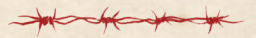


URBAN LEGENDS

With all the
horror drawn by



Miloš Mazal



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Death in a ventilator

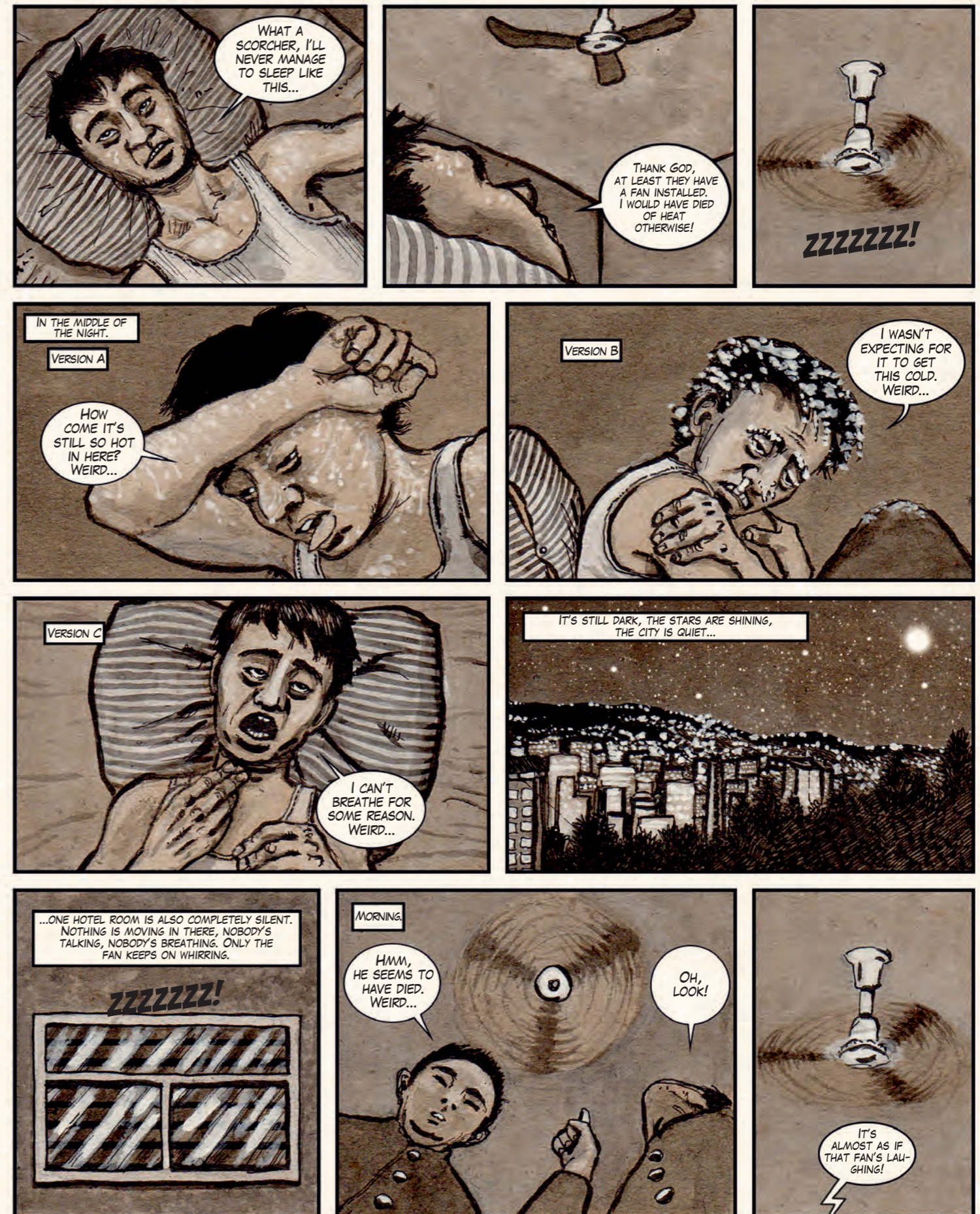
(South Korea)

Can a lethal force be concealed in an ordinary fan?
Why is it best to switch off electric fans at night?



South Koreans believe one very odd superstition: that if they fall asleep in a room with a closed door and windows, and with an electric ventilator turned on, they're going to die. Yes, there was a case where a 59-year old Min was found lying dead in a hotel, with a fan above his bed turned on. However, it wasn't the fan that was declared the cause of death.

This legend of killer fans dates all the way back to the 1920s when people were afraid that this new piece of technology could paralyse their face. Some South Koreans are of the mind that a ventilator can suck all oxygen out of the room, leaving only carbon dioxide in the air. But rooms are no submarines. Others see the danger in possible hyperthermia, or hypothermia. Even though none of these claims is supported by any sort of science, people still stubbornly buy into them. In order for the producers not to lose customers in South Korea, local shops sell ventilators equipped with a timer which allows customers to set the start and end of ventilation. Hurray, sweet dreams have been rescued!



Letter

(Post-war Germany)

Can you think of a situation where giving help to your fellow man can result in a battle for your life? What threat was posed by a mysterious blind person in a country plundered and starved by war?



The theme of selling and consuming human meat has been suspiciously popular in Germany. For example, Germans used to spread fake stories with the intention to smear the Jewish population, in line with the Nazi dogma. You could learn, for example, that Polish Jews murdered a German girl and sold her flesh on the black market. And before that, Jews were falsely accused of using human bodies and blood for ritual purposes. All of it was lies, fabrications, and nothing else. But people sometimes believe even stories that aren't believable at all...

Let's return to post-war Berlin. While the blind man legend could be seen as instructing us not to "blindly" believe those who seem helpless, cannibalism was actually practiced, mostly during the war. It didn't occur in Germany, though, rather in Soviet Russia when Leningrad was being besieged by the German army from 1941 and 1944. The siege lasted 900 days, over the course of which the food supply dwindled to nothing and the locals were dying of starvation. This left them to consume their dead neighbours. Shortly after the Nazi leader's death in 1945, an urban legend sprung up, claiming that there was a blind man in the city, tricking innocent residents into becoming someone's dinner.



Spider bite

(Unspecified exotic destination)

Why are some people so afraid of spiders?
Is it true that a whole colony of spiders
can settle in a human body?



Even though Spider-Man probably wouldn't agree, it's quite impossible for anything like this to ever happen. Since when do spiders multiply by biting someone? Since when can they lay anything under someone's skin? For some reason, people tend to enjoy scary stories that feature spiders. At one time, there was a false rumour about a woman who bought a palm tree in an unspecified retail chain. When she brought it home, a strange whistling could be heard from the flower pot. Just to stay on the safe side, the woman called the information line whose operator warned her to immediately leave the flat. Specialists arrived and found a tarantula nest in the palm's roots.

But to be fair, let's conclude with a legend that paints spiders in a nicer light. Different variations can be heard in Germany or in Ukraine, but overall it's about a poor family who couldn't afford food, let alone Christmas decorations. Their Christmas tree was bare and the children were sad. That's why friendly spiders spent the night spinning beautiful webs of different shapes and sizes for them. The first rays of sunlight turned the webs into strands of silver and gold, making sure that the family would never starve ever again. Although it's just a story, there still are Christmas decorations that resemble spider webs. After all, spiders bring good luck.



Well to Hell

(Siberia, Russia)

What happens when people dig all the way to Hell?
How hot is it in Hell? Is it true that a team of Russian scientists made a hole reaching to Hell?



Although the story is just a legend, a well like this truly does exist. You won't find it in Siberia though, but on the Kola peninsula, at the Finnish border. From 1970 to 1992, Russian and Norwegian geologists were studying Earth's crust there, managing to dig the deepest bore in the world while they were at it – it plunged full 12.261 beneath the surface, reaching layers of rocks that were two and a half billion years old. The Guinness World Records even lists the bore, nicknamed The Well to Hell as many people believed and some still believe that the geologists' true mission was to dig all the way to "hell". We shouldn't find that idea surprising in the least. When the research was still going on, TBN – a U.S. television network – aired a story in 1989 on Russian engineers who hit a high-temperature capsule. The microphone they lowered into the bore allegedly managed to record strange wailing. Viewers immediately started to claim that the sound was made by souls suffering in hell. The actual research was conducted differently. For one thing, the scientists estimated the well's temperature to be mere 300 °C, but most importantly there were no voices of suffering souls, screaming to high heavens, Sure, the researchers did lower highly sensitive microphones into the well, but they did it to record the sound of lithospheric plates moving. They even managed to predict earthquakes and other seismic activities by analysing the recorded sounds!



The Hook Man

(USA)

Is it true that a scary man with a hook in place of a hand sets traps for young lovers? Could an encounter with Hook Man cost a young couple their lives?



The story about a runaway maniac was born in the 1920s. Back then, society was much more traditionally minded than it is now. Maybe that's what started the legend – parents wanted to deter teenagers from meeting at remote locations, or perhaps even imply that those who weren't chaste enough would be deservedly punished... Amen. There are several versions. In some, the couple hears someone scratching at the door right after the broadcast ends, and then leaves for home with the murderer holding onto the bonnet of their car. No wonder that horror writers go for these stories with the same enthusiasm as the Hook Man goes after one's car. Our "hero" has starred at least in six movies. A legend of similar magnitude, The Boyfriend's Death. In this version, only the girl listens to the radio and hears the warning that a murderer or madman has escaped from a mental institution; her boyfriend, meanwhile, is outside, taking a walk. He's not coming back. Then, the girl hears scratching at the door which gets more and more intense. When the girl gets out, she notices her boyfriend, hanging upside down from a tree. It was his nails that was making those scary sounds, lifelessly running over the roof in the wind. Regardless of whether the couple lives or dies, all versions end in the same way: "And it's said that the Hook Man is still out there!"



URBAN LEGENDS



Maybe you think of cities as rather boring places, where the fellow citizens we meet are always grumpy and in a hurry. Certainly you don't see them as settings for mysteries, to say nothing of horror stories. Well, if that's what you think, you're mistaken. The book in your hands will take you to dark, secluded urban places, spinning before your very eyes a web of urban legends, some better known than others. If you value your life, I advise you not to get into the strange black Volga or onto the midnight bus. Having read this book, never again will you be surprised by a deadly hotel fan. If you have overcome your fear, let me welcome you to the pages of modern legends and myths.

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