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to: YOU
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title: **RESISTANCE**

Hi,
it's a pity that your phone broke down just when I was about to tell you my story. Don't worry, here it is. It's about an old lady that I probably told you about some time ago. You know, to be honest, I never thought that one day I may miss her, but let's start form the beginning.

As you may remember I live in the strict city center, on one of the streets reaching the main market square, in a typical old building. Centuries ago, yes, it's that old, it used to be a house for the whole family of a rich trader. Just after the WWII it was changed into separate flats for six families. Two on each floor. The ground floor, with really beautiful ceiling, was redesigned and changed into a shop. A small one, but it was always possible to buy some good food and fresh bread there. Unfortunately not any more.

I have been living here for about ten years. During that time everything has changed. When I moved in I was the only new in the building as my all other neighbours used to know each other for a very long time. Saying *Good morning* to everyone was something natural as we all lived together. We sometimes helped each other or at least had some chats on the stairs.

The neighbours were friendly. I was one of the youngest living there and maybe because of that only the old lady downstairs, looking like a witch, didn't like me too much. I could feel that whenever I met her, but apart from that it was quite good place to live. Everything started to change when at the same time two of the neighbours, both from the third floor, decided to sell their flats just overnight. It was about five years ago or so and it was a surprise for all of us. I mean for those who stayed there. So apart from myself and the old lady downstairs, there was also a family of some drunkards, opposite the old lady and above them, on my floor, there was a flat that was rented to a family with a small noisy daughter called Suzie.

The five-year-old girl was noisy but regular I would say, so in fact she was not a trouble. She was always crying being waken up six thirty and always screaming about five, for no reason, when she was going back home with her parents in the early evening. At first it was difficult to get used to that, but after couple months I even realised that I had treated her almost as a cuckoo clock. It will be more than half a year since they moved out. When I am writing to you it is exactly the time when she would scream climbing up the stairs. I think I miss her and her parents somehow. Nice people and it was good to have neighbours. At the moment their former flat is not rented, but fully emptied and being changed into dentist clinic. Quite wired.

The drunkards, a very happy couple that used to live on the first floor, were removed some time ago from the building. I have no idea why and what happened to them. They just disappeared. They were drinking a lot and sometimes were not so fresh, but in fact it was always possible to ask them to help you. They always had time. Even when I was moving in they gave me a helping hand with my stuff. Were so happy when I thanked them with couple beers for that. No matter how boozed they were, everyday, of course at different times, they used to sweep the staircase, mop it and clean the surrounding of the building. Their flat was changed in to a GoGo strip club. Together with the old lady, we have spent about a year fighting with it and all the techno and bass sounds shaking the building.

Going back to those flats on the third floor. I once met one of my former neighbours and as we stopped to have a small-talk, he admitted that he and neighbours from the same floor were offered very good

price for their flats. Someone came to them one night and offered the price much higher then they could even dream of for their flats. The only condition was that they had to sell two flats at once. The offer was so good that both families agreed and after couple weeks their flats, together with the adopted attics, become a cheap hostel for tourists but especially for those coming for weekend stag parties. Mostly bloody Brits arrived but not only. At that time the boom for my city started and as it was promoted as a city of cheap beer and easy girls people interested in both started to appear. Now the city council is proud to announce that every year our city is visited by ten times more people that it has its residents. They are proud but for us life become really difficult. Everything in the city center is now for those fucking tourists. Remember the shop? It's no longer there. Now I have a restaurant downstairs. Not bad? Well, to do everyday shopping I have to travel to big shopping malls and loose much more time and money for that. The restaurant wouldn't be that bad, but to be honest they even don't have menu in my language. Only in English, German, French and Russian. I'm not their target client and the prices there are too high for me to go as I don't get paid in Euro.

Some nearby cafes were closed, some changed into 24/7 donner kebabs and those that are left are also twice more expensive as they used to be. People like me, I mean living there, have no place to go, as everything is supposed to be for those fucking tourists. It's a long story, we can talk about it when you have your phone back. I'm curious if you also have the same in your city.

Anyway, about two years ago, the old lady came to me and from the moment I saw her in the doorway I knew that everything was going to change. She brought a home baked cake and wanted to talk about the future that was going to come. At first I didn't believe her when she told me what kind of disaster we may expect. I don't know how she knew that the hostel upstairs meant vomits on the stairs and parties at night. I think it was a little difficult for her to come to me and ask for help. She surprised me saying that as only two of us left here, we had to stick together. As we were talking it appeared that she had the impression that I didn't like her as she was old. I was totally wrong about her and I didn't trust her at first but in fact, day by day, I started supporting her.

Sometimes she had really crazy ideas. She had sleeping problems and since we had the hostel and later also the club she found it more difficult to rest. When the mob was coming back too late, behaving too nosily, she used to open the door and showing them the alarm clock communicated the time. She didn't know English, but was fluent in French and Russian. Some were even afraid of the “clock witch”.

Also when some clients came to the strip club or later to the brothel she used to open the door and standing in the doorway looked deep into eyes of the clients. Without saying a single word. Just staring at them.

She was writing a lot of letters to different institutions. All in pen. I retyped them on computer and as we printed them and both signed, to make them more official, we sent them to different units of the city office. At first I didn't believe they would work, but a half year ago, we had a success. The GoGo club was changed to brothel. She said then *“you know, maybe it's not much, but we gained something and that makes difference. It will be at least more quite.”* She always claimed that “*we can't save the whole city, but we should try”*. She often added that “*we are responsible for our part of it”*. I think she was right about that. She passed away yesterday and now I'm the only one left to continue the resistance.

What about you?

Regards, Lech

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