

TAWALS

14 years old

Bring comedy to the scene.

Making others laugh is your victory.

Black band on head, like a child playing soldier.

If someone had told me I would write about my own life, I would have laughed. I was always laughing. It feels like a lifetime ago. Tawals the clown. When I was a little boy it almost sounded like an honour. Better than Tawals the Filthy Polabian, I say.

Those really were different times. Times when you could put stars back into the sky. I swear.

I went to school with Kresnik. We were like bread and butter.

I bet that, if anyone reminded him now, he would flip out.

But the truth is hard to kill and it looks nobody in the eye, Polabian or Vendevean.

I also had Borevit, the skies praise that crazy fucking violinist, and great Svetovit.

The best at everything. Every arsehole in the Dusk Dragon would pay to be like him.

I bet a couple of them would shag him too.

At the time we certainly had no idea what to do with a woman, but I think all of us were a little in love with Ziva. The sad, sweet little princess in her castle, locked up between tutors and guardians by her hag of a mother. Irresistible, isn't it?

I was serious about putting stars back in the sky. It happened.

That's how I met the two brothers. Jarilo already had that sad air about him: He just had to jump out of nowhere with a rock he passed off for a fallen star, and Ziva melted at his feet. I swear Svetovit would have cracked his teeth if he gritted them any more than that.

But I only cared about the star, and since I'd heard about a bottomless well that would send you into the sky when you fell in (later I discovered the water had simply run out. Even legends die after all), I proposed we all go there.

We would return to Polabo the token of love he'd sent to Vendevea, so that he could get a piece of her back. I think Jarilo said it like that.

Pity it was all a ruse cooked up by his brother Veles.

He was in cahoots with one of Ziva's guardians, getting paid to tell him where to look for us.

The scoundrel even pretended to run to warn us, directing us to flee right into the trap.

Veles was always a clever fellow.

The day I hear he's been deported as well, the Polabian cause will truly be lost.

Until then for me the Dusk Dragon can very well go fuck itself.

Be it the last thing I ever write.

TAWALS

21 years old

You're in your turf. Keep the scene under control and close it at the right moment.

Black band around your wrist, to play with.



Is there a dumber idea than a farewell party? Back then it seemed brilliant, I suppose. Now I'd rather settle for a sip of wine, without even a reason to celebrate. Ziva was about to leave. With her coming of age she'd discovered she wasn't made of glass, like her doctors said. Her mother couldn't hold her back anymore.

I was happy for her, ever since the first moment. Especially because I was the only Polabian in the clique and I couldn't not notice how strong the town was starting to smell.

A stench of resentment, fear and tyranny.

Just like the well-off ladies in the Maw used to wear the same shoes as those in the capital, only a season late, so the Vendevian bastards in our province had just learnt the Dragon's lesson. I worked in my uncle's inn and in the space of a few months I had seen it get emptier and emptier. Not to speak of the broken windows, smashed by some coward at night. Arseholes.

Still, when Svetovit came up with the idea of a party to send Ziva off, it was easy to convince him to hold it at my uncle's. The lad was so broken-hearted that not even his pride could hide the cracks. It was a good party.

It just goes to show that an awful idea can always give birth to something beautiful.

Or maybe it just goes to show that I'd really want a farewell party right now.

Not one where you laugh and dance, though. Who said you need to laugh to be well?

Actually, I probably said that and repeated it often, when I was a boy.

If I die, I want a farewell party where everyone cries and despairs.

Screaming what a good-spirited fellow Tawals was, what a clever man, what a noble, honest heart!

I want Borevit to play. When that madman picks up his cello, everyone gets teary-eyed. And he just needs to open his mouth to leave everyone rolling with laughter. He's out of his mind.

I want Veles there too. I invited him to Ziva's party. I happened across him by chance, coming back to the Maw after many years. He told me he went around the world scamming people, like Polabo's fucking avatar!

If there's such a thing as reincarnation, I swear I want to come back as Veles. I swear.

I don't want Kresnik to be there, however. Cocksucking bastard, you were my best friend and I bet even back then... It doesn't matter. You won't be at my farewell party and I surely won't see you in hell. Because I won't be the one to end up down there.

TAWALS

28 years old

Bring conflict to the scene. Your jokes are cutting, your patience has run dry.

Black band around your arm, in mourning.

Tonight I dreamt of a funeral. No, I remembered it. I sure as hell won't get one. Fine by me. I've always found them depressing. I'll only miss Borevit's music. He was the one playing, at the funeral of Ziva's mother. We buried her in the Polabian cemetery, during the second year of the war. Who would have guessed that a grand lady of her station would actually be of Polabian blood? It must have been quite the surprise for the Dragon arseholes, when they discovered it in their fucking archives. Good for Ziva that the news didn't come out right away, because rich Polabians were the first to kick the bucket. Rich or poor, here at the border we're all the same anyways. The same as beasts, the same as slaves. I feel so tired. I don't know why I'm wasting all this energy on writing, it comforts me though I see no reason for it. There's nothing much noble about a human skeleton scrawling in chicken scratch on a roll of toilet paper... The perfect surface for my memoirs. But for my letter to Veles I got my hands on real paper, exchanging the last sip of the hooch I'd brewed in a crack of the floor for a single page. I'm an awful business man, am I not? But someone must know what kind of hell this place is. Might as well tell it to a Polabian that might cook up some horrible idea like coming back to the country and getting caught. I just hope that the Vendevean doctor with those gentle eyes will keep his word and leave the letter in the brothers' hideout when he goes home. Home... Fuck. What a pretty word. But I was talking about my dream. It's important to note everything down, I know Borevit has a list of everything he's ever eaten. And he's a genius, no? Well, I was at the funeral of Ziva's mother and in the dream the bombers actually came, just like Kresnik feared. I would have rather died like that, instead of spending these last years in the camp. Yes, the last, because I won't delude myself into thinking I might ever return home. War will never end, not for me. The foreigners that so wish to save us Polabians will take their sweet time killing all Vendeveans... Yes, all of them, even Svetovit and Kresnik. The great war hero and my arsehole of a best friend. I just wanted to live, damn it. To pour drinks to people, to wander the world with Veles and Janilo, to hear Borevit play, to see Ziva smile. Just live. But the Dragon came and swallowed everything. I don't even know why. Did they arrest me because I hid people in the inn? Or because I made a bad quip to the wrong Vendevean? Fuck them. It's too late to feel anything at all.

VIDOVIN

39 years old

*Bring conflict to its bitter end. Be the villain,
force the others into difficult choices.*

White band tied to your arm, like a soldier.

September 21, Maw of Dusk.

I have completed my relocation to the opposite border of the country.

As per my instructions, I have delivered to the local Dragon headquarters my reports regarding the Slopes of Dawn internment camps. The registries have been updated with the death of 26 Polabian deportees native to the Maw, among which was notorious agitator Tawals. I identified the corpse myself. As the camps fall into enemy hands, the documents redacted by me are the only surviving testimonies.

I have recalled private Svetovit from the front, so that he may aid me, together with official Kresnik, my brother, in the task of cracking down on the western frontier border controls. The population of the Maw of Dusk and its surrounding region lives in terror, and the eastern invasion pushes the most shaken to cravenly consider expatriation. I have already had occasion to assess the laxity of our troops at the garrisons: They are mostly composed of shirkers that sought out assignments at the border to avoid the frontlines. All this is going to change. The party has my word.

I grew up in the Maw and I know its Vendevidians. They only need to understand how necessary their collaboration is to help the vessel of the Cause get past this rough patch of sea. As for the Polabians, I shall make it clear that this time no rat will abandon ship. I have long watched these people, as supervisor to the deportation camps. I know all their tricks and I know well where to strike them. The infamous Polabian Brothers, criminals and swindlers that make us into the laughingstock of the civilised world, are heroes to them.

The local police has recently sighted them in town, and among the expatriation permit applications I noticed one from the philharmonic for the famed cellist under the bombs. Citizen Borevit's liaisons with the Polabian brothers have been confirmed by official Kresnik. I have thus released the permit - for 3 people instead of the requested 4. This will not be enough to stop their plans, but I suspect that the fourth accomplice may be citizen Ziva. My brother claims she has harboured the Polabian brothers, but private Svetovit fervently denies this accusation. For the sake of respect towards a war hero and in memory of the suspect's father, surely unaware of his marriage to a half-Polabian wench, I shall separate the girl from the reprobates. Official Kresnik and private Svetovit have known the Polabian brothers' faces since infancy, and thus will confirm the identity of Borevit's associates.

If the Fathers allow it, we will at once be their judges, jury and executioners.