

Mirko's Morning

by Andrew Stancek

Mirko walked past the broken streetlight; wet sand and cement dust crunched underfoot. He should have worn gloves, he thought. October, must be below zero.

Father woke him up, stumbling in around five, supported by the blonde from across the road. He fell. She groaned pulling at his arm, tumbled on top of him, swore, laughed her parrot squawk. Father was snoring already, sprawled on the floor littered with empty rum bottles, shards of a broken plate, peanut shells. The blonde kicked off a high heel, limped to the bathroom, ran water. She came out wearing only her skirt; her pale breasts swayed as she stopped at Mirko's bed.

"Hey, Tiger, you want some?" she slurred. "He's not waking anytime soon."

Mirko did, but next to his snoring father? He shook his head.

"Your loss," she cackled, stumbled to the bed in the corner, hummed a tuneless song, and began snoring, too.

More excitement than reform school, Mirko laughed to himself, pulling his pants on. At seven he was meeting Duro at the construction site, hoping they'd pass for sixteen, get hired on for demolition work for the day. Three days ago Father promised to buy groceries. The two hundred crowns Mirko stole from Mother was running out. They might have to rob the kiosk, do it right this time. He began the trot towards the all-night café. Damn, it was cold.

