

THE COLDNESS.

The days are icy, but for some reason there is no snow. The darkness sticks around almost all the time, but at night it becomes friendly. At night it suddenly doesn't make me feel tired and isolated anymore; it has the color of the darkest shade of red wine, breathing like drinking. It hurts my lungs, though tasteless; I feel a bit dizzy after the running.

A more rational part of my brain still tells me that I shouldn't be here, and not with him, but I'm not listening, I don't really know why it is too difficult to just leave, to go home.

We are both too drunk, unclear whether what we are doing is hugging or holding on to something. For balance? We fall and I laugh; the street's asphalt is very hard and even colder than the air. I can feel it through my thick jacket, as if it was directly touching my bones, and suddenly I don't want to stand up again. For some reason he doesn't get up either.

A middle aged woman, seemingly even more drunk than we are, stops and asks whether everything is OK with us. I leave the conversation to him; she kneels down, as if she secretly wanted to join us. I know that the street that we are laying on is my best friend at the moment, and I appreciate its presence far more than that of the boy next to me.

Exactly because it's cold and hard, as cold and hard as anything could be, it comforts me and makes me feel secure. Here I am, at the bottom of things; nothing can happen to me.

His voice next to me still has the sound of the muggy air in the bar we just left. It brings back the memory of his sleepy stare, with heavy eyelids slowly sinking further down, which I tried so hard to find something behind -a reason or an explanation at least. I waited and felt my eyes get tired and heavy as well.

He didn't answer, but just kept staring, his eyes opaque. What did he see? There must have been something, some starting point, a connection. What did he see in me?

I concentrated, trying to look closer - deeper -, until the girl who never stops smiling started to talk to me and he fell asleep. For a while I watched the others. They looked like fish in an aquarium, opening and closing their mouths almost mechanically, with no sound reaching my ears through the thick glass. I was bored. When everyone left the table to smoke I grabbed his wrist. Let's go, I said, pulling him up, and out the bar. Then we ran.

The cold seems to have tapped its way straight into my veins and now slowly but inevitably starts to fill me up, spreading and replacing what used to be blood. It starts to feel like a second, fragile skeleton of ice inside of me. Any intention of movement produces a crackling noise. It pricks me and drags me back to the present.

What are you doing down there, why don't you get up? I hear the woman, still there and apparently not willing to leave us, and then his voice, finally answering, in a tone of astonishment, as if he didn't expect any words to come out of his own mouth. I don't know, he says, I don't know. My ice-skeleton resists a little, but quickly shatters into millions of little sharp pieces as I stiffly get up. I have to go home now, I say, and without hesitating I start to walk away from the obscure nighttime scenery: a skinny boy laying on the icy sidewalk and an older lady kneeling next to him, lit up by the fluorescent letters of a shop window -or once in a while by the headlights of the taxis driving by.