

MORIYAN

J E R E M Y P E T R O





***Moriyan** is a novel about a man whose life we follow through his missives - wondrous letters that arrive at a small town, settled in a beautiful valley, where they are received with joy and excitement. This town is transformed into a theatre where the citizens become the audience, Moriyan is the invisible actor, his letters are the dark stage, and his words are the tools that create pictures, acts, and thoughts for the audience...*

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AS IF THE END IS NEAR

I had my fill of travelling across the world. I saw miracles and wonders. And it seems I had enough of it all. I am desirous of peace and quiet, a common fire and dirty boots after hunting, washing dishes, and boring books. I would like to stop, settle down at some nook. But I haven't found what I'm looking for.

It is all in vain to be surrounded by peace when you don't have peace within you. It is all in vain to get warm by a tempestuous fire when you are cold inside. You may sing rejoicingly, but sooner or later a song will start crying. You may tell jokes, but laughing will suddenly stop.

There's no peace or meaning until you find what your heart needs, what feeds your mind, inspires your soul.

And then autumn came. It came down impetuously somehow that year, hard, with moaning winds and downpours from mountains. The old citizens claimed that the winter would be severe, but nobody heard a reason for their conviction. Old people always spoke the truth with no need for a reason, everyone believed.

Days became colder and colder and people became more and more lethargic. They spent very little time outdoors. Fires were lit in small fireplaces, gathered products were consumed, stories were told. Even funerals were delayed to other times. No one wanted to die that autumn. Nights were tumultuous and gruesome. Winds lifted the lifeless trees and rearranged them around the town walls. A local river deserted its riverbed, leaving pictorial traces on its banks. Rain drummed on lead

roofs, creating rhythms against heart beats. Animals were very nervous and they didn't let anyone cuddle them. Night watchmen on the town wall were the only moving shadows. Due to that strange atmosphere that had supremacy over the air, the entire town would sleep, as if it didn't want to know what was happening around it. They didn't have any better solutions.

And then this all had to stop. Although it was a time of a full moon, absolute darkness reigned outside. The watchmen almost fell from the walls because they couldn't see the stone path, and thus hid in their watchtowers until dawn. Wind was blowing and pummeling the town walls so strongly, that everyone thought that town would be ripped out with its foundations. The river was raging in its bed like a chained starving lion which sees its prey. A strong rain transformed into ice. Tin tiles hardly bore the strikes of the icebound rain. This lasted for several long nights. No one slept. People gathered in homes, trying to drive away ghastly anticipations by telling stories, breaking off talk while straining their ears and guessing what was happening outside.

And then, after the fifth night, in the woods beneath the mountain strange sounds began to reverberate. Sharp screeches of metal, knocking of wood striking wood, smashing of stone. They were so loud that they reached the town, jumping over the walls and squeezing through fissures and openings. Children were cowering to their parents, wives to their husbands, and all together to the fireplaces, hoping that fire would chase away the coldness, which arose from fear. After two nights the sounds stopped. Only to return again three days later, now stronger and louder. And with an addition. Growling, roaring and screaming, crashing and ripping all mixed with the previous sounds. Citizens thought that the end of their small world had come. Along with all that, human voices came as well. At first quietly,

and then more and more strongly came human voices of various colours and tonalities, intonations and lengths, as if somewhere beyond the mountain unknown powerful armies clashed with their beasts and arms. Then voices evolved into moanings, cries and calls. As if wounds were crying for help. Eventually, the citizens could stand it no longer. They organized a meeting and elected a few brave men to go out during the day with lamps and whatever arms they had, to investigate the territory from where the sounds were coming. That's how it happened. After the first day they returned empty handed. After the second day it was the same. So it was after the third. But on the fourth day, they returned with a little sack filled with lion hair. They were all perplexed because there were no lions in their region. When they examined every hair closely, they found tiny drops of blood on some of them. Lion's blood.

The quest continued.

This time, only after the fifth day, they returned with a trace; a little piece of lynx tail. And a miracle again, for in their region there were no lynx. They examined the tail and once again found drops of blood. Lynx blood.

The quest continued again.

In vain, for five days, they searched the surrounding area part by part, and even expanded the territory to the base of the mountain, because they had found nothing. And then, on the sixth day, in a pit more than five meters deep, they discovered a large bear claw. In their region, bears were small, black and so peace-loving that they were walking the town square freely. Not in any of the town writings, that were at least hundreds of years

old, did they come upon a case where any of those little bears had ever gone mad and attacked anyone.

And they found blood again. But this time, next to bear blood, they found human, too. One drop of human blood.

The whole town erupted. Everybody was stirred up in their hearts. As fast as they could, they started counting themselves. All of them were there. Except the old field keeper. They searched everywhere, but there was no sign of him. The search lasted the whole day, to finally find him at dusk in one of the public house wine barrels, comatose from alcohol. Scared of all the events, he drank the entire barrel and fell into a coma. They carried him out of the barrel and took him to a room. When the alcohol dissipates, he will return to the world of the living, everyone agreed. They didn't have time for anything else, except for the events in the local woods. Some anxious and some encouraged with the finding of human blood, began to consider that perhaps they should silently and imperceptibly sneak up at night to the place where the sounds were coming from and see what was taking place. Further, if that were to be done with a bigger group of volunteers, it would be far safer. The idea was reasonable, but they couldn't find any volunteers, so it was abandoned. It was decided to continue with their already constricted searches.

All working days passed but the quest was futile, they always returned with empty hands. Being accustomed to look only for specific things, the local trails didn't draw their attention. They already began to lose hope and to think that all this was going to be another half-finished story, when the old cleaner of the temple asked them to go out on the seventh day as well. The old man seemed to have a premonition. And he was

right. On the seventh day they found the trails. This time, the most courageous men came back with two feathers, one black like the most bloodthirsty thought, and the other white like the song of a girl before the wedding. But it was not known to anybody from which bird or birds the feathers came. They had never seen such shapes, such structures, such veins, such colour. The feathers not only differed in colour, but freshness, too. The black one was ragged and aged, and the white one was strong and healthy. They didn't know what to think.

The searches continued, but they found nothing more except those two feathers, the black one like the most bloodthirsty thought, and the white one like the song of a girl before the wedding. Until one day shortly before the end of autumn, in the middle of the day a young man, from who knows where, knocked on the door of the town gate. Hospitable townsmen immediately let him in, especially because of the prevailing situation in the town.

From his looks, he appeared to be a man of twenty-five, simply dressed, common stature, with a calm and quiet character. They took him into the main room of a town building and planted him near the fireplace to warm himself. And they surrounded him and started to pose queries. But the stranger didn't speak much, so they didn't find out much about him. Except that he was going around the world, searching for knowledge and meaning. He answered most questions by shrugging his shoulders. But he was very interested in listening. The only thing they could tell him was what had been happening to them during the last months. Nobody noticed how the eyes of the simple stranger flashed in a moment. He asked them to bring him everything they had collected. After a short hesitation and doubt, they did as he asked.



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