

Ioane PEZUASHVILI

Kaya

1

I'm kind of rectangular and awkward. With acute angles? Maybe, I'm not sure. I feel discomfort when dealing with people and they feel the same. I want to say something, just like now, explain what sort of person I am, but I can't find suitable words to describe myself. Only geometric figures come to my mind. I find it hard to put my ideas into words while inside my head everything is wonderfully shipshape. But one thing is what you think and quite different what and how you say it. I believe I can't express my thoughts but, at the same time, I believe I think correctly when I want to say something. Even now I'm stuck. People want to hear something that I can't say. I can't or don't want to, that's why I try to be on my own, alone, stay aloof and be quiet, away from the others. The others who bother me and whom I bother.

Although I love peace and quiet, I've never liked cemeteries much, neither have I been an emo, or have I ever had a cat or a dog or a hamster, neither can I knit, and with the exception of my asocial trait, I have no particular oddities. Being asocial isn't really an aberration, rather a choice or a way of life, or a conscious choice of lifestyle. My chosen lifestyle doesn't include wandering alone in a cemetery on a rainy day, but still I'm in a cemetery right now. It's my grandpa's birthday, so I decided to come to his grave. Apparently, the rest of the family has already been here judging from a burning candle. I sit on the low stone edge and look at the grandpa's only smiling photo.

My grandpa was a very good man, in fact too good. It was he who gave me my first camera, a Zenith, together with an amateur Kodak film. He warned me to take photos of only those things that interested me, that caught my eye and would wish to keep to myself. He said photography was like history, my history, that's why I had to take pictures as I saw fit. I must have been thirteen at the time and immediately told Grandpa I wanted to take his photo. He asked why him. I said he was the oldest in the family and would soon die. He smiled, probably for the second or the third time in his entire life. That's when I took his photo. Of course, its quality wasn't particularly good – slightly out of focus, and dark. On the other hand, it's Grandpa's only smiling photo. He insisted on having it on his gravestone.

It begins to rain. I sit at the grave and stare at his photo. I don't know why I came here, why people go to graveyards of their dead instead of visiting their living friends... I don't know why it's necessary to pay one's respects. Grandpa is dead and gone, and if he is anywhere, it's in memories. In my memories he never smiles, so it's rather strange he had chosen the smiling photo for his own gravestone. He must have wanted to smile, at least occasionally, but couldn't, just like I want to contact people but can't. I might think of a trick for my gravestone: 'He lived and loved' or 'He loved life'. That's what I'll most probably do. It's not at all necessary to be remembered as you were in real life. Instead, at least after your death, you should try to be who you always wanted to be. Grandpa was angry, too angry in fact, but looking at his smiling photo, one might think he was the kindest and meekest of men. Thanks to the photo he is remembered as a smiling person. Grandpa

became someone he had never been, and all this is due to his picture, slightly out of focus, somewhat dark, now on his marble slab.

I walk to a bus stop. The rain is lighter, but the raindrops are somewhat slanted, hitting my face painfully. The bus driver at the terminal insists he will only set out when half of the seats are occupied. I remind him he has to follow his timetable and it's high time he moved. He retorts that the timetable isn't going to feed his family. Neither will waiting here, I add. The driver has no answer to this one, so he asks me to leave him alone in the name of God. Nothing doing, so I leave him be, but tell him to wait for me while I walk around. He grumbles that he has other things to worry about. The driver is a strange character. I ask if I can take his photo. He wants to know why. It's useless telling him about Grandpa's advice, so I just say: 'Why not?' He agrees, shifts his cigarette to the right corner of his mouth and assumes the expression of a mafia boss seen in old American movies. He became who he wanted to be but wasn't, or couldn't be.

There is nothing mystical or symbolic in cemeteries. They are just like parks but greener and more peaceful. But I certainly can't ascribe any mystical features to them. I walk around, look at the gravestones because it's interesting. It's not clear how one dead can be distinguished from another if one has a marble statue while someone else has only the name and the dates written on the headstone. Some graves look like fashionable restaurants. I come across two like that, where you can accommodate twenty-odd people for a party. And of course there are busts and statues on some of them, which I find extremely strange. In general, a statue is a bizarre thing for me because there is something of idolatry in it. Why are statues erected to people and not for their deeds? It's even more bizarre when a family puts a statue of their dead member. Why? For what accomplishment exactly? Only because that someone lived? Weird. It's weird when a family idolizes its dead, putting them higher than the other deceased, consequently securing their own superiority over other mourning families. A cemetery is a kind of a city, but a city of the dead where the dead are governed by their live relatives. And if in a city a SUV with dimmed glass windows demonstrates superiority over others, on a cemetery those SUV owners overpower the rest with busts and statues.

A young girl with shiny, wet red hair was sitting at one of the graves. In the greyish atmosphere of the cemetery where the dead air is permeated with the non-descript dead and where even green leaves are colorless, her wet red hair screamed like mad. Though I believe it's immoral to take pictures in a cemetery, I pulled out my camera and took the first photo. Hearing the click, the red-head turned to me. I couldn't see her face because I was busy with the frame and focus. She looked at me for some time, then sprang to her feet and ran away. I lowered the camera and watched her back for some time, her wet hair and the raindrops dripping on her back. She was running and her back was breathing.

Needless to say, the bus driver didn't wait for me.

2

The light bulbs in neuropathologist's office shouldn't ever be blinking. One is only visiting to neuropathologist if his or her nerves are shaken, why add broken light bulbs? You could throw in some water drops from leaky pipes and maybe an annoyingly loud clock to form a perfect bouquet of neuroses, and a physician will have no problem prescribing a thousand and one tranquilizers.

Is this some kind of psychological test, I asked. What you mean, she asked. Broken lights, I replied. Oh, damn Givi, she exclaimed, constantly promising to change it for almost a year, keeps forgetting to, and meanwhile I've already gotten used to it. Now tell me dear, she continued, what's bothering you? Currently it's the blinking lights, I admitted; as for the rest, I have already told you during the previous visit. So remind me dear which one are you, she asked, the one that doesn't sleep at nights or the one that uses geometric figures as epithets. The latter, I replied. Any progress, she asked. I gained some weight, I said.

She added a drug to my prescription...

After the neuropathologist I didn't feel like going home, so I went to a photo studio. I hate it when there are only two shots left on the film, you can't wait to have the whole thing developed, but on the other hand it's a pity to waste those two shots, you never know, you could take picture of "the very thing" with one those two shots. I'm not sure what this "very thing" is, but if you throw away those two shots, you'll never know whether you had the chance or not to get it. While you still have these two shots, those two photos still exist. It's kind of like Schrödinger's cat.¹ Now, I believe, that the cat is not alive, that moreover it doesn't exist at all. So I spoil these two shots, rewind the film in the camera and put it away in the box. By grandfather believed in the power of photography, I don't; maybe because I'm a bad photographer. I'm actually not a photographer at all, it just so happened, that I own a couple of cameras and a photo studio, and that I try to take pictures of everything and everyone – pictures for girls with duck faces for profile pictures on social networks, pictures of models to enhance their chances to get married, pictures of banquets, where I usually lose all hope for the next generation, pictures of weddings with fights, pictures of baptisms, where bribing the priest is a whole science, and pictures of revelries where they just revel.

Most orders come for banquets and celebrations. No wonder I frequently find myself in bizarre and disgusting situations. There is not much to do in such situations but to observe, so that is what I do – I observed how Georgian men are much like Georgian children and vice versa. At weddings and banquets, I often see strange associations. Certain youngsters resemble certain douchebags from previous week's festivity. Back at home, I compare the pictures from the wedding and the feast and find striking similarities – the way they talk, the way they toast, the way they think, their drinking bellies... and I mean drinking, not just being fat. I have nothing against people, who are overweight, but when a 20 year old boy has a beer belly from too much festivating and eating, this is different, a rather disturbing phenomenon. The most fascinating thing is that the older douchebags and the younger jerks consider themselves equally "religious" and "devoted orthodox." In one of the weddings, the tamada² made everyone stand up for a collective Lord's Prayer.³ You should have seen the scene – everyone trying to do his or her best. In front of me was a senior couple, past their sixties, who started to do prostrations after the prayer. The tamada was not satisfied, so he began Prayer for Faith via a microphone. The people at the table, who somehow managed to follow the Lord's Prayer, had no choice but to be silent. I think the tamada and me were the only ones there who knew the prayer by heart. These people do not really know what is it that they claim to believe in. I find it weird so I don't like to communicate with them. If I'm kind of rectangular, these people are mainly isosceles triangles,⁴ stupid and idiotic, from a stupid and idiotic era. The worst thing is that they bring up youngsters in similar isosceles-like way. Because youngsters try so hard to imitate them, young boy living in one part of the city has a striking resemblance to a full-grown douchebag with a drinking belly from another part of the city.

“Why sit all alone, like some king Lear?” Before this stranger sat next to me and began talking about literature, I was alone in the last car of the night subway. I was exhausted, returning from the photo studio while he probably came all the way from the first car just to sit next to me. And here I thought the doors between subway cars only open in Hollywood films.

I’m drunk because the smell of alcohol becomes literature, explained he. Then he went on to ask why I was not drinking. I said that I shouldn’t drink. Who should?! - He replied, but was not satisfied and kept asking why I wasn’t drinking. At first I tried to dodge his questions, but finally decided to give up and tell the truth. Firstly, because his questions started to annoy me and secondly, I couldn’t find any reason not to be honest with a total stranger, whom I most likely would never meet again. On the other hand, we are told from very childhood to not trust strangers. Honestly, talking about trust, strangers are the ones that one should trust the most, because they don’t really care about our secrets. Hell, they don’t care at all. Now, if this stranger is also wasted, you can tell anything, make a confession if you feel like it, next morning he won’t remember anything anyway, and even if he does, what will he do with it? So I went ahead and told this drunk stranger, that I shouldn’t drink because I had hemorrhoids. He laughed: “your ass hurts, right?!” I nodded. Then he jumped back to literature: “if you think about it, writing is torture – if you write you are tortured, if you don’t – it torches you. A paradox, no? Here we are, sitting on a bench and moving forward, but how can we move forward while sitting? What difference does your walking make if in the end you come back to where you took off from? So, instead of walking and returning, it’s better to be sitting and moving forward.” I asked if he meant literally and figuratively. “What do you think?” he replied. I said I could understand it either way. “What did you understand, then?” he asked. I said, I thought he was living in that subway train. “Why only in this subway train?” he replied. “If it goes to maintenance, I move to another train going forward.” I said that after he’s gone forward, the train returns, so he is going backward. “Backward and forward exist only when there is something ahead or behind waiting for you but when front and back are all the same, only distance is left, and distance is just a thought, if you think about it– you move forward, but if you don’t then it doesn’t matter where the subway is going, ‘cause you’re standing still. And why stand when one can sit down, right?” he added. I agreed.

At the last station, I prepared to get off the train, but he remained sitting. I asked whether he was getting off or not. He smiled and waved me goodbye. “By the way, you took an amazing picture today!” he said through the closing doors of subway car. I was astonished, but before I could say something, the train moved and left me thinking about this strange man. I wonder why they call it going in circles. Going in rectangles is also going in circles, right? Geometric figures bother me a lot, and geometry was never my subject at school.

3

The World Cup in football is on, and it seems there is nothing else going on in the country, nothing good, nor bad. There is not even one political post on social network, the TV news throw no bones to even hungriest of NGOs. Everyone, from radical liberals all the way to fascists is watching football. Football unites us around tranquility. The main objects of hatred and disgust, rather than politicians, are the football referees, with one distinction – only one swearword is used for them instead of usual spectrum of terms. The boys in my neighborhood worry all the time about their gamble bets – some they get right, some they lose, not enough yellow cards here, wrong number of corner kicks there. I’m still working on orders. Some 16-17 years old girls come to my studio, they are somewhat oval and simple. They bring football jerseys and want to pose in them, they are very joyful, they bother nobody and do nothing much, they just go off and enjoy, or just enjoy life. It’s

good when you enjoy life, not so good when they think they will be taken care of by future husbands; however, now they are enjoying their life, and that is good.

I took sixty some photos of the girls and promised to have them ready in two days. They left. I went to balcony for a smoke. On the street where my studio is lives a kid, maybe four-five years old, who is my namesake. I took notice of him; he doesn't seem very bright. Today my suspicion was confirmed again. The children were playing hide-and-seek in the yard. The namesake was already "found", but he was trying to help the last hidden kid to beat the seeker, so that in the next round he wouldn't have to become one himself. Every time the way to the hidden child was clear, my namesake shouted:

When I say "A," that means "go";
And when I say "O," that means "stay"!

At first, I thought he was mixing up letters and rhyming on purpose, but, sadly, found later that he was doing the same thing most of the time so obviously, the seeker always got the hidden children, and, obviously, the kid—who will never become a poet—had to become the seeker every time.

It's great that in spite smartphones and entertaining gadgets kids still play in the courtyard. Watching them makes me strangely happy, as if I'm having fun with them too. When I was a child, the only computer anyone has ever seen was "Dendy". And even "Dendy" I'd only discovered when I was eight or nine; before that, the only toy I had was a gun-shaped branch that fell from the tree in my yard. This branch, a gun-weapon, was for me all the other toys too, like a sword, a fishing rod, a horse, a bike, a Jedi light sabre, etc. In short, this was a real magic wand, and my friend for two years, which I took to wars and battles, to fishing trips and exciting travels, and so much more. At the end of these marvelous two years, something terrible happened... The girl who lived in the neighborhood was visited by relatives from abroad, who had only seen her in childhood, and remembered her as a boy, so instead of bringing a Barbie, they brought her a sword and a shield. Probably any four-year-old girl in any other country would cry her eyes out for receiving a sword and a shield, but not in our country, not in that age, not in those years, when any real, no- imaginary toy was as precious as some difficult-to-acquire oil for the heating stove. Eager to try it out, my neighbor girl rushed to the yard to challenge me to a battle. I distinctly remember that at a time my magic wand was a horse, but, to face a warring neighbor, I quickly transformed it to a sword and we engaged in battle. I was clearly at a disadvantage – my foe had a shield too, so blocked my strikes and attacked without mercy. I could barely defend myself, so come up with a strategy – I climbed a ladder and advanced on my opponent from above. The tactic worked superbly, and this time it was my neighbor who barely managed to defend herself. She had to use her shield for protection but after one of my blows, I heard a rather ominous sound: my magic wand bent and broke in two. I was staring at two pieces for a while, then all became blurry, one by one teardrops began to fall from my cheeks and before I knew it, I was crying... no, not crying, but weeping – my magic wand with which I'd spent two years, defeated countless evildoers, broke in the middle of the fight! The knights in the middle ages had probably had similar feelings when their best-smithed, blessed sword broke in the middle of combat.

Everyone in the neighborhood heard me crying hysterically. My father rushed out and asked what was going on. I couldn't answer him, I couldn't speak through the weeping and the crying, so just pointed at the broken branch. He picked it up and gazed at me in surprise. You're crying for this, he asked? I nodded. He looked at the branch again, then looked around, went to a

tree in our yard, broke one of the branches, and gave it to me. Here, take this, he said, this one is longer, you already grew out of that horse anyway; you're a big boy now, enough with the crying. I took the branch from him, it really looked like my magic wand, and my father was right, it was longer and would make for a better horse. I smiled at my father, he wiped away my tears and gave me a kiss on the forehead. I turned to my neighbor girl and challenged her to go on with the battle. She clanged the sword at her shield and assumed the fighting posture, I advanced with a wild battle cry...

It was past midnight when there was a knock on my door. I was baffled as I didn't expecting anyone, I opened the door and found a young, slim, pretty girly standing there. She was smoking, seemed nervous about something, and had a birthmark above the cheekbone. She looked at me, gazed for a while, then broke into tears. I'm sorry, I can't do it, she said and went away. I stood astonished at the door and stared at her, leaving. Her hair was cut short and was had a poorly done black dyejob, the colored stains visible behind her ears. She was going down the stairs nervously, sniffing. I couldn't see her face, but her shoulders were trembling. I couldn't figure it out whether to follow her or not. If I followed her, what I could possibly say? The strange girl crossed the courtyard and turned to the street. I stared hypnotized for a few seconds, then went back to studio, meaninglessly pacing for a while, then ran after her.

4

We came back to studio together, she said her name was Kaya.⁵ I said, that's a good name, ~~and that it's good...~~ she said, everyone keeps saying the same thing. I admitted that it wasn't a very creative remark and offered some tea or coffee. The girl refused. She was wiping tears from her eyes with the back of her hands; I passed a handkerchief to her but she refused, saying that she had her own. I wondered, why she wiped tears with the hands if she had a handkerchief, but said nothing. I kept quiet, and the silence become weird and awkward. The kind of silence when you know what to say, but before you say it you have to come up with something else to say, something that's not a conversation starter nor the main subject, something very general, something that's often difficult to find. Initiating and maintaining conversation is not one of my strong suits. I already managed way too much – I went after a girl in tears and managed to bring her back. I'm not sure why I did all that, probably because she wanted to come in, and I didn't want to be alone, didn't want to take a subway in the night, meet that weird stranger again. The referee didn't count two of Mexico's goals, I managed to say something. She smiled. That weird and awkward silence again. This is too much, I already managed to start the conversation once, but I can't do it again. Kaya looked at me with watery eyes, than stood up and came closer to examine my face. I stood stunned, she looked so intensely, I wished I was standing a couple, or better, a hundred steps away. Then she touched my face with fingers, it was a strange, cold touch and I stepped back, gestured her to stop. I'm very sorry, she said and set down lighting the cigarette. No coffee or tea, but I could sure use a drink, she added. I had some cognac. After the first shot she asked if I believed in miracles. Probably not but I haven't really thought about it, I replied and went on saying, that people believed in miracles and fortunetellers only when they didn't want to accept reality or when they expected something better, which is only possible in miracles. Maybe you're right, maybe not, it depends on the miracle and on the person, she said. I replied, that categorizing miracles didn't seem right, miracles are what they are, and they either shouldn't happen at all, or at least extremely rarely. So these rare moment still have to happen sometimes, right?, she asked. I had to agree with that. She didn't say anything, just turned to the many photos I had displayed on the wall. The photo of my

grandfather was there too, not as a tribute to the deceased just as part of my history, my first photo interest.

Kaya finished examining the photos on one of the walls and then said, honestly, that she thought I wasn't particularly good at photography. I wasn't offended, just smiled and nodded. Who is this, she asked. My grandfather, he's dead now, but he was the first person I ever took a picture of, that's the very photo, I explained. Was your grandfather a joyous person, she asked. I replied, that on the contrary, he hardly ever smiled. Why is he smiling on this picture than, she enquired. I didn't want to explain everything about my grandfather, she was still a stranger to me, so I just said, that people generally smile on photos. She complained that it was insanely hot in the studio, and took off her shirt. Now she was wearing only a t-shirt, and without a bra her nipples became very visible. I couldn't help but look, and I imagined that her breasts should be kind of cute, small and firm. Luckily she didn't see me stare, she was looking at a blurry out-of-focus photo of a naked body. I offered to turn on the fan, and brought in a huge studio one from the next room. She smiled and asked what it was. This is a thing for wind effects, I explained, some girls who come here like to have their hair waiving to the wind. So you shoot models, she asked. Models too, but mostly teenagers with an inferiority complex, I admitted. Why is there no focus on this one, she asked. There is, it's on the lips of the girl, I replied. What about the rest of the body, she said. I replied that the rest of the body was not the point, at least in this picture. She didn't understand so I added, that when I was taking these pictures, I wanted to show erotica without erotica. Right, so do you still take such pictures, she asked. I had to admit that in our city you would have to be very famous photographer, or have a lot of money, otherwise it's hard to have naked models to shoot, and the reason why I opened the studio and take pictures of banquets and weddings is that I don't have a lot of money. She said it was not a bad idea, then had another drink and asked if I wanted to take her pictures. Now? I asked. Why not, she replied...

I was right about the breasts. She undressed before I could set up the lights, she said it would help her to be more relaxed and open. I didn't mind, set up the lights camera, the transparent glass and the lubricant. She seemed surprised to see the lubricant, I would too, if I was half-naked with a stranger, lubricant in his hand. So I rushed to explain that I used the lubricant and transparent lenses to achieve get a blurry focus effect, and that I wasn't a big fan of photo editing so I preferred the first shot to be natural. She wanted to have another drink first, probably her sixth. She stumbled on the way to the green screen. I said that she seemed drunk, that she might regret the photo shoot the next day, and that maybe it wasn't a good idea. You have no idea what's going on here, she said looking at me a little surprised and angry. I asked her to tell me but she wanted to go on with the shoot.

Just as I was ready to take first picture, Kaya burst into tears. Her naked, vulnerable and fragile body, eyes in tears – the photo turned out very emotional. Kaya kept crying so I offered to stop. She waved at me to continue, so I did. Kaya only stopped crying while I was changing the lens or the lighting, then kept crying while I was shooting. There was something major behind her crying. Unlike others, Kaya was not acting in front of the camera—something genuinely bothered her, something that was choked back and now turned into tears. I changed the lens on the camera and began to take portrait pictures of Kaya. There was something terrifying in her weeping portraits, something so authentic as one only sees in war chronicles.

We worked for three hours straight. I was extremely satisfied, as the photos were coming out very well; however, weird thought kept bothering me the whole time. I felt like a character in a

Kaya screenplay, her study subject or something like that. We finished ; only two lights were left for me to switch off. She set down on a chair so the light was behind her, didn't hurry to get dressed. I turned to switch off the light, but she asked to leave it alone. Why you aren't drinking, she asked. I said, I couldn't drink, health-wise. She said she didn't believe that. I offered to show her a prescription. She said she didn't believe the whole thing, me being a live person, this all was not fitting in the logic. I said it was too late to talk about logic after an evening spent talking about miracles. She said, that illogicality is what she actually meant, that if something is off in terms of logic, then it must be a miracle. It depends, whose logic, I replied, the magic tricks don't fit in to my logic, but they certainly are no miracles, just illusions which can be explained logically. She asked if I was always so straightforward and dull. No, on contrary, I objected, then added, that I feel incredibly at ease and barely believe that I've just had such a long and open conversation. What do you generally do, sit still, she asked. No, I said, I'm just kind of rectangular. Rectangular? Yes, a rectangle with sharp angles. She smiled and asked, what she would be. Maybe a beam, I replied, a beam, that has only the beginning and you start here and I don't want you to end. Kaya smiled again, then, after gazing at me a little bit, asked if she could touch my face. This time I agreed. She closed her eyes and studied every feature of my face with fingers. Tears fell from her eyes again, she brushed my hair, then stood up to leave. She started to get dressed, as if regretfully. I was never a leader, never was one to take control of a situation, but I couldn't let her leave just like that, I had to do something. She was already buttoning her jeans. If you leave now, I said standing up, it will be as if you're just an interval, and rather short one, and an interval is the worst thing that can happen to me now. I approached her, took her by the arm and kissed her, and she kissed me back. Then tears fell from her eyes, but through tears she kept taking my shirt off. She laid me on the sofa and took her clothes off again. She was crying. I tried to calm her, but she told me not to be a fool and to let her be. She said I had no idea what a miracle it was. I have never made love to a crying girl. What can be more mystical than a woman crying over a grand secret, a secret that cannot be told nor guessed or comprehended no matter how much you try, even without tears, much less with tears, as they seem to cover everything—for the man exposed to crying girl tears shift everything to another, rather mystical dimension. It is unthinkable not to love the crying women, to just take pity of her, unthinkable not to hate all and every, who wronged her, everyone for whom she cries, not to despise yourself, just because she cries in front of you, because you can help her not to cry, but you can't help her. You can't help because of her tears, because you wish for her to continue crying, you wish to keep staring at her tears, you wish to love her and hate yourself for her tears, and for loving them... and for being in love.

5

Getting lost in a big city is more difficult than in a small one, but people get lost more frequently in a small town, especially if they do want to be lost. In a small town you rarely lose someone, or find yourself lost. Nobody likes to get lost, but everyone wants to disappear from time to time, and the more often they wish to disappear, the stronger that desire is. But getting lost in a small town is very difficult; even worse is disappearance, but sometimes it happens, you lose someone, and it happens, you wish to be there, somewhere in no place where they are... and sometimes it happens that you cannot, are not able to vanish, and remain on display, with all the horrors you endured, with what you felt when you lost somebody and what you feel when you aren't able to disappear.

Kaya left just a single phrase in her note – “a beam is also an interval.”

I lost Kaya, or more precisely, she made me lose her and she lost me. I had been trying to find her for two weeks, but how can you find a person who you only saw once, in your own studio, and about whose name you aren't even sure. Looking for Kaya was like searching for a cat in a dark room, It seemed that I had the same chance of finding her in this city as of finding Confucius, the difference being that Confucius is like a black cat that is not in the room, and Kaya is like Schrödinger's cat – she is in the city and is not there. Searching is nonsense, the only hope left is a miracle. Kaya said that our meeting was a marvel, I think that her disappearance is a miracle, how could one lose a person like Kaya, but how could I not fall asleep with Kaya beside me, with her arms around me. Every morning is a disappointment, the same room, the same situation, only Kaya has vanished. Kaya's disappearance from my life was as strange as her appearance. I have never been fond of mysteries, much less now...

Earlier I thought of myself as an enclosed quadrangle figure, now I am more like a little pointed cube... I lie in the studio thinking about that night and cannot guess what and why it happened, why Kaya had appeared in my life if she had to vanish, and so soon. The worst is that nothing is the matter with me, neither her appearance nor her vanishing, all in all, I have no business with this story. Nothing has happened to me, Kaya made it happen to me, she involved me in a kind of a play in which I have a tiny, episodic part. But our stories differ from one another, I am a secondary character in Kaya's story, whereas Kaya is a main figure in mine. It is not the case that this story spins around two different circles with one point touching... I can't stand more of this Geometry...

I decided to develop Kaya's photos and the old film. I use traditional methods, a dark room, rinsing the photo paper in the developing liquid, and so on. Kaya's photo film was light-streaked, and I could save only a single photo. This could not have really happened, it is not real. One could not have experienced such a story and afterwards lose everything altogether. As if Kaya's disappearance was not enough, now I had to lose her photos as well. Disaster. Wouldn't it be better for me to spoil the second film with the red-haired girl's photo in it? No! If it is a loss, everything must vanish all together and so it happened. Out of the happiest day of my life only a half-lit photo remained, and only Kaya's face, I will never see her body as she was that day, naked, somewhat insecure and still very strong, so attractive and stupefying... I will never see her breasts again... Kaya vanished, disappeared from my life and now even from the photos. She should have vanished. She couldn't have remained the same person I saw that evening, it was impossible. Kaya was like that just once, and just for me, or rather, in front of me. The real Kaya is probably different; like my grandpa who was not a smiling man, Kaya is not a girl who poses naked, and imagining her this way is as wrong, as my imagining my grandpa being a smiling man... But naked and crying Kaya was real and honest. She did not lie, but neither did my grandpa when he smiled. Wrong things happen to me, I deserve neither such happiness nor such problems. What sense does goodness have if it is necessarily followed by badness? What difference does joy make if you have to be hurt afterwards? Why do we find anything? If we lose it, what is the sense of finding? I was accustomed to my being quadrangular, why should I get smaller and more enclosed?

Sitting in the last car of the night train, I was sure I would come across that mystical stranger, and I did want him to appear. He came over from another car now, a bottle of vodka in his hand, sat this time in front of me, then offered me the bottle. Love is a strange thing, he said, sometimes it makes you hate it, a paradox, isn't it, to hate love? Not love, but... Before saying anything, drink, he interrupted me, it's no good cursing one's own faith with a sober brain, better to

swear being drunk than complain being sober... Give vent to everything you have inside, don't keep in anything... I replied that there was nothing left, that everything I owned, or not, had been lost. He just chuckled ironically and asked me not to cry. I smiled and swallowed some vodka. He was aware I fell in love and lost, but asked me to tell him exactly what happened, and how. I thought people like me should write, as I am not that good a speaker. He laughed and pointed out that my writing skills are not too great either... I smiled, what could I say, he was right. I showed him Kaya's photo. He put on a pair of glasses and looked at it, smiled in a warm and kind manner, then turned to me, took the bottle and drank a mouthful, exhaled and said that short hair also suited her, though cutting such fiery hair must be a sin. I looked at him surprised, could not see what he was talking about. He told me that after me taking a photo of her and strolling away, she followed me, and then while I was running after the bus, she watched me with suspicion. Hearing the old man's words, everything turned upside down for me, I didn't know whether to believe him or not. What was the point of a completely strange girl of whom I only took one picture to come to my studio and flip my life upside-down? The man said that the story started at the cemetery and that maybe I should look for the answers there. But how could I go to there at midnight? The man calmed me down, and offered to accompany me as he did not know when he would meet me again, and was interested himself in the matter... He asked about a flashlight and I showed him my phone. Better than nothing, he said...

Graveyard, quite dead in the daylight, is complete folly at night. Not a single utterance, only silence and emptiness. Emptied of everything, I filled myself with the graveyard's silence. Walking past the graves with the flashlight, looking for where I took a photo, I somehow remembered the spot, though the old man insisted on going to the other side, claiming to remember where exactly the girl was sitting in the middle of the graveyard. I wondered who he was and how come he knew so much about me and my story. Then a thought came to me, I froze in one place and asked some complete nonsense, like whether maybe was God. The man laughed uproariously. It was very strange to hear the laughing voice in the silence of the cemetery. Barely regaining his breath, he managed to control himself. He said, now that was a good one, and went further along into the cemetery.

We found the place where I took the photo of Kaya. I reached up to the grave and shone a light on the tombstone. Next to the name and surname there was a photo of the deceased. I looked at the photo and dropped the flashlight in surprise, *I* was depicted on the tombstone, it was me! The old man took the flashlight and once again I saw my own face. I said that it was me, but the old man remarked that it couldn't be me as I was sitting right there, though the photo resembled me exactly. I took the flashlight and examined the photo closely. It was me, exactly— everything, eyes, features, lips, the look. We were identical, except for name and surname. He was my age when he died; underneath it said – “He lived and rejoiced.” Strange it was, he lived and rejoiced, I thought of putting the same line on my own grave just for fun, but he really had the right to say that, as he really did live and rejoice. It is impossible to live with Kaya and not to rejoice, not to be happy and not to enjoy every day, but the inscription was not made by this boy, perhaps Kaya asked for it, as she herself enjoyed a life with him. Kaya was also happy with me, the person who was not the one she loved, and that day neither was Kaya the woman with whom the dead boy lived. It's a miracle, I said, such things never occur in reality, it's all illogical. Very logical it is, that is why it is a miracle, the old man answered. I agreed, miracles never happen in vain, there has to be a reason for them to occur. Sitting next to the grave, I looked at my deceased double. This boy is dead, Kaya will never be with him, he lives only in her memories, while I am real and his double, and though Kaya loves him, adores her memories. I cannot be this boy, I can only alter his role, and that is why Kaya had vanished, and there is no reason to search for her. Kaya and this boy were beams, but life is not an

exact science and a beam may change into a segment, in Kaya's life I was that tiny segment of the line which extended the beam. I could not and have not been able to prolong it, as I was not the one to initiate the beam. Strange it is, a beam may break into segments, but the segment can never be beamed out, a segment is just a segment and within it, you are either happy or not. I certainly was! The old man sat next to me and asked what I would call this story. I got confused, didn't follow him. He reminded me of my ambition to write, and asked about the title of the story. I replied, that if literature has a gender, it certainly is female and stories should carry women's names...

Kaya... He said.

Translated from the Georgian by Nikoloz Ghambashidze, edited by IWP

NOTES:

¹ Schrödinger's cat is a thought experiment, sometimes described as a paradox, devised by the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger in 1935.

² A toastmaster at a Georgian *supra* (feast), the emcee of the festivity.

³ The Lord's Prayer is the prayer that Christ gave the Church. The Orthodox Church teaches that it is the unfailing model and rule for all prayers. Undeniably the Lord's Prayer is the most commonly- used prayer.

⁴ A triangle with (at least) two equal sides.

⁵ In Georgian, "kaya" literally means "it is good."
