

A white eagle,

for Tudor Vornicu,

High up in the sky, one day a white eagle saw a yard full of hens. They were small, black and - seen from a certain distance - appeared to be extremely kind and nice.

Aligning his flight along some chillier air draft, the eagle descended a step from the heavens and curiously approached the tiny assembly. Younger hens were nibbling the land overturned by claws and croaking whenever they could dig out some worm: then, they would trudge to carry the worm to some aged hen, as an offering. However, the aged hen, after tasting it, would push it with her beak to a clutter of poorly fed and starving chickens. And they were nastily starving. In their hatches, some clucking setting hen would protest now and then that someone had forgotten her sitting on the unhatched eggs, with an irrelevant cackling. Although no one was satisfied with the lesson of social servitude, the eagle saw the yard he was floating in circles over, as a patch of heaven.

"Look at this source of goodness" said the eagle to himself within his albescent little head -

"I have to struggle for some mouse lost altogether with the rain, the blizzard, sometimes with raging storms and when, eventually I managed to snatch it from some fleeing vixens, I reach my lonesome nest with it in my claws just to find out some sly snake has just eaten out one of my young, sometimes all the eggs - whereas these girls behave with such difference with each other - " and the eagle sighed so wearisome.

"What if I settle my nest among them? I would have my eggs set and hatched with their help, old hens would feed my young whereas I could grant them all protection underneath the threatening shade of

my enormous wings, against any mischief whatsoever. And, when I wearied would be homeward bound, falling down from heavens and reside on the Earth, I might get some love for my yearning - At least interested love for the help I provide - I shall give it a serious thought."

Then, with a paramount spin, the eagle ascended in his flight and back he was empty-clawed in the barren nest, awaited by noone.

He was indeed an unmatched eagle.

A few days passed, while he missed no opportunity to draw a majestic circle over the yard full of black hens. high up there, the small orderly life of the yard full of hens seemed more and more tantalizing and safe to him. Consequently, nights began to move on with burdensome feet over the white eagle's nest. In his stumpy nest, night sharpened her claws in doubtful noises, like wailing lacking courage. He began to muse on the concept of "hazard" and suddenly awoke by the solitary height of his existence where there is no one to weep for the deceased, as high there, inside the nest above the precipice, his own death would pass unknown.

"By the way, the white eagle awoke musing, what befalls to eagles who have the misfortune to die of old age? Are they torn apart by the other eagles? Do they drop dead on the ground to become prey for coyotes?"

Some fear unexperienced before pushed him away from the torn branches of his unfinished nest. He felt like his wings would not unfold in the hazy desert of the fog. Never had he lurked the dawn fo impatiently - and when the clouds turned eventually into broad light over the mountain peaks, he took fearfully off for the first time above the still misty precipice separating him from the yard full of tiny black hens. In order to brace up, the white eagle flew on giving himself a pep talk.

"I will go straight to them. No later than today. Certainly, I'm in no position to come down to them empty-handed" so he seized thee chubbiest hare cub he had deemed running through the mire. The joy

of his made decision let the eagle lower quite uncautiously over the henful yard, clasp tight in his right claw the wounded hare cub.

Of course, when the eagle's shade covered the henful yard, the hens got frightened like hell. Some hid in their hatches under the angry setting hens, others under the pile of snow-covered logs, some even behind the forsaken privy in the back yard. One hen only stood firm amid the yard, menacingly collecting her starving young underneath her wings swollen with indignation. Gathering his wings about himself as tightly as he could, the eagle descended amidst a whirlwind of dust, and softly landed on the claw-scratched ground of the yard.

After that he laid down as gracefully as he could the hare cub and pushed it with his orange beak towards the raging hen who definitely impersonated the ruler of the place. Then, he himself meekly paced with his beak lowered and mourning wings to the slightly moulting but lofty hen eyeing in turns the huge white bird poorly supported by two skin-covered legs, and the hare cub stone still with fear, or the younger hens hoisting themselves from behind their hiding places. After a due moment of surprise, the lofty hen issued the shrillest sound the white eagle had ever heard. And went on repeating it when, out of nowhere, a somehow old rooster came in sight, lacking feathers, deaf and annoyed at the aggravation. Once he set an eye on the enormous bird, he almost dashed away, however noticing the eagle's humility, remembered that a long time ago he had been some outstanding rooster.

And then, as he had been so insistently summoned that meant he wasn't to go down the drain. Well sir, such a fierce rooster had our rooster been... So aggressive! He might have not started fighting with an eagle, but his cock-a-doodle doos sprang out from the depths of his manly chest until the hunter came up with his gun and set order in the yard. Namely, as long as he the rooster had called so many a-time the hunter, didn't that mean that the rooster himself had actually set order? Well, is it a trifle to undertake the responsibility of a watch dog? This time, nevertheless, the hunter was hardly required to be there. The eagle stood humble right on the spot where he had landed and

looked ailing. Therefore, the fearless rooster came closer followed by the shrieks of the lofty hen. He himself eyed in turns the eagle who made no moves in subjection. He was no familiar with the language spoken by hens. He had no means to prove his good intents but by standing in humbleness on his landing spot. After a long examination, an idea sparked inside tthe rooster's brain: he began pecking at the eagle's skin-covered legs. As he saw that the bird did nothing to defend himself, he went on pecking at his fallen wings. Then at his neck. Ultimately, the rooster began to peck at his head. Undoubtedly that was hurting him. However the eagle thought that, whether he sits gently and passes successfully the exam, a yard council will be constituted and a way out will be found regarding his being temporarily welcomed among the tiny black hens who began themselves to approach the huge whitish bird thrashed by some old timer rooster.

"Oh, I wish the rooster knew the protection I could grant for this distinguished yard," he was thinking while he was thrashed. "If only I could give a piece of my mind to these distinguished hens in clear words, I might explain what good use may an eagle be this day, so ugly day, today -" But the yard had unified strength, gathering beak by beak and began to bite each and every side. The very chickens hoisted themselves from under the wings of the old hen and were prone to fight. Meanwhile, the hare cub shook off the land's dirt, stood up and watching contemptuously the eagle who allowed himself to be thrashed by those raging hens, he flew away to the mires he had been picked up from. Hardly had the first drop of blood dripped down his injured breast, that the eagle stood up on his monumental skin-covered legs, stretched out his paramount white wings and span in circles to ban away those beaks maddened with victorious elation. Then, waking up from his momentuous search, the eagle first jumped on the fallen fence of the yard. There, indeed, he had a firm stand for his powerful crooked claws. Even a rotten log could be something reliable to perch on. Unable to believe that he had been so seriously misled by his own self, he looked down at those hens who had seemed so nice from his height - They croaked, congratulating each other for

doing the job themselves, with no help from the hunter, such an enormous eagle!

And what, how often in a lifetime does a henful yard seize the chance to thrash an eagle?

What if he was a white one? Was he not there landing with a hare in his claws? Was he not a potential hazard? Woe to us, they had stuff to build tales for countless generations of young hens around the glorious deed they had proudly done. The day when the eagle was thrashed had to be written down in legends glorifying the matchless bravery of the aged hen - Hadn't she summoned the rooster? So what, will the others spring up in indignation, did we not bite the enemy with our beaks? And the chickens will practise with their own young when they grow old and have their own families, the thrashing of an eagle landing with a burthen of gifts in a yard full of hens -

On his fence, the eagle looked attentively high up in the sky. It was as he had seen it for the first time. On this very fence, he beheld the hunter clutching his gun in his hand and coming. He was approaching to dig out the source of the scandal in the yard.

The eagle awoke from his dreamlike mood and flew away.

He gained altitude yet looking down, towards the "oasis of goodness" that had kicked him off in such hatred. When the hunter beheld the eagle, he shot at him and missed. Seeing the eagle gain distance, the hunter waved his hand in disgust, chased a chubby hen, caught her and departed from the yard where the other hens still congratulated each other altogether with the rooster for the unheard-of victory.

The hunter laid his gun down, took a knife out of his trousers, and cut off the head of the hen in one violent move. Then he took back his gun and shook the hen unwilling to die on his way home.

At his turn, the eagle flew farther and farther thinking of nothing. He learned back again to pierce through the wind with his orange beak. And for the first time, he awoke observing his feathers

struggle around his beak under the wind. The fields had never seemed so square, rectangular, hexagonal. The tractors had never seemed so tiny and red.

Spread as they were in the fields, they appeared to be drops of blood dripping in the confused flight of a dying bird.

Or, on the contrary, dripping during the somewhat random flight of a bird free from her death, in a last moment. It was as it had never seemed good enough to her the ability to elevate above the fog nesting in the valley.

The eagle had a long journey flying up there. He was hurt by every stroke of wind in his wounds inflicted by hens and nonetheless he was cured by the air he carried on his flight along.

High up there, the air was clean - Disinfectant.

When the clouds turned red with the coming night over the mountains, he was back to his unfinished barren nest that he couldn't find any more. Of course, the nest was somewhere in the neighbourhood, on some mountainous slope, but as long as he span around, the white eagle was unable to find it back in the fog rising shamelessly from the valley, up to the bravest treetops.

When he eventually understood, he flew up to the highest rocks of the slope, to the rarified air, where even the wind was shy to blow.

There, on a thin unbelievably green blanket of moss, shone in the matchless light of the clear moon, three withish eggs.

With unmatched tenderness, the eagle sat up over them, protecting them with his injured breast against the chill of the freezing night.

Then, with a smile, the eagle inspired the whole heaven deeply in his chest, and for a moment covered the billions of sparkling stars with his stretched out wings that, this time, did not fit in the translucent night.

Corina Chiriac, January 2005. Bucharest

