

## The Man with the Musical Name

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The man's names rhyme so whimsically, I find myself singing them as I walk the corridors. But when I see him, usually in the dark from the edge of his bed, I call him only by his first. He often mistakes a blue velour slipper for the blue-green urinal that hangs from the frame of his bed. I find him with his penis still swaddled in his footwear, and I direct him to reverse the string of actions that got him out of bed, had him loosen his pyjamas, take his member out; all of which he has by now forgotten. The slipper, which I will later empty and wash under the tap, I now take from his hand and set on the floor. I have him sit, to raise one leg and then the next. Thank you, thank you he says, his eyes scrunching open and shut, his thick eyebrows rising and falling with the opening and closing of his eyes. I smooth the covers under his chin. Thank you, thank you he says again, then asks for a kiss. Give me a kiss he asks as gently as if I were his beloved, and I blow one onto a fingertip which I touch to his cheek.

That his sweetness has survived his mostly broken mind I can also see from the photographs pinned to the wall, where in one, his arm wraps around a woman in a mink coat, his wife, their smiles overflowing before a fountain in a city somewhere in Europe. Riga perhaps? The two of them appear again and again, always happily: together, then with an infant child, then children, then children grown to adults. The parents are aging, then old, and his wife disappears from the frame as the man leans over a cake with the numerals 9 and 0 nestled amongst white frosting. His eyes preserve the brightness of his youth, but now, in bed, they have closed, and he breathes the breath of sleep. I draw the curtain and walk into the corridor, chanting his musical name.