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Bachelor Thesis

"China": Translation and Stylistic Analysis of Charles Johnson's Short Story

„China“: Překlad a stylistická analýza povídky Charlese Johnsona

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Odevzdáním této bakalářské práce na téma "*China*": *Překlad a stylistická analýza povídky Charlese Johnsona* potvrzuji, že jsem ji vypracoval pod vedením vedoucího práce samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále potvrzuji, že tato práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce představuje překlad a komplexní translatickou analýzu krátké povídky „*China*“ od Charlese Richarda Johnsona. Práce se skládá z praktické části, která zahrnuje překlad původního textu do češtiny, a teoretické části, která zkoumá různé jazykové a stylistické jevy v rámci povídky.

Praktická část práce se zaměřuje na proces překladu a zkoumá výzvy, které vznikají při překládání literárních děl. Překlad je prezentován jako originální dílo s cílem ukázat, jak byl původní text přizpůsoben cílovému jazyku při zachování jeho podstatného významu a stylu. Teoretická část práce zkoumá jazykové a stylistické prvky původního textu a jejich dopad na překlad.

Analýza je založena na teoriích překladu představených Dagmarou Knittlovou a Jiřím Levým, které poskytují rámec pro hodnocení kvality překladu. Studie zkoumá různé techniky, které autor používá k vyjádření významu a emocí, jako je použití metafor, vyobrazení a symbolů, a jak je využít při překladu.

Výsledky této práce přispívají k pochopení překladu jako složitého procesu, který zahrnuje nejen jazykové, ale také kulturní a sociální faktory. Práce tedy zdůrazňuje důležitost hlubokého porozumění zdrojovému textu a cílovému jazyku, stejně jako potřebu zohlednit kontext, v němž bude překlad čten. Celkově tato práce ukazuje hodnotu překladu jako prostředku kulturní výměny a poskytuje náhledy na výzvy a příležitosti, které vznikají při překládání literárních děl.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Překlad, *China*, Charles Richard Johnson, bojová umění, funkční ekvivalence, hyperonymie

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a translation (and its comprehensive analysis) of the short story "*China*" by Charles Richard Johnson. The work comprises of a practical part that involves the translation of the original text into Czech, as well as a theoretical part that investigates various linguistic and stylistic phenomena within the story.

The practical part of the thesis focuses on the translation process and examines the challenges that arise from translating literary works. The translation is presented as an original piece of work, with the aim of demonstrating how the original text was adapted to the target language while preserving its essential meaning and style.

The theoretical part of the thesis investigates the linguistic and stylistic features of the original text and their impact on the translation. The analysis is based on the theories of translation presented by Dagmar Knittlová and Jiří Levý, which provide a framework for evaluating the quality of the translation. The study examines the various techniques employed by the author to convey meaning and emotion, such as the use of metaphor, imagery, and symbolism, and how to employ them in translation.

The findings of this thesis contribute to the understanding of translation as a complex process that involves not only linguistic but also cultural and social factors. The work highlights the importance of a deep understanding of the source text and the target language, as well as the need to consider the context in which the translation will be read. Overall, this thesis demonstrates the value of translation as a means of cultural exchange and provides insights into the challenges and opportunities that arise when translating literary works.

KEYWORDS

Translation, China, Charles Richard Johnson, martial arts, functional equivalence, hyperonymy

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1 INTRODUCTION

The following thesis presents a translation of the short story "China" by Charles Richard Johnson, originally written in English, into Czech. The aim of this thesis is to make the story accessible to Czech-speaking readers and to promote cross-cultural understanding through literature.

"China" is a powerful work of fiction that explores the complex relationship between consciousness, the body, and the spirit. The story also highlights the destructive influence of American culture on Black individuals who have accepted its limitations. By translating this story into Czech, the hope is to bring attention to these themes in a new cultural context and to facilitate discussion on the universal human experiences that the story addresses.

The translation process was carried out with great care and attention to detail, with the goal of preserving the essence of the original story while also adapting it for a Czech-speaking audience. The thesis will discuss the translation choices made and the challenges encountered in the process, as well as the cultural and linguistic considerations that were taken into account. Ultimately, it is hoped that this translation will contribute to a greater appreciation of the richness and diversity of literature across cultures.

1.1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND THE SHORT STORY

Charles Richard Johnson, born in 1948 in Illinois, started publishing cartoons as early as when he was still in college, where he studied journalism (and later obtained a PhD in philosophy). He was active in the *black arts movement*, publishing 2 cartoon collections on the topic. At the beginning of the 20th century, Johnson earned a MacArthur reward.

The short story *China* was published in a collection of 8 short stories, called *The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Tales and Conjurations*, wherein a few stories, *China* included, centers on the essence of the Black encounter within American society and the validation within a culture that fails to reflect that identity. The brief narrative 'China', in particular, showcases the potency of awareness in relation to the physique and soul, and the harmful effects of American customs on African American individuals who have internalized its constraints.

1.2 THE AIM AND THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE THESIS

The objective of this thesis is to translate three specific chapters from English to Czech while providing a theoretical analysis of the translation process, especially in regards to potential difficulties that could arise. The theoretical analysis will explore the more challenging aspects of the translation and demonstrate how canonical translation theories, such as those by Jiří Levý, Dagmar Knittlová, informed the resulting translation of many passages.

Dagmar Knittlová similarly stresses the importance of comprehending the text beyond just its words and structures, but also its complex and multi-level meaning within the context of its cultural background (Knittlová 27). Knittlová offers a scheme of 5 textual filters¹ as a tool to help translators determine what is relevant for the text and simplify decision-making before starting the translation process (Knittlová 22). This scheme was adhered to in the given order.

As Jiří Levý notes, a translator must have a firm grasp of three key elements: 1) the source language, 2) the target language, and 3) the content of the text being translated (Levý 17). The translator must also be able to comprehend the original text, interpret it, and re-style it for the target audience (Levý 53). Levý also says that translating is retelling. The translator decodes the meaning of the original text, then reformulates it into the target language (Levý 44).

The translation is also largely guided by the effort of trying to find a balance between the fidelity and fluency principles. Fidelity refers to the extent to which a translation accurately reflects the meaning of the original text. A faithful translation should convey the original message and tone of the text without altering its meaning or intent. A translator should strive to preserve the style, cultural references, and nuances of the original text as much as possible while also ensuring that the translation is clear and understandable to the target audience. Fluency refers to the naturalness and readability of the translated text in the target language. A fluent translation should flow smoothly and naturally, without sounding awkward or stilted. The translator should consider the target audience's language level,

¹ 1.cultural, 2.formal, 3.semantic, 4.linguistic aspect and 5.the aspect of the literary genre

cultural background, and stylistic preferences when translating, to ensure that the translation is both accurate and easy to read.

Both fidelity and fluency are important in producing a high-quality translation that effectively communicates the intended message to the target audience. A translator must balance these two principles to create a translation that is both faithful to the original text and fluent in the target language (Knittlová 7-9).

Many different issues concerning the lexical and syntactical equivalence emerged during the translation. Concerning the lexical equivalence, the most significant challenges arose mainly from cultural allusions and words which seem to have zero or partial equivalence in Czech, such as having to decide whether it is more optimal to employ a foreign word as a loanword, to translate it from scratch, omit the word or substitute it. As for the syntactic equivalence, the challenges appeared mostly in the form of punctuation marks – mostly semicolons – and extremely long compound sentences, which had to be modified.

Another lexical specialty of our translation is dictated by the predominant focus of Johnson's short story, namely martial arts terminology. As such, it was crucial to develop a conscious effort to remain faithful to the original text in the relevant terminology. Extensive research on the proper translations was carried out to ensure the retention of the meaning and cultural significance of the terms. Additionally, great care was taken to ensure that the terminology is appropriate to the context in which it is used, so as to avoid any confusion or misinterpretation. These translational efforts seek to preserve the integrity and authenticity of the original work, while also making it accessible to a wider audience.

All aforementioned phenomena and more shall be discussed in detail in chapters 3-5.

2 PRACTICAL PART – TRANSLATION

1 Evelyn's problems with her husband, Rudolph, began one evening in early March—a dreary winter evening in Seattle—when he complained after a heavy meal of pig's feet and mashed potatoes of shortness of breath, an allergy to something she put in his food perhaps, or brought on by the first signs of wild flowers around them. She suggested they get out of the house for the evening, go to a movie. He was fifty-four, a postman for thirty-three years now, with high blood pressure, emphysema, flat feet, and, as Evelyn told her friend Shelberdine Lewis, the lingering fear that he had cancer. Getting old, he was also getting hard to live with. He told her never to salt his dinners, to keep their Lincoln Continental at a crawl, and never run her fingers along his inner thigh when they sat in Reverend William Merrill's church, because anything, even sex, or laughing too loud—Rudolph was serious—might bring on heart failure.

2 So she chose for their Saturday night outing a peaceful movie, a mildly funny comedy a *Seattle Times* reviewer said was fit only for titters and nasal snorts, a low-key satire that made Rudolph's eyelids droop as he shoveled down unbuttered popcorn in the darkened, half-empty theater. Sticky fluids cemented Evelyn's feet to the floor. A man in the last row laughed at all the wrong places. She kept the popcorn on her lap, though she hated the unsalted stuff and wouldn't touch it, sighing as Rudolph pawed across her to shove his fingers inside the cup.

3 She followed the film as best she could, but occasionally her eyes frosted over, flashed white. She went blind like this now and then. The fibers of her eyes were failing; her retinas were tearing like soft tissue. At these times the world was a canvas with whiteout spilling from the far left corner toward the center; it was the sudden shock of an empty frame in a series of slides. Someday, she knew, the snow on her eyes would stay. Winter eternally: her eyes split like her walking stick. She groped along the fractured surface, waiting for her sight to thaw, listening to the film she couldn't see. Her only comfort was knowing that, despite her infirmity, her Rudolph was in even worse health.

4 He slid back and forth from sleep during the film (she elbowed him occasionally, or pinched his leg), then came full awake, sitting up suddenly when the movie ended and a "Coming Attractions" trailer began. It was some sort of gladiator movie, Evelyn thought, blinking, and it was pretty trashy stuff at that. The plot's revenge theme was a poor excuse for Chinese actors or Japanese (she couldn't tell those people apart) to flail the air with their hands and feet, take on fifty costumed extras at once, and leap twenty feet through the air in perfect defiance of gravity. Rudolph's mouth hung open.

1 Evelyniny problémy s jejím manželem Rudolfem začaly jednoho večera na začátku března – byl to ponurý zimní večer v Seattlu – když si po vydatném jídle z vepřových nožiček a bramborové kaše stěžoval na dušnost, možná na alergii na něco, co mu dala do jídla, nebo na první náznaky divokých květin v jejich okolí. Navrhla, aby na večer vyrazili z domu a šli do kina. Bylo mu čtyřiapadesát, pošťákem byl už třiatřicet let, měl vysoký krevní tlak, rozedmu plic, ploché nohy, a jak Evelyn řekla své přítelkyni Shelberdine Lewisové, neustále se bál, že má rakovinu. S přibývajícím věkem se s ním čím dál hůře žilo. Říkal jí, aby mu nikdy nesolila večere, aby jejich Lincoln Continental řídila šnečím tempem a aby mu nikdy nepřejížděla prsty po vnitřní straně stehen, když seděli v kostele reverenda Williama Merrilla, protože cokoli, dokonce i sex nebo příliš hlasitý smích – a to Rudolf myslel vážně – by mohlo přivodit srdeční zástavu.

2 A tak pro jejich sobotní večer vybrala klidný film, mírně vtípnou komedii, o které recenzent *Seattle Times* napsal, že je to nenáročná satira, která nutí diváka pouze k uchechtávání a nosovému chrčení, z níž Rudolfovi poklesla víčka, když do sebe v potmělém, poloprázdném kině hrnul nesolený popcorn. Lepkavé tekutiny přimáčkly Evelyniny nohy k podlaze. Muž v poslední řadě se smál v nejméně vhodných chvílích. Držela popcorn na klíně, i když nesolený nesnášela a nechtěla se ho ani dotknout, a vzdychla, když se Rudolf přes ni přehraboval, aby do kelímku strčil prsty.

3 Snažila se sledovat film, jak jen to šlo, ale občas se jí oči zamlžily a zbělaly. Tu a tam takto oslepla. Oční vlákna jí selhávala – sítnice se jí trhaly jako měkká tkáň. V těchto chvílích byl svět plátnem s bílou skvrnou rozlévající se z levého rohu směrem ke středu; byl to náhlý šok z prázdného snímku v sérii diapozitivů. Věděla, že jednoho dne jí tento sníh na očích zůstane. Zima navěky: oči se jí rozštěpily jako její vycházková hůl. Tápala po rozlámaném povrchu, čekala, až jí zrak roztaje, a poslouchala film, který nemohla vidět. Jedinou útěchou jí bylo vědomí, že ačkoliv její zdravotní stav sice nebyl nijak skvělý, Rudolf na tom byl ještě hůř.

4 Během filmu tu a tam usínal (občas do něj strčila loktem nebo ho štípala do nohy), pak se úplně probral a náhle se posadil, když film skončil a začala upoutávka na nadcházející filmy. Byl to nějaký film o gladiátorech, a to pořádně kýčovitý, pomyslela si Evelyn a zamrkala. Téma pomsty v ději bylo chabou záminkou pro čínské nebo japonské herce (které od sebe nedokázala rozeznat), aby mlátili rukama a nohama do vzduchu, zmlátili najednou padesát komparzistů v kostýmech a skákali dvacet metrů vzduchem v dokonalém popření gravitace. Rudolf měl ústa dokořán.

5 “Can people really do that?” He did not take his eyes off the screen, but talked at her from the right side of his mouth. “Leap that high?”

6 “It’s a *movie*,” sighed Evelyn. “A *bad* movie.”

7 He nodded, then asked again, “But can they?”

8 “Oh, Rudolph, for God’s sake!” She stood up to leave, her seat slapping back loudly. “They’re on *trampolines*! You can see them in the corner— there! —if you open your eyes!”

9 He did see them, once Evelyn twisted his head to the lower left corner of the screen, and it seemed to her that her husband looked disappointed— looked, in fact, the way he did the afternoon Dr. Guylee told Rudolph he’d developed an extrasystolic reaction, a faint, moaning sound from his heart whenever it relaxed. He said no more and, after the trailer finished, stood—there was chewing gum stuck to his trouser seat—dragged on his heavy coat with her help and followed Evelyn up the long, carpeted aisle, through the exit of the Coronet Theater, and to their car. He said nothing as she chattered on the way home, reminding him that he could not stay up all night puttering in his basement shop because the next evening they were to attend the church’s revival meeting.

10 Rudolph, however, did not attend the revival. He complained after lunch of a light, dancing pain in his chest, which he had conveniently whenever Mount Zion Baptist Church held revivals, and she went alone, sitting with her friend Shelberdine, a beautician. She was forty-one; Evelyn, fifty-two. That evening Evelyn wore spotless white gloves, tan therapeutic stockings for the swelling in her ankles, and a white dress that brought out nicely the brown color of her skin, the most beautiful cedar brown, Rudolph said when they were courting thirty-five years ago in South Carolina. But then Evelyn had worn a matching checkered skirt and coat to meeting. With her jet black hair pinned behind her neck by a simple wooden comb, she looked as if she might have been Andrew Wyeth’s starkly beautiful model for *Day of the Fair*. Rudolph, she remembered, wore black business suits, black ties, black wing tips, but he also wore white gloves because he was a senior usher—this was how she first noticed him. He was one of four young men dressed like deacons (or blackbirds), their left hands tucked into the hollow of their backs, their right carrying silver plates for the offering as they marched in almost military fashion down each aisle: Christian soldiers, she’d thought, the cream of black manhood, and to get his attention she placed not her white envelope or coins in Rudolph’s plate but instead a note that said: “You have a beautiful smile.” It was, for all her innocence, a daring thing to do, according to Evelyn’s mother—flirting with a randy young man like Rudolph Lee Jackson, but he did have nice, tigerish teeth.

5 „Tohle lidi fakt dokážou?“ Neodtrhl oči od obrazovky, ale promluvil na ni pravou stranou úst. „Skákat tak vysoko?“

6 „Je to *film*“, povzdechla si Evelyn. „*Špatný* film.“

7 Přikývl a pak se znovu zeptal: „Ale dokážou to?“

8 „Proboha, Rudolfe!“ Zvedla se k odchodu a její sedadlo se nahlas zaklaplo. „Jsou na trampolínách! Vždyť jsou vidět v rohu – tamhle! – když otevřeš oči!“

9 Opravdu je viděl, jakmile mu Evelyn natočila hlavu do levého dolního rohu obrazovky, a zdálo se jí, že její manžel vypadá zklamaně. Vlastně vypadal stejně jako to odpoledne, kdy doktor Guylee Rudolfovi řekl, že se u něj vyvinula extrasystolická reakce, slabý sténající zvuk, který se ozval ze srdce, kdykoli se uklidnilo. Nic víc už neřekl a po skončení upoutávky vstal – na zadku měl přilepenou žvýkačku – s pomocí Evelyn si navlékl těžký kabát a následoval ji dlouhou, kobercem vyloženou uličkou, východem z divadla Coronet a k jejich autu. Nic neříkal, když cestou domů štěbetala a připomínala mu, že nemůže zůstat celou noc vzhůru a flákat se ve svém sklepním obchodě, protože příští večer se mají zúčastnit svatodušního shromáždění v kostele.

10 Rudolf se však shromáždění nezúčastnil. Po obědě si stěžoval na lehkou, přeskakující bolest na hrudi, kterou míval příhodně vždy, když se v baptistickém kostele Mount Zion konala shromáždění a ona šla sama – seděla se svou přítelkyní Shelberdine, která byla kosmetička. Té bylo jednačtyřicet, Evelyn dvaapadesát. Toho večera měla Evelyn na sobě neposkvrněné bílé rukavičky, béžové terapeutické punčochy kvůli otokům kotníků a bílé šaty, které pěkně zvýraznily snědou barvu její pleti, tu nejkrásnější cedrově hnědou, jak říkal Rudolf, když před pětatřiceti lety v Jižní Karolině randili. Ale tehdy si Evelyn na schůzku vzala sladěnou kostkovanou sukni a kabát. S černými vlasy sepnutými za krkem jednoduchým dřevěným hřebenem vypadala, jako by mohla být stroze krásnou modelkou malíře Andrewa Wyetha pózující pro jeho obraz *Day of the Fair*. Rudolf, jak si vzpomínala, nosil černé obchodní obleky, černé kravaty, černé křídlovky, ale nosil také bílé rukavice, protože byl vrchním uvaděčem – tak si ho poprvé všimla. Byl jedním ze čtyř mladých mužů oblečených jako jáhnové (nebo kosi), levé ruce měli zastrčené v prohlubni na zádech, pravou nesli stříbrné talíře na dary, když téměř vojensky pochodovali každou uličkou: Křesťanští vojáci, pomyslela si, smetánka černošského mužství – aby upoutala jeho pozornost, nevložit do Rudolfova talíře bílou obálku ani mince, namísto toho lístek s nápisem: „Máš krásný úsměv.“ Podle Evelyniny matky to byla přes všechnu její nevinost odvážná věc – flirtovat s takovým nadřzeným mladíkem, jako byl Rudolf Lee Jackson, ale měl pěkné, tygří zuby.

11 A killer smile, people called it, like all the boys in the Jackson family: a killer smile and good hair that needed no more than one stroke of his palm to bring out Quo Vadis rows pomaded sweetly with the scent of Murray's.

12 And, of course, Rudolph was no dummy. Not a total dummy, at least. He pretended nothing extraordinary had happened as the congregation left the little whitewashed church. He stood, the youngest son, between his father and mother, and let old Deacon Adcock remark, "Oh, how strong he's looking now," which was a lie. Rudolph was the weakest of the Jackson boys, the pale, bookish, spiritual child born when his parents were well past forty. His brothers played football, they went into the navy; Rudolph lived in Scripture, was labeled 4-F, and hoped to attend Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, if he could ever find the money. Evelyn could tell Rudolph knew exactly where she was in the crowd, that he could feel her as she and her sister, Debbie, waited for their father to bring his DeSoto—the family prize—closer to the front steps. When the crowd thinned, he shambled over in his slow, ministerial walk, introduced himself, and unfolded her note.

13 "You write this?" he asked. "It's not right to play with the Lord's money, you know."

14 "I like to play," she said.

15 "You do, huh?" He never looked directly at people. Women, she guessed, terrified him. Or, to be exact, the powerful emotions they caused in him terrified Rudolph. He was a pud puller, if she ever saw one. He kept his eyes on a spot left of her face. "You're Joe Montgomery's daughter, aren't you?"

16 "Maybe," teased Evelyn.

17 He trousered the note and stood marking the ground with his toe. "And just what you expect to get, Miss Playful, by fooling with people during collection time?"

18 She waited, let him look away, and, when the back-and-forth swing of his gaze crossed her again, said in her most melic, soft-breathing voice: "You."

19 Up front, portly Reverend Merrill concluded his sermon. Evelyn tipped her head slightly, smiling into memory; her hand reached left to pat Rudolph's leg gently; then she remembered it was Shelberdine beside her, and lifted her hand to the seat in front of her. She said a prayer for Rudolph's health, but mainly it was for herself, a hedge against her fear that their childless years had slipped by like wind, that she might return home one day and find him—as she had found her father—on the floor, bellied up, one arm twisted behind him where he fell, alone, his fingers locked against his chest.

11 Zabijácký úsměv, tak tomu lidé říkali, stejně jako u všech chlapců z Jacksonovy rodiny: zabijácký úsměv a krásné vlasy, které nepotřebovaly víc než jedno pročísnutí dlaní, aby se z nich stala luxusní hříva, navoněná pomádou od firmy Murray's.

12 A Rudolf samozřejmě nebyl žádný hlupák. Přínejmenším ne úplný hlupák. Když shromáždění opouštělo malý vybělený kostelík, předstíral, že se nic mimořádného nestalo. Stál jako nejmladší syn mezi otcem a matkou a starému diakonovi Adcockovi neskákal do řeči, zatímco konstatoval: „Ó, to je ale od pohledu silák.“ Což byla lež. Rudolf byl nejslabší chlapec z Jacksonovic rodiny; bledé, knihomolské, pobožné dítě, které se narodilo, když jeho rodičům už bylo dávno po čtyřicítce. Jeho bratři hráli fotbal a šli k námořnictvu, zatímco Rudolf žil Písmem svatým, měl označení 4-F a doufal, že bude navštěvovat Bohosloví v Chicagu, pokud na to někdy sežene peníze. Evelyn poznala, že Rudolf přesně ví, kde se v davu nachází, že cítí její přítomnost, když se sestrou Debbie čekají, až jejich otec přiveze svůj Chrysler – rodinnou trofej – blíž k předním schodům. Když dav prořídil, připotácel se k ní pomalou ministrantskou chůzí, představil se a rozbalil její zprávu.

13 „To jste napsala Vy?“ zeptal se. „Víte, že není správné zahrávat si s božími penězi?“

14 „Ráda si hraju,“ řekla.

15 „Fakt, jo?“ Nikdy se na lidi nedíval přímo. Hádala, že ho ženy děsily. Přesněji řečeno, silné emoce, které v něm vyvolávaly, Rudolfa děsily. Byl to honimír; a to ukázkový. Nespouštěl oči z místa nalevo od jejího obličeje. „Vy jste dcera Joea Montgomeryho, že jo?“

16 „Možná,“ škádlila ho Evelyn.

17 Vzkaz strčil do kapsy a postavil se tak, že si prstem na noze označkoval zem. „A co asi získáte, slečno Hravá, tím, že budete během vybírání darů blbnout lidí?“

18 Počkala, nechala ho odvrátit zrak, a když ji jeho pohled znovu přejel pohledem tam a zpátky, řekla svým nejmeloďičtějším, měkce dýchajícím hlasem: „Tebe.“

19 Nahoře před vchodem ukončil své kázání zavalitý reverend Merrill. Evelyn mírně naklonila hlavu a usmála se při vzpomínce – její ruka se natáhla doleva, aby jemně poplácala Rudolfa po noze; pak si vzpomněla, že vedle ní sedí Shelberdine, a zvedla ruku k sedadlu před sebou. Pomodlila se za Rudolfovo zdraví, ale hlavně to bylo za sebe, pojistka proti strachu, že jejich bezdětná léta utekla jako vítr, že se jednoho dne vrátí domů a najde ho – jako našla svého otce – na podlaze, břichem vzhůru, s jednou rukou zkroucenou za sebou, kam spadl, osamocený, s prsty přitisknutými k hrudi.

20 Rudolph had begun to run down, Evelyn decided, the minute he was turned down by Moody Bible Institute. They moved to Seattle in 1956—his brother Eli was stationed nearby and said Boeing was hiring black men. But they didn't hire Rudolph. He had kidney trouble on and off before he landed the job at the Post Office. Whenever he bent forward, he felt dizzy. Liver, heart, and lungs—they'd worn down gradually as his belly grew, but none of this was as bad as what he called "the Problem." His pecker shrank to no bigger than a pencil eraser each time he saw her undress. Or when Evelyn, as was her habit when talking, touched his arm. Was she the cause of this? Well, she knew she wasn't much to look at anymore. She'd seen the bottom of a few too many candy wrappers. Evelyn was nothing to make a man pant and jump her bones, pulling her fully clothed onto the davenport, as Rudolph had done years before, but wasn't sex something else you surrendered with age? It never seemed all that good to her anyway. And besides, he'd wanted oral sex, which Evelyn—if she knew nothing else—thought was a nasty, unsanitary thing to do with your mouth. She glanced up from under her spring hat past the pulpit, past the choir of black and brown faces to the agonized beauty of a bearded white carpenter impaled on a rood, and in this timeless image she felt comforted that suffering was inescapable, the loss of vitality inevitable, even a good thing maybe, and that she had to steel herself—yes—for someday opening her bedroom door and finding her Rudolph face down in his breakfast oatmeal. He would die before her, she knew that in her bones.

21 And so, after service, Sanka, and a slice of meat pie with Shelberdine downstairs in the brightly lit church basement, Evelyn returned home to tell her husband how lovely the Griffin girls had sung that day, that their neighbor Rod Kenner had been, saved, and to listen, if necessary, to Rudolph's fear that the lump on his shoulder was an early-warning sign of something evil. As it turned out, Evelyn found that except for their cat, Mr. Miller, the little A-frame house was empty. She looked in his bedroom. No Rudolph. The unnaturally still house made Evelyn uneasy, and she took the excruciatingly painful twenty stairs into the basement to peer into a workroom littered with power tools, planks of wood, and the blueprints her husband used to make bookshelves and cabinets. No Rudolph. Frightened, Evelyn called the eight hospitals in Seattle, but no one had a Rudolph Lee Jackson on his books. After her last call the starburst clock in the living room read twelve-thirty. Putting down the wall phone, she felt a familiar pain in her abdomen. Another attack of Hershey squirts, probably from the meat pie. She hurried into the bathroom, lifted her skirt, and lowered her underwear around her ankles, but kept the door wide open, something impossible to do if Rudolph was home. Actually, it felt good not to have him underfoot, a little like he was dead already.

20 Evelyn usoudila, že Rudolf se začal hrotit ve chvíli, kdy ho odmítli přijmout do Bohosloví. V roce 1956 se přestěhovali do Seattlu – jeho bratr Eli sloužil nedaleko a řekl, že společnost Boeing nabírá černochoy. Ale Rudolfa nezaměstnali. Než začal pracovat na poště, tu a tam měl potíže s ledvinami. Kdykoli se předklonil, točila se mu hlava. Játra, srdce a plíce – ty se postupně opotřebovávaly, jak mu rostlo břicho, ale nic z toho nebylo tak zlé jako to, čemu říkal Problém s velkým P. Jeho pind'our se zmenšil na velikost gumy na tužce pokaždé, když ji viděl se svlékat. Nebo když se Evelyn, jak bylo jejím zvykem, zatímco mluvila, dotkla jeho paže. Byla snad příčinou toho všeho ona? No, věděla, že už není na pohled nic moc. Množství sladkostí, které spořádala za celý život, se na jejím vzhledu podepsalo. Evelyn nebyla nic, kvůli čemu by se muž zadýchal, skočil po ní a hodil ji oblečenou na pohovku, jako to před lety udělal Rudolf – ale nebyl sex něco dalšího, čeho se člověk s rostoucím věkem vzdával? Stejně jí to nikdy nepřipadalo až tak dobré. A kromě toho chtěl orální sex, což Evelyn, mimo jiné, považovala za odpornou, nehygienickou věc, která se provádí ústy. Podívala se zpod svého jarního klobouku za kazatelnu, za chór černých a snědých tváří na zmučenou krásu bílého tesaře s plnovousem napíchnutého na krucifix, a v tomto nadčasovém vyobrazení se cítila utěšená v pomyšlení, že utrpení je neodvratné, ztráta životní síly nevyhnutelná, dokonce možná dobrá věc, a že se musí zocelit – ano, jednou se to stane – až jednou otevře dveře své ložnice a najde svého Rudolfa obličejem zabořeným ve své ovesné snídaňové kaši. Zemře dřív než ona, to věděla v kostech.

21 A tak se Evelyn po bohoslužbě, šálku kávy a kousku masového koláče s Shelberdine v přízemí jasně osvětleného kostelního sklepa vrátila domů, aby manželovi povyprávěla, jak krásně ten den holky Griffinovy zpívaly, že jejich soused Rod Kenner byl spasen, a aby si případně vyslechla Rudolfovy obavy, že boule na jeho rameni je varovným znamením něčeho zlého. Jak se ukázalo, Evelyn zjistila, že kromě jejich kocoura, pana Millera, byl jejich malý domek ve tvaru písmene A prázdný. Podívala se do jeho ložnice. Rudolf nikde. Nepřirozeně tichý dům Evelyn znepokojoval, a tak se vydala po nesnesitelně bolestivých dvaceti schodech do sklepa, aby nahlédla do pracovny zaházené elektrickým náradím, dřevěnými prkny a plány, podle kterých její manžel vyráběl police na knihy a skříně. Rudolf nikde. Evelyn vyděšeně obvolala osm nemocnic v Seattlu, ale nikde žádného Rudolfa Lee Jacksona v evidenci neměli. Po jejím posledním telefonátu ukazovaly hvězdicové hodiny v obývacím pokoji půl jedné. Když položila nástěnný telefon, ucítila známou bolest v břicho. Další záchvat průjmu, nejspíš z masového koláče. Spěchala do koupelny, vyhrnula si sukni a spustila spodní prádlo ke kotníkům, dveře však nechala otevřené dokořán, což bylo nemožné, když byl Rudolf doma. Vlastně bylo fajn nemít ho pořád za zadkem – bylo to trochu, jako by už byl mrtvý.

22 But the last thing Evelyn wanted was that or, as she lay down against her lumpy backrest, to fall asleep, though she did, nodding off and dreaming until something shifted down her weight on the side of her bed away from the wall.

23 “Evelyn,” said Rudolph, “look at this.” She blinked back sleep and squinted at the cover of a magazine called *Inside Kung-Fu*, which Rudolph waved under her nose. On the cover a man stood bowlegged, one hand cocked under his armpit, the other corkscrewing straight at Evelyn’s nose.

24 “Rudolph!” She batted the magazine aside, then swung her eyes toward the cluttered nightstand, focusing on the electric clock beside her water glass from McDonald’s, Preparation H suppositories, and Harlequin romances. “It’s morning!” Now she was mad. At least, working at it. “Where have you been?”

25 Her husband inhaled, a wheezing, whistle-like breath. He rolled the magazine into a cylinder and, as he spoke, struck his left palm with it. “That movie we saw advertised? You remember—it was called *The Five Fingers of Death*. I just saw that and one called *Deep Thrust*.”

26 “Wonderful.” Evelyn screwed up her lips. “I’m calling hospitals and you’re at a Hong Kong double feature.”

27 “Listen,” said Rudolph. “You don’t understand.” He seemed at that moment as if he did not understand either. “It was a Seattle movie premiere. The Northwest is crawling with fighters. It has something to do with all the Asians out here. Before they showed the movie, four students from a kwoon in Chinatown went onstage—”

28 “A what?” asked Evelyn.

29 “A kwoon—it’s a place to study fighting, a meditation hall.” He looked at her but was really watching, Evelyn realized, something exciting she had missed. “They did a demonstration to drum up their membership. They broke boards and bricks, Evelyn. They went through what’s called kata and kumite and...” He stopped again to breathe. “I’ve never seen anything so beautiful. The reason I’m late is because I wanted to talk with them after the movie.”

30 Evelyn, suspicious, took a Valium and waited.

31 “I signed up for lessons,” he said.

32 She gave a glacial look at Rudolph, then at his magazine, and said in the voice she used five years ago when he wanted to take a vacation to Upper Volta or, before that, invest in a British car she knew they couldn’t afford:

22 Ale to bylo to poslední, po čem Evelyn toužila, nebo aby usnula, zatímco se pokládala na své hrbolaté opěradlo, ačkoli nakonec usnula, podřimovala a snila, dokud něco neposunulo její váhu na straně postele dál od stěny.

23 „Evelyn,“ řekl Rudolf, „podívej se na tohle.“ Rozespale zamrkala a zamžourala na přední stranu časopisu o Kung-Fu, kterým jí Rudolf zamával pod nosem. Na obálce stál muž se skloněnou nohou, jednu ruku měl zaťatou v podpaží a druhou mířil pěstí Evelyn přímo na nos.

24 „Rudolfe!“ Odhodila časopis stranou, pak stočila oči k přeplněnému nočnímu stolku a zaměřila se na elektrické hodiny vedle sklenice s vodou od McDonaldu, čípků na hemeroidy a románů Harlequin. „Je ráno!“ Ted’ už začínala být našťvaná. Nebo alespoň cítila, jak dostává vztek. „Kde jsi byl?“

25 Její manžel se nadechl, sípavým, hvízdavým dechem. Sroloval časopis do válce a při řeči si jím udeřil do levé dlaně. „Ten film, na který jsme viděli reklamu? Vzpomínáš si – jmenoval se *Pět prstů smrti*. Právě jsem ho viděl a ještě jeden, který se jmenoval *Hluboký tah*.“

26 „Nádhera.“ Evelyn našpulila rty. „Obvolávám nemocnice a ty jsi na hongkongském dvojpromítání.“

27 „Poslouchej,“ řekl Rudolf. „Ty tomu nerozumíš.“ V tu chvíli se zdálo, že nerozumí ani on. „Byla to premiéra filmu v Seattlu. Severozápad se hemží zápasníky. Má to něco do činění se všema těma Asiatama, co tu jsou. Než začali promítat film, čtyři studenti z kwoonu v čínské čtvrti vylezli na pódium –“

28 „Z čeho?“ zeptala se Evelyn.

29 „Z kwoonu – to je místo, kde se studuje boj, takový meditační sál.“ Podíval se na ni, ale Evelyn si uvědomila, že ve skutečnosti se díval na něco vzrušujícího, co jí uniklo. „Uspořádali předváděčku, aby nabrali nové členy. Rozbílili prkna a cihly, Evelyn. Prováděli něco, čemu říkají kata a kumite a...“ Znovu se odmlčel, aby se nadechl. „Nikdy jsem neviděl nic tak krásného. Přišel jsem pozdě proto, že jsem s nima chtěl po filmu pokecat.“

30 Evelyn si vzala valium a podezřívavě čekala.

31 „Přihlásil jsem se na lekce,“ řekl.

32 Ledově se podívala na Rudolfa, pak na jeho časopis a řekla hlasem, který použila naposledy před pěti lety, když chtěl jet na dovolenou do Horní Volty nebo předtím když chtěl investovat do britského auta, o kterém věděla, že si ho nemohou dovolit:

33 “You're fifty-four years old, Rudolph.”
34 “I know that.”
35 “You're no Muhammad Ali.”
36 “I know that,” he said.
37 “You're no Bruce Lee. Do you want to be Bruce Lee? Do you know where he is now, Rudolph? He's dead—dead here in a Seattle cemetery and buried up on Capital Hill.”
38 His shoulders slumped a little. Silently, Rudolph began undressing, his beefy backside turned toward her, slipping his pajama bottoms on before taking off his shirt so his scrawny lower body would not be fully exposed. He picked up his magazine, said, “I'm sorry if I worried you,” and huffed upstairs to his bedroom. Evelyn clicked off the mushroom-shaped lamp on her nightstand. She lay on her side, listening to his slow footsteps strike the stairs, then heard his mattress creak above her—his bedroom was directly above hers—but she did not hear him click off his own light. From time to time she heard his shifting weight squeak the mattress springs. He was reading that foolish magazine, she guessed; then she grew tired and gave this impossible man up to God. With a copy of *The Thorn Birds* open on her lap, Evelyn fell heavily to sleep again.
39 At breakfast the next morning any mention of the lessons gave Rudolph lockjaw. He kissed her forehead, as always, before going to work, and simply said he might be home late. Climbing the stairs to his bedroom was painful for Evelyn, but she hauled herself up, pausing at each step to huff, then sat on his bed and looked over his copy of *Inside Kung-Fu*. There were articles on empty-hand combat, soft-focus photos of ferocious-looking men in funny suits, parables about legendary Zen masters, an interview with someone named Bernie Bernheim, who began to study karate at age fifty-seven and became a black belt at age sixty-one, and page after page of advertisements for exotic Asian weapons: nunchaku, shuriken, sai swords, tonfa, bo staffs, training bags of all sorts, a wooden dummy shaped like a man and called a Mook Jong, and weights. Rudolph had circled them all. He had torn the order form from the last page of the magazine. The total cost of the things he'd circled—Evelyn added them furiously, rounding off the figures—was \$800.
40 Two minutes later she was on the telephone to Shelberdine.
41 “Let him tire of it,” said her friend. “Didn't you tell me Rudolph had Lower Lombard Strain?” Evelyn's nose clogged with tears.
42 “Why is he doing this? Is it me, do you think?”

33 „Je ti padesát čtyři let, Rudolfe.“
34 „To vím.“
35 „Nejsi žádný Muhammad Ali.“
36 „To vím,“ řekl.
37 „Nejsi Bruce Lee. Chceš snad být Bruce Lee? Víš, kde teď je, Rudolfe? Je mrtvý – mrtvý tady na hřbitově v Seattlu a pohřbený na Capital Hill.“
38 Ramena mu trochu poklesla. Rudolf se mlčky začal svlékat, zatímco jeho zadek byl otočený k ní, navlékl si spodek pyžama a pak si sundal košili, aby jeho hubená spodní část těla nebyla úplně odhalená. Vzal do ruky časopis, řekl: „Promiň, jestli jsem tě vylekal,“ a s funěním odešel nahoru do ložnice. Evelyn zhasla lampu ve tvaru hříbu na nočním stolku. Ležela na boku a poslouchala jeho pomalé kroky dopadající na schody, pak zaslechla, jak nad ní zavržala jeho matrace – jeho ložnice byla přímo nad tou její – ale neslyšela, že by vypnul svoje světlo. Čas od času slyšela, jak jeho pohybující se váha skřípe pružinami matrace. Hádala, že si čte ten hloupý časopis – pak ji to unavilo a přenechala tohoto vyšínutého muže Bohu. S otevřeným výtiskem knihy *Ptáci v trní* na klíně Evelyn znovu tvrdě usnula.
39 Druhý den ráno u snídaně jakákoli zmínka o lekcích způsobila Rudolfovi křeče. Jako vždy ji před odchodem do práce políbil na čelo a prostě oznámil, že se možná vrátí pozdě. Stoupání po schodech do jeho ložnice bylo pro Evelyn bolestivé, ale vyškrábala se nahoru, na každém schodu se zastavila, aby si odfrkla, pak se posadila na jeho postel a prohlížela si jeho časopis o Kung-Fu. Byly tam články o boji holýma rukama, měkce zaostřené fotografie kruté vypadajících mužů v legračních oblecích, podobenství o legendárních mistrech zenu, rozhovor s jakýmsi Bernie Bernheimem, který začal studovat karate v sedmapadesáti letech a v jednašedesáti získal černý pásek, a stránka za stránkou reklam na exotické asijské zbraně: nunchaky, šurikeny, meče sai, tonfy, hole bó, tréninkové pytle všeho druhu, dřevěnou figurínu nazývanou Mook Jong ve tvaru člověka a činky. Rudolf zakroužkoval všechno. Z poslední stránky časopisu vytrhl objednávkový formulář. Celková cena věcí, které zakroužkoval – Evelyn je zuřivě sčítala a zaokrouhlila – byla 800 dolarů.
40 O dvě minuty později už telefonovala s Shelberdine.
41 „Za chvíli ho to omrzí,“ řekla její přítelkyně. „Neříkala jsi mi, že Rudolf má dolní bederní úpon?“ Evelyn se ucpal nos slzami.
42 „Proč to dělá? Myslíš, že je to kvůli mně?“

43 "It's *the Problem*," said Shelberdine. "He wants his manhood back. Before he died, Arthur did the same. Someone at the plant told him he could get it back if he did twenty-yard sprints. He went into convulsions while running around the lake."

44 Evelyn felt something turn in her chest. "You don't think he'll hurt himself, do you?"

45 "Of course not."

46 "Do you think he'll hurt *me*?"

47 Her friend reassured Evelyn that Mid-Life Crisis brought out these shenanigans in men. Evelyn replied that she thought Mid-Life Crisis started around age forty, to which Shelberdine said, "Honey, I don't mean no harm, but Rudolph always was a little on the slow side," and Evelyn agreed. She would wait until he worked this thing out of his system, until Nature defeated him and he surrendered, as any right-thinking person would, to the breakdown of the body, the brutal fact of decay, which could only be blunted, it seemed to her, by decaying *with* someone, the comfort every Negro couple felt when, aging, they knew enough to let things wind down.

48 Her patience was rewarded in the beginning. Rudolph crawled home from his first lesson, hunched over, hardly able to stand, afraid he had permanently ruptured something. He collapsed face down on the living room sofa, his feet on the floor. She helped him change into his pajamas and fingered Ben-Gay into his back muscles, Evelyn had never seen her husband so close to tears.

49 "I can't *do* push-ups," he moaned. "Or sit-ups. I'm so stiff—I don't know my body." He lifted his head, looking up pitifully, his eyes pleading. "Call Dr. Guylee. Make an appointment for Thursday, okay?"

50 "Yes, dear." Evelyn hid her smile with one hand. "You shouldn't push yourself so hard."

51 At that, he sat up, bare-chested, his stomach bubbling over his pajama bottoms. "That's what it means. *Gung-fu* means 'hard work' in Chinese. Evelyn"—he lowered his voice—"I don't think I've ever really done hard work in my life. Not like this, something that asks me to give *everything*, body and soul, spirit and flesh. I've always felt ..." He looked down, his dark hands dangling between his thighs. "I've never been able to give *everything* to *anything*. The world never let me. It won't let me put all of myself into play. Do you know what I'm saying? Every job I've ever had, everything I've ever done, it only demanded part of me. It was like there was so much *more* of me that went unused after the job was over. I get that feeling in church sometimes." He lay back down, talking now into the sofa cushion. "Sometimes I get that feeling with you."

52 Her hand stopped on his shoulder. She wasn't sure she'd heard him right, his voice was so muffled. "That I've never used all of you?"

43 „Za to může ten jeho Problém s velkým P,“ řekla Shelberdine. „Chce zpátky svoje mužství. Než zemřel, Artur dělal to samé. Někdo v továrně mu řekl, že ho může dostat zpátky, když bude dělat sprinty na dvacet metrů. No a při běhání kolem jezera dostal křeče.“

44 Evelyn cítila, jak se jí něco obrací v hrudi. „Nemyslíš si, že si ublíží, že ne?“

45 „Jasně že ne.“

46 „Myslíš, že ublíží mně?“

47 Její kamarádka Evelyn ujistila, že krize středního věku tyhle vylomeniny v mužích vyvolává. Evelyn odpověděla, že si myslí, že krize středního věku začíná kolem čtyřicítky, na což Shelberdine řekla: „Zlato, já to nemyslím nějak zle, ale Rudolf byl vždycky trochu pomalejší,“ a Evelyn souhlasila. Rozhodla se počkat, až si to vytluče z hlavy, až ho příroda porazí a on se jako každý správně smýšlející člověk poddá rozpadu těla. Tomu brutálnímu faktu rozkladu, který se dá otupit, jak se jí zdálo, jen tím, že se rozpadne s někým. Což je útěcha, kterou cítí každý černošský pár, když ve stáří ví dost na to, aby nechali věci vyšumět.

48 Její trpělivost byla zpočátku odměněna. Rudolf se z první lekce doplazil domů shrbený, sotva stál na nohou, bál se, že si něco nadobro přetrhl. Zhroutil se obličejem na pohovku v obývacím pokoji, s nohama na podlaze. Pomohla mu převléknout se do pyžama a prsty mu roztírala Voltaren do zádových svalů, Evelyn ještě nikdy neviděla svého muže tak blízko slzám.

49 „Nedokážu dělat kliky,“ zasténal. „Ani sklapovačky. Jsem tak ztuhlý – neznám svoje tělo.“ Zvedl hlavu, žalostně vzhlédl a v očích měl prosebný výraz. „Zavolej doktorovi Guyleemu. Objednej mě na čtvrtek, jo?“

50 „Ano, drahoušku.“ Evelyn jednou rukou skryla úsměv. „Neměl bys na sebe tak tlačit.“

51 Ihned se posadil, s holou hrudí, zatímco břicho mu překypovalo přes spodní díl pyžama. „Právě to to znamená. *Gung-fu* znamená v čínštině 'tvrdá práce'. Evelyn,“ – ztišil hlas – „myslím, že jsem v životě nedělal žádnou pořádnou dřinu. Ne takovouhle, která po mně chce, abych jí dal *všechno*, tělo i duši, ducha i tělo. Vždycky jsem cítil, že...“ Podíval se dolů, tmavé ruce mu visely mezi stehny. „Že jsem nikdy nedokázal dát do *čehokoliv* úplně *všechno*. Svět mi to nikdy nedovolil. Nedovolí mi se zapojit ze všech sil. Víš, co tím chci říct? Každá práce, kterou jsem kdy měl a všechno, co jsem kdy dělal, vyžadovalo jen část mého já. Jako by ve mně bylo mnohem víc, co zůstalo po skončení práce nevyužitě. Někdy mám ten pocit i v kostele.“ Lehl si zpátky a mluvil do polštáře pohovky. „Někdy mám ten pocit i s tebou.“

52 Její ruka se zastavila na jeho rameni. Nebyla si jistá, jestli mu dobře rozuměla, jeho hlas byl tak zastřený. „Že jsem tě nikdy nevyužila celého?“

53 Rudolph nodded, rubbing his right knuckle where, at the kwoon, he'd lost a stretch of skin on a speedbag. "There's still part of me left over. You never tried to touch all of me, to take everything. Maybe you can't. Maybe no one can. But sometimes I get the feeling that the unused part—the un-lived life—*spoils*, that you get cancer because it sits like fruit on the ground and rots." Rudolph shook his head; he'd said too much and knew it, perhaps had not even put it the way he felt inside. Stiffly, he got to his feet. "Don't ask me to stop training." His eyebrows spread inward. "If stop, I'll die."

54 Evelyn twisted the cap back onto the Ben-Gay. She held out her hand, which Rudolph took. Veins on the back of his hand burgeoned abnormally like dough. Once when she was shopping at the Public Market she'd seen monstrous plastic gloves shaped like hands in a magic store window. His hand looked like that. It belonged on Lon Chaney. Her voice shook a little, panicky, "I'll call Dr. Guylee in the morning."

55 Evelyn knew—or thought she knew—his trouble. He'd never come to terms with the disagreeableness of things. Rudolph had always been too serious for some people, even in South Carolina. It was the thing, strange to say, that drew her to him, this crimped-browed tendency in Rudolph to listen with every atom of his life when their minister in Hodges, quoting Marcus Aurelius to give his sermon flash, said, "Live with the gods," or later in Seattle, the habit of working himself up over Reverend Merrill's reading from Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Now, he didn't *really* mean that, Evelyn knew. Nothing in the world could be taken that seriously; that's *why* this was the world. And, as all Mount Zion knew, Reverend Merrill had a weakness for high-yellow choir-girls and gin, and was forever complaining that his salary was too small for his family. People made compromises, nodded at spiritual common-places—the high seriousness of biblical verses that demanded nearly superhuman duty and self-denial—and laughed off their lapses into sloth, envy, and the other deadly sins. It was what made living so enjoyably *human*: this built-in inability of man to square his performance with perfection. People were naturally soft on themselves. But not her Rudolph.

56 Of course, he seldom complained. It was not in his nature to complain when, looking for "gods," he found only ruin and wreckage. What did he expect? Evelyn wondered. Man was evil—she'd told him that a thousand times—or, if not evil, hopelessly flawed. Everything failed; it was some sort of law. But at least there was laughter, and lovers clinging to one another against the cliff; there were novels—wonderful tales of how things should be—and perfection promised in the afterworld.

53 Rudolf přikývl a třel si kloub pravé ruky, kde v kwoonu přišel o pruh kůže na speedbagu. „Pořád je tu ještě kousek mě. Nikdy ses mě nesnažila dotknout celého, vzít si všechno. Možná to ani nejde. Možná to nedokáže nikdo. Ale někdy mám pocit, že ta nevyužitá část – ten neprožitý život – se kazí, že člověk dostane rakovinu, protože leží na zemi jako ovoce a hnije.“ Rudolf zavrtěl hlavou – řekl toho až příliš a věděl to, možná to ani nevyjádřil tak, jak to uvnitř cítil. Ztuhle se postavil na nohy. „Nechtěj po mně, abych přestal trénovat.“ Obočí se mu stáhlo dovnitř. „Jestli přestanu, umřu.“

54 Evelyn zavřela víčkem tubu Voltarenu. Natáhla ruku, kterou Rudolf uchopil. Žíly na hřbetu ruky mu abnormálně nakynuly jako těsto. Když jednou nakupovala na Veřejném trhu v Seattlu, viděla ve výloze kouzelnického obchodu obludné plastové rukavice ve tvaru rukou. Jeho ruka vypadala podobně. Skoro jako z vystoupení Lona Chaneyho. „Ráno zavolám doktoru Guyleemu.“ Hlas se jí trochu panicky třásl.

55 Evelyn věděla – nebo si myslela, že ví – o jeho potížích. Nikdy se nedokázal smířit s nepříjemnými situacemi. Rudolf byl podle některých lidí až příliš vážný, a to i na poměry lidí z Jižní Karolíny. To byla věc, která ji k němu kupodivu přitahovala, tenhle Rudolfův sklon kdy se svrastělým obočím poslouchal každým atomem svého života, když jejich farář v Hodges citoval Marka Aurelia, aby bleskově přednesl své kázání, a říkal: „Žijte s bohy,“ nebo později v Seattlu, když urputně poslouchal, jak reverend Merrill četl z knihy Kazatel 9:10: „Všechno, co máš vykonat, konej podle svých sil.“ Evelyn věděla, že to nemyslel *až tak* vážně. Nic na světě se nedalo brát tak vážně – byl to koneckonců jen pomíjivý pozemský život. A jak vědělo celé shromáždění kostela Mount Zion, reverend Merrill měl slabost pro sboristky se světlejší pletí a gin a věčně si stěžoval, že jeho plat je pro jeho rodinu příliš malý. Lidé dělali kompromisy, přikyvovali duchovním pospolitostem – té vysoké vážnosti biblických veršů, které vyžadovaly téměř nadlidský smysl pro povinnost a sebezapření – a pošklebovali se svým pokleskům pramenícím z lenosti, závidi a dalších smrtelných hříchů. To bylo to, co dělalo život tak příjemně lidským: tato vrozená neschopnost člověka srovnat svůj výkon s dokonalostí. Lidé byli k sobě přirozeně shovívaví. Ale ne její Rudolf.

56 Ten si ovšem málokdy stěžoval. Nebylo v jeho povaze stěžovat si, když při hledání ‚bohů‘ našel jen zkázu a trosky. Co čekal? Evelyn se divila. Člověk byl od přírody zlý – to už mu říkala snad tisíckrát – nebo, pokud nebyl zlý, byl beznadějně zkažený. Všechno vždy selhalo – byl to jakýsi zákon. Nicméně na světě byl alespoň smích a milenci, kteří se k sobě tiskli opření o skálu, byly tu romány – úžasné příběhy o tom, jak by věci měly být – a dokonalost slibovaná v posmrtném životě.

57 He'd sit and listen, her Rudolph, when she put things this way, nodding because he knew that in his persistent hunger for perfection in the here and now he was, at best, in the minority. He kept his dissatisfaction to himself, but occasionally Evelyn would glimpse in his eyes that look, that distant, pained expression that asked: *Is this all?* She saw it after her first miscarriage, then her second; saw it when he stopped searching the want ads and settled on the Post Office as the fulfillment of his potential in the marketplace. It was always there, that look, after he turned forty, and no new, lavishly praised novel from the Book-of-the-Month Club, no feature-length movie, prayer meeting, or meal she fixed for him wiped it from Rudolph's eyes. He was, at least, this sort of man before he saw that martial-arts B movie. It was a dark vision, Evelyn decided, a dangerous vision, and in it she whiffed something that might destroy her. What that was, she couldn't say, but she knew her Rudolph better than he knew himself. He would see the error—the waste of time—in his new hobby, and she was sure he would mend his ways.

58 In the weeks, then months that followed Evelyn waited, watching her husband for a flag of surrender. There was no such sign. He became worse than before. He cooked his own meals, called her heavy soul food dishes “too acidic,” lived on raw vegetables, seaweed, nuts, and fruit to make his body “more alkaline,” and fasted on Sundays. He ordered books on something called Shaolin fighting and meditation from a store in California, and when his equipment arrived UPS from Dolan's Sports in New Jersey, he ordered more—in consternation, Evelyn read the list—leg stretchers, makiwara boards, air shields, hand grips, bokken, focus mitts, a full-length mirror (for heaven's sake) so he could correct his form, and protective equipment. For proper use of his headgear and gloves, however, he said he needed a sparring partner—an opponent—he said, to help him instinctively understand “combat strategy,” how to “flow” and “close the Gap” between himself and an adversary, how to create by his movements a negative space in which the other would be neutralized.

59 “Well,” crabbed Evelyn, “if you need a punching bag, don't look at *me*.”

60 He sat across the kitchen table from her, doing dynamic-tension exercises as she read a new magazine called *Self*. “Did I ever tell you what a black belt means?” he asked.

61 “You told me.”

62 “Sifu Chan doesn't use belts for ranking. They were introduced seventy years ago because Westerners were impatient, you know, needed signposts and all that.”

63 “You told me,” said Evelyn.

57 Dříve seděl a poslouchal ji, její Rudolf, když to takhle formulovala, a přikyvoval, protože věděl, že ve své úporné touze po dokonalosti tady a teď byl přinejlepším v menšině. Svou nespokojenost si nechával pro sebe, ale občas Evelyn zahlédla v jeho očích ten pohled, ten odtažitý, bolestný výraz, který se ptal: *Je tohle všechno?* Viděla jej po svém prvním potratu, pak po druhém – viděla ho, když přestal vyhledávat v inzerátech a spokojil se s prací na poště coby naplněním svého potenciálu na trhu. Ten pohled mu zůstal i po čtyřicítce a žádný nový, bohatě vychvalovaný román z Klubu knih měsíce, žádný celovečerní film, modlitební setkání nebo jídlo, které mu připravila, ho z Rudolfových očí nesmazal. Přinejmenším takový byl, než viděl ten béčkový film o bojových uměních. Byla to temná vize, usoudila Evelyn, nebezpečná vize, a ona v ní zavětrila něco, co by ji mohlo zničit. Co to bylo, nedokázala říct, ale znala svého Rudolfa lépe než on sám sebe. Určitě si uvědomí jaký je jeho nový koníček nesmysl – a ztráta času – a byla si jistá, že se polepší.

58 V následujících týdnech a měsících Evelyn čekala a sledovala svého manžela, zda se nevzdá. Náznak něčeho takového se však neobjevil. Bylo to ještě horší než předtím. Vařil si sám, její její poctivá domácí kuchyně mu byla najednou moc těžká a ‚kyselá‘, živil se syrovou zeleninou, mořskými řasami, ořechy a ovocem, aby jeho tělo bylo ‚zásaditější‘, a v neděli se postil. V kalifornském obchodě si objednal knihy o něčem, čemu se říkalo šaolinský boj a meditace, a když mu poštou přišlo vybavení z Dolanových sportovních potřeb v New Jersey, objednal si další – Evelyn si se zděšením přečetla seznam – napínáky na nohy, tréninkové desky makiwara, lapy se stlačeným vzduchem, úchyty na ruce, bokkeny, boxerské lapy, stojací zrcadlo (proboha), díky němuž mohl ladit svou formu, a ochranné pomůcky. Pro správné používání pokrývek hlavy a rukavic však podle svých slov potřeboval sparring partnera – soupeře – který by mu údajně pomohl instinktivně pochopit ‚strategii boje‘, jak ‚plynout‘ a ‚uzavřít mezeru‘ mezi sebou a protivníkem, jak svými pohyby vytvořit negativní prostor, v němž by byl ten druhý zneškodněn.

59 „No,“ zabručela Evelyn, „jestli potřebuješ boxovací pytel, tak na *mě* se nedívej.“

60 Seděl naproti ní u kuchyňského stolu a prováděl cviky dynamického napětí, zatímco ona četla nový časopis *Self*. „Už jsem ti někdy řekl, co znamená mít černý pásek?“ zeptal se.

61 „Říkal.“

62 „Sifu Chan nepoužívá pásy pro hodnocení. Byly zavedeny před sedmdesáti lety, protože lidi ze Západu byli netrpěliví, víc. Potřebovali ukazatele a tak.“

63 „To už jsem slyšela,“ řekla Evelyn.

64 „Originally, all you got was a white belt. It symbolized innocence. Virginity.” His face was immensely serious, like a preacher’s. “As you worked, it got darker, dirtier, and turned brown. ‘Then black. You were a master then. With even more work, the belt became frayed, the threads came loose, you see, and the belt showed white again.”

65 “Rudolph, I’ve heard this before!” Evelyn picked up her magazine and took it into her bedroom. From there, with her legs drawn up under the blankets, she shouted: “I *won’t* be your punching bag!”

66 So he brought friends from his kwoon, friends she wanted nothing to do with. There was something unsettling about them. Some were street fighters. Young. They wore tank-top shirts and motorcycle jackets. After drinking racks of Rainier beer on the front porch, they tossed their crumpled empties next door into Rod Kenner’s yard. Together, two of Rudolph’s new friends—Truck and Tuco—weighed a quarter of a ton. Evelyn kept a rolling pin under her pillow when they came, but she knew they could eat that along with her. But some of his new friends were students at the University of Washington. Truck, a Vietnamese only two years in America, planned to apply to the Police Academy once his training ended; and Tuco, who was Puerto Rican, had been fighting since he could make a fist; but a delicate young man named Andrea, a blue sash, was an actor in the drama department at the university. His kwoon training, he said, was less for self-defense than helping him understand his movements onstage—how, for example, to convincingly explode across a room in anger. Her husband liked them, Evelyn realized in horror. And they liked him. They were separated by money, background, and religion, but something she could not identify made them seem, those nights on the porch after his class, like a single body. They called Rudolph “Older Brother” or, less politely, “Pop.”

67 His sifu, a short, smooth-figured boy named Douglas Chan, who Evelyn figured couldn’t be over eighteen, sat like the Dalai Lama in their tiny kitchen as if he owned it, sipping her tea, which Rudolph laced with Korean ginseng. Her husband lit Chan’s cigarettes as if he were President Carter come to visit the common man. He recommended that Rudolph study T’ai Chi, “soft” fighting systems, ki, and something called Tao. He told him to study, as well, Newton’s three laws of physics and apply them to his own body during kumite. What she remembered most about Chan were his wrist braces, ornamental weapons that had three straps and, along the black leather, highly polished studs like those worn by Steve Reeves in a movie she’d seen about Hercules. In a voice she thought girlish, he spoke of eye gouges and groin-tearing techniques, exercises called the Delayed Touch of Death and Dim Mak, with the casualness she and Shelberdine talked about bargains at Thriftway.

64 „Původně existoval jen bílý pásek. Symbolizoval nevinnost. Panenství.“ Tvářil se nesmírně vážně, jako kazatel. „Jak jsi pracovala, ztmavl, ušpinil se a zhnědl. Pak zčernal. Tou dobou už jsi byla mistryně. S ještě větší prací se pásek roztřepil, nitě se uvolnily, víš, a pásek byl zase bílý.“

65 „Rudolfe, tohle už jsem slyšela!“ Evelyn vzala časopis a odnesla si ho do své ložnice. Odtud, s nohama vytaženýma pod příkrývkou, vykřikla: „*Nebudu* tvůj boxovací pytel!“

66 Tak si přivedl kamarády z jeho kwoonu, kamarády, se kterými nechtěla mít nic společného. Bylo na nich něco znepokojivého. Někteří byli pouliční rváči. Mladí. Měli na sobě tílka a motorkářské bundy. Poté, co na verandě vypili několik bas piva Rainier, odhodili zmačkané prázdné plechovky vedle na dvůr Roda Kennera. Dva Rudolfovi noví kamarádi – Truck a Tuco – vážili dohromady čtvrt tuny. Když přišli, měla Evelyn pod polštářem kuchyňský váleček, ale věděla, že by ho mohli sníst zároveň s ní. Ale někteří z jeho nových přátel byli studenti Washingtonské univerzity. Truck, Vietnavec, který byl v Americe teprve dva roky, se plánoval přihlásit na policejní akademii, jakmile mu skončí výcvik, a Tuco, který byl Portorikánc, se pral od chvíle, kdy uměl zatnout pěst, ale křehký mladík jménem Andrea, s modrým páskem, byl hercem na dramatickém oddělení univerzity. Říkal, že tréninků v kwoonu se nezúčastňoval ani tak k sebeobraně, jako spíš k tomu, aby pochopil své pohyby na jevišti – například jak přesvědčivě propadnout vzteku. Její manžel je měl rád, uvědomila si Evelyn s hrůzou. A oni měli rádi jeho. Dělili je peníze, původ a náboženství, ale něco, co nedokázala identifikovat, způsobilo, že jí ty večery na verandě po jeho hodině připadali jako jedno tělo. Rudolfovi říkali ‚starší bratr‘ nebo méně zdvořile ‚taťulda‘.

67 Jeho sifu, malý, uhlazený chlapec jménem Douglas Chan, kterému podle Evelyn nemohlo být víc než osmnáct, seděl v jejich malé kuchyni jako dalajláma, jako by mu patřila, a popíjel její čaj, který Rudolf dochutil korejským ženšenem. Její manžel zapaloval Chanovi cigarety, jako by byl prezident Carter, který přijel navštívit obyčejné lidi. Doporučil Rudolfovi, aby studoval tai-chi, „měkké“ bojové systémy, ki a něco, čemu se říká Tao. Řekl mu, aby si také nastudoval tři Newtonovy fyzikální zákony a aplikoval je na vlastní tělo v průběhu kumite. Nejvíc si na Chanovi pamatovala jeho zápeštní ortézy, ozdobné zbraně, které měly tři řemínky a podél černé kůže vysoce leštěné cvočky jako ty, které nosil Steve Reeves ve filmu o Herkulovi, který viděla. Hlasem, který jí připadal dívčí, mluvil o vydloubávání očí a technikách dobrých akorát tak na roztrhání třísel, o cvičeních zvaných Opožděný dotek smrti a Dim Mak, s nenuceností, s jakou se s Shelberdine bavili o slevách v Tesco.

68 And then they suited up, the boyish Sifu, who looked like Maharaj-ji's rougher brother, and her clumsy husband; they went out back, pushed aside the aluminum lawn furniture, and pommeled each other for half an hour. More precisely, her Rudolph was on the receiving end of hook kicks, spinning back fists faster than thought, and foot sweeps that left his body purpled for weeks. A sensible man would have known enough to drive to Swedish Hospital pronto. Rudolph, never known as a profound thinker, pushed on after Sifu Chan left, practicing his flying kicks by leaping to ground level from a four-foot hole he'd dug by their cyclone fence.

69 Evelyn, nibbling a Van de Kamp's pastry from Safeway—she was always nibbling, these days—watched from the kitchen window until twilight, then brought out the Ben-Gay, a cold beer, and rubbing alcohol on a tray. She figured he needed it. Instead, Rudolph, stretching under the far-reaching cedar in the backyard, politely refused, pushed the tray aside, and rubbed himself with Dit-Da-Jow, “iron-hitting wine,” which smelled like the open door of an opium factory on a hot summer day. Yet this ancient potion not only instantly healed his wounds (said Rudolph) but prevented arthritis as well. She was tempted to see if it healed brain damage by pouring it into Rudolph's ears, but apparently he was doing something right. Dr. Guylee's examination had been glowing; he said Rudolph's muscle tone, whatever that was, was better. His cardiovascular system was healthier. His erections were outstanding—or upstanding—though lately he seemed to have no interest in sex, Evelyn, even she, saw in the crepuscular light changes in Rudolph's upper body as he stretched: Muscles like globes of light rippled along his shoulders; larval currents moved on his belly. The language of his new, developing body eluded her. He was not always like this, after a cold shower and sleep his muscles shrank back a little. It was only after his workouts, his weight lifting, that his body expanded like baking bread, filling out in a way that obliterated the soft Rudolph-body she knew. This new flesh had the contours of the silhouetted figures on medical charts: the body as it must be in the mind of God. Glistening with perspiration, his muscles took on the properties of the free weights he pumped relentlessly. They were profoundly tragic, too, because their beauty was earthbound. It would vanish with the world. You are ugly, his new muscles said to Evelyn; old and ugly. His self-punishment made her feel sick. She was afraid of his hard, cold weights. She hated them. Yet she wanted them, too. They had a certain monastic beauty. She thought: *He's doing this to hurt me.* She wondered: What was it like to be powerful? Was clever cynicism—even comedy—the by-product of bulging bellies, weak nerves, bad posture? Her only defense against the dumbbells that stood between them—she meant both his weights and his friends—was, as always, her acid southern tongue:

70 “They're all fairies, right?”

68 Pak se oblékli, ten chlapec Sifu, který vypadal jako drsnější bratr Maharadžiho, a její nemotorný manžel odešli dozadu, odsunuli hliníkový nábytek na trávník a půl hodiny se mlátili. Přesněji řečeno, její Rudolf schytával hákové kopance, pěsti točené dozadu rychleji, než na ně vůbec pomyslel, a výpady nohama, po kterých měl tělo na několik týdnů zřalovělé. Rozumný člověk by si hned uvědomil, že musí urychleně odjet do švédské nemocnice. Rudolf, který nikdy nebyl známý jako hlubokomyslný člověk, pokračoval po odchodu Sifu Chana v tréninku takzvaných létajících kopů skokem na úroveň půdy z metr hluboké díry, kterou vykopal u jejich drátěného plotu.

69 Evelyn, mlsajíc pečivo Van de Kamp's z pekárny – poslední dobou mlsala pořád – pozorovala z okna kuchyně až do soumraku, pak přinesla na tácku Voltaren, vychlazené pivo a technický líh. Usoudila, že Rudolf to potřeboval. Místo toho Rudolf, natahující se pod vzrostlým cedrem na dvorku, zdvořile odmítl, odstrčil táč stranou a potřel se čínským vínem Dit-Da-Jow, které vonělo jako otevřené dveře továrny na opium v parném letním dni. Přesto mu tento prastarý lektvar nejen okamžitě zahojil rány (podle Rudolfa), ale zároveň bránil vzniku artritidy. Evelyn měla pokušení vyzkoušet, jestli léčí poškození mozku tím, že ho nalije Rudolfovi do uší, ale zřejmě dělal něco správně. Doktor Guylee při vyšetření zářil – říkal, že Rudolfův svalový tonus, ať už to znamenalo cokoli, se zlepšil. Jeho kardiovaskulární systém byl zdravější. Jeho erekce byly vynikající – nebo spíš obstojné – i když v poslední době se zdálo, že o sex nemá zájem, Evelyn, dokonce i ona, viděla v šerém světle změny na Rudolfově horní části těla, když se protahoval: Svaly jako světelné koule se mu vlnily podél ramen, na břicho se mu pohybovaly larvální proudy. Jazyk jeho nového, vyvíjejícího se těla jí unikal. Takhle ale nevypadal pořád; po studené sprše a spánku se mu svaly trochu stáhly. Teprve po tréninku, po vzpírání, se jeho tělo rozšířilo jako kynoucí bochník a vyplnilo se způsobem, který zahladil to měkké Rudolfovo tělo, které znala. Tohle nové tělo mělo obrysy siluet postav jako na lékařských kartách: tělo, jak ho zamýšlel Bůh. Jeho svaly, lesknoucí se potem, nabývaly vlastnosti činek, kterými neúnavně pumpoval. Byly také hluboce tragické, protože jejich krása byla pozemská. Zmizí spolu se světem. Jsi ošklivá, říkaly jeho nové svaly Evelyn – stará a ošklivá. Z jeho sebetrestání se jí dělalo špatně. Bála se jeho tvrdých, chladných činek. Nenáviděla je. Přesto po nich také toužila. Měly v sobě jistou klášterní krásu. Myslela si: *Dělá to proto, aby mi ublížil.* Přemýšlela: jaké to bylo být mocný? Byl chytrý cynismus – nebo dokonce komedie – vedlejším produktem vypouklých břich, slabých nervů, špatného držení těla? Její jedinou obranou před tupým železem, které stálo mezi nimi – měla na mysli jak jeho činky, tak jeho přátele – byl jako vždy její ostrý jižanský jazyk:

70 „Všichni jsou to buzničky, že jo?“

71 Rudolph looked dreamily her way. These post-workout periods made him feel, he said, as if there were no interval between himself and what he saw. His face was vacant, his eyes—like smoke. In this afterglow (he said) he saw without judging. Without judgment, there were no distinctions. Without distinctions, there was no desire. Without desire . . .

72 He smiled sideways at her. “Who?”

73 “The people in your kwoon.” Evelyn crossed her arms. “I read somewhere that most body builders are homosexual.”

74 He refused to answer her.

75 “If they’re not gay, then maybe I should take lessons. It’s been good for you, right?” Her voice grew sharp. “I mean, isn’t that what you’re saying? That you and your friends are better’n every-body else?”

76 Rudolph’s head dropped; he drew a long breath. Lately, his responses to her took the form of quietly clearing his lungs.

77 “You should do what you *have* to, Evelyn. You don’t have to do what anybody else does.” He stood up, touched his toes, then brought his forehead straight down against his unbent knees, which was physically impossible, Evelyn would have said—and faintly obscene.

78 It was a nightmare to watch him each evening after dinner. He walked around the house in his Everlast leg weights, tried push-ups on his fingertips and wrists, and, as she sat trying to watch “The Jeffersons,” stood in a ready stance before the flickering screen, throwing punches each time the scene, or shot, changed to improve his timing. It took the fun out of watching TV, him doing that—she preferred him falling asleep in his chair beside her, as he used to. But what truly frightened Evelyn was his “doing nothing.” Sitting in meditation, planted cross-legged in a full lotus on their front porch, with Mr. Miller blissfully curled on his lap, a Bodhisattva in the middle of houseplants she set out for the sun. Looking at him, you’d have thought he was dead. The whole thing smelled like self-hypnosis, He breathed too slowly, in Evelyn’s view—only three breaths per minute, he claimed. He wore his gi, splotchy with dried blood and sweat, his calloused hands on his knees, the forefingers on each tipped against his thumbs, his eyes screwed shut.

79 During his eighth month at the kwoon, she stood watching him as he sat, wondering over the vivid changes in his body, the grim firmness where before there was jolly fat, the disquieting steadiness of his posture, where before Rudolph could not sit still in church for five minutes without fidgeting.

71 Rudolf se zasněně podíval jejím směrem. Říkal, že v těchto obdobích po tréninku má pocit, jako by mezi ním a tím, co vidí, neexistoval žádný časový odstup. Jeho tvář byla prázdná, oči jako kouř. V této doznívající záři (říkal) viděl, aniž by soudil. Bez posuzování neexistovaly žádné rozdíly. Bez rozlišování neexistovala žádná touha. Bez touhy . . .

72 Letmo se na ni usmál. „Kdo?“

73 „Ty lidi ve tvém kwoonu.“ Evelyn zkrřížila ruce. „Někde jsem četla, že většina kulturistů jsou homosexuálové.“

74 Odmítl jí odpovědět.

75 „Jestli nejsou homosexuálové, tak bych možná měla taky chodit na lekce. Vždyť tobě to prospělo, ne?“ Její hlas se přiostril. „Vždyť přece tohle tvrdíš pořád, ne? Že ty a tví kamarádi jste lepší než všichni ostatní?“

76 Rudolfovi klesla hlava – dlouze se nadechl. V poslední době na ni reagoval tak, že si tiše vyčistil plíce.

77 „Měla bys dělat, co považuješ za nutné, Evelyn. Nemusíš se chovat tak, jako ostatní.“ Postavil se, dotkl se prstů na nohou a pak přitáhl čelo přímo k nepokřčeným kolenům, což bylo fyzicky nemožné, řekla by Evelyn – a poněkud neslušné.

78 Sledovat ho každý večer po večeri byla noční můra. Chodil po domě se závažím na nohy Everlast, zkoušel kliky na prstech a zápěstí, a když seděla a snažila se dívat na seriál Jeffersonovi, stál v pohotovostním postoji před blikající obrazovkou a při každé změně scény nebo záběru rozdával rány, aby si zlepšil načasování. Kvůli tomu si už Evelyn nedokázala vychutnat sledování televize – bylo by jí bývalo milejší, kdyby usínal v křesle vedle ní, tak jak to dělával dřív. Ale co Evelyn skutečně děsilo, bylo jeho „nicnedělání“. Sedíc v meditaci, posazený se zkrříženými nohama v plném lotosovém sedu na jejich verandě, s panem Millerem blaženě schouleným na klíně, ve stavu Bódhisattva uprostřed pokojových rostlin, které Evelyn vytáhla ven, aby chytily slunce. Při pohledu na něj byste si mysleli, že je mrtvý. Celé to zavánělo samohypnózou – dýchal podle Evelyn příliš pomalu – jen tři nádechy za minutu, tvrdil. Měl na sobě kimono potřísněné zaschlou krví a potem, mozolnaté dlaně měl položené na kolenou, ukazováčky na obou rukou přitisknuté k palcům, oči sevřené.

79 Během jeho osmého měsíce v kwoonu stála a pozorovala ho, jak sedí, a žasla nad živými změnami na jeho těle, nad ponurou pevností tam, kde předtím byl veselý špek, nad znepokojivou pevností jeho postoje, kde předtím Rudolf nedokázal v kostele sedět pět minut v klidu, aniž by se vrtěl.

80 Now he sat in zazen for forty-five minutes a day, fifteen when he awoke, fifteen (he said) at work in the mailroom during his lunch break, fifteen before going to bed. He called this withdrawal (how she hated his fancy language) similar to the necessary silences in music, "a stillness that prepared him for busyness and sound."

81 He'd never breathed before, he told her. Not once. Not clear to the floor of himself. Never breathed and emptied himself as he did now, picturing himself sitting on the bottom of Lake Washington: himself, Rudolph Lee Jackson, at the center of the universe; for if the universe was infinite, any point where he stood would be at its center—it would shift and move with him. (That saying, Evelyn knew, was minted in Douglas Chan's mind. No Negro preacher worth the name would speak that way.) He told her that in zazen, at the bottom of the lake, he worked to discipline his mind and maintain one point of concentration; each thought, each feeling that overcame him he saw as a fragile bubble, which he could inspect passionlessly from all sides; then he let it float gently to the surface, and soon—as he slipped deeper into the vortices of himself, into the Void—even the image of himself on the lake floor vanished.

82 Evelyn stifled a scream.

83 Was she one of Rudolph's bubbles, something to detach himself from? On the porch, Evelyn watched him narrowly, sitting in a rain-whitened chair, her chin on her left fist. She snapped the fingers on her right hand under his nose. Nothing. She knocked her knuckles lightly on his forehead. Nothing. (Faker, she thought.) For another five minutes he sat and breathed, sat and breathed, then opened his eyes slowly as if he'd slept as long as Rip Van Winkle. "It's dark," he said, stunned. When he began, it was twilight. Evelyn realized something new: He was not living time as she was, not even that anymore. Things, she saw, were slower for him; to him she must seem like a woman stuck in fast-forward. She asked:

84 "What do you see when you go in there?"

85 Rudolph rubbed his eyes.

86 "Nothing."

87 "Then *why* do you do it? The world's out here!"

88 He seemed unable to say, as if the question were senseless. His eyes angled up, like a child's, toward her face. "Nothing is peaceful sometimes. The emptiness is full. I'm not afraid of it now."

89 "You empty yourself?" she asked. "Of me, too?"

90 "Yes."

80 Nyní seděl v zazení 45 minut denně, 15 minut po probuzení, 15 minut (jak říkal) v práci na podatelně během polední přestávky a 15 minut před spaním. Tento odstup (jak jen nesnášela jeho vytríbený slovník) nazýval obdobou nezbytného ticha v hudbě, „klidem, který ho připravoval na rušný život a zvuk“.

81 Nikdy předtím nedýchal, řekl jí. Ani jednou. Nikdy ze dna plic. Nikdy se nenadechl a nevyprázdnil tak jako teď, když si představoval, jak sedí na dně Washingtonského jezera: on sám, Rudolph Lee Jackson, ve středu vesmíru; protože pokud je vesmír nekonečný, jakýkoli bod, kde stojí, bude jeho středem – bude se s ním posouvat a pohybovat. (Toto rčení, jak Evelyn věděla, bylo vymyšleno v myslí Douglase Chana. Žádný černošský kazatel, který si chtěl udržet pověst, by takhle nemluvil.) Vyprávěl jí, že v zazení, na dně toho jezera, pracoval na tom, aby ukáznil svou mysl a udržel jeden bod soustředění: každou myšlenku, každý pocit, který ho přemohl, vnímal jako křehkou bublinu, kterou mohl bez vášně prozkoumat ze všech stran. Pak ji nechal jemně vyplout na hladinu a brzy – když vklouzl hlouběji do vírů sebe samé, do Prázdnoty – zmizel i obraz jeho samotného na dně jezera.

82 Evelyn potlačila výkřik.

83 Byla snad jednou z Rudolfových bublin, něčím, od čeho se mohl odpoutat? Na verandě ho Evelyn ostře sledovala, seděla na deštěm vybělené židli, s bradou položenou na levé pěsti. Luskla mu prsty pravé ruky pod nosem. Nic. Klouby prstů mu lehce poklepala na čelo. Nic. (Jen finguje, pomyslela si.) Dalších pět minut seděl a dýchal, seděl a dýchal, pak pomalu otevřel oči, jako by spal dlouho jako Šípková Růženka. „Setmělo se,“ řekl ohromeně. Když začal, byl soumrak. Evelyn si uvědomila něco nového: on neprožíval čas jako ona, dokonce už ani to ne. Věci, jak viděla, pro něj byly pomalejší – jemu musela připadat jako žena, která uvízla ve zrychleném režimu. Zeptala se:

84 „Co vidíš, když tam jsi?“

85 Rudolph si promnul oči.

86 „Nic.“

87 „Tak *proč* to děláš? Svět je přece tady!“

88 Zdálo se, že není schopen odpovědět, jako by ta otázka byla nesmyslná. Jeho oči se jako oči dítěte zvedly vzhůru k její tváři. "Někdy není nic klidné. Prázdnota je plná. Teď už se toho nebojím."

89 „Vyprazdňuješ se?“ zeptala se. „I ode mě?“

90 „Ano.“

91 Evelyn's hand shot up to cover her face. She let fly with a whimper. Rudolph rose instantly—he sent Mr. Miller flying—then fell back hard on his buttocks; the lotus cut off blood to his lower body—which provided more to his brain, he claimed—and it always took him a few seconds before he could stand again. He reached up, pulled her hand down, and stroked it.

92 “What've I done?”

93 “That's it,” sobbed Evelyn. “I don't know what you're doing.” She lifted the end of her bathrobe, blew her nose, then looked at him through streaming, unseeing eyes. “And you don't either. I wish you'd never seen that movie. I'm sick of all your weights and workouts—sick of them, do you hear? Rudolph, I want you back the way you were: *sick*.” No sooner than she said this Evelyn was sorry. But she'd done no harm. Rudolph, she saw, didn't want anything; everything, Evelyn included, delighted him, but as far as Rudolph was concerned, it was all shadows in a phantom history. He was humbler now, more patient, but he'd lost touch with everything she knew was normal in people: weakness, fear, guilt, self-doubt, the very things that gave the world thickness and made people do things. She *did* want him to desire her. No, she didn't. Not if it meant oral sex. Evelyn didn't know, really, what she wanted anymore. She felt, suddenly, as if she might dissolve before his eyes. “Rudolph, if you're 'empty,' like you say, you don't know who—or what—is talking to you. If you said you were praying, I'd understand. It would be God talking to you. But this way...” She pounded her fist four, five times on her thigh. “It could be *evil* spirits, you know! There *are* evil spirits, Rudolph. It could be the Devil.”

94 Rudolph thought for a second. His chest lowered after another long breath. “Evelyn, this is going to sound funny, but I don't believe in the Devil.”

95 Evelyn swallowed. It had come to that.

96 “Or God—unless we are gods.”

97 She could tell he was at pains to pick his words carefully, afraid he might offend. Since joining the kwoon and studying ways to kill, he seemed particularly careful to avoid her own most effective weapon: the wry, cutting remark, the put-down, the direct, ego-deflating slash. Oh, he was becoming a real saint. At times, it made her want to hit him.

98 “Whatever is just *is*,” he said. “That's all I know. Instead of worrying about whether it's good or bad, God or the Devil, I just want to be quiet, work on myself, and interfere with things as little as possible. Evelyn,” he asked suddenly, “how can there be two things?” His brow wrinkled; he chewed his lip. “You think what I'm saying is evil, don't you?”

91 Evelyn si rukou zakryla obličej. Zakňourala a jednu mu vrazila. Rudolf se okamžitě zvedl – čímž vyhodil Pana Millera do vzduchu – a pak tvrdě dopadl na zadek; lotosový sed mu přerušil přívod krve do spodní části těla – což mu prý dodávalo více krve do mozku – a vždycky mu trvalo několik vteřin, než se znovu dokázal zvednout. Natáhl se, stáhl její ruku dolů a pohladil ji.

92 „Co jsem provedl?“

93 „To je přesně ono,“ vzlykla Evelyn. „Nevím, co vlastně děláš.“ Zvedla konec županu, vysmrkala se a pak se na něj podívala zalitýma, nevidoucíma očima. „A ty taky ne. Kéž bys ten film nikdy neviděl. Mám dost všech těch tvých posilování a cvičení – mám jich dost, slyšíš? Rudolfe, chci, abys byl zase takový, jaký jsi byl: nemocný.“ Sotva to Evelyn řekla, už toho litovala. Ale Rudolf to nevezal zle. Rudolf, jak viděla, nic nechtěl – všechno, včetně Evelyn, ho těšilo, ale pokud šlo o Rudolfa, všechno to byly jen stíny v přízračné historii. Byl teď pokornější, trpělivější, ale pozbyl spojení se vším, o čem věděla, že je u lidí normální: se slabostí, strachem, pocitem viny, pochybnostmi o sobě samém, právě s tím, co dávalo světu tloušťku a nutilo lidi něco dělat. Chtěla, aby po ní toužil. Ne, nechtěla. Ne, pokud to znamenalo orální sex. Evelyn už vlastně nevěděla, co chce. Najednou měla pocit, že by se mu mohla rozplynout před očima. „Rudolfe, jestli jsi ‚prázdný‘, jak říkáš, tak nevíš, kdo – nebo co – s tebou mluví. Kdybys řekl, že se modlíš, pochopila bych to. To by k tobě mluvil Bůh. Ale takhle...“ Čtyřikrát, pětkrát si udeřila pěstí do stehna. „Mohli by to být *zlí* duchové, víš! *Zlí* duchové *existují*, Rudolfe. Mohl by to být sám ďábel.“

94 Rudolf se na chvíli zamyslel. Hrudník se mu po dalším dlouhém nádechu spustil. „Evelyn, asi to bude znít směšně, ale já na ďábla nevěřím.“

95 Evelyn polkla. Takže na to došlo.

96 „Ani na Boha – pokud nejsme bohové.“

97 Poznala, že si dává záležet, aby pečlivě volil slova, bál se, že by ji mohl urazit. Od té doby, co se přidal ke kwoonu a studoval způsoby zabíjení, se zdálo, že si dává obzvlášť pozor, aby se vyhnul její vlastní nejúčinnější zbrani: jízlivým, uštěpačným poznámkám, shazování a přímému, ego devastujícímu úderu. Ach, stával se z něj skutečný světec. Občas měla chuť ho praštit.

98 „Ať je to, jak chce, prostě to tak je,“ řekl. „To je všechno, co vím. Místo abych se trápil tím, jestli je to dobré, nebo špatné, Bůh, nebo ďábel, chci být prostě v klidu, pracovat na sobě a co nejméně do věcí zasahovat. Evelyn,“ zeptal se náhle, „jak mohou existovat dvě věci?“ Čelo se mu svrástilo; kousal se do rtu. „Myslíš si, že mluvím o něčem zlém, že?“

99 "I think it's strange! Rudolph, you didn't grow up in China," she said. "They can't breathe in China! I saw that today on the news. They burn soft coal, which gets into the air and turns into acid rain. They wear face masks over there, like the ones we bought when Mount St. Helens blew up. They all ride bicycles, for Christ's sake! They want what we have." Evelyn heard Rod Kenner step onto his screened porch, perhaps to listen from his rocker. She dropped her voice a little. "You grew up in Hodges, South Carolina, same as me, in a right and proper colored church. If you'd been to China, maybe I'd understand."

100 "I can only be what I've been?" This he asked softly, but his voice trembled. "Only what I was in Hodges?"

101 "You can't be Chinese."

102 "I don't want to be Chinese!" The thought made Rudolph smile and shake his head. Because she did not understand, and because he was tired of talking, Rudolph stepped back a few feet from her, stretching again, always stretching. "I only want to be what I can be, which isn't the greatest fighter in the world, only the fighter I can be. Lord knows, I'll probably get creamed in the tournament this Saturday." He added, before she could reply, "Doug asked me if I'd like to compete this weekend in full-contact matches with some people from the kwoon. I have to." He opened the screen door. "I will."

103 "You'll be killed—you know that, Rudolph." She dug her fingernails into her bathrobe, and dug this into him: "You know, you never were very strong. Six months ago you couldn't open a pickle jar for me."

104 He did not seem to hear her. "I bought a ticket for you." He held the screen door open, waiting for her to come inside. "I'll fight better if you're there."

105 She spent the better part of that week at Shelberdine's mornings and Reverend Merrill's church evenings, rinsing her mouth with prayer, sitting most often alone in the front row so she would not have to hear Rudolph talking to himself from the musty basement as he pounded out bench presses, skipped rope for thirty minutes in the backyard, or shadowboxed in preparation for a fight made inevitable by his new muscles. She had married a fool, that was clear, and if he expected her to sit on a bench at the Kingdome while some equally stupid brute spilled the rest of his brains—probably not enough left now to fill a teaspoon—then he was wrong. How could he see the world as "perfect"?—That was his claim. There was poverty, unemployment, twenty-one children dying every minute, every day, every year from hunger and malnutrition, over twenty murdered in Atlanta; there were sixty thousand nuclear weapons in the world, which was dreadful, what with Seattle so close to Boeing; there were far-right Republicans in the White House: good reasons, Evelyn thought, to be "negative and life-denying," as Rudolph would put it.

99 „Myslím, že je to podivné! Rudolfe, tys přece nevyrostl v Číně,“ řekla. „V Číně se nedá pořádně dýchat! Dneska jsem to viděla ve zprávách. Pálí tam měkké uhlí, které se dostává do vzduchu a mění se v kyselou dešť. Nosí tam obličejové masky, jako jsme si koupili, když vybuchla hora Svata Helena. Všichni jezdí na kole, proboha! Chtějí to, co máme my.“ Evelyn slyšela, jak Rod Kenner vyšel na svou zastíněnou verandu, snad aby poslouchal ze svého houpacího křesla. Trochu ztišila hlas. „Vyrostl jsi v Hodgesu v Jižní Karolině, stejně jako já, ve správném kostele pro barevné. Kdybys byl aspoň jednou v Číně, možná bych to pochopila.“

100 „Můžu být jen tím, čím jsem byl?“ To se zeptal tiše, ale hlas se mu chvěl. „Jen tím, čím jsem byl v Hodgesu?“

101 „Nemůžeš být Číňan.“

102 „Já nechci být Číňan!“ Rudolfa ta myšlenka přiměla k úsměvu a zavrtění hlavou. Protože mu nerozuměla a protože byl unavený z mluvení, Rudolf od ní ustoupil o pár metrů a znovu se protáhl – pořád se protahoval. „Chci být jen tím, čím můžu být, což není nejlepší bojovník na světě, jen bojovník, kterým být mohu. Bůh ví, že v sobotu na turnaji nejspíš dostanu nakládačku.“ Než stačila odpovědět, dodal: „Doug se mě zeptal, jestli bych se o víkendu nechtěl utkat v bojových zápasech s nějakými lidmi z kwoonu. Musím.“ Otevřel síťové dveře. „Udělám to.“

103 „Zabijí tě – vždyť to víš, Rudolfe.“ Zaryla si nehty do županu a chytila Rudolfa: „Víš, nikdy jsi nebyl moc silný. Před půl rokem jsi mi nedokázal otevřít ani sklenici od okurek.“

104 Zdálo se, že ji neslyší. „Koupil jsem ti vstupenku.“ Podržel pootevřené síťové dveře a čekal, až vejde dovnitř. „Bude se mi bojovat líp, když u toho budeš.“

105 Větší část toho týdne trávila rána u Shelberdine a večery u reverenda Merrilla v kostele, vypláchla si ústa modlitbou a nejčastěji seděla sama v první řadě, aby nemusela poslouchat, jak si Rudolf povídá sám se sebou ze zatuchlého sklepa, když posiloval na benchpressu, třicet minut skákal přes švihadlo na dvorku nebo cvičil stínový box v přípravě na zápas, který se díky jeho novým svalům stal nevyhnutelným. Vzala si hlupáka, to bylo jasné, a jestli čekal, že Evelyn bude sedět na lavičce ve stadionu Kingdome, zatímco si nějaký stejně hloupý surovec vyleje zbytek mozku – nejspíš už ho nezbylo dost na to, aby naplnil čajovou lžičku –, pak se mýlil. Jak mohl vidět svět jako „dokonalý“? Tak to alespoň prohlašoval. Byla tu chudoba, nezaměstnanost, každou minutu každého dne po celý rok umíralo jednadvacet dětí na hlad a podvýživu, v Atlantě jich bylo zavražděno přes dvacet, na světě bylo šedesát tisíc jaderných zbraní – což bylo strašné, když je Seattle tak blízko od ústředny Boeingu – v Bílém domě byli krajně pravicoví republikáni: dobré důvody, jak by řekl Rudolf, aby byl „negativní a odmítal život“

106 It was almost sin to see harmony in an earthly hell, and in a fit of spleen she prayed God would dislocate his shoulder, do some minor damage to humble him, bring him home, and remind him that the body was vanity, a violation of every verse in the Bible. But Evelyn could not sustain her thoughts as long as he could. Not for more than a few seconds. Her mind never settled, never rested, and finally on Saturday morning, when she awoke on Shelberdine's sofa, it would not stay away from the image of her Rudolph dead before hundreds of indifferent spectators, paramedics pounding on his chest, bursting his rib cage in an effort to keep him alive.

107 From Shelberdine's house she called a taxi and, in the steady rain that northwesterners love, arrived at the Kingdome by noon. It's over already, Evelyn thought, walking the circular stairs to her seat, clamping shut her wet umbrella. She heard cheers, booing, an Asian voice with an accent over a microphone. The tournament began at ten, which was enough time for her white belt husband to be in the emergency ward at Harborview Hospital by now, but she had to see. At first, as she stepped down to her seat through the crowd, she could only hear—her mind grappled for the word, then remembered—kiais, or "spirit shouts," from the great floor of the stadium, many shouts, for contests were progressing in three rings simultaneously. It felt like a circus. It smelled like a locker room. Here two children stood toe to toe until one landed a front kick that sent the other child flying fifteen feet. There two lean-muscled female black belts were interlocked in a delicate ballet, like dance or a chess game, of continual motion. They had a kind of sense, these women—she noticed it immediately—a feel for space and their place in it. (Evelyn hated them immediately.) And in the farthest circle she saw, or rather felt, Rudolph, the oldest thing on the deck, who, sparring in the adult division, was squared off with another white belt, not a boy who might hurt him—the other man was middle-aged, graying, maybe only a few years younger than Rudolph—but they were sparring just the same.

108 Yet it was not truly him that Evelyn, sitting down, saw. Acoustics in the Kingdome whirlpooled the noise of the crowd, a rivering of voices that affected her, suddenly, like the pitch and roll of voices during service. It affected the way she watched Rudolph. She wondered: Who are these people? She caught her breath when, miscalculating his distance from his opponent, her husband stepped sideways into a roundhouse kick with lots of snap—she heard the cloth of his opponent's gi crack like a gunshot when he threw the technique. She leaned forward, gripping the huge purse on her lap when Rudolph recovered and retreated from the killing to the neutral zone, and then, in a wide stance, rethought strategy. This was not the man she'd slept with for twenty years.

106 Byl to téměř hřích vidět harmonii v pozemském pekle a v záchvatu hněvu se modlila, aby mu Bůh vykloubil rameno, způsobil mu nějaké drobné poškození, aby ho pokořil, přivedl ho domů a připomněl mu, že tělo je marnost, porušení všech veršů v Bibli. Evelyn však nedokázala udržet své myšlenky tak dlouho jako on. Ne déle než několik vteřin. Její mysl nikdy nezůstala v klidu, nikdy si neodpočinula, a nakonec v sobotu ráno, když se probudila na pohovce u Shelberdine, se nedokázala odpoutat od představy svého Rudolfa mrtvého před stovkami lhostejných diváků, zdravotníků bušících mu do hrudi, kteří mu ve snaze udržet ho při životě rozbíjejí hrudní koš.

107 Ze Shelberdinina domu si zavolala taxík a za vytrvalého deště, který obyvatelé severozápadu tak milují, dorazila do stadionu Kingdome v poledne. Už je po všem, pomyslela si Evelyn, když kráčela po kruhových schodech ke svému sedadlu a zacvakla svůj mokrý deštník. Slyšela jásot, bučení, asijský hlas s přízvukem nad mikrofonem. Turnaj začínal v deset hodin, což bylo dost času na to, aby její manžel s bílým páskem už byl na pohotovosti v nemocnici, ale ona se na to musela podívat. Nejprve, když sestupovala davem na své místo, slyšela jen – její mysl se lopotila při hledání toho slova, pak si vzpomněla – kiais neboli 'výkřiky ducha' z velké podlahy stadionu, mnoho výkřiků, neboť soutěže probíhaly ve třech rinzích současně. Připadalo jí to jako v cirkuse. Smrdělo to tu jako v šatně. Tady stály dvě děti proti sobě, dokud jedno z nich neudělalo přední kop, který poslal druhé dítě sedm metrů do vzduchu. Tam se dvě vypracované ženy s černými pásky proplétaly v jemném baletu, podobném tanci nebo šachové partii, v nepřetržitém pohybu. Měly jakýsi smysl, tyhle ženy – okamžitě si toho všimla – měly cit pro prostor a své místo v něm. (Evelyn je okamžitě nenáviděla.) A v nejbližším ringu viděla, nebo spíš cítila, Rudolfa, nejstarší model na jevišti, který se při sparingu v divizi dospělých utkal s jiným bílým páskem, ne s chlapcem, který by mu mohl ublížit – ten druhý muž byl ve středním věku, prošedivělý, možná jen o pár let mladší než Rudolf – ale sparingovali stejně.

108 Přesto to nebyl skutečně on, koho sedící Evelyn viděla. Akustika v Kingdome vířila hluk davu, řeku hlasů, která na ni náhle působila jako výška a převalování hlasů při bohoslužbě. Ovlivnilo to způsob, jakým Rudolfa pozorovala. Přemýšlela: Co je to za lidi? Zalapala po dechu, když její manžel, špatně odhadující vzdálenost od soupeře, šlápl bokem do rotačního kopu se spoustou prasknutí – slyšela, jak látka soupeřovo kimona praskla jako výstřel, když tuto techniku provedl. Naklonila se dopředu, sevřela obrovskou kabelku na klíně, když se Rudolf vzpamatoval a ustoupil ze smrtící zóny do té neutrální, a pak v širokém postoji přehodnotil strategii. Tohle nebyl muž, po jehož boku dvacet let spala.

109 Not her hypochondriac Rudolph who had to rest and run cold water on his wrists after walking from the front stairs to the fence to pick up the *Seattle Times*. She did not know him, perhaps had never known him, and now she never would, for the man on the floor, the man splashed with sweat, rising on the ball of his rear foot for a flying kick—was he so foolish he still thought he could fly?—would outlive her; he'd stand healthy and strong and think of her in a bubble, one hand on her headstone, and it was all right, she thought, weeping uncontrollably, it was all right that Rudolph would return home after visiting her wet grave, clean out her bedroom, the pillboxes and paperback books, and throw open her windows to let her sour, rotting smell escape, then move a younger woman's things onto the floor space darkened by her color television, her porcelain chamber pot, her antique sewing machine. And then Evelyn was on her feet, unsure why, but the crowd had stood suddenly to clap, and Evelyn clapped, too, though for an instant she pounded her gloved hands together instinctively until her vision cleared, the momentary flash of retinal blindness giving way to a frame of her husband, the postman, twenty feet off the ground in a perfect flying kick that floored his opponent and made a Japanese judge who looked like Oddjob shout "ippon" —one point— and the fighting in the farthest ring, in herself, perhaps in all the world, was over.

109 Ne její hypochondr Rudolf, který si musel odpočinout a pustit si studenou vodu na zápěstí poté, co šel od předních schodů k plotu pro výtisk *Seattle Times*. Nepoznala ho, možná ho nikdy neznala a teď už ho ani znát nebude, neboť ten muž na podlaze, muž potřísněný potem, zvedající se na patě nohy k létajícímu kopu – byl tak hloupý, že si stále myslel, že umí létat? – ji přežije. Bude stát zdravý a silný a myslet na ni v bublině, jednu ruku na jejím náhrobku, a to je v pořádku, pomyslela si a nekontrolovatelně plakala. To je v pořádku, že se Rudolf po návštěvě mokrého hrobu vrátí domů, vyklidí její ložnici, krabičky od pilulek a brožované knihy a otevře dokořán okna, aby z nich unikl její štiplavý, hnilobný zápach, a pak na podlahový prostor zatemněný barevnou televizí, porcelánovým nočníkem, starožitným šicím strojem nastěhuje věci nějaké mladší ženy. A pak se Evelyn postavila na nohy, nevěděla proč, ale dav se náhle postavil, aby zatleskal, a Evelyn zatleskala také, i když na okamžik instinktivně tloukla rukama v rukavicích, dokud se jí nevyjasnil zrak, chvilkový záblesk oslepení sítnice ustoupil záběru na jejího manžela, pošťáka, který se šest metrů nad zemí odrazil do dokonalého letícího kopu, jenž jeho soupeře zasáhl a přiměl japonského rozhodčího, který vypadal jako Bondovský padouch Oddjob, vykřiknout „ippon“ – jeden bod – a boj v nejvzdálenějším ringu, v ní samotné, možná na celém světě, skončil.

3 THEORETICAL PART – LEXICAL EQUIVALENCE

The sections which follow shall discuss and analyze some key areas which required our attention in order to provide a faithful translation that is at the same time fluent in the target language. The aim of these sections is also to explain why these areas of translation had to be dealt with and why.

The most significant challenges which appeared during the translation were the cultural allusions, which refer to (sometimes obscure) instances of US-specific culture present during the 1980s. The sections of the analysis are divided into three: the lexical section, the syntactical section and a section whose scope cannot be neatly subsumed within either lexicology or syntax.

For the purposes of better visualisation, paragraphs have been numbered throughout the entirety of the translation (practical part). As such, when a certain paragraph is quoted or discussed in the sections below, it shall be referred to in the format of *B:number of paragraph*.

3.1 WORDS WITH PARTIAL OR ZERO EQUIVALENCE

Should a fitting equivalent in the target language not exist, it is important to concern oneself with this so-called zero equivalence of lexis. A possible approach to this is to adopt the word from the source language into the target language, to use a calque, to omit the corresponding semantic part or to employ the word as a loanword (Knittlová 84-85).

According to this principle, the translation of words with zero equivalence in Czech shall be discussed in the sections below.

3.1.1 INFORMATION ADDITION

According to Knittlová, in the cases where a reader may be unfamiliar with a term, the addition of a general classifier (mostly in the form of a proper noun) is permissible in order to subsume the term into the relevant terminology field (Knittlová 82).

As such, this approach was taken in *China* in cases where adoption of the term may be confusing for the reader and where the reader would, more than likely, be unfamiliar with the original term. The added information has been bolded for better representation.

For example, in B:54, the addition of the attribute "*vystoupení*" was necessary, seeing as the phrase in English refers to an American actor who was active in the 1920s, which is surely an obscure reference even for American readers nowadays, let alone a Czech reader. In B:109 Oddjob refers to a villain from the James Bond universe. Seeing as the character Oddjob first appeared on screen in 1959 and was not included in any modern James Bond movies (specifically the reboot series with Daniel Craig starting in the year 2006), it is most likely a reference which would be lost on the reader, especially one of the younger generations. Therefore, the addition of the attribute "*Bondovský padouch*" was deemed necessary.

B:11 (...) rows pomaded sweetly with the scent of Murray's.: (...) hřívá navoněná **pomádou** od firmy Murray's .

B:11 (...) with the scent of Murray's: (...) pomádou od **firmy** Murray's

B:54 it belonged on Lon Chaney: jako z **vystoupení** Lona Chaneyho

B:58 from Dolan's sports: z Dolanových sportovních **potřeb**

B:105 Kingdome: **stadion** Kingdome

B:105 so close to Boeing: tak blízko od **ústředny** Boeingu

B:109 (...) who looked like Oddjob: (...) který vypadal jako **Bondovský padouch** Oddjob

3.1.2 INFORMATION OMISSION

The consequence of translational alterations is always generalization, substitution with a general term. In the case of information omission, the specifying semantic part is omitted (Knittlová 82).

In *China*, omission was employed a few times, in other cases simply opting for substitution or information addition. In B:11, the phrase may refer to the novel written in

1895, but it is more likely that it refers to the movie which came out in 1951. Either way, the reference is quite obscure and its omission and subsequent substitution with "*luxusní hřívá*" makes the reference more accessible to readers nowadays. In B:107, translating the name of the hospital was not necessary, seeing as the phrase "na pohotovosti" conveys the required meaning.

*B:11 no more than one stroke of his palm to bring out **Quo Vadis** rows: nepotřebovaly víc než jedno pročísnutí dlaní, aby se z nich stala **luxusní hřívá***

*B:21 after service, **Sanka**, and a slice of meat pie: po bohoslužbě, **šálku kávy** a kousku masového koláče*

*B:107 enough time (...) to be in the emergency ward at **Harborview** Hospital: dost času na to, aby (...) byl na **pohotovosti v nemocnici***

3.1.3 LOANWORDS

A loanword is a word borrowed from one language and incorporated into another language with little or no change in its spelling or pronunciation. For example, the English word "sushi" is a loanword from Japanese.

The name *Coronet* (B:9) is a proper noun that refers to a specific theater, and it is common practice to preserve the name of a theater or a company in translation. Therefore, translating it as "divadla *Coronet*" preserves the name. *Dit-Da-Jow* (B:69) is a loanword from Chinese that refers to a type of herbal liniment used in traditional Chinese medicine for treating bruises and injuries. The word does not appear to have a direct equivalent in Czech, and since the meaning of the word is explained by sentences which follow, the original form of the word has been preserved.

*B:9 (...) through the exit of the **Coronet Theater**: (...) východem z **divadla Coronet***

*B:10 (...) model for **Day of the Fair**: (...) pózující pro jeho obraz **Day of the Fair***

*B:62 “**Sifu Chan** doesn’t use belts (...): „**Sifu Chan** nepoužívá pásky (...)*

*B:69 (...) rubbed himself with **Dit-Da-Jow**: (...) potřel se čínským vínem **Dit-Da-Jow***

3.1.4 PROPER NAMES

If a proper name holds semantic significance, it can be translated. Jiří Levý also acknowledges this and explains that if the semantic value is absent, the only option is to transcribe the name, which means retaining its original form (Levý 116).

In China, proper names which are either known entities or first and last names have been adopted to Czech, and were declined in a way appropriate to individual words' genders, cases etc. Were they not adopted, substitution would have surely been confusing.

B:1 Evelyn's problems: Evelininy problémy

B:1 with her husband, Rudolph: s jejím manželem Rudolfem

B:1 In Reverend William Merrill's church: v kostele reverenda Williama Merrilla

B:1 told her friend Shelberdine Lewis: řekla své přítelkyni Shelberdine Lewisové

B:10 Andrew Wyeth's: Andrewa Wyetha

B:12 Debbie: Debbie

B:20 They moved to Seattle: přestěhovali se do Seattlu

B:24 glass from McDonald's: sklenice od McDonaldu

B:30 Evelyn (...) took a Valium: Evelyn si vzala valium

B:37 Capital Hill: Capital Hill

B:66 into Rod Kenner's yard: na dvůr Roda Kennera

B:69 Dit-Da-Jow: Dit-Da-Jow

B:105 so close to Boeing: tak blízko od ústředny Boeingu

3.1.5 ADOPTION

According to Knittlová, if an equivalent expression doesn't exist, it is permissible to employ a loanword, calque, omission or to adopt the word (Knittlová 84).

The adoption of a word in translation refers to the process of importing a word from the source language and then adapting it to fit the target language. This process can involve

changing the word's spelling, pronunciation, and even its meaning. For example, the English word "entrepreneur" comes from French, but it has been adopted and adapted in English to mean a person who starts and runs a business venture. The examples below have been adopted into Czech in the translated text, and, as such, and have been organically integrated into the surrounding text by means of a standard grammatical feature, namely declension suffixation.

B:27 (...) from a *kwoon*: (...) z *kwoonu*

B:53 (...) on a *speedbag*: (...) na *speedbagu*

3.2 SUBSTITUTION

A fair few terms with no equivalence in Czech were found in the translation. As these terms stand, one could be certain that to adopt these terms, or to use them as loanwords, would be illogical as the meaning would be lost on the reader of the translation. These terms range from cultural allusions specific to the United States and medication all the way to US store chains. According to Knittlová, substitution via an analogy may also be employed when translating factual terms and phrases, clichés, greetings and titles. Such an analogy should correspond to linguistic and cultural conventions of the target language, but if possible, preserve the foreign footprint (Knittlová 81).

The expression *Inside Kung-Fu* (B:23) was substituted with a general classifier "*časopis o Kung-Fu*" to convey the same meaning without making the text unnecessarily longer. In B:24 the name of the medication was substituted with a general noun, instead of a specific name. In a similar way, the translation in B:48 provides an equivalent medication available to the Czech market, which is well-known to most Czech readers all the while maintaining the function of describing a cream-type remedy for back pain. In the case of heavy Soul Food (B:58), which describes a type of cuisine specific to African Americans, an equivalent translation was impossible. Therefore, a simple substitution via the phrase *poctivá domácí kuchyně* was chosen. B:67 and B:69 were of a similar nature, both naming specific store chains. In the former, an analogical substitution was chosen, in the latter a general simplification. B:83 was a simple expression to translate, as both Rip Van Winkle

and Šípková Růženka share the characteristic of being asleep for a few decades, with the latter being a very well-known Czech fairytale.

B:23 (...) a magazine called **Inside Kung-Fu**: (...) časopisu o **Kung-Fu**

B:24 (...) Preparation **H suppositories**: (...) čípků na hemeroidy

B:48 she (...) fingered the **Ben-Gay** into his back muscles: prsty mu roztírala **Voltaren** do zádočných svalů

B:58 her heavy **Soul Food**: její poctivá domácí kuchyně

B:67 (...) about bargains at **Thriftway**: (...) o slevách v **Tesco**

B:69 (...) pastry from **Safeway**: (...) pečivo z pekárny

B:78 (...) he wore his **gi**: (...) měl na sobě **kimono**

B:83 (...) as if he'd slept as long as **Rip Van Winkle**: (...) jako by spal dlouho jako **Šípková Růženka**

3.3 "THE PROBLEM" (B:43)

In the context of the story, "The Problem" refers to Rudolph's struggle with his own manhood, and, by extension, his erections. The use of capital letters in "Problém s velkým P" emphasizes the magnitude of the issue, suggesting that it is not just any problem, but one that is of great importance or concern. Therefore, the translation of "the Problem" into Czech as "Problém s velkým P" conveys the meaning and significance of the phrase in the original English text.

B:43 "It's **the Problem**," said Shelberdine.: „Za to může ten jeho **Problém s velkým P**," řekla Shelberdine.

3.4 WORDPLAYS

The text contains two major wordplays which, at first glance, seem to have no equivalence in Czech. The one wordplay which proved to be the most difficult one to translate was the one where Evelyn disapproves of the dumbbells standing between her and

Rudolph. Dumbbells (B:69) refers here to Rudolph's friends, as well as his training weights, thereby making it a pun (a double entendre). According to Levý, a wordplay must not be left out, and, if necessary, adjusted so that the spirit and function of the wordplay is not lost (Levý 118-119). As such, the closest term available was *tupé železo*:

*B:69 Her only defense against the **dumbbells** that stood between them—she meant both his weights and his friends— (...)*

*Její jedinou obranou před **tupým železem**, které stálo mezi nimi – měla na mysli jak jeho činky, tak jeho přátele – (...)*

A similar sort of challenge, the pun below is created by the double meaning of the word "upstanding". The word can be interpreted as a synonym for "outstanding" or as a slang term for an erect penis. The translation into Czech plays with the word "obstojné", which is a synonym for "outstanding" but also derives from the verb "stát" which in slang can mean "stoják" (= an erection). Therefore, the translation reads: „*Jeho erekce byly vynikající – nebo spíš obstojné – (...)*“ which is the closest match for the tone and the double meaning as the original sentence.

*B: 69 His erections were outstanding—or **upstanding**— (...): Jeho erekce byly vynikající – nebo spíš **obstojné** – (...)*

3.5 UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

Levý and Knittlová say that although foreign units of measurements such as a pint have some representation in Czech, as a whole they should be substituted via an analogy known to the reader of the target language (Knittlová 81-82, Levý 124). Levý also mentions that in fiction, units of measurement do not have to match the source exactly when translated (Levý 135).

In the case of this short story, imperial units of measurement were substituted by metric ones in order for the units of measurement to match the language of the target translation. In addition, the units were roughly rounded off.

B:4 (...) leap twenty feet through the air: (...) a skákali sedm metrů vzduchem

B:43 *twenty-yard sprints: sprinty na dvacet metrů*

B: 68 *from a four-foot hole: z metr hluboké díry*

B:102 *stepped back a few feet: ustoupil o pár metrů*

B:109 *twenty feet off the ground: šest metrů nad zemí*

3.6 MARTIAL ARTS TERMINOLOGY

Though only a few martial arts terms appear in China, it was necessary to deal with martial arts (MA) terminology. Interesting to note is that a perplexing mix of oriental martial arts is used – this is notable when Rudolph goes to a kwoon (a Chinese MA training hall), is wearing a *gi* (a Japanese MA uniform), trains mostly Kung-Fu (Chinese MA) and is buying a mix of Japanese (makiwaras, bo staves, sai swords) and Chinese (mook jong dummy) training instruments and weapons. Despite the fact that Rudolph wears a *gi* when training, one would think that since Kung-Fu is Rudolph's primary MA, a suitable uniform would be chosen (such as the *yī-fu* – a Chinese equivalent to the *gi*). On the one hand, that statement could be disputed by B:29, where a few students from the kwoon perform *kata* and *kumite* – first two sections of karate training – on the other hand, a kwoon is a training hall specifically for Chinese MA, which makes the demonstration of B:29 perplexing, as karate is a Japanese MA trained in a *Dojo*, not in a *kwoon*.

3.6.1 GI

The "Gi" (or Keikogi) is a traditional uniform worn in martial arts practice, particularly in Japanese martial arts such as judo, karate, and aikido. While the Keikogi has its own specific design and function within the context of martial arts, it has often been translated into other languages using general terms that are more familiar to the target audience. In the case of the Czech language, the term Keikogi is commonly translated as "kimono", which is the term that was chosen for this translation. While "kimono" technically refers to a traditional Japanese garment worn for formal occasions, the term has also become widely associated with Japanese culture and style in general. Therefore, the use of "kimono"

as a translation for the Keikogi may help to convey the cultural and historical significance of the uniform within the context of martial arts practice. However, it is important to note that the two garments have distinct differences in terms of design and function, and the use of "kimono" as a translation for the Keikogi may not be accurate or appropriate in all cases.

*B:78 He wore his **gi**, splotchy with dried blood and sweat: Měl na sobě **kimono** potřísněné zaschlou krví a potem*

3.6.2 ZAZEN, FULL LOTUS

Zazen is a term used in Zen Buddhism to refer to the practice of seated meditation. It is often practiced in the full lotus position, a seated posture in which the legs are crossed with each foot resting on the opposite thigh. When translating these terms into Czech, it was important to consider both their literal meaning as well as their cultural and historical context. In the case of *zazen*, the term has been widely adopted in its original Japanese form, and is therefore commonly used in Czech as *zazen*. However, the full lotus position is not a traditional posture in Czech culture, and therefore requires a descriptive translation to accurately convey its meaning. The term *lotosový sed* is a descriptive translation that conveys the physical position of the legs and the seated posture. This translation also highlights the fact that the full lotus position is associated with traditional Eastern practices such as yoga and meditation. Overall, these translations demonstrate the importance of considering both the literal meaning and cultural context when translating specialized terms from one language to another.

*B:78 (...)in a **full lotus** on their front porch: (...) v **lotosovém sedu** na jejich verandě*

*B:80 Now he sat in **zazen** for forty-five minutes a day: Nyní seděl v **zazenu** 45 minut denně*

3.6.3 AIR SHIELDS, FOCUS MITTS (B:58)

These terms are quite similar in that they depict a piece of training equipment intended primarily for boxers, which is intended to be struck in order to train footwork, speed, accuracy of punches, uppercuts and hooks. Air shields are intended for solo training

and thanks to being filled with compressed air, they stimulate the impact and resistance of striking a real opponent. In contrast, focus mitts must be worn by another person (a sparring partner), who fastens the mitts to their gloves in order to take the punches. To differentiate the two, *air shields* was translated as *lapy se stlačeným vzduchem*, whereas *focus mitts* was translated as *boxerské lapy*.

B:58 *air shields: lapy se stlačeným vzduchem*

B:58 *focus mitts: boxerské lapy*

3.6.4 KWOON (B:29)

A Kwoon is a Chinese equivalent to the Japanese Dojo – a training hall for martial arts and meditation. The challenge laid in finding a suitable translation that conveys the cultural context and meaning of the term. A possible solution could have been to use the original Chinese term "guǎn" instead of the English loanword "Kwoon" to avoid losing the cultural context of the term. Nevertheless, such a decision could confuse readers and, as such, the term was kept intact and adopted into Czech through declension suffixation..

B:29 *from a kwoon: z kwoonu.*

3.6.5 MAKIWARA (B:58)

Makiwara is a solo training tool used in various martial arts, particularly in karate, that is designed to help martial artists improve their striking technique, power, and focus. It consists of a post, typically made of wood or a similar sturdy material, that is embedded into the ground or mounted on a base, with a padded striking surface attached to it. To reflect the nature of the makiwara being a training tool, the term was translated as *tréninkové desky makiwara*.

B:58 (...) *in consternation, Evelyn read the list—leg stretchers, **makiwara boards** (...):*

(...) *Evelyn si se zděšením přečetla seznam – napínáky na nohy, **tréninkové desky makiwara** (...)*

4 THEORETICAL PART – SYNTACTICAL EQUIVALENCE

4.1 MODIFICATION OF COMPLEX SENTENCES

During the translation of the complex sentences found in B:47 and B:109 to Czech, morbidly long compound sentences (especially B:109) were reduced in length. This reduction could be attributed to the importance of clear and effective communication. Complex sentences with multiple modifying phrases and clauses may be more difficult to understand when translated to another language, especially when the word order and structure are different. In exhibit B:47, the Czech translation has broken down the long sentence into shorter sentences, making it easier to follow. Similarly, exhibit B:109's long sentence has been broken down into three shorter sentences in the Czech translation, which may improve the legibility and comprehension for Czech readers.

B:47 She would wait until he worked this thing out of his system, until Nature defeated him and he surrendered, as any right-thinking person would, to the breakdown of the body, the brutal fact of decay, which could only be blunted, it seemed to her, by decaying with someone, the comfort every Negro couple felt when, aging, they knew enough to let things wind down.

B:47 Rozhodla se počkat, až si to vytluče z hlavy, až ho příroda porazí a on se jako každý správně smýšlející člověk poddá rozpadu těla. Tomu brutálnímu faktu rozkladu, který se dá otupit, jak se jí zdálo, jen tím, že se rozpadne s někým. Což je útěcha, kterou cítí každý černošský pár, když ve stáří ví dost na to, aby nechali věci vyšumět.

B:109 She did not know him, perhaps had never known him, and now she never would, for the man on the floor, the man splashed with sweat, rising on the ball of his rear foot for a flying kick—was he so foolish he still thought he could fly?—would outlive her; he'd stand healthy and strong and think of her in a bubble, one hand on her headstone, and it was all right, she thought, weeping uncontrollably, it was all right that Rudolph would return home after visiting her wet grave, clean out her bedroom, the pillboxes and paperback books, and throw open her windows to let her sour, rotting smell escape, then move a younger woman's things onto the floor space darkened by her color television, her porcelain chamber pot, her antique sewing machine

B: 109 Nepoznala ho, možná ho nikdy neznala a teď už ho ani znát nebude, neboť ten muž na podlaze, muž potřísněný potem, zvedající se na patě nohy k létajícímu kopu – byl tak hloupý, že si stále myslel, že umí létat? – ji přežije. Bude stát zdravý a silný a myslet na ni v bublině, jednu ruku na jejím náhrobku, a to je v pořádku, pomyslela si a nekontrolovatelně plakala. To je v pořádku, že se Rudolf po návštěvě mokrého hrobu vrátí domů, vyklidí její ložnici, krabičky od pilulek a brožované knihy a otevře dokořán okna, aby z nich unikl její štiplavý, hnilobný zápach, a pak na podlahový prostor zatemněný barevnou televizí, porcelánovým nočníkem, starožitným šicím strojem nastěhuje věci nějaké mladší ženy.

4.2 COPULAR VERBS

Linking verbs, also known as copular verbs, connect the subject of a sentence to a complement or subject complement. This complement can be an adjectival or nominal expression that is equivalent to the subject, or a predicate noun or adjective that specifies or identifies the subject. The copula is often the verb 'be' in all its forms, such as 'be', 'am', 'is', 'are', 'was', 'were', 'been', and 'being', but it can also be 'get', 'seem', 'appear', 'look', and so on. The use of these verbs is highly idiomatic and context-dependent, and their meaning frequently varies depending on the tense, aspect, or modality of the sentence (Dušková 8.61).

In the sentence "He became a black belt" (B:39), the copular verb "became" is being used in the past simple tense to indicate a change or transition from one state to another. The aspect of the copular verb in this sentence is perfective, indicating that the action of becoming a black belt was completed in the past.

The translation "získal černý pásek" accurately captures the meaning of the original sentence, as it also conveys the idea of achieving or acquiring the status of a black belt in martial arts. According to Dušková, "The copula can also introduce a change of state, or specify the subject" (Dušková 8.61). This is exactly what is happening in the sentence "He became a black belt", where the copula introduces a change of state from not being a black belt to becoming one.

4.3 ELLIPSES

In *China*, there are three ellipses which omit the end of the sentence (B:29, B:51, B:93). This is an ellipsis that signifies that a portion of the text has been intentionally omitted, either to indicate a pause or to remove irrelevant or unnecessary information. Such an ellipsis may also indicate a trailing off of thought or an unfinished sentence. In general, this kind of ellipsis suggests that there is more to be said or understood, but that the speaker or writer has chosen not to say or write it (Cohen 587-589).

B:29 They went through what's called kata and kumite and...": Prováděli něco, čemu říkají kata a kumite a...“

B:51 I've always felt ...": Vždycky jsem cítil, že...“

B:93 It would be God talking to you. But this way...": To by k tobě mluvil Bůh. Ale takhle...“

Ellipses in B:29 and B:51 were translated from English to Czech in a way that captures the meaning of the English sentences and conveys the intended sense of incompleteness or trailing off of thought. The ellipsis is employed in both situations to suggest that there is additional information or meaning that could be conveyed, but the speaker has made a deliberate choice not to do so. Ellipsis in B:93 was translated in a way which conveys the sense that Rudolph is using the ellipsis to indicate a shift in thought or a hesitation, and that the sentence is left unfinished.

4.4 SYNTACTIC AMBIGUITY

Syntactic ambiguity is one of the most important and frequent sources of misunderstanding in communication. It can cause confusion, misunderstandings, and in some cases, even humorous situations. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of possible syntactic ambiguities and to try to avoid them in both oral and written communication (Dušková 2.25).

B:53 *"There's still part of me left over. You never tried to touch all of me, to take everything.": „Pořád je tu ještě kousek mě. Nikdy ses mě nesnažila dotknout celého, vzít si všechno.*

The ambiguity here lies in the interpretation of the phrase "touch all of me". One interpretation could be that Rudolph feels that Evelyn has never fully understood or appreciated him, and that there is a part of him that she has never "touched" emotionally. Another interpretation could be that Rudolph feels that Evelyn has never fully explored or enjoyed their physical relationship, and that there is a part of him that she has never "touched" sexually.

B:59 *"Well," crabbled Evelyn, "if you need a punching bag, don't look at me." : „No,“ zabručela Evelyn, „jestli potřebuješ boxovací pytel, tak na mě se nedívej.“*

The sentence in B:59 can be interpreted in two ways. It could mean that Evelyn is not willing to be someone's punching bag or it could mean that Rudolph should not expect Evelyn to provide him with a punching bag. The ambiguity was kept intact in the translation in order to maintain the spirit of Evelyn's sarcastic remark.

B:78 *It took the fun out of watching TV, him doing that.: Kvůli tomu si už Evelyn nedokázala vychutnat sledování televize*

In paragraph B:78, the sentence could be interpreted either as "It took the fun out of watching TV when he did that" or "After he had done that, it was never fun to watch TV again."

B:107 *It felt like a circus. It smelled like a locker room.: Připadalo jí to jako v cirkuse. Smrdělo to tu jako v šatně.*

B:107 is ambiguous because it's not clear which part of the sentence "like a circus" and "like a locker room" applies to. Conceivably, it could mean that it either felt like a circus and smelled like a locker room, or that it felt and smelled like a circus locker room. The translation clears up the ambiguity thanks to the preposition tu in the second sentence, which clearly refers to the entire Kingdome stadium „Smrdělo to tu jako v šatně.“

4.5 FUNCTIONAL SENTENCE PERSPECTIVE

Functional sentence perspective (FSP) is a principle which places the rheme of the sentence at the very end. Due to the rigidity of English word order, a sentence applying this principle may appear to break the conventions of sentence linearity. In Czech, the word order is a fair deal more flexible, and thus the principle is more commonly found in Czech sentences (Knittlová 96-97, Dušková 14.3).

B:11 A killer smile, people called it: Zabijácký úsměv, tak tomu lidé říkali

In B:11, the subject is "smile" and the predicate is "people called it a killer". The focus, or new information, is on the attribute "killer", which is describing the smile. This emphasis on the attribute instead of the subject is a common feature of FSP. So, in the Czech translation „Zabijácký úsměv, tak tomu lidé říkali“, the focus is on the attribute „zabijácký“, just as in the original sentence the focus is on "killer".

B:91 Evelyn's hand shot up to cover her face: Evelyn si rukou zakryla obličej

B:91 is a topicalized sentence with the subject "Evelyn's hand" placed at the beginning of the sentence to emphasize it as new information. In contrast, the sentence which follows, "She let fly with a whimper", presents the action as given information. The translation „Evelyn si rukou zakryla obličej“ reflects the theme-rheme structure of the original sentence, where the theme (the new or given information) is "Evelyn" and the rheme is "si rukou zakryla obličej. "

4.6 PUNCTUATION

Maintaining the original graphic structure of the short story was crucial especially when paragraphs are concerned. Sentences were sometimes shortened when necessary (see sub-chapter 4.1), but most of the time their form was adhered to in the translation. Under punctuation modification also falls the alteration of commas, semicolons and dashes – be it by replacement via a comma or even starting a whole new sentence – when required, such as in the examples below. Especially the replacement of the semicolons was crucial, as they are not as commonly used in Czech. In the translation, they were mostly substituted with a dash or a comma, or even replaced with a conjunction (B:12). For scale, the original text

contains 29 semicolons, while in the translation, only 7 have been retained. Below are a few examples of punctuation modification, with the last two being indented in order for the modified punctuation marks to stand out from the dividing colon.

B:9 it seemed to her that her husband looked disappointed—looked, in fact, the way he did (...): zdálo se jí, že její manžel vypadá zklamaně. Vlastně vypadal stejně (...)

B:12 His brothers played football, they went into the navy; Rudolph lived in Scripture (...): Jeho bratři hráli fotbal a šli k námořnictvu, zatímco Rudolf žil Písmem svatým (...)

B:66 (...) since he could make a fist; : (...) od chvíle, kdy uměl zatnout pěst,

B:109 (...) would outlive her; : (...) ji přežije.

5 OTHER ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION

5.1 BIBLICAL REFERENCE

China contains a part of a direct quote from the book Ecclesiastes, more precisely verse 9:10, from the King James version. Nevertheless, the quote from the short story (B:55) is incomplete; the full quote is *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.* A direct translation from the *Czech Ecumenic translation* was used to convey the same meaning of the quoted part. Only the relevant part of the full quote was transcribed.

B: 55 “*Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.*”: „*Všechno, co máš vykonat, konej podle svých sil.*“

5.2 FORMAL AND INFORMAL ADDRESS

In contrast to English, the Czech language differentiates between a formal and an informal address, which depends upon the setting, social status and relationship between the speaker and the addressee. The characters in the story mostly refer to each other by their proper names, although a mix of formal and informal address was chosen for one specific case:

B:17–18(...) “*And just what you expect to get, Miss Playful, by fooling with people during collection time?*” (...) “*You*“:

(...) „*A co asi získáte, slečno Hravá, tím, že budete během vybírání darů blbnout lidi?*“

(...) „*Tebe.*“

The characters are using different levels of politeness in their speech in this example. Rudolf's speech is more formal, as he uses the more polite form of address "slečno" (Miss) and the formal verb form "budete". This form of address is appropriate for a formal setting, which is appropriate since Rudolf is talking about collecting donations. Evelyn's speech, on the other hand, is less formal and more colloquial. She uses the informal pronoun "tebe" and omits the verb, which is more typical of casual conversation. This less formal language reflects the playful and flirty dynamic between the two characters. Thus, the use of two

different levels of formality in the Czech translation attempts to accurately capture the nuances of the original English text and the social dynamics between the characters.

6 CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this thesis was to provide an original translation of Charles Richard Johnson's short story *China* from English to Czech, and to present a theoretical analysis of the translation and the process thereof. This was a challenging task that required a great deal of attention to detail and a substantial understanding of the cultural context of both languages. The main focal point of the analysis was on words with zero or partial equivalence (such as martial arts terminology) and US-specific cultural allusions, all of which posed a significant challenge. However, by utilizing various translation techniques, such as by employing analogical substitutions or via the addition of general classifiers (hyponyms), we hopefully managed to overcome these challenges and provide a reasonably faithful and fluent translation that effectively communicates the intended message to the readers of the translation.

The analysis of the translation was based on the works of Dagmar Knittlová and Jiří Levý, two prominent Czech translation theorists who have made significant contributions to the field of translation. Their works provided a solid theoretical foundation for the analysis, which allowed for a more in-depth examination of the translation. Furthermore, their works provided valuable insights into the translation process, which has taught me much. The segments of their works which have been the most relevant to the analysis have been cited and supplemented with practical examples to illustrate these phenomena.

In conclusion, translating the text did not just allow me to showcase my language skills but was also a huge help in learning and discovering new aspects of both the source and target languages. The challenge of finding suitable equivalents for complex terms, idioms, phrases, and expressions made the translation process a fulfilling experience. Overall, this thesis allowed me to enhance my translation skills and gave me a deeper appreciation for the complexities and nuances of the English and Czech languages.

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