

Valeriy Zhiglov

Kremlin bride



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The book comprises novels: “Kremlin Bride”, “White Sun of the Desert”, “Three Vertebrae of Fish”, “My Caucasus Holidays”, “A Crocodile with Swan Wings”, and other funny and sorrowful life stories, which happened with the author and other people he knew. The book also discloses details about Lazar Kaganovich’s sister, a participant of Joseph Stalin poisoning.

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Valeriy Zhiglov

I would like to present some of my novels for the pleasure of readers. The novels are based on real events from my memory, the events that impressed me.

Many people ask: “Why do we live this life? Under certain circumstances, we might feel as if we were spiritual entities, missing any material body”.

– Apparently, we live to gain life experience, to improve our soul even further. This very experience may be obtained by personal example, or by our co-involvement in it with other people.

A few words from the author

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Süsse Milch

Dedicated to all emigrants

Prayers and sorrow are for the eyes of your soul,
My sickness, my fear, the cry of my conscience,
Everything at the end, and everything at the beginning
Are for the eyes of your soul.

Igor Severianin

After graduating from a university, I got some free time and I decided to spend it on vacations high in the mountains, by the lake Issyk Kul. It was early morning, when I and other tourists took a long trip in a bus across mountain saddles. The city Almaty and the mountain lake Issyk Kul may be separated by 50 km only; yet it took around 10 hours in the bus to pass Tien Shan mountain passage in between, which serpentine in a manner that goes far beyond one's wildest expectations. On our way, there were several short stopovers, and tonight, we finally arrived to the destination point, a tourist camp Tamga, located on the southern shore of the lake. Tired after such a long journey, we had supper and went to bed.

The weather was cool during our holidays. Those were sunny days, and one could even get sunburns, yet water in the lake was pretty cold. Therefore, the second day of my vacations was marked with some weakness, and tonight I already had full-scale fever heat. I did not have any medicine against fever with me; therefore, I had no choice but to try to get some in a local medical station.

Having entered the station, I saw a young and nice lady, approximately 18 years old, full of optimism. Her whites emphasized her good body, and the white headscarf did not fully hide her golden hair. Her blue eyes, opened wide, on her face full of sunspots, really impressed with their innocent look of a child. I remembered I saw her earlier, not in her white uniform, but wearing some dress full of colors, and she looked different to other relaxed tourists.

We exchanged glances, and I told her about my fever and asked for some remedy against it. I took the pills she kindly offered, but for some reason did not hurry to leave. We spoke a little, and soon I knew she had her practice of a nurse after her first year of studying medicine in a university, at this tourist camp.

Her name was Maria; she also told me a little later that her close relatives called her Süße Milch, apparently, because she liked that sweet milk drink when she was a child. I also started calling her Süße Milch, or "sweet milk", if translated from German. There were many German families living on those lands, after they were moved to Central Asia during the Second World War. Almost all of them were known as people that work hard and are very accurate in their work.

Very soon we became friends, then even more. We often walked together with Maria across beautiful surroundings of the nice lake, enjoying watching blue water of the lake framed by a stone ring of white mountain peaks, and talked about various things.

Sometime I was reading for her the poems of my favorite poets of the Silver Age, like Merezhkovsky, Ldov, Apukhtin, Mirra Lokhvitskaya, Taffi, Golenischev-Kutuzov, Soloviev, Severianin, Nadson, Schepkina-Kupernik, Balmont, Bunin and many others.

She carefully listened to the lines of the poems that I was reading for her by memory:

"The Moon column disappeared in water,
The water surface is getting bluer.
Where are you, where..."

After I finished reading yet another poem, she asked for more poems. So, I started to read poems again:

“Moon strings,
Made of silver,
Poetic,
Tender of sorrow,
As if you are a fairy tale,
Streaming with tenderness,
Melodic,
Full of bliss...”

And again:

“Kiss lips more sincerely
Flower buds opened for you
Not to let them dry-out of moans,
To keep the beauty!
With the dream about Madonna’s kindness
Kiss lips more sincerely!...”

Hidden in bush of sandthorn beneath a cliff hanging over us, we were together, innocent and forgotten in time. But one day I was in her little room at the station, where she also lived, very late, and we decided to have some rest together on her narrow folding bed. I thought she never had an affair with anyone else before, and that was when I saw I was right.

We were attracted to each other stronger and stronger day after day, and we were realizing with sorrow that my three weeks of vacations were to expire one day. We did not want to split at all, but I had to start my obligatory military service then. I took a guitar that I always had with me, and I started singing one of my songs, the music for which I composed yet when I was a student, for the poem written by Anatoly Merzlikin, a modern poet:

“The rain stopped, water flows down the pipes
Darkness comes thick.
I got used to leaving cities
So I do not weep saying good-bye.
I only spend a few days in each place.
A square opened its wings
You are of those, the first in my life,
Who come to say good-bye at the railway station.
You say: “Write to me” and I say: “Sure”,
A cigarette spark falls down.
Here is the fifth carriage, one more step, half of step more,
You are by my side, whispering something quickly.
Wheels started running, and I cry something
From the train steps
My hand goes from your cheek and from your shoulder,
Like a leaf goes from a tree.
The rain stopped, water flows down the pipes
Darkness comes thick.

I got used to leaving cities
So I do not weep saying good-bye”.

Maria was sitting opposite to me, listening to my sad song with tears on her large eyes. I embraced and kissed her cheeks full of sunspots feeling the salty taste of the Sweet Milk.

The night ended fast for us, as one moment of time. The next morning, a bus took me back by a bumpy road, and we never met again. That was the time when German families often repatriated to Germany, their historical motherland.

Nevertheless, I still would like to believe she sometime remembers me in her secret dreams with nice words, which would reflect all our joyful emotions that we shared during those unforgettable days.

Three Vertebrae of Fish

“Good bye, commander, morning exercises and toilet
We shall not go in a column for a dinner anymore.
Moral officer, my friend, just be healthy,
Remember your eagles during civil service
We shall wear ties and bow-ties,
We shall walk in the city without your permission.
We shall no longer need to clean our medals,
No more disciplinary actions by military foreman!”

It was a rainy and cold November day, and we, army conscripts, were gathered in a conscription point of a military commissariat in Almaty. Although our departure by train to the military service destination was scheduled for the next day, we were put into this sort of “settler” for the entire day.

A senior officer presented an explanation: we should have enough time to rest after farewell. Therefore, neither food, no drinks are allowed for military service conscripts. Furthermore, during this day we were under military guard inside a closed room with double-level beds and only one toilet.

The room was with low ceiling, the cigarette smoke was above our heads. All non-smokers, including me, could barely breath this thick cigarette smog. Our military shift mainly comprised military university graduates, and we all had to complete obligatory military service with military practice as army officers.

After one day, we, hungry and besotted with the cigarette smoke, were put inside a train, and the train departed eastwards. The road was long, more than three days inside the train, during which nobody gave us any food. It was only the fourth day, when we arrived to the railway station Divizionnaya, which was near Ulan-Ude, the capital of Buryat Autonomous Republic. It was here where I had to do my military service, one year in a military hospital.

The hut barracks were former stables, and now they had enough space for around fifty soldiers of the military hospital personnel. Our main meal was pearl barley porridge served thrice a day, with a small exception: there was also potato soup with pasta, and tea with a piece of sugar, or starch drink, for lunch.

Sometimes small pieces of meat or fish were added to this pearl barley porridge, which soldiers also called “tarpaulin”. Those pieces were so small that once I decided to count all vertebrae of fish in my dish of a solder. The piece of fish was less than one centimeter thick, and it comprised exactly three vertebrae of fish. It was then, when I decided to write a story with the title “Three Vertebrae of Fish”.

One day, there was a funny situation during our nighttime guard duty. No need to remind that soldiers were always hungry, and any chance to fill empty stomachs with something eatable was used. It was the feeling of hunger, that brought two soldiers on guard duty into the dark room of soldiers’ kitchen, where they tapped a large metal barrel with the starch drink cooling down.

They later told us that was the moment, when they were so happy, as if the barrel comprised priceless treasure. Without thinking twice, the soldiers took iron cups that were near, and took some warm starch drink and started drinking it. Suddenly, one of them paused drinking and asked another, what might it be that was crissing on teeth, maybe raisins?

They decided to turn on light to resolve the mystery, and they were surprised to see quite an unpleasant picture. Brown cockroaches, myriad of them, were right on the wall of the barrel with the starch drink. Having reached the thin dry crust on the surface of the starch drink, cockroaches started

their feast, while new cockroaches were trying to find unoccupied space for the same. However, there were too many of them, therefore, getting there was not easy for them.

Soldiers interrupted their feast and mixed, with their iron cups, all this mass of cockroaches with the drink, and that was what crisped on teeth, in some way like boiled raisins would do. In darkness, they did not recognize the taste of cockroaches.

Later, during army officer practice, I saw cockroaches again, in a buffet, on a cake in a showcase. I told the barmaid about those disgusting cockroaches, and she replied that she shall not even touch those disgusting cockroaches, and in fact she left everything the way it was!

Although winter in Baikal region came quickly, and the air temperature was very cold, we still had to march in a column for breakfast, lunch and dinner, without winter clothes. A senior officer gave an explanation that was a measure against lice. Soon, all windows were covered with thick layer of nontransparent ice, and even water on the floor of the barracks became ice.

The winter between 1973 and 1974 was specifically cold in those lands, the air temperature was below -56 degrees Celsius. For some reason, the military commandment in the region decided to make military exercises lasting for 5 days, to see how the great Soviet army deals with extraordinarily low air temperature. Around ten soldiers with freezing injuries delivered to the hospital for the second day of those exercises convinced the commandment to stop the exercises.

One day, it became warmer outside, and the wind brought some snow. I came to a thermometer and saw the temperature of air was -43 degrees. It meant that within less than a day, the air temperature became 13 degrees higher. Therefore, although -43 degrees was still very cold, one would feel that it became warmer. After I resigned from army, I still, as an army officer, had to be at military exercises many times, but never again in my life did I experience the winter that was that cold and foodless.

In April, when nobody already believed spring would ever come, the air temperature went up, and the hills got covered with nice flowers of ledum in May. That was the time, when radio stations started broadcasting the song about the region behind the lake of Baikal:

“Ledum is blooming somewhere on hills,
Pines are fused with the sky.
It seems the region where I never have been
Has been waiting for me so long!”

Although there was the feeling that the military service was going to last forever, I was discharged from the army after obligatory service late autumn, and went home as a civil person. On my way home in a passenger car with reserved seats, together with other former soldiers, I was singing my favorite song about my beloved friend, accompanied by a guitar:

“I am standing again in a train
Alien land is around me,
I remember your eyes,
Your eyes, my beloved.
Where are you now, my love,
Who is the one your eyes are now shining for,
Who is the one your heart is now beating and soul is full of joy for?
Nobody loves you like I do,
Nobody would care for you like I would,
Nobody would kiss you like I would,
My beloved one, my best one,
Where are you now, my love,

Who is the one your eyes are now shining for,
Who is the one your heart is now beating and soul is full of joy for?"

White Sun of the Desert

After obligatory military service in Soviet army, I began working in a research institute, where many WWII veterans were working. One of them was Andrei Rublev, a former reconnaissance officer.

Time to time, talking privately, he used to tell about some of his adventures, how he, together with his wartime friends, was sent to the enemy territory to gather important secret information about enemy. Only few were lucky enough to come back safe after such reconnaissance raids.

However, those who did make it, and brought priceless information about enemy, the information that was critical for successful military actions by the Soviet Army, were questioned, sometime even humiliated, to disclose those who might be converted by Germans.

When Andrei Rublev, shortly before the end of the war, came back from the enemy territory, he faced a false accusation and sent to do time in one of those remote Stalin's concentration camps in Siberia. He had to work cutting trees first, and then he took part in constructing strategic military facilities.

In late 1950s, he was rehabilitated by court after long time in the camp, and freed earlier than expected. Having come back to his town, he found job and also began studying a university course that he attended in the evenings after work; he completed the university course successfully, and was hired by a scientific research laboratory in Central Asia.

Andrei Rublev really liked his new job of a science researcher, and he even successfully got the degree in science. Those, who knew him well, were sure everything goes well in his life after hard times he went through.

Andrei Rublev's wife was a nice woman, and he loved her very much. That was the time when a film crew was working in our area making the movie "White Sun of the Desert", which later became very popular. As it became known later, one of the senior film crew members was introduced to Andrei Rublev's wife during some public event, they fell in love, and she abandoned her husband and left those lands to live with her new love.

One would think a former reconnaissance officer, who survived the oblivion far more severe than an unfaithful woman, should easily forget her and continue his life. However, the family tragedy pushed threw him off his stride completely. The betrayal from those who are beloved is always harder to overcome.

He became alcohol addict, and he no longer cared about anything, and soon he was looking like a homeless person. One day, he left for a lunch break, but did not come back, and his colleagues began looking for him. They found him in a utilities room. Andrei Rublev hung himself.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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