

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Andrew Stancek
Snake in the Grass

"It's a warehouse. On the other side of the Danube, in Petrzalka. And they don't guard it." Duro takes a shot of his *borovicka*, grimaces, washes it down with beer. Mirko knows where this is heading, likes no part of it, and is desperate enough to listen. Duro is willing to lend him a hundred, but tangles the prospect of a lot more, in exchange for his help.

"So how do you know about it?" Mirko says. "And if it's valuable, why don't they guard it?"

"You haven't changed any, have you? You still walk around like your underwear is full. Always seeing trouble, even before you know anything. Have a shot, relax."

Mirko needs to get back to Father's place with sausage for Father, lemons and tea for Zofka. He has a clear vision of Father propositioning Zofka and her shrugging, "Why not." He needs money bad. He needs to find an apartment for the two of them. He needs her.

"OK, OK, so you know about the warehouse somehow, you'll tell me later. And we get whatever they have hidden. What are we going to do with it? And what's my share?" Mirko's fingers are drumming on the table counter; his leg is jiggling. It's still ten below but he is sweating.

"You need to get out more, Mirko. To get drunk like a pig, pick up some..."

"Duro, for Christ's sake. I have fifteen minutes. What do I have to do? And who is going to be looking for us if we actually pull it off?"

Duro signals the waiter for another shot and beer, sighs, pulls a wallet out. It is stuffed with bills. "Hey, zasran, here, take this. Don't bother to pay it back. It's for your valuable time. When you have time to listen, to treat me like a friend, call." He hands Mirko three hundreds, hoists himself up, saunters towards the bar. "But next time you want to borrow, call someone else, will you?"

Mirko grabs the bills, rushes out. When he gets home Zofka is sleeping and Father has a soccer game on full blast. After supper Mirko dials Duro's number. He needs it, whatever it is.