

(Continued from Notebook 1)

January 20. So, I wanted to write about the show on January 17. I think, rightly, that it was my debut. In the past, I had performed in shows at school playing parts of a writer, Pechorin<sup>2</sup>, etc. This was my first time performing in the great hall of *Komsob*<sup>3</sup>. The morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> was a Nekrasov<sup>4</sup> matinee; then there was a rehearsal that left much to be desired. We were told to arrive at six since the performance was starting at eight. At five o'clock, Frizer came by my place, and we went for a walk along the Sungari<sup>5</sup>. He began telling me his heart secrets, weirdo. My way to make others confide in me is to start confiding in them first. I was telling him that I was about to start playing *neighbors*<sup>6</sup> today, etc. We went back. I asked him to hear me recite my part while reading for the others. He reads with hilarious pathos, assuring me with every word that he feels he possesses a great artistic talent. Then we left for school. Around nine, Evarestov got charged up and started saying something about the importance of the evening show. [Page 2] I could not hear that speech (to my greatest delight) because they were putting makeup on me. *The Minor*<sup>7</sup> started, and I missed the opening as well. They put an old-man gray-hair wig on me, mutton chops, and a light blue tailcoat. In the first few scenes, I was supposed to be dressed in a landlord's gown, and then when I would enter with Skalozub<sup>8</sup>, I would have to change into a tailcoat. So I got into an armchair, took a kerchief in my hands and started to fan myself. Petrushka<sup>9</sup> was in front of me. I must say, I was not nervous at all. I didn't even notice how they opened the curtain. So I'm sitting there fanning myself as if I've just had lunch. "Petrushka, you always have new clothes on." I tried really hard to act like a true old

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<sup>1</sup> This is the spelling the translator found online. A more common way to transliterate the last name *Галацкий* is 'Galatsky.'

<sup>2</sup> The main character of *A Hero of Our Time* by Mikhail Lermontov.

<sup>3</sup> *Komsob* is an abbreviation of «Коммерческое собрание» ('*kommercheskoye sobranie*'), which stands for "Commercial Assembly" or "Commercial Club."

<sup>4</sup> Nikolay A. Nekrasov is one of the greatest Russian poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>5</sup> Another name of the Songhua River.

<sup>6</sup> *Neighbors* was a Russian love game for teens and young adults.

<sup>7</sup> A play by Denis I. Fonvizin (1745 — 1792)

<sup>8</sup> A character from *Woe from Wit*, a satirical play by Alexander Griboyedov (1795 — 1829)

<sup>9</sup> A character (footman) from *Woe from Wit* by A. Griboyedov.

man. When Famusov<sup>10</sup> was supposed to exclaim, “My Lord! He is a *Carbonari*<sup>11</sup>,” I started shaking my hands as if I was born an old man. I was rather calm but they say that in the very beginning my voice was trembling. Actually, I did not know what voice tone I should employ. During rehearsals, I spoke in my regular voice. Anyway, by the middle of the second act I already felt at home on the stage. When Chatsky<sup>12</sup> was reciting his “I wonder who the judges are!” Skalozub (Iokhvidov) and I started talking about the dollar exchange rate and our editorial board. I got completely carried away and didn’t even notice the audience. In the third act, at the line “It’s education that’s to blame,” I completely transformed into Famusov. [Page 3] When the performance was over, Chatsky and I dragged Emirov (the director) out onto the stage although he resisted in every way. Evarestov came out on the side completely by himself trying at all cost to show that he was the director. During the divertissement, I was supposed to play the 17th Song Without Words by Mendelssohn on the piano. At home, I played that piece flawlessly, but during the evening performance I played it with one mistake, which, as I learned later, no one noticed. Then it was R.Ts.’s turn to play. I had told her that she would make a mistake because I made a mistake although I knew my piece inside out, and she knew her piece much worse than I. Indeed, in the middle, she made a pause, during which one could die and resurrect and then die again. She was considering whether she should leave or keep playing, but eventually she scraped through it. Vovochka Ts. also played but for so long and so monotonously that Emirov asked, “Will he actually finish one of these days?” I like the Polyphony. There was an article about the performance in the *Rupor*<sup>13</sup> today, and it was noted that Galatzky and Markman did a good job portraying Famusov and Chatsky. Everybody says that I played my part better than Markman, which is true, but I am picturing myself as Chatsky. I don’t know if I would have played better... Our school magazine *On the School Bench* finally came out. [Page 4] It has a good circulation. Evarestov got terribly angry, “How come? I worked on it, made edits and corrections. I made an effort, and you wrote “Editorial board: Galatzky, Iokhvidov, and Khanin.” You could have at least written that I was your lead. On the playbill,

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<sup>10</sup> A character from *Woe from Wit* by A. Griboyedov that Alexander is playing.

<sup>11</sup> A revolutionary, a rebel

<sup>12</sup> The protagonist of *Woe from Wit*.

<sup>13</sup> Literally translates as “horn loudspeaker.”

Emirov's name comes before mine. This is total disrespect!" It is one thing after another! He's angry! I wrote this:

Evarestov is protesting,  
"I've worked truly hard  
And yet there is no space in the magazine  
For my last name.  
I went to your rehearsals  
Every single day."  
All talk and little action,  
Would be my response to him.

M. Frizer organized a friendly circle. For a start, we decided to get rid of Pinsky. It is almost done! Today, after a long meeting, because Zimin and Markman refused to be on the Self-Education Circle's board (their exams are coming up), we decided to submit the following list of desired board members for voting: Lesk, M. Lesk, Liberman, Galatzky, Frizer, and Iokhvidov. We decided to ditch Pinsky. During class today, I started to draw R.Ts. but her friend made her giggle all the time. So I decided to make a verbal description of her portrait and showed it to her. [Page 5] Here it is:

A snow-white maiden,  
With fire burning on her cheeks.  
Her eyebrows are like the wings of a feathered bird,  
Her eyes are shining malachites.  
Her lips are a beautiful bow,  
And her eyelashes are a dark night.  
Her gaze is pensive and clear  
And as calm as the moon.  
The sweet aroma of her hair,  
And, as shiny as the parquet floor,  
The silver pearls of her teeth...  
That was a portrait of R.Ts. for you.

She was pleased. She asked me to make a copy of it and bring it to the E.N.K.S.<sup>14</sup> meeting. But she didn't come. Vatner and Markman joined that club for one specific reason: R.Ts. Well, well. I will learn how to dance, and I will show them next time! Such an interesting game! I wonder who will win... Heh-heh, folks, unless my far-sighted eyes are betraying me, Lesk is also attracted to R.Ts. There he goes! That explains a lot! Will I end up playing the part of Pechorin?<sup>15</sup>

January 24. We got an assignment to draft an axonometric view of a desk for our technical drawing class. So we were walking together today, Mikhelev, Lesk, Liberman, Frizer, one other guy, and I. Lesk said that he had already made the draft. Mikhelev said that he would find a mistake in his drawing. Lesk said that he would not. We wanted to bet on it. Lesk did not agree so Mikhelev said that he would not have bet anyways. [Page 6] We arrived at Lesk's house. A bet was proposed again, and both agreed, for twenty kopeks. They started arguing. Mikhelev was providing his argumentation, but got confused. Lesk counted 20. He looked for another mistake and found it, but he himself was wrong. Another twenty kopeks. It went up to sixty, and then more and more. It went up to one ruble.

Mikhelev: The inclination here is the same! Look, one, two, three.

Lesk: It's like this and like that. Here's four. What do you make of it now?

Mikhelev: It's three.

Lesk: It's four. Look, these are equal, and these are similar. One, two. Understood? These have an identical angle. (He went on explaining for an hour.)

Mikhelev: Could you repeat it from the beginning?

They were going on and on arguing. Lesk would provide an hour-long explanation, and

Mikhelev would go, "What?"

L.: I haven't made a single mistake. Not a single one!

M.: I will find it!

L.: No you won't.

M.: Not even under a microscope?

L.: Well, we know you lot. You probably got it under a microscope.

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<sup>14</sup> Transliteration of the Russian letters "E. H. K. C."

<sup>15</sup> The protagonist of *A Hero of Our Time* by Lermontov.

M.: You won't find it even under a microscope.<sup>16</sup>

[Page 7] They kept blustering at each other and arguing. Lesk wanted to send it to a university, Mikhelev, to an engineer, etc. They went outside. They stopped in the middle of the street and kept yelling. People gathered, "What's happening? What's the matter? What is all this noise?" They left. A drunk man was passing by. They explained to him what the matter was. "Brothers! Do not argue... Both of you cannot win any...anyway, *hiccup*, only one can win... So, *hiccup*, let the one who loses argue further... Hahaha." They continued walking and stopped near our house, Mikhelev arguing his point and Lesk arguing the opposite. They got completely carried away and started drawing on the windows with a finger. Frightened faces looked out. I offered that they take our front entrance all to themselves. M. brought a pencil. They covered an entire wall in writing and were still arguing. I entered the house. I ate. I did some homework. I got out, and there they were, still arguing. I invited them in. They were loud, yelling at each other.

L.: I will prove it to you. I will not let you leave the house.

M.: So what are we betting for?

L.: The top board of a school desk.

M.: How about twenty kopeks?

L.: I will prove it to you. You will remember it, or I will hit you in the teeth (M. has no teeth at all.) You are either a thief or a crook.

[Page 8] They left the house and have been standing in front of the entrance for an hour. While I am writing this, I can hear their shouts. This has been fun!

Sunday, January 29. The E.N.K.S. meeting was held at my house. During the meeting, I

approached R.Ts. and quietly said into her ear, "It is late. I will walk you home."

"All right," she replied. When the meeting was over, I almost got into an awkward situation. It turned out that Fedya Markman also wanted to walk her home and was trying hard to make it happen. In the end, Lesk and I went with her. We talked, made jokes, etc. We stopped at the fence of her house and kept talking. Mosya<sup>17</sup>, her brother, came up to us. The decisive battle is coming: if we walk her home next time, our stock will rise by 50%. During classes (her desk is right across from mine,) I have been trying to feel out the situation, and hell if I know whether

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<sup>16</sup> It appears that Alexander mixed up the speakers.

<sup>17</sup> Short for "Moisey" (Moses.)

she is entirely with us, or with Vatner. Dammit! I wonder if she went with us eagerly or reluctantly yesterday, because if we let Vatner walk her home, then she will feel uncomfortable to refuse and will go, and we will think that she is with them and give up. Anyway, it is all about tactics and caution, and most importantly swiftness and pressure.

[Page 9] January 31. I have just come back from a delightful trip. I have not seen G. for several months. At six o'clock, I left the house and went to the streetcar stop. I wanted to go yesterday accompanied by Frizer, but he stubbornly refused and got what he deserved, of which I will tell you later. So, I approached the street car, boarded, and rode to the railroad station for a five kopek fee. There I got out and started walking on the Boulevard Prospect. Once I reached her white one-story house, I stopped. On my way, I had decided that I would go inside the fenced little garden (actually, not really a garden but an open space) where her house stood. That's exactly what I did without thinking for too long. There was deep snow along the edges of the garden, but in the middle it was less deep. I leaped and found myself almost near a window one third of which was covered by a curtain. I placed my foot on a small elevation, grabbed the edge of the window recess with my hand, and peaked inside. G. was sitting and reading a book. It was some poem with an illustration. I leaped back and in a flash I was near the fence. And it was only there that I noticed that there was someone else in the room. An idea popped in my head that would have led to unpleasant consequences if I had acted on it the first time around. I leaped again, found myself near the window, looked at G. for about five seconds, knocked, and leaped back right away. [Page 10] I don't know what I did it for; there was no one else in the room anymore except for G. After the knock, she got up, took a look, and probably put her mind at ease. I knocked a second time. The light went off, and she looked out the window. I strolled slowly along the fence and was about to leave, when I thought that I wouldn't come here for at least another week, so I knocked a third time. After that, the light went off again, while I took another stroll along the fence and turned around the corner. I thought that G. would come out. What would I do? I would probably start walking towards her. Indeed, the front door squeaked, but no one came out. Probably, she was not dressed and just took a peak outside while I could only see a person that would make a few steps outside since the front

door view was obstructed by a wall for me. This is most interesting! I'll have to drop by again in a week or so and try to make her come outside!

February 4. Something's happened on the Sun, because our school has been seized by a strange fever. At every recess, our class has a fight with the seventh graders. We have issued self-made proclamations like "Sixth graders, unite! Let's crush those fleas and pariahs of humanity. They are bedbugs on the body of our school," etc. [Page 11] Vladimir Vyacheslavovich saw Iokhvidov adjust his belt and reprimanded him. Iokhvidov said that there is nothing against it in the school rules. Indeed, it was just a simple and crude quibble. We had some study time before a written in-class assignment in Russian. R.Ts. and Mad\* were studying for Russian. Tsitrin bent over them from another desk. Iokha pushed him, and he went flying. He jumped to his feet and pounced at Iokha. The latter shielded himself. Vovochka kept hitting him, but Iokha felt it as much as a wall. Finally, Iokhvidov laughed, "You don't mess with big boys. Just try messing with Galatzky who broke your face. But you do mess with small ones." To be clear, Iokha is the tallest one in our school and could take on a dozen guys like Tsitrin. At that moment, I was busy drawing 50 year old Pechorin and Onegin<sup>18</sup>. Eventually, Sergey Evgrafovich heard the shouting from the next-door classroom and rushed to check on us. Iokha gave him all kinds of evasive answers. Finally, Ser. Ev. said, "In this case, you can leave the classroom!" "Thank you for your permission!" To cut the long story short, Iokhvidov was sent home and told not to come back until they send a letter. The next day (yesterday) he came to school. He was asked to leave. [Page 12] So he went to the principal and asked for his permission to stay. "No, we don't need kids like that."

"But what did I do, Alexander Veniaminovich?"

"And that's exactly the problem! You were rude to everybody, and yet nobody can catch you red-handed."

Iokhvidov's father came to school, and today we were lucky to behold Pavel Iokha resurrected from the dead! Today he came up to Sergey Ev. and said, "You promised to send a request regarding the periodic magazine." He heard a curt response, "I'm actually relieving you of your responsibilities as editor." Out of solidarity, I also refused, and so will Khanin. The magazine will

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<sup>18</sup> The protagonist of *Eugene Onegin*, a novel by Alexander Pushkin.

fail. Except lokha, there was not a single doer on the editorial board. Soon, there will be a general meeting and editors' re-election. We will be nominated, and Sergey Ev. will withdraw our nominations, and then we will say that we are not refusing. We need to show him, for Christ's sake! Although Sergey Ev. has been good to me, even better than usual. Still waters run deep?

February 6. lokhvidov and I had a long discussion about our editorial board situation. We needed to resolve it gracefully. We had two options. Sergey Ev. announces our departure and proposes an election of a new editorial board. [Page 13] We get nominated. S. Evgr. withdraws our nomination. At this point, we stand up and say "We are not withdrawing our nomination." "Well, I am!" S.Ev. replies. We leave the meeting hall. It is graceful but dangerous. The second option is to refuse to give any motives for the departure. A new board will be elected that will not produce a single issue because we will hold on to the best material. But in reality the matter took quite a different turn. Yesterday (Sunday, February 5) there was a meeting of the Literature section. R.Ts. made a presentation on *Creatures That Once Were Men*<sup>19</sup> by Gorky. A debate followed, and a resolution was made: "Former people" are a product of abnormal life of higher intelligentsia that is nothing but lamentable. Then we began discussing pending matters. By the way, Mr. Bodisko and Mme Tsitrina, Vovochka's mother, attended the meeting. Sergey Evgr. got up and said, "Just recently, we have celebrated the brilliant first issue of our school magazine. It has given a vivid account of the students' talents and has exceeded our expectations in all regards. Our heartfelt congratulations go to the editorial board." [Page 14] People started shouting, cheering, and applauding. lokha and I were sitting quietly without paying any attention. He only whispered a few words to me, "Sergey Evgr. is backing off." Then, after the noise subsided, the same speaker declared, "And now, as we are impatiently awaiting the second issue of the magazine, the entire editorial board has offered their resignation." The board chair I. Zimin got up and handed the petition to Serg. Evgr. who read it right away: "A petition to the Self-Education Circle's board. We, the undersigned members of the editorial board, are requesting to be relieved of our positions. A. Galatzky, P. lokhvidov, A. Khanin." Then there was talk about a fictitious passion for the magazine and on

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<sup>19</sup> This is the published English translation of Gorky's short story. The verbatim translation is "Former People."



how this passion impacted the academics, etc. I got up and declared that our resignation is even more understandable: it is due to the incompatibility of the magazine activity with our studies. When we were requested to give a reason for our resignation, we asked to be allowed not to comment. [Page 15] Then S. Evgr. asked, "I am asking the meeting: Shall we ask them to stay, or shall we elect a new editorial board?"

"Ask them to stay, ask them to stay!"

"All of them, or with some exceptions?"

"All of them! All of them!"

lokhvidov understood those words as that most people were of the same opinion. We ended up staying. I was elected the student monitor of the Literature section, or rather they wanted to elect me, but as I remained on the editorial board, I will not be able to take up this position.

February 8. Apparently, we have a new poet in our gymnasium that I have no chance of admiring. He has been writing for ten years (I have been writing for six and a half) and, of course, he writes better than I. Our views of poetry differ. He says that a poet must depict what he sees—life, whatever it may be. Naturally, it is hard to disagree with that, but I swear it is an elastic concept. Is it really life, "The blue-and-red moon was rolling across the sky, the field was silent, a cow was mooing?" Actually, I asked the question in a wrong way: it is life, but is it poetry? Can this line give the reader any aesthetic pleasure? It would be better to describe anything, even escape from life rather than render it like that. [Page 16] In a painting, the artist tries to depict something picturesque, something that pleases the eye, but he will not paint a cesspool, even though it might be flashing at him with the label "this is life." Basically, the entire literary scene today is nothing but the product of our agitated and eccentric times. I am judging by my own experience. I feel that the dissonance I introduce in my work is pleasantly teasing. Although I myself enjoy Beethoven, Gounod and others, in my compositions I insert disharmonious parts into most flowing melodies. Same is true about foxtrot music. Is it really music? It is nothing but noise. Yet, there are many people who wouldn't survive a day without jazz. Let's take painters as an example. They are looking for something new. Whether it is good or bad, it doesn't matter. All they want is to forget the old, the usual, and the laborious. They paint in meter-wide brushstrokes. From a mile away, you can see something, but if you get

closer, it is chaos. And they boast, “The sketch took exactly one hour. Just look at the colors!” Indeed, you see red, yellow, white, and red again. But can you compare these smears to Repin or Shishkov? Those painters took years to finish their painstaking work. But they did it! And what have you accomplished? True, those two cannot brag about how quickly they finished their paintings! [Page 17] Even then, it is only impressionists that paint nowadays. What about the rest? The Futurists! Here’s a circle with a red roof and an inscription “This is a lion.” Well done! This is life indeed. This is all about dissonance. Same goes for poetry! May it rest with all good souls, dammit!

February 15, 1928. Soon, there will be a debate organized by A. Izgur on our school premises on the topic “Sabbatai Zevi Is a Renegade.” M. Liberman will be the accuser, and I will be the defender. Everyone present will be judges. I have been possessed by the spirit of invention. I have invented an electric piano that doesn’t require pressing on the keys but only slightly touching them. It is based on a well-known principle. When you press, the wires connect and send current through the magnet winding wire that becomes an electromagnet and pulls the key, which bounces with the help of a special spring. Yesterday, I started using a new tactics regarding our school affairs. Everybody has gone insane. Sh. Saleev (he’s a Tatar) told me that he would cut his arm with a knife two inches deep, if only R. kissed him. I am inclined to think that he has enough willpower to do it. I have not been talking to R. at all, and I told Lesk, as a matter of fact, that his field of action is completely unobstructed. He could barely hide his pleasure. At 7:30 p.m., I went to the library. Soon after, R. came as well. We walked back together afterwards. [Page 18] I told her that if she walked me to *Komsob*, then I would walk her to her house. She agreed. We started walking home. We talked of this and that, but “mostly about nothing.”<sup>20</sup> I kept jumping from one thought to another, and until now I do not know whether I did it on purpose or whether my thoughts were actually running amok. We stopped to talk near the gate. I started talking about the stars and then I switched to painting. “You know, you are *not normal*,” she said, emphasizing the two words, *not normal*, meaning

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<sup>20</sup> A quote, possibly from Dostoevsky

*not ordinary*<sup>21</sup>. I found it funny because I felt I was pretending, and in reality I was able to think about yesterday's mashed potatoes for an entire hour. I asked her about Subbotovsky, my opponent in the views about poetry. She replied that he had made an impression of being a Don Juan. "Why? And do you actually know what it means to be a Don Juan?"

"Yes, I do."

People make mistakes all the time. Subbotovsky is the nicest guy. "He thinks too much of himself," she said to me. Where did she get it from? Hell knows! Her brother approached us. "Get lost," I told her, obviously not in a rude way. Then I said goodbye and left. It's funny: I'm walking with one girl and thinking about another. About the summer flower of mine, about my apparition, as I used to call her in the summer, G...

February 17. I've caught a cold. I have a runny nose, cough, and other wonderful things.

[Page 19] My mom didn't want to let me go to school, but I still went, not because I'm so diligent but because of the two written in-class assignments—in Jewish History and Oriental Studies—that will have a major impact on my grades in this third. No one in our class was counting on themselves. In Jewish History, I was brazenly copying from the book because I was writing about an unfamiliar topic. Obviously, everyone else was cheating too. One guy (the height of impudence) openly put his book on the desk and copied from it. The teacher noticed that.

"Are you cheating?"

"Aba Samoilovich, I can't write anything without the book."

It was a lot harder to cheat in Oriental Studies. Everything went well during the first half of the test. Just one time, the teacher (N. K. Bunyakin) looked at me with an indicative smile. The second half of the test, he was standing by my side like a tree stump (plague take him!) and my chances of getting a four or a five started falling down towards the center of the earth.

Eventually, I finished the paper and turned it in. I was about to leave, when Nikolai-svet-Konstantinovich<sup>22</sup> opened my desk, revealing a book inside. In the most innocent tone, I said,

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<sup>21</sup> The Russian word "ненормальный" (spelled as one word) means "crazy." "Не нормальный" (two words) means "unusual, not ordinary." They sound the same. The only way to emphasize the second meaning is to stress both words equally when speaking.

<sup>22</sup> The archaic prefix svet ("свет") is used to indicate special respect. Alexander is using it sarcastically.

“The book is opened on the Opium War chapter, and my paper was about dynasties.” He promised to give me a two. Hopefully, he won’t! For the second day in a row, Vovochka Tsitrin has been making overtures to R.Ts. [Page 20] It clearly bothers Lesk. I try to reassure him, “The guy is a rookie. He’s not a dangerous rival for you.” I must go visit “up the Boulevard Street just a little...”

February 18. Lesk is no longer hiding his feelings. Actually, it would be useless trying to hide them. Then again, there is nothing special going on. Ts. doesn’t go to E.N.K.S. meetings. Today, we wanted to propose a speech by Tsitrin, but because of the lack of quorum no pending matters were decided. We should not miss the moment! I think I understand what they are trying to do. They will bring Vovochka in, and then all of them will be together. On their way to the meetings, they will start picking R.Ts. up, and one way or another she will start going. This is a well-known mechanism. We should warn them and talk to her ourselves first. If my strategy works, we will have the upper hand. No risk, no reward.

February 23. I have a great idea for a huge novella. “Kh. and a girl called Ts. are in the same class. Then, in the summer, they meet at a resort. They play together and become friends. Now they are in seventh grade, the last year before graduation. Kh. spends his last summer in the city at the *dacha*, and Ts. also goes there. Their friendship transforms into something more serious. [Page 21] Oaths are made, assurances are given, and other usual stuff... Solemnly, they make an agreement. She must wait for five years until he graduates from a university in America and comes back. He goes to America and enters a university. Incidentally, he meets a girl called Z. Fate makes them see each other often. They fall in love with each other, but Kh. is held back by his promise, and he cannot bring himself to confess it to Z. The latter feels the same and suffers. In the meantime, Ts. writes tender letters but she is completely changed: she has other suitors who take her dancing and to theaters while Kh. suspects absolutely nothing. A rich old man offers his hand in marriage to Z. but she doesn’t love him. Her parents insist that she says yes, and finally she decides to open up to Kh. She tells him that she loves him, and if he loves her then she will refuse her suitor. Kh. tells her that he loves her but that he is bound by a promise given to Ts. Z. gets married to the man she doesn’t love, and sometime later Kh. receives a letter that says, “Congratulate me! X and I are getting married.” Kh. commits

suicide.” I will start writing the first introductory part that takes place in school now. In summer, I’ll write about their life at the resort, and then in the seventh grade, I will write about their seventh grade. [Page 22] And then I will write the ending. A good topic!

February 25. Lesk was called on in the History class. He got a four, which, together with the two he had gotten previously, gives him a three in this third. Lesk started crying and was rude to the teacher. He is such a wuss to cry in the sixth grade. He was lucky that R.Ts. was not present, or he would have worried himself to death with shame. I talked to her today. I told her that tomorrow on our way back from our teacher’s house (she has invited all the students to discuss the upcoming performance) I will make her go to the E.N.K.S. meeting. She said that she had temporarily unenrolled and that she was more interested in the Literature section of the Self-Education Circle. I said that I always feel that I am a Jew, and I will never trade our Jewish Circle for a Russian society 70% of which are Jews. She reminded me that I love Ukraine, hitting my sore spot in this regard. In my soul, I feel split up, divided. There are two paths in front of me, Ukraine and Palestine. I love Ukraine more than Palestine because I lived there, I was born there, and I feel all the beauty of that country profoundly. But something tells me that I don’t have a right to call and to bind my national name with Ukraine. [Page 23] I can admire and look at it as a side spectator. And it feels strange: from the scientific point of view, we are all the same people living on the same puny planet, yet something is dividing us. Maybe the International is right, but we, the Jews, should not be the first ones aiming for it. Let countries that are already sovereign states lead by example. It is easy for them to talk but do nothing. They will not lose anything, but the Jews, if they rush to the path of imaginary prosperity, would forever lose what they have kept sacred for thousands of years: their nation, their national identity, and their name—Jews. In our Self-Education Circle, we study Russian writers, we write and learn about Russian writers, but we are Jews. The Circle’s board is Jewish. The editorial board and the revisions board are Jewish. The sections’ monitors are Jewish. So why so much noise, when a handful of Russians among us know the Russian language, the Russian history, and the Russian literature 50% worse than the Jews? They should be ashamed of that, but who feels more ashamed—isn’t it us? [Page 24] I’ve refused to do three presentations on the Russian literature just because I hate to think that I will spend my energy and my time on

someone else's achievements. Well, actually, if all the nations feel that they are separate and not connected in any way with the rest of the humankind, then we shall also turn proudly away and not waste our abilities to benefit someone else who repaid us with low cunning in everything, but we shall benefit our own state and our own people. We are also a nation, and our foundation is way deeper than yours, and if we succeed in completing the construction of our building, then it will not collapse, ever. Also!<sup>23</sup>

February 25. Dealing with some shenanigans, of which, fortunately, I have a great understanding. Lesk, who is head over heels in love, has as much success with Ts. as an orange has with a pig. Now ever more frequently, my thoughts are at the "winter garden," because a room in Laoshaogou is almost leased, and I want to hope with all my heart that my summer flower...I do have the biggest hope in that circle. Saleev, who worships Ts. as well, gave her a caricature of her and told her that it was I who had drawn it, which was actually true. [Page 25] He wanted to discredit me in her eyes. Ts. tore the drawing without uttering a word. Today there was a rough rehearsal at Valentina Leontievna's. My acting was terribly bad. Then I walked Ts. home, and that walk gave me a definite confirmation that Lesk will be going through the torments of Tantalus. Bummer, I am split in two in all respects. I will even get a two in Algebra (which will probably not be very pleasant.) How will it end? I don't care. I really want it to be summer as soon as possible. I want to get into sports, but not the kind of "sport" that I am playing right now (which is a Pechorin-style sport.) I suppose it is a kind of sport as well since it requires tactics and caution. I am dying to know, how will Lesk treat me? Will he be looking for a way to fall out with me? No, he is bound by his relationship with the other party (Vatner and Co.,) but he will definitely try to annoy me. When he is alone with me, he's OK, but as soon as we get near Ts., he always tries to pick on me. It is ridiculous: it will get him nowhere while I will try to answer in kind, only in a more painful way. Splendid! The entire war is waged silently and in one's mind. I feel like a true sportsman!

[Page 26] February 27. We suffered a great defeat yesterday. *Woe from Wit* was played in Komsob. They played pretty decently in general. Everyone was there, both the girls and *that other* group. I barely greeted them before the start of the show. Vatner was there with K.

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<sup>23</sup> Written in Latin letters.

During the first act, Ts. was sitting with Tsitrin and other girls. Vatner and Markman sat closer. Bor'ka approached and whispered to me, "It would be great, if Vovochka could leave too." During the intermission before the fifth act, Ts. was sitting and writing something. I got closer. She was scribbling something with her pencil. I thought that it was a good sign, walked up to her, and started talking. Mei\* and Mad\* also joined us, followed by Lesk. I began feeling somewhat triumphant, but it was premature. Lesk, Mad\*, Ts. and M. were standing in the aisle. Vatner approached impudently getting in front of Lesk and invited them to sit down. Mad\* and M. went with him, making a fool of Borya.<sup>24</sup> Ts. stayed where she was. In the intermission, she joined the others—M. and Mad\* and K.—who were sitting with Vatner, Tsitrin, etc. So here's an important question: Did she go there because all of the girls were sitting there, or because of that Co.? Anyways, she spent the entire intermission sitting there. Lesk was mad, I was calmer, but I felt a little fooled, so I immediately decided to stop those shenanigans. [Page 27] The only thing that is holding me back is that it would be an admission of defeat, and I cannot allow that to happen. I would really like to have a chance to talk to Ts. She should tell the truth and stop playing her games. Hell if I know what she thinks! Apparently, she was [*illegible*] and making sketches. What a stupid girl! She has as much talent as my little finger. She drew at least ten études with Gust, and I drew two, and both of mine were better than hers. But this does not interfere with my business. I swear to God, I really want to quit all of this. I'm sick of it. I can't understand anything!

February 29. I haven't been talking to R. Lesk is obviously happy. I think of R. less and less. My mom went to the Railroad Directorate, and a room in Laoshaogou is almost leased. I'm already thinking about the summer. The second third ended today. I am "two thirds into Laoshaogou." According to the calendar, sunset is at 5:44. It is almost the time. I am taking off to catch a street car to the railway station, and... Good beye!<sup>25</sup> When I come back, I'll write about how it went.

There is a certain charm in Curwood's novels. Let all the pessimists, realists, and others from all over the world say whatever they want, but his books actually cleanse the soul after novels by Hugo, Dumas, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, etc. [Page 28] There is little of real life in

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<sup>24</sup> Short for "Boris."

<sup>25</sup> Written in English.

Curwood's books, or, at least, life in his novels is so new that one can hardly believe in it. All his male and female characters are the same type but under different names. And I will tell you as a learned professor, Curwood's way of thinking is the same as mine. Long before I read the first book by Curwood, I had already formed a somewhat Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideal of a human being in my mind, and it is the same that what we find in Curwood's books. You really enjoy it when everything works in the character's favor, when you read about his love, etc. It belittles the reader a bit suggesting that they like everything arranged and a happy ending, but why reject something that human nature longs for over a simple philosophy? If it is all made-up, but made-up well, then let a good, light, and joyful feeling remain in the reader's heart. When you read about the loss of virtue, the triumph of wickedness and other things like that, you unwillingly become a Byronist, and at my age it is very bad because it creates an overly pessimistic view of life. You need to enter life cheerful and fresh, without any preconceptions that it is empty, vulgar, and unfair. [Page 29] It is hard to believe, but maybe, indeed, the world of the Big Snows—the world of Curwood—is so attractive that our mind does not believe in it after the “civilized” life in a capital city.

March 1. “Hello, G... I have not seen you for a while<sup>26</sup> and decided to write to you. How's life? What are your interests? How is school? The third grading period has started, and I am thinking about summer. We are probably going to Laoshaogou (!) My mom went to the Medical Department of the Railroad Directorate, and a room is almost leased. We need to go there again in April. When do you go for a walk, and do you skate? Once, when I was on my way to the Central Library, I saw you in the window studying. I go for a walk at 6 p.m. What about you? Where are you going for the summer? Please write back! Goodbye now. My address is 12 Birzhevaya, here. Attn: Shura<sup>27</sup>. Affectionately yours, Shura.”

That's a rough copy of the letter that I sent by mail. I wonder what will happen. Everything has been taken care of. The only thing is the name, Shura. But I want G. to know, to figure out who the author is. I used the feminine form, just in case. What a wonderful escapade!

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<sup>26</sup> The grammar indicates that the letter is written by a female.

<sup>27</sup> Shura is a short name for both Alexander and Alexandra.



[Page 30] March 2. Yesterday, M. Rabinovich sent notes around the classroom inviting everyone to a concert on Friday (which is today) during the technical drawing class. They bought phosphorus matches (Pinsky and Shiro were sent to buy them) and then threw them around on the floor. When you step on them, the matches light up. There was an acrid odor in the classroom—in short, a perfect setting for a concert. But the concert did not go well—during his first solo performance, Rabinovich was sent out of the classroom. F Markman saw Lesk throwing the matches. When the usual interrogation started, “Who brought the matches? Who threw them on the floor?” etc., Fyodor Kuzmich (the inspector<sup>28</sup>) said, “It must be Tsitrin.” So Markman said, “No, it wasn’t Tsitrin.”

“So who was it?”

“It was Lesk.”

And actually it was Tsitrin, Lesk, I, and the entire class who had thrown the matches on the floor. Lesk was summoned to the registrar’s office. The inspector stood on his one side and the principal on the other. Fyodor Kuzmich began, “How come you don’t understand it? You are in the sixth grade, and you’re throwing matches around and disrupting a lesson! Phosphorus produces toxic gases. You have probably poisoned someone’s lungs!”

And the principal went, “Exactly. We don’t need kids like that!”

Lesk was sent home. Everyone, even the seventh graders, is saying that he will be a fool if he doesn’t beat Markman up. I’ve also given him the same advice. He says that he feels pity for Markman, but tomorrow after school... Indeed, Markman looks pathetic; he is short<sup>29</sup>

[Page 31] March 3. I have just come back from a meeting of the Jewish Circle. Liberman, Rogovin, Iokhvidov, Lesk, Markman, and others were in attendance. When the meeting ended, everybody got their coats on. We were first to leave, right behind Pinsky and Markman. Then I saw Lesk call Markman and tell him something. “Well,” I thought to myself, “he has just let him down, and Bor’ka is already on speaking terms with him.” But I was wrong. Lesk said, “Markman, I need to talk to you. Why did you rat me out?”

“I didn’t want to let Tsitrin down. I saw you throw the matches around!”

“And this is your excuse?”

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<sup>28</sup> A school official in charge of discipline.

<sup>29</sup> This sentence looks incomplete.

“Yes.”

“Well, in this case, I would like to talk to a rat in a different way. Do you understand?”

“Are you suggesting a fight? I will not fight you!”

“Well, I’ll just hit you then.”

“You can try.”

Pinsky wanted to get in between them, but Bor’ka said, “Move out of the way, Pinsky.” The latter moved, and Fedya got punched.

“Is that it?”

“Yes, that’s the way to talk to rats.”

“I do not consider it an insult to get punched by you.”

“Well, I’ve done it with pleasure.”

Pinsky and Markman left. For some reason, I felt sorry for Markman although he is a rat indeed... Today Pavel Mikhailovich brought thirteen counting glasses to class. The entire lesson we were examining different fabrics, hair, etc. [Page 32] When P.M. asked us to give the counting glasses back, only twelve were returned. We started looking for the missing one—under the desks, in the pockets—but the counting glass was nowhere to be found. “Monitor, please call the inspector!” Fyodor Kuzmich came and lectured us, but the counting glass was not found. Pavel M. excused the next class and left “for an unknown reason.” I think that he had either hidden the counting glass somewhere but then forgot about it and later failed to admit it, because he had already made a fuss at school, or a student had accidentally put it somewhere but was embarrassed to admit it later. Or someone actually [illegible]<sup>30</sup>. Today, Sergey Evgrafovich asked Gildburd a question, “How was *Dead Souls*<sup>31</sup> received by society?” The latter started making something up about Pushkin who had supposedly welcomed the novel with delight. Sergey Evgrafovich listened to him seriously, nodded in approval, and was about to say his last “very good,” when Rabinovich got up and said, “But Pushkin was already dead at that time (*Dead Souls* was written in 1840.)” Sergey Evgrafovich assumed a nonchalant air, “You see what excessive verbosity leads to?” Everyone got it but kept silent. By the way, the letter must have been received by now. I wonder if she will write back or not.

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<sup>30</sup> In the context, the illegible word probably means “stole it.”

<sup>31</sup> *Dead Souls* is one of the most famous novels by Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852)

[Page 33] March 4. Rogovin won a watch at the Maslenitsa<sup>32</sup> contest of the *Rupor*. Tomorrow he will get it. He is an interesting guy, Rogovin. He's a good comrade, maybe the best. His grades are a little below average if you think that an average student gets seven fours and seven threes. He is really sharp in anything related to bets or any kind of dares. Here are a few examples. He made a five-kopek bet with Frizer that he would jump higher than the line on the ceiling. He jumped a little and said, "Now let the line jump. Who will jump higher? I jumped higher than the line." Then he made a bet that he would walk by a vicious chained dog. When it was time to prove himself, he asked the owner (it was Eskin, our fellow student) to close the dog house, and he passed very closely to the dog house with the dog inside. I could go on and on with these examples but it suffices to say that no one wants to make a bet with him anymore. Yesterday he managed to make a bet with Pines that he would approach Alexander Veniaminovich (the school principal) and say to him, "You're an old fool." He will say it on Tuesday because tomorrow we are having a so-called "Book Day" where all students will be donating books to replenish the school library. [Page 34] But I already know what will happen. Rogovin will come up to me and say that, because my name is also Alexander Veniaminovich.

February 6.<sup>33</sup> There is no school today in observance of our holiday Purim. Yesterday night we were playing mah-jongg at Iokhvidov's when Bor'ka came and told us a super interesting thing. He met Rabinovich and the latter told him what had happened on the Konny<sup>34</sup> Street. That street is usually teeming with beggars that pester pedestrians. So Vatner, Pinsky, Mad\* and R.Ts. were walking down the street. It is not clear whether Vatner started a fight or whether he was provoked, but he turned around and hit a little street boy in the face, and then kept walking. The boy gathered some six to eight street urchins and ran after the tough guy. Vatner made a sensible decision to turn and go to the nearby Bodisko library. The entire group entered the library, and the siege began. Rabinovich also happened to be there since he lives on Konny Street. "Go to my place and call Abrashka Iflyand," Vatner told him (he was a hefty fellow.) Rabinovich refused, and the brilliant and bold idea was never carried out. [Page 35]

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<sup>32</sup> Also known as Butter Week or Crepe Week, an Eastern Slavic religious and folk holiday celebrated the last week before Great Lent (the eighth week before Orthodox Easter.)

<sup>33</sup> Probably a mistake made by Alexander. It should be "March 6."

<sup>34</sup> 'Konny' means 'equestrian' or 'horse.'

Fortunately, an acquaintance of Pinsky was also in the library, and Fritz went outside with him. The boys scattered. But Fritz with his eyeglasses could not behold his victory and rushed towards the corner of the street where he hired a horse-drawn cab and drove towards the library. The group got into the cab and made a glorious escape from the enemy that had long run away. I should ask R.Ts. today, "They say you have withstood a true siege?"

February 7. About half an hour before the rehearsal at V.L.'s, we were sitting in her room and looking through some pictures. Absolutely sure that no one beside them would understand, Mad\* said to R.Ts., "Do you know that he knows that we ran away? How could he know?" Ts. was silent. And I was just waiting for an occasion to talk about it. "They say that you have withstood a siege?" She was still silent. "An entire expedition was equipped to explore Bodisko library."

"And what is it there to explore? Everything is known already."

"My point exactly."

And that was the end of it. Today Pinsky was given no peace in class, "How much did you pay for the cab? What kind of horse was it? Is Bodisko library any good?" [Page 36] Fritz kept silent. Two days ago, Rogovin, M. Liberman, and I organized the 'TTS' (Three Tricksters Syndicate.) Our goal is to find means and valuables and "distribute them in time and space," as I. I. Gogvadze used to say.

March 13. I am such a fool! I had an unfortunate idea to write a letter to Ts.! I swear to God, I will break everything on my desk right now...

Friday, March 16. Our school will publish a special issue of the Life News newspaper (on one of the Mondays.) Sergey Evgrafovich asked me to provide a poem for the newspaper. On Wednesday, we had an in-class assignment in the Russian language. There were five topics about the works by Gogol, and the sixth unrelated one, "How I spend my time outside of school. What are my interests and why?" I chose this last topic to write about. Apparently, I did a good job, and Sergey Evgr. said that he will put it in the upcoming issue of the newspaper. My essay was read aloud in the registrar's office, and one of the homeroom teachers already predicted an illustrious future for me, "Such style, and such easy language." I could hardly keep from sticking my tongue out, but it would be embarrassing. In my essay, I wrote about my

interest in astronomy. Sergey Evgrafovich gave my essay to the school principal, A. V. Bartashev, so that he could check whether I got everything right about refraction, pressure, etc.

[Page 37] March 20. The other day, Frizer brought a hand-operated Victrola to class and placed it behind the curtain. During the long recess, we invited seventh graders and started dancing. Fyodor Kuzmich came right away, “What is going on, gentlemen?”

“We’ve just made a truce, and we are dancing a peace dance now.”

He left. A little later, he came again, found the Victrola and, almost laughing, took it to the registrar’s office. Alexander Veniaminovich says that in his 25 years of experience, he has never had a case like that. Here is a copy of a note that Sergey Evgr. sent to Mr. Frizer:

Dear Sir,

On Friday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, your son Mikhail, a sixth grade student, brought a hand-operated Victrola with him to school together with a foxtrot vinyl record in order to have dancing in the classroom. The Victrola was confiscated by the associate principal, so please come to school to pick it up in person or send an authorized person.

Home room teacher,

S. Ev. [*signed*]

[Page 38] Below, we added:

“Well written, but off topic. 3+”

It is what it is.

March 26. We went to Pines's birthday celebration yesterday. Before that, I was at Saleevs' for their Tatar celebration. At Pines's, we laughed a lot, made witty remarks, and joked about B. Lesk's immoderate eating. We almost ended up fighting. Damn it! It looks like Father wants to spend the summer in Ashihe. What a pity! Tomorrow, I will definitely go to the “cherished house.” Hopefully, I will somehow be successful!

March 29. Today is a recital of [*illegible*]<sup>35</sup> students. Although I am not doing well with my piece—Schubert's Impromptu No. 2—I am not stressed at all. Let's see how tense I will be before the concert! This piece is either beyond my mastery, or I've overpracticed, and it's become obscure. Anyway, come what may. It is much worse to perform at a recital than in a

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<sup>35</sup> Last name of a music teacher

play. In a play, it's not like critics are criticizing every single note and you feel much more at ease. I would like it to be tomorrow as soon as possible so that I could talk about the recital in past tense.

[Page 39] March 30. M. Liberman and I have just spent an entire three hours discussing the point. What is a point? A Euclid's postulate says that two parallel lines cannot pass through the same point. But a point is a "something." And, in theory, every quantity is divisible by two. That means that a point—as a certain quantity—can be divided into two points. Two parallel lines can be drawn through them. But it contradicts the postulate; therefore, a point should not be divisible by two. In this case, a point is not a quantity (since it's not divisible) and is a zero. Well, we'll have to ask the math teacher, but even he probably won't tell us anything conclusive.

March 31. Yesterday morning Father took away my Finnish knife that I wore on the side on a chain. There was so much yelling that the deluge of epithets I got caught in made me get dressed and prepare a proper response. Father always yells, but in response I get stone-cold calm and do not leave a single word unanswered. This makes him incredibly angry, but I actually couldn't care less.

[Page 40] April 1. After the incident with the Finnish knife, Father ordered me to eat in at my desk instead of the dining room table. Today Mother called me to the table but I didn't go. Father said that he would not provide a separate lunch for me. I replied that I wasn't asking for it. One word led to another. "But your mother told you to come. I could have said something yesterday, but I didn't say anything today."

"Well, you have to inform me when you change your orders."

He burst out yelling. In the past, during his outbursts, Father threatened and actually ordered me to get out of the house. But I never said anything. Today he did the same, "Go get dressed and do not cross the threshold of this house again." I rushed to the coat rack, grabbed my jacket and cap, and was about to run away but mom held me back. I must confess I would have had enough resolve to leave and not come back. It is springtime, so cold is not to be feared. Just get on a freight train, and to hell with everything. If I finally lose my patience, that's exactly what I will do. If I make a plan, you cannot knock it out of me with an axe.

Today is April 1. Pinsky told me that there was a fire at our school and there will be no classes tomorrow (today is Sunday.) [Page 41] At first, I believed him, abandoned my homework, but, as one could have expected, nothing happened.

April 2. Mother went to the Railroad Directorate. She wanted to lease a dacha at Laoshaogou. She met G[inked out]'s mother there. She told my mother that G[inked out] was sick all winter, could not get out of bed, and nearly died. Today she leased a dacha at Laoshaogou. The dachas were leased only to railroad employees. I felt despondent. They said that they would call today at 5 p.m. if there were still any dachas left. There was little hope. Father sent a letter to the resort's doctor. At 5 p.m. my mother was called to the telephone. They told her to come by tomorrow because there was a room available. Yay!

April 7. They did not have a room available. Today at 10 a.m. Father went to Laoshaogou in person to lease a room.

(It's 12 o'clock at night.) Hooray! We've leased a room from doctor Danilov in Laoshaogou.

April 8. F. often comes over to our house. He is a serious person, a fount of quotations, and a philosophy talker. "Talking about weddings and marriages is prose, but I also have a poetic streak in me." He starts talking about girls and women, and always makes a remark, "I hope that your son does not think too much of these words," or "I think that you (he refers to me) are still too young to understand what I am talking about."

[Page 42] April 9. Our newspaper *Monday* came out yesterday to benefit the school. My poems *Spring* and *A Village Evening*, as well as my in-class essay *In My Off Hours* were all published.

April 12. I just got back from the Central Library in the New Town. I went together with Rabinovich. When I was walking back past the "cherished house," I saw G. Without knowing why, I crossed the street to her side. G. entered a pastry shop to buy something, and I crossed the street back to the other side and stopped by a grocery store looking in the mirror with one eye and keeping the other one on the shop door. Suddenly I saw that G. had come out on the other side of that corner and was already going back. I got angry, although what would I have

done otherwise? Nothing. Well, it's OK, we are going to Laoshaogou soon, on June 3. Good beuye.<sup>36</sup>

It is 10 o'clock in the evening, and F. is at our house lecturing our guests about some heredity theory. He is casting pearls before swine.

April 13. I have just received a small envelope marked "For Shura." I got delighted. Then I opened it up, "Shura! Please come to my house for a cup of tea on Sunday, April 15, at 4:30 p.m. Esfir." Dammit! My heart was already pounding. [Page 43] That was an invitation from F. Bukhman. I will probably not go. Fritz is an idiot. He is madly in love with B.B. and used to be acquainted with her, but she stopped greeting him at some point. And now he's imagining that she wants to get re-acquainted with him. His aunt was with a visit at a house of this very pretty girl, S., and incidentally mentioned that a certain trader wanted to get acquainted with her. "Is he even attractive?" asked S.

"Yes, quite so."

Fritz told me about this with such good-heartedness that I even felt a little sorry for him.

April 15. The other day, Aba Samuilovich Izgur, our Jewish History teacher, pulled me aside in school and said, "I read your poems. I liked them a lot, but don't you write anything about Jewish life?"

"Of course, I thought about that, but it is hard, very hard for me to write about something I know nothing about."

"But don't historic events of Jewish life evoke national and patriotic feelings in you?"

I understood what he meant. "Be sure, Aba Samuilovich, that if I ever become a writer, I will only be a Jewish writer!"

Yesterday at 5 p.m., I was at school for a rehearsal. I invented some [*illegible*] with my throat because I really don't want to recite anything. [Page 44] Pinsky volunteered to recite my poems at the evening show. S. Evgrafovich organized a kind of polyphonic orchestra. What a bad joke! There is no musicality, nothing. Oh well!

March 17.<sup>37</sup> I have just gotten back. We played volleyball since 3 o'clock. I lost 20 kopeks but yesterday I won 30, so it's OK. There were three of us playing—Fedyashka Manushin, Eskin, and

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<sup>36</sup> Written in English.



I—against Bor'ka, Rogovin, Pines, Mikhelev, and one other guy. We played on a big court, and there were many empty spots on our side. Afterwards, we went inside the school and listen to the radio. On our way back we meet some college students. One of them was tipsy and suggested that we break up. We laughed at him. He argued for a long time and went to a police officer who was standing near the house of one wealthy man, "Do tell them to go. You see...they're just standing there," he said, pointing at us with a stick. "We will sure beat you up." The Chinese policeman approached the house and rang the doorbell thinking that we needed to go inside. We left. "Let's turn the corner, and you'll have it from us!" So we went around the corner. "Well, disperse now," the student continued. The other students have joined him. "Why are you still here? Let's go."

"I am telling them to disperse," the law enforcer replied.

[Page 45] "Don't be ridiculous! Let's go."

The students were taking him away. "Wait. Are you angry with me?" he asked Lesk. "Let's kiss. Give me your hand," and he slid a cigarette into Borya's hand. The latter threw it on the ground. "Wanna fight one on one?"

"I won't fight a burly guy like you," Lesk replied, "but do you want to fight the three of us by yourself?"

"Alright."

"It will be Fedyashka, Valelya (Eskin) and me."

On our way, Fedyashka got cold feet, so I offered my own fists instead of Fedyashka's. The students walked on the one side of the street, and we walked on the other. Near the Police Street, we converged to begin the fight. Lesk put out a condition that the students stood at a distance. Arguing began. I accidentally turned around and saw Fyodor Kuzmich accompanied by someone (probably his wife.) I promptly warned the others. Our guys fell quiet and greeted him loudly.

"Well, gentlemen, why are there so many of you?"

"They are talking politics here," one of the students replied.

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<sup>37</sup> Probably a mistake made by Alexander. It should be "April 17."

The inspector passed us by. Long story short, the fight did not happen. Lokha tried his best to use diplomacy in order to prevent the fight. One of the students asked, “So what do you want from him?” We went home. This episode reminded me of another, funnier, episode that happened two to three days ago. [Page 46] We were walking down the Chinese Street (all of our guys.) Near a shop window, we saw two hooligans. They were also drunk. One of them was limping. They were talking about something. One of our guys started laughing. One of the hooligans, who was red (in his face, not his political affiliation,) approached us. Lesk got lucky again: he bravely stuck his chest out as if to say “Wanna mess with us?” The hooligan got closer. We turned and walked away. Near the corner of the Birzhevaya Street, both hooligans caught up with us. We stopped. The red one (in his face) pushed Lesk. The second one was trying to hold him back.

“Who contradicted me?” the limping one asked. “Do not contradict me! Do not do it again! You are not to contradict me.”

Why he was so fixated on “contradicting” we were not able to tell, but it was really funny.

April 27. Last Friday, something happened that could have turned all of my current life upside down. I already mentioned that I have become friends with L. Subbotovsky. One morning, I unfolded a map of China, Manchuria, Tibet, Mongolia, etc. Running my hand across the map, I said that it would be great to visit those places. He (Subbotovsky) replied that he had thought about it many times and, indeed, it would be great to take a walking trip through Mongolia and Manchuria. [Page 47] We went out for a walk and could not stop talking about the subject. Finally, we got so excited that we decided to execute our plan for real. We decided to walk from Harbin to Manchuria through Hailar, then cross Dalai Nor<sup>38</sup> to reach the Kerulen River<sup>39</sup>, then take the Kerulen almost to the Urga, then turn West towards Khobdo<sup>40</sup> or the Tarbagatai. I put out 2,50, and we bought two compasses—one for him, and one for me. Then we went to a bazaar and checked certain goods out. Then we held a meeting in the *Komsob* garden. The next three days went by as if in a fever. On Sunday morning, Lenya<sup>41</sup> said that we

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<sup>38</sup> Another name of Hulun Lake.

<sup>39</sup> Another name of the Kherlen River.

<sup>40</sup> The old name of the city of Khovd.

<sup>41</sup> Short for ‘Leonid.’

will be leaving at 3 p.m. We bought a hatchet, coffee, tea, sugar, sausages, canned food, etc. We wrapped everything in blankets. At 2 o'clock, I said that I was going to Subbotovsky's birthday party and that I would come back late. I left. I arrived at his house. Everything was ready. I sat down to write a letter to Mother and Father. Lenya was rushing me and was stressed because his mother was supposed to come home any minute. Here is the exact copy of the letter, word for word, as it is lying right in front of me.

"Goodbye, dear Mom and Dad!

[Page 48] I am leaving with a good friend to meet life face to face. I am not asking that no one looks for me, because I know they will still look for us. I am leaving so that I don't spend this summer idly and uselessly, as it would be at the dacha, but in a healthy way among fields and rivers. In early fall, I will send a telegram and come back, but please do not look for me right now—it will be no use. Mom will be worried, but as a woman she will not understand that this walkabout will toughen me up and make me a man. You, Papa, can be proud of this deed of mine. We have textbooks, warm undergarments, a fur coat, a canvas tent, socks, stockings, and money. I repeat, do not look for us—two young men are not as stupid to be pulled back home by the ear. In the first days of August, I will be in Laoshaogou bypassing Harbin. So, I am leaving to face life and will spend my summer maybe even better than you, breathing fresh and healthy air. Please do not worry: I will be back in town in early fall."

Shura

April 22, 1928.

Subb.'s letter to his mom was also attached.

[Page 49] We took our bundles quickly (I took a blanket from home which has now played such an important part that I will never forget,) and started out towards the Sungari along Kazachya<sup>42</sup> Street. On the way, we grabbed two notebooks. At the railway station, we forgot to mail the letters, got into a boat, and crossed the river to the other bank. On the left bank, I ran to the pillar box and threw the letter in. We approached a bridge, tied our bundles made of blankets to our backs across the shoulders, and started walking down a path along the railroad tracks. We talked passionately, kept a vigorous pace, and discussed where we would spend the

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<sup>42</sup> Cossack

night, take a break, our current situation and prospects. Suddenly, the path bifurcated. One path led north, the other one turned more to the west. It was natural to keep going on the first path, but soon we realized that it was leading towards a plant. We kept walking. The bridge was receding into the distance and curving. The path was making a huge semicircle. Around 6 p.m., we were near the Miaotaizi station. Chinese people crowded a raised platform awaiting the train. We had made a big mistake (actually, he had, because it was his responsibility) that was quite funny if you look at it from the outside. We had packed everything with us including such little things like a needle, pins, dust goggles, etc., but we forgot the bread. [Page 50] We thought about buying some at the Miaotaizi station, but everyone was extremely busy, and we couldn't even get a drink of water there. We went on our way. Near the switchman's booth the path bifurcated again, but we could not see the plant or anything else. I took off my fur coat and the bundle and ran towards the nearest railway man's yard. A boy came rushing out. "Which way is Qiqihar?" I asked.

"Qiqihar is straight ahead, but why are you not taking a train?"

I mumbled something in response and went back to my despondent companion. Soon, he declared that he was feeling cold. I took my sweater off and gave it to him. We walked on. A stray dog started following us. An unpleasant wind blew in some clouds that made everything darker and sort of entered our souls, changing our cheerful mood. We walked for about a verst. I felt fuzzy like everything was in a fog. I barely knew that I was going somewhere with a few dollars that wouldn't be enough even for two weeks, with no bread... I was more cool-headed than my companion. I was held back by my exams, an unfinished school year, the prospects of a nice summer in Laoshaogou, etc. During the day, I was upbeat (I am referring to the days before we started out on our journey) but at night I felt uneasy. [Page 51] I was remembering tennis, volleyball, swimming, games and, most importantly, G. Nevertheless, I had left, and I would not go back. I might not always take the first decisive step, but if I do, I will not turn back. After one of the nights, when I had given in to the "still" feeling most notably, I had proposed to Subbotovsky to do the same, that is going to Asia, but after we have finished the school, and then when we are almost free, we would be able to go to both Tibet and Turkestan. But he only reproached me for hesitating. Fine! Let's go! And so we went, and as soon as we passed

Miaotaizi, my dear travel companion confided in me that he had decided to accept my plan. “You know what? It would be better if we go back. And next year we will set out on a proper journey.” I looked at him. Was he joking? No, it didn’t look like he was joking. I turned around and went back. And so did he, my dearest Subbotovsky, and after him went the dog that had probably decided that now it’s been bound to us by eternal friendship. Not far from Miaotaizi, we turned into a ravine, sat down, and ate one sausage each. Actually, I hurried to take it out of my mouth and gave it to the dog because without bread those hunters’ sausages were [missing page(s)]<sup>43</sup> [Page 52] Ugh, what kind of secret is it?

We have been uncovered! Subbotovsky’s mother came to our house to rent a room but she didn’t. Later, my mother met her and asked her about the birthday party. One thing led to another, and eventually I confessed everything. Father says that if I went to him and told him that I wanted to leave, he would have let me go and given me money, too. I don’t believe him, although...

May 16. Early morning today, there was a storm over Harbin that turned into a blizzard with pouring rain and SNOW. The hurricane with the snowfall lasted for quite a while. They reported that the hurricane affected the entire CER<sup>44</sup> line. According to the weather station, Harbin has never experienced such a precipitous temperature drop as we had last night. The temperature dropped to minus 2.8°C in the air, minus 4.0°C on the ground, and minus 6°C on the grass. The weather station explains this circumstance as the result of a phenomenon unknown in Europe but familiar only to those in the USSR and in North America, which is a “cold front” caused by movement of upper cold layers of the air towards South and Southeast.

[Page 53] May 26. I have already taken two exams, and I think both went OK—a written exam in Algebra and written exam in Russian. In Algebra, we were given a complex problem to test our knowledge of progressions, logarithms, implicit methods of solving equations, and compound percentages. I struggled but I solved it. I did not prepare at all for the second exam because I decided that I would write my essay on an abstract topic. That’s what I did. The topic was “The Greatest Victory Is the Victory Over Self.”

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<sup>43</sup> One or several pages are clearly missing.

<sup>44</sup> Chinese Eastern Railway

[Page 54] August 31

The cheerful summer has gone by. Will it ever repeat itself?

No one can answer this; whatever will be we are not to know.

But while my memories are still alive, while your shy kiss is still burning, I will reveal the notes of the days bygone and record this past summer in them.

So, I went to Laoshaogou. With me was my comrade Lelya Eskin. Everything there was as before, the same as usual, nothing has changed. Now that I am reflecting on these summer months, I can see how empty and drab the summer was. Maybe, only the last week jazzed it up. I was strolling in the park soon after my arrival, when I met V., G's little sister. I asked her about G., why she was not seen around. V. replied that after her lung disease, G. had a complication with her leg and was unable to walk. She asked me to drop by. I replied that it didn't seem very appropriate and asked her to say hello. Two days later, G. once again asked me through V. to drop by, so I did. [Page 55] I visited her this way several times, but then her mother arrived. I felt awkward and stopped my visits, and, by the way, soon after she was able to go outside. But, in general, I am timid, and this did not help much. I limited myself to looking at her for long stretches of time from our dacha, and she would position herself such that she could look at me. And (how disappointing and frustrating!) that's how the entire summer flew by, with bashful glances, a couple of words, and that was all. I played volleyball with my friends. Yaomin and Kuangengji<sup>45</sup> came over twice, and we slammed them both times. Lelya became friends with a twenty-year-old bigmouth Viktor, and together they spent their evenings in the company of a certain Rosa and Liza. Lelya basically got into a romantic relationship with Rosa. Especially because of her, he went back to the city when she was leaving. There, she went on a few dates with him. In his innocence, Lelya told Lesk everything, and the latter again told Rosa that Lelya had blabbered everything to him. Rosa got offended, and nowadays they (meaning Lelya and Rosa) avoid each other like plague. [Page 56] But let's go back to my business. G. became friends with L.F., the one who at the very beginning of my previous notebook approached me with a question about the Turkish hat and Lora. I always thought that L.F. was a spoiled girl, and I was afraid for G. Once I told her (G.) that, but it had no effect. I argued that she (L.F.) used face

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<sup>45</sup> For the names of both teams, spelling was re-created according to the transcription rules.

powder and wore lipstick. One time, G. was sitting on a park bench and reading a book. I approached her and started a conversation. Soon L.F. appeared, "I hope I am not interrupting." At first, I got angry inside, but now I am so happy that it happened. A conversation started. In the evening, G. took a stroll with L., and I went with them. We did it again the following evening. L.F. lives in a village, and I had to walk her home. Initially, I didn't feel like doing it, but now! On the way, she told me that G. fancies me, etc. We started getting together during the day, then at 8 o'clock in the morning. G. would carve out my name and I hers. One morning, L. did not come. G. and I went outside the gate and sat on a bench above a cliff. I took her hand. She did not withdraw it.

[Page 57] "You know, G., I like you."

"I like you too," G. replied, almost in a whisper.

Incidentally, one evening when I was walking L.F. home, she told me that she had once asked G., "What would you do, if Shura kissed you?"

"And what would *you* do?"

"Me? I would have slapped him."

"Well, I would have answered."

"How?"

"By kissing him back."

At that moment on the bench, I really wanted to kiss her, but I was not brave enough although I knew what would happen. This explains why G. had added, "Shura would not be brave enough to do this." Another time, the three of us were sitting on a bench by the river. G. took a pencil, tore a page from a notebook, and wrote something on it. After hesitating a little, she gave it to me and told me to read the note when I would be on the train already. She also gave me a little heart that she took out from the blade of her knife, but later she accidentally lost it herself. The day before my departure, G. and I sat alone. In ten minutes, I had to go to Maolaizhao for a volleyball competition, but I really didn't want to. [Page 58] I asked her to wake up earlier than usual the next day, around 6 a.m., and I did not leave until she promised me to do that. When I came running, the train was almost leaving. We beat Maolaizhao, but we lost to S[illegible]. The following morning—my last morning in Laoshaogou—I woke up early, around 5 a.m. The

morning was barely awakening. Patches of pink fog were still swirling in the valley. The sun was just rising. Naturally, G. was not there. Then it was 6 a.m., still no sight of G. Then 7 a.m. And then, at quarter past seven, when I already lost hope to see her in the morning, she came to the river. I started joking that she wakes up pretty early and that it's bad for her, etc. At first, she was smiling, but then, apparently, it started making her angry, and she asked me to stop. By the way, yesterday I promised to give her a present that she would not have to hide or to show, but it would be a great memory. Now I told her that I was not going to give it to her, etc. She kept asking for it, but then she became angry and said, "Well, whatever. Now I will not accept it anyway." We approached the stairs that led to the swimming area. [Page 59] Suddenly, I said "Actually, I will keep my promise," and I kissed G. "Won't you kiss me back?" G. kissed me. Five minutes later, we went to our houses. After breakfast, we went for another walk and smiled secretively. After twelve, G. and L. came to the railroad station. G. brought me a small bouquet of asters, snapdragons, and one tiny little pansy, G.'s favorite flowers. I picked it, kissed it, and gave it back to G. She was sad, and she had told me in the morning that she would be crying. When the train started moving, I pressed G.'s hand firmly, got on the footboard, and read her note. It was folded in a triangle, and there was an inscription on it, "To Shura." The note contained the following words:        [*Written in pencil: sentimental but true and touching.*]

August 24, 1928

Laoshaogou railroad station

Dear Shura,

Do not forget me!

I will remember you.

Please keep this as a memento.

[Page 60] July 3.<sup>46</sup> On Saturday, L.F. arrived and brought me a note from G. That's what it contained:

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<sup>46</sup> Not sure if the date is correct. The original says "3/VII."



To Shura Galatzky

August 30, 1928

Sungari railroad station

Dear Shura,

I feel bored without you. I think about you, and I want to see you very much. There's not much else to write about—you know the rest. If you want to see me, then come around September 15 to the Central Library. I think by that time I will be back in Harbin. Thank you for the poems. I am waiting for a letter in the *Rupor*. Goodbye for now.

With love, [*a wavy line*]

[Page 61] Back in Laoshaogou (Sungari,) we had decided to send letters to each other through the youth section of the *Rupor* newspaper. I chose a pen name *Smile* for G. and *Poet* for myself. However, on Saturday my letter was not published. I don't know why. I wonder what G. thought. I am now training in long-distance running, and to actually run with a purpose, I run to the house where G. lives and take a break there on a boulevard bench. Most probably, G. will be arriving on the eighth. By the way, L. told me that G. wants to celebrate her birthday this year and she wants to invite me, and if she is not allowed, then she will not celebrate at all. I will try to convince her not to do that because I cannot go to her place—I barely know her parents, and I don't feel comfortable in general because that story with the letter did not go unnoticed. G. was sick when the letter arrived, and her mom read it and said, "You know, it was Shura who wrote it." But, in any case, G. will get a present from me.

September 9. I don't know why, but I've suddenly remembered a few recent cases based on which I can say that it gives me a certain pleasure—I would actually say, delight—to inflict emotional suffering on myself. [Page 62] Just like it is pleasurable to wiggle an aching tooth until it bleeds, I like to torment my soul. Once, we (G., L.F., and I) were sitting after dinner and talking. G. asked me to recite one of my poems. I replied that I didn't remember any. G. kept asking. I kept refusing. Then she got up and said, "If he doesn't want to, let's go, L[*inked out*]." L. got up as well, and they left. I sat there a little, got angry, and also went away from that bench. I found a clearing and started walking bitterly back and forth. It cost me a lot, because I had only one week remaining in Laoshaogou, and every evening was precious to me. I

knew that they were looking for me, that G. was remorseful, but I kept hiding. Finally, I started walking down an alley and came across them. "Shura, what kind of childish behavior is this," said L. "Please make peace." We replied that we never had a fight in the first place. G. invited me to keep walking, but I remained standing where I was (I don't know why,) and they left without me. This was a break up. The following day, I met G. but she turned away from me.

[Page 63] Still, after lunch, I met her again and offered her complete peace. The peace happened. Another time, I saw G. with Alya A., a 15-year-old mother's boy. They were walking down an alley. I was sitting near the tennis court. My heart sank, and my blood started boiling (I have always thought that I have a little bit of Mongol blood in me.) Still, despite the state I was in, I could not fail to notice deep down that I was getting an acute bittersweet pleasure from this. Actually, it's good that it never happened again, because the poor Alen'ka<sup>47</sup> would have had to prove many laws of physics with his body as a living example.

September 10. It's evening. 10 p.m. I'm sitting at the piano. My fingers are wandering nervously seeking some distant melody. It's dark in the room; there's no one here. Only the piano lamp is lit. All of a sudden, there is a snap, and the window flies open... Ugh, I shuddered with horror. I thought that someone burst into the room. But there is no one. It was a gust of cold autumn wind. How scary! Fall days stir some morbid sensitivity in me. I have an unfortunate personality. My excessive impressionability has poisoned and keeps poisoning a lot of minutes of my life, constantly stirring some unknown strings in the depths of my heart. [Page 64] I have lived so little, but I have so many impressions. And the worst of all is that I will never ever forget them. I am an idealist, and it is hard for people like me to live in the 20th century. Who knows, maybe this spiritual side is dominating in me just as a fruit of my youthful dreams and unfamiliarity with life. Maybe life will tarnish my heart with materialism although now I often have my head in the clouds.

September 16. Happy is he who can pour his soul out in sounds or spoken words. A poet or a composer takes an incomprehensible pleasure in repeating the written lines, feeling something of their own, the voice of their heart. There is no one home. It's night time. I remember my summer poems. They were all written at night, when everyone had already gone

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<sup>47</sup> Another diminutive for the name *Alya*.

to bed and couldn't interrupt me either with the noise or with their curiosity. How many truthful lines have formed in some of the poems! Now that I'm scanning them with my eyes, I feel like I am reliving the feelings that influenced these lines. [Page 65] Here is a small poem, every word of which is the living truth. Its contents are simple, but it recreates one summer evening in Laoshaogou:

I will pick a scarlet rose from a flower bed,  
And I will wait for you in the evening.  
I will give the rose for a sweet kiss,  
And I will ask again so that I could kiss you all night.

The band of a magenta sunset was dying out,  
The purple shadows of branches were intertwining.  
The light crescent has risen above a quiet river.  
I've been waiting, but my sweetheart never came.

"What are you crying about, tender vine?  
She has not come, should I cry with you?"  
And the rose, the scarlet rose, withered,  
Poisoned by my burning tear.

[Page 66] September 18. I will never forgive myself for seeing G. yesterday and not riding up to her. I went for a bike ride; it was about 5 p.m. Students from that commercial school were going home—I'm not sure why so late. Near the corner, I noticed G., but instead of riding up to her, I sped down the street and turned to the side. I went around the boulevard, and I could see G. stop by the gate of her house and stare in the direction where I had disappeared. She saw me. Oh, *caramba!* I have come up with a new way to exchange notes. Just like in *The Squire's Daughter* by Pushkin, we will have a special drop site on the boulevard for our notes. But how do I get to see her?! I went there again today, but I did not see G. Tonight, I have come up with a new idea (failures definitely make one more ingenious.) I sent a note through G. Neplokh who lives across the street from us and goes to the same school as G. Tomorrow, he will give her the note, and already tomorrow I will see G. The note contains the following lines:

“My dear G, please come today (Wednesday) at 5 p.m. to the entrance of the Central Library reading room. [Page 67] If you can’t come, please send a note with the same boy about when, where and at what time I will be able to see you.

Sh.”

I’m waiting for 5 p.m. tomorrow.

Monday, September 24. It snowed lightly; the snow was sparse and got immediately absorbed by the ground. The air temperature is +5°R. On Saturday, Pavel Pinsky and I went to the library, and on the boulevard I saw G. We (meaning just me, without P.P.) took a walk together and chatted. She told me to come at 4 p.m. on Sunday. Of course, I came, but G. was not there. Around 5 p.m. I saw her. She was on her way home. Without waiting, I went towards *Zhelsob*<sup>48</sup> and from there I went running home (I’ve been doing long-distance running.) Today is Yom Kippur and I am fasting, although I could eat. No one is forcing me to fast, but I think it’s healthy to let your stomach take a break once a year.

September 27. I have an inflammation of the periosteum of my right shin. I’m not allowed to run. I feel sad about that.

October 2. Day after day, day after day are vanishing into the blue distance. It’s been a month that we’ve been studying. Everything is boring and monotonous. [Page 68] I would come to the piano and strike a couple of chords. I would pick up a pen wanting to write a poem. I have a topic but no inspiration, so I drop it. Thoughts of the future intrude my mind. I feel like I don’t want anything and I want everything at the same time. Where is G. now? She’s at home, maybe thinking about me. “Do not forget me,” the words are ringing inside my head. I feel scared! I have an impression that someone is behind me, looking at me... There is no one. The room is dark, with only one lamp lit on the window sill. I start understanding the condition of a drug addict, their desire to doze off, but “my desire is not the grave’s cold sleeping.”<sup>49</sup> Death is a scary word. When this word comes to my mind, I push it away. I would be glad to push the death itself away at the moment when it comes to claim my soul. Is there a soul? No, it doesn’t exist, just like there is no God or afterlife... There is only matter, and there is nothing else in the

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<sup>48</sup> *Zhelsob* is an abbreviation of «Железнодорожное собрание» (*‘zheleznodorozhnoe sobranie’*), which stands for “Railroad Assembly” or “Railroad Club.”

<sup>49</sup> A quote from Lermontov’s poem *I Walk Out Alone Upon My Way* (translation by Kristin M. Harkness)

Universe. There is nothing spiritual, everything is material. Why do we live? I don't know why, but I certainly don't want to die!

October 10. I have been elected to the editorial board, and, on my advice, Subbotovsky has as well. Iokha, who was also elected, refused. "I shall better play poker," he said. We have a group of avid gamblers in our class, Lya'ka Rogovin, Mon'ka Pines, and Mishka Liberman. [Page 69] As of late, Lelya Eskin and S. Malkin have joined them. They play something new every season. Last year, it was mah-jongg, this year it is poker. They play for high stakes (on our scale.) Lya'ka made four dollars once. You should see their fevered faces. Some turn pale, some turn red. Once I dropped by their place at the very height of the game. I came from the street, and right away I felt terrible stuffiness in Lya'ka's tiny room. No one paid any attention when I advised them to open the ventilation window. They had been playing non-stop from 3 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Mikhelev was losing big, and Lya'ka was winning. Vatner usually loses a lot. By the way, I've been curious about him. I am not sure whether he studies or not, but at 11:15 one can hear a bell coming from the street—he has arrived on his bicycle. After the class, during the long recess, he sees his loyal Vovochka and Pinza. Incidentally, about the Redhead Fritz. During student monitor election, we decided to vote for Sultanov as a kind of compromise. No one wanted to be offended, and electing this inane guy would not hurt anyone's feelings. [Page 70] But some people voted for someone else, and some voted for Pinza. Eventually, the two shortlisted candidates were Pinsky and Sultanov. At that point, S. Evgr. declared that the former will be the student monitor. We expressed our indignation. Pinza was sitting there as red as a boiled crayfish, but that ass had neither tactical skills nor self-respect to refuse, and he was proclaimed student monitor amidst protesting voices. But Fritz will not join us for the New Year's again, and we will knock him down.

November 2. Today at 11 o'clock at night my old friend Misha Shriro is leaving for Europe, to Paris. We've been studying together for eight years. And today he is leaving, probably forever. Never again will we see each other. I feel a little sad, not because I am losing a friend—we quarreled frequently, and he is ill-tempered—but sad in general. We studied together for so long, we've gotten used to each other, we've seen each other every day, and now... Damn it. I wanted to compose a poem for him as a souvenir, but then I felt kind of

ridiculous, both sad and ridiculous at the same time. Was I ashamed of my own feelings? I was afraid of being misunderstood... What a scary word, *forever*.

[Page 71] November 3. We must live for something, strive for something, otherwise life is empty and trivial, and in the hour of death not a single spark from your past will fly in front of your eyes, and the drifting road of your life will appear drab, empty, and pointless.

I have been seeing G. nearly every day. We talk about school and about day-to-day stuff. It is somehow childish... But aren't we children after all? I enjoy seeing her sweet face. It is so different from those faces "from the wharf" that look all the same. Shriro left. After seeing him off, Pinza and I thought that in a year, we will be leaving as well, although not in a first but in a third-class carriage, and not with mommy and daddy, but by ourselves, to carve a road to our education, to our lives.

November 18. Our class is going through bad days. All teachers are angry with us. The principal has declared a war on us. That's how it all started. The English class was very boring. Valelya put his hand back, caught Lyal'ka's leg, and pulled his boot off. The boot was passed around the class and eventually ended up on the desk of Asya Kadysh who was reciting her lesson at that time. [Page 72] As she was sitting down, she lifted her desk, saw the boot, and told the teacher. The principal and the inspector were called, and Valelya was sent home together with Lyal'ka. They called a special teachers council regarding the behavior of the seventh grade. We sent a letter to that council, in which we promised to behave in the future. Instead of defending his class, Chichikov<sup>50</sup> (S. Evgr.)—he is our classroom teacher—on the contrary, recommended that the council take drastic measures and punish Eskin harshly, maybe even expel him from the school. What a prick. Whenever we are in class, he quietly sneaks up to the door and watches those who misbehave. As soon as someone notices him, they say right away, "Chichikov." Immediately, the words "Chichikov! Chichikov!" travel across the classroom. The council ended with Valelya's suspension for two weeks. His case was dubbed "the boot case," and he himself was called Fukhinom (the name of a shoe store.) But that was not the end of it. Several days ago, Lesk was sitting in the classroom fixing a poster for the evening performance that happened yesterday (November 17.) [Page 73] Subbotovsky (or

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<sup>50</sup> Chichikov is the protagonist of Gogol's novel *Dead Souls*.

Sabachila, as we call him in class) got so happy that his name appeared on paper (he was reciting a poem) that he hugged me and said, "Well, Shurka, you and I have been put on a poster." I was so moved that, in my turn, I hugged him back in such a way that one of the desks got broken and we received the bill. After about five minutes, Lyal'ka and Frizer broke a second desk. Then the school principal issued an order that seventh graders are not allowed in the classroom during recesses or before classes. We did a whole lot of other mischief, and the principal called us scoundrels. But you should have seen the way he said that! "Believe you me, I am far more patient than you, and I will get my way!" The evening performance was yesterday. In the absence of a stage, there was only divertissement. I recited *Summer Night* and *Rose*, my poems. Then I accompanied R.Ts. in her melodeclamation *The Dying Swan*.

Right now, I accidentally flipped some pages of my diary and saw R.Ts.'s observation about Subbotovsky, dated February 17, where she compares him to Don Juan. [Page 74] I had a chance to witness it firsthand.

November 26. I do not trust myself anymore! I am a liar! Although, I shouldn't say this either. At the time, when I said what I said, I was telling the truth, and now... In simple words, I've received my first lesson, the result of which is the lack of trust in myself...

December 5. ...and my feelings. I have experienced disappointment, my ideal has been discredited, and what I dreamt about during long winter nights has been forgotten, gone, although the tangy aftertaste remains in my heart.

Nothing is constant in this world,  
Everything you say is a lie.  
Whatever you hated you will love,  
And whatever you loved you will forget forever.

I have become convinced that it is true! And here it is in simple words, "Even paradise can eventually become boring."

Christmas is coming. There was a meeting of our Theater section today. I was elected student monitor of the section. A large show is being planned.

December 6. I told R.Ts. that she was very perceptive, but I didn't tell her why. During our Economic Geography lesson, she sat at my desk. She spoke to me rather frankly. [Page 75] I told

her that she had been right when she'd said that Sub. was a Don Juan. She asked me to prove that, and I successfully did it. R. told me that S. had sent her notes, in which he wrote that he liked her, etc. We spoke kind of loudly, and S. was able to hear almost everything. He was thinking about approaching and "thanking" her for everything, but I asked him not to because then it would have looked like I told him everything. After school, I approached R.Ts. and told her, "Subbot. heard everything."

"That's even better."

By the way, during the party that was organized at Lya'ka's on the day of Skandibobra's departure, Sabachila sent a message to R.Ts. during a flirting game, "You are my ideal." She responded with "What number?" Excellent! Bor'ka is head over heels in love with R.Ts. Other guys constantly pick on him. I wonder what will happen. R.Ts. and Vovochka have almost fallen out. At the last play, F.M. did not come to see her. Vatner stopped being friends with Pinza altogether, etc. We are winning! Yesterday, we went to *Mechsob*<sup>51</sup> to see *Paul the First*. It was Bor'ka, R.Ts. and I.

[Page 76] December 16. There has been a lot of impressions in recent days. I am becoming convinced that it is difficult to conceal the truth. It will always surface, no matter how hard one tries to sink it. That's how it began. Iokha had a birthday party recently, and he invited both guys and girls from our class. Vovochka became alarmed. As it turned out, he and Pinza talked to R.Ts. during recesses trying to convince her not to go to Ekha's<sup>52</sup>. It looks like she could not decide. On the day of the birthday, when Lya'ka dropped by at her house to pick her up and take her to Iokha's (Ekha's,) she didn't want to go at first, but eventually she went. Vovka nearly stopped talking to her after that. He was invited, but Pinza, although he had been asked, didn't go, most probably because he was sucking up to Vatner who is at odds with Iokha. The matter was passed to the highest authority, that is, to Vatner. That *god*, obviously, decided that a single glance cast at R.Ts. would be enough so that she joined them again. But that glance had to be cast somewhere. On Friday, December 14, Bor'ka and I went for a walk after dinner and met Lya'ka. We went to his house and got carried away talking until 11:30 p.m. [Page 77]

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<sup>51</sup> *Mechsob* is an abbreviation of «Механическое собрание» (*mekhanicheskoe sobranie*'), which stands for "Mechanics Assembly."

<sup>52</sup> A different spelling for *Iokha* (pronounced the same.)



Walking back on Birzhevaya Street (where I live,) we talked about the New Year. As we were passing by Frizer's house, I suddenly heard laughter and a loud conversation. We raised our heads and, in Mishka F's room (on the second floor,) we saw light and heard some voices. We were able to distinguish the voice of Mon'ka Pines. Sabachila's profile could be seen through the window. Without thinking twice, I climbed a tree, jumped from the tree onto the balcony, and, in the window, I saw R.Ts., Vovka Ts., and I heard the voice of A.K. It looked like they were having a party. Bor'ka and I decided to wait until they come out and then walk towards them to make an impression on R. and Mishka. We waited for them at the entrance to our house, thinking that they would be taking Artillery Street, but we were wrong, and we lost them. Now I think that it was for the better. Yesterday, I thought about talking this through with R. candidly, but she did not attend a show at *Komsob*, and I had to postpone this idea. I am more than sure that the guys from our class will be celebrating the New Year as 'bachelors' again. [Page 78] In that case, Pinza will be booted out from his student monitor position, and everyone from that group will be boycotted.

December 17. The case is ripening. Yesterday, they were performing *The Dagger* at *Komsob* and, according to Bor'ka, R.Ts. and N.M. always kept with Vatner and Co. Today, as Bor'ka and I were doing homework, Lyal'ka came running, "The latest news! Vovka has invited the girls to celebrate the New Year without us." Lyal'ka is friends with Stefa Ts. who lives in the same building as Vovka and is actually his (Vovochka's) cousin. She tells him (Lyal'ka) everything, so we are always informed about the current affairs. Indeed, during the long recess today, Vovka talked to R.Ts. all the time.

Bor'ka suggested the following plan in case we end up celebrating the New Year by ourselves. We shall find a way to lure Vovka, Pinza and Frizer to our party (at Eskin's, where we will most probably be celebrating.) We will make them drink vodka and paint their faces with soot that would stain them for three days, etc. We distributed our roles. Bor'ka will make peace with Stefa, Bella G., and Gogvadze, and will start showing signs of attention (and not only signs) to N.M. [Page 79] I will try to find a moment to make an emotional impact on Ts. There will be fighting that we have never ever seen before!

December 22. I have a slight headache; I feel wistful and nauseated for some reason. I don't want anything; I think of nothing. I am looking for some solace in music, but my headache gets stronger, and I sit down to write my journal. Lesk came over yesterday evening. It was late. We talked about the past, about the school life that had gone by, about us. He is so much in love with R.Ts. that I feel sorry for him. He talked about his emotions, and now I see that in our entire class he is the only person who resonates with my personality; actually, not with my personality but with my feelings. He reminds me of those early summer nights when I was sick at heart with suspicions and doubts. I've spent the entire day at home today. I was constipated and twisting with pain, so I ended up taking the blessed *Olium Ricini*<sup>53</sup> and during my "purge" I wrote a very prosaic poem:

[Page 80]

When Apollo is not demanding  
A sacred sacrifice from the poet,  
The latter pinches his nose  
And takes a tablespoon of castor oil.

and so on, and so forth

Bor'ka came and told me that he had learned that R.Ts. went to the movies with Subbotovsky. *Caramba!* I wonder if the looks win over the mind. Subbotovsky has faith in his looks to the point of being ridiculous. By the way, the victory has been won. The day before yesterday, Bor'ka and I had a *warm* conversation with Frizer and Pinsky. We told them everything about their meanness towards our class. Pinza clarified that he was taking his revenge against us for having been booted out as student monitor last year. It was rather funny. Yesterday, Ts. asked me for a list of those who would be celebrating the New Year with us and signed it followed by S.M., N. Gogvadze, and A. Gonch... But this victory doesn't bring me much joy. If R. likes Sabachila, it makes everything clear. Bor'ka hates Sabachila. Yesterday, the latter said so that R. could hear him, "I don't think I will be celebrating the New Year with you."  
"To what do we owe this pleasure?" Iokha asked.

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<sup>53</sup> Author's spelling. *Oleum Ricini* is Latin for "castor oil."

[Page 81] “Most probably, I will be celebrating it with my old class,” and he swiftly turned to R. to see what kind of impression his words made on her. Sabachila is repeating the grade, and by his old class he meant his former classmates.

December 29. Last summer, when Lelya and I were in Laoshaogou, there were lots of college students from Shanghai in Harbin. Among them, there was a nice looking guy D. Op...m. Here, he made acquaintance of Bella G., went out on walks with her, and, unfortunately, fell for her. In early winter, in the fall, he went back to Shanghai, where he graduated from college earning a gold medal<sup>54</sup>. It looks like he had been corresponding with Bella. About a month or so ago, she sent him a telegram asking him to come to Harbin. After his graduation, Dodya received some money from his father and came here. It was funny, but mostly a pity, to see him spend days on end at Bella’s. But then Subbotovsky got acquainted with Bella and, while he was writing to R. about his ideals, he was spending his time with Bella. The end was prosaic; Bella started nearly hating O-m. So one time Bor’ka and I met O-m, Valelya, and Lyal’ka. “We are on our way to beat Sabachila up.” Sab. was at S.Ts.’, and Lyal’ka lured him out of there. A heated explanation took place. O-m hit Sab. in the face twice. [Page 82] Sabachila ran away, but then he came back with a knife and said, “If you touch me, then...” I took away the knife, and we started an hour-and-a-half long discussion. We demanded that Sabachila stop running after girls and choose just one, etc. In the end, Sabachila declared that he likes Bella. But I’m sure that he said that in order to hurt O-m. The latter nearly cried after that.

He went back to Shanghai recently. We celebrated the New Year just like we had imagined. Lyal’ka ruined the entire experience. After dinner, he, lokha, and Sabachila went to a convenience store and had some vodka to lift their spirits (bastards!) It had a really good effect on lokha. He was extremely joyful, professed his love to all girls, and was tireless. By contrast, Sabachila was sitting there quietly; then around 13:00 (which means, at 1 o’clock) he got up and left (they say he went home, but I don’t think so.) Lyal’ka was acting completely insane. To prove that he was not drunk, he wanted to walk a line on the floor. “So here is a floorboard, and here am I. I actually want to walk the floorboard.” But, overall, it was fun. We danced and

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<sup>54</sup> Usually, an equivalent of *summa cum laude*.

played games. Lyal'ka was offering to all the boys to "step out and see who is stronger under the moonlight."

[Page 83] January 14. There was an evening performance on Saturday, the 11th. Sabachila recited Esenin, Agnivitsev, and his own *The Bronze Horseman*. In the latter, he says he had a dream in which the Bronze Horseman was holding a tricolor banner in his hand, and instead of a snake the horse was stomping on something red and saying, "It will come." Such a hypocrite! He told me himself that he was *red*, etc. They say that the principal approached him after the performance and shook his hand because it had made him smile.

January 22. During the New Year's party, Bor'ka made peace with Bella. Since then, because he had broken his nose on a stone wall (R.Ts., that is,) he fell in love with Bella, confessed his love to her, asked her to give him an answer, etc. The usual stuff. One day, when he and Frizer were walking her home, B. asked Mishka to turn away near B.'s house and kissed Bella. Indeed, there's a thin line between hate and love!

February 1. And there's also a thin line between love and hate. Bor'ka barely talks to Bella. Apparently, she was just 'teasing' him, as we say. She kept Sabachila's picture in a locket she wore on her chest. Then she wore Bor'ka's picture for a day to divert attention. Anyway, the secret was exposed. This is all boring.

[Page 84] February 9. As soon as B. saw alienation on Bor'ka's part, she made peace with Subbotovsky. This is kind of ridiculous. Two days ago, Lyal'ka bet one ruble that he would attach a rag to Semyon Borisovich's jacket. We chipped in to get the ruble. During the class, Lyal'ka approached him without being noticed, I shielded him, and he was able to attach a rag. It was long and trailed behind him. It was unbearably funny, and at the same time I felt sorry for the old man. Bor'ka unattached the rag discreetly. By the way, Semyon Borisovich—his last name is Schneider; he is a famous local attorney and a professor of political economy in our school—had his 30th professional anniversary. On my initiative, we had a little ceremony for him. I wrote a small speech, and when S.B. entered the classroom, everyone got up, and I made the speech. S.B. shook my hand.

S. Evgrafovich, or Chichikov as we call him, is a downright XXX (God forgive me for saying this.) We decided to organize a big soiree during Christmas at *Komsob*, but Chichikov was

set against it saying that “there is not much time left,” etc. We still had 1.5 months, and we could have made it. Nonetheless, we decided to postpone the ball until Maslenitsa. [Page 85] I went to *Zhelsob* (the Central Library) to get some plays. Whatever we liked, Chichikov didn’t like, and the other way around. Finally, D. N. Bodisko suggested that we put up *Scapin the Schemer* by Molière. I would play the part of Scapin. But Chichikov couldn’t make up his mind. We wanted to have a director because the last year’s experience showed how important it was to have a director in an amateur play. Chichikov, however, produced some cryptic rationale against it, saying that we had not performed for a while, etc. and then he finished by saying “And, you know, I will be uncomfortable, if we have a director” (he should have started his argument with this.) He wants to take credit for the entire performance. Yesterday, he told me that he had found a school life play called *Air Steamboat*. The play’s author himself read it to him. Chichikov told me the storyline, and I feel embarrassed to call it a storyline. We will refuse to play it, and *finite a la comedia*<sup>55</sup>.

P.S. My suggestion to call S.Ev. *Bursak*<sup>56</sup> instead of Chichikov has been accepted. It’s been reported that he had graduated from a seminary. I wonder if this gave him the reason to imagine himself as Speransky.

[Page 86] February 13. It’s boring and sad. You are staying at home alone, feeling like you are all by yourself in the entire world. No one understands you; you don’t understand anyone; and you just keep living your life, but what for? Because that’s how it’s supposed to be; you have to live. Why has nature created a living creature? The entire universe—that is boundless and the size of which a human brain cannot even fathom—was not enough for it. When a person dies, nothing changes; nothing passes into oblivion; everything remains in place. His body will give food to worms, food to the soil. But nothing will be lost. The same substances will remain, only transformed. So what has happened? Why do we have so many thoughts, fear of death, dreams of afterlife, etc.? Everything makes sense, everything is natural: the machine broke down; its parts got rusty; the screws unscrewed, and eventually it stopped working. So why do we not want to die so much? Why does terror grip our hearts when, at the ebb of life, we think that life is over; it has gone by and will not come back? Everything in the nature makes sense; the only

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<sup>55</sup> Written in Latin alphabet.

<sup>56</sup> A seminarist.

stupid thing is the way man is made—actually, his spiritual, not physical part. Why has nature given man a brain that can neither comprehend, nor accept? Couldn't it make the same man an automaton that would work and enjoy things but would be devoid of the spiritual self? [Page 87] So that he wouldn't understand either the pointlessness of life, or sadness and wistfulness, wouldn't know fear and wouldn't think of either the past or the future. "Living in the present" would have dried a lot of tears, and life would be much smoother; it would still be pointless but at least we wouldn't understand it.

February 24. Markman, Sabachila, Bor'ka, and I were invited to perform at a Jewish ball at Modern. I was about to refuse, but then I remembered that it would be a good opportunity to go out, and agreed. I will have to recite some gibberish. After we turned down Chichikov's play *Air Mail* (not *Steamboat*), he got angry and, at the next class, he called on Bor'ka, M. Liberman, Pinza, and me. The first two answered their lesson OK; Pinza was 'slammed' by a two; and I was saved by the bell. Then I got a four with a double minus for an in-class assignment without a single error in it (the assignment was to write a letter.) I went to him, got into an argument, and quarreled with him completely. The following day, he called on me. I gave a good answer, but he said that he would ask me again. On ~~Saturday~~ Friday, we had the Jewish ball rehearsal. At half past six, I went to I. S. Schneider. [Page 88] He is a christened Jew who somehow "wiggled" his way in. Soon after, Sabachila came as well. We were sitting in I.S.'s office—he is an attorney—and reading our parts. I.S. stepped out. So I am reading but I am having a feeling that Sabachila is looking at me. Then he gets from his seat, comes up to me, and says, "Shurka, it's so silly, let's make peace."

"It is silly, indeed."

We made peace. I don't know why Sabachila did that (could it be out of nobleness?) but I think that he did it so that he could take part in the play that we are about to stage. A little earlier, I.S. asked Sabachila, "Are you going to perform in our play? You should have a go at it."

"It will be my pleasure."

Thursday, March 6. The Jewish ball was on Saturday. It was fun and nice. The Gypsy choir (consisting of Jewish amateurs) created a wonderful atmosphere. I was made-up to look like a Jew, with a beard and sidelocks. I was supposed to come out during Sabachila's speech. When I

came out on stage, Sabachila glanced at me and could barely restrain his laughter. He stammered, forgot his line, and could barely save the situation. I recited my part properly. Today, all of Harbin knows that Sabachila messed up his line. [Page 89] As a joke, I am saying that when Sabachila forgot his line and I. S. Schneider (Ioakim Semyonovich) prompted him—I.S. was sitting on stage acting as an announcer—Semyon Borisovich (the political economy teacher at our school and I.S.'s father) got up from the audience and yelled, “Ioakimushka<sup>57</sup>, no prompting! Thank you! You can sit down now.” I must confess we were bored. Without a table, we were sneaking in the background, but we still stayed until 4 o'clock.

March 11. Yesterday, we had the *hundred-day* event<sup>58</sup>. It was fun. I got caught unawares. I was eating my meal when I heard, “Galatzky, the floor is yours.” I didn't even have time to remove food from my mouth and started saying some gibberish. Anyway, to hell with all of them! We left at half past twelve. Actually, we left the school at that time, and then we (our group) went walking around until 2 o'clock in the morning.

March 30. We had to write an essay in the Russian class. Two lessons were combined, and we had two hours to write the essay. We were given the topic (among others) “Happiness is not in happiness itself, but in the pursuit of it.” You can imagine the surprise of Ser'ga<sup>59</sup> (a.k.a. Bursak, or Chichikov,) when, five minutes later, I turned in my essay that read as follows: “This statement is absolutely incorrect, which can be proven by the following logical chain. If happiness is in the pursuit of happiness then, evidently, the pursuit of happiness is happiness, therefore happiness is in happiness itself.”

[Page 90] Ser'ga racked his brain trying to comprehend the “logical chain,” while I had to write another essay on a different topic, for which I got a five.

April 29. We've gotten into eating contests. Frizer ate 15 pastries, and the following day Iokha ate 20. I would like to host a party on Wednesday (today is Monday.) By the way, last Monday we had a Chemistry exam. Bor'ka and I studied hard, and each got a five.

It is nighttime now. The wind is whistling and howling. It is dark and cold and bleak outside. I don't know why, but thoughts of death have been coming to my mind ever more

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<sup>57</sup> A loving, family version of the name Ioakim.

<sup>58</sup> A hundred days until the end of school.

<sup>59</sup> A common nickname for Sergey (literally, *an earring*.)

frequently. I think to myself that there are only two dimensions in the world: I and everything else. And that's what everybody should think. I perceive everything there is through my feelings. I contain everything within me. With my death, everything will be gone, nothing will exist, it will be darkness—and this is death.

### May 8.

Why is it for so many centuries, even millennia, and even now, there's been a distinction between the spiritual world and the material world? [Page 91] How can one explain it, and what is the reason for this distinction? Let us dwell on the subject of the spiritual world, the soul. What is the difference between the "dead matter" and the "live matter"? How is my body different from a rock, from a group of elements that are chemically identical to the composition of my body? The body of a person is nothing but atoms and molecules. In fact, everything is created from the same matter. Cut off a person's arm. Before, it was part of something living; now it is dead. Evidently, a person differs from something dead by their ability to think. Let us take a dead and a living person for clarity. The composition of the body is identical to the very tiny particle. The body of a dead person can even move, if electric current is applied to it. Yet, a dead person and a living person are not the same. From this last example, the difference between the dead and the living is absolutely clear, and this difference is the mind, the ability to think and to purposely subject functions of the body to the same command center, the brain. On the other hand, the entire complex system of our body also exists as separate parts. Take the liver, the spleen, the kidneys, the heart, etc. Every part is something whole in itself, but it lives in a certain symbiosis, with a friendly help from other parts. [Page 92] Each part functions because of metabolic activity. Each part of our body takes something, but it also gives something. Each part has blood vessels nourishing it and other vessels that carry whatever this part produces to other parts, and this entire huge and complex organization works both as separate parts, and also as a whole. One law is unchanging: everything takes and everything gives (by "everything" I mean every body part that takes and gives.) This giving can be either in the form of heat, or some kind of product, or a combination of both and maybe something else. Carotid arteries go into our head and feed the brain. Consequently, the brain "lives" and performs some kind of work, because it feeds and requires essential elements. But what kind of



product does the brain give away in exchange for the food received? It produces thoughts. A thought is a complex product of brain activity. A thought is invisible, intangible, and cannot be perceived by our sensory organs. But is this reason enough to consider thoughts to be immaterial, unreal, or, in plain language, non-existent? The brain is a phosphorescent and constantly radiating body. These rays are invisible, as we say, but they do exist. They resonate wonderfully in the brain of another person. [Page 93] Sometimes you exclaim, "Wow, this thought carried over." It often happens that you think about something, and all of a sudden another person says this very thing. What happens here is either you thought about something, but didn't have enough time to say it, or you didn't want to say it, but another brain caught your idea, in resonance, and said it out loud. Or the other person thought something, and your brain thought the same thing, in resonance, but that other person said it first. When I said that the brain phosphoresces, I literally meant it, but with invisible rays. From physics, we know that phosphorescence is a chemical phenomenon, therefore there is nothing surprising in the fact that the food the brain receives, after certain processes (evidently, quite complex processes,) transforms into a different type of matter (to put it in narrow terms.) This food radiates in the form of most intricate complexes that have a very fine structure. In my opinion, a thought cannot possibly be non-matter. If it is non-matter, then, as they say, it exists "in spirit." But, in general, is there something that is spiritual but not material? Something that exists is matter, in whatever form. But if "spiritual" is non-matter, then it equals zero, and it does not actually exist because we cannot imagine something that is not real, something that is non-matter, to exist.

[Page 94]

*signatures naturelles* — nature's mark

*marque de diable* — devil's mark

*charme de taciturnite* — charm of silence

*Sabbat* — sabbath

Therefore, if a thought is not matter, then it is not a "something," it is a zero, and the sum or combination of thoughts is also a zero. But then how are we different from a rock, the intellectual activity of which (i.e., its thoughts) equals zero? No, obviously, we are different

because we are able to think, and a thought is part of the product that nourishes our brain, or maybe even the entire product that comes into the brain.

What is a soul? It is a vibration mechanism that radiates the “spiritual.” But if nothing spiritual exists and there are only material things, the soul still exists. The soul is ~~an unknown~~ a certain part of the brain that is in charge of non-material, abstract concepts, such as love, goodness, etc. Of course, a thought of goodness is already something material, but the word “goodness” or “love” is something conceptual, just like our understanding of time.

Disputes often arose regarding the difference between the spiritual and the material. Descartes limited the number of substances to two, the matter and the spirit. Spinoza tried to narrow those two down to one. Locke and Hume attempted to shake the concept of substances from a psychological point of you. [Page 95] According to Plato, matter is the postulate of an idea. Spinoza was probably right, but, naturally, he did not possess our modern views and knowledge in certain areas of science, and he could not combine the material and the spiritual into a complete whole.

May 11. I have read *Fathers and Sons*, a novel by Turgenev. At the point where Bazarov dies, I quit reading. A heavy feeling overwhelmed me, and I got a lump in my throat... Death is the greatest injustice that has ever been created by nature.

May 19. The local white youth, a.k.a. white bandit hooligans, have been printing flyers before holidays that incite people to attack kikes, communists, etc. Recently, before Einstein’s anniversary, they printed flyers that said something like, “The kike Einstein came up with a theory that only kikes can understand.” The publishers of those flyers don’t even suspect the subtle irony with which they’ve referred to themselves.