

Goran Simic

On the bike

I am riding my bike. The pedals are already hot.
The odometer says I am far from a sudden heart attack
and every drop of my sweat says I am closer
to my bored young wife who has just arrived
and who sometimes cries for no reason.
I can do better. I can ride faster.

Is it Wojcek, that guy sitting in front of the funeral home?
Once a famous disc jockey back home,
he sold a great record collection to buy a ticket
to the promised land.
Now he's listening to painful silence
broken only by coins jingling in his hat.

I can do better. I can ride faster.

No, it couldn't be Vesna walking along the stripbar street
in a skirt that hides nothing.
She came on the same flight I did
to get married to someone she met through a pen-pal exchange.
I guess it's the same tattooed bastard
who is shouting from his car at her
to unbutton her blouse and smile.
Does he know she was once a ballerina?

I can do better. I can ride faster.

That grey man crossing the street in a wheelchair,
I hope it's not Jan.
Once a photographer, now just a frame.
Obsessed with lotteries, he served for years as a lab rat
renting his body for military experiments.
The day he won big money
he came down with a rooting illness
no one had heard before.
Now he spends his money buying deodorants
to quell the stench on his way to the casino.

I can do better. I can ride faster.

It's OK for today,
my trainer tells me,
get off the stationary bicycle
and don't bother asking for more time.
There are lots of newcomers waiting for you to stop.
Take your fear and your ghosts with you
on the way to the shower
and see you next week.

You can do it better. You can ride faster.