

ИСТОРИЯ МОЕЙ ГОЛУБЯТНИ

М.Горький

В детстве я очень хотел иметь голубятню. Во всю жизнь у меня не было желания сильнее. Мне было девять лет, когда отец посулил дать денег на покупку тесу и трех пар голубей. Тогда шел тысяча девятьсот четвертый год. Я готовился к экзамену в приготовительный класс Николаевской гимназии. Родные мои жили в городе Николаеве, Херсонской губернии. Этой губернии больше нет, наш город отошел к Одесскому району. Мне было девять лет всего, и я боялся экзаменов. Теперь, после двух десятилетий, очень трудно сказать, как ужасно я их боялся*. По обоим предметам — по русскому и по арифметике — мне нельзя было получить меньше пяти. Процентная норма была трудна в нашей гимназии, всего пять процентов. Из сорока мальчиков только два еврея могли поступить в приготовительный класс. Учителя спрашивали этих мальчиков хитро: никого больше не спрашивали так замысловато, как нас. Поэтому отец, обещая купить голубей, требовал двух пятерок с крестами. Он совсем истерзал меня, я впал в нескончаемый странный сон наяву, в длинный летский сон отчаяния, и пошел на экзамен в этом сне и все же выдержал лучше других.

Я был способен к наукам. Учителя, хоть они и хитрили, не могли отнять у меня ума и жадной памяти. Я был способен к наукам и получил две пятерки. Но потом все изменилось. Харитон Эфрусси, торговец хлебом, экспортавший пшеницу в Марсель, дал за своего сына взятку в пятьсот рублей, мне поставили пять с минусом вместо пяти, и тогда по закону приняли маленького Эфрусси. Отец мой очень убивался тогда. С шести лет он обучал меня всем наукам, каким только можно было. Случай с минусом

THE STORY OF MY DOVECOT

1

To M. GORKY

When I was a kid I longed for a dovecot. Never in all my life have I wanted a thing more. But not till I was nine did father promise the wherewithal to buy the wood to make one and three pairs of pigeons to stock it with. It was then 1904, and I was studying for the entrance exam to the preparatory class of the secondary school at Nikolayev in the Province of Kherson, where my people were at that time living. This province of course no longer exists, and our town has been incorporated in the Odessa Region.

I was only nine, and I was scared stiff of the exams. In both subjects, Russian language and arithmetic, I couldn't afford to get less than top marks. At our secondary school the numerus clausus was stiff: a mere five per cent. So that out of forty boys only two that were Jews could get into the preparatory class. The teachers used to put cunning questions to Jewish boys; no one else was asked such devilish questions. So when father promised to buy the pigeons he demanded top marks with distinction in both subjects. He absolutely tortured me to death. I fell into a state of permanent daydream, into an endless, despairing, childish reverie. I went to the exam deep in this dream, and nevertheless did better than everybody else.

I had a knack for book-learning. Even though they asked cunning questions, the teachers could not rob me of my intelligence and my avid memory. I was good at learning, and got top marks in both subjects. But then everything went wrong. Khariton Efrussi, the corn-dealer who exported wheat to Marseille, slipped someone a 500-rouble bribe. My mark was changed from A to A minus, and Efrussi Junior went to the secondary school instead of me. Father took it very badly. From the time I was six he had been cramming me with every scrap of learning he could, and that A minus drove him to despair. He wanted to beat Efrussi up, or at least bribe two

(1) desire

(2) rite of passage

(3) history

5%
(4) Jew. fate

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привел его к отчаянию*. Он хотел побить ЭфруSSI или подослать двух человек с рынка*, чтобы они побили ЭфруSSI, но мать отговорила его от лурных мыслей, и я стал готовиться к другому экзамену, в будущем году, в первый класс. У меня за спиной родные подбили учителя, чтобы он в один гол прошел со мною курс подготовительного и первого классов сразу, и так как мы во всем отчаявались, то я выучил наизусть три книги. Эти книги были: грамматика Смирновского, залачник Евтушевского и учебник начальной русской истории Путыковича. По этим книгам дети не учатся больше, но я выучил их наизусть, от строки до строки, и в следующем году на экзамене из русского языка получил учителя Караваева недосягаемые пять с крестом. Не большой наш город долго шептался о необыкновенной моей удаче, и отец был так жалкого гордью, что мне непрерывно становилось думать о суевией, переменчивой его жизни и о том, что он полдается так бесильно всем переменам и только радуется на них или слабеет.

Учитель Караваев был по мне лучше отца*. Караваев был румяный негодующий человек из московских студентов. Ему едва ли исполнилось тридцать лет. На мужественных его щеках пылево-румянен, как у крестьянских ребят, не работающих тяжелой работы, не противная бородавка силела* у него на щеке, из нее рос пучок пепельных кошачьих волос. Кроме Караваева, на экзамене присутствовал помощник попечителя Пятницкий, считавшийся важным лицом в гимназии и во всей губернии. Помощник попечителя спросил меня на экзамене о Петре Первом, я испытал тогда чувство забвения, чувство близости конца и бездны, сухой бездны, выложенной восторгом и отчаянием.

О Петре Великом я знал наизусть из книжки Путыковича и стихи Пушкина. Я навзрыл сказал эти стихи, цветистые человечьи лица* покатились вдруг в мои глаза и перемешались там, как карты из новой колоды. Они тасовались на лице моих глаз, и в эти

мгновения, дрожа, выпрямляясь, торопясь, я кричал пушкинские строфы изо всех сил. Я кричал их долго, никто не прерывал безумного моего визга, захлебывания*, бормотания. Сквозь багровую слепоту, сквозь неистовую свободу, овладевшую мной, я видел только старое, склоненное лицо Пятницкого с посеребренной бородой. Он не прерывал меня и только сказал Караваеву, ликовавшему за меня и за Пушкина:

— Какая нация, — прошептал старик, — жидки ваши, в них дьявол сидит...

M/F

longshoremen to beat Efrussi up, but ~~mother~~ talked him out of the idea, and I started studying for the second exam the following year, the one for the lowest class. Behind my back my people got the teacher to take me in one year through the preparatory and first-year course simultaneously, and conscious of the family's despair I got three whole books by heart. These were Smirnovsky's *Russian Grammar*, Yevtushevsky's *Problems*, and Putsykovich's *Manual of Early Russian History*. Children no longer cram from these books, but I learned them by heart line upon line, and the following year in the Russian exam Karavayev gave me an unrivaled A plus. +

This ~~Karavayev~~ was a red-faced, irritable fellow, a graduate of Moscow University. He was hardly more than thirty. Crimson glowed in his manly cheeks ~~as it does in the cheeks of peasant children~~. A wart sat perched on one cheek, and from it there sprouted a tuft of ash-coloured cat's whiskers. At the exam, besides Karavayev, there was the Assistant Curator ~~Pyatnitsky~~, who was reckoned a big noise in the school and throughout the province. When the Assistant Curator asked me about Peter the Great, a feeling of complete oblivion came over me, an awareness that the end was near: an abyss seemed to yawn before me, an arid abyss lined with exultation and despair.

About Peter the Great I knew things by heart from Putsykovich's book and Pushkin's verses. Sobbing, I recited these verses, while the faces before me suddenly turned upside down, were shuffled ~~as a pack of cards is shuffled~~. This card-shuffling went on, and meanwhile, shivering, jerking my back straight, galloping headlong, I was shouting Pushkin's stanzas at the top of my voice. On and on I yelled them, and no one broke into my crazy mouthings. Through a crimson blindness, through the sense of absolute freedom that had filled me, I was aware of nothing but Pyatnitsky's old face with its silver-touched beard bent toward me. He didn't interrupt me, and merely said to Karavayev, who was rejoicing for my sake and Pushkin's:

'What a people,' the old man whispered, 'those little Jews of yours! There's a devil in them!' ++

cf
artist's eye

exaltation of despair

divine madness

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THE STORY OF MY DOVECOT

६६

And when at last I could shout no more, he said:

Very well, I am strong, my little friend.

I went out from the classroom into the corridor, and there, leaning against a wall that needed a coat of whitewash, I began

describing against a wall that needed a coat of whitewash, I began to awake from my trance. About me Russian boys were

Playing, the school bell hung not far away above the streets, — the crier was snooding on a chair with a broken seat.

Their characteristic was shooting on a chain with a broken seal. Boys were doodooed at the crackacks, and gradually woke up.

crecipient toward me from all sides. They wanted to give me a bath, or perhaps just have a game, but I suddenly

As he passed me he haled for a
sudden, sharp, brief burst of agony.

moment, the frock-coat flowing down his back in a slow heavy wave. I disengaged myself from that large, bushy

upper-class back, and got closer to the old man.

"Chidless," he said to the boys, "don't touch this lad." And he laid a fast hand reverently on my shoulder.

"My little friend," he went on, turning me toward him.

Call your father that you are admitted to the first class.

On his chess a greater star hashed, and decorations jingled in his lapel. His great black uniformed body started to move

away on its stiff legs. Hemmed in by the shadowy walls,

The movement between them as a large moves through a deep canal, it disappeared in the doorway of the headmaster's study. The

little scurvy-grown took in a tray of tea, clinking solemnly, and

In the shop a peasant customer, tortured by doubt, sat

scratching himself. When he saw me my father stopped trying

to help the peasants make up his mind, and without a moment's hesitation he believed everything I had to say. Calling to the

assistant to start shutting up shop, he dashed out into the snow, shouting.

Chathedral Street to buy me a school cap with a badge on it. My poor mother had her work cut out getting me away from the

~~poor honest~~ crazy fellow. She was pale at that moment; she was ex-

persecuting destiny. She kept smoothing me, and pushing me away as though she hated me. She said there was always a

notice in the paper about those who had been admitted to away as though she hated me. She said there was always

the school, and that God would punish us, and that folk would laugh at us if we bought a school cap too soon. My

Wouldn't it be great if we could get a school cap too soon? My

[A faint horizontal line is drawn across the page, centered horizontally.]

была бледна, она испытывала судьбу в моих глазах и смотрела на меня с горькой жалостью, как на калечку, потому что одна она знала, как несчастлива наша семья.

Все мужчины в нашем роду были доверчивы к людям и скоры на необдуманные поступки. нам ни в чем не было счастья. Мой дед был раввином когда-то в Белой Церкви, его прогнали оттуда за кощунство. и он с шумом, очень скучно прожил еще сорок лет. изучал иностранные языки и стал сходить с ума на восьмидесятом году жизни. Дядька мой Лев, брат отца. учился в Воложинском ешиботе¹, в 1892 году он бежал от солдатчины и похитил дочь интенданта, служившего в Киевском военном округе. Дядька Лев увез эту женщину в Калифорнию, в Лос-Анжелос², бросил ее там и умер в дурном доме среди негров и малайцев. Американская полиция прислала нам после его смерти наследство из Лос-Анжелоса — большой сундук, окованный коричневыми железными обручами. В этом сундуке были гири от гимнастики, пряди женских волос, дедовский талес³, хлысты с залочеными набалдашниками и цветочный чай в шкатулках, отделанных дешевыми жемчугами. Изо всей семьи оставались только безумный дядя Симон, живший в Одессе, мой отец и я. Но отец мой был невыразимо доверчив к людям, он обижал их восторгами своей первой любви, люди не прощали ему этого и обманывали. Отец верил поэтому, что жизнью его управляет

злобная судьба, необъяснимое существо, преследующее его и во всем на него не похожее. И вот только один я оставался у моей матери изо всей нашей семьи. Как все евреи, я был мал ростом, хил и страдал от ученья головными болями. Все это видела Рахиль, моя мать, которая никогда не бывала ослеплена нищенской гордостью своего мужа и непонятной его верой в то, что древняя наша семья станет когда-нибудь сильнее и величественнее других людей на земле*. Она не ждала для нас удачи, она не хотела новой форменной блузы и только позволила мне сняться у фотографа для большого портрета. И все же нам пришлось купить шапку с гербом.

Двадцатого сентября тысяча девятьсот пятого

All this was seen by Rakhil, my mother.

mother was pale; she was experiencing destiny through my eyes. She looked at me with bitter compassion as one might look at a little cripple boy, because she alone knew what a family ours was for misfortunes.

All the men in our family were trusting by nature, and quick to ill-considered actions. We were unlucky in every thing we undertook. My grandfather had been a rabbi somewhere in the Belya Tserkov region. He had been thrown out for blasphemy, and for another forty years he lived noisily and sparsely, teaching foreign languages. In his eightieth year he started going off his head. My Uncle Leo, my father's brother, had studied at the Talmudic Academy in Volozhin. In 1892 he ran away to avoid doing military service, eloping with the daughter of someone serving in the commissariat in the Kiev military district. Uncle Leo took this woman to California, to Los Angeles, and there he abandoned her, and died in a house of ill-fame among Negroes and Malays. After his death the American police sent us a heritage from Los Angeles, a large trunk bound with brown iron hoops. In this trunk there were dumbbells, locks of women's hair, uncle's talith, horsewhips with gilt handles, scented tea in boxes trimmed with imitation pearls. Of all the family there remained only crazy Uncle Simon-Wolf, who lived in Odessa, my father, and I. But my father had faith in people, and he used to put them off with the transports of first love. People could not forgive him for this, and used to play him false. So my father believed that his life was guided by an evil fate, an inexplicable being that pursued him, a being in every respect unlike him. And so I alone of all our family was left to my mother. Like all Jews I was short, weakly, and had headaches from studying. My mother saw all this. She had never been dazzled by her husband's pauper pride, by his incomprehensible belief that our family would one day be richer and more powerful than all others on earth. She desired no success for us, was scared of buying a school jacket too soon, and all she would consent to was that I should have my photo taken.

On 20 September 1905 a list of those admitted to the first

-2-
male heredity

at 2nd of July, at 2nd of the year, that he was lost by no one in the world

parvenues. So too in ancient times David King of Judah had checks, and I had vanquished the sons of our own vulgar

combs; I had vanquished the Russian boys with their fat

my parents and said that I had vanquished all my foes in single combat.

I proposed my health. In this toast the old man congratulated out from beneath his waistcoat, and in ancient Hebrew

he should have. The ends of the traditional silk scarfs pocketed Monks like a man. He drank more Bassarabian wine than

honoured us with his presence. Besides the sacerd, old Jacobean, who had caught me the Torah and ancient Hebrew

noisy Wallonian synagogue. Besides the sacerd, old

saintly Passover which the Hasidim or who have visited their

be received by those who had the good fortune to

comic illustrations. The beauty of these illustrations may only

an awful long time to sing, songs performed with endless

Hasidic songs consisting of three words only but which took

the widest awake and the tallest. At our party they sang

without buying something or other. Of all Jews, salesmen are

landowners went in fear of them: you couldnt break loose

These salesmen would sell a machine to anyone. Passants and

ing salesmen who sold agricultural machinery in our parts,

all his pals - grain-dealers, real-estate brokers, and travel-

My teacher got up the ball to celebrate my success, and asked

evening he danced and pranced at our pauper ball.

to the school to read the list with my name on it, and that

were good stories. Well now, even silly old Shoyl went along

but this cock-and-bull stories I have never forgotten: they

Shoyl was just an old ignoramus and a simple-minded liar,

Polish language. But perhaps he had a t.

Nicholas P's soldiers shooting Count Goldfussia and other

ago Shoyl had been a tavern-keeper at Skirer. He had seen

stories he used to tell about the Polish Rising of 1861. Years

beautiful. Shoyl also differed from ordinary folk in the living

most, covered with fish-scales, and smelt of words chill and

old man, for he sold fish at the market. His fat hands were

even Shoyl, my grand-uncle, went along. I loved that boastful

too. All our kin kept going to look at this paper, and

class was hung up at the school. In the list my name figured

the story of my dovecot

95

of 470

1948: winter

class

of 470

1948: summer

Голиафа, и подобно тому, как я восторжествовал над Голиафом, так несгибаемый наш народ* силой своего ума победит врагов, окруживших нас и ждущих нашей крови. Мосье Либерман заплакал, сказав это, и плача, выпил еще вина и закричал: «*Vivat!*». Гости взяли его в круг и стали водить с ним старинную кадриль, как на свадьбе в еврейском mestechke. Все были веселы на нашем балу, даже мать напилась пьяна*, хоть она и не любила водки и не понимала, как можно любить ее, — всех русских она считала поэтому сумасшедшими и не понимала, как живут женщины с русскими мужьями.

Но счастливые наши дни наступили позже. Они наступили для матери тогда, когда она стала привыкать к счастью делания для меня бутербродов до ухода в гимназию и когда она ходила* по лавкам и покупала елочное мое хозяйство — пенал, копилку, ранец, новые книги в бумажных переплетах и тетради в глянцевых обертках. Никто в мире не чувствует новых вещей сильнее, чем дети. Дети содрогаются

от этого запаха, как собака от заячьего следа, и испытывают безумие, которое потом, когда мы становимся взрослыми, называется вдохновением. И это чистое детское чувство собственничества над вещами, пахнувшими нежной сыростью и прохладой новых вещей*, передавалось матери. Мы месяц привыкали к пеналу и к утреннему незабываемому сумраку*, когда я пил чай на краю большого освещенного стола и собирал книги в ранец, мы месяц привыкали к счастливой нашей жизни, и только после первой четверти я вспомнил о голубях.

У меня все было припасено для них — рубль пятьдесят копеек и голубятня, сделанная из ящика ледом Шойлом. Голубятня была выкрашена в коричневую краску. Она имела гнезда для двенадцати пар голубей, резные планочки на крыше и особую решетку, которую я придумал, чтобы удобнее было приманивать чужаков. Все было готово. В воскресенье двадцатого октября я собрался на охотнишнюю, но внезапные беды преградили мне путь*.

История, о которой я рассказываю, то есть поступление мое в первый класс гимназии, происходила

overcome Goliath, and just as I had triumphed over Goliath, so too would our people by the strength of their intellect conquer the foes who had encircled us and were thirsting for our blood. Monsieur Lieberman started to weep as he said this, drank more wine as he wept, and shouted '*Vivat!*' The guests formed a circle and danced an old-fashioned quadrille with him in the middle just as at a wedding in a little Jewish town. Everyone was happy at our ball. Even mother took a sip of vodka, though she neither liked the stuff nor understood how anyone else could — because of this she considered all Russians cracked, and just couldn't imagine how women managed with Russian husbands.

But our happy days came later. For ~~mother~~ they came when of a morning, before I set off for school, she would start making me sandwiches; when we went shopping to buy my school things — pencil-box, money-box, satchel, new books in cardboard bindings, and exercise-books in shiny covers. No one in the world has a keener feeling for new things than children have. Children shudder at the smell of newness as a dog does when it scents a hare, experiencing the madness which later, when we grow up, is called inspiration. And mother acquired this pure and childish sense of the ownership of new things. It took us a whole month to get used to the pencil-box, to the morning twilight as I drank my tea on the corner of the large, brightly-lit table and packed my books in my satchel. It took us a month to grow accustomed to our happiness, and it was only after the first half-term that I remembered about the pigeons.

I had everything ready for them: one rouble fifty and a dovecot made from a box by Grandfather Shoyl as we called him. The dovecot was painted brown. It had nests for twelve pairs of pigeons, carved strips on the roof, and a special grating that I had devised to facilitate the capture of strange birds. All was in readiness. On Sunday, 20 October, I set out for the bird market, but unexpected obstacles arose in my path.

The events I am relating, that is to say my admission to the first class at the secondary school, occurred in the autumn of

Jew. difference

back to history

-3-

1903. The Emperor Nicholas was then bestowing a con-
stitution on the Russian people. Officers in shabby overcoats
were clambering on to tall kebabs and haranguing the
people. At night shots had been heard in the streets, and so
mother didn't want me to go to the bird market. From early
morning on 20 October the boys next door were flying.
Lire right by the police station, and out water-carrier, aban-
doning all his buckets, was walking about the streets with a
red face and brilliant red hair. Then we saw baker Kaliastrov's
shop: Smernikov the policeman even kept inciting them to
jump higher. Smernikov was grit with a skill better than anything
had never been polished before. Out of his customary uniform
which in our town was behind the station,
At the bird market Ivan Nikodimych, the pigeon-fancier,
sat in his customary place. Apart from pigeons, he had
rabbits for sale too, and a peacock. The peacock, spreading its
feathers for sale too, sat on a perch moving a passionless head from side to
side. To its paw was tied a twisted cord, and the other end of
the cord was caught beneath my shirt. After these purchases I had
man a pair of cherry-coloured pigeons with luscious round
wicker-chair. The moment I got there I bought from the old
bag on my chest under my shirt. After this purchase I had
only forty pigeons left, and for this price the old man was not
prepared to let me have a male and female pigeon.
Kryukov breed. What I liked about Kryukov pigeons was
that their short, knobby, good-natured backs. Forty pigeons was
more no other customers, Ivan Nikodimych seeing that there
were no birds-sellers. At the end of our bargaining, seeing that there
from me a yellow race cocked by the unsociable passions of
the proper price, but the fancier insisted on haggling, refusing
the proper price, but the fancier insisted on haggling, averting
closer. All went as I wished, and all went badly.

Wholesalers market
and retail market

He xoxotinukon, ha nocothonom crom metce, chule
nuyraa molo mat, n-3-a hera oha he ottykariis meha, ho
nugopasiga ha yjinnu jaabopkam n jodekai no oxot-
nukon, rotopara nomeutacab jatier 3a bokzation.
Ha oxotinukon, ha nocothonom crom metce, chule
ctopoham Geccptacthon hperetction ronboroh, Jlana
ero Buiia obrisaa kpyaqehon Bepekebon, Jlana
tchekan jekan npiunemehnii Hrasa Hnikoimbiia nje-
teben jekan npiunemehnii Hrasa Hnikoimbiia nje-
xocbtamn n happy aygabrixn ciptabrii n xocbtamn
xy, J mena octabriac copok konieer noceie norkyukn, ho
ctapak 3a try uhey he xoteri otjatir ronyegn n rojyegn
kphoborckon nopyabi, J pphoborckon rojyegn n rojyegn
kjihobi, kophore, Jephnictrie, Jphoykejohphie, Copok ko-
sopahabai ot meha ketite jnito, coakkheche hehoushi-
mblin ctpactamn ntnuejora, K konyu topa, nnta, At-
neek Dlina nm Beppha ueha, ho oxotinuk jopoknica n ot-
noujanai meha, Bccepblumio no-moeay, Bccepblumio
he hexoxantca dyprixn nokymlumkob, Haan Hnikoimbiia

В двенадцатом часу дня или немногим позже по площади прошел человек в валеных сапогах. Он легкошел на раздутых ногах, в его истертом лице горели оживленные глаза.

— Иван Никодимыч, — сказал он, проходя мимо охотника, — складайте инструмент, в городе иерусалимские дворянне конституцию получают. На Рыбной бабелевского дела насмерть угостили...

Он сказал это и легко пошел между клетками, как босой пахарь, идущий по меже.

— Напрасно, — пробормотал Иван Никодимыч ему вслед, — напрасно, — закричал он строже и стал собирать кроликов и павлина и сунул мне крюковских голубей за сорок копеек. Я спрятал их за пазуху и стал смотреть, как разбегаются люди с охотницкой. Павлин на плече Ивана Никодимыча уходил последним. Он сидел, как солнце в сырому осеннем не-

бе, он сидел, как сидит июль на розовом берегу реки, раскаленный июль в длинной холодной траве. Я смотрел вслед старику, его сапожному стулу и милым клеткам, завернутым в цветное тряпье*. На рынке никого уже не было, и выстрелы гремели неподалеку. Тогда я побежал к вокзалу, пересек сквер, сразу опрокинувшийся*, и влетел в пустынный переулок, утоптанный желтой землей. В конце переулка, на креслице с колесиками, сидел безногий Макаренко, ездивший в креслице по городу и продававший папиросы с лотка. Мальчики с нашей улицы покупали у него папиросы, дети любили его, и я бросился к нему в переулок.

— Макаренко, — сказал я, задыхаясь от бега, и погладил плечо безногого, — не видал ли ты деда моего Шойла?

Но калека не ответил. Грубое его лицо, составленное из красного жира, из кулаков, из железа, просвечивало. Он в ужасном волнении ерзal на креслице, и жена его Катюша, повернувшись ваточным задом, разбирала вещи, валявшиеся на земле.

— Чего насчитала? — спросил безногий и двинулся от женщины всем корпусом, как будто ему на перед невыносим был ее ответ.

— Камашей четырнадцать штук, — сказала Катюша, не разгибаясь, — пододеяльников шесть, теперь чепцы рассчитываю...

— Чепцы! — закричал Макаренко, задохся и сде-

Toward twelve o'clock, or perhaps a bit later, a man in felt boots passed across the square. He was stepping lightly on swollen feet, and in his worn-out face lively eyes glittered.

'Ivan Nikodimych,' he said as he walked past the bird-fancier, 'pack up your gear. In town the Jerusalem aristocrats are being granted a constitution. On Fish Street Grandfather Babel has been constituted to death.'

He said this and walked lightly on between the cages like a barefoot ploughman walking along the edge of a field.

'They shouldn't,' murmured Ivan Nikodimych in his wake.

'They shouldn't!' he cried more sternly. He started collecting his rabbits and his peacock, and shoved the Kryukov pigeons at me for forty kopecks. I hid them in my bosom and watched the people running away from the bird market. The peacock on Ivan Nikodimych's shoulder was last of all to depart. It sat there like the sun in a raw autumnal sky; it sat as July sits

on a pink riverbank, a white-hot July in the long cool grass. No one was left in the market, and not far off shots were rattling. Then I ran to the station, cut across a square that had gone topsy-turvy, and flew down an empty lane of trampled yellow earth. At the end of the lane, in a little wheeled armchair, sat the legless Makarenko, who rode about town in his wheel-chair selling cigarettes from a tray. The boys in our street used to buy smokes from him, children loved him, I dashed toward him down the lane.

'Makarenko,' I gasped, panting from my run, and I stroked the legless one's shoulder, 'have you seen Shoyl?'

The cripple did not reply. A light seemed to be shining through his coarse face built up of red fat, clenched fists, chunks of iron. He was fidgeting on his chair in his excitement, while his wife Kate, presenting a wadded behind, was sorting out some things scattered on the ground.

'How far have you counted?' asked the legless man, and moved his whole bulk away from the woman, as though aware in advance that her answer would be unbearable.

'Fourteen pairs of leggings,' said Kate, still bending over, 'six undersheets. Now I'm a-counting the bonnets.'

'Bonnets!' cried Makarenko, with a choking sound like

Poprom

ef

high poetic cf imagery

villain

butchery

looted goods

I must answer for all. People are creating of whole rolls of cloth, people have everything they should, and we're stuck with bonnets! And indeed a woman with a beautiful bunting race ran past us down the lane. She was clutching an armful of ruffles in one arm and a piece of cloth in the other, and in a voice of joyfully described she was yelling for her children, who had stayed. Despite the woman with the blouse uttered after her as she flew, and she paid no attention to Makarenko, who was rolling his chair in pursuit of her. The legless man couldn't catch up. His wheels clattered as he turned the handles for all he was worth. Little by little, he crept in a decelerating voice, 'Where did you get that striped stuff?' But the woman with the blouse burst into tears again. Round the corner to meet her I crept a tickety cart in which a peasant had stood upright.

'Where've they all run to?' asked the lad, raising a red rein above the nags jerking in their collars.

'Everybody's on Cathedral Street,' said Makarenko placidly, everyboby's there, sunny. Anything you happen to pick up, bring it along to me. I'll give you a good price.'

The lad bent down over the front of the cart and whipp'd up his plumed nap. Tossing their lithy crowds like calves, the horses shot off at a gallop. The yellow lance was once more yellow and empty. Then the legless man turned his unchained eyes upon me.

'God's picked on me, I reckon,' he said lifelessly; 'I'm a son of man, I reckon.'

'What's that you've got in your sack?' he demanded, and took the bag that had been warming my heart.

'With this fast hand the crippled umbl'd the number

'Piggoons and draggerd to light a cherry-coloured sch-bird. Jerking back its feet, the bird lay still on his plam.

'Darned piggoons,' said Makarenko, and squaking his wheels he struck me on the cheek.

— N, b camon jneči, ho nepejky npegekana kenhina c
pacanamnmcia npegekana kenhina c
oxanry fecek a onoh pycce n uttryk ckyra a npyrot.
Cactinibim otvahnpim rojocom cspibras oha note-
Makapehky, kartnubero 3a heč ha kpeče. Bežorinj he
sonohincs 3a retiumm ee retom, n oha he cnyuan
pažinibim ajetři, ujetroboe natape n rojogaa koftra
Ho kenhuniby c retiumm mlatrem yke he gbito. En
kpeptvachn npegekana krehina c rojoma a terec.
— Kytja moni npegekana krehina a terec.
— Mytaz, — klon rbec ha Cogophon, — ymojhome kračan
Makapehky, — tam bce jnohn, myura-herobek: hero ha-
Ho naphe, ychpuma upo Cogophy, he ctaa meu-
kabz, Oh nojryuca han hepekaom, xuecthyu no ne-
lum kuhram, Jlouzajhi, karz terira, upbrlyju nprashpmi
cbohnn kpyuan n ucytinnch bckahs, Xkeutpbi npege-
mok chora octarci ketr n ucytinnch bckahs, Xkeutpbi npege-
npebeči ha meha moracune lirača.
— Meha uito je bor crickat, — kračan oh gežkunis-
N Makapehky nportayu mehe pky, žantrahnyjo
amotreknecko npegekana krehina...
— Hero y teča a topē? — kračan oh n bau meuwok,
Toučtoni pkyoi pažopouni kaikec typhahob n bbi-
tunua jekzata y hero ha žaujoni.
— Lorygn, — kračan Makapehky n, cypna koreca-
meh, nouhexan ko mhe, — rojygn. — norotjuni oh, kar
heotpaparime xoo, n yajapan meha no muke.

17
Он ударили меня наотмашь, сжатой ладонью, голубка треснула на моем виске*, Катюшин ваточный зад повернулся в моих зрачках, и я упал на землю в новой шинели.

— Семя ихнее разорить надо, — сказала тогла Катюша и разогнулась над чепцами, — семя ихнее я не могу навидеть и мужчин их вонючих...

Она еще сказала о нашем семени, но я ничего не

слышал больше. Я лежал на земле, и внутренности раздавленной птицы стекали с моего виска. Они текли вдоль щек, извиваясь, брызгая и ослепляя меня. Голубиная нежная кишкa ползла по моему лбу, и я закрывал последний незалепленный глаз, чтобы не видеть мира, расстилавшегося передо мной. Мир этот был мал и ужасен. Камешек лежал перед моим глазом, камешек, выщербленный, как лицо старухи с большой челюстью, обрывок бечевки валялся неподалеку и пучок перьев, еще лышавших. Мир мой был мал и ужасен. Я закрыл глаза, чтобы не видеть его, и прижался к земле, лежавшей подо мной в успокоительной немоте. Утоптанная эта земля ни в чем не была похожа на нашу жизнь и на ожидание экзаменов в нашей жизни. Где-то далеко по ней ездила беда на хромой и бодрой* лошади, но шум копыт слабел, пропадал, и тишина, горькая тишина, поражающая иногда детей в несчастье, истребила вдруг границу между трепещущим моим телом и никуда не двигавшейся землей. Земля моя пахла сырыми недрами, могилой и цветами. Я услышал ее запах и заплакал без всяского страха. Я шел по чужой улице, заставленной белыми коробками, я шел в убранстве из окровавленных перьев, один в середине тротуаров, подметенных чисто, как в воскресенье, и плакал так горько, полно и счастливо, как не плакал больше во всю мою жизнь. Побелевшие провода гудели над головой, суетливая лворняжка бежала впереди и в переулке сбоку молодой мужик в жилетке разбивал раму в доме Харитона Эфрусси. Он разбивал ее деревянным молотом, замахивался всем телом и, вздыхая, улыбался на все стороны доброй улыбкой опьянения, пота и душевной силы. Вся улица была наполнена хрустом, треском, пением разлетавшегося дерева. Мужик бил только затем, чтобы перегибаться, запотевать и кричать необыкновенные слова на неведомом, нерусском языке. Он кричал их и пел, раздирал изнутри голубые глаза, пока на улице не показался крестный ход, идущий от думы. Старики с крашенными бородами несли в руках портрет расчесанного

He dealt me a flying blow with the hand that was clutching the bird. Kate's waddled back seemed to turn upside down, and I fell to the ground in my new overcoat.

'Their spawn must be wiped out,' said Kate; straightening up over the bonnets. 'I can't a-bear their spawn, nor their stinking menfolk.'

She said more things about our spawn, but I heard nothing of it. I lay on the ground, and the guts of the crushed bird trickled down from my temple. They flowed down my cheek, winding this way and that, splashing, blinding me. The tender pigeon-guts slid down over my forehead, and I closed my solitary unstopped-up eye so as not to see the world that spread out before me. This world was tiny, and it was awful. A stone lay just before my eyes, a little stone so chipped as to resemble the face of an old woman with a large jaw. A piece of string lay not far away, and a bunch of feathers that still breathed. My world was tiny, and it was awful. I closed my eyes so as not to see it, and pressed myself tight into the ground that lay beneath me in soothing dumbness. This trampled earth in no way resembled real life, waiting for exams in real life. Somewhere far away Woe rode across it on a great steed, but the noise of the hoofbeats grew weaker and died away, and silence, the bitter silence that sometimes overwhelms children in their sorrow, suddenly deleted the boundary between my body and the earth that was moving nowhither. The earth smelled of raw depths, of the tomb, of flowers. I smelled its smell and started crying, unafraid. I was walking along an unknown street set on either side with white boxes, walking in a get-up of bloodstained feathers, alone between the pavements swept clean as on Sunday, weeping bitterly, fully and happily as I never wept again in all my life. Wires that had grown white hummed above my head, a watchdog trotted on in front, in the lane on one side a young peasant in a waistcoat was smashing a window-frame in the house of Khariton Efrussi. He was smashing it with a wooden mallet, striking out with his whole body. Sighing, he smiled all around with the amiable grin of drunkenness, sweat, and spiritual power. The whole street was filled with

ALONE

of earlier
estate of
total despair

blind rage
ecstasy of
destruction

Point

whole existence consisted in bending over, swearing, shouting
a splitting, a snapping, the song of flying wood. The peasant's
shouted the words in some unknown, non-Russian language,
strecth there appered a procession bearing the Cross and
moving from the Miunich-palace. Old men bore soft
the portrate of the nearly-combed Tsar, banners with gracie
yard saints swayed above their heads, unshamed old women
hew on in front. Seeing the procession, the peasant passed
his mallet to his chest and dashed off in pursuit of the banners,
while I, waiting till the tall-end of the procession had passed,
made my hasty way home. The house was empty. Its white
doors were open, the grass by the dovecot had been trampled
down. Only Kuzma was still in the yard. Kuzma the yardman
was sitting in the shed laying out the dead Shoy.

"The wind bears you about like an evil wood-chip," said
the old man when he saw me. "You've been away 20 days. And

Kuzma whizzed, turned away from me, and stared pulling
"They've done grandather in, but nobody else," said
Kuzma, tossing the ash to the car. "He cursed them all good
and proper, a wonderful damning and blasting it was. You
might fetch a couple of pennies to put on his eyes."

But then, in ten years of age, I didn't know what need
the dead had of pennies.

"Kuzma, I whispered, save us."

And I went over to the yardman, hugged his crooked old
back with its one shoulder higher than the other, and over
this back I saw grandather Shoy in the shadows, his
chest squashed in, his beard twisted upwards, battered shooes
on his bare feet. His feet, thrown wide apart, were dirty,
black-coloured, dead. Kuzma was tussing over him. He tried
to seize the dead man's jaws and kept glancing over the body to see
what else he could do. He fussed as though over a newly-

Later?

Fit to release
! At suitable

— Всех изматерил, — сказал он, улыбаясь, и оглянулся труп с любовью, — кабы ему татары попались, он татар погнал бы, но тут русские подошли, и женщины с ними, кацапки; канапам людей прошать обидно, я кацапов знаю...

Дворник подсыпал покойнику опилков, сбросил плотницкий передник и взял меня за руку.

— Идем к отцу, — пробормотал он, сжимая меня все крепче, — отец твой с утра тебя ищет, как бы не помер...

И вместе с Кузьмой мы пошли к дому податного инспектора, где спрятались мои родители, убежавшие от погрома.

purchased garment, and only cooled down when he had given the dead man's beard a good combing.

'He cursed the lot of 'em right and left,' he said, smiling; and cast a loving look over the corpse. 'If Tartars had crossed his path he'd have sent them packing, but Russians came, and their women with them, Rooski women. Russians just can't bring themselves to forgive, I know what Rooskis are.'

The yardman spread some more sawdust beneath the body, threw off his carpenter's apron, and took me by the hand.

'Let's go to father,' he mumbled, squeezing my hand tighter and tighter. 'Your father has been searching for you since morning, sure as fate you was dead.'

And so with Kuzma I went to the house of the tax-inspector, where my parents, escaping the pogrom, had sought refuge.

1925

Cossack women; Cossacks think it's an insult to forgive a man