

Yvonne Beetz

**Future never
returns**

„When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.“

from „SONNET 55“
„SHAKES-PEARES SONNETS. Neuer before Imprinted“,
London 1609

William Shakespeare
(1564 - 1616)
English poet, playwright and actor

Ljubljana/Slowenien: 27th June 1991, 3 pm

The analysts reported nothing good.

The Supreme Commander of the scattered Yugoslav People`s Army, the JNA, tried to keep the remnants together, and thought in no way that their messages encrypted.

Wanted to send their troops by helicopter to Ljubljana.

Planned landing at the airport in an hour.

Time is running.

In their boundless arrogance, they did not believe that the Slovenes were a handsome force. Should they be surprised.

We prepared ourselves.

With nine other soldiers he was ordered to arrive at Ljubljana airport in no time with rocket launcher.

As he stepped out of the barrack, the brightness hit him like a nuclear flash and he stopped.

A combat injury to his left hand prevented him from using his thumb and forefinger to grab. Cumbersome, he fished his sunglasses out of his breast pocket and put them on.

Ignoring that his comrades had followed him and were waiting for him.

A dusty tarp truck stopped in front of them and they got in.

The bullet holes testified to their use in combat operations against the JNA. The rust of decay.

The bazookas ready under the seats. Everyone faded out that through the loose attachment they were sitting on a powder keg that could go up in the air at any moment.

Crunching the tires began to spin and the drive through his hometown began. Electric cables grind slack on the footpath.

No dog, no cat, no people to see.

In the back of the truck they were penned on two benches, like the smoked fics in his father's hut. Sweat mixed with dust. In front he heard the radio crack and a distorted voice barked an order. The driver took the last out of the scrap wagon and accelerated. Every paving stone and every pothole they felt hundreds of times in the swings of the car. He closed his eyes behind his black glasses. Would he fight for the last time today? For a moment he thought of his family and thought goodbye to them.

He did not allow more.

He had a job.

For the freedom.

And if that meant fighting with blood.

Apparently there was no time to lose. The landing of the JNA troops was imminent.

A violent jolt and our shoulders collide.

"Don't lose time," he shouted. "Grab a bazooka and get on your battlefields."

Each of his tasks was highly concentrated.

"Come on. Come on. Come on", he urged they.

Last he jumped onto the airfield.

Damn it.

There was another plane of the Adria Airways to see. The engines started and the pilot drove towards runway. The entire fleet had long since been relocated to Austria. He would have liked to hurry.

No civilian victims. That was the goal. But if the pilot did not manage to take off soon, he would be one of the victims that helped save many.

Tanks rolled up.

While he coordinated their locations over the walky talky, he runs to the tower, which was now occupied by military air traffic controllers.

He released the walky talky from his belt.

Change to channel two.

"Are in position," he reported.

"Major, understood. Give another warning to Zagreb."

"Understood."

At last.

The plane took off and disappeared in the clouds.

Now they had free field of fire.

Not two minutes later.

"Major. Report all military helicopters in sight."

"Understood."

The sun was shimmering over the asphalt.

The tower was unbearably hot, because the air conditioning failed.

He exchanged his glasses for a binocular and searched the sky for intruders. In front of the snow-covered mountains of the Karst, two black flies moved towards them at high speed.

Channel One: "They are coming. Stand by. "

Channel Two: "Two helicopters approaching."

"Major, execute orders."

"Understood. Over and out."

He did not put away the binoculars for a second. They came closer, but were still too far above the city. Avoid population losses. Weapons were guaranteed on board. That would make a powerful explosion. Why only her airport was where close to civilian buildings? There had been no time for evacuations.

Nevertheless, he did not want to take any chances.

Channel One: "Stand by."

The nose of the first helicopter pushed over the security fence.

Then he gave the crushing command: "Fire."

The ammunition hissed high in the air and missed no target.

Two fireballs tore their enemies for freedom beyond recognition.

Nobody could survive this attack.

They had warned they.

They had not wanted to hear.

Pressure waves hit the glass and, like death, splintered it into life during the war.

Breaknecken/USA: 8th February 2016, 11.45 pm

Benett sank weakly to the top step in the foyer of the Lagrange Palace. He did not understand.

What happened here?

And was that just a hallucination or the reality?

Completely confused, he had staggered out of the room and gone down in a trance. His brother had just died a second time. Desperate, he clapped both hands in front of his face and was grateful for the blackness surrounding him.

Ljubljana/Slovenien: 4th July 1991, 11 am

The war was over. Bennett was finally home. Exhausted, he got out of the train. His hair turns gray within a week like his father's.

The summer heat kept Slovenia under control.

His parents had moved to the country with his fifteen year old sister to the grandparents.

Everything was the same in the village. The war had spared her. The wind blew over the front gardens with pink roses and purple summer lilac.

Squeaking, Bennett opened the wooden garden gate and at the same moment the front door opened and his mother stood in the entrance, tears in her eyes.

Startled, he dropped his duffel bag: "What happened?"

"Vlado ...", she sobbed. "But it's good to see you."

"What about Vlado?"

"He died in a helicopter mission in Ljubljana."

"But there were no victims of the Slovenian army."

Again she shook and sobbed, "He didn't dare to overflow and was still with JNA."

"No."

Bennett shook his head. He had lost his younger brother forever.

Breaknecken/USA: 8th February 2016, 11.55 pm

It was a cold February day. The year just seemed to have begun, at least it seemed to Benett Mikosz. He shivered as he walked with his colleague Josua Lembogo through the huge revolving door of the hotel building, past a few people of the forensics he knew only fleetingly.

He willingly let it happen that Joshua held him like a small child on the sleeve of his coat and pulled behind him. He put him in the Honda Prelude.

Both were not capable of words.

At home Benett was glad to be able to take Daria in his arms.

Then he cried unrestrained on her shoulder.

He noticed her helplessness.

But he did not care.

Breaknecken/USA: 8th February 2016, 9 pm

It was already late evening when he got the call from Joshua. Urgent.

Each time he felt that intoxicating feeling of fear and curiosity when he was assigned a new case. Even years of routine had not been able to put it off. As was his way, Benett had first kissed his wife Daria, then went to the kitchen to pack a bag of Extra Strong Bacon. No case could be solved hungry. He remembered his first years as an agent first at the State Police, then at the FBI as he walked down the stairs, and how easily everything had fallen to him then. But for a few years now, his job has increased more and more. Above all, the immediate wake-up and getting up was difficult.

At the bottom, Joshua was waiting for him, his right hand in his trouser pocket, his left hand casually using his smartphone.

He looked up, smiled crooked, and got into the car. Benett walked around the Honda Prelude and sat in the passenger seat.

"Lagrange Palace, a hotel opposite the Plaza. A chambermaid found a dead man, the call came in at eight o'clock in the police station."

Cleverly, Joshua threaded the car into the left lane of the city ring and in the wake of the evening traffic they drove towards the city center. Bennett pulled the bag of bacon out of his inside pocket, opened it and offered it to Joshua, knowing that he would refuse. Still, he did it again and again, a ritual, a quirk. Benett sighed, took a strip of bacon from the bag and stuck it in his mouth.

Joshua did not speak, Bennett took it chewing.

After a quarter of an hour, they turned into the sprawling apron at the main entrance to the Lagrange Palace and stopped behind three emergency vehicles that turned their blue flashing lights into a spooky beauty.

The hotel was built in the '80s, a typical case of architectural arrogance, big and ugly. The ravages of time did the rest, reinforcing his impression of evil with the soiled walls.

Joshua beckoned to a middle-aged man and introduced him to Bennett. "Mr. Wandheim, this is Special Agent Mikosz, our lead investigator."

"Nice ti meet you. I'm the hotel manager."

Bennett shook hands with Wandheim.

"The room is on the fourth floor, follow me please."

They headed for the lifts and Mr. Wandheim pressed the elevator button.

"Did you already identify the dead person and when did he check in with you?"

Mr. Wandheim wanted to say something, but Joshua interrupted him: "Bennett, this case is different, unlike anything we've ever experienced."

Joshua spoke forcefully in a tone he had never heard of him. Bennett stopped and looked inquiringly at Joshua. He said nothing, his expression was helpless.

Mr. Wandheim did not seem to be there anymore, staring at one point of the dove-blue carpet.

The elevator stopped and Bennett was the first to step into the hallway.

This was weaker than lit as the lobby and it took a few seconds to get used to the dusk. The passage was about

twenty meters to the right and left, no windows at the end. The walls are wallpapered, but everything looks neglected, as if it had not been renovated in forty years.

"We're still in the Lagrange Palace?" Benett turned to Joshua and Mr. Wandheim.

"Yes, Mr. Mikosz, there are a few things to say," Mr. Wandheim began.

Benett glanced at Joshua, who nodded imperceptibly.

"Mr. Mikosz, the top three floors of the Lagrange Palace have not belonged to the hotel since 1998, they were sold. In the course of this, the hotel rooms have since been used as a kind of residential apartments. Nevertheless, we provide the entire service that accrues."

"How does that work?"

"Individual agreements are made with the tenants about the nature of the service," Mr. Wandheim replied.

"For example, how often the cleaning service should come."

Now Joshua continued the explanation: "There was only one regulation with the apartment in question. The room should be cleaned today, exactly on February 8, 2016 at 22 clock."

"And before that, no one ever entered this room from hotel services?" Benett asked, looking at Mr. Wandheim.

"No, that was not the agreement."

"Where is the maid who found the dead?" Benett asked.

"Her name is Emma Paulson, she is in shock and is looked after below", Josua replied.

"Good, I'll talk to her later."

Joshua nodded.

"If there was an agreement, then we know who lived in there", Benett suggested.

"No, that's the point," answered Joshua. "The agreement was handed over to the hotel from a discount in year twothausendone. No one ever officially moved in."

"And now there's our dead body?" He pointed his finger at the closed door.

Without a word, Mr. Wandheim pulled a waistband from his jacket pocket, searched for a specific key, and put it in the security lock.

"The forensics was already on it?", asked Bennett to Joshua for safety's sake.

Joshua nodded again.

Mr. Wandheim turned the key twice to the left. "Do you want ...?", he asks uncertainly.

Bennett smiled briefly and rummaged in his inside pocket for a pair of thin brand Roeckl leather gloves, which he had acquired long ago for the purpose of criminal investigation at a congress in Brussels. Shortly after quitting service to the Slovenian Army in the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars of the nineties, he decided to leave Europe for good.

At the State Police, he was picked up with a kissing hand and sent just for training at EuroPol back to the continent, which he had never wanted to see again.

For as far as the attitude of the politicians in the Kosovo crisis was concerned, he always felt an impotent rage at their acceptance and idleness.

These gloves should always remind him.

He first had to cumbersome pull out his wallet, took this in his left hand, took hold of the inside pocket again and got hold of the two gloves. He changed his purse and gloves neatly in his hands and put the former back in his coat.

Due to this enforced delay, the hotel manager seemed more insecure than a moment ago and took a step back to make room for Bennett.

He deliberately pulled both gloves over his hands, took a deep breath, concentrated and pushed the door handle down.

He was holding his breath. Like the lid of a centuries-old crypt slowly open from him. In the hotelroom in which he now put his right foot first, the molecules of the air seemed to be in a materialized state. Dry was not the right word, vacuum seemed to him more apt term.

He now fully opened the door and entered the room. At first he hesitated, realizing that neither Mr. Wandheim nor Joshua were following him into the room. He looked around.

"I think you should take a look yourself," he answered his colleague.

Bennett realized now that on a small table a lamp scattered a scant light into the room. His eyes slowly adjusted to the half-gray of the surroundings and now he perceived the first details. All surfaces were evenly coated with a velvet, gray dust cover. Nothing moved, everything seemed frozen and stopped in time. In a brief, strange approach, Bennett passed through the long-worn memories of light snowfall in his grandparents' village, as a little boy on a pre-Christmas night. Peace and quiet. He had learned in his life as an agent not to ignore the first feeling at a crime scene.

His eyes captured every detail.

The forensics had done a great job, it was not obvious even for him as an expert at first glance, that previously someone in this room had already done extensive research.

Only the prints of a dainty lady's slipper were to be seen, which had to come from the maid. The room measured about twenty square meters, a window front, curtains drawn. On the right a narrow door, probably to the bathroom. In the middle of it an old wing chair facing backwards, to the left of it the small table with the lamp. The inventory was clearly not from this millennium, the tapered wooden legs on table and chair, he attributed to the fifties of the last century. He kept looking around but could not find a sofa or a bed. Instead, stood between the window and chair a completely dried Christmas tree.

He could not see the dead body from this first perspective anywhere. He walked to the window and realized that the Christmas tree was fully decorated. In a European style, not American. Christmas decorations made of wood and straw - completely untypical according to the standards of the New World. He paused, thinking for a moment. Slightly disappointed with himself, he internalized the crime scene feeling of a few moments ago.

Perhaps he had unconsciously been the first to notice the tree and therefore remembered his childhood. He sighed softly and set in motion a gray-woven straw star by the resulting gentle breeze.

He took another step forward and turned to the front of the chair. He saw a completely mummified man.

The mummification seemed to preserve the smallest details of the expression forever.

He had not been able to see it from the door, but now he saw an envelope under the lamp.

On it stood his full name.