

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

*Andrew Stancek*

### **Three But No Threesome**

“When you have money of your own, you get to waste it on nonsense, and nobody can stick their nose in. But I worked hard for every penny of mine. I decide what gets bought and what doesn’t. And, living in my house, you do as I say.”

Zofka is watching Mirko. She does not even look at Father. She has been sleeping on the narrow cot that used to be his, that he used to find so uncomfortable. It has not become more comfortable but it’s being shared. He can feel her ribs moving, her hot breath, hear her little snorts in the middle of the night when he cannot sleep for happiness, his leg thrown over hers.

Mirko knows he has to be grateful to Father for taking in a second stray. She had a high fever when he first half-dragged, half-carried her in, teeth chattering, and Father never blinked. Mirko announced that she will sleep on the cot and he would look after them both, Father for another ten days with his leg strapped up, Zofka till she gets her strength back.

“Make her hot soup,” Father said. “Piece of chicken there, carrots, frozen peas. Still half a bottle of rum if she wants some. Or else tea. She looks like she needs a doctor.”

Zofka voice is soft but determined. “No doctors. Had enough of them.” Father shakes his head but does not argue. Later he calls a doctor friend, says his leg is still up in a cast, he’s caught a flu, can the doctor call in a penicillin prescription.

Three days later Zofka’s fever is down, her eyes aren’t glassy and the fights begin. Mirko wants to stock the kitchen since there are three of them, wants her to have a new blouse and skirt. He won’t go look for a job and leave her alone in the apartment with Father. Zofka shrugs when he tells her. Not a big deal to her. She hardly bothers to cover up when Father looks at her. Her night screams are primal, unmuffled. Mirko finds them arousing but has no illusions about his uniqueness.

He thinks of calling Duro to see if he can borrow a couple of hundred crowns. Gotta be something he can do. A roof over his head and meals is not enough anymore. He looks over at Zofka, her eyes opening and closing, breath regular. Mirko wishes it were not middle of the day so he could snuggle next to her. Father is watching him, snorts in the certain knowledge of Mirko’s thoughts. His wallet is next to him, on the bedside table. Mirko closes his eyes, wonders how low he’ll go.