

Dolus Sororis

The sunrise has always seemed special. From the incalculable darkness, brightness returns, but hardly anyone realises how important this moment is. People sleep through the most important part of their existence – the change of a certain state in which we find ourselves, like rays of light appearing from behind the clouds after a catastrophic storm, should encourage us to act. We have learnt to avoid events that, at first glance, do not seem to have any deeper meaning. But isn't it true that everything means something? Even the most ordinary sunrise.

Stas watched them every day, constantly thinking about the same thing. About a different life he would like to experience somewhere else, where no one knows him and what he could achieve there. He also thought about what a big failure he was. His father, a role model for every man, constantly persecuted him with his taunts. All he could hear was his father's scornful laughter when the boy showed him his new pieces of work. He hated them.

'Son, no one here cares about this. No one even wants to look at your jewellery, let alone buy it. It's not useful. Do something else and don't waste the raw materials,' he would say.

At times like these, Stanisław realised how much he hated him and wished his mother would come back. She died giving birth to their second child, who never saw a single sunrise. This did not surprise anyone, as such situations are commonplace. It did not change the fact that he missed the warmth she brought into the hut. She was like the rays of sunshine breaking through the dark clouds after a storm, but sometimes she was the danger that could come. She was the one who woke him up early in the morning to go up to the roof together and see what she was - the rising sun. That's the way she was. She was wonderful.

Despite his eyelids moving at the speed of light, the boy could not stop the tear that ran down his cheek. He wiped it away and began to get up from the moss-covered roof tile. After his mother's death, he and his father moved to the city centre, leaving his whole life here, in the middle of the forest. That's why Stanisław used to come here so often, because only here could he be himself. He set off for Toruń. He was about to start his job at the family craft business. Every day was the same. Customers came and went, mostly satisfied, and his father was happy with the situation he found himself in. However, the truth is that it would not have been possible without the Hanseatic League - it was an opportunity not only for them, but also for the whole city. Thanks to this, Toruń was bustling with life. Ships arriving with beautiful cloths and other exotic items perfectly complemented the landscape, and the faces of the inhabitants were filled with gentle smiles. A true idyll.

The moments at work passed very quickly, but routinely. The boy's favourite time of day was coming, which was closing the business. He would then stay at the company for a few more hours – sometimes trying to come up with a new project that he could realise in secret from his father, and sometimes just sitting alone with his thoughts. He didn't complain about loneliness because he was never really alone. He wasn't surrounded by many people, but he encountered other mysterious creatures at every turn. He happened to spend time with fawns, owls and even mice. He felt at peace among them.

His thoughts were interrupted by a quiet and uncertain knock on the door. He had no intention of opening it, it was already late, but the stranger did not stop, so he got up and finally did it. He did not expect what he would see. Standing in front of him was a woman who looked like his mother. She was holding a candle, which is why he noticed her light, curly hair and brown eyes. His intuition told him to at least close the door a little, which had been wide open a moment ago.

- 'How can I help you?' the young man asked uncertainly.
- 'Stanisław? Please let me in. I know you don't remember me very well, but soon both you and I will have problems,' she pleaded. 'I'm begging you to do it.'

He did it. He didn't know why, but he felt it had to be done. He let her pass and she came in, clearly feeling relieved.

- Stachu! You don't even know how happy I am that you were sitting here. You probably saved my life. You see, I was supposed to spend another beautiful night among the trees on the outskirts of the city, but today I made the wrong choice. A family of wolves was walking nearby and they wanted to spend the night there too. So I, a good person that I am, started running in the other direction. Well, running... yes, well, I ran, and they chased me like mad.
- 'Woman, who are you? I don't remember us knowing each other, so before you tell me your life story, why don't you introduce yourself?'
- 'So you really don't recognise me?' Her face showed dismay.

Stanisław really didn't understand why he would recognise her. What she was saying didn't make sense, and the fact that she knew where he would be right now was terrifying in itself. The boy slowly began to move deeper into the room where the tools were, to protect himself in case of possible danger.

The next few minutes passed very slowly and awkwardly. Each was waiting for the other to make the first move. At one point, the woman stopped looking Stanisław in the eye. Instead, she directed her empty gaze at the wall behind him. The expression on her face changed instantly, and tears welled up in her eyes.

- Oh, I'm sorry, I... - the stranger broke the silence. - I'm sorry. I shouldn't have come here at all. It would be best if we both forgot about it. - she said with a sigh, then headed for the door.
- Wait. Don't go. At first, Stanisław did not recognise his own voice, which was filled with anger and despair. 'You came here because you say I should remember you because you remember me. However, I see you for the first time. Woman, what do you want me to do? Fall into your arms?' The boy's nervousness definitely caught the woman's attention, who had given up the idea of leaving the building. 'I don't know your name, but you obviously know mine for some unknown reason. I'm glad the wolves didn't get you, it's a pretty unpleasant death, but I don't know how you knew that I would be HERE...'
- Dorota.' She interrupted him suddenly. 'My name is Dorota.'
- "Okay, Dorota.
- Stanisław, I can explain it all to you, but you'd better sit down.

So he sat still as Dorota began her story. It started innocently enough - with what her nomadic lifestyle was like. She hunted herself and slept mostly under the open sky. She didn't mention anything to her family. It would seem that she simply didn't have one. It was difficult to understand how a woman could manage on her own. At a certain point, Stanisława began to get tired of this story.

- 'Sorry, but', he interrupted her, 'can you get to the point? I'm glad you can manage on your own, but I still don't know who you are.'
- Ah... specifics. Right. There. I'm not happy that you found out this way. I shouldn't be responsible for this, but I brought it on myself by coming here. I don't even know where to start. As I said, I have always been alone, but that is not entirely true. Of course, I had a father and a mother, but the father in particular disowned me because his greatest dream was to have a son. He later succeeded, but before that happened, he threw me out on the street. My mother could not protest. I was left alone, occasionally returning to the city to see if they were still alive. Some time ago, their dreams came true, as they had a son. He has grown up already. You know... my mother noticed me once. We talked a lot, she even apologised to me. She also admitted to me at the time that she was pregnant again and would give birth soon, but she was afraid it would be a girl. She was afraid she would end

up like me. She died shortly after that conversation. She died with her child during childbirth.

Then it hit him. He understood why Dorota had come to him.
Anger took hold of him.

- "You're my sister? I don't believe it! And you only remember me when you're in danger? You're so irresponsible. I really don't know what to say to you.
- Stas, it's not like that... When I realised you had come into the world, I stopped being interested in their lives. I only cared about you. I watched you, but I couldn't do anything else. If he found out... he would destroy you, your mother and me. I couldn't risk it. Now that the situation has changed, I have started to take steps to reveal the truth to you, which is why I am here. Because apart from the fact that we can finally be together, you no longer have to live with your father. I know it's a sudden proposal, but let's help each other... or at least be there for each other until a certain point.
- What do you mean? How would I help you? – Stanisław began to ask curiously. The prospect of living without his father was a convincing enough argument for him.
- Listen, I'll be in the forest, you'll finally use your talent and become popular in Toruń and beyond. It won't take long. A day, maybe two. Trust me, really.

There was silence. They were silent.
A second passed. Two seconds.
Three seconds.
Another one.

- 'It's okay,' the boy said unexpectedly, and Dorota's lips formed a clear 'O'. 'No, I don't trust you, but life without that tyrant... I'm in. What do I have to do?'
- Oh, I... I didn't think you'd agree so quickly. B-but yes. Hmm... you would have to make me a charm. I mean, not for me. I will take it and give it to the right hands, and then you will leave your father. Do you agree?
- What kind of charm? Are you a witch?
- God forbid! No! It won't be a complicated project... just something that will allow me to 'sell' you to the upper... circles. To present your craftsmanship. If you could, show your mastery by working on this little thing. With that, Dorota handed an amethyst to Stanisław.
- All right... all right. Come back the next night. Everything will be ready then.

They parted.

The next day Stanisław had to pretend that he hadn't spent the whole night at the factory, stressed out, making a medallion. However, he had almost managed to perfect it. A few finishing touches and it would be ready. Hours passed until it was time for him to return home with his father.

- 'Father, I'll come back later or stay here overnight. Don't wait for me.'
- 'As usual, you'll be messing around with that devil's work. You're no comfort to me in my old age,' said his father as he left the room, slamming the door loudly.

Hours passed. The project, long since finished, lay at the bottom of Stanisław's pocket. He was barely sitting up, listening for the expected knock on Dorota's door. He didn't know how much time had passed, but his sister had finally tapped the code they had agreed on the day before. The boy opened the door for her.

- ‘You did?’ Dorota began the conversation without any qualms.
- ‘Yes,’ Staś replied and took the work out of his pocket. When the girl saw it, she almost gasped for air.
- ‘A masterpiece. Simply a masterpiece.’

The boy knew it. It was probably his best work to date and he was extremely proud of it. He couldn't hide the smile that began to light up his face.

- ‘What's your plan?’ he asked his sister.
- Tomorrow you must be ready to leave your father once and for all. You will do it in the evening. Then you will come to Ciasna Street. There I will introduce you to your new future. Today I can't be here that long. I have to get going. Is everything clear?
- Yes, pretty much.
- Good. Great. See you tomorrow. And she almost disappeared through the door as if nothing had happened. Do you want some gingerbread? she hastily added.
- Er, sure... He didn't even have time to finish his sentence or say thank you because the girl was already gone.

The situation was just strangely chaotic. Steve felt uneasy, so he started to wonder if the decision he had made would turn out to be the biggest mistake of his entire life. Thinking about it all, the boy nevertheless

headed for home to pack the most essential things for his life alone. What would his mum say? Would she support the idea of him living without his father but with his sister? Of all people, he would like to spend his life with her.

His layette was not lavish. At a certain point, he was rummaging through the cupboards too thoroughly. At the very bottom, he found a small bundle, which turned out to be a sketch of his father in his youth. For a moment, he wondered how this young man, who came from a poor family, could afford such a luxury, but then he realised that the author of this work was not a qualified artist, but his wife, Stanisław's mother.

A tear welled up in the boy's eye. What happened to this smiling man? What happened to the man his mum loved? Did her death destroy him that much? Stanisław felt even more lost. He knew he had to go with Dorota, but the feeling that something was wrong kept haunting him. He tried to focus on something else to get rid of his negative thoughts.

The time had come to leave his old self behind. The sun was beginning to set. So as not to leave his father completely speechless, he decided to leave him some decorated gingerbread cookies on the table and a short note ‘*I won't be back. I'm sorry. Your son.*’ He left the family home forever.

As Stanisław walked through the streets of Toruń into the unknown, he noticed a ship on the Vistula full of foreign, but not only, splendour and thought only of the fact that soon his products would be traded in this way in Hanseatic cities. He couldn't wait.

As he got closer to the meeting place, all his anxieties and intrusive thoughts began to leave him. He was not anxious, just happy at the thought of the freedom that awaited him around the corner. Literally around the corner, as there was only one bend between him and Ciasna Street. Any moment now...

But his anxiety returned with a vengeance. There was no one or nothing there... just a small piece of paper with a few words on it.

Too late.

Come home, there's a surprise waiting for you.

Stanisław was late. He was convinced that the message came from Dorota. He didn't want to go home, but did he have any other choice? He doubted it. He couldn't do it alone, so he did exactly

what he was told again. He went home.

As he entered the house, he was already prepared for an argument with his father, but he was greeted with only silence. His father must have been really angry, but Stasiu decided not to be afraid anymore and stepped right into the lion's den. He assumed that his father would be sitting at the table, but he was met with something completely different - he was lying on the ground.

Unconscious. The boy ran up to him in a fraction of a second.

•‘Dad! Dad!’ he shouted at him, trying to wake him up at the same time.

No reaction. The son, wanting to say goodbye to his father, put his tear-stained face on his chest and that's when he noticed two things: gingerbread crumbs on his lips and a letter. The gingerbread crumbs on the man's lips could have meant many things, but... Stanisław could not believe that what he had left for his father, a sweet gingerbread (a gift from his ‘sister’) left on the table at home as a farewell, could have caused his death. Had he killed his father? A feeling of guilt flooded his body. Full of despair, he picked up the bundle lying on the table and started reading.

It all fell apart. Don't trust anyone.

Nothing but lies, especially hers.

A.

Stanisław collapsed on the floor, devastated. Without his mother, father and non-existent ‘sister’.