

MARISSTELLA OCTEK (SL ČIŽMEŠIJA)

KOTOR IS ...the city of angels... ANGELA

The story is about:

... the dreams and visions of inexperienced virgins three sisters (*tre sorelle*: Angela, Trifona, and Gracijana), daughters of the Italian Crossi family whose father is the distinguished captain of the ancient and famous Boka Navy...

... the religious virgin Angela who marries a versatile Croat from Boka Kotorska...

... Angela's descendants tell her life story through their memories...

... the longings of Mary Magdalene in all the women of the world...

... the impregnable fortress of the City-State of Kotor in the Boka Kotorska fjord in South Dalmatia with its Catholic-oriented Destiny...

... heavenly spiritual beings, merciful archangels, and angels full of holiness, grace, mercy, and care for all who worship them...

... hospitality and kindness as a moral law that is a prerequisite for bliss and victory...

... the science that is false without a religious approach and foundation...

... the gardens of the Mediterranean and their arboretums adorned with the dendrological-botanical motto *ARBOR VITAE, ARBOR MUNDI*...

... a message in a bottle that - like human life - is interesting for reading but not sufficiently comprehensible to remember for a long time...

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EDITION: ANCIENT BOKA KOTORSKA (BOCCHE DI
CATTARO): WOMEN STORIES

Book in the Series.

Book in the Series.

EDITION :

ANCIENT BOKA KOTORSKA (BOCCHE DI
CATTARO) :
WOMEN STORIES

PATRON OF THE PUBLICATION:

AKADEMIJA UČENJAŠTVA ZNANOSTI I UMJETNOSTI
GRADA - DRŽAVE BOKA KOTORSKA

= ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS OF THE CITY-
STATE OF THE BOKA KOTORSKA
(BAY OF KOTOR)

= ACADEMIA DI SCIENZE E ARTI DI CITTA - STATO
BOCCHE DI CATTARO

hrv. AUZUGDBK = eng. ASACSBK = ita. ASACSBC

KOTOR IS ...THE CITY OF ANGELS... ANGELA

by MARISStella Otek (SL Čižmešija)

*"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers,
for by so doing, unawares,
some people have shown hospitality to angels,
without knowing it."*

Hebrews 13:2

**** KAIROS: THE MERCIFUL HOURS OF GRACE:
VIGIL ****

2 Corinthians 6

„In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I succored thee: and I have formed thee, and given thee for a covenant of the nations, to establish the earth, and to cause to inherit the desert heritages.”

In those glorious years, in *tempora Catharinorum*, from 1391 to 1421, during the independence of the City-State Republic of Kotor, in the late night hours, before dawn, between two and four, the entire fjord of the Boka Kotorska Bay of Kotor would fall, would sink into a deep sleep, and its ancient Mediterranean city would take on a new form: the fjord, pointed upwards, at the heights and narrowed, sucked into itself, to human eyes was only the darkened mountain Orjen – completely invisible, and this is what it would have been like if it had been observed from within, from the inside, from the point of view of its commoners, independent citizens: the mountain approached the elongated hill that stood opposite, and now there were two identical, cramped mountain peaks, between which, in the gorge, under the veil of the vibrations of the melody of the Divine Mercy, stretches the loveliest, the most beautiful city that the eyes can see and the soul can embrace: the city has

picturesquely elongated and widened, spread out, forming an invisible circle perfect like a rosary rhyme in the worship, in the veneration of the Virgin Mary by praying the Rosary – the circumference which at the bottom of the sea, at seabed, in the center, it encompassed a lush green inhabited peninsula carved with narrow streets, and at the top of the circle, at the bottom of the bay, a smaller island, in the distance, as it was during the day, and another shell, islet in the making - from the prayerful body of pain and hymnism of the rocks, the hymnic prayerful rocks built for the Church - but nothing beyond the visible entered into the drinkability, potability of the vigil of the illuminated circle of fractal structure: since the opposite sides of the city were mirrored, its streets, both horizontally and vertically, descended from the tops to the shore: descended from the peaks towards the coast in both a horizontal and a vertical series: each street long and narrow, but wide enough for a carriage to pass through its stone cubes, to drive along its stone blocks: the streets intersected vertically and connected in a zigzag arrangement of serpentine – old stone staircases at the bottom of their handrails, densely embraced by blooming fragrant herbs: at the top of each staircase there was either the beginning or the end of each street, slender oil lamps flickered – with a subdued, dimmed, elegiac heavenly light, and there were so many of them, that an astrologer, a star scientist looking from the heavens would think that he was looking through an eyepiece at a swarm of the youngest newly born, newborn stars: if he listened, he could hear the silky rustle of angel wings as they slowly ascended and descended through the city, along the edges of the old luxurious stone marble palaces embracing the bell towers of ancient churches with

the tenderness of lovers, including the oldest, the Cathedral, above which a choir of little angels sang delicately: the city was submerged in gentleness, endowed with tranquility, drowned by and in the flickering gentle rays of the lamps, shaped like its sleeping inhabitants, resembled by its sleeping inhabitants hidden from view behind closed shutters – unaware of themselves, taken - lifted into a different dimension of harmonious space and consciousness, into the mysterious fullness of the vigil of the circle of light above the circle of deep bays of the fjord: everything - precisely the supernatural - was in those gracious hours of merciful grace when the city was taken over by the heavenly angels as their abode.

And He, the reader of souls, who sends the forerunner, the vanguard – the army of His angels to classify, to sort souls, who patiently and steadily monitors, supervises, and awaits all creation, who looks through the clouds, through the deepest furrows, bowels and womb of the earth, who watches from Heaven and from the purity of Heaven, which is according to Him the heart of mirrored bliss in everything He created, which through Him is in *mappae mundi* the heart of mirror bliss in everything He has created, only if He had the mercy to look away if only He would have mercy on His eyes, He would think that he saw... that He sees... the solid fortress of his unconditional love, the saintly, the holy city-monument of human faith: His own, His, angelic, Cathedral of God.

**** STRANDING THEY SAY TEMPORALITY ****

Where there was no Word, the sea sucked up the foam, which in slow musical tacts ran aground on the rocks, that in slow beats stranded itself on the stones, releasing and emitting a sound thinner than the touch of a harp string and softer than the softest touch of a harpsichord key. She was sitting on a small wall of sea cliffs, from the sea reef, at the bottom of the bay, where the sea was no longer deep, but it was stranded with messages in a bottle from who knows what kind of Future. It seemed to her that she was dreaming with her eyes open, while the sea foam hypnotically seduced her with a monotonous rhythm... it was rowing, hypnotic seducing... while a supernatural being in a long, rustling dress was gliding... glided over on the surface of the pebbles on the shore... gliding, gliding... It's like she-he is laughing... at the same time composing first a simple, then an increasingly complex melody of matter... within the modulation of the rocks, boulders, and pebbles-stones she heard, did she hear... she hears... does she hear... the piano... pianissimo... She flinched and immediately calmed down, feeling that she could not find a reflex, a stronger emotion than dreaminess with the invocations, the appeals of restrained clicks, suppressed cries of muffled joy. The creature suddenly turned to her... stood behind her... addressed her:

- Laugh with me!

She replied, still sleepy, still dreaming:

- I don't know how to glide on the surface of the pebbles!

- Come, I'll teach you! -

She was amazed at the muteness – which was silent, in the pores of words and the conversation with her thoughts then answered:

- I must get to know you first!

The creature, the being, stood behind her, but it was visible before her eyes like a mirror reflection. It asked her, again unspoken by her vocal cords, hidden from space and by space.

- What is your name?

- Angela - she answered.

- One day someone will write a story about us, Angela... a handful of stranded foam and ground, polished pebbles... who will be born after us, and will also be written down in advance, a part of this same sea foam. Our life and the angelic story are woven in the sentences of the Creator as Poet, Creator-Poet: from His Word, we have slipped into the text, and since we are... We were created from the essence of His Being, from the being of Being... We witness His formed, shaped Word brought to life, alive. And that lyricist who will be born to describe us according to a given template, to provide us with texture, us - to be texture, and he was also born where we are, in the words of the Creator: in which we do not precede but coexist. It is the hour of earthly temporality, precisely of heavenly Providence, when we, beings, will become embodied from the Word of the Creator, will meet – and as textuists, textual scholars – recognize each other... The only thing that cannot be foreseen, or predicted is the knowledge of how someone, brought to life at a given hour-moment, will be subse-

quently described: for each one... because everyone draws and takes from their jar of faith while washing themselves. The challenge is a description as such: whether it was meant to be - is it what it was meant to be - created from the benevolent thoughts and intentions of the ardent, fervent poet: the Creator.

- I do not need stories, descriptions, because I have always longed for something like this... for such a... an indescribable moment... merciful, melodious... but... am I now speaking... Do I talk now, like you, eloquently and more muffled than a whisper... unspoken?

The being answered:

- Sit in the carriage with me. Sit with me in the carriage! - and at that moment horses ran out of the stone alley, breaking the hypnotic silence. But it was as if they were also enchanted by it, so they calmed down and lowered their heads, listening to the rustling of all the stranding: both matter and beings.

- What do you think about - beautiful? - that being said.

- Horses? - she asked, not realizing where the being had slipped. - Are you in the sea? - asked absently, and when she didn't see him, she said again silently, in a wordy, soundless, in a whisper:

- Are you a sea fairy? Are you a mermaid?

- Heavenly Angel! - the being answered, calling her with a flap, a swing, a sweep of outstretched wings.

The horses she had seen were still standing quietly with their heads down, lowered. The chariot in the hands of the angels then descended from heaven, from the starry sky, merging with the bodies of the horses that roared, and neighed piercingly. And the darkness and the silence of the night was stirred up, but then they too fell silent. Soon, the

experienced heavenly celestial and now earthly noiseless carriage pulled, dragged her through narrow stone streets that she thought nothing greater and larger could pass through: the kinetic views – vistas of the ancient city eluded them in front of them, slipped before them, sucking in their voluminousness, while at the same time letting the carriage to take over the tailoring, the shaping of dimensions and circumference and scope. The shutters were closed, and the ivy and oleanders and bougainvillea flowers and flowers of Christ's passion, flower in all colors along the wooden houses and stone palaces, intertwined with the manes of the horses as soon as they rushed past them. In the city park, the mimosa tree offered green branches in yellow (yellow as bright bee pollen powder) bloom: she gently snatched, and grabbed them - from the carriage, with a sure gesture of her hand, as if she had been trained in this skill.

Below, on the shore, there were remained, flattened pebbles on which She, Our Lady, *Stella Maris*, the Star of the Sea, appeared: on the way to Purgatory, She collected drops of sea foam that she would later pour over the boiling souls who long to be with their Living God as soon as possible. In Her honor, an aria of little angels, the aria of mighty angels is heard from the top of the Cathedral: *AVE MARIS STELLA* the mouth of the bell tower sang. *AVE MARIA* was sung by the Heavens. Then everything calmed down, fell... silent.

**** CREDO (SACRE CONVERSAZIONI) ****

R.W. Emerson: *"And never one science did not arise but from poetic observation"*

With a sigh of wind, next to the ornamental stone balustrade, through the wide open glass balcony door of the marble palace, they entered a hall full of splendor and deep unadulterated, unclouded gentleness. In the middle of the hall stood a wooden table in the shape of a cross, decorated with olive and palm branches and multicolored ribbons from votive offerings – threads of tapestries: gold, silver, and hair. At the table sat mysterious persons, figures who were picking, sorting through rosaries, old evangelists and reliquaries, and whose faces could be seen, were visible under bright, airy, transparent veils. Each of them, looking in front of them at the cross with the figure, the image of Jesus Christ, uttered and pronounced their part of the sentence, which reads as a whole:

"Credo in: Deum, Iesum Christum, Spiritum Sanctum, Maria Virgine, Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam, Sanctorum communionem, Remissionem peccatorum, Carnis Resurrectionem, Vitam Aeternam... Amen".

Her companion, who wrapped her in his angelic cloak and gently lowered her to the farthest corner of the hall,

said to her in a friendly way:

- Here, in the holy conversation about holiness, there are all the blessed ones that the free city of Kotor has produced: Pope Sixtus V, Blessed Ozana of Kotor, Blessed Gracija of Mula, Blessed Leopold Bogdan Mandić, Anamarija Marović, Blessed Martin from Kotor, Blessed Marin (younger) from Kotor, Blessed Grgur from Kotor, Blessed Adam, Blessed Rafael, Blessed Angelico, Saint Felix martyr...

Graceful beings with ethereal wings glided through the hall, as before with pebbles, on the polished emerald floor, shimmering with a whiteness more brilliant, brighter than the mirror glow, shine of the bliss of a burning host - after each *Amen*, the angels of God paused and knelt gratefully, in gratitude, bowing, lowering their heads deeply and repeating the word "holy" sonically, sonorously and piercingly. Her companion, an angel, approached the table and said to them:

- Betrayal has occurred, among believers happened. Oblivion is betrayal. Love has been replaced by mere statistics. They claim that there have never been such numbers of us here... that many of us here... and there have been even more of us... there were even more of us, with us – us, with visiting angels - dedicated to the glory of the Eternal God.

- Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! - after the word God, all the angels knelt, lowered their heads, and repeated the word Holy for a long time, long, persistently, uniformly, gently, softly...

- We have been to churches, chapels, monasteries, hospices, scriptorias, and theological schools... we were with them on pilgrimages: their faith is so weak that even after they saw us, they noticed us as their guests and wrote us down, they did not believe Him. Jerusalem is an *axis mundi*, a spiritual

entity that a Christian could experience anywhere.

In the middle of the table, a raised text surrounded by stars appeared in the air, which looked like a record of the universe about the universe: there-here, where the galaxy was now deeper and wider: with its suction power, it sucked those present into itself, dragging them into the vortex of the *Credo*. In the content of the text of the holographically depicted and presented Croatian scientific *Zbornik Proceeding*, it was written... text stated:

"During the publication of the anagraph from 1781, a technical error occurred. Namely, in the table, under the number of the diocesan clergy in Kotor and its surroundings, there is the number 727. Comparing this number with the number of inhabitants of Dalmatian Kotor, the number of Kotor residents, and the number of diocesan clergy in Dalmatian Zadar, we can conclude that the number of Kotor clergy is unrealistic. We believe that such a large number of the clergy of Kotor occurred... was caused by a technical error, i.e. or rather, by inadvertently adding... the inadvertent addition of the number seven from the neighboring column. For this reason, we have omitted 727 and included the probable number 272."

... Waking up, she felt the orchestral illumination, spirituality illuminated by light, an orchestral glow, enveloped in light. She scattered the bluish, azzurro morning air, smiling. It was as if she dreamed of the carelessness of childhood, tasted sweetness on her palate, touched, felt soft tenderness, received golden light, gave a benevolent thought, glided... on the surface of the sea... but she could not remember the dream, but the infinite-deep gentleness in everything, the

divinity woven from the tenderness that possessed her, engulfed her. She felt blessed.

She remembered her favorite place in Boka: under the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary *Beata Maria Virgo* in a large mantle, cloak of yellow marble, supported and held by angels who celebrate Her and at the same time, simultaneously, worshipped Her.

**** FIANCÉ OF THE MORNING ****

Angela was awakened by the chirping of birds, more piercing than usual. She remembered that she had placed sunflower seeds scattered on the edge of the balcony, but she had not expected birds to fly, to burst into the room through the open balcony door. What a charm, a loveliness of waking up in the morning, while the reflections of the sun combined with the murmur of the sea were already penetrating every corner of the room with precise persistence. She remembered her daily task: to count churches, chapels, and monasteries and through calculation, to discover the exact number of clergy. In the antechamber ante-room, among the ornaments, in a golden frame with the shape of a cross, she read a list of Catholic churches and chapels in the Boka Kotorska Bay of Kotor - sixty-nine of them (with the current French barrack seventy), but what was missing... there were no Benedictine monasteries and their colleges, or schools, which gathered numerous clergy who sailed from various pious Western world centers for the reasons of worship - shorter or longer pilgrimages - first stopping by the nearby Croatian Catholic Dubrovnik or who were descended from the Montenegrin royal Cetinje and climbed back up to the Montenegrin Orthodox monastery of Ostrog. As the head of the embroiderers' section within the ancient *Confraternita* Confraternity Catholic Brotherhood of the Boka Navy - the oldest seafaring frater-

nity in the Adriatic and one of the oldest in the world which has played a memorial role for centuries, preserving and promoting maritime history and tradition - a Brotherhood with the participation included inhabitants of Boka Croats and Italians, and its sympathizers and frequent patrons Montenegrins - which takes care of both formal ceremonial and occasional attire, casual clothing on all (and for all) occasions and events of the famous Navy, she decided to strengthen her social significance and stand out: not by and with embroidery because all the ladies in the section were excellent famous embroiderers and widely known for the costumes embroidered with gold embroidery, but with new ideas that expand regular assignments and duties. She considered she should also take care of the church vestments. It is necessary to take care of church clothing and the ceremonial formal embroidery with the coat of arms of the invincible Navy that defended Kotor from the Turks - to be included in appropriate church ceremonies and festivities for example, while the *Karika* on January 13th was celebrated.

Decorated and adorned with communal intentions, she goes out to the balcony, takes a deep breath of the azure air - and through the refraction of light from the sloping roof with the vibrating gusts, blows of the warm southern wind absorbs all the benefits of the sunny song of the blessed Morning. Of course, it was the ideal occasion, an opportunity for the morning ritual: to check, to make sure that the sailboat of the beloved was still in front of her eyes, anchored in her memory and alive as a chirping, luxurious morning. The view from her balcony was among the most beautiful in the coastal city of Kotor, as it rose above the upper, higher, and lower tree-lined avenues of the city park

and encompassed the entire bay in length and width to its visible edge. Boats were crossing, cutting each other's path: fishermen were returning from early morning fishing, and bathers in boats, swimmers from boats in which joy screamed through impatient rowing rows - the impatient strokes of the oars screamed with joy - were just moving, heading to distant islets, green islands or lonely beaches in search of peace in natural beauty. A slender sailing ship with luxurious sails decorated with foreign flags was sailing into the bay from the direction of the Strait of Verige (the Verige Strait, the narrowest part of the Bay of Kotor: it was named after the noble Kotor family Catena, their Italian relatives, whose name means chains - the chains that prevented the Turks from entering the inner bays with the city Kotor), which meant that today merchants would raise prices, expecting a good profit.

City life flourished in the dynamic bustle of reciprocity, mutuality of brotherhoods of sailors, shipowners, shipwrights, caulkers, carpenters, coopers, barbers, surgeons, bellmakers, basket makers, butchers, goldsmiths, sculptors, stonecutters, shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, fishermen... She breathed the smell of the fish market... or she just longed for the bustle of small markets, when you are looking forward at the same time to sudden noisy bustling meetings with dear people (hugs with loved ones), and bargaining - fishermen's bargaining, negotiations with fishermen... and then with the enticing aromas, the tempting smells of delicious dishes, and finally a festive hearty, abundant lunch that is eaten with your favorite people.

Under the balcony, in the shade of the pine trees, she noticed someone... saw the waving of his arms, strong hands, but because of the staccato of the morning murmur in the

city streets under the rhythm, under the beats of the morning, she could not hear a word. The bells rang at that moment, so she stared at the old stone bell towers with heavy copper-bronze bells, whose weight you could feel through their monotonous, uniform rhythmic beats. They rang both bright and dark at the same time because the original shrill joy of sound had sunk, it was drowned in the bottom of the bay, from which it reemerged again like a murky echo, as a dull echo, reminding mortals of their designed transience. The oldest bell in the city rang. It was known that if you rang the bell, the witness of the century would bring you good luck: that is why she also wondered to who the God-fearing bell ringer (who was favorably, benevolently accompanied by a good Fate-Destiny) had allowed to reap happiness, luck today. Was it a heavenly bell – a message connected to a celestial clock or an earthly clockbell? The universe modeled after a clockwork excludes human participation unless it is just another component of its vast mechanism.

The miraculous dance of the shimmering sea surface (of the sea) and the movement of the sea boats towards the islets in the distance awakened hope in her, and as if in a haze, mist of morning excitement, her soul anchored itself among the relatives of lofty intentions - clouds that lazily and sensually expressed various forms of coexistence with everything around them: without the intention... with no intention of descending lower, to the sea, into the superior melody... melodiousness... of watercolors.

She was startled when she realized that he was waving to her, as he approached, getting closer and closer to the balcony: it was not her handsome, elusive, unattainable Captain, but the persistent Suitor in sailor's attire who, even un-

knowingly, had guessed the time when he would see her as natural as possible in a thin lace nightgown with loose hair, with her hair down: of course from a distance and sheltered by bright flowers in the soft leaves of the rampant blooming oleander. For the chastity in the dealings, in the interaction, between the lady and the suitor was implied. She waved and understood the message: a bouquet of the freshest wildflowers was already waiting for her in the lobby in a vase. Her Suitor was not a captain or a notable of the Brotherhood, but the son of a fisherman and a merchant, a sailor with a romantic heart with a house on the other side of the bay, in the wider backwater, a wider arm of the fjord, where the fjord exuberantly expands, spreads out into new bays. There were on gentle hills stretched rural estates bordered by gardens, orchards, vineyards, olive groves, pastures, groves, macchia, and meadows full of wild fragrant flowers of the most luxurious southern colors. This rural peasant landscape was the home of fishermen and their diligent women, hardworking wives, where the ladies of the town did not go, except for the necessary visits for church ceremonies: either to churches or to cemeteries located high in the hills. Only their maids, housekeepers maidservants would go to this tame and bustling rustic paradise landscape – populated, filled with olive mills, gazebos, barns, haciendas with bread ovens purposefully for freshly picked figs, oranges, lemons, raspberries, blackberries and other fruits for desserts and cakes, for fresh goat's milk and cheeses, garlic and thick yellow-golden thick olive oil, green and black olives, fresh spices, bread, cereals, legumes, prosciutto, salted fish, fresh sea shellfish, prosecco... and sweet red and white wine.

She went down the narrow interior stairs and peeked into

the room on the second floor and the first floor, but her sisters were not in them: she concluded that they were painting in the studio. For a few moments, for the umpteenth time, she thought about how their father - an experienced and respected captain of the Boka Navy and also a court auditor and in the past the head of the Confraternity - *gastald* - meaning superintendent or steward, could not have chosen a more beautiful palace: with smaller women's rooms with lower ceilings on the floors and a wide ground floor with a high ceiling that contained all rooms except the bedrooms. On the ground floor, on a Renaissance table in a Venetian vase, she noticed a luxurious bouquet and a short message: "Queen of flowers, flowers of all flowers, dew of flowers, the most sublime, the most exalted!! I'm waiting for you." She found Marija, the pretty maidservant, in the living room dissolving and opening the shutters. Marija loved aeration: in fact, she called out for the wind, invoked the tickling of the wind. And Angela thought about it: all the maids are like that, so frivolous, coquettish, and they all get married quickly...

- Don't open them completely, all the way, I'm still in my dressing gown! – she shouted and was taken aback when she finally found herself in front of the piano keys.

She played both the toccata and the fugue as if an escaping into the rhythmic and mental, thoughtful rigor of the composition was the best way to start the morning. In music, she felt the supernatural because of the displacement of her being: carved, engraved in the keys, she entered the purity of the sound into which she would voluntarily disappear, drowning in the shards, fragments of fragility - for the reality of an inconspicuous, unacceptable absence: she floated, jumped, immersed, plunged, flickered, merged, sparkled...

In music, obsessed with the density of the versions of Light, she ran with her eyes closed with the knowledge that she was always running towards the Light: each note was a strip of rays, a ray of light, particles of light, the wave of light, buds of the ever-traveling Spirit (and opening of buds was illumination) – an audible scream in the content of an even deeper, inner silent radiation which is compressed, squeezed contrapuntally, counterpointly into the luminous resolution of all earthly doubts... And she needed nothing but a string of chords, a series of chords, the flow of chords, except dedication and a complete harmonious surrender of harmonic herself. Who is pure Light... she sighed inside, within herself, quite completely sure of her simultaneously musical and divine polyphonic feeling. The thick lace curtains that provided shade in the afternoon heat were now connected, tied together, and through the half-open shutters penetrated the blended pearly refracted light with the breeze that, rustling, descended the leaves of the trees to the ancient amphorae in the garden, long since emerged, from which still, under the tickling of the wind, evaporate the taste of salt and the smell of algae and the pinch, the tossing of waves and mystical rustlings with the screams, cries of the secrets of the depths of the sea... still evaporate under the tickles of the wind to the keys of piano... and fingers that themselves, alone, without notes, in the resurrection of forgotten partitura, the score played the chords of a composition that had already been played so many times before.

She was timidly disturbed by the feeling of the presence of cooperative, collaborative, gentle, and fragile energy: if she had not been alone - Marija was cooking lunch in the garden kitchen - she would have bet that she felt the

tremors of other beings as well. She was overwhelmed, overcome by both self-satisfaction and bliss: bliss because of the accompaniment of the angels in whom she believed... - and how could it not be and how could she not - when her name is Angela...

**** THREE PIOUS SISTERS (TRE SORELLE) : EX
VOTO****

- Praised be Jesus and Mary! - said Don Gracija and when the sisters greeted him equally, but adding the fatherly figure of saint Joseph, he comfortably settled himself in a French armchair in the salon. The sisters sat opposite him, one next to the other.

- How beautiful and exemplary you are to me! - he gave them a cheerful compliment, in a good mood, which made them laugh contritely.

- Marija baked the citrus fruit cake that you love - said the eldest Angela hospitably, and pointed to the tray that stood on a nearby decorative baroque table covered with luxurious gold threads in an embroidered lace tablecloth that was the work of their hands. On one side of the table were the gold-plated covers of a prayer book, and on the other the breviary, the Liturgy of Hours. Next to the tray with cakes, stood French porcelain fruit bowls decorated with decayed twigs, budding branches, and leaves, full of various types of southern and tropical fruits that looked fresh just picked: black and green figs (heavier and larger than all the fruits), oranges, tangerines, lemons, kiwi, pineapples, bananas, avocados, mangoes, maracuja, ananas...

- I'll never know the culinary secret of good housewives... how it is always both fresh and delicious! - between bites he

looked at them, nodding his head slowly and intimately.

- The cake is really... sweetly lemony... excellent, supreme sweetness and aroma... I smell egg sponge cake... feel an egg biscuit... I smell orange feel... lemon... carob... honey... almonds... cinnamon... vanilla... but I don't recognize these white, delicious crumbs... so delicious...

- Coconut crumbs. Surely you have already... probably heard of coconut. Our father brought it from his last *voyage* to distant continents. These wooden carved figures of elephants and exotic birds are the latest decorations of the salon.

- South America, Africa, Asia... Mahogany, Burmese rosewood, macadamia... who knows what riches, what treasures the distance hides... and we Boka Catholics do not know this because we are not colonizers: we are exclusively travelers, never conquerors! And all the conquerors who tried to conquer us Kotorans... Because of the intercession of St. George, who eliminates, removes, and defeats all dangers, all monsters of terrifying and dangerous properties, and because of the intercession and his successor the saint of our Cathedral, a soldier with a spear - we have never been conquered, burned and killed even by the most dangerous of the most dangerous, and here I am thinking first of all, primarily of the Ottomans. If we know, and realize together in spirit with the patron saints of our Cathedral – we win! Do you know *Psalm 124.2-3 "Our help is in the name of the Lord: ...If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when people rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up alive..."*

- Thank God. - said the sisters in the same voice.

- But I did not come for the cake! – retiring from the teacher's rhetoric, Don Gracija exclaimed, suddenly,

abruptly lowering - dropping his saucer onto the gilded tray. The sisters froze.

- I came to tell you that there is no more sense in it... it no longer makes sense... those love thoughts in your beautiful heads.

- Oh... Oh... Yes...! - the sisters shouted with an audible relief in their shouts.

- After all, all is well with our Father and the merciful glorious Brotherhood! Oh... yes: and with the most holy Catholic Church! - they said.

- I am surprised that you are still waiting for your sympathies: handsome captains and sailors... which is nothing unusual because most of the girls in Boka dream the same... are the same... especially while their eyes are fixed on the steps, here I deliberately say steps and not dancers, of the ceremonial round wheel dance of the Boka Navy... All the world knows that the medieval traditional circle *kolo* dance is performed as a central event during the festivities, accompanied by musical orchestras, and knows that during formal celebrations, our members wear colorful traditional uniforms, and carry historical weapons... But it is time for you to get married! – when he said this, he looked into Angela's eyes, looking at her more sternly than the others.

- I hear that you have a suitor Angela. - he told her sternly.

- Don Gracija, my thoughts are dedicated to the Virgin Mary and her purity... holiness, and chastity of the Merciful... Virtuous... filled with all the virtues...

- We talked about the *Immaculata* earlier and after you refused to choose a monastic life dedicated to Her... As far as I remember, although no one but me needs to mention it... no one except me... your dowry was brought back. Returned from the monastery at the last minute.

- The barbarian French turned that monastery into an army barracks and the church into a warehouse - Gracijana said angrily.

- *Deo Optimo Maximo!* May Your will be done! Thy will be done! - Don Gracija replied contritely, continuing his thought:

- Bernardine lived a strict penitential life walled up next to the church of Our Lady of Rest here in Kotor... You know what we read in the church of the Holy Spirit: "*Regina Sanctissimi Stellari ora pro nobis*"! Amen.

- Thank God. – the sisters said in the same voice, contrite and meek.

- And let the merciful God intercede for the French... for having saved the *fundus religionis* in the form of the *Scuola Dalmata di San Giorgio e San Trifone* after the fall, the collapse of the Venetian Republic. - Don Grazia continued passionately, fervently, holding a glass of liqueur in his hand and making a gesture as if he were toasting the French:

- Oh, yes. And to the French, let the intercession of the merciful God be taken into account for saving the *fundus religionis* in the form of the *Scuola Dalmata di San Giorgio e San Trifone*!

- After all, the School is a tradition of the Templars and the Order of Malta... the church of St. John of the Temple! - Angela continued.

- There is a little spark and fervor here towards the saints, for the saints and their legends and miracles, but more politics. But politics can shake various Brotherhoods, but not such stable ones as ours: no one would dare to abolish their Venetian *Confraternita* and ours from Kotor: after all, we are also a military force, a strong military power. In our hands

are both the rudder and the saber! We also have a rudder and a saber in our hands! And the sabers and the goblet! And the sword and the goblet! And the glorious battles for freedom and expeditions to circumnavigate the world! - the priest explained.

- And power is also knowledge, to whom all papal indulgences were granted, right?... To whom all the papal indulgences have been handed, isn't it? - Trifona added.

- And gifts, donations... And the donated relics of Saint George! - Gracijana continued because it was necessary to show that the captain's daughters have not only beauty but also intelligence, which is talked about in luxurious salons.

- Dear maidens, you know everything, but you certainly do not know the name of the School's decorator...

- I know! Ivan Barić from Diocletian's Split.

- Eh... Wise Women, Captain's Daughter. Women like you give birth to people of noble spirit, even saints: may the mother of a saint be your role model... Eucaria! Eukarya! - sighed Don Gracija, lost in thoughts, sinking into thoughts that to the observer seemed more like a nap than a reflection or contemplation on the beautiful and wise maidens of the Brotherhood Confraternity or about the mothers of the saints.

- If only those Venetian lagoons were closer, on the feast of Saint George I too would give four gold ducats and two of our homemade breads and a decorated candle... - sighed Angela.

- But now you are receiving gifts... - Don Gracija said impatiently.

- What kind of gifts... Ah yes... just flowers... you know what our custom is here in Boka: camellia flowers, honey, and brandy for a kind and hospitable host...

- You know that the confessional secret... secret of confession doesn't leave me many options... too many possibilities... but everyone, absolutely everyone knows about flowers!

- Yes, this is true... when I infinitely, endlessly love freshly picked flowers from fragrant meadows...

- Rather, devote yourself to the plant species in your garden because you know that your father's wish... to plant in the garden all the species that are read in the Bible... has not yet been fulfilled! - the Reverend answered, replied her sternly.

- And it has not been fulfilled because no one has read the entire Bible in that naturalistic... in this natural science way: everyone gets excited when reading about human deeds and God's teachings, punishments, rewards, and intentions! Who would pay attention to the readable plant species? - exclaimed Angela.

- And because some species may no longer exist? - added Trifona.

- And because some species do not thrive, do not succeed in Boka...? - Gracijana also joined in, wise, reasoning.

- Dear and exemplary! Boka means the magnificent material and spiritual architecture of nature and man... EVERYTHING succeeds and thrives in this paradise, the paradisiacal climate of Boka: from the developing - developmental flowering of nature to the saintly heights of the sublime God-fearing and God-exalted, God-raptured human soul... While your father sails the high seas... I must tell you in his name... I have to tell you on his behalf... how you're not... that you are not doing well: either stop receiving bouquets or agree to the engagement... to get engaged...

- But even if I agree to the engagement, I cannot do it without my father's knowledge and approval! - Angela inter-

rupted him in an impatient voice.

- He has entrusted you to me and the Brotherhood for care! On the coat of arms of the *Nobile Corpo della Marinezza Bochese, Bokeljska Mornarica* the readable motto is *FIDES ET HONOR*, faith, and honor! - the Reverend replied in a stern voice.

- Thank you dear God and the Holy Catholic Church and the Brotherhood! - Angela answered on behalf of the sisters, and the sisters nodded their heads affirmatively.

- Yes, thank God... and now I will let you think about my words and see you on Sunday at Holy Mass, and before that, at confession, as usual.

- Thank you, Reverend!

- Thank God and Jesus and Mary, without whom you would not be here now in the company of exemplary virgins... Luckily... Fortunately, your father placed you in rooms upstairs, so it is indeed safer for you that way... And more beautiful, while in the evening you watch... look at the small boats decorated with lamps from which the song of the troubadours is placed...and flows...

- I have to ask you, Reverend, something before you leave. You see here, our beloved and respected father has kindly framed a list of all the churches and chapels in Boka Bay, and now we are thinking about... wondering how many clergy there would be in total?

- And who would know exactly? Why are you thinking about that?

- Some say less than three hundred and some say more than seven hundred.

- There were about sixty active Catholic churches and chapels, each with two priests, which is more than one hundred and twenty... let them be accompanied by about a

hundred young students, young chaplains, canons, future priests, which is more than two hundred... let there be about hundred priests of the Catholic and Orthodox faith who are at peace, and many of whom are not from our homeland but have chosen it for the elderly, the old people's prayer and fasting... then Biblical scholars for listening to the words of Eternal Life and confessors – do not forget that having a good confessor is one of the most influential graces of God - which is more than four hundred... and let there be about a hundred traveling guests of the Catholic and even Orthodox faith in the monasteries and *scriptoria*, scriptoriums where *incunabula* and Glagolitic missals, urbars, urbani were created... well, a long time ago, once upon a time, Benedictine monasteries stood alongside all of them... by everyone... which is more than five hundred... and a few hospices with oldest priests... and let there be about two hundred nuns, which is more than seven hundred of God's clergy... and the same number of people faithful to God, a thousand and thousands... We are talking about past times when the priesthood and the clergy played a significant social role and for many, it was a source of daily bread, an escape from poverty as much as a choice - a life calling, a vocation in life. The truth is: in Boka Bay, people and their saints prayed so wholeheartedly, fervently, contritely, persistently, saintly, and together that the powerful Ottoman conquerors, the Turks, never conquered, destroyed, and subdued the impregnable fortress-city of Kotor - and the city of Kotor in its history was even a free, independent Republic! History is a *locus theologicus* of God's saving event: it is in the embodiment of God's Word, the *Logos*, which is taking out the human nature and uniting her with His Divine in one person - entered history and re-

mains unbreakable and connected to its end. We must walk humbly together with our dear God... through History.

Tre Sorelle nodded very humbly, making sure not to interrupt him with questions.

- Christian faith is rooted in the historical sequence of God's revelations as the history of salvation which has its climax: it culminates in the event of Jesus Christ. In that event, its foundation has also the eschatological hope of the promised future of the ultimate goal of history, according to which all men and nations are called and governed.

Angela stopped listening... sinking... lost in thought. She pondered how she could have ever thought that she didn't need to think about what was happening below her balcony. When their priest and confessor went away, Trifona, who was named after the powerful, mighty saint of the Kotor Cathedral and was the middle one in age, and the youngest Gracijana, whose name shone like the name of the Blessed Gracija, laughed sweetly.

- How she... that pretty, sweet *Bokeljka* - which means a woman from Boka... Angela... could even think that she shouldn't think about what was going on under her balcony! – confessed Angela her thoughts with a smile.

- Still, he didn't find out what was going on... what was happening on clear evenings! - said Trifona. - He knows very well that troubadours go from house to house and from balcony to balcony, not choosing who they will sing to.

- After all, they don't sing the same songs to everyone...

- The sounds of the mandolin are enough for me, but you ordered them to sing you a klapa song and they sang it to you *a cappella*. – Trifona said impudently and defiantly.

- Maybe I did and maybe I didn't: how can you be sure from your balcony on the second floor of what you heard

and saw on my balcony above yours?

- Yes, dear, how can you be sure of what you heard and saw on my balcony below yours... from your balcony on the second floor? And last night's serenade was wonderful... beautiful... it was! - Gracijana exclaimed delightedly and excitedly.

All three of them laughed, confidentially, each to herself, imagining to themselves, inside...

- Do you think your suitor will play and sing tonight too?

- You know very well that he can't come to this side of the fjord every night.

- It is important that he arrives in the morning with bouquets... Which you're going to give up, aren't you, right?

- You bet she won't!

- Then you bet she won't because I bet she will!

- It's a pity we have no one to bet with... we don't have anyone to bet with – and they burst out laughing, looking at Angela, who had taken on a strange, unusual, petrified expression.

- What is Angela? - asked Gracijana anxiously.

- I will remain a spinster. I will dedicate, and consecrate my life to the Blessed Mary. To read prayer books to the population. To be an even better embroiderer. To take care of poor children: I will bring them gifts and cakes for the holidays. On Christmas Eve we will decorate the Christmas tree and bring orphans to our house... for Christmas and after... later... for the Easter! - Angela spoke more and more vigorously, briskly, raising her voice, her solemn tone, continuing as if in some fever and as if she were addressing a wider audience:

- I will enjoy the colors of autumn, the crackling of a fire in the fireplace in winter, the scents of spring, and the caress

of the sea waves in summer. I'm going to read poetry... yes, I will even write it! I will give free lessons in piano and reading and etiquette and church organ and singing... Yes, the singing... for I will continue to sing in the church choir with a voice more beautiful than ever: which the Purity of the Blessed Virgin Mary will grant me, even purer and more melodious! Yes, which will be given to me even more pure and graceful by the Most Pure Heart Saints!

- Wouldn't it be easier, simpler, if you were a nun? - Trifona said mercilessly.

- Why do you always spoil the dramatic atmosphere? - Gracijana retorted.

- It's easy for her to daydream while she has a father. And what will happen when her father gets old? He should have sons-in-law who will take care of the palace.

- Why don't you get married, but look into the distance from your balcony... as if he, a young man in his prime, still remembers you? - more mockingly than in a friendly way, her sister replied.

- Do you have nothing more pious to answer me? - Trifona said with a sigh.

- Who are you sighing, for now, I wonder... - Gracijana said, prodding.

- For the time that is rushing by, it does not bring solutions to me... Indeed... Time does not bring me solutions, but it does bring to Angela, as Don Gracija well noticed.

- Neither you, nor he, nor anyone in this world will give orders to Angela! - Gracijana shouted rebelliously.

Angela walked along the salon and seemed to be picking over through her steps... it seemed as if she was counting her steps, not caring about the conversation.

- Trifona is right. Sons-in-law should take care of the aging

elderly father and the estate. She really shouldn't be selfish and self-sufficient. I have to pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary to be better, more helpful, more humble.

- But not a slave! - exclaimed Gracijana.

- What would the Blessed Virgin say about my exaltation, my arrogance? How much pain She endured because of the sacrifice of her Son! Who sacrificed himself for others! For us!

- You sound so true... It's like you're a nun, but when I cover my ears I see your seductive, challenging beauty and the worldly sparkle in your eyes!

- Yes, I think... it seems to me you bring a little too much passion into your religious expression. I cannot imagine that dear nun Lucia would speak in such a strange way... that worldly way...

- And you've found her as an example... she bows her head contritely, she mutters, murmurs to herself and humbly lowers her head and gaze as if Jesus and the statues of saints are watching her at every moment!

- And they're watching us, from above.

- Come on... I'm talking about holding head... keeping head up!

- And the venerable nun is lofty, more noble towards saints... and blunt... and more eloquent...

- I don't care about nuns anymore! I'm going to get married! - exclaimed Angela.

- Who will get your room then? - Gracijana hops and jumps up to her sister with the intention of... just kissing her hair.

- If only you would think more about new cake recipes than about the freestanding mirror, the canopy, and feminine ornaments in her room... Be more useful and grateful than spoiled, even ostentatious, Gracijana!

- I'm thinking about the view from her balcony..... She is the first to see the ships returning...

- And those who are leaving. – sighed Angela, still in love with her handsome captain whose dance during the festivities attracts, and captivates the eyes: many girls, like her, ran, lavishly decorated, to watch the performance of the Boka Navy *kolo* dance mostly because of him and other handsome captains.

- Here I will read you a new thought by a young poet from the Republic, our dear free city of independent Republic Dubrovnik... maybe it will encourage us to think more concretely... Listen:

"The people of Boka do not know how to live with their thoughts firmly grounded, because surrounded by the natural beauties that the good God has mercifully bestowed upon them, given them for free, they immerse themselves in these beauties, constantly sighing for their Creator and imagining that they are already united with Him in a distant Eternity. Sometimes it seems to them that this Eternity, into which they constantly gaze with all the depths of their souls - especially at dusk, when the screeching of waves calm down, when the freezing and thickening condensation of the southern sea in the dark bay resembling an oily lake beneath the mountain peaks - is precisely the one that is just coming, closer to them than the dynamics of Life from which all co-shaping vitality springs. They completely forget to live to, without describing it, dreamily surrender to a unique pastoral atmosphere, they indulge in a pastoral atmosphere, since nowhere in the world does heavy, thick, salty water arise from sweet rain... Because Boka is not a sea connected by waves to the rest of the open

sea or separated within itself: it is a giant well of sweet rain-water mixed with grains of coarse salt - from which, after the mists of persistent gray rain, sunny paradise green island oases emerge in the heart of the blu, shores emerge with the greenest and most fertile fields on which juicy fruits paradise fruits grow, the sweetest fruits of black and white grapes, where animals emerge from paradise that provide blessings, that give benefits of every kind as healthy as mother's milk. The people of Boka do not live through Dionysian sensuality but through a spiritual longing for sensual displacement and carnal absence: because of the beauty bestowed upon them by God in which they are born as God's chosen ones, God's shepherds, they forget to live their everyday worries and do not understand why they should coexist with the little things and tricks, trifles that it places before them, imposes on them: because even the landscape is at their service, the landscape also plays into their hands, generously bestowing upon them all kinds of blessings, giving all kinds of benefits. Observing everything through the monumentality of Eternity - they live their presence in God's beauty in the style of a habit of expected but extraordinary events, immersed in deep rapture in the extraordinariness of the life-event as such, in deep ecstasy submerged in the valuability of the love-event as such, in the appearance and substance of the stillness, of the calm, of the World. They do not worry too much about the future because God has given them a sea rich in fish and fields rich in fruits, vegetables, and wild and domestic animals: to survive they do not have to fight, struggle with constant threats or the stinginess of the nature that surrounds them. They do not worry too much about dangers because God has hidden them behind the Verige chains, deep into the fjord,

in the embrace of the bay's gulf cave nymphs and coastal fairies, far and hidden from the lively turbulence and empty whims, vain of the outer World. They know that the most difficult, the hardest thing is to master one's soul and the sea, and they compete to see who will be the most excellent, virtuous, and skilled in steering both moral life and the seas. They only worry whether this fullness of intimate Eternity will last long enough for them to precisely understand the Creator: what He wanted to tell them, whether He told them everything, and why to them. That is why their motto, with the help of which they build numerous luxurious churches, chapels, and monasteries, consists of the grateful glorification: *MAGNIFICAT ANIMA MEA DOMINUM.* "

- I will observe the stars on the balcony. - said Angela, walking towards the unfathomable paths of the night sky, after listening to the written word. And she sighed more deeply than usual: as if she had said stars but actually meant her captain.

The younger sisters remained seated in a gracious silence illuminated by the sharp light of the moonlight, for the windows were now wide open. They held prayer books and rosaries in their hands. The salty, warm air was humid. In the distance, first muffled, catlike... cat footsteps and then mysterious human footsteps could be heard, rolling down the echo, through the gates, the ports from the sea, past chapels on whose old bell towers the coats of arms of ancient noble families were legible, past the cloisters, along the cloisters, balustrades, garrets, squares, mansards, piazzas, palaces... and even further, beyond everything that could be seen, beyond everything that can be fathomed...

the monotonous, familiar and caressing sound of the sea: now the boats lapped, now the shore. The scream of sails being torn apart by the enthusiastic sailor's wind. They trembled because they knew: Fate was the helmsman. Angela was already singing, humming, and dancing under the stars, imagining herself in the arms of her beloved. They heard, under their palates, something else: a fig was ripening sweetly.

**** THE CITADEL, THE CAVERNOUS REFUGE OF
THE HEART, THE STEADFAST SOUL OF MAN, IS
DIVINE ****

"Templum in monte sacrum quod Diva puerpera coeli incolit"
Ivan Bolica about the shrine of Madonna de Riposo,
Madonna a Quiete, Madonetta del Monte, Our Lady of
Health, *Santa Maria della Salute* over the city Kotor

Angela was not afraid of earthquakes, plague, or death. But she was afraid of the dark human souls who - full of envy, wicked, vicious, devilish, and malicious evil - through destructive plots, and destructive intrigues, purposefully destroy good opportunities, good paths, and good souls. That is why, before ill-intentioned people found out about her suitor, she accepted his invitation to take a walk through the fortresses of Kotor, defensive walls from the Venetian period which are also called the castle and the citadel. On the top of St. John's Hill, a small church dedicated to John the Baptist served the needs of the army that guarded the city walls. The church Our Lady of Rest and later of Health, built-in 1572 due to the plague when all the canons in Kotor died, overlooks the bay. Four chapels dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary lead towards the shrine of Our Lady of Health, *Santa Maria della Salute*: they all watch over the city of Kotor.

- I am an ideal guide, I know everything about the fortresses of Kotor. Like poet Ivan Bolica in the 16th century... with his Latin poem about the city Kotor: „*DESCRIP-TIO SINUS ET ASCRIVIENSIS URBIS*”. It is a good thing that Kotorans did not suffer much more in the severe earthquakes in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, which are still remembered in our regiment, by our domestic people, and which followed another threat, the occasional terrifying periods of the plague.

- What do you think, why does God send ... Why did God send plague and earthquakes? - Angela asked her eloquent suitor.

- And certainly not so that good people would perish, would die in them! – he answered.

- Possibly as a warning to the good to watch out for the wicked... to beware of the evil! - she added.

- Do you think the good ones should be warned and the evil, bad ones should not?

- No warning helps the wicked. They enjoy evil, they devise, create, and plan for a long time what evil they will inflict on others. - replied Angela.

- With me, you don't have to be afraid that anyone will harm you. I am here for you.

- If you protect me, who will protect you?... If you're looking after me, who's going to take care of you? – she repeated with a smile.

- Merciful God. Everything is in God's hands... But why do you think that warnings are only intended for the good?

- Some good people, like our dear father, are too good... and think that evil does not exist, especially not among the good. He sailed to the other side of the world and, with full trust, with full confidence in the goodness of the good peo-

ple who surround us... left us three sisters alone.

- When you, as captain's daughters, are surrounded by good people: nobility, clergy, nuns, families of distinguished, respectable captains and their loyal sailors...

- Yet... Still, you came to me easily and quickly...

- Easily? Quickly? So many years: first watching from afar, then asking questions, then getting closer, then establishing communication...

- Two years... from afar... not much...

- No, if this is now the beginning of something that will last for the rest of my life... in that case, it is not much. – her suitor sighs heavily.

Angela smiled mysteriously, looking away... the other way, as if she had not experienced his longing proposal. The suitor wanted so much to become a *fiancé* that he accepted the game and pretended not to be affected by her current aloofness, unresponsiveness, momentary detachment, receptiveness...

- And some people are not benevolently naive like your father, who knows full well that evil exists.

- And what do you know about such people?

- I know that such people build fortresses that are indefensible. They do everything so that evil does not triumph, and does not win so that evil invaders do not take over Kotor and loot and rob and kill its inhabitants.

- Yet all these good people do not do something good, when God warns them along the way with dangers, through threats.

- Who knows who He is admonishing and how much and what those He is admonishing have sinned... Who knows whom He warns and what those whom He warns have sinned?

- *Acruvium* in the time of ancient Rome, *Decaderon* in the time of Byzantium, then *Catharum* Kotor ... who knows whose - probably pagan bones - earthquake should be dug up, and then thrown into the sea with the rest of the earth dust...

- *Decadron* comes from the Greek word *katareo* κατάρέω : *kata* κατά = downwards, *reo* ρέω = to flow, run, stream, gush which would be to get, to acquire from a spring. To flow, descend, to fall into...

- Into the sea. – they both said at the same time.

- To fall, to collapse... as if the earthquakes were prophesied or described through that river flow that flows into the sea...

- The Psalms say: “...*our fortress is the God of Jacob*...”

- And they also say: “*I will sing of your strength and I will sing of your loving-kindness in the morning, I will shout to your mercy in the morning, for you have become my refuge and a refuge in the day of trouble. My strength, I will sing to you, for you are God, my protection, my God, my mercy.*”

- Amen – they both said at the same time.

Confused by the unplanned simultaneity, they fell silent. Amen still resounded, echoed in them as a God-given good sign. Angela puffed a little, deflated slightly blushed from the walk, and took out a Spanish fan from her purse.

- Here's some information for you... *you-who-know-it-all*. The fan has been kept in the family since the period when the Spanish and the Venetians conquered Herceg-Novi in the 16th century.

- You are more precious to me than an old antique fan... - the suitor answered, replied her heartily. She looked behind her to see where the maid and companion Marija was, who was assigned by the sisters to watch the suitor's every move, every step, and behavior since it was customary for unmar-

ried people to have an escort or worthy and decent companion.

- What a beautiful, hot day! – exclaimed Angela, obviously in a good mood.

- Hold your breath, you'll need it! 520 stairs lead to the church and 1420 steps to the fortress: the staircase winds parallel to the sloping paved road for the extraction of cannons – a little through a smile and more seriously, the interlocutor threw it at her, and continued to teach:

- Bastion Gudić protected the approach to Kotor from Trojica and Škaljari with its cannons, while the bastions Citadel or Campana, Bembo or Vendramin and Riva at the mouth of the Škurda River protected the approach from Dobrota. Gurdić and Citadel also defended the city from cannons from the fleet, of navy ships. The bastions had low gun emplacements and the cannons aimed at both the hill and the sea. Of all the historical moments, the most hateful thing for me is to say about some people in Boka... perhaps those who were not born in Boka... when they sided with the Orthodox Montenegrins and the Protestant English while the English from their warship directed, led the cannon fire in the direction of Kotor, after which the Frenchman Gauthier surrendered.

- I thought the French were barbarians when they converted the church into an armory.

- Think about it! The French are Catholics who were attacked by barbarian Orthodox and Potestanians! After all, barbarians would not establish theatre and the French established theatre in the city of Kotor!

- Still, of all the non-Catholic barbarians attackers, the worst are the Ottoman Turks.

- Oh yes, the Ottomans, the Orthodox, and the Protestants

had plans to conquer Kotor... All of them had conquering intentions towards Kotor, but God still intended it for the Catholics. The people of Kotor boast that the Ottomans never conquered Kotor because of the famous diplomatic skills of the learned people of Boka who stayed for years, even decades at the Muslim court. The truth is that the Turks had wise men who advised them not to conquer the fortress of the city, whose first and second patron saints were saints from Ottoman Empire central Anatolia. Saint George was born in Cappadocia or Cappadocia, on the territory of the Ottoman Empire. It was also called Korama, Matiamia, Maccan, Machan, and Avcilat: in a landscape of unusual volcanic rocks... with dwellings in the rocks. And Saint Trifone on the territory of Phrygia.

- Legend has it that the night before the attack on Kotor, the Ottomans fell asleep and all had the same dream: a dream about great and good people... and these were the Catholic saints George and Trifone, and the powerful, mighty Sultan Saladin, who together, as a sign of friendly welcome, prepared a magnificent reception and a great feast for them. When they woke up, they were dazed, intoxicated by good food and drink, local homemade Boka wine... and to verify, to check the truth of the same dream that they all had, that everyone dreamed... they procured, supplied themselves by homemade local Boka wine along with local olives and cheese and warm local bread rolls that they had never tasted before... and when they tasted it, they had the same taste in their mouths as during the dream, during the long and blessed sleep. Thus, intoxicated and elated, joyful, turned the sails..... and sailed out of the bay.

- The Sultan of the Righteous Faith Saladin, during the war with the Crusaders, demolished the church dedicated to

Saint George. So this was symbolically his act of repentance that overtook... that overcame him after his death? Oh, thank God for his mercy! O praise be to the merciful God!

- Saladin was known for pardoning Christian armies and granting Christians the right of passage through his lands. Richard the Lionheart considered Saladin to be the greatest leader of the Islamic world...

- This is the same sultan who was invited, and challenged by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa to a duel at Zoan in Egypt: the duel never took place because Barbarossa drowned on the way... Look, this tower on Gurdić defended the fortress from the direction of my settlement Škaljari!

- You can see here above the relief of Saint Mark on the gate of the tower door, on the tower, the coat of arms of the Venetian Gabriel family, whose member Albert Bertucia Gabriel was the Duke and Providur of Kotor: in their next coat of arms, on the side facing the source of the river that plunges into the sea, in the middle third of the height of the shield, arranged in three horizontal rows, a chessboard, a chess field is visible. In the upper part of the plate is the figure of the archangel Gabriel, the protector, and the patron saint of the family.

- The angel Gabriel saved Kotor from the non-Catholic barbarian invaders! Gabriel's name means "*God is my strength*". She said this so charmingly, proudly, and in rapture, in ecstasy as if she were Joan of Arc. Such loveliness could not escape the eyes and soul of her suitor, now *fiancé*.

- The vicinity of the monastery of St. Nicholas, then the church of St. Mary of the Bridge or Gurdić are all surrounded by citadels. Do you know about the breviary written in the *scriptorium* of the Franciscan Monastery on

Gurdić?

- Here is the coat of arms of the Michiel family, the providur of Kotor...

- I imagine that their family is also guarded by an angel... of course the angel Michael... Archangel Michel known as "*the prince of the heavenly host*" means in Hebrew "*Who is like unto God?*".

- And let the Verige chains, in our view, be guarded in our vision by the angel Raphael. And Raphael a healer and fellow traveler: "*God has healed*" is the meaning of his name... It is possible that he resolved the Turkish blockade with chains on the "Turkish" side of the Verige! Helped to defeat the fortified complex of Our Lady of the Angels on the free, Venetian side of Verige!

- And that was when Herceg Novi and Risan briefly, for a short time, fell into the hands of the Turks, but the angel... The eyes and soul of her suitor, already her *fiancé*, could not miss her loveliness.

- Be my angel, Angela! – in love, the suitor interrupted her in ecstasy.

- The citadel is the last core of defense in the fortress. The last defense in a battle. – Angela answered in confusion, humbly lowering her gaze... submissively, and continued in a somewhat quiet but trembling voice:

- Muslim Hajreddin Barbarossa's failed siege of Kotor is famous... He attacked Kotor in 1539 with 70 ships and 3000 sailors, but the prayers were led by the Dominican Blessed Ozana, and they were defeated. The Council of Kotor Citizens elected the Blessed Virgin Mary as the patron saint of the city on 1664 with words. „*fu stimata dal nostro serenissimo principe per chiave della Dalmazia per uno de rigavdevoli propugnacoli de l Italia et della christianita*”, and the year after the

Blessed Ozana joined in...

- The Psalms say: "*Who will lead me to the fortified city?*" – the suitor interrupted her with a new quote.

Angela, blushing, flared up, burst out and her face blushed even more.

- Have I finally conquered you, my fortress, the loveliest citadel? - in a half-whisper, weakened, and cracked voice, the suitor asked.

Angela threw herself into his arms. Marija, who was standing on a nearby tower, enjoying the view of the ancient bay, below the castle on the top of the hill of St. John, screamed with happiness. The city listened curiously, the fortress blushed shyly and girlishly, and the sky stood up and took up the event. It was the embrace of a *fiancé*.

**** DESCENDANTS ARE THE GRATITUDE OF
ANGELS: CADENCE ****

Enoch 26:1-3

1 „*And I went from there to the middle of the earth, and I saw a blessed place where trees with branches were abiding and blooming (from a dismembered tree).*

2 *And there I saw a holy mountain, and beneath the mountain to the east, there was a stream that flowed towards the south.*

3 *And I saw towards the east another mountain higher than this, and between them a deep and narrow ravine: in it also a stream ran beneath the mountain.”*

We were happy when our grandmother, after touring, our visiting the old city of Kotor within the fortified walls with the city guard towers guarding the narrow, lively streets that lead to the twelve squares (squares of arms, clocks, wells, weapons, flour, gold, Boka Navy, Kotor churches...) and the cloisters... surrounded by arched vaulted arcades - would also lead us to the old market full of fresh seafood in the dense, the thickened, heavy smell of the once again robbed, enslaved and finally captured sea - and finally to the upper side of the bay, to the highest old stone palace on the top of Škaljari near the old church of Our Lady of the Snows and an ancient - now park, then arboretum - rich in centuries-old pines, cypresses and autochthonous Indige-

nous species as well as species of trees brought from overseas distances, the homeland of eucalyptus, giant sequoia, mammoth, cedar, various exotics and cultivars susceptible, receptive to the climate of Boka.

In the palace, our old spinster aunts Trifona and Gracijana, thirty years older than our grandmother, were waiting for us. It was customary to stay with them after buying the necessary supplies that could only be obtained in the cities and were only available in the cities, and then return to our grandma's house on the other side of the bay: the things and delicacies had already been sent *via* by carriage - through the village of Kavač to the Croatian family in the Croatian villages of Bogdašići and Tivat, with confirmation of the news that we - which was routinely planned - would arrive in a few days. The palace smelled of citrus and coconut cakes, and the rooms on the upper floors, upstairs, smelled of quinces, fruit liqueurs, chamomile, and stale floral perfumes from who knows what period of life. In each room on the upper floor, upstairs was an antique bed with a heavy copper base, and on the beds, there were sumptuous, luxurious feather pillows and large porcelain dolls in the life-size of a child. We could walk around, through all the rooms, but we were not allowed to play with the dolls: there was more piety than care in the attitude of the aunts towards them, was more devotion than concern, and we had the impression that the dolls were like children they had never had. In the house with them lived a fat old cat with a very graceful gait and thick fur, coat, more elegant and cuddly, pompous than the domestic city cats: it was a "Persian" species - breed: an exotic one that comes by ship because it is ordered from a distant world, and if you are not a member of the Brotherhood - it costs a lot, it pays dearly. While

walking through the palace, we inquired, we asked about the countless carved wooden figurines, copper engravings, tapestries, artistic paintings of landscapes and ruined nature - only in vases revived, admiral's sabers and uniforms, and portraits of the household members that decorated (and who decorated!) every room. We have seen the old captain of the famous Boka Navy in the elegiac genealogy of the Italian Crossi family more than others, but there were also portraits of his three daughters and son-in-law and grandchildren, and all the grandchildren come from their sister Angela. It was a rule that the name Angela should not be pronounced because it caused tears and sobs from our aunts: but in front of her portraits, we were allowed to say in admiration, in amazement:

- How beautiful she was!

To this, the aunts always had the same answer:

- She was never by Fate beautiful, but she was happy by Destiny! She radiated from within, serving God and people well!

We, children, were not interested in the meaning of the words fate, destiny, and serving: it was important to play an adult-like life, and it seemed crowded and overloaded with possibilities and things, and although obsessed with grasping, reaching out... we did not understand how adults knew when and what to choose: from the possibilities of life to the exhibited things visible in the palace. Their dearest, favorite children, „great-grandchildren of Angela“ - as they called us, we drank juices because you could choose one day from homemade apple juice, orange, and lemon juice, another from blackberry juice, pomegranate juice... For this reason, we often ran to the room for hidden, secluded intimate moments, as our aunts called it, avoiding the vernacu-

lar expression that would degrade them to inartistic, unartistic banality: it was walled up next to the house, next to the luxurious, fragrant garden of our ancestor the sea captain, and the garden was full of local, native and exotic plants: from ornamental flowers to shrubs and fruit trees, to trees that adorn the most beautiful parks of the world's South.

The garden was enclosed by a high stone wall, hidden from view. Dry stone wall *suhozid* was a building method by which structures are constructed from stones without any mortar to bind them together: a certain amount of binding is obtained through the use of carefully selected interlocking stones: dry stone construction is best known in the context of stone walls traditionally used for the bounding of fields and churchyards or as retaining walls for terracing. But many came knocking on the palace door because it was the only way to get to the arboretum so praised by the Brotherhood Confraternity, which, after the death of the old Captain, continued to pay the gardeners - so that aunts could admire the luxuries - the kinds of herbs obtained from who knows what distance, various plant species brought from who knows how far away: South America, Asia, even from faraway Japan. The nearest arboretum Trsteno was erected in the late 15th century, by the Dubrovnik noble family Gučetić - Gozze who requested ship captains to bring back seeds and plants from their travels: arboretum was already in existence by 1492, when a 15m span aqueduct to irrigate the arboretum was constructed.

The aunts liked to brag, to boast about their connections in the famous Boka Navy and the details of all the notables, and dignitaries who brought them gifts, but those they

mentioned were the already elderly, aged children of former captains whom we only knew, introduced with the attributes of naval honors and as the already faded, seasoned generation of our grandmother: mature people who, through the Brotherhood, which had long since lost its glorious military significance, mercifully continue to work with charity - continued to act mercifully and charitably - never forgetting the old maritime tradition and the Christian virtue of charitable, caring mutual assistance.

On rare occasions, the aunts would ritually drink tea with rum in front of guests, in a ladylike manner, wearing hats, powdered and rosy, flushed cheeks, wearing long lace gloves beneath under which gold rings were visible, wearing pearl earrings worn in their youth: at the same time waving luxurious fans with motifs of geishas or passionate dancers with castanets. And our grandmother would constantly marvel, persistently wondered at how they could put rum in tea even at that age. Always the same story about a small drop that will smell in tea: in old porcelain painted cups with gold rims, when it can't be done in coconut and citrus cakes, in which, if you put rum - any decent religious believer who is not inclined to vices - gets dizzy, will surely make his head spin... Grandma loved fruit liqueurs that emphasized, that brought out the perfect taste of cakes...

- And in the past, sparkling-bubbly chocolate was drunk in this salon, which Angela loved so much... - said aunt Trifona.

- She agreed to marry when she received a letter from her Captain: he wrote to them at length about how he had found the woman of his life on the French coast: she had long curly yellow hair and her name was Solange, which means Sunshine... - continued aunt Gracijana.

- But to the surprise of all of us, Angela fell madly in love with her Croatian merchant-sailor, merchant-navigator husband when she discovered how gifted he was... hee hee hee hi hi hi gifted and faithful hee hee... endowed - gifted dear children with virtues and skills: from raising vineyards, teaching history to play musical instruments... Well, let's enjoy chatting a bit now... - added Trifona.

- We enjoy chatting and long days in Purgatory await us anyway... - Gracijana finished the sentence with the key information.

- You both virgins - in Purgatory?

We would burst out laughing because grandma spontaneously burst into laughter and, mixing laughter with tears, pathetically exclaimed:

- God cleanse them of their sins! God, cleanse them from sin!

Always the same sentences with polite exchanges of compliments that we already knew by heart, that's why we would giggle in the corners of the salon laden with sculptures, figures, sabers, portraits, copper engravings, etchings, vases with Greek and Roman mythological motifs, unearthed resurfaced amphorae, luxurious antique furniture, lace embroidered tablecloths, colorful decorative pillows in which an experienced, cunning, elegant cat with shiny fur persistently, lazily lounged. When we got bored of looking around the luxurious antique salon and after we had traditionally played the sonata sonatina composed "by the most famous composer of the Austrian Austro-Hungarian Empire" on the old, untuned black Viennese-made piano, as the phrase, formulation was said, without mentioning the composer's name but only the name of the mighty, powerful kingdom - as expected, because sisters never made it to

Salzburg and Vienna! - we would impatiently go to the rooms upstairs to play games of knowledge.

Each room had a vision of gratitude to God and the saints in the form of a small altar with candles in tall silver and gold candlesticks as are seen in churches. Under the altar were kept crosses, prayer books, rosaries, miraculous medals, jars of blessed water, miniature relics of favorite saints, women's brooches with white lilies, and other religious objects, as well as mementos from various first communions, confirmations, and pilgrimages... Next to the altar in the first room was Our Lady of Mercy framed in a gold frame, in the room on the second floor was Our Lady of Quick Help, and in the third room on the third floor was Our Lady of the Angels, shining in the expected divine splendor. The game of knowledge consisted of knowing how many attributes of Our Lady we knew and how many names, attributes of Our Lady's churches, chapels, and altars in Boka Bay we could remember: in addition to these three, the neighboring Our Lady of the Snows, then Our Lady of Rest, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of the Garden, Our Lady of the Rosary and certainly Our Lady of Health, because in the evening prayers on the eve of rest, before going to bed and after praying to our guardian angel, at the same time, while simultaneously expecting awaiting the intercession of Our Lady of the Angels and the angels themselves, we always thanked Our Lady for our health. In each room, opposite the altar, there was a chest of drawers with a mirror on which hats stood out on higher pedestals and below them combs, hairpins of various shapes, a handful of hair bows and ribbons, and lace gloves. Hats were old-fashioned and big, large, combs too stiff, gloves too wide... In the chests of drawers, there were

carved decorative boxes made of African ebony with glittering, sparkling jewelry: pearl necklaces, gold bracelets and earrings, gold rings with emerald gemstones, and precious stones... Scented soaps, olive oil hand creams, and floral perfumes were hidden in boxes at the bottom of the cabinets instead of at the top or displayed on the chests of drawers, and for the sake of maids. Because of the maids who would not miss the opportunity to smell, to scent themselves secretly, although the smell could not be hidden, could not be concealed, they would eventually reluctantly admit it. In Boka, women were more attached to perfume than to jewelry, because a handful of unique jewelry was made in the famous Kotor goldsmith's school; gold, pearls, and gems jewels from distant travels and journeys were also given as gifts, were also abundantly given away to ladies - along with an abundance of various portable treasures of sturdy, more solid workmanship. Exotic scents were more difficult to transport, to convey on sailing ships because wooden boxes and glass bottles were susceptible to breakage or rotting and occupied unimportant porous places in the rich luggage of sailors.

And in a secret compartment, under the deepest drawer, were the intimate letters of sister Angela. All of them were dedicated and consecrated to the merciful most holy Jesus Christ, Counsellor, and Bridegroom. In them, she regularly confessed, acknowledging her sinfulness, which, in her opinion, manifested itself in the sensuality that led her to reject life in the convent: was manifested in her preconceived sensuality, because of which she rejected life in a monastery and imagined married life with her beloved Captain. She identified herself with Mary Magdalene, who simultaneously longed for the passionate woman in love

within herself and the blessing of Jesus in a state devoid of passion. She knew that she belonged to a man, that Eve was created from Adam and for Adam, because of Adam, and that she could not live without submission to man: in every form of her desire, longing, and emotion she must be bound to him - she had to be attached to him: either earthly in the form of the Captain or otherworldly in the form, in the figure of Jesus. She felt, like Mary Magdalene, the pain of being close to the Man Jesus: and closest to him as his most beloved, as his dearest disciple. She felt that "Jesus Christ knows that Mary Magdalene loves him so much that she will feel the same earthly pain when she will be with him again in Eternity in Heaven".

We liked this romantic sentence about the pain of holy love so much that we remembered it although we did not understand what kind of desires and loves she, Angela, in her letters introducing herself as Magdalene, was writing to herself. We especially liked to read her unrelated, disconnected, mystical sentences:

"Here, in my city, the Word of God is being read and recited, drawing ... which attracts angelic warriors of Light to the silent, quiet, sleeping city. They enter the houses and decide the fate of the householders. If the hosts are hospitable, they bless the house and stay in it and talk to them kindly: those who are inhospitable are the warriors of darkness and their houses are narrowed at this hour (while at the same time, the houses of the hospitable ones are expanding) and closed with thick ivy for everyone's eyes. Angels come in various guises, in various forms: as beggars, as lost old men, as small children engrossed in play, as travelers, as relatives from other continents they have never met, as companions of lost, stray cuddly animals, and especially as

monks and priest confessors, a kind confessing priests..."

Or the words:

"Here is infinity. It's endless here. You feel bliss. Peace in my heart and the reflection of every ray that emanates from the lamps, warming my heart with the same power as it illuminates the city through the play of mystical shadows... look closer... take a closer look at what is in the reflection: the miniature movement of a being of light, light being within an angelic movement... the angelic harmony... the movement of the mist, of the haze and the shadow of the light that is the light of the world here, within the world above the world that is immersed in itself with light... immerses itself in light... where little angels play at entering the light, entering holiness: you enter one and estimate when the other will arrive, will come and jump into it - like me in a silent angelic chariot... like I - blessed - did in a silent angel's chariot."

Or the sentence about her clairvoyance:

"The beauty of God is manifested in His merciful messengers: the Angels who contain the knowledge of the Universe. By entering human lives and inviting people to creativity, they collectively recall this knowledge accumulated over time: knowledge or memories that I am about to paint. Here I give, I surrender myself to them, I am theirs: I feel them through the profound spiritual bond, I feel their spiritual guidance, I am silent to them, while I am a mystically endowed string in the hands of their intentions, a resonance endowed with their affection! The Holy Spirit is the immortal unchanging fire-water-air as one the same flame-flow and the Soul is its changing reflection in earth-nature: only through the eyes of love - because only Love is a true beauty, only she hopes for everything, ultimately, every-

thing attracts, connects and delights - I can see it and feel it deeply... the space between physical and ethereal."

In all the rooms, stood carved wooden chests full of festive ceremonial linen and clothing, and vestments stood out. From the spread, emanated the simultaneously intoxicating, potent, and acrid fusty smell, and pungent muted smell of the fateful combination of the offered but never realized dowry. Heavy antique carved cabinets made of precious noble wood lined and adorned the walls of all the rooms except Angela's room: she took hers as a dowry. There were still old dresses in the wardrobes, from the defiant, profusely graceful floral lace ones with crinolines for clinging to the flared joys, the inflamed joys to the black silk ones strictly trimmed for mournful, sad events. In them were light cotton bags filled with lavender, immortelle, chamomile, lemon balm, and other fragrant herbs.

- Rosemary goes with roasting, while sage, bay leaf, basil, and garlic are put in cooked hot dishes, whoever wants. Angela used to say: "If your husband doesn't like rosemary, hold it between your breasts and he'll love it." - we would say to each other with a laugh while closing the cupboards, remembering our aunts' lessons and teaching about fragrant aromatic plants that are placed in cupboards, spicy plants, the herbs that are added to dishes, and medicinal plants that are used to make teas. The lace on small decorative chests of drawers was decorated with wide transparent glass bowls with dried starfish, sea fan corals, luxurious noble feathers, and shells of various sizes, shapes, and ages, which we would put on our ears while listening to the sound of the sea. First, we would throw ourselves on the bed with feathered quilts, feather duvets, and pillows, then with our eyes closed we would listen to the sea in the shells.

Sometimes it murmured, quieter, sometimes louder, stronger, and sometimes it told an ancient story about sea sirens, mermaids in love who break the waves of the open sea during the day, and at night, secretly and unauthorized, without the permission of Poseidon, enter the Boka Kotorska fjord, to peer, to peek into the houses of lonely sailors and famous captains... And after the murmur of the shells, miniature wooden metal music boxes would wind up, would cheer up, playing a gentle melody that was sung like a lullaby on distant continents, while we daydreamed and guessed which ones. The magic of the house never ended because we shortened the time with exotic excursions into our imagination.

Next to the stairs themselves, which took on the rigor severity of the steep internal structure of movement were miniature cabinets in which antique women's shoes were kept seemed awkward to us: since the models did not attract us, we did not pay attention, although some of these rare antique pairs decorated with gold and silver buckles had artisan, craft and museum value.

Along the edge of the house and on the inside of the garden, behind the delicate mimosa trees, a small wooden house was hidden - a painting studio in which there were painting easels and traces of painting paints, where part of the portraits that decorated the walls of the stone villa were created. All the sisters were gifted with artistic talent, a talent for painting, as well as numerous other talents, and they always emphasized that in the very expression of their talent, the mysterious help of merciful angels plays a key role. - God is in the details, God is in the breath of life, God is in watercolor, God is in everything that you grasp and touch with a grateful, devoted soul! Because God himself is love! -

they said.

The studio was a hotbed of woven cobwebs: in the studio, there was a focal point of weaving cobwebs, and we pitifully studied the contents of the densest spider webs, in which there were beautiful specimens of not only flies and moths, crickets, but also smaller colorful meadow butterflies. The studio had a wooden roof gnawed, worn by time-hole, perforated, through which all-colored light penetrated kaleidoscopically in a mysterious rhythm, refracting the sun's rays towards the darkest corners. Due to the magnetic beauty of the spectrum of colors and shapes of the butterflies in the garden that circled, and flew around the blossoms of the blooming magnolia, the flowers of the rampant roses, we quickly forgot about the fate of those captured and condemned, sentenced to certain death. Seagulls could be heard in the distance, and in the garden nests the same colorful little birds sang, always the same faithful ones, except in the fall, in autumn, when the unknown ones flew over, flew by in flocks, not landing, not descending, but circling in greeting and predicting, prophesying Fate with their chirps, with clicks - like, as our aunt used to say, wandering owls that flew in at night. With the help of Goddess Natura, we entered into the sacred mythical knowledge that sees nature as alive and soulful. The world for us was not a material universe in motion but a multiplicity of beings ordered and set in motion by God.

And in the summer, crickets. Crickets were not beings to us, for us, but theatrical musical decor: always the same melody of Eternity purposefully delivered because it reminds us how much more similar we are to them than to the unattainable celestial, heavenly beings: present, loud, chirping, tireless, persistent, invisible to the eye and depen-

dent on the celestial, the heavenly arrangement of the seasons and life. In the summer, the heat in both the palace and the walled, fenced garden was settled, constant, crackling under the muffled crawling of snakes and lizards, like the longing for a neglected lake, somewhere out there, hidden from view (we imagined - behind the decorative giant, like walls, dense, thick-walled rosemary bushes), to which no passable path leads and from which the occasional croaking of frogs can be heard, barely audible, under the breeze, the density of the air, in the warm mist, haze and the persistent rule of monotonous Fate... our Destiny.

The garden, *Jardin des Plantes*, full of fragrant fruit trees, branching in height and width along the bushes of rosemary, immortelle, luminous cacti, sage... an abundance of herbs... from ornamental lavender bushes to fruit-bearing olive trees and luxurious flower jars with seasonal vegetables and flowers... seemed smaller, denser, condensed, and hid a circular path strewn with colorful decorative stones brought from faraway, distant Japan: in the middle of the circle, a small decorative fountain made of the Croatian island Brač stone with a statue of embracing little angels made by the stonemasonry craft in Pučišća. Walking along the path, we felt the vibrations of flowering, the energy of plants, the softness of the bliss of the colors of the Mediterranean, a sacred immersion in the sacral colors and scents, especially during the flowering season of Dalmatian saffron, mimosas, lemons, oranges, figs, peaches, pomegranates, almonds, apricots, mulberries which smelled from their hearts, their cores, still fresh on the branches and pecked by nearby starlings... Here - where we remember *J.W. von Goethe's* spiritual eye and spiritual ear and drawing - a sketch of the "*Urpflanze - primordial - original plant*" that

he drew for *Schiller* - the children's game consisted of recognizing the plant species that we collected for the herbarium stored in the secret compartments of our drawers: its fragrances melted, its scents dissolved our souls more than the soaps and perfumes of roses that our aunts in the countryside, in the biophilic village made for all of us. In the fragile herbariums were the forest tree, woodpecker, Adriatic Douglas fir, the yellow Takoma, the woody milkweed, the ornamental araucaria, St. John's wort, chamomile, lemon balm... as the years passed, as the years have grown, the colors and scents faded and some species seemed to have lost their names, although it seems to us that we would still recognize them at any moment today, having previously gently felt them, gently touched them with our hands. „*Das is keine Erfahrung, das ist eine Idee. This is not an experience, this is an idea.*” - *Schiller* said to *Goethe* who can see ideas with his eyes, who saw the idea of a plant with his eyes, because sensibility is not devoid of thought. In the middle of the garden, high up towards the preludes of the playful soft clouds, towered the lofty agaves and protruded: the kind that can be seen on postcards that you rarely receive in life, because later on in that same place they no longer grow (neither the agaves nor the same friendships) as a flower that sums up the imposingness and fragility of the moment of existence and moment of disappearance, that does not bloom because of the admired exclamations of the World - which blossoms not for the amazed but because of the guidance, the signposts of angels who, thoughtful, pensive and dreamy, lean, rest their wings on them.

At the bottom of the garden, close to the walls, but far enough away to provide shade for a wooden bench, grew

tall an ancient walnut tree, two pines and two cypresses, an eucalyptus, a cedar and an old oak tree that was the only one detained on the garden side of the wall, like a trace of a former rainforest, a dense oak forest: the eight pillars, even the virgin forest creatures - could be seen from the access roads and beyond, from the coastal promenades and in the glasses of ship's binoculars.

- Let the nests of tree branches be imprinted on your soul – the sisters said. Everything except palm trees, because palm trees, they claimed, are for promenades along the azure sea, where the width of the green palm leaves, which grow parallel to and despite the sea waves, signifies the transition from one color, matter, dimension and type of immortality to another. The sisters strictly avoided all species that would indicate a static, imprisoned, chained, withered timelessness: it was necessary to be as long as possible with one's spirit – *ARBOR VITAE* - tree of life, among the invited: who would be born for this world as an evergreen blooming gift to this world, continuing to gratefully return its gifts: clicking towards *ARBOR MUNDI*! *Arbor Mundi*, the cosmic tree acts as an *axis*, and the *axis mundi* is the center of the world. *AXIS MUNDI*, the world *axis* is the connection between Heaven and Earth, on the higher and lower realms, supporting or holding up the cosmos. That is why they were to rein, direct, and bloom a time as such - growing through the meaning of (being-there, being-here-and-now, being-in-the world, a being as beingness-existence in its being, through „*I am - we ourselves - being in the world*”) temporality - in the selection of each species that would permanently grow and periodically bloom and blossom – to be saved: that is why a single co-shaped soul in the garden and the world will not perish. They believed in the idea of *meta-*

morphosis which implies a change of dimension. A being that *metamorphoses* as if (she-he-it) withdraws into some peripheral infinity and then returns from it again to the area of formation of what is visible with physical eyes: because there is no death: because everything is reshaped, transformed into something new, something else. They believed in a new redistribution on a new dimension of existence.

An Indulgence, *indulgentia poenae*, the remission of the temporal punishment, the forgiveness of punishment was the only thing they hoped for at the end of their lives and what they wanted to leave as a legacy, as an inheritance to us, the descendants of their sister Angela.

- August 2nd is the feast day of Our Lady of the Angels or *Porziunculus*, and many people care about the complete forgiveness that a believer can receive as a gift from the Church, prayed for by St. Francis of Assisi: plenary forgiveness frees us from temporal punishments and penance! - they claimed.

God spared them both from life's efforts, excitement, greater relations, and delights but also disappointments, granting them modest hopes and sighs of longing, gently lowering them into this World so that they could merge with their lush, exuberant living environment, the luxuries of the old city and palace, the Romans *OTIUM*, the purity of souls and nature, and the picturesque paths of their garden in a uniform but a safe path, trajectory - framing their fragile feminine painterly souls that at the end of their lives - became more and more similar to nature and the description of nature from their beloved Mediterranean garden.

- In life, outside the tranquility, serenity, luxury, and perfection of the *Arboretum*, you cannot choose who you will love by destiny and who will betray you by fate! Who you

will fatefully love and who will betray you! - Angela told them, impressing, imprinting her life experiences on their souls... after which they would feel relieved that they were spared the greatest pain after all.

They were diligent gardeners pleasing to God, dear to God, steadfast by the patron saint of the gardener - with the protector of the gardeners' guardian, because during the torture of the patron saint of Kotor, the Angel brought a crown of precious stones decorated with flowers to the martyr. Finally, fused with the lightness of the sea breeze, woven into the threads of the breeze, wrapped, enveloped in the vibrations of the ship's traces of the Kotor galleys, their souls sailed through the *sfumato* of the fjord into the angelic world, into the *SPIRITUS MUNDI*, that they had imagined with the fullness of their well-being.

Now, when we remember them and the palace with a time-lag, with a mystical distance in time, it is difficult to discern, to distinguish, which detail of the memory is originally ours and which is theirs: because at the same time, we were wearing hats on our heads - both those old women drinking rum and we children at play - which from the perspective, from the eyes of the seagull circling over us, flying above us towards the velvety blue of the open sea, could have appeared, timelessly could seem, as an identical body of the same porous Mediterranean memory.

ABOUT THE EDITION

Book in the Series.

Book in the Series.

EDITION:

ANCIENT BOKA KOTORSKA (BOCCHE DI CATTARO) :
WOMEN STORIES

First published story of the Editon: RISAN IS TEUTA.

The story "Risan is Teuta" was published
by Author Marisstella Octek (SL Čižmešija)
in the Croatian language
in the Montenegrin literary Magazine ARS
by publisher OKF Cetinje: ARS: 2019. Nr. 1-2 (pages 141-150)

:
<https://okf-cetinje.org/marisstella-octek-risan-jest-teuta/>
The story is a Historical literary Fiction,
which is why it is presented in some versions of the Ency-
clopedia WIKIPEDIA
in the content of historical topics about the Illyrian tribe,
the Illyrian Queen Teuta,
and the small city of Risan in Boka Kotorska – Bocche di
Cattaro – Bay of Kotor.

PATRON OF THE EDITION : AUZUGDBK = ASACSBK =
ASACSBC

AKADEMIJA UČENJAŠTVA ZNANOSTI I UMJETNOSTI
GRADA - DRŽAVE BOKA KOTORSKA

= ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS OF THE CITY-
STATE OF THE BOKA KOTORSKA (BAY OF KOTOR)

= ACADEMIA DI SCIENZA E ARTI DI CITTA - STATO
BOCCHE DI CATTARO

ABOUT THE AUZUGDBK = ASACSBK = ASACSBK

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BOCCE DI CATTARO
hrv. AUZUGDBK = eng. ASACSBK = ita. ASACSBK

is tasked with caring for the spiritual heritage of the Boka Kotorška – Bocche di Cattaro - Bay of Kotor.

The initial period of heritage studies dates from the end of the 14th century when the city of Herceg-Novi was founded.

From then until today, the Boka has belonged to the countries of Italy, Austria, France, Croatia, and Montenegro.

Considering the nearly one hundred church buildings (churches, chapels, monasteries, etc.), the majority of the territory is Catholic, primarily linked to the Catholic Church under the jurisdiction of the Vatican, and then to a lesser extent to the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

The official languages of the multicultural Central European and Mediterranean Academy are: Croatian, Italian, German, French, Montenegrin, and Latin, a total of six (6) languages.

The Academy is active in the content of the FB thematic groups.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MARISStella Otek (SL Čižmešija)

Writer, Essayist and Editor of the *City-State of Boka Kotorska* (CSBK) = *Grad-Država Boka Kotorska* (GDBK).

Croatian Mother of two children, Stage manager, TV Screenwriter, Music teacher, Singer, Financial consultant, Lecturer, Librarian, Cataloguer, Head of the faculty academic library, etc.

Mariss (1969) was born in Kotor, Dalmatian fjord Boka Kotorska. Mariss is from Tivat and Bogdašići (Boka Kotorska) and also from Trakošćan and Ivanec (Hrvatsko Zagorje).

In Zagreb, finished Classical Elementary, Gymnasium for Classical Languages, and the High School of Music, obtained the title of Professor of Comparative Literature and Philosophy, graduated from Librarianship, and passed the State Professional Exam of the Republic of Croatia.

The University of Zagreb scholarship holder attended the International Summer School at the University of Oslo (1994) and the International University Scientific Seminars on Old Norse Literature and Mythology, as well as the Contemporary Swedish Literature Seminar at IUC Dubrovnik (1996 - 2000).

Since 1994 Mariss has published Poems for Adults and Children and Stories for Adults and Children in Croatian Literary Magazines (Zagreb). Since 2017. Mariss has been

publishing in Literary Magazines in Montenegro (Cetinje), since 2018. in the Literary Magazines of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mostar).

The Poet Miroslav S. Mader in the Review Article of the first Poetry Collection describes her poetic style with the words "*POETESSA OF RESTORED / RENEWED WORDS*".

Mariss was a TV Screenwriter for „*TV Programme for the Children and youth*” of the State Croatian Radio and Television.

Mariss retold fairy tales in the picture book for Children at publisher Miropictures Zagreb with Hungarian illustrator Mihaly Kanzel.

Mariss is readable in the SMASHWORDS catalog with self-published E-Books in Croatian language (Poems for adults, Essays about librarianship with *Studia Croatica* and about comparative literature, and Novels for children) and the ACADEMIA EDU Database and the RESEARCH GATE, and represented in the CEEOL and EBSCO Information Services databases.

Her stories for adults and poems for children are presented in Anthology books in Croatia and Montenegro under the names Stella Levanić Čižmešija and Marisstella Otek.

HISTORY OF THE ITALIAN-CROATIAN- MONTENEGRIN BOKA KOTORSKA :

The last time in the world history, when Boka Kotorska was in Italian territory, was in 1943, and in Croatian territory was in 1944.

Since 2006 is the territory of Montenegro.

Because of the godless atheistic regime of YUcommunism, the church of *Our Lady of the Angels* in the city of Kotor was turned into a movie theater.

NOTES

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CREDITS

CREDITS - THANKS

I thank my beloved children Martin Čižmešija and Anika Ana Marija Čižmešija who lived with me (during their childhood) while I began to write the story.

I keep in memory my beloved, cute, and brave pats: the gray crow with wounded (broken) wing Kebeba, rabbits Skočko and Bucka (with many other rabbits), and dog Bendži who lived with me (for years) during the shaping of the story.

I thank dear God for giving me many talents and for being the only one who gives me permanent and sincere support for all my creativity.