



# *Red Assassins*

A Factual Story Revealing How  
the Ukraine Lost Its Freedom

*by*

THEODOSY OSHMACHKA

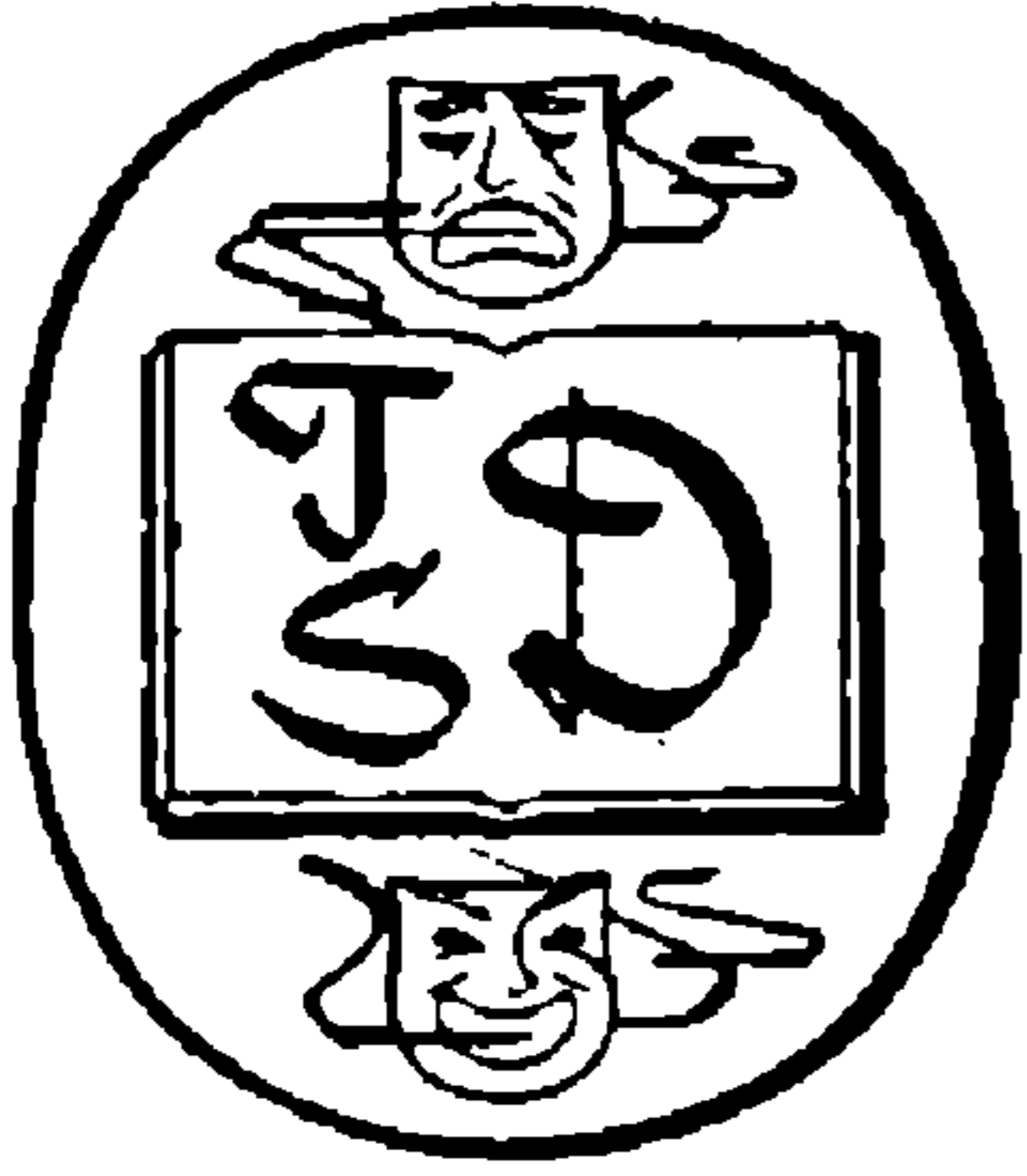
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*Publishers*

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## DEDICATION

*To the millions of people of the world  
living under the tyranny of ruthless  
dictators without any hope of ever  
gaining their freedom.*

## P R E F A C E

It is seldom that a publisher is fortunate enough to have a manuscript submitted for publication that is packed with such a terrific indictment of the Soviet ideology, and the methods of promoting it, as is recorded in this book, "Red Assassins." Within these pages are to be found all the devious and insidious methods that the Communists have used to spread their doctrine. If, in a small measure, we are instrumental in convincing the peoples of the world that the Soviet regime is sustained only for the selfish aggrandizement of a limited number of Party members, we are well repaid for publishing the book.

Theodosy Oshmachka, the author, is a former professor of Russian and Ukrainian literature in his homeland where he won renown as a teacher, author, and poet. His literary works have been translated and published in other countries. He, himself, was a victim of a purge of the educated, professional and business leaders of his country when the Ukraine was taken over by the Russians, completely stripped of everything that the people of this large country held dear, both material and spiritual.

Mr. Oshmachka was jailed in a Moscow prison for seven years without a trial, being subjected to every possible torture to force him to confess his opposition to the Communist regime. It was only by feigning insanity that he was able to survive a most horrible death. He was being taken to Kiev during the war for a trial when German troops advanced and forced the Russians to flee, leaving their prisoners behind them. He found his way to a refugee camp in Germany. From

there he came to America as a D.P. under the sponsorship of the Ukrainian Society. In 1957 his book, "Murderer's Rotunda," was published in the Ukrainian language in Canada.

"Red Assassins" is a translation of this book into English. The basic information in the book is not new, but it reveals in a most illuminating manner the brainwashing tactics that have always been employed by the Communists to break down the physical, mental, and moral fiber of their conquered peoples. The author has succeeded in portraying the intimate details of suffering and betrayal of his own family and the peasants of a Ukrainian village. Approach the reading of this book with an open mind and thank your God that you are still a citizen of a free world.

—THE PUBLISHERS

## INTRODUCTION

This book is not fiction, but is based on fact. All the circumstances depicted are actual happenings taken from life in the Ukraine during the Stalin regime. I have been absolutely honest in telling of the liquidation of the Ukraine by the Chekists who were, one and all, executioners.

Only the names and exact location of places have been changed in order to protect the innocent people still in the Ukraine who would experience terrible retaliation should it be discovered that they were revealing the truth about Communism.

Ivan Brus is no stranger to me. In fact, the author of this book knew him well. My experiences in prison were identical. All the details of our horrible experiences are recorded in this book only partially since it would be impossible to put into print much of the vicious treatment given us during several years of imprisonment in a Moscow prison.

I can vouch for all the facts I have presented regarding Stalin and Molotov. The conference in the "Murderer's Rotunda," the first chapter of the book, when Stalin instructs his executioners to liquidate the Ukraine is factual, even though it seems too lurid and horrible to be real. The details were given to me by one of the executioners present during this conference. Later he defaulted, was sentenced to Siberia, and was executed two years afterward.

All property was confiscated by the Communists, and the peasants were starved and tortured into submission. Deprived of homes for which they had labored, they were forced to work on collective farms or in factories. Some perished in

Siberia, many wandered from place to place as refugees, and many were jailed. Because I was a Ukrainian teacher of literature and an author, I was jailed in a Moscow prison, simply because they feared I might use my ability as a writer to oppose them.

Here, in this book, I depict the woe of my beloved country that the world may know and understand how Communism works. Even though their methods of infiltrating a country and conducting a cold war may have become slightly refined as the years have passed, the same ruthless and cruel physical and mental tortures continue to be the formula as the Communists carry on their campaign to conquer the world.

Many great writers have written Russian fiction with an honest background . . . men like Tolstoy and Korolenko. I have made no attempt to tell a fictional story. I tell only the truth about my observations of and experiences with the Communists.

—THEodosy Oshmachka



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## Murderer's Rotunda

One spring night in Moscow an officer, dressed in regulation overcoat, boots, and military cap, appeared from a side exit in the Kremlin wall. A guard closed the door. Although it was a moonlit night, the base of the wall was veiled in a thick, dark shadow. Parked in that shadow stood an automobile. High above the wall rose a watchtower, its dome shining brightly in the moonlight, but casting a long shadow across the shining square, which separates the Kremlin from the other city edifices. The shining high buildings standing above the low gloomy ones created the illusion of rising above a dark abyss.

It seemed as if the inhabitants of this Communist Capital had gone to sleep warily in order to avoid trouble, or hopefully to have it pass them by. Perhaps they lay in a shivering mysterious fearfulness under their bedclothes.

The officer hurried over to the automobile. A chauffeur opened the door.

“We have ten minutes to make it to our destination,” he said as he took his seat in the car.

Soon they were off at full-speed, racing past buildings, in and out of the shadows. The car was like a blazing meteor, as it sped along, passing the large moonlit buildings and then the dark ones.

Now it was out of the city limits, into the wide countryside, flashing past houses, groves and large strips of meadow land. Suddenly the machine halted. The officer climbed from the car, quietly turned into a well-beaten path, leading to a birch-grove a short distance away.

“Who goes there?” a guard barked out.

“Stalin of the Kremlin,” was the quiet reply.

The guard acknowledged Stalin as he saluted with his machine-gun. Just beyond the birch trees could be seen a high one-story building with large Venetian windows, and a round, semi-flat roof, set on posts. Rising from the middle of this roof was a strong pole, from the top of which a red banner fluttered in the wind, casting a shadow that resembled a large blackbird, trying desperately to tear itself away from a stake to which it had been tied.

The building was surrounded by a low, white-painted fence, enclosing a lawn.

Stalin quickly opened the gate, then walked along a path, paved with red brick, leading to a doorway between two columns joined by an overhanging roof. The guards on each side of the column saluted as they recognized the night caller. No light showed through the windows.

But the contrast inside the building was startling. One was immediately attracted to a chandelier that hung from the ceiling, suspended on a gaudy red chain of heavy wrought iron which seemed not to have cooled as it ran downward. From the outer ends of each angle in the roof similar chains stretched down to the chandelier, creating the illusion that

it was hanging on a network of chains. It was composed of four rows of frames, electrically lighted.

This building appeared to contain only one room, but actually it was a large circular hall—a rotunda—capable of seating fifteen hundred people. There were rows of chairs facing the new arrival in the center of the hall. Behind those chairs in the back was an entrance with a single door, made apparently of stainless steel, and two other entrances with double doors.

The whole floor area was laid with a deep-pile red carpet. Red predominated everywhere, with the exception of the windows, which were draped with green curtains from which white tassels were suspended. On each side of the single wooden door through which Stalin entered stood long tables covered with white cloth. Benches upholstered with yellow leather flanked the tables. Between the two large tables was a smaller one, three meters long, with red seats on each side, and also covered with a white tablecloth. Significantly a large map was spread on the small table.

Five soldiers in white uniforms sat at each of the large tables, holding machine guns, with the barrels ranged completely over the circular seats.

All the soldiers at both tables rose in a salute when Stalin entered the hall. He contemplated the map momentarily as he said, "Please sit down." They, however, awaited his pleasure.

It was only after he sat down that they followed suit, placing the guns on the tables with the barrels facing the hall.

Stalin pored over the map studiously for ten minutes. Then he looked at the wrist watch on his left hand, leaned back, and faced the entrance door expectantly.

Soon it flew open and an officer wearing a top coat entered. He strode straight to the table. Stalin rose, extending his hand in greeting.

“Mykola Ivanovich, are the people I mentioned ready for action?”

“They are, Josif Vassarionovich!” the officer answered obsequiously.

“I examined this map before your arrival,” Stalin explained. “We’ll have to send men as a precautionary measure into the various districts to forestall any potential uprisings.”

“Do you intend forcing collectivization on them?” Ivanovych asked with an odd mixture of courtesy and awe.

“This is not a debatable matter,” Stalin snapped. “Dramatic action must be taken with finality in all those hotbeds of dissension, even if the circumstances were framed by us.”

He indicated the map, naming the districts. “Chernehov, Cherkas, Uman, Kiev, Poltava, Katerinoslav and Kherson . . . After the Ukraine, we’ll see . . . That will be something for you to worry about . . . And notwithstanding your exceptional thoroughness, I cannot resist the desire to make immediate tests for my own personal satisfaction. I want to check up on the type of men we are going to send. That is one reason why I came here. I can’t examine every one of them, but the men I do question will serve as guides for the rest to learn what is expected of them. Please hand me the lists.”

Ivanovych opened his brief case and withdrew a file of papers from it, which he placed on the map before Stalin.

“Call in the men!” Stalin ordered.

Ivanovych pressed a button on the edge of the table, and a bell rang at the other end of the hall. A single door opened, and a group of men, none over forty years of age, dressed

neatly in civilian, army or navy clothes, was admitted into the room.

They filed in sulkily, with downcast eyes, seemingly afraid they might miss their designated seats. It was not until after they sat down that they furtively surveyed the brilliantly illuminated hall. Soon the fifteen hundred seats were filled. Officers closed the door and took their seats on both sides of Stalin. Other guards stood behind him.

Without looking at anyone in particular, Stalin casually addressed the gathering, but loud enough for all to hear. His voice crackled as he asked, "You all claim to be faithful servants of the revolution?"

Ivanovych answered for the men, nervously. "Yes," he said. "Otherwise, I would not have dared to invite them here."

"But they're all kurkuls?" (formerly rich peasants).

"Yes, kurkuls; but no proletarian could have executed his task as conscientiously as these men," Ivanovych assured Stalin.

Stalin ran his eye hurriedly over the list, picking out one name at random.

"Kasiko!"

From his seat in the third row there rose a small, thin man who, like Ivanovych, answered uneasily: "I."

The interrogation followed. Stalin's voice was like a whip.

"What did you do?"

"Acted as executioner."

"Where?"

"At the Lukianiwsky Prison."

"And how did you ever manage to get yourself appointed as the executioner of the convicted enemies of the proletariat?"

“Before I got my present job as State Executioner, I disguised myself one day as a Ukrainian rebel and got a woman with a ten-year-old girl and a twelve-year-old boy to put me up for the night. Her husband was a member of the Black Crow gang. During the night I woke up the whole household, shooting the mother and daughter without much ado. The boy, who had huddled in a corner, pleaded piteously for his life, yelling: ‘Don’t kill me . . . Don’t kill me!’ I spared him, but not for any humane reason. In his desire for future security, I knew he would be valuable. He was a kulak, the son of a rich farmer. Besides, he would spread the news of my deed around the village. Furthermore, I knew that this execution would serve as a deterrent to any other families harboring bandits in their homes.” (Members of the opposition were called bandits.)

“In other words,” Stalin interpreted, “you followed the practical course of propagating our greatest weapon — the terror?”

“Yes, that’s it.”

“Sit down!”

Turning to his aide, Stalin asked: “Was his statement corroborated before you brought him here?”

“It was; and I noted it in my daily record.”

“Good!”

The dictator mulled over the lists, selected a new name, covered it with his index finger, addressing the gathering meanwhile.

The reflection of the electric light from red walls, the red chains holding the chandelier, and the red carpet created the peculiar, frightening atmosphere that Stalin desired in which to handle his henchmen. An ominous, almost profound

silence prevailed. It was difficult to know whether the men had been focusing their attention on Stalin or on the officers next to him, whose guns were pointing in their direction.

The sharp voice of Stalin finally broke the tension.

“Partsunia!” he shouted.

A swarthy, little man, his pompadour brushed back in the style of an anarchist, rose from his seat in the front row. He wore a pair of dark trousers and a short jacket. He was on the verge of emitting a violent cough, but managed to suppress it by sheer will power, grabbing at his throat and forcing down some congested phlegm that had gathered there. Otherwise, he remained silent.

“What’s wrong with your tongue? Are you Partsunia?” asked Stalin, harshly.

“Yes, that’s me . . . I’m Partsunia.”

“What was your job before you came to this gathering?”

“I was an executioner.”

“Where?”

“In Kharkov.”

“And how many did you do away with down there?”

“I can’t remember.”

“And what did you ever do to achieve such a responsible position?”

“I was sent to Bohodukhov along with five other Communists to liquidate my own brother. He owned three hundred desiatinas (a land measure equalling 2.70 acres) of land. There was some talk about gold hidden on his land.”

“And how could you liquidate your brother when you yourself were a kurkul?” interrupted Stalin.

“Well, I had previously been seized by three Cheka officers at my home. They gagged me, bound me hand and foot, and then drove me to my flour mill, near which lay two old



grindstones. They set me down on the ground and then dug two small holes into which my feet were fitted so that they could lay my heels downwards, and my toes upwards, but they were prevented from turning sideways. One of the Chekists held my head, while the other sat down on my knees to stop me from yanking my feet out of the holes. The third Chekist rolled the grindstones almost down to my toes, which jutted upwards.

“‘You’ve either got to become a Chekist,’ ” he threatened, “‘or else I’ll grind your feet into the earth with these two stones.’ Well, I became a Chekist. Having experienced terror myself, I knew how to produce it in others.”

“That’s enough of that; continue with your original story.”

“Well, I heard that my brother had hidden some gold; and that is why we came to his place. There was nothing to liquidate, however . . . No wearing apparel and no bedclothes. The walls were marred with ugly holes and cracks. There was not even a rag to cover the children. Five of the children were sitting on the earthen stove to keep warm. My oldest brother stood by the threshold in sullen silence, while my mother and father, wasted to the point of greenness, waited close by, to see what we were going to do . . . The floor was littered with straw, but there were no bedclothes . . . That is where my mother slept . . . She was also the mother of this kurkul. . . I asked my brother where the gold was, but he just turned away from me without an answer. I questioned his wife, but she too said nothing. It was the same with the children. I then decided to take the whole lot of them to an empty warehouse, which had been made over into a number of prison cells. I herded them all into one of the cells and then shut the door. I intended to force a confession by starving them. Thus two days passed

without any food or drink. At first they cried, pleaded and prayed, finally relapsing into silence. I knew that my mother at her age could not last very long, so I called my nephew Sachko.

“ ‘Sachko,’ I said, ‘you’ll all die if you don’t tell me where the gold is.’ But Sachko swore he never even heard of any gold hoard. This was disappointing, for I figured the youngster would break down sooner than the old folks. I was on the point of releasing all of them, but I felt they should be taught a lesson they’d never forget. So I addressed my nephew Sachko again:

“ ‘If you choke your grandmother, we’ll let all of you go free. I want your father and mother and the rest of you to do the same to her, that is, squeeze her by the throat.’ He was very hungry, so he agreed. That night he choked his grandmother; but the others didn’t follow suit. So Sachko was called out again. ‘You’ll die if you don’t choke your grandmother by the throat,’ I said. Then I shut him in the cell again. They were now three days without food and water . . . It was nighttime. The door opened and in strolled the father. He walked up to the dead old woman, reluctantly squeezed her throat, then turned away and started to cross himself. My niece went through the same procedure . . . The children only choked but did not pray . . . They merely hid behind their parents, crying, and staring at the dead old woman.

“I called up a photographer. We re-entered the cell with two Chekists. I grouped the prisoners around the dead woman and had a picture taken of them. I handed the finished photo over to Sachko and ordered him to hang it up in the house . . . It is still hanging there.”

“What was the idea of the photograph and ordering it to be hung up?” asked Stalin in the same harsh manner.

“For reasons of collective terrorism.”

“Good! Be seated!”

Partunia sat down, wiping the perspiration from his forehead eyeing askance the group of soldiers to the right, who were now holding their guns pointed in his direction.

“Mykola Ivanovych, when did you record this statement?”

“A year and a half ago. All the facts were corroborated. He could have told much more than that.”

“That’s enough from him. I’d prefer to listen to someone else now.”

The dictator then ran his eyes over the lists for an interminably long period. Finally the tension was broken when he called out a new name.

“Motuzka!”

“Yes, sir, I’m here. May I come closer?”

The voice emanated from a tall, slender figure in the back row.

“Just remain where you are. What were you employed in up till now?”

“Executioner.”

“Where?”

“In Moscow, at Butyrka.”

“You’re a Ukrainian?”

“That’s right.”

“And how did you first win favor with Mykola Ivanovych?”

“Well, not exactly favor. I killed a former Tsarist police officer in the Ukrainian village of Virvichi, and also his wife

and two sons who were with him at the time. But his eight-year-old daughter escaped without harm.”

“Did you hear anything of her since then?”

“Yes. She’s been travelling among the people singing the Zurawka.”

“It’s about a crane, is it not?”

“Yes, it’s a kind of a song about a crane. I know it by heart . . . If you wish, I’ll sing it for you.”

Stalin regarded him woodenly and then turned to Ivanovych. But Ivanovych was too apprehensive about what Motuzka was about to say to notice the dictator’s penetrating look. Stalin then focused his attention on Motuzka, nodding for him to sing.

Motuzka sang in a deep, rich voice. The song spoke of the steppe, the high mountains, and the lonely crane fledglings, hungrily awaiting in their nest on a high tree the return of the parent cranes; how the father crane finally arrived with food, how he was killed by a hunter, how the fledglings were torn from their nest and taken away; and finally how the mother crane flew back home, moaning the loss of her little ones.

Ne’er a wing did this crane lift,  
In her flight from woe and pain;  
All she did was run and drift  
All along the vast terrain.

Long she sought her fledglings small,  
Looking for them everywhere;  
Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall,  
In the West and East sun’s glare.

Searching through the Ukraine,  
Ne'er a fledgling could she see;  
And like something unforeseen,  
The world for her just ceased to be.

Oh mother Crane, oh mother Crane,  
You sought your children fair;  
But you will always wait in vain,  
Who'll ever come to seek you there?

Stalin heard the song out, twirled his moustache, and then asked:

“And what was that police officer to you?”

“Kum, a godfather to my child, you know.”

“And how could you do that to your kum?”

“The Cheka—special police to hinder uprisings— called me to the district, and warned me that if I didn't have something to show them, some revolutionary action, they'd come at night and burn me and also my house. And so I thought, notwithstanding that I used to read the Bible and Shevchenko's Kobzar, and owned a bit of land, it would not cost me much to show revolutionary thinking. And so that is what I did.”

“Be seated, executioner!”

Motuzka sat down. Stalin turned his back on the gathering, put the lists down on the table, brushed them aside with his left hand, and then, as an after-thought, he ordered:

“Those who were not executioners will raise your hands.”

Not a single hand was raised. There was not a single cough or sigh. Spines remained erect. Stalin rose again, but not in his usual manner.

“Then you’re all executioners?” he asked, as if for corroboration. The gathering stared in immobile silence.

Stalin continued his address, speaking gloatingly and with malicious joy: “Yes, you’re all executioners and will continue to be. I am going to send you to the most rebellious spots in the Ukraine. Every one of you will be stationed at some point in a district. You’ll be employed in some public capacity without answering to the Cheka, the Army, or any other Communist organization. And as soon as your job is done, you’ll join forces with the Cheka, the Army, and the Collectives, thus creating a society in which we, the executioners, ignored now by the current world, will become the masters of the world and builders of our own fortunes which we will bequeath to our children and our children’s children. They will never know we were executioners. All they will be concerned with is the fortune left to them for a livelihood. They will know us only as builders and discoverers of fortunes for the benefit of all mankind. Children don’t ask their parents how they secure the means of their upkeep. Thus everything we do is for the benefit of ourselves and our children, and thus eventually of the whole world. There is one thing, however, that must not be forgotten, whether you’re drinking whiskey, lying in a gutter, sleeping with the wives of the men you’ve killed, or recuperating from wounds in a hospital . . . it is because of the future that I am now sending you into the Ukraine. I want you to keep an eye on all the popular leaders in the community, the ones the people love and look up to, even if the leaders command the respect of only ten persons. They are to be watched until they are finally done away with, whether they are co-operative managers, teachers, ordinary peasants, or even low-level party men. Mykola Ivanovych has had a plan in mind for a long

time which will soon be put into effect. There are many methods of fulfilling this plan: shooting by stealth and blaming someone else; poisoning the victim with the help of children and women, then burying him as if he had died from natural causes; and provocation, that is, provoking the victim into attacking you and then kill him off. This latter way is to be used only when all other methods have failed.

“If there were any suspects you’ve had to destroy among the peasants with any social or cultural talent, keep a dossier on their life, their rise upwards, their character, activities and leanings, and report to me when I call you. I don’t want any reports about the highly educated victims you’ve killed, or those of high birth . . . The Puhaches, Stenko Razins, and Chmelnitskys were not high born; nor were their descendants molded by a class of the intelligentsia. On the contrary, they were forged by the passions and other qualities of the common people who left their imprint on them.”

He went on, gaining momentum, his voice squeaking in his frenzied zeal.

“In another year, or perhaps sooner, the collectivization drive will be launched, and the community will have to be purged of such individuals. Thus in your difficult task you will have to resort to deceit, treachery, and murder. And if anyone blabs about your plans, he will forfeit his life . . . And that may include any of you executioners. So now you must all know which one of you is inclined to blurt out a secret. . . .

“. . . My instructions will be presented to you in systematized form by Mykola Ivanovych. You will be transported to your designated places by aeroplane. Perhaps we’ll meet again after your dossiers are completed. Until then, goodbye, my Zaporozhians!”

Mykola Ivanovych shivered. Stalin glanced at him sharply and extended his hand in farewell. Ivanovych, knowing what was in his mind, reciprocated. Stalin shook hands quietly and turned away. Ivanovych confusedly adjusted the revolver in his holster. Then he hurriedly stuffed the lists into his brief case, which he placed under his arm, and walked swiftly to a side door. He opened it and then ordered the first row of executioners to file out, which they did like monks after a prayer session. Stalin stood with raised hand in a military salute. Ivanovych waited until half the crowd had departed, and then, he too, made his exit. When the last row of executioners had filed out, they were followed by the group of military officers in white uniforms, and then came the turn of the other guards in the room. Stalin was the last one to go. He let his arm down, picked up the lists without folding them, and then departed in the direction from whence he had come.

This incident as related in this chapter actually occurred. The information about the meeting in the rotunda was given to the author by one of the executioners in attendance who later defaulted, was sentenced to imprisonment in Siberia, and later was executed.





## CHAPTER TWO

# The Land Becomes Desolate

There was a time when the Onykian Ravine was full of water, with sedges, cattails and reeds growing profusely on the edges along the banks. Water glistened as far as the dam that had been built by feudal labor. Hunters came to the Ravine to scare up some wild animal, and cowherds roamed its confines from April to early October, their clamorous voices reverberating over the clear or muddied waters. Some wild creature might suddenly start splashing with its dark paw or white snout, as it tried to catch some small fish.

The silvery purity of the water against the infinite azure sky, and the willows in wild abundance on the banks, were a heart-warming sight. Now and then one might notice a cow, that had broken away from her herd, splashing about in the water. Even the loud shouting of the angry herdsman, as he heaped abuse on the dumb animal, seemed fitting — even amusing.

“Would that you had burst into pieces when you were a calf! . . . Would that you were too blind to see the bull-rush . . . Would that you were thrice cursed.”

Once a brick outlet was constructed to take care of the overflow. But as the embankment around the outlet deteriorated, it caused a collapse of the brick structure, and of the dam itself. Now the volume of water was reduced to an unheard-of low level. The cowherds no longer had to swim blindly through deep water to chase their cows out of the pool. They took off their trousers, held them over their heads, and waded, belly deep, through the water.

There was no longer a shouting cowherd, an obstreperous cow, or the swish of flying wings as ducks lit on the water. The willows long since had been cut down, and the reeds, cattails, and the sedges also, just as if they never had been there. The basin of the formerly wide stretch of water had become a sheet of cracked and caked mud. Threading through this sheet, hardly noticeable, was a small isolated stream. But on the former banks could be seen four freshly-dug wells; and on the hillside, facing each well, there was a farmhouse.

It was not these houses that were the pretext for the destruction of the dam and the plant life in the ravine. In the year 1930, in the village of Kuchiwchi, the Russian soldiers appealed to the peasants for help to restore the ruined estates of the landlords at Kholodno. For work done with a pair of horses each man was to receive a half a pood (16.38 kilograms) of granulated sugar. The Matusiwsky Refinery had agreed on this price, they were told. The peasants, young and old, set out to rebuild the ruined estates, motivated chiefly by the thought that good, strong whiskey could be made from sugar.

In the Onykian Ravine they cut down the reeds, cattails and sedges into sheaves, and they hewed the willows for latticing the walls and fences.

They dredged all summer into late fall. And with their own horny hands and tireless feet, their own animals and wagons, they cleared the ravine of all plant life. Thus in 1931 the Onykian Ravine resembled a burnt-out desert with little growth and only a trickling stream.

These four houses, which at first seemed to have fitted so pleasantly into the Onykian landscape, now appeared to have lost that quality of harmonic union because of the ugly scene below the hill. It appeared as if some of the drab greyness of the ruin of the ravine had engrained itself into the homes, imbuing them with a similar ugliness. The invisible devastation of the whole Ukraine was at work, soon to be strangled by the Moscovite invader, or crippled by forced collectivization within months.

The house on the end belonged to Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus. It overlooked the Onykian Ravine, standing near the road along which the radhosp, or state farm, hauled its willows, reeds, cattails and sedges. There was a green potato patch between the house and the well, and around the house sunflowers grew haphazardly. Between them, lying among their own stems and leaves, were numerous pumpkins. Under the window of the house, near a path leading into the ravine, was an empty water trough. A little farther on stood an old skeleton of a tree with a zinc pail hanging on one of its dead branches. Standing by a shed was a one-horse wagon. On it were a horse collar, a shaft-bow and a whip. A couple of chickens pecked energetically in a litter of straw.

The whole place had a run-down look about it. The grass between the house and the shed was badly trodden, and the potato plants were trampled under. This general devastation was accentuated by the loud and incessant mooing of the cattle in the shed, the calves and heifers especially.

This unkempt condition of husbandry was typical of all farmsteads in the Ukraine at that time. Soviet domination was now passing into its tenth year, and the peasants had had plenty of time to acclimatize themselves to their hopeless outlook on life. It was only a few days ago that old Mother Brus had been taken out of the house and laid to rest in the cemetery.

The house was built along traditional Ukrainian lines, a vestibule or porch actually dividing the house into two parts, a larger part and a smaller part. The vestibule formed a sort of breezeway. Standing near the window in the smaller part stood a tall man, thirty years of age, dressed in a jacket and khaki trousers. His long, thin face was clean-shaven and pleasant-looking, but somber. This was Ivan, son of Ovsy Yukhymovich Brus. He had come in response to a telegram to attend his mother's funeral. Like all trains in the Soviet Union, his train had not arrived on scheduled time, and he was three days too late. He deeply regretted not seeing his mother either dead or alive; and he was astounded at the disorderly scene outside. As he heard the bellowing of the cows and the mooing of the calves, it all seemed to him like a funeral dirge for his departed mother. And now a duma, or song, persistently impressed itself into his mind, reminding him of a maniacal tendency in a certain person contemplating suicide:

“What were her joys, and of what consisted her zest for life?”

Perhaps even she would not have been able to answer that question, since the actual life of an individual falls so far short of his dreams. It must have been very painful for her to admit the fact of fecundity. She had given to the earth her children with as easy a conscience as scattering a fist

full of peas on the ground. Giving birth completed her obligation.

She never tried, Ivan reflected, to teach her children how to pray, or how to behave among people, for she never got beyond the "Our Father who art in Heaven" stage in her own prayers. She had borne six children, one right after the other, but she never pondered much over the process of "having children." As for the behaviour of her children among people, she justified the use of brute force in the sense that if some neighbor's child assaulted her offspring, then the latter was justified in reciprocating in kind, Ivan remembered.

"If somebody attacks you, pick up a brick and fight back."

"And if I hit him on the head and he starts to wriggle like a strangled chicken?"

"Why, then, he'll die like a chicken, the only difference being that he'll have a funeral."

She was the first to feel the drawback of her lack of education, for none of her offspring ever offered to help her. All six of them would play and fight outside all day, and then come home, dirty and unkempt, and then go out again. She merely cried as she tidied up her brood, sewing their torn clothes, and doing the cattle chores all alone. She would gather hay and other fodder on the hillsides of the lords' estates, then come home to deposit her burden of feed into the mangers for her cattle.

She had no time to speak to her children, let alone time to teach them anything. There were chickens, ducks and geese that needed attention as much as the children. Her immediate aim seemed to be to teach the young fowl to stay close to the house, and the children to know who their parents were, so that they, like the chicks, should know their way back home.

She was ruthless about their behavior towards other children; but she expected them to listen to her by reason of her kind words. She wanted her thoughts to be understood by those who considered her every word as superfluous as steam to water. But when they were being spanked, or fed, or being put to bed, they did not consider any accompanying remarks by their mother at all necessary. They were better able to distinguish their mother's deeds from her words than they were to distinguish other people's gardens from the clumps of weeds that grew near their own home.

And because of her dissatisfaction with the children, she was inclined to take it out on her husband, the father of her flock. She spoke of their immoral behavior, blaming him for spoiling them and for his lack of control. It was like adding fuel to a blazing fire when she charged that he, as a father, thought nothing of tomorrow, that he did not want to build a house, that he loaned money out to people who never intended to repay it . . . that he wallowed in drink, forgetting his family and God . . . that he spent his time carousing with his cronies . . . that he attended church only twice a year: Easter and Christmas. On and on she would bluster. Her tirade took place usually about dinner or supper time. Then the father, as if he were looking at his children for the first time, and ignoring the vituperations of his spouse, would observe his children and staring ahead with his bright, grey eyes, would suppress a secret smile behind his shaggy moustache.

"I travel from morning till night, visiting village after village, offering my services to cure their ailing animals," he would excuse himself. "How am I able to know what kind of 'Turks' you're bringing up here? If they behave like animals, then this human trash here must be beastly. In this case I can't be of any help . . . If they won't listen to you,

then you should pick up the first stick that comes handy and strike them anywhere at all, whether it's the ears, the head, the stomach, or the spine . . . And if any one of them tries to lay a hand on you, just tell me, and with God's help and the aid of a stout cane, I'll give his muscles a working over . . . Perhaps, then, hell will be increased with another devil . . . Or if the angels look with favor on my children, then heaven will have an additional inhabitant."

The mother would stop talking, Ivan remembered, silently wiping the large tears that ran down her face. Still weeping, she would quietly start to wash the dishes. Then she would go out into the yard and kneel down among the sunflowers, uttering the prayer: "Our Father who art in Heaven." Then she would improvise a prayer of her own. "I do not ask very much of you, oh Lord," she would say, "but there is something You can do for me without my implorations . . . If any evil hand is ever laid upon my children, let not it have the strength to break any bones either in their feet or their hands . . . Let them not become cripples, but preserve their strength even when the poor people of this land, used as draft animals to plow the fields, are being persecuted by the enemies of mankind."

Gently then she would attend to all their little wants, avoiding any show of force that would make them help do any chores. As she grew older, she even lost count of the days that went by with the passing of the sun, so oppressed was she by trouble and loneliness. The neighbors, noticing this and sympathizing, would visit her before the holidays, reminding her to cease work, for the next day was Sunday, or some holiday.

Thus the children grew up, unaccustomed to work or to strict discipline. And when they reached manhood the Moscovite terror in the Ukraine drove them into places, the names



of which the old mother was not even able to pronounce. Modest was the only child who remained at home. He accepted the domination of Moscow over the Ukraine as a natural and even necessary course of events, interpreting the campaign of terror as a visitation of wiser people merely because they were wiser than himself. Ivan had heard Modest treated his mother as if she were an animal. Now that she was gone, Ivan Brus felt greatly depressed. He should have returned earlier to help her. Remorse tightened his throat and brought tears into his eyes.

“What did she live for? And what was her reward, either by word, deed, behavior or some small token gift? She had received neither thanks, nor sympathy . . . She was like a lonely tree, or a small, dry twig, which the blackbird carries off to its rough nest. What a terrible and hopeless life! What a void must there be in the place where one held such a lofty sentiment as: ‘God, Truth and Justice!’ And what is the shortest road from this void to the ideal of Truth? Is it from the point where my mother was unable to lead her children? Or where the hideous Moscovite dictatorship began to enslave the people, to terrorize them, and to establish themselves as a mystical power in order to conquer the world and hold it in bondage to the Moscow heirarchy?”

It was in the year 1923 at harvest time that Ivan came home. The Moscovite red army divisions had invaded the Cherkas District, persecuting, arresting and torturing anyone suspected of co-operating with the uncaptured insurrectionists.

Ivan Brus was in his first year at the university in Kiev at the time. Thus one of these red divisions of Tuliak entered the village of Kuchiwchi, looking for suspects participating or involved in the insurrection. A list was supplied by the Vil-

lage Soviet committee. Brus and the teacher, Sima Pokalchuk, were named. She was taken away from the school and placed under arrest. The people were purposely called to witness the trial of this female "bandit." ("Bandit" was the word given by the Communists to indicate an individual opposed to their regime.) But since they were all out at work in the fields, it was only the head of the *poor peasant organization* who appeared. The Moscovites accepted him, advising him to stay for the conviction of the girl. The head of the poor peasants then asked the political instructor: "What is the punishment that you pass on an arrested person?"

"We don't know as yet," the instructor said briskly. "That will depend upon our Red Army soldiers. Tonight we leave this place; but somewhere outside we'll halt to carry out the trials."

But the disturbed head of the poor peasants asked a final question: "Is it possible to dispense justice without asking the girl a single question about her case?"

The political instructor, giving him an ironical look, replied: "If we were just against the bandits, they would not be bandits . . . We're not forcing you. You don't have to attend the trial if you don't want to. Now get out of here!"

With this remark the political instructor departed from the village government building (Rada).

This discussion took place before evening. The sun had already set beyond Kostiachenko's willows, and the shadows were falling on the common pasture in front of the village Soviet rada. There was still a reflection of light from the frontal over the door, and another bit of light shone off the rocking-shaft of the fire-engine. The head of the poor peasants came out of the village Soviet rada and waited on the porch to see what would happen. Four Red Army soldiers, sitting on benches, were guarding the incarcerated girl. Meanwhile

the sun had sunk still farther down behind the horizon. One of the four soldiers came over to the peasant on the porch, ordering him:

“Hey there, you! Beat it!”

The peasant head didn't comprehend. The soldier then raised his gun in a threatening gesture, yelling:

“Beat it, I tell you!”

The peasant now understood. He left the porch, going in the opposite direction. Since the political instructor had gone away, there was no sense in asking for justice. Hidden in the shadows of the home he looked like the charred column of a burned-down house.

Suddenly, coming from behind the willows, could be heard marching music, the barking of dogs, and the tramp of Moscovite feet. The peasant head slid away between the houses into the dark streets. The music had ceased and one hundred and fifty soldiers could be seen on the common pasture where they had halted.

Two soldiers approached the porch of the village Soviet rada, holding lanterns. A new order was given to the armed division:

“At ease! Everybody in a circle!”

Suddenly crowds of villagers began to appear on the scene, congregating near the porch, the fence or other places away from the soldiers. Soon another command rang out:

“The first half circle . . . about face!”

They all turned their faces towards the porch. The political instructor was already standing there behind a lighted lantern. And at that moment two red soldiers were leading a girl from the vestibule onto the porch. The soldiers, carrying the lanterns, were now holding them up before their faces. The head of the girl was unadorned with flowers or ribbons. A braid of hair hung loosely from the nape of her

neck down on her spine; and a fine piece of embroidery showed on the sleeve of her shirt as it protruded from under her corset. Her features were plain, almost childish, and she looked out innocently at the crowd as if she divined a propitious fate for herself there. And like a child she was ready to reciprocate with a smile of her own. Perhaps it was for people of her kind that Lesia Ukrainka wrote:

“Right up a rocky, winding hill,  
A stony burden I will bear;  
And while I’m taking it uphill,  
A merry song I’ll sing up there.”

But as a contrast to our young patriot and our great poetess, the very atmosphere seemed to tremble with the maniacal and wild roar of satisfaction manifested in the Moscovite song:

“In the village lived young Wanka,  
Wanka fell for little Tanka . . .  
Tproo, noo, ha-ho!  
Tproo, noo, ha-ho!”

The song was followed by roars, whistles, stamping of feet, and a clapping of hands. It all sounded as if a pack of wolves and wolfhounds had united with a herd of calves to rend the skies with a cacophony of weird sounds that could not have sounded worse in actual combat than it did on that summer night before the village Soviet rada in the Ukraine.

The two Red Army soldiers lowered their lanterns, while the other two led the frightened young lady to the ring of Red Army soldiers, which opened up to allow the entry of the soldiers and the girl. Then the ring was closed again. All

eyes were now glued on the center of the circle. The pent-up emotions of the young Ukrainian teacher burst out with unspeakable despair. But her shrieks were drowned out by a vast majority of guttural and hoarse-throated Moscovite voices, as one brutal soldier after another despoiled her.

“From the outskirts, with guns and dirks,  
Beyond the Danube, we fight the Turks.”

Thus the singing continued on under the starry sky with roaring ferocity, sparked with wild shrieks and loud whistles. Thus little notice was being paid to what was happening in the center of the ring. Some armed Moscovites, purposely appointed to expedite the terror, and to see to it that it was not disturbed, dispersed the villagers, chasing them away from the terrible crime now going on amidst the ear-splitting revelry of the soldiers. The village itself remained quieter than an omen of future catastrophe. It was only the dogs in the neighboring farmyards that made any noise by their mad barking and yelping. But soon the noises of the dogs ceased. The circle was opened up again. Two Red Army soldiers carried out the unconscious girl and threw her body over the fence near the fire engine. The girl fell on the ground without uttering a sound. Then there was another command: “Fall in line! . . . Attention! . . .” The attacks had kept up until the soldiers were handling only a corpse.

The sky was clear and lit up with stars. All was quiet with the exception of the howling dogs. A dead quiet prevailed in the village Soviet rada and the fire hall. At the spot where the Moscovite soldiers had formed a ring there lay a rumpled corset, but its owner could not be seen behind the fence. The willows and the tall sycamores were enveloped by a dark fog at the roots. Here, it seemed, was a fit place, if one

were looking, to find the dead body of the Ukrainian girl. There was no creaking of doors that night. The people, remained indoors and as the saying goes, were conspicuous by their absence.

On the next day the lone Ukrainian girl was given a public burial by the village Soviet Committee without benefit of clergy. Even her relatives were not notified, although they lived in a nearby village called Kaliniwchi.

Hereafter, this village and all the neighboring villages had enough to talk about for a whole month. The brothers and sisters of Ivan Brus, learning that the Red Army soldiers were asking about Ivan at the village Soviet rada, knew that they too were in danger. They left their own homes and hid out in the neighboring villages until the danger should pass. They delayed so long that they too missed their mother's funeral.

Surely nothing good or pure or godly could come out of this "Union of the Ukraine with Moscovite Russia." Only evil could result from this unholy alliance. Already Modest wore a worried frown, fearing that his educated brother was on the verge of being denounced as a bandit.

Only their mother was safe in her narrow, earthy grave. She was the only free one, for the Moscovites could not touch her soul which was with God.

Ivan rejoiced for the first time since his return home. For the first time he saw his mother's death as a blessed release. Her Ukrainian children must be driven over many a bloody path before they themselves would know eternity.

Was it possible that Modest could have any trouble over his father, or because his educated brother was on the verge of being denounced as a bandit? . . . Or that the door would be opened in his own native land for an exit into the other world, or an entry into a prison on this earth? And as for the

brothers and sisters, little can be said; for what mother, living or dead, could gather them unto herself, even momentarily, after the Red Moscovites had dispersed them over the face of the earth? One cannot measure the distance between God and a mother's despair. As regards Moscovite purpose that drives Ukrainian children over the bloody paths of reality, it is impossible even to visualize a distance that ends with God and with such domestic reality as a lonely, tethered cow grieving and moaning in a shed for her sedate and solicitous "hospodinia." (a farm wife who cares for animals)

## CHAPTER THREE

### Ivan Brus Visits His Father

Suddenly the sound of human footsteps were heard outside. They had broken in on Ivan Brus' reverie, transforming his very being, and re-directing his thoughts, so that he was like a bird contemplating a broken wing. Who was coming? What did he want? What would he do? In his mind he was already forming a careful explanation such as he had often managed when he had lived at Kiev. He was willing to face reality. But the knowledge that injustice, torture and betrayal might be imminent was more than his grief-laden soul could bear. He dare not put into words what he feared. He fought to keep the dire horror out of his thoughts. He was going mad. Seeking relief, he found some semblance of calm in his home surroundings.

He looked around for self-assurance. He now began to notice the arrangement of the house. On the left of the door there was a stove, with sleeping quarters along the whole length of it as far as the corner, with space enough between it and the wall to allow a person to squeeze through sideways. The bed was made. To the right of the door stood a small bench against the wall, its end flush against a pine cup-



board which, like an old cellar door, looked as if it was badly in need of a new coat of paint. There was a padlock on the cupboard door, under which a rubber stamp could be seen, with two strings hanging from it. Opposite the door was a small table, covered with a white cloth. Underneath the table lay a valise, already packed, and secured with a rope as if it were waiting there to be picked up by the departing husbandman. Before the forepart of the stove stood a small stool on three legs. He noticed that the earthen floor was a bit uneven, but it was swept clean. The broom stood in its proper place by the bed, against the wall. Above the table hung a small icon of the Saviour, dark with age. Only His thin cheeks shone brightly, but His eyes were almost indistinguishable. How often his mother had looked up into that sad face! At the foot of the icon, set on two crossbones, loomed the yellowish head of Adam. Everything was quiet and immobile, as if restrained by the cords hanging down from the padlock on the cupboard.

The door opened with a creak to admit the thin, grey-eyed father of Ivan Brus. His beard reached almost to his eyes, then branched out on both sides with long, shaggy whiskers.

“I bid you good day, since I haven’t seen you before now,” the old man said.

Without turning around from the window Ivan Brus replied: “No, we haven’t seen each other, Father.”

This restraint evidently cut the old man to the quick. He sat down on the small bench by the shelf, trembling, and asked, “Do you want to leave today?”

“Yes, today.”

Ivan kept looking through the window, still immersed in grief. But he was aware that his father was pulling at his whiskers as he had always done when greatly perturbed.

“Take me to Kiev with you, my son,” the old father begged. “I’ll soon die here. They have all kinds of hospitals for cattle there . . . And you know I’m pretty good at treating animals. I won’t be a burden to you.”

Ivan suddenly turned around and faced his father. This was the first time in three days that he had taken close notice of him. And as he sat there the son noticed a big change in his father, whom he had always considered a man of quick decision and inexhaustible energy. When he arrived home he was told by his brother Modest that their father had become a confirmed drunkard, that people in the villages where he had been treating their cattle were continually bringing him home, dead to the world, and setting him down on the prispa, or bench, in front of the house. He would lie there for a while, and then stagger into the house to sleep off the rest of his intoxicated haze. But what Ivan Brus now saw before him was not a man with maudlin tears in his eyes, not a slobbering sot, but something quite different. He studied the features of his sire with greater care and deeper understanding.

His father wore an old, dark jacket and a pair of trousers that were tucked in tarred boots . . . tarred perhaps before the funeral. And as he sat on the bench holding his cap with the two flaps in his left hand, upside down, he appeared to be suffering from some emotional upset rather than intoxication. Ivan Brus began to doubt his brother’s veracity. Ivan took hold of the three-legged stool, set it down near the window, faced his father, his voice full of sympathy:

“What’s wrong, Father?” he asked.

“Take me along to Kiev,” the father begged. “They have schools down there that teach everything about cattle. I’ll adapt myself and not be a hindrance to you. But here I’m lost. . . . Do you hear? That’s our cow mooing all day long

in the shed; she wants water. But if I gave her something to drink and let her out, Modest would give me no peace the rest of the day. He says I want to poison his cattle. What do you think of that? Just as if he ever earned the right to the cattle! Why, the people from Makiev gave me a calf because I had loaned them money once. They couldn't pay me in cash so they paid me with a calf. What is money worth now, anyway? That's why I added the calf to the farm. And now look what he's doing: shutting the cattle in so that I can boil over with rage all day long over such mis-management!"

"I don't understand, Father. I try to, but my thoughts don't click." Ivan felt a shudder of misgiving about Modest.

His father went on, "You're new around here. He's tied up with that Communist provocator, Mazdigin, Modest is. Even when your mother was alive he held me and your mother at naught. Seems like beastly souls have changed human nature—that devils have entered human bodies. Your mother and I were somehow able to fight back when we were together; we said we would die together. Would God it had been so! For if it had not been for this Communism, do you think that Modest of his own initiative could have figured out such tricks to play on his father? Why does he seek to have me discredited—even with you?"

"Father, do you drink whiskey at all?"

He asked the question harshly but with no particular condemnation. The old man immediately straightened up on the bench, letting his cap fall to the floor. Glancing at the icon of the Savior, as if he were calling on the Lord to be his witness, he looked straight at his son, a bitter smile on his face, his moustache quivering.

"I do," he answered, "and so long as people do not avoid me, I shall not refuse a drink when it is offered to me."

“And do they ever bring you home in an unconscious condition?” Ivan inquired.

This brought the old man to his feet. With a voice full of contempt, he roared: “Oh, soul of a beastly soul! So that’s the way you’ve christened me! Have you ever seen me, when you were at home, in a condition when I was not able to walk into the house on my own feet? You must remember that I never came home yet in anyone’s wagon. I always made it with my own horse, and on horseback at that. I used to travel the whole district, treating the cattle; and if my head had not been clear, even my own horse would not have carried me. And do you think that I now, with one foot in the grave, can lose my head? Sure, I take a drink but have I ever brought shame upon myself or anyone else?”

Ivan picked up his father’s cap, laid it down on the bench, and spoke to his father in a repressed voice:

“Sit down, Father. I’ll never insult you with an accusation like that again. I know all about your intoxication.”

“You do?” The bitter question echoed throughout the room.

“And do you know what the stamp on the cupboard containing my medicine is for? Do you see this? How can you, then, say you know all about my intoxication?”

Ivan spoke gently. “I mean I don’t believe any of those rumors about you.”

“My son, my son, whether you believe them or not, those rumors have been spread on purpose so as to make it easy for them to take my medicines away from me.” The old man struck the cupboard lightly with the palm of his hand.

“This Communism,” he said bitterly, “this so-called ‘People’s Government,’ has gone into partnership with the devil, unleashing the very dregs of society onto our land—people worse than dogs, who have been sent to terrorize us . . .

to slowly persecute us without sending us forthwith to the fires of hell. How else, by the grace of God, can you describe those evil deeds? Take the case of our village teacher, Mazdigan. What did I ever do to him? Even before the poor peasant organization had achieved power he had taken steps to have my medicines taken away from me on the grounds that I had no license to treat cattle, because I was a self-made man. I hurried on to Tashlyk to see Sergy Serhievich . . . you know him . . . he's the assistant physician, and a good one, too. So I said to him: 'Please take my supply of veterinary medicines.'

“ ‘But who will help the people now? And what will you live on?’ he asked me, looking at me with compassion.

“And so I told him the whole story. He visited me the next day, selecting those medicines that he thought he would need. He's as skillful in treating people as I am in curing animals . . . but he's more literate, and has more connections with educated people. And what does he do then? He goes to Cherkassy to tell the veterinary there, Figurovsky, all about my case. Then he visits Horodische and talks to Browenke . . . and then finally his last trip is to the Jewish veterinary at Shpola, whom he also lined up. All three of them met at the home of Sergy Serhievich. There were other committee heads there, too. Well, on the strength of evidence gathered in the neighboring villages, they made out some documents for me which gave me the right to treat cattle anywhere at all, and to cure contagious diseases and ailments of the organisms. Sheletian and I wrote to you about this when you were in Kiev. His daughter, Hapusia, is quite literate. We got her to write that letter, but it seems you never received it?”

“No,” Ivan said in a dull voice. “I never received it.”

“Well, that shows how the authorities look after us . . . Good Lord! What an Easter it turned out to be! The people acted like they were crazy. When I visited Lowhin Kahamlyk at Tashlyk, their mare was all bloated. Would you believe it? The people had congregated there as if it were a wedding or a funeral. Most everyone had a bottle under his arm, either of moonshine, or some kind of brew. For three days they drank and danced and made the welkin ring . . . And Lowhin Kahamlyk made a frame for my documents and painted it a gold color. Some of the drunks took the framed document and hung it on the wall, yelling meanwhile: ‘Look where our Hetman is now! Glory be to the Lord! Though our truth were a rocky mountain, and it were hurled into the sea, it would rise from the bottom to the top again just like a fish!’ Such kindness from everyone!

“That’s how it all was. I barely got back home again. They brought my framed document to me. The people’s shoulders were wrapped with towels. The next day I hung this document on the wall above the cupboard containing my medicines. It made me feel at ease. The people now called me from all parts of the district. Well, one evening I returned home, unhitched the horse and put him in the stall, picked up my medicine kit and entered the house. And what do you know? There was no document on the wall! I put down the kit and looked for Modest. There he was, sitting by the table, accompanied by Mazdigin, grinning, and gazing alternately at me and my son. I asked Modest: ‘What did you do with my license?’

“‘What license?’ he replied. ‘Do you call that a license? That was just a bourgeoisie way of letting you go out into the villages and demoralize the peasants.’

“He grinned just like Mazdigin did. I lost the strength to stand so I sat down and looked at those two human crea-

tures in silence, feeling a great weight pressing down as if two poods of lead had fallen upon me. And believe it or not, for the first time in my life I failed to explode with anger. I now saw clearly that a landslide was beginning to fall down upon the people, and that I was first to feel the terrible impact of the falling earth. I felt like one in a haze, not knowing what to do, whether to get up and go outside as an escape from my troubles . . . But Mazdigin's voice wakened me out of my befuddled state in the same manner as an executioner shocks a man condemned to death, by showing him the rope by which he is to be hanged.

“‘Well, old man, it's time for you to step down from your ‘Hetmanship’ and be yourself,’ he said. ‘I've come here to seal and dispossess you of the medicines which you have been profiting by. They are the property of the people, and will be taken over by the assistant physician, Onopreovich. We'll deliver them to the district; and if you put any obstacles in our way, we'll deal with you forthwith. So please hand us the key to the cupboard. Henceforth, the cattle will be treated by educated and trained people, and not by those who cannot write.’

“‘The key was on my person, so I said: ‘No one hands over one's property willingly. If you want the key, Comrade Mazdigin, come and get it yourself out of my pocket, for one of your ilk should not receive it from my hand.’

“‘He stopped smiling, got up from the table and started towards me. I got up too. Something in my face warned him to halt. Then he addressed Modest: ‘Modest Brus, it's not proper for me to take the key that way. You take the key which is the people's property, and by the same token, your property.’

“‘Is your conscience bothering you? All right, Modest, come and . . .’

“Modest approached me quickly, adding: ‘You don’t scare me.’

“As soon as he thrust his hand in my pocket, I lost control of myself, forgetting that this was God’s punishment against which there was no recourse. I smacked him hard over the knees with my right hand. He fell on his back. I pulled the key out of my pocket, hurled it into his face, and then I left, slamming the door behind me.

“I don’t know who picked the key up, but neither Modest nor Mazdigin are around here now. You can see the rubber stamp hanging from the padlock.”

“What a terrible situation!” Ivan Ovsievich cried.

“Yes, terrible, my son,” his father agreed sadly. “None of the children, except Modest, were here for the funeral,” he continued.

“Why, I thought that they were all around here, and that they attended the funeral.”

“No, not all of them. The oldest was in Krywy Rog, Kalenyk at Donbas, while Priska was away as far as Borispol. Nataalka at Buda was too sick to come for the last time to see her mother.”

Ivan stood up and started to walk from the table to the bed. His consternation spoke eloquently that it was painful for him to see everything that his father saw, and far more. He pulled out a bundle of papers from the pocket of his tunic, and, standing before his father, spoke feelingly:

“When a person lives in danger he does not realize how things change in this world. Two and a half years is nothing, as time goes, but it is long when suffering is great. My past impressions are still much alive, but those of today and tomorrow conflict with them. Now you’ve spoken to me about my brothers and my sisters, but what you said to me was



really alien. But through all this I can see you, my father, clearly; and I can see you in the same circumstances as I myself was in. You begged me to take you away to Kiev as an escape from this *dangerous reality*. Well, I left Kiev to get away from *dangerous reality*. Even before the death of Mother I had often planned to sneak across the border away from this deceitful government. And although it isn't easy for me to say this now, I saw in your telegram an excuse to get away, to get away without being suspected. It was my intention after the funeral to escape across the boundary. And now my Kiev escape has been concealed behind your and my misfortune. I shall not run away now. You see these papers here? This is my most recent writing. It deals with the purge of the Ukraine, but I could find no publisher here. You, Father, are a genuine Ukrainian, and I shall not be a traitor to you. I cannot leave you to the mercy of this terror, which the Russian "katsaps"—those miserable Russians with their goatees—brought down upon us from the north. Without you, Father, I see no point in escape. Both of us now have a common goal, such as I planned for myself.

"To secure a common escape for both of us, that will take time. First, I must return to Kiev and prepare the ground for it. You must remain here for two or three weeks . . . We must do something with this manuscript; I can't take it back with me. I have a feeling something evil will happen if I do. We'll have to hide it somewhere, yes, even bury it. If the Cheka ever caught me with it, they'd shoot me forthwith in some prison cellar. They'd file the manuscript, and it would never be read by the public. It explains who has let this horror loose upon us, and who has stirred up your son against you."

The old man stood up, looked his son in the eyes, and then said these two words: "Please wait!"

He hurriedly left the room and went into the vestibule. Ivan heard the clanging sound of metal as it struck some hard object. The old man sighed heavily, tramped back into the room, carrying a tin tea container in his hand. He brought also a small tool for digging up the earth, a large awl. Ivan had often seen this tool when he was a boy. His father used to fix his saddle or harness, or do odd jobs with it. The old man set the container on the table, removing it away from the corner. There, before the icon of the Savior, he got down on his knees and began digging a hole. Ivan stood over him, contemplatively. Soon Ovsy Brus drew up a bit and said:

“Now hand me your manuscript.”

Ivan Brus handed over the manuscript. His father, still on his knees, holding the manuscript in one hand, turned around to take hold of the container, and then, without dropping the papers, opened up the can and thrust his son's literary work into it. He then clamped the lid down over it, and let the can fall into the hole, covering it up with earth.

The expression on his face changed suddenly, taking on a stony pallor, as with fear. Ivan caught his father in the act of peering towards the door. The door was ajar. Standing on the threshold was his brother Modest, quietly noting what was going on in the house. The worried conspirators, having heard neither the sound of walking feet, nor the creak of the door, allowed the unwanted witness entry. Perhaps Modest hadn't opened the door stealthily? Perhaps it was already open? This was a difficult and unpleasant spot to be in . . . but it couldn't be helped.

The burden of silence, born of the conviction that all would now be lost, now hung heavily on these two people, even to the point of stupefaction. But even this strangling spectre of silence was dissipated as Modest asked, “Do you intend to drive Ivan to the station yourself, Father?”

“Why do you ask?”

“I saw the harness on the wagon, that’s why.”

“And why don’t you ask yourself whether the cattle need to be watered? Don’t you hear the calf bellowing? Has it come to this that someone else’s business is more urgent than your own?”

“Well, I declare! It’s safer to ride over your neighbor’s plowed field than to speak to you.”

Modest had his say and then walked away, leaving the house. It was as if he had gone out to feed or water the calf, for it now mooed only intermittently. The father sat squatting, his knees protruding outward, in silence.

When Ivan was left alone with his father, he quietly proceeded over to the corner, bent down low, picking up the large awl, which lay near the hiding place. He dug the container out of the ground, recovered his manuscript, putting it back into the pocket of his tunic. He buried the empty container and handed the large awl to his father, who rose to a standing posture. The father made no mention of his son’s act. He said simply, “I’m going to get the horse ready for the road.”

He departed only to return shortly with a look of pain on his face.

“It seems as if you’ll have to spend another night under this roof, for Wihra has broken her tether and fled from her stall. She’s somewhere out in the open field. It’ll take some time to find her now.”

Ivan remained silent. He had a premonition that something like this would happen. The father went out into the eroded yard, but lifted his eyes to a green field far, far away. Out there, somewhere, hope must lie.

## A Human Being Makes Way for a Dog

Comrade Mazdigin was the head of the Kuchiwsky Partkom, or party committee, and the principal of a seven-grade school. It was enclosed by a fence made of perpendicular palings. The school grounds included a fruit orchard which a former "Zemstwo" had planted and which dated from the time of the tsars. Mazdigin had been in this district for a year and a half.

When he first appeared there he was accompanied by a seventeen-year-old Jewish girl who helped to organize some Komsomols, or Communist leagues, in the neighboring villages. Her name was Mania Siamski. She was Mazdigin's mistress, so it was rumored. He did not enjoy this illicit relationship for long. Her brother, a top-ranking official of the Cheka, took her with him to Kiev. Knowing his sexual inclination, the Komnezam, a committee of the poor peasants, provided him with a Ukrainian girl of the same age to act as his housekeeper. To avoid bringing shame on the young lady, this Comrade Principal soon palmed her off upon another Komsomol, Peredery, who married her and got a double-row accordion for it. This instrument had to be taken away from

the peasant, Verbokrut, for the occasion. Having trumped up a charge against Verbokrut for agitating against the Soviet Government, they jailed him. After four days in jail, having no desire to remain there any longer, by requisition of the Partkom, he relinquished the accordion to Mazdigin for the supposed use of it to train the children's voices. Verbokrut was set at liberty, and his accordion became the means of saving the good name of a young girl. She became Peredery's wife.

But soon afterward the Comrade Principal, feeling the urge of companionship, noticed a fourteen-year-old girl in the sixth grade class, the daughter of the poor peasant, Shelestian. He got her to quit school and become his housekeeper. It was not known whether her father made any protest at all, but it did not escape the notice of the villagers that two horses were transferred from the school stable to his own smaller stable, and that Shelestian now began to use them.

These horses were requisitioned from the village rich man, Medianyky, together with a barouche. The barouche remained in the schoolyard. Whenever the Principal, Comrade Mazdigin, had to attend some party meeting in another village, Shelestian would lead the horses into the schoolyard, hitch them to the barouche, and then drive on to the indicated designation.

Shelestian had no love for the Soviet Government, nor did he ever try to kowtow to anyone, although he was now an employee of the Party Committee.

Today, evidently, Comrade Mazdigin did not have any worries over public affairs, for he remained at home, thoughtfully pacing the floor in the kitchen, from the vestibule door to the wall. This door was unhooked. Under a window that was shaded by a wide blind made from a sheet stood Hapusia,

washing clothes before a small kitchen table. Her back was turned to the wall towards which Mazdigin was walking. There was a cake of soap in a small plate that lay on the table; and near the plate stood a lighted coal-oil lamp. This lamp flickered intermittingly as Hapusia squeezed the water out of the clothes in the tub, splashing the whole stool on which the tub was resting, with suds. As Mazdigin promenaded, he looked at the lamp and then at the girl. The flickering of the lamp evidently disconcerted him, for he asked: "You don't need any more water?"

"No, I'll wring the clothes out, then pour the water out, re-soap them, and let them lay in the tub until tomorrow," the girl explained.

Then she straightened up, looking at Mazdigin. She wore a shirt, the embroidered sleeves of which were rolled up to her elbows. Mazdigin looked at her hands, then turned away, ostensibly because of the sudden light which bothered his eyes. Hapusia noticed his gesture, a sort of half-smile in her pleasant grey eyes and on her wide mouth, as she tossed a short plait of hair, braided with a red ribbon, onto her back. He looked at her, this time at her whole stature, and, standing opposite her, asked, "How long, Hapusia, do you intend to be like this?"

"Like what?"

"Oh, don't be so foolish. I've been making hints to you now for a long time, yet you act as if you didn't understand, or care to listen to me."

Hapusia ceased smiling. She didn't scoff, nor was there any trembling of her upper lip. If she felt helpless, she tried not to show it. She knew she was under the domination of this man from whom she had been trying very hard to get away. He had persevered for a long time now, making his demands.

"I know you." She tried to speak lightly. "All the boys are just like that, and so are you. The common boys always listen to those girls with whom they spend the night; but you never listen."

"And where did you find out how the boys spend the night, or how I behaved with those girls with whom I spend the night?"

"You're asking me, God only know what," she sighed. "All the people, the fathers and mothers, up till they got married, always attended the doswitky—the village evening gathering of the girls, you know, spending the night with their dancing partners. Well, that's what we do, and we know all that without being taught."

"Now you tell me how you know about the way I act with those girls that I spend the night with. For you have never spent the night with me. And this is getting on my nerves. I'm a bachelor, even if I am the kind mentioned in the song:

'The cucumbers now are yellow,  
Like an ox is this old fellow.'

And you're a girl who doesn't want to listen, although I know very well that you don't have any sleeping partner in the village. Now, tell me, who told you about my night affair?"

"Nobody told me."

"If you don't know, then don't blabber any ugly news about me. Has Peredery been passing around any hints among the people?"

Frightened, Hapusia bent over her shirts, nervously wringing them again, then setting them down on the table on some towels. She was silent. But Mazdigin took a few steps towards her, grabbed her bruskiy by the nose with his right hand, and, holding the nape of her neck and the braid of hair too, with his left hand, he lifted up her head. She straightened

up to her full height, blushing, and looking over his hands into his eyes. He let go of her nose, seized her bare arm around the elbow, and began petting her with his right hand, saying, "Hapusia, my dear; Hapusia, my darling! Tell me what you heard about me. It will be very bad for me if they start broadcasting those ugly things about me. For I'm a teacher and the head of the Party Committee. And they might expel me from the school. Tell me, my girl . . ."

He was insistent with a purpose, for he did fear scandal. He was tall, with a heavy and flabby face that showed evidence of a life of voluptuous leisure. His eyes were large and grey, but they always seemed to be partially closed, with two narrow slits between the eyelids. These opened up to their full width only when something unusual happened.

Invariably he wore boots, blue trousers, and a top shirt. The shirt was worn Russian style over the trousers, and secured with a Caucasian Cherkass belt around the stomach. His hair was yellow, cut long and combed back, but it never seemed to stay in place, continually falling flat on either side, leaving a wide part. He always looked untidy about the head. For some reason or other there was a perpetual stain on the back of his shirt at the shoulders. There was the smell of perspiration about him which reminded one of the odor coming from the dead pig bristles the Jews used to sell.

And as he was speaking and patting Hapusia's hand, leaning forward, the mop of hair falling down over his eyelids, those narrow slits over his lustful eyes opened wide. Her face turned pale, then burned red; but her gaze remained glued to his face, as if she were hypnotized. Frightened, she wrenched herself free from his grasp, and moved over to the wall.

"Leave me alone," she commanded, "and I'll answer you better."



He relinquished his hold, but remained in his former stance, insisting, "Well, tell me . . . tell me . . . it's very important . . . Tell me, Hapusia."

He sighed, thrust back some hair hanging over his left eyelids, then leaned his right thigh against the table. He waited. Turning pale, but still struggling for self-possession, she blurted, "I heard old lady Yakymykha talking to a woman. She said that Peredery had been at the home of Verbokrut, drunk with moonshine, yelling on the threshold of the vestibule, 'He thinks I'm a fool. He thought I didn't know why they took the accordion away from you . . .' He said you had the soul of a dog. '*Singed* my wife before I ever did, and then gave me your accordion to play away the illicit event and make me forget its obnoxious odor. Well, let him wait . . . let him enjoy himself for awhile. We'll fix him with an event.' "

"Is that what he said?" Comrade Mazdigin was plainly perturbed.

"Would that I never were able to leave this spot, if that is not the truth."

"Do you think that old lady Yakymykha would lie?"

"Of course not. She's an old woman, and God-fearing, too."

"If that's what he's saying, then he's speaking against Soviet authority," replied Mazdigin, unreasonably. "He's 'playing footsy' with the kurkuls; we'll chase him out of here. We'll see who'll be fixed with an event! We'll put all the Kurkul sympathizers on a road from which there will be no return for them. And if you were not an employee of our school, we'd send your father Shelestian along with Peredery to that far-off country of the stoop-shouldered and the long-tongued ones. But since you work for me, your father is not in danger of being exiled from his native village. He will

keep those two school horses and drive them for the Komnezam."

When he mentioned her father Hapusia knitted her brows sullenly and befoggedly, as she asked, "And what wicked thing did my father ever do to the Soviet Government? What did he ever have in common with Peredery that you now complain against him?"

"Oh, Hapusia! Your father and Peredery are chums; they meet together, and in their drunken talk dig a grave under the Soviet Government. But even if they were plotting against the Soviet, I would have mercy on your father. You need have no fear for him."

"And need I have no fear for him?"

She was now more quiet, putting aside her nameless apprehensions. Her forehead was smooth in the usual peaceful cast. She looked as serene as a smooth flowing river. But such a river could be suddenly deluged with raging water.

Mazdigin laughed affectedly, but he spoke with an assuring smile, "Now what do you mean when you say I don't listen to the girls with whom I make love?"

"Why, that's what the people say, and so does Peredery himself, that you pick young girls out and then have them married off to the Comsomols. That's why I'm afraid of you."

These last words of the girl astounded Mazdigin. To hide his astonishment, he approached her boldly, grasping her right hand in both of his, and showered kisses on it from the palm to the elbow.

"I'll listen to you now," he teased. "I'll listen, all right. I'll be your husband, and you'll be my wife . . ."

Hapusia kept whimpering like a small child that realizes something is amiss and yet cannot define it. Her red lips were open, her mouth dry, and it seemed as if she wanted a drink badly.

"I don't want to be a wife . . . I don't want to be a wife." She repeated it over and over, as if she could think of nothing else. "I don't want to be a wife . . . I don't want to be a wife . . ."

A small strand of hair, hanging down over her eye and cheek, got stuck to her lower lip. And Mazdigin, having ceased kissing her arm, and seeing the compressed lips of the girl, and the braid of hair sticking to them, emitted a sound which was neither a moan nor a sigh of satisfaction. Realizing her limp condition, he embraced her figure covetously, pressing her to himself and holding her in a vise. Then, relinquishing his hold, and looking momentarily at the almost unconscious girl, he began raining kisses on her with the kind of relish that is exhibited by a hungry hawk, sinking his black beak into the warm flesh of a captured bird. And the girl began to slip down limply against the wall, with her back to it. Mazdigin triumphantly swooped her up in his arms, swiftly carrying her from the kitchen to his room. It was only when he pushed the door of the room open with his right foot, that the short but thick braid of hair broke loose. It kept swinging lightly, striking the door-post, as if it wanted to catch hold of the wall and prevent its small owner from being borne to shame and dishonor. He banged the door with the heel of his boot as he crossed the kitchen threshold, so that it slammed shut. The incessant whimpering of the girl grew louder, as if she were pleading with tearful supplication.

"I don't want to be a wife . . . I don't want to be a wife."

It was eleven o'clock at night. A cool, peaceful indifference prevailed in the kitchen. And on the table a coal-oil lamp burned, solitarily, casting reflections off the plate holding the cake of soap, and the piled-up and wrung-out clothes by the lamp light, which stood near the lamp, creating

dark strands of light interspersed with light strands, which shone visibly where the side of the clothes-pile bulged out. A single red shirt could be seen at the bottom of the tub on the stool, floating around in the soapy water. From the little pool that formed under the tub on the stool, the water dripped in regular drops on the floor as if measuring the time that it would take to complete the unfinished work lying on the table. There was no water on the floor, only a dark spot where the water dripped in the quiet room. The play of the wind could be heard outside, as the trees in the orchard swished to and fro, and a twig kept tapping in a regular beat on the window pane. But the sheet covering the window, hanging down quietly, hid the kitchen light from the darkness outside, as it curtained off from view all human anxiety that threatened to interrupt the domestic peace of silent people, even though at this time there plainly could be heard the scratching of a dog's paws on the kitchen door, and from time to time a pleading bark, asking to be let inside. But all the things in the kitchen, sheltered by the curtain over the window, and the monotonous dripping of the water, were absorbed into the quiet of the night to such an extent that from time immemorial they feel beneath them in the firm earth a depth more frightening than a nightmare or even death itself.

And then, through the roar of the wind, and the murmur of the trees, the scratching and barking of the dogs, of the moist silence of the abandoned work in the kitchen, were heard the words of Mazdigin to the exhausted girl:

“Hapusia . . . Hapusia . . . Get up . . . It's very late. . .

“Well, where am I?” The sleepy girl came to life.

“Here with me. You must sleep at home.”

“I just knew that this would happen . . . that I, too, would have to look for a Peredery.”

And so as these words were being uttered one could hear light slaps being administered over bare flesh and the stamp of bare feet on the floor near the bed, and the voice of Hapusia, neither in anger nor in reproach but in acceptance of the inevitable.

“It would be better if you slapped yourself where you slapped me, than to do what you did.”

Then she went into the kitchen, closing the door behind her. She brought out a petticoat made from cheap material colored with elder sap. She put it on over her shirt. She looked it over carefully, grimacing as if to hold back from crying. Then a sound from the room brought her to her senses: “And don’t forget to tell your father, Hapusia, to stop chumming around with old man Brus, or he’ll get the same thing Brus is going to get!”

Whether these words frightened the girl, or struck a very sore spot, she very hastily tied the ends of the sewed-in belt around her stomach, blew out the light on the table, searched for the latch on the vestibule door, opened it, and then went outside.

Soon a large dog with long hanging ears ran into the kitchen. As it turned out later she had reddish hair, and was the kind hunters use to retrieve their game. She ran with a yelp to Mazdigin and opened the door with her paws. Barking joyfully, one could hear her jumping into his bed. He spoke to her kindly. But that was not the chief point of interest. It was too bad about Hapusia; for on second thought it seemed that evil days again were falling on the Fatherland, when a human being must make way even for a dog.

## The Parting of Ivan And His Father

It was five o'clock in the morning when the Brus' left home in their horse-drawn wagon. Ivan sat beside his father, his back to the horse. He was sitting on some freshly-cut spear-grass, covered with nettle sacking. In the back of the wagon lay a valise covered with grass, which Ivan could feel with the toes of his boots. And although the sun had risen more than an hour ago, it still retained its unblemished and original beauty. The world before him was still fresh, cooling and dewy green. Wild fowl flew from one lake to another, over the clouds of fog, or, having nibbled at the barley or wheat, had not yet lifted themselves away from the moist earth.

Ivan Brus contemplated his father's farmstead sadly as it slowly passed out of the range of his vision and was absorbed by the green heads of rye which surrounded it. Near the house and shed a young acacia grew, its green top branches reaching up to the ridge of the roof. There, near a brick terminal in a tall nest, stood a stork feeding its young ones. It was flapping its wings because one of the fledglings was a little over ambitious in trying to reach into its long beak. When it fell back into the nest, a weaker one would try

to climb up, and the old bird would flap its wings again. This would go on until the last fledgling would be fed.

Now these birds always seemed to Ivan Brus as if they were made of wood. They resembled in his mind a wooden mill, the wings of which, too, moved against the wind. Even so to Ivan Brus this feathered inhabitant of the Ukrainian farmstead was a pleasant sight. This stork and its nest continually stirred the same kind of memories as did the observation of a crane over a well. These two things always seemed to Ivan Brus to be made from the same material; and if either the one or the other were missing at the farmstead scene, then he felt a pain more poignant than the one experienced by the painter when he contemplates a scene dear to his heart, but unfinished because it lacked a few expert daubs of the brush. But when the stork family remains on the ridge of the house, while the crane is missing over the well, this speaks eloquently of the certainty that here the old mode of life is dying, if it is not already dead. The circumstances of his own and his father's life had attuned the soul to that sadness which people have when they part forever with something very dear to them. And so the young man recalled the verse of a well-known poet, Pavlo Petrovich Filipovich:

"Respect the old stork in his nest,  
He guards the house, stacks, and all the rest."

He winced, and looked at his father driving the horse. It was a fine horse, well-bred, and intelligent. The way the father held the reins, and the pleasure that was evident on his face, gave Ivan a temporary sense of satisfaction. Nevertheless, the father's figure was bent with recent experiences. He sat a little lower down than his son, facing the horse. And this position influenced to a great extent the son's impressions about his father. The father sat with his boots resting against

the dashboard. They were covered with dust, forming an earthy crust on them. His cap was the same color as his jacket and trousers. From behind the collar of his jacket could be seen the dark red embroidered collar of his cloth shirt.

Who embroidered it? His mother, or one of the sisters who failed to turn up at the funeral of their mother? Or was this shirt embroidered even before Ivan first saw the light of day? The children were all scattered like bricks from a ruined building.

Perhaps the villagers may still call him to treat their cattle. Well, the father may know very well that he appears under those circumstances as if in the role of an oak stick which is picked up when one is attacked by a mad dog. And when the attack subsides, the stick is cast away as an unnecessary thing, which will not be sought afterwards.

And so Ivan Brus now was still more sorry for this man, all rolled up in a ball, as it were, who called himself his father, and was now driving the horse, pretending to be very pleased with the driving, so that he would not have to speak to his son, or bother him, so abandoned and so helpless was he.

Now they approached the ruins of the destroyed lord's estate. Small piles of earth from the walls lay on the ground, covered with amaranth and thistle. Even now there were dark holes where the villagers dug out the posts, among which could be seen the rusty sides of a steam engine with its front end jutting up and the hind end deeply embedded in the earth. It had once been used for threshing grain on the steppes. A round hole loomed dark in the fore part of the engine. Inside the hole old soot came loose in caked form from the sides. Growing out from this hole two sunflowers grew with their as yet unflowered heads lowered down upon the back of the engine. A little farther away lay



the engine's fly-wheel. Some young millet and some old absinthe intertwined with the spokes of the wheels.

Now this broken-down, wrecked machine was really unfit to do the work for which, when new, it was intended. And though his father was still in complete possession of all his human faculties, he was nevertheless incapacitated by circumstances and made as useless as this wreck. The circumstances of life are always more kind to soulless things, depriving them of the possibility of their use only when they are really useless. But people attribute to broken-down things some sort of vindictive mystical quality which makes them stand out to complete people, cast out of human society, as examples of all personal catastrophes. And unfortunate people under compulsion find satisfaction in that grief, which proceeds from the consciousness, that they have a common fate with broken-down things, which really outlived them. Thus everything has two fates: first, when it is new and complete, and second, when it is broken down. But a person?

Ivan Brus thought it most unlikely that his father, this man driving the horse, who was waiting for his son to utter the first word, could consciously entertain the same thoughts in his own head that were flashing across the mind of the younger Brus. But he was certain that they were felt by the father, and that they were degrading him with all his past experience down to the smallest moral dimensions.

Ivan Brus did not have the kind of enduring confidence that would enable him to reveal his innermost thoughts to his father. Many of his childhood experiences had left their mark on his soul.

He recalled the most terrible experience of his childhood.

While he was studying at the Matushevsky Provincial School he got a book from a friend called "Indiana" by George Sand. He came home, and without preparing for the

next day's lessons, he began to read the book in the room across from the vestibule. He sat near a table. To let in more fresh air, the windows had been taken out of the frame and replaced with wire screens. As the breezes blew in they rustled the leaves on the malva plant in the vase which stood on the window sill. A large knife lay on the table. It was used to slaughter cattle before Easter and Christmas. Soon Ivan heard someone say: "Ivan, have you read very much yet?"

He raised his head and saw his younger sister, Priska. She was looking through the screen, smiling. He was vexed. Why was she disturbing him? Without saying a word, he lowered his head over the book. But his sister persisted: "I'll tell Father you're doing nothing but reading a book when you should be studying your lessons."

He ceased reading, waiting for the outcome, although outwardly he seemed immersed in the book. But the sister continued: "Our teacher said that books are a help only after you have learned your lessons. After that you can read until your eyes get bloodshot."

Ivan kept quiet, knowing full-well that an irritated person could not read. Keeping up the pretense of reading, he controlled every impulse to retaliate upon the unwelcome eavesdropper. But his sister meanwhile continued laughing, throwing up to him his bad faith with his teacher and father: "You think that Father won't listen to me? Oho, and how! He'll show you what it means to fool him. For what kind of lessons are those tales? They're just nothing without mathematics and prayers. Father'll accompany you to school with a knout, as he would a lazy ox that had strayed into a new garden. And no matter how fine your tale is, your teachers will greet you in school with outstretched fingers and will pull you by those long ears down on your knees. What! No longer interested? . . . Aren't you reading? . . . Aren't you alarmed?"

Ivan could stand it no longer. He glanced around in a madly infuriated temper and, seeing the knife before him, he picked it up and hurled it at the face grinning at him through the window. The knife pierced the screen, going through right up to the handle, and the point of the knife struck Priska in the forehead just above the right eye. There was a wild shriek outside. It sobered the boy up. A cold reaction of fear swept over him. He didn't know what to do with himself. But he did know, aside from the reading, that the knife which had nicked his sister's forehead was something that would earn him a sound whipping. So he decided to rush out of the house to avoid punishment. He jumped up, panic-stricken, grabbing hold of the latch. But horrors of horrors! The door was locked. There was no escape.

A shadow passed over the window. Ivan looked and saw Priska peering in. Her head was bound with a towel, the ends of which hung over her right shoulder. A thin stream of blood was running down her cheek onto her neck. Her nose, too, was covered with patches of blood. Her right eye was bandaged with a towel. She was a terrible sight. She was bitterly and silently searching for something in the house with her left eye. And, having noticed him, she blurted out: "You see what you've done to me? Mother has gone to Father at his work. They'll both soon be back, and Father'll skin you just like you skin the willow when you whittle a whistle. Now you can stew in your own juice. It was Mother who shut you in."

Having said this she went away from the window, and, noticing someone coming, she began to shout loudly: "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! . . . He's pierced my forehead and let my brains ooze out with that knife! And perhaps my eye, too! Oh, my God! Oh, my God! What's keeping them so long?"

Soon Ivan heard the voice of some woman trying to appease her. "Have you gone mad, shouting to the whole world like that? Why, if your brains had oozed out, you would have been lying down on the ground as lifeless as that log. Stop yelling! Nothing will happen to you."

"Oho, nothing will happen to me! If you were in my place, you'd yell louder than me."

Then she renewed her shrieking: "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! What has he done to me?"

And she managed to put so much into her terrible shrieking that Ivan's legs began to quake and feel as if they were frozen. Finally he heard someone say: "Would that the devil shut this girl's mouth up!"

But Priska in reply merely raised her voice still higher, as if she were calling down wrath even upon the strange woman: "Hey! . . . Come faster! . . . He hasn't run away yet . . . He's locked up . . . And perhaps Auntie Sanykha wants to let him out. . . . Oh, my God! Oh, my God! . . . Hey!"

Ivan heard the tramp of feet. And since his father wore boots even in the summer time, this tramp echoed in the soul of the prisoner like the march of Herod's army out of past Jewish history. His mother unlocked the door. His father crossed the threshold, halting for a moment. It was then that Ivan noticed sharply his father's peculiarities, as though he were a stranger. Thin whiskers, sticking out straight on both sides, reddish-colored brows, under which were two lights similar to those which he once saw in the painting of a wolf that stealthily crept up on an abandoned calf one summer evening. He took notice of his cheeks, nose, forehead, cap, hair and clothing. In his hand his father held a whip which seemed to be a permanent fixture there. This completed the portrait of his father. The father managed to utter just one sentence:

“So you’ve split your sister’s forehead open?”

The answer was quiet, filled with alarm, but truthful: “I . . .”

In a flash, uttering a growl, the father struck the boy across the head, full force, with his whip. Ivan wobbled on his feet and fell down by the bed. The father started beating down blows upon his fallen son with all his strength, as though the boy’s deed had maddened him. He was like a devil possessed of malice and rage. The father was as much out of breath as a thresher with a flail; he was silent because he could not speak. “Why, she provoked me!” Ivan had yelled, but he knew it was no excuse.

Ivan would never forget. Trembling from the blows, he grabbed hold of the bed, intending to crawl under it. But his father noticed this, hitting him fiercely with the knout on the hand. The boy wriggled like a snake and then lay motionless as a log. He showed only a tremor of the whole body when the knout struck him. Now the mother was frightened, believing her son was dead. She seized her husband’s hand, filling the house with her shrieks:

“Help, people! He’s killed him!”

The father, coming to his senses, struck the mother, too, with the knout across the shoulder, then left the house with as much speed as he had entered it. All was quiet in the house now.

As far as Ivan Brus could recall, his father was always as cruel and implacable as this, when, in his own opinion, human truth was transgressed. He superintended the horned cattle and the horses of four estates. He treated cattle, sorted them, looked after the separation of the residue from the sugar beets, and then supervised the sale of it. He either bought cattle himself, or delegated the purchase

of more cattle to others. He overseered large numbers of workmen, treating them as he would his own children. He never dismissed any laborer from work for any damage done. But after a second or a third transgression, he'd pounce upon the transgressor with his knout, belaying him unmercifully, and to his heart's content. And none of the whipped ones ever laid a complaint against him, nor showed any opposition to the whipping, especially when they realized that, from the first swipes, there was no escape from the beating. For they all knew that Ovsy Brus was not finding fault with them without cause and that, fundamentally, he was a just man, standing for the truth. He would never expel the transgressor, but would deal out his own manner of justice and let the consequences fall upon himself. The people, therefore, respected him; and the workers really felt happy when he joked with them; for he was a man apart from others; he was honest and just.

Ivan Brus was certain, even now, that if he had told his father at the time he was being punished because of Priska, that it wasn't he who split Priska's forehead, the father, knowing that it was Ivan who did it, would have beaten his son until he had forced a confession aloud out of him, so that he would be able to punish him before everybody. And the fact that he was locked in, that he was frightened, and yet could say "I am guilty" was something for his father to mull over pleasantly, as it showed that his son, even before the scaffold, would not be afraid to tell the truth.

Ovsy Brus loved to relate this experience with his son's truthfulness to the guests who gathered at his house during the holidays. Remembering his father's qualities, Ivan could not immediately be congenial with him. He hesitated

to discuss his problems with him even now. His father had always been strict and rigid in his discipline of his children and Ivan never felt very kindly toward him.

Then suddenly the wagon, coming down a hill, hit the level road, its impact causing Ivan to make himself more comfortable, so that he now sat with his father facing the horse.

And now the wide, green expanse of the steppe began to unfold before him. On the left side near the edge of the horizon, among the green gardens and fields, small dots appeared that really were the walls of the buildings of old Matusow, with their high factory chimneys. Farther on was Stanislawchyk. And finally railway forests or small groves could be seen dotting the wheat and barley fields. And behind a wide, expansive valley a station came into view, enveloped in clouds of fog and smoke from the steam engine. The sound of whistles could be heard from time to time coming from engines that were shunting about, or were passing by the station. Rising skyward above the green steppe verdure grew some green and tall acacias, like cliffs above the wide green effusiveness of Spring below. And the heart of Ivan Brus began to ache with a feeling of homelessness and loneliness.

The waves of wheat stalks fluttered in continuous undulations all the way to Stanislawchyk, and then as far as the hill near Buda. Just so the wheat waved during the battles of Chmelnitsky with the Poles. Close to them, large patches of shadows flitted by, cast by individual clouds, wandering across the quiet and very bright sky. It seemed as if the waves of wheat, and the shadows of the clouds, were racing each other to the nearest steppe lakes. The wind stirred the riverside grass, swept over the green and lifted to the deep azure

of the sky. Above it the sky-larks would render their song, the birds soaring so high that the human eye was not able to distinguish them. It seemed as if the land expanse were creaking under the pressure of the wind, the clouds, the shadows, the young heads of grain, and the waves of the steppe lakes.

“My son, look at our roadway along which we’re riding,” the father said. “Then observe other people’s farms, and our fields will look a bit different; for every distance hides the fruits of human labor from the observing eye.”

Ivan heard his father’s words. With an unshakable pain of loneliness he looked out from the wagon on both sides to the edge of the field where the rye stalks lay in one long streak. Over and along its edges poppies grew, and daisies, the tragopogon plant, the artemisia, the couch-grass and the fine shpurish grass. A heavy but not yet ripe spike of rye bent over them, over the sides and into the wagon. A little farther on, beyond the road among the rye, were some kind of piles, overgrown with weeds. He looked carefully, recognizing the piles as harrows with red teeth, rusted by corrosion, and cracked frames deteriorated by the rains and the winds. In their midst, too, were three seeders, their grain boxes wide open, their fore-parts still not detached. The splinter-bar and the shafts were simply lying athwart the roadway. And all these remnants were overgrown with bindweed, green fox-tail, absinthe and cow’s lung-wort. As they rode over the splinter-bar and the shafts, there was a loud banging and rumbling noise. It aroused a wild duck from its rest there, causing it to fly away into a thicket of rye a little farther on. And all of this seemed to be seized from all sides by the field grasses, as if the long tenacles of an invisible octopus was bent on gathering them all up and dragging them into the fertile black loam forever.



The father spoke again: "Who taught our poor peasants to farm like this? How could they? Throwing the remnants away to lie around like this for half a year! With that kind of management he'll last only two or three years. Why these cracked and warped boards on the seeders, these planks and braces on the harrows? And these cracked and split logs? It's all human bones, human feet and legs that are broken, hands that are weary with work. And what idiot would ever think this is the husbandry of our people?"

These scenes were already familiar to Ivan Brus, and it seemed to him that his father knew of his son's familiarity with the situation, and that his father was speaking thus because his helplessness had weakened him. Only in this way could he rid himself of his disgust. Ivan decided not to answer, although he knew that it would make it all the harder on his father. And for his own peace of mind, he ceased looking at the horse. It was no longer running, but walking rapidly, for the roadway was thickly overgrown with weeds. The horse was all splashed with the night dew as if it had come out of a river. Its legs were all wet up to the belly, which, too, was dripping wet. Its moist tail was covered with blades of grass, and poppy petals were sticking to its sides.

The son could stand it no longer, so he said: "Father, if you'll ever need to write to me, don't send any letters. They won't reach me. Only telegrams reach me, and they're late at that. Have you enough money for telegrams?"

"Son, as many people as there are in these five villages, Matusov, Kuchiwchi, Samhorodok, Tashlyk, and Syhnaiwchi, that'll be the number of purses of money that I possess. But I won't be sending you any letters, or telegrams. I have faith in your word . . . If you don't come, I'll know that you are dead, and that there's nothing for me to live for. I'll die, too. . . . You can see that all human truth has been eliminated

from their thinking. For some reason they have to destroy the old human generation so that they can manage the new one like the wind does the rolling flax. That's all. There's nothing more to say."

"My own dear father," answered Ivan Brus, with an effort at sincerity. "I really shudder at your words. It seems as if I've lost the ability to understand you. Why do you set up in your soul such futility? Meaning that if I'm not alive, then you'll have to perish too. I know only one thing, that this is a time of terrible peril . . . and that we walk in it like a wild animal over traps. But we know that even in the most terrible battles of war not all the soldiers die. Nevertheless, so that your soul does not fret over such horrors, I'll tell you now that I won't wait any two weeks, but I'll come sooner. I know what loneliness and anxiety does to a person who has been doomed to social extinction. I'll come earlier."

"When you speak of loneliness, does that imply that you have no one to wash your shirts for you?" Ovsy Brus asked this question with such fatherly solicitation, that it seemed as if there had been no previous talk about any terrible consequences in life. But the question had an ameliorating effect on the son, for he smiled and blushed a bit, answering his father simply and openly. He said, "Yes; I have a wife. I've been living with her for over a year. She'll be finishing a medical course this fall and will become a mid-wife. She's working at the Oleksandriwsky Hospital now."

"Then I must be given to understand that you wouldn't even think of abandoning one so close to you? Or to flee alone across the border? . . . Is she a bad person? What's her name?" the father inquired.

"This matter, Father, is complicated," Ivan explained. "She has to study for another four months. She's passed her

exams as far as books are concerned, but she must get practical knowledge too. If I were to ask her to share my refugee fate, that would interfere with her getting this practice, and that would be fatal to her career. And I don't want anything more to be added to my misfortunes."

"What's she called? What family did she come from?" persisted the father.

"They call her Olena Shchokolow. Her father's a railway engineer. She comes from a fine family, and Olena herself is a very fine person. But she . . ."

"Oh, my son, my son . . . what's all this 'but' for? You're too young to know, but human happiness during life has only one tie, just like every apple on a tree. If the tie disappears, so will the leaves, and the apple, too . . . and a person is not better than an apple. I believe that if you used more discretion, you'd save your own fate, one way or another. Would it not be possible to leave this country and hide one's self, doing meanwhile what one wants to do? It looks like all's not well between you two. And perhaps you're running away from this 'all's not well,' and, like a fool, I'm saying to you: 'Here, take my cabbage jug, too.' What's going on with you two?"

"I've told you already, and I'll tell you again," Ivan said bluntly. "I'm a writer, and I can't consider the conquest of the Ukraine by the Moscovites as fortunate for us. I can not look upon the methods they used in pacifying us as beneficial to us or as a 'liberation.' Therefore I can say 'good-bye' to my literary career here. Would you call me a decent person if I were to remain silent and accept Moscovite influence and methods unquestionably in our public life?"

The old man sighed, fixed the cap on his head, and then said: "A person doesn't need much on this earth. But it is necessary that he serve the people and be essential to

them. And you do not need more. I do know what this conscience is in the human breast. When it is uneasy, then no amount of riches and no powers will be able to effect peace for that person on earth, without which there can be no satisfaction with life, nor happiness. It grieves me to tell you, but I say: Do as your heart dictates. And I know that a young person's heart almost invariably speaks in the same manner as a traitor talks to his king. At your age a person is led from light to darkness, if his intelligence does not supply him with a small lantern. For youth is what it is because it never asks anybody anything. 'Give your heart full reins, you'll be put in chains.' You've knocked out of my hands the experience which would stand you in good stead. For it seems that people live and die, listening to their hearts, and noting experience in their books, for it to remain there unheeded. Woe unto me, an old man who knows that life has taught my children nothing! Do whatever you wish; you won't listen to me anyway."

The old man struck the horse with a rein. The horse lunged forward, jogged ahead, and then quieted down to a normal pace. His right hand still trembled. He evidently was still very jittery, judging his son from their last conversation, that there could be no agreement, or any sign of an agreement, between them. There was only one boundary, and that was one road leading into an abyss, such as the Cossacks of Taras Bulba bounded into . . . Some of them got out, but others perished on the cliffs.

After listening to his father's words, the son felt with his whole being that he would not be able to give an answer, for sitting there with his father, and having been in his father's house and under the quiet beneficent sun, he was not as he should be. All the while, he was feeling in the mood of superiority over his father because of his present helplessness

and his former power. He understood that this mood could not be dissipated without deep affection for his father. His profound respect and sympathy emanated from love.

The son was silent as he looked at the horse, now slowly approaching the farmstead not far away from the station, near the railway crossing, which the Nasachiwski people had built up. The first house near the field was not fenced in, nor covered with a red metal roof from the type of tin that was torn off the buildings of the lords. At that time it was impossible to buy this kind of material. Five cherry trees grew before the house, just recently planted. The remaining buildings were surrounded with young poplars and acacias.

When they were within two hundred yards of the farmstead, the son said: "Father, I'll get off here and walk the rest of the way. You can't drive the horse right up to the station. Your Wyhra looks too fine and shapely. If there are any Red Army soldiers about at the station, they'll take both horse and wagon away from you."

The father, without replying, quietly reined in the horse. The son leaped out of the wagon, pulled his valise out of the grass, set it down by his feet, and then seized his father's left hand, kissing it with his lips in farewell. Old Ovsy Brus, taken by surprise at this gesture, placed his right hand over his son's head, saying: "Son, I'll be able to help myself. If you have the time, come and see me again. If you find yourself in a tight fix, then go it alone across the border. But it seems to me, if you ever did come to see me again, it would only be to you that I would be bidding farewell."

Then earnest tears began to run down his cheeks and over his moustache, but there was no sign in the demeanor of the old man to indicate that he wanted to kiss his son in farewell. And the son knew very well that, whether it was his

own immediate family, or any strange people, he never kissed anybody unless it was on Easter.

At this very moment an aeroplane flew over Kuchiwka. Perhaps it was one of those people that Stalin had appointed for bringing in executioners into the Ukraine to start their social prophylactic campaign among the inhabitants. The son and the father did not pay any attention to it in their parting, so greatly were they immersed in their own mutual, deep and restrained sorrow.



## A Visitor From Moscow

It was dinner time. Comrade Mazdigin was at home, sitting by the dining table in the company of a Komsomol, who stood before him fumbling with a cap in his hands. The door to the kitchen was slightly ajar, and Hapusia could be heard clattering the oven prongs, and banging the spoons, as she set the table for dinner. On the neatly made bed with its new, grey bedclothes lay the dog, Nellie. Her white-spotted body was fat, sleek, and well-cared for. Her reddish ears lay on both of her front paws, her eyes gazing intelligently and intently at her master.

But the master was paying scant attention either to her or the Komsomol, as he stared at the revolver, glistening on the edge of the table to the right of his hand. It seemed as if he were focusing his attention on both the weapon and the Komsomol, so that the man would know with whom he was to deal. Above Mazdigin's head in the corner, suspended in the manner in which the picture of the Savior always hangs in such a place, was a portrait of Stalin; and a bit closer to the Komsomol, near the window, was the portrait of Menzhinsky, head of the All-Russian Cheka.



The whole floor, smeared either with black mineral oil, or mazout, being odorless, was sharply distinguishable from the white walls of the room, as if to remind one of the sootiness of the industrial proletariat. In the middle of the floor, even under the table and the chair where Mazdigin sat, lay a peasant carpet, the edges of which were artificially woven with blue triangular teeth and small yellow cockerels. And in between each cockerel and triangle were two red berries with two green tails.

“Didn’t the head of the Ortocheka give you anything?” asked Mazdigin.

“Oh, no. Here’s the piece of paper they handed me in an envelope.” He pulled the correspondence from the lower pocket of his jacket and handed it to the chief of the Partkom of the local district. Mazdigin took it and quickly read it over. It evidently pleased him for he began to speak cheerfully and loudly enough to be heard by Hapusia in the kitchen:

“The chief of the Ortocheka writes that all the prisoners, which you drove off to them today, tomorrow will be sent to Cherkasy, thence to Northern Russia,” Mazdigin spoke distinctly. “And were Peredery and Verbokrut, too, taken away from the village?”

“Yes, they’re gone too,” the Komsomol assured him, “and they’ll never return here again.”

Mazdigin pretended surprise. “And I thought they’d remain in the district more than a week. Now look what happened!”

The Komsomol seemed confused. In the kitchen not a knock, thump, clatter, tap, nor splash of water, came out of the sudden silence. Mazdigin grinned with satisfaction, glancing towards the kitchen door, and then back at the Komsomol. But he said, as if in sorrow, “During their last days in the

village they behaved like mad people. All they did was drink and curse the Soviet Government; and that could no longer be tolerated. I had to do my duty for the party."

While Mazdigin was speaking the Komsomol's eyes were lit with malice. Scratching the nape of his neck, he began to speak like the cunning peasant he was, wanting to surprise his listeners and at the same time win their approval. His manner was ingratiating. "Comrade Partkom, it was just like this. My comrades and I had orders to drive the prisoners away. As we were returning, we came alongside the turnpike, then honest-to-God, right before our eyes, just beyond the village, near Cybulka, there lit down upon the ground an aeroplane. The people crowded around it, and out stepped a dark-complexioned man, saying that he had come purposely to us to straighten out some matters. Such a small man he was! He said to the people that he had come from Moscow itself, and that he would remain in the village for a week. He asked me where the school was. Perhaps he'll soon be here."

An expression of sheer terror came over the whole of Mazdigin's being. He looked numb, as though all his senses were deadened. His countenance changed to a colorless, dull and glassy stare. Even so his face was directed to the kitchen, taking on a mad, lifeless, and stupid look such as one can notice in the old stone women up on the Wolinsky hills.

When he recovered himself a bit, he seized his revolver feverishly from the corner of the table. He jumped up, shoving the weapon into his pocket. He hurried over to the kitchen door, and Nellie, sitting on the bed, lifted up her head. As he stood on the threshold, he spoke to Hapusia, coaxingly and caressingly: "Hapusia, sweetheart, hurry; leave your cooking and other preparations. You've most likely finished everything, anyway?"

"Yes, everything," Hapusia answered. "All that remains to do is to fill the plates."

"Well, don't go to any more trouble, sweetheart; run along home and fix up a bit, then wait until I call you. When our guest comes I want you to serve him. So run along now; don't tarry. When he comes, I'll call you," he stammered.

Hapusia, confused by his mad behavior, tarried only a moment among her dishes. She dried something on her towel, wiped her eyes, then hurried out.

The master of the house nervously gave orders to Kom-somol, "Hurry on to the chief of the Komnezam and tell him to get on the truck. Where is it now?"

He was as upset as if he had stubbed his toe against a stone. The young man answered quietly, "Why, it's near his fence . . . at Comrade Komnezam's place."

Then Mazdigin continued his excited talk: "Have him get on the machine and drive post-haste to Peredery's wife. Have him take her along and then speed on to Shelestian's place. There he'll pick up Hapusia. He can take both of them to Otsarok where our Komuna has a pig sty containing some two hundred pigs. These two women are the most intelligent and the neatest. Furthermore, they're both daughters of fathers who are prejudiced against the Soviet Government. Have them remain there until they've washed all the hogs in the lake. That will take about a week. When the chief of the Komnezam takes the women away, instruct him not to tell why or where they're going. Let them be informed on the spot of the importance of the matter. I don't think that the representative from Moscow will examine our husbandry as far out as the steppe. Its good order will be in our favor and give us pleasure. Well, don't tarry . . . Wait, I've forgotten something. Tell the Komnezam chief to remain there with the machine until he hears from me. And have him keep a

watch on those two women to prevent any escape. When he does come for the provisions, then have the swineherds look after not only the hogs but also these women. They are both poor and it will be profitable for them to stay there. Get a move on you . . . and don't forget anything!"

The Komsomol departed. Mazdigin had an urge to go out and meet this "representative" from Moscow, but all the affairs on which he had relied during the last few days depressed him, and so he decided to remain until the guest arrived. Independence, even if it is only of a five-minute duration, is still independence, and it reminds one of an undisturbed animal in its den. And even this is not bad. The reason for his inhuman behavior towards Hapusia became more understandable.

During the last two days Mazdigin had been really afraid of Hapusia—afraid that she might give him a bad name. Every day she'd ask him: "When are we going to become man and wife," meaning: "When will we be registered as such in Zakca, even if we can't have a marriage ceremony?" But Mazdigin would assume a smile and say: "But to all intents and purposes we're man and wife. We sleep together every night."

Hapusia would grow angry, offering her last argument, that her usual menstrual period had ceased. She was fearful of what would happen. She had even been making inquiries as to whether any complaint could be made, and where. It was said among the people that there used to be a law enabling a girl to make a complaint against anyone committing a wrongful act against her.

These few days had become unbearable to Mazdigin. He decided to rid himself of all his sensual feelings for her, but his comfortable and quiet place inclined him towards further pleasures with her and so he delayed his decision.

And now someone had come all the way from Moscow to put things in order. Now he began to act under the pressure of that conscience which compels every criminal to cover up his tracks and to make an outward show of respectability. Thus Mazdigin without much ado expelled the girl from his feverish brain. He had made arrangements to be rid of her.

Suddenly he heard the stamp of feet in the distance. He looked through the front window of his room. What he saw was a dark, neat-looking man, holding a Lenin cap in his hand, accompanied by a villager with a valise. They came to the gate of the school yard. The villager set down the valise and halted, speaking hotly. Mazdigin watched him intently, but he could not recognize the villager. He regarded him intently even when a loud knocking on the door could be heard plainly; and even when Nellie, having jumped out of bed, barked furiously. It wasn't until the villager disappeared behind the school fence that the master of the house went to the door, yelling: "Kush, get back!"

He had no choice but to open the door. The dog, with ears pricked up, watched the new arrival. The guest hurriedly crossed the threshold and set his valise down under a window, his cap on top. Stretching himself and smiling, he extended his hand to the master of the house, saying, "I am Partsunia, especially sent to you from Moscow itself. Well, it looks like there'll be plenty to do here, for the villagers met me near the aeroplane with such demands as no one would ever have expected. Why, they even started their talk with: 'Make some order!' "

"Order?" interrogated Mazdigin, nervously.

"No, they haven't spoken anything about you yet," Partsunia said, only too easily interpreting Mazdigin's uneasiness. "But you can understand how such a demand can impress a person who has come to extend the revolution in the

villages, and then have those demands made upon him? And what kind of order do they need?"

With greater calm and ease Mazdigin spoke: "Well, it seems to me that you might have been better informed. But courtesy is the second law for humanity after all state laws. The villagers have justified the Marxian assertion that nourishment determines consciousness. They complain that the Matvsiwsky factory did not pay half of their promised sugar for hauling the materials needed in building the radhosp, but that they paid for the poor peasants' Commune. And now they ask whether you did not give their half of the sugar to that Commune too. Sit down here. Why are you standing?"

Partsunia sat down, followed by the master of the house in his usual place, except that the revolver no longer lay on the corner of the table. It was not until now that Mazdigin began to talk freely without the feeling of imminent, certain doom:

"What fools those villagers are!" he cried. "They're always being told in Matusiw that they would eventually get all of their sugar, but that they would have to wait until the new director arrived. But they keep mumbling and torturing themselves as if this would accelerate the matter. Whenever you come across a group of people in the village, the live topic of talk is that the new director will come and pay off the rest of their sugar. . . . The fools! It would be better if they kept quiet and waited; then something might be done, but now . . ."

"Oho, oho!" the pleased Partsunia chuckled. "So I see that the picture in your part of the country and in your village is not as dark as it seems. Evidently the revolution here has been well-grounded. If that is what they say at the factory, then it means that the Soviet State has won a victory. That means that there is a new director, and that he has no intention of paying them. Make the peasant strong, and he'll

go against cannons with his bare hands. And ultimately he might even emerge victorious. . . . No, the revolution was not for this, that we make orders for them. No, no . . .”

And with these words Partsunia pulled a paper from the side pocket of his jacket. He handed it to Mazdigin who read it, and, having folded it, handed it back to its owner with the very polite but somewhat timorous question, “And what is it they want of me now, Comrade?”

“Nothing special, only what you already know,” was the reply.

Mazdigin grew tense, drawing himself up, as if he had been deafened by a sudden cry and wanted desperately to hear every word of the speaker. But the speaker, taking no particular notice of anyone, and patting the pocket where he had replaced the paper, renewed his talk:

“You have nothing to worry about,” he said. “Just go on doing what you’ve already been doing, only do it more vigorously. You can help me. I’ll be needing only two things, to find rooming quarters and to find a direct and sincere person who knows these local people very well. When I do my questioning he won’t do any meditating, but will talk out of his pent-up feelings. I want to know what’s in his subconscious mind, what interests him. I want to speak to an uneducated peasant, one that has not been out of the boundaries of this village. In my quarters, I’ll be able to mull over what was said so that on the next day I’ll be able to start my revolutionary operations in your village. You understand?”

“I understand,” Mazdigin nodded. “You’re the Partorg and the party central chief, so you should understand.”

Partsunia agreed and then continued, “It’s important to me not only that you understand me, but that you, knowing what it’s all about, keep it in the consciousness developed by our proletarian revolution. You’ll not let the ducks out to

catch fish in the sand on the field, or the chickens to gather worms in the basin of the water that boils in the sluices.”

“Do you wish me to be present at your conversations?” asked Mazdigin cautiously.

“That’s wholly up to you, for you can neither hinder nor obscure the thoughts of this villager that I shall question. Common people always like to relate with greater pleasure that which in their estimation is important, in the presence of more people than just one person and therefore you’d be a desirable listener. I’m interested only in the finest aspects of peasant life, which were produced by bourgeoisie culture during the whole extent of its existence. But I’m speaking at length. Tell me, are you a proletarian?”

“Yes, I’m a proletarian,” Mazdigin affirmed.

But Partsunia did not let up, asking Mazdigin another nasty question: “And that poor peasant, the villager, who works in your Commune, is he, too, a proletarian?”

The master of the house assured him firmly and convincingly: “Proletarian, only that he is not a conscious one, or perhaps not conscious enough.”

Partsunia roared with laughter: “You’ll naturally excuse me for putting to you such suspicious questions,” he said. “But I’m very glad that I questioned you. You don’t know what a proletarian is, although you really defend our revolution like a proletarian. You can’t hide that from me at all. I feel it. Don’t look for proletarians among those people who work. All of them are among those people who control the people who work . . . The dictatorship of the proletariat! What is this slogan worth? What kind of a dictatorship would that be that would have to do its own work? None at all. Someone else would be doing the dictating as to what and how things should be done, and not the proletariat. And tell me,



please, did the bourgeoisie ever do any work with their own hands in their own state?"

"No. Others did their work for them."

This was but the echo of a thought, and not an answer to Partunia's question. Partunia casually touched his nose with his index finger. Then he continued speaking, pleased but insistent: "Well, now you're beginning to understand. The proletariat has now seized power into its own hands, keeping its head on its shoulders, for the bourgeoisie never had one. They gave their workers and farmers the economic opportunity to rebel against them. Without this economic ground there could not be any revolts. You should dig into your consciousness and realize that for us, me, you, and all the proletarians who hold the reins of government in our hands, the real ideal of the worker should be such that the worker and his wife and children would be, like Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel; that is, naked. I see now in your face what I want to see . . . yes, *naked*, so that they would not be able to rebel against us. So now I continue. I came to help you, not to harm you. There's really no point in our doing anything good in the villages; but there is a duty and an understanding as regards ourselves and the proletariat, to reduce all the people that we rule to a state of *nakedness* like our great ancestors lived in, so that they will be continually hungry, like the classical wolves."

He stopped to catch his breath, halting to look triumphantly at his listener. Mazdigin was silent, biting his upper lip. He was being possessed by vague emotions, not yet fully felt. His face was becoming pallid, taking on the expression one can see in the countenance and the slitted eyes of the self-hung executioner. Partunia, as if he were satisfied with the impression he was creating, suddenly smiled again, repeating: "And if Adam and Eve want

to wear tattered garments on their feet, we'll bring them to the factory where they'll make clothes. We'll let them have a couple of shirts, and jackets, and we'll store the rest in our warehouse and shove the key into our pocket. If Adam and Eve want to eat, we'll take them into the field, and they'll produce mountains of grain for us, which we'll thresh and haul to the granaries, leaving five kilograms a week for Adam and Eve, but the rest of the grain will be stored in the granaries, keeping the key in our pocket. If they want any apples, we'll have some orchards planted for them. And when they produce apples, then all the fruit that has been bruised or damaged, and which might rot in the warehouse, we'll give to them, and then lock the rest up and put the key in our pocket. Then let the progeny of the bourgeoisie rebel against the proletariat! Who then will give the keys to get some clothes and food, so that they can at least have their breakfast before launching the rebellion, which we will provoke in the Winter time to the tune of a Gypsy dance, for they will be in tattered garments or bare? Now I hope you understand what we, the proletariat, are . . . ”

His last question was rife with hatred and contempt as he cried, “We are the people who want to rule the planet earth on which we live, now and forevermore, as long as it is in existence. Now you understand what this dictatorship of the proletariat is? Just think it over and don't say anything to me.”

Now, the tramp of feet could be heard outside. Nellie jumped off the bed and stood by the door, barking. The master of the house ran over to her, seized her by the neck and unceremoniously shoved her into a corner. The dog yelped and turned around there, barking suppressedly, taking a stance as if to jump. The door opened into the room, and Nellie, now appeased, jumped back into Mazdigin's bed and

lay down on her front paws. For it was only Shelestian who came to the threshold. He gave the two men in front of him a startled look, expecting only to see Mazdigin. He was confused too by this comrade who came, according to the rumor, to "bring in order." At first he was embarrassed, then he turned to Mazdigin in genuine grief: "Thank you, Comrade Parkom, for your courtesy and truth. As for my daughter . . .

"What do you want?" Mazdigin came closer to him.

"What do I want, you ask?" Shelestian shrieked so loudly that his voice broke into the kind of falsetto that usually results from strained nerves. His straw hat sat down on the nape of his neck, the perspiration pouring down from his forehead. But he was not conscious of it. He held his left hand in the pocket of his cloth trousers, and in his right hand there was the handle of a whip, but with no whip. He leaned on it and its thin end began to bend between his bare feet. "You told my girl to fix herself up . . . to serve food to a nobleman. But even as she dressed up, you ordered her to be driven to the communal hogs at Otsarok."

"Just wait, Comrade Shelestian, there was a mistake," Mazdigin was sweating. "I'll send word to the Commune for them to send her back here to her own job. You go home. You can help me do this all the sooner."

The Parkom tried to appease him, quietly in Partsunia's presence. The only effect this appeasement had on Shelestian was to make him lower his voice and speak more evenly, but still with a feeling of affront and undeserved injury. "She won't come to you any more."

"I tell you, go home; there's been a mistake," Mazdigin shouted. "Go now, and don't raise an unnecessary racket here before this stranger."

Mazdigin longed to seize him by the shoulders and lead him to the vestibule door, but Shelestian retreated back a

step, entreating Partsunia: "Hear me out; at least you, Comrade, so that my injury will not take precedence, and that truth will prevail for us poor people."

Partsunia, to the great fear of Mazdigin, answered Shelestian with courtesy: "Tell me all about it. I'll hear you out and try to do what I can. You won't suffer any injury and the charge of untruth won't lie over the head of the one who made a mistake. Go ahead, tell me; I'm listening."

Mazdigin swallowed a lump of saliva. Shelestian now wiped his forehead with the palm of his left hand, saying: "Well, this is how it happened, Mr. Comrade. My daughter had no sooner dressed up in a white shirt and petticoat, than an automobile came whizzing in, blocking her way as she came out. And the chauffeur said to her: 'Get in; I'll take you wherever you want to go . . . even straight to the school.' And she got in. And there, too, was Peredery's wife, smiling and talking: 'The chauffeur told the people all about this,' Peredery's wife said. 'What's this? So he's swiftly fixing things with you too?' When my daughter heard this she lost control over herself. And how she grieved! And Mrs. Peredery continued: 'He had me seized so that I wouldn't tell the person who came here to 'put things in order' anything about how he arrested my husband. And he got rid of you so that you wouldn't say anything about any of us. For it does not matter that you now sleep with him, that you're still young and foolish, but your tongue may slip and spill everything.' My young one just sat there, saying nothing, covering her face with her petticoat, moaning and sighing heavily. But when Mrs. Peredery said they were driving to Otsarok for a week to wash the hogs, Hapusia leaped up as if she were scalded with hot water, jumping out of the car and running into the plowed field. Where did she get the strength to make that leap over the road and into the

plowed field? And, after resting awhile, she got up again, and started running back to the village with all the speed she possessed. But she didn't run along the road but kept to the plowed field. Finally she came running into the house, frightened and all out of breath, like a young rabbit, falling down at the knees of her mother, yelling,

“ ‘Why did you give me over to the Parkom, when he's designated me for the hogs . . . And you gave me up . . . Now I'll perish right here, at your place, for I'm heavy-bellied.’

“Then she fell down, all out of breath, looking lifeless. My wife ran outside. My daughter lay on the floor inside the house just as if she were out in the middle of the yard, for it is not proper to close the door on an occasion like that. The people came in and looked on, for they had sent for Onopreyovich. He's an assistant physician. Thus I now appeal to your commissar for mercy. Find some kind of truth or law against that whore's son; otherwise we'll punish him ourselves in the village!”

Then Shelestian bowed his head. Partsunia said, “It appears that Comrade Mazdigin has taken your daughter against your will to act as his housekeeper? Is that the way it seems? Did he ask your permission when he took her in?”

“Well, what permission? Is it allowed to do that with people's children?” Shelestian puzzled.

“In other words, you knew where you were letting her go,” Partsunia reasoned. “You knew that he might fool around with your daughter? It's impossible for a cat to live with a dog, without the dog sometimes grabbing the cat by the fur.”

“Mr. Commissar, you're kidding me as if I were a small tot,” the father cried. “It seems like you're one of our peo-

ple, and therefore must know very well that our boys and girls dance and have fun for two or three years. But no boy would allow himself to wrong a girl until they are married. But what have you got here? Why, she's still a child, while the color of his hair will soon be like mine. He slinked over to the child. No, think as you please, but that is not right. Be a human being. The whole village complains about Comrade Parkom."

"That will do," Mazdigin roared.

He was interrupted by Comrade Partsunia who said, "I'll speak to you about this again tomorrow. I'll call you, but now you can go home. I can't do anything right now. I've just finished a journey. Well, good-bye."

So he extended his hand to Shelestian. In his excitement Shelestian shook his head so that his hat fell down over his eyes; and when he extended his hand and failed to find Partsunia's, he confusedly set his hat right on his head and departed, murmuring excitedly: "It can't be ignored, for disorderliness may cause more harm than untimely rains on cultivated land. Farewell until our meeting tomorrow." And he departed.

Partsunia, turning to Mazdigin with a smile that meant nothing untoward had happened, said, "Although you may invite me to stay with you in the school, for purely public reasons I'll find quarters with one of the poor peasants in the village. Call one of the Komsomols to help me move my things. Besides this I want to let you know that this Comrade Shelestian will be my chief informer about your village; and if you are interested, come to our 'seance.'"

Mazdigin whistled with relief. Nellie jumped off the bed, and both of them left the house.

Partsunia stood waiting. It was only when the master of the house and his dog had gone beyond the school garden that he went over to the table and spread Mazdigin's papers on it, examining them.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# The Cross-examination of Shelestian

Comrade Partsunia was quartered at the home of the villager, Demian Klishcha. The back wall of his house faced the new cemetery, and the front faced the old cemetery. The old cemetery was fenced in with a rotting fence made of upright palings. Inside, it was so overgrown with grass, wild cherry, willows, and clumps of self-propagating acacia, that even the graves could not be distinguished. Here and there loomed some greyish tombstones.

The new cemetery was divided off from the village by a ditch, which once surrounded the feudal lands of the lords. There were about fifteen graves in the new cemetery. Fifteen meters away loomed a large oak cross. It was used as a starting point to measure off the boundary of the cemetery.

A tall acacia grew in green grandeur over the whole weather-beaten paling fence, surrounding the old cemetery, and running parallel with the ditch of the new cemetery, which ran by Klishche's house. The gate of the new cemetery was opposite the church.



Between the school yard and Klishche's yard there was a pasture overgrown with shpurish grass and thistles. And between these two human quarters, in the center of the pasture, loomed a path leading straight to the church, which was the same distance from the school as from Klishche's house. He had a neat garden, with a well near the stile.

When Partsunia moved to his quarters in the empty room on the other side of the vestibule at Klishche's place, the sun already had gone down to rest, and the village had draped itself with the first shadows of the evening darkness. There was still some golden light showing behind the church in the western sky where it met the horizon.

The windows of Partsunia's quarters were covered with sheets but some light still shone through. He wore a shirt and trousers held up by suspenders. He had put on slippers, setting his shoes near the bed. He had the look of a Jew who walks about in his wagon near his place in his stockinged-feet. The bed was already made with a plaited straw mattress covered with a sheet, a pillow, and another top sheet. There was no clothes-rack above the bed such as is usual in a peasant's home. Instead there was a nail on which Partsunia had hung his dark jacket in such a way that the revolver in each pocket could be seen protruding, handles upwards. On the table a green-shaded lamp burned. The door was latched shut.

Suddenly the door of the vestibule flew open. Partsunia, hearing the creak, got up. He now stood in the middle of the room, listening intently. Facing the table, it seemed as if he were listening with his spine to what was happening in the vestibule. Now the door to his own room squeaked open, the voice of Shelestian asking, "Are you home, Comrade Commissar?"

**"Just wait a minute."**

Partsunia immediately took one revolver out of a pocket, hiding it under the pillow. Then he pulled his jacket off the hook on the wall and drew it on. He buttoned it up, put his shoes on, and laced them up. It was only then that he approached the door, opened it, and stood waiting. The revolver hardly made a bulge in his pocket. When he felt he was ready, he yelled, "Come in."

Shelestian entered, shook hands, then said politely, "Good evening. Well, how is it in your new quarters?"

"Oh, just as you see."

Partsunia smiled with his lips only. "I won't remain around here very long. A couple of days, and then I'll move on to another village. Quarters do not bother me. It's good you came. Have you had supper yet?"

He asked the question casually. Without waiting for a reply from the villager, or caring whether it was forthcoming or not, he hurried over to the table, grabbed a dark bottle of moonshine on which, too, hung a small cup. He set it on the table. Shelestian was stunned by this unexpected gesture, silently looking at the bottle. Partsunia sat down behind the table, removed the cup and poured out a drink. Then he called out: "Come over here near me and have a small snort."

He swallowed the drink without waiting for his guest to come to the table. He poured out another one and set the cup down on the table near himself.

Shelestian was wearing his everyday clothes. He was even holding the same whip-handle in his hand. And now, seeing that the drinking was being done without him, he slowly turned to the rakes and set his whip handle down there, and his hat on the bench which stood against the corner of the table. With assumed indifference he said: "I thought that all genuine communists didn't drink whiskey, but perhaps it's

like it was with the monks who used to say publicly: 'Lord have mercy!' and in private: 'Drink hearty!' "

In the lamp-shaded light the faces of both men looked green. Partsunia gazed at Shelestian in a manner that was neither inquisitive nor conjectural. He finally broke the monotony of the silence that was so hard on the villager, "We shall not speak of your injury. We know a little about the wrong done to you. Now we want to hear about something good, to which, if we add your wrong, there will be an ease in the situation. So, Comrade Shelestian, the Soviet Government has attained such power now that it can take into its consideration the fate of the national heroes, past but still living. The Soviet Government wants to contact all the most useful and finest people in every village—all those people whom the folks love and respect and listen to, though sometimes they do not elect them to their responsible positions. If these finest people are now old, or crippled, the Soviet Government wants to take them under its protection; either in the sanatoriums, the hospitals, or else by way of awards for their former achievements in improving the lot of the people. We want to make them happy in their declining years. Therefore, I beg you to name any of the kind of people I have just mentioned so that we can satisfy their needs forthwith."

"Oh, so you want to know who suffered for the Ukraine? Or is it for the Soviet Government?" asked Shelestian, somewhat nonplussed.

"Well, no, neither this nor that. The Soviet Government wants to know all about those old people who fought neither for the Ukraine, nor for the Soviet Government, but about those people who are respected for their wisdom, for their helpfulness, or perhaps their good heart . . . And it wants to help them."

Shelestian's eyes lit up. Stroking his beard with his right hand, he said, "If that's it, then God be praised! It's about time to look into the grievances of the people and to consider their problems. *Daj Boze!* Let it be done! Let God do it! There is one man like that! He is in immediate need of protection against foul play, not of the people, but of human stinkers. It's a good thing that the Soviet Government is looking into our grievances. All his things have been sealed now; and he's in such dire difficulties that he can go alive straight away to the Lord . . ."

"What's his name, and why did they seal his things if he's not a kurkul?" Partsunia stirred about nervously, pulling out a notebook and pencil.

"Kurkul? Are they sealing kurkuls? Why, the kurkuls are really being robbed. He's the kind of a person whom you won't find even with a candle, and you won't find one like that even in Heaven. He's . . . Why, every person in our district knows what kind of a man he is . . ."

"I'm asking you, Shelestian, what his name is, and what good he's done the people."

Again Partsunia interrupted the villager's talk, smoothing out with his right hand the crumpled pages of his notebook on the cloth beneath the lamp.

"They call him Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus."

"What did he do to the people? What did he do to the people?"

Wagging his head reproachfully and sadly, as if he were worrying out loud, Shelestian continued: "He has been doing what every other christened soul in our district has failed to do. I had a father, and the people like me had fathers . . . and some of these fathers still have fathers. That is, for us they're old men. And all of them speak in eulogy; that they've never seen his kind before. Other villages

never have seen a man like him before. He lives in our village. His name is Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus.”

While Shelestian was relating his woeful tale, Partsunia was entering into his notebook the village, the region and the district. After making his entry he bent his head down sideways, and, with screwed-up eyes, looked past the narrator. Shelestian's head cast a shadow on the wall near the ceiling itself. When he accented any word vigorously, both head and shadow trembled accordingly. It seemed, too, as if the walls were shaking from the conversation.

“Our people,” Shelestian explained, “live and breathe on this earth thanks to their cattle. If you rescue an animal in the husbandry of a family, then, believe me, they'll thank you. For our people are poor, and their burden is lessened only because of the domestic animal, and nothing more. And so this man has been protecting us from our troubles for twenty-five whole years. Whether there is a blizzard, or rain, or a high wind, or day, or night, all you have to do is to come to his window. If he is at home, or you meet him outside, you say: ‘Uncle Ovsy,’ or ‘Ovsy Yukhrymovich, help me in my grief’ and believe my word, this person, without tarrying a moment, would hurriedly get ready and come and help. If there was any kind of an illness, or epidemic, or some terrible accident, he always knew better than anyone else just what to do to cure or prevent it. He knew it better than the finest priest knew his ‘Our Father.’ Then to him, to this person, came some dog-like souls, like the Pharisees to Christ, putting a seal on all his medicines.”

“Wait!” interrupted Partsunia, “then perhaps he, like in the saying: ‘From each one in the community a thread, and the poor one will have a shirt,’ gathered unto himself a good supply of everything? Perhaps he's one of your rich men,

otherwise those 'dog-like souls' would not find fault with him."

"He, a rich man?" yelled Shelestian, angrily. "Let those accursed souls not be able to find their way to church on Easter, if he's a rich man! Let the eyes of those devilish souls fall out of their sockets with their tears; let a sudden accident fall upon them, oh Lord, if they do see any riches at his home. Why, Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus never nastily demanded any payment for his work. If the person paid, he would take whatever was given him with thanks. If the person did not pay, he'd merely say: 'I'll thank you some other time; take it on credit, if you please.' And he did; and Ovsy was satisfied when that person merely offered him a drink for his trouble."

"I don't believe that such an expert on animals could not have laid aside something for a rainy day," indicated Partsunia, with assumed reluctance, adding: "Continue. I'll hear you out on this."

But Shelestian, discerning an air of scorn in his attitude, looked at him intently and, with restrained hurt feelings, said: "Well, praised be the Lord, there are plenty of people in our village. Call anyone else, and they'll tell you the same thing, and perhaps more. And now I'll go. Glory to the Lord, it's now night time, and morning is approaching; and the day is the stump to which a person is tied down with work." He rose undecidedly, searching for his effects. But Partsunia hurriedly bent low, coming up again with the bottle of moonshine, speaking merrily: "We'll have another snort and chat for another ten minutes. Help yourself, please! What's your hurry?"

Shelestian wiped his mustache with his right hand, and now, smiling conciliatorily, he took the cup, lifted it up, poured it down, standing. Then he sat down. Partsunia,

having corked the bottle, attaching the cup to it, and setting it down by his feet, asked: "Now will you finish telling me about that man? Why isn't he rich? That doesn't make sense to me."

"Why wasn't he rich? Hm . . . Why, all the people know the reason, and I told you. But you acted like you didn't hear. If anything ever did fall into his pocket from fees, he never took it home with him. Before he got there, some poor person would meet him and he'd give the money to him. Thus all he ever earned was given away. In this manner all his earnings have remained in the hands of the people. But Ovsy Brus never reminded anyone of their debt to him. He would say, trustingly: 'A person knows when he has a debt, and when he can, he will pay it.'"

"Yes, but how about his family? One has to meet their needs somehow," Partsunia persisted.

"That's right; and as for his family their quarrel with him was continual. His wife and children demanded that he build a new house. And what could he do when those neighboring villages were like a family to him? His own family did not have a home of their own until the revolution. . . It was only then by the sharwarok or mutual help plan that the villagers here got together and put up a house for him, in which he now lives . . . spending the rest of his life."

"Well, and did he give his children an education?"

"He did, but with what success? The children did not take after him . . . children of straw, they were . . . square pegs in round holes. There were six of them. One of them was killed by the Communists, and two girls are married. As for the rest, the Lord only knows where they are! Only the oldest one turned out well . . . he's somewhere in Kiev. He's a writer, or something. But he's an exception. He left the family group early to try to get himself an education.

Thus he's not to be taken into account. Only a week ago Ovsy Brus' wife died, but none of the children were at the funeral. It seems that even the one from Kiev did not attend, although he was the one that was most expected. The only one who was at the funeral was the youngest one, Modest. He and our Parkom and Comrade Mazdigin sealed the father's medicines. So now we have a dog's soul in our midst! This man is the sorest spot in our village! Wherever a quarrel crops up, or a fire, a theft, or a wrong done to a girl, then believe me, the only one they blame is Comrade Mazdigin. Take my daughter, for instance. Well, even if he did slobber over her, at least he should not have scorned her. He should not have enticed her away, for she no longer stays at my home. When she escaped from that Otsarok, she got so mentally deranged that she wandered from the place, and now I don't know where to look for her. Well, perhaps she's lost, the Lord forbid, like a dog that has gone mad and runs away from the yard . . . The child was here and now she's gone."

"And why did they seal those medicines? Did he poison anyone?" Partsunia persued.

Listening to these words, Shelestian seemed to have gone out of his mind. He banged so hard on the table with his fist, that the lamp trembled, making the light flicker, as if about to blow out; so that even Partsunia quickly thrust his hand into the pocket where the revolver was deposited. Then Shelestian straightened up, bent over the table, shouting to his listener: "You're not poking fun at me, Comrade Commissar, by asking that question? Why, he wouldn't befoul a boar, a chicken, or animal let alone poisoning them. And yet you say that. . . That public physician's assistant, Onopreyovich, has slinked his way to Mazdigin's to get his claws on those medicines. For one can't get medicines anywhere now."



Then Shelestian sat down, wiping his forehead, his lips, again looking in the direction where lay his hat and whip-handle. Partsunia, now completely calm, noting something in his book, started to say something. But, seeing that Shelestian was paying no attention to him, he nevertheless started talking. But the talk now was having the same effect as a flickering wick which is about to be put out. So Partsunia ceased talking and Shelestian began. . .

“Such people as Mazdigin should not be allowed to enter a school yard, let alone teach school or live in the school. Perhaps he may be a good Parkom, you ought to know . . . but to befoul the school with a person like that, I think, is not permissible in any books.”

He stopped talking out of sheer exhaustion, staring at his feet. Partsunia assuming a secretive and very friendly look, made a proposal to the villager: “And if you know that he’s that kind of a scoundrel towards the people, and towards you, why don’t you kill him? I’ll give you a revolver. Nothing will happen to you for this.”

Shelestian looked at him sharply. He got up. Coming to the table where Partsunia sat, he yelled, harshly: “Are you joking?”

“No,” answered Partsunia.

“If not, then I’m not joking either. A dog deserves a dog’s death. A person worse than a stinking dog and more virile than a communal bull should be tried by a public court, for we two are not the community. I am a small person, and you are a big person. I can take to this job like a fly to a toadstool, purposely set there. For who are you, and where are your Soviet laws that defend the people in the day time? But this is the night, and I’m a small person . . . No . . . Good-bye.”

He turned his back on the "commissar," picked up his hat, donned it, took hold of the whip-handle and then hastily opened the door. He hurried swiftly to the stile.

Partsunia, an expression on his face like that worn by the angler whose fish has broken off his hook, sat for a moment, then rose, turned the light down, and went outside. He was displeased that he did not detain Shelestian long enough to worm out of him a clearer picture of what the moujiks were thinking about the public murders. But he didn't fall for the bait. If he had known where Shelestian lived, he would have gone to his place to restore his mood, for he felt that the moujik had scored a moral victory over him. Cursing, Partsunia sat down on the prispa.

The yard was closed. In the center of it stood a wagon packed with straw; and it had a tongue with a yoke attached to it. Under the fence were some sunflowers, already in bloom, and underneath them, lower down, loomed the luxurious green verdure of pumpkin burdocks. The sky was covered with stars, and through its quiet expanse some light clouds floated. And to the right the church stood silently in the radiance of peace. Its prominence, which shone from two brilliant crosses, lay in the high coolness of the night. The pasture between Klishch's house and the school loomed dark with shpurish grass. Only the road distinguished itself as it ran along from the church far beyond the school and the old cemetery. Partsunia sighed and began to stare into the darkness of the schoolyard.

Then suddenly from behind the house, perhaps from the old cemetery, a figure appeared, going swiftly along the yard fence. Partsunia, with the fear which he often experienced, let his gaze follow the moving figure, similar to the shadow which never leaves its own object. It was only when

the man crossed the stile that Partsunia began breathing freely.

“Why, I was waiting for you at the school, and look where you are!” he greeted the newcomer, who chanced to be Mazdigin.

“Well, I was at the place of an acquaintance on a small matter. Hasn’t Shelestian shown up?” Mazdigin concluded with a question, and then with pretended grief added: “I came to hear what he had to say.”

Partsunia said, “Please sit down by me. I want to exchange a few words with you.”

He sat down, brushing back his hair with his right hand. It continually kept falling down on his forehead and parting in the middle.

“Well, I’m glad I ran across one of your heroes,” Partsunia said. “Such an unusual one could not be found even by the commissar of defense. That is, if everything is true that I heard. Can such a person exist in our time? What about this Ovsy Brus in your village?”

“Have you already spoken with Shelestian?” asked Mazdigin.

Partsunia ignored the question. “By gad, this news really unnerved me,” Partsunia confessed. “That man is one hundred per cent dangerous, if you take into consideration our ‘now’ and tomorrow’s ‘future,’ the aim of which is to transform the peasant holdings into communes. I’m told that the people around here are under the influence of Brus’ charms, which he uses when he treats the cattle. Is this the truth? What do you think?”

“Are you asking me?” Mazdigin inquired.

“Who else? There’s no one else around here,” affirmed Partsunia.

Mazdigin pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket, blew his nose into it, and expressed his carefully thought out opinion. "I'm sure that the person who spoke to you didn't tell you everything. Brus really is a dangerous person. There is much that is not understandable in his character. He knows Ukrainian and Russian. He can hardly read, and yet, go to him and he'll know all the prescriptions in Latin by heart. Whoever taught him? And when? The devil only knows! That son who now lives in Kiev is also dangerous to the government. He's a kurkul poet. Brus knows all about the veterinarian prescriptions. We have been convinced. I feel awestruck. And if you add to this that he is very fond of horses. He can tame and ride the wildest horse. In a race he usually comes out first. He never makes his visits in a wagon or a sleigh, but always on horseback which he can do like mad, drunk or sober. When he first came through a village it was on a well-groomed and restless horse with a small jog or amble. You can add to that the fact that he never curses or strikes anyone without reason. That bourgeoisie acquisition called conscience seethes within him with frightening power. If one is to believe all those theories of inheritance, then this creature perhaps has the blood of some Zaporozhian character in his veins. Therefore, he is more than two hundred per cent dangerous. What do you think?"

"I think he is only one hundred per cent dangerous, and no more. He's got to be sent with the accelerated speed to the place we designated for him, when we sealed his medicines," Partsunia decided.

Mazdigin coughed at this point, wanting to say something, but the direct and commanding tone of Partsunia kept him within the bounds of a listener.

"The medicines, just like we intended, must be handed over to Onopreyovich. But, nevertheless, he must earn the

right to them. Thus I beg you to unseal the cabinet and give the key back to old man Brus, as if the Commissar in Moscow ordered it. And in the meantime let Onopreyovich make him ill with an injection as soon as possible. I'd like to see this hero of the people, even tomorrow. Then he must be taken to the regional hospital, which is under the strict surveillance of our Cheka. What kind of a hospital have you here?" Partsunia inquired.

"The one at Rokhmistriwka," was the suppressed reply of Mazdigin.

"Very well. We'll drive him there. Tomorrow I'll visit the Rokhmistriwka Partkom. He'll be under my control there."

"And what questions will you be asking him there?"

"That will be evident."

And, like the khazain's dog, which the khazain strikes, comes crawling all the more to be beaten by the hand that struck it, so Mazdigin immediately turned around and began to add to what already was said. "If you ever have anything to do with him at Rokhmistriwka, then remember that old man Brus had been burying something in his house with his son Ivan. The youngest son, Modest, told me all about it. He and the old man live together in the same room. He told me he had actually seen them burying it. But when the old man had taken the older son to the station, he searched the spot but couldn't find anything. Perhaps they've hidden it elsewhere. Or perhaps the hidden article has by now landed in Kiev."

"It's a good thing you told me about that. I'll remember it," said Partsunia, now yawning, and at ease.

But Mazdigin, as if to go his casual manner one better, and like people who consciously try to interject their last profound word, added: "The wonderful way you put the

problem of this frightening person is proof that our leaders in Moscow have sense in their heads. And that is the truth, because I've asked one of the party men whether there really was in the Matusiwky factory a director who held such thoughts as you just now expressed."

"Well, you're right," replied Partsunia. "There has been a director there now for four months, but the factory doesn't speak about it to anyone, so as not to give the sugar to the kind of material from which we're going to build the Commune."

He added, "In order to know why a chicken clucks, it doesn't take much sense to guess what she's laid. And so, please, when you're going to take Brus to the hospital, tell him publicly before all the people that if he really is sick, he'll be sent to a health resort. And that the Soviet Government will take care of such persons as himself. Well, so long! Now go . . ."

And while he was still sitting, he extended his hand to Mazdigin. Mazdigin rose swiftly, pressed his hand, and said, "I am always glad to do my job in such a manner that my sacred duty before the party will be performed in the proper way."

Partsunia kept quiet. He didn't rise until he saw Mazdigin's head showing above the sunflowers. And then, having entered the house, he hung his jacket on the nail above the bed. He began to walk around. He did not turn up the wick. He now walked in his shoes, and not only in his stockings. Nor was there a single revolver protruding from the pockets of his hanging jacket.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Brus Visits the "Health Resort"

In the village of Kuchiwchi the people called their committee "Komezza." On the next day Mazdigin and the chief of the "Komezza" called a meeting in the field of all the members at eleven o'clock in the morning. In the communal field, near the ditch where stood the barrel of water, they announced that the supply of medicines would be returned to old man Brus. Let him treat the cattle! They said, too, that he would be sent to a health resort where he could recuperate from the hardships endured while serving the community. The people were tired and covered with dust from the fields. Some of them were drinking water from the barrel, meanwhile resting there with their hands on the hot hoops heated by the sun. But most of them were standing quietly with their hats and caps on, their heads being covered, listening to the news. The wind in the field, as it blew, ruffled their hair, just as it did the green plants growing along the ditch as far as the field's horizon. The reaction of the people to the news would have been passive had it not been for someone in the back interjecting: "That should have been done long ago!"



The field was being prepared to lie in fallow. By its width and length it, too, loomed dark between the wheat and rye. The fallow land, caught by the harrows to which the horses were now hitched, showed the teeth of the harrows that had bitten into the black furrows with their uprooted weeds right up to the frame. The moving team raised the dust as Komezza yelled, "Let the Commune move!"

The horses snorted and strained. The harrows raised the dust as their teeth bit into the earth, clicking as they struck a piece of iron or some bone. The people yelled, cracking their whips in the air, rushing and hurrying, so as not to straggle behind the horses or the teeth of the harrows. This evening they were dusty and sweaty. Dust was in their hair and on their faces. Later they would wash themselves near the hearth so as to clear away not only the dust from their bodies but the grief from their souls. They spoke of old man Brus. What if he should not return from the health resort? Bitterly they knew that in order to remember one must have permission. And in order to think one must be certain that someone will not hear your thoughts.

When one first is uncertain of a person, it is like the first stroke of an axe on a tree, which is productive. Perhaps because of this, the whole gathering in the field of the "Komezza" reacted passively as regards the news about Brus. It could not do otherwise, because it was oppressed with a premonition of evil events to come.

They say that when the keys were being handed back to Brus, Modest's wife was at home. She killed a chicken and her husband got a bottle of moonshine. They called the father for supper. They became reconciled. Old man Brus was in a conciliatory and benevolent mood. But on the second day after the reconciliation, he began to complain about a pain in his chest. Thus two days passed by, during which the old man

did not eat anything, so that he could change to another diet after this fast. He used to do this with his animals, he said. Modest, having noticed this, immediately called Onopreyovich, who advised the old man to go to the hospital at Rokhmistriwka. Brus demurred at first, but when the physician's assistant assured him that he would be transferred to the health resort, just as the lords used to do with their sick people, Brus agreed. And who would have refused to try out that distant place which always stood like a legend before the eyes of the poor person? He said to Onopreyovich: "You've already stopped expecting guests, but here they come. Look into their tender eyes, but keep your own eyes on the hind wheels. In other words, watch your step."

"Why do you worry?" Onopreyovich inquired.

"Why?" Brus repeated. "Because after the day comes the night. The older we get, the wiser we become. But we pay little heed, just like the old stone women who, in their indifference, are not stronger than small children which one must not let fall out of one's hands because they'll get hurt. It is for this that we have health resorts and superintendents."

"You speak as if every promise were foolish," the physician's assistant said. "You seem to be thinking 'Even if the horse vanishes, and even if you yourself are killed.'"

"So what? Isn't it true?" Brus asked. "And aren't our poor peasants trying to outwit God? We used to be the slaves of the lord, and now we want to be the slaves even of our guests. God once gave us intelligence and land, so that we would be able to handle what we have. But now we've handed our field over to our guests just as if our intelligence were no longer necessary. Just as if it were to serve in obedience to someone rather than to serve one's self. Now I have to listen to you and ride to the health resort."

The physician's assistant listened and reasoned: "Oh, Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus, intelligence among the people is rare. It's better to say: What is for the people is for us too; what is for the community is for the old woman too. For we were not, and are not, the law in the Ukraine."

And so they drove Brus to the hospital. His son Modest took him there.

The Rokhmistriwka hospital had been built sometime before by the "Zemstwo," and supplied with good doctors. Up until the revolution it bore a good reputation, even after ten years of human fear and insecurity. Even now it could boast of a good name as the friend of human beings and as a human resting place for the sick and ailing.

When Brus was brought into the hospital before the setting of the sun, he simply began to revive in spirit. During his life he had often brought the sick of his own family, and the sick of his acquaintances, here. He expected with definite assurance that there would still be people there who knew him. He thought if he convalesced for about three days, that this would be fortunate. He would rest, and be cured, for his illness was not of long duration, only two days, really. He knew from his own experience that when an animal's stomach began to hurt the thing to do was to change the old diet to a lighter one, meanwhile supplying nourishment with proper medicines, thus saving the animal. He had applied this remedy to himself. If his stomach began to ache, he immediately stopped eating. He knew that, following this short fasting, peasant food would put him back on his legs again. Now that they had brought him to this hospital, that would all be for the better. Here people were fitted to alleviate the pain of the sick. Even the appearance of the hospital garden, with its flowers and trees, had a beneficial effect upon him insofar as his rest and peace were concerned.

The Rokhmistriwka Hospital stood on the crossroads, one of which led to Melnikiwka, and the other to Ladimirka. The garden was rife with cherry, plum, pear, apple and walnut trees. All around this green growth, over the old picket fence, rose some high, straight sycamore trees. In front of the entrance door, through which the sick were brought into the dispensary, on both sides of the steps grew large thickets of elder, hiding the large panes of glass in the windows and their clean frames that were painted white. The green roofs of the annexes harmonized with the leaves of the poplars and sycamores and all the other green verdure. Only the white patches of the walls could be seen here and there, penetrating through the thickness of all this green growth.

Old man Brus, getting off the wagon with a smile of satisfaction, turned his eyes towards the entrance to the dispensary as if he wanted to go there as to an old and good friend. It didn't matter that his diet had made him feeble, and that there still was that burning pain in the chest; for when Modest took him under the arm, he leaned with pleasure on his son, climbing the stairs, and reaching the dispensary with comparative ease.

An electric lamp burned in the ceiling, reflecting its light brightly on the handles of the door. The room was empty. There was a bench near each opposite wall, its pale-blue color showing signs of wear on the edges. To the right of the entrance door was a drain pipe with a spout and tap. There was a smell of iodoform and of another strong medicine. Brus recognized the odors as those of old acquaintances, and so this first recognition was pleasant and soothing to him. It was only when he sat down on the bench and looked at the white walls with their full illustrations of diseased livers, throats, stomachs, eyes, intestines, feet and syphilitic ulcers, that he began to experience a forewarning of uncertainty.

Then from out the door which was on the right of Brus, there came a woman in white clothes who asked Modest: "Where did you bring the sick man from?"

He told her, and she continued: "You tell all of your poor peasants that we never take in sick people at night. This man could have waited until morning. And you brought him tonight. But I'm taking him in only because the G.P.U. phoned us that if anyone came from Kuchiwka we were to accept him. You can go now. The sick man can remain."

Modest, his hat still on his head, approached his father, took his hat off, extended his hand in farewell, and said: "Get well, Father; good-bye. I'll come to see you on Sunday."

The father, extending his hand and trying to rise, answered in a sudden, alarmed voice: "Son, take me back with you. It will be better to come here another time."

He wanted to say something else, but the woman came over and, putting her hand on his shoulder, started to soothe him: "Don't worry, it'll all be very good for you here. And if you don't like it here, you are at liberty to leave any time. Or to check out. Don't worry. Look at yourself. You came here in good spirits, and now you're fretting like a child."

The words of the woman appeased Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus a little, and, having stirred on the bench, he spoke as if to excuse himself. He said, "It came to me all at once that I shouldn't be here. There must be a mistake. Oh, has Modest gone already?"

Once again Ovsy Brus became painfully disturbed when he saw that he was left alone with a woman in hospital clothes. And even if he had heard that someone else besides the G.P.U. had suddenly framed him, he would have lost his equilibrium just the same. The putrid, horrible, cold and importunately slimy word "G.P.U." The peace of the

sick man fell, like a person shot in the head, or an ox struck between the horns by the butt end of an axe. Oh, if this had been a man, and not a woman in white clothes before whom Ovsy Brus was waiting, he'd somehow sneak out into the corridor and yell for his son to return.

The violence of his mood momentarily dissipated itself, thanks to this same woman. She took Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus by the hand and led him slowly through the door near which he had been sitting. She passed through a small vestibule, going outside into the thick shadows and a bush of cherries. The boardwalk creaked under their steps. There was a growth of flowers on both sides of it. All this was lit up by a lantern from the building to which they were going, but the lantern could not be seen because of the branches. Finally they saw a lantern on the right of the entrance door. Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus walked along slowly, leaning on the arm of the woman in the white clothes, involuntarily looking at the Indian pinks, peonies, violets, pansies, and the malva which grew near every house in the village in their pleasant and glorious colors. The specters caused by the word "G.P.U." dissolved, becoming light, dissipating like fog beyond the high porch of the hospital . . . God only knows where . . . When they came to the steps of the building where the lantern was located, there was no trace of the word G.P.U. in Ovsy Brus' psychic makeup. He was too stunned.

The woman led the sick man into the bathroom and, having shown him the tub, said: "Take your clothes off and have a bath. Fold your clothes up and put them right here. I'll bring you a night shirt; you can put it on. That's fine."

Then she left him, shutting the door behind her. Brus looked around and saw a little window near the ceiling through which a little cherry branch with pretty green leaves was protruding. But the bathroom seemed so empty that he

visualized an empty manger, an empty trough, and an empty new coffin. The word "G.P.U." again entered his mind, like a wind striking the metal sheeting on a house. The old man found it hard to breathe. Though nervous, he began to undress. He turned the water on and washed himself. Now the door opened and the familiar servant woman threw him some clothes and then shut the door. He let the water drain out and dressed. He sat for awhile, got up, and rapped on the door. The servant woman came with her orders.

"Take your jacket, hat and trousers with you," she instructed. "I'll put them in the storeroom tomorrow. Leave your dirty shirts and boots here. After tomorrow I'll bring you clean clothes. We have no slippers, so you'll have to walk in boots. And when you sign out of the hospital you can take your old clothes with you."

The old man slowly stooped down, putting on his hat, and taking the old clothes that he was wearing when he came to the hospital. The servant woman watched his movements carefully. When he had straightened up, she said, "Now come with me!"

She took him under the arm. They went through three doors in the lighted vestibule. They entered a sick room. There were three empty beds already made up with blankets. In the corner there was one bed with a sick man in it who was lying with his head to the window. He was inert. An electric light was burning brightly. Brus could plainly see a clean cuspidor near every bed. The white enamel had chipped off the cuspidors in places, creating the illusion that they were filled with cool, black water.

"Well, this is your home and your bed," the woman said. "Lie down and rest. The doctor will visit you tomorrow morning. So long!"

She left. Brus lay down, covering his head with the blanket since he felt chilly. And, doubling himself up, he lay still. An even, pleasant warmth now began to pass over his body. Although he was tired and wanted to fall asleep, his heart was beating out a warning of danger. He lay thus for a long while, but he finally fell asleep. He dreamed that Modest was calling him to have a look at the water in the Onykian Ravine. From the head of the Ravine to the lords' dam his locked cupboard with the medicines was floating, half submerged in the water; but the door, lock and seal could be seen plainly. Just as he was about to ask his son why this medicine cupboard was in the water, a wild duck lit down on the lock, flapping its wings and quacking. But the cupboard just floated on. Suddenly the sound of gunfire was heard. The cupboard and the duck were enveloped in such a thick cloud of smoke that they were no longer visible. And when the smoke had disappeared, there was no trace of duck or cupboard in the water. Only the waves went on to the dam, splashing against the banks. Brus half-consciously stirred in his bed, knowing half-consciously what the real situation was, and tried to fall asleep again.

Suddenly a real shot reverberated throughout the room. Brus leaped up in his bed, looking over at the table. There before it he saw a dark-complexioned man of average height, dressed in hospital clothes, looking intently at him. The man held in his right hand a rubber fly swatter. When the night visitor saw that he was being consciously watched by Brus, albeit nervously, he swished the swatter with all his power over the table. A cool chill swept over Brus' spine. His whole being was shaken with horror. Feeling deeply insulted, he asked restrainedly, "What are you doing . . . playing games with me?"



He started to look for his clothes. But the one who did the swatting began to appease him in a manner that an executioner uses in appeasing the victim before the scaffold, consoling him with the promise that the rope would not break, that it was strong. He said, "Here you are the only one who hears me swatting, for the other one behind you will never hear anything again. So please do not get angry, and don't put your clothes on. This room is closed, and I have the key to it."

He opened up the palm of his left hand and displayed the key. And Brus, who had been quieted by the words of his visitor, now began to dress. He finished dressing, and wanted to rise, staggered, and then sat down on his bed, exhausted. The unknown person, seeing that Brus had sat down, began to sit down himself hypnotically on the table, keeping his eyes glued meanwhile on Brus. Having finally taken his seat, and holding the swatter in his right hand, he asked, "Tell me please, sincerely! How much gold did you bury in your yard?"

Brus looked at him silently, breathing very heavily. Turning away from the questioner, and lowering his eyes down to his bare feet, for he had left his boots in the bathroom, he now felt that they would come in handy. But the one on the table, so importunately insistent, continued: "I'm asking you how much gold you've buried in your garden? Or did you turn it all over to your oldest son, who took it to Kiev?"

"What is this if not a hospital?" the old man asked in lieu of a reply, but in a way that meant he was just coming to his senses.

His tormenter said, "This is a hospital. Wherever a person wants to rest in his own name, there you will find the G.P.U. not letting the person come to his senses, all in the

name of Communism. For to let you come to your senses would mean you'd become as wise as Communism, or perhaps even wiser. For then the trump card would be in your hands, and that would not be to our benefit. Do you understand? So please tell me where you hid your gold if you wish to live out your life in peace. If you won't, you'll see what will happen. I'm waiting."

He got up from behind the chair, went over to the window with his swatter, hanging it on a screwdriver that was used for unscrewing the window bolts. Then he returned, and, having sat down on the chair, he started to stare, with eyes that were not rapacious, nor weary and inquisitive, at the almost stupefied old man who, without lowering his gaze off his inquisitor, just sat in silence. And who knows how long Brus would have been that way had the stranger not interrupted the already too prolonged silence.

He said, "There is no escape from the Soviet Government. All the Komezas, all the public servants, all the teachers, all the Komsomols are Soviet spies. But all these can be seen externally; but if you add all those who come upon the enemy rashly, or unexpectedly, then our power becomes very great. No matter where you wanted to exchange your gold for currency, you'd have to deal only with the G.P.U. That is, the people you'd have to ask to make the exchange would be the G.P.U. No matter whether it would be in some isolated village, or in Odessa, or in Kiev, or in Moscow. Your case is hopeless. I know everything. I know that you've been digging in the house, and that you've been covering up; and that you've been uncovering what you covered up. But I don't know what you've done with those Tsarist five and ten spots that you've gathered up during your life. If you give them up to us, to the Soviet State, we'll allow you to live out the rest of your life. And if you don't confess, believe me,

your son in Kiev will perish with you too. This is our diagnosis of your illness. Remember now, who we are, and who you are! And don't try to wriggle out of this. It'll be better for you to tell the truth."

Brus heard the Chekist say that there was only one person in the room listening to what he, the Chekist, had to say, and that the other man lying there must be dead. And so everything that was said by this creature blew over Ovsy Brus not with the terror of death, or with any great realization of human disaster, but with a great sense of emptiness. This terrible loneliness drew down on his heart a more visible chill than a winter sky, where there is no sign of living creatures. Can the community which he served all his life now come to his rescue? And what does it all mean now? You can crush, twist or burn straw, but it is still straw. And of God . . . what does he know about Him? Perhaps this, that small people are delivered over for a sorting over, for some redefilement, if not for actual extinction. But there was one thought in the soul of Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus which grieved him very much, and that was that he would like to be able with the rest of the strength within him to get a message through to his son in Kiev, to warn him to flee. And as for himself, if he was to perish, then let it not be in a hospital room, or in some G.P.U. cellar. Then let him die among those grasses and grains where he had spent his whole life, helping them to sow the grain in the ground, helping them in the growing and the reaping of the ripe grain, just like he, too, was helping the animals. Thus this terror, this emptiness of human life in face of the grains and the grasses, even in face of death will not be terrifying. If somehow one could only get away from the gaze of this creature sitting behind the table.

He asked the question not for the need of the fleeting moment, but for the same reason that a wild animal makes crooked traces in the snow when its den is too exposed to danger.

“Why do you keep on reviling me as some kind of an enemy, as if I had committed a murder?” he asked. “Are not our people the Soviet Government?”

“And what kind of a Soviet Government are you, when you hide your wealth from us?” the inquisitor demanded. “Or would someone say that you stuffed the pieces of a broken plate when they do find out that you did bury something? That’s not what they will say, but they’ll say that you hid some Tsarist gold. If that’s so, then you’re an enemy. You’ll only prove that you’re a friend by confessing where you hid the gold. Did it go to Kiev, or did you bury it in your garden? I’ve never tolerated any jokes with such as you.”

“I can see that you want the gold,” Brus said. “I know that, no matter what kind of human truth I’d tell you, you’d thrust it aside like a foul and unnecessary rag. There is gold in it. You’ll unfold it, take out what’s in it, then throw it back into some manure or mix it in the mud so as to forget about it. I say: ‘There is no gold in the rag. That rag was a person who served the people with his health, and his intelligence, and . . . and . . .’ ”

The unfortunate Ovsy Brus began to speak bitterly, but the executioner leaped out of his place, running from behind the table to the bed, and, pointing at his bare legs, yelled: “Why, you old grand-pop, where’s your sense and conscience? Why, look at your legs. Clean, hey? . . . Hey? . . . Why don’t you understand that it was the Soviet Government that gave you the opportunity to keep them clean, and put you to boot into this clean bed like a mother does a

child? And yet you have the gall to speak like that? . . . Oh! Oh! . . . You snaky breed. You're not sincere with us, so we'll not have any mercy on you! You've brought suffering upon your own self; and before you die, it won't be the priest you'll call in, but us; and you'll tell us where you've hidden the gold. Such strength is essential to the Soviet Government for buying what remains of the conscience of the bourgeoisie in foreign countries . . . for buying all the priests in the foreign countries so that they'll say from their pulpits, and in their churches, and their meetings, that you yourselves have degenerated. For we, the Soviets, the Bolsheviks, have a God, and all of you are just trash, beasts, and unclean pigs!"

Having returned, he walked to and fro near the chair. Then he resumed his talk to the silent and disturbed old man, ordering: "Undress and get into bed; and stay there until you get better. Then we'll resume our conversation. Well, what are you making such large eyes at? Do you understand what I told you?"

Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus had lived his span of years, but he remembered well that no one had ever talked to him like this. Every job, and every promise, he had exercised and fulfilled to the full measure of his conscience and ability. When he had learned about animals, never under any circumstances did he accept his invitations reluctantly. When the people spoke with him it was with respect and thanks. With all his heart and soul he was happy over this, for he felt that he had earned and deserved it. But this man? . . . Was he a person, or was he a devil? Why did he hammer so insistently at the wounds of an old man's torn soul?

Because of this consciousness Ovsy Brus' countenance had taken on a very doleful look. This old costume looked strange on him now, because it had become too large by rea-

son of the khazain becoming thinner. The fresh shirt at the neck now looked on him as if on a dying person. The grey head, with temples drawn by the skin in such a way that all their bones bulged out, had the look of a shrunken corpse. Only the eyes under the thick brows were opened wide, and were so dark with aroused feeling that even the pupils could not be seen. It seemed that all life would explode from them with anger and despair, and that the flesh would become numb forevermore. His whiskers, although they stuck out like a cat's, did not detract from the look of horror on the face of Ovsy Brus, for it partitioned off, along with those strong white teeth, the upper part of the head, thus making it seem from this side of the head as if, under those whiskers, the candid smile of one who was dying, prolonged itself. His bare feet trembled, and his hand shook, as it rested on his knee. This look spoke not of fear, but of the unexpected appearance of something, which in the human life of this world seemed impossible.

The executioner could not stand this look. He was awestruck, and, so as to conceal it in himself, took a bold step towards the sick man, saying, "If I tell you to lie down, well, then, lie down!"

He began to unbutton Brus' jacket, took it off and put it where it had lain before. He took his trousers off, too, and laid them aside. Then with a high hand he forced him back impudently onto the pillow, adding, "Lie down and rest, and remember that I haven't yet finished the matter with you. And remember, too, that you can't get away from here. You'd better worry about how you're going to die peacefully. This evening your supply of medicines was transferred to Onopreyovich."

The sick man was stirred by these words, and he hung his head down on his chest. Silent tears began rolling down

his cheeks onto the pillow. He was rendered helpless by these sudden harsh experiences. But the executioner didn't notice this at all. He had hurriedly left the sick chamber. Partsunia was the name of the executioner.

A short time passed. One could hear the clock behind the wall beating out twelve o'clock. Ovsy Brus raised his head. Outside the window the lower part of a sycamore, lighted up by the lantern burning in front of the annex door, could be seen. The old man trembled. He noticed Partsunia's swatter hanging on the screwdriver. Then he forced himself to transfer his glance to the sick man whom he had noticed when the woman had brought him into the room. This man was lying in the same position as before. When the executioner had said that "that man" would no longer hear anything, he must have known that the man was dead. Why didn't they take him out of there? Or were they going to wait for Brus to die so that they could put his body in its place to scare another candidate for death?

And so Ovsy laid his head on the pillow. Now he felt an ominous silence in the chamber. The light of the lamp, and the made-up beds, and the floor, and the two windows, were as silent as the corpse. Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus began to recall where he had left his boots, for he had become unspeakably sad in the cramped quiet of the chamber.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Flight From a Trap

Filled with this kind of worry, Brus lay without closing his eyes or covering himself. The realization that behind him lay a corpse, or what looked like a corpse, kept his disturbed and limited consciousness in a state of supreme misery. He must run away, and so he waited, as if he were selecting the time of escape. He wanted to have the light put out, though he knew it would not be done since he could not find the switch. Then somewhere in the distant village a cock crowed. Brus jumped up as if he were waiting for a song. It had wakened his lagging spirits. The old man let his feet down on the floor. When he rose, he staggered, bending down to his clothes. He put on his trousers and jacket. Then, having noticed that his hat was lying on the floor, he hesitated to pick it up. The mad thought struck him that the man with the fly swatter might let the hounds smell it so they would have his scent when they tracked him. But he bent down, almost trampling on it, then picked it up and put it on his head. Without looking around he slowly left the room, for Partsunia had not closed the door behind him. Perhaps he thought that feebleness was greater insurance than



a lock. Brus kept looking at his feet to avoid tripping himself, in the same way that a pedestrian crossing a foot-way plank over an abyss keeps his eyes glued on the plank. If he makes just one sideway glance he might fall headlong into space from which there would be no return. The vestibule was lit up as when he had arrived. He recognized the door to the bathroom, and he entered it. His boots were lying on the floor near the door and his clothes near the bathtub. He drew out his handkerchief and tied both boots together by their straps which he had always pulled to get his boots on. Then he threw them over his shoulder so that one of them rested on his spine, and the other on his chest. He left and went through the vestibule. The door was not shut, just ajar. Through the opening one could see the stairs lighted by the lantern. When he left the annex, there arose before him, like a wall, a row of sycamores. In his own mind he thought of going straight ahead across the garden and crawling out through some hole in the fence. But then there might not be a hole in the fence so he stayed on the boardwalk.

Thus he came to the dispensary. He recognized the door through which Modest had led him. It was locked with a key from the inside, which jutted out through the hole. Fortunately there was no one around. The electric bulb was burning, lighting up the picket fence and the thicket of lilacs. Brus came to the door, pressed against it, turning the key. The door opened and he crossed the threshold into the dispensary. Losing not a single moment, he locked the door behind himself, leaving the key in the hole. And he slowly descended the stairs to freedom.

It was not yet dawn, but he felt the chill of the early morning all over his body. He crossed himself, saying: "God help me!"

He wandered across the Milnikiwsky road and came to the fields. Between them and the road extended a long, raised pile of earth, overgrown with thickets of thistles with long triple needles like thorns. Since Brus was barefooted, he could see there was no way to cross from the road to the fields. So he went along this overgrown ridge, looking for the pathway. He was quiet now, looking up at the stars shining brightly in the sky. He was going westward, passing the hospital, which in the shadows of night reminded him of a pile of thick fog. It appeared to watch his flight with several bright fires. Its close proximity frightened him. He went on, held up by one wish: to get away from this part of the country. He walked carefully, afraid that, if he should stumble and fall, he might not be able to rise again.

Soon he began to feel smoother earth beneath his feet. His gaze showed him the path. He stepped onto it with more assurance, going into the dark fields. They were now of one color to him with the sky, which differed only in that it was starry. To the right of Brus it was darker than in any other direction. He knew that there was a ravine leading from Nasachev all the way to the Ladimirsky station; and that a railway ran through it. Along the railway ran a river. The fog from the river and the smoke from the engines perhaps had joined in one large thicket hanging over the ravine; for the night was peaceful, though dark. On the left side ran the road to Kuchiwka, but he could not make it out. Far, far away, perhaps beyond Samhorod, there was a red glow rising up, similar to that made by a forest fire.

The pathway intersected the pasture. He now walked on rolling land. A villager with a team of horses and a wagon came along. Brus was trying to rid himself of an apprehensive feeling when the peasant halted his horses, yelling, "Jump on; I'll give you a ride."

Brus hesitated only a moment, then approached the wagon.

"I'll put my boots on the wagon," he said. "You just go on without me. When the road ends, you can drop the boots off. I'll come along and pick them up."

The man tightened his hold on the reins to check the horses, and asked, "Where are you from?"

"From the Smilansky hospital . . . at Kuchiwka," Brus answered. "And believe me, I'm so all in, I can hardly drag my legs behind me. And so, if you please, at least give my boots a ride."

"Hey, hey, that just isn't right!" the villager cried. "Let me help you up on the wagon, if you're not able to climb up yourself."

He dismounted, and really did help Brus up onto the wagon. He resumed his seat and raised his whip, shouting, "Away there, you bays!"

The horses pulled away at a lively trot. Turning to Brus, the villager observed: "You're too trusting. Why, I could have taken your boots and made off with them. You know the times are such that for a piece of rotten leather for patching one has to pay with sacks of grain. And you trusted me! What would I have in this breast of mine if I took your boots and left a feeble khazain like you to trudge behind? You're a strange man. My horses aren't played out, so why shouldn't I give you a lift too?"

"Perhaps you're headed for the harvest, you with your scythe and your pitchfork?" Brus turned the trend of talk into another channel.

"Of course not; harvest time is still two weeks away," the peasant explained. "I'm heading for the Shokhiniw Ravine to cut some grass to pasture the cattle a bit."

Turning away, he ceased talking, and this pleased Brus. He was afraid that the villager might recognize him. The old man had his own failures of which he was ashamed.

It now began to dawn. To the left and back of them a red glow arose above the horizon. All over the pasture piles of hauled manure could be seen. The grass and the thistles loomed dark in the morning freshness. The dust on the roadway along which they were riding no longer rose up behind the wheels, being held down by the morning dew.

Finally the field began to slope downwards into the deep Shokhiniw Ravine. They were now passing a lord's estate—a large farmstead. The road leading to it was overgrown with grass and thorns. The gateposts were torn out, and in their place grew elder trees. The walls of the farmstead buildings loomed behind acacia bushes, cherry trees, and ipomoeas that grew entangled on the porches, in the paneless frames, and the crumbling chimneys. They passed by this ruin silently into the ravine, in which grew cattails, sedges, and tall grass. All this growth loomed grey because of the dew on the leaves.

The villager led his horses into the grass, halting them. The wheel bands and the rims soon began to drip with moisture. The horses began to nibble the grass. The villager helped Brus off the wagon, indicating with his whip handle to the Kuchiwsky fields, "You see that pile of earth over there? The Soviets are constructing a road to Uman. You'll find a road near that pile over which you can get to that side."

Brus thanked him, laid the boots over his shoulder, and trudged along over the wet grass.

But when he came to the acacia garden from the Melnikivsky to the Kuchiwsky fields, he felt a heavy weariness passing over his body, with a renewal of the burning pain in

the chest. A dull ache began in his head, akin to the drowsiness of a drunken person. It seemed as if his head were so heavy that his knees began to bend. He plodded on, now leaving behind the young tree garden, now coming to the pathway between the Kuchiwski plots of rye, not once stopping to rest, all the while conquering his weariness. If anyone had asked him where he was heading, Brus would not have known the answer, unless, having reflected a bit, he would say, "To tell Ivan to hurry faster, for his father is dead."

When he told the villager that he was on the way to Kuchiwka, he had really meant that he was heading for his own fields to die there. In his infirmity he had no intention of throwing himself on anyone. It did not matter that he had given the best part of his life for his people. Now he sought for a place to rest, so that the wall of growing rye would shield him from the sun, and serve not only as a shelter from the wind, but from the prying of unwelcome eyes. The shoulder on which the boots had been hanging had become numb. The left hand, which rested on the chest, as it held on to the folds of his jacket, had become so stiff, that he couldn't spread out the fingers to let loose of it. He now realized that it would require very little to make him fall. Perhaps only a little breeze, or a louder rustle of the rye heads, or perhaps even the sudden warbling of a sparrow over his ear would be all that would be necessary. He was at the end of his strength.

The sun wheeled higher into the heavens, just as the rolling-flax, having leaned on its dry stalks, does not fall, but lifts itself higher. The sun's rays turned upon the ryes, and grasses, and trees, and they glistened with freshness.

Brus looked out at the beautiful world. At the head of the ravine, white and high, stood the Kuchiwka church, enfolded

in a cloud of red sunlight. He became dizzy, staggered, and fell face forwards into the rye. He tried to straighten out his hand, but failed.

The earth was mercifully cooling, smelling of crushed grains and spiked with a pleasant morning odor. He was aware even of last year's straw, this year's fresh roots, the sun's dew, and the insects. Having cleaved to the earth with one's whole body, he thought, one really feels stronger. What mattered it that his hat had fallen off, and that the stalks had hung their bearded heads on his grey head, rocking in the wind, and touching his hair.

Then old man Brus heard, coming out of the moist earth, and the green grain, "Grandpa . . . grandpa . . . Get up! It's breakfast time by the sun . . ."

Could it be his fancy? Not being able to stir, or move his head towards the pleasant voice, he begged, "Pull the boots off my shoulder . . . and set them down by me. They've pressed down upon me so much, I can't get up."

A young girl's voice again spoke up, sympathetically. "Good Lord, this is the first time I've seen such a thing . . . when a person cannot get out from under his boots. Wait, I'll help you."

And indeed, in a few minutes, he was actually sitting on the pathway near the rye. His boots, still tied with the handkerchief, lay near him on the shpurish grass, and on his boots lay his hat. His left hand was clutching the earth. He moved his fingers, with sheer joy that he was able to recognize the earth with them. His feet were bare, and all covered with dust, which, having been moistened, and then dried, had become drier than an egg shell. His dark trousers were not rolled up; and they were wet up to the knees. The girl stared at him, pity in her eyes.

“Grandpa,” she begged, “sit here awhile. I’ll run to the village, and the people will come and get you.”

The thought flashed through Brus’ mind that the people who would come to take him might be the same ones who had already taken him. He pleaded, “Young lady, just wait awhile. Please tell me, where am I?”

“Near Kuchiwka.”

“And how did you happen to be around here?”

“I was on my way from the Tashlyk farmstead to old man Brus’ place. My aunt sent me.”

“And whose girl are you?”

“Shelestian’s.”

“Are you Hapusia?”

“Hapusia. Yes. How did you guess?”

“Did you know Ovsy Brus?” he asked. “Or have you ever seen him?”

“I saw him . . . once—maybe more times.”

“You saw him? . . . My poor child, I’m Ovsy Brus. It seems to me that I should be able to help you.”

The girl looked at him with fear, then at his boots and hat. She started to wipe her eyes with her green petticoat, saying, “I’m afraid you won’t be able to help me. You don’t even want the people to help you.”

Brus’ right hand, with which he held to the earth to bolster up his sitting position, trembled. His left hand was propped against the ground. He did not even have the strength to sit up straight. And the girl’s last words seemed to have sobered him.

“Tell me, young lady,” he begged, “what is it you want? I’ll help you at least with words.”

“Help me. My aunt told me you’re the one who can help me.” When she said this she was looking down at the ground,

holding her petticoat to her face, pressing it to her eyes. She wiped away the tears that had been flowing. Brus, getting control of himself, carefully and sympathetically put a question to her: "How can I help you or anyone else, if I don't know what it is? I have to know everything if I'm to be of any help . . . Tell me. Don't be ashamed."

"I'm big-bellied," she confessed.

"Listen well, young lady. I no longer have any medicines in my house—if that is what your aunt hints at. But there is another way, if you are not afraid. If you take this path you may save yourself. Just before Easter I was treating the cow of a Makiev widow, and I saved the fee. The khazayka, knowing that I had a son in Kiev . . . she thought he was not married yet . . . she gave me ten Tsarist rubles, asking that my son have them made into a wedding ring. Perhaps even two rings! And she tied these rubles with a red ribbon, and plaited it into the mane of my horse Wyhra just near the forehead. That red ribbon must still be hanging there. You go this evening or tomorrow morning. Take a pair of scissors with you. When Wyhra starts eating, then pat her gently on the forehead, and at the same time cut off the ribbon holding the rubles. Then ride with this money to Kiev. I'll give you the address of my son."

"And whom will I go to?" asked Hapusia confusedly and suspiciously.

"To my Ivan. His wife will become a doctor this year. And she'll help you. Do you hear? When you get that money, take it with you to the station. The devil take them, if they keep it all for your fare. You'll then have no reason to worry over it. But before you go to the station, go to Onopreyovich. Let him put into the glass those medicines which are in the green bottle with the large red cross. Have him



come to me. Tell him where you saw me, and what I asked you to do. You won't forget?"

"No, I won't forget. Thank you, Grandpa. But I didn't get the address."

"Aha . . . Well, now . . . Have you got anything to write it down on?"

"No, but I won't forget . . . You just tell me . . ."

"Very well, I won't give you his address. I'll just give the name of the hospital where his wife works. Everybody in Kiev knows where it is. You just ask for the Oleksandriwsky Hospital and the lady Doctor Shchoholov. You won't forget?"

"The Oleksandriwsky Hospital and the lady Doctor Shchoholov. No, I won't forget. I'll never forget. Thank you, Grandpa!"

"Wait a minute; tell my son everything that you saw, and tell him that I died. He'll know what to do."

Hapusia, standing there, began to sob. She turned her head away from Brus towards the village and, holding her chest with her hands, grieved. She broke into intermittent cries. Her grief touched the old man, for tears began to flow down his unwashed, stubbled face, and over his whiskers. Finally he said, "Run along, young lady. Don't tell anything to the people; just tell Onopreyovich to bring me an injection. Go, and don't tarry . . ."

Hapusia, looking at the village without turning to Brus, and weeping silently, proceeded towards the village, saying just one word, "Farewell!" She said it brokenly.

She disappeared beyond the moving field of rye. But her grief still echoed back to the lonely person on the field. Like the rain drops on a pane of glass, the tears still kept rolling and rolling . . . just like it was in the hospital when Partsunia

told him that they had given Onopreyovich all of his medicines.

The time passed imperceptibly on the field. Old man Brus sat near a wall of rye, grasping the soil on both sides with both hands. The tears had dried in his eyes, on his thin chin, on his whiskers, and on the stubble underneath the hooked nose. The sun had long since passed its zenith in the sky, spreading its rays over the whole world, and over the Kuchiwka ryes just like a dove spreads its wings and feathers before cooing.

And now someone put a hat on Brus' head, while he sat in the same place with closed eyes. It could have been said that he died while he was in a sitting posture, had it not been that his black feet, covered with dried dust, were trembling from time to time, just as if some insect had been biting into them. It was quiet all the way to the village and the Nasachiwsky and Melnykiwsky ditches, except for some quail and young hares that ran away from Hapusia.

How had Hapusia landed here, and found the one she was looking for? She had been on the way from the Tashlyk farmstead, by Lynnikiw and Panychiw, and Hromowenkiw, to the Brus farmstead. And the pathway she was following was only fifteen steps off from the spot where Brus lay. This pathway joined at right angles with the path that led to the farmsteads. Here she found something that resembled a man. It was Brus!

Then from behind the corner of two walls of rye appeared the physician's attendant, the worthy Onopreyovich, who, having seen Brus, went over to him. He stood there before him, gazing intently and excitedly at the old man; then spoke more loudly than was his usual habit. He said, "Good day, Ovsy Yukhrymovich Brus!"

Brus trembled, and opened his eyes, and on his pallid and wrinkled face, there passed a flash of satisfaction. He spoke like one in a dream:

“Is that you, my dear Onopreyovich?”

The latter sat down beside him, asking, “And how can I help you, Ovsy Brus?”

Brus spoke quietly, “Just look at me,” he directed, “and if it’s necessary, just feel me to see if I’m feeble, or whether I’m sick. Something’s burning in my chest.”

Onopreyovich pronounced his diagnosis, “I don’t have to examine you to know and to say what it is. I know. You are very sick,” he said. “You’ll have to undergo an operation. You’ve got stomach ulcers. But first you’ll have to get better before your operation. This is all I can say.”

Brus asked, “And if I get well again after the operation, will you share my medicines with me, so that I’ll be able to live out my span of life before reaching God’s boundary?”

Onopreyovich was stirred. He lifted his hat up, coughing meanwhile, “You know very well, Ovsy Yukhrymovich, that there are no medicines around now,” he said, not unkindly. “If I were to give you some, Mazdigin and all the Communists would know about it. And they’ll do to me, what they’ve done to you. For, believe me, Mazdigin had no sooner come into our village than he started egging me to take over your medicines. He said that you travel about the villages agitating against the Soviet Government, and that there’s no place for you in this new world. So it wasn’t really I who did this great injustice in taking away from you your means of existence. Besides this, when Mazdigin and your Modest brought your medicines to me, he said that the one from Moscow told him that you should be isolated from the people, perhaps in the same way that Sergy Sergiovich was isolated.”

“They say that he cut his hand on some rusty tin and got blood poison, and that he died in his own bathtub.”

It seemed as if Ovsy Brus were trying to contradict this with his words, but he remained silent, listening. And now the fingers of his right and left hand were trembling on the ground from his efforts to maintain equilibrium.

“Why,” said Onopreyovich, “he isolated himself from the people; and if he had not, then his fate would have been the same as yours.”

“Thank you, dear Onopreyovich,” Brus said, “for listening to me, such a harassed person, and coming to me. I asked you about one special thing. Did you bring it with you in a syringe?”

“I brought it.”

Onopreyovich’s reply was heavy and forced. And Ovsy Brus looked at him, directing him with his eyes to look at his left hand. Then he said, “This one is not very strong. Give it an injection, please. Then let me fall asleep and rest. It seems as if some children were here and wouldn’t let me sleep . . . and that they pulled off my hat and were putting it on.”

Mr. Onopreyovich got down on his knees, taking hold of Ovsy Brus’ left hand, rolling up the dirty sleeve of his jacket over his elbow, then looking for the syringe in the lower pocket of his jacket. But it had stuck there, and he could not get it out as fast as he would have liked. Thus the assistant physician spoke just for the sake of saying something:

“You used to make injections into mad dogs and wounded cattle to ease their pain,” he remembered. “And now we ourselves are like mad dogs and wounded animals that need

this injection. And so you forgive me on this earth, for you know how it has begun to reach out to us.”

While he was speaking, the hand with the rolled-up sleeve shone white against the sky, its skinniness standing out to the eye. One of the veins near the elbow joint grew as blue as the cornflower that grew so abundantly on the pathway. Perhaps the vein grew so terribly blue because Onopreyovich's forehead began to perspire. But he finally bent over the extended hand, making the injection in the firmest part of the arm. Ovsy Brus begged, “Lay me down so that when I begin to fall asleep I'll be facing the sky and the earspikes. So that if I do dream, it will be like the life I've led among these fields and these, our people.”

Then he was silent. And the physician laid him down, putting the boots under his head. He stood up over him, holding the empty syringe in his hand, quietly sobbing. The hat lay behind the head and back of the boots of Ovsy Brus. Time passed on, God only knows how much, the physician still standing, looking at the old man. But it was evident that he did not expect any pre-death phenomenon. It was evident that he was greatly stirred by this quiet but terrible event.

Ovsy Brus did not close his eyes. He lay there, looking upwards, so that the physician thought he was still alive. But when he took the hand of the man and felt his pulse, he knew he was feeling the stillness of a corpse. He swiftly unfolded the sleeve on his left hand, rolling it down again to its former length. And he bent his right hand so that the palm was lying over the heart. Then he took off his own cap, stood awhile, and then followed the path to the village. But he still was holding the syringe in his left hand. It was only when he recalled that the people were in the habit of closing the eyelids of their dead, that he hur-

riedly pocketed his syringe and put on his cap. He felt a weight on his mind. He began to question his own position. And what now? He knew, too, that no one would have any reason to take his medicines away from him. His knowledge of this increased his assurance. Thus he walked more swiftly. Well, what of it? Such is the way of the world.

And so he entered the village, where he saw, flying out from under the church belfry, four crows, as they soared over the village. The sun was just beginning to set in the west, to descend away from the houses and the trees; and the weeds were casting longer shadows like the fingers of that darkness which drew into its midst the copper-tinted evening sun.



## CHAPTER TEN

# Hapusia Journeys to Kiev

On Brus' hill Hapusia, with scissors that she got from her aunt, cut off the knot from Wyhra's forehead, and, having returned the scissors, she went on to Onopreyovich's. He listened to her message from Brus and asked several times where he was lying; and, having said the word "good," he silently began to contemplate the cupboard, which stood open before him. Hapusia again asked whether he would go; but even now the attendant did not say anything, but he sighed deeply and looked at the cupboard. Hapusia became alarmed, and, having said good-bye, swiftly left the house. As she walked along, without looking around, she kept listening intently to guess whether or not Onopreyovich was following her.

Finally she came out onto the Rokhmistriwsky road, thence to Ladimirka Station, without a piece of bread, but still in possession of the red package in her hand. She was afraid to take the path to Tswitkowe, for that would have entailed wandering between high grain stalks, and she feared looking sideways lest the spectre of old man Brus might appear to her, the Brus who told her to tell his son that



“Not very far. Just go right on ahead. Keep to the road and you’ll get there, right to the station.”

Hapusia wandered on. She passed some groves and came to the ravine. In it was a river, and across the river a bridge. It flowed through a very lush meadow. Some tall willows and straggly sedges grew on the bank. Then she heard the snort and rumble of a train, and finally a whistle. But the train could not be seen because of the thick willows and poplars. The path above the river bank was indistinguishable from the one near the water’s edge, in that the grass was not as high. This used to be the case where rivers flowed through Ukrainian meadows.

No people could be seen in the meadow; only the magpies flew from tree to tree, chirping. And she came to a part of the river which flowed in the shade of some willows. Here it was wide and clear. Hapusia looked into the water and halted, holding onto a willow. She noticed that her grey petticoat was ruffled, and there was a yellow stain on the left sleeve near the embroidery. It disturbed her. She flattened down some tall grass with her foot and sat down on it. And it was not until now that she examined the contents of the little red packet, for her fingers started to hurt. They were stiff. She untied the packet with her teeth and left hand, spreading the contents on her knee. The “chervonets,” worth ten rubles, shown brightly. She tested them between her teeth. She rolled up the hem of her shirt on the right side, tying up the packet in it. The cloth was not very thick, so the bulge was not too large. She tied it with the same ribbon as was used before. And now the packet was like one of the little dolls that children in the village play with. Then she spread her petticoat out on the path, grabbed a handful of grass, im-

mersed it in water, sprinkling her petticoat with it. Then she folded it up, placed it on the grass, and sat on it. Having sat awhile, she pulled her shirt off too, after having looked around and noticing no one. She was now as bare as a water-nymph. And then, having dropped to her knees, holding the end of her shirt between her legs, she began to wring out the yellow stain from her sleeve into the water. The stain washed off easily, for it was just a bit of dust that had stuck there when the sleeve was in a moist condition. As the shirt had become partially wet, she decided to wash the whole thing. Having wrung it out, she sat down again on her petticoat, spreading the shirt over her knees. And she sat quietly over the dark reach of the river in the Ladimirsky Ravine.

The sun beat straight down on the head of Hapusia. The sedges and the willows cast their shadows on both sides of the river. Because there was plenty of sunshine on the meadow where Hapusia sat, the shades and shadows were very dense; and over the whole expanse of the meadow the dark grasses grew with green verdure in their secluded, moist nooks, so that their eyes played blindman's buff with each other. Even the dandelions, and some other yellow flowers, could not subdue the loudness of colors of the meadow verdure. And everywhere among the willows, the green verdure, and the yellow dots seen above the grasses, were being pulled upwards by the elements of life to the sun, enfolding Hapusia and the white shirt on her knees, just as if she were a blooming flower herself. It was sultry from the heat. Streams of vapor rose up from the meadow to the tops of the sedges and willows, and over it all was the rustling of the leaves.

Suddenly Hapusia aroused herself. She placed her shirt on the petticoat, and then, without going into the water, washed herself. She unplaited her braids and shook them

out again. Then she braided her hair, turned her back to the river, and stretched out her body on the meadow. Finally she donned her shirt and petticoat. After feeling the knot with her hand, and looking around her, she resumed her wandering along the riverside. The willows, sedges and the meadow seemed to have wedged in on her. And she, having disentangled herself from the meadow reeds, saw the station before her. She took especial notice of a bell near the station door, which glistened brightly. She saw, too, on the rails to the right, two cars, also heated by the southern sun. It was hot and quiet, and the place was deserted. Hapusia crossed the hot rails to the station.

The station was empty inside. It was swept, but it still smelled of cigarette smoke which had permeated the crevices, paint and benches of the whole place.

Hapusia's heart began to beat with alarm. She sat down on the bench near the wall, there being only one bench, and started unfolding the packet, when someone coughed. Blood flowed swiftly to her head, reddening her face. But she, without looking around to see where the cough came from, suddenly straightened up, seeing before herself in the wall a wicket with little yellow doors. Looking out from it, watching her, was a man with a moustache in a black cap that had a red border. Behind him was another face, but it wore no moustache. Hapusia got up, went over to the wicket, handed them the gold "chervonets," requesting, "Give me a ticket, if you please, to Kiev."

The moustachioed one took the money, silently contemplated it, and then handed it over to the younger man with query: "Can we take it?"

The latter, motivated by the same impulse that Hapusia had when she bit on the money, drew a knife out of his pock-

et, opened up the blade, testing the "chervonets." Then he pulled out a Soviet "chervonets," handing it over to the moustachioed one, saying, "Why, she's given us a gold one . . . Give her a ticket and her change."

Turning to Hapusia, he asked: "Where did you get this fine money?"

"That's my money," answered the young lady. But the young man persisted: "Are you a poor peasant or a "khazayka"?"

"Khazayka."

"Why, then, do you ride to Kiev barefooted and in only one shirt?"

Hapusia was silent. The young man wore a grey cap and an open front shirt. It was secured with a narrow leather belt, with white pieces of tin hanging down from the buckle. His black shirt was adorned with a red sash. He looked at Hapusia with questioning eyes, again asking: "Is your father a komnezam?"

"A komnezam."

He heard the answer and smiled. Then he continued: "I like that. Aren't you afraid of riding all alone?"

Hapusia said nothing. Meanwhile the moustachioed one handed her a ticket and the change. The girl now paid no attention to anyone. She went over to the bench, sat down, deposited the ticket under the shirt over her bosom, and then started counting her change. The young man came to her through a side door. He wore boots and blue trousers. Approaching nearer, he said: "Young lady, it isn't all trains that run to Kiev, just one every twenty-four hours. I'll tell you which one to take. I'm on the way to Kiev too. We'll both ride together in some quiet corner. How about it?"

Hapusia blushed with confusion. Then as if in defense, she said: "I bought a ticket not for a corner but where the people sit. I want to be among people."

"Very well, then; you'll ride with the people. But I'll visit you on the road. You won't be angry, will you?"

Hapusia was silent. Then he said to her: "The train will leave in the evening. Don't go anywhere, so that I'll be able to yell to you. You can sit in the station, or walk in it, but don't go away from it."

When he went away, Hapusia followed him with her eyes, and then, having wiped her lips, she began to examine her petticoat and the sleeve of her shirt, as if she were looking for the stain which she had washed away. She didn't see herself, and if she had, she would have been satisfied with her appearance. Her white shirt with dark red hemstitching on the sleeves looked neat and clean. Her petticoat was no longer crumpled but had even folds from her waist down to her pale pink calves. The sash, though it was just a piece of the old green sash of her father's, fitted around her waist well enough, showing no loose threads anywhere. Her round head with its blue eyes was circled with two braids from the nape of her neck to her forehead, making the girl look so attractive, that even an old man, having seen her, had a desire to rub his old cheek against her face. She surmised as much when he just sighed and turned away. But the young man, of the same age as herself, would forthwith have her play blindman's buff with him. The young man was wondering what kind of a present would be appreciated by her. He teased her by inquiring. She was now more at ease than she was when she entered the station.

How long she had been sitting there, she did not know. The sun had already gone down behind the willows and the poplars from which she had come to the station. The shades cast by them passed over the rails and reached up to the station windows. Hapusia became sadder and sadder, perhaps because of the fear she had of that young man with the narrow belt. She could have gone out to buy some bread if she had known where to buy it. She could have gone out to refresh herself, had she not been afraid to miss the train. For who can tell whether it would come along late in the evening or early in the morning.

Some people passed by her, but they were silent. A train passed by without stopping. She began to believe that it was the one she should have taken. It made her so sad that she would have cried, had she not been afraid of being seen crying. Several times the moustachioed one would speak loudly to someone, and she would think that the young fellow with the narrow belt was laying in wait for her and looking at her through a small hole, and that it was he to whom the other man was speaking. She could not muster up the courage to ask the moustachioed fellow whether that train that had just sped by was not the one she should have taken. She also wanted to see the young man very badly, for it was he who was supposed to yell when the train was coming. And because of this entanglement of emotions, she was bound to sit still, in the one place, her only movements being to change her position on the seat whenever she became too fatigued.

Suddenly she heard something that she never expected. The old man began to yell from the wicket: "Young lady, young lady, are you asleep? Get up and and go outside. Your train will soon be here. It'll stop only for a few minutes.

He opened the door and let the girl go in before him. There was no one in the car from one door to the other. She moved ahead between the windows and the partitions of the seats, but the conductor ordered: "Sit down here."

She turned around and saw him pointing to a seat. It was a wooden bench. She sat down on it. The conductor went on and the girl looked around at her surroundings. Opposite her, sitting on a bench, were three Jewish women, and alongside of her, near a small table by the window sat a Jewish man. When she first entered the car they were all speaking their own language. Then one of them spoke to her, "Are you going far?"

Hapusia looked at her and silently turned away. She began to fear her neighbors. She had often heard stories at home of what the Jews and the "katsaps" do to people to force them into Communism more quickly. She never inquired into the truth of all that she heard about the Jews, but she did see and hear how the people hated Communism. And so she became afraid that she'd be forced to look after Jewish children. She thus tried hard not to look in their direction, but rather through the window on the left side of the wall, and on the door. The train very swiftly passed by houses, forests and meadows. And she heard the sand, loosened by the blasts of wind, rattle against the window panes. But when the train came to a stop, she could not resist looking to the right, through the window near which sat a Jew. Then she noticed that he was dressed just like the young man, who changed Brus' "chervonets." He, too, wore boots, blue trousers and a narrow sash with the white pieces of tin hanging down from the edges. The only difference was that the Jew's top shirt was white. He, too, was quite young. And that Mazdigin too, she recalled, dressed like that. Also that he,

too, was a Chekist, and a Parkom, and that people were afraid of him. She was awe-struck with the sameness. She was now certain that the man who changed her money was a Chekist. She suspected that perhaps the "moustachioed" and local conductor feared him just like the people feared Mazdigin. For the Chekists exist only in the Soviet system to demoralize the people and to kill them. Why, the young man at Ladimirka said he would yell when the train came, but it was the moustachioed one who did the yelling!

Hapusia began to contemplate the houses as they swiftly passed before the window. She noticed that all of them had roofs and white walls, and were as pleasant-looking as the homes in her own home village. Although she knew that this was all Ukraine down to Kiev, and that Kiev too was the Ukraine, she nevertheless said to herself, "This is the Ukraine!"

She breathed more easily. She decided that if the train made another stop, she would get off the car and find her way to some village and make the rest of the journey to Kiev on foot. She began to feel very hungry. Swallowing some saliva, she decided to wait until the train made another stop.

As if in spite, the door, through which she had come into the car, opened and the same Chekist who made out her change for her appeared. Hapusia grasped with both hands the bench she was sitting on, as if to prevent herself from being carried off. He came over to her and sat down between her and the Jew, unfolding a piece of bread in a newspaper, and saying: "Here, take it and eat! Perhaps you are hungry?"

Hapusia didn't have the strength to refuse, for she hadn't had anything to eat since she was at her aunt's . . . that was yesterday. So she took the bread with a "thank you!"



Then she glanced at the Jews, who really could not take their eyes off her. She lowered the hand with the bread on her knee, transferring her gaze dolefully to the Chekist, who began encouraging her: "Eat, eat! I'll give you some more in the morning."

It was at this point that the train stopped. The Chekist silently rose and departed. Hapusia crumpled the newspaper with her left hand, set it down beside her, and started eating her bread. Soon she forgot about the Jews, just as if they weren't there. After supper she threw the crumpled newspaper off the bench down on the floor. There was no thought of walking to Kiev now. But nevertheless she had to force herself not to look on the side where the Jews were sitting, but they did not notice this. It hurt her very much that she took the bread from the Chekist. Why was he trying to be so good to her? It can't be possible that he had forgotten Ladimirka where he had been trying to persuade her to ride with him in a quiet corner. He said he'd bring some more bread in the morning. That means he won't happen to come around here in the night? The attention of the Chekist alarmed her. All these troubles wearied her, and she began to get drowsy.

It had long since grown dark outside. One could no longer see any forests, or meadows, or fields, or villages through the window. All the Jewesses had gone to sleep on the lower benches and the higher berths. The Jew near the window was drowsing by the table, and the only thing that could be seen were the twinkling stars in the dark sky. It was late evening or perhaps even night. Frequently the stars would disappear in the clouds of smoke that came out of the engine's chimney, and then they would light up again, with their usual brightness.

Then the door opened and in came the Chekist. The drowsiness disappeared from her face, and her countenance took on a look of terror. Her lips parted a bit, and her eyes were glued to the face of the Chekist. The horrible fascination caused by the sudden turn of the moment drew together all the live strings of her being into one little cluster. She did not tear her glance away from the Chekist, just like the bird with clipped wings when it sees the approach of the one that clipped them.

He sat down beside her, asking: "What do they call you, young lady?"

"Hapusia," was the answer.

"Come along with me. I've got a spare place where you can sleep. You're drowsing already. And this man here can't sleep on account of you."

He cast a glance at the Jew, bent over the table near the window. Hapusia watched the Chekist silently, breathlessly, without stirring. Seizing the right sleeve of her shirt between his two fingers, the Chekist spoke again, "Let's go, Hapusia. You'll get a good sleep there, and I'll return your gold money . . . Let's go!"

Letting go of the sleeve with his two fingers, he now had hold of her elbow. It seemed as if he had been trying to help her to rise. In a moment the girl faced him. With her left hand she feverishly withdrew his hand away, uttering energetically and despairingly: "I won't go anywhere. I'll sit here. I've got a ticket for this place. The conductor told me to sit here. I won't go away."

"Do you know that I have the right to arrest you for buying a ticket with Tsarist money? What is it you don't want? Let's go, or I'll take your ticket away from you, and the change from your chervonets; and I'll arrest you."

She got up on her feet, ran over to the window, grasping the end of the leather strap with which the window was raised by the people, so as to open it, and then stood still. The Chekist, having glanced at the Jew, who was now awake and watching the interesting scene, stood up and, having gone towards the door, halted and whispered to Hapusia: "You're under arrest. Come along with me."

But the girl did not stir. She was silent, trembling all over her body, the tears rolling down both cheeks.

"Do you hear? . . ."

Hapusia's only answer was a very loud: "I'll yell for help!"

Her nervous voice woke up the Jewish woman on the bench opposite Hapusia. The Chekist, noticing this, hurriedly left the car. But the harassed girl, without loosening her hold on the window strap, began to wipe her eyes with her right hand. Her breast heaved from the sorrow which she tried to stem, and her dammed up emotions would have readily exploded if somebody had shown her any sympathy at the time. The Jewish woman lay down again, and the Jewish man rested his head on his hands to drowse anew. But Hapusia stood by the window alone, as if her hand were tied there, trembling with convulsive and hopeless despair.

It was growing grey outside. The night had passed into the beginning of dawn. Hapusia ceased trembling. Once again the silent villages, stations, groves, rivers and forests flitted by the passing train. This diverted her, and she let go of the window strap. The window slipped down quietly into its slide-blocks more snugly than before. She learned that one could open the window with these straps. So she seized the strap again with both hands, trying to lift up the window pane.

It gave. She then took a firm hold of the bottom and yanked it up as far as it could go. And then she poked her head out of the open window. But the wind tore at her hair, and she withdrew back in again. She now knew, however, what she would have to do if the Chekist ever came back. For when the train would pull into Kiev, she would not leave along with the Jews through the door, but she'd crawl out through the open window. She was sure that the Chekist would be waiting for her to come out and arrest her. Perhaps he was even now behind the door. Or maybe he'd be waiting outside by the car with the conductor. She sighed deeply, looking at the Jews. The Jewesses were already down, gathering up their shawls and blankets, placing them into their valises. Even the man was sitting up with his cap and coat on. Suddenly Hapusia grew cold in her chest. What if they all got out of the car and she'd be left alone in it? And it might still be very far to Kiev. So she turned to the nearest Jewess and asked: "Is it still very far to Kiev?"

This person, being careful not to drop and trample any of her clothes on the floor, surprisedly and reluctantly answered: "When the train stops, and we begin to go out, you can leave too. That will really be Kiev."

Hapusia had enough of this reply, although she was thinking of some kind of retaliation. The girl was now looking excitedly at the window, holding on with both hands to the narrow window sill. She was not worried about not thanking the woman for her reply, for the Jewess most likely was not squeamish about the reply she gave to her. Hapusia decided on her plan of exit from the car. She would not leave through the door with the Jews. After they all had left, she would crawl through the window, leap out, and make her departure that way.

In the meantime it was getting lighter and lighter outside. The grass, the trees, and everything mobile and immobile near the train shone with dewy brightness. All those huge buildings, which rose up hastily, like reddish clouds, loomed darkly from the night's moisture. Farther on behind them, nothing could be seen, for the steam engine slowed down, discharging clouds of smoke, which no longer spread over the cars, but which sprawled on both sides of the train in thick masses, replete with sparks, hiding the sky and the country in the distance.

Hapusia could now see, among the tall poplars, long trains of cars without engines, dazzling with white inscriptions, and looming dark with the moisture of falling mist, the remainder of which settled on the poplars.

The train stopped with a thud, and with a terribly loud snort. She turned to her neighbors, but they had already started to leave, the Jew following in the rear. Hapusia closed the door behind the Jews. Then she sped towards the window, grasped the edges of the window sill with both hands, shoved herself feet-first through the open window, so that her petticoat rolled up to her eyes. She swung herself around in the window, and hung down from it against the wall of the car. She held on like this for a moment and then let herself fall down. She bent down, slipping under the car past its wheels onto the station platform. Here many people were carrying their baggage to the station. Hapusia mingled with the crowd, passing through the station with them, and then out onto the street where there was plenty of moving space for her, the drivers, the trolley buses, and the people who got off the train. This was Bezakiwsky Street.

Hapusia walked at an almost running pace. The side streets, which she avoided, were empty of people. The morning quiet was disturbed only by those people who got off the morning train, or the drivers who drove them away, or the people, who, like Hapusia, walked the pavements. The sky was clear and starless. Over-hanging the Botanical Garden, and spilling down over a high wall, and thence onto the street, there was a small misty cloud. In succession, over the tops of the chestnut, oak and maple trees, the sky diffused the brightness of the sun, although it was still hidden far beyond Kiev.

Hapusia had not yet dared to ask anyone about the Oleksandriwsky Hospital, but she worried about it in her thoughts. Perhaps it was even nearby. She heard behind her the clatter of shodden feet and the suppressed rumble of rubber-bound wheels. It seemed to come swiftly closer, and then suddenly to cease. Now the sound of horses' feet gave way to the tramp of human steps. Hapusia slowed down her pace, turning her head really to ask where the hospital was. She was being pursued by the same Chekist who clung to her in the car. The girl was consumed with animal-like terror; and so she started to run away as far as the eyes could see. But her pursuer caught up to her, seizing her by the hand, and dragged her along with him. At first she offered just token resistance, whining meanwhile. But when she saw before her the driver to whom the Chekist was leading her, then without extricating herself from his grasp, she sat down on the pavement, yelling at the top of her voice: "Help! Save me! Help! Save me! Whoever believes in the Lord! Help! Save me, whoever believes in the Lord!"

But the Chekist, now excited, hurriedly shoved the girl onto the steps of the barouche like a bag of sand. But she did

not cease her mad shrieking. Finally he halted. He bent down to her, closing her mouth with the palm of his hand. Biting him, she broke loose. Then she fled past the barouche. Then suddenly from the showy doorway of a two-story building, a man in a black hat and coat jumped out. He hurried towards Hapusia, saying: "Stand behind me!"

He halted, waiting for the Chekist, with hands folded back on his spine. Behind him Hapusia was shaking with fright. The Chekist, noticing this, halted in the full height of his chase. He turned around, and started running to his barouche with no less energy than he exercised when he was chasing after his selected victim. He ran up to his barouche and, nonchalantly, as if nothing ever happened, yelled: "Drive to the station!"

When he had disappeared, Hapusia's protector turned around, looking at her silently. As she stood before him, her petticoat was jerked a bit to the right; and her clean white embroidered shirt showed a dark stain over her bosom. Perhaps it was made there when she climbed through the window. Her right leg was so scratched, that the top layer of skin here and there had been torn and rolled into curls, and blood was trickling from the wounded spots. One such streak ran from a bone in her foot up to her knee. Some dark patches showed on her face where the tears had been running down. On her round head her still undishevelled tresses lay in a neat crown. Her defenselessness, and her charming semi-childlike figure, her grey, tender eyes lent her some sort of intangible attractiveness, common among girls of Ukrainian extraction.

The tall man asked: "Where are you from, young lady?"

"From the Cherkassy District."

"Where's that? And this is the way you came? What-ever brought you this far?"

"I've come to the Oleksandriwsky Hospital . . . to see one lady doctor. I've forgotten her name. They call her . . . They call her . . . Her husband's name is Ivan Brus."

"Ivan Brus? Maybe her name is Shchoholov?"

"That's it . . . just like you say. But I've got to see Ivan Brus first. His father sent me here."

"So . . . I'm Chudiev, a physician and a friend of Ivan and his wife. Well, then, come to my place, young lady, and you can tell me how that scamp ever accosted you. We'll have breakfast together, and after that I'll take you to see Brus. They're my acquaintances. I'd take you right away, but it's still too early . . . Well, come along with me."

But Hapusia, withdrawing a few feet towards the pavement, said: "Perhaps your wife is still asleep, and we'll waken her. She might be angry at me?"

The man said bluntly: "I have no wife, and there's no one for me to waken. That's why you've got nothing to be afraid of. Well, will you come?" he added, more emphatically.

But Hapusia was insistent. She pleaded: "Please tell me the way to their place. I'll find it. I don't want to put you to any trouble."

"So you don't want to go to my place?"

"No."

"Well, then, I won't go there either. And, though it's quite early, we'll visit them. I suppose they'll let us in. You'll not find the place yourself."

And they departed. Hapusia walked behind, looking all around at the great height of the buildings, the very straight streets, and at the iron fences. But she paid no attention as to how the sun greeted those objects. She felt the coolness of



the stones on her bare feet, and the early morning air, which cooled the calves of her legs. They passed a ravine and came to the house overlooking it. The tall man pressed a white button in the wall with his finger. There was a ring inside. Soon a man's voice called from inside: "Who's there?"

Hapusia's fellow-traveler bent low. "Excuse me, please. This is Chudiev."

"And you . . ."

The door opened and Ivan Brus showed up. Ivan stood on the side of the vestibule. Hapusia recognized him immediately, although he was dressed in a long cherry-colored dressing-gown. He invited them in: "Come in . . . Come in, please."

They all entered, coming through the vestibule into the room. The tall man didn't take his coat off. Ivan Brus gave Hapusia and her companion a chair, but he himself sat down on the bed. The tall man said: "I've brought one of your fellow countrywomen along with me."

At this the khazain drew himself up with amazement: "My fellow countrywoman!"

"Yes . . . I was coming home from night duty, and had barely taken my hat off to hang it up, when I heard someone yelling: 'Help! Whoever believes in the Lord!' Now you know that these are the usual words with which every Ukrainian concludes his call for aid when in serious danger. I put the hat back on my head and ran outside. This young girl was running straight at me with a Chekist chasing after her . . . a genuine Chekist . . . the usual type, Caucasian style, sent here by Stalin. I decided to repay this pursuer for all the heartaches of my experiences. So I planted myself there, putting the girl behind me, and waited. My hands were burning to get at the Chekist's throat. But no. He was too anxious

to retreat, thus leaving his victim alone. I started to question the girl, who she was, where she came from. Thus it turned out that she was one of your countrywomen. I offered to treat her to breakfast, but she was so upset by that Stalinist cavalier that she was even afraid to visit her protector. She said she's come from your father."

Then he ceased talking, awaiting the final outcome of his morning's adventure. Brus asked: "Did my father send you here?"

"Yes."

"With a letter?"

"No, he told me to tell you that he has died."

"What horrible nonsense! How did he come across you to give you such a message."

"He didn't find me; I found him. He was laying on the pathway near Kuchiwka, by a wall of rye. I helped him to sit up . . . and he sent me from that place."

Ivan Brus turned pale. It seemed as if he had lost the power of speech, for he was silent; and no one ventured to break that silence. Memories of his last visit with his father flashed through Brus' mind, and his words regarding his marriage. The picture of his father took shape in his soul. He stood out as a strong figure of mysterious brooding. A figure, not of grief, nor of drama, but of out-of-this-world-predestination, who contemplates sensibly the advent of coming days; and who demands a show of sense from those with whom he deals. It was similar to every foreboding of death common to every person, only that it was swifter, and thus more mystical and terrible. It could have killed at once, but it didn't, remaining in the soul like that force which causes earthquakes. It remained in Ivan's soul, to chastise him.

After this interval of silence, Ivan Brus with an effort again asked: "And whose girl are you, and why did you find him instead of some other person?"

"I'm Shelestian's girl. My aunt sent me to get some medicines. I was on my way to his place when I found him on the pathway. Perhaps by now he's dead, for he could hardly sit up straight. He gave me the chervonets that were tied to Wyhra's mane. I was to buy a ticket with it. And that's why I'm here."

Ivan Brus looked at Chudiev helplessly. Chudiev became confused, dumbfounded by the words of the girl, and the impression she had made on Brus, but he interjected: "It passes my understanding, young lady, how he could have sent such a small mite like you to search for his son in this large city. And how could you agree to come? Did you ask your parents' permission?"

Then, turning to Brus, he concluded: "It's impossible to accept this news as the truth. It all impresses me as false, even if the girl is evidently sincere."

Following this remark, Hapusia turned away from the two men towards the window, where, having put her hands to her eyes, she sobbed . . . so that it was only with sadness and despair that one could look at her. But Brus contradicted his friend.

"She's come from Father. She's not fooling us," he said. "It pains her that we do not believe her. She's told the bitter truth, which I realized when I was parting with my father."

Following Brus' words Hapusia quieted down. Turning to Chudiev, she said: "I was going to his place, because I'm big-bellied. The Parkom 'singed' me. The Komezza got me to be his housekeeper, and he overcame me. He does that to everybody. I don't want to have an illegitimate child. Grandpa

Ovsey sent me to the wife of his son Ivan, because all his medicines were taken away by the Parkom and handed over to Onopreyovich. He told me to tell you that he died, although he was still holding on to the earth with both hands when I helped him to sit up. And that's the truth."

She turned away again and began to sob, and to wipe her eyes. Brus then quickly got up, exhorting the girl: "Come along with me, please, young lady."

She rose and accompanied Brus. Going through the vestibule, they came into the kitchen, where there was a bed with a mattress, and a closed cupboard. Brus opened it, took out a quilt and a pillow, and, throwing them on the bed, he asked: "Do you want something to eat?"

"No . . . I'll wait for her."

"She won't be here until supper time."

"I'll go to bed."

"Just lie down, and I'll find something to eat for you."

Then he left the kitchen, shutting the door behind him. He stood by it, holding on to the handle, as if to steady himself. Tears welled up in his eyes. And it wasn't until he heard Chudiev stirring about in his room that he quickly wiped them away. Chudiev came out to meet him, saying sadly: "Pardon me. I didn't know that I was bringing along your fellow countrywoman with such bad news."

"There's no reason to worry. We don't know from one moment to another when we're bringing happiness or woe in our lives to another."

Then they both shook hands sincerely and parted company. The outside door opened with a bang. Brus went back to his own room and sat down on the bed. He was pale and drawn and rigidly stiff. If it hadn't been for the tears rolling down his face, it could have been said that he was sitting there without any sense of feeling.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# The Funeral of Old Man Brus

There wasn't a single cloud in the sky. The sun shone brightly and clearly over the fields and the village of Kuchiwka. At nine o'clock in the morning the church in the meadow with its two golden crosses and its domes was visible at a great distance. Yes, even from Matusiw to Stanislaw, and as far as the Rokhmistriw forest. It was only the boundaries at Melnikiw that were indistinct. But the white walls of the church might have maintained their usual peaceful aspect and their unchangeable character had it not been for the looming dark stain on the high steps leading to the entrance door. Long ago, where it now was, there had been an inscription in large, black letters, inscribed in semi-rainbow form:

*"Fear the Lord, and honor the Tsar.*

Now one word, *chti*, remained—the word "honor."

Thus on the third day after Onopreyovich's adventure on the roadway near Melnikiw the Kuchiwka bell tolled. Although it was only the chime of an ordinary bell its echo reached as far as the reflections from the two gilded crosses, way to the Kuchiwka boundaries. Thus the people heard the bells from the same source as the reflections. The people

knew that the intonations were calling them to the church at Kuchiwka, although this was not Sunday or a holiday, but an ordinary week day—Thursday. It was good that the Kuchiwkians had been able to salvage their tolling bell from the Communists.

The people came by roads and by paths to the church. They came from the Repiakhiw corner past Puhachiw, past Mantach. They came from Palarushiwka by way of the dam, from the distant Harbariowsky corner, from Lynnikiw, from Hromowiwka. The men, the women and the children came. People recently married, people of middle age, grey-haired and decrepit — they all came. And the youth, too. These people came not in the colors described by Oleksy Tolstoy some time ago:

“And into the Temple of God come the Cossack women in colorful groups.”

They all came in the same monotonous uniformity. For after ten years of the Bolshevik invasion, known as the Russian revolution, they did not have the means, nor the place, to buy new clothes. So they wove cloth from their own hemp and made their own clothes—trousers, shirts, petticoats. And they wore out the overcoats, which they brought from the Russian army. They dyed their clothes the same color as elder. Therefore, they all bore a grey elder color look about them, which included their old straw hats. Only the women, here and there, still paraded the remnants of their old shawls over their grief-wrinkled countenances.

The whole meadow around the church was crowded with people who gathered in groups, a crowd greater than that in the church. The gate to the church yard was open, as well as the door of the church. In the yard the people were congregated more thickly. They went into the church and came

out again to make room for others. A suppressed murmur seethed among them. But in the gathering to the right of the church stairs the conversation was the loudest. The local musician from Repiakiwka, Kornelius-Petrovich Brovchenko, was talking.

“Salivon came running to me from the priest,” he reported, “saying, ‘Lend me that coffin in which you sleep! It will be an eternal debt . . . until Doomsday, for there’s no boards anywhere to build a new one.’ Hm . . . How’s that? No boards? Why have I spent ten years for nothing trying to get used to sleeping in it, so that there would be no pain in the next world and now, wonder of wonders, I’ve got to give it up to goodness knows who? And he said, ‘Not to goodness knows who, but we’ve got to bury old man Brus. They found him,’ he said, ‘in the morning on that roadway that leads to Melnikiwka. His left foot,’ he said, ‘was eaten away by the foxes, and his body decomposed, although he was dried up like a small beet on a stove.’ ”

A tall man with a dry willow branch in his hand spoke: “All this happened because of the ‘health resort’ while we in the Komezza thought three days ago that he was forgiven. Mazdigin said that they had given him back his medicines. A person never does outrance in thought tomorrow’s day. That’s how it is. It makes one shudder!”

Kornelius Petrovich spoke in anger, emphasizing his words: “Just as you see. And this is what Salivon told me. Would that those souls of Herod had to listen until the Judgment Day to what I heard. He told me that Modest had hardly got back from Rokhmistriwka when the Parkom had already been waiting near Modest’s vestibule. He yelled to him in greeting for him to load the cupboard at once on the wagon and haul it to Onopreyovich. They loaded it, and took it away that night. Such robbery and deceit! Now I’m not fated



to sleep in my own coffin in which I slept ten years, and perhaps I won't even be laid in the raw ground in it. Souls of Herod! This person served us, worked for us, and now he's slated to go to the other world in a borrowed coffin!"

The tall man spoke again, "And have you, Kornelius Petrovich, really handed over your coffin to Salivon?"

"Do you think that I didn't? I've laid in it, glory be to the Lord, but I've never smelled it up. But old man Brus reeks with odor and is eaten up by the wild beasts of the field. He could not be brought into the house and placed on a bench, even according to the law. The priest, thanks to him, ordered him to be placed in the coffin and taken to the church. He was to have been buried this morning, but they're waiting for young Brus to come from Kiev to the funeral. The priest sent the telegram yesterday. Ivan should have arrived last night. But he didn't. The priest wants to wait another half a day, for there's a day train too. If no one arrives from Kiev at eleven o'clock, then they'll go on with the burial."

"They say that Ivan Brus will be accompanied by the new director of the Matusiwsky Factory. It were well if really . . ."

The tall man added his few words, holding the willow branch in his hand, looking uncertainly and inquisitively about.

But Kornelius Petrovich, measuring those who listened with a look, smiled sarcastically, "Hey, hey hey . . . Wait like that *katsap* who tarried over an ice hole!"

A laugh came from the gathering which crowded still closer to catch the conversation. Kornelius Petrovich, finding himself in the center of the group, began to pull his tobacco pouch out of his wide trousers, as if he were trying to be casual and to increase the curiosity of the people. He cast

glances at the fence. Evidently he was planning to go out and have a smoke there. He was about seventy years old, of medium height, and strongly built. He wore a straw hat, all in one piece, but grown rusty from long wear. From under it passionate and cunning eyes looked out. Under his bulbous nose a long moustache spread out, covering the corners of his mouth. They were grey, but they were rusty-looking in the center of the lip from too much smoking. They say that even his flute was rusty and smelled of burning tobacco. Then, upholding the words of Kornelius Petrovich, a small villager, Anton Levinko, joined the conversation: "Perhaps you're right, Kornelius Petrovich, for the new director has arrived. Now there's no need of waiting, like that *katsap* at the ice hole. Hey, hey, hey . . . He's come. You'll see things happen fast."

Then he stopped, looking around him. At this point Kornelius Petrovich turned to him, still holding the tobacco pouch in his hand, saying threateningly: "And what sparrows brought this bit of news on their tails about our new 'mister?'"

"Hey, hey . . . Verily, they did, and such news as our sexton would not be able to read out of his dream book. Thus when Modest brought his father's medicines in the evening to Onopreyovich, he was accompanied by Mazdigin. Onopreyovich, after they had lifted the cupboard off the wagon, started to whisper something to Mazdigin, either this or that, blinking his eyes. At this point I heard Onopreyovich speak downrightly: 'And will no one, I say, claim these transported medicines?' I put my cheek against the paling and listened. Mazdigin was speaking: 'No one will take them away because this land belongs to the factory, and what they will tell the new director in a week's time will be final, and so that's that. Nobody will take them away.'"

The whole gathering murmured, and angry remarks were heard:

“Listen to him and he’ll tell you about the dry ashes and the moist eggs . . . and is this director like a fly that can sit on a carcass in such a way as not to be noticed?”

“You don’t believe it? Well, here is my last word.”

Anton Levinko was hotly emphatic: “I had just come out of the house that evening to look at the pond, asking myself if I should go out in the morning to catch some fish with a seine. Suddenly I heard a wagon coming. I ran among the sunflowers to the fence. I stood among the pumpkins under a cherry tree, seeing and hearing everything clearly, just as I see you. If someone had told me, I wouldn’t have believed it, but this is how it turned out. And whether you believe me or not, the truth doesn’t need any witnesses.”

The voice of Kornelius Petrovich made itself heard again: “Open up the road, open up the road, the director’s approaching, Anton Levinko!”

“And what kind of a director am I?” retaliated Shelestian, who had suddenly appeared among the people.

“The kind who’s had an eye pulled out. Whoever gouges, he’s a director.”

“If that’s the case then I’m not at all necessary to you, for I’m an old director. My eye was gouged out twenty years ago, and you’re awaiting a new director.”

“Well, what about the new one? He’s possibly not like that, because he’s being hidden from us. Perhaps he’s a repulsive fellow with his two eyes gouged out? And you can’t be called repulsive because you still blink out of the one eye, like a thief in ambush.”

“Oh, brothers!”

Shelestian answered, “This is not a gathering but a protective enclosure around God’s home . . . and we must put

our trust in it, for if the evil spirit hears anything it's liable to come here. Anton Zakhariovich evidently didn't lie when he said that, but if I tell you something, then you'll probably shout me down. Well, go ahead and shout. That's what the Almighty Lord gave us throats for, and for nothing else. All of you perhaps know how the Parkom sent my girl among the people? This evil spirit let her go, and she's lost, lost . . . and to this day she hasn't shown up at home. What do you think? The one who flew from Moscow on an aeroplane called me to his quarters in the evening, questioning me about all the finest and most important people around here. I tried to tell him! But he diverted the conversation to Mazdigin and my daughter. And the evil spirit said: 'If you have any complaint against him, take this revolver and shoot him.' Ha? . . . The evil spirit spoke well? But I thought to myself: Satan won't allow the devil to gouge his eye out; but this accursed soul provokes me to commit murder. I got up from behind the table and went outside, as if I had come out of a tannery.

"You can believe or you don't have to believe about those devilish souls; but you've heard about Zakhariovich. And we're all here at the funeral of the person they, the accursed souls, drove to the 'health resort.' "

There was a lull in the conversation. Quiet prevailed. All that could be heard was the monotonous voice of the priest intoning over the dead man. In the enclosure it, too, was as clear and peaceful as it was in the church. It seemed as if there, down below in the village, the pond between Palarushiwka and Repiakiwka, whose bulrushes bounded Matusiwka, was made more serene and brighter in its reach. The sun lighted up the church in the surface of the pool. Fishermen's boats grew numb on the shores, and there was no noise in the pool nor any spitting of the boats to chase the fish into the nets and the seines. The reflections of the sun and the

church on the pool shone with such a glow of brightness that the human ear awaited with misgiving the cry of a duck, or the stroke of an oar over the water.

The quiet was finally disturbed. And the tension among the people disappeared. Grandpa Areny, with a cane, approached Shelestian. He was the village Soviet watchman. He said: "Shelestian, you're to drive the Parkom to Rokhmistriwka. There was a telephone call to the village Soviet Building. I was at Mazdigin's and he sent me to you."

"And won't he be at the funeral?" Shelestian asked harshly.

Grandpa Areny answered casually, "Of course he won't be here. Whatever must be done first, is done first, and not afterwards."

"Oho, oho, Grandpa Areny, he'll be at the funeral, even if we have to haul the seducer. We'll haul him here," Shelestian declared.

He turned around and departed with a firm step, Grandpa Areny following after.

The pasture now was full of people: in front of the church, around the road, near Demiah Klishch's place, and around the large cross in the new cemetery. The look in the faces of these people evoked grief in the observer; for such a large gathering always took place when some primordial trouble was endangering them—whether it was drought, or an epidemic, or the blessing of a well, so that the sky would not be cruel to the fields. For neither *Jordan Day*, when the priest and the congregation go down to the river to bless its water, nor any other great holiday, could bring out such a large crowd of people.

Now the midday sun stood directly overhead, scorching the people mercilessly. All of them, with their perspiring

faces, looked to see whether they were carrying out the dead man, or whether young Brus had come to his father's funeral. Finally the choir entered the church with the precentor, Onyky Savich, followed by the priest and the choir master. Beyond the fence two oxen were hitched to a wagon on which the dead man was to be placed. It was packed with straw and covered with a white sheet. On the left side, hanging from the horn of each ox, was a *plakhta*, an embroidered carpet. The man who came in the wagon was Lowhin Kahamlyk, an old friend of Ovsy Brus. He stood before the oxen, holding in his left hand a whip, and in his right hand a whip-handle with which he brushed off the flies which settled on the necks, legs, and under-bellies of the oxen in droves. Now it was being whispered that the son would not be at the funeral, and that none of the other Brus children was there, just as they were not in attendance at the mother's funeral either. But everybody began to feel better, since they would not have to broil under the sun much longer.

Then from out of the church came the song: "Holy Lord, holy and powerful, holy and immortal." Then the banners, carried by boys, began to appear outside, their tin tassels rattling and rustling in the wind. Following the banners came the coffin. It was carried by six mouzhiks. And behind came the priest and the choir with the lid to the coffin. All the villagers who were standing within the fence, and those outside of it with their hats on, soon took them off. The choir was composed of married men and women who had ceased singing in the choir ten years ago. But today they gathered together and took over that duty from the younger folks. Their singing was full of sincerity and welling tears for the poor man who was like themselves, and who had spent all his life travelling over their fields, rescuing and healing their cattle.

After they had placed the coffin on the wagon and the banners, glistening in the sun onto the road, Lowhin Kahamlyk, having wiped his eyes with his hand, started to drive the oxen with the wagon on which now lay his old friend. The choir sang out:

“In Thy Kingdom . . .”

And all the people followed the wagon. Following the choir, step to step, two young boys led Wyhra, saddled and harnessed, just like Brus used to do when he travelled among the people with his medicines and his good heart. They say that it was Kahamlyk who asked that he be buried this way, because in Tashlyk they were Ukrainianizing the church, and the people know how to bury such a man in their own way, the Ukrainian way.

About this time, through the school gate that was always open, rode the Parkom in his barouche with his dog Nellie. He was holding her by the collar with his hand. Shelestian was driving the horses. He was sitting on the coach box. When he turned the horses onto that road which led to the church, Mazdigin jabbed him in the ribs, ordering, “Don’t drive that way. Drive past the mills.”

But Shelestian, having struck the horses hard with his whip, making them move at a faster clip, turned to his “lord” and yelled, “We can’t go that way. The road over there beyond the village has been ploughed under. We’ll have to take this road.”

He stood up suddenly, turned into the road, hitting each one of the horses with all his power with the whip. The horses ran at such a fast pace that anyone wanting to jump off the barouche would have done so at his peril. Shelestian held the reins tensely in his hands, holding the horses in check. Now the first two banners, coming from behind the church, approached the road as if to meet Shelestian. On both sides

of the road stood the crowd, waiting for the moment when they, too, could march in the funeral procession to the cemetery. The choir sang:

“To the Lord God, my Judge, I come.”

This mood of waiting, and this funereal serenity was broken by a maniacal shriek, as if Shelestian were drunk: “The director’s coming, driving the lord and the lady!”

The whole crowd, all its groups, suddenly turned as one person to the riders, growing numb in all their original deepest feelings. The eyes of all watched madly and excitedly. The waiting of each being was strained with pain. Now the barouche came up even with the first banner. And here between the banners and the people was the narrowest part of the road. Shelestian shrieked again, just as if he didn’t see the procession on his left side: “The director’s coming, driving the lord and the lady!”

He turned his horses to the right, so as not to clash with the man holding the banner. The people standing in front of the horses rolled back, just like the water in the lake into which a big rock had suddenly fallen from a hill top. Now the barouche rumbled in a less congested spot into the road which joined Rokhmistriwka with Matusiw. And the “Parkom” in the back alternately got up and sat down, unable to stand on his feet. Nellie, who was being held by the collar by Mazdigin’s hand, becoming restless, sat on her seat beside her master, barking loudly at Shelestian. When he had already passed by all the groups, Kornelius Petrovich joyfully started talking to the nearest people: “And where did this evil spirit suckle so? He was just here a while ago, as sober as my flute under the roof. Just think how this thing turns out. If the bull has a spot on its forehead, then the calf will have one too. At Shelestian’s place there was a grandpop, a drunkard, who always used to say: ‘In that world



let me be held up even with a fence, it matters little to me. For the Lord God is merciful; and he'll squash me just as easily as he squashed all the others' . . . And Shelestian is the same."

But nobody noticed his troubles, because everyone had cares of his own, although maybe different ones. Everybody was excited over Shelestian, and they all looked in the direction from which Nellie's barking came. If the priest had not appeased them, the people, just like the pupils, would have been stirred even unto weariness by the event. He called Salivon, who was holding the incense censer in readiness, whispering something to him. After this Salivon looked at the bearers of the banners, who too, having lowered them down to the ground, stood by watching where the "Parkom" had ridden with Shelestian. Salivon approached the first one of them, saying, "It's not proper to keep standing . . . Go ahead . . . Go ahead."

The banners moved again, and following them were all the people. The old choristers, male and female, by now having forgotten everything, moaned:

"Sobbing over the grave . . ."

And this dirge was the language of despair of little people in the face of the immeasurability of time and the abyss out of which life appears, and into which it disappears again.

Finally they all gathered around the open grave in the cemetery. The priest turned to the people with a funeral oration. He stood before the banners as they glistened in the sun. His grey hair fluttered in the wind. The chain, on which hung the cross, glistened along with the embroidered outer parts of the vestments. The words he uttered in his funeral remarks seemed not to belong to him, for he himself in the midst of the banners, appeared to be like the icon:

“And this is our respect, and our service, oh father of the people, that we gather around you here today for the last time. For we are just like you: ragged and forlorn; only that we didn't go where the wild animals could eat our bodies.”

Some woman under a banner grieved with a loud and terrifying voice. The heads of the people on the expanses of both cemeteries wagged from side to side like the tree tops in a strong wind. As an echo of the woman's shrieks, the choir sadly sang:

“Immortal memory, immortal memory.”

These words, sung to God, meant that He was immortal, and that this memory of the person was equal to him, although we die sooner than this human observation passes from one thing to another; and that God in His incomprehensible greatness is not understood either when His Cosmos perishes, or when it appears on earth . . . neither when an insect dies, nor when it appears on earth. And to place human memory alongside the immortal power of God, and the endless accounting of His Being is terrifying, just as if some insect had told the Carpathian Mountains that it was as great as they. Terrifying truth! . . . And terrifying boldness and despair!

All the people, it seemed, held to such an understanding in their semi-conscious feelings; for they wept without thinking, motivated only by their despair, that their losses could not be checked, nor become free from the need of such losses. Or is it because they were thinking, we can lose ourselves in words and remain in that state of delusion as an escape from reality for some time, just as every person goes through a carefree period of youth, so that he can afterwards pass into that state of the reality of life, which flashes with millions of pieces, torn from eternal life in the universal cemetery?

After the funeral the people dispersed to their various villages . . . to Stanislawchyk, to Matusiw, to Samhorod and to Tashlyk. Soon both cemeteries were empty. The emptiness in the old cemetery seemed still more deserted because of the trees which helped the settled graves to become still more settled in the ground, and more unnoticeable, because of the shadows that were cast upon them. But the grey graves in the new cemetery still loomed high because they were not dug in the shadows of any new trees or flowers, or other growth. At that time this was not the concern of the people.

But they say that someone on the first night came to Brus' grave and placed his boots on the pile of earth, and the hat on top of the grave. Two days and two nights passed, and the boots were no longer there. Only the hat, carried by some gust of wind, holding on to the ground, rested against another grave, top downwards. It remained there for perhaps a week, then it was gone. Perhaps some people had brought those articles as a reminder to them that a man had been buried there, and as a hint that they might plant at least some cornflowers over the grave. But they said, "No matter. Everything comes, everything departs and has no end."

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### Stalin and Molotov in Moscow

This was the year 1931. It was the month of March. On a clear and starlit night in Moscow, the whole of the Kremlin was enveloped in the shades and shadows of its high walls. Only the northern part where it bends around in a circle, as if it wanted to turn a corner, shone against the sky with lighted windows.

On the very peak of this ancient brick rainbow loomed the watchtower, but it cast its shadow not on the Kremlin but on some quiet place. Under the Kremlin tower a one-story building with two large windows lighted up a path planted with some kind of growth, which had not yet shown any signs of spring verdure. The patches of light crossed the path and leaned against the high and thick Kremlin wall. They broke off momentarily but soon seized hold of the wall tops again.

Someone came to the little porch of the building. The windows were three meters above ground so that no one could be seen in the center of the structure. A person appeared on the porch and knocked on the door. There was no sign of a bell on the doors or on the walls.

In the other room coming from the porch, appeared another figure who stood there, waiting. It was Stalin in his work room. He stood there looking at the compactly closed door to the right of him. The table was set with a dark tablecloth with flashy red edges. Lying on it was a pile of papers in dark bindings. They were folded like a book. To the right, standing on the table, was a lamp with a purple shade. It was not lit up, since there was an electric light like a long glass pipe shining overhead, giving off light like daylight. The chairs were upholstered with dark leather. The one from which the khazain rose had arms. The whole floor from end to end, and corner to corner, was covered with a yellow carpet. The walls were bare of tapestry or pictures. To the left stood a huge globe reaching almost to the ceiling with its axis. Around it was a three-step platform covered with red silk. On both sides of these steps, looming white, were some artfully carved decorations. The platform was movable.

A cautious rap was heard on the door. Stalin answered: "Come in, come in! Can't you for once do without all this ceremony? Just come in, that's all."

A man in a black uniform, medium height, wearing pince-nez eyeglasses, square-faced, could easily be distinguished as Molotov. He answered, "No, I can't rid myself of my bourgeoisie habits no more than you can rid yourself of encouraging me, Josif Vassarionovich."

"Pardon me, Viacheslav Mikhajlovich, for not opening the door myself. I have full faith in my women, and, as you see, I haven't been wrong."

"You've driven me into a corner of confusion, because I regard all girls, even those in petticoats up to their knees, as women; but I'm not including Svitlana Josephine."

Molotov spoke confusedly, or perhaps pretendedly so. Stalin answered with amazement.

“What?”

“Because I regard your daughter like an old Archbishop would a miracle-working icon. If I did otherwise, would I really be myself?”

“If you wish I’ll call her and let you tell her what you think of her?”

“The Lord forbid! I think worse of myself, but if you wish . . .”

“No, no, no.”

The khazain spoke swiftly, and then proposed, “Pull up a chair and come closer to the table.”

Stalin sat down. Molotov quickly grabbed a chair standing along with two others near the window, drew it to the table and sat down on it. Stalin spoke to him condescendingly, in the way those in power talk to their underlings to impress them with their power, so that they would know that no general matter could be solved without them.

“You remember, Viacheslav Mikhajlovich, how we both discussed last year the problem of collectivization in the Ukraine? You presented a plan then with which I agreed.”

“I remember . . . I remember very well.”

“You then proposed, within the time limit for the reform of village agriculture and the social readjustments of human life, to send out of indigenous Russia a powerful army of party workers, who, along with the Ukrainian Communist party, would suddenly take over the Ukrainian village soviets by force, using blows in the teeth with brass knuckles to drive the population into the kolhosps. And anyone ignoring the beatings, or other threats, refusing to go along, was to be deprived of bread, orchards, and gardens, and forced to die a worse death than that of an animal infected with rabies. If anyone recants, his bread, orchard, and garden will be re-

turned to him provided that he keeps working for the good of the socialist state. Isn't that so?"

"I think it is, Josif Vassarionovich. I do not go back on the thoughts I expressed for the good of our socialist fatherland."

"And you know," continued Stalin, "I think you were and still are under the influence of Ukrainian nationalism, making allowances for the crime of deviation from collectivization. To this I will add, whoever refuses to comply, let him die. And if, because of hunger, he wants to join the collective, let him, too, die of hunger. I emphasize this detail because these renegades, once they get a foothold in the kolhosp, will go back to their kurkul centuries-old longing. They have a more elastic mind than the volunteers hit with brass knuckles and they'll prolong their obstruction of the unity of socialistic Russia. We can't afford to ignore this fact."

"Pardon me, Josif Vassarionovich, but was I ever your opponent? To me you were always an example of our patriotism and infallible judgment in the formulation of doctrine for the reformation of our fatherland."

Stalin looked at Molotov as if he were greatly elated over the marvelous words of his fellow-plotter, and then said, "You should know that I'm very pleased with the ease with which you disassociated yourself from your Ukrainians. I'm now not only sure, but really strengthened with the assurance that you are a genuine friend and partisan. My reward lies in the fact that, having once selected you as one of my close workers, I made no mistake in my choice, and I make no mistake now. I am certain that you will not condemn me if I embodied your secret and noble wishes with political expediency. I am doing everything to prevent any weakening in my merciless importunity regarding the crushing of any separatist tendencies of the nations of our union. And I wish

to confess that it was only until now that I was sure of you, and that's why I'm making this confession. I'm going to centralize control, bringing all the administrations of the various peoples under one central communist Russian Government. And so, without your knowledge, I've already made those efforts in the Ukraine that are necessary for the successful implementation of our collectivization plan, without which a united Russia is impossible. The sharp edge of my knife is not only directed against the kurkuls in the Ukraine, but against the poor peasants as well. Within this last year up to the present day I've ordered every evidence of Ukrainian resurgence to be stamped out among the Ukrainian people, whether that resurgence is initiated by a politician, a philosopher or a self-made artist . . . so that there'll be no one to lead the insurrection which might crop up now during collectivization. Do you understand?"

"I understand, but I've been trying to catch my breath," answered Molotov.

"We must have more peace. I'm getting stronger and stronger morally, because I see no protest growing in your soul. But do you know who I'm going to use in this solid operation?"

"Excuse me, Josif Vassarionovich, I can't even guess."

"The Ukrainian kurkuls. Part of them were destroyed, but those that remained now belong to us. They've lost everything, and they have nothing in their souls but hatred towards those who have so cruelly and mercilessly uprooted them from their channel of life. They were killed and impoverished by the Ukrainian poor peasants. It didn't matter that they were doing this under the threat of the Moscovite revolver. It did not matter that this same revolver muzzle was being aimed at their foreheads. They dream of their independent Ukraine, which can only rise after the victory of the prole-



tariat over the whole world . . . let us say, during the next hundred years. But they dream about it. But the kurkuls, almost all of them who missed being exterminated, are learned and experienced. They received their education in Russian schools . . . intermediate and high school. And now they find themselves at home only where there's Russian culture; and where there is Ukrainianism, for them there's trouble, robbery and misfortune. They don't forget any injustice done to them until their dying days; and in all conditions and circumstances they'll pull for Great Russia. And what do we need? A great force to defeat capitalism, and that force can only be socialistic Russia. I've taken them all over, and with them I intend to change all the levers controlling any future changes of our state. And so that my deed does not conflict with my word, here you have it. In a minute you'll be convinced."

Stalin confidently and peacefully turned to the right side of the table, pressing a wide white button which stood in the center of a circular cut-out in the cloth. In a few minutes the swift step of a man's feet was heard coming from the same place that Molotov had come from. There was a rap on the door. Molotov's lower jaw moved like that of a bulldog along with his trimmed moustache. His eyes were glued to the door. And when Stalin said, "Come in, please!" and into the room entered in the uniform of the G.P.U. the same young man who led the executioners into the Red Rotunda for questioning by Stalin. He drew up to attention, awaiting an order. Stalin, without acquainting him with Molotov, said: "Please, Mykola Ivanovych, sit down by that light with the lampshade."

The latter kicked his heels together, indicating his thanks. He looked around to see what he was going to sit down on. But Stalin, as if he were not noticing him, but taking his

measure just the same, again said, "You'll find chairs near the window."

Ivanovych quickly seized a chair, set it down and sat on it, all ears and eyes with attention. Molotov turned from him to Stalin, as if he were appeased. Stalin questioned: "Mykola Ivanovych, tell us please, how far has our socialistic prophylactic plan succeeded in our future reforms?"

"One hundred fourteen thousand and twenty-one people," was the reply.

"And does this include any people faithful to us?"

"No. Not one soul from our communist forces has perished. The operation was well planned, sure, and without loss."

Stalin then turned to Molotov, demanding: "Viacheslav Mihalovich, please ask him as many questions as you deem necessary for a better understanding of this interesting truth."

Molotov, as if he were expecting this, quickly, stiffly, and a bit excitedly, asked: "Do your figures take into account all the southern republics, or only the Ukraine?"

"Just the Ukraine. She paid for her potential revolution with one hundred fourteen thousand and twenty-one lives."

"And not one of those counter-revolutionaries has been arrested?"

Molotov asked this question once again. In his eyes little fires blazed, neither of satisfaction nor of complete gratification. But Ivanovych lifted his gaze upon Stalin as if he were questioning him with his eyes, remaining silent; and then, seeing that there was nothing there but stony silence, he answered Molotov: "Some of them were isolated, not in prisons but in hospitals. But their numbers were so insignificant that the rest of the population had no concern about their fate."

Instead of waiting for Molotov to put another question Stalin turned to Molotov: "You know, Viacheslav Mihalov-

vich, that for every situation, I have one dominant Russian principle: 'Measure it seven times, but cut it once.' Therefore I authorize you to examine what has been done by Comrade Ivanovych. You, Comrade Ivanovych, must have a registry of all those liquidated together with their correct addresses?"

The dictator looked sullenly at Ivanovych, who quailed under his gaze, thrusting his right hand into his bosom, taking out from the one side of his uniform some folded papers, intending to hand them to Stalin, who turned to Molotov: "Please, Viacheslav Mikhalovich," he said, his words incisive, "this is not for me but rather for you."

Molotov rose with excitement, took a step forward so as to stand by the table directly in front of Stalin, bowed deeply before him, speaking with deep feeling, "Every time I leave you I'm filled with fresh patriotic zeal so necessary in the struggle with our difficulties. I'm always ready to offer you all my energies to uphold every one of your initiatives. My heart is cleansed with joy from the conviction that all your efforts in the future will be crowned with success, for today, in upholding you, I am most fortunate."

Stalin, without rising, extended his hand. Molotov squeezed his hand, bending low again. Ivanovych sat, waiting, without having received even so much as a nod of farewell from the departing guests. Stalin, smiling at Ivanovych, said, "Now we can talk, not of matters as such, but of the reflection from them, so to speak, which in our consciousness burns even when the affairs themselves, having been assimilated with it, do not leave the slightest trace in real life. And so . . . have you been convinced by anything that you've taken away the lives of the ablest people that threatened the advent of our future? For I'm sometimes scared when I realize the historical life and wisdom of the Ukrainian Nation. Are those natures which we considered talented up to

the beginning of the proletarian revolution? Are they really so talented when considering as a characteristic their saying: 'Still waters break the dam?' "

Ivanovych, having straightened up his sitting posture, and forcibly restraining his seething excitement, began to relate, as if he were pulling words out of a refreshed contemplation:

"I think that your fear has realistic justification, but only in part. For all times have known political organizations, which were directed against the resurrectionist section of the population. They really comprise an idea and an action. And the others always draw the attention of the police sooner than necessary.

"I've executed your commission only against the first . . . against the opinion of the people. That national bit of wisdom, 'Still waters break the dam,' concerns only such restless natures as still have the will-power not to disclose their aims in action. Then, when their fellow countrymen are roused to indignation, they are wisely silent. They merely bide their time. These people of genius organize themselves. You yourself made the proper observation regarding the appearance of a genius. So perhaps I've been mistaken from the outset. For who can say that a genius can act without the proper environment? You, having paralyzed the individual forces, by the same token, have paralyzed the environment. No one can say how long the interval must be within which such people can appear, and make us quake for our own future. I bow to your opinion. I am nothing; I'm merely inspired by you."

"That's right. Whatever every society has held in high esteem hitherto must be proscribed by me. Thus for me such words as ability and genius mean the first step against our revolution. People with such a sign always have a very great faculty for perceiving only a limited reality of present-day life, and they haven't any prognosis as regards the approach-

ing future. If they could foretell it, they'd always be our partisans and friends, or perhaps from fear of our terror which will grow as time goes on. Believe me, our terror *will* grow. That is why I put the question to you, and that is why your answer did not as yet satisfy me. Having in view the hackneyed stuff palmed off on us by the natural sciences, I ask: 'Did they not consider whether the children of the people destroyed by you had the same capabilities as their parents, or at least any capability to show that they were the children of parents gifted by nature?' "

Ivanovych replied, but his answer hummed with apologies and fear: "Josif Vassarionovich, when I exercised the duty you placed on my shoulders, I too, like you, became interested in the children of the victims of our state expediency. I asked myself, to what extent at any given time does this expediency destroy our opponents to communism? I surveyed two things: the future organizers of insurrection against us, and the future of the Ukraine for the next five hundred years. I considered the problem of the orphans. I discovered that every orphan is talented. Every one of them is distinguished from the neighboring children, even in outward appearance, with finer youthful features . . . that is, with the intangible thing known as spirituality."

While Ivanovych was speaking, Stalin noticed that his method of thought and his line of reasoning were similar to his own, notwithstanding that the thought and its contents may have diverged a bit from the truth. The dictator had the unpleasant feeling that he was being made a fool of. But with hardly a trace of a smile, he rebuked Ivanovych: "You spoke of the parents, but you did not consider the fact that their orphans are still alive, and that they cannot influence the present generations, let alone the future ones."

Ivanovych listened to the latter words, shaken by Stalin's smile. Everyone in the Kremlin knew the significance of his smiles. *He had always signed his death sentences smiling.* And so, when Ivanovych made his answer, he had suddenly gone hoarse. "Oh, I understand perfectly what I'm talking to you about. I'm trying with all my heart and soul to speak of everything that can coincide with the real truth of present conditions. For foresight and conjecture can become facts only as theoretical syllogisms. Therefore, I'm very painfully impressed with your remark that I'm not quick-witted. I haven't anyone else in life to gratify, and you don't need to trouble yourself about the orphans. We have the addresses of the destroyed people. The G.P.U. will never forgive them for having exterminated their parents. From this day forward I'll consider them as non-existent."

Stalin, with sullen indifference written all over his face, wearily exclaimed, "In the old days the oracles never dared to talk to their rulers in such a dramatically simple manner. In every ancient mythology anyone who tried to equal the gods in anything won fame as a hero, but only as a dead hero. Our time is not the time of gods, who acted on inspiration; but this is our time, and we act only with deliberation. And that's fortunate for you."

The young officer's heart sank within him, and he held his breath. He gaped at Stalin with wide-open eyes, as if at a danger that had no retreat. Even the most terrifying danger always loses its power to influence a doomed person. Stalin looked narrowly into the face of Ivanovych, and, just as if he had noticed some new qualities there that he had not seen there before, he asked again: "Your remarks and experiences regarding the place where you executed your duty encourages me to learn of at least one example, whether of those

who perished from your operations in the Ukraine any were left who could affirm the natural law of psychic inheritance?"

There was a momentary silence. The officer didn't grasp the meaning of the question immediately. Perhaps the light with the purple shade interfered; for he was looking at the unlighted lamp instead of at the lit-up one in the ceiling. But finally he regained control of himself, swiftly drawing a notebook from his pocket out of which he had already handed over some papers to Molotov. Unfolding it, he again looked up at the ceiling.

"You can light the lamp," Stalin uttered. "There's a mechanism by the wick that'll make it work."

Ivanovych extended his hand. It clicked under his hand, and a purple light covered his face; for simultaneously with the click the white light in the ceiling went out, leaving Stalin in semi-darkness. He listened. There was only the rustling of paper. Finally the voice of Ivanovych echoed, the sound of it resembling the cautious steps of the person who has stumbled into the dark, empty rooms of a strange building.

"I'll give you the first example, Josif Vassarionovich. He's the brightest of all the other thousands that died too. Here it is: Smiliansky Region, village of Kuchiwka, district of Kiev. He was a self-made veterinarian, Ovsy Brus. At the time of the organizing of the Komnezams the convention of physicians gave him the right to carry on his profession. He never rode with a wagon or with a sleigh, but always on horseback. I believe he is a Cossack descendant. He could read Russian and Ukrainian in syllables. He couldn't write at all, even his own name. But he knew all the names of his medicines in Latin by heart. Where he learned them is not known; for his oldest of six children, although he is a Ukrainian writer, doesn't know any Latin."

Upon hearing these last words, Stalin threw his whole body onto the railing of the chair. His whole figure now showed little evidence of that casual indifference which was so evident in him when the white lamp was on. The speaker continued: "But his talent as a poet is great. He published a book, *Pillars*, which is very popular among the students. But that's not all. He was a student at the pedagogical institute, and, listening to the lectures on Ukrainian literature, he had the opportunity to listen to lectures on his own book, the *Pillars*. This is an example of brilliant inheritance of spiritual powers."

The speaker lifted his gaze from the notebook to the dictator and Stalin asked, "But you did not say whether your 'example' was a talented veterinary?"

Ivanovych explained: "When the physicians once gave him permission to practice, that meant that they must have had an exceptional case before them. I looked into all this information personally. All the neighboring people among whom Ovsy Brus practiced his profession unanimously spoke of him as their greatest benefactor and savior of their domestic cattle."

"Good." Stalin uttered this word with poise and begged Ivanovych to continue. "And please read at least one poem from the book, *Pillars*. But read it without artistic effects, just like you would in a public school third grade class. I'm interested."

Ivanovych began to turn over the leaves of his notebook. Having found what he was looking for, he raised his head, saying: "I'll read a poem which I regard as counter-revolutionary. Our censure committees are weighing the matter to see whether . . .



At this point Stalin blurted out: "There's no need for an introduction."

In this poem the author starts out with an expression of rapture over a girl, and then grieves over her because she has been taken in by a Russian who has been on an inspection tour of the collective farm. And the further synthesis of the poem speaks of the whole Ukrainian nation being forced into a help-yourself-if-you-please condition. And finally, the fate of the poet emerges,

"For I extend my hands, bound with heavy chains  
To the unmeasured caves beyond the clouds;  
And I ask, though suffering like a wound:  
If the earth has not brought to us happiness,  
Then perhaps we'll find it over there.

But the stars, and the spaces, with even pace,  
Run through the fingers, as water off the snows;  
The planets, sideways, strike against the fetters,  
And from my hands, rubbed by those iron chains,  
There runs an answer with my blood."

Having heard those words Stalin rose, thrusting both hands into the pockets of his trousers, as if he were looking at a poet only five steps away. He expressed a desire to hear the poem out again. He was dressed in a "tolstoy" and boots with legs running up to his knees, making him appear taller than he was. The collar of his shirt was unbuttoned. And without allowing Ivanovych an opportunity to look up from his book, he ordered: "Don't get up; wait awhile."

Then he asked: "Do you understand what you've just read? . . ."

Without waiting for a reply, he continued: "The rhythm in this poem doesn't please me. But I'm sure that in all universal poetry you won't find such a picture as has been described in the last two couplets of this poem. Here you will see how a gigantic figure pierces the cosmos with its tragic greatness. Thus we perceive the world more powerfully than we would ordinarily see it. Even Milton has not spoken to us with such pictures. Therefore I agree with you that we have dealt the Ukraine, which wanted to rise from the past into the present, a mortal blow. Thus the Ukraine, if she wants to rise against us, will find herself sterilized. That is, if from those one hundred and fourteen thousand the children won't remain. Is that not so?"

"Very good. I agree with you a thousand times, that our G.P.U. will not forgive them that they are the children of those parents which it destroyed."

Now Stalin began to speak more pleasantly: "I appoint you overseer of all the prison camps in Northern Russia . . . to bolster up the discipline of our G.P.U., so that all of our penal and state security bodies will be ready to meet these orphans whom we are so worried about. Tomorrow I'll issue an order to all the summary operational bodies in the north."

Ivanovych rose; but instead of clicking with his heels, he merely bowed his head. This was in lieu of thanks. From then on he did not sit down. There was a momentary silence. Then Stalin continued: "Tell me who controlled the liquidation of the people in the Smiliansky Region?"

"Partsunia."

"He's one of those cutthroats you brought to me at the Red Rotunda?"

"That's right; he was one of them."

“Well, all those men who operated in the Ukraine in that campaign of extermination will continue to exercise their duties as executioners, but this time in central Russia. But this Partsunia will shadow the poet and watch his every move. But under no circumstances must he ostensibly mix into any of the affairs of his life. If he wants to cross the border, let him cross it; but all those who helped him to do so must be arrested as ordinary criminals. From now on I want to have a report of all the outstanding events of the life of this poet. You’ll send me a report at least once a year.”

“And suppose he doesn’t cross the border, but remains here to cause us trouble? Shall I arrest him?”

“Yes. Perhaps it may be necessary. But it will only be to find out what he was doing and who his fellow-workers are. Then he can be released.”

Now he was silent. Ivanovych stood stiffly by. Finally Stalin withdrew his right hand from his pocket, lifted it up to his face and saluted.

“Thank you. You’ve earned my gratitude. This is enough for today’s conference. Good night!”

This time the officer clicked both heels together, turned around hurriedly, and swiftly left the room. Stalin sat down ponderously on his chair, breathing deeply. His head was turned to the window. Meanwhile somewhere in the distance a sound was heard, resembling the hoot of an owl. It echoed through space, and then was lost in the dark emptiness. It was the tower clock beating out the hours.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# Hapusia Is Questioned

The end of March in Kiev was unlike that in Moscow. The best example of this difference could be seen in the gardens on Kateriniwsky Street between Mikolaiwsky and Lutensky Streets. They were surrounded by a high, thin fence of iron bars that looked like spears. Through it one could see stately poplars, and running along the fence, clipped acacia, not as high as the fence itself. Beyond this growth, which had already begun to leaf out, in the midst of the garden, there loomed a two-story building with a red, tin roof. It was almost a whole block wide. The sun had already risen to the tenth hour of the morning, and from its warmth and bright light there rose around the building a light spring mist, so that the wide and high windows in their own reflection flurried with lacy, scurrying shadows. One's first impression of this scene was fresh and joyous. Had it not been for the guard in a green cap standing by the central entrance gate, this feeling might have lasted indefinitely.

A neat young woman approached this guard, handing him a paper. He read it, returned it to her, and showed her the entrance. The young woman quickly entered, hurrying over

to the porch. Here she was halted by another guard, who, having taken the paper, spoke loudly: "Go right in. The corridor to the left. Number five."

She entered, turned to the left, passing two doors, halting before number five. The ceiling in the corridor was high. Before her, lower down the yellow walls, a red door was easily recognizable. The girl pulled out from the left pocket of her grey overcoat a handkerchief and wiped her nose. Replacing it back into her pocket, she tapped lightly on the door. There was no answer for some time; the girl fidgeted. Finally there was an answer, "Come in."

She entered, halting near the threshold, looking at the man in green, civilian clothes. He was sitting down, holding both hands on the edge of the table. To his right hung a portrait of Stalin in a black jacket, and under it was a closed, brown cupboard with two opaque panes instead of doors. The room was long, with only one window. The walls were yellow. The ceiling was white with a dark circle in the center, from the middle of which, on an electric wire, hung a lamp over the table. Some papers lay on the table near a yellow briefcase. The man looked at the girl inquisitively.

The man was Partsunia. Finally, having satisfied himself with his observance of the girl, he gave an order: "Take that chair over there by the wall and sit down over here, closer to the table." The girl took it swiftly and gladly and sat down. Partsunia then asked: "Are you from 28 Leontovich Street?"

"Yes," was the monosyllabic answer.

"Good."

Partsunia agreed. Then, taking a letter out of an unsealed envelope, he handed it to the girl: "Read it at once and then return it to me."

She took it, pulled the letter out of the envelope, and began reading it: "Comrade Partsunia, commissioned to conduct an extraordinary social reform in the Smiliansky Region.

"Since it is your desire, I hereby wish to inform you that Hapusia, the daughter of Shelestian, really did come to me and say that Ovsy Brus was lying on the pathway which leads to Melnikiwka. When I came he was already dead. But where she disappeared to is unknown. If she had any money I'm sure she'd ride to Kiev to the young Brus on the instruction of the one who was dying. For she was in such a pregnant condition that it was only there that she could be saved from shame and iniquity. She couldn't get the money either from her father or her aunt, for they had none. It seems to me that she ended it all by committing suicide. I have nothing more to say as regards Hapusia, daughter of Shelestian.

Village Physician's attendant,  
Opanas Onopreyovich, August 15, 1930."

After reading the letter Hapusia placed it on the table, and nervously grabbed both ends of her head shawl under the chin and tied a tighter knot. Lowering her eyes, she remained silent. But Partsunia, drawing the letter to himself, questioned: "So you were at Onopreyovich's?"

"I was."

"Whom did you see when you went to him, or from him?"

"There were two people standing near his yard. Perhaps two women, or perhaps two girls. I couldn't say which."

"Where did you go from the assistant doctor?"

"To the station."

"Did you ever return to Ovsy Brus?"

"I never returned."

“Did you ever go to your father or your mother?”

“No.”

“Or to your aunt?”

“No.”

“Whom were you going to see from your aunt’s at Tashlyk?”

“I forgot.”

“That’s not the truth.”

Hapusia remained silent.

“Weren’t you at your mother’s or father’s then?”

“No.”

“You’re no loyal daughter. How many letters did you write them from Kiev?”

“Not one.”

“That not only seems strange to me, but it’s hard to understand. How can you deny your own father and mother? Something must have happened to you, otherwise you would not without just cause have disavowed them. How old are you?”

“Fifteen.”

“Well, and why didn’t you write them a single letter? Was it because you were afraid of someone?”

Hapusia kept quiet, breathing heavily, without looking at her inquisitor. Indeed, during the whole questioning period she sat with downcast eyes, lifting up her head only when making an answer.

And now Partsunia, in a commanding voice, and in a manner such as is exercised by people when they catch someone red-handed in an evil deed, proclaimed: “Do you know that Mazdigin told me that you stole a purse with two ‘cherwinchi’ from him and then ran away, God knows where? Since you’re now in Kiev, you must have come here on this stolen money.”

Hapusia raised her head in surprise and alarm, in which there was a mixture of anger and hatred, causing her to yell: "Would that he went mad! He lies like a mad dog!"

Then she pulled her handkerchief out of her pocket again, wiping away the sudden tears. It was quiet in the room. Even Partsunia now was saying nothing. He was watching the girl's trembling shoulders and heaving breast, as she sobbed and tried to check herself against her aggrieved, down-trodden and outraged feelings. Partsunia waited. It was not until Hapusia started blowing her nose into her handkerchief, with which she had just stopped wiping her eyes, that he turned to her again. "Did Mazdigin pay you anything when you worked in the school?"

"He pay anything? Why, he'd cheat me of my last beggarly kopeck, let alone pay me anything!" she burst out.

"Be that as it may, but I still think that you came here on money stolen from Mazdigin," Partsunia continued. "And the reason why you avoided seeing your parents before your departure was because you feared being punished for robbery. For it is impossible that the khazain of the school would not have told his workman about his daughter's theft. You knew this and that is why you avoided your family. I am not trying to hand you over to the court, but I do wish to find out the truth and let you go back to your work. Of course only on condition that you return the stolen money. After you return from this examination, you can send the money by mail. Just tell me that you stole the money and I'll let you go free. If you won't tell me I'll call the guard, and he'll take you to the 'doper,' that is, to the prison. Do you understand?"

Hapusia understood only too well. She knew she faced something worse than death. With a new strength, arising out of her spiritual suffering and despairing fatigue, she faced



this serpent that fed on human misfortune. She knew full well that the people were impotent to help her.

“Oh, my Lord, my Lord!” she cried. “What have I done that you talk to me thus? Would that the hands of the one who stole the money were cramped! Would that the one who saw this hideous, slimy-like-a-snake money, had his eyes smashed! Why, I never in my life cheated any human being even of a kopeck! And you . . .”

She turned pale, trembling with nervous excitement, but Partsunia was inexorably insistent. He said: “There’s no reason for getting heated over this. All you need to do is to say that you stole the money from Mazdigin. The Soviet Government does not believe in any curses, but only in a clear case. You just tell us what we already know. On whose money did you come here? All I want is to clear you before the Soviet Government of any stain. That can only be done if you confess to the charge that we are making against you here.”

The girl’s heart beat more rapidly. It was evident she was approaching a state of nervous exhaustion, or even of temporary derangement. But with great effort she began to speak more quietly, her words coming out in whispers: “Old man Brus gave me the money. He told me it was tied up in a knot with a red ribbon and attached to the mane of the horse Wyhra, near the forehead. Well, I went there, and surely enough that’s where the money was.”

Partsunia almost jumped out of his chair at this information. But he held onto the table with both hands, his eyes shining with the passion and madness of a beast of prey, whose paws were feeling the warmth of its victim. He kept putting the pressure on the inexperienced soul: “Are there any witnesses to this fact?”

Hapusia looked helplessly at the floor, then said: "There were no witnesses. But if you want to convince yourself that I'm not lying, you can come to our village and look at Wyhra's forehead. She's still perhaps wearing that red ribbon. For when I cut it off I left part of it there, taking just the knot with the money. Nothing else around the forehead was cut. And there's no one around there now to braid the mane so that there would be more trace of the ribbon."

Partsunia leaned back on the chair's support in silence, evidently mulling something in his mind, but still holding the girl with a sharp stare. Hapusia was breathing heavily. Finally he asked: "Where did you get the scissors to cut that ribbon off the horse's head?"

"At my aunt's place. She was working in the garden. I went into the house, and took the scissors off a nail near the window. There's a rule hanging there, too, for measuring cloth before sewing it together."

"That's all very well, but you told me that you didn't go home nor visit your aunt, and now you say that you did. I still believe that you stole the money from Mazdigin. However, I'm sorry for your inexperience, and so I'm letting you go home to cleanse your conscience and then to admit that you stole the money from Mazdigin. I am not going to call you, but you will come of your own accord and tell me. I'm not going to judge you. If you don't confess, then you'll be tried, considering that you mentioned the horse Wyhra, for having drawn the youngest Brus son, Modest, into the matter. Now go and don't forget about the prison . . . and don't tell anybody about what we said here. Otherwise, you'll never get out of that prison. Go now. I'll wait another week for you to come of your own accord; and if you don't, I'll have you

called in, and then our conversation will be very much longer and even disagreeable.”

Hapusia got to her feet, staggering. She regained her balance, and left the room. Partsunia, dispatching her with an air of a conqueror, set his chest against the table and began making notes on some paper, hurriedly and nervously. Suddenly there was a knock on the door, so loud that Partsunia shuddered, momentarily unable to answer. A G.P.U. man in military uniform entered, asking: “Shall I let this young citizeness pass that just came out?”

“Hasn’t she got a pass?”

“No, she hasn’t.”

“Let her pass.”

The door closed. Partsunia was no longer writing. Rubbing both hands over his pate, as if he were patting down his hair, he seized the edge of the table, meanwhile concentrating on the button of Stalin’s coat in his portrait. But the whole figure of the Chekist indicated that it wasn’t the button that interested him. The terror that he had produced in others now clawed at his own vitals. He feared Stalin.

A year ago when Ovsy Brus escaped from the hospital, Partsunia had experienced all kinds of troubles, not because something happened to the man, but because he let slip through his fingers a thread that would have led him to the gold money. This fact worried him up to the time that the executionary expedition against the leading people of the Ukrainian nation had been completed. When he decided to send in his report to Moscow regarding his region, he had been forced to give up the case of the gold money of Brus as lost.

Ivanovych had sent him into the Ukraine for a week for the purpose of tracing the gold and he was feverishly anxious

to get down to the task of finding the gold that the old fool had hoarded during his life. Even the slow train had irritated him. But how to find the gold? He had figured on visiting Mazdigin even before he commenced any of his other duties.

At Mazdigin's he had learned that Hapusia had notified the attendant about Brus, who was dying on the field, and that she had disappeared. She had not shown up at her parents' place, nor had they found her dead. Partsunia did find out that she had gone to Kiev to see young Brus on the old man's wish, and on his money. And right there at Mazdigin's he formed his plan.

The Chekist now sat anxious but satisfied, that the matter was now being controlled by what he visualized as a rope, and that this rope now must be continually wound up without letting go of the end, thus making him, Partsunia, master of the situation. Hapusia and Brus' wife were the penultimate knots in this rope, the hardest to untie. Thus they must be isolated from Brus.

To this end, he investigated all the secrets of the poet's life. He learned that, following the death of his father, Ivan Brus had suffered a serious nervous breakdown, and that any mention of his father's death would make him weep. Had it not been for his wife, Olena Shchoholov, who was working as a full-fledged doctor in the Oleksandriwsky Hospital, he would have died long ago. She cared for him with a deep devotion and an understanding tenderness.

Partsunia learned that she had placed Hapusia in the hospital for an abortion operation, and after that had found a position for her in the hospital as a nurse. He knew that Ivan Brus had a room and kitchen at 28 Leontovich Street and that he and his wife lived in the room, while Hapusia slept in the kitchen. It had been hard at the time to find living quar-

ters anywhere in Kiev. In gathering all this information he had visited the Writers' Association; and he had examined many lodging registry offices. He had been at the Oleksandriwsky Hospital in conference with the "Party cell."

The whole matter now concentrated itself in the person of Hapusia. Once she was thoroughly frightened, the whole Brus family would fall in line. By living there Hapusia would undermine their position. She would be able to meet Partunia practically every evening. Now he recalled that when he was at Mazdigin's, it never had occurred to him to see Modest. But this was now imperative. He'd say, "Well, what do you know, Hapusia got ten gold 'karbowanchi' right from the horse's forehead!" If he had known this sooner he'd have made efforts to see Ivan's brother long ago. There's nothing else to do but to make a trip there, and perhaps learn not only about some signs of this gold but about where it is hidden.

His mesmeric and agitated torpor lifted as he looked at the cupboard. He rose at once, and, with the step of the person to whom every moment is precious, he went over and opened it. It was really a clothes closet with some civilian clothes hanging in it, a summer and winter coat. On the right side wall hung a grey overcoat, and under that was a black uniform with a red collar. Underneath all these clothes were some small but fine yellow, leather valises. Perhaps they were requisitioned. He quickly opened one up, pulling out a bottle of "rykovka" which had been already unsealed. He returned with the bottle to the table and, setting it in his brief case, he carefully sealed it.

He made ready to drive to the village. The figure of Hapusia, strangely enough, was passing before his eyes, as if in his soul she was his greatest worry. Her round cheeks, slightly wide mouth, with the delicate teeth, her grey and

almost childishly worried eyes, were alluring and sweetly exciting. He sighed, and, returning back to the cupboard, he donned his summer khaki overcoat and dark hat, shutting the closet. He walked the floor for a long time, with both hands in the pockets of his overcoat. He was not worried about any of the servants coming in, because this was his living quarters, as well as his office. His work was carried on independently of all general Chekist matters. He was certain of success.

His whole being craved, within the sphere of his experiences, emotional satisfaction. He wanted very much to see Hapusia, and as soon as possible. And so he decided to call her when he got back from the village, not even waiting for her end-of-the-week's penance.

Then, having bethought himself, he picked up his brief case and went outside. The key clicked in the lock, and then lay deep in his pocket. At the garden gate both Chekist guards allowed him to pass with military respect.

Partsunia came out on Luteransky Street, and then turned into Khrestiatyk Street. People outwalked him or else passed him in such a way as to avoid him. But he paid little attention to them. The sun over Kiev was clear but not scorching. Among the Kiev buildings and the green patches of the living trees people kept tramping along Khrestiatyk Street, on one side and the other they were all Partsunias, which the Partsunias were questioning. There could be no other kind of freedom for the people, other than this. They were all dragging each other into amenability. He swore blue blazes and accelerated his pace. On the corner of Luteransky and Khrestiatyk street he halted, and began to watch the crowd, looking in the direction of Wasilkiwsky Street and the Dnieper. Finally he straightened up and yelled: "Driver! Driver! Hey, come here, driver!"

A driver came along in a one-horse barouche. Without asking about the fare, he leaped up on the step. Holding onto his seat and the iron on the wing of the barouche to which a leather apron was attached to cover the legs of the passenger, he ordered: "To the railway station."

The driver flicked the horse with his whip. The barouche clattered away and Partsunia began to button up his coat, having laid his brief case beside him.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# The Search Stopped by an Accident

Since the trains always came in late, Partsunia did not arrive at Brus' farmstead until ten o'clock in the morning. When he finally arrived at Modest's house, Partsunia noticed a fine horse hitched to a wagon and tied to a tree. He decided that this would be his means of transportation back to the station. He was in a benevolent and agreeable mood as he cast his gaze over the farmstead.

All around the farmstead loomed the dark moist earth of spring. Only the acacias and the paths around the house showed green in the edges of the swelling buds. The house itself had a forlorn and uninviting look. The outward appearance was very much accentuated by a stork's nest on the house, which was in a dilapidated condition.

For a moment the heart of Partsunia was stirred, but not for long. It took on the same meaning in his self-satisfaction as the shadows cast by the clouds would have in relation to the whole day. Thus Partsunia was soon absorbed in the task of finding some clue as to where the gold was hidden. The question of who was to get it was not important, whether it might be the state or himself. He knew very well that he who



first draws water out of a well will be the first to drink, to douse himself or to wash his hands with it.

Partsunia did not enter the house by the usual well-beaten path. He took a roundabout way, passing the harnessed horse. It was a fat, reddish stallion with a white mark on its forehead. He was unbridled and tied with the rein of his bridle to an acacia tree. He was nibbling at an armful of hay that lay there before him. This might be the horse Hapusia had mentioned. Partsunia, softening his step, looked over the horse's mane, forehead and tail carefully. He knew that the villagers would hide valuable articles in unusual places, seemingly on purpose, so that they could not be easily found. But neither in the forehead, the mane, nor the tail did he notice any ribbon. And, passing by the frontals, so as to get into the vestibule, he saw two villagers sitting behind a table, and a woman too. But he couldn't distinguish what was on the table. Jutting out from the ground inside the room was the skeleton of a tree on which pots were hanging. There was a threadbare rag on it too.

Having gone through the vestibule, Partsunia began rapping on the door of the room. He heard steps inside, and then a voice: "Who's there?"

The door opened, and a young man about twenty years old, pale, and with untidy beard and whiskers, stepped out.

Partsunia asked: "May I come in?"

Then from the table came a happy voice: "And why not? The house was built first of all for the khazain, and then for the guests. The khazain's in the house, and the guests, if they have something in their pockets, and are not mad, are welcome to enter. It'll make us happy."

"Oh, my Lord, if he were only the khazain of someone else's house; but he isn't, and yet he drives them out as if

from a priest's yard." Thus spoke the woman, looking Partsunia over.

The villager who spoke was sitting on a bench, his elbows resting on the table which was set with an untidy cloth. To the right on a towel lay some slices of bread, and in the center of the table there was a plate with some fried bacon. The villager wore a jacket made out of the kind of heavy cloth from which the villagers in the Ukraine usually sew their overcoats. His trousers were made of thick cloth, dyed in elder. The lower part of his trousers in the bootlegs were tied with cord. The man was long-faced, youthful-looking, though he wore whiskers and an untrimmed black beard. On the bench beside him lay his straw hat.

The woman was blond and small, wearing a three-cornered neckerchief, but no "ochipok." Since the ochipok was a cap worn by a married woman, Partsunia concluded that she was unattached. She was sitting opposite the young man, dressed in a blouse made of cloth and dyed, too, in elder. It was evident that they were drinking something, but, having seen someone go by the window, they had hid it. Since moonshine was prohibited by the government, they had to buy the "rikovka." God being high up in the sky, and the government far away, the villagers were still able to run off their liquor to their own consolation and amusement. From one way of looking at it, Partsunia, ignoring his obvious duty and setting his city hat down on the bench near the window, said: "Please accept me into your company. I won't be left out."

As he sat on the bench he opened his brief case, pulled out a bottle, and set it down on the table. The villager with the black beard blurted out, "Now, Modest, you'd better take it easy. You've lost your place! It now belongs to a new chair-

man. Sit down on the bench, and let our company be as thick as those willows which are loved by the wolves!”

Partsunia moved over to the old, worn stool in front of the table.

“And where did the Lord bring you from?” asked the man who had let Partsunia in.

Partsunia, paying no attention to the question, turned to the black-bearded one and ordered, “Uncork it!”

Then he answered the question: “I’ve come here to visit your teacher, Mazdigin. But something happened to the wagon right in front of your place. And so the driver refused to go any further. He returned to Nasachiw. Well, I saw the horse standing out in front, and I said to myself: ‘I’ll go in and ask them to drive me the rest of the way, if it’s still far off to the school. It won’t be for nothing. I’ll pay for the trip.’ ”

Now the man with the jacket that was made out of the cloth commonly used by the villagers to sew their “switky” with, spoke up, but without any ironical embellishments: “No, my good man, you’re off the track. My wagon and my horse are not here to transport anyone. The khazain, Modest, asked me to come here and join my stallion with his mare. That’s why I’m here, as you can see. And it’s not even a stone’s throw to Mazdigin’s from this place. You’ll make it readily on foot. But why argue? There’s no reason for it. Right here on this table stands our disenchantment and our harmony. And come now, comrade, or how do they call you?”

Partsunia answered, then asked, “And how do they call you?”

“They call me Sayko,” the villager answered, “and my family name is Oleksandrovich. That’s so our people will not forget where the people are being destroyed and not even asked their family names when they’re killed.”

Then, having picked up the bottle, he smacked the bottom of it with the palm of his left hand, so that the stopper flew up to the ceiling, leaving a moist whiskey stain there. Partsunia, unable to hold back his ecstasy, shouted, "Well, you must be tops in the village-drinking business!"

"Don't believe your eyes. The sun shines hotly on the whole world, but it hasn't burned anyone up yet, and our fathers have not said anything to anyone about it," the villager shouted.

Partsunia almost jumped out of his skin, and, pretending that he had committed an offense, as an excuse for examining the horse's mane, he started to beg to Sayko Oleksandrovich, "Pull me by the hair just like the teacher does with a pupil. I should be more careful about my mistakes before sedate husbandmen."

The villager spoke with amazement: "And what's wrong with you, Mister Comrade? Why, you haven't even drunk a glassful, nor taken a snack after your trip. I hope I haven't offended you. That isn't right."

"Well, if you don't want me to offend you, I'll grab a hold of your hair, and not only you, but your husbandman. Let me have a glassful."

"Oh, come now, khazaochko," he begged the lady of the house, "find us a tumbler or a glass."

Then he filled a small white tumbler and handed it to Modest, shouting, "Drink, khazain, so that your mares will breed colts, and that your stallions will never die out, but remain tougher than a Hetman's mace!"

Modest Brus drank and, having made a grimace, began to eat. After Partsunia had served them all with a drink, and himself too, without eating anything, he reminded them, "You

don't want to pull my hair, so now the khazayka will do it. Here you are!"

He bent down to her, but the khazayka demurred, "And is this at all necessary?"

"Yes. Without it we won't be friends."

And the khazayka, smiling, seized Partsunia's hair with her right hand, and then, letting go of it, said, "You'll never grow bald because of me, but because of them even your hair may fall off."

The Chekist, as if with great pleasure, chuckled and jumped up on his feet.

"And you, Sayko Oleksandrovich, let me have that bunch of hair, which you haven't cut since Christmas, so that I can punish you for having refused to punish me according to your own law."

The latter, being neither here nor there, as if in jest, or bound by a duty which he didn't understand fully, bent his head down a bit, looking askance at Partsunia's snout. But Partsunia seized the villager's hair with both hands, running his fingers over his whole head as far down as the nape of the neck. Then he did the same to Modest, finally stopping before his wife. But it flashed through the mind of the Chekist that men often grab their wives by the hair and beat them. He sighed, and then smiled, sitting down on his seat, addressing the men in a tone of victory, "But I won't let you seize my hair so I'll lose it."

Sayko Oleksandrovich sat sullen and silent. It was evident that Partsunia's tricks were not to his taste. Then, coughing emphatically, he began to rise from the table, saying, "Well, Modest, let's go to the animals, for they'll be waiting for me at home, to scold me."

Everyone rose, including Partsunia, who picked up his brief case, saying, "I'll go with you too. I don't want to offend anyone . . . the khazayka said that men's heads become bald from men's hands; but since they did not pull my hair I won't be bald, but you two will. Fate works otherwise. And in order that our allotted fate won't be realized, I would like to see it fall upon the animals. Let me do the worst part of the process; let me examine the manes and the tails. Ha-ha-ha . . ."

Sayko gazed at him wolfishly and blurted out, "I don't always believe in fortunetellers, but go ahead."

"All the more so," continued Partsunia, "because an animal doesn't live until the time when a man begins to grow bald. Thus it won't be so terrible if the spell is passed on to the animals."

The khazayka did not go out with the men. They, passing by the wagon and the stallion, went straight to the hut. Here, in the center, her side to the door, stood Wyhra tied to the manger. Partsunia asked, "And are you going to lead her out?"

Modest smiled and answered, "I have to lead her out. In a small hut like this only dogs could be paired off."

He entered and soon came out with a grey mare. She was both quiet and fine-looking, holding her head up both sprightly and spiritedly. Partsunia came towards her head, asking, "What do you call her?"

"Wyhra."

"Wyhra? What an odd name!"

The uninvited guest said this like an echo to Modest's words. His whole attention was riveted on the forehead. And sure enough he saw in the horse's mane a piece of red ribbon. He placed his hand over the animal's snout and patted it, saying, "A wonderful horse! What a noble head and what

a trusting look! Where did you ever get such a fine animal?"

After feeling the knot made by the ribbon in the hair, he found that the ribbon really had been cut. Hapusia hadn't lied! All that was left of the ribbon was a small shred that still held on to some hairs. Partsunia, holding the brief case between his legs, reached the bit of ribbon and unravelled it. Then, without looking at it, he thrust it into the pocket of his overcoat. He pulled the brief case out from between his knees with his left hand, and with his right hand he ran over the horse's mane, just as he did with the men's heads. Then he stepped aside, saying, "What a figure! A queen and not a horse!"

"Oh, what kind of a queen?" asked Modest, modestly. "She's already had two colts."

"Two colts? I would never have believed it . . . Never."

Then he approached Wyhra again, patting her on the ribs, running his hands over her down to the tail, which he seized at the middle, pulling it to himself with his left hand and parting it, meanwhile holding the brief case, and saying, "Honestly, but this tail is so grand and splendid, that experts on horse beauty would compare it with the colorful tail of a pheasant. A real fine horse. I hope the Lord will let you have a third colt from her as fine as its mother."

Without listening to what Modest was saying, he turned to the wagon of Sayko Oleksandrovich, when he met Modest's wife, carrying in her arms some Austrian puttees from soldiers' shoes. He looked at her in wonder, and asked, "What are you carrying those things for?"

"To tie the mare's tail with them, so that the stallion will not hurt himself."

And now Sayko came over, taking the puttees away from her, rubbing them in the same manner as a village woman

rubs her fingers over the goods at a store, while choosing cloth for a jacket or petticoat. He expressed his fears: "These puttees are just as terrible for the stallion as for the mare's hair," he objected. "But whether the tail is wound with puttees or not it still has to be pushed to a side, the same as a tail that is not wound with them. Otherwise, I wouldn't let the stallion go ahead."

Modest, anxiously, but with pretended indifference, began to appease Sayko Oleksandrovich:

"There's no reason for worry," he said. "I'll pull back the tail and hold it myself. What's wrong with you all of a sudden? I only keep these puttees for Wyhra. I've wound her tail twice with them before: When Sedykov's stallion was here, and also Kapturov's. Now if it weren't for Wyhra, just like the other people, I'd wind my feet with them."

Suddenly the wagon rumbled, and the stallion neighed, thus breaking in on the misunderstanding which began to appear among the villagers. Sayko Oleksandrovich ran over to his own horse, tearing away acacia branches, making the leaves tremble. But Wyhra was quiet. All she did was to lift her head higher and look over at her unknown wooer.

Sayko Oleksandrovich seized the stallion by the bridle and led him and the wagon to some hay, holding him there until he had quieted down and had begun to eat the hay again. Partsunia, too, came over, bent down to his brief case, laying it on his knee, trying to find something, and murmuring something under his breath: "I've some sugar somewhere . . . it was somewhere. Oh, yes, here it is, thank the Lord."

Closing the brief case again, holding the sugar in his right hand, he came over to the horse, asking the khazain: "And what is this wooer called?"

But the khazain kept quiet, watching Partsunia's pranks. The horse licked up the sugar with his lip and started crunch-



ing it, watching the hand of Partsunia as it closed over to pat his muzzle. It wasn't until then that Sayko Oleksandrovich sullenly spoke: "They call him 'Stutsia.' "

"And what kind of a word is that, 'Stutsia'?"

Partsunia was patting the horse's forehead when he asked that question.

"Why, that's the name my wife calls him by when she waters him from the pail. But his real name is Stukan. It means 'the one who knocks.' "

"Stukan?"

Stukan's mane was long and thick, such as only the Arden breed possesses. Although the horse itself was of a sorrel color, the tail was very dark. Running down between his ears onto his forehead, and from the center hung three-strand braids without ribbons. The whole mane along with its braids folded over from the neck in a curving arch after the fashion of a wave during a great wind breaking over a pier. It gave the figure of the horse a colorful appearance, especially the great breast and the gracefully curved belly. Partsunia at first patted the braids on the mane, and then the mane itself, and then contemplated the tail. He did not notice that the horse had pricked up his ears as soon as he was being patted on the mane. He had a sinister look.

It was plain that he was aware of Partsunia. His pricked-up ears lay lower than the arched bulge of the mane. And his head did not look like that of a horse, but was similar to that of the legendary serpent, which, having poked its head out of a cave, gets set to leap on its enemy in one jump. When Partsunia whacked the horse on the forepart of his tail, he fairly made the welkin ring, not with his neighing, but with his piercing shrieking, which made the hair stand on end, and the flesh tingle with creeping fear. Ee...ee...ee...ee...ee! The horse lashed out madly with his right hind leg so hard

against Partsunia's thigh, that the brief case flew out of his left hand. And he, stretched out on the ground, grasping at it with both hands, merely seemed to be spasmodically raising the dust with his fingers. Then, turning over on his left side and crawling around, he began to force epithets through his tightly compressed teeth, "You lecherous soul, Stutsia . . . Oh . . . oh . . . help! Bring the doctor along quickly . . . Call him . . . Oh, you hellish blood! . . . Oh . . . Oh!"

Sayko Oleksandrovich ran over to the fallen one, yelling over him with pretended alarm: "They call that devilish soul of a horse, Stukan, and not Stutsia! It's only my weak-minded wife that calls him Stutsia. He's Stukan, the devilish soul!"

Partsunia, not having ceased twisting around, moaned like a madman: "He's Stukan for you to be knocking around the world! . . . Not Stukan, but the doctor . . . The Hydra! . . . Help! . . . Get a doctor!"

Sayko Oleksandrovich ran over to bridle his horse, yelling meanwhile to the frightened Modest: "The man is hurt! . . . It's terrible . . . Perhaps his stomach is pierced . . . I don't know whether I'll be able to bring Onopreyovich. I don't know what to tell him, and he won't know what salves or medicines to bring along to treat the man with."

"It's not the stomach . . . No, no . . . Oh . . . oh . . . oh . . . A bone's broken! . . . You son of a whore!"

But Sayko Oleksandrovich now began to yell from his wagon, which was well on the move: "Drive the mare into the hut before she tramples on the man in the yard!"

Then he let the stallion go at his full trot. And the rumble of the wagon wheels appeased the suffering one, for, having doubled up his left leg, and straightened out his right leg, he no longer was swearing blue blazes, but was turning his head, now laying one cheek on the ground, now turning his head

and laying the other one down . . . letting it rest on the left hand, then on the palm of his right hand, grinding his teeth meanwhile, hissing through them, and moaning. But Modest and his wife, having led the mare into the hut, looked out timidly from it, watching the stranger in the middle of their yard.

The sun in the sky now indicated the twelve o'clock noon hour, for the shadows off the houses and the acacias were at their shortest length. And everywhere, on that side and this side of the Onykian Ravine, over the black earth loomed little smokey clouds of grey mist in more or less evenly transparent throngs over the horizon. And somewhere from the distant rivers could be heard the single cry of a wild male goose, that had separated from the flock. The echo of his cry reverberated over the fields, swinging the rays of the sun in the warmth of the earthy vapors. Both of the Bruses just stood there in the hut without showing themselves outside, or going back into the house, gazing in fright at the stranger who was lying down but not getting up. Well, and what if he should die? Both of them whispered to each other without making a move away from their animal.

Finally the wagon came back rumbling like a messenger of joy and peace . . . Glory be to the Lord! . . . Both Modest and his wife came out from the hut and now were waiting in the light of the sun. The wagon halted in the yard, Onopreyovich jumping out of it, going over worriedly to the prostrate one. He bent over him in a squatting position. Partsunia was breathing heavily with closed eyes. The doctor's assistant lifted one of his hands and started to feel his pulse. Partsunia opened his eyes, and the doctor, pointing at his straightened out leg, asked: "Does this one hurt?"

“Yes.”

“Now lie on your back.”

“Perhaps I won’t be able to.”

However, he was able to pull himself up in the position ordered by the doctor, who helped him until he lay on his back, bending only the left leg, but leaving the right as it was before—straightened out. The doctor’s assistant slowly straightened out the left leg, too, so that it would lie like the right one. He observed: “I’ll try to bend your right leg into the kind of position your left leg is in. Try to help me if you can. And if you can’t, try not to interfere with me.”

Now he worked on the other side of the right leg, and, getting down on his knees, he took hold of his right foot, thrusting his left hand into the joint of the knee, using all his force to bend it. Partsunia hissed through his teeth. But the doctor, keeping his equilibrium, kept to his job. Partsunia moaned. The doctor’s assistant waited a moment and then went at it again. The leg was now bent, and held angularly over the straightened one. The doctor’s assistant was satisfied, and, perhaps in order to show his ability, he clenched his teeth and his fist and, having lifted it a bit backwards, he smacked it into the hollow of the knee joint of the straightened-out leg with all his force so that Partsunia jerked it out madly into the straightened-out position it was in when Stukan struck him, making him shriek: “Why, you damned snake! . . . Away with you! . . . Get away from me!”

Then he rose on the elbows of both hands, starting to spit on the doctor. But the latter quickly got to his feet, and, paying no attention to Partsunia’s venom, quietly announced: “It’s all right now. Your leg’s whole, and so is your hip bone. We’ll take you to Rokhmistriwka. There you’ll recuperate in the hospital for two weeks, and you’ll soon be well. There

might be a fracture somewhere, but it'll not hurt your health."

It wasn't until now that Modest came out of the hut and silently took a position behind the doctor, listening and sighing heavily. Sayko alone of all those present took little interest in Partsunia's fate. He just kept sitting in the wagon holding the reins and looking at the horse, waiting for the conclusion of this unsuccessful day.

The doctor's assistant came over to the wagon, smacked the hay with which it was loaded with his hand, saying: "We'll set the comrade down lengthwise. There's plenty of hay, so it won't aggravate the contused leg. Move up a bit forward, Sayko Oleksandrovich."

The latter moved up. The doctor's assistant asked for help to lift Partsunia onto the hay. They helped him to get up on his feet and to limp over to the wagon. There all hands hoisted him up onto the hay. They laid his brief case beside him. Then the doctor asked: "Are all your things with you?"

The latter answered that there was still an unemptied bottle of whiskey on the table in the house, which the khazains could finish themselves. With that exception all his other things were beside him. Then Onopreyovich gave his order to Sayko Oleksandrovich. He said, "Drive on, and take your 'tribute' with you. For if it hadn't been for your horse, there would not have been an accident. Be careful of the bumps on the road. Drive slowly, or still better, go round the bumps."

Sayko Oleksandrovich, upon departing, spoke not to the doctor, but to Modest and his wife, "Don't lap it all up. Leave me at least a glassful for my payment."

Modest's wife, as a rejoinder to him, retorted: "The trouble was all yours, and so was the payment. We won't touch a drop of it; we'll leave it all for you."

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### The Net Closes In

On the evening of the day that Hapusia was called for questioning, Ivan Brus' wife, Olenka Antonivna Shchokolov, was leaving the hospital feeling very tired. She had kept her maiden name for professional reasons. She was paying very little attention to the passers-by, nor to those young people, mostly students, who gazed at her inquisitively. Being healthy and attractive, she was accustomed to admiration. She walked along on the Great Pidwalny, past the German Consulate, with her brief case, in which she carried a pharmaceutical book, a physician's smock, and a cheap stethoscope.

There being no lockers in the hospital, she would not have dared to leave any clothes for fear of their being stolen. A pharmaceutical book was as essential to her as a breviary was to a priest. But since she still had a year to go after finishing her medical course, her pharmaceutical book was most important.

The street lights were on, but only near the consulate, and on the corners where the streets with their clanking tramways crossed each other. For wherever such a noise was not heard, there was the kind of gloom that the Communists re-

joiced to see in the consciousness of the people. No longer did the people dare to celebrate Easter. Few had the courage to carry their "paskas," or Easter bread, to be blest.

Finally Mrs. Olenka Brus reached Leontovich Street, walking down it until she came to a two-story building, which she entered. Opening the door with a French key, she went into her room. In a small vestibule hung a man's overcoat and hat, and under those a pair of galoshes.

She went into the dark kitchen and turned on the light. She saw a valise on the bed, and on top of it a package in a black handkerchief. Hapusia, dressed in a grey overcoat and wearing a white kerchief, was sleeping, her shoes still on her feet, which were hanging down from the bed. The girl's face was marked with dark patches from the eyes to her neck. Olena Antonivna knew that something dreadful had happened to Hapusia . . . that she must have cried herself to sleep. Gently she wakened the girl.

"Hapusia . . . Hapusia . . . What is the matter with you?" she begged. "Hapusia!"

The girl wakened, wiping her eyes with her hands, and sat up. She was silent, looking dully down at her feet. It seemed that even her thoughts had become wooden. Olena Antonivna asked with deep concern, "What's wrong with you, Hapusia? Are you sick, or something? Why didn't you come to work? You know very well that your absence, in case you're well, will discredit us. Tell me, are you sick?"

"No."

"Not sick?"

"No."

"Quit saying 'no,' and tell me in so many words . . . Are you sick?"

Suddenly Hapusia spoke up with a normal outburst, "I'm not sick. I'm well . . ."

"Glory be to the Lord. Well, then, why weren't you at work?" Olena Antonivna demanded. "Were you somewhere, or did you stay home all day?"

"I was home all day."

"And nothing happened to you?"

"Nothing."

"You are lying to me shamefully. It is plain that all is not right with you. Because if it were just this or that, you'd not be packing up your things to leave us. Now tell me, why is this valise packed, and this package?" Olenka demanded.

Hapusia cried out in such abject woe that Olenka would not have been amazed if the girl had dissolved into tears. Hapusia, between convulsive sobs, cried, "It looks like I'm lost forever. There's no place for me anywhere. They're hounding me like dogs in the field after a cat. Oh, Olena Antonivna, what am I to do now?"

Olena Antonivna became more gentle. "You tell me everything," she said, "and all of us together will know what to do."

"What am I to say when they already told me that if I ever told anyone about them, I'd never come out of prison?" Hapusia cried. "I don't know what I'm to do: to run away from you, or to do away with myself? For me it's easier to flee, but I don't know where to."

Olena Antonivna put her hand on Hapusia's shoulders and comforted the girl who was shedding such bitter tears.

"If it's too hard on you, then don't say anything at all. Calm yourself," Olena Antonivna advised. "Don't grieve so. Everything happens in a lifetime. But there isn't any kind



of grief in this world that people working together can't overcome."

"I can't believe that. It isn't grief with me, but human adversity."

Then Hapusia began to wipe her eyes with the edges of the shawl tied around her head. Sharing her secret had relieved her, and the knowledge that she was not alone lifted her heart. Olena Antonivna now questioned her in such a way that the girl was able to answer with more ease:

"Were you called out by the G.P.U.?"

"Yes. They're charging me with the theft of money from the man who made me pregnant. What am I to do? I've told the G.P.U. the whole truth, but they just have one thing in mind, and that is to insist that I stole the money."

"How did they call you? Did they send someone for you, or did they send you a letter?"

"The head of the komsomol cell at the polyclinic. I had hardly dressed up for work when he came to me, saying: 'You're being called to the Kateriniwka.' He showed me a card with an address on it, and he told me not to get up for work or to go to work, saying that I could go back to my job after everything was over. That is why I didn't return to the polyclinic. My head began to pain me so much, oh, so much, that I could hardly see the path home."

"Without you there, Hapusia, it was like being without hands," Olena Antonivna spoke kindly. "There was no one to prepare the sick for their operation, nor to bring them there. I had to do all that alone. And the fact that they were calling you, and trying to pin that theft on you, and forbidding you to repeat to anyone what they spoke to you about, does not auger well. They're trying to enmesh you in some

intrigue. They want to use you as bait to catch someone else; but at the moment I just don't know who it is."

Olena Antonivna showed anxiety. Hapusia guessed that her own trouble was in some way tied up with that of Olena Antonivna's.

"If all they need me for is to use me as bait to catch someone else, then that means that they want me to be a G.P.U.?" she decided.

"That's right," Olena Antonivna agreed, "you will become a sort of shoot of their organization, something like a small fibril off the root of the stalk. It is really not a stalk, but if you pull up the whole plant, you'll be pulling up the fibril at the same time. You'll be working for them for nothing. You're from the village. If you were a working girl, perhaps you'd be given a sop. You'll be working for them with no other remuneration but that they'll be spending the night with you. With some people this goes down easily, but others can't stand it and thus lay hands on themselves."

"My Lord, my Lord! What should a foolish person like me do? If they start forcing me, I'll do something to myself," Hapusia cried.

"Don't do anything to yourself now, and don't leave us either," Olena Antonivna advised. "Unpack your things, undress, and go to bed. Tomorrow you'll go to work. I'll confer with Ivan Brus. We'll figure out something together so your trouble will disappear. Please don't blabber a harsh word to anyone at work. Hold yourself aloof from them all until this 'human adversity' that you mentioned vanishes. But tell us everything, even about the person that starts making love to you, whether it's in the clinic, or you're approached on the street. The matter is too serious. We too won't delay the matter. If you won't be able to stand it, I'll send you to a

doctor acquaintance of mine in another city. But God help you if you blurt this out to anyone, for then we'll all be lost, and you'll forever be without a chance of being rescued."

"I have saved my wages, Olena Antonivna," Hapusia spoke with fresh courage. "As for telling anyone about it, you know I'd never do that. I haven't written my mother for a whole year now for fear they'd find out in the village where I was. As for the G.P.U. knowing where I was, well, I don't know how they found out, for I've never written or spoken to anyone about it."

"Be of good cheer," Olena Antonivna comforted the worried young girl. "As regards money, no matter how much a person has, he never seems to have enough. Don't refuse my help. Here! Add this to your purse. Go to sleep. It's late already. For tomorrow will be a hard day for us."

Olena Antonivna rapped on the door of the living room, and without waiting, entered the room.

Near the right side of the table, facing the window, sat her husband, Ivan Ovsievich Brus. Over the table hung an electric light, wrapped with green paper but in such a way that clear light fell on an open manuscript laying before him. He wore yellow pajamas and slippers. Behind him near the wall stood a bed. Near the wall that partitioned off the kitchen, there loomed a wide clothes closet. Olena Antonivna went over to it, placing her brief case in it. Taking off her coat she hung it up on a nail. Then, without taking her beret off her head, as if she were playing the game of waiting, she looked down at her husband and said: "I was lonesome for you."

"But I wasn't." He spoke playfully but with affection.

"You weren't?"

"No."

Olena Antonivna said: "I have a good mind to punish you for resisting my charms."

"I'm anxiously waiting." Ivan's eyes smiled.

She went over to him, framed his face with both of her hands, then pressed his head to her bosom, rocking him as she talked.

"Listen, listen, and torment yourself. Now you can feel by your head how my heart is palpitating and it knocks like somebody knocks a little lamb in the forehead to stop his useless bleating."

Ivan, circling her slim figure with eager arms, kissed her tenderly and yet with the passion of a lover.

"I was really very, very lonesome for you," he murmured against her lips. "Sit down and tell me all about your day's events. You've been in to see Hapusia?"

He drew her down on his lap, but she jumped to her feet, took the beret off her head, and, went over to the closet, to hang it up. She ran a comb through her hair, which hung down luxuriantly over her temples, and framed her fine eyebrows and large hazel eyes. She drew a chair to the table, sat down and asked casually, "Did you eat dinner?"

"Why do you ask?" Ivan Ovsievich inquired. "Do I ever deviate from the universal practice of human beings to eat their dinner? You seem to be holding something back?"

"Perhaps. Were you anywhere today?"

"I was at the Association of Writers . . ." Ivan Ovsievich hesitated. "There they showed me the decision to send me to Crimea for treatment for a whole year. I hope you will be pleased about it. It would be wonderful if I could be an active writer again and care for you. We have, you know, a very real financial burden. My father's death, which shocked me into a

whole year's illness, will lose its keenness, which even you, my dear, did not have the strength to dull. Time should heal."

Olena Antonivna indicated the manuscript on the table.

"That is important," she said, fighting back her tears at the thought of separation. "You'd have time to work on it."

Brus took his wife's hands, kissing them with gratitude for her unselfishness. What was best for him was her first consideration.

"My dear," he said. "My friend! My sorrows are your sorrows. And my success shall be your success. Keep on believing in me, Olenka." (Changed spelling indicates tenderness.)

"The Communists," Olena said, "strive to make life conform to book life, in other words, to theoretical life. And here is where the Delphian Oracle has terrible power even over me! Yes, let there be a book. But there must be something else besides a book. There must be life."

They were silent. For a moment it was very quiet. Olena Antonivna was remembering that she must inform Ivan about Hapusia's situation. She scarcely listened to what he was saying. She was sure that he was still psychically sick and in no condition to listen to the horrors that were being perpetrated in their lives. Besides her daily work oppressed her soul with ordinary fatigue. Moreover, she assumed that these events in their development might strike him even without her advance warning. She would have to break the news without delay. But how? With pain that bordered on indignation, she exclaimed: "Look at what you are saying—that it is better not to be born at all. But, good Lord, your philosophy would demand immediate death. Why, it's plain self-destruction!"

Ivan said, "Perhaps that's what would have happened to me, if I had not had you around. But along with that one must

remember that people with such thoughts live their full span without losing their appetites. Take Schopenhauer, for instance . . . Soldiers, sitting in their trenches, holding their positions, have similar ideas. But those thoughts you call self-destructive! If I were in a war, such thoughts would not be shared by me with my friends, especially if I were fighting in defense of my Fatherland. For the defense of one's own natural human rights gives satisfaction even to the most sullen person, if that person is honest. I haven't the right to diminish such satisfaction of any member of my nation. I haven't the right to diminish his happiness even for one moment. For if I did that, I would be standing athwart the road of my nation, which strives eternally to bring happiness to all its members . . . and to each one separately. Why was I so uneasy a whole year because of the sudden death of my father? Because I knew that he could have lived more than one year . . . or more than twenty years. Here in these questions one will find the most terrible word of any human being: 'Traitor,' for I consider my father as an embodiment of a living Ukraine. I have not the strength to hide such a word as 'traitor' under such designations as 'sick.' I have an unrestricted right to my own philosophy, but not to death. For I have a foundation for my spirit which is called the slavery of a nation, and which holds me back from any practical conclusions in my philosophy. In other words, I'm not worse than the soldier in the trenches as regards the historical enslavement of my nation."

Olena Antonivna rose hurriedly, went over to her overcoat hanging in the closet, and pulled a handkerchief out of it.

She said, "Thank the Lord that you've become another person—a sane, brave one—for we've had such a problem

come to us, that we must understand and act. It's a case of poison being neutralized."

Ivan Ovsievich was certain that his wife was referring to the fact that he had used the word "traitor." For his grief was caused not only by the death of his father, but because of that moral knot which his father's death had tied to his conscience. He had previously tried to withstand the pricks of conscience but without success. He tried this again now but Olena again failed to help. It was evident she didn't understand. Ivan answered listlessly and with constraint: "Why? Has something happened to Hapusia?"

"You're wondrously sensitive," Olena Antonivna said. "You guessed."

She nodded her head towards the kitchen:

"When I entered the room," Olena Antonivna confessed, "I was tired and did not know where to start. So I purposely avoided your question: 'You've been in to see Hapusia?' But now, thank the Lord, my soul is at peace."

"Now what's it all about?" Ivan Ovsievich inquired. "Why do you act so cautiously, as if you were skating on thin ice?"

Then Olena Antonivna related everything that had happened to Hapusia, finally adding, "They called her out for some other purpose, and not to charge her with theft. They trumped up this charge to frighten her, so that they could condition her to their purpose."

"So! So all this prancing around me was coming to this?" Ivan decided.

"Although the matter is obscure, it is nevertheless too unpleasant to say anything more about it. You've given it the proper evaluation."

He hushed up, but his silence increased its importance.

Olena Antonivna was looking at him with the expectation and certainty of the reaction that she expected from Ivan.

Ivan began, thinking out loud: "Hapusia, as a person, was not indispensable to the G.P.U. She had been uprooted from her native habitat long ago, and thus could not be of service to the G.P.U. in any way. Who are her friends now, and who were her friends a year ago? What standing did her parents have in the community that she could fit into at her age, and with her life, so that she could be of value to the G.P.U.? She was now out of touch with those people that she had left. If the Russians notwithstanding still wanted to place her in her old locale as a spy, then that would take a long time. It would mean overcoming many extremes, both her own and those of the surroundings. It was well known that the Cheka operates only with ready-made material under ready-made conditions. The Cheka carries on its work with a view to the future, especially if it thought that this future could be human, peaceful, and satisfactory."

Aloud Ivan continued, "I am sure that here a net had begun to be set, not by the initiative of those who presently created the Russia Empire, but of those who helped to create it. The latter deal far more cruelly and mercilessly in individual cases with people that are essential to them. There is always more unrest and chaos at the bottom, which interferes and irritates. Action is taken here more swiftly and more inexorably. General national trends are naturally of much slower growth, requiring greater clarification in the spheres in which they are being developed. Therefore, the reality of cruelty which has provoked us, or will provoke us, is very dangerous. With the help of Hapusia it wants to seize



us with some ends that it has caught; but we can only guess what they are.

“It is important that you tell me whether you agree that the Communists do not want to catch her fellow villagers, or her parents, through her; but that they want to catch us through her right here in this house without all the machinations that they began to use on her. For I cannot understand it otherwise.”

Olena Antonivna cried, “Oh, my Lord! Ivan, I know you. When anything comes into your head you accept it as real; and you draw such terrible conclusions that they influence not only your own life but that of others. I did not want to be definite about something that one could only guess at. But I can see it would be worse if I did not say anything. We know that the method of the G.P.U. is not to let a person come to his senses or to be resurrected back to life. In other words, they want to destroy us. It grieves me to say this, but the thought keeps creeping into my mind.”

“Good,” Ivan agreed. “Both of us recognize the danger and we know the person that the Cheka wants to destroy morally, so as to eventually destroy us morally and physically, too. My suggestion, therefore, is to send Hapusia to another place where she would work and hide out, too. Would you, please, look after that matter?”

“Very well, I’ll look after it.”

“Besides that, my dear,” Ivan went on, “the disappearance of Hapusia from our place will without doubt disturb our Chekists for awhile, and disrupt their plans. Sometimes out of such mix-ups salutary things arise. One must keep that in mind, and take precautionary measures against such a danger, which both of us now recognize. You can do it with the help of so many medical friends all over the Ukraine, and even in the U.S.S.R.”

“This is the way I’ll arrange it for Hapusia. I have a lady doctor friend at Voronezh. I’ll visit her with Hapusia within the week. I’ll get permission for myself but not for Hapusia. Thus I’ll be going legally, but Hapusia will be going illegally. I’ll be there a week or so. This will dis-orient those who are watching us. Starting tomorrow I’ll try to get my permit. And if anyone asks where I’m going I’ll tell them to western Ukraine. That’s all.”

“It’s a good plan. That’s enough for now. You’d better get to bed. You’re tired. I’ll sit up awhile.”

“Is it very late?”

“Half past eleven,” Ivan Brus answered and turned to the table, bending over it, leaning on it with his elbow near the open manuscript. But he didn’t look into the manuscript as if he were not listening to what was going on in his soul. His gaze was downcast, and his face was wrapped in a mood of rising sorrow. Olena Antonivna, having measured her husband with a surprised and inquisitive look, quickly rose and went over to her bed to prepare her things for a rest. And, having swung into bed under a wool cover, she looked out from under it, thoughtfully regarding her husband. It was the first time that she had seen him carefully weighing the matter of meeting this danger which already had deadened their souls with the heavy step of its sullen approach. She grieved over him, her voice mournful.

“My dear, I can’t hold my eyes open any more. I’m too sleepy. When you go to bed, just bend over me and kiss me on the forehead.”

Ivan turned to her with the appeasing voice of an older person talking to a small one, saying, “I won’t forget. I’ll do everything that you asked me to do. If you wish I’ll set the lamp further away on the table and cover it.”

“Well, don’t forget then. Goodnight.”

Ivan lowered the light and bent over the table. He felt deserted, left alone to struggle in the web of his conscience.

His high forehead, straight nose and lean, oblong face, were green from the reflection of the paper in which the lamp was wrapped. It seemed as if his loneliness was of that color too. He was sure now that he would be arrested, perhaps even before he got the release from the Ukrainian writers to allow the visit to the Crimea. Struggling against this danger would be like the struggle of a person against the ocean waves after having fallen out of an aeroplane onto the surface of a watery abyss. The possibility of self-defense and of a struggle for one's self was open to him only in those expanses of his being where Olena Antonivna would not dare to look in. He wasn't thinking worriedly of her, for he had often had the opportunity to see the arrangements that were made for the wives after the arrest of their husbands. The husbands were destroyed but their wives remained in their old positions. His heart beat in the coldness of his doom to fight alone. He said to himself, "The whole of the U.S.S.R. is now under the control of one will which has already destroyed the thoughts and feelings of millions of living people. The fear of death in prison leads beyond the prison walls to the life of a serpent that hides in the brushwood and the rocks. Over every one of those crowds of people there are lightning flashes for striking them down and destroying them. The whole nation suffocates in the fumes of hopelessness and predestination."

The reflection of the green light which lighted up his hands not only seemed like the color of his loneliness, but it reminded him of the green, electrical storm flashes and green tongues of fumes which remain after a fire and which are emitted by the dying embers. The Ukraine was wounded, he knew. Over her bandaged wounds serpents creep; and

homeless dogs feed on her blood. The Ukraine had been broken by two forces, the Jewish and Moscovite, struggling among themselves. The stroke of death is still being controlled by the Jews. The Cheka is still in their hands. And the poison of gas fumes, the army and the militia, are controlled by the Moscovites. It is already seen that the Jewish forces are subordinating themselves to the Moscovites. And thus from the prison one must start a struggle for one's own life, and by a show of boldness repay them for the shame brought down upon the Fatherland.

As against these two destructive forces there is another force, and against which no revolution has made preparations for a struggle. This force, which as yet has not been tried out by any revolution, is illness. To conquer it no one has as yet gone on a crusade. But now coming to its rescue for more than fifteen hundred years has been Christianity, using as its means the universities, the libraries, the churches, the hospitals and the various branches of the Red Cross. These means are being used by the most cultured nations of the world. Tradition is like the wind, which levels off ancient hills to the level of the ground. And the perused theories about saving people, although they may remain in the mind of the murderer as nothing but fine words about good, and empty as far as he is concerned, nevertheless the murderer very often cannot overcome the emptiness of the mentioned words and passively does a good deed.

Most of the words coming out of Christian culture have been retained in the minds of the Soviet murderers, curiously enough in the Jewish minds, the Moscovites no longer remembering the words by heart.

In other words, if you pretend to be sick in the prison, then you can count on getting attention only from the Jews. But what kind of sickness must you have? Naturally the only

kind that appears potentially down through the generations is insanity. Thus if an insane Ukrainian attacks a Russian, they won't leave behind even a moist trace of him. He'll be destroyed. The Jews will try to please the Russians. And if there is an attack on the Jews, the Russians will maintain an indulgent neutrality. They will consider the strength of the competitor and will not destroy a sick person without some kind of consideration. The more so because they know that the sick person will have a moral standing among the masses, while they won't.

So Ivan Brus decided to feign insanity—schizophrenia. The Jews would be the means to cause the sickness. One must have someone to wreck one's vengeance on for one's national wrongs. One would feel like the soldier in the trenches who keeps on fighting against historical injustice, notwithstanding that a pessimism that is born of real life keeps urging him to stop fighting.

Ivan Brus anxiously wiped his forehead with both hands. Yes . . . that would be his path of rescue and struggle . . . He had decided.

Then he hardened again. It was quiet in the house. All that could be heard was the peaceful breathing of Olena Antonivna. The green light lay on his hands, his face and eyelids. It was now long past midnight, but Ivan had not moved from the table. Perhaps his conclusions had pressed down too heavily upon his consciousness, for he had been breathing as lightly as Olena Antonivna in her bed. He was asleep on his chair, having leaned with both hands against the table and over the manuscript. It seemed as if they were both awaiting some fine person who would kiss them both on the forehead.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### Ivan Is Arrested

In 1931 the G.P.U. was quartered on Vladimir Street between the Great Pidvalny and Sophia Street, where formerly the association of pedagogical workers of the Kiev District had their quarters. Thus in Kiev in the month of June at eleven o'clock in the morning there came to the G.P.U. headquarters a smallish, neat and dark-complexioned citizen. He jumped out of the barouche and pulled out of his pocket a neatly folded paper bill, throwing it to the driver, who caught it in the air. Then the little man grabbed his brief case and ran to the door, which was the first on the left side of the building. A guard blocked his way, and the little man nervously drew out a document from the pocket of his jacket, displaying it and yelling: "I want to see Comrade Boris Moiseyovich Siamsky at once."

"Comrade Siamsky's orders were not to let anybody enter," was the quiet rejoinder.

"Not let anybody enter? Where are your telephones?"

"In the vestibule to the right."

The citizen swiftly entered. About five meters ahead of him was a door, and near the door stood another guard.

There was a telephone on the side. The citizen asked the guard, "Tell me, please, what room number would I have to call to get an answer from Comrade Siamsky on the phone?"

"One hundred and twenty."

"Thank you."

After a few swift turns of the dial the telephone receiver clicked in the hands of the visitor. Finally he started to yell into the mouthpiece, "Number one hundred and twenty . . . Comrade Siamsky . . . Is he there? Good."

After several swift turns of the dial the telephone receiver clicked again and the visitor again started to yell: "Comrade Siamsky? . . . Call him to the phone at once. Tell him that Comrade Partsunia wants to see him."

For the citizen was none other than Partsunia.

A month had elapsed since he was kicked by the horse. His leg still pained him, although he forced himself to walk without limping. He was fortunate not to have any bones broken. Outside of a slight fracture in the hip bone the doctors told him there were no other injuries. He was sorry not so much for his loss of physical health as for the loss of time which was thrown to the winds.

Why shouldn't he be sorry? He had thought that within a couple of weeks he could draw out of Hapusia's soul all the information he needed; that he'd use her as an informer against Ivan Brus. Sooner or later he would find out where Brus had hidden the Tsarist money. To facilitate this aim he'd get the help of Hapusia. But now he had been in Kiev four days, only to learn that Hapusia had disappeared from the city. He almost went mad.

Perhaps Partsunia had exaggerated the possible amount of money that had been hidden secretly. The thought that this

money might not belong to Brus, but to him and a little to the organization which gave him the means of life while taking it away from others, always made him nervously electrified and painfully touchy about all failures. Since these failures would be noticed in Moscow, it might be interesting to know in what light his activity was being regarded. He decided that his case demanded that he do not stress his failures at all. After satisfying himself that he would not find Hapusia within a certain time in Kiev, or in her native village, he quickly figured out another plan for achieving his aim. He sent a telegram to the G.P.U. at Rokhmistriwka demanding the arrest of Modest and his transfer forthwith to Kiev. And so he visited Modest at the Lukianiwsky Prison. It was all worked out in accordance with his plan.

Suddenly his impressions and thoughts were interrupted by the ring of the telephone. A guard went over, picked up the receiver and answered.

“That’s right, he’s here.” Then, hanging up the receiver, he said, “They’re asking for you. Take those steps up to the third floor.”

Boris Moiseyovich Siamsky was the assistant head of the Kiev District G.P.U. At the moment he was sitting in his office. There was only one table, which stood on a great, red rug of Moscovite manufacture spreading over the whole floor from corner to corner. His table desk was bare. There was no inkwell, pen or pencil on the table. On the wall between two windows hung a portrait of Stalin, full-figure. The assistant head was tall and dark, with a round head and dark eyes.

Partsunia, without even knocking on the door, quickly entered the office, exclaiming happily, “How do you do, Siamsky?”



Siamsky, extending his hand to Partsunia in silent greeting, soon started talking cautiously, asking "And what was this that you thought up? Without asking anyone, and without interesting yourself in how the khazains are planning their areas for today's and tomorrow's prisoners, you have brought from the village a ballast element, locking him up as if you were trying to hatch chickens from broken shells out of which the eggs were eaten."

Squeezing his hand, Partsunia started to defend himself without taking the chair that the chief had indicated with his eyes. "Please control yourself!" he shouted. "I brought only one person here, and at that for only two or three days. This villager will perform his duty as a witness, and then he'll quickly go back to where he came from. Believe me, he'll not take up too much time in your precious prison cells."

"We know all about your machinations with witnesses," Siamsky retorted. "You bring them here for two or three days and then send them for ten years somewhere in the north. Well, what is it you want of me?"

Partsunia got angry and started to yell: "Would that the devil took away your father! Without your authority no transfer like that can take place. And don't you put on such a pretense of irresponsibility. You're like a crocodile that worries over its victim, but sullies its teeth with its criminal blood. I have no time to get mixed up in your great plans."

"How about you? Don't you believe in them?"

"Even if I did believe, do you think that my belief would help you in your operations to exchange a majority for a meager ten thousand Ukrainian chauvinists a year?"

"That's what you think?"

"For a greater number, no, as a practical man."

“Your mistake is as pitiful as that made by the bright boy who thought that there was no more important element in mathematics than the slate.”

“Now, have you really thrown a net over the whole Ukrainian population with their hop-hop-hopper and hey-hey-hey in their songs?”

Partsunia expressed his delight with a slightly exaggerated raise in his voice.

Boris Siamsky, having lowered his voice, spoke in an almost friendly manner. “You can feel at rest about our plans,” he said. “It will strike everybody unexpectedly with its grandiose sweep, so that all the foundations of all the hopes for the future of our enemies will scatter in tatters, dust and sawdust of the all-embracing ruin. After that they’ll never be able to resurrect their dreams of a national state. The Ukraine with her national aspirations stands on the brink of her own destruction. And you dare to tell me anything!”

Partsunia impetuously and with exaggerated joy extended his hand and begged with evident emotion in his voice: “Let me have your working hand; I want to squeeze it from the bottom of my heart!”

Very slowly and sedately Siamsky extended his right hand, which Partsunia grasped enthusiastically, saying, “I greet you! I greet you! Oh, you don’t know how I envy you! I’m telling you. The number of interesting cases you’ll handle, and perhaps genuine operations! I wish you health and peace during the coming cases with the rabble.”

And now Boris Moiseyovich Siamsky rose and, having looked at the door, raising the finger of his right hand, said, “Sh-a-a-a! Sit down on the chair and tell me what you want with me. I’ll do everything in my power.”

But Partsunia did not sit down. He just held his briefcase closer to his side, reproachfully saying: "I have always been happy over your successes, but you have received me as if you were anxious to get rid of me with fine words. You know that I am the guardian over the counter-revolutionary poet, and that my matter is both urgent and essential."

But Siamsky appeased the comrade by saying, "Your dissatisfaction amazes me. You've caught me with an empty table. In other words, I've been waiting only to hear your problems. You didn't want to sit down at all, and I too didn't want to either, so that you would know that I respect you. I'm willing to help you with your problem."

"I am very pleased. That's friendly of you. I need a room to work in for about three days; and two cells also, one for a woman, and one for a man."

Siamsky looked concerned. "You see," he said, "you must take into consideration the plans that I talked to you about. As matters now stand, the demand for vacant cells at any time of the day or night continues the year round. Since our organization is motivated by the principle enunciated by that great Russian person, Peter the Great, 'Delay is akin to Death,' then I'm sure that the need of all the places in our prisons and institutions of the G.P.U. for the incarceration of prisoners and for investigations will crop up sooner than expected. I'll be able to let you have two places for those two people, but I can't give you a room for investigatory purposes. I'll make you a proposal, and you can take advantage of my benevolent disposition by using my office when the need arises. We'll make a division of time: I'll use the office from ten in the morning till four in the afternoon; and you can have the evening and night hours. I'm sure I'll be able to share my office with you for three days.

Have patience, even if your problems can't wait. Nevertheless, I'd like to know exactly what your problem is. For behind one's back they don't sell even a cat in a bag! How many minutes would it take to tell me?"

"About five minutes."

"Well, then, I'll sit down and listen."

Siamsky, with the look of a person who is doing a favor to a colleague because of his foresight and strength, sat down. Partsunia, still standing up, began to talk. As he talked, he kept walking to and fro near the table. Then he would stand still, making motions with his right hand, as if he were emphasizing the importance of his case. The listener, scrutinizing the face of the narrator, listened with unagitated attention. But one could tell by the way he was sitting, and the expression on his face, that he was interested in the story, for he had moved but once, and that was only to shift his sitting posture. When Partsunia finished, Siamsky exclaimed, "What an idea! It would not spoil the appetite either after or during the performance of our grandiose plans! You figured it out well when you decided to arrest them both. You couldn't have done otherwise. But I still don't understand what information you want to get out of them? They're intelligent people, and I'm sure they won't tell you anything that they know."

"I, too, know that they won't tell," Partsunia admitted. "I wish by the inquisition to sow dragon's teeth, as it were, in their lives. And then something may come out of it, and I'll be able to find Hapusia."

"And what have you in mind?" Siamsky inquired.

"Well, Olena Shchokolov doesn't know anything about the hidden treasure which was performed by Ivan Brus and his father. And I am sure that even if old lady Brus had

been alive, he would not have told her about the treasure. With a woman the truth is always on the tip of her tongue, and with a man it's in his fist. This is my best witness; and I want to use it to make a psychic wedge."

"Very good, if you succeed in it. Do it; that's your affair. Nevertheless, I'm curious to know what valuables they've hidden."

"Why, the Tsarist gold money. I told you. Doesn't the 'chervonets' taken from the horse's mane mean anything to you?"

"If it does, it means very little. I believe that they've hidden church articles. Church chalices for drinking home brew! You can't braid a chalice into a tail or mane."

"I still believe that gold money was hidden."

"Well, that will do! Do what you want to do. I'll give you a room to work in. And while you're going on with your investigation, just heed my experience, and you'll understand that this money 'hater' didn't hide the money."

At this point he stood up and Partsunia, seemingly feeling happy that this unnecessary talk was now at an end, began to utter a few parting words. "Thanks for your friendly understanding. If I ever need the help of several Chekists, I believe they won't refuse to aid me."

"I'll issue an order about that. I'll telephone immediately. I want to co-operate with you in a friendly manner, just like my own chief did. Goodbye." Siamsky picked up the telephone receiver and began to talk. Partsunia, meanwhile, left with nervous speed.

At one o'clock of the following night a truck pulled out of the Kiev G.P.U. yard on Vladimirsky Street. There was an oppressive and deathlike silence in the city. The streets and pavements were empty. The lights were burning only in

those parts of the city where citizens lived who were suspected by the G.P.U. The quiet of the night was pierced only by the noise of automobiles starting out from the Lukianiwsky prison, and from Katerinsky Street, on the way to arrest people. It is not known why they did this, because the automobile which drove out of the headquarters of the G.P.U. yard on Vladimir Street rode on without any noise. Even the front lights were dimmed. And thus, on the ground of the dark city, to the mysterious sky and to the small and sparse stars, it seemed like the movement of a shadow that separated itself from a building in some secluded corner of the street.

Now the auto passed by the German consulate on the Great Pidwalny, approached Leontovich Street, and then halted. Two officers rose up in the back seat. The door was opened and two other persons got out, one in civilian clothes, the other in an army uniform. The person in civilian clothes said something to the two in the automobile. One of them got out and went over to the two who were standing on the ground. And the three of them turned to the left into the street. The auto, too, moved without a sound or a light to the Hay Market. This was the road to the Lukiansky prison.

The civilian with one of the officers stood by the door of Brus' lodging place, and the other one stood under the window of his home. The civilian knocked energetically on the door. And in every neighboring yard, and from under every shadow, a cold, apparent, long acuteness of fear showed itself. On the opposite side of the house behind the visitors, the window of someone's lodging place opened, and just as suddenly a latch clicked and it was shut again. The quiet on the streets grew more heavy and the cobblestones colder. And behind the door of Brus' lodging place someone asked, "Who's there?"

The civilian replied, "Open up! The G.P.U. wants to examine the inmates of this lodging place!"

For a moment there was a rustling near the latch and a click, too. Finally the door opened, and the civilians thrust a revolver through the open door, ordering, "Hands up, please!"

Brus, who was dressed in his pajamas, held his hands up while the officer searched him. Then the civilian whispered a command: "Take him into the room but without any noise."

In the room the officer tiptoed to the window, stood by it, aiming his revolver at the bed. The civilian pressed the button in the wall, lighting up all the walls, the ceiling and the table in the center, the two chairs near the bed, and Olena Antonivna in the bed. It was Partsunia who spoke to Brus. "Stand behind the bed near your wife's head."

He stood there quietly. On one of the chairs rested a closed book, another chair being empty. The top clothes of both husband and wife were hanging on the wall near the cupboard. Olena Antonivna was holding up her head with her hands above the pillow. She was covered up to the neck with a quilt. And Partsunia said to her, "Put your head down on the pillow. That's right. Lie there without moving."

The Chekist by the window now lowered the hand with the revolver. Partsunia went over to the table, pulled out an envelope, drew a paper from it, read it, then said, "Don't worry, Comrade. We're not arresting you. Pardon us for all this trouble. You'll freely and rightfully leave for treatment. I won't beg your pardon yet, for I don't know what form this apology will take."

Brus changed the position of his legs, but he remained quiet, waiting. But Olena Antonivna having stirred, indicated in a voice filled with emotion, "Your words are as near to the

truth as those that you uttered before the outside door when you said that you only wanted to examine the inmates.”

“And were you, too, near that door?” Partsunia asked this question sarcastically, but not insultingly.

“No; I heard it from here, for Ivan had not closed the door of our room. You yourself are witness to that.”

Partsunia, swiftly rummaging among the papers and books, examining them, made no answer at the moment. But with a hardly perceptible but meaningful smile, he started to rustle the papers and books more loudly, transferring them from one pile to another. Olena Antonivna was evidently very deeply moved by Partsunia's insinuation that she had been near the door, and that she had swiftly run back into her bed and under her quilt; and also by the fact that not one of the Chekists had made any clear answer concerning the examination of the inmates. She was deeply stirred and wanted to say something. The Chekist, who was standing by the window with the raised revolver, noticed this and reminded her, “Don't move, and don't talk. Wait until you're spoken to!”

Following these words Olena Antonivna remained quiet and did not stir during the search of the room. From her outward look one might think that she had been ready for this arrest, and not for those possibilities that Partsunia had mentioned at the beginning of his operation. Finally the Chekist felt over all the clothing. He was examining the last pocket of Brus' trousers when a knock was heard on the door. He merely glanced at the door, then quietly went over to the table, took a chair and set it down in such a way that his back was turned to the door. He drew the notebook out from his jacket, opened it up and asked, “What is your family name?”

Brus answered by asking a question: “Are you asking me?”



“Only you.”

“Ivan Ovsievich Brus.”

“Tell me, what were you burying in the ground in your father’s house at the time you were home to attend your mother’s funeral?”

“There was never anything of the kind,” answered Brus with amazement in his voice.

“I’m asking you again: What were you hiding in the smaller room across from the vestibule along with your father? That was the time when you came late for your mother’s funeral.”

“I’m telling you that there was nothing. I still have a strong and clear memory, thank the Lord. I don’t understand how such an accusation can be made against me.”

“You don’t understand? Well, you’ll soon understand. I’m surprised at you, an intelligent man, hiding behind such means as self-defense, which is used only by the horny handed villagers with their ‘I know and I don’t know, I see and I don’t see.’ This puts you on an equality with ignoramuses.”

Ivan was silent. It was evident that he did not intend to react against any insults. But Partsunia would not keep quiet. With an irritation that showed but slightly in his voice, he turned to Olena Antonivna, “Did your husband ever talk to you about this incident? Just lie there; speak from your recumbent position.”

“This is the first time I’ve heard about this.”

“That’s some husband you have. Never speaks to his wife about intimate matters.”

Then Olena Antonivna spoke up bravely, “Don’t intrude into the intimate affairs with my husband. We haven’t yet given you the right to insult us as people.”

“I’m sorry if I’ve caused you any pain, but duty stands above everything. You will soon see, my dear comrade, with whom you’ve tied up your life.”

Partsunia now struck the table with his knuckled fist with the same measured beat as was used by someone before him on the door at the time when he was examining the clothes of the khazains hanging on the wall. The door opened and Modest entered, accompanied by a Chekist. Modest was wearing a short jacket of peasant make, torn at the pockets from old age, but now mended with patches of the same material. On his feet, looming dusty with crooked heel pieces, were some Russian leather shoes, and his boot tops hung miserably over his dirty cloth trousers and his shoes. He held in his hands a winter cap with ear muffs. Without looking around, he kept his eyes glued on Partsunia.

Ivan turned numb with fright and fear. He recognized his brother immediately, and after a brief pause he greeted him. “How do you do, brother!”

Modest looked and shook, thrusting his hand out as if he wanted to seize hold of the walls, which were not anywhere near him. The Chekist had to hold him up. Modest looked at his brother again with a painfully twisted face and, without answering his brother’s greeting, concentrated his gaze on Partsunia again. The latter, having noticed this meeting, rested his gaze on Olena Antonivna who had raised herself from the surprise of it all by both hands up on the pillow, looking deliriously at the “mouzhik.” Tears rolled from her eyes, flowing silently down her face, falling off her chin onto the pillow. Finally she drew herself up, let her feet fall down on the floor, and started to yell: “Ivan, hand me my clothes. I want to dress.”

Partsunia leaped up immediately, ordering in a metallic voice, "Stay in your place! Move one step and your eyes will pop out! Lay down the way you were lying before." Then, turning right to the window, he shouted, "Che-kist!"

In this one word there was a command for vigilance, and a reminder of something in the past which compels a Chekist to be cruel and unabated. On hearing this cry Ivan turned pale, stretched up, making himself taller. With feverish haste he whispered, "Olenka, be quiet and lie down. I beg you."

Olena Antonivna listened almost mechanically and lay down, covering herself up to the neck. She was now not looking at the ceiling, nor within herself, as if she were listening to someone else not in these terrible surroundings. Partsunia too sat down, having turned his head to the left, but in such a way that he could not see the ones in the back. He ordered: "Fellow-countryman, come closer to me!"

Modest came closer. Partsunia got up again and, having seized Modest around the shoulders with both hands, he turned him around facing Ivan Brus, and ordered, "Keep standing like that!"

Having sat down, he turned his gaze on Ivan Brus, who no longer was looking at his brother. Having quieted down, he contemplated the Chekist who had led his brother in and was now standing by the door. But one could easily see that he was watching every nervous movement of his companion. Partsunia understood this, and continued: "Comrade Modest, do you recognize who's standing before you?"

The exhausted voice woodenly droned, "I recognize him."

"And who is he?"

"My brother."

"Your own natal brother?"

“My own natal brother.”

“Now tell us before all of us whether it’s true that he was burying something in the room across from the vestibule and from the room where you lived?”

Modest with despairing indifference replied, “I don’t remember.”

Partsunia stood up, sidled towards Modest and, having drawn his revolver from his pocket, he started slapping his left palm with the revolver, the same way a director uses his tuning fork, meanwhile watching the villager, and timing every question with each smack of the revolver. “I’m asking you . . . you idiot . . . you forgetful one . . . You kurkul! Do you know what it means to die for the Soviet Government? Do you know that in the Soviet Government only that life lives, which by reason of its power fells another life, just as nothing dies from falsehood but only from the truth, in the same way as the sun really shines above us? Do you know that if I shot you from this revolver that you’d be dead from the truth, because there was a bullet in the revolver, and not from a lie, which wasn’t in it? Because of that you’ll have to tell the truth!”

Then he stepped to the side of Modest, who had become beclouded and excited, his features turning black with fear, his legs shaking. Turning his head to Partsunia, he uttered very feebly: “Honest, I don’t know. I can’t remember.”

“What do you mean, you can’t remember?”

The Chekist saw something in the face of the villager which he had often seen in the doomed ones a few moments before their execution by shooting. And thus the revolver was put back into the pocket on the right side of his jacket. He stood before Modest again. He continued his questioning, but this time in a more sympathetic tone of voice. “Why,

only a year ago you told Mazdigin all about it. Why don't you want to tell me anything? This happened right after the funeral of your mother. Don't you remember?"

"I remember." Modest rejoiced. Out of sheer fear he had transposed something in his head. And now, like a small child, he grew happier when he recognized the replacement. Partsunia sighed lightly and drew out a handkerchief from the pocket of his trousers, wiping his forehead. Then he resumed his seat and began to ask questions, pretending to be attentive and humane. But there was a hidden poisonous barb in every word against Ivan Brus. In this respect he did not mask his words.

"Now you tell me, Modest, how your father was digging in the house. Your brother Ivan is interested in this too."

"It was on the third or fourth day after my mother's funeral. I was coming home in the evening when I heard the calf bawling in the hut. The vestibule door was open. I entered. In Father's room I heard a conversation between two people. The door of the room was ajar. I opened it a little wider and looked in. Father was digging a hole behind the table. He had thrust a box with something in it into the hole, and then covered it with earth."

"Your father alone, or with your brother?"

"Alone. My brother was just standing there looking on."

"Good. Wait, Modest. You stand facing me and not your brother. Otherwise, it's as if you were tethered."

"Well, you told me to stand like that."

"When was this? According to you, your brother was there too?"

"He was."

"And when they saw you, what then?"

"Nothing. I turned around and went out to the calf."

“Well, and how was it the next day?”

“The following day my father and Ivan rode off to the station. I stayed home and looked to see what they were hiding. I dug up the hole but found nothing in it.”

“Did they take it away?”

“I think they took it away.”

“And what do you think was in that box, medicines or money?”

Now Modest began to show a real interest in the matter. He replied, “Oh, not medicines! Father treated cattle, but all he ever got from the people was thanks. Father didn't need to spend money on anything, for he always got enough to drink and to eat from the people. Whatever money he did lay up had to be stored somewhere. That's why he wanted to bury it.”

“Good . . . good . . . very good. Well, what have you to say in regard to this burial?” The inquisitor now turned to Ivan who was standing near his wife's head, listening like one hypnotized to every word of Modest, and watching the impression that he was making on the Chekist and on Olena Antonivna. He had never told her anything about the hiding because he was afraid to put himself in a bad or uncomfortable position before her. Ivan, knowing his wife's sensitiveness, knew that she would immediately exaggerate everything, turning fanciful things over to the point of grotesqueness. He worried about how, following his brother's evidence and the demands of the Chekists, he would appease her with his contradictions. For who knows whether he would ever be able to talk to her freely on this subject. Although he expected anything from the Chekists, Ivan never expected an attack from the Cheka against his conscience. So now he kept quiet, awaiting Partsunia's next question, thus using the delay to figure out an eventual answer. And it was not long in coming. “Why

do you keep quiet? Tell me finally: what did you hide with your father in his house?"

Ivan Brus replied, "I'll tell you, but only to say that my father and I didn't hide anything. An intelligent person would have figured this out differently. It's no wonder that my brother, Modest, saw it and spoke about it the way that he did. For it happened this way. Father's house was built only recently on shifting soil. And because of that the left frontal started to settle. I spoke to my father about this and expressed an opinion about how long the house would be able to hold up. Thus both of us dug a hole, sweeping up the earth with a broom. Then I bored a deep hole with a thick piece of iron in the middle. Then I asked Father to get a tall tin can and fill it with cast iron. We covered it over with earth to give it more weight. Then we set it down over the drilled hole so that we could test the instability of the earth. That is all there was to it. It's plain why my brother didn't find anything on the following day when he dug up the filled hole again."

Ivan Brus heard how his wife breathed with greater ease as she ran her cheek over the pillow. Partsunia, penetrated with coolness, swiftly asked Modest: "Is there really something like that going on with your house?"

"Oh yes, our house is really sinking down on one side into the ground."

"Well, and have you ever afterwards noticed that can around the place which they were burying?" Again the Chekist put his question with strained curiosity. Again the answer came with laconic transparency.

"It's now under our stove filled with millet."

"Are there any pieces of cast iron that could find their way into the can?"

“Oh, we put them into our tub when we steam out our shirts.”

Partsunia grew dumb. But it was evident that Modest was no less worried over the fate of the Chekist than he was over what Ivan and his father were hiding, and which, according to his brother's words, he just couldn't quite make out, for it had now become nothing . . . and so he dared to ask: “And now, Comrade chief, will nothing come out of that hidden money?”

Partsunia suddenly set his eyes on him, as if to convince himself whether these dogs' souls were making a laughing stock of him. But, having learned that they were not, he rose and asked Modest again, “Have you enough money for the journey home?”

Modest answered, “I had a ruble but they took it from me at Lukianiwchi.”

The Chekist thrust his hand into his pocket, pulled out a ruble, threw it to Modest, who watched its flight as it left Partsunia's hand downwards, just like a feeble dog to which a piece of bread had been cast. He picked the money up, put it in his pocket, and then in Moscovite soldier fashion, yelled: “Thank you very much! *Pokornishe Blahodarim!*”

“That was for your journey back home. Go away from here and ‘beat it’ to the station!”

Then, without paying any more attention to him, or to anyone else, he thrust both hands into his pockets. Having gone over to the wall, then to the table, he bent his head down. When he had raised his head, Modest was no longer in the room. Only Ivan Brus looked at him quietly and patiently. But Partsunia went wild. Looking at Brus with a hypnotic stare, he began to pull out his revolver just like he once did in the hospital before Ivan's father, after having swished



loudly with the fly swatter and then sat down. He now slowly leveled the revolver at Brus. Brus stretched out and raised his head, but his whole figure remained immovable. Only Olena Antonivna feverishly raised herself on her right hand, and shaking her left hand under the muzzle of the revolver, shrieked in a frenzied voice, "Oh!"

Partsunia lowered his revolver, without putting it back in his pocket. He showed his teeth in a smile to Olena Antonivna. "Contain yourself, madam. It was all good. But you," he said, turning to Brus. "Don't think that I believed your fairy tale. When people hide money in the manes of horses, they think up those stories to destroy any trails to the treasure hidden in the ground. Believe me, you'll yet tell me sincerely where you've hidden it, and what you've hidden. There are no fools; they're all married. Che-kists! Let him dress up. He'll go with us!"

With swift steps he halted at the feet of Olena Antonivna. The two Chekists left their places. One of them went over to where the clothes were hanging, and the other halted by Brus, taking him under the arm. Ivan spoke to his wife: "Farewell, Olenka!"

His voice was broken by a hot lump of repressed feeling in his chest. His wife, it seemed, did not hear his farewell greeting. Having settled on her right elbow, she followed with frightened eyes that were full of tears the Chekists and her husband as if they were figures in the pictures of tragic scenes and not living persons. It was not until one Communist in the front, and another in the back, led her arrested husband out of the room that she fell back onto the pillow, choking with grief. Partsunia thrust his revolver into his pocket and, as if he were accentuating the fact that tears too were necessary in the Soviet Union just as caps and straw hats

which never prevent one from listening to any commanding orders, he loudly remarked: "Citizeness, when the Chekists come to you again at night, you will have the right not to let them into the room until they call the janitor. I think that we'll meet again. Farewell!"

Then he entered the vestibule. When he closed the outside door, he heard the terribly lonely and unappeased grief of the forsaken woman.



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### The Cry of a Soul

Brus was led into the bottom story of the Cheka to the opposite side of the final door. One Chekist was in the back, and the other in the front, both with readied revolvers in their hands. On the right side loomed a long white wall without a stain or a cobweb on it. On one wall on the right side there was a series of doors side by side. They were all freshly painted in red and all were closed with bolts and heavy locks. But the left side of this passage, although it too had a long white wall, had no door, there being instead a space painted red of the same area as the door on the right side. And every such painted space was exactly opposite some door. The whole floor was cemented, with an incline from the door to the space on the left wall. On the floor from each door ran some narrow troughs to the left wall, ending at the opposite painted spaces on the wall, where there were cast iron covers of the color of cement over the drains in the floor. In the ceiling between every one of the spaces and the doors an electric lamp shone. The light was dazzling to the eye, and wound round with a light red air-nimbus, similar to that which is painted around the heads of saints.

Finally, on the opposite side Ivan Brus with his escort halted before the same kind of door as was in the right wall, but here there were no troughs. The group remained standing for about five minutes until two more Chekists came along who replaced the first two. The sound of the departing feet of the replaced Chekists had now died out in this lowest floor of the Cheka, but the new Chekists kept standing. The door was not bolted and the forepart of the hasp was hanging off the hook. Thus it seemed that at any moment someone would come out through the door.

This impression fatigued Brus very much. He was experiencing a kind of slow numbness. He was tired, and he knew that such deep weariness would weigh still more heavily upon him for they would purposely not let him rest. He began to look down at his feet, thinking that it would be pleasant to sit down on the cement and wait that way.

Then something rumbled from the center and the door opened. Brus was led into the office that was lighted up with the morning's light which entered through two small windows on the level of the ground. In the middle of this room stood a table, and near the table sat a young Jew in a Chekist uniform. The Jew ordered: "Come closer and stand here!"

Brus went closer. The Jew took some clear blank paper from a drawer and, handing it to Brus, said, "Take them. They're questionnaires. You fill in these forms, and sign them."

Brus looked at them, took them, and began to read. The two Chekists who brought him in stood near the threshold, watching Brus' hands. The first thing the questionnaire asked for was the family name. Then the name of the counter-revolutionary organization to which the arrestant must have

belonged before his arrest. Finally a signature was demanded of the reader. After reading it, Brus did not hasten to fill in the questionnaire and to sign it. He held it before his eyes with the kind of expression which one can see in the features of tired people who set out to do something and then fossilize in their desire, as it were, until someone brings them to their senses. The Jew here played the role of the awakener. He reminded Ivan Brus of his duty. "Please, sign it," he ordered.

Brus looked at the Jew, and saw that he was extending his hand. Still half conscious, he thanked him. Having placed the questionnaire on the table he drew a cross on it, writing at the bottom: "I refuse to read it," signed his name, then handed it over to the Jew. The Jew glanced at the questionnaire and signature, then gave his instructions, "Please place all the things you have on your person on the table. And if you are wearing a belt, then hand that over here along with your suspenders."

Brus was nettled by the change in the Jew's language to him. But what was he to expect anyway? He began to empty his pockets. The Jew turned to the Chekist: "Chekist, search the prisoner."

The guard felt over every seam in his clothing and then, having come to the hooks in his overcoat and the eyes in his collar, yanked them off and threw them on the pile of Brus' belongings on the table. The Jew ordered, "Lead him up to the third floor to room one hundred and one."

The Chekist near the door shouted, "Prisoner, follow me!"

Brus moved, followed by the Chekist who had torn off the hooks. Once again they were walking along the corridor, again passing by the red door, the red spaces, the troughs,

the drain covers and the electric lamps with the reddish nimbuses that are painted around the heads of saints. Brus began to feel such a depression as he had once felt before when he was locked in the room for having struck his sister with a knife in the forehead, and was waiting punishment from his father. He was single then, and now his loneliness was freezing his soul. The quiet of the office accompanied his loneliness as he climbed the steps upwards, just as if an echo were quieter than his loneliness. For it was quiet everywhere, and there was a smell of paint and also, it seemed, of whitewash.

The Jew went ahead of them near number one hundred and one with the papers. The picture of Olena Antonivna swam before Ivan. Then there was the touch of the Chekist's hand on his shoulder and the words of the command: "Don't sleep, come in!"

Brus entered the room and the Jew departed, closing the door behind him. The two Chekists who led him in now remained behind the door. Sitting behind the table was Partsunia in the army uniform of the G.P.U. On the right side of the table lay a revolver, and before him, spread on the table, were the papers the Jew had brought. The Chekist ordered, "Sit down!"

Brus looked ahead, and having seen a chair, drew it closer to the table and sat down. Partsunia, not losing any time, asked, "Did you do this to the questionnaire?"

The paper was crisscrossed with a pen, and at the bottom was the statement: "I refuse to read it."

Brus kept quiet. But the inquisitor, holding the paper above the table a little longer and now touching Brus' signature with the finger of his free hand, again asked: "Is that the name you go by here today?"

Brus, instead of answering, began to beat lightly on the table with the fingers of his left hand. The surprised Partsunia put the questionnaire on the pile of other papers before him, and then, with a mysteriously inquisitive look, fixed his gaze on Brus. Brus ceased knocking on the table. Quiet prevailed in the room. Behind the door could not be heard any rustling nor creaking nor any other breach of the quiet peace. Brus did not look at the Chekist, having turned his head away to where his fingers were drumming on the table. Partsunia asked, "Why are you drumming on the table?"

Ivan Brus did not answer.

"Hm . . . stand in the center of the room; otherwise, you might leap up on the table."

Brus stood up, having measured the Chekist with his eyes, and then carefully studied the table. Partsunia quickly drew the weapon to himself, and, holding his hand over it, he yelled nervously, "Stand in the center of the room at once, or . . ."

Ivan turned around and then went with restrained steps to the center of the room where he stood facing the table. Partsunia sat down composedly, but he nervously thrust the revolver into the pocket of his uniform and began talking cautiously:

"I want you to mistake neither me nor yourself. I want you to understand me, an agent of the G.P.U., as I am, and what I want. I, too, want to know you. For only on that basis can we come to an understanding and complement ourselves with mutual help. In order to do this it is necessary that you should recognize us, the Chekists, along with the demands and desires of the whole Communist organization. It is essential that you consider us just, as those who defend only the truth. We are not bloodthirsty. The wolf is always just



when he wants to eat a sheep or some other living creature. He is hungry. And, if the sheep recognized this truth, it would not be a sheep but the same as the wolf, only weaker. It would be able to avoid such misunderstandings as meeting the wolf so as to be eaten by him. But it does not avoid him, for it is a sheep. This is the identical behavior of the two human classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletarian. The stronger among them is the wolf, and the weaker one is the sheep. Although the wolf and the sheep will never come to an understanding till doomsday we people, however, can do this. We take for ourselves only what belongs to us. We seized power and we want to build on this earth a life only for ourselves, and not for non-Communists. We want to place you under such conditions that you'll only help us, understanding that you won't be helping yourself in our system, but only us."

He went on. "Take note of the fact that we've enlisted to our aid even generals who had risen and gone to bed, thinking of the Tsar. In order to live on this world, they had everything that they wanted, because they did what we wanted them to do. Accept those conditions, Ivan; so that you'll understand that you're essential in aiding us, and not in dividing the good with the Communists which they took away for themselves. This is the truth, and we, in defense of it, are true not only to our own desires, but to that power which determined the forms of our planets and also their course in the unmeasured spaces of eternity. And now, on the other hand, I would like to know about your kind of truth. It won't be until then that we'll talk about our mutual relations, and about whether you're worthy of life. Believe me, if I find out that you don't want to show your true self, then, notwithstanding whether you're an expert of the experts, or even

a genius in your own practical line, I'll destroy you, as a dog destroys a flea that it has caught on its belly!"

Partsunia again quietly contemplated Brus with an inquisitive glance. Brus said nothing while he looked at the Chekist. But the Chekist impatiently muttered: "You have a fine wife, and you're a talented writer. Why, therefore, do you follow a line that will lead you to the next world? Why all this silence and sullen looks? You should understand that those people live on earth who do not have everything but just enough to live on. So let us go on. I'll write in all your answers to the questions in the questionnaire, the ones that you crisscrossed and which you refused to answer. We'll fill in the questionnaire not in the order given here, but in accordance with the curiosity latent in every question. What is your nationality?"

"Ukrainian."

"Are your parents still alive?"

"No, the Jews poisoned them."

Partsunia raised his head, casting an excited and inquisitive glance at Brus. It was in this mood that he continued with his questioning: "How? Your mother and father too?"

"I don't know about my mother, but they did poison my father."

"And what did they poison him for?"

It was a nervously apprehensive question; and it was noticeable that Partsunia had changed his voice a bit towards the lyrical side of tremor.

"I believe that he was something like Christ."

"And if like Christ, what about it?"

"Because Christ was a Jew, and he loved all the people of the world. For that He was crucified, as you know. And my father gave up his whole life for his fellow-countrymen.

He treated their cattle, and their fowl, and even they themselves, sympathizing with them in their pain. He got no money. The Jews poisoned him because he was like that Jew against whom even today they have a grudge.”

Partsunia seethed. “Do you take me for an idiot, or have you become an idiot yourself? According to you, what nation do I belong to?”

“Jewish lackey. Such people don’t belong to any nation.”

“Oh, you carcass of a dog’s soul! Why, having read your signature on the questionnaire, I felt that you were ‘literate’ and so I began to speak to you like to a person . . . but you, you soul of a dog, simulate unconsciousness. Ha? Literate!” And he shouted, “Chekist!”

The door opened. A guard came in, waiting for orders. Partsunia asked him: “What nation do you belong to?”

“Russian.”

That was the answer. Partsunia, having turned to Brus, asked: “According to you, what nation would this soldier of the revolution belong to? Tell me so that I’ll know why you’ve been so extremely impudent to my face.”

Brus, scornfully but cautiously having looked at the soldier, replied, “He’s a disguised Jew.”

“How? He’s not a Russian?”

“No, he’s a disguised Jew.”

“Hey! . . . Counter-revolutionist! . . . You’ve gone so mad that you think you can jump over the world and flee from the Soviet Government. You’re alone in that . . . and nobody will support you. What are you blabbering?”

“That I’ll be able to jump over it.”

“You?”

“I.”

Partsunia coughed wildly and then settled down a bit so as to watch the spectacle which suddenly appeared before him. Ivan Brus took one step ahead and then madly ran to the table. He jumped up on the chair, and then onto the table, appearing on the other side of it, holding on to the wall. This happened so quickly that Partsunia was hardly able to get out of the way. On this side of the table there was an upset chair, and some kind of paper which had fallen off the table during the excitement. Brus, just as quickly as he had stuck to the wall, had loosened away from it. And so he began to pass by the table so as to get to the center of the room, but he was stopped here by the Chekist of Russian nationality, who hoarsely whispered, aiming the revolver at Brus: "Stop!"

He stopped. And now the Chekist in the vestibule, having heard the noise and racket, came running into the room. But Partsunia, short-winded and immobile all the while, now said, "Let the son-of-a-bitch stand against the wall with his brain! Put him in that corner over there . . . his snout into the corner just like a cat into his own droppings on the ground. Oh, you see what's got into his head. I've never heard the likes of this during the whole time of the destruction of the counter-revolution!"

The Chekists led Brus to the corner which was to the left of Partsunia's table, taking positions on either side of the prisoner. Partsunia went over to the center of the room where only a short while ago Brus was standing. From there he surveyed the terrain of the recent events. Then he slowly walked over to the crowd, having hung his head down as if he wanted the better to look the prisoner in the eyes. And, not having come close, he halted, asking with the same expression on his face, "Well, according to you, if the Jews had caught

another such a man as your father would they poison him too?"

"Yes."

"Then in your opinion they're crippling your whole nation?"

"Yes. At first they'll poison us, and they'll poison the Jewish servants. And then sometime after all this the disguised Jews will become real, and not be disguised Jews!"

"Well, what a theory!" blurted Partsunia as if he were satisfied. He quickly approached Brus, striking him with all his power on the right cheek with the palm of his hand. Brus staggered, clumsily waving his hands, and falling on his left side.

But Partsunia quietly turned his back on the fallen man, going over to the table. He sat down, pondering a bit, and then he shouted, "Take him away, or rather drag him away to cell ninety-three. Let him think over what he's going to say in addition to what he has already said."

Ivan Brus' right cheek was flushed. From his right eye ran a stream of tears, and the eye was red. The left eye, too, shone with tears. When he tried to get up, he found it hard at first to rise. Raising himself up on his knees, he began to look for the wall with his hands so as to pull himself up. But there were no walls within reach of his hands. Then he wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his overcoat. He now saw the wall on the left side. Leaning against it with his hands he worked his way to a standing posture.

He was wearing a dark winter coat and a grey suit. The dark collar of his top shirt was not buttoned but lay open on the sides. The fly of his trousers also was not buttoned up, but opened on both sides, the end of an undershirt protrud-

ing out from it. Back in the office, when they were baring his soul, it was made to shine in all its natural nakedness. And because he did not sleep at all, nor wash himself, his face glistened with sweat as if it had been contracted by a thin and alien skin that had been rubbed with some kind of yellow salve. Even the blue bruises on his cheek accentuated some sort of deadness in the expression of his face and eyes, which were so full of tears that he could see only the outlines of things. It was evident that, even if they had all run down, he would still have perceived the world through the feel of his hands, or through that feeling which deadened the expression of his face.

One Chekist took Brus by the arm, and the second followed suit with the other arm; and they left, passing the upset chair, the fallen paper off the table, and the silent Partsunia behind the table absorbed in his papers. He merely sat there passively, even when the prisoner was being led out of the room and one of the Chekists had slammed the door behind him forcefully.

While they were leading Brus into the ninety-three cell, his feelings subsided, the tears stopped flowing and the world of prison corridors dawned on him. He walked firmly; but when he wanted to free himself from the Chekists' helping grasp, he realized he couldn't do it. The Chekists squeezed his elbows all the harder. Brus was now certain that he could only be alive not as a writer, but as a person, provided he would accept all the demands made on him: those that were written in the Marxist books, and those that would be imposed on him during the weekly or monthly inquisitions. He was pleased with his start, for he saw that he had hit Partsunia unexpectedly in a weak spot of his Chekist serenity. He also knew that there would be simultaneous suffering

along with his retaliations for all his own insults and those of his fellow countrymen too, who would pass through the hands of the G.P.U. executioners. There was just one thing that was hard to bear about it. What if Olena should learn about his insanity? How would she take it? For he hadn't given her the slightest hint that he was preparing to meet the struggle with the Moscovite executioner face to face in the prison.

The bolts rumbled, and the locks clicked, and the keys clanked, and the door to cell ninety-three opened. Brus crossed the threshold and halted. The door behind him again slammed shut and the bolt banged.

On the right side of the cell stood a tin toilet with a wooden cover. To the left from the door as far as the window, the length of the cell, were some plank beds made from freshly-cut spruce. One lonely man was sitting on a bed in the corner near the window. He was grey and wore a cloth shirt; and on his feet were some old boots with boot tops into which the trousers were tucked. They were made of cloth and were very greasy. Behind him near his head loomed a coat, and on the coat a straw hat. The villager looked at the man who was standing near the bed with his hands clasped on his chest, looking devoutly at the window. He had on a warm khaki *kufayka* or under-jacket and trousers of the same color. On his feet were bast shoes tied with foot cloths right up to his knees. He had a small, round head with a moist reddish tuft. He had a place among the plank beds because his coat was laying there.

Brus greeted him out of courtesy and not out of mere need: "Good day! Where can I find a place for myself?"

The one-eyed fellow answered: "Anywhere. The beds are not occupied, thank the Lord. Pick any one out for yourself."

But the one who had stood in that devout posture didn't even stir. Without even undressing, Brus crawled up on a plank bed near the door. His whole body ached all over. It seemed as if exhaustion and suffering of the soul, and the burning ache of the flesh from the blows, had come out from within his clothing like a flame of suffering, just as steam comes out of the ground when it is heated by the morning sun. He felt great pain and pleasure at the same time, for his consciousness had been fading. He fell asleep.

Ivan Brus felt someone tugging at his leg so hard that he was pulled out of position on the bed. At first he hardly realized what was going on, and so he turned over on his stomach. Holding on to the bed with both hands, he resisted the efforts of the tugger. But when he finally became conscious of where he was, he leaped up with alarm, asking, "What's this? What do you want?"

The villager with the one eye, speaking rapidly and pointing at the peephole in the door said, "Get up, faster. The guard's calling you!"

But Brus was in no hurry. He asked the one-eyed fellow: "Did I sleep long?"

"Perhaps more than half an hour."

From the peephole came a shout: "Come here faster! Stop blabbering over there!"

Brus came over. The Chekist spoke to him through the peephole. "Were you the last one to be brought here?"

"I don't know."

"I'm asking you: Did they bring you here today?"

"Today."



“What’s your name?”

“Please ask in an orderly manner what you want of me.”

The latter answered irritably: “Before we go any further, tell me your name. From there on I’ll ask you what I think is necessary.”

He waited, watching Brus through the peephole. And Brus, acting as if he were trying to recall something, paused for a moment, and then answered. “Ask those who arrested me. They know.”

“And you?”

Brus remained silent, looking at the Chekist.

“I’m asking you, you clumsy ox; don’t delay me!”

He smashed his fist against the wooden window. Brus blinked his eyes several times, and then went over to the plank beds. Footsteps now could be heard racing away from the door along the corridor, which was prompted by this insult to authority that now demanded satisfaction. The villager, a Ukrainian, came over to Brus, speaking sympathetically: “You shouldn’t have antagonized him. It’s bad enough here as it is. He can do with you as he pleases. Those are the stock questions that he asks of everybody, and which he has to enter in his book as a food quota. You won’t be entitled to any bread today. Perhaps you might get some *balanda* (a thin soup) but I now doubt it.”

Brus kept quiet, as if to make up for his silence. Then someone rapped on the wooden window. The “devout” man, who was not noticed by anybody, pulled up his hands as if he were being drawn up by an invisible string, and beginning to play “run to the spot,” invoking:

“Axe and gloves, gloves and axe;  
Axe and gloves, gloves and axe!”

Brus grew numb with astonishment as he watched this strange and wild spectacle. The Ukrainian villager shook with fright, as if from some soul-destroying mystery, saying: "Believe me, that dog's soul dances and mutters like that before breakfast, dinner and supper. And it's the same thing all the time. All one needs to do is knock on a window and he suddenly hits the floor with his rag-wrapped feet. And try and tell him something; he doesn't hear you, as if he were a wound-up top. He'll only stop his antics when you fling him on the plank bed. Even then, as he lays there below you, the devilish soul twitches his feet, yelling:

" 'Axe and gloves, gloves and axe . . . ' "

Brus kept quiet, as if he were not listening. He was nervously following the Russian with his gaze. But the latter, filled with ecstasy, kept leaping in one place, making the floor squeak and the bed tremble, while his tuft of hair kept flopping up and down on his head, his under-jacket flapping on his small body, as if it wanted to tear off all the buttons and break loose. The words of the song touched some dormant spots in Brus' being, which were attuned to understand only primitive voices and sounds, which called one on to shame and to an aversion towards everything that was dear but now ruined. In the song there was a demand for blood, which echoes from age to age on the "fine squares" of Moscow. He heard the praise and support of "Yezhov's gloves" and the "axes." This was an expression of piety before the brutality of the despot:

"The axe and gloves, the gloves and axe,  
The axe and gloves, the gloves and axe."

Drops of sweat were now rolling down his forehead. The orbits under his forehead widened, as if from fear, and his eyes shone with the color of grey oilcloth covered

over with some fluid. But he still continued to stamp and beat in one place with his refrain. Perhaps this human creature would not have been able to stand it without falling down unconscious, had it not been for the calling command from the cell door:

“Well, come and get your dinner!”

The Russian from his dancing spot leaped towards his plate like a cat from a wagon. The Ukrainian too, jumped towards his plate. This call moved Brus, and so, faster than he could have done it without the call, he crawled up on the bed and lay down, with his spine turned towards the cell door. He was highly strung. His head ached. One feverish thought flashed through his mind: For whom was this dance? Whoever composed it, and for what purpose? Brus was seized with anxiety over the expediency of the means for saving himself that he began with. Then he heard the Ukrainian speak: “There’s some bread and balanda for you.”

But Brus, without turning around, pleaded: “Take it all. I won’t eat because I’m sick.”

He couldn’t make out what his fellow-countryman replied. Nor did he know whether he accepted the gift or not. But he heard and understood very well what the Chekist shouted through the peephole:

“Shelestian, take away your things!”

Brus noticed how suddenly and rapidly Shelestian leaped up, and how he tore along through the open door of the cell into the vestibule of the prison.

What a person! Whoever you were and whatever you were . . . Whether rich, or poor, or wise, or foolish, when you’re faced with a time of danger, then all the things that you’ve gone through in your life as you grew up, you appreciate only when it meets you again, but so as to pass you by. Brus

wanted to run and to yell so that his fellow-villager Sheles-tian would return. But alas, no! No one would let him come, and no one would consider the cry of his soul from his distant, but now fallen silent, youth, which had suddenly come to life because of the touch of one casual incident. No, Brus' misfortune would never allow him to rest any more. It would remain like a threatening night over him and his poor Father-land!



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### The Tragedy of a Man's Hat

Olena Antonivna heard the Chekists leave with her husband, heard them tramp out, and then the automobile pulling out without a honk. She was filled with terrible grief, alternately quieting down and then moaning without restraint.

It was only when she felt the kind of peace that comes when newborn life rests or when someone dies and is freed of misery that Olena Antonivna quieted down. Her attention was now concentrated on the open door from the room into the vestibule.

Her emotions having subsided, the lonely woman leaped up, and, having put her slippers on, went into the vestibule to try the outside door. She sighed and wiped her eyes with her hand, then turned around to go back to her room when she saw her husband's hat on the hanger. She took hold of it, turning it over before her again and again, sighing at the same time. Returning with it quickly to her own room, she shut the door behind her. Then, having sat down on the bed, and having placed the hat on her right side she began to wonder, as she laced her shoes, how she'd get the hat to her husband. But how? Today, as always, it would be embarrassing

in the clinic without her; and to delegate this to someone else would be impossible. For who would risk taking a hat to a prisoner of the Cheka? She would have to do it herself. She halted to tie the laces of her other shoe and, without letting go of them, she suddenly raised her head with the thought of going to Sergy Chudiev, who at the moment still had two weeks left of a month's vacation, and begging him to substitute for her in the clinic today. And so it was with relief that she finished tying up her laces.

Outside the morning was of that hour when the sky is lit up just before the rising of the sun. Olena Antonivna was ready to visit Chudiev even at that hour. Whether he'd be alone, or whether someone else would be with him, at least she'd still find him at home.

It was not proper that a man should be without his hat. Such a spectacle always indicated slovenliness.

The sun had not yet risen to its full circle above the horizon, and the streets of Kiev were still empty of pedestrians and automobiles, when Olena Antonivna rang the bell for Chudiev on the third floor of the building on Bezakiwsky Street. Under her left arm she was holding her brief case containing the doctor's smock and stethoscope, and also her husband's hat. She was ringing energetically with her right hand at certain intervals. Soon footsteps were heard from behind the door. She readied herself strainedly. Her heart was beating in anticipation of the meeting. She stepped a bit to the side. The door opened with a dull creak as it turned inwards. Chudiev in brown pajamas and a dark smock peered into the vestibule.

Olena Antonivna greeted him: "Good morning."

"Oh, it's you?" He looked amazed. Then he quickly said, "Come in, please, come in. My lord, what a surprise! Go

straight into the other room. You can take your overcoat off here." As he spoke, he closed the door.

"Excuse me," she said, "but I'm not going to take my coat off. I've come only for a few minutes."

The first room served as a kitchen and also as a vestibule; for on the right side near the window there was a table on which stood a burner, plates, and a frying pan with an unwashed spoon in it, yellow from dried yolk. The room smelled of unwashed clothes, although they were nowhere in evidence. It is true that the shadows and the passages upwards in the dark vestibule, and the morning sunlight in the room made uncertain impressions on the eye, different from reality, which made the odors uncertain too. For Olena Antonivna the morning held nothing in it at all of the kind of constancy that would help her build a complete picture in her soul. For with every moment the morning light was turning into day.

In the other room opposite the door, standing near the wall, was an unmade bed with a pillow and a pillow case of a much darker color than the sheets. A grey blanket, lying obliquely across the whole bed with one end touching the wall and the other end dragging, made it look disorderly. On the right side near the entrance of the room stood a sofa flush against the wall from the door to the window. On its side arm near the window hung the newspaper "Proletarian Truth." Between the sofa and the bed in front of the window was a table with a pile of books. Picking up the paper and setting it down on the table, Chudiev said, "Sit down and tell me what brought you here so unexpectedly and so suddenly."

She sat down near the sofa, placing the brief case on her knees and her husband's hat on that. Chudiev also sat down on a chair in front of the table, on the back of which rested



a dark packet and under that again, a pair of trousers of the same color. The window with a rolled-up blind showed a morning tint similar to a rose petal which was torn away by the wind. The colors of the early morning were reflected on Olena Antonivna. And she, being delicately rosy in her own right, seemed still more pleasantly rosy from the early sunlight. Her beret, tilted slightly, permitting the heavy, dark braids to hang down in dark arches on her right ear and over her right cheek, with her dimples alternately appearing and disappearing during the conversation.

Olena Antonivna, although she was over twenty years of age, looked to be only eighteen. Chudiev looked at her with pleasure, and then at her hat. Ill at ease and with an aching heart she began to speak of her woe, which, like love, always seeks a secret corner in the soul: "Sergy Ivanovych, I've come to you so early in the morning in order to catch you at home. And pardon me . . . last night the Cheka took my husband away . . . and so suddenly that he perhaps forgot to take some essential articles with him. As you can see, he forgot to put his hat on. So I'm going to ask you to substitute for me in the clinic today, while I try to find out what happened and to hand over the hat."

The look of attention and enthusiasm disappeared from Chudiev's face. His relaxed figure crumpled on the chair into an immobile lump, wrapped in greyness and chilliness, and his face had become drawn into a mask. He spoke in a business-like manner. He said, "I'll take your place today, but don't tell anyone about our agreement. For who knows whether this morning's light smile might not pass into boisterous laughter, or into an insane roar?"

"Why do you speak thus, Sergy Ivanovych?" Olena Antonivna asked. "Is it because you think that we Ukrainians

are not worthy of anything, even of the things for which we are qualified?"

She spoke as if she were trying to salvage the situation that might arise tomorrow. Smiling bitterly he answered with pain in his voice:

"Oh, I can see that you know very little. Last evening I came back from the village. I didn't even spend the whole of my vacation away from Kiev. Do you know why I left my own green Penates, my native home? Do you know what's taking place in the villages now? In the Poltava District mass arrests are the order of the day. Perhaps this is the prevailing situation in the whole of the Ukraine. They're rounding up all the priests, the autocephalists, former co-operators, teachers, and all those peasants who took an active interest in the Ukrainian revolution. In other words, they're imprisoning a good half of the nation. And now the automobiles thunder and roar all night. Every night one can hear with strain and tension shots here and there, heated all the more by feverish anxiety. In the morning each village lacks fifty or more souls, and near the village Soviet Vlada one may find several dead bodies. The district prisons have been so filled with prisoners that they are now being held within enclosures near the prisons. It is said that many of them are being shipped without a trial in cattle cars somewhere to distant parts of Russia. Chekist detachments tramp about the villages, like wild wolves over the fields where thousands of dead bodies have fallen, victims of murder on a grand scale. I believe that this massacre will be extended to the cities as well, even to Kiev. Otherwise, why was your husband arrested?"

"Honestly, I don't know." Her answer was naive, almost childlike.

“Well, for goodness sake, how can you simply say ‘I don’t know?’ Why, your husband was a talented writer and a Ukrainian, which meant that in the eyes of the ‘one and indivisible’ Russian people he was not clean,” the doctor explained. “From those examples that I gave to you, can’t you draw your own conclusions as to why your husband was arrested?”

“I don’t think I can. He hasn’t written anything for a whole year because of a nervous illness,” Olena Antonivna explained. “The arrest has no foundation. It was such a heavy blow that I don’t think he’ll ever write again.”

The face of the young woman had undergone a change because of her spasmodic effort to hold herself back from weeping. Her breast was heaving as she gasped for breath. She concentrated her gaze on the floor, so as not to let her disturbed emotions break forth.

“So you’re not able to figure out why your husband was arrested,” Chudiev said. “I can tell you. He was arrested in a general planned flood of arrests. They’re taking over, hauling away, and destroying our economy, and ruining our Fatherland. You cannot speak of one man here when a whole nation is being deliberately destroyed by a fierce and blood-thirsty power. One must analyze what happens before one’s own eyes. Is there a planned project for uprooting a whole nation? Or is it merely our own generation that is being designated for destruction?”

“And after that, what?”

“Are you asking me? Nothing. The wise person will know where the abyss is, or where there is a clear road. And so, if that person has not yet lost the instinct for life, he must go along a beaten path, and not rush haphazardly into an abyss, which they have put purposely in his way.”

Olena Antonivna watched him closely to see whether she could detect any fear, or whether he was tired and wanted to be left alone. But no. She was struck by a thought. What if he refused to go to a clinic? What would she do then? Well, let him show what kind of a person he is under the dark smock in the pajamas of an intelligentsia, and wielding fine Ukrainian words. Without lowering her gaze from his eyes, which were now looking uneasy, she begged, "Analyze. I don't understand."

"Analyze for you?"

Now he looked his visitor straight in the eyes, as a doctor would do to a psychically sick person, who had suddenly revealed a wise thought which couldn't be realized because it emanated from a sick mind. After a few moments of pause, having noticed that she was quietly waiting, he got up and walked about, then turned again to Olena Antonivna and began to bandy words about as if in a fever, "The dead do not return from the grave, but the dead most accurately and truthfully outline the perspective of the future. No matter how many years I'd live on this earth, or wandered about homeless, I'd never become like you who look upon the world in the same way as a dewdrop on a cherry leaf meets the world. I'm well acquainted with life, and so I can no longer be satisfied with just one sun. If I'm not taking my own life, it means that I have no faith in the other world and want to continue to exist on this one. I'll only be able to exist now under present circumstances so long as I'm obedient to the powers that be, which now hold the Ukraine in the palm of their hand, the Ukraine which was once controlled by the Central Rada. Excuse me for my excitement. Whenever I pronounce those two words, or think about them, I begin to feel a nervous

coolness. Listen to my teeth chattering. Just like a child suffering from the cold.”

Then he ceased talking, holding on to his chest with both hands. It appeared that he would fall into a spasm of unrestrained and painful coughing. The muscles of his jaw bones were puffed out, making it difficult for him to breathe. They shook and trembled. It was evident that whenever his efforts at speaking weakened his jaw muscles, his mouth would open and his teeth would chatter.

But he spoke: “You see what kind of terror it is. The whole of the Ukraine is being driven into the prisons. Your husband is in prison. But I want to live, and I shall live, helping the Bolsheviki to destroy everything that stands in their way. I’m not a Bolshevik, and I’ll never be in the party, but I’ll help them with all my being. Now do you understand? Wait a minute, and don’t run away from me. Be seated, for I haven’t finished my analysis.”

He walked over resolutely to Olena Antonivna, who really had risen to leave the room. Holding her by the shoulders, he sat her down on the sofa. And she, realizing her helplessness here, begged him with a moan: “Don’t say those things to me any more, for I haven’t the energy to listen or to tolerate this endless outrage.”

He, having sat down on the chair before her, and having bent down to her, began to enfold his argument a little more quietly, but still sullenly. He didn’t even notice having stubbed his right foot against his shoes, one of which turned over and remained lying there. The other, having slid off, appeared somewhere near the chair. His socks spread out between his shoes.

“Now tell me, how can I be otherwise, that is, to your way of thinking, better, when I know all about our Ukrainian

past?" he demanded. "Not from history, not from literature, but from the past. People make the history of the liberation of a nation with some kind of conscience which is tied up with the ethics of one's nation. But the past takes place with individuals, and only with drunkards, with types such as Hohol's Vakula, and Hohol's Solopies' Shoes . . . and this in spite of how much one would like to be loyal to our nation. You know that there was a time when the Ukraine was fine and powerful, when she indeed was our dear mother. But the Central Rada with its general committees acting in unison handed our mother over to the Moscovites . . . to Kerensky for the reason that she did not recognize the Central Rada as that foot cloth which Shevchenko foresaw:

'Foot cloth, dirt from the broom  
of his Majesty, that's all.'

But that was the foot cloth, that was torn off his old ulcer, by the Moscovite tramp, who had crawled out of the books of Maxim Gorky. In the Spring of 1917, holding positions on the Western Front, there were more than twenty divisions of Ukrainian soldiers, completely separate, with their own banners and their own commanders. All was quiet on the fronts. The Russians did not attack.

"But the Ukrainians on all the fronts got organized under their own banners to defend their own Fatherland. There were more than twenty divisions . . . more than a million armed and trained Cossacks. Now Kerensky, who had almost struck the Central Rada in the snout, ordered it to throw its forces into an attack. So a second All-Ukrainian Army Convention was held. They debated whether to advance or not. Delegate I. Hawryluk rose to speak. I believe he was a genius, but our committeemen had him killed. Well, this Hawryluk advised against an advance or to leave the front, but

to remain there and strengthen ourselves, to Ukrainianize the rest of our soldiers so that some day in the future we'd be able all the better to defend our homes. At that time no one foresaw such a need, neither the head of the Central Rada nor Petlura, that is, nobody but Hawryluk. But his speech at the Second All-Ukrainian Army Convention was not printed by the Central Rada, and he himself was handed over for court-martial, which dealt with him in such a manner that he has not been heard of up till the present day.

“But they themselves threw the finest and most intelligent youth of our Fatherland into this advance . . . to defend Russia . . . to defend Kerensky's glory. Do you understand? Young, organized Cossacks, enlightened men handed over to Kerensky, who threw them into battle to be destroyed or crippled! The current Russian papers of that time wrote that those armies went into battle on the order of the inspired Chief Kerensky. But they did not write that the Central Rada handed over an armed Ukraine to the Moscovites like a young female serf her virginity to the slaveowner. Playing the Ukrainian national anthem, with lowered golden-blue banners, tied with red ribbons, our divisions went into battle . . . into slaughter. The Moscovites, sitting in their trenches, merely smiled behind them. The Ukraine was aroused to drown in her own blood. It was for this that the minds of our leaders were moved . . . the minds of our idiots who spoke the Ukrainian language. Our people believed them because they were the first to use the Ukrainian word, and that they were thus first in wisdom. Before the revolution they had read up on Russian books so they could dress them up in the Ukrainian language and destroy us with this knowledge. Piles of corpses were heaped up, jumbled with torn and bloodied golden-yellow pieces of cloth and broken staffs. Hundreds

of thousands of cripples was the price paid by what was once a wonderful national army. The Moscovites purposely thrust them into bone-breaking attacks in order to destroy the Ukraine, which had resurrected to life.

“Our Fatherland was divided into Bolsheviks and non-Bolsheviks. In this deed they were helped by our leaders! During the most terrible period Kerensky appeared and saved Moscow. In the dead of the night at the twelfth hour I. Hawryluk came along and was destroyed by the Central Rada committeemen. The people turned away from their committeemen. They told them that generals were sitting in the General Secretariat who had no right to be among the leaders. After this terror the Central Rada was aided by the ‘grey overcoats’ and the ‘blue overcoats,’ and the Germans and Western Ukraine. But our nation was neglected and tortured by the Central Rada and Kerensky. So they did not listen any more to what the committeemen were saying about the Ukraine. The cripples and those who were not crippled were munching sunflower seeds and saying: ‘We’re already lassoed. They’ve built a dam for us across the river and put a noose over us!’”

“That is, if the Central Rada and the General Committee had not handed us over as an armed Ukraine to Kerensky for his advance, our army would have been intact, and it would not have stunk here of Germans or of Bolsheviks. That misfortune that you are now experiencing would not have fallen upon you or the whole of the Ukraine. Thus Moscow can thank Kerensky as the first executioner alongside of Peter the Great; and we, the dying, who are burying our loved ones, or looking for them in the various Cheka headquarters and prisons, should recall I. Hawryluk, who at the Second All-Ukrainian Army Convention in 1917 ended his speech as



follows: 'If the General Committee gives the order to advance, that will be the end of everything. Our golden-blue banners will fall, and the power of our brothers will be destroyed!' "

In a voice such as is used by children when they depend upon the favor and strength of their elders, the young woman asked: "Well, what can we do now, when they've orphaned us so?"

"What? Live, but live like wise people. The Central Rada was wise, and in order to safeguard life for itself, what did it do with the nation? That is, when the Bolsheviks start demanding aid to destroy those impediments that stand in their way, well, go ahead and destroy and live. Even now the Moscovites are beginning their mass arrests, so you go ahead and help them!"

Olena Antonivna quickly rose from her chair, restrainedly but resolutely, making her decision.

"Please don't take my place today. Somehow I'll get along myself."

"Just a minute, please, I beg you. This is the kind of time when neither you nor I might not last on this earth even until this evening. So let us at least be frank with each other."

The young woman stood looking to the side depressedly, across the sofa at the wall, but she waited as if performing a duty. Noticing this, he thanked her. His words were full of bitterness and mad despair as he continued to unfold his battered thoughts: "Tell me: what should our fellow-countrymen do to bolster up their spirits in these wild times? And to whom can we dare to express ourselves? Just think, the Commune has imposed directives and twisted terrors on us, and has broken into pieces everything that we held dear to our hearts. It has suppressed those pieces so much that they can't even rattle. It has lodged into our freedom only

the assurance that we'll remain in Moscovite bondage until the Judgment Day. The Bolsheviks have made even the active members of the Central Rada emptier than bags of wheat chaff because Kerensky got all the kernels. They, conscious of their emptiness, began to leave their beyond-the-border retreats and return back. Now tell me, why did the head of the Central Rada return with his companions? Why? . . . This bad blood might have remained behind the border, so that there might have been for such wretched souls as myself at least a reflection left of what is Ukrainian, or something of the human past. But these empty souls returned only because the wise ones, who destroyed the power of their people, want to live, and not to die, by announcing that fact.

“Now they are just like me, although I've not yet made any agreement with the Chekists, while they've agreed to everything the Cheka demanded of them; otherwise, they would not have been allowed to come back here. But beyond the border they were greater than I. For the mist of the spilled blood of our Cossacks, having enshrouded them, dissipated up into the clouds and we, looking on from afar, thought that our leaders were so grand. So there is nothing else for us to do now but to do what our leaders have done. People need the truth but cattle can do without it.”

Then he quieted down, pale and exhausted. His jaws had tightened, and the strained muscles on his cheekbones twitched convulsively. Now he was standing aside, as if making room for her. Now she stood in the same posture that she had maintained when he was speaking. She was looking over the sofa at the wall. She was still holding her brief case under her left arm and elbow, out of which protruded the white ends of her smock. In the same hand she held her husband's hat. This gave her a pleasant but sad schoolgirl look. Chudiev

decided that she was turning away from the disorder in his room. He looked over at it. The quilt and sheet were rolled together into a ball lengthwise from the pillow to the side of the bed. Chudiev felt the freshness of the morning and the joy of the presence in his room of this pleasant woman. Out of sheer thanks he bent over, took her right hand and kissed it, saying: "I'll take your place and then come back home to tell you of my impressions. I thank you sincerely that you did not forget me and came to see me. Please do not judge me too harshly for the disorder in this room."

She answered with a movement of her eyes, in which could be seen thankfulness and easement, and so she assured him: "I am happy that I made no mistake. Thank you sincerely."

She went swiftly into the kitchen and down the steps to the outside exit into the street. She did not look back once, although she felt that Chudiev was on the threshold, staring after her.

It was a very clear morning. The sun was so warm and pleasant that even the walls of the buildings on which it cast its radiance, exposed each four-cornered bricks within its hardened mortar seams.

Olena Antonivna intermingled her steps with other pedestrians, stamping along with them reverberatingly to Leontovich Street.

She entered her own home and set her brief case on the made-up bed, with the hat of her husband, and her own coat. Still wearing her beret, with a troubled expression on her face, she went into the kitchen. The bed on which Hapusia had been sleeping was now empty and without a mattress. She looked her kitchen over with excitement. The stove shone

with coolness. Some small pot forgotten by Hapusia in the corner behind the stove shone against the bottom of the white walls. This quiet evoked sadness, just as the stove emitted coolness and soot. She recalled Chudiev's room and its much worse disorderliness. She became extremely sorry for those people who had thrust the Ukraine into such a mad and deplorable helplessness. She was sorry for her husband and for Chudiev, and sorry for those hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian Cossacks from whom they concealed the sincere and united voice of the all-national warning, and who died beneath their own golden-blue banners for a Moscovite cause, notwithstanding that alongside of the sun coffins were burning with the gold of life. Olena Antonivna grew weak and could not stand. She leaned against the wall and wept. And her weeping echoed throughout the quarters.

At ten o'clock she was at the Cheka headquarters on Vladimir street. She came to the entrance which had a door on the right side of the building. Here she was halted by a guard: "Where do you want to go?"

"I want to see the head of the Cheka."

"The head of the Cheka?"

The guard repeated his question, and then carefully and quietly looked Olena Antonivna over. Evidently she had made a good impression on him, for he politely opened the door for her. Before he let her in, he yelled: "To the chief! One hundred and twenty."

And, having returned to her, he invited: "Come in."

She entered the vestibule, and had to pass by still another guard who directed her: "The third floor."

"On the third floor she did not have to wait long by the door for an entry. When she went in to the chief on his invitation, he looked at her from behind his table, holding his

gaze on her longer than was his usual custom when meeting visitors. Then he said: "And what is your difficulty?"

She was facing Boris Siamsky. Alarmed, she placed her brief case on her knees, and her husband's hat on the brief case, expounding her troubles meanwhile: "Last night they arrested my husband, and he forgot his hat. So I brought it along together with some food."

"What's his name?" asked Siamsky swiftly.

"Brus . . . Ivan Ovsievich Brus," she answered.

Siamsky, having raised his hand in the manner of those people who stop others in a wagon, or who wave off those with whom they do not wish to hurry their problem, said: "Take your chair and sit over there near the window. Keep sitting there until I call you over here. Over there near the door!"

She looked around in amazement and, having understood what he was telling her to do, took her brief case under her elbow, and the hat with the same hand. Then she stood up, dragging the chair with her right hand to the window. She sat down, arranging her articles in the same order as before. Siamsky followed her every move with his eyes and, waiting for her to settle down, he picked up the telephone and said: "Please tell Comrade Partsunia I want to see him. Do you hear? Very well, I'll be waiting."

He hung up, leaning against his empty table. He did not have long to wait. The door opened and Partsunia entered. Without looking around, without paying the slightest attention about how the door was closing behind him, he slammed it shut with his right hand, raising his head questioningly to Siamsky: "Couldn't the heart of the khazain stand it?" he yelled and approached the table, extending his hand over it to Siamsky in greeting. Siamsky squeezed it in the palm of

his own hand like a sated dog, pressing a piece of bread to the ground with his snout that had been thrown to him. Then he began to speak, expressing his conviction, dissatisfiedly: "You are withholding information although you know that the general action I spoke to you about previously has developed to the culminating point of its power. In the provinces all the prisons and divisions of the Cheka are overloaded with material assigned for liquidation. In our Lukianka not only the cells but the corridors and yard are teeming with village stink, packs, caps and undercoats, bast shoes, wornout heels, foot-cloths, straggling and unkempt beards."

"Boris Siamsky," Partsunia interrupted, "don't talk in hyperboles, for you won't surprise me."

"Well, according to you, Soviet Russia is a hyperbole?"

"Tell me, what is it you want from me?"

"I want you to recall the talk we had before Brus' arrest. I wish to tell you that my forecasts regarding our operating quarters have been justified. In about two days we'll transfer from the prison the whole lot of our arrested Ukrainian intelligentsia. We'll help them to put on a front of 'fighters for freedom.' It's really an obnoxious task to have anything to do with them. They cannot even formulate their evident destruction into some kind of a theory for outside people."

"Take it easy. I'm leaving it all to your will. Do whatever you like with your prisoners, but leave that one 'mortal' to me."

"Why is he now a 'mortal' to you?"

"Because he simply doesn't want to understand the matter that I'm interested in. Psychically he's living with imaginary phantoms, which suggest to me that there might be other crimes. He's ceased eating, drinking, and even refuses to converse with me. Well, now, why should a normal person

like he torment himself thus? It's plain that out of fear he wants to hide more important matters than those for which he was arrested."

"That is, in your opinion . . ."

Siamsky wanted to say something, but Partsunia, having been in a state of unfolded trouble, and unfolded disclosure of his impaired assurance, hastened on: "That's right. In my opinion he should come under the general observance of our Cheka. That is, if he breaks his hunger strike, there'll be a 'statute' for his death; but if he doesn't, he'll be sent to a hospital for the insane for a life period . . ."

"Why not hand him over to his wife as her responsibility, and not necessarily send him to a psychiatric ward? As if it were freer there than in our prisons?"

"Is that what you say? Good!"

Partsunia intervened: "Well, let it be so. Have your own way. In his wife's hands he'll dismiss everything, and come out of his painful unfreezing. But in the domestic refuge of his home it will be possible to tear him away from all his criminal roots. In our hands he'll then be a chicken snatched from under a hen by a hawk. The hawk never returns with the seized chicken. And the matter of the isolations thus will be fundamentally ended."

"You're always letting your imagination run away from you. That is not what I'm interested in. I rely upon my own studied thoughts. Well, we'll deliver him to his own wife."

Partsunia rested his surprised and questioning look on the face of Siamsky. It seemed as if he had stopped breathing. Finally, as if he were convinced of something, he decided: "No, we can't let him go now, for he can only be a good citizen when he is dead, or a good sick man for our psychiat-

ric institutions. And then only when under our supervision he'll be buried under the ground."

"But won't you have to free him?"

"Only when he ceases his hunger strike."

"Within the next few days?"

"Perhaps within the next week, or perhaps two weeks."

Siamsky rose and, smiling and extending his hand as if in indication that the conversation had ended, said: "Well, goodbye. I won't want to meet you again before another two weeks."

Partsunia, without even touching his hands, merely raised his right hand in a military salute, turning around swiftly, and going halfway to the door. It was then that he noticed Olena Antonivna. And, evidently having recognized her, he halted with a half turn, so that he stood with his chest parallel with the wall and his head turned towards Siamsky. And, without lowering his right hand, he asked in a settled hoarse voice: "Is this a conspiracy against me?"

The answer followed: "No, I'm making a deposit of our good faith to citizeness Olena Brus. I want her to be a partner in our onerous Chekist activity."

Partsunia, without changing his posture, but merely raising his already raised hand higher, asked in a hoarse voice that was permeated with anxiety: "Only within the next two weeks?"

"Only within the next two weeks."

The door slammed shut. Outside could be heard the sound of departing footsteps.

During the conversation between the two Chekists, Olena Antonivna had felt the uneasy discomfort of her situation. She knew that it was not for nothing that she was seated where she



was. But all this was forgotten by her when the conversation turned to the fate of her husband. Every word of every one of the jailers beat into her being just like the blows of the executioners in the days of Rome that drove the nails into the hands and feet of those martyrs that were crucified on the cross. And she sat, bearing her suffering. She rose madly only when Siamsky explained the reason of her presence. But even when she leaped up, she restrained herself, breathing heavily because of her own woe and the suffering of her husband. Finally Siamsky ordered: "Take your chair and come over here so that we can bring our matter to a conclusion."

She came over swiftly without the chair to the table, excitedly begging the Chekist: "Please allow me to see my husband. I know that he needs his hat and the food that I brought him in this package. I know that he's not guilty of anything, not even of the smallest thing!"

For her plea rang with such a desire to avoid everything that Siamsky said to Partsunia, that it became like the unconsciousness of the animal, which, having found itself in a cage, and seeing the free world through the bars, begins to thrust its head through them to meet the world. It does not feel the tearing of the flesh on its head, and its brain does not feel the burning of the open wounds. For the words and behavior of Siamsky towards her insulted and frightened her, suggesting to her a perspective of activity that she had always considered worthy of a foul, vile and repelling beast. Siamsky, measuring the perturbed and helpless woman with an impudent and egotistical glance from the height of his disdain towards one of a race strange to him, spoke as one with a single concentrated desire: "You can not now under any circumstances see your husband. But I would like to help

you by proposing that you remain in our Cheka Division as our doctor.”

And the woman with a despairing and echoing cry answered, “I’m not a doctor, but a midwife.”

“That does not make any difference.”

Trying to appease her, the Chekist said: “You’ll be allocated to the woman’s division. From there you’ll be called into the men’s divisions for consultation. We’ll pay you three times as much as you get in the Oleksandriwsky Hospital. I wish to advise you that there will be a consultative body to look into your husband’s case. Your agreement will be a deciding factor as to whether you’ll be a member of the consilium which will decide your husband’s normality or insanity. His adjudged insanity will be based on experiments in the hospital for spiritually sick people. Please decide now, for the conclusion of your visit here will mean that everything has been decided and that my proposition will need no more reviewing.”

What could this young and inexperienced woman say to a proposition of this nature, when, during the whole time she lived in Kiev, she had heard talk about how the doctors who served in the Cheka had to execute the duties of executioners in various ways and forms? And so she pleaded again with the Chekist: “I beg you very, very much . . . Please deliver this hat . . . and this food.”

Siamsky stood up, speaking roughly and even threateningly: “Bring those things with you in a couple of days. It’s impossible to take them to him today. You will have to spend those two days in your room and not leave it at all. Don’t go back to the hospital. For if you disobey me, you’ll be arrested.

Since you did not wish to speak about your co-operation with us, there will be others to speak to us about it. Good-bye."

Olena Antonivna, with her husband's hat and brief case under her arm, began to leave without bidding the Chekist a good-bye. She heard him yell over the telephone. "Allow Comrade Shchokolov to depart. She's carrying a brief case and a man's hat."

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

# The Ultimatum: Either Serve Moscow or Die

Olena Antonivna left the Cheka as if she were burning in a fever. The day was not a day for her; and the bustle of the street meant no more to her than the heavenly clouds passing over the city. She could no longer think about anything else but the terrible spectacle of life that rose up before her. They would not accept the hat in the Cheka which meant that there was something evil happening there. She knew from acquaintances that when things were not accepted at the prison, or were returned, that it meant the death of the inmate. As for the proposal that she serve the Cheka, it was a possibility that she could not really approve of under any circumstances. What of it if this one or that one was already a Chekist? Or if this one or that one was already serving in the Cheka as a consultant in the deaths of prisoners or the corroboration of the normality or the abnormality of those sentenced to death? She could not allow it to be imposed on her because it was out of line with her conception of good and bad.

But she was already under arrest at home. And for what? Naturally because she had heard a Chekist conversation! Naturally, too, they would not forgive her so long as she

was free, or so long as she was not co-operating with them. It meant that she would have to flee . . . Gather up her clothing and speed post haste to the friend to whom she had sent Hapusia!

Before she had reached her home it was thoughts such as these that ran through her mind. But it was the latter decision that took possession of her, making her feverish and causing a cold shiver to run through her.

It was not until she had come to the steps of her lodging place that she came to her senses and saw that the day was clear, benevolent and friendly, for she had felt the warm spring air as it was reflected from the steps, the door and the doorknob. On the doorknob itself, which was painted black, a yellow butterfly with black spots on its wings had settled. It was only when she had extended her hand with the key to open the door that the butterfly had flown away.

She recalled that spring very long ago when the Germans first came into the Ukraine. Insurrections rose up against the Germans here and there. After every such uprising German cavalry detachments would come into the village. Every rider, besides all his other armor, carried a lance with a yellow-black banner. Her fellow-pupils with whom she went to school used to say that on those banners was written: "Death to the Ukraine!"

The recollections pierced her soul with a sharp pain and, having shut the door behind her as she entered her home, she halted near the threshold, momentarily looking around as if she had entered a strange home. It was empty and abandoned, there being no one to wait for but Chudiev. She became agitated, recalling the words of I. Hawryluk: "If we throw our armies into the advance on the demand of Kerensky, our golden, yellow banners will fall, and along with it the strength

of our brothers." Olena Antonivna put her husband's hat on the table and, pressing her brief case to her heart with both hands and looking at the hat, she filled the whole room with her crying. Then she suddenly quieted down. She listened one minute, two minutes. It was quiet. She swiftly put the hat by the brief case and started to go to the door, but she halted when she heard a loud and bold knock on the closed door. She waited until the knocking ceased. Then, seized with sudden anxiety, she slowly began to walk over to the door as if her feet were sticking to the floor that was seemingly covered with thick tar. And, without touching the door with her hands, she asked, "Who's there?"

The voice from the outside said: "Is this the khazayka? Open up, please; I've come to see you."

It was the voice of a man that sounded familiar. She opened the door, coming out across the threshold and holding on to the doorpost. Before her stood a weazened comrade in a blue uniform, but without a cap. He bowed courteously, opening the door with his hand so as to enter. But when he said, "I won't spend more than ten minutes," the khazayka recognized Partsunia.

She stood by the wall with surprise, silently letting him go past her into the house. This unexpected call was more frightening than those delirious dreams that a small, lonely tot feels when it is getting dark outside and it does not know how to turn on the light in the house.

The reason for Partsunia's visit was that he was a Chekist and, like all the others, he was suspicious of everything. Because Partsunia, after his conversation with Siamsky, had seen Olena Antonivna behind him in the room, he decided that the Brus case was taking an adverse turn against him. Thus he felt that at all costs he must find out what the trouble was. Having followed Olena Antonivna from the G.P.U. head-

quarters to her home, he walked on Leontovich a short distance and then came to knock on her door. The matter seemed so dangerous to him that he was ready to go the limit to liquidate any attack from the rear. Thus, standing with his back to the table, pleasantly smiling at the khazayka who indifferently walked in front of him into the room, he asked, "Where will you allow me to sit down? I've been pre-occupied all night and I do not wish to waste any energy to the point of complete exhaustion."

Olena Antonivna swiftly took the chair near the window and dragged it over to the table. "Please sit down," she invited him.

He sat down, waiting for the khazayka to get settled. And when she had passed by the table and sat down on the bed opposite her husband's hat, he began to speak in a voice that was apologetic for the trouble he was causing.

"I came about the matter that you were discussing with the chief of the G.P.U., Siamsky. Well, what do you think about it?" he asked.

The khazayka shook. "What matter? My husband's hat?"

Partsunia crossed his right leg over his left one, having taken hold of the top end of his jacket. With simulated indifference, he said, "I think that Comrade Siamsky was not worried about your husband's hat, for there are thousands of hatless prisoners now occupying his attention. I've come to speak to you about a matter, about which you were meditating, irrespective of the hat."

Deciding that this was the stock method of Chekist approach to a conversation and that it smacked of a terrible and dirty mystery, Olena Antonivna answered, "He spoke to me about taking on the position of doctor at the G.P.U. But I did not say anything definite to him, nor can I to you, for I find it

hard to make a definite decision. Right now I'm so full of woe that I've become sick."

"In other words, you don't want to?" Partsunia inquired.

"It's not that I don't want to, but I'm sick," Olena Antonivna explained.

Her uttered thought with its attuned form was spoken in such a way that the woman would have burst out with the full force of her hatred for the suffering that she had experienced during the last few days of woe. Partsunia, catching the shade of meaning of her uttered words very well, said, "You speak to me as if I did not understand your state of mind, which stands out against us Chekists like a bristling cat before a dog. It is the same kind of attitude that I once had towards the G.P.U. The same type of antipathy the students, doctors, professors, academicians, writers, pedagogues, villagers and even workmen used to have! At first they would twist, equivocate and try to slip from under, but later on they became even better Chekists than we. Now really, who are you to think that you can avoid helping us? If you don't want to tell me, I'll tell you. You're taking that stubborn stand because you have this home and 'chervonets' in pay and a few kilograms of black bread on your monthly card. Now if we take all this away from you and hold you for half a year at the Cheka in the wringer, then you'll find out that you're dependent upon our favors. If you don't see it our way, then you'll faint from your own experiences, thinking: 'Why did he look at me thus? Why did he not speak like he did yesterday?' So you see, Comradess, you can not escape our protection, if you wish to live peacefully in this country. Honest and wise people realize at once what they are up against in our revolution. If you protest in this way, then please tell me what will make me think that you are honest and wise?"



Olena Antonivna remained quiet. Partsunia ceased speaking, feeling quite safe. He knew very well that he had followed Siamsky's wishes. He now knew that there was no real protest against him. If there were, it was still in the mind of Siamsky where it was germinating the first steps against him. Knowing this was so, he now felt he could boldly and safely avoid it. The case of Brus and his wife could once again be probed. Other tactics offered unexpected possibilities. He was pleased with himself. And now, having kept quiet, he waited to see what this woman would say, who had become an instrument against him, and who he, Partsunia, could now manipulate so that she would become a useless card, and not a trump card, in the hands of his adversary. He decided to realize this right here in this room.

After a short pause, Olena Antonivna actually did answer in a suppressed but dignified voice, "Why do you insult me? You're a man, stronger than I, and you know I'm here all alone. You have to believe me that I'm sick. And if you did not hear me, I'll tell you again that I'm sick, and you, therefore, cannot accept some of my remarks in the full extent of their semantic text. I have never liked it in life. I've never liked those people who, knowing their power over the weak, lord it over them. I am under your authority. But not in spirit or in thought, and that is all."

Then she became quiet and, having drawn a handkerchief from her sleeve and pressing it to her nose and lips, she coughed. Partsunia, removing one leg off the other and bending towards the table, with a voice of indignation and secret threat, answered, "Your language about insults is no different from the rest of the talk that the prisoners use in their first meetings with us. I am not going to ask you for an apology, for I see no difference between courtesy and

brutality. I only recognize a difference between a realistic state of affairs and between visible things. That is, between your truth and wrong. I consider your sickness as fear, as a lack of courage to look reality in the eyes, and as a slight threat on your part which can easily be avoided. No, no, you cannot circumvent it, nor escape anywhere, because you are necessary to us. You're a clever young doctor, and beautiful to boot . . . and we know everything. We know the intentions of such sick people as you. You think I don't know that you've hidden Hapusia? I know and I've acted. I now know where she lives and where she works. If we have not yet arrested her, it's because she's not essential to us right now. Let her live. But we need you; and if you try to escape, we'll catch you and bring you back and make you 'voluntarily' become our comrade. Well, what does your sickness seem like to you now? Ha?"

He now began to contemplate her carefully and restrainedly. He noticed her watching her husband's hat. Partsunia knew that this hat had become a symbol of her woe and a moral force. He therefore began to disclose to her her hopeless situation. He set out to disarm her.

"I cannot sympathize with those people who suffer over anything at all," he said. "And this is good, but in no way bad. The struggle for life on this world has taught me about life. Your looking at your husband's hat with grief does not move me. *For the hats of live people, and of people essential to life, are always with them and on their heads.* But this hat merely lies here, waiting for a head, but there is no head. One day goes by, two days go by. Perhaps no head will appear for this hat within the next two days or perhaps even the next two years. But in our Chekist practice, when clothing is not accepted for the prisoner, then he's no longer in a certain place; he's somewhere else. Or perhaps he's not even

among the living. An anchor falls off a ship into the water along with its chain. When the chain is pulled up without its anchor, they don't dive down to look for it, but they tie a new anchor onto the chain. Thus it is with your hat and your husband. The Cheka is a bottomless pit. Those who fall into it do not return. But if your husband returns, it will be as a Chekist. Otherwise, he'd never be freed. That is, he'd die the kind of a man he was when he was your husband. And you, too, can escape us by committing suicide. That is, kill yourself or else become a Chekist. For in the one case and in the other it means the death of the person who lived by the old moral code . . . or marry a Chekist and you won't be a Chekist, but your husband will. You'll have two duties: sleep with your husband, and be able to sympathize with Chekist heroic deeds. That's all. If you wish then, I can be that kind of a husband to you. I can protect you from Chekist investigations more successfully than anyone else. And I can stave off from myself and my wife all spying and suspicion, for I'm the most talented of all the Chekists. Well, I'm declaring myself. Think it over, and I'll come tomorrow for your answer. You won't say anything? If that is the case, then you'll speak with someone else. But I'll then be lost, for I've been very free with my thoughts. That was about saving you from Chekist investigations. I'm taking a risk, but I'm going outspokenly to my goal just like every Chekist does. If I've won—good; if I've lost, it's down into the abyss. Don't you think that those of us who are being taken out to be shot become counter-revolutionaries? No, no, no. They just made an unsuccessful Chekist move, stumbled, and fell straight into the jaws of death. But you are necessary to us Chekists, especially to me and Siamsky. Believe me, you are most essential to me."

And, passing his right hand over his face, he sighed and hushed up. He was pacified, but Olena Antonivna could feel only terror. For every word Partsunia uttered chipped off in her heart a piece of the picture of her soul, just like bullets striking the side of a wall each time chip off something which falls down and never returns to its original place. She grew weaker and weaker. For she knew that she did not have strength enough either to drive him out of the house or to get him out with pleas. Thus she was compelled to listen to him, placed as she was without the slightest protection against him. If she had had only some moral strength handed down from the not too distant Ukrainian past, but no! There were two inimical angles: the people and their leaders. The people and their ways were always strange and never understood by the leaders. The events of the national insurrection, the culmination of which was the Second All-Ukrainian Army Convention through which Petlura and Hrushevsky handed over the insurrected Ukraine to Kerensky, became the black sky on which Partsunia lighted his ill-boding stars. And what he said about the death of her husband rang with truth. It now prompted her to ask worriedly, "You arrested my husband. What did you do with him? Has he been executed that you express such terrible conclusions?"

He stared at her in surprise and, pausing awhile, replied, "I won't tell."

"Why?"

And Partsunia, indicating the hat with his hand, asked, "You brought that to Siamsky today?"

"Yes, I had it with me."

"Well," said Partsunia confidently, "your hat will tell you about your husband. Ask it."

"I do not understand you," she said. "I do not understand you."

As for Partsunia, he understood perfectly well the bared despair of Olena Antonivna. He knew the psychological implication in the words, "I do not understand you." To all that was said, he added scornfully, "Honestly, you're like thousands of other Ukrainian Intelligentsia who turn away from Communist reality and hang on to the small reality to which they have been accustomed. They prolong their self-deception. Their tactics are piteous, and they are piteous people! Well, now, tell me what Siamsky said to you when you were there."

"He told me to bring the hat in two days, and that he'd give it to my husband."

A smile played on Partsunia's face, and he said, "The old way of life in its worst aspect always respected the word 'promise,' for the old world never considered the real sense of things but only the imaginary aspect. The old world grounded its main strength on imaginary phantoms throughout the ages, such as heaven, hell, and so forth. And thus this 'good,' one of the main mysteries of the old life, is as unattainable as heaven, becoming only an ideal and an aim. Thus all those Hugos, Dickenses, Skovorodas, Tolstoys and the Crosses were always guardians over those promises so that 'hope' might live through their expressed words like a legend in the minds of children."

Partsunia continued: "A legend is a fine thing, but it won't supply the listener with food. Therefore, we do only that which is within the scope of our real possibilities in this life on this earth. Beauty and comeliness we discount as unprofitable. And hope, too. Whoever cultivates it is a cheat. So when Siamsky said that he'd take the hat and deliver it to your husband then he, too, put you in the position with your wish as if he had told you to come and see him five thousand years hence. For the Communists know what should be done and what should not be done. When it is necessary

they do things forthwith without the slightest delay. When they delay a thing for a day, it means that they've delayed it for a thousand years. That is, for non-realization."

All this was unbearable to Olena Antonivna but Partsunia went on: "Ah, well, what is there to say? Every blind, deaf and dumb person has already realized from all this that whatever our institutions promise is never done, for they do not exist to uphold illusions, but for realistic purposes and possibilities. Their aim is to collect taxes and to strengthen the Commune here and beyond the borders, and not to bolster the word 'good' for some unknown. You must know this as a future Chekist, that you're not to knock on the door with your forehead, but to break it down forthwith. That is all. Set your doubt to a time limited by my comrade and you'll be an inch nearer to reality."

He rose and passed by the table over to Olena Antonivna, extending his hand in parting. She got up and drew her hands back a bit, then spoke in a firm voice, "I won't give you my hand. Your world is terrible. In my own I'll stay with the old gods such as Christ, Hugo, Dickens, Wenchenko. They are more dear to me than my own poor, helpless life! Goodbye."

Partsunia said hoarsely, "In other words, I've made an unsuccessful move. That is, you're lost!"

"And not you?"

"No. But the only way you can escape us is to go to the other world. Therefore, I'll come to you again tomorrow, and perhaps we'll speak about our union, and not about the death of a human being. Goodbye!"

He quickly left the room. Olena Antonivna stood still, like a stone woman. It was not until Partsunia's footsteps could no longer be heard that she swiftly dressed and, picking up her brief case, almost ran out of the house. Outside she looked

around on all sides and, not having noticed anything suspicious, she walked along Leontovich Street to the ravine. Then she turned into Pirohovsky Street and crossed Shevchenko Boulevard until she came to the Obratzov Clinic. There at the drug counter behind which medicines were kept on a shelf, she wrote out a prescription in Latin, handing it in at the window. The druggist found a small package, wrapped it up in a blue paper and handed it to Doctor Shchokolov. The latter took it excitedly, thanking the druggist and squeezing her hand. Having gone outside, Olena Antonivna looked around again and saw on the opposite side, a little to the right of the clinic, a young man in a red army uniform. He was looking towards her. It seemed to Olena Antonivna that as soon as he noticed her, he had gone in the same direction that she had taken to come to the drug store. He was walking ahead of her. Thus they both came to Leontovich Street. Here he looked back without stopping.

Olena Antonivna readied herself for an adventure. But no. The Red Army soldier passed her lodging place and, having gone to the end of Leontovich Street as far as the Great Pildwalny, he halted. Here he was met by a woman. Both of them began to watch Olena. The doctor ran into her lodging place. In her room, without undressing, she ran to the window to see whether the two trailers were still standing. But they were no longer there. Olena Antonivna had no doubt that these two were on her trail at the order of Siamsky. It meant that the Cheka was now fully informed and that she was in danger of immediate arrest. But if she had only been sure that her husband was . . . She wept.

She would have to wait for Chudiev from the Oleksandrivsky Clinic. Although he was a bit twisted, his conversation always sounded sincere and full of suffering. One

could always recognize truth in his words. Something would have to be done. Chudiev would advise her.

She undressed and hung up her coat on the old place near the closet. Then she began to take the books off the table and pile them up near the window. She lifted the lamp off the table. Then she wiped the table, covering it with an oilcloth which she brought from the kitchen. She made some tea, lowering the flame in the burner, leaving a teapot on it so that it would not cool off. Unwrapping the package she had prepared for Brus, she took six eggs and placed them in a basket on the table. Finally, having set a chair in front of the table and another one opposite to that at the back of the table, she made the bed and then started to change her clothes. She put on a thin pair of stockings through which could be seen the tanned skin of her legs. She put on the yellow shoes that she had worn only a couple of times. She donned clean white underthings. Finally she got out a dark rose dress with a collar and lapels trimmed with light blue silk, decolette, trailing out behind the dress in long, free ends. Having put on the dress, she tied with the ends of the lapels a neat and luxurious bouquet on her breast. When she had fixed her hair with the aid of a pocket mirror, she went over to the table, sat in her husband's place and began to wait for Chudiev.

It was now dark in the room. Outside here and there the lamps marked off with their radiance the frightening shadows of the buildings which mysteriously circled around the structures when there was a wind and even when there was quiet, both in the daytime and at night. She sat by the table of her husband, waiting quietly. There was a knock. She opened the door and let her colleague in. She lighted up the room, inviting him to the table. He took his coat off near the closet,



then sat down. Suddenly he saw Brus' hat on the bed, and he asked, "Didn't you go to your husband?"

"And why ask? I went."

"But the hat?"

Olena Antonivna bethought herself and cried, "Lord, look at me! I've invited you to supper and there's not a single glass on the table."

She ran into the kitchen, brought glasses out and filled them up.

"Please eat. Here are the eggs. There's the bread. Everything on the table is for our supper. For you."

But Chudiev did not look at the food; his eyes were on the khazayka. He noticed that there was an unusual elegance about her, and that there was a spirited air about her which he couldn't make out. Without trying to analyze it, he again asked, "Now really, what is all this? The hat is not where it should be."

"You still have your own idea. You're afraid that I might be fooling you? It is the same as if you wanted to say that there shouldn't be any women on the earth. For what kind of a woman would it be that didn't do a little artful dodging?" Olena Antonivna cried.

Then in a lowered voice of reproach she muttered, "They didn't accept the hat. They told me to bring it in another two days. During these two days I'm supposed to lie in bed and not even go outside. I'm in a virtual domestic prison." And then in the same tone of voice as before she asked, "Now, my truthful man, tell me whether I should take the hat to them or not? Is my husband alive or not?"

"Were you at the Cheka today?"

"I've told you, my dear friend, that I'm in domestic incarceration for two days. Who did it to me? Surely, not the director of the hospital . . . only the Cheka," she explained.

She related to him the whole story, about the conversation between the two Chekists, about Siamsky, and about Partsunia's visit. Chudiev listened to her attentively without even touching the food. Finally he reasoned, "They've killed your husband. And if not, they'll do it soon. The matter is clear. The fact that they asked you to serve with them in my opinion is very good. Our time only justifies existence on this earth. He does not wish to recognize the price that people pay for this existence. Do you contemplate being a Chekist doctor? Do you want to be a current executioner?"

Olena Antonivna, smiling and looking at him with an almost playful gaze, replied, "I shall. You're my first teacher. You taught me how to be wise and I want to repay you. I want to accept you as my first lover. I've been asked to be a Chekist. I know very well that this invitation does not mean that I'm qualified for an executioner's job. They want to have me with them, whether in bed or over the corpse of a freshly executed one. Well, what kind of a man are you? Do you want to be the first?"

Chudiev looked around, rose swiftly, went over to the window and pulled down the blind. Then he resumed his seat with an amused smile and started to answer: "You said that you will serve the Cheka, and I'll tell you that I'll be your first lover. If you had not wanted to serve there, I'd not even come to greet you tomorrow. Intelligence—that means to kill millions and thus to live on the bones of the killed ones. Destroy the Ukraine and live on the glory of her death. This is our fate, my dear Olena Antonivna. Now I shall sup with relief, and you can tell me whether I should begin this evening or tomorrow night? As for me, I'd like to kiss you in bed even today."

He drank his tea and ate his bread with relish. But the khazayka, disregarding his lover's agreement, began to urge

him like a good hostess, "Eat your eggs. I took them to my husband, but they refused to take them from me. My husband, predestined for death by my future lovers who will come after you . . . 'The matter is clear,' as you would say. But there is one matter I can't figure out: What'll I generally be on this road I am forced to take? Just a cuspidor like the one that stands in the clinic before the office of the director into which everyone can spit without thinking of insulting it? Or a carrion that every dog, having found it in a ditch, can crush, tear and chew and drag in the dust, over the manure and every stinking surface? Please eat! Eat! I've prepared this for my husband, and now you'll be my first lover. Eat what was intended for my husband. But I'll not give myself up to you today. Come to me at half past nine in the morning and we'll arrange our love affair. My dear, why are you so reticent? Are you anxious to leave here in a hurry? Please wait for another five minutes. You remember this morning? You didn't let me have my say. Your motives were based on the belief that one of us might not live until the evening. I had the same reasons, but I hid them because of the agreement to serve as an executioner in the Cheka. But my reasons are not as painful to me as yours are to you."

Chudiev arose and silently began to look for something in his pockets. He asked: "Have you an aspirin or a pyramidon? You're sick. Take one and go to bed."

Olena Antonivna looked at him quizzically. "I've neither one nor the other. You don't think I'm sick, do you?"

"Isn't it evident? Your talk is nervous. And your reality is mixed up with nonsense. Now if you had assured the Cheka, you wouldn't be arrested in the next two days. There's something wrong here."

“I’m really under arrest for two days. And so please excuse me for telling a fib. But I think that nothing endangers you here.”

Then she asked: “Have you ever noticed how the priest greets the people on Easter Day? The people come . . . come . . . The old, the young, the weak and the strong, and he kisses everyone, saying, ‘Christ is risen, Christ is risen!’ It seems as if he won’t be able to stand it . . . that he’ll fall from exhaustion. But no! He holds on until the last person says: ‘He is indeed risen!’ But the priest bends down to kiss him on the lips, answering, ‘Christ is risen!’ Have you seen that?”

“Yes.”

“I think most of the priests do that out of obligation. The old priests feel that they are doing that out of pity for themselves and the people, meaning that he and they are so helpless before death. And so for one single day in the year they all together feel a victory over their predestination. I think so, and I look at you and I think of our people on whom no one has pity, whose property is taken away from them and who are being driven like cattle into our prisons, and to hard labor and even to death. Neither you nor I have the courage to sympathize with our nation out loud. I’d like to, but I’d pay dearly for it, even with my life. If I could only appear before our people and greet every one of them with ‘Christ is risen,’ and kiss each one, and hear, ‘He indeed is risen!’ I’d kiss and I’d speak until I’d die from exhaustion. Why do you always talk so terribly? Because you’re frightened with terror and mercilessness. I’d feel terrible too if I were unmerciful to you.”

Chudiev stood up and waited for the khazayka to finish. Then he extended his hand in a goodbye. “Farewell . . . I

must go. Please lie down on the bed. Look for an aspirin . . . or something else. You know . . . And go to bed."

She rose and squeezed his hand. He turned around and went to get his coat. But Olena Antonivna quickly came from behind the table and intercepted Chudiev, her back to the door. She held a key in her hand, saying, "Take this key to my home, and come tomorrow morning at half past nine. I won't be home then. You'll take an addressed article from my table."

Chudiev said, looking down at the key, "Can I do without it?"

His words were cruel in context, but they were uttered to mask something deeper. Perhaps fear.

Olena Antonivna reassured him, "You can no more do without it than I can withhold a feeling of pity for you. You are in the same state as is our nation. You are predestined. And so, just like you pleaded with me this morning so that I would hear you out in regard to your belief that one of us would not live in freedom until this evening, I now plead with you in regard to the same thing. Perhaps one of us will not live until morning. Let us part with the kind of kiss with which our priests and our people greet each other on Easter morning. For love of one to another differs little from sympathy of one to another during great grief."

She quickly grasped him around the shoulders with both hands and lifted her lips to his. He bent down and they kissed each other three times. And she, crying and shaking all over, uttered the words, "Christ is risen!"

He held her in his arms for a long moment, as though he could never let her go. It was as if the earth waited for the birth of a great love. He wiped his eyes as he turned to leave. She caught up with him, thrusting the key into his

pocket, and saying, "You have the key to my house. Come tomorrow at half past nine in the morning."

Chudiev stuck his hand in the pocket where the key was. The outside door slammed shut and Olena Antonivna was alone.

The next day at half past nine Chudiev entered the vestibule of the Brus home and closed the door tightly behind him. The vestibule was lighted by the window which was above the kitchen door, which accounted for the semi-darkness. There was only a streak of electric light coming in from under the kitchen door. This surprised him. But when he entered the room, he saw Olena Antonivna in bed with her head turned to the wall. He decided she was asleep, so he tiptoed over to the closet and took off his coat. Then in the same careful manner he went over to the table. It was in the same order as he had left it yesterday. His glass, which he had filled a second time, stood half full, but the khazayka's glass was as empty now as it was then. The six eggs were still whole. In the center of the table was a letter in a white envelope with a large inscription: "To Sergy Ivanovich Chudiev." The letter was weighted with the piece of bread which Chudiev had failed to finish eating. Having gazed at Olena Antonivna to see if she were asleep, he tore the envelope open and took out the letter to read it:

*"To Sergy Ivanovich:*

*I do not beg your pardon, for neither of us is guilty. I only ask you to look after my funeral. When you put me into the coffin, please lay both of my hands on my breast. And then cover my palms with my husband's hat. I know that this is foolish, but what else should I do? I have only once been wise in my lifetime. It was when I finished my last examination at the Medical In-*

*stitute. You'll find the money for my funeral in the right pocket of my coat. Don't cry.*

*Olena Shchokolov."*

Chudiev ran wildly and nervously over to the window. He drew the blind up. Then he looked the room over. He came to the table, took hold of the lamp, turned on the light. Then he looked a long time at the dead woman, without approaching the bed. The tears rolled down his face.

Finally he tiptoed to the dead woman. Under the bed stood her yellow shoes. And Brus' hat lay on the floor a little farther away. Olena Antonivna was half covered with a white woolen quilt and she lay all stiffened out lengthwise on the bed. Her head was turned and bent to the wall. Her right hand, having been extended in a line with her neck, held in its fist the end of an unravelled bouquet, which had been so extended from the decolette that even the dress had been wrenched out of position. It was only the left hand that could be seen from under the quilt. And her luxurious tresses lay below the nape of her neck, having fallen off the pillow onto the sheet.

Chudiev wiped his eyes, bent over and kissed the knuckles of her right hand which stuck out over the squeezed end of the bouquet. With his practiced hand he examined the spot where among living people the pulse is supposed to beat. But it was quiet and cold there. Chudiev numbly turned away from the deceased and, having gone over to her coat, he withdrew from her pocket five "chervonet" and transferred them to his own pocket. He put on his coat and departed. But he halted again before the threshold. He turned around and bowed. And a moan escaped from him: "Farewell!"

When he was leaving the lodging place, the outside door slammed shut with a loud bang, but it did not frighten anyone in the Brus home.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

# Enemy Against Enemy

It was already eleven o'clock at night. Ivan Brus, still alive, lay on the wooden plank bed facing the wall. The kat-sap at the opposite end was asleep. His figure as he lay there was hardly distinguishable amid the shadows of the cell. Light filtered into the cell through the window from an outside electric lamp. It shone from a post in the center of the prison yard. The whole space between the plank beds and the other wall as far as the "parasha," a make-shift toilet that could be moved about, and the entrance door were within the reach of the light.

Brus, taking advantage of the variation of darkness and light in his cell, gave his thoughts free rein in his half-sleepy head. As cruel and beastly indifferent as the Communist government is to its people, nevertheless it does kill off its protagonists at once. It sets a limit and its bloodthirstiness is regulated accordingly. Why don't the Moscovites kill the Ukrainians most active in opposition outright? Ivan Brus wondered. No, they prolong the act of destruction, looking back on the hind wheels of their state wagon. That is, somewhere far behind that wagon there is something that slows down



the destruction of people. Thus even now Moscow had hoisted up her leg in order to cross the threshold to that far-off point. That threshold was the Ukraine with all her people. If she crossed that threshold and destroyed that far-off point, would she give the same rights to him so as to take advantage in the cell of the union of light and darkness and of peace before formulating death? This would be a useless and unprofitable reflection.

It became more painful to him, especially when he knew that neither by weeping nor by the exercise of an iron will could anything be done against this mad power of cruelty. The whole of the Ukraine was broken up into small fragments, one of which was he himself. Would his heroic opposition act as a helpful moral force? Who would be inspired by it? Would Brus himself be conscious of his small holy deed? Moscow stands there before him against his tiny strength with her gigantic power, while he stands before her until he is squashed. It's enemy against enemy. Without faltering, he would have to keep up the battle in his own soul and be ready to meet the Moscow horror. He would have to find the weakest spot in the body of this historical and most beastly enemy. For he was not an animal but one who walked with equal tempo whether behind a plow or into a massacre. He must not sit in the prison, wait, eat, sleep, rise, die, go into the dressing-room or the inquisition chamber, for that would mean the culmination of the thing that the Moscovite Cheka was waiting for. He must not even dare to attack his inquisitor, for that would mean calling down upon himself sudden death. That would give this Moscovite beast the opportunity in one movement to cross the Ukrainian threshold and destroy the thing that this hideous creature with its repugnant morality was waiting to do. Thus reasoned Ivan

Brus. It was painful almost to the point of shame, to go the way of the death that the Moscovites were putting in his path. He would be led on this path and he would be met on this path. All the way along it the strength of his spirit and the crises of his soul would be controlled.

The fact that he had refused to eat was the real path of his struggle. His schizophrenia was the only means of appeasing his ethical feelings and the rescue of his spiritual independence. The nervous exhaustion which he had suffered the year after his father's death did not lend itself to finding another means for his struggle. It reduced him to such a spiritual state that is described by Shakespeare as "to die, to fall asleep." But love, friendship, and his relations with the people through his beloved work in his conscious mind found no utterance here, extending the expanse of the world to indefinite limits of non-existence. What was the most powerful means to a new resurrection of the soul? If only he could deal out extinction to every ravager in the Ukraine! But he was too puny and feeble.

There was a sudden banging and clattering at the door. It opened and two officers came in and stood by the plank bed where Brus was presumably sleeping. They were silent. They left the door in the vestibule ajar. Light fell into the cell, mixing with the light that came into it through the window from the outside, the combined rays lighting up the backs of the officers. Their leather shoulder straps, leather belts and revolver sheaths shone in the glare. The tall one stood near the bed. The other one, somewhat smaller, stood on the side. The taller officer spoke first. From his voice one could tell that it was Boris Moiseyovich Siamsky.

"Brus!"

Ivan Brus shivered, but he did not change his posture in the bed, nor did he turn around at the call of the Chekist. After a short pause the Chekist spoke again in a voice that showed every evidence that he knew the sleeper was aware of the call and was trying to evade talking.

“Brus, tell us, why don’t you want to eat? What is there weighing on your conscience so much?”

There was quiet with an undercurrent of overstrained sadness on the bed. The prisoner was in such a state that it seemed to him that he could hear the heart of one laying on one end of the bed, and the heart of the person on the other end, beat. Even the Chekist knew that such a quiet could compress the prisoner’s heart to the point where it would burst. He listened calmly and noticed the resistance of the person on the bed. Then Boris Moiseyovich Siamsky turned to his comrade, saying in a naive voice:

“Grab the prisoner by the legs and wake him up. Perhaps he is asleep. Pull him over here.”

The other Chekist swiftly got in front of Siamsky, who took a step backward, bent over the bed, took hold of Brus’ leg without wakening him, and yanked him hard. Then he yelled, “Hey, there’s no reason to fall asleep here. This is a prison and not a bedroom. This is not a place to rest but for hard labor to atone for human conscience. Get up!”

He twisted his leg. Ivan Brus merely raised his body up and looked woodenly at the two Chekists, leaning with both arms on the bed the way dogs with broken hind legs often act when they are being dragged by the tail and hold on to the ground with their forepaws. The Chekist Siamsky again asked, “Will you tell us why you don’t want to eat? Do they give you bad food? Is your conscience towards the Soviet government really over-taxed?”

Brus no sooner heard the voice of the Chekists than he stiffened with every cell in his body as if at any moment he expected a hard blow. When the stillness of silence began to change to the strain of waiting, Brus turned his head with relief to Siamsky and answered with such a distressedly dramatic voice, as if he were complaining that every time he spoke about it nobody would believe him, but that he would continue to speak about it even if he were driven out of this world: "I'm afraid that I might be poisoned by the Jews."

The one who had been twisting his leg could no longer restrain himself. He seized him again by the same leg and yanked him with such power that Brus found himself on the end of the bed with his legs touching the floor. In order not to fall off, having turned around with the aid of his hands, he sat down on the edge of the bed facing the Chekists. Siamsky placed his hand on his right shoulder, asking, "Do you understand what you're saying?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"Do you know that you're talking counter-revolution? The word 'Jew' is taboo. The Soviet Union has not as yet started practicing poisoning of its citizens. Thus no one should dare to think, let alone say that. You're liable to have your teeth knocked out. You're inviting a horror upon yourself such as human flesh has not yet experienced. Tell me what you've said so that I'll be convinced that you're a person and not something that people have a chance to see and to hear only once in their lives. Well?"

"I say that the Jews might poison me, and that's why I'm not eating."

Now the Chekist who had actively been tugging at Brus stepped back a few steps, as if he were trying to get a better view of this interesting spectacle. He watched Brus with

undisguised wonder. Perhaps he had forgotten where he was, for the first spasm of laughter, having cricked his face and cooled off in the mist of his eye, kept its ugly expression intact. Siamsky, feeling a pain in his being, which had not been aroused for a long time, having been secured in its inertia with something certain, being similar to immovable Biblical sanctity or well-known historical truth, began, in an intimate voice unusual for a Chekist, to admonish, "Well, and why do you talk like this? What do you know that you speak of such a horror?"

As if he were really encouraged by this intimacy, as if he had believed that the matter should be examined agreeably, Brus did not compress his lips nor suppress his answer. He explained, "The Jews poisoned my father. Now they're poisoning all the Ukrainians who have not yet become bandits and murderers. They're even poisoning those people who still recognize themselves as Ukrainians, and those that are imprisoned without reason. I think that the Jews will soon start doing this in the cities as well as in the country."

Siamsky straightened up, turning to his comrade, surprisedly and excitedly beginning to come back to normal from which he had been startled by this wild and unexpected surprise:

"Do you know, I believe he's insane? To say such things . . . But in order to be more sure, for this might be unspeakably insolvent simulation, one must uncover his whole psychosis. We've got to put him in a 'bag' and keep him there until his sores themselves speak for his mouth without any control by his intelligence."

Then, turning to Brus, as if he wanted to know whether the latter heard everything or not, he shouted, "I don't believe you. We'll torture you to the last thread of your being. We'll

find out where the beginning of truth is because you speak of where the end is. You should know that you'll crawl on your hands and knees and beg us to kill you and not let you suffer any longer. You'll repent with every bloody step you take that you, not having found out with whom you are dealing, made such talk about the Jews . . . right here in this cell. Well, now, tell me: who am I?"

"A Jew."

"And who is this?"

Siamsky asked the question, pointing at his petrified comrade just as Partsunia did earlier.

"He looks like a disguised Jew."

Siamsky bent down to him like the woman who speaks with a strange but interesting child, "What difference is there between a disguised Jew and a real one? How do you distinguish between them?"

Brus kept quiet, looking sullenly down at his feet.

Brus' inquisitor interrupted his silence, "I would like to tell you that this man with me is no disguised Jew, but a genuine Ukrainian, and his name is Partsunia. So you see how you've been mistaken."

And Brus lifted up his head, contemplating Partsunia carefully and having recognized him, quietly and evenly, as if he were ignoring Siamsky's announcement, declared, "He's a servant of the Jews."

"Well, you see now!"

Siamsky shook as he spoke to Partsunia, "It's useless to talk to him. This is unbelievable!"

Having risen up, and having turned his official head to the door of the cell, he raised his voice to a metallic pitch, and barked, "Strilok! Shooter!"

The Chekist, who had been standing behind the threshold of the cell, holding the key, also yelled, "Strilok!"

There reverberated like an echo from a loud voice throughout the corridor:

"Stri . . . lo . . . k . . .

Finally there was heard the swift and uniform military step and stamp of shodden heel-pieces over the wooden floor, shaking the dismal walls of the Chekist citadel. An armed guard halted with a key in his hand, bowing obeisance to Siamsky, and yelling in a disciplined and suppressed voice, "Here, Comrade Chief!"

"Take the prisoner and put him into the first 'kabinka' and watch over it until the next guard comes to make the change," Siamsky ordered.

"Yes, Comrade Chief!"

Thus yelled the servant. He swiftly ordered Brus in the same tone of voice that he exercised in answering the chief, "Come with me! Swifter!"

Brus got up from the bed. Siamsky and Partsunia stepped aside to make way for him. Then they silently looked at him, unbuttoned, and bearing blue spots that looked like ordinary dirt stains that worked into his face under the unshaven beard. Brus acted as if he expected a blow from some side. His skin and his whole being tensed against a secret threat. It was not until he got beyond the threshold of the cell that he began to feel the pleasure it gave him in telling his executioners what no other person had dared to tell them in the whole extent of the U.S.S.R. He had said it as if he were behind some invisible shield. It did not matter that they could beat him, but they could not kill suddenly. He knew full well what moral right was, even in face of the raised hand of death. He knew that such a hand of death before such a force often loses its

threat and falls down weakly. He was not seeking logic; he proceeded gropingly and intuitively. He knew instinctively how his behavior was striking the conscious executioners, making their blows less forceful. He felt that it was not they, with weapons in their hands, who were the heroes, but it was he who was the hero, for he was not afraid of their millions of deaths, hidden and visible, whether in the shadows, in the single cells, in the cellars, from revolvers, or from the fists of a beastly and merciless guard. He was not afraid of death whether in a separate prison or in the thousands of thousands of barbed-wire enclosures on the surface of all the expanses of the U.S.S.R., plunged in the darkness of the moans of all the small nations and the despair of the deluded and persecuted Ukraine!

Both of the Chekists halted and left him to stand alone. Brus spread his hands to feel his way around. He grasped in his hand a revolver that was aimed at him. He withdrew his hand. And a voice was heard to say, "You see?" Brus remained silent.

He could not see anything. Suddenly the electric lights went on. There was a large red door in front of him. It opened out into a long corridor. On the side near the door post stood a Chekist. Two Chekists thrust Brus into the corridor across the threshold. The two Chekists remained on the other side, the one holding the door:

"Halt!"

He took him by the hand. While he was holding him he let the prisoner have a look around.

To the right on the wall that was freshly plastered with white earth, there was a single door locked with a bolt but without a hasp. Opposite this door on the blind wall there was painted a huge, red spot of the same form and area as



the door. From the door to the red spot on the wall, in the form of an arch, covered with a red circle, there was a trough perhaps intended for drawing off blood or water. Over the center of this trough an electric light burned between two sheets of red tin which hung parallel with the ditch downwards, from the door to the red spot on the wall. Thus the main force of this light between the two tins, as if between the two walls of the trough, flashed chiefly on the red spot on the wall, on the red door and on the trough running downwards. Farther down the corridor beyond this lighted spot it was very dark. Ivan Brus recalled that this was the corridor along which he had walked on the day of his arrest to the office. But he had not noticed the tins within which the lights were. So Brus no longer thought that insanity would rescue him. No, he only felt that this means would have to be used before death, in the same way that a thistle uses its thorns when a cowherd twists its fragrant flower. For this was nothing else but an exposure of his psychosis, following which a person dies, but only morally.

A Chekist opened the first red door. There was a vestibule, and farther on another similar door that was open. To the right stood a narrow closet about the height of a man. The Chekist opened it and, having stood beside it, ordered, "Well, get in."

But Brus did not go in. He merely looked at the closet. Then the Chekist suddenly lunged at him and shoved him inside, slamming the door behind him. Brus, losing his balance, banged his head against the opposite wall of the closet. He had to hold on with both hands, trying to get his bearings and find out where he was. There was no room to move his feet forwards, and only a little to the sides. He bent down to find out what the obstacle was, finding a chair with its back

against the wall of the "kabinka." Brus turned around to the door and tried to sit down, but his knees had pressed against the door and his back against the wall in such a manner that his body could not get down to a sitting posture on the chair. A cool sweat covered his whole body. He strained to resume his standing stance, but his body had been so drawn into the tight space of the "kabinka" that he was not able to straighten up to the comparative freedom of his standing position. He felt the pressure of the top part of the chair against his spine. He worked his hands back to the parts of the chair that were causing him this inconvenience, took hold of them and then strained with all his might. His forehead, which had been pressing against the door, rose a bit higher. Then he swung his right foot to the right, giving more freedom to both legs.

He rose, breathing heavily. One minute passed and then another. Brus, like those people who in the dead of the night fall into a deep hole and then begin half-consciously and half-instinctively to feel around with their hands to figure out their situation, began to feel the walls of the horrible trap. Now his fingers with greater sensitivity assured him that he was locked up in a metal case. He leaned with one hand against the door and with the other against the back wall, bracing himself in an attempt to rock the cage. But to no avail. Then, holding on to the walls, he tried sitting down as far as he could go, and to put his right leg under the chair. The chair didn't move, but he felt an immovable lump with his foot under the table. He felt it from the front, and then from both sides, but not the back or top of it which he couldn't reach. He decided that at the bottom, coming up from under the floor into the "kabinka" was a very heavy bolt on which a very large nut was screwed. The unfortunate

man straightened up to the full height of the "kabinka." In his efforts he had become suppressive, not with cold but with hot sweat. He felt weak and numb. He guessed they had purposely shoved him into this "kabinka" to suffocate him.

After a moment of numbness he again raised both hands and began to feel the walls with his palms to see whether he might chance on some air hole. After a long and feverish search he came upon a hole the size of a small peasant wooden wagon wheel. It was right in front of his nose. He raised his head a bit and pressed to it with his mouth and breathed deeply with his chest. The air was fresher than in the "kabinka" in which he had become so wet and hot.

He looked through the hole and saw that the right and left doors of the vestibule were tightly shut. The corridor light shone from under the left door in a narrow streak around the threshold. And the space between them both was a blank and frightful emptiness.

An inexpressible sorrow took possession of him. For whose memory and for what transgression did he have to suffer so? Although he, even during his student days, expected the beginning of the destruction of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, but now, having found himself in the Russian bag of destruction, he could not reassure himself with the fact that, having given himself a role, he was trying by means of it to escape sudden death. For sudden death like a streak of lightning has no trace. But a gradual one is like a forest fire, which burns slowly, driving before it cattle, birds and people, causing unalleviating pain and despair on a huge expanse of territory.

Now he recalled how his father had been burying his own manuscript in a tall tin container, while the other son was looking on. They had been hiding the manuscript in a

metal container and now he himself was hidden in an iron cage. He felt himself to be like a bag of earth hanging on the wall of the "kabinka," tied by his own hands to the air-hole. The earth is pulling so that the fingers would straighten out and fall down and level off with the ground as closely and as unitedly as possible. He realized that he must hold on as firmly as possible so as not to unite with that horror down below . . .

If it had not been for Olena Antonivna he would have fled with his father from this country that was enveloped in hellish flame. As for Olena Antonivna, his father is dearer to him than her. A leaf from the black poplar falls into a pond in the fall. The waves raise it higher than the level of the water until it is blown by the wind onto some floating board and then falls back again.

But now . . . Oh, he never craved sleep as he did now! The muscles of his arms never pained him so much as at the present! His fingers never were rendered so soft. Now he would have to continually draw his hands up so that his fingers could reach and firmly grasp the edges of the hole. He rested his unconscious head on his hands. Whether all this appeared to him in a dream, who can tell? But he saw himself in the corridor, where it was full of great red spots on the walls, and doors like the spots. It was as if one of the doors was taken off the hinges and laid by that arch which had hitherto been covered with a cast-iron lid. He lay on the unhinged door at full length, supinely. He could not move either his hand or his leg. His brother Modest was holding his head with both hands, so that he could not move. The katsap who had been dancing in the cell with the refrain:

"Axe and gloves, gloves and axe"

was now at Brus' legs with an axe, leaping about to and fro over the uncovered arch, and singing another type of song:

“The sharpened axe, and the steel cover,  
and the steel cover.”

A three-pronged flame emitted from the drain. When the katsap saw the flame he immediately stood over Brus with the axe. He wielded it with all his force and chopped off Brus' right leg . . . With a second stroke he cut off his left leg. Brus was surprised that his mangled limbs did not hurt, but merely tingled. There was no bleeding from the severed parts, just as blood does not flow from the dead plucked chickens at a market place. The katsap seized him by the mangled feet, and Modest grabbed him by the head, and they thrust him into the drain with the blue flame up to the armpits. Brus began to feel a burning pain in the parts of the legs where they had been cut off. His hands lay in such a way over the drain that he was unable to fall down into it. The Russian, having seen this, took hold of the two amputated legs and thrust them into the drain in front of Brus' face, shoes upwards. Ivan's hands went numb and he began to squeeze into the hole, body, arms and all. At this moment a thick smoke began to rise up past his ears, nape and nose. Brus was overcome and fell down.

A knock of a head was heard banging heavily against the metal of the kabinka. Then everything was quiet there.

In the morning at nine o'clock the corridor door to the vestibule and to the kabinka opened. Two armed guards entered with a man in a white smock who held a brief case under his armpit. He came over to the kabinka and began looking at the hole through which Brus had been breathing. A guard stood on one side of it, while another opened it

with a key. They swiftly withdrew from the cast-iron doorposts. From the center of the kabinka two legs and two shoed feet rolled out. The body, heavily sliding down the walls, finally rested on the chair, then fell against the cast-iron of the left wall and remained there. The right leg lay over the left leg, the heel-piece of which rested on the threshold. The man in the white smock gave orders.

The guards dragged the stiff human body out by the hands and legs and set it down before the door. The man in the white smock stopped beside the dragged-out body and, looking at it, said, "Pull him out and lay him on the floor. When was he put in here?" He nodded his head towards the open door of the "kabinka."

The guard hurriedly announced, "He was put in not last night but the night before."

The dragged-out man lay on his right side with his legs doubled up under his stomach and his two hands extended to his right knee. The flaps of his overcoat lay down flat behind him, so that the front of his body was exposed. His grey under-jacket was fastened and his open shirt disclosed his neck and bearded chin. The trousers under his stomach were wet. The man in the white smock looked into the "kabinka." There was a pool there which kept running down past the cast-iron. The man in the white smock bent down over the lifeless person. He held his hand and began to listen. Then he raised his head, saying to the guards, "Turn him over on his back."

They turned him over. The man in the white smock, having set his brief case down and pulling out a syringe, stuck it into a vein on the patient's neck and squirted something into it. Having put his syringe away, he began to listen to his pulse. Finally, having bent down, he squeezed the

shoulders of the unconscious man, ordering, "One of you pull his right leg while the other presses down on his knee."

They straightened out the leg and did the same with the other one. The doctor separated both hands, placing them on either side. Then he rose, again ordering, "Take him back to the same cell from which he was brought here. His pulse is still beating. The stinging pains in his hands will disappear by this evening. The reason his legs and hands had grown stiff was because he had torn himself from the hole too soon. I thought at first that he was dead. Is the stretcher here?"

He nodded his head in the direction of the red door. The guard understood that he was to go to the neighboring cell and get them. The doctor departed, leaving the guards behind him. The one who opened the door of the kabinka pointed with his fingers at the man laying down, "Look how the snot's beginning to run out of him!"

And the other, having looked, merely said, "You have the key. Get it and we'll take him out of here."

And he departed.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

# Hunger Strike in the Prison

Into the window of the cell such colors of the evening were reflected as the sun sometimes throws on the thick rain clouds that come out of darkness. This sunset marked the dying of the day. The cell was quiet and dismal.

Ivan Brus, lying in the same place as on the first day, was now turned with his face towards the wall. The manner in which the folds of an overcoat were lying across his back was indicative of how he, having doubled up in the kabinka, had become stiffened. The shadows of the folds were wider than the folds themselves and they blended with the darkness of the beds. It seemed as if Brus had been fastened with them to the place.

There was nobody in the cell now. Even the Russian had been transferred elsewhere. The quiet pressed down all about him. Ivan felt a need for food, and he waged a struggle with this need. On the edge of the bed opposite his feet was a wooden plate with two cutlets, some fried cabbage mixed with fried cracklings, and a wooden spoon on top of this tempting preparation. Half an hour ago a Chekist had brought in this meal. Brus was lying with his back to the wall. The Chekist



set the meal right under his nose, turned around and left the cell. Having lain still for some time, Ivan looked at this temptation, swallowed some saliva, then forced himself to rise though his legs and spine pained him. He rose up and shoved the food away. Then he lay down with his face to the wall and his back to the cell. He was not afraid of the temptation to eat. No, he would not do that. He was afraid that he would have to suffer very much in trying so hard to hold to his decision. He was desperately in need of food, but there might be poison in the food. The terrible game he was playing was tied up with this possibility. Because of his desire to eat, his legs began to pain him all the more. Even the thought that he must not eat did not lessen the general painful misery that enveloped his body and soul. He knew that he would not touch the food, but he also knew that he would not be able to think of anything else but the food. Thus he would be tied down to it, and nothing else would remain in his consciousness. He would only be a small creature, smaller even than a little calf tied by a rope to a stump in the meadow that could only be released by the khazayka.

Thus, he with all his consciousness would be tied by the food to the will of the Chekists, to the will of his guards and executioners. So what? Let his appearance and his feelings be an aid to the Chekists, or to the executioners, but his will would still lead his soul to independence even if it meant death. The Chekists would get no satisfaction out of his present state of mind, for they would not know what was going on in it; all they could do would be to guess. But surmise and certainty are two enemies. No matter how lacking a person is in consciousness and instinct, he nevertheless desires that at least a part of his psychosis remains a secret to the outer world.

He became quiet, a part of the general gloom of the cell. He felt very weak. In his mind he sought those congenial souls with whom he could commune, and with whom he could die. But he did not have the strength to do even this. He was afraid to die alone, for every loneliness is similar to death even for the young. Now there was the metal container with the manuscript, and the father who had been burying it as if it were gold . . . and the figure of Olena Antonivna and the Chekist standing over her with a revolver. Why do people at a time like this, he thought, not have the opportunity to hold together in their mind's eye all the pictures dear to their hearts?

Suddenly the light which stood over the entrance door of the cell went on. The prisoner trembled and moved the position of his legs, bending his head on his breast and beginning to watch and wait. The key clicked, the bolt creaked, and the door opened. Siamsky and Partsunia entered with two Chekist officers. They stood in front of the parasha. Siamsky without blinking looked at the food which stood on the edge of the plank bed, while Partsunia watched the man. Brus rose, pulling himself up into a corner, and sat down. He had a growth of beard and his eyes were deep set, with dark arches under them, as if they were purposely painted so as to become larger. Under his beard on his cheekbones there were dark spots from dust, sweat and tears. His hair, since it was not combed, lay all dishevelled. His unbuttoned overcoat disclosed an underjacket and trousers fastened around his waist on all buttons. But his right trouser end from the knee down to the shoe, and from the boot top of which a foot was seen in a white sock, loomed red with rust like a piece of tin. His stretched-out legs were not bent at the knees. Brus knew he must look like a pitiful figure.

Partsunia, whether on purpose or not, or out of genuine feeling, made a wry face, asking, "Why do you draw away? Don't you recognize me?"

Brus answered dignifiedly although a bit reproachfully, "I don't want you to tug at my leg."

"When did I tug at you?"

"Yesterday."

"And are you still ailing?"

There was no answer from the plank bed. Partsunia swiftly and meaningfully cast his gaze on Siamsky who was surprised at Brus' stony indifference. He answered Partsunia with a meaningful glance of his own and began to listen to the conversation between the two. As if he were convinced of his own truth, Partsunia now became more self-assured: "I am not pleased that your head is so full of the events of the last few days. It is very necessary that you remember what we do with you. For without that you will not have the sense to be afraid of your own skin. We are not playing games with you here. The Communists create a state out of every separate individual, and they destroy every obstacle that emanates from the smallest person so as to make each advance of their state easier. Thus I ask you to recall that after I had tugged your leg you were led out into the corridor. And they led you out of it into the kabinka. Do you remember?"

Brus, who had been watching him with immovable eyes in such a manner as to suggest that he understood his executioners very well, especially him, expressed sorrow, "You are doing me an injustice when you think that something happened to me. No . . . I remember everything. I still have a lot of sense left to discover my guilt in your behavior. I am not guilty of anything before the state, for I've not lost my mind yet."

“Why do you not eat if you are sensible? . . . If you are guiltless? . . . You won’t get away with it. I know very well that you have become very frightened over your greater guilt rather than the one I arrested you for. So now you’re wriggling because you’re afraid of the just law for the deed which you hid. Is it not so? Why don’t you eat?”

“I don’t want the Jews to poison me. That is all.”

Partsunia, as if someone had stuck a dagger in his back, turned to Siamsky, “Listen to what the snaky carcass blabbers! If I were in your place I’d use only one kind of language on him, the language of the last word, the last argument, the one used by the unconquerable Cheka. I wouldn’t allow an intelligent person . . . What kind of an intelligent person? A slovenly kurkul with cracked fingers, which stink of the manure of his deeds, should not be allowed to go at such a pace!”

It appeared as if Siamsky did not hear Partsunia’s anger. All the time he was watching Brus impressedly, making believe that he did not know what conclusion to come to, or to take the usual action, which arose out of the divisions: either an enemy or not, either to liquidate him or to let him live. Thus he asked him mildly, as if he were castigating the severity of his colleague, “Now really, why don’t you eat? The food is fresh and appetizing. I think that you are a sick and very intelligent man, and so consider all your rudeness a result of your ailment. You need to be rescued for there is a dearth of intelligent workers in the villages. You could become a good teacher. Eat. I want to see you get well and so we’ll supply you with good food every day.”

Just as Siamsky hitherto ignored Partsunia, so now Brus regarded only Partsunia and not Siamsky. But Partsunia did not take his eyes off Brus. When the head of the G.P.U.

stopped talking, Brus quietly and mysteriously beckoned Partsunia to him with the finger of his right hand. Partsunia was upset. He yelled, "And what do you want now? What kind of a trick are you trying to play with your eyes? . . . Hypnotics?"

"Come here. I want to tell you something . . ."

Brus quietly and confidentially invited Partsunia over to the bed. His words would have echoed with a false note if it had not been for his wild look. Although the conversation concerned only intelligence and normality, nevertheless, following the words of the prisoner in the cell, an air of horror prevailed which did not touch reality at all. If there were any relation it was only where the human heart shudders at the tangible but not comprehensible danger of death. The words of Brus virtually thundered forth on the ears of the two Chekists, who stood before the parasha. When Partsunia stared goggle-eyed, following the invitation of Brus, the prisoner again spoke up, "It's not necessary now . . . Don't come . . . Don't be afraid . . . I'll never tell you. For it's evident you're a Jewish servant. Now if I called a Jew . . ."

Brus indicated Siamsky with his eyes, "He'd approach me at once. I know that if he were not here, you wouldn't be afraid to approach me. I wanted to speak so that he would not hear . . . But it's not necessary any more . . . The same fate waits both of us. They'll poison me here in this cell as if I were a rat, and then they'll do the same to you, their servant, but not in the cell. I wanted to whisper this into your ear, but now let him hear it too."

Even the air was electrified. It was evident from the way the features of the Chekists changed, and from the fact that they did not interrupt Brus' tirade. But even as he spoke Brus kept licking his lips after every sentence. His mouth

was dry. He tried hard to draw out some saliva to appease his thirst. Siamsky, noticing this, spoke again, "No matter who I am, I'm not your enemy. I'm only doing my duty in trying to fix a just punishment on those who are guilty before the worker-peasant government. Your greatest enemy is you yourself. You say that someone wants to poison you, and yet you do not want to eat in a place where you are fortified against any criminal acts or intentions to commit criminal acts. I guarantee that this food is fresh and wonderful. Look at it."

He picked up a plate with his hand, holding up a cutlet with a spoon over the bed, saying, "Who would refuse such food like this? Only a maniac who looks into a freshly dug hole . . . And look at this cabbage. Fine, appetizing and mixed with cracklings . . . Eat, for you'll need health when you're freed . . . And not the gaping jaws of death cooled by the earth."

Brus, having lifted up his left leg, bent it and then lay down on his right elbow, licking his dry lips meanwhile. His features were seized with convulsion, as if he had swallowed some saliva. Siamsky quickly set the plate down on the bed, turned to the Chekist, ordering excitedly, "Run out quickly and bring him some water. He wants water."

Some water was soon brought in. The Chekist climbed up on the bed with a mess dish in which soldiers usually carry their food. He approached Brus and extended the mess dish to him, saying, "Drink."

But Brus, having gazed at the attendant jailer, said, "Give it to the chief. Let him drink it."

He lowered his supported head down on the bed. But Siamsky reacted to Brus' proposal in restrained fashion:

“I am sorry,” he said, “that you have behaved in such a manner that I’ve been unable to decide your fate here in the Cheka. I’m sorry that I’ll have to send you to the Lukianka where it is already full of people . . . some from the villages, and they’re still being brought in. There’s no more room for the new prisoners, so that they’ll have to be accommodated in the corridor or even outside in the yard. They are the kind that will have to be sent to the corrective camps.

“During the last three days there were two insurrections in the Lukianka. The rebels were mowed down with machine guns in the corridor . . . And many innocent ‘intelligents’ fell victims who would have been useful workers in the village schools. It’s a pity. But on the other hand many vacant places were made for others which were immediately occupied by those coming in who were not yet killed . . . You are sick, but you will be sent into that hot crowded mass. There will be no place to lie, nor to sit down, and you can expect another insurrection at any moment, followed by a shooting, and all for nothing . . . It’s a pity!”

He took a deep breath, turned to the two Chekists, ordering, “Take the prisoner away immediately and drive him in the ‘black crow’ to the Lukianka!”

Without looking at anyone, without any parting words, he left the cell with a military step, followed by Partsunia. The ordinary Chekists moved, too, from their places. One of them stood by the bed, while the other climbed up on it towards Brus, ordering, “Stand up! We’re going to another lodging!”

Brus grabbed hold of the bed and tried to rise. He didn’t succeed on account of the pain in his legs. The Chekist, having noticed Brus’ efforts, could not resist saying, “It’s too bad, brother. I can see that you’re not able to walk. I don’t know

how you'll get along over there. Monstrous things are happening at the Lukianka. It's so crowded that there's not even enough room for a chicken to peck. Two hundred souls were shot as a result of a rebellion. The places of the dead people were immediately taken by those outside in the yard. The walls are splattered with blood which hasn't been washed off yet, for one can't get through the teeming mass of people with brushes and pails of water. The people keep pressing and pressing. It looks like there will be a third rebellion to put down so as to make room for those prisoners outside in the yard. Come along and help me raise this man up."

He turned to his comrade. The latter leaped with businesslike agility onto the bed and helped lift Brus up. They began to lead him across the beds onto the aisle. The talkative Chekist again asked, "What district are you from, fellow-countryman?"

Brus kept quiet. But the inquisitive Chekist did not lose his temper and kept insisting, "What's wrong with you that you can't walk?"

Brus remained quiet. He was so disturbed with the Chekist's information that he didn't notice that they had already left the cell into the corridor and were out in the G.P.U. yard where the "black crow" motor was quietly droning. The Chekists opened the door of the prison automobile and a light went on brightening up the G.P.U. yard. Inside the automobile there was a bench on each side. Brus was thrust into the car by his escorts. He sat down. The Chekists sat down on either side of him. The door was shut between them and there was utter darkness inside. The voice of one of them said, "You're riding in this car alone, but there will be twenty souls riding back in it. This night we'll be driving that many from Lukianka to our G.P.U."



Brus kept quiet. The automobile idled for awhile and then moved on. For ten minutes the "black crow" rumbled along over the potholes. The prisoner and his guards held on to their benches. Then the car blew a horn and halted. A door was opened and Brus was led out of the car. What he saw was beyond all human expectation. From the square near the Fedor church a huge, elongated crowd of people was advancing. Accompanying the crowd on both sides were two nervous red army soldiers with rifles. They were shouting to one another and whistling. They were leading peasants in coats, under-jackets, straw hats, red army caps and sharp-pointed caps. They all bore sacks. On both sides of the sidewalks of this procession guards stood in line. If any straggler wandered onto them they would shout, "Go around! . . . Go around!"

The straggler did not go around. He returned back from fright. The buildings facing the crowded streets filled with prisoners were conspicuous by their deathly dark and quiet windows. Two lanterns shone by the prison gates, lighting up two groups of red army soldiers near one side of the entrance to the yard. Their chief stood at their head, yelling at the foremost prisoners, "Faster, faster! . . . Stop lagging!"

The people ran into the yard so fast that some of them fell down. Following soon after the shout of the chief, came another voice from the center of the yard, and another from the army group near the gates, "Look!"

"Y . . . es!"

The arrested people kept running and running towards the opposite side of the yard. Chekists with lanterns went ahead, lighting up the way. There was an open gate in that end of the yard. Here before it was a train of empty wagons. Each wagon was open at the back as it faced the prison gate.

Set up against each of those openings was a wooden raised platform for entry into the wagon. And on each side of the platform stood a Chekist who drove the people into the wagons:

“Faster! Step lively! . . . Stop lagging!”

The people, bending down low, crawled up these sloping platforms. Now near all the foremost wagons, nearer to the steam engine, hammers and axes roared, nailing in the prisoners in the wagons. A patrol of three army soldiers were beating with their gunstocks to test the strength of the enclosures. When each train pulled out, another soon took its place.

From behind the Fedor church people gradually began to appear, slowly joining the ranks into Dorohozytsky Street, bending their steps towards the Moscovite encirclement to the prison. They were burdened with sacks that looked like heavy, dark clouds out of which might fall either a shower or hail. This procession of people was slowed down about a half a kilometer before the prison by four Chekists. One of them, holding before him a list, began to read off the names of the prisoners, while another one behind him held a flashlight. A third one at the end was holding two large dogs with leashes, one in the right hand, and another in the left hand. The dogs were straining at those leashes, barking and yelping at the prisoners with an uneasy and wild excitement. When Ivan Brus heard it all, he was shaken to such depths as evoke a mystical feeling of predestination. He had heard such barking and yelping once in a menagerie when the guards had been carrying some fresh meat for the wolves, hyenas, and foxes. The animals, standing up on their hind feet and holding onto the wires, went mad with anticipation. He saw that not one single person viewed this canine excitement without notice. They watched it with the same attitude that rose up

in Brus. For if this beast had not been drilled by a live person to whom it was handed over for the purpose of tearing a human being apart, it would not have exhibited its wildness nor tried to break away from its leash.

The people kept moving on. They did not respond to the Chekist's calling out of names. Perhaps one or two out of a hundred of the crowd replied. Then the Chekist, without the dogs, would call out the responder and lead him into the prison building through a side door over which hung a lantern.

Yes. The time had come for the Moscovite to round up all of them for death so that he could live himself. He drove all of them into one place but by different paths. He did it in such a way so as not to let the foreign countries hear the most painful signs of the people that he was destroying.

Finally the Chekists took Brus under the armpits and led him into the prison. A guard at the door only asked, "From the first corps?"

And the answer was, "From the chief."

"Come in."

They led the prisoner into the corridor, then up to the second floor. A Chekist rapped twice on the closed door with his fist. The door opened up and was closed again. Inside it seemed as if the door and the walls had become softened with a thick steam. The heat lay heavily on his chest and shoulders with a great, slimy and suffocating weight. Brus breathed in the acid, thick odor of boots, foot-cloths, unwashed beards, and the filthiness of exhausted human flesh. Along the ceiling up to the other wall, which shone through the iron bars, hung a dense mist. Under it along the walls streams of liquid flowed down. Here before the bars where Brus was, in the middle of the ceiling, shone an electrical light through steamed glass. Under him on a platform like the one used to

drive the people over into the wagons lay a Chekist on his belly on the plank bed in a shirt, jacket, trousers and boots. He was looking through the bars into the great caged hall teeming with people. Before him lay a machine gun. On his left were four more machine guns in wooden cases. They were guarded by another Chekist with a machine gun in his hands. He was half-naked. In the vestibule of the caged hall there was a suppressed rumbling. The dismal look of the vestibule lent him an ominous and wild look. Those milling masses of prisoners roused the soul to that state of trembling which a miner experiences in a coal pit in which there are cave-ins and he can no longer hear the beat of the pick-axes of his fellow workers, and the underground cosmic quiet begins to whine in his ears and his blood.

The eye takes all these things in as if they were a great, smutty and smoky blacksmith shop which the khazain abandoned and into which the enemy drove all these people for future torturing.

They led them into this caged hall, into the perspiring crowd. The hall was twenty meters long. In the middle of the crowd was a narrow passageway straight to the triangle on the wall painted with mazout, its angle pointing upwards. Inside this triangle was a large red circle, shining with moisture, about the size of those round lids with which the villagers cover their vats of sauerkraut or borsch. In the center of this shining circle burned an electric bulb now obscured with human vapor. Around the light near the wall nested a ball of the color of that spot on the bottom of the ocean to which a diver dives to light his lantern. The center of the circle was hanging about the height of a medium-sized man.

Brus understood that this circle was a target for the machine gun in the event of a rebellion of the prisoners so as to smash with bullets the light in the red circle and to shoot

into the crowd, which in the sudden darkness would go mad to the point of helplessness of blind, small animals.

The passage was guarded by men naked to their belts. They stood on both sides in such positions as policemen take when, having joined hands, they do not allow a dense crowd to intrude on a passageway made for some hero. The prisoners stood on the wet cement floor, leaning their shoulders against the bodies of their comrades who were just as wet and naked as themselves. The hair, beards and moustaches of everybody, including those who were holding themselves back, were sticking to their heads from which streams of sweat were rolling down their faces onto their eyes, their eyelashes, eyebrows and noses, dripping down in drops. Streams of sweat shone on their backs and stomachs, running down and moistening their trousers.

It was a frightening sight. The great pile of tattered garments against the prison walls, rising up above the teeming mass of people, lent dismal despair to the scene. And so did those unconscious people who sat near the tatters, as if to die there. They had originally been standing, holding back the pressure of the crowd, then falling down and being carried by their comrades towards the walls near the moist tatters. In that crowd no single individual could move about freely, moving only when the crowd moved. So it seemed to Brus that the fallen ones had been lifted over the heads of the marching wet bodies and placed down near the tatters.

There was not less than twenty-five hundred people in the hall, and there were only two windows near the ceiling in the right wall of the hall. They were no larger than the ones usually seen in the stables of the lords. There were no panes. Brus figured that two hundred prisoners were killed in this very hall, not for rebellion but in the effort to keep a space open for a passageway.

He felt wet all over, his eyes welling up with sweat, with dirty liquid beads falling off the ceiling onto his head. They were dripping down on the marchers too. From time to time the reflection off those drops on the ceiling flashed on and then died out in the hot mist of the hall, which was lit up with a dismal subdued light.

Finally they came to a thick door at the end of the hall in the left wall. The Chekist rapped twice just as he did on the vestibule door. A small window opened up and an eye and a part of a nose looked out through the peephole. Then it closed shut and the door opened. Brus was led in. It was merely a small room which served as a passageway into another cell. The Chekists led Brus cautiously into that cell. Then they departed without any further interest in the prisoner.

Brus staggered and, trying to restore his balance, pressed his hand against the right wall. He was dizzy, feeling a chill run through him. After a moment he felt better, turning his face towards the cell but still holding on to the wall. The cell was small with beds in it, running from the left to the right wall for about two meters. In this same wall there was a deep niche in which loomed a yellow door. Before this niche there was a bare wooden couch. In the center of the cell before the plank beds was a huge tub of water. The prisoners gathered around it with mugs, small casks and a small copper cauldron. One of them had a long-handled iron ladle in it. There were no more than ten prisoners there. They all had been bending over the vat, dipping in their water, and spitting it out onto the floor and pouring it over themselves. Thus a pool of water lay all around the vat. The stomachs of the prisoners were all wet. They were drinking water incessantly out of their containers but, having taken a mouthful or so, they'd empty their containers back into the vat. They didn't

speaking and they didn't yell. Perhaps they didn't have the strength to do so, for all their bodies were bloated from water. Their shirts were black from lack of washing. Their clothes hung in tatters from their backs and stomachs, from too much scratching. Their trousers too hung loose on them in the front and in the back with dirty beads hanging downwards. And every torn tatter and every dirty bead was wet, sticking to the unbathed flesh that was covered with dirt. It was only in the front that the tatters did not stick to their flesh, for the water had been running down them like poison from a snake's head. These frightful people were barefooted and wore beards. All that could be heard in the cell was the knocking of container against container and the splash of water as if from the wheels of a small steamboat or water-mill. The sultriness of the large hall was equalled by the temperature of the air here.

Finally the fellow who had been drinking out of the long ladle, approached Brus, holding the container in his right hand, saying, "I am the reeve of this cell. I'll find a plank bed for you, but you'll have to tell me beforehand whether you'll drink water."

"Not now, but I'll drink some water later on."

Surprised and alarmed over such a question, Brus made his reply. The "reeve" again persisted. His enunciation was very heavy and sluggish, as if the words he uttered and their real context, which were to serve as a life demand and for life itself, were as indifferent as the bones of those people who lived and died a million years ago. He was squat and his face was dirty. Or else his beard was naturally blue even to the point of blackness? Brus did not know, for the reeve's back was turned to the electric light. All that was clear was that his face was very swollen, and his face shone with a halting, dead vagueness. It seemed as if the pupils of his eyes had dilated.

When they were seen, it seemed that they had come to that state in order to become as white as the white of an eye. Under the eyes of this person hung two bags full of fluid. Under his black beard they loomed white like on a drowned rat, or the drenched tongue of a cat. The "reeve" wore no shirt but only an old, old jacket. It had such an odor about it as comes from an animal skin that had been dried, then soaked and hung up in a damp place. It was evident that if he had tried to fasten his jacket, his buttons would not have reached their holes, so bloated had his stomach become. On his breast bone where his ribs were joined a tuft of black hair jutted out, giving the impression that it was there only because it couldn't fall off. The reeve's trousers were without a right end for that trouser leg reached only to his knee. His legs bared his bloated condition to the world, showing the black dirt embedded between his toes. He said, "You'll have to drink right away; and if you won't I'll put you on that wooden couch. You won't belong to our company. We hold a hunger strike against food, but we drink water. All of us expected a death sentence. We went hungry before the sentence and they brought us here. We have to keep up this hunger strike for a month. The G.P.U. will free anyone without trial or examination that holds out that long. At first we hungered like all of them. But it was only when we were brought here that we started to hunger like you see us do now. I'll now give you a ladle full of water."

He departed. This conversation impressed Brus with an inhuman fright. There was something left unsaid and insanely false in this talk. All these people, the water in the vat, the cell with its wet floor were all more frightening than the hall through which he had come here. There with all its terrible features could be seen the dramatic fate of driven people. But here what were these people to think about? What were



they to hope for? What kind of a hunger strike? And what a peculiar term of hunger? And why do they believe in its salvation? So that they mess about the water, and bloat, and await the thirtieth day?

The "reeve," limping, brought the water. But Brus just licked his lips and refused to drink:

"I don't want to drink now. Show me my place."

The "reeve" emptied his ladle and indifferently indicated the wooden couch near the niche.

"That's your place over there. Go and lie down."

Then he returned to his vat. Brus expected to be offered aid, for he was very weak at the knees. But now he decided not to return to these people. So he held on to the wall and started moving towards the wooden couch. After five minutes of such effort, or was it half an hour, he finally got there by himself. He lay down on the wooden couch, turning away from the cell so as to avoid looking at the horror that was splashing in the water in the center of the cell. And then wonder of wonders! He had hardly lain down when the light in the cell went out and the people began to murmur and to crawl over the beds. The splashing subsided and, as if a spell were cast over it, peace prevailed in the cell. But Brus could not fall asleep or think. He lay there numbly. Even against his will scenes of terrible reality came to his mind, dropping beyond his consciousness so as to allow new scenes to appear. He no longer heard anything as sleep entered through some crevices and open spaces in the cell and lay heavily down on the persecuted people.

Suddenly he shuddered. Something banged the door of the niche. He pricked up his ears. The door opened swiftly and light flashed through. Brus wanted to lift himself up to

see what the matter was. A tall man in a white smock extended his hands towards him and held him back, saying, "Don't move."

He saw to it that the man on the bed made no move while he waited for another man in a white smock, who came down the steps to the bed. He was shorter and stouter than the first man. Standing on the last step before Brus' bed, and noticing that he was not asleep, he quickly pulled out from under the left side of his smock a large hat pin with a yellow, faceted, round head. Women used to pin their winter caps or hats on their heads with these hat pins. But this one was too large for that purpose. It was more than half a foot long, and was sharper. This man, having pressed this modern weapon to his stomach, squeezing its head with his hands, got off the last step and bent down to Brus' chest so that he could see the weapon. Then he asked severely, "Why didn't you want to drink water?"

When Brus saw and heard this, he decided that his final hour had at last come. His answer to the man in the white smock was to grasp the flap and turn it aside, baring his breast, for his jacket and shirt were already unbuttoned. It was as if he were co-operating with the man in the white smock with the hatpin for the thrust into his readied breast and heart. The man with the hatpin recognized this at once. He gave a prompt order to the tall man, "Take him and come into the niche."

Then he quickly hid his hatpin. The tall man helped Brus to rise and began leading him down the steps to the place where the reflection of light was coming from. The smaller man followed, closing the door on the abandoned wooden couch. There was a sad peace in the cell for some time. Then

one of the "water-goblins" turned over on the other side and, groaning heavily, hushed up. It was evident that he was a witness of the event which spoke to him more eloquently than it did to the man who was led into the niche.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### A Dismal Future

They took Brus downstairs. Opening a door, they entered a room. It contained no chairs, no table and no windows. It was lighted by a small bulb in the ceiling. The room was in semi-darkness, but there was enough light to see the door into the other room. On each doorpost hung a gas mask. The smaller man, having left Brus, donned one of them and placed one over the head of the taller man, who did not let go of the prisoner with his right hand. Then the smaller man took hold of the door handle and said, "Go ahead!"

He opened the door and quickly closed it again after Brus and the taller man had entered the room. He grasped Brus under the armpit and slowed down their pace. They all stood in the center of another small room, which was lit up with a blue light that seemed to come from nowhere. Brus wore no mask. He began to feel dizzy and had to be held up by his two companions, who momentarily stood in one place without moving. Then in each corner of the ceiling a ventilator was opened. The same operation took place in the corners of the walls down below. Out of each corner a very strong breeze of

air blew into the room, rustling the smocks on the leaders and dishevelling the hair on Brus' head.

It was not until all the ventilators had gone on that they took Brus out of the blue room into another room. He was unconscious, and his feet dragged along the floor like those of a dead man. On the left side of the new room stood a bed, and on the right side there was a bath, and alongside of that some thin slabs recently fitted into the wall, and also a cleft for the exit of a tin pipe. Between the bed and the bath was a yellow door. A young and pretty woman in a doctor's white smock was setting things in order near the kitchen slabs. She was a small, buxom brunette. About a meter away from the head of the bed sat Partsunia and Siamsky. The two men, having dragged Brus to the bed, with two open apertures at its head, laid him down in such a manner that he was holding on to his cheekbones while his nose and mouth were free to breathe. Then they placed each of Brus' hands on a long round cane, one end of which was nailed to the back leg of the bed and the other end to the front leg. Each hand was made to grasp the cane but not to squeeze it. When Brus lay on the bed, the others removed their gas masks and hung them up on a steel hook on the door through which they had come in. Finally they placed an electric machine on the table near Brus' head and, having adjusted two thin plates to the nape of his head nearer his brain, one on one side and another on the other side, placing on each an arch that was attached to the machine with a wire. The smaller leader plugged the wire in the wall and the machine immediately began to roar with a hideous noise similar to the sound emitted from the "black crow" that is readied for departure. Siamsky watched all the manipulations quietly. Even the woman from time to time from her kitchen would cast an interested glance at the unconscious Brus. Finally he moved his two feet. The woman ran

over and felt his pulse. After awhile she ordered, "That will do!"

The smaller man in the doctor's smock pulled the wire out of the plug, took the plates off his head and threw it all higgeldy-piggedly under the bed. Then with the help of the tall man she turned the sick man over on his back and he was stripped bare. The woman went to the bath and began to draw some water. She heated it. They brought Brus over to the bath and left him there. The young woman scrubbed him with soap for about fifteen minutes. The two men helped her. They filled the tub twice and emptied it twice. Then they pulled Brus out of the tub and carried him over to the bed. It was made with two sheets and a quilt. The machine for his head was no longer in evidence for the pillow had covered it. They dried Brus with two towels but they did not put his shirts on. He was made to lay there without them. He didn't stir.

All the men now concentrated their attention on the woman. Without undressing she got under the quilt alongside of the naked Brus. Then she cuddled up to him closely, kissing him and whispering, "Ivan, my dear, perhaps you want to eat very badly? I'll bring some food to you here in the bed."

She repeated this several times, accompanying her words with kisses and pats on Brus' back with her right hand. Then she opened the eyelids on his left eye. But Brus immediately closed them. It was evident that he did this with a half-conscious effort. The woman began to whisper into his ear in such a way that her breath made the hair over Brus' ear rustle, "My poor Ivan. You're sick. We'll lift you up a bit, and I'll bring you some cutlets."

As if she were parting with him, she kissed him and got up. She brought over two cutlets with fried potatoes and

onions on a hot frying pan. The two men in the doctor smocks, having sat Brus up in his bed with the quilt on his back, began to hold him up in a sitting position. The woman, having raised the frying pan up to Brus' nose, halted, holding the food up in the air. The cutlets were still sizzling, emitting a pleasant smell. Everybody present was looking at Brus' closed eyes. Suddenly his eye-lashes began to tremble and to open up. His right eye was completely open, and his left eye was only half open. But both of them looked at the woman before him holding the frying pan with the food. Nobody even moved. It was quiet. From the immovable eyes heavy tears began to fall singly on his bearded cheeks. It seemed as if this were strained quiet crying. Along with this from the right corner of his mouth saliva was running down his beard. And Brus spoke, "Ea . . . ea . . . eat . . ."

But even his voice did not seem like his own. It was like a human voice but it sounded as if it had come out of some abyss that lay deep under his muscles and bones in mysterious solitude. No sooner had the woman heard him than she handed over the cutlets in the frying pan to the tall man, while she took Brus' right hand between both palms, asking mildly, "Where is the gold money which you brought from your home? I'll have to buy cutlets for you for you've nothing to eat."

She repeated this several times without letting his hand drop out of her palms. Brus quietly looked out at the woman with his one and a half eyes. Unnoticeably the tears ceased falling and the saliva congealed in the corner of his mouth. Only the eyelids trembled around the half-closed eye and the wrinkle near both eyes. Now the left eye opened up as wide as the right one. The woman quickly sat down on the bed and, holding Brus' hand the same way she did before, and looking into his eyes the same way, she spoke again with the assumed

gentleness and the sweet insidiousness of a snake, "My dear Ivan, you're very sick. And you can't leave this place anyway. I'll bring you anything you'll need. We haven't the means for life. Tell me where you hid the gold that you brought from your father. I'll buy you something to eat. But you should not remain quiet. Speak up! It pains me to see you so quiet."

She patted his hand ever so gently. But Brus, having fixed his gaze on her with immovable eyes which neither blinked nor had an inkling of consciousness in them, looked at her with an attitude of a scarecrow with glass eyes. Finally he muttered something and tears again started welling out from under the whites of his eyes, flowing over his eyelashes into his beard and losing themselves there. And he clearly uttered, "Ea . . . ea . . . eat."

Partsunia now wanted to say something, but Siamsky jabbed him with his right hand. He checked himself and hushed up. But the woman did not betray by any look or movement of her head her intention to wheedle out any interest from Brus. In this her strained state was like that of the two Chekists who sat behind Brus and a bit to the side of those two in the white smocks who were holding Brus up. The woman was patting and patting Brus' hand, and his tears flowed and flowed. And then she suddenly asked as if she had taken a jump, "What was in that container that you and your father were burying?"

"Pro . . . duc . . . tion."

"Whose?"

After this last question his tears ceased flowing. He spoke in such a dull voice as proceeds from the unconsciousness of a person who is suddenly awakened and suddenly falls to sleep again, "I . . . sleep."



His trembling left eye contracted again. The right eye, having lost its former brightness, remained open in its full size. The woman let go of Brus' hand and looked over at Siamsky. The latter, as if he saw some meaning in it, rose quickly and, having turned to Partsunia, spoke indifferently but without hiding his suppressed indignation, "Let's go. The matter is quite clear. He's gone insane. There's no use bothering with him any more. We'll hand him over to the psychiatrists."

Partsunia rose also, answering Siamsky in a phrase that spoke of his bafflement and not of his real mental state of mind, "If he had a wife I'd hand him over to her such as he is for her to amuse herself with. But now let him go to the Kiriliwka."

"Well, do as you please. It does not concern me."

Siamsky concluded without looking at anyone. Partsunia and he entered the prison by the same route they had taken to bring Brus in. As they passed through the room with green light they did not don any gas masks. When the door was closed behind them the woman moved off the bed. The two men in the white smocks put Brus on the bed and covered him with a quilt. Then they took the frying pan with the cutlets to the kitchen and quietly sat down to eat. The woman, having straightened out before them, fixed her hair and then asked, "Is anyone still there to check up?"

The tall man answered: "No. And I don't think there'll be any this week. They themselves are dying without help."

She turned her head away from him and rested her gaze on Brus awhile. Then she ordered: "Give this fellow an injection. He can't be sent to the psychiatric ward looking like that."

“And didn’t you hear what the dark fellow said about him?” Shaking the crumbs off his chest, the man spoke again.

The woman explained: “He’s not our chief. You heard our chief speak but not about that. Goodbye.” And she departed through the door that loomed between the kitchen tiles and the bed.

In the conversation that Stalin had with Ivanovych there was no mentioning of torturing Brus. It wasn’t for this that Partsunia or Siamsky had their conference with him. It was Ivanovych who let Partsunia into the act. Ivanovych was then Stalin’s personal secretary. That is, Stalin was the kind of dictator who gave directions, and the listeners were the ones who were to execute them according to their individual initiative, their own enlightened or unenlightened interests in Moscow. Stalin was the window through which the small nations looked out on the other world. Those who surrounded Stalin were the walls that supported the bloody window. But those were live walls. They could separate at any moment so that the window would topple down on the spot of ground on which it had stood for a time.

Moscow acted like a beast and not like people who understand the attachment of other people to their Fatherland. Stalin wanted blood just like those around him wanted blood. Stalin indicated the places where he was to satisfy his thirst and he did not go into details about achieving his desire. It was enough for him to smell the vapor rising from spilled human blood in the places that interested him. Whether rivers of blood ran there like he wanted them to, or seas of it that he did not foresee, did not matter; it merely gave him a greater relish of achievement. Stalin and Moscow found their beastly element and their beastly fulfillment in the one and in the other. Thus one does not have to wonder at the fate which

met the Ukraine and Ivan Brus. Whatever was missed by Stalin was rounded out by Ivanovych, his secretary. Whatever Stalin's secretary could not do, Stalin himself would fell to the ground so that it would never rise again.

Whenever a massacre and mass murder of people takes place there rises up into the air moans, shrieks, stench and red vapor from spilled human blood. The murderers then do not think or see clearly, for their stomachs are weighted down with ill-digested food and their eyes well up with heated blood. When in this murderous chaos they crowded each other and, without knowing it, in the heat of their bloodthirstiness attacked each other. The graveyards of executed people also echoed with the roars of the executioners who were mutually killing themselves off. The ground was marked off with their graves. It was not until the bloodthirstiness had subsided that the murderers began to take stock of themselves. But they started to call meetings again to select new centers for murder, thievery, deceit and rapine.

Three months after the incident with Brus at Lukianka, Partsunia was called to Moscow and Siamsky remained as the chief of the Kiev Cheka. After three months in the Kiriliwka hospital Brus began to stroll around, but he held himself aloof, hardly ever speaking to anyone.

He was in the prison investigating division. The barred windows were set in iron frames. The door of the ward was always locked, while an orderly sat inside with the key. Each patient had a clean bed with a sheet and a quilt, and he was bathed once a week. That was the only exceptionally good thing about it all, for they had all come from Lukianka or the Cheka. They were all very much afraid of the final decision of the doctors: Would they be transferred to the civilian sick wards, or to the prison? The first alternative

would be rescue, but the second would be a virtual death sentence or a transfer to the northern slave camps.

Though Brus did not speak to anyone about this, he could read it in the attitude of the sick people who were brought in and taken out to the prison by the Chekists. But the knowledge of this evil did not invoke any desire to ingratiate himself because of this dismal future. He was disorganized in his plans to meet Chekist reality. He understood quite well how his hunger strike had facilitated the Chekist experiments on him. The incident of the hatpin and the gas masks in the blue room, after which he was unable to recall how he had come to the hospital, spoke eloquently of this.

But he was indifferent now. There was no hope for the Ukraine, and there was no hope for him. As regards the Ukraine, only the women now remained to become slaves in the various projects of the Communist state, and the bedroom victims of the Chekists, and the unwilling tools for strengthening their domination of their Fatherland. He could not reconcile the latter conclusion with his own mistakes, to the account of which stood his hunger strike. He was too weak morally. His despair was too great, and his soul was too hardened. Well, what of it if he did want to see someone from beyond the prison walls? Did not the sentenced ones whom he saw near Lukianka and inside it have the same desire?

Now his thoughts dwelt on the matter of death. He was indifferent; for every step he took now was along the path put in his way by Moscow to accelerate his meeting with destruction. So he lived on, suppressing the desire of his heart, waiting for the end. But he did not notice that his exhaustion was directing his thoughts. They were whispering to him that his withdrawal from the prison division into an ordinary psychiatric ward meant freedom to rest and freedom

from prison; for he was neither a hero nor a lunatic who did not want to die the kind of death prescribed by Moscow.

If there had been hitherto anything similar to that kind of insanity, then he now had it. He was sick; for if he had not been, he would have concluded that Moscow had driven all of our life into the secret paths of his soul and that it was moving about there freely. But thoughts in Ukrainian heads swarm only along twisted paths, where there is no direct contact with enemy or friend . . . where thoughts of spiritual heroism and spiritual atrophy are obliterated.

But be that as it may, the chief of the G.P.U., Boris Moisyovich Siamsky, thanks to his personal plans regarding Brus, checkmated his reflections and his weariness. In three month's time he visited the psychiatric doctor at Kiriliwka twice to inquire about Brus' state of health. One cannot assume that the head of the G.P.U. was influenced by those choices that he had discussed with Partsunia. One cannot believe that those inquiries were the result of any humanitarian proclivities of the comrade Chekist.

This all took place in the dying days of October.

In the morning two orderlies set in order the ward for the sentenced ones. This was unusual, for this chore had always been done by one orderly hitherto. Today there was a change even near the ward door. Instead of one there were now two orderlies there: one inside, and one out in the corridor. Brus noticed the change immediately and was impressed.

Crawling out from under his quilt, he looked the ward over and waited. It had sixteen beds which stood in pairs from the first wall to the last one. For the most part the sick patients were sitting up on their made beds. Only the very sick ones were lying down. The ward had two windows on the east side. Before the first window near which lay Brus' pil-

low, shone the outlines of a branch of a tree, for the panes were thick and opaque. They let the light in and the outlines of other things.

It was quiet and peaceful in the ward, perhaps because the sun that came through the thick window panes had shone on the opposite wall. Between the first window and the lit-up wall stood a rosy pillar of dust in the air, intersected in the middle by the reflected outline of the branch outside the window. It seemed as if it were peaceful, too, beyond the window. The fallen leaves of the poplar and chestnut trees laying near the roots of their parent trunks, reflected from their lifeless red lustre the sadness of autumn serenity.

Brus' heart ached, but his mood was like the reflection of a fallen leaf lit up by the fall morning. He was very anxious that the present reality would not disappear before all things were arranged in the morning light. But no . . . the door opened, and the doctor's assistant and the G.P.U. lady doctor came in, accompanied by that orderly who watched the door from the inside of the ward. His place was now taken by the man in the corridor. The group of medics went over to examine the sick at the opposite end from Brus. The lady doctor was a thin brunette. Brus heard earlier that she was a Jewess. But the orderlies and the patients respected her.

And now the medics approached Brus. The lady doctor stood by the bed with her back to the wall, the remainder standing around the bed. She noticed the pillar of golden dust in the middle of the room and addressed the assistant: "What kind of order do you keep here that pillars of dust shine in this ward? Why didn't you air and clean it?"

Although this had been a routine question on many former sunny mornings, and he had always given the same answer, nevertheless he was touched on this occasion and

answered with a grimace: "Why, you know, Comrade doctor, that we air the ward only in the evening. Even then only from the corridor because there is no pilot or hinged window that can be opened to let the air in. We pull the window out only in the spring when we whitewash the ward."

In this he was upheld by the orderly: "Comrade doctor, you can see that the ward is very clean, just like in a church, and the air is very fresh too. Naturally after we sweep up there is a column of dust rising up from the floor to the windows in the dome."

But the lady doctor's reaction took on the usual routine character to the statements of the assistant and the orderly. She sat down by Brus, sighing reproachfully, laying her left hand on his head, asking, "Well, how do you feel, Comrade Brus?"

"Good."

"And is anyone persecuting you?"

"It does not seem so."

"And how is the matter of the Jews?"

"Comrade doctor, let's not discuss that."

"Well then, it's all right?"

Brus hushed up. Then the lady doctor, running her palm over his knee, began to coddle him mildly: "You're an intelligent person. We all know that; and we know that you have no criminal or bandit tendencies. Thus you have many well-wishers. Even the chief of the Kiev Cheka Division is your well-wisher. He'll come to visit us today. I've told him everything about you. He is sorry about you. He told me that you'll have to be discharged and set up somewhere as a teacher in a village or in the city, wherever you wish. You'll have to speak to him about that. He'll come and we'll call you to him, that is, if he wants to come to this ward. Are you willing to speak with him?"

Brus remained quiet, as if he were listening to a brick dropping down a bottomless pit. Or perhaps it was not a brick but his fate falling down the abyss, wanting to meet the black pool below and plunge pell-mell into it. The doctor, noticing Brus' pre-occupation, again said: "Don't lose the opportunity to save yourself. Be a man and speak to him."

Brus answered, "I've become very sick and can't speak."

"Then you can write whatever you want to on paper and read it to him. But please let me know what you want to write."

Brus remained silent. The doctor, too, remained silent for awhile. Then she took her hand away from his knee and begged, "Write it for him. It'll save you from slow spiritual extinction. Will you write it?"

Brus, turning his head towards the window, droned, "I'll write it."

"Now tell me, what will you write?"

"I'm going to ask him to give me permission to teach."

"And nothing more?"

"Nothing more."

"Oh, very well. Here's some paper and a pencil. I trust you, and I'll not examine your writing."

She gave Brus some paper and, having risen, said, "He telephoned to me. In half an hour he'll be here. The surgeon's assistant will come for you and both of you will come to my office. The chief and I will be waiting for you. Here's to a good meeting."

They all departed with the exception of the orderly who resumed his place by the door, and the orderly who resumed his place in the corridor. Brus, having lain a little after the departure of the doctor, drew the quilt over his shoulders, put on his slippers, took the paper and pencil which the doctor had left on his pillow, and sat down by the table. His



heart beat slowly but very strongly. He could feel the blood beating against his forehead and his face. The rhythm of the beat reminded him of the starting sound of a steam engine: Hoo . . . hoo . . . hoo . . . And Brus thought, "What station is my heart driving me to?"

Then, without doing any more thinking, he quickly began to write. In the process of writing he stopped twice to take a breath. Having written it, he read it, folded it into four parts and stuffed it under his armpit. He pushed the pencil away. Meanwhile, the assistant entered the ward, worriedly approaching Brus.

"Well, have you written anything?" he asked.

Brus pointed at the note under his armpit, holding on to it with his hand. The assistant smiled and asked, "May I read it?"

But Brus answered sullenly, "I didn't write this for you."

The assistant then ordered him, decisively, "Come, they're already waiting for you."

He quickly pulled off a dressing gown from one of the patients and put it on Brus, then asked, "Where is the doctor's pencil?"

Then, seeing it and without waiting for a reply, he thrust it into his pocket. Brus slowly moved towards the door. The assistant seized him under the armpit, helping to steady him.

In the office of the prison doctor there were three people behind the table and facing the door. In the center sat Siamsky. On his left was the prison doctor. To his right was a buxom brunette with attentive grey eyes. It was the same woman who had held up the cutlets for Brus to smell. Since he didn't recognize her he merely bowed to her. At that moment she reminded him of his Olenka. This disturbed him to the extent that he became visibly pale. With trembling

hands, he pulled out his note from under his armpit and handed it over to the prison doctor. A sudden hatred was noted in his voice. "Here it is, the writing!" The latter thrust it aside and said, "When you will have read it we'll take your paper; but now we're interested in your reading it. Sit down."

The assistant pushed a chair towards him. Brus sat down. To the right of him there was a closed window through which could be seen an acacia with its yellowing leaves. There were clusters of fallen leaves in every bend of the branches and the ruts of the cracked bark.

Behind Brus stood the assistant. Brus slowly unfolded his paper. But he dallied at the wrong end for some reason, evoking the uneasy movement and meaningful glances of his listeners behind the table.

Brus' hair, beard and whiskers had all been evenly cut with a pair of clippers. The stubble on his head gave his features a rotund appearance. His eyes were very deep set, so deep that his brows seemed to border on his pale blue forehead. His forehead, brows, and eyes simply accentuated the thinness of Brus' figure, which was covered with drawers, a white shirt, and a patched, reddish smock. The strange woman studied Brus carefully. Her left hand lay on the table, her outstretched finger trembling. What was she thinking about? What was she figuring?

Finally Brus unfolded the paper, holding it in both hands. He involuntarily looked over at Siamsky. The latter, as if an electric current had run through him, shuddered and then exhorted, "Read, read! We're interested."

Brus' voice, filled to the brim with the kind of feeling that with exhausted and lonely people is on the verge of weeping, spoke out:

“Petition to the Chief of the Kiev G.P.U.

“And how long are you, you Jewish soul of a dog, going to keep me here? Why, I would . . .”

Siamsky could hold himself no longer. He banged down on the table with his right hand, shrieking, “Enough!”

Having turned to the prison doctor, he concluded, “Well, thank you! Believe me, I would not have come to listen to the production of either a healthy or sick author if it had not been for the fact that you were such a master in producing these surprises!”

He rose in a fury and, without looking at anyone, moved away from the table. But in going around the table to get to the door of his office, he came upon Brus who was obstructing his way. And the assistant, having been greatly upset by the reading and this new incident and, wanting to clear the path for the chief of the Cheka, grabbed hold of Brus’ chair and pulled it out from under the sick man. Brus fell down, his legs stretching out under the table where the doctors were sitting. Siamsky laboriously and indignantly stepped over the sick man on the floor; and then, with measured military steps, he swiftly left the terribly disturbed gathering. When the squeak of the door in the corridor had subsided, the prison doctor ordered the assistant in a trembling voice: “Take him into the ward and give him a hypodermic. And when the effect of it wears off, lock him up in the agitated ward.”

The assistant helped Brus up and led him slowly back. But when the effect of the injection passed away he was not locked up in the agitated ward. With a new sanitary card he was transferred to the civilian division of the Kiriliwka Psychiatric Clinic. By feigning insanity Brus had reached his objective—to save his life. He now could look forward to

spend the remainder of his life in this civilian psychiatric hospital.

\* \* \* \*

Strange that one such as I, with my broken life, could ever find peace. But I have found a measure of it in this land of great tolerance and even greater kindness.

Here I must learn to forget, to lift my heart, so bound down with grief, above my burning memories. My good father, Ovsy Brus, is the warp woven strong into the pattern of my life, and my beloved Olenka is the woof, the filling to define and soften that pattern.

The Red Assassins pursue me in my worries, but I pray that the Ukraine will soon be rid of them—that the wheat will grow tall and the flowers bloom in the ravines, and that it may, like this great America in which I am a refugee, be dedicated to freedom.

As for Communism, since it is based on hate, I know it cannot survive. There is, in all life, only one supreme power, and that is Love. *Love conquers all.*



