

Everything Else Is Just Another Friend You Haven't Met Yet

Journeys through the Baltics

We arrived in a new place and knew nothing about it except that it was supposed to be bigger than the one we had just left. It actually looked like a city and that was kind of exciting. On a piece of paper was the address of where we were going to stay. The taxi driver spoke Russian and headed right out of town. Driving through a labyrinth of run-down factories further and further away from the city light, the fog became increasingly dense. It was soon impossible to see, so the car had to stop. We were lost in complete whiteness, deprived of all sense of orientation. All we could perceive was the sound of the sea somewhere nearby. The taxi driver was scared, so we left him and continued on foot through a field of nothingness. It was eerie and comforting at the same time. Just as we had got used to the idea that vision had left us and were now living in a world of pure sound, we saw a pink stripe before us. We knew this was the sign of our arrival.

Realizing it was Saturday night, we took a walk around town. We ended up in a basement club in which a DJ called Monster stirred up Latin flavors while the screens on the walls showed a documentary of how to make pin-up calendars with nude women from third world countries. We shared a drink and a smoke and then hit the road. A desperado taxi driver probably on some sort of downer zigzagged us back to our harbour residence. The lady running the place offered us her private quarters and we were welcomed as family. Scattered mattresses took up the entire room and in an instant we were part of an intimate gathering of a dozen old souls getting ready for a nightly ritual. In the early hours we headed for the ceremonial place in a deserted factory building. It was pitch black and we had no choice but to be drawn by the alien soundscape that seemed to promise an unnerving cathartic experience.

Entering the space was almost impossible; sound and light met us like an invincible wall of pain. Racing stroboscopic beams blinded us and in between the unmeasurable intervals of rapid light movement the space appeared in incredible patterns of colours revealing the secret code. Mathematical structures of lines hypnotically shifted the entire world in intense and frantic pulsating motion. A deep machinegun bass inaudible to the human ear made our physical beings rumble with torment from the feet up through the spinal column. We were nailed to the ground. Vibrating bones and echoes in the skull turned the terror into an addictive state of trance and thus forgetting ourselves we were killed by our own senses. Soon all traces of identification had vanished and even the sight of the murderers as they stood there on the stage in front of us with screaming heads and guitar shaped weapons melted away.

Not only our own death but also the death of others would continue to haunt us. Once a German town, the place carried heavy evidence of the layering of history. We were directed towards a gigantic new petrol station where several busy roads and bridges were leading from the remnants of a former Soviet industrial area into the broad grey boulevards of the town centre. The only sources of light along these

stretches were the occasional neon signs of casinos and malls. From here we entered the old graveyard in which the former inhabitants of the area had been buried. To the present day, robbers had been desecrating the graves and the overgrown forest was pockmarked by craters the size of coffins. Parties had been held among the emptied graves. Beer cans and used condoms were scattered everywhere. Mosquitoes and ghosts were lurking in the shady bushes. They were not ill willed so much as baffled that they had so relentlessly been made homeless. With us we carried a bottle of water that we declared holy and offered it to the trapped spirits. They welcomed the gesture and invited us to join them in a dance. Soon we were captivated. One moment we were petrified, the next dancing wildly around the empty graves. Exhausted we fell to the ground and into a deep and silent sleep.

We woke up and went to a local pancake joint from where we headed out of town. We arrived at an orthodox nunnery in a dark forest. Two hundred German soldiers fallen in WWI were buried here under a field of little grey crosses. Round nuns in stout boots, swathed in countless layers of black ran in and out of the buildings. We saw a group of young men playing volleyball on the icy meadow next to the monastery grounds; they spoke German. We asked one of the nuns why these men were playing volleyball in the freezing cold. She looked surprised and answered "What men?". It was minus ten degrees Celsius so we went to Pokaini forest to make a fire. The lakes in the forest were frozen and covered with a thin layer of snow that was arranged in peculiar ornamental patterns. It was possible to read the patterns in order to look into the future, and we saw that things would fall into place naturally and elegantly. After walking in total silence for some time, gravity became partially suspended and our movements effortless. We lit our fire next to the Father Stone and dedicated it to our friend from Magadan, a city 6,234 kilometers to the east, as we knew that he was planning to start a family this year.

Possessed by history and fascinated by the remote and exotic we took the road to the seaside where we wandered through derelict amusement parks of a long gone past. Swaying fluorescent orange palm trees were providing shelter from the icy Baltic wind that blew through the maze of fairytale-like building work unfolding in the neighbourhood. A gang of seedy dwarfs peered at us from a hand carved Bavarian balcony. From the top of a small artificial cascade a monkey appeared performing an intriguing gesture. It quickly vanished into a newly painted concrete grotto carved into the ruins of some socialist architectonic masterpieces. Dusk approached but as if time had slowed down the sun was hardly moving towards the horizon. Several people had told us that there was a certain magic to this place, something hard to describe, like a crack in the continuity of reality or the meeting point between two separate worlds.

The glow of a lantern bathed the entire setting in pale yellow light. The scenery was eerie yet strangely attractive and we were driven to explore the place further but the resort suddenly started to fade away in front of our eyes. We found ourselves, regarded from this side of the world, at the outermost tip of the northwest. The sun had remained in exactly the same position and even though it was time to find shelter for the night we decided not to check into the only hotel. Instead we continued further towards the end of the cape regardless of the warnings about strange forces that made it impossible to return the same way and of experiences that could haunt us forever. An elderly woman stood at the side of the road right at the limit of the village. She appeared to us to be an oracle and so we decided to stop and ask her what to do. She invited us inside and presented us with a small wooden annex

of the old farmhouse. Fresh linen and a hot fireplace were waiting as if she had known that visitors would be coming.

We soon left the house to get a glimpse of the sunset and started walking down the north shore towards the cape, where the beach turned sharply to the southwest. Two dogs and a group of swans decided to accompany us. Unusual formations of stranded and fallen tree trunks were spread all over the beach. One could recognize beings and whole chains of events in them. The shadows stretched to their extreme and the atmosphere was gloomy in spite of the golden light that continuously streamed from the frozen sun. The instant we traversed the tip of the cape we stepped into another world. Looking back, the beach we had crossed was now completely cloaked in darkness while on our side it was still bright. Night and day were coexisting in this instance. The glowing ball of the sun was perfectly round and liquid, just gently touching the horizon of the completely still, metallic surface of the sea. We were witnessing the planet's first and last ever sunset. Red and golden rays of light penetrated our beings and we multiplied into countless versions of ourselves. All of a sudden a huge truck appeared with enormous speed racing up the beach right towards us. People of all ages were hanging out of the windows, some stood on top of the drivers cabin waving, some with guitars, other with weapons. Realizing that we too were inside that truck looking out on the illuminated flocks of ourselves disappearing with the melting sun, the spell of the place began to take a grip on us.

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