

RAZLOGA NEMAM, AL' OPET SAM SPREMAN
I HAVE NO REASON, BUT I'M STILL READY FOR THE SEASON

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20. septembar - 8. oktobar 2022./September 20 - October 8, 2022

Razloga nemam, al' ipak sam spreman

Radovi su nastajali tokom 2019. godine do danas, a u sebi sadrže segmente iz sporta (košarke), umetnosti i popularne kulture. Tokom rada na akvarelima, pokušao sam da istražujem specifične momente sa košarkaških utakmica, kasnije da ih spajam sa određenim segmentima iz istorije umetnosti kao i trenucima koji se izdvajaju iz protoka vremena.

Većina akvarela su zapisi iz svakodnevnice koja nas okružuje sa uplivom novonastalih aktuelnih događanja. Kroz radove razmatram na koji način se može objasniti/razumeti današnje okruženje i kako se može uvideti protok vremena i prostora; pitamo se o vremenu i prostoru u eri digitalnog okruženja i ubrzanja, kako se snalazimo i na koji način se držimo određenih formi, a koje se neminovno menja pri svakom novom talasu. U totalnom obilju senzacija kojima smo okruženi pitamo se i kako pronaći određenu informaciju koja nas može dovesti do *zdravog razuma* i time se spasti od privremenosti. Sva ova pitanja koja se postavljaju daju nam novo osećanje da sve što se dešava nekako lebdi, bez istorijskog određenja, konceptualne definicije i kritičkog prosuđivanja. Takva vrsta paradigme je mesto za delovanje i traženje mogućeg izlaza ili odgovora na postojeće stanje.

Predrag Terzić

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Deset priča koje prate jedanaest izabranih akvarela pisao sam polako u periodu između 15. februara i 22. jula 2022. godine. Svaka od njih je rezultat mojih razgovora sa Predragom Terzićem, u potrazi za glavnim linijama imaginacije u njegovim akvarelima. Bazičnu postavku činila su pitanja o slobodi i jednakosti. Otuda je, između fantastičnih košarkaša kao što su Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Wilt Chamberlain, Michael Jordan i Magic Johnson, kao osovinski izronio lik Billa Russella, čiji je privatni i profesionalni život bio obeležen višedecenijskom borbom u pomicanju granica slobode i igre. Poslednju priču iz kataloga, ispostaviće se, završio sam devet dana pre njegove smrti. Zamišljen kao onirički dnevnik Billa Russela, katalog ove izložbe nije doživeo da jednog dana dospe do njegovih ruku, ali je zato svaki njegov san, pretočen u priču, našao uporište u jednoj slici, a svaka je slika putokaz koji je iz snova o slobodi, preko Russellove igre, dospao u naš život.

Saša Ilić

Beograd, avgust 2022.

I Have No Reason, But I'm Still Ready for the Season

The works have been created since 2019, and they contain segments from sports (namely, basketball), art, and popular culture. While working on these watercolors, I tried to explore specific moments from basketball games, and later combined them with certain segments from the history of art as well as with the moments standing out from the passage of time.

Most of the watercolors represent records of the everyday life that surrounds us, influenced by current events. Through my works, I examine the way in which today's environment can be explained/understood and the way in which we become aware of the passage of time and space; we consider time and space in the era of digital environment and acceleration, and we wonder how we manage in those two aspects and in what way we stick to certain forms, while time, as well as space, inevitably change with each new wave. In a complete abundance of sensations that we are surrounded by, we also wonder how to find certain information that can lead us to *common sense* and thereby rescue us from temporariness. All these arising questions offer us a new feeling that everything that happens is somehow floating, without historical determination, conceptual definition, and critical judgment. This kind of paradigm is a place for acting and searching for a possible way out or for the answer to the existing situation.

Predrag Terzić

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I was leisurely writing the ten stories, which accompany the eleven selected watercolors, in the period between February 15 and July 22, 2022. Each one of them is the result of my conversations held with Predrag Terzić with the aim of finding out the backbone of imagination in his watercolors. The basic setting of this exhibition relied on the issues of freedom and equality. Consequently, Bill Russell emerged as a pivotal figure among fantastic basketball players, such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Wilt Chamberlain, Michael Jordan, and Magic Johnson. Russell's private and professional life was marked by a decades-long struggle to push the boundaries of freedom and the game. It turned out that I have finished writing the catalog's last story nine days before his death. Conceived as Russell's oneiric diary, the catalog of this exhibition did not live to reach his hands one day. However, each of his dreams, turned into a story, found its foothold in one picture, and each picture represents a signpost that, through Russell's game, entered our lives coming from the dreams of freedom.

Saša Ilić
Belgrade, August 2022

BLACK BOOK, GREEN DREAMS

Dnevnik snova Williama Feltona Russella¹

1. *Black Mamba* – Jul 1940. West Monroe, Louisiana
2. *Louisiana On My Mind* – 4. februar 1960. Syracuse, New York
3. *Heart of Emmett Till* – Avgust 1955. Univerzitet San Francisco, California
4. *FBI Watch* – Lexington, Kentucky, 1962/ Reading, Massachusetts, 1963.
5. *Call Me Ali. Muhammad Ali* – 4/5. jun 1967. Cleveland, Ohio
6. *Red In Green* – 15. april 1966, Boston, Massachusetts
7. *Go Up For Glory* – 6. oktobar 1976, Alamogordo, New Mexico
8. *Spirit of Kilimanjaro* – 12. februar 1946. West Monroe, Louisiana
9. *Giant Steps* – 16. oktobar 1999. Los Angeles, California
10. *The Last Call* – 11. maj 2011. White House, Washington, D.C.

¹ William Felton Russell (1934-2022), legendarni američki košarkaš, dogododisnji centar tima Boston Celtics (1956-1969), kao i prvi afroamerički trener u istoriji NBA košarke. Njegov život i rad neodvojivi su od borbe za ljudska prava Afro-Amerikanaca u USA.

BLACK BOOK, GREEN DREAMS

Dream Journal by William Felton Russell¹

1. *Black Mamba* – West Monroe, Louisiana, July 1940
2. *Louisiana on My Mind* – Syracuse, New York, February 4, 1960
3. *Heart of Emmett Till* – University of San Francisco, California, August 1955
4. *FBI Watch* – Lexington, Kentucky, 1962 / Reading, Massachusetts, 1963
5. *Call Me Ali. Muhammad Ali* – Cleveland, Ohio, June 4/5, 1967
6. *Red In Green* – Boston, Massachusetts, April 15, 1966
7. *Go Up for Glory* – Alamogordo, New Mexico, October 6, 1976
8. *Spirit of Kilimanjaro* – West Monroe, Louisiana, February 12, 1946
9. *Giant Steps* – Los Angeles, California, October 16, 1999
10. *The Last Call* – White House, Washington, D.C., May 11, 2011

¹ William Felton Russell (1934–2022), a legendary American basketball player, the Boston Celtics long-time center (1956-1969), and the first African-American coach in the history of NBA basketball. His life and work are inseparable from the struggle for the human rights of African-Americans in the USA.

1. BLACK MAMBA

Jul 1940. West Monroe. Louisiana

N ikada ne bih zapisao ovaj san da mi se nije vraćao više puta kasnije u životu. Čini mi se da je bio prvi koga se sećam.² A pre njega kao da nije postojalo ništa. Osim priča. Naš prvi sused, na imanju u Monroeu, bio je zaposlen u pekari. Voleo je vatru i priče. Radio je noću, u pekari. A danju na imanju, sa ženom. Pomagao je mom ocu Charlesu oko bašte. Jednom su u vrtu, iznad busenja aronije postavljali veliko bure u kome smo hvatali kišnicu. Tada sam prvi put čuo za Njeno postojanje. Sused je pričao o Njoj kao da ju je sreo, ubedljivo, živo, oči su mu se caklile, ali ne od sreće jer je pripovedao tako dobro, već od straha da bi se svakog časa mogla pojaviti. I zaista, pojavila se već naredne noći – u mom snu. Čuo sam najpre Njene korake. Dopola sam otvorio oči i pogledao kroz trepavice. Bila je to Ona – Crna Mamba, koja je došla odnekud, iz močvara Louisiane, o kojima su starci voleli da pričaju uz vatru. Nije hodala, plesala je, video sam isprepletenost kostiju i trave. Na sedam koraka, pravila je krugove oko mog kreveta i puštala zvukove od kojih su mi se ukočile ruke i noge. Čuo sam jednom od svog suseda da ni sa čim ne možeš pobediti Crnu Mambu, ako se već odlučila da te poseti. Ležiš i znojiš se, treseš se od straha, kuća se smanjuje, krevet se smanjuje, dok ona raste. Ali rastem i ja u tom snu, izdužuju mi se noge i ruke. U jednom času ona mi je sasvim blizu, osećam njen vlažni močvarni dah. Tada se hitro okrenem na bok i ispod jastuka izvučem očev pištolj, koji on inače drži iza sedišta u kolima. Pucam jednom, dvaput, triput. Ne nišanim, samo ispaljujem metke. I njen ples prestaje. Povlači se u mrak, vidim je kako baulja unatrag, ka senkama, rastinju, močvari iz koje je došla. Naposletku, tamo su samo dva užagrela zmijska oka. Kada se vratim nazad na jastuk, već sam budan, okupan u znoju. I mislim se, hoću li moći da sve ovo ujutro ispričam majci.

2. Ovaj san, u nešto izmenjenom obliku, Bill Russell je zapisao na početku svoje autobiografije iz 1966, koja je izašla pod naslovom *Go Up For Glory*.

1. BLACK MAMBA

West Monroe, Louisiana, July 1940

I would never have written this dream down if it hadn't come back to me many times later in life. I think it was the first one I remember.² And before that dream, it seemed that there had been nothing. Except for stories. Our first neighbor, on the property in Monroe, was employed in a bakery. He loved fire and stories. He worked in a bakery at night. And during the day, he worked with his wife on the farm. He helped my father Charles in the garden. Once they placed a large barrel above the Aronia shrubs in the garden. There we collected rainwater. That was the first time I'd heard about Its existence. Our neighbor talked about It as if he had met it, convincingly, vividly, his eyes alight, but not with joy because he was telling the story so well, but with fear that It might appear at any moment. And indeed, It appeared the very next night – in my dream. I heard Its footsteps first. I half opened my eyes and looked through my eyelashes. That was It – the Black Mamba, who came from somewhere, from the swamps of Louisiana, about which the old men liked to talk by the fire. It wasn't walking. It was dancing. I saw the intertwinement of bones and grass. Seven feet from me, It was circling around my bed and producing sounds that made my arms and legs go numb. I had once heard from my neighbor that there was no way to beat the Black Mamba if It had already decided to pay you a visit. You just lie there sweating and trembling with fear, the house is getting smaller, the bed is getting smaller, while It is getting bigger and bigger. But I'm also getting bigger in that dream, my legs and arms are getting longer. At one moment, It is so close to me that I can feel its wet swamp breath. Then, I quickly turn on my side and pull out my father's gun, which he usually keeps behind the car seat, from under the pillow. I shoot once, twice, three times. I don't aim, I just fire bullets. And It stops dancing. It withdraws into the darkness, I see It lurching backward, toward the shadows, the vegetation, the swamp from which It has arrived. In the end, there remain only the two glowing snake eyes. When I get back on the pillow, I'm already awake, bathed in sweat. And I think to myself: "Will I be able to retell all this to my mother in the morning?"

² This dream, in a slightly modified form, was written by Bill Russell at the beginning of his 1966 autobiography which was published under the title *Go Up for Glory*.



2. LOUISIANA ON MY MIND

4. februar 1960. Syracuse, New York

Ne volim džez, moji prijatelji to dobro znaju. Ipak moj trener Red³, koji luduje za tom muzikom i dugačkim cigarama marke Blackstone, ume povremeno da mi kaže kako mu ličim na Theloniousa Monka⁴, iz profila. Proverio sam, nije u pravu, mada ne mogu baš da se udubim u svoj profil pred ogledalom. Taj Monk me podseća na nekog mesečara iz Severne Karoline, pokušao sam da ga slušam – ne ide. Moje uši čuju samo škripu patika po parketu, muziku skokova i udarce loptom o tablu koša. Ipak, tog februara 1960, uoči utakmice sa Syracusom Nationals, dok smo autobusom dolazili u hotel, zaspao sam nakratko i sanjao čudan san. Ta pesma se vrtela neprestano tih dana, ali ja sam je čuo tek u svom snu prvi put. Ne, nije bila u pitanju Georgia, već Louisiana. Stajao sam na stejdžu potpuno slep, okrenut profilom prema publici. Kao Thelonious, ali sam zapravo pevao pesmu Raya Charlesa⁵ koja je brujala sa svih stanica. Zvučala je kao nostalglična nota slobode, samo ja sam dobro znao da to nije tačno jer tamo, u Louisiani, još nikada nismo bili slobodni. Ni otac, ni majka, ni brat, ni ja. Zato smo otišli iz nje ranih dana. Pevao sam to u vlažni gusti vazduh Louisiane koji se zgušnjavao u žute, zelene i plave lopte oko moje glave. Kažem – Louisiana, u mom snu. Bio sam sve dalji od nje, samo me je ta stara pesma kao pupčanom vrpcom, još nepresečenom, povezivala s njom. O kako je to teško, odlaziti, neprestano odlaziti od kuće, biti sve dalje, a opet videti samo taj jedan put, koji kao tri prepletene zmije vijuga unazad, ka onome što smo nekad zvali domom. Trzao sam se u snu, dok je tamni oblak promicao iznad mene. Bio sam sve nemirniji, željan nekih drugih ruku da me ponesu nazad, ka njoj – Louisiani, gde su vode zelene a polja žuta. Gde se belci ne snalaze na putevima ni kada su široki kao najsvetliji dan. O, Louisiana u mojim mislima, ti si samo igra šarenih lopti iz detinjstva. Tvoje su ruke surove i krhke. Ti si me naučila da trčim i skačem dok sam bežao od tvojih lokalnih bandi. Kada bih s tobom zaigrao basket, niko nas nikada ne bi pobedio. Ostani sa mnom i sutra, i noćas, dok pokušavam da se saberem, jer se svaki deo mene rastače i ponovo spaja na putu ka tebi – Louisiana.

3 Arnold Jacob „Red“ Auerbach (1917-2006), američki profesionalni košarkaški trener, najvećim delom karijere vezan za tim Boston Celtics. Smatra se pionikom moderne košarke.

4 Thelonious Sphere Monk (1917-1982), američki džez pijanista i kompozitor.

5 Ray Charles Robinson Sr. (1930-2004), američki pevač i pijanista. U svojoj muzici kombinovao je stilove soula, džeza, ritma i bluz, kao i gospela. Njegov prvi veliki hit je pesma *Georgia On My Mind*.

2. LOUISIANA ON MY MIND

Syracuse, New York, February 4, 1960

I don't like jazz; my friends know it too well. However, my coach Red³, who's crazy about this kind of music and long Blackstone cigars, occasionally tells me that I resemble Thelonious Monk⁴ in profile. I've checked it and he's not right, although it's not that I can completely scrutinize my own profile in front of the mirror. That Monk reminds me of a sleepwalker from North Carolina. I've tried to listen to him – it doesn't work. All my ears can hear is the squeak of sneakers on the court floor, the music of rebounds, and the ball hitting the backboard. Yet, that February of 1960, right before our match with the Syracuse Nationals, on the bus to the hotel, I fell asleep for an instant and had a strange dream. That song was constantly on the radio in those days, but I'd heard it for the first time in that dream of mine. No, it wasn't Georgia, but Louisiana. I was standing on the stage totally blind, facing the audience in profile. Like Thelonious, but I was actually singing the Ray Charles⁵ song that was blaring from all radio stations. It sounded like a nostalgic note of freedom, though I knew very well that it wasn't true because there, in Louisiana, we had never been free. Neither my father nor my mother, my brother nor I. That's why we left it in the early days. I was singing it into the humid dense Louisiana air that thickened into yellow, green, and blue balls around my head. I say – Louisiana, in my dream. I was getting further and further away from it; only that old song still connected me with Louisiana like it was an umbilical cord, still uncut. Oh, how hard it is to leave, constantly leave your home. How hard it is to be further and further away, and yet see only that one road, which winds backward like three intertwined snakes toward what we used to call home. I twitched in my sleep as a dark cloud passed above me. I was getting more and more restless, longing for some other hands to take me back to it – to Louisiana, where the waters are green and the fields are yellow. Where white people can't navigate the roads even when they're as broad as daylight. Oh, Louisiana in my thoughts, you're just a childhood game of colorful balls. Your hands are cruel and fragile. You taught me how to run and jump while I was running away from your local gangs. If I played basketball with you, no one would ever beat us. Please, stay with me tomorrow, and tonight, while I'm trying to pull myself together as every piece of me is falling apart and coming together again on my way to you – Louisiana.

3 Arnold Jacob "Red" Auerbach (1917–2006), an American professional basketball coach, most of his career is associated with the Boston Celtics. He is considered a pioneer of modern basketball.

4 Thelonious Sphere Monk (1917–1982), an American jazz pianist and composer.

5 Ray Charles Robinson Sr. (1930–2004), an American singer and pianist. In his music, he combined the styles of soul, jazz, rhythm, and blues, as well as gospel. His first big hit was the song *Georgia on My Mind*.

I zaista, sutradan, na parketu Univerzitetske Arene u Syrakuzi⁶, igrao sam kao nikad pre – 23 pogotka, rekordni broj skokova – 51 i 5 asistencija. Red je vrištao od sreće. Russ, rekao je zagrlivši me posle utakmice, vrag te odneo, kako si samo isprašio te mother fuckere.

⁶ U pitanju je utakmica Boston Celticsa protiv Syracuse Nationals, održana 5. februara 1960, kada je Bill Russell postigao rekord po broju skokova, koji će 24. novembra iste godine oboriti njegov večni rival – Wilt Chamberlain, igrač tima Philadelphia Warriors u to doba.

And indeed, on the court of the University Arena in Syracuse⁶, the next day, I played like never before – 23 points, a record number of rebounds – 51 and 5 assists. Red was screaming with joy. “Bloody hell, Russ”, he said hugging me after the game, “you’ve made a great job at kicking those mother fuckers’ asses.”

⁶ It was the game played by the Boston Celtics against the Syracuse Nationals on February 5, 1960, when Bill Russell achieved a record number of rebounds, which would be broken on November 24 of the same year by his eternal rival – Wilt Chamberlain, a player of the Philadelphia Warriors at the time.



3. HEART OF EMMETT TILL

Kasni avgust 1955. Univerzitet San Francisco, California

Znam da je bilo leto, jer te godine prvi put za ferije nisam otišao da posetim oca, već sam ostao na koledžu kako bih vežbao košarku. Moj tadašnji trener Phil Woolpert⁷ nije imao previše poverenja u mene a ja, iako sam igrao dobro, nisam mogao da budem prvi. U to vreme nije bilo prihvatljivo da jedan crni igrač bude najbolji. Ali ja jesam to bio. I kada sam shvatio da ne mogu sam, igrao sam timski, gurao sam sve napred. Tako smo pobedili u 28 od 29 utakmica te sezone. Osvojili smo nacionalno prvenstvo. Bio sam MVP na Final Fouru. Naš tim bio je prvi na All American. U proseku, imao sam preko 20 poena i preko 20 skokova. Bio sam jedini momak na koledžu koji je znao da blokira šuteve. Kraj leta 1955. Ostao sam na koledžu da bih vežbao. Sećam se dana kada sam u novinama pročitao vest da je u Misisipiju linčovan četrnaestogodišnji momak po imenu Emmet Til⁸. Otišao je da preko leta poseti rodbinu, i pred jednom prodavnicom je razgovarao sa mladom Carolyn Bryant. Ubrzo ga je rulja optužila da je flertovao sa belom ženom. Njen muž Roy i njegov ćoravi polubrat Milam, uhvatili su sirotog momka, izbili mu oči i raskopali grudni koš, a sve po zakonu Jim Crow⁹ koji je još uvek vladao na Jugu. Ubrzo, telo Emmetta Tilla poneo je jedan od rukavaca Misisipija. Tog avgusta više nisam bio svoj. Sve teže sam pogađao koš. Postao sam nervozan. Znojio sam se i tresao, ali ne od straha već od osećanja da su mi za petama. Taj linč podsetio me je na jednu razglednicu iz mog rodnog grada koju mi je davno pokazao deda: na njoj je mladi Afro-Amerikanac bio obešen o hrastovu granu, dok je oko njega pozirala bela gradska svita; jedan beše prekrstio noge, drugi s polucilindrom gurnuo ruke u duboke džepove, treći je grickao travku. Ostali su se naprezali da ne trepnu. U mom snu, uvek se pojavljivao taj sa polucilindrom. Najpre bih ga video iza gradskog ugla kako me prati. Onda je postajao sve brži i brži. Ja bih potrčao ali on je kidisao za mnom. Bežao bih kao lud između kuća u predgrađu, preko rečnog nasipa, trske, štuta i dasaka na napuštenom gradilištu. Na kraju sam pao celom dužinom i kada sam se okrenuo, više nisam video njega već ogromnu pegavu slepu hijenu. Bolesno oko bilo joj je presvučeno sivom skramom. Podno njenih nogu još je damaralo iščupano ljudsko srce. Odnekud sam znao da je nekada pripadalo momku koji se zvao Emmett Till. Hijena se nije micala dok joj je iz čeljusti još uvek curila krv. Dograbio sam prvi kamen i gađao je, ali ona

7 Philipp D. Woolpert (1915 –1987), američki košarkaški trener na Univerzitetu San Francisco tokom pedesetih godina prošlog veka.

8 Emmett Louis Till (1941-1955), četrnaestogodišnji dečak iz Chicaga, koji je prilikom posete rodbini u Missisippiju linčovan jer je optužen da je flertovao sa belom ženom, vlasnicom radnje prehrambenih proizvoda. Njegovo brutalno ubistvo, kao i oslobađanje dvojice ubica, pokrenulo je novi talas borbe za ljudska prava na američkom Jugu, koji je dugo bio pod senkom rasne segregacije nakon Gradanskog rata, kao i tokom XX veka. U znak protesta protiv rasizma, Bob Dylan je snimio pesmu "The Death of Emmett Till" 1962.

9 Jim Crow –legalizovani sistem rasne segregacije na američkom Jugu.

3. HEART OF EMMETT TILL

University of San Francisco, California, late August 1955

I remember it was summer, because that year, for the first time, I didn't go to visit my father for the holidays, but instead, I stayed at college to practice basketball. My coach at the time, Phil Woolpert⁷ didn't have much faith in me, and although I played well, I couldn't be the first one on the team. At that time, it was unacceptable to have a black player as the best one. But I was the best. And once I realized that I couldn't do it all alone, I became a team player and pushed everyone forward. That's how we won 28 out of 29 matches of the season. We won the national championship. I was the Final Four MVP. Our team was the first one at All American. I averaged over 20 points and over 20 rebounds. I was the only fellow in college who was able to block shots. In the late summer of 1955, I stayed at college to practice. I remember the day I read in the newspaper that a fourteen-year-old boy, named Emmet Till⁸, had been lynched in Mississippi. He went there to visit his relatives over the summer, and he spoke to a young Carolyn Bryant in front of a store. Soon afterward, the mob accused him of flirting with a white woman. Her husband Roy and his specky half-brother Milam caught the poor boy, gouged out his eyes, and mutilated his chest, all according to the Jim Crow⁹ law that was still effective in the South. Soon, Emmett Till's body was carried away by one of the Mississippi's arms. I was no longer myself during that August. It was getting harder for me to hit the basket. I became nervous. I sweated and shook, not out of fear, but due to the feeling that they were right on my heels. That lynching reminded me of a postcard from my hometown that my grandfather had shown me a long time before: on it, a young Afro-American was hanging from an oak branch, while a white town entourage was posing around him; one of them had crossed his legs, the other one with a bowler hat shoved his hands deep into his pockets, while the third one was nibbling a blade of grass. The other ones tried their best not to blink. There was always the one with the bowler hat in my dreams. First, I would see him around the city corner following me. Then he got faster and faster. I would begin to run, but he was chasing after me. I would run away from him as a lunatic, between the houses in the suburbs, across the river embankment, and among the reeds, construction rubble, and planks at an abandoned construction site. I ended up falling full length, and when I

7 Philipp D. Woolpert (1915–1987), an American basketball coach at the University of San Francisco during the 1950s.

8 Emmett Louis Till (1941–1955), a fourteen-year-old boy from Chicago who, while visiting his relatives in Mississippi, was lynched because he had been accused of flirting with a white woman who owned a grocery store. His brutal murder, as well as the acquittal of two murderers, commenced a new wave of struggles for human rights in the American South, which had long been under the shadow of racial segregation after the Civil War, and also during the 20th century. As a sign of protest against racism, Bob Dylan recorded the song *The Death of Emmett Till* in 1962.

9 Jim Crow – a legalized racial segregation system in the American South.

nije ustuknula. Naprotiv, zakoračila je prema meni a ja sam se povlačio rukama sve dok nisam udario u jednu naherenu dasku na kojoj je pisalo nešto na potrugalskom. Najednom, u snu, uspeo sam da razumem taj natpis: „Nek se završi svet, jer tako treba, ustani, mrtvače, napusti grob, jer došao je sudnji dan.“

turned around, I saw a huge freckled blind hyena instead of him. Its sick eye was covered in a grey scab. Under its legs, the ripped-out human heart was still pounding. I knew from somewhere that it once belonged to a boy called Emmett Till. The hyena didn't make any move, while blood was still dripping from its jaws. I took the first stone I could grab and threw it at the hyena, but it didn't back away. On the contrary, it stepped toward me, whereas, I moved backward with my arms until I hit a bent plank that had something written on it in Portuguese. All of a sudden, in a dream, I managed to discern that inscription: "May the world end, since it should be that way, rise the dead man, leave your grave because Doomsday has arrived."



Acabe o mundo, porque É já preciso
Erga-se o morto, deixe a sepultura
Porque é chegada a did. do juízo

4. FBI WATCH

Lexington, Kentucky, 1962/ Reading, Massachusetts, 1963.

Kada bi me posle 22. decembra 1956. pitali za koga igram, uvek bih odgovarao – za Celtics, nikad za Boston. Da se razumemo, Boston i njegovi mediji su tih godina bili pravi buvljak rasizma. A ni ja im nisam ostajao dužan. Nikada. I nisam se smejužio novinarima, nisam se slikao sa decom belaca, jednostavno nisam želeo da budem njihova dvorska luda. To ih je strašno ražestilo. A onda, jednoga dana, kada smo stigli u Lexington, gde je trebalo da odigramo egzibicionu utakmicu, postavili su zabranu za crne igrače u lokalnom restoranu. Red je pokušavao da se raspravi sa vlasnikom restorana ali nije išlo. Kasnije, u hotelu, prišao mi je Frank Ramsey¹⁰, i kao da nešto poverljivo ima da mi kaže, pognuo je glavu i rekao mi da su se neki ljudi proteklih dana raspitivali o meni. Mora da su bili iz FBI-a¹¹, rekao je. Nisam želeo da poverujem u to, ali me je ta misao nadalje pratila kao senka. Kao što sam vidao te tipove u svakom belcu koji se na ulici slučajno zaustavio i pogledao me iskosa. Živeo sam u paranoji koju je potvrđivalo uplitanje neočekivanih ljudi, tobožnjih fanova, koji su od mojih klupskih kolega, ponekad čak i od samog Reda tražili neke informacije, tobože za medije. Mene su izbegavali. Tada sam počeo da sanjam živo blato Bostona. Kao plešem po parketu s loptom, sam sam na sceni, pod reflektorima, idem ka protivničkom košu, ali snopovi svetla sve su jači, a parket pod nogama sve tamniji i mekši. Na kraju gacam po blatu i nikako da stignem do protivničkog koša. U jednom trenutku shvatim da sam utonuo do kolena, bacim loptu što jače mogu ka košu, ona nestane u svetlosti a ja nastavim da tonem. I onda kriknem, ispružim ruke, na kojima tek tada vidim metalne zardale alke od lanaca. Blato se poda mnom rastvori počne da me guta u krupnim zalogajima, a neki ljudi iz publike u tamnim policijskim uniformama sa majicama, znatiteljno počnu da mi se približavaju, kao da prate igranje golfa ili kriketa, a ne moje davljenje u njihovom izmetu koji naposljetku počinje da mi prodire u usta. Ovaj san mi se vratio i jedne zimske noći 1963, kada sam se nakon porodičnog izleta sa ženom i decom vratio kući, u Boston. Vrata su bila provaljena, zidovi išarani rasističkim parolama, moji sportski trofeji izgaženi, a nasred našeg bračnog kreveta dočekala nas je hrpa govana, kao da mi se čitava navijačka falanga iz Bostona posrala u život.

10 Frank Vernon Ramsey Jr. (1931–2018), američki košarkaš i trener. Igrao je za tim Boston Celtics u periodu 1954-1964. Početkom sedamdesetih postao je trener tima Kentucky Colonels.

11 Billa Rassela je njegov društveni angažman često dovodio u konflikt sa fanovima Celticsa, medijima, da bi naposljetku bio stavljen pod nadzor FBI.

4. FBI WATCH

Lexington, Kentucky, 1962 / Reading, Massachusetts, 1963

After December 22, 1956, whenever I was asked which team I played for, I would always reply – for the Celtics, never Boston. Let me explain myself: Boston and its media were such a flea market of racism during those years. And I never refrained from fighting back at them. Ever. I never smiled at reporters, and I never took pictures with the whites' children, simply because I didn't want to be their court jester. That made them furious. And then one day, when we arrived in Lexington, where we were to play an exhibition match, they placed a ban on black players in the local restaurant. Red was trying to fix the issue with the restaurant owner, but it didn't work out. Later, in the hotel, Frank Ramsey¹⁰ approached me and, as if he had something confidential to tell me, he bowed his head and told me that certain people had been enquiring about me in the past few days. "They must have been from the FBI¹¹", he said. I didn't want to believe it, but that thought followed me onwards like a shadow. I saw those guys in every white man who would accidentally stop on the street and give me a sidelong look. I lived in paranoia, which was constantly confirmed by the interference of unexpected people, supposed fans, who asked for certain information from my team players, and sometimes even from Red, ostensibly for the media. They avoided me. At that point, I began to dream about the sinking mud of Boston. In that dream, I'm dancing on the court with a ball, all alone on the stage, under the spotlights, and I'm heading toward the opponent's basket, but the light beams are getting lighter and lighter, whereas the floor under my feet is getting darker and softer. In the end, I'm walking in the mud and struggling to reach the opponent's basket. At one point I realize that I've sunk up to my knees in mud, and then I throw the ball as hard as I can toward the basket, but it disappears in the light, while I continue to sink. And then I scream and stretch out my arms, and only then do I see rusty, metal chain links on them. The mud dissolves beneath me and begins to swallow me in large mouthfuls, and some people from the audience wearing dark police T-shirt uniforms approach me curiously as if they're watching a golf or cricket game, and not my drowning in their excrement which eventually begins to enter my mouth. This dream occurred again one winter night in 1963 when I came back home to Boston after a family trip with my wife and children. The door was broken in, the walls were painted with racist slogans, my sports trophies were trampled, and we were welcomed by a bunch of shit in the middle of our double bed as if the whole army of fans from Boston had crapped in my life.

10 Frank Vernon Ramsey, Jr. (1931–2018), an American basketball player and a coach. He played for the Boston Celtics in the period from 1954 to 1964. In the early seventies, he became the coach of the Kentucky Colonels.

11 Bill Russell's social involvement often brought him into conflicts with the Celtics fans, and the media, and eventually, he was placed under FBI surveillance.



5. CALL ME ALI. MUHAMMAD ALI...

4 / 5. jun 1967. Cleveland, Ohio

Stojim u zelenom dresu Celticsa sa brojem 6 u tom snu, ali ne znam šta da radim jer nema lopte. Zbunjen sam, skoraknem unazad pa se zaustavim. Telo bi se pokrenulo, svaki mišić mi je napet, ali ostajem u toj privremenoj paralizi i iščekujem ono što mi se primiče sa belog horizonta. Ne vidim ga zapravo, ali čujem, neki koraci se približavaju, sitni, kratki, gotovo nečujni. I neko šuštanje za njima. Onda vidim da se iz te beline preda mnom pomalja vrh koplja, ubrzo za njim i plavi deo američke zastave sa zvezdama. Duga je i pohabana: izranjaju belo-crvene pruge, ali nikako ne vidim ko mi donosi tu zastavu koja liči na steg sa bojnog polja, ne znam tačno kog jer ne uspevam da vidim osobu koja je nosi; samo beskrajna pohabana traka američkih boja giba se ka meni, i raste. Naposletku ugledam malo crno dete, ne starije od godinu dana u beloj spavaćici, pomalo spuštenog pogleda, ljutito, kako mi prilazi vukući tu zastavu za sobom kao opomenu. Moja napetost ne prolazi, ukočenost raste, mišići mi pucaju od bola, ali ja stojim kao hipnotisan odlučnošću tog deteta koje korača preko celog belog sveta ka meni. Onda se zaustavi na nekoliko metara udaljenosti, mahne rukom i veoma razgovetno me pozdravi: Pogledaj, bra! Vidi šta su napravili od nje. Kako su je zasrali... Sad je obična krpetina sa ratišta. Ali ja neću tamo! Nikada, rekao sam to svima... Ko si ti?, pitam. Hej, bra! Pa ti me ne prepoznaješ? Pa, juče smo bili zajedno... Kada me je Jim Brown¹² ubeđivao da obučem uniformu, a ti da je spalim na trgu. Cassius¹³, čoveče, iznenadim se, ali kako si tako mali, tako... Nisam mali, opomene me to crno dete sa zastavom, to ti se samo čini od straha koji ste progutali juče u Clevelandu.¹⁴ I ne zovi me Cassius. Ime mi je Muhammad. Muhammad Ali. Zbunio si me, kažem, mislio sam da si... da si... Pogledaj me, bra! Mogao sam da postanem najbolji bokser svih vremena, ali sad se sve prekinulo jer sam odlučio da ne idem u Vijetnam. Šta bi ti uradio na mom mestu? Da si tek na početku? Da imaš dvadeset i pet? I da nosiš ovakvu zastavu? A svi ti kažu, ako ne odeš u rat, propašće ti sve za šta si se spremao. Nikada Celtics, nikada centar, nikada br. 6. Nikada ti, Russ, čoveče! Je l bi mogao to? I zašto se još uvek odazivaš na to ropsko

¹² James Nathaniel Brown (1936), profesionalni ragbista, kasnije sportski analitičar i glumac. Sportsku karijeru je ostvario igrajući za tim Cleveland Browns.

¹³ Muhammad Ali (rođen kao Cassius Clay; 1942-2016), američki profesionalni bokser u teškoj kategoriji i društveni aktivista. Prihvatio je islam 1961. Pobeđivši Sonnyja Listona 1964. osvojio je titulu svetskog prvaka. Iste godine je promenio svoje ime, odričući se svog "ropskog imena" Cassius Clay. Odbio je da se odazove na poziv u Vijetnamski rat 1966. pozivajući se na svoju veru i prigovor savesti. Zbog toga je pretrpeo težak pritisak javnosti, kao i presudu kojom mu je oduzeta titula svetskog šampiona kao i zabrana bavljenja boksom, što je ukinuto tek 1971. Zbog svog istupanja protiv rata, Muhammad Ali je postao simbol antiratnog pokreta u USA.

¹⁴ U Clevelandu je održan skup podrške Muhammadu Aliju 4. juna 1967. Na tom skupu je pored mnogobrojnih afroameričkih sportista i javnih ličnosti bio prisutan i Bill Russell.

5. CALL ME ALI. MUHAMMAD ALI...

Cleveland, Ohio, June 4/5, 1967

I'm standing in the green number 6 Celtics jersey in that dream, but I don't know what to do because there's no ball. Confused, I take a step back and stop. My body would like to move, but my every muscle is tense, and I remain in that temporary paralysis waiting for the thing that's approaching me from the white horizon. I don't actually see it, but I can hear it. Some steps are approaching; they're small, short, and almost silent. And some rustling follows them. Then I see the tip of a spear emerging from that whiteness before me, soon followed by the blue part of the star-spangled American flag. It's long and worn: white and red stripes are emerging, but I can't see who's bringing me that flag that looks like a battle flag. I don't know exactly from which battlefield it comes as I can't see the person who's carrying it; there's only the endless frayed band of American colors swaying toward me, and getting bigger and bigger. Finally, I see a small black child, not more than a year old, in a white nightgown, his eyes slightly downcast, angrily approaching me dragging that flag behind him as a warning. My tension doesn't fade away, my stiffness is increasing, and my muscles are bursting with pain. But I'm standing there as if hypnotized by the determination of that child who's marching across the whole white world toward me. Then it stops a few meters away, waves its hand, and greets me in a very clear voice: "Look, bro! Look what they've made of it. How they've messed it up... Now it's just a rag from the battlefield. But I'm not going there! Never, I've told that to everyone..." "Who are you?", I ask. "Hey, bro! You don't recognize me? Well, we were together yesterday... when Jim Brown¹² was convincing me to put on a uniform while you were convincing me to burn it in the square." "Cassius¹³, man", I'm taken by surprise, "but how come you're so small, so..." "I'm not small", that black child holding the flag in his hands rebukes me, "I only seem small to you because of the fear you swallowed yesterday in Cleveland.¹⁴ And don't call me Cassius. My name's Muhammad. Muhammad Ali." "You've confused me", I say. "I thought you're... you're..." "Look at me, bro! I could have become the best boxer of all time, but now everything's stopped

¹² James Nathaniel Brown (1936), a professional American football player, later sports analyst, and actor. He built his sports career playing for the Cleveland Browns.

¹³ Muhammad Ali (born Cassius Clay; 1942–2016), an American professional heavyweight boxer and social activist. He accepted Islam in 1961. Defeating Sonny Liston in 1964, he won the world title. In the same year, he changed his name, renouncing his "slave name" Cassius Clay. He refused to be drafted into the Vietnam War in 1966, citing his faith and conscientious objection as the main reasons. Because of this, he withstood tremendous pressure from the public. Furthermore, a verdict was reached against him that stripped him of the world champion title and he was banned from boxing. That ban was lifted only in 1971. Due to his opposition to the war, Muhammad Ali became a symbol of the anti-war movement in the USA.

¹⁴ A rally in support of Muhammad Ali was held in Cleveland on June 4, 1967. Bill Russell was present at that rally along with many African-American athletes and public figures.

ime? Promeni ga! Budi William X. Budi Bill X. Slobodan čovek. I reci svima, ovo je moj prigovor savesti, ja ne idem u vaše ratove! Odjebite, žohari! I bićeš ne najomraženiji čovek u USA. Nego neko sitno, bedno, prezreno stvorenje koje nikome ne treba, čija košarka je nebitna, a sloboda ukinuta... Šta bi tad uradio, bra? Ha? Ja počinjem da uzmičem pred tim samouverenim detetom koje nosi celu Ameriku na leđima i kažem: Ne bojim se više za tebe, Ali. Već za sve nas, ostale... Koješta, bra!, kaže mi Muahmmad Ali, mršteći se: Kada budem otišao sa scene u svoj svet, u svoje slobodno ime, niko me se više neće setiti. Pa čak ni ti, bra... Onda se mirno okrene, i istim onim sporim koracima, vukući zastavu za sobom, otkorača ka nevidljivom horizontu. Nekoliko trenutaka kasnije, poslednja crna tačka stopi se sa belinom.

because I've decided not to go to Vietnam. What would you do if you were in my shoes? If you were just at the beginning? If you were twenty-five? And if you were carrying a flag like this? And everyone's telling you that if you don't go to war, everything you've been preparing for will be ruined. Never the Celtics, never the center, never the No. 6. Never you, Russ, man! Would you be able to do it? And why do you still respond to that slave name? Change it! Become William X. Become Bill X. A free man. And tell everyone: "This is my conscientious objection. I'm not going to your wars! Fuck off, you cockroaches!" And you won't be the most hated man in the USA, but a tiny, miserable, despised creature that no one needs, whose basketball is irrelevant, and whose freedom has been abolished... What would you do then, bro? Huh?" I'm starting to back away from that self-confident kid who's carrying the entire America on his back and I say: "Ali, I'm not afraid for you anymore. But I'm afraid for all of us, the rest of us..." "Don't talk rubbish, bro!", Muhammad Ali tells me frowning. "When I leave the ring and go to my own world, to my free name, no one will ever remember me. Not even you, bro..." Then he turns calmly, and taking the same slow steps, dragging the flag behind him, he marches back into the invisible horizon. A few moments later, the last black dot merges with the whiteness.



6. RED IN GREEN

15. april 1966, Boston, Massachusetts

Njega niko nije znao kao Arnolda Jacoba Auerbaha. Nisam ni ja. Svi su ga zvali Red. Kasnije sam saznao da je taj nadimak dobio zbog crvene guste kose, kakvu je imao u mladosti, ali već tada, sredinom šezdesetih od sveg crvenila ostao mu je jedino taj nadimak. Kada sam ga jednom pitao odakle mu takav osećaj za košarku, on je izvadio dugačku cigaru, stavio je među zube i rekao: Od dobrog starog Walta Whitmana. Ma daj, rekao sam, ne volim džez, ne verujem u poeziju. A Red se onda podbočio kao što je umeo da radi ponekad na utakmici: Moraš voleti džez, i neizostavno moraš da čitaš poeziju. Ako misliš da igraš dobro. Još i više ako misliš da nekog podučavaš igri, kao ja. Puste priče, nasmejao sam se, ali je on tada iz svog sako izvukao jedno džepno izdanje Whitmana i pružio mi ga je. Ovo je moja košarkaška biblija. Zar *Vlati trave?*, pogledao sam korice, mi ipak igramo na parketu. A ne, ne, rekao je Red pripalivši cigaru, to nije obična trava, to je učenje o ritmu, a ritam je u košarci sve... Prelistaj malo večeras. Poslušao sam ga, ali tek kasno uveče, pred san. Pročitao sam samo jednu kratku pesmu, koja je išla ovako. Zapamtio sam je na svoje čuđenje jer je bila kratka ritmična. Postala je deo Redovog i mog prijateljstva: *Oh me! Oh life! of the questions of these recurring! Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the foolish / Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and who more faithless?) ...* Ti stihovi su me preveli u san. Stajao sam sa istom knjigom u rukama i pokušavao da osetim ritam. *Oh me! Oh life!* Odnekud se pojavio Red sa loptom, prišao mi je bez pozdrava i davši znak glavom da nastavim da čitam naglas, počeo je da vodi loptu, ritmično lupajući o parket. Pogledaj, rekao je Red, ritam vodi značenje, a značenje uzdiže ritam. Košarka je ono što pet ljudi s loptom radi na parketu. Tim je povezan ritmom, značenja uzdižu njihovu zajedničku igru. Kada deluju kao pesma, njihova igra je nepobediva. Pogledaj malo kako igra Tommy Heinsohn¹⁵ – njegova je igra kao Whitmanova poezija, ali on sam je nedovoljan. *Oh me! Oh life!* Dakle, ne ti, ne sam, već mi, zajedno, kao tim, kao život sam, igrajući košarku otvorićemo jednom od nas, bilo kome od nas, ono što zovemo *open shot*. Ja to zovem *Celtics Way*. I to je naša pesma. To smo mi. Naš život. Na terenu.

Sutradan me je nazvao Red. Pitao me je da li sam čitao Whitmana. Bio je pomalo sumnjičav pa sam mu izdeklamovao tih nekoliko stihova. Bilo je jutro, 16. aprila, dobro se sećam. Ja se uvek svega dobro sećam. Pozvao me je da ga nasledim na mestu trenera Boston Celticsa. Pristao sam. *Oh me! Oh life!*

15 Thomas William Heinsohn (1934–2020), američki košarkaš. Igrao je za tim Boston Celtics u periodu 1956–1965. Bio je jedan od prvih predloga za trenera Celticsa kada je Red Auerbach odlazio sa te pozicije. Bill Russell je često govorio o njegovoj igri kao o poeziji.

6. RED IN GREEN

Boston, Massachusetts, April 15, 1966

Nobody knew him like Arnold Jacob Auerbach. Neither did I. Everyone called him Red. Later I found out that he got that nickname because of the red, thick hair he had in his youth. But even then, in the mid-sixties, all that redness left him only with that nickname. When I once asked him where he got his basketball feel from, he took out a long cigar, placed it between his teeth, and said: “From good old Walt Whitman.” “Come on”, I said, “I don’t like jazz, I don’t believe in poetry.” And Red then placed his hand under his chin as he sometimes used to do during the game: “You must love jazz, and inevitably you must read poetry. If you want to play well. Even more so if you want to teach someone the game, like I do. “Rubbish!”, I laughed. But then he pulled a pocket edition of Whitman from his jacket and handed it to me. “This is my basketball bible.” “Isn’t it *Leaves of Grass?*”, I looked at the cover, “we’re still playing on the floor.” “Oh, no, no!”, said Red lighting a cigar. “It’s not about ordinary grass at all, it’s about studying rhythm, and rhythm is everything in basketball... Take a look tonight.” I agreed, but I did it only late at night before I fell asleep. I only read one short poem, which read like this. To my surprise, I remembered it because it was short and rhythmic. It became part of Red’s and my friendship: “*Oh me! Oh life! of the questions of these recurring / Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill’d with the foolish / Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and who more faithless?)...*” Those verses transferred me into my dream. I stood with the same book in my hands trying to feel the rhythm. “*Oh me! Oh life!*” Red appeared from somewhere holding the ball in his hands. He approached me without greeting and, giving a sign with his head to continue reading aloud, he began to guide the ball, rhythmically hitting the floor. “Look”, Red said, “rhythm leads meaning, and meaning elevates rhythm. Basketball is what five people do with the ball on the floor. The team is connected by rhythm, meaning elevates their joint play. When they sound like a song, they are unbeatable. Take a look at Tommy Heinsohn’s¹⁵ play – his playing resembles Whitman’s poetry, but he himself is insufficient. *Oh me! Oh life!* So, not you, not alone, but we, together, as a team, as life itself, by playing basketball we will earn for one of us, any of us, an opportunity to get what we call an *open shot*. I call it the *Celtics Way*. And that’s our song. That’s we. Our life. On the court.”

Red called me the next day. He asked me if I had read Whitman. He was a bit suspicious so I recited those few verses to him. It was the morning of April 16; I remember it well. I always remember everything well. He invited me to succeed him as coach of the Boston Celtics. I accepted. *Oh me! Oh life!*

¹⁵ Thomas William Heinsohn (1934–2020), an American basketball player. He played for the Boston Celtics in the period from 1956 to 1965. He was one of the first suggestions for the Celtics coach when Red Auerbach was leaving the position. Bill Russell often spoke of his playing like of poetry.



7. GO UP FOR GLORY

6. oktobar 1976, Alamogordo, New Mexico

N ikada ranije nisam razmišljao o vremenu na taj način. O vremenu uopšte i vremenu u košarci. Red mi se javio posle više godina otkad smo prekinuli kontakt nakon moje poslednje utakmice u Celticsu u maju 1969.¹⁶ Te noći, nakon tesne pobede protiv Lakersa, nešto se prelomilo u meni – prekinuo sam sa Redom ali i sa Wiltom. Teško je ostati bez prijatelja, ali jednoga dana, oni se vrate nama ili mi njima. Redov telefonski poziv vratio mi je jedan izgubljeni deo života, pa sam bez mnogo razmišljanja prihvatio njegov poziv da otputujemo na otvaranje Muzeja istorije svemira u Novom Mexicu. Dok smo gledali veliku sliku sazvežđa Severnog neba, obojica smo bili zatečeni tim novim saznanjem o merenju vremena. Ne ovog našeg, nego onog drugog, zvezdanog. Pogledao sam na sat: bilo je 18 časova popodne. Taj podatak sam ubacio u mašinu koja je posetiocima muzeja bila ponuđena kao pomoć za izračunavanje zvezdanog vremena. Ubrzo sam na njenom ekranu video da je zapravo među zvezdama bilo 18h 31min. i 29sec. Red i ja smo u trenutku zaključili isto: u košarci bi trebalo drugačije razumeti vreme. Nisu naše četvrtine bile identične vremenu na časovnicima u sali, naših 48 minuta bilo je produženo drugačijim ritmom disanja i kretanja. Kasnije, u avionu, prisećao sam se tog pronalaženja drugačijeg vremena u svom životu. Zapravo, ja sam najveći deo svog vremena proveo iznad parketa, u vazduhu, u skokovima, od najranijih dana. Dok mi je stjuardesa nudila mineralnu vodu, setio sam se svog starog trenera sa koledža koji mi je prilazio u tajmoutu sa bocom vode i negodovao zbog mojih skokova. Ne, govorio je, zajebi više to! Smiri se. Ali ja nisam slušao – odlazio sam uvis. Ekstremno visoko. Ponekad opasno. Mogao sam tih dana da skočim preko svoje visine i blokiram svaku loptu. Moje ruke bile su iznad svih onih *mother fuckera* koji su se muvali pod košem. Tako sam vertikalnu igru doveo do igre koja je poznavala samo horizontalne kretnje. I baš na tom mestu izglobljavalo se vreme u košarci. Odskočio sam jednom, drugi put, i već treći skok me je poveo tamo odakle više nisam mogao da se vratim – u san. Tiho brujanje aviona se udaljavalo, pretvaralo u osipanje zvezdanog vremena. Video sam veliku plavu loptu iznad sebe, čitavu planetu sa kojom sam počeo da igram košarku. Izbio sam je iz ruku igraču ispod sebe i podigao je uvis, da bih i sam krenuo za njom. Čuo sam povike suigrača kako nestaju dole nisko, poda mnom. Teren se smanjivao, a plava lopta me je zvala gore, sve više, bio je to glas sirene košarke i ja sam morao da joj odgovorim. Igram sam basket tamo gde niko nikada pre mene sa loptom nije bio – u svemiru.

¹⁶ U pitanju je finalna utakmica koja je održana 6. maja 1969. između timova Boston Celtics i Los Angeles Lakers (108:106). Poslednja utakmica koju je Russell odigrao za Celtics, utakmica kada je narušio svoj odnos sa Redom Auerbachom i prekinuo dugogodišnje prijateljstvo sa svojim rivalom i prijateljem Wiltom Chamberlainom.

7. GO UP FOR GLORY

Alamogordo, New Mexico, October 6, 1976

I had never thought of time that way before. About time in general and time in basketball. Red phoned me many years after we had lost contact following my last game with the Celtics in May 1969.¹⁶ That night, after a close win against the Lakers, something broke inside me – I broke up with Red and also with Wilt. It’s hard to lose friends, but one day, they come back to us or we come back to them. Red’s phone call brought me back a lost part of my life, so without much thought, I accepted his invitation to travel with him to the opening of the Museum of Space History in New Mexico. As we looked at the large picture of the constellations of the Northern Sky, we were both taken aback by this new knowledge of time measurement. Not this one of ours, but the other one, the sidereal one. I looked at my watch: it was 6:00 p.m. I entered that data into the machine that was offered to museum visitors as an aid for calculating sidereal time. Soon I saw on its screen that it was actually 6 h 31 min. and 29 sec. among the stars. Red and I immediately came to the same conclusion: time should be understood differently in basketball. Our quarters were not identical to the time shown on the clocks in the hall. Our 48 minutes were extended by a different rhythm of breathing and moving. Later, on the plane, I reminisced about my own quest for a different time in my life. In fact, I spent most of my time above the floor, in the air, jumping from a very early age. As the flight attendant offered me mineral water, I remembered my former college coach who would come up to me with a bottle of water during a timeout and complain about my rebounds. “No”, he would say, “screw it! Take it easy.” But I wouldn’t listen to him – I would jump high. Extremely high. Sometimes dangerously high. In those days, I could jump over my height and block every ball. My hands were above all those *mother fuckers* who were buzzing under the basket. So, I brought the vertical play to a play that knew only horizontal movements. And that’s where the time in basketball was becoming distorted. I rebounded once, twice, and already the third jump took me to a place where I could no longer return – to my dream. The low hum of the plane was receding, turning into a scattering of sidereal time. I saw a big blue ball above me, the whole planet with which I started playing basketball. I knocked it out of the hands of the player below me and lifted it up, to go after it by myself. I heard my teammates’ shouts disappearing down there, below me. The court was getting smaller, and the blue ball was calling me up, higher and higher. I heard the voice of a basketball siren and I had to respond to it. I was playing basketball where no one before me had ever been with the ball – in the universe.

¹⁶ It was the final game between the Boston Celtics and the Los Angeles Lakers (108:106) that took place on May 6, 1969. The last game Russell played for the Celtics, the game when he strained his relationship with Red Auerbach and ended his long-time friendship with his rival and friend Wilt Chamberlain.





8. SPIRIT OF KILIMANJARO

12. februar 1946. West Monroe. Louisiana

Moja majka Katie imala je pet sestara. Više od svih voleo sam njenu najstariju sestru – tetku Any. Možda mi ne bi ostala u takvom sećanju, da poslednje dane života svoje majke nisam sa bratom Charliem proveo kod nje, iščekujući vesti iz Ouklanda gde je mama ležala u bolnici. Imala je probleme s bubrežima, a ja nisam tačno znao šta je to sve moglo da znači. Bio sam sklon da poverujem u priče svoje tetke, koja je sve to tumačila uticajem duhova bolesti. Bila je opsednuta nesrećnom sudbinom moje majke. Verovala je da bi samo prava molitva koja bi umilostivila crne duhove mogla da je vrati u svet zdravih. Pominjala je često neku rođaku, koja je nažalost davno umrla ali koja je, po porodičnom predanju, mogla da komunicira sa nevidljivim silama. Kod tetke Any u malom dnevnom boravku, koji je ujedno bio i kuhinja i spavaća soba za odrasle, na zidu je visila slika planine Kilimanjaro pod snegom. Zauzimala je dobar komad zida kao deo izgubljenog porodičnog sećanja na prapostojbinu. Jednom prilikom, kada nam je tata javio da se mama sve teže bori sa bolešću, čuo sam od tetke tu priču o svetoj planini i njenim vrhovima – Kibu, Mowenziji i Shiri. Kibo je bio uspavani vulkanski krater, rekla je, odatle je na svakih stotinak godina izlazio Kralj Uhuru kao duh koji je donosio spas ili kaznu. Svakome po zaslugi, zaključila je tetka Any. Možda bi samo on mogao da pomogne mojoj sestri, on i niko drugi. Samo više nije bilo nikog ko bi mogao da razgovara s njim. Pomislio sam tada, pa kako nema, kako to više nema... Zar nismo mi tu, spremni da krenemo na Kilimanjaro, ako treba. Te noći dugo nisam mogao da zaspim. Drhtao sam pod pokrivačem u groznici od molitve i temperature. Slike su se mešale, video sam majku i oca, naše staro dvorište na maloj farmi gde smo nekad živeli. Otac bi nas sve pozvao, a onda bi mu majka skočila na leđa, a brat i ja bismo se oklembesili o njegove raširene ruke. Bio je kralj našeg dvorišta, nosio nas je s lakoćom, a majka se smejala slobodno i ludo, uživajući u svakom njegovom koraku. Onda bi nestali majka i brat, a otac bi u mom snu počeo da se menja, da bih ga na kraju video kao nekog drevnog afričkog kralja kome je kruna od lijana i listova kaktusa padala na oči. Tata!, viknuo sam. On je malo zastao, odmerio me i rekao nekim ledenim glasom: Ja sam kralj Uhuru. A ko si ti? Ali tata, usprotivio sam se, nisi ti... Prestani da cmizdriš, prekorio me je popravljajući svoju krunu. Oko njega se kovitlao sneg kao ogrtač: Zašto si me zvao? Moja majka, jedva sam uspeo da kažem, bolesna je, teško, leži u bolnici... Znam, rekao je moj izmenjeni otac, sada kralj Uhuru: Bliži joj se kraj. Ugasiće se već sutra kao što su se ugasile moje sestre Mawenzia i Shira... Ne! Ne želim to!, vrisnuo sam: Spasi je, molim te! Dečake, opomenuo me je kralj Uhuru podigavši ruku, pogledaj malo oko sebe... Tada sam se okrenuo u pravcu koji je pokazao. Stajali smo na vrhu Kilimanjara, u snegu do kolena i gledali niz litice koje su menjale boje kako su se spuštale ka podnožju. Moj svet nestaje sve brže, rekao je kralj Uhuru, seku mi šume, uništavaju

8. SPIRIT OF KILIMANJARO

West Monroe, Louisiana, February 12, 1946

My mother Katie had five sisters. I loved most the eldest one – Aunt Any. She might not be my favorite one if I hadn't spent the last days of my mother's life at her place, together with my brother Charlie, expecting the news from Oakland where my mother had been hospitalized. She had kidney problems, and I didn't know exactly what that could mean. I was prone to believing the stories of my aunt, who interpreted it all as the work of illness spirits. She was obsessed with my mother's unfortunate fate. She believed that only the right prayer that would propitiate the black spirits could bring her back to the world of the healthy. Likewise, she would often mention a cousin of hers, who had, unfortunately, died a long time ago, but who could communicate with invisible forces according to the family story. There was a painting of Mount Kilimanjaro under the snow hanging on the wall of Aunt Any's small living room which was both a kitchen and bedroom for adults. It took up a large portion of the wall as a part of the lost family memory of the ancestral home. On one occasion, when my dad informed us that my mom was hardly struggling with the disease, my aunt told me the story of the sacred mountain and its peaks – Kibo, Mawenzi, and Shira. She said Kibo was a dormant volcanic crater, and around every hundred years, King Uhuru would come out of it as a spirit, bringing either salvation or punishment. "Judging on one's own merits", concluded aunt Any. "He might be the only one who could help my sister – he and no one else. But there was just no one left who could talk to him." At that point, I thought, how come there was nobody, and how come there was no one anymore... Weren't we there, ready to climb Kilimanjaro if needed? I couldn't fall asleep for long that night. I was shivering under the covers due to the fever coming from the prayer and temperature. In my mind, the images were mixing. I saw my mother and father, our old yard on the small farm where we used to live. Our father called all of us, and then my mother jumped on his back, whereas my brother and I clung to his outstretched arms. He was the king of our yard, he carried us with ease, and my mother was laughing freely and madly, enjoying his every move. Then my mother and brother disappeared, and my father started to change in my dream, and I ultimately saw him as some ancient African king whose crown made of lianas and cactus leaves was falling on his eyes. "Dad", I shouted. He paused a bit, gave me a stern look, and said in a strange, cold voice: "I'm King Uhuru. And who are you?" "But, dad", I objected, "you aren't..." "Stop whining", he rebuked me fixing his crown. The snow was swirling around him like a cloak: "Why did you call me?" "My mother", I barely managed to utter, "is very sick, she's in the hospital..." "I know", said my altered father, now King Uhuru. "Her end is near. She'll surrender herself to a death tomorrow, just like my sisters Mawenzia and Shira did..." "No! I don't want that!" I shouted. "Save her, please!" "Boy", King Uhuru

reke, šire granice ljudskih naseobina, guše me. Glupavi turisti hrle ka vrhovima starih planina i za sobom ostavljaju svoja konzervirana govna. Na kraju će nestati i moji glečeri.¹⁷ Bolest obuzima sve, Russ, shvati to. Odnela je moje sestre, odneće noćas i tvoju majku. Jednog dana će doći i po nas dvojicu... Instinktivno sam potražio njegovu ledenu ruku. Ali ko si ti?, pitao sam. Ja sam Uhuru, odgovorio mi je dok se njegova ruka topila u mojoj: Sloboda.¹⁸ Svakim danom, ima me sve manje. Nestaću sa ovim snegom, Russ.

¹⁷ Usled klimatskih promena, količina snega na Kilimanjaru smanjena je u periodu od 1912. do 2008. za 80 odsto. Prema izveštaju iz oktobra 2021, sneg bi mogao potpuno da se istopi u naredne dve decenije.

¹⁸ "Uhuru" na jeziku svahili znači "sloboda".

admonished me raising his hand. “Look around you...” Then I turned my head to where he was pointing. We were standing at the top of Kilimanjaro, knee-deep in snow, looking down at the cliffs changing colors as they descended toward the foothills. “My world is disappearing faster and faster”, said King Uhuru. “They’re cutting down my forests, destroying my rivers, expanding the borders of human settlements, suffocating me. Stupid tourists swarm up the peaks of old mountains and leave behind their canned shit. In the end, my glaciers¹⁷ will disappear as well. The disease is taking hold of everyone and everything, Russ, understand that. It took away my sisters, and it’ll take away your mother tonight as well. One day, it will also come to take away the two of us...” I instinctively searched for his icy hand. “But who are you?”, I asked. “I’m Uhuru”, he answered as his hand was melting in mine – “Freedom.¹⁸ Every day, there is less of me. I’ll be gone with this snow, Russ.”

17 Due to climate changes, the amount of snow on Kilimanjaro decreased by 80 percent between 1912 and 2008. According to the report from October 2021, the snow could completely melt within the next two decades.

18 “Uhuru” means “freedom” in the Swahili language.



9. GIANT STEPS

16. oktobar 1999. Los Angeles, California

Wilt¹⁹ je otišao kao što je i došao u moj život, trčeći sa loptom. I to što sam rekao na njegovoj sahrani, da ćemo nastaviti da *igramo u večnosti*, delovalo mi je besmisleno kasnije, u hotelu, kada sam ostao sam. Ležao sam na krevetu i osluškivao zvuk ventilacije. Morao sam da je isključim i da otvorim prozor kako bih osetio neku dublju tišinu koja nastupi kada nam ode prijatelj. U stvari, porazilo me je to što sam čuo od njegovog agenta Sya²⁰, koji je mi je prišao nakon ceremonije i rekao da sam bio drugi čovek na Wiltovom spisku koga je trebalo obavestiti o njegovoj smrti. Bio je to jedan od onih trenutaka kada čovek zanemi pred nečijom gestom. Klimnuo sam glavom Syu i nastavio da stojim oborenog pogleda. Svet se stišavao. Bio je ponovo tih, činilo mi se, kao tokom onih dvadeset godina koliko nisam govorio sa Wiltom. Od prelomne utakmice,²¹ poslednje koju sam odigrao za Celtics, a ispostavilo se i poslednje koju sam igrao sa Wiltom. Iako protiv njega, zapravo sam igrao s njim, ne sa Lakersima, bila smo tu samo nas dvojica, broj 6 i broj 13, ja besan a on sa povređenim kolenom. I ponovo sam se zapitao, jesam li zaista bio tako ohol da kažem kako se „izvukao“ iz utakmice jer je video da njegov tim gubi. Neki je novinar potvrdio da jesam. I Wilt je to čuo. Ali ja nisam reagovao. Ni tada, niti dvadeset potonjih godina. Čutanje nije zlato, kao što neki kažu, čutanje je propadanje u živo blato. U blatu nema igre, bar ne sa loptom. U blatu gubimo prijatelje. Blato nas okiva oko nogu. Najgore je belo blato. Osetio sam kako me ta slika iz krcate dvorane iz 1969. sve dublje gura u taj kal. Dok sam ležao na krevetu odeven i tonuo u jastuk, prvi put u životu sam osetio šta znači sanjati budan. Možda sam i halucinirao. Ne znam. Ali tu, u hotelskoj sobi, nadomak kreveta, jasno sam video naše dve figure. On je, iako viši od mene, bio dole, a ja kao i uvek gore, u vazduhu. On mi je dodavao usijanu loptu a ja sam se dvoumio da li da je preuzmem. Bili smo protivnici i, uprkos tome, prijatelji u jednom beskrajnom takmičenju za mesto šampiona, za mesto u Hall of Fame. Preuzmi, Russ!, viknuo je. Ne, odgovorio sam, ne treba mi tvoja lopta. Uzeću je sam! Ne možeš sam, opomenuo me je Wilt, i ovo nije lopta. Ovo je veće od nas... Dvoumio sam se. Bilo mi je teško da shvatim šta to znači, kada si s nekim u neprestanom nadmetanju a zapravo i nisi, već

19 Wilton Norman Chamberlain (1936–1999), američki profesionalni košarkaš. Sportsku karijeru je ostvario igrajući za timove Philadelphia/San Francisco Warriors (1959–1965) i Los Angeles Lakers (1968–1973). Većni rival Billa Russella.

20 Sy Goldberg, agent Wilta Chamberlaina.

21 Finalna utakmica koja je održana 6. maja 1969. između timova Boston Celtics i Los Angeles Lakers (108:106). Pred sam kraj utakmice, Wilt je povredio koleno, što je Russell prokomentarisao kao "manipulaciju" i pokušaj da se izvuče iz utakmice koju gubi. On je to video kao ličnu borbu između njih dvojice, što je Wilta povredilo. Nisu govorili dvadeset godina nakon toga, sve do trenutka dok mu se Russell nije izvinio. Tada su obnovili svoje prijateljstvo, koje je prekinuto preranim Wiltovim odlaskom.

9. GIANT STEPS

Los Angeles, California, October 16, 1999

Wilt¹⁹ left my life in the same way he entered it, running with the ball. And what I said at his funeral, that we would continue to play in eternity, seemed meaningless to me later, in the hotel, when I was all alone. I was lying on the bed and listening to the sound of the air conditioner. I had to turn it off and open the window to sense a deeper silence that follows once your friend is gone. In fact, I was devastated by what I'd heard from his agent Sy²⁰, who approached me after the ceremony and said that I was the second man on Wilt's list of people who needed to be informed of his death. It was one of those moments when one remains speechless at someone else's gesture. I nodded to Sy and kept on standing with my eyes downcast. The world grew quieter. It was quiet again. It seemed to me it was as quiet as it had been during those twenty years that I hadn't spoken to Wilt. Since that crucial game,²¹ the last one I played for the Celtics, which turned out to be the last one I played with Wilt. Although against him, I actually played with him, not with the Lakers. There were only the two of us, number 6 and number 13. I – furious, and he – with an injured knee. And once again I wondered if I had really been so arrogant to say that he “got out” of the game because he had seen that his team had been losing. Some journalist confirmed that I had behaved so. And Wilt heard my words too. But I didn't react. Neither then, nor in the twenty years since. Silence isn't golden as some people say. Silence means falling into the sinking mud. There's no play in the mud, at least not with the ball. We lose friends in the mud. The mud binds our feet. The worst is white mud. I felt that the image from the 1969 overcrowded hall was pushing me deeper and deeper into that mire. While I was lying on the bed still dressed and sinking into the pillow, for the first time in my life I felt what it means to daydream. I might have been hallucinating. I don't know. But there, in the hotel room, close to my bed, I clearly saw our two figures. He, although taller than me, was down, and I, as always, was up, in the air. He was passing me a burning ball, and I was hesitating to take it. We were two opponents, and yet, friends in a never-ending competition for the champion's position, the place in the Hall of Fame. “Take over, Russ!”, he shouted. “No”, I replied, “I don't need your ball. I'll take

19 Wilton Norman Chamberlain (1936–1999), an American professional basketball player. He had a sports career playing for the Philadelphia/San Francisco Warriors (1959–1965) and Los Angeles Lakers (1968–1973). Bill Russell's eternal rival.

20 Sy Goldberg, Wilt Chamberlain's agent.

21 The final game was held between the Boston Celtics and the Los Angeles Lakers (108:106) on May 6, 1969. Near the end of the game, Wilt injured his knee, which Russell commented as Wilt's “manipulation” and attempt to get out of the game he was losing. He saw it as a personal fight between the two of them, which hurt Wilt. They did not speak for twenty years after the incident, until the moment Russell apologized to Wilt. Then they renewed their friendship, which was cut short by Wilt's untimely departure.

u nekom odnosu u kome najveći rival postaje naš učitelj. Wilt je bio to. Sve vreme. Učitelj i najozbiljniji protivnik kog sam imao na parketu. U Japanu bi ga zvali *sensej* – jedini pravi učitelj, koji nam nikada neće dozvoliti da ga pobedimo u onome čemu nas je podučavao. A ja sam iskoristio njegovu povredu kolena da ga nadmašim na toj finalnoj utakmici pre trideset godina. Još sam ga i ponizio. Takve greške nas okamene i nama treba mnogo godina, mnogo vremena tišine da se izlečimo od povrede koju smo naneli prijatelju.

it by myself!” “You can’t do it by yourself”, Wilt reminded me. “And this isn’t a ball. This is larger than the two of us...” I hesitated. It was hard for me to understand what it meant when you’re constantly competing against someone when actually you’re not, but you’re in a sort of relationship in which your biggest rival becomes your teacher. Wilt was the one. All the time. A teacher and the greatest opponent I had on the floor. In Japan, he would be called *sensei* – the only true teacher, who would never allow you to defeat him in what he was teaching you. And I used his knee injury to outplay him in that final game thirty years ago. I even humiliated him. Such mistakes petrify you and you need many years, a long period of silence to heal from the hurt that you caused to your friend.



10. THE LAST CALL

11. maj 2011. White House, Washington, D.C.

Sa godinama čoveku dosade mnoge stvari, postaje zaboravan, čak i oni koji se sećaju svega kao ja, posustanu. U zadnje vreme, najdosadniji su mi govori političara koji treba da mi dodele neko priznanje. Naročito kad krenu u hvalospjev o nečemu za šta nikada pre nisu čuli, niti ih je zanimalo. A ja dođem, odsedim neko vreme, spustim se malo u kolenima kako bi mi okačili medalju i odem. Za svaki slučaj, kao lek protiv dremeža u takvim prilikama, ostavim telefon u džepu sakoa podešen samo na vibraciju. Naštelujem vreme predviđeno za njihov govor, tako da mirno mogu i da zadremam. Uvek se prenem od tihe vibracije iz džepa, žmirnem i pogledam gde smo, je l došao red na mene. Tako je bilo i danas kod predsednika Obame na svečanoj dodeli Medalje slobode. Sedeo sam iza njegovih leđa dok je on nešto pričao o prvom Afro-Amerikancu na mestu trenera u NBA. Prekrstio sam obe noge i pravio se da ga pomno slušam, a u stvari već posle pola minuta sam otputovao. Više ne znam da li je to moj telefon bio pogrešno podešen pa se tiho oglasio iz džepa mnogo ranije nego što je trebalo. Bilo mi je neugodno pa sam brže-bolje posegao za njim. Halo, javio sam se znajući da je to samo alarm i da s druge strane svakako nema nikoga. Halo, rekao je neki stari, meni dobro znani ženski glas: Halo, Bill. Gde si ti, do đavola...? Ja sam, kako bih rekao, u Beloj Kući, odgovorio sam pokušavajući da dozovem sliku te namrštene žene iz svog detinjstva. Kakvoj beloj, Bill? Kakvoj sad kući? Pa Beloj, rekao sam ne znajući šta da dodam jer me je talas nelagode već potpuno preplavio. Moje telo se setilo nečega brže od mog uma. Steglo me je u grlu, pa sam izgovorio doslovno istu rečenicu kao pre toliko godina: Šta..., šta se to dogodilo, tetka Any? Nastupilo je dugo ćutanje... Tvoja majka, Bill... Umrta je... Jutros... Javili su iz Ouklanda. Nisam stigla da pročitam onu molitvu... Ja sam ćutao i zamišljao dnevnu sobu svoje tetke, moćni Kilimanjaro na zidu, kalendar za 1946. sa slikama Američkog ratnog vazduhoplovstva... A moj otac?, pitao sam, šta je s njim? Otišao je po nju... Rekla sam da ćemo je sahraniti ovde. Sirota Katie, ništa nije stigla za života... Ali tetka Any, pokušao sam da joj objasnim, ja sam sada kod kralja Uhuru... Mogao bih da ga zamolim da je vrati... Ne budi glup, Bill. Ti si sada odrastao muškarac, iako imaš tek dvanaest... Uhuru je samo moja priča... Sad moraš da odrasteš, i da pratiš tu svoju loptu koju držiš pod krevetom. Ali ja ne mogu..., zavapio sam. Moraš, Bill!, zapovedila je tetka strogim glasom: Moraš! To bi i tvoja majka želela. Da izguraš tu stvar do kraja. Je l me čuješ? Ah, tetka Any, skoro sam zaplakao, pa ti ne znaš koliko je to stvari u mom životu..., čitave planine su preda mnom. Moraš da naučiš da skačeš, Bill, rekla je tetka odlučno: I to visoko. Jebeno visoko! A ta tvoja bela kuća nije mesto za to. Definitivno.

10. THE LAST CALL

White House, Washington, D.C., May 11, 2011

With age, one gets bored with many things. One becomes forgetful, and even those who remember everything like me, start falling behind. Lately, the speeches of politicians who need to present me with a certain award are the most annoying to me. Especially when they start a eulogy about something they've never heard of before, nor have they been interested in. And I come, sit for a while, kneel a little so that they can hang a medal around my neck and I leave. Just in case, as an antidote to dozing on such occasions, I leave my phone in my jacket pocket set to vibrate only. I set the time allotted for their speech so that I can take a nap. The silent vibration I feel in my pocket always startles me from my dream, I squint and look around to see where we are, and whether it's my turn. It was the same today with President Obama at the Medal of Freedom ceremony. I was sitting behind him while he was talking about the first African-American head coach in the NBA. I crossed my legs and pretended to listen to him carefully, but in fact, half a minute later, my mind started wandering. I don't know anymore if it was my phone that was set up wrong so it rang quietly out of my pocket much earlier than it should have. I felt uncomfortable so I reached for it as quickly as possible. "Hello", I answered knowing that it was just an alarm and that there was definitely no one on the other end. "Hello", said an old, well-known female voice: "Hello, Bill. Where the hell are you...?" "I'm in the White House, so to speak", I replied trying to evoke the image of that frowning woman from my childhood. "What white, Bill? What kind of house?" "Well, White", I said, not knowing what else to add, since a wave of uneasiness had already overflowed me. My body remembered something faster than my mind. My throat tightened, so I repeated literally the same sentence I had uttered all those years ago: "What..., what happened, Aunt Any?" There was a long silence... "Your mother, Bill... She died... This morning... They called from Oakland. I didn't get to read that prayer..." I was silent and imagined my aunt's living room, the mighty Kilimanjaro on the wall, a calendar for 1946 with pictures of the American Air Force... "And my father?", I asked, "what happened to him?" "He went to get her... I said we'll bury her here. Poor Katie, she didn't live up to make much of her life..." "But Aunt Any", I tried to explain to her that I was with King Uhuru at that moment... "I could ask him to bring her back..." "Don't be stupid, Bill. You're now a grown man, although you're only twelve... Uhuru is just my story... Now you need to grow up, and follow that ball of yours that you keep under the bed." "But I can't...", I wailed. "You have to, Bill!", my aunt commended in a stern voice: "You have to! That's what your mother would want too. To get that thing done all the way through. Do you hear me?" "Oh, Aunt Any", I was about to weep, "but don't you see that it means so many things in my life? Entire mountains lie before me." "You must learn to jump, Bill", said my aunt firmly: "High. Fucking high! And that White House of yours is not a place for it. Definitely."



Kataloški podaci/Catalog data:

01	A 087 40x30 cm 2022
02	A 094 30x40 cm 2021
03	A 065 40x30 cm 2020
04	A 070 27x39 cm 2020
05	A 055 23x31 cm 2020
06	A 095 40x30 cm 2022
07	A 064 31x23 cm 2020
08	A 078 40x30 cm 2021
09	A 077 40x30 cm 2020
10	A 085 40x30 cm 2021
11	A 076 40x30 cm 2020

Svi akvareli su rađeni na Hahnemühle 300 g/m² Fine grain; 100% cotton paper; Natural white; Sold per piece; Acid-free;

All watercolors are made on 300 g/m² fine-grained Hahnemühle®; 100% cotton paper; natural white; sold per piece; acid-free.

Hvala/Special thanks to:

Nina Todorović, Ivan Stanić, Saša Ilić, Biljana Jović, Zoran Sremčević, Marko Granić, Ivana Miljković, Dragana Rašić Vuković, Nenad Malešević, Aleksandar Kecman, Nikola Mijušković, Mark Brogan, Radenko Milak, Ksenija Samardžija, Slobodan Jovanović.

Sponzori/Sponsors:



FONDACIJA
SAŠA MARČETA

МУЗЕЈ
ПРИМЕЊЕНЕ
УМЕТНОСТИ



IMPRESUM

IZDAVAČ/PUBLISHER:

PREDRAG TERZIĆ

ТЕКСТ/STORY BY:

SAŠA ILIĆ

PREVOD/TRANSLATION BY:

DRAGANA RAŠIĆ VUKOVIĆ

FOTOGRAFIJA/PHOTOGRAPHY BY:

NENAD MALEŠEVIĆ

DIZAJN/DESIGN BY:

NINA TODOROVIĆ

ŠTAMPA/PRINTING BY:

KOTUR I OSTALI D.O.O.

TIRAŽ/CIRCULATION:

200

CIP - Каталогизacija у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

75.071.1:929 Терзић П.(083.824)
75.023.2(497.11)“20”(083.824)
821.163.41-36

ТЕРЗИЋ, Предраг, 1972-

Razloga nemam, al' opet sam spreman = I have no reason, but I'm still ready for the season : Коларчева задужбина, 20. septembar - 8. oktobar 2022./September 20 - October 8, 2022 / Predrag Terzić ; tekst, story by Saša Ilić ; [prevod, translation by Dragana Rašić Vuković]. - [Beograd] : P. Terzić, 2022 ([Beograd] : Kotur i ostali D.O.O.). - 60 str. : reprodukcije ; 25 cm

Upredo srp. tekst i engl. prevod. - Tiraž 200.

ISBN 978-86-904676-0-0

1. Илић, Саша, 1972- [аутор]
а) Терзић, Предраг (1972-) - Акварели - Изложбени каталози

COBISS.SR-ID 74500105

WWW.TERZICPREDRAG.COM



978-88-904876-0-0