

URMUZ

ALGAZY & GRUMMER¹

TRANSLATED BY JULIAN SEMILIAN

Algazy is a pleasant old man, gap toothed and grinny, with sparse and silky beard, neatly placed upon a gridiron screwed under the chin and hedged with barbed wire...

Algazy speaks no European language... But if you wait for him in the dawn of day, at the break of morn, and say to him: "What goez, Algazy!" dwelling on stressing the sound of Z, Algazy grins, and so as to manifest his gratitude, pushes his mitt in his pocket and yanks at the start of a string, prompting his beard to jump for joy an entire quarter of an hour... Unscrewed, the gridiron serves to resolve any quandary, pertinent to the harmony or hygiene of the home...

Algazy never accepts bribes. Once only he lowered himself to this mode of demeanor, when he was a copyist for the Church Notary, and even then he took no cash but only a few crock shards, eager to endow with dowry several of his indigent sisters who were about to become betrothed the very next day...

Algazy's greatest bliss — along with his customary tasks at the store — is to harness himself of his own good will to a wheelbarrow, and tagged at the distance of two meters by his crony Grummer — to hop at a gallop, with the singular ambition of collecting old rags, punctured vegetable oil tins, but notably, knucklebones, which then the two gobble together, after midnight, under the most sinister silence...

¶ It's the former marquee of a well-known establishment from the capital, hawking suitcases, wallets, etc., still in place these days but under a single moniker. In any case, we grant ourselves the liberty to believe that the names Algazy or Grummer, through the images they stir by their specific musicality — upshot of the sonorous impression they produce in the ear — do not seem to correspond to the aspect, dynamics, and content of these two pleasant and distinguished citizens, in the likeness of which we encountered them in the actual world...

We grant ourselves the liberty to portray above for our readers how an Algazy or a Grummer should and could exist "in abstracto" had they not been created by chance occurrence, by a fate which refuses to consider whether the objects of its creation correspond, in their shape and motion, to the names which were bestowed them.

We beg forgiveness of Mrs. Algazy & Grummer for the above scrutiny which we allow ourselves to delve into; because, we carry out this task merely out of our sincere desire to serve them, inciting them, before it's too late, to take appropriate action on this account.

It appears that there is only one remedy: either they should each seek another name, genuinely suitable to their particular actuality, or reshape their own identity, form and function, while they still can, according to the singular esthetic of the monikers they bear, if they still insist on keeping them...

Grummer, moreover, sports a beak of scented wood...

Reclusive and bilious, Grummer lounges the live long day sprawled under the counter, beak stabbing a gap in the floor board...

As you step into the store, a delicious aroma tickles your nostrils... You are welcomed, as you stride up the steps, by a trusty lad, who, instead of hair has, sticking out his head, strands of a green cottony thread; after which you are greeted with great warmth by Algazy and urged to settle on a foot stool.

Grummer spies and waits...Treacherous, with glance askance, unearthing at first his beak only, which he ostensibly douses upwards and downwards in a gully dug into the ledge of the counter, Grummer looms up lastly in full measure... Then, through all manner of manipulation, maneuvers Algazy into absconding the scene, at which time, fawningly, lures you artfully into a variety of verbal intercourse, notably touching on the subjects of sports and literature — until, suddenly, when whim strikes him, he wallops you twice with beak on the belly, impelling you to barrel out into the street, shrieking in agony.

Algazy, who is forever forced into discord and exchanges of words with the clients, on account of this inadmissible gimmick of Grummer's, scurries off after you, prevails upon you to return, and so as to regain your satisfaction, grants you the right — if you already acquired an object of value greater than 15 cents — to... sniff a whiff off of Grummer's beak, and, if you so consent, to squeeze him as hard as you can from an ashen rubber bubble screwed to his back, a bit above the butt, compelling him to bounce through the establishment without bending his knees, all along expelling incoherent grunts...

One fine day, Grummer, without forewarning Alagazy, grabbed the wheelbarrow and set off alone in search of rags and knucklebones, but upon return, bumping into some poetry remains, postured illness and, under the dark of the bed sheets, swallowed them up surreptitiously... Algazy, catching on, slips in there after Grummer with the earnest intent to administer his crony no more than a light scolding, but to his horror detects in Grummer's gut that all that was still any good in literature had been consumed and digested.

Deprived thus of any forthcoming prime nourishment, Algazy, in lieu of redress, gobbled up, while Grummer slumbered, the bulk of his bubble...

The next morn, Grummer, forlorn, — abandoned to the world without bubble — impales the old timer with his beak and soon after sunset rushes him furiously to the top of a tall mountain... There a colossal battle flares between them, persisting through the gloom of night, until, before the break of dawn, Grummer, overpowered, makes motion to restitute the whole of the gobbled literature.

He throws it up on Algazy's arms... But the old geezer, in whose gut the gobbled bubble's fermentation kindled the quiverings of forthcoming literature, discerns that all that

is submitted to him is far too puny and much too obsolete...

Maddened by hunger and unable to locate in the dark the ideal nourishment which they both so craved, they quickened to the battle anew with redoubled vigor, and under the pretense of merely tasting each other so as to achieve improved integration and get better acquainted, they set about taking bites off of one another with ever flourishing fury, and, gradually consuming each other off, they come to the very last bone... Algazy is the first to finish...

EPILOGUE

The next day, at the foot of the mountain, passers-by could spot in a ditch, hurled by the rain, a gridiron with barbed wire and a scented wooden beak... The authorities were contacted, but before they could arrive on the scene, one of Algazy's spouses, who was shaped as a broom, showed up unexpectedly and... swinging right and swinging left two or three times, swept everything she found into the garbage...