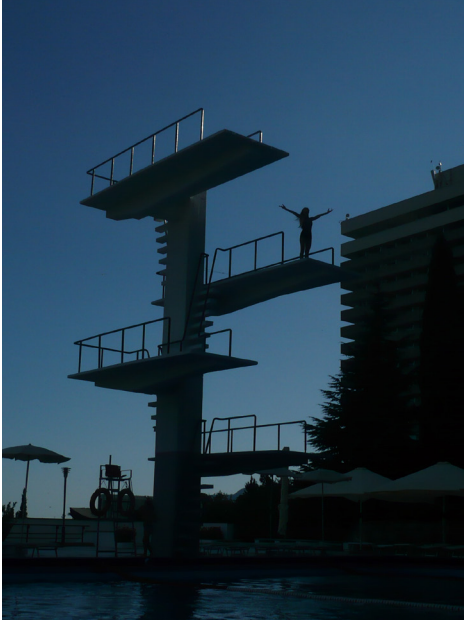


FICTION



Lelya AREY

***PARENTS KILL THEIR CHILDREN:
THE RECEPTION OF LELYA AREI'S
STORY
PIGTAIL***

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Emotions, worries, feelings, and human behavior have always been a subject of interest for the artists. The inner world is a multifaceted object of artistic interpretation in the literature of different times. Considering the individuality of characters and the uniqueness of each personality, this is an eternally relevant theme. The artist's task is to find unique characters and reveal them to the reader using the means of artistic language and psychological insight, show the full spectrum of emotions, pass thoughts and feelings prompting to experience a special emotional journey.

In the early 21st century we observe the rapid development of Ukrainian psychological prose for and about teenagers. Young heroes, their problems, traumas, unimplemented aspirations and desires, internal and external conflicts, arouse great interest among writers and recipients.

The story of a teenage girl is presented in Lelya Arey's story "Koska." The author chose an interesting narrative perspective: the protagonist of the story is the schoolgirl Yulia but the problems of family relationships are raised, the attitude of the influential father to the family, the image of the doctor and the plot development

are presented from an adult point of view. This artistic technique provides a dual address of the work and significantly expands the reader audience, encourage to look at the described problem from different perspectives.

Yulia has her hobbies and dreams but her father has other plans for her. This oppressive feeling of “prison,” lack of freedom, loneliness and sadness prompts her to a kind of rebellion. She is an individual and does not want to repeat her mother's fate, constantly afraid of not becoming a shame for her father. She seeks freedom. Her protest is typical for teenagers, but the form of protest is very unusual. I wonder: Is it possible? Is this a real story or fiction, someone's specific experience or an original plot twist? Lelya Arei managed to intrigue the reader, confuse with frank writing.

The author leaves the plot of the story open but clearly writes the phrase “Parents are killing their children” into the text. Yulia's story is one of many that illustrates the truth of this statement. “Do we believe the author?” I think after reading the work, everyone will have their answer and associations.

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Pigtail

*Dedicated to D. Y.K.
Birthday present*

In the resident's room, a young surgeon stretched lazily in the morning. This



was his first duty as a responsible surgeon. He tried to recover his strength somehow. On weekends, he especially wanted to be in bed and do nothing. However, for the first time, the duties of the “senior” fell. Of course, this is a great honor, a special recognition and trust, that was expressed by both the Head of the Department and the Chief Doctor.

However, the feeling of self-importance lasted for five minutes, and then the work piled up... And he ran like a horse at a wedding: “mare's face in flowers, and butt in soap”... The first time. Superstress because of little things. The silhouette of his wife's ideal figure, which periodically appeared in his consciousness, constantly distracted him from work. She lies warm and relaxed. He really wanted to join her under the blanket. The surgeon enjoyed it, anticipating that the shift was almost over. The night turned out to be difficult: seven primary surgical treatments of wounds to various hyperactive persons, who still tend to fall from bicycles onto pebbles, or beat the glass with their teenage fists at the school disco in fits of jealousy; affected inguinal hernia; three appendectomies — one of them with adhesive intestinal obstruction; laparotomy of a closed trauma of the abdominal cavity organs — rupture of the spleen with hemoperitoneum, spontaneous pneumothorax in an unfortunate student of the 1st year of the medical institute; drainage of the pleural cavity according to Bülow in a diving athlete, who was completely unexpectedly attacked by a bulky “grandmother” with a board in the pool, when she was floating... The girl, struck by a boat on her nose, went to the bottom from the pain, and then stumbled several more times over this woman's body. It was not easy to swim out on her own this time. Of course they got her... The surgeon was a little over thirty.

None of the non-surgeons (their relatives and people close to them) even guess how exactly the operation takes place. The surgeon and his assistant, intertwining their hands in the cut opening of the patient's body, touch each other with their heads, faces, shoulders, and body, as if the two of them are small children in a sandbox, sculpting a little cake, a pretzel, or scooping water from one bucket with their palms. At the same time, both surgeons – both different-sexual and same-sexual – are only interested the process of the operation and its successful outcome: to carefully drain the blood, sew up the blood vessel, remove the tumor, as well as it is important for boys and girls to empty the bucket drop by drop, make even edges, sculpt roundly.

What nice parents these teenagers have! You need to have iron nerves staying at home to watch how strong the stomach ache your child has, what a high temperature

he has, and wait for everything to pass by itself. Of course, it will pass after the operation — in a month — after the greedy gluttonous doctor pulls your child out of the other world. And how impudent he is! And pay the charity contribution, and buy medicine, and then drag yourself to the other end of the city with food afterwards! And what, the anesthesiologist also needs to be paid?! And why is he here?! Is this a job! They can do it without him!

This is how people who are not poor at all, those who drive the most expensive cars, the parents of teenagers, think. Gasoline is very expensive, and so are spare parts, and in general, we have free medicine, so, as in the anecdote: After the doctor took out the fish bone stuck in the patient's throat, the patient asks:

“Doctor, how much do I owe you?”

“Exactly half of what you wanted to pay, when you ran to me!” answers the doctor.

It is not surprising that the children of these parents are often drug addicts. Money is not a problem for them, and communication with children often comes down to prohibitions, lack of conversation — because there is no time! They should work! Therefore, the mutual understanding of these parents and children should not even be raised.

The surgeon took off his shoes and stretched out on the couch, it was almost dawn outside the window ... A nurse entered the resident's room and asked in a loud whisper:

“Do you want fried or boiled potatoes with meat, Kostyantyn Yaroslavovych?”

“Fried ones” answered the doctor, falling asleep. He fell into some dimension, where chased after him begging: “Come on, please! I am asking you very much!” And he answered: “I'm on vacation! Go to Feshchenko.” However, they persisted: “But we are under the patronage of Hryhorovsky...” And he conceded: “Well, well, what can I do with you, after the twenty-fifth...”

And suddenly he jumped out of the annoying phone signal. The name of the chief doctor was unpleasantly visible on the monitor. The doctor strained, portraying cheerfulness in his voice, but they did not listen to his greetings, but immediately announced in a mentoring way:

“The deputy governor for social affairs has just called, he will come to you now... The man is very respectable... Do everything properly...”

The phone was hung up. An excited nurse almost broke into the doctors' residency



room and began to call demandingly:

“Kostyantyn Yaroslavovych, urgently! The boss called... The girl...”

The surgeon automatically got up from the coach, put on his shoes, and left the resident's room.

In the waiting room there the closet was standing — a man in his forties, with a pumped-up beautiful figure, unshaven, in sports pants, his hands demonstratively played with the car keys with a Mercedes key fob.

“Lord, it is your will! Another miser!” thought the surgeon.

“Proceed to the inspection area,” said the surgeon to the closet, making an inviting gesture, and entered the examination room.

“Sit down!” the doctor pointed to a chair near the table.

Then the phone rang in the closet, he started talking, got excited and went out into the corridor. His daughter remained in the inspection area. A fourteen-year-old girl in a hat was lying on the coach and reading something on a mobile phone, which suddenly began to play the Irish folk song “Drunken Sailer” performed by the Irish Rovers. The inscription “Mein Führer” appeared on the monitor. The girl saw the doctor and canceled the call.

“Who is calling?” - Kostyantyn Yaroslavovych asked softly, almost tenderly.

“Dad...”

“And where is he?”

“He just came out into the corridor...”

“In the corridor...”

“Of course,” answered the doctor with understanding. “Well, what do they write?...”

The girl's gaze lit up slightly, which immediately went out, mixed with a painful spasm on her face, which she tried to suppress, which was worth her good efforts, as a result of which the nymphette's mouth belched. She became very ashamed, the pallor of her face began to turn pink...

“Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't want to...”

The surgeon became internally wary, but visually it was completely invisible.

“You were looking so intently at your phone...”

“The doctor continued trying to establish contact.”

“Why did you come at night, don't you feel like sitting at home? What do you have there? Will you show?”

The girl was very surprised that the doctor was talking to her and was generally interested in what she was doing. She unlocked the keypad and showed the phone. There was a picture — a boy holding as large as a puppy, ladybug to his chest against the backdrop of war.

“What is it?” asked the doctor with sincere interest.

“This is me drawing...”

“Did you draw it yourself?... And how?...”

“With a finger...”

“Well... You are very talented...”

“...” the girl smiled shyly ...

“Why are you drawing with your finger on the phone?”

“Dad says it's nonsense... He doesn't want to buy me a graphic tablet. He wants me to study medicine at the University of Bologna... So I have to draw with my finger...”

“Why exactly in Bologna?”

“Now it is fashionable to study abroad. Everyone goes to Britain, to Austria. And in Bologna, a human body was dissected for the first time... Back in the 13th century. There are traditions...”

“Did dad bring you here?”

“Yes...”

“Why?”

“Because he thinks I'm pregnant...”

“And are you pregnant?...”

“No.”

“Why are you sure of this?”

The girl smiled.

“Just because I am not a Saint - not the Virgin Mary! I am a virgin!”

“Does dad know about this?”

“Yes. I told him about it. However, he does not believe me...”

“Why doesn't he believe you?”

“Because I feel sick all the time and my stomach has increased...”

“Was there vomiting?”

“Just a little... I can't...”

“Did you go to the gynecologist?”

“Yes. They said that I am a virgin... That I need to see a surgeon...”



“Why at night and not during the day?”

“That's how dad works... He has no time. And then, my stomach doesn't really hurt...”

“Let's take a look at you... Lift up your sweater...”

Yulia belonged to the “golden youth”. She had a very domineering and influential father. Dad had a good position that gave him the opportunity to earn very, very much. It was simply impossible to spend so much money. The goal of earning was not the result, but the process. In addition to money, dad had power, a specific reputation – everyone was afraid of him, trying not to get involved, and those who depended on him flattered and enslaved him, he had a desire to control everything and rule everyone. Yuli's mother did not work because her father did not allow her. Despite the fact that the mother was forbidden to work, she still could not make any decisions on her own: she could not even decide which washing powder to buy: “Persil” or “Ariel”. Because this was done by special people. The powder was bought by the chauffeur according to the list prepared by the maid. And the cook made a list of food, which also handed over to the driver, and she also decided what the menu would be. Not to mention cosmetics and clothes. The selection of creams was made by a beautician, and the selection of clothing by a stylist. Because the wife of **SUCH** a MAN should not burden herself! After all, he makes good money! He can see to it that his wife enjoys life! It's okay for her to waste her time on powders! Let her rest! Is there no one to buy the powder?!

Yulia's mother lived in a prison – a very luxurious prison... Yulia was probably freer than her mother. She needed to at least go to school, study well. The most terrible thing was that both of them could dishonor such a respectable and wonderful person as their father and husband. The understanding that both of them are – a shame – has forcefully entered the worldview of these female beings. Mom put up with it. And Julia, probably, too, almost from the moment of birth. However, now, in the period of adolescence, something unknown, suppressed earlier, somehow intrusively quietly disturbed her. And she predicted that something did not suit her after all.

He dreamed about a brilliant career for his daughter. After all, he has such opportunities! He can do almost anything for her. He planned for his girl to become a doctor, because by world standards it is a prestigious and highly paid profession. Even now he began to look for the building in the center of the city, which would later become a private clinic for his treasure. Dad informed Yulia of his decision in

the usual unappealable manner – he simply stated the fact that she should focus on biology, chemistry, physics, English, German and Italian.

English – because he was going to make a world-class luminary with Yuli, German – because in the last thirty years advanced scientific literature on medicine was published in Germany, and Italian – because Bologna, it is not like everyone else, creatively... Highly qualified tutors in chemistry, biology and physics were hired right away. Yulia has been studying languages since she was ten years old, so the linguist teachers remained the previous ones.

Yulia hated chemistry. At least biology was interesting to her, as she liked to draw, and the knowledge of the structure of plants, animals and humans helped to depict them with precision to the nuances. Yulia wanted to make cartoons, but despite all the possibilities of her daddy, she didn't even have adequate computer programs or even a tablet to do it. Therefore, she used the maximum capabilities of the phone, which was very good. Dad bought a mobile phone because of the price – just obscenely expensive.

Yulia had no friends. It is useless to communicate with boys, because according to such standards the bridegroom should be sought abroad. Recently, she became close to a new girl in the class, who also drew. They showed each other their drawings. Julia was fine with her. For the first time, she communicated with a person who is pleasant to her and who does not oppress her. After classes, they went down the school stairs together.

“Where are you going?” girlfriend asked Yulia.

Julia was very confused, she did not expect such a turn. Her mother was waiting for her after school to go to the beauty salon to get a manicure.

Yulia conspiratorially began to ask:

“Now we will go outside, my mother will be there. Don't approach her, don't greet her, don't pretend that we communicate.”

“Okay...” said the friend. She was too tactful to ask any questions and ask for explanations.

In the evening, opening a hateful chemistry textbook, Yulia began to cry. She was unbearably sad. She clearly understood that she absolutely did not want to be a doctor. And she also felt that she dreams of being an artist. However, not to paint any oil paintings that are not interesting to anyone. She wants to make cartoons.



Yulia knew that she would never be able to confess to this father. Yulia had long, very thick and beautiful hair. She was crying... A thin strand of hair was in her mouth. Out of desperation, she began to rub her lower teeth against her upper teeth and felt something crunch in her mouth. A strand of hair stuck to the lips, and a gnawed lock of hair was near the ear. Yulia went to the mirror and saw that the hair near her face was not symmetrical. Then she took the scissors and cut off the bitten strand to the root. So that Dad wouldn't notice, she shoved the cut hair into her mouth and bitten off a long piece hanging from her lips. The hair was very disgusting. It was just impossible to eat. Yulia began to feel nauseous. She stopped... She took a breath... Then she swallowed everything with effort. However, the hair got stuck right in the throat. Yulia began to suffocate... She ran to the kitchen, poured a glass of water, and drank it in one gulp, hoping to bury hair in stomach with water. She succeeded. She breathed a sigh of relief.

From that day, Yulia gradually, almost imperceptibly for herself, began to eat her own hair. Every time she was very disgusted. Every time there was a feeling of disgust, nausea, and the desire to vomit. However, water always helped. Over time, Yulia discovered that she could no longer eat the way she used to. That her stomach hurts, and the nausea became constant, even when she did not eat the hair, and there was meat in front of her, which she also could not eat. The process of eating food became disgusting.

The hair began to thin on the head.

Yulia's friend got a fashionable haircut – very short. Yulia liked it. She also wanted a haircut. Yulia told mom about the desire to change her hairstyle, but her mom replied that she should ask dad for permission.

In the evening, before going to bed, Yulia asked dad:

“Now the undercut hairstyle is very fashionable, can I get a haircut?”

“No way,” as always, dad categorically refused. “After all, you have such magnificently long hair.”

Depressed as usual Yulia went to her room. And all night she bit the hair from her head, ate it, and drank water. So that Dad wouldn't notice, she glued fake hair to her bitten strands and braided it. In the morning, her stomach was full of water and hair, and there was something inexplicable on her head, therefore she put a fashionable

Undercut – haircut: very short nape and temples, very long top. The main feature is the lack of a smooth transition between long and short hair. An original combination of shaved temples and the back of the head with long bangs.

hat with ears, and pigtail was hanging behind the back. Yulia refused breakfast. When dad forced her, she ate a few pieces of omelette, after which she threw up.

Her parents decided that she was ill, so she would not go to school... Yulia spent about a week at home. She did not eat well, refused food, she vomited, and her stomach increased in size. The mother noticed vomiting, refusal to eat, an increase of the belly and naturally realized that her daughter was pregnant! At fourteen years old! God, what a shame! The issue should be resolved urgently! She told her husband everything.

Late at night, Yulia lay on the sofa in her room and drew with her finger on the phone. Since she was sick, the hateful chemistry had for the time being disappeared by itself, and the girl was doing her favorite thing. She liked to be sick... Dad entered the room. Yulia tensed. He aloofly sat down firmly beside her and sharply pulled back the blanket.

“Get up...” dad said quietly and sternly.

Yulia, as always, obeyed. Dad lifted her pajamas and exposed her stomach. He noticed a tumor in the stomach area. The father looked intently into his daughter's face. Glued hair made a natural mess, a braided pigtail dangled behind her back.

“Why are you so disheveled?! When did you brush your hair?!”

“Now it's so fashionable...” Yulia said quietly but clearly.

“Brush your hair!”

“Fine.”

“Are you pregnant?!”

“No.”

“Then what's wrong with your stomach?!”

“I do not know.”

“Let's go to the doctor! Get dressed right now!”

Thus, in the morning, Yulia found herself in front of a very nice and reliable person - Kostyantyn Yaroslavovych. The doctor pressed Yuli's stomach with warm fingers. He smelled very pleasantly, and Yulia even liked his touch. Kostyantyn Yaroslavovych felt a dense mobile formation in the stomach area, which was in no way connected to the wall of the organ. In shape, it repeated the internal contours, but somehow strangely separated from them. He looked at Yulia, confused and interested.

“Why are you wearing a hat? Are you cold?”



“No... It's just like that... I want...”

“You could tip your hat.”

“Yeah...”

“Take it off, please.”

Yulia took off her hat, and the doctor saw her head. The surgeon turned to the nurse.

“Almost everything is clear to me... We will prescribe an X-ray examination or, better yet, an ultrasound of the ABDOMINAL CAVITY ORGANS. What time does Tamara Pavlivna come?”

“About eight o'clock,” answered the nurse.

“And now it's half past six... Let's do it this way. For some time, let the girl lie down in the waiting room, in the ninth, maybe even sleep a little. We'll let Dad go home for now, and we'll take her to Tamara's about eight o'clock. Dad should arrive no earlier than one o'clock. I will talk to him now.”

To her surprise, Yulia was not even upset by the fact that she was left in the hospital. She liked the doctor. It was quiet and peaceful. She was taken to the ward and she surprisingly fell asleep.

According to the conclusion of ultrasound: a hypoechoic homogeneous mass in the stomach cavity measuring 14 by 8 cm, the walls of the stomach are compacted. After additional appointments on the examination X-ray with contrast, Kostyantyn Yaroslavovych realized that he was not mistaken...: the pyloric section and the body of the stomach were filled with a large foreign body... a trichobezoar. In the picture, Kostyantyn Yaroslavovych saw what he had predicted: a trichobezoar. The trichobezoar repeated the internal contours of the stomach and even continued into the intestines. The "tumor" was thirty-five centimeters long, and the widest part was eleven centimeters across. The weight could be accurately determined only after the operation, but approximately, the doctor estimated, one hundred and eighty grams. The stomach in the picture was enlarged, because a pressure ulcer had formed where the stomach was perforated. In addition, due to the long inactivity of the parents, the inflammatory process around the stomach began. The surgeon saw that if the operation is not performed urgently, the formation of a phlegmatic infiltrate is likely.

The doctor looked at the picture, and shifted his gaze to the girl:

“Is someone insulting you?”

“No...”

“What about your head? Where is your hair?”

Yulia blushed...

“Why did you do it?”

“I do not know...”

“We will prepare for the operation...”

“Fine.”

In the office Kostyantyn Yaroslavovych looked at the tough man who had somehow lost his temper.

“Your daughter has trichobezoar. It should be said that it is quite neglected – almost black in color, but due to bile in some places with a brownish tint, and already stony density.”

“But what is it? I do not understand...”

“Your daughter was eating her hair.”

“...”

“Due to the obstruction and impossibility of digesting them, a so-called "tumor" was formed from the hair ... Why do you think she did it?”

“She wanted to cut her hair, but I forbade it.”

“You forbade it... That's why she cut off her pigtail and, so that you wouldn't find it, ate it all – just stuffed it in own stomach.”

“How long will she spend here?”

“From a week to three...”

“She missed classes, tutors can come to her. Should I catch up on chemistry?”

“Do you know that she paints?”

The indignant father's disappearance immediately passed, and the man again assumed the position of the usual iron stance.

“She will enter a medical institute,” – the father stated categorically.

“It's clear...”

On a Sunday morning, it is amazing and pleasant to drive around the city. There are no cars, no people either. Quiet and peaceful, because the whole city is asleep. The sleepy doctor entered the apartment. After a quick shower he eventually did what he had been thinking about the last night: he crawled under the covers to his wife. She was sleeping. She was warm. The sun rose. There is a desire to live. However, the doctor was a little sad. The warm woman seemed to feel it, and she snuggled to him

by her skin.

“Sleep...” she whispered authoritatively.

The surgeon obediently closed his eyes.

“Something happened?”

“Parents kill their children...”

“Did you speak?”

“Spoke...”

“Didn't help?”

“It didn't help... I feel sorry for the girl... There will be another unhappy person...”

The warm woman began to touch the doctor, kiss him. He lived...

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