

Martyr

*I'd sleep and forget it; I had my own life, my own sad and ragged life forever.
Jack Kerouac "On the road"*

I was riding the subway, from Manhattan to Greenwich. I could not spotted anything that was going on outside. Halogen lamps on the ceiling reflected in the windows, completely not allowing me to determine how much time must elapse before I get home. I decided, therefore, to look at the passengers. I made a kind of fun, which I practiced from an early age: Who can be this passenger? In the compartment there were exactly three people: the sleeping homeless, a huge black woman looking like someone's babysitter and long-haired woman. View of a woman reminded me of the person I once knew.

The Felice Huffman.

That was the time of my life when the view of every woman of similar age to her present made my heart beating faster.

I knew Felice since childhood. She was my neighbor, we often played together and circled our bikes around the neighborhood. We were opposites: she was rebellious, arrogant and ready to oppose. Even if the situation didn't require a half of her nerves, which she sacrificed for the case.

I was calm, steady and silent. I noticed that sometimes silence take care of a lot of things that could ruin one imprudent word. I liked to read books in the evening, while she was - at the age of nine years- looking for a circle of friends, where she could be a star and the master of the situation. Moreover she always drove her plan to the end.

She knew how to skillfully manipulate people. Sometimes I also was used. In fact, I was aware of that.

Once to our town has arrived a snowstorm. The roads were practically impassable, and the icy wind whipped the faces of several passers-by.

Dry crackling frost invited to our city white dancer who got lost in flight of her feathers. I remember I had this thought that time. We waded across the street, and I, with every step, fell almost to my knees into fresh layer of powder. Felice persuaded me to escort her home.

Supposedly she was afraid that she could collapse under snow and die unnoticed. I was not so sure. She supposed to be the last person, who would be afraid of something. I agreed then, making a big circle, because I caught up sixteen streets. So I walked bravely like the heroes of "White Fang. Felice wandered behind me, already trodden path.

I remember that when I got home- wet, cold and hungry- I got hit from my mom in the ass. I was late and scared her to death. She was sure that I got lost on the way to school and froze. Indeed, when I looked out the window, all the houses seemed to be uniform, under the facade of snow.

I got a slap in buttocks and my first thought was "What a warm hand." I did not feel pain.

So it was when I found out that Felice goes to someone on a first date. She asked me, what she should wear.

The pain was hidden somewhere deep under the skin, and the presence of the girl caused that my body was surrounded by illusory sheath of heat. Softened the chill that began to grow since then inside of me, as an indestructible block of ice.

In high school I started to smoke, read Sartre and pretend that I do not care about anything. However, that was not the the worst. My main addiction has become pretending to be someone I'm not. Felice gradually moved away from me, leaving our conversations and shared fun for evening events and fleeting acquaintances.

In high school I started to smoke, read Sartre and pretend That I do not care about anything.

However, that was not the the worst. My main addiction has become pretending to be someone I'm not. Felice gradually moved away from me, leaving our conversations and fun for evening events and fleeting acquaintances.

Every day she became more beautiful and unavailable. In her eyes I could see growing disdain

In fact, I had the impression that it concerns not only me and my posturing. It covered the whole world of Felice, its surroundings, the microcosm, which she was creating. At the same time she was disgusted with this formation.

That fateful year of graduation. Suddenly we both proposed ourselves the torture.

We became the ones that have so far avoided like the plague.

And then Felice disappeared.

I went back to school after the unexpected chickenpox. It lasted two weeks, prescribed. During conversations with colleagues I found out that Felice was gone. She was not the one and a half week at school. So far, she often liked to run away and disappear for a few days to maintain the prevailing aura of mystery around herself. These play even lent her popularity.

However in that moment, something got locked up inside me. I was filled with a strange, calm assurance that she will not come back.

I started searching. I abandoned everything I previously considered meaningful and important in my life. All plans and objectives have become a farce. I stopped to learn, to take care of myself Often- under the pretext of recovering things, which I loaned her- I went to Felice's room and searched it to find anything that could constitute as a clue to her whereabouts. Her parents hired a detective, but he came up with no clue.

Finally, when I almost give up -as usual- hint appeared by itself. I sat down on her bed and something began to poke me in the ass. From under the mattress I took a mini guide to Lisbon.

After two days I left the United States for the Old Continent. I bought a ticket using my savings. Just like she, I left school and did not tell anyone about my plans. In retrospect, I think it's funny. It was the first thing we did exactly the same without mutual agreement.

I was looking for her. In the meantime, I discovered that there are more beautiful places in the world than the city library and park where we were doing picnics. I moved to the oldest district of Lisbon, Alfama.

I also started to study the history of art. Time has become unreal, he began to seep through my fingers like a sand. I had the impression that I live in pretense. I created kind of story of anonymous individualist. I was reborn only in the course of searching Felice.

Five years has gone. She could have been anywhere in Narvik or Bucharest, in Calcutta or Novosibirsk. I was afraid to travel, to move out of the city, even if I had enough money to visit- for a few days- Paris or London.

People did not believe me, admired me. A lonely teenager from petty-bourgeois American town has educated himself and he gained respect in a foreign land. What I did, was just looking for her, living the memories. I lost the only one photo of Felice during the walk by the sea. I did not allow myself to think, that she might not want to be found.

It happened, I became a professor. It was May, I was walking down the street. It smelled of grilled sardines, Portuguese delicacy. Along the street grew fig trees. The sky above me was bitten by teeth of St. George's Castle watchtowers.

Then I saw her. Felice walked in front of me. She was thinner, more modestly dressed than I remembered.

It reminded me about my 5 anniversary of stay in Portugal.

I called her. She paused, and her eyes widened. Paled. Turned around and began to run. After a while of the dementia I set off at a run behind the darkening silhouettes. Do not run away, I begged, nudging the people, and then the wallet fell out of my pocket. When she noticed that I follow her, changed direction and ran into the street.

She went straight under the wheels of an oncoming car.

I do not remember what happened to me after that. I know that I ran away from that place (Rua dos Fanqueros- I do not want to remember), and the next day I woke up in my room.

After a few days I was over the Atlantic Ocean, on the way back to my native land.

Now I'm properly old. Such trivial matters hindering seeing, like the light of lamps reflecting off the windows do not irritate me as they used to. I see a lot of things.

For a long time after return felt like I was immersed in a bubble filled with a liquid, that was neutralizing me to any of stimuli from the outside. Then the bubble burst unexpectedly. I began to ask questions, the ones which I did not want to think about before. I did not pretend no one. Neither the arrogant young man who has read a few books more than his pals, or alone professor-foreigner, who have succeeded. No matter how, but it worked.

I thought about Felice. I started from the most trivial matters.

We were in elementary school and learned about the federal police. Our class tease, Teddy caught initials and began to softly chant: "Felice, Police, Felice ...". She smiled to everyone in the class. But then shaken Teddy parents had to explained his behaviour to the Director, and children had convicted boy to ostracism. It's all about the gumption of Felice, who was hit, where it should not.

Memories began to bother me, In the night, before my eyes I saw the swirling, moving images. Sometimes it had fallen on me and I was waking up, screaming. Milky glow- which entered through the window- was not blowing them away. Rather unwillingly became a model of the new growing questions. Then, one night, I realized that Felice did not want to be found. I was the only one living symbol of the old life, and I appeared suddenly before her eyes, as in this poem by Baudelaire: "Remember, my soul, the thing we saw

That lovely summer day? "

And I, against my will, at that moment I became a carrion lying on her path.

I felt guilty, but I did not do a single step to try to find her. I was afraid awareness that Felice died.

I used my Portuguese title of professor and found a job at a university in New York.

Constantly moved around and was looking for new places, just like Felice did. Maybe she wanted me to become a traveler? Traveler-martyr, who signifies newly known places with his suffering?

Follow to debase even more, and do not forget, discover or explore.

I visited my home town. My hypothesis have confirmed, at the beginning of her journey through the Europe, Felice sent her friend, Annie postcards without any content. I went to visit her, led by intuition. On a thin, shiny paper block were different cities. Including London and Paris, which I wanted to visit. View of the Tagus river flowing into the ocean, the depletion of the rocky, sun-drenched slopes put me in a gloomy mood.

Annie liked me. She went with me to New York, where we got married.

She was in his own opinion happy, contented woman who has made a good decision.

For me Annie was a tragic symbol of the joy of life, which meets with the silence.

I've never done the suggestions that we could have a child. I did not want to hurt another person.

Divorced after two years. I could not bear the thought that I mortified someone, wishing for both of us well. I called and apologized. We brought together with Annie, as a proverbial friends.

Once I could not stand. I told her about Felice. This time emotions broke through my shell.
I wanted to be understood. Annie listened. At the end of my argument looked at me and said:
-I knew it. I knew all about it.
I left distraught and full of shame. I had nowhere to go.

I finally got to my own heart of darkness. I started reading. Realized that I forgot about the most important activity that gave me directions and constituted the main content of my life .

From the perspective of human, who meet everyday with other points of view (even if they were only a small, printed letters) Felice become a miserable person. She followed the nothing. Happy, as long as she did not have to be defined. Sound of the rain, a gleam, suitable song were able to bring back to me our conversations. Stupid allusion of her character and interests meant that Felice was able to leave the room and not speak to me for two weeks.

Too much time had passed. I forgot about the events, which could be bothering me on and on. Checked the records of hospitals in Lisbon. There wasn't any note about woman, who died in a car accident. My conscience began to calm down.

The train began to slow down. I looked at the woman sitting in front of me. Her honey-colored, tangled hair fell on flaps of the gray coat. Her black eyes stared at me. On the face showed a tired smile. The dark crayon on her eyelids smeared a little bit and gave them a pensive gaze, a disturbing expression. Some facial skin wrinkles appeared, but it looked rather charmingly, than sedately.

She was very pale.

Previously, my eyes only passed her briefly. During my meditations I stared at the puddle of mud on the floor. She could be the closest person in my life. Until now I really noticed her.

-Good evening. - She said, looking at me. She looked like the reincarnation of Venus of Urbino. She looked like someone I once knew.

The train stopped. I got off and followed into the depths of the night.