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Vincent Czyz

## The Nameless Saint

**I**t was the hour when the lamplighter, toting a ladder over his shoulder, made his tedious rounds; when workers slogged through the streets as though souls on their way to purgatory; when bones turning to dust in graveyards unexpectedly shifted like a heap of logs burning on the grate. This was not the quarter of Samirska lit by theaters and cafes, cabarets and fine restaurants—a quarter smiling like a crescent moon in the dusk—here the restaurants had bare wooden floors and for a *drima* offered a bowl of cabbage soup or, for a few more, greasy stew and

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a slice of black village bread. Here, mounted gendarmes patrolled the streets in pairs or not at all.

A woman leaned out of a narrow window and called for her child.

At the bar of the Blind Beggar, Brosnik Yelenich was trying to decide how likely it was that a man sitting at a corner table was his father. The tavern was smoky and the light poor, but the man looked about the right age. His hair was blond, as his father's had been, and

he had the slim build Brosnik remembered.

He hadn't seen Vanya Yelenich since he was 10.

Brosnik didn't have his father's height, but he was broad-shouldered, with short, muscular limbs that brought to mind a sturdy animal—an ox or a ram.

His conversations tended to begin and end with his good-

for-nothing father—where Vanya Yelenich might have gotten to, how he managed to pay for his drinks, how hard he (Brosnik) was going to hit him when he found him, the questions he was going to put to his father while he sat, dazed, on a grimy floor or cold cobblestones.

*Do you know how many floors Yalana Yelenich had to scrub to support us?*

*Do you know how tired she was after a day that lasted 16 hours?*

*Do you know how years went by and still she believed that you'd show up one day and on that day, she would have the pleasure of forgiving you in front of her son no matter how much you didn't deserve it?*

"Revenge is a bitter drink, Brosnik Yelenich," his mother warned. "It will burn a hole in you faster than the strongest *ambruca*. Take pity on your father and empty your cup."

The man who looked like his father was glaring back at him. The other man at the table, his black beard untrimmed and coarse, his head oversized and shaggy (it could have belonged to a steppe buffalo if only there were a pair of horns), was the one Brosnik would have to worry about.

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Shrugging, Brosnik drank his beer. He'd been in countless fights in a dozen towns and cities and learned the vulnerable places: to render a man dizzy or unconscious, the punch should land just below his cheekbone or in the temple; to take the wind out of him, under the heart, in the solar plexus, the liver, or a kidney; merely to punish him, in the nose or ears.

Although he was only 20, he'd already been dishonorably discharged from the army after an argument had come to blows, and the men had had to revive their sergeant. He'd lost his job as a printer's apprentice in Brezhla for falling asleep behind the binding machine. He'd quit a butcher's shop in Tatavnia because he couldn't stand the stink of congealing pools of blood and the buckets of offal he was expected to carry. He'd worked the docks in two port cities, but the sea spits out such dregs, the sailors were so swift with their blades and the stevedores so handy with sharp words and their steel hooks, he probably wouldn't have lived out the year had he stayed.

Whenever possible, he traveled by train. Only then, watching the countryside go by through a window like a moving painting in a frame, listening to the rhythmic clicking of the wheels on the track, rocking with the wagon while he gazed dreamily out a window (ignoring the men complaining the rumbling gave them a headache), only then did he feel at peace.

"You were on too many trains as a boy," Yalana Yelenich said. "You slept on them too often while I chased after your father. It's my fault your soul is never at rest even when you're sleeping. I shouldn't have taken you with me, but I'd hoped Vanya Yelenich would come to his senses when he saw me with his blond-haired son and sometimes—may God forgive me—sometimes I needed the company even if you were only a child."

The man who put a friendly hand on Brosnik's back was short and spindly, his skin swarthy, his black mustache drooping. He wore boots with upturned tips, baggy shalwars and a colorful vest over his shirt. He was probably Tazta or maybe a Kurg who didn't observe the Muslim proscription of alcohol.

"Another beer, my friend?"

Brosnik didn't trust Taztas or Kurgs, but he shrugged. "Why not?"

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“Gebzen Grastinyeke of Zamoya.” He reached for his hat, but maybe because he’d been drinking, it fell.

Brosnik snatched the fur cap before it could land on the muddy, beer-soaked floor and handed it back.

“What do you expect for your beer, Gebzen Grastinyeke?”

Gebzen looked at the two men sitting in their dim corner and pointed. “There’s going to be trouble, I think.” The teeth in his smile were sharp. He was small, but Taztas were never without their knives and knew better than sailors how to skin an enemy. “Just a friendly warning.”

“I can handle them without paying for your blade.” Brosnik looked again. Could the blond one be his father?

Gebzen pointed at the men again and laughed loudly. “We’ll see.” He began backing away. “The big one’s getting up now.”

Brosnik looked at the shaggy man, at his leather vest worn to holes in places, at his bloodshot eyes.

“What’s this habit you have of staring?”

“Why don’t you go keep your *ambruca* company? Unless you can drink and talk at the same time, I won’t have to listen to you.”

His black eyebrows, as tangled as overgrown bracken, lowered. He brought his huge face closer to Brosnik’s. “I don’t like the way you’re looking at my friend.”

Brosnik tightened his grip on his beer mug. “Bad enough I have to listen to you, your stink is probably left over from the hole you slid out of when you were born.”

Gebzen Grastinyeke and another Tazta were between the two men even before Brosnik had finished uttering his insult.

“Gentlemen! Let the fight be fair, let no one interfere. Two *kroshten* on the boy! Tavern-keep! You’re the treasurer here. Ten percent to the house!”

“Ten percent plus any damage to the house!”

Chairs scraped noisily, voices rose suddenly like birds startled into flight, tables were shoved aside, and someone answered Gebzen’s bet: “Drugo has a head like a block of wood, he never goes down! Five *kroshten* on Drugo Luzja!”

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Coins clanged and glittered on the bar. The tavern-keep swept them into a pile, busily scratched names and amounts onto a bit of paper.

Brosnick bet two *kroshten*—all the money he had—on himself and began rolling his head to loosen his neck (better the head doesn't resist when caught by a punch).

Drugo Luzja didn't circle like most opponents, didn't look for a weakness or an opening, he lumbered in as though he were a sliding mountain slope. Brosnik avoided the bovine head, put shoulder, back, and hips into a right that landed between the flaps of Drugo Luzja's vest. The air came out of him like a musket ball. Stepping to the side, Brosnik planted a left hook in a kidney. Drugo Luzja took two punches to his unprotected face, which straightened him up, and two more under the rib cage.

He fell to his hands and knees.

Brosnik kicked him under an eye.

Wild screams of elation and strident cries of despair met and flattened each other out like colliding waves.

Brosnik's boot thumped into ribs and the fallen man groaned.

"He's finished." Brosnik pushed on his opponent with a heel. Drugo fell over on his side and moaned.

The tavern-keep, who was paid no matter the outcome and so was likely to be the only disinterested observer, nodded. "No reason to thrash him like a dog. Winners step up to the bar!"

Shouts rattled the plank walls, glasses jiggled on tables pounded by fists, hands slapped Brosnik on the back, and gap-toothed smiles lined the way to the bar.

The hand on his shoulder was Gebzen Grastinyeke's.

"What made you so sure I would win?"

"I put my hand on your back to see if you were as solid as you looked—you're like a pile of stones. When I pushed my hat off my head, I saw you weren't drunk, that you have quick reflexes. You have scars on your hands, so you're used to fighting, but only one on your face—you usually win. Your opponent was big, but he's drunk and clumsy as a steppe buffalo. There's nothing swift in his

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muscles. The look in his eye is dull—he fights out of boredom. But you ... you're seething, you have whitewater in your veins." Gebzen shrugged. "And, of course, there's gambler's instinct."

"Where's my beer?"

"Come with us to Zamoya!" Bedru Albiye said. "It's the beginning of the Festival of the Fourteen Clans, gaming wherever you turn. And the plum brandy the Gypsies distill is sweeter than any wine or *ambruca*. Only the Gypsy women, who will give you nothing more than a sly glance, are sweeter."

Brosnik shrugged. "I have work here in Samirska, in the stables."

"You're shoveling manure!" Gebzen laughed. "And how much do you earn in a month? Four? Five *kroshten*? My friend, come to Zamoya. You'll come back here with your pockets sagging with *kroshten*, and then you can load wheelbarrows of shit to your heart's content."

Brosnik finally got a good look at the blond man as he helped Drugo Luzja to his feet; he wasn't Vanya Yelenich.

**B**edru Albiye and Gebzen Grastinyek took turns sharing a horse with Brosnik Yelenich. The Taztas were like spiders in the saddle, somehow stuck to it without clinging, seeming never to tire. They even smelled like their horses.

Bounced up and down all day, Brosnik's bones ached, his haunches went numb, and the Taztas laughed at him in the morning when he said, "I'll walk, I'll catch up or get on the train at one of these stations. I'd rather fight two Drugo Luzjas than get back on a horse."

"Be thankful it's spring and the weather's warm. In Zamoya, the shadows of the Kaldovians are always premonitions of evening, and in winter, the cold settles in and even your dreams shiver."

Brosnik thought of Yalana Yelenich waiting for his father these 10 years, how her waist had thickened and disappeared, a Penelope without any suitors other than the janitor of the building, a consumptive drunk who had two teeth less after an argument with Brosnik—two teeth he rattled in a cup he carried with him up and down the

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stairs as a reminder of his poor judgment. Her samovar was always lit, and no matter how bitter the tea, she diluted it with forgiveness, dissolved prayer like sugar cubes, held the glass in hands as rough and cracked as old shoe leather but red and swollen as leather never is. Her knees had become bony knots, permanently darkened beyond any scrubbing. She fell to them naturally now as though a carpenter had made her to fold up and be put away under a sink or in a closet.

When they got to Zamoya, there were no Gypsies other than the owner of Zabalva's Tavern and two of her cousins. Brosnik had never seen a head of hair like Zabalva's, dark waves that could have been woven into sail rigging, that would have gleamed blue-black on the open sea, an abundance of hair like a strip of curdled night. Her eyebrows pointed haughtily upward and danced to their own music; her bracelets jingled with coins and charms; her many-layered skirts were lifted often to expose legs as firm and smooth as polished pine, promising equally muscular haunches. When she bent to wipe down a table, her breasts looked as though they would tumble impudently out of her blouse.

"Don't stare, Brosnik Yelenich. Zabalva will let anyone court her, but she gives herself to no one. Have some cabbage soup, drink some *ambruca*, take the stiffness out of your joints. The Gypsy caravans will be here soon enough."

Dark skin glistening with sweat, Zabalva brought *ambruca* and bowls, poured with a dazzling smile and was gone with a twirl of her skirts.

"My friend, the first drink in Zamoya is always to the dead." The Taztas held up their bowls. "May their wanderings in the underworld be at an end, may their souls be at peace."

"Unless my father is among them." Brosnik finished his bowl of *ambruca* in a gulp.

Both of the Taztas glowered at him.

"Remember, Brosnik Yelenich," Bedru said in a flat voice, "you're not in Samirska."

Brosnik held up his empty bowl. But when Zabalva returned in a chatter of dangling gold, Brosnik grabbed the ancient bottle by its cloudy neck to keep her from pouring. "I haven't seen my father in 10

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years. I sleep badly at night, I've never found work that suits me, I can't live east or west of the Kaldovians."

Zabalva reached down and scratched Brosnik under his stubbly chin as though he were a cat. "I'm a Gypsy but I don't tell fortunes or divine the whereabouts of fathers who've deserted their families. When the caravans come, don't go there either. They'll spread pretty lies at your feet, like carpets braided from false hopes and gaudy thread. They'll tell fantastic stories because they'll want to distract you from what they can't heal. And because they are always happy to take money from a *Gadjo*. But among the Taztas ... once there were Taztas who could read your face, your scars were as good as landmarks to them, they could whisper to your heart in its own monotonous language ... they're all gone now except for Ananatalya Nodravna. She's sitting over there smoking her pipe."

Brosnik thanked Zabalva for her advice and then lifted a bowl to the new friends who refused to let him pay.

"Go." Gebzen shooed him with a hand. "See what Ananatalya Nodravna has to say. But be respectful. She's a witch and her spells are strong."

Brosnik introduced himself to a grandmotherly woman whose hands rested on the table as though they were too heavy to carry. Her fingers, Brosnik noticed were nearly as thick as his own. A pipe between her teeth, she smiled at him, slitting her small eyes. Her face was dark, its folds too deep to call wrinkles.

"My mother insists my soul is spinning like a mad dervish, that it has no sense of direction."

Ananatalya Nodravna sent a cloud of pale blue smoke toward the ceiling. "In Tazta *soul* is always she. Language remembers the soul is a woman, but men forget. She's your mistress, and you must learn to understand her." Ananatalya Nodravna put down her pipe and placed four tall cards on the table. "Pick one."

Brosnik Yelenich was drawn first by the perfection of the circle, next by the elegance of the flat pyramid, then by the strength and fort-like quality of the square, finally by the beauty of the five-pointed star.

"I can't."

"Of course you can."

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“No, because then I give up the other three.”

Ananatalya Nodravna swept up her cards. “Most likely your mother is half right. Your soul has no sense of direction, and so she can’t choose one from among them, but I don’t think she’s whirling or restless, it’s because she’s blurry.”

“I don’t understand.”

Ananatalya Nodravna raised an index finger with the tip missing. “Every soul is as recognizable as a face, but yours is like smoke trapped under a jar.

“The Gypsies will tell you the soul has a face that belongs to the woman you’ll fall in love with, but that’s just the sort of romance they like to sell. In fact your face will age according to how well you get along with your soul—quickly and badly when you don’t, well and handsomely when you do. Yes, graying and old you can look better than you did as a youth if you’re in harmony with your body’s mistress.”

“And what’s to be done about it?”

Ananatalya Nodravna shrugged. “Some answers, Brosnik Yele-nich, you’ll have to find on your own.”

“What about my father? I’ve been looking for him for years.”

“Do you have anything that was his?”

Brosnik took off his cross, a cheap one made of nickel. “This wasn’t his, but he wears one exactly like it.”

Reaching for the cross, her stub of a finger looked as though it were begging back its missing piece. “Tomorrow, I’ll tell you something that will help you find your father.”

**T**he Gypsies came into the cobblestone square early the next morning in caravans with lanterns swinging from them. Some were covered by canvas, some had wooden roofs with carved eaves and diamond-shaped windows, all of them were painted red as background for twisting vines bristling with flowers of all sizes (colorful flames that warmed only the eye). The caravans made it seem as though spring were being trundled in on spoked, wooden wheels. Open carts followed close behind, then Gypsy women on foot, the Gypsy children, and last of all the Gypsy dogs, including a blue-eyed

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wolfhound who made a ruckus by dragging tin cans that had been tied to his tail.

Still half asleep, looking out on a hazy morning, Brosnik saw a girl of 16 or 17 whose head was bent with fatigue or maybe grief, who walked as though she had nowhere to go.

Downstairs, he found Bedru Albiye and Gebzen Grastinyeke already waiting for him.

“Look Brosnik Yelenich! They’ve come!”

Brosnik watched from the doorway.

“I know the one your eye follows. Remember, my friend, these are Gypsy girls. At 12 or 13 they’re already brides. She’s married to a man with white hair, a fiddler. She sings while he plays. She’ll bear him children and sing all her life until he’s dead before she’s even beyond her child-bearing years, and then she’ll secretly take someone into her bed, probably a boy, until she can’t hold his interest anymore.”

Her black eyes, the way her cheekbones undercut them, and, in morning light settling like mist, the curved seam of her lips, were like letters that might have formed a word, except that they were as indecipherable as the shape of a stone. He turned away from the procession, his ears ringing as though he’d run into a doorjamb.

Most of the shops closed down when the Gypsies arrived—the coppersmith and the tinsmith, the blacksmith, the shoemaker and the tailor, the carpenter and the basket weaver in particular, not because the owners wanted to gamble, but because the Gypsies always brought their own craftsmen and always undersold them. Taztas were already heading toward the caravans carrying damaged pots, broken tools, unmended furniture. In the cities, shopkeepers tried to stunt the competition by insisting it was a Gypsy who forged the nails with which Christ had been hammered to the cross. But Taztas had only the vaguest notion of who Christ might have been, considered

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him of no more account than rumors of unicorns or griffins, were sure that, if his flesh had been pierced by Gypsy nails, the nails had been, however unfortunately put to use, of fine quality that contradicted their modest price.

The games began almost immediately—cards, dice and backgammon on boards and tables set out by the Gypsies. Traditional events in riding, wrestling, knife-throwing, and archery were held outside of town. Centuries before, when the Tazta had ruled a small empire, a few Gypsy bands had gotten the idea of timing visits to coincide with these spring competitions, and the Tazta thrived on the carnival mood the Gypsies conjured with their music and dancing.

Brosnik had gotten the last empty room in Zamoya, which explained the tents that had sprung up like enormous overnight blooms on the outskirts of town. Fighting took place at night behind Rosto's Tavern. Only the men were allowed to compete, only men were allowed to watch. Brosnik saw herders with sheepskin vests, tall men who looked as impossible to subdue as the mountain crags among which they lived. "They're Azaks, they never get tired," Gebzen whispered. "They're used to the thin air of the mountains, their lungs are overfed down here." Shirtless Albanians in white breeches and orange sashes, their bodies all muscle and bone, stood in a circle, laughing and talking. "Thin but fast, very fast!" Most imposing were nomads wearing shalwars, red sashes, red turbans and jackets decorated with braids. Tall, like the Azaks, they had square shoulders, thick mustaches, cheekbones sharp as table corners, and were so alike they could all have been brothers. "Fierce fighters, some of them would rather die than give up."

Bedru held out something shiny to him. "Your cross. Ananatalya Nodravna thought you might want it for luck."

Brosnik took the cross while Gebzen's fingers roughly massaged his neck.

"There are rules, Brosnik Yelenich—we don't collect our money if we break them. No kicks are allowed, no blows below the navel, and an opponent who falls has to be given the chance to get up."

Brosnik stripped off his shirt like the other fighters (the nickel cross flashed in his hair like a coin in sunburned grass) and waited

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while lots were drawn to decide the matches. The onlookers formed a ring around the fighters, and boys held out lanterns on poles. Brosnik trembled from the chill night air, from fear mingling with his blood.

His first opponent, a drunken Slav with an enormous belly, seemed surprised when Brosnik hammered home a right hook that made him stagger back a few steps. He was more surprised when a trio of punches snapped his head from one side to the other and cracked a bone so loudly even the men watching moaned. The big Slav sat in the grass as though he were a child playing with dolls. Blood poured from his nose, which was grotesquely crooked and already swelling hideously. He screamed when three men who'd seen many such injuries held him down, and one of them pushed the bone back somewhere near where it belonged.

Gebzen leaned over his shoulder. "Six *kroshten* for the big Slav!"

Brosnik's second fight was a Gypsy with silver in his mustache and not a few missing teeth.

"Be careful," Gebzen warned. "They call him the Old Mongoose because you can throw a handful of sand at him and still miss!"

Brosnik's first punch cut nothing but air. A jab stung him under the eye in return, and he felt the little cross bounce against his chest. He swung again, but again the Gypsy slipped the blow, this time landing a hook to the ribs. Brosnik had never seen anyone move the way he moved; he ducked, leaned away from punches, his torso rolled on his hips as though his bones were rubber, and all the time he peppered Brosnik with counterpunches. His right eye almost swollen shut, Brosnik had only managed to graze the Old Mongoose a couple of times.

He was going to lose.

Thinking this, he got hit again. Enraged, Brosnik charged and hurled his fists, but the more experienced fighter danced around him, taunting him with a gap-toothed smile. As long as he followed that jeering mouth, Brosnik knew the fight would belong to the Old Mongoose.

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Lowering his eyes to the Gypsy's chest, just below the sternum, Brosnik began to aim his punches there. His left slid off sweaty skin, but his right fist thudded into ribs. His opponent shuffled out of range again, his smile probably gone now although Brosnik didn't know: he refused to so much as glance at that crenellated lure. Eyes fixed on a chest steely with gray hair, he pretended to throw a jab. When the Old Mongoose rolled away from it, Brosnik hit him in the kidney. The Gypsy was wheezing now. Brosnik threw a flurry of punches: some missed completely, one or two hit shoulders, but two landed solidly, and the Old Mongoose went down. Brosnik cocked a leg, but he heard the Taztas screaming "No kicks! *No-oh* kicks!"

When his opponent got to his feet, Brosnik strode forward with his hands at his waist. He got hit as he'd expected, but he barely felt the jab he took in order to land another kidney blow and then a hook to the head. The Gypsy went down again, and this time he began to cough. Blood speckled the hair on his chest, and the other Gypsies signaled the fight was over.

"You are stubborn like all the Slavs, Brosnik Yelenich, you outlasted him!"

Leading him across the cobblestone square, Bedru and Gebzen gave him 10 *kroshten*—more money than he'd ever held in his hands.

Zabalva's Tavern was smoky and hot, there were Gypsies dancing and singing, playing fiddles, *zurlas* and lutes, their shirts open, chests sweaty, jewelry trembling and shimmering, the long hair of the women spraying like seawater against rock or swaying in braids. The Tazta women were hardly less colorful in their red kerchiefs, their bright vests and long skirts embroidered with flowers. They clapped and sang although they didn't understand the words, jumped out of their seats and chose dancing partners from a crowd of Tazta men in pantaloons, tasseled sashes, and boots with up-curved tips.

Bedru waved to Zabalva. "Plum brandy for tonight's winner!"

Brosnik's right eye was a slit above the swelling and his lip had been split open, but there was no ice to be had that time of year. Out of his left eye he saw the Gypsy girl. The coins strung around her neck, the kerchief that covered only the back of her head announced that she was married. She raised her chin slight-

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ly, exposed a little more the curved seam of her lips but didn't avert her eyes.

Zabalva brought bowls and a bottle with bubbles in the murky brown glass, its uneven shape due either to poor workmanship or years of being passed from hand to hand.

"Ananatallya Nodravna has been waiting for you, Brosnik Yelenich."

Draining his bowl of plum brandy, he made his way to her table. She had to shout in his ear to be heard.

"Ah, look at your eye!" She put a thumb on the swelling and felt it lightly. "You have a blurry soul but a good heart. You remind me of my son. I haven't seen him for years now. You have his blue eyes, you're a handsome boy, like him. You shouldn't be set against other men behind Rosto's Tavern like a bunch of roosters."

Brosnik nodded. "What about my father?"

"In one of my dreams I was looking for a hairpin, a very old one made by Taztas. I searched through every drawer, emptied every chest and box, but I couldn't find it. I finally gave up, and it was only by accident, reaching up to adjust my hair, that I felt it. I understood then that I'd been looking for something that was there the whole time. Do you see? The pin is your father. He's here in Zamoya."

"Here? Impossible!"

"I thought so, too. I know everyone in this town and in the nearby villages, but I've never heard of Vanya Yelenich. Where did you last see your father?"

"A railway station. Ten years ago."

"Who knows where the trains took him? I'll try to dream again tonight."

When he returned to his table, Zabalva was talking with Bedru and Gebzen. Then she was gone with a glittery jingle.

Gebzen stood up and put an arm around Brosnik's neck as though in drunken camaraderie. "Someone wants to see you."

Gebzen took him through a room full of women who, wearing silk dresses that exposed their bosoms, their skin warmed by red light from candles burning in crimson holders, gazed at him expectantly; took him past the kitchen where a cook looked up like a

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mouse that senses the presence of a cat; held a door open for him and motioned for him to go outside.

The Gypsy girl was standing there, her eyes like smoked glass. Her hair, which was straight and braided, was as black as soot. Her face was angular, a little bony. She didn't wear anything to brighten her lips, to shadow her eyes, to flush her cheeks. The brown of her skin was so striking he hoped the ground in which they buried him turned out to be the same color.

"The Old Mongoose is my father."

Brosnik's insides slid toward his feet. "I'm sorry—"

"He's a bastard. I hope you broke his ribs."

Brosnik nodded. "Some fathers deserve no better."

"He married me off two years ago to a man who is 46 years older than I am. He lost me in a card game. I'm 16 now and my husband's mind has gone to rot. He has to be tied to a tree at night or he wanders off, he speaks nonsense, he can't provide for me but still, I'm told, I have to honor the marriage. My mother takes my side but my father says, 'When your husband's dead, you can get a new one'."

"And your new husband will be a Gypsy."

She nodded. "One of these nights you'll have to fight my brother. He's the way my father was 25 years ago—stronger, quicker, with fists like horse hooves."

"He's a bastard, too."

"Every year he wins here unless there's a giant like Rosto in the competition. I don't think you can beat him, but I'll promise my father that I'll be an obedient wife to my mad husband if you lose. If you win, I'll stay with you—I'll lose my home, my family, my husband in a single night." She smiled and shook her head. "But you won't win." She reached up and touched the swelling under his right eye. "It makes you more handsome, I think."

"If I lose, will you keep your word?"

"I'll stay with my husband until they bury him."

Before he could say anything else, she put her arms around his neck and kissed him. The taste of her mouth was like a pungent root.

"One other thing about my brother: he sees better out of his left eye than his right."

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She kissed him again with her spicy mouth. "Now get out of here before someone sees us."

Gebzen was waiting on the other side of the door.

*[Find the rest of the story in Camera Obscura Vol 3]*

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