

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

GORAN VOJNOVIĆ
SOUTHERN SCUM GO
HOME!

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Goran Vojnović: Southern Scum Go Home!

Who is scum? Scum is a person who lives in the territory of a certain country, but does not belong to the ethnic majority there. In our case this refers to those who come from any place south or east of the river Kolpa. In most cases their descendents are also considered scum. In their physiognomy they differ from the majority population by their low forehead, thick joined-up eyebrows, high cheekbones and a strong lower jaw. Their main behavioural characteristics are: they love an easy life, they swear, they like alcohol, women and football. They adore kitsch and gold jewellery. They are into martial arts and are frequently aggressive without any real reason. In most cases their period of acclimatisation is a lengthy one.

from the song Čefur by Robert Pešut Magnifico*

** the word Čefur in the original is a derogatory term used in Slovenia*

Čefur – an immigrant from the southern republics of ex Yugoslavia' (20th century), also in written form čifur, čufur, čefurka, čifurka, čufurka, čefurski, čifurski, čufurski, all derogatory. Probably from Croatian or Serbian Čift, Čivut meaning 'Jew', in most uses in these languages a derogatory description of a member of the Jewish nation. In Slovene the ending –ur, rather than the original –ut, has been adopted in line with other derogatory terms such as nemčur (instead of nemeč) – derogatory for a person of German origin.

Marko Snoj, Slovene Etymological Dictionary

Southern scum go home!

a popular graffiti slogan on the streets of Ljubljana (orig. Čefurji raus!)

Why I Haven't Got A Team

I haven't got my own team! This is really what bugs me most! If I lived in Belgrade, I would support Red Star and be a true fan. A Delija throughout my life! If I lived in Sarajevo I'd have been a Maniac, a FC Željezničar fan. But all that is real fucked up here. You can't support Olimpija if, like me, you play for our local FC Slovan. You can't just say you're a Slovan fan, 'cos that just sound crap. It's a fuckall of a club. What does playing for them make me? A Red Tiger? Well! What the fuck! Slovan footballers play in the third league and their grounds have a standing capacity of one thousand. But Olimpija is a club for mummies' and daddies' spoilt brats. Only up town fags play there. It is not that I don't support Olimpija, but no money in the world would persuade me to become a Green Dragon. I don't know why! It's just not right! Fuckit! Maybe the real problem is that I'm southern scum. But it is also because I'm scum that it really bugs me that I haven't got a team. It's in my blood. This need for a team for which I could get into a fight with anyone who'd say any shit about it.

I think my Slovene schoolmates don't really care that they haven't got a team. They don't give a shit. But me ... this really gets to me, so much that I think I really need to do someone in to get it off my chest. There is no sodding tradition here. If you're born in Barcelona, your parents buy you a Ronaldinho kit, a club season ticket and take you to Camp Nou every Sunday to watch the match with Real. After that you go to matches all your life. When you get married you take your wife along, then your kids, your grandchildren and so on. And Barca is the law! If anyone just mentions Real or Ronaldo, they've had it! No questions. Get him! If you come to school in an Eto'o kit you are in. If you wear Raul you are fucked. Not like here where you can come into school with an Olimpija shirt with Cimirotič written all over it and still be cool. Or you can walk through the main square in Ljubljana wearing a rival Maribor kit and no one will do your face in.

My old man, Radovan Đorđić, is a Red Star fan. I was too, when I was a kid and watched over and over all of Radovan's taped old matches from when they were world champions. Stojanović, Radinović, Najdovski, Šabanađović, Belodedić, Jugović, Prosinečki, Savičević, Binić, Mihajlović, Pančev. I watched them against Milan, when it was one nil to Red Star and the match was stopped due to fog. In the repeat match they were out on penalties. I watched them against Cologne, when the goalie Stojanović was injured and the reserve Milojević let in three goals in the second half. Then they finally shook off this run of bad luck and went through the lot to win the European championship. Ranka, my mum, told me that it was real crazy at our flat during the championship, full of people. The old man's mates, ageing scum. All supported Red Star in the style of everybody watching the match peacefully with the occasional smart ass commenting on this or that and then you'd suddenly get a: »Comeooooooooon! Shit no! Selfish motherfucker! Fuck you, you idiotic twat! What a loser! Unbefuckinlievable!« And then all sank back into contemplative mood until the next opportunity for Red Star. The old man is actually Bosnian, but a Serb and has been a Red Star fan since birth, even travelling to matches in Belgrade and Sarajevo to support the team. I can't

be a Delija. Don't know why not. It's all complicated to fuck's degree. OK, I support Red Star, but can't say it is my team ... no way ... no point in that is there? That's for Belgradians. If you are cool, you support your local team. But Ljubljana is a strange town.

It might be because I'm southern scum. If I was a Slovene, I'd sit at home and support Olimpija. I'd probably also go to ice-hockey matches. My father Janez would sit with me and calmly explain how Olimpija were national basketball champions in the 1970's and how, in the 80's, they once drew with Red Star who were World Champions and how they then played with Milan in a match that was Marco van Basten's last game with the team and Olimpija lost 3:0 only. That's it. If you once supported a team that were world champions, then you can't just switch and get excited about draws, honourable defeats, Champions League pre-qualifiers, the Slovenian Cup or the high score against FC Fuckin'Nowhere. Fuck it, you just can't. OK, I supported the Olimpija basketball team when they were in the Final Four in Rome and when they were taking apart Panathinaikos with Dominique Wilkins and Kinder with Predrag Danilović ... but when they started losing with minor local teams that was too much to take. This inborn tradition just doesn't exist here. It is the southern scum in me. Either you're the best in the world or, as Radovan would say, 'you just go sharpen pencils'.

My mates support Red Star. Dejan supports it. And Aco too. But their parents are Serbs. From Serbia. We Bosnians see things differently. Radovan can't stand these chetniks, Serbian nationalists such as Arkan, or his wife, the popular singer Ceca, or the basketball player Gurović with his tattoo of the chetnik leader Draža Mihajlović, or the fact that Red Star has become a team that now has to play in Champions League qualifiers, just like Olimpija. It's shit. Dejan wears his red scarf and goes off to Red Star matches with the Fins, Hungarians, Estonians and other such wankers. Aco hits for Croats, but I just watch matches with Germany. This I got from one of my old man's mates, who changed allegiance from Dinamo Zagreb to Red Star and then kept explaining how very different the teams are and how the people in them are quite the opposites. Before the Champions league draw, those in Zagreb awkwardly ponder: »You know guys, it would really be great if we do not get the Germans in the first round. It means we can get through to the second round ... just as long as we don't get the Germans.« At the same time at Red Star they boast: »Hope it's the Germans. We'll fuck the Krauts and their mothers like in forty-five. We'll score at least five against 'em!« It is not that the Germans totally walked over them in the end, but your chances are better if you start the match with balls. That is what I bet on. You can't give a shit about a game where all you can expect is an honourable defeat. This is not the mentality. That is why Aco, Dejan and me, and we sometimes drag Adi along too, get together and support the Yugo team. We have our God. That is the basketball player Dejan Bodiroga! In basketball we all support the same team. I can't be bothered with other shit such as volleyball or water polo. Footie and basketball. Perhaps the occasional handball. All the rest is real crap.

Fužine should have its own footie club. That'd be something! There are twenty thousand of us. All the illegals included thirty thousand. And that is not counting the junkies. FC Fužine. That is the real point ain't it? Either you support a big club that plays for the world championship title, or a small, local, neighbourhood, marginal team that loses all its games and it's all great

fun when a hundred or so gather at each game and do someone in when they all get pissed afterwards. Ljubljana is sort of in between a town and a village and its teams are sort of in between good ones and zilch. FC Fužine would be the solution. One could get into that. Fužine ... neat!

For a while it looked like we might even get a club. Every Sunday the older guys set up their goal posts on the local playground and played. On the perimeters pensioners played chess, someone brought a boot full of beer and the stands were full of kids and older scum with the excuse that they cannot play ball 'cause they have a knee injury or some shit or the like. The other point; not a woman in sight and not a word of Slovene heard. Only Matej the postman played, so everyone called him Slovenac as he was the only one that wasn't southern scum. Similarly the caretaker Vlado was called Tuđman after the president of Croatia. Just because he was from Slavonski Brod. No one gave a shit he wasn't even a Croat. Smajlagić was called Janša after the Slovenian PM, 'cause he once, long before Janša went into politics, demonstrated to let him out of the slammer. And so they played. It was great fun. We'd go along to watch and laugh at our old men. It was hilarious listening to those who had learnt some Slovene, forgotten some scum and sort of spoke a mishmash mixture of the two. Fužine language. You'd get stuff like: »Pass me z ballu! I've do my ankle bad! My back it is twitchy hurt!« And on top of this all the racist insults that showered in bursts of laughter from these caretakers, plumbers, drivers, conductors, builders and all the other scum from Fužine, all of them full of socio-political connotations of what was once common territory: »Shoot you Slovene bastard! You clumsy Ustasha idiot! Are you Bosnians stupid or just dumb? I am here alone by the goal, but you can't fuckin' see me!«

Then it all fell through. Even those cripples don't play chess any more. FC Fužine is no longer an option. FC Olimpija also fell apart and is no more. It's all crazy. Can you imagine Barca falling apart? Or Bayern? Or Liverpool? People would go out into the streets. There would be demonstrations. Parliaments would be stormed. All responsible would be hung by their balls. Not here. The largest football club in the country dissolves and no one gives a damn. If the National Philharmonic was closed, artists would go on and on about tradition and culture and all that. But if you fuck up a team against which Marco van Basten played his last game, it doesn't matter. They are only sportsmen anyway. Dumb, uneducated, uncultured. Only southern scum play footie anyway. They all have short wonky legs. This is the fucking mentality. No respect. How can one get enthusiastic about something everyone else despises? And then they go on about assimilation. This takes time. Workers come from ex Yugo and you want them to learn about your poets and writers. What else? As if they gave a toss about any of their own poets back home. I want to be into a team. But I can't. There you have it. And so part of my Slovenian identity is under pressure. As is my scum identity. How am I supposed to assimilate and become a sort of Slovenian if I ain't even got a team. Just not possible. And this bugs me.

Why We Got Into A Fight After The End Of The Final

No fuck in the whole world can really compare to a buzzerbeater in the final. OK, perhaps a fuck with Angelina Jolie. But Brad Pitt for sure can't remember every fuck with Angelina, while Michael Jordan certainly remembers all his buzzerbeaters in the NBA finals. Fuck it, that's a fact. I must tell all of you who were at it when I scored against Olimpija in the last second of the National Championships, even if you were pumping J.Lo with her fat arse, that at that moment I was the daddy. The Best! And there is no way I would exchange that feeling for a threesome with the sexy singers Severina and Ceca. Well, perhaps for them I might, but not for any other threesome in the whole world. I'm not kidding. A buzzerbeater is better than a fuck and that is it!

I was real nervous. More than ever in my entire life. 'It was unbelibavle', as my komšija Senad would say. I was real worked up throughout the game, 'cos these cockarses brats from Olimpija really get on my nerves, so much I want to puke when I see them. With their new Air Jordans at every match. You always get those players on the court whose parents are in the stands and push free ski passes to the coach, or their companies sponsor the team and they are board members. I'm not saying Slovan is a cool team. But Olimpija is real shit! I mean real shit! Instead of a coach they've got this fat pig, blown up like a balloon! No wonder you're a nervous wreck when you play against them. Your hands sweat and you feel shaky. And the referees keep blowing the whistle in their favour, so you really want to start head butting all of them, thieving cunts! Then there's our coach, a total idiot with a voice you can't possibly hear in a full arena, so all you see is his idiotic grimace from the perimeter, as if it might explode. You know exactly what he is shouting and would really like to tell him where to stick it. He hasn't got a clue and talks total bullshit. On top of all this I get Radovan attending the game, shouting nonstop from the stands, despite knowing bugger all about basketball as he only ever played footie. But he thinks he knows everything and I can hear him screaming during the game: »Marko! Maaarkoooo! Go get the ball! Watch their forward! Centre the ball!«, and such gibberish. And you get those pathetic Olimpija fans shouting: »He ain't got it! No way - he'll miss! He fucked up!«, specially when their daddies begin letting out their typical Slovene warnings: »Sebastiaaaaan, do not allow him to outplay you with a crossover dribble!«. Crossover dribble my cock across his stupid face! Then you get the ball, you rush towards the basket and shoot the ball somewhere. Anywhere, fuck knows where!

And the ball falls into the basket. You don't even know how yourself. It is all a blur anyway, but you have won. And that's that, fuck it! And you see the perplexed face of Sebastian's bird, the guy who tried to block you, but you outplayed him with a crossover dribble as you showed him the finger and screamed into his ear that you'll pull your pants down and show him how he can go fuck himself. We're the best! We're the best! All the tension disappears, adrenalin starts pumping and you become an animal, or 'an aminal', as my komšija Senad would say! You let out an animal roar and hit into something with all your strength. Anything that happens to be in front of you and if you're lucky it isn't a concrete wall 'cos you'd probably injure yourself. You run up and down the court shouting until your vocal chords start to fail

you. We are the best, the best! You hug and embrace your totally sweaty teammates, hit each other on the shoulders, jump up and down, throw yourself on the floor, jump up again and release all the crazy energy. We're the best! We're the best!

That is actually a Red Star fan chant. Our team started using it after a match in the Pionir Arena in Belgrade when a fan ran out onto the court towards the end of a match in which Red Star were losing, and started jerking off in front of the best player of the Italian team, some black dude, with all the fans shouting: »We're the best! We're the best! We're trash! We're trash!« This scummish primitivism, fucked up, vulgar, repulsive and sick, Balkan morbid narcissism is in a strange way always really cool when something as raw and animalistic as this is happening to you or when you are totally wasted. This is something in our genes, at least in us scum. So you shout » We're the best! We're the best! We're trash! We're trash!« And everyone else in the locker rooms joins in, even the Slovenes. They towel snap each other on their naked butts, jump around, pull faces. When those white and green wankers went past I shouted into somebody's face » We're the best! We're the best! We're trash! We're trash!« All he did was push me aside, but that was enough to start it off. It was the best punch up of my life. We kicked their asses real good. Smashed up their poncy ass faces!

Why, Thanks To Radovan, We Ended Our Celebrations In A Meat Wagon

The cops came thanks to Radovan. I am sure of that. It was bound to happen and I knew it would before I went out, plus the fact that Rile and Krstić came round. I imagine they were playing real loud classic popular Serbian singers Miroslav Ilić or Šaban Šaulić or some other golden oldie that Radovan has the original tapes of. He gets them out every time he is hammered. Then they wail along: 'Come and we'll grow old together!' We even toasted before I left, me with lime cordial and them with some really fierce rakija that he had brought from Bosnia yonks ago and was saving for a special occasion. Of course with him it's a special occasion every time he gets hammered. It is not that he does it often, but when he's pissed he's a real mess. I can just see him, waddling down the corridor to speak to the cops. He probably took the trophy with him and started to explain how his son Marko won and how they are celebrating a little and were a little merry, 'cos Marko scored, like, in the last second of the match and got a trophy for the best shot of the tournament. Then he promised them that they would turn the music down and go to bed, so they left. He then shouted back down the corridor to turn it back up and kept banging on the door of that fat Maršič woman, yelling that it's none of her business calling the cops and how he'd fuck all hew excess flab and how it's not his bloody fault her son is a crackhead. Pero is in fact not a real junkie, he just smokes pot. Of course Radovan doesn't know the difference or realise that smoking a joint does not mean that you'll automatically switch to coke. It's all the same shit to him. He'd send them all off for rehab with a couple of years hard labour on a building site. The cops heard him for sure, but couldn't be bothered to come back up again. They only came to give a warning anyway. That's all they are obliged to do by law. But then they came across us on the ground floor. Well, dear Radovan, you really fucked us well on that one.

We'd also downed a rakija. One that Dejan nicked from his old man. Old Mirtić doesn't notice, 'cos he's got plenty of other bottles around and doesn't give a shit what kind of booze he drinks anyway. We really got loaded. Then one of us four geniuses, Dejan, Aco, Adi and me, had the idea of singing 'We are the Champions' to the entire block of flats. So we rang all the door phones, held onto each other and started howling something that sounded more like puking than singing. And that was the exact moment that the cops who had warned Radovan that his Šaban was too loud came by. They actually just walked past us, rolling their eyeballs, but then Adi, most wasted of us all, began banging on the intercom panel shouting.

»No one can get to us! We are stronger than fate!«

These are actually the words to the Bosnian Serb folk singer Mitar Mirić's popular song, but it fucked up the whole situation. The cops got an attack of ballistocitis and before we managed to complete the chorus of the Republika Srpska unofficial anthem, all four of us were in the back of the riot van. I can't remember how I got there, all I remember is that Adi was underneath me and Dejan on top of me. Then the doors closed and the fuckin' meat wagon took off with us all trembling in the dark.

It was clear what this was all about. Classic. The cops used to fill their vans with kids who fished illegally on the nearby river. They would drive them around for a while and then dump them in a forest in the middle of nowhere to scare the shit out of them. Adi was caught once and he wandered around the forest until he came across some other cops. He sold them a load of bullshit about how he was at dance class and got lost on the way home and asked them to drop him off at home. And they did. What dumbasses! They didn't shake him up as much as us though. To start with it was actually quite cool and Dejan kept shouting at the top of his voice.

»We are from Fužine, and we know where we are. You can't fool us, we have a compass!«

»What compass! It's called a compass you twat!«

Dejan kept at it and we kept laughing our heads off as Adi continued to sing the Mitar Mirić piece.

»They can hate us, those who do not love us!«

»Drive straight to Belgrade mate!«

»I sure can, my friend, blindfolded!«

But then the fun was over. We started being thrown around the back of the van, falling over each other and these bloody idiots set off their siren, floored it and cornered like crazy. Not a sound from any of us. All you could hear is the thumping against each other or the side of the van and cries of pain and agony. I didn't know whether to try to keep my balance with my arms stretched out, or to protect my head. I couldn't quite manage either and as we went round a corner somebody fell onto me and pushed me against the wall so I fell down and rolled around. I felt real dizzy and the other three kept falling onto me. I decided to protect my head and wait for the madness to end. True hell. I was shitting myself big time and thought that this was the end of us. The van kept going round corners and we were all on the floor holding onto each other. Then the moron braked suddenly and we all hit our heads. We'd stopped. The door opened and somebody pulled me out by my leg and I landed on the ground. Straight into a pool of mud. Aco fell on top of me. The cops drove off. I lay on the ground as Aco slowly peeled himself off me. I could hear Adi throwing up and I think Dejan cried. We were in the middle of some bloody woods fuck knows where. It was raining. We lay in the stinking mud and for at least five minutes no one moved.

We wandered round that fuckin' forest for fuckin' ages. What the fuck, they dump you there and then it's your fuckin' problem what to do. Adi threw up again and Dejan felt real sick. We argued over which direction we should head into. We kept shouting at each other and Aco sat on the ground and said he wasn't going anywhere. That we should all just fuck off. Dejan started hissing something at him and Aco grabbed him to beat him up. Then he suddenly took off through the forest. We ran after him. I don't think I've ever been so fucking furious in my life. What morons these idiotic pigs! Fuck 'em all. Dejan and Adi kept at it for a while.

»We must be in the eastern suburbs.«

»No way, the eastern suburbs are built up.«

»We must be north then.«

»You ain't been north in your life.«

»Where are we then?«

»How should I know? Šmarna gora.«

»Šmarna gora my arse. Šmarna gora is a hill, you twat!«

I felt dizzy. I really did. I thought I was about to faint. Shaking, I wanted to cry. I had a funny feeling in my teeth. I kept biting my lips, clenching my fists and digging my nails into the skin of my palms. Had I met a cop at that moment, I'd have killed him. I swear. I was mental. Loony bin mental. All the fear from being thrown around the back of the van really did me in. So much I thought I'd have a heart attack for sure.

»To me this looks like Golovec hill. Just from the other side.«

»The other side of Golovec is the motorway.«

»Come on! Call a cab, man!«

»And what're you gonna tell him? To come to the other side of Golovec, under Šmarna gora to the northern suburbs?«

»Have you got a better idea, or what?«

When I saw that fucking hunting lodge or whatever shit that old wooden hut was, I went beserk. I started throwing anything I could get my hands on at it. Stones, earth, branches, anything. I kicked the door with all my strength.

»Fucking cunts! Motherfucking bastards! What did we ever do to them, fucked up twats! What did we ever do?!«

The others joined in. We smashed all the windows, tore down the door and totally trashed the place. I mean totally!

Why We Didn't Hang Around Outside The Block Of Flats As Usual

Sitting outside the block of flats is a national pastime in Fužine. It probably is elsewhere too, but in Fužine this discipline has developed into an art form. Fuck it, small flats, large families, tense relationships, low living standards. Low standards mean that every large family has only one television in the flat. This makes relations tense, 'cos you keep fighting over who is going to watch the box. Once some lucky person gets to lie on the sofa and grabs hold of the remote control, there's not much everyone else can do. If the mother is watching a Mexican soap, the father goes off to the coffee shop. And if the father is driving everyone up the wall with Serbian cable, the news and current affairs channel or some tedious TV debate, then the mother goes off to visit a neighbour for a coffee. Either way the kids are fucked and if they don't own a computer they go and sit around outside the blocks of flats. And scum and computers don't really go together. PlayStations, OK, that perhaps, but programming and hacking aren't really scum scene. Most scum parents once heard somewhere from someone that computers can be dangerous for children, so then they never cough up for a good machine. So you sit around in front of the block of flats, bored to tears. Wasting your time. You discuss whether a Merc made by German machines is better than a handmade Ferrari. Machine vs. man. Big theme. Then you include Terminator, Robocop and Schumacher, and Adi's uncle Emir who works at the Merc assembly line in the factory in Germany, and Dejan's mate who tests Ferraris in Italy, and Juventus, and Bayern, and Aco's granny Stojadinka's sweater, and sweaters from Emporium and so on for days and days. In the meanwhile you watch tired fathers returning from work, good little neighbours coming back from school, that TV presenter that lives on the eighth floor in her high heels, who wiggles her arse so that I always get neck ache when she walks by, Božo's sexy mum whose age we are still not sure about – is she around 40 or closer to 50?, the pisshead Šuškić from the eleventh floor, who was once so wrecked he went into the wrong block of flats and nearly broke into a total stranger's flat 'cos he couldn't unlock the door, or Vlado, the caretaker who is always grumbling about something, fuck him. At the end of it you still don't know whether a Merc is better than a Ferrari. A Merc is German and the law. All gatarbeiters and mafia guys have one. A Ferrari is a Ferrari and that's that. You rot away sitting in front of the block of flats. But at least that's cool. Much better than listening to Radovan and Ranka.

It's always the same. Dejan goes on and on about some shit or other and Adi takes the mick and keeps trying to prove him wrong.

»I tell you we were north of town.«

»You're full of shit, mate. North my arse! Number six bus goes to the north of town. You just haven't got a clue!«

»Go and buy a paper. Then we'll see where that hunting lodge is. It's sure to come up in the crime section that we trashed it.«

This is just a sort of clever-front-of-the-block-of-flats idea. That as soon as you wreck some shithole somewhere, you'll be headline news. But Aco believes him and goes off to the

newsagent, returning with the daily broadsheet Dnevnik. I didn't even know such a paper existed.

»Look at what this idiot bought. Thinking to read 'bout cultural stuff? I told you to buy a tabloid.«

»This has got a crime section too!«

»Now you'll see where we really were. Huh, north. You'll see we were west of town.«

Anyway.

»Hey look! We're in!«

»Give it to me! I'll read it! You don't know how to anyway!«

»Shut the fuck up!«

Unbelibavle! The hunting lodge is a high society party venue and now we're in the papers. Fucking hell, it's not much, but you have to start somewhere.

»Hut van ... da ... li ...sed ... What's this?«

»What a loser. Read on.«

»Hut vandalised on Dolgi Most last night ... There, Dolgi Most.«

»But that's north of town. Number six goes on to Dolgi Most.«

»You really are full of shit. Do you know where Dolgi Most is?«

»Well, where?«

»It's ... you go towards Vič in the western end of...«

»Just shut it. It's nowhere near Vič, 'cos it's on Dolgi Most. If it was Vič, the paper would say Vič.«

»You ain't got a clue. What about the time you didn't know where the triple bridge on the main square was?«

»I knew it was on the main square, just didn't know what the square was called.«

God knows whether this conversation would ever have ended were it not for Samira, Adi's mother.

»Adi, here comes your mum.«

»Shit, what does she want again!«

Samira marches towards us, looking serious. Adi's old man Mirsad works in Austria. Adi says he's a driver – we all say he's a rubbish collector. Samira is always following Adi around the estate, bugging him to come home. Adi doesn't take any notice of her and is always slipping away. She then tells Mirsad when he's back and Adi gets an official telling off. Then Mirsad goes back to Klagenfurt, Adi gets away again and Samira is back to traipsing after him all around Fužine.

»Adi, come home with me now.«

»No way, I'm staying right here.«

»Your father is coming home today.«

The thing is that Mirsad never comes when he is supposed to come, so Samira waits around for him with lunch ready, trying to round up her children all round Fužine, so they can have a

proper family meal together when Mirsad gets in. Occasionally she manages to catch up with Adi, but never Adi's older brother Sanel. He's a totally lost cause.

»So what? When he arrives I'll come home.«

»Come home right now, we're having lunch!«

»No way. Fuck off.«

It's always the same shit. I really don't get how she puts up with it!

»Come on...«

»I said no, fuckit. We're all going out for lunch. Marko's treat 'cos he won yesterday.«

The real shit is that I always end up feeling sorry for Samira. Adi never goes home with her, but she still stands there, looking at us all, pleading with Adi who just ignores her. All we do is stand around staring at the pavement like dimwits. Sometimes I feel so bad I think of going to have lunch with her myself instead.

»Just go home and leave me alone. Come on guys let us go elsewhere, 'cos she's not going away.«

So we usually follow Adi and leave her standing there slouching sadly. Mirsad in the meantime is off somewhere, pumping Austrian girls. There's someone you really can't trust. I wouldn't be at all surprised if he worked somewhere locally and that all this stuff about Klagenfurt is just a shitty story he tells Samira. What does Mirsad know about where Klagenfurt is anyway?

Why *Komšije* Are Better Than Neighbours

In Fužine we have neighbours and we have *komšije*. It's not the same thing. For example, there are four flats on our floor and we have neighbours in two of them and *komšije* in the third. A neighbour is the Maršič woman with her son Pero, the pot smoker. Radovan is always arguing with her at tenants' meetings and is annoyed by all the plants she keeps on her doorstep. I do say hi to Pero, 'cos he was at our school for three years before he moved to a better school in the centre of town. Radovan says the Maršič woman didn't want her kid to go to school with scum and that's why she now has a drug-addicted son. Radovan will never forgive her for moving Pero to a supposedly elite school. They've argued ever since, and whenever anyone even mentions the Maršič woman in front of Radovan he always adds: »The cow.«

Next door to the Maršič woman are our other neighbours, the Furlans. They're a friendly young family with two small children. Mrs Furlan is sort of a cool chick, but has too much of a sporty look for my liking. Too Slovene. Both she and Mr Furlan are very much into sports. Slovene kinds of sports such as jogging and cycling and skiing. And they drag their kids along too. They're never at home anyway, always off to somewhere. Ranka likes them 'cos they always greet her in the corridor, always seem to be in a jolly mood and their kids are well brought up and hold the lift door for her and smile and stuff like that. Radovan insists it can't be healthy rushing around and being so sporty and thinking about your body all the time. He always adds »How typically Slovene«. And that's not a compliment.

Then there's our *komšije*, the Ristić family. They're scum who live next door to us, so I can listen to their music when Bole has the music channel on at full volume. Bole and Živka are both from Bosnia. They're even from the same village, somewhere near Bijeljina. Their two daughters, Snežana and Sanja, are both married and Snežana is already pregnant. Bole is the caretaker at a secondary school in the northern part of town. Živka is retired 'cos she's got some problems with her heart or something. They are our *komšije*, 'cos you can call on them at any time of day or night. If you've forgotten your keys to the flat or if you need a couple of eggs on a Sunday evening. If Radovan can't watch a match on the telly 'cos Ranka is watching some daft soap she's a fan of, then he calls in on Bole. And when Bole celebrates a win, Radovan joins him and they both get absolutely hammered. Whenever you see them it's always: »Oh, Marko, where have you been? How are you doing? Come and sit down for a while. Have something to drink. Have something to eat. Here's a beer for our basketball player.« Bole also comes round to our place often, supposedly to ask things when he's not sure about something. And he's often not sure about various things. When he comes he talks and talks and there's no getting rid of him. And my does he know all that's going on in Fužine. Like an old woman. He knows everyone and everything. He's like the intelligence service. If he worked for the police, there'd be no crime in Fužine.

The way he goes on and on usually gets on my nerves. Shit Bole, do you ever stop? Normally I'd just get out, but today, for the first time in my life, it suited me that he came round and broke this silence of ours and stirred the situation a little. Bole had heard I'd been at the

police station and came round to ask about it. Not directly of course. He came round saying he wasn't sure when the next tenants' meeting was, but we all knew he came to find out what had happened to me. He never asks outright of course, but drops a few hints into a seemingly endless conversation about a load of other stuff. Come on, Bole, get on with it! Spit it out!

»I saw that kid, Marina's boy Aco, walking around with his arm in a sling, so I asked Mira from number eight about it. She's friends with Marina, and she told me that the cops broke his arm and that Marina had to take him to A&E afterwards. The cops just released him pretending nothing was going on. But he had a broken arm and even a couple of cracked ribs.«

I couldn't believe it. I'd spoken to Aco, but he never mentioned anything. Fuck the pigs. Even Radovan sat down. He was real shocked.

»And I told this to Ljubica at the bank and she told me that Marko was with him too. I was worried about you, but there, at least they didn't do Marko in like that, what luck. Hey, Marko my boy, don't mess with the cops. They're so fuckin' corrupt. No ... all this ... I mean kids like Marko ... it's outrageous. And I heard they hadn't done anything serious, just jumped around on the bus a little ... but that bastard Damjanović, the driver, called the police ...«

»Damjanović who?«

»The guy from the next estate, you know him for sure. He's from somewhere round Niš, the shithead. He used to work as a driver in the factory down the road and is now a bus driver. His wife works at the post office as a secretary or something, sure you know him, now ... what's his name ...«

»But why did he call the police?«

»Well, the kids didn't really break anything, just jumped around a bit and shouted. He should have just told them nicely to get off the bus. That so, Marko?«

»No way ... shit ... but why? How could he ... why?«

»What a shitty bastard. His daughter used to go out with that Bešlić kid, but when they broke up he went and beat up the kid. Sick really. After this his daughter left home.«

»Where does he live?«

»Somewhere on the neighbouring estate, don't know exactly, Komšić knows him well, they used to work together. He caused some problems then, but I don't know what that was all about. But whatever the business with Komšić was, something isn't quite right it seems.«

Fuck, Bole, did you really have to get into all this? Now Radovan will get all worked up and insist on finding out who this driver from the neighbouring estate is. It's impossible that he is scum from Fužine and that Radovan doesn't know him. He'll spend all night going over all scum from Fužine that he knows, trying to picture who this Damjanović guy is. I was thinking about Aco and how we really hadn't done anything serious enough to deserve what we got and how by calling the cops, this Damjanović guy really fucked us over. Especially Aco. I can't even recall what he looked like, but perhaps Adi and Dejan can. Someone is bound to know him.

»Tell me, what you say his wife's name is?«

»I know her, but can't remember her name. She works at the post office. Dark hair. Croatian I think.«

That, of course, is what matters most right now.

Why No One Gives A Toss About Anyone Any More

Scum in Fužine haven't really assimilated well. In fact they don't give a toss about assimilation. There's a whole load of scum round here who can't even speak Slovene. They can just about manage stuff like 'gutbye' and 'hullo' and 'a small biir' and 'a pak of cigaret' and 'pleez' and 'fenk you' and three or four other words, but that's it. They can't put a single Slovene sentence together. Not even close. You get people like Pešić from Adi's block of flats, for example. He's been here for thirty odd years, but the only sentence he knows in Slovene is: »Trespassing railway tracks can be fatally dangerous.« Fuck it. When he came to Slovenia he got a job in construction and maintenance at the railway company and still works there today. Everyone on the site was from Bosnia apart from the supervisor, and he was a Croat. Why bother to learn the language? No chance. Pešić is either at work or in Kubana, where everyone is southern scum anyway. Apparently he once attended a tenants' meeting and once even went to a meeting at his kids' school and tried to speak Slovene on both occasions. Well, that's what he says he did anyway, but no one realised that that's what it was supposed to be.

Locals get really pissed off if someone doesn't speak the language, but I really don't see what difference it could possibly make if all the Pešićes of this world were fluent in Slovene. It's not as if they would then talk to them. All this is pretty pointless shit as far as I'm concerned. I mean, the idea that all these Pešićes should learn the language out of respect towards Slovenia and stuff. All these Pešićes work on building sites. They've built the whole country and all they respect in their life is Miroslav Ilić and cold beer. If they all spoke only Double Dutch no one would even notice. Who gives a shit? But Slovenes seem to suffer in some way because of this and keep going on about it and stuff. That's all these complexes of theirs for you, just 'cos they could never play football.

But scum in Fužine have picked up one Slovene trait. No one really gives a toss about anyone anymore. People walk right past you and pretend to not even see you. Each to his own, as Radovan would say. Of course as soon as you're gone, they then talk about you behind your back and stuff. If they see you nicking a car radio, no one will say anything, but within half an hour all the komšije on the estate will know all about it. Everyone, apart from the police. Everyone stares at you and everyone knows everything there is to know about you, but no one ever asks you anything. No one dares to. Now that we have these surveillance cameras in the block, they know when you get back home, when you're pissed, when you limp and where you itch, everything. But no one says anything. It's as if you're not here. But they know all there is to know about you.

Sometimes it's actually better like this, 'cos if all the scum from our block of flats interfered in my business I'd totally freak out. Like today, when I was marching up Golovec hill in a torn T-shirt, ripped by a crazed Aco, and a bloody lip. I was real worked up and everyone was watching me, but they all pretended that everything was normal and nothing looked odd about me. Once I was out of sight, I'm sure they began weaving a web of stories. Everyone on the estate will be wondering what happened and at the same time they will all come up with a load of bullshit and make up crazy theories and stuff. But not a single person stops to

ask me if I'm OK or if I just might need any help. This actually suits me right now, 'cos I'd probably punch anyone who dared ask me anything at this moment right in the face. I walked up the hill, passing a whole load of people out for a walk, most of them locals from Fužine. There were all sorts. From nutters who can hardly walk, but pretend to be running around Golovec in tracksuits and headbands, scaring off wildlife, to OAPs talking about their ailments and extending their usual stroll through town in order to cover all of them, to various scum housewives, walking and discussing the latest episode of some Mexican soap, all worried 'cos Fernando left Maria. They all looked at me and saw the fucked up state I was in, and all pretended that nothing was out of the ordinary. Scum probably thought I was a drug addict and Slovenes probably just thought that that's what scum look like anyway and that it's quite normal.

I haven't been up Golovec hill in ages. They used to drag us up here on sports days in primary school and allowed us to run around freely till we were all exhausted. Teachers would sit on the benches, smoke a whole carton of cigarettes and chatter away just waiting for their 'shift' to finish. That was what Fužine school sports days had to offer. Now I sat on the same fucking benches, looking like an escapee from the nuthouse.

I looked down towards our estate, trying to psych myself up into going back down to the block of flats to see where Aco is. And to find Dejan and Adi. I tried to make myself move, but couldn't. It was as if my arse was glued to the bench. It got cold and began to get dark, but I still sat there, rotting on Golovec. Fucking Golovec. It's probably best I just stay here and become one of those weirdos who walks around the forest raping women. There used to be a whole lot in the news about them, but never anything conclusive. I think a lot of it was just parents trying to scare their daughters in an attempt to discourage them from going up to Golovec with their boyfriends for a quick fuck in the woods. Fucking Golovec. I just couldn't make a move to walk back to the estate. What bugged me was that, 'cos I was all torn and bloody, some folk on the estate were bound to ask questions. Besides, I don't actually know how it got this far and what happened to Damjanović. Probably what I should have really been shit scared about is that something serious did happen to him. But I wasn't. I just couldn't be bothered to start explaining how my t-shirt got ripped.

As I was dragging myself home back down the public footpath, Mr Slatner, our ex biology teacher, jogged by. There's an odd guy for you. He lives in a world of his own, grows pot plants, keeps a herbarium and sings in some fucking choir. Total weirdo. No shit. And now he comes running up to me in his gay polka dot track suit, smiles and starts jogging on the spot right in front of me, asking all sorts of questions.

»Have you been for a walk? Do you still play basketball? Is school OK? Are your parents well? Are your classmates all doing well?«

He asks all his questions, still running on the spot and I nod in reply. Then we both greet each other with another nod, and he jogs off up Golovec. There, that's what I mean. This guy saw my bloody lip and my torn t-shirt, but that's none of his business. He's got more serious stuff to attend to. It's a good job everyone has always got other, more serious stuff to think about.

Glossary

Delija	a Red Star Belgrade supporter
Green Dragon	an Olimpija Ljubljana supporter
Maniac	a Željezničar Sarajevo supporter
Red Tiger	a Slovan supporter
rakija	a strong spirit, popular throughout the Balkans, considered to be the national drink among Serbs, Bosnians and Albanians
komšija (pl. komšije)	Bosnian for neighbour
Dnevnik	a popular daily paper in Slovenia
Fužine	an area to the east of the centre of the Slovenian capital Ljubljana with large estates of high rise blocks of flats built in the 1970s and 1980s, making it the most densely populated area of Slovenia
Golovec	a hill and a neighbourhood to the south of Fužine in Ljubljana
Vič	a western suburb of Ljubljana