



Source: David Charter, 'Bleak review sends Ankara sliding down EU order', *The Times in The Australian online*, 17/10/06.

Tags: [violence](#), [child/parent](#), [corporeality](#), [intimacy](#), [discomfort](#)

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The car travelled for at least three hours. It stopped twice. There was a smell of cigarette smoke and sour sweat. The men in the coats must not have changed very often, he thought. He lost all sense of direction. He lost all sense of himself. They had handcuffed him once they had got inside the car. The blindfold cut into his skin. When he breathed his right side hurt, a sharp pain, then a cramp. They spoke occasionally, rough voices, perfunctory speech. They spoke to him only once.

'Well, Doctor Professor, how is it now, eh? What do you think of your plans now, eh?' Then a pause. Then 'Don't worry, your girlfriend won't miss you.'

The car bumped along. Then stopped immediately to the side of the road. A door opened. The smell of dung hit his nostrils. Then the sound of a man pissing. The smell. He wanted to go. This was it, this was the lowest, he thought, if he wet himself inside this car. He held on until he felt sick. How far can a man sink away from himself, he wondered, what was he a few hours ago and what is he now? His body was betraying him. His mind wandered. Unconnected thoughts, his mother's hands kneading dough, the side of the hill above Goritsa, where he had played as a boy, the large black and white squares on the marble floor of Sofia University, the flight of the pigeons above the rooftops, and his daughter—her face, no, her eyes—when she had cursed him, when she had said, weeping, 'damn you I never want to see you again'. Only the eyes: brown and big and open and the heart, broken. The brightest eyes in the world.

And then dark again. The weight of his body in the back of that car was unbearable. He hadn't moved in three hours. In which field were they going to drag him out and shoot him? Would they make him sign something first? Would they beat him again? Would they kick him? In the head? In the back? In the ribs? In the groin? Is this what it had come to?

The sound of the car was as ugly as the smell of their bodies. So this is what they have been doing, he thought. This is what we have heard about in snippets. This is what has been whispered about in corridors. It is strange to learn things, to learn what they had been fighting for, to watch history unfold and to suddenly find yourself in the centre of it, unseen by anyone. All that time, it was coming closer, with every event and every wrong comment he had made, every case he had taken without thinking it through, this had been approaching. All that time, every time we spoke, met, thought we could still move freely, they were coming closer to us. He thought of Lorca, and Vaptsarov, Vaptsarov's face in that final photograph, where the fascists had lined him up and

photographed him before shooting him at dawn. That's what we did, only I didn't know about it, and that's what they are doing to me now, and now finally I know. Finally I know. A moment of the most poignant grief hit him right there and then. It rose up in his chest, and again his daughter's eyes, and then the tears came. And he couldn't hold them back: through the blindfold as it cut into his face, wet and hot and dirty and uncontrolled. This was not meant to be; this was not the way history was meant to unfold; this is not the justice we wanted; this is not the people's society; this is not the new order; this is not, is not is not.

'Eh, professor, easy'. The gruff voice of the driver. Then a little laugh from in front. His chest heaved in hiccups, and a cough came up. Then the sight of his professor's face, saying 'international legal entity must be considered in these circumstances except in article 6'; then the memory of the sound of water rushing past in the gully below Goritsa; then the smell of cooking; then just the pain of his ribs again.

And what would she find when she went up the stairs of the apartment building, and through the door? She would push it lightly, she would be afraid, he would not be there to comfort her, she would tip toe down, she would not want to be seen by the neighbours, they knew his wife, they knew about him, they gave him sidelong looks. She would breathe in small grabs, the tears would well up, she would walk into his office, where they met, where they spoke hot quick loving stolen words, where they comforted one another. She would walk into his office, she would see the shambles they had made, she would put two and two together, she would know she would never see him again. Would she know? Would it be true? Would there be an ever again? She would pick up the piece of paper, the letter he had held just before they had smashed the door down. Her fine white fingers would hold the letter, her chest would break into sobs but she would be afraid to make a sound, she would turn, she would walk slowly to the window, she would drop the letter from between her fingers, the letter would leave her touch forever, the last thing he held. She would glance out the window, at the morning sun above the rooftops. What is forbidden? What is right? What is never?

She would look at the birds above the rooftops, and then she would leave.

The car stopped and he was lugged out. They had arrived.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Bagryana Popov.*