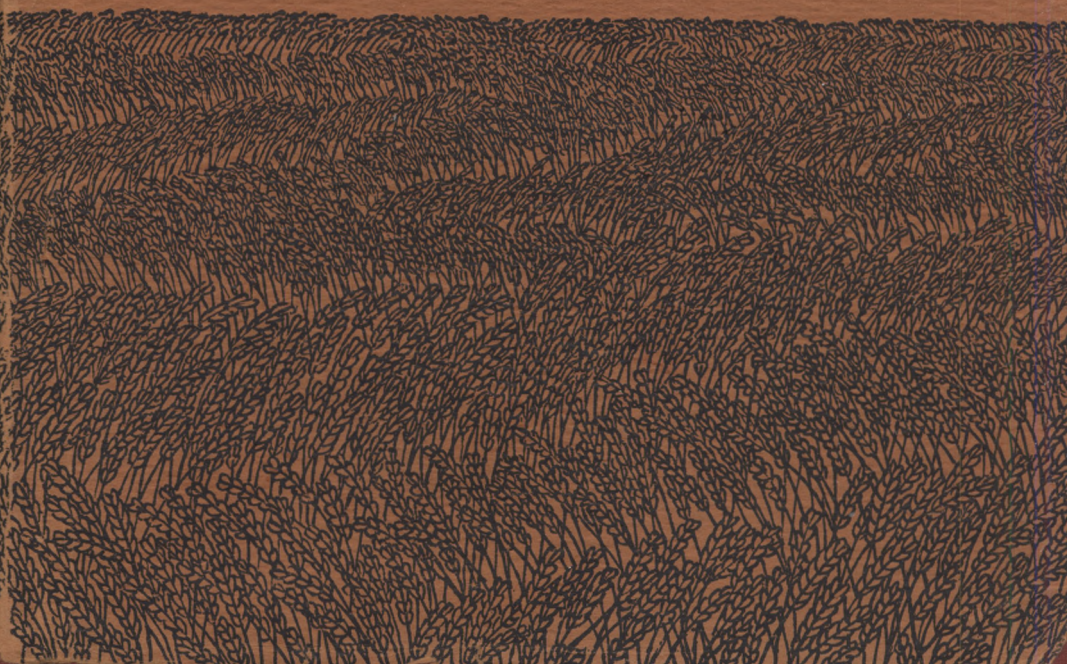


THEIR LAND

*An Anthology of Ukrainian
Short Stories*





THEIR LAND

This Anthology of Ukrainian Short Stories is the first book of its kind to appear in English. It is a representative collection of the various types of Ukrainian short stories which reveal the richness and beauty of Ukrainian literature. They are remarkably diverse, inasmuch as they run the entire gamut of the genre and type.

Here are stories by Marko Vovchok based on life in the fifties and sixties of the last century; stories of the Ukrainian populist school depicting the life of the people in their misery, hardship and oppression; and stories by Ivan Franko, one of Ukraine's leading writers, stressing the vital need of popular education and cultural progress. Here are the austere and miniature stories of Vasyl Stefanyk, perhaps the greatest master of the art, and stories of the Ukrainian national revolution and how the Ukrainians struggled in defense of their newly-won liberty; stories illustrating the lot of Ukrainians under the Soviet regime, both before and after World War II; and finally stories written by Ukrainian writers who have made their homes in the New World.

The stories selected were largely those that have appeared in English during the past thirty years, mainly in the English language supplement of the Ukrainian Daily

Cover by J. Hnizdovsky

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**AN ANTHOLOGY OF
UKRAINIAN SHORT STORIES**

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE

LUKE MYSHUHA, LL. D.,

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE UKRAINIAN DAILY "SVOBODA"
A SCHOLAR AND PATRIOT WHOSE GENEROSITY MADE
POSSIBLE THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK.

ROMAN SLOBODIAN
Executive and Trustee of the
Luke Myshuha Estate

ANTHONY DRAGAN
Managing Editor

THEIR LAND

AN ANTHOLOGY OF UKRAINIAN
SHORT STORIES

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FOREWORD

By Clarence A. Manning

Associate Professor of Slavic Languages (Ret.)
Columbia University

This volume of Ukrainian short stories is a welcome addition to the literature on Ukraine in English. The stories cover a wide range of styles and subjects and they will give the reader the opportunity to acquaint himself with still another facet of Ukrainian literature and of the genius of the Ukrainian people.

The majority of the previous translations have been of Ukrainian poetry and especially of the works of Taras Shevchenko, one of the three or four great poets of all Slavdom in the early half of the nineteenth century. This is rightly so, for it was Shevchenko who by his poetic and artistic genius placed the revival of Ukrainian literature on a secure basis and ensured that it would not be tempted to content itself with a minor and provincial role as compared to its neighbors. His work was continued in this line by Ivan Franko and Lesia Ukrainka and later by large numbers of talented writers.

Yet, at the same time the short story came to play a larger and larger role in Ukrainian literature, whether in Eastern or Western Ukraine. At first, as we see from this collection, these largely belonged to the ethnographical school and depicted the life of the downtrodden peasant classes, but as time passed and the Ukrainian revival progressed, the authors treated more complicated and psychological themes, until in the period after World War I the stories emerge as highly original treatments of Ukrainian themes. These have become still more complex and varied as Ukrainian writers, thrown into the emigration by the fortunes of World War II and the restrictions on their work imposed by Moscow in Soviet Ukraine, have made themselves familiar with the life of Western Europe and America and the latest movements of thought in the free world.

Only a very few of the latest stories have been specially translated for this work. Most of the others have been printed by the Ukrainian Weekly during its thirty years of existence and by English editions of other Ukrainian publications in the United States and Canada. This

may explain some omissions, but it also serves to show the variety of appeals made by the literature. We can only regret the omission of at least one story by Khvylovy, in a sense the greatest of the short story writers after World War I, but his works have recently appeared in English in Canada and the editors did not feel like duplicating this.

The volume is properly dedicated to Dr. Luke Myshuha, long time editor of Svoboda and an ardent believer in Ukrainian literature and its translation into English. At his death he established a fund for fostering this work and it is only fitting that the first volume produced by it should give this broad view of Ukrainian short stories translated in the United States and Canada.

It should have a wide appeal in the English-speaking world, and we can only wish the editors and the publishers every success and the readers a real enjoyment and understanding of the Ukrainian genius.

UKRAINIAN SHORT STORIES

By Luke Luciw

It has been said that if one wants to understand a poet, one must visit his country. But the converse is equally true. The country of a poet can be discerned from his productions. Thus anyone taking the trouble to acquaint himself with the works of Ukrainian literature would by the same token understand all the better the Ukrainians and Ukraine from the most ancient down to the most recent times.

In the famous epic poem of the 12th century, *Tale of Ihor's Armament*, one would see that the current inhabitants of the territory, now known as Ukraine, had to set up a defense against the Polovtsians. In later periods the Ukrainian people had to check the Tatars and the Turks, who threatened to engulf Christian Europe. In the West, Ukrainian territories were endangered by threats of Polish enslavement. It is in the superhuman efforts of the Ukrainians to retain these territories for the Ukrainian people, in their epic creativity, in their famous *dumas*, and their semi-historico-educational, semi-literary productions, in the so-called Chronicles of the Kozak era of the Ukrainian people, that their real desires stand out in bold relief.

When, however, these superhuman efforts of the Ukrainian people ended in failure, when, during the 18th century, Ukraine had lost its own government and passed under Muscovite domination, the first Ukrainian writers of the new era of Ukrainian literature in their productions took up the defense of the then only single fundamental stratum of the Ukrainian people, — the peasants, who were living in serfdom.

Ivan Kotliarevsky, 1798, and Gregory Kvitka-Osnovianenko, 1833, popularized with affection in their works the peasants and townsmen, who had not yet become full-fledged heroes in other literatures. Gregory Kvitka-Osnovianenko was the first in world history to picture the Ukrainian peasants in his productions as noble people, who had the right to a worthy human life. The same course was followed by other Ukrainian writers before the time of Taras Shevchenko. And thus it was that Taras Shevchenko, the greatest Ukrainian poet and the spiritual leader of his people till the present time, whose anniversary the Ukrainian people have celebrated 100 years after his death in 1861, followed the tradition of his forerun-

ners and said that on "the guard" of his enslaved nation he had set his poetical "word."

A similar defensive role was played by the literature of other captive nations, such as the Serbs, the Czechs, and the Poles. For a short period of time following World War I, the Ukrainian people acquired independence (1918-1921) to enjoy their own way of life; but after those few years of freedom they became more and more subjugated to the will of Moscow, against which not only the Ukrainian insurgents but Ukrainian literature as well put up a vigorous battle.

The contents of this collection of stories are purely incidental. The present list of stories was selected from those that had been printed from time to time in various periodicals in the United States and Canada. Some translations were made especially for this book. But the incidence of selective content had this good quality that it prevented any tendentiousness of selection, since these translations were done by people without any previous knowledge of, or understanding among, one another.

The first piece in this book is by the writer Marko Vovchok, who began writing while Taras Shevchenko was still alive. In her stories she wrote with such deep affection and profound understanding of the unfortunate lot of the peasant-serfs that it was largely through her influence that serfdom in Russia, and thus in Ukraine which was then dominated by Russia, was abolished in 1861. It was at the same time, just 100 years ago, that a civil war was being waged in the United States over the question of slavery, and this too incidentally, ended in the emancipation of the negro slaves.

The story *Lymerivna* does not deal with a serf theme; and neither does the tragic solution of this tale disclose any inherent pessimism on the part of the author. Her shackled heroes by reason of their own life and the chivalry of their souls are sufficient answer to that system of serfdom which then weighed down so heavily upon the Ukrainian people. One of the stories of M. Vovchok tells how a young Ukrainian maiden did her bit aiding the Ukrainian army in its struggle with the Russians. It gained such great popularity in France that it became one of the compulsory subjects in the school curriculum of that country.

Marko Vovchok enjoyed a great deal of popularity in other literatures. Her stories were translated by the well known Russian writer Turgenev. She was imitated by many subsequent Ukrainian writers.

When the Russian occupational government saw that the Ukrainian movement was becoming more dynamic, it resorted to terror and placed a ban on it in separate "ukases" in 1863 and 1876, and after the second the printing of books in the Ukrainian language was not permitted. Then some Ukrainian writers smuggled their productions into those parts of Ukraine that were occupied by Austria.

In Lviv, the capital city of the Ukrainian lands under Austria, the first man to achieve fame as a writer was Ivan Franko. He made use of different genres and wrote many short stories. The tales in this collection, however, do not give even a general inkling of his creativity as an author, who through the medium of his stories fought valiantly against social injustice and national enslavement, wherever it might show itself. Ivan Franko had a profound knowledge of human nature, for he was a keen observer of life such as he had experienced in the village, the town, or in the center of the oil industry — Boryslav.

The creativity of Ivan Franko and Michael Kotsiubynsky is evidence of the fact that Ukrainian literature did not deviate from those trends which were then the vogue in Western European literatures. Realism was followed by various other modern trends. With M. Kotsiubynsky it was impressionism, which did not prevent the Ukrainian author, even in its most refined form, from remembering that his task is the eternal struggle against the enslavement of man, as can be deduced from the story *Laughter*. In his novels the author touches on the pogroms of the Russian Tsarist police perpetrated upon the Jewish and Ukrainian population in order to subdue the enemies of the Tsarist regime.

In this book Lesia Ukrainka and Olha Kobylianska are each credited with one story apiece. The former authoress is better known as a poetess and writer of dramatic works in which, notwithstanding that the themes are taken from the life of foreign peoples, she has nevertheless successfully depicted the enslaved life and struggle for liberty of her own nation. Her fairy drama *The Forest Song* in theme and plot is similar to Shakespeare's play, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, although the heroes of the Ukrainian poetess's play are the farmstead and the surrounding forest which serve as the background for the unfolding of the argument that a person's material satisfaction does not give him complete happiness because of an inner impulse toward something higher: namely, beauty, poetry, and loftier ideals.

The authoress Olha Kobylianska can justly be called a poetess of beauty, bred as she was on German and Scandinavian literature. Her heroines are not satisfied with the dreary humdrum of everyday

ordinary life, but in the remote recesses of their country they yearn for the full life, hating the filth and falsity in which it was their lot to live. Her characters for the most part are women engaged in a struggle to emancipate themselves from the restraints put on them by the force of current circumstances — a struggle which is now clearly evident in all cultural peoples.

Ivan Franko, who also was a prominent literary critic, wrote at the turning point between the 19th and 20th centuries, at a time when young Ukrainian authors, nursed on the latest patterns of European literature and with an aversion to broad pictures of external life, began to turn their attention to psychology, with the main aim of their creative art being the awakening in the soul of the reader of some definite attitude by methods such as are suggested by modern studies of psychology and so-called psycho-physics.

These thoughts of Ivan Franko relate to the already mentioned M. Kotsiubynsky, O. Kobylanska and Lesia Ukrainka as well as to the following authors about to be discussed briefly: Basil Stefanyk, Marko Cheremshyna and Les Martovych.

The greatest of these three was Basil Stefanyk, now recognized as the greatest artist of the creative word since Taras Shevchenko. All his work — short stories — can be collected in one book, but it earned for him a firm place in Ukrainian literature and brought him fame beyond the boundaries of his own native land.

The short stories of Stefanyk, sometimes condensed down to one page, evoke in the reader something of the same kind of spiritual cleansing, "catharsis," as that produced by Greek tragedies. In their power of incensement they remind the reader of the profound plays of the great American dramatist, Eugene O'Neill, with their high dramatic quality.

The ideal of the Ukrainian peasants in the works of Stefanyk is to own their own piece of land; and when the war of liberation broke out, it was their aim, too, to achieve independence and a sovereign Ukrainian state of their own, independent of their neighbors. The villager Maksym sent two of his sons to the front where they both died. His cup of grief was filled to overflowing with the death, too, of his wife. He becomes blasphemous; but when his ire subsides a bit he starts praying to the Virgin Mary who should be able to understand and excuse him since she "lost but one son while he lost two!"

But this epic struggle of the Ukrainian peasants for land and for a sovereign Ukraine is not at all to the liking of the present Communist enslavers of Ukraine, who are unable to destroy Stefanyk's works in spite of their efforts to do so, as he is by now too firmly established as a writer. They are compelled to print his stories, not,

however, without warping his ideas to suit their own ideology and presenting him as an author whose forte was picturing poor peasants. He was thus described by Zhuk in *Vasyl Stefanyk: Literary Portrait*, Kiev, 1960.

The Ukrainian village, too, was the subject of Marko Cheremshyna's creative works. The heroes of this writer believe in the justice of their cause and that their kind of truth would ultimately prevail although meantime on the front the national enemy of Ukraine had won the upper hand. The language of Cheremshyna is replete with baroque embellishments, for his knowledge of the language was so extensive that he could virtually shower it with profusion. It is here that he differs so much from Stefanyk, whose every word fits exactly into place without superfluity and is noted for its laconic statement. But in ideas Cheremshyna does not differ at all from his bosom friend Stefanyk.

Les Martovych regarded his heroes through the prism of a humorist-satirist even when he touched on the most tragic events of their lives. But he loved them even though he did not close his eyes to their defects and faults. Thus in a spirit of generosity he poked fun at them, sometimes ironically, especially at the so-called intelligentsia who were so helplessly impractical and so indirect in their actions as compared with the common peasants.

Bohdan Lepkyi in his story *Ready to Go* pictures the directness and sense of responsibility of an old Ukrainian villager, who even in the face of death performs his duty in the manner ordinarily expected of a villager. Lepkyi was a great esthete in his own personal life, and he was an esthete in literature as well. He was a symbolist, a realist, and an impressionist, but he did not deviate from his own native soil. He was a patriot, an irredentist Ukrainian who portrayed the greatness of Hetman Ivan Mazepa in a cycle of novels.

Volodymyr Vynnychenko widened what was until then the central trend of Ukrainian literature by the addition to it of worker-revolutionaries and the revolutionary intelligentsia. He entered the literary field as an original personality. He did not idealize his heroes but rather drew attention to their weak points with fearless naturalistic strokes, sometimes touching on delicate matters of morals among his people who were being tainted with disharmony. He bowed down before "beauty and power." He took part in the 1905 Ukrainian Revolution, and during the second revolution he became an active figure in the creation of the Ukrainian National Government.

Modest Levytsky, a doctor by profession, was a keen observer of the life of the common people with an excellent command of the

Ukrainian language. He wrote affectionately about the grey masses of his people, interlacing his stories with humor from a thorough understanding of the human frailties of his fellow-countrymen, lavishing restraint on the idiosyncrasies of his heroes, most of whom were Jews and Ukrainians who had been living in harmony with each other.

The first revolution in Tsarist Russia in 1905 brought in its wake some concessions to Ukrainian literature, since the ban on the printing of books in the Ukrainian language was lifted, although in Tsarist Russia, until the second revolution, there was still censorship of newspapers and books.

Following the second revolution, Ukrainians enjoyed a few years of complete freedom, after two hundred years of enslavement. There were no bans on the Ukrainian language, although the army operations did not favor quiet cultural creativity. The USSR ultimately subdued the Ukrainian national revolution, and the Ukrainian National State, 1918-1921, collapsed; but the Russian Communist occupational authorities were unable to proceed forthwith to the final destruction of Ukrainianism. It was at this time that there occurred a new spontaneous resurrection of the Ukrainian literature. Dozens of talented writers appeared on the scene with printed editions of new works. But this felicitous period did not last long, for the Russian occupational forces began encroaching on literary freedom and took to task the writers of even those books that hitherto they had allowed to be printed.

As to what was taking place in Ukraine at that time the readers of this article can get some faint idea by perusing the biographical sketches preceding each selection: namely, which authors were destroyed, or exiled to Siberia, or silenced by fear of punishment.

Among the authors thus destroyed was Gregory Kosynka, whose heroes still kept up the struggle for truth under a new government, the same kind of truth for which Stefanyk's villagers gave up their lives in the *Sons*. The villagers in the stories of Kosynka continued the struggle for freedom under the new Communist regime, for which they died, just as the author died, fighting the battle for liberty.

Arkadii Liubchenko was at first quite taken up with the Communist slogans about liberty, in the sincere belief that the Communists were genuinely earnest about their professions of faith. But he soon found out that the present authorities were the same enslavers of peoples and nations as were the Tsarists. Satirical stories on Communist reality began pouring from his pen. Liubchenko was put on the carpet by the official critics and was thus silenced

as a writer of short stories. Following World War II, he emigrated to the West, where he eventually died.

Yurii Klen was able to extricate himself from behind the Iron Curtain even before outbreak of World War II, and fled to the West where he was able, unhampered, to pursue his talents as a writer. He is the author of the poem *The Accursed Years*, in which in highly poetical language he depicts the great famine in Ukraine during the early 1930's. He was a talented translator of poems into the Ukrainian language, especially from the German language. His short stories are saturated with idealism. As the reader will find out for himself, these stories are tinged with a mixture of reality and fantasy.

Yurii Lypa, a doctor by profession, took upon himself the task of eulogizing the liberation war of the Ukrainian people, 1918-1921. His heroes remind one of the ancient Ukrainian Zaporozhian knights, who fought for the liberation of Ukraine from under the bondage of the Turks or the Russians. Yurii Lypa's heroes are proud of being Ukrainians, valuing the liberty of their people even above their own personal liberty. It is of note that Lypa followed the same precepts in his own life, for he died a hero's death in 1944, in the ranks of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which he had joined following the invasion of Ukrainian territory by the Russian Communists.

Political conditions in the USSR are not conducive to free and unfettered development of Ukrainian literature.

All the publishing houses are in the hands of the government, and so all books are government editions. But the course of government policy as regards the relation of Moscow to Ukraine changes from time to time. It is then that the "omniscient" eyes and the "omni-auditory" ears ferret out this or that writer for deviating toward Ukrainian "bourgeois" nationalism. It is then that such and such a writer falls from grace and favor, or else is shipped off to Siberia, or finally, arrested, sentenced, and then shot. The "disloyal" books are destroyed or removed from public libraries, with others to take their place there.

Although the Communists speak loudly before the world about national liberty, yet they carry on a policy of Russification in Ukraine. This system of punishment for books already published creates greater difficulties for Ukrainian writers than during the Tsarist regime, for then they never suffered any punishment for books that were published and which passed the censor. Ukrainian writers are no longer able to have any of their books published anywhere beyond the boundaries, as was the case hitherto, because no one can send anything outside of the country. Boris Pasternak somehow succeeded

in sending his manuscript outside of the USSR, but the world now knows what happened to him for that manoeuvre.

Such pressure on Ukrainian writers hampers the development of Ukrainian literature. One must then admire the persistence and tenacity of the Ukrainian people who, even under such obstacles, are still able to create any kind of literature and keep on struggling even against hope and bitter reality, to turn even the slightest concessions to the good of Ukraine.

It must be understood that the Ukrainian writers in Soviet Ukraine can not openly oppose the Russian Communist regime, as much as they dislike it. But this regime, with the co-operation of a few supporting it, makes public announcements and appeals in which "bourgeois" nationalism is condemned. The official critics frequently uncover in separate literary works some "nationalistic" or "bourgeois" deviation. There is hardly a single one of the older writers who has not had some difficulties because of this.

Nevertheless, even in such conditions of political and police control, Ukrainian writers have shown the great powers of vitality that exist in themselves and in the Ukrainian people as they struggle on toward a fuller life. Even under conditions of modern slavery the Ukrainian villager has shown an unexpected zest for life, such as is depicted in some of these stories.

We have omitted mention of some of the authors included in this anthology. We believe that their works speak for themselves. Furthermore the notes in the biographies attached to this book will clarify their image for the reader. Incidentally, most of them live now in the Free West where ample opportunity is offered to them to develop their literary abilities according to their own inherent nature and intuition. Prominent among such writers are Anatole Kurdydyk, Oleh Lysiak, Ivan Kernytsky, Ivan Smolii, and others, who belong to that numerous group of Ukrainian writers residing in different countries of the Free World.

Marko Vovchok

LYMERIVNA

Translated by Helen Kinash

Marko Vovchok, the literary pen name of Maria Vilinska, was born of a Ukrainian-Polish landowning family in 1834, Orel province, Russia. She was educated at a girls' boarding-school in Kharkiv, Ukraine. Following her marriage to the ethnographer Opanas Markovych she transferred her residence to Ukraine where she and her husband settled down at various intervals in Kiev, Chernihiv, and Nemyriv. Enthused by the Ukrainian manners, customs and mode of life, she quickly absorbed their ways and learned their language, and finally with the sympathetic encouragement of her husband, turned out a collection of short stories which were published in 1857 under the title, *Folk Stories*. This collection of stories, dealing with the life of the people, permeated with romantic sentimentalism but presenting very realistically the onerous lot of Ukrainian women, especially the peasant women, soon brought her recognition and fame not only in Ukrainian literature but in Russian as well, when the stories were translated into that language under the capable editorship of I. Turgenev. In the period between 1859 and 1867 she spent her time in many countries of Western Europe, mostly in France where she gained fame through the translation of her story *Marusia*. Though now residing outside her own country, she continued writing in the Ukrainian language, and published her second volume of *Folk Stories* in 1862. After the death of her husband Opanas Markovych in 1867, she returned to St. Petersburg where she worked for some Russian journals which published her stories in Russian because of the ban on the Ukrainian language. These stories included *Living Soul*, 1868, *Notes of a Participant*, 1869, and others. Later on in the 70's she married a second time to Lobach-Zhuchenko, with whom she lived for the most part in the Caucasus, revisiting Ukraine from time to time, and meanwhile continuing her research into Ukrainian folklore and language. She continued her literary activity until she died in 1907 at Nalchik, Caucasia.

LYMERIVNA

He gazed into the water, absorbed in his own gloomy thoughts. The deep, clear water of the rivulet reflected a pale, wan, emaciated face with dark, deep-set, weary eyes, compressed into a tight, rigid line. On the opposite shore lay the village with its gardens, orchards, streets, houses, wells, and a tall church. Situated so near the water, the village was bright and fresh with flowers, plants and trees, which grew richer, bloomed and ripened sooner than elsewhere. In no other village were roses so fragrant, red poppies and carnations so fascinating, lilies, peonies, sweet-peas and black-eyed-susans so abundant. Fruit trees produced rich crops; the linden trees afforded cool refreshing shade in the hottest summer days; birch trees looked curly and pleasant; poplars grew tall and straight. The streets were covered with soft green grass. When two neighbors failed to visit each other for a few days, the path between their respective homes disappeared under a velvety cover of grass. Even the straw roofs of some houses bore grass and flowers.

But it was not the village that drew the attention of the young, wealthy, handsome Kozak Shkandybenko. He came from a nearby village, where he owned a fine house, fertile fields, green forests and vast steppes. But in spite of his wealth, the Kozak was not happy. His heart was crushed by pain and suffering. There in the beautiful village across the brook lived a girl, the very thought of whom obsessed him. Ever since the day when, carefree and happy, Shkandybenko came to visit his friend and saw the girl at the well, she never for a moment left his thoughts. And now, when he asked his friend about her, his heart beat faster.

"She is a poor girl, a widow's daughter. Her name is Lymerivna. She is not of our class," answered the friend.

The days went on, they talked of many things, but there was just one sweet, prepossessing thought in the mind of the young Kozak—to see Lymerivna once more. Shkandybenko went home.

But his life seemed to be entirely changed. He had lost interest in everything. His mind was preoccupied by one image, the thought of which made his heart ache. Where was his usual pride and dignity? One day the wealthy Kozak stood trembling under a willow tree, waiting for the girl to come for water; and when she came, he asked her diffidently:

"Will you marry me, Lymerivna?"

"No," answered the girl. "I will not marry you, Kozak."

This first failure deeply hurt and embittered the Kozak. He went far away from the place where Lymerivna lived and spent his days carousing with beautiful women, but the image of the poor, quiet girl remained with him forever. He always seemed to hear her calm, clear voice, so dear to him; but he never could forget the answer that so cruelly lashed and bruised his heart.

The Kozak waited a second time for the girl, full of desire and apprehension. Again he whispered to her:

"Will you marry me? I cannot live without you."

And once again the girl refused him. The young Kozak now lost all zest for life. But his desire for Lymerivna was too strong to resist. The once strong and proud man went to the girl a third time, begging and pleading with her slavishly, and offering to lay his life, riches and power at the feet. And again the girl replied:

"I will not marry you, Kozak."

It would have been less cruel, had she strangled him with her white hands. How can a person live without sleep, peace of mind, zest for life, and with a heart full of anguish and pain? For to him she had become life and happiness, death and misfortune.

Shkandybenko attended a wedding in the village, hoping to meet Lymerivna there. She was present, sitting among other girls, singing with them in her clear high voice. Her fresh lips smiled, her cheeks were aglow, her eyes as bright as stars. The young, rich and handsome Kozak stood among the merry wedding guests like a humble orphan, unable to remove his eyes from the beautiful girl.

Lymerivna's mother took it all in. The old woman was possessed by a mad passion for money. Her only desire was to get rich, and she thought of gold day and night. Her face was as yellow as the gold she favored, and her lips were as white as silver. Her house and income never satisfied her and life was fading away without riches. When she noticed the longing look the young Kozak had fixed on her daughter, she at once divined its meaning. She managed to get near the Kozak and engaged him in a pleasant conversation. The shrewd woman asked no direct questions, but in a few words drew out from him all that had passed between him and her daughter. She flattered and complimented him, and the Kozak felt a current of new hopes flowing through his heart.

In accordance with the custom of the people, he decided to send a formal proposal to Lymerivna in spite of her repeated refusals. Lymerivna did not say a single word to him, but he left the wedding, nevertheless, full of hopes, plans and impatience.

"Since when has Shkandybenko loved you?" asked the mother on the way home from the wedding.

"Since we first met," answered Lymerivna.

"He is going to propose to you," said the old woman.

"I don't want to marry him, mother," replied the girl.

"You don't want to?" laughed the mother, as she repeated it again, "You don't want to?"

It seemed to her that this was just a whim of her daughter.

"He's been in love with you for some time now," said the old lady a little later.

"I won't marry him, mother," was Lymerivna's reply.

"You must be out of your mind," laughed the mother.

"I can't marry him, mother," said the girl. "I don't love him."

"Don't be ridiculous," shouted the mother. "If you refuse to marry him, I'll bind you hand and foot and send you to him. I'll call down the wrath of God upon your head! Do you know how rich he is? He owns forests and plains and fields!"

"I want nothing of his riches."

"I remember his father," her mother continued. "He grew rich suddenly, as if he had found a treasure. I remember how he once had brought home a handful of gold coins... What wonderful beads his mother had! And all this was inherited by his son."

The old woman was restless in her sleep that night, disturbed by the tempting vision. Lymerivna sat at the window all through the quiet moonlit night.

Until the day he sent men with his formal proposal to Lymerivna, there was no rest for the Kozak Shkandybenko. The men returned with gloomy faces and unsteady eyes. They told the Kozak that his proposal was accepted, but it seemed that the mother was forcing the girl into this marriage.

"Take care, Shkandybenko," said the oldest of the men, "Lymerivna does not seem willing to marry you; do not bring misfortune upon your home."

"It is true," added the younger man; "the girl did not utter a single word. She just stood there, pale and silent, and ghost-like."

The young Kozak did not answer. He stood on the threshold of his door, downcast and dejected, like a person forever pursued by misfortune. "I shall have her after all," he said at last, a strange smile taking shape on his lips, and a light shining in his eyes.

Shkandybenko began preparation for his marriage. He bought an estate fit for a nobleman, spent money lavishly on decorating the new home, and brought valuable gifts for his future bride. Lymerivna's mother accepted the gifts with pleasure, admired them, flattered the Kozak, entertained and showered attention upon him. As for the girl

"I do not love you, Kozak, let me alone!" were the only words he heard from her. Neither her mother's pleas and threats, nor his kindness, humility, love and pain—nothing, nothing could move the girl's heart.

And the Kozak stood on the bank of the rivulet, contemplating the water, absorbed in torturing meditation. He spent a night of agony, but still early the next morning he started out to see his loved one. "Today, today!" whispered a feeble voice within him. His bruised, bleeding heart ached with anxiety and faint hope... He came in. The old woman welcomed him as warmly as ever, calling him "her son," and inquiring about his household and business. Shkandybenko heard little of her talk. He sat gloomily, still hoping for a miracle, looking at the girl's charming face, which was so cold and unfriendly to him who loved her so fervently. The old woman, fearing that her daughter's insolent indifference toward the Kozak was offensive to him, shot threatening glances her way.

"We're overwhelmed with the beauty of your gift," said the mother. "Where did you get such wonderful cloth?"

This reminded the Kozak of the gift he had brought that day. It was a string of costly beads. The mother grabbed the beads, looked at them with admiration, praising them without end. Not a word was uttered by Lymerivna. When her mother fastened the necklace around the girl's neck, she shuddered, as though a snake had touched her white skin.

The Kozak trembled as if a stray arrow had pierced his heart.

"My gift does not please you, Lymerivna," he said with a bitter smile.

"I do not want anything," answered the girl.

"Do not listen to her," exclaimed the mother alarmed, "don't listen to her, my son. She does not understand."

The Kozak wanted to speak, but his heart was crushed, and his head was in a daze. He left the house and walked aimlessly until he reached the brook. The fresh, cold water drew his attention, and he stood there for a while in meditation, longing and loving. Though spurned, hurt and in pain, he still loved her! For his love transcended even anger, grief, offence and sorrow. It was time now, he thought, to sever all painful relations. He was overcome with passionate love for the girl, which, despite his frustrations, urged him to return to her house. It seemed as if he was going to a feast. When he approached the house, he heard her voice. That was like sweet music to his ears. He stood there enchanted by the lovely voice that he had thus far heard so seldom. He waited until his heart had calmed down. Then he heard a conversation between mother and daughter. The old woman was scolding the girl for her unfriendliness to such a prominent man

as her betrothed. Then came Lymerivna's usual answer: "I do not love him, I do not want to marry him."

If only she would say something else! Some other words, just as cruel, albeit different! These few words haunted him day and night searing his very soul like a brand.

The mother's voice grew louder and more angry. She threatened to throw a curse on the girl and to disown her, to marry her off by force if need be.

"You may force me into this marriage," answered Lymerivna, "but my heart and soul will remain free. But, mother, do not force me, do not bring misery into my life and his!" but the more she pleaded with her mother, the firmer the old woman became.

The Kozak opened the door and entered.

"Where were you?" asked the mother, "we've been waiting for you. Please sit down, my son."

"When is our wedding going to take place?" asked the Kozak.

"We've set a date for it, my son, and it shall not be changed," answered the old woman hastily.

"It's too far off. Why wait so long?" asked Shkandybenko.

"Everything is ready; it can be hastened," answered the mother accomodatingly.

"Please do," said the Kozak.

It was growing darker and darker in the house. A faint breeze, rich with the fragrance of roses, jasmines, and various other shrubs and flowers, wafted in through the open window.

In the dark it was hard to distinguished a rose from a black-eyed susan, a bright red poppy from a pink peony. Or make a distinction between the white hands and the white sleeves, the face of his beloved and her smooth silky hair. She never even looked at him, nor said a word. Only when he bade her "Good night" did she answer with another "Good night."

But it seemed that his "Good night" had gone into oblivion. Since he met Lymerivna, he had known no more good nights. Would they ever return?

The wedding was to take place a week later. The old woman puttered about, the jingling of gold ringing in her ears. Her heart leaped at the thought of the prospective riches, sinking only when she reminded herself of her daughter's departure. But she betrayed no inkling of her feelings. She remained stern in behavior to the girl, awaiting impatiently for the time when riches would make both of them happy.

The Kozak patiently waited for the appointed day. His house looked cheerful with its shining windows and white walls, the whole home shaded by green trees; the garden replete with flowers; the distant

fields rich with crops of rye and wheat already ripening; the wide steppe green with fresh, fragrant hay; the long expanse of clear blue water glimmering far away in the distance.

But all this—the shining water, the golden undulating fields, the green verdure of the steppe, the flower garden, the cheerful house with shining windows—to him all spelt impatience. He could not wait any longer.

Lymerivna also waits. Her white arms are folded on her bosom, her beautiful eyes do not watch the bustle of preparations for her wedding, her lovely lips are locked in silence—she waits. She watches the sunrise in the morning and sits at the window till sunset. For a moment her eyes light up and her face grows pink with a blush. The light in her eyes vanishes, and the color fades from her cheeks. Late at night Lymerivna sits at her window, shrouded in darkness, until the rising moon lights her up again, revealing her white, calm face.

Saturday arrived. The groom found a house full of young girls dressed in bright clothes, with fresh flowers in their hair. The bride sat among them, also dressed in her best, with a wreath of fresh flowers on her head. She did not move, but looked at him searchingly. What were these large gentle eyes telling him?

Shkandybenko was in a strangely mixed mood of ecstatic happiness and deep fear—as though he were the proud possessor of a great fortune and trembled lest he lose it. He heard and saw nothing during that day.

Songs of girls, sounds of voices, music, the bright sun, Lymerivna sitting next to him, her lustrous hair, the fragrance of fresh flowers, the road home, the bright scattered stars and the moon—all these things were mixed up chaotically in the mind of the groom. And yet transcending everything was that overwhelming feeling of happiness and unconquerable fear.

On Sunday a noisy, jolly crowd brought the bride and groom to the church, and they were married.

Is it a dream or a reality, young Kozak? A reality indeed! He is taking his young wife to his home. They are met by guests and servants, who wish them a happy life. The little white house with the glittering windows is cheerful and merry, but somewhere lurks fear and melancholy.

The guests left, leaving the young pair alone.

“Dearest Lymerivna, my wife, tell me what I can do to please you,” pleaded the young Kozak.

“I want nothing. I do not love you,” answered Lymerivna.

“If you could give me just a little of your love,”

“I do not love you.”

Like a wounded animal the Kozak ran out of the room into the dark night.

Lymerivna remained alone. She looked around, at the white walls of the room, at the beautiful evening. She stood there, pondering and listening. Suddenly she flew out of the house like a bird, aimlessly and without destination. She passed the dewy steppe, the forest and dark fields. Whither was she running? She knew not, but she felt it was away from captivity. The future did not matter so long as she was free from this slavery. Somewhere in the distance she heard shouts and the galloping of horses. She turned into a narrow path and ran along its length. Sharp thorns clung to her bare feet, and her luxuriant hair caught on the branches, but she ran on. The voice now became louder and louder, and the horse seemed to approach nearer and nearer. The tall shadow of a man now fell before her eyes.

It was the Kozak. "Please," he pleaded, "do not run away."

She looked at him for a moment, deep into his eyes, and then quietly said, "I am sorry for you, but I do not love you."

The Kozak composed his grief. "So shall it be," he said simply, though his voice trembled slightly. "I give you your freedom. I give you all my possessions. I shall go away, never to return."

He wheeled his horse and rode off. Once he looked back and waved his hand at her. She raised hers in acknowledgement. And that was the last they ever saw of each other.

Ivan Franko

LITTLE MYRON

THE EDUCATION OF HRYTSKO

Translated by Stephen Shumeyko

Ivan Franko was the most prolific of the Western Ukrainian writers, poets, and educators and a researcher in the Ukrainian and Slavic languages. He was born in 1856 in the village of Nahuievychi, not far from the town of Drohobych. He was educated in Lviv and Vienna. He took to writing at an early age and published his poems in student journals. In the latter half of the 19th century he was carried away by the socialist slogans of the times and thus came into conflict with the political and social authorities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and was imprisoned several times for his political convictions. Beside publishing many collections of poetry, Ivan Franko was also the author of a long series of stories, a historical novel, *Zakhar Berkut*, 1883, another work called *Boa Constrictor*, 1884, the theme of which was taken from the life of the workers at the oil refinery in his native Drohobych; the life of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Eastern Galicia, *Foundations of Society*, 1894-95; *Crossroads*, 1900, and others, as well as a collection of stories, *By the Sweat of One's Brow*, 1890; *Seven Tales*, 1900; *Good Profit*, 1902; *Little Myron*, 1903; *In the Lap of Nature*, 1905, and others, including those in this selected collection. In his earlier prose works Ivan Franko was a follower of Emile Zola and a representative of the realistic trend in Ukrainian literature. The greater part of the themes in the stories of Ivan Franko were taken from the peasant way of life during the second half of the 19th century. After a long, lingering illness Ivan Franko died in 1916 in Lviv. In his poetic work he takes second place in Ukrainian literature to Taras Shevchenko.

LITTLE MYRON

Little Myron is a queer child. To his father he's the apple of his eye, wondrously clever; but then, a father can be a partial judge, all the more so, a father like Myron's father, a man well advanced in years, who had almost lost hope of ever having a child. Such a parent, naturally enough, could have any sort of an offspring and yet consider it the most precious, the most beautiful and clever in the whole world.

The neighbors used to whisper that Myron "is not like other children." As he ambles along, he keeps swinging his arms in a peculiar way, whispering to himself, now picking up a switch and either swishing it through the air, or else knocking off the head of weeds with it. In the company of other children he is shy and awkward; and if he ever ventures to say something, it is enough to cause the elders to shrug their shoulders.

"Vasyl," said Myron to another little boy. "How far can you count?"

"Who, me? How much should I? Five, seven, fifketeen..."

"Fifketeen? Ha-ha-ha! And how much is fifketeen?"

"How much should it be? I don't know."

"It means nothing at all. Come, let's sit down and count together."

Vasyl sat down, and Myron began to count, striking the stick against the ground at each number: one, two, three, four...

Vasyl listened for a while, then rose and scampered away. Just then old Riabyna passed by, coughing and breathing wheezily. Myron could not even notice him. The old man stopped and began to listen... Myron reached up to four hundred...

"Why, you foolish child," explained the old man in his somewhat nasal voice. "What are you doing?"

Startled by this sudden interruption. Myron turned his frightened eyes on the ancient Riabyna.

"Don't you realize you're beating holy earth? Don't you know the earth is our mother? Here, give me that stick."

Myron gave his stick to him, without the least idea what the old man wanted of him. The latter flung the stick deep into the nettles. Myron nearly burst out crying, not so much because of the

loss of the stick, but rather because the old man had interrupted his counting.

"Go home and say the Lord's Prayer instead of performing such antics," snorted the old man angrily, as he shuffled away, muttering to himself. Myron watched him till he was out of sight, unable to comprehend what the old man wanted of him, and what wrong he had done.

II

Little Myron loved to roam in the green flower-covered valleys, among the wide-leafed burdocks, the scented corn camomiles, to breathe in the sweet odor of the dew-laden clover, and to cover himself from head to foot with sticky flowering burrs. Nearby there was a brook with high steep banks and gurgling fords which ran through the pasture. Its clay bottom was covered by soft water-weeds that looked like skeins of green silk, all in all a most paradisiacal and alluring spot to Myron. In this idyllic place Myron loved to while the time away, hidden in the deep grass. He would gaze at the splashing water, at the water-weeds, and the little fishes that from time to time emerged from their hiding places in search of prey, sometimes darting upwards until their gills broke through the surface and gulped down a little air, then swiftly fleeing to their hiding places as if they had just stolen some delicious tid-bit. And in the meantime the sun would blaze down from a cloudless, deep-blue sky; but since the wide leaves above him guarded him from sunburn, Myron felt only a delightful sense of warmth and happiness. His little grey eyes looked out eagerly at the world, and his forehead would wrinkle up with childish concentration as thoughts kept stirring in his young mind.

"That sun above me — why is it so small, when father told me it was very big? Perhaps the hole in the sky was made so small so as to let out just that much sun and no more."

But then another thought struck him.

"Well, how can that be? When the sun sets, the small hole is there, and when it rises, it is still there. Does the hole travel through the sky with the sun?"

This was too much for him to comprehend, and he promised himself that as soon as he reached home he would ask his father about the peep-hole of the sun.

"Myron! Myron!" someone yelled in the distance. That was his mother. Myron jumped up to his feet and ran down to the ford in order to cross the brook. Suddenly he stopped in his tracks. He had crossed here many times before without the least hesitation,

but now he saw something that made him pause. He was standing directly facing the sun, but instead of seeing the shallow bottom with its pebbles and water-weeds, as he always had, a deep blue bottomless pit now met his gaze. He did not know that this was just the reflection of the sky smiling up at him. And so he stopped in amazement. How was he to wade through such great depth. And from where did it appear so suddenly? He stopped and began to examine it more closely. It remained the same, except that near the bank he could see the familiar pebbles and hear the usual pleasant gurgling of the water. He turned his face in another direction away from the sun, and looked into the water; now everything was all right; the abyss had vanished and the ford was as shallow as before. This discovery both calmed and surprised him. He began to turn around back and forth, experimenting with this strange vision, somehow made happy by it. And as for his mother's call — he had forgotten all about it.

Little Myron stood there for a long time, turning this way and way, yet not daring to cross the brook. He could not get over the feeling that this shallow stony ford would suddenly open, and a deep blue abyss would appear between the banks into which he would fall and disappear like a pebble thrown into a deep, dark well. Who knows how long he would have stood there, had a neighbor, Martin, not appeared, hurrying with rake and pitchfork to his hay.

"Why are you standing here? Your mother is calling you. Why don't you go home?"

"I want to go home, but I'm afraid."

"Of what?"

"Of this, — see," said Myron, pointing at the bottomless pit in the water. Martin, however, didn't understand.

"What's there to be afraid of? It's very shallow."

"Shallow?" said Myron unbelievably. "But look at the big hole!"

"Hole? What kind of a hole?" said Martin; and without taking off his shoes, he crossed the brook, hardly wetting them. The example of Martin assured Myron; he, too, crossed the ford and ran home hurriedly.

"What a foolish child! Five years old and he's afraid to cross such a shallow brook!", the neighbor blurted out testily and hurried on his way.

III

In summer, when the grown-ups were out in the fields, little Myron remained at home, but not in the house; he was afraid to remain there, scared of the "gray beards in the corners," that is

"the shadows," the wide chimney with its cavernous black interior, and the wooden hook fastened to the ceiling window which served as a ventilator in wintertime for smoke from burning pine splinters that illuminated the house. Myron played outside for the most part, gathering flowers and plucking their petals one by one, building houses out of sticks and chips that lay strewn about in the woodshed, or sunning himself on the abutment of the front wall of the dwelling. There he would listen attentively to the chirping of the birds in the apple trees and gaze at the blue sky. For a while this was sheer delectation, but then in turn his childish forehead would cloud up with other thoughts not so pleasant.

"What makes a person see the sky above, or the flowers, or daddy and mother?" he would ask himself. "With what do I hear? I can hear the call of the kite and the cackling of the hens. But how?"

It seems to him that it is the mouth that enables him to see and hear. He opens his mouth, and lo and behold! He sees all and hears all...

"But wait, maybe it's these eyes?"

He closes his eyes; now he can't see a thing. He opens them; now he sees and hears; he closes them again; now he cannot see but he still can hear.

"Oh, so that's it! I see with my eyes, but with what do I hear?"

Again he opens and closes his mouth, with no effect upon his hearing.

He does likewise with his eyes, but the result is the same. A sudden idea strikes him. What'll happen if he should close his ears with his fingers? He pokes his fingers into his ears but hears a dull constant noise. What new sound has replaced the call of the kite and the cackling of the hens in his ears? He removes his fingers from his ears. In place of that noise he now hears the kite and the hens. He tries it again, with the same result.

"How come?" puzzles little Myron. "Ah, now I know. With my ears I hear the cackling, but with my fingers I hear that noise. That's it!" And to assure himself that his reasoning is correct, he repeats the whole process again.

When at noon the reapers returned home for lunch, Myron ran out to greet his father.

"Daddy! Daddy! I know something!"

"What do you know, my child?"

"I know that a person sees with his eyes."

His father smiled indulgently.

"With his ears he hears the cackling, and with his fingers he hears a noise."

"How is that?"

"Well, when I don't stick my fingers into my ears, I hear the hens cackling, but when I do, then I hear a funny kind of a noise."

The father roared with laughter at this observation, while the mother, glancing reprovingly at her offspring, waved a reproaching finger at him, saying:

"Hush, you scamp! You'll soon be old enough to marry, and here you are spouting such rubbish! How else could you hear if not with your ears?"

"But why doesn't a person hear this cackling and this funny noise all at the same time?" asked Myron. "When his ears are not closed, he hears the cackling, but when he shuts them with his fingers he hears that funny noise. Just try it yourself." And to encourage his mother, he stuck his fingers in his ears.

His mother, however, made no attempt to follow his example; and though she continued to scold Myron, it was evident she could not find an answer to his question.

IV

Myron's greatest trouble lay in his inability to think properly. He just couldn't think, that's all! No matter what he said there usually would be something wrong with it; and whenever he said anything, each time it was his mother or someone else who would reprove him for it.

"You big dunce, why don't you think before you speak, and stop balling things up so much."

Despite all his efforts, however, poor little Myron just couldn't help putting his foot in his mouth every time he spoke. And so poor Myron decided that thinking was out of his line.

One time, for example, the whole family was seated around the dinner table. The mother had served some appetizing cabbage soup. Myron had swallowed one or two spoonfuls and then suddenly realized that a hush had fallen upon all those present, so intent were they on their meal. Aha, he thought, here's a fine chance for me to say something clever. But what could he say? That obviously required some thought; so he began to think. He thought so intently that the spoon he was carrying to his mouth suddenly froze in the air together with his hand. He stared vacantly into space and then his eyes fastened on a picture of the Virgin Mary hanging on the wall opposite him. Only his lips moved, as if he were whispering.

The servants noticed this and glanced significantly at one another, while the maid whispered to old Ivan: "Watch him pull another boner."

"I wonder," little Myron began slowly, "why the Holy Mother looks and looks, but still does not eat any soup."

Poor Myron! Despite all the pains he took he could not think of anything better than that to say; perhaps it was because he had so often been reminded by pressure from above to talk "like other people."

Smiles, laughter and his mother's customary berating that included the rather derogatory appellation, "You 18th degree dunce," was enough to make Myron cry.

"Can I help it if I can't think like other people?" he asked, wiping away the tears.

V

What will happen to Myron? What kind of a flower will blossom from this kind of a bud? It is not hard to foretell. Such types are common in our villages. Already at an early age they stand apart in walk, appearance, words, and acts. And when such a child is forced to spend all his time in a crowded peasant hut, without any chance of getting an education, when his parents constantly remind him of his dissimilarity to other people, it all tends to stifle his individuality and inherent ability; which then by constant disuse becomes atrophied, and thus degrades our little Myron to the status of an incompetent husbandman, a poor lout; or worse still, divests him of the ability to direct his talents into channels of constructive work, thereby increasing the danger of his straying into paths of evil and becoming either a criminal or a charlatan.

If, on the other hand, such a child happens to have loving parents who are not too poor, and who will sacrifice even their penny for his education, then, well, what then? Do you think such a child's fate will be a better one, that is, better in the common sense of the word? Not at all. In school he will pursue knowledge with great eagerness, imbibe it as a sick man would fresh air; and then upon his graduation ardently propagate knowledge and high ideals among the ignorant and downtrodden... But for this, however, an unenviable fate awaits him — he will become familiar with **prison walls**, suffer all kinds of indignities from his fellow men, and end up by languishing in poverty, friendlessness, and loneliness in some God-forsaken spot; or carry out from prison the germs of mortal illness which will send him to an early grave; or, having lost faith in holy, absolute truth, will begin to drown his woes in liquor even to the point of complete forgetfulness. Poor little Myron!

THE EDUCATION OF HRYTSKO

The geese knew nothing about it. Even that very morning when the father intended to send Hrytsko to school, they knew nothing of his intention, while Hrytsko knew even less. As usual he rose at early dawn, ate his breakfast, cried a bit, scratched himself, found himself a willow switch and, skipping along, drove the geese before him from the pen to the pasture. The white gander as usual would point his rather small head with its wide red bill and red eyes at him, hiss fiercely, and then, cackling something unintelligible to the geese, waddle into the lead. The old "hryva" goose, with the grey top and the white under-bottom, also as usual, would refuse to remain in the ranks for long, and so would wander off beyond the bridge into a ditch; and for this dereliction Hrytsko would give her a smart cut with the switch and call her a "rascal," a name he reserved for all those who refused to recognize the sovereignty of his rule in the pasture. Clearly then, neither the white gander, nor the "hryva" goose, nor anyone in the entire company—of which there was a full score and five—was aware of the impending transfer of their lord and master to a far less exalted position in life.

And thus, when the final and unexpected news broke, when the father, coming in from the field, called Hrytsko, and handed him over to his mother to wash, comb and dress him, just as God ordained; and when his father took him by the hand and without even a word of explanation led the already alarmed boy through the pasture; and finally, when the amazed geese perceived their erstwhile leader entirely transformed into a new being with new boots, new felt hat, and new red belt, they emitted a sudden and very loud cry of wonder. A white gosling, neck outstretched, ran up very close to him, as if to see him all the better; while the brownish goose also stretched out her neck and dumbfoundedly regarded him for quite sometime, without even a peep, until finally she hissed out a "de-de-de-de?"

"Foolish goose!" Hrytsko muttered scornfully, turning away as if to say, "I haven't fallen that far from grace as to have to reply to a goose's question!" Or was it because he didn't know the answer himself?

Soon they entered the upper stretches of the village. Neither the father nor Hrytsko said anything. Finally they reached a rambling,

old straw-roofed building with a chimney on top. Approaching this building were many boys of the same size or even bigger than Hrytsko. Beyond the building a man in a vest could be seen walking around in the garden.

"Ha!" said Hrytsko.

"Do you see that house?"

"Yes."

"Well, just remember; that's a school."

"Bah!" replied Hrytsko.

"Just behave yourself; don't show any of your tricks; listen to your teacher; I'm on my way to get you registered."

"Bah!" repeated Hrytsko, understanding but little of what his father was talking about.

"And now you run along with these little boys. Take him along with you, boys."

"Come along!" yelled the boys; and they took him along with them.

Meanwhile the father had gone into the yard to talk things over with the teacher.

II

They entered the porch which was dark and smelled of last year's decayed cabbage.

"Do you see that over there?" one of the boys said to Hrytsko, indicating a dark corner.

"I thee," lisped Hrytsko tremblingly although he actually saw nothing.

"There's a hole there," said the boy.

"A hole!" repeated Hrytsko.

"If you don't behave yourself, the teacher'll throw you into that hole and you'll have to sit there the whole night through."

"I don't want to," shrieked Hrytsko. Meanwhile another boy whispered something into the ear of the first boy; they both laughed; then the first one, getting hold of the school door, spoke to Hrytsko:

"Rap on the door! Faster!"

"Why?" asked Hrytsko.

"You have to! It's the custom for anyone who comes here for the first time."

There was a buzz in the school, just as in a bee-hive; but when Hrytsko rapped at the door the noise quieted down. The boys opened the door slowly and then pushed Hrytsko inside. Soon some birch switches lashed on his shoulders. Hrytsko became frightened and began to shriek.

"Hush, you fool, you shouldn't do that! Whoever raps on the door should also be rapped on the shoulders. Didn't you know that?"

"No-o-o-o, I didn't," whimpered Hrytsko.

"And why didn't you?"

"B—b—because this is the first time I've been in school."

"The first time! Aha!" the boys yelled as if surprised that there could be such a first time in school.

"Oh, I see we'll have to act as hosts to you!" said one of the boys, who fished out a long piece of chalk and handed it to Hrytsko.

"Here, you fool, take a bite; faster!"

They all stopped talking in their anticipation of seeing Hrytsko actually putting the chalk into his mouth and chewing on it; which he did.

"Eat, you fool, faster!" the boys reminded him, meanwhile dying with laughter.

Hrytsko began to chew the chalk and finally to eat it up. The school room was filled with a paroxysm of laughter that actually made the windows rattle.

"W-W-Why are you laughing?" asked the astonished Hrytsko.

"Nothing at all. Do you want to eat some more of it?"

"No; what ith it?" lisped Hrytsko.

"Don't you even know? What a fool! That's a kind of Jerusalem; it's very good."

"Oh, not very good," said Hrytsko.

"But you've not really tasted it yet. It's proper to eat for everyone who comes to school for the first time."

It was at this moment that the teacher appeared. Like a lot of alarmed sparrows all the boys rushed pell-mell to their seats; Hrytsko alone remained standing with tears in his eyes and his lips laden with moist chalk dust. The teacher approached him sternly.

"What is your name?" he yelled.

"Hrytsko."

"What kind of a Hrytsko? Aha, you're a new one. Why aren't you in your seat? Why are you crying? How did you get so white? Ha?"

"Why I ate some Jerusalem."

"What? Some Jerusalem!?" questioned the teacher. Again the boys could hardly contain themselves from laughter.

"The boys gave it to me."

Hryts looked around the room, but he couldn't recognize anyone.

"Well, now! Go ahead, sit down! You had better learn something, but don't eat any more Jerusalem, or else you'll get a whipping!"

III

The class began its lesson. The teacher was saying something, displaying little squares upon which were written or drawn curiously-shaped hooks and props; and everytime he displayed a new one the boys would shout something; but it was all above Hrytsko's head. For that matter, he didn't even pay any attention to the teacher, but found a great deal of amusement in the antics of the boys seated around him. One was picking at his nose, another was trying to stick a straw into Hryts's ear, while a third was most diligently applying himself to the task of pulling out loose threads from his thread-bare jacket; already he had a good-sized pile of threads before him, yet he kept on pulling more.

"What you pulling dem for?" asked Hryts.

"Oh, I'm goin' to take 'em home to eat 'em with my borsch," the other replied calmly; and for quite some time afterwards Hryts wondered whether the boy was in his right senses or not.

"Hryts! You're not paying the least bit of attention!" the voice of the teacher suddenly boomed at him, and at the same time Hryts felt a sharp pain in his ear, which the teacher had seized and given a sharp tweak. The pain was so excruciating that tears appeared in his eyes. When he recovered his senses the boys were already reading from a set of tablets which the teacher had arranged before them. Untiringly, over and over again, they chanted in a sing-song fashion "a-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha." For some reason or other this pleased Hryts and he too joined in the chorus, his thin piping voice shrilling above the others: "a baba halamaha." Even the teacher became impressed by this, and thinking that he had an apt pupil before him sought to give the boy a further opportunity to distinguish himself by arranging a new combination of the letter, reading "baba"; but Hryts, not even looking at the new word, shrilled at the teacher: "halamaha." The whole class roared with laughter, not even excluding the teacher. Hrytsko looked around him in a puzzled manner, and then turning to the boy next to him, asked, "Why don't you say 'halamaha'?" And not until he felt the sting of the teacher's ruler over his back, did he first realize that something was amiss somewhere.

"Well, now, what did they teach you at school?" his father asked him when Hryts had returned home for lunch.

"Oh, we learned to thay 'a baba halamaha!'" the boy replied, proudly.

"And did you know it well?" asked his father, ignoring for the moment the question of what this strange word could possibly mean.

"Of courth," replied Hryts, loftily.

"Well then, be a good boy!" admonished his father. "When you finish this village school I shall send you to higher schools, and then you'll become a priest. Woman, give him something to eat."

"Bah," said Hryts.

IV

A year passed since that fateful day. The high hopes of the father for his son as a scholar had long since been dissipated. The teacher had frankly told him that Hryts was a "dunce of the 18th degree" and that he would do better to take the boy out of school and return him to tending geese. And indeed he was right, for after a year in school Hryts returned home just as wise as when he first entered. To be sure, he had by this time memorized that awe-inspiring "a baba halamaha" so well that even in his sleep he was heard to recite it. But that seemed to be the limit of his education. The other letters of the alphabet whirled about in such a manner that he could never recognize any of them. And as for reading and writing!... Whether all this was because he did not have a retentive memory or perhaps because the teacher was to blame, no one could say; however, one thing was certain, — that the designation as the "18th degree dunce" was not only not limited to Hryts but applicable to most of his companions, for all of them dreamed of that day when they would be freed from the constant canings, ear-twistings, jabs, hairpullings, and once more appear in the full glory of their dignity and importance as lords of the pasture.

Hryts, of course, was more anxious to return to this status quo than any of the others. The blasted reader, which a year's hard use had well-nigh reduced to shreds, that confounded "a baba halamaha," and the accursed nagging and prompting of the teacher had upset him so much that he had actually lost weight and color, mowing about as if in a daze. But finally the Lord had taken pity on him, sending along the month of July. His father, too, had relented with the promise one fine morning: "Starting today you won't have to attend school anymore."

"Bah!" was Hryts's only reply.

"Take your shoes, hat and belt off; you'll need them only for Sunday wear. Gird yourself with a baste-belt, don your baste-hat and go out and tend your flock of geese."

"Bah," said Hryts happily.

V

The geese, as usual, being woefully dumb, had no inkling of the impending change that awaited them, — a happy one this time. For during the whole year they had been tended by a neighbor's boy, Luchka, who, as a rule, did nothing more in the pasture than dig holes, make mud pies, and cover himself with dust. And as for the geese, he hardly gave them a thought, letting them drift for themselves. Misfortune and tragedy dogged their footsteps at every turn. More than once they wandered off the pasture into some neighbor's farm, receiving much abuse and even blows for their errant ways. Once five young ganders and ten geese were sold by the "*hospodynya*" in the market; it was a heart-breaking event for the rest of them. The ashen colored one, wandering into someone's garden, was caned there to death; and then tied to the end of the cane and barbarously dragged all over the pasture and finally tossed unceremoniously over the fence into her pen. On another occasion a young gander, the fine pride of the flock, was killed by a hawk when he had wandered away from his own kind. And yet, despite all these unfortunate mishaps, the flock had increased in size. Thanks to the white gander and the "*hryva*" goose, as well as to two or three of her gosling daughters, the flock had increased during the year to as high as forty.

Thus when Hryts appeared among them that morning, willow switch in hand, the sceptre of his authority, the geese just stared at him at first, emitting but one faint hiss of surprise. But neither the white goose nor the "*hryva*" goose had forgotten their former pastor. With loud outcries of joy and furious beating of wings they threw themselves at him.

"De-de-de-de?" gagged the "*hryva*" goose.

"Why, in school, of courth," lisped Hryts loftily.

"Oh! oh! oh!" exclaimed the white gander in surprise.

"Don't you believe me, you old fool?" cried Hryts angrily, giving the goose a cut with the switch.

"Eh, whot-whot-whot-whot?" honked all the geese, swarming around him.

"You mean what did I learn in school?" said Hryts formulating their question.

"Eh, whot-whot-whot-whot?" honked all the geese again.

"A baba, halamaha!" said Hrytsko in reply.

Again there was a hiss of surprise and wonder, as if none of the geese could comprehend such profound wisdom. Hrytsko just stood there in unapproachable pride; but not for long; for at last the white goose found his voice.

"A baba halamaha!" he replied to Hrytsko. "A baba halamaha!", repeating it again in his ringing metallic voice, raising himself erect, stretching out his neck and flapping his wings. And then, turning to Hrytsko, he hissed, as if to shame him all the more:

"A kshee, a kshee!"

Hryts was heart-broken and ashamed! To think that the gander in one fleeting moment had grasped and repeated all the wisdom that it had taken him one whole year to gain! That was the final straw!

"Why didn't they thend him to thkool?" thought Hrytsko bitterly, as he drove the geese to the communal pasture.

Olha Kobylianska

N A T U R E

Translated by Percival Cundy

Olha Kobylianska was born in 1863 in the town of Hurahumora, Bukovina, where she spent her childhood and girlhood years before moving to the capital of the province — Chernivtsi. Living as she did in the midst of a mixed Ukrainian-Rumanian-German population with a super-imposed German administration, that is, an Austrian administration in which the German language was in official use, she began writing in German, and it was not until she had made the acquaintance of some Ukrainian writers that she turned to Ukrainian as her literary medium. Her first stories in the Ukrainian language were written in a sentimental, realistic vein, and her themes and personages were taken from life in the Ukrainian village. Her further works, especially the stories, *The Person*, 1894; *The Princess*, 1896; *Niobe*, 1907; *Across the Footbridge*, 1912; *In Pursuit of Positions*, 1914; *Apostle of the Common People*, were all dedicated to problems dealing with the emancipation of women, individualism, aristocratism and other themes from the life of the intelligentsia. Themes taken from peasant life were utilized basically in only two of her larger novels, namely, one written in a romantic vein, *On Sunday Morning She Dug The Herbs*, 1919; and another with a romantic and mystic flavor, *The Land*, 1910, the latter being, from the artistic point of view, her finest production, dealing as it did with the peasant's love of the soil. Besides stories Olha Kobylianska wrote sketches, the greater part of which are lyrical passages, miniatures in prose, etudes, impressionistic dialogues, or else artistic descriptions of nature, into which it seemed as if some motive from human life were interwoven, as for instance, the psychological novelette *Nature*, included in this anthology. Sometimes nature, as in her sketch *The Battle*, is the main and real hero of her production. Olha Kobylianska died at the age of 79 in 1943 in Chernivtsi.

NATURE

She was over twenty and tall.

Although Ukrainian from head to toe, she had reddish hair, which is a rarity among Ukrainians, yet her features showed her race, and the almost melancholy sadness, stamped on everything which marks this unfortunate people, was the basis of her character. Her eyes, large and somewhat fixed and moist, were sad even when her lips smiled. Because of her eyes, they called her "a Ukrainian Madonna." Having grown up in solitude and in the midst of almost luxurious ease, she knew nothing of life or of its darker sides. She knew it only from books which she read to satiety.

Tolstoy was her god. Shevchenko she knew almost by heart. Indolent, like her people, she was not very eager for work, and lived like those exotic plants in hothouses where the storms that rage outside are envisioned as in dreams. And she dreamed, she dreamed very much.

Her imagination had flowered into such fulness, that on its account all other impulses were stifled and never saw the light of God's sun. Though she was almost unwholesomely sensitive, yet she mocked at a pure 'cultivation of emotions and ideas'.

Above all else she loved nature.

She roved about the mountains without companions, without a weapon. She knew the entire mountain district around the small town where she lived, as well as her own room, and one of its wildest and most beautiful spots was the goal of her excursions the whole summer long.

Her naturally strong temperament demanded something more than 'chamber beauty' and a tranquil, pampered existence. Instinctively she felt the essence of the storm and there were moments when she passionately longed for it. She loved conflict as others loved the splendid, rich coloring of pictures and music which can intoxicate, and thus she imagined conflict to be. Sometimes she was dominated by an inexpressible thirst for the feeling of victory but because she had grown up in idleness, never discouraged and never fortified, petted and coddled, her strength slept and wasted, and she passed into a sickly, unreasoning sadness.

That is what she was like.

She dreamed of a happiness whose varied fulness should overwhelm her.

She waited for it every day, she lived continuously in expectation of something new, distant. Like the sunflower, her soul stood open for an unknown someone, something . . .

She would lie in the forest, at full length on the moss, and through the tops of the pines she sought the sky.

It was magnificent.

Sometimes she followed an eagle in flight, or the vulture quietly wheeling in circles or hovering like a dot in the sky.

Eagerly she caught the sounds of water and turned them into laughter. Did not the voice of the stream tumbling over the rocks and stones seem like subdued laughter? Just listen to it . . .

At other times she lost herself entirely in the roaring of the forest and, covering her face with her hands, she imagined that she was lying on the seashore.

Surely the waves of the sea roared just like the pine forest, exactly the same . . . only, perhaps, a little louder.

She wished enormously to find herself on the sea sometime, to see it in storm, or when the sun was setting, or on a moonlit night. That surely was another beauty than that of the mountains; restless and full of change, alluring and splendid. The mountains, with their grim, stoical tranquility, made her feel mournful, so that more and more her thirst for beauty was awakened and they were not able to quench it.

And so she dreamed about the fjords and the mountains in the north . . . Here and there in the forest could be heard the melancholy songs of the Hutsuls and all of this gave her an immense satisfaction.

On the cliffs amidst the steep rocks, an echo could be heard, and she imagined herself to be a great bird, as in furious flight it beat against the hard walls of rock, and finally, exhausted, fell to the ground. After that came a silence.

Sometimes she wept from sadness.

The storm would rage over the pines, and bending and shaking would render them all the stronger. The next morning they would the more proudly lift up their crowns and bathe them in the golden rays of the sun. For all this they had a right to lift themselves up to the clouds and be proud.

She loved strength and power, and yet! . . .

Once a mountain horse was brought to her father's for inspection.

It was a splendid, slender colt, black as coal, with arched neck, large nostrils and protruding, sparkling eyes; its bushy tail almost touched the ground.

She stood at the window and looked on as it reared up in the wilderness and would not be tamed. A young, handsome Hutsul, whom she had seen now and then in her father's office, was holding the

animal and with all his strength was trying to force it to stand quiet for they wanted to examine its hoofs from beneath.

For some reason he was not succeeding.

Suddenly she was overcome by the desire to subdue the animal. Her eyes flamed and her tender nostrils began to quiver. Something stirred within her that evoked the desire for action and drove her outside.

Just as she was, dressed for indoors, bareheaded, she rushed out into the courtyard. But when she came to within five steps of the colt and just as it began to rear, she became so terrified that her knees trembled and she turned white.

A few moments later and she was lying on her sofa, weak, and her lovely white hands, adorned with rings, lay inert in her lap, standing out listless and unstirring against her black flowered dress.

What had happened to her? It was a ridiculous fright, an inopportune eruption of plebeian instincts, which, because of her pampered life, had not been subdued.

She had made a fool of herself before the servants.

Her lips curled in irony at herself.

Was it really true that nature could not be denied?

Her grandmother on her father's side was just a Hutsul. Beautiful, but still a peasant woman! The Hutsuls were apt to have imperceptible moments when their instincts burst out and knew no bounds...

But her mother was a lady of distinction, with sought-out emotions, strict manners, and strangely unusual beauty. It was a finished product, the result of the work of generations!.. She herself was decidedly of her mother's type; if there were to be any echoes of her grandmother's emotionalism, they could be only dissonances.

After all, she had not been concerned about the horse. She had wanted to look at the man beside it. Generally speaking, his features were pure Slavonic, but there was also something innate about him, something which drew, compelled, something which awakened her interest. Of course, she had only seen him as he passed before her window, that is, her father's. But she would have liked to see his eyes and his lips near at hand... Only once... after that she could have painted them from memory.

Yes, there were moments when she was capable of doing something great; then she was tensed like a bow about to let an arrow fly into the far distance. But they did not last long. She drank and became indolent. The waiting tormented her and put her out of the mood. At such times she turned to nature.

There she gathered strength and patience. There she celebrated her golden hours of victory—when for instance, she climbed up a

high, dangerous peak, up a steep cliff, and gazed at an eagle, at its black, sparkling hostile eyes, at its watchful, bent-forward posture.

Particularly she loved autumn.

Not the kind that brings with it damp, cloudy days, yellowing leaves and chilling storms, but the kind whose beauty equals that of spring. The kind with clear, warm days and pure, blue skies. In the autumn everything in the mountains was beautiful, magnificent.

The wild Carpathians! She knew their proud, shut-in beauty and their marvellous natives, the Hutsuls. She knew all the secrets of the forest... In September the spider webs stretch from tree to tree almost to infinity, gleaming in the sun; and all through the forest it is so quiet, quiet... The streams gurgle gravely and swiftly, but their waters are cold and flowers no longer grow along their banks.

The sun was declining toward the west. The sky was cloudy and only bright crimson in the west.

The mountains, swathed in mist, stood out fantastically and sharply against the sky in dark-gray beauty.

On one of the mountains, overgrown with forest, stood a new Hutsul house. Immense firs spread their branches over it, sadly shook their proud tops and great drops of rain fell noiselessly down on the mossy sward.

Stillness all around, except for a roaring in the unfathomable forest like muffled waves of the sea...

In places, the last rays of the setting sun broke through into the forest thickets, quivered for a moment on the branches like golden shadows, and then it became totally dark in the forest.

The door of the house opened and there emerged a young Hutsul, bending slightly, with an axe carelessly thrown over his shoulder, and he gazed pensively into the distance.

Tall, supple, strongly built, like all of his tribe, his face was handsome to a degree. It was gloomily pensive, tender around the lips, and the upper part Slavic, that is: rather broad, yet this did not affect its handsomeness.

His black hair, according to custom, was cropped down to the brows and covered his forehead.

His dress enhanced the splendor of his body.

Wide red trousers, shirt as white as snow, embroidered at the collar and on the sleeves, beneath which could be seen strong, sinewy arms. Breast, neck and hands were adorned with silver chains and crosses, and a gay-colored belt decorated with rings and coins; into the latter were stuck a pipe and other implements.

He looked attentively at the peak in front of him, from which hung down white mists, torn and ragged and covering the tree tops.

So long as he could look and do just what he wished!—this, of which he was thinking did not come out of these green depths. Cloud after cloud drifted slowly over the abyss, and then the last beams of the sun disappeared behind the mountains... Irritably he spat between his teeth, went over to the fallen trunk of a fir beside the house, and with a mighty swing sank his axe into it. Then he seated himself on the trunk, rested his elbows on his knees and covered his face with his hands...

Some demonic power had mastered him.

And that demonic power was she, the lovely red-haired witch, whom he had come across in the forest... Witch? Yet he would have told her that she looked like the picture of the Mother of God, that hangs in the church, and still... still, she was not the Mother of God...

The Mother of God did not have red hair, the Mother of God never made a fool of a man when she attracted him as that one did, but she—ach!

Three days ago it had all happened and since then he had been out of his mind.

Even in his dreams he saw her. The blood coursed frantically in his veins, it throbbed in his temples like hammers and flashes ran before his eyes.

She was no Mother of God, but a witch! But a lovely, entrancing, red-haired witch!

How he loved her, how he longed for her! He was sick with the longing, he felt like weeping like a child, he could have killed her in wrath, because he had her not! Why didn't he come across her any more? Why?..

It had begun so sadly, yet it ended so gloriously.

It happened thus.

First of all, the forest warden had accused him there, in the town, before the gentlemen, of 'violation of forest rights,' because he had intentionally cut down a fir tree (the same one—it was half-decayed—on which he was sitting). For this they had ordered him to pay a fine, and in addition, sentenced him to forty-eight hours in jail, for insulting officials, so they said.

It all came vividly to his mind.

His defence, why he had done it, was of no avail. He absolutely needed the tree for a shed under which he and his mother could sit in summer to watch his herds of sheep and horses. His light wood was

completely gone, and he absolutely needed something, so he cut down the tree . . . just a single, solitary one in all that primeval forest.

Of course he got angry when the gentlemen calmly and heartlessly rejected his justification and only permitted him to reply to the question they asked. Then he wanted to pay double the fine if they would only let him go. Why, up there at home, his mother was alone with hundreds of sheep and horses and could not manage them, much less drive them all down to the stream to water them. She was no longer able to ride horseback as when she was young, let alone his colt, after which all the other horses ran. She was an old woman who could cook his food and spin. They ought to understand this!

The gentlemen merely smiled at one another. When he reiterated his request, still more stubbornly and, looking at them proudly and defiantly, stamped his foot, then the devil broke loose.

They called him a proud bird who needed caging . . . one who trampled the Emperor's commands underfoot . . . who would soon no longer believe in God . . . because he had hundreds of sheep and horses . . .

He ground his teeth in rage.

They even brought the Emperor into it! . . . And God Himself! And who was it rode to church every Sunday, if not he? And as to the Emperor, he lives far, far away and does not see what goes on here . . . Just for one single solitary tree . . . Beggars, all these gentlemen . . . Slaves, who serve . . . They wanted to smear him . . . an only son, the richest Hutsul . . .

He said all this to their faces, but did his forty-eight hours.

The food they gave him he did not touch . . . Let them keep it for themselves, he thought—It's because of such stuff that they are as thin as spindles and pale and ugly.

But afterwards, they just turned him loose . . . God!

Yet this was not the main thing, and he did not want to think about it at all.

After all this, he ran through the town with soldier-like steps, where it was hot and dusty and swarming with crowds of people, and when he stepped out on the first road leading homewards and felt himself embraced by the customary coolness of the forest, all his rage against the lowland folk evaporated. He no longer needed to hurry; there was no one following who could compel him to turn back! . . .

On the left of the mountain along which he was going, there yawned an abyss covered with forest, on the right there rose the rocky, forested mountain side, high and steep as a wall. A few hundred steps ahead of him, on the very verge of the precipice, was a large stone, which during some wild spring night had been torn

loose from the rocky forested mountain, and now lay like a resting place for wanderers.

There he sat down for a moment to light his pipe.

He did not sit long. Out of the gulf right near the stone, a girl came walking up. With a firm hand she grasped the ferns growing near the stone, lifted herself and stood on the path.

She was not of peasant stock,—this he noticed at once. A red kerchief was bound around her head, the ends knotted behind, and her face and neck were bare. Her face was as white as mother-of-pearl... and beautiful... eyes large and gleaming, but infinitely sad...

They looked at one another in silence for a moment.

"God give you health, Lady!" he said at last, timidly straightening up.

"God give you the same!" she replied in a slightly wearied tone, nodding to him as to an old acquaintance... Then she pulled the silk kerchief from her head, wiped her lightly perspiring brow with it, went around him slowly and began to ascend the steep mountain path.

He started after her.

She was tall and supple in stature and swayed slightly in the hips as she walked.

"God, red hair," he thought. "Like a witch... not a single girl around here has hair like that... they're all dark. And how they somehow all run after me!... Yet it's already a month since I left the village and not one of them has come up here!"

He laughed forwardly. Walking ahead of him, she looked back frightened.

"Where are you going?" he said, catching up to her.

"Into the forest."

He whistled and shook his head.

"So you are from the town! A lady!"

"Don't call me 'lady,' I'm not married."

"Then you have no 'lord'?"

She shook her head, while her big eyes gazed seriously at his lips.

"Why don't you get yourself one from the town. There are plenty of them there. Get yourself an official!"

She shook her head again and a smile passed over her lips.

"No? Sure, if you did not obey him or said something he didn't like, he could shut you up for forty-eight hours. They know how to do it, those gentlemen! I've just come from them."

And without waiting for a reply, in indignant tones, he told her what had happened to him.

She looked at him attentively all the time. When he had finished his story and for a few moments more cursed 'the gentlemen down there,' she laughed quietly.

"What are you laughing at? There's nothing at all to laugh about!"

"You need to understand the matter, my man," she said gravely.

"Do I need to go crazy or eat poisonous mushrooms? That's what they ought to do down there!" he replied.

"Neither the one nor the other. But you didn't understand them. Your thoughts come from the heart, theirs from the head. They think according to laws and they proved it to you to a dot that you had no right to cut down that tree, although the forest is so large. You look at it differently. You must always think with your head."

He spat through his teeth.

"The devil take them! They're all swindlers, a lot of starved frockcoats. Didn't God make the forest for everybody? That's something they can't deny and they'll never convince me. Let them be gentle a hundred times, and know how to read and write. Why, I had bad luck, and why they caught me—ha, ha! that was just because it was an unlucky hour when I cut that tree!"

"There are no lucky hours or unlucky hours," she said.

"Oho!" he dissented.

"Believe me. If you had studied, you wouldn't say such foolish things."

His eyes flashed.

"You think that if you know how to read and write, you've already got God by the feet? There are saints who... Well, I say nothing—those people who study, they are wise, that's true, but they are bad."

"Sometimes they are, but don't think that ignorance makes one better."

"How do I know?" he said. "As God makes a man, so he is. Whatever his lot, so he lives, and when a man's time is up, he dies. Let me be as wise as I will, yet when God wills it, I must die!"

"Certainly—there's no helping that."

"Now see! If they are so wise, so good, then why don't you take one of them for a husband?"

She glanced at him with pleasurable malice.

"That's different: that's saying I must do the one or the other. Not one of them pleases me. I'm very rich too; I hold them all in my hands."

"Just the same as I do with the girls in the village," he said proudly, and then, more as though talking to himself, "I'm rich too;

the richest rich man, so our people say. All the girls are dying for me."

She laughed.

"Why do you always laugh?"

"I'm not laughing at you."

He was appeased and calmed down.

"That's true," he said. "If a man's rich, he can laugh at everybody. And I laugh at them all. I don't think about any of them."

"And you would also laugh at me?" she asked fulsomely, and as though under the influence of an inward suggestion, looking him straight in the face.

"At you?"

He looked at her almost in fear, then smiled, blushing slightly.

"Ah, that just doesn't go," he said.

"Why not?"

"I don't know . . . but you are . . ."

"What am I?" she asked gravely.

"A . . . well, I don't know . . . like . . . like the picture of the Mother of God in our church . . ."

She laughed again; not very heartily, but all the same, she laughed. Then both fell silent.

They walked on in silence for some time.

He was handsome and strongly built, and she admired him as she had done earlier.

Once it entered her mind and she began wondering whether he loved a girl, and then—she knew not why—she thought of the phrase: "to be embraced by a strong arm . . ."

Physical strength and beauty of the body meant much to her, and though she never 'loved', yet all the same she liked handsome, robust people. When she felt fatigued, often there would come to her a longing desire, a need, to rest on some one's bosom. But that some one would have to be strong and courageous. Above all—courageous.

She began to walk more slowly.

They had walked long and fast. By her heavy breathing and a slight flush on her face, he noticed that she was tired.

"You're tired," he said. "You can't keep up with me, I am going too fast."

"True," she said wearily.

He suddenly began to walk quite slowly.

"You talk like we do so well," he began anew.

"I am the same as you—I am Ukrainian, a Hutsul. Wait a moment; I'm tired. If I go too fast, my heart begins to palpitate and sparks flash before my eyes."

She pressed her hands to her temples.

He came to a stop facing her. For a moment they gazed at each other; it seemed that from both their eyes a flame suddenly darted and flared up into a fire.

They both dropped their eyes. She looked around timidly: Was this the same scene she knew so well?

But yes! The same dark-green precipice, the same rocky wall there at the right, covered with firs as straight as candles, and tender, white beeches among them and luxuriant ferns, and here and there slender white flax... Calmly, incessantly, the forest roared.

The forest chill clung to her body. A bird cried out nearby; she shuddered in disquiet.

"Are you afraid?" he asked in alarm.

"Only today. As a rule, never."

"You're here everyday? And why are you afraid today?"

"I don't know. I feel less solitary when I am in the forest all by myself."

"How is that?"

"I don't know... I don't know—really..."

"What do you do here?"

"Nothing. I just come here. It's true—sometimes I paint the firs... Usually I listen to the forest roar. It roars like the sea, only far weaker. You don't know how the sea roars... I have never heard it myself but I know it roars... there, listen!"

They both listened, holding their breath. The beating of their hearts could be heard.

Again she looked around in disquiet... never before had it seemed so wild and solitary; the exuberant green of the forest seemed to oppress her.

"Don't be afraid... I am here in the forest behind you... that's not good..." he said in a strange, strangled voice.

Silently and almost swiftly they went up the steep path.

A line of stubborn resolution lay around her lips, her eyelids were cast down. Her long, dark lashes stood out marvellously against her face as white as snow.

"The sun will go down behind the mountains," he said agitatedly, breaking the stillness, and with a swift movement pushed his hair aside from his brow. He felt hot.

"When I came here into the forest, it struck three. We've been going a good two hours and in the town it must be five."

Saying this with almost trembling lips, she pulled a small watch out of her silken sash, stood and looked at it most attentively.

"Ah, you have a watch? Gold. Show it to me!"

He pressed close to her. They both looked tensely at the small golden thing.

"It goes as if it had a soul," he said. "How wise the people in the world are to make such a thing... God, God... You surely are rich when you have a watch. Your father must be a great gentleman! Who are you?"

She smiled again.

"You don't know who I am?"

"No."

"But you have seen me... think."

"I never saw you before."

"Just think."

"But I tell you, no!"

"Well... When you brought your fine horse into the courtyard at the lawyer's... and tried to make it stand still... I came out... Do you remember?"

He thought a moment.

"I don't know..." he said slowly and surprised. "But I never saw you... someone came out... that I do know..., but it was someone in a black dress..., I don't remember your face."

She turned her eyes away from him and smiled.

"If you don't know who I am, then it doesn't matter; I have seen you often, very often!"

"You're laughing at me again!"

"No."

"Then who are you?"

"What is it to you? Anyway," she added, with a melancholy smile, "I am one who has no good fortune!"

"You're rich and you have no fortune?" — he said incredulously and smiled. "See, maybe someone has turned it away from you; it happens sometimes... but you are young..." he continued and stepped closer to her and in so doing, unawares, touched her hair with the brim of his hat.

She gazed at him and that instant a hot flame spread over her face.

"It's true..., I'm young... and how old are you?"

"Next birthday I shall be twenty-six. I...", suddenly he stopped, all aflame. With glittering eyes they gazed one at the other.

"You!" he uttered suddenly in a trembling voice.

"What is it?" she replied, scarcely audibly; she had dropped her eyes.

"You're beautiful," he said in a confused, toneless voice.

A slight quiver passed over her body.

She lifted her eyes again. Her face had become pale, as if the last drop of blood had drained from it, and on it the marks of the

deepest agitation were clearly visible. Sparks seemed to spurt from her eyes.

A forced smile showed on her lips and faded away. She could not endure his look. She was suddenly in the grip of an emotion hitherto totally strange to her . . . and tears came into her eyes. She retreated far from him to the very edge of the precipice and said quickly:

"Let's go on!"

And they went on into the forest, where it became quieter and ever quieter; only the purling of the stream was heard through the stillness. Swiftly she went to the edge of the precipice, hurrying lightly alongside the branches of the firs which hung over the path. Agitatedly, he asked:

"So you like it here in the forest?"

"I like it."

"Why? There's nothing to be seen here."

"Just because I don't see here what I usually do."

"If that's so, come up with me to my perch; you'll like it much better there. Not a living soul comes up there, except sometimes my father on a feast day. I've been up there with my mother for a couple of months and scarcely a living soul has come to visit us. Will you?"

"You're the only son of your parents?" she asked, paying no heed to his request.

"Why, yes. Will you come?"

"It can't be done."

"And why not?"

"Because it can't be done."

"Because you don't want to?"

She was silent.

"Because you don't want to! Do you hear?"

She forced a smile, but her eyes gleamed almost frantically with emotion.

"See," she said, "how thickly the trees grow here, the air is practically wet; further on you can't see the sky . . . O God."

"You're afraid!"

She shook her head and looked at him with eyes full of a marvellous gleam. She still did not want to turn back, although she knew not why. She was also far from desiring to remain with him . . . Suddenly she felt that her will was really not free . . . What a fool she had been only two hours ago!

"Don't go so close to the edge—you'll fall!"

She made no reply.

"Do you hear? Ah, you're afraid of me! I won't do anything to you. I don't need your watch. Come closer: see, on my chest, my chain with crosses is worth more than your watch. Come, I'll give it to you! . . . And I could give you still more . . . Even my black horse with its carved saddle . . . Just come!"

It was as though she did not hear him. With flushed face and feverishly shining eyes, she went upwards with an effort. The forest became even denser and wilder. The path, steeper and higher, led up to a mountain meadow. She wanted to get there, — at any price, in any event, and afterwards back again.

Out of breath, with great tension, it seemed, he walked beside her . . .

Finally they reached the top.

Before their eyes a marvellous sight was spread.

The summits of gigantic mountains overgrown with forest, dark-blue precipices, primeval woods, luxuriant mountains—all together drenched in blue. And all this was not far away. No, quite close to them, mountain after mountain rose, only divided by abysses. Over all this a miracle of pure, blue sky.

It was all grandly, magnificently beautiful . . . All this space, full of splendid color, this exuberant, intense, almost dark-blue leafage . . . Stillness all around, solitude, and the roaring of the forests.

Overwhelmed by this grandiose beauty, she stood still for a moment, she seemed to have forgotten that he was beside her.

He sat close by on a stone. He seemed not in the least to notice the beauty all around, he saw only her.

She stood before him, so tall and supple, a miracle of beauty.

It seemed to him that in the glow of the sun her splendid body became visible to him through her light, bright dress. He saw clearly all its contours and lines, he felt them as one feels near at hand a strongly perfumed intoxicating plant. The blood throbbed in his veins in frantic rushing.

Suddenly she turned her head and directed her shining, widely-opened eyes so quietly.

"It's so beautiful here," she remarked, and somewhat confused and with a touch of dejection, began to look around her.

"That's so, but sit down!"

"Ah, no. I must be going."

"Going! Why?"

He said this as if not knowing what he said.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"I must, indeed . . ."

"Sit down a bit!"

"I don't wish to!"

"Why not?"

"Because..."

"Come on, sit down!"

It sounded like a command.

A certain willfulness, which disdained to acknowledge a feeling of fear, stirred within her; she smiled and whispered:

"And suppose I don't want to?"

A determination, cold as ice, came out on his face. He rose up on one knee, seized her supple waist with both hands and drew her towards him.

"You're so beautiful... so beautiful!" he said in a muffled voice.

When he pressed her to him, it seemed to her that something unsuspected, like an electric current passed from him to her, and a thousand flames burst out within her. Yet she wanted to resist.

"What do you think you're doing? What do you want?"

"Nothing."

"Then let go of me."

"You're so beautiful, so beautiful!"

A wild emotion mastered her. Her breast heaved high, her heart almost burst. She felt there was something cutting away her powers of resistance when he drew her to himself.

"Man, let me go!"

For a moment she fought with him, mutely and almost mechanically. Her eyes flamed and he was as pale as a corpse. He did not let go.

"If I beg you... you see... I beg," he whispered, time after time. "You're so beautiful... so beautiful..."

Her head swam, and she could not speak.

On his knees he embraced her waist with his hands and held her tightly as in a vise. He buried his face passionately in the folds of her dress and slowly but powerfully drew her down to earth... She lost all will power...

A light, uncertain smile played over her face, which, white as snow, bent lower and lower, and yielding to the domination of an unknown power, she slowly slipped almost senselessly to the ground like a broken palm...

Dazzlingly and as though drunk with victory, the setting sun glowed with glorious gold and the tenderly bright clouds all around it turned into an ardent red furnace...

That was all!

And now he was sitting here, poisoned, mocked and scorned, condemned to a mortal longing for her.

He, the richest, the handsomest, he, for whom all the village girls were 'dying', he longed in vain!

That had never happened to him before. He ground his teeth and beat his fist against a tree.

How beautiful she was, marvellously beautiful!

First in a brief dream he had dreamed of her. And this he could not recall exactly: he could only recall that she had come very close to him and that from her touch it seemed as if the sun burst into light within him. While doing this, she smiled quietly as she did when he said all the village girls were dying for him. And she incited him to climb to a summit where one's head swam.

"You must seek me," she said to him among other things, and these words and even the tone of her voice he remembered well. Today, early in the morning, he had mounted his black horse and, like a madman, had ridden over the road along which he had walked with her.

Perhaps, she was somewhere there, painting the firs and listening to the roaring of the forest?

But he did not find her.

Once he had a feeling that something resembling a person was going through the forest. Holding his breath, he listened on every side, stood motionless like a lurking tiger... But it was only a deer, and his horse, affrighted, almost jumped over the precipice... That was all he got from that ride.

Then, all had been so beautiful, like the sun at high noon. He wished it would be as beautiful again. He loved her, yet now it was his turn to 'die.'

He laughed, but his heart was full of tears of rage.

Then, she had gone away with a look as if she had become another person, as if the world had suddenly become different. She was as white as snow, and her big, sad eyes shone so strangely... Lord God! "Do you love me?" he asked her.

She did not reply at once, but after a moment's thought and with a tired smile, she said:

"No."

"Oh, you do love me!"

"Maybe!"

"Why—maybe?"

"Because, because, that's different."

Was she making a mock of him in that she showed herself no more? Would she really never come again any more?

It was possible!

The village girls came more than once or twice when they loved a fellow, for example: him! Proudly and impatiently he shook his handsome head, and a stifled, savage cry burst from his lips.

Yes, he was simply going mad . . .

He felt as though his soul was in a jumble and would no longer settle into order. He hardly bothered about his horses, scarcely even drove them to water.

What should he do?

What should he do to see her again, to have her?

If she ever fell into his hands again, she would have to go with him up to his place on the mountain, willy-nilly. She must. He was determined.

He would sit with her all by himself. She did not like to be alone. There she could listen from morning till night to the roaring of the forest—no one would hinder her. He would be able to come to her, for she would be his, but strangers . . .

He knit his brows fiercely.

Let any of them venture it! He would fly with a smashed skull into some abyss where even the vultures would not find him.

It was not advisable to play tricks on a Hutsul in love.

But she would fare well with him.

All the woolen covers with beautiful figured stripes which his mother kept in a chest down below for him, he would carry up to the peak. All the gay-colored kerchiefs, silken materials, the silver coins, the magnificent colored sashes, all richly woven, shirts white as snow, skins of bears that he had killed himself, all the embroidered sheep-skin coats, all these he would carry up to the peak and surround her with them all.

His black horse with the carved saddle, silver mounted, which he had inherited from his grandfather—he would give her that too, for as a matter of course, she, as a true Hutsul, would not deign to go anywhere on foot.

Only, If the horse took it into its head to rear under her, as its habit was at every bridge, that would be the end of it at once! He would shoot it on the spot, as he had done to the golden-maned mare which some gentleman had once entrusted to him to graze on the mountain meadow. He wanted to clean out a sore on its leg, but it lashed out at him in the ribs so that he had to stay at home for nearly two weeks like a cripple. He paid the mare afterwards for it, maybe paid it too much, but anyway the horse got what was coming to it!

Yes, he was good when he was good . . . But when he was bad! . .

He ran his fingers through his hair, wiped his brow and kept on thinking how he might get her.

Already he was planning something.

Sure, he still had the red silk handkerchief which had fallen out of her belt, and which she had forgotten to take with her. What an

odor it gave off! God knows among what herbs it had lain. He would take it to the old Hutsul sorceress. She could surely help when nothing else would. But for the time being he wanted to have nothing to do with the old woman. He was thinking out something by himself . . .

The door of the house opened, his mother came out and called him to supper.

"I don't want to eat," he said suddenly without raising his head.

"God bless you, my son!" replied his mother gravely, "I think you're shaping to get sick. May Christ keep it away . . . May the good saints turn it back!"

With a troubled countenance she felt his forehead and tried to look into his eyes.

He sidled away from her anxious, sunken eyes.

"You see?" said his mother with triumphant bitterness, "they put it on you down there. May God make them pay for it! Here, let me suck the evil spell from out your brow." And, kissing him, she sucked the spell out of his forehead.

"There, now it will be better; and afterwards, I'll put out the fire and smoke the house with herbs. Ah!" she complained, "that was an unlucky hour when you cut down that tree. You came home to me sick with a hanging head. You don't play your fife and you scarcely eat. May the saints turn the evil back on your enemies! Well, come inside . . . What are you doing there with your axe?"

"I want to go into the forest."

"What for?"

"I want to cut down another fir."

"Have you gone crazy? God preserve you!" she cried in fear. "Do you want to be locked up a second time . . . and fall sick? Give it up, my dear, give it up. The evil hour is still on you, and you're not altogether clear of it yet."

"I'm going, mother, I must go," he replied gloomily, and hanging his head, he covered his face with both hands. "I must," he continued, "put up another pen for the sheep beside the shed. One might get sick, and you could keep your eye on it while I'm away in the forest with the others or looking after the stream where I catch the trout and I'll cut a fir there. The forest is thicker there than anywhere else, and the sound of the axe won't carry. I'll cut the tree close to the ground and cover the stump with moss. I'll make the fence there on the spot and throw the chips into the water, and then let anyone come and take me to court! I'm not afraid!"

He stood up as he spoke the last words with gloomy resolution.

"I'm going now, mother, and don't expect me before midnight."

"If it must be absolutely so, then go," said the mother sadly.

"But it would be better if you stayed at home. And the weather may change; the storm hasn't blown over for today."

"No. It won't come again today. Yonder, the evening star is winking already, and the moon will be full tonight!"

"Then go and God be with you! I'll keep your supper for you, and until you come, I'll spin and pray for you."

Swiftly he went down the familiar slope covered with forest, impatiently kicking dry branches or pieces of tree which lay in his path. A deep stillness reigned in the forest, and only his firm tread or now and then a muttered curse when he made a bad step broke the silence.

"I'll get her, all the same!" he thought, with malicious joy. "I'll go down to the stream and cut the biggest fir right where the people pass. Then someone will go and report me to the gentlemen down there; they'll want to shut me up again for another forty-eight hours, and then I'll go to the lawyer's and hang around there till she comes out!"

But was she his daughter? No, she must have been only joking when she said she had seen him there very often! Why hadn't he seen her? And why did he see the lawyer's wife? That short, awe-inspiring lady who always looked at his feet when she used to come into the office when he was there. That could be her mother... she couldn't belong there, she must belong somewhere else. She talked Ukrainian, her mother talked some awful language. God only knows what. He hated her.

He knew only one thing. He would wait at the lawyer's until she showed up, and then he would go after her... and then she would have to be his.

He walked faster and faster. He was now not far from his goal. Already through the forest, which was now thinning out, could be seen the waters of the mountain stream, glittering in the moonlight.

Only a few steps more and he would be at the spot.

Right in front of him, along the mountain side, flowed the stream; stirred up today by the storm, it was running in great foaming waves which gleamed plaintively in the moonlight.

More lovely nostalgic than ever, the whole range of mountains rose proudly before his eyes. Illuminated by the magical moonlight, by millions of stars, it was as beautiful as a fairy tale.

Did he perceive, did he feel the magnificent beauty of nature? From a child he had been accustomed to the splendid mountain scenery, he knew the silent summer nights, bright as day, for on many a night he had not slept while guarding his horses; and yet... and yet, when his view reached beyond the peaks wrapped in blue clouds, his heart was seized by a deep and inexpressible longing.

And here at his feet the waves purred and muttered a melancholy something, their sounds awoke in his heart... tears. Yes, he felt so heavy, he felt himself so orphaned, and knew not himself why, but he began to sing... A true child of his people, he sought relief in song.

Far and wide the melancholy song carried in the distance, and melted in splendid harmony with the beauty of the bright, clear night.

He threw his hat on the ground as though all his sad thoughts had found a nesting place there.

When he came here, he had thrown the handkerchief about his neck. The strange perfume which exhaled from it, and which he in general had noticed about her, led him to feel that she stood more vividly before his mind. A longing and a turbulent hunger for her kept coming back ever more strongly.

He turned his back to the stream.

The last fir on the bank received the first stroke. At first the strokes fell slowly, in measure, then more swiftly, more strongly. He worked thus for an hour, without resting even for an instant. A sort of feverishness had seized upon him. Unceasingly he thought about her. She stood before his mind so vividly in all her entrancing beauty, with all her speech and smile. He seemed to be living through all of it again.

How beautiful, how marvellously beautiful she was!

And to cap it all, there was the dream!

The dream still lived in his memory. Just as if at this moment he felt her caress, felt her soft warm body...

"You must seek me!" He heard it suddenly right beside him. He shuddered and stopped chopping. Almost at the same moment, the words were repeated: "You must seek me!"

Yes, it was her voice... Her voice!

Before he could recover, the fir cracked and swayed, and falling, almost caught him—if he had not leaped aside in time! He was terrified, as never before in his life, and his hair stood on end.

What was that?

He looked around, then into the water... the words had come from there, so loud and so clear...

But nothing stirred. The waves followed one after another, not too swiftly, but not too slowly, ever new and new ones. The fir had fallen into the water, and the waves slowly and deliberately heaved it up on their crests and majestically carried it away with them.

And yet everything was so calm and tranquil, as though awaiting something... the floating tree, even the entire forest—everything, as though it had to be so, as though it had to witness something.

The waves glittered in the moonlight, and over them there moved some bluish, cloudy forms, nay, they were everywhere, they had gathered as though bent on crushing and overwhelming all.

A frantic fit of shuddering fear seized him; he would have roared: Away, you beasts! But suddenly he thought of God. He crossed himself again many times—then, as though by some inward command, he tore the silken handkerchief from his neck and crumpling it up in his hand, hurled it into the water.

In an instant it had all become clear to him.

She was a witch... a witch!... Oh, holy Mother of God!... Oh, all the saints!...

What had he got into? With whom had he to do?

A feeling of rabid hatred against her came over him.

He could have killed her on the spot, crushed, trampled her under foot like a dog, like a worm... For now like a flash of lightning he was solving riddle after riddle...

Not for nothing had she red hair.

Not for nothing did she exhale the odor of herbs.

Not for nothing was she so marvellously beautiful, so like the Mother of God, for only in that way could she have cast a spell over him!

Not for nothing did she wander alone in the forest. What Christian goes into the forest to listen how it roars?

And why wouldn't she say who she was?

And why must she have been there in the courtyard when he could not remember her face?

And then she said she had no good fortune! Only those who are wholly accursed by God have none... Some good fortune God allows to everyone. She was trying to turn his good fortune away from him. Ha, ha, ha!

"You must seek me!" she had hissed in the dream. "Yes, indeed, seek me!" For this he had come here following her call, God knows whither, in order to fall into the claws of her kin, in order that his good fortune might pass over to her! Why had she asked whether he was the only child of his parents? None but the only children are especially endowed with good fortune.

And why wouldn't she promise to come again, if she was really a girl and the child of Christian parents? Why wasn't she afraid when she was in the forest all by herself? And yet she pretended in his presence that she was afraid? He was no *Dovbush*!

May the lightning strike her! May it smite her and destroy every trace of her from the face of the earth! Or let her turn to stone, or

let her be torn to pieces by wild horses, or let the earth swallow her up! Yes, let her fall over a precipice somewhere and be swallowed up!

At last he calmed completely.

He went home as sober as he used to be before, so much so that he almost smiled. One ray of light flashed through his mind. All this had to happen to him because he had moved into his new house on the peak without first having had it blessed!

But first thing tomorrow he would go to see the priest.

Michael Kotsiubynsky

THE DUEL

Translated by Dr. C. H. Andrusyshen

ON THE ROCK

Translated by A. Mykytiak

LAUGHTER

Translated by Marie S. Gambal

Michael Kotsiubynsky was born in 1864 in the family of a city civil servant in Vynnytsia, Podilia, where he finished the primary and intermediate schools in preparation for the profession of a teacher. He received his teacher's certificate and then taught school for nearly two years in the village of Lopatyntsi. In 1892 he secured a government position as an official to combat phylloxera (plant lice) in the vineyards of Bessarabia and the Crimea. In 1898 he was transferred to Chernihiv to a position in the local *zemstvo* (a self-governing body), where he remained until 1911. He began writing at the age of 20, his first production being published in 1890. With the experience and impressions acquired as a teacher and civil servant, he had collected enough themes and material to launch a series of stories and tales on the life of the people in a realistic style. Later on, in 1902, especially in his work, *Apple Blossoms*, and in the story included in this anthology, *On the Rock*, he changed to an impressionistic style, and thus became one of the founders of the impressionistic trend in Ukrainian literature. The themes of Kotsiubynsky's later productions, including the plot in another story in this anthology, *Laughter*, are influenced by the events of the 1905 revolution and the years of reaction that followed. One of the most impressionistic works of Kotsiubynsky is the story *Fata Morgana*, the first part of which was written in 1903 and the second part in 1910. The crowning point of Kotsiubynsky's creative art was reached when in 1911 he wrote the story *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, which actually is a wonderful prose poem of the life and nature of the Ukrainian Hutsul region. In his stories Kotsiubynsky was a humanist, sensitive to human vicissitudes and human grief, charmed by beauty and nature. The favorite authors of this distinguished writer were the western masters of prose, Zola, Strindberg, Hamsun, Schnitzler, Maeterlinck and others. Michael Kotsiubynsky died in the city of Chernihiv, in 1913.

THE DUEL

They had just finished dinner—Madame Antonina and her daughter's tutor, Ivan Piddubny.

He rose from the couch, carefully moved the round table and the remains of the supper still on it, and she held out her hand for him to kiss. He began to kiss it, not as acquaintances usually do, but on the palm and higher.

Madame Antonina did not mind; on the contrary, throwing her head back and, with her greenish eyes watering within their reddened lids, as they always did after the liqueurs, she looked down on the young man's curly head. With her free hand she unbuttoned her sleeve and pointed, saying:

"Here, here . . ."

His lips followed the blue vein up to the soft white contour which shone in the subdued light of the table lamp.

All of a sudden they heard a violent clatter on the window pane.

The window pane shook, and all its panes jarred wildly.

They were startled, and their bulging eyes stared at the dark window through which the snow-covered branches of the garden could hardly be seen.

"Who is it? What is it?"

"My husband—he saw it all."

And while they stood there in helpless expectation of something terrible and inevitable, the sepulchral silence was broken by the slamming of a door. The sound of steps was heard, and the master of the house dashed into the room with his cap and overcoat still on and snow clinging to his galoshes. He was short, his eyes sparkled with anger, and his beard trembled.

He carried his left arm outstretched from the moment he had entered the house, and having reached the dining room, he pointed to the door.

"Out! Out with you!"

Ivan Piddubny's features changed, he wanted to say something, staggered, raised his hand and then, his head lowered and step uncertain, crossed the dining room, brushed past the master, went through the next room, and into the vestibule. Behind him he heard Madame trying to pacify her husband in a subdued, dull voice:

"Be yourself, Mykola. Have you lost your senses?"

"Out! Out with you!" Mykola shrieked thinly and unnaturally, stamping, his feet still in the galoshes.

As the instructor was putting on his sheep-skin coat, his pupil, ten-year-old Ludia, having heard the commotion, rushed into the vestibule. She was half-undressed: a short white slip, hanging on white shoulder-straps, did not even reach her stockings, and revealed her bare knees. She crossed her arms over her breast and, bending slightly forward, turned her frightened blue eyes to her father beseechingly:

"Daddy! Daddy! Don't chase *Pan** Ivan away . . ."

That's what she called her beloved teacher. But daddy paid no attention to her. He also rushed into the vestibule, gesticulating comically as he declaimed:

"I took you in as my own son, as a gentleman . . . I fed you, paid you . . ."

Madame Antonina was saying something, Ludia was screaming—but Ivan did not hear it. He found his cap, mechanically grabbed *Pan* Mykola's umbrella out of the corner, and hurried out.

A sharp gust of cold air, the blazing windows of the houses, people's voices, the coachmen's bells—be careful!—and he found himself on a silent, deserted street. Before him he saw *Pan* Mykola's outstretched left arm and two red blots—were they caused by the frost or by the emotion? His ears continually dinned with: "Out! Out with you!" . . . A scandal! A shame! Blood boiled in his ears, he felt a lump in his throat. He ran on unconsciously, his sheep-skin coat unbuttoned, somebody else's umbrella under his arm.

The moon had already set. The stars were sparkling on the snow, as if they had rained down from the sky. The contours of the objects around were sharply outlined. The trees, buildings, fences seemed as hard as if chiselled out of marble, and appeared strangely calm, strangely strong. The blue light was sharp and prickly, as if frozen.

The tutor didn't notice anything—he kept running down the street with but one desire: to reach home as quickly as possible, to hide himself from people, from shame.

"Out!"

"Out" just kept following him. It even ran ahead of him.

He passed several coaches. He wanted to drive home, but thought that it might cost him more than five kopecks.

Piddubny rushed into his room and, without putting the light on or taking his clothes off, threw himself upon the bed.

* *Pan* — Ukrainian equivalent of Sir or Mister.

The entire event stood vividly before his eyes. Besides the shame and the dishonor that burned in his blood, he felt ridiculous. He had been driven out like a dog, and, humbled like a dog, he felt impotent, speechless, timid. She would never forgive his disgrace, his baseness. He should have said something, done something. But what? He did not know. It was his first love affair with a lady of quality. A poor tutor, from an impoverished urban family, once dismissed from school, he had never allowed his sinful thoughts to reach beyond a house-servant or some poor lass who dressed in her best only on holidays and whose hands were always red from work. It so happened that this forty-two year old well-to-do lady had thrown herself into his arms so suddenly and craftily that he had hardly dared to protest. He became her prisoner. She needed him every hour, every minute day and night. She assured him that he had good taste, and had him buy buttons, thread, cloth and furniture for her. She dragged him along with her from store to store on shopping tours. Then she decided that Ludia should study more, and, instead of one hour, he was to put in three. Since the lunch hour came in the middle of the lesson, he was always asked to join them. She took him to concerts and to the theatre, when her husband was occupied elsewhere. He had to listen to her music, much music, although he did not understand it; and whenever he stayed late in the evening, it appeared that not only she but her husband also asked him to remain for the night. He was then given a separate room which once belonged to the nurse-maid, and in the morning, as he went down for coffee, he would at times pluck a woman's grey hair off his clothes.

Coming for a lesson, Ivan usually entered an empty, almost dead, house. The husband would be at work, Ludia would be playing somewhere at the farther end of the garden or at the home of her friends, and the servants were not permitted to show themselves in the living room while their mistress was busy with her toilette. She would half-open the door of the third room, her dressing room, look out, her hair loosened and her arms naked, and call him to her. She would kiss his eyes, cheeks, lips passionately, endlessly, tickle him with her unravell'd hair which smelled of stale pomade, throw her naked arms around his neck—while his head whirled.

"Ivas... Ivasechko... Ivanko... my own, my little darling," she moaned between kisses, "my master, my lord, blood of my heart, poesy of my life, my Romeo."

Then she would tell him to kiss her, hold out her neck, shoulders, her high and well preserved breasts, raise her arms so that he might kiss her armpits, and then laugh nervously when he tickled her with his moustache. She would sway to all sides, and her greenish eyes would look down upon him from out of their red lids, while the

wrinkles on her face smoothed out under his caresses. Then she would produce from under her pillow a folded paper and thrust it into his hands quickly and mysteriously:

"Here! This is for you."

The fine feminine hand-writing and blue ink would tell him that it was a letter from her.

While attending to Ludia, he would secretly unfold the letter and read it. Ludia was then free to do whatever she liked.

The letter would be five or six pages long, written in a somewhat old-fashioned, florid style, with allegories and long, labored periods. It would smell of stale pomade and was spotted with kiss prints, not allegorical but real, impressed on the letter paper and added as an illustration to the tender words. "If you could only look into the abyss of my feelings, and, enhaloed by the celestial brightness of my love . . . I wish I could live eternally on your breast, make my abode upon it and, in ineffable happiness, in boundless ecstasy, drink the dew from your lips, kiss your footprints, caress the air you breathe . . ." You are my lord, my master, my life and death . . ."

She wrote him such letters at least twice a day. She either thrust them into his hands or asked Ludia to deliver them. He often found them in the pockets of his overcoat or received them by mail. The drawers of his table were stocked with papers written in blue ink, and the air of the room was filled with their particular odor. To every letter she demanded an answer, a long, passionate answer, brimming with unearthly feelings, with the spirit of knighthood. She demanded it. His duty was to lay bare his soul before her. He decorated it with theatrical tinsel, toiled, perspired, and yet nothing would come out of it. Whenever he failed to answer, or, if he did, it was short and pale, she quarreled with him, called him good-for-nothing, common; but after a while she again threw herself on his chest, petted him, put even longer letters into his pockets, and dressed more lightly so that he might have a freer access to her flesh. During her attacks of tenderness, she often moistened with saliva the cigarettes which she smoked without number, and stuck them into his mouth. Or she would snatch a cigarette from his lips and smoke it herself—then her greenish eyes within their red lids became encircled with wrinkles of gleaming satisfaction. Such love tortured him, although at the same time it tickled his pride. What he feared most was to become ridiculous in her eyes. And now:

"Out!" And out he had gone, like a dog.

Piddubny groaned as if he were wounded. It was his own fault. He should have done something. But what? Fight? No. Throw a glove in his face? But he had no gloves with him. Challenge him to a duel? Perhaps.

His eyes happened to fall on the window and he writhed in pain. The window pained him. He rose from the bed and pulled down the blind. Then he lay down again and covered his head with a pillow. A vague and formless dissatisfaction with himself crept up in his breast. His head seemed to swell and, at the same time, become empty. Only incoherent and disordered thoughts passed through it, like summer shadows.

She would see him in the nurse's room. Kiss me! But when he became too pressing in his desire, she would be seized with fright.

"I am afraid... I am afraid, my darling," she would whisper, terror in her eyes and pain on her lips, and then, looking uneasily around her, she would push him away.

He had nothing to fear and did not listen to her. Then she would tremble and shriek thinly like a fly in a web, but this conventional mannerism, feigned by an aging woman, only irritated him.

"Oh! My darling, my own!... I am afraid... I hear someone coming..."

And she would tear herself away from him, leaving him alone with his burning desire...

At other times she was simply merciless. During long evenings, she forced him to listen to music, mostly classical—Bach, Haydn, Beethoven—and at the end of a fugue or a sonata rendered with understanding and expression, she turned to him on her swivel tabouret, and asked with triumph in her eyes:

"Did you like it?"

His answer would be vague: "Yes... no... well, you see..."

She would fix her angry eyes on him.

"You are an ass, you don't understand anything," she would say.

She would then purse her lips and turn her round back to him.

He would sit depressed and think that she was right.

She was capricious, passionate, sentimental and oldish. Her behavior reminded him of an old French novel.

"Daddy, don't chase *Pan Ivan* away!"

He saw the bare arms and long legs under the white slip, and that beseeching, innocent look in the eyes of the child...

Why did they make this innocent soul the witness of this domestic slough?

How he hated that official with those red spots on his face, that trembling beard and that shrill voice! How he hated him for being the husband of his mistress, the cause of his shame and timidity!

Oh, how wonderful it would have been to strike him down, to press him down with the entire weight of his body, to seize him by the throat! But what would she have said?

"A ruffian! A hoodlum!"

She would expect decorum, a duel . . .

"Well then, let it be a duel!"

This he said aloud, then sat up on his bed and stared into the darkness.

A duel scene from some novel passed through his mind. A green meadow. The witnesses were wearing top hats. He raised the pistol . . . bluish smoke . . . and then sank down . . . a red streamlet trickled through his shirt . . .

Piddubny closed his eyes, trembled, and hid his head under the pillows.

No, he could not do that! He simply couldn't!"

His entire body squirmed at the very thought of blood. Finally he was comforted by the supposition that *Pan* Mykola would refuse a duel.

Inquiries, police investigations, a trial. This would place him in a ridiculous position. What then? Piddubny lay in darkness long and alone, thinking to the accompaniment of the night watchman's rattle.

"Well!" said Ivan, sitting up in bed. "You've acted like a pig. You have forced yourself into the family and taken somebody else's wife. Have the boldness, then, to acquit yourself honorably. Take her and make your own nest . . . On what? The ten kopecks in your pocket? On your poverty? And what about the child?"

He felt something stir within him; it gurgled through his throat in a convulsive laughter. "Such a middle-aged woman? The remnants? No!"

His thoughts again reverted to the matter of a duel. He must wash away his burning shame with blood.

Another scene.

They fired at each other. Something sharp pierced his body in the very spot where the insult rankled, and he felt relieved—he was both a corpse and a hero!

They talked about him, felt very sorry for him, wept for him, wrote him long letters, tender letters—endless, blue lines on expensive paper—letters which he would never read.

His consciousness doubled, and, at the same time, as he noted the result of the duel, he realized that it was only a fantasy. Nonsense. He would not for anything in the world expose himself to the barrel of a pistol.

He kept forcing his thoughts to dwell upon the duel. He tried to imagine what would happen to him after he was dead. In the first place, he would not breathe—and he really stopped breathing and lay motionless. The blood in his veins grew cold and thick, like jelly; the members of his body became rigid, wooden, inflexible. Like papier-

maché. Emptiness in his head, emptiness in his breast. It was impossible to cover his mouth or to force a sound through his throat...

Then, in a passionate impulse of vitality he forced a short sound out of his breast, touched his body, bent his arm. All of a sudden he leaped to his feet. A happy thought flashed through his mind. It was without form as yet, light and subtle like ether; and while it trembled and agitated before him, like an escaping gas, he felt how, from the very depths of his being, there arose his own insignificance, pretence and capitulation, to glare at him with green eyes, to wind around him like snakes, to fume his head with ill-smelling vapors.

Finally he succeeded in grasping this thought. There it was!

He would challenge *Pan* to a duel by means of a letter, a letter which would pass through Antonina's hands—and she certainly would not allow the matter to go to any extremes, one way or another.

He jumped to his feet almost joyfully.

The window behind the blind grayed and showed several bright blots; a pale wintry light entered the room from the outside. It had been snowing all night.

Piddubny lit a candle.

In what form was he to write the letter? He did not know. There were a few romantic novels around somewhere, perhaps something could be found in them. He began to rummage for them. What the devil happened to them? They were nowhere to be found. Well, it didn't matter. He only knew that he would close the letter with, "Yours contemptuously." What a glorious thought that was—yours contemptuously!

"Dear Sir!"

And he stopped. Thoughts took possession of his head, but forms were driving them out.

Finally, after crossing out many words and recopying them again and again, he composed the letter.

"Dear Sir! Yesterday you were bold enough to offend me gravely. Only blood can wash away this insult. Kindly arrange for a time and place where I may direct my seconds. Yours contemptuously, Ivan Piddubny."

Then he crossed out "contemptuously" and wrote „truly", re-copied the letter and addressed it to *Pan* Mykola Tsiupa.

There!

It was still early, half past seven. The Tsiupas usually rose at about nine. Piddubny paced his room and kept glancing at his watch. Time dragged; finally he put on his sheep-skin coat and went out.

It was sunny and warm. Soft snow covered the ground and the building obliterated the outlines of the fences, clung to the bark of the trees and to their branches. Through the white net formed by the

branches the bright blue sky shone, while on the snow, in the gold of the sun, bluish shadows flickered. The sun and the air tickled one's cheeks, and the greenness of the fir branches peeped from under the snow so freshly that it seemed as though spring were merely clothed in white garments.

A crow flew by and perched on a fence.

But how was he to send the letter so that it would get into Antonina's hands? He feared meeting *Pan Mykola*, who often left home earlier than usual.

A herd of cattle was being driven to the slaughter-house... a heap of russet hides, legs and horned heads.

How wonderful it was to breathe—one drank the air as though it were warm milk. Look, the sun had brought a starlet on a snowy branch to life.

The letter was getting crumpled in his pocket. It had to be sent. It would be brought to her—she would come to the door. A letter? From whom? Ah, yes! Her face would change color as she took it to her husband.

A deserted street. Two rows of white houses topped with white roofs, and the snow between them. The smoke is winding skyward. A *moskal* is hurrying by with a basket on his arm. Hey, you! Hey!... The fellow approached Ivan.

"Take this letter... There, see those two windows? Give it to the lady, do you hear? I'll give you ten kopecks when you come back."

He fumbled in his pocket and found the money.

He walked up and down the street and waited.

The *moskal* returned.

"Are you sure you gave it to the lady?"

"Yes, she took it."

"Here you are."

What would happen now? How would it all end?

The day was long, endless, fearful. At noon the sky was smiling. The melting snow was dripping from the roofs and the entire room was bathed in gold.

He paced the room, thinking.

Food wouldn't pass his throat, his mouth was dry, his head heavy. What would happen?

After lunch he lay down on the bed. He was cold, indifferent, numb, expecting nothing.

It would turn out one way or another.

Gray shadows wandered about his room, the window darkened and dissolved, evening dust invaded his heart. Nobody, nothing was heard around him.

Knock-knock... Was somebody knocking at the door?

"May I come in?"

Whose voice was it? He trembled and sprang out of his bed.

"Come in."

It was he... *Pan* Mykola. His voice was hoarse, he looked sideways, he didn't take off his overcoat, nor did he offer his hand.

He sat down.

Ivan looked for matches; his trembling hand couldn't strike fire.

"Never mind, thank you."

Ivan kept trying to strike fire.

"You, you..." *Pan* Mykola began hoarsely, "you mustn't be angry with me, I was drunk last night. Nothing else, simply drunk... nothing else... Well, when a man is drunk, you understand..."

Aha! Of course, he was drunk... dead drunk... and nothing else... Ivan couldn't understand how it was possible not to have noticed that the man was as drunk as a hundred-litre cask of brandy, as a cabaret full of women... ha-ha!... How was it possible not to have noticed that?

"Ludia misses you... come tomorrow and continue her lessons... and forget what happened between us yesterday..."

Ha-ha! Ah, you old drunkard! You were as drunk as a... and nothing else... Of course he would come, by all means, ha-ha... Everything within him laughed. He had a mind to stifle the hoarse throat of that man, although he tried to reveal neither his joy nor his desire...

Of course he would come... and nothing else... ha-ha-ha!

And not a word about the letter!

Swine!

Piddubny was roused from sleep. He had slept soundly all night, as if he had been dead. About noon he took *Pan* Mykola's umbrella under his arm and hastened to his pupil. The familiar feeling of a teacher, on his way to give a lesson, comforted him. Only when he crossed the threshold and glanced at the steps he had descended the day before yesterday, and, above all, when he put the umbrella in the corner—the thoughts of that evening rushed at him like cold water and fettered the freedom of his movements.

Ludia was already standing in the doorway of her room, and, jumping on her long legs, she was stretching out her thin arms to *Pan* Ivan.

"*Pan* Ivan... *Pan* Ivan..." she squealed joyfully, looking at him with amorous eyes, eyes like her mother's.

They went to work immediately.

Nothing had changed: the lesson was interrupted and they were called to lunch.

Once more he crossed those rooms out of which he had been driven yesterday. In the dining room he saw the round table, and *Pan* Mykola and Madame Antonina.

Pan Mykola pressed his hand drily. Madame Antonina looked tired but beaming; and, taking advantage of a moment of *Pan* Mykola's inattention, she thrust into Ivan's hands such a bundle of papers that he hardly knew where to hide it.

They lunched in silence, though trying hard to make conversation.

Pan Mykola was polite, attentive, too much so perhaps. From time to time, he passed the food to Ivan, saying, as he looked somewhere beyond him:

"Come, come, why don't you eat? Won't you have this? And this?..."

And that "this-s-s" was spoken with such emphasis, as if his mouth were full of wasps.

Ivan had not yet gained his composure; he lowered his eyes and ate, endlessly, unconsciously, with as much courage and self-sacrifice as was exhibited by *Pan* Mykola in urging him to eat.

Madame Antonina would often lose her napkin, and, bending to pick it up, she would pinch Ivan's leg.

At times she would place his hand on her lap. Ludia sighed and raised her head heavenward.

"Thank you, dear God! Now we are all happy."

ON THE ROCK

From the cafe in the Tatar village, both the sea and the gray sandy shores could be clearly seen. The bright azure of the sea seemed to flow unbrokenly into the open windows and doors, and merged with the blue sky into a seeming endlessness. Even the sultry air of the summer day carried soft bluish hues in which the contours of distant coastal mountains melted and dissolved.

A wind was blowing from the sea. The salty breezes had lured the patrons and, having ordered their coffee, they congregated near the windows or sat down on the veranda. Even the owner of the cafe, the crooked-legged Mehmed, attentively supervising the orders of the guests, called over to his younger brother: "*Dzhepar, bir cave... iki cave!*" (One coffee... two coffees). Meanwhile he leaned out of the door to breathe in the moist breeze and for a moment to lift the small round Tatar cap off his shaven head.

While Dzhepar, red-faced from the heat, fanned the glow on the burner and poked in the pan to whip a thick foam on the coffee, Mehmed contemplated the sea.

"There will be a storm," he said, without turning. "The wind grows stronger. Yonder on that boat the sails are being reefed."

The Tatars turned their faces toward the sea.

On a large black barge that seemed headed for the shore, the sails were reefed indeed. The wind bulged and bellied them and they were torn from the sailor's hands like big white birds; the black boat leaned heavily and lay sideways upon the blue waves.

"It is heading toward us," said Dzhepar. "It is the Greek who brings salt."

Mehmed also recognized the Greek's boat. To him it was very significant, for besides the cafe he ran a small grocery store in the village, and was a butcher. In other words, he needed salt.

When the barge came nearer, Mehmed left the cafe and hurried toward the shore. The guests hastened to empty their cups and rushed after him. They crossed a narrow, winding street which curved around the mosque, and descended by way of a stone path to the sea. The blue water seethed and boiled with foam on the sand. The barge surged in the same spot, splashed like a fish but could not reach the shore. The gray mustached Greek and his young servant Danhalak, tall and long-legged, exerted all their strength by pushing with their bodies

on the oars; yet they did not succeed in bringing their boat to shore. Finally, the Greek threw the anchor down into the water while Danhalak quickly began to pull off his shoes and roll up his yellow pants above his knees. From the beach, the Tatars exchanged words of encouragement with the Greek. Blue waves were whipped to milk at their feet, where it melted and sizzled on the sand before receding into the sea.

"Are you ready, Ali?" the Greek shouted at Danhalak.

Instead of an answer, Ali threw his bare feet over the side of the boat and jumped down into the water. With a skillful move, he caught from the Greek a bag of salt, threw it over his shoulder and lunged on to the shore. His tall figure in narrow yellow pants and a blue jacket, his healthy face tanned by the sea wind, and with a red kerchief on his head, was reflected very beautifully against the background of the azure sea.

Ali threw down on the sand his load of salt and leaped into the water again, his wet red calves diving into the light foam that was whipped like the white of an egg, and gradually washing them in the pure blue waves. Time after time he ran back to the Greek; then he had to snatch the moment when the boat had been lowered down to his shoulders in order that he might dexterously receive the heavy sack. The boat rose and fell on the waves and tugged on the anchor like a dog on its chain while Ali was constantly toiling from the boat to the shore and back. The waves often caught up with him and threw at his feet their balls of white foam.

At times Ali would let the right moment pass, and then he had to grasp the side of the barge and ride along like a lobster clinging to the ship's side.

The Tatars had gathered on the shore. Even in the village, on the flat roofs the Tatar women appeared, disregarding the heat, looking out from there, like colorful flowers in their garden plots.

Gradually the sea lost its temporary calmness. Small boats rose from the individual rocks on the shore, lay with their breasts upon the waves and swept over the sea. The sea became dark and changed. Small waves merged together and like clumps of greenish glass, crawled unnoticed toward the shore, fell upon the sand, and shattered in white foam.

Beneath the Greek's boat, the sea boiled and seethed and foamed, while the boat itself leaped up and floated as though riding away on white-haired breasts. The Greek often turned to look back and examine the sea with great anxiety. Ali, spattered all over with foam, now ran swiftly from the boat to the beach. The water at the shore began to turn muddy and yellow. The waves threw up stones and sand from the bottom of the sea; and at the ebbing of the tide they

were dragged along the ground with a thunder as though something huge were gritting its teeth and roaring.

Within half an hour the flood had leaped over the stones, flowed over the shore road and reached even to the bags of salt.

"Mehmed! Nurla! Come here, people, and help! Or else the salt will get wet. Ali, come here, I say!" the Greek snorted.

The Tatars made quite a commotion, while the Greek together with his boat was dancing on the waves, bored to death by the sea. At length, the salt was brought to a safe place. Meanwhile the sea acted in stride. Then the monotonous, rhythmic echo of the waves changed to billowing, at first like dumb, heavy panting, then becoming short and violent like a distant shot from a cannon. Clouds flitted like gray cobwebs across the sky. The surging sea, now dirty and dark, dashed upon the shore and covered the rocks off which rivulets of water, muddy with foam, streamed and dripped.

"Hey, hey! There'll be a storm!" Mehmed cried out to the Greek. "Pull your boat upon the shore!"

"What-what do you say?" the Greek croaked, trying to drown out the flood in his shouting.

But the Greek was now alarmed. He turned around, and amid the splash and blast of the breakers he began to loosen the chain and to fasten the rope. Ali also rushed to the chain. The Tatars now pulled off their slippers, rolled up their pants and got ready to aid. Finally, the Greek lifted the anchor, and the large barge, snatched up by the muddy waves that had soaked the Tatars from head to foot, glided onward toward the shore. The small group of hunched and drenched Tatars noisily pulled out from the sea, amid the gurgling foam, the black barge which seemed like some sea monster or an enormous dolphin.

Lo and behold! The barge, at last, was lying on the sand. It was tied to the post. The Tatars shook the water off and then, together with the Greek, they weighed the salt. Ali helped, though at times when his master was absorbed in talking with his customers, he would cast glances at the unfamiliar village. The sun was already setting over the mountains.

The small Tatar huts, built of unhewn stones, with flat earthen roofs, one above the other like little card houses, without any fences, gates or streets, clung all over the bare gray projections of the rock. Paths wound down along the stone declivity, disappeared among the roofs and emerged somewhere straight below the stone steps, black and bare. On one roof, by some miracle, there was a thin, silken tree, which to one looking up appeared to spread like a dark crown on the blue sky.

In turn, beyond the village, in a distant perspective, a magic world revealed itself. In the deep-seated valleys, green with the grape and full of a gray mist, stone groups huddled, roseate from the setting sun or looming blue from the thick forest. Barren mound-shaped mountains like gigantic tents cast a shadow of blackness, and the distant gray-blue peaks seemed like the prongs of congealed clouds. At times the sun sent down from behind the clouds into the mist, the bottom of the valley, its oblique strands of golden threads, cutting through the rosy rocks, the blue forests, the heavy black tents, and kindling the altar-fire on the pointed peaks.

In the midst of this legendary panorama the Tatar village appeared as a cairn of rude stones, and it was only the group of tall girls who were returning from the fountain, jugs high on their shoulders, that gave life to the barren desert.

Away from the village in the deep valley, there flowed a creek among the trees. The sea flood had stopped its waters as it flowed from amongst the trees with its reflection of the green of the trees, the colorful garments of the Tatar women and the nude bodies of the children.

"Ali!" the Greek shouted. "Come! Help pour out the salt!"

Amid the roar of the sea Ali scarcely heard the call.

Over the shore, a salty fog of little drops was hanging. The turbid sea still raged. It was no longer mere waves that rose on the surface of the sea; they were billows, high, angry, white-combed, from which long bundles of foam tore away with an echo, and then spumed up. Billows rose continually; they subdued the black waves, leaped over them and inundated the shore on which they left tiny gray particles of sand. Everything was wet and drenched.

Suddenly the Tatars perceived a crack, and at the same time water poured into their slippers, and around their feet. It was a strong wave that had caught up the boat and thrown it upon the pole near by. The Greek ran up close to the boat and gasped—there was water in the boat! He cried out in distress, scolded, wept—but the roar of the sea drowned his lament. It was necessary to pull the boat to safety and tie it again.

The Greek was by now so sad that, although it was already twilight and Mehmed invited him to his cafe, he did not go into the village but remained on the shore. Like phantoms he and Ali wandered about in the mist amid the angry billowing of the sea which chilled them to the marrow. The moon which had risen some time ago, soared from cloud to cloud; in her beams the stretch of the shore appeared white from the foam, as though covered with a first fall of snow. Finally, Ali, attracted by the fires in the village, persuaded the Greek to go with him to the cafe.

Once a year this Greek distributed his salt along the Crimean villages on the shore, usually giving it out on credit. On the following day he ordered Ali to prepare the boat in order to save his own time, and then he went up the mountain path to collect debts in the villages. The shore path was flooded, and the village was cut off from the world by the sea.

With the coming of noon the waves began to subside, and Ali went down to his work. The wind made the red kerchief on his head flutter, and while he was busy with his boat he hummed a song as monotonous as the flood. At the proper time, as a faithful Moslem, he spread a kerchief on the sand and knelt in religious contemplation. In the evening he made a fire on the shore, cooked the wet rice that remained in the barge and was about to make preparations to spend the night by the side of the boat; but Mehmed called him into the cafe. It was the time of the year when the grape merchants always arrive, and often he had found it difficult to secure a place for himself, but now there was much free room.

Stillness prevailed in the cafe. Dzhepar dozed near the stove which was covered with glistening dishes, while inside the stove the fire flickered and slowly turned to ashes. When Mehmed awakened his brother by calling "cave!", Dzhepar started, leaped up and grasped the bellows in order to fan the fire. The fire began to bare its teeth, burst into sparks, reflecting itself on the copper dishes, while the fragrant steam of the fresh coffee filled the room. Under the ceiling the flies buzzed. Around the tables, on benches upholstered with silk, the Tatars were sitting. In one corner some played dice; in another they played cards, and on every side there stood small cups of black coffee.

The cafe was the heart of the village where all the interests of the populace concentrated—of the people who lived amid the rocks. There usually were the local notables: the old severe mullah Hassan, with a turban on his head and dressed in a long coat that hung like a sack on his bony, numb body. He was a somber fellow, and stubborn as an ass: the very reason he was respected by all. There was also Nurla-efendi, a wealthy man, for he owned a brownish-red cow, a woven wagon cover, and a pair of buffaloes. There, too, was the *yuzbash*, the captain who owned the only horse in the entire village. All of these people were his relatives, as well as the entire populace of this remote little village, although this did not stand in the way of a division into two enemy camps. The reason for the animosity could be traced to a small spring which trickled out of a cliff and then streamed through the centre of the village and the Tatar gardens. Thus it was this water alone that gave life to whatever grew on the rocks; and when one half of the village let it flow through their gardens,* the other half got heartaches watching the

sun and the baked rock dry up their onions. Two of the richest and most influential persons in the village had gardens on opposite sides of the stream: Nurla on the right, and the *yuzbash* on the left. And when the latter diverted the water onto his land, Nurla would dam the stream further up, and divert it to his, thus watering his own particular corner. This angered all the left-bankers, and so they, oblivious of family ties, fought for the right to life for their onions, smashing each other's heads. Nurla and the *yuzbash* headed the warring parties; but it seemed that the *yuzbash's* party was getting the better of it, as it had the support of mullah Hassan. This enmity was evident even in the cafe; for when the followers of Nurla played dice, the *yuzbashes* eyed them contemptuously and sat down to their cards. The only thing that these enemies had in common, however, was that they all drank coffee. Mehmed who had no garden, and as a merchant stood above party controversies, kept limping from Nurla to the captain, appeasing and serving them. His round face and shaved head glistened like that of a skinned ram, while in his sly, ever inflamed eyes a restless fire wandered. All the time he seemed to be troubled about something; recalling, counting and incessantly running into his small store, down into his cellar—then back again to his patrons. At times he rushed out of the cafe, raised his face toward the flat roof and called: "Fatima!"

Then on the walls of his house, rising above the cafe, like a shadow, a woman appeared, enveloped in a sheet of linen, gently moving across the roof to its very edge.

He tossed some empty sacks up to her, or ordered something in his sharp, squeaky voice, speaking curtly and imperiously, even as a master orders a maid-servant. Then the shadow disappeared as unobtrusively as it had appeared.

One day Ali had noticed the woman. He was standing near the cafe, watching how softly her yellow slippers descended the stairs that joined Mehmed's hut with the ground. Her bright green veil flowed down in folds over her tall figure from her head to the red *sharavary*. She stepped down gently, slowly, carrying in one hand an empty jug, while with the other she held together the veil in such a way that the stranger could see her long black eyes eloquent as those of a mountain deer. She rested her eyes on Ali; then she dropped her eyelashes and proceeded onward, gently and quietly, like an Egyptian priestess.

It seemed to Ali as if those eyes had pierced into his very heart and that he carried them away with him.

Once on the seashore, while putting the boat in order and humming his dreamy songs, he seemed to look into those eyes. He saw them everywhere—in the waves—transparent and tinkling like glass,

and in the hot stones shining in the sun. They even peered at him from his cup of black coffee. He cast glances at the village more frequently, and he often saw on the roof of the cafe, under the lone tree, the hazy figure of the woman turned toward the sea as though she were looking for her wandering eyes.

Everyone quickly became familiar with Ali. Girls passing by from the fountain, would pretend that they accidentally uncovered their faces; they would blush on meeting the handsome young Turk, quicken their steps and whisper to each other. In turn, the male youth liked his jovial nature. In the fresh, quiet summer evenings when the stars hung above the earth, and the moon shone above the sea, Ali would bring forth his *zurna* (flute) brought from the regions of Smyrna, and in the cafe or some other place he would talk with his native land by means of sad, heart-rending melodies. The *zurna* attracted the youth, especially the young men. They understood the song of the East, and quickly an entertainment would take place in the shadow of the stone settlements: that shadow, interwoven with a blue light. The *zurna* repeated one and the same tune — monotonous, vague, endless like the song of the cricket, so that one swooned or began to palpitate beneath the heart, and the enchanted Tatars caught up the rhythm of the song:

“O-la-la . . . O-na-na . . .”

On the one side, the mysterious world of the gigantic black mountains dreamed; on the other side, the serene sea reposed and sighed in its sleep like a baby—it trembled as a golden path under the moonlight.

“O-la-la . . . O-na-na . . .”

Those watching from their stone nests above, at times saw a hand extended that met a ray of the moon, or again the shoulders trembled during the dance as they listened to the monotonous, penetrating refrain of the *zurna*.

“O-la-la . . . O-la-la . . .”

Fatima also listened.

Her parents had been mountaineers, in a distant village where different people were living, where different customs existed, where her girl friends were left behind. In her country there was no sea. One day a butcher came, paid her father more than any other local lads could pay, and took her with him. He was repulsive, crude and strange like all these people here—like this land itself. She had no family, no girl friends, no friendly people: it was the extreme end of the world, nor were there any roads leading out from it.

“O-la-la . . . O-na-na . . .”

No roads are here—for when the sea gets angry it washes away the only trail on the seashore. Here is the sea — only the sea — every-

where. In the morning its blue blinds one's eyes; by daytime its green waves are swaying; in the night it breathes like a sick man. In fair weather it irritates with its stillness, in a storm it spits and strikes and roars like a beast and disturbs one in his sleep; its sharp air penetrates even into one's house so that no one feels well. One cannot escape it nor hide himself... it is everywhere. It stared at Fatima. Time and again it tormented her: it would cover itself with a fog, white like the snow on the mountains, until one got the impression that it was no more, that it had vanished, but beneath the fog it still raged, groaned and sighed—exactly as at this moment:

"Cra-ck!... cra-ck!... cra-ck!..."

"O-la-la... O-la-la..."

It fidgeted under the fog like a baby in diapers; then it threw it off. Long, torn shreds of fog clung to the mosque, enwrapped the village, slipped into one's house, lay down heavily on one's heart, even the sun was no longer visible... Yet, just now... just now...

"O-la-la... O-la-la..."

Fatima now often appeared on the roof of the cafe, crept to the tree and viewed the sea... But no—it was not the sea that she was looking for; she looked for the red kerchief on the head of the stranger, and hoped to see eyes — large, black, ardent ones that she was ever dreaming of. Yonder, on the sand, in the seashore, her pet flower was blooming now—the mountain crocus...

"O-la-la... O-na-na..."

Stars hovered over the earth, the moon hung over the sea...

"Are you from afar?"

Ali was startled. The voice came from above, from the roof. Ali raised his eyes.

Fatima was standing near the tree, and its shadow covered Ali.

He flushed and stammered: "From the vicinity of Smyrna... far away... from here... I came from the mountains."

Blood was rushing to his head like a sea wave: the Tatar woman held his eyes captive—she would not leave them free.

"What brought you here? Aren't you homesick here?" she asked.

"I am poor... with neither a star in heaven nor a straw on earth... I am working..."

"I heard you playing..."

Silence.

"In our mountains it is always merry... music, joyous girls... in my homeland there is no sea. Is there in yours?"

"No; there's none nearby."

"Isn't there? Then in your home you do not hear its breathing?"

"No: in my homeland there is sand instead of sea . . . the wind carries the hot sand, and mountains grow like humps on the camels . . . in my homeland . . ."

"Hist! . . ."

As though by accident she showed from under the veil her white, harassed face, and put her finger with its painted nail to her full rosy lips.

All around them everything was deserted, there were no people. The blue sky like another sky looked at them, and it was only past the mosque that there were some hushed female figures.

"Are you not afraid, *khanim* (lady), to talk with me? What will Mehmed do if he sees us?"

"Whatever he pleases."

"He would kill us if he should see us."

"When he pleases . . ." She shrugged.

The sun had not yet risen although some of the peaks of Yaila had already begun to glow with a pinkish tint. The dark cliffs looked somber while the sea below was still lying under the gray veil of slumber.

Nurla descended Yaila and sped after his buffaloes. He was in such a hurry; in such a hurry that he did not notice the bundle of fresh grass gradually slipping down on the backs of the buffaloes and scattering about as the big wheel rumbled over the stones and shook the plaited cart. The black heavy-set buffaloes, shaking their shaggy spines and huge heads, once more headed toward their home yard in the village. Nurla then recalled something. He turned them in the opposite direction and halted in front of the cafe. He knew that Mehmed would still be asleep, so he knocked on the door.

"Mehmed . . . Mehmed! Kel munda, come here!"

Mehmed, his eyes heavy with slumber, leaped to his feet and rubbed his eyes.

"Mehmed, where is Ali?" Nurla asked.

"Ali . . . Ali . . . he is supposed to be here." His eyes roved over the empty benches.

"Where is Fatima?"

"Fatima? . . . Fatima is sleeping . . ."

"They're up in the mountains."

Mehmed stared fixedly at Nurla, they silently crossed the cafe and looked outside. There on the road the buffaloes were standing,

all covered with grass. The first ray of the sun had fallen on the sea. Mehmed turned to Nurla.

"What do you want?"

"You're crazy . . . your wife has run away with Danhalak; I saw them in the mountains while I was returning from Yaila."

Mehmed's eyes bulged out of his sockets. After listening to Nurla, he pushed him away, dashed out of the house and, swaying on his crooked legs, crawled up the stairs. He ran to his room and leaped out on the roof. Now he was indeed like a crazy man.

"Osma . . . an!" he cried out in his hoarse voice, cupping his hands to his mouth. "Sa . . . ali! Dzhepar! Bekir! Come here, kel munda!"

Looking around in every direction, he started yelling as if it were a fire alarm. "Hussein! Mustafa!"

The Tatars appeared and got out on their flat roofs.

Meanwhile Nurla joined in the clamor from down below.

"Has . . . san! Mahmu . . . ud! Zekeri — a . . . a!" he shouted, in an unnatural voice.

Fear was sweeping over the village, rising up to the higher huts, rolling down again, leaping from one roof to another, and calling people together. Red fezzes appeared here and there and everywhere running together on the curved and winding paths down to the cafe.

Nurla explained what had happened.

Mehmed, red-faced and benumbed, silently stared over the crowd with his protruding eyes. Finally he ran close to the edge of the roof and, light as a cat, leaped down dexterously.

The Tatars made the air ring with their uproar. Not only Mehmed's honor, but that of the whole tribe, had been violated. That it should be such a wretch, such a hideous servant of a Danhalak! What an unheard of thing! And when Mehmed brought out of his house a long knife which he used to cut the throat of a sheep, swinging it in the sunshine and putting it into his girdle, the entire tribe was ready.

"Lead us! Show us the way!"

Nurla started first, followed by the butcher limping on his right leg and accompanied by a lot of indignant and relentless kinsmen.

The sun had already come out, heating up the rocks. The Tatars moved up a path that was well-known to them, falling into line like a small column of wandering ants. Those in the front line were silent; some of the neighbors, however, at the rear of the column were exchanging some words. Nurla moved forward like a hound that already smells the deer, Mehmed, somber and red-faced, limped hurriedly along although it was still early in the morning; the gray stone had already become heated like the top of a stove. The very narrow

path, scarcely more discernible than the trail of a wild animal, disappeared at times into the stony desert or even lost itself under a protruding rock. Then the air became moist and cool and the Tatars lifted their fezzes in order to cool their shaved heads. And the further they advanced the harder it was for them to avoid the obstacles; but the stronger the sun was blazing from above and heating the stones under their feet, the greater was the tenacity that showed on their flushed, sweating faces, and the stronger was the rancor which drew their eyes almost out of their heads. The spirit of these wild, barren rocks that were cold at night, and in the daytime were warm like the body, penetrated the souls of these hurt people, causing them to proceed onward to defend their honor as well as their rights, with the implacability of the severe Yaila.

They speeded up the tempo of the chase: the fugitives must be overtaken before they reach the neighboring little village, Suaku, and flee by the sea. Of course, Ali and Fatima were strangers in these parts, and so could easily go astray in the labyrinth of paths. This is what the pursuers counted on. Nevertheless, although Suaku was not so far away, there was no sign of anyone anywhere. It began to get sultry, for the moist sea air did not reach these heights and blow as it did on the shore. Down there they were accustomed to it. Thus when they ascended or climbed up the various slopes, trampling on the bruising stones beneath their feet, with their quarry not even within sight, and their tasks back in the village unattended to, sweaty and weary, they became angry in their frustration.

Those in the rear now slowed up their steps a bit. But Mehmed still rushed onward, his eyes glazing, his head poised like that of a goat; and as he limped, his body rose and sank like a sea wave. The pursuers began to abandon hope; Nurla, evidently, had come too late. Still they proceeded onwards. Now and then, the pronged shore of Suaku with its gray sand shone forth from above, and vanished again.

Suddenly Zekeria, one of those at the front, hissed and halted. All the others looked at him while he silently extended his hand and pointed at a high rocky ledge that divided the sea.

Over there, from behind a cliff, a head with a neckerchief tied on it momentarily appeared to view. This set the pursuers' hearts throbbing. Mehmed let out a half-audible roar. They all glanced at each other, a single purpose seizing them: Could they succeed in driving Ali on to the ledge? That would help all the better to seize him with their hands. But Nurla had already formulated his plan. He quieted the group down, then divided them into three groups which were to surround the rock from three sides. The fourth side was too steep, all the way down to the sea.

They were cautious, as if on a hunt. Mehmed, however, seethed with fury, thrusting himself forward as if to pierce the boulder with his furious eyes. Then suddenly out from behind a rock there protruded the border of a green veil and beyond it the tall Danhalak climbed as though springing out of the rock. Fatima was in the lead, green like a spring bush, while Ali walked on his long legs tightly dressed in the yellow pants, in his blue jacket, and wearing the red kerchief. Tall and elastic as a young cypress tree, against the background he looked like a giant. When they halted on the summit, a flock of seagulls flew up from the adjoining rocks, covering the blueness of the sea with a quivering net of wings.

It was quite evident that Ali had lost his way. He now took council with Fatima. They contemplated the rock anxiously and then looked for a path. The quiet gulf of Suaku could be seen in the distance.

Suddenly, Fatima became frightened and screamed. The veil slipped down her head and fell, while she gazed fearfully into the bloodshot eyes of her husband glaring from behind the boulder.

Ali looked back. At the same moment, creeping up the rock from all sides, grasping the sharp edges with their hands and feet, were all the people who had listened to his music and drank coffee with him, Zekeria, Dzhepar, Mustafa.

They were not silent any longer. Out of their hoarse throats, as if in one breath, a mixed sound burst forth, falling on the fugitives. There was no escape whatsoever. Ali drew himself erect, braced himself against the stones, put his hand on his short knife, and waited.

His pale, haughty, handsome face showed the courage of a young eagle. Meanwhile, in back of him, over the abyss, Fatima rushed to and fro like a frightened seagull. On one side was the odious sea; on the other side was the still more hateful and intolerable butcher. She saw his bulging eyes, angry blue lips, his short lame leg, and the sharp knife he used to cut the throats of sheep with. In her despairing soul she flew over the mountains to her native village. Her eyes were covered, blind-folded, the musicians were playing, while the butcher was taking her down from there to the sea, like a sheep, to be killed. With a desperate motion she covered her eyes and lost her balance. The blue jacket, decorated with crescents, fell over and disappeared amid the cries of the startled seagulls.

The Tatars were all frightened. This tragic and unexpected death turned them away from Ali. The latter did not see what happened behind him. His eyes roved over them like a wolf as he wondered what they were waiting for. Could it be possible that they were afraid?

In front of him he saw the gleam of savage eyes, inflamed and ruthless faces, distended nostrils, white teeth, and all this wave of

fury pouncing down upon him like a sea flood. Ali defended himself. He pierced Nurla's hand and scratched Osman; but at that very moment they tripped him. As he was falling, he saw Mehmed raising his knife over him to plunge it into his ribs.

Ali's chest ceased to heave, and his beautiful face assumed a quiet expression.

The affair was finished; the honor of the tribe was vindicated, saved from disgrace. On the stony ground at their feet, lay Danhalak's body and at its side was the green veil, trampled and torn to shreds.

Mehmed was drunk. He swayed on his twisted legs, waving his hands menacingly; his gestures were stupid and meaningless. Having pushed aside the curious who crowded around the corpse, he grasped Ali by a foot and dragged him along. The rest followed him. As they were following the route they came on, Ali's splendid head, with its face like Ganymede, was dragging over sharp stones, bleeding profusely, bobbing up on uneven spots, and creating the delusion that he was agreeing to something with a nodding: "Yes, yes . . ."

When at last the procession reached the village, all the flat roofs immediately filled up with colorful groups of women and children. The roofs then indeed looked like the gardens of Semiramis.

Hundreds of curious eyes followed the procession to the sea. There lying on the sand was the black barge whitened by the noon-tide sun. It was tilted a little, like a dolphin thrown out by the sea. A hole was in its side. The soft blue waves, pure and warm like the breasts of a girl, cast on the shore an embroidery of foam. The sea merged with the sun in a joyful smile that extended far away, over the Tatar settlements, the black forests, up to the heated clusters of the Yaila mountains.

Silently, without uttering a word, without any ceremony, the Tatars lifted Ali's body to the barge, and amid anxious cries of the women that came from the village, from the flat roofs, like the sobs of the frightened seagulls, the ship was pushed into the sea. The sea churned on the rocks, the water splashed and spouted with foam on its sides, and carried the barge into the sea—gently, almost imperceptibly.

Ali sailed onwards to meet Fatima.

LAUGHTER

Natalie, pale and drowsy, opened the door of the bedroom into the dining room where Barbara, the maid, was already busy dusting the furniture. Buttoning up her white morning jacket on the way, she spoke in a quiet but rather frightened voice:

"You didn't open the shutters yet?"

Barbara threw her dust-rag down, ready to rush toward the windows.

"No... no... never mind... keep them closed all day!" she ordered the maid sharply.

Husky, heavy-set Barbara raised her face, the color of earth, and stared curiously at her mistress.

"There's trouble in town today," her mistress said. "Evil folk keep prowling about the streets. If only they don't head this way. Don't go to the market today. Any food in the house?"

"There's no meat."

"It doesn't matter. Prepare what we have. But don't go out on the street, and don't let anyone in the house. We're not at home, understand? We left town, all of us; but if friends come, that's different."

Natalie spoke the words in a whisper, while her bright, near-sighted eyes wandered around restlessly.

After Barbara left, Natalie looked around the room. It was dim with yellowish strips of light seeping through the shutters, flowing through the air in muddy rivulets. She shook the metal window locks, set the bolts in place, and then, stooped and shadowy as a ghost, passed into the next room. She tried all the windows that opened out on the street. From time to time she would put her ear to one of them and listen attentively. A bewildering cacophony of sounds seemed to come from the street. She thought them strange and frightening.

How will the day end, she wondered. It wasn't enough that people were trampled on by Cossack horses, but there wasn't enough blood being spilled, they were now playing the unthinking masses against the intelligentsia. She had pleaded with her husband beseechingly to go away for a time, begging him also to take the children away; but no; he refused, and now it had come to this! Oh God, and because of what?

She thought of the filthy, stupidly written, brutal proclamations with which the town had been swamped and plastered, calling on the people to beat and kill the enemies of the government. Their own name was mentioned, clearly written—yes—lawyer Valerian Chubynsky... The name was hated by the police, and it was right there on the list...

Natalie Chubynsky rushed into another room from which proceeded the shouts and laughter of some children.

"Sh...! Oh my God, stop shouting!"

In a despairing gesture she waved her white-clad arms like a bird flapping its wings. Speechless grief lay in tiny folds around the corners of her pale lips. She tried to hush the children while at the same time she cast furtive glances in the direction of the windows as though fearful that their lively voices might seep through the shutters out into the street.

Barbara came to her aid. The calm movement of her body as she made her way around the room, gathering the scattered clothing, putting on the children's stockings, the sure, heavy tread of her bare feet, her solemn face — all this brought peace to *Pani** Natalie. The house seemed safer with such a trusty and sensible human being around.

"Were you out on the street, Barbara?" she asked.

"No, I wasn't. I just stopped at the gate for a while."

"How is it? Everything quiet?"

"Well, yes. A few strangers called. They asked for the master."

"Strangers? What kind of strangers?"

"Who can tell... just strangers..."

"Was there... did they carry anything in their hands?"

"Yes, sticks."

"Sticks?"

"I told them the master wasn't at home... that everybody had left town."

"That's good, Barbara, that's good. Remember, dear, there's no one in the house, but you. Oh, my God!"

"Barbara, Barbara!" Chubynsky's angry voice could be heard from the table. "Why are the shutters still shut?"

Pani Natalie held Barbara back with her hand and rushed into the dining room.

There stood her half-dressed husband, blinking his blurry eyes; he had hardly put his glasses on, when he found his sight impeded, while his face with its mop of blond hair seemed disheveled and rumpled.

* *Pani* — Ukrainian equivalent of Lady or Mistress (Mrs.).

"Valerian, my dear, just let it be... Those were my orders... You know what kind of a day it is now. Today I won't let you go anywhere."

"Sheer nonsense. Let them open the shutters."

"Oh my lord... Now I beg you... FOR MY PEACE OF MIND... FOR OUR CHILDREN..."

Red rashes broke out on the face of *Pani* Natalie.

Pan Valerian lost his temper. What fairy tales! Just the same there's no place to run to! Nevertheless, in his own heart he felt that what his wife did was for the best.

Soon Barbara came back with the samovar. They all sat down at the table.

It was somewhat dark and something unusual in the house flickered on the walls and on the buffet, and the wind loosened the shutters and kept banging them; the children — a boy and a girl — amazed at the peculiar circumstance, whispered to each other, while *Pan* Valerian irritatingly drummed on the table with his fingers. His cup of tea had chilled, and he impatiently chewed on his white, thin beard, looking blankly at something over his glasses. During the past few days he had noticed some suspicious persons trailing him wherever he went. At night some shadowy figures loomed near the windows, slinking back under the porches when they felt they were being noticed. And yesterday, as he was proceeding along the street, he clearly heard someone swearing behind him, which most certainly was directed at him. "Orator, orator!" angrily hissed some raucous, dark peasant who glared at him everytime he looked around. *Pan* Valerian didn't mention this at all to his wife so as not to distress her. All at once a whole sea of heads flashed before his eyes — heads, heads, heads... sweaty, flushed faces, and thousands of eyes looking at him from the mist of a dove-colored vapor. He spoke. Some kind of a heat wave beat against his face, entering his chest with every breath. Words poured out of his breast like wild birds boldly and accurately. His speech, it seemed, hit the mark. He succeeded in clearly and simply picturing the antithetic interests of those who gave work and those who had to take it, so that the matter became more plain even to himself. So, but what will there be today? Will something really happen today?

Chubynsky looked at his wife. She sat stiffly erect, listening; on her pale face were signs of alarm.

Those closed windows were really irritating. What was behind them, out on the streets, on those unknown rivers where strange people float, which at any moment might overflow and flood the banks?

Suddenly something banged against the shutters.

Everybody momentarily grew numb.

"What are you frightened of now?" asked *Pan* Valerian angrily. "Perhaps it's only the children, in their antics, unwittingly hitting the shutters, as it often happens; and here you are, imagining I don't know what..."

Out of the kitchen came Barbara.

"What happened, Barbara?" asked the frightened *Pani* Natalie.

"Young master Horbachevsky has come... He came by way of the yard into the kitchen.

"Ah, let him come in!"

Student Horbachevsky had already come from behind Barbara.

"Welcome! What's the news? Please tell us," asked the host as he greeted him.

"Very bad, it seems. The Black Hundred held a meeting all night long they say, at Mykyta's place. They drank and discussed what person they would beat up. First of all they decided to destroy the 'orators' and 'democrats.'"

"Oh, my God!"

"Don't distress yourself, mistress, perhaps nothing will come of it. There's some sort of a suspicious movement on the street. They wander about in groups of four. Their faces are ominous, somber, their eyes, ferocious, ill-boding, glowing with fire when they encounter an intellectual. Could I have some tea, please?"

Pani Natalie poured some tea into a cup, and, spilling some of it on the way, handed it to the student.

"Well, and what else?" asked *Pan* Valerian, breaking loose from his place and chasing about the house.

"Thank you. I came across the market place. There were many people. They're handing out drinks. Some secret meetings are being held, but what they're talking about — I don't know. I heard only a few family names: the Machynsky's, the Zalkin's, and yours."

"Oh, my Lord!"

"Don't be frightened. There's always more people around on a Sunday and they're apt to drink... May I have some bread? Thank you. Just the same I'm surprised that you didn't leave town. As I was hurrying down the street toward your house and saw your windows closed, I thought — they're not at home. So I decided to stop for a minute, to ask where you had gone and for how long — and here you are. You're taking a great risk."

"There, you see! Didn't I tell you? Didn't I beg you to leave town and take the children away," Natalie lamented, pressing her

hands to her bosom, beseeching the guest with pleading eyes, as she had done a little while ago with her husband.

"Why talk about it now!" Valerian shouted angrily, walking hurriedly across the room. He was smoking one cigarette after another, thrusting aside with his head the gathering blue clouds of smoke that crawled after him like the waves of mist in the mountains.

"Terrible things going on, terrible..."

This was someone else talking, in a woman's high pitched voice.

They all turned toward the kitchen door, through which a momentary shaft of light was shining, and a tiny, roly-poly woman came rushing into the dining room. Her hat had shifted to the side of her head, and her hair, disarranged and red, was like a flame thrusting itself into the room out of the turbulent street.

"My, but how dark it is here!" she explained. "Where are you? Where is everybody?" Without greeting anyone, she hurried toward the table and plumped herself down on a chair.

"My precious dears, are you still alive? It has begun... The mob is parading through the streets carrying a portrait of the Tsar. I just saw them beating up Sikach."

"Which one?"

"The younger one, the student... He didn't take his cap off before the portrait. I saw him without a cap, in a torn jacket, bent double, thrown back and forth, all bloody, beaten up... His eyes were huge, blood-shot, stark-mad... I was terror-stricken. I couldn't stand it... Do you know whom I saw in the mob? Our people. Peasants... in their holiday attire, with their large boots on, simple, dignified, peasant folk... People from our village, quiet, peaceful, industrious..."

"That's the worst element, Tetiana Stepanivna," said the student Horbachevsky.

"No, don't say that. I know them. I've been teaching in that village five years now. I had to get out because they wanted to beat me up. Everybody ruined. As for the wealthy... But the one I feel sorry for is our neighbor. A poor old widow. One of her sons is in Siberia, another in prison... All that was left was that old cottage and orchard. Now they ruined everything, took the house apart, cut down the orchard, tore up the son's books... She refused to plead like the others did. They went out to meet the mob, carrying portraits, and together with their little children they knelt right there in the dirt and filth, pleaded for long hours, kissed the peasants' hands... Those were spared..."

"What horrors," whispered Nathalie.

She was sitting as before, strained, tense, as though awaiting something.

"Sh... quiet..." she interrupted the conversation impatiently. Far away noises came from the street.

Everyone was quiet. Turning toward the windows and stretching their necks they seemed frozen at attention.

The din seemed to be coming nearer. There was something of a distant rain storm in it, of the suppressed howling of beasts. A-ah-ah... a-ah-ah... the mingled sounds echoed through the high-ceilinged room and somewhere, not far away, there could be heard the tramping of feet across the stone-paved street.

"How vile... how vile... I'm going out on the street"... exclaimed Chubynsky, suddenly aroused. He began rushing around the room as though in search of something.

They began shouting at him in muffled voices to keep him from going out. They were searching for him, and he could not do anything out there; nor could he leave his wife and children. His wife said that she would die without him.

The din had died down, and it was somewhat quieter now.

The frightened children in the corner, however, began to sob.

"Barbara, Barbara," thundered Valerian, "take the children to the other room. Just keep them quiet."

Barbara entered, heavy, calm, her ruddy arms bare to the elbow. She spoke to the children and they quieted down. Putting her coarse, bare arms around them, she led them out of the room.

It was a little more peaceful now in the dining room.

"How fortunate you are," said Tetiana Stepanivna, "to have such a fine maid."

Natalie was glad to find at least one bright moment during which she could relax in the midst of all those terrible experiences.

"Oh, my Barbara is a woman of gold. She's our real friend... Calm, sensible, friendly... And just imagine, she gets only three *karbovantsi* a month..."

"A fine character," added Valerian. "This is her fourth year here. We've become so used to her and she to us. She loves the children."

After they discussed this topic, the guests began to bid each other good-by. Tetiana suddenly recalled the reason for her visit. She thought it was dangerous for Chubynsky to remain at home after all those speeches he made at the meetings. It would be better to spend this horrible day in some safe place with neighbors.

Horbachevsky thought otherwise. It would be better, he thought to remain at home, not to appear on the streets. It wasn't very well

known where the Chubynskys had lived since they moved into this house only a while ago and with the shutters closed everybody would think the house empty.

"No, no. I'll remain at home. What will be, will be," Chubynsky consoled them at parting.

Husband and wife were left alone. Valerian rushed around through clouds of smoke, as though he were trying to scatter despair. Natalie remained depressed. Finally Chubynsky sat down beside her.

"There, there, don't take it so hard," he spoke to her, trying to appear calm. "Nobody will trouble us... They'll shout a little and then they'll go home..."

"I... I'm all right... Never mind me... I also think there's no real danger."

She was hardly able to control her nervousness.

"I'm certain that there aren't many hoodlums around..."

"There won't be any blood spilled."

"Oh, my God, of course not that..."

Now that they were alone in this dark room, surrounded by something terrifying and unknown, trying to hide from each other their thoughts and anxieties, their fear increased. It enveloped them like some gas that was about to explode.

Would he be able, alone and unarmed, to withstand the vindictiveness of a mob that was blind to what it was doing!

And what if they come?

If they do come, they'll move all the furniture against the door and they'll defend themselves to the end. They'll barricade...

Ting-a-ling... ting-a-ling...

The loud, sharp ring of the bell reverberated in the vestibule. Chubynsky jumped up.

"Don't go... don't open the door..." pleaded Natalie, wringing her hands.

And all the while the bell kept clanging in a wild, jangling fury. Chubynsky rushed toward the kitchen.

"Barbara! Barbara!"

But there was no Barbara.

What should be done? They had to do something. Where was that Barbara?

Barbara finally came running in.

"It's the doctor ringing; he's coming in through the kitchen..."

The doctor, tall and well-built, waved his arms around like the wing of a windmill, and began shouting on his way to the room:

"You're sitting here, my doves, and you don't know what is going on..."

"They're beating people up, killing them... Throats will be cut like those of chickens... They forced themselves into Dr. Harnie's rooms, destroyed all his instruments. Dragged his wife by the hair and took Harnie himself away. They ordered him to carry the portrait at the head of the hoodlum's procession. There you are!"

"Oh, my God!"

"Ivanenko was dragged out of the carriage and his head was crushed. That's number two. Zalizko on grounds of autocracy was brutally beaten up. Number three. It's rumored that the midwife, Rashkevych, was beaten to death. There are no police around — they must have disappeared. We'll be handed over to a drunken mob. We must defend ourselves. We must get together at the square in front of the Duma. Do you hear? At once."

The doctor was shouting loudly, as if he were already on the square facing the people.

Natalie's heart was bursting at the sound of that shouting.

"Quieter... please... they'll hear," her eyes pleaded. Pressing her hands to her bosom she whispered in terror:

"Oh, doctor, doctor... please... be kind enough... oh, my God..."

But the doctor paid no attention.

"Take your revolver along," he shouted. "Let's go out at once!"

"I have no revolver," Chubynsky explained angrily.

"Whew!" the doctor whistled. "What is this, you have no weapons? So we only know how to make speeches, but when it comes to do something. No, no, my little doves, that can't be! None of that! Sit here, if you will, until they come and cover you up like chickens with a sieve... I'm going..."

"But where?" Valerian was also shouting. "It's madness! You can't do anything!"

But the doctor, crying out and waving his arms around, rushed out of the room.

Chubynsky was terror-stricken. Cowardly fear possessed him. He couldn't understand it all. What should he do? Go where? He didn't want to die such an inglorious, horrible death. To hide? Not alone, of course, but all of them. He looked around the room. Moaning, half conscious, his wife pressed her hands to her temples. Barbara was busy around the table. Run away? Where? Dozens of plans popped up in his mind only to dissipate again. No, no, not that! Sheer animal terror drove him about the room, from door to door. Thoroughly shaken up, he tried to get hold of himself again. Don't

lose your head, don't lose your head... that was a voice calling within him, yet at the same time thoughts ran through his mind like those of an animal caught in a trap. What's that? What does she want?

"Shall I serve breakfast?"

Ah — that was Barbara.

It brought him back to his senses.

"What did you say?"

"Breakfast? No! Did you hear?"

"Why, yes, why not? Ha, ha!"

This "ha, ha" slowed him down; he stopped in the centre of the room. He noticed that Barbara's face twitched like quiet waters at the leaping out of a fish. One of the ripples rolled toward him.

"They're killing the gentle-folk," Valerian explained in a mournful tone of voice, but he noticed with surprise that Barbara's heavy body shook as if she were suppressing a burst of laughter.

"What's the matter?"

"I... I..."

Suddenly this burst of laughter gushed forth.

"Ha, ha! So they're beating them up... well let them... Ha, ha, ha. Away with all masters... ha, ha, ha! Thank God, the people, at last..."

She even made the sign of the cross.

Her face was bloodshot, her eyes afire. Holding her bare, red hands akimbo, she shook with laughter as if she were drunk, her large breasts flopping up and down under her filthy clothes.

"Ha-ha-ha!"

She could not restrain her drunken laughter. It was so overpowering that it clattered in her throat and chest, from which only now and then she emitted a word, as if it were a bit of foam.

"Ha-ha-ha!... the whole lot of them... uproot them... ha-ha-ha... let not a seed remain... ha-ha-ha!"

She was almost sobbing.

The laughter crazily filled the room. It was painful and terrifying, like a mad dance of shiny, sharp knives. It struck the room like an outburst of lightning, bearing within it the menace of destruction and death.

Chubynsky got hold of the table to steady himself.

He was stung to the quick by the laughter. What she was saying was impossible, insane!

Natalie was the first to react.

"Get out!" she exclaimed in a thin, shrill voice. "Get out! She might kill our children yet! Drive her out of the house!"

Barbara was not laughing any more. Her breasts still kept flopping, up and down. Her head was bent low. She leered at her mistress and then, gathering up the dishes, she walked toward the kitchen with a heavy tread.

Her bare feet moved with a heavy tread along the floor.

Chubynsky felt warm. He was trembling all over. He intended to follow Barbara, and then stopped suddenly. Something out of the way had happened; he could not understand it... It was insane...

He rushed toward the kitchen and opened the door.

The kitchen was lit up.

He saw Barbara standing at the table, stooped, withered, calm, busily wiping something.

"Bar..."

He wanted to say something.

But he only stared; stared with large, sharp, frightened and unusually far-seeing eyes. He embraced the entire picture, the smallest details. He had been blind as to what he saw in passing by, day after day. Those bare feet, cold, red, dirty, rough; like the paws of an animal. Over the shoulders a piece of rag that gave no warmth. The earthlike color of the face... Sunken eyes... We have eaten all that away with our dinner... The smoke in the kitchen, the hard bench on which she slept in the midst of slops and dirt... like a beast of burden... He saw the strength that was broken down in the service of others... the sad and dready life spent in servitude... Life without brightness, without hope... for others that their life might be made more pleasant... And in addition to everything he expected friendliness from her!

He was speechless; what could it have been for?

It was all so clear and simple. He ran out of the kitchen back to the dining room.

"Did you see?" he asked his wife as he rushed toward her. "Go and take a look! Why isn't she striking?" he shouted in a voice that sounded strange.

He ran around the room as though someone were after him. He felt feverish. There was no air with which to breathe.

He ran toward the window, and hardly realizing what he was doing, he began loosening the screws, quickly and impatiently.

"What are you doing?" cried his wife, frightened to death.

He paid no attention to her.

With all his might he pushed the iron rods. The shutters opened with a clang, the echo reverberating against the high ceiling. The window hit against the frame, flooding the room with a dull, yellow

light. The autumn wind had swept into it a cloud of fine, cold dust and a multitude of strange, chaotic sounds.

"Why isn't she striking?"

His lungs breathed in the cool air and he didn't even notice the terrifying clamor on the street.

And the street moaned.

"Ah-a-a," the sound reached him from afar as if it were from a broken dam.

"Ah-a-a," nearer and nearer came the savage sounds. The clang of glass was in them, the sound of despair and terror. And the tramp of a mob's feet... A driver clattered madly down the street, the rumble of wheels behind him... autumn winds dispelled the yellowish clouds, anxious to escape from the city.

"Ah-a-a... ah-a-a..."

Modest Levytsky

THE BAD ROAD

THE TERRIBLE NIGHT

Translated by J. A.

Modest Levytsky was born in 1866. By profession he was a doctor. He was a writer, dramatist, publicist and a linguist. His stories were written in the traditional style of the times, realism. His themes were taken from the life of the forgotten, down-trodden provincial people, and frequently dealt with the miseries of the Jewish people in the Ukrainian towns, such for instance as *Forgot*, *Criminal*, *Idle Walk*, *The Happiness of Peisakh Leiderman* and others. The heroes of Modest Levytsky's stories are passive, inert, wretched people, crushed by a blind fatal misfortune. He discusses their fate with restraint, objectively, without rhetorical grandeloquence, with sympathy and compassion. He died in Lutsk, Volhynia, in 1932.

THE BAD ROAD

A great misfortune had visited Ivan Shpak. A tree fell down on his son Mykyta when they were cutting poplars near the house; it did not kill him outright, but crushed him with sufficient force to make the blood ooze out of his mouth.

Mykyta was always puny and weak, especially since the winter he had been attacked with colic. From then on his strength had steadily waned, so much so that they would not take him into the army because they had found that his lungs were decaying.

And yet, although puny and weak, Mykyta was very industrious and diligent. He could not handle a scythe or a flail because such work made him lose his breath, but he did everything else around the house, in the garden and in the barn.

Shpak had another son, a younger one. Though physically stronger than his brother, he was not very bright. In fact, he was quite stupid.

So when this misfortune came right before St. Nicholas Day, too — Shpak began to worry. He was sorry for the young man because he was so good and industrious, and as far as work was concerned he felt as if he had lost a hand. When Mykyta was on his feet nobody seemed to have noticed his work, but when he was bedridden, it became evident that it would be hard to get along without him.

Thus when Mykyta was carried home after that unfortunate accident — he could not walk — everybody thought he was dying. He was blue in the face, he breathed in a strange manner, quickly; while pure blood came out of his mouth. But after the surgeon applied a few cupping glasses to his chest and back, and gave him something to drink, it seemed as if Mykyta would improve.

But the surgeon advised taking him to the *zemstvo* hospital immediately.

"At home," he said, "it'll be hard to take care of him, while in the hospital there are all kinds of medicines and a doctor will attend to him every day."

Shpak did not want to take his son to the hospital right before the holidays, and his wife cried as if her son were dead and begged that he be left at home. "If he has to die," she said, "let him die

here, in his own home, among his own." But Mykyta wanted to go to the hospital.

"Take me, father. They know better what to do, they have studied those things. Maybe they will help me... At least they may stop the flow of blood... I find it hard to breathe... You can come to see me later, and if I'm no better, then you can take me home."

Thus Shpak on the advice of other people and the desire to satisfy his son's wish, took the lad to the hospital.

After examining the patient, the doctor shook his head.

"His case is a very difficult one," he said.

"Won't he get better?" asked Shpak.

"Who knows?... He is very weak... However, if the hemorrhages stop, there will be some hope."

"Then perhaps I had better take him back home?"

"No, leave him here for a while. Come back in a week, then I'll tell you."

After a week Mykyta was no better. The hemorrhages stopped, but he had a fever.

So when Shpak came to find out about him, the doctor again advised against taking his patient home, explaining that he might catch cold on his way and thus get still worse.

"If there is no hope, perhaps it'd be better to take him home? My woman's eyes are swollen from crying. 'Bring him home,' she cries all the time, 'let me at least look at him for the last time. Let the poor boy have some *kutia* with us'."

The doctor hesitated.

"He will only catch more cold in weather like this," said he. "Look what's going on outdoors! Let him stay here at least till the holidays. Perhaps the fever will leave him by then, and there will be some hope for improvement."

The weather was really bad. The cold winter rain formed deep pools of water which dissolved the snow, and the roads were terrible.

"Bad roads!" sighed Shpak. "I started from home before dawn and barely made those one and a half miles by noon. My horses are tired out completely. By the time I get home it'll be night."

"You see," said the doctor. "Then how are you going to take him, sick as he is, in such weather?"

"Let me stay here till the holidays, Father," begged Mykyta. "Perhaps I'll get better... I don't want to die..."

"Will he die here before the holidays?" asked Shpak, turning to the doctor.

"No, God willing."

"Well, let him stay then... I'll return next Thursday, before *kutia*, my son, and take you home. You will at least spend the holidays with us."

Shpak turned toward the window. Two big, hot tears rolled down his weather-beaten face, passed over his gray mustache and fell on his chest. He wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his coat...

Another week passed. Mykyta was no better. The fever scorched him. He became very thin. His eyes were deeply sunken in, and his cheeks were unnaturally red. He was burning up like a wax candle. A heavy cough hampered easy breathing.

Thursday his father came again. He had started from home very early, before dawn, in order to rest the horses a little and return home before dark. The road was worse than ever and the weather was just as bad as before.

"Well, doctor, will you let me take him home?" asked Shpak, standing by the bed of his sick son.

"All right," answered the doctor.

"So there is no hope for him anymore?"

The doctor said nothing, merely making a motion with his hands. He did not want Mykyta to hear that there was no more hope for him.

Shpak looked at his son sadly.

"Let's go, son."

"Let's, father."

They clothed Mykyta, the nurse helping the old man, for the boy could not sit up any more. Wrapping a heavy shawl over his son's head and putting on him a sheep-skin coat, Shpak, with the help of the orderly, carried Mykyta outdoors and put him into the wagon.

Propping up the sick boy with straw where necessary, Shpak asked, "Are you comfortable here?"

"Yes, father."

"Ain't you cold?"

"No."

Shpak stood by the wagon a while, as if wishing to say something but hesitated.

"Why don't we start, Dad?" asked Mykyta.

"Just a minute..."

Shpak blew his nose.

"I'll tell you what, Mykyta, let's go to town..."

"To buy something?"

"Yes, perhaps, my son, we better buy a few boards at the same time... You see yourself how bad the road is... The poor horses

can hardly move... And in the village, where will I get them?... Afterward... I'd have to go to town again..."

"All right, father," sighed Mykyta.

"At Berko's, they say, the aspen ones are not expensive..."

"Father!" said Mykyta sadly, "don't I deserve pine boards at least? I obeyed you, I tried to do my best..."

"Oh, my son, my son!" moaned Shpak. "Certainly you earned them, and did your best... Would I deny you such a thing, my child? But you know yourself — where is the money? There will hardly be enough even for aspen boards."

Mykyta said nothing.

"Besides, there will be other expenses, too," added Shpak.

Mykyta sighed in resignation.

"Now, do you know how it will be, my son?... Next spring when I get stronger, I'll put up a nice cross for you, made of oak. I'll not be stingy. But now, let the boards be aspen ones, eh?"

"All right, father."

THE TERRIBLE NIGHT

Halka, the excise controller, was returning from a tour of inspection in his distdict, hurrying home before the shadows of night fell on his homeward path. It was already getting dark, and he still had about thirty versts before him. The road was poor: in some places the snow reached up to the horses' midriffs; in others the runners scraped the bare, frozen ground.

Strange as it may seem, all kinds of obstacles have a way of popping up when least expected, as if on purpose. Such was the case with Controller Halka on that particular day. In one distillery the man in charge was so stupid that he never kept his accounts straight: there was always either a shortage or an unexpected surplus. Here Halka wasted about half an hour, cursing the man and his own job, before he straightened out the account. In another village the local constable detected some bootlegging, so Halka had to remain there until the report was written. At the post-office the horses had not been readied for him, so another hour had been wasted.

Although Halka kept urging the driver to speed up the trip back home, the more he travelled, the less hope was there of reaching home that night. It was just recently that Halka was transferred to this district, near the Austrian border. He was not acquainted with its roads, or the people and their customs. Furthermore he was very timid. And this aspect of his nature was intensified by all kinds of stories about smugglers and marketeers. He was told that they were first-class ruffians and robbers, all of which magnified his fears of travel by night.

"How far is it to Berestechko?" he asked the driver.

"About ten versts."

"Well, bless my soul! Didn't you say we'd be there in a hour?"

"Yes, even earlier than that if it weren't for the bad road. In daylight we could cut across — they say the road is better that way — but at night it is dangerous..."

"Why?" asked Halka nervously.

"Oh, we might lose our way. And if we should happen to strike the border — well, we might get hit with a bullet, or run into some other kind of trouble..."

"Well, the sentries might try to pick a quarrel with us. Sometimes they even shoot without asking questions."

"But they have no right to shoot when a person doesn't run away or hide himself."

"They have the right to do anything. What do they care?"

"How about the smugglers? Are they dangerous?"

"Why?"

"I've heard that they rob people."

"Well, that happens. Sometimes they do. But not much so the smugglers as the marketeers. They're very unreliable people. The smugglers aren't so bad."

"How about these marketeers? Do they live here or are they foreigners?"

"They belong here, but some of them are from the other side of the border."

"Our own people or Jews?"

"Our own; though there are some Jews among them. The Jews bring the run-aways down here to the border, where they are taken by our own men, peasants. Whoa!" The driver jerked on the reins.

The sled hit something, almost upsetting its occupants. Something crashed.

"What's the matter?"

The driver got out and looked around.

"Well, the seven hundred devils!" he cursed.

"What happened?"

"The pole broke, that's all; curses on its soul!"

"Well, what now?"

"How do I know? If we could only reach Merva... You can't go far without a pole, especially on a road like this. Oh, why didn't you burn up when you were little!" cursed the driver at the pole as he tried to fix it with a rope.

Considerable time was lost before they repaired the damage. They now had to proceed very, very slowly, examining the pole ever so often.

"It is absolutely impossible for me to get home tonight," thought Halka in despair. "But perhaps it's better this way. If I went further I might meet unexpected death: a sentry's bullet, or a marketeer's knife."

"Listen," he turned to the driver, "you say those marketeers rob sometimes?"

"It often happens, sure; especially when they smuggle somebody with money, or good clothes. They guide him to the very border, then take everything away from him and let him go on the other side."

"Aren't they afraid of the officials?"

"What officials?"

"Well, any kind of authorities."

"Sure. Sometimes the police catch them. And the excise officers may get hold of them, too, because while smuggling the emigrants one way, they smuggle whiskey on their return trips."

"Then they don't like the excise officers?"

"Why should they?"

"Do they kill them sometimes?"

"Whom?"

"The excise officers!"

"No. I never heard of it. Once they were being chased by the excise guards who were shooting at them. Well, they returned the fire and wounded one guard."

"Wounded him, eh?"

"Yes. But who knows who shot him, the marketeers or the men they smuggled? There are all kinds of people, you know... Years ago, my father told me, there were road inns, but no distilleries as yet. And once an official who was very clever in catching those marketeers and smugglers, stopped at such an inn — to feed his horses or to spend the night there, I don't know which — and afterwards disappeared as though he had never been there."

A chill ran down Halka's spine. He patted the revolver in his pocket reassuringly.

"Perhaps they killed him."

"Perhaps. Surely they would not have treated him very kindly. But that was years ago! Or perhaps he escaped across the border."

"Why should he?"

"Don't officials run away sometimes? They say that some of them steal money from the treasury and then disappear so that hardly a trace is left of them. There are people like that among the gentlemen, too, they say."

Halka quieted down a little.

"How far is it to this place Merva?" he asked.

"Not very far."

"Can a person stay there overnight?"

"Why not? They have roadhouses there."

Soon, in the dark distance, there appeared a light. Shortly afterwards Halka entered a little border town.

"Shall we go to the roadhouse?" asked the driver.

"Of course. What else can we do at night, and without a pole?"

"Sure. You can go to sleep. In the meantime I'll fix the sled. If we start by dawn, you'll be home in the morning."

The driver drove into the shed of the old dilapidated roadhouse that stood at the edge of the town.

The proprietor came out, lantern in hand. He was a middle-aged big, husky Jew.

"Welcome, welcome, your honor!"

"Have you a place to sleep?" asked Halka.

"Yes, certainly. Just step in and see for yourself. This way, please . . . *Khayke, a lecht, gikher!*" (Khayke, bring a light, quickly!) he shouted to someone in the darkness.

Halka pulled out his feet from under the sheepskin robe, got out of the sled and followed the inn-keeper. His legs were asleep. It was hard to walk in his heavy overcoat, and the ground was slippery. Slowly shuffling his feet, he followed his host into the guest room.

A big, fat Jewess, wrapped in a warm shawl, brought in a candle. Halka looked around the room. It was quite large, the walls and ceiling were painted, and it had a large fireplace. Along one of the walls there was a bed covered with a red quilt and several pillows. Beyond it stood a big black clothes press. There were a few chairs and a big round table. The room was clean and warm, although a faint odor of garlic could be noticed.

"Well, don't you think this will be a nice place for you?" asked the proprietor, smiling with satisfaction.

"Pretty good," said Halka, unbuckling his belt.

The Jew put down the lantern and helped his guest with his overcoat.

"Have you a samovar perhaps?" asked Halka.

"Certainly! We have everything: tea, sugar. Perhaps you want something with your tea? Fried fish, eggs, milk?"

"All right. Give me some tea. I'm freezing."

Halka began to pace the large room back and forth, trying to limber up his legs.

"Mister proprietor," he said, "please help the driver fix the sled. It's out of order . . ."

"Don't worry, your honor! We'll fix everything . . . *Khayke zoog bringen a samovar, gim im epess tsee ferbassen*; (Khayke, tell them to bring the samovar, give him something to eat). Perhaps you want some whiskey — then, beg your pardon, we have none."

"No whiskey?" said Halka in a doubting tone.

"So help me God!"

"Perhaps you have some imported stuff or rum?"

"You just cannot find a single drop of it here, so help me God to live till Sabbath Day!"

"Well, I don't need it. I have my own."

"That's good! Because we have everything to eat, but no whiskey."

"All right, now go see to it that I get the samovar."

The innkeeper and his wife left the room.

"Only a fool would believe that he has no whiskey!" thought Halka pacing the room. "I bet if the place were searched, all kinds of contraband could be found. No doubt, he smuggles the emigrants, too, the unbelieving marketeer!"

He felt uneasy. Through his mind flashed the incident of the excise officer who disappeared without a trace, perhaps in this very house . . ."

Halka drew the revolver from his pocket, examined it and placed it on the table.

"Let him see it," he thought, "he will not dare."

A picture of the big, husky proprietor with his dark, sunburned face, and his black, shaggy beard overcrowded his imagination.

"The man can't be trusted! Without a revolver, where would you be? Surely he must have accomplices not only here, but on the other side also. And why should they worry? If one of them does anything unlawfull here, he escapes to the other side; and after committing a crime there, he comes back here again . . . Such people cannot be trusted!"

Halka approached the window. It was old and frail; it could be opened by a good push from the inside, or by a strong pull from the inside. He went over to the sliding door that led into the adjoining room. The door, too, was poor; it was held together by a thin wire hook, and the crack between the two sections was so wide that you could almost run a finger through it.

"A child could break in through this door if it tried hard enough!" laughed Halka uncomfortably.

Bits of conversation, Jewish, and mostly from women, trickled through the door from the adjoining room. Halka knew a little German and understood some of the words.

"*A naiter aktsiznyk!*" (A new excise officer!).

"Hm! They know who I am. A new excise officer! It might have been better to continue the trip," he mused.

He hesitated. To stay was dangerous, but to continue the journey at night was more dangerous.

"What a job! Instead of staying at home safely, you have to drive around near the border and spend nights in such places where you're not sure of getting up alive in the morning."

Soon a young Jew brought in the samovar, and old one, and put it on the table. The proprietor also entered with a plate of boiled eggs,

fried fish, some white bread and salt. He espied the revolver from the corner of his eye, and Halka noticed that he did.

"A powerful rascal!" thought Halka. "A marketeer!"

"How about that pole?" he asked.

"They'll fix it, don't worry!"

"If it were not for that, I could go on. I wouldn't have to stay overnight here."

"Don't you like it here?"

"At home it's better."

"Of course, there is no place like home. But to travel at night over such a road..."

"Dangerous, eh?"

"What do you mean, dangerous?"

"Well, all sorts of things may happen. Here on the border there are all kinds of people..."

"Eh? What kind of people?"

"Smugglers, marketeers..."

"What of it?"

"Don't they commit crimes?"

"What do you mean, crimes? If a person does not bother them, they do no harm. God forbid!"

"Do they come in here?"

"Who?"

"Marketeers."

"Only the best people patronize my establishment: gentlemen, officials, frontier officers. An examiner on his way from St. Petersburg once stopped here. The chief border physician. The year before last the captain of the district police stayed here overnight. Marketeers?... Pshaw!" laughed the proprietor.

"How are you making a living, then, if you have no business with the marketeers and smugglers?"

"How? I am a trader in poultry and dairy products. I buy them here and send them abroad. I am known throughout the whole district."

Halka gazed at the proprietor with a doubting eye.

"Tell it to the fools," he thought.

After talking to him for some time and finishing his late snack, Halka made ready for bed. Again he examined the windows and doors — which but added to his uneasiness — took the revolver from the table and put it under the pillow, undressed himself and put out the light.

But he could not sleep. Somehow, every terrible adventure and murder he ever heard of or read in the newspapers, preyed upon his mind. He recalled the mysterious disappearance of the excise

officer — and automatically his hand reached under the pillow and touched the revolver.

He could hear the Jews in the adjoining room.

He heard how someone tried to quiet them down several times.

Halka tossed in bed about one hour before sleep began to descend upon him. The conversation in the adjoining room grew quieter. All of a sudden a stamping of feet was heard outside, and somebody drove into the shed. More stamping of feet and hoofs.

Halka stood up in bed and listened.

"That must be the marketeers!" he thought.

"Decent people wouldn't travel as late as this!" Chairs were being moved. Someone was coughing.

Halka felt for the revolver.

Suddenly the loud conversation stopped, and whispering sounds emanated from behind the door.

"They are conspiring!" thought Halka.

He grabbed the revolver, got out of bed, and, barefooted, quietly, on tiptoe, approached the door leading into the next room.

Halka caught a few words of their conversation.

"*Schlooft?*" (Is he asleep) a voice asked.

There was a pause. "*Schlooft!*" (He sleeps!) whispered another voice.

"*Gib a messer!*" (Give me a knife!) said the innkeeper a little louder. Halka recognized the voice.

"How many of them are there?" he wondered. "If three or four of them rush in suddenly, I won't be able to shoot more than once... I must hide myself. They will make for the bed... I must hide myself here, behind this clothes press. Before they reach the bed I'll bag one of them. Before they realize what happened, I'll have another one on the floor, and then, we'll see... I'll jump out the window, on the street... But perhaps they are watching under the window?... Anyway, it's better to hide myself, I'll gain time... If only my hand wouldn't tremble so..."

Quietly he tiptoed behind the clothes press, knelt down on one knee, rested his elbow on the other and prepared to shoot.

Meanwhile, in the adjoining room bare feet were shuffling and the conversation was going on in a whisper. Then, slowly, one half of the door was pulled to one side, and a long streak of light broke into the room. A knife was inserted through the opening, slowly and carefully, raising the hook which held the door together.

"Here it comes!" Halka shivered and held his breath.

The hook was released, one half of the door was opened. On the threshold stood the tavern keeper with a long kitchen knife in his hand; behind him was his wife, holding a lamp in one hand and

covering the light with the other, trying to let in as little light as possible into the room.

They were alone.

The innkeeper looked around the room, and quietly — he had no shoes on, only his socks — moved forward. It was a terrible sight — this hairy head, shaggy beard and athletic stature, knife in hand.

"Shall I shoot?" Halka pondered; "no, let him come near the bed, and turn around to me with his back... It'll be easier to hit him then... So far there are only two of them... I have time..."

The intruder moved quietly toward the table.

"He wants to get hold of my revolver," Halka reasoned. "He thinks I left it on the table..."

The proprietor groped about the table with his left hand — in the right he held his terrible knife — then pulled the candlestick toward himself, took out the candle, cut it in two, replaced one half of it in the candlestick, and, taking the other half with him, just as quietly and carefully, started back toward his room.

"*Schlooft?*" — asked his wife in a whisper.

"*Schlooft!*" — he answered, and noiselessly shut the door after him...

Lesia Ukrainka

A CONVERSATION

Translated by Percival Cundy

Lesia Ukrainka was the pen name of Larissa Kosach. She was a prominent writer, authoress of a collection of poems, *On the Wings of Song, Thoughts and Dreams*, and *Echoes*, as well as a series of dramatic poems on themes taken from the history of ancient Greece, *Cassandra*, and from Roman history, *Rufinus and Priscilla*, *The Orgy*, and from Jewish history, *The Babylonian Captivity*, *On the Ruins*, and, also, from the life of the English colonists in America, *In the Wilderness*, and the dramas, *The Stone Master*, and *The Forest Song*. She also left a number of stories. The most notable of her prose stories are, *Friendship*, *Over the Sea*, and a story published in this anthology, *A Conversation*. Lesia Ukrainka was born in the year 1871 and was an invalid most of her life but this did not fetter her spirit. She died in 1913.

A CONVERSATION

"Great is love and fateful, like a simoon which drifts up with the sand, the placid lakes and the quiet fountains in the oases, overwhelms the noisy mountain streams, no matter how bravely they rush down, bringing to the valleys their message of mountain air and liberty; it piles up unexpected bulwarks against the lordly mighty ocean, which must retreat, changing the boundaries of its domain..."

Thus the young poet read aloud, his head with its thick mass of curls bent over the closely written manuscript. He sat at the feet of the sick actress in 'retirement,' who lay on a sofa, languid, apathetic, listening to his reading, as hopeless invalids listen to the sound of the restless waves, while lying on a sun-baked beach.

Suddenly she began to laugh unpleasantly, either too heartily or not sincerely, so it seemed to the poet.

"You find it amusing?" he said offended, then added, overly submissive, apologetically: "True, perhaps I did forget my geography while writing it."

The actress smiled more composedly:

"I know still less about geography than you."

"May I ask then, why you laughed?"

"Why not? Only it's hard to say... It seemed to me as though it were the beginning of my obituary or something... And it seemed somewhat strange to hear that while still living."

"Your obituary? Yours? In what way? Why? If it were an obituary, it certainly would not be yours. Oh, no! not yours, I know very well..."

A note of cruel unkindness vibrated in the voice of the young poet.

"My boy!" the actress's voice, on the contrary, was tender and kind, though with a tinge of mockery: "Don't be always thinking of yourself!"

The poet said nothing but merely cast a look, full of reproach and pain, at her faded countenance.

"Don't reproach me and don't be offended, for it is true. You worry about me and neglect yourself, you take care of me and make sacrifices impossible to repay" — the poet made a vehement movement, but she stopped him, shaking her head — "sacrifices impossible

to repay, but you are only thinking of yourself, you are not thinking of me at all."

"I do more than think of you!" the poet explained.

"That may be so... Yet, even though it is all the same, you are not thinking of me; you do not understand me and it makes me sad. No one understands me, and it is not because I am an enigmatic, unintelligible nature. No, it would be quite easy to understand me thoroughly, it needs but little thought to discover me, but it is clear that no one is curious. The first time people saw me they were 'in ecstasies,' they called me a 'star,' 'incomparable,' and so forth; they said many things like that, you know, they wrote a good deal, but as to thinking of me — no one ever did, not even you."

The poet pondered:

"Maybe it's true," he then said quietly. "Maybe I didn't think of you, that is, up to this moment. But such thinking won't do any good, for supposing you were not the same as you are, worse or better. You are my fate."

"Ha!... 'worse or better,'" she repeated pensively... "Perhaps if I were better, you wouldn't love me."

He looked in surprise at her.

"Well, certainly," she continued, "people like you are always looking for discords, broken strings, shattered harps, and when I was more beautiful, when there was nothing broken about me, not a discordant note, you found my harmoniousness boring. There, take up that album — you'll find a lot of my earlier pictures, you may look them through, I have no objection, I am not playing the coquette with you, look at them."

He examined one after another all those earlier pictures of her in starring roles, in wonderful costumes. He looked at them for a long time, then closed the album and silently replaced it.

"Well, what about it?" she asked nervously.

"Maybe you're right," he replied mildly and smiled brightly, but somehow he felt sorry for her.

"You see, my... I almost said 'My dear,' but that would be nonsense, unoriginal and even cruel? There are situations where a woman dare not use the words." She glanced at him sorrowfully and apologetically.

"Call me what you will, anything you please." He bent, took her pale, slender hand, still more emaciated than her face, and kissed it almost with reverence. She closed her eyes and after the kiss her hand lay inert yet constrained, as though she had forgotten it. A few moments passed in silence.

"Ah! What was it I was just about to tell you?" The actress spoke as though slowly rousing out of a doze.

"Were you about to tell me something?"

"Yes, it seems so... Oh, yes!... How do you think I came to be burnt out?"

"You? Burnt out?" The poet's voice rang with surprise a shade overdone.

"Now, listen, I don't like that," she frowned as though in physical pain. "Insincerity doesn't become you. You well know about my downfall, what it was, when it happened, and that it is irretrievable."

"I know nothing about irretrievability," said the poet, averting his glance.

"Lord bless you! I'm not going to press you to the wall. That's not the point. But how do you think it happened that I went into 'retirement'?"

"Why, everybody knows — you fell sick... overworked... And no wonder! You put so much of yourself into your roles..."

"You know nothing at all about it," she interrupted impatiently. "Not a thing! It was just because I stopped putting myself into them!"

"You were overworked earlier."

"Be still! It wasn't that," she burst out sharply and fretfully, and impatiently changed her position several times.

"Did I make you angry?"

"Ach, no, no..."

She turned toward the wall and began to count with her finger the squares in the Persian carpet hung against it. Her countenance altered, her eyebrows drew together; once or twice she was on the point of speaking and each time she pressed her lips together. Then she suddenly turned round to the poet and looked him full in the face.

"It doesn't matter. I must tell you all the same," she said in a sort of desperation. "Although I feel that I ought not to tell you." She stressed the pronouns "I" and "you."

The poet replied with a like emphasis: "You may tell me everything."

"All right," she said boldly, though in a tone not entirely steady. "Here it is: Once I fell very much in love, 'Only once?' perhaps you are thinking..."

"I am thinking nothing," said the poet, this time rather brusquely. *

"I say 'I fell,' for in such cases it is customary to say that, instead of 'I am'."

"So?" said the poet, somewhat startled.

"Yes. Now what? You are surely thinking now: 'For what reason is she telling this to me? She's dramatizing a situation, just like an actress.'" She burst out with her unpleasant laugh, and her face, pale from former habitual makeups and from present sickness, became overspread with a dull, patchy flush.

"May I ask you — if you can: don't laugh like that," quietly, yet as though pained, the poet said and went over to the window.

She stopped.

"Well, I won't, I won't. Come over here, I can't talk loud." — He obediently sat down in his accustomed place, the low stool near her feet.

"What I am going to tell you is very banal, not worth telling, least of all to a poet. You don't admire such things."

He impatiently shrugged his shoulders. "Are you going to expound a thesis to me?" he said, displeased.

"Now, you stop! You ought to realize it's not easy to strike a natural tone, talking about one's self like this."

"Forgive me, I'll be patient."

"Moreover, there is nothing of an 'affair' in my story. I simply fell in love and then the 'business didn't go,' as they say. A very thin romance for an actress. Ha, ha!... Ah, sorry, I promised not to laugh" — she broke off her laughter by herself, for she noticed that the poet's face bore an expression of deep pain.

"He, I suppose, did not love you in return?" asked the poet, when she fell silent again.

"Why that 'I suppose?' No, on the contrary it is hard to say which of the two of us loved the most."

"Then why?"

"Don't make me laugh at you! Do you really think that loving one another is enough to bring a couple together? Listen:

"Not all the gardens put forth flowers

Which send out buds in spring's sweet showers."

"Who was he?" said the poet, frowning."

"He was and still is a writer. Not like you, one of 'God's elect.' (The poet gazed at her searchingly, but paid no attention to it). No, just a common, everyday writer, who does dramatic criticisms and carries on some sort of column in a provincial newspaper. He was then doing paste and scissors work; 'What our contemporaries are saying'; now it seems he's been promoted to local news. In his writing there was no 'divine spark' in himself, for it gleamed in his eyes, and there was

that in his voice which was lacking in his words. For this I forgave him everything, even those unpardonably stupid verses which he once wrote for one of my benefit nights. And his critiques on my work, although they were always laudatory, but... may the Lord forgive him for their style — these, even for the actor's unfathomable taste, were lacking in discrimination. It always seemed to me that that spark of his should be liberated from literature, be struck out of himself, and that I might be the one..."

She fell silent.

"Why didn't you do it?"

She passed her hands across her brows:

"Why?... because he would not follow after me and I wouldn't go to him."

"Why?"

"Ach, how tiresome you are with your 'Why?' I will tell you all without that! The usual thing; he wanted me to become his lawful wife, he didn't want to love me otherwise, he didn't want to share me with others, he was fearfully jealous. To live always in the same town, that I could not do, and he could not be satisfied with occasional meetings, now and again; it was therefore easier for him to separate altogether, as he said himself. But I preferred not to go his way."

The poet for some reason seemed more cheerful.

"I understand. You were concerned about your own precious freedom. The joke of conjugal obligation did not appeal to your artistic nature. Perhaps the thought of a vow as a compulsion of love offended you. Lawful marriage would imply a conventional bourgeois life for you."

She frowned at him, then smiled languidly:

"No, that wasn't the trouble. I simply was afraid of hard times, ordinary material progress.

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"But I have rarely seen a person less greedy for money than you."

"I should have been afraid of the vagabond actors' hardships, for I have experienced them and come through them quite happily, but the hardships of married life, family, personal troubles — I feared them then and would still be afraid of them now, regardless of anything!"

"Somehow I can't understand it," said the poet slowly, and his face took on an expression of incomprehension, disillusionment.

"It seems to me that maybe your passion was not so great as it appeared to you."

"Why then am I dying from it now?" she burst out in feverish, genuine despair.

She sat up on the sofa, wringing her hands. Her eyes had become immense and black, as though they had been artificially darkened. The poet, with a gentle movement, pushed her back on the pillows and again she lay submissive, composing herself. A silence fell between them. The poet mechanically leafed through his manuscript.

"Don't think too badly of me, and comprehend, if you can," she again began to talk. "If I was afraid of those hardships, it was not because I was afraid of hunger, cold, ragged clothing and broken shoes."

"You were afraid for your love; that it might wither in the struggle of life?"

"Maybe there was something of that. Although I did not fear for my own love, but for his. Women somehow manage better to keep up the poetry of their feelings in the midst of life's prose than men do."

"You think so?"

"So it seems to me. But that's not important, for that alone would not have withheld me. In any case, his love might have faded, if not from hardships, yet long separations, and so it amounts to the same."

"You didn't believe in him?"

"No, not exactly... Well, of course, one is more certain of one's own self. And it seemed to me that my love was 'stronger than death'..."

"And therefore?" asked the poet with hope in his voice.

She smiled sadly and ironically:

"Yet, however, death is stronger, I must regretfully confess. It is stronger even than that which seemed to me more powerful than my love and more precious, yes, more precious."

"What is that?"

"Is it possible you cannot guess? Oh, you poets are wiser on paper than in life! My art, of course. That's why hardships seemed so fearful to him."

The poet, without concealment, kept on looking at her with his former expression.

"What sort? A prompter's job? Maybe a 'walker on'? He had not even the ability to be a 'super,' and our own company did not carry such along. He might perhaps have agreed to something of the sort but our stage superstitions would not have allowed it. The

husband of a 'star,' 'our first lady,' the 'incomparable premiere,' or what have you — and to stand on the stage as a super in dumb roles, an errand-boy, one who 'holds up the corners'... No, no, you may not understand it, but it was impossible, im-pos-sib-le! I tell you. He would have been a complete failure on the stage... The same as you, too . . .," she said swiftly.

"Why should I be included here? I have never been on the stage. How do you know, perhaps . . ."

"No, no! No 'perhaps.' I have an infallible flair in such things. A complete failure, I tell you." Irritably, she looked straight at him. "Err . . . I don't know, but maybe, my love might not have stood it!"

A malicious spark flashed in the poet's eyes.

"However, this . . . your friend, it seems, did not display any particular talent even in his literary work, you said so yourself."

"That's quite another thing!"

The poet shrugged his shoulders disparagingly.

"I don't understand why. What's the difference?"

"A newspaper man may not be so terribly gifted, but at least he is called 'an honest journalist' and not a tramp."

"Now see, with you it's all a matter of words . . ."

"Well, there is the word 'scribbler' too."

She turned patchily red and flashed her eyes at him.

"You, what do you think you are!"

"Forgive me . . ."

"Whatever he was, my closest friend could not have measured up to and equalled in position. No matter what he was behind the scenes.

"But you yourself earned considerably," he persisted.

"A bird of passage such as I was and must be in the present conditions of our theatrical life, could make money in spurts, — I had no reserves and never understood how to lay them aside. If I set up a permanent nest, I would lose my earning power. Even had he been an actor . . . and how can a writer on a small paper in a small town adapt himself to another paper? It's not so easy."

"That is so."

"On my earnings then, it is true, we might both have lived, even perhaps with a family, if he had given up his position and lived, traveling with me, at my expense. But he wouldn't hear of it."

"That's understandable," declared the poet thoughtfully.

The actress flared up.

"What! That's understandable to you! That a man for the sake of some bourgeois superstitions can break his own heart and that of the one who loves him! That's understandable to you!"

"That's not superstition, it's elementary decency."

"Just 'elementary'! Everything is elementary with you men! Suppose I had lived on his miserable 'so-much-a-line,' giving up my profession for love, that would be 'elementary indecency'?"

"No, quite another matter. In present circumstances..."

The actress waved her hands.

"I know, I know, I know! I've heard it a thousand times! It bores me. Elementary. Enough! He said just the same. I used to hate him at such times."

The poet did not venture to defend his thesis.

"Perhaps he might have gotten something to do with your company?" he timidly interjected.

"He would merely have been my husband."

"An extraordinarily nice position: 'husband of the queen!'" the poet blurted out.

"No worse than being 'wife of her husband'."

They exchanged sharp looks, mutually hostile. Another silence fell between them, longer than the former ones.

"Give me a cigarette," the actress said at last in a fatigued, apathetic voice.

The poet was already mollified again and felt himself guilty of a fault toward her.

"I can't," he objected. "It harms you to smoke."

"Does it matter, whether it harms me or not?"

"To whom are you saying this?" the poet said in a tender tone and suddenly added, "Did I offend you?"

"No, but I didn't feel like talking."

The poet looked searchingly into her face; her eyes were lowered, but even thus she could not stand that searching look, and turned away to the wall.

He took her hand in his. "Don't be angry. I don't know myself how that wicked flareup came between us. It's all over now, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is."

She turned back to him and began to talk as though there had been no interruption.

"However it was, we separated. That is: I went away from him. I transferred to another company, worse, and on poorer conditions, in order to get out of that town and fly away to the world's end.

Well. I traveled as far as Siberia in order to evade the temptation of returning to visit my 'unaffianced lover'..."

"Unaffianced? Maybe unaccepted?"

"It's all the same. It was not a whim on my part, let me tell you. I feared for my art, for really if he did stand up against small family hardships, it would be done for. That's what I thought then, that it could only be ruined by such things, but it turned out... Ha, ha!..."

"Oh Lord, that laugh!"

The poet cracked his fingers.

She cried out: "Don't do that! I can't bear it!"

The poet folded his hands, but remarked: "See here, I mustn't do anything that annoys you, but you..."

"Of course! You are well, but I'm sick. Don't interrupt me or else I cannot talk... Well, I went to Siberia. I thought that, having made such a costly sacrifice to the god of art, I should become forever his high priestess."

"And it's true!" interjected the poet warmly.

"No, it is not true. I know better. Not his priestess, but his slave I felt myself from that time on. It seemed to me that I was cumbered by fetters, I forgot that it was I myself who had forged them and I cursed some unknown evil spirit for it... Maybe there was really an evil spirit who had cloven my heart and soul in twain..."

"It is always the lot of artists and poets that they must water the path to immortality with their own blood!" said the poet somewhat pathetically.

The actress frowned and writhed.

"Pish! Mere talk! However, I will not deny that it may be so for poets, you should know it better. I am not a poetess. As to artists first of all: what is our immortality? So many words written down in the history of dramatic art? Whose heart will thrill reading those words, say: ten years hence?"

"Now, you are taking too short a view."

"It's all one. That's enough to measure such 'immortality'. No, no, no, we want to live and to hope for immortality, it is only when alive that one feels one's self great and immortal. While I lived, I was without a care, in harmony with myself and my art. I was happy and I really was something on the stage. Until I experienced my own great calamity, when grief took my soul captive to its very depths, I was able to 'live' my roles sincerely — you know that my strong point was powerfully dramatic characters — for I had an inexhaustible range of emotions which had been expended on my own life. I knew only grief which was portrayed in dramas and I

believed it was like that too in real life. I vitalized that written grief on the stage and behind the scenes I rested from it and gathered new strength. I was once a very cheerful and 'splendid colleague' — did you know that?"

"No, I heard..."

"No matter. That's not the point. But... when I found out by myself through living experience what grief is, and what it costs to make sacrifices, all at once, somehow my roles lost all their significance. The slightest false note cut me, and for hours I tortured myself, seeking the 'natural' tone for those unreal banalities, with which the roles of my repertoire were filled (and these were by no means the worst of dramas). I ceased to play 'the words,' I began to study the characters.

"But that is the highest stage of dramatic art!" exclaimed the poet, and was about to begin a long exposition of his assertion, when she raised her hand to stop him.

"Maybe it is so. We're not talking about that. Had I advanced to that stage while I was still happy, it might have worked out to advantage both to myself and to my art, but... it was merely one unceasing torment; I was always comparing the written grief to my own unwritten one, and the latter was my standard while studying. I recalled how people really weep from desperation, how they really talk when saying farewell, how they really lose their heads from grief, and it tore my heart and the roles seemed to be a caricature of myself and of my sufferings. Many a time I came out on stage with despair in my heart and with fear: How am I going to play this lying thing sincerely? Really, sometimes I shuddered. But 'study' saved me, and for a long time no one noticed anything. Only you know, it was not as it once was, a mere pretending, but hypocrisy. After such exhibitions, I returned home shattered, fatigued, discouraged, no longer conscious for what and for whom I was sacrificing myself. Art appeared to me then as a soulless idol, painted with faded colors, and I began to hate and nothing was more dreadful to me than that hatred. It was like an abyss into which I was rushing head first..."

Both sympathy and pity for her gleamed in the poet's eyes, but he compelled himself to speak tranquilly:

"But not everything was false in those roles of yours. I know there were passages at least in them, sometimes the entire role, which were vividly drawn from reality. Didn't it seem so to you?"

"That made it still worse," she said, evading a direct reply, "when such passages occurred, then I did not act at all, neither playing 'the words,' nor doing it 'with my head,' but I publicly wept

and swooned with longing, many a time forgetting the words of my part and the play and the audience itself. Really, there were times when I ought to have been chased off the stage with a broom for such exhibitions, but the critics and the public always forgave me on the grounds of hysteria. When, following after me, the feminine part of the audience writhed in hysterical attacks, it didn't seem to me a 'triumph,' but the Siberian plutocrats showered me with furs and jewels. For me such a 'triumph' did not end on the stage, but often I continued my 'acting' whole nights through at home until I was stunned by mortal fatigue or killing doses of narcotics. Oh, what nights they were! What nights they were!... Had it not been for those immense spaces, I certainly would have run back to him barefoot and cast myself before him, begging him to take and hide me from such 'art'. But the next day I was 'studying' again... And so passed several years..."

"Oh, I could stand a lot then, that is, it seemed to me that I could... Pride helped me a good deal. I didn't want to confess to myself that I had made a mistake and that I was undone."

The poet's face again took on a malevolent expression, he felt it and endeavored to restrain it but he could not, and so began to speak in a purposely indifferent tone:

"I don't quite understand it. You reproved me for not thinking about you and yet I could not have abandoned you for pride as you abandoned yourself... Did it never occur to you that it was your own fault for giving way to such torments? No, you are just pitiless."

She looked at him sidelong and her voice vibrated with irony: "And you are so incredibly compassionate! How then to defend the cause of my — what shall I say? — Well, it doesn't matter... Only, you see, I must say in my own defence that I did not know that anyone else suffered as I did, for no one wrote to me about it... Really, I had asked him not to write to me..."

"Yes, I asked him, but he ought not to have listened to my request, if... Maybe you will say that was a woman's logic?"

"I won't say anything," replied the poet sullenly and began again to rifle through the pages of his manuscript.

She thought a moment, then spoke simply, without irony, without irritation, in a frank and friendly tone:

"You know, we'd better drop this conversation. It's clear that my story is upsetting you."

"No, no," he dissented, frowning with pain. "If you possibly can, finish it. Tell me everything right to the end. Otherwise it will make me suffer too much. And pay no attention to my behavior... Maybe I have spoken unjustly and unkindly... but I... you'll under-

stand . . . a sort of inner conflict, or even more . . . It's very hard to . . . and anyone in my place . . . No, I can't tell you . . ."

She summoned up her strength and with a slight groan of pain lifted herself up to reach for his hand with her own. She stroked his hand and lay back again with another slight groan.

"No, I am more to blame . . . But then, no one is to blame. Who knows whether it is harder to listen than to tell . . . But having once begun — not to listen or not to tell, it would be still harder. Only I will be brief and without any lyricism . . . Good?"

"As you will," said the poet, immediately softening.

"But first give me the medicine and put something under my head. I seem to have slumped down. Yes . . . Thank you. Now you see, I did not hold out to the end. Maybe with time I might have become tranquilized, maybe I was beginning to forget (in our day, somehow we don't quite believe in undying love), had it not been for those roles with their lies and their truth, which kept on re-infecting my wound. Well, in brief, at last I just had to return to that town. But he was already married . . ."

"It is possible!" exclaimed the poet, "He could forget you?"

She smiled sadly.

"Pish, don't pretend to be naive! Men are in the habit of having, besides the 'great, fateful love,' as you called it, a dozen, if not more, of other smaller, unfateful loves."

"I think that sometimes happens with women, too."

She turned her eyes away from him nonchalantly:

"Did you see his wife?" asked the poet somewhat enigmatically.

"Why not? I was in their home!"

"You were in their home?"

"It seems strange to you? Well, strange or not, I was there in their home. The first evening I saw him in the theatre with a woman. I knew at once that it was his wife, she sat beside him and one could guess right away that she had come to the theatre on a pass, she was poorly clad for the first rows of the orchestra . . . And then there is something peculiar in the behavior of a married couple each to the other — always noticeable. During the first intermission I had him called back of the stage and asked to be introduced to his wife. He couldn't find any pretext to refuse. It was in public. None of my colleagues suspected anything for they knew nothing. And we were introduced."

"What was she like?" the poet was unable to conceal his curiosity.

"Like? Different from me, quite different. Does that satisfy you?"

"But what sort of person was she?" the poet repeated his question, a little abashed.

"She had been an office employee on the newspaper where he worked, but now she was the 'wife of her husband,' or, dear me! 'a married woman.' What else could she be?"

"Well, she might have been employed?"

"She now had a different employment," said the actress with a short laugh, almost like a cough. "When I visited them, she was giving the baby a bath and two other small children were under her feet, squabbling and fighting and driving her to desperation. I swiftly perceived that I had come at a very inopportune time, just as she was putting the children to bed and her husband ought to have been helping her because the wife and the servant girl were having quite a trouble with the bathing. He tried to pretend to me that this did not bother him, nay, even amused him, but he, poor fellow, surely would have made a miserable actor! I noticed that he wiped his brow a couple of times. All they had was two small rooms and the older children slept in the one where I was sitting. It did occur to me that I ought to go home, but I didn't."

"Why?"

Again she began to laugh.

"Why that 'Why?' I had come as a guest, I had been invited to 'come and spend the evening,' so I stayed and sat, the entire evening I sat."

His face took on a very hard expression as she said this. Once again a disagreeable something stirred in the poet's heart regarding her.

"But they certainly only asked you out of politeness, for you said yourself you came at a very inopportune moment."

"And how did that concern me? I wanted and had the right to see how my ex-lover and his wife lived. As I myself might have lived, if... Well, I saw. The children wouldn't go to sleep for a long time and there was trouble before they had their milk and so on. In addition, the baby was a bit sick and it had to be walked up and down in the mother's arms before it fell asleep. After the children had gone off, they put a screen around them and we sat down at the table to drink tea. But before the tea was ready the servant-girl had to call her mistress several times into the tiny kitchen through which I had passed because it was the only entrance into the apartment. Then she called her husband out and they whispered together quite a long time. Then the servant-girl ran out somewhere a couple of times, again called her master and mistress out and once more there were ally when there was perhaps an extra pass. However, we did talk

long time in the kitchen (I suspected that she was cook as well as nurse-maid and that the servant, a child of about twelve, was merely an errand-girl). Meanwhile the master entertained me, or rather I entertained him."

"What did you talk about?" asked the poet dully.

She looked at him mockingly.

"About all sorts of things, cheerful things."

"Cheerful?"

"What did you think?" That in the wife's absence, we tried to 'renew old memories,' or that I, 'weeping, fell into his embrace,' or that he, 'urged by demonic powers, abandoned all and followed me like a faithful dog'? Alas, dear heart! you only find such things in plays. No, that evening I played quite a different role. I told him about the jolly rides in troikas, about the plutocrat Siberians, about corsages with hundred ruble notes in them, given to me because I had learned to sing Gypsy romances and to dance on tables. And when the mistress entered with a platter of *'varenyky'* and the servant-girl finally brought in the samovar, rolls and the traditional 'tea sausage,' I was just describing the 'Lucullan banquet' in Irkutsk the night of my benefit performance. Having poured the tea, the mistress took out her sewing — a child's garment — and one could see that it was really badly needed work. I paid a compliment to her skill and she replied that she did all the sewing for herself and the children. It seemed to me that some of the work on her husband's garments was hers too. I promised to bring her a pattern of the latest style such as I was wearing. The poor thing was obliged to thank me for it. Ha, ha! Her elbows were torn, maybe she never had the time to patch them."

"I never thought you could be so unkind," said the poet with a quiver in his voice.

"And I never thought you could be so sentimental. After all, it becomes you; you are a poet and a lyrical one to boot. But what am I! Merely an actress! All the same, I gave quite a gifted performance that evening, only it was for the last time..."

The poet opened his eyes wide at this but said nothing.

"Then the conversation turned to literature (you see how well I have remembered the evening's program) and it appeared that they read nothing at all, because he wrote too much and she — 'Well, where should she get time to read!' He did, however, know about the new plays, because, 'on account of long service,' he had a standing pass to the theatre, but she knew little, for she only went occasion-mysterious deliberations. Then the mistress was away for quite a

about the plays and mostly about my new roles. I assured them that nothing was more satisfying to a person than a career on the stage."

The poet looked at her sadly.

"And was that sincere?"

"I did not expect that it would be necessary to point out to you the dot on every 'i'! Sincere? Insincere? I don't like such questions! How do I know? Maybe both!"

"I thought that then, at that time, you really could have said it sincerely. You were once terrified by the prospect of hardships and here you saw them close at hand.

Impatiently she broke in upon him:

"What, then, did that change anything? Well, hardships, real hardship, still worse, maybe, than I had once imagined... But perhaps you think that the 'divine spark' was quite extinguished in his eyes? That his voice had entirely altered? Oh, no! He had merely begun to write still worse... And I well realized that it would be possible to kindle that spark in him, but not in such an environment... and that otherwise it never would be and could not be. His home could not be otherwise, you understand? Whoever had been his wife, her fate would have been the same, you understand?" She raised herself up, this time without a groan, and tremblingly squeezed his hand.

Cautiously he pushed her back on the pillows again and said (he himself knew not why):

"But people sometimes find love and happiness outside the home and not with their lawful spouses."

"It's not worth-while talking about that," she said calmly, "not with him, he wasn't that sort..."

"And how did he behave toward his wife?"

"Very well, it seemed. However, somehow, they appeared as though they felt a sense of guilt each toward the other. But all this is stupid."

She turned her head to one side as though it fell by itself, inert and powerless.

"Well, I played out the role."

"What role?" asked the poet in alarm, for it seemed to him that she was losing consciousness.

"What role? Why, the farewell to an 'unaffianced lover.' And then I went home and somehow, I no longer thought or felt a thing, just as though I was no more in this world. At first I felt something like repentance, now pride, now hope, and finally, nothing at all. The day after, I had to play on the stage, something melodramatic. Oh, what a torture it was! Completely dead, I had to pretend an imita-

tion of a living creature. But here 'study' did not help. I no longer felt falsehood or truth, I was burnt out, dead while still living. Finally it was remarked. I collapsed. Then I fell sick. But you know all this."

"And you never saw him again?"

"No, what for? It made no difference. I went away then... not purposely, for nothing mattered any more... The company left and I went with it..."

She stopped and seemed to doze; the rays of the setting sun fell on her closed eyes, she paid no heed.

The poet sat quietly and held his breath so as not to disturb the silence. The sunlight quivered on the wall in tiny patches, then faded out... The actress slowly opened her eyes.

"How could you love a dead thing like me?"

"I loved you long ago in Kharkiv."

"Yes, that's so... I was traveling to Siberia... then I was still alive... It is not good for me to detain you here at my side?" she asked somewhat gravely, urgently.

"You don't detain me," said the poet bowing.

"Yes, you said... I am your fate. I believe it. Maybe it does happen. At least as long as I'm alive. But I shall soon die and you'll be free."

"When I die too!"

Her lips moved with difficulty.

"It becomes a poet to say that I... No, I didn't think, I think nothing. But: suppose he had died then, long ago, I might have been free and should not have become burnt out... However, I don't know... Enough of this... Read me something."

"What shall it be?"

"Something of your own, of course."

The poet looked through his manuscript irresolutely without speaking.

"Finish what you began."

"That?"

"Why not? It will do me good. Read. Start from the beginning or from where I interrupted you."

The poet smoothed his thick curls and began:

"Love is great and fateful, like a simoon..."

The poet went on, pouring out his comparisons; the actress lay still and slowly wound a tress of her dark, cloudy hair around a thin, pale finger, winding it and then unwinding it over and over again...

Basil Stefanyk

THEIR LAND

Translated by Marie S. Gambal

Basil Stefanyk was born in 1871 in the village of Rusiv, Western Ukraine, of a peasant family. He studied medicine in Cracow but without completing the course, he returned to his native village to continue work on the land. It is with the village and its various facets that his literary works are concerned and he dealt with these early in his career, even as a student in the gymnasium. In his condensed, lapidary and very expressive style, Stefanyk turned out hard stories but they are replete with internal tragedy and sometimes have cruel peasant types as the heroes who in interminably harsh settings struggle eternally for existence. His stories are contained in such volumes as *The Blue Book*, 1899; *The Stone Cross*, 1900; *The Road*, 1901; *Maple Leaves*, 1904; *My Word*, 1905; and *Their Land*, 1926. In the stories of the last collection, especially such as *She — the Land* and *Sons* there is the elementary love of the Ukrainian peasant for the land that he cultivates by himself and defends through his sons, and furthermore for his Ukrainian fatherland. Basil Stefanyk died where he was born — in the village of Rusiv in December, 1936.

THEIR LAND

When Semen returned home at sunset he found five wagons loaded with all sorts of things and a child's crib atop. The horses hitched to the wagons were fine animals. And at the side of the hut some people were sitting, old, young — all strangers. Aged, barefooted Semen, with shoes hanging over his back, spoke to them:

"Glory be to Jesus Christ! Where are you from, good people, and how am I to call you?"

"We are Bukovinians. War has driven us away from home. I'm Danylo, and at my side, the old one, is Maria, my wife. These are my two daughters-in-law with their children. That is my own daughter with her children; and we would like to spend the night with you if you'll let us."

"Yes, do spend the night and be our guests. Let's have a chat while my wife gets supper ready. She's my second one, young and fine, when she wants to be."

"And this is my first. Fifty years we've been married, and now she's gone mad. I'll have to bury her somewhere along the road, for she's lost her reason under the wheels. As long as she could see our village she just cried. She jumped off the wagon, but my daughters caught up with her. When she lost sight of the village, she went numb. And here she sits, dumb-like, with the grandchildren."

"Danylo, my friend, don't wonder! She's left her words on the window panes, with the golden pictures on the walls of her home. Like little birds they throw themselves about the empty hut, like little orphans. They chirp prayers in their hiding, and the woman will be mute without them... but take her to the large room and pray for her to St. Nicholas. Maybe the word will be reborn within her."

So the two old men dragged the aged woman before the holy pictures, and loudly said their prayers. But the old woman remained silent.

"She lost her speech before her own saints, and that's where she'll find them."

"It's not my business to ask, but why have you left your land with those fine wagons and roan horses, and those children so young?"

"Friend Semen, I put my children on the wagons so's not to leave them at the mercy of the enemy. When they chained the priest and his wife and drove them out to the mountains, when they took away the teacher during the night, God knows where, when they hanged the mayor in the center of the village and posted soldiers there so nobody would bury him, I left my land and put my flesh and blood on the wagons so that no one could bring disgrace to them. The Tsar is Orthodox and we're Orthodox, too, which is treason. That's one thing. Another — the Russian is coming and he's blotting out the sun. And from China and Siberia and the whole world wild men are coming. They kill the old, rape the young women and cut their breasts off, and they take little children away and scatter them across desolate lands in a far-away kingdom. The windows in the village have gone blind, the bells have become mute. God's punishment has fallen upon us for the sins of the wide world. And I have tried to take away my blood, my children, from under the heavy hand of the merciful Lord to Christian lands."

"They're calling us to supper, Danylo. And don't grieve the Lord with your unwise sorrow."

"Eat and help yourselves, my flock of birds that know not where you fly. And we, Danylo, the two of us, let's have a taste of the bitter, maybe our aged backs will turn from the ground upward."

The two old men drank whiskey. They did not touch food at all.

"Children, go to sleep with your little ones. May the Lord paint pleasant dreams for you, and we old folks will stay up a while."

"Danylo, if you won't get angry, I would tell you something."

"I left my wisdom and anger back home. You can even beat me, for, you see, I'm an old bird without a nest."

"An old bird shouldn't leave his nest, because he can't build a new one. It's better that his body should grow stiff in the old one than in a ditch alongside a strange road."

"True, Semen, true. For these words I thank you..."

"Where have you set out to go? After the landlords and Jews? The Emperor has his treasure box open for them; to you it's closed. When you come to a city of strange tongues, among tall, cold walls, fate will scatter you among the rocks, and only in dreams will you see our beautiful land. And your bony hands will sow spring wheat over the stones. You'll be beside yourself, and the city folk will laugh at you. God will not receive you from among those stones, but He will come out to greet you if you're killed on your own land. Go back to your soft soil, and there God will pour blessings upon you, even if you die hanging from a tree..."

"A sinner am I, Semen, a sinner. Before God and before you. My meadows are like well fed lambs, dark and curly. I shall turn my wagons toward the rising sun at once, not to anger the Lord..."

"Our work is on the land. Let her go, and you're lost. Hold on to her, and she draws out all your strength, with her palms she ladles your soul. You cling to her, you stoop over her and she pulls at your veins, but in return you have flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and stocked barns. For your efforts, she gives you a household of children and grandchildren who laugh like silver bells, and blush like the red guelder-rose... Don't go with the landlords and the Jews, Danylo, don't look for the Tsar. His like will always come to the peasant to take taxes from him..."

"May the Lord bring everything of the best to you, Semen, for your wise counsel. I'm going back home. May God's will be done!"

The old Maria spoke:

"Let's go, Danylo, let's go home!"

"That's a woman for you! When it came upon her, she started talking!"

"And now let's drink to our good luck. May we live through the evil hour, and when we die, may our bones rot in our own land!"

And so the two old men drank, and the old woman with them. She sat in the middle, embraced the two, and led the song:

Only my own darling,
Like the little gray dove,
Goes not to sleep.
She rocks her child,
In the cradle deep.
She gossips with the wild wind...

Late into the night they sang their songs. With the rise of the dawn, the wagons rumbled. Danylo was getting ready to go back.

And when the sun was coming up, the two men bade farewell. They kissed each other's dark hands. The red sun cast their shadows across the fields, far across the land.

Les Martovych

THE CHANGELING

Translated by Stephen Shumeyko

Les Martovych was born in 1871. He was a contemporary and friend of Stefanyk, and was by profession a lawyer. He came from a peasant family. His stories dealt with the way of life of the peasants of the early 20th century, and of the village intelligentsia, the priests and teachers of that period. He wrote in a realistic style with a touch of impressionism, and at times with a sharp criticism of the provincial bureaucracy and townsfolk. His stories appeared in collections such as *The Changeling*, 1900; *Cunning Panko*, 1903; *The Windgod's Gift*, 1905. He also wrote a story about the life of the intelligentsia, *Superstition*, published after his death in 1917 but written in 1911. His story *The Difference*, was written in 1914. It was one of the collection in *The Windgod's Gift*.

THE CHANGELING

From the threshold to the table ran a wet and muddy path, while outside a heavy, sleety rain was falling. All the world had shrunk, rendering the air as close as in a barrel. A feeling of dispiritedness prevailed in the peasant hut: for grandmother, sitting on the oven-top, it was because the damp weather made her cough the more; for Joanna it was the cooking that made the oven all the more smoky; and for Ivan, behind his loom, because the light was all the poorer.

Suddenly the door banged open, and into the house ran a bare-footed boy, with mud clinging up to his knees. It was Mykytko, the youngest brother of Ivan. There was another bang; the door slammed shut so hard that the windows rattled. Immediately the air of cheerlessness disappeared; all three raised their heads inquiringly.

"What's this — the house falling down?" asked the grandmother irritably from the oven-top.

"What's the matter with you?" exclaimed Joanna to Mykytko. "Why don't you enter as you are supposed to?"

"Because I have no time."

"And why don't you go over and kiss Grandmother's hand?"

"Because I didn't come to her; I came to Ivan."

"Ah, so I'm honored with a visitor," said Ivan testily from behind the loom. "Well, sonny, just wait a moment, and I'll give you such a reception that you won't be able to sit down for three days."

"That's just exactly why I came here. Take a whip, Ivan, or better still, a ploughstaff, and beat me until the blood starts spurting."

"Have you gone crazy?"

"No, I need the marks."

"What marks?"

"Bruises! You see, it's like this. Today I got a lacing from Tsypeniuk, and I want him arrested and jailed for that. But, curse the luck, his beating did not leave any marks on me, and without them I can't do a thing to him."

"You must be possessed of the very devil himself to think of such a thing!"

"Oh, come on, give me a good beating."

"Let me alone, I tell you, and get out of here."

Grandmother's temper exploded:

"Get out of here, you scamp! To think of arresting such a fine man as Tsypeniuk. Shame on you!... Oh, merciful God! What is this world coming to?... Get out! You antichrist! Get out! For if I take a stick it will be just too bad for you!"

"As if you could," jeered Mykytko. "But you can't. You're good for nothing. You just sit and loaf."

Mykytko was purposely impudent; he wanted to goad her to the point where she would beat him.

Grandmother's face grew purple with sudden anger.

"Did you hear? That little devil is insulting me right here in my own home! Ivan! What are you sitting there for? Give him one he won't forget for a long time!"

This reaction was to Mykytko's liking; he was quick in following it up.

"That's it! That's it! Give it to me, Ivan! Not once but many times. I'll give you my share in father's farm when he dies if you do."

"Oh, leave me in peace!" exclaimed Ivan disgustedly. "I'll get your share anyway, for you'll be rotting in prison then."

"Yeah, but you will get it sooner if you beat me, for then I'll depart from this earth sooner!" Mykytko urged eagerly.

"Ivan!" Grandmother's cracked voice interrupted. "Are you losing your senses, getting into a debate with him!"

"Of course not, granny; don't get excited. Can't you see he's purposely egging us on so that we'll give him a licking?"

Grandmother grew silent.

"Oh, come on, Ivan, beat me," urged Mykytko, not in the least discouraged. "We'll both go out in the hallway. I'll grab a hold of the milk-stone, and then you can whack me as hard as you can. But if you don't, then, by gosh, you'll be sorry! I'll burn your house down!"

"You'll what? What's that you're yelping?"

Ivan's patience had now reached a breaking point; and so was that of his wife.

"Don't you think he's capable of doing that?" she shrilled. "You know him well enough. He hasn't a bit of conscience."

Mykytko grew even more insolent.

"Yeah, and that's not all. When I fire your house, your stacked wheat will burn down too, the wheat you stole from father last summer. Don't worry, I saw it."

"Wow!" cried Ivan and Joanna as with one voice. Ivan rose from behind the loom, his face livid with anger.

"Give it to him!" cried Joanna.

"So you would make a thief out of me, eh!" shouted Ivan, as he strove to untangle his feet from the clumps of thread on the floor. "Just wait, wait, I'll settle with you right now!"

"I'll tell you something more, Ivan, so that you'll get even more angry. Do you know what happened to those harness traces that disappeared last summer? Well, I do; I took them and I cut them up into straps for my dog. So there!"

"Oh, you jail-bird!" the three cried, beside themselves with anger.

"Come, my little one, come; I shall settle with you for all that right now!" And so with these words, Ivan seized Mykytko firmly by the collar and half-pushed and half-carried him into the hallway.

The women were furious.

"Oh, I hope he gives it to him plenty!" Grandmother shrieked.

"This little loafer has made thieves out of us! Can you imagine! No doubt, but he must have squealed to father. Murrain take such a boy! Look at the harm he's done already! Oh, oh! How I cried over those traces, for Ivan took the last cent we had to buy them!"

Outside a loud racket was heard.

"What's that! Is he whacking him so hard?" Grandmother asked. "Go and take a look, Joanna."

Joanna looked out into the hallway.

"And how!" she exclaimed. "Ivan is giving him such a drubbing! But Mykytko is like stone; he's holding on to the mill-stone quern for dear life; his teeth are clenched; his eyes are shut, and he isn't even wincing. And can you imagine what he's saying: 'Hit in one spot, Ivan, so that the mark will show better.'"

Grandma grew somewhat contrite and conscious-stricken.

"Tell him to ease up a bit, not to hit too hard," she said. "But wait; it's all quiet; Ivan must have stopped."

Joanna looked out once more into the hallway. She shook her head. "Mykytko has taken his shirt off; he's asking Ivan to see whether the welts are very big. Now he's telling Ivan to beat him some more until the blood begins to spurt."

And the racket in the hall started all over again.

"Tell Ivan to stop immediately," said Grandmother, "for he's liable to beat him to death. The boy has plenty of courage but no strength; and he's only fourteen years old."

Before Joanna could go to the doorway, the door opened, and in walked Ivan with Mykytko. Ivan was flushed from the exertion. Mykytko was as pale as a sheet, shaking like a leaf, his lips trembling, with tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Well, how do you like it?" asked Ivan, panting. "That's for the traces you stole."

"What a weakling you are!" derided Mykytko through his tears. "You can't beat me any more because you're tired. Bah!"

"Didn't you get enough, you little devil?" exclaimed Joanna. "Why, look! Now you're crying!"

"I'm not crying!" denied Mykytko tearfully. "Those tears are coming by themselves, curse them!"

"What are you standing there for?" asked Grandmother from the oven-top. "Why don't you go?"

"I'm waiting to see if my marks burn, because if they don't, then Ivan will have to beat me some more," explained Mykytko. "Oh! They burn all right! Yes, they burn fine! They will drive me to the magistrate like a whip. I won't even touch the ground — that's how fast I'll run!"

Mykytko scampered to the doorway, paused, then said:

"And as for you, Ivan, don't tell anyone that you beat me up, or else you'll go to jail yourself."

With that he disappeared.

After he had gone, Ivan spoke: "I don't believe in any superstitions, but I really think he must be a changeling. Lucifer himself must have changed him. He has goaded everyone at home to the point of desperation, so much so that father has been driven almost crazy. He bought a horse with a reputation for biting and kicking, shoeing him with horseshoes. He figured that when Mykytko went among the horses, as he often did, one of them might kick some sense into him. But did that ever happen? Oh no! The horse would kick father, or mother, or me, or even the hired hand; but this little devil would crawl around the horse, under his belly, and tweak his tail without the horse even paying any attention to him."

Grandmother shook her head worriedly:

"I still think that something bad will come from this. He will either get run over on the road to the magistrate or land in jail himself."

The conversation languished. The three of them returned to their interrupted tasks: Grandmother to her snoozing, Joanna to her cooking, and Ivan to his loom. Meanwhile the rain outside pattered against the windows. Tranquility and dispiritedness once more fell upon the household.

Mykytko had already gone beyond the village limits. Blithely leaping over puddles, his bare feet often sank into the mud, causing jets of muddy water to shoot up. He paid no attention to the pain in his back, but consoled himself with the thought that they would put Tsypeniuk in jail. He'd show him!

The whole world seemed to be against Mykytka; they beat him at home, they beat him in the village, they beat him everywhere. And never through it all did he ever hear a kind word beside the curses. And so our little Mykytka felt happy in the thought that now he at last had an opportunity of paying back some of the abuse that he has had to put up with.

Bohdan Lepkyi

A FLOWER OF FORTUNE

Translated by Stephen Shumeyko

READY TO GO

Translated by J. A.

Bohdan Lepkyi was born in 1872 in the Western Ukrainian village of Kryvenke in the family of a priest. He was one of the most prominent of the Ukrainian lyrical poets as well as an eminent prose writer, and was the author of such collections of stories as *From the Village*, 1898; *From Life*, 1901; *Stories*, 1901; *The Fortunate Hour*, 1901; *In the Mountains*, 1904; *Punishment*, 1905; *Casting Words*, 1911; *Under the Fir Tree*, 1930; also such stories and historical novels as: *On a Quiet Evening*, 1923; the tetralogy *Mazepa*, 1926-29; *The Captain's Daughter*, 1927; *The Star*, 1929; *Vadym*, 1930; *The Whirlpool*, 1941, and the story *Mazepa — From Poltava to Bendery*, 1955, published after his death. The themes of his stories for the most part were realistic, nationalistic pictures. Later on he wrote in an impressionistic style about the life of the Ukrainian village during the latter part of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, or else about the Ukrainian intelligentsia, particularly the life of the Ukrainian Catholic priests. Bohdan Lepkyi was a well known literary authority, and was Professor of Ukrainian literature at the Jagiello University at Cracow, where he died during the German occupation in 1941.

A FLOWER OF FORTUNE

As a young child he had often heard people talking about "happiness."

"What is happiness?" he once asked his mother, peering intently into her face.

"Happiness, my child, is fate, destiny, fortune," his mother replied, not knowing how to explain to such a small tot the meaning of the word "fortune".

"And what is fortune?"

"Fortune, my little one, is a flower that is hard to get."

"And what is fortune?"

"Beautiful, you ask; why of course it's beautiful, very beautiful, indeed; so much so that when you gaze upon it, your eyes rejoice, and your heart lifts with gladness and amiability."

"Mother, I want that beautiful flower. Tell me where it grows; I'll go and fetch it. I'll get it and bring it back for you and for me."

"You don't need it now, child," said his mother, kissing his fair head. "You're still too weak to go after it, and it's too far away beyond the waters. Now you're well off as it is. Some day when you're bigger and stronger, but not until then."

"No, I'll not wait until I'm bigger and stronger. I want it now. Tell me, mother, where can I find it?"

The child kept repeating this "tell me" so persistently that his mother, in order to appease the child, went over to the window and indicated the pond. (The house stood on a knoll, at the bottom of which was a lake.)

"Over there beyond the pond; see them?"

"Yes, mother, I see them! There's a whole meadow full of them; and how beautiful, how very beautiful! Are they far from here?"

"Very far. Can't you see? Far beyond the waters."

"Beyond the waters?"

The boy lapsed into a reverie, his big blue eyes gazing thoughtfully into the distance where the horizon seemed to merge with the blue waves of the lake. Dusk fell. On the rim of the horizon a faint glow appeared, and a moment later the moon came up like a silver boat. Slowly it sailed into the starlit sky, and it seemed as if it were soaring not through the peaceful blue of celestial space, but rather over the dreamy water.

"Mother!" exclaimed the little lad, leaping joyfully from his deep reverie. "You know what, mother?"

"What, my child?"

"I know something but I won't tell."

"Why won't you tell me?"

"Because I won't; you'd be angry at me if I did."

"Why, you little rascal. Don't you know, you must tell your mother everything?"

"Yes, I do, but this one thing I won't tell you," replied the little boy, as he cuddled his curly head against his mother's breast.

A few moments later he was already in bed. His mother led him in his prayers, telling him to beg the Lord to take good care of his daddy, brothers and sisters, and then tucked him in, making the sign of the cross over him, and saying: "Sleep." He closed his eyes and pretended he was asleep. He even snored; but he was awake. As soon as his mother had tiptoed away from his bed and closed the door behind her, he opened his eyes.

It was quite bright in his bedroom. The moonlight flowed in through the window and shone upon the four walls, the door, the holy pictures on the walls, and the furniture. Beneath the window, outside in the garden, a nightingale sang its rich love-song, while from the lake came the faint babbling of water, as wavelets upon wavelets, as small as the wrinkles on an old man's face, splashed against the dam and the shore kept thrusting them back as if they were invaders. The wavelets momentarily receded, but soon came right back again, stronger than ever. The boy pricked up his ears.

"The babbling lake is calling me, promising that it will carry me far out yonder into the meadows where grow those flowers of happiness and fortune. Look how they bloom! No flowers anywhere blossom so beautifully! Why aren't they plucked by people? Aha! I know; they can't get at them; they don't know how to swim across the water. But I do. Just wait until mother falls asleep and it begins to dawn, I'll go after them; yes, I really will!"

The moon shone brighter and brighter, and the nightingale kept on singing more beautifully than ever, while the wavelets lapped more and more vibrantly. And all the while the boy was not asleep; he was thinking about the paradisaical flower of fortune.

Midnight passed and the short night of summer was coming to a close. Morning had already begun to dawn. On the distant horizon a long, narrow streak of light appeared, at first pale and indistinct, then growing larger and larger. The stars began to fade and disappear, while the nightingales ceased their warbling. A chill, early morning breeze rustled through the trees in the grove, while dewdrops trembled on the petals of the flowers.

And all the while the boy was wide awake. His chest rose and fell in excitement, his eyes shone, and his lips burned. He raised his head, propped himself against the bedding, and then sat up. For a moment he listened intently. The household was asleep. Even the old, large black cat, who usually went out hunting at this time, now lay by the oven like a black clod of earth. It, too, was asleep. Silently the boy climbed out of bed, tiptoed over to the window, and gently opened it. It was but a few feet from the sill to the ground below. He shivered with the chill, as the cold dew wet his warm feet and the raw morning air penetrated his body. He began to run. It was getting warmer. Swiftly his pattering feet carried him near the dam. Then he paused. Now he could hear the babbling and splashing of the water more distinctly, begging him to plunge into its cold embrace.

"Come," it seemed to say, "I shall carry you over to the other side where the beautiful flower of happiness and fortune grows. It's so fragrant and so radiant! No one has seen its like before. Come! Don't be afraid!"

With outstretched arms the boy plunged into the water. Over yonder on the horizon dawn had arrived. In its center there shone a golden ball, and its rays cast flickering flames upon the restless waters. Each inflowing wavelet grew brighter, and reflected the rays off the scales of a fish. Wading through these liquid scales, he got into deeper and deeper water. He was trembling all over with cold and excitement, as his eager eyes, fastened on the golden horizon, drew him constantly onward. Suddenly he saw a large bird swimming toward him. It slowly bore down upon him like a sailing vessel in a gentle breeze, its wings rising and falling slightly, its legs guiding it. It was a swan. Beyond it there appeared another swan, tall and white, with a gracefully arched neck.

"Take me, oh white swan, and carry me across this water. I won't encumber you. See how small I am!"

The boy spoke; and the swan, as if it heard what he said, continued drawing closer. It examined him curiously, then nodded its head wisely, nudging the second swan with its wing, as if to say something to her. With one accord, both of them wheeled and swam away.

"Wait!" pleaded the boy. "Don't run away from me; take me with you and carry me across."

The swans paid no attention to him. Faster and faster through the glittering wavelets.

"Wait!" the boy cried out through his tears, as he plunged through the water after them.

The tiny waves glitter and flame; the wind skips lightly over their crests, carrying with it the sweet odors of the forest, while the little

boy keeps plunging deeper and deeper into the lake. Already only his head shows, then his hands, and then his hair, floating on the water . . .

A doctor sits by the bedside of the unconscious body with furrowed brow, listening intently to the faint beats of the heart. The poor mother watches him as if he were some prophet.

"Will he live?" She asks.

"Will he live?" repeats the doctor, thoughtfully.

"Yes, if that be God's will. If his constitution is strong enough, then with the Lord's help he will get well. But if not, then he'll go in quest of happiness and fortune, eternal happiness and fortune."

The sick child opened his eyes and hazily contemplated the ceiling. Raising himself painfully, he whispered through chapped lips:

"I want the flower of fortune . . . Let me go; I want to go get it."

Many years have passed in the meantime. No one now would recognize the little curly-haired boy. He has grown, and he has changed, changed into a mature man with a knowledge of life.

Thanks to an instructor in botany he has also learned all about the flowers in the world. He knows that over there, beyond the waters, there grows no flower of fortune. He knows this . . . yet he keeps plunging into the waters of life and swims in search of it, looking for this wonderful flower of fortune . . . Will he ever find it? Who knows?

READY TO GO

"Father!"

"What is it?"

"They want you to go to a sick man. A man is waiting outside."

"To a sick man—a sick man," repeated the priest, as he rubbed his sleepy eyes. "Tell them to go to the sexton; he'll open the church and have everything ready."

The servant girl shut the door and repeated the priest's order to the caller.

In the meantime the clergyman turned over in his bed and pulled up the quilt, which was slipping down to the floor.

"They want me to go to a sick man. Well, what can I do? I must go. Oh, but it feels good to sleep . . ."

Sleep never seems so pleasant, as when we are interrupted.

And so the priest's eyelids gradually closed over his eyes, and he fell asleep again.

"Father! Oh, Father!"

"Yes?"

"The sexton's now in the church; he's waiting."

"Is he? Tell him I'm coming."

In less than an hour the two men emerged from the church and walked down the village road. They were enveloped in a gray mist and could hardly see one another. Passers—by dropped on their knees at the sound of the sexton's bell, as is the custom when a priest is passing by with the Holy Sacrament.

It was a frosty autumn morning. The mud on the village road, like thick dough, was hard on the surface and shone with its dirty crystals. It crumbled under the feet of the priest and his companion with a barely perceptible noise. The clergyman felt somewhat chilly and hurried. So did the sexton, who rang the bell every three or four paces. Thus they trod the long village road, and stopped beyond the school by the well.

"Here we are!" announced the sexton.

"Here?" asked the priest, and he entered the gateway.

To his great surprise, everything was very quiet. No one came out to greet them. There were no relatives, no neighbors.

"Perhaps it is not here?" the priest hesitated, turning to the sexton.

"Yes, Father, this is the place. Old man Skrehota is sick. I am certain of that."

"Let us walk in then!"

They entered the house.

All was quiet. There was no sign of life. The bed was uncovered, but the sick man was nowhere to be seen.

"Is anyone here?" cried the sexton in a loud voice. Then he looked into the kitchen, the pantry and throughout the cottage. But no one answered—except the chickens in the attic.

"Well, let's wait..."

They sat down on the bench and waited.

Meanwhile the sun had come up and the mist was rising. Suddenly they heard a faint voice: "Shoo! Shoo!"

They went outside. There they saw an old man, bareheaded and barefooted, chasing after the pigs, trying to drive them into the pigpen. But the animals as if conscious of the old man's weakness and awkwardness, kept running in all directions, with an apparent determination to get into the neighboring garden, protected only by a low fence.

"Shoo! Shoo!" cried the old man, hardly standing on his old, wobbly legs. "Shoo! Into the pigpen with you!"

The priest looked on for a while and then became uneasy.

"Look here, old man, what do you mean? You sent for me, got me out of bed—and why? Who's sick here?"

The old man looked at the priest and nodded.

"It is I, Father; it is I; I'm dying."

That was too much for the priest.

"What! Making fun of me to boot? You're dying, and yet you're chasing all over the place after the pigs!"

"Listen, dear Father!... They broke loose, so I had to drive them back into the pen... Shoo!... otherwise they'd get into the garden of the neighbor's yard... Shoo!..."

There is no telling how long this would have lasted, had it not been for the sexton. He quickly put the bell and the red lantern down on the threshold, and went to the old man's rescue.

The pigs were soon driven into the pen. The old man shooed them once more, shut the door after them and fastened it securely.

He then approached the clergyman and kissed his hand.

"Forgive me, Father, and don't be angry with me! The pigs got out, and naturally we had to drive them back."

The priest smiled. He had too good a heart to be angry and was sympathetic with his people. And then there was nothing to be displeased about.

"I'm not angry," he said meekly. "Still I don't think it was very nice of you to trouble me so early in the morning when there was no real need for it. I see you're strong enough to come to confession next Sunday, No?"

"Oh, my Lord! Next Sunday? That's impossible... I don't know whether I'll live till noon... I've been holding on and waiting for you... So help me God, Father, it is just as I say..."

The visitor did not know whether to believe the old man or not. He entered the hut. The old man retired into another room to put on some clean clothes. After a while he came out nicely dressed, with his hair neatly combed. The priest did not hurry him.

"How long have you been ill?" he asked, as he seated himself on the bench.

"Oh, since long, long ago... I don't feel any pain in my body, Father, but my strength has somehow left me... I don't sense it in my bones any more... And I have such a cold feeling in my chest... Death is surely coming..."

"But why isn't anyone here with you? Are you staying here all alone like a hermit? Why even a healthy person feels lonesome when left alone, and a sick person must feel that way even more so."

"I'm not alone, Father... I have my children, very, very good children... It would be a sin to speak of them otherwise..."

"You say they are good, yet they don't seem to care much for old men."

"They do, they do, Father. Oh, they think of me a great deal. This morning not one of them would leave me... They stood by my bed and cried... I told them, 'What's the use of crying? Go, every one of you, to your work. There's no use in watching me. No one will steal me... And if I must die, I may just as well die without you being here... You, my Gregory,' said I to my oldest son, 'go to Zmiina. The field is ready, it's time to sow... when the funeral comes, you will lose time again—and the frosts are coming early... And you,' said I to my daughter, 'go to town and buy all that's necessary. You know well that if anything should happen, the stores in our village will charge you double the regular price for anything...'

"My daughter-in-law I've sent to another village to notify her relatives. And my son-in-law was to call on you, Father, and stop at the carpenter's on his way back... Thus I was lying here all alone, when hark! The pigs have broken out of the pen... I looked out of the window... They were trying to lift the gate with their snouts. They had to be put back. So I pulled myself up, thank the Lord, and got them in... And you, Father, must not be angry with me, for I'm really sick—very, very sick."

Again he kissed the priest's hand and assured him of his illness. "Don't you feel lonesome being all alone?" asked the priest.

"Aren't you afraid?" added the sexton.

"Why should I be afraid? I haven't killed anybody, nor injured anyone, nor stolen anything... I've lived my time, and now I must go — just like a workingman. Having finished his job, he goes home . . . And isn't it time for me to go? For nearly two months now I've been wasting the holy bread. My strength has left me somehow. I cannot do any work and it's not right to eat your children's bread for nothing. It would not pass my throat. I cannot swallow it . . . Thanks to the Lord, my end is very near . . . Why should I be afraid? I've brought up my children, divided what I had among them . . . I instructed them and advised them. What more is necessary? No, I have nothing to fear."

"Let us proceed, then," said the priest moved by the old man's words.

"Let's begin in God's name," answered the old man, and crossed himself.

No sooner had the priest returned home and begun to eat his breakfast than the church bells started ringing.

The old man Skrehota was dead.

With the wheat field sown, the pigs in the pen, and the daughter on her way home from town—he could now die in peace.

Marko Cheremshyna

THEY CAUGHT A THIEF

Translated by Dr. C. H. Andrusyshen

Marko Cheremshyna, the literary pen name of Ivan Semeniuk, was born in 1874, and like Stefanyk and Martovych, was of a peasant family; like they, too, he was a poet of Ukrainian, especially of Hutsul, life. He, too, started to study medicine, but changed to the study of law at the University of Vienna, which he completed in 1901. He began practicing law in the town of Deliatyn and then for the rest of his life at Sniatyn. Marko Cheremshyna started his literary work while a student at the university in 1897. After completing his course in 1901 he published during the same year a collection of short stories under the title, *A Cataract*, written in a modern style, realistic for the most part. Notwithstanding his topics of grief and misery, Cheremshyna, unlike Stefanyk, nevertheless preserves a spirit of optimism and faith in people and in a happier future. His stories are permeated with humor. His second book of stories dealing with Hutsul life about the time of the First World War, *The Village Is Perishing*, was published under the editorship of M. Zerov in Kiev in 1925. These stories deal with the terrible destruction of the Ukrainian villages by the Austrian and Russian armies during the First World War, by fire and sword, and the senseless devastation and slaughter of the civilian population. Tragic as his stories are, they still maintain a spirit of faith in the victory of right and justice. One of his stories first printed in 1901, *They Caught A Thief*, is included in this anthology.

THEY CAUGHT A THIEF

After the feast of the Epiphany his father died; his mother did not tarry much longer; and finally, whatever he had inherited was taken away from him to pay off the debts. For weeks on end small Yura, Pryimak's son, wandered about all alone, and no one ever asked him if he had eaten, slept, or had a shirt on. Nobody at all!

His pale little face turned yellow as wax, and on both its sides the bones protruded sharply, while his eyes sank into his head and became bleary. Only his thick, uncombed hair grew even more profusely and covered his forehead and neck, but was not covered itself. His front teeth also grew bigger to take the place of those which he had lost during his father's lifetime. But what's the use! His upper lip was too short to cover them, and for that reason the children out on the street mocked him and called him buck-toothed.

When his father was still alive, Yura used to tend a goat and take it to graze along the edges of fields and on the banks of brooks, until the goat was taken away for a debt. Then he had a wonderful life indeed: he was a shepherd, and walked about with a little whip. The handle he had cut out of a hazelwood, and a rope, which some fettered horse had lost on the threshing floor, he had twisted into a lash. From the same rope he had also made himself a belt to hold up his trousers.

And so now he walked down the street, making a cracking sound with his whip. And when some farmer observed him doing that and scornfully ridiculed the end, saying: "What do you think you're doing, boy, taking dogs to pasture?" — Yura lowered his head, hid the whip behind his back, greeted the farmer politely, and passed him by very quickly. And then again the same cracking sound of the whip was heard.

So eager was he to be a shepherd!

But nobody wanted to hire him as a shepherd. An aunt of his came from the neighboring village, where she served in the priest's household, and took him to the rich Krechun to see if he would hire the boy to herd cattle.

"I don't need a tramp like him. He might steal something from my house and run away, and then try to find him. You could sooner catch the wind in the field than him. I am capable of looking after my own property without his help. He is a bad one."

So Krechun thundered this out in reply to Yura's aunt; while Yura became so terrified that he fled from the yard before the rich man could finish what he had to say.

And when the aunt said good-bye to Yura, before returning to the village where she worked, she said: "Out of my sight, you wretch; shame is all I get from you!"

And so Yura continued to pace up and down the village streets.

If he ever found a vegetable or a berry of any kind in the forest, he simply threw it into his mouth and gulped it down in one swallow. And if someone took pity on him and gave him a slice of bread, he did not take it immediately; and if he did, it seemed as if the whole world were tumbling down upon him.

"Thank you, uncle, auntie, I am not hungry" he said; while his eyes appeared to devour it greedily; so bashful was he.

If one walks along the meadow of the rich Krechun, following the brook and the hedges, one arrives at Fenchuk's meadow land, and finally finds himself ascending the Klotychka Hill. On the Klotychka berries grow in such abundance that one cannot but sit down and eat them. Yura had been going there for some time for his noonday meals, but their season was now over. Now he was going there to see whether they had appeared under the top leaves.

The sun had just had its midday rest and again started out on its journey. It was beating down so hard on the good Lord's earth that perspiration rolled thickly down one's face. In the meadow Krechun's old wife let the calf go to suck the cow so that the cow would release some of her milk. She herself was crouching on the other side and slowly, one after another, took the teats out of the calf's mouth, while the calf sucked and sucked; from time to time it nudged the udder and continued sucking. All that Yura observed through the red enclosure. As soon as the calf stuck its head under the cow's udder, he, too, pushed his head through the reed fence; and as soon as Krechun's woman struck the calf on the muzzle and it moved its head to the side, he likewise drew his head back from among the reeds.

When at last Krechun's wife seized the calf by the tail and ears and dragged it to the stall, Yura rose and continued on his way.

He walked slowly and did not make his whip crack at all. At times he even stumbled over tiny mounds, as if he did not see where he was going in broad daylight. By the rope which fell from his belly to his hips, one might easily judge that it was hunger that was blinding him.

Meanwhile the water in the brook was gurgling and rushing from stone to stone. Suddenly he recalled how his father had once brought fish from Bessarabia. It was salty and tasty. His mother

had boiled it with onions and given him a piece the thickness of two fingers. It was then that he had taken the goat out to graze along the brook. He was eating the fish and time and time again drinking water from the brook with such gusto that Krechun's rich wife was jealous of him when she came to the brook with the buckets.

"And where have you been that you're gulping down so much water? At a feast?" she asked angrily.

This sweet memory was interrupted by the rope which finally determined to fall from his hips to the ground. He tied it more tightly and, step by step, reached Fenchuk's meadow. And in the meadow the cow was mooing and slowly walking toward him. It may have appeared to the cow that Fenchuk's wife was coming to milk her and bringing fodder, because it was exactly milking time, and a cow certainly knows those things.

Yura stopped and leaned against the reed enclosure. At first he lowered his head as if he were thinking of something, and then he put his fingers into his mouth and began to chew them and look at the cow very, very sorrowfully.

The cow drew closer and closer to him. When she reached him, she stuck out her head and put her mouth to his hand as if to sniff him, and then began to lick his hands, face and hair.

The sensation Yura felt was much more pleasant than at the times when his mother used to delouse him in the sun. It was the first time since her death that he had experienced such a pleasurable feeling, such warmth. As an orphan, he had met only with coldness and mockery. For the third day now he had had nothing in his mouth. If it continued much longer, the skin of his belly would get stuck to his back. Out of gratitude he began to pat the cow's forehead and say: "My Mitska, my dear little one!" Then he climbed over the reed fence, plucked a handful of grass and gave it to the cow. The cow began to eat it. As he looked at her eating it, he suddenly recalled his hunger. And he also recalled Krechun's calf which had been sucking its mother with so much relish; and again remembered all the sweetness he had experienced while his father and mother were alive. At the moment he forgot where he was, and went down on his knees at the cow's udder, drew the teats to his parched lips and sucked them, one after another, unconscious of what he was doing. Meanwhile the cow stood still, chewing her cud. She was glad that she would get rid of her milk in time and that her udder would become lighter.

But old woman Fenchuk did not forget her household chores, because it was not for nothing that she had been a housewife for twenty one years. In one hand she carried a bundle of fodder and in the other a milk bucket, and went to her cow out in the meadow.

She walked in that direction and pondered whether she should leave to-day's milk for cream or take it to Jew Berko's wife and sell it raw and for that money buy a candle to burn as an offering to the Mother of God. She was a member of the church sorority, you know. She came up to the cow, stopped, looked, looked again and could not believe her eyes. So angry did she become that she let both the fodder and the milk bucket fall to the ground.

"I hope you sucked blood. I hope you did!" She shouted at him at first, just as a cow would bellow at a young steer if the latter drew near its mother's teats without her permission. Then she pounced on Yura who continued to kneel and suck, insensible to all else, seized him by the hair and turned his head upwards.

"So that's the kind of a thief you are! So now you've turned to stealing my cow's milk, you robber, you!"

Lamenting at the top of her voice, she struck Yura indiscriminately across the face, legs and belly. Then she grabbed him by the hair, raised him in the air and dashed him to the ground. In the meantime the cow had moved away from the spot, walked up to the abandoned fodder and began eating it peacefully. That sight increased the anger of Fenchuk's woman. She again seized Yura by the shock of his hair and raised him again. It was only then that Yura seemed as if he had awakened from sleep. Up to that time he had not been aware of what was happening to him. Fenchuk's woman beat him, but he did not say anything; he did not even stir. It was only at that point that he recognized old woman Fenchuk's face, which was bespattered with saliva; and he began to cry and beg to be forgiven, as he would beg to be spared if someone had begun suddenly and without cause to belabor him with blows.

"I won't do it again, auntie, I promise I won't, auntie darling, I wo-oo-on't."

Fenchuk's wife did not listen to him. She abandoned the cow and the bucket and led Yura by the hair to the house, cursing him continually: "You wretch, you fiend, are you trying to rob me, rob me, you thief?"

Inside the house old Fenchuk heard his wife's shouts and rushed out to the gate, calling out: "What's the matter there, Nastia?"

"Just think, we are in the house, and this thief is robbing us of our very subsistence," replied his wife shrilly.

"Impossible! Where did you find him?"

"Why, just imagine, he glued himself to the cow like a leech and sucked out all the milk."

At this explanation of his wife, Fenchuk spat into the palms of his hands, opened the gate and ran up to his wife as lightly as if he were a boy. He seized Yura by the hand and whacked him on the

face, right and left. In a moment Yura began to scream even louder and beg to be forgiven: "Uncle, I won't, I won't do it again, as long as I live, never."

So loudly did he scream that all the neighbors began to hasten to the place as if to witness a curious spectacle.

Fenchuk shook Yura once more, gnashed his teeth and yelled again: "Just you wait! I'll teach you once and for all! Nastia, go in and fetch me the scissors."

Nastya was still relating in snatches to the neighbors how she had caught the thief, and only when she had finished her story did she go for the scissors, moaning and cursing all the way.

"Shear the thief, shear him!" shouted the neighbors who finally understood why Fenchuk told his wife to fetch the scissors.

Tears streamed down Yura's face. He screamed in an unnatural voice. He knew that it was the custom to cut off the hair of real thieves in the village, and he also knew that it was a great shame. And for that reason he could not contain his tears.

Fenchuk's woman brought out the scissors and gave them to the old man. The neighbors at once seized the boy by the hands and held him fast, while Fenchuk cut Yura's thick growth of hair close to the skin, even closer than one shears the sheep in the spring.

Such a clamor arose when he was being sheared that it seemed as if the sound were coming out of a seething cauldron. Those who were holding him heaped upon him all the curses which were reserved for the thieves. Nastia cursed him even louder than the others. Yura now moaned only from time to time in a hoarse, tearful voice. And those who had nothing else to do, walked up and down the street and informed the idlers from the highlands about this event. They applied both palms to their mouths and shouted:

"We've caught a thief!"

"Pryimak's Yura!"

"Yes, yes, the one with the buck teeth!"

Volodymyr Vynnychenko

HUNGER

*Translated by * * **

Volodymyr Vynnychenko was born in 1880 in a peasant family in the Kherson district. He was a novelist and a story teller and also was prominent as a Ukrainian Socialist worker, who between the years 1917-1919 held important portfolios in the government of the Ukrainian National Republic. In 1920 he emigrated to France where he lived until his death in 1951. He entered the literary field in 1902 and gained considerable prominence for his talented naturalistic stories with a strong national flavor dealing with the landless peasantry, hired laborers and the town proletariat, such as were depicted in his stories, *The Machine*, *Slave of Beauty*, *Kuz and Hrytsun*, *Hunger*, *Contrasts*, *Rabble*, *At the Wharf*, *Beauty and Shrength*. In a series of other stories he supplied naturalistic pictures from the life of provincial townsmen, soldiers of the Tsarist armies and prisoners in Russian jails. In a third group of stories of this first period of creativity, 1902-1905, Vynnychenko dealt with figures of the intelligentsia, participators in the then revolutionary movement, and pictured them in complicated psychological situations. It is in this trend that he wrote his later stories and plays, especially his novels after 1906, such as *Oneself*, *In One's Own Way*, *Idols*, *Equilibrium*, *Parents' Testament*, in which Vynnychenko analyzes the background of bureaucratic reaction following the revolution, and shows the characters of sick and morally broken revolutionaries. In a similar vein he wrote his satirical novel, *Memoirs of the Pug-nosed Mephistopheles*, 1917. Another one of his works worthy of mention is the fantastically adventurous novel, *The Solar Machine*, 1928, in which the author supplies a test of a utopian solution of the labor problem, and the novel *The New Commandment*, 1949, dealing with Bolshevik expansion westwards.

HUNGER

Along the bottom of a ditch, near the station, halting and listening at intervals, three human beings were crawling. The stars were mutely watching their progress, knowingly nodding to each other. The wind soughed shyly in the grass, then passed on into the ditch, then veered timidly into the steppes. The yearning of night whispered mysteriously and sighed beside them.

Now and then the man in the lead would stop, emerge slowly from the ditch, and look toward the station. Everything there was as before: the station was asleep. As before, barely visible in the light of the lantern, a figure loomed on the bench by the bell. As before, through a window one could see the person of the telegraph operator stooped over the desk. As before, one could see lights among the trees in the orchard and some persons around them. And as before, laughter emanated from the figures and from the light, and the clinking glasses, now delicate, quiet singing, or rollicking, loud laughter. And between the station and the ditch glittered the outlines of the rails, straight, extended, rigidly aimed at something in the distance. The rails, having left the zones of light, vanished in the gloom, and one could barely see, there in front, where they were crawling, the long rows of cars.

"Well?" whispered the other two in the rear, when the front man had slid down.

"Push right on!" the latter would say hoarsely, then silently move forward again. The men in the rear followed him, queerly twirling their knees and stopping at times. And when they stopped, the rustling in the ditch stopped too, and one could hear how softly the wind lingered near them, the sighing of something in the steppes, and the sound of laughter emanating from the orchard. And in the dark sky above the silent, mysterious stars kept diligent watch over them.

They crawled for quite a while.

And again the man in front rose, stuck his head out of the ditch and froze. The station had moved aside and the rails no longer glittered. Instead, there stretched out a line of freight cars in a long, dark row.

"Hush-sh-sh!" hissed the front man, turning towards his followers. "Come out!"

"Here?" asked the man in the middle, crawling up to him.

"Here they are . . . Do you still have your sacks? . . . Hush-sh-sh! You! Let it twist you down there!"

The man in the rear stopped with fear and squatted down. Then slowly, barely moving, he crawled up to the other two and asked:

"Are you sure?"

"Don't worry, I carried it on my own back . . . Now be quiet!"

"Don't lag behind . . . Hush-sh-sh! And don't run away if someone starts shouting . . . Just drop the sacks . . . Do you hear?"

"Why, sure . . ."

"Well, God help us . . ."

Swaying strangely, the trio, one by one, started off cautiously for the freight cars. The cars stood there, enveloped in some mysterious gloom. All the same, dark and identical, like coffins on wheels, it seemed as if they waited there for the men immobily, hiding within themselves something mysteriously terrible and invisible. Somehow, it was sad.

And the station on their side dozed peacefully to the gentle singing in the orchard and the laughter and the chatter. In the steppes the wind had gone down.

The man in front suddenly stopped.

"Who's there?" came a voice from the cars at the very same instant.

The three figures, one by one, became petrified. The stars glimmered, tensely awaiting the outcome; and even the wind fluttered from the fields, rustling something at their feet.

"Who's there? I'm asking! Do you hear?" they again heard the voice from the cars, angry and somewhat apprehensive.

"Drop the sacks . . ." whispered the front man hurriedly and, having thrown something aside, he uttered loudly and calmly:

"We are from here."

Somebody by the cars began to move.

"Who are you? What sort of a person walks around here?"

A dark figure disengaged itself from the cars and began to approach them. The front man at once started walking faster and the others followed suit.

"Halt! Wait!" The voice that they heard behind them was even more apprehensive, and they accelerated their steps.

"Why should we wait? There's no time . . ."

"I tell you, stop, or I'll shoot . . ."

The front man stopped, and the others did the same. The figure came quite close, so that one could now see a stick in his hand and his dark beard.

"So, what's up? How are you?" The man in the front spoke calmly.

The figure did not answer; it began a close inspection of their faces, clothes, and hands.

"Do you know us, maybe?" the middle man mumbled gravely and involuntarily.

"Yes, I know you . . ." answered the person just as gravely, without ceasing to inspect them. Then he produced something from under his coat and suddenly blew a shrill whistle.

"And what would this be?" asked the man in front perturbedly.

The figure, without answering, turned its ear toward the station. The cars stood in a dark somber row, indifferent to the four men standing tensely in the darkness beside them. Only the wind hung around curiously, and the stars glimmered at one another.

The person drew his whistle and blew it again at intervals, shrilly and menacingly.

"Don't you have any fear of God, man?" asked the front man with sad reproach. "Did we run over you with a horse cart that you have to whistle and call the gendarmes?"

Suddenly, from the station there, too, came an interrupted, shrill whistling. The person stirred with relief.

"God is God and duty is duty," he said firmly and coolly. "Yesterday, some tramps were also going to the station under false pretence. And in consequence it turned out that they had drilled a hole in the car and let out all the grain under the car! And you, watchman, must be responsible."

"So you think we're looking for the grain, or something?"

"Who knows? Let the gendarme be the judge of that . . ."

It was quiet.

"Ah," sighed the front man. "People! . . . Your own children may be hungry . . . Right away he calls the gendarme . . . And perhaps those tramps hadn't eaten for three days? Yes, the same ones that let the grain out? Ha?"

The watchman raised his hand again and blew the whistle. An answering call came back immediately. The trio sullenly froze with apprehension.

"Yes," the watchman chimed in angrily. "If it weren't for the children, I wouldn't be wandering around here chasing after you devils . . ."

He fell silent. There was the sound of someone hurrying to the cars.

"Are you from a hungry village?" asked the watchman gravely.

"Yes," answered the front man with reluctance.

"From Kyrasyrivka or Vodiane?"

"From Vodiane . . ."

"Were you going for the grain?"

"How that grain bothers him!" remarked the middle man sharply and angrily. "And even if we were after the grain, so what? Can you prove it? Are we afraid of your gendarmes! May the devil take them along with you, you rascal. You think he's frightened us! Ha, he whistles . . . You should be whistled over the head to knock you clean behind the cars . . ."

"Just try it," said the watchman contemptuously and calmly.

"That's enough, Danylo!" said the front man.

"What is this, anyway . . . What have you seized us for? Have you caught us in any act, or something? He thinks that when he's got a whistle it makes him a big chief."

"Where are you?" came a voice from the cars.

"Here," shouted the watchman.

Approaching rapidly, two persons appeared, mumbling and clanging something.

"What is it?" shouted one of them, as he came nearer.

"Right here . . ." said the watchman gravely. "Some . . . hung out by the freight cars."

The persons came quite close, stopped and began to inspect the captives. Both of them wore white shirts, girded by white belts. One of them had a rifle in his hand, the other one had a sabre at his side.

"Hm . . . yes," seriously drawled the figure with the sabre. "Where do you come from?"

"From Vodiane, *Hospodyn* Gendarme . . ." abruptly sighed the front man. "So, we were going to the station . . . We know nothing . . . When suddenly there is this: 'Stop, or I'll shoot!' What have we done?"

"Well, do you have your passports?"

"Passports?" The front man began to cough. Then he wiped his mouth and said briefly:

"Passports on us . . . it so happens that we don't . . . Only . . ."

"Hm . . . yes. Now then, come along with us . . . We'll discuss it at the station."

The front man shrugged his shoulders, sighed and set off behind the gendarme. The others followed him sullenly, with the soldier, carrying his rifle, bringing up the rear. In three or four minutes all five of them stood in the orchard from which they had heard laughter and gentle singing. On the table under the acacia trees stood lanterns with candles inside. From among the lanterns bottles protruded; and among the bottles stood plates with *hors-d'oeuvres*, boxes with some food, knives and glasses. Two ladies sat at the table, beside them some elderly gentlemen and two officers of the gendarmerie. One of them was bald, with a lush brown moustache, the other one was handsome.

Around the candles moths kept circling in mad confusion, hitting the glass, falling on the table, struggling, crawling and flying up again.

The eyes of the persons sitting at the table were misty, and the lips and cheeks of the ladies were somehow very red.

"Well, what is it?" said the officer with the lush moustache. He looked expectantly at the gendarme. The latter, shielding the captives with his body, stepped forward and saluted.

The gendarme pulled himself even more erect and said seriously and buoyantly:

"We have caught some es-es-expropriators, Your Honor!"

There was quite a commotion: even the elderly gentleman who had been diligently wiping his plate with a piece of bread turned his head in surprise and awed attention.

"Expropriators?" the officer asked lazily, in disbelief. "Aha, well, step aside."

The gendarme turned nimbly about face and stepped aside. All of them curiously eyed the figures that stood before them.

All three men were bare-foot, with large black toes, lean grey faces, a growth of beard, with peasant, emaciated necks on which dark wrinkles could be clearly seen, all three without hats, their heads drooping, as if expecting inevitable trouble because of their appearance.

One of the ladies, with large dreamy eyes, began to laugh: "Some expropriators! Phew! I thought they were real ones..."

The gendarme looked at her askew, but waited to see what the officers would say. But the officer merely hiccupped, threw his weight against the chair support, and even more lazily turned to the captives:

"Yes-s-s... Hm... Now then, what did you... that... what was it? Make trouble?"

The "expropriators," whose eyes had avidly surveyed the snacks, stirred and turned their heads toward him.

"We, Your Honor, made no trouble," said the front man briefly and hurriedly. "We were on our way to the station... And then he came to us, excuse me: 'Where are you going, I'm going to shoot...' We stand before you as before God, Your Honor... We are from a hungry village... No food for two days, Your Honor..."

"Now, you're lying... You all sing the same song..."

"Your Honor," interceded the gendarme, "they were caught by the cars with grain."

"That's it! You see... You wanted to steal grain?..."

"Your Honor," said the front man, again turning his eyes from the table and dropping his head. "If we had been going for the grain we would have had sacks, or at least bags... And we are — just as you can see for yourself..."

"Hm!" the officer twisted his moustache.

"To hell with them, Seriozhka!" cried the other officer impatiently.

"Let each one of them have it with the whip, Skrypchuk, and to hell with them."

The gendarme saluted him but waited what Seriozhka had to say.

"Hm," said Seriozhka, as he twisted his moustache, lazily and drunkenly looking at the captives. The captives stood there, waiting alertly, and eyeing the food. The ladies whispered something to each other and laughed, gazing concentratedly at the captives.

"Put them under arrest!" Seriozhka decided suddenly, limply turning toward the table.

"Yes, Sir!" the gendarme clicked his heels. "Let's go!"

The captives began to stir again. Danylo knitted his brow and grumbled under his breath. The man in the rear, with his little, pointed nose and round, cherry-like eyes, looked frightened, becoming even more tense and discomposed. The front man spread his arms, curtly saying:

"Your Honor! What is the charge?"

"Disorderly conduct," the officer replied lazily without turning around.

"Your Honor, we have children... Our families are hungry... What have we done? Have we caused any trouble? What have we been put in jail for?"

The handsome officer jumped to his feet impatiently. Going up to them, he shouted:

"Get going!"

"What have you arrested us for?" asked Danylo in his heavy bass voice, angrily, as he looked past the handsome officer and at the back of the officer with the lush moustache. Turning slowly, the officer carefully looked Danylo over.

"Hm! So it's you again... Hm!... Hit him on the mug," he winked at the front man.

The front man looked at Danylo in alarm, at the officer, with wide open eyes, failing to understand.

The ladies began to laugh.

"This is clever," chimed the elderly gentleman indifferently, wiping his lips with a serviette. "It reminds me..."

The officer glanced more zestfully at the ladies and, turning around, shouted sharply:

"Go on! Hit him in the mug."

"Your Honor!" the front man said, raising his hands imploringly.

"Shut up! So you don't want to? Well, then, you'll get it in the mug."

"You," he said, nodding to Danylo. "If he won't hit you in the mug, then you hit him."

The ladies, the officer, even the elderly gentlemen began to laugh merrily.

"Right!" cried the lady with the dreamy eyes.

"And then he'll give it to you . . . And then both of you will fix the third one over there. Now then!"

Danylo, breathing heavily, looked angrily at the officer. The front man smiled disconcertedly, while the man in the rear surveyed everyone with fear, crumpling his cap with his trembling hands.

"Well!" yelled Seriozhka, suddenly and threateningly, as he madly leaped to his feet. "Am I going to joke with you, or something? Hit him in the mug!" He stamped his foot at Danylo and pointed with his head at the front man.

Danylo grew pale and said dully:

"What am I to beat him for?"

"Don't reason. I'm ordering you to beat him — do it!"

"Your Honor!" cried the front man imploringly. "In what way have we deserved such humiliation? People will spit on us . . . Have mercy! Let Mr. Gendarme hit us . . . and then let us go . . ."

"I want you to hit each other's mugs . . . And the gendarme shall get his chance . . ."

The gendarme smiled. Danylo turned around and said:

"Send us to jail."

"No. You hit him one on the mug and then go to jail. I won't even send you to jail. I will let you go to the four corners . . . Do you hear? I promise! So help me! Well?"

"My God, my God!" yelled the front man, shaking his head sorrowfully. Danylo again shifted his weight from one foot to the other, silently and tensely growing numb.

"Well?" said the officer, looking at Danylo. He did not move.

And suddenly the officer's face went crimson, his eyes became bloodshot, his moustache began to twitch.

"Skrypchuk! I won't trifle with you very long . . ." he barked madly. "Shoot them!"

Danylo quickly glanced at the officer, at Skrypchuk who timidly drew his revolver. Suddenly he made an angry wry face, croaking hoarsely:

"You have no right to shoot us!"

"What?" roared the officer, as he ran to the gendarme, pulling the revolver out of his hands.

The gendarme hurriedly took off the strap on which the revolver had hung around his neck, and then froze with fear again.

The ladies uttered a cry. The front and rear man looked ahead with their large eyes and obviously hardly saw anything.

But at this point the handsome officer quickly approached Seriozhka, grabbed his hand firmly and said:

"Seriozhka! Spit on it! No need . . . To be tried for some scum . . . Forget it! Spit on it!"

"No-o-o," croaked Seriozka. "I'll make him . . . I'll show him the right . . ."

"Sergey Semionich!" said the lady with the dreamy eyes. "God be with them! Send them to jail and that's enough!"

The officer with the lush moustache let the revolver go. Then, breathing heavily, he turned to the ladies.

"Larissa Ivanovna! I'll make them! They ought to do it for you . . ."

"No need . . . I don't want it . . ."

"No. I'll make them! Do you hear! I'll let you go free; I'll give each of you a ruble for vodka . . . Do you hear? Hit him!"

"Your Honor! Let us go," sobbed the front man.

"No, I'll give you a ruble for vodka, beat him! Do you hear? So help me, I will . . . Don't you believe me? Here . . ."

The officer reached determinedly with drunken hands into a pocket. He produced a purse and shook some money out into the palm of his hand. Some of the coins rolled off, fell on the ground and lay there beside Danylo's feet. The gendarme wanted to jump to pick them up, but the officer shouted:

"Let them be . . . It's for them! Hit him! I'll give you all of it. Hit him!"

The hand that held the money was shaking; the moustache was tangled and bristling, and the eyes stared at the front man.

"I'll give you all of it! Sock him one in the mug!"

The front man glanced at Danylo. Danylo looked at the money, at the ground, then at the money again.

"Go on, strike, you fools!" impatiently cried the handsome officer. "And then go to the devil! Take the money and hit him!" he turned to the front man.

"Well, the one who strikes shall get everything," shouted the officer with the lush moustache.

"Well?"

Everyone froze with fear. The front man smiled queerly, whispering something; Danylo was breathing heavily; the ladies and elderly gentlemen waited with avid, tense interest.

"Well?" the officer moved his hand and the coins jungled.

The three grey figures, as though drawn by a magnet, turned their heads at the jingling, and on their grey faces, emaciated by

hunger, appeared something more restless, something sly and greedy. Danylo shifted his weight from one foot to the other and wheezed through his nose. The man in the rear came closer.

"Well, it's interesting..." whispered the lady with the dreamy eyes in sweet compassion, moving even closer, as she passionately watched the captives.

The officer jingled the coins again, smiling silently.

"Your Honor," the front man sobbed painfully. "Be so kind as to donate the money to us. We are hungry... We have children... Your Honor!"

Danylo stirred. The front man looked at him anxiously. He fell silent, swiftly, restlessly, surveying the group.

"No, hit him in the mug," smiled the officer, jingling the money again. His drunken, satiated eyes wandered over the hungry, tense forms of the three grey captured men. These men began to stir again, anxiously, fearing to meet one another's gaze, standing silently before the ladies and gentlemen with their oily eyes full of greed.

Suddenly Danylo turned to the front man and, without looking at him, said dully:

"Strike, Semen..."

The front man even stepped back.

"Never mind, strike! Let's have the money..." Danylo turned to the officer.

"No, first hit him in the mug," the officer swayed drunkenly.

"Well," Danylo snorted and, swinging his arm, hit Semen in the face. Then he turned quickly and dully blurted to the officer:

"Let's have it... I hit him..."

"No, wait. Now he must hit you."

"Of course," the dreamy-eyed lady seconded with rapture.

Danylo turned sharply to Semen. Smiling queerly, and looking aside, he said in a rasping voice:

"You strike, too."

Semen hesitated.

"Go on, strike!" Danylo barked angrily. "What's the matter? Here."

The ladies and gentlemen watched greedily. The front man spread his arms, then raised one hand and shyly struck Danylo in the face. Danylo turned to the officer at once and, looking at him gravely, said:

"It's done."

"Now then, there you are," the officer smiled, satisfied, and, having raised his hand, he let the money fall on the ground.

"Pick it up!"

Semen, Danylo and the chap at the back, hurriedly stooped and grabbed the coins. They began to crawl on the ground at the gen-

darme's, the gentleman's, and the ladies' feet, pushing one another, arguing, and even snatching the coins from one another.

And the gentlefolk stood above them deliberately pushing the coins away from them and clapping their hands with shouts of rapture:

"Bravo! Bravo! Yes, don't give in!"

The stars looked down sadly from the dark skies, and, peering through the foliage, it seemed that they were crying: a curious wind rustled anxiously among the twigs; while the moths, paying but little heed to the commotion and sensual clapping of the satiated, drunken people, just flew around and blasted themselves against the glass, crawling stubbornly on toward the light; and once again falling, crawling, and flying toward the light.

Yurii Klen

**ADVENTURE OF ARCHANGEL
RAFAEL**

Translated by Adam Hnidj

Yurii Klen's real name was Oswald Burghardt. He was a Ukrainian writer of German extraction, born in 1891, in Podilia, a part of Ukraine. He studied at the Kiev University, 1914-1917, and during the First World War lived in exile in Archangel province. Returning to Ukraine, he began a literary career as a poet and translator from the English, German and French languages. He translated Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and stories of Jack London and others. As a poet he wrote in the neo-classical style. With the increase of anti-Ukrainian terror in occupied Ukraine, and after some time in prison, Klen emigrated to Germany in 1931. Besides working at various German universities where he lectured on Slavic literature, he began to publish as a Ukrainian writer under the pen name of Yurii Klen, with a poem on the Soviet terror in Ukraine under the title, *The Accursed Years*, 1937; a collection of poetry *Caravels*, 1943; and the first part of a historiosophic epopee, *The Ashes of Empires*, 1946, the rest of which was published in a full edition of his works, after his death, in Toronto, 1957. Besides poetry he wrote several stories such as *Acacia*, *Apples*, and the story printed in this anthology, *Adventure of Archangel Raphael*. He died in 1947.

ADVENTURE OF ARCHANGEL RAFAEL

On a rather dark spring evening, saturated with the breath of a distant storm, with the fragrance of lilac and the smell of ozone, enveloped in a white cloud, the archangels Michael and Raphael trod the earth with swan-like step. "Trod" does not mean that they actually moved their feet, for their heels hardly ever touched the grass and dust on the road, and the cloud that was wound around them seemed as if it had been wafted on and on by the wind.

Wandering thus, they talked, but it was not words that they bandied about, which must be threaded by the dozens to express an idea. In a short moment ideas, like a flash of lighting, flew from one to the other, illuminating their foreheads, and as quickly flashing back the answers; on account of this exchange of ideas, lightning flashes played upon the sky, and these flashes were then thoughts which appeared soundlessly, illuminating the countryside for a moment, and disappearing into space over-saturated with the impending storm. To transfer their conversation means to translate it into miserable human speech; the rays into sounds, the colors into words, and losing long periods in order to report what was said "in a flashing moment." The flashes in Michael's thought had a purple shade, whereas those of Raphael were of transparent blue. Incidental passers-by, noticing this play of heat lightning, delighted in the phantasmagoria of unseen colors.

Transmitted in the miserable way of our expressions, the content of their talk was approximately as follows:

Raphael:

Strange is the human breed that is imprisoned within the limit of space and time.

Michael:

Strange and unlike us, — first-born, the Lord's pets, created in the period of dawn.

Raphael:

Unlike us who are pampered by His love.

Michael:

Unlike us who glitter like snow-crowned peaks in the first rays of the morning star.

Raphael: *

We whose cohorts' armour shines like mist-covered mountain ranges.

Michael:

We, who with our sun-lit wings, like shields, surround the Lord's throne.

Raphael:

We, who are His arms, stretching out of space like blossom-covered branches of the cherry tree.

Michael:

We, who are the great mirrors of the lakes, reflecting His glory like the sun's unbearable glare.

Raphael:

The mirrors which absorb the light thrown back to them by the celestial sphere.

Michael:

How different from us people are!

Raphael:

Like the smoke from a fire which rises high and dissolves into space.

Michael:

Like the bugler's fanfare which dies away, after rolling across the battle-field.

Raphael:

Like the fragrance of the lilac and jasmin bushes which fade after the spring and summer.

Michael:

Do not the rays of their actions intermingle with a symphony of light which, having been reflected from the celestial sphere, returns to us?

Raphael:

Do not these dispersed rays tremble in the luminaries which are our creatures?

Michael:

Perhaps they tremble so feebly that we do not notice it.

Raphael:

If so, then the participating humans would be pertinent to our bliss.

Michael:

Not completed, nor perfected, ever changing, once elated in an attempt at unattainable heights, and again drawn by the whirlpool of falling into the abyss, they hurry in an incessant river of cessation.

Raphael:

Unlike us, we, who are completed, perfected, do not remain in the stream of cessation, but in unchanging existence, in the inextinguishable light.

Michael:

Which could not be borne by eyes, otherwise they'd become blind, and whose bodies would turn to ashes by mere contact.

Raphael:

That's why we angels are not allowed to appear before their eyes.

Michael:

And did you not, Raphael, appear before Tobias, and did you not both together make a complete trip?

Raphael:

Yes, but I surrounded myself with a film of thick astra-ether and with this misty apparel I clothed myself and, being like a human, in vestments not of human origin, I became his fellow-traveller, his guard on the journey.

Michael:

Thus, too, appeared Gabriel to Mary when he brought her the tidings that she was to give birth to the Saviour.

Raphael:

Yes, but his head was enveloped in a cloud through which the radiation of his face hardly penetrated; he was shrouded in mist, and in luminous cloud he stood before her eyes. Did Moses not cover his face with his tunic when he stood before the people after his talk with the Lord, for, after having been on Mount Sinai, his face shone so brightly that his people could not hear it? And was not Zacharias struck with dumbness from fear when, dressed only in layers of smoke, an angel appeared to him in the temple.

Michael:

If it were not for these wrappings the human being would die on the spot, having seen one of the immortals.

Raphael:

Are we really so fearful?

Michael:

We are beautiful; but the human being can bear beauty only up to a certain point. Excessive beauty kills him.

Raphael:

So there is a limit, which, if overstepped, turns beauty into horror.

Michael:

Besides, humans have no senses to receive this excessive beauty; an over-loud report shatters their ear drums, and an over-strong light blinds their eyes. Do they not become blind after a day's ex-

posure to the sun-lit snow of the polar wastes? And how about the case when their eyes catch a glimpse of the shiny border of an archangel's robe?

Raphael:

And strange is their inability to see anything beyond the strict limits of time and space.

Michael:

Timelessness exists only for us. The past, the present and the future are always before our eyes and we do not differentiate between them. People captured by the stream of cessation, or obstruction, pass through the aperture of the present; they soar between the two non-existences. They see only a tri-dimensional space, being tri-dimensional themselves.

Raphael:

Is it not strange that the human being, of all the creatures created by the Lord, knows that his destiny is death, that it is characteristic only for his kind to strive for change, to improve on the fortunes of his life, and even to pass on as a heritage to posterity the strivings for a still higher ascent, for a still deeper fall.

Michael:

We do not know this, for the Lord created us in a perfected state. In this we are akin to the animals, for they, too, have come out perfected from the Lord's hands; they have not been imbued with an effort to become something else, to improve themselves. Their being, as well as ours, is spherical, and human existence is a line proceeding ad infinitum.

Raphael:

Thus no limit has been put on human progress.

Michael:

Does it mean that they may become more perfect than angels?

Raphael:

Or in going in the other direction, they may become more hideous than the demons.

Michael:

In neither of these cases has a limit been set by the Lord.

Raphael:

The human praises in songs the tree, the flower, the angel, the sky, the sea, the demon, the beast, the earth, the sun, the stars, which are also living creatures that pierce through the spaces in their flight. But why does everyone ignore the human being? No fable and no song has been composed about him, either by the beast, or by the sky, either by the tree, or by the flower.

Michael:

It is because they feel ashamed for the human being, for that unstable creature who kills and destroys without need, who deforms the earth's surface, without ever achieving a balance and a steady lasting form. Just as the human being feels a sense of shame for his prodigal son who has taken a wrong path, — his existence is not mentioned.

Raphael:

Do they not keep quiet, — the sun, the sea, the flowers, — because a human being embodies their best hope, and they follow his progress, while they all, checking their breath, follow him while he grows, assumes shape, and blossoms with a blue and purple bloom? It is like a family looking alarmed, yet hopeful, at their whimsical child, different from all the others, and they ask themselves secretly whether these different characteristics do not show a future genius who is to become the pride of the world?

Michael:

Two ways are open for the human being: to become the shame of the universe, or to fulfill its secret hope.

Raphael:

Perhaps the Lord has put into the human being His most cherished hope.

Michael:

Let us hope it will not fail.

Raphael:

As it did before . . .

Michael:

Is it not strange that an angel should follow the path of human efforts, human falls and human rises . . .

Raphael:

Is it so because Lucifer was created half-angel and half-man; and striving toward the highest and the lowest was made inherent in him. He was made immortal, and given an opportunity to achieve equality with God, or to fall into the abyss.

Michael:

To us, all the other angels, such an effort is unknown. Unchangeable and definitely formed we came out of the hands of the Lord. We are His primordial creations, His darlings.

Raphael:

Did not God love the human being more than us, by showing him, a feeble and impotent creature, the way by means of which he might surpass us and achieve equality with the Creator? As for us, he drew a line which was not to be overstepped.

Michael:

He offered His Son to redeem them from sin.

Raphael:

Can you imagine Him being crucified in order to save such animals?

Michael:

No, because animals do not recognize sin, even when they are destroying other living creatures.

Raphael:

Does the Lord, then, not love the humans more than us?

Michael:

Just as the smallest child in a family is always the father's darling?

Raphael:

Perhaps, because it is the most helpless?

Michael:

Not for human beings, but for us, has the Lord set up a limit which cannot be exceeded.

Raphael:

But, instead, He has given us tranquility and eternal bliss.

Michael:

And to the people He has given restlessness, struggle, contention, alarm.

Raphael:

We are the bright lakes which reflect the Lord's glory.

Michael:

And the human being is like a stream that rushes over the stones, foaming, tearing chunks off the banks, and in the folds of its shining glory, marring it, breaks them up in its own way.

If a man, going along with the angels, had been gifted with their sight, their ability to see things not visible to ordinary eyes, he would have been very surprised to see in the city's squares, alongside of the familiar towers, churches, and halls, buildings which had never stood there, changing the city's appearance, making it look unlike the one he had so clearly visualized in his memory. These buildings were distinguishable from any of the others by reason of their odd transparency, as if they were passing a light through themselves and were made of glass, or created from dense mist, blinking with a phosphorescent gleam. These were the building which had never been erected, but had been created by the architect's fantasy to embellish the town. Unrealized projects materialized into stone and steel by the power of ingenious ideas. Alongside the others, so contactable in their real objectiveness, they looked as if they were made of cobwebs and dreams. The archangels' gaze rested on them longer than on the other things. As they proceeded across the bare

steppes, a whole town of this kind of transparent, ornamented buildings appeared suddenly—the never realized plan of an architect, worked out to the smallest detail.

"Look," said Michael, "Those beautiful chimeras testify to man's everlasting endeavors. Even things which were not created by human hands, but merely by human imagination, exist as something real, immovable, and crying out to God of man's yearnings, strivings, and attempts at the unobtainable. Do you hear the music which was never written down but lived in the composer's heart as an immortal melody? Do you hear the songs which were never born because they were too beautiful? Our superiority over human beings lies in our ability to see and hear all, while their eyes and ears are merely capable of receiving only too rough vibrations of material energy."

"Oh, how interesting it would be to assume human form for a few days to live with its strivings, not to feel the chain of past happenings, not to see the pictures of the future, to embrace a short period of life for a short time, to put yearnings of eternity into it, to feel at last what human suffering and longing that they talk about in songs is like; and to learn, at last, what that feeling of hate, so unknown to us, is like."

"Or horror, vengeance, desire for self-sacrifice, and thousands of other things," added Michael, with a smile. "Why do you not enter a human body and experience it all for a short time?"

"The human body which I created from astral material when I visited Tobias was not a real body of flesh and blood," said Raphael. "It was only a mask to cover my angelic form. Therefore it could not feel what a man born of woman does."

"Then take yourself some other body," said Michael.

"I cannot deprive a man of his life; that would be homicide, and I would rob him of his body which was given to him to perform a certain task in life. I cannot take control of a body during sleep for the soul is too strongly tied to the body and would not surrender its place to me. If a body is dead, it is not suitable for any experiment."

Meanwhile the archangels were passing through a suburb of Kiev and, under a large tree, they saw a man half-sitting and half-lying on the ground, having partly slid into a ditch. There was some blood on his head. He was evidently unconscious and reeked of brandy.

"You see," said Michael, "this is a man who swallowed too much and lost his way here. He fell down and hit his head against a stone. He's neither alive nor dead, but somewhere in between the two. It is uncertain whether the man will return to the sober state of a live human being: his soul has not yet left the body, but it wanders or flies far away from him, only slightly connected with the body."

It will not resist you; enter the body and, with the power of your will, return it to consciousness."

The proposition appealed to Raphael. He hesitated for a moment, wondering whether he would find his way in new circumstances and surroundings. He knew that the man was called Andron Vertoprakh, he knew that the man was thirty-two years old, an accountant of the state bank, and a bachelor. Would he be capable, after taking hold of the body, to perform all the functions of an official and citizen, to be aware of all the duties which awaited him? Now everything was bright, open and without doubt to his angelic eye; but what would happen after he entered the body of a man, limited by the tight borders of grey everyday life, when he had rid himself of his present omniscient penetration, without having any rudimentary experience of everyday life. But then he said to himself that if he considered the consequences of his actions too long he would never dare perform the deed, because reflection paralyzes action and makes life questionable.

Therefore he approached the man, looked at his dirty, blood-stained face. He looked at the eyes which had disappeared under the forehead, covered with black strings of hair, at the half-opened mouth and, realizing that he had made up his mind, pressed his being into the body, as if it were the door of a house abandoned by the owner who had gone God knows where. The door yielded under the pressure, creaking, and bursting open. The visitor did not enter but fell into the parlor, finding himself in a warm, stuffy room where he had to begin his existence without awaiting the owner.

The first feeling of "Raphael Vertoprakh," when he lifted up his head, was pain and the realization of what in the human speech is called suffering. His head was reeling from the blow and from the hops. Leaning against a tree, he rose to his feet, tried to stand upright on his own, and take a few steps; but he staggered and nearly fell over. Then he stood facing the wind until his head cleared slightly and his brain began to function. He clearly felt like Raphael, that he was Raphael, whom it was as if they had sewn up in a tight bag, with slits left open for his eyes and ears, to enable him the better to receive the impressions of the outside world. In his mind was clearly fixed the picture of Michael, the awe-inspiring fellow-archangel, with a flaming sword, with white wings and a blue gleam; flashes of Michael's thoughts were still in his memory. But little brain streams had already penetrated into Vertoprakh's life: mostly, impressions of the last drinking spree, then meetings with women, talks with his chief, and the picture of Michael was soon superseded by the figure of the burly chief with the "Order of the Red Flag" on his breast.

The archangel who had assumed a human shell felt clearly that he now stood at a point of a straight line from which a continuation of it stretched out, straight as a drawn line, into the future. And when he looked backwards the line split into two branches: one branch leading to the empyric heights where the choirs of the blessed stood around the the Lord's throne, and the other one, also leading toward the past, went the way of the life of the miserable, filthy Vertoprakh, almost to his cradle and stopped there—the recollections did not go any further.

Still staggering, Raphael made his way to the town. He had no difficulty in finding the street and the house on the third floor of which were the lodgings of the bank accountant. The all-comprising omniscience, typical of angels, aided him; on the other hand the automatic action of Vertoprakh's brain led him with the infallibility of an instinct along the streets, finding its way even at night. Thus, having found the house and ascended to his floor, he felt the key in Vertoprakh's raincoat pocket, put it in the lock, turned it, entered the room, turned on the switch, and the light on the table flared up, flooding with its green hue a heap of papers strewn all over the table. He poured a glass of water out of a carafe and emptied it once. He moistened his forehead with a cool wet towel. All these were Vertoprakh's habits followed mechanically and automatically by Raphael who did not realize what he was doing. His head was still reeling and his thoughts were confused, so there could be no hope of any work being done that night. Thus he went to bed and switched off the light. Stunned by the two hour stay in the body, dizzy with pain, he hoped that in his sleep he would leave his terrestrial prison and fly up to the empyric heights, to be able to rest; but nightmares, partly consisting of Vertoprakh's experience, were so intermingled, that they brought no refreshment to the spirit.

At half past seven the alarm clock by his bed began buzzing. Raphael jumped up to his feet. Vertoprakh's experience told him it was time to go to work. Having swiftly gulped down a cup of beet-root tea without sugar, which was brought up to his room, and a few slices of black bread, jocularly called "Soviet cake," Raphael, having checked his brief case, placed it under his arm, put on his hat and headed for the bank.

Passing through the hall with the numerous desks, he greeted his colleagues. Some of them, noticing his black and blue eyes, smiled ironically, asking no questions, knowing probably from experience what these symptoms originated from. When he passed the desk of Barbara Mytrofanivna who was in charge of money transfers abroad, she winked at him; but Raphael, taking no notice of it, bowed curtly and headed for his desk. Barbara drew up her lip at this sup-

posed offence. He could not rid himself of this feeling of dual personality: on the one hand he knew that he was an archangel, who only yesterday had flown in from the celestial spaces; and on the other hand he began to realize more and more distinctly his identity with Vertoprakh, bringing out the facts of his past from memory. The spirit, which lived with its own reminiscences, found itself in a strange controversy with the mind, which, over the years, had piled up its own impressions, according to which actions of the body had been made automatic. Office work became a real burden on Raphael. He, who, as it were, could breathe in at once all the wisdom contained in Kant's works, all the calculations of Newton's life work, all the beauty which weeps and rages with joy in Beethoven's works, (because all this did not equal the wisdom of the seraphims and the nirvana ecstasies of the cherubim), he who could swallow this in a second could not sit four hours checking and double-checking long columns of numbers in his books. What happened to his ability to grasp everything in a flash? If it had not been for the mechanization of Vertoprakh's brain work he would have been drowned in the sea of trivial rubbish. Soon he discovered that he would not even have been able to lace up his shoes if it had not been for the subconscious mechanization in the movement of the fingers owing to Vertoprakh's experience. But Vertoprakh also demanded a reward for the experience he had turned over to the new master of his body. As he calculated in the bank Raphael felt that his brain power began to work more drowsily, as though missing something. His hand moved automatically into his pocket and brought out a packet of cigarettes. His lungs demanded nicotine; his brain had to be whipped up by dope, like a lazy horse.

These were concessions the archangel had to make to the human organism. In a couple of days, Raphael had almost completely acclimatized himself to his work; yet at times, sitting at his desk, he remembered his flights in the spaces, and his talks with comrades, and then his human heart began to acquire a deep feeling, a yearning for the same things as his spirit. Gradually, however, these reminiscences grew dimmer, becoming like dreams to be remembered in the morning, but paling into oblivion with the passing of the day, losing clarity of outline, gradually dissipating, then being superseded by the events of the real surrounding life.

It was tragic that he did not remember all the events of Vertoprakh's life, having but a vague picture of it. His memory functioned well from the moment he took possession of Vertoprakh's body. He had quickly taken over all that pertained to automatic reaction toward daily happenings, acting instinctively like the cuckoo that puts her eggs into some other bird's nest. His brain told him he had

his years of infancy and youth, but if he were to fill up a form, he would have been able to write merely about his flights in space, where the harmony of the world and the choirs of the immortals resounded. Even these memories soon faded. For an angel the life of the world was as clear as the palm of his hand. It lay even beyond the limits of time, and for a man it seemed to be sealed with seven seals. All the experience of the other side had remained behind a wall, which grew even higher as if separating him forever from everything connected with earthly life. No sound from beyond reached him.

Thus as far as the past was concerned, a void was created in Raphael which he was unable to fill; while ignorance of the most important facts of Vertoprakh's life threatened him with surprises and dangers. It was only dreams that reminded him of the past. When during his physical unconsciousness Raphael's spirit became separated from the body and flew into the unknown, Vertoprakh's spirit, still somewhat connected with the body, would return to it, and dwell habitually in this old neglected domicile. It would nose about in all corners, pull out old mouldy memories like ours, taste them as a miser tastes crusts of dried-up bread, and from these pieces of those dreams, which, like burrs, stuck to the memory, it was possible to reconstruct in blurred outlines a picture of the past, as scientists, studying several bones, reconstruct the skeleton of a prehistoric monster. Many a time these dreams consisted of drinking orgies, embezzlement of money, and remonstrances of his superiors for being late and slack at work. God knows what rubbish he used to bring to light when visiting his deserted house at night. They were little things which never bothered Raphael during his working day, and which he swept out from his memory in the morning. At times he saw some women in these dreams; Andron Lukych cautiously uncovered their shoulders, giggling and exciting the blood in the sleeping body.

What dangers were concealed in Vertoprakh's biography was shown to Raphael in the following case: One late evening there was a knock on the door and Barbara appeared on the threshold. She hurled her hat on a settee, threw herself into a chair, and began to weep. When Raphael approached with intent to comfort her, she pushed him away angrily and shouted: "How long is this behavior going to last?! After all our meetings, outings, and nights spent together, you behave as if I didn't exist. For three weeks you've been going by my desk, hardly honoring me with a glance, or exchanging a few words with me. Do I deserve such treatment? You're all alike. You play with a woman, get what you want, then leave her."

He tried to appease her in vain. The more he spoke, the greater became her deluge of words, citing all his offences, at the same time supplying him with a great deal of Vertoprakh's biography, which he forthwith committed to memory. Following his attempt to appease Barbara, she concluded her monologue with the tart exclamation: "From now on, you're not Andron to me, but Comrade Vertoprakh."

And then in despair, not knowing what he was saying, he told her, "But I'm not Andron, nor Vertoprakh, but simply Raphael, not responsible for the action of another man." For a moment the woman was petrified with surprise, and then in a gust of sudden anger, she picked up a cup half-filled with tea and hurled it at him. This was followed by a plate, then a vase. Raphael jumped to his feet and ran out of the house. "So you're teasing me..." she shouted after him. After wandering about for a couple of hours, he returned home, found his room deserted, a shambles made of his crockery, a drawer with papers broken into, some torn-up letters he knew nothing about lay strewn on the floor, and the money he kept in an envelope had disappeared.

Back at work the following day, he passed by Barbara's desk, like a beaten dog, without even looking at her.

After a few days his department chief, the one with the Red Flag Order, summoned Raphael and reprimanded him for some mistake which had occurred three months ago. He was questioned about a file which he was supposed to have received some time ago, but which he could not recall no matter how much he tried. Thus it turned out to be a double reprimand. Raphael, having restricted the limits of his archangelic consciousness to the foggy horizon of a dull man, felt like a cripple deprived of the use of his legs.

Departing, he quietly said to himself: "Andron has concocted a drink which you, Raphael, must now drink". But the chief heard these words and followed him with surprise. Soon the phrase made the rounds of the office, finally reaching Barbara, who compared it with another analogical phrase she had heard herself. The girls began to whisper, looking at Raphael, breaking off immediately whenever he lifted up his eyes. The phrase "slightly mental" was especially noted. Barbara tried to find an explanation for all his strange behavior during the past weeks, even feeling pity for him. From that day on he was referred to by no other name but that of "Little Raphaella" by all the girls.

This whole matter would have been passed over lightly, had it not been for an epilogue supplied by another incident. In ten days time, an investigator of a certain institution summoned Raphael and began to inquire whether he was a relative of one Rapalski, jailed in Lubianka, charged with treason and conspiracy against the

government. When the accountant denied it most emphatically, he was asked whether he was a brother of one Kasimir Rafalovich, arrested near the Polish border and charged with espionage for Poland and, if not, what then was his proof that he was indeed Andron Vertoprakh.

Raphael began by referring to the fact that for so many years he had been known in town and in his employment, that his papers were in order, having been issued by the state police; and eventually, if he at times called himself jokingly "Raphael", it was because his maternal grand-mother hailed from the Jewish family of Raffaler, whose members all were proletarians and laborers.

This did not entirely satisfy the investigator. Producing a cigarette case with someone else's gold monogram, he offered his fellow-conversant a cigarette and politely asked if, in order to cleanse himself from all suspicious, he would not take on the job of an agent in the institution where he worked. Raphael became alarmed and, in order to put off an answer, he asked for a few weeks time to make up his mind. The investigator gladly agreed and dismissed him.

Having arrived home, Raphael felt an acute thirst coming on which could only be quenched with alcohol. He recalled exchanging a shirt for home-made brandy only a week ago. These were the concessions that were made to Vertoprakh, whose body stubbornly demanded things which its previous master had never refused.

Then he decided to put an end to it. The fight with Vertoprakh was ferocious. He came at night to demand his rights and planted weeds where Raphael cultivated golden wheat, choking it. Raphael made a plan for the day. After work he bathed in the river and rowed in a boat, and basked in the sunshine. Soon the body became nicely brown and radiated health. Vertoprakh's ailing paleness vanished, his muscles became strong and tanned. He destroyed his thirst for alcohol before it became a habit. Gradually he began to stop smoking. The aim of this regime was to make the body strong and rid it of all the bad habits which ruined its health, in order to turn it over to its previous owner at the right moment in an irreproachable state, so as to enable him to follow the path that leads upwards; in short, to make Andron Vertoprakh become a credit to it—at least this is what Raphael was thinking as he recalled his talk with Michael. Vertoprakh himself rebelled against this imposed regime. In the beginning he appeared in his domicile at night, furious, quarrelsome, rejoicing in licentious dreams, drinking and making trouble, tempting Raphael as the devil had tempted St. Anthony. But in the morning Raphael swept out the dirt, the domicile of his spirit was thoroughly aired, clean, tidy, sunny. Looking in the mirror, he noticed that

Vertoprakh's countenance assumed a certain air of gentility. The nocturnal visits of the previous master became less and less frequent and, in the end, he succumbed, humbly allowing Raphael to lead him his own way.

One evening Raphael was passing by a church. He heard singing, saw a light, then went in and stood in a corner. The words of the priest were solemn, so were the voices of the choir. Candles flickered in front of the golden images. When Raphael recalled his shiny brethren, the streams of blinding light in which they floated, the tranquil immobile lakes reflecting the Lord's glory, the wings of the archangels glittering like mountain ranges against the sun, and the harmony of the spheres resounding with the immortal thunder of melody, his eyes filled with tears. All this, now forgotten, hidden under the rubbish of the daily routine of life, began to shine, to play with all the colors, with rays from the diamonds and precious gems, with the fanfare of archangelic trumpets.

Under the influence of church surroundings, these dim reminiscences came to life, flooded his soul with streams of light, and Raphael even shed a tear, having wondered whether these unfortunate people ever noticed it at all, or, remembering the existence of the world, whether they had found a faint allusion thereto in the fluttering flicker of the candles, in the golden brocades and other vestments of the church service, with their songs imitating the melody of the spheres. He realized how hard it is for the human being, who has never seen celestial beauty and the Lord's glory, and only presumes their existence, to make his way through darkness to a path leading upwards. He understood why the Lord had set up such a high reward for the dangerous journey which consisted of constant falls into the abyss and flights above the clouds; and that this reward could only be given to one in a million, but, this, however, makes them superior to the angels. He realized eventually that floating on the changing, stormy stream of danger, ever-changing, is a more complicated matter than having being created and perfected by the hands of the Lord, and being in a state of immobile existence, of bliss, preordained for one ahead of time.

The following morning Raphael's chief met him with a leer on his face. "So you, my friend, have begun to frequent churches, to pray to God! Ha! Ha!"

How difficult it was for the human being to stay on a chosen path, or to recognize which of the many detours was the shortest way to his goal, was proven to Raphael in the course of the following days.

About 10 o'clock in the evening, after a short knock on the door, a girl of about 18 years of age rushed into the room, embraced and

began kissing him. She chattered rapidly and happily about how difficult it was to find his place in the evening. Her rain-drenched coat radiated freshness, so did her whole youthful, carefree being. Having noticed his embarrassed face, she suddenly asked whether he did not recognize Halia, whom he had met last year in the hills, and with whom he had spent a carefree summer night under the stars on the river bank and then in the tent. Raphael, completely flabbergasted, tried in vain to extract from his brain that fatal memory, and hastened to assure the girl that, indeed, he remembered; also that such an incident leaves a mark for the rest of one's life.

He was so pleasantly overwhelmed, however, that he could not find the right words to express himself. Then she admitted that, having no friends or relatives in Kiev, she went straight to him, hoping that he would not refuse to accomodate her till the following morning. Raphael hopelessly surveyed his room, worrying about her comfort, explaining that the settee was too small for two people to occupy at the same time; and that therefore, he could offer his own bed while he himself might stay with some friends overnight. But she protested vigorously: no, it was out of the question to let him leave the room at night, in such a downpour of rain. But then he could not turn her out into such a rain either. And as for the bed, made by an old bourgeois manufacturer, it was big enough to accomodate even three persons. Could he hesitate after that night in the tent?

Raphael realized that, besides Vertoprakh's fate, he had also assumed certain of the latter's responsibilities. Perhaps those responsibilities were assumed during an unguarded moment, but this did not matter. He must recognize them, just as a government recognizes agreements and loans of its predecessor. And, in the end, was it not a crime to turn out the girl into the rain, or to leave her alone, when she had been looking forward to seeing him for days? Having become a human being he had to behave like one, and not live according to the angelic code. And human life is so arranged that it is impossible to avoid offence which one has to pay for and do penance for. Man is chained to his fate by causes and consequences. The night spent with the girl gave Raphael a kind of proud self-assurance that he was now a real one hundred per cent human being and not a casual guest from the Empyrean on a short visit to a dull area of a provincial planet.

After two months he received an invitation to talk with an investigator of the institution which had summoned him previously. The investigator, having stressed that the period allocated to him to make up his mind had been deliberately prolonged, asked him whether he had decided to take on the suggested work as an agent.

Raphael replied that during that time he had managed to find out that in his institution, the state bank, there were no anti-revolutionaries, since they had all been screened and checked; thus there was nothing to uncover. The investigator retorted that the state was as interested in anti-revolutionary actions — for none could ever escape the omnipresent eye, as it was in the way of reasoning, the feelings of the employees, and the so-called 'prospective anti-revolution'. Raphael replied that he lacked experience and talent for cases of that kind. The investigator gave him a severe look, pointing at a fat dossier lying in front of him, which he referred to as the "case of Rafalovich," in which he, Vertoprakh, was also entangled, and whose part in it would very soon be straightened out. Therefore, Raphael had better make up his mind and disclose his associates. He was given another two weeks to make up his mind, not at home, but within the walls of that hospitable building. A policeman was summoned and Raphael was handed over to his care. He was led into a cell. When the door was opened, a wave of foul air struck him in the face. A chaotic din came from within. He found himself in a room without tables or chairs. Some hooligans were sitting on the bunks in torn clothes, playing cards. They greeted him with shouts of "Hurrah!" which resembled a war cry. Looking over the newcomer from head to toe, one of the players said: "Let's stake his hat!" In ten minutes time it was staked and won by one of the players. Next his coat was staked; then his shoes; but at this point Raphael resisted. He was thrown to the floor, two men sitting on his back, while another went about the task of taking off his shoes, or in their lingo, "dismounting the wheels."

Raphael was summoned three times to appear before the investigator, but without result. He did not tell any tales about anyone. The *blatni** made life difficult for him. They hunted him, pushed him around the cell from one to another like a football. A broken rib caused him great pain, and he bled profusely from the cavities left by two smashed teeth.

This incident was an opportunity for Raphael to discover that a human being could not avoid being guilty of one thing or another. To denounce someone meant incriminating innocent people; it, too, meant committing a grave sin and taking on the duty of doing penance for it, thus increasing the amount of suffering and evil on the earth. However, not to denounce anyone meant subjecting his body to further injuries, and the body did not belong to him, Raphael, but to Vertoprakh who would appear sooner or later and his property would have to be turned over to him. In what condition would Raphael return the body? He had caressed it, cleansed it of all evil, hardened it in the sun and in the cold, and now would return it with knocked

* *Blatni* — in prison jargon — thieves, hoodlums.

out teeth and broken ribs! Did he not take on himself an irretrievable debt toward Vertoprakh? Yet in either case the responsibility could not be avoided. Here, for the first time, Raphael felt what people call "hatred," a thing entirely unknown to angels.

He felt hatred toward his persecutors who not only tortured his body but also wanted to kill his soul. How could he avoid humiliation? If it was difficult for an angel, how much more difficult must it have been for a human being?

When the investigator called him for the fourth time, he had made up his mind. He reported at once that he wished to make "a conscientious statement". The investigator was very glad, took a pen, dipped it in the ink, and prepared to write. But he still remained in the same position, with the pen in his hand, when Raphael began to talk. The accused stated at once that he was not Andron Lukych Vertoprakh, but Archangel Raphael. He depicted the beauty of the empyreal heights, the Lord's glory, the lake-mirrors in which it was reflected, the streams of songs which flowed like rivers round the throne of Sabaoth, (here the investigator jotted down something in his book), his brethren, the archangels, who surrounded him with their mountain snow-white wings as if with sheaths. He said that if he had been able to find the right words which would have adequately described this glamor, and human language had no such equivalent words, the investigator's mind would explode from inability to conceive that which was beyond the limits of human imagination. He also told about his last talk with Michael, whose authority ruled over innumerable cohorts of celestial knights, and with whom he would come onto the earth one day to secure real order, and of the incident of finding Vertoprakh's almost dead body, taking it over, and bearing all the consequences of that deed.

Raphael spoke sincerely, tears filling his eyes. The investigator listened attentively, at times a smile appearing on his lips and, when Raphael had finished, the investigator asked him whether he had had any particular friends among the archangels; Raphael then named Gabriel. The investigator noted something down and then began to write fast. The statement was not long, and nothing of the accused man's tale was mentioned; he only had to testify with his signature to the membership in the terrorist "Association of Archangel Michael," which had existed during Tsarist times and whose remnants began to rally planning an armed uprising. The accused, despite the investigator's protest, did not sign his name "Vertoprakh" but "Raphael," saying that he could not incriminate someone else, being responsible only for himself. After that he was discharged.

The following day Agatangel Havryluk, the bank's administrator, was arrested. He was held and questioned for three weeks but, since

his past was irreproachable, and he had fought against Wrangel, Petliura, and Denikin, and apart from Vertoprakh's vague statement, there was nothing against him, he was released. In addition to this, he denied any close relationship with Vertoprakh who called himself Raphael. During the following five weeks, all people by the name of Havryluk, Havrylenko, or Gavrylov were arrested all over the USSR in Moscow, Taganrog, Batum, Rostov, etc. Among them also was a Serb Gavrilovich, who was shot for being in touch with White Guardist Russian emigres in Belgrade. From among those arrested, thirty one were imprisoned, two executed and the rest went to Taimir, Kolyma, and Pechora. Saddest of all was the arrest of Father Sabaty, vicar of the church Raphael frequented. He was charged with leading the "Association of Archangel Michael" under the assumed name of Sabaoth. Raphael intervened in vain, trying to prove that his words were entirely misunderstood and misconstrued. The investigator gave him to understand that, though he considered Raphael mentally deficient, nevertheless from the mouths of clowns one often hears the truth, notwithstanding that such truth was strangely twisted in the mind of the utterer. Then again, it was not decent of Vertoprakh, who had been a candidate for the party for two years, to stand up for the priest. Raphael was amazed at the revelation and noted down one more detail of the not entirely known biography of Vertoprakh.

It was quite a long time before his rib had mended and his teeth had been replaced. When after all these misadventures he put in an appearance at the bank again, none of his fellow-workers asked him where he had been. His good morning greetings were hardly acknowledged, all contact with him was avoided; in general, he was ostracized as if he were contaminated with some plague or other contagious disease. However, people under arrest were all treated like this. Administrator Havryluk was the only one to approach his table on the first day. He showed his mighty fist roaring: "You are trying to get me involved in your anti-revolution, you!!! Watch out or I'll count your ribs."

After another week, Raphael's chief approached him and, having been informed beforehand by the investigator of Raphael's mental state as "madness through religious causes," he suggested a three week holiday in the Caucasus to mend Raphael's nerves. Tiberda, lying up in the mountains, was recommended for its cool climate, highly beneficial to the nervous system. Our comrade accountant accepted the suggestion gladly and immediately.

Upon his arrival in Tiberda, Raphael did not stay in the sanatorium for the first three days, but made long trips to the waterfalls in whose cool waters it was so pleasant to give relief to his weary

body. He looked into deep gorges, at the bottom of which flowed snakelike streams. He climbed up high cliffs on which fir trees grew. Amid all this wild beauty he felt nearer to his lost country in which happy beings did not experience pain, or hatred, or insult, or a wish for revenge. Many were the times when he compared his former archangelic might with his present human impotence. He felt lonely.

One day he saw a fair-haired girl in the bushes by the river, splashing in the water with her bare feet, and stopped surprised. He was impressed by something in her face which reminded him of the cherubim whose gift is pure love, in contra-distinction to the seraphim who loves only eternal wisdom. He approached her and spoke, and human love touched his archangelic heart for the first time. But he realized at once that he could experience it only because he had borrowed a heart made of human flesh and blood. The ray of happiness given by this love was only a feeble reflection of the happiness the angels experience in the empyreal heights, but there was a sweetness and yearning unknown to the angels.

"Look," he said, "we are only guests on this earth, but we are beings from another world. Snatches of music can be heard in this world which hum in our ears; we must find the melodies here on earth. We are searching for at least a reflection of that light in which our spirit flourished, though in another world. Sometimes it would seem as if we have found it in a waterfall, in a river's flow, in a lover's eyes; and then our hearts beat faster, and we start remembering something we can only vaguely recall. Thus eternal longing is our life companion. Keep gazing at the blue strip of the forests on the horizon: something calls you there, and that something is longing. Gaze at the far-off sea, dotted with sails like butterflies; it is calling you; again that something is longing. Look at the limitless space of the steppes, where the sun sets in the high grass—it keeps calling you; it is longing."

So spoke the lover, and those words originated, not in Vertoprakh's brain, but in Raphael's soul; they were strained, however, through Vertoprakh's warm blood, and Raphael, who until now was a pure spirit, received a soul. Soon Raphael and Irene began to meet, to meet every day, becoming inseparable until evening. But once there was a surprise in store for him. She didn't come to the appointed place, but he saw her afterwards, holding a slim youth's arm. The same story repeated itself on the two following days. Then Raphael felt a longing which he had never experienced before, and he had to bear the misery of jealousy, another proof that a soul had been born to Raphael. On the fourth day he met Irene again. She told him that the fiance whom she had known for several years had come to take her home because her stay at the sanatorium was over. He

restrained his egotistical feelings and wished her good luck in her new life. Suddenly she embraced him, then began to cry, assuring him that he had awakened in her a feeling that would live forever and never die, a feeling that would bring her to him in Kiev, and against which there was no remedy, against which she was helpless.

Perplexed and immensely happy in his unhappiness, he remained alone for the last week of his holiday.

Immediately after the farewell, momentary joy so pervaded his being that his soul felt a need to do someone a good turn. Shortly he met one of the vacationers on the sanatorium road, a Peter Kravchenko, a nervous man, with an extremely troubled and depressed look about him. Questioned about it, he said that his wife was visiting a town nearby, and that he wished to see her but had no money for the journey. Raphael pulled out 300 rubles from his pocket and gave them to him. In reply to his sincere thanks, Raphael said that he would be extremely pleased if Kravchenko did not refuse to accept that unusual gift.

The last days were pregnant with unpleasant surprises. First of all, a letter arrived from the bank management in which the comrade accountant was asked to explain the grounds for the expenditure of 1873 rubles and 43 kopecks in November of the previous year.

"Now Vertoprakh has really rendered some service," grumbled Raphael, under his breath. "Who knows where to find those grounds?"

Another letter from his local executive of the Communist Party informed him that, according to an agreement with the local organization, he was, after his return, to conduct an anti-religious campaign in the District of Ivanhorod. Here the investigator possibly had a hand in the business, since Raphael had told him about his sojourn in the empyrean, or perhaps even the manager of the bank to whom someone had reported having seen Raphael in church. So he had to prove by his actions that he had gotten rid of all superstitions during the last three weeks, and was prepared to fight them.

A newspaper brought the unpleasant news with the last mail; there was a paragraph which excited the whole sanatorium. It reported that a murder had been committed in Helendzhik: A man, Kravchenko, had arrived unexpectedly to visit his wife and caught her with a lover. With three shots he laid both of them low on the spot. Probably he had been told everything beforehand, thus making the murder a premeditated affair, all the more so because he had bought a revolver from an Armenian while on the way. An accountant in some mysterious way had been implicated in the case.

Raphael was stunned; the good deed he had contemplated had turned out to be an evil one, and fate had laid on him a considerable part of the responsibility for what had happened.

The tragic chain of events became more twisted. In addition he had to give some explanation of the alleged expenditure. Shrewd Vertoprakh would have found some way out, but not Raphael. And here again was that anti-religious propaganda paradox, whose execution was entrusted to no one else but an Archangel. Oh, how ardently Raphael now wanted to return his body back to Vertoprakh! As he went to bed at night he consoled himself with the hope that his spirit, having left the body, would not return to it, but would leave it to its previous master who would begin to occupy his home again. But in the morning, having awakened, he felt he was Raphael. There was only one way of returning to the empyrean: to sever the chain of life forcibly but then the body, having been harmed, could not be the home to which Vertoprakh's spirit had to return in order to accomplish its task on earth.

In anxiety and confusion he lay down on the bed, reviewing in his mind's eye the events of his masquerade in human form. This was supposed to be the night before his departure from the sanatorium, and on this night he had a dream to the effect that a television connection was made with his former existence.

He dreamt he was in a large courthouse hall, and that in this hall there were a lot of seats for the spectators, but the hall itself was empty. He sat all alone in the jury box, awaiting the appearance of the judge. He was dressed in a snow-white tunic, girded by a silver belt, and on his fair, blond head there was a golden wreath of oak leaves. He sat down behind a table, on which he placed a brief case. "Raphael!" he said, "without my permission you dared to leave the circle of existence predetermined for you and enter the swift stream of human, whimsical and ephemeral actions, and undergo the uncertainties of terrestrial wandering. Did you not know that, having left the bright lakes and boarded the boat carried by the waves of a mountain stream, you made yourself incapable of avoiding guilt; you included yourself in the chain of cause and effect for the short time of your earthly existence, having created something called 'Karma' in which offence causes punishment, which again causes a new offence, which carries also penance and punishment, with the chain having no end. Having infringed the circle of destiny, you wanted to help Vertoprakh, but in so doing did you not worsen his lot? Will he not have to take over your liabilities to enable you to return to the Kingdom of Light? And will he desire to do that? Will he be able to manage under

the new circumstances you have created through your interference in his earthly life?"

Raphael was silent.

Then the judge said: "Let us hear the witnesses!" Upon which he opened his brief case. Raphael glanced around the empty hall.

"Barbara Mytrofanivna!" was the sound that came through the air. Raphael did not see anyone but he heard the scraping of a chair when someone rose, and from the middle of the hall he heard Barbara's voice:

"I accuse! Raphael deprived me of my lover with whom I had lived in peace and quiet. In my colorless office life, Vertoprakh was my colorful office sun. Having deceptively assumed his form, Raphael repulsed me, poisoned my confidence and the sleep of my nights. Raphael is guilty!"

"Halia!" again resounded the voice amid the profound silence of the hall. Again Raphael heard the scrapping of the chair, followed by a young familiar voice coming from the other end of the court.

"Raphael, having assumed the form of my lover whom I had met one hot summer night, stole my love. In my womb I carry Raphael's baby, but will Andron recognize this baby as his own when he returns to his body? I accuse Raphael, he is guilty!"

After a moment's silence the dispassionate voice called again. "Peter Kravchenko!"

Kravchenko answered from the other end of the empty hall. "I knew that my wife was going to meet her lover. For a long time I contemplated what I would do with her, whether I should kill her or not. I decided, however, to let the matter ride for a while, since perhaps it might have interfered with my night's sleep; but I met Raphael on the way and he offered me money. The old flame of revenge flared up in me. Well, I went and killed. Perhaps Raphael meant well, but damned be the hour that I met him! He is guilty though the guilt is not his."

"Father Savaty!" the voice pierced the silence for the fourth time.

Said Father Savaty: "Raphael had no evil in his mind, but why did he call God's name where it should not be mentioned? Is it not said that pearls should not be cast before swine? I do my penance for his mistake in the Tamir tundra!"

"Agatangel Havryluk!" the same voice rang out again for the fifth time. And Havryluk began to talk: "Through Raphael's carelessness and rashness I found myself in jail. I suffered for three weeks standing for five hours at a time before the execution wall, sitting in cold water through the night, going without food for three days. I was guilty of no crime and had no accomplices. But to release

myself from suffering I accused innocent people. I bore them false witness. They have Raphael to thank for that."

And then these voices were heard: "We, Havryluks, Havrylenkos, Gavrylovs enslaved in Taimir, Pechora, Kolyma, we accuse, we accuse! Raphael is guilty."

"All the witnesses are against you!" pronounced the judge gravely. "What I have just heard is sufficient for me to pronounce sentence and judgement. But let us listen to the last witness: "Irene!"

And far away, beyond the invisible crowd, a voice resounded: "Raphael awakened in my heart and soul a yearning that I had not known before. He will remain the guiding star on the horizon of my life till the end of my days. Blessed be his name! Blessed be the remembrance of him!"

The judge smiled, closed the dossier and said: "All right, let us wait and see how Vertoprakh masters his task"; then he quickly left the hall.

Raphael remained under the influence of the dream all next morning. He realized that he had made Vertoprakh face a series of tasks which would not be easy to solve, if he was to consider his own liabilities, as well as those inherited from Raphael. Possibly, Vertoprakh might cope with them more successfully. But how could he, Raphael, settle the muddled case with the bank in the meantime; how could he make them leave him in peace with their anti-religious campaign; how was he to disentangle himself from fresh grillings and to annul his statement of his membership in the monarchist organization "Association of Archangel Michael"; how was he to settle the even more muddled case of his relationships with Halia and Irene? Some plan of action had to be worked out, and to do this he had to strain all the fibres of the mental apparatus he had inherited from a not very moral, nor very clever, though perhaps cunning and shifty Andron Lukych Vertoprakh.

Meditating on this, Raphael was approaching a waterfall whose ripple he could hear. In his deep meditation he had not noticed that he had been standing before it for several minutes. Upon realizing this, he lifted up his eyes to the glittering sheet formed by the water falling down the rocks, glimmering against the sun so brightly that it was painful to look at it. Then suddenly he shuddered.

From beyond the blinding sheet in silver armor, in unearthly beauty transformed into horror, in a light so insufferably bright that the brain disintegrated, there stepped out and stood before him, the archstrategist Michael, a sword in his outstretched hand.

Raphael's earthly body could not bear this beauty, this horror. He fell dead to the ground. Then he got up, left it, and stood beside his companion. Flooded with the light of his white wings they re-

turned together and forever, to the happy lakes, which like mirrors reflect the Lord's glory, to the land where there is no revenge, no hatred, no jealousy, no offences and punishments. And thus he completed the circle of his short terrestrial wanderings, returning the body to Vertoprakh, who would now have to reorient himself in his new situation, and to solve—as yet we do not know how—complex questions which had matured in the meantime.

Alexander Douzhenko

UNFORGETTABLE

Translated by Michael Luchkovich

Alexander Dovzhenko was born in 1894 of a peasant family in Sosnytsia, Chernihiv province. He was originally interested in painting but later turned to cinematography in which he rose to world prominence with his films, *Zvenyhora*, 1927; and *Land*, 1930. In the 1930's he found conditions under administrative pressure and repressions so unbearable that he transferred to Moscow to continue there his work as a director, acquiescing in official demands, changing his themes and artistic method. He returned to Ukraine to continue his Ukrainian cinematographic career soon after the death of Stalin, and created his final films on Ukrainian plots, *The Bewitched Desna*, 1954, and *Poem About the Sea*, 1956. It is with these cinema dramas, and with a series of stories that he achieved a prominent niche in Ukrainian literature as a master of word and style. His films and creative writing were in the romantic and expressionistic style, and far removed from the official method of socialist realism. Dovzhenko died in 1956.

UNFORGETTABLE

I am greatly inclined to tell this story in the most endearing terms that suggest themselves during one's rare and irrevocable hours.

One would like to cleanse each word in a Ukrainian well from which a Ukrainian maiden drew water, and then set up each word in a row, so that the unforgettable can play its part among them, like the sun on Easter Day, and thus gladden human hearts in these great and difficult times.

One would like to embroider words like red flowers on plain towels and hang them up on display in every room where they can be seen from all angles as one enters the room, and always remain immaculate as my mournful old mother once said about herself.

Oh, where are they? I'll climb up on a high hill and look westwards upon my Ukraine. I'll look at the sky, crosscut with projectors, and I'll count the familiar stars. I'll recall the years of my youth, when I did not tread on the earth, but wafted over it, as it were; when I thought of making the world happy with my good deeds, just like any other boy; or mused over my beloved, composing words but fearful of direct action.

Many winds have blown over my head, which even now is quite gray. I no longer soar up to the heights, but keep my feet more firmly on the ground; and I begin to see things in the distance. My winged youth, whither hast thou fled? Fly hither to while away the hour with me! Sail on along the spring waters of the Desna and bring with you those words. Let me speak to you about the maiden Olesia and about nothing else. Then you can sail back along the water; sail on and do not ever return again to me, and I'll seek counsel about Olesia, and perhaps I'll even weep.

Cannons roar; darkness begins to fall.

In the dust and smoke it seems as if the sun is setting forever. Many kilometers of rye are burning up, and the spring corn has been trampled under foot now for several days by machines, by millions of stray horses and cows. The airplanes bombard the herds from the sky and grind them in the dust. Wounded horses fill the air with their unearthly neighing; while oxen roar from the odors of the wounded, dying by the thousands from foot and mouth disease and glanders. Order-bearers drive their lumbering pedigreed cattle, cry-

ing over them as they proceed along the roads with their children. The sheep keep limping along, and dust keeps rising upwards from the paths.

Thus the sons of Ukraine kept retreating eastwards.

Thousands of German corpses kept floating down the Desna; and parachutists kept falling from the skies into the willows. Tears and leave-taking were everywhere.

"Farewell, mother, farewell!"

"Farewell."

"Good luck to you; good luck . . ."

Beside the cool well near the village, as if in a song, there under the willow-tree by the old house, stood the maiden, Olesia, sad and quiet, just like all the other girls. She had already given the fighters all that she could; and all day long she had been handing out drinks of water from a pail, and she had ceased sobbing; there were no more tears to shed. Somehow her eyes had become dry, and they had brightened up again; her lips had swollen a little, and from under her eyes had fallen the shadows of sorrow, as did the disappearing wrinkle between her brows.

"What awaits me? What does my beauty avail me?" were the constant questions she asked herself as she kept gazing at the path the past two weeks.

At first it was the dust-laden trucks filled with various things that rode over the roads. On top of the things sat countless silent women from distant towns. At that time they still were the butt of much bantering. My deceased mother used to curse them as she spat after them, wishing them no good at all.

And the horrid drone of airplanes came down from the sky. It appeared as if the whole of Ukraine had broken into flames as she retreated eastwards. The cattle from beyond the Dnieper in the far distance started their trampling march along the pathways and over the rye and spring-corn, bellowing and mooing. The males, men and boys, had evacuated the village long ago, although some of them had returned home to drown their woe in liquor and sobbing, cursing everything on earth, including their own tribulations.

Olesia was horrified. She had never before in all her nineteen years experienced such terrible fright; indeed there had never been such horror since the world began.

"Oh woe is me, we're all doomed; this is the end!" moaned Aunt Motria loudly. "And you'll die, too, my dear orphan; and our whole family will be reduced to naught."

Olesia sobbed. The events of the past three days had finally broken her spirit. The army had begun to trudge along the road, dispirited, fatigued and silent. Then the fields started to burst into

flames. The air was filled with smoke and the roar of motors. The bombing planes began their work of devastation. They appeared from out of the sky like vultures and mowed the people down to the ground.

Olesia thought that this was the end of the world that her deceased grandmother had often frightened her with when she was a child.

Some strange shepherds were handing out mutton to the villagers. Meat and meat fats were being sold at next to nothing; but the old and young women were doling it out anyway. Nobody was saving anything, and nobody was being denied anything. Grain and other remnants of the *kolhosp* were being distributed, while work of any kind had ceased completely.

Olesia watched the road. She was not an ordinary girl. She was neat and beautiful, the pride of the whole community. When the day's work was done, she would sing like a bird near the house with a range that could be heard in the whole neighborhood, and in a manner that would put to shame any professional artist; and her embroidery was on display in glass cases on the walls of various European museums: in London at the Albert and Victoria Museum, in Paris, too, and in Muenchen and New York, although she was not aware of it at all. Olesia had learned her art from her deceased mother. By nature she was refined, talented, and artistic, inherently so; tactful, diligent and bred in a fine family. The light-minded youths of the locality were quite timid in her presence, and awed by her wondrous and unapproachable personality.

The fighters would come to drink and then silently go on their way. She asked them no questions, but looked penetratingly into their faces, reading sorrow and grief in each countenance. A greater, yes, a much greater grief than one can imagine, fell upon those people, depressing and numbing their sensibilities.

"So long, fair maiden; we wish you happiness," was the parting greeting of three artillerymen who had left the well. The mind of Olesia would be invaded with such a flood of untold bitter grief that she would choke up with emotion. Olesia looked behind her. The crowd had thinned out considerably. Here and there a few persons still remained.

"This is the tail-end," she thought. "Is this really the last of them?"

And now she decided on a plan of action, a plan unheard of before, unknown hitherto either in her own village or among her own people. It was a deed so out of the ordinary, the very thought of it made her heart grow cold and almost stop. It was a dangerous move inspired by the current extraordinary and unusually dangerous times. What motive impelled her to attempt this deed? From whence did the

urge come? Was it from the instinctive depths of her people? Was it from some semi-conscious wisdom, which like a hunch comes to the aid of a person in difficult times, when the intellect is on the wane and is no longer able to distinguish danger, to ask questions, while the lava of eruption keeps pouring down from above?

One of the remaining youthful tankmen who approached Olesia was Vasyl Nechai from the Kamianets district. He came to slake his thirst at the well. Vasyl was a handsome, powerfully built young man.

His clothing was encrusted with dust and sweat. His sleeve and the back of his shirt showed signs of having been burnt. His strong soiled hands, and the beads of sweat on his temples, and the wrinkle on his forehead belied his age.

"So long, young maiden, farewell," he uttered as he straightened up from the pail.

"Happy journey! But wait; Listen!" said Olesia quietly, gazing at the tank-driver with a deep, painful expression in her eyes. "I want to ask you something."

"Me? What do you want to ask me?" said the tankman, the unusual attitude of Olesia drawing him to her, momentarily.

"What's that, young maiden?"

"Listen," said Olesia, "spend the night with me. The shadows of evening have already fallen... Do it while it's still possible, do you hear?"

Setting the pail down, she approached him.

"I'm a girl. I know the Germans will be here tomorrow; they'll maul me around; they'll outrage me; that's what I'm afraid of. Therefore, please, let it be you... please, spend the night with me..."

Her last words were uttered excitedly, and then had fallen to a whisper.

"I can't take you," said Nechai, honestly and openly. "The day before yesterday I was fairly burning up under the bomb attacks. I assure you, I'm no hero."

"You're one of us."

"I'm retreating; I'm fleeing; I'm abandoning you. Understand my shame; I'm not a hero."

"You're unfortunate; I'm unfortunate, too. Think of my shame also. Look around and see what's going on. I want to remember you forever, and not those corpses floating down the Desna. Please remain."

Olesia looked at him with such faith and such painful supplication that he kept silent without taking his eyes off her. He looked at this strange, unknown and accidentally encountered young maiden in such a way as not to ever forget her afterwards, even for an hour, and

to carry her, this young maiden, in his heart through all the battles, and all the conflagrations.

The house smelled of old pictures, the lovage plant, the mint, and the faded sweet-rush, or some other equally pleasant odorous plant.

"Please be seated, sit down behind the table," said Olesia quietly, taking him by both hands. "Do you want something to eat; well, a little, anyway, please . . . Perhaps you'd like to wash up after your travels?"

Vasyl took his shirt off and began to wash himself over the tub. Olesia poured some cool water over his hands, then on his head. He closed his eyes. He felt the dust and sweat run off himself. It was a pleasant feeling; but when Olesia poured a jug of water down his spine he almost neighed from the sensuous titillation it gave him, although he was too shy to admit it or to show it.

She handed him a clean towel. He took his shoes off and, after washing his feet, he sat down on a bench near the table. Some kind of timid bashfulness still held him in leash without let up, but not so in her case. She, too, was bashful, yet not so bashful. She kept walking to and fro about the house, carrying him some food to the table. She was fulfilling what to her alone was an inscribed law.

They both ate together, avoiding reading desire in each other's eyes, or to see whether it was there; and they talked about this and that, being wary of silence. Sometimes their eyes met when the thread of their conversation was about to break; it was then that they ceased breathing or chewing their food. It seemed as if they were both becoming petrified with stony glances at each other. And when once it had appeared that breathing had ceased completely, Olesia's whole being had broken out in a groan, and she pressed her hands to her breast.

"Oh my God, what'll become of us now?"

When darkness had finally fallen on the house, she was the first to make a decision. She went over to the bed, and spent considerable time making it up with clean bed sheets, silently musing meanwhile. She opened up her mother's chest, taking new clothes out of it, pillow cases, towels, laying down two pillows side by side, and then going outside to bring in some flowers.

There were no singing bridesmaids. No one was sowing Olesia's bed with seeds of rye, or of wheat; and no heads were turned with intoxicating liquor; and the match-makers sang no subtle songs. Olesia made her own wedding preparations.

It was quiet in the house; it was only somewhere in the distance that heavy artillery was making its shattering noises; and far away an approaching airplane would announce its rumbling perrsence.

"Please do not look at me," begged Olesia, sighing heavily, as she donned a fresh blouse. Vasyl actually heard the pounding of his own heart.

"How my heart keeps beating!"

"And mine, too," said Olesia quietly. "Oh, come over here!"

She stood beside the bed in her embroidered blouse. The moon was shining directly on her through the window.

"What do they call you?"

"Vasyl."

"And I'm Olesia. Give me your hand."

She pressed his hand against her heart.

"I'll never forget you," she said, at once sadly and sternly; then she kissed Vasyl on the cheek timidly and with almost childish naivete.

"Now you tell me these same words."

Vasyl repeated the words. He hardly recognized his own voice, so low and solemn was the utterance; but a thrill ran through his whole being like a bell.

Suddenly the window panes began to rattle. A flight of airplanes drove dangerously over and near the housetop with a terrible roar. Bombs were being dropped with thunderous bursts as they struck somewhere beyond the village.

"Pardon me!" came a voice from somewhere in the distance.

"Oh my children, my dear, poor children!" complained another voice coming somewhere from the road.

They lay there for a long time in silence, listening involuntarily to the noises. Then Olesia explained to Vasyl that it was her Aunt Motria crying, for her four sons were recruited into the army.

And she was now bidding farewell to the fifth son, Ivan.

"So," sighed Vasyl; "how sweetly you smell of the lovage plant!"

"And when you breathe you smell of pickles or pickle leaves."

"And you!"

"And you . . ."

They gazed at each other with widely open eyes the whole night through. Gradually their timidity disappeared, and they continually found something new in each other, something wondrous and unexpected, some alluring and inexplicable thing. Each one of them felt a surge of youthful strength and the power of dominion and gratitude. At times it seemed that they had known each other from childhood, and they were enveloped by a joyous peace. But then some small incident would crop up to arouse them to the real circumstances of their unexpected meeting; and the reality of it would evoke fresh fluctuations and emotions in the midst of the miseries of the night, the bellowing of cattle, and the howling of the dogs.

"So they call you Vasyl?"

"Yes."

"Vasyl, Vasylyk, and I'm Olesia. Kiss me, Vasylyk; tell me once again that I'm pretty. I feel so happy."

"Then, why do you cry?"

"No, I'm not crying; I'm feeling just so fine!"

"My own, dear one, why do you cry?"

"Why? That's you crying; you won't forget me?"

"My dear one!"

"My dear one, too."

"My beautiful one."

"My beautiful one, too! Come to me!"

Again they smiled at each other out of sheer delight and sorrow. They believed, and they did not believe, that they were man and wife.

"Do you know, Vasylyk," Olesia whispered to him, "if we happen to survive, and if we shall live together, we'll never speak a cross word to each other during the rest of our lives; now what do you think of that?"

"That's right."

"Is that right?"

"That's right."

"We'll live so well, like nobody else in the world. Is that not so?"

"That's right."

"You won't forget me?"

"No."

"You'll find me and win me back?"

"I'll find you and win you back."

"Come to me, come!"

It seemed as if centuries of common popular love had met, which sowed children on our fertile land; as if centuries of woeful leave-takings of the Ukrainian maiden, the Ukrainian woman, celebrated in the sad folklore of the people, had come together.

It began to dawn. The shadows in the house now softened to lighter tint, and each farewell now wiped its own eyes in the vestibule behind the door.

"Repeat some of those fine words to me again, Vasylyk," begged Olesia, as she pressed against Vasyl's shoulder. The night is now waning; it'll soon be time for leave-taking."

"Listen, Olesia."

They spoke long throughout the dawn. They joined their simple love with a spiritual unification of extraordinary strength, which indeed surprised both of them. It seemed as if they had matured during that night, and that their souls had risen to great heights of

perspicuity and understanding. It appeared, too, as if the implacable inevitability of parting had enlightened their emotions, lending an especial beauty to them.

During this night things began to resolve themselves before them, as if some new insights into matters had been given to them to see things more clearly and more penetratingly; and even Vasyl had found words in himself which he thought he had never been able to utter, or to find hitherto.

"No, I'll never forget you, my dear wife. I'll never forget you, nor your home, nor the well beneath the willow tree, nor your village. I'm abandoning you in our own land; but what is our land, what is even life without you?!"

"Vasyl," moaned Olesia.

"Farewell; my soul is on fire . . ."

"The day has finally arrived," said Olesia, as she turned around in fear.

"What'll you be thinking of me, Olesia?"

"I shall try to save my breed. I begged you to give me hope . . . Don't tarry, Vasyl."

"I'll return to you; I'll return. I'll come to you through fire, barbed wire, everything on earth. No matter what you'll be, I'll return to you; whether you're black, or sick, or crippled by the enemy; and even though you're gone gray from grief and tears, and your tresses have become white; and even though you'll dig trenches against me, and twine German barbed wire to keep me out, sow wheat for the bread of the enemy, you'll be in my mind beautiful, just as you are now beautiful. And may the hands and the tongues of those who try to think ill of you shrivel up. And if in your grief you should curse me and those who discarded you and as yet have not died in the Dnieper, you must know that I've forgiven you beforehand, for such is now our fate; and so you should forgive me," said the excited Vasyl, wondering at his own unusual words.

"I forgive you," said Olesia, "but you just find me."

"I'll find you," said Vasyl, as he embraced her with his great strong arms. "If it thus happens that I'll not find you, because I've been killed, Olesia, or I've been blown up somewhere, perhaps even by the demolition bombs in my own tank, so that nothing is left of me but my scattered bones in the fields, which may not even be found for burial, I'll still return to you. I'll become a bronze statue in your village, just over there beyond this window! I've understood, Olesia. There's only one path back to you, just one road, the road of heroism. One must be a hero and hate the enemy. Olesia," said Vasyl, thoughtfully; "how unnecessarily sluggish was my first appearance at your home!"

"I've forgiven you."

"I see. I've observed the majesty of your womanly soul. You, Olesia, have unveiled a world before me."

"Come to me, you poor fellow, come! . . ."

Did they, or did they not sleep? At times they both fell into something that resembles sleep, but this was not sleep. They did not cease to sense each other, as it were, and to feel as if they were both flying in each other's embrace over the blue sea and were listening to the intonation of distant bells and the gurgling of spring rivulets.

They parted in the early morning, long before the sun rose, in the garden near the stile, when the dew was still moist on the ground.

Olesia did not follow Vasyl into the faraway country. She did not possess either any goods, nor a compass, nothing for a road trip. What she had was a house, land, flowers, and the precious graves of her parents.

Vasyl soon disappeared amidst the beaten rye.

He moved swiftly and easily, and with a clear head. In fact it seemed as if he were flying, with no feeling of the earth beneath himself, ready for gigantic deeds. He understood the necessity for haste to the fighting forces of his friends, and the need for forgetting about the rest of the world in the name of life and the mortal struggle on the battlefield with the enemy. But Olesia sobbed out her century-old song on the stile, returning in a devastated frame of mind to her home. And she became like one petrified, paying little heed to the shelling of the village, or how the remaining fighters were retreating from the field of battle, or how German enslavement slithered into the village.

"My heart, auntie, is like a stone. Now they can do whatever they please with me," she said, speaking resignedly to her aunt who had come to mourn over their common fate.

Olesia sat as if in a daze, emotionlessly contemplating the pillow on which there still remained a trace of Vasyl's head.

Leonid Mosendz

HOMO LENIS

*Translated by * * **

Leonid Mosendz was born in 1897 in Mohyliv Podilsky in the family of a town civil servant. He was a chemical engineer, a doctor of technical science, and a prominent poet and prose writer. Besides several collections of poetry Leonid Mosendz was the author of a series of stories which were collected in such editions as, *Homo Lenis*, 1937; *Revenge*, 1939, and published also in separate journals and newspapers during his life and after his death. He was also the author of a great unfinished novel *The Last Prophet* dealing with the armed conflict of the Jews with the Roman occupational forces before the birth of Christ, the hero of which was Jehovkhanan, later John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah Christ. Mosendz, too, was the author of the autobiographical novel *The Seeding*. Mosendz emigrated from Ukraine after the end of the the Ukrainian War of Liberation and, having completed his studies in Czechoslovakia, he remained there, and later moved to Austria, where he came down with a serious case of tuberculosis. He was transferred to a sanatorium in Switzerland where, after an operation, he died on October 13th, 1948. The liberation struggle of his people was the subject of his works as lyric poet, prose writer, and publicist. The themes of his stories were taken from the armed conflict of the Ukrainians with the Bolshevik occupants, and this too is the theme of the story *Homo Lenis* included in this anthology. In the story *The Return of Michael Smiles* Mosendz pictures an American soldier Michael Smiles who, having found himself in Ukraine, joins the liberation movement of the Ukrainian freedom fighters, and having been taken prisoner by the Bolsheviks, chooses death by shooting as a descendant of the former Ukrainian Kozak — Michael Smilsky. The unfinished novel *The Last Prophet* finally was published in Toronto with the aid of his friends. During his university years and his stay in sanatoria Mosendz made many translations from English and French literature.

HOMO LENIS

"Do you wish to hear a definition of so-called civilized man? Very well, here it is: Homo Lenis — the man of obedience..." And David let his gaze fall persuasively on each of us.

To tell, or rather sententiously utter, paradoxes of greater or lesser value, was David's greatest pleasure and even his privilege, which we did not gainsay because, first of all, David was the invariable head of the Club and he did not have to wait his turn to say something without reservation. Secondly, to sit silently at the "Second-Hand Bachelor Inn" wasn't much of a treat. After a paradox would come David's explanations and motivations. That is why we came here.

As a matter of fact the inn was called "At the Bachelor's," but David preferred to name it "At the Second-Hand Bachelor's." Even in such a case we did not beg to differ; for who would go to an inn between eight o'clock and midnight, if not second-hand bachelors like us? At least that was the conclusion of envious tongues, not connected with the Club.

Having assured himself in his own opinion that the sudden assertion had registered, David proceeded to motivate it.

"Can you cite one instance from the past when humanity allowed itself to be so meekly, tacitly, and so passively, I would say, *en masse*, murdered, as during the present century?.. The Great World War!.. Encompassing all nations, like sheep to the slaughterhouse, like passengers to a booking office. And the more civilized the nation the more humility it showed. Why, they even queued for the carnage..."

"The most culturally backward nations were the first to drop out of the war. You will say that they haven't been pacified, even now? That is another question. To be sure, they started another slaughter, but in that helter-skelter melee there was more, yes, considerably more, individual hatred and ambition than in the European War. In that War the mutual annihilation disclosed a strictly systematic, mechanized senselessness and disorder on a universal scale.

"But that's not the point. I merely wish to stress the high degree of organization and mechanization of destruction so characteristic of the Great War. I wish to point out that the revolution broke out just in the middle of that planned mutual annihilation. Thus I see another proof of my definition of civilized man: humility and

obedience throughout his entire life, beginning with fashions and ending with death...

"Take a wild animal. It feels instinctively... it runs away or fights a dangerous foe to the end. A wolf will lie down on his back, and even while he's bathing in blood, will bare his teeth; a bear will push his posterior into a thicket and defend himself to the last. But even the bear is not much! A mouse will start biting when, half-squashed, it's being pulled out of a trap. The sheep alone bleats for a while and then puts out its neck... For it's a domestic, civilized animal! Where in the world do you find wild sheep? Przewalski, I believe, saw them once, but even so, his eyes were probably blurred by alcohol...

"And thus the reason why the whole epic of war, and all subsequent revolutions with their terror, have hit civilization so hard was because it was founded on humility, and the victims had grown too accustomed to legality, to order, and to a system. Without a word of protest they arranged themselves in line ready for the Chekist's bullet and the machine gun. Whew!" David spat with distaste.

"A civilization which allows itself to be so easily destroyed, which breeds such men-sheep — I would not even regard as a civilization. But I know one really civilized man who died in a very uncivilized manner. I'll tell about the case.

"Do you know Kras? Of course you know it... A big railroad station, a great railway center... Always a Sodom of locomotives, cars, points, smoke and traffic. Looking at all that network of intricately woven railroad life, I've often marvelled how it could be directed. I marvel even now; but I know that it is directed...

"At Kras, one of these directors was Engineer Kahler. His outward demeanor, it seemed, would give him the right to a responsible post, — the mighty stature of a miner, penetrating eyes, clear-cut features, a deep voice... and in addition, intellectual qualities of no mean order.

"We were acquainted. And if at times I was amazed at the systematization of railway business, he'd only smile and mutter convincingly: 'Organization, system, brains...'

"And if the system were disturbed and the brains failed? What then?

'It won't be disturbed! We'll hold it...'

"Who the 'we' were Kahler never explained. From the firm tone of his voice I guessed it must have been those hundreds of disciplined and orderly employees who keep the wheels of organized mechanical life going, holding, maintaining and feeding the vital arteries of industry and not allowing them to perish... not for the sake of

some noble ideals, but simply proceeding from orderly habits, such as the habit of execution and maintenance at a steady pace of a pre-arranged mechanism, and the habit of outward civilization.

"You, too, will remember how the tempo of railroad activity had been speeded up in wartime. Even I, who know so little about it, had noticed its mad acceleration. It was at this time that I chanced to meet Kahler. He had not changed at all, unless it was that he now worked harder and was somehow pleased with his work, very much pleased.

" 'Just imagine,' he used to say, 'what pleasure I get out of it. To see and know that the amount of work will increase, that it has become complicated, and yet to feel that there is enough strength left to cope with an even more increased pace, and to have it still under control and to be able to direct it, — ah, the realization of all this is what gives me the greatest pleasure.'

"And then Kahler disappeared for days, lost perhaps in building up the administration. Things eventually began to snap with such a bang that even the dead turned over in their graves. You remember the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918? You remember how the horde of beasts had gone wild in their protest and the brutal way in which they they had run rough-shod over humility, order, regularized mechanism, rushing ilke the tide from west to east... every beast to his lair... and how Kahler's self-assurance had begun to waver?

" 'What will happen now?' I asked. 'Your machine is creaking, the wave will sweep it away!'... 'Perhaps... it'll wash it away together with me... They won't find me humble and meekly acquiescent, but fighting mad! I won't give in! Let them try!'

"And they did try! During the last two months of 1917, Kras was simply deluged with a stream of humanity homeward-bound. They demanded cars, locomotives, dispatch of trains out of turn; everything forthwith, everything as soon as possible, so that they could leave that land, scarred by spade and shells.

"The set-up mechanism disintegrated before your very eyes. The news reached Kras that at one or another junction ferocious masses threatened to take over the job of their own transportation, if the administration would not satisfy their demands. They assembled trains by themselves and ran them; and the over-loaded convoys pushed on without any order or system, like snakes awakened from their sleep.

"Machines were ruined, axles were burned, cars and trains ran down embankments and the regular administrators on the job were helpless, and powerless in the face of the many-headed beast that had laid itself on its back and had shown its teeth.

"The beast had even tasted blood. They learned at Kras of railroad administrators being paid off at various junctions. The intelligence received told of men hanged on lamp-posts, shot, or simply crushed to death, or burned alive in locomotive furnaces. Kahler grew thin, but he firmly held the railroad by heroic efforts, the personnel under his control, and withstood the wave that was flooding his domain.

"There were still no excessive incidents at Kras; its personnel still held the helm of business in their hands . . . and the mob pushing east, even before arriving at the station, knew that at Kras there were still traces of the hateful order, and that behind this order stood one Kahler, of the old regime, an engineer . . .

"Kahler's name was known all along the line, and the mob that flooded the corners of his station in gray waves hated it, but they obeyed the regulations; and so trains from Kras departed as the need arose. They were not overloaded, and so the machines did not deteriorate. But the mobs bided their time, venting their lawlessness at endless meetings with implied threats to Kahler.

"As for the wretched, frightened railroad revolutionary committee, it always backed Kahler in critical situations; and Kahler, too, was successful in calming down numerous delegations which came asking for trains from various staffs, regiments, batteries and divisions. But the mood of the masses grew more explosive every day. There remained but a few days before Christmas. One meeting followed another; threats against Kahler were getting more vicious. But no one dared take an active step against him. When a meeting was at its highest tempest, Kahler usually could be found in its midst, fearless and adamant. His mighty stature alone, and the deep, convincing tone of his voice, would as a rule produce such appeased shouts as, 'he's right, he's right.'

"It was on December the 24th. I happened to walk into the station, and the first acquaintance I met was Kahler. He was hurrying somewhere and hastily shook hands with me. 'I am going to the freight yard. A transport from Dolyna has arrived there. In Dolyna they smashed up the station, killed the stationmaster who would not dispatch their train out of turn, and then came here. Now they are all being lined up. They have called me out on the phone. Everyone on the platform is frightened. I am in a hurry . . .'

"I wanted to stop Kahler, but he rushed ahead a few steps, made for the cars, and was soon out of sight. I also hied ahead, by a longer route, to the platform.

"The long, monotonous freight platform loomed gray with soldiers. From the menacing and vociferous mob the breeze wafted a mixed odor of human sweat, boots, moisture, overcoats,

bread and pipe tobacco — the characteristic odors of a concentrated mass of military men.

"My semi-military, proletarian appearance was much to my advantage for I could move freely in the crowd without attracting any attention. I was under the impression from the start that something extraordinary was about to take place; the beast had tasted blood and wanted more of it. All that was needed was a signal. So far, they continued their deliberations.

"Some strong, huge Siberian, still bearing the remnants of old insignia on his shoulder pieces, stood on an ammunition box, haranguing the crowd with all the slimy malice and senseless fury of soap-box oratory. It both nauseated and terrified me.

"You'll remember similar meeting speeches, a bit of everything: three hundred years of blood sucking... repressions... common pot... workers.. revolution and anti-revolution... practically all the slogans and appeals common to the angry, primitive man who does not know and can not choose the proper words and phrases to express his subconscious fiery desires... So he jumbles anger with naivete, crazy pathos with ennui, obscenity with family tenderness...

"The mob, however, reacted to the speaker's words. Through his eyes, they saw their distant domiciles from which some many-headed ogre, some devilish, monstrous anti-revolution had held them back so long, thousands of miles away, and even here, on the way back, was putting obstacles in their way... Already, accompanied by the general roar of 'he's right, he's right,' the resolution was being adopted to go to the depot and take a locomotive by force. Already the mob, brandishing their rifles, swayed in a motion, when Kahler jumped upon the box. He was dressed in his black railroad coat, with insignia on his hat, clean-shaven, a personification of will-power and discipline, so hateful to the frenzied crowd.

"The mob stopped, fell silent for a moment, and then erupted with the active volcano of a long dormant and suppressed desire for blood; they recognized Kahler. I heard his first words: 'Comrades, I...' Then Kahler's voice was lost in the thundering avalanche of revolutionary hatred. One would have required a thunderstorm to drown the noise of that crowd.

"Another word or two reached me from Kahler's side. And suddenly, in a short push, the mob swayed toward the box and Kahler vanished.

"As fast as the mob leaped, so it stopped suddenly. Drawn inside, I found myself by a lamp post near the platform. The ammunition box, and a few smaller ones, too, were transferred to the post. At

once a score of ferocious hands and arms yanked Kahler up onto the box. A human ape, clad in an overcoat, with a rope between his teeth, began climbing a post just above him.

"I stood there, petrified. The depressing realization of helplessness, and the shame of impotence, weighed heavily on my mind... But Kahler just stood there on the scaffold, erect and immobile, looking haughtily over the heads of the mob. Only his face went pale and his eyes became larger. A thin stream of blood was running down his chin onto his ripped and rumpled overcoat.

"The ape in the overcoat let down the rope. The Siberian swung the noose around Kahler's neck. The ape was pulling up the rope. The mob, meanwhile, kept hurling the most abominable insults at the victim... I lost all feeling in my body, and I no longer was aware of my surroundings, but I did not take my eyes off Kahler.

"All that remained to do was to knock the small boxes from under Kahler's feet, and on the rope they would... dangle...

"The mob was roaring... It seemed that Kahler was petrified.

"The soldier from Siberia jumped off the trunk. His face was on a level with Kahler's feet. All he had to do was to extend his hands toward the boxes, — but then the incredible happened...

"Kahler's face suddenly came to life, as though a galvanic current had flashed through him. In one quick movement his right leg was raised, and in a terrific last effort struck forward at the Siberian's face...

"I tell you, it was but an instant, a second... and a loud crushing was heard... Blood squirted, and the huge Siberian spun around and sat down... and on the taut rope swung Kahler's body...

"That, gentlemen, was the death of a civilized man... was it not?"

Gregory Kosynka

FAUST

*Translated by * * **

Gregory Kosynka, with the pen name of Strilets (the archer), was born in 1899 in the village of Shcherbanivka, Kiev district, in the family of a poor peasant. As a youth he worked as a peasant laborer and then secured employment in a sugar factory. In 1914 he went to Kiev where he acquired his education, while working as a clerk in various offices. In 1918-19 he took part in the armed struggle in Ukraine. Then in 1919 he published his first prose work in the newspaper *Struggle, In the Beet Fields*. His first collection of stories was published in 1922 under the title, *Against the Golden Gods*. Next appeared the collection, *Among the Growing Rye*, 1926; *Politics*, 1927; *Selected Stories*, 1928; *Heart*, 1929; *Compasses*, 1930. The journal *Life and Revolution* published Kosynka's novel *Harmony* but the work was never published in book form. Having come out of a village, and having taken part in the armed struggle of the Ukrainian peasantry with the occupational Communist regime, Gregory Kosynka in his short stories writes not only in the same impressionistic vein as Stefanyk, Cheremshyna and Kotsiubynsky, but just as they did, he, too, became a poet of the Ukrainian village and of the revolutionary period. The heroes of his stories are for the most part Ukrainian peasants, insurgents and deserters, implacable and absolutely dedicated to the struggle against the Soviet occupants. For this inexorable stand for the insurrectionists Kosynka naturally came into conflict with the Soviet official critics. When Paul Postyshev became the secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Kosynka was arrested in 1934 on the charge of "organizing plans for terroristic acts against the Soviet authorities," something which in fact he did not do, but he was shot along with many other Ukrainian writers and workers. Kosynka's unfinished story *Faust*, taken from his immortal heritage, is included in this anthology. It was first published in the journal *Ukrainian Sowing*, 1942, after the retreat of the Bolsheviks from Ukraine.

FAUST

When down through the ages the last flickering star begins to burn out, my constant thought and painful agony will keep on flaring; and on a dark strip of the sky, emblazoned in blood-red letters, will appear the prophetic words of Franko:

"Oh my people, tortured, disunited,
Like a paralytic on the cross-roads,
Regarded askance a scabby nondescript!"

In your name, Faust from Podilia, I write the following lines. Let ensuing generations recall your great name; and let them kneel down before your tribulations.

My dear, my very dear native Faust! Of course you wouldn't understand that such terrible words as "national tragedy" would be alien and unintelligible to you; you're that simple, even unto primitiveness. However, before your abrupt and terrible death, you were able in your cell No. 12 to draw a small coffin with a tiny cross on it, or rather under it, to draw it with your fingernail on the wall, and your Christian as well as family name: "Prokip Koniushyna." That's all.

It was on a frosty Christmas Eve that they hauled Koniushyna into our cell from his own prison "secret chamber." He was grayish in appearance, and looked something like Faust in the opera of that name.

Koniushyna's lips were swollen. He was going through the motions of catching and swallowing the warm and heavy air of the cell; then making strange gesticulations as if he were about to leap into some abyss.

The gesticulating villager looked the group over, smiling at them gently, whispering something meanwhile as he sat down on the edge of the plank bed. Then, to the amusement of the crowd, he made the following statement:

"Well, what do you know; what a story! We've got people here, too!"

The cell greeted Koniushyna's sally with a burst of laughter. This character, it was decided, would have to be initiated into the ways of the prison.

Officer Klientsov, who relished putting a scare into such recruits, looked Koniushyna over with mock intentness, twisting his mouth with grave irony and curiosity:

"Bandit?" he asked.

Koniushyna made no answer. Then the officer, unable to refrain from further bantering, continued poking fun at him:

"They've brought in Faust. If we stay here a bit longer, we'll see Goethe. And so, my merry little fellow, for what sins did you get yourself hauled into this cell, eh?"

Koniushyna was in no hurry with an answer; he turned his weary eyes on the slouched form of Klientsov, and all the others, and then with a touch of malice, he directed a question to the officer:

"And isn't it all the same to you?"

From a corner near the window there roared a hoarse voice:

"Right you are! At-a-boy, Faust! That's handing it to him!.. Has he asked you why you've lost your shoulder-straps?" said the same voice from the corner to Klientsov.

Klientsov snapped back snarlingly, but no one took his part. It is true that the new name with which he dubbed Koniushyna caught the fancy of everyone. It didn't matter that Koniushyna didn't get the point of the name; and most likely this was the first time that he had ever heard the great name of Goethe.

Faust from Podilia was not yet sure whether they were laughing at his boorishness or impoverishment, or because they were siding with him against Klientsov; thus he once again contemplated them with his large, gray eyes, noting especially the sarcastic smile on the lips of Klientsov. Nevertheless, somehow, he had the feeling that he, Faust from Podilia, was being supported by the crowd.

Thus he solemnly pulled out from his pocket a greasy tobacco pouch, set it down on his white tatter-covered trousers, laughing good-naturedly:

"Let's smoke! Down with worries!" he said. "It's all right here with you, sure... so good that I'm hardly able to describe it: warm, cosy, and mainly — there are people here... The place where I was..."

And this was as far as he had gone with the remark.

"Let such goodness be the eternal lot of those snakes!" roared the abetting voice from the corner again. Faust raised his eyes in amazement, wondering whether this remark might be a boner. Perhaps not; but it was better not to do any jabbering, because he knew by experience that prison did not favor the talkers. Thus with subtle, characteristic diplomacy, peculiar only to the peasants, he began to make excuses for himself:

"Oh sure; I say, you're having it good; it's warm here, and you have plank beds..."

"S-sh! What a terrible pain! What an accursed affliction! God damn this painful tooth, anyway!"

A strange person, unknown to Faust, began running around in felt boots. From his language and origin he appeared to be a Pole, cursing his teeth, as he kept spitting a thin layer of saliva from his mouth. When Mr. Yatskiivsky — that was his name — finally stood in front of Faust, begging him to roll a cigarette, he offered the following advice:

"Oh sure, the teeth; I know. If we take some of the first extraction in the distillation of brandy, *samohon-pervak* (moonshine), you could put some *makhorka* (tobacco) in a fern leaf, moisten it and then apply it to the tooth; then, believe me, the pain would disappear immediately; I know."

But Yatskiivsky took that advice as an insult.

"What'd you say, disappear? Save your advice for your own father, peasant! Do you understand? Have you got a father? Disappear — the idea!"

But to Koniushyna there was no evidence of intent to insult: his advice, well, it was just advice. As a matter of fact it seemed a bit ludicrous to see such a shabby "Mr." in his felt boots putting on a display of righteous indignation as he flitted from corner to corner in the cell. Hunching his shoulders, Koniushyna lost himself in contemplation of this comically proud "Mr."

But it must be admitted that Mr. Yatskiivsky with his show of honor was really an object of mirth to the inmates of the cell: what with his *konfederatka* military cap, Austrian overcoat with white eagles, imposing whiskers, and the kind of pride that only a Klientsov could puncture with his jocular badgering:

"On Mr. Yatskiivsky," he said with gravity, "even a louse does not crawl futilely... Why, you may ask? It's always looking around for the historical boundary lines lost by the Poles..."

Yatskiivsky naturally resented these words, but there was no stopping Klientsov.

"Mr. Yatskiivsky," said Klientsov, utterly oblivious of the resentment "yearns for the brilliant past of Stepan Batory... And as for the lice, I've heard him question one 'blonde' with my own ears, 'And what province does my lady come from? From Belvedere?'"

This, I repeat, was a usual detail of day by day life, unworthy of serious consideration; for it was a topic of our daily wrangle. I merely mention this bagatelle in the event of someday being called on to paint a picture of Klientsov as the propagator of great state chauvinism.

Later on, as Faust slept by my side, he spoke as he dreamed of the orchards in white bloom, and of his green *Podilia*... Spring, he said, was often the subject of his dreams.

We interpreted his dreams as meaning that soon Faust would be working behind his plow, that soon he would be harrowing his fields; and if the color green were of the essence of his dreams, it clearly indicated that he was to live. And the village, too, came to him in his dreams, it glowed in the smoke, in white outline, replete with cherry blossoms; and when one looked into this outline, the smell of the fields came wafting therefrom, the summer fallow, too; it seemed to smell of last year's manure; and the birds in the high heavens announced their singing presence.

"Such a dream," asked Faust, "what does it mean?"

I didn't give Faust an immediate answer, for at the moment I had been listening curiously to the conversation between Malamet and Mr. Yatskivsky:

"So you've got a toothache," said Malamet, "well, I'm not protesting. Well, let it be so; everyone has his own malady! But when I have stomach cramps, when blood keeps trickling from me, when ... and you revile me; well, I ... what must I do then?"

"What a comedy, by God!" said Faust with peasant sincerity. "I've been dreaming such a pleasant dream, and here they are: quarreling over a *parasha*.*"

"Get up!"

In the hollow corridors guards were now whistling, keys were clanging; and Storozhuk, notorious throughout the whole prison, blessed us all and Christ, too, with a vile curse. The sleepy cell inmates got up, threw their bedclothes hurriedly into a corner, expectorating all over the place, then lining up in military double-file, for such was the custom — to rid the prisoner of a strong spirit of protest, or at least to reduce him to the status and condition of Kononchuk, who long ago had lost the image of a man.

Now a few words about Kononchuk:

He was an ignorant and impoverished villager, a villager who signed the acts of prosecution with three crosses, and then sometimes afterwards knelt down on his knees in the prison at the sight of a piece of bread. The vermin, then, that is found on such a one as Kononchuk, is so great that it sometimes appears as if his flesh were like pitted soap ... And the morning review is completed — always short and somewhat too business-like — Kononchuk sits down, as Klientsov says, "to read the paper:" the "blondes" have taken such a grip on his flesh that Kononchuk is hard put to it to scrape his bones with a thick peasant shirt and loosen their hold and drop them on the wooden floor ... The "siftings" fall down — such vermin!

Faust makes a wry face, just like a small child; and it appears that he'll soon be sobbing; but he merely sighs and wags his head

* *parasha* — slop pail (in prison jargon).

and, wishing to help Kononchuk, he grabs one of the "blondes" by the legs, sets it down on the floor, and crushes it viciously with his shoe.

"That's just what she deserves!" Faust keeps mumbling. "Oh Kononchuk, it seems your "blonde" is not from Belvedere! She does not crackle, under the shoe like Yatskivsky's louse. His louse is an intelligent one, a high-brow one... Is that not so, *hospodyn** lieutenant?"

Following such a comment, and especially such a blunt and unceremonious question on the part of Faust to Klientsov, I'm inclined to doubt that he is such a blind tiller of the soil... But then, who is he?

Klientsov whiles away time by telling vile jokes in the Polish language (he had spent some time in Polish prisons, where from patronage sources he was supplied with white bread, sometimes butter, too, coffee and books — a professorial library, as it were), contemplating Faust at the same time with hatred and suspicion.

"It's too bad that they didn't lock you up with the *blatni*, says Klientsov; "just too bad! Your bandit spirit would soon be knocked out of you."

But Faust just keeps smiling blandly:

"So what about the *blatni*?" he says. "We're everywhere — we, and not you... But to meet an officer, and one with a medal at that, is a different story, Klientsov. Really, how can those barbarians hold an innocent person for five months?... Now really, you must agree, this is not a cultured thing to do."

Who is this Faust? I'm beginning to have my doubts that he's the common type of "Uncle" from Podilia that he pretends to be.

At this point, so some Galician writers say, a quarrel usually starts between Faust and Klientsov, replete with abuse; but on this day they somehow managed to get along without it. Nevertheless Klientsov did get in a dig:

"Five months, *gospodin*** Faust, is not death, but you'll definitely land in an 'earthly committee' with which to save your independence."

"You dirty scum!" said Faust in brief derision. But our sullen, *kartser*-fearing village-chairman restrained both of them with a short curse and then, after having reviewed all corners of the cell, shouted an order to fall in line, double file. Then there was the usual visitation of the prison authorities, and a new-style and an old-style inspection.

Even in the distance, far away from the cell, there now could be heard the clinking of spurs. It was well known to us that the

* *hospodyn* — Ukrainian equivalent of Mister or Sir.

** *gospodin* — Russian equivalent of *hospodyn*.

chief of Corps No. 6, a pimply, bluish-bay, cynical and insolent man named Beiser, wore brilliant cavalry spurs. The Jewish prisoners nicknamed him "mad dog." It was his custom when he visited our cell, first to inspect Kononchuk's tatters, twisting his features into a hideous mien as if he had just seen a nest of vipers, and not the bed of Kononchuk.

He spat on the floor, although, according to the instructions, spitting on the floor was definitely prohibited. Beiser switched his dry, greenish, somewhat ram-like eyes to Faust, whom he now questioned incessantly. No day without his singling him out in the line with the question:

"And what were you accused of?"

We all waited with bated breath for the answer to this question as we were all anxious to know what the charge against this mysterious Faust was. To sit out for three months in "solitary" was a task that few could survive . . . And yet this very same Prokip Koniushyna pretended to be — there was no doubt — a naive villager from Podilia.

They looked intently — and so did Beiser — into Faust's granite-gray eyes, in which deep, deep down there was stored hatred and contempt not only for Beiser but all of us; the kind of hatred which sometimes would send the sparks flying from the pupils. It was then that Faust's hands would tremble from anger but he was always able to control his emotions. Thus his quiet answer to the question:

"For what? Aha, insurrection."

This reply upset Beiser; he was unable to contain his anger. He kept drawing his hand out from under his officer's overcoat, stamping his foot and shaking his hand as if he were about to strike Faust full force in the face.

"Bandit! God damn you, anyway!" shrieked Beiser furiously.

This was the point of raging fury that we prisoners feared the most. We were certain that Faust, in spite of his run-down condition, would return the blow; or what is still worse that he'd take a bite right through his throat.

But Faust kept silent. All he did was to bare his teeth, his strong, white and even teeth; and the malice, which had registered so sharply on his peasant features, had merely concentrated on his dry but once succulent lips, congealing there, it seemed, along with his spit.

He swallowed it, smiling crookedly and looking at the floor. Beiser left Faust alone for a moment, looking the rest of us over sternly, curiously, as if we were all highly dependent on him. Klientsov, gloating, evidently, over the "hot bath" Faust was getting, burst out laughing; but it did not escape Beiser's notice:

"Hey, there! . . . What's up with you? Why're you neighing and gloating?" Klientsov straightened up to his full height and having ground his teeth at the derogatory singular "*ty*," he countered angrily:

"Prisoners are people, too."

"Twenty-four hours in the *kartser*,"* Beiser ordered dully.

And Klientsov, without cigarettes and bread, was led out somewhere from the cell.

Beiser then turned to Faust:

"Where is your bunk?" he asked.

"The third one."

The chief then gave Faust's bed a thorough search, also his bag, towel, embroidered with a cranberry color design . . . He was already to leave the cell, when he suddenly started to read the scratched-in words: "Prokip Koniusshyna," and at the bottom: "Christ will Rise, Hallelujah!"

"Christ will Rise — that's yours, too?" asked Beiser ironically.

"For me He won't rise . . . What do you want?" was Faust's reply.

"Three days in the *kartser* . . . Ventilate the bedstead."

Beiser went mad.

"Who dropped this cigarette butt?" he yelled out loudly. "Cups, glasses, spoons, knives . . . Inspect them; take them away! . . . Here, you, orderly; fold up the beds for three days!"

"Yes, sir!"

"No parcels to this cell for this weekend . . . you've forgotten the cigarette but . . . the twenty-four hour *kartser* . . . protest and banditry."

A reply from one of the cheap mensheviks or ukapists:

"Of course it used to be that in every prison there were live people . . ."

Somewhere beyond the door of our cell, in the empty corridors, tinkled the cranberry-colored bell on the spurs of chief Beiser, Corps No. 6.

The ancient *kartser*, in which Faust sat, within its own stone walls, saw and heard many a tragedy: people gone mad, suicides by hanging, heads being knocked against walls — all there for the old *kartser* to see and hear.

It was now green with mould, because of old age and human tears; in the corners there were trails of water which, in the winter, when frozen, rendered the floor quite slippery.

Faust related his none-too-profound history as follows:

* *kartser* — solitary confinement.

"When Beiser," said he, "threw me into this mouldy hole I begged him to take me out and shoot me right away . . . What reason, I ask you, did I have to rot on a stump, when I knew what my fate would be better than did Beiser?"

"I cursed him obscenely to his face and, would you believe it, I felt all the better for it . . . I reviled him, not because I love cursing, but because something so inexplicable happened to me, which even up till now I've not been able to explain intelligently.

"My head burned with fever, and the prison-wall, just imagine, our great prison breaks loose from its groundings and soars high, high over the forests . . .

"And I remember well my dispute with Beiser: You lie, I tell him — let there be prisons everywhere, *kartsers* and sentences, but here you have a good sign: one of them has broken out from the ground; it soars. And do you know, at first I began to really laugh. Then suddenly I was seized with fear: Look what they've done with me in seven months! That idiot all for naught mentioned Faust and the legends — I'm still alive, although my history, too, deserves a legend.

"I know, there's no life for me any more, no return to life — I'm spitting up blood . . . It's strange but a poet, a very sick poet, wrote these two lines in the *kartser*:

The backward village rages,

While Ukraine keeps spitting blood . . .

"Backward village . . . Here in the *kartser* I scoffed at the words of the investigator: where did you meet for the conference? Where, at whose place?"

Faust pressed his cheek against the cool wall, whispering quietly: "At my sister's, do you hear?" Then he straightened up and quoted from some philosopher: "To rule over slaves, one must change them to automatons — that, for the most part, is the purpose of all despots . . ."

"So you must understand," he said to the wall, "Prokip Koniushyna will never be a traitor. I'll perish, and so will many thousands like myself; but I'll never sell my own sister out. Nor will I anyone else. I'll never become a Judas."

Faust began to cry . . . It appeared to him the image of the investigator Odnorogov was still there, talking to him:

Says Odnorogov to me: "You, Koniushyna, are of the working class, a proletarian; you've had an education; after all, you're not just a Hrytsko or an Omelko . . . So why and from what motives did you join the criminal society of freedom fighters? Why did you take part in the insurrection?"

Koniushyna answered:

"Oh, yes... I went, but I had to; for when they set fire to Hrytsko's and Omelko's houses that's the only time they remember their pitch-forks and dignity, but as for me, an intelligent man as you said yourself, I should look my enemy consciously straight in the eye..."

"That's for him, just as if..." said Faust, laughing up his sleeve and handing him a cigarette: "Smoke," said Faust, "ours, but tell me where did yours disappear to, where were the bandits?"

Odnorogov leaned his head over the table. He raised his hand and struck him full force in the teeth.

Faust remembered how he had bitten his hand to the very bone, so that it was only by injections that the life of Odnorogov was saved. For this incident Faust was subsequently incarcerated in one of the sub-departmental "solitaries" for three months.

The days went by. Koniushyna began to spit blood. He was then sent to the general prison, cell No. 12.

Bing-bang! Bing-bang!

"Listen," said Faust to me, "they sing that song as if they were drowning their own sorrow... Is that not so? But I can't see any reason for grieving. Really I've experienced such great joy and enthusiasm, that even now I feel dizzy when I think of the past..."

"I once had a horse called Iskra; and whenever our detachment emerged out of the forest, songs bloomed in the manes of our horses, the green forests laid roads for us, and we ourselves were like the forest: green — and so young and courageous..."

"At the command: 'Cavalry, mount your horses!' they gathered together like a whirlwind, their spurs ringing, and their stirrups clanking, and even horseshoes rattled... And so they whirled along the Ukrainian steppes, with forests abreast; yes, the forest, with the night slipping by in blazes for the forests were on fire."

And again they sang the old prison song:

"One hears them go by..."

Somewhere, someone is being led to a Siberian slave labor camp."

"Stop singing! They'll never blossom, the songs now will never blossom in my horse's name! And I'll do no more worrying: we're dying in the name of our succeeding generations."

He came straight up to the door, lengthily reading what was scratched by finger nail:

"Here was our last night... We died for the liberty of our people: let him who visits this cell remember us... Our Ukrainian land is drenched with blood and corpses, without freedom or even the desire for it..."

The rest of it was so greasy as to make it illegible.

Faust stood long lost in thought; those words were not meant for him, since the complaint of the prisoners sentenced to death was not directed to him.

"The last night," his memory recorded. "When will this last night come to him? To Koniushyna?"

He fell on the iron bed completely exhausted. He no longer remembered whether that was a dream, or whether there really was such life. He was trying to recollect...

"...Today. Rich *kutia*, yes, sure... Iskra then didn't belong to me, and our songs did not reverberate over the forests. My mother stood by the table lighting a lamp before the holy pictures:

'Christmas Eve is near, children; none of your pranks, now!'

"And the floor in our house, covered by Oksana with a new clay coating, shone brilliantly; and our childish eyes, too, shone with joy and happiness... Mother no longer scolded when little Yatsko tugged at her skirt, begging: 'The first little *pyrizhok* for me, mother!'

'Fine, Yatsko, the first for you, only for you!' she said, patting his bristly head and sending him off to his father.

"And his father's eyes would light up, too, like those of Saint Nicholas. He would seat Yats on one side and Nastusia on the other side of himself and then amuse both of them..."

"Passing by them would be the proud Oksana; she was older and as a worker her mother's favorite. In Oksana's braid, as I remember, there was a blue poppy-colored ribbon. 'She'll make someone a fine bride some day,' I thought. And she would then turn to me with a smile:

"Such a one, my dear sir," she said; "good enough to go chasing around on the street, but when it comes to chopping wood, it's 'Let father do it!'"

"Oksana would then shame and worry him a little; but her father would act like he didn't hear anything; his gray head would wag and mumble as he uttered these fabled words:

"We may never live to see such happiness, but it'll come, children, yes, sir; and all the poor people will be given land..."

Now the time had arrived for the rich *kutia*: it was Christmas Eve.

The guard's alert eye; sleepy, rumpled like a prostitute's bed sheet, features, turbid eyes, peculiar whiskers like thin, sauced sausages, tobacco-smoked; in the front gums two large wolfish teeth, a bullish neck...

He, Storozhuk, bows to Beiser:

"Such a bent-down one..." laughs Storozhuk.

He's always happy during such solemn, festive occasions. He hums a couple of lines from a song.

The whisky has turned Storozhuk's stomach; so he goes out to vomit into the urine can. He's being urged to hurry.

The cell. Faust took his sack off the bed, untied it, then approached Kononchuk, saying:

"You've been bragging, uncle, that you have a son? But he'll not bring it here this evening; accept my own; I'll be your guest today."

He then turned to Klientsov:

"Don't gloat over my loss, Mr. Officer; please remember 'hundreds will fall, but thousands will rise to take their place in the struggle...'"

Malamet was offering a prayer to the Lord.

Faust sat immovably for an hour, looking askance at all of us, whispering something to himself quietly; then, rising up, he asked Mr. Yatskivsky:

"Where, Yatskivsky, is your cup with the eagles on it? Eh? Please give me a drink."

A voice grew louder, then waned down to a whisper.

"Do you hear, Storozhuk is reading his lists?"

Then again he came close to the pail and got himself a drink of water and following this, what seemed to us a conscious act, he never again regained his sanity; he had gone insane.

He began to catch at the air with his hands, as if he were trying to seize the reins on the horse... He chased about the cell, shrieking:

"Right, attention! Right, mount! To battle!"

"Fellows, what horse is it that runs with Iskra? Storozhuk wants my blood? Well, here it is; drink it!"

He banged his knuckles against the edge of the door, smashing them to the point of profuse bleeding, and then, to the amazement of us all, he began to trace in blood a capital letter on the wall... He did not complete it, so then again he filled the cell with his shriek:

"Cavalry, right, attention! Cavalry, right, mount! Fall in line! Get ready for battle!"

Storozhuk stood on the threshold of the cell. He seized Faust by the bleeding hand, gripped it tightly, roved his turbid eyes over all of us, and then forever led Koniushyna out of the cell for the last time.

The cell became numb with fright.

In the neighboring cell, the "*etap*" one, some students, recruits to our prison, were singing:

"Oh rejoice, dear earth,

The Son of God is born..."

And Kononchuk, sobbing convulsively, held a piece of bread in his hand that was given to him by Faust from Podilia.

Arkadii Liubchenko

BLOOD

Translated by C. H. A.

Arkadii Liubchenko was born in 1899 in a peasant family in the Kiev district. In 1921-22 he served in the Red Army and then worked in various theaters in Ukraine. He commenced his literary career by writing poetry, but then turned to prose, and published various collections as *The Stormy Road*, 1926; *She*, 1929; *The Sails of Anxiety*, 1932, and others. In his earlier stories he was absorbed by the romance of revolution, but soon adopted a critical position on the questions of Bolshevik reality, such as was evident in his satirical *Insult*, 1927, and in the journal *Vaplite*, for which he was harshly condemned by the official Soviet critics. He, too was persecuted for his prose poem *Vertep*, 1929, in which he allegorically expresses the idea of independent development for Ukraine. Following the ban on some of his works he wrote little. On the outbreak of the Soviet-German war in 1941, Liubchenko was forcibly evacuated from Kiev to Ufa, but he succeeded in remaining in Kharkiv; and when the Germans occupied Ukraine, he went on to Lviv, and from there to the West. He died in 1945. One of his stories, *Blood*, is included in this anthology. It was taken from the collection written in 1929 and published in Lviv in 1942 under the title *Vertep* (The Puppet Show).

BLOOD

On a wintry night the wolves moved toward the edge of a large thickly forested ravine, softly and stealthily. They were making their way laboriously through the deep snow, for it was only a while ago that the snowstorm had ceased, and all around them lay a thick, frothy foam. They waded slowly, their bodies swaying gently on their slender legs.

Their backs, necks and muzzles were strained to the limit, their ears were pricked up, and all their movements were directed forward. And from a distance it appeared that they were not wading, but slowly sailing out of the forest jungle.

On the edge of the ravine, where the abruptly turned wall of the forest ended, and where a long patch of bushes stood out boldly, the wolves halted.

They were lost to view, having concealed themselves in the shadows of the bushes.

One of them, carefully, calmly and cautiously planting his paws, made a few steps to the last bush which stood out a little to the side. Here, from this last shelter, the eye could better survey the wooded ravine.

Then the foremost wolf crouched and looked out into space.

A prolonged silence followed. Behind the wolves rose the high solid wall of the forest; in front of them lay quite a large, twisted ravine. This ravine, which was completely filled with snow, reinforced from both sides by the walls of the forest, appeared to have been seized between the two shaggy paws of a gigantic and silent beast. If this unknown beast were to move either paw ever so slightly, or lessened the pressure of the one or the other, a slight sound would have come from under those shaggy, clawed paws.

The wolf was anxious to hear any kind of a sound, so much so that he involuntarily moved his paw.

A wee crunching sound actually was heard. At the wolf's touch the twig on the bush moved, making the snow flutter down from it. The wolf shuddered and his hearing was sharpened.

And again silence followed. It was an intensely cold night. High above in the sky the thickly studded stars twinkled brightly; while way down below, the snow, reinforced by the frosty cold, glowed unalterably and intolerably white. And just as indifferently, as if it

were bewitched, lay the ravine, soundless, sensitive in its very stillness. And just as solid and taciturn stood the forest all around, disquieting in its rigidity.

This deathly lull accompanied the wolves at every step. It seemed as if everything had died in its tracks before the horrible cold; as if nothing were alive under the sky except this utterly weary pack.

At times, it is true, a slight rustling was heard or a short crackling sound, these seeming especially clear in the middle of the night. Everyone of the wolves pricked up its ears, extended its muzzle as far forwards as it could, raised upwards, and fitfully, hungrily, sniffed the air. But they soon found out it was a delusion: the whisper was only the sigh of a large tract of snow. The cracking sound was but an emanation thrown off from a moaning branch as it threw off an unnecessary burden of snow.

Again, as before, silence followed.

The wolves, however, were eager to hear sounds, vital, disturbing sounds, such as a rustle which stops one's breath; an enigmatic rustle, which by its approach, transports the entire being into a sweet and dreadful captivity; a stealthy rustle, which reveals the presence of a living creature; a palpitating rustle, which causes the mouth to water and the tongue to lick the gums; a rustle which smells of blood.

The wolves were hungry.

The night passed and the day dawned many times, yet despite their utmost efforts, they could not find food anywhere.

Shaggy, lean-ribbed, piteously stooped, the very embodiment of misfortune, ravenously eager, like rapacity itself, they dragged themselves along, one after the other, meekly and inseparably, among the intricate brakes, snowdrifts and labyrinths of the forest. Unwittingly, they were trudging about in circles, coming back to points left behind time after time, confusedly, as if in a stupor. Realizing, however, that nothing edible could be found at points hitherto traversed, they bared their teeth in savage anger at the leader; while he, too, showing his teeth, moved in another direction.

But the more that hunger gnawed them, the greater became their rising ire. It was particularly evident during the day, when the expectation of any prey was less, or when they paused to rest in secluded spots.

During the day, too, they often grouped themselves under the shelter of some brushwood and, coiling themselves, and pressing closely together, they warmed each other, temporarily, at least, warding off the cold. Each lay wherever he fell, with his nose buried

in the warm fur, the odor of which began to recall to them thrilling, ravishing, warm and passionately desired odors.

At such times, under the curtain of closed eyelids, in partial drowsiness, there came to them more intensely and more clearly visions, dreams, and memories of the warm and still palpitating flesh, of the warm albeit somewhat bitter blood.

These visions were so powerful and so realistic was the smell of blood, that their breathing quickened and their nostrils dilated passionately. They envisaged savage coursings, swift pursuits, the tantalizing nearness of the prey, the tingling joy of continual feasting, all to such a degree that they shuddered and growled in their feverish drowsings. Upon awakening, some of them looked around stupidly, timidly, and embittered. It was only later, after having licked their muzzles, that they began to gaze ahead with stern ferocity.

It was precisely at such moments that they felt a painful sucking in their bellies, as if unbearably sharp claws were squeezing and lacerating their entrails; and their rage at such moments would become ominous.

They would be seized by a ripping wrath against that unseen, inseparable, importunate beast which continually lacerated their entrails with its claws; a senseless wrath against their own passionate and wild dreamings; an uncontrollable wrath against what appeared to them to be the calm, white day, against that mocking, cautious and, as it appeared to them, hopeless day — a wolfish wrath against everything surrounding them.

But when the day slowly withdrew into the unknown and when the soft-pawed evening, step by step, stealthily began to take its place, the wolves felt relief. Gradually, stoopingly, the evening twilight, approaching from behind the trees, brought with it something conspiratorial. The evening was always gloomily alert and cunningly secretive. In its wake it brought an even greater gloom, the concentrated gloom of the night and of mysteriousness. And from this very source came their relief. In this the wolves found consolation, because in it they found hope.

The evening brought with it new life. The surrounding objects cast off their unbearable uniformity, assumed new forms and meaning. Shadows, large and small, in crowds, gathered cautiously, soundlessly, from everywhere, as if numerous beasts were advancing upon the forest. But the recently formed outlines changed, and everything was becoming almost mobile — whether it was a stump, a bush, or even a tiny shoot.

In the gathering of the shadows, in the mysterious mobility, there appeared a hospitable shelter to satisfy all: for some it was a haven of safety, for others — the most artful ambush.

As soon as the evening set in, a connection began to form between the wolves and all that surrounded them, and a natural compact started to shape. Because of their profound sensitivity they understood with miraculous keenness all that surrounding life, divining and differentiating with wonderful instinct the least rustling and stirring.

Hunger, while weakening their bodies, intensified their avidity and sharpened their senses. They knew how to pretend a dead faint without being conscious about it; and they were transformed into a single taut nerve, being afraid that their hearts were beating so loud, that they might be heard in the forest.

Such a night had come and gone many a time, and in its place came the cautious, mocking day. And as the day passed, conspiratorial night returned.

But they found nothing, nothing that was alive.

Within the last twenty-four hours something happened to change the situation somewhat. The air seemed to have softened; thick, fluffy snow began to fall like tufts of fur from a white rabbit. In the air there appeared — at quite a distance, it is true — fresh, but long unperceived odors.

Regrettably, at dawn a light wind rushed through the tree tops, leaving behind it a stream of soft whistling sound. This sound had hardly begun to dissolve when new gusts of wind, powerful and fitful, came rolling swiftly, impudently shaking the trees. The trees groaned and began at once to cast off the weight of snow.

The gusty wind raised the white powdery substance, flung it upwards, whirled, yelped, and covered the sky and the tree tops with the foamy sinuations of the snow storm. Almost all day long the frenzy prevailed. Snow was falling all the time, and the unleashed hurricane flung itself all over. The bushes sank deep in snow; high white mounds arose, and snowdrifts, gullies, shelters appeared suddenly here and there, and just as suddenly they changed form or broke completely apart.

All the wolves passed into a small hollow, under the protection of low spreading and broadly palmated branches.

Towards evening the whirlwind subsided. And then an even more powerful and sharply glowing cold began to hold sway. The wolves had already been chilled to the bone during the day. They felt a dull aversion to everything.

But at the end of the day it became clear. The most recent footprints could be expected on the snowdrifts. Then they felt a slight and hopeful flutter in their hearts. Inwardly, they roused themselves, shaking off the day's listlessness, weariness and awkwardness. Some of them impatiently stretched themselves with a crunching sound. Some licked their tongues; other lowered their ears and greedily began to sniff the air.

They knew by instinct that all kinds of beasts, as they called themselves, would now crawl out of their secret nooks in search of food. All that was now needed was close attention, redoubled caution — and the prey would end its flight in their teeth.

Hunger forced them to concentrate all their strength in order to save their lives. Theirs was the yearning to live — simply for the sake of living.

And so, convinced, obstinate, their attention concentrated, their caution redoubled, they started out into the night through the bluish evening.

They were sinking up to their chests, up to their necks in snow. Only in spots did they come upon solid ground which the wind had licked clean, where it was possible to trot for a while.

They were saddened by that, irritated, wearied quite uselessly; for in the event of a chase, it would make the pursuit more difficult.

The front-running wolf suffered more than the others. He was an old wolf who was the first to sink into the fallen snow, break it apart with his chest, crush it with his paws, and forcibly make tracks for the others to follow. And he could not by any means reveal that he was worse off than the rest. He had to bear himself proudly, firmly. He had to be tireless.

After having wandered a long time that day, they finally struck upon a fresh and still warm imprint. They flung themselves feverishly in pursuit. Whether they proceeded stealthily, ran or rushed headlong, not one of them was aware. What they did was simply by force of circumstance, and by the unknown and imperious power which held all of them in its control.

Only much later, when out of sheer momentum they plunged into a deep, snow-filled crater, did they stop.

The leader listened alertly. The others impatiently and eagerly pricked up their ears. It was understood that the scent of the track instead of increasing in odor was decreasing, that there was an error, that they must proceed in the opposite direction, that their leader, their foolish leader, their hated leader . . .

But the leader had already sensed his error, flinging himself in the opposite direction.

They rushed after him.

It was an insensate race. They sped like the wind, raising in their wake a white mist. The ravine leaped back, and again it drew near. The forest swayed on both sides. The sky above swayed likewise. The stars were circling. They felt an icy breath. And their breathing was fiery. And their hearts yearned to fall on the snow.

Suddenly they stopped. The leader stopped of his own volition; while the others rushed upon him headlong and in disorder. In their roused imagination they already felt the prey crushing between their teeth; and having packed into a mass, they rushed blindly and at random to seek out the body, endlessly striking their bared muzzles against each other as they continued the search.

The body was no longer there, but somehow, somewhere nearby there wafted a sharp, delightfully tantalizing scent.

In a moment all understood that here precisely, in their very midst, there lay the dark and not altogether frozen offal of a wild goat. Its light rousing smell obscured their senses.

They felt their tongues swollen and heavy. Saliva began to flow copiously. In terror they beat about the same spot, because the snow here was packed, but the tracks, as if purposely, strayed and suddenly lost themselves.

In perplexity they dispersed in all directions. However, they did not break too far apart; and as they hustled about in haste, they held their noses close to the snow, sniffing and smelling. And wherever they passed in their search of the prey, they left behind them sinuous loops of their footprints. They came upon their own footprints more and more often. In time they began to experience the feeling of horror. Despair was beginning to set in.

It so happened that they all crowded into a small clearing. Out of breath, bewildered, they did not even glance at one another; but here, massed together, they suddenly and indisputably felt that all pursuit was in vain.

Their hearts grew faint. And they hated each other, and each one himself, immensely.

But where was the leader? Where was his experience? How could he have failed?

With bleary wrath they glanced at him.

Soon a gloomy, famished dejection began to envelop them. So oppressive was it that one wished to close his eyes tightly, raise his muzzle, and from the uttermost depths of his being howl out a complaint, desperately and frightfully.

Exhausted, powdered with hoarfrost, piteously stopped, after having licked some snow, their tails behind their legs, they again set off at random, slowly and loyally.

Suddenly one of them, none other than the leader himself, staggered from sheer exhaustion.

It was a terrible, decisive moment: if he fell, he would be torn apart in an instant.

Instinctively he understood that. Horror crept into his eyes, and it seemed as if his own skin, having cracked on his back, suddenly peeled off. Although, as a result of the pursuit, he felt utterly exhausted, and everything around him seemed to be in a whirl, the breath of death roused him. The deadly alarm awakened in him fresh, and perhaps his remaining, strength.

He, an old wolf, concentrated his strength, leaned aside somewhat, as if to avoid a blow, and sharply bared his teeth. Then, striving to preserve his inner equilibrium and put on an appearance of firmness, he took a few steps to the side and, quite indifferently, raised his hind leg — to do his business.

This display of indifference, freedom of action and independence appeared so natural to the others. So much vital desire to cling to life was revealed in those movements, and such was the calm shown regarding the beast's own safety, that the danger soon passed. Some smelled the besprinkled place, and did the same. The pack, holding their savage intention in leash, slowly, stealthily, again followed the leader into the silent spaces, into the night.

And yet they were expecting something to happen.

Not one of them even for a single moment would admit that he might die, because their imagination was filled with such an attractive smell of warm blood. The ceaseless, savage blood within them dominated their belief, motivating and filling them with the tireless passion to search and the ever-present desire to struggle for survival.

And so once again the wolves came upon the same hollow, but at its other and more distant edge.

This was the end of the sharply curved wall of the forest. They stopped here and sought shelter among the bushes.

The foremost wolf took a few more steps to the last bush from which he could scan the broad, extensive banks of the ravine. He strained his body slightly forward, stood still with bated breath, and stared into space.

Completely filled with snow, surrounded by the thick perpendicular walls of the trees, as if seized between the paws of an unseen, continually drowsing or sleeping beast, this ravine seemed like a

great lake whose white, smooth surface could not but immediately reveal the appearance of a beast of any kind. It was the center where the different sounds reverberating in the distance could not but assemble, — so did their instinct tell the wolves.

The leader felt terrible. Why? Simply because he was the leader. When the pack last ate he had a fierce desire to become foremost. Now he did not want to lead, and tried to mix with the others. But no matter how he tried to drag his paws and give the other wolves an opportunity to get ahead of him, they slackened their pace in an equal measure, stubbornly leaving him ahead.

They did that not because he was an old and most experienced wolf, but because there had risen too great a danger to them all, and no one wanted to be the leader.

Even now the old beast felt that the entire pack, crouching behind him, vented its ravenous spleen not only on the surrounding phenomena, but also on him. The pack — he felt — would not forgive him the recent unsuccessful chase. The pack hated him, just as he hated it.

His head was in a frenzy from utter exhaustion. Dark, misty cobwebs fluttered in front of his eyes. The bitter cold bit into his paws, and he felt a prickly trembling pervade his body which was chilled to the bone.

The wolf bristled with an effort.

At times the cold, having coursed through his entire body, seemed to disappear into the snow, and he felt a brief and sudden relief. Then the dark cobwebs began to unravel themselves on all sides and instill the old beast with a light indifference, tempting him to doze off for a while and snatch a short nap.

The wolf could not permit that, and yet the wolf could not overcome himself.

And when he closed his eyes, the painful sucking gnawed at his stomach again. His entire being contracted in pain and it howled. Having howled, it grew faint. And immediately, as it occurred during a chase, a strange, almost voluptuous fainting spell flooded his belly and chest. It dispersed quickly in all directions, coursing in the veins; and it burdened the body with a kind of intoxication, pressing it down to fall on the snow.

The wolf was overwhelmed with a desire to lie down; but he simply could not permit himself to lie down. And he knew that eventually he would not be able to hold himself up, and would have to lie down — to his death.

Suddenly, amid his drowsy tremor there appeared a rainbow. Both its ends were seized by a mist which gradually slipped away

somewhere. The rainbow, too, was dissolving. It illuminated the long edge of the forest which was all flooded by a spring sun. To the edge of the forest a gray ball with long ears came rolling. The wolf flung himself after it. He had already faintly felt in front of him the strong, tantalizing smell. And he already faintly heard the sound of alien, mad leaps . . .

As if stunned, he gave a start and stupidly opened wide his eyes.

Bitterly and reproachfully he glanced back at the spot whence came the sound which might betray them before the time, but in reply to him there flashed several yellowish-green threatening sparks.

Slowly he turned his head away, pretending indifference. But he understood. In the flashing clamor of the yellowish-green sparks he already saw that ominous, speechless, benumbed apprehension which, for some reason, always roused in his memory the odor of decay.

From that moment he was filled with great terror.

With a sudden surge of self-preservation, anger, and revenge, he was ready, even at that moment, to offer the fiercest resistance. Again he glanced back at them, his eyes flashing threateningly.

It was a mistake. The pack does not like to be threatened. The pack, conscious of its united strength and predominance, cannot stand contradiction. In its ferocity, it admits only humility, and only the humble one has the right to move in its midst.

It was a grave mistake. The pack, from the first to the last, bared their teeth at him, ready to spring at him at any moment.

As before, the wolf feigned indifference and certainty of his own power, and turned away. He was finally convinced, however, that behind him there was something merciless, decisive. And he was stung to the quick. And although he tried his best, he could not now conceal his great and overwhelming horror.

But it was just too bad for him that they already knew about it.

They knew that he was afraid of them. They saw through his timidity, uncertainty, confusion, insignificance his very end. It roused their hate all the more, enflamed their rage, and fired their entire being with a fierce purpose.

After such protracted failures and adversities, their conscious and unconscious efforts invariably centered on him. Because of their very gregariousness, they began to feel that the only way of overcoming the danger that was threatening them, was in the center.

They were lying in wait waiting for that final, most difficult inner movement which eventually had to cut that unseen gossamer thread between them and which still held them back.

To the leader all this was very clear. Well did he know that it would be enough if only one of them made up his mind. Just one slight movement and that would be the end!

He suddenly felt a shrill ringing sound in his ears from the strain of it all. The ravine seemed to have reeled. A prickly shudder flashed through his body, and he felt the sharp and obfuscating smell of decay come wafting to him.

What should he do: Spring up and seek escape?

But they would soon overtake him.

Well, let them! 'Twere better to die in a fight.

All he did was gently and carefully shift his paws, while the shivers, which passed through his skin, painfully dissipated into the snow.

He could no longer glance back — he was afraid to make the least significant movement. He was imprisoned by the gregarious, overbearing power which streamed upon him from behind, burdened him, and paralyzed him.

Bending low he was now sitting motionless. This posture still affected those which sat behind him and, willy-nilly, forced them to remain similarly motionless.

He seized upon one last hope and stood still, as if dead.

Suddenly he raised a wail. Mournfully, hopelessly, and soundlessly, for no one heard it. He sat silent, as if he were made of stone. But seized with immense terror and despair, and clenching his teeth tightly together, he wailed.

He felt he was being dealt with so unjustly that he could not but weep; so weak and insignificant did he appear that he wished, yes, longed with all humility, to fall at somebody's powerful paws and fawn upon them, lick them, humble himself before them.

Nobody heard him, but in his ears the echo of his own lamentation and of his own eager complaint reverberated powerfully.

He could no longer endure this. He was ready. He wanted it to begin as soon as possible. He could not swallow for lack of saliva. His heart stopped beating. His blood pulsated throbbingly in his temples. His head was in a whirl, and all in a flame.

Then suddenly something whisked behind him and darted past him into the ravine.

That very instant he darted also.

And the entire pack followed both of them.

It all happened with lightning speed.

He was speeding slantwise across the ravine. He was speeding after the one of the pack that was the first to spring out. He already knew that was done on purpose, so that it would be more convenient for those following him to attack him, and that he now must by all means overtake the first one and plunge his teeth into his throat; otherwise the others would reach him at any moment now and would sink their teeth into his throat.

Make haste if you can! Do your best!

The snowy flood boiled and raged under their paws. In places the hollows were so deep that one had to wade through them and tread carefully as if on boggy ground.

The snowy flood rushed by so swiftly, the bushes and the trees sped so madly backwards that it seemed as if everything had become uprooted and had hastened away flying madly by.

Perhaps not one of them had ever felt so light, so sprightly, as he did at that moment.

Even he, the old wolf, had never taken part in such a chase.

The distance between himself and the one that had sped ahead of him was growing smaller and smaller, as was the distance between himself and all the others in the rear.

Those behind were drawing nearer.

He already felt their breathing.

They were almost upon him.

They did not overtake him.

Now they were abreast of him.

They were speeding on abreast. Abreast.

And yet they do not touch him.

Still they do not touch him.

Why do they not touch him?

After the first wave of terror rolled past, it immediately dawned on him, as if he had suddenly come to his senses, what was really happening. Before him he sensed the strong, enticing smell of a creature; he heard the wild, crunching sound of one in flight; he understood that they all, in a crowd, were again pursuing their prey, which had first been noticed by that one which had darted past him with such a quick spurt.

Does that mean that they will not touch him after all? That he will live; live to glut himself! He will be able to glut himself! For the prey is quite near. It has already flashed its presence among the trees.

Overjoyed, excited, hardly believing what was happening, he quickened his pace.

He raced so swiftly that his old heart could hardly endure it.

They all tried hard to reach their prey by a short cut; and thus they passed each other, fiercely knocking against each other, struggling fiercely, and making all haste in order to tear off a better piece.

Because of the thirst that darkened his senses, his eagerness, and the tempo of the race, he did not understand or remember what happened later. In a trice he was hurled against the stricken carcass of the forest goat. His jaw opened mechanically and his teeth sank quickly into...

Something happened! The warm and palpitating flesh, the warm and somewhat bitter blood...

Suddenly he shuddered convulsively, and his teeth would not part.

In the meantime the others, jostling, clashing, wrangling, greedily tore their prey apart, fiercely slashing it with their teeth. Make haste who can! They almost choked on it, uttering sounds of joy as they gluttonously sucked the warm blood with reddened snouts. Make haste!

He jerked again, but could not disjoin his clenched jaws.

Then everything around him reeled, whirled about, and with its immense weight plunged into the abyss bearing him along with itself. Somewhere in the depths, having struck the bottom, he felt such a sudden, terrible, and sweet pain in his chest that his heart could not endure it and was shattered to pieces.

Rounding out his eyes into a fixed stare, he was still able to observe that the stars were melting, flowing down from the sky and falling on the snow drop by drop. He was still aware that he must again jerk, but he did not know that he was already stretching out in painful ecstasy, being gripped by death.

He was in their way — he who looked so strangely serious and motionless. They snarled at him, threatened and even bit him.

One of them was even bold enough to snatch for himself the piece stuck between those teeth which were clenched never to open again.

Yurii Lypa

PETKA KLYN

Translated by Michael Luchkovich

Yurii Lypa was born in 1900 in Odessa in the home of a Ukrainian doctor, writer and community worker, Ivan Lypa. He, like his father, was a doctor and a writer. Having emigrated with his parents in the 20's before the advance of the Bolshevik armies, he lived at first in Lviv and then in Warsaw. He was the author of a few collections of poetry, a three-volume collection of stories, *The Notebook*, 1936; a historic romance, *Kozaks in Muscovy*, 1934; also a publicistic-historiographic work, *Ukraine's Destiny*, 1938; and *Dismemberment of Russia*, 1941. In his stories collected in the volume, *The Notebook*, from which the present story in this anthology was taken, *Petka Klyn*, he discloses a wide panorama of the Ukrainian War of Liberation, 1917-1920. Like the heroes of his stories Yurii Lypa joined during the Second World War the Ukrainian Insurgent Army which carried on an armed struggle against the Hitlerite and Bolchevik occupants of Ukraine. He died in 1944 as a doctor in the Insurgent Army.

PETKA KLYN

The burglars declared war on the Denikin police in Odessa, — an open war. Never did the Odessans have a better show.

The Moldavanka, the Romanivka, port localities and other outskirts of the great city, at that time nearly a million in population swarmed with small groups of pale men, dressed for the most part in elegant service jackets. They were girded with cartridge belts and armed with rifles, although revolvers were their usual weapons. Enconced in window embrasures, in sheds above the pillars, behind gates, porch doors, acacia bushes, most of which had already been chopped up for firewood during the revolution, they greeted with furious rapid-fire shelling the timorous divisions of Denikin's police, who were distinguished by the tins they wore on ear-tabbed peak caps and their long black overcoats. It was said the burglars would gain mastery over the city and smash it once and for all, and even install their own government in it. This was too much even for the unfortunate administration of the Denikinites: a few thousand police, recruited from Ukraine, and from a few purely Russian formations, were ordered to surround the intractable outskirts (where after sunset usually the golden shoulder pieces were afraid to show themselves) and, advancing step by step, to clear them of undesirable elements.

The police divisions were met with machine gun fire of the well organized partisans. A definite, overbearing arrogance prevailed among the thieves during the last dozen or more months: having divided the city up into plots, they exploited it, shearing the inhabitants regularly like a flock of sheep. Among the thousand *blataks** the group of burglars distinguished itself the most, as domineering throughout the whole mass. They operated without allies, entering homes with brandished revolvers, and appropriating everything of value from the occupants. About a thousand robberies were committed during the night. The then underground Bolshevik party made deals with the burglars over the division of authority in the event of an insurrection against the Whites to the effect that they too were to have their representatives in the police commissariats. The managers of the larger philanthropic concerts published appeals in the newspapers to the burglars not to rob any persons with tickets to such concerts. Thus the inhabitants boldly sauntered forth to

* *blataks* — similar in meaning to *blatni* (see page 194).

those concerts on this particular night, since none of the pedestrians, even those without tickets, were robbed.

And now, during the pauses in the shots at the *pharaohs*,* the thieves hurled witty jeers and jibes at them. The police had become a frightened and woeful body, which lost much of its authority. They began to walk about in crowds displaying red banners and allowing the infuriated mobs to shoot down like rabbits their agents and superior and inferior officers.

The thieves had won a measure of sympathy among the inhabitants, even including some of those who were robbed, since they had often displayed more chivalry and goodness of heart than did the so-called "idealistic" armies. Legends were told about these burglars, songs were being sung in their honour, and the names of the most prominent leaders were on the lips of everyone.

Near one of the small railway bridges that spanned one of the dirty streets on the outskirts, there raged a battle. The police took positions behind some low barricades at one end of the bridge; at the other end, leaping from position to position, hiding behind iron girders and projections, the thieves hurry-scurried. They had the initiative, holding the situation well in hand, with the police reluctant to show their heads anywhere. A small agile man of powerful build and swarthy features, barking out short orders and threats, was in command of the robbers.

He let the most vile curses drop foully from his lips, but his features maintained an unusually peaceful composure; but each one of his twitching movements seemed to instill more courage into the robbers: their gray figures which aimed and hid so skilfully, ever advancing, it seemed, would force the cumbersome police to ignominious and irreversible retreat... Shots from the police positions were now on the wane.

The little *otaman* of the robbers drew his revolver in indication of one last decisive order, when from above the barricade appeared the dark eyes of Maxim, and the machine gun blasted right in the faces of the stupefied burglars.

The burglar chief stepped aside and looked the situation over: his soldiers were sprawling about the bridge like gray beads of quicksilver; some of them falling down and crawling about, one of the corpses hanging on the railing, then sliding downward until it reached the bottom of the gray street. The great majority of burglars swashed back again, a great wave of fear carrying them on its crest.

"Halt! Halt! Or else I'll shoot!" he yelled in a sharp, angry voice. "Halt, guards," he kept shrieking, aiming at one, and then at

* *pharaohs* — in underworld jargon — policemen.

another, after having turned around to the machine gun. He looked stubborn and there was a glow in his yellow eyes.

The burglars halted, a peculiar expression of hesitation on their faces. There was still the crack of further shots, but this time by order from Petka Klyn.

"Halt, guards, forward!" he yelled, although he knew that his subordinates remained stationary instead of following him. So now he knew that he would fall and they would disperse, if he did not put a stop at once to those accursed black coats with the machine guns. And so, leading the way, Petka Klyn pulled two hand-grenades from his belt and set their mechanism right for the inevitable explosion, meanwhile proceeding with even step, like a person having a dream in his sleep, along the planks of the bridge. The machine gun roared with fury. A cloudless sky loomed overhead with merciless blueness. Klyn was being watched on the one side by his comrades, and on the other by the police, while he himself had reached almost the middle of the bridge. Suddenly a stray bullet struck him in the thigh. He dropped down on his knees, moaning; but the roar of the thieves on the other side was ten-fold greater. The police rose up from behind their barricades, straightening up to their full height, shooting all the while. Then the wounded Petka Klyn, knowing weaker, hurled both of his grenades at that insatiable, living thing, the machine gun.

His eyes were now lack-lustre, but he still heard the explosion of one of his grenades, how it shattered the police chest of arms and ammunition. He heard, too, the noise made by his second grenade, and the joyous shrieks of his fellow-fighters.

A few of his comrades rushed up to Petka to give whatever aid they could. The bullet had pierced his thigh, leaving a small hole at the point of entrance, and a large square wound where it had its exit, which happened to be in the front part of the flesh.

"Petka, you were shot from the back," someone yelled excitedly. "One of our men must have done it."

"I know who it was," answered Petka Klyn, without actually knowing who did it; but in order to maintain his authority to the end, he continued: "Never mind, I'll catch him!"

Petka made an attempt to sit down; but all he did was lean his head down a bit in a faint to rest on the dark railing.

II

It seems that this was the only single genuine victory which the *blatni* could boast of over the *pharaohs*, because of the fact that they had fled in panic. But this singular war had ended as sud-

denly as it had begun. The shadows of the robbers with their revolvers and rifles had dissipated in the darkness of the yellowish houses and cellars of Odessa's outskirts only to hide away in the labyrinthine catacombs. This was an ordinary raid, but one on a grand scale in which ten thousand robbers took part.

Petka Klyn did not rest for long: in his time two years of penal servitude had not destroyed him, and neither would his injury.

At the Moldavanka the movie "Urania" was being shown from four on. The winter of 1919 was warm in Odessa. The doors of the movie theater were left wide open. Coming out through the doorways could be heard the strumming of a string orchestra and the boisterous laughter and whistling of the audience. The manager of the theater and two young, huge employees stood by the door with a look about them at once guarded and determined. By clearing a way with his fists any suspicious person with a downcast look could enter without paying; and even the honorable public, dissatisfied with the film, with a deafening roar, after having pulled up chairs from their mooring and taking them away, could withdraw out on to the street in a line.

Somewhere in the distance under the largest lamp stood Petka Klyn, his legs wide apart; his wound had started to heal, and he now attended "the big jobs." He kept his left hand in his pocket, but with his right hand he gracefully seized his pen knife and started picking his teeth, as if in proof that he had just had a sumptuous supper. And as he picked he condescendingly acknowledged the greeting of his comrades and admirers.

The last act of the cinema had come to a close, and the great dark throng of people dispersed. Having exposed himself to view, having looked them over, Petka Klyn slowly made his way along the street which was lighted up brilliantly by the shower of rays shining down from a full moon, swinging along satiated and satisfied.

From some remote tavern in a basement drunken voices were spouting out the lively words of a song about him, Petka Klyn:

"Good luck to you, Petka Klyn,
Where's the Lord taking you?"

And now he was making his way through the quieter parts of the city, showered with moonlight, trying to adjust his pace so that his shadow would merge with that of the low houses. Suddenly he pricked up his ears, and, having looked back, his own legs seemed to carry him of their own accord: he ran easily, somewhat like a hurled stone, and then, almost soundlessly, six or seven shadows seemed to be leaping behind him. And as he looked, Petka Klyn saw the silver flash of a knife. He looked no more but kept on running.

There was mutual enmity between the various outskirts: thus the Crooked Gully Corner hated all the other corners. In the fiercest fights there was no quarter, no codex, no law or rule. If a few of the "gallants" or "guys" came across some strangers, they lost no time in argument but went to it right away with Finnish knives.

Petka recognized a few of them. They were people who killed for killing's sake, and they were regarded as low-down in the scale of esteem by the burglar hierarchy who recognized only brains and skill, talent and will power, as the main criteria. These were only the common garden variety, who acted only when instigated by somebody. Petka could hear behind his back their hollow, suppressed curses. A whirling knife flew past Petka's elbow, falling down with a clang. Petka stepped sideways, all out of breath; his strength had waned almost completely, his left leg hurt painfully and felt as if it was being filled with a dead weight. But he ran on with a twisted look of suffering on his features, listening to the heavy panting of his pursuers. He stuck two fingers in his mouth and let out a shrill, loud whistle; but none of his followers were anywhere nearby.

Petka Klyn ran on a bit further and then halted, holding a knife in his hand.

There were only three giving chase to him. One of them, a broad-shouldered fellow who, having outrun the others and coming a few steps nearer to Petka, raised his hand and, having failed to hit the mark, fell down ingloriously, swearing profanely, as if he had been mowed down and then laid at full length without motion.

Petka started to run again.

The locality where this chase took place was well known to him. He was enticed by the open gate and the garden beyond the wall. He leaped over the enclosure and then, having accustomed himself to the darkness and green peacefulness, he turned around.

A couple of dozen steps away from him were the three, cursing and threatening him. A little further on two others were looking over the wounded man, from whose pierced breast a whistle had emanated, and from whose blood-foamed lips there came the wheezy retort: "Just wait, I'll get you yet!" Somewhere in the distance a single straggler, too, was giving chase.

Petka's inherent sense of showmanship momentarily overcame his sense of fear. He settled himself on the wall the better to hurl a few "sneers," when suddenly a revolver in the hands of one of the pursuers flashed with a red flame, as did another shot; and Petka disappeared like a marionette pulled by a string.

In the darkness of the large garden he felt amazed at the turn of the tide. They were shooting at him; this was not an ordinary

battle; it was a duel; it was of special importance to someone that he be killed.

III

The Bolsheviks had "many recipes" to show that governmental authority had not actually been destroyed, and that the answer to the romantic ferocity of the populace was the calculated ferocity of the secret police. Executions were complemented by the most senseless orders, especially orders for mobilization.

They knew how to take robbers' quarters in hand one way or another; and it was thus no wonder that so many robber "gods" and leaders were in the ranks as commissars.

Under the influence of persuasion by execution and agitation on behalf of the "most just government of the proletariat," the outskirts responded to the appeal and recruited a few special regiments in the name of some of the most prominent Reds. The first regiment was composed exclusively of thieves, including Petka Klyn who was drawn into it by the general trend.

All this took place in the early spring of 1920, when the regiment was ready to move out into the field of battle. The assembly point of this regiment was the main station of Odessa, and no regiment had set forth with such picturesqueness.

The robbers had hired all the best drivers that they could find, and then moved on to the station in single file, fiacre after fiacre. In every carriage sat a newly-baked communist hero, accompanied by a Sonia or Shura as a heart-diversioning mate. They were quite drunk, singing their bandit songs in which comparisons were made between lemons in a linden alley, to the accompaniment of an accordion.

It was with such a joyous hubbub as this that they departed, bidding farewell to everybody, and after having listened to a dozen or more commissar speeches. Odessa's main station, as is well known, lies in the center of the city. Before the city is left behind a few stops are made at the smaller stations. When after an hour's ride the army heated cars came to a stop at the Odessa freight station, Petka Klyn's drunken stupor began to clear, and so he looked out through the door. The restless, vociferous, and gay Odessa spoke eloquently to him with every home, with every stone and the silhouettes of the passers-by. From the Old Bazaar Petka could see the poultry maids returning with their pigeons and their chickens, dressed in their orange, blue, and violet shawls, wild peasant stone masons, white with dust, were wending their way in crowds to Narubaiska, like the devil rode the carters along the streets in their empty two-wheeled carts, wrinkled German colonists in their gray caps were hauling wine for sale, near the tracks a crowd of weeders from Dalnyk halted — robust, proud, high-breasted, in red and yellow kerchiefs.

A wind blew up and Petka drew in a whiff of the odors of the sea, of tar and sun-dried fish. The sea beckoned to him from afar. This sea—the most beautiful, the most famous, the most powerful, near which Petka grew up, catching fish for a livelihood, all alone, catching crabs, too, with his bare hands, bathing in the sun, in the salt water and wilful freedom. From the sea emanated his love for color and variety. Petka Klyn contemplated the figures of his companions, noticing their uniform similarity in external appearance with their greasy green shirts and other apparel. It filled him with fear — fear for his future. Smiling suddenly with his yellowish eyes, he sang about the extraordinary robber chieftain, who, before the judge in the courthouse, was indifferent as to the number of people he had killed or slaughtered; but he was not indifferent about his companions living in freedom, stealing and plundering.

Then, after spitting and cursing his bleary-eyed companions, he tore off his army tatters with all the insignia of honour, leaped skillfully out of the heated car, ran along a bit, making a few obscene gestures in the direction of the slow-moving train, and then ducked among the yellowish houses.

The news of Petka Klyn's escape spread among the thieves, and so they soon sloughed off their drunken stupor, hatred of official authority getting the best of their fear of military execution. The robbers chose to follow Petka's example.

When the train had at long last hobbled into Odessa-Zastava, the First Communist Regiment had been reduced to seventeen soldiers, and the latter had only stayed back because they had been too drunk to try an escape.

Odessa, hungry and cold, simply smiled at this episode.

IV

The Bolshevik government, feeling that this episode was a reflection on its authority, was determined on revenge. It did not lack in skill and cunning; thus it took but a few months to achieve its purpose.

The former soldiers of the First Communist Regiment were caught without trouble; for the robbers, having outwitted and made a laughing-stock out of the Bolsheviks, swiftly and completely forgot them and let their guards down. Others were caught by the former methods of long, patient search. Petka stayed in hiding, swearing that he would never be taken alive; nevertheless he was captured in his hiding place while asleep and, after he had been beaten severely for his attempt to escape, he was brought in like the rest of them to the Port Army Commissariat.

Several hundred of his companions were already incarcerated there. Some of them were sitting in silence, contemplating their early execution for desertion; but the majority were unconcernedly raising a racket by their carefree songs; while others even had some moonshine with them. No one seemed to know what was to be done with these prisoners.

Finally the dead-faced Chinese drove them with their bayonets into a huge grain barge. The dark-complexioned commissar now in a suppressed tone without pathos read out to them the instructions that they, as deserters, were to be reserved for the disposition of the army authorities in Sevastopol. Having said this, he gestured with his hand, and then the prisoners, prodded on by the bayonets of the Chinese entered in long streaks the dark interior of the barge.

The hatchways overhead were bolted, and in a few moments the small steam-cutter pulled the strong and wide "berlina" further beyond the breakwater and the Odessa Light House, all along the Arkady bank until finally the barge started to roll and pitch on the waves of the open sea. Leaden clouds floated in the sky, in which silent sea gulls soared with power and ease.

Inside the barge it was quiet at first, until a few angry and excited voices responded to the suggestion: "Let's break it down, brothers! Must we perish here?!" Then from many lips came a roar of malice and despair.

Inside the suffocation grew ever greater giving rise to madness. Hundreds of hands kept pounding on the walls probing for a weak spot; they finally found one. The hatchways of the barge began to raise a bit, and the bolts started to bend, outwardly — it seemed. The barge was breathing heavily like a large frog. Finally the bent bars and the great locks gave way, the boards on the door cracked, and the prisoners leaped onto the wooden deck.

Leading all the others, his battered fists dripping blood like a wild animal was Petka Klyn, jumping like a cat and then halting. There was no one on the sides of the boat, neither the guards nor any other persons.

Petka ran up toward the prow, but the cutter, puffing smoke was already far away. A miracle took place on the horizon. All around the sea loomed violet, covered over with a gray overhanging celestial canopy. The silence of the prisoners was overcast by the sudden certainty that they were soon to be the victims of death by famine. Curses mingled with tears of impotence were hurled at the departing cutter which was passing out of sight. And the smaller the silhouette of the steamer, the more hysterical were the curses and the tears shed by the prisoners.

Petka Klyn kept quiet. His small figure strained itself to the utmost, as he looked in another direction, sniffing the air, it seemed.

The silhouette of another ship seemed familiar. Petka focused his gaze as he contemplated it. In the meantime the ship, ominous and gray, was executing some evolutions, for soon a golden streak flashed through a cloud of white smoke over its decks, the roar of the shot tearing the expanse asunder, as it were.

"That it the *Almaz*; they're shooting at us, brothers!" Petka turned to his silent companions, adding: "It seems that death is overtaking us now."

If there were any doubt about the first unsuccessful shot, then the spattered splinters falling ominously around the barge was ample proof that a shot had been fired. The case was clear.—On instructions from the Bolsheviks, the barge with all its deserters was to be sunk by the *Almaz*, an army cutter.

On the deck of the barge there arose a noisy and forlorn turmoil. Some of the men still hoped to save themselves, thinking that they would not be struck, others were preparing to leap into the water, not knowing, however, in which direction to strike out, while some merely wriggled in their own impotence, not knowing how to swim, or indeed what to do with themselves.

Only Petka Klyn, sitting on the railing, seemed petrified: where and how far away were they from the bank—was his dominating thought. The fog, however, made it impossible to see the bank; nor was it possible from having been locked in, to calculate how long the barge had been towed by the cutter.

Meanwhile someone had fallen at his feet, winding his arms around his knees.

"Petka," he whimpered; "Petka, forgive me, comrade! Before I die forgive me my sin! Forgive me, otherwise we'll all die here. It was I who shot at you from the bridge at Melnychy, who urged the people on to kill you. When you returned from "*Urania*" I guided the soldiers to you as you were asleep." A blond, with white eyelashes and brows, deeply affected by approaching death, Vaska Matsan, a young friend of Petka, a dull and revengeful robber, barely drivelled his words out. He was a frequent inmate of the prisons. The older robbers poked fun at his slouched figure and his head hunched deep in his shoulders.

"You Judas!" said Petka quietly looking down at him. "You" — and here he added the most vile curse that he knew. "Why did you want to kill me?"

Almaz shot again but missed. A column of water rose up, falling on the barge.

"Petka, you are very skillful, everything comes easy to you: you're praised by everybody, you're loved by the girls, songs have been composed glorifying your name," sobbed the browless one, closing his eyes at the sound of the explosion and the searching look of Petka. "I, too, wanted to be known and have songs sung about me . . . So now, forgive me, Petka, or else we'll all die."

"You!" blurted Petka disgustedly, getting up as if he had been lashed with a whip; his strong and lithe flesh did not want to die, while mention of the song evoked more faith in himself. "You" he said, as he pushed Matsan away with his foot, without looking, with no time to work up anger. Petka's eyes flashed, and his step took on the qualities of feline liveness and wolfish ferocity. As he went along he discarded the superfluous clothes, shoes and, without thinking or halting, he plunged into the sea.

He dove, submerged and then swam along without choosing any direction, instinctively, decisively and swiftly. His instinct did not betray him, for in another hour Petka recognized the graceful Genoese tower on the Golden bank, where cypresses and thuyas loomed, where the roofs of the villas grew blue and white, where, after having fallen on the golden sand among the red cliffs, one can dream sweetly about existence.

The robber lay there exhausted. "Oh Mary, oh Mary!" came a clear, feminine voice singing a Neapolitan song, while a piano in a villa beat out a melancholy tune.

The cruiser *Almaz* discharged a few more shots. Revolutionary gunners are not brilliant, but they can get in a lucky shot once in a while. With its side breached, its inside flooring damaged, the barge shipped water, but it did not sink; but the final shots blew it to pieces.

V

Having once experienced a great danger has the effect of making healthy people see the world one hundred times brighter. Petka felt possessed with immeasurable strength, while his impertinence had no bounds. This was the acme of his robber romanticism. He finally chose robbery as his trade or profession; and here in resourcefulness and courage he outshone his predecessors.

At the same time all of Petka's deeds took on the character of colorfulness. His surroundings awaited his play, and he threw into it in times of danger all the force of his personality, as he did too in times of relaxation.

He even regarded himself as a poet. When the accordion played the orchard dance, or any other robber couplets, he would brusquely and energetically sing some verses about his own successful expedi-

tions, bragging about his loot and treading with a grave face upon the members of his interested circle of listeners.

Once during such a dance it seemed to him that the crooked figure of Matsan appeared a couple of dozen steps away in the distance.

"Wait, Vaska!" yelled Klyn with a show of joyous malice and when that worthy failed to obey, he picked up a piece of red rock and hurled it at the figure.

The stranger turned around—No, this was not Vaska Matsan!

The attacks of Petka were jeers at the Bolshevik institutional set-up. A large price was set on his head. He was thus hunted by Bolshevik patrols and non-Bolsheviks looking for a reward. But combining unwise indifference over his own safety with witty cunning, he managed to evade his pursuers.

The final adventure of Petka Klyn took place on Bolharska Street, made famous in the numerous songs sung by the robbers. Bolharska Street at the time was in Petka's zone of activity.

In the dead of night a single-story house caught fire. It started at the bottom like a large bonfire, raging with flame, and puffing with smoke and soot. There was no water at the time in Odessa; the water pumps were not drawing water from the Dniester River, and the firemen, hacking at the neighboring wooden annexes with axes and hooks, by Muscovite method, liquidated the fire. The home was sure to burn down. A division of militia surrounded the place, forbidding any of the dwellers to come near the fire. Several fire victims appeared in their night clothes, lamenting vociferously.

At that time there appeared at the window of the first floor a dark, agile, and diversional figure with a small bag tied to his belt. He was making a majestic gesture of greeting to the crowd below.

"That's Petka Klyn!" yelled the voices down there. "How do you do, Petka Klyn?"

The militia and patrol of the Red Army soldiers, which had come closer, without another thought, fired a wild salvo of shots at the silhouette of the robber hero.

Petka Klyn disappeared, but he appeared again at the window to show the crowd that nothing had happened to him. The people responded with a roar of joy and praise which lasted a long time, although Petka had receded back into the depths of the rooms.

It was not known whether he himself had set fire to this old wooden building, or whether he had appeared at the fire with the ulterior motive of "buying" something for himself. Or perhaps he was enticed by the spectacle and the admiration of the crowd. At any rate what he heard down on the ground was the screaming of hundreds of surprised voices, and that was the sweetest music to his ears. The rooms were full of smoke, but Petka, without ever so much as touching any

chairs, slid along softly, dexterously snatching everything of value and flinging it into his sack. In another few moments he intended to climb up on the roof, leap to other house-tops, and finally disappear.

The soldiers ceased shooting and then looked on dully into the smoke and fire, all upset by the curses and jeers of the hilarious crowd. Finally an officer of the patrol, having said something quietly to an officer of the militia, turned to the patrol with the announcement:

"Attention! Who wants to volunteer in the capture of Petka Klyn?" Here he mentioned the monetary reward and the service promotion. "Let him come forward!"

Not one of the soldiers came forward. They were all silently watching the fire burning up the door of the orchestra and the windows, and licking up the first floor.

"Then you'll go," said the officer curtly to a soldier in the first row, a venereally diseased blond. His face was pallid as he rose and flung down his overcoat. Without taking his eyes off the burning door, he walked right up to it like a lunatic. The wood sputtered, the framework cracked, and the flame was reflected on the brass helmets of the firemen. The soldier had hardly entered through the frame of the door, when a large, heavy beam, glaring through the smoke in a small flame, fell on the unfortunate man, crushing his skull. His clothing immediately caught fire. The black, charred flesh sizzled and peeled off, disclosing red muscles. His hands and feet began to convulse. The muscles of his stomach and the cartilages of his ribs burned right through, and the joints began to fall apart. A woman in the crowd wailed.

The officer stood by near the stiffly overwrought soldiers, saying nothing; but this time Petka was able to slip away.

Then, as if dominated by a fit of rage, a short blond with a crazy look on his face, forced his way through the files of the militia and stood before the officer.

"I'll get Petka Klyn!" he shrieked, his white eyelashes trembling and his colorless, twisted face full of meaning, meaning of the most profound sort, of an almost unreasoning hatred.

The officer repeated to him the words about the reward and gave him a revolver. Matsan — for this indeed was Matsan — did not take anything. He measured with practiced eye the building on fire, then suddenly threw himself forward like a hungry animal, climbing up drain pipes onto the roof of the building. The hot metal burned his hands, the pipes often broke under his weight, but he crawled on steadily until he came to his destination.

The crowds down below were silent. On the right and left side stood hundreds of people who populated the long street.

Finally Matsan stood on the roof, but everybody was quiet as they contemplated his silhouette. The chief of the patrol drew a cigarette knocking it against the match case.

Almost simultaneously with the somewhat lost silhouette of Matsan, there appeared another silhouette, agile, decisive and alert; and as it came into view, it set down the stolen articles, and then the two antagonists attacked each other. They did not fight with knives: they choked each other, scratched with their finger nails, and bit each other madly and blindly. And down below many hundreds of naked people swung to the tempo of the struggle. The officer just stood there with the same unlit cigarette.

Petka Klyn was shorter than his opponent, but cruelty, or rather a right to cruelty, filled his whole being with joy. He felt his enemy grow weaker, and then dragged Matsan with senseless curses to the edge of the roof.

There both of them dangled, two dark figures, showered with a red glow, faceless and inhuman, and often showing white, merciless fangs.

Matsan fell down. Petka weighed his chest down with his knee. Suffocation deprived the defeated one of feeling: and down he went, blind, deaf and dumb, hitting the blazing beams and planks.

No one shot at Petka when he got up heavily to his feet and then with agile tread took a few steps forward on the roof. He was tired, not so much because of the struggle, as with the constant attempt on his reputation, or just the plain, inexorable, ferocious attempt. Vaska Matsan had pursued Petka a little too persistently for him to accept the fact of Vaska's death easily or casually. Petka Klyn took a few more steps forward, halted, and then went ahead to the edge of the roof.

And this was the beginning of the end of Klyn. He looked down below where lay the body of the mangled Vaska. Encircled by smoke clouds, Petka staggered, smiling hazily at the crowd below, and then lost his balance. It was only this, and not the bullets whistling around him, that caused him to fall downwards.

Petka fell, but he got up immediately: his burns were negligible. Petka Klyn turned to run, but was immediately surrounded by the soldiers.

And then a sense of peace swept over this brave and criminal creature. Petka Klyn, the burglar, knew exactly what awaited him. Any burglars caught on the spot were to be executed.

His attitude toward the officer was contemptuous and unpardonable. In answer to the question: "Where are your confederates?" with a wide sweep of his hand he gestured to the right at the mob,

and then himself. As for the names of his confederates he merely smiled and said nothing.

In this affair even the officer was in a hurry: for him the matter, too, was clear-cut.

Having made a few entries into his note book to the effect that during the whole time Petka had been joyfully and pompously bandying raucous shouts with his friends and comrades, the officer ordered the soldiers to push the mob back to the right and to the left. The mob moved back as if in a theatrical performance, creating a wide aisle or corridor, leaving room for Petka near the wall opposite the conflagration. The militia enclosed the vacant spot with a chain; the soldiers stood in double file face to face with the solitary Petka Klyn, who hobbled a bit. An officer appeared between him and the soldiers. He dryly and hurriedly read the sentence of death for burglary and hostility to the proletarian government. Having finished his reading, he wanted to step aside and give the sign to shoot; but Petka Klyn, with the same sarcastic and theatrical smile, asked the officer for permission to sing his "last tango."

Fear registered on the face of the officer that this might be another one of Petka Klyn's tricks; but having taken stock of the situation to the right and then to the left, he gave his approval to Petka by a nod of his head. He ordered his soldiers, however, to keep their gunsights on Klyn.

Petka then began to sing his final song. He sang with a shrill falsetto, as always a bit mockingly, with illustrative gestures of his hands. He sang leaning against the wall, with the unblinking barrels of twenty four rifles levelled at him. He was regarded with interest by the somewhat hunched officer, not without sympathy and respect; and just as the brave look upon the brave, so did the militia-men on the side with their bayonets fixed on their rifles; and from the mob to the right and to the left cries broke loose, and sighs and sobs, at intervals, since the people wanted to listen.

Petka related his experiences on the sea, where he had sailed on a commercial boat; he told with pathos and light rhymes about the number of murders he had committed, and he seemed to grow in the red light of the fire, while the metal helmets of the fire fighters were all directed toward him, immovable and brilliant.

Petka told how his friend had treacherously wanted to kill him, and how he had defeated him in honorable combat, while the rifles of the soldiers began to tremble a bit, perhaps from weariness.

Finally Petka sang about his own death, trying with his falsetto in melancholy melody to convey how sincerely he

“... Sang his last tango
beneath the wall!”

Following these words the command rang out:
“Fire!”

Petka Klyn did not fall, although a grimace of pain had changed his face. It was only after the second salvo that he fell, and the soldiers discharged a third salvo into the lifeless remains of the man.

Anatole Kurdydyk

THREE KINGS AND A QUEEN

Translated by N. N.

Anatole Kurdydyk was born in 1906. He was a journalist and writer whose first sketches appeared in 1924 in Lviv. He is the author of a collection of legends, *The Flaming Fires*, 1929; stories, *Little Fighters*, 1932; *The Secret of an Acquaintance*, 1935; and *Three Kings and a Queen*, 1943. Besides this he wrote a series of plays, operettas and comedies. His first years of literary activity were noted for frequent verses in the newspapers and journals. He now resides in Canada.

THREE KINGS AND A QUEEN

I

I had never expected to live in a desolate mountain village such as Georgia Sica—a village forsaken by God and man.

But like many others driven from their native land, I chose Rumania as a refuge and found that I had to accept a post as customs officer. Choosing between two evils, the job of customs officer on the Rumanian-Hungarian border, miles from any town, seemed better by far than the firing squad waiting for me in the land I had fled from.

Georgia Sica wasn't a town; it wasn't even a village. No one could really say what it was with its several tiny houses, a small church, women sitting on their musty doorsteps, doing absolutely nothing and watching their goats and children playing in the mud, and one or two stores, the stock of which could easily have been loaded on a small truck.

Then there was the only two-story building in the village, the headquarters of the highest authority in the region: our customs and border guards.

I don't believe I will ever forget the old building that boasted the sign "Cafe Stefania, A. and S. Karvynovych, Proprietors".

That's where I went on my first day in the semi-ghost-town, and I was surprised to see that inside it was clean and neat, with a beautiful girl behind the counter.

"Good morning," I said in Rumanian, "could I get something to eat? I'm as hungry as a Carpathian wolf."

"Good morning," answered the pretty blond girl. "Why do you think we keep this place? Even if it's for a Carpathian wolf, I think we can find something to eat." And she came nearer. "What would you like, sir?"

She was like a spring morning, bright, refreshing, and alive with her natural beauty.

"Well, a cup of coffee, and some pastry perhaps, if there is anything like that in Georgia Sica."

She appeared a trifle surprised, I noticed.

"Sir," she said, "You misjudge our Georgia Sica, but it is a common fault with almost all newcomers here. I can assure you that our town has its nice sides, and happy people in the bargain."

She went away to prepare the food.

This cafeteria, I decided, had atmosphere. It was not as bad as I surmised. The tables, too, were covered with embroidered tablecloths, and there were reprints of some masters on the walls. Even the pastry seemed tempting.

It was then that Hrabach entered from another room, with a guitar in his hands. He smiled as all musicians smile, but he almost dropped the guitar when he saw me.

"Balutsky!"

"Hrabach!"

Our greeting was spontaneous as we sprang to meet each other in the centre of the room.

"Hello, Balutsky, you old newshound, you . . .!"

"Hello, Michael, you Spanish donkey. Since when have you been playing a guitar?"

"Well, well, well . . ."

It seems that only mountain tops never meet . . .

And so I discovered that the coffee shop wasn't owned by a Rumanian, but by a fellow countryman. The woman behind the counter was the owner in fact—Stefanie Karvynovych.

Andrew, her husband, joined us after a while and we sat around the table sipping wonderful Vandurana wine.

For a while I even imagined that there couldn't be a nicer spot in all Rumania than Georgia Sica.

II

Andrew Karvynovych was not a jealous man. He watched his wife flit like a butterfly with a happy smile that beamed self-assurance.

"What do you know about love?" he used to ask, "Just what most people know about it?"

"Do you know any more about it?" I ventured to ask.

"Of course I do. Just look at Stefanie and me. You'll find out about it, too. After many years together, it's still always the beginning for us. Every morning we look at each other as if we were meeting for the first time."

And he wasn't making an idle boast.

Besides, Stefanie was a good business woman. She greeted everyone in the village like an old friend, and always had a kind word on the tip of her tongue. She was at every table in the cafe; she knew what was worrying each person, and everyone who came was happy to hear her voice and see the rainbow in her eyes.

III

"Listen, my friend," I asked Michael one evening, "tell me quite frankly: are you in love with Stefanie?"

He lowered his head, and was silent for a few minutes, and I began to feel that I had guessed the truth. Then he shook his head and said in serious tones:

"I'll tell you the truth. It will probably sound very silly, but it's the truth, nevertheless. I met the Karvynovyches in Bucharest. We spent many lean days together, fighting poverty and hardships. At one time we even lived in a single room. She was a heroic woman.

"Imagine. Perhaps she knew that I was in love with her. She must have known, but she never showed it. I remained a true family friend and Karvynovych trusted me completely. You know me. I just can't break a trust."

And he looked into my eyes. Always the same,—sincere, unshakable in his high principles.

"And so it stayed. I'm not married myself, but I feel every respect for any marriage, especially this one. Maybe I'll find another Stefanie . . . But I know there isn't another like Stefanie in the whole world."

He crossed to the other side of the room, took up his guitar and played. And sang. You should have heard him play! His whole soul was in his music—his whole world. A nice, pure world.

I later found out that he had left Bucharest first to come here, then had helped them settle in this village to open their business. The business itself was Stefanie's idea.

"We need a cup of coffee here," she told her husband. "You know, Andrew, like the one we had in our home town, where we met."

Michael loaned them a few thousand to begin with, and in a short time this near God-forsaken town had a beautiful cafe. Stefanie not only cooked, but managed the business, and soon it became a center of village idylls.

Even Andrew was happy. A writer, he took heart again and began to peck away at his typewriter. He soon sold a few articles to national magazines, and Stefanie appeared radiant in her pride for her husband.

Michael and I, of course, were there every day. There was always conversation and gay atmosphere; people came from everywhere in the district.

But I should say the best evenings were those when the four of us sat down quietly in the cafe to read the newspapers, letters from mutual friends. Michael played and sang often, and we helped him with the folk melodies of our land.

We were like figures in a strange game—three kings and one queen.

IV

It was April—April 17th to be exact.

April in Rumania was like May in our homeland. There were no nightingales to launch a lucid song from the heavens, but there were flowers, sunshine and spring beauty everywhere you looked.

It was the third April I had spent outside my homeland, and at the same time I was about 40 miles away from Georgia Sica. A customs officer in this adjoining territory had shot himself. There were some definite irregularities in his books and I was there to check them. For three weeks I had been there, checking and rechecking.

The case was very clear, however, for it brought a black market ring to light. I had to arrest seven peasants and the whole town was quite angry with me. But the mountains here were beautiful, and the Rumanian girls even more so.

This day I was high in the mountains in one of our border outposts. I saw a wagon coming up the steep trail, and borrowing binoculars from one of the border sentries, I discerned the worried countenance of Michael.

I went out to meet him.

"What has happened, Michael?"

But he was silent. I knew something serious had brought him here. I was anxious to know.

"What is it? Stefanie sick? Andrew sick?"

"Worse. Stefanie is unfaithful to her husband."

I thought I hadn't understood for a moment, but finally his words sank in.

"Stefanie? Are you crazy? That's a lot of nonsense."

"It's true. That's why I've come. If we don't do something right away, I'm afraid something very terrible will happen."

I wanted to know more about this unhappy piece of news.

"I really don't know how long it has been going on, but I found it out by accident. After you left, perhaps a week after, I noticed that Stefanie was in a very bad mood. At first I thought it might have been on account of you, because you know she likes you very much.

"But, besides this, that bandit Goulianu appeared oftener at the coffee shop. I started to watch him closely, because you know that fellow Goulianu is not to be trusted with anything.

"The day before yesterday I thought I'd go up the mountain to pick a bouquet of spring flowers for our Stefanie. But as I rounded a turn in the path I came upon a sight that shocked my senses! There

was Stefanie . . . and Goulianu was kissing her. I recognized her blond hair well. Nobody knows what his trade is!"

"This is impossible. You must have made a mistake. Maybe he was trying to kiss her," I said.

Michael paused for a moment, and his expression became sadder still.

"No, my friend, I watched for a moment. I saw that she was returning his embrace. This was a real love scene, not something I imagined, I tell you. She must have sensed my presence because just then she loosened herself from his embrace. Then I walked around the turn. They pretended they were talking . . ."

We were both silent for a long time.

"Did you say anything to her about it after?"

"No. What could I say. I knew that we should go back as soon as possible. I thought of Andrew and I felt a complete sadness in my heart. Cursed world!"

V

We could not leave that day. I had to finish my check. The government had lost a lot of money, and the suicide victim had done a fairly thorough job of cheating the government wherever he could. I worked from dawn till dawn the next day.

On the third day we left. The route to Georgia Sica seemed to stretch to infinity, but late in the evening we arrived back home.

Some of the villagers stood around the cafe. It was closed. They asked questions. What had happened to Stefanie?

First Andrew had left on a business trip, and shortly after, Stefanie had locked up the business and vanished.

I had to say something, do something, to cover up the inevitable scandal.

"Well, neighbour," I told one customer, "our Stefanie wanted to take a holiday, and away she went."

"So suddenly?" another one asked. This time Michael helped out: "You know our Stefanie, fellows. She is a very unusual woman and when she wants to do something, she goes right ahead by herself and does it."

But our answers were poorly given and poorly met. I remember that evening, for it seemed like the end of the world to both of us.

Michael simply said: "She has taken off with this damned monster Goulianu." In her room we found a note addressed to Andrew:

"Andrew: I am not going to defend myself before you. It happened this way, and this is the end. Don't wait for me. I can never thank you for everything.

Stefanie."

Then there was a P. S., —

“Please be calm about this.”

That was all.

Michael took the letter and said:

“Andrew is not going to get this letter.”

VI

One week later Andrew came home from his trip.

“Stefanie! Stefanie dear!” he shouted as he crossed the doorstep.

Michael walked up to him:

“She went away. She received a telegram and I promised her that I would help her here with the business.”

“Oh, yes,” said Andrew, “I know. She must have gone to the Dovbushes, but she must have left a note for me. Where is it?”

He did not find one. He did not say anything, but he must have sensed something was wrong somehow because he was sullen and silent. The village mayor dropped by good-naturedly: “You see I am in for a change and my wife is out.”

“Oh,” replied the mayor, “you already know the story, I see.”

Andrew gave him a funny look.

“I know? Why shouldn’t I know? My wife went to Bucharest and I’m going there too. In three days we’ll both be back.”

And he went to his room.

We followed him. We tried to tell him the story, piece by piece as best we could. He didn’t even hear us through, but shouted.

“And you call yourselves friends! You’re nothing but a bunch of liars. I never expected this from you. I’m leaving for Bucharest, and I’ll be back in three days with Stefanie!”

VII

He wasn’t back in three days—nor three weeks. As for us: we could only wait and Michael managed the business better than Stefanie. I helped him as much as I could. The villagers even began to forget about the Karvynovyches. The whole town knew the story, but nobody talked about it anymore.

The next date that I remember distinctly is July 21. When I came in Michael said: “Andrew is back,” and he sighed. “He’s sleeping.”

He was back all right. But you could hardly recognize him. He was dirty, unshaved, and he looked much older. There was a strong odor of whiskey about him.

And this was the same Andrew who hated alcohol.
His little world had collapsed. He was the picture of defeat.

VIII

Our first conversation was strange indeed. He was half drunk.
"Give me your hand," he said. "I'm not angry with either of you.
Nor with anyone for that matter."

He asked for a drink. We refused.

He opened his suitcase and displayed bottle upon bottle of liquor.
And in his opinion the Bulgarian was even better than the Rumanian.

Days passed and he drank more and more. He never once mentioned Stefanie.

Then one evening there were screams—a brawl—and Andrew was in the thick of it, fighting with postmaster Zakhar.

"I forbid you to say that!" Andrew was shouting.

"And I'm not going to listen to you," Zakhar shouted back at him.

It was all because of Stefanie, naturally, and restoring peace in the cafe was no easy matter that night.

The next day Andrew asked Michael for 20,000 in Rumanian currency. He was drunk again and we didn't know what to do with him. Michael finally gave him 5,000.

Andrew started receiving illegal whisky from across the border. As a customs officer I saw it happening under my very eyes—and several days later he told me he had already made a few thousand.

He received a letter one day, and he was off again; nobody saw him go. But two weeks later we received a telegram reading simply: "Send me 10,000."

We sent the money to the address he gave.

Five days later the money was returned. He wasn't there any longer. We became worried all over again, but we couldn't do anything. He had simply vanished.

IX

It was two months later that the summons came. From Bulgaria, it asked us both to appear in a small town court as soon as possible. The magistrate asked us whether we knew Andrew Karvynovych. Andrew had been jailed for attempting to cross the Bulgarian-Greek border with a band of smugglers. We put up bail for him, and some minutes later, Andrew was released.

It was a strange meeting. He said:

"I know everything now."

And he looked like the shell of the Andrew we once knew. A lost man—a sick man.

X

The game grew stranger still. Three kings now, but no queen.

XI

Finally a letter came. I recognized the writing at once.

"Michael . . .!"

We opened the letter together, and saw Stefanie's signature. We read the short message:

"Come to Radul's cafeteria in Mehet Alba Thursday and do not say a word to anyone."

"Well?"

At first we wanted to run to Andrew. Then we dropped the idea. Why should we?

Said Michael:

"We have to go ourselves. Radul's public house isn't very far away. Some 20 miles or so. Tomorrow is Thursday and we can manage it quite easily. Who knows what has happened—but it must be important or she never would have written."

Early Thursday, I said: "Michael, I'll go alone, and you stay with Andrew."

"No, I won't let you go alone. We'll ask Captain Grigorescu of the customs police to go with you." We went to Grigorescu and got him out of bed. We talked for a long time, but finally settled on a plan: I was to leave immediately, and the Captain was to leave at 12 noon. He was to take five soldiers along.

XII

My gun was ready, but I checked it again and put it in my pocket. I started out. It was a bright, fresh morning.

Our horses moved slowly through the forest, the wheels of our wagon beating out a slow and eerie rhythm on the ground. We met three men on horseback — one of them was Zakhar.

"Hey," he called, "where are you going?"

"And where are you off to? Are you going to use that shotgun for hunting?"

"Perhaps . . ." And they rode by.

I thought about Zakhar for some time. He was supposed to be at his Post Office. What was he doing out here? And as I thought it, I must have dozed off, for all of a sudden I heard the shouts of my wagon driver . . .

Then someone put a blanket over my head.

Bandits!

My gun was snatched away, and I heard the cry: "To Hangiar!" They tied me up. I heard one or two shots, then the wagon moved on.

XIII

It was a ridiculous turn of events. I gave up hope of meeting Stefanie. I found it hard to breathe under the blanket.

"He's choking," I heard a voice.

"The devil take him," came another harsh voice.

But someone loosened the blanket under the ropes. I gulped some fresh air, and through an open fold I saw a wild face. "Be quiet!" it said.

What else could I do?

I recalled the name they had shouted—Hangiar—where had I heard it before? — Aha! That was the name that ran through the accounts in the smuggling case I had checked in the border town recently. It meant that Hangiar had some connection with the smugglers, and that they were probably taking me to the smugglers' center now.

A sharp voice startled my thoughts. The wagon stopped.

"Have you got them both...?"

"Only one," my captors replied.

So they knew that we were both supposed to come... But how?

They removed the blanket, and again I saw wild, barbaric faces.

Then I saw Gouliau—and next to him, Stefanie, her hair dishevelled, her features expressionless.

She spoke:

"Well, Commissar! Alone, I see. Thank you for coming. The Captain (and she pointed to Gouliau) and the boys are anxious to meet you. Old friends, aren't you? And there are several accounts to be settled."

She gave me a look of hate, then turned to the bandits...

"You're ready to settle these accounts, aren't you, fellows?"

"Yaa!" they shouted.

Stefanie walked up to me, spat in my face, then slapped me twice across the mouth with her hand. The stinging blows made me shout:

"B... of a woman!"

"Take him upstairs. Take away his ropes, give him a bottle of wine, and lock him in one of the rooms!"

They took me into a house, and upstairs. I was finally left alone. I was sore all over.

I couldn't hear what they were talking about, but I heard loud voices and laughter—they were beginning to drink. I lost track of time for my room was dark.

Then I heard her voice. She was coming upstairs with Goulianu.

"No, Georgi, not that way—over here. You're a little drunk, and you're forgetting the way to your room . . . That's right, in here. The prisoner is next door . . . Here, sit down and I'll get you a pillow . . . Rest a little . . . Maybe you'll even sleep for a while."

"No! I don't want to sleep," shouted Goudianu. "We're leaving tonight! Tonight, you hear."

"But Georgi—you promised. And you always keep your word. You said we would go tomorrow."

He started to argue with her, but she said: "Look, George! You've got to trust me. I did everything you said and I even went to Bulgaria — everywhere you wanted me to . . ."

He wasn't going to give up yet. Just then some pistol shots rang out downstairs.

"What's that?" asked Goulianu.

"The boys are all in a good mood. I'll go take a look."

She went to the top of the stairs and called down:

"You're doing fine, boys! Keep it up! The Captain likes it!"

"Vio!" they shouted.

"Here, Captain," I heard her say as she came back to the room next door—"take a couple of shots yourself. Here's your gun."

"I don't want to," he said.

"Then I will . . ."

I heard a shot from next door.

Then the door to my room was unlocked.

"Come on!" she shouted, and pulled me out by the arm.

I followed her down the back way to the basement. There were powder kegs piled in one corner, and Stefanie lit several long fuses. As we left the house, she threw a match into a pile of rubbish and paper.

I began to understand the story . . .

We could still hear their shouts and shots as we left. At the edge of the forest we stopped and looked back. The house was burning like a match. A window was opened and one of Goulianu's gunmen put his foot over the ledge. I sent some bullets whistling around him.

I heard my last bullet at the same time the explosion took place. Everything was silent again.

And that was all.

XIV

By morning we reached Georgia Sica. Captain Grigorescu had gone on to the bandit's hideaway. Stefanie's story was a simple one. Karvynovych was an assumed name. Andrew was a refugee from a Soviet consulate, and someone had stolen his papers. Stefanie got false papers, and they started out anew. But one day Goulianu showed up in Georgia Sica, and recognized Andrew. Well, he should have, for he had stolen Andrew's papers.

Goulianu began threatening Stefanie with blackmail, and she wanted to save her husband in her own way. She hit upon a dangerous plan, — she went with Goulianu — leader of the notorious Black Band of smugglers and killers. But once with the bandits, she couldn't break away. She was trapped, and had to plan an avenue of escape. She began by aiding in the smuggling operations, and winning Goulianu's complete trust. They planned to flee to the United States, and Goulianu had packed up his business, and announced he would stage a farewell party for his men. She had to take this opportunity, but she needed somebody's help. She chose me, as Goulianu still had a grievance to settle with me. I had been responsible for the arrest of several of his agents. They wanted to get me in a trap, and, Stefanie said, were planning to kill me by slow torture. Stefanie never had a concrete plan. She just hoped that something would turn up.

And it did . . .

Our strange game had ended: the three kings had found their queen.

Oleh Lysiak

DIENBIENPHU WILL SURRENDER TOMORROW

*Translated by * * **

Oleh Lysiak was born in 1912 in Lviv. He is a writer and journalist, working with many Ukrainian journals and newspapers to which he contributes many reports, sketches, and articles. He is the author of stories dealing with the armed struggle of the Ukrainians against the Soviet and German occupation, *For the Riflemen's Custom*, 1953; and *People Just Like Ourselves*, 1960. He now resides in the United States. One of his stories is included in this anthology, *Dienbienphu Will Surrender Tomorrow*, the theme of which is taken from the war in Vietnam. This story was awarded first prize in a literary competition sponsored by the journal *Kiev*.

DIENBIENPHU WILL SURRENDER TOMORROW

Artillery shells whistled through the air. When the bright yellow lights of the rockets slid very slowly from the dark clouds, paling the violet and green machine gun tracers, the earth, ploughed by explosions into a muddy chaos, the torn barbed wires, stood out shadowless.

A man wriggled over the muddy terrain, pushed aside a bullet-riddled corpse, and rolled out of sight. In a moment his head appeared over the parapet of the trench he had found.

"Over here, over here! Faster, faster!" he called in a low voice, gasping for breath.

One after another four dark silhouettes jumped into the ditch. Outside raged the full fury of the enemy's fire. Time after time bullets hit the muddy ravine close to the parapet of the trench. Inside there was only the sound of rapid breathing.

"In an hour or two, when things quiet down, I'll go for a reconnaissance," sounded the voice that had called them to the shelter. "Bien, bien, all right, Terno," answered another voice, tired and weak. "Oh, my arm!"

"You'll have the first watch, Hans," the first voice commanded softly. "In two hours, you'll wake up the lieutenant and me. Then he will be on post and I'll go out. At six."

"Uh," — answered a guttural voice.

In the ditch, the fast breathing gradually became slow and heavy, while above roared at full strength the concentrated fire of the field.

The hours passed.

In the fog before dawn, from the muddy, dug-up hills toward Fort Isabelle came the rattling of machine guns and the dull strokes of grenades. Hooommm-hooomm, the bass chords of the explosions counter-pointed the distant battle. The artillery fire had ended, and those who sat in the ditch — the ones who were not asleep — could imagine how hot things were over in Isabelle. Their imaginations stretched out to recreate the pictures familiar, for many months, of what comes when the black geysers of the "softening up" cease, and out of the fog over what was long ago a rice field, come stooped figures, moving closer and closer amidst the barbed wire and barricades. Machine guns cough for one moment,

and then the hateful sound like the barking of a pack of dogs, "Die, French!" Grey shadows loom, and the defending soldiers push aside the butts of their machine guns, pull the pins from grenades, take up rifles conveniently leaning against the wall of the trenches with bayonets fixed. Frayed bursts sound here and there, and directly overhead, wrapped in the fog, appear the figures of the Vietminh soldiers.

In the thoughts of the five men in the forgotten trench there was no place for sympathy with those who were in Fort Isabelle. They were simply glad that they had found shelter. All of them were worn out.

Every day, every day, every day the same: the terrible thunder and roar of the artillery that poured over their heads, now for the second month, the same masses of attackers, every day the same "Die, French," coming from the grey fog in front of their positions; every night the same loudspeakers, speaking in all possible languages, calling them, the soldiers of the *Legion Etrangere*, the Foreign Legion, to go over to the Vietminh side. Yesterday they even talked in some Slavic language, didn't Sergeant Pierre Terno say?

Lieutenant Arraye tried to break through the streak of fog in the forefield of the ditch with his eyes. Somewhere there, from among the mudholes, the grey chaos of tree stumps and discarded ammunition boxes, the sickening smell of disintegrating corpses, should appear Sergeant Pierre Terno. Pierre Terno, the best non-commissioned officer of the platoon, the man who calls himself by some different, longer name.

... Wait, how was it, how was it, Lieutenant Victor Arraye tried to remember, watching the empty, fog-covered forefield. Even in the citation the battalion commander sent three weeks ago, they said that Sergeant — then that other, longer name — showed "heroic courage and boldness befitting the best sons of the Grand Nation."

But he isn't French, thought Arraye, and it came to his mind that he didn't know where Pierre Terno came from. Maybe that little black-haired Andre... Arraye looked behind him and saw that Andre was sleeping, his head resting on the arm of fat Corporal Hans... Hans... what's his name again?

Silence. On the forefield little birds chirped and fluttered. — I wonder how there can be birds here, thought the lieutenant. Do they really keep nests, hatch young, here in this grey hell?

Arraye looked again into the trench. The faces of the three men sleeping in the mud were tired and heavy, unshaven, streaked with sweat and dried blood. These men were all that were left from a patrol sent from Fort Isabelle to collect the freight of the plane that

fell, shot down by the enemy's anti-aircraft batteries, between the lines.

Eight of the patrol remained over there in no man's land, in the silent fog. Only four of them reached that forgotten trench — four, plus the American pilot of the crashed plane, who miraculously remained alive not far from the remains of his machine where his dead co-pilot lay.

— Hans, little Andre, the American flier, myself, and Terno. All we have left. Sergeant Pierre Terno, who should be back any moment now. The fog will lift in no time.

— Pierre Terno. The Lieutenant saw in his imagination the figure of a big man in his forties with pale blue eyes, peasant-like deliberate motions, the thick fingers of a woodcutter. But Pierre's movement became lightning fast when he fanned his bursts from his Sten gun, his pale eyes grew sharp when he stood on watch or repeated an order hard to execute; and his heavy hands became those of a magician at once. Then somebody always shouted "Terno, Terno!" And he sped with a ponderous pace, something like the quick deliberateness of an elephant — or maybe the ancient aurochs from the steppes by the Black Sea?

Something was moving off there in the gray fog. No, it was his imagination, nobody was coming. Arraye strained his ears, tried to pierce the fog with his eyes. He could only see the fragment of wood, and the nearest stumps. — I saw something like this before, Arraye remembered. Oh, yes, the blasted heath in Macbeth.

... But no, something was moving, someone crawling in the fog. A little touch of the shoe awakened Corporal Hans; a moment later little dark-haired Andre was standing at the parapet. The bandage was slipping on his leg.

The noise from the forefield became quite clear. Corporal Hans Schroeder inserted the clip into his submachine gun and the click from the lock sounded, in the dead silence, like the crack of a whip in a circus arena. Andre turned angrily toward Hans, the finger on his lips trembling.

In the strained silence they could, for a moment, hear only the sound of the birds. In the rhythm of the chirping came another sound, a light chirping whistle.

Look at Andre, look at him! He put down his Sten, puckered his lips and whistled in the same tone as the sound from the forefield. A muffled voice came from the fog. What did he say? What language is this?

"*Tak, Petre, my tut!*" (Yes, Peter, we're here) — answered Legionnaire Andre, and then catching the glance of the officer, he added guiltily in French, "*Nous sommes ici, Pierre, ici . . .*"

— Oh, they should speak whatever language they want! — flashed in the officer's mind. — The devil with it, if only Pierre gets back. When he is with us, everything is different.

Sergeant Terno appeared at the edge of the trench. He squirmed across the parapet and slid down the clay wall, splashing lightly in the muddy pool at the bottom of the ditch. Smeared with clay, bleeding from barbed wire scratches on his hands, he breathed heavily for a few seconds, staring, one by one, at the men in the trench. His pale blue eyes grew warm for a short moment as his glance stopped at the face of his friend Andre, but then they returned to their cool pale expression as he met the eyes of Lieutenant Arraye. He slightly stiffened to attention and his hand lifted to the edge of his helmet.

"Oh, leave it, Terno, leave it" Arraye waved his hand. "Report."

But Terno did not respond to the officer's order at once. First he pulled a piece of dry rag from his pocket and wrapped it around the lock of his Sten, cautiously leaned the gun against the wall of the ditch, took off his helmet, showing a balding skull, pulled the big American .45 pistol from his belt, and slipped it into the holster hanging low at his right hip.

Arraye controlled his impatience easily. He had become used to this procedure and knew that the Sergeant was right. He must, like a peasant, take care of his tools first; and only then . . . The lieutenant stood calmly, waiting for the last step. Terno pulled from his breast a packet of pitch-black Gauloise cigarettes, lighted one, and only after taking a full puff did he speak to the officer. "Pardon, mon lieutenant. You understand?"

"I understand," — wryly smiled Arraye.

"We can take a seat," — said the sergeant, "it's not necessary for all of us to be on guard. One is enough. It will be quiet over there for a while."

"It's your turn," — the officer said to the American. "All right?"

The pilot nodded and turned to the parapet.

The explosions from Isabelle had stopped. From time to time a single shot banged, and occasionally a short machine gun burst. The four, sitting on the bottom of the trench, lifted their heads.

"They beat them off once more," — mumbled Corporal Hans Schroeder, — "Isabelle holds out."

"Not for long," — growled out the sergeant, scraping a smooth patch in the mud with his boot.

"Tell what you know, Peter!" The fat Hans was growing impatient. — "You never talk just talking, *das weiss ich.*"

The sergeant cast a sharp glance into the German's eyes.

"*Warte mal*, Hans, you will know enough soon."

"Tell it, Pierre," — asked the young officer in the smooth, soft kind of voice one uses when he is talking to an elder brother and does not want to annoy him.

The voice of the sergeant was quiet and even, and his breathing came easily after the short rest. The grey smoke from his cigarette gave him visible pleasure. His voice suggested nothing but professional crispness when he started his narrative.

"I met a patrol" — he wiped the mud from his dirty lips — "our patrol from Isabelle."

Somewhere, far over them, above the gray clouds that touched the peaks of the jungle-covered hills, a plane was droning thinly. They would not see it, but the sound reminded them of the world that was somewhere far away from that shell-pocked mud, beyond the ring of fire from the Van Nguyen Giap divisions, far, far over the jungle...

A few hundred yards away the ack-ack batteries started their coughing. The sergeant continued.

"Tomorrow they will not shoot any more," — he said slowly, throwing the last centimeter of his cigarette stump on the ground.

"All right; tell it, Pierre!" — The lieutenant finally lost his temper. — "I sent you on a reconnaissance to get some information, particularly to get an idea how we can get out of this dirty place, not to make prophecies about what will happen tomorrow, *nom de Dieu!*"

"All right, all right, *mon lieutenant*, if you are in such a hurry for bad news," — answered the sergeant. — "Here it is, my truth: we surrender."

"Surrender!" — The four voices joined in one explanation; even the American turned to the sergeant.

"Surrender..." — a false note sounded in the voice of Corporal Hans Schroeder. He looked around in a furtive manner, not sure if anyone could interpret the tone of his voice.

"Surrender!" — Naked terror like a strong blow forced the word from Andre's mouth. A flash appeared in his eyes.

"What, surrender? To the dirty bums!" — The pilot twisted his face in a grimace. — "After all we flew in here?"

Arraye after his exclamation had become silent. His face looked worn and tired. After two years participation in "Operation Hache," two months of siege, the heroism of General de Castri, his own

responsibility... Arraye felt one small tinge of relief: that it was not he but this big Slav who had brought the news.

"Yes, we surrender," — repeated the sergeant. — "Why do you wonder? Didn't you ever surrender, Hans? Did you expect something else?"

"Did the men from the patrol tell you anything more, or was that all?" — asked Arraye. — "What more can one say?"

"They were heading for Fort Gabrielle to tell them to destroy everything important before the end. They lost radio contact. They were supposed to burn the documents, codes, and so on. And we... we should follow your orders, lieutenant."

Arraye's brow wrinkled. Probably his wounded arm hurt him again.

"Are you oriented, Terno? Which way did the patrol go? And... where are we?"

"They went back to their fort. They said they'd had enough. They tried all they could — or risked all they would."

"Risked all they would? What is there left to try?"

Instead of answering immediately, the sergeant started to scratch out a map on the patch of muddy earth he had smoothed out with his boot. All heads bent over the drawing. The American also came closer.

"Fort Isabelle is here." — The sergeant pointed with his stick, smeared with blood from his hand that he had used to make the sketch. — "Over there is Gabrielle, and here is where the pilots dropped their cargo." He turned toward the American, who nodded. "These hills and the path are occupied by the Vietminh. Their artillery are on the hills; the boys from the patrol knew the location of every gun, because they were all the time under a barrage from those hills. The path serves the Vietminh as a supply line for their artillery. On both sides of the path is a thick jungle."

The ack-ack guns stopped firing. A single gun, further off, barked still.

"At no other place is the jungle so close." — The sergeant straightened his body and glanced at his audience. They were all silent.

Somewhere in the clouds the plane droned again, and the pilot looked up sorrowfully. In an hour or so, that Joe will be in the bar in Hanoi. Oh, goddam it!

"We are here." — The sergeant pointed with his stick. — "Under the direct fire of those bastards on the hills. When the fog rises and they see us in this mousehole — they'll have a fair chance to finish us off before the official surrender. And besides, they can't know that

our Old Man is going to surrender, after getting his general's stars. We are here. Ten minutes from the jungle and the path between the two hills on which Vo Nguyen's artillerists are sitting. That's all."

Arraye lifted his eyes to the sergeant. The rest turned also to him.

"Well, Terno, what do you think?"

The sergeant pulled out another cigarette and with a quick glance counted the remaining ones in the pack. Six.

"What do you think, Peter?" — Corporal Schroeder repeated the officer's question. — "Would it be possible?"

"Possible, yes. But it's hard to tell if one could get through. Three of our — or maybe even five," — he added slowly, — "could jump over, until the Vietminh notice it. And in the jungle... when you have food... and luck..."

"Wait, Terno, wait." — the lieutenant, with clear effort, tried to strengthen his voice. — "Let's resume all you said, once more. And, Sergeant Terno, ... I thank you for your excellent accomplishment of my order. Thanks, Pierre."

"Why, a votre service, mon lieutenant," — Terno lifted the hand holding the cigarette. — "You allow me?"

"Talk, Terno." — The officer accepted his proposal with visible gladness. — "Then..."

"First possibility," — the sergeant lifted his head, — "is to return to our fort..."

"And get shot on the way!" — threw in little Andre with passion. — "How can you say that, Petro!" — The words came out of his mouth as if of their own volition. He surely struggled inside, his squeezed fists trembled.

"You're right, Andrii. And that would be pointless before the honorable surrender." — The sergeant's voice vibrated with irony, but his eyes glowed with sympathy for his friend. — "The next choice: sit in this hole and wait until the yellow comrades get us. The third possibility: the path in the jungle and 130 kilometers to the next outpost."

"It would be silly to try to return," — sipped the fat corporal through his teeth, "but to wait here for the end of the show... just in case we might live through it."

"We might live through that!" — Andre bent close to the German's face. — "We might live through being captured — but after? Do you know what that means?"

In his voice was so much swollen pain and rage that Hans was silenced at once. The lieutenant also remained still. After a while he lifted his head.

"*Bien, mes amis*, I shall give no orders in this case; for every one of us this is a different matter. I know that some of you cannot be taken prisoner by the Reds. With me it is something else. But I will neither surrender, nor can I get through the jungle with that stump — "he showed his wounded arm —" alone. Four of us can get through — isn't that what you said, Pierre?"

"Maybe even five." — The sergeant looked down and carefully pressed out his cigarette in the muddy pool. — "Maybe even more, if something distracted the attention of the Viets. Who knows?"

"I repeat, I do not want your decision now," said the lieutenant. — "At night, when it is dark enough for us to try, tell me what you decided. Then and in case the fever breaks me," — the lieutenant pointed at Pierre, — "He will give the orders. And until then," — Arraye smiled dryly — "full democracy reigns, and everybody can decide for himself. All right, pilot?" — said Arraye in English, — "did you understand me right?" He turned his eyes to the American.

"Goddam right!" — The American nodded vigorously. — "But I don't need to wait to decide. I'll try the jungle. Otherwise I wouldn't be in this hole with you."

"I know, pilot," — answered Arraye. — "But you better wait anyway."

Their muffled voices stilled. The lieutenant had probably exhausted his whole store of energy. He looked without speaking at the sergeant, who rose.

"Well, let's be quiet now, if you intend to live until evening and submit your decision to Monsieur le Lieutenant then. Sleep, eat, dream, but do it quietly. Maybe they will not see us even if the fog rises. But they can hear us all right. So — be quiet."

"May I sleep now?" — The American turned to the sergeant. He took for granted that the big man had taken over from the lieutenant. — "I wanna sleep, *compris? Coucher...*"

"Relieve him, Andrii," — said the sergeant. "At night you may have fever."

Four mud-covered, gray figures settled as comfortably as they could in the ditch under the clay walls. Corporal Schroeder again closed his eyes and put his head on his chest.

The sergeant with deft hands changed the bandage on the leg of his wounded friend, who in the meantime watched the forefield.

Then Terno crawled toward the lieutenant. — "Don't do it," — whispered Arraye. — "The wound stopped bleeding; better not touch it. I'll be all right." — The sergeant settled against the wall, his head leaning on his hand. The pilot pulled some papers from his pocket, mumbled something, then he too fell asleep.

In the ditch all was silent.

— "What did he say, that stupid: We might live through it? How can he know? Did he see the blood on the walls of the wagons, when they were taking us from the PW camp in Germany for repatriation *na rodinu*? The blood of those who cut their veins, one after another, with the blade!

The dark eyes of "Petit Andre" opened wide. Oh, get rid of that picture of the bloody strings flowing slowly along the wall of the wagon . . . the blood of those who waited in a row for a miserable death by suicide, milder at least than what awaited them if the Americans handed them over to the Reds.

His eyes closed again. The red thread disappeared and in its place appeared the smoothly-combed hair of the MVD major. — "Don't be afraid, boys, you'll go to *rodina*; you'll be repatriated. *Rodina* will forgive you . . ." — And his cool, unblinking fish eyes ironically bored through the face of Andrii Gonta. Forgive! As if we had not, as German slaves, dug the corpses from the mass graves in the "Park of Culture and Relaxation," the bodies of those executed years ago by the NKVD, in Vynnytsia.

His thought returned to Vynnytsia, small, provincial Vynnytsia on the Boh River: the ten-year school, his mark of "A" in the Ukrainian language, the excursion to Moscow, the performance of Korniichuk's *Pravda* at the Bolshoi Theater, all the falseness, the fakes, the indignity — all the lies, lies!

And then the war with Finland, the occupation of Western Ukraine, until then a part of Poland; the secret meetings with those strange young men and women who not only spoke the Ukrainian tongue, but thought Ukrainian thoughts, of a free country, keystone of the western Slavic nations, powerful enough to escape domination by Moscow or Berlin . . .

And then the new war, the retreat and the long, long time as prisoner of war, the "Valley of Death" in Uman City, where thousands of prisoners starved to death or were beaten to death by the Germans; then digging out the corpses of those executed by the NKVD in old Vynnytsia, and hard beatings and hunger and ill treatment at the hands of such as this, what's his name, Hans Schroeder. Then the Vlasov recruiters, and after that again the same boys as the Western Ukrainians in 1939, but this time in German uniforms with the Ukrainian lion on their sleeves. Then the end of the war, and surrender, and the end of everything; the barbed wire of the PW camp, the compulsory repatriation of "collaborators," American guards and American wagons, and again the red string of blood on the wall, oh God! Oh, God!

And then — the wire cut in the night with stolen pliers, the flight into the French Zone of Germany; the recruiting bureau of the Foreign Legion, where nobody asks any question but, "*Votre nom?*" "*Mon nom* — Andre..." "Perhaps Andre Petit," — laughed the fat sergeant, and this question was answered for long years to come.

Marseilles, Sidi bel Abbes, more training, the long voyage, seven years of the dirty war — "Operation Hache," burning rice straw huts, executions of old men and women and children, parachute jumps into the green chaos of the jungle, assaults, ambushes...

Far away from here on the banks of the small Ukrainian stream called Boh the forget-me-nots are blossoming again; it's spring, it's May. They are blossoming beside the monastery where the Kozak leader Bohun defeated the Poles three hundred years ago; they are blossoming in the park where NKVD agents laid row by row the corpses, each with a hole in the back of the head. Oh, far, far away from here, distant green Vynnytsia, a small town on the banks of the Boh.

No, Hans Schroeder; no, Lieutenant Arraye. For Petit Andre, for Andrii Gonta, the way into the Communists' prison is closed.

"Goddamn right I don't wanta be caught by those yellow crooks. Hell, yesterday I was flying like that guy the Red just stopped popping at, flying that freight Fairchild, throwing supplies to the besieged Frogs. The job was all right — pay not bad, insurance, pension for Janet "in case of something..." But after what the boys told after they came back from the PW camp in Korea, me get caught by those dirty, yellow, stinkin' bums — no, no sir.

Some seek adventure; some have adventure thrust upon them... Which one's me? No job, after the Korean war, Janet expecting the baby, the mortgage and car payments two months overdue already; then the offer for civilian pilots to fly material to Indochina. Good job: ten thousand a year, 25 thousand insurance — where can you find a better job for an unemployed World War Two pilot nowadays. Wait, where is Indochina; let's take a look at the camp. Aha, real close to India and China; yes, here's Hanoi and here's that — what's the name? ... Fort Dienbienphu.

The more of the same, like the nights over Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Dresden, Vienna... flak shaking the plane. Hardly enough time to jump — and Jimmy, the navigator, wasn't lucky at all. God bless these guys who found me.

But a Commie PW camp? Never. That big guy, what's his name? Peter or Pierre — he's right: hit the path to the jungle. 130

kilometers; how many miles is that? One mile is 1609 meters, or a meter is 5/8 mile... Surrender... no!

Kurt must be 12 years old now... or is he 13? When I was on leave last time, in January, 1945, how old was he? I could take the letter from Anne Marie from the helmet, but what's the sense? I almost could recite it: Kurt is going to the *Oberschule*; Annemarie goes every day to the office of the French Commissioner in Koblenz, trying to free me from the Foreign Legion; everything is hopeless; everything was in vain; but she still hopes, waits, is faithful...

But what other way could I expect? *SS-Unterschafuehrer* Kurt Breuer, of "*Leibstanderte* Adolf Hitler" — now Corporal Hans Schroeder, *Legion Etrangere*. Nothing else left in the spring of 1945, only the recruiting office of the Foreign Legion in Mainz. My record was due to turn up any day, the record of what happened over there, in *Osten*, in Eastern Europe, where those two came from, Andre and sergeant Pierre.

The open space surrounded with barbed wire, in among the hills, close to the highway. The long ditches the prisoners dug. The long benches where they sit, row after row, naked — men, women, children, and people. One after another they march to the edge of the grave dug by their own hands, obedient, dead before the bullet crushes their skulls. The whole platoon got special privileges that day early in the morning, schnapps, extra wurst; they knew that there would be *Spezial Kommande*. Drunken men look a different way at skulls broken by bullets; the hands that press the triggers seem remote, not one's own — again another body, another wet rug falls into the ditch, young girls, old men, boys. One after another the spiritless corpses walk to the edge of the ditch; the long wooden bench is empty again; the gray cadavers fill the grave, and the bulldozers roar as the guards lead in the next crowd of naked victims. All unreal, a haze, one is there and not there...

"*Ach, Posten, Posten, lassen Sie mir beim Leben!*" — mumbled the young woman with pale lips, whose sparkling beauty was not nullified by her shaven head, her face grimaced with fear of death. — "Oh, guard, save my life! *Ach, Posten, Posten!*"

And then, years later, the pregnant women in the bamboo huts, the strange guttural language; but they were just like the others, begging for their lives. Fire thrown at the rice straw roofs; shots, killing old women, paralyzed old men in the huts who could not move, little children. "Operation Hache," the dirty war! Well, is it ever clean?

"Didn't you ever surrender?" that Ukrainian sergeant asked me. He knows something; he's suspicious about me. How did they

say yesterday over the loudspeaker: "*Deutsche Kameraden* from the Legion, throw down your arms; come over to us . . ." I must decide.

From over on the left came a machine gun burst. None of the men even lifted his head. The artillery was silent now, no low flying planes to drop napalm canisters. Maybe they will start another attack at night, just to soften up and hurry the last decision. It must be done before then; they always start at nine.

If we are not in the jungle by nine, thought Lieutenant Victor Arraye de Treville, then I will never see you again, *mon Paris*. It is a long way to you, *mon Paris*, as far as the nights in the Faubourg St. Germain, the discussions in the Cite Universitaire, browsing in the wooden boxes of the bouquinistes are from the green camouflage overall of the Foreign Legion in Indochina.

Far behind, a dying blue flame like the poem of Baudelaire, is the pre-dawn life on the Place Pigalle, the awakening of Les Halles, the last kisses in the students' *mansarde*, the last tears of Madame Arraye de Treville, over whose bed hangs the red ribbon of the *Legion d'Honneur* and *Medaille Militaire* of her husband, Victor's father, who did not return from the Maginot Line in 1940.

Who could know, coming as a volunteer, what he would do during these two years — "Operation Hache"? Who could know it would be hunting fanatic partisans who die with the shout, "Ho Chi Minh will live thousands of years!" Who could know that it would mean burning out villages in the jungle, killing children, while their mothers are raped, executions and murders . . .

"Why are we here?" — Terno said strangely, with his quiet smile. — "You, the French, are quelling a revolution, to preserve your empire. "We" — he threw a glance at his friend, Andre — "we are not stopping a revolution, we are conducting one, against another empire, here and elsewhere."

By the time darkness comes, everything will be decided. If only I were not broken down with fever. If I lose consciousness here . . . But there always will be Terno. What's burning in that Terno? He has still not told me everything, I knew that. He is hiding something, that silent Terno . . .

If you could know, thought Petro Ternovych, watching the lieutenant from under partially closed eyelids, if you could only know, you poor, disillusioned, smashed-up hero! No, I haven't told all I know. One must remain here, probably forever.

The narrow path between two hills. They bring the ammunition that way. Behind the hills, on both sides, the thick jungle; whoever gets into it is safe, no search can find him. On the foreground of the hills, in front of the artillery positions, guard posts with machine guns. They cover the path and can rake whoever comes up to it.

Only if someone will draw their attention from the path... Someone — who?

Arraye is wounded; he wouldn't even be able to hold a pistol. That cowboy? Good boy, but what can he do? They taught him to drive an automobile and fly an airplane, not to fight on land. That German corporal — he couldn't stand it; he would go to the other side and break the whole business. But he is the only one not wounded in this crippled company. But still, one hates to let him get out of sight, that sonofabitch. Andrii? He is in bad shape. His leg is swollen — if only it is not gangrene — and it is a long way to Hanoi. Oh, if I could only be with you, sighed Petro, and he caught himself in the decision that he had already determined who would be the "someone." It means you must be the one to remain here, Petro? Before the young moon comes up you will be some hard, motionless object in this muddy ditch? Not see the fog lifting before the first rays of sunshine tomorrow morning?

But Andrii can't be caught by the Reds. He is from the Soviet Union; they would send him back to Russia. No, those who transmit every morning over the loudspeakers, "*Tovarishchi*, throw down your arms, the homeland, *rodina*, will forgive you everything..." They will identify Andrii Gonta, former Soviet citizen. Andrii must get out.

But it would be a pity if the road must end. The long road: the village over the Dniester canyon, the silver rocks on its banks; the gay, boy-herdsman years, then first work in the underground, first beatings by the Polish police, first arrests, first months in prison... The studying as much as possible, and a youth spent behind bars as a political prisoner.

The thunder from the East, the rattling of the tanks, the swift-moving tanks. Again arrests, the long line of ragged slaves deported beyond the Polar Circle, the month-long days and nights. Then, hope of freedom, the Polish officers in Siberia, recruiting for General Anders' Corps. Again the same old slogans, the same old "there is no Ukrainian nation," and the last remaining escape: desertion to the recruiting office of the Legion.

You never had much luck, Petro! But happiness is not recorded for everyone in the book of fate. You survived — up to now — and not many had that much luck. Andrii must get out, and there is no one else to help him; only the two of us here who understand, who have been hounded by East and West both.

All was still on the dead field. The earth, broken, raped, smashed by artillery shells, was a graveyard, markerless and receptive. The hills were silent, silent was the main fort, silent was the artillery at

the edge of the forest. No reconnaissance planes droned in the air. Heavy drowsiness tortured the men broken and run down by fever and strenuous exertion. Somewhere far away was the world, majestic mountains, green fir forests, white, snow-covered clearings, foaming rivers, cities where men had leisure to rush about. But here is only the dead silence of no man's land, heavy half-dream and waiting, for the evening and the darkness to come and bring the end. The end? What end?

"Goddam, it's dark already," sighed the pilot. His body ached from the parachute jump. On the horizon pockets flashed from time to time, slowly falling, flooding the field with light. "Oh-oh, they've started the fireworks already. Probably the evening concert soon, too. Wouldn't I like to be in Pompton Plains, New Jersey!"

"Hey, you!" — Somebody was bending over the American. — "Listen."

"Listen," — said the voice in French, — "you understand me?"

The American nodded his head, then clasped the shoulder of his questioner, expressing understanding.

"So, listen. The lieutenant has fever. Understand? There is no point in asking anyone about the decision. Hans will go first, *avant garde*. Then those two — the lieutenant and Andre" — the voice trembled a little — "and then you. You, the last one. Remember, let nothing hold you back. When you hear firing from here and they, the yellows, start answering that fire, go, go — understand?"

"Yes, Sarge, but how about you? When do you go?"

"I'll go later. Don't worry about me. But you must understand that he — well, they — all of you must get through. All of you but Hans are cripples. If somebody does not draw the attention of the Vietminh, nobody will get through. The score is simple: 1-4. Clear?"

"Something strange was happening to the American. Something bitter was coming up in his throat and choking him."

"I would like" — he whispered through clenched teeth — "I would like to stay with you . . . but, oh, goddam!"

"Never mind, pilot," — whispered the voice in the darkness. "Never mind. Remember: you're the only one who knows. You must never tell them. Right?"

"Right!" — answered the American through clenched teeth. But he knew that he lied.

The lieutenant was groaning and mumbling some delirious words. Hans supported him, but Arraye again slipped through his hands. "That will be the trouble, *Herrgot, verflucht!*"

"Can you walk, Andrii?" — The sergeant helped his friend get up. — "I know you will make it. What we've walked through already!"

"With you I will always get through, Petro," — answered Andrii Gonta. — "We walked the long roads together, remember?" — His voice was weak and tired.

"I will be a little behind you". Petro's voice turned again into the voice of Sergeant Terno. "I'll cover your road. I will see you after I get that job done, in the jungle, or in Hanoi, or somewhere."

"We'll come through. With you, Petro, we always come through. Oh, if only that damned leg didn't ache so much!"

"Hans!" — The sergeant took the German by the hand and pointed to his wrist watch. — "Compare your time with mine. See, in 5 minutes you start the march. There is no point in talking to the lieutenant. You will go first. Bear to the left from the barbed wire; the right side is full of mines. In ten minutes even such a bunch of cripples should be at the foot of the hills. Wait strictly ten minutes. In ten minutes — come what may — hear me, Hans, come what may, all of you jump over the path and into the jungle."

"*Und was machst du?*" — Astonishment sounded in the German's voice. "Hans — or rather — listen and don't wonder. There were people who knew you as a KZ guard, but they are not alive any more, understand? Long ago I was supposed to give you a bullet, you know what for. But I am lending you your life, *SS-Unterscharfuehrer* Breuer, if . . . if you lead them safely through the jungle."

No answer. From the darkness came only the heavy breathing of corporal Hans Schroeder.

"I am giving you a gift, Breuer, that bullet, but you must get him, Andrii Gonta, into a safe place. You must do it!"

One more second of heavy, fast breathing. And the voice, "*Ja, in Ordnung*. I'll do it."

When Petro turned, he heard yet the quick words, — "*Ein moment*, Peter. Do any others . . .?"

Petro turned. His whisper was mildly ironic. — "No. Corporal Schroeder. And what I know is in the grave."

Arraye again regained consciousness. With trembling left hand he opened the holster of his pistol. — "Everybody decided, right, Terno? Your're the last, what?"

"*Oui, mon Lieutenant!* I am the last. Now you can go."

A scuffling, some stifled groans. Petro boosted them as one after another they struggled to the parapet of the trench. Finally the American climbed up. Now they were all away. No, the pilot's head appeared again at the edge of the ditch. Petro saw it clearly on the background of the slightly righted sky. He was holding something in his hand, and Petro reached up. A crumpled pack with two cigarettes in it.

"I don't have any more. So long, man."

"Thanks, *merci*. Some day I may give them back . . ."

The head disappeared for good. The slight sounds in the mud silenced.

After things like that, it isn't so hard. But now, fear, normal fear, comes up from all the dark corners. There is still time, still time. You can still jump out of the trench and follow them — or surrender. Nobody would ever know. But I can't, I can't! Still four minutes. Why me? Why just me? Why should I die here, alone, afraid, not gloriously, not in the passion of battle, but alone in the mud. Oh, God, help me; save me — or help me to stay here . . .

"That others may live, that others . . ." Yes, but not alone in a ditch for five whole minutes. They need only five minutes, and then . . . Oh, God, why is it going so slow. Still two more minutes, two whole minutes!"

Petro Ternovych bent his head on his hands. "I can't pray now, God. But You are the Great, the Merciful, You'll help me . . . Our Father, Our Father . . . I can't remember what comes next — there will be no time for the whole prayer. They will . . . thirty seconds more . . . Thy will . . .

Petro Ternovych's hand did not tremble as he pulled the trigger of the machine gun, directing its muzzle toward the hills. Amid the dead silence of the foreground sounded the rattling bursts of the light machine gun — and then hell opened its gates.

Over the field climbed a hissing rocket, and then a second, and they fell directly over the lone trench where the machine gun was firing. The front line of the Vietminh, the whole front line, seemed to jump from its silence.

The batteries spat fire like devils loosed from their chains. The rocket guns screamed against the dull crunch of mortars. Serials of tracers in variously colored lines met amid the broken stumps of the trees in the darkness. Both hills, on both sides of the path, emitted bright flashes of fire, all concentrated on the lone trench.

The mad exhibition of the lone shooter lasted only a few minutes. The spitting fire from the trench suddenly stopped, and the Vietminh mortar and gun crews, smiling and joking, in American overalls, poured their rain of shells into the field for a few minutes, the few minutes, the few minutes necessary for the figures crawling now through the first bushes of the thick jungle, then ceased.

The trench was silent now. The next rocket showed only mixed mud, fragments of boxes, some long objects through its slow ride down, and hissed out on the silent field.

Somewhere between the muddy pools, amid the broken stumps, a head in a helmet poked out. Petro Ternovych listened carefully. "You stopped shooting at me, *"tovarishchi"*? Crossed sergeant Terno off your record? Too soon."

The long hours will be passing. Somewhere on the horizon the first glow of pre-dawn light will strike the skies. Toward this light slowly crawls the lone figure amid the dead field.

The silence will last until morning.

Fortress Dienbienphu will last until morning.

Fortress Dienbienphu will surrender tomorrow.

Ivan Kernytsky

THE DISCARDED NEWSPAPER

Translated by Nestor Ripetsky

Ivan Kernytsky was born in 1913 in the village of Sukhodil, Bibrka district, Western Ukraine. He is a feuilletonist and prose writer, and the author of a collection of stories, *St. John's Fires*, 1934; *My World*, 1938; *The Village Speaks*, 1940. Before the second occupation of Western Ukraine by the Soviet armies he emigrated from Lviv to the West, at first to Germany and then to the United States. In Munich 1947, he published a collection of humoresques, *Along the Gypsy Roads* and in New York, 1952 appeared his *Migrating Birds* and others, such as the story, *Hero of the Outskirts*. Besides this he writes dramas and comedies. He has resided in the United States since 1949, working as a feuilletonist on the daily *Svoboda* and the journal *Mykyta the Fox*. The plot of the story, *The Discarded Newspaper*, is taken from American life.

THE DISCARDED NEWSPAPER

It was 1.30 in the afternoon and Blackie was at his usual place at the intersection of Broadway and 14th Street, standing beside a wire wastebasket. Occasionally, some of the people coming out of the tunnel of the subway would throw magazines and newspapers into the basket. It was then that Blackie, bending over the basket, would pick over the papers with his bony fingers — his day had begun.

Like many others, Blackie too was wont to speak to himself aloud, agreeing with himself, then arguing with himself, waving his hands and shaking his head.

"What people we have around today! Nobody reads anything worth while. The trend is toward cheap trash, sensational and criminal junk. Look what we've got — 'Courier,' 'Herald,' 'Evening News,' but where is the 'Times' or the 'Tribune'? Isn't there one intelligent soul around here that'd throw away a 'Tribune'?"

Blackie smiled sarcastically and clicked his stained false teeth. To tell the truth, there was nothing to smile about. A cold biting wind cut him to the bone and he could feel the beginning of a storm rising out of the Hudson River. Pedestrians were running about and quickly disappearing into doorways and subways. Blackie straightened his thin frame and put his stiff hands under his arms, robbing the last remnants of heat which still remained in his frail body. As a native New Yorker, he stood up stoically under the ever changing spring weather. What disturbed him most, however, was that the clock on the Edison Building showed the time to be 1.40 and Mr. Ridgewood had not yet come out of the restaurant. For the past several years there had existed a sort of mutual unwritten law between the two, a gentlemen's agreement — a contract of congenial souls.

Every workday at exactly 12:05, Mr. Ridgewood came down the elevator from his 10th floor office in the Lincoln Building where the luxurious offices of Lux Company were located. Mr. Ridgewood was now manager, but Blackie remembered when he was only the assistant manager. On his way to lunch at the "Ambassador," he stopped at Oscar's booth, a blind veteran news-vendor, and bought the "Tribune." Blackie too, stood near the booth, a respectable distance from Mr. Ridgewood, but not too far away — and they always

exchanged glances. Mr. Ridgewood waved a friendly greeting, flashing the familiar smile, the mutual feeling behind which was understood only by the two of them.

Mr. Ridgewood then disappeared through the glass doors of the restaurant and then at exactly 1.30 came out again. Passing Oscar's booth he slipped the "Tribune" unnoticed into the wire basket. Blackie's hand reached out at the same time almost touching that of Mr. Ridgewood's. But their eyes at the moment were turned in opposite directions, as if in avoidance of each other. It was a matter of a split second.

With the newspaper folded under his arm, Blackie felt important. Every day at this time he had a feeling of elation as if he were being resurrected from the dying embers of insignificance to a renewed and better life, or ascending from a lower to a higher social stratum. When the weather was nasty, as it was today, Blackie went to the Public Library on 2nd Avenue where he had a place to read and daydream. They knew him there and tolerated him, pretending not to notice his presence. Blackie sat near the radiator and the quiet atmosphere in the library made him drowsy, but he dared not fall asleep lest he might be asked to leave. For that very reason Blackie did not like to read the "Tribune" in the library, much preferring to wander in the park, where he smiled to lovers, and to mothers taking their babies out for a walk, and even to dogs.

As he passed the refreshment stands, he cried out, "Hi, Chief!" then briskly wended his way to a bench under the shade of the elm trees. This particular spot was never selected by anyone else beside himself. The squirrels would frolic at his feet and the ground was usually covered by a flock of pigeons. He did not like squirrels as they reminded him of rats to which bushy tails had been added. They reminded him, too, of the many places of abode which he often shared with such creatures. But pigeons — they were different — he liked them.

His pockets were always filled with crusts of bread that he had picked off tables in a cheap restaurant on 3rd Avenue, and kept specially for his winged friends. It gave him great pleasure to feed the birds, putting morsels of bread in their sharp beaks as gently as a mother would feed her baby. These crumbs were often the sole item on his own menu, but when Blackie was engrossed in reading an interesting editorial he unconsciously crumbled all of the bread and fed it to the pigeons.

Finally, realizing there was no more, he would cry out with mock accusation, "You robbed me, you bums!" stroking their necks

lovingly. "You took advantage of me while I was reading the article of Mr. Lippman and I emptied by pockets, but it is not that I'm blaming you so much as it is that you don't know how to respect the dignified bald head of the first governor of our state."

Blackie had a special respect for Governor Peter Stuyvesant, the brave "Silver Peg," with a wooden leg, who with 100 soldiers for defence did not hesitate to take his stand against the proud fleet of His Imperial Majesty. Comparing the heroic figure of the defender of New Amsterdam with the "peace at any price" pacifists, whom he had encountered on the pages of the "Tribune", made Blackie ashamed of his mighty nation and brought him to the verge of tears.

"Our fathers with the most primitive weapons conquered this continent and built the mightiest country in the world. But you dopes are ready to destroy it with atomic bombs and rocket ships," he accused the authors of the pacifist articles, as he nervously beat the paper with his finger.

Startled by this sudden outburst, the pigeons flew off his knees, his shoulders and his dilapidated old hat and perched on the bronze bust of the Governor. Blackie jumped up after them. He waved his paper furiously, trying to frighten the birds off the monument, but the pigeons were not to be driven away. Blackie helplessly turned his back on them, buried his head in the "Tribune." Suddenly he was thankful that he would never go down in American history so as not to have a monument erected in his honor where pigeons might roost, and dogs meet for their rendezvous.

Suddenly a sharp, strong wind blew in from the Hudson, cutting him to the bone. Blackie's rag-clad body trembled, all the more so as he recalled the bright, sunny days spent reading in the park. He had to grasp the wire basket for support so that he would not be blown out into the cold water and carried away like dried pieces of orange peel or old newspaper. He turned his back to the wind, hiding his face in his collar, but alas, the icy sleet cut his skin like crushed glass, melting and trickling down his neck.

Blackie raised his snow-covered eyes to the Edison and saw it was almost 1.50 P.M. and Mr. Ridgewood had not yet come out of the "Ambassador." It was then that Blackie broke down in grief.

"May the devil take your soul!" he stormed aloud, wiping the hot tears mixed with the icy sleet.

"You sit there with a glass of port wine, you don't care that someone sits out here freezing to death, waiting for you as if for God's mercy. You don't even want to do me this one favor — to throw your newspaper under my nose, like a bone to a dog — no,

because you are a big boss and manager and I am just dirt. Then tell me, big shot, why aren't you at your director's desk for the past twenty minutes? It's your duty to direct the affairs of the company, but you're not there because you're sitting at a bar, romancing with some painted monkey. You're all alike, you managers — repulsive, good for nothing. Your hard working fathers started by selling newspapers or shining shoes and left you, millionaires, fortunes while you waste them on girls in taverns. A curse upon you!"

If someone had overheard Blackie, he would have thought he was a Communist agitator who chose such untimely moments for a street meeting. But it was not so. It never entered Blackie's mind to upset the social order of America; he did not envy the wealthy nor did he bear any class hatred, least of all did he begrudge Ridgewood his \$40,000 a year pension or his beautiful mansion on Fifth Avenue or his luxurious car. No, his heart ached for only one thing — Mr. Ridgewood's discarded "Tribune."

Torn with grief and lashed by the cold sharp wind, like a lost leaf in the midst of an autumn desert, Blackie cried his sorrow out of the very bottom of his poor overwrought soul. He cursed Mr. Ridgewood unmercifully, wishing him all the evils of the Egyptian gods, threatening and waving his fists. A policeman, pulling up his raincoat as he emerged from a shelter, made his way toward him.

At this very moment, the glass doors of the restaurant spun and out ran the head waiter in a white uniform, hatless, with only a newspaper covering his head, crying out to the officer:

"Officer! Hey! Come quickly. There's been a tragedy over here!"

"What happened?" asked the policeman.

"Mr. Rridgewood of Lux Company died suddenly from a heart attack."

They both disappeared quickly through the doorway.

A fresh gust of wind gently carried the wet and mud-spattered "Tribune" to Blackie and deposited it at his feet.

He bent down slowly, picked up the paper and held it in his hands, as he gazed dazedly through the glass doors into the restaurant.

Ivan Smolii

THE GIRL FROM VYNNYTSIA

Translated by Oksana Dragan

Ivan Smolii was born in 1916 in the village of Mykhnovets, Turka district, Western Ukraine. He began his literary career with the publication in Lviv journals and newspapers of some of his poems and stories, *Meeting* and *The Career of a Builder*, the theme of which was taken from American life. His first book was a play *Life in the Balance*, 1939; also during the same year was published his story, *Granite Histories*, in Lviv, but it never appeared on the book market because of the occupation of Western Ukraine by the Soviets, and by reason of his emigration to the West. Residing now in Germany, Ivan Smolii published in 1947 in Regensburg a collection of stories, *The Girl from Vynnytsia*, the themes of which were taken from the anti-German struggle during the Second World War. A translation of the main story of this collection, which describes the implacable hatred of a young Ukrainian maiden for the cruel ravagers, is included in this anthology. Ivan Smolii has resided in the United States since 1949, where, unhampered, he has continued his literary activity. In 1951 in Winnipeg he published the story, *The Boundaries Crumble*; in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a collection of stories *Mannequins*, 1956; and in 1959 also a collection of stories, *Betrayal*. In 1960 the newspaper *Svoboda* published a story of his, *Near the Border*, the theme of which was taken from the period of the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine.

THE GIRL FROM VYNNYTSIA

I met her at a critical moment of my life.

For two days I had been encircled by the wheat and rye of the Vynnytsia's gardens, where I was hiding after escaping from the local police commissariat the night before I was to be shot. I knew that they would be making a thorough search for me, so I did not dare to show myself to anyone. But this afternoon it mattered little to me how I was to die. I wandered across the furrows toward some suburban cottages.

In the place where the field joined with the gardens, behind an old rickety fence, stood a small white house. I was sorely tempted by the fruit trees in the garden; and the cherry tree, already covered with red cherries, held my attention. I slid through a hole in the fence and started gathering cherries.

This task absorbed me momentarily, but suddenly, a few steps away, I heard a soft, surprised exclamation:

"Oho, and what is this?"

I looked around, and the bent cherry bough slipped from my fingers and straightened out. Before me stood a strange, graceful girl in a white blouse and khaki skirt. Her long hair, held together only by a ribbon, fell to her shoulders. The eyes which looked at me were greenish gray, distinguished all the more by arched brows which now were lifted as if in surprise or complete sympathy.

"I'm hungry," I said frankly, encouraged by her attitude.

"Then come into the house," she said easily, indicating the side of the house as if inviting an old friend. "Come!" she added urgently, seeing my hesitation.

I followed her obediently. We entered a room opening on a veranda. I glanced at the neat set-up of the home, and then at myself. Standing there as I was on a fancy rug, my feet dirty and bare, and caked with mud, I felt ashamed of my drabby appearance.

"That's nothing. Everything will be all right," said the strange girl unexpectedly, as if divining my thoughts. "Wait here, I'll be right back."

She disappeared behind the door of a neighboring room, and then all was quiet. I stood there, uncertain, bewildered by this unexpected turn of fate. Was this person really chosen by destiny to save me? Or was this...? I shuddered. I didn't have the strength

to finish this thought. Like a caged beast I nervously circled the room, looking out the window. Perhaps I had again traded freedom for a prison. She could easily guess who I was and where I had escaped from.

I began to imagine things. The face of Commissar Schenk rose up before me, even more swollen with rage and hatred than when he stood in the doorway of my room looking on as his agents ransacked drawers and hiding places, yanking out batches of illegal literature, books and maps. Then they drew out of my pocket a small, accurate revolver. Ah yes, having been unexpectedly attacked by the police I let them have it without even a show of struggle. What would I not give to have it now! And maybe now was the propitious moment, when, having given up freedom...

At this moment the door opened sharply, and she stood on the threshold.

"Oh, don't worry!" she said, noticing my emotion. "You can only die once, and a young and handsome Kozak like you should stand before God decently washed and dressed. Follow me."

I followed her through several rooms and along an inner corridor into a washroom.

"You'll find what you need here; and these clothes are for you. When you're cleaned up, come into the dining room."

The door closed softly and I began washing.

When at last I appeared in the dining room, the strange girl was already waiting for me. I sat down at the set table. Fear of betrayal deserted me, and in its place an unconquerable curiosity was born to learn something about this person. I looked the room over, but the furnishings did not disclose anything unusual, nor supply any clue as to whether she lived here alone or with someone else.

"To whom do I owe this—my miraculous rescue?" I asked as I began to eat.

"Perhaps just to an ordinary chance."

"There were many changes in my lifetime, but this is a special one. I don't need to tell you where I've escaped from, nor what threatens me—and you, if we're caught."

"Be calm; we'll pretend we're old, good friends."

"Friends?" I asked in surprise.

"Of course."

Her eyes contemplated me penetratingly for a moment, causing me to shiver involuntarily, though I could offer no rational reason why.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Stepan," I said accomodatingly. "Of course you surmise every-

thing about me," I added, "but it's much harder for me to guess about you. At least you can tell me what to call you."

"If it means anything to you, call me Katria."

In view of the stormy times I wanted to ask her whether she lived here all alone, but the question died on my lips; I found myself instead telling her about my own life, that of my mother and sister whom I had not seen for so long, and about my many adventures.

She listened without interrupting; then we were both silent.

"Well, Stepan," she said finally, as she rose, "I'm going to town, but I'll be back in the evening. You're tired. Lie down and rest. I'll take the key with me."

I was alone now in a strange house. Katria had just passed along the path by the window, dressed in a dark suit with a red kerchief on her head; slowly she disappeared from my sight down the street beyond the houses.

I knew there was no other soul in the house, nevertheless, as I turned from the window I listened for some signs of life. I felt like a prisoner, yet there seemed to be nothing to be afraid of. Any minute I could open the window and flee to the fields beyond the garden from whence I had come. For a second that seemed to be the wisest thing to do: I already had clothes and was free to leave at any time. And besides, was not my unexpected benefactress somewhat mysterious in her behavior? Could I trust her? Who was she? Where had she gone now?

All at once I began to feel these questions intriguing me; it seemed, therefore, that I would have to remain here, and that our chance acquaintance would not pass without leaving a trace. This reversal of opinion about her surprised me. When we met in the garden she appeared to be a young girl, and now suddenly she seemed to have aged ten years. She probably might be thirty; but in view of her finely chiseled youthful face, her clear, pleasant smile, and the lack of wrinkles around the corners of her mouth, I was inclined to think her younger.

Who was she?

My curiosity induced me to make a search of the kitchen, and the bedroom. In a faience ashtray I found a half-smoked cigarette. Who left it? It must have been a man. But who? Katria's husband, brother or lover?

Before me was the door of yet another room. In vain I tried to peer into it. Frustrated and chagrined, I lay down, pursued by an avalanche of continually persistent and mystifying questions.

I jumped up with fright, as in the old prison days, but soon became calm again. Katria stood beside me, waking me gently. On this mild June evening I forgot for a second the threat of war and occupation, forgot about my unenviable position. Her voice, however, recalled me back to the world of reality.

"You've slept; that's fine. Now let's go."

"Where?" I asked with honest surprise.

"To new quarters."

"What new quarters?"

"You'll see," she answered abruptly. "We'll go now. This is the best time."

And so we left immediately. I was silent and on my guard, looking around as she led me further and further through little known sections of the town. Then unexpectedly a river—the silent, dark Boh emerged before us. We walked along the bank, then turned in toward the houses.

The old house before which we stopped had sunk into the ground, indicating by its appearance that we were somewhere in the suburbs. Katria knocked on the door, and at once it swung open.

"It is I, *babusiu*,"* said Katria to someone. It was only after an interval that I could discern in the darkness enveloping us an old, stooped woman in the entrance way, facing us. We entered a room with cramped quarters, low-hanging ceiling, and poor, old-fashioned furnishings.

"Here he is, *babusiu*," said Katria, bringing me face to face with the old woman. "I'm leaving him in your tender care, as we agreed; I'll call later and supply you with everything you may need. So long, Stepan..."

"You're leaving?" I asked with surprise.

"Of course—I'm in a hurry, but don't leave until I fetch you some documents."

Katria had hardly disappeared through the door than I began to realize how I felt for her; how in this somewhat complicated situation I had fallen in love with her.

"But why did she send me away?" I wondered. "Why could I not have remained with her? To whom is she dedicated? Where is she hurrying now?"

I felt an upsurge of jealousy rising within me. To her I probably was just a casual passerby on the road of life.

* *babusia* — the nominative form, means grandmother; *babusiu* is the vocative form.

The kindly *babusia* contemplated me with sympathy and friendliness, as if divining my thoughts. Gazing into her faded, intelligent eyes, I asked frankly:

"*Babusi*, who is this Katria?"

"Well, you see for yourself."

"Where does she come from?"

"I don't know."

"Is she married?"

"I don't know; I don't know anything."

"Then how does she know you?"

"It was like this," began the old woman, my eyes riveted on her. "I've known her since spring. It was an early but ill-fated spring. She was returning from the cemetery, not far from here. People kept constantly passing my house like shadows, secretly burying the bodies of those murdered; and new graves rose quite often.

"She too had come from the cemetery one day. She must have buried someone very dear, for she seemed bewildered, almost demented. Although I had become inured to human sorrow, having seen it as a daily occurrence, yet I could not help weeping when I saw her with head bowed down in almost frightening silence. Finally she glanced around the room; and when her eyes focussed on a photograph on the wall, this one here, she asked:

"Who is it?"

"My husband," I said.

"And where is he now?"

"He joined Petliura's army and perished."

"And so you've preserved it throughout all these bad times?"

"What else should I have done? Why should I not cherish that which was dearest in life?"

"She sat around for a while, and then she said, 'I'll call again, *babusi*.' After that she was a constant visitor; and everytime she came she brought something to eat, as I was hungry most of the time. She's a good girl but an unhappy one."

"Whom did she bury, her husband?"

"I don't know and I didn't ask; but it was someone quite close to her, someone very precious; and it's most likely she's all alone in the world."

I was restless from inactivity and uncertainty. A week had almost passed and Katria did not come. I waited for her to bring those papers, for I had not a scrap and so could hardly appear anywhere empty-handed. I was greatly moved by the old woman's information about Katria. It seemed as if someone had lifted a corner of a heavy curtain before me and then let it drop again.

A week passed. I became restive—something could have happened to Katria; perhaps I might never see her again. *Babusia* tried to reason with me, but I decided to go. I had to search for a long time but I finally found Katria's cottage. Hidden in the garden, in the dusk, it betrayed no signs of life; no sounds anywhere; no light. I stopped before the front door and tried it carefully, then circled by a path through the flower beds and stood underneath a window listening. My discovery, so simple and ordinary in itself, shocked me — I heard voices; one feminine, Katria's of course, and the other masculine.

"So this is solitude," I thought bitterly; "so this is my abysmal naivete: I keep worrying about her and she calmly enjoys herself. It would be unwise and awkward for me to enter now." I returned from this excursion disillusioned and depressed.

Katria came next evening when I was preparing to visit her again. She was gay and strangely elated.

"And what is this?" she asked, noticing my reproachful look.

"Katria, why didn't you come for so long?"

"Why? Did you miss me?" she smiled.

"I was worried about you."

"About me? What an idea! It's always the same with me."

I wanted to tell her everything I had been thinking about during those days of waiting. I debated whether to tell her about yesterday's visit underneath her window, but at this moment Katria handed me some papers.

"Here you are. This is temporary. The passport isn't extraordinary and the photo doesn't look like you. I think I'll get you a better one soon."

"Where did you get this one?" I asked, as I examined the passport of one, Kirschner, who from the photo appeared to be a person over thirty, full faced, with a short haircut.

"I found it," she answered without even blinking.

"And you'll find a better one?"

"I hope so. For a head like yours can appear in public only with good papers. My, but it's precious!" As she said this Katria touched my head gently, kindly, and with a smile asked further:

"And do you know how much this head is worth? A fair sum — fifteen thousand *"karbovantsi."***

She enjoyed my bewilderment for a moment, then drew out a printed notice and placed it before me. I skimmed over the thick lines of the police advertisement and understood everything.

My escape had caused a lot of commotion. Materials found in my possession had led the police to believe that they had caught one

* *karbovantsi*, plural of *karbovanets* — monetary unit in Ukraine.

of the foremost leaders of the organization, which fell with a vindictive hand upon those responsible for the horrors perpetrated under the occupation. A thorough search was being made for me, with the promise of a considerable sum to anyone who would give me up into the hands of the police.

"Wonderful!" I said; "luck has smiled upon you. This is indeed I. You've got fifteen thousand in your pocket."

"Yes, and perhaps much more," she added, looking at me rather strangely. "Is that all you're worth? But enough of that. Just wait, I'll bring you something better. And take good care of your head."

She went away, leaving me with a flood of new thoughts and other surmises. I was pleased that my head was valued so highly and that Katria knew about it. I must not have been mistaken. Today in her behavior toward me she displayed so much kindness and friendliness that it led me to believe that I meant something to her. Nevertheless, I still knew nothing about her; yes, even now when she is gone. How did she get this passport? On what grounds did she make those new promises? With whom did she make such wonderful contacts, and at what price?

For some reason I thought of the preceding evening, when I had overheard a conversation under her window, and again jealousy flamed up with characteristic urgency. I was ready to run after her, keep her in sight, catch up to her and explain everything, overwhelm her with questions. I rebelled, then finally restrained myself and waited.

The next time Katria came in the morning, while I was still asleep. She must have stood over me for some time before waking me. I cried out in surprise.

"You, Katria!" The first exclamation of surprise and joy escaped from my lips before I realized that I had used the familiar pronoun *ty*,* as to an intimate person. But she accepted this familiarity form indifferently, speaking calmly and openly.

"I've brought you something, Stepan."

She untied a bundle and handed me a uniform, the blue uniform of a gendarme. I inspected it with awe.

"Now if only there were documents," I sighed.

"And here they are," Katria said, handing me a passport.

I glanced at the photo. It was someone my age, with a long, thin face like mine, with the same characteristic side haircut. I held the passport in my hand and then, with what seemed suddenness even to myself, I asked sharply:

"Where did you get this?"

* *ty* means the singular "you," used in addressing intimate friends; otherwise the plural *Vy* is used, especially when addressing one's elders.

"Ha, you're strange at times," she answered coldly.

I felt embarrassed. I don't really know why I asked her about it.

"The documents are ready; put on those clothes and be on your way. I've helped you enough, it seems."

"Very much," I confirmed. "It's really a miracle how I met you in this difficult adventure. Yes . . ." I stopped, troubled. All was clear, all was decided. Tomorrow I'd leave and never see her again. A small episode in the life of a vagabond was this acquaintance; an unforgettable event, not to be erased from memory.

I moved uneasily in the unusual silence which prevailed between us, and, gazing at Katria, I whispered with feeling:

"Ah, Katria!"

"Why?" she asked, probably feeling what I had put into that exclamation. A fleeting smile passed over her face and vanished tragically in the corners of her mouth. Suddenly I felt like a small, naughty boy before this person who hid her own private world within herself.

"Katria, I'll come to you this evening."

"Why?"

"Katria, permit me."

She turned away from me for a minute to hide her face, then sat down on the bed beside me and stroked my forehead gently.

"You'll go home," she said, "you haven't been there for a long time, and you've faced death dozens of times. You should rest now. Your mother awaits you, and she's worried. Isn't that true?"

"Yes, that's true; she waits."

"And your sister?"

"She waits."

"And your girl?"

"No!" I denied, suddenly realizing how bleak and faded my past had become, and how deep was the feeling that had welled up in my heart for this person.

"No?" smiled Katria, raising her eyebrows. "But perhaps?"

"Katria! I have so much to tell you. Allow me to come to see you tonight. Katria!"

"If you want to talk, go ahead; I'm listening," she said calmly; and again I felt like a naughty, tongue-tied boy who had lost the power of speech.

"Oh, you!" she said with a smile; and for a while I thought that she would hug and kiss me, so tender was the way she stroked my forehead. But she rose.

"Don't come to me. Please don't. I'll come here tomorrow; and if I'm not here, please be brave in your work; and think of Katria sometimes."

She hurried away swiftly, as if to avoid disclosing any emotion on her face. Spread out before me on the bed were the documents and the uniform. I still felt the gentle touch of her palm on my feverish forehead.

And so the episode came to a close. Was it all in vain? Possibly we'd see each other tomorrow; and if not...

No, I had to see her again; I had to talk with her; for me this was not just a mere episode.

I dressed in the gendarme's uniform, and *babusia*, appearing with the breakfast, cried out in fright as she failed to recognize me. This buoyed me up. I passed the day with one thought in mind, or was it one tantalizing dilemma? I must not go to see her; what if I should visit her today?

That memorable evening came slowly, apprehensively, as did every evening during the war. I was all ready to leave, yet I stood there in front of the house, listening, as somewhere on distant streets one could hear the chug of motors and the rumble of autos, as they rolled further west in endless file toward the front lines. Somewhere a solitary shot rang out, probably the prank of some drunken officer returning from a tavern as he playfully aimed at the window of a darkened house. There were those who fled in fright beyond the houses at the very sight of me; while others merely bowed. Passing the bank I went deeper into the center of the town. It was late in the evening when I finally arrived at Katria's house. I entered the garden where I had first met her. After the heat of the day a cooler breeze now drifted in from the fields. The stars shone coldly on the heavenly dome; the Milky Way spread out widely in the sky. There were roads ahead, too, and new adventures, new deeds; and I wanted to close one chapter of my life this evening.

Standing in the garden I was lost in reverie, when suddenly somebody seemed to have stepped out of the door of the veranda and, standing on the steps, appeared to be waiting for someone; perhaps it was Katria. If so, she'd come down, follow the path, and we'd meet and greet each other with the same unexpectedness and tenderness as before. In the mood I was in this evening I'd tell her everything; I'd no longer be the shy boy.

But things didn't turn out that way; I now reproached myself angrily for letting the opportunity slip by; for after a while the form retreated and disappeared in the doorway, leaving me alone.

What should I do now? I approached a window carefully and at once caught the sound of voices. The feminine alto was unquestionably that of Katria, but it was seldom heard, drowned out as it was by the constant blaring of a masculine bass. Frequently a satisfied laugh interrupted the conversation, the contented guffaw

of the strange man who had evidently been Katria's successful entertainer.

I became feverish. I really had no business investigating Katria's private life. However, I could not endure this incident. When I recalled how gently she had caressed me this morning, I felt outraged. Was this, my ideal person, entertaining another man? And he at that, a foreigner. Could this be the sorrowing woman who suffered so over the loss of someone dear to her? No, only such a naive dreamer as I could idealize so ordinary a woman as would live out the war in such a manner. It was only this morning that she toyed with me as with a child, laughing inwardly at my platonic sighs and ardent glances.

My outrage was reaching its peak; I had already decided that I had neither the desire nor the purpose to see Katria again. I had to forget this episode and never even think of it. Now I had to leave. I had already lost much valuable time.

For the last time despite myself I listened more carefully to the noise inside. The voices had quieted down and the ensuing silence tortured me even more by the lack of demonstration.

A distinct shot, which suddenly blazed with a deafening roar inside, seemed to shatter my brain. My entire built-up structure of reproaches against Katria fell apart at this sound, particularly because of the fear that it might have been aimed at her, and that a macabre night drama might be unfolding here.

I hurried to the front door, but it resisted my efforts to open it. I returned to the window, climbed up to the top of the foundation and knocked at it gently. No one answered. As hesitation might be costly, I whipped out the revolver Katria had given me and smashed through the window pane. I was showered with fragments of glass; and in groping about for the window catches I cut the palms of my hands mercilessly; and in doing so I loosened the sash, and the thick drape with which the window had been tightly covered, gave, falling into my hands. I jerked it aside sharply and at that moment I stood paralyzed. I was blinded by the light of a flashlight directed at my eyes, and next to it glittered a cocked barrel.

I cried out desperately, feeling that in one more second I would find myself on the floor, shot, or probably dead. At my cry the light went out.

"You're out of your mind!" I heard a voice from the darkness. "What do you want here?"

It was Katria speaking! She was still alive! This was her voice!

This awareness seemed to give me strength. Overstraining my muscles, I landed in the dark room with one leap.

"What's going on here? Turn the light on!" I commanded.

There was no answer. An uneasy silence followed my outcry. Then the sound of footsteps could be heard, some sort of motion, and a light went on.

Katria stood by the door, her hair let down, pale, angry, looking like a complete stranger.

"What do you want here?" she asked in a hardly recognizable voice. Was this really someone else speaking?

But I smiled sarcastically at her coldness and pointed to the table, on the cloth of which lay overturned glasses, bottles, and food.

"Who was here?" I asked, feeling as if jealousy were turning my heart to ashes. My eyes rested on the couch on which were strewn a military coat, cap, and belt, which the lover in his haste to escape had left behind, or else he had fallen down in a drunken stupor in another room. It all became quite clear to me now; I was not able to deceive myself any longer.

And as for her, all her feminine charm had seemed to dissipate from her now in view of her dishevelled hair and her excited behavior for having welcomed the favors of her lover.

What was I here for? I was ashamed of myself.

"Forgive me," I said. "I'm not needed here; I'm sorry that I interrupted your pleasant game. My hot nature is to blame for everything. I'm forever grateful to you for coming to my aid at a critical moment. I've met many women in my life, and now suddenly I've become fascinated with you. I wanted to tell you this before, and so I repeat it now.

"And yet I feel like I'm on fire, like rioting. You're despicable, you're vile, because you lie down at the feet of the oppressor, shower him with favors at a time when thousands of your brothers and sisters die an undeserved death at the hands of that same murderer."

I was overcome with feeling; the sight of this person filled me with disgust; and hatred flamed up within me. I turned away from Katria and my gaze rested unexpectedly on a boot sticking out from under the tablecloth. In a moment I had swept it aside and stood dumbfounded.

Under the table lay someone in a uniform. Was it a soldier? Emblems on the collar indicated that this was a Gestapo officer. It occurred to me that he might be lying there in a drunken stupor, but the light shining on his bloody head disclosed a dark blot on his temple. I now realized that this was a corpse, and I shuddered at the sight. I had seen dozens of deaths before, how wounded comrades had been slain so as to avoid being taken prisoners, and how hostages were massacred in market places, nevertheless icy shivers began to run down my spine.

"Katria," I gasped, unable to control myself; "Katria, what is this, who is this, what's going on in this house?"

She regarded me without a word, her hair spread in disorder all over her back and shoulders; her face pale and lusterless; her eyes amazingly clear and penetrating.

"Who?" she said at last, "Who? My love!"

These words left me dumbfounded. I tried in vain to convince myself that the girl facing me was the gentle, tender, kind Katria who had saved me...

"Katria!" I whispered, unable to find adequate words.

"What's troubling you? You guessed it. This *is* my lover."

I stood tongue-tied, suddenly becoming afraid of this person. Her face seemed to be graying, twisting into a grotesque mask, her eyes throwing off the reflections of a sick mind. Was it possible that this kind, courageous girl had become insane?

I felt the flames of love die down in me suddenly and the shudder in my heart at having met up with something unpleasant and hideous. My immediate impulse was to flee at once far away from this delirious house and person. I started toward the door.

She silently and wordlessly followed me with a look, her eyes holding me. I stopped helplessly in the doorway, waiting...

"You're going," she said, "so you're fleeing? That's good, that's easy; but, then, is it possible to run away from one's self?"

Her voice sounded subdued; but in it could be discerned an arresting note of pain and quiet grief.

"Yes, Stepan, you're fleeing, running away without looking into the bottomless pit... And yet you must look into it. You forced your way into my life; you now know secrets never before disclosed to any other person on earth. Now you must get the complete picture; then you can judge for yourself."

I understood this to mean that she wanted to let me in on some terrible secret. She went over to the table, pulled down the sides of the table-cloth, covered the body, and then sat down for a talk. I listened to her chaotic and depressing story, with its implications of human tragedy.

She had been married. Her husband had been a young intellectual and writer, Borys M., whose uncommon talent, mighty in its power and strange depth of thought, had exercised a great fascination on her.

A cynical grimace must have appeared on my face, for Katria spoke with unexpected intensity.

"You're mistaken if you interpret my praise as the blind adoration of a wife. He really was not an ordinary person, oh, no! I was happy to be able to work near him, yes, and to protect him. Borys' fellow-workers were arrested, tried, and shot; but I protected him with my

feminine intuition which foresaw in advance dangers and traps and enabled me to help lead him out of them safely.

Then came the war. The front lines moved ominously through the city. We succeeded in hiding, but when we came out of our hide-out we were faced with a new and as yet unknown situation. Soon Borys was summoned with many others to whom many promises were made as recompense for their cooperation. Borys at first was intrigued by the apparently endless possibilities of the new proposals. But then began the ruthless liquidation of the people in our group. We managed to escape from our bombed, undermined, deserted capital and finally arrived at this place.

"Everything, it seemed, went well; we established ourselves somehow in this new place. Borys got work in a store. At nights he wrote a lot, and I helped him. And then..."

Katria moved for the first time, her voice taking on a depressing, funereal quality.

"I was working on some manuscripts. I stopped typing for a moment to check over some of the lines I had completed, when I heard a knock at the door.

"Borys was sound asleep on the couch, worn out by his work; I didn't want to wake him, so I went to open the door myself. Opening it, I stood transfixed with fear. Three Gestapo men stormed past me through the doorway, pushing straight into our room.

"'Ha, wonderful!' said one, his eye roving over the shelves filled with books and the table covered with papers. 'Work goes well here.'

"'This is the one!' said another, standing over my sleeping husband.

"Borys slept as quietly as a child, his light hair falling over his forehead, his hand hanging over the side of the bed.

"I stood petrified with fear; I wanted to scream but was afraid that Borys, waking suddenly, might start something foolish; but my concern went for naught. I saw the murderer start to draw his pistol slowly. I wanted to cry out, but instead of my scream a loud shot rang out. Borys had turned over as if trying to settle himself into a more comfortable position, and then he became quite still...

"Two others searched the room, rummaging savagely among the books and papers. I must have looked singularly strange in my passive stance, observing every movement from the center of the room; for the butcher gave me more than a casual glance. His swollen face, gray, glittering eyes with their narrow slit eyelids, did not reflect any intention, as he evilly twisted his lips and laughed in my face.

"'Hey, beautiful!' he muttered, taking me by the chin and leaning forward as if to kiss me, being probably discouraged by my apparent lack of awareness of everything; for he pushed me rudely

aside with vulgar curses in his own foreign language. They talked for a minute, probably deciding what to do with me. I waited listlessly for my turn. But they probably had a lot more similar work to do that night and left me alone with Borys . . .”

Katria became silent. I thought she would gush forward with a flood of tears, but they didn't materialize. She just kept staring ahead of her as if into another world. It was strange how one's personality could thus change so completely. Minutes before her loosened hair had endowed her with feminine charm, and she created the impression of being an easily acquired madam. But now I saw before me a new person, a mourner, an un comforted widow. Yes, she wept sincerely, unashamedly, and her clasped, nervous hands accentuated the depth of her tragedy. In face of this speechless grief, I dared not offer a single word of comfort.

“I was ordered to keep strict silence,” she continued, as if returning from an outer world. “Until today I've told no one about that night; nor have I wept until tonight. Do you know what that means? Not that I didn't want to cry, mad as I was with anguish; but not one tear fell to ease my grief. I still don't realize that I'm alive, yet I'm consumed with pain and onerous thoughts. I'm not sorry for my life, but I often wonder why people don't understand how much we lost with Borys' death. I protected him, guarded him, and helped lead him away from the embrace of death and destruction as well as I could. Had he lived he might have performed miracles, he might have been the leader of thousands, but what now...”

Her eyes bored into me as if she expected an answer or some help from me. She sighed with the very hopelessness of the situation, and I sighed too. I was also horrified at the thought of how so many thousands of our best people were being destroyed by the enemy, and how many millions of others were being rendered helpless to intercede.

“And then a new idea was born within me,” she said, speaking with more zest, as if she had just escaped from an enchanted ring. “Yes, a new idea; I nourished it and became obsessed with it. Now I live only for it. I shot Borys' murderer when he, drunk with wine, felt sure of his conquest over me. On his temple he now bears the same kind of bloody blotch as he had once inflicted on Borys. Nobody suspected my fine hand in that deed. I killed him for the horrid, venomous creature that he was, but I did not think this was sufficient retribution: many, many enemy deaths were needed to balance one...”

“And so I go on, wading in deeper and deeper...”

“As for this last one—I was told of his brutality and so had him marked. I searched for him, enticed him here, and got him drunk.

As he sat beside me he told me boastfully of how they had pacified a surrounded village, how the men escaped and the women and children were shot down. He accompanied his tale with loud, raucous laughter until I had quieted it down without even batting an eye... But every death like this one demands another, and still another. Oh, Stepan!"

She leaned down low, her hair falling in waves that covered her face almost completely, while her shoulders shuddered spasmodically. After unburdening herself of this unbelievable confession, she wept, perhaps, for the first time.

I crept quietly out of the room, swaying like a drunken man; but I ran into the night as if really escaping from a bottomless pit that yawned before me.

Never again was I fated to meet this strange woman. And now no matter how often I think of her I know not whether to judge her or to sympathize with her. In her case my distinction between justice and crime has been considerably dulled. It is then that the noble face of this widow appears before me, framed in her waving hair, marked with unearthly pain, with eyes that gaze at the swaying scales of justice, visible only to her.

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"Svoboda," "The Ukrainian Weekly," where its former editor, the late Stephen Shumeyko, so successfully presented samples and illustrations of Ukrainian short story writing. They all have one thing in common — they were translated by Ukrainians living in the New World, in the United States or Canada, so they show not only the high level attained by the writers in Ukraine but also illustrate their appeal to Ukrainians in the Western Hemisphere.

The publication was made possible through a generous gift of the late Dr. Luke Myshuha, for many years editor of "Svoboda" and an active sponsor of all efforts to implant Ukrainian culture and traditions into the life of the United States so as to give them firm roots in their new environment while preserving the essential features of the old. The volume will undoubtedly serve many purposes, especially as a textbook of the Ukrainian short stories to be used in schools and colleges and should also find its way into private collections. It should be of great help to those who are interested in knowing more about the Ukrainian people and Ukraine. For "It has been said that if one wants to understand a poet, one must visit his country. But the converse is equally true. The country of a poet can be discerned from his productions."

