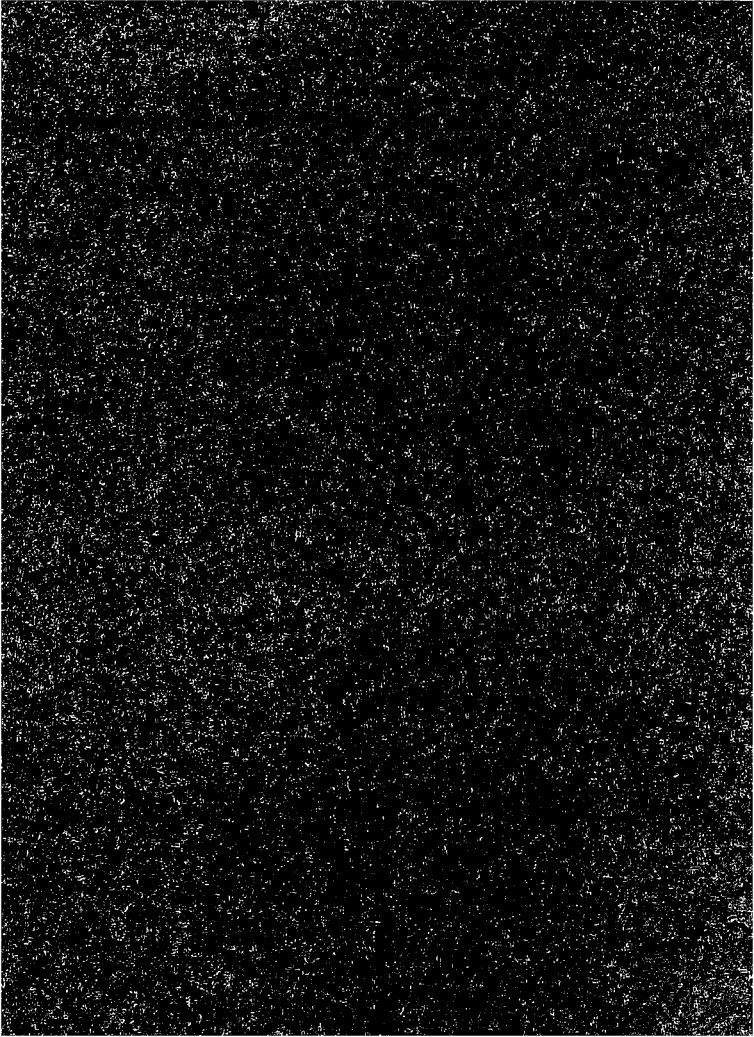


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A very dark  
POEM



# Herr Luftinspektor.

A P O E M

b y

Andre Orbeliani.

*\*Luftinspector means 'thin air supervisor'; Andre Orbeliani PEng writes from Nelson, BC, and suggests that, because everyday news is so dull, a poem may be of some distractive value. We agree—Ed.*

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# THE LUFTINSPECTOR

*a poem by andre orbeliani\**

As dark as Hell!

This here is not Hell.

Then, what is it?

This is the Jersey mine near Salmo, BC.

And my headlamp went out.

I turned the button for the spare

Nothing happened/Thus darkness.

I am alone

because I am a Luftinspector

and I am a mile from the portal.

Nobody knows what a Luftinspector is

they call me a different name.

but I remember/how this name/was given to me.

I was also alone then  
walking along the Corso  
alone and in a joyful mood.  
looking at the crowd  
looking at the girls.

They were many  
in groups of three/or four/sometimes five.

Croatian girls are pretty  
you know.

The lads gathered in bands  
shouting and joking.

I walked alone  
full of self-respect  
I was nineteen.

The girls called me the Luftinspector  
I was told.  
Because I walked alone  
looking busy/on the Corso.

Now I am a Luftinspector  
for good.  
I inspect the air of the mine.  
Once a week/for pollution  
The air and the vehicle exhaust,  
with my test tubes.

This time I am stuck  
I cannot test the air in the darkness  
I do not dare to walk either.

There could be an orepass  
on my way/an orepass,  
a vertical hole down three hundred feet.

I am here in the Forty-Two Hundred Drift.  
Forty-two hundred feet above sea level.

What sea level?  
The Mediterranean?/The North Sea?  
No! Probably the English Bay.

Very pretty the English Bay.  
Although I like the Adriatic best.  
English Bay is not romantic.  
I wonder why?

How long will I stay in this darkness?

I even can't sit down/it's wet.

I tried with my hand/water on the road.

I should be out at midday for lunch.

My lunchkit is on my desk.

Will somebody see?

and wonder where I am?

Maybe not./Maybe later.

I will probably stay marooned

to the end of the shift.

The foreman will see my tag on the board

and send someone to pick me up.

He does not know where I am.

I am not one of his men.

I am the Luftinspector.

I am in the Forty-Two Jersey Drift.

Forty-two hundred feet

above sea level.



Maybe the North Sea.

Dunes and bunkers

German bunkers from the Atlantic wall.

A poster. Beware of booby traps/Keep out.

Curiosity prevails.

Sanded-in rooms.

Narrow view on the sea.

Two metre thick walls.

And a mattress.

Somebody was sleeping here/or making love.

with a wartime poster/for privacy.

It is not curious

absolute darkness/and no mystical fear.

Why should I be frightened?

In childhood/sometimes

since then/never.

What if there would be . . . a scream!

I do not see.

I listen.

Water dropping somewhere.

Drip, Drip, Drip . . .

I remember how she was getting nervous  
when the tap was dripping.

I tightened it solid

it still was dripping

and she could not get asleep.

I am happy that this water is dripping  
absolute silence would be unbearable.

For another five hours/Maybe more.

I look at my watch

the pointer is luminous.

Quarter to eleven.

When will I write my report?

Hell, hell, hell,

Why did I remove my lamp from my hat?  
and dropped it.

It did not hit the ground

it jerked the cord/and it went out.

I wanted to look at my notebook  
what for?

To check the data on the ventilation door?

I did not need it right now.

Nothing I can do right now/but wait.

The water drips.  
There is another noise.

It must be a truck/somewhere far away.  
Closer/Definitely closer.

There it is.  
Two headlights  
Two smaller headlamps  
A searchlight/pointing up.  
They are checking the roof.

Maybe they stop for scaling  
and they will hear me then.  
I run agitating my notebook.

They expect a headlight  
they don't expect a dark figure.  
and they don't hear me  
because of the noise of the truck.

I run and I cry  
they are still far away  
I run as fast as I can.  
I see the road and I run.

The truck turned to the left

It's gone.

I still run/then I stop

I could knock myself out/hitting a wall.

I continue walking along a wall.

I feel the wall with my hand

and I feel the ground with my foot.

and I progress slowly.

If I reach the intersection

another truck can pick me up

or the same on the way back.

Complete darkness.

the blind they should be used to this:

they walk as I do.

They are more skillful.

I must look ridiculous if somebody could see.

There is no timbering in this mine

With the props, I could not progress.

Here is the end of the wall

It turns left.

This could not be the drift where the truck went.

Too close/I could not walk so far.

It must be a side drift/if I walk there  
They will never find me.  
Stop and wait.  
Lean against the wall and wait.

If I make four steps in the right direction  
I will cross the side drift.  
It should be twelve feet wide.

Let us try.  
The direction, I'm not sure.  
Walking in the open space  
Like at sea by night.  
At sea there is a compass  
and sometime a lighthouse/blinking.

I have seen a blink.  
Just an imagination  
because I have been thinking about a lighthouse.  
Wait a bit/let us check/a little bit back.  
There it is/I have seen it again.  
a red light/ like a taillight of a car.

Now if I follow this light  
and walk in a straight line  
there should be no obstacle.  
as long as I see the light.  
If there is light there are people.

What if this light vanishes?  
I will be in the midst of nowhere.  
If this truck drives away?  
Or maybe it isn't a real light.

What else can it be?  
Let us concentrate on walking.  
A step/Soil muddy/Nothing in front.  
Clear on the sides.  
Another step/two/three/twenty/fifty/  
Oh God, what a slow progress.  
I recall how I was once lost on the lake  
Not dark, misty/And no compass/of course.  
it was cold/so cold!  
It's not cold underground.  
They say that the wall is 42°F.  
summer and winter/No cold, chilly.

The light is not a tail light.  
It's much higher.  
I have seen a reflection/in a pool of water.

Now I can see  
this is an electric bulb  
inside a red lantern.

I can see,/I can walk.  
A wooden partition/and a door.  
This must be the shiftboss's office.  
Nobody inside./nobody around./A phone.  
Hello! Here is Andre,  
my headlamp is out.  
We come at once.  
The electrician got a reprimand.



