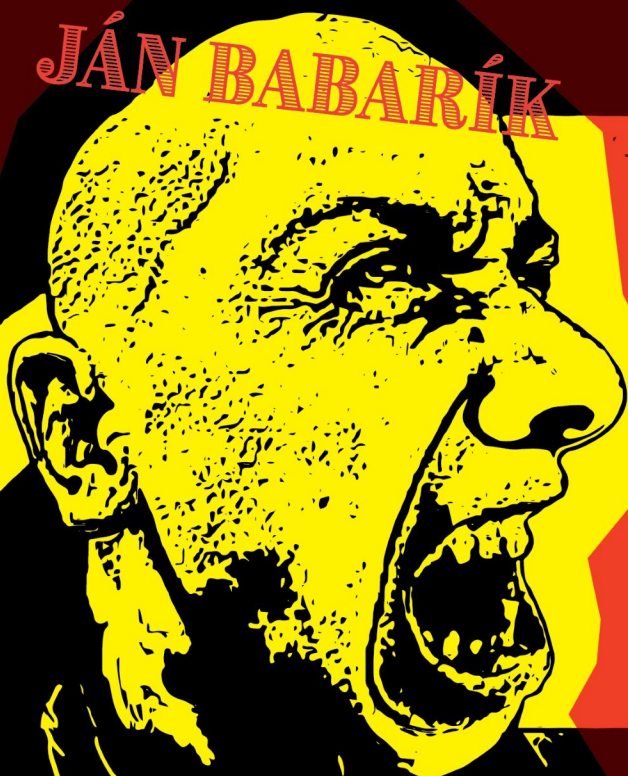


JÁN BABARÍK



JUMPER

Published by Ján Babarík 2024

From Slovak original translated by © Ján Babarík 2024

Editor: Richard Swales

Cover design © Michal Šplho Design Amorandi

ISBN (MOBI): 978-80-570-5504-4

ISBN (EPUB): 978-80-570-5503-7

ISBN (PDF): 978-80-570-5877-9

# JUMPER

By Jan Babarik

## Jumper

'There are some strong amphetamines, combined with phenylethylamines...'

'Sounds like Egyptian pharaohs.'

'...and a high dose of ketamine. This, mate, is the drug of drugs.'

I guess I still don't look enthusiastic enough. Ružbach, my personal drug dealer, if I can call him that, takes a breath and continues:

'You're going to fall into the K-hole of the century! Impressive dissociative anaesthesia will open up unimagined horizons for you, about which the dooper plebs have no idea. This is the drug for kings, the holy grail of posh junkies!'

I burst out laughing. Ružbach sees that he's got me and laughs too.

'Come on, Klemo, love thy dealer! Buy two doses.'

'What's the name again?'

'Jumper. Brand new stuff. I brought it from Amsterdam myself. You'll be the first Slovak to get it.'

'You mean the second, don't you? You're also Slovak.'

Ružbach shakes his head and theatrically puts on an unhappy expression.

'Never, my mate. I can't afford it. I'm in total shit, you know what happened to me. Look,' he gestures to the half-empty apartment with an outstretched hand, 'I've sold everything that had any value. You cannot keep your nose clean in this business, you know, but I have always licked my wounds and returned stronger! Two doses for one grand, for you.'

I'm confused a bit. Ružbach never presses me like this. He knows very well that I am not a junkie in the true sense of the word. Here and there I buy from him, some coke, hash, or high-quality grass. Sometimes, only sometimes, some light synthetics, but never diesel or acid. Well, once in a while I try something different, I like new experiences. I am, as Ružbach once told me, a rich motherfucker who doesn't know what to fuck himself with from the sheer joy. But I have never crossed the line. Coughing up a thousand euros for two doses of some kind of ketamine is well beyond my limits.

Money is not a problem for me, I just think it's stupid to spend a pile like that on two pills. Ružbach is waiting with hope and I am not ready to turn him down yet.

'Dis... how did you say that? What anaesthesia?'

'Dissociative. I just said it for fun. Don't worry, there's no magic in it. You break away from your body, look at yourself from a height or from a third-person position. Understand? K-hole like hell.'

'What hole?'

'K-hole! Kei! Ketaspin, keller trip, oofa-doofa! Damn it, Klemo, you've been buying from me for ten years and you still manage to amaze me with questions. Sometimes I can't figure out how you got so rich.'

'Hahaha! Ružbach, Ružbach. I didn't get rich by looking at myself from a third person perspective. I know when to buy and when to sell. That's a talent you obviously lack, otherwise you'd still have that giant TV here.'

I love making fun of him. We've known each other too long for me to get offended.

'Two doses for a grand, Klemo. Seriously.'

'Give me a demo for one hundred. If I am happy, I'll get the rest.'

'No demo with this one.'

'So, one pill for three hundred.'

'Two for nine.'

He got me. He sees that he won and grins. I'm curious about his famous Jumper and I've had such a miserable week that I can't wait for those unknown horizons.

'Okay,' I say, pulling out my wallet. 'I'll give you eight hundred for two, but if I'm not happy enough, you'll give the money back.'

'I won't, but I'll be sorry, okay?'

'Fair enough.'

So, I leave Ružbach eight hundred euros lighter, yet richer with the promise of the unimagined horizons of a classy junkie. Or whatever he said.

I park my car near the tennis courts at Anička Park and walk across it to the Hornád River. This part of Kosice is my favourite when I need to relax after a hard day. My wife doesn't like it when I come home with my head full of concerns. I don't care what you do, she used to say, even if you go to the brothel, just don't come home to me with this dull sheepish look of yours. I'm not much into brothels and she knows it. I don't enjoy that kind of sex. Actually, I can't even do it. And I'm not one of those who blow off steam somewhere

in the gym with a punching bag or under a barbell. I prefer to reset my head with a good drug. The truth is, that I usually just smoke a good joint. And Ružbach is well known to have great grass. He brings it from Amsterdam. Cannabis like mother's milk. If our fathers had smoked this forty years ago, it would have blown their brains out.

And now I've got this Jumper. Dissociative anaesthesia. I've been after real ketamine for a long time, to separate my soul from the body as if experiencing clinical death. I know perfectly well what a K-hole is, I just pretended not to be interested in Ružbach's offer, otherwise he would have increased the price. In the end he sold me two blister packs for 800. Good bargain. Each blister contains two capsules - green and red. Ružbach made sure that I understood the rules. The green capsule marked with the inscription GO is the starting capsule. This is the Cape Canaveral from which I will fly to the wuthering heights. When I want to get back, I take the red capsule with the inscription HOME on it. It would bring me back into my body.

But be very careful, Ružbach emphasized, they are unique. For each green there is a specific red, made just for it, so that it can effectively paralyze the molecules of hydrochloride salt from the green capsule. Novices, said the prick looking at me, are advised to take both at the same time. The red capsule has got reinforced walls and digestive enzymes open it around ten minutes after the green. That kind of trip should be enough for the beginning. Later on, after gaining some K-hole experiences, I can fly as much as I desire, and return my drugged self to home port whenever I want.

The wonderful thing about Jumper is, that even during dissociation My body will be under control. With common ketamine drugs you run the risk of not being able to come back. You disconnect yourself from the world and your soulless body walks under a car, falls off a bridge, or drowns in a river. While your imagination is flying in the clouds, the body kills itself. Jumper is different. You are still in control of your body and you can return to it whenever you want. Let's get fucked!

I feel like I did when I was about to try bungee jumping for the first time. My heart is pounding in my throat, my legs and arms are shaking slightly. Step by step I'm wondering what's going to happen to me. I'll swallow both capsules at the same time. The green will dissolve before a minute passes, the start is pretty fast. Almost instantly, the ketamine will shut me down, tear my soul away from my body, and I'll fly up into the heavens to see my

clueless body sitting on a bench, with a look several grades below the sheepish one that annoys my wife so much.

I will be able to fly, say, above the Main Street, or over the nearby Furča housing estate, like an invisible drone. And my body will still be sitting on the bench. Ten minutes later, the red capsule will dissolve, my body will twitch once or twice (probably), I'll open my eyes, the sheepish look will disappear and I'll start drowning in happiness from the high level of adrenaline. That's how it should go according to Ružbach, how they described it to him in Amsterdam. Four hundred euros per blister, a really good price for such a flight.

While mentally preparing myself for the adventure, I cross the narrow bridge over the Hornád River and walk about a hundred metres upstream. It's quiet there, no pedestrians, joggers, dog walkers, just tall grass to sit on. The river flows quietly under the steep embankment and I can already see myself flying over it. In the middle of this daydream I hear footsteps from behind and before I can turn around, a heavy body drops down next to me with a thud and a huff.

'We couldn't have met in a better place, bitchboy,' he says ..., uh, God, what's his name ... I can't recall his name, but I know him very well. He is the last person I want to meet. And the first person I'm scared to meet.

Arpad, yeah. His name comes to my mind while I stare at the surface of the river in agony. Arpád Twat or who-knows-what. They nicknamed him Kilo. Almost a meter eighty tall, weighing well over a hundred kilos, asymmetrical bunches of muscles all over the body, small eyes, set deep in the head and close to the bridge of the nose. Head as bald as his knee, chin covered with two-day stubble. Back in the day, in the nineties, he belonged to a powerful criminal group in Kosice, and me, a young and stupid wannabe Godfather, an overly ambitious local swindler, tried to do some business with them.

Every now and then I bought or sold some computers, telephones, digital cameras through them, commodities that were unavailable for many Slovaks at the time. Then they wanted to make me their fall guy. Establish all kinds of companies in my name, cheat the tax office on VAT returns and then dispose of me after use. Fortunately, times changed before they managed to end my miserable life, the bad guys were imprisoned and we, the good guys, took advantage of the experiences and continued with smart trading - buying at a low price, and selling at the higher price. Much higher.

Kilo was jailed for 13 years. He was released last year and since then he has been suffering from the persistent idea that I owe him something. Not just me. I think he bullies several people who have crossed his path in the past. The train of his thoughts is simple – I am a martyr of collective guilt. You grew rich while I was rotting in jail, so give me my share now. And if you go to the police, not only will I kill you, but I will also tell them what you were up to with us back in the nineties.

‘What is it?’ he laughs and slaps me on the shoulder. I hiss in pain.

‘Whoa, whoa, don't shit yourself, bitchboy,’ he laughs with good humour and gives me a headbutt, which doesn't hurt, but is totally humiliating. I stare blankly at the river, but I no longer perceive its calm flow. I silently clench my teeth and my hand, in which I hold two blisters with Jumper. What a beautiful afternoon it could have been!

‘I need a thousand Es. How do we do it?’

I can see peripherally that he is looking at me, waiting for an answer. God, how I fucking hate that dumb cunt!

‘Tomorrow, bitchboy. All clear? About this time in Jumbo. In fifty-euro notes.’

When I don't respond, he waves his open palm in front of my face and exclaims:

‘Hello! Anybody home?’

Then he dopeslaps me again, this time so hard and painfully, that I feel a crunch in my neck.

‘Okay, okay’ I say through clenched teeth. ‘But then you leave me alone, okay? I don't owe you anything, and I've already given you enough.’

‘I will say when it's enough. What do you have in that hand?’

Instead of answering, I clench my other hand, too, trying to show him that this is how I normally keep my hands.

‘Don't shit on me, bitchboy, or I'll open that hand in such a way that you'll never close it again in your fuckin lifetime.’

I understand and show him two blisters, each containing two coloured pills.

‘It's for my thyroid gland,’ I say.

‘Of course, bitchboy. Ružbach usually sells medicines for the thyroid grand. Give it to me. Now!’



I hesitantly hand them over. How did he know about Ružbach, flashes through my mind but the question disappears before I start worrying, and I say: 'It really is medicine. Very strong one. It could harm...'

'Shut up!'

He eagerly opens both blisters and throws the packaging into the grass. He thoughtfully tosses two red and two green pills in his palm.

'I'm sure these are drugs,' he says. 'I just don't know what kind. Here,' he hands me a red pill. 'Scoff it.'

This is my chance. If he swallows a green capsule, I would have lot of time to skedaddle. Without the red one he will have serious problems to get back, but the worse, the better, isn't it? While he'll be in the K-hole, I will take all remaining capsules and enjoy them somewhere really far away.

'You have to take the green one first. It is the trigger. Later or at the same time, you take red. This is an expensive ketamine drug from Amsterdam, the latest blockbuster.'

'Shut up,' Kilo says, handing me both the red and the green. 'Scoff it.'

'And... You don't want to?'

'Eat!'

Very, very reluctantly, I take two pills from his clammy palm, covered in dirty dumbbell calluses. This is not how I planned it. Ružbach said that I will be able to control my body. Maybe, if Kilo flies into the K-hole too, I'll be able to get my body of here and be somewhere near my car when the wrap on my red melts.

'You prick-eyed dickhead, eat it now, or I will shove it in your muzzle through your eye!'

I don't hesitate anymore. I put two pills in my mouth and swallow. The capsules are smooth, but they don't want to slide down my throat. My mouth is dry, the moron stressed me out.

'Here you go,' Kilo says, opening a can of coke. God knows why he got it for himself. A normal person doesn't usually carry that kind of stuff around.

When I take the pills, I wait anxiously to see what's going to happen. Kilo looks at me from the side, I pretend he's not there. Then it comes. Not gradually, but all at once, like a pressure wave. My whole body jerks and I suddenly see myself from above. I immediately return to my body and get overflowed by a tsunami of endorphins.

'Oh, almighty fuck, Kilo, what is this?' I cry, yearning to hug him. Kilo laughs and I take off again. I won't come back this time, but I know that I can. That knowledge uplifts me - I can fly! Not that I have to for being smashed, but I can! Yes, I can! It's my choice! I fly higher, tufts of clouds are rolling around me and - you won't believe it - angels are sitting on them. Little chubby babies with adorable white wings. I want to cuddle up to them, for God's sake, why don't I still have my own children?

I need to find Kilo and show him the angels. I look around, but no trace of him, just a blue sky and white clouds below. I try to stand on one, I walk on it, but I am not quite sure if it is real. After all, my body stayed down, didn't it? I start to laugh. My body is on the ground and yet I'm walking in the clouds! That's funny! Then I fly down. I feel the wind in my hair, like that little moron in *The Neverending Story* when he was flying the dog. This is beautiful! Beautiful!

I see my body sitting on the grassy bank of Hornád. I wave at it. The body stands up, looks up and waves back. Then it starts walking towards the old village of Tahanovce. I fly above it, looking down, feeling like the king. Like the president of life. Like God, smashed by a high quality Jumper from Amsterdam. Smashed God, I like that. I've had a difficult seven days of creation, on the eighth day I drugged myself up. I am asking my dear believers not to disturb me. Where would I, the great lord God himself, end up if I guzzled bread and wine? This is the true Eucharist! Open your mouth, dear son, stick out your tongue, you will receive the body of the Lord in a tasteful two-coloured package. Made in the EU. Take it, this is my body which has drugged itself for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

I laughed like I hadn't in a long time. I flew just above my head and saw that my body was laughing too. It was walking upriver and laughing.

Whoah! Train! There, on the other side of the river, rushing from Kysak at a terrible speed, people sticking their heads out of the windows in terror and calling for help. Seems like the terrorists have blown up the train's brakes. I fly over the river, on the way I change into Batman. I stand fearlessly on the rails in front of the rushing train and shout: Stop, three hundred devils! Stop, one thousand and three hundred devils! The train runs through me and it tickles terribly. Suddenly - quite against my will - I find myself above my body. I notice that I have no hair. A huge red plastic funnel appears on top of my head, through which an invisible force pulls me in. The red capsule has woken up and released the evil Mohammedan

genie! Where has my hair gone? To arms, hussar riders! Don't let the Turkish pagans to... to...  
Fuck, it's about to end...

\*\*\*

Clap! Clap! Open your eyes! Open your eyes! C'mon, wake up!

I open my eyes wide. The slapping starts being annoying. I feel very weak and I'm about to throw up. A nice black-haired guy in glasses is leaning over me, a woman stands behind him.

'Wake up, wake up!' says the guy, but he isn't slapping me anymore.

'What happened to me?' I ask in a faint, muffled voice. As if it wasn't mine.

'Only a medical examination can show that. You need to go to hospital,' the guy answers. 'You were hanging around here, laughing like a drain, looking very happy. Then you lost consciousness. We have called an ambulance, they'll be here any minute.'

I must be looking confused, because he pats me on the cheek and says: 'It's ok. You'll be all right.'

Then he checks my pulse on my arm and looks satisfied.

'Are you a doctor?' I ask.

'Sort of. I would say it is Takotsubo syndrome. They call it the happy or broken=heart syndrome. Your adrenaline has risen to a level that is toxic. Too much happiness is harmful, my friend.'

Ambulance? Happiness? What is happening? For some reason, I don't want an ambulance or medical attention. I feel that I have done something wrong and I must not be seen by a doctor until I remember everything.

'Have you taken any medication or drugs?'

'Drug?' I ask, and suddenly a bell rings. Of fucking course! Jumper! A K-trip and then a switch off. Definitely no examination, no hospital.

I sit down. The sort-of-doctor and the woman are wearing running gear, their foreheads are dripping with sweat. The woman smiles blankly at me.

'I'm fine now,' I say and struggle to get up. I suppress a groan that is coming from my gut.

'Stay seated,' the guy blurts out, gesturing with his hands as if to push me back to the ground.

'I said I'm fine,' I repeat more sternly, giving my head a good shake to relax my stiff neck. I feel lumps of muscle on my shoulders and it feels good to roll my head over them. Strange feeling. Overall, I don't feel like I'm in my own skin. I run my hand through my hair... My head is completely bald!

'Where's my hair?' I ask, and two of them take a step back.

'What... What's the matter...?' I rub my hands on my skull, it's as smooth as my forehead. Then I run my hands over my neck. It is thick, hard, I can feel the knots of muscles under the skin.

'What the... Hell, what is this?'

My face is also kind of weird. On the nasal bone I feel a distinct lump from some old fracture. I do not understand that. Am I still in the K-hole? Is this some sort of post-hallucination or what? And are those two ...

'Are you real?' I ask them. They take another step back. The woman stands behind the guy and peers over his shoulder.

'Or I'm just imagining you?'

In the distance on the other side of the river, I see an ambulance speeding down the road. The beacon is flashing blue, the siren is off. They'll be on the bridge soon and then at me. No examination until these hallucinations are gone, until I'm back in my normal self.

'I'll see my doctor tomorrow. I have no time now. Tell them it was a mistake,' I say, walking away quickly. It's strangely hard to walk, as if my legs are covered in thick rubber. I look down. Belts of massive muscles ripple under blue jeans. They give me resistance when walking, which I am not used to. Confusion inside me is being replaced by fear. What the hell is going on? I look like Kilo. I look at my palms. The same calluses from the dumbbells, with settled dirt. Tiny nails, as if grown into thick, fleshy fingers. Rock-hard knuckles from punching bag. These are Kilo's hands! This is Kilo's body! What the hell am I doing in it? I'm getting really scared now. If it's a dream, however scary, I'll wake up sooner or later. And if it's some hallucination, it disappears when the drug leaves my body.

I don't even know when I started running. I no longer feel the resistance of the muscles, I got used to it. This isn't a dream, it couldn't be this vivid. I feel every touch of the ground on my feet, the pulsing blood in my(?) body, the increasing ease of movement. And an amazing strength that I have not felt in my life. It's a hallucination, I'm still in the K-hole!

The panic is reluctantly draining receding. I'm starting to think more rationally, looking for a way out. I manage to slow down from trotting to a walk. Of course it's me. I'm in my own body, I just need to get the drug out so I can stop seeing that bald asshole everywhere. I need to buy two or three litres of water, then walk, drink, urinate until I clean my body.

I'm near the main road. I cross the bridge and head to my car. The best thing to do would be to go to some gas station, buy drinking water and maybe something to eat, then drive somewhere out of the city, and walk around in the forest until I get rid of it. I try to stop perceiving the unfamiliar body, not to look at my legs and arms. Not even at passers-by, so they don't see my confusion. I'm telling myself that everything is under control and I know exactly what needs to be done.

I come to the tennis centre, but there is no car. I'm sure I parked it here. Right here. Somebody must have stolen it. I reach into my pocket for the keys and try to ignore the unyielding denim on my bulky frame. Nothing in the front pockets, but in the back I found a wallet. Black, leather, I've never had one like that. It contains several hundred euros in fifty and hundred notes, some plastic cards, and an identity card in the name of Arpád Molnár. Kilo's face peeks out at me from the photo. This really freaks me out.

All of a sudden I start sweating and feel weak. I slump down to the grass and notice the worn-out Nikes on my feet. They are not mine. I breathe deeply, trying to regain control over the situation. What was the plan? Drink a lot of water, filter the poisons through the kidneys, take a slash, look in the mirror at the good old face of mine and say: That Jumper is really good stuff!

I start calming down. Finally, I get up and walk with a wobbly step to the nearby tennis garden restaurant. At the bar, I ask for two litre-bottles of still water. After I pay, I look in the mirror on the other side of the bar and cry out when I see Kilo. I see his reflection, holding a bottle of mineral water in each hand, with fear in his eyes and scream shooting out from his mouth. The girl behind the bar jumps away in fright, the guests stiffen, but no one intervenes. Who would provoke such a beast?

I'm labouring my breath with an effort, trying to calm down. C'mon, Klemo, calm down! Calm down! You knew you were going to see him, didn't you? You're a smart guy, you know exactly what's going on with you. Take the bottles and get out of here before they call the police. Go to the park, drink the damned water, and then piss the bloody Jumper to the river!

I obey. When leaving, I nod and twist my face into a smile as a gesture of apology. Outside, I open the first bottle and drink almost all of it in one go. Judging from how the water pours into me, I understand how dehydrated I must have been. This must be the reason for those hallucinations. I drink the second bottle more slowly to give it more time to flood the body. I'm not far away from the mineral spring at the end of Anička Park where I can fill both bottles and drink again.

A strange drug. Very strange. I try to organise my thoughts about it. Analyse the drug, evaluate my state of mind with my amateur medical beliefs. I feel that rationality is the way to salvation. Thinking leads to understanding, and understanding is the way out of this madness.

All my 'flying' was, of course, just an illusion. Dissociative anaesthesia, not the separation of soul from body, but the ILLUSION of the separation. I was just imagining all that flying. I imagined the clouds, Batman's effort to stop the train, Kilo's arms, legs, bald head. I imagined it all so perfectly that I believed it. I still do. I'm still under the influence of the drug. I think the red capsule pulled me back into my body, and suppressed the thoughts of flying, but it couldn't clear me completely. And the visions continue. It might be some sort of a side effect, like K-cramps, when people throw up after taking ketamin. I have never vomited, not yet, but there are plenty of other side effects, like memory loss, you name it. And Jumper is Terra Incognita. New drug, new side effect.

At least it's fun. Once this is over, I will remember it for a long time. And maybe I will buy it from Ružbach again. The show must go on.

I finish the second bottle. Not far away ahead I can see the mineral spring hut with the tap inside to fill up the bottles. Locals call it Gajdovka. The sparkling water stinking like rotten eggs will do me good. The urge to urinate, which I have felt since I left the restaurant, has become unbearable after drinking two litres. I decide to hide in the nearby bushes for a piss, and then go to fill the bottles. In the shelter of the bushes I suffer another shock. The penis I pull out of my pants and intend to piss through is definitely not mine. It is a long thick hose, wrapped with a vein the size of a V-belt. I have never seen anything like that in my life. I think I must be really scared of Kilo when I subconsciously see him like this.

That cock hangs down from an open zipper halfway down my thigh, and even though I know it's just an illusion, I can't force myself to touch it. It's like touching someone else's

dick. Kilo's. I lean on the tree with my hand, tilt over and piss without holding it. Damned Jumper! Damned drugs!

Then, full of determination, I fill both bottles and drink that stinking water like hell. My stomach is about to explode, the next urge to piss comes in less than fifteen minutes. I relieve myself the same way as before, leaning against a tree. I go to fill the empty bottles, although I know there is no room for more water inside me.

A couple of hours later the fear starts rising in me again, and gradually turns into panic. What if it never gets fixed? What if I never stop seeing Kilo in me? Maybe the drug has damaged my brain and caused some kind of schizophrenia. Kilo was the last person I saw before taking it, that's why I see like this now. Where should I go? What should I do? If only I had a car... I can't even report the theft to the police, because how could I talk to them in this condition?

What should I do? Go home? I could be there on foot in an hour, but I don't dare going through the city like this. Ružbach! Why didn't I think of him earlier! I was actually thinking about calling him, but I don't have my cell phone. (Really? I'm definitely wearing my clothes, along with my wallet and cell phone. I'm just hallucinating Kilo's clothes, am I not?)

I am at Ružbach's place in less than twenty minutes. It's in the very first block of flats in the Furča housing estate, you don't even have to go through the city, just follow the connecting road between the park and Furča. Wide road, no houses, no people, just a continuous snake of cars. Ružbach opens the door and looks at me the way he always does. Maybe a little surprised that I didn't check in beforehand.

'So?' he asks. 'All good?'

'I'm not sure,' I say. 'It seems to me that something's gone wrong.'

'What?' he asks, not inviting me inside. He is standing in the doorway, shifting from one foot to another, obviously uncomfortable.

'You tell me,' I say. 'You're hiding something from me, I see it.'

'What would I hide from you? You said we're even now. I gave you five hundred, plus I told you where to find Klemo. You said you wouldn't ask me for any more...'

'Wha... What you sayin...?'

'You said it yourself. Before. I don't know what went wrong over there, it's not my business. If Klemo refused to pay you, it's really not my...'

'What are you talking about? Are you fucking bombed or what?'

Ružbach startles and raises his hands in a defensive gesture. He is afraid of me. That moron is afraid of me! I follow him inside and close the door behind me. Ružbach is completely shaken by then. It makes no sense to me. Only if he's drugged up as a cunt.

'Wait,' he says in a trembling voice, with his hands still risen in front of his face. 'Wait, Kilo, I didn't do anything wrong. I don't understand...'

'What Kilo?' I say softly, trying to calm him down. 'It's me, Klemo. I'm the one here who's hallucinating!'

I'm beginning to understand what he just said. He sold me to Kilo! That's why that idiot knew where I was. This caddish pusher betrayed me! But why does he see Kilo instead of me? That's fucking creepy! I'm so confused that I can't even get angry.

'Klemo?' he looks at me in amazement. 'Are you alright, Kilo?'

'That's enough!' I burst out. 'Stop playing with me! I took that fucking Jumper of yours and since then I can't get rid of a feeling that I'm in Kilo's body.'

Ružbach opens his eyes and mouth wide, and backs up until he hits the wall. It's clear to me that his dismay is genuine, and that scares me too.

'Seriously, tell me. Who do you see?' I challenge him.

'Kilo.'

This gets me more confused than afraid. Something's happened to me that cannot be understood. It occupies my mind so much that I don't have time to be scared.

'How much did Klemo pay me for the Jumper?' Ružbach asks.

'I paid you eight hundred,' I say, with more emphasis on I. 'Why do you ask?'

'Did you tell Kilo how much you paid me?'

'No. He never asked.'

'I told him that you gave me five hundred. I owed him exactly that much and I didn't want him to take more from me. It's really you.'

We stand there facing each other with wide eyes. All I understand is that something happened that I can't understand. A large mirror hangs on the wall between us. I hesitantly stand in front and immediately jump aside when I see Kilo in it.

'You see this too?' I ask. Ružbach nods.

'Come here,' I say, 'Next to me.'



I don't know what I expect. Maybe to see Spiderman in the mirror rather than Ružbach, which would mean that everything is completely fine. But it is Ružbach who stands next to me. I feel as if some kind of brain connection snapped in my head.

'Fuck! Fuck! What is that!' I yell and punch the mirror. It breaks to pieces. Fortunately, nothing happens to me, not even a scratch.

'What did you give me you idiot?'

'Normal Jumper! They've been eating it up in the West for weeks now!'

Ružbach reverses to the kitchen, I follow him with clenched fists. I don't want to hurt him, but somehow his fear does me good.

'Calm down, calm down,' says Ružbach and pulls a chair to me. He conjures two glasses from somewhere, and takes out a bottle of clear brandy from the fridge. There's no label on the bottle, so I assume it's homemade. He pours generously into both glasses and hands one to me. I drink without a word and suppress the urge to gag. I'm not used to this strong homemade staff.

'Tell me everything. I need to know all details.'

I shrug shoulders and stretch my hand with an empty glass for filling up. My hand shivers like a leaf in the wind. While he refills both glasses, I start talking. How Kilo appeared out of the blue (giving Ružbach a hostile glance, because it's already clear to me that he gave away my whereabouts), how he asked me for a thousand euros, how he took my blisters and poured the capsules into his palm...

'Both?'

'Both what?'

'Both doses? All four pills?'

Ružbach breathes sharply and looks at me with the expression of a mystery hunter who has had a light-bulb moment. Immediately it occurred to me, too.

'You think that...'

'Of course!' he exclaims. 'The red capsules are unique, they only work with their green ones. You mixed them up and your soul followed your red one into Kilo's body!'

'Have you lost your dull mind? What soul? The K-hole is just an illusion!'

'But Jumper is something else!'

Ružbach looks excited. Like a scientist who amuses his listeners, like a merchant who extols his goods.