





K R Z Y S Z T O F
FISZER

From Roots to Blossom

Roots and Branches, #4

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Autor's Note

This publication is a collection of three titles written by me with an aim to improve my mental health. It took me around seven years to do so, but the final result was worth it.

People say that time heals all wounds, however time itself cannot do anything else but pass.

Healing mental wounds require constant attention, care, understanding, thoughtfulness, compassion, acceptance and strength. Time is but a landscape; a background for all the work one must do in order to heal.

Although my healing path is not yet over, this series has served its purpose.

Krzysztof Fiszer

FROM ROOTS

22 III 2019

Primal Soil

About my first home.



Our first apartment was on the first floor, and our second apartment was on the ground floor of this old building. (Photo: 2008, Szropy, Poland.)



Gasthaus Hildebrandt, a tavern that belonged to Herbert Hildebrandt, which years later became our home. (Postcard: 1916, Shroop, Germany.)



Writing that most likely says: 'Alles in seiner Zeit' (All in good time).



Overpainted sign with name of the past owner, Herbert Hildebrandt.

Facts about the building and its surroundings.

Main walls of the building were made of red brick and almost everything else inside was constructed with wooden planks and beams. The entrance to the first floor of the building was hidden on the rear side of the house, with old, wooden door with loose, cold, iron handle. Behind it were white walls and two or three small brick steps leading up to the right, the only spot in the building with a tap where fresh water was accessible; and then around eleven wooden steps leading up to the left. On the left of the first floor that looked like an attic was this huge apartment with big, brown wooden two-winged doors occupied by my neighbours, a mother, and her daughter.

Between the two main parts of the building was a corridor right under the roof, with a brick chimney to the right, and big old chipboards laid down on the planks making a path to our side of the house; we referred to this open space as the attic. Our side of the building was mainly the attic, with a very small three-room apartment on the left side. This was my first home.

Our first communal apartment had a main entrance leading to a room that was used mainly as a bedroom for me and my siblings during warmer seasons, and exclusively as a toilet at nights during winter season. The middle room was used as

a living room and my parents' bedroom all year long, and as children's bedroom during winter. Behind it was a kitchen with no sink, often used also as a bathroom and a toilet, and a children's bedroom during winter. Windows had wooden frames and were very old; during winters they were often covered with blankets at nights to keep the warmth inside the house.

During the weekdays bathing was done in a big bowl, and on Sundays in an iron bathtub placed behind a furnace in the kitchen.

In the children's bedroom, right above my bed, there was a spot on the ceiling where it partly cracked open and the weight of a wooden beam in it lowered it down a bit.

Right in front of the doorframe between children's bedroom and the living room the wooden planks of the floor were loose and coming down when stepped on, so folded boxes were stacked under the carpet to make the floor look flat.

There was no toilet in the apartment. As a substitute, we used one iron bucket intended for urine which at nights was placed in the kitchen behind the furnace or in the attic during warmer seasons, or placed in the children's bedroom during heavy winters, which was then separated from the living room with

a thick blanket, since there were no doors inside the apartment. There was another iron bucket intended for excrements placed outside the apartment at some spot in the attic. Every morning the buckets' content was poured into a sewage well located near the building's entrance. Whenever our neighbours would see one of us emptying those buckets into that well they would yell at us, threatening to call the Police. On our ground plot around one hundred meters from the house was an external toilet made of iron light-blue plates used during the day and some warm nights during summer. I remember that during winters this toilet was frozen cold, and during summers it was overheated, stinky and it was a magnet for fat green dung flies. Our small ground plot contained over the years vegetables and livestock such as goats, rabbits, chickens, geese, ducks, and pigeons, and almost always one dog.

The second communal apartment where we lived was placed on a ground floor. It comprised of three small rooms and a bathroom. All the internal walls separating rooms were built by my father with red bricks and they ended half a meter below the ceiling, except the bathroom walls which were built all the way up to the ceiling.

There were no doors inside this apartment as well as the

previous one. There was a tap with fresh water though, placed in the bathroom next to a bathtub, but the toilet seat itself had no water container, so flushing the toilet was done with a bucket.

The entrance to the apartment was leading right to the middle room used as a kitchen that had a furnace but no sink. To the left was a bedroom for me and my siblings. To the right was a smaller bedroom for our parents. Behind it was the bathroom with a water tap, a bathtub, and a toilet seat.

I lived in the first communal apartment until I was thirteen years old, or so. Then we moved to the second communal apartment where I lived for around one year before I moved out to live with my maternal grandparents.

The way my first home made me feel.

1. Lack of any doors between rooms inside of both apartments made me feel that I can't have any privacy or a place where I could lock myself away from danger.

Using iron buckets for urine and excrements was underlining my lack of privacy. It made me feel ashamed and afraid that someone will see my genitals; it also made me feel unsafe and unprotected from any possible external danger at those vulnerable moments.

2. Walking to the external toilet at night made me afraid of being attacked by something or someone on my way there and back.

3. Sleeping next to the entrance door that were locked at night only with a big nail on a thin chain made me feel scared that someone may break in at any time to cause me harm.

4. Broken ceiling, old windows (the one in the kitchen clinging to the frame only thanks to few nails), faulty planks in the apartment's floor, missing wooden planks in two big rectangle-shaped spots in the attic's floor — they all made me feel on full alert, because I was afraid that my home may fall apart without warning.

Using blankets during winter to cover the windows and to separate one room from other rooms because of the cold, made me feel that even my home can't provide me with life sustaining conditions.

Sleeping under cracked ceiling, from which cold stream of air was gently blowing at me at night, made me feel afraid that the ceiling will fall on me during my sleep and kill me.

5. Lack of flowing water and internal bathroom and toilet in the first apartment made me feel extremely poor.

How those feelings influenced my behaviour.

1. I have a strong need to shut the doors and to lock them tight when I use the bathroom/toilet, because otherwise I don't feel safe in there. Even when I am alone at home (locked or not) I can't leave the bathroom/toilet doors wide open while using it without feeling in danger and without feeling that everyone can see me. Sometimes I even lock the doors to the bathroom/toilet when I am alone in the house, just to give myself that feeling of full safety.

I have a huge disgust for using urinals in public restrooms, so I never use them.

2. Walking to a bathroom, which I never used before, makes me feel uneasy, because my mind suspects that there might be some danger waiting ahead.

3. I feel very uneasy and endangered if I'm about to sleep in a room that has no door, or in a room with doors wide opened, even when the house is full of my family members. I need those doors to be closed. If not, I feel like anyone could come in during my sleep to hurt me.

4. My mind is unable to recognise any house or any apartment that I live in as a haven. It only recognises it as a set of walls,

doors, and rooms which in theory are meant to protect me from any external danger, but at the same time I am convinced they will fail to do so when danger will come.

For many years I had a reoccurring dream in which the house that I was in (one of our old apartments or an apartment on high floor in a skyscraper) would start tilting to one side just to collapse entirely in the end of the dream.

5. I recognise the presence of flowing water, a bathroom and a toilet in the house as something that shouldn't be there by default. It makes me feel it is not right to have such luxury.

Pros and cons.

1pro: I strive to provide myself with safe environment and situations that potentially can't place me in a harm's way.

1con: It underlines my lack of trust for people.

2pro: I am cautious when it comes to visiting new environments for the first time, which helps me to spot potential health risks sooner.

2con: It underlines my lack of trust for people.

3pro: Sleeping with doors closed helps me to provide myself with a sleep undisturbed by external noises.

3con: It underlines my lack of trust for people, and it alienates me.

4pro: Moving to a new house/apartment/place is easy for me because I am not attached to previous place on an emotional level as much as people who treat their houses/apartments as their homes.

4con: I don't receive full mental comfort from spending time at home. It also prevents me from attaching emotionally to my current abode.

5pro: I consciously appreciate the fact of having flowing water

and a bathroom/toilet inside a house. I can cope with poor sanitary conditions more easily than people who were used to high standards of life since their early childhood.

5con: I don't always understand that it is my right to have flowing water, and a bathroom/toilet in my home and that I don't have to feel as if I don't deserve to have them.

Alcohol

About alcohol at home
and my alcoholic father.

Memories of my father.

Alcohol had a place in our home since I can remember, almost always accompanied by arguing, insults, fights, and violence.

My father's parents were both alcoholics.

Heaving guests from neighbourhood at home was always equal to drinking some amount of alcohol.

I remember my drunk father charging to a kitchen (back then placed in children's bedroom) looking for a knife or an axe, because he was enraged with our distant uncle who was sleeping drunk on a bed in the third room (the future kitchen), and my father wanted to kill him. My mother managed to stop him from doing that.

I was few years old when I was given a cheap red wine to try its taste. The smell of it and bitter taste of alcohol in it made me to choke on it, so all the wine came out through my nostrils burning them.

I remember my drunk father half-lying next to the wall on the floor in the attic, few steps from the entrance. He was coming back from some libation, but he didn't have the strength to reach the door. His forehead was cut right above his right eyebrow; blood was streaming from that cut. His eyes were all

glassy and not understanding what they see, like he wouldn't be there anymore, like he would be just an empty shell.

I remember my drunk father sleeping on a bed after he came back from a place where he was drinking. Even though he was deep asleep, his eyes were wide open.

I remember our mother telling us that one time during winter our father was found lying drunk on a side of the road in a snowdrift while it was still snowing. Some man who was walking by that place found him and brought him home. My father was almost dead cold.

I remember going on a 'business trip' by foot with my father to a nearby village, to some farmer from whom he was about to buy a male goat. When we got to the farmer's home the drinking began and it lasted for few hours. I remember telling my father I wanted to go back home already. When we finally head back home my father was fully drank, he was swaying, he was unable to force the goat on a chain to follow him. Eventually my father fell into the ditch next to the road, full of broken branches from the trees growing nearby and the goat run away. I remember calling to my father: 'Daddy let's go, I want to go home!', repeatedly. In the end some man who was driving his car on that road took us in and drove us home.

I jumped out from the car first and run upstairs to our apartment, just to be far away from my father. I told my mother what happened, she looked through the window with me, so we could see how my father is falling out of the car on the ground.

I remember my father ripping pages from our books to have something to use as a kindling to start a fire in the furnace.

Over the years my mother, out of depression and hopelessness or want, was often drinking with my father.

On my First Communion I received a bicycle from my godfather. Once my father found out the combination for the bicycle lock, he started to use it and broke it eventually. The bike was designed for a small teenager, but my father's weight was over 100 kg.

My father had the tendency to punish me and my siblings for signs of disobedience (e.g., returning home later than we were told to) by spanking our bare buttocks with his hand palm or his belt. He also used to twist my ear or grab the back of my neck and squeeze it tight when he wanted to force me to apologize for something or tell him something he wanted to hear.

I remember my father having a very long phase where he would start drinking on Friday and end it on Tuesday or Wednesday,

just to start drinking again next Friday. This cycle would repeat itself for many weeks. During those times at every Friday, and sometimes even Thursday, I was asking my mother for permission to leave home and spent the rest of the week at my grandparents' place, because I was too scared of staying at home, knowing all too well my father's behaviour when he was drunk.

I remember sitting at the table in the morning, there was my mother, an uncle and my father who was pouring vodka to a glass. Because of the stress I felt during the previous night, when adults were drinking, my hands were shaking uncontrollably. My mother tried to point it out to my father, to make him aware how his drinking is affecting me. 'Look how his hands are shaking', she said. My father's first response was: 'He's a young alcoholic'. After that my mother said to him that I'm shaking because I'm scared of his drinking. For a second, I could see on his face guilt, but he chased it away with some pointless comment.

I remember my father taking one of our dogs, called Maks, to the attic. He tied a rope on one of the wooden beams, placed it around the dog's neck, and then he told me to turn the radio on, and make it as loud as possible, so no one would hear the dog's cries. I remember Maks trying to run away, I remember him

squealing and waving his paws in the air as my father pulled him up on the rope. He kept the dog up until it suffocated to death. Afterwards my father said that he did it, because we were too poor to be able to feed Maks.

I remember my father hanging another dog of ours, called Murzyn, on a branch of a very old pear that grew on our ground lot. He did it because he decided that the dog was too wild and unpredictable after it attacked one of our goats a couple of times.

I remember standing in our ground plot, with my back leaning on a tall wooden cage for rabbits. It was an early spring with first warmth of the sun. I went there because I wanted to mentally rest and have some peace of mind. My father was drinking since the morning that day, and he was roaming between the village and home, either looking for something to drink or trying to start a fight with my mom. I was hoping he wouldn't be on that ground plot, but he wandered over there and passing me by, he looked at me with the same disgust he was serving my mother when looking at her while he was drunk, and he said to me: 'What now, you Judas? Your mother turned you against me'.

I remember waking up in the middle of the night because I've

heard my mother crying. She and my father were both drunk at that time. After listening I understood they were talking about the puppy, which we had for a few days. It turned out that my father grabbed that puppy and threw it against the wall on the attic, killing it this way. He did it because supposedly the puppy bit his hand.

I remember my father insulting my mother on many occasions with names such as whore, bitch, slut, prostitute, etc. My mother was insulting him back at such times to defend herself.

I remember our father explaining to me and my brothers that the only reason he had to have children and start a family was to avoid being enforced in the Army to do the Obligatory Military Service, because back in the time of his youth a husband with a family was treated by the government institutions as the only one who can provide his family with food.

My parents were unemployed for most of the time. Each time my father had a job he would spend some of the money he earned, or most of it, on alcohol.

When my mother got a job in a seaside town, one hundred kilometres from home, my father got a job as well in a village

around twenty kilometres from home. He was spending most of his salary on alcohol, and he wasn't taking good care of us, he didn't even try to do his best. When my mother came to visit for one weekend, he demanded from her to quit the job she had, because according to him taking care of the kids and working at the same time was too much of a job. My mother was seriously considering quitting the job and staying at home, but me and my brothers convinced her to pack and go back to work the next day, because we knew that if she would stay things would only get worse for all of us, her especially.

When my oldest brother turned eighteen years old, and our mother didn't live with us anymore, my father gave him an ultimatum. Either he would give him all his scholarship money that he was getting thanks to his school achievement, or he would be forced to leave the house and live on his own. My brother declined to give the money up, and he was told to leave home. When our mother found out about it, she contacted her parents, and they agreed to take my brother in. This way my brother moved out.

I remember my father always blaming others for his poor lot, and the more control he would lose, the more he would blame us all for everything, especially my mother. On the day I was about to leave home and move to my maternal grandparents

(my mother and my oldest brother weren't living with us anymore) my father said to me: 'You all destroyed me at my foundations'. And he meant it.

The way my father made me feel.

1. Seeing how my father hangs a dog, the dog that I really loved, made me feel terrified, hopeless, and powerless. It made me feel that I can't protect something that is important to me, because my father is in full control of every aspect of my life, and that he could easily destroy everything in it if he only wanted to.
2. Hearing my father insulting my mother made me feel scared for her well-being. I could never know when insults would turn into a fight, and my mom would end up getting a beating from him. It also made me think that he doesn't love her at all, and that he punishes her for his own weaknesses and issues.
3. Receiving physical punishment made me feel afraid of my father.
4. The determination with which my father was squeezing my neck or twist my ear, made me feel that he enjoys causing me physical pain, and that he truly hates me.
5. Watching how my father spends most of the money on alcohol made me realize that we couldn't count on him when it comes to our survival. It also made me think that he didn't care about us at all.
6. Knowing that my father uses our books as a kindling without

our permission, made me feel that nothing in the house belonged to me, and that he could take everything from me.

7. Hearing my father insulting me for taking my mother's side made me feel unworthy and being punished for doing something morally right. It also made me feel hated by him.

8. My father's anger, alcoholism and brutality made me feel fully dependent, awkward, and powerless, terrified of my own home, scared for my wellbeing, scared for my mother's life. It made me truly hate him. It made me to dream about his demise. It made me feel the desire to end his life with my own hands.

How those feelings influenced my behaviour.

1. For many years I tended to act like an irresponsible, co-dependent man-child who was unable to fully take care of himself. I was powerless, hopeless, and detached from the steering wheel of my life. I would let things unravel in my life without my intervention and I let other people to shape my life as they saw it fit.

2. I am always convinced that I will not be able to help people I care about or that I won't be able to save anyone or anything in the face of real danger. It always feels like I would be the one who would freeze or even flee, and thus be completely useless and powerless.

3. I am highly afraid of physical harm, and I don't do things that could potentially seriously injure my body. Quite often my brain projects scenarios of me getting injured in this or that way to inform me what kind of threat current situation and place may contain. I am also afraid of being suddenly assaulted verbally or physically by suspiciously looking strangers passed on the street.

4. I am always afraid that the person I will fall in love with and that's supposed to love me back and take care of me, will turn against me, will hate me, and violate me. That is also one of the

main reasons why I avoid entering intimate romantic relationships.

5. For most of my life I felt unworthy of attention and love. I would punish myself mentally for that on many occasions.

6. I am overly protective when it comes to my belongings, my books, and devices. I am not eager to lend them to someone and I don't like letting other people to use them.

7. For the most of my life I would never try to be the defender of anyone. I would also pretend that I didn't see nor hear anything when bad things were happening just to save my own skin.

8. My default behaviour is often passive aggressive.

Pros and cons.

1pro: It gave me perfect chance to observe how people take care of others and thanks to that I have learned to never let others to steer my own life.

1con: I have lost many years of my life on playing idle.

2con: It prevents me from seeking intimate relationships, because I see myself as a person who would not be helpful nor protective. I see myself as a true coward.

3pro: I know that I will never punish myself physically and that I will never take my own life, because the fear of physical pain will keep me away from it. I can scan my environment for possible danger it may contain, and that gives me the chance to avoid it.

3con: I am unable to separate the fear of physical harm from caring about my health, so whenever I need to or want to do something potentially dangerous, I need to turn both off, and that puts me in even greater risk. I have problems with communicating with people who I don't know yet, I just want them to leave me alone.

4pro: When it comes to any kind of relationships and interacting with people, I am highly sensitive to any signs of

negative feelings and dysfunctional behaviours. That gives me the chance to avoid toxic and disrespectful people. I only befriend those who over time will turn out to be worthy of my friendship, my trust, my true respect, and my attention.

4con: It prevents me from creating and sustaining low-profile relationships that could be useful in time. I only make room in my life for few members of my family and only few trusted friends. At this point no one else is allowed to sustain a full-time relation with me. I also don't let colleges from work to become more than that.

5pro: It forced me to learn how to accept and love myself. I understood that I need to learn how to be independent, how to feel good when I am on my own and how to give myself the attention I need. I don't see myself through the prism of what other people say or think about me.

5con: I strive to not attach value to what people say about me, even if the things they say are good things. Whenever someone gives me attention, I feel uncomfortable, and I immediately want to get rid of it. I don't want to be helpful; I don't want people to ask me about my private life, my activities, achievements, and future plans. I only want them to leave me alone, so I wouldn't have to give them my focus, because I have

the need to focus all my attention and focus on me and the things I do.

6pro: I respect my belongings and I take good care of them, so they would serve me for as long as possible.

6con: I don't trust people when it comes to sharing my belongings and devices with them. I always suspect that they will for sure misuse them, break them or even steal them from me.

7con: If someone would suddenly need my help or protection from physical danger I would most likely flee and pretend that I didn't see anything, or I would freeze and be unable to help them either way.

8con: I punish others with my behaviour, because of my own issues.

I was unable to find any pros for points: 2, 7, 8.

Terror

About domestic violence
and terror at home.

Memories of domestic violence and terror.

I remember being only few years old, and it was night-time. Me and my siblings were already in our beds when suddenly our parents started to fight in their bedroom, but in no time the fight moved to our bedroom. My father was a lot stronger than my mother, so she was losing in that fight. He was beating her; she was wrestling with him trying to defend herself. At some point he pushed her against the side of a cabinet and a wall, she slid down to the floor and went unconscious out of exhaustion and pain. Our father took the iron bucket in which we kept water, and he splashed all the cold water left in it right in her face to wake her up. When she did regain her consciousness, she was very weak, and she was convinced that she was dying. So, she started to call to me and my siblings by our names, she hugged us one by one and said: 'I am dying now. I love you and I am sorry for everything. Forgive me.' Me and my siblings were crying and calling to her: 'Mommy, please don't die!' Our father stood next to us, and the only thing he said was: 'Don't pay attention to your mother, she is just hysterical.' He was sober.

I remember lying in my bed at late night and listening to my parents fighting in the kitchen. When the fighting stopped, and my father went back to his bed I got up and walked to the

kitchen to see what happened to my mother. On my way there my father said: 'Don't go there, mother is lying in there.' I went in anyway, and in the dark, I saw my mother half kneeling and half lying on the floor in her purple night dress, with her face to the ground, her hair around her head and arms next to it lying on the floor motionless. She was crying, and I only managed to say: 'Mommy.' But she couldn't hear me, and my father was saying to me: 'Leave her there, let her cry.' So, I went back to my bed.

I remember crying in my bed, which I was sharing with my sister who was visiting us for few days. I was crying because our parents were fighting again in their bedroom, and I was frightened that my father would seriously hurt my mother. Then my sister said to me: 'Why do you cry? It they want to fight, then let them. It's not our business, it's theirs.'

I remember running back to our apartment, because one of my brothers told me that my father beaten my mom that morning and now the Police is in our home. When I walked in, I saw two Police officers asking my mother questions. My mom was still in her night dress, she was sitting on one of our beds, and she was brushing her hair so they could see how much hair she lost when my father attacked her. Then the officers went into the kitchen, and I went there with them, to see my father who hid

in there. He was sitting on a chair, and he was plucking feathers from a chicken, his face was in tears. When the Police asked him about what he did to my mother, he pretended that he doesn't know anything about it, and that he is just preparing a meal for his family. He was sober.

I remember listening to what was happening in my parents' bedroom, because we had a guest, it was late night already, and they were all drinking. At some point my mother turned on TV because she felt sudden want to play her favourite video game. My father didn't like that idea. He started demanding her to turn that 'stupid thing' off, and when she refused few times, I recognised from the noises happening behind the wall and from what our guest was saying, that my father grabbed my mother, slammed her against the wall and started to choke her. Luckily our guest managed to pull him away from her.

I remember me and my brothers trying to defend our mother during some fights, yelling at our father to leave her alone. Or yelling at them both to stop fighting.

I remember me and my brothers running out of the apartment to the attic, because our parents' fight moved to our bedroom. My father was drunk that day, and he was insulting and threatening our mother, which was the reason for that fight.

Their fight also moved out of the apartment, my father ran out of it first and when my mother chased after him, he slammed the doors shut, and she got stuck between the door and the door frame. He was pushing hard trying to crush her, and he almost broke her arm with it. Luckily, he was really drunk, so he stumbled, and my mother managed to push the door open, so my father lost his balance and fell on the floor. My brothers were standing on a side, each of them leaning at the wooden beam, scared and silent. I was trying to run away out of fear, and at the same time I didn't want to leave my mother alone, so I turned back, standing far away from them all, and I started to yell at my father: 'Leave her alone, you stupid man!'

I remember coming back home after a weekend that I've spent at my grandparents' house. When I walked in, I've noticed that one of the cabinets on the wall was missing its glass shelves and all the glasses that were standing on them. When I asked about what happened, my brothers told me that our father got drunk and during an argument with our mom about possible divorce he ran out of the apartment and came back with a crowbar. He said that he will be making a division of property, and he slammed those glass shelves with the crowbar right in the middle.

I remember coming back home, either from a school or after

a weekend. When I walked into my parents' bedroom it turned out that the TV was missing and the glass in the window was broken. When I asked about what happened, it turned out that my father was drunk again, and in the middle of an argument about which channel to watch, he grabbed the TV and throw it through the window, so my mother couldn't watch the channel she liked.

I remember watching TV in the evening with my siblings, our parents were already going to bed, but suddenly they started to fight. My father was insulting my mother. When she was trying to get out of the bed, and she was already siting on the verge of it, my father kicked her back hard, so she fell on the floor. When she sat on in the chair, he took one of the big, heavy pillows that they have in bed and throw it at her with all the strength he had. He was sober. We offered our mother that she could sleep in one of our beds, but she refused, and after my father calmed down, she went back to their bed.

I remember standing in the door frame between my parent's bedroom and the kitchen, pressing my back against one side of it and holding the opposite side with my hands as firm as I could. My parents were arguing and insulting each other, they wanted to fight, but I managed to get between them and not let them to reach one another. Even when they were trying to

reach to each other over my arms, and my mother was threatening my father with the iron furnace poker, and they were both yelling at me to move, I didn't move. I was yelling back at them: 'You will not argue! You will not fight! It's supposed to be normal here!'

The way domestic violence made me feel.

1. Watching my unconscious mother telling us that she is dying, gave me the amounts of fear and despair I never had before nor after.
2. Seeing my mother lying in the dark on the kitchen floor, sobbing after my father have beaten her, made me feel clueless and helpless.
3. Hearing my sister acting like me crying out of fear was something weird and hard to understand, made me feel surprised, clueless, and pathetic.
4. Watching the Police in my apartment gave me a little hope, but seeing the lack of effect their visit made on our lives made me feel, that what was happening in our family couldn't be stopped.
5. Hearing my father assaulting my mother because of a video game made me feel helpless, scared and torn between the want to help and the want to hide.
6. The times me and my brothers were trying to defend our mother, with no effect, made me feel powerless, frustrated, and angry.
7. Going back home and finding out that some of the furniture

is broken or is missing because of my father, made me feel embarrassed and endangered, it made me feel angry at my father, and it made me hate him.

8. Knowing that my father is a coward who assaults only those who are weaker than him, made me despise him and hate him.

How those feelings influenced my behaviour.

1. I keep my mother at the distance and keep her far away from my private affairs, because on the level of my subconsciousness I already said my goodbyes to her, I often feel like she is supposed to be dead already and I am supposed to continue living without her.

2. I don't know how to offer help. Whenever I see someone in the need of help it made me feel uncomfortable and confused, and I want to leave that person alone as fast as possible.

3. My default mindset says: other people are cruel, thoughtless, and illogical, they will only make you feel pathetic, guilty, and confused, so don't let them in.

4. I don't trust the Police and I don't believe that they exist to help. I see them as helpless, useless institution. In case of an emergency,

I would be unwilling to call them for help.

5. Moments like that one made my 'fight or flee' reaction to be set as: freeze, be frighten, clueless and helpless. In times of danger my body weakens.

6. I'm not eager to defend people because I don't see the point of it. My subconsciousness tells me that it would made no

difference. Some part of me even wonders if the assaulted person isn't by any chance getting what they deserve.

7. I was never inviting anyone to my home, and I was never talking about what was happening in it.

8. I automatically despise people who are aggressive, abusive, or drunk. My self-defence mechanism is the strongest when it comes to interacting with people who remind me even in the slightest of my father's qualities and behaviour.

Pros and cons.

1c. I feel like an orphan, even though I still have one parent that cares about me.

2c. Helping people in need never makes me feel good, even when I decide to help, I still feel like it is the wrong thing to do, like they should be helping themselves without bothering me.

3p. I don't let what people say about me to define what I think about myself. I also learned how to not use trust in everyday interactions with people. It helps me to remain steady.

3c. I have problems with creating new friendships or opening to my current friends and family.

4c. In case of emergency my attitude towards the Police could put myself or someone else at even bigger risk.

5c. In many situations I am helpless and unable to defend myself or someone near me that I care about.

6c. It is very difficult for me to help someone who is being assaulted or punished. I also tend to judge those victims as the ones who did something wrong.

7c. I don't know how to be a host and enjoy a presence of guests in my home. I only want to get rid of them as fast as possible,

I only wait for them to leave, because I feel like they shouldn't be there. I am afraid that they will find out that my home is filled with alcohol, domestic violence etc., even though it is not true anymore.

8p. It keeps me away from people who are aggressive, alcoholics, etc. Thanks to it the circle of people who are the closest to me is healthy.

I was unable to find any pros for points: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7.

I was unable to find any cons for points: 8.

Dog's Hunger

About years of poverty.

Memories of poverty.

I remember that having a toothpaste in our home was a luxury, most of the time we did not have it. We also did not have hot running water, so if I wanted to brush my teeth in the morning before the school and the fire in furnace was not burning, I had to use cold water and salt instead of toothpaste.

I remember my father sending me and my siblings to the stores to ask for food, promising that our parents will pay for it at a later date. I also remember my father sending my siblings to the local priest or to the church organist to borrow money from them when we had nothing to eat.

I remember going to stores alone or with my brothers asking for the cardboard boxes, so we could have something to burn in the furnace, sometimes by a chance of luck we were finding some food in them.

I remember one time our parents went to visit, and drink with, some distant relative of ours in a different village. They left me and my siblings alone; we were only around 6-10 years old. We were hungry but we had nothing to eat. Luckily for us, in one of the boxes brought from the store we found few sausages. They were already after the date of use, so they had distinctive sour taste. Fortunately, we had a strong mustard in our fridge, so we

used it to cover the sour taste these sausages had and ate them.

I remember that many times the only thing we had to eat was either dry bread with a glass of goat's milk, or dry slice of bread moist with water and dipped in sugar, or slices of bread dipped in egg fried on a pan, or nothing at all.

I remember that as a kid, when I had access to food, I was able to eat the entire one-kilogram bread loaf sliced horizontally in half and filled with liverwurst and tomatoes in one sitting.

I remember often feeling an urge to steal something from people or a store, either a toy or something that I really liked, because I couldn't afford to have it.

I remember my mother writing to some non-profit institution placed in Germany which was helping people in need, by providing them with second-hand clothing to aid us.

I remember that my teachers at school were always acting weird and were very surprised whenever I said that I didn't go anywhere on holidays, or that I couldn't afford to pay 30zł for a school trip.

The way those events made me feel.

1. I felt ashamed of my breath for years, and I am still unsure of it. It also felt unfair to have such lack in personal hygiene, when it was caused by factors I could not influence.
2. Whenever I was sent to stores, to ask for food, I felt used and ashamed. It felt unfair to be sent with such task, it made me think of my father as a coward, who doesn't want to take the responsibility of sustaining his family.
3. Feeding on food left in the boxes from the stores made me feel pathetic and ashamed of myself.
4. I always felt sick and unclean when stealing, because I knew it was not the right thing to do, but the want to have them and the feeling of poverty were so strong on me, they felt like a permission to steal.
5. Every time we received a big sack of clothing from charity organisations, I felt overjoyed, excited, and impatient, because I could not wait to find out what clothes I would get this time.
6. The teacher's response always made me confused, because poverty was my daily bread and I couldn't understand, why they couldn't understand something so basic. It also made feel sad, and explaining my situation to others was too hard for me.

How those feelings influenced my behaviour.

1. My breath was one of the reasons for which I was eager to avoid intimate contacts or to not stand very close to someone, because I was always afraid that they would feel the stink coming out of my mouth.

2. I really don't like to shop. Facing the checkout counter always makes me feel poor.

3. I will eat anything I can find in the fridge or in the cupboards that is 'food likely to be soon after the date of use', so it wouldn't go to waste. I don't like to open new packs of food unless the previous one is not finished. Since I can remember I was always categorizing food on my plate as follows: the food I don't like and the food I do like. To be sure that I would eat everything from my plate I would allow myself to eat the things I liked only after I would eat the things I don't like.

4. Every time a shop assistant approaches me, I immediately feel guilty, and I am sure that they will accuse me of trying to steal something from the store.

5. Every piece of clothing I don't want to wear any more, I pass to non-profit organizations specialized in providing poor people with second-hand clothing.

6. In time, I started to lie about the places I visited during summer vacations, even though I didn't go anywhere, and to every idea of a class trip etc., I started to say: 'I don't' want to. I don't feel like it'. It was easier to be antisocial than to talk about poverty.

Pros and cons.

1c. Because of lack of proper oral hygiene and lack of proper education on that subject, I developed an aggressive form of gum disease around age of eighteen, diagnosed five years later.

2p. Thanks to my dislike for shopping I can save a lot of money that I would most likely spend on the products I don't even need.

2c. My mind still doesn't understand that I am not poor anymore. No matter how much money I can have on my bank account, my mind still has problems with seeing that money as wealth, it just doesn't click.

3p. I have very strong respect for food.

3c. Feeling hunger so often in childhood plus my eating tendencies trained my organism to store extra fat basically from everything I eat and as often as possible just in case I wouldn't be able to eat anything in the nearest future. I struggle with excess weight since I was ten years old.

4p. I've learned to respect someone's property more than my own.

4c. I was a potential criminal.

5p. I buy new clothes only when I need them, and I make good use of the clothing I don't want to wear any more.

6c. Over time this pattern did spread to my entire life. Lying about how I am, and how my life is has become a norm to me. It took me few years to replace lies with silence. Now, when I don't want to explain something, I just don't speak, but even that is uncomfortable.

I was unable to find any pros for points: 1, 6.

I was unable to find any cons for points: 5.

Marriage

About my parents' marriage.

Memories of my parents' marriage.

I remember that my parents were often bringing up the topic of possible divorce during their fights. But for years it was always idle talk, shouted in anger. It was disturbing because I never knew what would happen next. Weather the fighting stop, or would it rage on with more hatred? It was also confusing, because I could not understand why two people who supposedly cannot stand each other are not turning those threats into reality. I was awaiting many times for something to happen. After many fights of this type I said to myself: "This is it. This time it will be over for sure. They will get divorced, and we won't have to live with our father anymore". But time after time nothing was happening, and when my parents finally did end up divorced, I was already a teenager living with my grandparents.

I remember that communication between my parents was often very bad, and my mother was the one who was often trying to reach out as the first one, or tried to make things right with words, or trying to stop the upcoming fight with words before the situation would get worse. My father was the opposite of that, he was often lying and using vulgar words to show his "affection", he was highly reactive and aggressive. The

lack of healthy communication and their dysfunctional relationship was a perfect reflection of the relationships their own parents had.

I remember that my father was often using insults against my mother to punish her for the wrongs he was doing himself, like: accusing her of being a whore and sleeping with other men, when he was the one who most likely cheated on her with another woman; accusing her parents for badmouthing him and trying to destroy their marriage, when it was his mother who was brainwashing him against his own wife; insulting her and accusing her of brainwashing us against him when in fact these were his own deeds and words that made us turn our backs on him.

The way those events made me feel.

1. Hearing for years about divorce that wasn't happening made me feel very confused. Each time the topic was brought up it made me gain hope about better future and some certainty that it will happen soon. However, the next day when nothing was done about it and those claims turned into empty words, all my hopes for a better future were dying yet again, and again.

2. The quality of communication between my parents, mixed with many other qualities of their relationship, made me feel hopeless and sad, because it made me think that it is not possible for two people who supposedly love/loved each other to reach consensus, to respect each other with words, to be honest, to be responsible, etc.

3. The methods my father used against my mother and against us made me feel victimized most of all, but also confused, because I couldn't understand why he, an adult, would behave this way and be so irresponsible and unfair towards us, his own family.

How those feelings influenced my behaviour.

- 1.** I stopped believing adults. I stopped believing that they can or want to make their lives better.
- 2.** The concept of a relationship my parents' example taught me was wrong, so I never knew how to create healthy romantic relationship.
- 3.** Such treatment made me helpless in in situations when I was being treated unfair by other people. It made me convinced that I am always supposed to feel victimized, no matter of the circumstances.

Pros and cons.

1p. It helped me to develop a system in which I don't accept what I hear from other people as true or untrue. I simply accept that someone said something, and then I analyse it to understand the reasoning or motivation behind the words I hear, what effect they are meant to have on me, what reaction they are meant to trigger.

1c. I have a strong tendency to see adults as even more helpless and unreliable than adolescents.

2p. I know too well how poor or bad communication looks like, so at least I know what to avoid, and for what quality of communication I should be aiming.

2c. For many, many years I had severe difficulties with properly communicating my thoughts, which I still have, but not as big as they used to be.

3c. My childhood experiences raised me in belief that I am supposed to be a victim of any kind, and it cost me years of self-loathing and swimming in depressive thoughts. I still struggle with this mindset.

I was unable to find any pros for points: 3.

TO BRANCHES

24 II 2023

Ghost

About fading, being bullied
and playing idle

Shame.

Silence is the major element of being the Ghost. Staying out of sight, avoiding attention, and playing invisible is a state which developed in me over years due to few different reasons, such as fear, terror, ignorance, and shame. They appeared one at a time and stayed with me, creating intertwined layers of what can be labelled as an 'invisibility cloak' that I was forced to wear for years to come. I felt it was important to do so to survive each hour and day of childhood, teenage years and so on.

I think poverty was the first to appear in my life. I was almost born into it. The state of lacking money to cover the basic needs of our family accompanied us since I can recall. It is something that made me feel as if I was not good enough in comparison to my peers, especially to those of my peers, who were not raised in poverty.

I always wanted that part of me to remain hidden from common sight, but poverty is not something that can be swept under the carpet when you want it to disappear. It is always out there in plain sight, in the state of your clothes, the state of your school handbooks, your lack of food, your lack of money for a school trip, your lack of hygiene, etc.

This lack of basic goods made me feel sad and ashamed of

myself and my own home. So, during my school years I always avoided inviting anyone to my place, and I rarely visited my friends. I did not want to be seen, because poverty was part of me, and it showed. There was no way for me to get rid of it. All I could do was to keep it out of sight by hiding along with it.

Furthermore, the awareness of my me and my family lacking wealth programmed me to suppress and minimize my needs as much as possible, because I did not want to become a burden to my parents.

Fear.

The next factor that contributed greatly to the fading process was the experienced fear and terror in a form of domestic violence, both physical and psychological, which I witnessed at my home.

It originated within my father, who was growing more aggressive over the years, while slowly succumbing to alcoholism. This anger and hatred were already part of his personality since I can recall, but they grew exponentially larger due to alcohol. His main victim was my mother, but my brothers and I would also become his targets from time to time.

Over time this violence has turned at the same time predictable and hard to predict. It would come because of behaviour, which was deemed as bad, but also behaviour that was in no way bad, or even because of telling the truth which was very unwelcomed at times.

This fear and terror, witnessed and experienced domestic abuse, developed in me a state of desired invisibility. I wanted to draw as little attention as I possibly could, to make sure that my behaviour would not be spotted by my father when he was either drunk or in a very bad mood. The reason is, I was not always able to tell what could trigger an aggressive response.

To achieve that partial invisibility, I avoided drawing attention with my presence, and I resorted to not speaking much. Silence seemed to be the best option to choose, unfortunately not always, because even that sometimes would be seen as me showing a problematic attitude.

When that happened, when I got the wrong kind of attention, I instantly and desperately wanted to disappear.

Ignorance.

Another element which turned out to be an important factor in the development of the Ghost in me was ignorance that I received from others and the ignorance I treated myself with.

Surely it was not the most obvious thing I would ever suspect of having such a big impact on the state of my mind and then my behaviour in a long run. But there it was, faintly present in everyday life, delivered to me by adults around me.

Some of them ignored my presence entirely, because I was a child and according to them, and a very common saying they would recite “Fish and children have no voice.” Reminding me this way, I was not allowed to speak when not asked to do so, and that my opinion and voice had no meaning nor weight when important matters were being discussed.

It would extend to other people ignoring my wants, interests, and preferences. They would even ignore my needs.

This trend in the end programmed me into thinking that there is nothing in me that would be interesting to see or hear. I started to think that I am not worth noticing, because I am devoid of substance.

Over time, I began to ignore myself on many levels and on many

occasions. I would ignore my feelings and their source. My wants and preferences would often be set aside, deemed as unimportant or irrelevant, and the most important of all, my needs would become suppressed.

In time, I would silence my natural reactions and impulses to the point I would feel very numb, almost dead, and very translucent, as if I was existing and not existing at the same time.

Bulling.

Growing up with my father taught me to be afraid of aggressive men in general. It has become my reason to avoid such individuals once I spotted them, and it is why I was seeking the presence of people who had more peaceful aura around them, people who felt safe to spend time with.

This trend did not clearly manifest itself in my early childhood, when I would spend more time hanging out with boys and very little time with girls. It did become more apparent during the years of puberty, when my male peers' behaviour had grown a lot more aggressive and unpredictable. During those times, I drifted towards cultivating friendships with my classmates who did not pose any danger to me. Majority of them were girls. For that, for hanging out with girls instead of boys, my persecutors would name me the Pimp.

Bulling in my case took the form of psychological abuse. Mostly name-calling, repetitive gestures that had strong sexual undertone, posing threats and aggressive domination. It would also extend to spreading rumours about me. The most hurtful of them would state that people have seen me masturbating myself in bushes in different places of my village. There was no stopping it or fixing the damage those rumours had caused. In

the end they would return to hunt me even after years have passed.

I think what caused me the biggest suffering was the fact that my persecutors, especially one of them, were my peers who a few years earlier I considered to be my close friends.

Bulling caused me to want to be absent from school. When I did attend school, I wanted to not be seen by those who had the tendency to abuse my fragile state, which they could sense as an opportunity to exploit it in harmful ways.

Idleness.

Playing idle was a big part in cementing my state of the Ghost, and it was done completely by me for over a decade of neglecting myself.

For a very long time, I was convinced that pretending that bad things I witnessed at our home did not happen or were unimportant would shelter me from their negative impact.

I believed that if I ignored all acts of bullying which were unleashed on me, it would never hurt me in any way.

I thought it was possible for me to become bulletproof by practising ignorance and idleness.

Furthermore, I preferred to ignore the fact that for years I allowed myself to maintain a status of a victim, even though I was no longer one.

Not standing my ground and fighting for myself, my rights and my needs was hurting me in a passive way, and I did not even recognize it for what it was until someone pointed it out, which allowed me to pierce the veil.

Since that point, I was able to see myself for what I was. I understood that when potential predators were no longer present in my environment of every-day life, I picked up their

mantle and continued to victimize myself with negligence and idleness. In a way, I was cherishing my victim status as if being a victim was my greatest life achievement.

What followed was my long effort of sieving myself through the veil of being the Ghost, so I could begin my slow journey of self-development.

Undead

About feeling frozen, having nightmares
and fearing death

Stagnation.

Getting stagnant in my efforts to shape my fate into something of my own making was quite a rapid occurrence. I think it was a state which came forth as a natural evolution of my idleness; lack of action to impact my daily life.

It was further strengthened by the constant feeling of hopelessness, as well as being almost entirely powerless on so many levels of my life.

Over time, this feeling grew stronger and more persistent in delaying my actions. It slowly pulled me down, flooding me with feelings of depression, sadness, and melancholy.

The more I succumbed to these emotions, unable to see any light of hope or a way out, the more I felt like I was already dead, as if my life has already ended for good before my adulthood begun.

Nightmares.

In my childhood bad dreams did not happen to me often. When they did, they would come as a reaction to a gore film I have watched or a result of having a fever, and I would not attach too much meaning to them.

In my teenage years nightmares rarely occurred during my sleep as well. They would appear mostly near the end of summer school break and the beginning of a school year. Oddly enough, they would contain visions of a beginning of a new World War. Warplanes dropping bombs were the most common theme in those nightmares, and they would make me feel quite disturbed for a while after waking up.

The most disturbing nightmares that I have ever experienced happened to me when I was twenty-one years old. That period in my life was a culmination of all my mental issues, and bad dreams played an important role in my emotional collapse.

All those nightmares had one common theme: Armageddon.

Visions of the end of the world would play out in many different scenarios in my sleep, bringing a lot of mental strain and a feeling of inevitable doom. Their variation would span across severe natural cataclysms. From fires, floods, and

cyclones, through meteor impacts, to burning sulphur raining from the sky and celestial bodies colliding with planet Earth.

These nightmares were the most intense I have ever experienced. They gave me a feeling of upcoming inescapable doom which stayed with me, feeding my hopelessness for moths.

Death.

There were times during the several years of my early life when I happened to fear for the life of my loved ones, mostly my mother. However, despite that fear and the possibility that her death could turn into reality, I didn't fully understand the concept of death.

I feared dying with my primal animal instincts, but I had no conscious and self-aware understanding of what it means to be dead.

This realisation came to me one day, completely out of nowhere, when I was around fifteen years old.

At one time, at the end of a school year, our teacher took my class for a walking trip to a lake. On our way back through the woods

I was having a conversation with one of my friends, then suddenly one of our classmates who was walking in front of us looked back at us and asked:

“Hey guys, do you ever think about death? Are you ever afraid that you're going to die one day?”

Those two questions were enough to direct my mind onto the path of exploring the meaning of death and the frightening

process of understanding what it really means to be dead, and how it will affect my body, mind, and consciousness once it will be my turn to die.

I find myself lacking words to describe how it felt when the entirety of my being, physical and psychological, understood that the only thing that awaits me beyond death is oblivion, and that the barrier that separates me from it is incredibly thin, almost non-existent.

I have become fully aware that death is something that negates life itself, and once it comes it will erase every little part of my existence, effortlessly and without mercy.

Over time, this awareness and fear born from it crippled me deeply.

TO BLOSSOM

25 XII 2025

Crumbling

About falling apart.

Veil.

Walking through life with inner demons that piled up layer by layer robbed me of the ability to see myself as I must have been seen by people I came in contact with.

I never knew nor suspected that the kindness I received from the members of my family and my friends would be the main reason for which I could never see how miserable and pathetic I allowed myself to be for a very long time.

I am definitely not a fan of 'tough love' but in my case it turned out to be a very crucial element of my recovery. The one that initiated it.

I never used this tool on anyone, and what I have discovered in life, for the 'tough love' to be effective, it cannot come from people who are the closest to you, for that will always be misunderstood as unwarranted cruelty or an abuse performed for sport.

In my case, it has been received from a person younger than me, somebody whose affection and sympathy I desperately wanted.

At the time, my psychological and emotional condition was very poor, but I was not fully aware how bad it was, nor how deeply those issues were rooted. I had a feeling it had something

to do with my early upbringing. However, the extent of the damage inflicted upon me was not known to me.

I was shrouded by the veil of ignorance, and the nurture I received did not provide me with tools that would help me to free myself from its harmful cocoon.

Puncture.

In that time of my life, the end of my teenage years and the beginning of my twenties, I was desperate to find myself a special someone.

I could not find in me any love for myself, nor a reason to love me in the first place. Hence, I convinced myself, that the only way for me to feel loved, and to be happy again, was to get into a romantic relationship. What a fool I was!

To make matters worse, at the time, I was mistaking pity I have felt for romantic attraction, therefore I was unable to sync physical attraction with romantic love in one person; romantic love being the mandatory element for me to get into a relationship.

Add all the aforementioned together and a tragedy writes itself.

To say I was very confused and confusing, while being pitiful and pathetic — and on top of that shortsighted, emotionally stunted, depressing and depressed — is an understatement.

Needless to say, it ended with me receiving a very kind rejection, one I should have respected. Unfortunately, I was buried too deep in my victimhood to do so.

I know that I inflicted emotional damage and distress to

a person who did not deserve it. For that I will always feel sorry. I have placed the darkest elements of my past on the shoulders of someone who was neither asking for it, nor was equipped to deal with it. I did not care how it would make them feel, and in what position I was placing them in. Furthermore, I was so ill, I even convinced myself that my actions were an expression of love.

It was not love. It was self-indulgent pity and misery, mixed with a notion, that under different circumstances — if I would be mentally and emotionally sound — I would love this person with my whole being, because they were worth it.

The response I received was both long due and well deserved. In short, it was a brutally honest description of who I was, and very accurate criticism of my behavioural pathologies.

My reaction was rage. I could not believe that someone younger and less experienced than me, who never suffered as much as I had suffered, dared to criticise me. In spite of that, deep down I felt they were right to do so, and I knew their personality well enough to know they would not resort to lie; if they said this is how I was behaving, then it must have been true.

In the end, this outrage of mine turned out to be the spear which punctured the veil of my ignorance. Though it was not easy,

I had to admit that I was entertaining myself with self-pity for too long, thus allowing myself to remain pathetic for years.

At that moment, I decided to change. I made a promise to myself that I will get better, for there was no way I would want to continue my existence in such a sorry state.

What awaited me were five years of hardship, which slowed down the progress of my self-development.

Turmoil.

I struggled for a long time to find a job, because I was afraid of work. My parents never taught me the right attitude and mindset towards work during my early upbringing and teenage years, therefore my transition from a student to an employee was not only delayed, but also disastrous.

Since my first employment happened to be in a company where every layer of its structure was dysfunctional, it conditioned me to expect everything the worst from working environments. I was definitely not equipped with the right tools and mental health to succeed in such a place. The time I have spent there culminated in my nervous breakdown and a resignation.

The second job only added more salt to injury, deepening fresh psychological wounds, and making me feel even more of an incompetent failure. Once again, I had to resign.

My third employment — though offering a better working conditions — due to the mental stress I was exposed to, broke the last sound strings of my nerves, which manifested in my body shutting down my digestive system altogether. I was sure staying in that job would lead to my demise, and so, I resigned.

After those three unfortunate professional experiences, I was unable to find sustainable work. I was so frightened of picking up an occupation, I would feel like fainting at the first day of a new job.

For years to come I would suffer from long term pre-emptive stress whenever I had incoming appointments or new events and activities; robbing me of sleep, straining and freezing my mind, worsening my gut health, etc.

My struggle with this ailment is still ongoing. Thankfully — as I am working on improving my mental health — the magnitude of its symptoms is slowly decreasing with each passing year.

Mending

About healing.

Mosaic.

After five years of such hardship, and twenty-one years of increasing misery preceding it, I was convinced that I will never be able to make a living in my home country; nor will I be able to build a successful and happy life for myself. So, when the opportunity to leave it all behind appeared, I took it.

Since I owned nothing, I had nothing to lose, but everything to gain.

There and then, in the foreign land which became my home, I found the financial stability which granted me time, space and peace of mind I needed to begin proper healing of my tarnished psyche.

In this better, safer environment, I managed to put myself under the microscope and begin a long self-analysis. The first and most obvious thing I observed about me was my distorted image.

I have learned to look at myself as if I was looking at a full-body portrait made of a stained-glass. In such works of art many glass tiles of different shapes, sizes and colours are joint and framed together to create a cohesive well composed image. It can only happen if all pieces are well-thought-out and placed

in their rightful places. Used as a metaphor, each piece of the mosaic can represent one thing, e.g.: a personality trait, a natural preference, a moral code, a skill, a nurtured belief, and so on.

While studying the image of myself, I realised how devastated it was. Many of its elements were underdeveloped or malformed, others were forced to sit in the wrong places, some of them were missing entirely or were replaced with pieces which should never be part of me in the first place; and the frame itself was misshapen and thin, barely holding it all together.

I understood that to fix it I would have to shutter my mangled mosaic, to then sieve through all the broken pieces, and analyse them one by one.

Wanting nothing else, but to heal, I shuttered it.

Dismantling myself psychologically was a delicate and slow process, during which I felt very frail and exposed. With all the pieces laid down before me, I was able to see them for what they were, and separate those which were naturally a part of me from those unwanted dark shards brutally fixed into my frame by external forces.

Each discarded shard left an empty space, thus giving more room to pieces in need of further growth and expansion, or to completely new pieces I wanted to make a part of me.

When I was ready to reassemble all the remaining pieces together in a rearranged configuration that was in agreement with my nature, the time has come to take care of the frame. It needed to be reshaped to fit the new image, and strengthen to prevent it from falling apart.

Code.

No progress on my healing path would have been possible without the development of proper tools, and the search for knowledge required to make them work. Over time the tools listed below has shaped the way I conduct my life on daily basis, thus keeping my frame strong and in the right shape.

Cleanliness.

A messy house equals a messy life. All the mess and disorder I let to take root in my own house will have its reflection in my day-to-day life, my decision-making, my behaviour, my relationships and my health. To have a clean life, I make sure that everything in my house is clean, free of clutter, free of hazards, everything has its own intended place, and I do not allow any mess to pile up. My house is the foundation of my inner peace; if that foundation would be built of crap, I would have a very crappy life.

Karma.

To some people, karma is a philosophy or a belief, but to me, it is an ongoing equation of probability. The more problematic elements I remove from my life, the more likely it is I will face fewer problems in the future. The more selective I am about people who are allowed to be part of my private life, the higher

the chance that my relationships will be long-lasting and healthy. The more ethical my self-conduct is, the lower the chance of dishonest people desiring my presence. I use this equation quite successfully to keep my life free of tragedies and concerns.

Negative thoughts.

A thought is but an electric impulse rushing between different, often random, brain cells. Its continuous occurrence creates a constant stream of thoughts, from which potentially negative and/or dangerous thoughts are picked by my mind prone to self-torment; a predisposition I have gained from years of suffered harm. In times when I am unable to control where my thoughts go, my mind latches onto those thoughts and charges them with energy, creating visualisations of situations and/or conversations in which I am being treated unjustly. These thoughts get inflated to enormous sizes in matters of a split of a second, they block all other thinking processes. When that happens, I do not register what I see, hear nor do; causing me to make mistakes, and my body keeps on moving on autopilot for a short time, before it runs out of conscious intention. The only method of preventing aforementioned inflation from happening is a constant vigil of my thinking process from the moment of waking up to the moment of falling asleep.

Naturally, for many reasons, it is impossible to achieve. In spite of it, I am doing everything I can to recognize, as soon as possible, when my thoughts are going in the wrong direction, and to redirect them onto a different, more positive and useful train of thought.

Lack of influence.

Worrying about the elements of life which I cannot influence is a bad practice. It took me a while to let go of obsessing over them, but in the end, I have learned to not let them take root in my head. I still observe and analyse some of them in case they have something to teach me, but I am very good at keeping them far away from me. Also, I have learned how to stay beyond the reach of people whose influence on me could be unhealthy.

Ambition.

Not knowing how to properly deploy ambition has caused me a lot of grief across many years. It took me a very long time to learn that ambition alone could be the death of me if I would let it out of control. Eventually, I have learned to keep it on a leash, in the size proportionally mirroring my available possibilities and abilities. Since then, my ambition no longer has the chance to devour me from within; now, it functions as a motor, providing me with motivation for continuous improvement. However, my ambition's nature has not changed; if I would let

it run free, it would tear me apart in a matter of weeks.

Transparency.

Keeping my life and human connections clear is very important to me. There were times in my past when I would end up entangled in shady and unethical situations, and each time it would happen I would feel awful about it. Over time, I have learned to recognize early signs of shady situations, which allowed me to not get caught up in them. Every time I start feeling like something or someone is trying to ensnare me with unethical conduct, I do or say something that will immediately cast a strong strobe of light on my position, chasing away every shadow nearby.

Imagery.

Writing was always a very useful tool which served me well while I was working through many dark moments of my past. However, sometimes words were not enough to unravel convoluted lumps of emotions. In such cases, transferring these feelings through my hands onto paper in the form of drawings filled with symbolism would do the trick. Seeing what I felt made it possible to name, understand and work through whatever was ailing me.

Nemesis.

In the case of owning a dysfunctional mind plagued by the tendency to hurt itself, I had to realize that for as long as I live, my enemy number one will always be me. Accepting this truth allowed me to focus on learning every patter of self-harm I may showcase. Once knowing what these patterns were and how they begin, I was able to caught them in their early stages, then take control over my own behaviour and overwrite old pathological ways with new healthy habits.

THE END