

The Story of Marul

1463 a.d.

**In spite of the old days' temptations,
one people preserved their words and their letters.
The beginnings of their culture
were written down in a melodious Dalmatian-dialect.
The poet we are telling you this story about
had done it with his pen.**

It happened in the city that is the door to the country called Croatia today.

**And the poet created a word,
And the word created the people,
And the people created the country.**

Split 1463

It was time of the Renaissance, the time art flourished with fascination.

The Venetian Republic ruled the City of Split and Dalmatian islands and the Turkish Empire was in their rear. Between these two opposites, a small people managed to preserve their own language, spoken not only at home but in official announcements and literature, too.

- *Aunt Nicoleta, was Dad coming to fetch me. We've agreed to learn together.*
- *No, my child, he won't be coming. A tragedy has happened. Uncle Jure, his cousin Perina's husband has been killed.*
- *Is it the one that went to fight the Turks?*
- *That's right. He was killed on the galley. The Turks conquered Bosnia.*
- *Aunt Nicoleta, why do you think people kill each other?*
- *The time comes, Marko, when man imagines he's God therefore he's allowed to write history wasting other people's blood and thus accomplishing his own wishes and forgetting his mortality. It is then that wars and killing begin.*

Almost all Split attended the funeral. Everyone came to see off the hero. Prince Andria of Split came with his soldiers. Thirteen-year-old Marko had never seen so many people and flowers.

Only three days later grandmother Mira entered the house saying:

- *Perina died. She was heartbroken after Jure's death. It caused the Papalić's house to grieve.*
- For the moment Marko stood astounded and numb.
- *Are you feeling well, son, - his father Nicola was worried.*
 - *Yes, I am dad. It seems to me all this has already happened in some books. It doesn't seem to be happening to us.*

Marko then withdrew to his room to write an epitaph to this love and cry against unnecessary dying not knowing that these verses were actually a prelude for his work to be written three decades later giving him the title of the Father of Croatian literature.

The Family Pecenic-Marulics

The fire was crackling and the children, who were many in the family Pecenic-Marulics, were sitting like kittens next to each other in front of the fireplace, trying to warm up.

In the evening Alexandar, Ivan, Peter, Valerie, Simon and sisters Andriana and Bira together with Marko would sit down around their mother Dobrica. All the good of this world seemed to have gathered in her. The meaning of her name said so, too. She had married Nicola when she was seventeen and her children meant everything to her. She was giving them her immense love and all the time she had.

While Nicola, as a judge, spent almost all days at work, thanks to Dobrica, their not very beautiful house was a real home always full of friends.

- *Mom, tell us how grandpa Marko became rich, shouted the children all together.*

And Dobrica would tell them how grandpa Marko had worked hard and saved and how one can acquire a fortune only by honest work.

- *He knew how to handle the money and we should thank him for everything we have today. I hope one of you has inherited that ability.*

- *Marko will* - Bira interrupted her – He already decides what each of us should do.

- *Marko is a poet* - Valerie continued – *and he's far away from reality. If we depend on him, we'll die of hunger.*

- *I've read his poems* – said Adriana – *and they're the most beautiful things I've ever read. Marko will outlive us all, if not by his body than by his spirit, and I don't think so just because he's my brother.*

The fire was slowly burning out and Dobrica rushed them to bed with kind words and a goodnight kiss.

Aristocrats and Commons

Summer came and Tidej Acciarini's school of humanities closed its door. Marko was watching absorbed in his thoughts. He was aware that the closing of the school meant turning a new leaf in his life. Next autumn he was going to Padua to continue his education.

Pape interrupted his thoughts:

- *Marko, have you heard that our people had a conflict with the commons again? They've been arguing at my place all day. They say the Great Council will prevent the commons to approach. All the aristocrat families of Split are there, my family, yours, the Cipcis, Tartaglias, Cindros and the others. If only you could hear them shouting against the commons!*
- *They'd better think of how to save us from the Turks. When will they realise they should unite, and not only think how to rule.*
- *Well, what can you do Marko? Power is not only sweet, but it also pays.*
- *It's true. Since the pope Pious died five years ago all Crusade wars against the Turks have stopped. God will punish us for not doing anything.*

At that time over 350 Croatian families and about two dozens of foreign ones lived in Split, so the Croatian had no match in any other languages.

Pape tried to provoke Marko:

- *When you leave soon for Padua you can say goodbye to our language. No one will understand you when you come back. You won't even remember us.*
- *If Tuscan dialect is a flower of the Italian language, then our Dalmatian dialect is a pearl of our Croatian language and it will always be a part of me, wherever I go. You never forget the language of unity. It remains in a person while he lives and not only will I not forget it but I also won't let all my poems and other works lose their attraction and originality it has given them.*

One people's language should be preserved and handed down from generation to generation as the greatest treasure. We should teach these words of our culture both to our people and all those who move here.

No ruler, whatever the country he rules, can rule his people if he doesn't know the original value of his language and if all the dialects are not equally dear to his heart.

As for the commons and aristocrats they must be one, one city, one people, one language.

Goodbye, Dalmatia

As if feeling Marko's departure, the summer was hotter than ever sucking all the Mediterranean heat into the cove of Split. With his friends, Pape and Toma, Marko called at the Albertis' to fetch Katarina.

- *Kate, join us for a walk* – Pape waved at Katarina who was looking out of the window.
- *Mother won't let me. I have to help her with the housework. We're having guests from Ancona tonight, so I mustn't leave the house.*
- *Be careful not to fall in love with an Italian* – Marko added smiling.

Katarina blushed. She has been in love with Marko since she was little, and she thought he was not indifferent, either. If he had asked her out she would not be able to refuse and she would have sneaked out of the house.

Marko, however, lived in a strange world of his own and knowing Pape was secretly in love with Katarina, he was not even dreaming of her being in love with him.

The summer was coming to its end, the weather changed and people started to wear warmer clothes. Marko got up early and went down to the sea. He liked that change of the weather, the time of getting cold that drew away passers-by and left him alone with the sea he loved so much.

At one moment Katarina was next to him. For a short time they stood silently, her presence bringing tranquility into his soul. Their hands barely touched and warmth passed through each part of his body.

- *But Pape,* - Marko started.
- *For me there's no one but you, Marko,*
Katarina interrupted him, leaned slowly her head slightly kissing his lips, then turned heading for the town.

Marko looked after her for a long time. He wished to stop her, he wanted to shout, but he simply could not do it.

Only the image of parting remained buried deeply in him forever.

All his friends came to the farewell party. The Cipiko brothers came from Trogir bringing Andrija Alesi and Nikola The Firentine who were working on the Cipiko mansion and the reconstruction of the blessed Ivan Ursini's chapel at the cathedral of Trogir. Upon his return from Šibenik, where he was working on its cathedral, Juraj Dalmatinac was staying with the Papalics, at their mansion, which was mainly his own creation.

- *Dear Marul,* - Pape started half officially, - *now that you're leaving for one of the greatest universities of Europe, to be tutored by the most famous Paduan university professor Jenisio Picentino - everything therefore being first-class - do not forget us mortals and send us a poem of yours so that we can feel the breath of Padua.*
- *And when you find yourself before Donattelo's Gatamelate, a large bronze monument of the Venetian condottiere or enter the basilica of St. Anthony at Padua, pray for us sculptors, surrounded by the works of this great master,* - continued Juraj.

It was time to turn the leaf. Toma Niger, a friend he could only wish for, went to the University of Padua, too.

- *When you finish the college,* - started Toma reciting, - *Padua is a necessary step If you are longing for knowledge.*

Dalmatia stayed behind, but Marul's hand would not rest. The distance would bring the necessary homesickness and the poems would rise up from his soul, as they had never done before.

Padua 1471

The University of Padua was founded far back in 1222, only three years after the one of Bologna.

Fourteen seventy one was the year of remembering Dante Alighieri, the author of *The Divine Comedy*, who had died on 13 September 150 years before. Toma and Marko were viewing the exhibited works. Toma knew Dante obsessed Marko.

- *Look, Marko, here's Boccaccio's Trattatello in laude di Dante. It must have been the first attempt of writing Dante's biography.*
- *Here's what I've been looking for, - said Marko as if overhearing Toma, - It's Dante's "Convivio" in which Dante praises common language calling it a new light and a new sun, and this is "De vulgari Eloquentia" in which he tries to draw a common line from fourteen Italian dialects. He actually wishes to put in harmony the regional dialects so that, gradually but inevitably, the common language replaces Latin.*
- *Another grist to your mill. And I like it. I've always known you're our Dante.*
- *You don't have to be Dante to love your own language.*
- *No, but all this should be written down, worked on. It isn't a small job and if you don't do it, people will forget all about it. One day they'll write about you, I know it.*
- *For what you've been doing will be the history of Croatian language.*
- *Dante was really great. Taking Virgil as the guide through the Purgatory was really courageous.*
- *There's another thing you have to solve, -*
said Toma smiling, - Dante had his Beatrice, Boccaccio his Fiammeta, Petrarca his Laura, all unreturned loves. As far as I know all your loves were returned, so a little bit of love suffering is missed in your poems. If I had your looks I'd spend much less time over books.

Before he went to bed that night Marko wrote

*Dread boy called Cupid draws a bow,
And now I'm a target for every arrow
His unerring hand hits to my breast,
Rattling of chains, that's all my rest.
'Cause I can't get out of Cupid's prison
I kneel before Muses, verse is the reason.*

Genoa 1472

During their studies Toma and Marko visited almost all the cities on the Apennine Peninsula.

So the road brought them to Genoa, the biggest Italian port, the third university centre after Bologna and Padua, certainly the most important for seamanship and trade.

Feeling the life of Genoa, meeting seamen, tradesmen and ship agents was something completely new for both Toma and Marko and this moving away from art towards trade was a new experience.

They came to an inn where a lot of seamen had gathered. A lively discussion attracted their attention. A young man of their age made the whole party hold their breath by his words:

- *Long time ago in 2nd century BC the Greek astronomer Hipparchus made the first sky catalogue with 850 stars and set foundations for modern navigation. It is, however, true that Aristarchus, who lived from 320 to 250, refuted his theory of geocentric system with fixed Earth in the centre. At that time the theory of the Sun as the centre of the world and the Earth orbiting it – the theory which some do not believe in today – had already been set. I believe that the eastern countries become closer if we sail westwards. And all of us having courage to turn the old astronomers' dreams into practical reality must unite to bring people and countries closer together.*

- *Who's this young man?* – Marko asked.
- *Christopher Columbus, - the young speaker interrupted him, - remember my name because these are not just empty words. This is the time of the renaissance and people are conquering the world. I've met a man called Leonardo, who has been designing a device that will give man the wings. Trust me, people will soon conquer the sea and the air.*
- *What a speech, - murmured Toma.*
Marko offered his hand to Christopher saying:
- *I'm Marko, and I consider myself to be a poet and a writer.*
- *Should your actions be as strong – Toma turned to Christopher, - as Marko's writing is, you'd carry out everything you think of.*

That night they talked for a long time. Having returned to Padua Marko thought of Split. So many things have been happening in the world, yet what he missed most was his city.

There is no place like home

*No awakening, I don't miss
When I dream about your kiss,
Wooden bed is soft as leathers,
My dreams fly on pillow feathers.*

The sun was persistent in its intention to wake Marko up, but he was not giving in. He loved staying in bed until decent hours as he used to say.

He was thinking of Padua and the last days.

The speech he had given on behalf of the university on the occasion of the Venetian doge, Nicolò Marcello's death was regarded as magnificent. The doge's death came with the notice of his youngest sister Adriana's death.

Once in one's life it happens that all the feelings and pains melt down into one. This was exactly what happened to him while he was giving his speech. At this time of summer Split was completely deserted. As soon as he arrived, Toma went to Hvar, so he had not managed to see Pape before. The Albertis had gone to visit their friends at Ancona.

- *Marko, come down, the Cipikos are here to see you, - he heard his mother calling.*
- *One can't have a decent rest, - thought Marko. - I'm coming.*
Peter and Jere were sitting with Dobrica when Marko entered.
- *Look at you, - Marko said smiling. - what's up?*
- *We've come to say hello. There's nothing new at Trogir. Have you heard Juraj died at Šibenik? - Peter asked.*
- *Juraj Dalmatinac. What a pity. But he left behind the works that would make him immortal.*
- *I don't know if you've seen his works at the Šibenik cathedral, and he was also participating in finishing the Minceta Fortress and the Rector's Court in Dubrovnik.*
- *No, I wasn't able to see that, but his Christ's Whipping, St. Anastasius' altar at our cathedral were made exquisitely. He was quite old, and he left Nikola the Firentine and Andrija Alesi to continue where he stopped. One's work mustn't die with one's death; otherwise one life was in vain.*
- *I've only heard people praising you, Marko. What was it you did at Padua? - Jere asked.*
- *Nothing much. I've only improved my Latin and was the best student of the university. Now I have to use the summer to get some rest and then start working.*
- *Where are your brothers and sisters? The house used to be crowded with people when we came.*
- *Alexander, Ivan, Peter and Valerie are civil servants, Simon has become a cavalry officer, and after Adriana's death Bira went to St. Benedictine's convent.*
- *It's odd how Adriana died young. She loved your poems so much, - Peter began to talk.*
- *She faded away overnight like a candle.*
They said goodbye having promised to visit each other more often.
After they had left Marko remembered Adriana's words.
- *Marko's poems are the nicest thing I've ever read. He'll outlive us, if not by his body, than certainly by his spirit.*

The Face of Death

A lot of wine was drunk on that day, and warm Indian summer made young people stay in the town streets. They danced and sang the night away. Pape was dragging Marko who got slightly drunk.

- *Let's go to the Albertis' and sing to Katarina.*

Marko tried to avoid this in all possible ways, but Pape was persistent. There were musicians and instruments, so they made Marko sing some of his verses standing bellow Katarina's balcony. They then repeated after him in chorus. Finally, Katarina came out. A winch was hanging on one side of the balcony left there by some workers for lifting their material.

At one moment Pape sat on the board on which material was put and exclaimed:

- *Pull the rope and rise me up to the sky,
to my beloved Katarina let me fly.*

The party took hold of the rope and lifted Pape to the balcony. Katarina looked at Marko and he realised he gave her up to Pape.

Perhaps the friendship was stronger or his love wasn't strong enough, or it was all the wine...

And while these thoughts preoccupied him, Katarina and Pape disappeared from the balcony.

The company parted, only Marko remained. Dizzy from the wine and the night warmth he fell asleep.

Suddenly a loud crash woke him up and he saw Pape beside him lying still in blood.

Next to him was the winch that most probably loosened from the wall under Pape's weight while he was trying to get down from the balcony.

Shocked, he almost fainted. He was looking at Pape's face. It was the face of death.

He pulled himself together momentarily and tried to pick up the body, but it was too heavy he only managed to sit it up leaning on the house wall. Then he ran to fetch his father. He rushed into the house and having woken his father up he told him what had happened.

- *Go back, I'll go to the Papalics',* - said Nicola.

Pape's parents soon arrived to the place of the accident, but nothing could be done for Pape. Having returned home Nicola told his son:

- *Marko, it'd do you good to get away from Split for a while. Go to island of Šolta to your godfather Balistrilic.*

- *I agree with you,* - said Marko.

First thing in the morning Marko started packing.

- *Why so many books?* – Dobrica asked.

- *Mother, only work can prevent me from thinking about what happened,* - and he thought for himself:

I could have been in his place. The destiny played a very harsh game with our lives.

The boat was sailing towards Šolta and he could already see the town of Nečujam when these verses crossed his mind:

*When loving flame is going out,
When longing girl is kissed with cold mouth,
Face of death knows how to punish
To fulfill your heart with the pain never vanished.*

.....

“May you be sent to Šolta”

Choosing the cove of Nečujam for a hermit life was not so bad. Dujam Balistrilic's little field house was not far away either from the sea or from the field. Physical work is always a cure for the soul. Besides fishing and fieldwork Marko was also tiring himself with books. Translating was the right work so the translated books were piling up. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* was among his first translations. Then followed Petrarch's *The Canzoniere* and he started translating the mediaeval best-seller Thomas van Kempen's *De imitatione Christi*. Due to preciseness and accuracy of this charismatic “fifth gospel” he had no freedom of expression. So chapter after chapter he proved both the richness of Croatian language and his command of it.

He still found time for reading Juraj Sizgoric's poetry.

A year had passed and he got used to the lonely life.

You can run away as much as you like, but events always bring you back to reality turning you to the course of life.

On the 8th of April 1475 he received a message about his father's sudden death. He returned home. His brother Valerie got married and he settled down with him and his wife Helen in their house close to the church of St. John's.

It was a spacious house, so he turned one floor into a library and study. The library contained over two hundred books and it was the place in which he spent most of his time.

Katusha

They needed a servant for the house so Valerie brought a young girl who had recently come to the town from a nearby village and found lodging in their vicinity.

- *This is the maide I was telling you about,* - he introduced her to Marko.
- *What's your name?* - Marko asked her.
- *Kat'sha,* - the girl answered.
- *Katusha,* - Valerie repeated after her.
- *Ah, let's show you around the house so that you can see what your job will be,* - said Marko, waving her to follow him. – *Here. This is the library. You must dust these books carefully.*
- *So many books! You must be as clever as Solomon.*

Marko laughed. He liked this firm and simple girl.

Simplicity, sincerity and openness are rare with people nowadays. And Katusha looked exactly like that. She will bring refreshment to this house.

- *I'll be here right at dawn,* - said Katusha leaving.
- *Please, don't come early,* - Marko caught himself saying this quickly before Katusha left, so that her goodbye message does not come true. – *Come after we go to work.*

Together with his brother Alexander, Marko joined the civil service. Alexander was the second eldest, who had already worked as the town treasurer and a judge. He was also a member of the aristocratic council.

Alexandar married Clara Alberti, Katarina's cousin.

- *Tell me about Katarina, - Marko said to Alexandar.*
- *Well, Marko, nobody knows anything. She disappeared that night, and her family moved to Ancona. Various stories have been told. There's a rumour that Pape hadn't fallen and that he'd been murdered and she walled in. Who knows if the truth will ever come out? The house is abandoned. Even Clara never goes there.*
That evening everything came back to his mind, all childhood pictures, friends that had gone. The apocalypse knocked at his door, nightmares tore his soul and body apart, and the morning was not coming to bring a new day.
- *Sir, will you get up or shall I bring you your breakfast to bed, - asked Katusha having opened his door that morning.*
- *The nightmare continues, - answered Marko, but he was happy life came back to his room with Katusha.*

Simon and Valerie

The wars with the Turks were not dying down and in 1476 Marko's brother Simon got killed. Simon's funeral reminded him of uncle Jure's death thirteen years earlier.

Many people loved Simon, his sincerity, his being talkative and sociable.

- *Simon was young and lively. If anyone loved and enjoyed life, it was him, indeed, - Valerie said.*
- *Perhaps he loved women, drinking and gambling too much, - Helen went on, - but let us not speak of the dead.*
- *There'll never be peace in Dalmatia. The Turks are threatening from the east and if we don't realise they must be stopped here, I'm afraid to even think of the consequences, - Marko concluded.*

Years have passed and Marko had to subordinate his life to his family's needs. He kept them all together working as a civil servant, neglecting somewhat his writing.

The only piece of news that made him happy was including his letters in *Elegia et Carmina* by Juraj Sizgoric in 1477. Juraj was his favourite poet so this insertion of his text meant a lot to him.

In 1479 Toma Niger became the Hvar School rector. He often came to Split and Marko always insisted on his being his guest.

- *Katusha...*

- *Coming.*
- *Toma is coming from Hvar today, so do roast some meat.*
- *Certainly, I like Toma, I will get the best for him, don't worry.*
- *Oh, I know you can't fail when you like someone, but when the guests who don't please you come, you don't even offer them a drink and that's not the right way.*
- *When I don't like someone, and when I see you don't like him either – I lose the hospitality tone..*
- *You've really put it nicely. I've understood your point and I like your sincerity. If only all the people could speak like that! Valerie did a good job when he brought you. You do like him, don't you?*

Katusha blushed:

- *It's true. He's so handsome, and poor Helen can't give him any children.*
- *You just take more care of the house, and the children will come, - Marko finished the conversation without having the slightest idea that a few years later Katusha would give birth to son Anton and daughter Bira. The children took too much after Valerie so with reason people said they were his.*

The Turks

In May 1481 the powerful sultan, conqueror of Istanbul and Bosnia, Mohammed II, died. His heir was his son Bayazit II. The Turks did not rest until Croatian, Dalmatian and Slavonian governor Matija Gereb defeated them on the river Una in 1483. King Matijaš signed a seven-year armistice with the Turks. In 1490, when the armistice with the Turks expired, Matijaš died.

The Turks started attacking again and in 1493 they broke into Carniola and Styria through Croatia and on 9 September destroyed Governor Derenčin's army in the field *Krbavsko polje*. This defeat in which 13,000 Croats were killed or captured had ruinous influence on all Croatians. They sought help everywhere and in 1499, the war broke between Venice and Turkey. The Turks came close to Split, burning down, robbing and killing.

For several years Marko had withdrawn to Šolta again to find some peace for his writing. He was finishing the translation of Toma's *De imitatione Christo* and he began writing his biblical epic *Judith*, the work that was simply his answer to the events he had foreseen long ago. He was writing it in Croatian, and by this work he would deserve the title of the father of Croatian literature.

He dedicated *Judith* to his godfather from Šolta, Dujam Balistrilic.

Returning to Split

His brother, Ivan's illness brought him back to Split where he only managed to close his eyes. However, the illness that Ivan had brought from his galley threw his other brother Peter to bed, too. Marko called a doctor, his friend Siva from Šibenik, but there was no help for Peter, either. The pest fever took away both his brothers in July 1501, and in the same year in November Dobrica died of sorrow.

Valerie was on the galley so Marko had to give up writing to run the family business.

That year's events did not, however, pass him by.

From the position of the Split School rector, where he had been transferred from Hvar in 1491, Toma Nigler was appointed administrator of the Cathedral of Split. He became the vicar of the Archbishop of Split, Bernard Zane. "Secular events" returned to the Marulics' home.

And while Toma was in a diplomatic mission between Venice and Prince Ivan Korvin, Marko and Zane together reached a judgement on clergymen dissipation.

- *Marko, do you think life of clergymen should differ from the way they live nowadays allowing themselves too much?*
 - *If one has chosen to be a clergyman his behaviour must be an example to other people. I think clergymen have to be disciplined.*

 - *It'll do them no harm to have their hair shortened, beards shaved, stop feasting and chasing women.*
 - *There will be protests.*
 - *Let them be. Who wishes to serve the God let him do so, and who does not want to do it, the church door is wide open for him to leave.*
- As Marko had returned to writing, spending his time with Zane motivated many of his works.
- De humilitate et gloria Christi* where, through a collection of stories, he gave biblical stories from the saints' lives, *Quinquaginta parabolae* in which he treated Christian theology and moral terms and exalted ethics over science through faith, hope and love.
- *Fifty Parables or, Quinquaginta parabolae is after all your lightest work. Through the routine of simple professions, through a fisherman, birdman, shepherd or a judge you promote the Christian principles of living. I like this one best.*
 - *So does Toma. The Institution or De institutione.. condemns. In the chapter on greed the examples from the Bible support the claim that many take advantage of religion for profiting...*
 - *The same goes for now, - Zane concluded and went on, - should these priests of ours write history it would probably remember me as notorious, but I'll take that risk.*

Hvar

In 1510 the town of Hvar had a population of 1,300, and the whole island almost 6,000. The aristocrats, or to be more precise 38 aristocrat families with about 200 members lived in their palaces in the old part of the town called "The City" surrounded by the ramparts preserved below the town fortress – "fortica". The plebeians were not allowed to this part, only women and girls who sold and brought in food at the particular hours. The other privileged class was the church with the bishop and his high priests with about 100 clergymen out of whom most were staying in monasteries in the town. The rest of about 1,000 inhabitants were plebeians.

The plebeians were offended by the aristocracy's dissipated behaviour towards their girls and wives who used to bring food to the city. Feeling unjustly disdained and unnecessarily isolated by the walls, on 6 February the plebeians took an oath to conspire against the aristocrats before an old sooty cross hanging in Nikola Bevilaqua's son's room.

No sooner than they touched the cross, a fierce storm broke over Hvar. It was pouring with rain, the sky became dark, and at 7 o'clock in the evening the land shook three times. The earthquake tore down the St. Annunziata's church roof in the same alley. The plebeians left and Toma Bevilaqua's daughter stayed by the cross. When she looked at the crucifix, she noticed it was "bleeding".

Frightened, she called her grandfather and her mother, and then they called the canon, Matija Lukanic who took the crucifix to the church altar and put it there.

Soon everybody from Hvar came to the church. The fear of the announced bloodshed gathered both the aristocrats and the plebeians in the cross procession the following day. The plebeians from Jelsa, Stari Grad and Vrboska understood the warning from the heavens differently. Led by Matija Ivanić from Vrbanj, they began an uprising and were soon joined by many plebeians.

At Split, Sebastian Giustinian, the providitor general of Dalmatia, requested the ships from the people of Split to crush the insurrection on the island of Hvar.

- *Marko, can we meet at your place, - asked Toma.*
- *And who's preventing you?*

Besides Toma Niger and Marin Domic, who was the leader of the plebeians of Split, the representatives of rich plebeian families Daugubio, Capogrosso and Cambi were also present at the meeting. Although their requests were similar to those of the Hvar plebeians, the most important thing for them now was to persuade the aristocrats not to give their ships for crushing insurrection on the island of Hvar. They did it through Marko's brother Alexander who was a member of the council.

- *Matija gathered over 2,000 people and his fleet of 30 ships well armed with guns is in control of the Hvar waters, - Toma said.*
- *If he goes on like this, he'll conquer Hvar, - Marin went on.*
- *Not that I want to interfere, - Marko interrupted the discussion, - but isn't it more important for you that Matija Ivanić explains your requests in Venice. Is bloodshed necessary? The Senate staff will still make their decision after they hear your representative against the aristocratic one. I don't know who they'll send, Marin Hektorovic, most probably.*
- *Marko, you don't understand a thing. Once the walls of Hvar are down we'll talk from different positions, - Toma concluded.*

Split did not help Giustinian, and all that Matija Ivanić and Marin Hektorovic achieved in Venice was appointing a providur at Hvar. The "City" had not fallen, but Matija Ivanić ruled the rest of the island of Hvar and the island of Vis.

Many aristocrats found shelter on the island of Brač, some of them in Split.

Hanibal Lucic settled with Franje Bozicevic.

Franje Bozicevic Natali was some twenty years younger than Marko. To him Marko was a personification of art. Marko was both his friend and his teacher and he often used his library.

Lucic was still a young man so coming to Split to Marko and Franje was an adventure to him. Unfortunately, the times were difficult and there was little room left for poetry.

Yet, that evening Franje and Hanibal came to visit Marko. For the moment, they forgot the troubles at Hvar, the danger from the Turks. By his poetry Lucic reminded them that in spite of all the events there still can be time for the soul.

The wonderful dialect of Hvar echoed melodiously in Marko's library:

No lady all around

Beauty as mine can be found,

All gratitudes she collects,

Fairy-games with my heart plays...

- *Marko, how can you have a plebeian for a friend? - Franjo asked having Toma in mind.*
- *Franjo, there are no plebeians and aristocrats, there are only good and bad people, - Marko answered with a smile and went on, - Toma got involved in politics, you can't reach him any more, but you have to take your hat off to him. He has travelled half Europe to tell everyone what evil the Turks are.*

His speech at the Lateran council is still ringing the alarm in people's ears. Everything's boiling in him and his life path is devoted to correction of injustice. If we ever defeat the Turks, be sure Toma will be there.

- *In addition, do you think he is right about the plebeians and aristocrats, - Hanibal asked quietly.*
- *It's all seriously cooked up. Moral and behaviour went lose on one hand, and reason and patience on the other, - Marko answered.*

After a year, the plebeians conquered the "City". In October, however, the armada providure, Vecenco Copello, sailed into Hvar and, having destroyed the Ivanic's fleet, defeated the plebeians. He captured 20 leaders and hanged them on the mother ship masts. As a warning he had their heads carved in every arch peak of the Hvar loggia. Matija managed to escape to Krajina and later to Italy. He was never again heard of.

Governor Peter Berislavic

Together with Marin Domic Toma was imprisoned in Venice as one of the plebeian leaders, but Zane managed to set him free and bring him back to Split.

Still, Toma was restless so he joined the governor Peter Berislavic in his crusade wars against the Turks.

Delighted, Toma told Marko about Peter,

- *You have to meet Peter. He adores your poetry. Whatever you write down he tries to make true. The spirit of Judith finds the ground in this man who had sold all his property to arm the people for fighting the Turks.*
- *I'm ready to go with you, Toma, whenever you say. I've already heard a lot about Peter and his sacrifice from respected people and I do wish to meet him.*

The two of them set off to Knin to visit Peter.

Peter was a very pleasant person and Marko immediately spotted the unbreakable ties between him and Toma – they were the moving spirit which, Marko was convinced about that, could achieve whatever they thought of.

They spent a pleasant evening. The time passed quickly, unnoticed. In the morning, when they were about to leave, Peter told Marko:

- *Marko, I want you to take this clock in memory of our encounter. It is the only valuable thing I still have.*
- *Do not ever renounce anything you are fond of, - Marko said.*
- *On the contrary, when I give a present I give only what is dear to my heart. I think that only in this way a present has its value.*

May this clock express my deep respect of your works and may it show you the time – the time the Croats are coming with.

The two great men shook their hands firmly and for quite a while they were saying goodbye to each other.

Toma went with him part of his way:

- *I'm staying with Peter. See you soon.*
- *You were right, Toma. Looking at you two, I know the time of our victory will come.*
- *I'm always right, - answered Toma and, smiling, waved him goodbye.*

In May 1520 Peter Berislavic was killed in a Turkish ambush at Vrazja gora near Korenica. His death painfully struck and deeply touched his contemporaries. Marko was among them. This death ominously announced possible tragic development of future events.

After his death the governor's position in Croatia stayed vacant for more than a year. Marko's brother, Valerie, died the same year.

Valerie's death forced Marko to take the role of "pater familias", which to him, who was not used to everyday duties, was a burden at that age.

A year earlier Toma had become a bishop of Skradin so he seldom came to Split.

Against the Turks

Peter Berislavic's death made the work *Suprotiva Turkom (Against the Turks)* see the world. It was a cry to God and a human confession mixed with the feeling of helplessness – anticipation of war destruction.

“Solus Deus potest nos liberare de tribulatione inimicorum nostrorum Turcorum, sua potentia infinita”

Marul expressed his depression and being incapable to find solutions for the difficult war devastation of Croatia through *The Epistle to Hadrian VI*. This literary document contains disappointment caused by Europe's negligence. He pleaded the Pope to join the armies and start the war for the defence of Christianity.

“Common danger should be pushed back by common weapons.”

Katusha's voice roused him from deep thoughts:

- *Toma's come with a man.*

Marko stood up to greet his guests. He and Toma embraced, and then Marko looked at his guest.

- *This is Peter Kruzic, the Duke of Klis – Toma introduced the man.*
- *Another Peter, - Marko said quietly, - we lost one important Peter. However, every Peter is important. Like all Peters, you too keep a key, his is of paradise and yours is of Split – do not let Split fall into Turkish hands.*

- *I won't. Until Toma and I live you don't need to worry, - replied Peter.*

Peter's eyes glistened with certainty so Marko realised that while there are people like Toma and Peter there will be Croatia.

- *I'd like you to stay for dinner. I'll tell Katusha to prepare something for us.*
- *It's impossible to refuse Katusha's dishes, - answered Toma.*

Katusha was glowing with happiness. She liked Toma because she knew how glad Marko was to see him.

Over dinner they remembered all past events and Peter had to listen to everything. So many friends had gone, so many things happened. They did not know where many people were and whether they were still alive.

- *I've been taking care of this small family of mine that has remained, - Marko said and went on –*

I exchange letters with Bira. She is at the Benedictine convent, and the Cipikos, Peter and Jere, drop by from time to time.

At that moment entered Alexander and having greeted everybody he turned to Marko:

- *There's an urgent call for you from the convent. They didn't want to tell me what it was about.*
- *Are you coming with me?*
- *They only told you to come. They didn't want to say anything else.*
- *Give my regards to Bira, - said Toma.*

It's time to go. Katusha, take good care of him, will you?

- *He's totally disobedient, my dear Toma. It's incredible – such a clever man.*

Toma laughed:

- *Marko, you're not twenty any longer. Watch yourself a little.*
- *You two watch Klis and I'll be well. If not my body, my soul will always be with you.*

They embraced and said goodbye.

Katusha saw them off. On his way out Toma asked her:

- *Has Marko been to the doctor? He doesn't look well to me.*
- *He's been to the doctor, but he doesn't want to say anything, - Katusha answered shaking her head.*

Having started down the street Toma turned back and saw Marko at the window. He became numb having caught himself thinking if he was going to see him alive again.

Their last embracing was as if a farewell grip. They knew each other too long not to feel that something was wrong. He stopped in the street and looked at Marko's window until his face disappeared behind the curtain.

- *Are we going, Toma, - Peter asked him beginning to realise what has been happening.*
- *Yes, we are, Peter. It's time to meet our fate.*

Katarina

- *Katusha, tell Franjo to see me off to the convent.*
- *All right, sir.*
A few minutes later Franjo came. He was always glad to help Marko in any way and Marko treated him as a son.
They slowly came to the convent door.
- *Wait for me here,* - Marko said and knocked at the convent door.
The door opened and he went in. Bira was there to meet him.
- *I thought something had happened to you.*
- *No, Marko, someone wishes to see you.*
They passed through the corridors and finally entered a room.
An old woman was lying on a bed, death slowly approaching to drag her away forever.
- *Katarina,* - Marko managed to utter.
- *Marko, come closer so that I can touch you.*
Marko approached, his body was burning with the feeling that flooded him.
- *You're alive.*
- *I am, and I've never stopped loving you. I just wanted to touch you once again and feel you close to me before I die.*
- *I...*
- *Don't say anything,* - Katarina interrupted him, - *there was nothing in my life besides you. I'd like you to know that I followed all you did in your life. In my soul I was always with you.*
- *Can you forgive me, Katarina?*
- *There's nothing to forgive. Love means giving and I chose that as my life. Come closer and take my hand.*
Marko sat by Katarina and tenderly took her hand. He looked into her eyes. Once again she was the same girl who had kissed him on a deserted beach one autumn morning. He leaned and slightly kissed her.
It was all Katarina waited for and Marko realised she was gone.
- *Forgive me, Katarina,* - Marko said once again, the tears filled his eyes and he cried long having lost the sense of time.
Bira touched his shoulder and he turned around:
- *You knew all the time she was here.*
- *I did, but she didn't let me tell you.*
Marko slowly stood up and Bira helped him get out where Franjo was still waiting for him:
- *Are you all right,* - Franjo asked having seen him shaken.
- *I don't know. Please, take me home, I'm tired of life.*

*The night full of memories it was,
The night when whole life overcome your mind.
The night full of tears and forgiveness to find,
The night full of shadows it was.
The night with no wish, no desire,
The night with no flame in the fire.*

For a second he saw Katarina calling him, her arms wide spread, and he knew he was forgiven.

In the morning Katusha opened the door and saw that Marko went away for good.

There was a strange expression of relief on his face.

Katusha sat down and started crying.

Klis

It was April 1524. The fortress of Klis proudly resisted the Turkish siege. There were, however, too many Turks and the surrounded Klis seemed to be bleeding under the Turkish attacks. The night fell and the Turks were aware Klis would not resist until the end of the following day. After midnight Peter Kruzic's ships were increasing in number somewhere off the coast. Toma managed to drag a ship full of ammunition and weapons. They waited for the dawn and just before its break they completely surrounded the Turks.

The moment light was about to conquer the night there rose a thick black cloud over Klis and it seemed that a human image came out of it. Like arms, the ends of the cloud embraced the Turkish tents and by a strong wind made a lethal whirlpool swallowing everything on its way.

- *Marko*, - said Toma gazing at the face that created the cloud.
- *Charge*, - shouted Peter.

And the Uskoks started at the Turks destroying everything on their way. The Turks were fleeing in panic unable to comprehend that their certain victory was turning into catastrophic defeat. Peter and Toma, whose old bones suddenly gained supernatural power fought like lions, while Marko's spirit powerfully carried them towards the victory.

Aftermath on the battlefield they embraced happily and simultaneously looked up to the sky. The cloud had disappeared and the sun of freedom shone to warm Marko's and their country forever.

Epilogue

In 1527, only three years after Marko's death, the plague raged Split. It killed 6,000 inhabitants of Split and its outskirts and in the fight against it, more than 250 houses were burned down. It was a big blow to art because most of artistic works – including Marko's – were destroyed in fires. Marulić's manuscripts, however, started returning from all over Europe, from Italy to England where he was read and translated. Today, thanks to love of people from these places, all his works are at hand.

Marko Marulić was buried at the church of St. Francis on the Split Strand. If you come to Split, don't fail to visit this Croatian literature classic's grave.

And finally

Not all Marulić's works have been mentioned in this *Story of Marul*, but if it kindles your interest in the father of Croatian literacy the purpose of this booklet will be accomplished.