



ULYSSES' SHELTER 3

Call announcement: July 29, 2022

Submission deadline: August 29, 2022

What is it about?

THE ULYSSES' SHELTER: BUILDING LITERARY RESIDENCIES NETWORK is the third stage of a project co-funded by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) under the Creative Europe programme 2021-2027. The network of literary residencies has now been extended to seven European countries: Croatia, Slovenia, Greece, Serbia, Malta, Spain, and the Czech Republic and collaborates with many institutions and NGOs in each participating country.

This special call refers exclusively to **the emerging screenwriters in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia** who apply for **one residency in October 2022 on the island of Mallorca**, Spain, under the curatorship of Mallorca Film Commission, partner on the “Ulysses’ Shelter” project.

The residency programme addresses the international dimension as its priority by giving the young, emerging screenwriters to work, perform and present themselves at Mallorca. The residency will be accompanied by a rich supporting programme consisting of film and literature-related activities aimed at specific (local) target groups, such as taking part in the screenwriting workshop and visiting and taking part in the activities of the [Evolution Mallorca International Film Festival](#).

Where is it?

Mallorca, Spain: October 2022

How long are the residencies?



3 weeks

Who is eligible to apply?

- Applicants must be emerging screenwriters
- Applicants must have at least one, and not more than three screenplays made into a short or longer film, of whichever genre
- Applicants must be Croatian, Serbian or Slovenian citizens
- Applicants must have advanced knowledge of English
- Applicants must be able to travel to Spain in October 2022
- Applicants must be open to collaborating and working with other artists and partners
- Applicants must write an entry for the ULYSSES' SHELTER website Tovar.hr during the residency
- Applicants should be interested in fostering a relationship with the local audience

NOTE: To be considered for the residency programme applicants must meet all eligibility criteria.

What is offered?

- **Two (2) residencies** at Mallorca in October 2022
 - A. One residency is for screenwriters who are already working on an adaptation of a literary work into a screenplay: the applicant for this residency has to write which literary work they are adapting into a screenplay and add a short synopsis (up to 300 words). The selected screenwriter will participate in the programme 'Islands of Fiction'. It will include a writers' summit and the Evolution Mallorca International Film Festival.
 - B. One residency is for screenwriters who will adapt Robert Graves's story 'A Toast to Ava Gardner' (the original story is attached to this Call) to a film treatment in



the English language of 10-15 pages in length for a long feature film (of approximately 90 minutes in length). For this residency, the applicant has to send a logline (one to two sentences) and a synopsis/expose (1000-2000 words) in the English language for the story 'A Toast to Ava Gardner'. The selected screenwriter will participate in the programme 'Islands of Fiction'. It will include a writers' summit and the Evolution Mallorca International Film Festival. Also, the selected screenwriter will have the opportunity to present the work to producers' and investors' forums, as well as the support of the local community and cultural scene since Robert Graves's life and literature are considered a part of the Mallorca cultural heritage.

- An introduction session, artist talk or other events/workshops
- Support for the residents
- Promoting residents on the ULYSSES' SHELTER social media accounts, newsletter, and website Tovar.hr, as well as on all partners' social media accounts, newsletters, and websites
- Networking possibilities and international visibility
- Covered accommodation and travel expenses (economy class)
- Fee (400 EUR gross including all taxes) and Subsistence (gross 300)
- A fantastic opportunity for an ambitious emerging screenwriter to benefit from a unique experience which can strengthen their career, to create a work, do the necessary research, as well as experiment and take on a new direction in their writing.

The same applicant can apply to both programmes, but he/she/they can be awarded only with one residency.

What are the submission requirements?

- Application must be **submitted in English**
- Application must be sent to ulysses@sandorf.hr by **August 29, 2022**



If applying for:

A. For the residency programme including the work on the film adaptation of Robert Graves's story 'A Toast for Ava Gardner':

1. CV or Resume (in English, no longer than one page)
2. Motivational letter that includes an explanation of why the applicant wants to visit the screenwriting residence (in English, no longer than one page)
3. Bibliography (list of screenplays and other works in English)
4. A logline (one to two sentences) and a synopsis/expose (1000-2000 words) for the story 'A Toast to Ava Gardner' (in English)
5. One recommendation letter (Optional)

B. For the residency programme including the work on a film adaptation of any literary work for film:

1. CV or Resume (in English, no longer than one page)
2. Motivational letter that includes an explanation of why the applicant wants to visit the screenwriting residence (in English, no longer than one page)
3. Bibliography (list of screenplays and other works in English)
4. The applicant has to name the literary work they are adapting into a screenplay and add a short synopsis (up to 500 words)
5. One recommendation letter (Optional)

For any further questions about the open call, you can contact ulysses@sandorf.hr.

When will the results be published?

The International Selection Committee, consisting of members from all the participating countries in this Call (Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Spain) will suggest **two (2) applicants from either Croatia, Serbia or Slovenia** to participate in the residency programmes during 2022.



The results will be announced on the project's and partners' websites and social media by **September 15, 2022**. The selected applicants will also receive a direct email.

You can find more on partners and their work here: [DSP](#), [KROKODIL](#), [MFC](#), [SANDORF](#).

GDPR

By submitting the Application to this Open Call, you give your consent for the information provided in the Application to be held on computer or other relevant filing systems and to be shared with other accredited organisations or persons in accordance with the GDPR 2018.

Privacy Notice

We will at all times process and store personal data in line with relevant legislation. The information provided will be used exclusively for the selection process. The names and short bios of the selected candidates will be made public.

A TOAST TO AVA GARDNER

IN Spain, a married woman keeps her maiden name, but tacks on her husband's after a *de*. Thus, on marrying Wifredo Las Rocas, our Majorcan friend Rosa, born an Espinosa, became Rosa Espinosa de Las Rocas – a very happy combination. It means 'Lady Thorny Rose from the Rocks'. Rosa was much luckier than her maternal cousin Dolores Fuertes, who thoughtlessly married a lawyer named Tomás Barriga, and is now Dolores Fuertes de Barriga, or 'Violent Pains of the Stomach'. My wife and I first met Rosa at a Palma store. We were complaining bitterly, in English, of an age-old Majorcan superstition that the sun shines brightly throughout the year, and that consequently no trouble about drying clothes can ever imaginably arise. Majorcans provide no airing-closets in even their grandest houses, and scorn that old-fashioned English contrivance, the nursery towel-horse, which allows harassed mothers to keep abreast of their children's washing during long rainy spells. We had by now visited every furniture shop in Palma, searching for one, but been greeted only by shrugs and smiles.

Then Rosa piped up at my elbow, in beautiful clear English, with hardly a trace of a Spanish accent: 'Excuse me! I could not help overhearing your conversation. My husband Wifredo Las Rocas will, I am sure, be delighted to make you a towel-horse. He knows all about towel-horses. My dear old English nurse, the late Nanny Parker, brought a towel-horse with her when she came to us from the British Embassy at Madrid; but I'm afraid my elder sister in Saragossa has it now. If you care to come along with me ...'

Wifredo and his partner, Anibal Tulipán, worked in a large furniture factory on the outskirts of Palma. Though originally they owned fifty per cent each of the factory shares, the building got badly damaged by fire; so the Central Bank rebuilt and restocked it for them at the price of a controlling interest. Wifredo and Anibal were, in fact, reduced to mere employees of the Bank, subject to dismissal if they failed to show a profit – an un-

comfortable position in times as difficult as those, for men so proud.

Anibal looked after supplies and sales; Wifredo, after design, production and personnel. They had been brothers-in-law, but the death of Wifredo's sister from an overdose of sleeping-pills, taken in protest against Anibal's too serious liaison with a dentist's receptionist, snapped the family tie; and if ever two men were temperamentally more unsuited to become partners, these were they. Anibal, who loved all things German, especially metaphysics, music and sauerkraut, closely resembled Goering in appearance, and had a truly Wagnerian ill-temper; often, when he felt cross, he would emulate Adolf Hitler by throwing himself on the floor and biting the carpet. Until the war ended victoriously for the Allies, Wifredo – tall, fair, and rangy – was careful to conceal his strongly anglophile tendencies. These had been excited some years previously when he first fell in love with Rosa and came under the posthumous spell of the celebrated Nanny Parker. Nanny Parker, on entering the Espinosa household, had brought with her a bound series of the *Illustrated London News*, dating from 1906 to 1925, and kept adding a fresh one every year. In 1936, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and Nanny Parker's death – under a fast car driven by a party of non-intervening Italian airmen, remember? – closed the series. But a constant study of these volumes had made Wifredo an expert in all things English for the thirty years that they covered.

When Rosa introduced us to Wifredo, and asked whether he could supply a nursery towel-horse, he agreed with enthusiasm, seeing in us a helpful source of information about all that had happened to the British race since the death of George V. The outcome was an almost breathtaking towel-horse, stout and capacious as a church, in solid mahogany, with fluted rails and brass knobs – and that at a period when mahogany was practically unobtainable on the island. Wifredo charged us only a nominal sum for this masterpiece, assuring us that the pleasure was entirely his.

Then Anibal heard about the towel-horse from the factory foreman, flew into one of his infernal rages, called Wifredo all sorts of gross names, and accused him of cheating the business,

wasting valuable materials, delaying the execution of other orders, and allying himself with certain ancient and inveterate enemies of Spain. He even threatened to bring the ridiculous towel-horse to the notice of the Central Bank. Wifredo replied passionately that Great Britain was Spain's best customer and, after Spain, the noblest country in Europe. He also commented on Anibal's Teutonic lack of taste, humour and imagination, adding that he proposed to start immediate production, though on a rather less expensive model than the prototype, of no less than one hundred 'Nanniparkér' nursery towel-horses. Then followed some very pointed remarks, such as: 'The priest must have had a bad cold when he christened you "Anibal"'. He surely meant "Animal". You are indeed a fat, brutish, sophisticated, Germanic beast, save for whose degraded adventures in the lowest haunts of Santa Catalina, my poor sister would still be alive today!

A rough-house ensued. Wifredo was the stronger of the two; but at some stage or other of the Civil War, Anibal had attended a hard course in street-fighting, and learned all sorts of clever tricks from his SS volunteer-instructors. Both combatants were seriously injured.

The factory had not been running too well even before this. Worn-out but irreplaceable machinery; power cuts; timber shortages; new national fiestas commemorating the triumph of the Forces of Light, on each of which the management was obliged to reward the workmen with double pay for taking a patriotic vacation; trouble with the syndicates; decrees forbidding the dismissal of a single workman however inefficient, dishonest or redundant – all this had been bad enough; but a complete breach between the partners brought matters to a crisis. Wifredo and Anibal now obstinately pursued their own unco-ordinated policies: Wifredo designing his furniture in a yet more provocative English style, Anibal starving him of suitable timber and making no attempt to sell whatever he might manage to make.

Realizing that the factory would soon go bankrupt unless someone intervened decisively, Rosa did so. She had the good sense to phone a certain Cathedral Canon: elder brother and

confessor of the man who stood with a whip above these warring partners – the Central Bank Director himself. After explaining her predicament, Rosa begged the Canon to impose peace by whatever means he thought best, short of ruining both households. 'Very reverend Father,' she said, 'although it is true that Don Anibal began this disgraceful quarrel by calling Wifredo gross names which no man of honour could accept, I must admit that Wifredo's reply did nothing to ameliorate the situation. It is equally true that Don Anibal struck the first blow; yet Wifredo failed to turn the other cheek. Now, however, he repents of his un-Catholic attitude. It is no joke that every day, on going to the factory, he must carefully remove his wrist-watch and place it on a shelf, together with his spare reading glasses, for fear that they may both be splintered in a fresh hand-to-hand encounter.'

The Canon listened with encouraging snorts, and finally gave his opinion. 'My daughter,' he said, 'I can see only one way out of the trouble which you have so clearly presented. It is that you and Don Anibal's wife must form a realistic alliance for peace. Until your husbands can be persuaded to clasp hands in friendship, you must insist, at least, on their jointly asking the Bank to appoint a permanent arbiter who shall settle all disputes between them. Such an arrangement should involve no great expense: some retired military man of rectitude and discretion will, I have no doubt, be pleased to undertake the task. Not for a monetary remuneration but, let us say, for a daily allowance of refreshments. Thereafter, your two husbands need not meet except in this arbiter's presence; though the Bank will of course desire them to accept all his decisions without question – as football players accept those of the umpire, on pain of being ordered off the field. If you can answer for your husband's agreement, let us arrange a meeting between yourself and Don Anibal's wife at my house tomorrow; there, with God's help, all will be decently settled.'

The name of Anibal's new wife, the pretty ex-dental receptionist, was Gracia Joncosa de Tulipán. (Another floral combination of names: 'Reedy Grace of a Tulip'.) Gracia was a tough girl and also, like Anibal, stubbornly anti-clerical. She

attended the meeting, but warned the Canon straight out that, since the initiative had clearly come from Rosa, Anibal would reject the plan of arbitration as energetically as if it had been proposed by the Kremlin itself.

This brought a frown to the Canon's roseate face. Yet he refrained from dredging up Gracia's reprehensible past, and merely begged her to imitate Rosa's truly Catholic spirit. 'Blessed are the peacemakers' he intoned, wagging a fat finger.

'Blessed are they indeed!' Gracia echoed, impressed against her will by the huge, cigar-scented study: its dark, forbidding bookcases, its dark, forbidding pictures of saints being flayed alive, being grilled over hot coals, or merely kneeling in ecstasy on a mountain crag surrounded by winged demons. 'But my Anibal,' she went on, 'will at once convince himself that such an arbiter was chosen by connivance between yourself and Don Wifredo as a means of ousting him from his post.'

The Canon replied smoothly: 'Dear daughter, your hot-tempered husband must have no fear. Assure him that I, a Canon of Palma Cathedral, solemnly guarantee to find an arbiter of such absolute rectitude and insight that he might well be a descendant of King Solomon himself. If, however, your husband refuses my assurances, I shall feel that the Church has been spurned, as well as the Bank, and will inform my brother of his obduracy.'

Gracia saw the red light. She cried: 'No, no, most reverend Father! Pray do not talk in that sense! Anibal is, at bottom, a peace-loving man, and entertains the highest esteem both for yourself and for your distinguished brother. Let me try to make him see reason.'

'You will do well to try, my daughter,' the Canon answered grimly; and so the interview ended.

Anibal threw another fit when Gracia delivered the Canon's message. 'It is a hold-up!' he is reported as exclaiming. 'Must I indeed hand over my wallet to these shameless gangsters with a truly Catholic smile?'

Yet there was no way out when the Bank Director offered as a possible arbiter the retired and much-decorated Colonel whom I shall call Don Hilario Tortugas. During the Rif War he had

been shot on three separate occasions, through calf, knee and shoulder, finally losing all the fingers of his left hand in performing a deed of such terrific valour that it earned him the Grand Cross of San Fernando. For Anibal to challenge the integrity of so outstanding a hero would have made him ridiculous. Moreover, Don Hilario, bored by inactivity, had readily accepted the task, asking a daily honorarium no larger than two cups of coffee, a salami sandwich, a bottle of beer, and a Canary Islands cigar. The coffee must be scalding hot; that was his one stipulation.

The arrangement worked well enough. True, Don Hilario could claim only the most meagre knowledge of how a factory was run – an educational fault displayed in Spanish history by a long sequence of gallant, honourable, high-ranking Army officers who have found themselves charged with their country's economic fate. Nevertheless, experience in the command of men had sharpened his natural intuition as to whether people were telling him lies, truths, or half-truths; and, when disputes arose on technical points he decided them by a careful study of the partners' voices, faces, and demeanour, rather than of the documents laid before him. Thus he settled the vexed question of the 'Nanniparkér' towel-horses by arguing that though Wifredo would doubtless turn out a superbly professional product, if given the required materials, Anibal's lack of confidence in these novelties suggested the wisdom of postponing their manufacture. He also ruled: 'The factory should, however, bear the expense of creating the prototype, and of selling it at a minimal price to an influential foreign family by way of justifiable propaganda.'

Don Hilario's daily appearance at the factory did much to restore the morale of the workmen. They used to boast in the cafés: 'We have the famous Colonel Tortugas on our payroll – he who once ran his sword through seventeen Cabyls, one after the other, though wounded in a score of places. There's a fighter for you!' Yet Anibal found it difficult to swallow his resentment: 'Only imagine! That ancient military relic set over me as supervisor and spy!' He continued to make things as difficult as he could for Wifredo, by misrepresenting both the supply

situation and the sales prospects; at the same time complaining to Don Hilario that Wifredo spoiled the workmen and showed an utter ignorance of modern furniture trends.

On Rosa's advice, Wifredo kept cool and behaved as Englishly as possible, in the hope of provoking Anibal to over-reach himself by some crude act that could not escape official censure. But he was secretly worried by Anibal's attempts at ingratiating himself with Don Hilario. For instance, when he gave Don Hilario a box of a hundred *Romeo y Julieta* cigars on his Name Day. Don Hilario, needless to record, firmly declined the gift, swearing that much as he enjoyed a good smoke, he could never allow himself to deviate one hair's breadth from his more than Draconian code, and must avoid even the suspicion of venality. Nevertheless, Wifredo saw him eye the box with badly disguised wistfulness.

From time to time, Wifredo offered Don Hilario a lift back to the centre of town in his boat-shaped 1922 Renault two-seater – Majorca is where good cars go to die, and they take unconscionably long about it – but Don Hilario always insisted on walking, even on wet days when his wounds troubled him. He would accept no more and no less than the daily two cups of sweet, scalding coffee, the Canary Islands cigar, the salami sandwich, and the bottle of beer stipulated in the contract. Once only, his conscience permitted him to borrow from Wifredo a couple of cigarette papers with which to roll his own cigarettes; but paid them back the very next day.

So much for the situation at the factory. Now for that of the 'influential foreign family'. We had an unexpected visit from Ava Gardner, a close friend of our Maryland friend Betty Sicre. Betty suggested that Ava should take a short holiday from the exhausting social life of Madrid to visit soporific and truly rural Majorca. There she could catch up on sleep, study Spanish grammar, swim daily, and consult me about how to finish her random education by a crash-course in English poetry. We had met Ava at Betty's house a few months before and found her great fun; afterwards she sent us a huge bouquet of red roses, an attention which my wife and I appreciated all the more because,

as we already knew, Ava is not one to distribute idle favours. She was feeling lonely at this time, her elder sister having just gone back to the States, and would borrow each of Betty's four small sons in turn to keep her company at night. 'The other boys at the American School will think me a sissy,' the youngest but one had tearfully complained, 'if they find out that I sleep twice a week with Ava!'

At Palma's Son Bonet airport, she came rushing towards us across the tarmac: a startled deer, pursued by a hungry-looking wolf. When the wolf saw her suddenly engulfed in our large family – the children had played truant from school by telling their monks and nuns that an aunt was arriving from London – he slunk off slavering. But word flew from end to end of the airport that the famous Ava Gardner had finally come to Majorca; and crowds went milling around in search of the red carpet, the bouquets, and the press photographers. Meanwhile, we hurried Ava into our Land-Rover, and hauled her baggage off the airline truck. One film-struck enthusiast saw a woman who closely resembled his idol bandying nonsense with our children in the dusty car; he stopped, narrowed his eyes, and passed on – it could not, of course, be she. We made a clean getaway.

Ava explained that there had been two really troublesome Spanish wolves aboard the plane. The first, seated across the gangway, kept addressing her in an experimental sort of Italian, until she slammed shut the *Oxford Book of English Verse* (supplied by Betty for the poetry course) and said: 'If you *must* interrupt my reading, why don't you at least talk your own language?'

The wolf answered gallantly: 'Signorina, I decided to give myself the honour of employing your own musical tongue.'

Ava looked puzzled. 'You must have got things mixed,' she said. 'I happen to have married a Sicilian, but my Italian is even worse than yours.'

The wolf leered at her craftily. 'Do not think to deceive me! All our papers assure us that you are a true daughter of Naples.'

'Then they're lying. I was born and raised in North Carolina.'

A horrid doubt overtook the wolf. 'Then I am mistaken? You are *not* Sofia Loren?'

With a cry of indignation Ava leaped up and took refuge in a vacant seat forward, but found Wolf No. 2 waiting there to pounce. So she read the *Oxford Book of English Verse* in the washroom, from which she emerged when the plane had landed; only to find the wolf waiting for her with amorous yelps at the foot of the landing-steps. Female film stars, it seems, are bound by a strict code: they must never insult journalists or press photographers, never refuse to sign autographs (unless desperately pressed for time), and never either slug wolves with overnight bags or poke out their eyes with parasols.

Ava's plans for improving her Spanish grammar and catching up on sleep did not come to much. There are too many places in Palma where gipsies strum at guitars and dance *flamenco* all night; and Ava can never resist *flamenco*. Besides, her first visit to Majorca attracted such immense attention that she was forced to change hotels four times in five days; but it fascinated us to bask for a while in the spotlight of her glory. Though far preferring, she said, a meal of shepherd's pie or sausage-and-mash at our Palma flat, she gallantly took us out once or twice to the lush restaurants.

After dinner, in one of these, she asked me for her poetry lesson, and I told her that so few poems were worth reading, and so many were wrongly supposed to be worth reading, that she had better make sure she would not waste her time by this poetry course. Washing for gold could be very dull work. Then, changing the metaphor, I said that a clear, personal voice was better than all the technical skill and daring experimentation in the world — really good poetry always makes plain, immediate, personal sense, is never dull, and goes on making better sense the oftener one reads it. 'Poems are like people,' I said. 'There are not many authentic ones around.'

Questioned about the monstrous legendary self which towers above her, Ava told us that she does everything possible to get out from under, though the publicity-boys and the Press are always trying to clamp it even more tightly on her shoulders. Also, that she has never outgrown her early Hard-Shell Baptist conditioning on that North Carolina tobacco farm, with the eye of a wonderful father always on her; and still feels uncomfortably moral in most film-studios; it isn't what she does that has

created her sultry reputation, but what she says. Sometimes she just can't control her tongue.

A photographer suddenly let off a flash-bulb at us, and Ava flashed back at him almost as startlingly in the fiercest language. But when he apologized at once, she half forgave him. The rest of our talk was punctuated by the waiter's handing a succession of autograph-books to Ava for signature; she obliged automatically with a fixed, sunny smile, not losing the thread of our conversation until one autograph-hunter, an over-stuffed sofa of a woman, plumped herself down next to me, leant across me, and said: 'Oh, dear Miss Gardner, I have seen *every single one* of your films! Now I wonder whether you would be so good as to give me your *personal* autograph for my seven-year-old grandchild. Her name is Wendy Solgotch Wallinger.'

Ava frowned. 'Is the Solgotch Wallinger strictly necessary?' she asked. 'And what am I supposed to write on?'

'Oh, I thought film stars always supply the paper!'

Ava frowned more deeply. Her comments on that paper shortage had better stay off record. They were quite enough to account for her sultry reputation. Nevertheless, loth to infringe the code further, she tore a corner off the menu, scribbled 'Wendy, with best wishes from Ava Gardner,' and waved Mrs Wallinger away with it.

Having found my *Collected Poems* at our apartment, Ava asked which of them to read first. This question embarrassed me, after what I had already told her. However, there was one, I said, which she might perhaps like to take personally; though it had been written long before we met. I marked the page for study when she went to bed that night — if she ever did.

She speaks always in her own voice
Even to strangers . . .

and:

She is wild and innocent, pledged to love
Through all disaster . . .

That was Ava to the life.

Meanwhile, at the furniture factory, Anibal had been consistently difficult. He accused Wifredo to Don Hilario of stirring up

the workmen and alleging that the timber he supplied was so green, warped and knotted that it would serve only for making rustic seats and the like. Confronted with this charge, Wilfredo informed Don Hilario that he had made a factual statement, not a complaint: indeed, far from stirring the workmen up, he had encouraged them to hope that something at least could be made from the eccentric lumps of raw tree which were all that his partner could now buy.

When Don Hilario looked at him quizzically, Wifredo went to the workshop and returned with a particularly unattractive section of local pine, consisting almost wholly of large knots. He asked: 'Am I seriously expected to fulfil a municipal order for eighty class-room desks with timber of this quality? And what about my saw-blades?'

Don Hilario eyed the exhibit and ventured cautiously: 'Well, you might hammer out these knots and use the holes for securing the scholars' ink-wells; but I shall make it plain to Don Anibal that if you were to take this course, there would undoubtedly be many times more ink-wells than scholars.'

Seven o'clock struck, and Wifredo exclaimed: 'Pardon me, Don Hilario! The workmen have gone off, and so has my partner. I must lock up without delay. Since I am aware that any invitation to ride home in my battered car will be declined, let me wish you a respectful good night. There is a certain haste; my English friends, the intellectual Graves family, are honouring my house with a visit, and hope to bring Miss Ava Gardner.'

Don Hilario caught his breath and clutched at Wifredo's sleeve. 'Do you mean the veritable Ava Gardner?' he asked slowly. 'She . . . is here, in Majorca?'

'Yes, the one inimitable Ava,' Wifredo answered easily. 'The Señores Graves assure me that she is as gracious and intelligent as she is beautiful.'

'"Gracious and intelligent" indeed! "Gracious and intelligent" is petty praise! For me, Ava Gardner is the greatest artist alive!'

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Ava did not, as it happened, come to Wifredo's with us that evening. She had made a trip to the fine sandy beach of Camp de Mar; but, the weather being bitterly cold – it was just before the fearful February freeze-up of 1956 – she alone was hardy enough to swim. Several carloads of admirers stood watching, and a roar of admiration rose as she tripped down the hotel steps in her bright Italian bathing costume and dived into the tempestuous waves. Yet no would-be life-saver, we were told, jumped in after her; if only because Spaniards, though incurably romantic, are not altogether Quixotic. Later, Ava was whisked on to the Binisalem vineyards, where she spent so agreeable a time sampling our sole Majorcan vintage wine that we did not catch up with her again until midnight.

The next morning, Don Hilario drew Wifredo aside and said urgently: 'Friend, tell me about her!'

Hating to disappoint the Colonel, Wifredo answered: 'A phenomenon! So gentle, so beautiful, so humorous.'

Don Hilario sighed. 'Ah, Don Wifredo, your experience fills me with the greenest envy!' He added in a sudden rush: 'I have never, you know, accepted a gift or a favour from you, ever since I came to this factory. Not a cigarette, not a match, not a ride in your crazy automobile! However, I will say that, unlike your boorish partner, you always show the utmost consideration for my feelings in this respect, never making any move which might be open to malicious misinterpretation; and for that I honour you. Indeed, I honour you so highly, and so commend your correctness, that I feel emboldened to make a surprising request: one that you will, I am sure, recognize as being on a quite different level from the mundane round of industry in the ambience of which we daily meet. Don Wifredo, I am a lonely old man; all winter long my wounds ache; I have few pleasures. Well . . . to be short, if you could, by any plea, prevail on your distinguished English friends to approach Miss Gardner . . .'

Wifredo answered: 'Not another word, Don Hilario! And if anyone else in all Palma were to ask this of me – even the Director of the Central Bank, upon whose good will my liveli-

hood depends – I should say: "Impossible!" But when the most courageous soldier of our race makes such a request, how dare I rebuff him? I trust that the matter can be arranged before Miss Gardner leaves the island early this afternoon.'

A few minutes later our phone rang. 'Robert,' Wifredo said excitedly, 'will you meet me at noon in the Café Mecca on a matter of the gravest importance? I cannot explain over the telephone.'

To my relief, Ava had read the marked poem and decided to accept it as a personal tribute; in fact, begged me to copy it out in long-hand and sign it for her.

'With great pleasure,' I said, 'if you'll do a trade. Ava, I want a print of your most supremely glamorous photograph, inscribed: "To the heroic Colonel Don Hilario Tortugas y Postres, with the heartfelt admiration of Ava Gardner." Let me write it down for you.'

'Is "heartfelt admiration" strictly necessary?'

'It's essential!'

I wrote out the poem for Ava in a fair hand, and soon after she had flown back to Madrid (with four crates of Binisalem wine among her luggage) a splendidly large signed photograph arrived, duly inscribed for the Colonel: a portrait, I was half-glad to see, of her exotic legend rather than of herself.

Rosa and Wifredo invited us to the most English dinner we had eaten in years: mulligatawny soup; roast beef with roast potatoes, Yorkshire pudding, a boiled cabbage; apple dumplings with cream; and (as Edward Lear has put it) 'no end of Stilton cheese'. Wifredo even produced a bottle of vintage port – how he got hold of either the Stilton or the port, beats me – and solemnly toasted Ava Gardner.

We all drank.

Then, in a voice thick with emotion, he announced: 'Dear friends, in consequence of Don Hilario's report to the Bank, delivered two days ago, I now have sole charge of the factory, being answerable to the Bank Director alone. Anibal has been bought out and dismissed; and I am empowered not only to

arrange my own timber supplies, but to choose a new sales manager!'

We congratulated him riotously.

'That is not all,' he went on. 'The "Nanniparkér" Nursery Towel-horse now goes into immediate production, as well as a similar contrivance, suggested by dear Rosa, for hoisting wet linen to the kitchen ceiling by means of a cord and pulley. It will equally serve, in better weather, for hams, sausages, strings of red peppers, and ropes of onions. How original, and how very useful! I propose to name it "The Ava Gardner Drying Rack". Each example will bear a beautiful coloured miniature of my benefactress, taken from the authentic photograph of her plunge into the sea at Camp de Mar. Do you consider that I need write to ask her permission?'

'She would consider it strictly unnecessary,' I answered, sipping my port, cracking my walnuts, and thinking: 'Dear Ava!'

U ŠPANJOLSKOJ žena nakon udaje zadržava djevojačko prezime, piše ga ispred muževljeva, ali se između dodaje *de*. Tako je naša prijateljica s Mallorce, Rosa Espinosa, nakon što se udala za Wifreda Las Rocasa, postala Rosa Espinosa de Las Rocas – jedna vrlo sretna kombinacija. Jer, to prevedeno sa španjolskog znači “Gospa trnovite ruže od stijene”. Rosa je bila puno sretnija od svoje sestrične po majčinoj strasni, Dolores Fuertes koja se, ništa ne misleći, udala za odvjetnika Tomása Barrigu, pa se sada zove Dolores Fuertes de Barriga, ili “Neobuzdana bol u trbuhu”. Moja žena i ja smo upoznali Rosu u nekoj trgovini u Palmi, dok smo na engleskom razgovarali o davnašnjoj majorčanskoj predrasudi, da na ovom otoku sunce sja cijelu godinu, tako da nitko nikad nema problema sa sušenjem opranog rublja. Shodno tome, nitko na Mallorci, čak ni u najraskošnijim kućama, nema prostoriju za sušenje rublja, u onom smislu u kojem u Engleskoj majke u takve prostorije sklanjaju rasklopive sušilice i po njima vješaju tek oprano rublje svoje djece tijekom dugih kišnih razdoblja. Takvu sušilicu sada smo tražili po svim trgovinama namještajem po Palmi, ali nailazili smo samo na bespomoćne osmijehe i slijeganje ramenima.

Tada me Rosa uhvatila za ruku i obratila nam se na tečnom engleskom, s gotovo neprimjetnim španjolskim nagla-

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skom. “Oprostite, ali nisam mogla prečuti ono o čemu razgovarate. Moj suprug, Wilfredo Las Rocas, sigurno će vam rado izraditi jednu sušilicu za rublje. On zna sve o sušilicama. Moja draga engleska dadilja, pokojna Nanny Parker, donijela je jednu takvu sušilicu sa sobom, kad je došla k nama iz Britanskog veleposlanstva u Madridu. No, bojim se da je ta sušilica sada kod moje sestre u Zaragozi. Ako biste htjeli poći sa mnom...”

Njezin Wifredo i njegov partner, Anibal Tulipán, radili su u velikoj tvornici namještaja u predgrađu Palme. Iako su nekada njih dvojica posjedovali svaki po pedeset posto dionica tvornice, nakon velike štete od požara, novcem Centralne banke uspjeli su je nanovo izgraditi i staviti u pogon, ali po cijenu predaje kontrolnog paketa dionica. Wifredo i Anibal su zapravo spali na to da su postali obični zaposlenici banke, kojima je jednako kao i drugima prijeto otkaz, ako tvornica ne ostvari očekivanu zaradu – što je bio krajnje neugodan položaj u takvim teškim vremenima, a pogotovo njima, koji su bili toliko ponositi ljudi.

Anibal je brinuo o nabavi i prodaji, a Wifredo o oblikovanju, proizvodnji i osoblju. Njih su dvojica bili šurjaci, no smrt Wifredove sestre nakon predoziranja tabletama za spavanje koje je uzela iz protesta radi Anibalove preozbiljne veze s asistenticom njegova zubara, prekinula je obiteljske veze. Doista se nije moglo zamisliti dvojicu temperamentnih muškaraca koji su manje odgovarali jedan drugome kao poslovni partneri. Anibal je volio sve njemačko, pogotovo metafiziku, glazbu i kobasice, izgledom je podsjećao na Göringa, a po temperamentu je bio wagnerijanac. Često je znao, kad nešto ne bi pošlo po njegovome, ponašanjem podsjetiti i na Hitlera, kad bi se bacao na pod i počeo gristi tepih. Sve dok rat nije završio pobjedom saveznika, Wifredo je – visok, zgodan i okretan – pažljivo skrivao svoje jake anglofilne osjećaje. To je osobito došlo do izražaja kad se prvi puta zaljubio u

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Rosu i potpao pod posthumni utjecaj vradžbina slavne dadilje Parker. Naime, ta dadilja Parker je sa sobom u kuću Espinosa donijela i naramak časopisa *Illustrated London News*, od 1906. do 1925. godine, koje je nastavila dobivati i narednih godina. Kad je izbio Španjolski građanski rat 1936. godine i kad je dadilja Parker poginula – pod kotačima brzog automobila kojega je vozio jedan od onih talijanskih avijatičara koji nisu sudjelovali u ratu, sjećate se?¹¹² – časopisi su prestali dolaziti. Međutim, Wifredo je nastavio proučavati i čitati te uvezane časopise i tako postao stručnjakom za sva engleska pitanja obrađena u časopisima tijekom tih tridesetak godina.

Kad nas je Rosa predstavila Wifredu i pitala ga može li nam nabaviti sušilicu za ručnike, on je s veseljem rekao da može, vidjevši u nama izvrstan izvor informacija o svemu onome što se dogodilo s Britanijom od smrti kralja Georgea V. do danas. Kao posljedicu svega toga dobili smo prelijepu sušilicu, čvrstu i veliku, od solidnoga mahagonija, s više nizova poprečnih prečki i mjedenih zglobova – i to u vrijeme kad je na otoku praktički bilo nemoguće nabaviti išta od mahagonija. Wifredo nam je svoje remek-djelo minimalno zaračunao, uvjeravajući nas da je to učinio s velikim zadovoljstvom.

Nakon toga je Anibal čuo priču o sušilici od tvorničkog predradnika, po svom običaju se silno naljutio i izvrijeđao Wifreda, optuživši ga da ga vara na poslu i troši vrijedan materijal, dok druge narudžbe čekaju, a on surađuje s prastarim, zagriženim neprijateljima Španjolske. Čak je zaprijetio i da će o toj smiješnoj sušilici obavijestiti i Centralnu banku. Wifredo mu je odgovorio da je Velika Britanija najbolji trgovinski partner Španjolske i, poslije Španjolske, najotmjenija europska zemlja. Također je prokomentirao njegov teutonski loš ukus, neduhovitost i nemaštovitost. I da odmah namjerava

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¹¹² Riječ je o Mussolinijevim fašističkim snagama koje su aktivno pomagale Francovu vojsku, ali je službeni Rim to nijekao. (op. prev.)

započeti s proizvodnjom ništa manje nego stotinu sobnih sušilica, jeftinijih modela od prototipa, pod nazivom “Dadilja Parkér”. Nakon toga su još uslijedila i dobacivanja, tipa, “Svećenik koji te krstio mora da je bio nahlađen kad ti je nadjenao ime *Anibal*. Mora da je zapravo htio reći *Animal*. Jer ti si jedna debela, bezosjećajna, umišljena, njemačka životinja i da nije bilo tvojih sramotnih lovačkih pustolovina najniže vrste u Santa Catalini, moja bi jadna sestra i danas bila živa!”

Nakon toga je došlo do tučnjave. Wifredo je bio onaj snažniji od njih dvojice, ali u nekoj od faza Građanskog rata Anibal je polazio ozbiljan tečaj na kojemu su ga dobrovoljni instruktori SS-a naučili mnoge korisne trikove za ulične tučnjave. Tako su obojica završili tučnjavu s ozbiljnim ozljedama.

Tvornica ni prije ovoga nije dobro radila. Bili su to stari, ali nezamjenjivi strojevi, mučilo ih je ograničenje potrošnje struje, nije bilo ni dovoljno drveta, a bilo je mnogo novih praznika koji su slavili *Snage svjetla*, za koje je poslovodstvo svake tvrtke moralo radnicima davati dvostruke plaće, da bi ljepše proveli patriotsko slavlje. Mučili su ih i problemi sa sindikatom, nisu mogli otpustiti niti jednog radnika, bez obzira koliko bio neučinkovit, nepošten ili suvišan, a sve je to postajalo jako teško. Međutim, potpuni razlaz partnera doveo je sve to skupa na rub ponora. Wifredo i Anibal tvrdoglavo su i neusklađeno ustrajavali svaki na svojoj poslovnoj politici. Wifredo je želio oblikovati namještaj u nešto smionijem, engleskom stilu, dok mu je Anibal uskraćivao kvalitetno drvo, ne pokušavajući prodati ono što bi ovaj ipak uspio proizvesti.

Rosa je shvatila da će tvornica ubrzo propasti ako netko nešto odlučno ne poduzme. Nazvala je kanonika katedrale, ujedno i starijeg brata i ispovjednika čovjeka koji je stajao iznad glava dvojice zaraćenih partnera – samog ravnatelja Centralne banke. Nakon što mu je iznijela o čemu se radi, Rosa je zamolila kanonika da među njima uspostavi mir,

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kako god misli da je najbolje, a da niti jedna od obitelji pritom ne nastrada. "Poštovani oče", rekla mu je, "iako je istina da je don Anibal počeo ovu sramotnu svađu nazvavši Wifreda imenima koja ne bi mogao mirno saslušati niti jedan častan čovjek, moram također reći i da Wifredo nije učinio ništa da tu situaciju ikako ublaži. Jednako je tako istina da je don Anibal prvi udario, ali Wifredo je propustio ponuditi mu i drugi obraz. Danas mu je, međutim, žao što se nije malo više potrudio u kršćanskom ponašanju. Nije nimalo smiješno da on svaki dan kad ide u tvornicu prvo skine svoj ručni sat i odloži ga na policu, zajedno s rezervnim naočalama za čitanje, bojeći se da bi se mogle uništiti u još jednom obračunu šakama." Kanonik ju je saslušao, kimajući s razumijevanjem, i na koncu iznio svoje mišljenje. "Kćeri moja", reče, "vidim samo jedan način na koji bi se mogla riješiti nevolja koju si mi opisala. A to je da ti i don Anibalova žena doista zajednički poradite na uspostavi mira. A dok ne uspijete svoje muževe natjerati da se ponovo prijateljski rukuju, morate ih barem nagovoriti da zamole u banci da im pronađu nekoga tko će stalno rješavati sve njihove sukobe. To ne bi smjelo mnogo koštati. Neki bi čestit i razborit umirovljeni vojnik mogao, nesumnjivo, sa zadovoljstvom izvršavati tu zadaću. Možda ne uz novčanu nadoknadu, nego, recimo, za dnevnu okrepu jelom i pićem. Štoviše, vaši muževi ne bi se morali sastajati osim u prisutnosti ovog arbitra, a banka bi, dakako, zatražila da prihvate sve njegove odluke bez dodatnih propitivanja, baš kao što nogometni igrači prihvaćaju svog suca, čak i pod cijenu da ih isključi iz igre. Ako bi se vi mogli obavezati da će vaš suprug takvo što prihvatiti, onda ćemo dogovoriti susret vas i don Anibalove žene u mojoj kući, već sutra. A tamo ćemo se, uz Božju pomoć, pristojno složiti." Ime nove, lijepe Anibalove žene, donedavno zubarske pomoćnice, bilo je Gracia Joncosa de Tulipán (još jedna cvjetna imenska složenica: Nježni tulipanov izdanak). Gracia je bila oštra djevojka i, baš

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kao i Anibal, tvrdoglavo protucrkveno nastrojena. Došla je na sastanak, ali je odmah upozorila kanonika da će, obzirom da je inicijativa sasvim jasno krenula od Rose, Anibal cijeli plan odbiti jednako jarosno kao da ga je predložio sam Kremlj.

Poput rozete okruglo kanonikovo lice na ove se riječi namrštilo. Ipak, suzdržao se od svake osude Gracijina nedavna nedolična ponašanja i jednostavno je zamolio da pokuša oponašati iskreni katolički Rosin duh. "Blago mirotvorcima", gotovo je otpjevao, zaprijetivši svojim debelim prstom.

"Neka budu blaženi!" ponovila je Gracia, protiv svoje volje, ali ipak pod dojmom te velike radne sobe, prožete mirisom cigara, velikih, nedodirljivih polica punih knjiga, tamnih, nedodirljivih slika svetaca na živo oderane kože, isprženih na vrelom ugljenu ili, pak, u zanosu, na koljenima, na planinskoj litici okruženih demonima koji su se oko njih uzletjeli. "Ali moj će Anibal", nastavila je, "odmah pomisliti da je taj sudac izabran na temelju dogovora vas i don Wifreda, kako bi ga maknuli s njegova položaja."

Kanonik je mirno odgovorio. "Draga kćeri, tvoj naprasiti muž ne mora se ničega bojati. Uvjeri ga da ja, kanonik katedrale Palma de Mallorce, svojom dušom jamčim da ću pronaći suca toliko čestita i pronicava, kao da je potomak samog kralja Salomona. Međutim, ako tvoj suprug ne vjeruje mojoj riječi, onda ću ja to shvatiti kao nepovjerenje prema Crkvi, kao i prema samoj Banci, i onda ću o takvom stavu morati obavijestiti i svoga brata."

Gracia je shvatila da se upalilo crveno svijetlo. "Ne, ne, časni oče! Molim vas, nemojte tako govoriti! Anibal je, u duši, čovjek koji voli mir i visoko cijeni i vas i vašega uvaženog brata. Dajte mi priliku da mu sve ovo izložim."

"Bilo bi dobro da pokušaš, kćeri moja", reče kanonik mrko. I s time je razgovor završio.

Anibal se ponovo razjario kad mu je Gracia prenijela kanonikovu poruku. "Pa to je pljačka!" navodno je rekao. "Zar

da ja stavim svoju sudbinu u ruke tih bezobzirnih gangstera koji samo navlače na svoja lica iskren katolički osmijeh?”

Ipak, pokazalo se da nije bilo drugog izlaza nakon što je ravnatelj banke kao arbitra ponudio umirovljenog, više puta odlikovanog pukovnika kojega ćemo zvati don Hilario Tortugas. Za vrijeme Rifskog rata¹¹³ bio je ranjen u tri navrata, kroz list noge, u koljeno i u rame, da bi na kraju izgubio sve prste lijeve ruke izvršavajući zadatak od tolike važnosti da je dobio i Veliki križ San Fernanda. Da je Anibal pokušao osporiti poštenje ovakvog junaka, ispaao bi sasvim smiješan. Štoviše, don Hilario, kojega je mučila dosada, rado je pristao na tu ponudu, tražeći da zauzvrat dobije dnevni honorar koji će biti dostatan tek za dvije šalice kave, sendvič sa salamom, bocu piva i jednu cigaru s Kanarskog otočja. I da kava mora biti pakleno vrela. Jedino je to jasno zatražio.

Ova nagodba je prošla prilično dobro. Istina, don Hilario morao je priznati da samo površno zna kako tvornica radi – što je bila rupa u obrazovanju svojstvena španjolskoj povijesti koja obiluje dugim nizom udvornih, uvažениh, visoko pozicioniranih vojnih časnika kojima je povjerena ekonomska sudbina zemlje. Usprkos tome, iskustvo zapovijedanja ljudima izoštrilo je njegov prirodnu intuiciju kojom je prepoznao govore li mu ljudi laži, istinu ili neku polu-istinu. Kad su se prijepori događali oko nekih tehničkih pitanja, on bi presudio vodeći se pažljivim razmatranjem glasova sukobljenih partnera, njihovih lica i ponašanja, a ne dokumenata koji su ležali pred njim. Tako je razriješio i osjetljivo pitanje sušilice *Dadilja Parkér* prepoznavši da bi Wifredo nesumnjivo visoko stručno izradio svoj proizvod, kad bi dobio odgovarajuću sirovinu, dok mu je Anibalova sumnjičavost u nove proizvode sugerirala da bi bilo mudro odgoditi samu proizvodnju. A

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¹¹³ Rat koji se vodio između Španjolske i Francuske s jedne, i berberske države Rif na području Maroka s druge strane, 1920.-1926. (op. prev.)

presuda je glasila ovako: “Tvornica bi, ipak, trebala podnijeti trošak izrade prototipa koji bi se uz minimalnu cijenu prodao nekoj utjecajnoj inozemnoj obitelji uz prateću promidžbu.”

Don Hilario se svakodnevno pojavljivao u tvornici, što je podizalo moral radnika koji su o njemu razgovarali i u kavanima. “Kod nas je na plaći slavni pukovnik Tortugas – onaj koji se nekoć svojim mačem probio preko sedam gora i sedam mora i mnogo puta bio ranjavan. To je pravi ratnik za nas!” Ipak, Anibal je teško podnosio njegovu nazočnost. “Zamislite! Neka prastara vojničina, kao da je živa relikvija, sada me tamo nadgleda i špijunira!” I dalje je što je mogao više otežavao posao Wifredu, navodeći mu krive podatke i o nabavi i o mogućnostima prodaje, dok je istovremeno don Hilariju govorio da Wifredo kvari radnike i pokazuje očito nepoznavanje suvremenih trendova u izradi namještaja.

Rosa je savjetovala Wifreda da se ponaša što mirnije i što hladnokrvnije, poput Engleza, nadajući se da će to potaknuti Anibala da se razotkrije nekim nepromišljenim činom koji neće izbjeći ozbiljnoj službenoj osudi. Međutim, Wifredo se potajice bojao Anibalovih pokušaja da se zbliži s don Hilarijom. Primjerice, kad je ovaj darovao don Hilariju kutiju *Romeo y Julieta* cigara za njegov imendan. Don Hilario je, nepotrebno je i reći, glatko odbio dar, rekavši da usprkos tome što voli uživati u finim cigarama, nikada sebi ne bi dopustio da i za dlaku odstupi od svoga drakonskog koda i da ne želi navući ni trunku sumnje oko svoje nepristranosti. Ipak, Wifredo je primijetio kako gleda tu kutiju cigara s jedva prikriivenom žudnjom.

Povremeno se Wifredo nudio povesti don Hilarija natrag do središta grada svojim *Renault* dvosjedom iz 1922. godine, s karoserijom što je podsjećala na brod – Mallorca je bila mjesto gdje su lijepi automobili dolazili umirati i uspijevali ostati na životu nevjerojatno dugo – ali don Hilario je uvijek ustrajavao na tome da prošeta, čak i po kišnim danima

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kad su ga boljele njegove rane. Nije prihvaćao ništa više, ali ni manje od onoga što ga je išlo svakoga dana, po dvije šalice slatke, vrele kave, cigare s Kanarskog otočja, sendviča sa salamom i boce piva – kako je bilo određeno ugovorom. Samo jednom mu je njegova savjest dopustila da posudi od Wifreda nekoliko papirića s kojima je smotao cigarete, ali ih je i vratio već sljedećeg dana.

Toliko o stanju u tvornici. Sada ćemo reći nešto o “utjecajnoj inozemnoj obitelji”. Nas je neočekivano posjetila Ava Gardner, bliska prijateljica naše drage poznanice iz Marylanda, Betty Sicre. Betty je predložila da se Ava nakratko odmori od iscrpljujućeg društvenog života u Madridu i posjeti uspavljujuću i zaista, za ladanje, sasvim pogodnu Mallorcu. Da se tamo naspava, bavi španjolskom gramatikom, svaki dan pliva i posavjetuje se sa mnom kako da završi tečaj engleske poezije koji je sasvim slučajno počela pohađati. Avu smo upoznali u Bettynoj kući nekoliko mjeseci ranije i otkrili da je vrlo zabavna. Nakon toga nam je poslala veliki buket crvenih ruža, a taj znak pažnje meni i mojoj supruzi je bio posebno drag i zato što smo tada već znali da Ava nije od onih koji tako što radi iz navike. U to vrijeme osjećala se osamljeno, nakon što joj se starija sestra vratila u Sjedinjene Države, pa je posuđivala jednog od četiri Bettyna mala sina da joj prave društvo po noći. “Drugi dječaci u Američkoj školi će mi reći da sam mamina maza”, bunio se najmlađi od njih u suzama, “kad saznaju da dva puta tjedno spavam s Avom.”

U zrakoplovnoj luci San Bonet, na Palmi, dotrčala je do nas preko piste, poput srne koju proganja gladan vuk. A kad je taj vuk vidio kako ju je prigrlila naša velika obitelj – djeca su se ranije vratila iz škole zavaravši učitelje, svećenike i opatice, da im iz Londona stiže teta – slineći se povukao. Međutim, s jednog kraja zrakoplovne luke do drugog brzo se pročulo da je slavna Ava Gardner konačno stigla na Mallorcu pa su

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gomile ljudi pohrlile u potragu za crvenim tepihom, buketima i novinskim fotografima. U međuvremenu smo mi na brzinu smjestili Avu u naš Land-Rover i uzeli joj prtljagu s kamioneta zrakoplovne tvrtke. Jedan zaneseni zaljubljenik u film ugledao je ženu koja je jako sličila njegovoj obožavanoj glumici kako priča besmislice s našom djecom u prašnjavom automobilu. Zastao je, zaškiljio i produžio dalje – naravno da to nije mogla biti ona. Doista smo lako izveli taj bijeg.

Ava nam je objasnila da su u avionu bila dva vuka, dva vrlo velika gnjavatora. Prvi, koji je sjedio s druge strane prolaza, stalno joj se obraćao nekim eksperimentalnim talijanskim, sve dok nije snažno zaklopila korice svoje *Oxfordske knjige engleskog pjesništva* (koju joj je kupila Betty, za njezin tečaj) i rekla, “Ako me baš *morate* smetati dok čitam, zašto barem ne govorite svojim jezikom?”

Vuk joj je uglađeno odgovorio, “Ali, *signorina*, želio sam, vama u čast, progovoriti vašim divno muzikalnim jezikom.”

Ava je ostala zbunjena. “Mora da ste nešto pomiješali”, rekla je. “Ja se jesam udala za Sicilijanca, ali moj je talijanski još gori od vašeg.”

Vuk ju je i dalje znalački gledao, ne susprežući pohotu. “Nemojte misliti da mene možete zavarati! Sve naše novine uvjeravaju nas da ste vi rođena napolitanska kći!”

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“Onda lažu, jer ja sam rođena u Sjevernoj Karolini.”

Tek tada se vuk prestravio, u nedoumici. “Znači li to da sam ja pogriješio? Vi *niste* Sofia Loren?”

Srdito uzdahnuvši, Ava se digla i potražila spas na slobodnom mjestu sprijeda, no tamo je pronašla vuka broj dva, jednako spremnog da je zgrabi. Zato je nastavila čitati svoju *Oxfordsku knjigu engleskog pjesništva* u toaletu, odakle je izišla tek kad je zrakoplov sletio. No, tada je ugledala istog onog drugog vuka koji ju je čekao s izljevima ljubavi u podnožju stepenica kojima se izlazilo iz zrakoplova. Međutim, filmske dive moraju poštovati stroga pravila. Nikada ne smiju vrije-

dati novinare ili fotografe, nikada ne smiju nekome uskratiti autogram (osim ako nisu baš u strašnoj vremenskoj stisci) i nikada ne smiju vukove po glavi tući ručnim torbicama ili im izbijati oči kišobranom.

Avini planovi da će učiti španjolsku gramatiku i konačno se naspavati prilično su se izjalovili. Po Palmi je bilo previše mjesta gdje su cigani svirali gitare i plesali *flamenco* po cijelu noć. Jer Ava nikad nije mogla odoljeti *flamencu*. Usto, njezin je prvi posjet Mallorci pobudio toliko pažnje da je u pet dana morala promijeniti četiri hotela. A nas je oduševljavalo što smo se mogli ogrijati pod istim reflektorima koji su pratili nju. Iako joj je bilo drago, kako je rekla, pojesti pastirsku pиту ili kobasicu s pireom u našem stanu u Palmi, ona nas je nekoliko puta vrlo galantno izvela u otmjene restorane.

Nakon ručka na jednom od tih mjesta, zamolila me da joj pomognem oko njezina tečaja iz poezije. Rekao sam joj da ima vrlo malo pjesama koje vrijedi čitati, a da ih ima jako mnogo za koje se pogrešno tvrdi da ih vrijedi čitati, tako da bi joj bilo bolje da ne gubi vrijeme s tim tečajem poezije. Jer, ispiranje zlata zna biti vrlo jednolična rabota. A tada sam joj, odlučivši se za drugu metaforu, rekao da je jedan jasan, osobni glas vredniji od svih tehničkih dotjeranosti i hrabrih eksperimenata na ovome svijetu. Da istinski dobra poezija uvijek rađa jednostavne, izravne, osobne osjećaje, da nikad nije dosadna i da je sve bolja što je čovjek češće čita. “Pjesme su poput ljudi”, rekoh. “Ljudi dostojnih našeg povjerenja nema mnogo.”

Kad smo je pitali kako se nosi s tom čudovišnom legendom koja ju je nadrasla, Ava nam je rekla da čini sve što može da se toga riješi, iako momci koji su zaduženi za odnose s javnošću i novinari uvijek nastoje to breme još više navaliti na njezina leđa. Rekla nam je i da se nikad nije riješila strogo baptističkog odgoja, s farme duhana u Sjevernoj Karolini, gdje je provela djetinjstvo, uz brižnog oca koji ju je uvi-

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jek štitio. Da se i dalje radi tog čudorednog odgoja u većini filmskih studija osjeća nelagodno; da svoju žestoku reputaciju nije stekla ničim što je napravila, nego onime što govori. Da neki put zaista ne može obuzdati jezik.

Tada je neki fotograf iznenada bljesnuo svojim aparatom u nas, a Ava mu je gotovo istog čas uzvratila najoštrijim riječima. Ipak, nakon što se ispričao, ona mu je napola oprostila. Ostatak našeg razgovora bio je isprekidan konobarevim molbama Avi za autograme u cijeli niz bilježnica. Ona je poslušno na sve to pristajala, s namještenim, vedrim osmijehom, a da pritom nije gubila nit razgovora, sve dok se jedna žena koja je također bila lovac na autograme, krupna poput pretvrdo tapecirane sofe, nije ugurala, nagnula ispred mene i rekla, “Draga gospođice Gardner, vidjela sam *doslovce sve* vaše filmove! Sada bi me zanimalo biste li bili toliko dobri da mi date svoj *osobni* autogram za moju sedmogodišnju unuku. Ona se zove Wendy Solgotch Wallinger.”

Ava se smrknu. “Je li baš neophodno i ovo Solgotch Wallinger? I na čemu da vam to napišem?”

“A ja sam mislila da filmske dive uvijek imaju kod sebe malo papira!”

Ava se još više smrknu. Ono što je rekla o tome zašto nema papira bolje da ostane nezabilježeno. Već je sasvim dovoljno rečeno o njezinoj žestokoj čudi. Bez obzira na to, ne želeći predrasudu o svojoj naravi dalje uslojavati, otrgla je komad jelovnika, našvrljala, “Wendy, s najljepšim željama, od Ave Gardner” i s time otpustila gospođu Wallinger.

Kad je u našem stanu našla moje *Sabrane pjesme*, Ava me upitala koju da od njih prvu pročita. Ovo me pitanje dovelo u neugodnu situaciju, nakon onoga što sam joj ranije rekao. Međutim, rekao sam joj da ima jedna koju bi možda mogla shvatiti osobno; iako je napisana mnogo ranije no što smo se upoznali. Označio sam joj stranicu na kojoj da je potraži kad ode te večeri u krevet – ako je to ikada činila.

*Ona govori uvijek svojim vlastitim glasom
Čak i sa strancima...*

i

*Neobuzdana je i nevina, s vjerom u ljubav
Usprkos svih svojih nedaća...*

Tako se odnosila Ava prema životu.

U međuvremenu, u tvornici namještaja Anibal je i dalje stalno pravio probleme. Prijavio je Wifreda don Hilariju, da je pobunio radnike koji su se počeli žaliti da je drvo koje je nabavio odviše sirovo, izvitopereno i prepuno čvorova, da se od njega mogu izraditi jedino rustikalni stolci i slično. Suočen s ovom optužbom, Wifredo je izvijestio don Hilariju da je on doista to izjavio, ali da se nikome nije požalio. Štoviše, daleko od toga da pobuni radnike, on ih je hrabrio da se nešto ipak može napraviti od tih neobičnih komada sirova drveta koji su bili jedino što je njegov partner bio u stanju nabaviti.

Kad ga je don Hilario upitno pogledao, Wifredo je otišao u radionu i vratio se s posebno lošim komadom lokalnog crnogoričnog drveta na kojemu su se isticali jedino veliki čvorovi. "Očekuje li doista od mene da odradim općinsku narudžbu za osamdeset školskih klupa od drveta ove kakvoće? A što li će se tek dogoditi s mojim strojnim pilama?"

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Don Hilario je pregledao izložak i oprezno predložio sljedeće, "Možda biste mogli izbiti ove čvorove i iskoristiti te rupe kao đačke tintarnice; ipak, jasno ću reći don Anibalu da će, ako se ovako nastavi, klupe imati više tintarnica nego što u razredu ima đaka."

Odbilo je sedam sati i Wifredo reče, "Oprostite mi, don Hilario! Radnici su već otišli, baš kao i moj partner. Morao bih zatvoriti bez ikakva odgađanja. Kako mi je jasno da ćete odbiti moju ponudu da vas odvezem do kuće u svom troš-

nom automobilu, dopustite mi da vam zaželim laku noć. U određenoj sam žurbi. Moji engleski prijatelji, obitelj intelektualca Gravesa, čine mi čast dolaskom u moju kuću na večeru i nadaju se dovesti i gospođicu Avu Gardner.”

Don Hilario je ostao bez daha i zgrabio Wifreda za ruke. “Mislite li na onu pravu Avu Gardner?” upitao je polako. “Ona.... je ovdje, na Mallorci?”

“Da, jedina i neponovljiva Ava”, odgovorio je Wifredo jednostavno. “Gospodin i gospođa Graves uvjeravaju me da je ona draga i pametna, jednako koliko je i lijepa.”

“Draga i pametna, mora da jest. *Draga i pametna*, baš lijepo rečeno! Za mene, Ava Gardner je najveća živuća umjetnica!”

Ava ipak nije došla do Wifreda s nama te večeri. Otišla je na izlet do plaže u Camp de Maru – bilo je to netom prije onog strašnog vala hladnoće u veljači 1956. – tako da je ona bila jedina koja se odvažila ući u vodu. Bilo je tamo i nekoliko skupina obožavatelja koji su je gledali i veliki se uzdah oduševljenja prolomio kad je silazila stepenicama hotela u svom talijanskom kupaćem kostimu jarkih boja i bacila se u gotovo olujne valove. Ipak, niti jedan se spasilac, kako nam je rečeno, nije bacio u vodu za njom. Možda je tome tako jer Španjolci, koliko god da jesu nepopravljivi romantici, zapravo nemaju nimalo donkihotskoga duha. Kasnije je Ava šmugnula u binisalemske vinograde, gdje je provela neko dulje vrijeme kušajući jedino vino koje se na Mallorci može napraviti od domaćega grožđa, tako da se nismo vidjeli s njom prije ponoći.

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Sljedećega jutra don Hilario je pozvao Wifreda u stranu i žurno mu se obratio. “Prijatelju, pričajte mi o njoj!”

Ne želeći razočarati pukovnika, Wifredo mu odgovori. “Čudesna je! Tako blaga, tako lijepa i tako dobra raspoloženja!”

Don Hilario uzdahnu. “Ah, don Wifredo, vaše me iskustvo ispunja najsirovijom zavišću!” A onda je još brzo nešto

dodao. “Nikada nisam, sami znate, prihvatio nikakav poklon niti uslugu od vas, od onda kad sam došao u vašu tvornicu. Ni cigaretu, ni šibicu, niti sam se povezao u vašem ludom automobilu! Međutim, moram vam reći da ste vi, za razliku od vašeg neotesanog partnera, uvijek pokazivali da uvažavate ono što ja u pogledu svega toga mislim, tako da niste pokušavali ni ponuditi ni reći ništa što bi bilo podložno nekom zlradom ili pogrešnom tumačenju. I radi toga vas cijenim. Štoviše, toliko vas cijenim i toliko sam uvjeren u vašu čestitost da se osjećam slobodan ipak vas nešto zamoliti. A tu molbu ćete, siguran sam, shvatiti kao nešto što je na sasvim drugoj razini od naših svakodnevnih tvorničkih problema i okolnosti u kojima se stalno susrećemo. Don Wifredo, ja sam star i usamljen čovjek. Cijelu zimu moje me stare rane bole. Jedva da me išta još veseli. Dakle, da skratim, ako biste mogli pitati svoje uvažene engleske prijatelje da li bih mogao od Ave Gardner zamoliti...”

Wifredo ga prekinu. “Ni riječi više, don Hilario! Da me bilo tko drugi na cijeloj Mallorci ovo upitao – čak i sam ravnatelj Centralne banke o čijoj dobroj volji ovisi moj cijeli život – rekao bih mu: ‘Nemoguće!’ Ali kad je u pitanju najhrabriji vojnik našeg naroda i kad on tako nešto zamoli, tko sam ja da bih ga mogao odbiti? Vjerujem da se ovo pitanje može riješiti prije nego što gospođica Gardner napusti naš otok danas, rano poslijepodne.”

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Nekoliko minuta kasnije zazvonio je naš telefon. “Robert”, govorio je Wifredo uzbuđeno, “možemo li se sastati u podne u kavani *Mecca*, po pitanju od najveće važnosti? Ne mogu vam objasniti preko telefona.”

Na moje olakšanje, Ava je pročitala označenu pjesmu i odlučila je prihvatiti kao osobnu posvetu. Štoviše, zamolila me da je vlastoručno prepisem i potpisem joj se.

“S najvećim zadovoljstvom”, rekoh. “Ako mogu dobiti nešto zauzvrat, Ava. Želio bih jednu od vaših najljepših fotogra-

fija sa sljedećim vlastoručnim potpisom. ‘Junačkom pukovniku don Hilariju Tortugasu y Postresu, istinski mu se diveći, Ava Gardner.’ Evo, napisat ću vam cijeli tekst.”

“Mora li baš biti i ono ‘istinski mu se diveći?’”

“Pa to je ključno!”

Prepisao sam Avi vlastoručno cijelu pjesmu i vrlo brzo nakon njezina povratka u Madrid (kamo je otputovala s četiri sanduka binisalemskog vina, koje je pridodala svojoj prtljazi) stigla je predivna, velika, potpisana fotografija, i to onako kako je bilo dogovoreno. Bio je to njezin portret – nije mi bilo sasvim drago što ga vidim, jer je više prikazivao njezin izmišljeni, egzotičan lik, nego nju samu.

Rosa i Wifredo su nas pozvali na veličanstveni engleski ručak kakav nismo jeli godinama. Angloindijska *mulligatawny* juha, puna jakih začina, pečena govedina s pečenim krumpirima, jorkširski puding, kuhani kupus, okruglice sa šljivama u vrhnju i (kako bi rekao Edward Lear) “beskrajno mnogo stiltonskog sira”. Wifredo je čak odnekuda stvorio i bocu izvrsnog desertnog vina – otkuda ga je nabavio, nije mi jasno – i onda svečano nazdravio Avi Gardner.

Svi smo iskapili svoje čaše.

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A tada je, glasom nabijenim osjećajima, Wifredo nastavio. “Dragi prijatelji, nakon što je don Hilario podnio svoj izvještaj banci, prije dva dana, mogu reći da sada ja jedini upravljam tvornicom i da sam odgovoran jedino samom ravnatelju banke. Anibal je isplaćen i otpušten, a ja sada imam ovlasti ne samo da kupujem drvenu sirovinu, nego čak mogu postaviti i svog ravnatelja prodaje!”

Čestitali smo mu u velikom veselju.

“Ali to nije sve”, nastavio je. “Sušilica *Dadilja Parkér* kreće odmah u proizvodnju, baš kao i još jedan sličan proizvod, koji je predložila draga Rosa, za odlaganje mokrih krpa na stalku koji se montira na strop, uz pomoć konopaca i kolo-

tura. U boljim vremenima može jednako poslužiti i za vješanje šunki, kobasica, niski crvenih papričica i vijenaca luka. Vrlo izvorno i iznimno korisno! Predlažem da taj proizvod nazovemo 'Rasklopna sušilica Ave Gardner'. Na svakom će primjerku biti i autentična minijatura moje dobročiniteljke, s fotografijom njezina skoka u more, kod Camp de Mara. Mislite li da bih je trebao pitati za dopuštenje?"

"Ona bi to smatrala sasvim nepotrebnim", odgovorio sam, natočio još malo desertnoga vina i grickajući oraščiće pomislio, "Draga Ava!"

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