

***La Symphonie du Loup* by Marius Daniel Popescu
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Opening Pages.

He was almost fifty, most of his hair was grey, he left us two days after the accident. For those two days he was in a coma, at the hospital where they operated on his head. The surgeons operating on him said he'd likely pull through. They cut open part of his skull. They had asked his wife for a signature for the surgical intervention. His wife signed that she accepted the risks of the operation. They were married two years. They lived in a small house, and with them there was her daughter, from her first marriage, her mother and there was her grandmother too. He lived with these four women in the house. Her daughter was eighteen, her grandmother eighty. He was an engineer, in civil engineering. Her mother was deaf-mute, nearing sixty. When he died, he was working on a building site in the provinces, he was directing the construction of an industrial dairy. Those days he only went home on Saturday evenings, returning to the site on Monday mornings. At about eight o'clock in the morning he left. On Monday mornings his wife didn't go to work. His wife was manager in a musical instruments shop, she sold violins, pianos, flutes and drum sets. She was younger than him. He was twelve years her senior. He had been working as an engineer for a good ten years, it was his second profession, his first that of sports master. He had been an athlete and then studied to be a sports master. When you were born, he taught sport to deaf-mutes, in a special school. He learnt of your birth over the telephone. There weren't many telephones at the time. He learnt the news of your birth

around nine o'clock in the evening and he took a taxi to the hospital. You liked going in taxis with him. When the taxi went from a part of the road covered by tarmac to a part of the road covered by cobbles, you liked the change in the sounds made by the taxi wheels rubbing on the road surface. The sounds of the wheels on the cobbles were like a cavalry charging. You liked playing a cavalryman charging his enemies. He gave the taxi driver a big tip. During the trip he said several times to the driver that he had just become a father. He left the taxi and he ran across the area leading to the neonatal unit and he climbed the steps of the stairs three at a time, as far as the door, and he rang the bell. The janitor of the maternity ward came out to tell him that he could not see you outside of visiting hours; the janitor of the maternity ward was imagining a big tip, and he told him that he had to return the following morning, after ten o'clock. Your father smashed in the janitor's face. He gave him two punches. First he went for the janitor of the maternity ward's right eye then, with the second punch, he went for his mouth. Two punches full in the face for the janitor of the maternity ward. Then he went up to the next floor alone. He started opening the doors of the wards and he called your mother by her first name. He woke up everyone. He soon found you. The nurses and doctors were not able to prevent him seeing you at ten o'clock in the evening. He knew you were born prematurely. You were born at seven months, and when he came into the room where you were with your mother, he saw you in the incubator and he said to the nurse "get him out!", and the nurse got you out immediately and he took you in his arms and he kissed you and he said that you had a big nose. He kissed your mother.