

# FREUDIAN WOOD

by Aleksandar Vadim

It was one of these ethereal Venetian autumn evenings that can make the most hard-boiled leatherface turn a little sentimental when Alice ran into Professor Aschenbach who bemoaned his sadness towards this world on a little table of a Grand Hotel facing the darkness of the Lido.

When passing by this strange looking man Alice found a fluorescent source of discomfort in his eyes that struck a chord with her and that made her want to find out more about the origin of his grief, but it wasn't until a lot of affectionate sweettalk, sugary manipulations and opalescent drinks later he would finally open up to her:

"I am suffering from toxic nostalgia, my dear", he said, "I am longing for a world that no longer exists. I am craving for the days of an earthly paradise that are gone for good. I pine after the place that once was Vienna at the turn of the century: the cafes, the ideas, the architecture and the arts, the good people and their burning secrets within the vibrant nights of the fin-de-siècle... but most of all: I miss my precious friend Sigmund who is no longer with us and who alone had the ability to make me feel like home for a moment in his therapy room in Berggasse and save me from this cold and indifferent world of grey...."

Alice, who listened to the old man's declarations with growing affection decided to give him a special treat on a whiff, so she silenced him by slowly pressing her lickpot onto his lips and looked deeply into his eyes: Aschenbach – caught by surprise but quickly grasping the implication – said no word and sincerely returned her gaze while leading her up to his room by the hand where – much to his surprise – he would wake up alone the next morning to find a precious bottle of perfume instead of a goodbye-note on Alice's pillow. The mysterious bottle read "Freudian Wood", so Aschenbach sat back and closed his eyes with a streak of fatalism as he sprayed the atomizer twice:

And as the perfume unfolded, he saw the old books of Freud's personal library resurrect in front of him through the musty note of the Labdanum; he felt the scent of the sweaty cumin evoking the oppressed sexuality of his beloved century in a milky haze of past times; he marveled at the notes of cypress and sandalwood recreating the woody workbench and the solid rack of the legendary couch of Berggasse with himself, Aschenbach, laying down to face the nether regions of the self, fueled by the animalic notes of the costus and abelmosk: After a long and weary battle the bottom note unrolls and in the eternal depths of the ambergris Aschenbach

rediscovers the breath of his late friend, who appeared to lean over him to console him.

“Sigmund!”, cries Aschenbach opening his eyes wide and shedding a silent tear.

Legend has it that this strange man called Aschenbach became obsessed with this Edenic scent and that he spent the next fortnight in his hotel room barely eating and no longer answering his correspondences in the posture of an animal, sweaty and with his hair dye dripping over his face onto his shorts, inhaling the perfume and talking gibberish to himself, spraying “Freudian Wood” over and over again with shaking hands like an addict until the precious liquid in the bottle was spent. The other guests of the Grand hotel heard an ear-shattering outcry of despair chiming through the halls.

Aschenbach departed the very same day and never returned to Venice, as it is said that poor old knut spent the rest of his days feverishly searching for another bottle of “Freudian Wood”.... But it is also said that he was unsuccessful because – unlike you, my dear reader – he has never crossed the doorstep of 