oil from her hair. He put his arms around her, his hands on the silver buckle of her belt. She took his hands and slid them slowly up her body, over the warm flesh of her stomach, across her breasts to the center of her chest. She rocked her body into his to the rhythm of the music. When she felt the length of his penis asserting itself against the seat of her jeans, thrumming with the music, she turned and put her arms around him and opened her mouth, kissing him.

Soon, she said.

In the morning they woke Ado, who, unsteady, drank a beer and went to meet his unit. They walked through the empty morning streets, the sun not yet up. They went through the park and up the steep hillside, past the Ottoman graves and the linden trees. It was a long climb uphill, and in his building, on the stairs, they passed the Soulful One and the Married Flirt on their way to work. Hello

Stephen, they called, their voices winking. At the top of the stairs, Stephen and Elise entered the flat. In the ceiling there was a hole the size of a small car. The windows to the living room had been blown out. Most of the furniture remained in good repair, though the walls were scarred with the results of shell fragments.

Elise said, Oh—

It's fine, Stephen said. Not like they're going to hit the same place twice. Besides, now the light will be better.

A skylight. For your models.

As a temporary fix, they hung a blanket over the windows; they nailed another to cover up the hole in the ceiling. They rearranged things and Stephen said, Are you hungry?

Yes, Elise said. Where is the bed?

—

An erotic encounter, writes Octavio Paz, begins with the sight of the desired body. Whether clothed or naked, the body is a presence: a form that for an instant is every form in the world.

Naked, then, she took Stephen by the hand. Naked, she ran her fingers across his throat. Then he kissed her throat, and she let out a sigh, and he felt that sigh vibrate against his mouth. He kissed her eyes. He kissed her navel.

She said, coming up for air, Which is the best way? For the first time? How is one to know?

He said, I don't have any condoms.

She said, I do. At the hotel. She said, sitting up, This way.

They sat facing each other, atop his sleeping bag, her legs around his hips, and she said, sliding her body onto his, I have condoms at the hotel. Then she arched her back, and he buried his nose into her neck and hair; she drew her nails along his spine; she breathed into his nose.

Q. Why does the act of love require movement and repetition?

A. Because the body wants to do it again and again.

As does the heart, which beats inside of it, and the voice which rises to give its assent. This, the encounter . . . *the engagement* . . . it affirms the heart's desire to make. It affirms nature's desire to join, to

participate in that field of energy and light which makes it. So affirming, it transcends, and thus it is possible to make the body one with the body of another. All music has a rhythm, even fire, and all lovers believe in the possibilities of love, which is and always will be an act of faith. To love well is to know the power and grace of a god: it is to join in that field of energy and light all gods first require if only to describe. Spin a wheel on its axis, drop a coin into the sea—to delay the passage of time—to frame the moment, there—they made love in a single pose. They measured their bodies with their hands. Then they closed their eyes and then they opened them. She held him tightly. He kissed her mouth. She bit his ear.

Stephen, she said, in between sessions.

He said, Do you know what you said? A while back?

What?

Ja. You said, *Ja.*

She laughed, hard. Then he laughed until he was in tears. After a while neither could really breathe, and so he tried particularly hard to give it a rest.

She said, getting up, reaching for her jacket and her boots, *Wo ist die Toilette, Bitte?*

He stood at the window and watched her pee in the snow. Then he stepped outside, wearing only his boots, and did likewise.

She rested the side of her head on the palm of her hand, elbow cocked. She put her finger to the mark she'd made on his ear. She said, kissing his shoulder, Now I've made a mark.

You did that a long time ago.

On Hvar.

I kept watching you. And then we kept meeting—

She said, It is like Ado's story. Nobody will believe it.

They don't have to. They don't have to believe a single word.

She said, I did not want to do this unless I was certain.

Certain of what?

Certain I could forgive myself for breaking up your marriage.

He said, We have things to talk about. We have things I need to tell you.

About R.

About R. And my son.

What was his name? I should know his name.

Gulliver. His name was Gulliver.

Plate #22

A man and a woman, each wearing only a transparent shroud, facing each other. They are standing in profile in the center of the Goat Bridge. The landscape is white with snow. They are standing on the cold stones.

Music, especially that deriving from the voice, is best experienced live. A song remembered is like a boy's shadow: he sees the form, but not himself. Song remembered is not song felt.

They had some nice days which followed despite the war. They picked up some UNHCR plastic to cover the windows and the hole in the ceiling, which vastly improved the light. They went to see *Hair*—standing room only—and they went to the Holiday Inn and joined in a party there, and then they went up to Elise's room, and they took off their boots, their jeans and thick sweaters, and Elise draped her underwear on the doorknob, and they made love drowsily inside her sleeping bag. There was an odd wave of hopefulness in the air: perhaps the sides were going to talk things out? Then Peter Messinger arranged to show Stephen the Serb fortifications on the ridgelines, the Old Austrian Fort, and they took a brief trip with a television crew to Pale: at a checkpoint on the way back, the guards refused to accept their bribe and let them through until Stephen showed them first his faculty ID and then a membership card to a Bally health club. In the city, Anna and Elise interviewed a passing-through entourage of diplomats who spoke diplomat-speak while expressing hopefulness while surrounded by their seven bodyguards packing 9-millimeter Glocks. There was a drag race between two reporters in separate Yugos on Tito Street, and one of the reporters burned out his engine,

which caught fire, and rolled to a stop in front of Tito's Barracks. Summerville had scouted out a woman recently turned to prostitution whom he now promised to deliver safely to the other side—by which he meant the West. Paris or Berlin. He was a guy with connections. He said, What good are they if you can't save a pretty girl? In the bar there was a visiting rock band carrying a lot of guitars looking mournful from their hard life on the road.

Life under the big top: all was pleasant given the general conditions, but then the enemy destroyed a neighborhood on the western edge, Otes, obliterating it with thousands of shells over a period of two days, and the hopefulness vanished like that. UN flights stalled. The smugglers and war profiteers raised their prices. Sniper activity increased. Then like a flat stone an outbreak of enterocolitis skipped across the city and everybody came down with the shits.

Ah shits, Messenger said to Stephen. Messenger took Stephen up the stairs several flights to a room. He opened the door to the room but the wall behind the door had been blown away, which made entering feel as if you were stepping into another world—a magic kingdom, where it was cold.

Messenger said, pointing at the distant timberline, I am getting out of here. I want a toilet that works.

So soon?

It is not going to change. We have the gist of the things. If people like me leave the younger ones will have more chances. All the motors on the cameras. Snap snap. It is a different world, Stephen. Nobody aims anymore. My pictures, they go on the same page as the tampon and the dishwasher. This war will make many of the young ones. It will establish them. When you are young you think, Oh God, please let my pictures appear in the same place as the tampon. But I am no longer young. I no longer care to sell the dishwasher.

Stephen said, Will you take Elise?

But I don't understand, Stephen.

To Zagreb. She needs to go to Zagreb but she won't leave. You know—

I don't think Elise will want to leave you.

I don't want to go yet. Not yet. I'm not done.

What are you doing? You never show me anything.

A project. Something to finish before I show it. I'm slow. I don't want to go yet. I said four months. It's not time.

It is not going to get better. Stephen, you cannot make it better here.

Stephen looked out through the massive hole in the wall, across Sniper Alley, to the dark mountains. He said, I know that.

So?

You know how everybody hates the press? Motherfuckers, you know? I mean, Evil Press, always trying to be rich and gain notice at the expense of the people they talk about. And there's a side of that, God knows. But for all those people who hate the press, especially here, in Sarajevo—if it weren't for the press and the UN this city would have been obliterated months ago. Erased. Like Tito's wife from the photographs. She never did exist. Sarajevo would not exist.

Yes, well—

Stephen said, I *know* I cannot make it better.

As you say, you are not a journalist.

I don't want to leave. I don't want Elise to stay just because I am.

This is slightly ironic, I think. I will speak with her. We are like brother and sister, only for the fact that I of course am much older and we used to be lovers and then she does the tearing of my heart in pieces. You are putting salt into the wound of my old man's heart.

Really?

No, Stephen. No. But of course you are right.

—

That night shelling erupted throughout the city. Like lambada, Ado said. *Booom, boom boom boom boom.*

Stephen and Elise and Ado went to the cellar in his building. They were joined by the Soulful One and the Married Flirt and the old couple who lived on the first floor and their dog. The shelling lasted throughout the night.

There must be a push somewhere, Ado said.

I wouldn't know.

They had a candle: a wick in oil, burning slowly. There were no real candles left. People had stolen candles from the churches and cathedrals. A candle is romantic only when there is air to circulate; otherwise, it eats up oxygen.

Okay, Stephen said. Favorite Movies.

Dirty Harry, Ado said.

The Married Flirt said, *Top Gun. The Way We Were.*
Das Boot, said Elise. Or *La Femme Nikita. The Young Lions.*
Plenty, Stephen said. Anything by Fellini. *The Searchers.*
Dirty Dancing, said the Soulful One. And then she sang from that movie—*Baby! Oh baby!*—and Stephen's skin goosefleshed.

The Married Flirt said, Favorite Places to Do It.

There was silence.

You know, she said. The Lovemaking!

There was another silence, then an exploding shell. Then laughter.

Anywhere, said Ado. But of course.

Me too, said the Soulful One.

A boat, I think, Ado said. I have often heard good things about the boat.

Elise said, Oh, a train. Always a train.

Stephen?

I agree, he said.

More laughter, which rang hollowly. Even though they did not speak English, the old couple joined in. They sat huddled in the corner. The couple had no children to either lose or care for them, but they had their dog, which trembled beneath the shelling. And more shelling. Another hour passed. Then two. Elise took his arm and said, once, I'm frightened. *Really*. He had now a throbbing headache. It was going migraine, he could tell by the clouding of his vision; he needed air. Then at one point Stephen walked up the stairs to the third floor. He checked the new plastic on the windows, the hole in the roof. He went to the roof and looked out over the burning city. Everything, once again, was on fire. The houses and the streets and the people who had made them. He stood on the roof and looked out across the fires and the red and burning sky. People often confuse the sublime with that which is tender, and pretty, which is a mistake, because this was neither tender nor pretty: it was fierce and terrifying, apocalyptic. It *was* sublime. And this little city burning in this little pocket of the world—this was just a token, Stephen knew, of that which made the world. Likewise it was a token of that which will most likely destroy it.

He reached into his pockets and gathered all his loose change and flung it at the sky.

Fuck you, he yelled. Fuck you all to hell.

There was a sudden lull, then, and he could hear the coins landing on the rooftops—falling, tinkling like rain.

—

In the morning the dog would not go outside. The man of the old couple tugged on its collar, but in the doorway the dog stood locked like a mule. The man cursed and the woman cried. He did not hit the dog, but he cursed it, viciously, and yanked on the collar, while Stephen stepped out and turned to call to the dog. Still the dog would not budge, and now Elise entered the doorway, with the dog, and Stephen was crossing the deep yard when a shell—that whistling, first—landed behind the fence. Diving, he hit the ground while the shell exploded all around him. He had been saved, though he did not know it, by a tree, and when he rose—it was silent, except for the loud ringing in his ears—dusting himself off, he felt a wetness. Great, he thought. Pee in your pants. Pee in your pants in front of all the girls. Way to go, Steve, and his ears were ringing, bells in a cathedral, and he knew he was walking in a circle, a tight circle, checking the surroundings, the bark of the tree, and then he stopped to rub the wetness from his crotch, hoping to make it bleed into the fabric while he began nonchalantly to walk back to the house, which was difficult, given the trembling in his legs. He smiled, widely, and said, waving his hands, No problem.

Elise stood in the doorway, her mouth open, and made a slight cry. She pointed to his waist.

Fuck, Stephen thought. Fuck, and then he looked down and saw that the front of his khakis was soaked in blood. There was blood on his hands. And then, standing there, he undid his belt and dropped his slacks. A fragment had sliced across the glans—bleeding like a ripe tomato. Ginzu knife, he thought. \$9.95. Collect them all. He thought, getting dizzy, What, now I'm going to faint? He said, loudly, No big deal. All in one piece. Really, and then he began to laugh. He laughed, really hard, and he was trembling and having difficulty hitching up his pants. Goddamn it, he said, trembling, God fucking damn it, and Elise stepped into the yard to help him do the belt while the old man and the old woman went to their apartment to find a bandage.

The dog, standing in the doorway, knelt down upon the mat and licked its paws.

—

He went with Elise to the Koševo hospital complex, which was bedlam. No plasma. No antibiotics. No anesthesia. Everywhere there was blood and misery and the indecent wail of human suffering. She spoke with people while Stephen waited in the basement. People were being delivered now by taxi, the drivers covered in blood. When she returned, she slipped Stephen two sealed packages.

They're sterile, she said. Take them.

She said, Don't argue.

His arm had been cut, too, tearing his favorite sweater. She took him to a doctor who sewed up in less than three minutes the top of Stephen's arm. The doctor used blue sewing thread. Then he taped the arm, and Stephen said, Thank you, and the doctor said, You are welcome.

They left and made their way to the Lion Cemetery. It was painful for him to walk, but at least his headache had cleared. Fog blanketed the mountaintops, making them safe. The giant stone lion at the center of the cemetery had been chipped and torn by repeated shelling. Its tail looked as if it had mange.

They sat in the curve of the statue's pedestal, the lion above them, looking out at the radio tower. Stephen said, pointing to a ruined building, The maternity hospital. They wanted to kill the babies.

Elise curled into his side; they watched the cold morning drift across the ruined Olympic complex.

Stephen said, Ado comes here. Before the war he'd come here and get high. It's a good place to meet chicks. You know, those suddenly available.

He's a boy, Ado.

Really. Once I watched him help a girl find a grave and by the time he was done he had her address and was dropping by twice a day to fetch her water.

She laughed. She said, I like him.

Stephen said, I used to read to my son. Gulliver.

Mm hmmm.

A book about a magnificent lion turned to stone. Just like this guy.

She said, I should read this book.

He comes back to life. It's a happy ending.

She said, taking his hand, I have to go to Zagreb. I'll stay with Nina. See the baby.

Okay.

I don't want you to stay so long, okay? Finish what you need to do.

He said, There's not going to be a happy ending here. The city is destroyed. Even if it ended now, right now, the city is destroyed. Stephen said, I want you to send a fax. To R. Tell her I'll call her in a few weeks and that I'm safe and well. Will you?

Yes, Elise said. Of course. She said, Stephen, promise me something.

Yes—

Promise me when I'm gone you'll pay attention to the dog.

Plate #26

A man, dressed in a sweater and corduroys and socks, no shoes, seated in a chair. He is holding to his chest an open book. His hands are arranged so that one can just make out the title—An American Tragedy.

Two days after Elise and Messinger caught the two o'clock flight out, Anna came by his building.

Oh Stephen, called up the Married Flirt. You have a visitor!

There were shoes at the door of his flat, and boots, in keeping with the tradition of Ado and Ado's family. Stephen was photographing a Serbian woman whose family lived in Belgrade. The woman, Biljana, had come to Sarajevo because her husband was a Muslim. Her husband was famous for having destroyed several tanks with an RPG. Each time he took out a tank, he'd pierce his ear. He had not left the city because he wanted to take out tanks and because his grandmother needed somebody to care for her, and then she had died, his grandmother, from a heart attack while walking up the stairs. On the sixteenth floor, she sat down, and somebody found her, rolling down the stairs to the landing. It took several hours to locate some petrol to put into a car and by the time they had there was no point in driving her to a hospital. Everybody in Sarajevo was dying for a lack of something.

Biljana was a striking woman—statuesque, in the manner of Botticelli’s Aphrodite, though Biljana’s hair, unlike that of Botticelli’s model, had been shaved close to the skull. Less hair in the breeze meant less target to attract a sniper in the hills. Biljana was seven months pregnant. On her way from Belgrade to Sarajevo, somebody had cut off her ring finger with a pair of metal shears. Before permitting her to pass, the border guard’s officer returned to her the ring so she might place it on her other hand. Stephen had fixed tea, and she was sitting on the sofa, when Anna arrived at the door beside the shoes.

I was lonely, Anna said at the door. And Summerville won’t leave me alone. She said, May I come in? May I watch?

We will have to ask Biljana.

Yes, Biljana called. Of course.

I brought presents, Anna said, taking off her shoes.

She had brought three bananas from the Holiday Inn and a bottle of German wine—light, and very sweet. Though it was early, the light pouring in through the plastic sheeting was fair. It was not a cold day, but it was cold inside the apartment. The light caused one to expect it to be warmer.

Biljana rose, and stepped into the room Stephen used for sleeping, and changed into a robe. She emerged from the room and said to Stephen, Where am I to stand?

She had modeled before the war in Belgrade and Ljubljana for the magazines. She knew how to stand. Anna poured the wine into coffee cups.

Anna said to Biljana, A boy, I think. He’s going to be a boy?

I think so, too, Biljana said, laughing, stepping back. She removed her robe, the scent of her body billowing out across the room as if caught in a small breeze. She had to be six foot one, Stephen thought. She weighed more than he did. Biljana laid the robe over the back of a chair.

Stephen drank some wine, which tasted warm, having been carried through the city beneath Anna’s coat. Anna sat on the sofa, watching, sipping her wine. Stephen said to Biljana, testing the light, Who do you want to give this to?

Pardon?

This picture. It helps sometimes to know who it’s for. He said, moving her arm into place, Can you open your fingers? Like a fan? There.

What do people say?

Here? Usually they say . . . I don't know. It doesn't matter what they say. It's best *not* to say. Look, this is the thing. It's not for the person who *sees* it. It's for the person to whom you *give* it. It's for that person only. So, you have only one person to give this to. Who is that? Don't say. Just know. Who is it for? First thing that comes to your mind.

Okay, Biljana said. I know.

Okay, Stephen said. There you go.

They took some other poses: Biljana, seated on the floor, her arms behind her for support; Biljana, standing on her tiptoes, her arms to the sky; another of her torso, arms also raised, out of the frame. When they had finished—it did not take long—Biljana put on her robe and drank a final sip of wine. Leaving, she kissed Stephen—cheek, cheek—and exited the apartment fully dressed with her robe tucked into a shopping bag which read *Saks Fifth Avenue*.

Anna said, Will you take one of me?

Yes.

Not for your thing. Your project. Just for my husband. Our children.

I have something for you already, Stephen said. You're at the airport, coming off a flight. The sun is in your hair.

No. I mean, you see. Like her.

Pregnant?

No no no. Stephen Brings, you are teasing me? She said, finishing her wine, Someday I would like a photograph—a beautiful photograph—the kind you make, of me in the nude. No, not nude. *Naked*. Even if I am not beautiful. That's the beauty, isn't it? The likeness? I am not a model like her, like Biljana. But someday I want a photograph of me for my husband. Who is one to ask?

You must have friends, Stephen said.

Yes, I suppose. She said, Elise and I are very close friends.

Yes.

She said, I think she will be good for you if you let her be good for you.

You know I'm married, Anna.

Oh, I don't think so. I know. *I* am married. *Peter* is married. My family, I am going to meet them in Bonn. My husband, he works for the government.

I knew that.

Some things will never happen and other things will. She said, Will you do something with me today? Will you help me pass the day? Always when I am away I get lonely and feel dark and then I don't know how to pass the days.

Me too.

I want you to do something for me.

Take your picture—

Yes, that. But not now, that's for later. I am not a part of this. I might be part of the description, but I am not what needs to be described. You can take my picture this summer when you and Elise come and visit us in Spain.

It sounds nice—

We'll go to the beach. To the mountains.

Maybe. I'd like that.

You will have to bring Elise or my husband will think we are lovers and spoil it. He's much older than me and becomes jealous easily, which is stupid. There is no man I could possibly love more. He mixes up the fucking with the loving. You will have to bring Elise. Promise.

Okay. If she'll come with me. I promise.

Anna smiled, having made him promise. She said, He is a man. Typical. Do you know Spain? I want to show you Spain. You and Elise, together. She said, I am glad we were not lovers. That one night.

Oh?

She laughed. She said, I like you more as a friend than a lumpy pillow in the dark. As a lover, I would have left you for my husband, or you would have left me, angrily perhaps, knowing I would not leave my husband. That is how one knows one is married, I think.

It's a new experience for me, Stephen said. I'm not used to it.

You mean Elise.

Yes.

Stephen, you must be very certain not to mix up the fucking with the loving.

I won't.

Because otherwise you will have more heartache.

—

That night he and Ado and Anna went to Skenderija—the Youth Complex Hall now turned UN Barracks. To get there they had to cross the Eiffel Bridge, which was tricky—*Pazi*, the sign read. *Snajper!* They had a small window between dark and curfew, and once across the bridge Ado led them to the trash receptacles used by the UN troops. Beneath, a shopping mall, with no products left to sell; above, guard posts sandbagged and filled with peacekeepers keeping track of those shot by snipers, keeping track of shells coming in. They were meticulous, the peacekeepers, at keeping count.

If abortion is murder, Ado exclaimed, then masturbation must be genocide!

At the trash receptacles, Ado selected the correct dumpster and leapt inside. He started going through it. He tossed things out, lots of raw garbage fetid with the stink of rich food. There were empty packages which had been delivered to the troops, boxes and boxes; there was office paper of the type one finds in offices. The only thing UN troops wanted which they could not get through the mail, through the incoming flights, was girls. There were a few pimps, running them, but mostly for the Big Guys. Ado was not a Pandarus, a pimp, but, he said, I know people. It's a small city. In a small city you get along by exchanging the things people do not have. He shrugged and said, The same as in the big city.

Sometimes, he said, he came here looking for guns; sometimes fresh food. Sometimes other things. Once he found six rocket-propelled grenades, just like that.

Ah ha, Ado said, tossing out several boxes, each of which was sealed, and inside each was a pair of boots. NATO boots. Much better than the Chinese boots which never fit. These boots varied in sizes in the European manner and the leather was really leather and of course these boots were not made inside a prison by somebody who did not even have a pair of slippers!

Somebody told me there might be boots here, Ado said. And look at the things we have found. Boots!

Will they fit?

I have very big feet. Like a camel. Two humps.

Ado knelt to the ground and removed a worn sneaker and put on a boot. Yes, he said, looking up, beaming. The boot fits. Who could believe such a thing?

How much does a boot cost? One that fits?

A boot like this? Oh, I don't know about such things as that. A boot like this is not so popular because it must be so big.

Uh-huh, Stephen said. You know what they say about guys with big feet?

Uh-huh, Ado said, lacing up the other, proudly. I do too.

Plate #28

A young man with a mohawk and pieces of metal studding his nose and lip. He is naked save for a single Nike high-top sneaker on his foot. He is leaning on a crutch, having recently lost his right leg just above the knee. There is also a ring piercing the head of his penis. He stands extending his middle finger in the classic pose: Angry Young Man.

An acquaintance, a professor, asked Stephen to give a talk to his seminar on the relationships between literature and photography. The professor explained it would be a useful distraction for everybody. Afterward, the professor would take Stephen to a dinner being held in honor of an American Diplomat's Birthday. The location of the dinner was top secret. They would arrive by way of a windowless APC. On the way, inside the APC, the professor said, That was more useful than I thought it would be. Thank you, Stephen.

The professor had done part of his training in the States and was highly regarded for his work on Dreiser. Clyde Griffiths, like Theodore Dreiser, was typically misunderstood, especially by Americans; the professor, his teaching load having been radically reduced, was active elsewhere in his efforts to save the city. The professor said, My grown children, they will leave as soon as it is over. But I am here. They will plant me here with the other stones.

Stephen said, You could go to any university in the States.

I suppose. But here I am of more use, I think. He said, Tell me about your project. You are trying to document the war?

No. Not hardly.

Then what?

There is a rule, Stephen said. I call it the rule of the shrink.

The psychiatrist.

The rule goes like this: whenever a shrink listens to a patient talk

about anybody—his mother, father, his partner—the shrink is taking notes. The shrink takes notes here especially because here the patient is really describing what's led him here. To this shrink's office.

I see where you are going, said the professor. Like Jack Burden in *All the King's Men*? Like Nick in *Gatsby*?

A version of that, yes. When Sturges photographs a naked family on a beach in France, he photographs himself. He photographs his love and wonder for that family. For what made that family and for what brought him here to it. He photographs everybody wearing clothes.

So—

So when I photograph a figure of Sarajevo, of the other, I photograph also the self. Not just my self. Any watchful self. It may be a complete disaster. But I want people *not* to see an other. I want people to see the self they've made.

You could do this anywhere, said the professor. The Sudan. Bolivia. So why do you do this here?

Driving in, the first time, I passed that sign. That graffiti. *Welcome to Hell*.

Yes.

Hell, as I understand it, the real hell, not the fire and torture of the priests to scare the children—the *real* hell is permanent separation from God. Hell is being separated from that which made you.

The professor said, cautiously, This must cause God some pain, too.

Maybe. Stephen said, If I were God, yes. It would cause me pain, too.

I see.

I never knew that, Stephen said. I never knew that until I just said it.

Well, said the professor, pleased to have been of some use. Then I would like to volunteer. If you will have me, I would like to be photographed by Stephen Brings and visit your Chicago. The professor said this word, *Chee ka go*, as if he'd never been there.

When they arrived, they were led into a cellar, the doorway of which was protected by a platoon of UN troops. Inside, past the descending stairs, they entered a large room positively glittering. A chandelier the size of Rome, a rug the size of Baghdad, and in a much

finer state of repair; there was a snazzily dressed fellow playing the ubiquitous Petrov upright; there were butlers carrying flutes of champagne on silver platters and women wearing thousand-dollar dresses with brooches pinned like medals to their chests. Stephen, shabby in his one sport coat and threadbare turtleneck and blood-stained khakis and dirty boots, felt adequately out of place. He needed a shave, a haircut. He needed a hot bath with some soap. Everything here in this room, unlike the rest of the city, was clean like raw steel: the glassware, the silver, and the jewels blinking like Christmas beneath the chandelier. Too, there was some reading of Wordsworth, in honor of some British chap particularly keen on Wordsworth, apparently all seven and a half million words' worth: some clapping, some glad-handing. A speech with kudos and false yuk-yuks. At the dinner Stephen was seated by a concerned Italian movie star who said to him once during the course of the meal, Pass the salt. There were several courses to the meal, and a half-dozen forks with which to negotiate it. The food was too rich to eat, and so he nibbled, politely, when he could. He felt light-headed and never finished his first glass of wine. Obviously he had a fever. When the American diplomat clapped his hands, a Moroccan manservant appeared, in uniform, as if from nowhere. As the dinner party began to wind down, Stephen became entangled in a conversation with an Intellectual.

The Intellectual said to Stephen, So, you are here for fun?

Excuse me?

The man was drinking a glass of red wine, not his first; in his free hand he held a tumbler of Ballantines. He had a cigarette tucked behind each ear—one of them, the cigarettes, was French. The man's suit, which had seen better days, was nonetheless of a superior cut to Stephen's outfit.

Fun, said the Intellectual. On safari. War tourism? You wish to understand our humiliation and suffering. You and Bianca Jagger? Joan Baez and her hippie songs?

Stephen's professor made a step to intercede, which Stephen did not understand, and which consequently failed. The Italian actress strode across the carpet on her Italian legs. The circle formed. The professor made a second attempt to rescue Stephen when the Intellectual called out—

You Americans! What could you possibly understand? What could you possibly know about suffering!

The professor turned and said something to Stephen. The American diplomat, pleased to have turned fifty, clapped his hands for the Moroccan manservant who appeared wearing white gloves.

A French woman in a navy silk dress smiled in sympathy.

Stephen said, What?

Our city, said the Intellectual. Our security, our basic necessities. While your airplanes fly every day over our rooftops! Degradation, said the Intellectual. That is the coin of this realm. Denial, that is yours. Of the United States. The Intellectual said, pointing to Stephen with his tumbler of scotch, Go home. Go home and eat your supper there. Play your guitars *there*.

The circle parted, and the professor guided Stephen, and helped Stephen with his coat, which smelled of woodsmoke and sweat and manure, and Stephen said thank you on the way out to somebody he did not recognize.

Outside an APC was filling up with departing guests. It was cold, and their breath steamed in the cold air. Stephen's side ached, as if he'd been struck by a downed power line, and his legs felt dangerously weak; the glans of his penis, having healed, felt nonetheless tender; the muscle in his arm throbbed in time to his cold heart. The wind blew against the fabric of his khakis at the knees, which *also* hurt. He was dizzy and trembling and made off to enter the APC when the professor held him back, stamping his feet in the cold, nodding to a second vehicle.

It is not you, Stephen, the professor said, shivering, taking again Stephen's arm. It is not you.

A tiny red dot sailed amid the stars across the sky. Mars? A satellite spy?

So, the professor said, letting go. So now we go home to the dark.

—

That night in the dark he had a dream in which he drove across the United States. He started in Manhattan and took the GW bridge and cut across Pennsylvania by way of the turnpike, then Ohio and Indiana and the Skyway past the abandoned Falstaff brewery: stopping for lunch in Chicago, he kissed R on the cheek, and she introduced him to her husband and his two teenage girls. R said twice during the course of lunch, We have to stop the Cycle of Violence.

She had grown older and more sad, though perhaps this sadness was just him, Stephen, driving into her life this way uninvited. Blasts from the past, when were they ever welcome? In her office hung a framed print of Stephen's which she removed from the wall and now returned to him. The space on the wall where the print had hung, it was described by a rectangle of missing soot—the passage of years. Then he shook hands with R's husband and drove past the refineries in Denver, doing ninety, the flames shooting up into the sky. In Nevada he realized it was odd, driving across the country without having yet encountered any traffic, and sometimes in the mirror he saw the face of a child—wide-eyed, silent, looking out the window. If flying was this, it felt like flying. At times he drove faster than the distance his lights could illuminate. Everything is light, he said.

I need to sleep, he told himself, because I'm going faster than the light.

You need to get there, a voice said to him, one which sounded like his father's. You need to get there. Then you can sleep.

I need to sleep, he said. I really need to crash.

—

Elsewhere in the city that night in the dark somebody turned on the gas. Zoran Jovanović, having awakened from a dream in which he drove a car into another on the Road to Life . . . having awakened from this disturbing dream, he sat up in his cold bed. The air smelled funky, as if it needed washing. Then Zoran reached for his cigarettes, and struck a match, and blew himself to oblivion.

—

Stephen ran to the window. There was a man in flames below him on the street. The man in flames was trying to put the flames out in the snow.

—

Stephen! called a neighbor from below. There's gas! They've turned on the gas!

Plate #32

A woman in the sunlight descending the ramp of a UN relief flight. The woman wears a white shirt with sleeves rolled up exposing her bare arms. She is wearing khaki shorts, socks, and hiking boots. The light shines on her knees, the sun and the wind fill her hair.

Life is preceded by the same silence which follows it. O, says the mouth, opening into the cold. The city was cold and silent, and he walked across the city in the cold night air. The mountaintops were covered with fresh snow. The sky filled with an ambient light. At times he cast a shadow; he listened to the steps of his boots echoing off the buildings—as if the streets and passageways were mere canals through which he was traveling. The voyage, he thought, is always uncertain, and all too brief. Despite its moments of turbulence. The scars of the bomb in the pavement: the concrete rose, the dragon's footprint. Earlier he had listened to a choir rehearse in the basement of a church. The basement had filled with the voices of the choir which now were lost to him. Song, like hope, always takes place in the moment which it fills.

He decided to cut through the Kamerni passageway, beneath the chamber theater, which was complicated by the dark. During the day, in the light, one could see the nuclear-bomb shelter with the vault-like door built in Tito's day to protect the population. So much for planning; so much for telling the people what the people wanted to hear: crawl into a vault, all several hundred thousand of you, and you'll be safe. In the passageway, he held his hand before him, a blind man, and stumbled in the dark.

That you? said a voice.

He stopped. A red light—the laser beam—on the wall beside him, circling. The light blinked, as if to give a signal. He felt his heart race belatedly into his throat.

Summerville's voice laughed in the dark. Over here, Steve.

The light blinked once again.

Stephen said, You are going to kill somebody with that thing. Somebody is going to kill *you*.

Nah, said Summerville's voice. Not me.

Stephen's eyes adjusted to the dark. He said, Maybe you shouldn't be so overconfident.

Summerville was sitting on a crate with his elbows on his knees. The passageway smelled like urine and smoke. Summerville said, lighting up a cigarette, the flame blinding Stephen all over again, What'cha doing, Pardner?

Going home.

Me too, Summerville said. Got lost. He said, holding out to Stephen a bottle which smelled putrid, Want a hit? A belt? Wanna snort?

No, thanks.

Gover something. Govo, nara gova. Something. Summerville said, Beats me. Got it from a peasant for thirty marks.

Really.

Tastes like shit, you ask me.

You okay?

Yeah. Me, I'm okay.

That stuff will make you blind.

Sit in the dark, you don't notice.

They listened to the clatter of a woman's heels clicking on the stones.

Stephen said, Don't turn that thing on. Do not do that. Just keep it in your pocket with your dick.

Lighten up, Steve.

They caught the woman's perfume as she strode by the two of them. From the look of her, she'd been at BB. The club to be, BB was it.

Summerville said to the woman, You speak English?

The woman, leaving behind a cloud of perfume and nicotine, said, lying, No.

Summerville laughed. Too bad, he called to her, laughing. Too bad!

Shit, the woman said. Bye-bye. And then she was gone onto Tito Street.

Stephen said, making up his mind, You can't stay here. It's cold. Curfew is coming. You'll end up in the clink.

I'm too drunk to go anyplace. He said, Besides—

Come on, Stephen said, lifting him up. He took the bottle. Stephen said, emptying the bottle in the passageway, This represents a massive failure of intelligence. You know that?

Summerville said, You think I'm a spook, Steve? A ghost in the night?

No.

That's perceptive of you now, isn't it. Everybody feels bad for the Bosnians. But I'll tell you, it's the Serbs who are fucked for life. I'm not even a journalist. My cousin, he edits a rag in Abilene. I send him letters; he calls me a reporter. Not the *Gazette*, I'll tell you that. Not the *Daily Planet*. Summerville said, I'm fucking nobody.

You are who you are.

You know you can get credentials that will make you anybody you want? Want to be born in Moscow, change your name to Vladimir, I know the guy. How 'bout Argentina. All you need is cash. Cash makes the ghost.

Yeah, Stephen said, catching Summerville's weight. A big fat one.

Watch your tone, Steve.

Then don't breathe on me. Jesus.

They had to cross Tito Street, where the light returned. They had to enter the park. Several times, going uphill, Summerville asked for permission to rest. Twice, he stopped to vomit. Jesus, he said, vomiting. Fuckin' A. This is a big fucking park. Then they'd start again, passing by the gravestones—those turbaned stone penises, glowing in the light. They passed beneath the giant trees.

Too bad that girl didn't speak English, Summerville said. Know what I mean? You know what I like? I like 'em real. Real girls. You go to any strip joint in America all the chicks have fake jugs. I'll tell you this, Steve, the milk of human kindness most certainly does not run through a fake jug.

Gotcha.

He said, It's not supposed to last. That flower of youth thing? He said, You can't make *that* last. That's why it's so fucking precious, don't you see?

I do, actually.

Say, you hear about the tunnel they're digging?

No.

You can see the scar marks in the porno films. You know that? Nah, you don't watch porno films. Too good for that. What is that? Me, I like the real thing. Nice thing about Europe, people still appreciate the real thing. Too bad they don't all speak English. I mean, too bad for them.

Uh-huh.

Thing is, I feel for these Serbs, you know. No matter what happens, they are going to become the fucking piranhas of the world.

Uh-huh.

That's right, Summerville said. Mean-ass fucking fish!

Got ya.

Not like your German pals. Oh no. Kill a few mill Jews, all is fine, we're best pals. The Krauts, they have industry. They have fi-fucking-nance. Technology. What the fuck does Belgrade have?

I don't know.

Exactly. Nobody does. And once the smoke all clears and the dumb-fucking dumbfucks get off the hills and go back home nobody will ever talk to a Serb again.

They had made it to Stephen's street now, which was steep, uphill, and very narrow. Walking with a drunk man, it slowed your progress. Stephen knew he did not have the strength to spare to be doing this. Summerville said, You hear about the tunnel?

No.

Somebody's digging a tunnel, Summerville said. Supposed to go under the airport. Top secret. Digging it right under the fucking UN. Very hush-hush.

Then maybe we shouldn't tell anybody—

Say, speaking of secrets. You like that girl? Really? The girl whose daddy makes elevators?

Elise.

That's the one. She's a looker, that girl. Kraut and all. He said, I was married once. Just like you, you know? Kids.

I didn't know.

Didn't like the life. Didn't like people who thought I was good. Thing about being a dad, your kids think you're good. They think you're better than you are just because you want *them* to be good. Me, I'm not good. I'm bad, Stephen Brings. I felt bad pretending all the time. I like to fuck and run.

There's always rehab.

More times than you can count. Not like you. You are good, even if you are getting some on the sly with Elise. Fräulein Kohlhaus? You should check out the busted elevators in the Holiday Inn. Jesus. Don't take offense. God knows I'd be in there pitching. Your pal, Messinger, he knows the score. He said, Jesus, where the by-golly fuck do you live?

It's not much more.

I like that Anna girl. I'm friendly friendly. But they don't like me!

They don't trust you.

How's that?

You lie.

Well. Just a little bit! Me, I like that Anna girl. Woman, excuse me. I like a girl with natural jugs. Milk of human kindness. I like girls who are already married and have suckled a babe or two. Who know what a man is like. Cuts down on the lying, you see. Not the pretend man. The real stinking snorting beast of a motherfucker.

You're not as bad as you want people to think you are. You're not even as bad as *you* think you are.

Just go dry out, huh?

And stop lying, maybe.

Clean up and wash away the sins of the world? You know that line in church, Christ died for your sins? Christ died for your redemption to save the blah blah world? I always think, *Everybody* died for your sins. *Everybody* died for the sins of the world. That's the fuck of it, you ask me.

They reached the door to Stephen's building. From nowhere came the lonely and metronomic sound of a man chopping wood in the dark. He could smell smoke in the air. The sky was bright.

What'cha looking at?

The light.

Well, Summerville said, swaying. La dee da. Looking at the light. He leaned heavily on a post. Then Summerville turned and put his cold hand on Stephen's shoulder, and said into Stephen's ear, sadly, *Boo*.

—

In the morning Summerville went out into the yard to retch. Ado and Stephen stoked a fire in a metal stove and heated up two cans of Hormel chili. When Summerville returned, he dug into his pockets and fished out a jar of aspirin. He said, looking at the chili, Just like home.

You should eat, Stephen said. After last night.

Stephen's own sides were blistering; his fever had intensified; standing, stirring the pot, he'd felt weak at the knees and wanted to fall back into his sleeping bag and sleep. The blisters on his sides felt like fire. It felt like a dripping hot fire.

Summerville said to Ado, taking a place at the table, You're that guy. You're that guy who does chicks in the dark?

Ado looked at Stephen, who shrugged. Stephen said, It's a good story.

Woman, Ado said. One *woman*. Be sure to tell the whole world. Ado said, At least I do not drink the liquors made from the shit of animals.

What's that?

Let it go, Stephen said.

Summerville said, elbows on the table, It's unbelievable, that story. The Affair of the Dark.

I know, Ado said, nodding. Such things.

Summerville said, So you guys have any condoms around here?

No, Ado said.

No, Stephen said.

Me, Summerville said, I've been using the same for a week. It's getting old, if you know what I mean.

Stephen said to Ado, Anna's flying out today.

Lucky Anna, Ado said.

Okay, Summerville said. Okay. Let's do Favorite Pop Stars.

U2, Ado said.

Stephen?

He set down his spoon. He pushed away his plate. No, he said. I can't do this anymore.

Bread, Ado said. You need some bread. I'll get some today.

David Gates, Summerville said. The Guitar Man! *Mm hmm mm hmm Baby it's hmm the Guitar Man.*

Stephen said, Would you give it a rest? Please?

Summerville said, taking Stephen's plate, You should get on that plane with Anna. You're not looking too spry.

What about you?

I'm working on that girl thing, Summerville said. I'm going to give that girl her freedom.

Oh, good.

Summerville said, For once I'm going to do something right.

Lucky you, Ado said, rising. He took his plate and set it in the sink which had no water. He said, I would like to say good-bye to Anna.

They arranged to meet at the Holiday Inn. Ado said he would bring home some bread. Summerville asked which way Ado was going, and

they went out the door together, regular pals. He listened to their boots thumping down the stairs.

Later, when Jusuf returned from his shift at the Goat Bridge, Stephen heated up some water for tea. Then Jusuf hooked up a radio attached to a car battery and for a while they listened to pop music from Armed Forces Radio piped in from Bonn.

—

They stood outside behind the Holiday Inn with the burned-out Unis Towers standing guard. The ground, everywhere, was littered with broken glass. Following the rules, Anna wore a flak jacket. She kissed Ado good-bye, cheek to cheek, and she placed into his hand a fistful of marks.

No, Ado said. I cannot—

Yes, Anna said. She had tears in her eyes. A Blue Helmet was talking to another Blue Helmet at the APC which was going to deliver her to the airport—a flight to Split, and then to Zagreb. Given the distance she'd spend more time on the ground than in the air.

Ado said to Stephen, I am going inside. I will get us a drink.

Anna said, wiping the tears from her eyes, This is stupid. I'll see you in a couple weeks, right?

Right, Stephen said. He was fatigued from the walk over. His right side especially ached and he felt as if he'd been branded with an iron. He was dizzy and hot.

I'm going to go to the Esplanade, Anna said. I'm going to burn my clothes and take a bath and walk around in one of those cotton robes and order salmon! Meet me at the Esplanade, Stephen. Me and Elise. Okay?

Okay.

Say it again, she said, shivering in the cold. Promise. Say okay, Anna. I'll meet you at the Esplanade.

He saw a shadow pass, a bird's. Her hair was tied up. The wind kicked up and tossed her bangs. She wiped her eyes and was smiling now, and she said, Well, say good-bye for me, will you—

And as he reached to embrace her, he heard the crack, the sonic boom of the round passing by his ear, while Anna's face exploded.

—

He wiped the blood from his eyes. He knelt on the ground, screaming, cradling the back of her head in his hands.

The blood stayed in his eyes, blurring his vision. It was hot on his fingers, the blood, and he pulled Anna's body behind a dumpster reeking of shit. The Blue Helmets at the APC arrived, automatic weapons in tow. There was a cab, nearby behind an overturned bus, and they waved the cab down. They put Anna in the cab and Stephen climbed inside and held her. It was only a few hundred yards to the Military Hospital. At the hospital he was told she would not die. Her lower jaw was missing, as were several of her teeth. She would not die so long as she did not stay. She needed, said somebody with blood on her clothes, to be stabilized.

He stayed with her the night. In the night she slept courtesy of humanitarian morphine which had arrived on the incoming flight she was to have departed on. In the morning Ado brought him bread. They used a phone set up at the Holiday Inn to contact Elise and Anna's husband. Ado had made arrangements with people to have an APC pick her up at the hospital. The APC picked her up, and Stephen took the ride with her to the airport. There was a film crew arriving and two others departing. The departing crews helped Stephen get Anna on the plane. Across the tarmac a handful of red and green tracers fired across the darkening sky.

Plate #36

A naked man—tangled hair, a scar across the muscle of his arm—facing the camera, holding in his outstretched hand a photograph. The man holds the photograph with his thumb and forefinger. The photograph is obviously the size of this photograph. In the photograph the man is holding there is the figure of a small boy. The boy is striding across a plaza: behind him, a woman, her head cocked, admiring the architecture of St. Peter's mid-stride. In the back-

ground, opposite that woman, three young priests in black cassocks stroll across the plaza. They are laughing in the sun.

Ado met him at the Holiday Inn. Stephen said, I hate this fucking place.

Go.

Stephen said, looking up, I'm sorry. It's not fair. I know I can go.

Ado said, Stephen, we all can go. The question is *where* we go.

Thank you, Stephen said. For before.

She did a story about my friends, you know that? Came to the trenches and then she sent my photographs to her magazine in Spain. *My* photographs. I am a photographer now in Spain. Someday maybe I will be like you.

—

They had more drinks despite the stiffened blood on Stephen's clothes. The sky was too bright to walk safely in. Summerville arrived by way of an armored Land Rover with his girl on his sleeve. She had pressed clothes. A miraculously clean white cotton shirt. She was a beauty—Balkan features at their best: a little Turk, a little Austrian, throw in a pinch of, what, Greek? Chinese? Why were the most beautiful people always of mixed ethnicity? There was a lesson there, a moral. There was an understanding which could grow common.

No more drinks, he told himself. Then again, the drinks quenched the fire burning at his sides.

Summerville said, Steve. I'm sorry. God, I'm sorry. Is she going to be okay?

I guess.

Summerville said, Those things I said, you know. I was cocked, you know? I didn't mean any of those things I said.

It's done, Stephen said. Let it go. Really.

—

He ate a fistful of bread. As the afternoon began to darken, as he and Ado were making ready for the walk home, two soldiers came running in through the back door. They had been looking for Ado.

Having found him, they spoke urgently.

Ado said, rising, Stephen, I must go.

Where?

To the river.

Why?

Somebody wants to talk to me. War profiteer. He insists on talking to me. It's probably nothing. A jokester. A funny guy. But the commander says I must come. My commander.

They had to make it across the street to the museum, which was dangerous in the light. We do this at the same time, Ado called. Okay? At the same time!

Okay.

Okay.

They bolted across the street, across the median and the tram tracks, and then the other half of the street. Once they reached the safety of the other side there was a sense of anticlimax. As if all that effort—the running, the panic—had been for naught. They hit a trench and made their way beneath the bridge to the river. There were two soldiers, different soldiers, with a wireless radio. Everybody had been waiting. The commander appeared and tapped his watch.

The commander spoke to the radio, announcing Ado's arrival. Across the river the buildings facing the river were blasted into ruin. Guttled by fire. By looters. Nothing inside but men behind sandbags with automatic rifles standing guard. Snipers, their barrels poking through spaces meant for bricks.

Ado spoke into the radio. There came shouting from the other side.

Ado shouted back.

More shouting.

Fuck, Ado said to Stephen, pointing to the handset. This fucking guy.

Then, more shouting, and Ado slammed down the radio. He was trembling. He rubbed his eye with a fist. He swung his arms and hugged himself in the cold.

What?

He asked me if I was Ado.

And?

I said I was Ado. He asked me if I was the same Ado who is the Ado who fucked his wife.

Stephen looked at his friend. He felt a chill in his heart. He said, feeling his chilled heart quicken, Really?

I told him to go fuck himself.

Shots fired on the other side of the river. A man in a fourth-floor window stood in the window and fired his weapon into the air.

Then another voice shouting Ado's name across the river.

Ado! Hey Ado!

And a woman's body in a green dress thrown over the side of the building. There was a telephone cord wrapped beneath her armpits; there was blood dripping from beneath her dress down her legs to her bare feet. She swung in the cold against the ruined building. She was alive.

And then there was another voice, screaming. Ado's.

Inside the tunnel, one of the soldiers beside Stephen raised his rifle and aimed across the river and fired at the woman. He missed the first time. The second time, he hit her shoulder, and she swung slowly around.

Then another cursed and shoved the soldier aside, aimed his rifle, and shot her in the head.

So that she died.

—

Later that night Stephen said, Was that her? Was it her?

Ado said, drunk and in tears, I don't know.

Ado said, his hands shaking, Maybe.

—

Ado said, wiping his eyes, I think so. I think it must be so.