

Rome, April 16th 2035

"You brave men and women: you deserve victory and glory". From outside, the chorus of exultance covers the burst of the machine gun fire. *"The unfaithful have been defeated; the enemies of God and humanity have been defeated. Glory to God. Glory to God"*. They must be a kilometre from here more or less: they're advancing in a dispersed manner, on foot and on armoured tanks without meeting resistance.

During the last few hours, the explosions have diminished. They resonate through my body. The din from the days the bombs fell and the response of the aviation have ceased and left room for long minutes of nothing. I try to hold my breath and listen to this peculiar kind of silence. I assure you, its a horrible experience. The snipers use their last rusty ammunition from the roofs; pulling the trigger with warped fingers from eight months of resistance. They do not have enough lucidity nor are they stupid enough to try to flee from an army of 500,000 men that at two blocks from here are setting their houses on fire and raping their sisters. They have lost but are still shooting.

In any case, I can't blame them. I haven't fled either and will not, in the short lapse of time that separates me from the arrival of the fighters of God and from what seems to be my inevitable death. I do not expect compassion from a herd of ferocious Negroes that have left their villages and crossed seas to conquer Europe and slaughter its inhabitants. On the other hand, we starved them for centuries. According to the court of history, they have the right of vengeance. I try to imagine what the face of the first I see will be like when he passes through the doorway. I can't figure out his features but I can see his expression clearly: unreasonable and hungered. It will be a muscular beast, anxious to rage on my flaccid body. I've heard that people like me are killed with dagger and swords in these days of delirium. So a blade is the destiny I'm waiting for, immobile in the middle of this room decorated with turquoise majolica that have seen me holding the queen in my arms dancing with her,

drinking French wines and conspiring against the President of the Republic. Now, it is not a room anymore. It's a wreck drifting in the tempest of defeat: a turned over library, a bonfire of chairs while the April breeze blowing through the broken windows make the doors slam. Solitary pages flutter.

The scramble and the riots started six days ago. Alone, I haven't found a way to defend our house from the looting. Your mother has departed the way she lived; a frightened hyena. The last time I saw her, she was in the bedroom frenetically stuffing her pockets with handfuls of useless money; she stared at me as if I were a stranger and ran away tripping on the hem of her fur coat. As far as your cousin is concerned, he didn't face up to the idea that they were coming. On the last floor there was music, drugs and people coming and going until three evenings ago; the morning of the day before yesterday I found him dead on the pavement. His head was smashed. His fiancé's body was beside him. They must have jumped from the balcony. I buried them with my hands in the garden without a tombstone to prevent someone from mangling their bodies. As far as your friend Carnov is concerned, he tried everything to convince me to follow him. I even considered some of his proposals but neither his efforts nor my thoughts were useful. Even if a hiding place does exist where some Arabian secret agent will not find me, I won't be able to flee from what I am: a man corroded by egoism upon which I have prospered, a corrupt government official of a defeated empire, a specimen from a museum of a decadent civilization. In a world that begins tomorrow there is no room for my rules or my ideals. Whether we were right or wrong, we will be judged by a boring historian. The fact is we have passed: this has been decided by some deity that probably wasn't on our side.

Here, I can hear their voices in the garden: they are yelling and encouraging each other. Somebody shoots in the air. A bomb explodes. I can hear its echo in my swollen and empty stomach, just like I heard the others. Just a pile of ruins is what is left of the man I used to be. In this situation, waiting for death is an easy job.

There is only one haemorrhage I cannot stop, dear Jan, and it's the awareness of your hatred. I know that you will read these few words, my only son, in a couple of days in a place I have never seen and that you will rejoice like you never have in these twenty-eight years. This is my last excruciating passion.

They're tearing the door down. They're here.