

Three Axes
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i

I was meeting up with a few people and making an oversized stuffed heart (the organ) with them. When we finished it measured approximately 2 meters in height and a little over a meter in diameter. Its outer shell was made of velvet and lacquered vinyl, giving it a glowing effect. The seams between the materials were patched with old cloth dipped in red wine. Everything was sewn together with ultramarine blue thread. We paid great care to the colors we chose. We were meticulously crafting the veins, arteries and chambers of the heart using see-through PVC tubes filled with trash and dust we collected at home, which we further cooked in red wine. Sometimes we poured wine over the entire heart to mimic blood flow.

The group stayed consistent, people rarely missed those meetings. Every second day, we gathered in a small room in one of the group member's basement—incidentally quite close to my house. We were spending only an hour there, because that was the most that all the people could squeeze in to their schedules.

We talked to each other in between tasks, but we were generally very concentrated on finishing the project as efficiently as possible. Once the heart had no more cracks and no visible white synthetic stuffing coming out, we attached rust-colored leather straps onto small hooks in the corners of the room that we'd previously installed. We then fastened the straps to a few black carabiners sewn directly on the heart. Finally, we suspended it midair—to float in the center of the room. We packed our things and cleaned the space. That day we stayed a little longer than usual. As we exited the room, some suggested we go for a celebration drink, but others were in a hurry and not everybody managed to agree on a place, so in the end we didn't go. I walked slowly back home, just a few corners farther.

ii

I found out about a couple that refilmed the love story of Carrie and Big from *Sex and the City*. The trailer for the film starts with a version of the scene when Carrie is having brunch with the other three main characters from the show—Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha, and telling them that she'd done “the number two” at Big's, after a year of dating, and they all giggle. In the remake, in a memory sequence, one sees Carrie sitting with the same three characters—here all in their mid teens, behind a once futuristic, now for the most part redundant metal staircase in a shopping mall, in what seems like the US Midwest, dressed in authentic early 90s clothes. I notice the eye for detail, distinctive of indie movie productions—“a passion for accuracy, nonetheless aestheticized”, one could say. In the back Toto's *Africa* is playing. Yet another carefully selected element. I have recently read in *The New Yorker* that hearing this song in an empty shopping mall evokes an almost inexplicably strong emotional response in people, and that there is an entire community of people on YouTube who make songs that sound as if they're coming from an empty mall, a bathroom on a party, or from a room next door. Carrie and her crew are laughing and one hears Carrie saying: “I did the number two at Big's yesterday”, followed by high-pitch laughter. Cut to the present: one sees Carrie, dressed in navy blue

and black, sitting with 3 people who have not previously appeared on the show and saying only: “*the category isn’t serving...*” in a neutral manner, followed by a waiter bringing her a Cosmopolitan and an abrupt cut to the credits and the premiere dates in a few metropolises.

iii

While on a plane, I get bored and I pay for on-board Wi-Fi. I scroll through my feed and see Jasna pop up, a person I haven’t had contact with for a long time. I attempt to remember her story.

She was from a poor family living in the suburbs of Belgrade. Her father was sick, I don’t remember from what exactly, maybe cancer, he was often in hospital. She was very hurt by that, but determined not to show anything to the world. Her favorite thing was her phone; she was constantly filming herself and her friends, often in explicit settings. I remember that being the distinct feature of hers—that uncanny creative outlet, which was somehow left unobserved and unmentioned by her peers, who were otherwise policing, often violently, anything they deemed different. Jasna was having a thing with a boy, I can’t remember his name either, he was one of the popular kids. He was *brutal*. Jasna was one of the popular girls as well. Nobody knew love and affection in their vicinity and so neither did they. He was insulting her, calling her names, rebuffing her, then changing his mind and allowing her to come back to him. He was the one pulling the strings in their game of two—he was making calls when he was in the mood to watch her disfigure herself in the quicksand of his making and then when it was erotic again to establish truce. She was just somehow in all of that, almost blindly tossed around from one extreme encounter to rejection and back again. All the agency she has ever really had were the video clips she was making; her own gaze and body in the scenes of her dystonic life—reflected back to the world. The last I remember of Jasna was a dramatic, cruel and painful climax in the shape of submission to the boy, on a party, into a crippled avowal of love, intense and ambiguous. That incident however undoubtedly only signified an unchanged continuation of their loveless lives, with or without one another—with their notions of human relations firmly embedded in the history of aggression and post-war trauma they grew up in.

That was her story. And then came the credits, as if nothing had just happened—white letters on black, *business as usual*.

From my feed however, I deduce that Jasna is a very successful actress now and that she goes by her other name: Isidora. She has moved past her troubling debut into new identities, with which I am not familiar.

Oh, time to land. *See you laterz alligators!*