A Comparison of a Published Translation and a Self-translation of a Chapter of the Book *The One Plus One* by Jojo Moyes

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na srovnání dvou překladů kapitoly z knihy JoJo Moyes *Jeden plus jedna*. Cílem práce je porovnat práci profesionální překladatelky s prací začátečnice. V teoretické části práce je popsána problematika překladu na rovině lexikální, gramatické a textové. V praktické části práce jsou potom jednotlivé části překladu analyzovány podle těchto rovin. Závěrem je uvedeno, jakých chyb se dopouštěla profesionální překladatelka a jakých začátečnice.

Klíčová slova: profesionální překladatel, překladatel začátečník, srovnání, lexikální rovina, gramatická rovina, textová rovina, analýza překladu

ABSTRACT

The thesis is focused on a comparison of two translations of a chapter from a book *One plus One* by JoJo Moyes. The aim of the thesis is to compare a translation done by a professional translator with the one done by a translator beginner. In the theoretical part of the thesis translation is discussed on lexical level, grammatical level, and textual level. In practical part of the thesis the translations are analysed according to these levels. From the analysis a conclusion is drawn showing what kind of mistakes were done by the professional translator and by the translator beginner.

Keywords: professional translator, translator beginner, comparison, lexical level, grammatical level, textual level, translation analysis

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

As in the Czech culture majority of the people read in their mother tongue there is a need for translators of literature. A few years ago, when reading JoJo Moyes' novel *One Plus One* in Czech, I finished the book with an impression of an inferior translation. When considering a topic for my thesis several years later, I remembered this feeling that ruined my impression of a great book. I decided to translate a chapter from the book myself and compare my work with the published translation. The aim of the thesis is thus to compare the work of a translator beginner with the one of a professional.

When choosing the chapter for comparison I set my requirements: it was supposed to be a chapter somewhere in the middle of the book, not too long or short, and then I chose a random chapter and translated it. Only after I was confident about my translation, I asked two independent readers to read it and suggest improvements. Afterwards I read the published translation. Then I selected problematic parts and classified them according to issues described in the theoretical part of my thesis. One after another I compared them and commented on the quality of translations, what could have been done better and what is the difference between those two. Finally, based on the analysis, I defined the most striking differences between the work of a beginner and a professional.

I. THEORY

1 TRANSLATION IN GENERAL

Translation is a process where a translator tries to communicate information from a text of one language, the source language, to another one, a target language, whilst maintaining the meaning of what is being said. In this process, it is due to many reasons difficult, maybe impossible, to only reproduced the source text to the target one (Newmark1995).

When translating from a source language to a target language there is always a question of equivalence. In current translation practice we observe a principle claiming it is not that important to use the same linguistic tools; it is important to communicate the same meaning. Despite that, we should follow the semantic, connotative, denotative, and pragmatic platform of the text. Also, the character of the message should be taken into, whom the text is meant to serve, and author's intentions (Knittlová et al. 2010).

If one's translation is of high quality, it should be perceived by the recipient as a new piece of work. To achieve this, a good translation should sound natural, it should have the same meaning in the target langue as it has in the source language, while retaining the same dynamics (Knittlová et al. 2010).

1.1 Types of translation

There are three types of translation: intarligual translation, interligual translation, and intersemiotic translation (Munday 2016). The thesis focuses on interlingual translation. This type of translation, also called proper translation, focuses on "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language" (Jakobson 2012). Intralingual translation can be further divided into four categories: interlinear translation, literal translation, translation free, and communicative translation. Interlinear and literal translation focus on the form when categorizing a translation, translation free and communicative translation focus on its meaning.

A translation is called interlinear, also known as word-by-word translation, when even though there are equivalent grammatical structures in the target language that were used in the source language, these are not used. Second type is literal translation. When using this type of translation grammatical structures of the target language are adopted. The translator would use word-by-word translation, not dealing with collocations or idioms of the target language. Third type of translation is translation free. It focuses only on the connotational aspects of a text. In this case, a translator usually ignores stylistic and other aspects of the text; that is why this type of translation loses its aesthetics. The last type of translation is communicative translation, or idiomatic translation. In this type of translation, a translator

focuses on equivalence of pragmatic aspects of a source language in a target language, for example idioms (Knittlová et al. 2010).

Usually, a final product of translation will consist of all the mentioned types. Translator's goal is to create a text that sounds natural in the target language, but it has the same meaning as in the source one, and therefore it sounds like a new piece of work (Knittlová et al. 2010).

2 EQUIVALENCE AT LEXICAL LEVEL

When considering lexical level of a language a word is usually what one thinks about at first. However, a morpheme is the smallest unit of language that can change the meaning – it can, among other meanings, express plurality. Nevertheless, word is the smallest unit that can stand independently. Every word has its value when standing independently; it gains a different one when used in a context (Baker 2011). That means that the context or words surrounding the given word can affect its meaning. In lexical analysis of a text we examine whether a word is standard and non-standard, or whether the author is using common vocabulary or a technical term (Knittlová 2003).

Proportional and expressive meaning of a word can be distinguished. When talking about proportional meaning we can judge whether the word is true or false because it describes a particular thing. We cannot do the same thing with expressive meaning because it refers to author's feeling. When using a language, we can decide what kind of word we want to use, whether a stronger expression or a milder one (Baker 2011).

When translating, the difficult part of the job is on the lexical level. There could be words we find hard to translate. It may be because we do not understand the word, for example because it is a part of collocation not known to us.

2.1 Translation of proper names

The problem with translating proper names is that there is no equivalent for them in the target language (Bílková 2012). When translating proper names, a translator must search for those that they are not familiar with. They should bear in mind that there are some that can be translated to the target language, but untranslated proper names are often present in TT as well; if translators tried translating them, the text would be unnatural. Also, they should stay impartial and avoid using proper names that are politically influenced (Newmark 1995). It is also important to pay attention to the spelling of the words.

Good translation of proper names is important. It can be the feature showing the foreignness. Also, it could be very disturbing for a reader when name of a character is badly translated, as it accompanies them throughout the whole book. When choosing the right translation of a proper name one should consider time period or a culture, so it fits in the text well (Bílková 2012). A translator can never completely erase the traces of the SL from proper names, but one should make it as natural as possible (Bílková 2012). Therefore, there is always a dilemma in the world of translation whether to stay as close as possible to the original text and keep the proper names in the source language, which is called

naturalization, or make it as familiar as one can for the reader; in such case a translator would translate all the proper names in the target language, which is a case of domestication. Ideally these two processes should be kept in balance (Bílková 2012).

2.2 Translation of idioms

An idiom can be a pitfall for a translator. An idiom is a "frozen patterns of language" (Baker 2011). Usually, it is not possible to change its form or to guess its meaning (Baker 2011). Moreover, idioms are closely connected to the culture of the given language. When translating an idiom, we never focus on its function. Thus, we try to find an idiom in the target language that would correspond with the one in the source language – that is called stylistic equivalence (Bassnett 2014). When using an idiom, it is not allowed – under normal circumstances – to change its form in any way (Baker 2011).

There are two possible difficulties that a translator has to overcome when translating idioms. The first one is that he/she might not recognise the idiom in the text in the first place. Generally, if an idiom does not make sense in a real world, or it is very hard to understand it is easy to recognize it. The problem arises when an idiom can be translated literally as well. In such case, when the translator is not familiar with it, he/she might miss it. Another problem arises when in a target language there is a similar looking idiom but with completely different meaning (Baker 2011).

Fixed expressions and proverbs pose a similar problem. The main difference is that their meaning is easily understandable, but it is necessary to work with such multi-word expressions as with one unit and not with separate words (Baker 2011).

In some languages it is more common to use idioms than in others. English is very specific in using them; other languages may use them more sporadically. Therefore, as a translator, one has to think about what strategy he or she would choose to use. There are several possible methods for translating idioms: an idiom of the same meaning and same form can be used, the same meaning but different form, an idiom can be paraphrased if there is no equivalent in the target language, or the idiom can be even borrowed from the source language or omitted completely (Baker 2011).

2.3 Translation of collocations

Considering translation of collocations first requires understanding of the term "collocation". It is a "tendency of certain word to co-occur regularly in a given language" (Baker 2011). It is not easy to translate collocations because these relations can often be

mysterious (Newmark 1995). Where a collocation can be found between two words it can sometimes be found between their other forms as well, but in some cases, it is not possible. The same applies for synonymy: usually, they collocate with completely different words. It is not only the case of English language but other languages as well, thus special attention has to be paid when translating collocations. Not only it can be matter of using different words, it can also be the way how the situation is portrayed. Collocation are closely connected with cultural setting as well. Different collocations will be used in Arabic and English language because their cultures are different (Baker 2011).

These is a different collocation range for every word. Generally, if a word belongs closer to the core of language vocabulary, it has much broader collocation range than specific word. Also, the range is affected by a number of senses a word has. If a word has several meanings it also has broader collocation range (Baker 2011).

It can be challenge for a translator to translate collocations. Not knowing a collocation can result in translation of separate words, which can lead to presenting wrong meaning. We can then end up with a completely different meaning. We can then say that a word's meaning largely depends on what accompanies it. ST and TT can also have collocations with similar form but different meaning, which may pose a problem for less experienced translator. This means that even though a collocation appears to be the same we should always make sure it really is that way (Baker 2011).

When translating collocations, most of the translators try to be as natural as possible. Although, it is not easy to find the exact same collocation in the target language there is usually a similar one that can be used but with a little change of meaning. The translator then needs to decide whether this change of meaning is important in that particular context, which could serve as a determinant of whether it is used appropriately. A translator should always try to use expressions that are natural in the target language so that the text it smooth (Baker 2011). Sometimes, it can be difficult for a translator to find the right collocation. Those are one of the most important aspect of a language (Newmark 1995).

3 EQUIVALENCE ON THE GRAMMATICAL LEVEL

In terms of grammatical equivalence, two levels of which language consists are morphology and syntax. On this level of analysis features such as gender are examined. English and Czech language, being from different language origin, differ tremendously in these aspects. It is necessary to keep in mind that a translator is obliged to follow these when translating one language to another. Comparing grammar systems of English and Czech language, one of the significant differences is that in the Czech language nouns and verbs must agree in gender and number. Thus, the verb then takes corresponding inflectional ending. In this case the translation from English to Czech language can result in information change, because in a source text we do not know whether the main character is female or male, while in the target language we do. From the other perspective, it is even more difficult to express an idea when the target language lacks the grammatical category; the phenomena then has to be described lexically which can result in the reader thinking that it has a greater importance than it is supposed to have (Baker 2011).

3.1 Gender

As was said, every language has different grammatical categories, one of which is gender. That is how one grammatically distinguishes whether nouns, both animate and inanimate, are masculine or feminine. In some languages, e.g. in Czech, determiners, adjectives and even verbs correspond with the gender of the noun. In English it is not the case. So, for example, if in Czech we say: Ta otevřená kniha byla na stole [That open book was on the table], inherent feminine gender is marked by the -a/a inflection in the demonstrative pronoun ta [that], in the adjective otevřená [open], in the noun kniha [book] and in the verb byla [was]. However, a book is neither feminine nor masculine in English, because it is inanimate. In English we distinguish inanimate, and masculine and feminine. In plural it will always be they, though. These three categories are same in the Czech language as well; the difference is when talking about plural, then masculinity and femininity is distinguished as well.

Speaking about nouns in general, English usually does not have distinguished gender, although there are some exceptions. We can find feminine and masculine version of professions such as waiter or a waitress; to distinguish these a suffix *-ess* is used. Another example can be found when talking about different species, as for example cow and bull.

When translating, the problem that arises from gender specification is of noncorrespondence with a form of a verb in Czech. When a translator must choose between masculine or feminine suffix, they can put more emphasis on the gender or reveal the gender of a character earlier than they are supposed to (Baker 2011).

3.2 Formal way of addressing

Formal way of addressing may be a difficult job for a translator, especially when translating from the English language to Czech, as there is no equivalent for a socially more distant and more polite V-form (vykání in Czech) as distinguished from more familiar T-form (tykání in Czech). It might not be easy to simply guess where one should use formal way of addressing only from the context of the text. It is the translator's decision aided by his/her sense for the language whether to use formal or informal way of addressing. It is not much easier to translate from a language where there is formal way of addressing used to one where it does not exist. When it is not relevant in the text they can simply use informal way of translating. When it is, though, they have to verbalize that a character addressed someone formally, which often does not sound natural.

3.3 Voice

Passive voice can be difficult to translate for a Czech translator as Czech and English languages differ when it comes to its usage. In the Czech language the usage of passive is rare compared to English, where it is used widely. Passive voice is used when a subject in the sentence is affected by the verb, but it is not the agent as it is in the active voice. Usually, it is not clear who the agent is, thus it is not important; what is important is the action, not who did it. In the Czech language subject *oni* [they] can be used instead when one wants to leave out the subject. In English passive voice is used for example as an indicator of author's objectivity (Baker 2011).

Under any circumstances the translator must maintain the text in the target language as natural as possible and even though it is not common to use passive voice, he or she should think about its strategic use. So, considering, for instance English business correspondence where numerous phrases in passive voice are frequently used to maintain the objectivity and unspecified agent, we cannot use those in the Czech language because it would sound unnatural.

Most importantly, it has to be taken into account that usage of passive voice is a functional phenomenon, with each use fulfilling a certain function. Every language can have different rules for using it, and differently evaluates connotations which passive has in the target language (Baker 2011).

4 TEXTUAL LEVEL

4.1 Cohesion

On the textual level of the text the term cohesion refers to the connection of the text as a whole works. It shows what kind of lexical and grammatical features are used in order to link the text. There are different devices used in order for the text to be cohesive. The text is better organized, and we can easier understand it thanks to these links (Baker 2011). According to Newmark "it follows both structure and the moods of the text" (1995).

What is meant by structure is connecting words that link one sentence with another on the principle of theme and rheme, where theme is the new information and rheme is the old one. By mood are meant the connotations that words or expressions have – can be for example the difference between positive and negative (Newmark 1995).

Five cohesive devices can be used in order to make to text smoother: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion (Baker 2011).

4.1.1 Reference

When an author needs to refer back to an already mentioned entity he/she usually uses reference. When using a reference, an expression is introduced by its proper name and then it is referred to by a referential item, most usually a pronoun. Reference is when one identity is referred to by another "expression in the immediate context" (Barker 2011). As referential items we can consider pronouns.

Apart from pronouns other forms of reference might be used, those are demonstrated on an example below.

There is *a cat* on a roof.

1. Repetition

The cat is going to get hurt if it falls.

2. Synonym

The pussy is going to get hurt if it falls.

3. Superordinate

The animal is going to get hurt if it falls.

4. General word

The duffer is going to get hurt if it falls.

5. Pronominal reference

It is going to get hurt if it falls.

It has to be kept in mind that every language has different rules for using reference (Baker 2011). Considering Czech and English language, these rules are quite similar.

4.1.2 Substitution and ellipsis

Substitution and ellipsis deal with grammatical relations of the words. When using substitution, a sentence constituent is substituted by another one as in an example below.

- A. *The colour* is too dark.
- B. What about this *one*?

The sentence constituent *colour* is substituted by *one*, which is a word typically used when using substitution as well words *do* or *some*.

When using ellipsis, some of the sentence constituents are omitted. It can be used only when the meaning is clear after omission of the item (Baker 2011). See example below.

- A. *Does* Paul *listen to music* while cleaning his room?
- B. Yes, he does.

The reason why it is considered an ellipsis is that the verb *does* does not substitute *listen to music*.

4.1.3 Conjunction

If an author wants the reader to be interested and his/her text to be cohesive and easily readable he/she should use formal markers so that there is a connection between his/her sentences and even bigger parts of the text, such as paragraphs (Baker 2011). There is a difference in the frequency of their usage in every language. If they are used more often in the source language that would be used in the target one, they can and should be omitted (Newmark 1995).

4.1.4 Lexical cohesion

As a lexical cohesion can be considered relation between the vocabulary used in the text. There is lexical connection that can be recognized. Lexical cohesion can be considered as a situation where a used expression has a lexical connection with a lexical item that has already been used in the text (Baker 2011).

4.2 Omission

Sometimes, when a translator does not find a corresponding equivalent in the target language and paraphrasing, or explaining its meaning would distract the reader, he/she can use the strategy of omission. It may be for example because of the lack of grammatical category in the target text or an expression connected to the culture of the source text. It can only be used in such cases, where omitted expression is not vital for understanding of the context (Baker 1992). This method should only be used when it is unavoidable. By using omission, the text always loses some information. When using omission, it is translators aim to create readable and natural text (Baker 1992).

II. ANALYSIS

5 INTRODUCTION

In the practical part of the thesis an analysis of translations done by two different translators is performed. The *source text* is a chapter of the book *One Plus One* written by Jojo Moyes. In the analysis it is labelled as ST. The first translation is done by myself, Barbora Hubáčková, the author of the thesis and an unexperienced translator. In the analysis examples, my translation is marked as *own translation* (OT). Second translation was done by Eva Klimentová, the author of the published translation, a professional translator, and her translation is marked as *published translation* (PT).

When analysing the translations, the examples were selected according to the issues discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis. These examples are numbered and commented on according to particular issues under investigation.

6 THE TEXT UNDER INVESTIGATION

6.1 Analysed text

For the thesis a chapter was chosen from a book written by a British author writing under pseudonym JoJo Moyes. The genre of the book is a romantic novel. The theme of the book is a love story between two completely different people from different classes of society. The story is written in narrative past and it has chronological order. It starts ab ovo. The narrative situation is figural even though the narrator has access to a mind of a different character in every chapter. The function of the book is entertainment, and the target readers are women readers, as the book is a love story. The author uses different discourse strategies to keep the reader interested, as for example usage of idioms or the character's personal experience.

7 PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

7.1 Translation process

According to Newmark there are two ways a translator can proceed at the beginning of his/her translation. They can either carefully read a given text, sometimes even multiple times, so they understand it and discover the difficult passages as well as the tone. Following such analysis, they continue with translation of the text. The second approach, the one I chose when translating the text, is to start with translation of a short passage of the text to learn about its properties, and then go back, re-read it and make possible changes. It is considered a better strategy for literal text (Newmark 1995).

A translator will always find himself/herself in between "flow" stage and analytical stage. In the first stage the translator works on subliminally, he/she works fast and does not have to think about the process too much. On the contrary, in the analytical stage, he/she is conscious and carefully analyses the text and his/her possibilities of translation (Robinson 2012). To reach the desired quality of the translation these two should be kept in balance.

The process itself can be encapsulated in three steps. At first a translator does his/her job intuitively, they just translate. When they proceed to the second step, they edit what was translated, and finally sublimate. They accept what they have learnt (Robinson 2012).

8 LEXICAL LEVEL

8.1 Proper names

(1) ST: 'Marmite,' said Nicky, arriving back and peeling apart two slices of bread.

OT: "Marmite," řekl Nicky, když se vrátil zpátky a rozlepil od sebe dva plátky chleba.

PT: "Marmite," řekl Nicky když přišel a odlepil od sebe dva krajíčky chleba.

Marmite is an English spread made out of yeast. It is not so common in the Czech cuisine, but it is quite known by the target audience. Both of the translators decided to keep the original name, not to replace it with a Czech equivalent, which means they used strategy of foreignization. If domestication was used to clarify the expression an expression *kvasnicová pomazánka* [a yeast spread] could have been used.

There are other possible equivalents that could have been used. To analyse which one of them would have been the best option in context one has to consider why the author decided to use Marmite in the first place. Consumer opinions on the spread are diverse, there are many people who do not like it, and so it might have been the author's intention. It was used in a conversation between Jess and her son Nicky.

The context suggests that Jess knows that Nicky does not like *Marmite* but she was in hurry and so she was not able to find anything else. Taking this into account I would suggest using some equivalent from the target language, as for example *škvarková pomazánka* [crackling spread], which is typically not popular with kids, and even with some adults. Both *Marmite* and *škvarková pomazánka* [crackling spread] are spreads; bread with that spread could make a quick and easy snack. If the novel was not in typical British settings peanut butter could have been used. Like Marmite it is available in almost every kitchen, but it is typical American spread, liked by many but disliked by others, so it could ruin the impression of a British novel.

To conclude, using the proper name Marmite is not a mistake but as it is not known for the Czech audience a better option would be to use an equivalent from the target language.

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(2) ST: 'I could charge up my *Nintendo*,' said Nicky from the back seat.

OT: 'Aspoň bych si nabil *Nintendo*,'ozval se Nicky ze zadního sedadla.

PT: 'Mohl bych si nabít *Nintendo*,' ozval se Nicky ze zadního sedadla.

Both the translators decided to keep the expression *Nintendo*. It is a name of the company producing gaming devices, but the term *Nintendo* is widely used among people to describe any of their products, therefore it is a generalized expression. No child in the Czech Republic would call it in any other way than *Nintendo*, thus both translators are accurate.

(3) ST: We could find a *McDonald's*. There's bound to be loads of them around here.

OT: Mohli bychom najít McDonald. Určitě jich tu bude hodně.

PT: Mohli bychom najít McDonald's. Určitě jich tu budou mraky.

(4) ST: We don't eat McDonald's.

OT: My *McDonald* nejíme.

PT: My do mekáče nechodíme.

These two examples are rather ambiguous. When analysing them, it is obvious what the translators' intentions were, but it is hard to say which was done better. We have to analyse both examples, 3 and 4, to have a clear idea of what was going on.

In an example 3 the speaker is Mr Nicholls. He is a rich and serious man and so his language should correspond to it. Here, both the translations can be considered acceptable as *McDonald*, which is used in OT, as an expression widely used in casual conversation. In PT, the expression used was the proper name of the fast-food chain, *McDonald's*. Possessive -'s is not a feature of Czech grammar, which means the proper name of *McDonald's* is typically shortened to McDonald and accompanied by Czech inflections denoting various cases, e.g. *do McDonald-u* [to the McDonald's]. Czech speakers also adopt the pronunciation to Czech pronunciation rules. Both *McDonald* and *McDonald's* would be acceptable in translation, even though a typical Czech speaker would most probably not add the possessive –s inflection.

When it comes to the example 4, the speaker using the expression *McDonald's* is Jess. She is a single mother working as a cleaning lady. Her vocabulary is quite different from the one of Mr Nicholls. The expression used in PT, *mekáč*, is typically used in the Czech

language in a non-standard form, and thus corresponds with Jess' vocabulary in general. The translator most probably wanted to highlight the difference between the status of these characters. On the other hand, in OT I decided to preserve the same expression as in an example 3, *McDonald*. Even though it does not highlight the difference between the two characters so much, the term *mekáč* [non-standard expression for McDonald's] would have been used in more casual conversation, as for example with her kids.

When comparing these two translations, it is clear that even though the intention of the translator of PT were good, we have to take into consideration the tone of the conversation. It is clear that Jess wants to sound serious in presence of Mr Nicholls, and thus she might rather use the expression *McDonald* rather than *mekáč*. It gives her more credibility. She does not want to degrade her status even more, so she rather uses the full term *McDonald*.

To sum up, I would still choose the expression *McDonald* in both cases. In example 3, Mr Nicholls is speaking, who normally uses standard language as he is of a higher social class. Despite that, as was explained above the inflection -s is not used in Czech, thus he would probably use the term *McDonald*. In an example 4 I would use it because of the seriousness of the conversation.

8.2 Terminology

(5) ST: I think I've finished the *complex equation*. Do you want to see?

OT: Myslím, že jsem právě vyřešila tu *soustavu rovnic*. Chceš se podívat?

PT: Myslím, že jsem dodělala *kvadratické rovnice v oboru komplexních čísel*. Chceš to vidět?

Considering that the piece of literature that is translated and compared is a novel, one has to keep in mind that the reader most probably reads it to relax and does not to think about the truth value too much. Due to this a translator must consider what kind of terminology he/she would use. In the case of *complex equation*, the translators chose different strategies.

In OT I decided to simplify it for the reader and use more simple term. *Soustava rovnic* [simultaneous equation] is not an equivalent for *complex equation* but it is a term an ordinary reader can understand. It does not sound disturbing in the TT.

In PT the translator decided to opt for the opposite direction. Most probably, she wanted to demonstrate how smart the little girl solving complex equation is. In my opinion, this description is not only too hard, but the fact that the Czech equivalent is a long, multi-word expression, makes its reading and appreciation much more complicated.

In my opinion, considering the genre of the book, simplification of the expression used in OT is a better strategy.

(6) ST: Well, you solicitor is wrong ...

OT: No tak to se tvůj *právník* plete ...

PT: Tak to se tvůj *advokát* mýlí ...

In generalized sense, translation of a solicitor as both *právník* [lawyer] or *advokát* [advocate/solicitor] could be correct. Although, better translation would probably be *právník* because as well as solicitor he/she only represents people in lower courts. When applying the strategy form the example 5, as it is a novel it is not so necessary for a reader to know whether the one who was wrong was *právník* [lawyer] or *advokát* [advocate/solicitor], there is only a small difference which is not important for an average leisure reader. It is not vital for the understanding of the story and most of the readers probably will not know the difference between the two, it is acceptable to use both of these terms.

As translator beginner I obviously put more effort in the search for the correct expression, even though it seems it was not always so necessary.

(7) ST: Norman was lying on *tarmac*, looking like he'd been dropped from a great height.

OT: Norman ležel na *betonu* a vypadal, jakoby ho někdo pustil u velké výšky.

PT: Norman ležel na asfaltu a vypadal, jakoby ho někdo upustil z velké výšky.

Clearly, in this example it is visible that in OT I was distracted and due to lack of concentration I confused *beton* [concrete] and *asfalt* [asphalt]. The correct equivalent for *Tarmac* is *asfalt* in Czech. I simply confused these two expressions and did not check whether I am right or wrong. Of course, it is not such a big problem because *beton* [concrete] can be used as a material for parking parks. Also, as was mentioned in the examples 5 and 6, it is not an important information for the reader. Thus, it does not affect the quality of the story. Nevertheless, the denotation of the chosen equivalent in the TT is wrong. In PT, the translation was correct, because an expression *asfalt* [asphalt/tarmac] was used.

8.3 Collocations

(8) ST: Marty used to tell her she had the world's worst *poker face*: ...

OT: Marty jí říkával, že má ten nejhorší poker face na světě, ...

PT: Marty jí říkával, že má ten nejhorší pokerový výraz na světě: ...

In this example, in the case of OT, I decided to keep the foreign expression. This should be the last resort that a translator does. Only under unavoidable circumstances might he/she use an expression from the source language if the TL has an equivalent or near-equivalent expression. I decided to use the loanword because it is widely used by young people, in the internet community, and it is typical in memes, which are often adopted from an English-speaking culture. The expression is used among my peers, thus for me it was perfectly normal.

Pokerový výraz [poker expression] used in PT is also not the correct expression, as it is ungrammatical and the correct version is *pokrový výraz* [poker expression], in which the English spelling is not preserved. This would suggest the unprofessionalism of the translator.

Thus, neither of these translations can be considered correct. In Czech, the correct idiomatic expression for *poker face* would be *kamenný výraz* [stone expression] which was not used by any of the translators. A translator should always try to use an equivalent from the source language. It is his/her job to cultivate the language and use the proper expressions. Especially in this modern, internationalized word it is important to use domestic expressions to enable native language cultivation and also to make the functional TL expressions available for the next generations.

(9) ST: He looked straight ahead through the wind screen.

OT: Podíval se před sebe přes *přední sklo*.

PT: Díval se přímo před sebe přes *čelní sklo*.

In this example, in OT I used a non-standard expression for *wind screen*, *přední sklo* [front pane]. It is an expression that is standardly used in casual language, and it is so common for me I used it with no hesitation and did not even think about the possibility that it could not be correct.

In PT a standard and technically accurate expression čelní sklo [frontal pane] was used.

Although a technically and stylistically correct expression was used in PT, due to type of the text using the expression *přední sklo* [front pane] does not necessarily need to be considered a mistake. If it was a translation of a technical journal a translator would have to verify the term in a dictionary. In a novel, this kind of a word, as it is a part of non-standard language, can be used.

(10) ST: She gave him *painkillers*, and watched him wash them down with cola, ...

OT: Dala mu *Ibalgin* a dívala se, jak ho splachuje kolou.

PT: Dala mu *prášky proti bol*esti a dívala se, jak je zapíjí kolou.

As the expression *painkillers* is understandable and short, it would be nice to find a similar expression. However, in Czech, there is no such equivalent. The translators used different strategies when dealing with this expression. In OT I decided to replace *painkillers* by using a name of a painkiller brand *Ibalgin* that is widely used on the Czech market. It should enable the target audience to understand what is meant by this proper name. The strategy is only partially effective, as Ibalgin is used primarily as an inflammatory medication and secondarily as a painkiller, and the character in the novel only needs to eliminate a headache. When using this strategy, a drug called *Aulin* would be a better option. When using the proper name, the only problem could be the fact that the reader can consider it as a hidden advertisement.

The second translator decided to correctly translate painkillers as *prášky proti bolesti* [pills against pain]. The only problem can be seen in the use of attribute. As *painkillers* is a simple and clear compound, *prášky proti bolesti* [pills against pain] is a long attributive phrase which is not in agreement, thus it is more complicated for the reader to process.

(11) ST: I'm going to live somewhere else when I'm a teenager, I think.

OT: Myslím, že až budu *v pubertě* budu bydlet někde jinde.

PT: Myslím, že se odstěhuju, až budu teenager.

The expression *teenager* does not have an equivalent in Czech. In this example, one must consider who the speaker is and what the overall meaning of the sentence is, not just one word. There is a little girl speaking, considering moving out when she is a teenager. In Czech the word *pubert'ák* [a person in puberty] is probably the closest equivalent to a teenager, but in this context, it is not suitable. It is because *pubert'ák* [a person in puberty] in

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Czech has negative connotation. It is someone in puberty, usually someone whose mood

changes very often and who does not obey his/her parents. It is an expression that would

most likely not be used by someone while talking about himself/herself. Moreover, the

speaker is a little girl. No child would use an expression like this. A child could probably

say až budu velká [when I'm a big girl], which seems for me to be the best option.

In PT an expression teenager was used. It is an expression widely used in the Czech

language, but as well as in previous examples a translator should not use expression from

the source language, only when it is absolutely necessary. The strategy of foreignization was

used in PT while using the term. As mentioned above, one way or another, this would not

be the term used by a small child and the translator as a professional should have thought

about it.

In OT on the other hand, I used the strategy of domestication while using the term

v pubertě [in puberty]. Although, when deciding what expression to use I considered

pubert'ák [a person in puberty] mentioned above as well but in the context below it did not

sound like a proper Czech language. None of those appears to be a good option as analysed

above. In my case it could have been due to text hypnosis by the ST or lack of concentration.

(12) ST: I had a nightmare about them.

OT: Mám z nich noční můry.

PT: Zdál se mi o nich zlý sen.

A *nightmare* is an idiomatic expression that has an equivalent in Czech, however, the

author of PT used term zlý sen [bad dream] which has more or less the same meaning, but it

is paraphrased. When translating it is always better to use idiomatic expression when

possible. It gives the translation added value and the text sounds more natural.

In OT an equivalent idiomatic expression was used, that was *noční můry* [nightmares].

It was a better way of dealing with this expression. It might have been because the author of

the published translation was in time press and needed to get the job done. Due to that she

might not have thought about it. Although, on this level of professionality she should have

put more effort in her job.

When considering the expression itself, *noční můry* was a better option. Considering the

translation of the whole sentence it is not so clear. From the source text it is clear that it was

only once Tanzie had the nightmare. In the published translation it is clear as well. It is not

so clear in OT, where it sounds more like she has had the nightmare multiple times, as *noční můry* is typically used in plural in Czech.

Considering this the best choice would probably be the connection of those two. Thus:

Měla jsem o nich *noční můru*. / Zdála se mi o nich *noční můra*.

(13) ST: Jess couldn't tell him: if you were *a single parent*, there were certain things you could not do.

OT: Jess mu nemohla říct: kdybyste byl *rodič samoživitel* věděl byste, že jsou určité věci, které dělat nemůžete.

PT: Jess mu nemohla vysvětlovat: jako *matka samoživitelka* některé věci nemohla dělat.

When considering these translations, the whole sentence has to be put under investigation. In OT, I used the strategy of word-by-word translation, thus I used the term *rodič samoživitel* [single parent]. The sentence is in my opinion clear and it is more authentic.

In PT, more specific expression was used by the first translator, but it was because the translator decided to change the sentence. I would not consider the translation correct, because it does not feel like a proper Czech sentence. If changing it this way, the translator would have to use conjunction $\check{z}e$ [that] instead of the colon, or if using the colon then it would have to be taken as direct speech, as in OT. If she would have used it, then she would have to use the term $rodi\check{c}$ $samo\check{z}ivitel$ [a single parent] as well, because she is talking to a man. Probably, she wanted to use the term matka $samo\check{z}ivitelka$ [a single mother], because it is used more often than $rodi\check{c}$ $samo\check{z}ivitel$ [a single parent]. When using this strategy, she should have considered the meaning the whole sentence as well. This was clearly she did not put too much effort in translating the sentence.

(14) ST: They would have to pay for an extra day's *bed and breakfast*, somewhere, at least.

OT: Museli by někde přespat a koupit si snídani, a to přinejmenším.

PT: Budou si muset aspoň na jeden den někde zaplatit *nocleh se snídaní*.

In this example, can be seen that in OT I was distracted and overlooked the collocation. It was clearly matter of concentration and a mistake was done, as the sentence has completely different meaning after the translation. It is a common mistake made by translator when dealing with collocations that he/she translates the collocation as separate words. In could be matter of lack of experience in my case.

In PT on the other hand, the translator managed to spot the collocation. As there is no equivalent it Czech the translator used a strategy of paraphrasing. Bed and breakfast was then translated as *nocleh se snídaní* [a sleepover with breakfast], which I would say is understandable.

8.4 Idioms and fixed expressions

(15) ST: Jess' grandmother often stated that the key to a happy life was a short memory.

OT: Receptem na šťastný život je krátkodobá paměť, prohlašovala často Jessiina babička.

PT: Jessiina babička často říkávala, že krátká paměť je klíčem ke šťastnému životu.

In PT there is a clear text hypnosis. The author might have been distracted or in under pressure and thus translated the idiom word by word as *klíč ke šťastnému životu* [a key to a happy life]. The correct idiom in the target language is *receptem na šťastný život* [a recipe for a happy life]. This sounds more natural. There is a similar expression, *klíč ke štěstí* [a key to happiness], which would have roughly the same meaning. If the translator wanted to use the word *klíč* [key], then she would have to use the idiom as a whole, not to mix the two.

In OT, I struggled with translating the idiom as well but managed to find the right idiomatic expression *receptem na šťastný život* [a recipe for a happy life]. As a beginner I put more effort in finding the right translation.

- (16) ST: Jess thought of the way his few smiles dad steadily grown fewer, his watchfulness, the way he now seemed like *a fish out of water*, pale and vulnerable, in the rare hours he was out of his bedroom.
 - **OT:** Jess myslela na to, jak se čím dál míň usmíval, na jeho obezřetnost, a to, jak teď vypadal *jako ryba na suchu*, bledý a zranitelný, když zrovna náhodou vystrčil nos ze svého pokoje.
 - **PT:** Jess myslela na to, jak se Nicky čím dám míň usmívá, jak je ostražitý, jak vypadá *nejistě* a je pobledlý a zranitelný, pokud vůbec kdy vyjde ze svého pokoje.

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As in the Czech language there is equivalent for an idiom fish out of water, it was just a

matter of using it. In OT I translated it as jako ryba na suchu [a fish on dry land]. By using

an idiom, the text becomes more interesting and readable. It keeps the reader interested.

In PT the translator decided to paraphrase again. It is not a wrong option but again the

text loses its added value. If a translator decides to omit an idiom he/she should compensate

it in another part of the text. This translator did not. This could be considered as a mistake.

As it is a novel the text should be interesting and if idioms are used in ST they should be

used in the translation as well.

However, both the alternatives are correct, better strategy was to use an idiom. It is a

discourse strategy that keeps the text interesting.

(17) ST: Mr Nicholls rolled his eyes.

OT: Pan Nicholls *obrátil oči v sloup*.

PT: Pan Nicholls zakoulel očima.

Here, OT can be considered more suitable than PT. I used an idiomatic expression

obrátit oči v sloup [turn eyes into a column] that can be used for the same situation in the

Czech language. People roll their eyes to express annoyance, which was exactly the case

here. I maintained the idiom in the text and kept its value, although it was not easy to find

the standard expression.

In PT, it was translated as zakoulet očima [roll one's eyes]. Firstly, it is not an idiomatic

expression, which as well as in the example number 16 degrades the text. The idiom was

translated by word-by-word translation, due to that its meaning was changed. Moreover, this

expression, zakoulel očima, does not evoke the negative connotation. This could be done to

entertain or just for fun but does not show the displeasure. For these reasons, OT can be

considered as better handled.

(18) ST: But right now, I couldn't give a toss.

OT: To je mi teď ale *úplně fuk*.

PT: Ale v tuhle chvíli je mi to *srdečně jedno*.

When translating this idiom both translators decided to use Czech idiomatic expression.

When working on my translation I was looking for an idiomatic expression that would have

the same phonetic effect, that would sound similar. I decided to use an idiomatic expression *úplně fuk* [do not care at all], where *fuk* is monosyllabic word as well as *toss*.

In PT the translator used an idiomatic expression *srdečně jedno* [does not matter at all]. Both of them have the same meaning and idiomatic, thus both are correct. Maybe, I, as a translator beginner, have put more effort in the translation when looking for an expression that would sound similar.

9 GRAMMATICAL LEVEL

9.1 Gender

As was mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, in Czech noun gender must agree with verb and adjective. This might pose a difficulty for a translator when translating from English to Czech language. As verbs have an inflection according to the gender of the noun a translator must decide whether to use feminine or masculine gender even when it is not clear from the context. When in Czech noun is feminine and it is in plural, a corresponding verb takes inflection –*y*; when it is masculine and plural, it takes inflection -*i*. There is no such distinction in English. We can see on the example below, that without context it is impossible to tell what kind of inflection should be used.

(19) ST: They watched him go in silence.

OT: Potichu se dívaly, jak odchází.

PT: Mlčky se dívaly, jak odchází.

It is clear that in English it is absolutely impossible to tell whether the speakers here are females or males. From the context, it was clear that those were women, there were only four main characters in the captures, two males and two females, one of the men was not present at the moment and the second one was the one leaving. Both of the translators used the correct inflection -y that corresponds with female plural.

Another problem related to gender could arise from the fact that nouns in Czech when animate have both feminine and masculine version. In English there is no such distinction, there are only a few exceptions when it comes to professions as for example waiter (masculine) and waitress (feminine). An inflection *-ess* is used in such cases. In the ST a term *solicitor* was used. As well as in the previous example it is not possible to determinate the gender, thus as in Czech there is no way how to avoid a distinction the translator must choose whether to use feminine or masculine version of the word. Both of them used the term in masculine version. In OT a term *právník* [lawyer] was used and in PT *advokát* [advocate/solicitor].

This can lead to a connotation that every solicitor, or at least most of them, are men. Of course, it is not true but when using the feminine version of the word, the reader could on the other hand think that the female translator as a feminist, or it would suggest it is a particular solicitor who is a woman.

9.2 Formal way of addressing

It is not easy to decide whether to use formal or informal way of addressing when there is no grammatical category in the source language. There are some hints that can help one in his/her decision making. In the case of the translated book the relationships between the characters have to be kept in mind. There are four main characters that appear in this chapter. Jess, a single mother, her two kids, and Mr Nicholls, who is a millionaire. It is quite clear that when it comes to a conversation between the two kids and Jess as well as the kids to one another and even when Mr Nicholls talks to the kids, informal addressing will be used. The problem arises when it comes to a conversation between Mr Nicholls and Jess. As the chapter is written from Jess' point of view, one can notice she thinks about him as Mr Nicholls. This could indicate that their relationship is on formal basis, or at least when she talks to him she uses formal way of addressing.

The problem is with Mr Nicholls. When thinking about his character who as a millionaire offered a ride to his cleaning lady with her two kids, there are two options. Of course, there is a possibility that he sees himself as someone better than the rest of the crew, as he is the rich one. But the fact that he offered them the ride in the first place suggests that he does not. So, with this in mind, it can be assumed that he is going to use formal addressing as well because Jess is approximately the same age as him and she is technically his employee. Moreover, professional relationships are typically more formal in Czech culture than in the Anglo-Saxon cultures. A translator can choose what strategy they are going to use. Either way, there will always be implications hidden.

(20) ST: "Kids, nobody to move. Okay? We don't want to irritate Mr Nicholls,"
OT: "Děti, nikdo ani hnout. Jo? Abychom pana Nichollse náhodou
neznervózňovali."

PT: "Děti, nikdo ani hnout. Jasné? Nechceme panu Nichollsovi lézt na nervy."

From the example above, it is clear that Jess uses informal way of addressing when talking to her children. The address Mr used before his name suggests that she would use formal addressing when talking to Mr Nicholls. In Czech V-form is expressed by using second person plural instead of singular, with corresponding pronoun vy [second person, plural]. An example of that is shown below where in OT V-form is demonstrated by an inflection -te [second person, plural] in the verb nemůžete [you pl_cannot]. If T-form was

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used the form of the verb would be *nemůžeš* [you _{sg.} cannot] with an inflection -*š* [second person, singular]. In PT was even used a pronoun corresponding with V-form *vy* [second person, plural].

(21) ST: "You can't drive when I'm moving any part of my body?"

OT: "Nemůžete řídit, ať už hýbu čímkoli?"

PT: "Vy nemůžete řídit, pokud pohybuju jakoukoli částí svého těla?"

As was mentioned above, there is no hint such as this one in the case of Mr Nicholls, but both of the translators decided to use formal way of addressing for him too, as it would bring negative connotation to his character if they decided otherwise.

(22) ST: "Um, is there any chance you could stop with the tapping?"

OT: "Ehm, je tu nějaká šance, že přestanete s tím klepáním?"

PT: "Ehm, existuje možnost, že byste přestala s tím stepováním?"

In this example, in OT V-form is demonstrated on the same principle as in example 21; *přestanete* [you pl. stop; second person, plural]. In PT the translator used conditional mood which can be considered more polite; *byste přestala* [would you pl. stop; second person, singular, conditional mood].

9.3 Voice

Even though, in English passive voice is used much more often than in Czech it was not the case of this novel, as passive voice tends to be used more frequently in non-fictional genres. In the analysed chapter these were only two examples of a usage of passive voice, both of which were translated to Czech active voice. It was a good decision considering the frequency in which passive is used in the target language. The text then sounds more natural.

(23) ST: The country lanes were banked with wild flowers, ...

OT: Hromady lučního kvítí lemovaly venkovské cesty, ...

PT: Venkovské cesty lemovalo luční kvítí, ...

(24) ST: The roads were lined with endless stretches of car parks.

OT: Cesty lemovaly nekonečné řady zaparkovaných aut.

PT: Silnice lemovali nekonečně dlouhá parkoviště.

The two examples show conversion from passive voice in source language to active voice in the target language. In OT the subject and agent is *hromady* [piles] and in PT it is *luční kvítí* [flowers] and the used verb is *lemovali* [lined; third person, plural] in OT and *lemovalo* [lined; third person, singular] in PT. If the sentence was in passive it would have a following form: *Venkovské cesty byly lemovány lučním kvítím* [Country lanes were banked with wild flowers], but as was said passive voice is rare in Czech.

In the second example the verb changed from active to passive is *lined*, and the sentence is changed on the same principle as in the example 23. It is interesting that in both examples the verb was translated as *lemovali/y* [lined] even though it is used in a different context.

To sum up, usually when there is a use of passive in English when translating to Czech an active voice is used. That was used in both OT and PT.

10 TEXTUAL LEVEL

On the textual level there are various phenomena that can be examined, although in the theoretical part of the in the chapter regarding textual level cohesion was mostly described, this chapter will focus on omission as it can be recognized on the textual level and it was the most noticeable difference between the two translations.

10.1 Omission

The most significant difference between the beginner's and professional's translations was the frequency of the use of omission. When omission is used in translation it should be only in a situation where there is no other choice. It should be only used when there is no equivalent expression and description would disturb the reader. When using omission, a translator should always try to compensate it somewhere else in the text.

When translating the chapter, I was determined to translate everything, and even though it was difficult and sometimes the process was long and took a lot of time I managed to translate everything. The author of the published translator on the other hand, as she is more experienced and she is probably more confident, knows it is possible to omit a part of a text when it is not vital for understanding of the plot. For her, time is money and when something does not feel worth it she does not translate it.

In my opinion, professional translator overused the omission strategy. Moreover, when using the strategy of omission, she did not compensate it anywhere else in the text. There are some cases where omission was a good strategy as they were really hard to translate and had close to zero information value, but there were some which were perfectly translatable and still omitted.

To sum up, in the published translation omission was used nine times, and only one of them was well-founded. I chose two examples to demonstrate that in the first one I find omission a good strategy, in the second one on the other hand I consider it unnecessary.

(25) ST: She would give herself away within hours and blurt out a confession like one of those North Koreans.

OT: Kdyby byla jedním z těch severokorejských zajatců, určitě by ze sebe vyhrkla přiznání a prozradila se během pár hodin.

From this example it is clear that omission was a great strategy as the translation process was extremely long and difficult. In English the translated sentence would look like this:

If she was one of the North Korean captives, she would most probably blurt out a confession and give herself away within a few hours.

This sentence was not vital for understanding the plot. A reader can understand it even without this metaphor. It could even confuse the reader. When translating this sentence, I was searching for real events relating to confessions of North Koreans and I did not know how to handle this as well. So, at the end omission was a good strategy to use in this case, which was not in the following example, though.

(26) ST: She suspected he wanted a break from them.

OT: Podezírala ho, že si od nich potřebuje odpočinout.

In this example the use of omission is not legitimate. Of course, the reader can understand the story with this sentence, but it is perfectly translatable [She suspected him (that) he needs to take a break from them].

When using omission, the text loses is value, and as was said it should only be used when unavoidable. When comparing the work of a translator beginner and professional the biggest difference is in the effort put to the work. On the example of omission, it is clear that translator beginner tried very hard not to deprive the reader of anything. In the case the profession translator it is clear that it is just a job and time is money. Lack of effort is obvious. When something is not vital for the text the professional translator knows, there is an option of omission.

CONCLUSION

The thesis was focused on an analysis of a work of a translator beginner and translator professional. The text analysed was a chapter from a book written by JoJo Moyes, One Plus One. In the theoretical part of the thesis the theoretical background for the analysis was described. In analysis appropriate examples were chosen and analysed.

The aim of the thesis was to find the biggest differences between professional translation and translation done by a translator beginner. My analysis was done on three levels; lexical level, grammatical level and textual level. On lexical level I dealt with translation of proper names, terminology, collocations, and idioms. In this part of the analysis I found out that in PT the translator often paraphrases, especially when it comes to idioms and thus deprives the text of its value added. Generally speaking, on the lexical level, the mistakes were done by both of the translators. They were of a different origin. In case of the translator professional, these were made due to lack of effort. In case of translator beginner most of the mistakes were caused by lack of attention. It is clear from the use of wrong vocabulary.

On the grammatical level, gender, formal way of addressing and voice were analysed. In this chapter the translators used the same techniques and agreed in their strategies.

The last chapter was concerned with an analysis of a textual level. The most striking difference here was the use of omission by the author of the published translation. She used it even when it was not necessary and more importantly she did not compensate for it anywhere else in the text. This suggests the difference between the effort levels put in the work. In the case of translator professional, it is visible that she has a boundary defining whether something is too much work to deal with and she will not cross it. The translator beginner put a lot of effort in the translation and translated even almost untranslatable sections.

To conclude, both of the translations had their flaws. These were of different origin, though. In case of OT the mistakes were mainly caused by lack of focus, on the other hand in PT they were caused by lack of effort.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SL	Source	text
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- OT Own translation
- PT Published translation
- SL Source language
- TL Target language
- TT Target text

SOURCE TEXT

Jess's grandmother had often stated that the key to a happy life was a short memory. Admittedly that was before she got dementia and used to forget where she lived, but Jess took her point. She had to forget about that money. She was never going to survive being stuck in a car with Mr Nicholls if she let herself think too hard about what she had done. Marty used to tell her she had the world's worst poker face: her feelings floated across them like reflections on a still pond. She would give herself away within hours and blurt out a confession like one of those North Koreans. Or she would go crazy with the tension and start plucking at bits of the upholstery with her fingernails.

She sat in the car and listened to Tanzie chatting, and she told herself she would find a way to pay it all back before he discovered what she had done. She would take it out of Tanzie's winnings. She would work it out somehow. She told herself he was just a man who had offered them a lift and with whom she had to make polite conversation for a few hours a day.

And periodically she glanced behind her at the two kids and thought, What else could I have done? It shouldn't have been hard to sit back and enjoy the ride. The country lanes were banked with wild flowers, and when the rain cleared the clouds revealed skies the azure blue of 1950s postcards. Tanzie wasn't sick again, and with every mile they travelled from home she found her shoulders starting to inch downwards from her ears. She saw now that it had been months since she had felt even remotely at ease. Her life these days held a constant underlying drumbeat of worry: what were the Fishers going to do next? What was going on in Nicky's head? What was she to do about "grim bass percussion underneath it all: Money. Money. Money.

'You okay?' said Mr Nicholls.

Hauled from her thoughts, Jess muttered, 'Fine. Thanks.' They nodded awkwardly at each other. He hadn't relaxed. It was obvious in his intermittently tightened jaw, in the way he was deep in thought behind his sunglasses, at the way his knuckles showed white on the steering-wheel. Jess wasn't sure what on earth had been behind his decision to offer to drive, but she was pretty sure he had regretted it from the moment Tanzie had first wailed that she needed a sick bag.

'Um, is there any chance you could stop with the tapping?'

'Tapping?'

'Your feet. On the dashboard.'

She looked at her feet.

'It's really distracting.'

'You want me to stop tapping my feet.'

He looked straight ahead through the windscreen. 'Yes. Please."

She let her feet slide down, but she was uncomfortable, so after a moment she lifted them and tucked them under her on the seat. She rested her head on the window.

'Your hand.'

'What?'

'Your hand. You're hitting your knee now.'

She had been tapping it absentmindedly. 'You want me to stay completely still while you drive.'

'I'm not saying that. But the tapping thing is making it hard for me to focus.'

'You can't drive if I'm moving any part of my body?'

'That's not it.'

'What is it, then?'

'It's tapping. I just find ... tapping ... irritating.'

Jess took a deep breath. 'Kids, nobody is to move. Okay? We don't want to irritate Mr Nicholls.'

'The kids aren't doing it,' he said mildly. 'It's just you.'

'You do fidget a lot, Mum."

Thanks, Tanze.' Jess clasped her hands in front of her. She sat and clenched her teeth and concentrated on staying still, trying to focus on the good, which was that Mr Nicholls hadn't changed his mind. It had been almost sixty miles now and he hadn't changed his mind. And when you were basically responsible for an entire household, it was kind of nice not to be in charge for a while.

She let her head fall back against the headrest, closed her eyes and cleared her mind of money, of Marty's stupid car, of her worries for the children, letting them float away with the miles, and she tried to let the quiet hum of an expensive engine pass through her; she let the breeze from the open window ripple over her face and the music fill her ears and just briefly she felt like a woman in a different sort of life altogether.

They stopped for lunch at a pub somewhere outside Oxford, unfurling themselves and letting out little sighs of relief as they cracked joints and stretched cramped limbs. Mr

Nicholls disappeared into the pub and she sat on a picnic table and unpacked the sandwiches she had made hastily that morning when it turned out they were going to get a lift after all.

'Marmite,' said Nicky, arriving back and peeling apart two slices of bread.

'I was in a rush.'

'Have we got anything else?'

'Jam.'

He sighed, and reached into the bag. Tanzie sat on the end of the bench, already lost in maths papers. She couldn't read them in the car, as it made her nauseous, so she wanted to take every opportunity to work. Jess watched her scribbling algebraic equations on her exercise book, lost in concentration, and wondered for the hundredth time where she had come from.

'Here,' said Mr Nicholls, arriving with a tray. 'I thought we could all do with some drinks.' He pushed two bottles of cola towards the kids. 'I didn't know what you wanted so I got a selection.' He had bought a bottle of Italian beer, what looked like a half of cider, a glass of white wine, another cola, a lemonade and a bottle of orange juice. He had a mineral water. A small mountain of different-flavoured crisps sat in the middle.

'You bought all that?'

'There was a queue. I couldn't be bothered to come back out to ask.'

'I – I haven't got that much cash.'

He looked at her as if she was the weird one. 'It's a drink. I'm not buying you a house.'

And then his phone rang. He grabbed it and strode off across the car park, already talking as he went.

'Shall I see if he wants one of our sandwiches?' Tanzie said.

Jess watched him stride along the lane, one hand thrust deep in a pocket, until he was out of sight. 'Not just now,' she said.

Nicky said nothing. When she asked him which bit hurt the most, he just muttered that he was fine.

'It'll get easier,' Jess said, reaching out a hand. 'Really. We'll have this break, get Tanze sorted and work out what to do. Sometimes you need time away to sort things out in your head. It makes everything clearer.'

'I don't think what's in my head is the problem.'

She gave him his painkillers, and watched him wash them down with cola, then stretch out his gangly limbs tentatively. In the car, she had tried to move the dog so that Nicky wasn't pressed up against the door, but it was tough. Norman was too wide to fit in the

footwell. He could sit up in the middle of the back seat – they actually put a belt round him for a while – but then he would gradually slump until he was horizontal; a canine landslip, his head on Tanzie's lap, his great backside shoving Nicky along the leather seat.

Nicky took the dog off for a walk, his shoulders hunched, and his feet dragging. She wondered if he had cigarettes. He was out of sorts because his Nintendo had run out of charge some twenty miles back. Jess wasn't sure he knew what to do with himself when he wasn't surgically attached to a gaming device.

They watched him go in silence.

Jess thought of the way his few smiles had steadily grown fewer, his watchfulness, the way he now seemed like a fish out of water, pale and vulnerable, in the rare hours he was out of his bedroom. She thought of his face, resigned, expressionless, in that hospital. Who was it who had said you were only as happy as your unhappiest child?

Tanzie bent over her papers. 'I'm going to live somewhere else when I'm a teenager, I think.'

Jess looked at her. 'What?'

'I think I might live in a university. I don't really want to grow up near the Fishers.' She scribbled a figure in her workbook, then rubbed out one digit, replacing it with a four. 'They scare me a bit,' she said quietly.

'The Fishers?'

'I had a nightmare about them.'

Jess swallowed. 'You don't need to be scared of them,' she said. 'They're just stupid boys. What they did is what cowards do. They're nothing.'

'They don't feel like nothing.'

'Tanze, I'm going to work out what to do about them, and we're going to fix it. Okay? You don't need to have nightmares. I'm going to fix this.'

They sat in silence. The lane was silent, apart from the sound of a distant tractor. Birds wheeled overhead in the infinite blue. Mr Nicholls was walking back slowly. He had straightened up, as if he had resolved something, and his phone was loose in his hand. Jess rubbed at her eyes.

'I think I've finished the complex equations. Do you want to see?'

Tanzie held up a page of numbers. Jess looked at her daughter's lovely open face. She reached forward and straightened her glasses on her nose. 'Yes,' she said, her smile bright. 'I would totally love to look at some complex equations.'

It took two and a half hours to do the next leg of the journey. Mr Nicholls tapped the steering-wheel as if they were stuck in a jam (they weren't), took two calls during the journey, one from the woman called Gemma, which he cut off (his ex-wife?) and one that was obviously to do with his business. He was silent for a whole forty minutes after he'd taken the second. A woman with an Italian accent called just after they pulled into a petrol station, and at the words 'Eduardo, baby' Mr Nicholls ripped his phone from the hands-free holder and went and stood outside by the pump. 'No, Lara,' he said, turning away from them. 'We've discussed this ... Well, your solicitor is wrong ... No, calling me a lobster really isn't going to make any difference.'

Nicky slept for an hour, his blue-black hair flopping over his swollen cheekbone, his face briefly untroubled in sleep. Tanzie sang under her breath and stroked the dog. Norman slept, farted audibly several times, and slowly infused the car with his odour. Nobody complained. It actually masked the lingering smell of vomit.

'Do the kids need to grab some food?' Mr Nicholls said, as they finally drove into the suburbs of some large town. Jess had already stopped noting which. Huge, shining office blocks punctuated each half-mile, their frontages bearing management- or technology-based names she'd never heard of: ACCSYS, TECHNOLOGICA and MEDIAPLUS. The roads were lined with endless stretches of car parks. Nobody walked.

- 'We could find a McDonald's. There's bound to be loads of them around here.'
- 'We don't eat McDonald's,' she said.
- 'You don't eat McDonald's.'
- 'No. I can say it again, if you like. We don't eat McDonald's.'
- 'Vegetarian?'
- 'No. Actually, could we just find a supermarket? I'll make sandwiches.'
- 'McDonald's would probably be cheaper, if it's about money.'
- 'It's not about the money.'

Jess couldn't tell him: if you were a single parent, there were certain things you could not do. Which were basically the things that everyone expected you to do: claim benefits, smoke, live on an estate, feed your kids McDonald's. Some things she couldn't help, but others she could.

He let out a little sigh, his gaze fixed ahead. 'Okay, well, we could find somewhere to stay and then see whether they have a restaurant attached.'

'I had kind of planned we'd just sleep in the car.'

Mr Nicholls pulled over to the side of the road and turned to face her. 'Sleep in the car?' Embarrassment made her spiky. 'We have Norman. No hotel's going to take him. We'll be fine in here.'

He pulled out his phone and began tapping into a screen. 'I'll find a dog-friendly place. There's bound to be somewhere, even if we have to drive a bit further.'

Jess could feel the colour bleeding into her cheeks. 'Actually, I'd rather you didn't.'

He kept tapping on the screen.

'Really. We – we don't have the money for hotel rooms.'

Mr Nicholls's finger stilled on the phone. 'That's crazy. You can't sleep in my car.'

'It's only a couple of nights. We'll be fine. We would have slept in the Rolls. It's why I brought the duvets.'

Tanzie watched from the rear seat.

'I have a daily budget. And I'd like to stick to it. If you don't mind.' Twelve pounds a day for food. Maximum.

He looked at her like she was mad.

'I'm not stopping you getting a hotel,' she added. She didn't want to tell him she'd actually prefer it if he did.

'This is nuts,' he said finally.

It was only when he turned back to the wheel that it occurred to her he might not want to leave them alone in his car.

They drove the next few miles in silence. Mr Nicholls had the air of a man who was quietly pissed off. In a weird way, Jess preferred it. Two, three days max, she told herself. In fact, she'd just let him drop them at the maths competition and tell him they would make their own way back. She wasn't sure she could take more than another forty-eight hours of being stuck in a car with him. And if Tanzie did as well as everyone seemed to think she would, they could blow a little of her winnings on train tickets.

The thought of ditching Mr Nicholls made her feel so much better that she didn't say anything when he pulled into the Travel Inn.

'I'll be back in a minute,' he said, and walked off across the car park. He took the keys with him, jangling them impatiently in his hand.

'Are we staying here?' Tanzie said, rubbing at her eyes and looking around.

'Mr Nicholls is. We're going to stay in the car. It will be an adventure!' Jess said.

There was a brief silence.

'Yay,' said Nicky.

Jess knew he was uncomfortable. But what else could she do? 'You can stretch out in the back. Tanze and I will sleep in the front. It will be fine.'

Mr Nicholls walked back out, shielding his eyes against the early-evening sun. She realized he was wearing the exact same outfit she had seen him wear in the pub that night.

'They had one room left. A twin. You guys can take it. I'll see if there's somewhere else nearby.'

'Oh, no,' she said. 'I told you. I can't accept any more from you.'

'I'm not doing it for you. I'm doing it for your kids.'

'No,' she said, trying to sound a little more diplomatic. 'It's very kind of you, but we'll be fine out here.'

He ran a hand through his hair. 'You know what? I can't sleep in a hotel room knowing that there's a boy who just got out of hospital sleeping in the back seat of a car twenty feet away. Nicky can have the other bed.'

'No,' she said, reflexively.

'Why?'

She couldn't say.

His expression darkened. 'I'm not a pervert.'

'I didn't say you were.'

'So why won't you let your son share a room with me? He's as tall as I am, for Christ's sake.'

Jess flushed. 'He's had a tough time lately. I just need to keep an eye on him.'

'What's a pervert?' said Tanzie.

'I could charge up my Nintendo,' said Nicky, from the back seat.

'You know what? This is a ridiculous discussion. I'm hungry. I need to get something to eat.' Mr Nicholls poked his head in through the door. 'Nicky. Do you want to sleep in the car or in the hotel room?'

Nicky looked sideways at Jess. 'Hotel room. And I'm not a pervert either.'

'Am I a pervert?' said Tanzie.

'Okay,' said Mr Nicholls. 'Here's the deal. Nicky and Tanzie sleep in the hotel room. You can sleep on the floor with them.'

'But I can't let you pay for a hotel room for us, then make you sleep in the car. Besides, the dog will howl all night. He doesn't know you.'

Mr Nicholls rolled his eyes. He was clearly losing patience. 'Okay, then. The kids sleep in the hotel room. You and I sleep in the car with the dog. Everyone's happy.' He didn't look happy.

'I've never stayed in a hotel. Have I stayed in a hotel, Mum?'

There was a brief silence. Jess could feel the situation sliding away from her.

'I'll mind Tanze,' said Nicky. He looked hopeful. His face, where it wasn't bruised, was the colour of putty. 'A bath would be good.'

'Would you read me a story?'

'Only if it has zombies in it.' Jess watched as he half smiled at her. And that smile was what broke her.

'Okay,' she said. And tried to fight the wave of nausea at what she had just agreed to.

The mini-mart squatted, illuminated, in the shadow of a logistics company across the road, its windows bright with exclamation marks and offers on crispy fish bites and fizzy drinks. She bought rolls and cheese, crisps and overpriced apples, and made the kids a picnic supper, which they ate on the grassy slope around the car park. On the other side the traffic thundered past in a purple haze towards the south. She offered Mr Nicholls some, but he peered at the contents of her bag and said thanks but he'd eat in the restaurant. She suspected he wanted a break from them.

Once he was out of sight, Jess relaxed too. She set the kids up in their room, feeling faintly wistful that she wasn't in with them. It was on the ground floor, facing the car park. She had asked Mr Nicholls to park as close to their window as possible, and Tanzie made her go outside three times, just so she could wave at her through the curtains and squash her nose sideways against the glass.

Nicky disappeared into the bathroom for an hour, the taps running. He came out, switched on the television and lay on the bed, looking simultaneously exhausted and relieved.

Jess laid out his pills, got Tanzie bathed and into her pyjamas, and warned them not to stay up too late. 'And no smoking,' she warned him. 'Seriously.'

'How can I?' he said, grumpily. 'You've got my stash.'

Tanzie lay on her side, working her way through her maths books, locked into a silent world of numbers. Jess fed and walked the dog, sat in the passenger seat with the door open, ate a cheese roll and waited for Mr Nicholls to finish his meal.

It was a quarter past nine, and she was struggling to read a newspaper in the fading light when he appeared. He was holding a phone in a way that suggested he had just come off another call, and he seemed about as pleased to see her as she was him. He opened the door, climbed in and shut it.

'I've asked Reception to ring me if anyone cancels their booking.' He stared ahead at the windscreen. 'Obviously I didn't tell them I'd be waiting in their car park.'

Norman was lying on the tarmac, looking like he'd been dropped from a great height. She wondered whether she should bring him in. Without the children in the back, and with the encroaching darkness, it felt even odder to be in the car beside Mr Nicholls.

'Are the kids okay?'

'They're very happy. Thank you.'

'Your boy looks pretty bashed up.'

'He'll be fine.'

There was a long silence. He looked at her. Then he put both hands on the wheel, and leant backwards in his seat. He rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands, and turned to face her. 'Okay ... so have I done something else to upset you?'

'What?'

'You've acted like I'm bugging you all day. I apologized for the thing in the pub the other night. I've done what I can to help you out here. And yet still I get the feeling I've done something wrong.'

'You – you haven't done anything wrong,' she stammered.

He studied her for a minute. 'Is this, like, a woman's "There's nothing wrong" when actually what you mean is that I've done something massive and I'm actually supposed to guess? And then you get really mad if I don't?'

'No.'

'You see, now I don't know. Because that "no" might be part of the woman's "There's nothing wrong."

'I'm not speaking in code. There's nothing wrong.'

'Then can we just ease up around each other a bit? You're making me really uncomfortable.'

'I'm making you uncomfortable?'

His head swivelled slowly.

'You've looked like you regretted offering us this lift since the moment we got into the car. In fact, since before we got in.' Shut up, Jess, she warned herself. Shut up. Shut up. 'I'm not even sure why you did it.'

'What?'

'Nothing,' she said, turning away. 'Forget it.'

He stared ahead of him out of the windscreen. He looked suddenly really, really tired.

'In fact, you could just drop us at a station tomorrow morning. We won't bother you any more.'

'Is that what you want?' he said.

She drew her knees up to her chest. 'It might be the best thing.'

They sat there in the silence. The skies darkened to pitch around them. Twice Jess opened her mouth to speak, but nothing came out. Mr Nicholls stared through the windscreen at the closed curtains of the hotel room, apparently deep in thought.

She thought of Nicky and Tanzie, sleeping peacefully on the other side, and wished she was with them. She felt sick. Why couldn't she have just pretended? Why couldn't she have been nicer? It would only have been for a couple of days. She was an idiot. She had blown it all again.

It had grown chill. Finally, she pulled Nicky's duvet from the back seat and thrust it at him. 'Here,' she said.

'Oh.' He looked at the huge picture of Super Mario. 'Thanks.'

She called the dog in, reclined her seat just far enough for it not to be touching him, and then she pulled Tanzie's duvet over herself. 'Goodnight.' She stared at the plush interior a matter of inches from her nose, breathing in the new-car smell, her mind a jumble. How far away was the station? How much would the fare cost? They would have to pay for an extra day's bed and breakfast somewhere, at least. And what was she going to do with the dog? She could hear Norman's faint snore from behind her and thought grimly that she was damned if she would vacuum that rear seat now.

'It's half past nine.' Mr Nicholls's voice broke into the silence.

Jess lay very still.

'Half. Past. Nine.' He let out a deep sigh. 'I never thought I'd say it, but this is actually worse than being married.'

'What – am I breathing too loud?'

He opened his door abruptly. 'Oh for Christ's sake,' he said, and set off across the car park.

Jess pushed herself upright and watched him jogging across the road to the mini-mart, disappearing into its fluorescent-lit interior. He reappeared a few minutes later with a bottle of wine and a packet of plastic cups.

'It's probably awful,' he said, climbing back into the driver's seat. 'But right now I couldn't give a toss.'

She gazed at the bottle.

'Truce, Jessica Thomas? It's been a long day. And a shitty week. And, spacious as it is, this car isn't big enough for two people who aren't talking to each other.'

He looked at her. His eyes were exhausted and stubble was starting to show through on his chin. It made him seem curiously vulnerable.

She took a cup from him. 'Sorry. I'm not used to people helping us out. It makes me ...'

'Suspicious? Crabby?'

'I was going to say, it makes me think I should get out more.'

He let out a breath. 'Right.' He glanced down at the bottle. 'Then let's ... Oh, for crying out loud.'

'What?'

'I thought it was a screw top.' He stared at it as if it was just one more thing designed to annoy him. 'Great. I don't suppose you have a bottle opener?'

'No.'

'You think they'll exchange it?'

'Did you take the receipt?'

He let out a deep sigh, which she interrupted. 'No need,' she said, taking it from him. She opened her door and climbed out. Norman's head shot up.

'You're not going to smash it into my windscreen?'

'Nope.' She peeled off the foil. 'Take off your shoe.'

'What?'

'Take off your shoe. It won't work with flip-flops.'

'Please don't use it as a glass. My ex did that once with a stiletto and it was really, really hard pretending that champagne smelling of feet was an erotic experience.'

She held out her hand. He finally took his shoe off and handed it to her. As he looked on, Jess placed the base of the wine bottle inside it and, holding the two together carefully, she stood alongside the hotel and thumped them hard against the wall.

'I suppose there's no point me asking you what you're doing.'

'Just give me a minute,' she said, through gritted teeth, and thumped again.

Mr Nicholls shook his head slowly.

She straightened up and glared at him. 'You're more than welcome to suck the cork out, if you'd rather.'

He held up his hand. 'No, no. You go ahead. Broken glass in my socks is exactly how I hoped to end tonight.'

Jess checked the cork and thumped again. And there – a centimetre of it protruded from the neck of the bottle. Thump. Another centimetre. She held it carefully, gave it one more thump, and there it was: she pulled the rest of the cork gently from the neck and handed it to him.

He stared at it, and then at her. She handed him back his shoe.

'Wow. You're a useful woman to know.'

'I can also put up shelves, replace rotting floorboards and make a fan belt out of a tied stocking.'

'Really?'

'Not the fan belt.' She climbed into the car and accepted the plastic cup of wine. 'I tried it once. It shredded before we'd got thirty yards down the road. Total waste of M&S opaques.' She took a sip. 'And the car stank of burnt tights for weeks.'

Behind them, Norman whimpered in his sleep.

'Truce,' Mr Nicholls said, and held up his cup.

'Truce. You're not going to drive afterwards, are you?' she said, holding up her own.

'I won't if you won't.'

'Oh, very funny.'

And suddenly the evening became a little easier.

TRANSLATION BY BARBORA HUBÁČKOVÁ

Receptem na šťastný život je krátkodobá paměť, prohlašovala často Jessiina babička. Nutno říci, že to bylo ještě před tím, než se u ní projevila stařecká demence a zapomínala i to, kde bydlí, Jess ale věděla, co tím myslí. Na tu věc s penězi musela zapomenout. Kdyby nad tím moc přemýšlela, nikdy by s panem Nichollsem nevydržela zavřená v jednom autě. Marty jí říkával, že má ten nejhorší poker face na světe, a že se jí pocity na obličeji zrcadlí jako odrazy na klidném rybníku. Kdyby byla jedním z těch severokorejských zajatců, určitě by ze sebe vyhrkla přiznání a prozradila se během pár hodin. Nebo by z té nervozity začala nehty trhat čalounění.

Seděla v autě, poslouchala Tanziino štěbetání a říkala si, že najde způsob, jak mu všechno vrátit, než vůbec zjistí, že něco vzala. Dá mu to z Tanziiny výhry. Nějak to vymyslí. Řekla si, že je to přece jen někdo, kdo jim nabídnul odvoz a s kým bude muset pár hodin denně vést zdvořilostní konverzaci.

V pravidelných intervalech se dívala na ty dvě děti na zadním sedadle a říkala si, co jiného jsem měla dělat?

Přece nemůže být tak těžké, pohodlně se usadit a užívat si jízdu. Hromady lučního kvítí lemovaly venkovské cesty, a když se mraky rozestoupily, obloha měla barvu jako na pohledu z padesátých let. Tanzii už nebylo špatně a s každou ujetou mílí jí ramena klesala níž a níž. Až teď si uvědomila, že už se celé měsíce necítila ani vzdáleně v pohodě. Její život teď měl neustálý podtón obavy: Co Fisherovi provedou tentokrát? Co se asi Nickymu honí hlavou? Co bude dělat s Tanzií? A pod tímhle vším se ještě dokola ozývalo: peníze, peníze, peníze.

"V pohodě?" zeptal se pan Nicholls.

Vytrhnul ji z myšlenek, a tak jen zamumlala, "V pohodě, díky." Rozpačitě na sebe kývli. Ještě se neuvolnil. Bylo to patrné z toho, jak přerušovaně svíral čelist, jak hluboko byl zabraný v myšlenkách za svými slunečními brýlemi, i z toho, že svíral volant tak pevně, až mu zbělaly klouby. Jess nevěděla, co ho proboha vedlo k rozhodnutí nabídnout jim, odvoz, co ale věděla jistě, bylo to, že toho litoval od chvíle, co Tanzie poprvé řekla o blicí pytlík.

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"Ehm, je tu nějaká šance, že přestanete s tím klepáním?"
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"Klepáním?"

"Tou nohou. O palubní desku."

Podívala se na svoji nohu.

"Vážně mě to znervózňuje."

"Chcete, abych přestala klepat nohou."

Podíval se před sebe přes přední sklo.

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"Ano. Prosím."
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Spustila tedy nohy na podlahu, ale protože to bylo nepohodlné, za chvilku je zase zvedla a zastrčila je na sedadle pod sebe. Opřela si hlavu o okénko.

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"Vaše ruka."
"Co?"
"Vaše ruka. Teď si klepete do kolena."
Ani si neuvědomovala, že by to dělala. "Chcete, abych se vůbec nehýbala, když řídíte."
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"Nemůžete řídit, ať už hýbu čímkoli?"

"Tím to není."

"Čím to teda je?"

"Tím klepáním. Klepání mě... irituje."

Jess se zhluboka nadechla. "Děti, nikdo ani hnout. Jo? Abychom pana Nichollse náhodou neznervózňovali."

"To jsem neřekl. Ale je těžké se soustředit, když do něčeho pořád klepete."

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"Děti to ale nedělají." Řekl mírně. "Jen vy."
"Dost se ošíváš, mami."
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"Díky, Tanzie." Jess spráskla ruce. Sedla si a se zaťatými zuby se soustředila na to, aby byla v klidu. Snažila se hledat pozitiva, třeba to, že si to pan Nicholls ještě nerozmyslel. Ani po osmdesáti mílích si to ještě nerozmyslel. Vzhledem k tomu, že měla zodpovědnost za celou domácnost, bylo docela fajn jednou nebýt ten kdo to má na starost.

Opřela si hlavu o opěrku, zavřela oči a vypustila z hlavy peníze, Marthyho blbý auto i starosti o děti a nechala je za sebou spolu s ujetými mílemi. Nechávala sebou pronikat tiché vrčení motoru, vánek z otevřeného okna ji ovíval, hudba plnila uši a ona si na chvilku připadala jako by to ani nebyl její život.

Na oběd se zastavili někde za Oxfordem, protáhli se, a jak si tak prolupali klouby a procvičili ochablé svaly, ulevilo se jim. Pan Nicholls zmizel v hospodě a ona si sedla k piknikovému stolu, kde vybalila sendviče, které ráno v rychlosti přichystala, když se ukázalo, že nakonec přece jen budou mít odvoz.

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"Marmite," řekl Nicky, když se vrátil zpátky a rozlepil od sebe dva plátky chleba.
"Spěchala jsem."
"Není tam něco jiného?"
"Marmeláda."
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Povzdechnul si a natáhl se do tašky. Na kraji lavičky seděla Tanzie, dávno zabraná do testů z matematiky. V autě se učit nemohla, protože se jí dělalo špatně, a tak teď chtěla využít každou příležitost. Jess pozorovala, jak plně soustředěná čmárá příklady z algebry do cvičebnice, a po stopadesáté přemýšlela, po kom to má.

"Tu máte," řekl pan Nicholls s táckem v ruce. "Říkal jsem si, že by nám všem bodlo něco k pití." Posunul dvě koly směrem k dětem. "Nevěděl jsem, co budete chtít, tak jsem toho vzal víc." Koupil flašku italského piva, které napůl vypadalo jako cider, sklenici bílého vína, další kolu, limonádu a pomerančový džus. Sobě vzal minerálku. Uprostřed stolu ještě ležela menší hora z brambůrek různých příchutí.

"To všechno jste koupil?"

"Byla tam fronta. Nechtělo se mi chodit zpátky a ptát se, co si dáte."

"Já – já nemám moc peněz."

Podíval se na ni, jako by byla úplně blbá. "Je to jen pití, nekupuju vám přece dům."

A v tom mu zazvonil telefon. Popadl ho a mluvil už když si to kráčel na druhou stranu přes parkoviště.

"Mám se ho zeptat, jestli si taky nedá sendvič?" řekla Tanzie.

Jess sledovala, jak si vykračuje po cestičce s jednou rukou zastrčenou hluboko v kapse, až než zmizel z dohledu. "Ale ne teď," řekla.

Nicky nic neříkal. Když se ho zeptala, co bolelo nejvíc, jen zamumlal, že je v pohodě.

"Zlepší se to," řekla Jess a natáhla k němu ruku. "Fakt. Teď si odpočineme, vyřešíme Tanzii a pak vymyslíme, co budeme dělat. Někdy prostě potřebuješ od všeho utéct, aby sis to srovnal v hlavě. Pak je všechno jasnější."

"Nemyslím si, že to, co mám v hlavě, je ten problém."

Dala mu Ibalgin a dívala se, jak ho splachuje Colou a neohrabaně si protahuje své dlouhé končetiny. V autě se snažila toho psa posunout tak, aby nebyl Nicky natlačený na dveře, nebylo to ale tak jednoduché. Na to, aby si lehl pod nohy byl moc velký, mohl by sedět uprostřed, ale i když ho připoutali, nakonec stejně skončil ve vodorovné poloze; sesuv v psí podobě, hlavu měl u Tanzie v klíně a svým prostorově výrazným pozadím tlačil Nickyho čím dál hlouběji do kožené sedačky.

Nicky vzal to psisko na procházku, ramena měl svěšená a šoupal nohama. Jess přemýšlela, jestli má u sebe cigarety. Byl celý nesvůj z toho, že se mu před dvaceti mílemi vybilo Nintendo. Jess nevěděla, jestli ví, co se sebou, když není chirurgicky napojený na nějaké herní zařízení.

Potichu se dívaly, jak odchází.

Jess myslela na to, jak se čím dál míň usmíval, na jeho obezřetnost, a to, jak teď vypadal jako ryba na suchu, bledý a zranitelný, když zrovna náhodou vystrčil nos ze svého pokoje. Pomyslela na jeho obličej, když byli v nemocnici, rezignovaný, bez výrazu. Kdo to byl, ten, kdo řekl, že jsi jen tak šťastný, jak šťastné je tvoje dítě?

Tanzie se sklonila nad papíry s příklady. "Myslím, že až budu v pubertě, budu bydlet někde jinde."

Jess se na ni podívala. "Co?"

"Myslím, že budu bydlet na koleji. Nechci vyrůstat blízko Fishrových." Načmárala číslo do sešitu, pak vygumovala jednu cifru a napsala místo ní čtyřku. "Trochu se jich bojím," řekla potichu.

"Fisherových?"

"Mám z nich noční můry."

Jess polkla. "Nemusíš se jich bát," řekla. "Jsou to jen hloupí kluci. To, co udělali, dělají jen zbabělci. Nestojí za to."

"Moc to tak teda nevypadá."

"Tanze, vymyslím, co s nimi provedu a napravíme to. Jo? Nemusíš mít noční můry. Já to zařídím."

Seděly potichu. Kromě vzdáleného burácení traktoru byla cesta tichá. V nekonečné modři jim nad hlavami kroužili ptáci. Pan Nicholls se pomalu vracel za nimi. Napřímil se, jako by mu spadl kámen ze srdce a v ruce držel telefon. Jess si promnula oči.

"Myslím, že jsem vyřešila tu soustavu rovnic. Chceš se podívat?"

Tanzie zvedla stránku plnou čísel. Jess se podívala na rozkošný nevinný obličej své dcerky. Natáhla se pro ni a narovnala si brýle na nose. "Ano," řekla a Tanzie se rozzářila. "Hrozně ráda se podívám na nějakou soustavu rovnic."

Další úsek cesty zdolali za dvě a půl hodiny. Pan Nicholls poťukával na volant, jako by trčeli v zácpě (netrčeli), vyřídil dva telefonáty, jeden s ženou jménem Gemma, ten típnul (bývalá žena?) a ten druhý byl zjevně pracovní. Řekl, že zavolá později. Po tom, co zvedl ten druhý hovor, byl celých čtyřicet minut zticha. Hned co zastavili na benzince, zavolala žena s italským přízvukem, a po slovech "Eduardo, zlato" vytrhnul pan Nicholls mobil z držáku na telefon a šel si stoupnout vedle pumpy. "Ne Laro," řekl a otočil se k nim zády. "Už jsme to probírali . . . No tak to se tvůj právník plete . . . Ne, to, že mi budeš říkat humre, na situaci opravdu nic nezmění."

Nicky hodinu spal, jeho modročerné vlasy mu padaly na oteklou lícní kost, ale jeho obličej vypadal ve spánku trochu klidněji. Tanzie si potichu zpívala a hladila psa. Norman spal, několikrát si u toho hlasitě prdnul a auto se pomalu naplnilo jeho odérem. Nikdo si nestěžoval. Aspoň tím přebil všudypřítomný pach zvratků.

"Nepotřebovaly by se děti někde zastavit na jídlo?" řekl pan Nicholls, když konečně dojeli na předměstí jakéhosi velkého města. Jess už ani nevnímala kterého. Každou půl-míli míjeli obrovské zářící kancelářské budovy marketingových a technologických firem, o jejichž existenci neměla ani ponětí: ACCSYS, TECHNOLOGICA nebo MEDIAPLUS. Cesty lemovaly nekonečné řady zaparkovaných aut. Pěšky nešel nikdo.

"Mohli bychom najít McDonald. Určitě jich tu bude hodně."

"My McDonald nejíme," řekla.

"Vy McDonald nejíte."

"Ne. Můžu to říct ještě jednou, jestli chcete. My McDonald nejíme."

"Jste vegetariáni?"

"Ne. Mohli bychom jen najít nějaký supermarket? Udělám sendviče."

"Myslím, že McDonald by byl levnější, pokud jde jen o peníze."

"O peníze nejde."

Jess mu nemohla říct: kdybyste byl rodič samoživitel, vědět byste, že jsou určité věci, které dělat nemůžete. Většinou ty věci, které každý předpokládá, že děláte: pobírat přídavky, kouřit, žít v městském bytě a krmit děti McDonaldem. V některých případech se tomu neubránila, v jiných ano.

Trochu si povzdechl a dál se upřeně díval před sebe. "Dobře, tak bychom mohli najít něco k přespání a uvidíme, jestli tam nebude i restaurace."

"Tak trochu jsem plánovala, že prostě přespíme v autě."

Pan Nicholls zastavil u krajnice a otočil se k ní. "Přespíme v autě?"

Cítila se trapně, a tak na něj byla ostrá. "Máme s sebou Normana. V žádném hotelu nám ho nevezmou. Tady to zvládneme."

Vytáhl telefon a začal něco ťukat na displeji. "Najdu něco, kam můžeme i se psem. Určitě tu něco bude, i kdybychom si měli trochu zajet.

Jess cítila, jak rudne, "Byla bych radši, kdybyste nic nehledal."

Dál ťukal na displej.

"Opravdu. Nemáme – my si hotel nemůžeme dovolit."

Prsty pana Nichollse se zastavily na displeji. "To je šílené. Přece nemůžete spát v mém autě."

"Je to jen na pár nocí. Bude to v pohodě. Stejně bychom spali v rollsu. Proto jsem brala ty peřiny."

Tanzie je pozorovala ze zadního sedadla.

"Mám denní rozpočet. A ráda bych se ho držela. Pokud by vám to nevadilo." Dvanáct liber maximálně.

Podíval se na ni, jako by se zbláznila.

"Vy si ale klidně hotel najděte," dodala. Nechtěla mu říct, že by jí to vlastně vyhovovalo víc.

"To je šílené," řekl nakonec.

Až potom, co se otočil zpátky k volantu ji napadlo, že je v tom autě možná nechce nechat samotné.

Dalších pár mil bylo v autě ticho. Pan Nicholls byl naštvaný, a tak byl potichu. Jess to z nějakého důvodu vyhovovalo. Dva, maximálně tři dny, říkala si v duchu. Asi mu řekne, aby je vyhodil na olympiádě a zpátky už to zvládnou sami. Nebyla si jistá, jestli by to s ním zavřená v autě vydržela dýl než čtyřicet osm hodin. Když se bude Tanzii dařit tak, jak všichni předpokládají, mohli by něco z její výhry vrazit do lístků na vlak.

Představa, že se pana Nichollse zbaví, jí zlepšila náladu tak, že ani neprotestovala, když zastavil u penzionu Travel Inn.

"Hned se vrátím," řekl a namířil si to přes parkoviště. Vzal si s sebou klíče a netrpělivě s nimi pohazoval v ruce.

"Přespíme tady?" řekla Tanzie, mnula si oči a rozhlížela se okolo.

"Jenom pan Nicholls, my zůstaneme v autě. Bude to dobrodružství!" řekla Jess.

Chvilku bylo ticho.

"Jupí," řekl Nicky ironicky.

Jess věděla, že to pro něj bude nepohodlné, ale co jiného měla dělat? "Můžeš se natáhnout vzadu. Tanze a já se vyspíme vepředu. Bude to v pohodě."

Pan Nicholls se vracel zpátky a zakrýval si oči před zapadajícím sluníčkem. Všimla si, že má na sobě stejné oblečení jako tu noc v baru.

"Už měli jen jeden volný pokoj. Dvojlůžko. Můžete si ho nechat vy. Já se porozhlídnu kolem, třeba najdu něco jiného."

"To ne," řekla. "Už jsem vám to říkala. Nic dalšího už od vás přijmout nemůžu."

"Nedělám to pro vás. Dělám to pro ty děti."

"Ne," řekla a snažila se znít víc diplomaticky. "Je to od vás moc hezké, ale my to tady zvládneme."

Prohrábl si rukou vlasy. "Víte vy co? Nemůžu spát v penzionu s vědomím, že dvacet metrů ode mě spí na zadním sedadle kluk, kterého zrovna pustili z nemocnice. Nicky může spát na té druhé posteli."

"Ne," řekla už jen ze setrvačnosti.

"Proč?"

Sama nevěděla.

Jeho výraz potemněl. "Nejsem žádný úchyl."

"Nic takového jsem neřekla."

"Tak proč ho se mnou nenecháte spát na pokoji? Proboha, vždyť je stejně vysoký, jako já."

Jess zrudla. "V poslední době to neměl jednoduché. Prostě na něj jen chci dát pozor."

"Co je to úchyl?" zeptala se Tanzie.

"Aspoň bych si nabil Nintendo," ozval se Nicky ze zadního sedadla.

"Víte vy co? Takhle konverzace je směšná. Mám hlad. Potřebuju si dát něco k jídlu." Pan Nicholls se naklonil dveřmi. "Nicky, chceš spát v autě nebo na hotelu?"

Nicky se úkosem podíval na Jess. "Na hotelu. A taky nejsem úchyl." "A jsem já úchyl?" zeptala se Tanzie.

"Dobře," řekl pak Nicholls. "Navrhuju, aby si Tanzie s Nickem vzali ten pokoj. Můžete tam s nimi spát na zemi."

"Nemůžu vás nechat zaplatit hotelový pokoj a pak vás nechat spát v autě. Navíc, pes by vyl celou noc. Vůbec vás nezná."

Pan Nicholls obrátil oči v sloup. Zjevně mu docházela trpělivost. "Tak dobře. Děti budou spát na hotelu. Vy a já zůstaneme v autě se psem. Všichni budou spokojení." On teda spokojeně nevypadal.

"Nikdy jsem v hotelu nespala. Spala jsem už někdy v hotelu, mami?"

Nastalo krátké ticho. Jess cítila, jak ztrácí kontrolu nad situací.

"Já na Tanzii dohlédnu," řekl Nicky. Už se začal radovat. Až na ty modřiny byl v obličeji bledý. "Vana by bodla."

"Přečteš mi pohádku?"

"Jen pokud v ní budou zombíci." Jess si všimla, že se na ni napůl usmál. A ten úsměv ji zlomil.

"Dobře," řekla a snažila se potlačit vlnu nevolnosti, kterou jí její rozhodnutí přineslo.

Naproti se ve stínu logistických firem krčilo smíšené zboží, jeho okna zářila a barevné vykřičníky upozorňovaly na nabídku rybích kousků s chlazeným nápojem. K večeři koupila housky, sýr, brambůrky a předražená jablka a udělali si piknik na travnatém svahu vedle parkoviště. Na druhé strašně burácela projíždějící auta, tvořící fialový opar táhnoucí se směrem na jih. Ptala se pana Nichollse, jestli si dá s nimi, ale když se podíval na obsah tašky řekl, že se nají v restauraci. Podezírala ho, že si od nich potřebuje odpočinout.

Když zmizel z dohledu, taky si jí ulevilo. Zavedla děti do pokoje, a trochu jí mrzelo, že tam s nimi nebude. Pokoj byl v přízemí a okna měl směrem k parkovišti. Poprosila pana Nichollse, aby zaparkoval co nejblíž jejich oknu a Tanzie už ji třikrát donutila vylézt ven, jen aby jí přes okno zamávala a rozplácla přitom nos na skle.

Nicky na hodinu zmizel v koupelně a celou dobu měl puštěnou vodu. Když vyšel ven, zapnul si televizi a lehnul si do postele, bylo na něm vidět zároveň vyčerpání i úleva.

Jess mu nachystala léky, vykoupala Tanzii, převlékla ji do pyžama, a nařídila jim, aby moc neponocovali. "A žádné hulení," varovala ho. "Myslím to vážně."

"Jak asi?" řekl nabručeně. "Máš moji trávu."

Tanzie si lehla na bok a procházela si učebnici matematiky, zmizela ve svém světě jen ona a matematika. Jess nakrmila a vyvenčila psa, s otevřenými dveřmi si sedla na místo spolujezdce, jedla housku se sýrem a čekala, až se pan Nicholls vrátí z večeře.

Když se objevil, bylo čtvrt na deset a ona ve slábnoucím světle mžourala do novin. Podle toho, jak držel telefon, bylo vidět, že zrovna dokončil další hovor a vypadal, že je asi tak rád, že ji vidí, jako ona, že vidí jeho. Otevřel dveře, vlezl dovnitř a zase je za sebou zabouchnul.

"Poprosil jsem recepční, aby mi zavolala, když někdo zruší rezervaci." Hleděl před sebe přes čelní sklo. "Samozřejmě jsem jim neřekl, že čekám na parkovišti."

Norman ležel na betonu a vypadal, jako by ho někdo pustil z velké výšky. Přemýšlela, jestli ho má vzít dovnitř. Bez dětí na zadním sedadle a narůstající tmou, jí sedět v autě s panem Nichollsem připadalo ještě divnější.

"Děti jsou v pohodě?" "Jsou nadšené. Děkuju vám." "Váš syn je teda pěkně zřízený."

Nastalo dlouhé ticho. Podíval se na ni. Pak položil obě ruce na volant, a opřel se do sedadla. Hřbetem ruky si promnul oči a otočil se na ni. "Dobře... Udělal jsem ještě něco, čím bych vás naštval?"

"Chováte se, jako bych vám celý den lezl na nervy. Za tu věc tuhle v baru se omlouvám. Dělám teď co můžu, abych vám pomohl a stejně se pořád cítím, jako bych něco provedl."

"Nic – nic jste neprovedl," zakoktala se.

Chvíli si ji zkoumavě prohlížel. "Je to jako když mi žena řekla "Nic se neděje" když jsem ve skutečnosti provedl něco, co ji naštvalo a měl jsem hádat, co to je? A pak se hrozně naštvala, že jsem nehádal?"

"Ne."

"Vidíte, teď si nejsem jistý. Protože tohle "ne" může být součástí toho, že se "nic se neděje.""

"Nemluvím v hádankách. Nic se neděje."

"Mohli bychom se v tom případě trochu uvolnit, když jsme spolu? Hrozně mě znervózňujete."

"Já znervózňuju vás?"

Pomalu otočil hlavou.

"Vypadáte, jako byste toho, že jste nám nabídl odvoz litoval od chvíle, kdy jsme nasedli do auta. Možná dokonce ještě předtím, než jsme nasedli." *Zmlkni*, varovala sama sebe. *Zmlkni*. *Zmlkni*. "Ani nevím, proč jste to vlastně udělal."

"Cože?"

"Nic," řekla a otočila se od něj pryč. "Zapomeňte na to."

Přes přední sklo hleděl před sebe. Najednou vypadal strašně unaveně.

"Asi by bylo lepší, kdybyste nás ráno vysadil na nádraží. Už vás nebudeme obtěžovat."

"To myslíte vážně?"

Přitáhla si koleno k hrudníku. "Asi to tak bude nejlepší."

Potichu tam seděli. Obloha mezitím potemněla, teď už měla stejnou barvu jako beton na parkovišti. Jess dvakrát otevřela pusu, že něco řekne, ale nic z ní nevylezlo. Pan Nicholls tiše seděl a hluboko v myšlenkách zíral přes přední sklo na zatažené závěsy hotelového pokoje. Myslela na Nicka a Tanzii, jak klidně spí na druhé straně té zdi a přála si tam být s nimi. Bylo jí špatně. Proč prostě nemohla dělat jako by nic? Proč na něj nemohla být milejší? Bylo by to jen na pár dní. Cítila se jako idiot. Zase to všechno musela podělat.

Začínalo se ochlazovat. Nakonec zezadu vytáhla Nickyho peřinu a vrazila mu ji. "Tu máte," řekla.

"Hm," podíval se na obrovský obrovského obrázek Super Maria. "Děkuji."

Zavolala psa dovnitř, sklopila si sedačku, jak to šlo, ale jen tak aby se ho nedotýkala a přetáhla si přes sebe Tanziinu peřinu. "Dobrou noc." Civěla před sebe, luxusní interiér auta

měla jen kousíček od nosu, čichala vůni nového vozu a v hlavě měla zmatek. Jak daleko je asi nádraží? Kolik by ta cesta stála? Museli by někde přespat a koupit si snídani, a to přinejmenším. A co si počne s tím psem? Za sebou slyšela Normanovo tiché chrápání a pomyslela si, že kdyby teď měla vysávat zadní sedačky, tak je v háji.

"Je půl deváté." Hlas pana Nichollse prolomil ticho.

Jess nehybně ležela.

"Půl. Deváté." Hlasitě si povzdechl. "Nevěřil bych, že to řeknu, ale tohle je snad ještě horší než manželství."

"Co – dýchám moc nahlas?"

Z ničeho nic otevřel dveře. "Pro pána Boha," řekl a namířil si to přes parkoviště. Jess se narovnala a pozorovala, jak přebíhá přes cestu do samoobsluhy a mizí v jejím jasném interiéru.

Po několika minutách se znovu objevil s lahví vína a balením plastových kelímků.

"Nejspíš to nebude nic moc," řekl, když lezl zpátky na sedadlo řidiče. "To je mi teď ale úplně fuk."

Zírala na tu flašku.

"Mír, Jessico Thomsnová? Byl to dlouhý den. A zatracený týden. A i když je to auto prostorné, tak tu není dost místa pro dva lidi, co spolu nemluví."

Podíval se na ni. Oči měl unavené a na tváři mu pomalu začínalo rašit strniště. Vypadal tak nějak zranitelně.

Vzala si od něj kelímek. "Omlouvám se, prostě jen nejsem zvyklá na to, že nám někdo pomáhá. Jsem potom..."

"Podezíravá? Nevrlá?"

"Spíš jsem chtěla říct, že jsem si díky tomu uvědomila, že bych měla víc chodit mezi lidi."

Vydechnul. "Aha." Letmo se podíval na flašku, co držel v ruce. "Tak pojďme... No to si snad děláš srandu."

"Co?"

"Myslel jsem, že má šroubovací uzávěr." Hleděl na flašku, jako by to byla jen další věc, co mu dnes měla znepříjemnit život. "Výborně. Asi s sebou nemáte vývrtku, co?"

"Ne."

"Myslíte, že mi to vymění?"

"A máte účtenku?"

Dlouze vydechl, ale ona ho přerušila. "To nevadí," řekla a vzala mu flašku z ruky. Otevřela dveře a vylezla z auta. Norman zvedl hlavu.

"Neprohodíte mi ji čelním sklem, že ne?"

"Ne," řekla a sloupla ochrannou folii. "Vyzujte si botu."

"Co?"

"Vyzujte si botu. S žabkou to nebude fungovat."

"Prosím vás, hlavně si z ní nedělejte skleničku. Moje bývalá si ji jednou udělala z lodičky a neumíte si představit, jak těžké bylo předstírat, že šampaňské, co smrdí po nohách je vzrušující zážitek."

Nastavila ruku. Konečně se zul podal jí tu botu. Díval se, jak do ní Jess tu flašku zasunula, pevně ji uchopila, a jak tak stála bokem ke zdi hotelu, silně o ni s tou botou praštila.

"Asi se nemám ptát, o co se pokoušíte, co?"

"Prostě chvilku vydržte," řekla se zaťatými zuby a znovu praštila do stěny.

Pan Nicholls jen pomalu kroutil hlavou.

Narovnala se a zlostně se na něj podívala. "Jestli chcete, klidně ten korek můžete pro mě za mě vycucnout."

Zvedl ruce na obranu. "Ne, ne. Jen do toho. Střepy v ponožce, tak přesně jsem si dnešní večer představoval."

Jess zkontrolovala korek a znovu bouchla. A hele – centimetr čouhal z hrdla flašky. Bum. Další cenťák. Opatrně to všechno držela a znovu bouchla, a pak to vyšlo: jemně vytáhla zbytek korku z hrdla a láhev mu podala.

Civěl na flašku, a pak na ni. Vrátila mu zpátky botu.

"Ty jo. Vás se hodí znát."

"Umím i navrtat poličky, vyměnit shnilou podlahu a vyrobit klínový řemen z punčochy."

"Fakt?"

"Kromě toho řemene." Vlezla do auta a vzala si od něj kelímek s vínem. "Jednou jsem to zkoušela. Prasknul asi po třiceti yardech, ještě u nás v ulici. Škoda punčoch z M&S." Lokla si. "A to auto pak ještě týdny smrdělo po spálených punčocháčích."

Norman za nimi kňoural ze spaní.

"Mír," řekl pak Nicholls a zvedl svůj kelímek.

"Mír. Nebudete potom řídit, že ne?" Jess zvedla svůj.

"Nebudu, pokud vy ne."

"Ha ha moc vtipné."

A najednou byl ten večer tak nějak snesitelnější.

TRANSLATION BY EVA KLIMENTOVÁ

Jessina babička často říkala, že krátká paměť je klíčem ke šťastnému životu. Pravda, to bylo tehdy, než kvůli stařecké demenci zapomínala, kde bydlí, ale Jess chápala, jak to myslela. Musí na ty peníze zapomenout. Pokud si dovolí příliš myslet na to, co provedla, nikdy nepřežije, že chtě nechtě musí sedět v autě s panem Nichollsem. Marty jí říkával, že má ten nejhorší pokerový výraz na světě: pocity se jí míhají přes obličej jako odrazy na klidné vodě. Ke všemu by se za pár hodin přiznala. Nebo by ji to napětí tak vytáčelo, že by začala zarývat nehty do čalounění.

Seděla v autě, poslouchala Tanziino brebentění a slibovala si, že mu to všechno nějak vrátí dřív, než zjistí, co udělala. Vezme ty peníze z Tanziiny výhry. Nějak to vymyslí. Říkala si, že je to jen muž, který jim nabídl, že je sveze, a s kterým musí několik hodin denně zdvořile konverzovat.

A pravidelně se ohlížela za sebe na své dvě děti a ujišťovala se: Co jiného jsem mohla udělat?

Nemělo by být těžké pohodlně se usadit a užívat si jízdu. Venkovské cesty lemovalo luční kvítí, a když přestalo pršet, mraky odhalily azurově modrou oblohu jako z pohlednic z padesátých let. Tanzie už znovu nezvracela, a s každým kilometrem, který urazili od domova, Jess stále víc napřimovala hlavu a narovnávala ramena. Teď si uvědomila, že už celé měsíce necítila ani náznak pohody. V poslední době se nemohla zbavit neustálého bubnování neodbytných obav: Co udělají Fisherovi příště? Co se děje v Nickyho hlavě? Co má udělat kvůli Tanzie? A pod tím vším pochmurně tepal basový buben: Prachy. Prachy.

"Není vám něco?" zeptal se pan Nicholls.

Jess, vytržená z myšlenek, zamumlala: "Ne, díky." Rozpačitě na sebe kývli. Neuvolnil se. Poznala to podle toho, jak střídavě zatínal čelist, jak svíral volant tak pevně, až mu zbělely klouby. Jess nevěděla, co vlastně bylo za jeho rozhodnutím nabídnout jim svezení, ale byla si naprosto jistá, že toho celou

dobu lituje.

"Ehm, existuje možnost, že byste přestala s tím stepováním?"

"S jakým stepováním?"

"Poklepáváte nohama. O palubní desku."

Pohlédla na své nohy.

"Opravdu to ruší."

"Vy chcete, abych přestala poklepávat nohama."

Díval se přímo před sebe přes čelní sklo. "Ano. Prosím."

Nechala nohy sklouznout dolů, ale bylo jí to nepohodlné, takže po chvíli je zvedla a zasunula si je pod sebe. Opřela si hlavu o sklo.

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"Vaše ruka."
"Cože?"
"Teď se klepete do kolena."
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Roztržitě se do něj poklepávala. "Vy chcete, abych seděla naprosto nehybně, když řídíte."

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"To neříkám. Ale to poklepávání způsobuje, že se těžko soustředím."
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"Vy nemůžete řídit, pokud pohybuju jakoukoli částí svého těla?"

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"O to nejde."
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"Marmeládu."

"Tak o co teda jde?"

"O to poklepávání. Prostě... mně to... leze na nervy."

Jess se zhluboka nadechla. "Děti, nikdo ani hnout. Jasné? Nechceme panu Nichollsovi lézt na nervy."

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"Děti to nedělají," pronesl mírně. "Jenom vy."
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"Ty se fakt pořád vrtíš, mami."

"Díky, Tanze." Jess sepnula ruce. Seděla se zaťatými zuby a soustředila se, aby se nehýbala. Zavřela oči a oprostila svou mysl od peněz, od Martyho pitomého auta, od svých starostí o děti. Nechala je odplouvat s ujetými kilometry. A jak se jí přes obličej vlnil větřík z otevřeného okénka a v uších jí zněla hudba, v tu chvíli si připadala jako v nějakém úplně jiném životě.

Zastavili se na oběd v hospodě někde na předměstí Oxfordu. Napřímili se a vydávali ze sebe úlevné vzdechy, když jim lupaly klouby a protahovali si zkroucené končetiny. Pan Nicholls zmizel do hospody a Jess se posadila na piknikový stůl a vybalila chleby, které ráno chvatně připravila, když se ukázalo, že pan Nicholls je nakonec přece jen sveze.

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"Marmite," řekl Nicky, když přišel a odlepil od sebe dva krajíčky chleba.
"Spěchala jsem."
"Nemáme něco jiného?"
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Povzdychl si a sáhl do tašky. Tanzie seděla na kraji lavičky, zabraná do matematických knih. V autě je číst nemohla, protože se jí dělalo nevolno, takže chtěla využít každou

příležitost k práci. Jess ji pozorovala, jak si soustředěně zapisuje rovnice do sešitu, a přitom nevnímá okolí, a už po sté si říkala, odkud se tahle holčička vzala.

"Tady máte," pronesl pan Nicholls. "Napadlo mě, že by nám všem přišlo vhod něco k pití." Přisunul k dětem dvě lahve koly. "Nevěděl jsem, co chcete, tak jsem opatřil výběr." Koupil lahev italského piva, něco, co vypadalo jako třetinka cideru, sklenici bílého vína, další kolu, citronádu a lahev pomerančového džusu. Sám si dal minerálku.

Uprostřed se tyčil kopeček brambůrků s různými příchutěmi.

"To jste všechno koupil?"

"Byla tam fronta. Nechtělo se mi vracet ven, abych se vás zeptal."

"Já... já s sebou nemám tolik peněz."

"Je to pití. Nekupuju vám barák."

Potom mu zazvonil telefon. Popadl ho a s rukou přitisknutou k týlu odkráčel přes celé parkoviště. Cestou už mluvil.

"Nemám zjistit, jestli si nechce dát náš sendvič?" nabídla se Tanzie.

Jess ho pozorovala, jak jde s rukou zabořenou do kapsy, dokud nezmizel z dohledu. "Teď zrovna ne," odpověděla.

Nicky nic neříkal. Když se ho Jess zeptala, kde ho to nejvíc bolí, jenom zahuhlal, že je v pohodě.

"Bude to lepší," ujistila ho a vztáhla k němu ruku. "Opravdu. Dáme si tuhle pauzu, vyřešíme to s Tanze a vymyslíme, co dál. Někdy člověk potřebuje někam vypadnout, aby si to srovnal v hlavě. Pak je všechno jasnější."

"Myslím, že problém není v tom, co mám v hlavě."

Dala mu prášky proti bolesti a dívala se, jak je zapíjí kolou. Nicky vzal psa na procházku, se shrbenými rameny šoural nohama. Říkala si, jestli má cigarety. Byl rozhozený, protože asi před třiceti kilometry se mu vybilo kapesní Nintendo. Jess si nebyla jistá, jestli Nicky ví, co si má se sebou počít, když není chirurgicky napojený na herní konzoli.

Mlčky se dívaly, jak odchází.

Jess myslela na to, jak se Nicky čím dál míň usmívá, jak je ostražitý, jak vypadá nejistě a je pobledlý a zranitelný, pokud vůbec kdy vyjde ze svého pokoje. Myslela na jeho odevzdaný, bezvýrazný obličej v nemocnici. Kdo to řekl, že člověk je šťastný jenom tak jako jeho nejnešťastnější dítě?

Tanzie se sklonila nad svými výpočty. "Myslím, že se odstěhuju, až budu teenager." Jess na ni pohlédla. "Cože?"

"Možná budu bydlet na univerzitní koleji. Moc se mi nechce dospívat vedle Fisherových." Zapsala si do sešitu nějaké číslo, potom jednu číslici vymazala a místo ní napsala čtyřku. "Mám z nich trochu děs," špitla.

"Z Fisherových?"

"Zdál se mi o nich zlý sen."

Jess polkla. "Nemusíš se jich bát," řekla. "Jsou to jenom pitomí kluci. Zachovali se jako srabi. Jsou to nuly."

"Oni si jako nuly nepřipadají."

"Tanze, zjistím, co se proti nim dá dělat, a vyřešíme to. Ano? Nemusíš mít kvůli nim zlé sny. Já to vyřeším."

Seděly a mlčely. Kolem bylo ticho, jen z dáli k nim doléhal zvuk traktoru. Nad hlavami jim v nekonečném blankytu kroužili ptáci.

Pan Nicholls pomalu kráčel zpátky. Napřímil se, jako by něco vyřešil, a v ruce nesl mobil. Jess si pro mnula oči.

"Myslím, že jsem dodělala kvadratické rovnice v oboru komplexních čísel. Chceš to vidět?" Tanzie jí ukázala stránku s výpočty. Jess pohlédla na dceřinu půvabnou, upřímnou tvář. Vztáhla k ní ruku a narovnala jí brýle na nose. "Ano," zářivě se usmála", to bych strašně ráda."

Zvládnout další úsek cesty jim trvalo dvě a půl hodiny. Pan Nicholls za tu dobu vyřídil dva telefonáty, jeden od ženy jménem Gemma (bývalé manželky?) nakonec zamáčkl a jeden byl zjevně pracovní. Těsně poté, co zajeli k benzince, zavolala mu žena, která mluvila s italským přízvukem, a při slovech "Eduardo, brouku" pan Nicholls vytrhl mobil z držáku hands-free, zajel k pumpě a vystoupil z auta. "Ne, Laro," řekl zády k nim. "Už jsme o tom spolu mluvili... Tak to se tvůj advokát mýlí... Ne, vážně na tom nic nezmění, když mi budeš říkat "humře"."

Nicky si na hodinku zdříml, modročerné vlasy se mu přilíply na napuchlou lícní kost. Ve spánku vypadal bezstarostně. Tanzie si tiše pobrukovala a hladila psa. Norman spal, několikrát se hlasitě uprdl a pomalu zaplňoval auto svým smradem. Nikdo si nestěžoval. Vlastně to zastíralo neodbytný puch zvratků.

"Nepotřebují si děti dát něco k jídlu?" zeptal se pan Nicholls, když konečně dojeli na předměstí nějakého velkého města. Na každém kilometru míjeli obrovité, rozzářené kancelářské budovy, na fasádách měly názvy obchodních a technologických firem, o kterých nikdy v životě neslyšela: Accsys, Technologica či Avanta. Silnice lemovala nekonečně

dlouhá parkoviště. Nikdo nechodil pěšky. "Mohli bychom najít McDonald's. Určitě jich tu budou mraky."

"My do mekáče nechodíme," řekla Jess.

"Vy do mekáče nechodíte."

"Ne. Můžu vám to zopakovat, jestli chcete. My do mekáče nechodíme."

"Jste vegetariáni?"

"Ne. Víte co, mohli bychom jenom najít supermarket? Udělám sendviče."

"U McDonalda by to nejspíš vyšlo levněji, pokud jde o peníze."

"O peníze nejde."

Jess mu to nemohla vysvětlovat: jako matka samoživitelka některé věci nemohla dělat. Což byly v zásadě věci, které od sólo rodičů každý očekával: žádat o přídavky, kouřit, bydlet v obecním bytě, vodit děti do mekáče. S některými věcmi nemohla nadělat nic, ale něco změnit mohla.

S pohledem upřeným před sebe si tiše povzdychl. "Tak jo, dobře, mohli bychom najít nějaké místo na přespání a pak zjistit, jestli tam mají i restauraci."

"Já jsem si spíš myslela, že prostě přespíme v autě."

Pan Nicholls zajel na kraj silnice a otočil se k ní. "Jak jako přespíme v autě?"

Z rozpaků se celá naježila. "Máme Normana. Nikde v hotelu ho nevezmou. Tady to bude v pohodě."

Vytáhl mobil a začal ťukat do displeje. "Najdu hotel, kde berou psy. Určitě někde bude, i kdybychom si museli trochu zajet."

Jess cítila, jak se jí hrne krev do tváří. "Víte co, radši bych, kdybyste nic nehledal."

Pořád něco vyťukával do telefonu.

"Vážně. Na hotel nemáme peníze."

Panu Nichollsovi zamrzl prst na telefonu. "To je na hlavu. U mě v autě spat nemůžete."

"Vždyť je to jen párkrát. Zvládneme to. Stejně bychom přespávali v tom rolls-roycu. Proto jsem s sebou vzala ty přikrývky."

Tanzie vše sledovala ze zadního sedadla.

"Mám denní rozpočet a ráda bych ho dodržela. Pokud nic nenamítáte." Dvanáct liber denně na jídlo. Maximálně.

Podíval se na ni jako by zešílela.

"Nebráním vám přespávat v hotelu," dodala. Nechtěla mu říkat, že ve skutečnosti by bala radši.

"To je fakt magořina," řekl nakonec.

Dalších pár kilometrů nepromluvili ani slovo. Pan Nicholls vypadal naštvaně. Jess to tak nějak zvláštně vyhovovalo. A pokud se Tanzie opravdu bude na olympiádě dařit tak, jak se obecně předpokládalo, mohli by něco z její výhry utratit za jízdenky na vlak. Při představě, že pana Nichollse pošlou do háje, se Jess tak ulevilo, že ani necekla, když zajel k hotelu Travel Inn.

"Hned jsem zpátky," řekl jí a přešel přes parkoviště. Vzal si s sebou klíčky a nervózně s nimi komíhal v ruce.

"Přespíme tady?" zeptala se Tanzie. Protřela si oči a rozhlížela se kolem.

"Přespí tu pan Nicholls. My zůstaneme v autě. Bude to dobrodružství!"

Na chvíli bylo ticho.

"Supr," hlesl Nicky.

Jess věděla, že je celý rozlámaný. Ale co měla dělat? "Můžeš se natáhnout vzadu. My s Tanze se vyspíme vepředu. Bude to v pohodě."

Pan Nicholls se vrátil, stínil si rukou oči proti podvečernímu slunci. Uvědomila si, že je oblečený úplně stejně jako onoho večera v hospodě.

"Mají poslední volný pokoj. Dvoulůžák. Můžete si ho vzít. Zjistím, jestli je někde poblíž ještě něco jiného."

"To ne," ohradila se. "Jak jsem vám už řekla. Už od vás nemůžu nic víc přijmout."

"Nedělám to pro vás. Dělám to pro vaše děti."

"Ne." Snažila se znít trochu víc diplomaticky. "Je to od vás moc laskavé, ale my si tu vystačíme."

Pro hrábl si rukou vlasy. "Víte co? Nemůžu spát v hotelovém pokoji, když vím, že o kus dál spí v autě kluk, kterého právě propustili z nemocnice. Na druhé posteli může přespat Nicky."

"Ne," vyhrkla automaticky.

"Proč?"

Nemohla to říct.

Zachmuřil se. "Nejsem žádný úchyl."

"To jsem neřekla."

"Tak proč svému synovi nedovolíte, aby se mnou přespal v hotelovém pokoji? Vždyť je stejně vysoký jako já, prokristapána."

Jess zrudla. "V poslední době toho na něj bylo moc. Prostě na něj musím dávat pozor." "Co je to úchyl?" zeptala se Tanzie.

"Mohl bych si nabít Nintendo," ozval se Nicky ze zadního sedadla.

"Víte co? Tahle debata je naprosto absurdní. Mám hlad. Potřebuju se najíst." Pan Nicholls strčil hlavu do dveří. "Nicky, chceš spát v autě, nebo v hotelovém pokoji?"

Nicky pohlédl úkosem na Jess. "V hotelovém pokoji. A taky nejsem žádný úchyl."

"A já jsem úchyl?" zeptala se Tanzie.

"Fajn," oddychl si pan Nicholls. "Takže domluveno. Nicky a Tanzie budou spát v hotelu. Vy můžete přespat u nich na podlaze."

"Já ale ne můžu dopustit, abyste za nás zaplatil hotel, a pak jste musel spát v autě. Navíc pes bude v noci výt. Nezná vás."

Pan Nicholls zakoulel očima. Zjevně mu docházela trpělivost.

"Tak tedy dobrá. Děti přespí v hotelu. My dva budeme spát se psem. Tak budou všichni spokojení." Moc spokojeně ale nevypadal.

"Já jsem ještě nikdy nebyla v hotelu. Byla jsem už někdy v hotelu, mami?" Na chvíli nastalo ticho. Jess cítila, jak se jí situace vymyká z rukou.

"Já se o Tanze postarám," slibil Nicky. Vypadal, že se těší. V místech, kde jeho obličej nebyl pohmožděný, měl barvu tmelu. "Vana by bodla."

"Přečetl bys mi pohádku?"

Jenom pokud v ní jsou zombíci." Jess si všimla, že Nicky se na Tanzie pousmál.

"Tak jo," kývla a pokusila se překonat vlnu nevole nad tím, s čím právě souhlasila.

Ve stínu velkoobchodu s potravinami se choulil minimarket s výlohami rozzářenými vykřičníky a nabídkami křupavých rybích kuliček a perlivých nealko nápojů. Jess nakoupila rohlíky a sýr, brambůrky a předražená jablka a připravila dětem k večeři piknik, který společně snědli na travnatém svahu u parkoviště. Na druhé straně silnice v purpurovém oparu s rachotem projížděla auta směrem na jih. Jess nabídla panu Nichollsovi, aby si s nimi dal něco k jídlu, ale jen pohlédl do tašky a podotkl, že děkuje, ale nají se v restauraci.

Jakmile byl z dohledu, Jess se uvolnila. Ubytovala děti v pokoji a trochu jí bylo líto, že tam s nimi nebude. Pokoj byl v přízemí, s výhledem na parkoviště. Požádala pana Nichollse, aby zaparkoval co nejblíž u okna, a Tanzie ji přinutila, aby třikrát vyšla ven, jen aby jí mohla zamávat za záclonami a přitisknout nos ke sklu.

Nicky na hodinu zmizel v koupelně, celou dobu měl puštěnou vodu. Pak si pustil televizi a lehl si na postel. Vypadal, že je vysílený a že se mu zároveň ulevilo.

Jess mu připravila prášky, vykoupala Tanzie a oblékla ji do pyžama.

Varovala je, aby nebyli moc dlouho vzhůru. "A nehulit," upozornila Nickyho, "fakt ne."

"Copak můžu?" ohradil se. "Máš moji trávu."

Tanzie si lehla na bok a prokousávala se učebnicemi matematiky. Jess nakrmila a vyvenčila psa, sedla si na sedadlo spolujezdce a nechala otevřené dveře. Snědla rohlík se sýrem a čekala, až se pan Nicholls nají.

Bylo čtvrt na deset a právě se ve slábnoucím světle pokoušela číst noviny, když se objevil. Podle způsobu, jakým držel v ruce mobil, nejspíš právě dokončil další hovor a vypadal, že ji vidí stejně rád jako ona jeho. Otevřel dveře, nasedl a zavřel je.

"Požádal jsem na recepci, aby mi zavolali, kdyby někdo zrušil rezervaci." Zíral přímo před sebe. "Samo sebou jsem jim neřekl, že budu čekat na parkovišti."

Norman ležel na asfaltu a vypadal, jako by ho někdo upustil z velké výšky. Jess přemítala, jestli ho má vzít dovnitř. Bez dětí na zadním sedadle a s padající tmou jí připadalo ještě divnější, že sedí v autě vedle pana Nichollse.

"Jsou děti v pohodě?"
"Jsou moc spokojené. Děkuju."
"Ten váš kluk vypadá pěkně dobitě."
"Bude v pořádku."

Nastalo dlouhé ticho. Pohlédl na ni. Potom položil obě ruce na volant a zapřel se do opěradla. Promnul si oči dlaněmi a otočil se k ní. "Dobrá...takže udělal jsem ještě něco, co vám vadí?"

"Cože?"

"Celý den jste se chovala, jako bych vás štval. Za tu věc onehdy večer v hospodě už jsem se vám omluvil. Dělám, co můžu, abych vám pomohl. A přesto mám pocit, že jsem udělal něco špatně."

"Vy... nic jste špatně neudělal," zablekotala.

Chvilku ji pozoroval. "Myslíte tím takové to ženské "nic se nestalo", a přitom si myslíte, že jsem provedl něco trestuhodného, ale čekáte, že to uhodnu sám? A pak se fakt naštvete, když to neuhodnu?"

"Ne."

"Víte co, já fakt nevím. Protože to vaše "ne' je možná součástí toho ženského "nic se nestalo"."

"Já nemluvím v hádankách. Opravdu se nic nestalo."

"V tom případě snad můžeme býr trochu víc v pohodě. Jsem z vás fakt nesvůj."

"Vy jste ze mě nesvůj?"

Pomalu k ní otočil hlavu.

"Od té chvíle, co jsme nasedli do auta, jste vypadal, že litujete, že jste nám to svezení nabídl. Vlastně ještě předtím, než jsme nasedli do auta." Buď zticha, Jess, varovala sebe samu. Buď zticha, buď zticha, buď zticha, buď zticha. "Vždyť ani nevím, proč jste to udělal."

"Co?"

"Nic," odsekla a odvrátila se od něj. "Kašlete na to."

Zíral před sebe skrz čelní sklo. Najednou vypadal opravdu, ale opravdu unaveně.

"Vlastně stačí, když nás zítra ráno hodíte na nádraží. Už vás nebudeme otravovat."

"To skutečně chcete?" zeptal se.

Přitáhla si kolena k bradě. "Možná by to bylo nejlepší."

Kolem nich už byla tma jako v pytli. Jess dvakrát otevřela ústa, aby něco řekla, ale nevydala ze sebe ani hlásku. Pan Nicholls zíral přes sklo na zatažené závěsy hotelového pokoje, zjevně hluboce zamyšlený.

Pomyslela na to, jak Nicky a Tanzie klidně spí za zdí, a přála si být s nimi. Bylo jí nanic. Proč se prostě nemohla přetvařovat? Proč nemohla být milejší? Je kráva. Znovu všechno zvorala.

Ochladilo se. Nakonec přitáhla ze zadního sedadla Nickyho přikrývku a vrazila mu ji. "Tu máte."

"Aha." Pohlédl na obrovský obrázek Super Maria. "Díky."

Zavolala psa, aby šel dovnitř, sklopila si sedadlo tak akorát, aby se ho nedotýkala, a potom přes sebe přetáhla Tanziinu přikrývku.

"Dobrou noc." Zírala na luxusní obložení, které měla přímo u nosu, vdechovala vůni nového auta a hlavou se jí honily myšlenky. Jak daleko je odsud na nádraží? Na kolik přijdou jízdenky? Budou si muset aspoň na jeden den někde zaplatit nocleh se snídaní. A co si počne s tím psem? Slyšela Normanovo pochrupování a ponuře si pomyslela, že by si pěkně dala, kdyby to zadní sedadlo teď musela luxovat.

"Je půl desáté," ozval se do ticha hlas pana Nichollse.

Jes s nehybně ležela.

"Půl. Desáté." Zhluboka si povzdechl. "Nikdy mě nenapadlo, že něco takového řeknu, ale tohle je snad ještě horší než manželství."

"Jak to, moc funím?"

Prudce otevřel dveře. "Prokristapána," zaúpěl a vyrazil přes parkoviště.

Jess se vztyčila na sedadle a dívala se, jak běží přes silnici do večerky. Zmizel v prostoru osvětleném zářivkami a za pár minut se zase objevil s lahví vína a balením plastových kelímků.

"Nejspíš nebude k pití," podotkl, když si opět sedl za volant.

"Ale v tuhle chvíli je mi to srdečně jedno."

Zírala na lahev.

"Příměří, paní Thomasová? Byl to dlouhý den. A celý týden stál za houby. A i když je v tomhle autě spousta místa, nestačí pro dva lidi, kteří spolu nemluví."

Pohlédl na ni. Měl unavené oči a na bradě mu začínalo rašit strniště. Vypadal zvláštně zranitelně.

Vzala si od něj kelímek. "Omlouvám se. Nejsem zvyklá, že nám někdo pomáhá. Vyvolává to ve mně..."

"Podezření? Rozmrzelost?"

"Chtěla jsem říct, že to ve mně vyvolává pocit, že bych měla víc chodit mezi lidi."

Oddychl si. Jasně." Podíval se na lahev. "Tak tedy... ále, do háje!"

"Co je?"

"Já myslel, že má šroubovací uzávěr." Zíral na lahev, jako by to byla další věc, kvůli které se musí rozčilovat. "Super. Předpokládám, že nemáte vývrtku?"

"Ne."

"Myslíte, že mi ji v krámě vymění?"

"Vzal jste si účtenku?"

Jess přerušila jeho hluboký povzdech. "Není třeba," řekla a vzala mu lahev z ruky. Otevřela dveře a vystoupila. Norman prudce zvedl hlavu. "Nechystáte se mi s ní třísknout o přední sklo?"

"Ne." Odloupla záklopku. "Zujte si botu."

"Cože?"

"Zujte si botu. S žabkami to nepůjde."

"Prosím vás, nepoužívejte ji místo skleničky. Moje bývalá to jednou udělala s lodičkou na jehle a bylo fakticky těžké předstírat, že pít šampaňské, které smrdí jako nohy, je erotický zážitek."

Vztáhla ruku. Konečně si sundal botu. Díval se, jak do ní Jess vložila spodní část lahve, opatrně uchopila obojí do ruky, postavila se ke zdi hotelu a udeřila o ni lahví v botě.

"Předpokládám, že nemá smysl se vás ptát, co děláte."

"Ještě momentík," utrousila skrze zaťaté zuby a znovu začala bušit lahví o zeď.

Pan Nicholls pomalu zakroutil hlavou.

Napřímila se a zpražila ho pohledem. "Klidně si račte ten špunt vycucnout, jestli vám to vyhovuje líp."

Zvedl ruku. "Ale ne, kdepak. Jen pokračujte. Střepy v ponožkách, přesně tak jsem chtěl dneska večer dopadnout."

Jess zkontrolovala zátku a znovu udeřila lahví s botou o zeď. A vida – z hrdla už čouhal centimetr špuntu. Buch. Další cenťák. Opatrně víno uchopila, ještě jednou bouchla – a bylo to: zbytek zátky jemně vytáhla z hrdla a podala mu otevřenou lahev.

Pohlédl na lahev, potom na ni. Vrátila mu botu.

"Ty jo. Známost s vámi se vážně vyplatí."

"Taky umím namontovat poličky, vyměňovat shnilá prkna v podlaze a vyrobit klínový řemen z punčochy."

"Fakt?"

"Ten klínový řemen ne." Nasedla do auta a vzala si od něj plastový pohárek s vínem.

"Jednou jsem to zkoušela. Roztrhal se, sotva jsme ujeli pár metrů. Naprosto zbytečně zničené neprůhledné punčochy od Markse a Spencera." Napila se. "A v autě to pak celé týdny smrdělo po spálených silonkách."

Norman za nimi zakňoural ze spaní.

"Mír," řekl pan Nicholls a pozvedl kelímek.

"Mír. Nebudete potom řídit, viďte?" Taky pozvedla kelímek.

"Nebudu, pokud nebudete vy."

"Chacha, moc vtipné."

Najednou byl večer trochu snesitelnější.