

A photograph of a heavily rusted and weathered fishing boat on a beach. The boat is tilted, with its cabin and deck showing significant corrosion. A large, dark, textured structure, possibly a pier or part of a larger vessel, dominates the right side of the frame. The sky is a clear, pale blue, and the beach is visible in the foreground. The overall mood is one of decay and abandonment.

ANATOLY KUDRYAVITSKY

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

ANATOLY KUDRYAVITSKY

**THE FLYING
DUTCHMAN**

Translated from the Russian by Carol Ermakova

GLAGOSLAV PUBLICATIONS

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

by Anatoly Kudryavitsky

Translated from the Russian by Carol Ermakova

Cover and interior layout by Max Mendor

Original photo at the cover by Maria Agustinho (shutterstock.com)

© 2018, Anatoly Kudryavitsky

English translations © Carol Ermakova, 2018

© 2018, Glagoslav Publications

www.glagoslav.com

ISBN: 978-1-911414-87-2

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.

CONTENTS

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN9
THE RED CANALS OF MARS, THE AMBER SPOKES OF VENUS	155
A SYMPHONY'S FAREWELL162
BROTHERS IN PENS	170
RUSSIAN NIGHTMARE186
BRITISH AGENT214

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the editors of the following, in which a number of these stories, or versions of them, originally appeared:

“The Red Canals of Mars, the Amber Spokes of Venus”: *Far off Places*, “A Symphony’s Farewell”: *Asymptote*, “Brothers in Pens”: *Prosopisia*. “Russian Nightmare” and “British Agent” were first published in *Dream. After Dream* by Anatoly Kudryavitsky, Honeycomb Press, 2013.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

A tone poem

Only the individual who is solitary is like a thing placed under profound laws, and when he goes out into the morning that is just beginning, or looks out into the evening that is full of happening, and if he feels what is going on there, then all status drops from him as from a dead man, though he stands in the midst of sheer life.

—Rainer Maria Rilke. *Letters to a Young Poet*

PART 1

Andante

1.

Houses swallow people. They toy with them for a while, then: gulp. And when the person quietens down and gazes out of the window, the window dims and the scenery becomes a poorly primed canvas. You can rip through that canvas, or you can get caught in its web.

N. managed to not get caught; he ripped through the canvas. But unless you are a spider, there are many webs which can snare you. N. would soon let himself be swallowed by another house – a large wooden one, standing alone on a riverbank.

He sailed unhurriedly along the byroad like a little boat, a suitcase in one hand, a bag of food he'd bought on the way in the other; the forest gradually took him in, absorbed him, then released him into a first clearing, then a second; a hazel, pines, then suddenly aspens and silver birch, then more pines. The scent of the river. She was the queen of this place. Birds on the wing would bow to her, paying homage; otherwise, to drink her waters was forbidden.

The house was her palace. It was dedicated to the river, it lived for her. Straddling the ridge pole, balanced like yokes, dragonflies sang for her. And someone called Noone slung the yoke over his shoulders, carried dead water to the river and scooped the living waters from her. He lived off this water without food, and did not become Somebody because it was disgraceful, because it was unnecessary, because he had already been somebody.

An empty bucket stood on the veranda. Or maybe he was just imagining it standing there? Or maybe he was just imagining himself standing there on the veranda? For we are all artists imagining our own image. And now this is the still-life: a veranda, threaded on a tree. A “poplaspen” as N. christened it at once, unable to remember

whether it was an aspen or a poplar. Even if you don't remember, you still have to call it something, so you simply call it whatever you wish, not what others wish. Actually, N. often behaved contrary to others. He fondly called his own life 'non-life,' nicknamed himself Noone and, since a man needs a surname, he decided to make his nickname his surname, too. For privacy, and well... Curious, would anyone think to read it as *no one*?

Of course, a real Noone should live nowhere. N. probably wasn't the real Noone since that is an honorary title which has to be earned. So what was N.'s story? For years, he had lived in the city. Lived and lived, and only left now. The city still lived in him, though. He tried to evict it, but to no avail, so he had to carry it around within him: he lumbered up the steps, sat down on the bench—still with the city—and talked to the landlord while the city roofs were knocking against each other in the depths of his innards.

The house had long since swallowed the landlord, who now had a dull air about him. He was remembering his wife, who had been carried away by the river on a yellow wave – carried away to town, they said, to a new marriage, but who knew where? You cannot ask the yellow wave. His wife lived in his eyes, and the stranger observed with interest how she beat the carpets, washed the windows and prepared lunch. At last the landlord closed his eyes, his wife hidden within them, and named his price. The price filled the whole veranda. It was followed by silence.

N. understood that this was akin to giving alms to the poor: you should either refrain completely, or give such that the poor cease being poor; you may even have to give yourself.

He accepted. The price obediently disappeared into a pocket, agreement reigned. The house was now his, until the autumn. As for the house itself, well, of course it raised no objections, readily releasing something long-since swallowed in favour of a new flavour for its belly. Noone did not suppose it could swallow him, too – well, how can you swallow *no one*? You simply can't.

The landlord disappeared down the path. He left everything, even the photograph of his wife. It was an exodus. He was almost weightless; everything had been burnt out from within.

2.

“To the left, Willem!”

“Aye, Captain.”

Nothing stirred, nothing was happening, not a soul to be seen, yet voices rang out, and the ship sailed on.

“Raise the jib!”

The helm squeaked, silver clouds glittered in the compass glass.

“Hey, Dirk, remember that barmaid in Hamburg?”

“Aha... Slacken the guy ropes.”

But there were no sails, either. Bare masts, just some rags on the rigging, parched fish and petrified bread on the mess-hall table, a bottle empty but for the bluish scale of vapourised wine...

“Captain’s counting the haul, I reckon.”

“The bosun, too. They threw the merchant overboard, thought they’d made a hush job of it, but we saw for ourselves!”

It was the seagulls all gaggling at once, each to its own tune, yet each understood. It was a cabotage voyage.

“To the right, damn it! There’s reefs ahead!”

But there were no reefs, no sandbanks, either, although the dark clouds on the horizon were indeed dry land. Nothing hindered the ship, and the voices echoed among themselves. The voices were quick, the people, dead, but with living voices. The dead generally maintain an eloquent silence, but should they speak...

3.

A reflection lived in the tin bucket. It was jolly in the mornings, glum in the evenings, preoccupied – but with what? He preferred to wash in the morning reflection.

The stove was emitting make-believe smoke, like a sketch. The house lived its own life, too, breathed through the stove’s white brickwork, occasionally letting out a groan through its mighty painted boards.

A “Warrior-Liberator” mug, an egg, bread and butter spangled with glass sugar crystals... This was breakfast. The Sun pointed a ray at the modest fare and giggled.

But who cares? After breakfast he could sit at the khaki-coloured typewriter and begin hammering out ‘The Flying Dutchman. The

Origin of the Plot.’ Actually, the familiar story hammers itself out, and the Flying Dutchman sails along the typed waves of the Rheine – well, the typewriter is called ‘Rheinmetall’!

Somebody is stomping around in the attic, sounds almost like a fight! Who else is up there? He goes to look, his feet playing the keys of the creaking staircase. The attic is empty, its windows cobwebbed over. Wait – not completely empty. There’s a chest in the corner. Ancient, dusty and heavy, it doesn’t let itself be opened, keeps itself to itself. There’s an axe downstairs, on the veranda...

And the lock is broken. A smell of tobacco. Thick, almost putrid. Who’s coughing? Nobody? My, how they’re coughing!

*Fifteen men on a dead man’s chest.
Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum.*

Well, there was *yo ho ho* all right but no bottle of rum to be seen. A maritime spyglass, a flannel cloth with two flint stones, an extremely long, ancient pistol with a dull, encrusted mother-of-pearl handle and – a large, lacquered casket. It was opened without the aid of the axe. Inside he found an old-fashioned maritime cap and a heavy bronze key.

“But where are the piasters? How can there be a chest like this without any gold?”

The tragedy was that N. thought about money, but money never wasted a thought on him. Ever. Money lives its own life, has its own likes and dislikes, its favourites. But why did he need money here, anyway? He had enough for food, and there was nothing else to buy, anyway. Wonder about that key, though. There don’t seem to be any fitting keyholes in the house. But if there’s a key for a door, there should be a door for the key!

He closed the chest and went down into the garden. The paths were long since overgrown, the vegetable patch, too. But the apple trees were laden with fruit. What’s up there? The sun was wheeling overhead like a pancake in an oiled frying pan. He discovered a bench darkened by rain under one of the apple trees. N. sat down, pondering: what was a chest like that doing in the middle of nowhere, among the Valday Hills? What am I doing here in the middle of nowhere among the Valday Hills? Time hummed

softly, seeping off somewhere between the trees into the ‘twixt-trees.’

The house stood utterly unruffled, its pale, silent windows reflecting the grey-blue matt of the afternoon sky. A woman appeared at one of them. She was looking at him. N. shuddered – he had not been in that room yet.

He hurried back into the house, rushed up to the door, knocked, and went in. Empty. A double-bed with nickel-plated iron knobs at each corner, no mattress. A mahogany wardrobe. He opened the wardrobe door, as if expecting to see someone inside. No, the wardrobe was uninhabited but for the thick, sickly-sweet smell of lavender. N. recoiled, then peered inside again. Shawls were lying on one of the shelves, an ancient coat hung in the other side, nothing special, just a grubby orange throw-over raincoat.

Nobody.

He opened the transom, tucked a corner of the curtain into it to mark the window, and went back out into the garden. That wasn’t the window where he had seen the woman! He went into the next room. It was completely empty. He hung the curtain out of that window, too. It turned out to be on the other side of the window with the woman. There were no other rooms between the two. It was a window into nowhere, he realised. Or from nowhere.

4.

Some things drop into memory’s windows, some get lost, some can be seen in a flash, but others are kept in darkness... That woman – had he seen her before? Had she been present in his past life or in this present non-life? Who knows... He tried to imagine her with a child. There are women whom you simply can’t imagine with a child, and she seemed to be one. Was she the spawn of this house, of its grey dust, its dowdy kitchen utensils, the river’s dampness? You could not think of her as a mother, nor, for that matter, as a lover or a wife. No, she was simply the woman of this house, even if she didn’t exist. Each place has its soul, a female soul.

“But what is the soul?” N. pondered, and that musing gave rise to an unpleasant ache in the pit of his stomach. And before his closed eyes, the contours of a fiery plane glowed green. “If there is a soul, then that means

there must be a past. But if, as in my case, there is no past, then does that mean there is no soul? Or is it hiding, waiting for this present to become the past, for it to accumulate?”

Then it all seemed funny. Well, a house of ghosts – what better place to ponder the soul?! He had to end up here, of all places! And a rhyme came to his mind: ‘all’ – ‘bawl’... Yes, the bawl, those jaws, this was what he fled from. But there’s another rhyme: ‘all’ – ‘fall’... At that, the green fire-plane in his eyes became unbearably bright and pain seared his heart. He lay down on the sofa with its worn office leather and tried to put an end to the philosophical games of his consciousness, or his subconscious, and to think of nothing at all. The pain passed, and sleep took its place.

5.

He woke up. It was cold... The sheet was wet, and the blanket, too. Lowering his feet to the floor – water up to his ankles. A flood!

He somehow pushed his feet into his boots and, throwing a windcheater over his shoulders, he rushed out into the yard. Oddly enough, it was dry there. A green lamp glowed in the garden, lighting everything around with an eerie, ghostly glow.

“How come? Has the river come gushing into the house, does it want to embrace me, carry me to the bottom?”

Water filled his eyes, waves beat against his brow.

“The house is chasing me!”

Frightened, he strode away, but the dense undergrowth caught him in grass traps, snagged him in snares. All of a sudden, a red dress flashed between the trees, a face appeared for a split second... It can’t be, he said to himself. She’s no longer on this earth!

Then everything became clear: he had not seen what one is not allowed to see; indeed, had he seen anything at all? N. lay down on the grass and closed his eyes.

Then his eyes opened by themselves. He was back in bed again – how had he got home? He had no idea, and there was no-one to ask. The sunless morning was turning grey outside the window. He was dressed – had he forgotten to get undressed? Oh, he hadn’t even taken off his boots... There was no water anywhere, and, oddly, everything seemed dry. He wanted to sleep, terribly, so he tossed his boots aside. A button fell out of one. A red one? No – golden.

6.

Along the lane, around the corner, along the lane again, down the slope, between the barrels, over the ditch, around the cart, over the little bridge, hop, skip and a jump over the puddles, then back on the lane again, but he has already forgotten where he is going... no, not forgotten. Two more blocks, a left turn, then to the right, and straight ahead... Seems he has brought himself somewhere, and he is glad: it's good to have reached the final destination of any journey, although not all final destinations turn out to be pleasant resting places.

Take this tavern here in Rotterdam, for instance, this sailors' purgatory, with its fumes, tobacco smoke, dark corners, and low, terse hullabaloo where everyone talks at once. A figure in a rust-coloured camisole and a grubby neckerchief takes itself from table to table with obvious effort, stopping for a long talk here, barely mumbling one word there. Will they chase him away at once? No, the figure slides over to the next table, and once again: "blah blah blah..."

"Who is it?" the infantry officer asked a fellow at his table.

"Dirk Slothem," replied the old sailor, leaning over the table like a truncated mast. "Sailed with him once I did, he was the bosun on that ship. Now he's gathering a crew for the Crystal Key, an old piece of junk from Antwerp, a schooner or a bark, who knows. Wants to sail to the East Indies, on that old wreck!"

"Reckon it won't make it, then?"

"I wouldn't even risk riding it at anchor, roadstead!"

"So why's he rounding up a crew, then?"

"Who knows? Made it worth his while, I guess. A daredevil looking for his own kind. They'll all perish!"

The tobacco smoke coiled into a Pacific Ocean cloud turning the sea foam grey. The figures in the corners of the tavern braided themselves into tornado-columns and then unwound themselves again. One of the figures appeared dimly at the other end of the table. It seemed more real than ghostly, and the sailor realised there was someone else at the table, too: a young maritime officer.

"I've signed up," said the officer, whose name was Kees van der Weide. "They offered to make me First Mate. They really do pay well,

whoever they are, and anyhow, I know that craft. She doesn't look too good, of course, but she can creak on another 50 years and more."

"You're a brave man," said the old sailor shaking his tousled grey head and topping up his rum from the jug. "With a risk like that you might as well buy a ticket to heaven."

"Ah, so you know the story, too!" said van der Weide with a wink.

"What story?" the infantry officer asked, squinting like a pharmacist as he measured the next dose of port into his glass.

"I'll tell you. An interesting tale, by the way," van der Weide began. "It happened many moons ago, back in the days when a large monastery stood not far from here. Well, one day the young novice Brother Ambrosius comes running up to Abbot Boniface and he presses his frightened face right up to the abbot's shrivelled ear and whispers: "Father, a young runaway monk is selling tickets to heaven in the next village." "Really?" says the surprised abbot, almost choking on his Moselle. "For how much?" "For a sum equivalent to the church tax," replies Brother Ambrosius, nervously running his fingers through what's left of his brown hair. "And the people find money both for him and for us?" asks the abbot. "Yes, Father." Now it's the abbot's turn to scratch his tonsure. "But we're missing out on that money!" he sniffs. "Can't we add at least a little to our profits? I want to talk with this monk!" The novice Brother Ambrosius's Adam's apple starts to bob up and down his salient chick-like throat. "But he's a blasphemer, Father!" Gnawing on his chicken bone, the abbot says piously: "The church teaches one should use the mistakes of her wayward sons to further her good." And so the monk was caught in some peasant's house and brought before the abbot. They found scraps of tatty paper on him, with the words: "We, the most merciful Archbishop of Utrecht, do hereby confirm that the below (there was a gap in the text here) has atoned all earthly sins and is worthy of our mercy. As such, we see no reason why he should not be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven unhindered." The papers were signed 'Humble Servant of God Frederick, Archbishop of Utrecht.'

"My brother, you are not giving God's unto God," said the abbot when—at his own request—he was left alone with the sinner. Having obtained his interlocutor's full agreement, he continued: "My brother, if the name of Christ's representative is taken in vain, then that representative should be recompensed." The sinner's full agreement

was obtained on this point, too. Father Boniface faked the archbishop's signature himself, since he was better at it. The peasants continued paying their taxes, buying their tickets to heaven, being brought to ruin, and dying out.

The Reformation came. The surviving peasants stormed the monastery, pitchforks in hand, and drowned Father Boniface in a vat of Moselle. As for Brother Ambrosius, they very humanely cracked his skull. The rebellion was led by that same rogue monk who decided it was better to be the lightning than the lightning conductor.

"And so, did the peasants get to heaven with their tickets?" asked the infantry officer, who had lost count of his drinks.

"That I cannot tell you," said van der Weide with a smile. "You see, I've never been there and, taking my future plans into account, I doubt I ever shall."

7.

The garden was calling him again. Leaves partly covered the sun. The minutes of the present oozed from the echoing emptiness of past years. You cannot look at the sun, but you can look at the point where the sun's rays land...

N. sat on the bench and closed his eyes. Silence. No, not silence, a cricket is chirping, the leaves are rustling; this is not silence. Silence is when there are no books, and it is good to think in such silence. Akhmatova said: you can live without books, and that is how he lives now. But in the city, in his flat, dozens of bookshelves were piled up with volumes and volumes, all read and re-read. But he couldn't read them any more: they belonged to his past life. Now there's nothing to do but watch the garden, ponderously green, frowning in the breeze.

The gate was green, too. Look, it's opening now, and in comes a beetle, a timber-worm. No, not a beetle, but something beetly, hugging a heavy iron sausage in its front paws.

"Gas."

But no-one had ordered anything, not even Noone. Then it dawned on him: maybe the runaway landlord had ordered it?

"This way," N. showed the gasman the kitchen door.

The canister was installed, but the gas man didn't straighten up, he stayed crablike. What else does he want, that dark-haired beetle?

“Do you have any water?”

“Ah, he wants a drink. Where’s the kettle?” But the kettle was hiding, so N. showed the gasman the bucket. He lifted the lid – and gave a start.

“What have you got in there?!”

There turned out to be nothing but a bunch of pondweed in the bucket.

“I thought it was someone’s hair!” the gasman calmed himself down after groping around in the bucket. “But it’s seaweed not pondweed! Are you growing it?”

“Yes, instead of sea kale,” N. remarked dryly.

And the gasman left, forgetting his drink.

8.

“Got seaweed there, you say?” asked Merinos, the head of the local police. He was bathing in the refreshing breeze of the old “Victory” fan with its rubber paddles like donkey’s ears.

“Yes, sir, seaweed. Not pondweed,” declared the phony gasman, the patch of sweat on his dark blue police shirt spreading.

“A scientist, then,” Merinos stated, helping the fan along by gently waving his small, pink lady-like hanky. “I don’t like their kind...”

“Who?” sergeant Vasily Safonov enquired hesitantly, donning his usual police uniform with relief.

“Those chaps, smarty pants. Students, doctors, professors of this, that or the other... Enemies, that’s what they are.”

“But maybe he’s a Soviet intellectual?” Vasily was warming up to this intimate conversation with the boss.

“Dream on! Soviet intellectuals, for your information, are careerists, and as for real intellectuals... Oh, they’re clever folks. But they’re not Soviet. Can’t even drink properly, don’t like fighting, and can’t utter so much as a single strong word! And that’s why I don’t like them. No simpleness in them.”

Hanging opposite one another, the portraits of the two Ilyiches—one bald, one eye-browed—exchanged approving glances.

Vasily didn’t bother to enquire why his boss didn’t like doctors. He himself was none too fond of medical staff – he once got such a boil from an injection ‘on the back of his face,’ as he liked to put it,

that he avoided sitting on it at all costs, like you would avoid sitting on a wasp.

“Well, you keep an eye on him,” concluded his boss. “True enough, you can’t do much damage with seaweed – he can take some algae off us, as a matter of fact, the river’s choking up with it... But still, keep your ears pricked.”

The drop slowly creeping down the ginger Merinos’ freckled forehead finally reached the tip of his nose, and he swore, steadily and unhurriedly, as if to say that if swearing were a game, well, he’d play it on his own terms.

9.

To make a face... Well, what can you make a face from? From an apple, a pear, grass, fat, glue, dye, horse hair, Lego, breeze blocks, marble, bronze... But the most beautiful human faces, male or female, are not made of apples, fat, or dye or the like.

One such face was the carved female face which adorned the nose of the barque the Crystal Key. The vessel was indeed a barque, not a schooner or a barquentine, with a square rigged foremast and main mast, and fore-and-aft rigged mizzen mast. The heavysset bosun Dirk Slothem would punish the sailors not only for referring disrespectfully to their old ship, but even if he caught one of them insulting the wooden figurehead, calling it ugly or, even worse, Medusa. You mustn’t give the ship’s protectress obscene nicknames! They would never dare on a Spanish vessel, for fear of their maritime backsides; they don’t spare the rod there! And it just so happened that the Crystal Key was indeed passing by the Spanish coast not far from the Cape of Finisterre.

The captain had not yet shown himself to anyone; orders were given by his first mate, van der Weide. More than once the tipsy sailors clapped the bosun on the back, hoping to make him confess that there was no captain but van der Weide on that ship. But Dirk Slothem was a sailor with decades of experience who had even sailed on Portuguese and English vessels, and such familiarity didn’t raise a smile; he twirled and twirled his long red whiskers and, in his measured Frisian way, would let them talk their fill, then reply: we have a captain on this ship, and his name is Captain Falkenberg. He’s simply indisposed and is lying in his cabin.

But one of the sailors who'd had too much rum, not convinced by the bosun's explanations, was about to lay into him, fists flailing. Slothem only hit him once, a short, lightning blow from his hand the size of a bull's thigh. Coming back to his senses that evening, the sailor joked that Medusa herself must have struck him with her full force.

10.

Seventhly, you get peckish. No matter how much food there is in the house. After some time—say, on the seventh day—you discover that an odd hotchpotch is all that remains. A tin of green Hungarian peas, say, and 'Theatre' toffees. Well, you simply can't stomach that any more... And so you venture out of the house, and make a great geographical discovery; without the aid of a telescope, you find a new planet, fall under a bus or buy yourself something to eat.

Foodstuffs – they are the fruit of someone's labours. Either man labours over nature, or nature labours over herself. Man has not yet mastered the art of producing something edible from himself. Maybe he will learn. Definitely, he will learn.

N., meanwhile, walked along the woodland path, putting some distance between himself, the house and the river, drawing closer to human habitation, and—most importantly—to the village shop. That shop sold grey white bread, rusty herring, tinned sprats in tomato sauce, coarse ground salt, bay leaves in packets with a picture of bay leaves, and an "Accord" record player with LPs of the Choir named after Verevka and the vocal-instrumental ensemble called "The Gems." There was a sales assistant there, too, curious and rather unkempt. She began by asking:

"Who are you?"

"I live here," N. replied, to avoid admitting he was Noone, although that was the answer the question begged.

"Ah, so it's you who's renting the old house by the river... And what are you doing there?"

"I'm on holiday," N. said. "I'm thinking."

He said that, of course, without thinking. Never tell simple folks of your ability to reason: it arouses nothing but vague surprise. Then

anyone you meet or come across will already be forewarned: you are a dangerous crackpot.

“Hmm, what is there to think about here?” said the sales assistant with a shrug.

“Well, one can think about anything, not only about the place where one is at the moment... Tell me, is there a post office here?” he asked, and then thought at once: “What do I need one for? Sending letters is dangerous.”

“Yes, there is. On the next street,” answered the shop assistant. “My sister works there.”

“Alone?”

“Most of the year, yes, but a student’s helping her now. His surname’s Trampin. He’s a bit of a simpleton.”

“What do you mean?” N. asked, surprised.

“He’s always getting muddled, putting the letters in the wrong place, and my sister has to sort them all out again. They nearly threw him out of uni last winter, apparently. That’s the kind of young folk we raise out here...”

N. struggled to pack his goods into his string bag, tying the handle with twine just to be on the safe side. He could have bought the record player, too, of course, but the record selection on offer was obviously below par. If only they had Bach’s cantatas or, just for fun, Wagner’s “The Flying Dutchman”! Actually, he knew that opera by heart, and he’d brought the score with him, just in case.

The string bag stretched his arm, the twine handles cut into his palm, and he stopped to wrap them in a handkerchief. And while he was carrying out that operation, sergeant Vasya was standing at the police station window watching him.

“Come and look at our intellectual, Comrade Captain!”

Captain Merinos was engrossed in pulling a splinter from his fat, freckled forefinger. He swore, dug into his long-suffering finger with a needle, swore some more, pulled out the needle, thrust it into the lapel of his police jacket and finally stomped across the painted floor towards the window.

“Him?” he said in surprise. “Bit old, isn’t he? Grey. Doesn’t look dangerous. Down at heel...”

Rested, N. continued on his way. Just then, the panting shop assistant ran into the police station.

“So, did you ask him what he’s doing?” Merinos enquired as to how his instructions had been carried out, trying again to coax the splinter out with the tip of the needle.

“I did.”

“And what is he doing?”

“He’s thinking.”

And Merinos caught the splinter at last, pulling it out with a shriek of pain.

“Ffffck,” he said to the splinter, and then, after a pause, went on with the other conversation. “No, seems he’s dangerous after all.”

Meanwhile, N. had reached the boundary of his land. The border was marked by barbed wire wound three times between rough wooden posts pounded into the ground. N. could have sworn that just a few hours earlier, when he had left, the fence had been noticeably further from the house. He walked the length of the fence, but there was no sign that the posts had been moved. Was he imagining things? Or had the ring of barbed wire tightened by itself?

11.

Night. A white cloud on a dark background. A speaking cloud.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Ask me,” sighs the cloud.

“Why can I find no peace on this earth?”

“Hmm, good question... Do you really want to know?”

“Yes.”

“Because you are unlucky: you landed in the wrong country, the wrong century and, worst of all, you are not who you seem to be...”

“Maybe...”

“To put it very briefly, you cannot find peace because there is no place for you.”

“Why is there no place for me?”

“Because you want to be something other than was intended.”

“Something other?”

“Yes. You want to be better, cleverer. And that does not go unpunished.”

Black steam came out of the white cloud’s mouth, or at any rate, from where the mouth should be, from where the cloud spoke. Or was it laughing?

In his next dream he saw a man with a mirror for a face. N.'s own face was reflected in it, except that his eyes were closed and his cheeks were pallid.

“You don't know how to die,” said the man with the mirror-face. “I will teach you. You have to have the knack, you see. You have to learn death, gain experience...”

The visitor began to teach him how to die, showing him an endless kaleidoscope with images of all sorts of death. That night N. died over and over – he drowned in the ocean, fell off the roof, choked on smoke and toxic fumes, perished at the hands of murderers and hangmen, committed suicide and quietly faded away in a geriatric ward. He understood that death could be boring, like any other ordinary activity, and he also understood that there can be no prior experience: each time you die anew. And in the morning, if you are lucky, you wake anew...

He did indeed wake up: someone was tickling his cheeks. The round face of the dressing table mirror searchingly trained the sun's rays right into his eyes.

12.

The waves run barefoot, playing football, chasing the ball of the sun, shattering it into a thousand shards, only to gather them up again and play again.

And so the Canary Isles are passed. The storm was lying in wait for them in warm waters. The wind shook the Crystal Key like a cat worrying a half-dead mouse. The sails were clewed down, but still the ship creaked and shuddered. The next wave rocked the deck and broke off a wooden plank, part of the outer hull. Panic broke out among the sailors; realising any one of them could be swept overboard at any moment, they ran for shelter anywhere they could. The bosun walked the deck, clutching spider-like onto every dangling rope or line, dealing blows left and right as usual in the hope of returning the sailors to their posts. But it was all in vain.

Just then a strange figure appeared on the bridge. He was dressed in a black Spanish camisole with silvery embroidery and a broad-brimmed hat. For a moment, the figure took in what was happening around him, then, audibly but without yelling, he gave an order:

“To your posts, all of you! Bosun, send two sailors to secure the lifeboats!”

The order came in the pause between two mighty waves, or it would not have been heard.

“The Captain! It’s the Captain!” a whisper rustled through the sailors.

The order was carried out post haste. The Captain took off his hat and everyone could see his swarthy, even yellowy face and long grey hair. Those standing closer to him glimpsed rather harsh facial features and cheeks well ploughed with wrinkles.

“I, Michael Falkenberg, cured by the grace of providence from my ailment, am now taking command of this ship according to all earthly and heavenly laws.”

He uttered this calmly but powerfully, and the sailors acknowledged this man’s authority without a second thought. No need for him to shout or back up his authority with blows as Dirk Slothem did; his word and his glance sufficed.

“Aha, Michael,” thought the bosun, who was himself seeing the captain for the first time. “Smacks of the Spanish ‘Miguel.’ Maybe he’s that Spanish renegade, the former captain of the English frigate who later sailed on our warships? He went by the fictitious name of van der Dekken – ‘man from the deck.’ And I bet Falkenberg isn’t his real name, either. No doubt our captain’s a nobleman, and who knows what his real name is...”

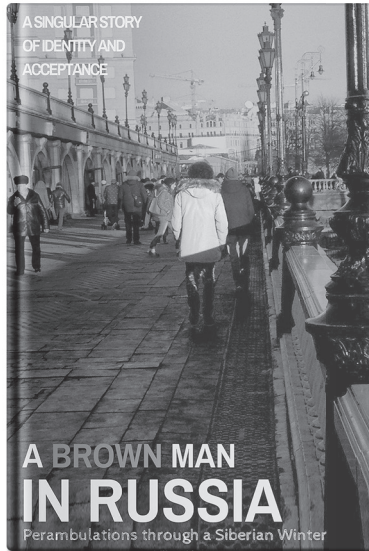
Dirk looked at the captain again, but he couldn’t see his eyes, they were too deep-set. And for the first time in his life, the bosun felt uneasy.

“The captain’s obviously a foolhardy man,” he thought. “I wonder if I’ll make it back to my wife and children after this voyage?”

But Dirk Slothem was a man who knew how to handle himself, so his face did not betray his doubts. And anyway, his attention was diverted to another strange event: a second man in black now appeared on the bridge. Unlike the captain, this one was dressed simply, but there was something sinister about his impassive, parchment-white face with its hooked nose. Looking closer, Dirk realised that the worst thing about this man was his smile.

“And that’s the physician. A cautious guy, never more than a yard away from the captain,” came a voice behind the bosun.

**A Brown Man in Russia -
Perambulations Through A Siberian Winter**
by Vijay Menon

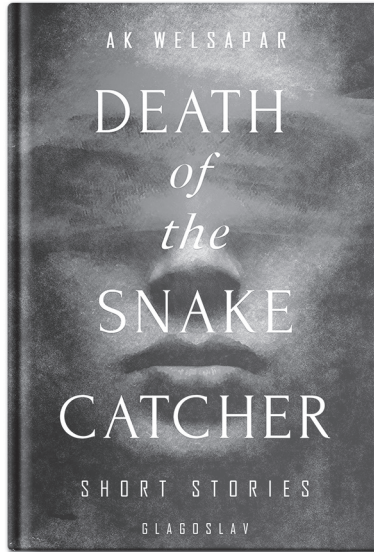


A Brown Man in Russia describes the fantastical travels of a young, colored American traveler as he backpacks across Russia in the middle of winter via the Trans-Siberian. The book is a hybrid between the curmudgeonly travelogues of Paul Theroux and the philosophical works of Robert Pirsig. Styled in the vein of Hofstadter, the author lays out a series of absurd, but true stories followed by a deeper rumination on what they mean and why they matter. Each chapter presents a vivid anecdote from the perspective of the fumbling traveler and concludes with a deeper lesson to be gleaned. For those who recognize the discordant nature of our world in a time ripe for demagoguery and for those who want to make it better, the book is an all too welcome antidote. It explores the current global climate of despair over differences and outputs a very different message – one of hope and shared understanding. At times surreal, at times inappropriate, at times hilarious, and at times deeply human, A Brown Man in Russia is a reminder to those who feel marginalized, hopeless, or endlessly divided that harmony is achievable even in the most unlikely of places.

Buy it > www.glagoslav.com

Death of the Snake Catcher

by Ak Welsapar



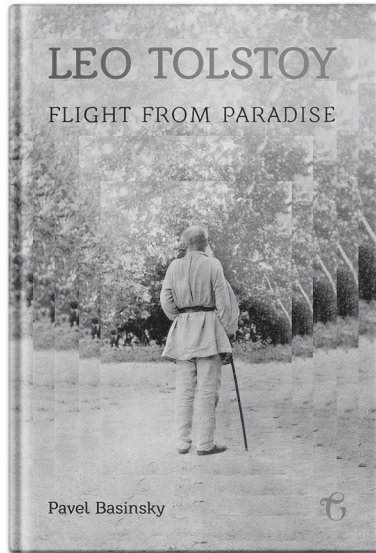
This book features people from one of the most closed countries of today's world, where the passage of time resembles the passage of a caravan through the waterless desert. This world has been recreated by a true-born son of that mysterious country, a Turkmen who, at the will of fate, has now been living for a quarter of a century in snowy Scandinavia. Is that not why two different worlds come together in *Ryazan horseradish and Tula gingerbread*, to come apart in *Love in Lilac*, in which a student from the non-free world falls in love with a girl from the West?

In the story *Death of the Snake Catcher*, an old snake catcher meets one on one with a giant cobra in the heart of the desert. In the dialogue between them the author unveils the age-old interdependence of Man and untamed nature, where the fear and mistrust of the strong and the hopes and apprehensions of the weak change places but co-exist as ever. *Egyptian night of fear*, in which a boy goes to an Eastern bazaar and falls into the clutches of depraved forces, is created in the writer's characteristic style of magical realism, while the novella *Altynai* celebrates first love, radiant and sad, pure as virgin snow.

Buy it > www.glagoslav.com

Leo Tolstoy – Flight from Paradise

by Pavel Basinsky



Over a hundred years ago, something truly outrageous occurred at Yasnaya Polyana. Count Leo Tolstoy, a famous author aged eighty-two at the time, took off, destination unknown. Since then, the circumstances surrounding the writer's whereabouts during his final days and his eventual death have given rise to many myths and legends. In this book, popular Russian writer and reporter Pavel Basinsky delves into the archives and presents his interpretation of the situation prior to Leo Tolstoy's mysterious disappearance. Basinsky follows Leo Tolstoy throughout his life, right up to his final moments. Reconstructing the story from historical documents, he creates a visionary account of the events that led to the Tolstoy's family drama.

Flight from Paradise will be of particular interest to international researchers studying Leo Tolstoy's life and works, and is highly 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

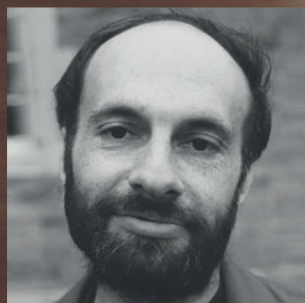
- *The Time of Women* by Elena Chizhova
- *Andrei Tarkovsky: The Collector of Dreams* by Layla Alexander-Garrett
- *Andrei Tarkovsky - A Life on the Cross* by Lyudmila Boyadzhieva
- *Sin* by Zakhar Prilepin
- *Hardly Ever Otherwise* by Maria Matios
- *Khatyn* by Ales Adamovich
- *The Lost Button* by 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
- *Soghomon Tehlirian Memories - The Assassination of Talaat*
- *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*
- *Nikolai Gumilev's Africa*
- *Zinnober's Poppets* by Elena Chizhova
- *The Hemingway Game* by Evgeni Grishkovets
- *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 WelsaparRichard Govett
- *Hard Times* by Ostap Vyshnia
- *Duel* by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych
- *Vladimir Lenin - How to Become a Leader* by Vladlen Loginov

More coming soon...

Some time in the 1970s, Konstantin Alpheyeu, a well-known Russian musicologist, finds himself in trouble with the KGB, the Russian secret police, after the death of his girlfriend, for which one of their officers may have been responsible. He has to flee from the city and to go into hiding. He rents an old house located on the bank of a big Russian river, and lives there like a recluse observing nature and working on his new book about Wagner. The house, a part of an old barge, undergoes strange metamorphoses rebuilding itself as a medieval schooner, and Alpheyeu begins to identify himself with the Flying Dutchman. Meanwhile, the police locate his new whereabouts and put him under surveillance. A chain of strange events in the nearby village makes the police officer contact the KGB, and the latter figure out who the new tenant of the old house actually is.



Born in Moscow, **Anatoly Kudryavitsky** is the grandson of an Irishman who was imprisoned in Stalin's GULAG. Educated at the Moscow Medical Academy, he holds a PhD in Biomedical Science. In Russia, he worked as a researcher, as a magazine editor, and as a literary translator. Blacklisted in the Soviet Union until 1988, he was first published openly in 1989.

Kudryavitsky has won many international awards

for his English-language haiku, and is regarded as one of the most prominent European haiku poets. He lives in Co. Dublin, Ireland, and works as the editor of *SurVision*, an international magazine for Neo-Surrealist poetry, and *Shamrock*, an international haiku magazine. He has given readings and spoken at many European literary festivals. His poems and stories have been translated into fourteen languages.

