

OYSTERS
by Sonia Nikolova

translated from the Bulgarian by Enyo Stoyanov, edited by Angela Rodel

"Our mothers are dirty mangy seagulls!"

The girl's name was Oyster. Because the great Portuguese writer Paolo Coelho copied the great American writer Hemingway, who started *The Old Man and the Sea* with the sentence "The old man's name was Santiago," and as the great Bulgarian writer Georgi Gospodinov claims "every beginning is hard!" as, by the way, my grandfather Velko thinks, who also insists that "life is a sea and whosoever can't swim in it will drown," and my mother, paraphrasing him, says that "Sofia is a sea and whosoever can't swim in it will drown," and my father is of the opinion that Grandma Krema is right, because she says "ain't nothing but dog-eat-dog," that is, life is a school, and the school teacher says that life is complicated, and the school teacher's husband dates Evgenia, whom everyone calls Jenny, just like in a short story by the great Bulgarian writer Chudomir, and right now I want to go clubbing, because Georgi from the other class' thing was huge, and because he is a painter and his father is a painter, and his grandfather is a dentist, and all of my mother's teeth have fallen out, because she used to work at the nuclear power plant in Kozloduy, because she's the one taking care of us, because she is a single mother and she has even read Virginia Woolf and she even knows who my father's current wife is, who is particularly evil, I said that I want Chekhov for a father and everything to be perfect with him, his hair, his clothes, to be dandruff-free and not smelling like vodka, and because my mother's teeth have fallen out, and Georgi's uncle is a dental technician, then I'll make Gosho marry me and we'll fix my mother's teeth, and daddy's jaw, and I'll read my new novel to Georgi, which starts with the following epigraph "Our mothers are dirty mangy seagulls!" but his mother buys *Scream* magazine and dresses like a dumpy old bag and has a car, and visits the beautician and there she reads *Nose and Style* magazine and often has plastic surgery on her butt and she often visits the Boulogne Forest where, according to my mother, money grows on trees, as long as there is someone you can give a hard-on, but my mother has no teeth and she doesn't give anyone hard-ons, but her current boss often tells her "you'll eat my dick" and sometimes "you'll eat my prick," and sometimes "suck my cock, you crazy bitch," and mother never says anything to him, only sometimes at night she talks in her sleep and she talks about Chekhov and his short story "Oysters," and sometimes she says "Eat my dick, Chekhov," and sometimes she is very nice and

says "Yes, please" and in the morning when I wake up she is already awake and I go to the kiosk where my mother sells sugar and rice, and she says "Take a stick of gum and get out of here" and my first boyfriend Bobby used to sing this rhyme: "Goin' on a picnic, chewin' on a bubblegum stick, water rising up to my... knees!" and my name is Sofia, which, according to my mother, means Holy Wisdom, one of Jesus' hypostases, and my mother's name is Mary and she is a seamstress by profession, and her school teacher used to tell her that "you win a man's love through his eyes and his stomach," and she always wore white at home and sang "Rejoice, Mary, full of grace" and daddy used to beat her every week, and sometimes every other week, and once he even broke one of her teeth but she doesn't remember and thinks that Sasho the stud from the kiosk next door did it, but he doesn't even know her.

Daddy, on the other hand, doesn't know Chekhov and only tells his friends jokes about virgins, and he is Muslim and believes that he will go to HEAVEN in a forest of virgins and there someone will buy him a drink and he'll say "Let me tell you a joke about Mary, my wife, that is," and he'll tell that joke that compares a virgin to a tin can – it isn't so important who the first one to open it is, the important thing is that what's inside isn't rotten, and mother was a virgin when she married him, just like the mother of a great Bulgarian writer whose name I cannot remember, but she publishes in the newspaper of those younger middle-aged guys, who are not like the older writers and who might actually publish some of your writing just like this one for free and you don't even need to give them blow-jobs, as happened with a teacher of mine, who teaches French, Mrs Gekova, who at an advanced age started writing poetry and she had to give the famous local poet Maralampy Maralampiev a blow-job and her poems were published in the Bulgarian Publisher and all the old writers liked them a lot, and this is how the poetic cycle "German Love" was aired on the TV programme "SZO" every Friday on channel BNS. In fact, my name is Sofia, but daddy calls me "Oyster," because the most expensive cans were oyster cans, and my mother was like an oyster when he made me, and I appeared in the world dirty and slobbering in a local pub. During Oyster hour.