

Zoran Bingulac

OPPORTUNE TIMES

Only at opportune times, pure souls will take the paths of infinity,
in the ruptures of spiral spaces of the universe.

Dedicated to the restless shadows of our dear souls in the interstices of the novels

Zoran Bingulac
OPPORTUNE TIMES

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Anagram?

Petar Five Five Petrović
Eva, spouse
Nemanja, son
Natalie, former spouse
Ivan, son
Elena Nestorović, doctor
Rade Miletović, actor
Adualo Apendev
An Skosmos
Cole Kagebe (KGB)
Antoan
Antonije
Dule Cajla
Ankica

Gradimir Grada Grozdanović
Peladija, spouse
Rista, son
Olivera, former spouse
Uroš, son
Anđelija, lifetime student
Karlo (Herr), actor amateur
Emil
Neško
Mija Cia
Rocky
Robert
Vule Mrak (Vule Dark)
Elona

.....
Una
Ema

.....
Mirka
Lola

.....
D.

12. 21. 2012?

I

In the most hidden of only a few remaining, nostalgically pleasant, old metropolitan yards, full of green, with imposable colorful clusters of tiny flowers, sat a formally dressed, middle aged man, at the wooden table. He was looking through, what seemed to him translucent walls covered with dark green, old, ivy leaves and was enjoying the sunny May Sunday afternoon. He was not attentively listening to his pretty wife who was standing behind his back, on the steps of the renovated and, in this moment, still ideal, family home and, who was, who know how many times, calmly and authoritatively, stubbornly repeating her tiring advices.

– Write, Petar! Write, Petar! You promised that you would start writing your new novel. What are you missing now, honey? The small wooden table was made according to your detailed instructions. The little horizontal beams are placed precisely how you demanded, ten centimeters in height. Rubber bands that are supposed to prevent the mischievous wind from playing with the pages of your novel in the yard have been placed. Special pencils that are eagerly waiting for you to use them have been purchased as well, because you despise the other mechanical and computer ways of creating text. Are you lacking time or inspiration? Concentration–inspiration! Inspiration–concentration, Petar! You will get your new ID tomorrow, of course, with the necessary help of your young

friend, energetic, attractive, and inevitable doctor Elena, Lela Nestorović that you have been trying to get for a while, in accordance with the advice of your aging friends, which will, instead of Petar Petrović, say Petar Five Five Petrović.

English and especially French translations of your novels have been well accepted overseas, mainly because of your romantic and mysterious writing style. You have to start writing before the announced arrival of your friends, ex– wife Natalie and son Ivan, whose arrival is especially anticipated by our Nemanja, who is supposed to graduate soon, and enroll in a prestigious high school. That’s why, national 400 meters record– holder, start writing. New obligations are flying in, and the three remaining credit payments are coming as well. Your business ventures with French partners are gone, as are my art shows and the sales of paintings and icons.

– So, write, Petar! Write, Five Five Petrović! Why aren’t you writing? You will probably come up with something new, or you will repeat the old phrase that successful endeavors should be started on a Tuesday. What Tuesday Petar?– she asked him, for the first time in a considerably increased tone, while taking one step towards him.

– The day after tomorrow, my honey! The day after tomorrow!– he answered convincingly, as though he was attentively listening to her all along, which his next sentence confirmed.

– Eva, honey, don’t worry too much about Nemanja’s graduation and enrollment in the high school...

– I know our Elena likely has the necessary connections.

– You’re right! She is so pervasive, well behaved, and grateful for my help from a long time ago in realization of her college ambitions. By the way, let me tell you not to worry about the new passports, IDs, or car registrations with the marks that you want. She is so energetic, serious, cheerful, and willing to sacrifice herself. She helps people selflessly. I wonder if there is any every day problem in this country that she would not be able to fix efficiently.

– Petar? Petar?

– Don't be crazy, my love. She is young enough to be my daughter, and you also saw her boyfriend, the beautiful actor. She never met her father, who left her and her mother when she was almost two years old. She has tremendous respect for me. You know that you are my only soul mate.

– Petar? Petar?

– Let me kiss your blue eye, my little wife.

The way she managed to solve administrative conundrums that I fell in the process of changing my name. We took the advice of her friend, attorney Jovanović, so the name change or the addition of the middle names Five Five was explained as abbreviations of foreign names that have a symbolic meaning. No one even gets asked if the names are male and female these days. Namely, Five Five, does not represent two number fives, but shortened names. Stupid, but proved effective, because when the process was repeated, with Elena's assistance, they approved my request. She got mad that I did not come to her at the beginning of the process because, as it turned out, everything would have been finished within a few days. Elena likes my new name.

– Until the arrival of your friends, the reason for your insistence that your name be changed will remain mysterious. If that even matters, I like your two new Fives but they have to belong to me alone, your soul mate Eli. Therefore, Petar, Five, and Five can each write one of the three planned parts, and Petrović can write the epilogue of the new novel. In doing so, it can be irrelevant which part will be written first. So write, Petar Five Five Petrović!

– Of course. I promise that I am definitely starting to write on Tuesday– the day after tomorrow, at 5 pm.

– I trust you, honey. Someone is ringing the doorbell! Nemanja must be back from American football practice, which enchants him

so much. Support him. Have a talk with him and don't say anything about Elena's help with graduation and high school enrollment. He needs to try and take this important moment in his life seriously.

– What's up, pops! How are you? Enjoying and stylishly sipping on French cognac. I'm in a hurry, my friends are waiting for me, and we're going to the café. I'm not tired. I am thinking about graduation and getting into high school. I'll eat everything that mom made for me. I'll be back on time. I need a little more dough because my friend, a girl is coming out with me.

– Is this enough?– he asked handing him a red bill.

– It is. Thank you. I have to tell you that my new football coach is your Rale Miletović. You know that actor and your friend's, Doctor Elena's, boyfriend.

– Sit down to have a juice with dad, Nemanja. I see that you're in a hurry but, just tell me, doesn't Rale seem a little too gentle for such a rough sport to you?

– Pops, you're tripping. Rale plays rugby for “the Wolves”. American football is just a gig for him. Older friends fearfully say they call him “the butcher”. He breaks players' bones at rugby games. The audience can't watch how he flips them. He is a born killer with a baby face. All the chicks want him. He didn't recognize him. Do you want me to whisper in your year how rather vulgar we spoke to us at the first practice, because mom should not hear that.

– Whisper to dad.

– He said that gentle little girls play American football and wear plastic diapers and protective helmets, so that they don't go back home to their mommies hurt. “ If you listen to me, practice hard, drink lots of milk, eat raw meat and forget your worried mothers, you will become real men and one day, you will get enough courage to play at least one manly rugby game”. Pops, he looks so dangerous, all dark– haired, when he speaks with that deep voice and stares at us. I don't know if we were acting when we were talking to us during practice or when I was meeting him.

– Pops doesn't know either, son. I love you; here is some more money because your "friend" is coming out with you tonight.

– Thanks pops see you.

– You look magical, Eva. Come, give me a kiss. You were never more beautiful and seductive. Why are you formally dressed as well?

– I have to try to compete with the younger, medical generations.

– Don't be crazy!

– I'm kidding, Petar. When are Elena and Rale coming?

– They should have been here already, but actors are famous for being late to rehearsals of their plays. Elena is obsessively punctual. You'll see that she will immediately apologize for her slight lateness. I think it is best for us to have a drink with them here, and then move to the living room because it will get cold. You saw that I bought French wine and a few types of foreign cheeses. You surely already arranged them on that wooden palette of ours.

– Of course, honey! Empress Elena, Lela Nestorović is coming to visit us with the young archduke Rale, Lale Miletović.

– I picked a few fresh flowers for decoration. Here you go! These are for decoration and I'll put this little flower in your beautiful dark hair. It will match your maroon dress that is touching your erotic and seductive body.

– They're here! I'm gonna go open the gate.

– Come in, young friends. We have been waiting for you eagerly. Welcome!

– I am sorry for the lateness. Rehearsal for Rale's graduation show ran long.

– Good evening, Ela. You look lovely.

– Thank you! I think you and I have started addressing each other more casually a long time ago.

– Good evening and my respect! – Rale said to her, handing her a bouquet of garish yellow flowers.

– I hope that you will like red wine from Bordeaux.

– Look, Eva! Elena brought us the same wine as the one we prepared to serve tonight, but with a different harvest year. It shows that at least something changed from the time described in my previous novel, which was clearly carefully read.

– Mr. Petrović, I wanted to...

– Please, Rale, call me Petar, Sir or Mister are out of the question. We are friends.

– Okay. My salutation was in accordance with my diplomatic upbringing and respect I have for “you”, especially as a prominent sports record holder.

– I am sorry to interrupt you again. Is your father the esteemed ambassador Dejan Miletović?

– Yes, Petar. As his son, I often went to sleep in one and gotten up in another country. He is currently an ambassador in Yangon, according to his own wishes. My mother is with him at the moment, but she often comes to Belgrade to spend time with me. As you know Petar, there is no country more beautiful than Serbia.

– Petar, you have completely, once again, changed the topic of the conversation. Let Rale finally tell you what he intended, before we go into the house. It’s getting chilly.

– We are getting back to what I had in mind, Petar. Tell me the real version of how achieved the still current 400 meters record, in response to you being unfairly left out of the Olympics. I read and heard different versions of that event.

– What versions, Rale?

– In the tests, it’s stated that You, sorry, that “you”, officially had third time of your discipline but that, at the last minute, tycoons from the shadows, eliminated you from the 4 x 400 relay at the Olympics, for unknown reasons.

– That is completely correct. They did great injustice to me, probably because of vanity, some nonsense about my relationships with

girls, interests of political circles, fear of my independence...However, injustice can be a permanent obstacle or new impulse towards success. In my case, it turned out that no one has ever managed to create greater motivation for sport success than those people. They unexpectedly became genius coaches.

– The word is that, after that, you trained incredibly persistently, while your friends were not achieving desired results at the Olympics. Some rumors mention alleged use of some stimuli...

– My dear sports friend, I trained so hard that not even the strongest of kettle would endure it, but I beat myself beforehand. That's elementary. I ate everything, even your favorite raw meat that you recommended to the young athletes today. With regards to the second part of your question, you will now get to see something that I've never wanted to show the journalists, not even Eli, who would be especially interested in seeing that.

– I really don't know what Petar will show you. Perhaps some proof of the truth behind his claim.

– Yes, Eva. These are the results of tests ran by the medical institution MHL from Switzerland, half an hour before and after my record winning race.

– MHL is still the most famous medical lab in the world. It's all completely clear!– Doctor Elena got interrupted the conversation.

– I never showed this until now because, apart from some unofficial circles, the doubt has never been expressed anywhere. It was artificially created by the same, and threatened lobby that influenced by unexcused absence from the Representation. I consistently ignored them the entire time. True sports lovers found my decision to completely leave the sport of athletics, after setting a record, weird. It didn't matter that I kept repeating that my goal has been reached because I broke a record that was above my realistic abilities. That was impossible to repeat. Success in sport brings eupho-

ric joy, but failure and injustice endless pain that is hard to describe. Believe me that I am sincerely waiting for the day when I will congratulate the new record holder and wishing that those great injustices never get repeated again. Sport successes are easily shared, unlike injustices and difficulties that are only bearable in the circle of true friends.

– Thank you, Petar, on your honest and documented answer. We often fail to realize that injustice can serve as great encouragement in a particular moment.

– You’re right. If it hadn’t been for that obvious injustice, my record setting, my trip to Paris, wife Natalie and son Ivan, my soul Eva and son Nemanja, novel, friends, travels, you, and this wonderful wine that we have neglected, would not have happened. Cheers!

– Elena, I beg you to help me in my endeavor to convince Petar to make two important decisions. My husband thinks very highly of you.

– I didn’t know that, Eva!

– Believe it! Together, we need to influence Petar to start writing his new novel on Tuesday and to stop participating in any political activities.

– It will be my pleasure, Eva. Petar’s involvement in the political life, albeit minimal, is truly unnecessary, because everyone sees him as their idol, good neighbor, friend, and cousin.

– I will listen to you gladly. I have already stopped with politics. For me, politics represents a search for realization of national interests, which is pronounced in us that spent a lot of time abroad. In that endeavor we often feel disappointment the way small children do, because politics is a dirty and immoral activity. Here, I officially promise that, as early as tomorrow, after picking up my new ID, I will cancel my membership in all political associations. I can see that people don’t see me as a person from the world of politics.

– You said that, without the great injustice, there would not be those people that improved your turbulent life. That refers to me and Lela, who became completely new people, thanks to you. You “awakened” her, and she me. We were shaken awake from a long half– sleep. She became more independent and ambitious, and then she extended her influence to me. Case in point, after three years, I decided to pass the graduation exam at the Academy and soon there will be a movie showing in which I have the main role that I will tell you more about over the course of the evening. Elena is some new Elena. We are all pebbles on the road of other’s destinies. Petar, you are that important pebble of ours.

– My stone of destiny was that great injustice. Thank you to the “friends” who caused it. I sincerely forgave everything to them a long time ago. Everything is relative, except forgiveness.

– While we’re on this topic, explain to us Petar, what makes up Elena’s power in relations to people that was created, as Rale says, as a result of your indirect influence.

– Elena’s power doesn’t lie in her undeniable beauty but in her honest attitude toward people. She doesn’t take advantage of them, which they sense. They don’t see her as an erotic symbol for many reasons, which I can’t explain in detail now, but they see hope in her. It only takes her a few minutes to restore lost hope to people, without which man is not a man. She is realistic and very well intentioned. She shows us that little things can mean a great deal to someone. She is the prototype of a person from the twenty second century, when putting unnecessary barriers to realization of basic human needs will be punishable. She kept these characteristics hidden deep in her, but they were suddenly awakened and turned into a volcano of immense love. We can imagine a world in which everyone would follow her example. She overcame the injustice that was done to her before she could not even fully walk, and turned it into love as a general category.

– You will embarrass me in front of my boyfriend and Eva. So stop praising me, because this wine should not be accompanied by a tear, even if it's a happy tear.

– Petar, I assume that your son complained to you about how I scared them at practice today. Of course I recognized him, but I didn't want him to think that he has some kind of a sports leniency with me. He's got heart, just so you know! That's the most important thing. He's not afraid of anything, although he is slightly weaker physically than most of his team mates. He will advance towards rugby where, unlike your sport, people often lose teeth, and then...

– He will have to switch sports because of that. Won't he, Petar?

– We will see Eva. That's only up to his coach Rale, Lale Miletović to decide.

Entering the large living room, they were admiring the meticulously placed paintings that almost completely covered the walls, dominated by ones that were exclusively in shades of purple. The author of these truly impressive, large, oil paintings was their tonight's host, Eva, who honestly promised, on their insistence, that she will design the cover pages of her husband's new novel in her purple–y style. On one of her paintings, here was an unfinished face of an athlete that Petar wore on his back in a jersey with the national coat of arms. It will be finished when somebody new breaks Petar's record. New champion will then be given this painting as well.

– Please, Petar, tell me what architectural genius did the project and tastefully decorated this space? The solution for the stairs is impressive! We are supposed to decorate our family home soon....

– I will gladly recommend you to my friend, architect Vladimirov. I will call him tomorrow and put him in touch with you, because he is overbooked so we need to do that on time.

– Here is that same French, red wine, but with a different make year– harvest year that is. The first wine was drunk the main cha-

racters from my first novel, while they were sailing La Seine... The new wine is getting drunk by us, living characters that will become incognito, imaginary characters in the new novel, which I am starting to write on Tuesday at five o'clock.

– Petar, which character are you? Cheers!

– Cheers, Elena!

– Dear Friends! Lady and gentlemen! Seeing how you see me as an energetic, capable, and concrete person, allow me to briefly lay out basic protocol reasons of our tonight's visit in eight points.

First, Petar, we are meeting tomorrow morning at 7:50AM, in front of the police station so that we can pick up your new ID. We will have coffee with Chief Kosta too, who wants to meet you. His soon practices athletics. Period!

Second, you are invited to Rale's graduation performance on June 15th at 6PM. Here are the invitations, we are eagerly expecting you. Period!

Third, you are invited to the premier of "Sigh", with Rale, Lale Miletović in the leading role of the "stud" from the romantic times. Here are the front row invitations. Period!

Forth, you are invited to my Master's thesis defense, on June 24th at noon at the College of Medicine, which would not be happening without Petar's help. After the defense, please attend my ceremonial lunch because it is also expected that I will named the Assistant Professor. Here is the reminder...Period!

Fifth, everything has been taken care of with regards to Nema-nja's graduation and enrollment to the high school. Period!

Sixth, retrospective exhibit of paintings of the artist Elena Petrović will be held on May 11th of next year at the City Gallery, at 5 o'clock. Period!

Seventh, the promotion of the new novel by Petar Five Five Petrović will be held on December 21st of this year at the National Museum, at 7 PM. Period!

Eighth, all activities related to passports and registration will be started tomorrow morning, and done by Thursday. Period! Thank you for your attention. We will discuss details in the next few days. Have I been sufficiently operational?

– Too much so! – Everyone said in unison.

– Please always call me Petar, the way my friends will continue to do, without having to go into reasons behind the change of my name.

– All right, Petar, but thus write, write, and write!

* * *

Under the Linden trees in the garden of Petar's favorite bar, next to the old market was where they often sat over the past three years of their unusual and passionate acquaintanceship. There were only a few permanent regulars in the restaurant, at the same tables they have been sitting at for decades and scrolling through the daily newspapers with the morning coffee. They were greeted by their favorite, and always cheerful waiter, and old friends.

– Good morning, Miss. Good morning, champ. Congratulations on your refined taste.

– Good morning, old friends! How's the sports forecast? Do we have any "tips" for today?

– The Chief was attentive, of course, thanks to your magical influence, he said, picking up the newspapers that he clumsily dropped under the table beforehand.

– You're not right. You saw how happy he got when you agreed to encourage his son, future successful sports colleague. Isn't that right? Ella and I will go to see him later, to take care of some necessary formalities around the passports.

– The usual drink?– waiter asked politely.

– Wait, we need to figure it out.

– Alright, I'll come back later.

– Male trash! How is it that you don't know what we need to drink today, without having to figure anything out? You forgot... I can't believe you forgot...

– You just reminded me, my bright fool but before you continue to curse me, look at your beautiful left little shoe.

– You're definitely out of your mind. I love you! The way you skillfully did this while picking up the "accidentally" dropped newspapers. How did you come up with gluing the little green heart on my shoe? Crazy, imaginative, and unforgettable. Thank you! It's really impossible to come up with a more original present for the three year anniversary that is especially important to me. You have no idea how much you mean to me. I will go crazy with love. Why don't you tell me you love me?— she uttered softly while seamlessly leaning towards him.

– I want you more than ever, but a lot less than I will want you next year, as we are remembering today's day and the third anniversary of our unquenchably burning relationship. I'm glad that you are wearing your beautiful hair the way that I want you to. Long, naturally blonde, straight, and cut the way I like it, so that it reveals the hidden and pronounced transition to the most erotic lower part of your body, that only belongs to me. Tell me that you're only mine!

– Only yours, my only trash that fulfilled all my senses. You convincing me to shorten my hair has some "esthetic reasons", but it is a sin that you gave me a complex that my ears are a little lopsided and that the tops of both of my ears are slightly protruding though my hair, so that I wouldn't even think of tying my hair in a ponytail or putting it up in a bun, which I used to do a lot. My fool!

– Rest assured, if you hadn't listened to me, your future students would surely nickname you "crooked ears". Imagine students saying

that they are going to the young, crooked earned assistant professor's lecture. So wear your hair the way I like it!

– Fine, but what nickname will they give me if I listen to you?

– Only one– white angel.

– What did your little invisibly crooked eared angel do in honor of today? You can't notice, so I will show you how much you mean to me. I did what you never would have enough courage to do– she said excitedly as she was showing him her two earlobes, on the insides of which were tattooed two little letters "P" in a light green color.

– Maybe this is a Cyrillic letter "P" and refers to your Rale.

– Idiot! You can see that the two little Latin letters "P

signify my two Pet's, and that they are tattooed with almost the same color as the little heart you gave me. That is also the color of our eyes.

– You're wonderful. You really touched me. I never loved tattoos and now, I am unusually happy that you did that. However, do use my joke if your Rale even notices by accident what you did.

– Stop and let's enjoy in our memory of the night three years ago, when I discovered my true self and became a young woman. I grabbed you for myself, but it seemed that I did not completely separate you from you secretive female friends.

– That is only your vivid imagination that I adore, especially on Fridays. But, let's go back to your revealed bridge to the most interesting part of your body for me. Instead of Master's in Science, you could immediately become a successful singer.

– What's that got to do with anything, my fool?

– The time of radio artists is gone, and only two– three top singers today build their careers based on their voice. What matters is my favorite part of the body, drive, and hidden support. Voice is not that important, because new technology is here, background vo-