

Tiurin must have greased them with that pound of salt pork, for the 104th had gone back to its old place in the column—that could be seen from the neighboring squads. So one of the poorer and stupider squads was being sent to the “Socialist Way of Life” settlement. Oh, it’d be cruel there today: seventeen degrees below zero, and windy. No shelter. No fire.

A squad leader needs a lot of salt pork—to take to the planning department, and to satisfy his own belly too. Tiurin received no parcels but he didn’t go short of pork. No one in the squad who received any lost a moment in taking him some as a gift.

Otherwise you’d never survive.

The senior roster guard glanced at a small piece of board.

“You have one away on sick leave today, Tiurin. Twenty-three present?”

“Twenty-three,” said Tiurin with a nod.

Who was missing? Panteleyev wasn’t there. But surely he wasn’t ill.

And at once a whisper ran through the squad: Panteleyev, that son of a bitch, was staying behind again. Oh no, he wasn’t ill, the security boys were keeping him back. He’d be squealing on someone.

They would send for him during the day, on the quiet, and keep him two or three hours. No one would see, no one would hear.

And they’d fix it all up with the medical authorities.

The whole parade ground was black with coats as the squads drifted forward to be searched. Shukhov remembered he wanted to have the numbers on his jacket touched up, and elbowed his way through the crowd to the side. Two or three prisoners stood waiting their turn with the artist. He joined them. They spelled nothing but trouble, those numbers: if they were distinct the guards could identify you from any distance, but if you neglected to have them repainted in time you’d be sure to land in the guardhouse for not taking care of your number.

There were three artists in the camp. They painted pictures for the authorities free of charge, and in addition took turns appearing at roll call to touch up the numbers. Today it was the turn of an old man with a gray beard. When he painted the number on your hat with his brush it was just like a priest anointing your brow.

The old man painted on and on, blowing from time to time into his glove. it was a thin, knitted glove. His hand grew stiff with cold. He only just managed to paint

the numbers.

He touched up the S 854 on Shukhov's jacket, and Shukhov, holding his rope belt in his hand and without bothering to pull his coat around him—very soon he'd be frisked—caught up with the squad. At once he noticed that his fellow squad member Tsezar was smoking, and smoking a cigarette, not a pipe. That meant he might be able to cadge a smoke. But he didn't ask straight away; he stood quite close up to Tsezar and, half turning, looked past him.

He looked past him and seemed indifferent, but he noticed that after each puff (Tsezar inhaled at rare intervals, thoughtfully) a thin ring of glowing ash crept down the cigarette, reducing its length as it moved stealthily to the cigarette holder.

Fetiukov, that jackal, had come up closer too and now stood opposite Tsezar, watching his mouth with blazing eyes.

Shukhov had finished his last pinch of tobacco and saw no prospects of acquiring any more before evening. Every nerve in his body was taut, all his longing was concentrated in that cigarette butt—which meant more to him now, it seemed, than freedom itself—but he would never lower himself like that Fetiukov, he would never look at a man's mouth.

Tsezar was a hodgepodge of nationalities; Greek, Jew, Gypsy—you couldn't make out which. He was still young. He'd made films. But he hadn't finished his first when they arrested him. He wore a dark, thick, tangled mustache. They hadn't shaved it off in the camp because that was the way he looked in the photograph in his dossier.

"Tsezar Markovich," slobbered Fetiukov, unable to restrain himself. "Give us a puff."

His face twitched with greedy desire.

Tsezar slightly raised the lids that drooped low over his black eyes and looked at Fetiukov. It was because he didn't want to be interrupted while smoking and asked for a puff that he had taken up a pipe. He didn't begrudge the tobacco; he resented the interruption in his chain of thought. He smoked to stimulate his mind and to set his ideas flowing. But the moment he lighted a cigarette he read in several pairs of eyes an unspoken plea for the butt.

Tsezar turned to Shukhov and said: "Take it, Ivan Denisovich."

And with his thumb he pushed the smoldering cigarette butt out of the short

amber holder.

Shukhov started (though it was exactly what he had expected of Tsezar) and gratefully hurried to take the butt with one hand, while slipping the other hand under it to prevent it from dropping. He didn't resent the fact that Tsezar felt squeamish about letting him finish the cigarette in the holder (some had clean mouths, some had foul) and he didn't burn his hardened fingers as they touched the glowing end. The main thing was, he had cut out that jackal Fetiukov, and now could go on drawing in smoke until his lips were scorched. Mmm. The smoke crept and flowed through his whole hungry body, making his head and feet respond to it.

Just at that blissful moment he heard a shout:

"They're stripping our undershirts off us."

Such was a prisoner's life. Shukhov had grown accustomed to it. All you could do was to look out they didn't leap at your throat.

But why the undershirts? The camp commandant himself had issued them. No, something was wrong.

There were still squads ahead of them before it was their turn to be frisked. Everyone in the 104th looked about. They saw Lieutenant Volkovoi, the security chief, stride out of the staff quarters and shout something to the guards. And the guards who, when Volkovoi wasn't around, carried out the frisking perfunctorily, now flung themselves into their work with savage zeal.

"Unbutton your shirts," the sergeant shouted.

Volkovoi was as unpopular with the prisoners as with the guards—even the camp commandant was said to be afraid of him. God had named the bastard appropriately.<sup>6</sup> He was a wolf indeed, and looked it. He was dark, tall, with a scowl, very quick in his movements. He'd turn up from behind a barracks with a "What's going on here?" There was no hiding from him. At first, in '49, he'd been in the habit of carrying a whip of plaited leather, as thick as his forearm. He was said to have used it for flogging in the cells. Or when the prisoners would be standing in a group near a barracks at the evening count, he'd slink up from behind and lash out at someone's neck with a "Why aren't you standing in line, slob?" The men would dash

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<sup>6</sup>Volk means wolf in Russian.

away in a wave. Stung by the blow, his victim would put a hand to his neck and wipe away the blood, but he'd hold his tongue, for fear of the cells.

Now, for some reason, Volkovoi had stopped carrying his whip.

When the weather was cold the guards were fairly lenient in the morning, though not in the evening. The prisoners united their belts, and flung their coats wide open. They advanced five abreast, and five guards stood waiting to frisk them. The guards slapped their hands down the belted jackets, ran over the right pants pocket, the only one permitted by regulation, and, reluctant to pull off their gloves, felt any object that puzzled them, asking lazily: "What's that?"

What was there to look for on a prisoner at the morning roll call? A knife? But knives weren't taken out of the camp, they were brought into it. In the morning they had to make certain a prisoner wasn't taking six pounds of bread with him, meaning to escape with it. There was a time when they were so scared of the quarter-pound hunks the prisoners took to eat with their dinner that each of the squads had to make a wooden case for carrying the whole ration, after collecting it, piece by piece, from the men. What they reckoned to gain by this stupidity was beyond imagining. More likely it was just **another** way of tormenting people, giving them something extra to worry about. It meant taking a nibble at your hunk, making your mark on it, so to speak, and then putting it in the case; but anyway the pieces were as alike as two peas—they were all off the same loaf. During the march it preyed on your mind: you tortured yourself by imagining that somebody else's bit of the ration might be substituted for yours. Why, good friends quarreled about it, even to the point of fighting! But one day three prisoners escaped in a truck from the work site and took one of those cases of bread with them. That brought the authorities to their senses—they chopped up all the boxes in the guardroom. Everyone carry his own hunk, they said.

At this first search they also had to make sure that no one was wearing civvies under the camp outfit. But, after all, every prisoner had had his civvies removed from him down to the very last garment, and they wouldn't be returned, they were told, until they'd served their terms. No one had served his term in this camp.

Sometimes the guards frisked you for letters that might have been sent through civilians. But if they were going to search every prisoner for letters they'd be fussing around till dinnertime.

Volkovoi, however, had shouted that they were to search for something, and so the guards peeled off their gloves, ordered everyone to pull up his jacket (where every little bit of barrack-room warmth was treasured) and unbutton his shirt. Then they strode up to run their paws over the zeks and find out whether any of them might have slipped on something against the rules. A prisoner was allowed to wear a shirt and an undershirt—he was to be stripped of anything else: such were Volkovoi's instructions, passed down the ranks by the prisoners. The squads that had been frisked earlier were in luck. Some of them had already been passed through the gates. But the rest had to bare their chests. And anyone who had slipped on an extra garment had to take it off on the spot, out there in the cold.

That's how it started, but it resulted in a fine mix-up—a gap formed in the column, and at the gates the escort began shouting, "Get a move on, get a move on." So when it was the turn of the 104th to be frisked they had to ease up a bit: Volkovoi told the guard to take the name of anyone who might be wearing extra garments—the culprits were to surrender them in person to personal property that evening with a written explanation of how and why they had hidden the garments.

Shukhov was in regulation dress. Come on, paw me as hard as you like. There's nothing but my soul in my chest. But they made a note that Tsezar was wearing a flannel vest and that Buinovsky, it seemed, had put on a vest or a cummerbund or something. Buinovsky protested—he'd been in the camp less than three months, a former Navy commander who still couldn't get his destroyer out of his system.

"You've no right to strip men in the cold. You don't know Article Nine of the Criminal Code."

But they did have the right. They knew the code. You, friend, are the one who doesn't know it.

"You're not behaving like Soviet people," Buinovsky went on saying. "You're not behaving like communists."

Volkovoi had put up with the reference to the criminal code but this made him wince and, like black lightning, he flashed: "Ten days in the guardhouse."

And aside to the sergeant: "Starting from this evening."

They didn't like putting a man in the cells in the morning—it meant the loss of his work for a whole day. Let him sweat blood in the meantime and be put in the

cells in the evening.

The prison lay just over there, to the left of the parade ground. A brick building with two wings. The second wing had been added that autumn—there wasn't room enough in the first. The prison had eighteen cells besides those for solitary confinement, which were fenced off. The entire camp was log-built except for that brick prison.

The cold had got under the men's shirts and now it was there to stay. All that wrapping-up had been in vain.

Shukhov's back was giving him hell. How he longed to be in bed in the infirmary, fast asleep! He wanted nothing else. Under the heaviest of blankets.

The zeks stood in front of the gates, buttoning their coats, tying a rope around their bellies. And from outside the escort shouted: "Come on. Come on."

And from behind, the guard urged them on: "Move along. Move along."

The first gate. The border zone. The second gate. Railings along each side near the gatehouse.

"Halt!" shouted a sentry. Like a flock of sheep. "Form fives."

It was growing light. The escort's fire was burning itself out behind the gatehouse. They always lit a fire before the prisoners were sent out to work—to keep themselves warm and be able to see more clearly while counting.

One of the gate guards counted in a loud brisk voice: "First. Second. Third..."

And the prisoners, in ranks of five, separated from the rest and marched ahead, so that they could be watched from front and behind: five heads, five backs, ten legs.

A second gate guard—a checker—stood at the next rail in silence verifying the count.

And, in addition, a lieutenant stood watching.

That was from the camp side.

A man is worth more than gold. If there was one head short when they got past the barbed wire you had to replace it with your own.

Once more the squad came together.

And now it was the turn of the sergeant of the escort to count.

"First. Second. Third."

And each rank of five drew away and marched forward separately.

And on the other side of the wire the assistant head guard verified the count.

And another lieutenant stood by and watched.

That was from the side of the escort.

No one dared make a mistake. If you signed for one head too many, you filled the gap with your own.

There were escort guards all over the place. They flung a semicircle around the column on its way to the power station, their machine guns sticking out and pointing right at your face. And there were guards with gray dogs. One dog bared its fangs as if laughing at the prisoners. The escorts all wore short sheepskins, except for a half a dozen whose coats trailed the ground. The long sheepskins were interchangeable: they were worn by anyone whose turn had come to man the watchtowers.

And once again as they brought the squads together the escort recounted the entire power-station column by fives.

“You always get the sharpest frost at sunrise,” said Buinovsky. “You see, it’s the coldest point of the night.”

Captain Buinovsky was fond of explaining things. The state of the moon—whether it was old or young—he could calculate it for any day of the year.

He was fading away under your very eyes, the captain, his cheeks were falling in. But he had guts.

Out beyond the camp boundary the intense cold, accompanied by a head wind, stung even Shukhov’s face, which was used to every kind of unpleasantness. Realizing that he would have the wind in his face all the way to the power station, he decided to make use of his bit of rag. To meet the contingency of a headwind he, like many other prisoners, had got himself a cloth with a long tape at each end. The prisoners admitted that these helped a bit. Shukhov covered his face up to the eyes, brought the tapes around below his ears, and fastened the ends together at the back of his neck. Then he covered his nape with the flap of his hat and raised his coat collar. The next thing was to pull the front flap of the hat down onto his brow. Thus in front only his eyes remained unprotected. He fixed his coat tightly at the waist with the

rope. Now everything was in order except for his hands, which were already stiff with cold (his mittens were worthless). He rubbed them, he clapped them together, for he knew that in a moment he'd have to put them behind his back and keep them there for the entire march.

The chief of the escort guard recited the "morning prayer," which every prisoner was heartily sick of:

"Attention, prisoners. Marching orders must be strictly obeyed. Keep to your ranks. No hurrying, keep a steady pace. No talking. Keep your eyes fixed ahead and your hands behind your backs. A step to right or left is considered an attempt to escape and the escort has orders to shoot without warning. Leading guards, on the double."

The two guards in the lead of the escort must have set out along the road. The column heaved forward, shoulders swaying, and the escorts, some twenty paces to the right and left of the column, each man at a distance of ten paces from the next, machine guns held at the ready, set off too.

It hadn't snowed for a week and the road was worn hard and smooth. They skirted the camp and the wind caught their faces sideways. Hands clasped behind their backs, heads lowered, the column of prisoners moved on, as though at a funeral. All you saw was the feet of two or three men ahead of you and the patch of trodden ground where your own feet were stepping. From time to time one of the escorts would cry: "U 48. Hands behind back," or "B 502. Keep up." But they shouted less and less; the slashing wind made it difficult to see. The guards weren't allowed to tie cloth over their faces. Theirs was not much of a job either.

In warmer weather everybody in the column talked, no matter how much the escort might shout at them. But today every prisoner hunched his shoulders, hid behind the back of the man in **front** of him, and plunged into his own thoughts.

The thoughts of a prisoner-they're not free either. They kept returning to the same things. A single idea keeps stirring. Would they feel that piece of bread in the mattress? Would he have any luck at the dispensary that evening? Would they put Buinovsky in the cells? And how did Tsezar get his hands on that warm vest? He'd probably greased a palm or two in the warehouse for peoples private belongings. How else?



Because he had breakfasted without bread and eaten his food cold, Shukhov's belly felt unsatisfied that morning. And to prevent it complaining and begging for food, he stopped thinking about the camp and let his mind dwell on the letter he'd soon be writing home.

The column passed the wood-processing factory, built by prison labor, the workers' settlement (the huts had been assembled by prisoners too, but the inhabitants were civilians), the new club (convict-built in entirety, from the foundations to the mural decorations—but it wasn't they who saw the films there), and then moved out into the steppe, straight into the wind heading for the reddening dawn. Bare white snow stretched to the horizon, to the left, to the right, and not a single tree could be seen on the whole expanse of steppe.

A new year, 1951, had begun, and Shukhov had the right to two letters that year. He had sent his last letter in July and got an answer to it in October. At Ust-Izhma the rules had been different: you could write once a month. But what was the sense of writing? He'd written no more often then than now.

Ivan Shukhov had left home on June 23, 1941. On the previous Sunday the people who'd been to Polomnya to attend Mass had said: War! at Polomnya they'd learned it at the post office but at Temnenovo no one had a radio in those days. Now, they wrote, the radio roared in every cottage—it was piped in. There was little sense in writing. Writing now was like dropping stones in some deep, bottomless pool, They drop; they sink—but there is no answer. You couldn't write and describe the squad you were working with and what kind of squad leader Andrei Prokofievich was. Just now he had a good deal more to talk about with Kilgas the Lett than with his family at home.

Neither did the two letters a year they sent him throw much light on the way they were living. The kolkhoz had a new chairman—as if that hadn't happened regularly! It'd been amalgamated with neighboring farms—that'd happened before, too, but afterward they'd reduced its former condition. And what else? The farmers were failing to fulfill their quota of work days—or the individual plots had been cut down to one-third acre, and some people's right back to the cottage walls.

What he couldn't take in was the fact that, as his wife wrote, the number of people in the kolkhoz hadn't grown by a single soul since the war. All the young men

and women, without exception, had managed to get away to work in factories or in the peat-processing works. Half the men hadn't come back from the war at all and, among those who had, were some who cold-shouldered the kolkhoz. They lived in the village and worked on the side. The only men on the farm were Zakhar Vasilych, the manager, and Tikhon, the carpenter, who was turned eighty-four, had married recently, and already had children. The kolkhoz was kept going by the women who'd been there since 1930.

There was something about this that Shukhov couldn't understand—"living in the village and working on the side." He'd seen life in the days of private farming and in the days of the kolkhozes too, but that men weren't working in their own villages—this he couldn't swallow. Sort of seasonal workers, were they? Going out traveling? But then how did the village manage with the haymaking?

They'd given up seasonal work a long time back, his wife had replied. They didn't go out capentering, for which that part of the country was famous; they didn't make osier baskets, for no one wanted them these days. But they did have a craft, a wonderful new craft—carpet painting. Someone had brought stencils back from the war and from that time it had become so popular that the number of those carpet painters grew and grew. They had no steady jobs, they didn't work anywhere, they helped the kolkhoz for a month or so, just at the haymaking or the harvesting, and for that the kolkhoz gave them a chit saying that so-and-so, a member of the kolkhoz, had been released to carry on his work and that the kolkhoz had no claim on him. And they traveled all over the country, they even flew in airplanes to save time, and they piled up rubles by the thousand and painted carpets all over the place. Fifty rubles a carpet made out of any old sheet you could spare—and it didn't seem to take them more than an hour to make a carpet of it. And Shukhov's wife nursed the strong hope that when Ivan returned he too would become one of those painters. Then they'd raise themselves out of the poverty in which she was living and they'd send the children to a technical school and build a new cottage instead of the old broken-down one. All the carpet painters were building new cottages and now, near the railway station, the cottages had gone up in price from five thousand to all of twenty-five.

Then Shukhov asked his wife to explain to him how he, who'd never been able to draaw in his life, was going to become a painter. And what were those beautiful

carpets like? What did they have on them? His wife answered that you'd have to be an utter fool not to be able to paint the patterns; all you had to do was to put the stencil on and paint through the little holes with a brush. There were three sorts of carpets, she wrote: the "Troika," an officer of the hussars driving a beautiful troika; the "Reindeer"; and a third with a Persian-style pattern. They had no other designs, but people all over the country were glad to get these and snatch them out of the painters' hands. Because a real carpet cost not fifty but thousands of rubles.

How Shukhov longed to see just one of those carpets!

During his years in prisons and camps he'd lost the habit of planning for the next day, for a year ahead, for supporting his family. The authorities did his thinking for him about everything—it was somehow easier that way. He still had another two winters, another two summers to serve. But those carpets preyed on his mind...

There was easy money to be made, you see, and made fast. And somehow it seemed a pity to lag behind his fellow villagers.... But, frankly, he didn't want to turn carpet painter. For that a man needed to be free and easy with people, to be brash, to know how to grease a palm or two. And although Shukhov had trodden the earth for forty years, though he'd lost half his teeth and his head was growing bald, he'd never either given or taken a bribe, nor had he learned to do so in camp.

Easy money weighs light in the hand and doesn't give you the feeling you've earned it. There was truth in the old saying: pay short money and get short value. He still had a good pair of hands, capable hands. Surely, when he was out, he'd find work as a plumber, a carpenter, or a repairman.

Only if they deprived him of his civil rights and he couldn't be taken on anywhere, or if they wouldn't let him go home, would he turn to those carpets for a spell.

Meanwhile the column had come to a halt before the gatehouse of the sprawling site on which the power station stood. While the column was still on the move, two of the escort, clad in ankle-length sheepskins, had left their places and wandered across open country to their distant watchtowers. Until all the towers were manned the site was forbidden territory. The head guard, a machine gun slung over his shoulder, advanced to the gatehouse. Smoke, a great cloud of it, belched from its chimney—a civilian watchman sat there all night to prevent anyone stealing lumber

or cement.

Far in the distance, on the other side of the site, the sun, red and enormous, was rising in haze, its beams cutting obliquely through the gates, the whole building site, and the fence. Alyosha, who was standing next to Shukhov, gazed at the sun and looked happy, a smile on his lips. What had he to be happy about? His cheeks were sunken, he lived strictly on his rations, he earned nothing. He spent all his Sundays muttering with the other Baptists. They shed the hardships of camp life like water off a duck's back.

During the march, Shukhov's face cloth had grown quite wet from his breath. In some spots the frost had caught it and formed an icy crust. He drew it down from his face to his neck and stood with his back to the wind. He'd managed to keep the cold out in most places though his hands were numb in his worn mittens. The toes of his left foot were numb too—that left boot was badly worn. The sole had been repaired twice.

The small of his back ached, and so did the rest of it, all the way up to his shoulders. Ached and throbbed. How could he work?

He looked around, and his eyes fell on the face of the squad leader, who had marched among the last five. Tiurin was a broad-shouldered man, broad in the face too. He looked morose as he stood there. He had no jokes or smiles for his squad, but he took pains to see they got better rations. He was serving his second term; he was a true son of the GULAG<sup>7</sup> and knew camp ways through and through.

In camp the squad leader is everything: a good one will give you a second life; a bad one will put you in your coffin. Shukhov had known Andrei Tiurin since the time they met at Ust-Izhma, though he hadn't been in his squad then. And when the prisoners who were in under Article 58<sup>8</sup> were transferred from general camps to "special" ones, Tiurin had immediately picked him out for his squad. Shukhov had no dealings with the camp commandant of the P.P.D., with foremen or engineers—that was the squad leader's job: he'd protect him with his own chest of steel. In return, Tiurin had only to lift an eyebrow or beckon with a finger—and you ran and did what

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<sup>7</sup>Central Camp Administration: here used to mean camps in general.

<sup>8</sup>For political crimes.

he wanted. You can cheat anyone you like in camp, but not your squad leader. Then you'll live.

Shukhov would have liked to ask Tiurin whether they were to work at the same place as the day before or go somewhere else, but he was afraid to interrupt his lofty thoughts. He'd only just averted the danger of the squad being sent to work at the Socialist Way of Life settlement, and now he was probably deliberating over the "percentage"<sup>9</sup> on which the squad's rations for the next five days depended.

Tiurin was heavily pockmarked. He was facing the wind but not a muscle moved—his skin was as tough as the bark of an oak.

In the column the prisoners were clapping their hands and stamping their feet. The wind was nasty. It looked now as if the sentries, known to the prisoners as "parrots," were perched in all six watchtowers, but still they weren't letting the column in. They tormented the life out of you with their vigilance.

Here they are. The head guard came out of the gatehouse with the work checker. They posted themselves on each side of the gate. The gates swung wide open.

"Form fives. First. Second. Third..."

The prisoners marched as though on parade, almost in step. To get inside, that was all they wanted—there no one had to teach them what to do.

Just beyond the gatehouse was the office; near it stood the work superintendent, beckoning the squad leaders to turn in there, not that they didn't head that way anyway. Der, too, was there, a convict himself but a foreman, the swine, who treated his fellow prisoners worse than dogs.

Eight o'clock. Five minutes past (the whistle had just sounded the hour). The authorities were afraid that the prisoners might waste time and scatter into warm corners—and the prisoners had a long day ahead of them, there was time enough for everything. Everyone who steps onto the building site bends to pick up a scrap of firewood here and there—fuel for the stove. And they hoard it away in nooks and crannies.

Tiurin ordered Pavlo to go with him to the office. Tsezar turned in there too. Tsezar was well off. Two parcels a month. He greased every palm that had to be

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<sup>9</sup>A paper stating the amount of work done and the percentage of the plan it amounts to.

greased, and worked in the office in a cushy job, as assistant to the rate inspector.

The rest of the squad at once turned off to the side and vanished.

The sun rose red and hazy over the deserted area. At one place the panels of the prefabs lay under the snow; at another a start had been made on the brickwork, and abandoned when no higher than the foundations. Here lay a broken steam shovel, there a dredge, farther on a pile of scrap metal. A network of ditches and trenches crisscrossed the site with a hole or two here and there. The building of the automobile repair shop was ready for roofing. On a rise stood the power station itself, built up to the second story.

Now there was not a soul in sight. Only the six sentries on their watchtowers were visible—and some people bustling around the office. That moment belonged to the prisoners. The senior work superintendent, it was said, had long been threatening to save time by giving the squads their work assignments the evening before, but for all his efforts they never got around to it—because between the evening and the following morning all their plans turned upside down.

So that moment still belonged to the prisoners. While the authorities were sorting things out you stuck to the warmest place you could find. Sit down, take a rest, you'll have time enough to sweat blood. Good if you can get near a stove. Unwrap your footrags and warm them a little. Then your feet will keep warm all day. And even without a stove it's good to sit down.

The 104th went into a big room in the repair shop where the windows had been glazed during the autumn and the 38th were pouring slabs of concrete. Some of the slabs lay in wooden forms, others, with mesh reinforcement, were stood up on end. The ceiling was high, the floor was of bare earth: a cold place it would've been if they hadn't heated it with lots of coal—not for the sake of the men working there, of course, but to help the slabs set faster. There was even a thermometer, and on Sundays, if for some reason or other no one was sent from the camp to work there, a civilian kept the stove going.

The 38th, naturally, wouldn't let any stranger near their stove. Their own men sat around it, drying their footrags. Never mind, we'll sit here in the corner, it's not so bad.

Shukhov found a place for the seat of his wadded trousers-where hadn't they sat?-on the edge of a wooden form, and leaned against the wall. When he did so his coat-and jacket tightened, and he felt something sharp pressing against the left side of his chest, near his heart. It was the edge of the hunk of bread in his little inner pocket-that half of his morning ration which he'd taken with him for dinner. He always brought the same amount with him to work and never touched it till dinnertime. But usually he ate the other half at breakfast. This time he hadn't. But he realized he had gained nothing by economizing-his belly called out to him to eat the bread at once, in the warmth. Dinner was five hours off-and time dragged.

And that nagging pain had now moved down to his legs, which felt quite weak. Oh, if he could only get to the stove!

He laid his mittens on his knees, unbuttoned his coat, untied the tapes of his face cloth, stiff with cold, folded it several times over, and put it away in his pants pocket. Then he reached for the hunk of bread, wrapped in a piece of clean cloth, and, holding the cloth at chest level so that not a crumb should fall to the ground, began to nibble and chew at the bread. The bread, which he had carried under two garments, had been warmed by his body. The frost hadn't caught it at all.

More than once during his life in the camps, Shukhov had recalled the way they used to eat in his village: whole pots full of potatoes, pans of oatmeal, and, in the early days, big chunks of meat. And milk enough to bust their guts. That wasn't the way to eat, he learned in camp. You had to eat with all your mind on the food-like now, nibbling the bread bit by bit, working the crumbs up into a paste with your tongue and sucking it into your cheeks. And how good it tasted-that soggy black bread! What had he eaten for eight, no, more than eight years? Next to nothing. But how much work had he done? Ah!

So he sat there, occupying himself with his hunk of bread, while near him on the same side of the room sat the rest of the 104th.

Two Estonians, close as brothers, sat on a flat concrete slab taking turns smoking half a cigarette from the same holder. These Estonians were equally fair, equally tall, equally lean, and had equally long noses and big eyes. They hung onto each other so closely that you'd think one would suffocate unless he breathed the same

air as the other. Tiurin never separated them. They shared their food, they slept in adjacent bunks in the top row. And when they stood in the column, waiting for work to start, or turned in for the night, they went on talking to each other in their quiet, deliberate manner. In fact they weren't brothers at all. They first met here in the 104th. One of them, they explained, had been a fisherman on the coast; the other had been taken as a child to Sweden by his parents when the Soviets were established in Estonia. But he'd grown up with a mind of his own and returned to Estonia to complete his education.

Well, it's said that nationality doesn't mean anything and that every nation has its bad eggs. But among all the Estonians Shukhov had known he'd never met a bad one.

The prisoners sat around, some on the slabs, some on forms, some straight on the ground. A tongue doesn't wag in the morning; everyone sat silent, locked in thought. Fetiukov, the jackal, had been collecting cigarette butts (he even fished them out of the spittoons, he wasn't fussy), and now he was breaking them up and filtering the unsmoked tobacco onto a piece of paper. Fetiukov had three children at home but when he was sentenced they'd disclaimed him and his wife had married again. So he got no help from anywhere.

Buinovsky, who kept stealing glances at him, finally barked: "Hey, you, what do you think you're doing? Picking up all kinds of diseases? You'll get a syphilitic lip that way. Stop it."

The captain was used to giving orders. He spoke to everyone as if in command,

But Fetiukov didn't give a damn for him-the captain got no parcels either. And with a malicious grin on his drooling lips he replied: "You wait, captain. When you've been in for eight years you'll be picking them up yourself. We've seen bigger men than you in the camp...."

Fetiukov was judging by his own standards. Perhaps the captain would stand up to camp life.

"What? What?" asked Senka Klevshin missing the point. Senka was deaf and thought they were talking about Buinovsky's bad luck during the frisking. "You shouldn't have shown your pride so much," he said, shaking his head in



commiseration. "It could all have blown over."

Senka was a quiet, luckless fellow. One of his eardrums had been smashed in '41. Then he was captured; he escaped, was recaptured, and was sent to Buchenwald. There he evaded death by a miracle and now he was serving his time here quietly. If you show your pride too much, he said, you're lost.

There was truth in that. Better to growl and submit. If you were stubborn they broke you.

Alyosha sat silent, his face buried in his hands. Praying.

Shukhov ate his bread down to his very fingers, keeping only a little bit of bare crust, the half-moon-shaped top of the loaf—because no spoon is as good for scraping a bowl of cereal clean as a bread crust. He wrapped the crust in his cloth again and slipped it into his inside pocket for dinner, buttoned himself up against the cold, and prepared for work. Let them send him out now! Though, of course, it would be better if they'd wait a bit longer.

The 38th stood up and scattered—some to the concrete mixer, some to fetch water, some to the mesh reinforcements.

But neither Pavlo nor Tiurin came back to their squad. And although the 104th had been sitting there barely twenty minutes and the working day—curtailed because it was winter—didn't end till six, everyone felt already they'd had a rare stroke of luck—now evening didn't seem so far off.

"Damn it, it's a long time since we had a snowstorm," said Kilgas, a plump, red-faced Lett, gesturing. "Not one snowstorm all winter. What sort of winter do you call this?"

"Yes... a snowstorm... a snowstorm," the squad sighed in response.

When there was a snowstorm in those parts no one was taken out to work—they were afraid of letting the prisoners leave the barracks. They could get lost between the barrack room and the mess hall if you didn't put up a guide rope. No one would care if a prisoner froze to death, but what if he tried to escape? There had been instances. During the storms the snow was as fine as dust but the drifts were as firm as ice. Prisoners had escaped over them when they topped the barbed wire. True, they hadn't got far.

Come to think of it, a snowstorm was no use to anyone. The prisoners sat locked in; the coal was delivered late and all the warmth was blown out of the barracks. Flour didn't reach the camp, so there was no bread; and more often than not there was no hot food either. And as long as the storm lasted—three days, four days, even a week—those days were counted as holidays and had to be made up for by work on Sunday.

All the same, the prisoners loved snowstorms and prayed for them. Whenever the wind rose a little, every face was turned up to the sky. Let the stuff come! The more the merrier.

Snow, they meant. With only a ground wind, it never really got going.

Someone edged up to the stove of the 38th, only to be ousted.

Just then Tiurin walked in. He looked gloomy. His squad understood that there was something to be done, and quickly

“H'm,” said Tiurin, looking around. “All present, hundred and fourth?”

He didn't verify or count them because none of Tiurin's men could have gone anywhere. Without wasting time he gave his men their assignments. The two Estonians, Senka, and Gopchik were sent to pick up a big wooden box for mixing mortar nearby and carry it to the power station. They all immediately knew that they were being transferred to the half-completed building where work had been halted in late autumn. The other men were sent with Pavlo to get tools. Four were ordered to shovel snow near the power station and the entrance to the machine room, and inside and on the ramps. A couple of men were sent to light the stove in the machine room, using coal and such lumber as they could swipe and chop up. Another was to drag cement there on a sled. Two were sent to fetch water, two for sand, and yet another to sweep the snow off the sand and break it up with a crowbar.

The only two left without assignments were Shukhov and Kilgas, the leading workers of the squad. Calling them over, Tiurin said:

“Well, look here, boys—” he was no older than they were but he had the habit of addressing them like that—“after dinner you'll be laying cement blocks on the second-story walls, over there where the sixth stopped work last autumn. Now we have to figure how to make the machine room warmer. It has three big windows and

the first thing to do is to board them up somehow. I'll give you people to help, but you must figure out what to board them up with. We're going to use the machine room for mixing the mortar, and for warming ourselves too. Unless we keep warm we'll freeze like dogs, understand?"

He'd have said more, maybe, but up came Gopchik, a Ukrainian lad, pink as a suckling pig, to complain that the other squad wouldn't give them the box. There was a scrap going on over it. So off went Tiurin.

Difficult as it was to start working in such cold, the important thing was to get going.

Shukhov and Kilgas exchanged looks. They'd worked as a team more than once as carpenter and mason, and had come to respect one another.

It was no easy matter to find something to board up those windows with in the bare expanse of snow. But Kilgas said: "Vanya, I know a little place over there where those prefabs are going up, with a fine roll of roofing felt. I put it aside with my own hands. Let's go and scrounge it."

Kilgas was a Lett but he spoke Russian like a native. There'd been a settlement of Old Believers near his village and he'd learned Russian from childhood. He'd been in the camp only two years but already he understood everything: if you don't use your teeth you get nothing. His name was Johann and Shukhov called him Vanya.

They decided to go for the roll, but first Shukhov ran over to where a new wing of the repair shops was under construction. He had to get his trowel. For a mason a trowel is a serious mater—if it's light and easy to handle. But there was a rule that wherever you worked you had to turn in every evening the tools you'd been issued that morning; and which tool you got the next day was a matter of chance. One evening, though, Shukhov had fooled the man in the tool store and pocketed the best trowel; and now he kept it hidden in a different place every evening, and every morning, if he was put to laying blocks, he recovered it. If the 104th had been sent to the Socialist Way of Life settlement that morning. Shukhov would of course have been without a trowel again. But now he had only to push aside a brick, dig his fingers into the chink—and presto! there it was.

Shukhov and Kilgas left the repair shops and walked over toward the prefabs. Their breath formed thick clouds of vapor. The sun was now some way above the horizon but it cast no rays, as in a fog. On each side of it rose pillars of light.

“Like poles, eh?” Shukhov said with a nod.

“It’s not poles we have to worry about,” said Kilgas casually, “so long as they don’t put any barbed wire between them.”

He never spoke without making a joke, that Kilgas, and was popular with the whole squad for it. And what a reputation he had already won for himself among the Letts in the camp! Of course, it was true he ate properly—he received two food parcels a month—and looked as ruddy as if he wasn’t in camp at all. You’d make jokes if you were in his shoes!

This construction site covered an immense area. It took quite a long time to cross it. On their way they ran into men from the 82nd. Again they’d been given the job of chopping out holes in the ground. The holes were small enough—one-and-a-half feet by one-and-a-half feet and about the same in depth—but the ground, stone-hard even in summer, was now in the grip of frost. Just try and gnaw it! They went for it with picks—the picks slipped, scattering showers of sparks, but not a bit of earth was dislodged. The men stood there, one to a hole, and looked about them—nowhere to warm up, they were forbidden to budge a step—so back to the pick. The only way to keep warm.

Shukhov recognized one of them, a fellow from Viatka.

“Listen,” he advised him. “You’d do better to light a fire over each hole. The ground would thaw out then.”

“It’s forbidden,” said the man. “They don’t give us any firewood.”

“Scrounge some then.”

Kilgas merely spat.

“How do you figure it, Vanya! If the authorities had any guts do you think they’d have men pounding away at the ground with pickaxes in a frost like this?”

He muttered a few indistinguishable oaths and fell silent. You don’t talk much in such cold. They walked on and on till they reached the spot where the panels of the prefabs lay buried under snow.