

Martin Kolacek

# The Deleted Ones



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(sample)

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## 1. In the Concrete Paradise

Lerm came to his senses, sitting in the cockpit of a fighter which was falling uncontrollably towards the ground. He had no idea of what the hell he was doing there, how he had got there, or how to fly a fighter. With the onset of a sudden self-preservation instinct, he tried to push, pull or rip off anything which indicated some sort a function with its colour or shape. He managed to make the fighter twitch a bit but could not to stop it proceeding in its suicidal direction. Only a few seconds to the impact remained, although each of them seemed like an hour to Lerm. Where was the story of his life which was supposed to be replayed in front of his eyes when he was about to die? Or, at least, some of its parts? Even a little bit? No matter how hard he tried to recall anything while attacking the plane's interior vigorously, his memory didn't seem willing to cooperate at all. Just a few hundred metres... four hundred, three hundred, two... Lerm closed his eyes in terror and grabbed a handle which he had loosened during his previous uncoordinated efforts. One hundred meters, fifty, the last second of his life...

His ear drums exploded in the noise of the impact. He heard the melted steel starting its short flight against gravity just to fall down among the burning debris. He wasn't dead. He opened his eyes. His seat was flying through the air, leaving the exploding fighter behind. He was still holding the handle of a catapult which had saved his life. When the parachute opened and he started descending slowly, Lerm laughed loudly. He had just outlived his own death.

He landed near an ugly concrete structure at the edge of a big city. The sun was shining brightly. The wind which had been blowing around his body a few minutes before was now blocked by a mass of flaming concrete. However, the sun's rays were as hot as ever. Lerm thought he now knew how a lobster feels when thrust into a pot of boiling water. He paused in surprise. That was a memory! He clearly recollected the pot and the lobster twitching inside. Sadly, that was all. He couldn't remember where and when had he seen that. He sighed, untangled himself from the parachute, and set off to find the nearest shade. He went around the whole building before finding any. He sat in the shadow of a long-abandoned bunker and tried to find some saliva in his dry mouth to fight his thirst.

If only he knew where he was! He knew he needed water. Shouldn't he also know where to find it? Come on, brain, work!

It was pointless. The only thing he remembered was his name, and even regarding that he could have been wrong. He was able to speak, although he had a distinct feeling not all people spoke the same way. What else did he know? He was a human and he'd die if he didn't find water. Apart from that, his memory included only information like: 'It is advisable to remove your pants before you pee.' But that was all. Lerm sighed and stood up again. His head felt dizzy and he thought he'd faint. He didn't though. He set out on his journey to find water again, hoping for a miracle.

After half an hour of swift walking, he finally reached a building which seemed inhabited. There was a young man sitting in front of the door. When he spotted Lerm, he jumped up enthusiastically, approached Lerm, shook his hand and kissed him. Lerm shook in terror. No, he wasn't so timid he couldn't stand being kissed by a stranger. But the hand and the lips felt... well... inhuman. They were cold and somewhat spongy. Lerm wasn't sure how a human touch should feel but he knew this was wrong. He touched his own lips. They seemed much warmer and compact.

'What's the matter?' the man asked.

Lerm was still watching him, frightened. He was remembering the touch again and again, unsure what had just happened.

'What is the matter?' the man asked again.

'I don't know...' Lerm whispered uncertainly and touched his own lips again, 'those lips...'

'What's wrong with them?'

'The skin is... wrong.'

The man grimaced as if he were badly offended: 'Oh sure, so the lord is a Garddonn, eh? I suppose you are better than we are?'

'What?'

'Being arrogant should decrease your rating, shouldn't it?'

'What?' insisted Lerm. 'Look, I don't know what a Garddonn is and I don't have a clue what are you talking about. I just know your lips feel strange. Like... well... not human.'

'Well, they are not, are they? Neither are yours.'

'Of course they are.'

'Oh sure,' the man sniggered, 'you wouldn't notice the difference, would you?'

Lerm realized this person was obviously out of his mind. The memory of the touch faded away and Lerm came to the conclusion he had become confused by the heat of the sun so his reaction had been inappropriate. Therefore, he decided to get straight to the thing which he needed most: 'Could you, please, tell me where I can find anything to drink? I'm very thirsty.'

'Oh, so that's how they describe dehydration these days, right?'

'Look...' Lerm paused. This wasn't even worth an answer.

'The ionic mix can be found in the centre, of course.'

'What centre?'

'In the community centre! What's wrong with you?'

'How do I get there?'

'Just follow that street and turn left at the square...' The man stopped dead.

'That's a strange stimulator you're wearing.'

'A stimulator?'

'Yes, a smell stimulator. What label is it?'

Lerm didn't know if he should laugh or be angry. This was a really unique way to offend someone. 'For God's sake, it's normal to sweat in this weather, isn't it?'

The man's expression changed abruptly. His eyes were gleaming with fear. 'Do you... do you mean you are a living one?'

'Do I look dead?'

'No, I mean... are you a human?'

'Of course I'm a human, for God's sake! What the hell do you think I am? A kangaroo?'

'Are you from the Moon?'

'Pardon me?'

'Have you come from the Moon?'

'What?' Lerm felt stupid but he really didn't know what to answer. He had no idea where he was from.

'Alright, welcome to the Earth, then.' The man looked as though he wanted anything but to speak to Lerm right now, or even to be in the same place. 'The registration office is located in the community centre. The replicators as well. Oh, and don't drink the ionic mix - it will kill you. And we certainly wouldn't want that, would we? Or, at least, you wouldn't. I am happy I had the opportunity to inform you about it; they will tell you more in the office.' And he disappeared into the house.

'A madman,' Lerm thought and continued in his quest to find water, in the direction indicated by the strange man. Although he didn't know if a replicator in a community centre would solve his problem since its main purpose, as it seemed, was to provide some sort of an ionic mix which was fatal to him anyway.

There were more and more inhabited houses and people. At first sight, it seemed like an ordinary human society. People walking up and down the street, sunbathing or resting in the shade. But there was one very odd thing about them. Most of them were in pairs and most of them... well... were enjoying each other's presence. Closely. No matter if the pair was of different sexes or of the same one they were all holding hands, kissing, playing. It seemed like a bizarre lovers' paradise which, instead of a beautiful blossoming meadow, was inside a depressing greyish concrete estate. Those few people who were not in pairs had an unnerving habit of kissing anyone who maintained eye contact for at least a few seconds. Lerm soon learned to keep eye contact only with nice women and avoid it with anyone else. But it didn't do him much good, for even being kissed by beautiful women was a bad experience. Most of their lips were cold and spongy like the lips of the first person he'd met after he'd crashed. Lerm's chest was soon full of anxiety. It made breathing difficult.

He had walked for about an hour when a neon sign caught his eye. Loud music was coming out of the door below. Something in Lerm's head connected such a place with serving drinks, although, again, he had no idea where the information came from. He walked in.

He found himself inside a gloomy old pub with couples interacting closely all over the place. A few of them were sitting on the bar, while others were performing twitching movements on the dance floor. Lerm couldn't tell if they were dancing or having sexual intercourse. Something in between, probably. A barman who seemed lost in thought was pouring a shockingly blue liquid into a glass. When he saw Lerm he came over to him. He was the first person who didn't kiss him on sight. Which Lerm was grateful for.

'What can I get you?' the barman asked in a booming voice.

'Something to drink,' answered Lerm who still couldn't believe his luck at not being kissed.

## Martin Kolacek : Profile Deleted (Sample)

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'Ionic drink okay?' the barman asked, and put the glass of a blue liquid on the table.

'Sure, of course, if it doesn't kill me since I'm a human,' Lerm laughed. 'You wouldn't believe who I met right...'

'A human?' the barman interrupted him. 'It will kill you then, of course.'

'Come on! And who do you have it for, eh? Squirrels?' Lerm lifted the glass.

'For bots, of course.'

'What bots?' Lerm took the glass away from his mouth again. The smell of the liquid made him bilious. It reminded him of a cleaning agent.

'For the bots of pleasure. Where are you from, man? The Moon?'

'I...'

'You look confused. What has happened to you?'

'I...' Lerm wasn't sure if he should tell the truth. But everything was odd and he needed answers, 'I'm afraid I've lost my memory,' he said at last.

'I see. You should go to the upload centre then, they may have it there somewhere.'

Was it a joke? Or an insult? But the barman didn't seem to mean it one way or the other. He took the ionic mix out of his hand and filled a glass for him with something which looked pleasantly like water. Lerm didn't protest in any way. And he was glad he hadn't. It really was water. Its touch on his tongue felt like diving into a sea after a year in a desert.

'Another?' the barman asked.

'Sure,' but then his memory came with another issue. It was like it always came to torture him, never to help him. 'I don't have any money,' he said.

'Man, you really are confused. You are on Earth now! Hey, Aardvark!' he shouted in the direction of the podium. Two male figures, who were dancing practically naked close to each other, turned to him.

'What?' one of them asked.

'Come here, Aardvark, there's one of yours here!'

'One of mine? You mean an ant bear has just walked into your pub?'

'Not your favourite animal, you idiot! A human!'

The man called Aardvark ran towards them and looked at Lerm in disbelief. His lover shambled after him. Neither of them kissed him.

'Are you really a human?'

'He is!' answered the barman instead. 'Just seen him drinking that white shit of yours.'

'White shit is cement, Corticoid,' answered Aardvark, obviously following some sort of a long-standing dispute, 'water is transparent!'

'Like I care. Drink cement if you want to.'

Aardvark sighed, took Lerm's arm and led him to his table. Lerm didn't like his naked body being so close but he knew he really needed answers. And these guys might be willing to give him some.

Lerm and Aardvark sat at a table while Aardvark's lover stood nearby with a sad expression in his face.

'Hi, I'm Aardvark,' said the man. He shook Lerm's hand and kissed him.

'Lerm.'

'Hello, Lerm.' He became aware his lover was still standing next to him. 'Sorry, this will just take a minute. Hey, Moulan, come here, my love!'

Moulan approached them reluctantly.

'What's wrong with you?' Aardvark asked.

'I... I just thought that now, when you have a human to pair with you won't want me...'

Aardvark stood up and hugged Moulan, whose naked penis hardened a little. 'How could you possibly think that?' Aardvark whispered. 'I love you and I want to be with you no matter what.'

'Really?' Moulan seemed as if he was going to burst in tears of happiness. 'Of course. The two of us are meant to stay together. I'm just fulfilling my social duty. Now come on, we have to take care of our guest.'

While Lerm was thinking nervously about what Aardvark had meant by 'taking care of him' Moulan kissed them both and sat down next to them. His lips were normal, human-like.

'So? How did you get here?' Aardvark asked.

'To be honest,' Lerm answered truthfully, 'I have no idea.'

'That's strange. And where are you from? The Moon?'

'Why does everyone think I am from the Moon?'

'Most of the people come from the Moon. My parents came from there too. You are lucky you've come here. Most barmen don't allow humans in their pubs. But Corticoid is cool, he doesn't mind. Am I right, Corticoid?' He waved at the barman who obviously thought Aardvark was ordering drinks because he nodded and started filling glasses.

'So, where are you from?'

'I don't know. I don't remember anything.'

'Nothing? That's odd. Well, they can do amazing things with memory these days. But nothing?'

'No. I came to in the cockpit of a fighter.'

'Sh!' hissed Aardvark. 'Don't you say that ever again.'

'What? Why?'

'Because the only humans equipped with fighters are the Moon terrorists.'

'What terrorists?'

'Dumb-asses who kill Pleasurebots. Either because they claim to fight against the order or because they are just idiots who think humans are more valuable than bots.'

'What order?'

'The profile handling system.'

'I don't understand.'

'Neither do I, not entirely. Bots usually know, not us. Anyway, is there anything else you remember?'

'No, absolutely nothing. Do you think I am a terrorist?'

'Very probably.'

'What would these bots do to me if they knew?'

'If you don't feel like killing anyone anymore, they'd do nothing. It has something to do with the profile filter.'

'Aardy,' Moulan whispered, 'you shouldn't speak about this.'

'I know, sorry,' answered Aardvark in the same whispering voice.

'I think,' Moulan continued instead, 'it would be best if Lerm just went to an upload centre...'

'No, it wouldn't,' Aardvark interrupted his partner, 'at least not before he learns more about our society.'

'Why?'

## **Martin Kolacek : Profile Deleted (Sample)**

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Before he could answer, Corticoid came and put three glasses on the table. Two of them were filled with water, the third with the ionic mix. Moulan took the third glass and drank it.

'You've probably realized,' Aardvark said to Lerm, 'Moulan is a Pleasurebot too.'

'Pardon me!' protested Moulan.

'Oh, sorry, my dear. Of course, Moulan is a Garddonn, that's clear at first sight.'

'Gard... what?' Lerm asked.

'Don't you even know what a Garddonn is?'

'Not a clue.'

'Garddonn is a much more advanced form of a Pleasurebot. His skin is made of noble foam, poured in a dry environment, with great metamorphic abilities.'

'Is he artificially created, then?'

'Of course.'

'Are they robots?'

'Yep. Pleasurebots. Robots created for pleasure. They either get a personality immediately in the factory or you can choose and download any of millions of profiles from the database.'

'Did you choose Moulan, then?'

'No, my Moulan came with a pre-installed personality. I had to understand him first. That's probably the reason I fell in love with him in the first place.'

'And...?' Lerm wasn't sure if personal questions were acceptable but this one had been haunting him for some time now, 'have you always been gay?'

'Gay?' Moulan repeated, confused.

'That's how humans describe males who sleep with other males,' Aardvark explained to his boyfriend. Then he turned back to Lerm, 'Didn't I tell you Moulan is a Garddonn?'

'So?'

'Show him,' Aardvark told his partner. Moulan stood up so his lap was at the same level as Lerm's face. Then, his body changed. After a little more than a minute, there was a female Moulan standing in front of him.

'But I like him more as a boy,' Aardvark said. 'Pity it will take a few hours before he can turn back.'

## 2. The Warzone

Aardvark and Moulan were unbelievably friendly towards Lerm. They even suggested that he should move to their place and live with them until he found somewhere suitable for himself. Lerm accepted their kind offer gladly because the idea of living on the streets in an unknown city scared him. Though he often had to witness their intimate behaviour, for his hosts were anything but shy, it was a small price to pay for the shelter provided. Anyway, Lerm soon realized that publicly displayed intimacy was more accepted in this society. Thanks to that, Lerm soon stopped feeling awkward when observing their private behaviour.

'I will have to go the old Rostan,' sighed Aardvark one day at the dinner table.

'Again?' asked Moulan. 'That's awful! The woman is a fanatic!'

'She sure is. She tidies the whole flat at least three times a week.'

'Oh, she's trying not to bother you much, then; since she requests your services only twice a month.'

'Who is she and what services do you offer?'

After a few days with Lerm, Aardvark had got used to the permanent questions, which he answered with the patience of a parent whose child has just learned to speak.

'A Pleasurebot,' he answered. 'Her life cycle is nearly at its end and she has some weird profile which thinks everyone will speak ill about her if she terminates in a messy flat.'

Lerm had already learned expressions such as 'having a profile', which meant the Pleasurebot's personality, or 'someone's life cycle ending' instead of 'dying'. A Pleasurebot was in fact something like a shell in which a personality had been recorded after it had been downloaded from the internet. If a Pleasurebot died its profile became public on the internet again, ready for another download. That was why Pleasurebots' ideas of ultimate questions was very different from that of humans.

'Alright,' Lerm answered, 'and what service can you provide for her?'

'I'll clean her windows.'

'Windows? Why you?'

'It's my job, isn't it?'

'I thought you could get anything you need from a replicator. What do you need a job for?'

It certainly seemed that way. Did you need food or a drink? You just asked a replicator. Did you need a sweeper? No problem, just ask a replicator. And after all, what would you need a sweeper for when you could choose from the many designs of robotic vacuum cleaners the replicator was able to materialize. Nearly everything could be created that way. Except love, of course. A Pleasurebot had to be ordered from a factory.

'Yes, more or less,' Aardvark answered, 'but there is still some work we have to do ourselves. And you also feel better if you contribute to society. Everyone has an occupation. Corticoid is a barman, Moulan creates games, I clean windows. Humans usually clean windows.'

'Moulan, do you really create games?'

'Sure,' Moulan answered, smiling, 'everyone loves games.'

'And... how exactly do you create them?'

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'Well, the usual way. I just have an idea people may love playing kangaroos on the Moon, you know, all the jumping must be fun. So I create some game rules and specify the properties in the replicator.'

'I thought... No offense, Moulan, but how come a robot does a creative job while his fellow human cleans windows?'

'Lerm!' Aardvark snapped at him, clearly much more offended than his partner, 'you still don't get it, do you? Moulan isn't just a robot! He has a complex personality like any human.'

'I know, I'm sorry, I don't mean to be rude, but didn't you say yesterday something about a Pleasurebot's brain being different from a human's? That one can do what the other can't?'

'Sure. But it has nothing to do with personality, creativity and so on. More like the nervous system. Hand-eye coordination, for instance. Like the window-cleaning.'

'What is so special about cleaning windows?'

'A Pleasurebot isn't capable of cleaning a window properly. It is a very complex brain process.'

'Excuse me, but I don't see anything difficult in rubbing a glass with a cloth.'

'I said 'properly'. To get rid of all smudges.'

'Even so.'

'What you should know is that there are many different kinds of information a brain must process during window-cleaning. The material is fragile; therefore you must find the right pressure. It must be strong enough to polish the glass but if you press too hard you'll break it. And the smudges can be on both sides. Some of them can be polished out dry but some of them must be wet. All of that requires very precise hand-eye coordination. It's simply too hard for a Pleasurebot to do the job.'

'I see. But don't you think this is sort of servant stuff?'

'To some extent, yes. But we are immigrants in their society so we are glad for any role we can take here. They need us and we need them. If we do the job, others will help us. If anything is broken in our household someone else will come and repair it for us. Or someone creates a great game about kangaroos on the Moon.'

'Funny. I thought humans were somewhat superior to bots, being the original life.'

'You really must be from the Moon, dude!' Aardvark seemed angry, 'how else could you say shit like that?!'

'When we met in the pub, Moulan thought you'd abandon him just because you had met a human. So, I thought...'

'That you are something more than him? You're kidding, right? The only reason Moulan had any thoughts of that sort is because some humans want to have children so they prefer human partners. But that's not true in my case.'

'The two of us couldn't have children, could we?' Lerm laughed to lighten the situation a little bit.

'Well, we could, though it wouldn't be much more natural than the way Pleasurebots replicate. Anyway, I don't see a reason to populate this piece of shit with more pieces of shit like us. There are more than enough humans, to tell the truth. The Moon is full of them. Aggressive, selfish, scheming bastards! They are not worthy of cleaning Moulan's shoes!'

'I wonder,' said Moulan, to interrupt Aardvark's anti-human hate speech, 'what has happened to you, Lerm. You don't remember anything but you have

unbelievably old-fashioned ideas about the world. Even worse than most of the humans from the Moon have. But you have no idea where they come from. Someone obviously played a nasty trick with your memory. I think you should go to the Upload centre...'

'No, he shouldn't,' Aardvark interrupted.

'Why?' Moulan asked him, surprised. 'This is the second time you have said that. Why shouldn't he go there? They can perform miracles with memory.'

'Believe me, better to stay out of their way.'

'I believe you. But honey, I thought there were no secrets between the two of us.'

'It is no secret. I just think it is a bad idea.'

'Aardy, look straight into my eyes and say it again! I know you well enough to know when you're lying.'

'What is the Upload centre?' asked Lerm, not only to find out the answer but also to interrupt a potential quarrel between his hosts.

'They handle profiles and modify memories,' answered Aardvark, who was obviously glad of the interruption. 'Ever since Pleasurebots were first created. The human brain is not *that* different.'

'Aardy has been there once, haven't you?' continued Moulan who clearly didn't want to abandon the topic of why his boyfriend had acted so weird.

'I suppose so. Or, at least, I planned to. I wanted to delete a trauma of some sort.'

'What trauma?' Lerm asked.

'I don't know,' Aardvark smiled, 'which probably means they succeeded and deleted it. Together with the memory of the visit itself. I don't remember what happened there.'

Suddenly, an explosion on the nearby street interrupted them. Then another two, followed by shooting, screaming and more blasts. Aardvark and Moulan fell to the ground. Lerm didn't have to ask what to do this time and copied them.

'What's happening?' he asked, scared.

'That was fucking close!' said Aardvark, suddenly less keen to answer his questions. 'They must be in the street!'

'Who?' Lerm tried again, but still without receiving an answer. Aardvark crawled to the window and peeped through it.

'What do you see?' Moulan asked.

'Seems like humans,' answered Aardvark who had at least a limited range of vision to the street, 'shooting everyone in their way. They have the biomass sensors but they obviously aren't using them. The scanning can't be that quick. They're coming in!'

Stomping sounded inside the house.

'Moulan, to the bathroom! Quick!'

'No! I want to stay with you!'

'Don't be a fool! They won't kill humans.'

'You don't know that for sure!'

'But we have a chance. You'd be killed on sight. Please, Moulan, I don't want to lose you.'

Moulan turned around reluctantly and shambled to the bathroom.

'For fuck's sake, Moulan, run!'

A bang echoed on the door. Moulan ran at last. He was just entering the bathroom when the door exploded. Smoke and dust filled the room and

blinded everyone for a while. Then, two men with weapons in their arms came in.

'We're humans!' Aardvark shouted.

'Check them!' the smaller one ordered the taller one. He lifted one hand from his weapon and took out a device of some sort.

The dust settled meanwhile and Lerm had the first clear view of the infidels. In comparison to beautiful Pleasurebots, these two looked like ugly trolls. The taller one who was scanning them resembled a gorilla with overdeveloped biceps. His arms were too big, compared to his small head. The other man was tiny, with restless eyes and a face full of wrinkles.

'They're humans, alright.' The gorilla-man finished scanning and hid the device. Then, he turned to his potential victims, 'Too bad for you we've been authorized to shoot collaborators.' The gun was aimed at Lerm's head.

'Stop that!' the tiny man ordered him. 'You kill humans only over my dead body!'

'And why are we risking our lives here, eh? To shoot a few bots who are going to return in new bodies in no time? If we want them to take us seriously we will have to shoot collaborators!'

'You don't know for sure these are collaborators.'

'They live among bots. That's the only proof I need!'

'We are not collaborators!' Aardvark said.

'No kidding? So how come you don't kill the bots with us?'

'How could we? We don't have any weapons.'

Lerm was pretty sure Aardvark wouldn't harm any Pleasurebot even if he had a full arsenal of nuclear rockets. But Aardvark knew arguing with the terrorists' philosophical views wasn't the right way to save their lives.

'I don't believe a fucking word they're saying!' the gorilla-man turned to his superior. 'They live here. I'll kill them.'

'No!' the tiny man prevented him from shooting them again.

The gorilla-man rolled his eyes and put the weapon down again: 'Why not?'

'You'd love to, wouldn't you? It is your dream, to kill a human, isn't it?'

'What? No, just a collaborator.'

'Sure. You are tired of killing bots that won't cease to exist. But humans, that's a different story! You are fascinated by the idea they close their eyes for the last time. You want to delete someone permanently!'

'And so? I wasn't recruited just because I am good at metal cutting.'

'Yes, but what we don't need is a bloodthirsty psychopath. I'm telling you, we will clean the house and then take these two to the Boss.'

'Fuck you!'

'Fuck you! I'm the superior here in case you hadn't noticed!'

Another terrorist appeared in the doorway, 'Hey, cunts! What's taking so long? The Masses are on their way!'

'So fast?' the tiny man answered. 'How the fuck?!'

'Someone must have given them the word. So kill those two and get the fuck out of here!'

The gorilla-man lifted his weapon again.

'No!' the tiny man stopped him again.

'Fuck you,' the gorilla-man shouted impatiently, 'that was your superior!'

'Paragraph 3,' the tiny man countered, 'a lower ranking officer can disobey an order if it was given in a situation about which the higher ranking officer did not have enough information. Now, get out!'

'Stupid paragraphs!' the gorilla-man shouted, and both terrorists left the room.

Aardvark slid down the wall, sat on the ground and gazed at the destroyed doorway. Lerm realized he couldn't stand either. The fear of death ceased and weariness came. He felt like he was going to faint. He sat down, next to Aardvark. He'd sit there and rest peacefully forever. But it wasn't over yet.

The terrorists couldn't have reached the end of the street before the noise of shooting and explosions came again. Aardvark didn't move but Lerm wanted to know what was happening. A vision of a gorilla-man returning to the house disturbed him like a vampire-based nightmare.

There was intensive fighting on the street, between terrorists hidden behind debris and armoured figures that were approaching them quickly. Normal bullets bounced off the armour of the latter, and only a few high-calibre weapons were able to pierce it. Although the body count was 3:1 in favour of the terrorists, the outcome of the battle had been clear the moment it had started. The terrorists didn't stand a chance. A grenade fell behind the debris and blasted a huge terrorist to pieces. Lerm hoped it had been the gorilla-man.

'Some armoured figures are approaching them,' Lerm commented to Aardvark and Moulan; the latter having joined them in the main room.

'Yes, it's a disciplinary commando,' answered Aardvark who, with the prospect of continuing life, continued in his teaching role. 'If they've arrived so quickly the terrorists don't stand a chance. If any of them gets out of there alive I'll eat my socks.'

'I hope they don't,' smiled Moulan, 'it would be terrible to kiss you then.'

A half an hour later, the battle was over. The disciplinary commandos literally hacked the terrorists to pieces.

'They're done,' Lerm commented. 'Now, they're going from house to house.'

'Are they searching the houses?' asked Moulan.

'Seems like that.'

'You must hide!'

'Why?'

'Because they can access a registry of inhabitants. If they see a human who shouldn't be there...'

'But no one seemed to mind. You are the one who told me I could find my own flat soon.'

'This is a war zone now, understand? What do you think they'd do if they found a surplus human in one of the houses so soon after the attack?'

'Moulan is right,' Aardvark supported him. 'Just shut up and get to the bathroom!'

'But what would they do to me? They are police, aren't they? They won't just kill me, eh?'

'No, but they may take you away. Anywhere. Don't you see we want to help you?'

'I know, but...'

'For fuck's sake, Lerm! Don't you see what's happening here?! Get the fuck in the bathroom and shut the fuck up!'

Only then, after Aardvark had shouted at him, did Lerm finally realize he had been acting stupidly. He didn't really know why he had protested so much.

## **Martin Kolacek : Profile Deleted (Sample)**

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Perhaps because of the shock he had just been through. He was starting to feel he should face his fate boldly and fight all the obstacles. Yes, it was total idiocy. He nodded and ran to the bathroom.

He was crouching under a wash-basin and listening to the voices coming from the main room. Heavy steps which had been sounding through the whole house reached the flat.

'Thank you,' Aardvark's voice sounded, 'thanks for saving us!'

There was a moment of silence. Then, a voice of a squad member answered:

'How did you manage to survive?'

'I've been hiding in the bathroom,' Moulan answered, 'and my boyfriend is a human.'

'They were thinking about killing me,' Aardvark continued, 'but then, they just agreed they'd take me with them. But they didn't, thanks to you.'

'Why did they want to take you?'

'They wanted to check if I am a collaborator.'

'Has there been anyone else with you?'

'What? Why? No.'

'Positive?'

'Sure.'

'Alright. You will go with us for identification.'

'But surely that's not necessary, officer. We will tell you our names and personal numbers.'

'I'm afraid it you'll have to come. We need a DNA scan of both of you.'

'But... we are common people. You can check our names and our official numbers.'

'Gentlemen,' the squad member said resolutely, 'I don't make the rules, I follow them. Either of you could be a masked terrorist. You'll either go with us voluntarily or we will take you by force.'

'But officer, how would a terrorist know our personal numbers?'

'That doesn't matter. If you prove to be who you say you are we will release you. Tomorrow morning, you will be able to look for someone to repair your door.'

'Chm, it will take a week to find someone anyway,' Aardvark grunted and the main room fell silent. The heavy steps left the house.

Lerm didn't have the courage to abandon his shelter under the wash-basin. He sat there and gazed at the tiles the bathroom was inlaid with. He couldn't dismiss the feeling that this wasn't a coincidence and that someone knew about him.