

I am (romance)



...But it was a reality: predatory and cruel like a pack of hungry wolves.

It was hopeless reality inevitable as death itself...

Mykola Khvylovy (1893–1933) was a prominent Ukrainian writer and publicist of the Ukrainian cultural renaissance of the 1920s.

Born as Mykola Fitylov in Trostyanets, Kharkov Governorate to a Russian laborer father and Ukrainian schoolteacher mother, Khvylovy joined the Communist Party in 1919. In the same year he became the chief of local Cheka in Bohodukhiv povit. He moved to Kharkiv in 1921 and involved himself with writers connected to Vasyl Blakytny and the paper Visti VUTsVK (news from All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee). In 1921, he also published his first poetry collection.

In 1922, he began to focus more on prose writing. His initial collections *Syni etudy* (Blue Etudes, 1923) and *Osin'* (autumn, 1924). His impressions of the work as a CheKa officer are reflected in his 1924 novel "I am (Romance)", the hero of which - the head of the local Cheka - sentenced his mother to death in the name of the ideals of the revolution.

After his death, his works were banned in the Soviet Union and because of his symbolic potency were mostly not permitted until near the end or after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

“Mykola Khvylovy wrote in his autobiography that in 1917, soon after the February Revolution, he came to a congress of soldiers, as a combatant and member of an army council, with two ribbons pinned to his suit: a red one and a yellow-and-blue one. He offered a simple explanation for his dual political views: “I wanted to be a Ukrainian Bolshevik.” The drama of being divided ended in suicide: on May 13, 1933, Khvylovy shot himself in his apartment. The revolution was devouring its children. The new Soviet authorities set out to destroy an entire generation of Ukrainian intelligentsia – and Khvylovy was one of their leaders. And as a leader and ardent communist, he could not fail to feel his responsibility for the unfolding tragedy...

...Khvylovy's story is tragic not only in that it illustrates the cruelty of Stalin's totalitarian regime, which, by the way, skillfully played on contradictions among writers, fuelling the ambitions of some and disciplining others, which made infighting between literary groups look like self-destruction. The problem was also with the political illusions of an entire generation of Ukrainian national communists who hoped that Ukraine could be built together with the Russian Bolsheviks. When their eyes were opened, they mounted resistance against the "Red Empire," but it was too late”.

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I am (romance)

Blossoming apples

From far mist, from calm lakes beyond the commune's hills comes a rustle: Maria is coming. I walk the endless fields, transiting the passes and where the burial mound, I am leaning on a lonely deserted cliff. I look into the distance. – Then one after the other, the thoughts are dancing around me, like Amazon girls. Everything disappears then...Mystery riders are flying, staggering rhythmically, towards the spurs, and the day is dying down; the road is running in graves and beyond it – silent steppe... I lift up my eyelashes and remember...truly my mother is an archetype of that incredible Maria, who stands on the verge of unknown ages. My mother is endless innocence, solemn sadness and infinite kindness. (So well do I remember it!). And my unbearable pain and my intolerable suffering are warming in the sacred candles before this ambrosial and sad vision.

Mother says that I (her restless son) have sorely tortured myself... And then I take her lovely head with the silver that covers her hair and silently put it on my chest... Beyond the window dewy mornings were coming and pearls were falling down. Incredible days were passing. Somewhere from far the dark forest made their way wanderers and by a blue well, where the roads flew apart, where a rogue crosses, they were stopped. A young tanning was it.

- And the nights are passing, the evenings are rustling by the poplars, the poplars are disappearing the highway endlessness and with them gone are my years, my blossoming youth. Then came the days of thunderstorms. There, beyond by a rapid bluish side, lightning is flashing and boiling, and mountains are foaming. Heavy, humid thunder cannot break through from India, from the south. And the nature is waiting for a storm. However, beyond the clouds you can hear another hum...deaf bombardment. Two storms are looming.
- Emergency! – Mother says she has watered mint today, the mint is dying in bewail. Mother says “Thunderstorm is coming!” And I see two crystal dewdrops shimmering in her eyes.

1

Attack after attack. The hostile armies are clashing furiously. Our cavalry from the flank and then flanks of insurgents go to counterattack, and thunder fulminating, and my thoughts – an impossibly taut wire.

Nights and day I spend in “linchpin”.

Our apartments – fantastic palace: it's the house of an executed nobleman. Chimeric hangings, ancient pictures, portraits of the prince's surname. All this is looking at me from different sides of my accidental room.

Somewhere the army's phone sings his sad and thrilling melody that reminds me of a far station ringing.

On the luxurious settee is sitting, with the legs tucked under himself, an armed tartar and chanting Asian: “Ala-la-la”.

I'm staring at the portraits: the King gloomy, his eyebrows, the Queen – scowling contempt, their children – in the dark of old-century oaks.

And in this unusual hardness I feel the whole ancient world, all powerless grandiosity and beauty of third youth last noble ages.

This is clear pearl on the banquet of the wild and hungry country.

And I am, an absolute stranger, a bandit – from one terminology and insurgent – from other terminology, I am simply and clearly staring at these portraits and in my soul I don't have and will never have such anger. And it's understandable:

I am security officer but I am human too.

Dark night, when beyond the window city nights pass, when blue mist rises above brickyard and citizens, like the mice, go for gateway, in canary-yellow castle, dark night in my incredible closet gathering my friends. This is new Sanhedrim, this is the black commune's court-martial.

Then from every single corner peers real and horrible death. Inhabitant:

- Here is living sadism!

I:

- ... (silent):

-

On the town's tower beyond pass is anxiously ringing copper. It is a chime. From a dark field I can hear muted cannonade.

My acquaintances are sitting by a wide table made of black wood. Silence. I can hear only how the station horn is playing his music again. Sometimes you can see insurgents beyond the window.

It's easy to recognize my friends:

A doctor Tagabat,

Andryusha,

And...degenerate (faithful watchman on the chats).

This is a full black court-martial.

I:

- Attention, please! On the daily agenda we have file about shopkeeper X!

From an ancient chamber come out menials who bow to us like for kings, they are watching us clearly, us – new Sanhedrim - and put the tea on the table. Then they silently disappear, walking on the velvet carpets, into the labyrinth of tall rooms.

The candelabrum for two candles dimly lit. The light doesn't have enough power to reach even quarter of the room. From the ceiling looms a girandole. In the town – darkness. Here is darkness too: the electric station disrupted.

The doctor Tagabat was lying on the wide settee on the distance from candelabrum, and I can see only his balding head with too high forehead. Behind him in the far distance in the dark is the faithful watchman with the malformed skull. I can see only his mad eyes, but I know: the degenerate has a low forehead, his black dig disheveled hair and flattened nose. He always seems to me lag and I think that he should have been standing in the Department of Criminal Chronicles many times.

Andryusha is sitting to my right, absent-minded and sometimes glancing at the doctor. I know why.

Andryusha, my poor soul Andryusha has been stationed here by the heartless revolution committee, against his own will. And Andryusha, this unhappy communard, when he has to sign the dark conclusion "to kill", always takes his time, always signs like this: he doesn't write his own name and surname on the document, but he draws something incomprehensible, something spun like a Chinese hieroglyph.

I:

- Doctor Tagabat, what do you think?

The doctor (emotional):

- Kill them!

Andryusha was watching, a little bit scared of the doctor and hesitating. Then, with shivering hands, he uncertainly says:

- I don't agree with you, doctor.

- You don't agree? – And thunder of laughter echoed in the kings chambers.

I was waiting for this laugh. It has always happened. But every time I shudder and it seems that I walk to the cold quagmire. The rapidity of my thought reaches peak.

And at that time a vision of my mother appears in my mind...

- ...“To kill”???

And my mother watches me crestfallenly.

... On the town's tower beyond the pass is the anxiously ringing copper again. It is chime. Dark on the west. In a noble house barely heard deaf bombardment. Someone informs us by phone: we have gone on counterattack. Behind the curtain in the glass doors glow: there are burning villages, burning fields and dogs are howling in corners. There is silence and the beating of people's hearts in the town.

... Doctor Tagabat has pushed a button. Then a menial brings old wines on a tray. After that, the menial goes and his steps disappear.

I am looking at the candelabrum, but my sight involuntarily goes back to Doctor Tagabat and the watchmen. They hold the wine bottles and they drink it meanly and wildly.

I think: “It has to be”.

But Andryusha nervously paces from place to place, all time about to say something. I know what he thinks: he wants to say that it is foul, that communards don't act like that, that all of this is Bacchanaliya etc.

Oh, he so amazing, this communard Andryusha!

But when doctor Tagabat dropped the last bottle on the velvet carpet and clearly wrote his surname under resolution “to kill”, I was unexpectedly taken by calamity. This doctor with broad forehead and bold, with cold mind and heart of stone – he is, he my hopeless master, my animals instinct. And I, the head of this black commune's court-martial, - I'm nobody in his hands, I, who surrendered to the will of wild element.

“But where is the escape?”

- What escape?? – I didn't see the escape.

Then in my mind I see the whole dark history of civilization, and wandering people, and centuries, and time...

- But I didn't see the escape!

In fact, doctor Tagabat was right.

... Andryusha signed beneath the resolution quickly, but the degenerate was staring at the letters with satisfaction.

I thought: “If the doctor is an evil genius, then the degenerate is a killer”.

But I thought: “Gosh, common! Does he look like a killer? It's for him in stressful time I have been wrote an anthem.”

And then came out, withdraw from me, my mother – prototype of Maria and thickening waiting in the dark.

...The candles were melting.

Stern figures of a king and queen disappeared in the cigarette's blue smoke.

...to death awarded....six!

Enough! Enough for tonight!

Tartar began to sing his Asian: “ala-la-la”. I looked at the curtain, at the glow in the glass door. – Andryusha has disappeared. Tagabat and the watchmen are drinking their wine. I throw over my shoulder mantle and come out from the king's house. I am walking through silent streets of this fey town.

The town is dead. Citizen know, that we will have gone before these four days pass, that our counterattacks are hopeless: soon our carts will squeak toward the neverland. The town was waiting. The darkness.

The king's manor on the east looks like a dark woolly figure, now it is black commune's court martial.

I turn around and look at it, and then suddenly recollect, those six souls on my conscience.

...Six on my conscience?

No, it's lie. Six hundred, six thousand, six billion – the darkness on my conscience!!!

- Darkness?

And I squeeze my head.

...And again in my mind I see the whole dark history of civilization, and people wandering, and centuries, and time...

Then I, wearied, lean on the gates passionately blessing that moment, when I met doctor Tagabat and the watchman with the deformed skull. Then I'm turning out and prayer fully watching the east woolen figure.

...I'm lost in narrow streets. And finally I come to the lonely house, where my mother lives. The yard smells like mint. Behind the barn lightning rages and I can hear the rumble of strangled thunder.

The darkness!

I go in, take off my mantle and light a candle.

... - Are you sleeping?

But mother didn't sleep.

She comes to me, takes my exhausted face in her withered old palms and bows her head on my chest. Again she says that I am, her restless son, and have sorely tortured myself.

And I feel on my arms her crystal dewdrops.

I:

- Oh, mother, how I am tired!

She brings a candle to me and looks at my exhausted face. Then comes to the dimly lamp and crestfallenly look at image of Maria. – I know: my mother will come to the church tomorrow too: she can't stand our worries and wildness around.

But at the same time when I came to the bed, I shivered:

- Wildness around? But does my mother think like that? Like that can think only Versailles!

And then I, confused, assure myself, that it is lie, that I don't have mother, that it is nothing more than a phantom.

- A phantom? – I shivered again.

No, THIS is not true. Here, in silent room, my mother not a phantom, but a part of my criminal "I", whom I give freedom. Here, in a remote corner, on the edge of yard, I hide from the guillotine one of the ends of my soul.

Then in the animal ecstasy I close my eyes and, like a male in early spring, I'm gasping and whispering.

- Who needs to know the details of my worries? I'm a true communard. Who dares to say it another way? Can't I rest for one minute?

Dimly lit the lamp before the image of Mary. Before the lamp, like a carving, stays my sad mother. But now I don't think anything. The blue dream caresses my head.

2

... Ours go back: from place to place: at the front – panic, in the rear – panic. My battalion is waiting. During these two days I will find myself in this cannon roar too. My battalion is select: it is young fanatics of commune.

But now they don't need me here. I know, what is the rear, when enemies are near the walls of your town. These dirty rumors spread every single day and, like a snakes, crawl in the streets. These rumors spread even in the garrison's mouths.

Someone is reported to me:

- Comes hidden complaining.
- Could incite a riot.

Yes! Yes! I know: he could incite a riot, and my faithful agents are hiding in the corners, and almost nowhere put this guilty and almost innocent home waste.

...Cannonade become closer and closer. More often come runners from the front. Dust collects and hangs above the town, covering the muddy sun. Sometimes lightning rages. Drawn carts, shouted anxiously locomotives, sweep cavalryman.

Only black court-martial commune surrounds oppressive silent.

Yes:

Will be many shootings and I finally knock down!

Yes:

Versailles have felt yet, how in the blind and dead silence of the king's house above the town flare clear and short shots; Versailles knows:

- Duhonin headquarters!

...But mornings are still blossoming of pearl and pulling down the stars in the mist of the far forest.

...But the muted cannonade is becoming louder.

Soon will be a thunderstorm.

...I am coming to the king's house.

Doctor Tagabat and the watchman are drinking the wine. Andryusha is sitting gloomily in the corne. Then Andryusha comes to me and, naively sad, says:

- Listen to me, friend! Let me go!

I:

- Where?

Andryusha:

- To the front. I can't stay here anymore.

Huh! He can't stay here anymore! I suddenly have lost my temper. Finally it happened. Long have I been restraining myself. He wants to go to the front? He wants to throw off this dirty business? He wants to wash his hands and be innocent like a pigeon? He gives me "his right" to swimming in this pool of blood?

I am yelling then:

- You are answering back! Do you hear me?... If you say it again, I will kill you immediately.

Added Doctor Tagabat dynamically:

- Do it! Do it! – And his cackle echoed through empty labyrinths of king's rooms. – Do it! Do it!

Andryusha wilted, paled and went out from room.

Doctor has said:

- Dot! I am going to rest! Keep on working!

I:

- Who is the next?

- Case № 282.

I:

- Enter.

The watchman silently, like a robot, leaves the room.

(Yes, it still was the watchmen: not only Andryusha – we were sinning too: the doctor and I. We often used to avoid of watching these killings. But he, this degenerate, was always a soldier of revolution, and left the field only then, when the smoke has cleared and the dead were buried).

...Curtain parted and a pair comes in: a woman in mourning and a man in pince-nez.

They were absolutely frightened by this situation: aristocratic luxury, king's portraits and disorder – empty bottles, gun and blue cigarette' smoke.

I:

- Your surname?
- Z!
- Your surname?
- Y!

The man pushed his thin and pale lips and started speaking with crying notes in his voice: he cried about indulgence. The woman was wiping her eyes with a handkerchief.

I:

- Where are you were taken?
- There!
- Why are you were taken?
- For that!

Well, you had a meeting! What kind of meetings can be held at this alarming time, 1 a.m. in a private flat?

Ha, you theosophists! You are looking for truth!...New? Yes! Yes! Who is this?...Jesus? No? Another world's savior?...Well! You can't be satisfied by Confucius or Lao-Tse, or Buddha, or Mohammed, or even the Devil!.. Yes, I understand: you need to fill up empty space...

I:

- So, you think it's time for the Messiah's return?

Man and woman:

- Yes!

I:

- You suppose this is the psychological crisis we can observe in Europe, and in Asia, and in other parts of world?

Man and woman:

- Yes!

I:

- So, why fucking hell, you, motherfuckers, don't do this Messiah with "linchpin"?

The woman starts to cry. The man became paler. Formidable portraits of king and queen were gloomily looking from the walls. Echoed muted cannonade and the station horn was playing his anxious music. Enemy billfish is attacking our stations – telling by telephone. From the town echoed noise: carts that were passing over the bridge.

...The man dropped to his knees and asked for pity. I kicked him powerfully – and he flattened on the floor.

The woman deadly whispered:

- Please, listen to me, I am mother of three children!...

I:

- Kill them!

At that moment the watchmen appeared and in half a minute the room was empty.

I went to the table then, poured wine from the decanter and drank away. Then I put my palm on my cold forehead and said:

- Next!

The degenerate came in. He advised me to postpone my affairs and consider this extraordinary case:

- A new group of Versailles was just brought in from town. It seems, all of them are nuns. They were campaigning against our commune on the fair.

I was warming to the role. The smoke was staying behind my eyes, and I was in a condition, like an extraordinary ecstasy.

I suppose that such a condition fanatics were going to jihad.

I went to the window and said:

- Enter!

...In the room appeared the crowd of nuns. I didn't see it, but I felt it. I was watching the town. Dusk. I didn't turn for a long time, I was relishing it: all of them will be gone in two hours! It was dusk. Before the storm, lighting cut the scenery again. On the horizon beyond the brickyard were rushed up the smokes. Versailles attacked furiously and fiercely – this was reported by telephone. On the empty paths sometimes appear trains speedily going west. In the field are staying, like heroes, guardian cavalry units.

Emergency.

In the town the shops are boarded. The town is dead in comes in wild medieval distance. In the sky stars appear and illuminate the earth by green light. Then they die out, disappear.

But I must hurry up! Behind my back stands the group of nuns. So, well, I have to hurry up: the cellar is crowded. I determinately turn out and want to say my hopeless:

- K-i-l-l-t-h-e-m!

But I turn out and see – standing in front of me my mother, my sad mother with Maria's eyes.

I anxiously darted sideways: what is it – hallucination? I anxiously darted sideways and cried:

- You?

And heard from that crowd of sad woman:

- Sonny! My restless sonny!

I am feeling myself about to faint right now. I am feeling numb, I have taken hold of the chair and lean on it.

But at the same time laughter echoed like thunder, crashed about the ceiling and disappeared. That was Tagabat, the doctor:

- “Mother”?! Hey, you, fucking doll! Do you want tits? “Mother”?! - I recovered instantly and put on the edge of my mantle.
- Damn! – And attacked the doctor.

But he coldly looked at me and said:

- There, there, hush, commune traitor! Be able to dispose of “mother” (he accented “of mother”), as you could dispose of the others.

And silently turned away.

...I was rooted to the spot. Pale, nearly dead I stood before hordes of vestals with confused eyes like a haunted wolf (I saw it in the huge console-mirror, which hung opposite).

Yes! – finally grabbed the other tile of my soul! I won't go there, to the edge of the town to criminally hide myself. I now have just one right:

- nobody, never and anything to say how broke my own very self.

And I didn't keep wits about one

The thought cuts my brain. What should I do? Can it be true, I'm the soldier of the revolution, and will miss this crucial moment? Can it be true, I'm leaving the watch and play and discredibly play the commune foul?

...I set my teeth hard, looked at my mother, frowning, and whipped out:

- Each and all in the cellar. I'll be back soon.

But even I said it, the office rang with laughter.

Then I turned to the doctor and threw out clearly:

- Doctor Tagabad! You, obviously, have forgotten who you are dealing with? Would you care to go in Dukhonin's control headquarters...with these bastards! – I gave a wave of the hand aside, where my mother stood, and silently got out of my office.

...I didn't heard anything behind me.

...I went from the country seat as if drunk, to nowhere at twilight into the pre-storm stuffy evening. The cannonade was growing. Again haze blushed over the far brickfield. Across the mound an armored car thundered: it's was getting between them the fateful duel. Enemy regiments were avidly pressing on the insurgents. The night smelled of shooting.

I went to nowhere. I passed by the carts, rolled cavalryman, carts thundered on the bridge. The town stand in the dust, and evening didn't clear the air of prae-storm.

I went nowhere. Unthinking, with stupid emptiness, with a heavy weight on my crooked shoulders.

I went nowhere.

III

...Yes, they were hard minutes. It was agony. – But I knew how I'd do it.

I knew it by the leaving the estate. Otherwise I wouldn't get out too quickly from the office.

...Of course, I must to be consistent!

...And the whole night I was dealing with cases.

Then, during the several dark hours, from time to time, blushed short and clear shots:

- I'm, commander-in-chief of black tribunal, performing duties to the revolution.

...Is it my fault, that my mother's figure didn't left me this night at all times?

Is it my fault?

...At lunch comes Andryusha, who, gloomy turned:

- Listen! Let me let her out!

Me:

- Whom?

- Your mother!

Me:

(silent)

Then I want to laugh painfully. I can't cope with my emotions and start laughing at the whole room.

Andryusha grimly looked at me.

It is absolutely unrecognizable.

- Listen. Where is the good of this melodrama?

My naive Andryusha wanted to be shrewd this time. But he was wrong.

Me (beastly)

- Get out!

Andryusha paled again.

Oh, this naive commundard definitely doesn't have a clue. Per se, he doesn't know, why this crazy diabolical cruelty exists. He sees nothing in my cold wooden face.

Me:

- Call! Find out where the enemy is!

Andryusha:

- Listen!

Me:

- Call! Find out where is the enemy!

In this moment over the estate flashed a piping shell which nearly broke. The windows rang and the echo went on booming through the empty princely rooms.

By the phone pass: Versailles press, they are at hand: from three miles off. Cossack patrols show up near the station: insurgents depart. – Shouted the station horn.

...Andryusha flung out. I flung after him.

...Fumed on. Again haze blushed over the wide horizon. There was cloudy dust over the town. The sun-cuprum, overcast. Only muddy dust raced over a wide horizon. Fantastic blizzards rose from the

road, ran in the heights, cut spaces, overflowed homes and raced and raced again. Stood like a vicious pre-storm.

...And here boomed cannons. Flow cavalier men. Northern carts.

...I forgot about everything. I heard nothing and – I can't remember how I got to the cellar.

Shrapnel had broken plunk and it's become empty outside. I came up to the door and just wanted to look through the small window, where my mother was sitting, than someone took me by the hand. I turned about –

- Degenerate.

- What a guard! All ran away!... he...he...

Me:

- You?

He:

- Me? Oh, me! – and knocked on the door.

Yes, he was a faithful dog of the revolution; He will stand on watch ever under worse fire! I'm remembering, I thought then:

- "this is the keeper of my soul" – and unthinking wandered to the urban wasteland.

...And in the evening the southern part of the outskirts were astir. We had to go to the northward, to leave the town. But insurgents were bidden staying here till night, and they were steadily dying on the earth walls, crossroads and silent outs of gateways.

...But what do I do?

...There was urgent evacuation, the clear fire-fight, and I'm was finally off legs!

The documents were burning. A consignment of hostages was dispatching. Was taking the rest of the indemnities...

... I'm finally off legs!

...But my mother's face popped up and again I heard sad and strong voice.

I brushed hair up and with open eyes was looking on the town tower. And again it is getting dark and once again southward was burning homes.

...The black tribunal of commune is going to escape. Load on carts, plod wagon-trains, the crowds hurry to the northwards. Only our lonely battleship stands still in the recess of pinewood and hold back from right flank enemy regiments.

...Andrusha has disappeared somewhere. Dr. Tahabat was quietly sitting on the couch and drinking wine. He silently follows my orders and rarely ironical look at the portrait of lord. But this look I feel exactly on oneself and it make me nervous and worry.

...The sun is down. The evening is dying. The night is coming. On the earth walls going deserters and monotonously beat machine-gun. Empty lord rooms fade in waiting.

I look at the doctor and can't stand this look at ancient portrait.

I jangle:

- Dr. Tagabat! In an hour I have to eliminate the last part of convicts. I cannot choose but accept the detached force.

Then he ironically and apathetically:

- What then? All right!

I'm worried, but the doctor gibingly looks at me and smiles. – Oh, he certainly understands what the matter is! It in this part of convicts my mother is.

Me:

- Please, leave the room!

Doctor:

- What then? All right!

Then I go down and raging.

- Dr. Tagabat! The last warning: don't jest with me!

But my voice breaks and it's gurgles in my throat. I jerk to grasp the mauser and on the spot finish off the doctor, but I suddenly feel myself wretch and worthless and understand, that I'm losing the last feeling of the liberty. I sit on the couch and plaintively as powerless beaten dog, look at Tahabat.

...But we are into the last minutes. I must go.

Again I pul myself together and for the last time look at the lordly portrait of princess.

Darkness.

... - Escort guard!

Guard entered and reported.

- The parts removed. Shooting appointed in the country: the beginning of the pine wood.

...Over far prison haunt the moon. Then sailed on calm blue streams, throw over the lemon splash. At midnight stroked zenith and stopped over the abyss.

...In the town was energetic slugging.

...We were walking the north road.

I will never forget this silent procession - dark crowd on the shooting.

Behind screamed the carts.

Advance guard - escort Communards, then - a crowd of nuns, in the advance guars me and once more the escorts Communards and Dr.Tagabat.

But we came across the real Versailles: all the way no nuns said anything. There were genuine fans.

I was walking along the road as then – to nowhere and on the side of me wandered the guards of my soul: doctor and degenerate. I looked into the crowd, but I didn't see anything there.

But I felt:

- My mother was there
with her neck adroop. I felt: smells like mint.

I stroked her nice head tainted of silver gray.

But suddenly in front of me tramontane distance grew. Then again I painfully wanted to fall to knees prayerfully looking at hairy silhouette of the black tribunal of commune.

I pressed my head and went on the deadly road and behind of me the carts were screamed.

I suddenly denied: what is it? hallucination? Is this the voice of my mother?

And again I'm a miserable man: somewhere near the heart sick. Do not cry! However? I wanted to cry, to cry the tiny tears – like when I was a child.

And broke out:

- It is possible, that I drive her to the shooting?

What it is: reality or hallucination?

But it was a reality: predatory and cruel like a pack of hungry wolves. It was hopeless reality inevitable as death itself.

...But maybe this is a mistake?

It must be different!

- Oh, it's, cowardice. There must be a life rule: errare humanum est. What? Make mistakes!

And what kind of mistakes can be made?

Indeed: it was a reality as a pack of hungry wolves. But it was also the only way to "lakes of unknown beautiful commune".

...And then I burned in the fire of fanaticism and clearly reflected the steps on the north road.

...Silent procession was approaching to pinewood I do not remember being arranged nuns, but I remember:

I went to the Doctor and put his hand on my shoulder:

- Your mother there! Do, whatever you want!

I looked:

- Figure stood out from the crowd and quietly went to on the edge of the forest alone.

...Moon was at the zenith and hanging over the abyss. Further away in the green and lemon obscurity dead road. To the right looms outpost of my battalion. And at this moment there was a bountiful garden on fire – gunfire again beat anxiety. It departed insurgents, then notices the enemy. – Side exploded shell.

... I took a holster mauser and quickly went to a lonely figure. And then, I remember, that fire broke short: so that was finishing with the nuns.

And then, I remember –

From outskirts of pinewood our armored car was beat an alarm. – Buzzed the forest.

Flashed up the fire – one,

two –

and more – beat! beat!

Hostile armies are pushing. We must hurry. Oh, you must hurry!

But I go and go, and lonely figure of my mother is there. She stands, raising her hands and sadly looking at me. I hasten to the enchanted outskirt of pinewood and a lonely figure is the same, at the same place.

Not a thing to be seen anywhere. Only a month pouring green world permeated with the zenith. I keep on hand the mauser, but my hand is weak and I'm on the point of crying with trivial tears – like in childhood, on the warm chest.

I'm trying to shout:

- Mother! I'm saying: come to me! I have to kill you. Sad voice is cutting my brain. Again I hear the mother says, that I (her rebellious son) absolutely tortured myself..

...What is it? Is it again hallucination?

I brush head up.

Yes, it was a hallucination: I have long stood on the empty outskirts of pinewood in front of my mother and looked at her.

She was silent.

... Armored car screams in the pinewood.

Fire was rising. A storm is coming on. The enemy went on the attack. The insurgents are departing.

...Then, angry and flooded with heat of some impossible joy, I crossed my hands over mother's neck and pressed her head to me breast. Then I reached up the mauser and pushed down on temple.

Like a sheared wheatear she leaned to me.

I laid her down and deliriously turned back. - Not a thing to be seen anywhere. Just sideways it's getting dark the warmer corpses of nuns. - Nearby cannonry thundered.

...I put my arm in the pocket and remember in the next breath, that in the king's apartments I have forgotten something.

"You fool!" - I thought.

...Then a shudder passed over me:

- Where are the people?

Of course I must hurry up in my battalion! - And I flew on the road.

But before I did three steps I was stopping by something.

I jumped and ran to mother's corpse.

I stand in front of it on knees and gazed to her face. But it was with God. I remember blood with the dark stream poured down her cheek.

Then I lifted up this hopeless head and avidly dig my lips into white brow. - Darkness.

And suddenly I hear:

- Well, communard, stand up!

It's time to go to battalion!

I checked out and saw:

- In front of me again stood degenerate.

Aha, I'll be right there. I'll be right there. Yes, the time is ripe for me! - Then I rearranged the belt of my mauser and again flew on the road.

...In the plain, like a further bogatyrs¹, stood horsy insurgents. I ran there, pressed my head.

... A thunderstorm erupted. Somewhere is coming up early hour's flaws. The moon softly dying in skewered zenith. From the westward were approaching the clouds. Is going clearly, plainly slugging.

...I stopped in the middle of dead plain:

- There, in the strange darkness, unknown burned soft lakes of tramontane commune.

¹ Bogatyr - a folk hero, brave warrior, a man-giant with superpower and courage; powerful, giant, courage person (translator's note)