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Let's begin with his wound. Yes, let's begin there. The last of the stigmata inflicted during a brutal upbringing that Samir Tahar spent his whole life escaping, it was an inch-long gash on his neck. He'd gone to a plastic surgeon in Times Square who attempted to sand it off with a grinding wheel, but it was too late: he would keep the scar forever as a souvenir, would look at it every morning and remember where he came from, from what place/what violence. *Look at it! Touch it!* They looked, they touched. The first time was always a shock: the sight of/the contact with that whitish scar which betrayed the fury of its creator, signaled the taste for a power struggle, for contradiction—a form of social brutality that, brought to incandescence, presaged eroticism—a wound that he could hide beneath a scarf, a foulard, or a turtleneck sweater, so that nothing could be seen of it. That day, he was concealing it behind the starched collar of a $300 shirt—purchased in one of those luxury clothing stores that Samuel Baron only ever entered now with the vague hope of stealing from the cash register—and everything about him breathed opulence, complacency, consumerism, a zero-defect design. Everything about him denied what he had been: even his manners were affected, his voice tinged with an aristocratic accent, this man who, in law school, had been one of the most vocal supporters of the proletarian left! One of those radicals who had used their original mortification as a social weapon. Now, newly rich, an A-list lawyer, a big spender, a thunderous orator, a *lex machina*, everything about him spoke of identity change, vaulting ambition, social redemption—the exact counterpoint of what Samuel had become. Was he hallucinating? Maybe. This isn't *real,* thinks/prays/screams Samuel; that can't be

him—Samir—that brand-new, famous, deified man, a personal and original creation, a prince surrounded by his camarilla, with his slick, specious rhetoric. On TV, he is primped and sexy, appealing to men and women, worshipped by all; an object of jealousy, perhaps, but also of respect; a virtuoso of the bar, fearless and shameless, smashing the prosecution's argument to pieces with the jackhammer of his wit . . . That can't be him, that artificial courtroom wolf, *there*, in New York, on CNN, his first name Americanized in capital letters—SAM TAHAR—and beneath it, his occupation: *lawyer*, while *he*, Samuel, was wasting away in a dingy apartment in Clichy-sous-Bois, rented for €700 per month, was slaving eight hours a day as a social worker for a charity, helping troubled youths who always seemed to ask: *Baron—is that Jewish?*, and would spend his evenings reading/posting on literary blogs (with the username Witold92)/writing pseudonymous books that were systematically rejected—*His great social novel? We're still waiting for it*—that can't be him, Samir Tahar, transformed beyond recognition, his face covered with a layer of beige foundation, eyes turned to the camera with the perfect command of an elite actor/lion tamer/marksman, his dark eyebrows waxed and shaped, his body corseted in a bespoke designer suit that was possibly even bought for the occasion, chosen specifically in order to seduce/persuade/attract attention, the holy trinity of political communication, the lessons that had been rammed down their throats at law school and which Samir was now putting into practice with the arrogant self-assurance of a campaigning politician. Samir, a guest on American television, representing the families of two U.S. soldiers killed in Afghanistan,[1] intoning a paean to

1 Santiago Pereira, twenty-two, and Dennis Walter, twenty-five. The former dreamed of becoming an artist but was pressured into enlisting by his high-ranking father. The latter stated: "Success, to me, means fighting for my country."

interventionism, glorifying moral fiber, trying his hand at sentimentalism! Samir, being questioned by the journalist[2]—who treats him with deference, as if he's the conscience of the free world!—and remaining calm and confident, apparently having muzzled the beast within him, controlled the violence that for so long contaminated his every gesture. And yet, when you first met him, that was all you saw: the surreptitious wound, the tragic echoes of the horror of his formative years, spent inside the grimy walls of a twenty-floor tower block, fifteen or twenty of them (maybe even more) crammed on a stairwell that stank of dog/human piss; all those years spent pent-up there, on the eighteenth floor, with a view of the balconies of the tower block opposite, sweat suits swaying in the wind—fake Adidas, Nike, Puma bought for nothing in Taiwan/Ventimiglia/Marrakesh/the local Goodwill store, sweat-stained grayish undershirts, frayed underpants, rough toilet paper, plastic tablecloths, panties misshapen by too many washes/pounds lost or gained, hung out to dry in front of the satellite dishes that swarmed over the roofs/façades like rats in darkened basements where nobody ever went anymore out of fear of theft/rape/violence, where nobody ever went unless threatened with a pistol/knife/box cutter/knuckle-duster/billy club/bottle of sulfuric acid/pump-action shotgun/pepper spray/rifle/nunchuks (this was before the unrest in the East and the arrival in bulk of weapons of war from the ex-Yugoslavia—what a godsend! Just take a family vacation and—bingo!—load the good stuff in the trunk among all the kids' toys: assault rifles, automatic weapons, Uzis, Kalashnikovs, explosives with electronic detonators . . . even [whatever floats your boat] rocket launchers, if you buy them

2 Kathleen Weiner. Born in 1939 in New Jersey to a shoemaking father and a housewife mother, Kathleen graduated from Harvard. But her greatest claim to fame remained her supposed liaison, at the age of sixteen, with Norman Mailer.

cash-only. So you go off to a forest where you can practice alone, no witnesses, and then you wage war in underground parking garages sticky with puddles of engine oil and urine where nobody ever went anymore unless accompanied by a cop—and cops never went down there anymore. You wage ideological warfare in squats where twenty-five-/thirty-year-old lepers rejected/remade the world, or sexual warfare in basements stinking of damp and dope smoke where fourteen-/fifteen-year-olds roasted NONCONSENTING minors, ten or twenty of them taking it in turns, 'cause they had to prove they were men, 'cause the violence inside them had to force its way out somehow—they told the judge this in their defense—'cause they needed some kind of outlet for it. Or gang warfare carried out on wasteland turned into a battleground, night and day, by dozens of people crowding around to watch rheumy-eyed pit bulls fighting, each of them named after some fallen dictator—Hitler being the most popular—betting heavily on the biggest, the most rabid, the most deadly, yelling at the beast to tear its opponent to shreds, to bite its fucking eyeballs, turned on by the blood/the ripped flesh/the groans of pain and dying), while Samir stayed upstairs, studying like a freak, refusing to accept a life with no future, no money, having to choose between a job as a cleaner/warehouseman/delivery driver/caretaker/security guard, or dealer, if you aim really high, if you're ambitious; wanting to impress his mother, Nawel Tahar, a cleaning lady for the Brunet family.[3] Nawel, a petite, black-eyed brunette and model employee, knows all about them: she cleans their laundry, their dishes, their floors, their children, scouring, scrubbing, pol-

3 Her employer, François Brunet, is a French politician, born September 3, 1945, in Lyon, Socialist Party member and parliamentary deputy, the author of several books, the latest of which, *Toward a Just World*, had been a best seller (source: Wikipedia).

ishing and vacuuming, declaring only half her earnings, working Saturdays and public holidays, sometimes evenings in order to wait on them/their friends, politically committed men, feverishly scanning the papers for their name, googling themselves whenever they hear that someone has written an article on them—good or bad, who cares, as long as people are talking about them—happy to fuck women under thirty in rooms rented by the year, preoccupied by their weight, the ups and downs of the stock market, their wrinkles, obsessed by the loss of their youth, their savings, their hair; people who sleep together, work together, swap jobs, wives, mistresses, take it in turns to big each other up, lick ass, and get their cocks sucked by Albanian whores—the best in the world, apparently—whom they will attempt to liberate from detention centers where they were kept by ambitious administrators, whom they will try to save by using their connections—vainly, alas—sickened by immigration policies that tear away their objects of desire, their cleaning ladies, their kids' favorite babysitters, the construction workers paid cash-in-hand who transform industrial wastelands into luxury lofts where they continue the revolution until the Assemblée Nationale Métro station because beyond that it's not really their area anymore, *Nawel, you can have the leftovers it's a shame to waste them and we don't have a dog*, yes, the tragic shards of fate and hate that twenty years spent swallowing the choke pear have burned into their gaze—a hardened, shadowy gaze, sharp as a carbide knife that will scalp you and yet you'll like it all the same. But all that was before Samir's social success as a TV puppet, animated for your pleasure: Bravo, you've done it! *She* was conquered. Because there were two of them in front of the screen, two of them suppressing their hysterical aggression, two accomplices in failure: Nina was there too, Nina who had loved him, at twenty years old, when everything was still to play for, when everything was still possible. What am-

bitions does she have now? (1) Obtaining a raise of €100 per month. (2) Having a child before it's too late—but what kind of future would the kid have? (3) Moving to a two-bed apartment with a view over a soccer field/trash cans/a muddy lakeside area where two ivory-colored swans flap their wings/die—the lost territories of the French Republic. (4) Paying off their debts—but how? Short-term solution: a government debt forgiveness commission. Long-term solution: God only knows. (5) Take a vacation, one week in Tunisia maybe, at an all-inclusive beach club on Djerba . . . well, they could dream.

"Look at him!" Nina shouted, eyes riveted to the screen, hypnotized by the image, drawn to it like a moth to a halogen lamp—a moth that will burn alive—and, watching him too, Samuel felt certain that Sam Tahar had long ago put behind him what had happened in 1987 at the University of L.—the incident that had destroyed Samuel forever. Twenty years spent trying to forget the tragedy of which he himself had been the unconscious orchestrator and the expiatory victim, and all for what? For it to be broadcast on CNN, at prime time.

They had met in the mid-eighties, at law school in Paris. Nina and Samuel had been together for a year when, on their first day back at school, they made the acquaintance of Samir Tahar. Like them, he was nineteen years old, but he seemed slightly older: a muscular man of medium height, with a nervous walk, whose beauty was not instantly obvious but who had you spellbound as soon as he opened his mouth. You saw him and you thought: *Yes, that manly authority, that animal magnetism—fuel for sex*. Everything about him promised pleasure; everything about him betrayed his desire—an aggressive, corrupting desire. That was the most disturbing thing about him, this guy they knew nothing about: his

sincerity in conquest. It was the first thing you noticed: his taste for women—for sex, his weakness even then—perceptible in his ability to seduce them instantly, almost automatically, his sexual voracity, which he didn't even try to control, which he was able to express in a single gaze (a fixed, piercing, pornographic gaze that unveiled his thoughts and was constantly on the lookout for the slightest hint of reciprocation) and which he had to sate—quickly, urgently; his self-proclaimed and unabashed hedonism, his absolute coolness in conversation, as if every friendly or social relationship with a woman or a girl could only be justified by the possibility of its being transformed into a different kind of relationship.

But there was something else too . . . You could sense the predatory nature of this son of Tunisian immigrants; you could sense the belligerence, fed on a feeling of humiliation so powerful that it was impossible to work out who, in his personal history of relationships marked by mistrust, could have had such an enduring and forceful effect upon him. He had his mother's ambitions for himself: he wanted to succeed, to break the cycle of failure and poverty, of surrender and defeat; the family cycle, in short, which had already cost the life of his father, destroyed the dreams of his mother, and caused the breakup of a family. He was going to cut through the bars of his social jail cell, even if he had to do it with his teeth. A social climber? Sure, if you like . . . He was an immigrants' son who refuted social mimicry—one of those who had assimilated the republican message: study hard, work hard. A role model. People envied his provocative, transgressive boldness, his aggressive way of thinking, which was not without charm. How could you not be won over by this slightly mocking student who could tell you about his childhood in the poorest part of London or in a dilapidated ghetto, then his adolescence in a tiny attic room and his return to a seedy public housing project, with a flair for the sordid details that

could move you to tears and, five minutes later, talk about a meeting between Gorbachev and Mitterrand as if he had been there? His strength was his taste for politics and for stories. He could spend whole evenings reading autobiographies and speeches by Nobel Prize winners; he liked learning about these people who had achieved greatness, because that was what he wanted for himself: greatness. The aura, the charisma . . . he already had those.

For a man like Samuel, for whom the whole of existence was nothing but a mass of neuroses and whose only ambition was to use this mental suffering as material for a great book, it was a providential friendship. Because when he first met Samir, he was in pieces. Out of nowhere, he had just learned the truth about his origins—and it was chaos. His parents had waited until his eighteenth birthday to inform him that he was actually born in Poland as Krzysztof Antkowiak. There you go, son, your innocent childhood is over—welcome to the adult world! An open world of perfect transparency is opening its doors to you! Samuel would have preferred to remain in ignorance. He didn't know what shocked him most: learning that his parents were not really his parents or discovering that his true first name was a derivative of Christ's: Samuel had been raised, after all, by a couple who were first secular (a pure, hard, uncompromising secularism, loudly and proudly proclaimed, according to those who knew them at the time) and then Jewish Orthodox—a spectacular turnaround with no rational explanation. That story alone could fill a book. A few hours after his birth, Samuel was abandoned by his mother, Sofia Antkowiak,[4] placed in

4 The daughter of Polish farmers, Sofia Antkowiak dreamed of becoming a famous dancer but became pregnant after a one-night stand with a soldier. Two months after giving birth, she threw herself under the wheels of the Warsaw-Lodz train.

an orphanage, and then adopted by a French couple of Jewish origin, Jacques and Martine Baron. Their names no longer provoke even the tiniest spark of recognition, and yet they were among the most active agitators on the French political and intellectual scene in the sixties and seventies. Members of the Union of Communist Students and the French Communist Party, friends with Alain Krivine and Henri Weber, Jacques and Martine Baron—both of them from the same middle-class assimilated Jewish background—had long ago given up any desire for recognition. Rejecting determinism and gregariousness, they decided to reinvent themselves, transforming their identity in a sort of magic trick. Both of them gravitated toward the major intellectual figures of the time. Together, they had attended a prestigious École Normale Supérieure and had passed the philosophy exam. They taught literature and they were young, beautiful, feverishly committed; they had everything, except "what mattered most"—a child. Jacques was sterile, and for a man like him, who had based his whole life around transmission, this was an unbearable situation. They applied for adoption and, after two years of waiting, were finally approved. That night, they celebrated the imminent arrival of their child, along with about thirty of their closest friends. After several glasses of wine, someone asked what name they were planning to give the child. To their shock, they realized they had never even thought about it. Martine replied first: They could name the child Jacques, like her husband. Or Paul, perhaps, or Pierre. Everyone nodded their agreement and they drank to the future PierrePaulJacques. For Jacques and Martine, that night would be remembered as one of the happiest of their lives. Two weeks later, however, Jacques surprised all his friends by deciding to have his son circumcised, even though he wasn't circumcised himself. He named the boy Samuel—which, in Hebrew, meant literally: *His name is God*—and organized a huge party to which all his friends were invited. And then, just as the rabbi pronounced the

child's name out loud, something completely unexpected occurred: Jacques told the rabbi that he wanted to revert to his real surname, Bembaron, and to change his first name: from now on, he would be Jacob. He wished to follow his son into the bosom of the church. The partygoers—consisting essentially of journalists, writers, professors, activists from the extreme left, and atheist intellectuals—were dumbfounded. Their eyes showed incomprehension, even consternation. *So he's returning to the ghetto?*—that was what they were thinking. Jacques/Jacob appeared a man transfigured: his face was hot and red and he looked exultant, and yet he had not touched a drop of alcohol. But he saw the rabbi, he saw the golden embroideries that decorated the Torah scrolls, he heard the heartrending notes of an organ hidden in the attic, and he had a flash of illumination: there was no other explanation for this sudden turn toward the sacred. Later, he would refer to this event as his "return"—not a return to the ghetto, but a return to himself, to the sacred text. They left the center of Paris behind—the Latin Quarter, the Café de Flore—and they left behind their friends, who no longer understood them, who said, *They're crazy, it's so sad, it's a tragedy, they're going through some sort of crisis, they'll come back*. They never went back. They moved to a two-bedroom apartment on Rue du Plateau, in Paris's nineteenth arrondissement, and enrolled their son in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish school where teachers with beards and black hats taught prayers and sacred texts. There, in the presence of his own teacher—a man in his seventies with a magnetic charisma—Jacob felt good. He had never been as happy as he was with this man who taught him Hebrew and initiated him into the mysteries of the Torah, the Talmud, the Kabbalah. He felt reborn. No longer was he political, rebellious, angry. And if he did, ultimately, keep his surname—Baron—it was only because he was forced to by French law. Samuel knew nothing of his origins. Jacob waited until he was eighteen before revealing the truth. When this finally happened, Samuel at first did not react

at all. Then, after a few minutes, he left the room without a word, and then the house. No more than an hour had passed. In a public bathroom, he shaved his beard, cut off his payot, and threw away his black robes. Lies. Bullshit. Betrayal. It was over. His parents had anticipated some anger, but not this brutal rejection, this sudden and absolute rupture. Samuel squatted in various places, and met Nina in college. So she wasn't Jewish? Good! That was what he wanted—to provoke his parents. Because for practicing Jews, worried about the perpetuation of their race, this was a serious issue. They told him: Either you come home or you stay with her and you will never see us again. Nothing could have been better calculated to dissuade him from returning than this unequivocal ultimatum, this aggressive demand. He stayed with an aunt. She kept his parents informed. They colluded with her, the hypocrites, but for them it was better to know that he was safe, was not living on the street. He was deeply in love with Nina at this point, dependent on her to a frightening extent. But Nina, raised in a rather strict military family, was extremely moral: faithfulness mattered to her. Her mother had gone to live with another man when she was seven years old. She woke up one morning and found a card on the living room table—one of those brightly colored postcards that people generally send to thank someone who has invited them to a party. On the front, it said, "THANK YOU." On the back, a few words in a shaky handwriting. Thank you for the years we spent together. Thank you for not judging me. Thank you for forgiving me. Nina's father burned the card with a cigarette lighter, in front of her. Neither of them ever recovered from this incident. He started drinking, and she filled the vacuum where her confidence had been with morality and rules. Samuel nicknamed her "French Justice."

Samir's sudden appearance in their lives caused the first cracks in their suffocating union: from now on, there were three of them,

joined at the hip, moving as one, like a wave. You could see them from afar: the gang, friendly and complicit, without even a hint of jealousy or deceit; the loving couple and the free electron. Everyone in college gossiped about them: look at them, always together, showing off their intimacy, their collusion. And, deep down, they were excited by this: it was their own private game. But then, out of nowhere, tragedy hit. A few days before the oral exams, not having heard from his parents since the ignored ultimatum, Samuel learned that they had died in a car accident. A policeman told him at dawn, having first asked if he was the son of Jacques and Martine Baron. *Yes, that's me.* And he truly was his father's son in that moment when the policeman told him that their car had veered off the road and fallen into a ravine. Samuel does not remember how he reacted—the aftermath of the announcement is a black hole. Perhaps he collapsed, cried, yelled out, *It can't be true I don't believe you Tell me it's not true!* And the policeman: *I'm sorry, but it is.* But he remembers the wake, the vision of the two corpses covered in a shroud, with those men in black praying around them and him standing there with his prayer book in his hands, saying Kaddish for the peace of their souls. Samir was there, in the background, wearing a skullcap, hands crossed over his stomach. He too was thinking of his father: there had been no one at his funeral, no one to cry for him. That same day, Samuel, accompanied by his aunt, repatriated his parents' bodies to Israel, in line with their last will and testament. But before leaving the morgue, he took Samir to a quiet corner and solemnly told him: "Look after Nina for me. Don't leave her on her own. I'm counting on you." And that was exactly what he did. He took her out to eat, to watch movies, he gave her books, he went with her to bookstores and museums, he helped her revise, and barely a week after Samuel's departure, when she returned from an oral exam in tears, Samir led her to a room that a friend had lent him, took her in his

arms to calm her down, and there, within a few minutes, was on top of her (she was still crying) and removing her clothes (she was wearing a skirt, luckily) and pacifying her the only way he knew. Sex was his form of consolation, his way of making things better; it was his reply to the brutality of life—the purest reply possible, he had never found a better one. That might have been the end of it, but no, it was impossible. Whatever there was between them was too strong, too powerful. It overwhelmed them. They were suddenly defenseless, interdependent—they had never expected *this*. And while he should have told her that it was a mistake, while he should have walked away—this was how he normally acted, in all sincerity, because he got bored quickly; he didn't like to repeat his conquests—instead he fell in love. Not only did they see each other again, they never left each other's sides. For several days, they were inseparable. He loved her, desired her, wanted to live with her, and he told her this. It was the most terrible betrayal: Samuel would return; he'd just lost his parents in tragic circumstances; Samuel was his friend. In a fair, just, moral world, his behavior was outrageous, but, *We do not live in a fair, just, moral world*. That was what Samir thought. *I know what I'm talking about, because I know where I'm from. The world is violent. Violence is everywhere.* This was all he could find to tell her. *Love is violent too. You must choose.*

Samuel returned, but they did not confess their affair. Samuel thanked Samir—*a true friend, someone you can rely on when things get tough, a brother you can trust*. It went on like that for nine months, maybe more. Nina did not want to tell Samuel anything. He was living alone in the apartment his parents had been renting, surrounded by their furniture, their belongings—a death chamber. She never went to see him and he never went to see her. It was over between them. They never made love anymore. And when the school year ended, Samir gave her an ultimatum: *It's him or me*.

Samuel had no trouble remembering those years, and soon he would no longer be able to hold back the tide of images of Samir the Star that flooded his mind, the waves of Samir crashing through the barriers that had been repaired, smashing down the fragile interior edifice he had spent years reconstructing and which now exploded and was drowned and dispersed by Samir Samir Samir.

You're impressed, aren't you? By his success. Admit it!

Nina looked at him with a mixture of pity and anger.

Yes

It's true

You're right

So here we are . . .

For a brief moment, she had imagined what her life might be now had she gone with Samir twenty years ago, had she made a different decision when he commanded her to *choose*: irresistible Samir, so confident, so self-assured, versus Samuel, weak in love, cowardly in adversity, devastated by the violence of the break that Nina had provoked and who could find no better way of keeping her than slicing open his veins with a box cutter in the college auditorium, one of those small knives with a retractable blade, made of blue plastic—you just push the safety catch, once, twice, you have to do it in a single movement, press down hard, even if it hurts, then let the blood pour out and the sadness with it—Samuel who had found no better way than this of proving that he loved her, that he was ready to die for her, to put an end to this unbearable pain, to cure all his ills with the stroke of a blade.

When he awoke, he understood that she had chosen him. Putting her love to the test. The risks and dangers of this. And yet, it *had* to be done. And there she was, hair messed up, face pale,

almost corpselike—*he is suffering, so I suffer too*—sitting on the edge of the bed, practically at his feet, *like a dog*, he thinks. There she was: Nina, fully present, plumping his pillow, holding his glass as he drank, helping him to eat—time to atone, to set in motion the mechanism of expiation—Nina, surrendering to the heroic romanticism of suicide *for love*. How beautiful it was, how powerful, how great. Nina never leaving the room except when the nurses asked her to. As for Samir, the case was closed. Neither of them ever attempted to see him again. His name was taboo. They pretended to forget him.

Upon his release from the hospital, Samuel quit his parents' apartment (too expensive), donated their furniture to charity, rented an efficiency, and gave up pursuing his law degree. (He even wondered why he had begun it: to piss off his father, he supposed, but he was no longer very sure. His suicide attempt and the spell in the hospital that followed it seemed to have annihilated all his determination and willpower; from now on, his vision of life was blurred and murky, everything ambiguous.) He took a literature degree by correspondence and began a job teaching foreigners to read and write. Nina too gave up her studies—she had never liked law—and became first a sales assistant, then a waitress, then a receptionist. Nowadays she worked as a model for a few major store catalogues—Carrefour and C&A, mostly.

Look at him! My God, look at him!

There was something masochistic in the way they kept watching Samir's media consecration. They could have changed channels, but no—their suffering fed their rage, their fury. (Finally fuel for a book, thought Samuel. Finally a chance to write a novel that might actually be published!) Samuel and Nina sat petrified in front of

their Firstline TV set, bought at Carrefour for €545, payable in three installments, interest-free—an object whose acquisition had caused so much tension and discord between them, with Nina pleading for its purchase for years while Samuel argued against, seeing it as a threat, before finally yielding—realizing that nothing would ever be the same again, that something had been corrupted/destroyed/soiled forever, something like innocence, like the artificial bliss that ignorance provides.

Moving closer to the screen, Samuel examined Samir, wondering if he'd had a nose job, scrutinizing his tumid lips, his amazingly smooth forehead, the way he shone and swaggered on the screen, and seeing his own reflection superimposed on Samir's image, in a cruel comparison. "Get out of the way!" Nina shouted. "I can't see!" Samuel moved aside, then walked behind Nina, watching her as she knelt in front of the TV, in a sacrificial posture, intoning something—but what?

Samir smiled mechanically at the journalist, proud and happy to be where he was, where he belonged—you could see it in his puffed-out chest, the quiver in his upper lip. He lit up the screen. Nothing they had been through seemed to have affected him in the slightest. He was like a man who escapes from a crashed and burning car without a scratch, while the vehicle's other occupant is dead at the wheel.