



Absolute Zero

Artem Chekh



Artem Chekh

Absolute Zero

ABSOLUTE ZERO

by Artem Chekh

Translated from the Ukrainian
by Olena Jennings and Oksana Lutsyshyna

Proofreading by Michael Wharton

Book cover and layout interior created by Max Mendor

Publishers Maxim Hodak & Max Mendor

© 2020, Artem Chekh

© 2020, Olena Jennings and Oksana Lutsyshyna

© 2020, Glagoslav Publications

www.glagoslav.com

ISBN: 978-1-91289-467-3

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This book is in copyright. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published without a similar condition, including this condition, being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Artem Chekh

Absolute Zero

Translated from the Ukrainian
by Olena Jennings and Oksana Lutsyshyna

GLAGOSLAV PUBLICATIONS

Contents

PART I: ABSOLUTE ZERO	7
NEW DREAMS	8
THE HOUR OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS	10
ONE DAY IN THE LIFE	12
PASSIONS OVER A LEAVE	14
DMYTRYK	17
SO HAYSYN IT IS	19
THIRTY	22
CLASS CONFLICT	24
SOMEBODY ELSE	26
CAMP	28
WAR IS NOT INTERESTING	30
IMITATION	32
A GREEN CHINESE TRACTOR	35
KEEP WRITING, CHEKH	37
BETRAYAL / VICTORY	39
CAMOUFLAGE COCKROACHES	41
LONG T-SHIRTS	44
IT'S ALL GOOD	47
PART II: FALL, WINTER, AND SPRING AGAIN	49
THAT SAME GAS STATION	50
WE ARE HERE	52
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	54
NORMS	56

ABSOLUTE ZERO . . . . .	. 58
OUR FRIENDS . . . . .	. 61
LIGHT GRAY ZONE . . . . .	. 63
THE SOUND OF THE TRAIN STATION . . . . .	. 65
NIGHT WATCH . . . . .	. 67
NEIGHBORS . . . . .	. 69
DONBAS'S QUIET SUN . . . . .	. 71
NEW OLD DREAM . . . . .	. 73
WE SUCCEEDED . . . . .	. 75
A UNIQUE FALL . . . . .	. 78
ALMOST LIKE IN THE STORIES . . . . .	. 80
11120TH DAY OF LIFE . . . . .	. 82
A MIRACLE DIDN'T HAPPEN . . . . .	. 84
NEW YEAR'S EVE . . . . .	. 86
RESPONSIBILITY . . . . .	. 88
BELOW ZERO . . . . .	. 90
CEREBRAL PALSY . . . . .	. 92
BOYS . . . . .	. 94
TWO YEARS AGO . . . . .	. 97
WAR ISN'T FASHIONABLE . . . . .	. 99
THEY DON'T LIKE THOSE KIND IN THE ARMY . . . . .	. 101
A UNIQUE WINTER . . . . .	. 103
SILENCE . . . . .	. 106
WINTER CROPS . . . . .	. 108
LETHARGY . . . . .	. 110
INESCAPABLE EXPERIENCE . . . . .	. 112
A LIFETIME AND A LITTLE MORE . . . . .	. 114
COTARD'S SYNDROME . . . . .	. 116
A QUASI-RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW . . . . .	. 118
SUCH PEOPLE, SUCH ROCKS . . . . .	. 120

OUR ANNIVERSARY SOMEWHERE IN THE DONBAS	122
SEVENTEEN BAGS OF PASKAS	125
WATCHING OUT FOR THE ENEMY	128
A UNIQUE SPRING	130
PROSTITUTES ARE ALWAYS FOLLOWING THE ARMY	132
ODE TO NEW BALANCE	134
THE ABUSE	136
THE END OF THE FIFTH TOUR	138
THE APRICOTS OF DONBAS	140
THE LAST NIGHT	142

PART I

Absolute Zero

New Dreams

The bus bearing the slogan sign “Everybody Dance!” painted across its side looked like it was ferrying passengers to a spa rather than a boot camp. There were forty-one drafted men and two accompanying officers. We were en route to the Rivne basic training camp.

When the city high-rises ended and the forest began, I almost cried. I was sentimental, moved by the anticipation of a new life. I was puzzled by my new role, excited by the unknown. I was filled with something like a desire to put on my uniform as soon as possible, to walk around in camouflage, just like all those I watched during this last year with mixed feelings of admiration and guilt, though I knew I would be drafted. If not in January, then in April. You always have a gut feeling about such things. I even quit my job. Wanted to finish writing a book. Ran out of time.

The bus stopped and men moved toward the door. Somebody elbowed me. Instead of an “excuse me,” he uttered an expletive.

“The toilets are behind the gas station,” one of the officers politely informed us. “Just please no hooch, guys.”

“No hooch,” we agreed.

Some men had already purchased alcohol the day before, and it was now carefully packed away or poured into plastic lemonade bottles.

We were standing around smoking. One short guy recounted, “For twenty years now I’ve been having a recurring dream that I was drafted into the army. I tell these people that I’ve already completed my draft time, and they say, ‘Hell no, you’re gonna serve.’ And in that dream I’m on the bus, at a train station, my boots too tight. Since the war in Donbas started, I dream about this every night. And sure thing, the draft card came, and now I’m on my way. Just like in my dream.”

The others nodded, agreeing, sighing, and one after another shared stories and fables. They recalled Soviet mercenaries in Libya and Egypt in

1976, Afghanistan in 1989, and Yugoslavia in 1994. A volunteer who spent twenty-six years as an ambulance driver kept urging everyone to give up alcohol, repeating the officer's words.

We got back on the bus and started off again. Tired from excitement, everybody was whispering nervously, despondently watching the landscape through the windows. Everybody was drinking.

I chowed down on some sandwiches: cheap white bread with processed cheese. I was thinking, should I offer some to anyone else? Do I look like a scrooge? Or is it too soon? Maybe later when we get to know each other better?

I was looking at those who were drinking something resembling cognac from plastic bottles. They didn't share either. They were just drinking their own stuff. So I relaxed. I thought about my wife, only yesterday standing with me in front of the Selective Service office. She was lost in thought, her life about to change, starting a new chapter without me, the cold nights, the anxious mornings. How long would it be before we saw each other again? A month? A year? Two? Forever?

Standing there with her I thought, for the first time, that I was living somebody else's life. And from then on, I would have somebody else's dreams. And occupy somebody else's place, to become a hero, or a coward. Or die.

One way or another, each of us would have new dreams.

The Hour of Freedom Fighters

Having passed the admin building and arriving at the tent city, the first thing I see is sand and hair. Instead of dirt it is all sand, partly turned into dust. And hair. Long and short, black, red, gray strands cover the ground as if forming a shag rug. The evening breeze blows the hair, and it flies over the tents like pollen from a poplar tree. Near the generators the men sit on stools. Their skin is very tanned. Their heads are being shaved by other shaved men with soft stomachs and scars all over their bodies from old surgeries.

I walk together with the dozen Kyivites who had been summoned with me to the Selective Service office, timidly between the tents, catching curious glances thrown at us by the locals.

“Guys, where are you from?” we hear them ask. “Kyiv,” we answer. “Capital boys! Haha!” This reminds me slightly of classic scenes from movies where the hero ends up in prison and walks through the prison block to his own cell.

Our uniforms are too new, our boots too shiny, our skin still retains the paleness of winter, we have too many expensive cigarettes in our pockets, and on our heads are the remnants of stylish haircuts.

We immediately line up in formation. Along the ranks of the fourth platoon, a lieutenant with a pot belly slowly walks by. He is dressed in a new British uniform with a camouflage pattern. He insults the soldiers, chain smokes and openly mocks the troops. Approximately one hundred of the drafted men in my company look like inmates. Some immediately react to the lieutenant’s jokes and laugh, revealing their black, toothless mouths. The scent of sweat and alcohol emanates from their skin.

Over the tents new and old ragged flags fly: yellow and blue, black and red, the colors of independence. Beyond the tent city, heaps of trash burn slowly. It reeks of latrines. Oh God, I think, how did I end up here? Who are

all these people and where are all the brave and athletic young men from the ads? Where are all the lawyers, designers, journalists and salesmen? Where are those who sold their Rolls Royce for an opportunity at the front? What kind of a guerrilla unit is this, what kind of anarchy? How can I press Control Z and return to the clean streets of the capital, and my spotless office?

I am standing in my new, not-yet-faded uniform, and near my feet is a Polish backpack distributed to us along with the uniform, and the red Deuter backpack. My palms are sweaty, and from this very moment I realize that there is no turning back. Together with the cavalry, on top of a machine gun cart, with a bayonet in one hand and an early twentieth-century semi-automatic rifle in the other, there is only drowning in blood, following orders, shooting, and somehow, along the lines, not going mad from the suffocating Hour of Freedom Fighters. This is how it is: initiation, hair-cutting ritual, baptism with dirt and shit.

“Get used to it,” says Lyosha, who came here with me. But unlike me, he has experience in the army. He is an expert in local customs and habits.

Twilight sets in. Mosquitos buzz over the tent city. The company leaders take us on an excursion to a local bathroom. It is long, thirty meters or so, covered with boards that were removed, most likely, from some shed. Near the walls, there are two narrow trenches. They are filled with excrement, white chloride powder, and blood. It seems that hemorrhoids are the most common disease here.

For a second, I imagine how tomorrow morning I’ll be doing my business sitting butt to butt with others. I try to banish this image by thinking about what will happen to me in a month or two – with a short haircut, suntanned, with flaky skin on my face and my hands dirty from cheap machine oil. I will be sitting on a stool near a tent, watching the new arrivals. I might even be spitting from time to time. My new uniform will fade into a light ochre color, my combat boots will be permanently gray from dust, my feet will become calloused. Ahead of me there will be new trials, my regiment called to active duty, probably to war. I may even be maimed or killed... but at this point I am so new, I smell of fresh sweat and Givenchy after-shave. I am wounded by these images and struck by a premonition of the inevitable.

Ah yes, and my freedom-fighting commander stands over there, that fat asshole in the British uniform.

One Day in the Life

The most poignant dreams come right before sunrise. Usually it is something from civilian life – my wife, my son, the people from my past, college years, high school. These visions leave me uneasy and disturbed, because after you wake up you realize that you’ve already stopped belonging to yourself. “Where am I? Why me?” you ask for the umpteenth time, crawling out of your sleeping bag. “And what will this new day bring me?”

These first thirty minutes of the new day are not kind to you, as the demons of doubt and fear unleash themselves upon you while you are still drowsy. But as soon as I have breakfast and endure the humiliating routine of morning formation, the fog in my head dissipates, and everything settles. Fears dissolve, dreams are forgotten, and I don’t feel the murky hatred toward my commander as I did in my dream. He is also less irritated with us.

We go to the training fields. At 8:00 a.m. the sun already burns our necks and noses. Our boots kick up a thick wall of white dust. It’s hard to breathe. From time to time, we start running. But we keep talking anyway. What about? We talk about our previous jobs, past experiences, the tragedies we lived through, the boundaries crossed, and, of course, about weapons and their characteristics. Though truth be told, weapons, with abbreviations instead of names, hardly speak to me. And how could they, if I was one of those few at school who always skipped the chapters about war in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*?

They teach us to shoot. Some of the experienced men say that they teach us all wrong, that at the front nobody shoots this way. They teach us to crawl and to dig trenches. And they teach us to run, a lot, as if all we’ll be doing is running away from death, or chasing it. All this training is reinforced by extreme attitudes from the instructors: from maniacal rigor with paperwork, reports, and our signatures in each column to a laissez-faire attitude about safety. We either stand in lines for hours to receive thirty bullets and

sign tens of documents or we are given wooden crates of RPGs and do not keep track of what we blow up.

Running and crawling are, at least, simple. Here you have only your legs and feet, the wind at your back, and your heart. It is good if your heart is healthy. For some, running turns into a macabre exercise with the inevitable finish of falling to the ground and swallowing dry sand. Water is poured on them. They are transported to a field hospital, and heart meds are placed into their parched mouths. In such cases the instructor yells:

“These are The Two Hundred! – this is military slang for dead. – They are the fuckin’ dead! To hell with them! Let’s run, boys!”

And run we do. I am thinking about The Two Hundred. Well, at least judging from their faces and their ages, they have been Two Hundred for a while now. They just don’t know it yet.

We return to the camp. We have lunch, we clean our weapons. At 4:00 P.M., there is formation and more training, till dark. Sometimes the instructors are too lazy to take us to the field, so we sit in tents. We melt from the heat, wait for supper, stand in line at the commissary where we can buy everything we need, except alcohol.

I try to focus on reading. But from the very first week in this camp I realized that I’d have to forget about reading for the time being. I just can’t – the radio is too loud, the heat too strong, and the new experience and conditions are emotionally more gripping than any texts.

At night I crawl into my sleeping bag. The nights here are cold, like on the prairie. I cover myself with a blanket. Somebody got a television from somewhere, and now it competes with the radio. Somebody starts frying potatoes at midnight. From outside I hear the angry dealings of scouts and artillery men. The fifty-watt bulb that hangs lonely from the ceiling blinds me as if we’re being interrogated in prison. I cover my head with my jacket.

I fall asleep. Through the fog and sweet nightmare, I struggle to figure out what I’m doing here. Come on, man (I’m angry with myself). You wanted it so much! You really wanted to play this game – the comic Major Payne, or some other war hero! You wanted training and drills until you fell over, fighting till victory, and a return from war as a decorated veteran! You wanted to become one of them! You wanted to get a taste of real patriotism! So suck it up. Get used to it! Or let yourself go to hell.

Passions over a Leave

The newly drafted can be divided into those who would love to leave at least for a day and those who are overall satisfied with an uninterrupted stay at the training field. The first kind mostly consists of family men and drunks whom they call avatars. Beyond the training field is regular civilian life which they have already grown unaccustomed to like to an old lover, but memory makes them excited, and they smile nervously hearing the word “LEAVE.”

For two days, one day, or a few hours. In my regiment, there is a man who spent four hours at home. The other ten he was on the road. But he did manage to see his wife and kids, as well as drink some milk and eat homemade *kotlety*.

For some, even to go to Rivne, the closest town around here, is a luxury. The town has cafés, ATM machines, and supermarkets. Also, in the town one can have a drink. Not the local hooch, which can send you to the hospital, but decent, and, most importantly, safely manufactured vodka. And then it feels like a special kind of chic to ride in a *marshrutka*, a crowded minibus that is the only means of transportation in some areas of the city, while half-drunk, wearing a uniform, ignoring the disgusted looks that the passengers throw at you.

Because of avatars, the commanders are not particularly willing to let the more responsible soldiers into town. Sometimes, though, the commanders have no good reason. – No. – Why? – *Because I said so.*

But sometimes it is the other way around: the officer is in a good mood, so he lets half the platoon have a leave, some for a day, some for three days, and some for three hours.

The city terrifies, fascinates, and excites the soldiers who are not used to it. Long-forgotten feelings surface, something nostalgic, foggy, from childhood. And there you are, a child, after spending three weeks at summer

camp situated between a narrow river and newly planted pines, returning home, walking through the town, recognizing and recalling it, gazing at the buildings that were most significant to you... People wearing civilian clothes surprise you the most. "You exist? Thank you, I like looking at you." In a coffee shop you go to the bathroom and see yourself in the mirror for pretty much the first time that week. "Hey man, is it really you? You've changed." On the streets, you break the habit of spitting onto the ground or blowing your nose through one nostril. You step back gasping when bicycles go by and you watch out when crossing the street. It takes so little: a smiling waitress wearing plastic earrings, two Americanos, a pastry called "Tenderness," fifteen minutes in a bookstore, half an hour in a park, two pounds of strawberries, the restless sounds of the city. All of this can be found in Rivne. This time around I was not allowed to spend my leave in my hometown.

They are afraid to let us go on leave. The natural instinct would be not to return. They are afraid that you will stab or shoot somebody on your way home. Or rape. Or you'll eat somebody's chihuahua. Or you'll shit under a monument to a revered artist. Or you'll arrive drunk. Or you won't arrive at all, just like Vovchyk from Verkhovyna. They say he had joined as a volunteer. The joke is that he climbed down the mountains to buy matches and was grabbed by recruiters. He does not even have state-issued ID, just an ID card from his forestry. Vovchyk served well, never malingered, never accepted an invitation to drink. And then he asked for a leave for four days, to commemorate forty days of the passing of his father, an important occasion for a religious person. And he never came back: he's had it with the military service. The case was handed over to the prosecutor's office.

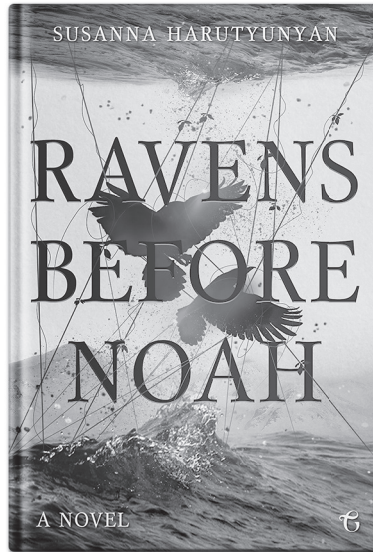
This meant problems for the commanders, presumption of guilt for the soldiers, and, possibly, a five-year jail term for Vovchyk.

Or there is another one, a new guy from Luhansk. He seemed pleasant and calm, and even played sports. He asked for a leave to go to the town and was late coming back, claiming he got lost. He returned drunk, with an unfinished vodka bottle and a beer in his backpack. He was standing in front of the platoon and pitifully apologizing, saying that all this was caused by his childhood trauma, babbling something about his dad and the fresh breath of freedom. One more soldier managed to steal deodorant from a supermarket, and was brought back by the police... The desire to break

away from the army at least for a few hours makes many soldiers resort to all kinds of cunning behaviors, such as scheming, lying, flattering, and offering bribes. One commander, for example, accepts only gadgets and appliances.

A little bit of time outside of the training field gives you strength, lets you feel like a civilian, and that means free. The army is trying to make you get used to a routine and discipline, but at first, this is a lost cause. In a month, one cannot achieve this; there is no way to break one's will or to compensate for its absence. Eventually the soldiers do grow accustomed, of course. They make peace with the circumstances, become integrated into the system, become its part, though not an inherent part, and sometimes even redundant. They sit on the benches near their tent, smoke, tell jokes, anxiously think about the eastern front, hope to return home, and despair about death. But not today, for sure, not today.

Ravens before Noah
by Susanna Harutyunyan



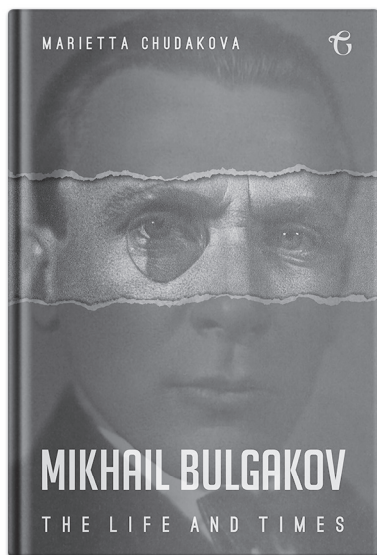
This novel is set in the Armenian mountains sometime in 1915-1960. An old man and a new born baby boy escape from the Hamidian massacres in Turkey in 1894 and hide themselves in the ruins of a demolished and abandoned village. The village soon becomes a shelter for many others, who flee from problems with the law, their families, or their past lives. The villagers survive in this secret shelter, cut off from the rest of the world, by selling or bartering their agricultural products in the villages beneath the mountain.

Years pass by, and the child saved by the old man grows into a young man, Harout. He falls for a beautiful girl who arrived in the village after being tortured by Turkish soldiers. She is pregnant and the old women of the village want to kill the twin baby girls as soon as they are born, to wash away the shame...

Buy it > www.glagoslav.com

Mikhail Bulgakov: The Life and Times

by Marietta Chudakova



Marietta Chudakova's biography of Bulgakov was first published in 1988 and remains the most authoritative and comprehensive study of the writer's life ever produced. It has received acclaim for the journalistic style in which it is written: the author draws on unpublished manuscripts and early drafts of Bulgakov's novels to bring the writer to life. She also explores archive documents and memoirs written by some of Bulgakov's contemporaries so as to construct a comprehensive and nuanced portrait of the writer and his life and times. The scholar casts light on Bulgakov's life with an unrivalled eye for detail and a huge amount of affection for the writer and his works.

Mikhail Bulgakov: The Life and Times will be of particular interest to international researchers studying Mikhail Bulgakov's life and works, and is recommended to a broader audience worldwide.

Buy it > www.glagoslav.com

DEAR READER,

Thank you for purchasing this book.

We at Glagoslav Publications are glad to welcome you, and hope that you find our books to be a source of knowledge and inspiration.

We want to show the beauty and depth of the Slavic region to everyone looking to expand their horizon and learn something new about different cultures, different people, and we believe that with this book we have managed to do just that.

Now that you've got to know us, we want to get to know you. We value communication with our readers and want to hear from you! We offer several options:

- Join our Book Club on Goodreads, Library Thing and Shelfari, and receive special offers and information about our giveaways;
- Share your opinion about our books on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones and other bookstores;
- Join us on Facebook and Twitter for updates on our publications and news about our authors;
- Visit our site www.glagoslav.com to check out our Catalogue and subscribe to our Newsletter.

Glagoslav Publications is getting ready to release a new collection and planning some interesting surprises — stay with us to find out!

Glagoslav Publications
Email: contact@glagoslav.com

Glagoslav Publications Catalogue

- *The Time of Women* by Elena Chizhova
- *Andrei Tarkovsky: The Collector of Dreams* by Layla Alexander-Garrett
- *Andrei Tarkovsky - A Life on the Cross* by Lyudmila Boyadzhieva
- *Sin* by Zakhar Prilepin
- *Hardly Ever Otherwise* by Maria Matios
- *Khatyn* by Ales Adamovich
- *The Lost Button* by Irene Rozdobudko
- *Christened with Crosses* by Eduard Kochergin
- *The Vital Needs of the Dead* by Igor Sakhnovsky
- *The Sarabande of Sara's Band* by Larysa Denysenko
- *A Poet and Bin Laden* by Hamid Ismailov
- *Watching The Russians (Dutch Edition)* by Maria Konyukova
- *Kobzar* by Taras Shevchenko
- *The Stone Bridge* by Alexander Terekhov
- *Moryak* by Lee Mandel
- *King Stakh's Wild Hunt* by Uladzimir Karatkevich
- *The Hawks of Peace* by Dmitry Rogozin
- *Harlequin's Costume* by Leonid Yuzefovich
- *Depeche Mode* by Serhii Zhadan
- *The Grand Slam and other stories (Dutch Edition)*
by Leonid Andreev
- *METRO 2033 (Dutch Edition)* by Dmitry Glukhovsky
- *METRO 2034 (Dutch Edition)* by Dmitry Glukhovsky
- *A Russian Story* by Eugenia Kononenko
- *Herstories, An Anthology of New Ukrainian Women Prose Writers*
- *The Battle of the Sexes Russian Style* by Nadezhda Ptushkina
- *A Book Without Photographs* by Sergey Shargunov
- *Down Among The Fishes* by Natalka Babina
- *disUNITY* by Anatoly Kudryavitsky
- *Sankya* by Zakhar Prilepin
- *Wolf Messing* by Tatiana Lungin
- *Good Stalin* by Victor Erofeyev
- *Solar Plexus* by Rustam Ibragimbekov
- *Don't Call me a Victim!* by Dina Yafasova
- *Poetin (Dutch Edition)* by Chris Hutchins and Alexander Korobko

- *A History of Belarus* by Lubov Bazan
- *Children's Fashion of the Russian Empire* by Alexander Vasiliev
- *Empire of Corruption - The Russian National Pastime*
by Vladimir Soloviev
- *Heroes of the 90s: People and Money. The Modern History
of Russian Capitalism*
- *Fifty Highlights from the Russian Literature (Dutch Edition)*
by Maarten Tengbergen
- *Bajesvolk (Dutch Edition)* by Mikhail Khodorkovsky
- *Tsarina Alexandra's Diary (Dutch Edition)*
- *Myths about Russia* by Vladimir Medinskiy
- *Boris Yeltsin: The Decade that Shook the World* by Boris Minaev
- *A Man Of Change: A study of the political life
of Boris Yeltsin*
- *Sberbank: The Rebirth of Russia's Financial Giant*
by Evgeny Karasyuk
- *To Get Ukraine* by Oleksandr Shyshko
- *Asystole* by Oleg Pavlov
- *Gnedich* by Maria Rybakova
- *Marina Tsvetaeva: The Essential Poetry*
- *Multiple Personalities* by Tatyana Shcherbina
- *The Investigator* by Margarita Khemlin
- *The Exile* by Zinaida Tulub
- *Leo Tolstoy: Flight from paradise* by Pavel Basinsky
- *Moscow in the 1930* by Natalia Gromova
- *Laurus (Dutch edition)* by Evgenij Vodolazkin
- *Prisoner* by Anna Nemzer
- *The Crime of Chernobyl: The Nuclear Goulag*
by Wladimir Tchertkoff
- *Alpine Ballad* by Vasil Bykau
- *The Complete Correspondence of Hryhory Skovoroda*
- *The Tale of Aypi* by Ak Welsapar
- *Selected Poems* by Lydia Grigorieva
- *The Fantastic Worlds of Yuri Vynnychuk*
- *The Garden of Divine Songs and Collected Poetry of Hryhory Skovoroda*
- *Adventures in the Slavic Kitchen: A Book of Essays with Recipes*
- *Seven Signs of the Lion* by Michael M. Naydan

- *Forefathers' Eve* by Adam Mickiewicz
- *One-Two* by Igor Eliseev
- *Girls, be Good* by Bojan Babić
- *Time of the Octopus* by Anatoly Kucherena
- *The Grand Harmony* by Bohdan Ihor Antonych
- *The Selected Lyric Poetry Of Maksym Rylsky*
- *The Shining Light* by Galymkair Mutanov
- *The Frontier: 28 Contemporary Ukrainian Poets - An Anthology*
- *Acropolis: The Wawel Plays* by Stanisław Wyspiański
- *Contours of the City* by Attyla Mohylny
- *Conversations Before Silence: The Selected Poetry of Oles Ilchenko*
- *The Secret History of my Sojourn in Russia* by Jaroslav Hašek
- *Mirror Sand: An Anthology of Russian Short Poems in English Translation* (A Bilingual Edition)
- *Maybe We're Leaving* by Jan Balaban
- *Death of the Snake Catcher* by Ak Welsapar
- *A Brown Man in Russia: Perambulations Through A Siberian Winter* by Vijay Menon
- *Hard Times* by Ostap Vyshnia
- *The Flying Dutchman* by Anatoly Kudryavitsky
- *Nikolai Gumilev's Africa* by Nikolai Gumilev
- *Combustions* by Srđan Srdić
- *The Sonnets* by Adam Mickiewicz
- *Dramatic Works* by Zygmunt Krasiński
- *Four Plays* by Juliusz Słowacki
- *Little Zinnobers* by Elena Chizhova
- *We Are Building Capitalism! Moscow in Transition 1992-1997*
- *The Nuremberg Trials* by Alexander Zvyagintsev
- *The Hemingway Game* by Evgeni Grishkovets
- *A Flame Out at Sea* by Dmitry Novikov
- *Jesus' Cat* by Grig
- *Want a Baby and Other Plays* by Sergei Tretyakov
- *I Mikhail Bulgakov: The Life and Times* by Marietta Chudakova
- *Leonardo's Handwriting* by Dina Rubina
- *A Burglar of the Better Sort* by Tytus Czyżewski
- *The Mouseiad and other Mock Epics* by Ignacy Krasicki
- *Ravens before Noah* by Susanna Harutyunyan
- *Duel* by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych
- *An English Queen and Stalingrad* by Natalia Kulishenko
- *Point Zero* by Narek Malian

More coming soon...

The book is a first person account of a soldier's journey, and is based on Artem Chekh's diary that he wrote while and after his service in the war in Donbas. One of the most important messages the book conveys is that war means pain. Chekh is not showing the reader any heroic combat, focusing instead on the quiet, mundane, and harsh soldier's life. Chekh masterfully selects the most poignant details of this kind of life.



Artem Chekh (1985) is a contemporary Ukrainian writer, author of more than ten books of fiction and essays. *Absolute Zero* (2017), an account of Chekh's service in the army in the war in Donbas, is one of his latest books, for which he became a recipient of several prestigious awards in Ukraine, such as the Joseph Conrad Prize (2019), the Gogol Prize (2018), the Voyin Svitla (2018), and the Litaktsent Prize (2017). This is his first book-length translation into English.

