

A person stands on a dark mountain peak, shining a bright flashlight beam upwards into a starry night sky. The beam illuminates a portion of the Milky Way galaxy. In the background, a valley is filled with a warm, orange glow from city lights, with distant mountain ranges visible under the starry sky.

A. Belyaev

***The earth burns
When light goes
out***

"Classics fantasy" 9

A. Belyaev

Classics fantasy – 9

«Издательские решения»

Belyaev A.

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WHEN LIGHT GOES OUT John Parker works as the modest accountant in office of the Gray and Co company. To earn additionally, it begins to catch on the city of the homeless and the lost dogs and once, running away from a pursuit, he gets to hairdressing salon where, meets the girl of the dream Maggie and falls in love with her.

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THE EARTH BURNS

1

In the Business yard, in a reception of the chairman of VSNKh of the USSR, among visitors there was an elderly person with the face rubbed for years and life and in a shabby coat. Having taken seat in a corner, he sat not movably, expecting when reception begins.

The door of an office opened, and the secretary looked out from there. It eyes recalculated turn of people with portfolios and papers in hands. Several people darted off and approached it. But the person was ahead of all in a shabby coat.

– There will be a people's commissar soon?

– It has a meeting in Council of People's Commissars today. To hours to four has to be. On urgent affairs the deputy accepts it.

– I need the people's commissar – the person impressively told and took seat on a chair with a look: I will die, but I will wait.

At last it entered an office.

– I listen to you – the people's commissar shortly told.

And the person in a shabby coat started talking. Its surname Mikheyev. He is an inventor. Its specialty – fight against the desert, against the terrible desert approaching the Soviet Union.

He spoke passionately, being confused in words, losing the main idea. The huge amounts of solar energy which during the summer are made and скопляющиеся on the sandy and stony or only poorly covered by vegetation soil, have no other exit, except as on an ispepeleniye next, still live and inhabited lands. The earth burns.

Any area where dry winds and not enough atmospheric precipitation blow, turns into the desert.

What is seen by us in huge spaces of the Aralo-Caspian Sea? The Mga, Chmara, mosses – these “dry tears” and the reek of alcohol – saliva of dry deserts, with their destructive influence on life, on all vegetation, especially cultural and meadow. Flowers, without having blossomed, fade, without yielding a fruit or even perishing in kidneys... Grain ears and any cereals are empty and give weak умоют... Leaves on a grass and on trees turn yellow, falling down before time.

In the Volga region, in the North Caucasus, in Ukraine... in Saratov, Stalingrad... And to Kiev... Kazan, Ryazan... the cities and lands are dimmed by dust storms in dry summer.

– You have a project how to fight against the desert? – the people's commissar who was patiently listening to his speech asked. And from a question Mikheyev somehow calmed down at once.

– I am an engineer. And if I had no developed plan, I would not begin to take away from you time. Twelve years I worked on this idea. Collected huge material. At me everything is calculated, weighed, verified from the most general to the most slightest detail.

– What your project consists in?

– Piping of Volga. A barrage at Kamyshin.

In a piping such level of new formation of the river when, on the one hand, cover with drift of its water huge spaces of the Zavolzhye steppes and deserts is established, recovering them, with a potusheniye in them “the fire of the earth”. On the other hand, in the river level on height which is not violating the main interests of the coastal cities and the population rises.

– Your materials will be studied. Will report on results on me – the people's commissar told, as if finishing a conversation. – You need to see one of members of board NKRKI of the USSR, to acquaint him with material, to report about difficulties which you met on the... Hallo... Yes, I...

If now there was an inventor of phone Bell, Mikheyev would kill him, so he hated the “impolite invention” disturbing a business talk this minute.

And from a reception the impatient engineer wearing spectacles and with a portfolio already looked, and the secretary already brought a heap of papers for the signature, and the people's commissar already gave to Mikheyev a hand...

2

Desert... It burned horror heart in the childhood when Mikheyev was no more than twelve years old. He lived with the father, the territorial doctor, in the abandoned steppe village beyond Volga. The Mga, both Chmara, and dry fogs for the boy were not mere words. He grew up under the crimson sun as if choking in a haze of a dust storm. From dust there was no rescue. It covered with a gray raid leaves of trees of a lean garden, got into the house through the closed windows, powdered tables, beds, toys, climbed in but with, eyes, ears and lungs... And the dream was disturbing, as in time сирокко. There, behind fields, the desert as the animal ready to a jump hid. Her ominous sandy whisper was heard far.

And suddenly she was loudly knocked at doors and grabbed by a throat with a bony hand of hunger. It was in the ninety first year of last century. Unforgettable year! The child could not be saved from terrible pictures of hunger, as from Chmara and a mga. And Mikheyev remembered this nightmare well.

Began with the fact that at familiar men of the person became gray, eyes became hollow, the nose and cheekbones became aggravated, cheeks and a stomach were pulled in. Their bodies became flabby, puny, Mischa Mikheyev could not understand why it. And then many withered people suddenly began to grow stout strange white-yellow completeness.

Mischa looked in windows of log huts. Almost in everyone the yellow spark of a candle in the dead man's heads shone. But sparks went out soon: there were not enough candles, and dead men became more and more. Living people turned into corpses...

The inflated corpses of animals on fields... Stench... Swarms of flies... Crying of the hungry street children who lost parents... And over all this is the hot, destructive sun and the dry fog covering with a shroud the world doomed to death...

And behind the village there were adust fields. Dry, brown stalks powerlessly drove at the earth an empty ear. Burning wind burned them, sand brought. Over once corpulent fields sepulchral sandy hills grew. Dry ears as the last reminder on the perishing fields stuck out of these graves here and there.

The desert killed all live... It cannot be forgotten!

This horror did not leave his all life.

Mikheyev dreamed the globe from big height. Here huge bald patch of the Sahara, here deserts of Turkestan, China... And all these bald patches slowly creep away extensively as leprosy... And here all globe turns into the desert. And the last people choke in a sandstorm without water and air...

"I will be an engineer that knowledge to win against the desert" – young Mikheyev solved. He became the engineer hydrotechnician, but did not win against the desert. Many years he developed difficult systems of irrigation canals and threw them.

– It is all the same what to try to put out the fire a spray! – he spoke in despair ... – Only plentiful waters of Volga could put out the fire of the desert... And what, if?.

3

Mikheyev was in RKI loaded with huge folders with manuscripts, tables, schedules, maps, drawings.

But at it something was more interesting than dead drawings. Mikheyev put on a table a korobishcha size in meter and in a brick thickness. There lay its expensive a child – "the materialized

idea”. It was the relief of the Volga basin and the Caspian Sea made of mastic. Arable lands are painted in yellow color of ripe wheat, a meadow – in light green, and the woods – in dark green. From the East ominous brown languages of the coming desert put in the Zavolzhye fields. The riverbed of Volga and a bottom of the Caspian Sea were naked.

In half an hour the room was turned into the peculiar laboratory filled with the audience.

Mikheyev put the model edges on two tables, under model put an empty bucket, and full – on a table and through a rubber tube started up water in Samara to onions. Water cheerfully ran on the course, broke in the delta a difficult pattern into sleeves and began to fill a bottom of the Caspian Sea. When the sea was filled to the put end, Mikheyev opened below a drain that water remained at one level.

– The annual debit of Volga – there began Mikheyev – in round joint account three hundred fifty – three hundred seventy cubic kilometers. All this mass of water evaporates and therefore the Caspian Sea does not raise more likely goes down in annual level. We cannot evaporate water in our experience and therefore we release superfluous down. Now here what I suggest to make with Volga. – Mikheyev took out a curved plate from a pocket and enclosed it in a groove on a relief below Kamyshin.

And in the face of the audience the dammed waters of Volga began to rise above “dam”, and below, to the Caspian Sea, only the very narrow stream began to flow.

– Height of this barrage – thirty seven meters. And, you look, from this horizon Volga spontaneously merges in unimaginable spaces of the Zavolzhye steppes and deserts in three powerful streams.

The water which rose over a dam stood minute in indecision, as if in perplexity before an unexpected obstacle, and suddenly poured down on the East on a slope, on courses, hollows, hollows, having formed complex network of the Martian channels and lakes.

– These streams are reached not some artificial and grandiose, costing huge funds, constructions, and, of course, not digging of channels. They flow on natural deepening, hollows and ravines, of course, with the corresponding capture and the direction of water flows.

– And why this streamlet flowing into the Caspian Sea is left? – one of the audience asked.

– The one seventh part of the debit of Volga is left in the direct, direct current to the Caspian Sea on continuous with it, so and with Baku, water communication. A half of it also on acquisition of through direct traffics. Means, about seventy cubic kilometers of the debit of Volga will follow directly to the Caspian Sea. And three hundred cubic kilometers, instead of their present loss in the sea abyss, will go east on revival of lands from Volga across Emba, and on a potusheniye of “the terrestrial fire” there, and, with elimination deserts, on acquisition of new farms, on melioration of the freed lands there.

– Means, the sea...

– The Caspian Sea will decrease in the level on two thirds of meter a year, and in thirty seven years the condition of its level will go down on twenty four meters. The Caspian Sea will have here what look.

Mikheyev opened the crane under a relief board more, water from the Caspian Sea began to flow in a bucket stronger, and sea level began to go down quickly. In a second there passed years, and out soon familiar outlines of the sea was not to find. The Caspian Sea “dried out” almost on a third. The bottom of a northern part to Mangyshlak and Makhachkala was bared. On it there were only a few crossing channels yes of “lakes” in a northeast part.

– Generally ground spaces will be released on hundred fifty thousand square kilometers, the same to seventy thousand in mouths of the Kura both at the Persian coast and in Cara-Bugaze, and the most important – across Absheron and Cheleken immeasurably valuable spaces of oil lands, too in thousands of square kilometers will be released. At last, all coast of the Caspian Sea will be freed from malaria pernicious there.

The first stone to this world of new construction puts the project of a piping of Volga. Specialists, not the last spokes in a wheel of the Soviet device, worry.

Desire to give a review of the project of a piping of Volga! VSNKh demands. The People's Commissariat for Agriculture and the State Planning Committee are interested, RKI presses...

Strange project and stranger author, as though also the engineer, not the young man. And the project – you do not know, as well as to approach it... Scope is Bolshevik, the idea grandiose and that will leave – Allah knows.

Old engineers whisper:

– If this project passes – much kaput. How to be?

– For the place you worry?

– What place? If there passes Mikheyev's project, then many engineers will be required... The place will be. But there you will be...

– On a mikheevsky mill to pour water? To you manual labor, to it honor? He-he. Do not worry, however, in advance, maybe, still will fail this crazy project. Everything will depend on what response the expert – professor Chichagov will give. Yes here and it, as by the way!. Let's ask. Hello, Ivan Arkadyevich! Well, how your opinion on a piping?

Chichagov rumples soft lips and looks through gold points up. It carries the gray-haired head is proud and is careful as a fragile jewelry. In it its capital.

– Um... yes... piping... I still in detail did not get acquainted with material. Besides I can give a response only on the specialty. Technically, of course, the project is quite feasible. To dam the river – not God knows what knowledge. In it there is even nothing original. Mikheyev suggests to make only on a large scale what is done by the ordinary miller. But in the estimate, it seems to me, the author cruelly is mistaken. Here business smells not three hundred million, but billions, meaning the project in general.

– In billions? Means, not in power, and? There will not pass number? – The look of the engineer was poured by hope and greedy curiosity.

But Chichagov did not please with the direct answer but only vaguely shrugged shoulders.

And what old professor could answer? In his opinion, Bolsheviks only also did that undertook excessive tasks. Will be enough them. Will undertake a piping and... will make, perhaps!

– And here still I heard – the engineer told opinion of one large expert. – That says that Mikheyev's project – the absolute nonsense. Fish of the Caspian Sea got used to the water mode with this percent of salinity. Besides fish will have no place to throw caviar.

– And the representative Narkomzdrava – interfered other engineer – claims that Mikheyev not only will not destroy as promises, and will increase malaria in the terrifying sizes. Think only: to start up waters of Volga spontaneously! They form a set of boggy lakes, zalivchik, water "oaz" as the inventor speaks. What the hell it will turn out, and not only with malaria – the climate of all edge will change to the worst, but not to the best, and. The Caspian Sea will evaporate much less moisture of which eventually clouds are formed.

– Well, it is not so terrible – Chichagov objected. – The total of moisture in the region will not decrease. New reservoirs will evaporate water too. However, this my personal opinion, opinion of the layman in the field of meteorology – was modestly added by him.

The engineer wanted to ask one more question, but Chichagov decided that he told and so too much. Having pleaded what hurries on a meeting, venerable professor incurred the precious head further.

This meeting devoted to discussion of the project of Mikheyev was quite rough.

In the beginning specialists behaved frostily. Nobody decided "to cover the project with might and main", but many carefully expressed "fears" which, as a poison drop, had to poison the idea of the courageous project. At the end of a meeting of passion inflamed, and shouts were already heard:

“Nonsense! Nonsense! Madness!” The heavy artillery – Chichagov – was reserved by opponents of the project by the end.

The speech of professor of a form was “very objective”, and in essence he poured out a tub of cold water on enthusiasts, “having expressed the modest opinion” on multi-billion expenses.

The project hung by a thread.

But here unexpectedly to the aid of Mikheyev workers of places – the natives of the Volga region living in close proximity with “heat of the earth” moved.

Their impact was strong and amicable.

– You give Volga!

One of them repeated Mikheyev’s words: “At all water of life, neither humus gram, nor meter of height of Volga should not vanish in lowlands of the salt abyss of the Caspian Sea!”

– You give Volga!

4

Big stars without blinking look at Earth as if eyes of unknown night birds. The dense darkness, timid and stubborn, rose to the coals of the burned-down fire. Wind will run, the flame uvula will flash, will light faces of fishermen, the edge of the drying network, the black shining belly overturned on the bank of the boat will draw near coals also again. From the coast pulls dampness, tar, fish.

Tired fishermen ate up fish soup, scooping wooden spoons from a kettle.

– Burst напоследях. And then каюк: zagovey on fish! – the gray-haired thick old man Gleb Kalganov broke the silence, is shorter – Kalgan.

On its parties three sons – on the right the senior, at the left younger, same large, bearded big fellows, as well as he, only dark-haired sat.

Gleb is the head of fishing artel. The Caspian Sea and lower reaches of Volga – for it the open book which each line he knows by heart. Knows water, fish habits, vagaries of the weather, the seas and its inhabitants. On one signs known to it is able even to foretell when the puzanok, a beshenka, a vobla where they will direct a way whether the big catch will be goes. In all that his word – the law concerns fish. And as the fishing village only also lives fish, Gleb’s word and in all other – the law. What will tell, so to that and to be. Before war he was not the last owner on crafts, had the capital, a tackle, ware. Revolution destroyed his welfare, but not the authority. He governed artel in the old manner – a spit as wanted.

His words were surprising of fishermen. Kalgan behaves in a queer way!

– On our century of fish enough! – the speckled Horned owl responded.

– A spoon lick yes the tongue lose. The fact that not enough! – Gleb important answered. Having kept silent a little to be convinced that nobody interrupts any more, he continued: – The last times come. God took away reason from people, and put their mad became. The God’s world is wanted to be remade in own way: to dry up the sea, Zavolzhye to turn Volga mother in the steppe. Also there will be we as cancer aground. Truly aground! Both fathers, and our grandfathers lived by the sea, fished. Da Volga’ sea were to us an arable land, and fish – bread. And here – on you! The sea will dry up, Volga will leave, fish will die, also we will die. Where and a vobla and other sea creatures caviar to throw a puzanok will go? There is no place. There is no Volga. Cover! And our huts will stand in naked to a step. And the seabed will begin to be plowed. Where the God’s small fish froliced, there tractors zatarakhtit, will arrange state farm. Village Council at the bottom sea. Beauty!. Our fishing heads were gone! Without Volga, there is no sea to us a zhista!

Gleb became silent, having inclined the head as a bull under blow of a butt.

The speckled Horned owl spitted out loudly, swore:

– Yes you, maybe, drank superfluous, Kalgan, was not overslept? Regain consciousness, cross! What to part nonsense for the night? Whether imaginable this business?. – Also stopped short.

Gleb raised the head and strictly looked at the Horned owl.

– I never spent on drink mind and was not engaged in nonsense... Yesterday the chairman of the Village Council spoke to me. Arrived, speaks, some of Astrakhan, to employ the administration, people. All of them also told that Volga will be closed, will drain the sea. From Astrakhan, speaks, the sea of versts on three hundred will depart. Means, and from us it is a little less. Below Kamyshin, at the Little sister, visitors say, already dig the earth, the stone, sand bring, barracks build. A dam Volga will be intercepted. In a word, upoky, My God, smother deceased your slaves!

Fishermen suddenly rustled as if storm wind on the wood passed.

– How to be a tepericha? – the young scared tenor outvoiced all.

Gleb grinned in gray-haired moustaches – got!

– How to be – he important started talking. – Vreme-na-a! That year, is worse. And all because that God was forgotten. God told: “All good very much”. And they here you are! Then by God it is incorrectly created. Undertook to correct! And former and that unless is bad? In old times as was? – And Gleb already rode out the fad. He spoke about “Golden Age” when fishes caught more than eighty million kilograms in the Caspian Sea and lower reaches of Volga a year, for twelve million rubles, about a beluga weighing one and a half thousand kilograms, about a starred sturgeon in fifty kilograms, about a sterlet in sixteen kilograms.

– And now that? Beluzhka – fifty five kilograms, a sturgeon – ten-twenty, a sevryuzhka at all six kilograms. Fish becomes shallow, fall trade. And now at all limes want them.

After such preparation Gleb wanted to lead the speech further. But here unexpectedly the thin fisherman Kuzma Sysoyev, all prickly as the Caspian bull-calf, a prickly, long ago not shaven beard, prickly eyes and words prickly got into conversation:

– Bolsheviks are guilty, speak? They exhausted fish? And you are not present? And who in forbidden time yes in forbidden places caught fish? You will tell, not you? Who seines blocked the river, up did not pushchat fish to places of spawning? Who on “holes” of a stanovishch of oblavshchik arranged yes wintering there a bream and a sazan and caught a catfish? Not you? You are also the first fish wrecker! Exhausted fish, and itself was inflated. It to you tightened now belts, here and began to whimper: ha-arasho was! To whom it is good, and to whom it is bad. okpect you in servitude had all fishermen! It Otjetsya on our sweat-blood, on you, a svolocha, worked.

Gleb though that, as though and not about it the speech. Lit a tubule, in an extinct fire spat and quietly answered:

– Well, brothers, I became bad to you, the old man drove out of mind, look for the senior more young. And I see that me have nothing to do here more. Tomorrow I will at daybreak take a swag for shoulders yes with the sons and I will start wandering on a path of a kuda of an eye look.

Fishermen were disturbed.

– Bude, Kalgan!

– Without you, as without eyes!

– Do not throw us!

– The dog grinds – wind carries!.. – were heard from darkness of a voice of fishermen. But the salted, dense bass of Gleb covered all these voices:

– My word is firm! As told, well. And now to sleep!

Sighing and sighing, fishermen settled. It became absolutely silent. Only splash of the running wave was heard.

– Nikita! – Gleb said in low tones, having pushed sideways the son. – Sh-shsh... Creep, look whether this devil obstinate – Kuzma sleeps!

– Pokhrapyvayet – Nikita reported in a minute.

– Wake the carefully others... Horned owl, perhaps, too not трождь.

And when fishermen woke up, Gleb began to speak to them:

– Here that, children. Our business – tobacco. But only I so think that else it is possible to save the sea and Volga. Let's not give them in offense! Sh-shsh! Listen! Said in council that this devil's dam costs millions, and money it is just barely enough released. Here I also think ... – Gleb started talking even more quietly: – If will break through this dam, and all plan will break through them to the devil's grandmother. More money at them will not be enough. You realize? We will go all artel to Kamyshin, we will be employed in navvies, and there... it will be visible. Who agrees, that tomorrow and register!

Again silence. Large stars began to blink very often as if at night birds of an eye stuck together.

The small Volga town of Kamyshin is flooded alien fierce: seasonal workers, workers, employees, technicians, cooperators...

The village the Little sister on the right side of Volga, Solodushino with left and the island Shishkin, lying on the line of a barrage, are unrecognizable. As mushrooms after a rain grew barracks, cooperatives, dining rooms, catering establishments, clubs, hospitals.

The Kamyshin gardeners, damning a barrage, a piping and Mikheyev, transferred the bashtana far to the country.

Cucumbers and the well-known Kamyshin water-melons will grow somehow on the new place of a melon?.

– Ruined! At the roots cut! Ruined! Fish was gone, also our water-melons will be gone! – old men-bashtanniki grumbled.

The Kamyshin station is to the full filled with the arriving freights: wood, by cars, rails. Crept away with snakes on building of a narrow-gage railway. Fervently cuckoos shout, dragging for themselves tails of trolleys with sand, the earth, a stone. Zalyazgali iron jaws excavators. Zachvakali, drags breathed heavily, cranes creak.

Day and night there is a work. Brightly fires of lamps and searchlights disperse a gloom.

It is not slept to old men residents of Kamyshin. Will leave the house and long look at fires reflected in waters of the wide river and it seems to them that they got to other, terrible and unclear world where huge iron monsters creep, move necks more long than a cable column, champ mouths in which the bull and with horns will pass. And people – small, fussy – look after these unknown monsters.

Mikheyev almost does not sleep and eats on a clothes line. It is happy. The dream of his life was fulfilled. To the desert war is declared, he is a commander-in-chief at the front, the fire captain on “the fire of the earth”. He runs day and night bare-headed. Its bald head is red from the sun, wind and nervousness. The pointed nose was even more pointed, eyes flare. It all is heated by inspiration fire.

Runs on the coast, swings hands. After it, hardly keeping up, the lanky young engineer walks.

– Liquid air – here my secret! – Mikheyev shouts, without turning around to the engineer. – The device to Linda which is a little altered by me. Pressure – two hundred twenty atmospheres... We carry out liquid air on pipes and we release directly in water. It freezes water.

And before caissons we will receive a strong ice wall in the hot summer. Under its protection it will be easy for us to work.

It is better, than the temporary crossing points applied on Dneprostroy... What do you lag behind? Rather, rather!.

Work is humming in three changes. One change sends another calls to a competition. Day and night cuckoos have something in common. Cars roar, people rush about.

– As on the fire! – residents of Kamyshin speak.

– The fire also is; the earth burns, it is necessary to extinguish!

Dashingly Gleb Kalgan works with the artel. Sons of young people were outdone by the old man. And will graduate from artel work, at night-midnight take the networks occupied with themselves – and in boats. The river pulls, fish pulls.

And here among the old man bitterness pours out, facilitates heart, to the brim crowded with rage.

– Wait a moment! Will prop up a water dam autumn, here we also will gasp the artel to them on to help. One is bad – work at night, fires burn. Well and we will contrive somehow. To notice for the main thing where is thinner.

– Not there! Not there, devils, devils! Not there, rebyatushka! – Mikheyev's voice reaches from the island Shishkin.

– See, vostronosy devil! – Gleb grumbles. – To Ugomon on him is not present! Well, take a walk, shout a bit. Let's calm also you.

– The uncle Gleb – the young fisherman says suddenly. – And I met Kuzma yesterday. About cement works gadded. There, likely, it was attached.

Gleb frowned.

– Prickly it is necessary to be on guard this ruff. Will inform. All business will fail if slightly that will notice. Yes, can, for this purpose and came to building, maybe, overheard then... at night?.

– The uncle Gleb, and why pipes lay?

– Among summer water gas is wanted to be frozen. Frozen there was a wish for pike perches. Well, only unrealizable this business: before people did not reach yet that summer for the winter to overturn.

The message that “Volga will be frozen” quickly flew about building. The Kamyshin old residents were shocked.

– It is visible, not all nonsense that old women stir. In the summer ice to hold down the river – unless not the same miracle how the sea to dry up it and fire to kindle?

– Pomorozit water-melons! Though throw бацтан yes leave up hill and down dale...

After all hoped: not to create a miracle to the person!

But these hopes did not come true: froze vostronosy Volga. However, not all, but all it was also not necessary to it. And before caissons water froze, became an ice wall. Not that residents of Kamyshin, and and seasonal workers did not trust the eyes, a hand felt ice. Real, without fake. Cold and strong!

Day after day people win meter from the river behind meter. Lower wooden boxes caissons on a bottom, build concrete cubes bull-calves. Water directs in flights, boiling and worrying. Level of the semi-dammed Volga increases, and the autumn high water from above approaches. Concrete bulls, links of a chain which has to hold down Volga are ready almost everything. It is necessary to finish the last, to block iron boards, and Volga, having met an obstacle, will turn the plentiful waters, will move to the Zavolzhye steppes to extinguish “the fire of the earth”.

But it is necessary to wait an autumn high water, and it this year unknown: the whole summer and fall went pouring rains.

Water arrives every day, muddy, dark, gloomy. Storms, fights about concrete bulls. Dry leaves, herbs, bushes, branches, the whole trees – everything that was taken by the river on the way – stuck around ledges of bulls, litter coast.

But thousands of builders day and night forge chains for the river.

Kuzma Sysoyev works at building together with the wife. It became as though still prickly. Lost weight, acquired a beard. Day works, and does not sleep at night, turns as if he is pricked by dry bones.

– What you do not sleep? – the wife grumbles.

Kuzma in the dark sighs.

– Gleb damned does not give to rest with the artel...

Yesterday there were I to a barrage at night, and it goes about a pipe with air, sniffs up. And change not it. What there it is necessary to it? Uvidal me – was washed away.

– And you what business? – the wife grumbles. – Watch yourself. Here winter is at hand, and you still a fur coat yes did not receive valenoks. Others received long ago.

- Tomorrow it is necessary vostronosity to tell – Kuzma continues, thinking of the.
- And long ago it is time – the wife calms.

Suddenly the beep, faltering, alarm, tears night calm to parts. Alarm...

Kuzma ran out on the street.

That for weather damned! Wind knocks down, the rain whips, the river hoots. Workers run. Shout, noise not to understand in what business.

- Why alarm? – Kuzma asks.

– Accident. The pipe with liquid air does not work, melted ice, the caisson fills in – someone answers on the run.

Kuzma quickens the pace. The river ate an ice wall and presses a caisson. Here flashed as though the gray-haired head of Gleb and disappeared.

“It... Precisely his hands business” – Kuzma thinks.

The person in an old thick cloth coat without cap runs on the edge of a caisson. Vostronosity. Shouts, swings hands. To a pipe got, potters.

- You leave – shout to it. – Water will fill in.

Where there! Mikheyev sees nothing, does not hear. “If only liquid air went”.

And water is higher and higher, just about will fill in a caisson. Water knocks Mikheyev down, but he creeps again, clings to a pipe...

And suddenly crash, noise; a white cloud, hissing and whistling, fills a caisson. The pipe broke, and liquid air went directly to Mikheyev.

Mikheyev raised hands and... and stiffened, turned into an ice statue.

Storm, roar, noise also howl...

5

Dry Dol's village as if the ruined ant hill. To look – and you will not understand what happened. At peasants bewilderment is more senior on faces, the youth is cheerful, and women howl, as on the dead man. Nobody stays at home, all run from a hut in a hut.

And at the Village Council the people already crowd, collect a descent.

Two persons came by the car, they also stirred a rural ant hill. Announced: Volga in the steppe turns, and on the Dry Dale water will begin to flow. It is necessary to move to the mountain. On transportation and building money will be given. Who has an old hut, the new wood will be received.

The people rustle. It is good to receive money, to get a new hut. It is bad to throw familiar spot.

Ipat calling himself “the strong middling person” strokes a long beard which for some reason turned gray from one side.

– So it is so. And it is not necessary to agree durolomy too. Perhaps on a hill there is no water. Perhaps there to dig wells – you will not get to the bottom of water.

- Yes at water, a skewbald beard, we will live. Though from a window sup water.

– It grieves it to throw a new hut on the stone base. All base will be crumbled. The reluctance to start.

– To whom hunting? – Ipat answers. – Today on the mountain, tomorrow downhill... Directly put huts on wheels.

- Truly. Let's not go to the mountain.

Broke into parties. And again came from the city, it is necessary to convince a descent. Fought, postponed until evening.

- Children, and Panas Chepurenko will not go to the mountain at all. Uporisty old man.

– Who is Chepurenko? – visitors ask and learn that Panas – a thick oak of ninety two years, but still strong, the native from Ukraine. It is stubborn as a chock, believes in God. Tobacco smells, itself pounds.

Marishkin and Kurilko who came by the car decide to visit Panas after a descent.

It with a rake in hands digs in a kitchen garden. Answered a greeting with low bow and calls in a hut.

– Yes we here on an open air will talk to you.

But the old man is unshakable.

– Yakshcho on a rozmovi, I ask to a hut. – And the first leaves.

There is nothing to do, followed for it.

– Here that, the grandfather – Marishkin says – it is necessary to move to the mountain. If itself you will not be able, people will help.

– And navishche to exchange on the mountain dertitsya. Meni and here much.

– It is impossible, old times. Here water will fill in everything soon.

Panas listens carefully, irons long moustaches, slowly takes out a tavlinka, smells tobacco and at last negatively swings the head.

– Not the mozha tsyy quarrystone – is surely answered by him. – God обіцяв, що злив билыш without awaking.

Visitors exchange glances. They did not expect such objection. Marishkin, at once not to embitter the old man, decided to act diplomatically.

– Yes that about a Flood is told, and here Volga only, will fill in several villages, here and yours too. For irrigation of fields, you understand? From a drought. Fills in villages and villages a spring flood. So same not a flood.

– Повинь – an insha on the right. To Rozilletsya a richka й in protect a znova having come. And ви you show, що all the hall on vichno. And ви дурницю you show, що the hall. Not to a mozha tsyy quarrystone. God казав, що злив without awaking, thaw without awaking. Nikudi not pita.

Well you will do with it? Marishkin took out a scarf from a pocket and wiped the sweated forehead.

– You think: we will give lifting on new building. You will live in a new hut.

– Not an occasional office to exchange of your crossing. Not pita, thaw a kineets.

– I see, you do not trust us. Well and so that, grandfather. Go with us on the car. Building you will look at itself, you will be convinced with own eyes. You will see what there with Volga becomes, and you will believe.

– And on an encore to exchange your car? Not pita. An axis of a tutochka it is live, i in a domovina to a lyazh here.

And left city with anything.

But after their departure Panas strong thought. And the next day unexpectedly for all harnessed the fad, took a loaf of bread and left the yard it is unknown where.

It arrived to Volga, came to building. To the people multitudes. Through Volga the bridge, cars, a roar, vanity. Between bulls workers fit iron boards. Will lower boards – and the dam is ready. Will dam Volga, you will begin to flow steppes – more water has no place to disappear.

Panas went to catering establishment from where all building is visible. Stayed at a window the whole day is silent and drank infinite quantity to tea. And when evening fires filled in building and noise of works was not lowered, the old man spoke deafly in gray-haired moustaches:

– So a stench, roll out dit, to sink us. – Also it was difficult to understand what it is more in his words – censures or praises.

Panas arrived home and three days did not leave a hut. Thought whether got sick after the journey.

And then left and began to tell it that sukhodolna even pootkryvat mouths on a descent. Did not happen at “the Piping of Volga” of such propagandist.

And amicably also the neighboring villages reached on a sukhodolna hill, and for them.

– Hit into my head! – Kondrat Semenych knocked a huge fist on a table so that the inkwell jumped up. The chairman of the board of “the Piping of Volga”, companion Markov, shuddered and corrected points.

– Well, however, you that... not too – he, шуря told weak-sighted eyes.

– What that? It you that – Kondrat Semenych was not appeased, and he suddenly rose in all growth as if preparing for fight. His red hair were disheveled, eyes threw sparks. The huge person was crimson as if it descended from a bathing regiment. – I will not allow to touch state farm. And you would visit “Red dawns” yes looked that there is heaped up. One silage tower of what costs! – Kondrat Semenych bent a thick finger. – From cement. Beauty! You will not transfer it. So, so and to throw? Will stand among the lake as a beacon. And эмтеэс – bent the second finger. – In all the district you will not find such machine and tractor station. Stone, capital construction. Elevator, repair shop, power plant, stables, sheds, cheese dairies, creameries... To list everything – there will not be enough fingers. All this under water.

Before “Piping” corrected points again and softly told:

– But you know that Volga will begin to flow spontaneously. Leveling shows that “Red dawns” lie on the way of a flood and will be filled in almost on meter.

– Means, it is not necessary to start up Volga spontaneously. You build dams, build bypass canals.

– If to dig channels yes to build dams, then all plan of works will change – Markov objected. – It will cost huge money.

The secretary of a cell the Inhabitant of Tula, small growth, thickset, in an old leather jacket, grinned, rose and, looking directly in eyes to Kondrat Semenychu, started talking by an equal metal voice:

– Nobody doubts, the companion, that you strong love “Red dawns”. You – the beautiful business executive. But also beautiful business executives have the shortcoming. Even defect: narrow-mindedness. It is impossible to take only a narrow. We cannot break the plan of work. The question was discussed by experts and here and in the center and cannot be changed. You want it or do not want, and “Red dawns” will be transferred.

– I do not want.

– Then you should be cleaned from the road.

Kondrat Semenych did not even understand at once. Then his thick fingers trembled, and the person turned pale.

– ... to move away me... Me which created this model state farm. Me...

– Yes, you. Because you are not able to submit to directives. At the front buildings there has to be the same cast-iron discipline, as well as in the war, and you were at the front and have to know what is discipline. I repeat: we very much appreciate your economic and organizing abilities. Therefore I also give to you a good advice: think again and do not go obstinate. We are able to appreciate people. But the one who will become us on the way will be removed, whatever merits behind it were.

Kondrat Semenych heavily fell by a chair.

Also the Inhabitant of Tula sat down.

There came intense silence. All attentively watched Kondrat Semenychem. Deep folds on his forehead and a bridge of the nose spoke about heavy internal fight.

– All right – at last he muttered gloomy, darted off, shouted: – So long! – Also escaped.

All breathed a sigh of relief.

– With it it was more difficult to cope, than with old Panas – smiling, Markov told Marishkin. – Nevertheless the Inhabitant of Tula understood it.

– Still. Easier, as they say, for soul to leave a body, than to Kondrat Semenychu from “Dawns”.

7

Still the young man, without being afraid of bullets, broke Valkirny ridges to Kolchak soldiers. Visited also under walls of Warsaw. Everywhere surprised with iron will and character. Finished civil, settled in the Zavolzhye steppes and was engaged in economic activity. “Red dawns” – one of the first big state farms which arose in Zavolzhye. A lot of Valkirny had to fight also for “Red dawns”, for the breeding cattle, for cars, for each tractor. Children suitable were selected and made big business. And now that all order to dig up to the basis the hands.

– Posh-shel! – angrily Valkirny shouts and beats full state-farm horses on each side.

Cold... Burning east wind burns a face, lifts from the earth small, dry snow with dust. Snowless winter. As if did not damage winter... In places wind blew off snow after the journey, and under iron runners of sledge sand cracks and hisses. Kondrat Semenych pulls down more strong a bowie knife and quilts horses...

– Posh-shel!.

Arrived at dawn, woke the groom, itself unharnessed horses, put in stalls...

– Something as though it is gloomy, Kondrat Semenych? – the groom asked, yawning and being scratched.

– The devil of a hog on an aspen hung up, because and is gloomy – Valkirny angrily answered and quickly left a stable.

By the light of the being engaged dawn Valkirny started wandering on the settlement. There is each brick, everyone бревнышко told it the story.

Stood before a silo. The tower is good. Above a fire kalancha. Hundred years will stay... Looked at power plant, at farmyards... jammed heart.

8

In four days Valkirny unexpectedly was in repair shop.

– How many at you tractors are not repaired?

The master Sharokov looked at Valkirny and answered cheerfully:

– Six, Kondrat Semenych. By then, as the earth will thaw, all will be in serviceability.

– Means, sixty six. All right.

From this day Valkirny recovered.

Became talkative, active still. As though the weight off the shoulders at it fell down or it resolved a difficult task. And when snow and cheerful streams of a zazhurchala on slopes descended, Kondrat Semenych brought together board and addressed it with such speech:

– Here that, children. I received paper from Kamyshin. Will dam Volga on the first of May, and it will begin to flow to our steppes. One of streams will go directly to “Red dawns”, but only will touch with an edge. Not to postpone “Dawns” to the new place, it is enough to make to us a small dam in two hundred fifty meters of length and more than a meter of height, and water will bypass us and will begin to flow on the South.

– And suddenly will flood?

– Will not flood. I measured all. Water at us will be only on sixty centimeters above the level of “Dawns”, and we will make a dam in meter, well, even in one and a half meters.

– And to make as? – Grachev asked.

– And it is very simple. Tractors are, we will make in our workshops ploughshares more, we will launch our “tanks” – and they in a trice otvorotit the necessary layer of the earth. Merekayete?

Someone else did not merekat, and Valkirny, as always, patiently and in details explained.

Work began to boil. Grachev was “a bit an inventor” and with great feeling undertook design of “the trench car”. Made not really accurate, but sensible drawing. Valkirny approved, smiths were accepted to production of ploughshares, tractor operators put cars in order.

– So, so, children. Fry so that hot became the sky that sparks flew – Kondrat encouraged. He felt as again at the front. It was animated, mobile, cheerful, ate for three and worked for ten.

The tractors turned into trench cars left in the field soon and, according to Valkirny’s instructions, began to turn off layer behind layer.

The sun warmed more and stronger. The spring was amicable.

The dam was stretched already more than half when there was one incident.

Valkirny ordered “tanks” on fields as suddenly confused Grachev ran up to him. He held paper in hand.

– You that? – Valkirny asked, having pricked up the ears.

– Kondrat Semenyich, what is it?. How it so?. – there began Grachev. – Here paper came from “Piping” ... write here...

Valkirny did not listen to the end. Snatched out paper from Grachev’s hands and, having tapped of him on the shoulder so that that donkey on one side, told strictly:

– We follow me ... – And they departed from a tractor column that it was not heard their conversation””.

– Well, what is the matter? Speak.

– Yes here, “Piping” asks how we have a work on transfer of “Red dawns” on the new place. And whether we will finish work by May first. How it so, Kondrat Semenyich?

Valkirny annoyancely grunted.

– And here so. Hit into my head. I will not allow. To arrange a dam rather and cheaper, than to transfer the whole settlement. You understand? When they see how all this simply was arranged, will thank. And will expel me – the hell with them. If only to defend “Dawns”.

– Well... And if someone from them, from “Piping”, arrives yes here all this will open?

– Will not arrive. Now at them there is a lot of del. All visited. And will arrive, will see that we did not begin to move “Dawns” yet, will be abused and will leave on – mo – to it. I so believe... Unless will throw out me from “Dawns”. Well. You before ohm will be... What the nose on a fifth hung up?

– I anything...

Grachev trudged for Valkirny and now looked with new eyes at the built dam. Bewilderment and fear were reflected in his face.

And Valkirny shows no sign. Orders indifferently. Strong person.

9

Rain expected to fall. Under beams of the spring sun wet rails, roofs of station buildings, the brand new engine began to shine. It puffs, gains strength – now will go to carry all over the world different people with their different destiny.

From a roof of the prisoner car drops, brilliant as mercury drip. The barred window is opened, and in a window, as from a frame – the old man’s head. Gloomy watch dark eyes from under ragged eyebrows. Greedy pull in widely opened nostrils damp spring air. Stuffy in the car, and Gleb Kalganov got used to an open air of the sea and Volga. Watches Kalgan at station vanity and as if does not see. Retired a thought into oneself.

And suddenly his look recovered, was poured by rage. Kalgan saw Kuzma Sysoyev, wanted to hide, depart from a window – late. A prickly eye of Kuzma already stuck into his dark eyes, holds, does not release...

This meeting is casual or is not casual?. Perhaps, as it is not casual. Kuzma was the main prosecution witness in court.

Came! With own eyes wants to see that the pike toothy did not escape from networks... It is torn through crowd, keeping the eyes glued from Kalgan. To a window stuck, eyes as if bloodsuckers, stuck into the face of Kalgan, hold... Kalgan is silent.

– You sit? – Kuzma asks. – At, a snake!.

The engine hooted, cars started.

Gleb hard fell by a bench and looked at hefty sons, sitting opposite. And near it fishermen from its artel gloomy frowned.

– Went! – deafly told Kalgan.

– To the devil's grandmother on a visit – the fisherman, the neighbor of Kalgan grumbled. – All on your favor!

– In a whirlpool the head and us there! – picked up another. – “Let's not give Volga mother!” Here also did not give. Believed an old dog.

Kalgan is silent. “Here – thought – Mikheyev to all the reason. To be the death of Vostronosy, to break through a dam – and Volga is saved. Thought so, and left differently. The dam broke, and Volga will be locked after all tomorrow. In what the reason?. Vot and Kuzma – undersized, puny, a claw you will press down. And removed the head from Gleb's shoulders. Why? Because it with what is built?” Gleb heaves a deep sigh.

10

Orchestras died down, ceased speeches of speakers. The celebration is finished. Wide Volga waters are taken prisoner.

And infinite crowds of the people do not disperse yet. Watch that will be farther with Volga. Wait for extraordinary. But Volga as if tries human patience. Its level increases almost imperceptibly for eyes.

Go to look at the river below a dam. There it is more interesting. Water quickly falls down.

– Shallows! In the eyes dries out!. – the uneasy, cheerful voice is heard. The crowd of curious hurries there.

Yes, Volga shallows. From under water sandy islands – tops of “cans”, rifts are shown. Here and bottom. Sand, silt layers, the sunk anchors acquired a mold the dark remains of once sunk fishing vessels and barques... The nose of the fishing boat semi-brought by sand with the broken sail sticks out. River cemetery. Volga reveals the underwater secrets.

Several unlucky fishes who were not in time to go in time with water down fight at a sandy bottom, sparkling scales silver in the spring sun.

– Look! Som! – the same cheerful voice shouts. – Усипца! Usishcha!

– And it is right. Got, smart guy! Well and som! Poods on six. Drag on catering establishment!

The huge moustached som remained in the hole filled with water. Fights. Tychet in sand a stupid snout, vzmetat a tail dirty splashes.

And the crowd discusses the plan how to get a catfish.

– And well, children, for me, by the sea, a yak on dry land! – with desperate cheerfulness the young guy shouts and tries to reach som. But legs stick in damp silt. Having waved hopelessly a hand, the guy gets out on the coast.

– Here and itself you will be gone together with som!

– To put boards! – someone offers.

Till the night crowded curious on river banks.

The barrage did the part. By the night Volga began to fill in the left coast slowly. Its plentiful waters went to offensive at the desert, to extinguish the fire of the earth.

11

Matvei on the steppe on a dun horse goes, sings the song. Dun as if listened with delight, trudges a short step and ears spins.

– And well, select legs, Koska-a more cheerfully! – Matvei shouts and continues the song.

To Volga Matvei goes behind goods for collective-farm cooperative. Time spring is expensive, here and left at night that by the morning to return.

Koska again ears spins and a tail twists. Or the song is not pleasant? It is possible another. But the horse does not calm down. Forward extended the head, air smells, sniffs. Even shivers as though. What for the reason? Scented an animal? But what here an animal in the steppe? One gophers.

Stop! There was Koska as driven prt back, sniffs. Opportunity! Matvei on the cart stood up and suddenly sees... and to the eyes does not trust.

very far in the steppe by the light of a month water is silvered by a wide strip. Volga? Yes also halfway did not pass! Perhaps seemed?

– But, went! – There is no horse. The back moves back.

And the silvery strip on the horizon is poured by blue light, grows, spreads. River not the river, lake not the lake. And suddenly dawned on a thought: Volga moved.

Spoke about it to Matvei, warned, but not really he worried: “Until Volga reaches us, twenty times will manage to return!” And here was not in time, took.

Matvei pulled reins, turned the cart back. Koska as if only also waited for it. From where and the speed undertook! Jumps – it is not necessary to adjust.

And water follows them, quietly so as if effortlessly, fills in yes fills in steppe open spaces.

And suddenly water at first on back wheels, then on lobbies rustled, filled in legs of a horse and swept forward, dimming the steppe. Matvei looked at the earth – in water month is reflected.

– Take out, Koska! – Matvei shouts.

And Koska to the course reduced at once: sticks in dirt.

Koska hardly touches legs. Splashed still a bit on water and became. The cart got stuck in fat steppe dirt. You will not get out... To descend, perhaps, in ice cold water yes to help a horse?

Well water is also cold! And there is nothing to do. Matvei Bulykhnutsya, began to pull the cart, urges on a horse...

12

And waters go further and further.

Here they found the bed of the dried-up small river and, squeezed by coast, began to flow quicker. They draw the new map of the region with new lakes, gulfs, the rivers.

Collective farmers of the Dry Dale since midnight are on duty near new huts on the high hill. On radio the message was already carried: there is water! Where there was a waterless steppe, the river will begin to flow.

The children who got up on roofs, uvidal the first.

– Water! To Ida-from!.

At beams of a rising sun the melted gold water flowed, filling in the old river bed left, perhaps, one thousand years ago.

– Trophîme! Drag network! Fish on a visit all right!

– Our dry Dale of a teperich wet leaves!

– Ded Panas! It is advisable to remain to you in an old hut! There would be you the grandfather water now and fish would order!

Panas shchurit old eyes from light, smiles. And suddenly new shout from a roof:

– Steamship all right!

It with anything not in conformity! All heads turned on the West. There among a water smooth surface some black point which was slowly coming moved.

– What steamship! It is the boat!

– The devil on a devil, really!

At last the black point came nearer; the person astride a horse goes.

Tired, all wet, approached Matvei who abandoned the cart into steppes.

13

The new river, still anonymous, flows on the East, moistening air and the earth. It came here, to the adust steppe to extinguish the fire of the earth. Felt the way, carefully as blind, groping all roughnesses of the soil, filling in holes, sometimes branching off aside, and suddenly – stop! Came across, blind, a wall. Stood a bit and turned on the South, having changed the way planned by it the old course.

– Red Dawns station! – Grachev shouted.

On a dam poured out all settlement. Valkirny smiles. Everything left as he wanted. “Red dawns” are saved. There was a danger whether the river will fill in the settlement, having bypassed a dam from above, but also this danger passed: to the South a slope, and the river directed the waters there.

– Let now from Kamyshin come yes will look! I to them saved up not one ten thousand rubles. And all “barrage” was built, the kopek for them was asked!

– Good fellow, Kondrat Semenych! Head!

– And now for work, children! There is nothing to yawn! – And he walked by the saved “Red dawns”.

However this day came to an end absolutely not so joyfully as began.

Valkirny made orders on the farmyard when the out of breath Grachev came running to it. On it the person was not.

– Kondrat Semenych, trouble!

– What, broke through a dam? – quickly asked Valkirny and turned pale a little.

– No, not that! We did del, Kondrat...

– Say yes, the devil, plainly!

– Now called by telephone from Sukhanov. They say, filled in the villages of Igoshki and Chernyaevo which did not need to be filled in. A bit filled in Chernyaevo, and Igoshki in a hollow, so that absolutely on roofs. We, so the dam turned the small river not there where it is necessary. Ask for help...

Valkirny did not listen any more. He rushed and ran to office, having shouted on the run:

– Call alarm!

But Grachev lagged behind him, and Valkirny, the first having reached the square in front of office where the bell convoking for work and a lunch hung began to sound the alarm. From everywhere the people ran together. Valkirny gave orders:

– Harness horses, vividly. Take hooks, axes, ropes, do not feel sorry for horses, you drive with might and main. You fly to Igoshki. There is a flood!.

And itself ran to stables, chose the best horse, hastily put on a bridle and rushed off on a bareback gnedk on the steppe, the coast of the new river.

The village of Igoshki was in twenty kilometers from “Red dawns”.

The kind horse flew a whirlwind, and it seemed to Valkirny that it hardly trudges. Kondrat Semenych beat a neck of a horse with the end of a bridle and heels in sides.

“Here opportunity! I thought that the river will go more to the left... And well as there still people sank...” – Valkirny thought and at the same time involuntarily examined the area. Absolutely unfamiliar! River, creeks, lakes...

Here and roofs Igoshek are seen over water.

On roofs people, roosters, cats... Shout, groan, crying...

The peasants who were in time to get out, while water was low, sit with a sad face ashore. Around on the earth of a blanket, pillow, samovars, sheepskin coats – that managed to take out. Dogs, having raised muzzles, howl, looking at the flooded village.

Valkirny approaches and abruptly rebuffs a horse.

– Why you do not save, you are idle? – snatches on peasants.

– And how you will save? – the red peasant snaps. – There are no boats, with barehanded into water will not get.

– A barn it was necessary to sort yes a raft to make – Valkirny says

– Language easily! – hostile voices are heard. – Make itself! Axes sank, there are no ropes, than the raft will be connected?

– Hands it was possible to sort a barn. On a log you will not drown. So gradually would also drag the people on the coast.

Valkirny, as was, in heavy boots and an invariable leather jacket, floats to the next log hut. He removes from the boy's roof, mounts to himself upon a neck and floats back to the coast, without paying attention to crowd.

Valkirny when there arrived krasnozoryets managed to drag several people already on the coast.

Work began to boil. Sorted an old barn on logs, made a raft and on it transported all from roofs on the coast.

– In huts remained nobody? There is no drowned? – Valkirny asked.

– As though all are whole ... – Began to consider, to have something in common.

Valkirny was already going to return to “Dawns” to dispose how to place the people who remained homeless when after the journey the beep of the car unexpectedly was heard.

There arrived from Kamyshin the secretary of a cell, the Inhabitant of Tula to whom already phoned about everything.

He approached Valkirny, put to it a hand on an elbow – did not reach a shoulder – and, looking directly in eyes, told:

– Well that, Kondrat Semenykh, now you understand why private it is necessary to subordinate to the general? Posvoyevolnichali also did del! It is necessary to answer now!

Valkirny was silent, having hung the head.

14

Letter the first

“Dear Lenz!

I do not know what to begin with. I have such state as if I watched without interruption forty movies. Try, understand all this. I choose the general from lots of the diverse impressions: collective farm “New way”, in my opinion, the most interesting place on the globe. I as if moved on other planet where time moves with extreme speed.

To begin with the fact that from Kamyshin where I examined a great Volga dam, I flew through traffic on the big passenger-and-mail airplane to collective farm. Constant line. To the village on the airplane. Not bad?

There was a windy day, and I as if slid on the American mountains over the wide steppe. Once it was waterless, droughty, whimsical for harvests. Now all it is filled in with water: rivers, lakes, lagoons... In places I still saw wooden huts of villages, but stone four-storeyed houses, the whole towns of such houses met on the way more often (or rather under way as I looked from above).

– And also “The new way” is seen – the neighbor told me, pointing to the horizon.

I uvidat the smoking pipes of the plants. It is a lot of factory pipes. Whether my fellow traveler was mistaken? I interrogatively looked at it. He smiled and, seeing my bewilderment, hurried to explain:

– These are collective-farm factories and the plants on primary processing of agricultural raw materials: flax, hemp, development of tinned fruit and vegetables, myasokhladoyno, cheese dairies, mills, elevators, fish-canning, sugar, oil milling plants.

In a few minutes I saw all agricultural and factory collective-farm city. It stood at the river – the new river created by a piping which supplied it with water. Higher on a current, separated by a wide strip of the wood from smoke of factory pipes, the inhabited city, all from the white two-storeyed houses rolling in gardens and parks was located. Several houses were allocated with the size – it is probable, houses of government and public institutions. On the river swimming baths were seen, boats scurried about.

When we flew by over the wood separating the city from factories and the plants I uvidat equal, as on a ruler, the road which is cutting through the wood. It was asphalted. On it trams and cars scurried about back and forth.

We flew by over the city, and again before us fields stretched. There were spring field works. From airplane height tractors seemed little bugs, someone trained. Rovnenko they moved on fields a close formation, leaving behind themselves the black, loosened soil. Behind them other cars probably of a harrow crept, after they are seeders.

In places among fields buildings were seen. Were under construction new two – three-storeyed houses.

– New villages – smiling, my neighbor told. – Old villages were under construction without plan. Now all area of collective farm – and it at us not small – is broken into sites; and all population occupied with agriculture will be evenly placed on all area of collective farm so that each settlement processed the territory adjoining to it. Distances will be reduced to a terminal point, so, and time for moving. Economy in fuel of cars, speed...

– You in collective farm work? – I took an interest.

– In collective farm. Accounting assistant. And you not the correspondent? – he asked me in turn.

– No – I answered. – I go to work in collective farm too. I am an electrician.

– Foreigner?

– Yes, German.

– Here we soon and at home – told nomóyx.

I uvidat a high openwork tower of radio station on the horizon.

– Send-receive. Our, collective-farm.

Soon also houses seemed. It is a lot of good stone houses, the area surrounded with high buildings, a garden, a monument: the person with the raised right hand is Lenin. A mirror the river bend flashed. How many here is the rivers!.

The airplane began to decrease, and we went down on good airfield soon. I left. I was surprised by abundance of the airplanes standing on airfield.

– Whether has collective farm and own airplanes? – I asked my satellite.

– Public. Osoaviakhimovskiye. For crops and pest control.

With an easy suitcase (my baggage walked separately) I went to the village, collective farm, the city, arporod – I do not know how to call.

The city is brand new, very clean. Somewhere else end plaster and whitewashing of buildings.

I without effort found the house and the room intended to me for housing. You want to know what this collective-farm room for lonely? Twelve-fifteen meters area. Oblong. A big Vienna window without curtain. Under a window – pipes of water heating. Bluish walls. At a window on the right – a small desk with a chair and a desk electric lamp. Other lamp under a ceiling. Near a table on a wall

a small shelf for books. At the left wall – a sofa, the employee and a bed. Bedding – in a drawer in the sofa. Closer to a door, in the same left wall – the wall case for a dress which is a little acting. At the right wall – the wash basin separated from sides at belt height, thick glass walls not to spray water. Further, at a table – phone. Over an entrance door a loudspeaker loud-hailer.

House quite big. In it there is a good public dining room, club, at it small library. If in it there is no book necessary to you, can order it by phone in the central city library. At the end of a corridor – bathrooms where at certain one o'clock in the afternoon you can shave.

I have breakfast and went to “administration”. But about this visit allow to write another time. Be healthy. Your Karl E.”.

Letter the second

“ – You know agronomics? – the foreman when I was to him asked me.

The question surprised me a little.

– I am an electrician.

– I am an electrician too – he answered. – But at us and in electrical equipment an agronomical bias. So to speak, the agroelectrician as there is an agrochemistry. Whether you thought that you will be invited to potter with electric bulbs?

At us and school children cope with it. All electrical wiring lies in new houses on them. We have requirements to electrical equipment the. We demand something bigger from electricity, than lighting of houses and fields. You arrived to the interesting moment when we, using cheap electric energy which the piping gave us, pass to electrification of agriculture. We receive current from big power plant of the island of the Cone. Saw?

I nodded:

– Yes, grandiose construction. But you did not establish wires of high-voltage tension yet?

The foreman grinned and answered:

– You do not hurry to deny existence of what you do not see.

This answer surprised me, but I understood soon. The Soviet scientists invented the insulators allowing to lay under the earth cables for high-voltage transfer on long distances several years ago.

– Underground cables? – I asked.

The foreman in the affirmative nodded.

– It is cheaper – he answered – more economically in agriculture. Though we have lands and much, but we value each span. Elevated conducting would take away the considerable area of fields for installation of towers and would complicate operation of tractors.

– What application will have electricity in your agriculture?

– The most various. Idemte, I will show you our work. It is much made, it is necessary to make even more. – The foreman critically looked at me. – You already the person elderly, and you should study much.

We came to the suburb of the collective-farm town. Where the field road began, there was a big, long one-storey building with many wide doors. Through open doors I saw tractors of type, new to me.

– Electrotractors – the foreman explained. – Latest model. Work at accumulators. The Volga waters which thousands of years in vain spent the energy give it to us now. Our tractors as working horses, are sated with this energy and go on fields.

– And what you will do with the old tractors using fuel?

– And a lot of work will be them. Let's transfer them to those collective farms which are too far from an electric power source. Electricity will preserve to us much precious fuel. To burn down oil from which it is possible to receive the most valuable chemical products, as a matter of fact – barbarity.

We entered the neighboring building. There were other cars: electric harrows, mowers...

– At us everything will do electricity – with pride he told. – Same spring we will take our fields in electric hand. And so were ahead of us. Somehow in the day off go to the next collective farm Realovsky – it is closer to Volga. Admire that there does electricity. By Idemte now on farmyards, they at us since fall are electrified.

The road he continued to speak:

– We not only process the earth electricity, but also we heat it. Underground electric hot-water bottles are laid. Too late spring and early fall to us will not be more terrible. But there is more to come. We have a field where we ionize the growing cereals, and the result turns out excellent. Here stalls.

The pure, warm, aired rooms lit with electricity. Near each cow – electric milking.

– The hand of the person does not touch neither a cow, nor milk. Electricity milks, processes milk, cleans cows and stalls.

Then we examined incubators. The longest room reminding the factory shop.

Yes so it, as a matter of fact, also is. It is the real factory. Here “semi-finished product” – egg – turns into “the final product of production” – a live chicken. Long black boxes last. Silence. Deficiency. For people electricity works.

– It is not necessary to look after temperature more. It is regulated automatically. Electric hot-water bottles work ideally. Everything is calculated. When term comes, our poultry breeders only here are to take ready chickens and to put new portions of eggs in incubators.

The following room met me by discordant peep. It is “nursery”, брудергауз. Here bring up the hatched baby birds. They are divided on age and are located in boxes with low walls. Over boxes electric lamps and wires, some metal spheres with needles.

– Ionization and influence by ultraviolet rays. Grow by leaps and bounds. Incidence is brought almost to naught.

– Electric chickens – smiling, I say.

– Whether still you will see – the foreman answers. – Our production does not stop all the year round as hens rush also in the winter not less, than in the summer.

– Surprisingly! – I told, with admiration looking at thousands of fluffy zheltenky chickens, cheerfully and busy pottering about in boxes.

– Perhaps, electricity is designed to play the most important role in agriculture? – I told.

The foreman looked at me with some regret – so it seemed to me – small consciousness such supposedly at the person!

– So only the narrow expert of old time can argue – he answered. – We are dialecticians, and we are not escaped by the general communication of the phenomena. Electrical equipment, chemistry, physics, agronomics, botany, biology, bacteriology, meteorology – everything has the price the same as both air, and a sunlight, and water, and mineral fertilizers are important for plants. Everything is equally important. Take away one – and the plant will die in spite of the fact that it will be provided to all rest enough. Here you get acquainted with companion Boyko, the chemist of our experimental agricultural station. Talk to it. He will tell you about agrochemistry so much that, I am sure, the chemistry will seem to you the most important in agriculture. But neither he, nor I so we do not think.

We came back to a garage where I had to get to work and study soon.

– You are free tonight? – the foreman asked me.

– Absolutely.

And so that. You still will manage to go to Realovka. And today you come by eight o'clock to club. I will show you the movie on which all moments of the electrified processing of the earth in one of our best collective farms are photographed. Look.

In the same evening I saw how huge electric plows crashed into the earth and turned off layer behind layer. I saw how behind them as if I infantry after artillery preparation, send “to finish the enemy” other cars which broke earth lumps. The third cars scattered fertilizers, the fourth sowed,

exactly, carefully, accurately, the fifth mowed, reaped, connected and brought sheaves of wheat and a linking of hay from the field. No, not hay, and a fresh grass which went to a huge silo where electric current killed bacteria.

Over fields flew airplanes, and a part of sowing was made from airplanes. Other airplanes sprayed a poison for wreckers.

I saw the electric threshers giving pure, full grain. At last, I saw how electricity filled with grain huge elevators.

“Where – I thought – the overstraining horses, the exhausted bulls poured pbtly the mowers, women who are unsteady for fatigue, exhausted nursing right there on a field flabby children?. Instead of them – everywhere cars, and near cars and by cars are visible the dexterous, healthy, surely working collective farmers in the blue working overalls splashed by lubricating oil”.

I admit, I did not see a picture of more fascinating. It is deification of power, the equipment, electrification, the organized work triumphing over forces majeure of the nature...

Be healthy. Write. Your Karl Ernst”.

Letter the third

“Dear Lenz!

The foreman was right: when I visited at the agrochemist Boyko, I was ready to prozакladyvat the head that the most important in agriculture is a chemistry.

Met me by Boyko in chemical laboratory of experimental station.

– Came to us to work? – he asked, giving me a hand. It was in the gray dressing gown burned by acids.

At laboratory tables stood in dressing gowns of the young man and girl, they potted with torches, flasks, glasses, overtook, boiled, cooled...

In the certain room – a sanctuary where chemical gases do not come – under glass boxes there are chemical scales.

– Pay attention: that concussion of the soil did not affect them, scales stand not on tables, and on the shelves attached to walls. There is our last Soviet achievement – with pride told Boyko, lifting a glass box from brand new scales. – Tear off a scrap of a piece of paper and throw on scales.

I made it. Quickly weighed a scrap, removed from scales, stretched to me and told:

– Now write on a scrap a pencil your surname.

I executed also it. Quickly again put a scrap on scales. And that: scales noted an increase in weight from a short pencil inscription.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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