

'I'm sorry,' I said, casting around for something tangible to throw back at him. 'You were saying? The two sons? The "Minister of missing steps"?' As I spoke, I realised of course that I got it. That was the schtick, the sudden reversal: which one is the politician, which one the gambler... I looked at him and smiled: 'So?'

'Ah, it doesn't matter,' he said. 'It's just a story... A good one, but maybe I'm not in the mood. Next time!' He laughed out loud then swallowed down a cough that the laugh had threatened to awaken. 'But listen, this letter. Of course I know what it said, but you don't need me to tell you that. I mean, who do you think did it? The fairies?'

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'Bring Me Sunshine (after Dubravka Stojanović)' was created by cutting up, remixing and re-narrativising fragments from the following sources to create a completely new story:

Anon, 'Bring Me Sunshine: Which Parts of the Business Climate Should Public Policy

**Bring Me
Sunshine
(after
Dubravka
Stojanović)**

Tony White

It had stopped raining, but the ground was still wet and the corners of grassy areas and flower beds had been turned to mud by countless people's taking more direct routes across the square than the meandering gravel paths allowed. I swatted at the few drops of water on the bench with my newspaper, then sat down on it. Next to my shoulder, almost, was the trunk of a small ornamental tree whose weeping branches formed a small canopy above our heads. To my right, his chest rising and falling with the effort of our recent short walk, and wearing his several jumpers and crumpled shirt more flamboyantly than might seem likely, was M____. We weren't here to pass the time of day: 'You were saying... You were shown a document?' There was a pause between question and answer. Or maybe it wasn't a pause. I brushed at something on my trouser leg that might have been dried food and counted to five, ten. I scraped it with a finger nail. How long had I realised that he wasn't talking anymore. Oh, God, had he asked me a question? Maybe we were getting to the punch line at last. Of course I knew full well that it didn't matter if I'd been listening or not. I was here in the role of straight man -- -- Ernie Wise to his Eric Morecambe more befuddled I was by his palaver the better the effect. Any benefits to me would be in the realm of aesthetics, admiration of the master stylist; relevance to our conversation coincidental. I knew all this. Talking to M____ was like reading Myles na Gopaleen: that whole elegant storytelling apparatus brought to bear only in so far as it might furnish him with an opportunity for the deadpan delivery of some ridiculous pun or another, a sudden reversal that illuminated nothing apart from my own stupidity, and which would of course be followed by an excuse, some further exploration of the genres of deferral. It was all part of the game with him. I realised that he was looking at me. What did that expression mean? Pity?

kind of man to take short cuts across flower beds.
'When the actor was dying,' he went on, 'the elder son...'

For God's sake, was he joking? It might not have been raining, but it was cold and I wondered how much of his prevarication I could take; how long before I felt that dull pain starting in my lower back and spreading across the kidneys. Good grief. He was explaining how one of these sons was a great traveller. Saying that he loved to travel, or maybe he had to. That this son travelled all over the place: Moscow, Belgrade, Berlin, Frankfurt, London.
Never mind international jet-setting, I was wondering how far it was to the nearest pub, calculating when I'd have to make a run for it. I tried sitting up straighter against the bench's curve. Uncrossed my legs then crossed them again and turned to face him, resting one elbow on the back of the bench between us. Still he prattled on: something about a four-man delegation, a spa, someone disguising themselves as a monk, someone losing all their money.

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He didn't need any encouragement from me. We were going to be here for a while. He wasn't the

'You know. There was this king, or let's say an actor, a movie star, I don't know. Well, let's say he's an actor from the old days, the kind who would play kings or heroes in films that haven't aged very well, yes? So this actor has two sons, one turns out to be a gambler and the other is a politician. You know this story?'

I shrugged. What choice did I have? 'Go on.'

He made a brief wordless grunt but continued staring out beyond the railings at a man walking past on the other side of the street with one baby slung across his chest and another in a heavily-laden pushchair. Then: 'It's like the story about the king and his two sons. You know this?'

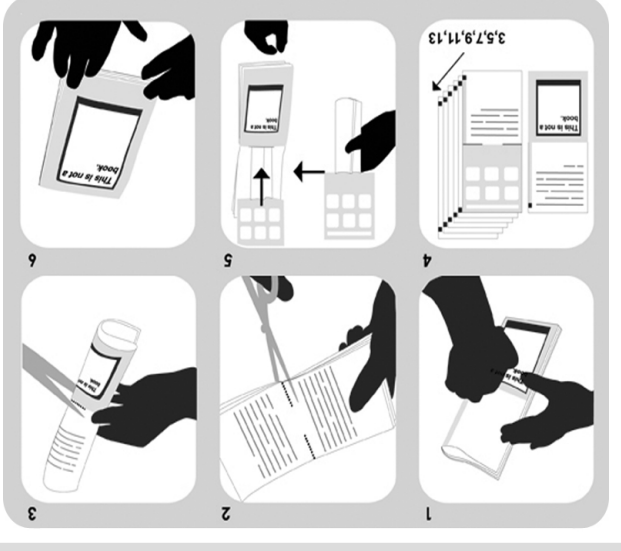
'Tell me about the letter. Do you remember much about it?'

that been there? I hoped that it might be a splash of last night's supper.

Bring Me Sunshine (after Dubravka Stojanović) Tony White

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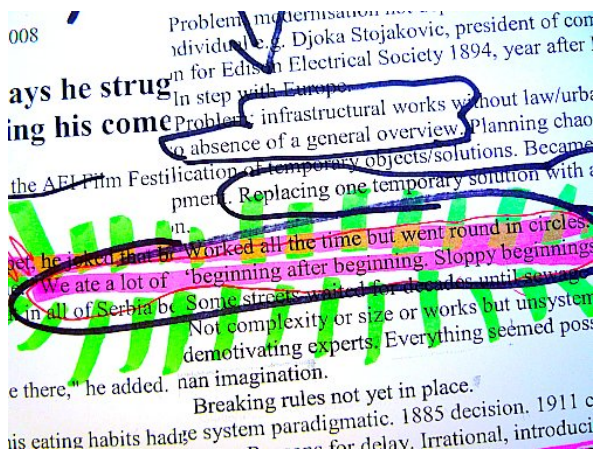
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Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1996-2008.
http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0613.html#serbia

Accessed 27 November 2008

Tony White, notes made during 'Accelerator -- Clutch -- Brake: Modernisation processes in Belgrade, 1890-1914' seminar by Dubravka Stojanović, University of Belgrade. Centre for South East European Studies, SEES. 11 November 2008.



I scratched at my trousers again then nodded, though my mind was wandering. I was thinking about the previous night, the restaurant, all those sloppy starters: starter after starter. Why would anyone be a vegetarian? Like trying to propel an aeroplane with ox-power... Apart from that we'd had a nice time. I'd already packed away my first bottle by the time she'd arrived. Everything had seemed possible for a while, but when I'd asked about vegan options, no wheat, no dairy, one of the waiters, who was emphatically not of the same nationality as the food, had nodded conspiratorially and said, 'You must be from America!' as if the concept of veganism might still be tinged with exotic glamour, a decadent whim of the too-successful rather than, for some, simply being a question of basic health, an attempt to avoid pain. 'Shopska salad!' he'd said confidently. 'That's the only thing that doesn't have meat in.' But when it arrived the whole thing was of course blanketed with white cheese. I'd pushed it to one side, ordered more olives.

He was saying that the other son concerned himself with infrastructural investments that had arisen in absence of a general overview; that some journalist once wrote that he should

Csedomille Mijatovic, 'Justice or Injustice? Which is best?' from Serbian Folk-Lore: Popular Tales, edited by W.Denton, London: W.Isbister and Company, 1874. Collected in *Folklore and Mythology: Electronic Texts*, by D.L.Ashliaman,

Accessed 11 December 2008

http://157.150.195.168/x/case/slobodan_milosevic/trans/en/060301IT.htm/49079-49085.

ICTY, 'Slobodan Milosevic (IT-02-54) Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia', 2006, pages

2008.

Anon, 'Mark Ruffalo's Veggie Nightmare: Serbian food while filming his comedy The Brothers Bloom.' *London Metro*, 4 November

European Studies (SSEES), 27 November 2008.

'Try to Fix?' Poster for seminar by Paul Seabright (University of Toulouse) and Wendy Carlin (UCL). Centre for the Study of Economic and Social Change in Europe, School of Slavonic and East

I don't know. I was finding it hard to concentrate. Footsteps behind us gave me the excuse to look around. I noticed that a small black plaque was fixed to the trunk of the tree as if it were an exhibit in an arboretum: 'Willow-leaved Pear.' The branches were bare, but the scant few slender leaves scattered on the ground near our feet did look like willow, or olive. I wondered if it was related to either. If it bore fruit.

Something about the Russian Cossack Army.

He talked of ways that this son exploited planning chaos, replacing one temporary entity with another. That he rose very fast by these means: by breaking rules not yet in place, by tricks dressed up as the righting of wrongs, by hiring and firing, by the demotivation of experts and eminent representatives alike.

become the 'Minister of Missing-out-steps.' Where was he going with this ridiculous parable?