



*S. Skitalec*

# SHACKLES

*The historical  
narration in  
three parts*

*1940*

S. Skitalec

**Shackles**

«Издательские решения»

**Skitalec S.**

Shackles / S. Skitalec — «Издательские решения»,

ISBN 978-5-44-969410-2

It is devoted to people unsatisfied, grieving for “the best share”, sharply feeling social oppression. As the writer who was close knowing life of workers the Wanderer managed to imprint spiritual power, moral purity, precise mind and “fantastic talent” of the Russian people in the books.

ISBN 978-5-44-969410-2

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# **Shackles**

**S. Skitalec**

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ISBN 978-5-4496-9410-2

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## PART ONE

### I

Solar, cheerful morning of early spring. Shirokaya Street of the big village is full of liquid dirt, pools and the spring murmuring streamlets. From a distance, from a high belltower of rural church, the joyful ringing of easter bells rushes. At the corner of the wide church area above descent to the river there is a small timbered lodge with a high porch. Near the house where recently carpenters worked, crude odorous beams lie, and it very much pleases a band of children, barefoot, with the panties which are rolled up knee-deep, with the long hair cut in a curve piece; and only the smallest of them – the three-year-old peanut – is dressed in a city way: in a jacket and картузик with tapes, in brand new shoes. In total on it brand new, elegant, festive. From a pocket the silver chain of hours is seen.

Children tore off crude bark from a beam, soft from the inside, separate it damp, gentle tapes, twist toy reins and knutik. All of them sit on a porch, busied. The Tatar, the biggest bosses. The others watch with what art it twists a crude string. Small costs below as cannot get on steps differently as on all fours.

– Vukol! – speaks Tatork small gently – what it at you on a chain?

– Hours – Vukol answers.

– Let's have a look!

The Tatar himself took out the real silver watch from the child's pocket, smelled them, licked and put to an ear.

– Tick! to it-bo! chevo-s there inside ticks! Ottsova, that?

– On a name-day presented! – Vukol speaks and wants to take hours back, but Tatorka sat down with them on the top step and was engaged in opening of a cover.

Children as flies, stuck around it.

Vukol very much wants to receive back hours, but he hesitates to insist and to get difficult on a porch, will not part forcibly children: all of them it is more of it.

– See you! – derisively Tatorka speaks – at hours! And what cap, with tapes yes from tsvyata!

Children laughed.

– Rich, devils! – continued the Tatar, picking hours a knife.

Vukol offended by laughter of companions flashed to ears, removed a cap, broke from it tapes and artificial roses, threw them on the earth, crushed.

Children laughed loudly again:

– Strizhenny bare, as Tatar!

Also were engaged in hours.

In big eyes of Vukol there were tears.

The Tatar broke off both covers of hours and began to take out small screws and castors, seeking that ticks there, “inside”.

– Give hours! – Vukol shouted.

Back Vukol received them in unassembled form: all interior of hours represented a handful of fragments.

– Nothing – encouraged him Tatork – to you their houses will soil!

Vukol silently thrust fragments into a pocket.

– Give the handle, do not become angry! – tenderly Tatorka told, going down from a porch.

Vukol reconciled and flattered smiled.

– On! – he trustfully stretched a tiny hand.

The Tatar unexpectedly pressed his palm below than the waist and made impropriety. All laughed delighted.

Vukol began to cry. It seemed to it that his hand is profaned forever. Wanted to run home, but also it was a pity to leave companions: a game in a horse with just prepared harness was assumed.

– Fool! – he told Tatorke.

– I am a fool? I will give those! To Vdar in a nose – at once blood will scatter... and to the father we will tell that you fought on the street! To you do not order to fight, and to us nothing, it is possible! What you blink? And eyes on a flat dish, do not vidt crumbs! There is a pool, washed up, exclusively! Yes something I am nasty? – The Tatar threateningly moved to it, but it was suddenly softened: – Well, an aydata in a horse to play! Three that? Vukol! You will go to my three?

– I will go.

Children, having joined hands, were built in the three. Everyone took a vozhzha in teeth. Tatorka, the coachman, really whips the three. Vukol represents pristyazhny; all rush on dirt the middle of the wide street, the brand new suit of Vukol is splashed with dirt, but the sun shines joyfully, dirt – warm, sparkles under the sun, streamlets murmur, from a harness is so fresh and smells delicious; Vukol is happy that Tatorka accepted him in a game, jumps with odorous, soft, bitterish vozhzhy in teeth, bending the head on one side as do to a horse in a pristyazhka – and suddenly, having stumbled, unexpectedly falls in dirt. The three stops, and all companions watch how it rises from a pool: liquid dirt flows from a face and hands, all its elegant suit in dirt. To cause sympathy of companions, Vukol loudly cries, standing in dirt with the stained hands bulged in the parties. But children laugh again.

– Well, spaced out more widely than a mitten! – the Tatar speaks. – I those here will stop up it!

The Tatar grabbed after the journey a handful of horse manure and wants to push to it in a mouth.

Vukol with a roar takes to heels, there, where the home porch is seen at the corner. He runs very fast, but Tatorka is much more and stronger it, on the bridge through a ditch caught up, grabbed by a collar and – about horror! – stuffed to it the mouth is full, smeared with manure of a lip and cheek. The kid even ceased to cry, convulsively bent to a stream and began to wash the person muddy water. All he was soiled and wetted through, but there is a wish to play at horses to him after all, only not from Tatorkaya. Children stand in the distance and watch how Tatorka at a slow pace comes back to them.

Suddenly on a porch the father Vukola appears. According to his face it is noticeable that the father heard his crying, perhaps, saw everything and very annoys.

Long dense curls of the father flutter downwind. He quickly goes to the son, silently takes Vukol by hands and carries away to the house. There they are met by mother and throws up the hands at the sight of the sobbing son in the suit tormented and splodgy with dirt. It without planing as the father, never scolds and does not punish; Vukol knows that mother would regret and consoled, would change clothes of him for all dry and released to play, but the father angrily discharges her, itself undresses the son and puts on the big bed veiled by bed curtains.

– Sleep! – by an imperative voice he speaks, drawing bed curtains.

Vukol long lies sobbing. If he could expect terrible appearance of the father, then would not cry on the street. He with envy hears voices of companions behind a window. It seems to it that the father did not understand his tears that it was only necessary to caress, console and again to release to play. That it is not understood, Vukol fell asleep with offensive feeling in tears.

Someone licked it damp, warm language in the lips. He woke up. On a bed to it the King got. This is his dog: for its entertainment the father got; it is small, red, with long wool and a fluffy tail, with an ostrenky muzzle, with sharp ears. Vukol embraces her, presses to a breast, and the King shchekotno licks to him an ear.

Bed curtains зашпилен pin. Mother always so does when stacks Vukol on the bed in the afternoon. Sometimes and she lays down with it, feeds him with sunflower seeds which she cracks for it. Vukol hears – someone entered the room, hears a voice of the male neighbor:

– As you want, Elizar but only that now she jammed our chicken again!

– Bill I it how many time, thought – will lag behind! – the father's voice answers...

– Is not present if visited – will not lag behind, fox breed! Make favor, exterminate you it, steals and steals – that your fox!

Stumps are heard, the man leaves. The father slammed the door of the neighboring room too. Vukol hears how he speaks about something with mother.

Vukol did not understand sense of a conversation with the man. What does the word “exterminate” mean? To finger? Of whom the man complained? Who eats hens? Suddenly his heart clenched alarm: yes it is the King! About the King before said that she steals and eats hens!

Vukol caught easy steps of mother. The curtain was removed: mother costs and smiles the silent smile.

The king jumped off from a bed, having flashed a fluffy tail. Vukol reaches for mother. She kisses it and quietly asks:

– And who to you broke hours it?

– Tatorka.

– And you would not give!

– He took... to have a look ... – Vukol justifies himself – he is big! He to me befouled a hand and violently fed with manure!.

His eyes were filled with tears again.

– Mother... it is not necessary to me a new cap! Children laugh... Tatorka fights... There is nobody to play... Only with the King... yes from Pashkaya!

Mother sighs:

– Well that! Play with Pashka, with the girl it is better, and I will banish Tatorka from our yard! She dresses it in an everyday old suit, puts on stockings, boots.

– A new suit all in dirt at you! Be not found you with this robber!. Well, get up!.

Vukol jumped off from a bed.

The father – in a jacket, in a cap, with the gun hanging on a belt behind shoulders entered.

– Mother! Tatorka told that we are the rich. Truth?

– No, pretty, poor! Men are richer than us! We will leave from here soon! Well and you yet small, will understand nothing!.

– Tatorka does not love the rich... beats me, thinks – we are the rich!

– Fool your Tatorka! – the father interfered. – Here it will get to me – I will dig to it ears!.

The thief will leave him, and it worst of all!

– Tatorka broke hours! – mother reported.

– Are guilty: entrusted the child, dressed up as acceptable... I look – and he in a pool that a pig.

– Yes it, companions such!.

– That also is! – the father sighed.

– You where with the gun?

– Yes here I want to take away a dog to smithies! Sonny! Let's go with me, your dog! I tied her at a porch! Also you will lead itself!

– The child should not look at it! – noticed mother.

– No, let sees what for theft happens!. That since then was afraid of theft!

– Yes what else understands дитѐ! – mother objected.

– Anything! Let will remember that and in thoughts this Tatorka was afraid to be the thief... and that...

At a porch the King on a leash quietly sat. The father untied it and that she did not escape from the child's hands, the free end of a rope about Vukol's belt tied.

– Itself also conduct it and remember that she is a thief, torment is what the thief has to gain!.

Vukol bewildered listened to the father, without understanding why they go to smithies, but to go there with the father was flatter. Vukol was already there, it is close behind their house, on backs, on the river bank.

The king jumped about Vukol, trying to lick him in a face. Having caught sight of this procession from where the children coordinated by a trace in some distance undertook.

On the occasion of a holiday in smithies did not work.

Against each of them there were columns for forging of horses. Under a steep slope the river, a bend approaching close backs of houses shone. From a belltower the cheerful ringing of bells rushed.

The father shortly tied the King to one of four columns and, having taken Vukol by hand, turned back. Having passed steps twenty, he stopped and removed the gun.

– Become behind! – severely he told the son – and be not frightened – now I will shoot!

Vukol stood behind, with fear watching as it lifted the gun, put a bed to a shoulder, and without understanding why and where the father wants to shoot. Burst a shot, from a trunk fire took off. With smoke began to smell something sharp. Vukol turned pale, lips began to tremble him.

– Well, that's all! – the father told, lowering the gun.

Through odorous smoke it was visible how on the earth at a column the King fluttered.

Without remembering itself, Vukol ran to it. The king twitched all over. From her nostrils blood streamed. Vukol loudly began to squeal, fell to it, embraced for a neck.

– King! King! – he shouted... Spasms squeezed his throat. Tears dimmed light. In eyes darkened. When the father raised it on hands, a child's face twitched...

Vukol regained consciousness. It seemed to it that he long slept that hours are whole that Tatorka did not pursue it that the King is living and now will jump to it on a bed, will lick lips and an ear.

Behind a window laughter, noise of children's, male and female voices, some crash as if peas pour in an empty bucket is heard, and someone shouts drawlingly:

– And well, how the woman follows water? and how children steal peas?

And again began to knock in a bucket, and children so laugh that even scream.

– Mother! – Vukol wants to shout loudly, but it turns out poorly and plaintively. – On the street! Mother opened bed curtains.

– What you, my darling? The head does not hurt you? It is impossible on the street, the father did not order! You had a heat!

– No, does not hurt! I will go to the street! What does it crack?

Women, men, children surrounded with a ring the man in a blue caftan, in a high black hat grechnevikiy, with the drum hanging at it on a belt. He fractionally beat the drum with two small sticks, from time to time pulling the thick chain tied by one end to a belt, and another – passed throughout a nostril to a big shaggy animal.

The animal somersaulted and grabbed on the ground, rose as the person, on hinder legs and then became the whole head above crowd. On other, thinner chain attached for a collar there was other same animal, but still small, it is no more than bandog. The young of wild animal sat at legs of the man and quietly looked at works of the mother, at the crowd with laughter monitoring representation.

– This is a she-bear with a bear cub! – mother told, lifting on the son's hands.

She-bear showed any ridiculous pieces. Then it was entered into the house, and the room was filled with the people. She-bear stood on hinder legs and drank up vodka from a glass, holding it in forepaws.

The festive crowd filling the room laughed, made a din.

The bear cub was brought to the yard and there tied to the tumbled-down wattle fence under a canopy. Vukol very much became interested in a bear cub: the young of wild animal was absolutely

manual, was afraid of nobody and behaved ridiculously. Vukol ran after him. There was a strong wish to get acquainted with it closer and to play as played with the King.

The bear cub sat on a wattle fence, pogromykhivya a chain. Vukol stood few steps away from him, having thrust hands into pockets of trousers. Small bear eyes sparkled good-natured friendliness. Both with curiosity watched some time at each other. Vukol decided to begin a game: bent down, lifted a small dry stick and threw into a bear cub. That sniffed at it, took in a paw, sucked and threw back. Vukol laughed and, having decided to continue a game, threw into him a stone. The bear cub looked for a stone, did not find and, having gone down from a wattle fence, went to the little person on all fours, but the chain prevented. Then he got up on hinder legs and quietly, plaintively zaurchat, as if complaining of a chain and as if inviting to approach him closer. Here Vukol remembered how the she-bear owner for fun struggled with her before the laughing loudly people. There was a wish to clasp also to it the new friend in arms. He gave hands to a young of wild animal. The bear cub sniffed at Vukol. From an animal smelled of wet wool. Approached it closely, but at this time someone seized him behind and lifted on air: it was Vukol's mother. Without telling anything, she ran from the yard, strong pressing the son to a breast.

On the street put on legs, took by hand, told:

– It is impossible to play with a bear: he will eat you! Let's go better to Romanevym!

Vukol was surprised: so ridiculous bear cub and cheerful!

Romanev lived nearby, in a big old log hut. There was much: the grandma, the gray-haired grandfather, two bearded men, two guys – all such huge, they seemed Vukola nearly to a ceiling: women, maids, children – the log hut is always full. In a log hut the horse harness, in an outer entrance hall – a colored arch with a bell is hanging: about Romanev said that they are from time immemorial coachmen. There lives Pashka, the friend Vukola. She comes to play every day to it dolls or calls on the street. Lips and a chin at it always in sores from fever, it always nasty, but Vukol loves it with all the heart.

All family sat at a table and had dinner. Pashkina the grandmother gave on a table.

– Welcome! – all told chorus. – Ali the groom – from missed the bride? Pashka! you will go in marriage for Vukol?

– I will go! – Pashka answers, thrusting a finger into a mouth, and, having approached “groom”, whispers to it on an ear: – Let's go to a barn.

All densely laughed.

Vukola with Pashka called the groom and the bride long ago and though they did not understand value of these words, nevertheless believed that they will always play together, even when big will grow.

Mother began to tell about Vukol's fight against a little bear and asked not to allow to go home the boy, will not take away bears yet: the guide has dinner.

– And we it together with Pashka on the near field will take to build a buffoonery! – men answered. – Tomorrow on an arable land we want to leave!

Mother left soon.

All family left to the yard. Men began to oil tar of a wheel and axis of the cart, women put knots, koshma, sheepskin clothes in the cart.

Pashka quietly pulled Vukol a sleeve and began to mince to gate. Her head with a white braid is tied by a motley scarf, a sundress on it from homespun matter, a leg barefoot, with coarse heels, in “tsepka”. Vukol always went after Pashka, and Pashka bossed.

The barn was across the road, there stood omt last year's straw, near it an old shed with a straw low roof. The somersaults in straw and a travel from an omet on a flat roof of a shed were favourite their game.

This time they, as before, happened, climbed on a shed and, having joined hands, with an extraordinary celebration jumped on an old, thin roof, and Pashka, choking with happy laughter, sang:

Rain, rain, stop,  
We will go to Arestan...

– Sing! – she shouted, jumping and holding Vukol by both hands.

In the heat of their fun the roof under their legs cracked, was moved apart, and both of them failed down, in a shed, together with an armful of brushwood and rotten straw. It was so unexpected that children did not manage even to be frightened and only floundered in dusty straw.

Dust powdered eyes, sprinkled faces, jammed into a nose. Having put out the heads from straw, they looked at each other in a dark shed and laughed. Got out, shook off, and Pashka began to jump again and started singing.

– Gate are locked! – plaintively Vukol told. – Let's not get out!

– Eva! and a gate on what?

Easily crept under shed gate, through a pool. From a barn ran to the Pashkiny log hut. Midway to them the low old man met a long white beard, in bast shoes and a high cap, in a blue pestryadiny shirt, a comb at a belt. Having passed them by itself, it took the end of a beard in a mouth, terribly began to roar, shook the head and zatopat bast shoes.

Children very much started running.

– This is the brownie! – Pashka explained, having turned pale and having begun to shake. She ran quicker than Vukol, but did not release his hand from the.

Vukol believed Pashka that it is not the person, but some terrible brownie: and before he heard about it from Pashka any horrors. The brownie steals some children, carries away them with himself in a bag and even eats.

In fear they looked back.

– Dorzhi! dorzh! – the brownie shouted them following – — solution! – shook a beard and stamped legs in bast shoes as though being going to catch up with them.

In horror, with crying they ran in in a log hut.

At Vukol were stared, lips twitched, the person turned pale as chalk.

– Brownie! brownie! – breaking into tears, Pashka shouted. – Runs for us... the beard long... growls here so: at-at!

– What brownie? – Pashkina the grandmother was surprised, looked in a window. – Yes it is Terenti, the shepherd! purposely it, not really! Took in head to scare you! See, as you shiver both! Well, fall to me, *восподь* with you! What old fool! Shepherd Terenti it, joker it at all not the brownie!

Pashka and Vukol rushed to it, buried the heads in her sundress, and she stroke-oared them on the heads wrinkled, rigid.

When children calmed down, put them in the cart on soft knots and sheepskin coats. There the grandmother, two maids and two guys sat down.

Dear Pashka cheered up and began to assure Vukol that in the field for them will build a tent which will be “to the sky”.

The field was nearby, immediately behind a village fence. From the cart pulled out huge panels and began to lift it on in advance hammered columns and stakes.

Vukol with interest waited for construction of a tent: really to the sky? Looked up: highly the cloud floated, the sun was rolled up for the end of the earth.

The linen tent was built such big and high that men went under a tent without being bent – but after all the tent did not reach the sky.

– It only this way, wait a moment! – surely Pashka told – and then *isdelat* another. That will already be to the sky!

Women made fire before a tent and began to cook porridge. All mudflows on a *koshma* in the middle of a tent and a fir-tree crude a honey agaric with bread.

Then ate hot potato, supped millet soup. While had supper, there came dark spring night with the rare large stars which acted in dense black height.

After a dinner all went to bed on a koshma a vpovalka. Vukola with Pashka put nearby, covered with an odorous tanned sheepskin coat.

– Groom with the bride! young people! – men joked.

– Sleep, good luck! – the grandmother told.

But they were whispered for a long time, arguing among themselves. In a tent opening stars from above looked.

– Nebushko is a God's tent! – his girlfriend whispered Vukola, embracing him for a neck thin hands – and stars – gvozdochka gold, the sky is beaten by them that did not fall – a baushka of a bayal – really, I do not lie, burst eyes! And above god sits: it does a rain, a thunder and to a molonye and if Ilya prophet on a nebushka goes by a fiery tarantass – a baushka of a bayal – that time the thunder rattles and molonye happens! And in the sky there are andela: hands at them of a netuta, only heads and wings, as at birdies – a baushka of a bayal!

Vukol with full confidence listened Pashkina to stories and willingly believed that about a barn to them the brownie met, in the sky there lives god, and the asterisks shining highly seemed svetlenky heads of angels which as if moved in dark height with the bird's wings.

Woke up from noise and a dialect. In the village often and cheerfully rang a big bell.

All were standing. Women hasty put on, men harnessed a horse in the cart. In the sky stars still glimmered, in a section of a tent dark night looked. It was cold. All left a tent, is disturbing speaking about something and not listening to each other. Having joined hands, children ran out after them.

Over the village all sky was poured by golden-scarlet light. From a distance noise of many human voices reached. The alarm stopped, again flew chaotic blows, merging in continuous copper howl. To brightly lit sky from the earth the dense cloud seeming white as steam floated. In the flaring sky something cracked.

– Ah-ah! – cried Pasha and suddenly began to cry, began to call the grandmother, without releasing Vukol's hand.

– Baushka, небушко burns!

– Ah you, vospod! – the old woman threw up the hands – that with you to do! Oferova burn! Obliquely from us! To be dragged we go, and you could not be put! The maid with you will remain! The house at Oferov burns, troubles as!

– Why, the baushka, burns?

The guy, vzvazhiviy horse, with irritation grumbled:

– Rich they, devils!

## II

Vukol sat on a floor of a timbered log hut at legs of the old woman dressed in a blue sundress with tin buttons. Near it there was his friend and the uncle – Lavrusha. The grandmother spun yarn, twisting the buzzing spindle; beside it the daughter – Nastya, the young girl spun it. On a heavy pine bench at a table the grandfather with a long gray-haired beard spun a bast shoe, and on the horseman the elder brother of Lavrusha – the adult guy Yafim – made a fishing tackle of a cane. The winter decline shone in icy glasses, giving them a reddish shade.

It was vaguely remembered how mother took out knots from the house, something was bound behind a tarantass, pillows laid sitting; mother sat down on them, having put Vukol's number. On a trestle near the coachman Romanev the person in strange clothes, in a blue cap, with a saber at a belt and long moustaches jumped. About a porch not movably and speechless the big crowd stood. There was a father dressed roadside, sat down with mother, and the three rushed on the wide rural street to pasture, for a village fence.

Hushfully the hand bell with the tied-up language tinkled, pogromykhivat jingles; the wide, flat steppe was a circle, smelled of a grass, dust and horse then. Vukol long admired a saber of the moustached person and joyfully looked around roads from where as if the high turning yellow rye bowed. Then all this somehow disappeared from memory and consciousness: Vukol lulled by jingles and measured rocking of a tarantass fell asleep on hands at mother...

Now Vukol was six years old, he lived in the village of Zaymishche on a visit at the grandfather and the grandmother.

The log hut of the grandfather stood directly against a village fence and was similar to him: big, thick, turned from thick beams, with a gray straw roof and gloomy windows. Also the grandfather was same: big, broad-shouldered, thin, but heavy; when went on a log hut – floor boards bent under its bast shoes. It had a long beard, gray-haired, the head bald and a voice – as at a bear. With adult children said a little and loved that understood it from one word. With small it was tender.

The grandmother – small growth, dry, with a thin profile of a dark face. Spoke and laughed quietly, timidly, good-natured.

Lavrusha is the rural little boy with a chestnut-colored thick hair a cap, with a deep frown, the sedate and judicious, real little little man. Almost identical growth and age, the uncle and the nephew very much loved each other, spent the whole day together, and slept in an embrace on *полатях* at night.

In a forward corner of a log hut there was a *bozhnitsa* with a set of dark icons and an icon lamp from color glass, the painted picture representing “Hung on a wall as mice of a cat buried”, along timbered walls there were wide and heavy pine benches, a *bozhnitsa* – a table. A quarter of a log hut the big Russian furnace with white *subfenny*, with a closet behind it and extensive occupied *polatyam* which connected to the furnace a thick bar. Big climbed *polat* directly from the furnace, children could get only on a bar there. About a door – the *fad* in which basts, a harness and different economic belongings were stored.

In a pier between forward windows hung, *наклонясь*, the archin mirror of market work decorated paper with flowers *zasizhenny* flies. Most often Nastya stopped before curve reflection in this mirror.

Nastya was the stately fair-haired girl with the pretty person. She “*nevestitsya*”, put on in print dresses, carried rings and earrings.

The frost adorned glasses of windows in elaborate blue colors. Winter twilight was condensed. Nastya, having breathed on glass and having had a look in the thawed circle one eye, shouted to children:

– Rolling all right!

The only beggar in the village was knocked on a gate.

Headlong, as the scared kittens, rushed children from an oven on polat, clambering on a bar, hid there in a far corner, buried the heads under pillows and sheepskin coats.

Slowly entered Rolling, having strong slammed the become covered with hoarfrost door.

It was very high growth, is thin and thin, with the little, bird's head, closely cropped, with a dark wrinkled face almost without vegetation, with a long pointed nose, with the big bag hanging through a shoulder almost to the earth. The thin, thin legs in frozen bast shoes which are wrapped up by rags shivered. On thin shoulders the old soldier's overcoat was wound.

– To Milostink For goodness sake! – said the Muscleman in low tones and pulled down a ripped cap from the head, being christened on icons.

Nastya went to a closet, brought a big chunk of sitnik.

– Accept For goodness sake!

Rolling crossed, lowered a piece in a bottomless lean bag and told by the sick deaf voice:

– Christ will save!

– Get warm! – compassionately the grandmother told. – To you on an oven to lie, and you go begging!

– I have nobody, all died, and the soldier, it is visible, and death does not take, it peck rolling!

– And if you on service were? long ago, tea? – slightly stammering, Yafim asked.

– Long ago! – the old soldier became straight. – At an anperator Mikolaye the First served, to will, twenty five years, and to Nona here – I go begging. There's nothing to be done? Destiny! it peck rolling!

– What it is musclemen?

– In old times we musclemen called carrion crows... a proverb at me such: it peck rolling!

– Yes you and that on old a crow are similar!

– Tease with rolling, and also forgot a baptized name itself!

– Years as to you?

– Mnoga! it was from the youth painfully healthy, served in grenadiers... one sticks to one thousand received, and pozor and I will not remember as, скрозь the system was driven and in fluent was, all was... well, pymat, in iron shackles chained and – on a mare!.

– On what mare?

– And эфро, a sudarka if on the area of a sekla a whip, so put on a mare – on a scaffold a bench such, on racks put it, hand-legged belts will bind, and the executioner – take care, to an ozhg! – as a whip vdarit, at once blood will scatter!

Rolling with a celebration quickened when shouted by a deaf voice: “take care, to an ozhg!”

– Passions каке&#769;! – having thrown up the hands, Nastya sighed.

– Now that for service? – willingly continued Rolling. – Overindulgence one!. At the noneshny sovereign – neither you a skroz-system, nor you mares, nor fie to you – birches – anything! Strike эфро service, them peck rolling! No, they would serve about ours! Took away me vyunoshy, held down took away, and it was turned back home by the old man, I tanned, have the live place no skin on a back, hems ache also now at night!. This – service! The marching was – extend a leg, a sock to a sock, unanimously in a frunta you stand – it is live dead, in ammunition – purity, besides articles – “он краул”, for example, it was required to take ease – and the infantry goes – the earth shivered! Э and that баять, the killer whale, is not present such service now! The First used to say the late anperator of Mikolai: kill nine, learn the tenth! Also killed! And I here strong was. Immortal to a regiment called, death was afraid of me! It was turned back home clean, there is no An – neither house nor home, either the family, or cousins-in-laws: god tidied up all! And here I live yes I live, me peck rolling, one word – immortal!.

– And in the war there were you, the grandfather?

– As! всеё transferred the Sevastopol kanpaniya! Had Georgy for bravery! what was!.. sheer hell!. as to the people lay down! well, god stored me it is unknown for ча: and sekl me, and скрозь

drove a system, and on a mare was, and in the war – though those scratch! Yes a tapericha all is also forgotten!

Children, slightly breathing and having hardly put out the heads from under rags, with horror listened to the terrifying story.

Frightened by rolling in the village of children, said to them that the old soldier carries away them in the bag. Nobody, except it, went with a bag behind a handout; only the priest who several times a year came from Petty-bourgeois Farms on collecting.

Rolling left. Children got down with polaty the in the regular way through a bar on the furnace – and lowered the heads through “zadoroga”.

In a log hut darkened.

The grandmother in a closet long inflated a piece of coal on a perch of the Russian furnace and, at last, lit a splinter, put it in the svetets who was above a wash-tub. The log hut was lit with the incorrect, wandering light.

The grandfather still spun a bast shoe, tapping with a shank of a kochedyk and tastefully ponyukhivy from time to time dark tobacco powder from a birch bark snuffbox, dexterously filling it on a nail of a thumb and involving one nostril a pinch. Continuing work, he quietly sang the lingering song under hum of spindles:

We will pass, brothers, lengthways down the street,  
We will sing the song old,  
Song old, Volga mother!

As soon as the grandfather started singing – children came to be on a floor at his legs, they began to spin something from scraps of basts too.

In the song it was told about the old man and the old woman interpreting whom from sons to hand over in soldiers:

Whether how to hand over to hand over the eldest son?  
Yes the senior has small children!  
Whether how to hand over to hand over the son of an average —  
Yes at an average the wife is tender...

At last, decided to hand over younger:

Does it have neither wife, nor children,  
And he is nepochetchik-son!

In a step to singing spindles buzzed. Through howl of a blizzard somewhere away the hand bell which was fading, again beginning to ring was heard for a long time as if asked to spend the night and did not let anywhere.

The song ceased to be listened, but the grandfather still sang:

Would not let to spend the night you,  
Yes well – sit down to have supper:  
According to your speeches – from soldiers you go,  
And our sonny in nekruta zabrit,  
In shackles went to service imperial,  
Twenty years passed also five years  
Also it is not known – whether it is live whether it is live?

Here he kept silent, knocked kochedyky and to the accompaniment of spindles and a distaff finished:

You, my darling sir-father,  
You, my darling mother,  
Whether you recognize СВОБО the son smaller?

Women continued to spin, and children with astonishment looked at the grandfather. It was represented to them – as the younger son was turned back to parents, thin and old as Rolling, tears stream down at it the terrible face with a long nose and the ugly, closely cropped head.

On all fours removed to legs of the grandmother and, twisting tin buttons of her blue pestryadinny sundress, unanimously stuck:

– Baushka! Tell the fairy tale!

The grandmother began to tell silent, darling, s by an old-womanish voice, without ceasing to spin and from time to time, on the action course, to sing, representing a goat:

Kozlyatushki, detyatushka!  
Open, unlocked,  
Your mother came,  
Milk brought!  
The milk on a vymeckha runs,  
From a vymeckha on kopytechka,  
From копытечек – in cheese the earth!

Plaintively and fantastically the song sounded. The grandmother, representing a wolf, spoke and sang by a thick voice; representing a kozlyatok, again changed a timbre.

When the wolf went to shape thinner language to the smith, the grandmother did a special face and spoke on – wolf low and densely:

– The smith, the smith, painfully I is simple, language at me is thick, hold down to me thin language!

The wolf achieved the, deceived and ate a kozlyatok; children with horror, as if in reality, saw an execution which the offended mother revenged it:

– The godmother, the godmother, a hair burns!  
– So it is also necessary to you: why mine the kozlyatok ate?  
– The godmother, the godmother, a leg burn!  
– So it is also necessary to you!.

A story about Ivanushka and Alyonushka was top of art of the storyteller: listening to this fairy tale, children already not for the first time shed tears of the best human feelings.

The grandmother told about the wonderful mare who gave rise zolotogrivy horses and the fad-gorbunka about clever brothers and Ivan the Fool; clever married and deceived the father, and Ivan honestly guarded the fatherly field. For it clever brothers considered him the fool, but left so that to it tumbled down happiness when clever got zolotogrivy horses, and to the fool an ordinary-looking gorbunok. Gorbunok had magic power and bore to the owner faithful service. At the end of the fairy tale when Ivanushka, apparently, inevitably had to die in the boiling copper, the gorbunok came of it to the rescue also here and even rewarded it for his sorrows: having boiled down in a copper, Ivan was the handsome, the clear head and the owner of the biggest kingdom in the world.

Was marvelous fairy tales at the grandmother much: about a firebird, about Zmey Gorynych, about the tsar Saltan, about the sleeping tsarevna, the Golden Cockerel, about a bottom a tolokony forehead and the worker to his Head.

Absolutely close the hand bell tinkled and calmed down. At gate the Ball began a bark, runners of sledge began to creak, someone knocked on a gate.

Yafim threw шубняк shoulders and left through an outer entrance hall to the yard.

– To whom a tepericha to be? – the grandfather grumbled, getting up from a bench.

In an outer entrance hall creaking, frosty steps were heard, and together with clouds of white frosty air the tall person in the fur coat brought by snow with the big lifted wolf collar tied by a scarf with the become covered with hoarfrost ice-covered beard entered a log hut. Behind it Yafim entered, bearing the big knot brought by snow.

The guest grunted, unbent a collar and began to tear off from moustaches the cold hand ice icicles. Yafim helped it to take off a fur coat, and to the middle of a log hut there was a red curly person in a jacket and fur boots overknee.

The grandfather turned pale.

– Really you, Elizarushka? – the grandmother threw up the hands. – Vospodì!

– I am most! – the guest answered. – Great you live. Did not wait?

– Come, kindly to favor! To wait for Kuda here? Three years passed!

Vukol pricked up the ears.

Elizar solemnly, three times kissed each other with all. Lifted on Vukol's hands, pricked to him cheeks with a beard, told:

– Masha with Vovka in the city!

The grandmother has a little cry in a voice:

– Darling you are our Elizarushka, a falcon clear, an eagle gray-winged!

The old man grunted, pushed the son-in-law to a table and itself sat down.

In a log hut began to fuss, laid a table. Nastya brought a tin samovar from an outer entrance hall and was engaged in it.

The guest put near himself children. Developed a small parcel: there were painted pictures, several brand new basten books and one big.

– With mail reached – he told – yes nearly went astray, strayed a little bit, here and were late!

– Where you there, in Siberia, lived? – gloomy the grandfather asked.

– In the city of Kolymi... Only a rank that the city, and actually – a hole! Solitude, game, deficiency!. But, by the way, grew roots, we see – and in Siberia good people are.

The grandmother sobbed.

– Everything эфто left because of us, because of our village – the grandfather noticed – because of the earth! The landowner on “conclusion” brought us here and deprived of the earth! you suffered for the earth!

Vukol attentively listened attentively to the father's conversation with the grandfather, understood badly, but intuition caught that all this has some communication with a half-forgotten trip. Suddenly pulled it to the father, взлез to it on knees.

– Aha! – the father laughed – you will go with me to the city to mother? and?

Vukol stretched to his ear and in a whisper reported in confidence:

– I will go!

Seniors long spoke about life in exile, about for what his parents got there, but a lot of things seemed unclear. Vukol decided to choose a moment when the grandfather is not for inquiries. He listened and kept the eyes glued from the father: for long time this image grew dull in his memory. Now Vukol with curiosity and pride admired still the young, talkative and attractive man. Its exterior which is almost forgotten by Vukol seemed very beautiful. The hair which grew in exile almost to shoulders were cast away back, opening a big clean forehead; the thin nose – with a small hump,

eyes – cheerful, derisive, a beard of pure gold, curls locks. Absolutely to the man it is not similar. In all bearing – daring. It was joyful to watch Vukola at him.

– Books what for? – the grandfather grinned. – We are illiterate, not about us pisano!

– In Siberia kind people educated! – Elizar objected. – And these took for children! From there is nothing to do and you will listen!

The grandfather took the big book, carefully developed it on a table and slowly began to overturn sheets hardened fingers. Long with surprise and bewilderment looked at the opened page speckled by ranks of black signs, mysterious for it, on white paper.

– What you look? – quietly the grandmother grinned. – Chitaka!

– Knowledge! – the grandfather told. – About what pisano?.

– Yes you and head over heels hold the book! – the son-in-law noticed.

– To it all one! – Yafim grinned.

– This is Paulson, the book for general reading! There is a story about Englishman Franklin who opened why there is a thunder and a lightning, and many other things about science! Is about Fulton who launched the first steamship!

– See you! – the grandfather told. – Bat, Ilya prophet rattles, on the sky goes!

– Fairy tales! The science everything learned that it to what happens in the nature...

The grandfather shook the head.

– And god? You Nanyukhatsya, it is visible, in only three years! And here to me everything is uniform: I and in церквы Nicoli do not go – far, by the Lower Farms, she! Old women of an epta of a prayer invented!. God willing a dozhdichka, here and thanks to it, to Christians from it more is necessary nothing!.

Elizar shook curls, looked at the father-in-law crafty:

– God? what god? Who saw it?

There came awkward silence. The grandfather frowned.

– Yes you what, Elizar, you joke, perhaps?

The guest laughed.

– Of course, I joke! I like to test people as they think!

– Ooh, you napuzhat us, Elizar Grigorich! – with a silent snicker the grandmother told. – That it, vospod!

– God as reason of the Universe, maybe, also is – Elizar pompously – only not such as it on icons we, icon painters, write told!

He looked at old icons of a bozhnitsa where in the center there was an ugly woman with the baby on hands, above rushed on two white fiery horses harnessed in the flaring chariot, the prophet Ilya with the fluttering white beard.

– Here though to take this icon: from the writing it is known that Maria was the surprising beauty, and icon painters write her so that surely ugly was!. I in books read that in our veins blood consists of the slightest balls which with the naked eye even cannot be distinguished! – Elizar led round all a severe look. – And what, if these stars, both planets, and the sun which is the same star, as well as other stars, an essence only balls which float in veins of very big such giant at whom all our Universe is, maybe, only in one blood ball? What if god such? If our globe – only a blood ball in his veins? Where the end to these stars which we see at the night in the sky? Present edge of the Universe – and behind edge that? Will tell, emptiness? And behind emptiness that? There is no end of the Universe because the incalculable number of the star worlds arise again instead of those to which there came the end. It is infinity and eternity! The nature is and there is god! The Universe has neither end, nor the beginning!

The beard of the grandfather began to move, hiding a smile.

– Kaka piece? and? – unexpectedly he told, addressing all and nodding on Elizar. – Sly fellow! it will get that mind for reason comes!

Nastya put a samovar on a table, placed tea cups. The grandmother brought snack.

Children were given on a cup of tea, and they drank it, sniffing and bending to a saucer not to spill. In the house of the grandfather tea was had seldom: only in solemn occasions when there were guests or on big holidays. Both boys with pleasure felt the aroma proceeding from tea together with steam and in it there was the main pleasure. The laurels frowningly attentively considered the new person.

– What case with me was! – there began Elizar, removing the emptied cup. – We stopped to spend the night at one man. And they had an old woman the patient, lies on the furnace. I ask what is with it? “Yes, speak, not by the night be told, frenzied as will roll on it – though from a log hut run, the passion to look! fights, beats, foam from a mouth! Here and now not in: it is necessary to remove it from the furnace, on a bed to put! Make favor if you are able, read before image ‘yes god will revive’! Помогат, знамо, it to us!” I speak: why to read? I it and so to a sym! the old woman is sick, ledashchy. Got to it on the furnace, took her by hands, so you will not believe, such force at the old woman appeared – I can do nothing. And a sileska at me in hands, you know, is. Beats off! I grasped it by hands, so she canines to me seized a hand, till it bleeds bit! What to do? Gave up. Tell house: this is a demon in it, only a prayer and it is possible to expel him. Well, there were I before icons, began to read. And it to me from the furnace: bya-bya-bya! Angrily it is so teased, eyes as coals! I got off, but continued to read what only under language turned up, even “Down the mother across Volga” read. And it though imitates, but more and more quietly yes is more silent. At last, it was tumbled down and fell asleep. Here its house removed. As dead: the head hung, hands as a lash, hears nothing and does not feel. Laid it. Speak: “Thank God, Christ will save those, helped out!. Now about one half a day will oversleep, and will rise healthy and will remember nothing, you expelled a demon from it!” In my opinion, klikusha it! A sincere disease such, and they trust in a demon!.

– And how not to trust? – all family was surprised with chorus.

– Here to one molodukha of snakes flew! – with conviction Nastya declared. – All saw! As at night all will fall asleep in a log hut, and rassyptsya over поветью, and then now to it on the furnace the husband her dead is: about the husband she grieved. It is known who grieves, to those and is. Yes does not order to tell anybody: threatens! She long hid and strike from the people you will hide? People see: каждую night over their log hut sparks is scattered a dragon. Stuck to it, confessed. Night came, it shivers everything, is afraid of it. Is – gro-oznay! – “You пошто told?”, and well to pinch! in bruises made all body by it. Threatens: prick you will tell people – with a braid I will come! About half a year flew, before tender was, and here terrible became. Istayala it, as a wax candle, in what soul... Also it came – with a braid! Yes in the afternoon! all houses were. Nobody zrit it, and she one sees! Threw the arms round the father a neck: “The father, close! wants to hit me with a braid!” The father embraced her, to close. Here all on a log hut rush about, wave what got that to strike a dragon, and nothing leaves: it invisible and winged, under a ceiling curls, she shouts to the father: “The father, on you he threatened! Wants to stick into a shoulder with a braid!” Here at the old man now the hand hung. The daughter – dead fell! So it took out soul from it and carried away. And the father on a hand, on a thumb, had a tiny black wound and everything hurts, all not to heal. They to healers, they to fortune-tellers – to help nothing, никакe#769; slanders! Integral year was ill. Yes, thanks, some passerby prisovetovat – it is visible from such that knew! – fresh blood from black chicken to primachivat with a special prayer and it is better to stick. Well also began to hem a finger gradually. The father of a dream lost at night: all will lay down on the furnace, and to it Dunya, the dead woman, seems, especially in the winter when a blizzard outside...

For a minute all became silent.

Splinter, crackling, flashed, grew dull, dropping the hissing pieces of coal in water.

The samovar a thin voice sang the plaintive song. The gray cat jumped off from the furnace and began to play on a floor a grandmother’s ball. Behind a window wind rustled, from time to time throwing snow dust into frozen windows.

– Shto – the grandfather meditatively muttered, stroking a beard – эфро all know. Not in one our village, and esteem everywhere, on all peasantry, to happen. Itself did not see, more and more women stir... a mozh, “it” dvistitelno... that... to fly at night?

– These cases everywhere how many you want! – there began Elizar. – Flies at night a fiery dragon it is necessary all our dark country! Therefore – night over it without dawn. From darkness it is rural... In the cities light has more about any not to hear dragons. From vain belief it, in vain such belief! Is called superstition!. People trust in a demon more strong, than in god, are afraid of it more, than god! And in what you trust, comes true!. I in one book read history – by verses it is written, the title – “Demon”. There too this national belief is taken, only the demon this not terrible, but unfortunate, young and himself is great – of course, the imagination human! The author took it from the people as the fairy tale, and the people and the fairy tale trust, here is how children! Great cause – belief! – Elizar kept silent. – And there was a history, I heard it in Siberia: the emperor Alexander the First, the fact that was at war with French in the twelfth year, actually did not die, and disappeared and became the hermit, was removed in the Siberian woods and lived to death under the guise of the simple man there. Konstantin about whom misters knew that as soon as it sets in, will give vent to serfs was a successor of an imperial throne. Well, it did not seem to zheltopuzika: they decided to kill him. Here Konstantin in the imperial carriage from Taganrog where Alexander as if died goes, thinks: as soon as I am a tsar, first of all I will give vent. Suddenly hears – behind far somewhere jump tops. Closer yes is closer. The driver to him turned back and speaks: “Your highness, successor Crown Prince! pursuit! not to good!” ... “Well that” – Konstantin, and he answers, speak, idle time was, waited from it for good the black people – “to what to be, to that not to pass!” Those all are closer, just about will overtake, began to see – the person ten. Again the driver speaks: “Sit down, the sovereign, on a trestle, put on my odyozha, and I will put on yours, I will sit down on your place!” Only they managed to be changed odyozhy and the place as those naskakat and – bang! bang – from guns on both sides in carriage windows: riddled the driver in an imperial odyozha, turned horses – and let’s go back. So the male driver saved the successor of a throne from death, itself for it gave life! Believed that Konstantin of serfs will release. And he as arrived to St. Petersburg, also refused a throne, knew who shot at the driver, in a face saw them: the most foremost and the richest were landowners, court графья, princes and generals. Was afraid that will kill him if he will regret peasants. Here Aleksandra was also inherited not by Konstantin as it would be necessary, and Nikolay Pavlovich nicknamed in the people Palkin. Only nowadays reigning Alexander though without the earth, but after all exempted the people from mockeries of the landowner, noblemen and посейчас are angry with it, and there was on it an attempt of Karakozov who shot at the tsar and it is unsuccessful, and, sidyuch in prison, got poisoned with the poison hidden in hair. It had long hair, dense and curly, and it was sent by landowners. So I heard, I tell the story as I heard it.

– Well, well – the grandfather with emotion interrupted it – the will was given, and the earth all one remained with landowners? When from them the earth is taken away?

– When – it is unknown, but there will be it inevitably! – Elizar shook curls. – There are secret society and confidential subland office, and those people want to lift all people on landowners. The people think that these secret people want to protect from the tsar’s landowners, think that noblemen and this tsar want to destroy in revenge for country will, but do not know that the tsar too at the same time with landowners! Here you also get to the core of this cunning mechanics!

All were silent. Did not wait to hear it from Elizar.

It became boring for children from a serious conversation, eyes at them began to stick together.

– Well – Elizar told them – it is time to sleep to you and a postoyta, at bedtime I will read you songs from the good songbook: “Bérenger’s songs” is called. How many I songbooks bought, and it is better than it did not come across.

He developed the small book in a pink cover printed with ranks of short lines and, having thrown several leaves, began to read:

I am not deprived of theomancy,  
I expect the end to princes of the earth:  
The deserved penalty will comprehend them —  
All poor things kings will die!

Elizar read well as though he did not read, and told, looking in the book. After several cheerful songs came across the song under the title “The falling stars”. In it the grandfather talked to the grandson:

...Here, the grandfather, one more fell.  
Flies, flies, and it is not here!.

– There was a great commander – with a sigh Elizar told, closing the book – conquered all countries, except ours!. When went before army on a horse, in the sky over it the star shone day and night. And here he decided to conquer Russia. Took Moscow, and inhabitants lit it. It was necessary in the winter, in severe frosts when crows on the fly fell the dead, to run back with all the army. Took him prisoner, took out to the sea, landed on the desert island and there naked chained to the rock, the black raven began to peck to it heart. Then its star was gone and did not ascend any more.

– I vtepor a boy was when still you and did not exist – the grandfather unexpectedly declared. – Slightly I remember when the Frenchman came... The people about Moscow cried... I remember, dreamily... Brought to spend the night prisoners: brought – were slightly live, and thawed – good fellows from themselves! One and remained with our mistress – the painter appeared good, in Dubrov then the house new was built, so he painted with pictures of a wall – and now is whole!

All got out because of a table and began to lay beds. Children got in the habitual way on a bar on polat, also Elizar went there, the grandfather laid down on the edge. Vukol as if was stuck to the father. The laurels timidly and wildly continued to consider it frowningly.

Babushka and Nastya spread a koshma on a floor. The splinter lit a log hut with the flickering light for a long time.

– Well, how you lived here? – Elizar asked the son – missed?

– No, we with Laurels always together... in the field take us in the summer, and that in the wood we run, companions are... Nobody ever scolds me, nevertheless...

– What?

– Heart hurt always... Why you threw me?

Elizar sighed.

– Thought – it will be better for you at the grandmother! In Siberia, the brother, life thin!. here so will violently send there – at the other end of the world, behind the woods, behind mountains, behind swamps – and live as you want!

– Why violently? For what? The grandfather told – for the earth? for what?

– And you know Dubrova? happened there?

– Happened! for a Trinity, with little girls! to look for cuckoo slezk!

– There now! Well there? You love the Oak grove?

– I love!

– And her merchant took away from our village and one lives in it! Here men gathered for a descent and sent me to the city, to strive for Dubrova because competent I! and when it was turned back in the spring – you remember, to a mozha when the bear-hunter with a she-bear came and the fire was?

– I remember! The sky burned!.

– We then lived in Shackles! Soon after that sent me to the city, and then – to Siberia... Mother went voluntarily...

– It when we went with a hand bell?

– You remember unless? Coachmen Romanev really nearby and now live! On the road we came around here and you sleepy the grandfather and the grandmother were given! And your heart, perhaps, you speak about us, was ill?

– Yes! – quietly Vukol whispered.

– And hear – the grandfather interfered – hearing goes whether lie, whether is not present – I do not know as if and on Zaymishche our forest are angry too! Someone like the successor's pomeshchikov! Whether tell, please, soon from swindlers the earth will be taken away?

Elizar laughed.

– I speak to you, we will inevitably select when at once we move to select everything!

The old man sighed.

The grandmother put out svetets, and everything calmed down in a dark log hut.

At last, all fell asleep, except the grandfather. Having convinced that all sleep, he began to think, and the grandfather always in a whisper thought at night, silently was not able to think. Its favourite word “swindler” vysheptyvatsya most often at it.

– Whether soon from swindlers the earth will be taken away?

And itself answered himself with a low whisper:

– Not soon!.

On walls cockroaches rustled; in the afternoon they were not visible, and there was the whole army at night. It seemed, they whispered to the grandfather ominous.

He loved the earth and country work, was severe and avaricious in expenses, maltreated a family and for it was respected by all in the village. Saved money in a jug, but to hint perish the thought about it to the grandfather: will become angry.

It seemed to it that the earth from year to year will give rise worse, rains drops out less and the sun does not heat in the summer as strongly any more as before when it was young and even went to the river at night to bathe. The earth at men becomes just barely enough as if it crumbles at them under the feet. Fists increased rent for the state site many times over...

The grandfather about the younger son, about the grandson whispered:

– That хрестьянин, and this not хрестьянин will be!.

Thought of the son-in-law: it was painfully changed from Siberia by this...

In life approached from where unclear. There were in log huts samovars and at whom and a lamp instead of a splinter. Maids – frantikh. Began to wear print dresses, there and Nastka puffs up, and here became honesty less in the people!

– Razorenye will be! Yafimk should marry! To marry the swindler!

The grandfather calmed down, ceased to whisper. One cockroaches whispered. Mysterious whispers rustled in darkness.

Over the sleeping dark village the first roosters sang. Flew over it terrible fairy tales, sad songs and gloomy beliefs. Till the dawn it was still far.

### III

To Yafim usvatat the bride on Petty-bourgeois Farms: there the people lived purely, on city manners, and the bride was from a prosperous family; calculation inclined the grandfather to stop on this choice, though he did not love farm for a frantovstvo and city manners.

At first there went the grandfather with the old woman to shows there. Also the bride's parents visited on a visit at Matvei: the serious business petty bourgeois in a long-skirted frock coat, with curly, in streaks of gray hair, with a comely beard, similar to the dealer or a prasol, and stocky, wrinkled, vostry on language, the fierce old woman.

Right there over a cup of tea and an entertainment there was a handshake. Only after that carried on the Farm of Yafima.

Took out full dresses from the storeroom: blue cloth long-skirted caftans, red belts, merlushkovy caps and leather boots with copper horseshoes. The grandmother put on a new blue sundress from brilliant matter with a braid and the same buttons in two ranks: from a breast to a hem. Took out rasshivny a headdress in the form of a half moon, threw from above with a big Turkish shawl. Ded and Yafim in the cloth caftans girded by red belts in the sheepskin coats covered by cloth wide open, with wide collars on shoulders, in suits of that breed which remained in the peasantry since ancient centuries as if turned into boyars. These expensive suits sewed at grandfathers and great-grandfathers, remaining from generation to generation were put on only in the most solemn occasions, only, maybe, several times in life.

New big sledge of own work with a high carved back, there are a lot of years standing in a barn, brought on the yard; harnessed the three in a new festive harness with copper set, with metal plates, jingles and long brushes, with the abrupt, high arch painted in motley flowers, on the ends fettered by copper. This harness was taken out from the storeroom only for ceremonial cases too.

In a root there was Chalka, a shirokogrudy roan gelding with a white long mane; on a pristyazhka – Karyukh, tonkonogy, with a little head, well going under a saddle, and dark-bay Mishka. Tails at them at all stuck thick, short plaits, and interwove scarlet tapes into manes.

The grandfather released a gray beard over an open sheepskin coat and villages near the grandmother on a back seat. Yafim – in a coach box. The laurels dissolved gate wide open, Yafim pulled reins, and the three ran out on the rural street, abruptly *заворотив* on the rolled snow road and having left behind a deep sled trace in a snowdrift. In windows of the next log huts curious woman's persons flashed. Yafim whistled, distorted reins, and the three, rattling jingles, rushed the middle of the wide street.

Horses were torn from a harness, bells choked under frosty wind, frosty dust was kicked up by a column. The grandmother was closed by a high collar, only warmly looking eyes were seen. Yafim, as always, was silent and serious, from time to time stirred up reins, and the grandfather important grinned, rolling in a semi-archin beard.

They were turned back late at night. Chalka was in soap, the grandfather – tipsy. While Yafim unharnessed horses and brought a precious harness in a cold spacious outer entrance hall, the grandfather and the grandmother changed clothes in the usual poor attire. On the grandmother there was an old pestryadiny sundress again, the grandfather put shoes on in onuchas and bast shoes, threw *zaplatanny шубняк*, put on a ripped shaggy cap and left to the yard with a lamp to give to horses a stern for the night. In a log hut the splinter cracked, Nastya spun, the fair-haired head with curiosity looked at Lavrushin with *polaty*.

Yafim entered, changed clothes, like the father, old and silently sat down in all to a table.

The grandmother collected to have supper.

– Tea, on a visit treated? – crafty Nastya asked.

– Znamo business! the table in total both a lapshennik, and a moloshn fried eggs, fritters in honey, chicken meat was full... Well live!. and we are not hungry какe&#769; not painfully not beggars are eager for food... tea! Everything was under the charter! Brought the bride under a veil. We Bai: not the veil was come to be watched, and the bride! Here took off a veil, the bride bowed to all under the charter, the prince-good fellow in an osobitsa.

Yafim grinned.

– Here, as it is necessary, the prince was asked: Whether Liouba princess young? The prince, of course, here bows silently, and matchmakers and matchmakers told: любa&#769;!. And ask the princess: whether люб to it prince young? The bride worshipped here, well, so люб! Well, here all on a ceremony... Prichityvala the bride long, Indus drove in a tear of all, I liked it: люта&#769; I will be, in mother, and from myself – тве&#769; rdinka, though nevelichka growth, and postavnenka! From a face it is white and from eyes it is cheerful!

Yafim again silently grinned, and Nastya told:

– Prick люта&#769; I – not life to me will be with it!

– Well, maiden thoughts are changeable! You, tea, prosvatay on that the meat eater!

– I bothered you, perhaps? – Nastya shot up.

– Did not bother and to what to be, to that not to pass, you we will pardon not all! The maid it is less – the woman more! Women repent, and maids are going to get married!. So – s, happened, people of a bayala are old!

The grandfather entered, cheerfully dumped шубняк, rose to become gray log huts under a matitsa and, притопнув bast shoes, unexpectedly started singing:

You, a hmelyushka, are cheerful the head,

The head, wide beard is cheerful!.

As you are absent, hop, more strong,

As you are absent, hop, becoming bright!.

The grandmother burst out laughing with a do-good, konfuzlivy snicker:

– And that you, the old man, rasplyasatsya! hop rustles, so the head is silent!

– Be silent you, the old woman! what is in the furnace, on a table throw everything! – and, притопнув, continued:

Hmelyushka walks across the field,

Still hop vykhvalyat itself!

– Me the sovereign, hop, knows,

Both princes, and boyars esteem,

And monks bless me!

– See you sorted houses! It is visible, there is no place like home?

...Still weddings without hop do not play,

Also fight and reconciled – all in hop!

Only there is on me a male gardener:

Deeply me, a hmelina, buries,

Drives in a tychinushka into zealously heart!

The grandfather straightened a beard and, sitting down to a table, laughed:

– On guests to walk and to itself not to lock a collar!. Let’s take a walk, it is visible, at a wedding, the old woman!.

- Well, well, all right! cheered up!
- And, well, to cry about what?. it put, Yafima is married! Yafimka, and?
- And you have supper yes lay down – to, the father! – smiling, the son answered.
- To an expense will be as! You do not stint, the old man!.

Ded Pociakhtel.

– Fifty will leave!. Well and at the good fellow not without sweetheart! The guy in a caftan, and the maid in a sundress!

Lavrusha looked, having lowered the head with polaty, and giggled joyfully: never before he saw the father such cheerful.

– You that, swindler! you laugh? Get down, sit down to a table! Soon and you we will marry!. Single, perhaps, you still?

– Single! – the Laurels giggled, getting down on a bar.

After a dinner the old man was filled up to sleep on *полатях*, singing more and more quietly, slowing down words:

That are rich men bought  
And in a suslitsa the hmelyushka was heated,  
On oak barrels spilled!  
As here I, hop, cleared up,  
On notches I, hop, dispersed:  
To Otsmey I to the gardener a nadsmeshka —  
I will hit it in *тың* with the head,  
And in the dirt a beard!

After several “hen nights” in the house of the bride the wedding train took place, at last: the church was on Petty-bourgeois Farms.

To Matvei’s yard the whole train drove it is done a bit of traveling, there arrived the cart with a dowry of the young wife.

Near the athlete Yafim it seemed small. Her face was still covered by a veil. A crowd entered a log hut. There it was already covered long, in all log hut, hundred, made of three tables, with the benches which are moved up to it.

Young people were put in a forward corner, to a *bozhnitsa*. The others stood, they did not need to sit down yet.

Yafim was in a scarlet worsted shirt and a blue cloth caftan, young – in a white dress of city breed. At solemn silence of the numerous guests who filled a log hut, the grandmother approached the daughter-in-law, quietly took off her veil from the head, and all saw the person young: round, white, with bystry clever eyes, with a dense fair-haired braid. The mother-in-law untwined a braid on two, twirled around the head, and on the plot head silk “*volosnik*” of pink color. Only after that guests began to take seats at a table.

The wedding, “*knyazhetsky*” feast began.

The new person – the young bourgeois who was not wearing sundresses similar on city entered the conservative country house of the grandfather Matvei. The laurels in a new shirt grandly sat near the brother.

The log hut rustled from a cheerful dialect.

\* \* \*

The spring sun began to warm the fields which did not dry out from the thawed snow yet, and the rural street turned green from the first gentle *muravka*.

The grandfather Matvei's family amicably prepared for an arable land: adjusted an ancient heavy plow, repaired harrows, ordered the lacking or broken parts to the smith Migun.

Migun was the fussy big-nosed man with often blinking eyes and hasty, fluent speech. He not only did soshnik, ploughshares and axes, but was able to exorcise blood, treated and tore teeth, gave to drink to patients with a nagovorny grass and was considered as the sorcerer. Lived independently from the village, and its smithy stood on pasture, behind a village fence.

All spring in it work was humming, the horn breathed, sparks poured.

When agricultural tools were given to serviceability, the grandfather Matvei with sons left on an arable land. Next-to-skin, few earth behind a village fence was, and it was plowed so out that never gave a good harvest: to fertilize it to nobody and came to mind because of annual repartitions. Coped with it quickly, and still there was time for the distant field: it was the enormous site in the steppe, versts for thirty from the village – the state earth.

In the olden days it was removed for forty years by men – three families of Listratov – and grew rich from it. Removed on ruble six hryvnias for tithe, and now handed over to men of the village on thirty rubles, but also it was favorable to men. About Listratov said that for them the site – a gold mine.

Except an arable land, men removed at them in the same place and a mowing. Coped with an arable land, and on cleaning each man employed in the city of reapers and mowers. Worked together with hirelings.

Agriculture across Middle Volga was so conducted once.

Ded Matvei from avarice seldom employed alien workers, worked with a family even at night. With a bast basket through a shoulder, without cap, whispering something, scattered seeds a semicircle. Yafim plowed the plow harnessed by four horses, and little Lavrusha was already able to go behind a harrow. Over an arable land rooks curled, damp rich soil hard stuck to bast shoes – hard, tiresome work: the antediluvian plow should be held on hands and on the run to clean off from ploughshares an iron rake the stuck crude earth, legs podvikhivatsya between layers of the vzryty earth, and the breast and a throat overstrained from incessant shout on horses.

From the near field by the evening came back home, but when went to the distant site, lived in the field, in tents, all week and only on Saturday on Sunday came home – to dirt, in dust, black as Blacks; therefore every Saturday “blackly” the baths standing on backs of the village surely burned. On Sunday all village delightfully and long fell down.

The village was above high break under which, maybe, in old centuries Volga proceeded, but then departed on several versts so under break the lugovina was formed, and behind it in a poluversta the rechonka Postepok, small as a stream, densely grown about coast with a sedge and floating water flowers ran.

Through Postepok moved on small, eternally dirty bridge or the corduroy road arranged from the outlined boughs and manure – and immediately the dense oak wood rustling with the solemn and mysterious noise began.

In the spring Volga flooded all wood, approaching closely the village, and then it was possible to float by the boat in the wood standing half in water.

On holidays the flooded wood was filled with boats with maids and guys in bright red dresses, songs, sounds of an accordion and laughter.

When water marketed, in the wood there were lakes, and one of them – the biggest, oval as the mirror – the surrounded wood which shipped in it the green branches was the favourite place of bathing at children, the whole days vanishing in the wood. The lake it was called Print.

After a high water in the wood and on forest glades violent vegetation quickly appeared: the grass grew on a belt, there were a lot of wild onions, stolbunts, a sorrel and fragrant lilies of the valley. Maids and women crowds went to holidays behind onions, a sorrel and flowers, came back home with songs. In the wood without stopping the cuckoo cuckooed, rooks shouted and chirped in every possible way a various bird's kingdom.

On the Trinity's eve all were on the near field. The wife Yafima, Anna Ondrevna, with his sister Masha, Vukol's mother, since spring staying with the father heated a bath. The log hut was locked on the padlock. From a village fence continually passed coming back from the field, but spring evening, absolutely starless, was so dark dense and damp darkness, the dusty road is so soft and silent that only on an easy pobryakivaniye of a harness it was possible to guess that someone passed from the begun to creak village fence gate, and only slightly the noticeable spot moved on the road.

Here the pobryakivaniye approached a log hut, from darkness the low flat arch and the cart with the horse who was silently afraid on a dense, creeping grass was hardly considerably allocated. Two shadows – women's and children's got out of the cart.

– And we здесь! – the children's voice cried from darkness.

The female shadow approached closer and gasped joyfully: on a zavalinka Elizar sat. Vukol and Lavrusha, giggling, were linked and not danced, not fought in darkness.

– We sit yes we wait! – Elizar told getting up. – Anybody there is no house!

– Eka! – the grandmother sighed – two women of the house! I ban, tea, heat! Children, a poklichta, run behind them! Ah you, darling!

Elizar dissolved creaking gate, entered Chalka into the yard, began to unharness a horse. The grandmother helped.

– Do not work, Elizarushka, men will approach now!.

Masha with a key came, children, behind them Ondrevn's molodayka came running... Unlocked a log hut, entered. Molodayka lit not a splinter, but a tin seven-linear lamp, previously having cleaned glass the brush.

– The lamp was got! – Elizar was surprised.

– And how? – brisk Ondrevna laughed. – Tea, is better and better than a splinter!

– She at us got any news! – good-natured the grandmother from a closet responded.

On windows there were in pots flowers with short flights of stairs from splinters, blossomed scarlet and lilac hand bells. A floor was washed purely up, scraped out, the log hut as though became cheerful.

– That the young hostess means! – the guest joked.

– God grant! – the grandmother told, spreading a stoleshnik. – And we are also glad! The grandfather to a spervonachal grumbled, and терепя and most ndravitnya! Anything! as they say, the znyayka teaches Dunno! The kind wife will preserve the house, and thin a sleeve will shake!

– The husband a cart will not bring in that the wife puts with a pot! – Elizar noticed.

– Whether for a long time to us, Elizar?

– The short-haired maid of a braid will not braid!

– How are you? – quietly Masha asked.

– Affairs – as soot is white! Anything! To our trumps all under color! Later I will tell!

Vukol told about the travel with the father by huge steamship with here such red wheels, to a black pipe from which there is a smoke and there is such whistle that you will become deaf! How they were in the city and what there, high houses: if ten log huts that are not enough to put of one on another – and!

The laurels listened and were surprised. After long separation at them was much what to report each other.

– And our Karyukh the zherebenochka brought! – he interrupted the nephew. – Pretty, all in it and is allowed to stroke!

This native log hut from a polatyama and a familiar bar, with white subfenny and a closet of Vukol behind it loved, he remembered winter evenings when the grandmother told fairy tales, the grandfather spun bast shoes, and they with Laurels traveled, as well as now, on a bar on polat. The familiar picture “As Mice of a Cat Buried” still hung on a wall, but he looked at it critically, with a smile. Too spoke of grandmother's fairy tales haughtily as read in books, mysterious for Laurels,

about the knight Don Quixote and his faithful armourbearer, about underwater travel of the captain Nemo by all seas and oceans.

“Big” sat at a table. There arrived the grandfather and Yafim, the father Vukola told something. Friends did not listen to what was told below: they above, under the ceiling, had talk.

After Yafim’s marriage the wall about polaty was pasted over with paper on which fancy patterns from the proceeding rain were formed. Yellowish spots merged in the opinion of Vukol in the imagined picture: as though astride horses Tatars, in sharp caps, in striped dressing gowns, fly at full speed with curve sabers in hands.

– You see? – he asked Monastery, showing on a wall. – This horses, and on them – Tatars with sabers.

– I see nothing! – the Laurels answered.

– And I see! yes you look longer – and you will see! There are horses, here Tatars, here sabers!

But the Laurels so saw nothing. He only partly trusted the nephew, from his assurances considered a lot of things lies. Their conversation often resembled Don Quixote’s conversation with his armourbearer.

– To lie – not to be tired, would be to listen to whom! – mistrustfully the little peasant laughed.

The voice of Elizar who told at cheerful attention of listeners too did not stop.

– Lomonosov was from simple fishermen, and reached that the tsar accepted it... There was Kulibin, the mechanic self-educated person, and that there was still Englishman Fulton... Was much such people for whom great brains worked, and more and more poverty left them...

– And at us too such is, the miller Chelyak – was heard the grandfather’s voice. – Sly fellow! The fan to build! On a leg to connect you with it!

– I know Chelyak, interpreted with him... both of us lack one: sciences! The bird to feathers, and the person the doctrine is red! But – to study never late. Also I will achieve the!

– And you remember – Vukol said – we have a picture “The Bay of Naples Has a Family of Fishermen”? I look every day – I will not see enough! The sea is drawn there, children bathe, and ashore the fisherman’s daughter is beautiful before, just as in the fairy tale...

– Nourishingly, it is visible, live! by the sea! – efficiently noticed Laurels. – Smooth! And it is good to bathe also at us, on Print! Let’s go morning! children we will collect to play an arable land!

– Better in robbers! – Vukol objected and began to tell about robbers.

They vividly went down on a bar. Ondrevna put them linen and showed the door for a door. On backs the spark shone. The bath was similar to a dugout with a small window. Undressing in a cold waiting room, continued a talk. To drive away fear, laughed. The grandfather with Yafim came to a waiting room soon.

Having returned to a log hut, also did not notice how fell asleep.

\* \* \*

Woke up late in the morning: the sun shone, hens outside cackled. The Russian furnace burned, in a closet of the woman cooked festive foods. From the yard the grandfather entered.

– Children wake – he told – behind a grass in zaymishche I go!

At these words Monasteries jumped and began to shake the nephew for a shoulder:

– Behind a grass! behind a grass!

Wiping eyes, ran out through an outer entrance hall on a porch – to wash: the clay washstand hung there on a string in the summer, the pure towel, but not a dirty rag as was before, to Ondrevniny orders hung in the same place.

Outside there was Chalka harnessed in the cart. In the cart the braid and the axe lay.

– Well, sit down, swindlers! – good-natured the grandfather told, dissolving gate.

It jumped in the cart, and Chalka, winding the head, zatrusit to the alley to descent in a lugovina where shone nocrenok and the wood moved under wind. It was from a distance heard as in the Rooky Mane rooks shouted, flickered a black grid over nests in branches of sprawling oaks.

The bridge, as always, was in deep dirt. For pedestrians the thick tree was thrown through a stream. Hardly got out to the abrupt coast as immediately came to be under the green arch of the wood stretching the wide branches over their heads. Chalka ran a slow, complacent lynx, footfall of his not grounded hoofs softly was given in the wood.

Through branches silver of the Print lake flashed, boundaries of oaks white cups of lilies of the valley, juicy stolbunets, bushes of a dogrose and unknown bright red berries flashed.

– Their wolves eat – explained Laurels to the nephew – on the Spiked glade strawberry is, and in the fall – топон, blackberry... Water, a grass теперя on Spiked high, dense sold!.

About half an hour went on the soft dampish forest road. Somewhere in the depth of the wood the cuckoo cuckooed. Morning was solar, warm, given to drink by freshness of the juicy, shady thicket rustling with infinite thoughtful and tender noise.

The grandfather was silent, occasionally patting Chalka vozhozhy what Chalka answered with friendly nods.

At last, left the Spiked glade. It was the wide flat valley in the depth of which there were giants the black poplars publishing the equal, dense, triumphing rumble.

– And what behind them? – the nephew asked the uncle.

– For sokoryam – Proran... for Proran – Vzmor! Hovorostnik grows there, high yes long... at-at, Proran – he angry yes bystry, deep – a bottom is not present!.

The grandfather suspended a horse and moved down after the journey in a high juicy grass. Then got down and, having whetted a scythe whetstone, waved it. It as if effortlessly, for fun, slightly moved a braid, slightly наклонясь forward, and the grass and a nikla, and laid down ranks, bared the cut earth.

The grandfather mowed, and children armfuls dragged a grass to the cart. At last, the old man lifted a big bundle and put it in the cart. Chalka tastefully chewed a grass – juicy, damp from morning dew. Having loaded the cart, the grandfather placed children on grass top, told:

– Trample down!

They cheerfully trampled down with pleasure smelling grass and joyfully laughed. Then mudflows. From a bright green mowed grass their uncovered heads – one fair-haired, another blond, and two pairs of laughing eyes were seen. To sit now it was soft. The grandfather jumped on a cart nakleska, pulled reins, and Chalka, winding the head, with a grass bunch in teeth, willingly drove the cart back on the former road. The crude grass lay densely. It was heavy to Chalke to trot, but he, probably, tried.

The zealous country horse was not young any more, but never waited for a whip, carried шагир-кро, ran a dispute, and in dark nights did not go astray, having remarkable memory on roads. It was the old friend and the grandfather's companion. Even now, when Chalki's strengths became any more not those that before, he still in the old manner strove to trot with a heavy cart. But was tired soon and only wound the head as if wanted to tell: "Eh, old age!"

It was pleasant to come back home, lying on a soft, damp, fragrant grass. On an edge the grandfather stopped Chalka, got down, took out the axe and cut down a young curly birch, having thrust its komly under a grass "for a Trinity".

– It is our, hrestyansky, the wood – explained Laurels to the nephew – there was a wish – cut down, nothing for it will be, and before the wood was lordly... the barin died long ago, the wood to us departed! And behind a village fence the merchant bought Dubrov near the village where the mansion remained, together with the earth...

– Here and there is not enough earth! – the grandfather interfered – swindlers! That there was the barin an earth, and now – a kuptsova!. Than you will live if you will grow up?.

Children could not answer, puzzled looked at each other. The wood rustled, green walls stood on both sides of the road, the green arch met over their heads. Again the Print lake flashed aside.

– Let's reach to the bridge – we will get down – whispered to the friend of Monasteries – on Print we will run!

When drove on the bridge, there was misfortune: the cart got stuck in dirt; Chalka hardly held on it to the dry coast and suddenly stopped knee-deep in the dense bog. How many the grandfather urged on it, it only wound and shook the head.

– Eh, old age! – with a sigh the grandfather told and on a shaft got out to the coast. – You what you sit, swindlers? Get down!

Children got on a shaft after the grandfather. Sucked in Chalka to the bog more and more deeply.

Then the grandfather выпряг him also looked around: whether looks who? But on a holiday behind the village was nobody.

– Eh, old age! – again the grandfather repeated, took Chalka one hand for a tail, and another for a mane, planted the feet against the coast so that bast shoes it went to the soft earth, terribly began to roar on Chalka and – pulled out it on the dry place. Then looked back on the parties again, became on chalkino place in shafts, all napruzhinitsya, the back stooped, the head left between big shoulders, and the long beard almost touched the earth. Panting, the grandfather rocked here and there and took out a cart then wiped a sleeve a bald head, put Chalka and suddenly, having angrily threatened with a whip handle, severely told children:

– You motrit, swindlers, do not stir! I will bungle!

And though they knew that the grandfather never before flogged anybody but only he swore and in rare instances raised, however involuntarily were afraid: they were frightened by its force; has to be therefore it also never did not beat anybody: was afraid of the force.

– We on Sittsevo will go! – prositelno told Laurels.

The grandfather silently sat down on a cart, pulled reins and, already driving off, waved on them a hand.

Having got over through a stream on the cut-down tree, they ran a forest footpath to the lake. Both were without caps, barefoot and already on the run took off from themselves shirts it is to plunge into the water rather. Print sparkled in the sun between oak trunks. When ran up to the high green coast, on an unruffled surface of the lake, on its middle, floated, being removed, two big proud birds with silver feathers, with long necks and black noses.

– Swans! – whispered Laurels, threw a shirt on a grass and wanted was with running start to plunge into the water, but on the usual place of bathing someone floundered about and swam, lifting legs the whole column of the splashes sparkling in the sun.

– Children! – cheerfully the chest female voice cried – you want, I will get a cockleshell?

– This is Grunka! – said Laurels in low tones.

The girl disappeared under water and long there remained, only circles on water went.

Suddenly she jumped out up to a breast over water and with laughter threw it a big brilliant silvery sink.

The laurels bent to lift a gift, but Vukol as if was dumbfounded, without taking eyes from Gruni. Around the head her snake twisted the black big braid intertwined in white water colors. The dark face with eagle eyes and thin, as if drawn, eyebrows affected it: it seemed to it similar to the person, somewhere seen by it... perhaps, in a dream...

Grunya swam up to the coast where over water, on low to a tree bough, her dress hung, and rose from water already in a shirt: the shirt was in covering on a breast and on hips and only around a slender waist lay freely, Unwound the long thick plait which fell below knees, squeezed out of it water, threw a lilac dress, and the head tied with a red bandage. By sight it was years sixteen.

– Lavrusha! This is the nephew, perhaps, yours? – loudly Grunya asked, and her voice began to sound as a pipe.

– Nephew! – solidly the Laurels answered.

Grunya looked at Vukol with the unusual eyes, and it seemed to him that she watches derisively.

– What is your name?

Vukol stood pale, looking to the earth, and, as captivated, lost gift for speaking, could utter nothing.

– See you, exactly what tsarevitch!

Light step there passed Grunya by it and, passing, again burned it with a quizzical glance. It disappeared in the wood, singing the lingering song.

– Eh, what! – Vukol with surprise told – it is similar to the fisherman's daughter!

The laurels did not understand it:

– She is not the fisherman's daughter, it Listratov the daughter, at them rolls in money!

They plunged into the water and floated. Then, having held the breath, fell by a bottom, opened eyes there as before did, and through water as through a chintz, saw each other sitting at a sandy bottom. Therefore the transparent lake – Print was called. Came up upward, splashed and floated as frogs, but Vukol's memory did not leave an image of the beauty; he wanted to see as soon as possible again it and to look, look endlessly.

## IV

In the wood the cart with two horsemen drove. The miller Chelyak, stocky, wide, all convex as if a bucket-chelyak which pour grain drove the horse. Elizar sat next. In a back of the cart some construction from a popular print and a wire was attached.

When the cart drove in the wood, the miller stopped a horse.

– Тпрр!. climb, a postrelyata! on Proran we go!

Children scrambled in the cart, and it zadrebezzhat on the familiar forest road.

After the cart the youth – guys and maids, as always to a holiday went groups. The miller knocked on a popular print and told laughing:

– Мотови&#769; ло-готови&#769; ло on a prozvanye “фир” – at it there are a lot of holes!

Children laughed, though did not understand intricate words of Chelyak.

– Flying carpet! – smiling, Elizar added and, having turned back to Chelyak, continued the interrupted conversation: – Whether it will be possible whether is not present, but there is no doubt that the science will achieve the and the person will fly as a bird...

The miller trifled a broad chestnut beard and anxiously frowned shaggy eyebrows. His old kazinetovy jacket was through impregnated with flour dust.

– Science! – derisively it pokryakhtet, jumping up on potholes – and where to take it to the man? You understand everything!. I from time immemorial – the miller: I look at gear wheels, at all mill structure, I look as the mill waves wings, but cannot depart!. and here the thought was! Twenty years I build, but I cannot reach... there is no help from anybody! My car is only the first experience, model... shortcomings at it – a plenty... there are no words, I tested it – went down from a mill – to float! and now through Proran I can...

He kept silent, groaning and leaning sinewy hands against edges of the cart. Having stooped, resembled the bird ready to fly up.

– And you what you build? – having kept silent, he asked Elizar.

– Built to a self-skating rink long ago, threw and again was accepted... I want to try again now... You are here a miller, and I from youth work at the plants... saw many models. Modeller I... Looked in books... It appears – the physics should be known: without efty knowledge you are knocked by a forehead about everything as the blind person...

– Here that and it: as a bug on a thread...

– But my main thought not in efty!. other, highest, big thought! – Elizar sighed.

– What?

Elizar shook curls, kept silent and told, having lowered a voice:

– The steam plane – here a thought!

The miller waved hands, splashed palms, nearly fell out of the cart and again caught a nakleska. Then, too having lowered a voice, whispered:

– On conscience I will tell you, and I fight! Does not leave! Hitch!. The tree feels ill at ease we cut...

– Be silent! – annoyancely Elizar interrupted. – Experiences are necessary! experiences! There will pass, maybe, one thousand years, not only the plane will be invented, and all life will change, heaven and earth will be moved... all work will be executed by the car, and the person will have only one – the highest work – a thought!. you remember, look back back what the mankind reached? Whether long ago steamships and engines went? And to efty only in the fairy tale Ivan the Fool on pike command went by an oven!. All laughed at Englishman Fulton who adapted a boiler, nobody trusted, nobody supported, with hunger the genius died!. And left on its!. And of course – instead of the flying carpet – the steam-engine will depart! Will depart! In efty there is no doubt!. And

by self-skating rinks will go very much even to fast time... but will sometime open also the perpetual motion machine!

– Can be! not at us only!

– And how nobility? The science is more wonderful than any miracles!. The thought works not only for you yes at me!. to a mozha, thousands of the heads, not to us a couple, fight... and I trust: people will achieve! inevitably!

In a back of the cart wooden gear castors – one lay more, another – is less, a wooden box, and from the cart two long popular prints similar to sails with the wire fastened to them overhung. Children wanted to touch and turn gear castors, to take wire rods. Vukol stretched was a hand, but the father strictly shook finger at him and continued an unclear conversation.

The cart slid through the Spiked glade to the very tall black poplars going to the sky the tops hooting under warm wind. They a ridge stood on the very brink of high clay break, and through their branches silver of the wide river flashed. The brisk horse ran on the soft road cheerfully and quickly, wind blew sideways, blowing off her tail and a mane on the party.

The miller stopped the cart, drove under a shadow of black poplars. They were so enormous that a horse with the cart and people on it seemed toy, tops of trees as if went to clouds: on the fozzle of the cut black poplar the cart could go in. Noise of widely raskinuty silvery branches merged in solemnly floating string rumble. Several enormous trees which are washed away by a high water under the roots fell down tops down and lay as prostrate giants, with naked roots, with even green branches. In the bottom of break the raging, bubbling sleeve of Volga, almost same wide, as well as it – Proran, a bend separated from Volga from which it was separated by the narrow oblong island densely overgrown with a young talnik rushed. Behind the island Proran, bending around it, again connected to radical Volga, forming as if a beach width in several kilometers.

– Vzmor! – told Laurels enthusiastically, showing on the island.

Far on the horizon the mountain coast of Volga slightly became blue and similar rose humpbacked, to a cloud, the gloomy mountain the Barge hauler. Lower mountains on the Volga Current it was hardly possible to distinguish the small town with several churches and the familiar tower reminding the sugar head.

The horse of a vypryagla was also tied to the cart put close to a tree trunk in several grasps. Thick boughs stretched over break. Deeply below Proran roared, the screw its terrible rapid turned, shaking up yellowish foam. Water had a fishing tent, and several fishermen sat with the long rods strengthened on pegs ashore. On a trick three-four boats shook.

With curiosity, having raised the heads, fishermen watched how Chelyak and Elizar potted about about the cart, knocking hammers.

From the Spiked glade the audience – guys, maids, children approached – the crowd was formed. Chelyak angrily cried on them that departed far away.

Masters assembled the small mechanism with a gear wheel and a spring, with a wooden crossbeam in a bottom of the open basten wings reminding wings of a huge eagle.

Chelyak from the cart got on a direct and long bough, walked all on it.

Elizar lifted and stretched him the aircraft. Slowly and carefully involved the mechanism on a tree branch. Chelyak long potted, measured something, leveled the wings raised over his head and began to get a spring.

– My God, bless! I fly!

Elizar got into the boat and across floated through Proran.

Cracked, began to patter in branches, and all saw an extraordinary show: the unusual bird soared up over Proran, rising above and above, like a kite. The beard of the miller and a leg in boots flashed. It seemed that the dragon flies and carries the person in the claws: under open wings the lump of the small human figure sitting on a crossbeam was seen.

The plane described an arch over Proran and began to decrease in Vzmor's talnik. Decreased slowly and – as it seemed to the stood crowd – very long. From a distance resembled already the kite who caught production.

The winged being fell to tops of a dense talnik, potrepkhatsya and disappeared in him. Elizar stuck to a sandy shallow, jumped out of the boat and ran to the scene.

The crowd rustled.

– Flew? and? fathers!

– It was killed?

– Do not know!

Rushed from a steep slope to the coast. Put palms to eyes, looked. Some jumped in boats.

But here on the bank of Vzmor there was Elizar, bearing on shoulders basten wings. Behind it, limping, Chelyak hobbled.

– It is live! Sly fellow!

– And god, perhaps, will not praise for it? Took in head to fly supposedly?

When the boat moored, on hands pulled out it on the clay coast. Chelyak was pale, the sleeve of his jacket came off at all, on a cheek blood flowed. It wiped it a red scarf.

Elizar stood ahead of all. His beard shivered, in eyes there were tears. He wanted to tell something and could not. On sand fragments of wings lay.

The crowd started talking at once:

– See, darling, saw death!

– Death to be afraid – not to live on light!

– Without courage there is no home brew also!

– It, so put: or a breast in crosses, or the head in bushes! Was able, means! without ability and a bast shoe you will not weave!

– Here those and car! – told, sighing, Chelyak – into smithereens! Invented everything, everything looked for what-s!

– That will also find – who looks for! Nothing, the brother, fell you, and towered! – Elizar told.

The inventor looked on died a child and repeated, sighing, a favourite saying:

– Prepared – a reel on a prozvanye фир – at it many holes!

\* \* \*

Before evening, as always for a Pentecost, maids in festive bright attires stood in the row the middle of the street and with lingering songs went to Dubrova to look for cuckoo slezk. It was the ancient cheerful custom.

The village since lordly times was divided into two ends by a hillock on which there was a column with an inscription: on the one hand: “the 1st society” and with another – “the 2nd society”, but in a spoken language the second society was called in the old manner “Children's corvee”: since serfdom when a half of the village was bequeathed by the landowner in favor of children.

“Children's corvee” had the village fence at the very end of the village, and Dubrova was seen behind a village fence: it was the reserved small wood, dense, curly, almost all the birch, going-down on the abrupt coast Postepka who in this place was deeper and wider, than about Zaymishcha, and all was covered with floating burdocks with white water colors. In ancient times there was an extensive landowner park, but now he ran wild long ago, grew with a dense thicket and turned into a beautiful virgin oak grove. Through the wood there was badly nayezzheny sandy road, and in the depth of the wood, on a glade, there was big wooden, with mezzanines, the former mansion; in it there lived the merchant Zavyalov now.

The merchant often and for a long time left on affairs, most seldom who saw him and knew. Sometimes only through the village the merchant carriage with the driver in a plisovy sleeveless

jacket, with the white-faced mistresses and young ladies sitting in it passed, looking at whom, women marveled to their whiteness, being perplexed that they eat it from what food it is possible to be such white-skinned?

Between the merchant who replaced the landowner, and full alienation was the village, but there was no open hostility. Deafly regretted that did not guess in due time to buy Dubrova and the earth adjoining to her when the landowner sold a manor, but then, during “release of peasants”, old men hoped that the earth will depart them for nothing. Men of the earth did not buy; now inhabitants, being sorry about it, envied the merchant: the harvest on its earth was always better than rustic. Removed the state earth at Listratov, and they through it that look will leave in merchants; but also against Listratov had no rage: each man on their place would arrive as Listratova. It was good luck, happiness, were annoyed only with the “old men” who missed the earth. The village thought that from the dubrovsky merchant neighbor the village neither dobra, nor did not see a harm. He sometimes exhausted the country cattle which came on its meadows and took for a potrava, but took “on conscience”, and sometimes and forgave. Also maids on holidays were not forbidden to walk across Dubrove; fellings did not happen, men had the wood better and more merchant Dubrova.

Walk for a Trinity to Dubrova behind cuckoo slezka was legalized by long custom. Now, as well as in old times, maids found in the most shady places of Dubrova gentle blue florets – cuckoo slezk. Surely everyone weaved a wreath, put on it the open head; had something in common in the wood, halloood and, having acquired in plenty, came back in blue wreaths, singing lingering ringing songs. It was the maiden holiday, to guys to coordinate for maids to Dubrova was not in custom: behind a crowd of the singing girls decorated with cuckoo slezka only rural children skipping ran.

When maids were turned back from Dubrova, day already tended to evening, from log huts on the green street long cool shadows were stretched.

The festive round dance gathered on a meadow against a village fence, at the grandfather Matvei’s log hut. Old men and old women sat on a zavalinka, women on a grass, having gathered in a circle, loudly gossiped, without listening to each other. On a meadow of the maid and guys, having joined in pairs hands, drove a round dance with singing, “played” as a theatrical show, spring songs.

In the middle of a moving circle stood one, other girl in a wreath from cuckoo slezok, the guy tried to break to it, but it was not let. The round dance sang:

In the city – the tsarevna,  
And in the country – the tsarevitch:  
Be opened gate,  
As there is a tsarevitch to the tsarevna...

The guy was passed in a circle, and it made everything that was told by the song.

You take it for the handle,  
Lead round around a gorodochka!

The round dance was surrounded by the audience; groups stood, watching a game. Children ran and somersaulted on a soft green grass. Among the audience there was also a grandmother, talked to the neighbor. Suddenly from a zavalinka the grandfather Matvei approached it, embraced it, small, heavy ruchishchy and with playful importance walked with it by a round dance, as if wishing to tell: – Here is how we, old men! And well you, youth?

The round dance approvingly laughed. The grandmother laughed too, slightly заалевшись as the girl, having passed with we rasshutivshitsya by the grandfather.

Vukol stood at gate of a dedovy log hut, at some distance from all and sadly looked at a cheerful round dance: there was no Gruni, and without it all this seemed to him boring. But here, at last,

also it came; he still from a distance recognized it by air, light step, by a red bandage on black as a resin, hair. With its arrival the round dance even more quickened, maiden laughter rang out, guys молодеваго assumed a dignified air. It was put “tsarevna”.

The Svirelny voice of Gruni was allocated from all chorus:

As by the sea, the sea blue  
Floated a swan from lebedyata,  
With small, from a detyatama...  
Otkol undertook млад the falcon is clear,  
Bruise-killed swan white?  
It started up down on skies...  
And plumelets lengthways on a berezhka...

Highly in the sky fancy heaps of clouds, scarlet from setting the sun slowly floated.

Vukol looked at Grunya from a distance and the more looked, the felt bigger pleasure from contemplation of her beautiful face. It seemed, it as the sun, lights all. From its presence it became joyful on heart. He looked after it when it went in a circle, listened as she started singing the new, bystry, cheerful song:

Sun at sunset,  
Time on loss,  
Maids sat down on a luzhok,  
Where muravka and flower...

Children of all village cheerfully ran about a round dance, only it one stood alone and watched everything at it.

The sun sat down behind the oak wood. The scarlet flame of a decline became crimson. The shadows stretched in all width of the green street seemed more dark and more sad. Suddenly Grunya left a round dance and the bystry, light step went directly to it, approached closely. Vukol saw her face directly before himself: on her dark-haired head still there was a wreath from cuckoo slezok, on Vukol blew softly them the delicate perfume which mixed up with a smell of Gruniny hair pakhnut warmth of a swarty, strong body.

– You what is cost here by one? – she asked with a crafty smile – lonely what! on here you!

Also stretched it something, wrapped in a piece of paper.

Vukol’s heart was driven in, tears in the eyes gathered. It silently accepted a gift and suddenly all flashed to ears, without reducing from it an enthusiastic look. Grunya too suddenly reddened. People for some reason stopped and watched them. Burst of laughter by all round dance sounded.

Grunya, as if having become angry, quickly turned and went back. The round dance started singing.

Vukol developed a piece of paper: there was an excellent steel “aglitky” rod!

Whether the beauty laughed at it, a children’s gift having hinted that he is still a child that to it early to be lost in contemplation of maidens, or, on the contrary, understood somebody better and felt, than she suddenly became for it?

Vukol did not know what is with him and whether it is possible to decide to call that feeling which so early was woken up in his children’s heart, but, shaken, mocked and made happy at the same time, having pressed its gift to storming heart, escaped from a round dance for a grandfather’s log hut, buried in the soft, covered by evening dew grass, hiding burning, unclear to him tears.

\* \* \*

For a mowing went to the steppe for many versts from the village, lived in the steppe all summer. Arranged the big tent called by “camp”, spread in it koshma and hid edibles. Stocked up with a keg of ice cold well water, whetted hammers scythes, sharpened them long whetstone and turned to work.

In the first braid there was a grandfather Matvei, Yafim hardly kept up with him, and to kids gave the certain site – to learn to mow. To sense from their mowing there was a little, but children did not do to rake up hay a rake, and in particular when took kopeshka to a stack a horse to whose collar the rope hooking on a kopeshka and dragging it dragging to a stack became attached; had to operate a horse riding, and here the child replaced the adult and was even more convenient: it is easier than a horse.

Children sent horses on a watering place, made fire in the evening and in general were necessary on small affairs and parcels. Nastya and Ondrevna raked up hay together with children, in the village the grandmother domovnichat.

The juicy, dense grass laid down direct ranks and quickly dried under the scorching beams of the sun. All body ached from this hard and fascinating work.

Long summer day was divided into four “upovod” – from sunrise to snack, from snack till a breakfast, from a breakfast till a lunch and from a lunch till a dinner when the sun left for the end of the earth. Had a rest only after a lunch. Scary tired, filled up instantly, anywhere: in a cart shadow, under a shadow of a grass shock, under a bush. Slept like a log, and it seemed – only fell asleep when the severe voice of the grandfather calling for work was distributed.

By noon the mowed grass dried, women and children raked up dry hay in small kopeshka.

On a sunset all with braids and a rake on shoulders came back to a camp. Made fire and boiled in a copper gruel – millet with potato. The same fires appeared around on all steppe. Slowly the evening dawn when in the deep sky flickering stars already began to move went out. The steppe sensitively dozed, in silence of steppe evening each sound was far heard: someone’s far conversation, silvery neighing of a horse, the sad lingering song, and after a dinner when on all steppe mowers began to whet hammers scythes and melodiously steel ringed – it seemed that giant strings stretched from one end of the earth to another.

But little by little strings calmed down, fires died away, and everything filled up, only a myriads of mosquitoes filled with a thin ring drowsy air. It was possible to sleep only under bed curtains which was stretched on four low pegs.

Quickly short summer night flew by, and heavy day of work was started over again.

When all hay was slanted, ranks raked up in kopeshka, kopeshka in big shocks – and, at last, began to throw a stack. For children there was the most pleasant work – to go astride a horse and to dragging bring shocks to a stack. The stack was removed by the grandfather, and Yafim gave it a trekhrogy wooden pitchfork heavy armfuls of hay. On the growing stack placed children – to knead hay, and they floundered in it, rolling up to a breast in fragrant green waves. To sweep away a stack the correct cone that it did not leave lopsided, the wide experience, and the grandfather always was required itself managed this responsible business. Having finished a stack, carefully went down from it on a rope, brushed with a rake, prignetat from above thick slega and then left the field till winter; found a stack on special signs in the winter and transported hay on the wood sledge big heavy carts.

So there took place the haymaking week after a week. Worked tensely and hastily to harvest hay till the rains.

Hardly the haymaking came to an end, kept up жнитво, and then a threshing. Sheaves put in ricks, and then in ometa, similar to stacks to protect bread from casual summer rains. Sometimes for several days there came the bad weather, and then waited it in a tent or a tent, forcedly wasting working hours in inaction. But was hardly established buckets as the threshing began. About an omet arranged current – the round cleared-away platform – and dimmed it sheaves. Connected in a circle not less than five horses by reins – bridles of one horse to a tail another; here again children were

necessary. Vukol and Laurels in turn became with a whip in the middle of a horse round dance and, gradually coming, drove a circle, adhering to edges of the current laid by sheaves. For want of habit at first at them from flashing of horses the head was turned, but, having accustomed, they with pleasure sent horses, patting a whip and shouting at them. Ded, Yafim and women methodically removed at this time a rake the straw threshed by hoofs of horses until on current did not remain жито together with chaff. Then horses were brought together from current, жито raked up aside, and current was dimmed again sheaves, already by the whole days, did not come to an end yet omt. Then the grandfather and Yafim blew жито, throwing it shovels downwind. Carried chaff wind, and pure жито fell on smooth current.

By the evening to children charged to drive horses on a watering place to the next steppe well, sometimes to the lake or the small river. Horses was five, the sixth – Karyukhin Vask's foal. Boys walked all without saddle, three horses with a foal ran ahead. Also one person could drive such small herd, but the unseparable uncle and the nephew were sent together everywhere to accustom both to work and the treatment of horses. The trip on a verst watering place for two, for three was always for both great pleasure.

At the same time the difference of their characters affected: Vukol took himself Mishka, a young karakovy zherebchik, by all means bridled it though in it there was no need, invigorated, forced to dance or let gallop, and the Laurels were afraid behind it on the old man Chalke and laughed loudly over the nephew's whims. As a result Vukol came back on the sweated horse, and Laurels on dry, hozyaystvenno preserving and feeling sorry for her while the desperate nephew without need rushed on жнивью with risk to break to itself the head. The laurels admonished and convinced the friend not маять a horse in vain, warned that the grandfather will swear if he learns, but itself and hid Vukol's tricks.

So they lived in the steppe all summer, until the end of August when, at last, the threshing was ended. Nastya and Ondrevna went to the country.

Having spread in carts it is line, loaded carts with the golden, nourishingly smelling wheat, accurately sewn up with a thick needle, covered with integral tawing skin, stuck ropes and a slow wagon train, at a slow pace, at a dawn moved on the wide steppe road to a long journey. With a forward cart the grandfather, behind it Yafim went to Chalke, and two little friends were located on the last a supply.

It was good to lie on a cart from which smelled of wheat and tar, to take out sometimes from a bag a chunk of sitnik and to indulge in infinite friendly chats.

The steppe was enormous, majestic and sad. Fields were naked, the grass is mowed, fields are compressed. Here and there were seen, stacks and ometa which are not threshed yet. Highly in the sky flew to the South from time to time, having constructed by the correct triangle, wild geese and ducks.

The sun climbed up above and above, promising hot August day. Soared. The small white cloudlet heaved in sight, it quickly increased and soon turned into the fancy snow-white mountains which were piled up one on another. Pulled a crude breeze. On the road, being turned, small whirlwinds ran, dust twirled a column.

At this time a wagon train, having climbed up a slope, began to go down on the abrupt road. Chalka was the great master of it: it almost on grain slipped from the mountain, resting against the earth all four hoofs, with the tense breast-band and the collar shifted to the head. Yafim going to Karyukhe came off a cart, holding it by the bridle and resting a shoulder against collar tugs. Having looked back, he saw that the cart swings inexperienced Mishka here and there. Then he let to Karyukh one, and itself ran up to the cart of children and made it in time: children with the last bit of strength pulled reins, but the young zherebchik worried, without being able to hold a cart yet. Yafim seized him by a bridle, rested against a tug. The neck of the man reddened, from under bast shoes dust flew, roadside stones slid, but at once it became easier for a zherebchik, and it, like Chalke, began to slip slowly on grain. From a half of descent forward carts rushed a large lynx. Then Yafim jumped on

a cart, snatched out reins at children, pulled. The bear felt in strong, skilled hands, went from the half-mountain the correct, bystry course. For nervousness and fear children did not notice that in the steppe it became more dark, on the mountain shadows ran, wind whistled in ears, and Yafim's shirt was inflated with a bubble.

Only when horses dropped into a walk again, friends looked around themselves: on the sky crept, closing the sun, a huge blue cloud. Somewhere away grumbled the remote thunder.

– Chapan take! – Yafim told, throwing him reins, and ran to catch up to Karyukh. On forward to a cart the grandfather already with the head was covered line.

After a thunder the first heavy drops of a rain fell. Children took out prepared чaпaн and, having nestled to each other, muffled in it. Absolutely darkened as in twilight, and suddenly, having broken off darkness, through all sky convulsively, breaks the curve fiery crack ran, for a moment lit all steppe to the horizon, and the awful roar with a crash came on a silver platter on the earth. It seemed, the earth trembled.

Heavy rain rushed.

Long silver streams clouds streamed, gave to drink the greedy steppe. Streams on the dirty road ran, wide pools on each side it spread, the rain bubbles similar to jingles jumped and burst. Lightnings continuously lit the steppe, and fiery eyes of angry Ilya seemed in them. The flaring wheels roared on the heavenly road, on clouds rushed and deafeningly winged fiery horses neighed. Noise of a rain and juicy explosions of a thunder merged in fine and terrible music.

The bear from karakovy turned in black, its wet wool shone, hoofs champed, spraying liquid dirt. Behind the frequent grid of a rain, fog which drew the sky and the steppe it was not visible going ahead.

Children shivered under become wet chapany. The rain through punched its rough prickly sackcloth. To wheels dirt stuck, drenching with fat lumps the cart. Tired horses, kneading pool hoofs, slowly pulled the creaking carts.

Thunder, being removed, calmed down, the lightning sparkled more and more seldom, the thunder-storm reconciled, grew weak, the rain ran low, the broken-off clouds left for the horizon, and the sun suddenly looked out: the washed, become green steppe began to sparkle in millions of splashes, was lit by warm fog as if sighed a full breast.

Native, familiar places Zavidnetsyа: a lonely brittle willow on a hillock and flat, similar to the stiffened wave, the mountain which from time immemorial it is unknown in whose memory called the Zhadayevy mountain. Further a barn zaserela from ometa of sheaves and straw, gardens, kitchen gardens, straw and board roofs of log huts.

Here the road turned out almost dry, the thunder-storm passed the steppe, having touched a small village only with one of the wide wings.

At a village fence left a straw tent shabby Rolling in a soldier's old cap, with a tube in teeth and opened creaking gate.

## V

The city, all timbered, except the main street, stood in deep snowdrifts. Glavnaya Street came to an end in a market and a push with the wrapped-up dealers sitting at the trays at the bottom of a high osmiugolny tower.

From a tower the street abruptly turned downhill to the bridge through the small river. Closely shops with market goods – with buckets, pots, shovels, valenoks nested. In a smithy knocked hammers, the horn breathed.

Here new dwelling of parents of Vukol. In the depth of the yard of the gloomy brick house with an inscription on a column of gate: “Kolchina’s house” there was a superstructure over the coach maker, in the form of a svetelka, the external wooden ladder conducted there.

In a svetelka there were three small rooms from which Elizar’s family occupied one.

Elizar worked at foundry, did models of difficult mechanisms. He usually stayed at home at a table and wrote with a pencil on the sheet of paper, sometimes taking compasses in hand, measuring something in the drawing developed before it. Work it demanded the accuracy of calculations and special technical knowledge.

Vukol climbed on a chair, laid down on a table all breast. The pencil left ranks of interesting, various signs on paper.

– What is it? – the son asked once.

– Figures! – absent-mindedly the father answered. Having looked at the son, thought and added: – You want, I will teach you to figures?

– I want! – Vukol was joyfully delivered on a chair.

Elizar put work aside.

– Well, look: this stick – one, here with a head and a tail – two, and this big-bellied – the three!

The father densely and largely drew figures, and Vukol remembered them at once. It seemed to it that they as people, everyone has the person: the three – thick, with a pointed nose – is similar to a duck, the five – cheerful, six – with a pot-belly and a small head, eight – as the dealer on a market, and the nine – the same six, only down a head – ridiculous.

Having examined the pupil, the teacher was surprised.

–  $\Theta$ , the brother and you are retentive? And you want to know letters?.

Letters were even more entertaining: the father drew them and shaded as though cut out from a tree, such Vukol saw on signs. The artist drew long, lovingly trimming with a soft pencil each drawing. While drew, Vukol remembered all alphabet.

– Well, it is enough for today! tomorrow I will ask you – as call each letter if you do not forget – I will learn you to read.

And then told mother:

– I will try on new, by a sound method which began to be applied only recently! much easier and leaves rather!

Thus Vukol’s training in the diploma began. Soon he already read magic fairy tales.

And here at Vukol desire with own hand to draw heroes, athletes, supernatural beauties such by what they were presented to it for the first time was.

Model of picturesque art the picture printed in paints, hanging on a wall of their room in a frame under glass seemed to it: “The Bay of Naples has a family of fishermen”. There everything was fine: the azure waves running on the sandy coast, a bright sun and in particular the reclining fisherman’s daughter. Hair at it dense, black, on hair a scarlet bandage, a dark face, thinly and gently outlined, fine and proud. Vukol represented it as live, and she seemed to him one of those beauties because of whom in basten fairy tales knights and heroes made the surprising feats. Someone forgot this picture at Elizar when he lived in Siberia.

There passed two more years.

Behind a partition there lived the mail carrier with the krivoglazy wife, a young soldatka and the master of musical instruments – it and the musician: the man of huge growth, with a big fair-haired beard, doing violins. Will make, will play and will sell, then begins to make new. In the evenings the master went to theater to play in orchestra. Often it played and at home. Vukol listened to his game for hours and hours. The musician showed it receptions of a game. Then announced Elizara:

– At your fellow perfect ear appeared! Give I позаймысь with it! Yes, here still that: children it is necessary on the stage! There is “The Russian wedding”! Release with me Vukol: the fifty-kopeck piece on gingerbreads or on books will receive and start up orchestra listens. Who knows? Perhaps bread will be for it later.

Vukol had no concept about theater and went there mainly because of an opportunity to earn a fifty-kopeck piece.

The building was theater old, a strange look. Got together with the musician illegally there and came to be behind the scenes. There was a turmoil, narrowness, noise and abuse.

The scene which it was visible between the scenes represented an interior of very strange room with stranger people: boyars and boyars in bright suits of country breed talked unnaturally loudly, and from the underground doghouse someone prompted to them loud whisper.

Vukol with greed watched at all this from the scenes waiting, what will be farther. It together with other children was dressed in a color kosovorotka with a corbel, by wide trousers and yellow boots, with a hare soft pad spread and powdered cheeks and prepared all for an exit.

On the stage it was noisy: boyars drank from empty wooden gilded ladles, the striped clown in a yellow cap with bells played a balalaika without strings, and actually played violins in orchestra, then on a scene at the opened door pushed out children and Vukol together with them. All of them sat down on a floor along a linen wall which began to hesitate when Vukol tried to lean against it a back, strong holding an own cap in hand.

Directly against a scene the enormous dark hole filled with the audience blackened. Vukol very much was embarrassed, feeling awkwardly before such big confluence of people.

Bright light of a set of the lamps throwing the light only on the stage blinded him. Heart is disturbing fought for nervousness, hands and legs grew cold.

Nothing could be understood from this what boyars shouted of and sang to the sound of music the orchestra driving the bows in a low hole over which, sitting on a high chair, raged, swinging a small stick, the uneasy person in a suit having a tail. It was unknown why released on the stage of children in a special dress, and when time to leave came, Vukol so began to bustle that forgot a cap on a floor, but the old woman who remained on the stage in an elegant sundress threw it behind the scenes, having told: “take a cap” though the underground person who was looking out of the doghouse did not prompt it these words.

Home Vukol was turned back together with the musician late at night when in a svetelka all slept, except his mother who was patiently waiting for return of the little actor.

After this case of Vukol called in theater to step on the stage in different representations, and soon he became the person: all actors and actresses knew it.

Changed clothes and made up, he participated in theatrical processions, was the queen’s page, jumped among little imps or angels with white wings.

It was always unpleasant to step on the stage, but free minutes of expectation of the exit he fell in love to watch and listen from the scenes to the events on the stage.

During the winter Vukol saw a set of various representations – ridiculous, sad and terrible.

The play “Prince Serebryany” seemed the fairy tale in persons. “Thirty years, or the player’s Life” concerned. But here put “Auditor”, and Vukol to tears laughed together with public of theater. Looking from the scenes at the mad father offended by ignoble children – the king Lear – cried with

pity. The execution of “Maria Stewart” shook. On “Richard Tretyem” blood was paralyzed in veins with fright.

In theater human life – misfortunes, sufferings, quarrels, tears, crimes, murders and suicides was represented. Even in vaudevilles comic actresses played барынь, fainting because of pure trifles.

– I do not love actresses! – sincerely Vukol’s mother spoke. – Slightly what now crack in a faint, is also ready! And here at us in the village and slykhy not to hear about faints! It is visible, only actresses also fall in a faint!

The father smiled, listening to it.

Everything that was represented in theater, was interesting, often sad, sometimes – is terrible or ridiculous and silly, but it seemed invented.

On boondocks of the city where the poor, the working people lived, nobody ever fainted and if cried, suffered and died, then really, without monologues and it is absolutely ugly.

\* \* \*

Studying at the musician to playing a violin, Vukol daily brought from the house in a workshop a lunch to the father; waiting until he eats, walked on huge, similar to a shed, squeal of saws, knock of axes and hammers, chisels and chisels stood a workshop where weight to the people in linen aprons worked with bibs. People planed, sawed, worked behind workbenches and lathes.

Elizar was in the same apron, as well as all. Through work noise, mixing up with it, under a high ceiling of the huge building loud human voices floated.

Elizar came back from work only in the evening, tired, with the hardened callosities on hands long ago.

Over a cup of tea spoke to the wife:

– Work is strict, difficult, exhausts all force, and, by the way, pay cheap. I want more piecework on holidays to do!

– Yes then it will be even more difficult! – Masha objected.

– Well! There is enough force while! It is necessary to raise children!

Three-year-old Vovka captured all attention of mother. Thought of himself extremely because it on a forehead had a scrofula. Vukol who is eternally shipped in reading and drawing looked a senior in the house.

Elizar often spoke:

– I did not get an education – I want that children studied! For children it is necessary to live! I do not want that children semiliterate were. Vukol, to read, draw and likes to play a violin to passion! In school it would be time to attach it – eight years to the fellow! But means are necessary! What to me holidays? Empty days! Not to go to a tavern to the family person as all at us go! Wild also our dark working people! Even such as I, am a little: at all plant – one-two and miscalculated! The others everything – as a holiday, so to drink, and then all barefoot yes fragmentary go, starve!

Elizar began to go to a workshop for all day on holidays. It caused displeasure and condemnation of companions: work on holidays was considered as a sin and a sign of godlessness. The baptized person still could not go to church, but in a tavern – it is obligatory. In a tavern there was the only communication of workers: there were on friendly terms, quarreled and fought, then were reconciled.

Elizar had well-wishers from elderly and those who are more sober, but such there was a little: alcoholism on holidays considered the majority a religious duty.

Wildly and apart treated Elizar, the scientific worker who was not observing posts, not going neither in church, nor in a tavern, differing from the companions in a flowery language in which along with proverbs foreign words met, names of scientists, writers and poets were mentioned.

About Elizar said that he is an atheist and probably some switch or the Molokan.

Once on Sunday it as usual worked in a workshop – whized boards for model. The workshop was empty. There were only a watchman and two elderly workers who incidentally came behind some business.

Suddenly in a workshop the drunk joiner Andrey Maslennikov, from the company sacredly observing custom of Sunday alcoholism, people of years of thirty with a small blond beard became hollow.

Slightly reeling and being drawn by the intoxication, it approached Elizar and as if unintentionally pushed it with a shoulder. That discharged it the left hand, without ceasing to whiz right.

– Do not disturb, Andrey! – he told quietly. – Drank on четвергак, and you break for seven hryvnias!

– I will disturb here! you знашь why I came?

– I do not know! – Elizar frowned, continuing to work.

– Not знашь? Well, so I will tell why: came to disturb! To dismiss you! The artel sent me! You пошто do not go with us, turn back a snout from artel? Ya-hundred scientific! such, syaky, nemazany, dry, in Peterburkh worked! And for what you in Siberia were? We know all! The Molokan you, do not believe in God, on a holiday alone work! Well, we efty will not allow! Artel on you in offense, Elizar! Ours all now in a trakhtira sit and talk about you!

Drunk threateningly moved on Elizar and gave a hand to stop the jointer plane.

Elizar took away his hand again.

– Do not disturb, I speak; you walk, so go from here, walk!

– Have you ever seen anything like it – Andrey increased tone, trying to razdrazhit himself – where slykhano that the working person супротив artels went? The artel speaks to me: “Go, Andrey, you are more sober than others, give him in a muzzle that blood washed!” – Andrey threateningly clenched fists. – We will set those as artel not to esteem! We so will blow up those – to new brooms will not forget, will remember!

He seized Elizar by the rolled-up sleeve baring unusually brawny hand, drunk, but too a strong and strong hand.

– Let’s go in трахтир, put artels a food! ask from us forgiveness!

Elizar silently continued to move the jointer plane, askance watchfully monitoring Andrey’s actions.

– So you so, материн son? Molokan, stolover!

Three people stood in the doorway of a workshop, is indifferent listening to a dispute.

Elizar solved, povidimy, not to answer stickings drunk, but all this more inflamed Andrey.

– I speak to them: you want, now I will go and I will give it a box on the ears? And they purposely provoke: “Where to you? You will not go!” Here I will go! Here both came and I will give in a muzzle if you will not stop working! You turn back a snout, the swine!

Elizar was silent.

– Throw the jointer plane, I speak! Well!

Andrey, panting, suddenly turned pale, grabbed from a workbench the iron hammer on the short handle and with the face distorted by rage very much hit Elizar with the hammer in a temple. The blow of a drunk hand was incorrect, Elizar otkachnutsya instinctively and resisted standing though on the person its wide stream blood rushed. Drunk, at most own blow, fell, but immediately jumped and with a roar rushed on Elizar covered with blood again.

Then the modeller, being protected, lifted a heavy oak bar of the jointer plane in a hand and, appear, slightly only touched them Andrey’s forehead.

That was unexpectedly burst backwards and закреб by legs.

Only here the audience ran up.

Elizar, pale as a cloth, with the lowered jointer plane in a hand, was motionless, frightened and amazed. The blood beating from a temple filled in to it a face and a shoulder of a shirt.

Andrey last time bryknut legs in the grounded boots, shuddered all over and calmed down. Terribly blown up bruise covered a half of his forehead over the left eye.

– Killed! – Elizar whispered, dropping the jointer plane. In eyes darkened. Hands and legs weakened. For a minute he fainted, but regained consciousness soon, having felt the wet towel which quickly reddened from blood on the head.

At this time in the doorway Vukol with a food small knot appeared.

The boy stopped, without understanding that he happened and that the red turban on the father's head means. His face twitched.

Andrey moved.

– Breathes! – the elderly worker, *склоняясь* over him told. – Mozhe, *оту* dobet! waters it is necessary! To cast!

The watchman ran behind water.

To Andrey directly from a bucket poured over the head. He poorly moaned.

All joyfully began to make a racket.

– It is live! not to death! it *oklematsya!* Means, and from us to the answer will not be! In hospital, and about a fight – mum's the word! so our way!

Andrey lay unconscious. His breast hard rose. From time to time weak plaintive groans escaped from it. The left side of a forehead and person was blown up, absolutely closing an eye.

– Christened! indeed!

– Well and it – it is good that missed, and that would cut out the hammer the head as a pot with Russian cabbage soup!

– And this – flatwise struck with the jointer plane: if an edge – a cover!

Lifted mutilated and incurred on the carrier.

Elizar spoke to the son:

– Nothing, the sonny, worry... My head – it nothing, will manage... will heal!. now together home we will go!

The elderly worker approached Elizar and told, swinging the head:

– Well, you got off lightly, Elizar! Seem, the guy will survive!

Then stroked a direct goatee with strong streaks of gray and added meditatively:

– Long ago I look at you: good you, the intellectual, correct person, but the goner here in our places! With all the heart I speak: you will serve month – pay off! What people at us – you see. Everyone behind a top, has a knife without Ali's passports with forgeries, there are which in a jail not once of a sizhivala! Vagrant people, *bessemeyny!* and the head is not expensive to them and not that others!

\* \* \*

In Zaymishche there was no church: the village belonged to arrival of Petty-bourgeois Farms, and went for seven versts to a mass only for a Trinity there, in the spring when all floor in church was covered with a new-mown fragrant grass, and outside decorated with just cut off branches of birches. Still there went to church on Flora and Monastery or on Ivan Kupava. For a bestial holiday, too in the spring when to the river drove horses, cows, calves and sheep and all of them humbly stood in water, listening as the priest – in a peaked calotte, hook-nosed, with a long wedge of a beard, similar to the Tatar, coming to Zaymishche three times a year on collecting voluntary donations – served after a mass a prayer in health of canine country friends ashore. Then the whole day guys and maids tried to pour unawares over each other water, ran with buckets from a log hut in a log hut, with laughter pushed stood gaping to the small river, boated on the century oak wood flooded with a high water.

Here everything that the grandmother Anna remembered by a church part: spring, joyful holidays with participation of the nature, the pets, children and youth who were coming to an end by the evening in melodious round dances after which burned down fires, jumped through fire, and in dark spring night till the dawn walked guys with maids, retiring couples: You look – by fall and the village who to whom will transfer matchmakers where wedding feasts are going to feast knew.

Was in these holidays of churchism a little – escaped the remains of cheerful Slavic paganism more. Because also these beautiful forest holidays together with her youth and a spring flood of mighty Volga running between the dense woods to which nobody knew neither the end, nor edge were remembered by it. It was possible to get lost in these Middle Volga woods forever. In them still there lived the laughing loudly wood goblins, and in the forest rivers and lakes the mermaid's beauties bathed. In spring sunny days the invisible cuckoo cuckooed-cried about the abandoned children, and girls long looked for its blue slezk in backwoods.

Nearly sixteen years married Anyuta to the athlete Matvei, and life passed in hard country work, without coming off mother earth. It was life of patriarchal country way, in a kurny smoky log hut, and still it was fanned by unconscious poetry of agricultural work. The concept about church god was vague – in the form of as if sprinkler of shoots on green country fields. The grandmother trusted in the Kingdom of Heaven, and a serious obstacle for eternal life in heaven only non-compliance with church formalities seemed it, and the main misfortune was – to die, not поговев the Lent, without having received remission of the collected sins and not “причастившись” in church.

Having remembered it after fifty years of absolute indifference to the priest and church, the grandmother on a case of death decided to correct this omission which came from its eternal employment and remoteness of the church building from the village of Zaymishche.

Now it was possible to go to the city, to stay for a while to the daughter and the son-in-law and there to pogovet. The grandmother was not going to die yet, but decided to use an opportunity.

At the same time also other purpose of a travel joined: in the city the grandmother was not since young years, overcame thoughts that life changed, the kurny log hut is replaced new, burning “in a white way” long ago, the splinter was replaced by a lamp, pestryadinny sundresses – print dresses, across Volga steamships went, somewhere the chugunka close goes, and illiterate parents find necessary to send children to school. Also the grandmother solved: time in the city there live the family, close now whether not to send Lavrusha to school? Gramotya Elizar by all means by a scientific part will let the Vukol.

As a result of her such reflections Yafim Chalku in sledge-rozvalni harnessed and carried mother and the brother through winter Volga. Hardly found Kolchina's house and a svetelka in the yard, asked for the yard and, having left a raspryazhenny horse under a canopy, got on a ladder.

They with surprise were met by Masha and six-year-old Vovka with traces of the begun to live scrofula on a forehead. Elizar did not return from the plant yet, and Vukol incurred to it a lunch.

The meeting was joyful. From congenial country good manners Masha told nothing about the hard work Elizara at the plant, about fragility of its situation. She sincerely rejoiced, having learned that mother came on week to fast, told her, as the church is close, namely – in the semibasement floor of a tower on a market, no distance from Kolchina's house. Sending to the Monastery school, told that Elizar himself also went to the teacher with a request to accept the son. The teacher agreed, though in half of winter, to put the boy in special such office for the youngest. Here and the grandmother Anna let will go to school to the teacher and will tell that she came from Elizara from foundry sending both boys to school. The teacher Elizara knows and respects for the fact that he well and cheap worked at repair of school in the fall.

The conversation took place for small a copper samovarchik of an ancient form. Mother and the daughter spoke without stopping, but the others only listened, smiling and sweating from hot tasty tea. Not talkative Yafim, without having said almost words, except interjections with stutter, overturned

a cup a bottom up, put on it a bit of sugar and, having risen because of a table, unexpectedly uttered very probably on the grandfather Matvei: “It is time to go!”

Having seen off Yafima, the grandmother before going to the teacher, the Monastery took by hand and went before such business to tower church.

But hardly they left gate of the house of Kolchina as became interested in a strange procession: towards to them from under the mountain slowly carried on the wood sledge of not movably lying young man with a black small beard and long hair. The big, strong body was covered with wide clothes.

The wood sledge was followed by crowd of the people, and the man driving the horse went near the wood sledge, pulling reins.

– The monk was drowned! – spoke in crowd.

The counter woman, having stopped, started talking to mother of Laurels:

– Hear, he drank, zapoyny was, and young still, zdorovushchiya! His Odezhu – the cassock and a calotte – on the river were found, at the ice-hole, and in a pocket – a note and as it is harmoniously written, exactly the song: “Do not look for, speaks, me anywhere! My body in water, an odezha on the edge, and soul in paradise!”

The laurels sedately followed mother holding it by a hand and long looked back, on the wood sledge where the dead person with long lay, as at the woman, hair, with a small dark small beard.

– What is it? – he asked – why it?

But mother answered only:

– Be silent!

They approached a tower. In its first floor through narrow long windows with the color glasses which are taken away by a figured iron lattice the burning wax candles dimly shone, and at low semicircular doors there were simple people, the most part of the woman.

Lavrusha’s mother, leading him by the hand, entered the close dark room with the low arches and sparks of candles shining ahead.

– Mother! what is it? – Lavrusha asked again.

– Church! – the grandmother Anna whispered, having stroked his head.

The laurels remembered how it once happened long ago to mother in church where to it the unclear word of “verb” which was often flashing in loud and lingering reading the person with a gray-haired beard dressed in the long heavy skirt embroidered in thick gold flowers was remembered. The word it was given by a dense echo under the high top of church decorated inside with unclear pictures which the Laurels liked to consider, showering the head up and being perplexed that this sonorous word of “verb” means. At the end of long reading and lingering singing mother took it on hands, bringing bearded people in long clothes with a gold bowl and a spoon in hands. One tied up to it under a chin a big zolotokanny crimson napkin, and another, without asking consent, violently put in a mouth a spoon with bitterish yellow-red liquid. The laurels always resisted and cried during this unclear operation.

Now he remembered former troubles in church and pricked up the ears though dangerous people in painted skirts were not here. Nobody read and sang.

– Let’s go! – whispered mother and, having climbed together with it stone steps on the eminence lit with a set of thin candles, told: – Be put to god!

The laurels did not know how to do it and where there is god.

Suddenly he saw not movably sitting barefoot person similar to just seen monk, in a long shirt from gray thick matter at which is around the head with the long hair and the small small beard framing a pale, lifeless face lying on shoulders the wreath from rods with the sharp prickles stuck to the person into the head was put on.

Prickles were in blood, several drops and spots of blood stiffened on a forehead, a face, a beard and clothes of the person.

The laurels frowningly looked at the silent, blood-stained figure and, having started back, nestled facing mother's short fur coat, looking for protection against terrible vision.

– What you? what you? – whispered mother, is god!

– No! – firmly the Laurels objected, are the dead! – And again rested – with a hostile frown.

From the twilight people and between them the comely old man in a long semi-caftan appeared.

– Do not force! – he said to the grandmother in low tones – this statue of work of the great artist! It is small, does not understand!

– It is silly still! – she confirmed – it ispuzhatsya...

When they left a tower, the Laurels calmed down and did not ask about dead god any more.

\* \* \*

The big gloomy room of school was full of boys of different age – from small to healthy teenagers. Monastery put with the smallest. The teacher – with the person in a silver bristle, with a section behind, in high stockings and boots with buckles – walked in a dark green suit of unprecedented breed before pupils and constantly beat them with a big ruler the heads. It gave to laurels a goose quill, an inkwell and the fragmentary leaf which is used up by serpentine lines not clear to Laurels.

At school there was a hubbub. One wrote, others loud chorus shouted drawlingly:

– Bra-vra! gra! Wad Dra!

It was reading on warehouses.

Seniors the teacher of one caused to solve problems to a big black board. There were big guys and, quickly knocking chalk on a board, covered it with ugly, negligent signs.

In a few minutes the teacher approached Laurels. The new pupil not movably and sadly sat before an empty leaf.

– Well what you do not write? – And itself read aloud the first line: – “Once sovereign Peter the Great...”

The laurels answered nothing. He cannot read any letter, and the teacher does not even know about it!

Behind the back of the teacher big pupils built grimaces, pulled each other hair. There passed hour. The laurels wrote nothing.

Change came. Bustle, fuss, a fight, laughter, shout and squeal did not stop. Dust dense fog was groundless.

Two biggest pupils who were called persons on duty selected several same big pupils who did not learn lessons and, having taken on a bunch pozor, moved in a corridor. Guilty in turn put on a floor, they lowered cloth trousers, laid down, and companions of a sekla their long rods.

Istyazuyemye shouted, but some endured pain silently.

The crowd of boys surrounding a sekution laughed at shouting and praised courage of those which were silent under birches. Them called inveterate.

“Inveterate”, putting on trousers, boasted that it is trifles that they and not that still can bear.

The laurels were surprised, but not frightened by an execution show: he perplexedly waited when it are сечъ birches, and resolved to endure pain silently. The pale face of the boy with the frowned eyebrows stored persistence expression.

He gloomy sat down on a threshold of the opened door. Pupils surrounded the beginner, exchanging remarks.

– It seems as waits for a sekution for a start! very ha!

– Teardrops! that's our way!

– To see, inveterate will be!

– Be not afraid, the newcomer! To you nothing will be!

– Yes he is also not afraid, on a snout it is visible!

At this time Anna with a breakfast in a small knot came. Her heart clenched at the sight of the son surrounded with the school students considering it.

Long could not achieve from it to sense that happened to it. At last, the Laurels told that the head hurts it. Drearily, frowningly looked at mother, asked home.

Lavrusha did not get to city school.

## VI

The fall in the village Shackles when burst the first frosts and will be chained as in iron, dirt on the wide rural street, always happened solar, windy, to the flying snare in the transparent sky.

The Volga woods seemed dressed in a crimson dye, gold and purple. After cleaning of bread weddings and wedding feasts were conceived.

Every day then the middle of the wide street, having stood in the row, there were a solemn rank discharged maids in fiery bright dresses, large, portly, vociferous, in short plisovy or velvet dushegreyka with assemblies behind and multi-colored buttons over them. There were they on a hen night and sang lingering wedding songs; the ringing chorus was heard on all village on four versts around.

At the end of the village, on the square about a tavern and shops, all late fall and all winter at first the least children, then teenagers, then adult guys gathered every evening and, clapping mittens, shouted:

– Give – give – yes – va-ah!

It meant the introduction in an ancient entertainment – the Russian fisticuffs.

Children, then guys and when absolutely darkens fought at first – there were men and even old men with gray-haired beards.

In long winter evenings above all village till midnight there was a groan from noise of fisticuffs. Since both ends of the village hundreds of fighters in sheepskin short fur coats, in fighting tawing mittens gathered.

The cult of physical force since ancient times dominated in Shackles. The fighters allocated on a fist fun became known and dear, like actors: did not interfere with it even belonging to “stranny”, landless people.

Fought – one end of the village with other end, the dissenters making a half of the village with Orthodox Christians. On each party there were athletes famous for the almost fantastic physical force. Were such that could pull out on the coast the sunk boat with water, lift on a back a cart with hay, break horseshoes, curtail into a tubule between fingers silver pyatialtynny. The victory of this or that party depended on their duel. Leaders met ahead of all, and behind them, coming, moving back, fight was humming: booming blows, howl and shouts were heard far on the village in frosty, snow night. Rules of fight in order to avoid bloodshed were strictly followed: not to beat “snouts”, not to beat “from a wing”.

Sometimes one of the parties was much stronger – weakness was driven nearly until the end of the village, but fresh forces suddenly were or there was a famous fighter – the issue of the combat sharply changed.

On the wide chetyrekhverstny street of the village all winter lasted on the road which is chopped up by measured blows of hoofs like a lying ladder, the Siberian, Ural and Orenburg wagon trains with frozen fish, furs, cotton and any raw materials. These wagon trains were long, with strong packed rozvalnyam, horses – strong, heavy – went a measured, disputable step.

Sometimes there passed caravans of camels with heavy vyyuka between high humps: through Candala before carrying out the Siberian highway there was an animal-drawn path – the main road.

For Maslenitsa all village in ten thousand inhabitants left to ride sledge. There were so many elegant sledge harnessed by exit horses in the harness rattling bells that horses moved a step, all weight from log huts of the same kind to another, in noisy, cheerful narrowness.

All riding had good horses, at many – trotters or amblers. The harness rumbled with bells and kolokolets, shone copper metal plates, silver set, decorated with silk brushes.

Having reached until the end of the village, long stood a camp, having got off in the dense mass of sledge, horses, people. Songs, sounds of strings were heard, thrown by humorous catchphrases

and jokes on a subject about Maslenitsa: its effigy made of sticks, the painted paper and rags was lifted over crowd as a banner or a banner.

Some storyteller-pribautchik from guys of a daring look by a loud voice for a general fun recited:

Hi, my soul,  
Wide Maslenitsa!  
Your paper little body,  
Lips your sugar,  
Speech your honey!  
Eh you, Maslenitsa,  
Red beauty,  
Fair-haired braid!

At this time the effigy of Maslenitsa flaunted over the heads of celebrating.

All crowd sbiratsya closely to those sledge from where usually ringing, young voice of an invisible rayeshnik was carried:

Honest Maslenitsa left  
On seventy seven horses  
In Moscow city to feast,  
From seven mountains to ride,  
To be consoled in honey-home brew!  
I also there was,  
Medical-wine of saws,  
On lips flowed, and did not get into a mouth,  
Anything happened!

The poem about Maslenitsa became infinite, was supplemented with improvisations; one stopped, another picked up:

During the Maslenitsa left  
With women to be played,  
I salesman of seven women,  
Woman's ensign!

After the competitions in jokes, jokes and humourous catchphrases turned back. All continuous mass of festive sledge filled the crowded street, the rumble stood from a sled scratch, clanking of a harness, shouts, songs, laughter. Singing was heard:

Since half of the night sledge began to creak,  
Kolokoltsa, bells rang out...

Its last day, visited Maslenitsa Shrove Sunday the companies to each other, apologizing in free and involuntary offenses, on ancient custom bowing down zemno and three times kissing. The youth of both sexes used this custom: each guy this day could kiss with the girl in public.

Towards evening the same day took out for the effigy of Maslenitsa sat down and there solemnly burned.

In total in this village – broad-shouldered, large figures of men in cloth caftans and undergarments, solid log huts with a high porch, with carved roosters on gate, stone houses of rich men, fat maids, full horses, a strong harness, fisticuffs and festive revelry – said about prosperity and satiety of this rough, but strong hammered together semi-rustic, semi-kulak life of trade Volga villages.

The reason of this exclusive wealth of the state peasants of Middle Volga existed from olden days and consisted only in long-term rent of huge spaces of the state earth.

These peasants were as if small landowners-tenants or farmers as to their services there was a boundless number of the agricultural workers flowing in the summer to Middle Volga from land-poor provinces.

Left that peasants of rich villages, owing to historical accident, operated work of alien, poor peasants, having formed the populous kulak villages doing grain business.

The village of Candala was one of such numerous villages. From a distance from Volga this huge settlement with several stone houses and two tserkva was visible: old – stocky, and near it new – under construction on the reduced scale of the known temple in Moscow.

In Shackles almost each peasant conducted big economy on the rented state earth: the male middling person who was not considered to the rich had up to ten working horses and who is richer – on sixteen and twenty. For departure not a rarity the male-kandalintsa had a trotter or an ambler. Units were one-horselovers, and absolutely poor, horseless, was almost not. On the contrary, from among the most enterprising, in time to occupy large sites of the rent earth and repeating it another, the new type of peasants – the speculators and businessmen moving the capitals in tens of thousands and living in stone houses on a merchant harmony grew: the layer of the rustic bourgeoisie moved forward. Across Volga there was a gold wave much of the developing capital.

Except prosperous fists, in the village there were real rich men, large industrialists, hlebotorgovets, drovyanik, millers who were living in a merchant way and not considering themselves men, they kept it is inaccessible, looked to the city. Such is there was a merchant Zavyalov who had a steam mill, one thousand tithes of the rent earth, owning Dubrova about the village of Zaymishche and the towing steamship on Volga. He did big grain business, in Dubrov lived arrivals, it is more in summer, as at the dacha. In Shackles had the two-storeyed stone house of urban style, with the extensive yard and services enclosed as the fortress or prison, the put-off height a brick wall.

Zavyalov and several others, to him similar, more small, ordinary predators, an okhulka on a hand of not putting, climbed the capitals and kulak tenor of life so highly that did not take any part in village life. Almost none of the country population saw them, dealt with them. The rough, ignorant, grown fat men, they put on airs from kupetsky arrogance.

But there were also new natives of men representing yet not defined layer of prosperous people of the village with a bias to “education”: such is there was a son of the kandalinsky head who passed from split into Orthodoxy Alexey Oferov who after the death of the father, having built the tent house with an iron roof and having put on a city jacket, began to subscribe to the “progressive” capital newspaper and the thick magazine, did not go to church and read underground brochures, at the same time continuing fatherly business of speculation in the state earth. He was on friendly terms with brothers Listratov from Zaymishcha. The senior from them is Pavel – grew rich from land lease, still the father taken, but apprehended all lines of the educated liberal probably from the younger brother Kirill who, having terminated a gymnasium, assumed to enter the university. All of them in a talk among themselves openly played the liberal, wishing moderate revolution or at least to the constitution. Nevertheless Pavel and Alexey united in business firm in the same land speculation, having accepted “in a share” the miller Amos Chelyak who was pleasant to them, the fist fighter, the inventor and the homebrew philosopher who and was ruined soon from unsuccessful crops.

The complete antithesis to all of them was presented by absolutely conservative person Trophîme Neoulybov, the recent poor serving as the salesman in grain business of the famous then

millionaire merchant Shekhobalov on which whim it was the land tenant who grew rich on grain trade. It was the person of patriarchal way, he dealt the in an ancient way, on conscience, on the word of honor, without bills and receipts, helping those from poor people who could still, like it, get on feet, in certain cases absolutely remitted small debts with anybody he had not legal proceedings.

Trophîme was by nature goodhearted and in the real predators on the character it was no good. Small капиталишко, for nothing fallen down to it in hands, as if waited only for a case to disperse on hands or to get into more tenacious paws.

Thus, prosperous kandalinets though belonged to various dissenting rumors and sects or were “pious” in an orthodox way, at the same time were the richest, avaricious, hard-fisted, resourceful fists.

Orthodox Christians were in soul dissenters, differing from them only in bigger softness, dissoluteness and smaller jealousy of religion.

Their all life, customs, concepts, intellectual interests, beliefs, raskolnichestvo and sectarianism – everything rotated about religion, followed from it, was imbued primitive, ceremonial religiousness which was not disturbing their aspiration to a profit at all. Inclination of some of them to education, the secular book and freethinking proceeded from questions religious too. It had the historical roots in the past when to Volga the Old Believers and sectarians driven by the government moved.

After a pagan and Pancake week gluttony and alcoholism – on pure Monday – from a belltower of old church densely and nourishingly lingering and sad sighs of the wordly bell calling for a prayer rushed; the village like penitential mood: all began to fast and fast, that is daily during one of weeks of a great forty-day post to go to the temple to all Lent services.

In early winter morning when in the dark sky stars still blinked, the people down the street reached for matins, then for a mass, in twilight – for vespers.

The old zakoptely church with потускневшею gilding of a low iconostasis, ancient icons of the strict letter, copper banners and “Saviour” in a dome was filled praying in the tanned short fur coats covered by dark blue cloth, with the hair cut in a curve piece and is plentiful – time for all the time of fasting – saturated with cow oil.

Devoutly and long, in silence dawning on itself under the charter a sign of the cross, they bit the dust when to an ambon there was an archpriest not in the embroidered brocade cope, and in a simple cassock and a stole – low, dense, with a long gray-haired tolstovolosy beard, with large lines of a stern face, with an imperious, commanding look from under gray-haired beetling brows.

In artistic – sad tone he humbly pronounced fine words, stretching prone on a carpet against an imperial gate:

– Spirit of despondency, lyubonachaliya and hostility not даждь ми! Grant spirit of chastity, humility and Lyubov ми, to your slave!

In dark church long in silence widely flashing hands of the dark people creating unclear to them a sign moved and again all gray мужичья weight bit the dust before icons together with the priest, having never thought to what these humble words approached furious character of the severe archpriest a little.

Svyashchenstvoval it in Shackles more than thirty years, several generations grew under his imperious look, and ever nobody heard from it the tender word. From the first day of the service he enjoined to call himself “tyatenky”, thinking to be “a father of the people”. All were afraid of it and obeyed as small children, and the tyatenka had an abrupt temper, the hand is heavy: he considered the village and all volost the ancestral lands, himself – unlimited her lord, and rural public affairs – the personal record.

Nobody in Shackles remembered and understood other attitude of the priest towards parishioners as imperious intervention in life of society, a family and the personality.

Teaching the Scripture at school, it painfully whipped pupils on cheeks the short, but weighty right hand. In certain cases it beat and adults, and all found it is in the order of things, nobody was surprised to it and in behavior of the priest was indignant with nothing.

Once the only representative of science in Shackles – the young local paramedic awarded to be on a visit at the archpriest, something successfully objected to his remark on too long and dense curls of the young man. It was enough that the paramedic appeared in disgrace. As disgrace threatened eventually with serious consequences for the paramedic deprived of vicarial blessing, the last, without having sustained a penance, used forgiven in the afternoon for Maslenitsa and was to the priest for reconciliation. But the spirit of humility, forgiveness and love was not свойствен to a tyatenka. While the lost sheep was spread at the pastor's legs, the Holy Father, having seized both hands in unpleasant for him its curling vlasa, long privately carried the victim alone on a room floor, dragged out along the corridor on a porch and dumped during snow.

The archpriest did not believe in God and never spoke in church of sermons. Childless, in gloomy loneliness he lived in a small old popovsky lodge with a front garden together with aged protopopitsy, thin, small, pathetic and intimidated, having cruel hard drinking.

The secret of the despotic power of the archpriest over freedom-loving kandalinets consisted not only in his iron will, but it is rather in close savoir vivre of the parishioners: it did not pursue sectarians and dissenters, did not send to them denunciations to the higher authorities, and was already highly appreciated for one it by them. Traveling around collecting, graciously came also to them, accepting also from broken away from church generous donations that served as pledge of the peace relations and in the future.

Ten thousand kind parishioners helped the archpriest to save the fair capital in thirty years of priesthood: a tyatenka it was not humiliated before extortion for occasional offices and on collecting – plentiful and rich alms money and products flew also without it in a deep popovsky pocket.

But the main thing for what kandalinets obediently suffered both requisitions, and the despotic address is his ability to advocate their interests, though not without own benefit, before the higher civil authorities, always hated to kandalinets. The archpriest did not wish to share the valid, actual influence on the kandalinsky people with the highest government, and to kandalinets spodруchny was to deal with the priest who was perfectly knowing their life, than from nothing understanding and therefore the heartless and cruel visiting provincial administration.

But “inside” the lord in a cassock treated them as little east despot, forcing to tremble before him. It was the feudal lord who was autocratically ruling all territory of the kandalinsky volost, on space and wealth surpassing any medieval European duchy.

The archpriest as a certain patriarch of the primitive tribe called by “kandalinets” provided to the citizens freedom of worship, non-interference of the far and hated administration to their life – and the kandalinsky oasis in the boundless ocean of old regime lawlessness in own way happily prospered under an absolute power of a tyatenka on infinitely obsolete, patriarchal and vassal beginnings.

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Such is there was an external and internal image of the village when Elizar, having returned from exile and not having settled in the city, returned on the old, involuntarily left by it native ashes. Removed the being empty public and church log hut after the sexton who died of alcoholism, arrived the icon painter and a zolotilshchik on the coming to an end construction of new church.

Carpenters and joiners tesat logs and planed bars about church, having created the whole tier of spill and shavings which were not forbidden to be dragged to the next hostesses and children on a kindling.

The church finished an iconostasis, finished a dome list, zolotilshchik gilded a carving of columns, doors and icons, carefully taking a peacock feather thin leaves of gold and polishing it on carving curls.

Every morning in old church called to a mass. The angular lodge with a front garden left the stocky archpriest in a kalimavkion and slowly went on a footpath to church, leaning on a long staff with a silver knob.

Elizar thought more of children now, than of himself: sons grew up – Vukol reached age school limit.

In one of windy, frosty and juicy autumn days he led the nine-year-old son in kandalinsky ministerial school.

The area against churches was decorated by institutions: volost board which in an ancient way still many called the order, and the big wooden stocky schoolhouse with the apartment of the teacher in an attic. About a porch of school on a column under a special roof like a mushroom quite impressive copper bell which rang, as hung on a veche, announcing the beginning of the doctrine.

Before the occupations about school pupils – the little peasants dressed in short fur coats and undergarments ran and fought. Suddenly frequent cheerful blows in a bell on a column sounded, and school students a crowd directed in classes. From an attic the teacher went down. The door of school slammed, and from there lingering singing of the children's voices singing a morning prayer deafly rushed.

When singing came to an end, Elizar with the son were included into school; pupils sat at long not colored pine school desks. Against them the teacher sat at department. Plaster of walls of the extensive room below fell off long ago, finding strips of shingles.

Pupils sat, without taking off undergarments and short fur coats, and at an entrance of strangers got up, then mudflows again, having turned the heads towards entered, with curiosity considering them. Vukol was close-cut, on him there were gray trousers навыпуск and a jacket with a belt – a suit of city school students, and he very much was surprised, having seen full school of the children with the long hair cut on-raskolnichyi in a curve piece dressed in a country way. Country children ironically examined city. The teacher, the tall solid person with a gold beard, in a stiff collar and a jacket suit, left because of department, gave a hand to Elizar speaking about the son. Vukol was so absorbed by impression of the pupils watching at it with obvious hostility that he did not hear the father's conversation with the teacher.

The teacher took the opened book from the forward pupil and Vukolu told, having stroked him on the cut head:

– You are able to read?

– I am able.

– Well, read this aloud yes more loudly!

Also pointed a finger in the book.

– To read he reads long ago! – Elizar told – and here about the letter ... – and, обратясь to the son, added, friendly lowering a voice: – Not робь!

Vukol did not quail: at the first view of the title specified by the teacher he saw chitanny to them and slyshanny in the recitation of actors in city theater the poem “Coachman's Wife” of Nikitin more than once.

It was the favourite poem of Elizar which and Elizar liked to read in a circle of the family in the evenings.

Vukol quickly, imitating actors and the father, with full compliance with intonations, taught still by the grandmother storyteller to represent characters, began reading. At school there came the unusual silence. Vukol read with ardent feeling, intending to strike listeners with the art: probably also did not dream rural school students that they are addressed by the person who visited the real stage in the real theater.

Having reached the place where the fright of the wife who guessed the death of the husband it was represented it is loud, with pathos screamed, raising the voice as the father did it it:

– And my husband?! – exclaimed  
Coachman wife,  
Also snow are more white  
It became.

Here unexpectedly burst an amicable laughter of little listeners. The reader reddened to ears, wounded up to the soul depth, but read up up to the end.

– Well done! – the teacher told and, having turned back to the class shutting itself mouths from laughter strictly told: – I ask not to laugh: he read perfectly: here and it is necessary to read good verses, and I taught you: but you still consider a model of good reading reading our sexton in church! It is advisable to laugh at you, but not to you at it!

Pupils became silent, but Vukolu seemed that they did not believe the teacher.

Vukol was accepted in the second class at once though Elizar, leaving, warned the teacher that he taught the son itself – and only to reading, and did not teach the letter. The teacher, smiling, objected:

– Nothing, we will learn.

When there occurred change and the teacher left upward, pupils, running out from school on the square, imitated Vukol:

– And mine my-?

And again laughed at the beginner: over his short-haired head and a city suit, imitated his gait, manners. Vukolu remembered far times of Tatorki, is inexplicable the hating Vukol.

It was considered how a ridiculous wonder. Big pupils – too in undergarments and with hair to a curve piece came from the senior class.

– Shay Kaká of a debt, as at Ali's goose at an ugly duckling!.

– And holds the head on one side!

– Correct for it!

At new explosions of laughter pokes, clicks in the head, pinches began, and one big speckled guy of years of seventeen caught it the head “to correct”.

The beginner suddenly lost patience, again reddened to ears as during reading, his lips flinched, eyes began to sparkle. Vukol grabbed the ruler sprained under a hand and stuck with it into a face of the torturer. The blow incidentally had directly in the laughing teeth, having scratched gums: at the guy blood seemed. He unexpectedly was embarrassed and departed away.

Too began to laugh at the big pupil:

– Eka communicated!

– Beginner! give it looking for!

– I do not fight! – gloomy, as the badgered small animal, Vukol answered.

– You do not fight, and gave a smack in the teeth?

– Well, according to Lyubov with somebody, with more exactly!

It was faced by the robust fellow fellow – hair as rye, blue eyes, a high breast. Its exterior something was even pleasant to Vukol. Not to fight, and to make friends with such. The boy growth was higher than Vukol and addition athletic.

It threw off an undergarment, having appeared in a red shirt and plisovy wide trousers.

– Let's fight! – and strong squeezed to it forearms, as if investigating muscles.

– Throw! – having flashed, Vukol told and very much squeezed the opponent's hands.

That with surprise receded.

– Stand, robyata!

Vukol was pushed out in a circle. Some encouraged:

- Fight, at us without fight it is impossible!
- Surely it is necessary to visit fight!

The opponent pushed it in a breast with the left outstretched arm, bringing right above and above.

Vukol turned pale. The audience surrounded them with a ring, encouraging both. The beginner extended the left hand too as a board, and both of them came around, choosing a moment for blow. The opponent came, Vukol departed, changing a position. Suddenly blue-eyed struck to Vukol the first short blow with a poke, but Vukol reflected it the left hand.

On both sides the short blows which were not achieving the objectives fell down.

Vukol quickly adopted methods of fight, new to it: here did not swing the arm widely, fought pokes, striking blow shortly and quickly. The martial art was in that the left hand to reflect blow: the hand of one was linked under an elbow to a hand of another. Blows of the opponent poured immediately on Vukol, but he quickly adapted not to allow them to itself (himself).

Sometimes both, сцепясь, as if not in forces were to be uncoupled and then, having jumped aside, again went around as the fighting cockerels.

From crowd remarks poured: all wanted that “the” fighter knocked down “beginner”, but Vukol, by sight thin less than the opponent, did not give in.

- Add to it, Vanka!
- Pour to the dolgoushy Tatar!
- To Gololoby!
- Give not to the peasant! To Strannem!

Strannimi in the village called strangers to peasants, visitors, landless, the poor people, farm laborers and handicraftsmen working on hiring. Each of small kandalinets got used, imitating seniors, to despise “strange”.

Having uncoupled, they were again linked. Vukol was more flexible, managed to jerk unexpectedly Vanka on himself why that suddenly fell on knees, and, falling, unintentionally hit the opponent with an elbow in a face. Furious Vukol crushed the athlete under himself.

They were separated. Hubbub began. Shouted that Vukol incorrectly struck. But at it under an eye bruise was blown up: was considered to beat “snouts” unlawful too.

Then Vanka zavorotit a sleeve of a shirt and showed bruise on a hand – a trace of “handshake” of a hand of Vukol.

It immediately changed a general view to the beginner.

- Here it is what! Only once zhamknut – and printed all hand!
- Silence! – Vanka cried, shaking off and putting on an undergarment – fight was in a draw! – And suddenly, having friendly smiled, gave a hand to Vukol: – Do not become angry! We have a custom – beginners in fight to test! I am Ivan Chelyak, the son of the miller Amos! Still nobody from legs knocked down me: I love such though you and stranniya! How call?

– Vukol! – the beginner answered, accepting the given hand.

Explosion of the general laughter sounded.

– Vukol! in a corner! knocked!

Rang out in a bell. All rushed in places. Vukola covered with chalk a black eye.

The teacher entered. In a class there came the silence. The teacher attentively looked round pupils and suddenly approached the beginner.

– It that at you under an eye? Plaid pranks?

Vukol flashed and got up.

– Plaid pranks! – he confessed.

– Perhaps, struck who?

– No! – firmly, but Vukol said in low tones – hurt!

- About a door! – someone prompted.
- Yes, about a door! – the beginner confirmed.

The teacher passed to department, developed the book and, having stroke-oared white the golden beard, told lingeringly and loudly:

- On – ачем – those!

## VII

To Vukol's brother Vovka there were only four years. On the middle of a forehead it from a scrofula still had scar with wrinkles extensively in the form of a radiant star. It was very beautiful – a star in a forehead – and Vovka was proud of it. In general after a disease during which it as to the patient in everything in a family was given preference, any privileges and advantages it became very ambitious, including itself (himself) the chosen nature.

Thanks to sunny days of windy fall he also down the street ran without cap, in one shirt, barefoot, in the short panties which hardened on a lap and took a motionless and curved form. Such suit and whitish hair a cap did not distinguish it from the other rural children all day long spinning about church under construction at all. He saw many chips and the shavings dumped in one big heap there. Every evening mothers sent children behind church chips. Nobody forbade to make them it: the church was under construction on public country money. Elizar had many chips near the house, but Vovka in imitation companions gathered several chips in a shirt hem once and was only going to carry them mothers as suddenly behind the back of it the severe voice was distributed:

– You what you do it?

Vovka looked back. Behind there was a low priest with a long gray-haired beard, with a staff in a hand. Other children abandoned chips and ran up, having hardly caught sight of the priest, but Vovka was less, it is sillier and more self-confident: and did not come to its mind to run.

– Throw chips! – imperatively the old man ordered.

Vovka threw, having taken offense.

– Where there lives your father?

– And! – Vovka pointed to a fatherly log hut.

– Well! Go!.

The priest slightly knocked him the cane, turned away and went by church to the popovsky house, this time quickly walking small steps and swinging full sleeves of a cassock.

Vovka skipping rushed home, sparkling barefoot heels, but told nothing the house about the meeting: all family sat at supper.

In a few minutes the church watchman came, greeted, told: “bread yes salt”, sighed then and, having lowered a voice, added, addressing Elizar:

– Tyatenka sent for you: ordered to come now!

Elizar was surprised:

– What for?

– Do not know! Told only that it is rather, say without any delay!

Elizar frowned. He did not love the archpriest: once the tyatenk was sent by a denunciation of it as to the harmful parishioner therefore the travel with a hand bell followed. It avoided a meeting with the archpriest, and went to church unless to easter matins, and became on a choir and tightened the chorister a pleasant, soft octave. The severe priest of words does not waste: means, something on construction business sponadobitsya.

He took off an apron, washed up hands, brushed the curly head and the beard streaming curls, put on a jacket from “devil's skin” and went, the benefit the house of the priest was near. Entered from a black porch, through kitchen, and told the cook:

– Report on a tyatenka: Elizar supposedly came; it sent for me!

The cook left kitchen and in a minute returned:

– In a room calls!

Elizar was surprised: seldom which of poor people allowed a tyatenk in a room, except dear and solid people.

He entered a small, close hall and frostily grunted. In the doorway there was a stocky figure of a tyatenka in a lilac polukaftanye, prepoyasanny the wide belt embroidered multi-colored worsted sherstyam.

The wrinkled face of a protopopitsa looked out of the side room and disappeared.

– Elizar?

– Yes sir, tyatenka.

– Well, enter!

Elizar approached under blessing and kissed a hairy hand of a tyatenka. Then became at doors.

Tyatenka some time went on the room which is purely tidied up with upholstered ancient furniture, with carved legs and backs. The master determined by a skilled look its advantages: still serf masters work. Under a window in a cage the yellow canary hung. Smelled of a cypress. Tyatenka did not invite him to sit down.

The archpriest stopped among the room, severely looked at the parishioner, having thrown hands for a back and tapping with heels.

– Long ago it was turned back to the village?

– Recently, tyatenka.

– You work at construction?

– Yes sir.

– I know that you are Jack of all trades... I remember you... Yes, yes... well that! it was turned back – it is good! I ordered to give you work on an iconostasis... you have to appreciate it?

– He is very grateful, a tyatenka, all of us here under your hand...

– Here only in church seldom and before saw you and now I do not see... for it I will not praise... Orthodox Christian?

– Not the conservative!. And to go to church not always there is time! Why sent?

Tyatenka frowned. It did not like freely keeping parishioner.

– Here that: badly you raise children, today I found your younger son behind stealing of church property. Stole a church tree and wanted to carry away home. Of course – the child, I do not blame him, but all answer falls on you: you sent the child to steal? and at whom? at church!

Elizar shuddered and became straight.

Tyatenka raised the voice, eyes sparkled from under the shifted gray-haired eyebrows...

– What does it smell of? What it is necessary for theft of church property? Once I want – and tomorrow will be in prison again! You know – here the archpriest stuck himself with a finger into a breast – I am a chief here, nobody is more! That I will want – that and I will make over you!

With each word of the archpriest Elizar turned pale more and more. At the words “I am a chief here” in his breast the old hostility flashed: too much he bore offenses from chiefs. Remembered wanderings on the plants and factories: everywhere there were chiefs threatening with prison. And now, hardly he tries to begin life and work without chiefs, the new master over his life and death – the pop petty tyrant long ago hating it, perhaps, only for the fact that did not see at it appropriate humiliation is... Elizar trembled: he knew that the criminal charge brought to it means, knew the boundless power of the archpriest and not prison was frightened: was afraid for destiny of a family. Not for fear turned pale – with the burning hatred which accumulated in soul during all life full of unfair offenses and humiliations; something prikhlynut at it to a throat, brawny hands shuddered, ready to seize the dangerous enemy by a throat.

The archpriest did not understand his state and danger to which was exposed: with pleasure looked at the pale, trembling victim.

Elizar broke himself, constrained what bubbled in him, silently was tumbled down before the archpriest, kneeled, told by the silent, shivering voice:

– Forgive, a tyatenka... did not look through for the son... did not send him and I know nothing that he made, but of oversight it is guilty!. Forgive!

The face of the archpriest cleared up. A look humiliated, in ashes of the lying enemy, the poor, for something dear we howl the village – satisfied it. The gait with the zakinuty curly head and an independent air of the workman since old years revolted him. It was necessary to bend, crush the arrogant man: for this purpose he chose by the tool the child.

– Get up! – the archpriest by softer voice told – on the first time I forgive! but – look! Go! Yes go to church more often! all of you such – wandering, I live you knock about the world! Moreover here that: get out from the church apartment! That also to spirit of yours was not!

When Elizar left the popovsky house, green circles went before eyes. Only having humiliated, he could save a family from a shame and an orphanhood. The hatred which was just boiling in him cooled down, having turned into a cold and firm, insoluble lump.

– Villain! – he whispered, having looked back to the popovsky house – I will never forget, I will never forgive, I will never go to your church!

Elizar did not go home, walked along the long village. Slow steppe twilight was condensed. In houses sparks flickered here and there, women milked cows, from the field the sheep herd came back. In evening air of silent fall various evening sounds, bleating of sheep and a voice of hostesses were far heard.

Two young guys slowly went along the road and, having embraced, harmoniously sang lingering, extremely sad song: its sobbing motive reminded crying on dead men. Elizar sorted words:

You are my darling mother...

Whether you recognize the son CBOBO small?.

Reached the end of the village and in thought stopped at the two-storeyed house of Neulybov. Above in a window fire shone.

Several minutes Elizar in thought stood on a porch, with a gloomy and gloomy face, then shook curls and resolutely knocked with an iron ring.

The door was opened by Trophîme's son – Fedya studying at school together with Vukol, he cheerfully smiled to the father of the companion. Having learned that Trophîme Iacovlevitch of the house, Elizar rose upward. Fedka ran ahead.

Trophîme sat one at a table, in purely tidied up room arranged with bentwood chairs. From a ceiling the trailing lamp under the green tin lamp shade shone. The old man read the huge church book in an ancient cover.

At Elizar's entrance raised the head, rose and gave a hand to the guest:

– Welcome, Elizarushka! what late? Sit down, sit down also you, there is nothing to stand, no sense in standing when you can sit!

Elizar sat down and hard took breath.

– With a big request, Trophîme Iacovlitch! I do not know how you will accept it but only not to the it is more!.

He kept silent, shook curls and suddenly started talking – passionately as if filled with inspiration:

– The thought, Trophîme Iacovlitch was at me! You know my life: since the childhood was at landowners a domestic serf, and the will left – the worker became, but I will not find the place in life. Everywhere offense to the working person! There was a wish to be beaten out from a low rank, it was wound on the cities, while the family was not – now a family! Difficult, Trophîme Iacovlitch! Young years left on factories and the plants! Was in exile – for the people! I see, you will not be beaten out! I am uneducated!. the craft does not ask to drink-eat, not the yoke, behind shoulders does not hang!. I want to settle in the village! For children I want to live, Trophîme Iacovlitch! My dream – to give to children at least small education.

– Correctly – Trophîme confirmed – for them all we live! Старшенький yours – was heard by me – studies well, can will reach business, the assistant will be! But about what such I think you began?

– And here! heavy on others corners to live! Stranny I! I live on the apartment and not everyone and will let with a family! Pay Kazhny month, and all to the house you live in the stranger! Will want – and go you want a kuda! Now here from the church apartment refused! and kuda you will go? At the kakhny man the log hut is full! Also I decided the log hut to ogorevat and there is no force! Trophîme Iacovlitch! help, the kind soul! I will pay as for the apartment, and there will pass time – my log hut will be, nobody will expel! It is not a shame to bow to you, there is no humiliation therefore – I know – you were a poor, felt need, remember it! I know, poor people are helped by you, help also me, not For goodness sake I ask – I will work!

Elizar for the second time this day knelt.

Tears on his beard flowed.

– Get up, Elizar! – having discontentedly frowned, Trophîme told – get up, I speak, I am not a god, to him bow to one, and I am the same sinner, as well as all of us! Sit down, we will talk plainly!

Elizar hard rose from knees, and both sat down one against another.

Trophîme stroked a beard, drummed fingers.

– You want to ogorevat a log hut? that!. it is valid – a family, and the worker you is one... I know long ago... you are honest, though is poor... and your life I know... much you were offended lyudyam, distressful you, and for it I esteem you! – He kept silent, shook the head. – And I same was, maybe again I will be a poor, I do not forget about it... In Yurlovke here, on Yura, on the edge of the selling izbenka new absolutely... just built sat down to eat! and not expensively ask – only five quarter!. in two windows on the street and two to the alley, it will be rather small, well and you are the master... you ukhyotat an izbenka, will make an extension, it also will be good! and on force... you will pay five quarter to you little by little, I will not force, the raboteshka will be on my mill. I build a steam mill!. masters with the head it is necessary for me!. here we will also pay back!. Kindly! you will have a log hut, Elizar!

Elizar did not trust the ears, though knew Neulybov's kindness. Wanted to tell something, but a spasm of a prikhlynul to a throat, tears dimmed eyes. Wanted to fall on knees again, but conservative Neulybov did not love bows. Involuntarily Elizar compared two patriarchal people of the village – Neulybov and the archpriest. What was then, he not absolutely understood. Trophîme saw him to a threshold and, having again returned to a room, began to leaf through the big book.

Coming downstairs, Elizar heard how he in a low voice slowly and distinctly continued reading:

– There lived a person in the earth Uts: the name to it was the I-island!

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There was a dark night when Elizar came back home. Night comes early in the fall, in log huts sparks shone everywhere: till a dinner sit at house needlework for a long time, weave, spin, knit, “stranny” shveets sew a sheepskin odezha, passing from a log hut into a log hut where will call; alien sherstobita on a thick and long belt string beat wool. It was thought to Elizar: prosperity, but motionless, almost same, as a century ago, раскольничья Russia with heavy life, with ceremonial religiousness, with roughness, with Maslenitsa and fisticuffs.

It was thought that it is difficult to punch still this thickness of the hardened, stiffened, old life and it, fully whether much more left her forward, whether much more became above it, having read something, and, above all – пообтершись on city factories and the plants where the worker's life where golodny, than here, about the full, grain, prosperous man.

Here though to take Neulybov, Trophîme Iacovlevitch: concepts at it shocking. No education above rural school is going to give to the only son. The archpriest has it – the first guest, the archpriest

such – rich and religious peasants, “well-intentioned”, believing in the tsar-father, as in the defender of the people against his angry enemies – noblemen and officials loves. Try to object it – and will not want to speak: it has the belief, probably not without secret sectarianism because at the archpriest Trophîme is more as the intercessor for the world country, in church it is never visible it. The yesterday’s poor salesman, and now the tenant-hlebotorgovets – in effect a fist professional, and here is how took others grief, a grief of the poor very much to heart, revived Elizar! Elizar ten times is of own will ready to work a debt, nevertheless Trophîme’s act did not consider kulak: just human feeling did not die in Trophîme yet, did not forget own recent poverty!. It was always joyful to see in people good, brotherly feelings to Elizar, it lifted in him spirit, gave new strength.

Elizar went in the most excellent, vigorous mood which quickly replaced in his heart which is just endured. He felt as if looked younger, risen, went light step, harmonious, dashing, high, with gold curls. Thirty five years were to it. Unintentionally in the dark came across about someone’s log hut a short log – easily lifted it over the head, carried by several steps on one hand and, having laughed, threw: Elizar has still a sileshka!

Not far the rumble of ordinary fisticuffs becoming everything was heard is more heard: has to be, just this end of the village from where Elizar came back receded; wordly drove conservatives.

Suddenly towards to it in all directions with a rumble and shouts “hand over ours!” – the crowd of receding flew in a disorder.

Elizar just in case prepared for protection: would not fly who.

In the dark it was necessary to be directed more sounds and roar of the battle, than to distinguish figures of people which number could seem more than it was actually.

Elizar at random wanted, keeping is closer to houses, to pass by a wall of fighters where went, povidimy, a desperate dump: footfall of legs, blows of mittens and shouts merged together. The crowd of fighters as a stream, entrained it, and Elizar vaguely distinguished a figure of the stocky person rushing ahead of a moving general wall of coming. From blows of the low person to the right and on the left one, other hand at simultaneous kick – fell and head over heels people as if the sheaves thrown by a pitchfork slid: the person as if laid a glade in the dense wood.

“Eh, great beats!” – Elizar involuntarily admired and did not sustain – rushed to him towards: they *шиблись*, having run one on another, and, having for a moment linked, stood in an immovability. The stocky person, like the anchor which went “paws” to the earth Elizar could not raise from the earth how many strained. The dark figure seeming to pig-iron seized a belt his iron ticks. Fist fight calmed down, the crowd surrounded with a ring rivals from whom any did not concede to another. But here Elizar slowly and flexibly began to become straight as if lifting on itself excessive weight, and low, having heavy knocked by knees about the frozen earth, sighed. In fight embraces they close uvidat each other.

– Amos? – with astonishment Elizar shouted, bending. – Chelyak?

– I also am! – having taken breath and hard rising, the miller answered.

Both easily sighed. Elizar remembered accident at the plant again.

– Well and force at you, Amos, for the first time we met in fight fist!

– In a draw left! – spoke, dispersing, the people of kandalinskiya.

– Not in that force that a mare Siwa! – Chelyak objected the friend – we should not struggle with you, and to stand up to one for another. Let’s come to me: long ago I am going to talk to you!

Chelyak stroked a wide chestnut beard and took a thoughtful air. They went along the wide street of the autumn village, on strong rolled, ringing road.

– Here that, Elizar, I will tell you: let’s have a heart-to-heart talk. There was an hour such, know when also I could appear, but God was merciful, I failed on crops, I have nothing now, except my chicken pox and that it is necessary to sell, firmly I feel: not rich men to me the company, and simple men, the working people. And about you, about your destiny remembered: not without reason you were in exile, I know for what business! Before I hesitated, but now – I respect this business quite!

Chelyak stroked a beard again.

– And looking for here that! – having kept silent, it continued – nobody and in a mustache blows that the end will come to rent soon: I heard from Kirill Listratov, from our student that this earth – as soon as will come to an end rent – all entirely will depart to our Volga millionaires! What then with our people will be? Ась? You what you will tell on it?

– In total as is – without the earth you will be left! – quietly Elizar told – the earth will leave to the big capital!

– Here, here! – joyfully Chelyak exclaimed. – The capital across Volga at full speed brings down! here to what state rent led us! It is necessary, oh, it is necessary, Elizar to hold the black people, for to blacken, for the poor, to look at the simple man! – He sighed and has interrogatively a look in eyes to the interlocutor.

– You grew poor, because at you and thoughts were changed! And all impoverished people to think will conceive!

Chelyak even stopped on the road, significantly a vypucha tin eyes.

– Here in what force, but not that a mare Siwa! – he muttered, swinging the head. Picked up Elizar under a hand and, having drawn near is closer to an ear of the interlocutor, whispered in a low voice: – And you know what books are read now by our sectarians? not sacred the old letter and what would think? and?

– Well?

– You know Leo Tolstoy’s “gospel”? “In what my belief?” read? it is printed on a hectograph. “About harm of smoking to tobacco” do not want to read: destructive books of Lev Nikolaich went to the people! Here than began to smell in the village! What will be farther?

They approached the tent house of Chelyak at the corner of the church area: in the house the spark shone. Rose by the high covered porch with carved columns, and Chelyak knocked an iron ring.

Yurlovka was called one of minor, side streets of the village going at right angle to the main street. It was the suburb leaving to pasture to the steppe, on the main road. Short and poor, Yurlovka consisted of only several stocky huts standing in one row on “yura”, on the hillock opened from all directions where autumn violent winds and winter blizzards freely stormed over them.

\* \* \*

Yurlovka was taken away by rural society for “strange”, the most part of the handicraftsmen who settled at a rich mudflow.

Stranniye had no country economy, did not hold either a cow, or a horse, nor even the small cattle: pathetic izbenka stood aloone, and about them was not neither house nor home. There long since sheep shepherds, fishermen, hunters, smiths of the next smithies located on the coast of the Lousy lake which was drying up in the summer lodged. Lived in Yurlovka the Jewish tailor – only on all village, the Pole with the daughter – the widow of the retired soldier receiving visiting guests, the zapoyny shoemaker, the mechanic tinman and to that similar craft люд.

Along with them also Elizar with a family lodged in own izba. This izba was allocated with the newcomer, a cheerful look, a board roof, a double joiner’s glazing of windows, and on internal furniture – hints for culture at undoubted poverty. Elizar performed artworks on finishing of new church, then passed to construction of a steam mill of Neulybov. Work for it appeared much: the prosperous village needed such Jack of all trades what was Elizar.

On the maintenance of the Laurels going to school together with Vukol, the grandfather Matvei monthly brought пятерик torments. Children both studied well; the nephew who arrived earlier went a class uncles are more senior. On Saturdays they received from school library of the book for reading which with interest were read also by Elizar. It happened so that the village assembly, according to the teacher, with assistance of Oferov and Chelyak, assigned two hundred rubles on an extract

of “efficient” books for school library, and the teacher, it was entrusted to them to make the list, having consulted to Oferov, wrote out classics where near Pushkin, Gogol and Tolstoy there were Shakespeare, Homer in translation of Zhukovsky and others, till this time writers not famous to the village.

It was the first noticeable ray of light in the village of Candala.

From new books not only Vukolu and to Laurels, but also both adults – to Chelyak and resembling “the student from the people” Oferova – from time to time gathering in Elizar’s izba, most liked Homer: a siege of Troy, brave heroes and “smart” Odysseus pleased all. There was a wish to resemble them, to speak about them. From heroes of antiquity passed to searches them in modern life. Were interested in the numerous antique gods close to human affairs, right there criticized church god who only “berezheny protects” yes strong sides.

After the meeting with the archpriest Elizar never appeared in church any more, long ago having grown cold to religion; all his family did not observe posts, but it did not cause condemnation in the village, half sectarian. Elizar, Chelyak, Oferov and Listratova were considered as the freethinkers who were openly blaming not only god, but also the governor.

Once on Sunday after a mass absolutely unexpectedly for kandalinets the archpriest came to an ambon and read a printing leaf in which it was told about sudden explosion in the imperial Winter Palace and wonderful rescue of the tsar from death. Immediately after reading the thanksgiving began.

News caused bewilderment: who needs the death of the tsar about whom said that he exempted peasants from the power of landowners? “Precisely landowners” – kandalinets thought; though they were never serfs, but many of the neighboring villages endured this humiliating state and remembered horrors of that time. The terrible event was understood as attempt of landowners to turn back back serfdom. Tranquility of kandalinets was broken: nobody wished return of the cancelled serfdom. Least of all his state peasants wanted – what never were at that time kandalinets – got used not to break caps before any administration, and landowners and not seeing before.

After a while in soft March day, in thaw when fluffy snow slowly fell in large flakes on the kandalinsky road pitted by wagon trains, to Elizar’s izba zavorotit the small light sledge harnessed by a black stately zherebchik. The grandfather Matvei and Nastya in tanned short fur coats got out of sledge.

Nastya was married on Settlements in only five versts from Zaymishcha, but, leaving the parental house on life, new to it, “cried out” in the “nevestiny lamentations” established by ancient custom:

Spent on drink my golovushka  
To foreign people on a distant storonushka!

Her face was unrecognizably faded now and expressed care, a sukhota and a grief.

The grandfather took out from sledge a bag with flour, brought in not locked outer entrance hall. Towards to them Masha ran out, and all of them entered a log hut. The door did not manage to be closed as there passed Amos Chelyak there, attentively looked at the attached horse and sledge, and in a gate school students – Vukol and Laurels ran in. Завидя a familiar horse, they began to caress her, calling by two names: Monasteries – Vaskoy, and Vukol – Hector. Vaska-Hector, playfully pressing ears, pretended that he wants to bite children, but it they did not frighten at all.

Having passed through Elizar’s workshop, they appeared on a pure half and in confusion stopped, seeing the guests sitting at a table.

– What late? – Elizar asked – really without lunch left?

Vukol, having kept silent, answered gloomy:

– On a prayer in church drove! – and, having approached a table, put a small printing leaf.

Laurels, looking frowningly, muttered a low viola:

– The tsar was killed!

This news struck all as unexpected blow.

There came the general heavy silence. All stood in those poses in what the disturbing message found them. At everyone terrible presentiments began to move. The general thought owning masses was about the landowners who are trying to obtain return of serf slavery. Ded Matvei was deeply convinced of it. The old giant with gray-haired borodishchy, in an open short fur coat sat in such pose as though he propped up a wide back the weight which fell down all. His eyes were filled with tears. The horror stood in suffering eyes of Nastya. Masha, having hung and having thrown for the hand head, dropped facing a wall. It seemed that this minute all dark country weight shuddered not so much because that considered the killed tsar the defender, how many for fear that the serf bondage will return.

Elizar took a printing leaf from a table and began to read in a low voice:

– “The malicious persons wishing to catch fish in muddy water...” – also broke off.

– Not clearly! – he sighed, having seen a leaf – what means malicious when nothing is told about their intentions? what do they want? and who killed? Really landowners?

Chelyak sat in a corner, having thoughtfully taken a chestnut beard in a handful, having made buldge out tin eyes.

– Just Listratov Kirill came to me: the St. Petersburg university of students dismissed on houses, also it goes – to Zaymishche. I ask: what supposedly for people it put otmochil? And he speaks: “Socialists killed the tsar! And rightly! a cur’s death for a cur!” Well, I marveled! Socialists? Yes same all youth, students, I met them, they do not know the people! Think that if to kill the tsar, then now and revolution will be!

– But not landowners after all here bend the line? – Chelyak interrupted – the popushcheniye to students is done? “Kill supposedly with the purpose, and actually for us you try! We will set later the people on you! We will kill two hares!”

Chelyak kept silent and made a helpless gesture:

– And really – miraculously somehow: explosion in the palace was made, at last, to turn gray it is white day killed, really protection knew nothing? Whether the court authorities not purposely allowed? Ась? The people – he intuition feels that “students” – then blindly go, do not know on whose mill water is poured!

– Perhaps or maybe another: we can approve nothing for eyes! – meditatively Elizar confirmed. – Time will show where the truth!. One is available: the tsar was killed by good people, in advance doomed themselves for it to death!. pay in the lives for life of one, means – are quits!. And still here what I will tell: it is felt to me, only the beginning – ahead still a lot of things we will see it; everything will judge the people!.

– Yes will be about the tsar! – Masha begged suddenly. – Well, killed and killed! We here at what? Not on this case our family arrived: have a look what Nastya became similar to? At the husband at it, at Saveli, a consumption, hear, a throat blood goes?. not to a fershal it is necessary, not to Svinukhu to go, to the fortune-teller? Advise!.

At Nastya tears slid from eyes.

Elizar waved a hand.

– What there fortune-teller? And fershat ours what understands? To the city it is necessary, to the doctor!

Nastya started talking:

– Gave me – have not a look for whom!. if only quiet was. However, quiet, meek, meek will also die!. and I where will get to? Кандалинским it is good, they have lands too much, and far away – lack of land!

Women exorcized both at once.

The grandfather got up in all the giant stature, nearly under a matitsa the head in a close izba, wrapped up sheepskin шубняк.

– Well, not before теперя... to go it is time to go home!. what in good time to cry? A man can die but once. And to what is wanted by swindlers – not to happen too! Подушны pay them, war will come – for them put a stomach, and back from them – what from bastards you will receive?

And it moved to an exit. All rose to see off visitors.

But at Nastya with Masha languages were untied only now. Told everyone the, without listening to each other, everything that at them boiled. They continued to speak even on a threshold of an outer entrance hall at the door dissolved outside.

The grandfather, scowling, in a cap and mittens, long sat in sledge, expecting.

– But-but! – with irritation he told Vaske, without touching, however, reins why the clever horse and did not pay attention to exclamation of the owner. Only when Nastya hasty rushed in sledge, and the grandfather pulled reins – Vaska a graceful, easy lynx ran out on the road.

Elizar, looking after sledge, shook the head.

Chelyak, shaking hands the friend, told at farewell, having significantly winked:

– Well, and so in what force, but not that a mare Siwa!

About Vukole and the Monastery listening and looking with greedy attention all forgot.

## VIII

On the familiar forest road towards evening summer day Lavrusha and Vukol went astride: there was a custom to take away horses in the summer in the wood on a pasture sometimes for several days. Sputyvali to horses forward legs, removed a bridle and let. When it was necessary, went to look for to the wood and found the most part soon: places were acquaintances, the, seldom it was necessary to wander long unless if horses come into a thicket; the horse stealing did not happen: horse thieves in these parts were not found.

Lavrusha went to Chalke who absolutely already grew old by this time, turned gray even, hardly tripped legs; but Vukol caracoled on Vaske-Hector. The stallion was successful wonderfully well – all in mother: the handsome with a little head, thin, dry legs and a broad chest, before all accurate – though paint a picture; does not go, and dances – “шлопак”, Don, Cossack to a sort the uterus was. To put Vaska into operation were sorry, harnessed only on holidays, in church or on a visit, fed on an osobitsa with bran, and Vaska in the wood, and even in distant herd, to the steppe walked in the summer, sent it to the amendment – and there was Vaska an exit, ceremonial horse; there was it notably: the racer appeared. Went a row, a step on the soft forest road under a green canopy of century oaks and, as always, talked. Vaska-Hector went beautiful “shlopaky” and asked reins, bridled under language, gnawed a bit, bending an abrupt neck with a long wavy mane. Tolstobryukhy Chalka ridiculously tried to go level with a young horse. It was not bridled, went dejectedly, pokryakhtyvy. Riders went without saddles, there was no such custom in Zaymishche. Elbows and bare feet of Laurels dangled from a jolty trot of an old horse. He laughed, seeing as the nephew tries to sit the good fellow and demands the beautiful course from a horse.

– Yes to you will invigorate him! Than to keep a horse – and you her heat!

The nephew laughed in reply...

– And you read “Nal and Damayanti”? there was such master to operate horses! And that there was Achilles – with him horses on – human used to say...

– Interpret with you!

– Really, I do not lie!. I am Nal!

– Liar?

– Eh, the uncle, listen as the wood rustles, he – live, really, is able to speak! And clouds! Well as!

– Anything to!. To us all this got accustomed long ago!. And the wood of ours, perhaps, we will lose soon: heard? bat, because of the wood want to have legal proceedings!

– And what your fathers to whom in a mouth look? How you will live without the wood?

– In any way!. the wood the barin according to donative paper refused to us, and after died ..., still long ago at grandfathers if were released... And hearing passed a teperich – the successor was and wants to sell on a felling our wood... to the merchant!

– There cannot be it and where donative?

– That is that it is absent... Lost...

– And who told... about the successor?

– Yes all know... News flies quickly!. Uslykhamsha, our men went to the city, on a market there аблакат is and what аблакат? The employed conscience, the drunkard! Want the father твоего to ask – how to be?

The laurels were afraid on Chalka and are efficient as the adult, interpreted the wood...

And the wood, native and close where each tree was familiar, each natural boundary bore the name, moved as live, and rustled under warm wind, spoke by many voices, and its voices merged in a solemn, viscous song. Ahead, through wide branches of oaks the flat, oval valley appeared through, the silvery black poplars going to the sky were seen.

– The merchant – continued Laurels – through the Spiked glade began to dig a ditch glubochenny and whose cattle for it will pass – we will exhaust! Did not see still a ditch?.

– And to spit to me on a kuptsova a ditch!

Vukol flashed and suddenly whacked fetters of a quick racer. The uncle did not manage to tell also words how Hector with the rider was taken out on a glade. Ringing footfall was given in the wood, the croup of a horse with a wavy long tail flashed and easy hoofs started gleaming.

– Ditch! – very much the Laurels cried and, lapping Chalka, zatusit after. But where there was Chalke to keep up with Vaska who became angry from blow? Vukol rushed on a bareback racer mad gallop and enjoyed a desperate gallop: only wind whistled in ears, the wide field rushed towards, floated, coming nearer, gray-haired black poplars, and gradually as the cradle or a castle on waves, shook under them a hot, smooth back of a stately horse. There was a wish to rush сломя a head that everything was at all, and here only Vukol felt, without giving himself in it the report as he passionately loves this wood, both a glade, and mighty black poplars over eternally roaring Proran, the native village at silent Postepk and the hot, fire-spitting, fantastically flying together with it racer. There was a wish to throw down someone a challenge, to show that to it the devil not the brother, to overturn the enraged horse nonexistent barriers, to crush someone who plans the evil against darling, from a cradle of the favourite wood.

– Ditch! – from far away the warning, thin, plaintive voice of Laurels reached it because of wind noise.

Vukol for a moment became puzzled, wanted to besiege a horse, but was already late. In one of waves of a gallop of Vaskin the back rose especially highly and is long. The horse reared and suddenly as if separated from the earth. Vukolu seemed that he somehow very easily slipped from Vaski's back and head over heels swept on a grass, having painfully hit a heel of the left leg against the earth.

At this time it was approached by Laurels, nearly falling from Chalka from laughter.

The edge of the wood left three children – barefoot, everyone with a horse bridle through a shoulder. They helped Laurels to take Vaska for an occasion. The laurels confused to it and Chalke forward legs fetters, removed from that and another a bridle, lashed everyone, and horses amicably began to jump to the wood.

Vukol rubbed and warmed up a leg: nothing, pain ceased, now it was possible to go. Children still from a distance cried to it:

– To catch crayfish!

It were the neighbour's children living near a dedovy log hut, three brothers Rebrov: Stepashka, on a pro-rank the Sheep Mug, the Scaffold and Vanka Alyapa. All of them five since small years kept the unseparable company.

Vukol invented fantastic games, every time new, in compliance with contents of the read books, told strange and sophisticated stories, but for this purpose it was always necessary to go at first to the wood, to a stream or the lake, to catch hands of crayfish, then to make fire, and after it Vukol was inspired on stories and any inventions: the last campaigns behind cucumbers and water-melons on others often were among a melon field and kitchen gardens, behind green pods and podsolnushka; for these feats to them sometimes got, but it was so pleasant to creep with fragile heart on a belly, to talk in a whisper and to come back in the same way with production. Business was not in a theft charm: it was always the game invented by Vukol. It was – the ataman of robbers, the captain Nemo, Robinzon, and the uncle – a Cossack captain or Friday, the others received roles too. Before beginning a game, he behind a fire told a story which should be played.

– Teperich, so we will catch crayfish, and after the game will go!. Tea, brought what new?

– Of course!. I will already tell you, and now – let's go on Eric.

Vukol, despite the hurt leg, ran ahead of all: dry and thin, it was easiest on the run: nobody could be ahead him. Behind the Spiked glade Postepok fell into abrupt, hilly coast, and in this place

was called Eric: here much crayfish were found. The great master to catch them there was Stepashka the Sheep Mug. He undressed, carefully went down in water, having plunged into it up to a throat, a vypucha of an eye, began to rummage hands under water: in the abrupt, mossy coast crayfish hid in special holes, and nobody was able to pull out so dexterously underwater hermits as did it the Mug. In a minute he threw on the coast of large cancer, then another, the third. Other children brought together them and piled. The laurels went to ask a kettle to fishermen, Vukol collected dead wood. The fire flared soon.

When all took seat around fire, Vukol told:

– I will tell you a new game – the siege of Troy – from life of ancient people is called... There were heroes – Odysseus, Achilles and Hector. I read this book recently... Troy – it was the city, and it was burned during war, and war came out because of Beautiful Elena. This history so begins:

Anger, about the goddess, sing of Achilles, Peleev of the son...

Sheep Mug diligently inflated a flame, and his long, freckled face amazingly similar to a sheep or goat muzzle reddened from a flame and strain. The laurels, in a shubnyak full of holes, a ripped cap, barefoot, enclosed firewood, Alyapa, small, tolstenky, with linen hair, with a thick nose – broke the prepared boughs, the Scaffold, similar to the brother, but is more comely, was heated at fire: autumn morning was coldish, fresh wind blew. Vukol wound a wreath from oak branches, put on it the head. After the ardent story all were silent for about a minute.

– And an otkelev you know all this, exactly everywhere were? – with ingenuous surprise bloated Alyapa asked.

– Yes itself bat that in books read! – was responsible for Vukol Lyosk – at – ooh, fierce to a chitanye!

– I not only read – Vukol objected – I when he in the city of veins, in theater saw any representations also in them played roles. There such stories are played, well and you see, happened as really, real-life such people what lived one thousand years ago...

– See you!

– Really! – all alive saw both Elena Prekrasnuyu and Paris and Menelaus! Only in a ridiculous look, and in the book they are not ridiculous!.

– And the fire of Troy saw?

– And that as?

– Eh, here to have a look! – lanky the Mug waved long hands – I love if that burns!. – and again began to blow on fire.

– Throw! – derisively told it the being silent Laurels all the time – and so too burns!

– I love! – it was not appeased the Mug, however rose from knees, shifted a cap on a nape and wiped sweat from a freckled forehead. Then, having become even more similar to a sheep, unexpectedly screamed, having turned on one leg: – Great burns! Give, children, a near stack zazhgy! at-at! as if was engaged!

– Waugh-from! – with a sneer the solid Laurels squoze the word – clever what!. it is told, three years not баял, and blurted out – so take out Saints! unless it then was mown to burn down?

– Yes it not our hay, not rustic, купцово!

– So that купцово?

– And that – Stepka zagoryachitsya suddenly – yesterday тятя came from a meeting, so told: the merchant at us otymt everything – and pasture will be its, and Zaymishche to it will depart, both the wood, and Shipova a glade!

Young peasants became agitated and made a din exactly as their fathers on a meeting:

– You lie all!

– The wood to us departed from the barin!

– Hundred years ours!

– You naplet everything!

– Yes ask men! – waving a hand, as if beat off the Mug. – In exactly men go: Yudan Gayduk, Spiridon yes in any way Ivan Listratov?

Along the road by a stack there were three men and about something argued with fervency, making and clapping a helpless gesture on hips.

One of them – big growth, the handsome with a black broad beard and a cap of a curly hair on the head – the brother Gruni, the joker and the mischievous person, shouted:

– Yes what to it in teeth to look? – And, увидав children, shouted, laughing: – Children, light merchants a stack! Tell that I ordered!

Also it raskatitsya by a laughter, sparkling white teeth and inflating the same thoroughbred, beautiful nostrils, as at Gruni. Men passed in the wood, continuing the conversation.

Sheep Mug triumphantly looked at companions.

– Shto? I lie? And men about what bat? Zazhgem, and more than anything! the uncle Ivan ordered!

He grabbed the burning brand, but interrogatively looked at Vukol, as if expecting permission of the ataman.

– Do not order! – in a low voice the uncle advised it – troubles we will acquire!

But as if the demon seized the nephew.

– Drag! – he resolved.

Sheep Mug with burning golovny in a hand delighted ran around a stack and stuck with it into dry, friable hay.

The stack was engaged from all directions.

Small sparks, smoking thin streams, quickly ran up and, expanding an ardent ring, captured a stack.

Tumbled down black smoke through which big wings of a bright red flame rose and trembled. Fire raised a howl with an unexpected force and ferocity, having partly puzzled instigators...

– It would be not necessary! – reproachfully the Laurels sighed – there will be to us a blowup!

All were silent, ready to stop unexpected and yet not seen them rage of fire.

At many heart заньло repentance and heavy presentiment. Only the Sheep Mug had fun and – whether falsely whether is not present – danced, shouting as drunk:

– Fire of Troy!

Suddenly on the wood ringing, bystry blows of horse hoofs sounded: to them at a gallop on a bareback horse the familiar man Abram Tsarev who was on duty this day at a fire warehouse came tearing along. It was angry and pale, with the uncombed head and a beard, without cap and a belt, barefoot.

– Hto lit it? – terribly he cried, having besieged a horse.

Smoke was spread by a black cloud over the wood.

Children were confused a little, but then chorus cried:

– To us Ivan Listratov ordered!

Abram burst in perfect abuse.

Then Vukol came forward and told quietly:

– I lit it!

The man wanted to rake up the fellow for hair, but changed mind: the boy is strange, from the big village – the grandfather Matvei's vnuchonok, a family spravny and Elizara he knew: the district Elizar is known to all. Swore once again, shook the fist at the company and with all the might skipped away back.

When it was behind a coppice, all exchanged glances.

– Why you undertook? – quietly Vukola the uncle asked – Stepka lit?

- I do not renounce, знамо I! – confirmed the Mug.
- I spoke to you – it is not necessary! – reasonably continued Laurels – for an arson in a jail put!
- In a sharp og? – scaredly Alyapa exclaimed and suddenly began to whimper.
- Alyapa! – all laughed – was afraid?
- All this you! – the others began to make a racket, approaching Stepka.

Mug grew quiet, it is guilty moved back, looking around and, povidimy, choosing a moment to turn the tail.

- A jail not a jail, and it is necessary to answer! – told the Scaffold – and rightly!
- On you we will also show, Stepashka! In total – “I will light” and “I will light”. Here also lit!
- Yes Vukol undertakes!

The dispute began.

– Stop! – at last, Vukol told and knocked about the earth a stick – there is nothing перекоряться: all should stand up for one! I am guilty one, I allowed Stepan, he also obeyed!. You chose me, it seems as the foreman... well, I also have to be responsible! Listen that I thought up!

He kept silent, leaning on a stick. All moved in a circle. Behind the back of Vukol there were Laurels which were going to whisper something to the nephew, but that, without listening to the adviser, continued:

- In a jail will put you nobody! all of you will tell when you are asked: I lit, one, without you!.
- The uncle pulled it a sleeve, but Vukol quietly took away his hand.
- And as you ... – with emotion escaped at Laurels, but Vukol interrupted:

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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