

FULL-CORE STATE NIHILIST



Mesque state. The central square of a provincial town. The air is dry with dust, and a movie screen adorns the concrete façade of the old town hall like a grey flag, the daily newsreel having just been displayed to the public a few hours ago. Two men, younger than old and peculiar in both speech and demeanor, are sitting on the edge of the sidewalk, the living embodiments of a particular problem.

“Co-ock,” the younger one laboriously enunciates, his dark, brushlike eyebrows raised high as if caught in a worry. The other – sporting the long, hanging sword-whiskers of Stepan the Despicable – smiles and nods in agreement. Pointing his index finger to the sky, he intones in a sagely voice: “I see your cock and raise you the fucking of said cock, penetrating its insides; a cock-fuck, so to speak.”

The other man’s grin widens upon hearing those words. In his mind’s eye he plays them out with discomfort, embarrassment, and horror – exactly what he was looking for. “Damn you, always off fucking your fucking sluts,” he responds in a completely everyday voice. The other man responds in the same manner: “Pissing into an ass, cock hard.”

The flow of banter comes to a halt for a brief while. “Female piss,” the first one tries. “The word ‘cum,’” the second responds. “Cum-tard... Cumlessness? You know, we should procure some liqueur and factory cigarettes. Some grub, too.” He gets on his feet. His slender torso, tattooed blue-and-white, is visible under his rather short leather jacket, and his trousers ride so low that most of his pubic hair is on full display. His pose screams *immer noch*: come at me! The other one seems to be of a likeminded demeanor, but instead of a leather jacket, he wears a checkered shirt, also unbuttoned, and the body underneath is shorter, stockier and less covered up by tattoos; more human looking, all in all. His eyes are big and black, his lips red as a rosebud. Both of their hairs shine with grease.

These guys are fags. That’s to say, members of a local youth movement with an extravagantly gay imagology. Some say that it’s a radical Mesque offshoot of the homo-sexual underground, while others might rightfully ask: what’s so radical about it? Their trade is mostly *contre-courant* shock value. One doesn’t really need to be homosexual to belong; one can always just say that they are waiting for the right one, though this might raise the stakes of their game of valor. Fags love to prove their valor, preferably with their fists. It was established early on that it’s not enough to be a repulsive outcast – that would just be a parlor trick. To really step on the heels of the world, you need to be downright terrifying; a predator. Where exactly this movement sprung from, no one can say with certainty. It might be the design project of nihilists who infiltrated Mesque’s internal security right before the new innocence took office. Or it might just be a byproduct of the times. These days, it’s hard to tell.

The merry couple return to the sleepy, dusty square that the good sun in its infinite kindness saw fit to warm up. “Piss wanker,” the taller, moustached fag says. “So, someone who needs to jerk off in order to piss?” the other clarifies. “Maybe. Seems plausible,” the older man replies. Let’s just call him Esteban, that is his name. The other one is Hulio.

Hulio says: “Small-dicked faggot.”

“FAGS EVERYWHERE, ALL AROUND!” Esteban roars out of nowhere. There’s real anger in his voice, though directed at what is not exactly clear. Pigeons flap their wings in alarm. A little flustered, he collects himself and takes a sip from the bottle. The cigs have been burning for a while already, generously taken from the store, its packages lining the pavement like little soldiers.

Hulio is a bit startled by the outburst, but carries on in a jovial manner: “Fags love that bottom hole.”

“Oh, they can’t live without it. Few can, really. Given that, it’s pragmatic to develop a normal relationship with it.”

“The name Nilbur Schmidt, does it exist?”

“A common name in some countries, even,” answers Esteban, his eyes twinkling for some reason. A pause. Hulio exclaims: “Cuntflesh.”

“Eat shit from me ass n’ swalla me cum, ye sow,” the slimmer slouch says suggestively, brows furrowed, his voice almost tinged with sorrow. They both burst out laughing. They stay there for a while, putting different expressions and tonalities on the sentence and, eventually, they start singing it. Like a choral, then a cabaret, then a boiadeiro blues song and finally like a drunk lullaby. Hulio doesn’t carry the tune too well; Esteban is better, but not quite perfect. “*Eat shit from me-e a-ass,*” the boys sing, “*swalla me cum, ye sow,*” the surrounding buildings answer. The rays of the midday sun gently caress them, painting them and the concrete and the tufts of grass peeking out from under the pavement with a golden hue.

There are not many people on the square, and the few that are mostly steer clear of them. Esteban’s chest is adorned with a heart-shaped medallion, inside of which is a small portrait of Lita Zippora, famous from the reels, now minister of various affairs. Beneath it, amidst the chest hair, are slogans in block letters: “EFFECTIVE PLANNED ECONOMY”, “THE MASSES WILL STRIKE”, “I AM NOT AFRAID OF DEATH”. Under Hulio’s left nipple “requires man” is written, and below that, next to the navel, a realistic but amateurly drawn cock looks as if its ripping itself out of the skin. Someone’s shoes click on the pavement, drawing nearer.

An artificially blonde, middle-aged woman in a sky-blue suit approaches the youths and puts her hand on her hip belligerently. “I get it. Let’s declare war on grammar itself, right? Against sentence structure too, why not. Let’s destroy morality. Let’s tear down the walls which have been built through the eons, regardless of the rationality of their construction. Let’s erase it all from your minds, from mine, from everyone’s, maybe! The world will be so much better, right? There’s only one problem, boys: what if you’re wrong?” Her voice is educated, the tonal shifts mellow.

Esteban arises slowly and furrows his brow: “We stand before two possibilities here, fair maiden. One is that you’re a few steps behind the times and can’t sing the new tune just yet. The other one is that you’re a moralfag to your very core – in that case, you’d do well to understand that without our like, your ideology lacks all theoretical legitimacy. You’d feel desolate and empty, staring into eternity as you chew on your little croissants; thousands of generations sipping coffee at outdoor cafés, going to work, munching pastries with your hair all neat, and nothing but this in the entire world. In either case... we do not precisely meet on the question of reality. And this conversation is over.” Esteban pulls a gun out from inside his jacket and points it limp-wristed at the woman, eyes crossed a little, mouth ajar and tongue searching for the tip of his moustache, trembling slightly as if snoring. A shade of terror passes across the older lady’s face; she turns around and disappears around the nearest corner, half-running. In surrounding doors and windows, human heads come into view. Esteban continues his pantomime for a bit, then sits down, takes a breath and spits: “Aunties,” sticking the gun into his pants this time. Hulo snickers uncontrollably, huffing and puffing as he tries to stop. “Oh, we really are doing a number on this reality shit,” he says in the end, wiping some tears away with his shirt sleeve.

“Poor bastards, these aunties. How can I take moralfaggotry seriously if its vanguard flees the battlefield like this? What do you think, will the auntie conduct a landing op, returning with reinforcement around the corner – maybe even on ropes, from the

town hall roof – to reinforce the supremacy of conventional morality in a magnificent show of force? Do you see that happening?” asks Esteban in the voice of an old man tired of life.

Hulio laughs. “No, I don’t, not at all. Ain’t you afraid you’ll shoot your balls off?”

Esteban smiles a halfway smile: “Not afraid of death, and not afraid of shooting my balls off. Also – it’s not loaded. If I wanted to bang-bang, I’d join the army. A gun is like a scepter. A status symbol more than anything.” He takes a puff from the cig and blows the smoke out from the corner of his lips. The lines around his mouth betray an older age than is typical for these guys.

Hulio doesn’t understand. “Status symbol, how?”

“Y’know, a symbol of state power. The state has a monopoly on violence. It has decided to share it with us. This is a sign of trust, a sign that our like have been invited to take part in matters of the state. But the idea of the state is not power for power’s sake, or violence for violence’s sake – they’re the means to an end, like muscles on a skeleton. Power is street cred, basically. If you don’t have any, you’ve gotta constantly kick some dudes’ lanterns in to prove yourself. But once you do have it... it becomes unseemly to jump in everyone’s face all the time. You can do whatever you want – everyone already knows that you’re not to be fucked with,” Esteban explains.

“So, what, you’re pro-state?” asks Hulio.

“A committed, full-core servant of the fatherland and a lifelong admirer of the ecclesiastic system,” Esteban straightens his back and looks into the distance, striking a pose laden with pathos. He turns back to Hulio. “Aren’t you a nihilist, anyway? No opinions on whether our dear government is ‘too nihilistic’ or ‘not nihilistic enough?’”

“I didn’t think the government had anything to do with it. I thought the whole point was that there was no point and that fucktards should be fucked with extreme prejudice,” the young, oiled hooligan admits.

“Intuitively this is correct, and, frankly, enough on its own, but when you think like that you’re really thinking like an auntie – acting

on instinct. The auntie sides with the state because they all do; they can't comprehend resistance. Street monsters like us – well, we're all at odds with the powers that be, always have been, and it's hard to comprehend reality in any other way. But actually, it's useful to understand politics, to keep up with the times. Otherwise, it's easy to be made a sucker. How much do you know about nihilism, anyway?"

"Behold the mighty nihilist standing eye to eye with death..." Hulio recites. "I know some stuff."

"But you never saw it for yourself?" Esteban is half-mocking his mate, but half-admiring him too. "You're a strange creature, Hulo. On the surface, you're just an ordinary, blinking idiot, ain't you? But when you dig deeper, one finds that you're completely devoted to not giving a shit about anything in the world, except maybe the obscene. And when one speaks to you for days, some shiny sparks of intrigue fly every now and then, but you never hold on to them. Very stylish. I couldn't do it like that."

The fags saunter along the city streets. There's concrete everywhere, three hundred years old; three- and four-story houses with bulky arches. The people are still sparse: a few soldiers, a horse carriage, some dogs. The sweat and dust come together to cover our heroes in a film of rank stench; it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it covers every inch of their being. A fat shirtless man smokes a cigar from a window and gives them a dull look from under his heavy eyelids; elsewhere a nosy crone looks on. Trash drifts about here and there.

"Concrete" Esteban gesticulates widely.

"Fag-rete," is Hulo's critical assessment.

"Concrete goes hard, man. Pour enough wire meshes and differently sized rocks into it and only dynamite can break it," Esteban defends the honor of this place, his hometown. It is called Radial Abbada; it's ring-shaped, with four lanes leading out from the central square, and more from the subsequent rings. It has never been a place of great cultural importance, and its economy is stagnant. In a few years, the entire city will be evacuated to build grey ships.

“In Yekokataa, acid rain eats up to ten centimeters of concrete per year. People wear rubber coats and rubber masks, and those who don’t still look rubbery – their hair all falls off and their skin looks like melted wax. At first it turns red and itchy, but they sell ointment for this, kind of like a boxer’s ointment that gets rid of bruises. This is from Miro’s address to the people, where he talked about the seven modern wonders of the world. Aluminum-based coating would make the concrete last longer, but it’s cheaper to just keep making more,” Hulio says jadedly.

“So you do know more than *‘behold the mighty nihilist...’*”

“I don’t really have to read nihilist theory to know it. Nor should I keep my fingers crossed it will win. The difference between you and me is that you adore the world. For you, being a part of the last generation makes it all especially golden. Me, I really don’t find anything too special about a government of dudes who actually know some shit for a change,” Hulio says slowly and bitterly. Esteban has not seen this side of him before. “But it’s nice to see you have fun. Makes my own mood more normal as well,” he continues.

Esteban is stricken somehow – wants to explain something, but falls silent instead, deep in thought. He starts humming a little song. “*Mom, how did you bother...*” By the end of the song, it becomes clear that Mom had never bothered, his own mother didn’t bother, and that there are more effective solutions to the problem than social democratic propaganda and Mazovian reconstruction.

Hulio and Esteban are standing in a cool, greenish corridor supported by bulky pillars, parquet under their feet, whispers, rustles and clunks echoing off the wall. The sign on the front door says “DIRECTOR”. Esteban stands up straight as a sword swallower and pulls on the door handle, stepping in with a brisk step. Hulio follows cautiously.

“Greetings!” howls the tall slouch cheerfully. The office is long and narrow and file cabinets narrow it further. Opposite the door is a desk. A withered older woman sits there and looks at the intruders with

alarm, cigarette between fingers. Esteban bows: “Esteban Dolores Cerveza, from the national intelligence service. It appears that libraries have become a strategic point of interest in this emerging political situation. Foreign spies gather here to read newspapers – imagine that! Other times they might use their nails to underline a word or a number in a book, a coded signal to fellow spies informing them of what to do or where to go. Given that, security measures must be established. It’s possible there will be changes in the structure of this institution. We’ll start a department of our own here, for sure.”

The director’s mouth turns into a thin line as she takes a drag from her cigarette: “Could I see your documents?”

“Documents! Oh dear!” Esteban spreads his hands. “It’s forbidden to carry any documentation while on an operation. Someone might hit you in the head with a rock and poof; they’d all be gone! I’ve just arrived from another mission – as you can plainly see – infiltrating young counter-cultural bandits, getting a lay of the land so to speak. I found their views quite sensible, though maybe they could be educated more in the ways of politics. I took this boy with me so he could see how the state operates – he’s a promising young man. Internal needs a lot of workhands at present.”

Hulio’s uncomfortable and not sure what to do with his hands. The director looks at them with a furrowed brow. “I can’t just let any hooligan from the street restructure the library, this is ridiculous!” she protests.

“Calm down, please,” Agent Cerveza says in a mellow tone. “You are correct, of course. I can write myself a referral and procure the relevant documentation right away. And it is true that the system we presently have operates mainly on Franconigerian values of trust and efficiency, but there’s also room in there for Dolorian bureaucracy. Trust, but also control. Do you have a telephone here in the building?”

“No,” the director answers in an unfriendly tone.

“Then you should probably go to the post office and use one. You could phone the central station and ask for the developmental department of the intelligence service. You don’t think this would end

well for me if I wasn't who I say I am, do you? One should trust our system at least that much.”

That got the director's attention: “No, you are right about that... Whom should I ask to speak with?”

“Just ask to be connected to internal security. Describe your situation to the dispatcher and they'll connect you with the right people. You must understand that traditional chain of command is ineffective these days. Centralized administration of civilian security would take more time by orders of magnitude than just training a lot of agents to assess security risks, who then seek out assignments to be coordinated with the center post factum,” Esteban explains, drawing some scheme in the air with his finger as if it helps elucidate matters.

“That's how it works?” the director sounds surprised.

“More or less, though there are all sorts of operations, as you can imagine. We're more motivated these days; we know our goal.”

“Okay then. I'll do it. You'll... wait here?” the woman asks hesitantly.

“Sure, I'd be glad to borrow your office. There's a bunch of documentation that needs to be prepared, after all.”

“Okay.” The director looks Esteban deep in the eyes. “I trust you,” she stresses. “What did you say your name was?” she asks, already at the door.

“Cerveza,” the man rattles. “Esteban Dolores.” Brief goodbyes are exchanged and then the fags are alone in the office, listening to her steps receding. The atmosphere is strange. Esteban slams down in the director's chair to catch his breath. Hulio rests his ass lightly on the desk.

“Normal name there, beer-man,” he says.

“A considerably more fucked up operation than I initially conceived, but a success all the same...” says Esteban with a pleased sigh.

“What happens now?”

Esteban gazes into some faraway nothingness. “Internal security has at least three separate organs, whose names I don’t know; the most important of course is the Therriers, which are directly controlled by the Founding Party and innocence – apparently they’ll tell auntie that all is well and according to plan, that we can do as we please. And then they should send one of their own to check on us, get our measure. If everything goes right and I understood Zippora’s ideology correctly – I’ll become a real agent. Might be that you will too. Of course, we might also face some pushback. Might even be sent “behind the fence”. You can bail now if you want, I don’t think anyone will come after you,” he explains slowly.

Hulio looks at his friend discerningly. “Are you sure you’re not some kind of agent already?”

“I’m glad you asked that,” Esteban smiles slyly.

“But seriously, are you? Why so tight-lipped?” Hulio prods.

Esteban lifts his brow slightly and straightens himself: “None of this is real. My name, the names of the agencies, my being an agent or not – they’re illusions. Reality is a beacon whose light can’t be buried or destroyed. Understand?” And for a moment it appeared to Hulio as if he were seeing a shiny metal cuirass instead of Esteban’s naked, hairy chest, tin medals and strange symbols draped on his uniform jacket.

“You’ll get your sword and shoulder patches,” he says with sudden conviction.

