

A BOND

The fateful desire was born to him and it lasted exactly three days. For three days he thought only about this. It seemed as though there was no-one who would be unable, over the course of three periods of twenty-four hours, to realise this desire. A desire, a fateful desire. This was a desire?

And God knows if he desired this to prove to himself what someone had told him, or else that he would get it done without a thought for anything and without a thought for anyone, he was simply in a desperate hurry, one way or another, to realise this desire.

It wasn't in fact so very difficult. He would just go out onto the street and, in front of all those people, not by night but by day, yes, in the bright light of day, there he would sing a song for dear life. Such was his desire. This was it. Just this.

No-one knew how the desire came to be born, how it had grown bigger and bigger. For five years, S had worn the same simply yellowish suit, had held his brown leather folder which he didn't let slip from his grasp, had walked along, stooping a little, hurrying quite a bit. He heard no gentle whispering rainfall, nor did he hear one kindly word from others, nor did the two hundred eighty-nine poplars which lined the road from his home to work become two hundred ninety, and the buildings remained as before, and S lived his life according to S.

But why? Why did he suddenly want to break into song?

He himself didn't know the reason. While, as he had gone about his business, he had not been dominated by this weird desire to utter something, that smile of self-confidence, which this utterly successful man wore constantly on his face, had brightened up the others' lives. But now...now he was through smiling. Since the day before yesterday, he had been frowning, had not spoken with anyone. Around the time this fateful desire had been born, he had felt really anxious, thinking that it would never be realised.

And when he bent down to open the drawer of the odd little desk at which he had sat for twenty years, with the provisions of rules and laws rushing from him hither and yon, and even as he stood and watched, without a smile, with a father's eyes, his new employees, and even as he rushed through the doors of women's clothes stores, rushing around in search of a beautiful thin dress to give as a present to please his wife, still he was continually thinking about this.

"Yes, tomorrow, tomorrow...Tomorrow, on the way to work...". This was, in fact, what he had decided yesterday evening. Not only that, he also knew what song he would sing. And not only would he shave off his beard, he would also not have breakfast, his friends were watching him, wondering with concern why he was rushing around so excitedly, he said not a word and, as soon as he saw his wife standing against the wall, S had become angry. And when that fearful and strange triangular eye had appeared on the road, he had found himself unable to sing. Yes, that morning when he had gone out without looking at his wife, he had trusted that it would be a complete success.

Calmly he undid the top button of his shirt and, shutting his eyes, he tried to doze. He was suddenly thinking about the time when he had come to work

here. S twenty-five years ago. He looked really young, his face was red, he would always want to do more...such a fine man. He had handled himself honorably, except that now he was thinking of the old chief caretaker, who had passed away. He had accidentally smashed the big painted china tea cup which the old man always carried in his hand. The old man had let out a great cry of distress. S had apologised, and that had been the end of it. But funnily enough, from that day forward, the old man would eat out at a workers' café and not in his dark caretaker's room. S had not himself realised this, but the office girls who kept an eye out for the old man told him one day. He was certainly amazed to hear this, and though he thought to give the old man a nice cup of Chinese porcelain, when the old man died without receiving his recompense, his mind had turned to other things. But every time he recalled the old man, the extraordinary sound of the china falling and breaking upon the stone floor rang in his ears. His eyes saw the curved handle and strangely colorful images on the smashed cup better than they did the old man's face. S sighed slowly.

Later, in the depths of winter, his co-workers had gathered to see his newborn son. He warmly remembered how, at precisely two o'clock, they had stood beneath the hospital window, making a racket, and suddenly he recalled that Hooknose Bayar, with his nose freezing, had been ramming his face against the furlined collar of Dolgor's jacket, and he couldn't help but smile. Now the majority of those people were not working here. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that the majority of those people were not working anywhere. The bosses and the workers were forever changing, and he was pretty much the only one who had been there, working, for twenty-five years.

S sighed slowly. The door opened and a young man who had come to assist him poked his small brown head in.

"You not coming to eat?"

S shook his head. But as soon as the door had closed, he felt a strange sense of hunger. He had not eaten that morning, nor the previous evening. As he considered this for a moment, he turned his head, as though he had been stung somewhere. And S felt strangely tired.

To be frank, he wouldn't sing on the street, nor at parties. He had, in his youth, fled from taking his turn in singing and, when there was no other choice open to him, he would feel his face flushing so, his throat growing so hoarse, that he would speedily change the subject.

S had decided to sing his song in an oddly understated sort of voice. Melancholic, though not sad. And anyway, how had he decided on this song? He had no idea. In fact, he produced not a sound. He would need to express that which was in his mind. S vigorously cleared his throat and undid another button on his shirt. He straightened his posture on the chair, and spoke the first words, the very first words...Suddenly, the door opened again.

For some reason, S jumped up and ducked, as though afraid. A girl, he didn't see her face, went off, slamming the door.

Someone else came out at the sound of the banging door and suddely, for no reason, S became angry and wanted to shout. He was angry with himself and with the girl who had just come out, and even with his wife, with everyone

in fact, and he cursed his life, which until today had been happy, and he absolutely wanted to swear at everyone.

Who knows how many moments passed? With a trembling hand he picked up the receiver and reached his house.

“Hello?”

He heard his wife’s voice, she wanted to say something calming and supportive, and he remained quite silent. He heard again her familiar, pleasant voice coming from the receiver.

“Hello? Who’s that?”

“Me...It’s me.”

“Ah...it’s you?”

Silence.

“Hello? S? Hello?”

“Yes, yes, I’m here.”

“No, you...you. Hello? What’s happened? What’s up? Are you alright?”

“I have something for you...”

As soon as he said that, S leapt from his chair and stood and sang in a trembling, indistinct voice.

“If I...”.

As soon as he had sung the final verse, he began to sob. When the receiver slipped and fell from his hand, he heard his wife saying something. S pillowed his head on the desk and slowly, very slowly, he wept.