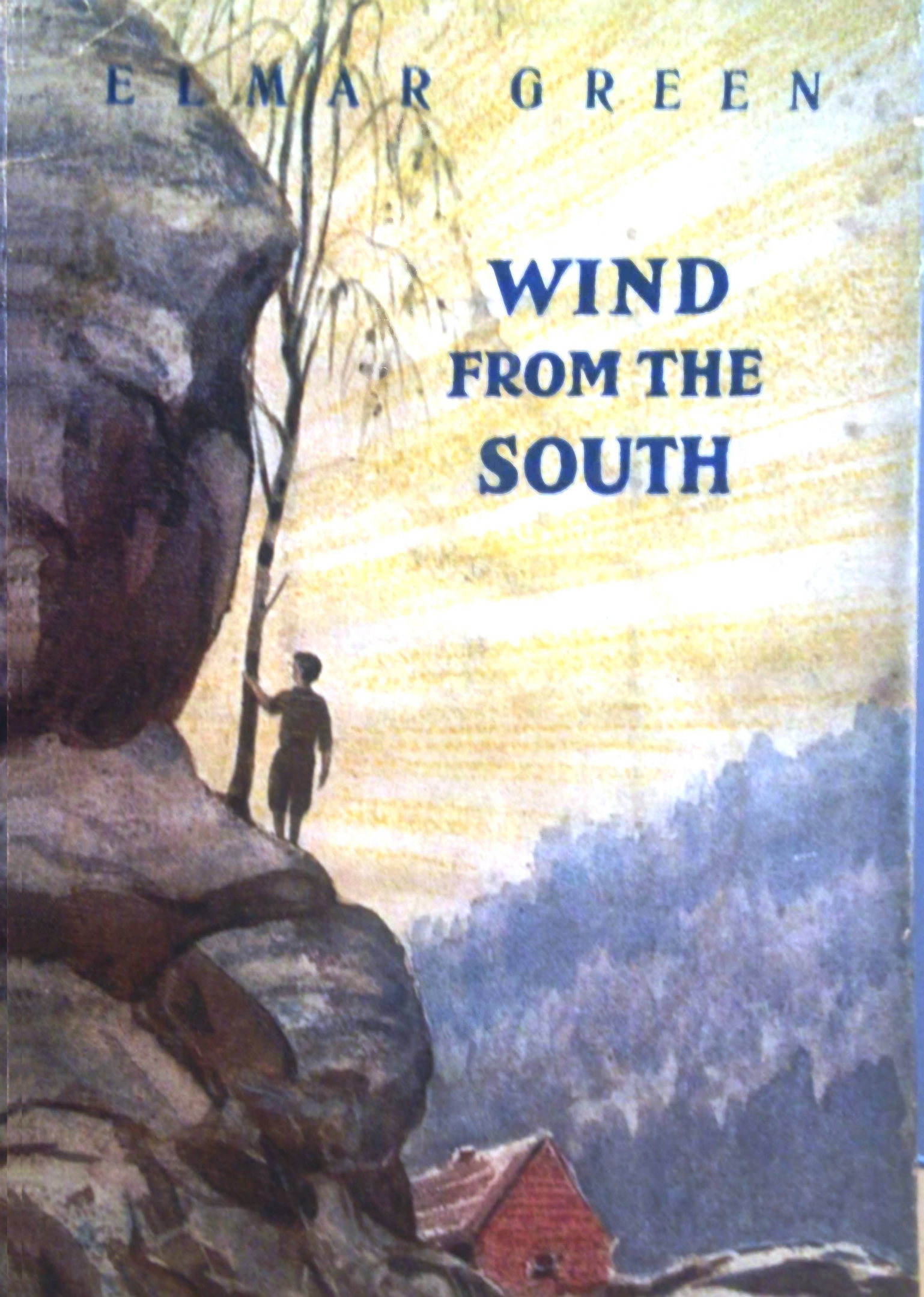


E L M A R G R E E N

**WIND  
FROM THE  
SOUTH**



ELMAR GREEN

WIND  
*from the*  
SOUTH

*A Novel*



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

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**ELMAR GREEN**



## ELMAR GREEN

Elmar Green (Alexander Vasilyevich Yakimov) was born in 1909. His father was a shoemaker. His mother worked as a farm hand for Russian landlords on the Karelian Isthmus. Elmar Green was still a small child when his father died and, unable to support him, his mother placed him in an orphanage in Petrograd in 1916. He lived in Leningrad orphanages until 1922, then for seven years he worked as a farm hand on kulak farms in the Novgorod and Pskov regions, the Ukraine and the North Caucasus. From 1929 to 1934 he served in the Baltic Fleet. In 1935 he went to work as a radio operator for forestry trusts in the Leningrad Region.

Elmar Green's first stories "Peeter," "Eino" and "The Returned Family" were printed in the magazine *The Literary Contemporary* in 1937.

During the Great Patriotic War Elmar Green served as a private, then as the commander of a signals platoon and later as war correspondent for divisional and army newspapers.

*Wind from the South* was written in 1946 and received a Stalin Prize.





\* 1 \*

TIME moves on and does what it has to do. Nothing would seem to have happened to make one dance for joy, but still, life on this earth is not such a bad thing after all.

There was a fog again last night, and in the morning a warm southern wind sprang up and cleared it away. And all at once you could see how many new boulders, darkly damp, had emerged from under the snow on the sloping fields on either side of the little valley, and how broad the stream had become which had only recently broken to the surface from under the heavy snow and now pierced the long valley from end to end.

It, too, looked black from afar, winding its way amid the snow and disappearing some-

where into the far-off stony hillsides covered with pine woods. The woods, too, looked black and soggy.

My hillock has also become dark and denuded. The foot no longer slips on its steep slope when I descend it in the mornings on my way to work or when I climb it late in the evening coming home. The sole of my boot feels secure on the rough surface of the rock.

My little red house stands on the crest of this stony slope, one white window facing the North overlooking the hillside, the other looking East down to where the valley and stream stretch away in the distance.

I have been told that my choice of location could have been a better one, and that I should have made my home on a plot that had a slope facing the South. I didn't have to be told that. I wouldn't have minded having my house on the southern slope with windows facing South, but this hillock of mine has no southern slope.

Instead of a southern slope there is a sheer wall of rock dead at the back of my vegetable plot. It is higher than the house and shuts out the light and sunshine from the South. Tree roots and tussocks of rusty grass hang down from its upper ledge. These roots

and grass are also soaking wet. Drenching wet too is the whole fissured surface of the granite wall, from top to bottom.

A man must be a fool to put his house up here with windows facing South. What could you see through them if you did? That there wet rocky wall and the four short vegetable beds running into it?

Of course, I realize that the children need more sun. But why not put up with things for a while? Herra<sup>1</sup> Kurkimäki was not able to give me another place right away. He would have been only too pleased to let me have some sunny hillside, but he didn't have so very many of them himself. In fact, that is what he told me at the time:

"I can't deal out left and right the land which my father and grandfather left me."

And I hastened to reply:

"Yes. That's true. That's true."

But I had been working for him twenty-five years. That counts for something, too. He also realized that. So he fell to thinking after he had spoken.

I looked at his wrinkles while he was thinking, and waited. But it's hard to guess a

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<sup>1</sup> Mister.

man's thoughts from his wrinkles, which had cut deep into his face like cracks. I tried to read something in his eyes, but I could not see them, because they were overhung by heavy creased lids resembling living little hoods. It is difficult to read any thoughts in such a face, all stiffened in cracks. So I stood waiting for what he would say. And after a while he said in a surly voice:

"You need a place nearby, so you can get to your work on time."

And I answered:

"Yes...."

My heart thumped with joy when I realized that he was not going to refuse me altogether. While I was about it I plucked up courage and said:

"But if you would be so kind as to let me have the bit of swamp or woodland I've been asking for, so that I could use half the crops to settle...."

But he interrupted me testily:

"Too early to speak of that yet. Too early."

And he turned away, still scowling, drawing his cigarette case out of his pocket. And I followed behind. But I did not say anything more for fear of making him lose his temper

altogether. But it seemed to me that he was turning it over in his mind.

And so he was. He walked on for five minutes or so, teasing my nostrils with the whiff of a good cigarette, then poked it in the direction of this here hillock and said:

"There. This'll be enough for you to put a house up on. It's close to your job, and there's some land which will do for a vegetable garden."

And since then I have been the master of this stony hillock adjoining the high rock, with a little birch tree and shrubbery on its summit.

At some time or other, I should imagine in very ancient times, a huge lump had split off this rock, a lump as big as my house, and had tumbled down to the foot of the northern slope. And now this small patch between the rocky wall and the spot where the fragment had fallen, the whole of this stony hump, became mine.

I leased it from Mr. Kurkimäki and he charged me for it at the rate of real land. But I never once reproached him for it. You daren't make him angry.

Sometimes men get wild and swear and demand things. But what do they get? They

get the sack. But I've been working for him too long to get the sack. It was not as if he had refused me. He had only said: "It's too early." That means there'll come a time when I'll get a bit of swamp or woodland. Just a little bit. I don't need much. Good God, just a little bit of swamp or woodland on which in a year's time I could raise wheat, rye, potatoes and peas. I knew the strength of my arms and wasn't scared by the big deep-rooted trees or the bogland. All I wanted was to get any little bit so that I could say: "This is my land, my farm."

But you had to keep on the right side of Mr. Kurkimäki and not nag him. He didn't like to be angered. And I had been working for him for twenty-five years. It would be a shame to get the sack after those years. So I did not say anything more, and merely tried to fix up life on that hillock as best I could.

\* 2 \*

The crag that had tumbled down thousands of years ago blocked the path of the stream which made a slight detour in the direction of my hillock before running down into the long valley. And though the stream had found a way for itself by doubling round the crag

it was nevertheless obliged to run upwards a bit. And so, in front of this crag a fairly deep water hole had been formed which served me as a well. The water in it always slightly bubbled, and was fresh and as clear as glass. On rounding the crag it sped on farther down to the middle of the valley in a regular cascade.

Facing the water hole and the crag I had fixed up a little bathhouse out of boards, its corners resting on four little boulders. It was a very little bathhouse, without any dressing room, and could not accommodate more than two people at a time. Still, it was my own bathhouse.

The boards and nails that went into its building I bought from Mr. Kurkimäki. From him, too, I bought the bricks for the stove and the cauldron. He didn't take any money for them. He simply wrote it down against my future work, but mentioned that the cauldron cost a good bit.

He did not take a single penny from me for the house either. I was simply to work off the house, too, that was all. Work twenty days each year. At first he wanted me to work off thirty days a year for the house. But the house was a very little one after all, just one room

inside, and from outside it looked more like half a house. And so he fixed the price at twenty days a year, to be worked off until the end of my life.

I figured that I would work off the cost of the bathhouse in eighteen months, and twenty days' work a year for the house was not so terrible. My children would then get it free.

My wife felt the same way. How her face lit up when she learned that I had accepted the terms. We had been living too long in a crowded little room of the common workmen's barrack, where we had nothing but a bed, a table and two benches on which our children slept. We didn't have our own kitchen or a bathhouse, and now we'd have everything. No wonder my Elsa's round rosy face lit up with happiness.

Only Vilho didn't approve of this new home. He said:

"Well, one hillock dweller more to the tens of thousands of others in Suomi. Settled himself on a rock and hugs his stony joy. . . ."

But what can you expect of a silly boy of twenty-five who has never had the urge for land? He imagined that because he had learned to make butter and cheese at Kalle Pol-

Janpää's creamery, he had learned all the wisdom of life. But he was young and foolish, and had not even learned to hold his tongue, which he couldn't keep still in his mouth for more than two minutes.

To be able to sneer doesn't mean that your brains are better than everyone else's. He seemed to think otherwise, if he took the liberty of making fun of those who were more staid than he in character and less talkative. Clearly he was making a butt of me when he related the joke about the two old Finns.

There was nothing funny about the joke, and he was the only one who laughed at it—Elsa simply smiled for the sake of politeness, that's all. Now, what's funny in it? Well, two old Finns were going into the woods to work and on their way they noticed a hare's tracks in the snow. One of them said:

"A hare's been here."

They went into the woods and worked there till midday. Then they sat down on a felled tree, had some lunch and resumed their work until evening, and then started home. When they repassed the hare's tracks the old man answered:

"Yes, a hare. . . ."

I don't see anything funny in this joke. If you ask me, the fellow who made it up overdrew the mark. Why should the second old man have waited with his reply until the evening when he could have answered much earlier, say at noon, when they were having their lunch.

Still better if he hadn't related such nonsense at all and showed more respect for his elder brother. It would be much more useful to learn sense from his elder brother instead of poking fun at him.

If he gave more heed to my advice he would not have got himself into trouble as he did at that dance. The party was arranged for gentlefolks. They paid for the hire of the place out of their own pockets. And he had to butt in, as though he had been invited, and moreover kicked up a row when they told him to clear out. If his elder brother had been there he would not have let him make a fool of himself.

Lucky for him there was a policeman on the spot who pulled him up, otherwise he would have been in for it, because young Vihtori Kurkimäki had already taken his glasses off. And when Vihtori Kurkimäki takes his glasses off it is a bad sign. Better dance it

back step when he does that. Everybody remembers the results of his boxing matches with such tough lads as Arvi Merikoski, Tauno Järvinen, Vappu Salo, Aate Vuorela and many others.

Vilho should have remembered that, too, and not have butted in where he was not wanted. But he did butt in and did not even take notice of what Vihtori Kurkimäki was saying. And the latter had said straight:

“Please go away, otherwise there’ll be trouble.”

And as he said this all his lean body grew tense, ready for action. And everyone knows that when he gets going he works like a machine, and his fists always land where he wants them to land.

But that silly Vilho must have forgotten this, for he continued to push his way through. Luckily the policeman happened to be on the spot. He immediately took in the situation and asked Vilho to get out. Vilho went, but not before he had threatened young Kurkimäki:

“I’ll make you remember this.”

The latter simply smiled. What else could he do in reply to that youngster’s folly? He

smiled, shrugged his shoulders and put his glasses on again.

But obstinate Vilho made up his mind to have his own back, and when the children of the rich folks held another party in the same house he turned up again. Luckily young Herra Kurkinäki had been called away to Helsinki on business, and only his sister was at the party, slim, fair-haired Hilda, who had come home on her vacation from the university. I don't think he had a fight with her though, and he came away disappointed. Somebody even said that she made him promise never to come to blows with her brother. I don't know about that—that's their business. In short, he was a giddy-headed fellow. You couldn't expect anything sensible from him.

\* 3 \*

There weren't any real men, one might say, at Kalle Pohjanpää's creamery, except the boss' son, Elias, who worked there in the capacity of foreman. And he knew what he was after in life and went straight for it. He was a regular smart guy he was, and when invited to join the *Suojeluskunta*<sup>1</sup> he signed up at

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<sup>1</sup> Schutzkorps.

once, because they were all smart guys there ready if need be to lay down their heads in a fight. He wasn't afraid of anything, he wasn't, and he used to say outright in front of everybody:

"We'll show 'em who we are, *perkele!*<sup>1</sup> We mean business, we do, let me tell you. Finland is destined to play a great role in history, and we are going to fulfil that role. We'll have a go at Russia first, and then the other countries will help us. The Bolsheviks must be crushed, *perkele*, otherwise they'll grab the whole world. And we're going to be first in that business, because we're the bravest and strongest people in the world, *perkele!* Besides, we're nearest of all to *Pietari*.<sup>2</sup> We'll take *Pietari* from them. That's our city, too, *perkele!* And we'll take the North from them. It's ours too. Our Finnish tribes live there. The Russians don't understand a thing about the North and are only in our way, *perkele*. Finland will be a great country. Mark my word. You take that from me, *perkele!*..."

And he always used to clutch his *puukko*<sup>3</sup> when he said that, and glare horribly with his

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<sup>1</sup> The devil. Used as an oath (hell, damn).

<sup>2</sup> Leningrad.

<sup>3</sup> Finnish knife.

little black eyes that looked like two shiny buttons, and also bared his white teeth, over which there bristled a little black moustache clipped exactly like Hitler's.

But he always had a smile for me, I don't know why. Every morning, when old Pohjanpää's truck used to drive into Mr. Kurkimäki's cattle yard to take the milk, Elias used to stand up in the car when it was still at a distance and wave his cap to me, showing his white teeth. And then he would jump down and first thing come straight up to me.

I don't know what made him take a fancy to me, but he'd hang around me all the time the milk was being poured into the cans by the cow house. He'd slap me on the back, feel my biceps, peer up into my eyes and say:

"That's the kind of boys our Suomi breeds, *perkele!* Who can compare with us? You're a lucky devil, Einari. Look at the fists you've got, *perkele!* With fellows like you we needn't be scared of any Bolsheviks. You're the stuff that's made for fighting, not for ploughing the land, *perkele!* Why not join our detachment, eh? You're a rich man now, aren't you—you've got a house of your own, *perkele!*

You've got to defend it against the Reds. Take me, I've got nothing to defend—I'm still an ordinary worker in my father's employ—yet I'd be the first one to go to the war, if it started, because it's the right thing. Call o' the country, you know. And here you've got a house of your own, *perkele!*”

Every time he talked that way I wanted to remind him that it wasn't my house yet. But what did that mean to him? The fellow spoke from the bottom of his heart, and it wasn't worth interrupting him.

I used to listen to him in silence, moving closer meanwhile to the milk cans to lend a hand in getting them up on the truck more quickly. When the cans are loaded the driver begins to hurry him, and then there is nothing left for him to do but to climb into the truck after the cans.

But while I moved up to the cans he'd manage to say a lot more, slapping me on the back all the time. He didn't so much talk as shout—that's the way he had:

“You and I'll show the stuff we're made of, Einari. Eh? We'll show people yet the kind of things we're capable of, *perkele!* You just wait until it starts. The sooner the better! It's all I dream about. You'd better look out

then, *Ryssä!*<sup>1</sup> I'll strangle 'em with these here hands like chickens, *perkele!*"

And he held out his hands with clawing fingers. You couldn't say they looked very awesome, those hands and fingers, because he wasn't much of a figure himself anyhow—just a little over medium height, and not particularly sturdy, though he hobnobbed with wrestlers and boxers somewhere at the sports club in Kivimaa.

But he'd shout this out so ferociously and flash his eyes and teeth so horribly that even Kerttu and Elsa would stand, hypnotized, by the milk cans outside the cow house. I don't know whether he noticed it himself, but he would come close up to them and begin brandishing his fists still more fiercely and shout in such a way that his voice would sometimes crack and only croaking sounds would burst out of his throat:

"It's time we put the lid on that brood, *perkele*, if we want to live ourselves! They've hemmed us in from the South and from the East. They're suffocating us, don't you feel it? Eh?"

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<sup>1</sup> Abusive epithet for a Russian.

I answered that I did. Who didn't? Why, even the school kids know that all the evil in the world comes from the *Ryssä*.

And he went on:

"There, you see. Even the kids know it. And I say—enough! Time to put a stop to it, *perkele*! We can't both go on living together. There's no room for both of us in this world. It's either Suomi or the Soviet Union, *perkele*!"

And he'd go on shouting in this strain until we got close to the milk cans, and the women looked at him with respect. And then he'd grin and wink at them to drive away their fears and give them to understand that although he was a terror to the enemy his friends had no reason to fear him. He was kind and obliging with friends.

I'd help him to load the cans onto the truck, and he'd clamber in after them, wringing my hand at parting and looking at me as if to say: "Never mind, Einari, don't you worry. You and I'll show 'em yet what's what."

After that one of the women would get in after him, because someone had to be present when the milk was delivered at his father's creamery and bring back the cans with the skimmed milk.

I always wanted it not to be Elsa. Not because she shot frequent glances at the black moustache and white teeth of Elias Pohjanpää and readily laughed at his jokes, but simply . . . well, I preferred when it was the lean and ill-tempered Kerttu Lahtinen who got into the truck and Elsa went back to the cow house.

Not that I feared anything, God forbid, though I well knew that Elsa had once had a mind to marry Elias and did not immediately make her choice between us. Maybe sometimes she was sorry she had chosen me. I couldn't say. I heard her praise Elias more than once, but I was not angry with her for it, no fear. I know that once she'd made her choice she'd made it, and that was that. As to whether Elias had intended marrying her—that's another question, and I think if you were to ask her about it she wouldn't be sure herself. But I never thought of asking her such questions.

When the car started Elias would wave his hand to me again, and show his teeth, and I, too, nodded my head to him as affably as possible, especially when it was Kerttu sitting next to him and not Elsa.

After all, he was a decent fellow and wore his heart upon his sleeve. And it's not such

a bad thing that, he hated the Russians like that and was not afraid to pitch into them. Our country needs men like him. Who else is going to defend her if not such brave fellows who are prepared to lay down their heads if necessary. And you can expect anything from the Russians. We've heard and read enough about them in our newspapers to know the kind of birds they are.

I nodded my head after the departing truck and then said to Elsa:

"Let's go and have lunch."

And she answered:

"Just a minute. I'll give the cows some hay."

I helped her give fodder to the cows and calves, and we went home to have our lunch. We rounded the boulder-strewn hillock which prevented our seeing our house direct from Mr. Kurkimäki's farm house. We rounded it and came out to the stream which ran in a big circle round this hillock and dropped down the long valley exactly between it and our own hillock. Then we crossed the stream by a wide thick plank just a little above the crag and the water hole which bubbled before it, and ascended the western slope of our hillock straight towards our house.

Our house. . . . I remember how much noisy merriment there was at our place that summer Sunday when I put the last finishing touches to the house and we lugged our belongings into it.

While me and the wife were fixing things up our kiddies romped about on the grass at the foot of the sheer rock at the top of our hillock. It was a tiny green patch which Herra Kurkimäki had referred to as the "vegetable garden."

But it wasn't a vegetable garden yet. When I dug the spade into it it only went half-deep into the ground. Below that was just solid stone. To make this place a vegetable garden I had to cart up thirty-eight loads of earth and loam. Only after that did we get those four little beds which are still thriving.

For this earth and loam Herra Kurkimäki made another entry in his book, for the use of the horse and cart as well. But I didn't trouble about that. It was awkward to worry him over every trifle.

But then next summer we grew our own vegetables in those beds, and they lasted us right up to Christmas. Even flowers grew

around the borders. My little Martta attended to that. She planted sunflowers too, but they grew poorly. The sunlight struck them only in the morning and the evening, and then only in the longest summer days. The hot midday sun was cut off by the sheer rock.

My son Lauri did not plant sunflowers. That doesn't mean that he reconciled himself to the chill and damp which filled the air at the foot of the rock. He, too, was very fond of the sun and looked eagerly up at the ledge of rock from which the grass and shrubby roots dangled down with twigs bright and green and full of the southern sun. And at first he looked up at the little birch tree that stood at the very edge of the summit, and then he started to crawl up, clinging to the cracks in the rock. But he lost his hold every time and came tumbling down on the soft vegetable beds. Still, every year he managed to climb higher and higher, and you could see that he would get to the top in the end.

And his mother all the time was radiant with joy. She's a little woman, my wife, but she's plump and sturdy and could take a lot on her rounded shoulders. There were days

when she had to milk all the cows in Mr. Kurkimäki's dairy all by herself. And there were exactly fourteen of them. But she never complained. She was as radiant as the sun, proud of the fact that we now had our own little home. Women like to have a home of their own, their own household. That's the way they're made, I suppose.

But she didn't very much like the idea that the most sloping northern side of our stony hillock was bare and empty. From the very first days we moved in she started walking over it from all sides, poking the spade into the thick layer of green moss that covered it in parts.

And she didn't fuss around for nothing. Beneath the layer of green moss she hit two long deep crevices. She dug them deeper and widened them with a pick, dragged up earth in a basket and planted four currant bushes in one crevice and two raspberry bushes in the other.

I laughed at the pains she was taking at the time, saying that nothing would come of it. But in two years it had all grown out and begun to yield berries, especially raspberries.

And then it was her turn to laugh:

“Well, what now? Nothing come of it, eh? And what d’you think this is?”

She moved a cup of raspberries up to me, took a handful and began stuffing them into my mouth, purposely squashing them over my lips and cheeks.

Then I gathered her up in my arms and tossed her up to the very ceiling of our little room and kissed her with my juice-stained lips on her hot round cheeks and mouth, and little nose and her eyes, which she instantly closed, throwing her head back.

That was nothing to me, though she was a sturdy wench and pretty heavy. But I was no weakling myself. And when we stood side by side her fair hair never reached above my shoulder, no matter how high and fluffy she tried to make it.

At that time it was nothing to me to toss her up to the ceiling. I could lift the whole of my family on my shoulders and carry them across the field or woods wherever you wanted to. I could then spill them all three onto the grass and race about and play touchlast as good as any of them. And I had already turned thirty-six then. That was such a solid age that they didn’t take me into the army during the winter war.

True, Herra Kurkimäki assured me that it was because of him that I was not taken. He said that he had fixed that up through his son Vihtori who occupied a very important post in Helsinki. Well and good. I was, of course, very grateful to both of them, because I never expected anything good from war.

Paavo Pikkunen, who worked together with me in Hugo Kurkimäki's employment, wasn't taken into the army either. He was already forty-two at the time. But even if he had been younger the Kurkimäkis would have managed to keep him out, because he was a wonderful worker. There was nothing he couldn't do. He worked for Mr. Kurkimäki as ploughman and woodcutter, smithy and saddler, carpenter, gardener and cabinet-maker.

But my younger brother Vilho was conscripted during the winter war. He was the only one of all the workers at Kalle Pohjanpää's creamery who was taken into the army, because he was an eyesore to his boss. None of the bosses he had previously worked for liked him. Vilho was always grouching at

something or other, he always quarrelled and demanded things that no one else demanded.

I had plenty of arguments with him on this score. I did the best I could to make him see sense, and once I told him straight that he would end up badly if he went on like that.

And by way of answer he just smiled. I could see he wanted to say something amusing, because there was a sly twinkle in his blue eyes, but he did not say anything, he merely stretched his young mouth in a faint smile.

Probably some new joke about the Finn was turning in his silly head. He was always cracking jokes and making fun of a Finnish trait of character if it struck him as funny. But this time he restrained himself, perhaps because he did not want to offend me, seeing that he was my guest.

I said to him:

"You might at least respect the memory of your father. D'you remember what he said: 'Don't break away from the land'?"

And he answered:

"To be able to break away you've got to be stuck to it first. I don't seem to remember

the old man setting any sort of example in this respect. No matter how hard the poor devil struggled all his life he wasn't even able to get a vegetable garden for himself."

I answered to that:

"All the more reason we should do it."

He smiled again.

"You want to say that you have struck root already? I'd like to know how deep they've gone."

And he made a gesture as if trying to dig his heel into the stone on which my house stood to discover how deep the roots had gone.

I knew what I could say to that, but didn't bother to answer. After all, nothing comes to a man all at once, leave alone such a happiness as land. Everything that I see around me already belongs to someone. Who would simply and lightly agree to parcel me off a bit of land from his own property? It's much more profitable to have other people work on your land. And to pay a farm hand ten marks a day in addition to his food is not so very difficult, all the more so that the boss deducts the money from him in any case for various additional purchases. There isn't a boss who doesn't know what he's about. To get a piece

of land out of him will take you more than one year. And by that time you'd manage to twist your arms out of their sockets working on another man's farm. But what's the use of talking about that to stupid Vilho? What does he understand? I replied just for the sake of shaking him off:

"I've got my house already." But I instantly regretted having said that when I noticed the merry twinkle in his eyes again and the amused smile of his mouth.

"House? What house? Oh, this here.... Aye, some house! Some house! Why, this isn't a house, it's a whole palace!"

And he started walking round my house on tiptoes, twisting his head up in the air so that twice his hat dropped off his blond head. He still had a lot of the schoolboy in him which sometimes displayed itself quite out of place.

"Gee, what a house! Why, how much did you pay for it?"

He knew where to sting me. But there was nothing funny about it. I'd have gladly settled up for the house at once if I could. But I wasn't in a position to lay out twenty thousand marks before Mr. Kurkimäki all at once. That's why I took the house on those terms. To be sure, it wasn't very pleasant to

think that this would go on till the end of my life and that the house would not be mine until I died. But what could I do? You couldn't expect Herra Kurkimäki to make me a present of the house. Vilho ought to have understood that. But he didn't want to understand anything and merely tried my temper with his childish tricks.

And just then my wife came up to me and asked me quietly:

"What shall we give to the table?"

I said:

"What d'you mean?"

She asked:

"Shall we get the bacon and cheese up from the cellar or not?"

I said:

"No need to. Have we got potatoes?"

She answered:

"Of course!"

"Milk and butter, too?"

"Yes."

"Well, that'll do. What's the fuss!"

"What about the wine?"

"Don't need it. Make some coffee with milk—it'll do as good as wine."

I was angry with him and wanted to let him feel it somehow. I can just see myself

turning back the stone covering the entrance to the cellar for the sake of every big talker and getting out my last piece of cheese and bacon and my last bottle of wine. Before wanting such a treat a man's got to know first what it costs to buy from Mr. Kurkimäki, how many weeks my hands and back have to work just for one gammon of bacon.

"We'll do without the cheese and bacon. Make it the usual dinner."

And generally, what was the idea of dragging himself here twelve kilometres all the way from old Pohjanpää's creamery? Just for the sake of playing the fool? It was not worth tiring his legs.

I would probably have lost my temper and told him a thing or two about his cleverness. But just then he began playing with my kiddies, and I decided to say nothing. What can you expect of him? He was just a youngster—full ten years younger than me, for all that he had shot up almost to my height.

He was tossing my towheaded kiddies in the air while they squealed for joy, and I didn't know what else to say to him. His blue suit clung close about his figure, especially when he threw his arms up, laughing at the top of his voice. And it was nice to see the

difference between the breadth of his shoulders and his hips.

He, too, took after his father in strength of body, like I did, but he had mother's good looks. She, too, had had the same big blue eyes alight with mirth, the same short straight nose and gentle mouth in which there always lingered a smile. If she had been alive now and could see Vilho she'd think she was looking at herself in the mirror.

Of course, it was nice that his face resembled mother's. Still, he ought not to be such a scoffer. It didn't turn out half so bad that there were only potatoes, milk and butter on the table. The milk was fresh, and so was the butter. And the potatoes were big and yellow, clean .peeled before they were cooked. When my wife tipped them out of the iron pot into a bowl a thick white cloud of steam rose to the ceiling, and it didn't smell at all bad.

And Vilho himself was the first to stick his *puukko* with zest into the biggest hot potato that caught his eye and begin eating it. He took it off the knife with his left hand and then began smearing dabs of butter on it and biting off a bit at a time, blowing on the hot potato that scorched his fingers and washing it down with milk, like father used to do.

He put enough butter on the bread, too, but never mind! Nobody thinks of blaming him for that. And the coffee, too, which my wife poured into his cup, was real good coffee, with milk and sugar, yet he came out with another joke about the stinginess of the Finnish peasant.

Anybody else would have taken care to spare the feelings of his elder brother, whose guest he was. But he didn't care, he never did care about anything in the world, and related something like this:

"A Finnish peasant wanted to take a ride in an airplane with his wife, but he didn't want to spend the money for it. So the pilot says to him: 'All right, I'll give you a ride for nothing if you'll sit quiet. But if you as much as cry out once, you'll pay me a hundred marks. Is it a go?' 'All right,' said the peasant. And off they went on a flight. The pilot drove them round a long time, switching up and down and round about the field and the woods. But the peasant was mum. Then he flew higher, looped the loop several times and dropped down in a corkscrew dive. Then he went up in the air again and swooped down. He thought this would frighten the fellow and make him cry out. Easier said than

done. That would mean paying a hundred marks. What Finnish peasant would ever do that? The pilot went up above the clouds about twenty times and dropped down like a stone each time. He did such awful stunts as he had never in his life done before, and in the end got himself fagged out, and still the peasant didn't cry out. The pilot got fed up and brought his plane down. 'Well,' he asked the peasant, 'stuck it?' 'Stuck it,' answered the fellow, all green in the face. 'Come, tell the truth,' said the pilot, 'didn't you once feel like yelling out? There were moments when your mouth must have opened of itself to yell out?' The peasant admitted it. 'You're right,' he says. 'Once I nearly cried out. That was when my old woman fell out o' the plane.' "

And Vilho burst out laughing when he finished the story. Elsa, too, laughed. Even the kiddies were tickled at the other end of the table. But I didn't see anything funny in it and I could not make out what his idea was in telling this joke. If he meant that as a stone in my garden he needn't have come to my house and sat down at my table.

But I didn't tell him that, and went on smearing butter on the potato with my knife.

as if nothing had happened, and putting the potatoes into my mouth one after another until the bowl was empty. And then I, too, turned to my coffee which Elsa had poured out into a little white cup. She filled up my brother's cup again from the milk jug and coffeepot and moved the sugar basin closer to him.

The table didn't look that bad to make one offend the host and hostess on account of it. The oilcloth on it was new, too, with a pretty blue pattern on it, and there was enough food on it not to send the guest home hungry. I can't make out what more he needed.

He must have realized himself that he had said something he shouldn't have said, and so he decided to put things right. And so he said:

"It was probably some *muonamies*<sup>1</sup> like you, whose pocket is eternally empty."

But I didn't answer him and went on drinking my coffee. What did he mean by that? Supposing it was a *muonamies*? What of it? Of course a fellow like that hasn't got much in his pocket to boast of. But what then?

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<sup>1</sup> A day labourer working for his food, sometimes with trifling extra pay.

I drank my coffee and said nothing. And Vilho had already forgotten about me and was playing with the kiddies again. You could see he was very fond of children. He pulled faces at them, jerked his head towards the plate on which there was almost no butter left and said in a sort of mock dismay:

*"Äiti, hoil  
Missä voi?"  
"Kissa söi?"  
"Missä kissa?"  
"Aitan alla."  
"Missä aitta?..."*<sup>1</sup>

And started off on the rigmarole familiar to all schoolchildren about how the barn caught fire, the fire was put out by the water, the water was drunk up by the ox, the ox was killed by the axe which was driven into the stump and the stump was gnawed by beetles which were eaten up by the birds who then flew away beyond seventy-seven lakes and seas. And as he recited this he continued to pull

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*"Oh, Mummy!  
Where's the butter?"  
"Pussy ate it?"  
"Where is pussy?"  
"Under the barn."  
"Where's the barn?..."*

faces. But no matter how he grimaced, his face still remained nice. And the kiddies squealed and went into peals of laughter, not at all because they were scared.

I, too, always felt a bit jollier when I heard their laughter, and this time I looked kindly at my young gay brother. Why should I be angry with him? A man's foolishness is not a thing to get angry with. And what he had just said about the man who works only for his keep is the downright truth, I swear. Where could a fellow like that get a hundred marks for such trifles as sky-flying? What's the sense in throwing money away on that?

And it isn't surprising that he stuck it out. He should rather be praised for it. How did he say it? "If you yell, you'll pay up...." There, but he didn't yell. What are you going to do about that? He just didn't yell, that's all. He's got the spunk, that means. He was twisted round and thrown about, but he didn't say a word. He's a right guy! Only once he very nearly yelled. Only once—when his old woman dropped out. Ha-ha! He's a scream, that Vilho! He does say funny things....

And I broke into a laugh, pushing the empty cup away from me. And Vilho was surprised and asked with a smile:

"What's up?"

And I answered:

"Only once he nearly yelled . . . when his old woman fell out. . . ."

And I broke out laughing again. He looked at me for a second in surprise and then nearly dropped off the bench, holding his sides with laughter. He laughed long and when he got his wind back he said:

"No wonder we are warned—'never tell a Finn a joke on Friday, for he'll see the point only on Sunday and begin to cackle over it in church during the service.' It takes a long time to sink in with you. . . ."

I had thought at first that he was just laughing over the joke. But it seems he was laughing at me. To cut short his merriment I said:

"There's nothing funny about a fellow's pockets being empty. Poverty is not a thing to laugh at."

Then he immediately became serious. He can always pass very quickly from fun to gravity, if he wants to. And so he shot me a glance out of his big fine eyes and said:

"On the contrary, we should laugh still more at the shameless club law that exists in our countryside."

I asked:

“What shameless club law?”

He tipped his chair back against the wall, sat musing a little while and began reluctantly:

“You should know that. You’re experiencing something of it on your own hide. Tell me, d’you consider it right that you’ve been working another man’s land for twenty-seven years and for twenty-seven years you’ve been dreaming about land, and still have nothing but this rock on which you live, and even that’s not yours. And how many such people do we have in our wonderful Suomi! In comparison with others you’re standing pretty firm on your legs. You’re now a hillock dweller, though you have no land. You’re moving ahead, making good, thanks to the fact that you’ve got the health and strength of a horse. But what prospects has the *ruokalainen*<sup>1</sup> got, for instance? Not a ray of hope. And he’s darned lucky if he’s sure of his food and job till the end of his life. But he isn’t sure of that either. If his boss tells him to clear out there’s no law that’ll protect him. And it won’t protect you either, if your worthy

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<sup>1</sup> A person who works only for his food. Usually old men and women or invalids.

Herra Kurkimäki takes it into his head to sack you tomorrow. There are no secure and permanent laws in this country to protect the rights of the rural labourer. His fate lies entirely in the hands of his boss. And each boss has his own laws. One fixes his farm hand's pay at five marks a day, another at seven, a third at ten. One leases a bit of his land to a labourer after five years' service, another after ten years, and a third leases none at all. Even the *palkkatyöläinen*<sup>1</sup> in the country has no fixed wage. The boss fixes it at his own discretion. Me, for instance, the boss pays eight marks an hour, and Pettunen twelve, although we do the same job, and sometimes I even do more responsible work. But he's the boss. He does what he wants. Who's going to tell him what he has to do? You can only tell him at some big enterprise. Take Väinö Ahonen's sawmill, for instance—the workers there are not likely to let you tread on their toes. They can stand their ground all right. But we're like specks in the wind. There's a lot of talk about liberty for every man, down to the lowest day labourer. And he himself believes himself to be free,

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<sup>1</sup> A labourer working only for wages.

hearing everyone talking about it, but what he doesn't see is that he is tied hand and foot at every step, that he has been pressed to the ground with a foot on his neck and being made in addition to haul a load as big as your hillock. We live in Europe and call ourselves cultured people, but in no European country will you find the rural landless labourers in such hopeless thrall as in our country. No, not in a single country. I say nothing of Russia...."

Here I fairly gasped with surprise. Was that Vilho sitting in front of me or was it not Vilho? All right, I could understand him grouching a bit at things in our country. Many people grouse at them. But suddenly to bring in Russia and put her in the first place....

"I say nothing of Russia...." Hear that? Where on earth could he have got those ideas from? That's what comes from breaking with good and respectable people and associating with all kinds of riffraff from Ahonen's saw-mill. They've driven all kinds of nonsense into his silly head and now you couldn't knock it out if you tried.

He says nothing of Russia.... Just listen to that! What can that silly windbag know about Russia? Can't he see that all the evils

in the world come from her? Can't he feel how that country is pressing up against us from the South and the East and that her very nearness to us excites fear and alarm in everyone?

Can't he sense that she's lurking at our doors with evil designs, and her breath makes the winter seem more severe and our summer look more like autumn? Can it be that he doesn't read about all this in books and magazines and hear it in church from the parson? Or does he consider himself to be cleverer than other people?

I was just going to tell him off properly for speaking such words, but at that moment Hilda Kurkimäki appeared in the doorway. It was very rare for the daughter of Mr. Kurkimäki to honour our house with a visit.

She knocked before entering and asked: "May I come in?"

And I answered:

"Please, please do, welcome, neiti.<sup>1</sup> Sit down and have some coffee with us."

And I got up to give her my seat on the bench at the table. But she answered:

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<sup>1</sup> Miss.

"No, no, thanks. Please, don't trouble. I just dropped in for a moment. I was passing by and heard you talking. And I thought, why not drop in on our neighbour and see how he's fixed up in his new home? So I just dropped in. It's very nice here."

She had probably forgotten that she had already been at my place once, true, a long time ago, but she had said approximately the same thing. We had Vilho visiting us that time, too, I believe. The only thing I couldn't understand is where she was "passing by." There were no roads anywhere nearby. I suppose she knows.... I repeated my invitation:

"Sit down, neiti. Just one cup for company. Pour a cup, Elsa."

And Elsa poured hot coffee straight from the stove into a clean cup and moved up the milk jug and the sugar basin. And she said with a laugh:

"But where's the company, my friends? Am I to drink all alone? It isn't nice to abuse your guest's trust. I did not expect that of you, Einari."

And she threw a glance at Vilho's empty cup. I said:

"Pour us out some coffee, too, Elsa. Please, heiti. Sit down here."

She sat down, removing her little hat from her fair hair braided back from her forehead and temples. Her thin green frock gave off such an odour of perfume that my little room seemed to be filled with invisible flowers.

I began assiduously taking sips of my hot coffee, because it was awkward not to make up a company for such a rare visitor. But Vilho for some reason got up without touching his coffee. It appeared that he had another visit to make somewhere and had just remembered it. He slipped his *puukko* back into its case, threw us all a nod as he put on his hat, and said to me:

"I'll drop in again some time, Einari."

"All right."

Looking through the window we saw him run down the hillock to the stream in his broad blue suit and disappear from view for a minute, then he reappeared walking up the plank that was thrown across the stream. He walked across it lightly and easily, although it bent under his weight, and at that moment I glanced once more at his shoulders.

Yes! People must have been speaking the truth about his encounters with Matti Ruokasalo

and Toivo Koskinen. Looking at those shoulders one might well believe the rumours. They've developed in breadth immensely of late.

When Vihtori Kurkimäki came home on a visit to his father he was in the habit of arranging an encounter with the finest boxers of his weight in the workmen's club in Kivimaa and in Lappeenranta, among the circle of boxers to which Vilho belonged. As it happened, on his first arrival he won the bouts against all the boxers except Matti Ruokasalo. The latter beat him.

But then Vilho challenged Matti Ruokasalo and knocked him out in the third round. Another time young Kurkimäki was defeated by Toivo Koskinen. And soon after that Koskinen got a challenge from Vilho. They say Koskinen had a terrible left punch, but he didn't last beyond the sixth round, and took the floor under Vilho's glove. Looking at those shoulders I could believe that.

Neiti Hilda also looked after him until he disappeared behind the adjacent hillock that stood between us and the Kurkimäki house.

Then she turned round to us again, smiling pleasantly and holding the cup of coffee in her hand. And we, too, looked at her pleas-

antly, because she was the daughter of our boss. She was our mistress just the same as old Mrs. Kurkimäki. She said to Elsa, motioning to our kiddies:

“How big they have grown.”

Elsa stroked the white little heads and answered:

“They’ll soon be our helpers.”

Neiti Hilda put the cup down on the table and said:

“Thanks, Elsa. No, no, no more. I’ve had enough. Very good coffee.”

I answered:

“If you like it, please come and see us more often. We’ll always have some coffee for you.”

She repeated her “thanks” and got up from the table, straightening the white sash on her thin green frock. She was so slim in the place where the sash was drawn that if I had wanted to put the fingers of both hands round her their tips would have met both in front and behind. But below and above that everything was in the right proportions. And she looked exactly like a fashion plate out of a ladies’ journal.

Only her mouth beneath a broad little nose was, I dare say, a bit too big for

a fashion plate, though it had just the right touch of lipstick and smiled at me and Elsa while her hands were busy putting on her little hat.

But it was very odd. Her mouth smiled at us, but she herself, it struck me, was not smiling at all. Her eyebrows, looking like two black curving threads, were drawn together in a pucker above the bridge of the nose, but not at all in a smile, and there was no mirth in her dark hazel eyes. The long dark eyelashes above them even fluttered as though she were surprised rather than pleased. It was clear by all signs that Elsa and I were not in her thoughts at all at the moment.

And when she said "good-bye" she cast glances around her as though she had forgotten something. I decided that she wanted to say something more to us and suggested:

"Won't you sit a little longer, neiti? What's the hurry?"

But she answered, her thoughts elsewhere:

"What? No, thanks. I just, you know . . . happened to be passing. Thought I would make a neighbourly call. . . ."

"It was very nice of you, too. Please come more often. We'll always be glad to see you."

I saw her out into the yard and she stepped down the hillock on her high heels. The wide skirts of her frock swayed from left to right as she walked, swishing against the tan silk stockings of her shapely legs.

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Vilho did not come in to see me any more, though he had said he would "drop in." They simply didn't let him. He was taken into the army. The winter war was brewing and all strong young men were taken into the army.

Though Vilho worked at the creamery, which was of national importance, he came under the conscription. He behaved too cheekily to his boss to count on holding his job.

Of course, Kalle Pohjanpää would not have said that he had no need of Vilho. He did need him, just as he needed all the other workers at the creamery. But when he was ordered to send men to the recruiting station whom he could do without Pohjanpää sent only Vilho and entered the rest in the list of indispensables.

It was his right, as the boss, to choose whom he wanted. If Vilho hadn't behaved like the idiot he was he would have remained.

Why should Herrä Pohjanpää have tried to get rid of him if everything was running smooth between them? Pohjanpää's creamery was considered an enterprise of national importance, and its owner could easily have said that he needed all and every one of his workers, otherwise he would have to close down and the state would not receive any butter for export.

But Vilho spoiled everything by his cheeky behaviour. And so, instead of coming in to see me as he had promised, he put on a grey cloth soldier's cap, a tunic and trousers of the same stuff, and tramped off with other poor beggars like him down the sandy Finnish roads, hawling soldiers' songs.

I shouldn't imagine that he found it very jolly singing. There isn't much to say for a soldier's life, and there never was. And what joy is there in a soldier for other people? He doesn't eat his own bread. Somebody else must eat a little less and work a little more to keep him fed and tramping the winding roads of Suomi, singing foolish soldiers' songs.

And all the fault of Russia, which he tried to praise. That was clearly stated in the newspapers and magazines. It was all clear and

simple. It was clear even to schoolchildren. Vilho alone made out as if he saw the thing in another light. He blamed anyone you like for all this trouble except Russia.

But the most surprising thing was that he was not the only one who thought that way. I came across other men who spoke the same as he did. Now and again I'd catch such words as "Been asking for it," "You'll get your great Finland now," "Reap what you've sown," "Somebody's made a mess and we've got to bear the brunt."

And many other words did I have occasion to hear which showed that there were people who looked at these things in quite another way than we did. There were a lot of them, especially at Ahonen's sawmill, where I used to go to find out if there were any letters from Vilho. And I was glad when I learned that nearly all these men had been taken into the army and the mill changed over to work on one frame.

Elias Pohjanpää was also glad. He said:

"They should be driven out first right under the enemy's fire for saying such things! They're traitors to their country! We'll round 'em all up here, clear all that vermin out, *perkele!* We'll show the damned *Ryssä* that

they're betting on the wrong horse if they count on discord among us. There's no discord among Finns. The Finns are all as one man, and every one is prepared to give his life for his native Suomi, *perkele*! And we here are going to take care of that, there won't be any mischief-makers among us, *perkele*!"

And he did take care of it. He listened attentively to what people were saying and he even caught two men who had the nerve to say that Russia didn't need this war and the Finnish people didn't need it either, and the only ones who needed it were Finland's rulers who began it. He reported these men to the police or somewhere and they were arrested.

Me, too, he told not to stand on ceremony with such people and to report them at once to the proper quarter. Such people couldn't be tolerated in our midst when the country was threatened by an invasion of the *Ryssä*. A man had to do everything he could for his country's good, though it be here in the rear. Of course, he would have gladly gone to the front himself to show the other fellows how a man should fight. But he couldn't help it, if he happened to be working on a job of national importance. He had to grin and bear

it and try to make himself useful back here. And you may be perfectly sure, he'd be able to do his duty to his country, *perkele*, even back here. And he advised me as well not to let the grass grow under my feet.

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I didn't let the grass grow under my feet. There was plenty of work to do. Herra Kurkimäki said that we had to work more now, because every extra hour of work we put in was a help to our soldiers at the front and a blow at the *Ryssä*.

And we worked more, though Paavo Pikkunen sometimes used to spread his hands and mutter to himself that he couldn't for the life of him see how and where it hit the *Ryssä* when we shovelled the grain from the threshing shed into Mr. Kurkimäki's barns or when he salted the meat in his barrels for sale. But who's to blame if Paavo Pikkunen's tiny skull couldn't take in such simple things.

After we'd finished threshing, we started hauling timber and stone for building the flour mill. Mr. Kurkimäki had big plans. His idea was to become a competitor of Mr. Pohjanpää. He intended building not only a flour mill, but a creamery as well. And at that,

factory he decided to drive his separator not by horsepower, as Pohjanpää did, but by the power of two streams. He intended to use the same power to turn the grindstones of his future mill and drive the dynamo engine which he had already ordered from Sweden.

He promised to install electric light at my place, too, when the motor started working. He said:

“You’re my best workman, Einari, and I wouldn’t grudge you anything. I’ve given you a house. Now I’ll give you light. Let it burn free of charge, as long as you live for all I care. I’ll only deduct the cost of the wiring, that’s all.”

I didn’t know what to answer him, and said:

“It’s very kind of you, Herra Kurkimäki. I’m sure I don’t know how I deserve....”

But he waved my words aside and answered:

“Never mind, never mind. That’s nothing. We’ve all got to help each other. The country’s having a hard time now. The country’s got to weather the storm. And to do that we’ve all got to try our hardest, every one at his own job.”

I said:

"You know me. As long as I've got strength in my hands. . . ."

But he interrupted me:

"I know, I know. There's no question about you."

And he turned away. But I followed him for a few steps—I did so want to tell him a few more words. But nothing suitable came to my mind, so I stopped and looked silently at his back as he retreated farther and farther away from me.

He had a peculiar back. It was broader below than it was above, especially when he wore a heavy winter overcoat. And his legs were thick and heavy, and he trod the ground with them firmly and securely as if he were testing its strength.

I hurried to the stables where Paavo Pik-kunen was already sitting mending a hame, and said:

"You're taking your time over it. It's high time we rode out, but you're still sitting and messing around."

He eyed me suspiciously and answered:

"There's only the tugs left to lengthen."

And he poked his bradawl at a knot in the raw hide leather of the tug which he was struggling to undo, but the knot was drawn

so tight that he couldn't do anything with it. He just wheezed and breathed hard without avail. His stubby blue-veined fingers grew white with the strain, but they couldn't manage it. Then I said:

"Give it here."

And I took the tug from him. My fingers were not that bad yet, and I untied the knot fairly quickly and lengthened the tug and then the other one.

Of course, Paavo's fingers were not bad either, but they didn't have the strength they used to have. It had dribbled away somehow, just wasted.

People say he had had several thousand marks saved up when he first asked Mr. Kurkimäki to let him have an allotment. He was in a position to lease land from him or buy it and build a house on it if he wished. And he went about in high spirits beforehand, entirely forgetting that he might get a refusal.

You should never believe beforehand that someone will suddenly come out plump and give you land, even though for money. Good Lord! The days of miracles have passed. I'd just like to take one look at the man who'd tell me:

"I've received some land. I didn't have any at all, but now I've got it. Here it is. Take a handful, feel it. You can take some of it with you if you want. I don't mind. I've got enough."

Good God, I'd like to take a look at such a lucky devil, if there are any such in the world!

But you should never believe in such luck beforehand, so as not to scare it away. You must always be prepared for a refusal. Paavo Pikkunen didn't think of a refusal and the world became bitter for him. He got himself drunk when he heard that he wouldn't get any land. And a week later he got drunk again.

He should have waited two or three years and asked again, instead of taking on like that. What did he gain by taking on? He began to drink. His money melted away and he didn't profit anything by it. I advised him to ask again, but he said he'd never ask any more.

He drank without making any fuss. He'd get drunk and sit on his cot in the common barrack. Sit and say nothing, only blink his eyes, staring at the wall opposite him, then turn over on his side and go to sleep.

Sometimes the seasonal hands who lived in the same barrack from spring to autumn

tried to rag him. But he was a quiet little man and they were big, noisy fellows, and nothing came of it. He merely looked at them with his clear eyes that were like a child's, blinking his white eyelashes and saying nothing. If they made themselves a nuisance he'd clutch his *puukko*, and then they'd leave him alone.

They say he'd had an eye on a girl he intended marrying when he got his allotment. But he didn't get his allotment and the span of girlhood's too short for her to wait without end. During this long interval she made another choice. And he squandered all the money he had saved up on drink.

I finished with the hame and said:

"Get the horses out quickly. Who's going out today?"

He eyed me askance again at the word "quickly" and answered:

"*Jättiläinen* and *Reipas*."<sup>1</sup>

"Lead *Jättiläinen* out first. We'll try the hame on."

First of all he put away his tools and then led out *Jättiläinen*. He always liked things shipshape and never left his tools lying about

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<sup>1</sup> Giant and Frisky.

the place. He put everything away in a little box, even the wax ends and bits of leather, and only after that did he lead *Jättiläinen* out.

Beside the horse he looked quite a boy. He always had trouble in getting the hame on, because the horse had a habit of tossing up its head. And in order to reach its head you'd want two such little fellows as Paavo Pikkunen on top of one another.

I slipped the hame on myself, and fitting on the hipstrap I said:

"Lead out *Reipas*. We've got to manage at least eight trips today."

He led out the sorrel stallion with the broad croup and began harnessing him to the other sledge. Dawn had broken and it was light enough to make out clearly all the wrinkles on his round little face. The skin formed little pouches under his eyes, his lips had grown thinner and his little chin seemed to have become sharper, though it was overgrown with bristle, because he had not shaven for weeks.

Formerly he wasn't a bit afraid of the frost and looked like a regular ball of fire, bustling hither and thither, always busy and pottering about and sometimes even shouting at me.

And now I had to shout at him sometimes, because he did everything much slower than before.

Of course, he tried his best now too. His hands had been so used to work since childhood that even now they were constantly on the move. Constantly occupied with something or other. But he did things much more slowly than before, and it was I who had to hurry him up now.

Seeing that he was struggling to draw the ends of the hame together I went up to him and took the strap out of his hands. His heavy breathing touched my face and I saw that he had managed to have a drop that morning. I looked at his round little nose that had reddened with the frost as he stood stamping his feet and cuffing his sides with chilled hands, and said to him:

“You’ll kill yourself, Paavo, with that stuff.”

He turned up the collar of his coat, pulled down the flaps of his leather cap and growled:

“I don’t need anyone’s advice.”

We hitched sledge trailers onto our sledges and rode out to the woods for logs. The frost was so keen that we had to jump off the sledges now and again and trot along behind them.

We drove as far as the railway station along the snow-cleared highroad and then turned off onto a little-used road that led to the Kurkimäki woods.

On the way to the station we met people, carts and even cars. One truck caught up with us and when it drew level with my sledge somebody cried out to me:

“Hi, Einari! Hullo, *perkele!*”

And I saw quite close to me the red face and little black moustache of Elias Pohjanpää leaning out of the truck. He smiled at me, waving his mittens, and his white teeth gleamed like the snow in the sun.

And sitting by his side, with her face turned away from the oncoming wind, was my Elsa. She had gone out to deliver the milk. But why couldn't Kerttu have gone this time? She had nothing else to do in the daytime. Maybe Elias had persuaded her?

Elias's face flashed past so close that I could have reached it with my hand. His coat collar and cap were covered with rime. Strange, this was not the first time I saw his face close up when it was smiling, but only now did I take a good look at it, though he passed my swiftly running *Jättiläinen* in less than a minute.

Why, he didn't seem to be smiling at all, if it comes to that. Upon my word, that's how it struck me on that frosty morning. He simply had his mouth open and was showing his teeth and shouting, but there wasn't any smile, say what you like.

There wasn't a smile on his parted red lips or in his little round eyes that looked like two shining buttons, there wasn't a smile anywhere. He simply opened his mouth so that his white teeth showed and shouted:

"Cheer up, Einari! Don't worry! We've still got some kick in us, *perkele!*"—and waved his woollen mittens to me again.

He was a curious fellow. A decent sort, of course, the kind of men the country needed, but better if he had lived in some other place, farther off, dash it. . . .

But then Elsa did really smile to me. She turned her face, wrapped in a white woollen shawl, in my direction for a moment and smiled to me with her eyes alone, and then turned away again from the oncoming wind and from Elias.

It was a good wife I had found in life, may God give her health and strength as long as she lives.

But most of the people on the road were coming the other way. A train had left the station just before, leaving some people on the platform. We met some of these people on the road.

In one of the cars I saw a familiar face. I immediately recognized the big red mouth and long-lashed eyes and began waving my hand joyfully, because it was Hilda Kurkimäki. I waved my hand to her and shouted:

*"Terve<sup>1</sup> neiti! Terve!"*

But she only just slightly nodded her head to me. It was clear that she hadn't recognized me. That's what I told Pikkunen when we started trotting behind our sledges again to warm ourselves up. But he did not answer anything, just smiled nastily, hiding his round little face, that had grown green from the cold, in the collar of his coat.

I was sorry I was not riding behind. He wouldn't have noticed then how I had waved my hand to her, and there wouldn't have been any need for explanations which brought out that nasty grin on his face.

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<sup>1</sup> Hullo.

But then in a different way I was in luck that I was riding ahead of him. Not far from the station I saw an empty broken case lying in the roadway, made of smooth-planed boards and lined inside with shining tin, and I picked it up. Just to make sure, I called out to some people who were pottering around a big shed:

"Is that your case?"

But they shook their heads, so I threw the case onto my sledge. It was my case now. If I had picked it up somewhere on Mr. Kurkimäki's land I would have brought it to his yard. But the highroad wasn't his land, though it ran through it. All kinds of people walked and rode on the highroad and everything that was on it did not belong to him. Therefore I wasn't obliged to give up the case to him. It must have been dropped by some big car that was going to town or from town.

You could make many things out of that case and that beautiful tin. You could make a fine shining shelf and fix it up on the wall of your room above the stove. There wouldn't be enough tin for the lower part of the shelf, but my wife could cover it up with paper trimming so that the wood wouldn't show. Then the shelf would look like a metal one from above. The nails sticking in the case were

mine too. There would be quite enough of them to make a shelf with, and some left over.

Once I moved to Mr. Kurkimäki's yard from a distant field an old shed knocked together out of boards in which some nails had been left sticking also. Those nails, now, were not mine. I pulled them all out with pincers, straightened them out on Paavo's anvil and gave them to old Mrs. Kurkimäki who had all the keys to the storerooms and barns.

But the nails that I found in those boards I had bought for the bathhouse were mine, of course. I was fully entitled to them, because I paid for them by my labour.

Once I found a wrench on the fringe of the woods. I brought it to Kurkimäki's storeroom, because that happened on his land. Another time I found a bridle on the highroad. I didn't take that to the boss. I made enquiries of the neighbours to make sure that they hadn't lost it, and then brought it home. I said to Elsa then in a joke:

"Well, now we've got a bridle. All we need now's to buy the horse and we'll have it all complete."

And she smiled at that—only it wasn't a bright smile.

Of course, it was ridiculous to think about a horse. Horse, indeed. We were saving up mark by mark to buy a cow. For economy's sake I stopped subscribing to the *Suomen Kuvalehti*<sup>1</sup> magazine and the newspaper *Kansan Työ*,<sup>2</sup> I gave up smoking though I felt pretty peckish for a whiff of tobacco, but this didn't help us much in laying by money for a cow. It all went on food and clothes.

Riches never come of themselves. They come very slowly, crumb by crumb. You've only got to know how to save up, by skimping and pinching.

Take Mr. Kurkimäki—not a single rag is wasted there, not a scrap of rubber or leather, not a single empty can. He collects all odds and ends, sorts them out and then ships them somewhere.

Many of his things have become quite old, and another boss in his place would have thrown them out to hell on the rubbish heap, but he kept these things going and serving. The old cart in which I carried the manure had rotted away a long time ago and had broken down several times, and every time I told

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<sup>1</sup> A Finnish illustrated magazine.

<sup>2</sup> *Popular Labour*.

him about it. But he had only one reply: "Got to mend it." And I patched it up as best I could with nails and strips of wood and carted manure on it until it broke down again. Still, it did service, and the money for buying a new cart still remained in the boss' pocket.

That's how people get rich here in Suomi, where one stone is piled on top of another, keeping people apart, making their hearts hard and cold, where muddy swamps, lakes and forests have come between people.

They united men in their hard struggle for existence, these barriers did, but they hardened their hearts, made them grim and surly, fencing themselves off from each other by countless thick palings and barbed wire. The whole of Suomi is girded by such fences.

We rode for a long time with Paavo down the forest road that frosty morning. The branches of the fir and pine trees bent low down to the ground beneath the weight of the snow on them, and the high shaft bow of my *Jättiläinen* kept on brushing against them in passing. But that just happened to be to the purpose because the snow did not come down on me. It came down on *Reipas* and Paavo who were following behind. And after every such dose of snow Paavo jumped off the

sledge, shaking himself, and trotted behind the sledges. It was very much to the purpose, otherwise he'd have frozen on the sledge in his short coat.

The snow didn't crunch or squeak, it actually rang and sang under our feet and the runners. And the snow that came down on our heads was fine and dry, like powder.

I can understand why the Russians' advance has been held up on the front. It was held up by our Finnish frosts, held up by the snow.

There was a lot of snow that terrible winter. It crushed everything to the ground and built up thick loose-grained barriers on its surface. When the road reached the descent to the valley we saw from above a big snowy sea whose white waves had flooded the forest below.

You just try to wade through that sea in which huge trees together with their shaggy branches were sunk almost up to the middle of their trunks. While you floundered in that sea a Finnish machine gun or tommy gun would drill a dozen holes into you.

And when we were going up the hill we saw the same trees from below, just over our heads, from roots to crown, especially in the

spots where the road pierced the stony crest of the hill and where the trees clustered above the rime-covered bluffs.

They stood in a clump on the summit, heavy and drowsy with the snow and frost, just like hoary giants out of a fairy tale. I'd like to see you overcome those giants. While you'd be trying to get to them up the rocky sides the snowdrifts at the foot of the thick trunks would come to life. They'd let fly hundreds of bullets and send you hurtling down with a riddled head.

It does look like a fairy tale when all life on the earth comes to a standstill, buried beneath fluffy layers of snow that glow rosily in the morning sun. But that winter it was a tale of horror, not meant for children.

And our horses with big icicles at their nostrils and a thick layer of fuzzy rime all over their bodies did not look like peaceful work horses. They were transformed into beasts out of a tale of horror. In front of me between the shafts there ran a huge shaggy monster, its nostrils belching clouds of mist.

It would not have been at all bad if it hadn't been for the smell of blood in the air! One would have breathed easier, despite the terrific frost. And the gleam of the snow in

the morning sun would have gladdened the eye, and the horses' muzzles all covered in shaggy rime would have seemed amusing and comical instead of terrifying.

God beautifies this world of ours in different ways and everything that lives thereon at the different seasons, so that we may be able to sense its beauty and love it. But we haven't even got the time to look at it properly. We're busy all the time killing one another or working till our back splits. Who wants it?

Maybe you think I want it, or Paavo there wants it? Maybe we'll lose all our immense riches, he and I, unless we fight other peoples? Yes. That's how it works out, hee-hee. We want it—me and Paavo.

Now, to Vilho it's all the same. He hasn't got such wealth as we have. He gets only eight marks an hour, that is to say two marks less than I get a day, and so he doesn't see anything worth while in his life and has no desire to fight his good neighbours for the sake of it.

If you ask him, all our neighbours live better than the people in Suomi. That, he considers, is how the world is made. All the peoples live in a paradise except the people of Suomi. "He says nothing of Russia"....

Foolishness remains foolishness when one man tries to pass it off as a clever thing. But when a lot of other people repeat it in all seriousness then I dare say it ceases to be foolishness. So many sober minds couldn't go crazy all at the same time. Those two men whom Elias Pohjanpää had arrested didn't look at all foolish and they were held to be quite respectable and sensible people.

Come to think of it, that brother of mine was writing me very rarely and briefly. That's what he said in his letter: "I am purposely writing you little as I am in a hurry to finish this letter. If I go on I'll begin to swear. I can't think of anything but swearwords. I'm fed up with it all...."

It's interesting to know what he's fed up with. Wasn't he nearer now to his beloved Russia than ever before? He ought to be glad instead of wanting to swear at that. Russia was coming down on us like a heavy dreadful cloud from the South, and he could calmly wait for its coming and dance for joy.

Not so Paavo and me. We were in no dancing mood and had other things to think of besides Russia. And God's light didn't shine for us.

Herra Kurkimäki was hurrying us on. He had never tolerated slackness before, and now not a day passed that he didn't remind us of the war. And we worked as men should work in wartime, when the country is in danger.

Herra Kurkimäki could not hire seasonal hands during the war because there weren't any. But lumbering and haulage of timber for the building of the mill and creamery had to go on without interruption just the same, once it was planned.

And so Paavo and I worked with might and main so that there should be no slackening in the work, that the materials for the construction should be delivered without a break, and that everything should run on as though the seasonal hands were still working with us and had not left the little workers' hut at the Kurkimäki farmstead to go to the war; we worked with might and main to help speed up our victory and the end of the war, to get back to peacetime life where we'd find... where we'd find... What would we find in peacetime life? Good Lord, it's as clear as day. Not our own patch of land, of course, with meadows, pastures and woods. We'd find in peacetime life the same old toil on another

man's land, with the same hard strain from day to day, from year to year, all our life long. . . .

Dreary thoughts, for some reason, turn in your head when you drive with ringing sledge runners down the long white road amid the white motionless giants in such a stinging frost that your breath comes in gasps and your brains seem to freeze in your head.

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Try as hard as we might we made only seven trips that frosty day, hauled in fourteen logs and were chilled to the marrow by evening.

But I was more fortunate than Paavo. I just mixed the horses some clover and bran and threw some hay into the stalls and then went home, where Elsa and the kiddies were waiting for me, where the red-hot stove was blazing and potatoes were frying.

Whereas Paavo had to wait until the horses cooled down to water them and give them some more hay, and the other horses too, and at four o'clock in the morning he had to give them oats and another drink of water.

And nobody knew when and what Kerttu

Lahtinen the milkmaid would give him to eat in the common kitchen of the little workers' house before he lay down to sleep on the hard bunk.

She might sit another hour in her little closet reading a "true" love story in the *Viikonloppu*,<sup>1</sup> or writing letters to boys at addresses furnished by the same magazine, or perhaps she'd make up an advertisement herself for that magazine, in which she would state:

"Hullo, you tall black-haired boys! Here's a good-looking gay young girl who wants to start a friendly correspondence. Send your reply and photograph to the following address...."

Poor Kerttu. God had denied her good looks. She hadn't been able to capture a boy's heart at firsthand, so she was trying to do it by correspondence.

And I came home, threw the case down in the passage, and said to Elsa:

"I'll fix you up a shelf on Sunday."

Then I dandled the kiddies on my knees and asked them:

"You haven't been up to any mischief here

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<sup>1</sup> *The Week-End.*

without me? You, Lauri, what time did you get back from school?"

He answered:

"At four o'clock."

I took Martta in my arms, tossed her several times in the air, gave her a couple of playful slaps and said:

"You'll be going to school, too, next year. D'you want to?"

Of course she did. But we had to think first of getting her boots and a coat. And that thought was terrifying, because everything had gone so dear. I asked Elsa:

"What's the news at Pohjanpää's. Did you hear the latest communiqué?"

"Yes."

"What's it say?"

"They've suffered heavy losses but have advanced a little more towards Viipuri."

"I wonder what Vilho is feeling at the moment?" I thought.

Who could tell? He was probably finding out now on his own hide what Russia was.

I let the kiddies look at some old magazines and was idly turning over the pages of some of them myself without looking. The heat of the room had warmed me up and my face was flaming.

It's good to have your own house. I just stepped over the threshold and here I was in my own dear, warm world. And all the hard, the cold and the disagreeable was left outside that door and I didn't care a hang about it. All my life was here. This, at least, was turning out well.

Elsa, too, was all red, standing by the stove, and it struck me that her lips must be hot now. I could check that up in a tick if it wasn't for the children. The times had passed when I could do those tricks in front of them.

Not to sit in silence, I said:

"That'll do frying. It'll be good enough. Is there coffee, too?"

"Yes."

I suddenly remembered:

"Hilda's arrived, on her winter vacation, I suppose. Maybe she'll drop in these days."

My wife said:

"Why should she?"

I answered:

"What made her drop in that time? She'll drop in this time for the same reason. Just like that, a neighbourly call."

My wife placed the frying pan on the table, put some potatoes on plates for the kiddies and said:

"She didn't drop in just like that."

"What for, then?"

My wife mused a while, placing a fork and a slice of bread before each of us, and when we had begun to eat she said gravely:

"To look at you."

I stared at her, forgetting to swallow the piece I had in my mouth. She went on handling her fork with a perfectly serious air without even looking at me. Suddenly she laughed:

"Well, what are you staring at? Eat your supper."

And the children laughed too, picking up the potatoes from their plates with the forks. Then I fell to eating, too, throwing stealthy glances at the mirror that hung on the wall, and nearly burst out laughing myself.

There was something to look at, believe me. A big face, lean and long, if you measure it from the dishevelled light hair to the point of the jaw; and the jaw was as heavy and broad as a spade; the lips were a proper match in thickness and length. And the nose! It wasn't a nose, it was a boot with a broad turned-up toe. And between it and the upper lip there was a smooth space, slightly thrust forward, roomy enough for the palm of a

hand. And this whole outfit was now flaming and red with the warmth after coming in from the frost.

To look at me... hee-hee. She's a scream, that snub-nosed little woman o' mine. I'll make her sit up soon. Wait till I get at her cheeks and lips, wait till the kiddies go to bed and the light goes out.

Our room's a bit smallish. It's five of my paces from the door to the opposite wall with the window facing East, and even then the only free space is three or four of the middle floor boards. The whole right side is occupied by the stove and the bed Elsa and I sleep in, while on the left side there is the sewing machine, the table and the children's bed. On this side there is the second window facing North.

Only the ceiling and the side of the room in which the beds stand are panelled with cardboard. There wasn't enough cardboard to go all round. But I used several dozen copies of the *Kansan Työ* for this part of the room. Though the walls look rather patchy, at least it kept the cold out a bit.

When we had finished the potatoes I said to Elsa:

"Why do you always pour so much oil on

the frying pan? Look, there's even some left at the bottom."

She didn't answer anything. That meant she didn't agree with me. In such cases it's better not to argue with her. She moved the pan up to the kiddies for them to wipe round with bread.

We didn't always have loaf bread, because we did not have a proper stove. In the oven Elsa could only bake thin, dry cakes. She tried sometimes to bake loaf bread in the oven, but it came out soggy and flat.

However, there's no question of having a real stove in this house yet. It might be possible in some other house, in a new place, a place where we could manage to have two rooms instead of one, seeing that the kiddies are growing up. You can't always be living all crowded in a single room.

But when will that new place be, and where? That question forever gnawed at my heart, because I had already turned thirty-seven at the time and Elsa was thirty. When would we begin our new life, and where? If it wasn't to be soon and if it was to be on some difficult stony or swampy ground in the woods, how old would we both be by the time we settled down in that new life?

I am very fond of orchards, but if I plant my own orchard in about five or ten years' time I might get it at best to yield red currants and gooseberries, and maybe, in my old age, apples from the apple trees, provided old age did not catch us unawares before our time. But it's bound to come before its time, for I know what it means to stub woodland, drain marshes and clear land of stones.

I have only to look at this long valley running away into the distance with the stream in the middle to see the whole thing clearly. I can tell you exactly the amount of energy and sweat a man must give to make such a valley cease to be a swamp and to replace that there dense forest on either side of the stream by stretches of smooth, cultivated field divided up by ditches.

I sat gulping hot coffee, looking at Elsa's taut red cheeks, taking a glance at myself in the mirror and thinking: how much longer would we last? We had both lived half our lives and hadn't begun living yet. When would we begin? There was always something that prevented our beginning it, and now the war had come butting in, damn them whoever brought it on us.

The war did not only set back the beginning of our new life. It brought a shortage. Certain goods had already disappeared from the market, and even coffee was hard to get. Elsa had recently ground the last few beans and hadn't been able to buy any more yet. I reminded her, just in case:

"Don't forget that Neiti Kurkimäki may drop in to see us. Put away a little for the occasion."

But Neiti Kurkimäki did not come in to see us those days. She called much later, at the end of April, when the terrible winter war was over and she got leave to spend a week at home.

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And as it happened, this time, too, Vilho, who had come back safe and sound, had dropped in just before she came. He came so unexpectedly that I didn't have time to grasp it, and our meeting therefore didn't sort of take place joyously—it was just as though there had been no terrible experiences behind, just as though we had parted yesterday.

Elsa was not at home when he came, and while we were waiting for her we fell to

chattering about one thing and another. I expected the usual gay jokes and anecdotes about the Finnish peasant, and was prepared to forgive him all the gibes beforehand for the sake of our meeting. But Vilho was not very talkative somehow. You could see he was just tired. I did not want to weary him and kept silent, too. He sat thinking for a little while, then squeezed out of himself:

“And I thought that everything had changed here during the war. I was glad when I left the trenches. But it seems I was glad for nothing.”

I expressed my surprise:

“What should have changed?”

He leaned his elbow on the table and rested his head in his hand. He was very tired. He looked it. And he spoke dully and quietly:

“I came back to my place and my Pohjanpää scowls at me like he used to do before, and the same drudgery is waiting for me. And you’re still on the same old rock. Where’s your land?”

Why did he have to remind me of that again? I try to drive that pain deeper down so it shouldn’t poison my life, and he has to go and stir it up again. My land? God knows my hands yearn for it. No one could even

imagine what I'd do with it if I got it. But how to get it? It won't drop out of the skies itself. What's the use of talking about it?

"You'd better lie down a bit, Vilho. I've sent the kiddies for Elsa. She'll come and make us something to eat."

He sat on a little longer with his face buried in his hands, then straightened up and said:

"This is not the first time blood has been shed for nothing."

I said:

"How for nothing? We kept the Russians back, didn't we?..."

"And very foolish that we did," Vilho interrupted me.

I could simply stare at him. What was he talking about? Or was everything mixed up in his head because he was tired?

"I wish they'd given some people a clout on the head," he went on. "Not you, of course. They don't hit your kind. Your kind they take off the hillock and put 'em on the richest land in the valley."

I got up and looked out into the passage. There was nobody there. There wasn't anybody outside the window either.

I straightened the pillow on the bed and said:

“Take your coat off and lie down, Vilho. Have a rest.”

You couldn't let a man go on saying such things. God knows what he'd be saying next with that tired head. But he did not want to lie down.

At that moment I saw Neiti Hilda through the northern window. Vilho was sitting with his back to the window and could not see her, but I saw her crossing the stream and coming up the hillock.

This time I did not wait for her to knock but opened the door myself and said:

“Please come in, neiti.”

She walked in and the room was filled again with the smell of wonderful flowers. This time she wore a brown coat of thick woollen cloth, because it was still cold outside and the snow had not melted everywhere. Her coat was belted, like the frock she had on that time, and that made her look like a bouquet of flowers tied around the middle.

That bouquet was a mixture of all colours, especially at the white throat where the coat was open. There, beneath the brown cloth of

the collar there peeped out a green blouse with a snow-white collar, and a silk scarf stood out high, all covered with red, blue and yellow flowers.

But the best flower in that bouquet was her face with its soft skin, its broad little nose and big red mouth. Two dark hazel eyes with long black eyelashes shone merrily in that face, framed in fair locks, on top of which sat a brightly coloured little hat.

She gave me her hand, throwing a look meanwhile at Vilho, and said:

“Ah, Vilho is here, too—how do you do, Vilho!”

He got up, put his feet together, and with a slight bend of the head pressed her hand. Then he sat down again, sweeping back his long fair hair with his hand, and for some reason or other glanced at his hat hanging on a nail.

“I happened to be passing this way again, just imagine! There are wonderfully picturesque spots around here, and your little nook topped by the sheer cliff with the trees growing on it is simply charming. I can’t admire it enough. That beautiful pile of rock and boulders and the cold swift stream at the foot remind one of a scene out of a fairy tale. Don’t

you think so? And your little red house with its white windows livening up the whole scene is surely modelled out of cakes and sugar. And this little room is positively sweet. Everything bears the stamp of Finnish tidiness. But where is Elsa?"

"She'll soon be here."

"A fine little room. And has your brother been here long? I suppose he has already told you many interesting things about the war?"

She addressed me while she spoke, but she kept looking all the time at Vilho, who had his eyes averted.

Vilho suddenly got up. He made a slight bow to both of us and said:

"Please excuse me. I quite forgot that I have another urgent call to make."

And he reached out for his hat hanging on the nail.

My God, the way she looked at him at that moment! That's how one person looks at another when the latter wants to kill him and he implores: "O, don't kill me! Let me live a little longer! Spare me!" Even her lips twisted as though she were going to burst out crying, like a child. And it seemed to me that she even swallowed a lump that rose up to her throat.

And while he was making for the door she watched with eyes wide open in that pit-eous look full of anguish. And when the door closed behind him she lowered them and her fingers began to fumble with her wool-len gloves. Presently she raised her head, turned towards the window and repeated once more:

"It's very nice here. . . ."

The tone of her voice, however, sounded as if she had said: "How sad it is here." Her eyes were stealthily following Vilho until he disappeared behind the adjoining hillock. Then she turned round to me again.

I could not shake off the memory of that look she had given Vilho, and I did not know what to say to her. Something amazing had just taken place before my eyes. I said, so as to break the silence:

"Have you come to stay long, neiti?"

She replied with alacrity:

"No, not for long. Vihtori is sending a car for me from Helsinki the day after tomorrow."

She, too, was obviously anxious to find any subject of conversation in order to smooth over the embarrassment of her silence during Vilho's departure.

I sat thinking a while, casting about for some other question to ask, but she spoke first:

“Did Vilho tell you a lot of interesting things? How did they fight there?”

I recollected that Vilho had come to me very tired and had probably wanted to eat and go to sleep. What the devil had made him run away? He didn't have to go anywhere—that was simply another of his mad whims. And I answered with annoyance:

“They beat the Russians so hard that they had no choice but to take Käkisalmi, Sortavala and Viipuri from us. If they'd have gone on beating them the Russians would have taken from us Lappeenranta, Helsinki, Tampere and the Lord only knows what else. Thank God, they stopped beating them.”

She laughed and said:

“You joke rather grimly.”

Elsa came in at this moment with Martta and Lauri. Hilda turned to her at once:

“How do you do, Elsa. But I believe we've seen each other already?”

The other nodded her head:

“We have.”

“How big your children have grown.”

Neiti Hilda had probably forgotten that she had already said that last time. And Elsa, stroking the little heads, answered exactly as she had last time:

“They’ll soon be our helpers.”

Oh, she can be snappish, that wife of mine, when anything is not to her liking. Hilda must have sensed it, but she gave no sign. She put on her gloves and got up:

“Well, it’s time I was going. Excuse me for having taken up your time.”

I said:

“Don’t mention it, neiti. But perhaps you’ll stay on a little? What’s the hurry? Elsa will make some coffee....”

“No, no, thank you. They’re probably waiting for me at home. Good-bye.”

I saw her out, and watched her going down the slope of the hillock. Her stockings were spattered with mud. Crossing the plank she slipped and nearly fell into the stream. And when she had crossed the stream she quickened her pace without glancing to the side. The wide hem of her coat flapped against her calves left and right in time with her steps.

The sky was grey. It started to rain. I wanted to think over what had happened, but the rain increased and I went indoors.

Elsa and the children were already peeling potatoes. Elsa asked me:

“Why did you let Vilho go?”

I spread my hands. What could I do? You couldn't hold him back.

She was silent for a while, peeling potatoes, then presently she said thoughtfully:

“They wouldn't make a bad couple, if he loved her, too.”

That's just what I had wanted to think over, but I didn't like to have my thoughts interrupted. She's always popping out with her words when no one asks her.

I put on my raincoat and went out into the yard. There was nothing to do, but I just shuffled around, so as not to stand on one spot.

A wind was blowing from the South, and a slanting rain was beating on the back wall of my house by which the sawn and chopped firewood was stacked. The roof did not protect it from the slanting rain that was coming from the South back of the rock, and the rain dripped down from it onto the stacked wood in big drops and trickles.

It was pleasant to feel that warmth and moisture after a long frosty winter. The warmth for some reason always comes from the South—and the wind that brings the thaws, and the rain that washes the snow from the fields and the pleasant warmth of the sun.

It's a pity, though, that my house never sees that sun which is hidden by the rock. But then it gets plenty of warm rain and wind.

I straightened the pieces of bark that covered the wood stack and thought it wouldn't be bad to have a shed. Not only for the wood—it would be useful for keeping other things as well. Elsa and I still dreamt of having a cow.

But one needs boards for a shed, and they don't drop out of the skies. You've got to pay for them in marks or with these here hands on which the veins twist about like swollen spring streams amid the stony hillocks.

I could fix up the walls of the shed without boards. I had already begun to lay them out of stones lying left of the vegetable beds against the rock. There was a whole heap of stones lying about just to the left of the hillock down below, and I rolled them up to the top on Sundays. The walls of the shed turned out

thick as a fortress. But that doesn't matter. They'll keep longer. But you couldn't do without boards for the roof and the ceiling.

The only thing I made without boards was my cold cellar. I made use of the lower part of a big crevice in the rock, a little to the right of the vegetable beds. I widened the crevice with a pick and hammer, fixed up a thick arch out of stones, coated it thickly with clay and closed up the entrance with a big flat stone.

The result was a little cellar, but then we didn't need so much space for five sacks of potatoes and a cask of mushrooms or berries. And you could always find enough room between them for a pitcher of milk or a piece of pork, butter or cheese. As long as there was any pork, butter or cheese.

In the winter I laid straw around my cellar and buried it under the snow, and in the spring I opened it up again to give it an airing in the warm wind coming up from the South.

I turned away from the cellar so it shouldn't interfere with my thoughts, and began looking down to where the valley lay in a mist of rain. I turned my back to the wind. What did I care about the warm air coming from the South? It wasn't always the warm and the

good that came from there. In the winter something terrible and cold had borne down on us from there, Russia had been moving up then from the South.

Vilho was talking out of his hat: "If they'd come...." Even the war hadn't made him see sense. We ought to rejoice that they hadn't got farther than Viipuri.

I banked up the vegetable bed with my foot. In these warm damp days of spring thaw they had begun to run over the edges. I kicked them up a bit with my foot and then began dragging small stones and chips from the future shed and built them up around the beds in order that the rain should not wash my earth down the stony slope of the hillock.

The little flower bed which Martta had fixed up had all but been washed away. There was just a clod left at the skimpy dried stems of the sunflowers. No, this was no place for sunflowers. They didn't get any sun. They weren't given a chance to blossom and gladden the child's eye.

It's all right for him to say: "Still sitting on the same rock?" How am I to get off this rock? And where am I to go? To another such rock? It's only in his silly head that

benefactors appear, who are prepared to give men rich lands in the valley. It doesn't look as if they've given him anything. Goes about in the same old suit and overcoat—the only ones he has—and he's still all alone in the world, when he needn't be. . . .

I stopped messing around with the stones by the vegetable beds, rinsed my hands in a puddle and straightened up. The rain from the South lashed me in the face and I turned away from it again.

Yes. He needn't be alone. It only depended upon him. And how simple everything would be. Good heavens! What an opportunity he had. Vilho! What a fool you are. . . .

I looked across the stream to where they had both gone singly. What prevented them being together and calling on me together. And who knows, perhaps they would not be coming to this place here but to some other. Was I not his brother. And what would Herra Kurkimäki then be to me? . . .

All kinds of ideas came into my mind that day beneath the pouring rain. And there were one or two ideas that would not have entered everyone's mind, but I never spoke to anybody about it, not even to Elsa. What could a woman's head understand?

Though she started a conversation again at dinner time about Vilho and Hilda it was just idle talk. She'd never have been capable of hitting on the ideas that had occurred to me. A woman's a woman after all.

I said to her:

"We ought to look him up some Sunday."

\* 12 \*

But it was some time before I managed to look Vilho up. Every time some new business kept turning up. Besides, Neiti Kurkimäki this time was long in coming home from her university. She did not come back until the middle of the summer. After that I managed to tear myself away and went to Vilho and invited him down.

He was overjoyed when I came and squeezed my hand fit to break a fellow's fingers. I even felt uncomfortable at the sight of his pleasure, as though I were harbouring some evil designs. But I didn't have any designs. I just came to invite him down the next Sunday. That was all.

He promised to come and treated me to what he could. Then he showed me his new books on the history of Finland and various national and political questions, showed me a

big encyclopedia, various reference books and a heap of novels. This was what he spent his money on.

Then he showed me a new pair of boxing gloves and even fetched me a couple of cuffs on the ear with them. It was good to see him looking his gay old self again, like he was before the war. He was once more the handsome fair-haired youngster with the mocking twinkle in his blue eyes.

Then the other boys started playing on the guitar and singing and he took up the tune. After that they got ready to go to a dance at the workers' club and Vilho saw me off down to the road. I reminded him once more:

"So you drop in early in the morning."

He promised:

"All right, I'll be there."

That was half of my business done.

After that I had only to meet Neiti Kurkimäki. When I finally ran into her I went up and said:

"How do you do, neiti."

She held out her hand to me and asked:

"Well, what's the news? How's your family getting on?"

"Fine, neiti. Everybody's well."

She hesitated a moment, then asked:

"And how is Vilho getting on?"

I shrugged.

"Oh, him? He's as healthy as an ox."

"Has he been at your place lately?"

"Not since that time. But I think he intends dropping in on Sunday."

"Next Sunday?"

"Yes, he wanted to come in the morning."

She looked round and said:

"We're having fine weather lately."

I answered: "Yes." And at that we parted.

Everything was going as I had planned. I needn't have felt any qualms before my brother. Everything was turning out to his own good. He didn't know himself what was good for him. So his elder brother had to take care of that, seeing he had more experience of life.

To be sure, his fate would affect me, too. How could it be otherwise? One had to find a way out, sooner or later, from this blind alley I had run into on that bare, stony hill-ock of mine. I couldn't stick there till dooms-day. And if my hands couldn't help me do it, my head would.

I was pleased with my little plan and was looking forward to next Sunday. I purposely

fixed the morning for both of them, because in the morning Elsa would still be busy milking the Kurkimäki cows in the dairy, and I packed off the kiddies to a neighbour's farmstead and forbade them to come back before dinner time.

\* 13 \*

When Hilda came up the hillock I was alone in the house. I showed her our vegetable garden and the cellar and the flowers which Martta had planted, and the bushes of raspberries and currants and even the walls of the shed that I had begun to build up of stones. And she looked at everything and admired it.

"How charming! It's wonderful. Do you know, Einari, you are simply a wizard. You have brought the stone to life and have created a sort of fabulous little world amid this heap of dead rocks."

I don't know what there was to go into raptures over. Maybe she thought it gave me a lot of pleasure battering that rock in different places, dragging rocks on my back, living on a rock, carrying up earth to cover the rocks and then shivering over every handful of that earth for fear that the spring waters would wash it away?

I wonder what wizard she'd think me if I had the chance of sitting three or four years on real land? But never mind, I didn't have a head on my shoulders for nothing. It may not be good-looking, with that lean high-boned face and nose looking like a turned-up boot, but the brains inside it were no worse than in any other head, and could do their work properly.

What was a man to do? You can't live without cunning in this world. Everyone shifts the best he can in life. Why shouldn't I try my hand at it? If cunning, then cunning be it.

I felt rather uncomfortable, though, before Vilho, when he came. His nice blue eyes lit up again with such pleasure when he saw me, and he took my hand in both of his. You could see I was the only one he had in the world. And I was playing double. But it was too late to mend things. I opened the door into the room and said:

"Come in Vilho. Elsa will soon be here. Yes! I forgot to tell you. Neiti Hilda's here, you know. Just dropped in for a minute. She always comes in to see us when she passes this way. Today as well. . . . Why not drop in, if she's close by?"

I noticed that Neiti Hilda raised her long eyelashes in surprise at me, but I didn't care any more. I had done my part of the business, and things would now have to run their own course without me.

Vilho's tanned face instantly became grave when he saw her, and he hesitated for a second or two, looking down at the floor, as though making up his mind whether to turn back or not. But she had already got up to meet him, smiling with all her wide red mouth, and he bent his head politely and held out his hand to her.

I don't see how one could have helped holding out one's hand to her, because she looked like the sun that hot summer's day in her thin white frock drawn by a red sash.

I shuffled about the room a bit, then said: "You sit down, Vilho. And you, too, neiti, if you're not in a hurry. I'll just . . . I'll be back in a moment. . . ."

And I went out into the yard. But I had nothing to do there, and so as not to loiter about by the window where they could see me, I went to the back of the house and sprawled on the firewood with my head against the wall. So that's that. I had done my part

of the business and didn't intend lifting another finger in the whole affair.

The broad rocky wall had by this time screened me from the hot sun, and I shut my eyes in the cool shade. At first everything was quiet around, not counting the voices of the birds that fluttered about in the shrubbery and in the branches of the birch tree on the summit of the rock where every leaf and blade of grass stood out in a blaze of sunshine. And then I heard Vilho's voice through the wall:

"Do you smoke?"

And I was surprised to hear it sound so distinctly. Even the tap of the cigarette against the lid of the cigarette case reached my ears. And her voice, too, sounded right next to me:

"No, thanks."

I didn't like that at all. That meant that the sawdust was not evenly distributed between the double walls of my house. And it struck me then for the first time why that was so. The sawdust had been damp and frozen into lumps when I filled the empty space between the outside and inside boards out of which the walls of my house were built. And although I had rammed it down from the top with a long board it was loose in places, and did not form compact layers.

And then it had dried and the lower layers had settled and increased the empty spaces where part of the sawdust had got stranded on the crossbeams and around the piles without reaching the bottom. That's why every word spoken in the room reached me so clearly.

"Why are you such a rare visitor in these parts?"

It was she who asked that. And he answered:

"What have I got to do around here?"

She said:

"Well . . . visit your brother and generally . . . is it so bad here?"

He paused for a second—very likely taking a draw at his cigarette—then said:

"A brother remains a brother all one's life, even though we might never meet."

Now I understood why the cardboard lining in the room became damp in places during severe frosts and the room didn't hold the warmth. It had never dawned on me before. But now those voices on the other side gave me the right explanation.

I raised my head slightly and tried putting my ear to another part of the wall. But there, too, her words came to me just as distinctly:

"Does nothing else interest you here?"

His words came still more clearly, because his voice was strong and deep:

"What, for instance, could interest me here?"

After that I seemed to hear footsteps. She must have got up and gone up to him.

"Vilho!"

She said that quite softly, almost in a whisper, but it was quite audible, and you could tell by the tone the way her eyes were looking at him again at that moment.

"Do you remember the first time we met, at that dance in the workers' club? You spoke quite differently to me then."

He muttered in a sullen voice:

"I didn't know who you were then."

"Does that alter anything?"

He answered:

"It does."

"But how?"

"It puts each in his proper place. You are Neiti Kurkimäki and I'm Vilho Pitkänniemi. And don't let us talk about that any more."

I had an impulse to pick up a billet of wood and try knocking it against the wall. It would have helped to shake down the dried sawdust. But at that moment Neiti Hilda burst

into a laugh, and I thought: "Why scare them?"

Her laugh sounded rather odd this time. It was a sort of bitter laugh, as though she hadn't intended laughing at all.

But the wall really needed knocking round a bit, not with a billet, but with the butt end of an axe, to give the boards a good shaking down. And the empty space that forms on top between the two rows of boards in each wall after the sawdust settles a bit—the empty space could be filled up with moss. Sawdust costs money and has to be carted up from Ahonen's sawmill. Moss I could gather for nothing around the swamp, then dry it and stuff it down the empty spaces from the loft up above.

All this needn't have waited till next Sunday, but this had turned out an idle day for me—my hands had done nothing since the morning. Instead of doing things I sat lolling about, listening to a maid teaching a youth:

"I cannot make you out when you talk like that. So you, too, are infected with class prejudices. As between us two it would be quite meaningless. And you are too reasonable to fall into that error. Or am I wrong? I

wonder if I'm wrong? It would be sad. I don't suppose I will ever be able to understand people whose aim is to bring discord within their own country, their own nation. What for?"

"That's interesting! So neiti intends to present me with a new theory?"

The maid was giving the lad a lesson, but the lad was not half-inclined to take it.

"The world is actuated by quite different principles, believe me. It is clear even to a blind man that everything in life is governed by chance. Every turn of the wheel in the life of human society is sheer accident."

"Neiti apparently is not familiar with that greatest of teachings which scientifically proves that every phenomenon in the life of society is governed by an established law."

"I know what you have in mind. It's all folly. I assure you, that is not the main thing, Vilho. It is not that which determines the destinies of mankind. Life goes forward by its own independent path. You cannot fit it into any schemes. And the chief rôle in it is played by love and hatred, good and evil, intelligence and stupidity, honesty and baseness, beauty and ugliness."

She paused a little, seeking some more comparisons, and he took the opportunity to throw in:

“Wealth and poverty, satiety and hunger.”

I can see the ironical smile on his face when he said that. Ah, that lad had something in his head, he had!

She attempted to argue with him:

“Wealth and poverty are extremely relative conceptions, and it’s difficult to measure them by a standard gauge.”

But he instantly retorted:

“Yes, especially when you apply it to the four vegetable beds of Einari Pitkäniemi and the thousand one hundred acres of Hugo Kurkimäki’s land.”

She said, with a slight tinge of annoyance:

“That’s all nonsense, and it has nothing to do with it. The English say, ‘He is not happy who is rich but who is content with what he has.’ Your Einari, in his soul, is perhaps many times richer than my father, who knows neither peace nor sleep from constant worries.”

I sat up on the wood when I heard that. Tell me another one, fair neiti! The soul’s not a bad thing, but if you’ve got nothing to fill the stomach with your soul isn’t of any use. And how

long will the soul keep going if you don't nourish it on time?

I didn't catch what Vilho answered her. Perhaps he didn't answer at all and merely shrugged. He had that way with him.

She began again after a pause:

"You won't prove to me that. . . ."

But he broke in:

"I am not trying to prove anything to you, neiti. It is you who are trying. I must confess I never heard more childish arguments. . . ."

This time she interrupted him in quite a different tone:

"Oh, let us drop this, Vilho! Let us drop it. Was it this I came here to speak to you about? Who cares for them—for wealth, acres and classes. Promise me that you will answer one question, just one."

I rested my hands carefully on the wood and pulled myself up. You couldn't go on sitting here all the time listening. That talk was not for my ears. And if the wall had proved to be so thin that wasn't an excuse for eavesdropping.

I carefully adjusted the wood pile which had fallen out of shape in the place where billets were daily taken for the fire. But the

voice of Neiti Hilda behind the wall persistently repeated:

“Do you promise? But tell me the truth.”

And Vilho mumbled in reply:

“I see no reason why I should lie.”

“Tell me, Vilho,”—her voice was surprisingly gentle and soft when she spoke again—“Tell me frankly—I’m talking about our first meeting again—do you remember what you told me then, when you were seeing me home?”

“Well. . . .”

“Do you remember?”

“Yes.”

“Did you mean it with all your heart?”

“Why bring that up now?”

“But you promised to answer my question.”

He was silent. I was picking up a billet to lay it on top of the stack, but did not lay it down. It might make a noise.

“I am waiting, Vilho.”

It didn’t seem to be an easy thing for him. But presently he said:

“I’m prepared to repeat it.”

And she laughed a soft happy laugh. But he quickly broke it off:

“I say again—it doesn’t alter anything.”

"But it does, Vilho. It alters everything. You silly dear! What could be stronger than what you said that lovely summer's night? Everything pales before it. Let me touch your beautiful hair. There. Come, don't draw your head away, you obstinate boy...."

I moved a little away from the house. Those words were not meant for me to hear. I retreated to the vegetable beds that grew within the shadow of the big rock and began examining the signs of sprouting life.

The dill was doing best of all. But the carrots, too, had fairly shot up their hairy little tails. Elsa had already done some weeding here. The beetroots and turnips barely sprouted and needed more tending.

A handful of peas thrown on the edge of one of the beds bordering the rock had also given green shoots. Their thin tendrils had begun to cling to the rough surface of the sheer rock and were climbing up to the light and sun which they would never see. Those ends of the beds never got any sunlight, not even in the morning.

Least of all, I should say, the potatoes missed the sun. They grew on the three other beds and had come up pretty strong and even. But my Martta's flowers planted around the

borders looked poorly and had no smell. As for the sunflowers' planted on a separate clod of earth surrounded with pebbles, they barely pushed up from under the ground their first four little leaves.

I tried not to hear the voices coming through the walls of the house. But they were carried to my ears nevertheless. Even standing by the rock I could distinctly hear almost every word. The maid thought she had conquered the lad, but the lad didn't think of giving in to her, though at one moment he seemed to have done so. He was saying:

"Why should I deny what I said? That you are the most wonderful girl in the world, despite your strange ideas, I am prepared to repeat any number of times. And if I had to choose between hundreds of others I would not hesitate for a moment, though I cannot understand myself in what way you have won my heart. I like your practical sense in worldly matters. That I know. You don't fly high, you have no silly romantic notions like many other girls of your age and your class. You have soberly chosen for yourself a definite modest path and see it clearly to the end."

Here she put in:

"Yes, yes, Vilho. I would not be a burden to you. I'll finish my postgraduate studies and will teach art history."

But he went on as though not listening to her:

"At least, one little incident has stuck in my memory—do you remember?—that time I climbed the bird cherry to break you a twig of blossoms—the better ones grew higher up. I tore a button off my jacket, and you immediately brought out three needles and three different coloured threads hidden away somewhere in your blouse. And there and then you set about putting the runaway into its place with such a businesslike and diligent air."

"Yes, yes, Vilho. How nice that you remember that!"

"That's not the point. Why upset yourself with vain recollections? The whole thing boils down to a simple question which I'm going to ask you now."

"Yes. I'm listening, Vilho."

"Are you capable of breaking with your parents for good if you marry me?"

"Vilho! What nonsense is this! Are you serious?"

"I've put my question and am waiting for the answer."

"But it's absurd, Vilho. Why should we take after the heroes and heroines of sentimental old novels. We're living in the twentieth century. We have our own common sense."

"That is all I wanted to ask you, my dear Neiti Kurkimäki."

"But good God! It's utter folly to make such stipulations. You simply haven't given it serious thought, Vilho. What on earth for . . . why? Come, tell me that you're joking, tell me, Vilho."

Vilho was silent, and her voice penetrated to me again through the thin walls of the house as far as the rock.

"My God what shall I do with that mad boy! Listen, Vilho. I appreciate your sense of pride, but this exceeds the limit. And let me tell you, it's even stupid if you want to know."

"Maybe it is. But better so than to abase myself in my own eyes or in the eyes of people, of my comrades."

"Oh, your comrades again! . . . Vilho darling! But listen. . . ."

I tried moving round to the other side of the house, to where the hillock made a sheer drop. But even here their voices reached me. The girl's voice was supplicating and persua-

sive. And it was tender as only a woman's voice can be with the sound of love and tears in it. And the man's voice sounded dogged and level.

There was a moment when the girl's voice dropped away altogether, as though she were breathing her words. At that moment I glanced in at the window facing East. Right opposite that window I saw the second one on the other wall overlooking the North. And in the space between both windows I saw their heads.

They were both standing in the middle of the room and their faces were quite close to each other. She was looking up at him and her lips were moving, whispering something, and drawing towards his lips. But he was looking down at her, also saying something with a slight shake of the head, and he did not try to bring his lips nearer to hers.

I looked in the window for a brief space and then moved away at once. I went down to the bottom of the hillock, took hold of a big stone and began rolling it up the slope to the spot where I was building my shed. I had to do something. I didn't want to listen to another word, and I did not want to sit idle on a Sunday.

I rolled the stone up and then went down for another one. I rolled and carried up stones of different sizes, sweating from the strain, and one question kept turning in my head all the time—had their lips met or not?

Elsa came. She made coffee and fried some eggs. There was little talk at the table. And no joking at all. Hilda smiled to my Elsa, asking about the household and the children. Her lips smiled, but her eyes wanted to cry.

They both left at the same time. Before that Vilho came up to me and asked quietly:

“I suppose I have you to thank for this meeting?”

He didn't say either “good-bye” or “so long,” and followed her out, supporting her very politely down the slope of the hillock and on the wide plank across the stream.

And I immediately set to work again lugging up stones. I rolled them up one after another disregarding their size. I was even glad when I came across very heavy ones which bade fair to crush me with their weight. But I made short work of them. I had to smother something disagreeable and painful that had taken a hold on my heart, and I fought savagely with the stones, sweating hard.

I had never handled so many stones as I did that day. But while I was struggling with them, piling them up and laying them out in thick walls for my future shed, one thing I knew for certain—their lips had not met.

\* 14 \*

Vilho stopped coming to see me. Nor did Neiti Hilda come. I met her occasionally, and merely raised my hat to her from a distance. And she'd smile to me only with her lips and just slightly nod her head.

I heard about Vilho from some of his pals. They said he was quite all right and was working and reading a lot. Thank God he was all right. I didn't go to him either. I would not have been able to look him straight in his brave blue eyes.

In the autumn Vihtori Kurkimäki came home from Helsinki for his holidays and immediately fought boxing matches with the new boxers in the workers' club. And once more everybody saw in the ring that lean, efficient and mobile mechanism whose fists always landed where he wanted them to land.

He defeated three boxers until the turn came for Urho Jukola. Urho Jukola held out longer than the others and the bout was de-

clared a draw. But the next day Jukola was challenged by Vilho, who knocked him out in the first round.

After Urho Jukola the long-armed carpenter, Nils Haapanen was more than a match for Vihtori Kurkimäki. He knocked young Kurkimäki senseless in the fourth round. And three days later he was floored himself with a bleeding face and took the count over twenty. He was knocked out by Vilho.

They said that that had become a rule at our workers' club. Folk said: "He who beats young Kurkimäki is bound to lie at Vilho's feet." But nobody knew what made Vilho act that way. Vihtori himself did not know.

He tried to find out and even demanded an explanation. But Vilho wouldn't tell him anything, he just measured him coolly with his blue eyes. Some folks said, though, that he did mutter through his teeth:

"You'll soon find that out."

It was wrong of me not to go and see Vilho. Aye, very wrong! I should have called on him at least once during the whole year. But who could have foreseen what was going to happen? Events in our days don't move—they leap. I didn't go in the winter, I didn't go in

the spring, and after that it was too late. Poor Vilho!

Of course, nobody could then have guessed that trouble was coming to our country together with the German troops. We had merely heard that they were landing in small parties in Helsinki and other places and were then shipped North by rail, but who could have guessed what it meant? I only saw that some people frowned when they told each other about it. But Herra Kurkimäki said clearly and simply in reply to my question:

“We ought to be glad and proud that such a great country is giving us help against the Bolsheviks.”

I was astonished:

“What, are the Bolsheviks coming on again?...”

He stole a glance at me from under his heavy drooping lids that looked like little hoods, debated with himself a while, then said firmly:

“Yes.”

I didn't, as a matter of fact, remember it being reported anywhere as to exactly where and when the Bolsheviks had started military operations, but it was good to know that the German troops were with us now. With protec-

tion like that we could sleep peacefully. Elias said so, too. He added besides:

“But we don’t intend to sleep. Remember that. Sleep at such a time, *perkele*! We’ve got to be up and doing things at such a time. You just wait, you’ll soon hear things you never dreamt about. We shan’t only take back what’s ours! And you, too, we’ll give so much land that you’ll be richer than your boss, *perkele*!”

It was pleasant, of course, to hear such things, but I never thought at the time that all the trouble would come from them. And again it affected Vilho first, and not me, though he was working at a nationally important enterprise that was supplying export butter direct to Germany.

I was still mowing the grass on Mr. Kurkimäki’s flood meadows and he was already advancing against Russia in Eastern Karelia. I heard about it from two of his pals who were still working at Ahonen’s sawmill. But he didn’t write to me. He must have been pretty sore at me. A year went by and I didn’t receive a single line.

And then he disappeared altogether. I could not make out what had happened. His pals at the sawmill got a letter from his army mates.

That letter stated that Vilho was no more. There had been a fierce battle and heavy artillery fire that had mowed down a lot of men. And after that battle Vilho was no more. He was missing.

Now, that might mean anything—either he had been killed or was taken prisoner by the Russians. His pals reassured me that some men did get taken prisoners in that battle and my brother might have been among them. But according to Mr. Kurkimäki it amounted to the same thing. I asked him:

“Why does it amount to the same thing?”

He answered:

“Because I know what the Bolsheviks do to those who fall into their clutches.”

I asked:

“What do they do?”

He answered:

“They start with the fingernails.”

That didn't tell me anything, so I asked again:

“What fingernails?”

He explained:

“First they drive nails under the fingernails, and then they do all the rest.”

My hair even started to stir on the back of my head at these words, and I asked:

“What then?” •

Though he was busy he went on explaining to the end, seeing my ignorance:

“Oh, the usual thing. They chop off the fingers and toes, then the hands and feet. They chop off a little at a time so’s not to kill the victim at once. They cut out the skin, sear those places with tar and throw the man into a cellar in chains. Time you knew such things. The whole world knows all there is to know about the Bolsheviks, only you don’t know. Don’t you read the papers, at least?”

I said I had not read them for a long time—I simply did not have the time for them. I couldn’t tell him that ten marks a day was too little to allow one’s self the luxury of a newspaper. Elsa and I had to buy things for four thousand marks at least. But I didn’t think it necessary to tell him that.

And he went on explaining that every Finn who loved his country should read the newspapers, otherwise folks would think he didn’t care a hang about his country which had given him life, looked after him and protected him. One would think he was a stranger in this country and wished it ill. And I readily agreed with him:

“That’s true, that’s true.”

But the thought of my brother worried me all the time, and I didn't know what to do and what to say. It was simply terrible to think of. . . . But he stood around a little longer, as if trying to remember something, then said:

"I can only say this: your Vilho would be a darned sight better off lying dead in the grave. But I'm very much afraid he's alive. In fact, I'm sure that he's alive and groaning this moment somewhere in a cellar with chains on his stumps of arms and legs and with burnt-out eyes. I'm sure of it, because I know what those Bolsheviks are. . . ."

I am not such a fool, of course, as to believe everything I'm told. But all the wrinkles on Mr. Kurkimäki's face set in such a look that I realized at once how cut up he was over my brother's bad luck. He even waved his hand with a hopeless gesture and shook his head sadly.

My fists clenched involuntarily, and I said through set teeth:

"They deserve to be killed!"

He nodded his head, still wrinkling the creases on his forehead with a distressed air. And when he went away I mowed and mowed without a break until I had the horses all in a

lather. Only then did I set the mower running free and give the horses a little break.

The image of my mangled brother did not leave my mind.

Once, towards the close of autumn, my wife said to me:

“They say they’ve driven down a party of Russian war prisoners to Lappeenranta to mend the road.”

She always knew all the latest news, especially after she had been to Pohjanpää’s creamery. Elias always used to dish out all the latest news to her. He always used to talk about everything he knew. That’s the way he was made. And so everybody else knew what was on his mind.

He missed going to the war this time, too, even though he was so keen on going. And he complained to everyone about it—even to my Elsa—describing in detail what he would do to the Russians if he were there. He’d take a Tommy gun and start mowing them all down, one after the other. . . .

But I wasn’t listening. All I heard and kept in mind was that the Russians had been driven down to Lappeenranta to mend the road.

On Sunday I told Elsa that I was going to see if there was anything new in town.

She looked at me in surprise, but said: "All right."

I did not get as far as town, however. I had nothing to do there. I found what I wanted before I got to town.

Yes, it really was the Russians. I must have hung around them for close of an hour. But I did not hit any of them. I did not even spit in any of their faces. Somebody had taken care not to make life too sweet for them. They looked pretty low, and some of them swayed and dropped beneath the weight of the handbarrows they were carrying loaded with sand or stones.

These were the same Russians who had taken my brother prisoner, cut off his hands and feet, burnt his eyes out and thrown him into a cellar in chains.

But I didn't hit any of them. I only went up closer to one of them, a fellow as big as myself, and thought it wouldn't be a bad idea after all to knock him off his feet. My fists even clenched of themselves in my pockets when I thought of it.

But I didn't.

That big Russian turned his face to me, too. And I didn't see his eyes—they were sunk in his face. The first thing I noticed was

a short red scar running down the upper part of his wide forehead, and I understood in what state he got taken prisoner. I also saw a pair of broad, sharp cheekbones and a massive jaw like my own, with the same big firm mouth like I had. Strange! Even his nose was like mine, slightly turned up, only a bit shorter. I was surprised when I noticed this.

But in the places where a man's cheeks were supposed to be he had two deep hollows. There were grey hollows, too, in place of eyes. He looked at me out of these hollows and then went on pressing his boot down on the spade which wouldn't dig into the ground. I looked at the others and saw everywhere empty hollows in place of cheeks and eyes. Yes, somebody had already done his business, and done it pretty thoroughly, may God be his judge.

I went away without taking revenge for my brother, and it worried me a long time afterwards. I should have struck one of them with my fist or a knife. I was a bad brother, and there was no one to make me feel ashamed of myself the way I deserved.

All winter I suffered agonies of remorse for having turned out to be such a bad brother, and I made up my mind in the spring to go again where I could find the Russians. But I wasn't given the chance to go anywhere.

At the close of spring Paavo Pikkunen one day came close up to me, slipped a paper into my hand, looked about him stealthily, and whispered:

"Read it by yourself."

I was astonished. Since when had he gone in for slipping notes, like a young lady. You couldn't get a word out of him lately, leave alone a note. He grew less and less talkative from day to day. He had an occasional word only for the horses, and had stopped speaking to people entirely.

Nothing in him had changed. His face was just as round, and there was just the same number of wrinkles round his eyes. He had the same cap on his head, the same boots on his feet, the same woollen trousers and pull-over, the same scarf and short coat. But he seemed to have shrunk a bit these last few months. Shrunk all round at the same time and got smaller in size.

And his strength was on the wane, too. He still worked from morning till night. You could always see him with a tool in his hands. On finishing his work in the smithy he would instantly go to the place where we had dumped the timber and stones for the building work the year before. And there he immediately set about whittling logs and blocks for the new buildings.

But his strength was on the wane. Anybody could see that. He found it difficult now to handle the logs and ever more frequently straightened up his little back to take his breath. And there were hoarse, wheezy noises in his chest. That was from tobacco and liquor. Chiefly liquor. He was resorting to that pretty often. There wasn't a Sunday he didn't pour all his week's earnings down his throat.

Even Herra Kurkimäki began to notice it. One day he walked into the workmen's hut just when Paavo was sitting on his bunk staring drunkenly at the opposite wall. That was Sunday, and Saturday on the eve he hadn't managed to whittle all the blocks he had set out to do, though he had promised the boss he would. He had forgotten that he wasn't the man he used to be and told the

boss, referring to the heap that lay strewn across the path:

"I'll do that all today, to get it out of the way."

He tried to do it, but couldn't manage it. He'd forgotten that he lost more time every day waiting for the attack of wheezing in his chest to pass off.

And he didn't finish what he had promised the boss, he didn't plane the whole pile. Previously he'd have spent another night and even Sunday over it, because he never left undone what he had promised to do. But this time the heap of logs was too big and the strength in his little shrinking body too weak.

He wheezed hard over those logs till late in the night, but then went home after all, and lay down on the bunk without undressing, in his woollen pull-over, coat and trousers. And the next morning he remembered it was Sunday and time to drink away his week's wages. It did not matter to him that liquor had gone up in price. All he knew was that he had to drink away his wages. And Kerttu Lahtinen, the dairymaid, always had a couple of bottles handy.

So there he was, sitting on the bunk staring at the wall with his light eyes, like

lake water, and Herra Kurkimäki came in, saw him in that state and remembered what he had promised the day before. And he began scolding him, shouting at him in a shrill voice and even stamping his foot once or twice:

“Maybe you’d like to go to the army, eh? I can fix that up for you in a tick if you want! I’ll kick you to hell out of here. I don’t need any loafers about here!”

And he went away in a temper. But Paavo went on sitting staring at the wall, though the two old day labourers and Kerttu were still standing stiff at attention, frightened by the boss’ angry voice. Paavo went on staring at the wall—only his eyes all of a sudden began to shine strangely.

I had never seen him crying before, and here suddenly his eyes filled with tears which streamed down the puckered wrinkles of his flabby yellow cheeks. There he sat, staring in front of him, while the tears welled from his eyes, tears that were as clear as his eyes. They flowed down his cheeks to the little round chin, the old brown scarf wrapped round his thin neck, the woollen sweater, and dropped to his worn trousers and turned-down boots.

It seemed as though he would cry his eyes out. But he suddenly dropped on the bunk and turned his face away.

Yes, he was a curious man, that little taciturn Paavo Pikkunen of ours, and you couldn't make him out. The oddest part about it was that he was getting littler and littler all the time, like a roasting ham from which the precious fat drips out drop by drop.

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I remembered the paper he had slipped into my hand only late in the evening when I was nearing my hillock.

I pulled it out of my pocket and opened it. There proved to be two papers. Something was printed on them, the same on both. I couldn't make out the print, but by the light of the stars I could make out a picture at the top of each sheet. I peered at it and nearly cried out in amazement:

"Vilho!"

I took the rest of the hillock at a run, and first thing asked Elsa when I came in:

"Are the kiddies asleep?"

She said they were.

"Light the lamp, quick."

She lit the lamp and I unfolded both sheets. Yes, it was Vilho! My God! His picture was printed in full bust. Everything was in its place. The same fine brave eyes, the taut cheeks, the same smile. And underneath it was printed in Finnish:

“My dear brother Einari,

“Fond greetings to you from the Soviet Union. Fate has willed that I should be far removed from the horrors of the front. Do not worry about me. I am living well among others like me. The food and treatment are quite good. I wish you as well to see the end of the war safely through and then we’ll meet again in the same old place.

“Your brother Vilho Pitkäniemi.”

And on the back of each sheet the same thing was written in Vilho’s own handwriting. Even his signature was reproduced exactly. Vilho had written it himself. He had written to me. That was his first letter to me since the war began, and he was alive and well, my silly, harum-scarum brother Vilho.

I don’t remember how many times I tossed my Elsa up to the ceiling that evening. And when we had finished with the fried potatoes and the *korvike*<sup>1</sup> she said:

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<sup>1</sup> Ersatz coffee.

"Maybe all the rest they say about the Russians are also lies?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything."

I couldn't contain myself the next morning from taking one of the papers with me and showing it to Mr. Kurkimäki. I wanted to hear what he would have to say about it and see what the creases on his face looked like when he saw my brother's picture. For I still remembered the talk about the fingernails and the lopped-off hands and feet.

But he said something quite different from what I had expected. When he had taken a good look at Vilho's portrait his eyes screwed up in such a way that all the creases round them were bunched together. And then they fell back into place, all but the deepest furrows. Two of them on his forehead even seemed to have become deeper and ran right up his forehead from the bridge of his nose to the tip of his hat. He looked at me from under his hoods and said:

"We ought to find out who it is collects such things, and report it to the police. You know what we may come to if we start believing all kinds of bosh."

And I said hastily:

"Yes. That's true. That's true."

And there and then, before his very eyes, I tore the sheet into shreds and scattered them to the wind.

Really, God knows what we may come to if we start believing such things. It's awful even to contemplate. That's why I tore up the paper. The wind scattered the bits all over. But I felt rather jolly at the moment, I don't know why. But the boss I told:

"It's a pity I didn't come across more of them. Now, if I'd have found all the papers they dropped down, so's to be able to nip that nuisance in the bud...."

And Herra Kurkimäki nodded his head so violently that his fleshy jowls began to quiver. After that he hung around for a bit, stealing glances at me, and then began to growl in his usual grumbling tone:

"There's a new job waiting for you. A paying job. I could simply put you on it without going into explanations, but I want you to see how much I appreciate and respect you, so I'll tell you what it's all about. They've taken Pohjanpää's horse driver to the army—he wasn't only a driver, he used to give a hand in the factory as well. He's only got Elias and the chauffeur left now, and they

may be taken any day. They're taking his truck, too, for war requirements. The milk will have to be delivered by horse and cart. It's his own fault. The enterprise didn't look solid enough in the eyes of the government officials. He couldn't even install an electric motor all this time. But that's not the point. He asked me to let him have you to help him. I said I couldn't do it. I need you myself. But you'll go down there twice a day to deliver the milk by our horse and help run it through the separator and churn the butter. But here in the stables and the dairy all the work still remains yours. And you'll have to finish what ploughing's to be done, too. It can't be helped. You'll have to do things a bit faster and sometimes work part of the night. I'll raise your pay to fifteen marks a day. And for what you do at the creamery I'll pay you an extra ten marks a day. But you've got to keep an eye open there and learn the ins and outs of the business. Do you get me? I'll soon have a creamery of my own. You know that. Well, I can promise you beforehand that you won't have the meanest job there, if you try to do your best."

I did not immediately fully grasp all he had told me. The news was so sudden. Bu!

one thing I did grasp at once, and in order to make sure, I queried:

“That means twenty-five marks a day?”

And he nodded his head:

“Yes.”

Christ Almighty! Of course I was willing. I was ready to work day and night without a break for extra money. There was no need to coax me. But one thing worried me:

“What about when the haymowing starts? I won’t be able to get away.”

He set me at ease:

“I’ll get men by that time.”

“Where will you get men from, sir?”

“I’ll get ’em.”

“Well, all the better. If that’s the case I’ll do the work of two.”

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Elsa got it from me again after that. I tossed her up so high that her shoulder hit the ceiling. I had to kiss her several times to smother her grumbling. And as her lips were so kissable I threw in a few extra ones while I was about it.

And then we fell to discussing the cow. It wasn’t so very difficult now to save up the amount we needed to buy her. A hundred

marks in four days, a thousand marks in forty days. Fancy that!

But, as ill luck would have it, I had barely earned my first thousand when everything got upset and went to the dogs, damn it.

Elias Pohjanpää was right when he said that we'd yet show what's what. That's about what did happen. We showed what's what. . . .

When I brought down the cans with milk to the creamery the first time, Elias was overjoyed to see me. Lately I was always out in the field, on the ploughland, when he came on the truck for the milk. So we hadn't seen each other for a long time. And so his white teeth fairly flashed beneath his black little moustache when he yelled:

"Oho, *perkele*! If it isn't Einari down in our parts! How d'you do, pal! And we turned in the car yesterday, and the chauffeur, too, while we were at it, *perkele*! I wondered, what the hell are we going to do now about the milk. Who's going to deliver it? But father says: 'The customers will deliver their own milk.' Today all the others delivered their milk and went away. Promised to come back in the evening for the skimmed milk. But there wasn't a sign of anybody from Kurkimäki's, *perkele*. . . ."

I said to him:

"I had to finish one or two jobs there first. I'll be held up here a bit, you know. I've come to do the work of Mustonen."

He threw in:

"I know, I know. Perhaps you'll take my place, too? Eh? Have a try. You'll get fifteen marks an hour to begin with. Not so bad, eh? *Perkele*. . . . If you want, I'll have a talk with father?"

I answered:

"No, he wouldn't give me fifteen marks an hour."

I don't know what there was funny in that, but my remark sent Elias into a fit of laughter. At any rate his teeth were bared for fully two minutes, so that the saliva dried on them. He was still laughing when he yelled.

"O, *perkele*! Why, you've got the appetite of a pike, you have! That's not bad, though. By gosh, not bad at all. Give me more of your kind. But do you really mean it?"

I said:

"Mustonen here used to get fifty marks a day, but Herra Kurkimäki pays me only ten for doing his work."

He burst out laughing again and said "*perkele*."

We carried both heavy cans inside, and there Elias said again:

"I didn't mean about him paying you less, *perkele*. That's his business. But do you mean to say you could cope with that job, too?"

I queried:

"For fifteen marks an hour?"

"Yes."

"Sure I would."

"O, *perkele*!"

I helped him to pour part of the milk out of the can into a small aluminium tank covered with a straining cloth. He dipped a long glass tube into it, pressed his thumb over the upper aperture and drew it out again. The tube was filled with milk. He thrust its lower end into an empty glass test tube and released his thumb from the top of the tube. The milk immediately ran into the test tube. He was taking a test for fatty content.

I helped him pour the milk from the tank into the separator and fill the tank again with milk from the can. And he took another fat test. He had several of these test tubes with milk standing in a little box. Afterwards they did something with these test tubes. They added, if I am not mistaken, a drop of sulphuric acid and spun ~~them~~ round in some sort

of machine so fast that all the fat in the milk collected at one end of the test tube. In this way they determined the percentage of fat in each customer's milk in order to fix the exact price to be paid for the milk delivered.

When we had poured another tank into the separator, Elias said:

"I'm fed up to death with it all. I wanted to go to the front in the winter's war, if you remember, but they didn't take me. Now all those who took part in the winter's war have received decorations, and I haven't. Why am I worse than the others, *perkele*? I want to have a medal, too. If they'd only let me go to the front this time I'd show 'em what real fighting is. In a whole year they haven't even got as far as *Pietari*. Call that fighting, *perkele*! You've got to advance and attack, advance and attack and not give the *Ryssä* time to collect their wits. They're such a tough crowd, you know. Just give 'em a week's respite and you won't be able to dislodge 'em after that, *perkele*. We've got to take the offensive if we are going to hold what we've taken and take some more besides. To be left with nothing after we've been preparing for it so many years. I want to take a swell house for myself, for instance, in *Pietari*, on their main street,

the Nevsky. Ain't I entitled to at least one house for all my pains? Dammit, it's our Finnish city, ain't it, *perkele*. And Dad wants to take some lands in Eastern Karelia. He took a trip down there and has got his eye on a choice bit. It's about time I made my way in life, and here I am doing the job of a common worker in the family's own business, just as if that's all I was born for. Time to climb out of this hole and work my way up. The *Ryssä*—that's whom we should make work for us, *perkele*! But first we've got to defeat 'em. We've got to advance on them first. That's what the Germans are demanding, that we should advance on them quickly, instead of which we sit and do nothing."

I asked:

"The Germans are demanding? What business is it of theirs whether we advance or not?"

He answered:

"You don't understand anything. We're allies now."

I said:

"Oh, I see! But then why are they demanding of us and not we of them? Aren't we the bosses here? They're only guests in our country."

But he waved his hand again in annoyance.

“If you don’t understand anything you’d better keep your mouth shut. ‘Guests,’ *perkele!* Where d’you see guests. They’re that kind o’ guests who are likely to snatch *Pietari* from under our nose if we don’t look out. We must advance if we don’t want all our plans ruined. You won’t win yourself a house on the Nevsky or land in Eastern Karelia by sitting back. We’ve got to take the offensive. We’ve got to smash the *Ryssä*, *perkele!* Christ, if I was only there! I’d make ’em see it! I’d show ’em! D’you mean to say they won’t let me go? Gee, if I could only do for at least a dozen of the *Ryssä*, *perkele....*”

I tried to keep my eyes open to everything that he was doing, as Herra Kurkimäki had advised me. You can never tell. I might really have to take his place. The separator was new to me, and I could not make out what he was doing around it. So I had to keep my eyes properly skinned if I was to learn the ins and outs. The fellow was awfully keen on killing the Russians and he might manage to get his way in the end. Who’d take his place then?

He asked me:

“Wouldn’t you like to do for at least one *Ryssä*? Why, they’re the cause of all the trouble in the world, *perkele*....”

I said after a moment’s thought:

“Yes. Once I badly wanted to kill one of them.”

He threw in quickly:

“And so you will! Dash it, you will! There’ll come a time when you’ll kill more than one. You’re a real guy! You ought to join our organization. I’ve been telling you that time and again. Write out an application. Haven’t you a house of your own, *perkele*! You have to defend it. We’ll go and beat the *Ryssä* together when you join up. They ought to be wiped out clean, otherwise all our plans will go to rack and ruin, *perkele*!”

Just then his father came in and said:

“Why aren’t you turning the machine? What are you waiting for? Or has everything come to a stop without Mustonen?”

I went at once and unharnessed the horses from the sledges in which I had brought the milk. Elias showed me what I had to do. I hitched the traces to a wooden rod sticking out of the side of a high thick pole and began to drive the horse slowly around the pole which immediately began to turn on its

axis together with a pinion fastened on the top. This started rotating a big iron roller that ran inside through a hole in the wall. And there the roller turned a driving belt running to the separator, and the separator instantly started to make a pleasant humming noise and two white jets started running from two of its tubes into two aluminium tanks—a broad stream of skimmed milk and a small thick stream of cream.

All I had to do was to keep the horse moving evenly. I had purposely come for that on our little old mare. Any boy could have done that job. The bridle halter was tied to a stick nailed on the pole in front of the horse. The horse rotated the pole together with the stick and the stick pulled the horse by the bridle. Actually what was happening was that the horse was pulling itself and no driving was necessary.

All I need do was to follow leisurely behind the horse, clicking my tongue from time to time and thinking of nothing for a full hour until all the milk had run through the separator. But as a matter of fact I did do some thinking, especially after what Elias had said about the Russians. I was thinking of people who gouged out their prisoners' eyes, chopped

off their hands and feet and chained them in a cellar without even allowing them to write a letter home—not even a little letter with a portrait on one side and the text on the other, which could then be multiplied on a printing press and dropped from an airplane near the village where the prisoner's brother lives, though he were a bad, unworthy brother. What could one think of such people? They should all be wiped out, otherwise somebody or other's plans would go to rack and ruin because of them, *perkele*....

When the milk had been run through the separator I helped Elias to carry the cream into the back room where there stood a cement bath with water and ice. The cans with the skimmed milk were placed in a corner to be returned to their owners in the evening. I put my own cans on the cart to be delivered to Mrs. Kurkimäki. She knows how much of this milk to share out to us, her workmen, and how much to the calves and the suckling pigs.

This work wasn't at all hard. Why it was worth ten marks had me beat. It was no more difficult further on. We carried the tanks with yesterday's cream out of the cold room and put them in warm water. The warm water

was poured into a wide square cauldron, under which Elias had lit a fire before I came.

His father went away just then. So Elias ladled me up a full mug of cream and said:

“Have a drink, if you want, while the old man’s not here. Go ahead, drink it, never mind. I’d never grudge you anything.”

I really shouldn’t have done it. I felt ashamed of my greediness afterwards. But at the moment I thought: “why shouldn’t I have a drink of thick fresh cream if there’s so much of it and it costs nothing? I’ll eat less at dinner.” But I really shouldn’t have done it, especially accepting the mug out of Elias Pohjanpää’s hand, although he was a decent fellow, the kind of man the country needs. He patted me on the back and kept on saying:

“Go on, drink it! I’m prepared to do anything for you. You and I ought to be together all the time. Gee, the things we’d do....”

Presently we poured several tanks of warmed cream into the churn and I went out again to drive the horse. He shifted the driving belt to the axle of the churn and cried out:

“Go ahead!”

I drove the horse, and the churn, which resembled a barrel with its bellied sides pierced

by an axle, began to rotate lengthwise, turning up its bottoms alternately to the ceiling. Inside it the warm cream splashed about, now and then washing over a little glass peephole fixed in the side. When yellow grains of butter began to settle on the peephole instead of white cream, Elias cried out:

“Stop, *perkele!*”

I brought the horse to a stop and threw it some hay out of the cart. Then he called out to me again:

“Dust yourself down properly! Roll up your sleeves and wash your hands. Mind they’re clean under the nails! There’s a brush, there’s the soap, there’s the tap. And then you’ll put on this here over-all.”

He changed his own over-all for a cleaner one and covered his hair with a little white linen cap. I had to put on a little cap like that myself.

I did everything he told me to do and tried to keep a close eye on everything that he did, for you could never tell what might happen in life. . . . Of course, I couldn’t count on fifteen marks an hour, but, good heavens, if I could get at least an extra twenty marks a day for that job I’m sure I’d manage it. Twenty and twenty-five—that makes forty-

five marks. For 'forty-five marks I could lift the whole of their creamery on my back and carry it off a hundred miles.

Elsa had no idea what prospects there were for an additional income. I must keep my eyes open, keep them well open to everything that Elias was doing.

I saw him splash cold water over the wooden surface of a round little table press the middle of which bulged slightly in the shape of a cone. He swilled it several times, then began taking the clots of butter out of the churn with a perforated scoop, allowing the buttermilk to run off into the churn. He laid the butter onto the table press until it was full.

Then I began to turn a handle fixed to a wooden dented roller running from the centre of the table to its outer edge. I began turning the handle of this roller and the whole table began to rotate together with the butter which was pressed under the roller.

Meanwhile Elias poured clean cold water over the butter, washing the remains of the buttermilk onto the cement floor. He turned the butter over with two little wooden bats, also dipped in water, rolled it into a ball and pushed it under the roller again, dashing water

over it. And the roller flattened it out again in a long jagged pancake.

When the butter became firm and free of buttermilk Elias rolled it up into a ball again and carried it into the adjoining room where he placed it on a big wooden table previously swilled with water. Then he began taking the butter grains out of the churn again and putting them in the table press.

I tried tasting that butter. I took several clots with my fingers and put them in my mouth. But it didn't strike me as very tasty without potatoes and bread. Seeing me do that Elias said:

"Eat it, go on. I don't mind. I can't touch it—turns my stomach! Can't touch cream either. Bound to upset my stomach, *perkele*. You eat it, if you can stand the stuff. Go on, help yourself. But don't you dare bring any bread here. If my old man sees a crumb even on the floor, leave alone in the butter or the cream, he'll murder you on the spot, *perkele*. Go on turning. I've got to mould the butter before dinner. Oh, I'm fed up with it all, *perkele*! D'you mean to say I won't get the chance to go to the front? Gee, just to—only a dozen of the *Ryssä*. . . . Everybody's getting medals and crosses again, except me, *perkele*."

In the end his croaking got him what he asked for. In vain, too, was my own chasing after big money. God decreed otherwise. In vain did I keep an eye skinned to what he was doing when he handled the milk and cream, rolled the pile of butter on the table, crammed it into a wet wooden mould, opened up the mould and wrapped the big fine-looking slab of butter in wet parchment, washed all the tables and tanks and the churn and floor with hot water when he had finished, carried lumps of ice from the refrigerator into the cold room at the back where the cream was cooling in a bath with ice in it.

In vain did I closely watch all these doings. In vain did I lend him an eager hand in all this as he directed me. In vain did I count on profiting from other men's misfortune. I, too, was taken to the army.

I was taken, Elias was taken, so was the chauffeur and many others who had thought to sit it out at home. We were taken because the war proved stronger than all of us. It devoured men in batches and demanded ever more and more of them, may he who started it be blasted. Who started it? Oh, *perkele!*...

Only Paavo Pikkunen still remained behind, I daresay because he was too old and weak for a soldier's job. Besides, the wheezing, whistling noises inside him grew stronger every day, and when he lit his pipe first thing in the morning after waking he used to have a coughing fit that lasted at least half an hour.

The last time I went into the stable he had just finished coughing, had wiped away the tears and was sitting by the wall, blowing out smoke and listening to the crunch of the oats on the horses' teeth.

He stole a look at me, probably guessing that I had come to say good-bye, but kept silent, as usual. I took my mittens and stood around a bit, thinking of what I could say to him. I wanted to say something nice to him, he deserved it. Wasn't it he who had picked up the two Russian leaflets near Lappeenranta and hid them for me? The police ransacked the whole neighbourhood collecting them and even posted up a notice demanding that they should be destroyed or turned in, if anyone found them. But he had not destroyed them, had not turned them in, in order to give me pleasure. And I did not know what to say to him at parting.

While I was pondering he spoke up first. He stole another look at me and said, shifting his pipe to the corner of his mouth:

“Going?”

I nodded my head.

He sucked at the pipe for a while, then said:

“Cheating the boss of his profits, eh?”

I did not get him, and asked:

“What profits?”

He explained:

“Kalle Pohjanpää paid our Hugo the whole of Mustonen’s wages for you—fifty marks a day. And you’re going away. He’ll lose that profit now.—forty marks a day.”

I did not know what to say to that, and just stood striking one mitten against the other to give them a dusting. So that’s how it was. I hadn’t known that. But who cares. I was going away from here now and did not know whether I would ever come back again. It no longer mattered to me.

Paavo was saying again:

“Going together with Elias?”

“No.”

“So he didn’t succeed in enrolling you?”

“Enrolling me where?”

He sucked his pipe, then explained:

"They say they pay a premium to each man who draws a decent new member into their crew. I noticed he was always fussing around you. Looks as if he's been wasting his time."

I did not know what to say to this. He was coming out with such news as had never entered my head.

A couple of minutes later he opened his mouth once more:

"You should have joined their crew."

"What for?"

"You could have evaded the front, like Elias."

"Like Elias?"

"Yes. He was offered the choice of the front or some outfit of interior guard duty for hunting out deserters. He chose this outfit and when he had chosen it he went around trying to prove to everybody that he would be of greater service here than at the front and that he'd show what a real man can do in combating deserters and the internal enemies of Suomi."

Paavo paused for a while, then added:

"I must say he knows his business. He's handed over three more malcontents to the police."

I looked into the little corner cupboard to see whether there were any more of my things left in the stable. No, there was nothing else, except these here canvas mittens. I shut the cupboard and held my hand out to Paavo in silence. He got up, holding his own out towards me, but did not say anything more, just squeezed my fingers very hard in his broad little paw, very hard.

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And so they took me to the war, where they couldn't do without me now. I was told that I had to go and defend my land against the Russians, so I went to defend it. I didn't want them to take my four little vegetable beds away from me. I needed them myself. I grew such a lot of stuff on them that I crammed my barns, cellars and basements chock-full with 'em. I and my family might perish from starvation if they took those vegetable beds away from me. On no account could I afford to lose them, on no account. I was sorry I had not had time to warn Elsa that she should carry them away with her in a basket if we had to retreat before the Russians.

I wasn't to replace Mustonen and Elias at the creamery in order to rake in the marks. Instead, I put on grey cloth trousers and a tunic, took a tommy gun in my hands, struck up together with others a jaunty song about how we would give the *Ryssä* a thrashing and tramped off down the dried spring road southward whence a warm wind blew in our faces and the sun shone.

I can't make out what they needed me for this time. Or perhaps they really did intend advancing still farther, as the Germans demanded? Damn those Germans, if that's the case! Who the devil invited them here! Nobody asked me whether they should be invited or not. Of course, those higher up knew better than I what they were invited for, still it was I who went into the trenches and not they, if it comes to that.

I now knew a thing or two better even than Mr. Kurkimäki. He had been cut up about my Vilho having had his hands and feet chopped off and thrown into a cellar, but I knew that it wasn't so. And sitting in the trenches I had thought the whole thing over again and said to myself: "No."

Where could the Bolsheviks have got such a portrait of Vilho in his soldier's cap without

the badge, unless they had Vilho himself from whom they had torn the badge off? Where could they have got his exact signature, unless he had given it himself? The main thing—who could have written a letter to me, his brother, exactly in his handwriting, if not Vilho himself? No power on earth could compel him to write such a letter unless he wanted to himself—I know Vilho. And if he had written it, he'd written the truth, which meant that he really was alive and well.

So I sat arguing with myself in the trenches, and was even a little proud of having so cunningly got to the bottom of the matter. Perhaps it was this sitting in the trenches under Russian fire that helped to clarify the brain—I couldn't say.

In any case, a soldier's days in the trenches drag on wearily, and every day is like another, grey and dreary. The only bright spots in these grey and endless days are letters from home.

Elsa wrote me about everything that was going on. Herra Kurkimäki had not gone broke on account of my going away. It appears he hadn't been merely boasting when he told me he would get workers for the mowing season. He really did get them, and not only for

haymaking, but for ploughing and reaping and threshing, and for the building of the creamery and the flour mill, and for lumbering and carting stones. He had secured as many as fifteen men and they worked for him for next to nothing—just for *näkkileipä*,<sup>1</sup> skimmed milk and potatoes, and for very little of these.

Herra Kurkimäki was a smart guy, and knew how to make profit out of the war and not a loss. He took Russian war prisoners from the camp and made them work for him. Jesus Christ, not every man would have thought of that. To make your enemies work for you, eh! Make them work for nothing, for just four tiny *näkkileipä*, a litre of skimmed milk and half a litre of soup made from rotten potatoes which even Mrs. Kurkimäki's pigs refused to eat. Make them work for this from morning till evening, work so they couldn't stand on their feet from fatigue by evening. Dash it, that was a real smart idea, and even worth starting the war for, *perkele*!...

God knows what things a man only thinks about sitting in the wet trenches all through the long grey soldier's days. There is nothing

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<sup>1</sup> Flat dried rye bread.

in the world more dismal. I say nothing about the nights, the cold black autumn nights with wind and rains, or the frosty nights of winter. They drag on so long and slowly as though nothing else in the world ever existed or ever will, and Elsa, Martta and Lauri and the little red house on the stony hillock were like a beautiful remote dream.

That Elsa of mine is a grand lass. She at least brought that dream back to me. She never tired of writing about everything that was going on at home.

There was a lot of work to do, a whole lot. The master had more cows now in the dairy, and Kerttu had left. She had married an invalid who owned a little patch of his own. At last she had found a home for her longing, lonely heart.

Lauri and Martta had grown. Lauri was still making attempts to climb up the sheer wall of rock which darkened the house to where there was so much light and sunshine. But he still kept losing his hold and falling onto the soft vegetable beds, only to jump to his feet again and crawl up once more. He was growing up a dogged youngster.

Things had become worse with food. There were days when there was only skimmed milk

and potatoes on the table. Once in a while they had some fish. They had to buy some extra food on the black market. It couldn't be helped. As for boots and clothes, they had disappeared entirely. That is, you could buy clothes and boots, but who could think of buying when an ordinary winter coat cost four thousand marks. And instead of real boots, wooden-soled shoes with paper uppers had become the mode.

Things were not entirely quiet in the country. Elsa's uncle wrote her from Kemijärvi that the Germans had made the authorities introduce some kind of tax in the North. It appears that the Finns were in debt to them on account of their defending our Suomi against the Bolsheviks. They wanted to confiscate all the leather from old Kauko Murato, the tanner. But he refused to give it up. And when they started taking it away by force he took his hunting gun off the wall and shot three of them dead, smashing the shoulder of the fourth with the butt. Some old man that!

And then Elsa's uncle wrote that Toivo Mäntylä had come home on leave and found his sweetheart with a German officer. The next morning the officer was found in a ditch with his throat cut and Toivo took to the forest.

And there were many other instances of our men quarrelling and having knife fights with the Germans over some girl or for other reasons, though this was not at all what the Germans had come to our country for.

But private Arvi Heinola, home on furlough, beat them all hollow. He knifed two Germans in one go during a fight and threw a third out of the window and got away himself.

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Summer, autumn, winter, and again summer and again winter. Our life in the trenches ran on steadily. Sometimes a Russian bomb would drop nearby, and then we would go to collect tendons and bones to lay them in a pit together with shreds of grey soldiers' uniforms. Sometimes our scouts would go out across the river Rajajoki, and then we would meet and send off to the medical station the few whom God had helped to crawl back. Sometimes the Russian artillery destroyed our dugouts, and then those of us who were left with a whole skin dug the clayey sticky earth for a new dugout in the pitch-black night, dug with all our might, fearing another spurt of gunfire and greedily gulping with open mouths the cold

rain and wind of foul autumn weather or the freezing air of winter.

Elsa in her letters never tired of reminding me of that remote beautiful dream which I had seen but once in my life and had lost forever.

Things with Mr. Kurkimäki were going fine. At first he had fifteen Russian prisoners of war working for him, then their number was increased to twenty-five. They did all the work not only in the field and in the forest, but on the building sites, too. And Paavo Pikkunen was foreman over them. I'd like to see how he manages to talk with them.

At first some of the prisoners fell ill from the hard work and bad food. Herra Kurkimäki then sent them back to the camp and demanded others in their place. They gave him replacements. Then some of the war prisoners began complaining about the bad food they were getting. These, too, Herra Kurkimäki got replaced by new men. Soon, however, they stopped giving him replacements.

The Russians dug a deep ditch in the stony ground to join the two streams on the Kurkimäki land into a single stream. There was about fifty metres of ditch left to dig to con-

vert the two streams into one big current that was to drive the wheel of the flour mill, run the separator and the churn at the new creamery and supply electric light to the whole of the Kurkimäki farmstead and to my house.

But on this job one of the Russians was crushed by a rock, and they didn't send anyone to take his place. And when after this five Russians complained again about the food, they took them back and all the rest along with them and did not send anyone else to take their place any more.

Bad times set in for Mr. Kurkimäki. He visited the prisoners' camp to ask for another party of war prisoners, but they told him there:

"It's doubtful whether we'll be able to meet your request in the near future. They claim not only that you didn't give them extra food of your own but that you cut the ration which the camp gave you for them."

They say that Herra Kurkimäki for a long time couldn't find his tongue and just stared at everybody in surprise from under his creased hoods. In nineteen forty-two he had heard quite different speeches from the same men, and now thought they were simply joking.

But they weren't. They were in no joking mood. It was the year forty-four.

But Herra Kurkimäki didn't grieve long. What if they didn't give him any more Russian war prisoners. There were plenty of Russian Ingrians and Karelians in the country. They were free people it would seem. True, when they were taken off the rich lands of Eastern Karelia and around *Pietari* and shipped to Suomi they weren't asked whether they wanted to go or not. To keep them quiet they were promised land in our country. Otherwise it would have been very difficult to get them off the good Russian land. They were promised land here, but as it had not been prepared for them yet, they worked for our peasants for food and pay.

Herra Kurkimäki managed to get several Ingrian families transferred to his farm, and they worked for him in the field and woods, at the dairy and on the building of the mill and creamery.

Of course, Herra Kurkimäki paid them for their work not like he did the Russian war prisoners. Besides flour, potatoes and milk he paid them marks, too. Still, he didn't lose by it. What are marks worth these days? And the Ingrians accepted this pay.

They, who came from the boundless Russian fields were waiting to be given land in moss and stone-ridden Suomi. They had a lot of patience, those Ingrians, if they figured on getting land in Suomi.

Yes, Herra Kurkimäki knew how to get along, and took everything from the war he could. No wonder he trod the earth so securely on his heavy legs.

But what does it matter. I, too, was getting as much out of the war as I could. I was getting a soldier's sixteen marks a day. In a month that made four hundred and eighty marks, of which I sent four hundred clean cash to Elsa. Working that out in one's head, bearing in mind that this thing was dragging on not for one year and that Elsa didn't spend it all on the black market, one could hope that the cow was not so far away from us now.

It worked out then that I should rejoice and pray to God to keep the war going as long as possible. For the war was giving me a cow. Did I not have reason to rejoice and pray for it to keep going?

But God knew better what to do. The war ended. And that was the best thing for Suomi that could have happened.

My recollection of how it all happened is pretty hazy. It began and was all over before we knew it. True, we were expecting it and making busy preparations. We hauled timber and stones. We hewed, dug and built without pausing for breath. Our rations were increased and we were made to work through the whole long summer's day from dawn to dusk. But it was useless work and too late now to start it.

I worked on the second line of our defences. It was considered the strongest. Somebody called it "the necklace of death." We put all our efforts into building up its formidable links and welding them into one.

The Russians struck before we expected, though we had been expecting it all the time. This waiting had dragged on for so long that we got tired of waiting. And just at that moment they struck.

They broke through all our "necklaces of death" and made a dash from *Pietari* to Viipuri. I don't know what it was like, but I was told it was as though God himself had become enraged with sinful little Suomi and had flung a handful of fire and iron at her together with Russian soldiers.

I don't know what it was like, may God help me from knowing it! I was like in a dream. The whole world came tumbling about my ears and I no longer remembered where I was and who I was. If it was a dream it was a very terrible dream, nothing like the one where the little red house with its white windows stood peacefully and quietly in the shade of the rock on the stony slope of my hillock.

A cold rain poured down on my back and a wind blew in my wet face. My cheek was pressed against the rough foundation stone of a little house of which only a piece of wall with splintered rafters remained. I pressed against it and the earth and my only thought was that no one should see me. I had no other thoughts at the time. And all around me there was a noise of roaring thunder and the ground quaked under me.

I wasn't able to understand anything at the time, and I didn't try to understand. My only thought was not to be seen and crushed. But who was going to notice me? What did I signify then among this roaring hell of fire and iron over which the chill rain came down in sheets?

I hugged the wet foundation, seeking safety there.

Iron bulks rushed like the wind through smoke and rain with a clang of treads, while in front of them, at the side of them and behind them pillars of black damp earth shot up into the air. They shot up higher than the tanks and hung suspended for a moment, resembling a bush with black clods of earth instead of leaves and fruits. Then these clods came showering down on the turrets of the tanks and new clods of earth took their place in the air.

The Russian tanks rolled on in rows and one of them had nowhere to swerve aside when a little house cropped up in its path. It went through that house like an iron over the creases of washing.

I didn't even hear a noise. There were too many other noises. All I saw was that part of the roof got caught on the turret, was trailed along a bit and then dropped off.

Our guns were firing at the tanks. Their shots raised black bushes of earth and smoke with red flashes in the middle around the tanks. Some of the shells went home. They hit the armour, burst and scattered. I did not know what this meant at the time and I didn't care, so long as the tank didn't crush me. But now it's clear to me. Our shells rebounded from the Russian armour. They could not pierce it.

But there, one shell hit the mark after all, and the tank shuddered and came to a stop. A lot of black smoke came out of it. Then the upper hatch was thrown open and a man tumbled out, slapping himself over his burning clothes. Only one man. And immediately broad tongues of flame came belching out of the hatch, sweeping from right to left and licking the green paint off the turret.

Then there was a terrific thunder right over my head. I shut my eyes, hugging the ground still closer. The foundation stone shook and hit me in the shoulder and the jaw but did not drop away. The ground heaved under me and the thunder rolled away northwards, rending the air as it went. A Russian tank had passed over me.

When I raised my head again and opened my eyes I saw something that was more terrible than tanks. I saw the Russians. They were running in my direction.

I saw all the fields and stretches from the wrecked village to the distant forest, and all those fields were swarming with Russian soldiers running straight towards me. My God! That was Russia coming down on us. We had teased her and she had got moving and was coming down on us with all her great bulk.

Bushes of black earth and stones continued here and there to rise up in their path and our bullets fired from some rocky hillocks went whizzing among them, but they ran on. . . .

I could only stare at their faces on which the slanting rain beat down, and at their open mouths from which the breath came in rapid gasps. I was dazed by the multitude of faces which all looked alike to me.

One of them running ahead must have caught sight of some of my comrades who, like me, had not succeeded in getting away. He threw up his tommy gun as he ran and fired a short round. Running on a few more paces he caught sight of someone in another spot and fired several more shots.

I didn't think of anything then. The world was just a hideous chaos of exploding shells, whistling bullets, flame, smoke and rain, but the Russian soldier passed through all this and still seemed to be able to see and think.

And then he caught sight of me, too, swung his tommy gun round towards me and I felt a spray of stone and cement chips hit me in the face. I dropped face down onto the ground. But I couldn't lie there a second longer if I wished to remain alive.

I jumped to my feet, forgetting my tommy gun, and dashed across the path of the oncoming Russians, past the mud-spattered lifeless Russian tank wrapped in smoke, past the wreckage of the roof to where the bushes of currants and small trees could be seen beyond the vegetable plots.

I reached the bushes and threw myself on the ground. The Russian bullets whistled over my head—a full burst from a tommy gun. I waited until the firing ceased, then jumped up, ran on a bit farther and dropped to the ground again. The Russians rushed past shouting. They were running in front of me and behind me. They cut across the whole of this big garden planted with currant and raspberry bushes where I had thought to seek cover, and I crawled like a worm from bush to bush to avoid being seen and finished off.

I don't know how many of them ran past and how many were left lying, mowed down by our bullets. But when it grew a bit quieter I jumped up and made for the trees behind the garden. From there I steered for the forest which began a little way out of the village. That was my native Finnish forest. It would shield me like a dear mother from the ter-

rible things that were going on here and direct me home.

But as I was running across the last glade, jumping over killed and wounded, some one seized me by the leg and shouted out in Russian: "Stop!" And then added immediately in Finnish: "*Seis!*" and swore in Russian. I lost my balance and hit the ground with my face and chest.

While I was getting up the Russian had got up, too. He guessed where I was heading for, and barred my way to the forest. His green shirt was torn on the chest and soaked with blood.

He took a step towards me, and his tanned young face, which somehow reminded me of Vilho's, winced with pain. Only his face looked flabbier and yellower than Vilho's. He took a step towards me and repeated with pain in his voice:

"*Seis!*"

I looked at him and felt curious and terrified. There he was standing in front of me, he of whom so much had been written and spoken in our country, but of whom I knew nothing at all. He came up to me so close that I could distinctly see the fresh bruise on his chin and splashes of mud on his cheek,

and the pain and fury in his brown eyes. For twenty-seven whole years I had had him dinned into my head, him and his bare, empty, huge country. And now he was standing in front of me with his head slightly bent and shouting:

“Stop, damn you! *Seis!*”

I did not understand what he was saying. I only heard the sounds that flew out of his parched lips and was thinking how to get away from him quickly, before other Russians came up, and I dashed aside.

But he grabbed me by the shoulder. He was slightly under my height, but I could feel the terrible strength of his fingers. I had a hard time in wrenching myself free. But he grabbed hold of me again and I pushed him away from me with all my might. He fell down and clutched at me as he fell. I toppled down on him, on his bleeding chest.

I must have hurt him in falling, because he groaned. But he didn't let go of me, and we started rolling over the grass, clutching at each other's throat and hitting out with our fists.

I chose a moment when he started coughing and loosened his grip. I wrenched myself free and jumped to my feet.

I could have hit him on the head with a stone and killed him on the spot, but I couldn't hit him with a stone. I didn't want to fight him at all. Couldn't he understand that?

He hadn't killed my brother. I knew that for certain now. I just leapt aside so that he should not clutch my leg again in his iron grip and ran away. This time I got to the forest.

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The forest sheltered me from the Russians, shielded me from death. I crossed many rocky hillocks, rounded many lakes and swamps, going deeper and deeper into my native Suomi. A fine rain was falling and a cold wind blowing. My boots made sucking noises in the mud, my feet were wet, but then I had left behind what was going on back there down the roads.

In a deserted forest hut I found a little paper bag with wheat. Next to it lay some big empty paper bags. I took them with me and plunged into the forest once more.

Darkness fell, but I was still trudging on without track or trail through wind and rain, munching dry wheat grains. Late in the night I thought to cross a big hill, but I only had

sufficient strength to reach its summit. There I found a dry spot under a big boulder. I got out the bags, stuck my legs into one of them, tore another one open and wrapped it round my head and shoulders. The little bag of wheat I put under my head, the rest of the bags I spread under me, lay down on them and fell asleep.

I woke up in the morning when it was already quite light and the cold had penetrated through my damp clothes and chilled me to the marrow. It had stopped raining, but the air was just as chilly. I thrust my head out from behind the boulder and saw a big lake down below at the foot of the hill and a road to the left of it.

Good I had not descended that hill in the night. It would have brought me to the lake. The gleam of the water would have told me that the shortest way round it lay on the left, and I would have gone left and come out right on the road. And the roads were dangerous while the Russians were dashing down them.

That lake, then, had to be rounded from the right, though the eye could not see how far it stretched and where it ended. And so, thinking about having to go round the lake

on the right, I sat on the crest of the wooded rock next to a big boulder, gazed at the opposite shore of the lake and tried to figure out what awaited me there.

The shore rose from out the water in big granite ledges, and on each ledge there stood tall firs and pines, as straight as needles. They had been standing there for hundreds of years, their roots sunk in the crevices of the rock and their pointed crowns looking up into the sky.

They must have had a hard time growing on that bare stone, because there was no sap of life in that stone. It cost the roots a deal of effort to nourish those immense trunks, weighed down by thick shaggy branches. But there, they had nourished them after all, and now those giants towered to the skies, securely established on the rock. And the lake reflected them all in its depths, mirroring every stony ledge, every clump of these handsome green giants.

It always thrills me to look at such places where the greenery has conquered the stone by sheer power and patience, because I know from experience how difficult it is for life to take root on bare rock. All the more painful was it when I noticed that some idiots here

with guns and mine throwers had begun to open fire on the Russian tanks which made their appearance on the road.

If those idiots were set on throwing away their lives they might have chosen another place for it, somewhere among the bare rocks which no one would feel sorry to see smashed and splintered all over the ground.

But no, they had to open fire direct from these green ledges overhanging the placid lake, and immediately got a response from the road. A big fir tree, enveloped for a moment in a cloud of smoke, suddenly snapped at the base and slowly toppled over. It hit the edge of the rock and slithered down from ledge to ledge, losing its branches and needles as it went along.

More and more Russian guns began to speak up from the roadway. Every shot of theirs swept away a patch of green from the rocky ledges on the opposite shore, leaving them bare. Our gunners and mine throwers entrenched among the rocks made attempts to answer back. The flashes of their shots blazed here and there. Still more flashes came from the machine guns and tommy guns. The whole hillside, from top to bottom, crackled with them incessantly.

But ever more Russian guns opened up against the steep slope of the opposite shore. The whole shore was alive with fire and smoke, from base to summit, and little by little it divested itself of trees and stones which rolled down into the lake.

When the gunfire ceased and the wind had blown the last wisps of smoke off the ledges of rock I no longer saw on them the big straight trees that had proudly reared their heads to the skies. I saw only here and there their pitiful jutting wreckage and remnants of branches.

And then the Russian infantry swarmed to the base of the rock and began crawling up. They were met by the spitting of tommy guns and machine guns, but what good did these do?

I did not see how it all ended and hurried farther and farther away from this terrible spot, rounding the lake on the right. I was tormented by hunger and munched the wheat grains. There was nothing eatable in the forest yet, neither berries nor mushrooms. Nevertheless it was into the forest I went, away from men. So terrible were men those days.

I slipped past the Russians over to my own side, but I did not leave the forest. I came across some more poor beggars like myself in the forest, and we decided to hide ourselves from the world in the thick of the shrubbery while men were going mad.

We found some old potatoes in the cellar of an abandoned little forest hut and decided we would manage to get along somehow. However, we were hunted out by our own people. They did not ask us whether we were hungry or not. They drove us forty kilometres on foot without a halt and locked us up, dead beat, in a camp where there were dozens more like us.

They kept us there a long time, a very long time. I had never thought that our own Suomi was capable of treating her poor sons so unkindly. We worked like horses and were fed like chickens.

It is very sad when you live and feel from day to day how the sap of life leaves your body and doesn't return. It is sad to live and think that it is not for you the hot summer's sun shines, not for you God's bright day and all the beauty of the earth.

Elsa, of course, knew nothing of my plight and I did not write her anything. What sense was there in writing? To upset her and make her bring me her last crumbs? Better she remained ignorant. I only prayed to hold out until the end and not throw up the sponge before my time.

We were all such a sight that we were afraid to look at one another. And we no longer joked or laughed or were friendly with one another, although we had all been arrested for the same thoughts and offences. And now I know how easily human friendship can be broken. Stop giving people food and they will look murder at one another.

“But the day the news reached us that the war was over we looked at one another a little less grimly. And we lay all night on our hard bunks talking:

“So the war’s over, but is it over for us?”

“Why shouldn’t it be over for us as well?”

“We had no faith in our own strength . . . we went away. . . .”

“And did the right thing. Isn’t it clear now that there was nothing to have faith in?”

“What d’you mean nothing? Didn’t Russia agree to peace? If we’d have turned out to be weak she’d have crushed us altogether.”

"Russia is not in the habit of crushing anybody."

"The war's over for Suomi. But what about us?... D'you mean to say they won't let us go soon?"

"They'll let us go."

"They won't. We've sinned against our country."

"But then we haven't sinned against Russia."

"What's the difference?"

"All the difference. Russia's a power. She'll compel our rulers to let all those who were against war with her out of prison. You read the peace terms, didn't you? Didn't we accept them? Who made our rulers accept them?"

"Yes. She's a power ... she's a power."

"Russia ... what do we know about her?"

"Nothing at all."

"Yet she's been living alongside us all the time. And we'd never seen any evil from her—we only used to speak ill about her."

"But then you've got to know her now."

"The Germans have helped you to get to know her. You've got them to thank."

"Germans! ... If I could lay my hands on just one of 'em, *perkele!* ..."

"Yes, the war's over for Suomi at last. But what about us. . . . Can Russia make 'em let us out?"

"Of course she can. And take my word she will. Weren't we also against the war with Russia and didn't we prove it by our deeds. Russia doesn't forget her friends."

"Friends? Since when has the *Ryssä-Bolshevik* become the friend of the Finn?"

It was I said that. I couldn't contain myself. Somebody had to say that, otherwise the devil knows where we'd be getting to. I don't know whether I did right in saying that, but somebody had to say it after all, unless the things people had been taught in Suomi for a score of years was allowed to go to the devil. Perhaps somebody else should have said it, not I, but there was no getting away from saying it, so I said it.

And they answered me at once:

"You're an old idiot. Only such a friendship would have given your Suomi peace. If the knife that was clenched in the fist against Russia hadn't stuck out so noticeably behind the backs of our rulers you'd have been living in peace these twenty-seven years. There wouldn't have been the winter's war of nineteen forty and there wouldn't have been

this cursed slaughter. And our frontiers in the South would still be running along the Rajajoki, because Russia knows how to live in peace with any neighbour, if only that neighbour sincerely wishes it."

That's what they told me, and I said nothing in reply, because I was I, *perkele*. . . . What more could you expect of me? The things all around were not of my making.

And they went on talking:

"Yes, we paid dear for that knife concealed behind the back. And behind whose back was it?"

"That's what we've got to find out and make the culprits pay for our blood and tears."

"Ho-ho! You don't say so! Make 'em pay! Be satisfied that you've pulled through."

"Everything is possible in friendship with Russia. Together with her we could move mountains."

"Yes, the war's over for Suomi at last. It's over. However much the peace cost us, it's a joy for the people just the same. But what's going to happen to us?"

"Nothing terrible. As long as the peace with Russia is observed. She'll help us."

At this point I put in again:

"It's a shame to accept help from Suomi's worst enemy, from the *Ryssä*."

Again I said what had to be said. How could you not say it, good God! Where are we then, and who are we?

But they answered me again: "Fathead."

I turned over on my back, stretched my legs out so they dangled over the edge of the bunk and shut my eyes like a man who was fully entitled to take a rest after good deeds done.

And I said:

"Fatheads yourselves. You're all scared out of your wits over the *Ryssä*."

But they went on harping: "Russia, Russia." What do I care.

I don't know what could have so quickly spoilt men who had been seeing things for twenty-seven years in quite a different way. And now they were saying things I had never heard any man say before, unless it was that silly Vilho of mine.

And so we talked that first night of peace. Skinny faces on the double-tiered bunks gazed at the solitary pale lamp hanging from the ceiling. Everyone gave voice to what was on his mind, but nobody smiled.

And after that these talks went on without end. After that every bit of news that reached us we swallowed as greedily as we did the watery soup. Some of the men's wives and sisters visited them. They related what was going on in the world.

The Germans were still staying on in our country, not wanting to go away, although they had nothing more to do here. They had done their business in making us go through all that a human being could endure. What more did they want? People said that they finished up by just seizing our northern territory and that a regular war had started there between our troops and the Germans. And those who spoke about it didn't look distressed over such a turn of events. Rather the other way round. So that's how things end up between allies, when one of 'em wants to boss it over the other.

A Russian commission arrived in Helsinki to see how we were fulfilling the armistice terms.

We also heard that all the Russians would soon be repatriated and that our men would be coming back from Russia. Now that was a good thing. My heart thumped with joy when I heard that. That meant that Vilho,

too, would soon be coming home. How could it be otherwise? He'd come, too, once the others were coming. My only brother, my silly Vilho....

October came with cold rains and wind, but we were still in the same plight. We had heard that our political prisoners had been released from prison and that trainloads of Russians were already bound for Viipuri.

That was a fact. We sometimes saw them with our own eyes from afar. And one day when we were loading wood into cars at Honkaniemi sidings we saw them quite close. Their train was waiting to let another pass and they had poured out of their cars, as it was a dry warm day.

\* 24 \*

Yes, it was a fine autumn day. They were joking and laughing, holding up their tanned faces to the autumn sun. Why shouldn't they joke and laugh? They were going home, back to Russia who had defeated all those who had wanted to crush her. They'd come back and learn why she had won. Maybe they knew it now. By having starved for two or three years in our prison camps they hadn't ceased

to be Russians. There were people in the world who knew something that others will never know....

There were families in the train, with women and children. They had been confined in the camps for three years. That's the way we had bossed it over the lands we had seized. We didn't leave a single Russian at large, not even old men, women and children.

And now they were joking and laughing, standing in groups around the cars. Little boys and girls raced up and down, looking at everybody with curiosity, for children will be children. There were more men in one part of the train. Some of them sat musing, others were humming their native songs, while some were having a bite, their faces turned to the sun. Some of them were eating bread and butter, others were simply munching *näkkileipä* and washing it down with something out of flasks and cans. It wasn't for us to consider who had got taken and how. They were Russians, and that meant they hadn't had much of a good time with us.

They noticed us at once, as soon as they got out of their cars, but at first they only threw glances in our direction without saying anything. After all, we were their enemies. We

had fought them at the front and then starved them in our camps. How were they to look at us?

And we, too, stole glances at them, none too friendly. When a man's stomach contracts and squirms from emptiness it doesn't make him any too cheerful to see lumps of bread and butter disappearing into another man's mouth.

We stood divided off from the Russians by our guards and waited for their train to leave, because it prevented our carrying the wood across the track to the empty flats on the siding.

The Russians, too, had a guard of Finnish sergeants and privates, but these didn't do much guarding. They simply sauntered away and stood about smoking, so that no one interfered with our staring at each other.

One of the Russians, a sturdily-built man in a new Finnish greatcoat was finishing his bread and butter. He had eaten his bread, brushed the crumbs off his knees and got up with a bundle in his hand, stretched himself a bit, and then suddenly called out in Finnish in a cheery satiated voice to one of our men standing nearest to him—Otto Ukkonen:

*"Miks niin surullinen olet?"*<sup>1</sup>

The latter didn't answer immediately, the jaws of his thin cheeks working, then he growled:

*"Näet itse."*<sup>2</sup>

The Russian peered at him more closely and asked once more:

*"Onko nälkä vai mitä?"*<sup>3</sup>

But Ukkonen didn't answer and continued working his thin jaws.

The talkative Russian suddenly untied his bundle, took out half a round loaf of bread and stepped towards us. He was just about to hold the bread out to Ukkonen when the sergeant of our guard with a tommy gun in his hand barred his path and said:

*"Ei saal!"*<sup>4</sup>

Then two more Russians stepped up and one of them shouted:

*"Hei, Suomen pojat! Miksi olette vangittu?"*<sup>5</sup>

And one of our crowd growled in reply:

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<sup>1</sup> Why are you so miserable?

<sup>2</sup> You see yourself.

<sup>3</sup> Are you hungry or what?

<sup>4</sup> Mustn't.

<sup>5</sup> Hey, Finnish lads! What are you arrested for?

*"Aivan liika kysymys."*<sup>1</sup>

More and more Russians came up to us when they heard these words, and our guards threw their cigarettes away and barred their path. Even the *vänrikki*<sup>2</sup> hastened to their assistance. He stood in front of them, broad and stocky.

The first Russian held the bread out again, but the *vänrikki* laid his hand on his holster and bellowed:

*"Ei saa!"*

The Russian lowered his hand with the bread. Even the children fell silent, waiting curiously to see what would happen next.

But then a tall broad-shouldered Russian with a paper package in his hand stepped forward from one of the cars. His voice proved to be louder and deeper than that of our ensign.

*"Miksi ei saa? Pois tieltä!"*<sup>3</sup>

And he shoved our ensign aside, giving him a push that nearly knocked him off his feet. After that the Russian made straight for our crowd. As I happened to be the most noticeable figure in his path on account of my

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<sup>1</sup> No need to ask.

<sup>2</sup> Ensign.

<sup>3</sup> Why not? Get out of the way.

height he held his package out to me, and said:

*"Se! Ota venäläiseltä."*<sup>1</sup>

And other Russians followed suit and held out bread and cigarettes to us.

I took the package that was held out to me. Why not take bread if it is given you openheartedly and if you can barely stand on your feet from hunger? But I did not say anything. What could I say? I wanted to nod, but when I looked into his face I was unable to do even that and remained standing with my mouth open....

My God! I recognized that man.... But I'll never in my life tell anyone where I saw him before.

Yes, it was he. That broad, heavy jaw and nose that resembled mine, turned up like a boot, but just a bit shorter, I would have recognized anywhere. No fullness of cheek could change their shape. Above all, that short slanting scar on the upper part of the forehead....

I stood with the package in my hand and stared at him without saying a word. Good God, what could I say! I only wished that he

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<sup>1</sup> Here! Take this from a Russian.

would not recognize me. I don't think he did, though a look flashed in his hazel eyes as though he was trying to remember something. His lips smiled to me in a friendly way, and only the whistle of the downcoming train as it rumbled past us made him look grave again and turn his head round.

The stationmaster gave the signal and all the Russians went back to their cars. The big Russian leisurely followed on behind. He looked back, waved his hand to me in a friendly fashion, and, groping for an appropriate Finnish word, cried out:

“*Näkemiin!*”<sup>1</sup>

\* 25 \*

The train with the Russians had gone, but we still stood on the same spot looking anywhere but into each other's eyes. Then some one said with a bitter smile, looking at the ground:

“There's the *Ryssä* for you!”

There was a deep note of shame in his voice. Another fellow, very weak and as thin as a blade of grass, suddenly bent double and sat down straight on the ground. And we

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<sup>1</sup> So long.

heard him sob—he was that weak. He held four pieces of “plywood”<sup>1</sup> in his thin dirty fingers and we saw the tears falling on them.

“*Perkele!* I’ll never be forgiven,” he said, “for I killed two of them. . . . They came running down on me with tommy guns, there at the front. I lay among the rocks, working a machine gun. They came straight for me, yelling their ‘Hurrah,’ and I fired a round into them. One of them dropped right away, but the other one still came on. He was dead set on making the rocks where I was crouching. He was swaying so much that he made more strides to left and right than forwards, but he wouldn’t go down and kept coming on while I sent short rounds into him one after another, until at last he dropped. . . . Maybe the man who gave me this bread today was his brother. How am I to know? *Perkele!* What beasts we are, and how sickening it all is! . . .”

In my package I found half a round loaf sliced down to the middle with a flat slab of butter stuffed into the slit. He had apparently given me his ration. Where else could he have got this bread and butter? They had all given

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<sup>1</sup> Derisive epithet used by Finnish soldiers for flat, dry bread.

us the rations they had received for the journey. Given them to us, their enemies, who had maltreated and starved them in our camps. That's the kind of people there were in the world, of whom we knew nothing! Yet they had been living next to us all the time, right next to us.

\* 26 \*

I remembered all this at home, sitting at my table, with my brother Vilho facing me. He had drunk a lot. We had both drunk a lot. I had Elsa bring in five bottles of wine from the cellar—all that she had saved up during the war, and we drank them up between us.

How many years we had been waiting for this meeting! We had never hoped to see each other again. But God was merciful to us and we met again.

I got home before he did. Somebody said they had let us out of the camp not because they wanted to but because the Russian commission had insisted on it. I don't know. I don't know anything. Good Lord! We had heard and seen enough these years to be ready to believe not only this.

The whole of Suomi did nothing these days but talk about the Russians. It ap-

appears that many of our folks knew the Russians well, many had met and even lived with them before, and they were now telling very interesting things about them.

And I wondered why they hadn't told these things before if they had known about them. Why had they kept harping "*Ryssä, Ryssä*" and only now begun to speak of the *Vcnäläiset*?<sup>1</sup>

I got home in the evening. It was a cool still autumn evening. We spent the whole evening at home. I sat all three of them on my knees, put my long arms around them and pressed my cheek alternately to their flaxen heads.

Lauri and Martta had shot up these years. They now went to school together.

Elsa looked a bit run down. Her cheeks were not as plump as they had been, but they had not lost all their colour. Her eyes still held the old mischievous twinkle. And her lips were still as full and soft. I touched them, too, from time to time with my cheeks and lips. It was all so near and dear and a part of me.

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<sup>1</sup> Russians.

She asked me why I had not written such a long time, but I did not answer. Why upset her? This was my whole world which I held in my arms that evening. For that world I lived and toiled on this earth. All my joy was in it.

And Elsa stroked my haggard cheeks and little by little related the news about everything that had taken place in my absence.

Herra Kurkimäki was finishing the building of the creamery and the mill. It was going to be a big business with its own electric supply, much bigger than Pohjanpää's who was still driving his separator by horse. Meanwhile the milk was still going to Pohjanpää's. Elias came for the milk, as of old, on the truck. He had come from the army before anyone else and was now telling such stories about the way he hunted round the forests and swamps that it gave you the creeps to listen to him. He had fitted himself up with a gold tooth and when he smiled the girls were simply fascinated. . . .

I said to Elsa:

"You were saying something about the creamery and the mill."

She said:

“Yes, the mill is going to be a big one, and the creamery is going to be something like the big firm Vikström’s. The boss says that all the milk from Suokylä village and Antti Kosola’s dairy farm will come to him. He has a fairly big herd of cows of his own now, besides. He bought nine cows during the war and is going to buy more. He bought a horse, too, four pigs, twelve sheep and has set up a poultry yard. They took the Russians from him only quite recently, you know. All last year they worked on the buildings, did the ploughing, sowing, harvesting and threshing. They also cut a bed out of the rock for the second stream to flow into ours. There’s only a bit of cross-channel left to dig to join the two streams. And the two streams will be enough to drive his whole outfit. So the engineer said whom Vihtori brought down with him from Helsinki. The Russians didn’t cost him much. If they hadn’t worked on the quiet, making all kinds of little boxes, baskets, cigarette cases, bracelets and toys out of tin, wood and bark and exchanged them with our peasants for potatoes, fish and bread, they’d never have been able to stand the life. You know, they only got four pieces of *näk-kileipä* and half a litre of skimmed milk a

day. Now we've got the Ingrians working. Vihtori brought four families down. Fixed them up at Paavo's place. He was all alone in the house you know, after Kerttu had gone. It was too much for her—we each had fifteen cows on our hands. But when the Ingrians moved in it became much easier for me. Two women and three girls began to work with me. The men worked with Paavo. He's wonderful. Awfully smart at everything. He finds time for everything—in the smithy, in the stable and on the buildings. But he still drinks every Sunday. Drinks, coughs and is wasting away—getting old. He's foreman now on the job. But that's not for long now. The Ingrians are going away, too. Some Russian military representative came down from Helsinki and asked them whether they wanted to go home. And they all cried in one voice: 'We do, we do.' You could see they were pretty homesick. I judge by the women. They perked up as soon as they heard they were to be allowed to go home. I should say so! They lived somewhere near *Pietari*. Had their own land. Who's going to give them land here, when our own people are without? Even I'm glad for their sake, though I don't know how I'll manage now

without them. They're starting out tomorrow. . . ."

"Tomorrow?"

"Yes. In the morning."

I gently put them all off my knees.

"Let's go to sleep, otherwise I'll miss them in the morning."

She said in surprise:

"But didn't you say you wouldn't go anywhere for four days?"

"I'll look 'em up in the morning."

\* 27 \*

They really were quitting in the morning. All their belongings were bundled in a single cart to which a sleek black horse was harnessed. Paavo Pikkunen stood alongside holding the reins. How little and shrunken he had become! Or was it only his face that had shrivelled so? In addition it was grey from the cold. It was a bleak autumn day with a light wind that drove the last yellow leaves about in the air. The frosts were a long way off yet, but Paavo was already feeling the chill. He had a warm winter coat on his shoulders and his eyes watered with the cold.

When he saw me his eyes lit up with joy and the little creases around them grew

still more. I shook his rough little hand and asked:

“How are you getting on?”

He answered: “All right” and went on looking at me with a smile. I smiled at him, too. We stood like that for several minutes, then I asked:

“Where are you going?”

He nodded towards the people fussing around the cart, which was piled high with bundles, and answered:

“To the station.”

You couldn't say these men, women and children were well dressed. It wasn't so easy these days to dress yourself in impoverished Suomi. But they didn't seem to care much about their clothes.

They were all preoccupied with other thoughts and did not even glance at me. They must have been seeing things that moment such as I would never see in all my life.

Only two little boys stopped near me and one of them said:

“What a big man.”

An elderly, thin man in a short coat and rubber boots looked round at these words. He took his pipe out of his mouth and said:

"If that big man would lend me a hand to lift this here sack...."

I helped him throw a heavy sack of flour onto the top of the cart and asked:

"Going to Russia?"

He answered:

"Yes. Home."

And his eyes took on that preoccupied look again, as though he were looking into another world. I felt a bit nettled at that and asked:

"Didn't you like it here?"

He shrugged his shoulders, his thoughts still far away.

"I wouldn't go if I were you," I went on. "There's nothing good over there. Collective farms. Here you can buy a house, get yourself land...."

There was a wheezy noise behind me. I looked round. That was Paavo, laughing himself into a fit of coughing and wheezing. But there was no mirth in his eyes.

I chatted on a little more with the thin man. I tried to prove to him that it was better in Suomi than in Russia. There wasn't a better country than Suomi in the world and he was making a mistake in leaving it. Or maybe he thought it was worse than Russia? He was wrong if he thought that. He simply didn't know Suo-

mi well enough. He hadn't read our newspapers and magazines, hadn't heard our wireless, hadn't listened to our teachers in school and parsons in church. And he had to read and hear all that if he wanted to know what Suomi was. But maybe he didn't care to know what Suomi was, maybe he thought there was some better country in the world? Then let me say that he's mistaken, badly mistaken!

But he did not argue with me. He just nodded his head, throwing an astonished glance at me out of one eye, and chose an opportune moment to sheer away from me. He found an excuse to tighten the ropes on the cart and sheered away.

But I did not consider that our conversation was at an end. I couldn't let him go like that. So when they had finished all preparations for setting out I went up to him again and said:

"Well, good luck, pal. What's your name?" I asked him on taking leave.

He looked at me in surprise and answered:

"Stepan Kotilainen. And yours?"

"Einari Pitkäniemi. Wish you a happy journey home."

"Thanks. I guess we'll get there all right."

And they strode off in a crowd behind the cart to the railway station to go to Russia. And I thought to myself: "Now I'll have one man in Russia who shook my hand and knows my name. Maybe he'll remember me sometimes. . . ."

I even chuckled to myself—it was all so childish. What did I need someone to remember me in Russia for? I didn't need it at all. Just like that . . . a joke. Beginning to lose my sense in my old age. . . . But never mind. Let me have one person in Russia whom I know, hee-hee! What does it matter. And I watched the Ingrians until they disappeared round a bend in the road together with the horse and Paavo Pikkunen who walked alongside the cart holding the end of the reins in his hands.

And then I caught a glimpse of something on my left. It was the wide swaying skirts of Neiti Kurkimäki's frock and brown coat tightly drawn by a belt round her slim waist. She was coming down the fir drive from the yellow porch of her big house, coming quickly towards me. I guess she must have had some reason for being in such a hurry. But I wasn't looking in that direction and wasn't bound to notice her. I was looking back at the Ingrians.

I didn't see anybody but them. And waving my leather hat to them, I strode off home without looking around.

But when I had turned the dairy I heard a voice calling me:

"Einari!"

It was a very loud masculine voice, one you couldn't help hearing. And after he had called me another two or three times, I looked round.

My boss was standing at the middle gates of the dairy and beckoning to me. I stood still for a while, not knowing whether to go to him or not. For I had no intention of going to work that day. But when he came forward to me himself I, too, stepped up to meet him. After all, he was my boss, and it was awkward not to be polite to him. He shook my hand in a firm grip.

"So you've come back at last? My congratulations. Well, how are you? Safe and sound? Not wounded?"

"No. . . ."

"Fine. And when can you start?"

I did not know what to answer him, and looked silently at his drooping eyelids and puffy jowls. They had grown fatter and pinker during these years. Yes, and he had

grown a little stouter all round. One would think that all the fat hung about him and was slipping down.

I did not know what to answer him, and looked down at him with my lips compressed. And he asked:

“Perhaps you’ll come out tomorrow? It would just suit me. The damned Russians have taken the Ingrians away from me. We are doing the work ourselves today—I, my wife and daughter. Two other milkmaids will be coming to lend your Elsa a hand, but that is not enough. Will you come out tomorrow or do you want to have a rest for a day?”

I was still silent, although it wasn’t polite not to answer. He had never spoken to me before with such pleading in his voice.

But I felt annoyed. I had intended to take a rest for at least four days that remained till Sunday to put things in order round the house, and here he was asking: “Will you start tomorrow?” Oh well, if it’s come to such a pinch, I’ll start the day after tomorrow.

That’s what I decided to myself, but I forgot to tell him, because I was very much annoyed. And I proceeded on my way in silence, and only on the way did I recollect that I hadn’t answered him. I stopped then,

looked back and saw him still standing on the same spot looking after me.

I guess he was greatly surprised at my rudeness. But it was useless at this distance shouting out that I would come the day after tomorrow. I walked on in silence, dragging my feet in their heavy boots, because I was still weak and hungry and got tired very quickly.

\* 28 \*

I came to work the day after, as I had decided, although I still felt sore about it. And the boss looked at me again in surprise from under his brows. This time he did not come up to me and did not shake my hand. And when I raised my hat and said "*Terve*," he, too, answered "*Terve*" and added:

"So you've come after all? That's good. Very good. We'll get down to work."

But even then he continued to throw suspicious glances at me.

I did very little that first day of my work after the war. Very little. I cleaned out a cellar and laid it out inside with straw for dumping potatoes. While I was about it I cleaned out the icehouse for winter ice. It had a very bad smell and a good deal of

water at the bottom which had to be pumped out.

Then I shovelled the dung out of the cow house, spread fresh straw for the cows, and repaired the cart in which I was shortly to cart away all the accumulated manure to next year's potato field, which was also waiting to be ploughed under for winter. It was the same old cart, rotted to the core, and I patched it up here and there as best I could with fresh slats, the way I used to do before the war.

I changed the litter in the stable and cleaned down the horses. There were seven of them now, not counting the foals. The big black horse that had taken the Ingrians to the station was named *Mustalainen*.<sup>1</sup> *Jättiläinen* was in fine fettle, it did you good to look at him. And *Reipas*, too, had grown pretty fat. I scrubbed him down and stood a long time patting his massive croup on which the dark hide was as glossy as silk.

Yes. It was good to have a horse of your own. Not everyone understands how good it is. Least of all, perhaps, he who has several.

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<sup>1</sup> Gypsy.

I did very little that day. Paavo was ploughing up the potato field, and when he had a little spare time we both carted up two loads of sheaf rye to the threshing barn, and laid the sheafs out on the fire bars for drying and then heated up the barn. We had to begin threshing that rye at four o'clock in the morning the next day. The Ingrians had left without having finished the threshing, and it was left for us to finish one and a half ricks of rye, two wheat ricks and four oat ricks.

There were still some potatoes in the field to be gathered in as well. Rouva and Neiti Kurkimäki were digging it with the help of two hired women, who were to assist my Elsa morning and evening in milking the cows.

In the afternoon Elsa called me home for dinner, but I said I would not go and would better knock off a bit earlier in the evening. So I didn't go, but took a bite now and again at the *näkkileipä* and *kakkara*<sup>1</sup> which Elsa had stuffed into my pockets in the morning. In spite of this I felt hungry all day.

Towards evening Paavo showed me over the new buildings. Yes, they had done some

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<sup>1</sup> A thin dry fritter.

hard work here. The big two-storied building was finished, and there were enough bricks, stones and timber lying about in stacks and piles for another such building. Facing this stood a long brick warehouse covered with tiles. When had they managed to build all this?

Paavo showed me the spot where the two streams were to meet, showed me where the reservoir was going to be and where the dam. He took me inside the building and showed me all the sections on both floors where the machinery was to be installed for the creamery and the mill. But he couldn't show me the machinery yet. It was lying in the new warehouse opposite, under lock and key, and the key of the warehouse was in Mr. Kurkimäki's keeping.

But I had seen enough. The walls, ceilings and floors were there. Some more plastering would have to be done here and there. The place where the creamery was going to be had to have the floor cemented in three rooms, two cement baths for ice water had to be made for cooling the cream, and concrete foundations for the separator, the churn and the dynamo and motor in a separate electricity compartment.

There were also the window frames still to be done, the door jambs and the doors themselves, but Paavo Pikkunen's skilful hands were already attending to that. The interior finishing touches and equipment Herra Kurkimäki had decided to put off until spring. His son wrote him from Helsinki that it was very difficult just then to find specialists.

But the bulk of the work had been done, and done gratis by the Russian war prisoners.

"I'll be going home, Paavo. Enough for me the first day, otherwise I won't be able to get up at three in the morning."

And I dragged my heavy feet to my house, which stood on the same old spot, on the same stony hillock.

\* 29 \*

My poor house. It had had a tough time. The red paint on its boards didn't look half so bright. For so many years it had been battered by the rains and snows and chilled by the frosts. How many times had the drops of rain, melting snow or rime trickled down them, washing off the paint, and how many times had the spring winds and summer sun dried them through.

Yes, you couldn't say now that this nook resembled a scene out of a fairy tale. A drab-looking house on the drab rocks with a drab wet autumn all round—not a cheerful fairy tale.

I was very tired that first day of work after the war, and on mounting the hillock I went indoors at once. Lauri and Martta were sitting at the table doing their homework. I sat down next to them, watching their little hands tracing figures and letters in their exercise books, and then turned my face to the warm stove and fell asleep.

Elsa woke me up.

She turned up the wick in the kerosene lamp and began heating the stove. And I sat with my arms down, watching her movements. It was a fine lass I had. You couldn't easily crush her by hard work and cares. Three years she had borne on her shoulders all the cares of the home. Yet no sooner had the heat of the stove touched her face than the warm colour suffused it in the old way. And she had kept the kiddies well, too. Their rosy cheeks lay among the white pillows like ripe apples.

Of course, my help had been something, too. After all, I had been getting a soldier's

pay of sixteen marks a day and had sent her four hundred marks every month. It may not be very much for war times, but still it probably helped her to keep the wolf from the door.

Elsa smiled as she caught my glance, and said:

“I’ll cheer you up in a minute. Want me to?”

She placed the frying pan with the bacon on the stove and came up to me. I sat her on my knees and waited for her to speak. She stroked my thin cheeks again and then whispered in my ear:

“Don’t think that we’re so bad off. I’ve got eight and a half thousand marks.”

“Elsa!”

I could just stare at her in bewilderment. And she went on:

“And we can buy a cow for seven thousand. I’ve been looking at one here.”

“Elsa! But where’d you get the money?...”

She snuggled up closer.

“Silly. Why, it’s your soldier’s pay for three years. Not all of it, true, but as much of it as I managed to save....”

So there you are. What’s a man to do with such a wife? True, I couldn’t toss her

up to the ceiling that time. I was too tired that day. But I put my arm round her and walked her up and down the room several times, snatching kisses at her hot lips until the bacon frying on the stove began to burn.

That's how a woman can bring joy into the home. The greyest and most dismal day in life she can fill with sunshine and warmth if she wants. God bless her!

And how many privations did she endure not to touch my money! I only realized that properly the next day, when I was turning the handle of the threshing machine.

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We bought the cow. We no longer had to take milk and butter from Mrs. Kurkimäki on credit. We had our own now. It was a bit more difficult with the fodder and the shed. But we had enough cash to pay for the boards and shingle. I was to work off the hay for Mr. Kurkimäki till the end of the year. The nails, too, I had to take on credit.

And one or two other things as well I had to take from the Kurkimäkis on account of my future work. Elsa's coat was quite worn out, and Elsa deserved to wear

the best coat in the world. So I took some cloth for a new coat from Mrs. Kurkimäki. Of course, it wasn't the best cloth in the world, but still, it was fine and new.

The children's coats were worn out, too, but they could be remade from the old ones for the time being. Leather for their boots, however, I was obliged to take from Mrs. Kurkimäki's storeroom. And I took from her new leather moccasins for the winter.

The things the Kurkimäkis only had! You could find anything you wanted there. But the prices had gone up many times over and my wages hadn't increased, and so I wouldn't be able to work off this debt until the middle of nineteen forty-five.

And when we figured out that I hadn't been paying the boss for the house for three years, which meant that I was obliged to work it off for three months running with another month's work for the current year, and besides that had to get potatoes for seed and eating, firewood for the winter, straw for the cow's litter, some utensils and tools for the household, it worked out that I would have to give free service to the boss during the whole of the year forty-five and the beginning of forty-six. And in forty-six I was

due to work off twenty days for the house. That's how matters stood those first days after my return.

In addition I used to get very tired. Elsa tried to keep my strength up as best she could. But I wouldn't have her touch the last piece of bacon. Milk would do to put me on my feet again. Though my strength came back slowly, I had nevertheless managed to grow some flesh on my bones.

The hardest job for me was the shed. I wanted to economize a couple of dozen boards for the outhouse, so I continued to lay the walls out of stones while the cow stood under an awning of twigs against the rocky wall. It was the cheapest material after all. It didn't cost me anything and lay around in heaps. Clay too didn't cost me a single farthing.

I could only work on the building of the cowshed on Sundays, and all alone. The higher the walls grew the more difficult it was to lift the stones on to them. The last row was an especially stiff job. It just happened to be raining that day since morning, and I was drenched and all dirtied with clay, rolling the muddy stones up along a plank.

One stone, weighing about seventy kilos, very nearly slipped out of my hands. The plank dropped out of place and the stone was left lying on my upstretched arms, with just one corner resting on the edge of the wall. Luckily I had smeared a thick layer of clay on that spot beforehand. I exerted all my strength. The stone slipped along the clay and finally settled into place.

But I was absolutely done, and sank down exhausted on the stones at the foot of the wall. My hands were trembling and I was all atremble myself, breathing hard and fast with my mouth wide open. The steady autumn drizzle came down on me, beat down on my bare tired arms, and a cold wind blew in my face from the North.

Every muscle, hardened like a stone from constant labour, stood out sharply on my arms. It wasn't at all like that twenty years ago. There had been a layer of young fat then under the skin which had smoothed down all the bulges and there hadn't been any swollen veins at all. The strength had been going out of these arms for thirty years running.

The rain and wind beat in my face. Before me, down below, there stretched the

long valley, intersected by winding streams. Fields sloped down to the stream on both sides, divided off by straight ditches. A strip of flood meadows bordering upon the stream wound its way out to a gap between the distant wooded hills.

Thirty years ago, when I first came as a boy to work for Mr. Kurkimäki, there were woods, swamps and boulders here. There were woods and swamps in many other parts of his land where rye had ripened and potatoes blossomed many a time since. These woods had passed to him from his father, who hadn't had the time to work them. He had merely bought them up and left it for his son to do the clearing and cultivation. And now the son had cleared and cultivated his inheritance. The son was a good hand at that. . . .

I looked at my blue-veined hands, wet with the rain, and fell to thinking that I was now forty-two, but what had these hands done for me? They had made the bathhouse in which two people could wash at a time. They were making the shed, on which there was plenty of work still to be done. What else had they made? Those vegetable beds were not mine, and the house,

too, would not be mine until the end of my life. There was a cow, but that was the blood of Elsa and my children. I had nothing to do with it. I hadn't sent them the money for them to put away in a box.

Now I'd finish the shed and put the cow in it. What then? I still wouldn't have any land, and the strength of these hands would go on being expended on another man's land, another man's swamps and stones.

I was forty-two years old and still a *mäkitupalainen*. Even if I got land now it wouldn't be so easy for me to reclaim it, and it wouldn't begin to yield anything until I was an old man. Virgin soil had to be tackled at the age of twenty and not at forty-two. But I wouldn't even get virgin soil. Why worry? Nobody is going to give it to me, thank God. Besides, I already have my own house and even land. There it is. Try and step over it. You think one stride'll be enough? No, sir. You'll make two and three before you get from one end of it to the other.

I felt the cold rain trickling down my back. But I was too tired to straighten myself up. And, looking down, I could only see before me my arms with the swollen veins and hard muscles standing out on them. I was forty-two.

My strength was, now going downhill, never to return. Woe to you if you aren't standing on your own feet at forty-two.

Now, the war was over. The blood of many men had been shed. But nothing had changed. There was still no place for me in vast Suomi. Still that same hillock and those same stones in front of me. Could it be the same in other countries that a soldier should come back from the war to be greeted by a bare stony hillock? Surely there must be some place in the world where the soldier doesn't come home to run his head into a cold bare rock through which you can't get a glimpse of day or sun, and is greeted by something much warmer and more congenial. But where on earth is there such a place? Where? Nobody will tell you.... Is it usual for prisoners to be detained after the war, I'd like to know....

Men who had lost faith in their rulers were saying things. But what had brought them to say such things? It isn't much to the credit of the rulers when people begin looking quite the other way.

But never mind those people! I wasn't one to mock at their hopes. A man couldn't live without hopes. And every one's brains

were arranged their own way. I wasn't one to make fun of them or to blame anybody. What had it to do with me? I was simply a bit tired. And I was sorry for my hands.

I moved my wet, dirty fingers and clenched them, and hard and hefty fists they were. They still had some strength in them and could do a lot of damage with a good hard swing. But had God created them for that purpose?

Elsa came up the hillock and said:

"What are you sitting out in the rain for, Einari? Why don't you go indoors?"

Silly Elsa. I had no intention of sitting down and taking it easy. Fancy me taking it easy on Sunday! It just happened like that. That stone had got the better of me. I got up in silence and followed her into the house.

Work had tired her out, too, but she didn't loll about like I did. She gave the kiddies a piece of pie and busied herself at the stove. For such was the lot of the wife of a hillock dweller. Besides her job outside for earning the daily bread she always had the same amount of drudgery waiting for her at home, especially if she had little ones.

And I sat down by the stove to idle away the time. I smelled of clay and damp, and my work clothes were this time utterly ruined. Elsa noticed it and said:

“Put on a clean suit. You’re not going to sit like that, all wet. . . .”

But I didn’t start changing. Why put on my last suit on an ordinary working day? What would I have left for holiday wear?

Elsa must have thought of that, too, because she added at once, as though thinking aloud:

“You need a new one. Need it badly.” Then added louder: “Elias has got himself one already. Haven’t you seen it? Navy blue. Suits him. A pity you haven’t seen it.”

I wasn’t a bit sorry for it, but I said nothing. I looked at my hands. Now, for them I was sorry. And I’d like to know whether it was right that in the forty-third year of my life they should be giving away their strength more and more without getting anything in return.

And Elsa went on saying:

“Elias hasn’t seen you either yet—and he’s surprised: ‘Now, what does Einari do

with himself whenever I come down? I want to talk with him about the war, about our heroes, about the glorious scrapes we've been in, and he goes and hides himself. I wonder if he hasn't become infected with Bolshevik ideas, like some men have, and doesn't harbour designs against his own country? He was pretty close to the *Ryssä* all the time, you know....' ”

I smiled to myself ironically. How could Elias Pohjanpää understand the *Ryssä*?

And Elsa went on:

“And he bought himself shoes, too. Brown ones, German make. You ought to see how smart they look. He's a good-looking fellow as it is, the handsomest I should say of all our men hereabouts, excepting Vilho. But when he put his new suit on the first time and went out to the girls with that dazzling smile of his under the black moustache, he was simply grand....”

I went out again into the cold rain and wind to continue my work. A man could not sit idle on Sunday. It was getting cold for the cow under the awning. She was waiting for her shed.

As if on purpose the next day I ran into Elias Pohjanpää. I was going to the stable when his truck drove up to the dairy and he called out to me, waving his hat.

I had already managed that morning to cart up six loads of clay to the building site. It had to be mixed and rammed in the places where the cement floor was going to be laid. But on the sixth load my *Mustalainen* suddenly began to limp. I told Paavo about it and we decided to examine the horse's legs. I was worried—could it be a sprain? Paavo carefully led the horse off to the stable while I tapped down the heap of clay with a spade and went after him. At that moment Elias caught sight of me from afar and called out to me from the truck.

I did not answer him and walked on. My hand simply did not lift to respond to his greeting. I was dog-tired—it was no joke for one man to dig up six cartloads of clay and then tip them out, mending the cart three times between whiles because it was coming to pieces, and without having had any breakfast. It was all right for a healthy nourished man, but I was still hungry and

weak and therefore not particularly amiable with people. Probably that's why I didn't answer Elias Pohjanpää of the black moustache.

But when I turned round by the stable I saw that he had jumped off the truck and was hurrying towards me, flashing his white teeth with the gold one in the middle.

I don't know whether Paavo Pikkunen had told me the truth about his having enough gold for a full set of teeth and not only for one. The main thing, it seems, is to be able to take advantage of the opportunity when men guilty of evading military duty and their accomplices fall into your hands. Elias was said to have known how to take advantage of such opportunities, though I didn't understand what it was all about.

He came straight towards me, but I didn't stop to wait, I don't know why, and went into the stable. Paavo had already examined the horse's leg. When I came in he let it go and sat down for a smoke of his pipe. I asked him:

"Well, have you looked it over?"

Just then Elias came into the stable, and I didn't hear what Paavo said. All of a sudden it became noisy in the stable as though

a crowd of at least ten yelling roughs had flocked into the place. But it was Elias Pohjanpää who was doing all the yelling.

“Hullo, Einari! Old pal! It’s ages since I saw you, *perkele*! I say, you’re looking pretty thin and you’ve aged. Beginning to knuckle under, what? Don’t get doing that, man. Too early. Too early. Take an example from us, *perkele*! We’ve weathered all the storms, and here we are, still going strong! Why, Elsa has altered less than you have. She looks fine. Awfully stuck-up, though. Regular prude. It doesn’t suit her. She needs reminding who we are and who she is. Tell her so. But I’m glad to see you.”

And he held his hand out to me. But just then I took the hame into my hand which Paavo had placed against the wall when he had unharnessed *Mustalainen*. I took the hame in my hand to hang it on a long wooden wedge driven into the wall. So I did not immediately notice his outstretched hand.

And as I lifted the hame I saw that the sleeves of my coat had slipped back, baring my lean sinewy arms. Then I remembered yesterday’s dreary Sunday of mine, and other things too....

I hung up the reins and saddle girth, too, on the same wedge, and only after that did I notice and shake the hand that Elias was holding out to me. Elias talked without a stop and his loud voice made the stable sound like a market place. He was that glad to see me.

“But you’ve still got the same old temper. A bad temper, *perkele*! The war hasn’t changed you. More’s the pity. You won’t get far with a temper like that. You’ll go to the dogs, *perkele*. You take an example from us, then everything will go well with you. Have a smoke?”

He held out an opened pack of “*Klubi No. 7*” which in peacetime had cost four marks. But I wouldn’t smoke his cigarettes, and waited for him to light up and shut his mouth for a minute so that I could ask Paa-vo about *Mustalainen’s* leg. But he didn’t smoke either, and went on yelling, touching me on the shoulder.

“You take an example from us, you keep on good terms with us and then we’ll always give you a helping hand. Why, we’ve been to the war, too, *perkele*, but look at us! Are we any the worse for it? Safe and sound, with honours on top of it, *perkele*!

Only I didn't get to the front lines. I kept on asking them to let me. I knew that if I got there the *Ryssä* would get it hot. I'd have snuffed 'em out in batches, because when I get going there's no stopping me, *perkele!* People got to know me all right, don't you worry. But I didn't get into the front lines. I was needed elsewhere. What could a fellow do? Have to obey orders. The authorities wanted it so. And the authorities have always got to be obeyed, don't you agree? You're a soldier, yourself, you ought to know. Ain't I right?"

And he started prodding me still harder in the side and shoulder.

"You ought to be proud of the fact that you've been at the front, *perkele!* I envy you, dammit. D'you realize that? Even I envy you! You've seen our Finnish heroes with your own eyes beating the Russians, *perkele!* You've seen the power of our soldiers and you yourself have given those *Ryssä* a taste of the Finn. Ain't that so?"

He spoke and questioned me and peered into my eyes, and I didn't know what to answer him, but simply looked in silence at his red lips moving beneath the black moustache and the gold tooth shining.

"I bet you sent a lot of 'em west. Don't I know you, *perkele!*" he went on. "Such men do wonders at the front! What a pity I wasn't there! I'd have shown 'em, *perkele!* Why, for the mere fact that we had to give up the idea of *Pietari* I'd have crushed 'em like worms! I'll never forgive 'em that house on the Nevsky. What plans my father and I had, and they're all upset, *perkele*. I'll remember that all my life and only wait for the opportunity when it starts all over again. That blasted breed must be wiped off the face of the earth! All the evil in the world comes from them, *perkele!* The more of 'em you kill the better it is for others. You did a jolly good thing not to give them any quarter. How many of 'em did you send west?"

"Not one."

"What? Stop kidding! It can't be! I'll never believe it, *perkele!* You simply don't want to talk about it. Waiting to be coaxed. You're just as uppish as your dead brother Vilho. You shouldn't be. Come off it, tell us. What does it cost you to say? How many *Ryssä* did you kill?"

I looked at Paavo again. He had finished his pipe, sitting by the wall. I had to find

out from him how the horse was and then hurry off for my breakfast, not to waste time. My stomach was all drawn in and even shooting spasms—I was that hungry after handling the six cartloads of clay. But Elias didn't look as though he intended finishing his loud talk soon. He went on pushing me with his hand in the side and the shoulder, shouting:

“Well, how many *Ryssä* did you kill? I dare say not less than a dozen. It's God's rule that one Finn should kill a dozen *Ryssä*, all the more you could. Why, even I intended killing a couple o' dozen of them. But I wasn't there. They wouldn't let me go, *perkele*. But you were there and in the thick of it. You were in the thick of it, weren't you? Eh?”

“I suppose so. . . .”

“There, you see! You see! Didn't I say so? I knew you were, *perkele*! . . .”

And here he prodded me still harder in the shoulder and began to yell still louder.

“So you were in the thick of the fight! Good boy, Einari! Hand-to-hand scrimmage or what?”

“Hand to hand.”

"Attaboy! That's the stuff, *perkele*! I can imagine the mess you made of 'em. I bet you squashed 'em like bugs! Hang it, I wasn't there.... I can just see the two of us.... I'd have torn 'em to bits with my teeth, *perkele*! How many of 'em did you make away with?"

"None. That'll do. Get out of the way, I haven't had my breakfast yet."

"How none? You just said you'd been fighting them hand to hand."

"It was only one man."

"One? You fought just one man?"

"Yes. Come on, make way."

"Only one? You licked only one man?"

"I didn't lick him, he licked me."

"Wh-what? He? You?"

"Yes. He licked me."

"The *Ryssä*? You? The *Ryssä* licked you?  
A Finn? Alone?"

"Yes, yes."

"But, dammit, how...."

"How? Like this here. He grabbed hold of me first by the chest. Then he squashed me up against the wall. After that he started punching me in the jaw, like this, like this!"

And I demonstrated to Elias Pohjanpää everything I said. He struggled hard to

wrench free, his dark-brown eyes fairly popping at me, but I held him tight and pushed my fist home into his face, straight on the mouth where his gold tooth gleamed among the white ones. Sometimes he jerked his head, and then my fist landed on the brick wall. But I saw to it that the next blow landed square on his face with a still harder punch, and soon it was all covered with bruises and his nose and mouth began to bleed, dripping on his natty black moustache trimmed like the German führer's.

Then I let him go. But he swiftly pulled out his *puukko*. I seized his hand, however, and pressed him with my back against the wall. And though he bit and scratched my back I didn't release him until I had twisted the knife out of his grasp.

After that I let him go again, but he pulled a clever boxing trick and punched me hard on the jaw with his fist. Then I grabbed him by the chest, squeezed him up against the wall again and hit him until he dropped senseless.

But he didn't lie long and soon got up. Pulling a handkerchief and a mirror out of his pocket he leaned up against the wall

and stood a long time wiping his face, then went out.

By that time Paavo had finished his pipe and knocked it out against the wall, and when I turned round to him he said, looking closely at *Mustalainen's* foot:

"I've examined it already. It isn't a sprain. The horseshoe cracked and one of the nails is touching the live flesh."

I was breathing hard, and my hands were trembling. My God, I should think they were trembling! They weren't used to hitting a man. They were used to working, only to working, to doing something, however difficult it was, but doing it calmly, steadily and not moving with that stupid rapidity. That's why they were trembling, they weren't used to it. And everything was topsy-turvy in my stomach, too.

But Paavo did not look at me and did not see my hands. He was very preoccupied with the horse's foot and looked at nothing else. Even to me he spoke without looking up.

"You'll have to take *Jättiläinen* while I get him reshod."

I said:

"All right. I'll just go and have my breakfast."

He answered:

"Sure, go ahead."

And he went on examining the horse's foot and even fingered it. But hadn't he said that he had already examined it and knew what the matter was?

I went to have my breakfast. I held my hands as though I had soiled them on something dirty, and looked out for a puddle in which to wash them.

And as my boots splashed through the autumn slush I thought what a queer fellow that little Paavo was. A queer little fellow! . . .

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Several days later he surprised me again. He came close up to me, looked around him on all sides, and said quietly:

"Your Vilho's come home."

I didn't say anything. What could you say to such news? There was nothing to say. And he added:

"He intends coming down to see you on Sunday."

I pondered a little and asked:

"Did he ask you to tell me?"

"No. Just mentioned it during the conversation. 'I'll drop in on him on Sunday.' "

I nodded and drove the horse out into the field.

It was a dry day and people were digging potatoes in the field. Everybody was digging—the two hired dairymaids, Elsa, Neiti Hilda and even the old broad-cheeked Kurkimäki lady had come here to exercise her heavy bulk.

I began to plough up the furrows to excavate the potato tubers. When I drew abreast of Hilda she suddenly hailed me:

"Einari!"

I brought the horse to a stop. Hilda came up to me and asked me very softly, almost in a whisper:

"Is it true that Vilho has come back?"

I did not know what to answer. There are questions sometimes to which you just cannot think up an answer. I stood staring like a fool at her wide grey trousers tied up around the ankles, at the warm white sweater and the bright silk kerchief on her head tying her thick fair hair into a single knot. She was just as slim, only her bust

had grown fuller, swelling out the front of the sweater, and her lips seemed slightly fuller, too, though they weren't rouged this time. But the eyelashes were just as dark and long and the large eyes looked out at me very gravely from under them. I shrugged and asked her:

"Who told you that?"

"Elias."

"I suppose he's come, then."

She asked:

"Isn't he coming down to see you on Sunday?"

I wasn't able to think up an answer to that at once, but first thing I did I shook my head, then said:

"No, no. He's not."

"That's a pity. I thought...."

"No, no."

She bent over the furrow again, swiftly handling the digger and throwing the big and small potatoes into separate baskets.

I had a side view of her breast again, beneath the clinging white sweater. Yes, her breast was ripe. That mother's baby wouldn't be hungry.

Vilho came to see me on Sunday at the close of the day. It was a bright day, good weather for autumn, and a warm wind blew from the South.

Vilho came up the hillock so quickly that I had no time to make up my mind what to say to him, and at first we just stood facing each other.

"There. So you've come back at last," I said presently.

He looked a little thinner. Just a little. But his eyes and lips had the old faint smile on them. He said: "Sure I have!" and pressed my shoulders with his palms.

I squeezed his shoulders hard as well and shook him several times. It was my brother, alive and well. He was the only one I had, and God had kept him safe for me.

I dragged him into the house and whispered to Elsa:

"Put everything on the table. Everything we have. Get me? Grudge nothing."

We lit the lamp in the room and sat down on the bench by the wall while Elsa busied herself at the stove. The conversation was slow in getting under way. Elsa

fed the children' and put them to bed in a corner behind the curtain, back of the table, but we still sat in silence. Presently he asked:

"Did my letter reach you?"

I nodded my head:

"Yes. It did."

There was another pause.

There was a faint twinge at my heart, as though I were not particularly glad that he had come back cheerful after that terrible war.

To say something and keep my thoughts off nonsense I said to him:

"You've been away a long time."

He answered:

"Yes. Our own people detained us here, otherwise I'd have come back sooner. A special commission checked whether we hadn't become Bolshevik agents. I'd have still been there, probably, if I hadn't thought of saying that I was a Communist. They let me go immediately then."

I was surprised.

"You don't say so!"

"Yes. But first they asked me: 'What ideas do you intend to propagate?' I told them: 'Strange question. Communist ideas, of

course.' Then they looked at one another, thought it over and said: 'Good-bye to you, Mr. Pitkaniemi' and opened the doors to me. But I said to them: 'Don't be in a hurry to let me go. I may be a dangerous man. Bear in mind that from the very first day I will demand the trial of those who are responsible for having driven us to this slaughter.' And they replied: 'Very good.' That was the last I saw of them."

I stared at Vilho in amazement and didn't know whether to believe him or not. The devil knows what things were going on in Suomi these days. He saw my amazement and his eyes lit up more and more with a merry twinkle.

"And you don't seem to have changed much on this hillock of yours."

I don't know what he was hinting at. Leaving his remark unanswered, I asked:

"Are you really a Communist now?"

He smiled:

"Why, no. I simply got mad then and they believed me."

"Who is it you intend to put on trial?"

"What d'you mean who? Our former rulers, of course."

"Rulers?"

“Why, yes. ‘Who else is going to answer to Finnish mothers and wives for the murder of their husbands and sons, for the outrage of our country by the German bandits?’”

I was silent. I hadn’t yet even begun to think of such things. Good Lord, when, how was I to think of it! My life, shut off by the rock from light and warmth, was too poor for me to think of anything except my hillock.

The smell of stewed meat and baking spread ever more strongly in the room. Elsa’s cheeks were aflame from the heat of the stove and the oven, and Vilho brought his gaze to rest on Elsa as though he had suddenly remembered something. Then he asked, without looking at me:

“Has anybody been asking you about me?”

I was surprised.

“Who could ask about you here?”

“Well. . . . Somebody or other. Some acquaintances maybe. . . .”

“No, I don’t think so. . . . No. . . .”

Elsa was putting something on the table and rattled the plates. Then she went out into the passage and came back in a new dark-red frock.

Tucking the sleeves back over her rounded dimpled elbows, she slipped on a little white apron so as not to soil her dress and said to me:

“Well, what are you waiting for?”

The table was already laid with a white cloth, and pieces of cold pork and cheese lay on the plates. In one dish under a cover there were stewed potatoes and meat, and fried fish was sizzling on the frying pan standing on a piece of cardboard.

I glanced at Elsa. She motioned with her eyes to the corner of the room where stood five bottles of wine—her whole stock.

I asked:

“Is everything ready?”

She answered:

“Don’t you see?”

I looked at the table again, at the stove, and at the whole room and only just noticed how festive everything looked. When had she managed it? That’s what having a woman in the house means. There were fresh clean curtains on the windows. On the white tablecloth stood a bunch of some autumn flowers gathered from Martta’s tiny flower bed.

The stove gave off a pleasant warmth. The saucepan on the stove, in which a milk soup was cooking, was burnished clean and shone like silver. The coffeepot, too. The kitchen things on the shelf over the stove were also spick and span and sparkled with coloured lights. Elsa herself was as radiant as the sun and set off everything around. Even Vilho noticed it, and said:

“You’re a lucky devil, Einari!”

And he became thoughtful for a moment. I got a bottle out of the corner, uncorked it and poured out three wineglasses. Elsa, too, sat down for a minute and we raised our glasses. Vilho said:

“Here’s to Elsa!”

Elsa laughed.

“No, I’m not drinking that toast.” She glanced slyly at Vilho and said: “Here’s to every one finding his Elsa in life.”

We quaffed and Elsa got up to look at the cakes she was baking in the oven. I filled up the glasses again. Vilho tossed his off, caught a piece of fried fish on his fork and said:

“You’ve got to find a place first to lay your own head, before thinking of Elsa.” And seeing me gape, he explained: “I’m not working any more at Pohjanpää’s.”

“Why?”

He shrugged.

“Well . . . just couldn’t stand it.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Never mind. As long as you have a pair of hands—you’ll always find a Pohjanpää.”

I filled the glass. And Elsa meanwhile kept restocking our plates. After the fifth glass Vilho said:

“I got fed up with seeing his fat sleek mug. I told him as much. I said I might some day accidentally give it a punch. He asked, ‘Why?’ I said I detested all those who had fattened on the war and that I had better give notice. He agreed that it would be better, and paid me off.”

Elsa put some stewed meat and potatoes on our plates, while I refilled the glasses and got out the third bottle. I kept up with Vilho and was beginning to feel queer in the head. But I listened to him very attentively and tried to look as though I understood what it was all about, though I couldn’t make out how a man could quit his employer simply because he didn’t like his mug. Bosses with ugly mugs aren’t too scarce. . . .

No, that talk 'about ugly mugs was tommyrot. You couldn't kid me. I see through everything, though I don't say much. Vilho's tanned cheeks took on a deeper colour, his eyes gleamed, but not with a merry twinkle this time. The funny noises in my head grew stronger, and those little white curtains and the pillows on our bed, and the tablecloth, and crockery, and Elsa in her flaming frock and white apron who kept flitting to the table and disappearing again—it all danced and twinkled before my eyes, and made me feel jolly. I even felt like waving my arms about and laughing out loud, but Vilho was saying something again, and I fell to nodding my head and listening.

“I got sick of their whisperings, and decided to put an end to it. Whenever it comes to anything, off they go about the war and start that idiotic cackling. One day I overheard Elias telling Pettunen: ‘You're too young yet, you don't know the business of war, *perkele*. You take a lesson from those who have more experience. There are some smart guys who desert to the *Ryssä* at the very beginning of the war, lie low there until it's over and then go about trumpeting—I've been fighting, too! Those are the fire-

eaters you should learn from, *perkele*.' And he guffawed when he said that. Pettunen and Aate started guffawing, too, and looked in my direction. Then I went up to them and said offhand: 'What's to prevent me punching all your jaws for you? I just don't want to dirty my hands. As for you, Elias, thank your lucky stars that someone has already beat you black and blue and knocked your gold tooth out for you. Papers have been turned over to our government which state clearly how I got taken prisoner, and that's good enough for me.' Aate said to that: 'Oh, if the Russians wanted to conceal the actual circumstances they'd know how to do it.' And Pettunen added: 'Maybe they've made you one of their propagandists, so why shouldn't they conceal the fact?' Elias guffawed again at that and yelled: 'That's right, *perkele*!' I turned my back on them and walked away. Hell! I can't stay on there any more. My hands itch every time they start that kind of talk. To hell! Sorry, Elsa. Pour me out another one, Einari. And drink yourself. Elsa! What are you walking about for all the time? Sit down a minute. These are very nice cakes, Elsa. What d'you put in them?"

I kept on filling his glass and he drank, but he did not get jollier, like I did. On the contrary, after each glass his blue eyes grew sadder and his broad forehead puckered, while his lips pouted like a hurt child's. Yes, there was a good deal of the boy still in him, despite what he had been through.

But I felt light at heart from the wine. I wanted to sing, shout and wave my arms. And I wanted to see my brother looking as jolly. So I said to him:

"Cheer up, Vilho, don't let fools get on your nerves. What do they understand? What have they seen? Nothing but their boss' fat backside. Here, better have another glass."

He drank another glass, but it didn't cheer him up—he became still gloomier, staring into the corner, and looking altogether like a sullen boy.

"I'd like to show them how I deserted to the Russians. I'd like to poke their noses into it, so's they could see what it was like. And then I'd like to see what'd be left of them, what pieces of them could be picked up to send home, *perkele*.... Sorry, Elsa. I'm getting noises in the head, too, and am afraid I'm beginning to swear in front of la-

dies. It's Einari's fault. Pour me out another one, Einari. You're not angry, Elsa, are you? That's good. Let's drink together. Just one drop. Once in four years doesn't matter—and then we'll fast again. At least I will. You don't have to. No. You can go on having a good time every day for that matter. You've got something to rejoice in. You've got a house, and in that house Elsa. That's the main thing."

But Elsa didn't consider it to be the main thing. She interrupted Vilho and said laughing:

"We've also got a stony hillock. Are we to rejoice in that?"

But he comforted her:

"That's all right. A stony hillock's all right. Though it holds a man down there'll be an end to that some day. You haven't got long to stay on the rock. A fresh wind has started blowing in Suomi...."

I hastened to fill up his glass, and placed the last bottle of "*Imatran kuohu*"<sup>1</sup> on the table.

It struck me that he was going to say something I very much wanted to hear. I

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<sup>1</sup> Foam of Imatra—a brand of wine.

didn't quite know myself yet what words I expected from him. How was I to know, good God, living on this hillock? But he had to explain and confirm some sort of hazy notion of mine. And I waited with my eyes glued on his face, and I no longer wanted to laugh aloud and wave my arms. Misery crept into my heart again. I refilled the glasses, listening hungrily to his angry words. And he was saying:

"It's amusing now to remember how that popinjay of an ober-lieutenant yelled: 'Boys! Just one more push. Another good drive and we'll close all the roads to Lake Ladoga to the Russians and snap the lock on them. We'll have a try today. It's going to be a little local test, but it will show that we'll be able to tackle the bigger problem later on, that of closing the road across the Ladoga to the Bolsheviks. And then *Pietari* will be ours, my lads!' Poor scented dude, German toady! Where is he now? In what pot are the devils cooking the scraps of meat that were left of him? He got what he asked for. But why was the company to blame? Ah, Einari! What fine boys there were in that company! Toivo Koskinen, Kalle Ahola, Jalmari Kivimäki, Juho Peltonen.... All of

them simple folk who didn't want the war. And they were thrown into 'a little local test.' But we had forgotten that we were dealing with a giant whom nobody yet had ever beaten. And we had decided that we had knocked him over when we struck at him on the sly, for which we gathered all our puny strength. But he didn't think of falling. He merely took a step back to gather his strength. We didn't think of that when we planned our 'test.' I don't know what it was like in the other companies of our battalion which launched on that 'test', but I do know what it was like in my company. It didn't go far. The Russians saw through it all from the start and were ready for us. They waited until we had crawled out ahead and then they let the music go...."

He paused, frowning, and then went on:

"You never saw anything like it, Einari, and lucky that you haven't. You may thank your lucky stars. You'd have thought that the skies had come tumbling about the earth—the way it shook, and then all at once flared up from end to end. And when the wind had driven the smoke away you'd have seen that several acres of land had become black, as if a plough had turned it up

together with the spring snow in the course of a second or two. And it wouldn't have been any use your looking for the company amid those ploughed black acres. It didn't exist any more. I got up out of a fox hole in which I happened to be just before it began, like a dead man rising from his grave, and my mind was a perfect blank. I just stood there in a daze with the Russians running towards me. Where was my company, *perkele*? Where was Toivo Koskinen, Kalle Ahola . . . where were they? The Russians ran up. They snatched the tommy gun out of my hands, took away my grenades and *puukko* and motioned me to walk on. But here I suddenly remembered that I was a Finn and they Russians, and orders were to fight them, and that if I didn't have a tommy gun or *puukko*, at least I had a good pair of fists. And I hit one of them on the chin and sent him sprawling on the furrowed ground, but another struck me on the head with the butt of his rifle and I slumped down on my heels. The first man jumped up and thrust the barrel of his tommy gun in my chest. That was the end of me. I could tell by the gleam in his eyes that the whole charge of his gun was going into my chest. But

the other one struck the tommy gun aside with his butt and the bullets went whizzing past my cheek. They shouted at each other a bit, but soon calmed down, and the first one fiercely tied my hands tight behind my back with a piece of wire he found lying around and then motioned to me with his head to follow him. I looked around once more at the desolate black land and suddenly the mist cleared from my brain and I realized distinctly everything that had taken place. At that I started to cry. I couldn't help it. The whole thing was too horrible. Such fine lads.... They all had wanted to live, they had every right to live, but someone had sent them on a 'test'.... The wire dug into my hands, but I did not feel the pain. All the way I barely dragged my feet along, stumbled and cried. I couldn't help it—it was all so horrible....”

Vilho took the refilled glass, tossed it off and searched the table for a bite, but did not take anything. I didn't feel any too cheerful myself, listening to him, but he was my guest and I couldn't let him be sad. All right. I could do without the answers to my thoughts. I'd get the thing clear myself if it came to that. As long as my brother wasn't

sad in my house. Let him do whatever he pleases, let him scold me or make fun of me again if he wants, so long as he isn't sad.

I touched him on the shoulder and said:  
"All right, Vilho. Don't think about it. To hell! It's all gone and done with. Forget it and smile. Or better tell us an anecdote, like that time—remember? I won't get cross, not even if you make a butt of me, really. Elsa, pour him some more coffee."

Vilho smiled at last, looking at me and Elsa, then said:

"I'll tell you a tale about a Finn—want to hear it?"

"All right. If a tale, then a tale be it. Go ahead."

And I gave my head a shake to clear the mist before my eyes and to look alert and attentive. Let it be a tale then. Come on.

"Once upon a time there were two neighbours. One, a big, cheerful and good-natured man, every day approached the other one, a morose, silent man, with a friendly nod and held his hand out to him. But the other said nothing and scowled. The neighbour did not get offended, and the next morning he would smile again to him in a friendly way

and hold out his hand, and the other would not so much as lift a finger. But the good-natured neighbour did not take offence and next day he would hold his hand out again, but again without success. Finally his patience was exhausted. Whose wouldn't be, seeing that this had been going on for a whole year. And so finally he lost his temper and hit his neighbour on the head with a stick. Imagine his astonishment when he heard his neighbour crack and fall apart. But it appears that it was not the neighbour's skull that had cracked. It was a crust, a hard icy crust, that had covered him from head to foot. Someone had frozen him and left him like that. That's why he couldn't nod his head or hold out his hand. When the crust was smashed, a real live man stepped out of it, and he immediately broke out into a smile and held his hand out to his neighbour. The other shook it very warmly, of course. And it appeared that they differed very little from each other. Both were big, good-natured, snub-nosed and fair-headed, as much alike as blood brothers, and they saw no reason why they shouldn't shake hands with each other. It was good that the neighbour had thought of giving him a whack...."

I sat silent, leaning slightly forward with my arms on the table the better to hear. There was no longer a mist before my eyes which were wide open, gazing straight into Vilho's mouth, as though I had at last heard from him what I had been waiting for so long. My jaw hardened and I clenched my fists.

And Vilho looked at me with a smile and said, suppressing for a moment the mischievous twinkle of his eyes:

"It's a pity you haven't seen much on your stony hillock. Pressed in by the rocks from all sides. You haven't even been able to get to know your neighbour properly. And you ought to have, Einari."

I got up. I couldn't sit and listen any more. I had heard and seen enough. Enough! I got up and pushed back the bench. I pushed it back and struck the table with my fist, sending everything on it dancing. Then I struck it again. Then I banged it with both fists. Elsa cried:

"Einari! Have you gone mad!"

No, I hadn't gone mad. But I had to give vent somehow to my pent-up feelings. I couldn't sit and listen any more. I wanted to shout something, but remembered that the children were in bed, so I went out into the

yard, Elsa darting to the stove to make way for me.

And there amid the darkness my voice thundered down the hillside into the black autumn night. And then I began looking round for something to do that would tax the strength of my arms and groped about the ground of my hillock until I came across the stones lying by the unfinished shed. Then I began seizing those stones and throwing them at random down the hillock. For forty-two years I had been silent. I had to shout out something at least once in all that time! So I shouted and hurled heavy stones about, not knowing what I was doing. I had drunk too much that night. We had both drunk a good deal. We shouldn't have drunk so much. . . .

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At breakfast Vilho and I finished the fifth bottle left over from the previous evening. I had to eat my meal quickly and go to work. I had overslept as it was. Vilho stole glances at me from time to time. And though his eyes lit up now and again with a merry twinkle, I noticed in them a look of surprise, as though he had only met me

today, and not yesterday, and only today had begun to learn to know me. When the twinkle had gone entirely, he said:

“A man shouldn’t regret his words, if they come from his heart. Let them be written down against the account of the former government. It has itself to blame that such words were spoken.”

After a moment’s thought I asked:

“What words are you talking about? Not those that somebody uttered in our house after the winter campaign?”

He smiled and answered:

“One mustn’t take too literally what a man says when he’s tired and angry. The same applies to what was spoken in such a thunderous voice last night. But the old government has its own idiotic policy to thank for that. Let’s hope the new government will arrange the people’s life so that such words won’t be spoken. It’s in its own interests.”

I said nothing in reply. I don’t know what words spoken in a thunderous voice he was alluding to. He must have been dreaming. True, Elsa also whispered to me about some awful shouts in the night, but then she, too, is fond of pulling a fellow’s leg now and then.

After breakfast he put on his black overcoat, and I put on my jacket, and we left the house together. It was long past day-break, and the day was as calm and warm as on the eve. I was late for work that day. Elsa had already milked the cows before breakfast, and I had overslept.

Vilho took leave of me at the stables, but before going he said, once more suppressing the twinkle:

“I was a little mistaken in you, and I’m glad that I was. It seems that you, too, have gone through something that’s made you a head taller. You’re even stronger than I am now. I feel it. I haven’t matured yet as a man should who has a clear conception of his aim in life. I still need pointers and pushers. So far I have grasped this, that a man’s obligations to his country do not merely consist in peacefully working, eating and drinking. A man without a country is capable of doing that. It strikes me that you will make faster progress than I in this respect. What I have been gradually learning from books and wise comrades you have discovered by yourself on that hillock of yours, or wherever else it was you discovered it. A hillock, it seems, is not such a bad school. True, I

can't imagine how that new thing that has matured in you is going to affect your life, but if you have your word to say somewhere, it's going to be the right word, as weighty as one of the stones on your hillock. Our Suomi is going to have her share of toil and cares before each man straightens out his shoulders and draws a breath of relief. But that time is not far off, once such rebels have begun to make their appearance in the country."

The merry twinkle came back to his eyes for an instant, then he added gravely:

"Well, good-bye! I don't suppose I'll be seeing you soon. But I'll be glad to know and remember that you're not only a brother to me now...."

And he squeezed my hand as only he can squeeze it. I don't know what made him talk that way. He must have been dreaming still....

Just as he turned away, making for the highroad, a cart rode into the yard piled high with sacks of potatoes. People had already got some work done, it seems.

On top of the sacks sat Paavo and Hilda Kurkimäki. Hilda cried: "Vilho!" and jumped off the cart. The coat that was thrown

on her shoulders over the white sweater slipped to the ground as she did so, but she snatched it up with one hand and sped towards Vilho almost at a run with the other hand stretched out.

I don't know what she wanted to do with her free hand—perhaps she only wanted to touch him, or perhaps embrace him. She ran up to him quite close, almost touched him. But he very politely took a step back, so she shouldn't knock into him, slightly bent his head and shook her outstretched hand.

He wanted to continue on his way, but Hilda exclaimed, "Vilho!" and he stopped, preparing himself to listen very politely to what she had to say. His face was calm. Very calm. One might say too calm. I'd never seen him with so calm a face. This was a grown-up Vilho, without a trace of the boy.

His polite and calm air must have affected her, too, because she did not immediately find her tongue, to say:

"Not a single letter in three years. Aren't you ashamed?"

He asked:

"Was there any need for letters?"

She said reproachfully:

“Vilho!”

His whole air betokened a readiness to listen to whatever she had to say to him. And again Hilda was at a loss to find words.

So they stood for about a minute. He looked at her wide trousers tied about the ankles, at the bright kerchief on her head, at her face still moist with perspiration and not yet cooled. Her full lips had no lipstick on them this time, too, and her fair thick hair was neatly drawn beneath the kerchief. What with her cheeks and breast fuller now and her hands smeared with earth, she looked somehow different from what she always did. She seemed to be standing more firmly on the earth, had grown sturdier and didn't differ much from a farm-hand girl. I suppose they had come in for their share of compulsory work during the war.

And only the long eyelashes were as soft and silky as they were before. They fluttered in surprise over her beautiful dark brown eyes.

And it seemed to me as though a look of something other than calmness and politeness flashed over Vilho's face.

But I may have been mistaken, because immediately after that he bent his head slightly, raised his hat and said:

"I hope neiti will excuse me, but I'm in a hurry, really."

And he turned away. But she cried, almost shouted:

"Vilho!" And when he turned round she continued hurriedly: "It's a lie, Vilho! You're a bad actor. You overact and give yourself away. What for, Vilho? What for? All the same I won't believe it. Why must you, Vilho?"

Vilho raised his fingers to his hat once more and proceeded on his way. She cried: "Vilho!" But he did not turn his head. Then she stamped her foot and strode towards the house.

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Paavo dumped the sacks by the cellar and drove up to the stable. I helped him unharness the horse and mix clover for it. I noticed in doing so that he kept looking at me in a sort of odd way, with his eyes screwed up. I asked him:

"What are you looking at me like that for?"

He answered:

"What happened at your place last night?"

I asked:

“Why?”

“Because every word could be heard down here. You’ve got a voice like a blessed trombone.”

I shrugged. And he broke out into a wheezy laugh and began coughing. Then he wiped his watering eyes and added:

“You should have seen the boss. He was here down by the stable you know. Heard you out from first word to last.”

I didn’t say anything. So that was how things were. All right then. Now I knew just what sort of talk to expect from him. . . . Let him have his say. Who cares?

When Paavo went to have his breakfast I threw the dung out of the stable, changed the horses’ litter and walked over to the cow house with a pitchfork to do the same there. At the cow house I met the boss.

He was just coming out. I stopped to let him pass. He slackened his pace, too, looking at me very oddly from beneath his living little hoods.

I always greeted him when we met, but this time I did not wish him good morning and said nothing. How do I know, maybe he wanted to speak first. It often happens that

a man suddenly wants to say something before you greet him. Why should I interfere? So I said nothing, just looked at the deep cracks that lined the flabby flesh of his face. He nodded his head to me so that his heavy jowls were set quivering, and said as he went past:

“Morning, Einari.”

Then I nodded my head, too. As a matter of fact I wanted not only to nod my head. I intended saying “Good morning,” as well, but I was too late. Even the nod I gave was too late. He missed it, too, as he passed to his house with that solid, heavy tread of his, as though testing the strength of the ground with each foot.

I went into the cow house and started clearing out the dung, over which I spent a good hour. I had reached a point in life when there was no more need for haste. Farther on was a grey fog blotting out everything, and my haste would hardly make things any clearer.

I threw out the dung and made a litter of fresh-cut straw for each cow. After that I pumped drinking water for them into the long troughs and set off for the field to dig potatoes.

Everybody was busy at his own work. Paavo had ploughed new furrows and the others were digging. Then I took a digger, found two empty baskets by the cart and tackled a fresh furrow turned up by the cultivator.

Besides this field digging had to be done in two more places, and there was a chance of the weather turning bad at any moment. It might rain, or a frost might set in. So everybody was busy digging, except the boss, who stayed at home to look after the farm. Everybody was digging away for all he was worth. I was the only one who didn't hurry—what was the hurry? My life had run into a blind alley from which there was no escape, hurry or no hurry.

For all the hurry the potatoes would not have all been dug up if not for Vihtori. He had come home on a month's holiday from his Ministry of Agriculture and brought three more people with him to help dig potatoes—two women and a boy. A war widow and her mother and son. They had no home or permanent employment after being made to emigrate, so Vihtori found them work for almost a month. They worked well and swiftly.

But Vihtori didn't work bad, either. He took his glasses off, so they shouldn't be in his way, and when Vihtori Kurkimäki takes his glasses off you'd better look out. He rolled up the sleeves of his brown cardigan and fell to work with a vengeance. The digger whisked in his hands and the potatoes went flying in a constant stream, now into the basket, now into the bucket.

After a couple of hours' digging he quit-  
ted the field, and then he could be seen sprint-  
ing round his house and the garden or jump-  
ing rope. Sometimes he hung a heavy sack  
on an apple tree in the garden and began  
pounding it with his fists in leather gloves.  
He was, as usual, training for a bout at the  
workers' club in Kivimaa. Potato digging was  
just training for him, not work.

But he wasn't in luck that autumn. It  
hadn't occurred to him that all the men  
had been in the war, and if they hadn't had  
time there for training, they'd had plenty  
for working up a vicious temper. Besides,  
they all of them knew that Vihtori had not  
so much as smelled the war, holding an  
office job at the Ministry of Agriculture.

It didn't enter their minds that it was out  
of the question for him to go to the war, how-

ever keen he was on going, maybe no less keen than Elias Pohjanpää. He had so much business to attend to in the agrarian department, some of it in connection with Eastern Karelia. His only thought was not, God forbid, to miss a decent plot of woodland there.

Somebody had to attend to the difficult task of taking care of the hundreds of acres of new lands which we had seized from the Bolsheviks. And who was better qualified to handle this than one who was used to counting his own acres by the ten and hundred. But the boxers at Kivimaa didn't understand this.

That's why Vihtori didn't have any luck that autumn. His first match was a draw, and then they started beating him. The first to lick him out was Jussi Vähänen, then Riku Kivi, then Kauko Sarkola. But after the heavy fists of Yrjö Lehtonen, the lumberjack, he didn't go to the workers' club any more, and stayed at home to nurse his bruises.

Meanwhile another interesting thing had happened. Vilho put in an appearance at the workers' club. He challenged all those who had fought with Vihtori, even the man who had made a draw with him, and licked them

one after the other. Even Yrjö Lehtonen, who was as tough as iron, didn't stand up to him for more than four rounds, and in the fifth he dropped onto his hands and knees and didn't get up until the fifteenth count.

And again people began to say: "What does it mean? What's he driving at?" But many people didn't ask such questions. They thought they knew by now what it was all about. Young Mr. Kurkimäki wanted to practise on the labour sportsmen in preparation for his next boxing match in *Tukholma*.<sup>1</sup> The sportsmen of the workers' club knocked out of him any desire he may have had to practise on them. And Vilho made short work of everyone who dared to knock the breath out of Vihtori. There would seem to be nothing for people to cudgel their brains over. To many members of the workers' club in Kivimaa everything was so clear that they had no need to ask: "What does it mean?" They simply cut Vilho.

It wasn't long before the whole thing was cleared up for me.

Vihtori Kurkimäki came up to me one day. I wasn't expecting him to come up to

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<sup>1</sup> Finnish name for Stockholm.

me, and didn't even look in his direction. What reason did he have to come up to me? But I noticed out of the corner of my eye that his tall lank figure was coming straight towards me. So I faced round and waited.

He looked as if he had made up his mind to get something off his chest. This had been dragging on for so many days and he had probably consulted his father about it more than once, and now they had finally come to a decision. All right! I was prepared to hear anything they had to say. Come on, my dear herra, get it off your chest, I'm waiting.

He stopped, looking at me through his glasses. His face was very lean, his chin sharp and narrow, like a chisel, and over it was drawn a pair of lips so thin and pale as though he kept them tightened all the time.

He still had bits of sticking plaster on the bridge of his nose, on his cheek and jaw, but the other bruises had already healed. He didn't look as if he was distressed at having been thrashed four times in succession. On the contrary, he thrust his head out truculently on his wiry neck as though he were prepared to lay about him there and then. He was crazy over these fights and was prepared to go

to any lengths for the sake of a boxing joust.

Obviously, there was something behind his coming up to me. He came up without a hat and coat on, just in a light suit, although it was a cold autumn day. He must have considered the coat an obstacle in the conversation he intended holding with me, and he must have prepared some very convincing words. Well, I'd been long prepared for this, too, and I had an answer ready for any word of his. My fists, too, were ready just in case.

But while I was standing looking at him he drew a white envelope from his inside pocket and asked:

"Could you manage to give this letter to your brother before Sunday?"

I didn't answer. It's difficult to answer right away when a man starts a conversation with you quite different from what you had been expecting. And he added:

"Father is inviting him to a family gathering on Sunday evening. He wants to see him on business. And I have a few words to say to him."

I kept silent, though the envelope had passed into my hands. He paused, then added once more:

"We'll send a horse for him on Sunday."

I still couldn't find suitable words for an answer. So then he asked:

"Well, what do you say? Can you give it to him?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Why not? Of course."

In the evening I said to Elsa:

"Hand that over tomorrow morning when you go down with the milk cans. But don't give any regards. Just hand the letter over, that's all."

Sunday evening, coming home after having milked the cows, she said:

"Vilho's come. They've driven him down."

I answered:

"Well, what of it. What's it to do with me?"

She added:

"They say the boss has offered him a job as foreman at the creamery."

I said:

"No one's asking you about that. You'd better think of getting the children fed instead of standing about chattering."

Monday morning I noticed that Paavo was screwing up his eyes at me again in that odd look. I immediately guessed that he had another bit of news which he didn't mind sharing with me. But I didn't question him this time, since I didn't expect to hear anything agreeable. He came out with it himself in the end. He asked me:

"Was Vilho at your place yesterday?"

I answered:

"No."

He said:

"And I don't suppose he will be for a long time."

"Why?"

"He's gone to Tampere."

"To Tampere?"

"Yes."

He said nothing for a while, then asked again:

"So you don't know what he did yesterday?"

"No, what was it?"

He pulled his pipe out, filled it and squatted down by the wall of the stable. I took some tobacco from him, too, and rolled

myself a cigarette. I had given up smoking before the war, but got into it again at the front through lonesomeness. But I would have chucked it again. The first few days when I got home I didn't smoke at all. But now my life had run into a blind alley, it didn't matter any more. I rolled a cigarette and we lit up.

He started coughing, as he always did after the first pull, and I waited a long time until all the wheezy noises in his chest had quietened down. Then he said to me, wiping away his tears:

"He nearly gave our Vihtori a thrashing."

I was incredulous.

"How d'you know?"

"Our milkmaids were there. Helping the mistress about the kitchen. They had about ten guests. When they'd all settled in their places at the table and tipped the first glass, Vilho suddenly gets up, marches over to Vihtori, shakes him out of his chair and says: 'I think the time has come to remind you of a certain incident. It took place at our club five years ago, when you took the hire of it for a day to arrange a gentlefolk party of your own. Be so good as to recall the insulting

way you behaved to me at the time and to apologize now in the presence of this worthy company. It was a trifling incident, to be sure, and it would have been much simpler to have forgotten it long ago, but it's a matter of principle . . . so, if you please.' Vihtori stared at him as though he were seeing him for the first time in his life, and Vilho added: 'Hurry up, sir, otherwise there's going to be trouble. I can't keep on taking it out of other men's mugs all the time.' The guests sat very still, waiting. And Vihtori eyes him through his glasses and says: 'Have you gone crazy? Starting a row in a strange house?...' And Vilho tells him: 'Hurry up, my dear sir. Don't let us waste time and spoil your party. I trust you remember only too well what usually awaited those who defeated you in the ring? You ought to remember it. Well, that is just the prelude to what I am going to do to you now, unless I hear the required apologies. And you've had more than one opportunity of weighing our respective chances.' Yes, that's what he says, and stands close up to him, ever so close, looking at him straight in the glasses with a smile on his face. 'I'm waiting,' he says. And the milkmaids say that Vihtori hesitated a bit, then says: 'Yes, I must admit

that I acted caddishly at the time.' 'What?' queries Vilho, 'caddishly? Speak up, so that the rest may hear.' He repeats more loudly: 'Caddishly.' Then Vilho asks: 'Exactly how was it caddish? What did you do?' The other answers: 'Well . . . I shouldn't have prevented you joining our company, as a man worthy of every respect. . . .' 'Louder, come on, louder,' says Vilho and makes him repeat the apology several times. Then he turns his back on Vihtori and asks our boss: 'And so, you offer me the job of foreman at your new creamery? Or maybe you'd like to withdraw your offer now?' The other answers: 'No, why should I withdraw it. I never take my words back. Pranks are pranks, they don't concern me, business is business. I'm only waiting for your consent.' And Vilho says: 'Unfortunately I must disappoint you. I already have an offer from a state enterprise in Tampere. And so, I now see that my presence here is no longer necessary. Let me rid you of an unpleasant visitor. Tomorrow morning I am leaving these parts for good. Good-bye.' And out he goes without a glance at anyone, snatches up his coat in the hall and runs down the porch steps. The guests didn't say a word for a full minute afterwards. Then

Hilda suddenly jumped up from the table and also made for the door. Her father banged the table with his fist and shouted: 'Hilda!' But she only looked at him in silence and went out. I was in the field at the time. *Reipas* had got out of hand and made off from the horsepond. I was in the field and saw Hilda overtake Vilho on the road and walk on at his side. Vilho walked fast and Hilda had to trip along pretty quick to keep up with him. Her brown stockings could be seen flitting alongside his blue trousers. And a head wind blew out the skirts of their coats behind them. Then Vilho took her arm. After that they went slower and then disappeared behind the bend. I saw that myself, because I was in the field at the time trying to catch *Reipas* who had got quite out of hand and wouldn't let me catch him. But I caught him at last on the fringe of the woods."

I stamped out my cigarette and said:

"He's still a boy. Young yet."

But he remonstrated:

"So what of it. A boy has plenty of time to grow up. And take my word, that lad will grow up a real man. He'll deliver the goods all right...."

And Paavo became thoughtful, his face propped up in his hand so that the creases puckered half his cheek and not only under the eye.

I, too, became thoughtful, then nodded my head and said:

“That’s true, that’s true.”

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After that Paavo went out on *Jättiläinen* to replough the furrowed potato field, and the two milkmaids went with him to pick up the potatoes that had been missed during the digging. That was the way things were done on the Kurkimäki farm—not a single potato, not a single ear of corn was allowed to go to waste. He saw to it that everything was garnered, cleaned up and repaired.

But I wasn’t good for that kind of work any more. My life had run into a blind alley, and misery gnawed at my heart, and my hands didn’t feel like picking up or repairing anything. But I couldn’t get away from this. My God! Where could I go—an everlasting labourer on another man’s land! And though misery gnawed at my heart my hands reached out for the pitchfork of their own accord as soon as I came to the cow house.

Another heap of manure had already accumulated behind the cow house—a whole hill of it. A score and a half of cows knew their business. When I cleaned the cow house I had to frequently go outside and toss away the manure from the window opening to make room for the new manure I was throwing out. The pile had steadily grown and now reached the big stone that stood like a long hump behind the cow house and made it impossible to go or drive past. This manure had to be carted out to next year's potato field and ploughed under. This was work that had no end to it.

I pulled the manure cart out from under the shed and placed it next to the dung heap. I decided to harness the horse when I had filled the first cartload. It was the same old cart which I had repaired dozens of times before the war and which Paavo had repaired as many times before me. It had to be overhauled every time before being put to work, because it was all made up of patches and scraps and might fall to pieces under a heavy load. The rotten wood didn't get along with the fresh wood, the nails and bolts wouldn't hold. It was high time this cart was

thrown on the rubbish heap and a new one bought in its place, but then a new one wouldn't be economizing for Mr. Kurkimäki's pocket.

I always looked it over before putting it to work, but this time I didn't, and began throwing the dung into it straight off. My life had reached a blind alley, what the devil did I care about all this! . . .

I piled up a big load. Never mind that the rains had turned the ground quaggy. *Reipas* would manage it. We hadn't fed up those fat buttocks of his for nothing. But when I had laid on the last heavy lump the cart suddenly gave way with a crack and slowly heeled over with its axle in the mud, two of its wheels twisting up as though trying to touch rims.

I stuck the pitchfork into the ground. Then I bent down, placed my shoulder under the cart and tipped it right over. After that I examined the axle. Just as I thought. The damned thing had gone smash again! In the place where the split iron was fastened down with nails the nails had fallen out of the rotten wood, the iron had come loose and the wood had split and snapped all down the axle. The strips of wood nailed down to the

axle on top and on the side hadn't been of any use. They had snapped together with the axle.

Damn it all! I seized the cart by the thick crosspiece joining both axles, wrenched it towards me so that the rest of the manure fell out, lifted the cart above my head in a fit of anger and brought it crashing down on a stone with such violence that nothing was left of it but flying splinters. One of the wheels was torn off its axle and went rolling down almost as far as the Kurkimäki garden.

I looked around me and had a shock of surprise. By the corner of the cow house stood Herra Kurkimäki as large as life. He was looking straight at me. When the devil had he managed to spring up round the corner of the cow house. Anyway, this time he'd have something to say to me. All right. Let him say it, *perkele*! No use putting it off all the time! And I took several steps towards him myself, to save him the trouble. But he didn't wait for me to come up to him. He shifted his gaze to the side, then looked up at the sky and turned the corner of the cow house without another glance at me.

Then I stopped and looked around. Next to me, stuck in the ground, stood the pitchfork. I pulled it up and sent it after the wheel, straight into the boss' garden, and then went home.

My life had reached such a blind alley that the devil himself couldn't get me out of it.

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I did not go to work the next day. At first Elsa kept asking me all kinds of questions, but then she dropped it. And I sat without saying a word. There wasn't anybody to tell what I wanted to say. And I wouldn't have been able to say it properly, and nobody would understand what I meant.

Elsa came back from the dairy, made breakfast, fed the children, sent them off to school, cleared the table, then suddenly said, looking out of the window:

"The boss is coming."

I looked through the window. So he was, coming straight to us. He had already crossed the wide plank over the stream and was toiling up the slope of the hillock, treading heavily with his thick legs, as though testing the strength of the stone.

I got up from the table and went out to meet him. If he had come at last to tell me something, there was no need for him to come into the house. Some things can more conveniently be talked over outside, without coming into the house.

He came up the hillside, breathing heavily, and stopped in front of me so close that I could distinctly make out all the red veins on the soft tip of his little nose and on his cheeks. All the cracks and creases of his face were folded into the semblance of a smile, and he said, holding his hand out to me:

“Well, how are you getting on, Einari?”

But my hands were in my pockets at the moment and I happened to be looking elsewhere, I don't remember exactly where—at the sky or the rock—and didn't notice his outstretched hand. Maybe it was rude not to notice the outstretched hand of your boss, but what could I do if I happened to be looking somewhere else and didn't notice it. And I did so want to grip it! It had been the dream of my life to shake the hand of my boss as often as possible.

He threw me a look out of the corner of his eye and pushed open the door into the passage with his outstretched hand. He looked

back at me in the passage and eyed me again in the room with a look as if he was expecting some one to strike him from behind. But who could strike him from behind? I looked about me, too, and didn't see anybody, unless you count Elsa who was standing by the stove. There was nobody else but me behind him. Strange, who was there here to be afraid of?

Then he sat down by the table facing me and drew a paper out of his pocket. He unfolded it and pushed it over to me, with a gesture that I should read it. I read it without taking my hands out of my pockets. It was a title deed to land. I took my hands out of my pockets and read it again, holding it up closer to my eyes. He was selling me twelve acres of ploughland, twelve acres of meadow and twelve acres of woods. Payment was to be made by installments in cash or by service at my own discretion.

I looked over my shoulder at Elsa. She was washing the dishes in a basin, carefully going over a saucepan with a rag so as not to rattle the things. The hot vapour rose to her face which was bent over the basin, so I had no idea what she was thinking. But

what could she think, being unaware of the paper I held in my hands.

And the boss took out a fountain pen, placed it before me and said:

“Sign.”

I looked at Elsa again. But she didn't seem to have any intention of taking part in the conversation, and left it to me alone. So I shrugged my shoulders and took up the pen. Why shouldn't I sign such a paper? Good God! Hadn't I dreamed and yearned for this all my life?

Meanwhile he sat closely searching my face with a little smile on his own.

“Well? Didn't expect such a good thing, eh? That's all right. You'll have something to remember my kindness by.”

And he tipped himself back against the wall with a satisfied air and lit a cigarette. After a little thought I put the fountain pen back on the table without looking back at Elsa any more. I suddenly remembered his kindness. The smoke of his cigarette reminded me how I used to walk after him pleading like a beggar for what he had now brought to me himself. Why hadn't he come to me then with such a paper? I was younger then and would have accepted such

a paper from him, as a holy treasure. I would have worshipped it then. But now—now I knew its real worth. Now I knew the real worth of everything I saw around me and you couldn't buy me with such a paper.

I put the pen back on the table and pushed the contract away from me.

"I don't need your land."

The lashes of his drooping lids went up in astonishment and he slowly got up from the table.

"What d'you mean?"

"What I say. I'll take it myself when the time comes."

And thrusting my hands into my pockets again I drew back from the table to show him that the way to the door was clear.

He took the pen and paper and went slowly to the door. He turned in the doorway, and said once more:

"Have you thought of what you're doing?"

I answered:

"Don't let that trouble you. I know what I'm doing."

He looked at me in silence, then took hold of the doorknob. Over the threshold he looked back again and tried to form the

cracks in his face into an agreeable expression, saying:

“But you’ll continue your job with me, I hope? And Elsa, too? Eh?”

He gave us both a piercing look, and without waiting for a reply closed the door and went out to test the creaking floor of the passage and the stony slope of the hill-ock with his heavy feet.

I was still standing on the same spot by the table with my hands in my pockets and saw through the window how he crossed the stream and proceeded further with his lumbering swaying gait. And as I stood watching him I thought how hard it would be to knock a man like that off his feet when all the breadth and weight of him was down below. He probably stood very firm on the earth.

But as far as I was concerned, *perkele*.... If I ever have to say my word to him I’d like to see how he’ll keep on those feet of his. Of course, you’d need a pretty stiff blow to knock him over. But never mind. My hands hadn’t been working on his land for thirty years for nothing. Now they’ve learned to do more than just work peacefully, they’ve learned how to clench in fists, great

fists as strong as iron. At the moment I was all like iron' and wasn't any longer afraid of anything in the whole wide world.

I turned to Elsa. She was wiping the plates, dishes and cups. I went up to her, carefully took the towel and a cup out of her hands and placed them on the edge of the stove. Then I as carefully caught her up in my arms, stepped into the middle of the room and tossed her up. But the ceiling seemed to me too low this time, and I carried her out into the yard.

There above our heads there was room enough to the very sky across which a southern wind was driving heavy autumn clouds. But I didn't at all want her to fly away into the very sky, God forbid. Why fly so high? It was enough for me that her bright frock, fair hair and brown shoes fluttered almost on a level with the summit of the rock. And each time she flew up a beam of sunshine struck her from behind the rock, stabbing her through and through in a blaze of golden glory.

She is a heavy bit, that little woman of mine. A bundle of fire and ringing laughter. May every man be blessed with such a wife!

This, I dare say, was the first warm day after the stern winter. All the stones and bushes around, freed of snow, had become black, so had the stream which cut through the whole length of the valley, and the air was filled with smells that hadn't been there yesterday.

There are days in life when one somehow feels like singing or simply shouting something at the top of one's voice. But why make a noise unnecessarily? If you keep your eyes and ears open to what is going on around it will be clear enough that everything is singing in grim Suomi these days, when the wind is blowing from the South. The snow is slipping down from the high places, laying bare the earth, and it is beginning to breathe the new warm air.

Our Suomi now resembles that strong little birch that is clinging with its roots to the top of this rock. It has not given leaf yet and has only just thawed after the winter, and at first glance it shows no signs of life, but already the young sap of life has begun to rise in it and the buds are ripening.

My wife came out of the house in a new coat to go to church. Go to church, Elsa, pray there for me and for us all and for our new life which has not yet begun, but will begin soon, because we shall make it begin!

Towheaded, snub-nosed Lauri dashed out of the passage in a light jacket without a cap on. He cried out to me:

“Pa! Look how high I can climb!”

“Come on. Let’s see.”

And he began crawling up the wet granite wall, clinging with fingers and boot toes to every crevice.

“You’ll fall, Lauri.”

“I won’t, Pa. I don’t fall any more. It isn’t slippery today. It’s all melted. Look! Pa! See where I am!”

I looked and saw that he had already climbed higher than the house and was gripping the thick dripping roots hanging from the top of the rock. His hands are strong. He heaved himself up on them, threw his knee onto the upper ledge and there he was already, standing at the side of the birch and singing out to the whole wide world:

“Look, Pa! I’ve done it! Now I’ll always climb up and won’t fall any more. I can see

the sun from here, Pa! Over there! The clouds are still covering it, though, and it looks like a little bright circle."

I said to him:

"Never mind. The clouds will break up. This is a wind that'll break up any cloud, and then the sun will shine out in a full blaze. You and I are going to blow up this rock, so it should not hide the sun from us any more, and we'll build a new house on that spot. Then we'll lay out a new orchard and vegetable garden on the sunny slope."

I look around me on all sides, standing on my tiny hillock, and I feel secure on it, as though it were my own hillock from which nobody dare drive me. I gaze at the broad lands about me, at the long valley stretching away in a wide ribbon with the black stream in the middle, and I no longer grieve that they are not mine. My labour has created these lands, and I know that the hour has come for me to receive my due. And I'll get it, and I won't ask anybody for it, either. I feel that I have got the strength enough for it now.

Perhaps that is why I feel so happy to-day, feel like doing something out of the

ordinary—to start singing, or to shout or to say a good kind word to someone.

I haven't the weighty words which Vilho spoke of. I'd have said them to our milkmaids who are obliged to work for a stranger because their own home is too poor, and those two women with the child who have no roof of their own, and poor, bad-tempered Kerttu Lahtinen for whom the war didn't leave an uncrippled sweetheart, and tipsy little Paavo who sits moping by the stable wall.

He needs so little to make him completely happy. Only five acres of any kind of land. Even two acres of the poorest. He'd cope with it. He'd raise an orchard and vegetable garden on it, and what more does he need in his declining years?

He'd fence that land off from all the world and build himself a little house. He would let nobody into that house. He had stood enough gibes and insults from people. He did not want to see any more people.

So he says, propping his little yellow cheek in his fist. Then adds, as an afterthought:

"Unless a Russian happens to drop in. Him I'll let in."

And sits moping again, muttering about his being not much of a man although he had lived to grey hairs, and about not having any teeth to snap with when need be. A fellow like Elias Pohjanpää could pester him in front of women and shout: "Hey you, future Communist, or whatever you are! Now you people keep on harping that the Russians are good folks and the most reliable friends of the Finnish people. If that's so what made 'em go after our land in nineteen thirty-nine, eh? Tell me that if you can!" But he has nothing to answer him and remains silent, and walks away in silence, though the women are looking at him and expecting him to say something.

Poor little Paavo Pikkunen! What you need is my present joy and my teeth or at least my fists. Then the words would come readily to your tongue. Never answer a fool. It won't do you or him any good. To a sensible man everything was clear even in those days when the Russians made us the first friendly proposal for an exchange of territory, and so he won't pester you with silly questions after a lapse of five years. Anybody now can see the truth if he wants to. Or maybe you think the Russians were very

keen on taking your rich estates from you, ruining you and making you an eternal farm labourer? Don't you worry. Nobody is going to touch your riches.

That's what I say to him, and he gazes at me, blinking his drunken eyes. Then he takes his pipe out of his mouth and goes into a prolonged fit of wheezy laughter, gasping and coughing and wiping his tears.

I haven't got weighty words, dear Vilho. You're a poor prophet. Never will I find such fervid and powerful words as those I read the other day in the *Vapaa Sana* over the signature of Vilho Pitkäniemi. Your words about the agrarian reform in Suomi gladdened me not only because it was a voice in my defence. I found in them the same old Vilho of the twinkling eyes who firmly knew where he was going and what he wanted. And so I needn't have been worried by the thought that you had made Hilda Kurkimäki your wife.

You and Hilda have decided to visit my little house in the summer to celebrate some anniversary of yours. Welcome to my home! My doors are always open to you. I, too, have an anniversary to celebrate. And I

want you for it, for you are not merely a brother to me. . . .

I am very strong today. The smell of spring strikes my nostrils and my eyes look and see much further than the valley, further than the stones. I straighten my shoulders and feel everything tingling within me. The main thing is I know now whence this has all come to me. That's what's good.

Nothing, of course, special has happened to make one dance madly for joy, but life on this earth has become a bit more cheerful.

