

THE POWER OF WORDS
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translated from the Bulgarian by Angela Rodel

Last Saturday between two and two-oh-six in the afternoon in Crystal Park in downtown Sofia, words decided to show mankind their true power. Otherwise, that afternoon was no different from the previous or the following afternoon. The park was crawling with mothers and children, beer and coffee were being drunk, the usual passersby were strolling about.

But wouldn't you know, two women met up and one said to the other: "Oof. I'm going to take these sneakers back, they're defective. It's the second time this week. I'm gonna kill myself!"

Suddenly a gun appeared in her hand, startling her, her finger twitched on the trigger, a shot rang out, and the woman slumped to the ground, her brains blown out.

The second woman screamed and started repeating: "Oh my God! Oh my God!"

The heavens open and a deep voice boomed from above: "Yes? What is it?"

The second woman didn't manage to say a word, but fainted immediately.

A third woman, who had nothing to do with the first two and who was pushing her child in a stroller, gasped when she saw this scene: "Well, damn me straight to hell!"

Three short red devils with sharp little horns popped up next to her, grabbed her and started dragging her away. Luckily, her child started bawling and after a few minutes whimpered: "Mommy, c'mere!"

The mother materialized next to him, let out a scream, grabbed the child, ditched the stroller and made a run for it.

Two teenaged boys who were arguing on a bench nearby didn't notice what was going on, that's how absorbed they were in their squabble.

"Go fuck your mother!" One angrily spat at the other.

And the other kid was suddenly naked, and a naked woman was lying in front of him, staring at him with the most bewildered gaze, saying: "What in heaven's name are you doing, Tsetsi?"

The three of them took off running – the mother and the one boy as naked as the day he was born.

A poet, who was yet again declaring his feelings to the great love of his life, finally gave in: "You're right. My head really is in the clouds."

He rose up in the air and after no more than twenty seconds, his head really was up in the clouds, from whence he waved at the woman below, who was screaming at him to come down.

Moreover, two friends who hadn't seen each other for quite some time were just going their separate ways when one said to the other: "Where will I go this summer? Whichever way the wind blows!"

A strong wind blew up and somehow managed to sweep only him away.

An elderly woman who fed the pigeons in park every day crossed herself and murmured: "Lord help me!"

The heavens parted again and a deep voice said with exasperation: "Hello? Anybody there? Or is this another false alarm?"

The elderly woman crossed herself again and wondered what to say, but she was so stunned that she couldn't think anything up.

"It's no good, this habit of yours, calling me up for all sorts of nonsense," God said in a huff, pulled his cloud-curtains shut again and went back about his business.

People from the nearby cafes warned passersby in a panic to keep their mouths shut and not say anything whatsoever. Nevertheless, there were twenty or so more accidents, of which a dozen involved physical injuries, five ended in casualties, while three were difficult to categorize.

The six minutes in which words materialized were a true apocalypse for the adults. Only the kids were having a great time, because what was on the tips of their tongue was what was in their heads: bikes, ice cream, soccer balls, new dolls, remote-controlled cars, mommy and daddy happy together, and other such normal wishes.

This event never repeated itself. Despite all the children's efforts and despite the adults, who did their darnedest to avoid that park and to avoid talking about what had happened there. The only thing that would be remembered from the time immediately after the incident was the children's happy shouts and the adults' deep silence.

Words showed what they were capable of and then settled down again, but they were ready to wreak havoc on mankind at any moment when people managed to irritate them enough to make it worth their while.