

TODAY IS NOT TUESDAY

by Andrej Ivanuša

In the evening before going to bed, Erica asked herself when her George will stumble home at last. He wouldn't often get drunk on weekends. But still, now that he was in pension, she was slightly more worried about him.

“What if he tripped somewhere all drunk, hurt himself and now lies in a puddle of blood. She would nervously peep at the house telephone and constantly expect it to ring. Here and there she pulled the cellphone out of her tracksuit pocket and make sure it was turned on, had ringing volume set, and that the battery wasn't empty. She imagined getting a call from the police or the hospital, asking if George is her husband, because he is... She was tempted to call her son Tony and ask him to make sure that... She shook her head to dispel dark thoughts.

Of course she didn't like him roaming around with friends and ex-coworkers. But if she didn't let him, he'd be moody and grumpy the whole week. So she rather endured one day than having to go through a week of his crankiness. And he tried to make up for it every Saturday afternoon anyway.

In the bedroom, she set the alarm clock on the radio and listened to the music with half an ear. She changed to pajamas and still thought about it.

“But it was the same last week,” she thought to herself. “He’ll surely wobble back by midnight.”

She consoled herself that so far nothing bad has happened. And neither will this time! At least he didn’t get violent when he got drunk. He just quickly fell asleep and she would often find him snoring on the living room sofa, covered with his coat. Then she treated him all afternoon. Well, better yet, his hangover.

As she got into bed, she started to think less and less about this whole situation. She was more worried about everything she had to do the next day. She listened to music that lulled her to sleep. Tired, she started drowsing and half-asleep, right before dozing off; she heard some words of a reporter, saying:

“... The sky over Chicago was lit up by an extraordinary object ... eye-witnesses say ... bright light ... high-pitched buzz, like the sound of a bee swarm ...”

The alarm clock automatically switched off after a while when Erica was already fast asleep.

Rumbling and smothered cursing woke her up. It was already bright in the room. She quickly rose from bed and checked the time.

“Seven!?” she looked in astonishment. She threw off the blanket, put on the slippers and grasped the dressing gown. She was putting it on while walking and opening doors, but suddenly stopped short. There, in the middle of the living room, stood her George. Somewhat different at a glance. Drunk? No! Then ... uneasy? Puzzled? Yes, that’s it! He seemed absent. He looked towards her. Their eyes met. His look! He was scared to death!

“George! What happened to you?” she whispered. He stroked his bald skull and nape, covered with thin hair. He sighed. Then he got perplexed and looked down. He mumbled, more to himself:

“They kidnapped me!”

“What?!” She didn’t believe her ears. He cleared his throat and repeated, this time louder:

“I was kidnapped!” He swiftly raised his head.

She opened her mouth in surprise, not knowing what to think of it. Surely ... he can’t be drunk! Has he gone mad or what? She stared at him and observed his face. Then she realized that, surprisingly, his cheeks were covered with a few days old stubble.

“How ... is this possible?” she thought, “But he shaved yesterday morning!”

Before she could ponder over anything, though, he fell into her arms and burst into tears. He snuggled up to her, sobbing, like a spooked child.

“There, there! It’s alright now, George!” she comforted him. “It’s all fine now! You’re home.”

Abruptly, he moved away, wiped his tears and said:

“Nothing’s fine! Don’t you get it? The abducted me!”

“Who abducted you? When?”

George shriveled and made a gesture with his hand towards the ceiling:

“They! They abducted me!”

Erica shuddered as she realized what else has been disturbing her. His smell. He smelled ... stank ... She didn’t know how to explain it. His odor was very peculiar, something she had never smelled before.

“Who abducted you?” she absently repeated the question.

“A ... Aliens!” he stuttered.

She gave him an astonished look.

“He must have lost his mind!” it struck her. Her thoughts were like a torrential current, she was thinking so fast.

“Come!” she said, put her arm around his shoulders and gently placed him on the sofa in the living room. She sat by him and held his hand. She saw his absent look and felt he’s trembling. She caressed his arm.

“George ...,” she began. He nervously moved away his arm and said:

“You don’t believe me!”

“George ...,” she repeated. He waved his arm in front of her face and then he let it out:

“Such, little men ... I can’t describe them! You know! They took me four days ago and led me ...” She put her finger on his lips and stared in his eyes in surprise. Searching for madness inside him. But they were clear and pure and still terrified. She said slowly:

“I’d believe it if our Tony was saying such things. You know, all crazy about science fiction, reading those books and watching space movies. But ... you?” George shrugged his shoulders. He wanted to say something, but kept quiet.

“You’re drunk,” she exclaimed and nodded. She tried to convince herself that her George isn’t mad, but only drunk, blind drunk!

“I’m not drunk!” he objected. “I was drunk on Friday night, I admit. Then ... when I went ... home. Then ... those little men with bulging black fishy eyes abducted me. They torturing me for four days. Four days! For what I know, they have dissected me like a frog and then rebuilt ... Yes, yes! They rebuilt me like a Lego brick robot!”

She was quietly listening and started to swing back and forth.

“He’s gone mad!” she was thinking straight, as he was speaking. Only the end surprised her.

“They rebuilt you like a ... Lego brick robot?!” she asked.

“Yep!” he nodded. “They experimented on me, turned me inside out, took apart and rebuilt, like I’m a toy figurine.” Now, as he talked, he was regaining his composure. But so did he regain the memories he tried to forget about.

Erica moved away from him. She was listening quietly.

“Friday night, they took me with a flying saucer. And pfft – some kind of a beam pulled me up, to them ...”

“Friday was yesterday,” she said and again moved some inches away from him. This piece of information appeared to have confused him:

“Isn’t today Tuesday?”

“No, today is Saturday!”

“Saturday?” he exclaimed. “Can’t be!” He quickly grabbed his cellphone from a bag behind his belt. He took it out, turned it on and stared at the screen. Triumphantly, he looked up and showed it to her.

She was staring at it with eyes wide open. Without a doubt, the screen showed date and time: Tuesday, seven thirty. She turned and looked at his face. With a trembling hand, she caressed the four day stubble on his cheek.

“Maybe ...,” she thought and moved away the hand as if she had burned her fingers. She remembered the words of the reporter she heard yesterday before falling asleep. This was all too much for her.

“Yesterday was Friday and today is Saturday,” she repeated absently. “You went out yesterday ...”

He watched her for some time and again checked his cell phone.

“I don’t understand how’s this possible!” he said quietly more to himself. “Damn it! I was there. I really was ... four days!”

“George, if you say so, it must be true!” she said calmly. She swiftly stood up to get herself together.

“I’ll prepare us breakfast!”

He stared at her and kept looking at the screen of his cell phone. Vacantly, he said:

“Great, please do, I’m really hungry as a bear!”

Erica went to the kitchen and started rummaging.

But she kept shaking more and more and finally a coffee cup she was just putting on the table slipped through her hands. It fell on the floor and shattered.

“Erica? Is anything the matter?” George cried out.

He entered the kitchen a moment later, quickly reviewed the situation, nimbly pushed her away and bowed down as if he were young again. He picked up the shattered pieces in no time and tossed them in the trash. When he was done, he noticed that she was staring at him.

“What is it, Erica?”

“What about your back?”

“What about it?”

“Well ... doesn’t it hurt anymore?”

Now George realized as well that he bowed down without any pain in his back or his knees. Something he has not done since the retirement. He felt rejuvenated. He didn’t feel any pain anywhere. And his sight and hearing ... they were refined and keen. He was overwhelmed by a wave of inexpressible joy, when he realized what happened.

They were just eating breakfast. Erica was slowly gnawing buttered bread and sipped coffee. George was gorging on everything she had found in the fridge. He emptied it entirely and wasn't ready to stop. And he kept talking all the time. His memories started coming back. He told her every little detail.

At the end he had told so much that it was simply too much for her. She accepted everything, no matter what he said. And it didn't matter! The only thing that worried her was what's going to happen when George start sharing the story of his adventure with the others.

But in just a few days, she couldn't care less about what the others have to say. Her George! Every evening since, he'd take her to the bedroom with a naughty smile. Even the fact that she was younger didn't help her keeping up with him.

What she dearly wished for now was that she too was kidnapped by the extraterrestrials and turned inside out. She thought about how would be to be rebuilt like a Lego brick robot and ... reinvigorated.

