

VIE D'EUROPA

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SMALL CHOICES, ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES

A glass bottle ended up meaning more than expected. Winter light filled the room when I came across it, pulling things from a forgotten space at my grandparents' place. Hidden far back in a drawer, tucked beneath papers and broken bits, it sat waiting. Mold clung heavily to the top, dulling the seal. To look at it then? Just another grimy object, plain, unimpressive, hardly worth holding. Odd how one small touch brought such cold. Something under the surface stirred, uneasy. The glass held more than reflection - more than welcome. A wrongness sat there, quiet but clear.

Maybe I should've just walked away. Still, that wasn't what happened. Out came the object, wiped down slowly, then pried open, screwdriver doing the work. A letdown crept in. Was I hoping for sparks? Flames? Some shrieking thing bursting out? Not really. Foolish - yes, I saw it then. But from the bottle emerged something entirely different than expected. It had no shape, and that made it even more unsettling. Every word felt as if it was meant only for me. It knew my secrets, my fears, and my weaknesses. It knew about the anger I kept inside, the words I never said, the desires I believed were wrong. The devil spoke of happiness and freedom. It said that if I let it disappear completely, I would not have to pretend anymore. To live, it said, meant stopping hiding who I truly was.

The bottle stayed on the table, perfectly still, but it was no longer just an object. It felt like a doorway. I tried to walk away and tell myself it was all in my head, tiredness, imagination, too much dust in the air. But as I went downstairs, the voice returned, silent and clear, like a thought that was not my own.

It told me to look around. My grandparents' house had always felt safe, full of quiet moments and familiar memories. But for the first time, I realized I did not really belong there. I smiled when I was expected to smile. I stayed quiet when I wanted to scream. I played a role I had never truly chosen.

The voice did not judge me. It only named things, one by one, as if saying them made them real. For days, I tried to ignore it, but every time I was about to fall asleep, it was there. Every time I looked down, it was there. It didn't command, it suggested, and slowly, I began listening. The next day, I decided to go out for a walk. The winter morning air was cold and pungent. I met an old man on a street intersection, he waved at me with such enthusiasm. He stopped to talk to me and started telling me about his success, goals and a lot more. He spoke with so much pride and satisfaction, like he wanted to impress me. While I was listening to him in silence, at that moment I felt something annoying me, the voice came back, it whispered "It bothers you, doesn't it?" I flinched, but I acted as if nothing happened, but I tried to hide it, as a matter of fact it did bother me a little bit. Not for what the old man said, but more of how he said it, he was bragging about it too much and that was what was bothering me, he described himself as if he was a knight in shining armor.

"It bothers you, doesn't it?" The voice repeats in a calm tone.

"It's not what he says, but the way he says it with a superior tone."

The wind was blowing my skin.

"It isn't true." I thought.

"It is, you're feeling useless and little, you hate feeling like this."

The old man let out a laugh at his own joke and returned to talk about himself.

"You could interrupt him." The voice suggests

"Tell him that you aren't interested, tell him that you don't want to listen to his autobiography."

It was a foolish thing, and yet I still didn't have the courage to do that.

"Am I bothering you?" The old man asks.

I hesitated before saying: "Yes, you did nothing other than talking about yourself as if you were 'Martin Luther King,' that fought for equality and for human rights."

The old man remained motionless and then walked away, head looking at the ground. I felt a bit bad, but at the same time I didn't, and it was kinda eerie.

"See?" The voice whispered. "Nothing happened, you just said what you were thinking." I remained still for some seconds. The wind was going through my jacket, but it wasn't so cold that it could make me shiver.

I never talked to someone I didn't know like this, and without any motive, yet...

Nothing bad happened, so I kept walking.

"You feel lighter than before, right?" The voice added.

I didn't want to admit it, but a part of me really did feel lighter. As if I removed a weight from my back, as if for the first time I wouldn't need to fake kindness.

That same night, at dinner, everything seemed far away. My grandparents were talking like always, but I felt totally out of place, it didn't feel real, I felt like I was somebody new, someone that I didn't know.

My grandpa asked me to pass him the bread but when I was about to say yes, the voice whispered behind me, "Don't do it... why should you, after being treated like a stranger?"

I froze, spoon mid-air. The voice returned, calm: "Don't give him the bread... let it fall. Watch what happens when you choose yourself." A moment of hesitation, and then I let it slip. The bread hit the floor with a dull thud. My grandfather looked surprised, confused, and gave me a questioning glance. He said nothing, but I felt the weight of his gaze like a judgment.

The voice inside me smiled: "See? You can choose. No one stops you. It's just a small taste... but the flavor of control is yours."

I looked down at the bread on the floor. For a moment, I thought about picking it up and apologizing. It would have been easy, everything could have gone back to how it was.

But I stayed still.

My grandmother stood up with a tired sigh and went to get another piece of bread. She said nothing, and that silence was worse than any scolding.

"See? They don't react because they always expect you to be the good one, the polite one, the one who always does what they ask. But you're not obliged." I felt something shift inside me. It wasn't anger, satisfaction, or regret. It was like lifting a weight, a brick from the wall I had built over the years.

For the rest of the evening, my grandfather avoided my gaze, spoke less, and occasionally coughed as if to fill the silence on purpose.

Just one gesture could ruin an evening. One piece of bread dropped. One word spoken at the wrong time.

After that silent dinner, I stepped outside to get some air. The night was cold and cloudy, not a star in the sky. The windows of my house were lit but seemed distant, as if they didn't belong to me.

"Do you feel guilty?" the voice whispered.

"Maybe a little..." I thought.

"It's just a habit. They taught you that. But you didn't do anything wrong; you just made a choice," it replied. I walked down the driveway, feeling the gravel crunch under my shoes. Each step took me farther from the house. Every time, the voice suggested, but it never shouted, never imposed. It was patient, certain. "See how easy it is? One small gesture can flip the roles. You can choose whether to be the one who suffers or the one who decides."

I stopped under a streetlamp in front of a gate. The yellow light cut my face in half, leaving the other part in shadow.

At one point, the voice whispered, "This is just the beginning..."

At that moment, my stomach tightened. I didn't know how far it would push me, but part of me didn't want to retreat. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. It was too late; it was already taking control.

I stayed still under the streetlamp, the light burning one eye, the shadow seeming to devour the other. The voice crept into every thought, suggesting ideas, small choices, actions I had never considered.

In the following days, the voice continued to guide me. At first, it was small things: ignoring someone, taking things that weren't mine, subtle manipulations. Every act seemed harmless, but slowly it revealed how powerful the control it had over me was.

Time passed, and the suggestions grew bolder, the line between me and the voice thinning. It was no longer just an external voice: it was inside me, a presence I could not ignore, a constant influence. Every choice, every thought, every breath seemed dictated by that will. And then came the moment when the voice guided me to something irreversible. It wasn't anger or personal hatred, but a cold, precise impulse.

"Do it," it whispered, calm and irresistible. "See what happens when you truly choose." Terror and curiosity twisted in my stomach. I no longer knew if I was deciding: I was half myself, half the voice. That night, I realized I would never go back. The voice was no longer just in my head. It had become part of me. The darkness around me amplified every thought, every sensation. The empty streets were silent, broken only by my steps and the quick beat of my heart. Each streetlamp cast long, distorted shadows, as if the world itself bent to the voice's will.

"Do not hesitate," it whispered, warm and slow. "Every hesitation is weakness. Feel the power flow within you. Every fear can become strength." I moved forward without fully understanding why. The voice convinced me that obstacles were symbols, remnants of all I had endured without reacting.

"Look at your hands," it continued. "They can do what you want. No one controls you, only this voice... and now it's yours."

I made the gesture without thinking. Fear and exhilaration rushed over me: i no longer knew who was in control, me or the voice. I couldn't feel instincts nor mortality. And when it was over, when the world went quiet, a disturbing calm washed over me. The voice despite not saying anything, i knew it was still there, in the back of my head, always watching my every move. It was ready to guide me again, i knew that i would never go back. Every action, every thought, every breath that followed would be filtered by that presence. That voice was no longer just an echo, it was me, and i was the voice.

My hands were covered in blood, yet i felt a strange satisfaction in me, and deep down in my heart, i know there was no going back and that i had no

longer control, the voice has already taken over me, at least that's what I thought.

Inside me there was only silence, not an empty silence but a silence of satisfaction.

"see?" the voice whispered. "it was that simple."

I didn't answer, not because I didn't want to, but because I no longer felt the need. There was no distance between me and it anymore. The words it spoke didn't come from outside; they were born in my chest before I could even recognize them as sounds. I looked around. The shadows of the streetlights stretched across the asphalt like thin arms. The world had not changed. No thunder, no sign in the sky. Just me, just us.

I walked home without hurry. Every step felt light—too light. I expected panic, nausea, remorse. Instead, I felt a dense calm, almost sweet. I opened the door. My grandparents' house slept in silence. I went upstairs and, without thinking, entered the unused room. The bottle was there, on the table, intact, the cork in place. I moved closer slowly. The glass was clean. There was no more mold. No more dust. And on the neck of the bottle, the note was still attached.

"WARNING: DO NOT OPEN."

I stared at it for a long time. Then something cracked inside me. A thin thought. I opened it. I remembered the cork between my fingers, the faint sound of glass, the air escaping. Yet the bottle was closed. My hands began to tremble.

"It doesn't matter," said the voice. But it no longer came from a precise point. It was everywhere. "It was never the bottle."

My reflection appeared in the glass. Distorted. Dark. For a moment, it seemed to me that my face moved with a slight delay, as if we were not perfectly synchronized.

"I never controlled you," it continued. "I only said what you were thinking. I only removed the filter."

I stepped back. I remembered the old man at the crossroads. The bread left to fall. My grandfather's gaze. Every small gesture I had called a 'choice.' It wasn't freedom. It was the absence of restraint.

"You wanted me," the voice whispered. It was no longer calm. No longer seductive. It was flat. Natural. "I am the part you hid for years."

The glass of the bottle cracked with a sharp sound. A thin fissure spread across the surface like a spiderweb.

"You can't put me back inside," it said.

And in that moment I understood: the bottle had never contained anything. It was a limit. A symbol. An excuse.

I had been the one holding it shut. The cracks multiplied until the glass gave way. It didn't explode violently. It crumbled slowly, piece by piece, falling onto the table like bright dust.

Only the note remained. I picked it up and saw that the words had changed. It no longer said: "DO NOT OPEN."

It said: "WARNING: ONCE OPENED, THERE IS NO TURNING BACK."

The voice no longer spoke, because it didn't need to. I went downstairs. I stopped in front of the mirror in the hallway. I observed myself for a long time. I no longer saw shadow and light dividing my face. There was only a new expression—steady, aware.

I was not possessed.

I had not been deceived.

I had simply stopped pretending. And in the silence that followed, I understood the most unsettling truth of all: the voice had never entered me.

It had always been there.

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