

## IN THE PASSENGER CAR

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*Aleksander Wat*

In the passenger car heading south  
two old ladies, fighting off sleep,  
sharing an egg. Yellow crumbs  
powder their knees. On the sweating panes  
rosy-fingered dawn. Doesn't say much  
to their dead carp eyes.  
Close by a grove of trees zipped past. From the river  
the smell of sweet flag. To be  
a cow in the meadow.

AND ON THAT NIGHT, WELL AFTER MIDNIGHT, ...

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*Aleksander Wat*

And on that night, well after midnight,  
P. B. came to me.  
This time as an earthworm,  
4 meters 20, that's what I measured  
at first sight. And my room  
was less than 3 meters.  
Therefore he shrank  
like a spring squeezed by a finger.  
Thereafter he wound around me, unhurriedly,  
Rhythmically. Tighter and tighter.  
Through his soft hairiness I felt rings  
hard as india rubber. I didn't cry out, though it hurt.  
Everyone knows: whatever he does, he does out of love for me.

## ON OUR STREET

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*Aleksander Wat*

1

On Benvenue trees change color through the night:  
yesterday wedding-white, today the color of rotting plum.  
On the terrace wind from the Pacific kneads  
my face. Like this!  
And he got to me here, even though I fenced myself off with the ocean,  
jetted away in the sleepy elastic night  
above the black waters. In vain.  
And he found me even here, on this good street Benvenue.  
Each morning I go into the green water,  
watch in the mirror a skeleton  
with loosely stretched skin.  
In twelve hours a little bell from the campanile will remind us of the  
lost melodies of childhood.  
Roses smell different here than back home. And all this  
enters the one-dimensional course of time, whatever philosophers  
might say.  
Summer follows spring, fall comes after summer, and winter  
waits for me  
irrevocable. Although here, on the good street Benvenue  
seasons are unrecognizable as twins. Four orphan sisters  
patiently waiting for mother's return, benvenue.

2

From under an umbrella I look at the far ocean.  
The sun warms my cracked palms.  
I have folded them into a prayer, but I'm not praying.  
Once I read how Ibsen was dying:  
The sidewalk was paved with felt, and the carriages were sent  
the long way around.  
Here the automobiles are soundless. And there aren't any now.  
It's meal time. Footsteps on the stairs.  
A black postman tells me I owe three extra cents.

Ola goes to the living room for the pennies.  
For a few long moments I'm unguarded.  
I rip the envelope open. White card stock.  
An invitation to my funeral,  
which will take place on Tuesday at half past eleven.

Berkeley, July 1964