

Tower D

And when the dead came back, that's when things really got out of hand. The streets turned into god-knows-what, and the city stopped being itself. A big mess it was. In the towers it was quieter. Thankfully, they'd just been built— especially our, Tower D. It was the newest—and not many had died here yet. Except Jeremy. He fell out of a window last Christmas. I knew before the papers did, because I was there. Saw them pull him off the roof of a neighbor's car. Not much left of that Toyota. A grey SUV—a kind of asphalt-grey. I really liked it. I even went to his wake. I remember it vaguely. But I did sob a little when Jeremy's mom took the mic. They played his favorite song a few times on a karaoke machine.

The funeral—I don't remember whatsoever. Just the coffin. White, smooth, with gold handles. Probably the most expensive thing Jeremy ever owned.

At the wake, I mostly drank. I don't like their national food. Some kind of yellow rice—not even rice really, something rice-like but smaller and thinner. And it had bits of dried fruit in it. I picked at it out of politeness and thought: well, Jeremy's probably in hell by now. He wasn't a good man. Everyone in the courtyard of our towers knew that he occasionally battered his woman—not often, but still... Once I even saw him from my window, how he went for an old man that was walking his poodle. Never saw the old fellow before. He told Jeremy off about his cigarette butt. Said, - “Those bins aren't here for nothing. Maybe you didn't have any in Africa, but here, we don't toss butts in the grass. No lawns in Africa or what? So it don't mean you get to live like it's Africa here.” And Jeremy sent the old chap to sleep with one blow after these words.

And still, I was surprised when it turned out that Jeremy went to heaven. They explained it on Channel Five: only those who'd been in heaven came back. Because if the gates of hell had opened too—well, there wouldn't be any room left for the living. They didn't realize right away they'd have to bring them back in waves. By the evening of the second day, they settled on a rule: only those who'd died in the last five years. A kind of a test group. But from the start they had decided no one from hell would return.

Last Tuesday, we met. I'd had two cans of lager, went for a walk around the towers and rolled a cigarette. That's what I do now—what choice do I have? Have you seen the price of real cigarettes? Only ministers and bankers will be smoking them from now on.

So yeah—Tuesday. I finished my smoke, looked for a trash bin—I don't litter, I'm not from Africa, thank God. I was brought up right.

And suddenly—I see him. Standing there. Just like before he died. Tall. Clean-shaven. Bald. The accent hadn't gone anywhere. Everything about him was the same.

- Hey, - he said.
- That's not what they buried you in, - I said back.
- No, not tis, - he agrees.

I waited

- I don't know how it happened, - my neighbor said, sounding apologetic.
- Well... how are you? – I asked.
- Goot, I tink.

He used to talk this way. With a "T". Goot and tink and tis. Some african manner.

- Can I stay with you for two-tree days? Moma sold my apartment.
- Sure, I guess - I said reluctantly, and I didn't hide it.

And he stayed—all three days. If someone says "two-three," it'll be three. If it's "three-four," it will be four. This is always the case. Doesn't matter if they're ours or not, dead or alive—

no one passes up a benefit. Except fools, but they've been wiped out. These days, fools are all in the endangered species book.

On the third day, the real trouble started. A flood of people came from the other side, through devine gates. Whole crowds. And they started demanding their properties back. One door slammed, then another, and then a gunshot—and by midnight, cars were burning, tires too, highways blocked.

You could understand the living. Especially those who bought appartments from the heirs. They were the angriest. People were outraged—and with reason. I mean, resurrection's all good and jolly, but where's everyone supposed to live? You bring people back—fine! Some widow might even say “thanks”. But if you're going to bring them back, at least sort out the infrastructure, the jobs, and above all, the housing. Bring back their pensions and social insurance with them.

The north side of the city was first to ignite. Rich folks burn first—with their siamese cats and roses and green hedges. By dawn, the slums in the south were on fire too. There, guests were greeted more harshly. No time for dialogue there—every extra mouth is a threat.

By the morning of the fourth day, it got worse. The news broadcast cut out. The left-leaning folks had joined up with the returned dead and marched to the Ministry of internal affairs. The living ones chanted “Dead Lives Matter,” and the dead said nothing.

And to be fair—and I'll say it softly, but I'll say it—the dead often behaved more decently. The living mostly made demands; the dead, they mostly pleaded.

Still, the right-wingers won. The right always wins in chaos. Their believers shouted: “Where is the King of Kings? Why hasn't He come Himself?” And those questions quietly turned into something simpler and clearer: killing the once-dead isn't a sin. Killing the living is. But killing them—no. And there's no law against it. Shooting a dead man—maybe eccentric, maybe ethically not quite right, but its not a crime!

Yeah, things went to hell fast. This wasn't about not letting some grandma into her cottage. This wasn't - "turn up the music and maybe she'll leave."

A lot of people died—those, these. Some died twice, some even more, but everyone bled.

They didn't make it to our towers. Not enough died here—no more than one per building. Not enough for a revolution. Jeremy smoked the cigarette out the window. The one I rolled for him. Then he asked for another. I sat there. Glowering. Just sat.

- You came back with money? - I asked - Or how does it work over there?

I rolled him another. Grumbled, but did it. I'm not stingy, not really.

- What's going on? - he asked.

Outside, they were stringing a razor wire along the fence. Not a barbed wire like before, but the new kind—with blades like on kids' figure skates. At the gates, they were building a machine gun tower from crates and benches.

- Waiting for your kind, - I told Jeremy.

He dimmed all of a sudden. Like if life light had left left hi, - but how could it, really?

- Wait! - I shouted as he climbed up onto the windowsill.

Well, and you can guess how it ended. Same as before. And onto a Toyota again. Not the grey one this time. They've gotten another one, just like the previous, but not grey. Sky blue it was. Or used to be.