

# Contempt

by Ioana Bâldea Constantinescu

“Do you know anybody?”

Because you have to. All of your diplomas, your years of study, everything you know and can do, everything you did is, of course, very nice, thank you, don't call us, we'll call you, but do you know anybody? The everyman does not get to see the doctor, the boss, do you read me... we're talking about the time of important people. Precious people. Different from you. How come, who are you? You're ordinary. If you have no connections and no relatives, no political support, I don't know how to break it to you, but your boat is definitely sinking. Now, sure, there are queues and waiting lists of three, four, six months or a year and there are shortcuts. Your job is to find them. So, you see, what really matters is if you know where to look. The school of life, you know what I mean? To get by. To have the nerve. To be a chatterbox. Are you? What do you mean, you did well in school? What's that – you pay taxes? Minding your own business? You did what? When have we ever said we were interested in overachievers? We want to get to know each other, to understand each other, to be among our own kind, nothing to change except for this and that, the essential bits – come, this is something you hard studying kids should know, oh, you hard working bastards who end up spending all of your money on healthcare, because you had no idea how to ease off – a box of candies, a little something, you get me? What rights? I am talking to myself here. When did any of these ever matter? We have a system here and it works. You're too young to have figured it out. Too unripe.

Nothing is what you deserve here, you understand? Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. You want a diploma, a good job, a regular life with no one roaring at you just because they can, you want to go to the doctor's without bowing as if at the entrance of Heaven, being humiliated and most probably paying for it, you want the law to stay the same irrespective of the regime, you want to work eight hours a day, you want to submit a project, you want a contract, a vacation, what is it you want? A position, a diagnose, a place in a good school where no one yells at your kid and you don't have an instant déjà-vu when checking their textbook? Why do you think you deserve all of that? Why you and not the third cousin's brother in law's godfather's nephew? Whom do you know? Who likes you? Whose are you? Who's got your back? This is the planet of protégés, why should you be any better? How dare you ask for your rights “as an ordinary citizen”?

Ordinary citizens get by, you know, they bend their backs, they go visit the boss, the doctor and butter them up like toast!!! And they make themselves liked, today they get a little coffee, tomorrow a cookie, the day after tomorrow we'll see, creativity is important too, you know, nobody says it isn't.

You?

Who are you?



Contempt. Illustration by Daniel Ivaşcu

So what?

It's really hard being that naïve, isn't it? Look at these kids now, how do they call them? Snowflakes! They filled their heads with hot air, only dreams and fantasies, and intoxications, and stuff about empathy, and argumentative talks, and being worthy, how can you be worthy when you have just opened your eyes into the world and you don't know ANYBODY?

They will go? Very well, let them go away! Who's stopping them? Who will stand between them and their dreams? We have fixed things here and we have a system, we have values, we even have rules, of course they don't apply to everybody, that isn't even possible, we don't live in fairy tales.

These are fat lies, no place is all milk and honey.

You can be happy here, too.

Very happy.

You just need to know someone.

Me, for instance.