

CAVALCADE

Petra Svahn walked with a determined gait towards the office of the thesis supervisor. She was not at all enthusiastic about the upcoming meeting. After four years of studies at the University of Industrial Arts and Design, it was time for the final thesis, and she had no clue as to what she would do. Still, she was not one to shy away from a challenge. She knocked on the door thrice.

The door opened and Petra entered to meet Mr Jokela. Petra smiled at him and said, "I know what you are going to say. You'll say, 'When will you finally come up with a thesis proposal?'"

Mr Jokela sat down and said, "Quite right. It's September and I've been waiting for one since March. I have a report of your studies here. The only thing you lack is the thesis. In case you still have no proposal, I took the liberty of finding you one. The Helsinki City Museum wants us to document the suburbs of the 60's before they are renovated. As a photography major, you'd fit the requirements. They will foot the bill for an exhibition too. You'd be a fool to pass on this one. Well?"

Petra winced. "Sounds... nice."

"That is, if you don't have a topic of your own?"

"I'm working on it. Trust me. I'll tell you soon."

Mr Jokela put on a sad face, then shrugged and pulled out his calendar. "To get anywhere with it, you need to give me your thesis plan by the end of this week. Otherwise you'll miss the seminar and it's another two months down the drain."

Petra looked him in the eye. "I'll get you a plan by Friday. See you later," she said and turned to leave. Mr Jokela escorted her to the corridor and watched her pull away with an even more definite gait; he shook his head.

Inside Petra's straw-blonde head, things were far from definite. She knew from older students that the City Museum was a demanding client. Any project with the Museum would look great on the CV, but she didn't want to get involved. She wanted to be on her own.

Petra walked to the tram stop and hopped on the next one, bound for the city center. She put on her iPod headphones, and turned up the volume. She had a liking for heavy rock, and now she needed an extra dose. She thumbed the device until she heard the first chords of 'The Poet and the Pendulum' by Nightwish, then closed her eyes and breathed deep. The tram ride took until the end of 'Amaranth', when she stepped off the tram into the bustle.

Window shopping did nothing to alleviate her anxiety. She had a cup of tea and a roll, and decided to walk home. As soon as she hit the street, however, she changed her mind and

started walking in the other direction, and in twenty minutes she found herself by the stone wall of the Hietaniemi Cemetery.

For some reason, she'd always liked cemeteries. The age-old tranquillity appealed to her, as well as the cultural values of tombstones. She loved walking in Hietaniemi, a large old cemetery right in the center of Helsinki. Entering through the South Gate she wound her way up and down the paths, from the Old Guard cemetery to the Jewish Section and up to the Artists' Hill, where she spent some time looking at the carved tombstones of celebrated artists. Alvar Aalto, architect... Axel Gallen-Kallela, painter... Tapio Wirkkala, designer... the graves of celebrities went on and on.

Petra stood for a while, looking at the magnificent headstone of Eila Hiltunen, a sculptor, and she found herself thinking of the classic symbolic paintings, the Vanities. All of these people buried here had once been on Earth, breathing like normal people, experiencing joy, pain, love, happiness, and tragedy, and all the while, creating immortal pieces of art. And now, every one of them lay here, their spirit lost forever. All that remained was their fame and art.

She moved down the path a bit, and then returned. Looking at the same tombstone again she thought the only difference between these people here and the laypeople in the regular graves on the other side of the walkway was celebrity. Everyone knew these people and how they'd once looked, and what they'd created. The other people, well... they'd been born and had toiled all their life, and then slid into their graves with no one remembering how they looked.

Petra sauntered on across the major walkway into the other section. Jokinen, Södermalm, Oksanen, Arvola... none of these people rang a bell, and it would have been a small miracle if they did. Palmu, Sipilä, Johansson, Kaarlela... dead people, as surely missing as if they'd never existed. Deep in thought, she walked up the main gravel road and exited the graveyard onto Mechelin Street.

She crossed the road and stood for a second at the window of Atelier Bobrikoff. It was the second oldest portrait studio in Helsinki, and it was now celebrating its centenary year. The current owner, no longer a Bobrikoff by name, had decorated the window with three photos of each decade. Petra marveled at the skill of the old photographers whose images were still perfect examples of layout and lighting. The people in the photos were either sitting pretty with a radiant smile, or posing as somber professionals, or hugging their best friend. There were no names, just the faces.

She stopped. What if there was a way of matching a headstone to a photo of the person in his or her prime? And then to find the birth certificate and join a scan of that to these? And then to chain all of these into a cavalcade of ordinary lifetimes depicted in a series of images, from birth to prime to grave? She swooned with the revelation. This was what she wanted to do – a novel concept, and something she knew she would love to do. She ran to the nearest tram stop and boarded the next one headed east, and when she got home, she worked late into the night.

Mr Jokela was very surprised to see Petra outside his office when he arrived at eight in the morning. "Well? You must have something for me," he said, and opened the door.

Petra bounced in and slapped a paper on his desk. "This is my plan, and I'm sure you will like it too. It's exactly what I've been wanting to do. It's new and it's something no one has done before –"

Mr Jokela cut her babbling with a timeout hand signal. "Let me read this first, then we discuss." Petra sat on hot coals as he took his sweet time, then turned back to her and said, "It's new all right. Birth certificates, live people, and tombstones. I'm not sure I want to hear how you got the idea, but yes, I'll accept this. Provided you can put it all together in three months; looking at your plan, that's not a lot of time."

Petra flashed her trademark smile, which she knew was able to melt concrete, let alone middle-aged lecturers. "Don't you worry. I have a game plan all worked out." She bounced up from the chair and went to the door.

"Keep me posted how you're doing. I wouldn't mind a progress check-up or two later on - email will be fine," Mr Jokela said, and she agreed. Then she was gone, and Jokela shook his head.

Petra ran to the tram, then hopped off it at the Parish Union of Helsinki offices in Kallio. She entered the Central Registry and took a number. While waiting for the eight people to be processed, she had time to admire the classical style of the office, and the way it had been renovated with great care and style. Soon it was her turn.

"Hello," she said to the kind-looking elderly clerk behind the counter, "I'd like to have a look at the parish register, please?"

The lady smiled the same smile she gave to every new arrival. "For what purpose, if I may ask?" she said, and started putting together a stack of permission applications and brochures.

Petra explained her art project in a few sentences, and the lady nodded in approval every now and again. "That sounds like a very interesting enterprise. I'm sure we can help you. I'd not go very far into the past, because any registry book before 1865 is stored at the National Archive and may be a bit hard to get at. Besides, nineteenth-century registries are usually written in script, some of which may be very hard to decipher by the casual reader."

Petra was glad to hear that. "I actually had hoped to concentrate in the early 20th century anyway. So, when I have enough pictures of the graves, you think I can find the corresponding birth data here?"

"I'm quite sure, for those who were born here. These should be a majority of the Hietaniemi graves. You might also want to try the Malmi graveyard, since it's more recent."

Petra beamed in response and picked up the applications and brochures, and thanked the clerk. She stepped out into the bright sunlight and went back home to pick up her camera bag, then proceeded straight to Hietaniemi. She felt half daunted by the enormous task that lay before her, but at the same time she couldn't wait to get started.

Last night she had drawn a mind map of what she wanted to accomplish. She needed permission from the graveyard to get the tombstone pictures, and another for the birth certificates. The hardest part would be finding the pictures of people alive. For this she had taken the Yellow Pages and compiled a list of the ten most likely photography studios that might have such pictures. She decided to leave that last and hopped on a passing tram, wishing it could run like a speeding bullet to Hietaniemi.

The sunny and warm day, almost like July, was perfect for starting this venture. Petra entered the graveyard again at the South Gate, and dug up her trusty Moleskine from her battered camera bag. She understood the need to document every headstone not only as a picture, but also as location data so she could return to it if need be. She felt elated by the sunny weather and set to documenting the stones.

Within a couple of hours she had found thirty-five eligible headstones, with which she worked diligently. Mass production would not do; every stone had to be captured in a different way so as to underscore the singular nature of every life, even if it had ended already. She concentrated on people who'd died after 1900, as she believed it impossible to find pictures of people older than that. A few headstones that fell out of this category made it to the memory card of her camera merely on aesthetic value.

She also found she needed to devote a lot of time to the photo shoots. Otherwise all images would have more or less identical lighting, and while that could be adjusted in Photoshop, it'd be even more work that way. Besides, she wanted to take every image separately, to highlight the unique features of each stone. This first day would have to be a test run, but later she planned to work from early light until dusk on the headstones.

Back home, she rushed upstairs to have a look at the pictures, and also to start her bookkeeping. Petra was no newbie to image file management; the first thing she did was to drop the images in two folders, one for men and another for women, and then to enter the data from each picture in an Excel file. She entered every picture as filename, filedate, birth date, death date, last name, first names, graveyard, and plot ID. It took her three hours to do that for the first twenty headstones, but by the time she was done, and dead tired, she could look at the computer screen and feel the pleasant tinge of good work.

In the morning Petra jumped out of bed like a jack-in-the-box, which would have startled her parents. Gone were the catlike yawns and stretches, and her morning coffee mug was gulped down steaming instead of lukewarm. Today she was going to secure that missing piece of the puzzle, the live pictures. She had listed the ten oldest photography studios in town. Topping the list was Studio Weissenberg, situated in a prestigious stone building at one of the best downtown addresses.

Petra opened the door to the studio and was greeted by the current generation of Weissenbergs, one Ms Raittinen. Petra went to her and shook her hand, then explained her project. Ms Raittinen listened intently and nodded every once in a while, and smiled softly at her eagerness.

“I was wondering whether I could have a look in your archives and try to match my records with yours, and perhaps get a copy of any pictures I can match to the personal data I have collected?” Petra asked.

Ms Raittinen looked at her and said, “Sorry – I can’t allow that. We have customers in the fourth generation, and I am sure they’d not want us to distribute their family photos, not even for such a worthy cause as yours.”

Petra tried to convince Ms Raittinen that she’d treat the photos with respect, but to no avail. She had to leave empty-handed, and out on the street again she thought she may find herself in a jam with getting the pictures.

The same happened at every one of the ten studios with more or less the same words. Only one of the studios was willing to release pictures, provided Petra would obtain written permission to use the pictures from the relatives of the people in them. This was one avenue for further research, Petra thought as she walked into the busy street.

She wanted to walk home, just to have time to think. She walked for three hours, allowing herself to wander physically as much as her thoughts rambled. Halfway across the district of Kallio, she got a text message on her mobile: “We’re at Giggling Tuna. Pub Quiz starts in thirty. We need our star. Be there or be there. Jusa.” Though it made her smile, she decided against a night out, because she wasn’t in a mood for fun and games; she sent a message to that effect.

Thirty seconds later another one pinged on her phone: “NO. See you here.” She pocketed the phone and walked on, deep in thought, head drawn down between her shoulders. Two minutes later, another SMS disturbed her sulk. “We need you in the quiz or else we go hungry and thirsty. Don’t be cruel.” Against her will, and better judgment, she turned left at the corner and boarded a tram on the next street. Five minutes later she jumped off it and entered the favorite haunt of the artsy-craftsy Helsinki intelligentsia, where beer was relatively cheap and pub quizzes definitely vicious.

Her arrival was greeted by a roar from the corner. Five friends of hers had invaded the round table by the fireplace and garrisoned it with empty beer glasses. Jusa, Perttu, Anu, Vesku and Iina hugged her welcome and gave her a seat in their midst.

“Now we stand a chance in the Quiz,” Jusa said. “The quizmaster said it’s loaded with culture questions! Go Team Red!”

Petra gave him a vague smile. “Let’s just see how it goes. I don’t think I’m in the best of shapes, I’m tired and too deep in my project right now, but maybe this’ll help me relax a bit. Get me a beer and let’s start,” she said.

It was a culture quiz all right, but the combined knowledge of Team Red was sufficient to get them a seat in the tiebreak round with Team Green. Petra tried to support her team, and managed to solve three supremely devilish questions, but she wasn’t all there. Her team tried to cheer her up, but she joined the fun only for brief moments, and then sink back to her thoughts.

The quizmaster pulled the last question out of his battered champagne cooler with flamboyant moves. “And for the grand prize of tonight, the tiebreaker between Red and Green – are we ready? – we ask: Who wrote *Das Glasperlenspiel*?”

Petra burst out of her drunken and apathetic mood to yell at the top of her lungs: “Heinrich Hesse!”

The quizmaster turned to the other team: “Will you contest that answer?”

The leader of Team Green cleared his throat and said in an anchorman tone, “Hermann Hesse.” At this, the quizmaster banged a meat hammer against the cooler and announced that Team Green won the quiz and would be rewarded with a pizza and two pints of beer for each team member.

“What’s six pizzas and twelve pints between friends,” Jusa said and downed the remains of his warm beer.

“Sorry guys. It’s just that I am in a pinch with the project and don’t know where to go,” Petra pleaded.

“Spill it, let’s see if we can be of assistance,” said Vesa and gave Petra a pinch.

Petra outlined the situation with the studios, and explained how far she was in other regards with the project. The team agreed it was a tricky situation.

“Still, there’s one route you might want to try,” Jusa said. “Have you thought of the police?”

Petra stared at him. “Come again?”

“A friend of mine is at the Police Academy at Tampere. He was here in Helsinki just now, because all cadets are given a tour of the Crime Museum, which is closed to the public. He said he saw many interesting murder weapons, plenty of evidence from famous cases, and a lot of mug shots. A whole wall of them in neat binders, sorted by year.”

“What was the most interesting weapon?” Vesa asked.

“A teaspoon struck between the eyes. It was on display beside an axe and they were asked which was the instrument of a murder of passion.”

Petra had to yank Jusa back into the conversation about the mug shots. “Tell me more! So there were lots of them?”

Jusa looked at her and said, “Hey – I wasn’t there myself, but what I think you should do is to contact someone in the Force and see if they’d let you in with a scanner.”

Suddenly Petra was back on track with the thesis, and she gave Jusa a hug and a kiss, to the catcalls and whistles of the rest of the team. “For once you had an idea! I’ll call them first thing tomorrow.”

Jusa toasted her with an empty glass, and said, "I wouldn't call any lower level official. Try calling someone high enough in the hierarchy and present your case as research. Maybe it'll work, you just have to try."

By the time Petra was home, it was already almost light. She went straight to her computer and looked up the Crime Museum. It was under the National Bureau of Investigation, and she found the link to the name and number of the department head on the first page. It was hard to wait until it was 8am, but when the clock struck, she was on the phone. A secretary told her that she needed to email a free-form application for access to the museum, but it would be up to the Department Manager to decide whether she'd get one.

She wrote as convincing an application as she could and sent it off. More waiting ensued. It was only five days later that she got her reply, but to her relief, she was sent a research pass in a PDF file which she had to print to get into the museum. It was valid for two weeks starting from next Monday. This left her three days to prepare.

At eight o'clock on Monday, Petra stood in front of the NBI headquarters. She had prepared for this trip by packing her iBook, a scanner and her camera kit in a blue IKEA bag. She rang the bell, and at the buzzer sound, she opened the massive door. Petra reported to the door guard and was given a visitor swipe card in exchange for the permission, and then she was allowed to enter the Museum, accompanied by one of the staff.

She was led inside the hall, cavernous in size and arranged in visually engaging displays, even given the gruesome nature of the exhibits. Petra shivered as she was led down the main corridor towards the far end of the hall, with mementoes of past crimes on her either side. The guide took her to the back of the hall and into a research room.

There was one other researcher in the room, but he did not look up when Petra arrived with the guide. The guide pointed to a desk. "Okay, this is where you can set up shop. The mug shot binders are in the next room. There's also an alphabetic master list of all people, which will probably be of help. Your permission states you may scan the mug shot and necessary personal data, but none of the other data, which is on the reverse side."

Petra nodded and unpacked her things on the desk, connected the cords and powered up. Then she went to the archive. The master list was on the table, and one look confirmed that this would be a gold mine: all people were indeed in it, alpha by surname, followed by first names and date, and binder ID. She took it to her desk, heart racing.

Within ten minutes, she had two definite hits against the names in her tombstone file. Half an hour later, there were five, and by the time she heard her stomach growl, seventeen. She went to the cafeteria for a quick lunch, then returned to start the scans. She went to the archive room and pulled out the binder labelled "1922-A-K". Not really knowing what to expect, she returned to her desk, took a deep breath, and opened the binder.

Her first match was "Kronstadt, Karl Johan" who was born in 1889 and died February 22, 1935, but who had been booked for bootlegging on May 17, 1922. Petra turned the stiff, yellowed cardboard pages one by one, until she came to May, and then she slowed down. It

felt momentous to finally see the arrest card #1922-106, and see the first person she would attach to her cavalcade of life.

Mr Kronstadt was not a likeable person in the picture. Swarthy, with small and deep-set eyes, he looked very much like someone who brought in illicit booze in speedboats from Estonia. Petra detached the arrest card from the binder and placed it in the scanner. She cropped the preview so as to only take the image and the name data, and then took a high-quality scan. When done, she took the card and placed it in the binder, and said in a soft voice, "Nice to meet you, Mr Kronstadt." Then she carried on looking for the next match.

Petra was alerted to the passing time only when the guide announced they would close for the day. By now she had located and scanned fourteen cards. She went to the front desk and asked if she could leave her scanner behind, and was assured she'd find it there in the morning. With her head swirling from the effort, and also from the feeling of success, she went out into the bright day, and boarded a bus back home.

She spent the next day at the Central Registry, trying to find birth certificates. It took her quite a while to find the first hit, but at the end of the day she had twelve full sets of birth certificate, face, and tombstone. This she felt was reason enough to call Jusa and see if he wanted a beer.

Popping him the rhetorical question in a text message, she met him half an hour later at the Tuna. Jusa was surprised by the warm hug and a kiss on the cheek she gave him. "I wanted to show you what I've found," she said when they were sitting by the fireplace. She pulled out the iBook and opened the folder containing the mug shots. When Jusa saw the procession of faces, as captured by the police, he grew more and more uneasy.

"Good to see you've managed to make headway into the project," he said, "but isn't this a bit too dark for you? I mean, some of those people sure don't look like choir boys to me, or girls for that matter."

Petra brushed his worries aside. "What do you mean? They're just people, like you and me, although they've done their tour on Earth and moved on. There's nothing real left, except names and dates and locations, and reasons for busting. I'm just converting their image into pixels and setting them in a slide show, which is transient in itself. Nothing will remain except of course the DVD in the library copy of my thesis," she said and had a sip of her beer.

Jusa wondered whether to keep talking of this, but then saw it was pointless to make her worry too. "You're right. Just work it through and show us all!"

A few beers later Jusa walked Petra home. They walked slowly in the dimming light, Petra feeling light-headed and chatting away, and Jusa helping her walk steady. He liked holding her close. For him, it was all too soon that they reached her home in Käpylä. Always the gentleman, he kissed her lightly, then made sure she got in alright, and waited until the lights went on in her apartment on the second floor of the old wooden house.

Inside, Petra watched Jusa walk away and smiled. Just as he turned the corner, she saw someone else walk by her house with a limp. The district of Käpylä has its share of losers and

boozers, but there was something about this particular fellow that made Petra look twice. He looked up and into her home too, and when their gazes met for a split second, Petra felt a jolt. She had a feeling she knew this man. She had to back away from the window with her heart beating hard. Sleep was slow to arrive, and it was riddled with uneasy images.

The morning was bleak and rainy. At first she thought to go back to the NBI and work on the mug shots, but then decided to go to Malmi graveyard instead for more tombstones. She had to get images in different lighting and ambience settings, and some would need to be taken in rain. It was not a hard rain at first, but when she arrived at the graveyard, it rained quite much. Big drops fell on her and the headstones as she wandered among them, looking for suitable dates. By now she had also understood – she'd better concentrate on tombstones of single people.

She found a small black granite headstone by a large fir tree. As she set up her camera to capture it, she read the name. "AALTIO Jorma Kullervo , * 1895, + 1939". When she went close to it to take the picture, something felt odd about the headstone. She looked at the nearby ones, and they were all wet. This one was dry. She couldn't understand why, and looked up to see whether the fir was covering it, but this got her face all wet from the rain. She went closer to the stone again, and looked closely.

The stone was getting its fair share of the rain, but now Petra could see what happened. The rain was evaporating as soon as it hit the stone. She touched the granite slab, and it felt warm to her touch, even hot, though it was a cool morning and there had been no sun to warm it up. As she watched, the stone got so hot that she could see wisps of steam rise off its top, and when she took off the hood of her raincoat, she could hear the *pst-pst-pst* of raindrops as they hit the iron letters and turned into steam.

Petra scrambled to her feet and watched as the letters began to glow, first deep red, and then brighter and brighter, and by then, the sound of the pounding rain on the stone sounded like water on a sauna stove. She yanked her camera bag off the ground as she retreated in fright, first to the narrow gravel walkway and then to the paved main road leading to the gate.

At the gate she leaned her back against the cold iron bars and tried to calm down her frantic breathing. It was obvious she'd worked too hard of late; she'd just take some days off – maybe go see her parents? But then she remembered her two-week NBI pass. She had no time to take off. But today, she'd go to the Parish Union Central Registry and hope it'd be a calm and soothing environment. No more headstones today.

It was so nice to sit in that beautiful hall of the Registry all comfy and warm and leisurely turn the pages of registry books, Petra thought as she scanned the handwritten entries for matches against her database. She was passing through the year 1896, looking for three people she had found at Hietaniemi, and dreamed of rewarding herself with Fazer's Blue chocolate for each hit. She found two of those three, and then, pushing on through to 1910, she found seven more, and took a photo of each. It was a good day after all.

By eight the next morning, Petra was again standing at the gate of the NBI. She greeted the guide by the door, then went straight to her desk. The search for images was unusually

fruitful today; she found eight before lunch. Treating herself to a cup of automat coffee, she sat at her desk, letting her thoughts flow. She came to think of the arrest cards, and the limping man last night; she felt he was somehow connected to her project. Surely it was impossible to be here now, if one had been arrested in the 1920's? She went to fetch the binder that contained her first match. Flipping fast to get to the card she wanted to see, she found it and there it was: "Scars and marks: lower left leg prosthesis."

Petra slammed the binder shut. "This is crazy," she thought, "he is dead and buried!" And yet... she opened the binder again and removed the card, and scanned the flipside. Then she located the cards she had scanned already, and one by one, scanned the crime sides too. Trying her best to look casual and unhurried, she replaced the binders and packed up, and went home.

With a big mug of tea on the desk, she opened the flipside folder and examined each of her scans in detail. It was hard going from the start. Starting from Johan Kronstadt and reading about his armed robberies, she went through many crimes, from bootlegging and prostitution all the way to Aaltio's arson, which had killed two people. The more she read, the more intensely she now wanted to finish the Cavalcade, as she had started to call her project. She wanted to show that no matter one goes through in life, at birth and at death all are equal.

In the evening Petra grew restless. She wanted more variety to the pictures of tombstones, since the scans of mug shots and photos of registry entries had little creative opportunity. She wanted images taken in the night with flashlight, and others by long exposure with candles, and more. The thought of Malmi this evening, after the day, was too much, but maybe Hietaniemi would soothe her as always.

It was almost eight o'clock when she arrived at the main gate. On the way she'd met people walking away from the cemetery, and some had given her curious looks when she walked by them with her camera bag. The wrought-iron gate was open, so she walked in and closed it behind her. She felt she'd made the right call, there was nothing here to be scared of.

She went to a corner of the cemetery that was close to the sea. There were some old graves there, untended for decades, and with little plastic cards attached to the stones saying the Parish would reclaim the plots if no one paid the overdue maintenance charges. One of these was a diminutive white slab of marble, with gilded letters spelling the name of the resident: "AHNGER JONNA *1901 + 1925". In the last fading light, Petra set up her camera on a minitripod and captured the movement of the long blades of grass in the blustery wind. "Dead at only 24... my age," Petra thought and shivered.

Looking at the frame in the camera display, she felt something was wrong. She zoomed into the name and saw the name was not AHNGER, but GRAHN. She took a flashlight and pointed it at the slab. The text was not what she remembered, but it was now GRAHN, and the first name was JOANNA. She wrote it down with the Maglite between her teeth.

To get the dates right, she looked at the slab once more, but as she did, she saw an opaque, milk-white cloud emanate from the ground and cover the letters. Even as she watched, the letters were detached from the tombstone and they moved horizontally, and

rearranged themselves into GREN JOHANNA. Then they attached themselves on the marble, and the white substance faded away.

Petra stood transfixed and was totally at loss for a moment, but then she snapped another photo. She could not understand what was happening, but when the strange white cloud reappeared from the grave, and this time formed itself into two hands of a woman, Petra packed up and prepared to leave. When she started to run, she glanced over her shoulder and saw the name now as HANGEN RONJA.

When she closed the gate behind her and started to walk away fast, she picked up her phone and called Jusa. "Come pick me up. I'm walking north on Mechelin, you'll catch me at Sibelius Park if you leave now." She hung up and kept walking, until Jusa pulled his car to the curb and picked her up a few minutes later.

"I'm going crazy," she said to him. "I just saw someone's name rearrange itself on a headstone."

"I think this project of yours is getting to you," Jusa said. "Headstones aren't animated. If you keep at this, it'll hurt you bad inside the head." He navigated towards Käpylä on Sturenkatu. "I thought so from the start. You're too delicate a person to work with such morbid subjects as mug shots and headstones, and I feel responsible, because I told you about the police pictures."

Petra touched his arm and said, "It's not your fault. It's just that I've worked too hard. I know I saw something, but I also know it wasn't real. It just... looked so real." They sat in silence for the rest of the short ride.

Jusa parked the car by her house. "Want me to take you in?"

Petra smiled. "I'll make tea."

After their tea, Petra took out the camera and unplugged the memory card. Soon the pictures of the last shoot were on the Mac screen, and Jusa had to agree she'd worked hard to shoot all the headstones uniquely.

"Were these two sisters?" he asked when the last two images rolled on the screen. "The stones look very much alike."

Petra froze in horror when she flipped between the two images. "Oh damn... I wasn't hallucinating. That's one stone, but like I told you, the name changed as I watched. Something came out of the ground and then the letters moved like someone was playing Scrabble, and then the white stuff faded away. There's some of it on the ground here," she said and pointed to the grass in the picture. Some white material was still visible, but it was impossible to tell what it was.

Jusa said, "If what you just said is real, and that is one stone, I must tell you to stop this project. I have no clue what's happening there, but if that sort of stuff happens, just drop this project now."

Petra said, "As much as I'd like to, I want to see this through. I want to compile the cavalcade, because I've worked so hard on this already, and this'll be my thesis. I promise I'll never work with graveyards anymore, after this project is through." She took Jusa back to the sofa and poured him some more tea, then snuggled up close to him. "Just make me feel safe, will you?" He complied.

When the morning light peeked in Jusa's eyes, he searched for Petra on the bed, but she was already at the computer, sorting pictures. He put on his pants and went to her. "You're back at it?" he asked, and Petra nodded.

"Look, I'll show you the template I made." She clicked her mouse and Jusa watched a birth certificate appear on the screen. Only the name, Kronstadt, Karl Johan, was visible with the birth date, all else was blurred. Then this gave way to the face of the man, and Jusa felt the same chill run down his spine as last night, when he heard about the letters on the headstone. Petra had made a custom transition which in effect dissolved the face through monochrome into a shot of the headstone, with its gilded letters and polished, dark gray stone.

"All that remains is photoshopping the images and setting them up in this folder for the presentation software to find them. I promise I'll use the pictures I now have and not go shooting any more tombstones. I have thirty-eight complete sets, that should be enough." Petra's fingers flew on the keyboard as she spoke.

Jusa saw it was no use trying to talk her out of this, and also, it was not possible to have a rerun of the night. He got dressed, kissed Petra on the neck and left.

Petra registered him leaving, but was already deep at work. Every image had to be resized and cropped, blurred and color adjusted, and then noted in the Excel sheet as ready. She worked all day, stopping only for a quick lunch, but around eight in the evening she had a snack and a pause. Thirty-eight... she had set a goal of fifty images for herself. She had shot eighty-five headstones so far, and since she'd found one set of data for every other gravestone, she'd still need some more.

Then she thought of the promise she'd made to Jusa. Wincing, she thought she'd not need tell him if she went out and got the remaining fifteen. It wasn't a bad night to go out, there was no rain, and the thin cloud might actually part and show the stars. She dressed warm and inserted a fresh battery pack in the camera and flashlight, and went out to wait for the bus to Malmi.

There were more people at Malmi than ever before. Petra smiled at the widows tending to their departed husbands' graves with the same loving care they'd prepared them dinner for decades, and even chatted for a while with one of them. Then she resumed her hunt for lone tombstones of the suitable time frame. It wasn't easy this night, but Malmi is a wide space, and one by one, she found her targets. When she was shooting the fourteenth tombstone of the night, it was so dark she had to use flash.

When Petra looked at the image in the camera's large LCD, she saw two dots of light behind the headstone. "Oh damn, butterflies or some other freaking insects..." she said aloud and retook the image. This time she saw the same two specks of light again and zoomed in;

she nearly dropped the camera when she realized the dots were the camera flash reflecting from a pair of eyes. She looked around her, but the graveyard was all empty.

She raised the camera again and shot a frame at random, using the flash. When it appeared on the LCD, there were three pairs of eyes in the picture, and one pair floated between her and the tree a few yards from her. Petra's eyes widened; she detached the flash from the camera and allowed it to recharge, then flashed it at full power into the darkness.

The split second that the light shone among the graves was enough for her eyes to catch dozens of eyes floating around her. She flashed to her left, and to her right, and even behind her, always with the same result. If there was anything real responding to the light, she was surrounded.

Petra grabbed her bag off the ground and started walking towards the main gate. As she did do, she thought she heard something else besides the gravel crunching under her feet – as if someone was trying to say something to her. She couldn't quite make out what it was, because she accelerated her pace and was already half running, but the sound got louder and louder. "Leeeeaveeee... ussssss," it seemed to say, "alooooooooone..." She started running, and when she got to the gate, she slipped through it and then turned to face the graveyard. A cold wind blew in her face, bearing a clear sound to her ears: "Leave us ... alone."

For once there was a bus at the turnaround stop, and she ran in, slapping her travel card against the reader so hard as to get a disapproving look from the driver. He closed the door, and Petra watched as yellow leaves swirled around in a vortex of wind on the street. She went to the back and sat down, and saw the vortex travel down the length of the bus. The driver started the engine and drove out to the road, and Petra closed her eyes.

In the next red light, Petra opened her eyes and saw the leaves dance against the bus window. The vortex followed the bus, she realized, and almost panicked. When the bus hit the Tuusula dual carriageway, and accelerated to eighty kilometres per hour, she was relieved to see the vortex dissolve and the leaves fall on the road, scattered by the passing cars. She hoped to get home all right, and when she got off the bus at her stop, she ran home as fast as she could.

When Petra got in and turned on all the lights, she found nothing out of the ordinary. Once more she attributed to overwork all that happened. She made herself a large mug of strawberry tea and retreated to her computer to edit the last pictures. The curtains of the large window at the far end of her room were open, and she went to close them.

Looking out of the large window into the yard she saw many shapes. It wasn't clear what they were, but some were unmistakably human. What made her shiver was that she could see through the forms, and even as she watched, more forms arrived from all sides until there were dozens of them in her yard. When a limping man walked slowly to her footpath, and started to approach her door, she panicked. She understood in a flash what she had to do.

Petra opened her computer and clicked furiously on the mouse to get to the folders where the images were. She selected a bunch of the face images and hit Delete. Then she peeked out. Nothing happened, the forms were still there, and she heard a noise like the wind

was blowing in her room. She realized she had to lose the birth certificates and the gravestones as well, but in panic fumbled with the mouse, and had trouble getting in the folders. When the gravestones were deleted, she peeked out of the window, and saw some of the forms fade out, but some remained. When she finally deleted the last birth certificates too, the yard no longer had the crowd of gray people. Some swirling clouds could still be seen fading out in the dim light of the tired lamppost.

She was breathing hard but shallow, trying to calm down, but then she heard steps on the stairs. A fast step, then a slow one, a fast one, a slow... Petra remembered there was one more folder with one complete data set in it, the design folder. Three clicks later she saw the files on her screen, and at the same time she felt Karl Johan Kronstadt enter the room behind her. Ctrl+A selected the files, Delete dissolved them, and when Petra turned back in her chair, she saw the entity fade away and felt it turn into a cold blast of air. When her face was touched by it, she fainted, and knew no more.

She came to when it was morning, and her phone announced the arrival of an SMS. "Stockmann's Café at noon? Miss you. Jusa".

Petra smiled and replied: "Make it 2. Must see thesis supervisor, may take time. XXOO".