

Fluffy snacks

Short Stories

Author: Anda Cadariu

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I used to live alone, in one room flat in a working-class neighborhood. I had friends. I also had a job.

The trams were always full. The trolleys stank. The taxi drivers were rude – at least some of them. I have no car, so I cannot complain about the traffic. The smog had covered the blocks in a grey, worn-out coat.

An industrial city, a plain city. A hankering after *glamour* capital. Full of glow, a glow displayed on a huge pile of garbage. Misery and sparkles, promiscuity and romance. This meant for me Bucharest.

I often used to eat fluffy snacks, because I was spending my money for food on cigarettes. I used to live at the 6th floor and often go down to the kiosk on the ground floor, from where I bought fluffy snacks over and over again. They could not be compared with childhood fluffy snacks, which auntie Olteanu brought to me directly from the factory. Those were for export. These – for Romanians. And as a Romanian, I have been a Romanian and I will remain one, I enjoyed the fluffy snacks made for Romanians. Rigid, dry, unsalted, as a dry polenta sold in a bag.

I used to buy my fluffy snacks and go up again on the 6th floor. I was smoking and eating. My small flat was pretty nice. A mouse trap. I had a false happy moquette, a blue one with yellow, red, white and orange spots. I had a few pieces of furniture, the couch – also blue, the bookcase –



improvised from a few planks bought from Cora. The shower was hellish – I did not even have a shower hut. On the floor – no trace of sandstone, on the walls – no trace of faience.

It was clean, I cannot complain of that. I often cleaned it because the dust tended to gather in corners. In the kitchen I had a bread cabinet, lots of teas and a little electric oven. The stainless steel sink depressed me, and also the parquet patterned linoleum, remained from the former owner.

One beautiful autumn day, I sat, as usual, perched on top of the bed with the laptop in my arms, surfing the net and eating fluffy snacks.

This is when Adrian came at my door with his luggage. The landlords had evicted him out of the house and he had no other place to go. I welcomed him with open arms and we both climbed on top of the bed, stuffing ourselves with fluffy snacks.

He had stayed with me for a month, during which nothing romantic, erotic or sexual happened between us. He has been a good friend, a clean, civilized and educated housemate.

One night he woke me up to tell me stories. He told me about dwarfs, fairies, dragons and knights on horseback. They were fairly conventional stories, but made me feel very good. We were two lonely people, in a sleepy Bucharest. One stayed in bed and the other on a mattress, just getting warm with stories. When the stories ended, we opened a bag of fluffy snacks and we both crunched them slowly, up to dawn.

These were once nice and sad times.



We used to walk through Cismigiu and Herastrau, taking trips with the subway to the end of the line. We used to read aloud novels and history books. At night, in the neighborhood, the motorcyclists drove their Cagiva, Kawasaki, Yamaha. A friend of mine took me on his motorcycle once. It left me a huge void in my stomach. A void that I filled up with fluffy snacks.

Adrian adopted my culinary habits and we became better friends. We sometimes went out for lunch in a select place as Bistro Arles or Backstage, but we generally ate fluffy snacks.

Bucharest looked completely different when my stomach was full. It was picturesque and communist, an artificial jungle built on an industrial skeleton with little gems sprinkled here and there: Vilacrosse passage, Enescu Museum, Opera House, Unirii, Victoriei Avenue, Romana Square, the parks, the ruined buildings of the 30's, Cotroceni area. And the metro which runs through the city like a silver snake lost in a garbage lid.

I stood on top of the pile garbage in my one room flat from Drumul Taberei neighborhood, eating fluffy snacks.

Theatre, film, concerts, they all came in front of my eyes like a thin film that packed the pile of garbage. The light commercials from the hot points of the city, emphasized the mess. Adrian tried to cheer me up. He bought me a bicycle and two of Salinger's books. He borrowed me his tape recorder when I needed it for an interview. In the end, he took me half a bag of fluffy snacks when I came into chronic depression. I could have stayed in Bucharest eating fluffy snacks all my life, meeting my friends in Control, Fabrica, Expirat. But I moved. Adrian found another flat to rent and left. I gave him my last bag of fluffy snacks.

Now I live in my hometown and I eat more potatoes. I travel often to Bucharest. I meet Adrian for coffees and we recall the old times when we used to live in a poor one room flat from Drumul Taberei neighborhood and it took us hours to get downtown. When we meet, we eat fluffy snacks.



I cannot eat them at home. I underwent just like my mother, who got drunk with an Argentine wine when my grandmother died. Since then, she has not been able to drink wine. And I cannot eat fluffy snacks but in Bucharest. In memory of old times: garbage, industry, glamour.

Parks and the silver snake.

Smog and crowd.

Promiscuity and snobbery.

Fluffy snacks.

Translated by: Drăghici Elena

Proofreader: Diaconescu Elena Lavinia

MTTLC, Bucharest University

LiterNet.ro

