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MILORAD PAVIĆ

UNIQUE ITEM
delta novel with a hundred endings

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Attention!



*In buying this book, you receive
all one hundred endings
instead of one, so you can choose
your own unique item...
The rest are for others*

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How to read this book



The author has followed the ancient wisdom that says: the ending is the crown and the demise of a work. Therefore this novel is not like other books. It finishes differently for every reader, so you each receive your own end to the tale; for this book has one hundred different endings. Like the hundred gold coins that the poor man in the folk tale received for a magic bird. So you can choose whichever end you prefer. Leave the rest to others. Be satisfied with your own ending, you don't need anybody else's.



UNIQUE ITEM

Chapter One:
THE FIFTY DOLLAR SMILE



1.
Kenzo

Alexander is an androgyne. Some pronounce his name as Alex, others as Sandra. Now, Alex Klozewitz (alias Sandra Klozewitz) is sitting in “The Third Cat’s Inn” and ordering coffee with milk and a bagel from the beautiful black waitress. Alex is wearing a stud in his eyebrow, a blue shirt and jeans. He is sockless, in very low black moccasins. His handsome moustache is attached not to his lip but directly to his smile.

“What am I wearing today?” asks the Negro. Her smile has no moustache. Her smile is in verse.

“Augusta, Augusta, I noticed right from the doorway that you had changed your attire. Let’s see... Of course, today you’re wearing a drop of *Amsler* on your wrist. And somewhere else. Not bad. *Jean Luc Amsler!*”

Alex interrupts his guesswork in mid-word, for two well-dressed young men walk in behind his back. Each has a five hundred dollar suit that fits him as if it were paid a thousand dollars. Before he notices them in the mirror across from the door, Alex’s sense of smell recognizes their scents. One has a sumo wrestler haircut that costs as much as the expensive shoes on his feet: the odor he is wearing is *Kenzo*. The other is black, with a smile worth at least 30 dollars apiece, and has a gold chain instead of a shirt. He smells of a *Calvin Klein* elixir.

Alex instantly shouts out to the waitress: "Another bagel, please!" and flees through the door labelled "Toilet". The two men glance at each other and take a seat, staring at the door all the while. On the other side, Alex quickly tears off his blue shirt, remaining in a red, female blouse with sewn-in artificial breasts, takes from his bag and puts on a black wig, turns the bag inside-out so it becomes a lacquered female handbag, and slips the moccasins into it. His feet are now bare with brightly painted toenails. He removes the affixed moustache and the stud from his eyebrow, reddens his lips and rushes back out. He throws some money onto the bar in mid-stride, yelling in a deep, female alto: "Augusta, honey, keep the change!" and leaps out of the inn with a raised hand hailing a cab...

The two young men watch all this in confusion. Only when Augusta bursts out laughing, once again in verse, do they leap up hastily and run after Alex, who is now Sandra. After a rather brief chase the Negro catches him, takes off his wig and says:

"Don't make any trouble, or you'll get a couple of slaps. A yellow and a black slap. OK? Now listen! Somebody wants to see you. You know who and you know why. You'd better come quietly."

They take him to a second-hand bookshop. The back room smells of havanas. In it sits a huge gentleman, toying with a chopper used to remove the tips of cigars before lighting them. He is surrounded by semi-darkness filled with the sparkle of the golden titles on the sides of books lined on shelves. Everybody calls him "Sir Winston", and he is well known for always knowing in advance who will be killed when.

"You don't look well, Mr. Klozewitz," he says in a calm voice. With a hand with no fingernails he takes a cigar

from a gleaming, transparent tube labelled “Partagas”, cuts off quite a bit of the thick tip, carefully places the tube back on the table and lights up.

“Just take a look at yourself,” he adds, waving his arm towards Alex standing there before him all ruffled, without his wig, his bare feet filthy, and the powder and lipstick smudged all over his face.

“Anyway, you owe me too much, far too much, and all the agreed deadlines have long since passed. What is your occupation, exactly?”

“I’m a tradesman,” replies Alex warily, taking the moccasins from his handbag and pulling them on. “Besides,” he adds, “your mirror will show what I do.” And he steps up to the large looking-glass hanging across the bookcase.

As if on cue, all faces turn in that direction. There, in the crystal glass, the image of the ruffled Alex is replaced by the reflection of a beautiful, perfectly made-up woman in a white dress. Of the kind that can warm furnaces with her heart. In her bun she wears a wide-spread fan sprinkled with stars from the constellation “Cancer”.

After a moment of astonishment and doubt the first to gather his senses is the gentleman with the cigar. He wants to laugh, but sneezes instead and says:

“Illusionism, I see. Skillful, very skillful, Mr. Klozewitz. But whatever it is that you trade, you’re not doing well. You will never be able to repay me that way. We shall have to make some other arrangement, or else things will not be good. Are you willing?”

Alex nods, and the gentleman with the cigar takes two photographs and a key from a drawer. He hands them to Alex across the table. Then he says:

“So, we are offering you a deal. There are two persons—the ones on these photographs here—that are an immense

hindrance to us. You are to get rid of them. Forever. Here are their addresses and names. By the way, this is the key to the gentleman's private elevator at work. OK? Do we understand each other? Better for you to take care of them than to be taken care of by us, Mr. Klozewitz. And just so there is no confusion, I would like to show you something now."

With those words the man turns towards the Negro and asks:

"Which hand do you shoot with, Asur?"

"The right. I use the left to throw my knife."

"And you, Ishigumi?"

A gorgeous 50 dollar smile spreads across Ishigumi's face. He replies:

"I shoot with my right, boss. And I need not shoot twice. I need not use my left."

"Then stretch out your left hand, we don't want to harm the business."

And as soon as Ishigumi stretches out his left hand, his boss, with a single movement swift as lightening, slices off the top joint of his little finger with the cigar chopper and holds it up in the air, still bloody.

Ishigumi bends over, smelling a bit more strongly of *Kenzo*, stuffs the remainder of his little finger into his mouth and rushes out of the room. His boss now carefully places Ishigumi's finger in a transparent tube labelled "Partagas", corks the tube and hands it to Alex.

"This is a reminder, Mr. Klozewitz. As you can see, there is plenty of room inside for your own two little fingers as well, or some such thing, to be placed there by Mr. Ishigumi if you do not complete this matter of interest to us. Now you may go. I bid you good day."

Alex walks out into the street, blinded by the sunlight, takes a few steps, turns the corner, finally catches a cab,

gets in and opens the tube with Ishigumi's little finger. He sniffs the finger with disgust and tosses it out the window, muttering:

“An ordinary rubber finger. And I was supposed to fall for that. As if I had no nose.”

2. Old Spice

The photograph portrays a middle-aged man, his face peeking out from an “Armani” shirt as if to say: “People should not think. As soon as you start thinking, you realize you’re a dunce.” On the back of the picture are the following words:

*Isaiah Cruise, bets manager,
city hippodrome.*

Alex places the photograph and the small key in his pocket, the aforementioned low moccasins onto his feet, attaches an irresistible moustache to his smile and sets off to the hippodrome. To check out the area. For, he knows that the one with the cigar has gobbled up the joke. And that he would have to obey him. At least for the time being.

The main building has four floors, and the fourth leads straight to the manager’s office. Three buttons in the elevator can be freely be punched, but the fourth can only be used with a key. Alex inserts the key into the lock beside the number 4. It fits perfectly, but Alex doesn’t want to turn it, for that would take him up and drop him off straight into the office of the man from the photograph. And it is not time for that yet. He puts the key back in his pocket and sets foot out onto the stands.

No race is taking place at the moment. Several horses are trotting down the track. It smells of the male sweat of studs and the sharp sweat of young mares. Alex turns around, determined to keep searching and to try to spot Mr. Cruise somewhere if he possibly can. In this search he now finds himself on the dog track. Quite a crowd has gathered there. Greyhounds are racing. They are feverishly chasing the electric rabbit.

Alex walks between the rows and steps out onto the grass beside the track. He spots a huge regal "Borzoi" underneath a sunshade. The hound is all white and is standing by a table beside which the famous opera singer Matheas Distelli is reclining in a bamboo armchair. Distelli's golden mane glistens in the sunlight like a halo and he looks irresistible, even better than on the stage. On the table in front of him is a golden snuff-egg. The middle-aged lady sitting with him has just eaten a piece of cake. She stretches out the palm of her hand towards the hound, who places his head on her palm and the middle-aged lady redoes her lips using his eyes for a mirror. Her mouth now looks like a strawberry.

At that moment Alex Klozewitz is washed over by a breeze bearing the smell of snuff mixed with something that resembles cocaine; the strong odor of the hound's fur heavily doused with *Bulgari* perfume and the name of the middle-aged lady called out by the good-looking man beside her drift along with it:

"Lempytzka! Put on your shoes!"

He has just reached the conclusion that Distelli's voice sounds different in the opera, and that he is perhaps a bit hoarse at the moment, when that same breeze brings Alex the smell of racing greyhounds and the scent of the incredibly old-fashioned after-shave lotion *Old Spice*. Alex turns

and, almost in mid-air, catches a glimpse of the man from his photograph. Isaiah Cruise is shorter than he would have presumed. The shirt he is wearing is expensive, but fits him as if it were stolen...

Alex realizes that his efforts for the day have not been fruitless. As he prepares to leave he turns around and glances towards the trio: Matheas, Lempytzka and the Russian hound. The hound is warming his muzzle the length of a champagne bottle between the legs of his master. Lempytzka removes her shoes once more and rubs one foot against the other beneath the table. She is not watching the race at all. Just then she is as blind as time.

3. Poison

This morning Alex Klozewitz once again encounters the usual struggle with shaving. His mirror image, named Sandra, is causing him difficulties again. Since, like every mirror image, she must imitate his every movement, as soon as he starts to shave his head the beauty in the mirror starts brushing her magnificent navy-blue hair, and as he lathers his face she applies powder to her cheeks. Alex can see nothing in the looking-glass because of her and finally shaves by feel. Then she says:

“And you are really going to go through with this?”

“I have no choice, as you know; our projects are too costly,” he replies curtly.

“That does not excuse you. I will have no part in this. It was your decision to incur that debt, not mine.”

“What you are saying is ridiculous, considering the fact that we are one and the same androgyne being.”

“Which is why you know full well what I can do to you if I decide to put a curse on you.”

“You can do nothing, for I have shaven my head. All your curses will slide off me...”

He sprays *Envergure* of the Parisian make “Bourjois” behind his ears and on his wrists before he leaves, and Sandra, copying his movements in the mirror, applies her scent, *Antracite*, to those same spots.

Then Alex puts on his moustache and departs. The picture that he is carrying in his pocket today shows a woman in the prime of life with an irresistible smile. That smile bores dimples in her cheeks and weaves into her dangling earrings. Her name is Livia Hecht, and she works on the 18th floor of the “Plusquam City” bank. She is chairwoman of this institution.

A Mercedes drives her to the front door of the bank, and before she rushes into the lobby of her banking temple, Alex manages to spot several details about her. Lady Livia Hecht’s smile always finishes before its end as if it were bitten off; the remainder of that smile lingers on her face like a gutted fish. The lilac eyes of Lady Hecht command the unspoken “follow my gaze” and translate her German face into French, and mixed with her *Poison* perfume she bears a trace of some other scent, one that prevents *Poison* from being fully expressed. Alex has to run and catch another whiff of the trail of scent that remains behind Lady Hecht in the lobby resembling the upside-down hull of a huge ship before he realizes what is in question. Now he knows. The scent of some gentleman mingles with the feminine scent of this Lady. A rather banal one — *Dolce & Gabbana*.

So, on top of her *Poison* perfume Lady Hecht is wearing a masculine scent, *Dolce & Gabbana*. And now he needs to find the owner of this other scent.

Alex Klozewitz spends days searching the lobby and the floors of the “Plusquam City” bank. In one of the queues in front of the cashiers’ desks he detects the trail of *Dolce & Gabbana*, but it is worn by some elderly lady who had mistakenly grabbed her husband’s bottle instead of her own that morning. *Dolce & Gabbana* engulfs Alex Klozewitz for the second time in the elevator, coming from an old gentleman that squeals like a kid goat with his every breath. Alex

finally pops into the safety deposit-box department as well. As he talks to the woman employed there, he discovers, in the next room, a handsome green-eyed man, head of the special department for high-security deposit boxes who has a rubber gaze. Alex is tempted to come on to him, but controls himself in time as soon as he senses that the handsome man, whose name, "Maurice Erlangen", is inscribed on the name-plate at the entrance, uses the odor *Dolce & Gabbana*. It is plainly visible through the glass door that the office space of Mr. Erlangen is also occupied by his assistant, a mulatto woman with an Egyptian-shaped head that is formed by resting the neck on a metal crescent instead of a pillow at night.

Just then the telephone rings, and the assistant gives Mr. Erlangen the message that he has been called upstairs to Ms. Hecht's floor. She needs to consult with him.

The green-eyed gentleman leaves his room and walks past Alex hastily. Erlangen is good-looking, with the head of a female marble statue on top of a muscular body. The *Dolce & Gabbana* on the skin of the man from the name-plate leaves a fabulous odor behind him and almost knocks Alex Klozewitz off his feet. But he can sense something else on top of that smell. For, on top of his masculine one Mr. Erlangen has a feminine scent as well. Surprised, Alex concludes that it isn't the *Poison* used by Ms. Hecht, who has summoned Mr. Erlangen up to her office for "consultations" and has his scent on top of her own. The odor on this gentleman, chief counselor for high-security deposit boxes is *Dune*; the perfume of another woman.

Alex Klozewitz leaves, rubbing his hands. The composition of scents has produced a mathematically correct result. Ms. Hecht has perfect taste in her choice of lovers. And Mr. Erlangen has more than one mistress. Apart from Lady

Hecht and her *Poison* perfume he has another, one that uses *Dune*.

Upon leaving the bank Alex climbs onto the open roof of a street car and takes a seat. He places a hand in front of his eyes and stares at his little finger. With total concentration, he imagines the pain that the chopping off of that finger would cause. When the imagined pain becomes strong enough, he begins to shift it. He moves the pain from his little finger to his ear, then his knee, transfers it to his left eye, gathers it on the tip of his tongue and finally spits it out forcefully onto the street like a piece of chewing gum.

Then he starts to hum an aria from Mussorgsky's "Boris Godunoff" with relief.

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