

September 1994 - Budapest Hungary

Olimpia lost her sister because she loved the smell of leather. There were other contributing factors; the cigarette, their mother's alcoholism, the fact that all fabrics in Communist Hungary were made of the cheapest synthetic fiber possible. But, what really sealed her sister's fate was the irresistible smell of leather. Also, Olimpia forgot to bring any money. They left so fast she forgot to bring anything. Taking a bus or train was not an option, not that they could have boarded either; they were too young. Olimpia looked back at her sister as Cintia walked slightly behind her with face as white as the ~~Moon~~moon.

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Olimpia was vaguely aware that the M7 was leading out of Hungary to Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, countries she had never been to but hoped ~~to~~would be better than what they were leaving behind. Cars were scarce. Olimpia had seen maybe four ~~in~~passing, although they ~~have~~had been hitchhiking for hours. In the cool September night, both sisters were shivering.

To get Cintia warmed up, Olimpia picked up their pace, but soon realized her ~~younger~~ sister was already ~~walking~~ as fast as she could. Olimpia's heart ached for her; the bearer of her mother's death which was not yet even real for her. Cintia didn't understand why they were running on the side of the road like two fugitives.

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Olimpia tried to feel some sense of guilt, ~~but~~and failed. ~~But~~Loss and sadness came in waves, ~~and~~sShe was thrown around by them, helplessly, like those apples she had often seen in the Danube during summer ~~and~~that she was so tempted to catch and eat.

Comment [AH1]: Is Cintia younger? This word makes the detail stronger ,but if not younger then just delete.

She looked around. Wondering if she was to ever see Budapest again, realizing she didn't care. Although her mother had a strong sense of pride in being Hungarian, Olimpia never felt any kinship with a country that broke her powerful, brilliant mother, now burnt and gone.

The night was calm and full of sounds. Olimpia heard crickets, frogs, furtive and unfamiliar hissings passing in the grass, noises her city-trained ears were not used to, and she became frightened. ~~We're~~ They were still in the outskirts of the city. ~~w~~Where did all these creatures come from?

She felt her sister's small hand ~~close~~ tightly squeeze around her palm. ~~and squeeze. Then~~ At that moment, Cintia stopped, not just slowed her pace, but ~~entirely~~ stopped ~~entirely~~. For a second, Olimpia had the sickening thought of ~~needing to~~ dragging her all the way from Budapest to Vienna. A little whine came out of her sister's mouth, something half-way between a cry and a suffocated scream. ~~Then~~ However, many years of obedience took over, and Cintia began to walk again.

At last, a car came and slowed down behind them in the distance. By then, it was the middle of the night, and heavy rain drops began to fall. Olimpia studied the car approaching like a prowling feline. It was a BMW. Rare in Hungary, even in Budapest. She didn't know much about cars, since her mother never had anyone, but she knew about BMWs because they had beautiful lines, and she loved everything beautiful.

The car seemed ~~to be~~ hesitant about stopping, ~~and so~~ Olimpia raised her hand and smiled. Smiling felt ~~to her~~ foreign and distant, as if belonging to ~~a different person~~ her alter ego. Having understood her sister's intentions, Cintia froze and began to wail. Olimpia pulled her close and embraced her shoulders. Her sister was shaking, either from the cold or from shock.

Comment [AH2]: Clarify: the night of her mom's death or right now as they are escaping?

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Olimpia wasn't sure. Hugging her tightly and forcing herself to ignore Cintia's sobbing, Olimpia kept her other arm ~~up~~ raised and waited.

Fate comes in different forms. That time it came in the body of a beautiful car, wet from the rain, emitting reassuring little smoke puffs ~~and the sound of a~~ like a cat. The driver was yet invisible, and there were five, perhaps even ten seconds available to run, but the sisters didn't run. Olimpia was afraid, very much afraid, and she also knew that all of this was utterly reckless, ~~and probably superfluous~~. But, if there was one thing she had learned from her mother, it was the virtue of fortitude. ~~By the time t~~ The driver leaned over to look at the girls, showing nothing of himself but an arm that reached the door handle like a long, slimy, relentless snake curling out of his lap, ~~forming an image in~~ Olimpia's mind ~~of~~ imagined such paralyzing power that she could neither breath nor think, ~~but Olimpia she had~~ made up her mind to get in. ~~And~~ Once the door opened, and she ~~felt in her face~~ absorbed the warm, rich, inviting smell of leather, as gloriously seductive as the embrace of a loving father, it became impossible to run or do anything other than push her sister in and sit next to her.

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4. June 2017 - Providence CT

Snake-charmers, they say, are born not made. On the street across from the brothel, in an unassuming car, ~~motionless with a reserved face carved out of ironwood~~, sat a motionless young man of eighteen with a reserved face carved out of ironwood patiently waiting. Native American by birth, but adopted at five when his parents died. Elan Simon had large brown eyes, thoughtful eyes, the eyes of someone who might make fortunes then walk away. He was watching a yellow sportscar pulling ing up in front of the brothel.

Michael Crawley, Elan's stepbrother, ~~a~~ seventeen-year old ~~but younger~~, semi-serious track and field star, ~~and~~ so handsome that he believed himself to be beautiful, got out of his car and

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