

The winding road

The road suddenly curved and came to a crooked plane tree. Martin braked, shifted into second and steered sharply to the left. The screeching of the tires on the asphalt was a prelude to his bitter thoughts. They were about Anna.

Instead of making life better, lately she just seemed to create more obstacles, filling it with boring get-togethers in which the vulgar chattering of the television was background noise to increasingly rare pleasurable murmurs. Maybe the fire that usually ignites when you fall in love and later burns less brightly but spreads a more vivid and intense heat, maybe that flame had gone out a while ago, and he hadn't wanted to notice. Maybe all that remained between him and Anna was a filament of melancholic drool, heldtogether by laziness, by the anticipation of pain and by a couple of photos stuck to a panel. Then there was Gena, the girl from female baseball, with her flirting and her tight t-shirts under which exploded a sculptured freshness that was both an invitation and a prophecy.

He smiled fiendishly at the last thought, while the provincial road willingly followed the umpteenth succession of curves, twists and turns, ups and downs. The car ploughed through a vast horizon, made up mostly of unripe but vigorous vineyards, already an omen of the fruity wines to come.

As he drove, the mute snarl of a chained-up german shepard steered his mind to the last few months at the surgery: the boring rotation of puppies, blood on latex gloves, constant squabbles with the doctor, voluntary confinement to seasonal vaccinations. And the wicked desire that periodically gripped him: inject those bastards with the easy whimper with a deadly overdose and see their death spasms in the arms of their decrepit owners.

Lost in such dark thoughts, he lost his sense of the space he had crossed. The falling night made the journey's landmarks unrecognizable, even though he had traveled that way several times. Following whose advice had he submitted to a life of moderate dissatisfaction? He felt anger and desire explode inside him. That was enough. It was time to cut loose. Anna. The surgery. This time he would not go back. Change by God, change.

All of a sudden, passing over an unknown bridge made him realize that he was definitely lost. He hadn't seen another living soul in half an hour. Without realizing it, he had taken a secondary road, for tractors. He was afraid. He cursed the way in which he had gotten distracted, following crazy conjectures, a child's day dreams. He slowed down and looked at the scenery around him. Nothing. The lights of the car weakly perforated the darkness of the countryside, without offering any useful hold for his attempts to get his bearings. D

Discouraged, he stopped the car, got out and leaned against something on the side of the road. He caught his breath. He needed air. It took him a few minutes to recognize that his casual leaning post was the crooked plane tree near which he had steered sharply about an hour before. He had gone around in a circle. He hadn't even had a chance to let it sink in when the phone rang. A voice reached him from the other end. He was relieved. It was Anna's.