UKRAINIAN LITERATURE

A Journal of Translations

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Ukrainian Literature
A Journal of Translations

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Introduction

It seems somehow inappropriate and inopportune to discuss the problems of a literary journal in the midst of a war. As I write this introduction in Lviv, on the western end of Ukraine, on the other side of the country Russian troops have invaded and are conducting a war. As death and destruction ravage eastern Ukraine, destroying the lives of many innocent victims who want no part in this conflict, the fate of a small, irregular periodical seems hardly to matter.

And yet, this journal does matter, even—or perhaps particularly—in the current political and military situation in Ukraine. Whatever the Russian president's goals in Ukraine are, it is clear that he does not see Ukrainians as a distinct national group. In Russian propaganda, Ukrainian identity is seen as an artificial, false construct without historical, social, or cultural support and significance. The information war that accompanies Russia's invasion of eastern Ukraine is built on falsehoods, disinformation, and ignorance. In this context, every assertion of Ukrainian identity and every expression of its culture are important efforts to counteract and de-legitimize the negation of Ukrainian identity. These steps are significant both in Ukraine, where Ukrainians need the emotional support that expressions of cultural identity bring, and also outside Ukraine, where there is very little knowledge of Ukraine and the rich variety of its culture. This journal plays a very small role in projecting and protecting Ukrainian cultural identity, but a nation and culture are not built by single efforts, whether large or small. Indeed, it is precisely the inexhaustible flow of small efforts that demonstrates the resilience and authenticity of cultural identities.

Smaller endeavors, however, face enormous challenges, and even the slightest disruptions pose serious difficulties for a modest project. So it has been with this journal. *Ukrainian Literature* was founded in May 2001 through the efforts of Larysa M. L. Z. Onyshkevych, then president of the US branch of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (NTSh), and the head of its publications committee, Marta Tarnawsky. They concluded an agreement with me that called on NTSh to provide financing of roughly $10,000 per year to cover the cost of honoraria to authors and translators plus small office expenses. It was hoped the journal would appear every year in an online version as well as in a print edition, which NTSh would publish at its own, additional expense. In practice, that proved to be too ambitious a project. The journal has appeared only triennially and largely kept to the

budget. Even with the cost of printing, the expenses for each volume were under $15,000 or roughly $5,000 per year—a substantial but still modest commitment from an organization such as NTSh. Three volumes of the journal appeared under the agreement; however NTSh did not produce a print version of the third volume, despite requests from me and the translators to live up to its contractual agreements.

In the summer of 2013 I learned that the organization's support for the journal was being terminated. George Grabowicz, the new president of NTSh, explained that the journal's print edition was not successful and that the overall impact of the journal did not justify its considerable expense. My pleas to reconsider were not effective. The only English language journal in the world devoted to Ukrainian literature had lost its financial underpinnings and would likely have to cease publication. I wrote to the authors and translators who had already submitted materials for the fourth volume and they graciously agreed to allow their work to be published without any honoraria. Furthermore, my own translation of a classic Ukrainian author from the past (that is, an author requiring no honorarium) would occupy a substantial portion of this issue. The manuscript editor agreed to work without remuneration and my own work on the journal has always been gratis. Thus, the fourth volume of the journal could appear without any funding at all.

But this is not a model for the future. To survive, the journal must have a sponsor. One of the goals of this introduction is to make an appeal for secure, long-term funding for the journal. As the amounts described above indicate, the commitment is not particularly large. I will be knocking on doors soon, perhaps even yours. I will come with two arguments.

The first argument concerns success as a measure of what is useful and viable in the world. From the perspective of pessimists and cynics (let alone enemies) the entire enterprise of Ukrainian national identity and culture could be assessed as unsuccessful, beaten back by its opponents for over two centuries. Today, this argument is all but the official policy of Russia: Ukraine should not exist because it is unsuccessful (and Russia spares no effort, including military invasion, to insure Ukraine is unsuccessful). Nevertheless, if you are reading these words you likely share my judgment that Ukrainian culture and identity (they are inseparable) are not failures—although, heaven knows, it would be nice to see greater success. Ukrainian culture has outlived the cultural genocide of the Tsarist government, including its attempts to stifle the Ukrainian language. Ukrainian identity has outlived Communist totalitarianism, including the physical destruction of millions of Ukrainians in targeted campaigns against the peasants and against the cultural intelligentsia. Ukrainian culture has survived the ravages of post-Soviet corrupt governments in Ukraine. It will survive the current challenges as well, in part because the enemies who wish to destroy it don't have the power or support they think they command. The fate of this journal is not commensurate with the fate of Ukrainian culture, of course. But *Ukrainian*

Literature is performing a unique service in that sphere. It allows a broad and worldly audience access to the variety, the richness, the exuberance, the insights, and the achievements of Ukrainian writing in the past and in our own time. At this time in particular, when Ukraine has become a focus of world attention and concern and yet is little known or understood, that role should be fostered and ensured, not cut short because the enterprise seems to be unsuccessful. Success is a relative measure, and what looks embarrassingly unsophisticated or hopelessly discouraging today may be the height of fashion tomorrow. And financial measures of success are always mis-applied to cultural products. Taras Shevchenko never made a living from his poetry. That doesn't diminish his stature today. This journal doesn't aim to turn a profit. That's why we need support. But that's not because we waste money on futile efforts. If our product were popular, we wouldn't need support. But if it were popular, we wouldn't be the only ones doing this.

It is fair, of course, to channel funds to those projects that are more successful and away from those that are less efficient or less effective. But comparisons must be fair and objective. How can this journal be compared in its effectiveness to other projects funded by charitable or scholarly foundations? What are the criteria? Personally, I feel that, measured in purely financial terms, this journal achieves a great deal at very little cost. I would happily compare it to other projects, including those still funded by the NTSh.

The second argument in support of funding for this journal has to do with how the funds are used. The overwhelming bulk of our funding went to pay honoraria to authors and translators. Most of the translators were not well-paid academics, but rather students, retirees, or other individuals without the benefit of comfortable and steady income. The small honoraria help motivate them to continue translating. So too does the mere fact of publication—there are very few other venues to publish translations of Ukrainian literature. Proponents of the success argument frequently tell me I am doing the wrong thing by publishing a non-commercial journal and that Ukrainian literature in translation should be published by commercial publishers who command a wider market and far more resources. Indeed, that is my goal as well, but such publishers (outside of Germany) have not yet shown a strong inclination to do so, leaving this journal far from irrelevant or redundant. Our volume three published the first half of Myroslav Shkandrij's translation of Serhii Zhadan's *Depeche Mode*. The entire novel is now available from Glagoslav in a print edition. The same publisher has also published other material from our journal in anthologies of short stories. This journal is a conduit toward commercial publication, not an obstacle or a hindrance. Ukrainian literature remains woefully unknown outside Ukraine, particularly in the English-speaking world. Ukrainian writers need more exposure, encouragement, and feedback from the west as well as financial support. The modest payments we made to living authors in Ukraine or to their publishers not only assisted them financially but also helped confirm the notion that a Ukrainian writer

can realistically hope for a wider audience. What's more, these payments allowed us to be more selective in choosing material for the journal. The very best writers know their own worth and rightly expect an honorarium, even if a modest one, for publication of their works.

Ukrainian literature is struggling to find its place in the world. I am happy to devote time and energy to promote it. Ukraine's history and politics are also important topics, but I choose to support culture in general and literature in particular. Translations of Ukrainian literature into English project an unabashedly positive image of Ukraine (no matter what the works are about) and don't require tearful explanations of the circumstances and challenges facing the country. Literature is the very best ambassador for Ukraine and Ukrainians. I hope you agree and will help me find a new source of funding for this journal.

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* *

The translations included in this volume cover a very wide range of literature. Since 2014 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Ukraine's great poet, Taras Shevchenko, I am delighted that this volume includes several of his poems in fresh translations by different translators. Shevchenko is notoriously difficult, if not impossible, to translate into readable English that maintains both the flavor of poetry and the meaning of the text. The translations included here show two very different approaches to this enormously complex task. This issue also contains translations of another complex poet, Ihor Kalynets, by the late Volodymyr Hruszkewycz, as well as some poems by Vasyl Stus. All of these poems are offered here without detailed notes or further explanations, although no doubt the reader might yearn for some additional information. Such is the nature of poetry. Ukrainian readers also struggle to make full sense of Shevchenko, Kalynets, or Stus.

This volume also contains a number of works by living authors. Vasyl Makhno lives in New York and American readers may well recognize the geography, if not the cultural specificity, of his play, *Coney Island*. On the other side of the world, Kyiv and its academic settings look bizarre indeed in Kseniya Dmytrenko's "The Ping Pong Professor." An important quality of literature is its ability to challenge our notions of the familiar and the ordinary. Nowhere is this more evident than in the marvelous story "Dinosaur Eggs," by the late Oles Ulianenko, which gives us a whole new understanding of the heroism of mundane acts of imagination.

The bulk of the volume is devoted to classic authors from the history of Ukrainian literature: Vynnychenko, Kobylianska, and Pidmohylny. As always with complex works from a distant time, translators must navigate the narrow path between aesthetic considerations and explanations of factual details. In Vynnychenko's story, much depends on a sense of the historical

period, when some Ukrainian activists had found new courage to pronounce their message openly, while many of their compatriots were still too timid to give voice to their feelings in a climate of repressive government measures. The untranslatable terms *khokhol* and *katsap*—pejorative labels for Ukrainians and Russians, respectively—delineate the translator's dilemma in capturing terms whose sense lies in their insulting character rather than in any specific translatable meaning. Kobylianska's story about the horrors of war holds its own difficulties for the translator, who must negotiate a highly symbolic descriptive vocabulary and a stylized, emotive narrative style.

In Pidmohylny's novel *The City*, the issues are different. This major work holds significance on many different levels. One of these is history. Pidmohylny reflects the reality of Kyiv in the early Soviet period in many aspects of his novel. In my translation I have deliberately chosen to maintain some of these peculiarities in their Ukrainian equivalents, to preserve the cultural flavor of the times. The various acronyms that sprang up—KUBUch (Комиссия по улучшению быта учащихся), the committee to improve the living circumstances of students; the SocZabez, (Соціальне забезпечення) Social support committee; VUTsVYK, (Всеукраїнський центральний виконавчий комітет) the All-Ukrainian central executive committee, the highest organ of state (not party) power—have been retained as they were known at the time. I have also preserved the designation of the University as the Institute of People's Education, a silly euphemism of early Soviet times. The Institute that Stepan attends is, of course, Kyiv University. The geography of Kyiv's streets and structures is also usually rendered with Ukrainian names. The Golden Gates are familiar to English readers but the names of the bazaars (Sinnyi, Zhytnyi Ievreiskyi, and Besarabka) and other places are rendered in transliterated Ukrainian.

Pidmohylny also relies on many allusions and witticisms that may be lost on the English (and occasionally on the Ukrainian) reader. The village Stepan comes from, Tereveni, might be translated as "Nonsensical jabber." The three boys and a girl in a veil that are seen on the Dnipro are allusions to the mythological founders of Kyiv: Kyi, Shchek, and Khoriv with their sister Lybid. Iskra and Kochubei, whose monuments Stepan finds along the river, are historical figures who opposed Hetman Mazepa and sided with Peter the Great. "I-kannie," like the more familiar "a-kannie" is a feature of Russian pronunciation. All in all, Pidmohylny's novel is full of very specific allusions that readers may or might not recognize. The same is true of any great work of literature. The translator's role is not to explain everything to the reader—that's for university professors—but to allow the reader to enjoy the work in a form as close as possible to the original text. I hope the translations in this volume provide you with such an experience.

Maxim Tarnawsky
Lviv, September 2014

The City

Valerian Pidmohylny

Man has six qualities: in three he resembles an animal and in the other three he resembles an angel. Like an animal man eats and drinks, like an animal he procreates, and like an animal he expels waste; like an angel he has reason, like an angel he walks upright, and like an angel he speaks in a blessed language.

Talmud. Avot (Aboth) tractate.
[*Hagigah* 16A, in the *Mo`ed* seder]

How can one be free, Eucrites, when one has a body?

A. France. *Thais*.

Part One

I

It seemed you couldn't go any farther. Ahead, the Dnipro appeared to stop in an unexpected cove, surrounded on the right, on the left, and straight ahead by the yellowish-green banks of approaching autumn. But the steamboat suddenly turned and the long, smooth streak of the river stretched out to the barely visible hills on the horizon.

Stepan stood by the railing on the deck, his eyes unconsciously diving into the distance as the even strokes of the paddle-wheel blades and the dull sound of the captain's voice at the megaphone sapped the strength from his thoughts. They, too, stopped in that hazy distance where the river imperceptibly disappeared, as if the horizon were the final limit of his desires. The boy slowly looked at the near banks and was somewhat confused. At the bend, on the right, appeared a village, previously hidden behind the bank. The August sun wiped the dirt from the white houses and highlighted the black paths that ran into the fields and turning blue, like the river, just disappeared. And it seemed that this disappearing blue path joined the heavens in an endless field and returned by a second branch to the village, bringing to it some of that vast expanse. A third path rolled down to the river and carried back to the village the freshness of the Dnipro. The village slept in the midday sun, and there was a secret in that sleep amidst the natural elements that nourished it with their strength. Here, near the shore, the village seemed to be the tangible creation of the expanse of space, the magic flower of earth, sky, and water.

His own village, the one Stepan had left, also stood on a bank and now he unconsciously searched for some similarity between his own village and this one that happened to appear on his great journey. Happily, he felt that this similarity was real and that here, in these houses, as in the ones he had left, he would have felt at home. Sadly he watched the village melt and fade with every stroke of the engines, until the trail of grimy smoke hid it completely. Stepan sighed. Perhaps this was the last village he would see before the city.

In his soul he felt an indistinct agitation and dizziness, as if in his own village and in all those he had seen he had left not only the past, but his faith in the future as well. Closing his eyes, he surrendered to the sadness that cradles the soul.

When he straightened up from the railing, he saw Nadika. He hadn't heard her approach. He hadn't called her, but he was happy to see her. Quietly he took her hand. Without raising her head she shuddered and stared at the fan-like wake created by the prow of the steamboat.

They lived in the same village, but before now they had barely known

each other. That is, he knew that she existed, that she studied hard, and that she did not go out. A few times he had even seen her in the Village Hall, where he was in charge of the library. But here they met as if for the first time, and the coincidence of their destinations cemented a bond between them. She was on her way to study in the big city, as he was. They both had travel papers in their pockets and before them lay a new life. Together they were crossing the frontier of the future.

Actually, her prospects were somewhat more certain. She bragged that her parents would provide her with food. He was hoping for a stipend. She would be living with some girlfriends in their apartment. He had a letter from an uncle to a merchant he knew. Even her personality was more energetic, while he seemed self-absorbed and lethargic. In the course of his twenty-five years he had been a sheep hand, then just a boy, then a rebel, and finally the administrator of the village bureau of the Robzemlis Trade Union of Agricultural and Forest Workers. He had only one advantage over her: he was bright and did not fear the entrance exam. Over the course of the day on the steamboat, he had managed to explain to her many of the more complex principles of the social sciences, and she had listened with rapture to the enchanting sound of his voice. Stepping away from him for a moment, she had experienced sudden boredom and new, still unexplained economic problems. When he began to explain them, she wanted him to speak about something else, about his expectations, about how he lived before they knew each other. But she only thanked him for the helpful pointers, adding with assurance:

"Oh, you'll get a stipend! You're so knowledgeable!"

He smiled. It was pleasant to hear praise and faith in his abilities from this blue-eyed girl. Indeed, Nadika seemed to him to be the prettiest woman on the steamboat. The long sleeves of her gray blouse were more appealing to him than the bare arms of others. Her collar left visible only a narrow ribbon of flesh, while others shamelessly uncovered their shoulders and the incipient curves of their breasts. Her shoes were round, with moderate heels, and her knees weren't always jumping out from under her skirt. He was attracted by her unpretentiousness, which nicely complemented his own disdain for artificiality. His reaction to the other women was a mixture of contempt and fear. He felt that they weren't noticing him, or perhaps they were even scorning him for his faded field jacket, reddish cap, and threadbare pants. He was a tall, tanned, and well-built young man, but the short soft hairs on his face, unshaved for a week, gave him a slovenly appearance. He had bushy eyebrows, large gray eyes, a wide forehead, and sensitive lips. His dark hair was swept back in the style worn by many villagers and now adopted by some poets.

Stepan kept his hand on Nadika's warm fingers and gazed pensively at the river, the curving sandy banks, and the solitary trees on the shore. Suddenly Nadika straightened up and, waving her hand, pronounced:

"Kyiv isn't far now."

Kyiv! The big city, where he was going to study and live. It was that modernity that he must infiltrate to realize his long-cherished dream. Was Kyiv really close? Flustered, he asked:

"Where's Levko?"

They looked around and saw a group of villagers who had spread out their lunch on the stern. On the cloak they had spread out as a tablecloth lay bread, onion, and bacon. Levko, an agronomy student from Stepan's village, was sitting and eating with them. He was smooth and fatter than his height warranted, so in days gone by he would have made an ideal village priest—now, an exemplary agronomist. A villager himself from many generations back, he would be perfect at helping the villagers with a sermon or some scientific advice. He studied very diligently, always wore an overcoat, and, above all, liked to hunt. After two years of hunger and want in the city he had formulated and developed a basic law of human existence. From the slogan popular during the revolution, "whoever doesn't work, doesn't eat," he developed the corollary, "whoever doesn't eat doesn't work," and he applied this thesis at all times and in all circumstances. The villagers on the steamboat eagerly shared their simple meal with him, and in return he told them some interesting things about Mars, about farming in America, and about radios. They were amazed, and cautiously, with some derision and secretly disbelieving what he had told them, they asked him questions about these wonders and about God.

Levko came up to his young colleagues, smiling and swaying on his short legs. Smiling and being in good humor were his essential qualities, the measure of his attitude toward the world. Neither poverty nor education had managed to kill off the good nature that he had developed under the quiet willows of his village.

Stepan and Nadika were already tying up their things. Just one more turn of the rudder, and at the end of the sandy hills on the left side of the river lay the gray outline of the city. Before the extended pontoon bridge the steamboat let out a long cry and this piercing noise echoed painfully in Stepan's heart. For a moment he forgot the desires he was fulfilling and stared longingly at the stream of white steam above the whistle, which signaled the end of his past. And when the whistle suddenly stopped, his soul became quiet and lifeless. Somewhere deep inside he felt the foolish pressure of tears, totally inappropriate to his age and station, and he wondered that this moisture had not dried up during hard times and hard work, but instead had hidden and now stirred, unexpectedly and pointlessly. He reddened from embarrassment and turned away. But Levko noticed his distress. He put his arm on Stepan's shoulder.

"Don't worry, my boy," he said.

"It's nothing," answered Stepan, embarrassed.

Nadika was showering Levko with questions—he had to identify every

hill, every church, just about every building. But Levko proved to know little about the area. True, he could name the Lavra Monastery and the statue of Volodymyr, but he could not say for sure whether the hill on which the statue stood was called Volodymyr's. In Kyiv he circulated in a limited and well-defined circle bounded by Lenin Street, where he lived, and the Institute. He almost never deviated from this path, except that three times each winter he would go to State Cinema No. 5 to see some American films, and every once in a while he would go hunting along the Kyiv–Teteriv line. Therefore he was incapable of satisfying Nadika's curiosity, which festered unchecked. The jumble of buildings, so brittle and comic from afar, charmed her, and her smile betrayed joy at the prospect of living in them.

But her attention was soon torn away from the city. She was watching the motorboats that thumped briskly along the river, and the rowboats, in which half-naked, tanned athletes exercised their muscles, smiled, and swayed on the waves of the steamboat's wake. Daring swimmers dove almost under the paddle-wheel itself, yelling merrily. Suddenly, like a white illusion, a three-masted schooner passed by the steamboat.

"Look, look!" yelled the girl, captivated by the unusual triangular sails. On the deck of the sailboat were three boys and a girl in a veil. She seemed a water nymph from old fables. She was beyond envy.

Closer to Kyiv, traffic on the river increased. Ahead was a beach, a sandy island in the middle of the Dnipro, where three motorboats ceaselessly ferried bathers from the harbor. The city flowed down from the hills to this shore. From Revolution Street down the wide stairs to the Dnipro rolled a colorful wave of boys, girls, women, men—a white and pink stream of moving bodies anticipating the sweet comfort of sunshine and water. There were no sad faces in this crowd. Here, at the edge of the city, began a new land, the land of primordial happiness. The water and sun welcomed everyone who had just abandoned pens and balance scales—every young lad as if he were Kyi, every young lass as if she were Lybid. Their pale bodies, oppressed by clothing for so many months, were now released from prison and blossomed into bronze languor on the hot sand, like savages lost on the banks of the Nile. Here for a moment they were resurrected into primal nakedness, and only their flimsy bathing suits marked the passage of a few millennia.

The contrast between the dour buildings on the shore and this untroubled bathing seemed to Nadika both shocking and enchanting. In these opposites she recognized the breadth of urban life and its possibilities. The girl did not hide her excitement. She was blinded by the multicolored costumes, the range of body colors, from pale pink, only just exposed to the sun for the first time, to dark brown, well baked by the intense summer sun. She repeated avidly:

"Oh how pretty! Oh how pretty!"

Stepan did not share her excitement at all. For him, the spectacle of a

naked, thoughtless mob was deeply displeasing. The fact that Nadika, too, was willing to join this silly, mindless herd affected him negatively. He said, gruffly:

"It's all just lard."

Levko looked at the people with more compassion:

"They sit in their cubbyholes all day and go nuts."

Having climbed down to the shore in a crowd, Stepan and his friends stepped aside to let the other passengers go ahead. Nadika's excitement had withered. The city, which had looked sun-bleached and airy from afar, now hung over them, dark and heavy. They glanced around timidly. She was deafened by the cries of the huckstresses, whistles, buses clanging on their way to Darnytsia, and the rhythmic gasp of a steam engine at a nearby mill.

Stepan rolled a cigarette with his cheap tobacco and smoked it. He had a habit of spitting after lighting up, but here he swallowed the bitter tobacco and dust-flavored saliva. Everything around him was strange and alien. He saw the shooting gallery, where air guns were being fired, stalls with ice cream, beer, and kvas, huckstresses with rolls and seeds, boys with irises, girls with baskets of apricots and morellos. Hundreds of faces floated past him, some happy, some serious, some troubled. Somewhere a woman was yelling because she had been robbed. Children at play were making a racket. This was how it usually was here, and how it was when his feet were still treading the soft dust of the village, and how it would continue to be. And to all of this he was a stranger.

All the passengers had dispersed. Freight was being unloaded from the steamboat. Half-naked stevedores were climbing the long ramps with crates, bags, and fruits. Then they carried carcasses of beef and rolled smelly, tarred barrels off the boat.

Levko led them, showing them the way. At Revolution Street their paths diverged: Stepan was headed down into the Podil, the other two into the Old City.

"You can move in with me, if there's any problem," said Levko. "Did you write down the address?"

Stepan quickly bid them farewell and turned right, occasionally asking passers-by for directions. At a bookstore he stopped in front of the display window and began to examine the books. They had been dear to him from an early age. Even before he learned to read, still just a child, he would page through the only book that graced his uncle's study—an ancient journal of some kind, with endless portraits of the tsar, archbishops, and generals. Yet it wasn't the pictures but the rows of evenly spaced black marks that had caught his eye. He didn't even remember how he learned to read—accidentally, it seemed. Then he would pronounce the words with delight, although he still didn't understand what they meant.

He stood for a long time by the window, reading the titles of the books one by one, the names of their publishers, and their dates. Some, he thought,

would be useful to him at the Institute. But the mass of volumes, among which he recognized only one that he had read, made a strange impression on him. They seemed to embody everything that was strange, everything that frightened him, all the dangers that he had to overcome in the city. Contrary to reason, and to all his earlier calculations, desperate thoughts—at first formulated as questions—began to assault him. Why did he have to come here? How was he going to live? He would wither here. He would return home a beggar. Why didn't he sign up for the education courses in the provincial town near his village? What was the point of these childish dreams of Kyiv and the Institute? The boy stood before the modest Podil bookstore, which to him appeared so brilliant, and seemed to be wavering whether he should return to the dock.

"I'm just tired after the long trip," he surmised.

This fatigue also accounted, he thought, for the weariness of his muscles and the unwillingness to move that overcame him here. But he considered himself a messenger charged with an unusually important but alien assignment. His old desires suddenly felt like someone else's commands, to which he was surrendering but not without a quiet resentment. He went on under the power of his momentarily faded but still tenacious dreams.

He found number 37 on Nyzhnyi Val Street, opened the gate, crossed the yard, stepped up to the veranda, and knocked on the worm-eaten door. After a moment, the door was opened by a man in a waistcoat with a short beard and graying hair. This was the fish merchant Luka Demydovych Hnidy, who in the early years after the revolution, when the cities were poor and hungry, set up the base of his commercial enterprise in Stepan's native village, Tereveni, where he invariably stayed at the home of Stepan's uncle. Now the fish merchant was to repay these past favors, although times had changed and the past was not so pleasant that anyone willingly recalled it. He glanced at Stepan apprehensively over the top of his glasses, nervously tore open the envelope, glanced at the letter and silently walked into the house, reading it.

Stepan was left alone in front of the open door. His bundle was eating into his shoulder, and he put it down. He waited a few moments and then sat down on the porch himself. The street before him was empty. In the time since he arrived, no pedestrians had appeared on the street, only a wagon had rolled by with the driver barely holding the reins. The boy started to roll a cigarette, focusing all his attention on it, like a person who wishes to fight off insistent but irrelevant thoughts. Slowly he licked the edge of the cheap, thick cigarette paper, carefully sealed his creation, and then admired his work. The cigarette came out surprisingly straight, with a sharp point at the end to make it easier to light. He put it in his mouth and, pushing aside the tail of his jacket, he reached into the deep but only pocket of his pants—on the other side, the tailor had not wasted extra material, assuming quite correctly that there were people for whom one pocket was sufficient. Following this tailor's

example, nature could save an eye or an ear on many a person, as the myths about Cyclopes suggest. Rummaging through the treasures in his pocket—a knife, an old coin purse, an unexpected button, and a handkerchief—he pulled out a box of matches, but it was completely empty. He had used the last match on the dock. Stepan threw down the box and crushed it with his boot.

Because he couldn't smoke, the boy wanted to smoke all the more. He got up and went over to the gate, looking around for a passing smoker. But this Podil street was, as before, deserted. A row of low, old-fashioned buildings stretched to the riverbank, where it ended in dilapidated, long unpainted shacks. A solitary poplar, denuded by age, reached up awkwardly in front of a window.

Suddenly someone on the porch called him by name, and the boy shuddered as if caught committing a crime. It was Hnidy calling him.

"I shall live here," thought Stepan, and this thought seemed as strange to him as the poplar he had just seen.

Yet Hnidy did not lead him into the house, but deep into the yard, to a shed. Stepan walked behind him and stared at his back. The shopkeeper was somewhat hunchbacked and had thin legs. He was not tall, but his skinny legs seemed long and stiff. And a thought occurred to Stepan: How easy it would be to break such legs!

At the shed Hnidy turned the lock, opened the door, and said:

"You'll stay here."

Stepan glanced over Hnidy's shoulder into the tiny nook. It was a small carpentry shop. By the wall was a workbench; on the shelves above lay various tools. On another wall a flimsy window cast its shadow into the room. There was a scent of sawdust and fresh wood. The boy was so surprised by his new quarters that he even asked:

"Is this it?"

With keys jingling, Hnidy turned his glasses toward him:

"You won't need it for long, will you?"

His face was all wrinkled. There was something of a victim in his eyes.

Stepan timidly entered and put his things in the corner. Bending down, he caught a glimpse of his neighbors through the cracks between the boards of the partition—a pair of cows calmly chewing their cud by a manger. A barn! That's where he was supposed to live! Like an animal! Like cattle! He felt his chest tightening and blood rushing to his face. He straightened up, red-faced and insulted. Stepan looked at Hnidy's pale face, behind which there seemed to be neither desire nor idea, and, with a sense of his own superiority, said:

"Give me a match—I need a light."

Hnidy shook his head.

"I don't smoke.… And you be careful, too—there's wood here."

Hnidy closed the door and for a while the jingle of his keys was audible

in the distance. Stepan paced about his nook in long strides. Each step was a threat. He had not expected this kind of humiliation. He was prepared for hunger and poverty—but not livestock. True, he had tended cows once. But now, after the revolution, after all the uprisings, some shopkeeper—this stick-legged nothing—has the right to shoo him off into a barn?

The little window in the shed grew darker with the sudden nightfall of this still summery evening. Stepan stopped and looked out. Above a row of identical roofs, a factory smokestack stretched into the sky. Black plumes of smoke blended imperceptibly into the gray-blue dusk, as if penetrating the sky to reach into the depths of the universe.

His cigarette had already torn open between his fingers and the tobacco was spilling onto the floor. He rolled another and stepped out into the yard. So he'll go into the house, find the kitchen, and get himself a light. What's there to be ashamed of? After all, they're people too! But there was a youth sitting on the veranda, and when Stepan bent over to get a light from his cigarette, the youth said:

"Have one of mine."

Stepan was surprised, but he took the cigarette. Inhaling the smoke, he took a closer look at the youth, who was carelessly exhaling rings of smoke. When Stepan thanked him, the fellow nodded as if he were deep in thought and would be sitting here until morning.

Stepan lay down on the workbench in his room and enjoyed the fragrant smoke of the cigarette, which was intoxicating him. He closed his eyes and dreamily concluded that everything was fine. The fact that he was in a barn now seemed merely comical. He knocked twice on the wall to the cows, laughed, and opened his eyes. Above the smokestack in the window hung a bright new moon.

II

Outside the sun had risen when Stepan awoke and got up on the workbench. His body was numb from lying on the bare wood, but he paid no attention to this languor and rubbed his eyes with apprehension. Today was the day of the entrance exam. Had he overslept? Remembering that the exam was scheduled for one o'clock, he felt calmer and stretched. His neck ached and he rubbed it with his hand.

A quiet, monotonous gurgling came from beyond the partition that separated his quarters from the stables. The cows were being milked. This calmed him completely—it was still early. He sat on the workbench, his hands on his knees, and his uncombed head bowed down in recollection. Yesterday's details stretched before him in a bright thread. Perhaps it was back in his days as a stableboy, lying in the field and weaving whips or baskets, that he had developed this habit of self-reflection. Now, remembering the previous day, he was disappointed with himself. He noted a certain inner hesitation, a small, albeit fleeting, uncertainty—in short, what is known as inconstancy. But in his own mind he had no right to that feeling. He was part of that new force called from the villages for creative work. He must courageously take his place among those who would replace the rancid past and courageously build the future. He was even ashamed of that delicious cigarette—charity from a young gentleman.

Stepan tossed back the hair falling on his forehead and quickly began to dress. He shook out his field jacket, rubbed his pants with his elbow to knock off some of the dust, and untied his packages. They held some food, a military overcoat in the old tsarist style, and a change of underwear. Having emptied one sack onto the floor, the boy used it to wipe his shoes; then he spit on them, and buffed them again. Now he was thoroughly prepared.

Rather than wash now—which was, in any case, impossible—he decided to bathe in the Dnipro after taking the exam and turned his thoughts to breakfast. His supplies included three pancakes, almost twenty pounds of wheat flour, maybe four pounds of bacon, a dozen cooked eggs, and a bag of buckwheat. Unexpectedly, a couple of potatoes rolled out of his sack, and the boy laughed aloud at this find. He laid out all his edibles on the table and, for the sake of order, untied his field kettle from the sack and set that beside them. He was about to cut some bread when he remembered morning exercise. He definitely wanted to start his day normally, the urban way, as if he were already completely at home in his new surroundings. It was important to give yourself a routine straight off. Discipline and order were the best guarantors of achievement!

Stepan got up and looked around for an appropriate object for his exercise. He picked up the bench and lifted it a few times, admiring his agility and muscle tone. Putting it down, he was still not satisfied. Feeling his biceps

lovingly, he jumped up and, taking hold of a low joist, began doing pull-ups with ever-increasing speed and enthusiasm. When he finally jumped back down to the floor, crimson with effort and satisfaction, he turned toward the door and saw a woman with a milking pail in her hands. She was staring at him with a frightened, troubled expression.

"I slept here," he muttered. "I have their permission."

She was silent. Stepan felt unsure of himself—not because he didn't have his jacket on or because during his exercise his shirt had come out of his belt like a little child's. No, for him clothing was only a safeguard against the cold. But he understood that in this instance, the exercise had exceeded proper limits and turned into a silly game unbecoming of his dignity or position. And then this milkmaid will likely wag her tongue and say that he was trying to climb into the loft in order to steal something. He tossed back his hair and, considering the conversation closed, wanted to get on with his breakfast, but she entered his room, looked at his things, and put the milk pail on the ground.

"Was it very uncomfortable sleeping here?' she asked in a sad, listless voice, running her hand over the workbench.

"N-Yeah," grumbled Stepan unhappily.

But she wasn't leaving. What does she want, exactly? What is this—some kind of inspection? He took on an unmistakably dour appearance.

"I'm the lady of the house," the woman explained, finally. "Would you like some milk?"

The mistress! And she milks the cows herself? Sure, now it's not so easy to boss around the organized proletariat! Of course, from a milkmaid—one of his own—Stepan would have accepted the offer of milk, but if it's an act of charity from the mistress—no thank you!

"I don't want milk," he answered.

But the mistress, without waiting for his answer, was already pouring him some.

"You can wash in the yard, there's a faucet there," she added, taking up the milk pail.

Stepan looked after her. She had a thick, round back—abundance was evident in her shape. He angrily put on his jacket and buttoned it. He sliced off some bacon and started his breakfast, his thoughts turning to his exam. He had nothing to be afraid of. Math—he had an excellent command of it. To test himself, he recited the formula for the area of all geometric figures, binomial expressions, and the relations of trigonometric functions. And although he was unwittingly remembering precisely what he knew best, he was nevertheless pleased with the clarity of his knowledge. About the social sciences there was no concern at all. He had listened to so many lectures back in the village, and he had read the newspaper every day. And all this was in addition to his social background, his revolutionary credentials, and his professional work. All in all, he was well-armed on the educational front.

A look through his documents also left him content. In this pile of papers lay his entire life over the last five years—a rebel under the hetman, fighting the White bands, cultural and professional work. He even read some of it with interest. What couldn't you find here! There was his capture, imprisonment, and escape from execution. There were demonstrations, agitation, resolutions, the battle with ignorance and with homebrew. And how pleasant it was to see all this documented with seals, stamps, the straight lines of a typewriter and the clumsy squiggles of semi-literate hands.

Stepan got up energetically, put his documents in his pocket, sharpened a pencil with his pen-knife, and prepared some paper. It was time to go. Covering his food with a sack, he stopped by the milk. He was, in fact, very thirsty. Bacon and bread really need something liquid. And the milk would go rancid in this heat, anyway. He grabbed the cup, emptied it with one gulp, and threw it contemptuously on the workbench. Even a scrawny lamb will yield some sheepskin.

He stepped out into the yard, latched the hook on the door, and set off down the street. Before going to the Institute, he wanted to stop in at the trade union offices to see about possible jobs. Today, for some reason, it was easy for him to find his way around the city and he gave it little mind. Troubled with the important matters of settling down in a new place, he observed himself more than his surroundings.

Among the hundreds of offices at the Palace of Labor Stepan barely managed to find the division he was looking for—Agricultural and Forest Workers. Considering his business sufficiently urgent, he decided to go straight to the director of the division. It turned out he must wait, but this didn't trouble him excessively: first, it was only ten o'clock, and second, he was sitting on a bench waiting along with other visitors, an equal among equals. Borrowing his neighbor's newspaper and wasting no time, he became familiar with the most recent developments in the international situation, and, judging them to be propitious for the Union of Republics, went on to the "Village Affairs" pages. Here he found captivating reading. Learning that in the village of Hlukhari, at the request of the village council, an unreliable agronomist was fired from his job, Stepan sorrowfully reflected:

"That's what we needed in our village! But our people just sit like bumps on a log."

He diligently read about pilfering at the village cooperative in Kindrativka, about the battle against homebrew in the Kaharlytsky region, and about the exemplary breeding station in the town of Radomyshl. Each fact and figure he compared to his own village, and in the end concluded that its situation was, by and large, no worse than anywhere else.

"We need cultural cadres, that's what we need," Stepan reasoned. He was glad that he had abandoned the thatched roofs only temporarily, for three years. After that, he would return well-armed to do battle with homebrew, pilfering, and the inertia of the local administration.

At last it was his turn to speak to the director of the division. Stepan crossed the threshold anxious that the face he would encounter in the chair behind the desk might be too unfamiliar, along with soft furniture and a carpeted floor. After all, this was Kyiv! But his first glimpse set his mind at ease. The office furnishings were not much different from those of the regional committee, which served simultaneously as an office for all the regional administrators. Except maybe the sofa against the wall: such a luxury would have been unthinkable out there, but even if there had been a sofa, there likely wouldn't have been a free spot to sit down on it.

The director of the division was a straightforward man—but after hearing out Stepan, he was very surprised. Didn't Stepan, an experienced employee of the Agricultural and Forest Workers' Trade Union at the regional level, know where such matters were handled? First, he must register with the local office as a transient member, and then take his place with the others in the job lottery. There was a well-established and well-known procedure for matters of this sort, and you couldn't just go about wasting your time and the valuable time of busy administrators on things like this.

Stepan left his office somewhat perplexed. The director hadn't told him anything he didn't already know. But—that was the "usual" procedure. The boy had secretly hoped that in his case an exception would be made—at least on account of his active participation in the revolution and his exemplary service in the trade union. Besides, he had been sent off to obtain a higher education and deserved consideration ahead of the others. Yet the director hadn't even asked to see his documents. That was unfortunate. But after all, you had to admit that this way was even-handed and fair. No one should receive special favors.

Stepan found the job lottery desk and discovered that it only operated on Wednesdays and Fridays. This happened to be Monday. Such was the procedure, and no changes could be made, even for the newly arrived. A bulletin had been sent to all the regional centers, the clerk told him. What's more, she pointed out to him the list of documents necessary to register for the lottery, and Stepan realized, to his horror, that he was missing some of them and could not immediately produce them.

As hopeful as he had been entering the Palace of Labor, he was equally gloomy leaving. It immediately became evident to him that he would find no job here. He was only one among hundreds. While he collected the necessary documents, others would get all the jobs. And then, was there really any sense in entering the lottery? They'd tell him that he was here to study, not to work. He should have government support. He should be looking into stipends. That, indeed, was how it should be. He did not blame anyone.

Out on the street he suddenly had an idea. What if he just walked into some larger institution? Perhaps they just happened, by sheer coincidence, to be looking for a young, savvy accountant or registrar? Just walk in and ask—it's not a crime. At worst they'll say no and he'll leave. And what if it

works? This idea excited him. In his heart he had a strong sense of his destiny—it's natural for everyone to consider himself the only creature under the sun and moon. He turned in the direction of a large veranda over which hung a large banner, "State Publishing House of Ukraine," and quickly made his way to the second floor. In the first room a few young men were engaged in conversation on the sofa, a typewriter was clattering in the corner, tall bookcases lined the walls. Stepan stopped for a moment and then went on, assuming a carefree manner to avoid being stopped too soon. His eyes searched for a sign that said "supervisor," which he didn't find until he reached the third room. He was ready to grasp the doorknob when the man sitting nearby examining a pile of manuscripts suddenly said:

"The supervisor is not in—what's your business, comrade?"

Taken aback, Stepan mumbled, "I've come on business," and retreated with equal carelessness. Near the exit he heard words that were obviously said about him:

"Probably brought a bag full of poems."

And then there was laughter. At the door Stepan turned and saw the person who had spoken, one of the young men sitting on the sofa, a dark fellow in a gray shirt with narrow stripes. Going down the stairs, he mulled over these puzzling words.

"What poems? What do poems have to do with anything?"

But his enthusiasm did not abandon him. And although in the second institution he was again unable to get through to the supervisor, and in the third he was shown a list of dismissed employees in the very first room, he nonetheless entered a fourth. The director was in his office and received Stepan.

There was soft furniture and a huge, massive clock on the wall, but the director was young and not an ogre. Destiny was smiling on the boy. The director invited him to sit down and listened him out to the end. Then, he lit a cigarette, and said:

"I've learned this on my own skin. I'm a Red director, after all. Promoting employment for the worker and peasant youth is our most important task. That's the only way to cure the ills of our society. We know that it's only the young who will have the strength to build socialism. Come back in two or three months—"

Leaving this commercial institution, Stepan could hardly hold back the insult he felt. The director's gracious welcome exasperated him to the core. He sensed that all doors would close before him like that—some with no hope and others with saccharine politeness. Two or three months! With one chervinets and three pancakes! In a pigsty at the mercy of a merchant! Shoving his hands into the pockets of his jacket, the boy pushed his way through the crowd of pedestrians, avoiding any eye contact. It seemed everyone was ready to pronounce a harsh judgment of him—a failure.

The clock on the building of the district executive committee stopped

the bustle of his unhappy thoughts. It was a quarter to twelve and the exam began at one o'clock. Hurriedly asking for directions to the Institute as he went, Stepan forged ahead. The clarity of his immediate goal—the exam—quickly settled him down. If he failed the exam, what need would he have of any job? But in his heart, he was powerfully sure of passing the exam and imagining the other possible outcome gave him a sweet sensation, like a pleasant joke. In rhythm with his confident steps, the boy easily quieted his agitated thoughts. It was silly to imagine that he need only show up and everyone should be bowing to serve him. He must understand that he has entered into a pattern of life that has been unrolling for hundreds of years. There are no more good fairies and magicians, and there never were any. Only endurance and hard work can accomplish anything. And the dream of gaining a place in the city machinery by a single assault now seemed childish to him. He explained to himself that first, he must write the exam, earn a stipend, and study, and the rest would follow. There are student organizations, guilds, cafeterias. For this, one must be a student. And, you must remember—there are thousands like you!

In the corridors of the Institute there was such a mob that Stepan was swept up in spite of himself. Falling into the mighty stream of humanity, he could only let himself be taken he knew not where or why. Only when the stream dispersed at an auditorium was he able to ask where the exams would be taking place. It turned out that they were to take place exactly here, and that they were about to begin. But Stepan was no sooner calmed by this news than his neighbor asked him:

"And you, my friend, have you gone through the screening committee?"

Screening committee? No, Stepan had heard nothing of it. Is it required? Where is it? Third floor?

Forcing his way through the crowd with all his might, the boy reached the stairs and ran up to the third floor. And what if he's too late and the committee has closed down? Searching for employment, indeed! Red with shame and agitation, he entered the screening committee room—no, they were still in session. He was written down as number one hundred twenty-three.

Four hours later Stepan had cleared the screening committee and was assigned an examination session the day after tomorrow. Hungry and disenchanted, he headed home sluggishly. He understood perfectly that a screening committee was an absolute necessity and that you could not possibly examine in one day all of the five hundred candidates sent off to the Institute. But logical explanations did not stir his sympathies. He began to understand that order is pleasant only when you willingly apply it to yourself, but altogether unpleasant when it is applied to you by someone else. He was tired out. The empty day tomorrow frightened him.

Descending down to the Podil, he turned to the Dnipro to have a bath, as he had planned in the morning. Along the way he bought a box of matches,

and although he wanted to smoke very much, he was afraid that it would make him nauseous. First he would bathe, then have a bite to eat, and only then would he indulge in a cigarette. But he had no luck with bathing. This could only be done on the beach, which is to say he would have had to take the ferry over to the island. That cost five kopecks by rowboat, ten by motorboat. Two kopecks for the matches plus five—that would make seven kopecks! Such expenses were beyond his means, since, besides his expectations—which, after all, might come to nothing—he had only one chervinets, that is, ten karbovanets to protect him from the misery and misfortune that might beset him in the city. Perhaps he would have to return home to the village—he would need money for the ticket. He doggedly persuaded himself that such things had to be kept in mind.

At first he had the idea of following the shoreline far out of town, where he could bathe in a deserted spot before returning to his nook. But his body was exhausted: hunger was spreading a terrible languor through his muscles, and he decided just to wash up. Stepan took off his cap, unbuttoned his collar, and, looking around sheepishly, dipped his hands into the water. His body shook. The water felt so slimy and unpleasant. But he forced himself to wash, dried himself with an oily handkerchief and slowly went back to his Nyzhnyi Val Street.

In his nook, everything was as he had left it. The boy forced himself to swallow a couple of eggs and greedily rolled a cigarette. But he couldn't even smoke—the dryness in his throat and awful spasms forced him to throw away the cigarette and crush it under his boot. Utterly worn out, he took off his field jacket, spread it on the workbench and stretched his entire length on the boards, with his legs dangling off the end. Without any effort to focus his thoughts, he stared dumbly at the dusk in the window. The same chimney was spreading a blanket of smoke across the gray sky.

III

After lunch the next day Stepan set out for Levko's. Only yesterday he would have found it unpleasant to encounter an acquaintance, but today he wanted to see someone, to have a conversation. In the morning he took some bread, bacon, a few potatoes, and some buckwheat and wandered off along the riverbank a long way out of the city. He had gone quite a distance, maybe three kilometers from the harbor, searching for a spot where there weren't any people. A few times he was ready to make his camp but then suddenly he would come upon a fisherman or a huckstress waiting for the ferryman. It was hard to avoid your fellow man here, but Stepan patiently walked on, leaving even his view of the city far behind the bend in the river.

Finally he reached a small cove between steep banks where it was peaceful and deserted. Here he took off his shoes and field jacket, cut down two thick branches, and set up his pot. He gathered some dry grass, started the fire beneath his pot, rinsed the buckwheat, peeled the potatoes, and diced the bacon. The gruel was cooking. Stepan put a few more sticks on the fire, undressed, and lay down on the bank in the warm morning sun. From afar, the monastery chimes rang out every quarter hour, and this ringing along with the gentle lapping of the water brought the boy peace and sadness.

Then, abruptly, he got up and jumped into the water. He swam, rolled, dove, and yelled for joy. Afterwards, wild with hunger, without even getting dressed, he sat down to his gruel. It had thickened and was slowly bubbling. With a sharpened stick he impulsively hunted the potatoes and pieces of bacon and swallowed them without chewing. Then, having no spoon, he greedily dipped pieces of bread into the thick mass of buckwheat and shoveled them into his mouth. In a moment the pot was empty and its sides were polished clean, down to the last grain. And the diner himself lay nearby on his jacket, covered with his shirt. The heat was weighing down his eyelashes. He fell asleep before he could even have a smoke.

He awoke just as easily. Over his head the color of the sky was slowly changing, and a shiver that seemed to come out of the river ran across his body. He was now lying in the shadow of a hill behind which the sun had passed. The chill had awakened him. He got up, rubbed his eyes, and mechanically began to dress. This pointless sleeping had left behind a muddiness in the mind and a weariness of the muscles.

Later the boy sat down on the riverbank in the sun, which had long passed noon. Here, in the clear silence of the last days of summer, he was overcome with a painful feeling of solitude. He did not know its source or exact name, but every one of his thoughts dragged behind it a sticky weight and eventually broke off, empty and defeated. This was his first experience of such inescapable helplessness, and it breathed into his soul a dark premonition of death. His eyes stretched across the water to that place where

he had grown, struggled, and desired. The wind-swept, deserted, sandy riverbanks that stretched before him reminded him of the peacefulness of the village and added to his sorrow. On the other side of the hill he could sense the city and himself as one of the countless unnoticed bodies amidst the stone and the orderliness. On the doorstep of what he desired, he saw himself as an outcast who had abandoned the springtime and fields of blooming flowers of his native land.

Immediately he thought of Nadika. The memory of her that was hiding within him seemed to suddenly blossom in the passionate longings of his loneliness. She had been hiding from him, coquettishly, but now she emerged from that concealment, fragrant and cheerful. The erstwhile touch of her hand sent a living fire through his veins. He recalled their meeting on the steamboat, and the words she had spoken, seeking in them the assurance he yearned for. Her every glance and smile was now illuminating his soul, clearing there the twisted paths of love.

"Oh, you'll get a stipend. You're so knowledgeable!"

Yes, indeed! He was gifted and strong. He knew how to persevere. Where obstacles could not be pushed aside with a good push of the shoulders, he would wear them away with patience. Days, months, even years! Let her but lean toward him—together they would enter the gates of the city as conquerors!

"Nadika," he whispered.

Her name itself meant hope, and he repeated it as a symbol of his impending victory.

The boy returned home quickly, captivated by a single thought—his sudden girlfriend. She had erased all of his troubles, like a true enchantress, by becoming herself the most important objective that had to be attained. The desire to meet with her was so compelling that he determined to visit her right away.

At home, while he was straightening his field jacket and polishing his shoes with the spit-softened sack, hesitation began to engulf him. It was true that Nadika had been very sweet to him on the steamboat and had invited him to come visit. But she had also been very happy—didn't that mean she already had a boyfriend? But he quickly corrected this frightening thought. After all, Nadika was in this city, as he was, for the first time. Maybe she had met someone and fallen in love in the two days since they had arrived? That love could spring up suddenly he knew from his own experience. Perhaps she had even seen something in him, but now what could he, a homeless wretch, use to strengthen her feelings for him? So he'll go visit her as a pitiful villager in the midst of the boisterous city. And what will he say? What can he bring? He wants to lean on her but women themselves seek someone to lean on.

Stepan weighed his options at length, sitting on a bench, and decided to visit her only after he had passed the exam. He would come to his beloved as a student, not as a village bumpkin. He would say, "Here's what I have

accomplished and what I am worth." This settled him down, but he could no longer sit at home, so he decided to visit Levko.

Fortunately, he found Levko at home. The first thing that struck Stepan was the absolute orderliness in the student's humble quarters. The furnishings were far from ostentatious: a small painted chest, a simple table, a folding bed, two chairs, and homemade shelves on the wall. But the table was covered with clean gray paper, the books on it were arranged in neat piles, the trunk was topped with a red-and-black checked tablecloth, the window was adorned with an embroidered curtain, and the bedding was neatly folded away. Up above hung the largest and most important decoration and the inhabitant's prize possession—a shotgun and leather cartridge case. The evenly hung line of portraits on the wall—Shevchenko, Franko, Lenin—each draped with an embroidered cloth, projected an atmosphere of quiet, deliberate contemplation. Envy and consternation overcame the boy as he entered this tidy apartment.

The inhabitant himself was in an undershirt, working over a book at the table, but he welcomed his guest sincerely, sat him down on one of the chairs and began to inquire how he had managed to set up his own affairs. Stepan could not subdue his shame. He replied, briefly, that he had set himself up well, that he was living in a room that was free during the summer, where the family expected to settle a distant relative in the fall. He had nothing to complain about, for the moment. He expected to earn a fellowship soon and would move into an apartment, likely in the building of the Committee for the Improvement of Student Housing (KUBUch), as soon as he was registered as a student. The entrance exam was tomorrow, and he wasn't at all worried about it. Besides, he could count on some recognition for his participation in revolutionary activity.

"And what about you? You have a nice place?" asked Stepan hesitantly, full of respect for Levko.

Levko smiled. This apartment was paid for in suffering. When he was assigned to these quarters a year and a half ago, the owners had greeted him as if he were a wild animal. They refused to give him water, and they locked the washroom. They were an elderly couple, both former teachers. The husband used to teach Latin in high school, but since Latin was now cut from the curriculum he worked in the archives for three chervinets. Later, they had slowly got to know each other. Now they were friends. They drank tea together, and if he really needed to cook something, they let him. They were nice people, but very old-fashioned.

"You'll see for yourself in a minute," he said. "We'll all have tea together."

Stepan started excusing himself—he wasn't hungry! But the student didn't listen to him, slowly put on his shirt and, without even tying his belt, sailed out of the room.

"Well, here's the tea! Let's go," he announced, happily.

He dragged the embarrassed Stepan by the hand, with the latter only pretending to resist, since he truly wanted to meet people from the city and to get acquainted with them. Levko could not substitute for the real thing, since he too, like Stepan, would return to the village eventually after spending some time in the city, perhaps not accidentally but still only temporarily. Flustered, but with a firm resolve to observe and listen more than to speak, the boy entered the room of a real urban person—and a former high school teacher at that!

The room presented a strange collection of the most diverse things, which seemed to have come from various other rooms, huddled here in terror, and become petrified. Since there was absolutely not enough room for all of them, they stood in an odd crowd along the walls or simply in the middle of the floor. The edge of a wide double bed peeked out from under a short screen. Its head abutted a bookcase, in which faded brown cardboard covered the panels where glass had once been. A large wooden sideboard with high relief carving stood next to the bookcase and prevented its doors from opening properly. The top of the sideboard leaned against the wall, without which it would lose its balance. Farther along the wall, under the window, were shelves full of sheet music, although there was no piano in the house. At an angle to the window, which was partially obscured by its edge, stood a tall, mirrored wardrobe—the only thing that retained its original, clean appearance. Symmetrically across from the bed stood a tall, worn Turkish divan. On its wide back, topped with a long wooden surface, a gramophone, surrounded on both sides by even piles of records, raised its lonely horn toward the ceiling.

In a corner just by the door stood a small black stove, a "bourgeois," whose function was to heat the room in the winter while in the summer it was only used to cook meals. A wide chimney-pipe, attached to the ceiling, stretched directly from the stove to the middle of the room, then turned and wound its way to the wall, where it disappeared above the bookcase. The room was big, but diminished by all the objects it contained, leaving hardly any space in the middle for a small card table, which served as the dining table and seemed lilliputian next to its colossal neighbors. The tea was laid out on it in a sooty blue teapot, with four cups, a bowl of sugar, and a few slices of bread on a plate.

Levko introduced the owners. Andriy Venedovych was a lively old man whose face was overgrown with gray hair. His hands and gracious bow betrayed a certain pomp and self-respect. His wife, however, was missing a few teeth, so Stepan could not make out her words of welcome. This hunchbacked woman with a dry-skinned face and trembling hands invited everyone to sit down in her incomprehensible gurgle and began carefully to serve the tea.

Andriy Venedovych praised Stepan for his intention to study, but criticized the current educational programs and the fact that the old,

experienced teachers had been dismissed. Suddenly he asked the boy:

"Do you know Latin?"

Stepan felt uncomfortable as the object of the owner's undivided attention and blushed. He honestly admitted that he knew a Latin language had once existed but had never studied it, since it was no longer needed. These last words jarred Andriy Venedovych. Latin not needed?! Well, this young student had better know that only the classics will rescue the world from its current obscurantism, as they had earlier rescued it from religious blinkers. Only by returning to the classics could humanity revive its clear perception, full nature, and creative drive.

The former teacher's voice rose and resounded with passion. With ever greater enthusiasm Andriy Venedovych inundated Stepan with names and aphorisms whose meaning and importance were completely lost on the boy. He spoke of the Golden Age of Augustus, the genius of Rome that had conquered the world and still shone in today's darkness with a bright beacon of salvation. He spoke of Christianity, which had betrayed and devoured Rome but was in turn conquered by it during the Renaissance. And he spoke about his beloved Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Nero's tutor, the incomparable philosopher hounded by challenges and intrigues, who, when sentenced to die, met death by his own hand, cutting his veins, as befit a sage. He spoke about Seneca's tragedies, the only Roman tragedies that have survived; of his Dialogues, among which he could recite *De providentia* by heart. And they dare to ascribe to this Seneca, who combined stoicism and Epicureanism in a higher synthesis, to this genius of Roman genius, a relationship with the apostle Paul, a shallow follower of that religion of the prisons that toppled Rome!

It was getting dark in the room, and in the dusk the Latin instructor's voice resounded like a prophet's. He addressed Stepan time and again, and the boy was taken aback despite himself. But noticing that Levko was peacefully sipping his tea, he found the courage to drink his own cup in spite of the owner's prophetic voice. The lady of the house sat unnoticed, her narrow shoulders nearly disappearing behind the stout teapot.

"I may be old but I'm energetic," announced the old man. "I'm not scared of death. Because my spirit has classical clarity and tranquility."

Back in Levko's room, Stepan said:

"The old man is overwhelming."

"He's a bit psychotic, with his Latin language," answered Levko, "but he's a good-hearted person. And he's helpful. He's smart. He knows everything."

On his way out, Stepan asked:

"And what about this Latin? Is it really useless?"

"Completely," laughed Levko. "Why do you think it's called a dead language?"

He led his visitor out to the stairs and encouraged him to stop by again, even just to say hello.

IV

Walking down Lenin Street to Khreshchatyk, Stepan had much on his mind. The visit to Levko's had strengthened him. He told himself that Levko's path was his path too, and involuntarily he felt a touch of jealousy regarding his friend. He couldn't imagine anything better than such a handsome little room. Levko will work quietly and steadily there. He'll pass all the necessary exams, earn his certificate, and return to the village a new and cultured person, and with his return he would bring new life to his village. Stepan, too, must follow this course. He now clearly felt the weight of his responsibility, a feeling he had lost for a moment when he first set foot on this foreign, urban soil. The memory of the send-off he was given back in the district wafted over him like a warm breeze. How could he even for a moment have forgotten his friends, left behind with no hope of escaping the backwoods? He smiled by way of sending them a greeting.

His first acquaintance with city folk was also pleasant. First there was the skinny shopkeeper, whom he could crush with two fingers; second, the half-crazy teacher dismissed from his teaching, with his Latin and his peccadilloes. About the first Stepan did not trouble himself to think much—a simple NEP-man whose wife milks the cow in the morning and in the evening puts on her silk gown and sips tea with her friends. The shopkeeper—he's just a coward who trembles like jello over the fate of his house and store in which he has invested all his life and dreams. Stepan happily discovered for himself the cultural emptiness of the owner of the barn where he was now forced to take residence, rather than in the apartment that so far inhabited his consciousness only as a disembodied idea. What could there be in this shopkeeper's soul, besides kopecks and marinated herring? What feelings could he possess? He existed only so long as he was permitted to exist. A freak—nothing but weeds or trash that disappears without a trace or afterthought.

The teacher was more interesting. He thought about things and had a purpose in life. But that room—Stepan had to laugh remembering it. He could imagine the destiny that awaited this gentleman. No doubt the teacher had at one time been the owner of a large and comfortable apartment, but the revolution had, in one housing requisition after another, cut off room after room, chasing him and his unrequisitioned and unsold property into this cramped little corner that resembled an island after an earthquake. The revolution had also destroyed the high school where he had taught children of the bourgeoisie how to exploit the common folk and it had thrown him like a rat into the archive, where he could burrow among the old papers. He was still alive, he was still ranting, but his future is extinction. In fact, he was already dead anyway—as dead as that useless Latin language.

So there they are, these city folk! They're nothing but the dust of the past that needs to be swept out. And that was to be his goal.

With these cheerful thoughts Stepan reached Khreshchatyk and found himself in a crowd of people. He looked around and saw the city at night for the first time. He even stopped. The shining flames, the rattle and chimes of the streetcars that converged here and then ran off again, the hoarse howl of the buses whose large carcasses rolled so easily along the streets, the piercing cries of the individual automobiles and the shouts of the carriage drivers along with the dull clamor of the wave of humanity—all this suddenly shattered his concentration. On this wide street he encountered the city face-to-face. Leaning against the wall, hemmed in by the shameless surges of the crowd, the boy stood and watched, letting his eyes wander along the seemingly endless street.

He was shoved by girls in light blouses, whose thin cloth blended into the bare skin of hands and shoulders; by women in hats and veils, men in jackets; hatless boys in shirts with sleeves rolled up to their elbows; soldiers in heavy, stifling uniforms; chambermaids holding hands; sailors from the Dnipro fleet; teenagers; the raised caps of engineers, the light overcoats of dandies, and the grimy jackets of vagabonds. His eyes rested on hands that in the twilight seemed to him to be touching women's breasts, on interwoven elbows, on thighs squeezed against each other. His gaze rested on heads with hair neatly trimmed or braided in ponytails; necks straight and upright or sensuously bent down to shoulders. Before him passed couples captivated by each other; careless singles—sidewalk Hamlets; groups of boys chasing girls and throwing them the first flat words of friendship, which unexpectedly acquired provocative sharpness; businessmen returning late from the office, in no hurry to arrive at their boring homes; elegant ladies casting superior glances at the men and shrinking from an unexpected touch. His ears heard the indistinct clamor of interwoven conversations, sudden exclamations, occasional curses, and that sharp laughter that starts in one place and then rolls, it seems, from lips to lips, igniting them in sequence like signal flares. His entire soul was consumed with unbounded enmity toward this mindless, laughing stream. What else were all these heads capable of, except laughter and courting? Could there be a spark of an idea in their hearts? Could their thin blood sustain passion? Could there be a sense of purpose and duty in their consciousness?

Here they are—these urbanites! Shopkeepers, brainless teachers, ignorantly carefree dolls in fancy costumes. They should be swept away! They should be crushed, these worms, to make room for others.

In the twilight on the street, he sensed a trap. The pale glow of the streetlights, the string of shining display windows, the glare of the cinema—these were all will-o'-the-wisp in the urban swamp. They are a fatal attraction. Their illumination is blinding. Above, on the hills where the rows of buildings meet the rushing cobblestone street, in the darkness that

dissolves the sky and stone, were enormous reservoirs of poison and colonies of snails that poured out at night into this ancient Khreshchatyk valley. And if only he had the power, he would, like a sorcerer from a fairy tale, call forth thunder against this gray, heavy mud.

Stepan began to force his way disdainfully through the crowd, pushing every which way, without regard for any protests, blunted and desensitized like a believer in the midst of a witches' sabbath. Beside every cinema he was spun about in a whirlwind. Hundreds of feet were shuffling here, hundreds of torsos were bumping together, hundreds of eyes were staring. From wide vestibules decorated with bright posters and giant signs row after row poured forth, spreading out or bunching up depending on the force of the opposing streams. The shows were ending and within these establishments an exchange of substances was taking place. Paddling his way out of these treacherous streams, Stepan thought gloomily:

"Watching pretty pictures!"

He passed without stopping the sumptuous displays in the store windows, where waves of silk and muslin changed color under the lights and fell in soft waves from display stands onto the windowsill, where on glass shelves lay gold and shimmering stones, mounds of aromatic soaps amid vials of mysterious perfumes, countless packages of cigarettes with colorful labels, Turkish tobacco, and amber pipe stems. Walking past, he threw contemptuous glances—fire and ice—at these objects. The electric store stopped him, however. Behind its reflecting glass colored bulbs were flashing on and off, creating strange, lifeless flowers in the crystal of the mirrors of the display. And Stepan thought bitterly: why not take these lamps to the village, where they would bring real benefits, rather than mere amusement. Oh, the insatiable city!

He didn't recognize the bookstore at all. Could these really be those same familiar books, so dear to him, lying in this window, stretching endlessly beyond its edges in the reflecting mirrors at either end? Why were they too being paraded before the scornful gaze of the witless mob? Were theirs the eyes that would delve into the depths of these books, these repositories of important ideas, destined to set the world in motion? They had no right! This was mockery! He felt pity for these dishonored treasures, demeaned by the stares of the ignorant—a bountiful harvest trampled by a lust for amusement.

"Anything to make a sale," he thought.

He was so deep in thought that when he set off again the clamor of the street seemed even wilder. In this noise he heard both laugher and a threat to all those who would rise up against the shops and the lights. Tomorrow this street would spill out into the offices of businesses and institutions, it would flow into all the workplaces, filling all the jobs large and small so that wherever he might come knocking, the doors would be closed.

"Damned NEP-men," he thought.

On the corner of Sverdlov Street he was momentarily stopped by a crowd. He glanced up the incline where the streetcar was rising. There was an unexpected calm here, a sudden haven from the storm, where the crowd turned, died out, and evaporated, dispersing into individual figures. He watched the streetcar disappear into the distant gloom as it crested the hill, and in this bluish band of dusk beneath the streetlights, between the vague rows of motionless buildings, he felt the strange beauty of the city. The bold lines of the street, its crafted symmetry, the heavy perpendicularity on either side, the majestic slope of the cobblestone pavement throwing sparks from beneath falling horseshoes, revealed to him a stern and unfamiliar harmony. Still, he hated the city.

Past the greedy doors of beer-cellars, from which drunken music blared onto the street, past the archway that enticed people to the loto-hall and the crocodile head over the entrance to the casino, he walked by the Regional Executive Committee building and slowed down. In the evening, the section of Khreshchatyk between Komintern Square and Revolution Street was a desert, where only lonely prostitutes could be seen passing the time beneath the dark verandas. Behind him the valley of Khreshchatyk was abuzz. On the right came music from the Proletarian Garden. On the left, human shadows were rustling on Volodymyr Hill. Even the streetcars here seemed less intrusive.

For the first time this evening, Stepan tore his eyes away from the earth and raised them to the heavens. A curious trembling overcame him when he saw the crescent of the moon overhead amid the stars, the same moon that shone for him in the village. The tranquil moon, a rural wanderer like himself, companion of his youth, confidant of his adolescent dreams, subdued in him the anger that had been provoked by the street. The city must be conquered, not despised! A moment earlier he had been crushed, but now he was envisioning endless possibilities. Thousands like him came to the city, huddled somewhere in cellars, barns, and dormitories, and went hungry, but worked and studied, imperceptibly undermining its corrupt foundations and replacing them with unshakeable new ones. Thousands of Levkos, Stepans, and Vasyls were laying siege to these nests of NEP-men, squeezing them, and tearing them down. Fresh village blood was pouring into the city to change its substance and appearance. And he was one among these thousands, whose destiny was to conquer the city. The city-orchards and village-cities that were promised by the revolution, these wonders of the future about which books had given him only a dull impression, were for him at that moment very close and comprehensible. They were the challenge of the future, the noble goal of his education, the result of all that he had seen, done, and would accomplish. The life-giving power of the soil that coursed in his veins and his mind, the powerful winds of the steppe that had given him birth added passionate clarity to his fantasy about earth's shining future. He dissolved in this boundless dream, which captivated him immediately and completely. This

dream was his fiery sword, with which he conquered everything around him. Descending down Revolution Street to the grime of Nyzhnyi Val Street, he was ascending ever higher, to the passionate twinkling of the stars.

V

The city is a wonder. On the outside it's all hustle and bustle—life in the city, it seems, bursts forth like a mountain spring, with the energy of lightning. But inside, in the dim offices of various institutions, it drags along like an old wagon, entangled in thousands of rules and regulations. Stepan felt the blows of this urban formalism at every step, and no matter how he tried to excuse them with objective reasons, they did not become any less irritating for his efforts. Having learned from his previous experience, Stepan arrived on the appointed day for his exam two hours early, to allow time for waiting in line. Today, he was convinced, the formality of his attendance at the Institute would be settled, and he would have full rights to visit Nadika with the distinguished, although invisible, badge of a student. True, the impressions of the previous evening had, for a time, replaced the image of this beloved figure. Returning home, he had sat up for a long time, smoking and thinking about the city, its destiny and true purpose. But in the morning he awoke as always, eager and full of youthful energy, which, like a life preserver, kept him from drowning in the uncertainties that had unexpectedly engulfed him. Somewhat accustomed to his new lodgings, he boldly asked the lady of the house for a bucket and washed himself thoroughly. And then again the recollection of Nadika flooded his soul with its warm turbulence.

"The examination," he thought happily. "That's the primary thing!"

Having an uncontrollable inclination to analyze his own thoughts and actions, he scolded himself amicably for yesterday's anger and vague apprehension. Dreaming was a waste of time, he lectured himself: actions were needed—ceaseless activity to overcome all obstacles, with all one's energy focused on the next hurdle. The first of these hurdles was the Institute. He must gain admittance to the Institute and not fool around with all kinds of dreams, no matter how noble. Indeed, the examination seemed to him to be a hurdle that, once cleared, would gain him a queen and a kingdom. He prepared for it as if he were a famous warrior setting out on a campaign that would earn the victor the keys to the magic cave of treasures. And because he was inclined to conquer his enemies with one great effort, once and for all, he was unpleasantly struck by the fact that the examination would last two days—a written exam today, an oral one tomorrow. The announcement that contained all this information in a few short lines of text was entirely unconcerned with his idealistic enthusiasm, his youthful passion to solve all problems immediately. And he had to surrender to these meager lines.

Stepan sat down on a window ledge and prepared a cigarette—tobacco was a true friend and a comfort in all of his difficulties. But even this small pleasure was denied him by another small announcement on the opposite wall. He spent two hours in boredom, carelessly observing the mob of his future colleagues and thinking about himself. He sensed, although

indistinctly, a change within himself. He could not but observe a new fire starting to burn inside him, but one that was fitful, that trembled with every breath of an external wind. In the morning he had been happy, but now he was overcome with a sadness that was impossible to contain. Yet he was surely not worn out by any work, nor had any accident befallen him. And was it not but a few hours ago that he had told himself to be steadfast? These unfamiliar vacillations in his mood worried him. He was beginning to understand that the unsophisticated village existence that he had known heretofore, where all problems had been simple and overly practical, was something entirely different now that he had begun to live in the city.

Among the possible essay topics on the exam he immediately chose "The coupling of the city and the village." After preparing a mental outline of his essay he wrote quickly and easily. He elaborated his principal arguments extensively, examining both the economic and the cultural needs of this partnership, and illuminating its goals and desirable consequences. The village cultural activist, with a firm Marxist understanding of the importance of economic pre-conditions, was reawakened in him. The assignment captivated him completely—reading over his own sentences, he forgot that he was writing an examination. "The coupling of the city and the village is a bold step toward the construction of our future orchard-cities," he concluded, and turned in his finished exam a full hour before the scheduled deadline. Evening was falling. After wandering aimlessly along Shevchenko Boulevard, the boy decided that he should indeed visit Nadika, who was staying with some friends near the covered market.

The house she lived in was one of those ancient little homes that can be found unexpectedly on Kyiv's side streets right next to six-story buildings. The rusty green roof, the wooden window-shutters, the old-fashioned fenced-in yard in front of the windows, and the rickety stairs to the uneven porch were evidence of a greater antiquity than that allowed by the law on stolen and lost property. But Stepan was happy to see this shack, next to which his own shed seemed less miserable—a girl who lived here could, quite properly, be his.

Nadika lived with two girlfriends from her village who had set out into the wide world a year earlier and had rented so-called "quarters" in this old-fashioned home. One of them, Hanna, or Hanusia, was enrolled in sewing courses, preparing to replenish the ranks of the army of seamstresses whose profession had fallen into such disfavor during the years of war communism and barter economy, when everybody washed and cooked for themselves and sewed nothing at all, but now, in the NEP years, needed rapid replenishment, in accordance with the growth in demand and fashion. She was a quiet girl, driven out of the village by the hardships of a large extended family—driven out forever, with no hope of returning under the tattered, thatched roof of her parents. She was sincere and defenseless, somewhat romantic and forbearing, like all poor girls who harbor within them neither real passion nor reliable

strength. Her companion, a successful farmer's young daughter, was completing, in accord with her plans, a typing course and had been searching a half year now, with no success, for a suitable position and an appropriate partner, one with some accomplishments. She dressed with pretension and extended her little finger when raising a teacup. Her name was Nusia, which is to say, Hanna as well, but to a higher degree. Of the two beds, neither of which could be called a double bed, one belonged to Nusia, who was unwilling to compromise her possession in any respect, so that Nadika always had to double up with Hanusia, who was always agreeable to everything. These two beds and a table, typewriter, sewing machine, and haggard chair were the only markers of material possessions in the girls' apartment; the other decorations had more of a spiritual character: portraits and pictures that Hanusia had naively plastered on the walls, straining to add some domesticity to the empty rooms. She had adorned the portrait of Lenin that hung in the center with a big sign in uneven letters: "You have died, but your spirit lives on." In the corner she had hung an icon of St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker that was hardly noticeable at first sight. Of all the pictures, only one belonged to Nusia: a naked Galatea raising her arms and breasts to the heavens. It hung over Nusia's bed and disturbed Hanusia with its indecency.

Outside the door Stepan could already hear male voices, and his heart sank. He was not in the mood for happy people, and he wanted to speak to Nadika alone. But there was no other option, so he opened the door. The situation looked worse than he had imagined: there was a bottle on the table and the beds were pulled up around it to seat the three girls and three boys. Stepan's interest cooled, but then he noticed Levko and understood the situation. Those two were the boyfreinds of Hanusia and Nusia, but Levko was just here for the company, and so Nadika was free, free for him, since she was the first to get up from the table and welcome him. He was introduced to the two friends and sat down with them. Although he had eaten nothing all day and was hungry, he categorically refused to eat or drink. To eat at the expense of these two strangers—this party was surely their treat—was something his honor did not permit. Levko was a different matter: he sat in the corner, like a father at a wedding, and wasted few words, since his mouth was busy the whole time. He just smiled and gazed at the company. The life of the party were the two other fellows, who were displaying all their wisdom and wit for their ladies.

Hanusia's suitor was one of those village fellows who appear in the city like a wandering meteor—visiting the theaters, obtaining free passes everywhere thanks to the "coupling the village and city" campaign, attending all the public debates and soirees and, applauding endlessly there, annoying girls on the street, sneering at everyone, cursing everything; and then after a year returning to the village, taking up farming and growing wild again in one month. They turn out to be family despots and political conservatives. The

trump cards of this fellow's behavior were his salacious anecdotes and suggestions, which disorganized Hanusia's dreamy soul and broke down her already weak resistance. Compared to this wit, the other fellow was the model of probity. He, too, paid little heed to education, his chief goal being to latch on to a secure job; if that could be done without a diploma, then higher education should be cut off as a useless appendage, much like the worm-like protrusion of the appendix. Nostalgic for the beautiful turbulent years when it was so easy to get ahead, he knocked on all doors with a villager's steely determination and took advantage of every fortuitous acquaintance, until at last he landed himself a position as an instructor of club work, to which he clung with hands, teeth, and both his feet. But, examining his life through the prism of the ancient village stereotype, which puts certain very specific expectations before a young man setting out on an independent path, the brave young instructor was intent on adding Miss Nusia as a partner in his future official successes.

The conversation had stopped momentarily on account of the appearance of a new personage and now resumed its course. The topic was ukrainization.

"Now take, for example," remarked the instructor, "club work. It's a serious business. The workers are already fidgety, they complain about the drought of interesting leisure activities. And then there's this language. And a drama group. And maybe a choir. And then it's, ... oh heck, a distancing from the masses. It's tough for the party with this ukrainization policy."

He put particular emphasis on "party," a word, he felt, that had a magic influence on any sentence in which it appeared.

"Will the villagers be ukrainized too?" asked Hanusia, hesitantly.

The instructor smiled politely.

"It turns out they'll need it, too. After all, what kind of a Ukrainian can a bumpkin be?"

Stepan could not endure this any more. He burst into the conversation energetically.

"You are mistaken, comrade," he said to the instructor. "Ukrainization is meant to strengthen the coupling of the village and the city. The proletariat must be ..."

But Yasha, the young villager who was on tour in the city, laughed suddenly and threw a jeering glance at Stepan and Nadika. It was his habit to delight in his own witticisms even before he uttered them.

"He-he! So you two are coupling too?"

Nadika turned red, while Stepan, offended on both his own account and on hers, turned sullenly silent. What could he say to this insolent fellow, who considered himself the master of the situation, waving his arms about, pinching his Hanusia, and winking all around? He couldn't fight him here! Hunger and antipathy to this company were leading to nausea. So this was the vanguard of village society, erstwhile conquerors of the cities? And why was

Levko so calm, as always? Was he like them too? Was it the eternal fate of the village to be the dull, hopeless slave that sells himself for employment and food, at the expense not only of his goals but of his dignity, as well? Perhaps this was the path that awaited him too, this swamp that would suck him in and digest him, transforming him into a servile supplement to the rusty system of life's usual course? He sensed that life's terrible steel springs, which had loosened on the ruts of the revolution, would now be straightened again. Perhaps life was nothing more than this unstoppable train. Could no engineer alter its course along the rails on which it was destined to travel between the familiar, gray stations? One thing was certain—hop on, no matter what or where it was going. Weren't they symbolic, those famous freight cars of the recent though half-forgotten days, where hucksters fought for room, kicking and cursing each other, climbing onto the roofs, hanging off fenders and bumpers with their treasure sacks full of crumbs, living in filth and misery but with an unquenchable desire for life, with dreams of girlfriends, pies, and moonshine? And if there was such a mass of those mongers then, what of today, when there were no longer any food blockades, tribunals, or requisitions—when they were free to make use of entire caravans for their goods and the soft upholstery of train coupes for themselves?

Plunging into these unhappy thoughts as if peering into a bottomless pit, Stepan mechanically picked up the heel of a loaf of bread and began to chew it. The village was receding from him. He was beginning to see it in a distant perspective which left only the schematic outline of a living organism. He felt afraid, like a person beneath whom the ground has just shaken.

Meanwhile, the conversation, having wandered over various topics, turned to the ones that inevitably result from the very slightest infusion of alcohol even among the most virtuous people. Women's committees, marriage, love, and alimony appeared on the lips of the guests and the room filled with Yasha's laughing:

"But I tell you, the woman will always be on the bottom!"

"Oh my God, what is he saying?" cried Hanusia, for whom Yasha's comment had the greatest relevance.

Stepan felt Nadika's worried gaze and, raising his head, looked into her eyes. She smiled at him, but in this smile was the longing that comes to a girl in love, clouding her eyes and weighing down her hands with an insuperable weariness. Her heart had already opened like a seed in loose soil, sending out its first pale shoots to the surface under the influence of the eternal sun, which melts the snow and wakens thousands of seeds from the depths, without any responsibility for the winds they may encounter in its kingdom.

Levko was dozing, bent over the table. He wasn't hungry, today he had written the next portion of the entrance exam, and he had every right to be happy. Nusia was leaning her elbow on the knee of the instructor, who had lit his pipe and was contentedly blowing smoke in front of himself. Yasha had his arm around Hanusia, who had acquiesced after a few feeble protests.

"How 'bout a song?" he suggested. "Hanusia, you begin."

Hanusia raised her head and started singing, dragging out the words for a more sorrowful effect:

"To Ukraine the wind will blow,
Where my sweetheart I left low ..."

In a moment the song brought everyone together. Yasha, becoming serious, offered support in a lyrical tenor that, incomprehensibly, lived in his prosaic throat.

Nature had not endowed Stepan with the musical gifts of his nation, and once again he felt himself a stranger in this company. He felt the senselessness of his position here, where he was a silent dolt who had opened his mouth only once during the whole evening, and even then unsuccessfully. But he couldn't go, either. He wanted to say something to Nadika. She was sitting next to him, and the passionate but unfulfillable desire to touch her hand—to hear from her lips words addressed only to him—gnawed at him. She was waiting for him, he could see this in her every glance. And he was waiting for her. Nevertheless, other thoughts were continually obscuring her image, pushing her away from his dreams, although he was unaware of these involuntary betrayals.

As he left, he said to her:

"I'll come tomorrow."

"Do come!" she answered, and her easy familiarity filled him with a magical warmth.

"Nadika, I'll come tomorrow," he whispered. "Expect me, Nadika."

He went home quickly, consumed by a feeling in which he expected to find comfort and confidence.

VI

"Good! Very good!" said the professor.

Stepan came out from the exam. A crowd of curious students waiting for their own turn surrounded him. "How was it?" "What questions did they ask?" "Is it brutal?"

He had passed the exam. Tomorrow his name, too, would appear beneath the glass where the names of the accepted were posted. For three years these walls would be his shelter. He must see about the scholarship. He must write and tell the friends back home in the village about this success. The exam had been conducted in groups of five, and Stepan had listened in amazement to the answers of the four before him. Would they really admit them to the Institute? In any case, he was head and shoulders above them. His knowledge was firm and broad, without gaps or thin ice. He proved to himself the value of his three years of tireless work in the village, without rest or vacation, when the urge to study had overcome him. The last ounces of the milled grain he had earned and all the coins he had saved had been turned over to the teacher, or for books and paper. He had forsaken everything, had become an oddball and a recluse, spending his nights by a lantern dreaming of formulae and logarithms, while his friends laughed at him behind his back. Only someone strong in spirit could have managed the work he had undertaken, and he had accomplished it because he had a clear notion of what he wanted. He wanted to pursue higher education. Fearfully and devoutly he had dreamed of the day this would happen. And now the day had come! The only thing missing was the joy that should have accompanied such a momentous event.

He cheered himself with words of all sorts, turning his mind to his serious and worthwhile goals, but he could not drown out the misgivings in his soul or fill the void that had arisen there once the exam was off the agenda. The fact that he had passed the exam with great distinction had somehow disenchanted him, instead of bringing him satisfaction. The immediate goal was attained, and beyond that there appeared before him an endless road without any milestones. Preparation for the Institute had taken three years. Now it would be three more in the Institute itself. And what then? The prosperity of the village and the happiness of the people were, after all, far too distant goals to serve as the primary aim of his energies. He was strong, but he needed a fulcrum to move the world.

Stepan exited the large building, whose exterior was being painted in bland gray and white tones more suitable for one of the former institutes for the education of aristocratic young ladies than for an institution of the economic superstructure. Looking up at the high scaffolding and the painters dangling from the roof on cables and smoking cigarettes, the young man was taken aback by the soft colors that were replacing the harsh revolutionary

paint on buildings, posters, and magazine covers. And that gray-haired professor at the exam had used the term "comrade" so freely, as if it had never been for him a symbol of violence and looting. He had digested it, pared down its rough edges, and pronounced it now without any apparent discomfort.

The young man went to Nadika's, struggling to understand his disappointment and low spirits, although such searching seldom points to the true source of ideas and feelings. People deceive themselves more often than they tell themselves the truth owing to tiny and imperceptible—even to the person most interested—factors that cause enormously important changes in the soul, just as invisible bacteria influence the physical condition of the body.

"I'm sad," he thought, "because I want to see Nadika. I'm suffering because I've fallen in love with her."

Once again her name, which he whispered to himself, resounded as a happy echo along the dark corridors of his thoughts. She was a sun for him, its rays suddenly emerging from a gap in the clouds. Again and again he would lose her, then find her anew.

He didn't want to come in, even though Hanusia was the only other person there, her sewing machine clattering away. So Nadika tied on a kerchief and they walked out into the gray shadows of the early evening. The girl had also passed her exam to the vocational college and cheerfully told Stepan how she had almost flunked the political fundamentals part of the exam:

"...and then he asks me—this curly-haired guy—what is the RadNarKom? Well, I know the RadNarKom and the VUTsVYK inside out, so I say it's the Rada Narodnykh Komisariv, the Council of People's Ministers. And who is the head of the RadNarKom, he goes on to ask me. I'm as confident as ever and shoot back immediately: Chubby! And they start falling all over themselves in laughter. Not Chubby, miss. It's Chubar!"

Stepan chuckled.

"Nadika, isn't it wonderful to be together!" he said.

She threw him a fiery look, one of the kind whose attraction and promise are greatest when they themselves are most innocent. Every note of her excited laughter reverberated with love. Her courses would begin in a week, and she had to travel home to get the rest of her things and some food. On hearing that he, too, had a free week, she suggested secretively:

"We'll go together, won't we? I'll come out to meet you by the willows, the ones near our garden."

"I can't go, Nadika," he answered gloomily. "I need to settle the details of the scholarship."

All the joy left her voice.

"I won't see you all that time?"

"You'll come back, Nadika."

He had fallen in love with her name and repeated it often. It was already dark as they, along with other couples, climbed Volodymyr hill, where in a quiet corner the statue still held its cross, now blessing the Kyivans bathing on the beach. During the day, this was where children played with balls and hoops, tired office workers relaxed, and students read their wise books in the shade. At night, this was the promised land of love for chambermaids, soldiers, youths, and all those who did not yet comprehend the benefits and comforts of love-making within four walls. Love abhors witnesses, but in a city they're everywhere, even under tree branches in a park.

They wandered up and down the winding paths in the dense twilight. The accidental touch of their bodies through thick clothing provoked shivers, and their hands eventually intertwined in a tight clasp. Their love was blooming like a late flower in the intoxicating breaths of near autumn. Somewhere nature's white gown was already being woven and the icy nails of its coffin were being forged, but here the last gust of warmth, tinged with the thick scent of decay, was melting and soldering their hearts together into one heart, throttled by the flow of a new, combined blood. Words evaporated on their lips unsaid and the wind from beyond the Dnipro touched their bodies with a passionate tickling.

They stopped by the barrier above the cliff and watched fireflies on the hillside street crawling toward each other, up and down the incline, until they unexpectedly passed each other at the point where they would have collided. Below them the great river was a dark ribbon in the valley, its outline marked with streetlights and the fires on Trukhaniv Island. Below, on the left, through a shimmering haze, flickered a carpet of lights in the Podil.

"Do you love me, Stepan?" she asked abruptly.

"Nadika, my dear," he whispered listlessly. "My dearest Nadika, I love you."

He wrapped his arm around her waist and she put her head on his shoulder, trembling from the distant moisture of the water and the warm moisture on her eyes. He softly stroked her hair, subdued by a feeling that leaves emptiness in its wake.

In the morning Stepan came out to the port and waved his cap for a long time in response to her kerchief. She took with her his greetings to the village, a few delegated tasks, and a letter to one of his friends at work. It was a long letter, with more questions than information. About himself he said only that he had written the test, was hoping for a scholarship, and was temporarily living with friends. But under the influence of the recollections that overcame him, he was acutely interested in the conditions at the Village Hall, about the series of lectures that he had arranged before his departure, about attendance at the film series, and any new performances. He completely forgot that it was only a week since he had left the village. In particular, he asked about the work of his successor. The library, his own child, so to speak, which he had built from the remains of the collections of a number of rich landowners,

consisted of 2,178 volumes that he had personally cataloged, numbered, and shelved according to their subject. It was the largest rural library in the district, and every single volume carried the stamp of his diligent work.

"Remind them to make sure they pick up the Lenin display from the district office," he wrote. "I paid 7 karbovanets, we owe 2 and a half more. The emblems and banners that the girls embroidered are stored in the big wardrobe—I left the keys with Petro. Ask the girls to weave red and black ribbons together as a decoration—at the Institute here the portrait is draped with ribbons like that, and it looks very nice. I haven't made any friends here yet. I met two fellows from some village—they're so distracted and apathetic, it makes you sad. It will be tough to get enough to eat, but I'll manage somehow. Write to me about everything. I might be able to come for Christmas. Stepan."

When the steamboat disappeared from view, the boy sat down on a bench and rolled a cigarette. The dock had emptied of all visitors. The boys who sold sunflower seeds and seltzer were arguing among themselves for no reason. One of them asked him for a light and said:

"Your damsel has left. It's tough without a damsel."

Stepan smiled at the words and serious expression of this expert. He too could leave tomorrow, if he wished. It would even be the wise thing to do, instead of loitering half-starved on the streets of the city. Classes probably wouldn't start for at least a week, anyway. But something was holding him back, some kind of anticipation and a hidden unwillingness to go back home, even for just a few days. His letter was sincere only in appearance. It seemed to him that a whole eternity had passed from the time he had left the village. His expression of such detailed interest in matters over there in his letter was merely an attempt at deluding himself—convincing himself that the past still held significance for him, that he was living in it and for it.

At one o'clock he found his name, as expected, in the list of those who were accepted. He submitted a scholarship application to the SocZabez Student Support committee and stopped by Levko's place to borrow some books, because there was a whole week of free time ahead. But Levko's library was too limited and eclectic: aside from some agricultural textbooks he had all the issues of *Literaturno-Naukovyi Visnyk* for 1907, Ivan Nechui-Levytsky's *Khmary*, and the Collected Works of Fonvizin. Stepan tied all of these together with some string, adding a textbook on agricultural economics that just might prove useful at the Institute. In addition, Levko advised him to do what he himself had never gotten around to: see the city. Pulling an old map of Kyiv from a drawer, he passed it on to the boy as a guiding star.

This advice intrigued the boy. After some bread and bacon for breakfast, he would grab an issue of the *Visnyk* and set out for the whole day, systematically visiting all the places that were marked with symbols and accompanying explanations on the map. In the space of three days, he visited

the Lavra, descending into both the far and the near caves, where in the narrow and very low-ceilinged stone passageways there was a string of glass-enclosed coffins of the saints, and where the pilgrim's candles flickered and smoldered in the heavy dense air; he stopped by at Askold's grave, now a neglected cemetery where he read on the markers the names of people who had once lived but had left behind nothing of themselves except these names on a plaque; he wandered the winding alleys of the former Tsar's Garden and sat with a book above the cliff overlooking the Dnipro; he stopped by the Sophia and Volodymyr Cathedrals, centers of church activity imperceptibly churning beneath the lofty domes; he viewed the Golden Gates, the former entrance into great Kyiv. He took in all the large bazaars—the Zhytnyi, Ievreiskyi, and Basarabka. He meandered near the train station; he traveled the Brest-Litovsk highway to the Polytechnic Institute. He wandered through Demiyivka into the Holosiyiv Forest, rested at the Botanical Gardens, and spent thirty kopecks (not without some hesitation) to enter the Historical Museum and the Khanenko Museum, where he was enthralled by the historical weapons, ancient furniture, decorative panels, and colored china, which most attracted his eye. The shiny colors and fine designs enchanted him and attracted his hands. He stood in front of the display for a long time, noting every small detail, firmly inscribing each one in his memory. Everything new that he saw fit easily into his mind in ordered layers, tied by thousands of threads to what he had read and to what he could surmise. And everything new elicited a new desire. Of the monuments he had circled on the old map, for the most part only the pedestals remained. Actually, he had seen the figures of Iskra and Kochubei—they lay with broken limbs along the riverbank, beside a forge. Only Bohdan, untouched, sitting on his proudly prancing horse, pointed his mace northward, either as a threat or with the intention of lowering it.

Stepan gave his most diligent attention to the Podil, the area of the city where he himself lived. His own eyes confirmed that it wasn't only people whose passing is marked with stone markers: entire eras of history pass almost without a trace, leaving here and there only indistinct suggestions of their former glory. The shining hub of the middle ages, with the Academy and famous monasteries, was now transformed into a small market square, the haunt of tradesmen and foul-mouthed huckstresses, the center of domestic manufacture for soap, cartridges, leather, vinegar, and shoe black.

In the evening, returning from his excursions, Stepan would descend directly to the Dnipro in a remote spot, bathe and then wearily make his way home. After his evening ration of bacon, which had become his only sustenance, he would sit outside by the shed and have a smoke. The Hnidy home seemed dead. If there were any life in it, it was imperceptible from outside. Not a sound emanated from it and its door opened most unwillingly. At night the lights inside would silently turn on. In all this time Stepan had only once caught a glimpse of the owner coming home from his shop. His

wife still milked the cows twice a day but no longer offered any milk to Stepan. But every evening the same solitary young man who had offered him a cigarette on the first day came out on the porch for a smoke. He sat and smoked, then disappeared into the house again. Stepan felt a reflexive sympathy for him, since the young man seemed just as lonely as he himself was. But he didn't find the courage to walk up and speak to him. Stepan went to sleep early, since he didn't have any light, and slept late, compensating for his meager diet with rest. He put off any thoughts of searching for new quarters for the winter until his scholarship came through. But the question came up abruptly and unexpectedly on its own.

One evening, the skinny-legged shopkeeper himself walked over and greeted Stepan, sitting down beside him on a stump of firewood. Looking sideways through his glasses he asked the boy:

"Did you find yourself a place?"

Stepan had fully anticipated this unpleasant conversation and had a ready answer—he would move out in a week. He'd get his scholarship (that was certain!) and then he'd move out. The shopkeeper grunted. He had a proposal: Stepan could stay with them. He could sleep in the kitchen (there's a bed there) and get breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In exchange he would look after the cows, bring in the water (the faucet was outside), and in the winter he would be responsible for the firewood. Nothing more! On these terms, the shopkeeper was willing officially to declare Stepan his nephew at the housing registry. When it was Stepan's turn to answer, he thought for a minute, mostly out of self-respect: what was there to think about? He immediately calculated that he would have food and a warm room, while the scholarship would be left over for clothing and textbooks. The work wasn't hard—something better was hard to imagine. The boy answered slowly and seriously:

"Well then, I'll stay."

Hnidy got up. "Well, you may as well move in," he said.

Within a half hour Stepan had abandoned his shed and settled into the kitchen, where a small bed stood next to the stove, a cheap wooden clock clattering above it. The shopkeeper's wife, Tamara Vasylivna, handed him a gas lantern, a glass of milk, some bread, and a piece of roast meat, with which he celebrated his new quarters. After the workbench in the shed, the mattress felt like the tsar's own featherbed. The next morning he began his service as dairyman, water-carrier, and wood-chopper.

VII

On Sunday, when Nadika was due to return, Stepan made a general appraisal of his clothes. He sewed on a few uncertain buttons, using the needle he had made a habit of carrying around during his years of living alone; he shook out his field jacket, and polished his boots with a sack. He had been wearing his suit for three years now and the fabric had discolored in the sun; but this was sturdy stuff meant for an officer and would not wear through for at least three more years. Then he shaved very conscientiously before a small fuzzy mirror that hung in the kitchen—in the previous week he had developed quite a beard. Feeling fresh, youthful, and handsome after these preparations, the boy left the house with a spring in his step, heading in the direction of the covered market.

Two days in his new quarters had calmed and strengthened him. Like a treasure trove discovered after bland and crusty fasting, the warm meals freshened his insides and his thinking. Yesterday, taking advantage of some hot water left in the pot, he had done his laundry, dried it in the sun, and ironed it. He knew how to do laundry, how to iron, cook, and even mend boots. Reassured by the security of his new position, he took two of his now superfluous dry pancakes to the bazaar in the morning and sold them for 10 kopecks. He didn't like to let anything useful go to waste. He could not be accused in any manner of disorder or dissipation, and the hryvnia he spent to buy twenty cigarettes was an indulgence that even the poorest of beggars would have allowed himself on the day that his much anticipated and much desired sweetheart was due to return.

By Stepan's calculation, the work around Mr. Hnidy's home amounted to no more than an hour and a half or two hours per day. There was plenty of time left for the Institute and for studying. Add the scholarship, and for now he had a solid foundation for further endeavors. He accepted this change for the better in his circumstances as something appropriate: he had been expecting it without knowing where it would come from, since, despite his doubts and hesitation, he was confident of his good fortune. Like a young hunter in the forest, trembling before the wild beast but confident of his steady hand, he was ready to meet the success that fate held out for him, even if occasionally that fate stuck out its tongue.

Nadika had indeed returned, but the girls' apartment had the usual guests—the instructor and young Yasha—so there was no opportunity to speak with her, if he did not want to betray his feelings in front of these sneering skeptics. Stepan dejectedly lit a cigarette, but in giving him a letter of reply from his village friend, Nadika gave Stepan such a heartfelt look that he immediately cheered up and drifted into a soft warm languor. Putting the letter in his pocket, he thought:

"Dear Nadika! My beloved, my only Nadia!"

Yasha, who kept up on all the announcements and posters, suggested they go to a literary performance that was taking place that day in the auditorium of the National Library and was sponsored by the Cultural Committee of the local chapter of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. Yasha didn't remember which literary organization would be appearing, but assured everyone that admission was free and that there would be plenty of opportunity for cheers and good laughs.

"They're pretty nutty," he said, "some of them even have some hair on their upper lip already."

Nadika tried to claim fatigue in order to stay behind with Stepan, but Yasha cut her short:

"Kissing gets boring faster than you think."

Everyone set off for the literary performance.

They arrived an hour later than the announced starting time, but they still had to wait for a half hour. The delay was not an expression of the public's distaste for literature, but rather of the general state of affairs, one of the consequences of a deep distrust of civic life. Scattered and hounded into his burrow, the inhabitant is quite unwilling to crawl out, so when he is told to come at one, he comes at two, having licked his paws for another hour.

The wretched Yasha planted his own person directly between Stepan and Nadika, cutting off their path for interaction and leaving the boy no option but to look around at the audience and the auditorium. The seats in the National Library auditorium were divided into two categories according to the class principle: in front were the seats for the selected few, in back were benches for the common folk, mostly students. Behind the benches there was enough empty floor space to allow standing room for those who could not find room even on the benches. The feeble voices of authors, who, for the most part, have no skills in reading or speaking in public, reach the ears of listeners back here as completely indistinct mumbling, and the standing audience must find its amusement in the mere appearance of the literary performance, the figure of the author who is reading, and his friends, who sit at the table on the dais smoking, writing notes to one another, yawning, and making inspired facial expressions. This back gallery gives the greatest applause not to those prose writers who spread out their manuscripts on the lectern and read at great length, but offers it instead to the poets who walk out onto the center of the dais and recite from memory with great feeling and gestures, because these are more dramatic and they change frequently. The first two rows of seats were reserved for the most select: the critics and authors, the literary leaders and pleaders, who come with their wives and friends and cannot sit farther than the second row to avoid disgracing the dignity of literature itself, because an idea can only be honored in the person who represents it. And some of them actually sat in the front rows because they were these representatives, while others considered themselves to be such representatives because they were sitting in the front rows.

Among this literary beau-monde Stepan noticed the young fellow who had mentioned a bag full of poems when Stepan had visited the State Publishing House of Ukraine. Although this recollection was indeed quite painful, he asked Yasha who the young man was.

"Oh, that's Vyhorsky," he answered. "A poet, of sorts. He writes poems."

This was the first literary performance of the current season, so there were many spectators and admission to the auditorium was not nearly as free as the poster had indicated. The tradition of public literary readings had developed in those years when there wasn't even enough paper for cigarettes and writers were given the task of "going out into the streets." Literature had been forced to become a spectacle and the writer a public performer, but this tradition is now dying out and we can breathe a fond "Amen" over its casket. Literature, after all, is a book, not a recitation, and performing it in public is as strange as reading musical works without a piano.

When the authors had taken their appropriate seats around the table on the dais, the head of the Cultural Committee of the local chapter of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences opened (or unveiled) the performance with a few moving words about literature and its current goals, expressing an appropriately hopeful sentiment. But Stepan didn't hear what was being spoken. Unrelated thoughts were increasingly occupying him, replacing the works and the audience in his perception. He was thinking about the authors themselves, about their walking out in front of other people, who listened to them. They had pushed themselves out of the crowd, taken their appropriate place, and everyone knew them by name. They write books, these books are printed, sold, and cataloged in libraries. Back in his distant Village Hall he himself had marked with the library stamp a book by this Vyhorsky whom he saw here. Here was the author himself. Stepan was jealous of these authors and he did not hide this from himself, because he too wanted to push himself forward and become one of the selected. He was almost insulted by the laughter and applause given to these happy few, and each new author that appeared by the lectern posed the same painful question for him: Why wasn't this him? He wanted to be each of them, whether novelist or poet.

The presentation of works at a literary performance is only a warm-up for the main event—the discussion and evaluation. The audience likes these discussions, but not because they participate. The discussion is a bigger spectacle than the reading, with a larger body of participants and more spice. But, as a general rule, no one wants to speak at first. Of course, the last speaker has the pleasant opportunity to belittle all his predecessors and thus seem the wisest. Specialists in literary criticism, who maintain their reputation by never being satisfied with anything, proudly refuse to proclaim their esteemed opinion and must be asked over and over, like dignitaries at a public dinner. All in all, everyone prefers to laugh at everyone else rather than offer others grounds for laugher, but once someone has spoken, the stream of

speakers grows like an avalanche. Wisdom is contagious.

At the first performance, quite naturally, everyone wanted to make himself known, and so the innocent lectern became a scene of fierce verbal warfare, where all possible tools for convincing one's opponent were manifested: mockery, wit, torment, inventories of an author's ancestors with the aim of revealing among them a kulak or a bourgeois, citations from the author's previous works where a contradictory idea was expressed, and so on—matters interesting to the spectators but sad for literature. All the speakers, regardless of their convictions, adopted these beautiful and chaste methods, each justifying himself by observing that his opponents forced them to do so. After a half hour, a veritable knightly joust began on the dais, where Don Quixotes in armor forged of quotations or with bare hands battled against immortal windmills to the howls and applause of the satisfied spectators, while Sancho Panzas displayed their intellectual prowess, cultivating dreams of becoming governors of literary islands. These contests always ended in a draw, which allowed everyone to consider himself the lone victor.

At the beginning of the discussion, Stepan, wilting from internal trepidation, contemplated what *he* could write, *what* he could write about, and *how* he could write it. He examined all the events of his life that might be of interest to others, and joyfully latched onto some while hopelessly abandoning others, sensing their banality. But he had taken the first step and had immediately shown the essential skill of a writer: the ability to separate oneself into layers, to examine oneself through a microscope, categorize oneself according to possible themes, to treat one's own "I" as material. But the boy was hopelessly confused by his own self, at times feeling his own emptiness, and at other times, an excess of sensations that he could not bring under control.

Anguished, he raised his head and glanced at the current speaker, whom the audience was giving more attention than previous speakers, and he too began to listen. This one was speaking melodiously and with wit, placing emphasis on appropriate words, underlining sentences as if he were mounting them in shining frames. To the extent that he was able, he threw out a pithy word to the audience, evoked laugher, adjusted his pince-nez, and set off on a new inspiration. From his lips poured quotations in all languages, literary facts, demi-facts, and anecdotes. His facial expression evoked the anger of an insulted deity, the misery of a scorned dwarf, his torso curved and straightened in harmony with his authorial gestures. His words formed into lumps of malicious dough, which he rolled into leaf-shaped dumplings, sprinkled with baker's sugar and glazing, embellished with marmalade roses, and then he paused for a moment to admire his own creation before serving up these delicacies for consumption.

"Who's that," Stepan asked Yasha, impressed with the confectionary art.

Yasha was amazed at the limitless depth of Stepan's ignorance. This was Mykhailo Svitozarov, the most renowned of critics. For the first time that evening, Stepan joined the rest of the audience in a storm of applause that drowned out the words of the eminent critic.

At twelve midnight, the head of the Cultural Committee of the local chapter of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences closed (and covered up) the performance, saying a few moving words to the effect that somehow things would work themselves out, that there wasn't really any fatal crisis, and three cheers for literature. The performance ended and the field of battle was cleared without the help of first-aid battalions, since literary corpses do not lose their peripatetic functions.

"They sure did go at each other," exclaimed Yasha on the street. "I love to watch. This one gives the other one a whack and that one gives the first a double whack."

"Their writing is inferior, that's the issue," said the instructor solemnly. "I'm reading Zagoskin at the moment. Now there's a writer!"

"And I like Benois," said Nusia.

Hanusia was silent. Literature had robbed her of four hours, and tomorrow morning she must rise at dawn to complete an order.

Nadika walked behind with Stepan, telling him the news from the village. He was sullenly silent. By the porch she whispered to him, "Come tomorrow."

Stepan walked home enraptured by a single thought, having surrendered to it completely, down to the very last cell of his brain. The desire that had arisen and had now taken hold of him dominated him completely, consumed all his energies for its own purpose, blocked out the rest of the world, making him like the woodcock that hears only its own song. The youthful spring of his consciousness, which heretofore had fluttered only weakly, acquired tension and began to expand, giving motion to hundreds of gears and levers. Yes, Stepan must become a writer! He saw nothing frightening or unusual in this intention. Within a couple of hours it was completely familiar, as if he had nurtured it for years, and in his nervous apprehension he saw a sign of his talent, a display of his inspiration for creative work.

He had already chosen a topic: he would write a story about his old jagged razor that nicked him mercilessly every time he shaved. Here was its extraordinary story.

Back in 1919 he had hidden in the forests with a rifle during the uprising against the Denikin forces. They were a small platoon, maybe twenty men, making their way to the main rebel camp near Cherkasy. That night they had been surrounded, but unsuccessfully—the entire platoon had managed to slip out, escaping one by one to nearby villages, to wait for a more opportune time. Having hidden his rifle in a recognizable haystack on a field, Stepan had wandered the road a free citizen, but he was captured and delivered for interrogation. He insisted so patiently and naively to the gentleman officer

that he was just an innocent young man from that village over there that the officer let doubt creep in and gave orders to a Circassian to escort Stepan to the village. There he was to determine whether Stepan really lived in the village and why he was wandering in the field—and should the story prove false, to execute him before the assembled villagers to spread fear and serve as a lesson for all.

Yelling frightening threats, the scruffy, black-haired soldier in a fur hat mounted his horse, lassoed Stepan for security and led him in front, promising to shoot him like a rabid dog at the first attempt to escape. After a mile Stepan, swearing by his parents and all that is sacred that he was a peaceful villager, as a sign of his good character offered his captor the razor that he always carried in his boot leg. The severe Circassian became persuaded of Stepan's innocence, whipped him across the back and told him to run off as fast and as far as his feet could carry him. But Stepan knew their merry tricks too well and stood in place until the Caucasian had ridden off so far that he could no longer put a bullet in Stepan's back. The strangest thing, however, came a week later, when the rebels finally regrouped and successfully gave battle to the Denikinites. Stepan noticed the Circassian's corpse on the battlefield and pulled his own razor from the dead man's pocket. This adventure was intriguing in its own right, but Stepan deepened it and gave it a nearly symbolic significance.

In his story, the razor first belonged to a front-line officer, the embodiment of the Tsarist regime, but that officer was killed at the beginning of the revolution and the razor passed on to the victor, a supporter of the Provisional Government. From him it went to a Petliurite, who soon lost it to a red partisan, who momentarily gave it up to a Denikinite but quickly got it back, this time permanently, as its lawful owner. The fate of his razor was being elevated to the level of a History of the Civil War. It would be a symbol of the battle for authority. But this canvas needed to be embroidered with shiny threads and decorated with substance and action, so that the idea would truly come to life. Along the way home he considered various episodes and details, basing them on his military experience.

The wooden clock in the kitchen showed 12:15 when Stepan entered the house, quietly lit a lamp, grabbed some paper, and sat down at the table to write, drowning in a torrent of images and words. At 2:30 he finished, put the manuscript away without reading it, lay down, and after a few more minutes of vivid recollections sank into sleep like a stone.

VIII

After cleaning up around the cows and completing all his domestic obligations according to a definite, pre-conceived plan, Stepan read over his story and was left wholly satisfied. A wonderful story! Thoughtful and wise. And he had written it! The boy lovingly turned the pages—material evidence of his talent and a guarantee of future fame. After correcting a few blemishes, and writing out a clean copy, he considered the story's further fortune. First of all, he must sign it, attach it to himself with a unique name. He knew that some writers choose a different name, a so-called pseudonym or pseudo-name, like the monks who withdraw from the world and from themselves and all the associated particularities. This is what Oleksander Oles had done, for example, but Stepan found this path unappealing. In the first place, his surname was not one that would bring any shame—it was even very contemporary, if you like—and in the second place, what was the point of hiding? Let everyone know that Stepan Radchenko writes stories, that he is a writer, that he reads his works at the Academy and is greeted with applause. Let there be a copy of his book in the Village Hall library and may the friends he left behind there marvel and envy his achievement!

But as he was about to put down his signature, he hesitated. While his surname raised no objections, his name itself—Stepan—was troubling. It was not only too plain, but somehow tarnished and coarse. The boy thought for a long time, torn between preserving himself entirely in his signature and making it more sonorous and sparkling. He went through a whole stack of names looking for a worthy successor, then suddenly he lit upon a wonderful idea: to simply make a slight alteration in his own name, to give it the required dignity while changing only a single letter and the stress. He made his choice and signed the story, becoming not Stepan, but Stefan, thus giving himself a new christening.

The fate of every literary work is, if possible, to be published, to find its way to its reader, and to captivate him. Stefan Radchenko, the writer, held out great hopes for himself and trusted even more in his own abilities to achieve them. In his own mind, his story would surely find a place on the pages of some journal, and it would happen soon. From his experience in the Village Hall library, he knew only of the journal *Chervony shliakh*, published in Kharkiv. That's where he should send his story. But his desire to hear someone else's opinion of his story without delay convinced him that he must give it to a qualified reader this very day. But to whom? Why, Mykhailo Svitozarov, of course—the critic who had spoken so beautifully yesterday from the lectern, captivating everyone and garnering such applause. He was the one, the only one! He was very knowledgeable about literature, surely he was very sensitive to all the latest developments, particularly the ones with fresh new ideas. Surely he would want to offer his support, advice, and

guidance to a beginning writer! After all, this was his obligation and duty. For the young writer, the figure of this critic became a divinity who would most graciously accept the proffered literary offering.

Stepan resolved to visit the critic. True, he did not know his address, but his creative instinct promptly suggested that he might discover it at the address bureau. How convenient to live in a city! All the various conveniences! Having asked Tamara Vasylivna where that bureau was located, Stepan set off for it before lunch, and for one hryvnia discovered his own path to the literary heights.

After lunch, he stepped out of the gate with the sure stride of a person who has found his own place in the great jungle of the modern world. He passed one city block after another, carelessly stopping in front of store windows and posters, to show himself that he was not in a hurry. On Volodymyr Street, across from the Khmelnytsky monument, he entered a park and sat down on a bench among the children playing there, who were jumping, running, and throwing a ball. Their joy infected him. Catching the ball that happened to roll up to his feet, Stepan threw it so high—as high as the buildings themselves—that the kids yelled and cheered, all except its owner, who worried that her toy would never return from the great womb of the heavens. But the ball did fall, like a bomb from under the clouds, eliciting a new explosion of wild joy. Everyone jostled to give Stepan their own ball to see it fly into the sky. Taking three into his hands he began to toss them all together, like a circus juggler, completely enchanting his young admirers.

In their company he enjoyed a sweet moment without dark-tinged thoughts about the future or memories of the past. He felt the strange flood of existence that gives satisfaction all on its own, without recourse to hopes or plans. He felt like a bird resting in flight on outspread wings, capturing with its small eye the lush earth, a flower opening its petals in the morning, spilling its sweet scent to greet the sun.

Having said goodbye to the kids, who yelled after him as he left, he went on. Everything around him pleased his eye: the old bell tower of St. Sophia, the streetcar, and the uneven street lined with chestnut trees. By the opera he stopped to listen to some Ukrainian songs performed by two women and a blind old man, representatives of those artists who were "going out into the streets." From there he turned onto Nestor Street, guided by his desires and the directions he was given at the address bureau. The closer he came to the precious building, the more he felt—not anxiety, but the feelings of a woman who must undress before her doctor. Hastily he prepared the words he would say:

"Excuse me, I have written a story, and I've come to you so that you could listen to it."

No, better this:

"Excuse me for bothering you, but I would like to have your opinion on a story I have written."

The building where the great critic lived was itself great, with two separate wings surrounding a courtyard. Guided by his intuition, Stepan climbed up to the fifth floor in the first building, but the last apartment there had the number fifteen, instead of the required eighteen. After making inquiries in the courtyard, Stepan entered the second building with growing anxiety. Knocking on the door with his fist, he waited, his heart pounding louder than his knock. He knocked again, frightened by his own compulsion.

"Who do you want?" asked a woman who opened the door.

"Excuse me for bothering you," Stepan began, not recognizing his own voice. "I would like to see..." he stopped, forgetting the name. "I would like to see ... the critic."

"The critic?" asked the surprised woman, holding her capricious housecoat across her breast with her hand.

"That is, he writes essays," the boy explained, weakening under the burden of the cross. "Mykhailo ..."

"Do you mean Mykhailo Demydovych Svitozarov? The professor?" the woman said, relieved, and let him enter. "Yes, yes. This way, please."

She led the boy along a dark corridor while he trembled like a young thief breaking into a home for the very first time.

"Misha, someone's here to see you."

The boy entered the room where the great critic sat at a table by the window, writing. The critic did not raise his head. Stepan stopped at the edge of the rug that lay on the floor and timidly cast his eyes along the large bookcases lining the wall. A pious shiver chilled his heart in this holy of holies, and he was ready to stand there for an hour, or two, even forever, absorbing the feeling of greatness and languor.

Finally, the great critic finished pouring his thoughts onto the paper and cast an inquiring glance at the boy, who felt the gaze like a frighteningly sharp point pricking his skin.

"Excuse me," he said, bowing. "Are you comrade Svitozarov?"

Conscious of the pointlessness of such a question, he tried, to the degree it was possible, to swallow the inappropriate word 'comrade.'

"I'm Svitozarov. How can I help you?"

"I've written a story here ..." the boy began, but stopped when he saw an unpleasant grimace on the critic's face.

"I have no time," the critic answered. "I'm very busy." This disparaging answer stopped Stepan dead in his tracks. In the despondent chill that enveloped him, he understood only one thing: there was no desire to listen to him.

Since Stepan didn't move, the critic deemed it necessary to repeat himself, emphasizing every syllable: "I–am–ve-ry–bu-sy!"

"Goodbye," Stepan muttered glumly.

Walking out of the courtyard, he wandered about on unfamiliar streets, carrying in his heart the unbearable weight of helpless anger. He had never

felt so demeaned and destroyed. The proud words of that bookworm fell on him like shameful spittle. So he doesn't have time—well, let him set a time for an appointment. Even if he refuses to help, he could at least suggest where to turn for advice. And what right does he have to speak *like that*? Oh yes, he felt cut to the quick by that pompous manner, that aristocratic manner of a literary gentleman.

Walking with his head bent low, he fancied indefinite thoughts of revenge. He could crush that snail and break his ostentatious pince-nez, and drag him around on the floor, since the superiority of his own muscles was beyond doubt. And because this was the only kind of revenge he could think of, the realization of his powerlessness depressed him even more. Once again he could sense awakening within himself the peasant from the village, with a dull antipathy to everything that was above him.

Finding himself near a park, he went in and sat down on an isolated bench. After a while, he looked around and recognized his surroundings—it was Golden Gates Square, with a fence around the two piles of crumbling stone from which it took its name. Overcome by a rising flame of all-consuming hatred, he muttered gruffly and with a wry smile: "Golden Gates, indeed!"

The unexpected wound clouded all of the young man's thoughts. He could not escape the sense that he had left his home as an August Stefan but was now returning a mere bumpkin Stepan. He looked glumly at the silhouettes of passing figures and saw in each of them a secret potential enemy.

The green leaves on the trees were darkening, the splash of the fountain was growing stronger in the twilight, and a thick evening was descending from above the foliage. Suddenly, the lights turned on. In his corner the boy was long since all alone. The daytime visitors—fathers with newspapers and mothers and nannies with strollers—had melted away along with the last rays of sunlight. In their place came nocturnal moths, and those who chased them.

Stepan stood up, took up his story, and tore it to shreds.

"May you be damned," he said.

He set off toward Nadika's, although it was all the same to him whether he saw her or not. He would have gone to her after a victory, so he decided to go after a defeat as well. She met him happily in her kerchief on the corner of her street, where she had been strolling, hoping to see him.

When she saw him she raised her head and laughed eagerly, but he greeted her coolly.

"Hello, Nadika."

They walked over to the Tsar's Garden, and the girl laughed and cheerily described the first day of classes at the vocational college. He clenched his teeth. Classes had probably begun at his Institute as well. Well, let them begin! He immediately closed up within himself and looked out onto the world through self-imposed grates. Nadika's laugh was unbearable to

him, her cheerfulness offended him. Suddenly he felt an antipathy to the girl arising within him and the sensation was pleasant.

"And what does Semen write," asked Nadika, not yet sensing his mood.

"He doesn't write anything at all," he answered. And truly he did not know, because he had not yet read the letter from his friend in the village.

Nadika looked at him, perplexed.

"Stepan, dear, you're strange today," she said cautiously.

He didn't answer, and they reached the edge of the Tsar's Garden in silence. This silence offended the girl and she stopped, holding back tears.

"If you don't love me, I'll go home."

Stepan yanked her by the arm.

"I love you. Let's go."

He felt his power over her and wanted her to submit. All his animosity was focused on her and had she resisted he might have hit her. But she went along meekly.

When they reached the top of the hill, a blue rocket flew up from below and went out with a quiet crackle. It was a fireworks display. Pink, blue, red, and green flames whistled and streaked into the sky, describing bright arcs against the dark background, exploding and then falling back down to earth in a shower of sparks.

Stepan got out the last of his cigarettes and lit it.

"They're all pigs," he grumbled and spat.

Nadika was enchanted by the new experience, the play of colors and fire, and she had forgotten for a moment about her cheerless boyfriend.

"Who?" she asked in confusion.

"All of them watching over there."

"We're watching too," she cautiously observed, frightened by his voice.

"You think they're doing this for you?" Stepan asked harshly.

She sighed. He turned his back to the fireworks and walked away. Nadika silently caught up with him and glanced at his face. It was disinterested and cold in the intermittent glow of the cigarette.

In a short time they were in the thicket where the alley ended and the path along the cliffside began. The dark clusters of bushes breathed a moist gloomy calm, like that of a cellar. Stopping beside the ravine, made deeper by the darkness, they looked across to the other side where tall clusters of trees were frozen in a fearful silence. The silence everywhere concealed anticipation and desire, as before a storm, and the noise of the city below echoed like distant thunder.

The boy's cigarette went out, and he threw it impatiently into the ravine. Then he turned to the girl, who met his gaze with joyful expectation.

"Dear Stepan," she asked, leaning over toward him, "why are you so ... angry?"

Suddenly he took her in his arms and squeezed her breasts into his own chest with a passion sharpened by anger and humiliation. For this forceful

embrace she was willing to forgive him all his previous inattention. She took his head in her hands and wanted to pull it closer and kiss him, but he continued his motionless squeezing, weakening her with his embrace. The girl pressed her arms against his shoulders, pushing him away, but she had to pull them back, groaning in pain and constraint, suddenly realizing that he was bending her over and forcing her down, that her knees were giving out and the dark clouds of the sky were floating before her eyes. She fell outstretched to the ground, chilled by the tingling touch of air and grass on her uncovered thighs, squeezed by the dumb weight of his body, as it jerked and divided and penetrated her.

Afterward, they sat on a bench above the river, which ran silently below, a play of lights reflecting on its waves. Cutting through the clouds and leaves the white moon rose in the west, casting cold tinsel onto the waters.

The urge to smoke tormented Stepan as his fingers shredded an empty package of cigarettes.

"Why are you silent," he asked Nadika, tossing the shredded package into the ravine.

She embraced him longingly and hid her face in his knees.

"You do love me?" she whispered.

He raised her up and pushed her off.

"I love you. Why ask?"

She then began to cry—loudly, gulping and choking as if the flood of tears she had held back had burst out in a ruinous torrent. Stepan looked around.

"Don't cry," he said harshly. She wailed and cried on, losing her presence and her will in the flood of tears.

"I'm telling you—stop it!" he said again, jerking her by the arm.

She stopped, but a muffled cry again burst out, enraging him.

"In that case, I'm leaving," he said, rising. "It's your fault," he yelled. "You—you're to blame!" And he left, full of longing and anger.

IX

Life is frightening in its unrelenting continuity, its unstoppable drive. It doesn't adjust for a person's greatest suffering. It ignores a person's greatest pain. A person can struggle among life's thorns, but life will continue. It will pass right by, along with its acolytes who yell for all to hear, in fear or in awe, that there can be no roses without thorns. Life is that ubiquitous scoundrel who answers the tattered beggar's pleas with a shove, a slap, or a stick and then moves on, smoking his cigarette without even turning his gold monocle in the victim's direction. On the ruins of an earthquake are barracks full of the survivors who ceremoniously threw the crushed victims into the earth, but soon the graves are overgrown with grass and the veils of sorrow fall from the faces of those who have been longing to enjoy a good laugh.

At 37 Nyzhnyi Val Street there was no sign of the glacier that had crushed the spirit of one of its inhabitants. The cows were cleaned and fed, sufficient quantities of water had been brought indoors for everyone's needs and wishes. Every indication pointed to good order, nothing signaled any changes, and a lost coin would have been more noticeable here than a boy's lost peace of mind.

The prudent shopkeeper had already begun to put in a supply of wood for the winter. For a moment, the sleepy yard of the Hnidy home awoke to the sounds of cursing delivery men and squeaking logs. Indistinct gray workers appeared, of the kind that hang around the bazaars and on corners with saws and axes, waiting for clients who will purchase their labor. A team of workers typically consists of two adults and a youth who only carries the split lumber, in keeping with the child labor protection rules. Stepan joined in helping them, assured that this would not influence their negotiated wage. All day he eagerly cut and split the logs, swinging an axe with great anger, as if the logs were his mortal enemies. He handled the logs as if they were the branches of a vine, he talked with the villagers about their work and their lives, about their needs, the level of cultural activity in their village. But when they left, he felt guilty about his hollow words and insincere interest. It wasn't the first time he had observed a change in himself, but previously he had turned his thoughts away from this change. Now he had to admit to himself honestly that he was estranged from the village. It had faded in his recollections like a lantern fades in the light of day, but it hung over him, as a rebuke, as a source of concern.

In the evening, lying on his bed, exhausted by the logs and by his thoughts, he suddenly remembered the letter from his friend in the village—he still hadn't read it. The boy retrieved it from his pocket, where it had aged like an old document. There, after commenting on the state of affairs in the village, his friend continued: "... it always seems that you've only left for a short time and that you'll return in a few days. We got used to

having you here. Work continues, more or less, but you know our guys—as long as you keep your hands on the reins, it's all right. And now Oleksa Petrovych is being transferred to the district center. It's strange—whatever is good around here runs away from us. I guess it makes sense, it's only hopelessness that keeps people here. We're tied to this place like a curse. And when someone leaves, believe me, it makes you so feel so sad, you feel like crying. Sometimes you start thinking, maybe it's time to get married already? But that's just another pipe dream. You say you'll come home for Christmas. We'll have a talk. But I think you'll probably not come. There's nothing here for you, no wife, no kids. Out there, at first it's lonely, but there's plenty of work, interesting work, and you'll soon forget us and develop new friends. But do try to write...."

Every word of this letter hurt him by its simple, glaring truth. He could not contradict a single word. Holding the letter in his hands, he closed his eyes and whispered: "I won't come. I'll never come."

He called himself a traitor. This was the behavior of a renegade who had robbed his own parents, and he expected them to curse him. But as soon as he began to berate himself, he lost sight of the object of his disgust. It disappeared under the force of an unknown power, which methodically transformed his reproaches into pointless outbursts. Why, after all, did he consider himself a traitor? Plenty of people leave the village! Cities grow at the expense of villages—that's normal, completely normal. Furthermore, his higher education would be in economics. Once he finished that, he would obviously not be returning to a village. Living in the city was his destiny. And what had really changed in him? He was the same person he had been before. Everything was fine. He had food and shelter, in a day or two he'd get his scholarship. Where was the problem?

And then, like an indistinct pain, like nausea, like a terrible nightmare, a memory emerged—one he had passionately tried to destroy, to eradicate, and whose traces he had attempted to remove from his consciousness until it grew over in a barely noticeable scab, bleeding only occasionally—the memory of Nadika. This girl, who had only recently been so attractive to him was now a nightmare. His love had turned into a counterfeit banknote, received amid confusion and bustle and then thrown away as trash, with anger at being so deceived. She was from the village, which had now faded for him. She was a brief episode in the transition that had overtaken him, although a painful episode, a difficult one, with little justification. What about her? He gritted his teeth and whispered insolently: "If not me, then some other guy."

He was ready to yell this from rooftops to rid himself of the gnawing pangs that would not yield to his willful commands. But he had to cross her out of his life, to crush her image within himself, to remove this constraint that bound him like a chain on a prisoner's leg. He had glimpsed freedom through the grates on the window, and he now felt a secret hostility to anyone who was a witness to his past. In changing his plans, he was burdened by the

power his old friends held over him. He could not force himself to return the books he had borrowed from Levko, even though he had read or at least skimmed them. It would be agonizing to meet a person whom he had earlier considered an ideal worthy of emulation but had then suddenly been revealed in his emptiness. In his eyes Levko had shamefully become together with Yasha and the instructor, an essential member of the threesome that now symbolized the dullness of the village, its dumb backwardness, its vile inferiority. It sees no possibilities, or doesn't look for them, or doesn't need them. And Levko's neatly arranged room, the object of his jealousy, now seemed like a blind mole's burrow.

After a few days of solitary despair, he forced himself to visit the Institute. Yes, he had been awarded the scholarship. Instead of being happy, he felt offended. Only eighteen karbovanets! They said it would be twenty-five. He had secretly hoped for even more: there are, after all, scholarships for fifty, even for the full one hundred! Classes had started already, but he had forgotten to bring pencil and paper, so he figured it was pointless to attend on today. And he wasn't really inclined to go to class right now.

Back on the street he was overcome with an unusual concern. He made frequent stops at advertising kiosks, announcements, film posters, and shop windows, scrutinizing them with the same attention that he had once given objects at the museum, and with a certain piety and excitement. He was particularly attracted by the illustrations. A giant poster for the circus in three vivid colors—red, green, and light-blue—announced that a well-known and unusually dextrous clown and acrobat would soon be appearing, and as incontrovertible evidence of this, there was an image of him along with the circus troupe, and another separately, on the ground, and yet another high up, in the unreachable expanse of a high dome.

"This is very interesting," thought Stepan.

From an adjacent advertisement he learned that the Taras Shevchenko Theater was offering a concert series by a world-famous violinist, who gazed down at the boy with a friendly smile from the gray poster.

"Excellent!" Stepan said approvingly.

And at the State Cinema No. 1 a beautiful film with a big-name actor was playing. Examining the mysterious eastern costumes worn by actors in the still photos from the movie, he had an acute sense of just how unfashionable his own field jacket, yuft boots, and crumpled cap were. The famous actor was generously displayed in tails with a turban, in tails without a turban, in the cloak of a raj, on foot and on horseback, alone and in a duet with his sweetheart, and in a chorus of his admirers. Silently but sullenly, Stepan moved away from these photographs.

Next he stopped by a bakery window, where, in a poetic arrangement on white doilies, in delicately painted boxes, on china plates and vases, were displayed sweet and unspeakably delicious treats. His sad eyes devoured this heap of wafer and almond tortes, rum babas, glazed nuts, mounds of

chocolate, layers of colorful candies, and pastries of various form and content without knowing their names but understanding full well that they were not donuts, muffins, or cupcakes. He fingered the twenty kopecks in his only pocket but did not dare enter the store Instead he bought himself a couple of pastries on the street from a lovely girl who had the honor to sell them but never to eat them. Taking these slippery products of the sugar industry in his hands, he impetuously gulped them down, telling himself sternly:

"Quiet! I, too, want to indulge."

To him it was like a First Communion, which leaves in the faithful a sadness for the blood consumed and a hope for eternal life.

Before a ready-made clothing store Stepan examined the suits with an expression as if it were merely a matter of choosing which one would look best on him—in a fine material and well-tailored, of course. The price tags did not bother the handsome boy at all. They were far too distant from his financial potential—he might just as well choose the most expensive one, since he couldn't afford even the least expensive one. He was free to imagine himself the undisputed owner of these treasures, which would make him handsomer than the movie star, more talented than the violinist, and more dextrous than the circus acrobat. He could change suits as he wished at any moment, trying on top hats and ties, with matching handkerchiefs and socks, because there is no law that prohibits making use of someone else's property in your own imagination. And in that moment the boy understood the magical power of clothing, which had long since stopped being a means of covering the body and had acquired a wider and more noble function—to adorn and enhance it. Perhaps he would create something of genius if he were dressed right now in a high-collared English shirt, short narrow slacks, and pointed shoes. But in fact he did not create anything, because he could not rid himself for one moment of the awful realization that none of the items in the window belonged to him nor ever could. He sighed but kept standing there, submerging his gaze into the fabrics and the silks, like a diver trying to find pearls but coming up only with algae.

He was getting tired of the fruitless gawking when a woman in a batiste blouse which betrayed the edge of her camisole walked up to the window. Leaning her bare arms against the railing, she carelessly surveyed the color wheel of ties, perhaps even choosing one to make her lover an elegant, pleasing, and not overly expensive present, one that would satisfy both the heart and the wallet, since the latter expands and contracts, just like the former. This lady was perfumed with a strong Parisian fragrance, and its scent wafted around her like an illusion. It engulfed Stepan in a sweet fog, exciting him, and his nose widened, greedily inhaling the unfamiliar, fine scent, which poured through his veins like an intoxicating smoke. He smelled this woman as one smells flowers, breathed her as one breathes in the freshness of spring, the tar of a pine forest, the morning mist rising from the earth. Only the first wave was somewhat disagreeable to him, like the

unaccustomed smoke of a cigarette that soon becomes a craving. Alongside this woman he experienced the swooning dizziness that people experience at great elevations, recoiling from danger but also captivated by it. And when she had gone, he gazed after her with a brazen and reverent eye. Shuddering, he thought that this skirt could also rise, no matter how white, that he might also take possession of this fragrant body, as of all others, and immediately the thought struck him as savage and frightening. But this Kyiv woman, daubed with Paris, smoothed out the scab in him that belonged to Nadika, rendering it a pale and inconspicuous bruise.

At home he wandered in the yard, suffocating in the crazy dreams that beset him. They weren't even dreams but senseless, ridiculous hallucinations. Jumping from one in mid-stream, he latched on to another, sucked it, tasted it, and then cast it off too, with countless other and better ones to choose from. Here he was a people's commissar, driven around in an automobile, making public speeches, which thrilled him to the very marrow. He welcomed foreign delegations, conducted negotiations, introduced strange laws that changed the face of the earth, and after his death modestly unveiled a monument to himself. Then, elsewhere, he became a great writer whose every line tolled around the world like a prophetic bell, agitating people's hearts, and especially his own. Or abandoning great deeds, he would endow his face with captivating beauty, dress in the choicest suits, and conquer women's hearts in droves, breaking up marriages and running away with his lovers across every conceivable frontier, except the one of his imagination. Or he would saddle a rebel horse, break out the hidden, sawed-off rifles, and lead a band of mindless men in a siege of the city, where he would shoot his way into these shops, pile his wagons high with these suits, these delicacies and these pastries, and force a perfumed woman beneath him, like a captive. This was the image that captivated him most. Clenching his powerless fists, he whispered in anger and desire: "I would loot and pillage, and pillage some more!"

His fantasies were inexhaustible, his imagination untiring, his vanity unconquerable. He held in his hands a magic stone that trembled and burned, revealing all of the world's wonders. And that stone was he himself.

And when reason, that wearisome preacher, that desiccated sage who cannot understand desire, would fearfully begin its miserable sermon, he resembled a toy ship on the waves of a real ocean, and all of his wailing sounded like the complaints of a homeowner, trying to mend a broken water pipe by asking it to stop leaking.

That night he had a dream. He was walking through a lush garden along a straight alley, shaded by trees on whose branches elongated fruits, like bananas, hid among the leaves. Looking to one side, he saw a gazebo that he hadn't noticed before and walked into the shade of the grapevines growing around its walls. The unfamiliar woman who sat there did not even raise her head. Hesitating, he stopped at the threshold and then noticed that she was

beckoning him with her finger. Looking closer with ever greater amazement, he observed that she was wearing nothing but a nightshirt, and beneath her feet was a pond in which she would be bathing. Suddenly she fell back, face up, and a breeze lifted the rest of her covering. Savagely he threw himself on her, but no sooner had he touched her than he fell into a thick dense puddle and awoke from the pounding of his heart.

For a long time he stared into the darkness before him. According to folk wisdom, a naked woman in a dream foretells unavoidable shame.

X

The only relief Stepan had these days from his difficult trials was his contact with the Hnidys' son, Maksym—the same fellow who had treated him to a cigarette back in the penniless days of his first acquaintance with life in the city. This young man, barely older than Stepan, was easygoing by nature, dreamy and restrained, with a soft voice and a really deep and sincere smile. His expressions and manner evidenced the mature equilibrium of a person who was satisfied with his life and easily carried his destiny on his shoulders. It was precisely this tranquility that attracted Stepan to the landlord's son, whom he had at first disparagingly labeled a gentleman. In his own confusion he instinctively gravitated toward anything self-assured, and he secretly envied Maksym's good fortune.

For his part, Maksym was well disposed and attentive to the village boy. Two years earlier, he himself had finished the Institute where Stepan was just beginning. While his own recollections of his studies bordered on the painful, he endured conversations about specific programs, professors, and the various incidents of student life.

"Where do you work?" asked Stepan one day.

"At the Leatherworkers' Collective," answered Maksym. "I'm a pretty decent accountant. And that takes some inborn talent, to be sure."

"What kind of talent?"

"Attention to detail, most of all. And a kind of self-sacrifice, if you will. It's a peculiar world. That's why there are so few real accountants."

Stepan nodded. Since he had an active imagination and the skill to grasp everything immediately, as well as a propensity to take an interest in everything, he suddenly understood that noiseless world of invoices and vouchers, where life's variability fits into monotonous formulas, developed in advance, where numbers replace events and people. He sighed, unconsciously longing for the carefree tranquility of documents.

"Does it pay well?" asked the boy, after one of the frequent pauses in their conversations.

"It's in pay scale 16, with 25% benefits. It amounts to about 140 karbovanets."

Stepan could hardly hold back his amazement. For him, one hundred karbovanets seemed an amount beyond his most fervent desires, but a hundred plus forty more was a true marvel of immeasurable wealth. He asked naively: "So why aren't you getting married?"

This question made Maksym visibly uncomfortable. Hesitating a moment, he answered indistinctly: "You see, that's a complicated thing. And not at all a necessary one. You see, a fellow grows up and naturally starts thinking that it's necessary to get married. It's a tradition of sorts."

Suddenly he laughed and added: "And if you want, I can give you the

textbooks. I kept them all after I finished the Institute. Though since then they've published new ones."

But the boy was in no hurry to take advantage of this gracious offer, since he was not very interested in any books at the moment, not even the most erudite ones, except the open book of his own life, whose most recent pages he skimmed incessantly every day. Unable to find what might be called happiness, particularly one that was his alone, finding there nothing but monotonous days—whether because there really were no brighter memories, or because such memories are the unique privilege of old age, where they replace hope, or maybe because he was deliberately blurring them to crave the future all the more—he understood the past as a dull and difficult path along the ridge toward a precipice, which had brought him to the edge of a cliff in the mountains, to an abyss that he must either jump across, risking a swift fall to its base, or else return to the unhappy valley from which he had begun. Standing at the edge of the abyss, he felt the terrible determinacy of life, which leaves a person so little choice. It began to seem to him that his own path, in keeping with the general rule, had been ordained far in advance, and that the wide avenues that he seemingly chose for himself were actually narrow alleys, along which he was wandering blindly. The children's game of blind man's bluff, where a group of pranksters tease and poke an individual who is blindfolded while avoiding being caught by him, now became for him a symbol full of the deepest meaning, a representation of the essential condition of man in the world. Experience told him that he who snatches for the least and prepares for the grab with a patient, siege-like strategy will capture the most. Having fallen through thin ice on a number of occasions and gotten cold and wet in these unhappy immersions, he wanted to be careful, and so he temporarily come to a complete halt, viewing any movement as potentially dangerous.

The next evening Maksym called the boy into his room in the house and insisted on giving him the old textbooks. The homeowner's son was in an unusually excited mood, talking a great deal and laughing frequently. Giving Stepan the books along with some advice, he cheerfully added:

"See, you were surprised that I make what seems to be so much money but am not getting married. No doubt you think I'm lonely and don't know what to do with my money. But look here," he pointed at his library. "I have lots of books. I like to buy them, and read them, too. And you know, there are those who buy books but don't read them! Buy them and put them on a shelf. That's silly, don't you think? Plenty of things are silly. You're still young—I don't mean you're foolish. Not at all. But someday you'll see that reading books is far more interesting than doing the things that are described in them yourself."

He sat Stepan down in a chair by the writing table, lit a lamp that stood on it, and extinguished the electric light on the ceiling. Shadows stretched into the corners of the room. Stepan's gaze swept from the illuminated circle

on the table to the gloom beyond, which seemed to give objects and words greater significance. Maksym sat down across from him.

"Afterward," he continued, "it never turns out the way it does in a book. You laugh, but it's true. This, too, you'll understand some day. I'm not saying 'such things never happen,' only that 'it doesn't happen that way.' In a book everything is gathered together, polished, ordered, and made prettier. In the real world, things are the way they are, but in a book it's the way it should be. And tell me, what's more interesting? Let's say you go to a photographer and say, 'Take a picture of me that makes me look handsome.' You send the picture to some friends who have not seen you in a long time and maybe never will. Now tell me, do you think it's better if they see you in person? I'm not saying you're some kind of ogre—it's just an example. Would you like a cigarette?"

He held out a leather cigarette case to the boy.

"And this, too, is where the money goes: I like good tobacco. You know, in the years of war communism, everyone smoked that cheap tobacco. Not me! You won't find cigarettes like these anywhere. Nothing but the finest tobacco, scented with opium."

"But it's bad for your health," objected Stepan, lighting a cigarette.

"Everything is bad for your health! Breathing is bad for your health, because it burns up your blood. So don't breathe, perhaps you'll live longer. You probably think that if you avoid doing harmful things you'll live longer. But think this way: 'I'll do the harmful things and maybe life will be more satisfying.'"

"Life is interesting even without opium," said Stepan. "Here, in the city, I tell you, what's important is having money, a job. Oh, to have some money! But opium, that's for those who don't have a reason to live—the empty ones, the sick."

"Splendid! What an analytical mind you have!" Maksym replied. "Do you think a person's strength can be measured in foot-pounds? Can you measure the fullness of life in kilograms? That's naive! When you first mentioned marriage, that's what I thought—you're naive."

"So you think everyone who gets married is naive?"

"It's not those who are married that are naive, but those who think they need to get married. No—those who get married are not naive at all. They're unfortunate, if you really want to know. Have you ever in your entire life seen a single happy marriage? Be honest! No? I haven't either. What do you think of such a state of affairs? You want me to show you something?" he asked conspiratorially. "But it's a secret."

He retrieved a small box from the drawer and opened it. On a velvet background lay a flat golden pin with small jewels around a large ruby.

"Do you like it?" he asked, excited. "You know whom I'll give it to? My mother. Today is her birthday. Don't imagine we'll have company. We don't celebrate birthdays in our family. We live so quietly, no one ever comes

over—did you notice?"

Stepan timidly took the jewelry in his hands and examined it, holding it in his palm. The jewels sparkled, throwing sparks into the ruby, which it swallowed in a dull, bloody glow.

"It's very nice," he said, carefully putting the pin back into its box.

"You'd probably like to give something like that to your mother, wouldn't you?" Maksym continued. "Well, I know you're an orphan. If you want, I'll tell you something more. The only reason we took you in is because you're an orphan. We don't like strangers, we're used to being on our own. We wouldn't have taken you in for anything. But when I read in that letter that you had no parents, I spoke up right away and said we should take you in. Anyone who doesn't have a mother deserves help."

"Thank you," mumbled the boy, experiencing warmth, shame, and a bitter pain at the revelation of this charity.

"Now I'm offended. I'm sorry I told you about this. But I really was thinking about you. And I suggested turning over the household chores to you. Surely that's better than hanging around a dormitory, and Mother also benefits from the help. But don't go expressing your gratitude. Just forget about it—forget all about it."

Then Maksym showed him a few of the treasures of his book collection: wonderful editions from the Petrine era, Ukrainian publications with engravings from the first half of the nineteenth century, and an enormous collection of postage stamps in five thick albums—the result of tireless collecting that had begun in his childhood. He told the boy about the World Association of Philatelists, which he had been a member of for many years and through which he now conducted an intensive correspondence with fellow collectors in all corners of the world, supplying them with valuable stamps from the time of the revolution.

"You know," he said, "I would have a place to stay all over the world—Australia, Africa, the Malay Islands, if ever I traveled there. The rules of our Association require hosting any fellow-members. But I've never been outside of Kyiv," he added.

From Maksym Stepan brought back to the kitchen a whole pile of textbooks on statistics, economic geography, and commercial accounting, and put them all aside for future reference. Whenever he made a new acquaintance, he promptly noted that person's inevitable ludicrous qualities and thus lost some of his respect for him. So it was with the generous Maksym, whom he designated a strange fellow, perceiving in him a similarity to the crazy teacher he had met at Levko's a few weeks earlier.

"People are strange!" he thought. "And what do they need? To live a simple life, but no—they're always seeking a convolution."

This was what he thought, despite the convolutions he himself was hopelessly seeking, since a person is absolutely incapable of living a simple life.

But what struck Stepan most was the mention of his own orphanhood, which had unexpectedly brought him such a benefit. Indeed, his mother had died, as people told him, when he was only two years old, and there were no recollections of her were saved in his memory. Thus, going through the pain and suffering of childhood, he had sought solace in dreams, gliding across steppes and forests, reaching out into the boundless distance. Later he even lost the perception that his mother had ever existed in the same way that other women exist and give birth. Now the strange, filial tenderness that resonated in Maksym's voice awoke in the boy an aching longing for the woman who would have been dearest and closest to him. If only he had a mother he would not be so lonely. With grief he recalled the fate of mothers in the village who cowered in the corners of their son's homes as mere extra mouths to feed, disdained by their grandchildren and daughters-in-law, and he imagined all the more clearly how he would have loved and honored his own. But she was lost to him forever, without a trace, and the sudden realization of this loss underscored his alienation in the world, where he lacked the most basic, first relationship, as well as the most basic hope for the future. Lying down to sleep, he somehow grew smaller, curled up like a child under the influence of his feelings. The unquenchable thirst for a mother awakened in him the sensation of her former caresses and singing over his cradle. He passionately recreated his imaginary mother, whose beautiful features suddenly transformed into the harrowing face of death.

In the morning, mostly because of the books he had brought yesterday, which admonished him by their presence, he decided it was time to stop playing the fool. Grabbing a pencil and some paper, he finally set off for the Institute. But the sights and sounds of the streets and people, particularly the loud ringing of church bells, objectively convinced him that today was Sunday. He had completely lost count of the days and the situation amused him immensely.

"What a knucklehead," he thought about himself. "Well, tomorrow I start studying."

But he miscalculated by one day, discovering through his own experience that Monday is an unusually difficult day and not a good one to begin important matters. On Sunday night an unexpected incident occurred, of the kind that leave an indelible imprint on the character of an individual; an ember that continues to glow, despite multiple layers of subsequent ash, like the flame of a lantern, marking the dramatic turning points of a person's development.

That evening Stepan resolutely sat down to read attentively the introduction to statistics, an astoundingly insightful science that unerringly calculates the likelihood of any person falling under the wheels of a streetcar, dying of cholera, or becoming a genius. But Stepan did not quite get to those instructive chapters, and when the wooden clock, the chief decoration of his quarters, indicated that the time was ten o'clock, he felt it was his right to

sleep and thus resolve all outstanding questions from the previous day.

He fell asleep, and awoke at a quiet rustling by the bed. He instantly opened his eyes and in the gray shadows of the room's only window saw a white figure, enormous in the haze of his somnolent eyes. He sat up and asked in confusion: "Who's there?"

A thief? An illusion? A nightmare?

But the figure was coming closer, and the boy didn't so much recognize as instantly guess that it was the landlady. What had happened? A fire? A sudden death? But before he could formulate a question, he felt the touch of a sizzling hand on his face, his neck, his chest. And then two hands. The halting, irregular breathing was getting closer, leaning over, and stopped on his own lips in a dry, ravenous imprint. The woman's hands slid around his waist and on his chest he could feel the touch of soft, warm, and trembling flesh. Seized with incomprehensible fear, Stepan jerked away and pressed against the wall, eager to melt into it and disappear altogether.

"What are you doing? What's with you?" he muttered, gasping. His entire body stiffened in terror. His arms froze in ossified fear. He was breathing heavily and loudly, gasping for the cool, sharp air.

She went away quietly, and Stepan, as in a dream, heard the door gently close. Life was slowly returning to his limbs, his heart was steadying. He tried to move and cautiously stretched out, face up, on the bed. His legs were still trembling and blood throbbed in his temples. Slowly, as his terror subsided, he was realizing what had happened.

"What? How can this be?" the boy blathered, flexing his hands.

Along with his presence of mind came the recollection of the kiss that he had broken off, of the contact with his chest and the embrace of her naked arms. Naked! Now, belatedly, he understood! Her entire body, her excited, submissive body, was separated from his by no more than a nightshirt. And he had pushed it away, like a coward, instead of diving into it, discovering in its depths a hidden, energy-sapping warmth. What had stopped him? Sin? A sense of wrongdoing, or injustice to someone? Conscience? What did he care for this clingy rubbish, these sharp needles scattered along life's roadways, the stupid morality of superstitions? No, it was only childish fear—there was no other explanation that he could fathom.

His blood, having cooled somewhat, was now again inflamed and pulsed through his veins. His young heart was beating at a full, youthful throttle. His inventive fantasy was creating images in his imagination that would seem distasteful only to others but in the flame of one's own imagination were not subject to review by conscience. Overcome with a flaming desire for satisfaction, he carefully got up, trembling at the touch the cold floor. On tiptoe he approached the door that led to the Hnidys' bedrooms. Quietly he tried to open it, but it barely moved, only as far as the hook inside would allow. Thoughtlessly, Stepan was about to knock on the door, but his upraised hand fell limp. After all, it was his own fault.

The room was suffocating him. He stepped out onto the veranda in his underwear and sat down with his elbows on his knees. The cold air did not diminish his agitation. Fear and tension left a dull pain in his heart. Remorse for his sin—for the failure to commit the sin—gnawed at the boy, persistently, dreadfully. He called himself a dope, an idiot, a coward, and a loser. And not only because his unsatiated body had filled with bitterness, but also from the unexpressed deduction that possession of this lush woman, who was above his reach and more mature than he, could strengthen his spirit and temper his will, as sometimes happens after a victory that shows the hero himself what he is worth.

In the morning Stepan, nervous and fidgety from a sleepless night, glumly hung about the yard, smoking cigarette after cigarette, depleting his supply of cheap tobacco. Although it was now a weekday and the Institute was open to accommodate his desire to study, the mere thought of school evoked a terrible disgust. Who cares about the Institute? Compared to last night's incident, that would be simple and easily achieved. But the desire for this woman, about whom he wouldn't have dared to even dream yesterday, had been transformed into an aching thirst with an exotic, irresistible flavor, and had become, in the end, a burning issue of personal selfishness. The instant he imagined that this woman might not be his, anger welled up in him and brought to his lips the most insulting words. Adulteress. Debauchee. Even whore.

He was, however, quite capable of falling on his knees to beg her to smile at him at least once, to give him the smallest sign. But on meeting him in the kitchen, she was no different than she had been yesterday, the day before yesterday, a week or two weeks before. She did not betray last night's visit by the slightest of gestures. This seemed to him the very nadir of hypocrisy, the deep depravity of an overly self-indulgent female. She had come to him. That was indisputable. So why this proud dissimulation? That was unclear. Would she come again? The boy understood perfectly that he had offended her by his behavior, that he should do or say something—but what? but how? He didn't know and he didn't dare, fearful of spoiling his chances by a word or gesture that ruins everything instead of fixing it.

Quietly, without being heard, he entered the kitchen where Tamara Vasylivna was cooking lunch. She stood with her back to the door, and the boy entered unnoticed. Hobbled by the consciousness of his own mortification but simultaneously overwhelmed by an aching, almost beggarly desire, his eyes, alternating between pleading and voracious appetite, devoured the lines of her back and legs. And when she turned around and saw him, he observed on her face her suffering and enmity, which, appearing for a moment, hid behind an expression of immutable tranquility. But for him that was enough to catch a brief glimpse into her soul.

"Come tonight, come," he whispered, even too quietly, although there was no one who could have heard his words, since everyone else was always

out of the house in the morning. Not a muscle moved on her face under his careful scrutiny. She turned around and Stepan bolted out of the house, angrily slamming the door.

He did not come home for lunch, not without hope of thus signaling his despair. He returned home late at night, having spent the whole day wandering by the Dnipro, and he lay down to sleep immediately, again hinting at his readiness. The hours dragged on in endless eternities, the ceiling and indeed the entire house of the peaceful merchant were in imminent danger of collapse from the explosion of his impatience, and when she at last did come, the boy welcomed her with all the fire of youthful passion and that enormous store of energy that he had brought with him to the city.

XI

The last days of summer were exploiting their remaining privileges. At the end of September mornings turned cloudy, while in the afternoon the sun came out, filling the air with spring mirages and holding back for a while the falling leaves. But at night the winds tore them off and blew them around the streets, adding more work for the streetsweepers. Across these yellowish doormats, the city stepped out into a period of activity, awakening from its summer doldrums. The edu-cultural, cabaret, and theatrical seasons opened in a feverish frenzy. Various learned and semi-learned societies came to life, as their members returned from holidays and vacation homes. The bookstores and libraries, lethargic in the summer season when the mind is enfeebled, filled with customers and patrons, exhibits were opened, and lectures were read on the most serious topics of economy and morality. The proper life of the city was beginning, the springtime of its creativity, generally enclosed by walls and yet without limits.

With great enthusiasm Stepan, too, partook of this impulse. Actually, he had hardly missed anything by skipping the first weeks of classes at the Institute. Only now had all the professors returned and the printed schedule became an actual one, particularly in the work of groups and committees that begins with an unavoidable period of organizational activity. On the whole, he walked into class to find everything ready and he could immediately roll out his studies at full speed on the tracks that had been properly aligned to meet the academic plans. He signed up for practical sessions in statistics and historical materialism, and he attended lectures regularly—indeed, he was so absorbed in his studies that he barely got to know his classmates. They were of interest to him only as co-workers. But for them within a half-month he had become a reference book on Institute events, changes, and programs, because no one was better informed than he about all these matters. His notebooks with lecture notes were in such demand that they were typed up in multiple copies. Particularly in the fields of the theory of probability and higher mathematics, he immediately rose to the level of a recognized master, one of the select few who could see through the maze of formulas and propositions to the essential ideas that become the unfailing signposts in the labyrinth of external complexity.

In the evenings, having quickly run home for dinner, Stepan sat for two hours in the statistics laboratory, calculating endless rows of crop yields and death rates to establish the coefficient of correlation between them, and then spent two more hours in the library preparing for his presentation on Greek Atomism. Every spare moment at home he devoted to studying languages—English and French, of which up to now he knew only the alphabet used in mathematics. This was the largest gap in his knowledge, and liquidating this deficit was an overriding imperative for him. Stubbornness

and persistence were reborn in him, and these qualities were strengthened rather than depleted by greater application. Each day that passed was filled to the brim with content, leaving no room for doubts or hesitation. The boy was developing his strengths, burning brightly because such was his nature: he could take the oars in a race and move the boat without resting, until in the end the oarlocks themselves would give out.

The strange relations that evolved between him and the landlady did not hinder him at all. During the day, he somehow forgot all about them, since by her behavior Tamara Vasylivna herself severely limited their daytime contact. No allusions. No privileges. Only business, everything aboveboard. Nor did Stepan attempt to transgress these limits. Indeed, he liked this reticence in his unexpected girlfriend. As if she were afraid of the light that eats away at secrets like acid. Their encounters always maintained the magic of surprise. Theirs was a peculiar, comic, but pleasant kitchen liaison between a young man and a wicked mother, a quasi-sentimental domestic romance hallowed by the unchanging night and the ticking of the cheap clock on the wall, a romance with a sudden beginning, a passionate plot line, and a boring ending. And yet sometimes, perhaps in some trivial gesture or word, he suddenly detected in his visitor a hidden virtue that aroused his respect and undermined his previous understanding of her as a licentious woman always chasing men. At such times he succumbed to a fearful anxiety, and this relationship, which he explained in such simple terms, began to seem entirely incomprehensible to him. He would ask, feigning extreme naiveté: why, with what purpose, by what cause, for what reason?

"Because you're my little love," she would say.

But he wouldn't allow himself to use the familiar pronoun with her and called her "Musinka," as she suggested.

Occasionally, while reading a book or working, he would be tempted to laugh in amazement and happy satisfaction. How strange the world was! He had appeared in this merchant's family God knows how, attached himself to them somehow, and now look what he's doing—and not even intentionally, without any effort on his part. It turns out somehow that the things you seek escape you, but what you don't expect happens all by itself. Sometimes in passing he would think of Hnidy and Maksym. He hardly ever came across the former. He was sort of friends with the latter, but didn't see him very often either. Were they catching on? No, clearly not—since there were no changes in the internal, closed, and dreary life of this strange family. As for himself, he certainly would have noticed something, caught a stray glance or inadvertent allusion. His conscience told him that everything would be discovered, discovered soon, and things would end badly. These probable results—even without any mathematical calculations—made an unpleasant chill run down his back. But the voices of alarm were quickly silenced in the whirlwind of academic enthusiasm, which rarely gave them a chance to be heard.

Nor did he trouble himself too much with questions of terminology. Was this love? All right—it could be. It was funny, but possible. Who has the courage to say what is love and what is not? Shoes can be worn out, torn, patched, warped, and orthopedic, but they're always still shoes. Why does love need new footwear each time? Sometimes it walks in bast shoes and sometimes in slippers. In any case, secrecy and prohibition inflamed the boy's excitement, which completely replaces affection for young men, and the satisfaction of his desire gave birth to feelings of tenderness and gratitude. Under their languid influence the boy even kissed her hands, and these were the very first hands that had earned such regard from him. He was acutely aware of the thrill that her touch infused in him, of that explosion of active energy that her kiss ignited, like an electric spark. She wove herself into his life as an invisible, secret, but powerful influence, allowing him also to discover in her a woman who does not alternate among a variety of trivial emotions and does not force herself to meet specific expectations. Next to her, all the girls he knew were affected dolls who imagined the act of giving themselves to someone as an accomplishment, a self-sacrifice, and an unrecompensable service.

Slowly initiating the boy into the mysteries of love, she taught him to value a kiss, which heretofore had seemed to him a mere plaything, as well as the whole intimate web of arousal that mankind has developed in the period from the Stone Age to the present. Stepan quickly mastered the accelerated course in this field of human experience, passed on from one generation to the next without textbooks or instructional guides—freeing himself from the bookish diapers that swaddled his thinking. Because nights gave him the sensation of thoughtless and therefore authentic living, free from all prescriptions and stipulations, unconstrained by requirements or explanations. At night, the sedulous eye of control and objections was closed, the odious voices that invited, pleaded, and commanded fell silent, and having rid himself of them, he could feel the wanton liberty and insolent power of life, which breaks through thousands of obstacles to deliver its eternal magic.

There was nothing artificial in her knowledge of love, although the word "love" was her favorite joke. Yet suddenly, in the midst of caresses, the boy would sense in her a commitment, something unspoken, the heat of an internal flame that scorched him and frightened him. At such moments he told himself that he would never leave her, that he could not live without her. He was ready to suggest that she leave her family and make a new home with him on the foundation of the scholarship he received at the Institute. But a moment later she was joking again, and again he did not feel the pull of any obligations. He loved her jokes, he loved the happy, tender pet names that she bestowed on him, which everyone likes to hear, although they're silly. He loved the scented cigarettes she always brought, stolen from her son, and the careless and pointless conversations that they enjoyed together. Musinka

never spoke of anything serious, she never troubled him with her soul, and he should have been most grateful to her for this favor, since knowing another person's soul is too great a burden for one's own.

A month of carefree tranquility went by, working days and amorous nights, deepening and burnishing his consciousness. The wearying rains and gray mists had begun, but his army overcoat, unpacked from storage, saved him from the weather, while his heavy yuft boots were completely waterproof. In these garments his body felt as peaceful and comfortable as his soul felt in his body. All his worries fell silent, without any great effort on his part, and he was moving forward, full steam ahead, like an arrow shot from a taut bow. An awareness of this disposition brought a blessed order to his mind, impregnating it with the clear thinking that bears no resemblance to the malignant glitter of dreams. Poisonous, selfish, worldly illusions abandoned him and thus simplified his life, because he now understood that he must cross many a stream before he could draw his own conclusions. A dangerous inclination to incomplete induction, when the young man, on the basis of the first two decades of his sojourn on this earth, years both laughable and naive, attempted on his own to formulate the basic rules that govern life in this world, knocking his head against the wall of reality time and time again, was now replaced with a judicious intention to make life's acquaintance gradually and to accumulate within himself a sufficient quantity of life's facts. He became serious, somewhat proud, and acquired the appearance of a clever young man, who, although still young, already knows a great deal, understands everything, and can explain to everyone the what, the where, the how, and the why.

At the Institute Stepan was making progress with giant strides. Aside from his studies he was becoming more prominent in the social affairs of students, who were at the time largely indifferent and mistrustful of collectivism because of its obligatory status in the community. People only recognize the sweetness of those fruits that are forbidden, and the biblical parable on this topic would be very instructive for politicians. In any case, those for whom public life was an instinctive choice unrelated to circumstances found the student population of those days an unplowed if somewhat infertile field. After a few appearances at student forums, Stepan was elected as the administrator of the student office of the Robzemlis trade union and a member of the Institute's KUBUch committee. He was swamped and extremely busy, barely able to fit into a single day all of his personal and community responsibilities.

For the theatrical event being organized by KUBUch in the Institute's auditorium as a fundraiser for impoverished students, it was decided to include, in addition to the invited performers, a talent show. Stepan decided to submit his story "The Razor," which was lying around in manuscript without any purpose, to the event committee for its consideration. Having received their approval, Stepan cleaned and sharpened it for shaving the

masses, and read his work on stage before the audience.

He was nervous only for a moment. Then he suddenly calmed down and, sensing the growing attention of his listeners, found his rhythm as a reader. He read the story through to the end in a steady and well-balanced voice, avoiding unnecessary changes of pitch or pauses, and received as much applause as the invited tenor from the opera. Even more, since a flower was thrown to him—though it did not reach the stage and fell sadly on the floor. He did not deem it necessary to retrieve this first branch from the laurel wreath of his future fame.

His reaction to his own success was very negative, and when Borys Zadorozhny, one of the participants in the talent show and a student in his last year, warmly complemented him on his story and asked if he had written anything else, the boy grumpily answered: "I don't have time for such nonsense."

"That's a shame," said Zadorozhny. "What's awaiting us after we graduate? They'll herd us into a factory or behind a cash register, and that's it. You'll soon be overgrown with moss. But writing stories, that's a fine thing! As for me, I spend every free moment I have reading."

Stepan thought differently. Stories were just empty amusement, entertainment. You could survive just as well without them. And a small discussion began between them about literature, in which Stepan was the detractor and Borys the committed defender.

Nevertheless, at home before a week had passed he had written two more stories. The student Zadorozhny who had so warmly welcomed his story became—was it precisely for this reason?—his close friend, to whom he eagerly turned for advice and sometimes even visited at his apartment. This cheerful and talented student's biography was full of difficulties and disappointments. He had made the mistake of being born the son of an Orthodox priest, whose death some ten years ago had failed to erase the stain on his son's character. Twice he had been thrown out of the Institute for his class origins, and twice he had been reinstated, because his personal past was in fact without blemish. After five years he had reached his third year in the program and got a job as a night watchman in a dormitory. He considered himself the most fortunate person in the world.

That spring Borys would finish the Institute with a specialization in the sugar beet industry. Stepan felt a friendship toward him and a deep faith in his aesthetic taste. Thus Borys became the intimate confidante of his literary efforts and the first—and sympathetic, no less—judge of his literary works.

"Listen to this," said the boy, unfolding a pile of papers.

Borys listened, and approved.

"This is just something I threw together," said Stepan.

He threw together a half-dozen stories about rebels. He wrote them easily and quickly, a little carelessly, but with enthusiasm.

"So why are you marinating them?" asked Borys. "Send them off to a

journal."

"You don't understand!"

And Stepan told his friend how he wrote the first story, how he even thought of changing his name to a more dignified Stefan, and how the great critic had burst his bubble.

"Literature is a delicate thing," he added with sincerity. "If you don't have the talent, don't even start. That's why, I think, there are so few writers."

Borys did not agree.

"So you think it is like a professional appointment?"

"Yes, sort of."

"You're a fool."

"So be it."

Borys laughed.

"So how did you come up with Stefan?"

"Wasn't there a king or something?"

From that day onward Borys called him little Stevie.

One evening Stepan was concentrating on calculating currency conversion, estimating how many gold rubles there were in an Indian rupee if the rate of conversion to pounds sterling were known. While Stepan was in this state of disconnection from the moment and the environment, Maksym entered the kitchen very agitated.

"I need to talk to you," he said icily.

Maksym's voice was trembling and the lines on his forehead quivered nervously. An expectation of something very unpleasant swept over Stepan. Guiltily, he anticipated the subject of the conversation.

"You are a nocturnal thief," said Maksym, standing across from him by the table.

"What?"

"You are a nocturnal thief," Maksym repeated dully, leaning against the table with his hands. "You're a thief."

Stepan got up, frightened by Maksym's quiet, sullen tone.

"What's this about?"

Suddenly Maksym bent over and raising his arm, awkwardly and angrily hit Stepan in the face with his hand, striking him, in his haste, not on the cheek but directly on the mouth. This blow to the lips was not very hard but it was deeply offensive, and Stepan felt it like the sting of a whip on naked flesh. His face reddened like a wound, and his whole body erupted. He jerked forward and threw himself at Maksym, overturning the table with his leg and knocking Maksym onto the bed.

He beat him with his knuckles, with his chest, and with his head, in senseless rage and extreme anger. Then he stopped and sat up, blinking to erase the red spots circling before his eyes. He threw back his tussled hair and, legs shaking, threw on his overcoat and cap and left the house. He walked out without buttoning his coat, mindlessly splashing through puddles,

shaking in anger and mortification. That swine had hit him in the face! Maybe he should challenge him to a duel? Swords? Pistols? Hah—what a knight-defender of his mother!

With drunken satisfaction he recalled how he had beat him, choked him, twisted him, kicked him, and, at the same time, he regretted that he had cut off the punishment so quickly. He should have killed the snake! Made mincemeat of him! Because it was not just the insult that Maksym had given him that enraged him, it was the ruined tranquility, the financial ruin, and the loss of his mistress. And the more he realized the extent of his catastrophe, the greater his emotional enervation grew—a mindless, crippling, gnawing hatred. He was entirely consumed with a boiling rage. Had someone bumped into him at that moment, he likely would have hit him.

Running out heedlessly down the familiar path to Khreshchatyk, Stepan had to stop and consider where he would sleep the next few nights. Actually, there wasn't any choice, and he set out for Borys's place on Lviv Street, behind the Sinnyi bazaar. Brisk walking tired him and calmed him somewhat. His muscles ached from the emotional upheaval, and he was yawning from nervous exhaustion. Because it was late he had to knock for a long time: although Borys was out guarding offices, Stepan, as a familiar guest, was allowed into his room. Borys's absence pleased Stepan and he expected that by morning he would invent a sufficiently plausible reason for his visit. He found some bread, ate it, and immediately went to sleep, cursing Maksym for disrupting his life.

In the morning Stepan went to the Institute, and it wasn't until evening that he ran into Borys, to whose place he had to return since he had nowhere else to go. His mood was as black as tar—he had spent the whole day walking around in a huff, but he cheerily told his friend that his landlords were entertaining a houseful of family visitors and so he had to give up his place there for a while.

"Why don't you just stay here permanently?" said Borys. "As you know, I'm hardly ever at home at night. It's a dog's life, but it's better than dying of hunger. I've tried that before—it's not pleasant."

But, instead of jumping at such a convenient offer, Stepan graciously declined because he was infused with a secret expectation that somehow everything would get straightened out and he would return to his comfortable nest. How? He didn't know. A great "somehow" lived within him, a deep faith in his destiny, which had not been very hard on him up until now. Would Musinka really have to carry water herself? He could not fit such barbaric possibility in his head. Or would Maksym—may his soul rot in hell—really tend to the cows himself? But he had to admit that the Hnidy household had prospered without him in the past and could do so again. Musinka would cry a little and then she would find a more convenient lover. Such thoughts drove him into a deep despondency. He decided to wait. For what? Maybe Musinka would write him a letter—but she didn't know the address. And he didn't

dare write to her—he was even ashamed, since, no matter how you spin it, he had retreated from the field of battle, albeit as a victor.

For two days a longing for Musinka gnawed at him, mostly because he was distanced from her against his own will. He couldn't stand it when things didn't go his way. After another two days, however, he was reconciled to his situation and likely would have stayed at Borys's had it not been for a new difficulty, which dashed his plans once again.

That evening, before setting out on his watch, Borys noticed his unhappy demeanor.

"You're overworked, little Stevie," he told him. "Even a steam boiler can crack from too much pressure, and that's cast iron. It was Karl Marx who said that the working man deserves a rest."

"Yes, I see that myself," said Stepan, caught up in his work.

"The best relaxation is a woman's company, or, to put it plainly, a party. Somebody took me to one recently, and I'll take you there too. All we need is half a bottle and something to eat, like sausage. It's not far to go for fellows like us, just up to the Krytyi bazaar. It's not quite a house, not quite a barn—heaven knows what it is, but there are five girls.

"Five?" asked Stepan.

"A whole handful! And one of them, a real-life Beatrice. She's so fair and quiet—but you know, still waters can rupture a levee. What's her name? Natalka? No. Nastia? No. Well, whatever .... On one condition—she's mine."

"You can have them all!" said Stepan glumly. "I don't have time for girls."

"Do as you please, but even scholars say it's good for the metabolism."

After Borys had left, Stepan thought long and bitterly. That there were five girls rather than three was easy to explain. He himself had heard Nadika say that they would take in two more girls for the winter to help with the cost of firewood. No less certain was it that Borys was thinking of courting Nadika. And besides, if he stayed on here, Borys would keep dragging him there. Furthermore, Borys would keep telling him how the courtship was coming along. Any allusion to that girl was enough to make Stepan feel physically ill. What would happen if she came up time and again in Borys's conversation? An instinct for self-preservation prodded him, telling him that it would be dangerous to expose himself to so much pain.

That evening he felt hostility toward girls, a sad hostility over what had been lost and could not return, but now, from a distance, had acquired an ever greater attractive force. Could she possibly fall in love with Borys? For a moment he felt an urge to stay at Borys's place, to stay deliberately and go with him to the parties to prevent him from getting Nadika, to rub this conceited chump's nose in the dirt. Step on his tail a little, so he couldn't say "this one's mine." But his soul was too weary to take up such a challenge. He had a different, more important challenge before him. Picking up a book he said complacently: "Let him have her."

He decided to move to the KUBUch dormitory, bitterly disillusioned that the city was, after all, not big enough to avoid meeting certain people.

XII

This was the first morning that the most dogged student at the Institute, Stepan Radchenko, did not appear for class. Drearily, lost in thought, he walked along Revolution Street to Nyzhnyi Val Street to get his things, to remove from the home where he had found refuge the last traces of his stay there. He had specifically chosen the morning to do this, since Musinka was at home alone at that time. Although his anger at Maksym had burned out and extinguished, and Hnidy himself would hardly find the courage to say something—mostly he played the role of a non-speaking extra in this strange family—nevertheless it would have been unpleasant to see them. And they, too, would probably not want to meet him, and he certainly did not want to cause people any discomfort.

The door was unlocked, and he walked into the empty kitchen. For a moment he considered grabbing his things and disappearing forever. But he rejected this as shameful—he was not, after all, a thief. Besides, when he entered this kitchen where everything was familiar, when in the corner he saw the bucket with which he had carried so much water, the table on which he had scribbled so many sheets of paper, his books and notebooks still lying where he had left them—he felt a painful pang of regret that he must actually abandon all this. And why? He felt that he was the victim here. But all these objects were merely the background for the traces of a passion visible only to him. All of these things reminded him of his connection to a woman who had given him so much and such rich satisfaction. He realized in their midst that even if this feeling was not love, it had not yet been exhausted: its depth reached out for many more nights, the loss of which would surely be his ruin. Suddenly he felt that in losing her he had lost his spark, that the forced separation would throw him back into the despair that he had been battling all week with a subconscious hope that he might return to her and possess her again. Shaking with agitation, he knocked on the door to her room and then without waiting knocked again.

When Musinka appeared, the boy thirstily looked into her face, seeking there any signs of joy or delight at his reappearance. But her face was tranquil, as always during the day, though somewhat tired and pale. Then, without greeting, he said sharply: “I’ve come for my things.”

She smiled, and with that smile increased his irritation.

“I don’t want to bother you,” he cried. “Maybe you’ve grown tired of me. Maybe you sent Maksym yourself to get rid of me.”

“Maksym has gone,” she said.

“Gone?”

“He’s left us. He’ll live on his own.”

Terror gripped Stepan.

“He said, ‘Mom, promise you’ll get rid of that vagabond, and then I’ll

stay, and everything will be as it was before.' I said, 'He's not a vagabond.'"

Stepan ran up to her, grabbed her hand, and kissed it passionately.

"No, no, Musinka. I am a vagabond," he said. "I'm awful, and I should be run off. I love you, Musinka—forgive me."

She replied listlessly: "Forgive? You? For what?"

He kissed her neck, the corners of her lips, her eyes, her forehead; caressing these familiar spots, he embraced her piously and sensually. And she, as if awakened, threw her arms around his neck, and pulling back his head, looked into his eyes with wild desire.

That night she said to him: "I knew you'd come back."

"How?"

"I'll tell you later."

"I too was sure, despite everything, that I'd come back. I was coming for my things, but somewhere in my soul I knew that I would be back with you. Kiss me. Aren't I handsome?"

"There you go, my love," she laughed.

He fell silent.

"What are you thinking about?"

"About ... about the other half of your household."

"You didn't think about that before?"

"Very little, actually. I was scared to ask, Musinka. Everything turns out so strangely. It turns out that I don't know my own self."

"And you never will."

"Why not? I've learned many lessons already. And how much I've endured. The city bewildered me. I was drowning."

"And now you're drying out here beside me."

He heard so much pain and derisive mockery in these words that inadvertently he flinched, suddenly and unexpectedly coming to the realization, previously beyond his reach as something hidden and frightening, that his Musinka had had a life before she began to exist for him: that years, decades of the lost past, had unfailingly led them toward each other, their paths crossing here, in this kitchen. And at that moment he felt more clearly than ever before, as if someone's persistent gaze were causing him to turn around and look back, the quiet and inexorable force of destiny that governs the ordinary encounters of people, who were complete strangers yesterday but tomorrow become friends, lovers, or enemies. The idea struck him as mysterious and frightening.

Now he was afraid because he did not know what she was thinking. He clasped her hands in his own.

"You won't abandon me?"

"You'll never let anyone leave you."

"Is that why I returned?"

"What do you think, my little one?"

He leaned on his elbow and lit a cigarette. Her words were somewhat

unpleasant to him. They carried an echo of a knowledge of life that he still found unattainable, as well as a hint of gloomy irony.

She remained silent. He continued smoking, lying on his back.

"This was an unhappy week," she said.

"For me too," he answered.

"For you too? But how old are you?"

He wanted to protest.

"I am forty-two," she said. "I'm old. You're going to say that's not very old? Oh, my dear little one, in a year I'll be a real old bag, you'll hardly recognize me if we meet. But once, a very long time ago—you can't even imagine how long ago—I too was young. Do you know what happiness is? It's like the heavens. It can evaporate in a moment. But pain persists, on and on, without end."

"That's true," he said, "I've noticed that myself."

"People say that life is like a bazaar. And so it is. Everyone has their goods to sell. Some make a profit, others take a loss. Why? Because no one wants to die. You must keep selling, even if at a loss. After that, anyone can call you a fool. The seller who miscalculates is called a fool. But people are very different. Books tell us: this is a human being, with these qualities, and so forth. We have all kinds of sayings about people, about all human beings, and you might think we know what a human being is. Somewhere I read that there's even a science of souls called psychology. The author claims that people don't run because they're scared, but are scared because they run. But what's the difference to the guy who's scared? He doesn't know anything anyway. Do you understand?"

"You're probably thinking of idealist psychology. Today psychology is built on entirely different principles. Introspection has long been discredited as a methodology."

He put his cigarette butt on the table, extending his arm for this purpose, and turned onto his right side.

"So what happened then?" he asked, "You were young, and then what?"

"Nothing very interesting. I had two brothers and two sisters. They died. Who knows why I survived and they didn't. Strange, isn't it? We lived here—this is my building. We weren't rich, but we got along. My father was a small merchant. And now listen. He had a friend—they grew up and went to school together. My father dealt in iron goods, his friend sold fish. His friend did well. He built himself a big five-story building in Lypky, he went into wholesale and put away a few million. My father still traded iron here. He didn't envy anyone. But when four children of his died, he somehow withered. All his plans were lost. And then my mother died. I was left alone. I was scared of my father—he was so dour. He didn't notice me. He said nothing for days, weeks even. I didn't have any friends. No one visited us. In school the girls teased me and called me a nun. Then late one evening, when I was seventeen, that friend of my father's showed up with his son...."

"That's your husband?"

"Yes, that was Luka. I remember his father had a civilian medal on his chest. I can recall every day of my life, from when I reached consciousness as a child—it's frightening to remember your entire life. As if you were standing guard over yourself. My father said, 'Tamara, I'm going to die soon. You should get married.' I said 'Yes, father,' and kissed his hand. His hand was cold. He really did die two months later. That was when I first saw how distant people are from each other. Father was buried with honors, because everyone liked him. They put me in a black dress and led me by the arms behind the hearse, Luka on one side, my aunt on the other. I glanced over to the sidewalk and noticed people stopping, taking off their hats, asking who was being buried, and then going on about their business. When I saw this, I stopped crying. I felt ashamed to be crying in front of people who were going about their business. I imagined that they would go home and relate over dinner that some fellow was being buried and his daughter was crying wildly. After that, my tears dried up forever, though there were plenty of reasons to cry."

She stopped and leaned back against the cushion. The serenity of her words gradually bewitched the boy, and the more he fell under the spell of her story, the less he could say himself. Cautiously, he pulled out another cigarette and lit it.

"Don't shine that in my face," she said. "I haven't yet told you anything about why Luka, who had maybe seen me once somewhere by chance, came to get engaged to me. I didn't learn this until later. You can be certain that if anything's unpleasant, they'll always tell you about it eventually. Sooner or later, intentionally or not. So this is how it was. Luka fell in love with a girl who was also a merchant's daughter, and the affair reached the engagement stage. But the father or mother of the girl, I don't remember which, was careless enough to say that it was a great honor for the Hnidy family that they were letting them have their daughter. So old Hnidy immediately took Luka by the hand, and that same evening he brought him to our place. Luka hated him, but was subservient. You can imagine the fate that awaited me. In a word, Luka said that since I had ruined his life, I would at least need to cheer him up a little."

"Why didn't you leave him?" asked Stepan.

"Oh, he took care of that. All the doors were locked and the windows on the fourth floor were left wide open. How he wanted me to commit suicide! But he was scared to kill me himself. I was waiting only until my father died. But after his death Luka changed his attitude toward me. He stopped beating me, he completely forgot about me. I rarely even saw him. Of course, people told me exactly where he was and with whom he was living. And I kept living just for show. Do you know what dreams are for those in pain? They're a curse. But what dreams I had! The harder it was for me, the happier I became. I knew the most unusual worlds. I traveled to the evening star, the one that

rises at twilight, where I lived in exotic orchards, with quiet murmuring streams in an endless autumn. I dreamed only of autumn. And the love I enjoyed there! Later, I had a son."

"Maksym?"

"Yes, Maksym. I wanted him to have a different name, I wanted ..."

"What name did you want?" he asked.

"You'll be surprised—I wanted him to be named Stepan."

"Why"

"I didn't know back then, but later I figured it out. I had enough time to study myself, to uncover every thought. In the end, you see, I began to wonder at myself. I did not have the kind of self-love that other people have, but I was very close to myself. Do you understand? Self-love means being divided from yourself, but it's also possible to merge with yourself. In that case you can no longer love yourself—or better yet, there's no way to love yourself. And then you're not scared of your own self and your own thoughts. So here's why: when I was maybe twenty years old, a tradesman was working in our home. One evening I fell asleep over a book and he carried me to my bed. While he was carrying me I woke up, but I pretended to still be asleep, so he wouldn't put me down. I closed my eyes—it was both frightening and pleasant. Later, I had such an urge to ask this Stepan to carry me around that I would flee the house in shame. I tried in various ways until I finally succeeded in getting Luka's father to take him into the store, and I didn't see him any more."

Stepan felt a vague uncertainty. Could this really be her, his smiling Musinka, always cheerful and merry? Suddenly he felt uncomfortable that this woman, whom he thought he knew well, had her own secrets, unconnected to him.

She went on:

"And then came the revolution, and it destroyed all his millions. Luka went gray in a week, and we were chased out of Lypky to this place. That's when he noticed Maksym and me. One day he came into my room and asked, 'Tamara, do you hate me?' I said, 'You don't exist for me.' He began to fear me. He was scared to look at me. He began to wear blue glasses. And Maksym was growing up. Maybe it was my own fault—I loved him madly. Sometimes I thought he would be abducted. I stood guard over him night after night. When he started going to school, I would die of fear—I missed him so much. He grew up to be quiet and gentle. He collected butterflies, insects, then later, postage stamps. He loved to read. Every evening he would tell me about everything he saw and did in school, everything. I helped him study, as long as I could. When he became a teenager, I was overcome with grief. He would be pulling away from me soon, he would have to. I was heartbroken, I cried. He didn't understand. Once he came up to me and said, 'Mom, I'll never leave you.' 'That's impossible,' I said. But he replied, 'You'll see. Have I ever deceived you?' And indeed, he did not deceive me."

She fell silent, falling under the spell of her own words, overcome with the sadness of her own story, as if hearing it for the first time from a stranger's lips. Because when it takes shape in words, a recollection acquires a previously unknown reality. In the interplay of sounds it acquires a sharp edge, very different from its peaceful existence in silent thought.

He, too, remained silent, smoking, and looking out the leaded window, listening to the ticking of the clock over his head, which in the silence seemed to have accelerated. But his thoughts were hard at work, receiving and internalizing what he had just heard and what he needed to accept. The distant horizon of her past, the long dark corridor of time, illuminated here and there by the words she had spoken, first astounded him with the mysterious complexity of its turns and branches, but then dimmed and faded before his eyes, replaced by the growing smirk that forced itself onto his lips. So, what's the point? What was so strange in this banal story about an unhappy marriage, in this familiar urban story that gets repeated everywhere and anywhere under the low roofs of residential areas near cities where life consists of nothing more than love and tranquility? A merchant's submissive daughter, an unfaithful and tyrannical husband, autumnal dreams, motherhood followed by pride in a handsome child, clutching at the remnants of life, a sickly need to find at least some meaning in that life before it descends into old age, when the last, tearful, mindless flame erupts in a woman's blood. This was neither new nor rare. And yet he felt renewed energy from the unexpressed thought that somehow he had managed to squeeze into her squalid life, to reorganize and control it. When he appeared, everything changed. That was most important to him. Suddenly, embracing her and taking command of her, he whispered, "Musinka, you do love me, don't you?"

The handsome and bright boy's life, disrupted for a week, crossed the next threshold, and resumed its steady and surging flow. Whether at the Institute or at home, he felt marvelous, with too much work in school and in his community activities to give serious thought to any matter, particularly an unpleasant one. And Musinka, such a delicate woman, did not poison his satisfaction in possessing her with any painful reminders. Within the subdued home of the Hnidys, which had managed to expel one of its residents, everything was peaceful again, decomposing, dying a slow death that might take months or even years, yet emitting though its doors a fresh shoot from the random seeds in its manure. Within this rotting nest a wayward chick was shedding its immature feathers and resolutely learning to spread its wings. And indeed, after this remarkable event the boy could not help but feel himself the master of not only the kitchen, but also of the rooms beyond, which he never entered in the exercise of his invisible authority. Having caught a momentary glimpse into Musinka's uncovered soul, the inevitable consequence was that he immediately sent out his roots into this new area, established himself, and made himself at home there, freely soaking up the nutritious juices that can be drawn from a woman's body before it decays. He

enveloped her and fed his vitality by possessing her, and her cheeks burned in a feverish blush from the flame that consumed her while it warmed and nourished him, like the fruit that swells until it must fall away from its branch.

Winter should long since have arrived, as the reports from the Ukrainian national weather bureau affirmed, but it was delayed for reasons beyond the control of science. A timid snow would fall in the morning, only to melt on the cobblestones, leaving a watery mud that was not harmful to Stepan's yuft boots but was very troublesome to the street kids, those urban outcasts without waterproof footwear, who therefore needed to relocate to their winter quarters in manholes and trash dumps. In the endless slush people seemed as gray as the mud on the streets. Then one day something strange happened, and the snow, squeezed by the frost, did not flow down the streets to the awaiting sewers, and the city majestically unfurled its white arteries and proudly raised its forehead. Showered with white petals, it was reaching the apogee of its industriousness, hardening and contracting so that, come spring, it could throw off its wedding veil and begin its gradual wilting. This was the time when the windows of buildings were not extinguished until late, and inside, around tables, those altars of the new paganism, sat attentive two-legged owls, gestating, birthing, and raising administrative, operational, artistic, and scientific plans. It was the time when sleighs glided along the icy streets, when music from the bars grew louder, when revolutions of the roulette wheel accelerated, when buses donned chains, and women donned fantastic boots, and when students wrote their first reports at Institutes and in life.

XIII

Spring is brought to the city not by sparrows but by wagon drivers who, with the blessing of their collective farms, begin to break up the trampled snow on the streets, load it onto their sleighs, and haul it off where it can melt without affecting the welfare of the city. Before these harbingers of warmth arrive, not a single bud on the trees along the boulevards dares to fluff up and open. That would be a pretentious transgression against local laws, and a barbarian assault on the foundations of civilization.

The awakening of nature did not pass by without affecting Stepan's soul, which resembled an extremely sensitive plate, suitable for instant photography. Nothing highlights the artificiality of a city like spring itself, melting the snow but uncovering dead cobblestones rather than the expected plants. The boy still longed to smell the moist breath of the earth, to bury his gaze in the endless greenery of open fields, in the black rows of fluffy soil. All around him he saw the terrible subjugation of nature. The trees on the streets and behind fences in the yards, like animals in cages or a zoo, sadly stretched out to him their swollen limbs. So what did the change from cold to warmth mean here, besides an appropriate change of clothing? What was there to remind one of the steam rising on the steppes and the happiness of the man who feels the fertile earth beneath his harrow? There spring was the trumpet of a shining god, the luminous oracle of happiness and work. Here it was but a trivial, though pleasant, episode: the disappearance of streetside sand boxes and the renewed running of the suburban trains. The city rolled over in the sun, like a giant pampered cat, squinting its innumerable eyes in the sun, stretching and yawning in satisfaction. The city was preparing to rest.

But Stepan's springtime recollection of the village, brought on by the warm temperatures and rains, did not have sufficient strength to really subdue him. He was mournful about his childhood, and wistful about the past, which, at some distance, acquires a charm unrelated to its quality, but he hoped that this quiet grief would dissipate, like a thinning fog. Or maybe these were just the dregs of those indistinct appetites and unformed desires that are stirred up in the heart by springtime, whispering flattering words about the future, stoking a greater thirst, promising change and a new direction. Spring awakens and confounds the soul with various seeds that germinate more often into tough wormwood than delicate roses. Because life is a verbose and loud lottery with colorful posters, enticing billboards, and a sophisticated advertising campaign that promises extraordinary winnings, silently ignoring the fact that for each winning ticket there are thousands of thin and empty bits of paper on which their holders have staked their only hopes.

At the Institute spring meant exam fever, a disease that affects only students. It begins slowly with a lengthy period of latency that can be characterized by a heightened concentration, as well as a tendency to create

outlines and underline passages in textbooks. But the first symptoms of a full blown pathology follow the posting of an announcement on the professor's door, after which the disease passes into the typhoid stage, with fever, nightmares, and insomnia, reaching a crisis in the examination hall, where all the complications and possibilities of a relapse are revealed. Having received a grade of 'good' in the serious disciplines, such as political economy and economic geography, Stepan reflected on the Ukrainian language requirement and decided to get that out of the way, too. These were the only classes he had not attended, and he did not intend to waste much time preparing for a Ukrainian language exam, assuming, with very substantive foundation, that this was the language that he knew and used very well, even wrote stories in, and that he himself was precisely one of those Ukrainians for whom this language exists; therefore, he had every reason to believe he could pass this exam, all the more so because in his career as a rebel, before he had hoisted the red flag, he had for some time held the flag of the autumnal steppes and sky. But one can trip even on his own native doorstep. Stepan cowered at the first explosion from the heavy artillery of voiceless vowels and the laws of i-kannie while the rapid bursts of fire from the nominal and verbal cannon forced him into a shameful retreat, with the firm resolve to capture this unexpected fortress at all cost.

Armed with copies of the very best language textbooks from the library, he abandoned all others and that very evening began to explore and study them. Heretofore he had known only the Russian terms for grammatical concepts, and he pronounced their Ukrainian equivalents with a strange trepidation, seeing that his language had also been dissected into chapters and paragraphs, its laws summarized and rules established. He immersed himself in these matters with ever-increasing interest and satisfaction. Simple mundane words seemed somehow deeper, more meaningful when he mastered their component parts and the secret of their declensions. He fell in love with them, appreciated their function, and was overcome with respect for them, as if they were important dignitaries whom, from his own ignorance, he had previously treated as plain folk.

So, one month later, having mastered Olena Kurylo's Talmud and studied the history of the language according to Shakhmatov and Krymsky, he stood before a professor at the Institute who, not recognizing the student before him, marveled at the depth of his knowledge.

"You see how useful it is to listen to all my lectures," he said. "But I must say how rarely I have the satisfaction of testing a Ukrainian who knows his own language."

"Unfortunately," Stepan noted, "the majority think it is sufficient to be born Ukrainian."

"Yes, yes," answered the professor. "But I must admit that I persecute them mercilessly. I'm very happy you avoided that."

Their conversation developed and the professor asked Stepan about his

origins and his circumstances. Stepan depicted the latter in the bleakest of colors, since his arrangements really had begun to seem miserable to him. He described cleaning up around the cows as something dreadful, as if it involved dangerous work with African lions, and his kitchen as so dirty and stuffy that it might have been the cell of an anchorite monk in the thick of a dark forest. The good professor took pity on him and said:

"You seem to me to be a talented and serious student, and I'll try to help you. I must admit, I don't have that many students who listen to my lectures and whom I have not failed in an exam at least once."

After this the professor wrote a note of recommendation to the head of the Bureau of Instructors of the Ukrainization Program and also promised to speak to this eminent person himself. Then he added, squeezing Stepan's hand: "I expect that there you will be transformed from a student into an instructor."

Early the next day Stepan appeared before the Areopagus of Ukrainization, where an informal examinational conversation took place *between* or *among* the members of the board and *he* or *him*, depending on the linguistic theories of each of the members of the board. Next the defendant confirmed that according to all the relevant authorities of grammar, infinitives were to never be split, and sentences were not to end in prepositions, even if there seemed to be good reason for them to. Having spent some time analyzing the prohibitions against dangling participles, it was concluded that as a matter of fact, the theory that it seemed likely that in many cases various and sundry expressions could often be deleted from a sentence with no discernible effect on its meaning was true. Finally, after explaining why the word *which*, that is a non-restrictive pronoun, should be distinguished from the word *that*, which is often—mistakenly—used in its place, and why it is better to maintain verbal parallelism on both sides of the word *than* than not, Stepan was proclaimed a Knight of Ukrainization of the first order, with a payment scale of one karbovanets and eighty kopecks per academic hour.

Taking down his address and writing out a certificate for him, the elegant administrator of the Bureau of Instructors said, in a friendly manner: "Comrade, I expect that within a week or two you will receive an assignment in some company and,"—he added with a pleasant smile—"turn in your field jacket for something more appropriate. The biggest problem with Ukrainians is that they don't know how to dress."

Stepan himself was perfectly aware of how accurate these words were. Indeed, his worsted wool clothing was not only old but quite uncomfortable in warm weather, and it was high time to change it. He had often thought of this while dressing in the morning and undressing at night, when he came into closer contact with these rags and became convinced how poorly this exterior covering suited his abilities. And actually, it wasn't the lack of money that held him back—he had managed in these seven months to put aside about a

hundred karbovanets from his scholarship—but an embarrassment before his own sensibilities. Although his field jacket and boots had become a moldy costume for him, they still had the power of tradition. Changing his wardrobe seemed too audacious an undertaking, one that required a significant justification.

His horizon was expanding. To have three hour-and-a-half classes in some institution every week, getting a whole chervinets, that is, raising his monthly earnings to almost six chervinets—for him, this was no joke but a limitless expansion of his possibilities. These calculations excited the boy and comforted him, and then the springtime agitation would not leave him, even for a minute, churning from day to day into a seductive worry that draped his beautiful eyes in anxiety. It was increasingly wearisome to return home, and he spent evenings sitting in the library until closing time, immersing himself in books far deeper than any studiousness would require. In the morning, remembering that he was obliged to clean out the dung from the stalls and give the cows fresh hay and water, he began to lie around in bed, getting up at the last moment; sometimes he hit the meek animals with a stick in anger, although they always greeted him in a friendly manner. With growing irritation he imagined that for the entire summer, when the Institute was on break, he would be chained down in his kitchen, since he saw no need to show up in his village. The Podil, and particularly Nyzhnyi Val Street, this god-forsaken little hole in the ground, a suburban thicket, were no longer attractive to him, and the distance to the Institute, which he hadn't even noticed before, now seemed overly tiring.

Besides, anticipating his future wealth, he foresaw a real possibility of becoming better acquainted with urban culture—going to the theater, cinema, exhibits, and talks—but the distance to the center of the city meant he would be wasting a great deal of time on needless walking back and forth, discouraging him from taking part in these activities and thus hindering him from freely communing with the benefits of civilization. And in consequence of these unhappy reckonings, the boy was filled with disaffection, which poisoned his academic achievements, discolored his expectations, and diminished his energy. Suddenly he imagined that he was exhausted, and he secretly attributed a portion—maybe even the largest portion—of his exhaustion to Musinka, whose passion was needlessly, it now seemed to him, consuming his strength, worthy of higher and more valuable uses.

The Bureau of Instructors did not mislead him. Within a week and a half he received an offer in the mail to take over a class at the Housing Administration from comrade Lansky, who had announced his intention to give up teaching. That night, Stepan shared his good news with Musinka, but her reaction was not very supportive.

"What do you need these lessons for?" she asked. "Do you want for anything here?"

"But it's almost two karbovanets for forty-five minutes!"

"Your studies will suffer because of them," she said. "Those two karbovanets will cost you the Institute."

"Never," he answered, and, sensing a deeper suspicion in her words, he added bitterly, "I'm not going to play with cows all my life."

"Yes," she sighed. "You're right."

He was silent and continued smoking. Abruptly he added, "I'm tired. In the evenings my head hurts."

"Does it hurt? This wise little head? No, my shopkeeper's joy, it is your heart that's bored and filled with longing. How long will it keep beating? But Musinka will never hold you back—when she becomes unnecessary, she'll never—"

"Musinka, you're insulting me," he said. "I will never forget you."

"I see—you're already saying farewell. Those are always the final parting words: 'I will never forget you.' Your soul is like a slate tablet—rub your finger on it and you erase what was written there."

He would have preferred to listen to her jealous anger than to the soft bitterness of her words, which troubled him precisely by their accuracy. And, wanting to convince her and himself of the impossibility of a separation, he embraced her in the throes of a simulated passion, attempting to recreate the ardor of their first meetings.

The next day he had to be at the offices of the Housing Administration at 3:30 PM. Up until 11:00 AM he leafed through several textbooks and prepared his introductory speech. He wanted to begin his classes with a certain degree of grandeur, knowing full well how important first impressions can be. No less did he understand that appearing in the clothes he now had before an audience that he needed to win over was tantamount to playing on an untuned piano—even the finest symphony would turn into a cacophony of sounds. He needed to transform himself in the name of Ukrainization—this basic premise finally overcame his earlier hesitation. Gathering his savings, he set off for the store whose window had arrested him half a year earlier, its grand finery filling him with envious daydreams. Now he flew into it on the wings of his cash, fluttered and circled within it like a nimble sparrow, and in three-quarters of an hour he walked out with a sizable package containing a gray demi-season trenchcoat of indifferent quality, a similar suit, a pair of shirts with button-down collars, a Caucasian silk tie, green enameled cufflinks, and three colorful handkerchiefs with checkered edges. After further purchasing a gray cap, pointed shoes of chrome-tanned leather and matching galoshes, he spent the remainder of his wealth on good cigarettes and took the bus to Revolution Square in the Podil, because he needed to hurry. This bus had the honor of carrying him on his very first bus ride and the good fortune of pleasing him completely.

Musinka, who was cooking dinner for three in her *ménage à trois*, was very surprised to see the boy in the image of a youthful Santa Claus, carrying so many parcels, but he only asked, secretively, for permission to use her

room for a half-hour, since it had a mirror. There, he completed his transformation, easily adapting himself to the requirements of his new clothes, since his quick eye had often observed on others where everything belonged. Only the tie gave him trouble, unwilling to tie itself, but with brilliant insight he eventually achieved the desired effect. Examining himself from head to foot in the mirror, he froze in excited satisfaction, as if he were seeing and recognizing himself for the first time. His energy, flagging from secret anxiety, was immediately restored when he saw his tanned face set off against the white collar and the powerful arc of his chest beneath the close-fitting jacket. In rapturous delight he observed his high open forehead, welcoming the reason hidden behind it, and he slowly raised his hand to his hair, to smooth it, to stroke it, to caress his own self and thus show his love for his own person.

With an eager new spring in his stride he stepped back into the kitchen and stopped in front of Musinka, who could not hold back a joyous cry on seeing this butterfly that had emerged from its chrysalis. She hugged him and kissed him, forgetting in her fervor that she had less right to do this now than ever before. Then she stepped back a little, and her more careful observation completely confirmed her first impression—the boy was devilishly handsome, poised, and seductive.

"Your eyes are laughing," she exclaimed.

Hers were also laughing, in part. He, too, was looking her over from the heights of his European wardrobe, seeing in her signs of fading as much as she saw him in bloom. Never before had he noted so painfully her scrawny cheeks marbled with thin wrinkles, her anemic lips and sagging breasts. Her girlish smile was a grimace on her aging face, and he could not suppress the haughty thought that if she had been worthy of a first-year student at the Institute, she was certainly not worthy of a full-fledged language instructor.

At the appointed hour he ran into his predecessor, comrade Lansky. Looking at him carefully he asked: "Aren't you Vyhorsky, the poet?"

"True," grumbled the man, unhappily. "But we've been Lanskys from the time of my great great ancestors."

Then they talked about the business at hand. It turns out that the poet was leaving this class in pretty bad shape. He could not even say for sure what topics they had last covered in class.

"On the whole, I don't actually believe that studying is of any use," he finished, "especially the way I teach."

"OK, we'll go over the material from the start," said Stepan. "But tell me, if it's not a secret—why did you choose to use a pseudonym? I don't understand. You have such a beautiful name."

"It's not a secret at all," answered the poet. "You see, at first I signed my poems with my real name, and no one wanted to publish them. Then I invented a pseudonym, and they were accepted."

"Can that really happen?"

"Of course it can. Besides that, there's another reason. It's too big a responsibility to sign your own name. It's like an obligation to live and think the way you write."

"That's not impossible, is it?"

"It's possible, but it's boring."

Stepan offered him a cigarette.

"No, thank you—I don't smoke," said the poet, "but I do drink beer."

The new suit gave Stepan unusual boldness, surprising even him.

"Comrade," he said, "I write too, you know."

"You don't say?" the poet said sadly. "What do you write, if I may ask?"

Stepan cheerfully told him not only about his stories but also about his experience in visiting the critic, which now seemed to him a pleasant anecdote.

"I know him," said the poet. "A little wasp that tries hard to inflict painful stings. If you like, give me your stories—I promise to be attentive. But you must bring them to me this evening—12 Mykhailivsky Street, apt. 24. I'm leaving tomorrow and I'll take them with me."

"You're leaving? Where?"

"I'm not sure yet. I have three hundred karbovanets and I'll try to get as far as possible for as long as possible. I'm sick of this stupid city."

"Sick of it?"

"Aren't you? Just wait, you'll see. It will reveal itself to you. This one in particular. You know what our city is? It's a historical corpse, rotting for centuries. It needs to be aired out."

But the bell rang, signaling the end of the work day and ending their conversation, which Stepan had found of considerable interest. Together they entered the large room where the classes were held after work hours. The office workers sat in a group around tables that had been pulled together, across from a large piece of linoleum, which served as a blackboard for the class. After introducing his replacement the poet left, and Stepan, standing by the table, loudly, confidently, and energetically, like a nightingale singing its very first song, gave his lecture on the benefits of the Ukrainian language, in general and in particular.

XIV

Only a first-year student can truly appreciate the meaning of the term "Perfect score," which represents something of an imaginary, magic island, unreachable even by silver-tongued poets. In any case, Stepan Radchenko was the only one in his circle of friends who achieved this result, that is, he earned perfect grades in all the courses he had taken during the year. This achievement cost him an enormous expenditure of energy, particularly since he was also giving Ukrainian-language lessons three times a week and needed to spend considerable time preparing, as his theoretical knowledge did not quite meet the practical needs of the institution where he was called upon to enlighten the tired office staff who wanted to eat, not conjugate, and who had only a very dim understanding of the enormous obligations to the Ukrainian nation that had fallen on their shoulders.

The days he taught his classes were all the more difficult for Stepan because he needed to change his clothes. He couldn't risk showing up at the Institute in a tie, lest he provoke unnecessary questions or, heaven forbid, lose his scholarship. This was a giant headache for him, but he kept up the same annoying routine without fail: leaving home first as a poor student and then as a well-groomed instructor, with the appropriate changes in his facial expression, gestures, and gait. He was singular, but in two incarnations, each of which had its own separate function and goals. Man could not invent multi-personed gods without himself being heterogeneous, because, as a strange combination of striking contradictions, he needed an embodiment for each of them, and the inclination to create a single, great god with a small devil was an indication of the normalization of the human being, that is, a shriveling of the imagination. Mankind does not break down into so-called good and evil, into plus and minus, no matter how convenient this might be for public use.

Having fallen into the state of uncertain balance between his brown field jacket and the gray suit, Stepan was not worried by the duality of his existence, being sufficiently hardened against the minor superstitions that frighten the conscience and poison the lives of weaker individuals. In the process of development he had risen above them. Over the previous winter he had been convinced by personal experience that an individual should view the world and himself in a more forgiving spirit, because in life, as in an ice storm, one can fall and even knock down someone else quite accidentally, fully unexpectedly for both one's self and the other person.

All of this running around and the stress at work would, perhaps, have exhausted him, except that he finally resolved to find a new apartment, to open up new possibilities, whose very existence was the most important stimulating factor for him. This decision promptly cleared away all of his springtime gloom and changed his attitude toward the cows and toward

Musinka. Knowing that he would soon be rid of them forever, he began to show them the graciousness of a host whose unwanted guest has finally picked up his hat. Meanwhile, he inquired among his friends about rooms and viewed a few, but they all involved either renovations or the buy-out of a lease. He did not want to spend the money, knowing full well that his resources were insufficient to allow for an apartment that would be fully commensurate with his tastes and dignity; so he preferred to take something worse until his situation improved, rather than spend money on something middling.

At the end of June the Institute fell completely silent. The last examination session had ended, the corridors emptied, and there were just small groups of students finalizing their documents for summer leaves. But Stepan still went there often to deal with community matters. It was in the small room assigned to the KUBUch that Borys Zadorozhny, the friend whom he had lately been avoiding, ran into him.

"So this is where you've buried yourself," exclaimed Borys. "Why did you disappear so suddenly?"

"I was busy," answered the boy, pointing to the account books.

"Busy-shmizy—it's not right to forget your friends. Remember what Shevchenko said, 'He who forgets his friends is punished by God!' Well, it's a good thing I found you."

"Were you looking for me?"

"I certainly was. You see, I'm all done. I've finished the Institute."

"I have two more years," sighed Stepan. "They say they're going to add another year to the program."

"I suffered for five years, and it was nothing. But here's the point: I'm moving out and I'm looking for a decent person—"

"I'm dying to find a room!"

"And you're wondering why I was looking for you! Let's show some gratitude here. But don't think I'm leaving for a professional appointment somewhere. Nope, I'm taking the academic route—staying on with the department at the Institute. And I found myself a big, sunny room."

"You're a lucky stiff."

"There's got to be some reward for all my misery. But you, my dear little Stevie, don't know the most important thing. I'm getting married."

"The same one?"

"Yup, the same one—the fair one. I can't control myself when I think about it. You understand—it's love."

Stepan gave him a congratulatory hug, feeling a strange sense of relief, as if a great weight that he had been carrying all this time had fallen off his shoulders.

"Now, if I could just find someone to marry Musinka," he thought.

That evening they settled the details. Stepan said to his friend: "At my place it's always so noisy and busy, there are always guests visiting my hosts,

it's too much to put up with. You've really done me a big favor. I'm very grateful to you, Borys."

Borys warmly squeezed his hand.

"It's really nothing, don't thank me," he said with feeling, dropping his joking manner. "It's a great pleasure to me now to do something nice for someone. I give a kopeck to a beggar, and I feel good. I feel like thanking him for taking it."

"You're getting all starry-eyed, my friend," the boy observed.

"Maybe because I'm head over heels in love. Don't laugh. Love is real. I'm beginning to believe in eternal love. Really!"

Borys gave Stepan his new address and invited him to come over in a couple of weeks, after they were settled in at their new place as a couple.

"Well, that would be dangerous," thought the boy. Then he said aloud: "I'll move in tomorrow."

On parting, after a slight hesitation, they embraced.

After Borys left, the boy shrugged his shoulders. What a strange fellow, this Borys. He couldn't imagine that the feelings might be mutual. He recalled Nadika's face for a moment, her eyes that used to smile for him, and he came to the ultimate conclusion that she could love only him, Stepan Radchenko, and no one else. Although they were not apparent to others, he had special rights to her, and if he called her she would have to come immediately. The boy felt as if he had some kind of power over his friend's happiness and was allowing him to make use of it.

Then he felt sorry for Borys. The fortunate are, after all, just like the sick, and they need careful attention. Happiness, in the final analysis, is a disease of spiritual shortsightedness: it's possible only under an incomplete calculation of circumstances and an incomplete understanding of things. Sharp vision is also a problem, like blindness, and the most unfortunate people are astronomers who see dark spots on the surface of a bright sun.

Agitated, in part by the meeting with a happy person and even more by the inevitability of parting tonight from Musinka, the boy was cheerless and could not fully appreciate the satisfaction of his long-hoped-for change of apartments and the beginnings of his independent path into the beautiful world. Although he cheered himself with Musinka's words promising not to stand in his way when she became unnecessary, he was not at all sure she would admit that she was unnecessary at precisely the same time that he reached this conclusion.

He sighed and killed time until it was dark, even growing angry at the thought of a possible unpleasant scene, considering all the work he had done for the Hnidy family.

Indeed, when he, feigning levity, announced the news, it broke over Tamara Vasylivna's head like a thunderclap. For a moment she bent over and the boy feared that she might be fainting. That would be a real mess.

And then she whispered so softly that he could barely make out her

words: “You’ll leave ... that’s all right. You have everything before you. Just stay until the fall. You’ll leave in the fall. The leaves will be falling, the evenings will be quiet. Then you’ll go. Let this be your little sacrifice. You have everything before you: life, happiness, youth. You have everything, I’m only asking for a crumb. Is it so hard? Are you so stingy? You don’t want to tend the cows? All right, we’ll get a hired man. You want to move out of the kitchen? All right, take one of the rooms. What do you want? All right then, not the fall, just one month. One week. One day—but not right now, not now!”

He let her express herself, and then, wrapping his voice in sorrow and pity and struggling to express his deep sympathy for her pain, he said: “That’s just how it turned out with the apartment, Musinka. I’ll still come to you.”

Abruptly, she pushed aside the hand he had raised to embrace her.

“And you’re a liar, too!” she exclaimed. “You want to deceive me. I took him in off the street, like a bastard, and now it wants to give me charity!”

However uncertain his situation was, he understood these words as a terrible insult. He? A bastard? He had earned top honors, the “Perfect score.” He had entered the second year at the Institute. He was active in community work. He wrote stories that had caught the eye of a well-known poet. And he’s a bastard!? Maybe it’s time he stopped screwing around with this old hag. But before he could articulate an answer worthy of his offended self-respect, Tamara Vasylivna was patting him on the head.

“Don’t be angry, Stepan,” she said, so meekly that he felt appeased. “This hurts me. But all this is nonsense. Tomorrow you will go. Tomorrow, in a week, in two—it’s all the same. I’ll have to endure it. My dear little one, you don’t even understand what there is to endure. You’ll leave, whistling as you go, and that’s that. I won’t cry, either. Only those who expect happiness cry. I’m all alone. Maksym has left. And he’ll never come back.”

She laughed, quietly, with a sniffle.

“Remember, I told you about myself?”

“Sure, what?”

He would be happy to listen to her entire life story from the beginning, as long as she didn’t speak of tomorrow’s separation, although at the moment he didn’t anticipate that her story would be very interesting.

“I didn’t tell you the most important thing. ... I never loved anyone.”

He didn’t quite understand what she was saying.

“You were the first one I ever loved,” she went on. “Before, I didn’t dare, because of my son. How I hated him sometimes! You don’t even know how beautiful I was. My clothes scorched my flesh, I slept without a nightshirt, it burned me. That was a terribly long time ago. And then, you came.”

She kissed him on the forehead quietly.

“I didn’t believe in God. That is, I had once believed, and when I saw you I began to pray again. It didn’t help. I came to you like a nightmare, and

you pushed me away. I left. Then you called me, and I came. My will was broken."

She squeezed his hands in her own.

"Tomorrow you'll go, and you'll keep going for a long, long time. You'll pass by many people. Maybe I, too, will still have many days, only I won't ever meet anyone again. Many empty days, if I can sleep at night. I will tear them off like sheets from a calendar and there won't be anything written on the other side. And then death will come. That's frightening. Say something, anything!"

He shuddered. There was something unspeakably difficult and hopeless in her words. Again they drifted into a whisper, pushing him into an endless distance; they fell on his soul like drops of warm oil, softening all the callouses there, smoothing out all the wrinkles and folds, awakening a calm and happy sensitivity.

"Well, Musinka," he said, lost in thought, "You must do the talking. I can't say anything. I don't know anything. I don't know what will come of me. But one thing I have learned—we don't live the way we want to, and we can't help but give pain to others. That much I have understood. Sometimes it's nice, like now. Quiet, peaceful. What you have done for me, no one else will ever do. Musinka, you know this. I did not give you much thought when you were with me, but I will always remember you when you're gone."

Gratefully, kindly, she kissed him, but when, feeling encouraged, he wanted to answer with more than a kiss, she pushed him away.

"Let's not steal from ourselves, my love."

She embraced him and began to cradle him quietly, indistinctly singing, rocking him to sleep with gentle kisses to his eyes and forehead. The boy soon fell asleep, wearied by events and the warmth of his own kindheartedness.

In the morning he didn't awake until eight, and he lay in bed for a long time. Then he washed up and knocked on the door to the bedrooms. Getting no answer, he entered quietly. No one was there. As if no one had ever lived in these rooms. He stood for a while in Musinka's room, which resembled a young girl's bedroom, with its white duvet and the embroidered curtains on the windows, and then he returned to the kitchen, laden with distant memories. He drank the milk that had been left out for him, performed his duties to the cows one last time, and brought in some water. Now he was free, and he began gathering up his few possessions.

After some consideration, he lit the stove. As the logs ignited, he changed into his gray suit and then began to burn his field jacket, his pants, and the sacks he had brought from the village. The boots would not burn, so he threw them into the trash. All that was left were his notebooks, books, and underwear bound up in his bedroll.

He tied up all his things into two bundles, locked the door, put the key under the porch, as always, and left with the two parcels in his hands, carrying

in his soul sadness, the bitterness of his first encounter with life, and troubling hopes.

End of Part One

Translated by Maxim Tarnawsky

Original publication: Valeriian Pidmohyl'nyi. *Misto*. Kyiv: Knyhospilka, 1928.

Three Poems

Taras Shevchenko

In the Casemate
VII. "A cherry orchard by the house."

A cherry orchard by the house.
Above the cherries beetles hum.
The plowmen plow the fertile ground
And girls sing songs as they pass by.
It's evening—mother calls them home.

A family sups by the house.
A star shines in the evening chill.
A daughter serves the evening meal.
Time to give lessons—mother tries,
But can't. She blames the nightingale.

It's getting dark, and by the house,
A mother lays her young to sleep;
Beside them she too fell asleep.
All now went still, and just the girls
And nightingale their vigil keep.

1847

Translated by Boris Dralyuk and Roman Koropeckyj

Original publication: Taras Shevchenko, "V kazemati. VII. Sadok vyshnevyi kolo khaty," *Zibrannia tvoriv u 6 tomakh*, Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003, 2: 17–18.

“It was the year I turned thirteen…”

It was the year I turned thirteen.
I was out shepherding the lambs.
Was it the brightly shining sun?
Why did I feel the way I did?
As though with God...
They had already called me home,
But I kept lying in the grass,
Praying to God... And I don’t know
Why praying felt so pleasant then,
To me, a little orphan boy,
And why my heart had felt such joy?
The village and the clear blue skies,
The lambs—they all seemed to rejoice!
The sun glowed warm, it didn’t blaze!
But not for long did it stay warm,
And not long were my prayers...
The sun turned red, began to burn,
Set paradise ablaze.
As though awakened, I look up:
The village had turned black,
And God’s blue heaven up above,
It also had gone dark.
I looked at all the little lambs –
They’re not my little lambs!
I turned toward the village huts –
I do not have a hut!
God gave me nothing of my own!...
And then the tears poured down,
Such bitter tears... And then a girl,
Gathering hemp not far
From where I sat, just by the road –
She must have heard me cry.
She came and greeted me,
And wiped away my tears,
And gently kissed my face…

It seemed the sun began to shine,
It seemed all things on earth were mine,
Mine all... the orchards, fields, and gardens!...

And playfully we herded them—
Somebody else’s sheep—to water.

What garbage!... Yet, when I look back,
My heart is filled with pain—it cries.
Why had the Lord not let me live
My life out in this paradise?
I would have died tilling the land,
And knowing nothing of this world,
Not been a madman in this world,
Cursing both God and man…

1847

Translated by Boris Dralyuk and Roman Koropeckyj

Original publication: Taras Shevchenko, “N. N. (Meni trynadtsiatyi mynalo…),” *Zibrannia tvoriv u 6 tomakh,* Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003, 2: 36–37.

“Have ill luck and captivity...”

Have ill luck and captivity,
Have all those years, gone flying by,
Shattered my soul? Or have I even
Ever lived with it while living
With people in the mire, defiling
My purest soul?... And meanwhile people!
(People, of course, giving a laugh)
They say that it’s unsullied still,
And young, and innocent, and holy,
And other things besides... The bastards!!
Vicious! Vicious! You have stolen
My purest, my most precious diamond,
My once unsullied, holy soul,
And mired it in a filthy swamp.
And now you laugh! You infidels!
But was it not among you, bastards,
That I abased myself, and now
Can’t tell if I was ever pure,
Because you dragged me down among you
From holy heaven—and have taught
Me how to write these filthy poems.
You set a heavy boulder down
Upon the road... shattered my heart
Against it... Fearing God the while!
My heart—so small and so impoverished,
And it was righteous at one time!
And now I go without direction,
Without a beaten path... while you!
You wonder why it is I stumble,
Why I curse you and curse my fate,
And weep so hard, and, like you all...
Disown my poor, impoverished soul,
Disown my soul—sinful and hateful!

1850

Translated by Boris Dralyuk and Roman Koropeckyj

Original publication: Taras Shevchenko, “Chy to nedolia ta nevolia…,” *Zibrannia tvoriv u 6 tomakh,* Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003, 2: 687.

The "Moderate" One and the "Earnest" One
A Husband's Letter to His Wife

Volodymyr Vynnychenko

As you see, Olya, I'm writing to you direct from prison. I managed to find a kind person who agreed to get this past the prison authorities and drop it in the mailbox. So here I am in my old age. For twenty years I kept to myself on the farm, never venturing out, then the moment I come out I get myself locked up, thanks to my fellow countrymen. But don't be alarmed, my dear, the authorities here are not all stupid. They will quite soon realize that if I am a socialist, pigs might fly. But sell those boars we bought from the pig farmer Remeslo anyway and come to see me—you might get me out sooner. But be sure not to sell the black boar in the sty on the left, he's for breeding. When you get to Poltava go straight to the governor and explain everything to him, as I describe it below. But call on the secretary first and grease his palm to soften his liver. It might help.

It's that crazy Nedotorkany's fault. Do you know who I mean? The one who visited us last Easter Sunday and nearly came to blows with the local police chief who called the Ukrainian language "a dialect of Great Russian." Do you remember? A tall, strapping fellow with a long Cossack moustache. He's always wearing an embroidered Ukrainian shirt with a ribbon. No doubt you remember. Well, that's the nasty piece of work that got me locked up.

I was about to set off back home when I thought, unfortunately: "Well, why don't I pay a visit to my own sort, the Ukrainians? We have our freedom now, so there's no longer any great danger in declaring yourself a true Ukrainian. Whatever happens, your attachment to your roots is indelible in your heart."

So I stopped by the Ukrainian bookstore. I admit I spoke rather openly with the people there—had a go at the government for its objections to our native language. Well, as it turned out, Nedotorkany was headed in the same direction as I was, so we arranged to meet up in the evening and ride together to catch the train.

But this is the first and last time that I will travel together with earnest Ukrainians. I swear that if ever I see an earnest Ukrainian, I will give him a very wide berth. It will spare me the shame and misery I am now suffering. The moment he latched onto me in my room I should have gotten rid of him and refused point-blank to travel along with him. But how was I to know

that! I thought:

“Well, he’s one of us—a Ukrainian! One should support the national cause. You can’t sit around on your farms forever.” And now I’ll be sitting in prison for that.. When he got angry in my hotel room and wanted to leave I should have let him go, but no, I must have lost my mind, I begged him to stay. He got angry, you see, because I was wearing a collar and tie, not a Ukrainian embroidered shirt with a ribbon. (I wasn’t stupid—I didn’t want to advertise the fact that I am Ukrainian). I excused myself by saying that I had forgotten to bring an embroidered shirt with me.

But that made me a “renegade” and a ‘*katsap*,[1] disrespectful of our national culture.’ He was mortally offended.

Well, we traveled together anyway, chatting about Ukrainian newspapers, and I don’t hide the fact that it was actually pleasing to have a Ukrainian newspaper in my pocket without having to watch out in case they are rushing to arrest you. What can I say; it’s all very pleasant when it’s allowed, but it mustn’t contain anything controversial and we want it written in good Ukrainian. You couldn’t say of Nedotorkany that he was a socialist, either. It isn’t fair to say that of him—he just loves Ukraine a little too much. And at the moment that actually isn’t appropriate for us Ukrainians. We ought to be more politic: keeping silent here, holding back there, sometimes dancing to the tune of the powerful. Look, we won’t lose our heads or our legs as a result, and we may be lucky in some ways. But as for Nedotorkany, there isn’t anything to say—he isn’t the sort of man who understands politics. Just consider this, for example. We were riding in a cab, passing the memorial to the father of our nation, Bohdan Khmelnytsky, when Nedotorkany tapped the coachman on the back.

“Driver! I say, driver!” The latter turned and said

“Eh?”

Well, what of it? The fellow spoke Russian in his own manner. But no, Nedotorkany didn’t like it.

He corrected him in Ukrainian: “Not ‘eh?,’ but ‘pardon?’” The coachman didn’t know what he meant, of course.

“Beg your pardon?”

“Not ‘eh?,’” I said, “you should say ‘pardon?’ Understand? Who’s that on the horse?”

“Him?” the coachman pointed to Khmelnytsky with the handle of his whip.

“That’s right.”

“Oh, that’s some *khokhol* general.”

“Why *khokhol*?”

“If he’d been one of ours he’d be sitting straight, but this one’s sliding

[1] *Katsap* is an offensive Ukrainian term for a Russian; cf. *khokhol*, a similarly offensive Russian term for a Ukrainian.

sideways. Not much of a general.”

These words made Nedotorkany give a start. Grabbing the unfortunate coachman by the belt he shouted:

“What!? Not much of a general! You *katsap* bastard! Don’t you realize that all your *katsap* generals together are not worth the sole of his foot? Eh? This is the Hetman of Ukraine! Do you hear?”

This annoyed the coachman.

“You’d better hold your tongue, sir,” he said angrily. “I could drop a word in someone’s ear, you know. I may be a *katsap* all right, but I’m of the same faith as what the Tsar is.”

He might have kept quiet after that, but no, this aroused Nedotorkany even more and he blurted out something that you would only expect from some socialist. My heart missed a beat and the coachman was alarmed.

“So that’s it?” he retorted. “Is that any way to speak of His Majesty? Well, all right then—just you wait!”

“Where are you off to?” yelled Nedotorkany.

“Well, you’ll see! Yes! At the police station we’ll find out whether you were speaking the truth. We’ve brought in plenty of your sort…”

“Damn it!” I thought. “He’s asking for trouble. He’ll get me locked up.” I had already had the feeling that this was how things would turn out.

“Come on, coachman,” I said in a friendly tone, “drive on to catch the train. Forget about it.”

“Oh no. I can’t do that. Oh no. We’ll sort this out at the police station, for sure!”

What could we do? He really was taking us in. I noticed that Nedotorkany was beginning to squirm.

“So are you really off to the police station, my fellow-countryman?” he asked, finally.

“Did ya think ya was going to a restaurant after you talked like that? Eh?” What could we say to him? He was actually taking us in! Nedotorkany was starting to fume. Then he suddenly calmed down, smiled at me, and told the coachman:

“All right, go on then. So what? We’ll just see what the police will have to say to you at the station when they hear what you said about the Tsar. Let’s go, ”

The coachman did not respond. He kept quiet.

“We’ll see! We’ll see whether they’ll give you a little pat on your head for comparing your peasant’s gob with that of the Tsar.”

“Did I say that?” the coachman turned round to him. “I just meant in general, you know. You’re making too much of it!”

“No, my dear fellow. You said it, and my friend heard you too—he’ll bear witness. Well, do you know what you get for that?”

The coachman gave no reply, turning away and driving on. Then he slowly turned the horses round and went back.

“Where are you going?” asked Nedotorkany ironically, simply unable to resist the question.

“Don’t want to lose any time…”

“Oh, time, is it? Damn *katsap*s!”

“Leave it, Danylo Ivanovych,” I intervened. “To hell with him. Just keep quiet now.”

“No!” he said. “No need to humor him. Look what a bloody infidel he is! Ordering us about in our own home! Not much of a general! As for your Kuropatkins, Rozhdestvenskis and Stesels, what good are they? Only one of your generals was any use—Kondratenko, and he was a Ukrainian anyway, not a *katsap*. But do they know that? *Katsap* morons!”

Such a strange man! At the railway station he went at it again. He’s goes off to buy the tickets. I wait and wait, no sign of him. What’s going on? Oh well, I’ll go and look for him. I get to the ticket office and there’s a great crowd there! There’s a policeman by the counter and Nedotorkany next to him, angrily shouting about something. I try to catch what it’s about.

Nedotorkany’s shouting “He has no right! According to the Manifesto all languages are equal. He must understand me, for God’s sake! Who does he think he is, bloody stuck-up cashier!”

The policeman interrupts him.

“I don’t give a damn!” yells Nedotorkany. “Let him sue me! He’s in Ukraine, not in Katsapia, so he’s got to speak Ukrainian!”

I later regretted that they hadn’t arrested him right there and then! Unfortunately for me, it somehow turned out all right. Perhaps the policeman was stupid, who knows? We summoned a porter and got on the train. The first bell had already rung, announcing the imminent departure. The porter kept struggling to get our suitcases up on the rack, but there wasn’t enough room and he put one of them under the bench. Nedotorkany noticed this.

“Can you get it on top?” he inquired in Ukrainian.

“What’s that, sir? Get onto the cops?” he replied in Russian, misunderstanding the question.

“Doesn’t matter,” I hastened to intervene, starting to search in my purse for a zloty.

“Are you really Ukrainian?” Nedotorkany inquired skeptically of the porter meanwhile.

“Beg pardon sir?” responded the latter, bowing.

“Are you a *khokhol* or a *katsap* ?”

“Me, sir? A *khokhol*! Born and bred! From Chernihiv province.”

“Can’t you speak your own language then?”

Well, here we go!” I thought. “That’s all we need—to get into an argument with him! Now we’re in for it!” And as bad luck would have it, I couldn’t find a zloty. A hryvenyk wouldn't be enough and twenty kopecks would be too much.

“Ages since I lived in the village, sir. Forgotten the speech of the country folk,” smiled the porter, watching me fumbling.

Nedotorkany scowled even more.

“—It’s not the speech of ‘country folk,’ it’s Ukrainian!” Country folk could be French, German, Polish. Same with the upper classes.”

“Yes!” sighed the porter. “There’s folks of all sorts.” The second bell rang. The porter shifted from one foot to the other, watching what I had in my hand.

But I couldn’t find a zloty. I gave up.

“Have you got a zloty, Danylo Ivanovych?” I asked.

“A zloty? All right. But he should be ashamed to forget his native language. As for the cashier, the swine! He even wanted to have me arrested! What a *katsap* bureaucrat he is! A zloty, did you say?”

“Yes, a zloty, a zloty.”

“Our fellow dumpling eater holds his tongue and sits on his hands. Meanwhile, the *katsap*s are in charge of everything and spread their culture.”

“Sir! I haven’t time, I have to be off. The second bell’s rung,” the porter hesitantly interrupted him. Nedotorkany gave him a nasty look.

“Can’t you say that in your own language?”

“I’m a busy man, sir. Be so kind as to pay for my work. I’ve no time to get involved in politics.”

“Come off it! I’m not talking about politics.”

“Danylo Ivanovych,” I butted in, “never mind about that, just find a zloty.”

“Oh no! Wait a minute. He has to be taught. I asked you, can’t you say it in your own language?”

By now the passengers were beginning to notice us. The porter shrugged his shoulders and smiled at some young man who was watching us out of curiosity.

“Oh, for goodness sake!” I thought. “There’ll be another scene.”

“Danylo Ivanovych,”—I’m begging him now, “do leave the man alone!”

“No, wait. Just tell me what you call someone who forgets his own mother? Eh?”

The final bell went. The porter began to shake and with an angry look he said firmly:

“If you please, sir, for my work, or I’ll call a constable. Come on, what is this?”

When I heard him mention the word constable I quickly took out a 20-kopeck coin and pressed it into the porter’s hand. He was gone in a flash.

For some reason Nedotorkany shook his head, putting his purse back in his pocket. We set off. I settled comfortably in my seat, heaving a sigh of relief and began to doze off. I was just drifting off when I heard a familiar voice shouting:

“Ukraine saved Russia!”

Opening my eyes, I looked around and there was a political rally in full swing around us. There were villagers, students, workers, some young gentlemen, some Jews—in fact a whole national assembly had gathered here. And in the midst of them was Nedotorkany, on his soap-box. You know, Olya, it’s terrible on the trains now, wherever you go all you hear is “Revolution, resolutions, a constitution, the intelligentsia!” Were such goings-on ever heard of on a train? One used to travel in peace, chatting with a neighbor about the harvest or about the Boer War, and one’s blood pressure was normal, one did not suffer liver pains, and one felt relaxed. But now you hear nothing but:

“So many killed,” “So many injured.” Or “Confiscate the land without compensation!”—“No, buy it up!” They go on and on with never a thought that someone might be heartbroken at those words—whether it’s about buying up or confiscation. And the elderly peasants, too, the mumbling clever clogs! “You have to abide by the law,” they say, “the lords as well as the rest. They shouldn't have to go round with hands outstretched, begging for food. Let them have a plot of land just like everyone else and let them work on it.” How do you like that, my dear? That’s why I said “Let’s sell the land before it’s too late,” But no, “wait a bit,” you said. Well, it seems, we will wait till the bitter end. If only you could have heard what they were saying here, on the train.

“Ukraine saved Russia!” my Nedotorkany shouts.

“How’s that?” asked some fair-haired student.

“Because Russia was still asleep when our villagers rose up in 1902.”

I froze. Had he taken leave of his senses? He had nothing to boast about.

“Excuse me,” said the student. “You’re mistaken.”

“Ah,” I thought, “well, here’s a sensible person.” And what do you think?

“Excuse me,” he said, “there was revolutionary activity in Russia even before the disorder in Poltava. If you’re talking about rescuing, it was the intelligentsia and the common people who saved Russia.”

“That’s right!” I was thinking, when some young lady, suddenly jumping up onto the upper bench, by the window, shouted out in Russian:

“Come off it! If you want to know the truth, your intelligentsia were very, very reluctant to raise the revolutionary banner. Oh yes! They were only capable of following the banner raised by the proletariat (and dragging their feet at that). Of course, I am not speaking of the working class intelligentsia but of the bourgeois intelligentsia. Just like the bourgeoisie everywhere, they immediately betrayed the cause of freedom.”

The young lady sat firmly on her bench and even pushed the cushion aside, preparing to join in the fray. They went at it hammer and tongs! He was for the “intelligentsia” and she was for the “proletariat”! Somebody—

evidently a worker—sided with the young lady, as did a red-headed student, and the fair-haired student was challenged by some young gentleman. The exchange became so heated that they quite took my breath away.

“Well,” I thought, “I’m in trouble now; they’re going to arrest me.”

And so it turned out. It might not have come to that, but the devil got into Nedotorkany again. If they had calmed him down a bit, he would even have shut up. I was already thinking that he would keep quiet anyway. But no chance, I can see he's keen to put his two cents in. As long as they didn’t mention Ukraine he kept his cool, but no sooner had someone spoken of it than he lost his composure. Ukraine is a sore point with him. Just mention it and he goes crazy. I can’t even get very angry with him any more, because I can see that he is simply an unhappy man—just at the very thought that a fellow isn't speaking Ukrainian and doesn’t recognize Ukrainian. I dearly love Ukraine myself, I love my native language and I respect Taras, the father of Ukraine, but as for thinking about it like that—well, I just can’t do it. He is even ready to take land by force in order to establish his independent Ukraine. Well, I can’t go that far. Ukraine is Ukraine, but land is land. If you tell him that, amongst other things, do you think he might listen? No chance! And this is what was his downfall, and mine. That’s how it happened. All it needed was for somebody there to say, for example, that Poland might gain its autonomy. I involuntarily glanced at Nedotorkany. I could see he was tense; apparently he was anticipating something. They changed the topic of conversation. Then Nedotorkany rudely interrupted them, demanding:

“All right then. What have you to say about Ukraine?” At first they did not understand.

“What do you mean, ‘about Ukraine’?” someone asked.

“Well, look, there’s Poland’s autonomy, but what about Ukraine’s?”

“Perhaps in time Ukraine will be autonomous too.”

“Really?” laughed Nedotorkany sarcastically. “Thanks a bunch! That’s very generous of you!”

“Are you actually against that?” asked the fair-haired student.

In a flash, Nedotorkany scowled fiercely, saying emphatically:

“Ukraine is for Ukrainians. We don’t need your autonomy!”

Now I see some swarthy-looking student pushing his way forward, wearing a red Russian-style high-collared shirt, who had limited his earlier remarks to brief interjections on behalf of the young lady and “the proletariat.”

“Excuse me…,” he addressed Nedotorkany in Ukrainian.

The latter immediately mellowed on hearing his native language.

“Excuse me. Who do you mean by ‘we’ when you say ‘we don’t need autonomy’?”

“I mean us, all Ukrainians.”

“Excuse me,” laughed the student, “I’m Ukrainian myself, but I can

say that you are very mistaken when you take it on yourself to speak for everybody. The Ukrainian bourgeoisie, and only some of them at that, might need Ukraine to be independent, but the Ukrainian proletariat doesn’t need it at all. The working people of Ukraine, like workers everywhere, need a political system that favors their development. Like autonomy, for example. But to cut themselves off from their Russian or Polish brothers is something they don’t need at all.”

At first, Nedotorkany was rather stunned. Then he flew off the handle:

“What?! You mean you want to go on being ruled by foreigners?”

“We’re ruled over by the bureaucracy,” said the student, “and they rule over those foreigners too. The foreigners are not our enemies; they’re our brothers.”

I can see that Nedotorkany is beginning to snort and go red in the face. He’s getting angry.

“And these are the words of a Ukrainian? Are you Ukrainian? In a *katsap* shirt?”

“I’m Ukrainian.”

“Well, you’re nothing but a *katsap* lackey, you’re not Ukrainian! You’re …”

“Why are you insulting me?” asked the student, scowling. “I’m talking to you as a human being and you’re using language fit for the Black Hundreds.”

At this Nedotorkany got inflamed and burst out angrily:

“What?? Me—with the Black Hundreds?! Look here, you *katsap* spy! I’ll show you—.

Addressing someone nearby, a short Jewish man standing next to Nedotorkany said with a smile “He really is like someone from the Black Hundreds.” When Nedotorkany heard this he didn’t stop to think but lashed out at him, striking him full force in the face.

“I’ll give you ‘Black Hundreds,’ you Jew boy!” At this, all hell broke loose. The Jew shouts and tears come to his eyes. The students, foaming at the mouth, surge towards Nedotorkany. He waves his fists, shouting. Oh Lord! And here we are at the station; we hadn’t even noticed the train stopping. Such a din ringing in our ears! Then all of a sudden a constable made his way through the crowd and everyone went quiet. Perhaps somebody had sent for him, some well-meaning idiot. When Nedotorkany saw him, he was simply furious.

“So that’s what you’re like!” he shouted. “Sending for the police? And you call yourselves revolutionaries?”

“Liar! We didn’t send for him!”

“You are liars yourselves! Just look, you villagers. Do you see how the friends of the people stand up for you? Do you see how they struggle against those who defend your national honor and soul? Look, they’ve set a dog on me.”

“Excuse me sir. What’s going on here?” began the policeman in Russian. But he was unable to make himself heard; that crazy man did not let anyone get a single word in..

“Take me! Take me!” he shouted. “I’m not afraid of falling into any cop’s clutches! We are capable of standing up for an idea. Arrest us, go on, you tyrants. Let’s go, Mr Samzharenko! The *katsap*s are turning us over into the ‘hands of justice.’”

You can imagine how I felt when he addressed this outburst to me. I simply fainted. I wanted to shout out that this had nothing to do with me, that I was utterly innocent, but I was tongue-tied, as though in a dream. I thought I was about to have a stroke, but for some reason the Lord was merciful. I was quite numb as they led me out and I ended up in some room.

So that’s why I’m behind bars now. No other reason, I swear to God. Whatever protestations I made to the police officer, he didn’t believe me and I was taken to Poltava. They brought me here yesterday. I think they’ll release me; the prison governor gives me hope. I myself think they’ll surely realize I am a calm individual. As for loving Ukraine, well, have I ever mentioned this to anybody, anywhere? Just in that library. Well, just that once, and just in passing, but otherwise I’ve never said this to anybody! What do you think, Olya? Come here as quickly as you can, my love, and get me out. Sell those boars and borrow a fifty from Mitrofan Pylypovych and help me out, Olya, because I can’t stand it. Just make sure you don’t sell the boar that has a good pedigree. Your husband, Sydir Samzharenko.

PS: Even now Nedotorkany is unrepentant. He keeps swearing at his fellow inmates in the prison. “God damned *katsap*s, get the hell out of our Ukrainian prisons! What are you lot doing here?” Well, I ask you, is he nuts or what?

Translated by Patrick John Corness and Oksana Bunio

Original publication: Volodymyr Vynnychenko, “Umirkovanyj ta shchyryi: (Lyst cholovika do zhinky),” in his *Tvory*, Volume 2, Vienna: Dzvin, 1919, pp. 215–27.

Four Poems

Taras Shevchenko

[Testament]

When I die,
let me rest, let me lie
amidst Ukraine's broad steppes.
Let me see
the endless fields and steep slopes
I hold so dear.
Let me hear
the Dnipro's great roar.
And when the blood
of Ukraine's foes flows
into the blue waters of the sea,
that's when I'll forget
the fields and hills
and leave it all
and pray to God.
Until then, I know no God.
So bury me, rise up,
and break your chains.
Water your freedom
with the blood of oppressors.
And then remember me
with gentle whispers
and kind words
in the great family
of the newly free.

Translated by Alexander J. Motyl

Original publication: Taras Shevchenko, Untitled "(Iak umru to pokhovaite)," *Zibrannia tvoriv u 6 tomakh,* Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003, 1: 371.

[Untitled]

Days go by and nights go by
and summers end;
leaves turn yellow, leaves turn dry;
my eyes are dead.
My thoughts are asleep,
my heart doesn’t beat,
and all things sleep.
And I’m wondering:
Am I alive
or barely living
or just wandering?
If only I could laugh
or even cry.
Tell me, fate, where are you?
Have I none?
If you can’t spare a good one, Lord,
then how about a bad one?
Just don’t let me sleepwalk
and lose my heart
and roll through life
like a rotten log.
Let me live,
let my heart live,
let me love.
And if not—
to hell with the world!
It’s bad to be in chains
and die a slave.
But it’s worse to sleep
and sleep in freedom
and to fall asleep forever
without leaving a trace.
Did you live? Did you die?
Who cares?
Tell me, fate, where are you?
I have none!

If you can’t spare a good one, Lord,
then how about a bad one?

1845

Translated by Alexander J. Motyl

Original publication: Taras Shevchenko, Untitled “(Mynaiut' dni, mynaiut' nochi),” *Zibrannia tvoriv u 6 tomakh,* Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003, 1: 367.

To N. N.

As the sun sets and hills grow dark,
as the birdsong ends and fields fall silent,
as the people laugh and take their rest,
I watch.
My heart hurries
to the twilit gardens of Ukraine.
And I hurry.
O, how I hurry with my thoughts,
as my heart yearns for rest.
As the fields grow dark,
as the groves grow dark,
as the hills grow dark,
I see a star.
And I weep.
Hey, you star! Have you reached Ukraine?
Do dark eyes scour the blue sky for you?
Or don’t they care?
May they sleep if they don’t.
May they know nothing of my fate.
1847

Translated by Alexander J. Motyl

Original publication: Taras Shevchenko, Untitled “(Sontse zakhodyt', hory chorniiut'),” *Zibrannia tvoriv u 6 tomakh,* Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003, 2: 35.

[Untitled]

If only I could see
my fields and steppes again.
Won’t the good Lord let me,
in my old age,
be free?
I’d go to Ukraine,
I’d go back home.
There they’d greet me—
glad to see the old man.
There I’d rest,
I’d pray to God,
There I’d—but why go on?
There will be nothing.
How am I to live in slavery
with no hope?
Do tell me,
please,
lest I go crazy.

1848

Translated by Alexander J. Motyl

Original publication: Taras Shevchenko, Untitled “(Oi hlianu ia podyvlius'),” *Zibrannia tvoriv u 6 tomakh,* Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003, 2: 77.

Vasylka

Olha Kobylianska

It was seven years before the war. Maksym was getting ready to go to Canada. The night before his departure, he had a dream.

He walks as if in his own field, looking for its boundaries amid other landowners' fields, but cannot find them. His field and the fields of those other people are such a flat plain, which blends off in the distance with the sky so sincerely, that it makes you think: if you can get that far you'll touch heaven itself. But wait, not quite. Things never go the way man wants, but the way God Almighty wills. Maksym strains his eyes trying to distinguish the boundaries of his field, which he knows like his hands, plowed by years of work, but instead he catches a glimpse—and what does he see? From that far-off place where the earth and the sky usually meet as if greeting each other at daybreak, enormous billows of smoke are emerging quickly, one after another, and all of this is rolling directly onto the fields. Onto the fields, I say. Some slither like black vipers up into the sky, and others coil over the fields like snakes. What could it be? If it does not turn out for good, it will bring about something violent. And what do you know—here it comes. A white, elongated horse emerges from the smoke. The horse is without a saddle, its neck stretched for six hands. It is terribly emaciated. As if from a bullet wound, blood gushes from between its ribs. With its mouth wide open, the horse gallops feverishly, braying mournfully and menacingly. Billows of smoke rise behind it. The field is no longer a field, not a green wave of new sprouts, not God's freshly plowed land, but some kind of wasted plain, covered with dried lumps of turned-up soil, one larger than the other, and trenches of some sort. Is it a desert? What else can it be?

Maksym woke up. The stars were still shining, but he got up anyway. He did not wake his wife right away because she had been up late with the children. He had two of them: Dmytro, a little older, and little Annychka. Maksym went out into the yard, looked into the cowshed, gave the cattle feed and water, walked around his house, stable, and barn three times, washed his face, dressed, and went back inside. At the threshold, he met Vasylka, his beloved wife.

"Maksym," she said. "Why so early this morning? You still have some time before you have to go."

"I couldn't sleep any more."

"How come?"

"Because," he said and told her his dream. "Be good and careful, wife,

so you don’t encounter any misfortune.”

“From what?”

“From the field, of course.”

“Huh-ah?”

“You see, in my dream I couldn’t find the borders of our field. Smoke kept coming from somewhere, and it brought along a white and emaciated horse with a bullet wound. It was galloping someplace, braying mournfully. Perhaps it lost its master. I was bathed in sweat and woke up.”

Vasylka smiled faintly, showing her even white teeth.

“I don’t think this is funny, Maksym. What you’re telling me sounds very strange. Just think, you’re leaving, and I will be on my own with the children. Although it’s not a long time, as you keep saying; still, two or three years is hardly the same as two or three days. Don’t worry about the field. I will hold on to it with my own teeth. Your family is also here and can help me, should someone decide to plow through the boundaries.”

“Family? What family? Do you think my old aunt and her son can go to court hearings? Today, if misfortune comes your way, it will come. But do write to me, wife! Write the whole, real truth. Do not hide good or bad from me. God willing…”

“*You* write, Maksym,” she said, wiping tears away with the back of her hand.

“I will, Vasylka! Hush! Don’t cry! When I get good work and good pay, I’ll send you money, and that will be my letter to you. But you must write to me about the children, the cattle, work, and *how* you’ll manage the property without me. Write about everything. Don’t leave out a thing. Take good care of our old dog, because when you sleep at night it keeps watch. Last night when you were already deep in sleep, it howled so agonizingly, so mournfully, that my heart grew heavy. And then that white, wounded horse in my dream. That’s why I couldn’t sleep.”

An hour later, he took his leave.

He went down the road to the neighboring village, where he was supposed to meet up with several other men—two of them had already been to Canada—who were also traveling overseas.

He was walking fast so as not to let the sorrow that filled his breast overtake him, but also so as not to prolong his wife’s suffering—he loved her dearly. When they reached the place where they had to part ways, he stopped and removed his hat.

“Vasylka,” he finally said in a tense voice.

“Speak to me, Maksym,” she answered, pressing a handkerchief to her eyes.

“All sorts of things happen, Vasylka…”

She looked at him and tears gushed from her eyes.

“*Take care of the children*. Be *equally* kind to all of them…”

She understood him.

“Children do not ask to be born into this world, wife!”

She sighed loudly and pressed herself to his breast.

“How could you say this to me, my husband? Do I deserve such words from you?”

“Wife, I’m just mentioning it. Don’t get upset. I only want to *say* that things can happen. I could die. I’m saying it for *that* reason. Take care. Now go back to them, to *my Annychka*."

He cut himself short. His suppressed sorrow burst out of his breast in a loud wailing. He almost shoved his crying wife away, picked up his hat that had fallen to the ground, pressed it with an almost drunken motion to his head, and left.

* * *

The young woman looked back several times at her husband. They loved each other and had lived together in peace and harmony. Although they were not rich, neither were they poor. They worked hard and gradually, little by little, had begun to live well. A year ago, Maksym bought a small field that bordered his orchard. Since he did not have enough money in hand and did not want to sell his cattle, he had to take a bank loan for two hundred. To pay off his debt faster, he decided to follow good people’s advice and go to Canada for a few years, earn money, and then come back and settle for good on his own plot of land. At first, Vasylka objected. Why look for work overseas? Just crossing the sea can cost one one’s life. Water isn’t land. And the sea has *such* waters, they say. One can make money here too. She insisted on selling a cow. “If God is willing, we will get another,” she kept saying. But he was firm in his decision. He had made up his mind to go, and her words did not sway him. He kept saying the same thing over and over until she finally gave in.

And now he had left.

She returned home in tears. She was already longing for her Maksym, as if she were never to see him again. Who made up this Canada that tugged at people the way a fishing pole tugs at fish?

Her children met her by the gate. Little Dmytryk, who saw her first, ran towards her. Little Annychka followed.

“Where is daddy?” cried Dmytryk from afar, “Where is daddy? Is he already in the city?”

“He is already in the city,” she said in a faint voice, “already in the city.” And she clenched her teeth tightly so as not to burst into tears again.

She gathered her children to her and brought them back into the yard. Their old guard dog, Tarkush, stretched his front paws toward them, barking and showing his teeth.

“Food, food, food,” the dog seemed to bark in a friendly and impatient manner, addressing the mistress of the house. “Food, food!”

“All right, all right,” she replied, patting the loyal animal on its head. “All right, I’ll give some to everyone. None of you will be left out. Hush, be quiet!”

And all three vanished into the house.

* * *

Six years passed. All went well in Vasylka’s household. Everything was clean, neat, and well managed. The number of cattle in Vasylka’s stable grew, and she herself turned from a slim, young, and girlish-looking woman into a serious, robust, and hard-working mistress of the house. Energetic and decisive, she attracted particular attention with her bright, steel-colored eyes, which rested so inquiringly on everyone who entered her house, be they acquaintances or strangers. These inquisitive eyes demanded respect; otherwise her beautiful, white, wide forehead grew dark and stern, evoking discomfort, particularly when her red lips opened without a smile and started talking.

Maksym wrote and sent money. Years passed, but he did not come back. Dmytryk was almost ten, and little Annychka was already a smart girl, often helping her mother with chores. Both children had turned out well, and their mother’s heart beat faster at the thought that if not this year then the following Maksym would return and see his children—his Dmytryk, whom he spoiled so much, and his favorite, Annychka, a wise and kind child who read every thought from her mother’s eyes and the eyes of those who asked small favors of her. Yes, that Annychka, like a little mother, took care of everything when her mother had to leave the house and she and her ten-year old brother were left in charge of the household. But Vasylka did not leave the house often. There was no time. Only on Sundays did she go to church or to the city to sell something. She used the money either to buy something for the household or gave it to their priest, who then took her money to the bank. Their debt was long paid off, and on Maksym’s request Vasylka bought another plot of land, which she cultivated on her own. But Maksym kept postponing his return. Another three months, he wrote, another five, another four, and then he would come back for good, because his work in Canada was hard. It ate away his strength every day. He could already feel it in his back. That is what he wrote until his letters stopped arriving. Why? Vasylka didn’t know. She asked other women whose husbands were also overseas. One man once wrote ambiguously that he would be home soon; he was only waiting for Maksym, who had gone with their supervisor to M., where they were to dynamite a mountain cliff that was standing in the way of their railway construction. That was the extent of the information.

Time and more time passed. Summer followed spring, and autumn followed summer. But Maksym did not return, and sent no news. Vasylka began to worry. She could not sleep at night. She imagined Maksym dead. She cried and prayed. She engaged the priest for special services, sincerely hoping that God would enlighten Maksym and make him come back. At home, to be fair to her, her hands did the work of two persons. Her head thought for two. But, as God was her witness, her heart grew so sad sometimes, especially in the gloomy late autumn or in the winter. A man is a man. When a snowstorm raged outside and the temperature dropped, the windows nearly bursting from the frost and threatening to let the blizzard in, when the dog barked, howled, and rattled its chain, trying to break free as if guarding the house from someone or something, the woman had to calm the frightened children in their bed above the stove, pull on her sheepskin coat, and get knee-deep in the snow to make sure no shadow had slipped near the barn, the stable, or the house.

Oh, God!

Then the war broke out.

It broke out and shook the world.

The earth was ripped apart, turned over, and flooded with blood. That was when it really got going. Everything was covered with corpses. The voices of humans, animals, and cannon wailed, filling the air with their sound. Wounded soldiers wandered to and fro. The white, black, and brown ghosts of horses fell heavily to the ground.

At night, the stars shimmered timidly like small dots on the sky, and the moon hid half way behind the straight, dark strand of clouds. The moon was often pale.

When everything finally settled for the night, black crows came flying in and descended hurriedly to the ground.

* * *

One day during that time, Vasylka stopped by my house. She talked about her children, about the household, about Maksym, who, it seemed, could not come home because of the war, and about the dreadful times we lived in. She spoke about the war and about the enemy. At that time, everyone learned what sorrow was, and saw their fill of blood. Everyone made sacrifices. People forgot about themselves and cried only when they faced something that they had never seen before—gruesome dismemberment. This was what the war brought for many years. Then, with many interruptions, Vasylka told me the following story.

“Last year the enemy, the Muscovites, was stationed in our village, S. One of our soldiers, a dragoon named Ivan Rotenchuk, was hiding at a neighbor’s house, and it fell to me to bring him food. The enemy searched the

place but did not find him. Later he came over to my place and asked to stay with me for a few days. I made up my mind and said, “I’ll hide you until *our* troops come, or as long as I can.” I had some hay behind the house, and that was where I hid him. He stayed there while it was still warm, but when it got cold I said, “Come into the house. We’ll dig a hideout under the bed.”

I told the children to hold their tongues.

“This is our soldier, children!” I explained to them. “If the Muscovites find him, they’ll shoot him.”

“How can he be our soldier if the Muscovites are in the village?” the children asked.

“The Muscovites have taken over, children,” I said, “but he escaped from them, and wants to hide here till our troops come back.”

After thinking for a moment, the children—Dmytryk was then ten, and Annychka eight—replied, “And what if the Muscovites come and start asking?”

“Then tell them he is your daddy. The truth is, the Muscovites captured him near Stanislav, but on the way to Russia he escaped, changed into civilian clothing to look like a Ruthenian, and made it here pretending to be a local.”

“How can we say that, if our daddy is in Canada?”

“Dmytryk! He is a soldier, and that is very important. That is why we have to say he is our daddy.”

Dmytryk agreed and promised together with Annychka not to tell anyone. He also added earnestly: “In that case, we have to keep it quiet so that our emperor can have a lot of soldiers and defeat the Muscovites.”

Dmytryk took after his father. He always pondered over things, and when he set his mind to something, it was a pleasure to listen to him.

So Ivan crawled into his hideout under the bed.

One day the Muscovites caught him at home and said, “Very well! Why is your husband at home and not on the front? Why is he not fighting?”

“He is deaf,” I said.

One Muscovite tried to talk to him.

“You have to yell at him because he can’t hear you.”

Stepping closer and touching him, I yelled into his ear, “Pay attention, the soldier is speaking!”

He opened his mouth and said, “Huh-ah?” Then he addressed the Muscovite, “Please yell louder, I can’t hear you.”

“It’s good that you are home,” the Muscovite replied.

He didn’t speak to Ivan after that. The children were so quiet, as if they had water in their mouths. When the Muscovite stepped outside, they burst out laughing. Later some soldiers came and asked to stay at our house, but I didn’t let them in. I always kept my doors locked. When I had to go to the village or the city, I strictly ordered the children not to open the door so that, God forbid, a Muscovite might not get in.

One day the Muscovites came to the door and started banging, demanding we let them in.

“Mother is not at home,” Dmytryk answered, “We won’t open because you may steal something.”

I was at home, but hid. The Muscovites went to the neighbors, where they were told that I’m a Uniate, that I do not house any Muscovites, and that I *must* be at home. They came back with an ax and ordered the children to open the door, threatening to chop it down right away if they didn’t. I ran to the other room and told the children to open the door. They did so. The Muscovites came in.

“Where is your mother?” they said.

“We don’t know where Mother is!”—but they knew very well that I was home.

“If only she would come home! What is she thinking? Soldiers are being billeted everywhere, but she isn’t housing any?” said one of them.

Hearing these words, I came in immediately and said:

“What kind of a commandant is this, to talk about me this way? Who is this big shot, I ask you?” I said.

“Why aren’t you letting anyone stay in your house?” he answered.

“I have two small children, as you can see, and I’m not always home. I’m afraid I’ll get robbed. One woman I know was robbed, and I’m afraid the same will happen to me,” I said.

Then he lunged at me with an ax and wanted to hit me. Another soldier grabbed the ax.

“Leave the woman alone. She speaks the truth. In the village there will always be some scoundrel who would steal, so she is afraid,” he said.

“If your commandant gives the order to house you and anything is stolen, then I’ll know where to complain,” I replied.

After that they spoke nicely, and a sergeant came over and assigned three soldiers for housing at my place.

“Don’t do any harm to this woman and don’t take anything. She’s afraid,” he ordered.

“If anything is stolen, or if they take something, come to me,” he said.

The soldiers went out to get their things, and it grew quiet in the house. Then I gave Ivan thick, warm linen pants, a big sheepskin coat, two blankets, and a pillow, and sent him to the stable, back under the hay. That’s where he hid from the Muscovites.

When there was no one at home, he would come in to warm up and eat. Sometimes I called him in myself. At those times, one of the children kept watch by one window, and the other by the second window to make sure nobody stepped into the house. “If anyone gets close to our house,” I told them, “Call me, so I can greet the guests myself.” That’s how it went: when he stepped into the house, I would feed him, and the children would keep

watch by the windows.

When it became very cold I went to see my mother, who lived two kilometers away. I went through the fields so that no one would see me. It was snowing and snowing. The field was empty. There was no one around. Occasionally a lone raven would fly by and nothing else. I finally got there and told her everything.

“Mother, he can’t stay under the hay in the stable any longer. He’ll freeze. What shall I do? Give me some advice!”

Mother thought for a moment and said, “Woe unto you! He has to go. The Muscovites haven’t billeted anyone with me, and rarely does anyone come here. Bring him here and let him stay with an old woman.”

With that, I returned home. The following day I dressed him as a woman. I gave him my shirt and my skirt, made him a headdress out of my scarf, cloaked him in two sheepskin coats and took him to my mother’s place.

While we were walking along the road, several Muscovites popped up before us as if from under the ground. They stopped us and started fooling around. We didn’t feel the ground under our feet. They pushed me, but I pushed back. They tried to grab his breasts, thinking he was a woman.

“Leave her alone!” I cried angrily, pushing the enemy away, “Can’t you see she has a tooth-ache? You think we have trifles on our minds. Not at all! She is in pain and can’t see God’s world since morning. She can’t even speak! And just look at you!”

Then the Muscovites started questioning us about where were we going and where were we from.

“There is a doctor in the next village. We went to get medication for her teeth. Now we are heading home,” I said.

With that, they left us alone, thank God. We didn’t meet anyone else. My mother housed him for a while, but soon he had to return to us.

“It’s better this way. Some time here, some time there,” she said.

The Muscovites who stayed at my house never saw him. Yet when he moved back to my place, one Muscovite who was stationed at the neighbor’s house caught sight of him going through the yard to the stable, and he immediately called on me.

“Who’s the fellow who went to the stable? He looks more like a spy than a soldier.”

“Don’t say such dreadful nonsense. It is war out there,” I answered him. “Your soldiers can easily send me to Siberia for that.”

When my tenants came back from the forest where they had been hewing wood, they asked directly from the doorway, “Are you keeping a soldier here?”

“No, I’m not,” I said, “I’m not keeping anyone but you.”

“Really!?” they said, “Our comrades saw a spy going into your stable.”

When the neighbor’s tenant asked me about the man that went to my

stable, I immediately sent Ivan to Maksym’s sister.

“If they’re talking like that, they’ll likely search my place,” I said to him, “and then we’ll be in trouble.”

My tenants kept whispering something to one another, and finally said, “Hey, soldiers! Let’s go and look if someone is really hiding in the stable.”

They went out to the stable, but didn’t dare to go up to the loft because it was already dark. I ran back to the house and brought a candle.

“Look carefully for that spy!” I said, giving them the lit candle.

They climbed up to the loft and searched everywhere, making sure no one was hiding there. But *he* wasn’t there.

“There is no one here,” they said and climbed down.

And my children, my dear children, held their tongues and didn’t say a single word. My Annychka only followed everyone with her eyes, which popped out of her white face, and didn’t say a word. She was already sick. Oh, God!

* * *

For a whole year I wandered around so exhausted from poor sleep that people couldn’t recognize me anymore. For four months, I suffered from a headache day and night. I couldn’t sleep at all. I would hear a sound outside, and my whole body would shudder, and I would think, “Oh my, the Muscovites are coming again.” How could it be any different? Just think, I had to make food and take it to him, but the enemy was always watching over my shoulder. I withered so much that I had to see a Russian doctor. He told me, “Woman, you are ill because of stress and lack of sleep. You must rest.” And the doctor gave me powders for my sleep and for my head. God give him health, the powders made me feel better.

But Annychka wasn’t getting better. She had gotten sick long before Ivan came to our house. She had caught cold when our soldiers were stationed with us. The soldiers slept in the big room on one side of the house and I slept with the children in the small room on the other side. That small room had a big hole in one corner, and the draft got to my Annychka’s lungs while she slept. Despite her illness, she kept watching over Ivan as vigilantly as she did when he first came to us. When our troops were in the village and the Austrian doctors treated her, she felt better, but under the Muscovites, she grew worse again.

During the time that Ivan spent at my sister-in-law’s, another man like him who had run away all the way from Russia joined him. The two stayed together, and I fed both of them. My Russian tenants grew suspicious of the food I would take there.

“Who are you taking that food to?” they asked

“*She*—that is Maksym’s sister—lives in poverty now,” I answered.

“She has no money. She has only one cow, and right now it doesn’t give any milk. That’s why I take a share of what I cook to her. When our troops were in town, she was getting paid for her husband who serves in their army, and she gave me some money. And now, you can see how things are!”

“All right, all right then,” the Muscovites said.

From that moment onward, I was very careful not to get noticed. The Muscovites often used to go to the forest to hew wood, and I told *him*, “When they aren’t home I’ll throw a towel on the fence. You check the forest”—it was not far from my sister-in-law’s house—“and if they aren’t coming back, you may come over, eat, and then go back again.”

And he started coming. He ate, took food for the night, and I didn’t go out any longer. It was nice to have a break. And the Muscovites saw nothing. Soon, they moved out. And he came home again. When someone came over, my doors were always shut and if they wouldn’t go away, he would retreat into his hideout under the bed, and only then would I open the door.

Because of him I put wooden floors in my house, so he could have a hideout under the bed. If not for that floor, I’m not sure he would have been able to hide from the Muscovites for so long. When I was installing the wooden floor, the Muscovites asked me what was it for.

“It is warmer that way,” I said.

Right at the time that I was putting the floor in, an aunt from T. arrived and asked to stay a night at my place. I didn’t let her into the house because Ivan was there. Later, her son met me at the road and asked, “Why didn’t you let my mother stay with you for a night? You were giving birth, weren't you?”

Can you imagine how hard that was for me, and what harsh words I had to hear then? But I replied, “Why? I will tell you, but you and my aunt have to keep it a secret. Don’t tell anyone. I used *military boards* to put in the floor. When people find out about it, they’ll report it to our troops once they get back, and they’ll scandalize my household. They’ll take the boards back. That’s why. But don’t tell anyone, I beg you!”

He was appeased and went away.

My neighbors also had Muscovites stationed with them. Once, Ivan went to the stream for water. A neighboring Muscovite saw him and when he went back to his house announced, “That woman has a tall man walking around her place. Could her husband be back from Canada?”

The neighbor’s wife ran straight to me to find out.

“Did Maksym come home from Canada?”

“Huh-ah? Where?” I said.

“That Muscovite said he saw him carrying water.”

“That was Gregor’s boy” I said.

“Huh-ah? Why would he come to you, Vasylka?” she said.

“He took my pig to the market in S., but I didn’t pay him because I didn’t have any change. He came to remind me about it. But I can’t show him

where I hide my money, so I asked him to bring water. Meanwhile, I took out the money and then gave it to him. I couldn’t show him my hiding place because first he’ll notice it, and then he’ll come back and swipe the money. That’s how it is, my dear neighbor!” I replied.

This all took place during Lent.

The Muscovites finally stopped bothering me. When Ivan would occasionally step outside and a Muscovite would show up, the children looked at each other and quickly ran to warn him.

“Daddy, hide—because mother cannot run out to warn you all the time or the Muscovite will notice her.”

And so he hid either in the house, up in the hayloft, or in the hideout under the cow’s stall. He lived in misery, just like the children and I did. Meanwhile, my child, my Annychka, grew weaker and weaker. She died exactly two weeks after Easter.

The night before Annychka died, he stayed up with me by her bedside. He climbed out of his hideout under the cow’s stall (it was much better there than in the house), and lay down next to her so that he could give her a candle if I fell asleep. “Go to sleep or else what will become of you? You haven’t slept much lately,” he said to me.

He covered up the windows so that no one would look in.

And we both sat there like that and kept vigil.

I looked at the child again—I won’t speak of my grief—and saw a trickle of saliva was dripping from her mouth. “Do you want some water, Annychka?” I asked. I took her into my arms and gave her a sip of water with medicine. But she didn’t want any. Then he lit the candle, gave it to me, and I put it into the child’s hand. And when the child was dying and Dmytryk and I were crying, in that moment of my great sorrow, I suddenly saw a man with white hair as if floating in the air above the child. And I heard the words, “*Don’t cry, for she is in my light now.*”

My mother-in-law came from the other room and took the child from my arms. And Ivan said, “Don’t cry. Don’t you see she is an angel now? It’s better for her now.”

Then he sent me outside, because my sorrow was so unbearable that my heart almost broke. But when I thought—no,when I heard those words, perhaps from within me, perhaps from my missing husband—“Don’t cry, for she will be in my light,” I felt better.

He also cried bitterly, but continued to comfort me.

“Don’t cry,” he said. “Look after your other child. Also, if you fall ill, who will watch over me?”

When Annychka had died—it happened before daybreak—he went alone through the fields to the forest to get my mother. The following day, when I went to C. to ask our priest to perform the funeral rites for the child, my mother stayed at our home. When people started to come to the room

where the deceased lay, he was still sitting by the window. When I came back from C., it was late at night, I found a lot of people in the house. Ivan went to the stable and stayed there. My mother brought him food.

“Mother, I can’t eat because the child who watched over me and cared for me is no more. I can’t eat!” he said and cried bitterly again.

“Tell *her* she has to eat!”

I was given food, but I couldn’t eat because my heart was grieving so much for my child that I didn’t understand where I was. Only when I went to the neighbor’s house was I able to fall asleep. People left the house, but my mother and he stayed by the child all night…

When I came back home in the morning, he hid, as before. I went back to C. to buy a few more things and to hire a wagon to bring the priest to the funeral. I returned when it was already dark. I found the house filled with people again. I asked mother if she had fed Ivan, and she said, “I brought him food, but he doesn’t want to eat. All he does is think about something.”

I went to see him myself and asked, “Why aren’t you eating, poor fellow? You could fall ill, and it’s hard to be ill in the trenches.”

Then he ate a little.

My mother went back to her house and promised to return in the early morning.

He told me, “You stay in the house while people are still there, but I will go to sleep.”

I agreed. He went to sleep, and I stayed up till half past midnight. When everybody left, I woke him up and he came to the house.

“There is milk and bread—eat something, and I will go to sleep now. “

I went to bed with two sheepskin coats and my boots on, because it was very cold that night. He put another blanket and a sheepskin coat on top, and I fell asleep.

Sudden voices woke me. I raised my head to look around and saw a house filled with Cossacks. I screamed as loud as I could, although I was so scared that my voice was barely audible.

“Who is it? Who is it? Why are all these soldiers in the house?”

I thought it was a search, since so many Cossacks had filled my house.

“Don’t scream!” said someone from the crowd. “Don’t scream! Is there an Austrian in your house?”

“No!” I said.

The Muscovite captain began to speak.

“Maybe it’s your master? We won’t hurt him. Only tell us. Yes or no? He will only go with us to Russia.”

“No, Captain! There is no one here!”

“We will either hang you or shoot you if you don’t tell us the truth,” threatened the captain.

“Shoot me! Hang me!” I screamed again, “but there is not a single

Austrian here!”

“And what happens if we find one?” the captain asked again.

“Captain!” I replied, “I am not thinking straight now, because I just buried my child.”

“Have you seen any Austrians walking around other houses? Tell us the truth, and we’ll capture them on our own. They wander on the roads from time to time,” the captain asked.

“I haven’t seen any Austrians!” I said.

“You! *You* are a real scum! We know it already, don’t you worry!”

Then I fell silent.

When I was sleeping and the Muscovites knocked on the door, he, not knowing what to do, hid on the porch under the sacks. After talking to me, the Muscovites went outside to look for the “Austrians.” Guards stood around the house, so nobody could escape and there were plenty of Cossacks inside. When a Cossack found him under the sack, he called on others to shoot and shot once himself, knocking Ivan’s hat to the ground. Having dragged him outside, they hit him under the ribs so hard that he bent over in pain.

Then they turned to me.

“So, what now? There are still no Austrians here?!”

“People, what are you doing? I already have one corpse in the house, and you want to add another one?” I screamed.

“*You see*? Don’t you deserve to be hanged? You said there are *no* Austrians, and now—think for yourself!” the captain said to me then.

“Captain! My house is like a tavern now! A dead body lies on the table, so anyone can come in,” I said.

“And why did you give him a sheepskin coat?” he retorted.

“Merciful God! Since God took my child, let the devil take the coat, too! I had to take a soldier in because if I didn’t house him and didn’t give him the last crust of bread, he could have set my house on fire in no time,” I said.

Then they told me to open the stable. On my way there, I cried so bitterly that all the Muscovites pitied me. When I saw him in the yard standing among them, pale as death itself, I nearly fainted.

They asked about his rifle.

“Captain,” he replied, “when your soldiers captured me, they took everything away.”

They told me to give them a belt to tie his hands. I had one, but didn’t want to give it away. There was a wire stretched between poles near the house with some laundry hanging on it. They cut the wire and tied his hands behind his back so tight that they turned blue. And I—Oh God—I was wailing, yelling, and crying so bitterly.

“Oh, God! What did I do wrong on *this night* that you want to part me with my other child?” I was saying this on purpose to let him know *what* he should say about *when* he had come to my house. The Muscovites indeed

jumped up to him with questions about when he had come.

“It was probably half past midnight or one o’clock when I came,” he said. (They had captured him around two.)

“You haven’t slept yet?” they asked again.

“No,” he said, “I haven’t.”

“Where did you come from?” they asked.

“From another village,” he said

“What is it called?” they asked.

“I know a lot of villages,” he said. And he told them about villages somewhere near Galicia.

“Why did you come here? Did you *know* her, or why?” they pressed further.

He said that he had been going through the forest when he saw the village. He had come closer, looked around, and saw that there was a corpse in the house. Then he went in, because he knew they feed everyone at funerals. He came inside, but there was nobody there. Then the mistress of the house walked in and gave him food. He did not leave, and then the soldiers came. He said that the first woman who hid him gave him away because she was restless… maybe even jealous. Then he told the commandant, or whoever he was, that he was glad that the Muscovites captured him because he wouldn’t have to suffer any more, because now he would have food.

* * *

Ivan was taken to C. and put in jail. When the Muscovites took him, they told the villagers and me that we were facing *years in Siberia*. In response to that, I sent my father to see an informer and ask him to appeal on my behalf so that they wouldn’t take me to Russia. The informer only said, “Oh, I see—he stayed at your daughter’s house and you didn’t know about it?”

“I didn’t know about it,” my father said. “How would I? And she, my daughter, didn’t know. She is still so young and ignorant.”

“But I know it all. I know that even when he was still staying with the first woman, Zoika, he was already seeing your daughter. I know it all. And not only I—the Muscovites know it too,” the informer claimed. “Why didn’t your daughter Vasylka come to me *on her own*?” he continued.

Father came back and told me, “Go and see that stubborn man yourself. He won’t listen to me.”

Early next morning, I went to see him.

“Would you be so kind as to appeal to those in power not to punish me and not to send me to Russia? I have only one child left. Who would look after him if they take me?” I asked him.

At this moment, the commander in charge of the search entered.

“We captured *that* soldier at *this* woman’s house,” he said.

“Why did you hide the Austrian?” he asked, turning toward me.

“Gentlemen! For seven years, I have been living without a husband. It’s been four since I last heard from him. I think he is already dead. And I love *this* man, and he loves me. He doesn’t have a wife and we could have gotten married. And he also used to tell me, ‘I wish the Muscovites stayed here longer because when our Austrians return they’ll either shoot me or send me back into the trenches, and you wouldn’t have me anyway. The Muscovites are very kind people. If they take me to Russia, it might be even better for me. They are kind people.’”

But everything that I told them wasn’t true. I had to be cunning, so that the Muscovites wouldn’t get angry and wouldn’t kill us.

“She loves the Muscovites,” the commandant continued. “Sure she loves them. But we were told that your Austrian officers left money for you to hide him, and that he is a spy—it’s just that simple.”

“Our officers didn’t leave us any money, and I fed and housed this man out of love, and he didn’t trick the Muscovites,” I objected once again.

“So how much do you love him?” the commandant and the informer asked me then.

“Very much, gentlemen, as much as I love my own heart. Let me see him one last time.”

At this point, both men burst out laughing.

“We know,” the commandant said, “how love goes. I am sorry you haven’t had a husband for seven years, but … perhaps … perhaps we can help you a little. Only, you see, it’ll cost you. But don’t tell anyone. We are going to C.—and you come here tomorrow very early.”

I came early the next morning but found only the informer.

“Don’t tell anyone what I’m going to do because around here the whole of Russia can be sold for two kopecks. Your business will cost you fifty rubles, and nothing will happen to you. If you don’t have enough right now, I’ll stop by your house tomorrow early in the morning since I am going to visit the officers in C.,” he told me.

He came early indeed, and I gave him twenty more rubbles. And, to tell the truth, they didn’t even mention me in the protocol. Ivan was taken to Russia on the third day. I walked from S. and only caught up with him by the forest on the hills near C. I followed him all the way to the next village because the guards didn’t allow talking during the march. When we were finally able to talk, I gave him a few shirts, three loaves of bread, and a box of honey cakes.

“Don’t be sad. I would escape, but I have no money,” he told me.

“I’ll give you money,” I said, “but only if you are willing to defend our emperor.”

And I gave him twenty-five rubles.

“Oh God! You are so sincere! I’ll escape, whatever it takes, and I’ll defend our emperor as long as I have any strength left in me. Because I know that we live with our emperor as well as we would with our own father. For six years I’ve served and never did I come to any harm. Unless I get killed, I won’t stay in Russia,” he said.

When he was ready to take his leave, I instructed him, “Don’t smoke, don’t throw money in the air, but do buy bread once you get to a village, so you have something when you are on the run.”

He agreed with everything I said.

When they put him on a train in Kamianets P., he used the first opportunity and escaped together with another comrade who had been also captured by the Muscovites hiding in villages. The Cossacks raced after them, searched, questioned everyone, but couldn’t catch them.

After fourteen days, they came back.

Exactly at midnight, at twelve o’clock, Ivan arrived at my place. Earlier, when we had been parting ways, I had whispered into his year, “If God helps you escape, sneak back into my house so quietly that only a night-bird might notice you!”

He did exactly that. He hid under the stable, and that *other* man went to another woman. I didn’t recognize him at first. He was dressed as a Muscovite and had a very dark face. When I saw him under the stable, I started yelling.

“What?” I said, “Has a Muscovite come to me again? Is he going to steal from me?”

He said nothing.

Then I came closer and looked carefully. I looked, and it was *him*.

After feeding him inside the house, I said, “What are we going to do? Our house is under suspicion. You have to fix the hideout under the cow’s stall and stay there so that even my child doesn’t know you are here.”

Again, he heeded my words.

All at once, more than a thousand Cossacks came to our village and set up their quarters in the same corner where my house was. There were so many of them everywhere—in the house and in the yard—that there was no place to hide from them. They did not stay long, but it was still frightening. From now on, all I cared about was making sure there was plenty of bread in the house. So I was taking care of him once again. I brought him food and everything else he needed so that he didn’t have to get out of his hideout. Three weeks passed that way. When I milked the cow, I fed him and, as a result, brought only a small amount of milk back to the house.

“Your cow doesn’t give much milk, does it?” the Cossacks said.

“Very little,” I said, and that was all.

Once I went to C. to sell a young bull and there ran into the informer. I didn’t recognize him, but he stopped me.

“Woman,” he said, “are you out of your mind, or is there something else

wrong with you? Why did you let that *soldier* that we once captured at your place back into your house?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t see him.” I said, and my heart grew cold. “Go and search for him. If you find him, you can take my head off too!”

With that, I visited a fellow parishioner and asked her to hide him for a few days until after the search at my house.

“I’ll give food, money, and anything you want,” I said, “but hide him for a few days so that they don’t kill me or him.”

Three days later, they searched my house. I went to the field to reap rye, which was lying low, almost to the ground, as if asking to fall under the sickle, and the Muscovites came and turned the whole house upside-down. In the hideout under the cow’s stall, they found his maps and his magnifying glass. The whole village knew they found maps at my place.

I went to the informer and started to cry.

“So, did they find maps?” he asked.

“The children brought them from the forest. When our troops retreated, they left things behind. The children found them because they were playing in the trenches. Is it my fault?”

“Oh sure—*they were playing*!*”* he said. “You say you don’t know anything, but the news that he is back in your place is spreading around the village like fire. Great!”

“I swear, I don’t know anything,” I said.

“He might not be there, but the maps were found at your place. You will be in a lot of trouble, Vasylka!” he said.

In response, I gave him thirty rubles, and he promised that nothing would happen to me. And that is how it was.

People kept coming to the informer and kept provoking him.

“Is *she* going to pay for that? Why is Vasylka not being punished?” they said.

“Be patient, people—be patient: she’ll get *six years* in Siberia. Don’t worry about her,” the informer answered.

When I heard about it, I went to him and cried, “I gave so much money, and now I have to go to Siberia for six years? Where is justice?”

“I say this on purpose because people need something to gnaw on. They need a bone. Can’t you spare them one?” he said, and laughed.

He was right.

Meanwhile Ivan stayed with that woman, and I gave him as much food as I could. After the search, he came back. When the Muscovites retreated, I told him everything that was going on in the village, and we rejoiced together.

That is how it went until our troops came back.

When I heard how on the last day before the retreat the Muscovites searched for Ivan and the maps at my mother’s place, my vision blurred and turned yellow. I nearly fell to the ground. I was certain then that they would

shoot or hang both of us. But they didn’t come. They ran out of time.

On the way to my mother’s house, weak and nearly dead, I stopped in the middle of the road and thought, “God, if you give me death, give it in the name of our emperor, not in the name of a Muscovite. So many men gave their lives for the fatherland and the emperor, let one woman also fall for them, too.”

At the last moment, a Muscovite ran in and took a cow. But I cried and begged him, and he left me that dear cow. I sent it far away into the field with the man, so that it was visible only as a variegated dot on the horizon, and I myself stayed to watch the house.

I hid in the back room closest to the road and listened, in case the Muscovites might come back. No one is protected from them. It may look as if they are retreating, but they still come back to grab something or to bid someone farewell.

Oh Dear God!

So I listened for some time crouching down and putting my year to the ground. This way I might hear better what was coming. All of a sudden I heard a hiss and then silence, and again—a hiss and then silence! I wanted to go out, but I was scared. “Oh God,” I thought. “Maybe it’s the Muscovites ambushing our troops and they will soon start shooting their canons.” I listened for what words would reach me—Muscovite or German?

And I heard German—our words! Then I—Oh God! Should I scream? Should I jump?

“Our troops—our troops have arrived, Ivan!”

* * *

Ivan reported for duty and went back into battle.

Some of our people complained about me to our troops and said that I assisted the Muscovites.

When I complained to a sergeant (he wasn’t a German—no he was one of us), he—I don’t know why—said, “*You hid a soldier for the tsar, didn’t you? For the tsar?* And after that you dare to complain! You so-and-so! Go back to where you came from!”

I didn’t have any money—he knew that. And so it was. I left in tears.

* * *

With these last words, Vasylka silently wiped away tears with the back of her hand.

“And what happened next?”

“Nothing.”

Tears welled up her eyes.

“And what about Ivan?”

“Well, I told you. He reported for duty and went back into battle. Then God’s will was done.”

“What was it?”

I raised my head from my papers and looked at the young woman. She had never talked in such voice—no. Her face grew stone cold. Her eyes were cast down, and her hands hung helplessly on both sides of her body.

“What happened?”

“God’s will. He was captured.”

“By whom?”

“By the Muscovites. He was destined to go with them.”

“He will come back, Vasylka.”

She bit her lips and said nothing but good-bye.

* * *

About two years later, she visited me again. It was on the second day of the feast of the Intercession. She had come on a pilgrimage, along with some other people.

She looked more serious, as if her past life of daily toil was now appeased. Her face had faded and grown darker. Under the white scarf, it looked as if it were cast from bronze. Her eyes ran thoughtfully over people, as if asking something.

“Are you managing your household well?”

“Well enough. Why not.”

She was happy she could do her work again. If it weren’t for the land, work, cattle, and house, she would’ve lost her mind long ago.

“Any news from Maksym in Canada?”

“Not from him personally. But the priest made an inquiry, and a letter came saying that he had died. They wrote he had been blowing up some cliffs with dynamite for a railroad. He was working there, and one time he along with his supervisor and a few other men were blown up in a blast. Only his hands, they wrote, were found. Of the others—a leg, a head, and some pieces of flesh, like in a war. That was all.”

I was silent for a moment, and she sighed.

* * *

“And did you get any news from Ivan?”

“I did once.”

“Where is he?”

“They took him far, to Siberia. That’s very far. One man who escaped from there—this man wasn’t with him—told me that it’s so cold there that a

word uttered by one man falls frozen to the ground before it can reach the other.”

“That’s all?”

“That’s all. Who can retell everything? He also said that the nights are very frightening there.”

“Yes.”

“Frightening and deep, they say, as if one rolls into the other, as if rising from an eternal abyss. The summer is short. One has barely enough time to look at oneself and get a glimpse of the blue sky. The sun blinds the eyes there. We have it good here, they say.”

“Good, Vasylka.”

Silence.

She fingered timidly the fringe on her colorful belt and grew pensive.

“*Summer is good*,” she said coming back from her deep thoughts, “I work in the field and around the house. It has a new roof now. I weed, I weave, I whitewash. There is enough work for a woman. It never ends, as they say. But in the winter. Sometimes it gets so gloomy.”

“You have a child, Dmytryk.”

“He is my happiness. He is the only one God left me, otherwise, who knows? At night, which comes so early in the winter, I spin. I take such a pile of wool that I can’t even see the room behind it.”

“‘I can’t see you behind the wool, mother,’ Dmytryk sometimes says, ‘turn your head toward me.’”

“Oh son…”

“‘I want to see you. I don’t want you to cry. Daddy is in heaven—you told me so yourself. Don’t cry!’”

“Yes, it seems so.”

“Sometimes one cries,” she turned to me, acquitting herself. “Or I sing, and the child listens until he falls asleep. Once he’s asleep, I listen. Back in *those* times, I learned to listen carefully at night. Every now and then, I get frightened when an animal cries out in the stable. My body shudders. It all seems so prophetic. ‘*Someone might be coming*,’ I think. Sometimes, the dog howls or the wind wails in the fireplace, and I get frightened remembering *all of it*. God forbid I ever have to live through another war. I get up, put the wool in the corner, and pray. ‘Glory to You, Oh God—that You exist,’ I say.”

Translated by Yuliya Ladygina

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Vasyl Stus

[Untitled]

I cross the edge. This conquering the circle,
this forward motion of a foot,
this lived experience, this naked emptiness,
this salty water, like an oily sludge,
this hopelessness of first beginning,
they terrify me! Better to forget
this land of hesitation, and to extinguish the flame
and embers from memory. I cross the edge.
As leopards leap through burning rings
carrying the impulse of bewildered souls,
So you must aim at the center of death's eye,
And be reborn in death. Do not disturb
the old despondency. Begin beyond it,
well past the barrow, out there on the brink,
Where sacred tablets seemingly appear,
(but do not mention them to others).
Where the sea of humanity swims and step by step
a proud continent grows out into the sea,
like an ossified mirror of eternity,
like a prophetic word or a prophetic scream.
Go, cross the edge! Your birth will follow death.
Strive headlong for the path,
as bright as blood,
That favors honest and repentant souls
who live as such, expecting in their end
a new beginning. Yearning for the stars
as adversity spreads its wings and turns its energy toward
eternity.

18.IV.1972

Translated by Artem Pulemotov

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Dinosaur Eggs

Oles Ulianenko

Here's what Havrylo Kuzmuk, nicknamed Gorilla, recounted on that fine August day, under a generous, curdling sun, somewhere near the square, where pensioners spent their final days, children played on creaky swings, and lovers, hiding in the shadows, dashed into the open jaws of wooden tigers, the German tanks, to satisfy their carnal needs almost in view of hardened and ill-tempered veterans. And so, on that day, with the sun and the wind, with that intoxicating, pre-autumnal hope, he told his story, hands thrust into the pockets of his threadbare velveteen pants. Thus he stood, you know, and recounted:

"That summer, I got really lucky. I'm sitting by the zoo. I've got the blues really bad. Cars are whizzing back and forth, the sun is shining bright, life is rolling in high gear, you know, but your pockets are completely empty. Girls nibble ice cream as they pass you by, squealing like magpies, undermining your male pride. You're going numb, anger is taking over, complete despair, which is to say—and all signs point in that direction—it looks as though you're a useless human being in this world. Boredom. Weariness. There's no emotion or romanticism. Naked pragmatism and the usual nonsense. Life and pleasures just roll right along, as in a movie."

Vasko Blokha inhaled, slurped some beer from a bottle, and cast a sidelong glance at his neighbor, Pepa, with the expectation that the latter might just miss his turn at the bottle, which was going around in a circle, but the welder, playboy, and local intellectual Pepa was always of sound mind, which is why, with a glassy gaze, he stretched his arm out toward his demons to impulsively satisfy his insatiable gut. And so the guys angrily and in unison said:

"Yeah! ... And your point is? ..."

According to neighborhood protocol, this was an insult, so Havrylo circled round the children's playground, sniffling and spitting frequently underfoot, turning his pockets inside out until, after a while, he returned to his place and said:

"Hell, I guess there's nothing I can tell you."

Everyone present put on inscrutable, theatrical faces. Pepa even threw out the "f" word, whether to instill fear, or not to break with expectations, or maybe just for style and show. The pensioners raised their heads, ready to condemn, to curse, but not to request that this band of stinking hardhats finally

cut it out. Rather, they were convinced that the evil associated with these disheveled roosters was completely insignificant, much less than those young imbeciles who were dragging long-legged chicks into the forest of lions or tigers and then emerging with a befuddled and anxious appearance. Everyone present, including Pepa, pulled respectable faces. Morality creeps out upon the stage of life only when you yourself don’t want to take action, or are incapable of doing so—the causes are just the end result of your upbringing. That’s why underdogs are always envious of the powerful. It’s all so banal. Which is why it turns out like this:

“The swine, don’t they have anywhere to stick their dicks? When we did it, that was something to behold.”

“Go on, Havrylo. Just don’t make it up, or you won’t get any beer.”

Havrylo did one more lap around the playground, sure of himself and the victory of his own intellect, suppressing the insult but putting up a dignified front—as he had seen, as he had noted and learned, how all the famous people did on television and in the movies. Then he approached again, took the bottle of warm beer from Pava’s hands, and excitedly continued.

“So I’m sitting, smoking, when two guys walk up to me. Intellectuals. And one of them, he’s wearing glasses, looks like a professor and starts saying something about them conducting this important experiment in biology. So, if I want to make some money, and maybe ...”

Havrylo pompously raised a finger, and created a dramatic pause.

“... If I want to be of service to the state, I should go with them, that is, I’ll go with them, I’ll write a secret agreement and then, of course, they’ll conduct their damn experiment. I know. And then we left. Not far, because, you know, it’s really hard to bamboozle me. We did not go any further than the zoo. There was nothing special there, besides a house that stank like a horse barn on a collective farm.”

Upon hearing these words, Pava, like any city dweller, made a sour face and waved his open palms like a fan, while Havrylo continued, excited at the sound of his own words.

“So, you know, I look, and there, sitting right in front of me in a cage, is a gorilla. Massive, like a shack. Bigger than a monument. It’s a female, I mean. They sort of explained it to me. And then, bam, out of the blue:

‘Would you copulate with this lady?’”

“‘What the…?’ I exclaimed, twirling my finger around the side of my head, in other words, what’s with you, brother? ‘Did you just break out of Pavlivka?’ But they’re outdoing one another, enthusiastically telling me they’ll give me an injection and everything will go smoothly. After lengthy discussions, they jabbed me in a vein. It grew dark, I blacked out and when I came to, I was sitting naked in front of the zoo, under that cast-iron bull, my mouth full of fur, fur in my hands, fur on my chest. So I guess I did indeed screw the monkey. Then a bespectacled guy appears, like a satanic lawyer,

and says, as he holds out a packet of hryvni, ‘you certainly exerted yourself and their Lucille is fully satisfied, and you—that is, I—have entirely fulfilled your duty before the state and society and you will receive compensation.’”

It was then, they say, that the street riff-raff, along with the neighbors, began to call Havrylo Gorilla, and whenever he visited the local pharmacy or some such medical establishment, then everyone would laugh uproariously, asking to whom and for how much he was selling his children, or, what kind of carrots he fed them. But Gorilla made a charming artistic expression, in other words, he was offended. Later they were drinking beer, and Gorilla was telling the next story, which no one wanted to believe, but in the end, everybody agreed that something of the kind could and should happen in such a strange society as ours. They say the latter was the instigation for the undesirable continuation of the twisted comings and goings of Havrylo Kuzmuk, nicknamed Gorilla. He wasn’t even offended that he was thus nicknamed. Sometimes, though, confusion occurred, when drunken legs carried him to the zoo. Malicious folk snickered that Havrylo had gone to look for his children amongst the cages.

One memorable, violet-tinged evening, my mother hid my eyes from two chimpanzees, or gorillas—or were they hamadryads?—or, in a word, from the exposed intimacy in which the monkeys were engaged, looking at one another, while Mother was screaming, covering my eyes with her hands, not even realizing that she was thus confirming the great idea of the immortal Freud. The story was about something completely different, but it often reminded me of Havrylo. And this is what we were told by Ninka Kochetkova, the busty, blonde military widow who lived in the co-op building on Victory Square. That afternoon, she saw the cortege of the Japanese prime minister moving like a black snake from the south along the dusty highway, as though straining to take off . A racket arose, leading Ninka to surmise that perhaps a total mobilization had begun, or some other catastrophe from among those described to her by the hereditary alcoholic Khomenko before once again defrauding the unfortunate widow on the question of marriage. On that hot August day, when with a rumble the cortege rolled ostentatiously down the sweltering highway, while cynical citizens, indifferent to political or civic life, blankly beheld this spectacle with their cold and contemptuous expressions, confirming before the world their apathy and infantilism, or, as the philosopher would say, the fragmentary nature of their miserable existence, on that day, walking beside the roadway with two buckets full of either mushrooms or eggs, was one Gorilla, or Havrylo Kuzmuk. This minor detail was not observed until it was too late to change anything in this narrative, although there is no sense in it either, and everything, as it should, happens for the better. And so, precisely at noon, after the Japanese delegation had rumbled away, conversations once again swirled around Victory Square, in the usual fashion, feebly and slowly, utterly boring and unromantic, and on

that day Pepa stopped by to see Gorilla, who for some odd reason, hadn’t shown up for work.

“What’s with you?” was all Pepa said.

“Ah, nothing,” Gorilla calmly and coldly shot back, beating into an enormous pan, which in the western regions they call a skillet, an omelet of unheard-of proportions. If Pepa had had any people smarts, then, I repeat, likely nothing would have transpired. But his expression, that is, Pepa’s, was haggard and hostile. In other words, his eyes became huge as plums or the bottoms of a whiskey glass.

“What’s that, man?” inquired Pepa.

“Scrambled eggs,” answered Havrylo, and pushing his spoon deeper into his mouth, swallowed the eggs, drank a sip of water, and solemnly, in worldly fashion, continued the repast.

“What kind of crap is that in the corner? ... Yeahhh! And it’s time to go to work,” Pepa always talked like that because he was always embarrassed to call Havrylo by name.

“What goddam work? Right now I don’t have time for work,” answered Havrylo with a sense of importance, deterministically and with flair. “I have things to do here. Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah.”

Pepa could not tear his eyes away from the gigantic eggs, cut in half, that were piled together in the corner near the buckets.

“I got ’em for the pigs,” Havrylo explained matter-of-factly..

“I get it, for the pigs. Yeah. Yeah. But what is that crap in the corner? Yeah. Yeah.”

“Eggs,” said Havrylo.

“Yup, eggs,” said Pepa, shaking his head. Pepa wanted to drag himself away, but his native curiosity forced him to stay in place, as though someone held him by the legs while his head pleaded to get away God-knows-where

“Dinosaur eggs. Uh-huh. Dinosaur eggs.” Havrylo carried the spoon into his mouth, swallowed, smacked his lips, washed it down with mineral water, without even dignifying Pepa with a glance.

“Why?” said Pepa, taking a step forward, whether toward the corner, where indeed there lay enormous, halved eggs, or simply because he found himself unpleasantly prostrate and didn’t know what to do with his legs, which wouldn’t obey his head.

“Dinosaur eggs. Yesterday, it fell on the garage.”

“What fell?”

“The dinosaur.”

“What the …Yeah. Right. S-u-u-u-re.”

This time, Pepa skedaddled. He ran, as they say, four blocks, and then he paused, gasping and coughing, deciding on the spot to return to work like a good and decent citizen. Havrylo was just finishing his scrambled eggs, when a crew of alarmed, excited, and curious mugs burst through the door

frame. The foreman, with whom Havrylo worked on construction sites, unassumingly stood in the rear, allowing the brigade to view the spectacle up close.

“What is that?” the foreman finally blurted out, pointing with his finger at the gigantic eggs that lay in the corner.

“Are you, blind? They’re eggs. Uh-huh. A dinosaur fell on the garage and crashed through the roof. Right now, it’s on a leash and laying eggs for me,” stated Havrylo Kuzmuk with conceit. The mugs beyond the door guffawed, drawing out into a pyramid.

“Can we try some?” asked the foreman.

“It’ll be expensive,” cautioned Havrylo.

“How much?” said the foreman, logically concluding the first phase of the negotiation, holding his back nearer to Pepa.

“Well—uh-huh—for a try it’s ten hryvni each, on the spot. It’s a delicacy, you know, I mean, it’s a rudimentary historical thing, you know.” Havrylo was beginning to pile on the smarts.

“OK, yeah,” agreed the foreman. “And the producer himself? Can I take a look?

“Fifty hryvni each, on the spot, and not a kopeck less.”

The mugs—the crowd that is—roared in alarm. The pyramid swelled menacingly.

“Yeah… I always knew that you—” began Pepa, once again stammering on the name but he gathered his wits and spit out, “that you’re a bum and a cheapskate.”

Havrylo just sniffled and said, “Proletarian slobs! Uh-huh. Envious, eh? Uh-huh! It’s a historical fact that you have no need of anything, not even culture.”

The crowd grew still, thoughtful. About culture, they knew one thing: you should regularly wash your hands, wipe your ass, refrain from cursing when you are a guest, correctly place commas when filling out complaints, love your wife and kids, give up your seat to the elderly when using public transportation, and the like. Nobody knew anything about dinosaurs and culture. This made them guarded and reduced their current position to the blunt edge of absurdity. And so, after awhile, they decided to give fifty hryvnias each in order to personally witness the wonder. However their national pragmatism, which is to say their character trait, won over. This is why initially, the construction workers decided to chip in ten hryvni each in order to try, or more precisely, to finger the enormous dinosaur eggs. Havrylo sat right near the door with a large fat school notebook into which he noted the first and last names, the sums paid, even the professions of the visitors so that no one could shamelessly push through past their place in line, or usurp their turn through favoritism, which Havrylo Kuzmuk could not tolerate in any form. Pepa attempted to hoodwink a spoonful of egg but the fair-minded, worldly, and transparently honest Havrylo put a stop to any kind of attempts

to violate the established agreement. On the third day, having concluded the egg-show, he disappeared without a trace.

The roused and intrigued community began to exhibit signs of unrest and dissatisfaction. They wanted a miracle, but, surprisingly, the miracle impudently and tautologically faked them out, deceiving all of them who were seized by the illusion of a great holiday, and disappeared. But one man, that is Pepa, had doubts and endeavored to peck away till he found the truth, for his girlfriend stubbornly cursed Havrylo, probably because for the third year in a row he was avoiding her apartment. Rosy-cheeked Havrylo, as tasty as a tomato, was always successful with the plump lasses of Shuliavka, the young schoolgirls who traded favors on the side during summer vacations, swaddled and enveloped in a silvery dream, faraway and charming and magical, youthful and fresh, and also foolish. That is where Havrylo Kuzmuk had success, notwithstanding his monkey adventures—they even added incentive. Thus, Pepa was the first to circulate the rumor that Havrylo was squandering the dinosaur money in a restaurant with schoolgirls. So when everything had quieted down, and Havrylo appeared, radiating handsomeness and smarts, by now devoid of money, then the community demanded a true miracle—more precisely, the dinosaur that had crashed through the roof in Havrylo Kuzmuk’s garage. For a long while, Havrylo responded with silence, and in all honesty, he resisted the unrelenting persistence of his construction buddies as far as his conscience and upbringing permitted. But the brigade gradually grew animated, acquiring the threatening features that create a mob out of civilized and sophisticated people and in its turn, the mob hastily creates a ruckus or even a true revolution. And then Havrylo, nicknamed Gorilla, agreed. He immediately collected the amount of fifty hryvni per person, establishing the fact that a dinosaur is an animal, and that is why money is essential for feed, in other words, for the nourishment of an important, historic relic. For three days, the gang held back, but after successive periods of idleness, they stormed in a chorus to Havrylo’s place, forcing the poor soul to pull out the fat notebook and note everyone down by name, by rank, by amount of money earned, by wards, by regions, by neighborhoods, by nationality, and so forth, yielding to the ancient principle that paper is understood to witness and validate historicity, that is, the importance of an event. Which nobody doubted. Subsidies, additional allocations, and benefit quotas were not anticipated by Havrylo. This is why his buddies became the factor that played the main, if not the key role, in this story.

And here, finally, the agitated crowd, actually a brigade of members of the brotherhood of municipal construction workers, descended in a crowd on the countless metal garages that hugged the stinking river called by the legendary, almost charming name of Lybid, or was it perhaps Shuliavka—because of the historical nature of the event, its geography and toponymy have competing versions.

They raised a ruckus that spread over an area of two wards. They lined up in rows and columns, as though for a May Day meeting. They wore their festival faces to encounter the miracle they had seen in their school textbooks, and indeed, presently this might happen just as it had with an icon of Nicholas II. They raised up a storm in anticipation of the holiday: some inquired whether the dinosaur could be hand-fed? Does he answer to a nickname? Does he have a name? Is the dinosaur inoculated against rabies? What kind of muzzle is best? How much exercise does he need in twenty-four hours? and so on—all the various petty nuisances that get in the way of living. At about 300 feet, Havrylo stopped the crowd with a gesture, shoved his hands into his pockets in a business-like manner, and declared:

“I’ll go get him ready. Otherwise, he’ll be alarmed. Uh-huh.”

Pepa protested that this was a trick, that Havrylo would escape together with the dinosaur or he’d cook up something bad. Pepa was jealous about his girlfriend, which was why almost no one listened to him. And Pepa hid the evil and malevolence he felt toward Havrylo.

The crowd grew excited, ceremoniously drawing forward; the last time they had witnessed something like this was when an icon of Nicholas II was fetched from somewhere and the surging crowd fell directly under the wheels of electric trains. This was described by Pepa, who was boiling over with anger at Havrylo and the crowd. Finally, when everyone had noticeably soured, Havrylo appeared and commanded them to follow him. Quietly, everybody moved forward on tiptoe.

“What’s this?” Pepa, with good reason, was the first to ask, glancing around in search of not so much the dinosaur but of Havrylo himself, whose trail had gone cold.

Everything was as it should be: the garage with a broken-down roof, the stench, like in a pigsty, and the beast, tied to a cattle halter, howling in fear in a dark corner. When they attempted to remove the animal, it growled and began resisting. Finally, the daredevils turned on the light. The animal, which turned out to be a stray dog nicknamed Jack Pot, a good-for-nothing rogue who had been dressed in fins and had wings attached to his spine—the same kind of wings that children wear during Christmas when they play angels and elves. His tail was decorated with the green mane of a rubber toy crocodile named Gena, and his eyes were covered with polyurethane foam balls of the kind that parents allow their children to wear when play-acting as various clowns such as Oleh Popov, Chipolino, or Pinocchio. The animal raised its snout and howled at the hole in the roof. Jack Pot knew that soon he would be beaten, according to a dog’s fate, even sooner than his benefactor, who, as the evidence indicated, had fed the mongrel fried eggs. During these hours filled with bliss, the dog had grown insolent, imagining that he had landed in dogs’ heaven. All of this, it seems, had now passed.

“Yeahhh! Hee-Hee!” was all Pepa uttered, rubbing his hands. Jack Pot growled, wagging his green tail—the remains of Gena, the green rubber crocodile. The dog took the first blows steadfastly.

Havrylo was apprehended in exactly one month, intoxicated, lonely, and miserable. He was trying to feed Jack Pot, whose jaw was broken, with fish patties and was also trying to tell him a story. Jack Pot yelped, and then, noticing the rising dust, was the first to realize what was coming and ran off, leaving his savior behind to face the mob’s righteous anger. They beat Havrylo long and tediously. They beat him for lost illusions, for the money, for everything. Thrice, he was brought down by his legs from the seventh floor, yet not demonstrating any determination to throw the rascal down from there headfirst. Pepa constructively proposed lynching the scoundrel. Havrylo stood with a cord around his neck on his own construction site and wept, but pride kept him from pleading.

“You idiots. Mothas! All of you. Trash!”

Later, it took a while for them to patch him up at the local hospital. Then the surgeon, a wiry bachelor who resembled a locksmith, came up to him, repeating:

“Ha, ha, ha—well, they sure gave it to you, the donkey asses…. Whoa, what a sorry sight you are.” And the surgeon asked Havrylo, nicknamed Gorilla:

“I understand about the dog, but the eggs? How did it go with the eggs? Maybe truly—you know, really—they’re from dinosaurs?”

Though in agony on the cot, Havrylo was uplifted in spirit and explained:

“Have you seen those longish lamp bulbs on the street lanterns? Uh-huh. So that’s how it came out. I took those lamps, painted them, bought a pail of eggs, and didn’t sleep for about a night or two as I separated the whites from the yolks. I cooked up such a mess that even scientists couldn’t tell the difference. So there you go. And with the dog business, well, that was easy. In a word—inspiration.

With a blank, challenging stare, the surgeon stood facing the heavily bandaged and mutilated Havrylo and once again lectured him.

“So what was all this for? What is the advantage for you? Absurd!” He spread his fingers, as though trying to capture the air. “A stupid waste of time. I don’t understand.”

“Well, it’s like this. At least I had some excitement. You don’t just find two thousand hryvni on the street. I’ve never had such excitement before and never will, doctor. Uh-huh.”

“I think that another such prank and you are guaranteed another kind of place. Uh-huh,” the surgeon teased as he walked out of the room, continually amazed by folk wisdom. Havrylo lay on the bed and thought about Jack Pot and the traitor Pepa. And, of course, about justice.

“Hey, doctor, how is it that you know so much? I mean, at least I had

some fun. Uh-huh. Pepa’s gonna choke. Uh-huh. Who’s the bigger fool? Uh-huh,” said Havrylo to the empty door.

On the street, under the windows, Jack Pot whimpered. And the illustrious Havrylo finally fell peacefully asleep. Everyone has their own pinnacle. I believe that, too.

Translated by Luba Gawur

Original publication: Oles’ Ulianenko. “Iaitsia dynozavra,” *Kur’ier Kryvbasu*, 2001:2, 83–91.

Four Cycles of Poems

Ihor Kalynets

Summing up Silence

before these gates
should halt the boor
these gates **are** small thermopylae
beyond them white linen
on a green field
the untouched nation
of poetry for which we also
come to know the taste of blood

we shall talk of the poet
let us leave tyrants in peace

we shall talk of the brazen
let us leave alone those
who have gone dumb

we shall talk of Mytusa
but why not also recall
Holoborodko or Vorobiov
my peers

“nevertheless
the famed bard Mytusa
aged and in his pride not wishing
to render service to Prince
Danylo tattered and
in chains was brought”

but why not then
sum up one’s own
silence

but each day
shrinks to one sun

but each night
grows to one star

but each day and each night
shrinks grows

and immutably
each on his forehead wears
the escutcheons of duty

without even suspecting it

only I, o Mytusa
must know

about my unrepented escutcheon
the escutcheon of *melancholy*

I shall spill on the scales
all the dried leaves of words
summing up silence

o how late now is the autumn
of our silence

o what a plaything for the wind
is our petty silence

maybe I could
utter

sweetest

but do any words have value
balanced against your name

but do any words have the value
of one golden leaf of day

that from the bough of autumn
soon soon shall fall

until the silence fades
tarry for one moment

until the word comes full circle to the fruit
tarry for one moment

until I learn to perceive in the wind
Mytusa's brazenness

I too like he
shall depart with this autumn day

free of the favors of art patrons
tarry for one moment

having left behind not a single book
tarry for one moment

we shall lose ourselves in this solitude

among these three trees
among these three days

my most beautiful poem is on the bark
under the moss
the most beautiful rhyme for me
is you yourself
the longest life for me is one
of those days

I do not believe he is a stranger
nevertheless a stranger
would betray our silence

but since he has lost himself
in this solitude
among these three trees
among these three days

then his poems will be on the bark
over mine
then his rhyme will be more sonorous
than we
and for his life he'll choose
whichever day's convenient

and Mytusa also has
autumn for a lover

the parchment rinsing in the wind
is not for his purse

let the ink of the elder
ferment in the garden

let nestors in monasteries
practice their cyrillics

summing up silence
Mytusa will say

boians wall up with honey
the prince’s ears

for the gold of an autumn tree
I exchanged that of a prince

therefore it is not my parchment
rinsing in the wind

not my ink
fermenting in the branches

all the escutcheons of our nobility
are in foreign museums
all the escutcheons of our artisans
are in foreign hands
all our towns are under
the escutcheons of strangers

even the golden tree
and that in the neighbor's orchard
even this autumn
not in accord with our calendar
even you Mytusa
strictly speaking
are out of your time

nevertheless your silence
is unique
and those who would destroy
the tower of silence
rake together stacks of paper

all my books the wind bought
all my books the ash burned
all my books are in the safest
of libraries
in the treacherous eyes of my beloved change to lover

there came one more art patron
and he says
I too am the wind

there came one more ash
and he runs on
here's an index of books
for burning
could it be I'm too late

there came one more beloved
and she announced
there are no eyes more treacherous
than mine

but I had no more
for another wind
for another ash
for one more beloved
not even one line

summing up silence
I shall then speak

with the lips of an autumn day

with the uncertain color
of your eyes

with the yellow cloud
of a tree outside the window

summing up silence
I shall say

what unheard of luck
from among the millions
who lived live
and will live

with the lips of an autumn day
with the uncertain color of eyes
with the deceptive meeting of arms
with the yellow cloud of a tree
outside the window
for us to remain silent

Translated by Volodymyr Hruszkewycz

Original publication: Ihor Kalynets', "Pidsumovuiuchy movchannia," *Zibrannia tvoriv u dvokh tomakh*, Volume 1, Kyiv: Fakt, 2004, pp. 235–242.

Backyard Grotesques

we pray to you
holy spirit
in a leather shell

to your immortal
eleven priests
and to all their rites

on giant cathedrals
of stadiums

we form our
round worldview

where the ideology of the whistle
is founded in tradition

here anew we found cities
or overthrow governments

above this green chalice
we first received the eucharist
of the body and blood
of our homeland

we first tasted
ecstasy

in these days under our city
an explosive has been planted

it might explode into the air
at any minute
or not move at all

a thousand buildings
could crumble
or just a pebble beneath our feet

cars might be flipped
with naked bellies up like beetles
and streetcars too
or one streetcar might be
a few minutes late

panes might shatter
in every window frame
or a pair of glasses
might fall from
a pensioner's nose

it is difficult to predict
the corona of an explosion

only one thing is certain
that our city has been mined

our whole little province
is fenced in with tin tongues
beyond which there is no escape

immediately they raise
a theatrical thunder

evenings willingly
we listen
to concerts

and when real clouds
grumble above us
we think
that they too are of tin
and our little province
nails them down with golden nails

to also fence itself in
from above

a secret last supper in our city
when among the twelve
is one judas

ten times more secret if
among the twelve there were
ten judases

the tastiest course
is mania

our hosts and guests
dine on the host
of complexes .
of one of the hot poets
from the capitol

when he dined one on one
he was not assured of secrecy

now he has cooled off
he wants to be laid
to rest with *Literaturna Ukraina**

Translated by Volodymyr Hruszkewycz

Original publication: Ihor Kalynets', "Zahuminkovi grotesky," *Zibrannia tvoriv u dvokh tomakh*, Volume 1, Kyiv: Fakt, 2004, pp. 215–18.

* Official newspaper of the Soviet Ukrainian literary establishment.

Consciousness of a Poem

from the indifferent dark
as from a rock

oozed the breasts
of the fruit of knowledge

lips wove
a cry

arms uttered
a painful word

chastity fell
to its knees

from that moment was
chaos

and my not distant eyes
that became blades
perceived

in that sweet darkness
a swarming of presence

in the ravine between the breasts
the solitary flower of the lips
breaks through
and on a thin stalk
carries out the red form
of the heart
across long fallen leaves
dead stalks
of half-forgotten favors

only now
in this ravine on the narrow
ascent out of the abyss
into which could squeeze
only my fingers
you crumpled into a clump
of fertile soil the substance
at the root of resurrection
from this place
we shall grow into a slender tree

and some day
no one shall be able to divide
autumn mourning
into yours and mine

the one thing of value
that cannot be marketed

two streams
that cannot be stepped over
that dams cannot dam

would that I were
that earth
that I might absorb them

would that I were
that cloud
that I might drink them

but no earth
no single spirit
holds sway over them

for they flow
from those secret springs

the same beginnings
as tears

thus we know one another
in a dream
we dreamed
millions of years ago

with a stone axe
I hunted down fire

it trembled like a deer
like hair it overflowed

it escaped across the threshold
of our locked lips

it splashed into our pupils
symbols of the subconscious

it screamed dark words
which even now are beyond understanding

listen
such dreams
are forgotten immediately
on awakening

the slanting rays of the evening

if only to extend the road
into despair

if only to stretch hands out
to the inaccessible

if only to widen eyes
to take in the infinite

if only to fit into the word
the kernel of the word

those slanting rays
trail after me
in ribbons of blood

and when wide eyes
of wakefulness
probe the deaf wall
of darkness

there shall be in the slough
buried alive

silver slivers
from the mirror of eternity

fragments of memories
of a brief love

and so it happened

on the black slate
beside the tracks of the fern
your palm
was fossilized

with the line of destiny
clearly broken

Translated by Volodymyr Hruszkewycz

Original publication: Ihor Kalynets', "Dosvid virsha," *Zibrannia tvoriv u dvokh tomakh*, Volume 1, Kyiv: Fakt, 2004, pp. 204–8.

Threnody for one more Way of the Cross

THE FIRST PASSION

on the Golgotha
of the provincial court
they screened Your shining face
behind a palisade
of rifles

in solitude
you bear the cross

so feeble still
are our shoulders

THE SECOND PASSION

from her eyes
Ukraine brushed
a secret tear

Lord
how luminous
is the transparent gathering
of mourners

yet the mother
fattened
on her own marrow
legions of spies

THE THIRD PASSION

and those two
who were crucified
beside Christ

today
camouflage
high Golgotha
with a thicket of codes

in the procurator's toga
they hide
the brigand's knife

THE FOURTH PASSION

a fresh cross

small wonder
it weeps
kosmach resin

it shall yet serve
shall serve
in place of the iconostasis
in our
plundered church

THE FIFTH PASSION

imbecilic little nation
go on calmly
bustling

after all today
the earth
did not quake

and the darkness
that settled
prematurely
as ash
about your
head

you did not notice
anyway

THE SIXTH PASSION

without betrayal

sold out
by our impotence

more than one brother
shall yet forsake us
this day

even without pieces of silver

perhaps
then
you will feel pity
for the biblical judas

THE SEVENTH PASSION

our father is silent
and our mother
falls upon the bloody
wounds

intercede
mother of God
who also
became our mother
for us

let us
lay hands upon
the ever burning wounds

THE EIGHT PASSION

above the throng
metallic
rose
the martyr’s arms
of the helpmate

Veronica
you wished to wipe
the bloodied face

beneath their feet they shred
the linen cloth
that shall become
a banner

THE NINTH PASSION

turn away your face
from them

but allow
that in my soul
there should ever be

the image of Your
thorn-crowned
head

THE TENTH PASSION

out of love for us
he took upon himself
such a terrible
punishment

to redeem us from
the greatest
sin

carefree disregard
for *fire*

Translated by Volodymyr Hruszkewycz

Original publication: Ihor Kalynets', “Trenos nad shche odniieiu khresnoiu dorohoiu,” *Zibrannia tvoriv u dvokh tomakh*, Volume 1, Kyiv: Fakt, 2004, pp. 222–26.

Coney Island
A Drama-Operetta

Vasyl Makhno

Players:

Vanya (Sumsky): age 50–55, in the U.S. for fifteen years, an alcoholic
Mykola (Kolya): age 32–35, in the U.S. for two years, a heavy drinker
Pedro: age 25, a Mexican
Zina: age 45–50, in the U.S. for three years
Dana: age 35, in the U.S. for three years
Zhana from Moscow: indeterminate age and length of stay in the U.S.
Dima: a male guest of Zina's and Dana's
Ladies and Gentlemen: appearing in acts 3 and 4
"The Fourth Wave" of recent Ukrainian emigrants: appearing in act 6
The Ukrainian National Women's League of America Choir
A Hasidic choir

The play is set in New York City.

The choir of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America is singing their hymn, "O, Sisters, Raise Your Eyes and Spirit."

1. Coney Island/Stillwell Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

Subway trains arrive at the last stop, Coney Island/Stillwell Avenue.
From time to time conductors call out:
“Last stop! Last stop! Last stop!”
Three Brooklyn buddies are sitting on the platform: Vanya (Sumsky),
Mykola (Kolya), and the Mexican Pedro, whose name has no extension.
Conductors’ shouts of “Last Stop” come from all directions.
Vanya stretches out and falls asleep again.
Pedro is wrapped in a size XXXL jacket and is also dozing peacefully.
With his long unwashed dirty handsMykola is scratching himself where the missing zipper on his pants should be.
Pedro wakes up and watches Mykola.

Pedro: (*grins idiotically*) Mujer.
Mykola: Go to hell, you stupid Mexican. (*smiles at Pedro*)

Vanya finally wakes up.

Vanya: Huh? Ain’t the trains runnin’?
Mykola: They said something (*points at the loudspeaker*), but I don’t know.
Vanya: Hey Kolya, know what I used to be? (*with disappointment*) Aw, what the hell do you know... (*turns to Pedro*) Hey Pedro, what were you in Mexico?
Pedro: Pedro, si Pedro.
Vanya: You were Pedro?! Hey Kolya, Pedro used to be Pedro! This fuckin’ Mexican probably understands Russian. (to *Pedro*) Did you work for the Russkies in Brighton Beach? Hey Kolya, you ever been to Mexico?
Mykola: Sure.
Vanya: Yeah—when?
Mykola: What do you mean, when? When I came to the States, that’s when. We went through Mexico. Almost croaked in the goddam desert. *(pause)*
Listen, me and my wife, we got visas to Mexico, but we were scared as hell. I read somewhere that there wasn’t enough air in Mexico, in their capital.
Vanya: Someone stole the air?
Mykola: No, they built the city high above sea level.
Vanya: So they’ve got problems with air, huh? I mean, look at Pedro. The guy can’t do shit.
Mykola: So I started reading about Mexico, everything I could get my hands on. I read this one writer, Joe… Jack… Got it!—Juan, Juan

Rulfo. I read this story he wrote, “The Northern Border,” and that’s when I lost it. Fuck, he described how they (*points at Pedro*) cross the northern border, at night. The Americans shot them all, except for one guy who goes back home and tells his father the whole story. I don’t remember the rest, except they shot them all. So I think, hell, they could shoot us too. So we arrive in Mexico, as tourists you know, and they put us on some domestic flight, and we wind up in some godforsaken town, with mountains all around. They put us in some hotel. Fuck, when I think of it, I feel like puking. This girl, she’s about fifteen, she comes to us every day for a week and says not to go anywhere, says we’ll be leaving tomorrow. A week and a half goes by. There were seven of us in the hotel, all Ukrainians. One night the girl shows up with two others, and she says to take our things and bring water. By then the nights were freezing. We get to some river. The two other girls start blowing up plastic bags. We had to swim across. One of the Ukrainians was afraid of the water and stayed on the Mexican side. He just stood there, crying.

Two drowned. There was a strong current, their bags floundered, and they slipped off. Only their heads bobbed up from time to time. No one bothered trying to save them. Me and my wife and two others somehow made it to the American side. Act’ally, I found my wife only the next day, in a tree. She was terrified. The American border guards picked us up. Or we wouldn’t have survived. My brother in Chicago vouched for us, but we decided not to go there. And here we are—in New York.

Vanya: This Polish guy I know helped me out. Showed me this playground, right next to the New Utrecht station where I’d been sleeping. What a place—a playground and a bakery next to it! After a big night drinkin’, I’d wake up thirsty and hungry as hell, and I’d stick ’round till ten. Them Jewish kids, they’d run out of some kind of Jewish school, a yeshiva or somethin’. Kolya, them kids always left stuff behind—a bottle of water, some food. I never had to go through garbage no more. Can’t figure them kids out, running ’round the playground like they was on fire.

And then, every Friday before their Sabbath, the bakery’d put out bread and rolls in these big boxes. It was, like, go ahead, take it. So you ain’t never gonna die of hunger. Only, you know what sucks? Ain’t no one gonna give you no vodka. Still, it ain’t so bad…

Mykola: Yeah.

Vanya: So on Sunday, yeah, Sundays, I hung out at the McDonald’s. I’d open the door for people and get some dough for a bottle. Remember that whiskey, the one with the horse on the label? Thank McDonald’s for that. America’s a great country. You’ll get by. Only

problem is, I can’t work no more. My hands shake. And English is a bitch. Learn it while you’re young, Kolya.

Mykola: You know, me and my wife, we got here, sort of settled down, and then she says, “I want to go home.” Fuck, I say, wait ’til the spring, we’ll pay off our debts, we borrowed ten thousand. And she says, “No way, I’m not staying,” and that’s that. I got a construction job at first, while she stayed at home smoking cigarettes. Once I caught her with a Puerto Rican. The bitch sicced the Puerto Ricans on me. And I wind up in the hospital, at Maimonides. Some hag shows up and starts asking me when I got here, who invited me. She says some charity will pay for everything, for the hospital. That’s when I beat it. I decided not to go back to my wife. I met some Poles—they’d been bumming around about ten years—and joined them. They almost killed me when I said Lviv was ours—me against seven guys! That’s when I started sleeping on beaches. The winters are cold on Coney Island. If you make it to the spring, then it’s heaven. You can lie on the beach until it gets dark, when the lights go on like Christmas trees, and the ships float by and the ocean roars. Then it’s heaven.

Vanya: I just met Pedro, found him in Brighton Beach. You see how he is—he’s lost his marbles. Broke his back sellin’ vegetables. The Puerto Ricans kicked his ass, paid him no dough—he was freezin’, Kolya. He’s friendly and a pretty nice guy. Too bad ’bout him. The poor Mexican schmuck.

Mykola: Why’d he come here?

Vanya: Why the hell does anybody come to America? In fifteen years here I’ve met all kinds, Kolya. Important people—trainers, athletes, artists, academics.

So I’m sittin’ in Brighton Beach, near that Millennium thing, taking a breather, y’know. And I sees this six-foot tight-ass comin’ at me. I couldn’t believe my eyes. It was Yevtushenko. His poems, Kolya—I used to love ’em. Evgeny Aleksandrovich, I says, hello. Know what he says? “If you want my autograph, sure, but no money,” he says, ’cause he ain’t got none.

Mykola: I heard something about him, too. What’s he doing here?

Vanya: Dunno. Heard he’s workin’ at some university.

Mykola: They’re all coming here…

Vanya: Yeah. Fuck, America ain’t got room for the whole world. What that president of theirs is thinkin’, I ain’t gotta clue.

Mykola: You know, when I got to thinking about coming here through Mexico, I had no idea how. We took geography in school, but we never got to Mexico.

Vanya: Maybe ’cause it’s a different hemisphere?

Mykola: You can say that again!

2. Borough Park, Brooklyn, NY

An apartment in Brooklyn, where Zina, Dana, and Zhana from Moscow live.

Zina: Look, Dana (*shows her children’s clothes*). I bought these at “The Liquidator.” I’m gonna send ’em to my granddaughter. Yeah! They’ll be perfect for spring.

Dana: Yesterday I done some work for this Jewish lady, a rabbi’s wife. I saw the same stuff there. If it’s good enough for them, it’s gotta be good.

Zina: On the way up I met our neighbor, the girl who lives above us. I think the guy she’s living with is her husband.

Dana: Who knows?

Zina: That’s what I think… I ain’t never heard them fighting.

Dana: Zhana said she heard something, but it sure wasn’t no shouting (*laughs*).

Zina: They’re together, that’s a fact. She ain’t got that hungry look...

Dana: That’s true (*sighs*). I divorced mine. He drank. The jerk left me with two kids.

Zina: After mine left for America, he used to send me money and stuff. But then zip—no letters, not even a hello. I waited for a while. Then I went to the American consulate in Kyiv. This sweet young thing asks me, “Zina, why are you so set on getting to America?” And I says, I’m gonna go look for my man. He’s disappeared somewhere in that America. “Then go, Zina,” she says, “go.” Her own eyes were *soooo* sad.

Zhana: (*applying make-up without a mirror*) Hello.

A cell phones rings.

Yes, honey, yes, yes. Yes, Eddie... yes, darlin’. I’m on my way. See you later, girls. (*leaves*)

Zina: What a bitch.

Dana: The slut…

3. East Village, Manhattan, NY

The Ukrainian National Home.
A meeting is taking place.
Of the seven people at the meeting, five are dozing off.
Hearing aids are making squeaking sounds.
Sitting behind a table are the chairman and the secretary.
A bottle of Coca-Cola and plastic cups are on the table.

Chairman: Do we have a quorum?
Secretary: We do.
First lady: (*raises her hand*) I have a question.
Chairman: Yes, please.
First lady: When our family escaped to Slovakia in a wagon in 1944, we couldn’t foresee that the struggle for our dear Ukraine would take this long. My dear daddy—may he rest in peace—raised my brother and me to be patriots. Last year we sent 127 boxes of books to Ukraine. Our cellar had flooded, and the books began to rot, so we figured somebody might as well get some use out of them.

Our task was to keep up the struggle. And we did. I went to Ukraine the first time in 1973, with a tour. The KGB was everywhere. There was nothing there. People were so poor.

The second time I went with my husband after independence. There was still nothing there. People didn’t even have tea.

I didn’t go a third time because I retired. Glory to Ukraine!

First gentleman: Ex-cuse me please, but I have to put a quarter in the meter. (*leaves*)
Second gentleman: I have a comment.
Chairman: Yes, please?
Second gentleman: Relating to what the lady just said, we should at some point officially thank all those who haven’t forgotten our poor country (*wipes away tears*), and, despite their meager savings, do what they can to support our organization, which supports Ukraine.

The *New York Times* recently ran an article on Ukraine. I believe that our young people’s organizations should organize protests against such slandering of Ukraine and march up Fifth Avenue.
Chairman: (*to the recording secretary*) Please make a note of this valuable suggestion of Mister…
Second gentleman: I have an engineering degree. My name is Magister Khokhotsky.
First lady: I’d like to add…
Chairman: Yes, please.

First lady: We, our emigration, are in trouble, and we’ve got to do something about the newcomers.

Chairman: That, dear lady, is an important issue, but we won’t be able to resolve it today.

First lady: I just want, in light of point 3 on the agenda, to direct the meeting’s attention to the fact that something has to be done about them. The churches are packed with them.

Chairman: That’s why we’re meeting.

First man: Ex-cuse me, please, but I have to put a quarter in the meter. (*leaves*)

First lady: The nationally conscious part of our emigration has long since…

Chairman: Ex-cuse me, but we have little time and so much to talk about.

4. Borough Park, Brooklyn, NY

Zina and Dima. They quickly finish their drinks, undress hurriedly, and have sex. The doorbell rings.

Zina: (*worried*) Who’s that? Dana’s supposed to still be at work at the rabbi’s wife, and Zhana said she’s going up to the mountains with her lover. She’s supposed to be back tomorrow. So who…
Dima: Don’t open the door.

The doorbell keeps on ringing.

Zina: Oh, get dressed—and hurry.

They dress.

Zina: (*speaks into the intercom*) Who’s there?

Dana’s voice is heard.
Now, all three are drinking.

Dana: You wanna spend the night here?
Zina: Hey, wait a second!
Dima: What’s the problem? Why not? Zhana’s not coming back, is she?
Dana: No…
Zina: Wait a second. There ain’t no room here for three.
Dana: Dima baby, you can have Zhana’s bed.
Dima: What’s the problem? Why not? Zhana ain’t comin’, is she?
Zina: She said in the morning…

They get ready to go to bed. Zhana’s bed is closer to Dana’s.
Dana comes out of the bathroom and flirts with Dima.

Zina: Dana, quit foolin’ around and get to bed. We gotta save electricity.

Dana continues to flirt with Dima.

Zina: Dana, stop shaking your ass and go to bed!

Zina turns off the light. Dana keeps tossing and turning, visibly unable to fall asleep. Zina is awake too. Dima is asleep.

Dana: I can’t sleep.

Zina: Sleep!

After a while Dana’s hand moves up Dima’s bed sheet. Dima wakes up.

Dima: Is she asleep?
Dana: Yeah.

Dima pulls Dana into his bed. They start making love, and the old mattress, which Zhana found on the street, creaks rhythmically.
In the morning Dana lies asleep in Dima’s arms. Zina wakes up.

Zina: What the hell!!!

Zina pulls the still sleeping Dana off the bed. She punches the terrified Dima in the back and shoves him out the door, slamming it behind him.

Zina: You little bitch!
Dana: Oh, yeah? Well, you should be ashamed of sleeping with younger men.
Zina: Shut your trap, you witch.
Dana: Well, why do you bring guys home with you? You’re not livin’ alone, you know. Get yourself your own place. Then you can bring home anybody you like.

Zina starts crying, and Dana does too.

5. East Village, Manhattan, NY

Chairman: We’re at the final point of the agenda. Does anyone have questions?

First gentleman: A short one. Don’t you realize, gentlemen, that the “Fourth Wave” can take care of itself? We must think of Ukraine.

First lady: Well, I dream of Ukraine like I dream of my mother. When I was in Lviv everyone spoke Ukrainian. But in Kyiv they all spoke Russian.

Maybe we should move the capital to Lviv? In Polish times my dear departed daddy found work there on the railroad. And then…

Chairman: Madame, we’ll discuss politics at the end of the meeting. And I suggest we leave the capital alone.

First lady: I only want to make things better.

Chairman: Let’s leave well enough alone. Besides, what can we do?

Second gentleman: I’ve been listening to you, gentlemen, and have no idea what we’re talking about.

Chairman: In that case, sir, make a suggestion.

Second gentleman: Maybe we here in the free world, on Second Avenue, don’t understand everything about Ukraine, but my children went to Ukrainian school and my grandchildren learned 100 Ukrainian words, and I had to pay them 10 dollars for every word.

I have three grandchildren, gentlemen, so you can figure out how much that language has cost me.

(*A pause*)

And my son studied the map of Lviv because we were getting ready to liberate it from the Bolsheviks. It’s too bad about the speed of the Soviet Union’s collapse.

First lady: You’re quite right. Soviet rule had a premature climax…

Chairman: Please, let’s not pursue this question anymore.

First gentleman: Ex-cuse me, but I have to go. This was quite an interesting discussion. Will there be a meeting next Sunday?

Chairman: Of course—we have much to talk about.

First gentleman: So long, gentlemen.

6. Avenue U, Brooklyn, NY

The “Emigrant’s Dream” Restaurant.
A meeting of Fourth-Wave Ukrainians is taking place. The chair and secretary are sitting behind a table. There are fifteen people in the hall.

Chair: Uh, we’re here ’cause we have to unite—uh, establish something. Or aren’t we able to?
Secretary: As long as it’s not with them baniak Ukrainian DPs.
Worried woman: I suggest we establish a club, something that reflects our interests, so that we can get to know each other, have some fun…
Chair: Nah, that’s too narrow. It’s got to be an organization.
Secretary: Like what?
Lyrical woman: Oh, you know, the sort of place you could come and have coffee and read poetry.
I write, you know, but there’s nowhere to get published.
Secretary: A venue—that’s what we need.
Worried woman: I’ve been talking about space all along.
Secretary: But what’s that got to do with… We gotta be serious. I was thinking of a newspaper or journal.
Chair: Yeah, we need a journal. “The Voice of Brooklyn,” or…
Secretary: Let’s worry about the name later.
Lyrical woman: I agree with her. I mean, you come home and there’s no one even to read your poetry to.
Worried woman: Why are we talking about poetry?
Chair: We’ve strayed off topic. We have to think about dividing responsibilities and what we’re going to do.
Secretary: I’ve already made a list. Mishko will take care of the press. He loved to read newspapers back in Ukraine. Vira’ll do cultural work with the public and so on—
Here’s the list. Take a look at it.
Vira: Back in sixth grade, when I was in the Young Pioneers, my unit was named after the pioneer-hero Valya Kotyk. Remember him?
Anyway, my responsibility was mass culture.
As a first step, I propose that we buy tickets to the Metropolitan Opera and experience the sublime.
Worried woman: Opera—what’s that? Does it have dancing?
Lyrical woman: Are you kidding? They’ve got the world’s best singers, performing the world’s best operas…
Worried woman: Oh—that kind of opera. Yeah, It played on the radio back in Soviet times. Nah, I’m not interested. Don’t care for that stuff. I’m for going to a restaurant in Brighton Beach.
Chair: OK, guys, We’ll go to the opera some other time.

Secretary: Yeah. We’ve got to think of something that’ll make everyone so envious they’ll do it in their pants.

Styopa: Hey, let’s have an off-road motor cross, damn straight, or float down the Delaware in canoes. Something sick and wild. We’ll get a whole crowd together.

And I know this one journalist, he’s one of us, from our wave, he’ll do such a write-up—it’ll make ’em all throw up.

The worried woman gasps.

Oh—sorry. Sor-ry. I’m just a simple village boy…

Chair: What kind of motor race were you thinking about?

Styopa: I was just joking around.

Secretary: This is no place for jokes, this is a serious meeting.

Maria: Maybe we should think of some way to help Ukraine and its orphans?

Secretary: You gotta be kidding! We’re barely able to collect membership dues and you wanna help Ukraine! Did you just get off the boat? Let the DP Ukrainians help them. We’ve got other things to do—ain’t that so? *(appeals to the Chair)*

Chair: We’re not up to that yet. We’ve got a different problem—how to join forces.

Vira: If we’re not going to the opera, then I resign from my post.

Chair: Who said we’re not going? Most people here (*points to the hall*) have some higher education. We need culture, but maybe not just yet?

Secretary: Exactly—not just yet.

Maria: You know, there are lots of us in the Ukrainian Women’s Union.

Secretary: What’s with this union? We all used to be in the Union. Ain’t that so? *(turns to the Chair)*

Chair: So, what did we decide? *(to the secretary)*

Secretary: Well, what? Well, that we’re moving in the right direction. Ain’t that so?

Between the sixth and seventh acts, a year passes.

7. Coney Island/Stillwell Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

Vanya is alone but isn’t aware of it.

Vanya: Y’know, Kolya, there’s lots of Ukrainians in Manhattan. They got their own bank, clubs, national home, bars.

I used to go to this one bar.

One time some old guy sits down next to me, orders a beer, and when he starts tellin’ me his worries, his hands begin to shake, just like mine. So he says, “ Why are all of ya comin’ to America? Who’s gonna build Ukraine?” And I says, there’s still lots like me there.

Don’t worry, old man, they’ll build you your Ukraine.

Yeah…

Women got it the best here. They get their hands on some old fart, bat their eyes, show their tits, and he’s done for: straight to the altar. His kids don’t like it, but he says he’s in love and that’s that.

Lots of ’em get their papers that way. They stick ’round ’til they get a green card, and then they tell the poor impotent asshole to fuck off.

Yeah…

I used to live with this babe from Tashkent.

Listen, Kolya, every night she’d tell me ’bout some Kama Sutra guy. That Kama Sutra stuff pissed me off, so I dumped her.

Y’know, Kolya, I think I’m gonna die. I’m pissin’ blood. Last winter it was so freezin’ cold...

Vanya is standing near the entrance to the Coney Island/Stillwell Avenue subway station.
Hundreds of passengers walk by him.
Some pause and drop a coin into Vanya’s timidly extended hand.
Nearby two policemen are leaning against a wall; they ignore Vanya.
As Zina walks by, her cell phone rings.

Zina: Yeah, yeah, I’m here in Coney Island. I’m on my way… Yeah, I bought it, I bought it. Enough questions already. I bought it.

Vanya closes his fingers around some coins and wants to put them in his pocket, but he misses and the coins fall to the floor.
The sound draws the attention of the policemen.
Zina, too, casts a glance at Vanya.
Vanya’s lips and hands tremble and he has difficulty speaking. He recognizes Zina.
His throat goes into spasms.

Vanya: (*quietly, almost inaudibly*) Zi-na, Zi-NA, ZI-NA. (*and in an unnaturally loud voice)* Z-I-N-A!!!

Zina stops talking and looks at Vanya.

Vanya: (*hoarsely*) Zina.
Zina: (*into the telephone*) I’ll call you later… (*to Vanya*) Vanya?
Vanya: Zi-na—

Vanya and Zina are sitting on a bench at the Coney Island stop. The conductors call out, “Last stop! Last stop! Last stop!”

Vanya: It took you a long time to find me, Zina.
Zina: Too long and too late. (*sighs*) I got married, Vanya, to an old fart—a widower. I should be getting my papers any day now. I gotta take care of him.
Vanya: Our little Tanya—how is she?
Zina: She’s OK. She’s got a new husband, and he don’t drink. I helped ’em buy a new place. She’s gonna have his kid. They’re OK.
Vanya: Zina, don’t go telling her we met.
Zina: Oh—sure. I won’t tell.
Vanya: I’m done for, Zina. I can feel it. Ever since last winter...
Zina: Maybe you should go to a hospital?
Vanya: What hospital, Zina? I’m fucked.
Zina: Can’t I do something, Vanya?
Vanya: Just go, Zina— go to your old fart.
Zina: You don’t mind?
Vanya: Go ahead. You ain’t gonna sleep here at the station with me. But next Sunday, come ’round, Zina. You can help me with somethin’ then. I think I’m gonna need your help.
Zina: Where will I find you?
Vanya: On Sundays I’m here, or up at the McDonald’s. Zina?
Zina: Yes Vanya?
Vanya: Can I ask you for somethin’?
Zina: What?
Vanya: Lemme hold your cell phone. I never did hold one.
Zina: Here—go ahead.
Vanya: Yours?
Zina: Mine.
Vanya: The old fart bought it?
Zina: No, I did.
Vanya: It’s nice.

Zina looks at her watch.

Vanya: Time to go?
Zina: Yeah, I gotta go—it’s getting late.
Vanya: Zina, come next Sunday.
Zina: I’ll try.
Vanya: Come, Zina. Come.

The conductors call out:
“Last stop! Last stop! Last stop!”
Zina enters the subway, the doors close, and it departs.
Vanya is left alone.

A week goes by.

Vanya: Everything sucks. Kolya’s disappeared. Pedro’s gone. Zina said she’d come, but she ain’t here.

Zina is running toward Vanya along the subway platform, bumping into people.
Vanya is sitting hunched over on a bench.

Zina: Vanya! God, forgive me! I couldn’t get away sooner. The old man wouldn’t let me go.
Vanya: (*weakly*) Thanks for comin’.
Zina: You eat today?
Vanya: Don’t wanna. Ain’t had nothin’ for a week. I’m getting’ real weak, Zina.
Zina: Come on now, Vanya.
Vanya: I feel it, Zina. It’s the end… I wanted to ask you, about our Pasha…
Zina: There’s no Pasha any more, Vanya. (*pause*) They killed him, last year.
Vanya: (*long pause*) I had a bad feelin’ about him, Zina. Can’t explain it, but I had a bad feelin’ about Pasha. I used to dream ’bout him a lot last year.
Zina: By then I was here. Tanya phoned and told me about the murder and the funeral…
(*A pause*)
Vanya: Zina, maybe we shouldn’t ’ve?
Zina: Shouldn’t ’ve what?
Vanya: Come to America (*pause*). Get me to the beach, Zina….
Zina: The beach?
Vanya: Yeah, the beach.
(*A pause*)

I’m gonna die there…

Vanya and Zina leave the Coney Island station. They pass the stands and slowly approach the beach, which is deserted.
Zina tucks in Vanya on an empty bench.

A Hasidic choir begins singing “Hava Nagila” on one side of the subway platform. On the opposite side the Women’s League of America choir sings its hymn.

To the accompaniment of the two choirs, Vanya Sumsky’s soul says good-bye to America.
Vanya dies quietly on the beach.
Gulls fly above Vanya’s limp body. Their cries mourn his wasted life.
The lighthouse lamps are lit. The sun sets. Ships sail by.
But Vanya doesn’t see any of this.

The cellphone in Vanya’s pocket starts playing the Nautilus Pompilius song, “Good-bye, America! O-o-o-oh…”

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Translated by Alexander J. Motyl

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The Ping Pong Professor

Kseniya Dmytrenko

To Ukrainian professors from Ukrainian students

Just a few moments ago, Stepan had reached the Square. "The Square" was what they called this desolate space resembling a massive crater that had obliterated the city center, which was sealed with solid concrete and surfaced with granite slabs in a dark gray color reminiscent of the plumage of rooks. The young man felt awkward standing there, getting his bearings as he struggled to recover from the packed subway, out of whose oceanic depths he had just been borne as if by a random wave onto the safe shores of the Square.

However, ultimate salvation was still far away. A wintry blizzard insidiously grinned in the man's face; his already flushed cheeks felt the biting frost, and the relentless cold wind snatched the last warm breath from his chest. His eye was continually drawn to the gray surface of the slabs, in places blackened with wear, that had been laid here by the assiduous hands of the city construction crew. Stepan knew he was in the Square, as it had come to be known, though he had to keep convincing himself that it was indeed so.

After a moment he came to his senses and remembered what had brought him here. There was to be a meeting, a meeting with his dissertation supervisor. However, Stepan was still a long way from the place they were to meet. The tall Institute building stood somewhere on a hillside, but the Square, on the contrary, judging by the steep slopes he had frequently had to negotiate on foot in this uneven terrain, was some distance away from that hill, at the bottom of a very, very deep ravine—or, rather, abyss—which once meandered in a winding serpentine fashion until it was replaced with a long-drawn-out avenue, straight as an arrow.

Even in summer there were never many people on the Square, and in the depths of winter scarcely any at all. Stepan set off across its deserted horizontal surface like some apparition. A second later, this figure disappeared amongst the mute throng of stone sculptures occupying an amphitheater of the Square, alleviating the dismal impression of its emptiness. Broad-shouldered men, agile, nubile young women—the statues were assembled in small formations, representing canonical portraits of accepted social groups.

Stepan first came across a group of musicians: four lead casts of Cossacks in Astrakhan hats and fur coats, laughing good-naturedly through

their moustaches, holding wooden flutes and zithers in readiness for the concert to begin. In the center of the group was a young woman. She held no instrument; her refined beauty stood out in contrast to the rather rough-looking men. Her petite form enveloped in a flimsy dress, with a luxuriant, well-arranged coiffure extending from shoulders to waist—she seemed uncomfortable as a soloist before the clamorous, confident instrumentalists. Judging by her stooped shoulders and lowered chin, the girl was unable to overcome her shyness when meeting the public.

Leaving behind the musicians, Stepan came across a long slab of reinforced concrete being shaped by two workers. The youth in the hat was forcefully holding down the slab, ensuring it did not move; his older colleague was squatting next to him, painstakingly carving out a shape with an adze. The momentous effort he was applying to his work was clearly revealed by his bare, deeply wrinkled forehead, his tightly tied forelock, his hair soaked in sweat, his eyes bulging from their sockets, and the straining fibrous muscles of his powerful neck.

At the center of the next composition was a block of wood, next to which two men adopted contorted, melodramatic poses. They both wore woolen overalls and long fire-proof aprons thoroughly protecting their bodies from their chests down to their knees. The workers’ faces were almost completely covered by protective masks reminiscent of medieval visors. Two pairs of determined eyes lent a unique atmosphere to this scene. The knights of labor glared with a passionate intensity at the object of their creativity, located at the very center of the wooden block, as though it was not just an ordinary lump of metal but some magic crystal or a diamond which could, with the assistance of the hammer and anvil lying nearby, be turned into an elixir of immortality.

Without realizing it, Stepan found himself behind these figures, in the very center of the Square. He was used to this space being unnaturally overcrowded with sculptures, toward which he was actually quite indifferent. The stone figures of women and men were much taller and heavier than he was, overwhelming in their indomitable physical reality, in comparison with which his own body seemed like something insignificant and unreal, something quite inconspicuous, merely ephemeral, briefly carried to this place on a chance gust of wind. He would be simply swept over the Square, unnoticed by anyone, casting the merest shadow across the sculptures, incapable of eclipsing their eternity, were it not for the glass pyramid in the very center of the Square, which, as always, inevitably bore witness to his presence.

Stepan paused in front of one of its transparent facets; in the glass he saw a blurred reflection of his pale features and behind him the entrance to the underground passage leading to the other side of the road, which in turn led to the side street where his Institute was located.

Although on the glass surface everything was well ordered in a compact,

recognizable image, almost like a postcard photograph, in fact there followed a farther descent below ground and consequent climb back to street level, requiring a good deal of additional time and effort. Having negotiated this phase, the young man actually did not feel tired at all. He had spent many years in the city, and by now he was well used to coping with the demands of the urban labyrinth. Stepan did not find it at all unpleasant; he had long since ceased to find anything annoying in these endless descents and ascents. On the contrary, his thoughts turned to quite different matters, enabling him to escape to other environments, unlike the place where he presently found himself.

This was indeed quite possible. Such an opportunity presented itself right here, in this street which appeared to have become terminally drained and exhausted during all those years he had been coming here to attend the Institute. It stood at the very end of the street, occupying a far right-hand corner. For those approaching from below this building represented the end of their climb, while for those coming from above it formed a kind of gateway. So Stepan proceeded not just casually but full of expectation about his meeting with an old acquaintance, whose face he was so fond of recognizing again and again.

Old? But how old? Indeed, the secret of this edifice had revealed itself to him only quite recently, thanks to pictures taken by a friend who photographed buildings of this particular type, studying a stratum of urban architecture quite unfamiliar at the time. During one of their regular visits to the coffee bar, Andriy unexpectedly took out a small disc containing photographs from his briefcase.

“Look, I want to share my findings with someone who is not indifferent to the history of the city.”

At home, Stepan studied the images at leisure, and afterwards he began to recognize buildings on streets he thought he knew like the back of his hand. It was the same with this building. Stepan made his way along the familiar street and, all of a sudden, there it was! He recognized a building which he had never noticed before, noting clearly all the features of the hybrid style about which Andriy was so enthusiastic. What was mysterious and inexplicable in this case was the presence of avant-garde characteristics in entirely neo-classical residences erected at one time for the party elite. The apartments had extensive balconies and large windows letting in the light. Thanks to the high ceilings, the sun’s rays reached right inside the rooms, revealing a fantastically luxurious realm of domestic furnishings—brown lacquered wardrobes, decorative doors on the sideboard, tables slightly raised on elegant carved legs, heavy opaque curtains at the windows, and ornate chandeliers filling the room with a cascade of light. At any rate, that is how Stepan imagined it, having unfortunately never had the opportunity to live in such houses. However, thanks to Andriy’s discovery, he could now grasp something rather different, though no less absorbing—something not

concealed inside, but always accessible from the exterior: the graceful, geometrically perfect proportions of the walls, the bold, prominent design of the balconies, and also the surprisingly pliant, gentle curvature of the trim in the individual niches concealed between the semi-transparent stained-glass panels in the staircase.

As it turned out, the building in question was not the only one on the street. The characteristics of the inimitable style, clearly distinguishable on the photographs, were now also unmistakably visible on the neighboring structures. One of them occupied a complete block, in no way detracting from the capricious continuity of the slope. The building appeared to grow directly out of the street, the two forming an integral whole. Looking down from an aerial perspective, one could imagine its facade forming a continuous undulating ribbon that drew the eye all the way down, so that the slope of the street felt like a single sheer swoop.

Negotiating the incline with ease, Stepan found himself at the very summit of the hill. The Institute was quite close now, about two hundred meters away. Actually, despite the short distance, the rest of the way was not very inviting. That had to do with a sudden change in the weather, which became appreciably more severe up here on the hill, by comparison with the Square. The trees lined the horizon like fine black hieroglyphs crowning the hilltops, from where a panorama of the river stretched farther than the eye could see; seen from above, it appeared to be quite out of reach. However, the elusive yet inescapable proximity of the river instantly made itself evident—even in winter, when it was not flowing but merely resting at the foot of the hills, trapped in blocks of ice. The water continued to breathe even beneath the frozen surface, and the wind drove this silent, icy breath upwards, enveloping everything around it in mist and haze. On the hillsides, amongst the black branches, the breath from the river slowly froze to form thin transparent shards of glass, engraved with fine patterns of hoarfrost. The air lost its soft moistness, filling with crackling strings of snowflakes that stung the face and hands and melted on contact like tiny sweet fruit drops.

It must be said that during his years as a student this street, which led upwards from the foot of the hills all the way to the Institute, had changed almost beyond recognition. At one time it had been an ordinary little street leading past the park and turning off in a semicircle towards the Institute. However, time passed, and the number of daily visitors, as well as the number of their cars, increased considerably. Because of a shortage of parking spaces, the street had first of all to be widened, and this involved felling trees in the park and the demolition of what were usually called “unsafe” buildings. Years passed, but people remained unwilling to give up the use of their cars. And so the land surrounding the Institute was turned into a parking lot.

On arrival at the Institute first thing in the morning, the vehicles arranged themselves neatly side by side in compact semicircles. However, during the day so many of them turned up that one had the impression that

everywhere around was awash in a sea of cars. In the evening, after they had driven off, the lot was empty again, looking like a military encampment surrounded on all sides by a spiked fence.

The tall Institute building stood right in the center of the vehicles’ camp. It was a multi-story structure with an unusual exterior appearance. This edifice was built about forty years ago as an experimental project. The designers wanted to create the first building in the country to conserve heat by drawing it from the ground. To prevent heat loss, they built it high above the ground—several stories, one above the other, forming a kind of wheel attached to a massive central column which was to serve as the foundation. Each floor consisted of elongated rooms, each having a square-shaped balcony. The gleaming square balconies were arranged one above the other on the facade so that they merged to form a motley image. Seen from a distance, the Institute looked like a beehive with its honeycombs, buzzing and soaring into the clouds above the summit of the hills.

Viewed from the parking lot, on the other hand, the Institute gave the impression of a solitary alien bolt rising above the river, its summit leaning forlornly like the Swallow’s Nest. The top of the building was crowned with a bronze statue consisting of two male figures. These workers, dressed in jackets and trousers, embraced one another enthusiastically, fused together in a passionate kiss like an ornamental couple on a wedding cake.[1]

So much for the wonders and surprises which the designers managed to achieve. The energy-saving project, on the other hand, was a total failure. Since the design of the central column was not fully implemented, it was not possible to install the special pumps which were to extract heat from the ground and transfer it upwards. It now contained nothing more than elevator shafts giving access to the upper floors. The building was designed with no internal staircases, so when the elevators broke down one had to use a light metal staircase attached to the main outer wall of the building.

Maneuvering among the narrow spaces in the jam-packed parking lot, Stepan gradually began to make his way to the Institute. The cars crowded together like ravens that, having failed to migrate south in good time, now had to flock together to subsist and survive the bitter winter. Momentarily, Stepan’s eye rested on their smooth blue-black backs, as though he was listening for a reply to some perennial question. However, the mechanical birds stubbornly maintained their hostility and inscrutability, failing to react in any way to the young man’s presence.

Stepan suddenly felt a sharp, internal pain. He instinctively called out, as the pain was almost unbearable. Taken by surprise, he remained on the spot for some time, adopting a pose of desperation, defenselessly gasping for

[1] An allusion to the *Friendship Sanatorium* near Gaspra, Crimea, one of the best-known examples of late Soviet modernism of the 1980s. (KD)

breath, his pupils flickering behind his steamed-up glasses, which had slid down his nose, now barely resting on its very tip. His eyes widened strangely in a vain attempt to make out something of what was going on around him. With his right hand Stepan clutched at the left side of his chest, where his heart was beating desperately; below, his knees kept trembling.

Then Stepan felt something mysterious dragging him down and backward, away from the street where the Institute stood, back towards the slope, towards the Square and further on to the underground passage and the subway. He slid helplessly down from the parking lot, lower and lower, leaving behind him a thin, snaking trail like the tracks left by an inexperienced, novice skater venturing onto the ice for the first time.

Stepan made desperate attempts to resist the invisible force of gravity which had taken complete control over him on this snow-covered, deserted parking lot, where apart from him there was not a single other soul. In his fright, he began to seize hold of everything within his grasp. His moist fingers spread fan-like on a windshield as he unexpectedly saw himself in a driver’s side view mirror. In desperation he tried with his nails to grip a warning label indicating that in reality all was not quite what it seemed. But in vain!

For a brief moment he once again felt slippery glass under his elbows, quickly turning to rubber moldings and metal doors. Stepan tried to catch hold of the handles, but his whole body crashed onto the trunk. His legs gave way and his arms were of no use. Across the treacherous ice he almost careered, chin first, into headlights. Losing his balance, he attempted to grasp the thick tires, which were supposed to protect the car from ice—but the protection was meant for the car, of course, not for him!

In the end, all of Stepan’s efforts were in vain. The cold, shiny surfaces of the cars callously rejected him, leaving him with painful red marks.

He was carried further and further downhill, until he managed to come to a stop by the wooden gate of one of the neighboring houses.

At this instant everything became calm; the sudden ice storm subsided, and Stepan was no longer being carried away, so he could calmly consider how to move on.

Crossing to the other side of the street, he briefly disappeared into the park and then turned into a little avenue which circumvented the parking lot and led directly to the spacious Institute forecourt. The old doors reluctantly creaked open and Stepan slipped inside unnoticed.

The main foyer of the Institute was divided into two areas. The first began at the entrance, and the second was a little further on, inside the building, near the elevator shafts. Stepan took a look around; he was very familiar with this place, as he had been a regular visitor for many years. The first thing that struck one was the unusual design of the space. The foyer extended vertically, following the central column which supported the entire building. It stretched upwards to the very top of the internal well, forming a long, inclined wall, decorated with an old-fashioned mural. The picture on

the wall was the first thing that caught one’s eye as soon as one crossed the threshold of the Institute. The bright red images began at the base of the wall, rising gradually upwards and converging in a single tiny point at the top.[2]

Although the composition was dated, it had not lost its striking, pointed dynamism. The mural did not simply occupy the space, it shot to its peak with the velocity of a rocket and the suddenness of a lightning flash, making a vertiginous impression on the observer. As a result, this totally secular space was rendered virtually sacral. The painting on the wall had been inspired by a sense of cosmic vastness. It could be taken to depict the universe itself—cosmic objects and cosmic inter-relationships.

The central heroes on the canvas were people, but seen as a whole they took on surprising dimensions and forms, striving to take off and reach the highest point. From below, it was impossible to take in everything located at the very summit of the universe; however, the eternal rays of something beautiful shone down from above, drawing all the characters towards it. Here no individual walked casually on the earth. Although the characters were varied and each of them represented typical professional roles—the academic, doctor, or astronaut—what was common to all of them was a continual movement towards something better and perfect, whose constant star shone somewhere above, reflected on the surface of other satellites and planets.

This was how the entrance to Stepan’s Institute opened.

Beyond that, however, the foyer was supposed to serve purely pragmatic purposes—access to the elevators, a cloakroom for depositing coats, and a place for the reception of visitors. It was particularly unsuitable for the latter. The second area of the foyer, situated immediately beyond the mural, was more like an attic. There were all sorts of things lying around here, accumulated from goodness-knows-where.

There was a battered old table, where the elderly housekeeper usually sat, propping herself up on her elbows, when she emerged from her adjacent cabin to draw a breath of fresh air, as it were. And a scruffy desk with wobbly, hopelessly twisted legs, on which book displays were set up for receptions or special occasions. The top of the battered wooden desk was covered with newspapers (as always, there were no funds for establishing a bookshop). However, the rest of the time the desk always remained clear, attracting attention by its inscriptions and scratches and the adjustable chair with one arm-rest sawed off and half of the upholstery missing, making it hard as a rock, which began spinning round crazily if anyone so much as thought of sitting on it.

Other objects in various areas of the foyer showed similar signs of

[2] A monumental work of art in the foyer of the V. I. Vernadsky National Library in Kyiv (KD)

disorder and decline: the cloakroom where nobody had left a coat for ages because it was in need of refurbishment and most people attending the Institute left their things in their own offices; and the cupboard with its broken doors left ajar, containing nothing but old, yellowing papers. Then there was the table and stool. The bottom drawer stuck out, blocking the way to the elevators, which was narrow enough to begin with, while the top drawer had long since disappeared in an unknown direction. There was a creaky, broken-down divan squashed into the space between the cupboard and the table, and there were bundles of newspapers, piles of dirty, unwashed crockery, a dusty kettle, its electric cord missing, and much more besides that had somehow found its way here.

It was practically impossible to reach the door through all this clutter. Visitors had to go round it on one side or the other, forcing their way through gradually and having to keep looking back to check that, God forbid, they hadn’t damaged anything. In places you could generally make progress only by hopping on one leg. In front of the actual doorway leading to the elevator there were several rectangular steps, invariably with something placed on them—newspaper cuttings, a notebook containing rough drafts, a crushed pie packet—so it was better not to step on them but to jump over them, if possible.

Having taken the necessary leap, Stepan quickly turned to the left and walked through the doorway leading to the elevator. However, as it turned out, he was mistaken. Access to the elevators was on the other side, so he found himself outside once more, right on the external staircase.

Stepan sighed deeply. He felt worn out, exhausted by the evidently excessive demands this expedition was making on him, especially this last phase of it. After all that clambering uphill he just could not help feeling that the obstacles he faced whenever he needed to reach the Institute were not accidental—indeed, that they were deliberately placed in his way.

“Oh, so what! What’s wrong with me?” thought Stepan, suddenly bursting out laughing in relief. He recalled that he had come here once to continue his studies—that is, to undertake research—and on that occasion he really had felt out of sorts, and he had had a tingling feeling in his spine: was he really capable of doing this research, or wasn’t he? Would he be competent enough to follow this difficult path from beginning to end?

But this initial fear gradually dissipated as Stepan demonstrated that he was, after all, deserving and capable. He had worked hard on his dissertation, giving it everything he had, and he had always handed in his work on time, never even a minute late. He had submitted his work for the professor to read, and the latter had, in the end, given a very positive assessment. At the moment, though, he had come just to get a reference, and this was in fact a mere formality.

Taking heart, Stepan easily negotiated several flights of the snow-covered metal staircase. Opening the heavy metal door to the interior of the building, he entered a small, dim bunker of a vestibule leading to the floor

where the professor’s study was located.

Before entering the corridor, Stepan paused: his eye caught a sign with the inscription “No Smokyng” attached to the left of the door with new steel screws. The message was in Ukrainian but misspelled by someone who did not quite know the difference between Ukrainian and Russian.

Things like this for some reason always drew Stepan’s attention, luring him; one could even say that they stalked him. It was just such a small, insignificant sign-plate, on the face of it something quite ordinary, that could simply drive him crazy. He had noticed it earlier, when he crossed the threshold of the Institute for the first time, and since then, whenever he visited the building, he had simply been unable to avoid it. One way or another, he had been obliged either to greet it, or silently give it a nod, or at least cast a sidelong glance, or blink, as the sign had become for him a kind of little secret conspirator known only to him. He loved it for the oddity of its permanent presence in one and the same place for so many decades.

The sign-plate combined the old and the new in a rather striking way. Judging by the material it was made of, it could have been thirty to forty years old, but the gold lettering stood out so brightly against the dark red background that it could just as well have been inscribed yesterday. It was a light laminate, made of colored plexiglas, but the exhortation was so distinctly and deeply engraved on it that one had the impression of a sign made of something permanent, like quartz or granite.

Stepan took another look at the inscription on the sign, drawing out the syllables in a quiet whisper: “No-smo-kyng.” He could not believe his eyes: many years had passed since the sign with its exhortatory inscription had first appeared here. The sign itself no longer bore any relation to reality, since everyone around was smoking—and not just tobacco. Still, the sign continued proudly displaying its irrelevant imperative as though there really was something to be proud of around here.

In themselves, the letters were of no particular interest. Naturally, in the course of all those years they had been repeatedly renovated and re-painted, as witnessed by the insertion of the Ukrainian “y,” not so much filling the space left by the removal of the Russian “i” as, on the contrary, further emphasizing the absence of the latter, its clumsy prominence against the quite ordinary background of the sign-plate, like a gold tooth standing out in someone’s dazzling white smile. But what really enhanced the value of the sign-plate in Stepan’s eyes was the material it was made of. It was plexiglas, genuine plexiglas which, by contrast with cheap plastic, never stuck to your hands, never got covered in cracks or scratches, and remained rock-hard and as durable as steel for many, many years. It was pleasant, lightweight, pliable and cool to the touch. For this reason it was continually liable to be stolen—well, perhaps to try making spectacles out of it and observe the world through clouded lenses. What might it look like then, he wondered? But he had no time to ponder this question. The doors to the corridor were opening now, as

if of their own accord, and beyond them another part of the building suddenly came into view.

Once inside, Stepan froze—what faced him was not at all what he expected.

The floor where his Institute was located was usually cloaked in semi-darkness. The walls of the corridor were a misty yellow color and they radiated coolness, as in a cellar. Somewhere at the far end there was a scarcely visible glimmer from an open ventilation window. The light shone sluggishly and unwillingly through the air, and individual rays fell on portraits, illuminating the faces of the dignitaries proudly presenting their high foreheads. A little further on hung a notice board, which, like the sign by the entrance, was also made of scarce plexiglas, though not of the semi-transparent red variety, in which a mysterious reflection often glinted deep inside, but was completely transparent, so various announcements could conveniently be displayed behind it.

It was cozy and warm in the Institute, as in a rural cottage on a foggy evening just before dusk. There was very little furniture remaining in the corridor. The space was almost completely empty, and nothing prevented visitors from proceeding to where they were going. People who hung around here would, from time to time, come across various objects such as ancient library catalog drawers full of cards, an empty desk deserted as always, and several chairs covered in soft foam rubber. All this had remained here for ages. The objects seemed to have their own unique rhythm of existence, unaffected by anything except perhaps the regular dusting by janitors each morning—a rhythm unimaginable anywhere beyond the walls of this Institute.

But on this occasion everything was quite different. A blinding light shone directly from above. Small spotlights installed in the suspended ceiling continually emitted piercing, garish rays. The white walls, the floor, and the ceiling merged into one another seamlessly. In this room no clues remained which might give an indication as to its age. The corridor was like an operating theater where at any moment doctors wearing masks would appear to operate on the next patient.

Down at the other end, voices and footsteps could now be heard. Two female figures momentarily appeared in the corridor, each carrying a large pile of documents. Finding it difficult to carry so many, the women propped the stacks of files against their bodies, thus supporting their ample breasts, scarcely contained in their low-cut, tight-fitting blouses. One of the files bore the inscription “DEBI,” the last letter hidden by the long red fingernail of one of the women.

It occurred to Stepan that the women’s behavior was unusual—within the confines of the Institute it was really quite out of order! To gain entry to the academic community here, women had to behave just like men, and this entailed the masculinization not only of their behavior but also of their dress.

No covert glances, no playful gestures or flirtation! Short mini-skirts, dresses with plunging necklines, tight shiny leggings, low-cut blouses, frilly lace, semi-transparent georgette—all this was subject to an unspoken but strict and immutable taboo. How would it be possible to pursue research without such rules?!

And then again, even under conditions such as these, relationships were formed, families were established, and children were born. In a word, life never stopped; it continued to flow unremittingly in its entirely understandable and natural way.

In the end, the adaptation of men and women to academic research involved only a superficial, neutralizing effect. The women may have worn austere jackets, baggy trousers, and long skirts, but this did not prevent them from adding small, purely feminine accessories: striking earrings, expensive rings, fine gold chains. These typical tokens were inevitably retained, not so much for the sake of beauty or seductiveness, but for the purpose of reminding themselves and others of their femininity and of all the privileges attending that status.

At meetings the women were offered the best seats, in gentlemanly fashion; they did not have to queue to enter the conference room, they received gifts of flowers, and they were protected and taken care of like weaker beings. As for married couples, in the professional context their relationships were modified without difficulty—a wife or a husband was transformed into just another participant in the debate, or even an academic adversary.

However, young girls in short, tight-fitting dresses, with half-bare backs and protruding breasts, such as those that had just been blithely walking down the corridor, showing off their long legs in high heels and loudly exchanging the latest gossip—no! Women like that simply had no place here!

Stepan realized that he had in fact come to the wrong floor and that he had ended up in the reception area of the cosmetic surgery clinic. The hospital rented this space from the Institute, which was obliged to lease some of the floors in order somehow to cover its budget deficit. These women were, evidently, members of the clinic’s administrative staff.

* * *

The professor’s study was located behind the library, hidden away in a remote corner, so to reach it Stepan had to go almost to the end of the left-hand corridor. On hearing some commotion, he paused outside one of the offices. On the other side of the door voices were raised in agitation—some kind of discussion was in progress. Stepan looked into the conference room through a chink left by the slightly open door: the research committee was in session. “Ah, of course, it’s ‘dissertation’ day today,” he recollected.

Sure enough, the set-up was a familiar one. A young woman was

prancing at the rostrum, defending her thesis. Of all those present, she was the one who had to make the greatest effort during these proceedings. The members of the committee were sitting calmly in their seats. The chairman was keeping time, giving equal opportunity to all who wished to speak. At a long, rectangular table sat the experts and reviewers. Their role was to put questions and offer remarks, responses, or commentaries. Seats were also provided for the public, in the gallery. As it happened, there was actually nobody there that day, apart from a single elderly man, deeply engrossed in the latest issue of a newspaper.

The examination procedure functioned perfectly, strictly by the book, with no deviations or distractions. The participants rose from their seats one after another and made their statements without undue hesitation. The entire protocol of the session was known in advance, down to the smallest details. The eminent academics knew who was to speak and in what order, who was supposed to say what, and even, since they had all worked together for decades, who could say what “off the record.”

The members of the committee rose one after another from their seats to play their respective parts; it was like a puppet show, except that there had been no director for a long time now. One had the impression that at some time someone had drawn up this whole scenario for them and then just left, but no new producer had appeared, unfortunately. The puppets themselves, of course, had no imagination, so they were fated to repeat the same things over and over again throughout their ever-so-long careers. Someone once called a dissertation “words set to someone else’s music,” and Stepan had personally witnessed many times how true and telling this statement was.

Suddenly he was aware of something in the room seeking his attention, interrupting the turgid routine embracing everything around him. It was a sharp, piercing gaze that Stepan would be able to recognize in any situation. It was something very familiar, known to him very well for a long time, something extremely intimate and at the same time stunning and agonizing, capable of changing the course of events forever.

He was overcome by a kind of dizziness—what a dangerous, risky moment this might be, he felt—the moment of recognition! Yes, it was him! Stepan was no longer in doubt that he had recognized his old friend Ostap, with whom he had once spent many days and years in parks and cafés, drinking tea or coffee, engrossed in fascinating conversations about matters known only to them as close friends.

But then the moment of parting had inevitably followed. Their student days came and went, and so did their friendship. It was as if, like the score for a puppet show, it had been prepared in advance by a third party who, without knowing either Stepan or Ostap, had drawn up the entire scenario for many years in advance.

Was there anyone who “appointed” Ostap, or was it an entirely independent decision by his friend?

Stepan could not answer that definitively. It just became clear one day that Ostap had realized something about himself and come to a definite decision. Stepan remembered very clearly standing there, looking his friend straight in the eye as the latter quite sincerely admitted to him that he “intended to become a somebody” and that only then would he be able to return to something “real,” “essential,” the “main thing.” Although that was an unpleasant surprise for Stepan, he didn’t hold it against his friend by any means. Nevertheless, he made a different choice, to remain “a nobody.” Since then, he had never had occasion to see the cheerful glint in Ostap’s eyes, full of a kind of strange energy; somehow it gradually dissipated in the course of business trips, meetings, and involvement in important social matters, as well as confidential negotiations—the world to which his friend had become totally devoted.

Today that glint had suddenly reappeared, flashing before his eyes like the light from an internally concealed torch. After so many years of separation Stepan could foresee exactly the moment when Ostap’s eyes would once again light up, albeit only briefly, yet with that same brightness, that same undying flame that instantly permeated the entire being of his interlocutor, from head to toe, making an indescribable impression which could never be erased from memory.

Stepan could now distinguish two completely different roles adopted by his friend.

At the meeting, Ostap resembled more of a regulator who was supposed to coordinate matters in such a way that everything proceeded with painless precision, all participants in the discussion being able to follow smoothly one after another, unhurriedly, not needing signals, avoiding conflict and—God forbid—any mishaps. It had to be said that this role suited Ostap to a tee. Smartly dressed in an austere business suit, like a uniform, he was able to focus on all the details and nuances inherent in phenomena such as road traffic movements, while maintaining a flexibility of reaction in order to come to the aid of anyone needing it. Taking a sidelong glance, Ostap would briefly draw attention to some minor response, only to bring in the next speaker a moment later on the other side of the table, without making the slightest sound, giving the impression that everything proceeded of its own accord, with no external intervention. From time to time, the chairman lowered his gaze, stopped looking round and concentrated on himself—the position of his hands, the angle of his elbows, his stretched-out fingers—and at such times everyone around him also stopped and fell silent: a pause ensued.

A minute later, however, everything started up again. Some member of the assembly rose and started speaking, while others coughed in unison with the speaker or silently nodded, one of them shuffled documents while another raised a hand and asked questions; but it made no difference what any of the members actually had in mind, what meaning they gave to their words, what tone they adopted or what their voices sounded like, just as on the road the

particular make or model of a car usually makes no difference—the main thing is to keep the process itself going, keep the traffic moving, avoid malfunction, and, of course, show results, which in the present case meant the production of new academic staff.

Apparently, all the members of the assembly were agreed on this primary task, and it was this agreement that lay behind the deep consensus that allowed for the re-starting of the pendulum of examinations and defenses, launching new cycles of activity throughout the whole calendar year, one after another, changing the light from red to green and back again, letting through now the vehicles, now the pedestrians.

However, everything could also happen quite differently for Ostap—for example, in the case of a chance meeting on the narrow metal staircase by the entrance to the library.

Standing slightly unsteadily by the door were two shimmering, youthful figures. Turning to his interlocutor, Stepan did not so much listen to his words as look into his eyes. For a scarcely perceptible moment he was anticipating the elusive yet bewitching glint in his friend’s eye, which would completely wrench him from his present surroundings. Stepan had only to catch that glint and everything around him would dissolve, giving him the feeling of being flung into the far distance, to the horizon, into the unknown.

He looked around and realized that he had ended up somewhere in the middle of the sea. Stepan unexpectedly found himself thrown into a small dugout, carried on the waves somewhere far from the rocky shore. His toes were resting on the rough wooden surface of the boat, while from time to time the lukewarm seawater, heated by the sun, washed over the rest of his body—his arms, chest, and stomach. Everywhere could be heard the irrepressible dashing of the waves, their rolling grumble, and their sad, desperate lapping. He closed his eyes and felt himself alone with the endless horizon and the inexpressibly clear sky, unblemished by a single cloud.

The sea reminded Stepan of a stranger he once happened to meet who was surprisingly similar to Ostap. It was when he was on holiday in one of the resorts. Arriving at the coast, Stepan took accommodation right in the center of the tranquil, small town at the height of summer, full of young families on holiday with their children. It was a typical consumer oasis, where the vast majority of holiday-makers came to lie on the beach and to eat cheaply but well.

Stepan was completely out of his element here, because of what he called “lack of instinct.” Indeed, in Stepan’s case, the instinct required for proper participation in the pleasures and delights of holiday resorts was something of a rarity, something he could hardly ever boast about. As far as he could remember, he had always been lacking in instinct. Eventually, even the slightest traces of the precious sensitivity once given to him at birth finally vanished; discarded as unnecessary and superfluous, they disappeared. So all that was left for Stepan to do, given his lack of instinct, was to stay on with

the crowd, uninstinctively observing the instincts of others.

Leaving his room every morning, he ended up on the summer terrace of the restaurant. Sitting there, waiting for his breakfast, Stepan calmly observed all the excitement and the delight around him aroused by the fact that “they’ve brought the coffee,” or “there are palm trees growing in the park,” or “we’re going to the mountains tomorrow.”

Once he came to the restaurant after dark, for dinner. Stepan, as always, kept to himself, satisfied with the modest company of his room keys that occasionally rattled in his pocket. However, on this occasion there were no free places on the terrace, so he went inside. He sat at a table and gave his order, then he suddenly realized he was in a very different place, entirely unlike the terrace.

This room had an unusually high ceiling and also incorporated a gallery, which occupied half of the hall, forming a mezzanine level with cozy, cave-like niches. The predominant materials were wood and limestone, native to this locality. Apart from the large tables, there were several small tables for singles.

However, what actually determined the tone of the place was the guests themselves, who occupied the seats haphazardly, totally engrossed in their own affairs. Although they were all on their own, they seemed to be united by some extremely intense, self-sufficient activity. A face mysteriously peering at a screen or a book open at any old page, thin, bony fingers holding tightly onto a glass of café-latte or a gin and tonic, languid lips, half-open, now and again breaking into an ironically confused smile, eyes looking ahead distractedly, not focused on anything in particular, and not taking seriously anything going on around there.

A man was busy working behind the bar. Stepan did not notice him at first, but you only needed to glance at him to realize that the personality of the bartender was a kind of key axis or line of force governing all that went on here. His hips and chest were displayed in tight jeans and a short-sleeved tennis top, highlighting the flexing of his prominent biceps. He had a slightly elongated, taut face with a pointed nose, stubbly chin and rather hairy cheeks. On the one hand, the bartender looked like a typical local man; on the other hand, the professional dexterity he had developed over the years was quite striking.

The bartender’s gestures were so lithe and adept that he looked not so much like a member of the restaurant staff as like an accomplished artiste with the ability to take orders and prepare drinks while performing graceful ballroom routines. In fact, this impression was reinforced by an awareness of the mundane purpose of the spectacle. Of course, there was so much the bartender needed to know. He had to remember a long list of items in order to operate so confidently in this complex set-up involving all the various drinks and ingredients, as well as the containers—from squat, heavy whiskey glasses to elegant, refined champagne flutes, from everyday little tequila

glasses to exotic clay gourds with special straws for maté tea.

However, dealing with all these lists and inventories was by now a straightforward matter for the man behind the bar. He had long since acquired all the necessary skills, satisfying customers’ every whim at the drop of a hat. What is more, he even had time to answer his cellphone in a single gesture, calling out another enthusiastic “hello!” and continuing to hold it surreptitiously to his ear as he introduced a drinking straw into a glass of ice coffee with the index finger of his other hand, not forgetting as he did so to glance in acknowledgement in the direction of the latest beauty of the beach as she struggled to keep her balance on one of the rickety bar stools.

The bartender handed the coffee he had prepared to the waiter and for a moment, as he focused his penetrating gaze on the girl, he sensed a fantasy of desire in the first words unleashed from her torrid lips. However, this romanticism was short-lived. The next moment someone called to the man from somewhere behind his back, and he turned round, instantly switching to other matters. It could be a customer the bartender had got to know well in the last few days, someone with whom he could not only share jokes but discuss serious topics as well. Of course, there was no substance or depth to any of this; everything the bartender did was superficial, intended to disseminate a pleasant aura for the benefit of everyone patronizing the restaurant, ensuring a continuous interchange with strong drinks, lighthearted banter, gestures of familiarity, or passionate, knowing glances.

Everything around here moved and lived in unison with the lithe, supremely deft movements of his body. The walls of the restaurant vibrated with the techno, a passionate female voice now and again repeated with fake ecstasy in English, “with you I feel so high.” Stepan wanted to stay on a little longer in this delightful atmosphere; his eyes were still riveted to the bartender’s mesmerizing movements as he sank deeper and deeper into the magical vortex unfolding around him…

He experienced a similar sense of unity in Ostap’s chairing of the meeting. This also demanded both systematically organized knowledge and remarkable skill, a highly developed responsiveness to situations and to the whole gamut of human characteristics, foibles, and desires. However, in this case it did not concern scantily-clad girls on holiday and those who occupied the, beach but staid members of the Academic Council. Social status was not so important here; people were still human and they revealed the same habits and patterns of interaction, whether they were at the holiday resort or on the premises of his own Institute.

The session was unexpectedly interrupted—the chairman rose to announce the next candidate.

“Candidate number five seven five four three one, seven two two nine one one. Le candidat cinq sept cinq quatre trois une, sept deux deux, neuf une une … Der Kandidat Nummer fünf sieben fünf vier drei eins sieben zwo zwo neun eins eins…. Kandidat nomer pyat sem pyat chetyre tri odin sem dva dva

devyat odin odin….”

The announcements of the respective candidates were made in accordance with the new regulations of the Higher Attestation Commission. The principal points of procedure had to be announced in several languages. The legislators were convinced that this would promote the study of foreign languages, the internationalization of the country’s research effort, and the overall global integration of the national academic community.

The chairman mumbled the accursed numbers for such a long time that the old man in the public gallery was obliged to drag himself away from his newspaper. Raising his head, he looked around in despair, attempting to grasp the arcane meaning of this litany evoked by the voice of the chairman, who chanted his announcements like a priest praying for peace.

Stepan hastily closed the door and hurried off in the direction of his professor's office.

* * *

The young man stopped just outside the door. He entered the office unhurriedly, holding back his rapid breathing, as his chest was fit to burst. During his visits to the Institute over the years, Stepan had got used to arriving for his meetings with the professor in good time, having his speech at the ready, carefully thought-out in advance. At the same time, however, he tried to enter the office with a casual nonchalance, as if he just happened to be passing by and decided to drop in for a few minutes.

This tactic helped maintain a sense of spontaneity at the meeting. The professor was many decades older than his student, and he seemed to exist in a completely different time continuum, very slow-moving by contrast with the accelerated pace of urban life to which Stepan was so accustomed.

The pace of the conversation was usually so lethargic that Stepan kept having to remind himself what he was doing in the professor’s office and what the purpose of his visit actually was. As far as he remembered, during the time he had been working on his dissertation over the entire three-year period at the Institute, the professor had not said a word to him. And then, when the thesis was finished, and Stepan came to see him, delighted to be able to finally discuss what he had written, the professor remarked briefly and succinctly: “Well, you have completed the work.”

That is all that he had managed to say, as supervisor, about the content of the thesis, though it is true that they did subsequently spend some time correcting formal errors that could be problematical at the defense.

It was not that Stepan was deeply hurt or disappointed by his professor’s attitude. Of course, as he left his office on that occasion, he threw up his hands and shrugged his shoulders by force of habit, but this gesture did not mean he had taken any offense. More importantly, in fact, what Stepan had struggled with all these years in his relations with the professor was to understand his

silence for what it was, to give this taciturnity some meaning, or at least to set it out in a few simple sentences that he could understand. The thing was, you could not say of the professor that he did not know anything, or that he lacked sufficient knowledge, or that during the course of his very long life he had grown generally indifferent. In fact, there were times when the professor had shown himself to be cheerful, lively, and fully aware, laughing, making ironic remarks and smiling. On the other hand, none of this could adequately explain the impression of doom-laden frostiness and bitter alienation that Stepan experienced each time he entered the professor’s office.

Usually, as he crossed the threshold Stepan almost immediately had a view of the professor’s back, growing directly out of the back of the chair as if they were an integral whole. Twenty years ago, when the professor was younger, he wore an unattractive woolen coat, but lately he had taken to a thick fox-fur coat, which he had picked up at a street market. The fur on the coat was extremely lush and it certainly made the rather slight professor look bulkier. The deep-cut neck was set off by a gorgeous fox-fur collar. The collar was so big and so long it gave the impression that a live wild animal was curled around the professor’s neck. Thanks to his coat, the professor could hardly ever have felt the cold when he sat for hours on end in his office, even in the winter, despite the fact that in the cold season the building was left largely unheated.

Eventually, Stepan found a convenient and understandable explanation of the professor’s behavior that was summed up in one simple phrase—”the wall.” “The Wall” was a purely internal designation for something situated somewhere very deep inside the professor. It may have started right down in his toes, climbing higher and higher, up to the spine, and then, after passing through the spinal cord, have taken root in the head itself. Stepan did not know the exact route followed by this internal barrier and he had no way of knowing it, but over the years he had become convinced that what he came up against on visiting the professor's office was quite simply a wall that was utterly unassailable.

At one time the professor, along with everybody else, had lived through the turbulent revolutionary times when it seemed that all obstacles and walls were supposed to collapse and fall. However, according to Stepan’s approximate reckoning, he had been about forty years old at the time—and at that age nothing stands or falls any more, but just gradually and steadily becomes more and more overgrown with a layer of moss and mold. By all accounts, this is precisely what happened to his professor, a professor named “the Wall.”

After receiving his assessment, Stepan turned towards the door and he was about to leave. As always, he was overwhelmed by a feeling of being up against a blank wall of misunderstanding and indifference, from which there seemed to be no escape. He tried to look back, to take a last look at the professor sitting in front of the monitor, in the far corner of the long, narrow

cell-like room.

But this time, perhaps because he was visiting the Institute for the last time, Stepan was resolved to break the oppressive silence. He decided to ask the professor about one of the most incomprehensible and inexplicable things that had tormented him and disturbed his peace of mind throughout the past year. It concerned the books which were stacked in neat, tidy piles under the professor’s desk, right under his feet. Carefully wrapped in heavy paper, the books had evidently been brought here direct from the printers, though for some reason they were intended to be forwarded somewhere. Stepan, visiting the professor throughout the past year, had kept expecting that one day he would arrive to find the books gone, that someone had taken them away, or that they had somehow disappeared of their own accord, and that the space under the desk was at last clear again, as it should be. However, this had never actually happened, so today he looked down to see yet again the shiny toes of the professor’s shoes unconcernedly protruding over the books.

So, with a deep sigh, he went ahead and asked:

“Excuse me, Serhiy Ivanovych, I have always wanted to ask you, but always put it off until later ... about the books, about the, er ... packages of books.... Those under your desk. Don’t they sometimes, er … get in your way? What are you, er ... intending to do with them?”

The professor, who had been anxiously consulting his shimmering monitor, stood up and gave Stepan an unexpectedly positive, cordial look. His face lit up and a smile appeared on his lips. It seemed that he was deeply touched by his enquiry.

“Everything is all right, Stepan. Don’t worry. I’m glad you ask. I was just looking for somebody to help me move these books into the cupboard. Perhaps you could stay on for a minute or two to help me deal with this?”

Without waiting for a reply, the professor quickly threw off his fur coat and his business suit and he stood there in his tracksuit trousers and an old tee-shirt. Almost simultaneously, Stepan followed suit. In winter, to keep out the cold, he also wore a tracksuit under his ordinary clothes. As it turned out, he and the professor wore the same brand of tracksuit.

The professor bent down and pulled out from under the desk the first package of books that came to hand, quickly passing it to Stepan. The younger man took the pass cleanly and placed the books in the cupboard. The second package found its way into the cupboard in similar fashion, then the third, the fourth, and the fifth....

They continued to work together in this way for nearly an hour—the old professor and the young postgraduate, the former by the window-sill and the latter by the cupboard, one of them bending down to the floor and the other, by contrast, standing high up on a stool, trying to reach the shelves that were near the ceiling.

Gradually, the office became brighter and warmer. It no longer looked like a chilly monastic cell: the agile movements of both men brought this

space to life, filling it with remarkable energy and tension. Now the room looked like a railway carriage racing at full speed towards distant lands. Stepan and the professor were bending up and down like stokers, tossing packages of books into the cupboard one after another.

The print run was much greater than Stepan had expected. He did not notice that the packages gradually became lighter and smaller. Now they were passing quite thin wrappers, as if they contained notebooks, not books.

That probably happened because the printers decided to use different paper, Stepan surmised.

He recalled that for printing the most popular academic publications, two types of paper were the most popular; one was the heavy variety, like stiff foil, which was used for the vast majority of books, and the second was light and soft like a bird’s feathers, causing the book to swell like yeast and making it seem much larger than it actually was. The second type of paper was usually chosen for printing manuscripts with a small number of pages, or when the author was highly respected.

However, that did not explain the change in the size of the packages, because although they decreased in size, their weight remained the same as it had been at the start.

“Perhaps it’s just some completely different edition,” Stepan thought. Then he immediately switched to something else.

Although the packages had become thinner, they still maintained their rigidity, which later turned out to be advantageous for Stepan and the professor. Suddenly Serhiy Ivanovych straightened up and drew himself up to his full height, presenting a strong broad chest. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a small plastic table tennis ball.

“What about it, Stepan, fancy a game?” asked the professor, smiling through his fluffy moustache and immediately reaching under the desk to press a hidden catch. The floor between the men opened up and a board rose vertically into the empty space, gradually spreading out to form a table. Eventually, it turned out to be a real professional table tennis, table with shiny polished steel legs, a brand new green surface, and a bright white elastic net.

Stepan and the professor each picked up a packet of books, and they began slowly knocking the ball over the net. At first they did it half-jokingly, as if just pretending. Barely touching the ball, the men playfully leaped around the table, serving and returning passes.

However, they gradually got into the game and became keen adversaries. The professor and the student started making faster and faster strokes, both winning points, hammering the ball home. Stepan no longer felt that the room was too narrow; on the contrary, he felt just as confident as in the gym. The young man drew himself up to his full height to serve, fairly whacking the ball, while the professor adopted a comfortable defensive stance on the other side of the net, both feet firmly on the ground, so as to be able to return an equally adept shot.

Finally, one of them struck the ball with such force that it flew up in the air, screaming in pain as it cracked and crashed down like a wounded bird, never to return to the game.

For a few moments Stepan and the professor stood there speechless, truly regretting the demise of the ball, which had interrupted their game so abruptly. This finished off their diversion for good and all. They could not continue playing table tennis without a ball.

Unfortunately, this was the only ball the professor had. To get another one he would have to put on his jacket and go looking round all the neighboring offices, or even go outside, where there were plenty of shops selling sporting goods below the Square. But of course, on account of the freezing cold weather and the shortage of time, he was not going to do that.

There was only one last thing that they could still do together. Stepan and the professor faced each other across the table and removed their shoes. Now the men were barefoot; they took hold of the table and silently pulled themselves up onto its wooden surface. Unhurriedly, with full control over their movements, they both adopted the lotus posture, joining the tips of their fingers and closing their eyes.

In an instant all was quiet in the room, all oscillations and vibrations ceased and the last sounds fell away. Both men, deeply immersed in meditation, were enveloped in total calm from head to toe.

Difficult as it was for Stepan to break the silence, he whispered anyway:

“Own up, Professor, do you do this often?”

“Every five minutes.”

Translated by Patrick John Corness

Original publication: Kseniia Dmytrenko, *Avtosensy*, Kyiv: Nika-tsentr, 2013, pp 89–117.

Ukrainian Literature in English
A selected bibliography of translations
2000–

Marta Tarnawsky

¶ B37. *An Anthology of Modern Ukrainian Drama*. Comp. & edited by Larissa M. L. Zaleska Onyshkevych. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2012. xvii, 521 p. Cover design by Mykhailo Andrienko-Nechytailo (Michel Andreenko).

Contents: Preface / Larissa M. L. Z. Onyshkevych. • Introduction / (ix–xv) • About the editor, the translators, and the artist (xvi–xvii). • **Lesia Ukrainka** [Intro. & biblio.]: About *In the Wilderness*. [1–6]. *In the Wilderness* (1897–1909) / Tr. Roxolana Stojko-Lozynskyj. • **Mykola Kulish** [Intro. & biblio.] About *The People's Malachi.* [66–71]. *The People's Malachi* (1928) / Tr. John Prasko. • *About Sonata Pathétique* [125–129]. *Sonata Pathétique* (1930) / Tr. George S. N. Luckyj & Moira Luckyj; Appendix A1–10 + B [text variants] tr. Larissa M. L. Zaleska Onyshkevych. • **Volodymyr Vynnychenko** [Intro. & biblio.] The ethics of choice. [189–193]. *The Prophet* (1929) / Tr. Christine Oshchudlak-Stawnychy. • **Ivan Kocherha** [Intro. & biblio.] About *Masters of Time* [245–249]. *Masters of Time* (1933) / Tr. Anthony Wixley. Rev. by Larissa Onyshkevych & Roman Senkus. • **Liudmyla Kovalenko** [Intro. & biblio.] The play and the chosen reality. [307–309]. *The Heroine Dies in the First Act* (1948) / Tr. Charles A. Stek. • **Eaghor G. Kostetzky** [Intro. & biblio.] Structure and time in *A Play About a Great Man* [330–333]. *A Play about a Great Man:* a mystery (1948) / Tr. John Prasko. • **Bohdan Boychuk** [Intro. & biblio.] *Hunger – 1933.* The theme of freedom and anti-heroes [400–403]. *Hunger – 1933* (1961) / Tr. Vera Rich. Appendix: text variant / Tr. Vera Rich in collaboration with Bohdan Boychuk & Larissa Onyshkevych. • **Oleksii Kolomiiets** [Intro. & biblio]. Pawns or choosers? [435–437]. *Planet Speranta.* A dilogy (1965). / Tr. Don I. Boychuk. • **Valerii Shevchuk.** [Intro. & biblio.] The road of the eternal return [474–482]. *Birds from an Invisible Island* (1992) / Tr. Larissa M. L. Zaleska Onyshkevych.

¶ B38. Antonych, Bohdan Ihor. *The Essential Poetry of Bohdan Ihor Antonych. Ecstasies and Elegies*. Translated from the Ukrainian by Michael M. Naydan. With an introd. by Lidia Stefanowska. Lewisburg [PA]: Bucknell University Press [©2010]. 180 p. illus.

Contents: Contents. • Acknowledgments. • A note on the translation. / Michael M. Naydan. (p. 13–14). • A biographical sketch of the poet / Michael M. Naydan. (p. 15–20). • Between creation and the apocalypse: the poetry of Bohdan Ihor

Antonych / Lidia Stefanowska (p. 21–37). • **The Essential Poetry** of Bohdan Ihor Antonych: **I. From the collection *The Grand Harmony* (1932–1933)**: Musica noctis = Music of the night (Light up the torch of the pale moon in the sky). • De morte I. = On Death I (I will bow my head in thought only later). • Ars poetica II, 1 (I am an ordinary poet). • Liber peregrinorum 3 = Book of pilgrims (Jerusalem) (The yellow road beneath my feet). • **II. From the collection *Three Rings: Long Poems and Lyrics* (1934):** Self portrait (Red and silver maples). •. Three rings (On the wall a winged violin). • An elegy about a singing door (A singing door, a gray maple). • An elegy about the keys to love (I. A green leaf, a winged key. II. An ocarina played in the nights). • An elegy about the ring of a song (I have a house, and a garden). • The wedding (It began like this: I became intoxicated). • The country tavern (An old tale tells of). • To the wind (Toss a song to the wind). • A landscape from a window (Look: a fine day is churning). • Goblets (A green ash tree, a crescent and horses). • A prince (Mountains are still smoking from the snow). • Maples (Two lonely maples bent down). • The village (Cows pray to the sun). • Christmas (God was born on a sleigh). • Kolyada (Carpenters hew a sled from silver). • The green gospel (Spring is like a carousel). • Primordial summer (I. We sail out into a sea of pines. II. We will grow into the earth like pines). • The snake (A snake plantlike and bushy). • The forest (Learn the language of the forest). • An elegy on the ring of night (Becoming high on the toxic fumes). • The night (An open book, a lamp, wandering moths). • A late hour (A bat strikes its wings on the window). • Morning (The morning flashed. The sun like a red brick). • The arrow (Give me a lute made of stone). • Bitter wine (My days cruel and cold). • A bitter night (People have fallen asleep in the black city). • A night on St. George’s Square (Midnight is black, black as coal). • **III. From the collection *The Book of the Lion* (1936)**: The sign of the lion (A kingdom of dead flowers — the desert sleeps). • Daniel in the lion’s den (The infused, scented black gold of nights in the desert). • Ballad about the prophet Jonah; an apocrypha (My ancestor swam once on the back of a whale). • A song about the light before time (It’s no longer azure — these are already the fountains of blueness). • The Samaritan woman by the well (She, leaning against the stone wall of the well, ponders — a chipped lyre). • Six strophes of mysticism (The night slipped down like the cape from Christ’s shoulders). • Roses (The time of roses is late, sister). • Carnations (Green shadows. Carnations). • Peonies (The red youth of peonies). • Tulips (The red gold of tulips). • Violets (Violets and a telephone receiver). • A monumental landscape (The red cubes of walls, the circles of yellow town squares, the squares of parklets). • The square of angels (A marble tenor has already been singing on the theater). • Apocalypse (Silhouettes of heavy stonefooted prisons). • Starlion; or the Constellation of the Lion (Waters filled with living silver, the wells of compassion are sleeping). • Magicopolis; or how myths are born (The deepest blue of all the blue wonders — the sky beyond). • Sands (The bronze lake of a desert and scraggy cliffs). • The round dance (Tattoed girls dance on the city square of reverie). • A song on the indestructibility of matter (Having wandered into thickets, wrapped in the wind). • Prayer to the stars (Not for meager silver, not for liquor). • Red taffeta (Superstitions of past ages — of). • The tale of a black regiment (A tale clangs against a tale — prophetic bits of bronze). • **IV. From the collection *The Green Gospel* (1938): First chapter**: An invitation (The day already is burning on the coal of night). • To the beings from a green star (The laws of “bios” are the same for everyone). • An ecstatic eight-strophe poem (The greenish grains of flax rustle in

chests). • **First lyric intermezzo**: The first chapter of the Bible (When the stone still sang, serpents had wings). • Two hearts (We will go ahead of us, embracing). • A portrait of a carpenter (He was in love with art and an artist in love). • The fair (My brother — a tailor of boyhood dreams). • **Second chapter**: The sign of the oak (Beyond the dam of three days and three nights, where there is a numbing whirlpool). • Duet (Slowly we return to the ground as though to the cradle). • The garden (A biological poem in two variants). I. (Words tremble, like bees in the rain). II. (Two of us — two shaggy and intertwined bushes). • **Second lyric intermezzo:** A bird cherry poem (Already the night warmed by intoxicated flowers). • A sermon to the fish (To the crucians, to the carp and to the dolphins). • Carp (Carp sing and their blades cut the waters). • Spring (Antonych grows, and the grass grows). • Cherry trees (Antonych was a May-bug and once lived on cherry trees). • **Third chapter**: Goldsea (A rain of raspberries falling. Tribes of bees raving. Strings of light). • The fleece (Let the two of us journey for the enchanted fleece). • A prayer for the souls of drowned girls (We — are the tempters of girls, of persuasive lovers). • Ambassadors of the night (The boat of the sun moored at the pier — at a window on the oak). • To a pround plant, that is, to myself (Broad-shouldered stumps. Worms and June). • The lady of diamonds (A wagon drives into the third dam of the night. Who, wind, is it calling us?) • The home beyond a star (The hymn of plant life streams that calls for the irrepressibility of growth). • **V. From the collection *Rotations* (1938)**: Rotations (The alleys of sounds rush, planted into scales). • Cities and muses (Oak leaves, the scales of vendors, gypsies). • Ballad of the alley (Where, wringing blue hands). • Forever (Men in gray overcoats drown in the deep blue of an alley). • A ballad on azure death (Spectral stone buildings and boxes of courtyards). • The bottom of silence (The blindingly black coal of night, the depth and the mine of a heart). • The end of the world (Like a brown linen cloth, a cloud of ravens). • The concert from Mercury (The way a lid covers a chest, the night covered the anthill of the city). • Dead automobiles (Like bits of broken stars, motionless cars sleep at auto cemeteries). • Trumpets of the last day (Hundred-storied stone buildings sleep like weary animals). • Ending (Who needs your words?). **VI. From poetry not published in collections:** A Lviv elegy (Silver chestnut trees bloom again on a path on a Striy Park alley). • Green faith (The green god of plants and animals). • A prayer (Teach me, flora, growth). **VII. From the collection *A Welcome to Life* (1931):** The mad fish (The water gurgles burbles gurbles burgles). • The stratosphere (There is a world high up above us that is). • The bee (The July linden honey glistens). • Autumn (The long days ripen like spring apples). • About a strophe (Four parallel lines on the map of the heart). • Autobiography (In the mountains where, closer to the sun, I first gazed at the sky). • A welcome to life (Both a day and a century pass the same. The moments). • General index. • Index of poem titles in English. • Index of poem titles in Latin snd Ukrainian.

Published to celebrate the centennial of Antonych’s birth, the volume contains selections from Antonych’s collections *Velyka harmoniia* (1932–33), *Try persteni* (1934), *Knyha Leva* (1936), *Zelena Ievanheliia* (1938), *Rotatsii* (1938), and *Pryvitania zhyttia* (1931).

¶ B39. Desperate times; a trilogy. Selected prose fiction. Translated by Roma Franko. Edited by Sonia Morris. Toronto: Language Lanterns Publications, 2010. 3 v. (Ukrainian short fiction in English) (Ukrainian male authors, 1905–1933).

Volumes: **v. 1 Brother Against Brother**; selected prose fiction by Mykola Chernyavsky, Borys Hrinchenko, Pylyp Kapelhorodsky, Hnat Khotkevych, Mykhaylo Kotsyubynsky, Bohdan Lepky, Yakiv Mamontov, Leonid Pakharevsky, Oleksa Slisarenko. **v. 2. Between the Trenches**, selected prose fiction by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, Mykola Chernyavsky, Hryhoriy Epik, Vasyl Grendza-Donsky, Hnat Khotkevych, Antin Krushelnytsky, Bohdan Lepky, Osyp Makovey, Dmytro Markovych, Oleksa Slisarenko, Stepan Vasylchenko, Volodymyr Vynnychenko. **v. 3. Conflict and Chaos**: selected prose fiction by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych, Hryhoriy Epik, Vasyl Grendza-Donsky, Pylyp Kapelhorodsky, Antin Krushelnytsky, Bohdan Lepky, Valeriyan Pidmohylny, Oleksa Slisarenko, Stepan Vasylchenko.

Contents: v. 1. Introduction / Paul Cipywnyk. • George S. N. Luckyj Ukrainian Literature Translation Prize awarded to Roma Franko and Sonia Morris. • **Mykola Chernyavsky:** Blood. • The heroes come home. • Spring flood. • Comrades. • **Borys Hrinchenko:** January 9th. • Brother against brother. • **Pylyp Kapelhorodsky**: Why I was arrested. • The gracious manifesto. • In a village. • To see the sovereign. • **Hnat Khotkevych**: The hunger strike. • In a free country. • The three. • Facing the door. • It had to be this. • **Mykhaylo Kotsyubynsky**: On the road. • The unknown one. • **Bohdan Lepky:** Why? • **Yakiv Mamontov:** Under dark clouds. • **Leonid Pakharevsky**: When the accacia trees were in bloom. • **Oleksa Slisarenko:** Plantations. • Glossary. • Biographical notes.
v. 2. Between the Trenches. Introduction / Paul Cipywnyk. • George S. N. Luckyj Ukrainian Literature Translation Prize awarded to Roma Franko and Sonia Morris. • **Borys Antonenko-Davydovych**: Chapenko the sentry. • Hryshka the scout. • **Mykola Chernyavsky**: Lightning flashes. • The accursed city. • On the shore of the sea. • **Hryhoriy Epik:** Vasya. • **Vasyl Grendzha-Donsky:** Dividing the land. • **Hnat Khotkevych:** Small sketches of a great cause. • **Antin Krushelnytsky:** Between the trenches. • **Bohdan Lepky:** The first shots. • To flee? • The bells. • **Osyp Makovey:** From the cycle “A bloody field”: The cross among the linden trees. Memory eternal. A dead city. The border. The invalid. The parting. In the trenches. The bloody field. The shell. The refusal. K. V. Slaves. Fraternization. The quiet hour. • **Dmytro Markovych:** Final. • My dream. • **Oleksa Slisarenko:** Chaos in a quiet corner. • Redoubt no. 16. • Cataract. • **Stepan Vasylchenko:** Black poppies. • The virulent flower. • **Volodymyr Vynnychenko:** “Dear Soldiers!” • The sun’s first ray. • Glossary. • Biographical notes.
v. 3. Conflict and Chaos: Introduction / Paul Cipywnyk • George S. N. Luckyj Ukrainian Literature Translation Prize awarded to Roma Franko and Sonia Morris. • **Borys Antonenko-Davydovych**: Blue cornflower. • Tap-tap... • Steam locomotive no. 273. • **Hryhoriy Epik**. Among the snows. • On an October night. • **Vasyl Grendzha-Donsky**: Olya. • **Pylyp Kapelhorodsky**: Granddad Yavtukh. • The Red Army soldier. • **Antin Krushelnytsky**: An episode. • **Bohdan Lepky:** In a prisoner-of-war camp. • I am to blame. • **Valeriyan Pidmohylny:** The haydamaka.

• The military pilot. • “The third revolution.” • **Oleksa Slisarenko:** An accidental audacity. • Dushta the gunner. • The verdict. • Lord Slymakiwsky. **Stepan Vasylchenko**: The seagull. • Glossary. • Biographical notes.

¶ B40. Half a breath: A brief anthology of young Ukrainian writers = Lyshaiet’sia pivpodykhu: Korotkyi al’manakh molodykh ukrains’kykh pys’mennykiv: Ljubko Deresh, Irena Karpa, Kateryna Khinkulova, Svitlana Pyrkalo, Ostap Slyvynsky. [Edited by Il’ja Rakos. Lviv]: Teka [c2009]. 70 p. illus., ports.

Contents: “He marks the wonder woven through” / Hryhoriy Chubai. • Foreword / **Andrey Kurkov.** • **Ljubko Deresh** [Note]: Manchester et Liverpool / Tr. Liliya Valihun, Michael M. Naydan, Il’ja Rakos. • **Irena Karpa** [Note]: Kropyva, me, and the stolen shovel / Tr. Oleksandr Krasyuk, Il’ja Rakos. • **Kateryna Khinkulova** [Note]: Red. • One-two-three-four. • Three lessons. [No translator indicated]. • **Svitlana Pyrkalo** [Note]: Good-bye, Brezhnev! How many rubber items do you know? • Did your hands ever steal anything? • Ever had your head banged against a wall? • How many fiances do you have? • What do you do for Valentine’s Day during a financial crisis? • Heartshaped beetroot for borscht? • Which do you like better — newspapers or dinosaurs? • How do you make a first impression? • Remember Gorby, glasnost, and new thinking? • Do you still remember your first love’s name? • Have you ever wanted to be swallowed up by the earth? • How long does it take you to get from where you live to your real home? • How do you like your manicure? • But what if a manicure goes wrong? • Does your mother hate your shorts? • How much do you love your dentist? • How’s your hay this year? • Dead people can also get too close sometimes, don’t you think? • What does your New Year taste like? [No translator indicated]. • **Ostap Slyvynsky** [Note]: [Poetry]: Limbo (The nocturnal hills were as crumpled bedsheets). • Tribute to Marcin Swietlicki (Turn down all the lamps, leave only the light of the radio receiver). • Sequences (With this tooth that is growing stealthily, taking advantage of my sleep). • Eva (The old university building, which has been named “The Barrack”...) • The sky over Berlin (Heart is thumping, as if I know nothing yet). • Two poems for N. K. (1. It’s only six yet outside there reigned so many brilliant sovereigns! My she-devil! 2. Believe me, tiny glow-beam) / Tr. Lyuba Gawur.

In spite of the bilingual title page, the collection consists of English translations only. The end pages contain advertisements for the Open Ukraine Bookfund and for the Lviv International Literary Festival. The edition is sponsored by the British Council, Publishers Forum and the Lviv International Literature Festival. A brief comment by the editor (Il’ja Rakos) appears on the back cover.

¶ B41. Makhno, Vasyl. *Winter Letters and Other Poems.* Translated from the Ukrainian by Orest Popovych. New York City: Spuyten Duyvil [©2011]. 129 p.

A bi-lingual Ukrainian-English edition. **Contents of the English-language material:** Winter letters 1/ My father (you know my father was the same age as John Lennon). • Winter letters 2 / Eugene (The magi also arrived in New York and so did

Christmas). • Winter letters 3 / Coney Island (I arrived at Coney Island — and discovered an empty subway). • Winter letters 4 / Staten Island (Staten Island — is an island meaning — a cripple on crutches). • Sighetu Marmatiei (In Sighetu Marmatiei the odor of wormy apples). • The surname (especially annoying). • Dacia 1300 (it was during Ceausescu’s rule and when old buildings were collapsing). • Earthquake (When they stopped by the tavern for a few rounds of red wine). • Berlin 1 / The train “Kyiv-Berlin” (bro-life is one big pile of crap — the onslaughts of emigration). • Berlin 2 / Charlottenburg (In this city the coffee houses are scattered — like coffee beans). • Berlin 3 / Berlin Marathon (all the runners to reach the Brandenburg Gate). • Berlin 4 / Berlin Autumn (indeed — this city’s history touches almost everything). • Berlin 5 / October 2008 (Your native land welcomes you with the uniform of a customs official). • Bombay (at a New Jersey gas station Hindus in Shell company uniforms). • Prodigal son (when in that parable in the gospel — now being read in the little village church). • A little cloud (the wave that carried light out of the dark). • The old new year (except for the three feast days — no one came to visit — forget it). • August 2009: Maine (the seagulls in these latitudes stroll on wooden piers). • The send-off for a soldier (He read the prophets and his heavy heart). • Music in the city (in this city where jazz and swill are mingling). • The courtyard (by now replete with tomatoes and flies). • Soccer and cows (The cows from the soccer field have strayed into clover). • La Chica (She’s Alejandra — she’s from Medellin). • Kryvyi Rih (Kryvyi Rih — is a street urchin. A police antenna). • Dance me to the end of love (I darted into the pub when rain was pouring like Stravinsky). • Candle (I lit a candle for you Fedyo on your anniversary). • Sola mujer (They are — musicians, a soccer team). • Booze (there was poetry and there was booze). • Kandinsky (Who is this painter Anton Kandinsky?) • Pokrova (Who will come to the feast of Pokrova?) • Johnny Cash (From a display window Johnny Cash is observing attentively). • Jardin (men in home woven ponchos emerge). • Winter in New York (A New York pigeon flies above Broadway).

Includes biographical notes about the author and the translator on an unnumbered page at the end of the book, as well as Makhno’s portrait and comments about his poetry by Dzvinia Orlowsky and James Baumel on the book’s back cover.

¶ B42. Matios, Maria. *Apocalypse.* Translated from the Ukrainian by Yuri Tkach [sic]. Melbourne: Bayda Books, 2011. 108 p.

Translation of the short story *Apokalipsys.*

¶ B43. Matios, Maria. ... *Hardly Ever Otherwise*. Tr. from the Ukrainian by Yuri Tkacz. Melbourne: Bayda Books, 2010. 154 p. port.

Contents: From the translator / Yuri Tkacz. • Novel one: Four brothers, like Kith and Kin. • Novel two: Fare ye well, father. • Novel three: The swing of life.

Translation of the novel…*Maizhe nikoly ne navpaky*. Translator’s note provides brief bio-bibliographical data about the author.

¶ B44. Matios, Maria. *The Russky Woman*. Translated from the Ukrainian by Yuri Tkacz. *Mother Marica, the Wife of Chrystofor Columbus*. Translated from the Ukrainian by Paulo Onyfruk. Melbourne: Bayda Books, 2011. 121 p.

Translation of Moskalytsia and Mama Maritsa — druzhyna Khrystofora Kolumba.

¶ B45. Petriw, Myroslav. *Yaroslaw's Treasure*: a novel. [Toronto]: Blue Butterfly Books [2009]. 293 p. illus.

The author's own revised and modified version of the novel *Skarby Iaroslava*, written and published originally in Ukrainian. Includes a glossary and an interview with the author.

¶ B46. Rozdobudko, Irene. *The Lost Button*. [Translated by Michael M. Naydan together and [sic] Olha Tytarenko. London]: Glagoslav Publications [©2012]. 182 p.

Translation of the novel *Gudzyk.* With “A Note on Irene Rozdobudko” by Michael M. Naydan (p. 8–9). Naydan characterizes the book as a “taut psychological thriller.”

¶ B47. Shevchuk, Valeriy. *Lunar pain*. Tr. from the Ukrainian by Yuri Tkach, with a foreword by Marko Pavlyshyn. Melbourne: Bayda Books, 2010. 121 p.

Translation of the novel *Misiachnyi bil*. Pavlyshyn's foreword (p. 5–8) is a bio-bibliograhical and critical essay on Valerii Shevchuk who is characterized as “a writer attuned to, and in awe of, the imperfect rationality of the world; as an observer of the riddles and anguishes of the human condition; and as an historian fascinated by people of past ages, blessed and cursed with strange forms of knowledge as terrible as they are compelling.”

¶ B48. Starosolska, Juliana. *Woman in Exile. My Life in Kazakhstan*. Translated by Marie Chmilewsky Ulanowicz. Bloomington: Universe [©2011]. xvi, 171 p. map.

A translation of the memoirs originally published in Ukrainian under the title *Rozkazhu vam pro Kazakhstan*. Includes the translator's foreword (p. ix–x), the “Author's note to the third edition” (p. 171), comments by Peter L. Rudnytsky, Alexander J. Motyl, and Marta Dyczok on the introductory page. Biographical data on the author and her portrait appear on the back cover. In Ukrainian the author wrote under her pseudonym: Uliana Liubovych.

¶ B49. Tychyna, Pavlo. *The Raspberry's Eyelash*. Selected poems. Translated and edited by Steve Komarnyckyj. Salzburg: Poetry Salzburg at the University of Salzburg, 2012. 120 p.

Contents: Acknowledgements. • “Solar clarinettist” (p. 7–13) [Translator’s introduction]**.** • **Solar clarinets**: Solar clarinets (Clarinet, your nakedness). • The clouds uncoil (The light is blue and unreachable). • The grass whispers (The forest whispers). • Harps (The sunlight). • I wept (The storm clouds assemble). • I stand by the river (I stand by the river). • The poplars (The poplars grow at liberty in the field). • Over the meadows (The flowering meadow and gold drizzle). • Nature (Why do you try and conceal). • It dawns (Dawn, so mellow). • Enharmonic: I. Mist (Let the crow drift). II. Sun (A bird of paradise). III. Air (Give me it all). IV. Rain (Usually the river is a delicate plait). • Pastels: 1. (The hare flows over). II. (Day cradles in your hand). III. (And so twilight, a flute). IV. (To wrap the night). • If I should walk (If I should walk). • Open the door (Open the door). • Over the blue steppe (I walk onto a steppe). • What should I say (What should I say but the spring). • The grief of the Madonna: I. (She passes through the field). II. (She passes through the field). III. (She passes through the field). IV. (She passes through the field). • The ballad of the three winds (The sun cries syllables of fire). • War: I. (Here they are, the ineffectual angels). II. The sun and moon softly. • Golden echo (Above Kyiv, the echo). • **Plough:** Storm (The blade of a plough). • On the square (Say farewell to the freedom). • So the stars (So the stars shine and fall). • It will be so (It will be so). • On Shevchenko’s tomb: I. (We bowed to his tomb). II. (I recollect how the moon). III. (Thundering vegetation, a green). • Messiah (I imagine). • From “The creation of the world”): I. In the beginning there was nothingness). II. (So twilight fell). • From “The psalm of iron”: I. (Oh, whose cry echoes in the field). II. Somewhere over the seas there is justice and honour). III. (It passed like a vision the consecrated time). • My Madonna: I. (Mother of grace). II. So they would sing in praise. III. (Your lips soft as a rose). IV. (You are not made). • **Instead of sonnets and octaves:** Instead of sonnets and octaves. • Autumn (The fungus of May grows on all the world’s cultures). • Terror (And again we must endure). • Lu (I sleep and cannot sleep, fulfilling a will that is not my own). • Antistrophe (In those days, when herds of winds grazed over). • Evoe! (The poetry of revolution). • Who says (Rain stipples the asphalt with typhoid). • Antistrophe (Playing Scriabin to the jailed spectators). • **The wind from Ukraine:** The wind from Ukraine (I do not love anything as much as the gale). • The lament of Yaroslavna: I. (Snowflakes fall). II. (What are those shapes that obscure the sun?) • The Summer comes (Do you hear the advent of summer?) • Autumn so calm (Autumn so calm). • The fleet of the air (A girl threshing grain). • A reply to a compatriot (Like Dante in hell). • I speak for all (I speak for all — I endure their anguish as well). • Spring (It is spring, the air). • Kuznechna street: I. (I am heading west). II. (No, I will not refrain from looking). III. (The sun weakens, the hot violet). IV. I return along Kuznechna street). V. (The Easter rain). • Kharkiv: I. (Kharkiv, Kharkiv where is your face). II. (Oh, Steppe, oh wind savage and destructive). • Fugue (I walk past the cemetery). • **Later poems: From “The Crimean Cycle”:** I. The beach (She ran from the mountains to lie). • II. Rupture (There was no dolphin frolicking in the ocean). • III. Dreaming and more (I am afraid to dream during the day). • IV. Gathering cloud (I fall, I fall, I fall). • V. Ai-Petri (It has been evening for a while). • VI. Glorify (Eternal and unknowable). • VII. Barracks (Footprints embossed with moonlight). • VIII. Dawn (She went so far). • A friend’s burial (Already the morose evening changes colour). • First acquaintance (I remember an autumn day). • A silver night (So mother sleeps, the sound of her breathing like). •

Crown (The fir trees stand so quietly). • **Early poems:** I will only say these words to you (As the landscape murmurs around us). • The clouds weep and the wind laments (The clouds weep and the wind laments). • The spirit (Of the people burns like a priest). • Freedom (When a bell rings). • There (I stand in the rye).

The translator in his introduction says of his own translations: “My aim has been to convey the power of Tychyna’s voice to the English reader but not to render an academic text that duplicates the wording of the original while robbing it of any aesthetic value.” Biographical notes about the author and the translator appear on the back cover of the book. Tychyna’s b/w portrait is part of the cover design.

¶ B50. Zabuzhko, Oksana. *Fieldwork in Ukrainian sex*. Translated by Halyna Hryn. [Las Vegas, NV]: Amazon Crossing [©2011]. 164 p.

Translation of the novel *Pol'ovi doslidzhennia z ukrains'koho seksu.* Notes about the author and translator, with their portraits, on pp. 163–164.

¶ B51. Zabuzhko, Oksana. *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets.* Translated by Nina Shevchuk-Murray. [Las Vegas, NV]: Amazon Crossing [©2012]. 714 p. illus.

Translation of the novel *Muzei pokynutykh sekretiv*. Includes brief excerpts from reviews of what seems to be the German edition of the novel, as well as brief biograpical notes about the author and translator—all on unnumbered pages. A short publisher’s note about the novel appears on the back cover of the paperback. The author’s afterword with acknowledgments is printed on pp. 709–712 and a recommended bibliography on pp. 713–714.