

18+

Sergey Solovyov

*The Cavalier
Guards
1805. Austerlitz
cold sun*



Sergey Solovyov

**The Cavalier Guards
1805. Austerlitz cold sun**

«Издательские решения»

Solovyov S.

The Cavalier Guards 1805. Austerlitz cold sun / S. Solovyov —
«Издательские решения»,

This novel is written in memory of those distant events that took place in 1805, two hundred and twenty years ago. These nobles, the clan aristocracy of that distant Russia, showered from head to toe with privileges, who had no shortage or the slightest need, considered it their duty, their Holy Duty to fight with weapons in their hands, risking their own lives.

© Solovyov S.

© Издательские решения

Содержание

Foreword by the Author	6
Prologue	7
Peterhof	11
Postal station, new acquaintance	11
Naryshkin Manor	15
Opposite the statues of Dioscures	17
Like Castor and Polydevk	19
Visit to the Kurolesov family	21
Cavalier Guard Regiment	24
Here we go	24
Service	29
Horse guard and maids of honor	32
New party for Anna Grigorievna Kurolesva	35
First Watch	36
Duel	43
Lunch at the Kurolesovs. Colonel Kostetsky	48
Squadron on exercise	50
Theater, love and swords	51
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	61

The Cavalier Guards 1805. Austerlitz cold sun

Sergey Solovyov

© Sergey Solovyov, 2026

ISBN 978-5-0070-2424-2

Created with Ridero smart publishing system

“Noblesse oblige”

Foreword by the Author

This novel is written in memory of those distant events that took place in 1805, two hundred and twenty years ago. It would seem that such an old event, and why is it interesting and memorable? For people who are alien to the very concept of the Motherland, the question is quite natural and justified, for others who think and reflect, make decisions with their heads, the topic is important.

Why should ordinary ordinary people remember the deeds of such bygone days, remember these long-gone people and their strange, so to speak, deeds unnecessary to them personally?

That accomplishment of the Life Guards of the Cavalier Guard regiment near Austerlitz is significant in that under his banners he gathered the best people of the then Russian society, aristocrats, rich and famous in the world. These nobles, the clan aristocracy of that distant Russia, showered from head to toe with privileges, who had no shortage or the slightest need, considered it their duty, their Holy Duty to fight with weapons in their hands, risking their own lives. These people led the soldiers into battle, they were not sent to die, like the highest lower ones. They fought themselves and died, saving their comrades in terrible battles.

That, the true elite, who did not hide behind their privileges, but went to fight for their country, and can be considered a real ruling class, the true cream of society. In fact, and not just by passport, they were part of their nation, their people, shared with ordinary people all the dangers of war and suffering.

One culture, autocracy, united the whole society into a single nation with common values. And, many of the best representatives of other countries dreamed of becoming part of that state, Imperial Russia. Dozens of aristocrats who fled from the French guillotine joined the service class and, with weapons in their hands, confirmed loyalty to their new homeland. The princes de Broglie, counts of Saint-Prix, counts de Stael, fought in the ranks of the Russian Army.

In those days, the elite of Russia, despite the colossal social abyss, considered it an honor for themselves, together with ordinary people, to fight and die shoulder to shoulder, as a whole. Only when the elite of today's Russia is able to approach the officers of the guard of that distant time not with revelry, but with courage in war and honor, then everything in the country will fall into place, calm down and go in a way. The elite of Russia should stop feeling something separate from the country and the people. Only then will they cease to comprehend the unfortunate Russia behind the misfortune, we are from the so-called "multinational" people and a real united nation will appear. History is always an example for awareness and understanding of the present.

Prologue

Alexey mercilessly drove his black stallion along the alley. The wind blew his blond curls, fluttered the gates of a fashionable apache shirt, with a wide free throat. The youth skillfully kept in a high saddle, holding back the fierce burrow of his favorite. And he mowed everything down on the owner with his bright eyes, as if he had warned:

“Here, look at you... Don’t forget..”

Alexey habitually expected some kind of trick, and only held on more tightly. But no, his stallion only slightly led the croup, but pulled with a powerful neck. Such, they had a game. However, his father reminded him more than once or twice:

“You, here is the elder, and Andryushka should set an example. Whatever was beaten by inexperience. Horse, he is much stronger than you, and more weight. There are thirty pounds in your Coal, and five and a little in you. And, you have to be a rider, not just a rider. That is, you should immediately be able to humble any horse. Do not break his will, but show that it is more important...

“Father,” he objected then, “he is my friend... The corner is so smart and unlucky...”

“Not stupid, but all one stallion... And strong, burly. And, I must understand that the main thing is you, son. It is clear that whoever is smarter and smarter, since you feed him, and not he you.”

And father, Mikhail Alekseevich, very friendly, and patronizing, patted him on the shoulder. Father, lieutenant colonel of the Sumy hussar regiment, knew how to show everyone that he was in charge here. And, not only domestic, but also peasants, and even the manager, Gerasim Phillippovich. Mikhail Alekseevich Burlin tenaciously conducted business in his vast estates, in the vicinity of Ryazan. I understood how to plow and sow, and really store the harvested crop. And, he himself delivered wheat to Moscow, on his own barges, along the wide Oka River. And, in the Mother See they had a manor, with a large house made of aged oak logs, and then covered with plaster, so that it looked like stone. Rich, two floors, in a beautiful place, not far from Yauza. Nearby stood the estates of the Golitsyns and Vorontsovs.

So Alexey was distracted by his thoughts, and almost got a linden branch in the face. But, he just ducked, laughed at that. I was not lost, especially since I was in a good, elated mood. He imagined that he, as if from a three-saber saber, dodged, or, rather, from a Prussian broadsword!

— What I can do, “he whispered to himself.

Then he turned from the alley, their park, and drove further, to the planted lindens, to a small outbuilding. Here he dismounted deftly, as his father had taught him. He pulled his left leg out of the stirrup, bent at the knee, and holding on to the bow of the saddle, deftly glided to the ground. And, at the same time, he did not let go of the occasion from his left hand. The corner twisted his neck with displeasure, snorted. The young man stroked the horse’s proud neck, feeling with his palm the smoothness of his favorite’s short fur.

— Come, do not be stubborn, — Alexey calmly and confidently said, — that’s the connivance. And then they are waiting for me.

The stallion only snorted, but shook his tail proudly raised. He calmly stepped over with his hooves until the rider brought him to the iron rings near the wall. Here Sooty poked his face into the owner’s shoulder, as if recalling an important thing.

— What, take it, — and Alexey from the bag thrown over his shoulder, scooped up a handful of rye crumbs generously sprinkled with salt, — I’m sorry, I almost forgot.

The horse, calmly and gullibly grabbed the treat from his hand, while the essence was restlessly spinning his ears, as if he had heard or sensed someone. He looked to the side, but pushed the owner with his face, come on, they are waiting. The young man tied the horse’s reason to an iron ring, and walked along a wall made of rough gray stone.

He turned the corner and smiled. How it was to restrain! She stood and expected, right, it was him, a beautiful girl, in an elegant peasant outfit. Eagerly tugging at the edge of a headscarf tied around her head. And noticing the young man, she smiled happily, came closer, hugged and kissed impetuously.

— I'm glad that I came, — she quietly said such simple, but very pleasant words.

“I couldn't help but come, Martha. he answered, stroking her shoulder.

“That's all good. Don't worry.

Then he himself kissed the girl, and she took his hand, and took him to the house, where it smelled so amazing fresh hay...

— Barin, master!

Finally, Alexei heard the persistent voice of his servant, Fedor. But, of course, I could not answer yet, I just turned over on my back, pulled the blanket to my chin and portrayed a suffering face. Something similar, to the statue of Hercules, standing in his father's office. But, loud words still managed to snatch him out of the sweet puts of Morpheus. Well. not quite, the young man was all inspecting the dream, where again with him was his beloved Martha, and he, everything was in captivity of her embrace. It seemed that even now I felt her lips, delicate skin... Stretched, and carefully opened swollen eyes. Well, of course, instead of girlish charms, he had the bearded face of a servant in front of him. The young man just sighed heavily.

— And what, Fedor? What happened? he said with difficulty.

— So father, Mikhail Alekseevich, you are expected. They demand to themselves until Olga Andreevna, your mother, woke up. They grind very much. It would be better for you to talk to the priest.

Alexey instantly became serious, sat down on the edge of the mattress, and with his left hand simply crumpled the blanket.

— Okay, Fedor. Let's get dressed... — the young man said quietly.

— Excuse me, so the master said that let it go as it is, there is nothing to say, he is more shy...

— Give Fedor a robe, and silk slippers. Okay, I'm going...

Alexey was not going to argue with the priest when he was not in the spirit. More expensive for yourself. Therefore, as he was, in the underworld, he dressed a robe, and his favorite velvet cap with a brush. The robe was extremely good, too, made of burgundy velvet, with a belt decorated with gold brushes. The cap was slightly darker in tone than the robe, but also soft, and the head did not itch under it. Yes, to be honest, such a look was very in the heart of a young man. I hoped that he was becoming so similar to Turkish pasha and bey, preparing to plunge into the abyss of pleasure.

In the meantime, Fedor bowed the door, and bowed again. Alexei Mikhailovich appreciated such an appeal, shook his head a little in response, and thoughtfully laid his hands behind his back. As hoped, it looked very impressive, from the outside. True, here he was distracted.

— Mama, Mama! Alexey in a dressing gown walks around the house! ‘the cry of the younger sister, Marie, rang out.

— Accurate! — agreed the eldest, Natalie, — Alexis is walking here again!

And then these girls did not give him rest. He walked calmly, on business, and again...

— Fyodor, let's go faster! And then they won't give peace! Alexey snapped.

He almost ran, deftly disappeared around the corner of the corridor, showed his tongue to his older sister, and made the horns of the younger, putting a fist with bent fingers to his forehead.

Marie, delighted with such a joke, laughed, and Natalie, who had long played as an adult girl at the age of fifteen, shook her head with condemnation when she saw such a mess.

— Mama, Alexis!!! Marie shouted again.

With a creak, the door opened, and the hostess, dlma, left her bedroom. Her devoted servant, grandmother Natalya, also seeded behind her. As always, with a light cat in his left hand. Then Alexey

quickly disappeared, ran up the stairs, clutching the oak railings with his left hand. On steep steps I almost fell, stumbling, but in time I picked up a slipper off my slipper foot. I just gasped in pain, tightening my thumb, and grimacing, I seeded further and higher.

Finally, he went up to the saving door of his father's office. He knocked as he should, and heard a stern:

— Come in and lock the door.

Actually, the father's office was located in such a turret, towering above the building. What to do, retired colonel, Mikhail Alekseevich Burlin was inspired by Italian architecture. True, he loved the country of Dante and Raphael purely from engravings and paintings, hung in abundance on the walls of his estate. Well, Burlin's character was strict and norovist, even at home he started regimental orders. The door is closed for a key, which means that the owner needs privacy, and does not want to see anyone. Even his wife, Olga Andreevna, so beloved by them, did not dare to question his decisions.

And, looking at the face of this gentleman, a person unfamiliar with the house, I would think that this retired officer and zealous landowner, just a kind and sympathetic nobleman, hospitable and tarovaty. His right face, decorated with curly light hair, small, well-groomed sideburns, allowed him to think so. It could not be said that he is beautiful, rather, very attractive, built and mobile. The ladies adored him, and rarely could he sit down for a while at the balls given in the Noble Assembly of their provincial city, in quiet Ryazan.

However, those who did business with this landowner learned the tight business grip of Mikhail Alekseevich. He stubbornly and steadily grew rich, competently investing money from the sale of wheat in government bonds. And felting and cloth workshops provided a good income.

— Ah, Alexey, — said the father, raising his eyes from the papers, — sit down...

The young man noticed that the priest noticed his outfit, and it seems that this amused him. At least he wasn't frowning anymore. I just took the folder out of the old Italian table, my pride, and pushed it to my son.

— All Alexey, tomorrow you are leaving for St. Petersburg. On your own brick, with Fedor. With him you will not disappear, he is a practical servant, faithful and sensible.

— And for what father?

— Enough here on forests to ride, the devil knows what to do. You see, I got nervous, I even folded stupid rhymes. If you enter the Cavalier Guard regiment, I have already sent a letter to Count Uvarov, you will be accepted. A noble junker will come out of you. Yes, and you grew up, Alexey, it's time to serve your sovereign, as every nobleman should.

— But I would like to...

— You should forget about those meetings with Martha, friend... It went too far, in your "innocent" dates, and the girl, as they say, suffered... She is already going to the estate near Saratov, under the supervision of the manager, Gavriylch. Here, look, my letter to Tsar Alexander Pavlovich, where I wrote with my own hand that I humbly ask you to grant the nobility to My bastard...

— But... — Alexey jumped up and tried to say something, object.

The father, with force, forced him to sit down, firmly clutching his son's shoulders. The head of the family's face darkened with anger, the young man had never seen him like that before.

— What greatness in speeches... Even in our nineteenth century, your zeal is a little excessive. Neighbors will not understand that you got a peasant son or daughter at sixteen... And about mother, sisters and brother, Dmitry, think...

— And you? Father?

— I have already earned a slap from my wife, and attributed it to the fact that I did not strictly look after you, my son...

And Mikhail Alekseevich got up from the table, slowly approached his son, brought his hand, as if he wanted to hang him a slap on the head. But then, his fingers almost gently battered the bright curls of his offspring. The same one just grinned back.

— Can't Martha be left here? the youth asked.

— Drink, I don't want to say bad things about your lover, but she knew what she was going for and what she herself wants to get. Now, in Svetlovka, he will bring up your... my, that is, child. It will no longer be a serf. Something like this...

— And if... — Alexey began the phrase uncertainly.

Yes, Father, frowned, slammed his fist on the table, and in a different tone continued:

— Not yet... Do you want to repeat the feat of his ladyship Sheremetyev with Praskovya Zhemchugova? I, you know, not so rich as to arrange everything. And even then... Nothing good came of it.

Actually, this novel became a parable in the pagans, and the difficult fate of this couple was known to everyone. None of the noble families wanted to communicate more with such an eccentric count. He crossed all the boundaries of what is permitted.

— There is a solution, of course... — the father of the family broadcast, — to Siberia to go with his wife-simpleton, do you want, for good? The sovereign needs brave men, somewhere in Orenburg. There, among the Cossacks, you will live, but make good money...

Alexei here from the words of his father already jerked. In such a wilderness, right now, he resolutely did not want to go. It is better to suffer in the Cavaliers...

— Well, did you think about everything? — and Mikhail Alekseevich carefully looked at his son, — However, you will receive no more than three thousand a year for living. Quite a sufficient amount. Fedor will lead the house. This is the outbuilding of the possessions of the Naryshkins, our distant relatives. I sent the indicated amounts. True, while you will live in the regiment, but this is theiein's benefit, you will gain discipline.

In general, there was nowhere to go. I had to part with a free life, go to the royal service. To be honest, I did not want to leave my favorite estate.

— You're going right now, don't hesitate. In Moscow, for more than three days, do not stay. You have nothing to sit out there. Fedor is already collecting your suitcases, and the brick is ready. Go, kiss your mother and sisters, say goodbye to your brother, and, on the way, on the way...

Peterhof

Postal station, new acquaintance

— Fyodor, what is there?

He said so, with a ribbon in his voice, Alexey, and stretched out, tried his legs. He felt that he had reduced his calves, hastily bent his knees. I looked out the window, but I didn't notice anything new except trees and free-growing bushes.

— Yes, the master is going... Everything is fine. Okay, everything turned out that they drove into the forge. Horseshoes for horses were changed for us, and tires on wheels were already good iron. Kuzmich conscientiously did everything. On such a brick, you can get to Irkutsk, do not hesitate!

— Well, no, Fedor. I don't need to go to Siberia. Is the postal station still a long way away?

— Not too far away. So, five miles, no more. But this is the last station before St. Petersburg. And there, the outpost will be.

“You can get a fresh shirt for me out of my suitcase at the station. And how to introduce yourself to relatives in the capital? Indecent, — Alexey recalled.

— I will do everything in the best possible way, master... Do not hesitate, Alexey Mikhailovich!

The young man strictly sighed for order, and slowly treated himself to a couple of pies from a small tusk. The food was bought from a merchant at the last post station. Alexey ate delicately and then wiped his fingers on a linen napkin. Here, out of hellish boredom, he took out a book, opened it, and began to read from the bookmark, these “Suffering of poor Werther.” A curious, even more likely, fashionable book.

He started, to be honest, this novel, on the advice of his sister, Natalie. She talked about this work, only with aspiration, and rolling her eyes, it looked, to be honest, fun, and Alexei bought himself one. And at the same time, from the second-hand bookseller, he also acquired “White Lisa,” a fashionable writer Karamzin. I read that book on the road, tried several times to throw it away along the way, but it became a pity. Nevertheless, this story was very similar to his love adventure with Martha. And, in Moscow, Alexei visited those places in Moscow described in the novel. Simonov Monastery, “Lysine Pond.” He read the verses inscribed on the boards next to that backwater:

“In the jets of these poor Lisa died her days,

If you are sensitive, passer-by, at least sigh!”

“Here the bride rushed into the pond of Erastov,

Drown the girls: there is enough space in the pond!”

Yes, the last poem made you remember his Martha. Yes, the girl did not know how to read, fortunately. So, Alexey calmed down a little later. And then, under the supervision was his beloved, in a distant village. Daddy, he did not like to joke, and everyone was afraid of sticks. Mikhail Alekseevich was cool, and quick to reprisal.

In the meantime, Goethe's lines captured him. And, it became much more fun to go, especially after eaten pies.

But now, they drove into the gates of a large stone estate, which stood almost like a knight's castle, behind an extensive fence. The two-story, massive stone building inspired respect, like the coat of arms, a two-headed eagle on the facade. Nevertheless, the post office was one of the symbols of the steadfastness of the foundations of the Empire. And, this department, fully corresponded to its purpose.

Alexey was cautiously dismounted here, not wanting to get new boots in the manure. They were dragged for the young master by the best shoemaker of the estate, Maxim, according to Parisian color

lithographs. I really liked the work of the barchuk then, and Alexey, being upset, personally awarded the master with a silver ruble.

Nevertheless, he was dressed in a road, in a gray coat, the same color of pantaloons, of course, with a tie and an indispensable soft hat. But, for St. Petersburg at the ready was an arc outfit, the most fashionable, dark blue.

And the coachman, and the servant, Fedor, taking horses under the bridle, led the team to the stable. There, judging by the cry, he immediately entered into a fierce dispute with the groom. But, due to his complexion, his arguments, as you can see, seemed to the postal employee quite reasonable. And, without obstacles, he brought the master horses inside. Then, this faithful “Sancho Panza” returned, rubbing his hands with hay. On the way, he deftly dodged two chickens running, no, just flying towards.

— Like, master... And here, funny, — said Fedor, — and there are chickens..

— Tree, Le Haueme... — Alexey did not fail to shine French, — a wild place.

— Yes, the chicken pecks at the grain, and the whole yard is in manure... the servant continued in an edifying tone.

The young man just grinned. There was such a drawback for Fedorm, he probably knew all the proverbs and sayings, and used them to the place and without a place, if necessary and without such. It came out sometimes, quite funny. The servant knew how to cheer up.

But then, a married couple walked past him, judging by the clothes, and the presence of a servant and a maid who were walking behind, also a noble estate. The young man did not fail to say hello. And then, one should get used to behaving decently in society. In a new fashion, he touched his fingers on his hat, and depicted a slight bow. The head of the family greeted in response, his wife did not seem to notice the young man. But their daughter smiled kindly at Alexei.

Short in stature, but with piercingly blue eyes, full lips, a charming face, the essence decorated with a slight blush, the young lady seemed beautiful. All boredom disappeared from the young traveler at once, on the contrary, his mood improved indescribably. The young barchuk felt even cheerfulness.

— Fedor, is there a place to eat? Alexey asked, seeing off the good girl.

— And then... There is a tavern at the station. As with all stations, you can have a tasteful bite. Here, the master, I have been in places where they will treat you with salt instead of cabbage soup...

Burlin even went crazy that he asked Fedor about the kitchen. But, he gained patience, counted to himself to twenty, and only then said:

— What a family, find out. But, wisely...

So with the meaning of Alexey, and everything played with his cane. True, with annoyance I thought, why was it not with a sword? But, then I decided that such a look would make him fatuous. But, in an invisible and simple cane, there was also its own secret — a strong steel blade two inches long.

— So of course, master. Don't hesitate.

Fedor, out of habit, was calm. His servant was smart and filling.

And Alexey deigned to enter the tavern. The establishment was, in appearance, quite clean and decent. In the corner stood a large copper samovar flowing with steam, tables for a noble audience were located at the windows. Well, at the exit, there were simpler places for people.

— Would you like to dine, your nobility? — immediately asked the sex approached, — you can treat yourself to steam beef with horseradish, our cabbage soup is very good.

— Well, perhaps... And, feed my coachman, — and Alexey nodded in the direction of Fedor, — Cabbage soup, porridge, jelly.

— Untimely... Now, I will bring everything. Do not be worried.

The young man settled down at a free table, and below, an almost familiar family was already eating lunch. But, it would be completely indecent to stare, and Alexey was hardly distracted, and found a new object to observe. The janitor set to work, and began to sweep away the straw and

garbage, putting things in order. And then he pleased the floor, unloaded plates and spoons with forks from the tray. Alexey tried this carefully, but in vain he was worried. The chef of the tavern knew his business well, and the first dish was simply great. Stewed beef with mustard turned out to be a little harsh, but otherwise it tastes very good. Bread was all the more good. From sifted flour, without lumps, soft and fragrant. Well, the berry visar completed this splendor.

Here, having paid, Alexey went out into the yard. After that, not at all a spacious room, so saturated with the rich aromas of the dishes of the local culinary specialist, it breathed a little easier. Then the young man calmly sat down on a very comfortable bench. Taking up reading again.

Loneliness was not long. So, taking his time, rather even important marching, a nobleman came up, this father of the family. He touched his hat with his hand, and politely said:

— You don't expect anyone?

— No, — and Alexey got up, respecting the age of the interlocutor, -Aleksey Mikhailovich Burlin, nobleman, at your service!

— Grigory Ilyich Kurolesov, nobleman, Yaroslavl province. Let me smoke?

— Of course.

Then Mr. Kurolesov removed a pipe stuffed with tobacco from the voluminous pocket of his gray frock coat, then struck a sickle on a copper box. Skillful movement, and tobacco began to smolder, and a new acquaintance puffed smoke with pleasure, like a boiling samovar. Sometimes, as Alexey noted, Grigory Ilyich looked at him with obvious interest.

— If this is not a romantic secret, don't you tell me, young man, for what purpose are you going to the capital?

— Why the secret, and even romantic? Alexey did not understand.

— You, excuse me, are very young, and you travel alone. For the card did not sit down. With a book, and if I read it correctly, it's "Poor Werther's Suffering." After all, one to one converges. Hopefully. that did not offend you with such a hasty explanation.

— No, of course not. I follow to the regiment. On the road, you need to entertain yourself in order to indulge in melancholy.

Alexey was surprised at his so hasty exposure, but he was not even going to be called up or blamed. And then, he did nothing wrong, so, indulged in passion.

— Ah, here you are, Grigory Ilyich, — the lady intervened in the conversation. — can't you introduce me and my daughter to this un beau homme, such a graceful young man?

The word "graceful" sounded very meaningful in the mouth of this pleasant lady. True, a girl, so beautiful. how mysterious, while she was silent, like Alkestida, torn from captivity by Tanat.

— My wife, Zoya Pavlovna, — said Grigory Ilyich, — and my only daughter, Anna Grigorievna.

— Very happy to meet you. Alexey Mikhailovich Burlin, a nobleman, originally from the Ryazan province. Heading to St. Petersburg for military service.

— And what, everything in Ryazan live? — Zoya Pavlovna asked with an incomprehensible expression in her voice, — however, apples from those places are not bad.

— So why? And in Moscow we have a manor, not far from Yauza. Nearby are the gardens, very beautiful. But, nevertheless, in the village much more fun.

— Well, and we are forced to return to St. Petersburg, — added Grigory Ilyich, strictly looking at his wife, — to the left to the place of service, to the Berg College, under the command of Alexei Ivanovich Korsakov. There are a lot of things to do, we are all trying to find and produce saltpeter for the needs of the military department. Yes, so far, everything is not very good. In Perm, our manufactories produce few potions.

— And that you, father, are all about business... — said Zoya Pavlovna, — let's go, we'd better drink tea...

The bench was still much worse than the usual chair on the veranda of their estate. But, there was nothing to choose from, and Alexey settled down here, with a book in his hand. To be honest, I didn't sleep, I wanted to read a little, under the light of two oil lanterns hanging at the entrance. Still, the day ended quite well. And, full of impressions, while Alexey could not sleep, so I decided to read a little in the fresh air. True, from time to time it was necessary to drive away very annoying mosquitoes with a twig, who wanted to touch not the wisdom of books, but to get drunk on his blood. And their annoying buzzing distracted. The young man again waved his instrument, but immediately got up hastily.

From the door of the tavern came his new acquaintance, the charming daughter of Grigory Ilyich.

— Anna Grigorievna, — and Alexey weighed a light bow, and put his hat on the bench.

— Good evening, Alexey Mikhailovich, — the young lady answered with a gracious voice.

She sat down calmly, with her left hand habitually setting the hem of her dress. Then, she looked at him, and with a gesture of her right hand, gracefully invited her to sit next to her.

— I didn't bother you? Je suis tellement varlee. (I am very different).

— No, very happy. I'm reading here. Vitre enterprise est tout a falt approprite. (your society is very much to the point).

— Oh, — and Anna threw up her hands, — love Werther? How cute! I, you know, have already read this novel several times! And, turning these pages, I see in this book a new one for myself.

— Not bad, though...

— Is love for a married woman withering? and the young lady smiled.

“Rather, it's Werther's own passion. Resembles Pygmalion's attraction to a marble statue. Almost pointless and disastrous for both.

— But, as poets write, dear Alexey, “Not stones of women's hearts...”

— Here, the kindest Anna, Werther could destroy not only himself, but also this woman, his beloved.

Then the young lady looked at her interlocutor with a certain challenge. Not with a grain of anger, or perhaps with a desire to discover or prove something. But, calming down, she said:

— Perhaps this lady herself wished to be destroyed. “Women are killed by indifference... And so, if time happens to you, then we live on Vasilievsky Island, Universitetskaya Embankment, Skipper Channel, 14, seventh building. I will expect you.

Then the spring creaked again, and then the door slammed. A very dissatisfied maid appeared. She bowed, and said sternly:

— So your mother is worried, Anna Grigorievna...

— I'm coming, Xenia. I'm already going... — the young lady answered with annoyance.

Alexey bowed, saying goodbye. Thinking, he handed the book to his new acquaintance.

— As a keepsake. To brighten up your evenings. And for good memory.

— Thanks. How. once to the spot, Alexey. — Anna said with a kind expression, — Let's go, Ksenia, — the young lady said in a very strict tone.

She turned, rustling with a thin canvas of a summer dress, and then, like a soft leaf from a thin branch, a thin scarf fell out of the sleeve of a girl's robe. Alexey hastily picked up this message, not giving a gentle fabric and touch the ground. Anna turned to him, and smiled very sweetly goodbye. It seems that she noticed everything, certainly noticed how Alexey decided. Well, the young man hid this invaluable sign of attention behind the lapel of his frock coat.

Naryshkin Manor

— What, master and good. Our horses took a break, or even bowed. That's how fun they run, — said Fedor, bedbug the reins, — sit down, they, here, are not people, they demand peace and attention. I cleaned them all the way around, wiped them with felt and cloth, Now, just like expensive, you can't take your eyes off, — the servant praised himself.

— Thank you, Fedor...

Alexey barely heard what the servant was saying here. It seems to be important, and therefore praised. And all thoughts were only about Anna Grigorievna. He again pulled out a scarf with the initials of A. G. K. embroidered from the cuff. He felt the delicate floral aroma of perfume, sighed a little sadly.

— To the Naryshkin estate, which is on the Moika, not far away, is a master. And here, and the Moscow outpost... 'the batman explained.

Yes, everything here was performed conscientiously. Stone building, barrier on the road. And, three soldiers with a non-commissioned officer at the head, with a new and well-sewn form of a garrison battalion. Gray such, invisible cloth, and with newfangled black, like pitch, shakos. However, the alignment of the servants was canceled, and, as the young man noticed, all three had served for many years, and did not need hair powder, thanks to their own gray hair.

“With your arrival, your nobility. I ask for your passports, — the non-commissioned officer said politely, holding his protazan in his left hand.

Keever, with a leather visor, sat okay on his head, and the left sleeve of his uniform is all decorated with stripes for his long service.

— From, poilust, — answered the young man, presenting documents.

The servant, habitually examined the papers, expensive, then nodded to his assistants. Those raised the barrier, and Fedor, slamming the reins, sent his agreeable horses forward. Alexey, calmed down, sighed and stretched out his legs. As it seemed to him, the most restless in his journey was already over.

— What, master, now we will turn, and we are in place, — Fedor tried to calm him down.

It cannot be said that there was a slouch on the streets of St. Petersburg, but Alexey did not see so many crews in his entire life in his native village. And here, in addition, tall beautiful stone houses lined up, as if in rank, with free sidewalks nearby. And they seemed to be hugged by well-groomed, straight, as if laid out in a ruler, pavements. The abundance of passers-by, and even persons, judging by the clothes, decent, and possibly the nobility, surprised him. That decent people would walk, which generally seemed strange for a young man.

The wheels simply thundered on the cobblestone pavement, and the knock of savvy hooves, out of habit, deprived of peace. It seemed incredible to exist here, with such constant noise and rumble.

— Fedor, look, so that my room does not look outside. Did you understand?

The young man could not stand the excessive noise. He preferred silence, and not to hear the creak of wheels and the clatter of hooves all night long.

— So of course, the master... We will do everything in the best possible way. With the concept we, we will fulfill everything, do not hesitate...

Here, we reached the place. To be honest, Alexey, not knowing earlier that this is a manor, would have decided that this is a whole town. So extensive was this estate. Even, with a small well-groomed garden.

The visit to the main house did not end quickly, but after, when Alexei handed over the money to the butler, he also received the keys to the new home. And, a couple of parting words, so to speak, free:

— Behave with Syemka and Manka da Tanka... Kukharka, Maria, however, she is sensible and economic, does not fool. And Semyon is an intelligent stoker, and the janitor is good. The cellar, with the wing, is not bad, capacious and cold. It is better to take edible food at the Hay Market. Maria, knows where to buy, at a good price. Don't worry, master... Tatiana will keep the house in order, do not hesitate.

Alexey just nodded his head. And Fedor, standing next to him, a little behind the owner, diligently kept quiet. He knew how to do it very meaningfully and even responsibly. So, to make the right impression on the master.

In general, a whole procession was now moving to the outbuilding, which became the abode of Alexei Mikhailovich Burlin. Fedor and Semyon disappeared, but returned with their master's suitcases and baskets. The lock of the door was solemnly opened, and his servant began to dispose, taking all the trouble. He took up what he especially loved, to find activities for everyone. I didn't like it when someone, of course, except him, sits idle.

— Semen! Put it here, but quickly! Tatyana, this must be washed, and not in the bag! Maria, put a samovar!

To interfere with such an intelligent servant would even be stupid. Alexey calmly went upstairs, along a slightly creaking staircase, to the second, residential floor. He looked around three rooms, while they were as if inanimate, empty. Here, having thrown off his boots, he calmly lay down on a leather sofa in one of them, with windows to the courtyard of the estate. It seemed that only a minute had passed, but he, immediately and imperceptibly for himself, fell asleep.

Opposite the statues of Dioscures

— Barin, the food is ready. Here, pies and tea. Everything is hot, — Tatyana made herself felt, — it's time to have breakfast. Maria has prepared, everything is wonderful!

She lined the table with treats, very seductive in appearance, and the smell was appropriate. Attractive, in general. And the woman herself, too, in the juice itself, is a Russian beauty. Yes, and business and economic, it turned out, straight passion. Alexey looked around this charm with pleasure, with a considerable bust. Simple clothes rather emphasized than concealed the merits of her figure. What is he? So, I thought everything, of course, about the lovely Anna Grigorievna... Even sitting at the table, at pies.

— Aleksey Mikhailovich, here, your clothes are the best. Cleaned everything, but smoothed it out. Frock coat of English wool, pantaloons, freshest shirt, pins. Fancy top hat. Papers required for presentation.

— What are you talking about...

— So today you need to go to the regiment, introduce yourself. And when? I, here, talked with knowledgeable people, with Seraphim, with Ilya. They say that the regiment has now gone to Peterhof, to summer apartments.

— What are you, Fedor!

Alexey shouted it, but jumped up from the table, could hardly resist, so as not to drag the servant by the whiskey.

— All in vain you got nervous, Alexey Mikhailovich! — The servant answered hastily, retreating to the door, — In vain! So they themselves gathered, all the way, as they arrived.

— Okay... — and the young man calmed down.

He straightened his silk robe, pulled the cap over his ears, and sat down at the table. True, here the mood has improved. And then, from such a food, half dead could come to life! Alexey appreciated Maria's culinary talent. The bunny pies seemed simply incomparable in taste, as with cabbage, eggs and onions. Now, after such a breakfast, the day did not seem so gloomy.

— Fedor, shave!

— So, Alexei Mikhailovich, so far there is nothing and no need... Your face, like an angel from an icon, — the servant answered with a sweet expression.

A young man did not argue here, of course, it is more visible from the outside.

— Okay, then put the crew, let's go to the Voskresenskaya embankment. And Semyon is a coachman, and you, with me, are inseparable.

True, Alexey could not resist, and he ate a couple more pies and drank another cup of strong tea. Exclusively, for good spirits, of course.

It was absolutely impossible to say that now, in the summer months, the location of the regiment was lifeless. There are no boarded-up entrances, thundering silence or desolation. Not at all.

At the gate stood a guard of prominent soldiers in white uniforms, helmets with ridges, with carbines. The sight of these warriors inspired confidence in the impressionable Alexei Mikhailovich. And he, without a doubt, approached the mustachioed unter, and, as it seemed to him, he said firmly:

— Aleksey Mikhailovich Burlin, arrived at the place of drilling service. I have a letter of recommendation to Count Uvarov.

— Good morning, — the serviceman answered him with a certain doubt in his voice, — so the regiment is in summer apartments, only a reserve squadron is on duty here, Lieutenant Colonel Replin is still the senior here. I can lead to his ladyship, if you wish.

— I must. And you, Fedor, will stay here with things. Do not take your eyes off good

— With the whole concept, master, — the servant immediately agreed.

Today, Semyon was with the master's wagon. So the faithful paladin, baptized in the name of Theodore Stratilates, remained at the gate, which was not too saddened.

And Alexei Mikhailovich, now light, walked with a vigorous and gentle step, looking closely at the strict gait of the brave unter. I tried, of course, to go like this servant. The unter's step was light, as if he touched only the socks of his boots with a cobblestone pavement. On the parade ground, it was also crowded. Three unters trained soldiers to walk in the leg. Carefully looked that each of the ordinary performed this lesson. Well, the gentlemen of the officers were not visible.

So we got to the headquarters. His guide here saluted the sentry who stood at the entrance. The same one, with a carbine at his foot, remained immovable, like a marble statue. Then the non-commissioned officer knocked on one of the white-painted doors, and waited for an answer:

— Enter.

To be honest, Burlin already thought that the head of the squadron himself said this, no, in the presence, at a table lined with green cloth, he sat behind papers gray as a harrier, wahmister. Slowly filled out notebooks, checking with entries in other papers. What should I do? And here the prose of life did not give concessions!

— Zinovy Evseevich, this young man to his excellency, Prince Repnin.

— Thank you, Boris Arkadyevich. I will report in person.

Unter turned, and rattling the savvy heels of his boots, left the room. And the wahmister rose, sighing for the raft, and, waddling like a goose on the field, opened another door.

— Your ladyship... To you, — this clerk in uniform said inquisitively, with respect in his voice.

— The pass passes, Evseich.

And, without waiting for other words, the young man, with a shock briefcase in his hands, just flew into the office.

Here, at the oak table, sat a prominent lieutenant colonel, in a beautifully sewn white uniform, with orders.

— Aleksey Mikhailovich Burlin, arrived in the regiment. I would like to be determined by the cadet, your ladyship! said the young man quickly.

— So, I see that well done...

— Toot and paper. About training, and from the Noble Assembly of our province, and from his father...

— So you are the son of Mikhail Alekseevich? — Repnin answered calmly, warming his voice, — so, so... I remember a good officer, sensible... And now, then, he manages? Is the family big?

— I, the eldest, two sisters, Maria and Natalia, and the younger brother, Dmitry.

— I will definitely unsubscribe to Mikhail Alekseevich.. And the letter from Count Uvarov about your appointment is here, and the resolution of the sovereign, to accept for service in the regiment. It remains only for you to sew a uniform, to acquire a horse befitting our regiment, and a batman of good behavior.

— Actually, I have a servant, your ladyship...

— Nado to accept him for service, non-combatant. Let's put it on the lists, and all for a short time. Order is order, you understand. In a week, I suppose, deal with everything. Here are your papers — and the regimental colonel handed over the package, -You, cadet, go to the headquarters before leaving, get letters for the regiment officers. That's it, I'm not detaining you anymore!

Alexei, in high spirits, was returning to the gate, where a faithful servant was waiting for him. Now Burlin imagined how well Fedor would look in a cavalry guard uniform!

Like Castor and Polydevk

But, leaving the office, he almost ran into a thin young man, in addition, in the form of a cavalier. This young junker deftly dodged Burlin's shoulder, and looked quizzically back.

“Do you think you're offended?” Alexey asked with a defiant tone in his voice.

— In general... the junker answered with a grin.

— Do you want on pistols, or on swords?

— There is a more interesting way, young man!

— If you please, I am also accepted into the regiment as a cadet! From today!

— There is more. Alexander Ivanovich Albrecht, cadet of the cavalry guard regiment!

— Aleksey Mikhailovich Burlin, now also a cadet, — the young man answered confidently.

“If you don't mind, we'll go to the indoor Manege,” Albrecht explained.

— Do you want to fight there?

— Have you seen the patrons of our regiment? Albrecht did not quite answer.

— I'm sorry... — Burlin did not understand the question at all.

He did not consider himself stupid, but until he was strong in such subtleties. His new acquaintance was painfully subtly leading the thread of conversation..

— Not heavenly, but so to speak, almost earthly... Stauete Disoskur at the entrance, So Castor and Pollux humble horses. And, if you sit on a cool stallion, then I will assume that the misunderstanding between us has been settled.

— More than fair.

Alexey agreed, although he understood what a difficult task he might face. This junker could laugh at him cruelly, and he could be seriously injured. Strong skate — if not an opponent, then the test is for sure, and not easy. Not everyone could pass it. Yes, I did not want to retreat.

— From here, we are here, — explained Albrecht, pointing with his hand to a long, but rather elongated stone building under a gable roof and high windows, — This is the Manege of our regiment, where equestrian classes are held in winter, or even in summer. Come through?

Burlin only nodded back and frowned. But, thinking, I decided to surrender to chance. They were inside, the floor of the room was sprinkled with the purest, yellow sand. Two soldiers in gray working uniforms held a powerful horse of bay suit under the bridle. And the walmister approached Albrecht, saluted, and reported:

— All ready, your nobility. If you wish, we can start.

— Thank you, Trufan Mokic. Only instead of me Alexey Mikhailovich volunteered. I decided, having entered the regiment, to show the distance in front of us. You won't interfere, will you?

— What? — and the walmister frowned and fell silent.

— So he's also a regiment junker, don't worry. If anything, you say that I am to blame. Insisted, they say. Don't doubt it, you know, my father is influential, he will stand up.

— Right... You, here, your nobility, will see for yourself... — the walmister turned to Alexei, — Not yet circled, it happens, and a little mischievous. And so, the horse is kind.. Does not bite, so Yegor, you see says... But, and throw off maybe, if not for his...

— Nothing walmister, I will manage, — Burlin firmly uttered these words, and quickly approached the horse.

I felt a little sorry for my elegant pantaloons, but, leaning on the bow of the saddle, I brought my maiden leg into the stirrup, and threw my right leg, sitting down at once. Walmister threw him reins. But the soldiers kept the hot stallion snoring now. Led by his step, and prudently. However, the horse, as you can see, did not want to offend his defenders, those who feed him and take care of him

— Remove the frames! Burlin abruptly ordered.

The soldiers looked at each other, but did not talk, and quickly completed the order. The belts fell on the sand, and the horse walked proudly, raising its sheared tail high. Alexey gave a little forward, hitting the sides with the heels of his boots. The stallion bent his neck, rustled, abruptly threw up croup, but the rider is used to this. Easily kept in the saddle. Horse, moved to a gallop, famously passing along the contour of the Manege. Burlin has so far given free rein to the stallion, only supported the bridle. A lot of time passed until the horse ran out of steam and sweated. Then, Alexey, pulling up the reason, made the horse take a step, and then stop. Then the young man dismounted, and holding the stallion about, led him to the soldiers.

“Yes, really good,” Burlin said, looking at Albrecht.

— Yes, and you, Alexey Mikhailovich, a real doshadnik, — answered a new acquaintance, — We held on, just fine. I propose to switch to “you.” Melchior, in fact, is very cool in temper.

Burlin grinned, looked with regret at his pantaloons, now covered with horse sweat. But it seems that it was worth it, and calmly said:

— So we won’t shoot, Alexander?

— I think that misunderstanding between us is exhausted, Alexey.

And Albrecht gave him his hand. Burlin shook her with pleasure, accepting the rules of friendship.

Visit to the Kurolesov family

— What are you, Fedor, unhappy? That's what a palm uniform you sewed? — Alexey laughed, sitting in a two-wheeled hat, — the buttons glisten!

— So for what, your nobility? And now I am at the service.

— So now, moreover, you, Fedor and got a decent surname, are listed in our regiment, like Fedor Ivanovich Alekseev.

— This is young for you, the main thing is that the view is fair and cool. In order to instill respect in respectable people, and love experiences for girls of a noble title. Why do I need it? I, after all, at a respectable age, and became completely indifferent to the fair sex.

The batman finished this detailed speech, and meaningfully corrected his forage cap. Say, he sacrificed everything for the master, even peace of mind.

Alexey said nothing but rubbed his chin. Actually, Fedor was not entirely indifferent to female charms. Burlin noticed how his servant visited Maria's cook last night. But he considered it wrong to interfere in these amorous pleasures. He himself was sinful, and could not engage in moralizing with a pure soul. Therefore, he just rolled over onto the other side, and fell asleep calmly.

Well, and even more so, Fedor showed some agility, collecting a present for the Kurolesov family. A couple of bottles of wine, citrons, even cakes. Shawls for Zoya Pavlovna and Anna Grigorievna, and a smoking pipe in a case for Grigory Ilyich. Alexey Mikhailovich considered it indecent to appear empty-handed. And then, a pleasant impression should have been made, and this was not always an easy matter. As a young junker, he knew firmly from someone else's experience, in the absence of his own.

In the meantime, the crew drove along the Trinity Bridge. It was hard to get used to these perfectly straight streets here in St. Petersburg, in this beautiful city on the Neva. And here, on Vasilievsky Island, there were not even streets, and there were only lines, everything, as commanded by Peter the Great himself.

— Fyodor, did you forget the address? — Alexey was worried, — Universitetskaya embankment, Skipper channel, 14, seventh building, — he recalled.

— As you forget, your nobility. This is not the first time you remind...

— Make it easy...

— You ask yourself, then keep quiet, — the denman grumbled displeased under his breath.

Alexey was in too good a mood to pay attention to the dissatisfied murmur of the servant. With great pleasure he touched the hilt of his new sword.

The house seemed slightly gray and dull, standing not far from the water. They drove into the courtyard, where Fedor stopped the crew. A janitor approached them, removing his hat on the move and bowing.

— I'll pay a visit to Kurolesov. Junker of the Cavalier Guard regiment Alexei Mikhailovich Burlin, — the young man introduced himself with pleasure.

— So to you on the third floor, your nobility, apartment, on the right. There is a sign on the door.

— Clear, — noticed junker.

He fished a patch out of the veneer, and put it in the janitor's hand. He bowed again, with great pleasure.

— You, dear, look after the crew for now. Fedor will come soon, — explained Burlin.

— So I will perform everything in the best way, do not hesitate.

Alexey nodded, and the batman picked up the convolutions, and hastily followed the master. The stairs of the front entrance went up to the third floor, where two doors were siren, one opposite the other. Juncker glanced at one brass plaque, then another. Yes, and on the one on the right, an exquisite

knit inscription is engraved: “State Councilor Kurolesov, Grigory Ilyich.” Here Alexey immediately, without hesitation, rang the bell at the door. The hand jerked itself, read, against his will.

And opened, already familiar to him servant Ksenia. So right and froze on the doorstep, as if she was crazy, seeing such a guest.

— Fodor, what are you doing? — quietly said the junker, — bring gifts!

— Zoya Pavlovna! Grigory Ilyich! A young man came to us! — Ksenia let the owners of the apartment know a little hectic.

Mr. Kurolesov himself came out to meet, in a home outfit, with a soft frock coat of light gray color.

— Day is kind, young man... Although, already in the imperial service, — he added, noticing the guest’s uniform, — you, Alexei Mikhailovich, this suits you. Come into the living room.

Burlin followed the owner, removing the harness with a sword on the move. Still, at home, it would be indecent.

— Here, put, — noted the excitement of the guest Kurolesov, — sit down. Glad you came. And ladies, come now. Let’s start drinking tea.

They sat down on a sofa lined with old, blue silk, French work. In the middle of the room there is a table covered with a tablecloth, six chairs. In the same place, adding adventure, there was a tray with a decanter, and half a dozen elongated glasses of Murano glass. An old cabinet full of elegant dishes humped against the wall. On the walls painted in olive color hung paintings, with landscapes of places unknown to Burlin, and in the middle, making the situation more strict, was a portrait of their young emperor, Alexander Pavlovich. The two windows of this room gave quite a light, so that for beauty and convenience they were hidden by the Iranian curtains. In general, the atmosphere was not luxurious, but not poor, but rather pleasant, comfortable and cozy.

— Maybe a little wine, Alexey Mikhailovich? Kurolesov suggested.

— I will not refuse.

— Tokayskoe, — explained the owner of the house, filling glasses, — I, you know, appreciate it more. Pleasant, especially if in summer. What do you like more?

— So you understand, more milk, or berry vozvar. Due to his age, — the guest answered with a smile, — however, the taste is pleasant, — he noticed, taking a sip from his glass.

Here, Alexey hastily jumped up, greeting the ladies who entered. Having set aside the wine, he kissed the hand of Zoe Pavlovna, and then, with joy, touched Anna Grigorievna’s cold fingers. I noticed the truth, like a young lady, with undoubted approval in her eyes, looked around his uniform.

— To us, Alexey Mikhailovich granted. Also, came to St. Petersburg. Now, in the sovereign service, decent to his position, — Kurolesov said a little flowery.

“We’ll drink tea now,” added Zoya Pavlovna, “we are glad to see you, Alexey Mikhailovich.” Here, and you try pies, they are glorious with us.

— I allowed myself to come with gifts. Everything, from a pure heart, and Burlin showed on a shawl and a pipe in a case.

— Nice, and to the face, — said Zoya Pavlovna, throwing her shawl over her shoulders, and decorating Anna Arkadyevna with a similar board, — and here, the samovar ripened...

The face of any decent house, of course, was a tea set. It was so accepted. The guests looked at the wealth of the house in such subjects.

For example, Burlin remembered that mom and dad loved French porcelain, and here strict devices of the St. Petersburg Imperial Plant were in use. But, the young man was more pleasant was the society of Anna Grigorievna, who was sitting opposite him. The girl occasionally looked at the prigozhny junker.

The treat was wonderful, Alexey tried everything, so, little by little. And Anna, sat down at the harpsichord, and began to play a pleasant melody. Grigory Ilyich stood in a chair, and lit his pipe, with a dinny, almost an inch, chubuk.

Zoya Pavlovna quietly approached Burlin, put her hand on the back of his chair, and barely audibly asked:

— After all, Alexey Mikhailovich, you can be at the ball at the Rumyantsev? In the fall?

— Polk will return in September to St. Petersburg, Zoya Pavlovna. Must be.

— We will be glad to see you. So Anna will be sixteen, her first ball will be. You see for yourself, your daughter is quite favorable to you...

Such words were quite pleasant for Alexei. I really thought that I would have to unsubscribe to my father, but then I decided to postpone it until the fall. Not because he was scared, but there is nothing to run in front of the horse himself. In the meantime, in my heart it was good and calm, pleasant music filled the living room, everything seemed easy, pleasant and achievable. He seems to have been perfectly happy now.

Cavalier Guard Regiment

Here we go

— You see, Alexey, in half the day and get to the regiment, why should we wear horses in vain? Albrecht replied lightheartedly. — Time, endures, I say for sure, we will not be late.

— So the road is noble, and we left early, only dawn. Yes, the campaign turned out to be noble, and I received a whole bag of letters from Prince Repnin. We must deliver everything intact,

— So with purposeful anything quickly comes out. Although there is a postal station in Peterhof, but all one thing is better. But, you told the truth, your stallion is good.

— So it is, my Corner, — and Burlin gladly stroked the horse's mane, — and your Melchior, he will bypass any article.

— Father sent, from our estate, Boilers. He grew up in free meadows. Everything is by the sea, not far from St. Petersburg. And this road, also sovereign Peter the Great himself ordered to build. Wow, good places! And the wind is fresh, from the Gulf of Finland.

Indeed, it was very beautiful. They drove through the suburbs of St. Petersburg, past the most picturesque estates of agile and loyal courtiers who arranged here, saoi possessions And with his rescript, he approved the newly conceived. The size of the plots turned out to be small — 200 fathoms along the sea for 2000 fathoms inland from it. At first, no one believed that noble nobles would wish to settle here. And they thought that these wastelands would be forever free grazing, with herbs growing on these hills.

However, the artstocrats began to compete with themselves in the construction of new shelters, which grew into rich and well-arranged estates. Gradually, estates drowning in greenery appear along the road, belonging to the best aristocratic families of the Russian Empire! So, the desire of Peter the Great and here, was realized, and surpassed by the great creator.

This road now stretched along the sea, so beloved by the Russian tsar, it was not inferior in beauty to the road from Paris to the royal residence in Versailles, which in 1717 captured the tsar during a trip to France on the affairs of the Northern War. And the Peterhof road began from Fontanka (where the city border passed in the 18th century), bypassing the Narva outpost and stretching along the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland for 40 miles to Krasnaya Gorka itself. The history of the Peterhof Road is probably already well known to everyone who has visited the suburbs of St. Petersburg, located along the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland, at least once. Any traveler has certainly heard about how Peter 1 decided to create a picturesque road from St. Petersburg to his ceremonial naval residence Peterhof. And, I found nothing more kind and reasonable than to distribute the newly conquered Russian lands to noble courtiers, There are considerable plots, in general.

“In the meantime, my friend Alexei,” Alexander said with a laugh, “you must touch the legend of our seaside places.”

— And what is the legend, or is there a secret here? Burlin asked eagerly.

— What, look for yourself, — answered Albrecht, — the favorite resting place of our comrades...

“It seems an ordinary old inn.

— This is the same “Red Zucchini” itself, erected by the works of Peter the Great. And here we will certainly stop, so that you feel the hospitality of its owners. By his decree of November 16, 1706, the tsar presented a land plot on the 10th verst of the Peterhof road to his “pusher” Semyon Ivanov “for his service, wounds, full patience and leaving the field.” Near the donated site on the

road, a passing house is being built for the rest of the tsar and military ranks on the way to Strelna and Peterhof. In 1713, by decree of June 7, the tsar also gave this building to the translator Ivanov “for the construction of a free house in it according to German custom (tavern) for the sale of vodka and tobacco.” In the decree, the tsar forbade Ivanov to sell zucchini.

— And what, and now it is held by descendants of this tolmach?

— Well, alas, nothing lasts forever under the moon. Now the institution belongs to Colonel Garnovsky, secretary of Grigoriy. Potemkin. There are rumors that here back in 1762, during the days of the palace coup, the future Empress Catherine the Great herself spent a sleepless night from June 28 to 29, on the eve of the coming to power, with a detachment of guards who had just sworn allegiance to her. But, this tavern serves noble German dishes, with veal or corned beef. The institution is famous for its magic waffles. And what punch and mulled wine offer! Taste, just unfussy! Yes, and many come here, just for waffles.

Alexey did not even think to refuse. Both young men calmly entered the hall and settled at the table. In the corner, sat a pleasant girl, in a simple German dress, with a wonderful musical instrument. They found there a completely empty hall and one poor girl, a harpist, who was extremely happy with such a visit and began to sing with special zeal. Well, kabatchik, approached the guests. He was a dense middle-aged man, short-haired, in a knitted cap and a German dress.

Albrecht spoke to him in a respectful tone:

— Good day, sir. Serve us a pork shank with cabbage and black bread. I know that such a dish is especially good here.

— And mulled wine?

— Undoubtedly.

The conversation was in German, however, Burlin perfectly understood this language, thanks to his home teacher. He decently taught him five whole years of sciences, foreign languages and fencing, all the necessary noble sciences.

Large clay dishes contained hefty, rather huge portions. But, attracting the aroma of meat and sauerkraut, surpassed all doubts. Burlin, armed with a fork and knife, bravely attacked the fried leg, deftly trimming the softest meat from the bone. Taste, was like look, and attracting smell. Alexey underestimated his strength, and contrary to doubts, completely emptied the plate, leaving only a lonely shiny bone on the dish. Kabatchik cleverly removed the empty plates, and the hot mulled wine changed the roast. And this treat impressed the young man. The smell of cinnamon gave a little to the nose, cloves, nutmeg pepper and anise gave a fresh taste to the drink. Burlin finished hot wine, almost to the bottom.

— So how? Albrecht asked.

“Brilliant. And so simple, and so good. You can, however, and worry about my coal... I am very heavy.

— Nothing, drive...

Further the path was much more fun. They passed the English palace of Giacomo Quarenghi, the beautiful Dacha von Minikhov, the estates of Pavlino, counts of Vielgorsky, Maryino, counts of Tolstoy.

— But in Ulyanka, the possession of Counts Sheremetev, the regiment always expects a treat. As the regiment should in summer camps, so the count meets us with a solemn dinner, “Albrecht explained.

“But look, the postal station is not far away, we can rest again,” Burlin said.

This travelers shelter looked attractive, and, at the same time, more than usual. A squat red brick building behind a low fence. Not one or two of these was visited by Burlin during his journey from his father’s estate.

— Sidor! Drive a brick into the yard! Then get the horses drunk!

Albrecht wasted no time. He quickly dismounted, adjusted his hat, cheered up, and looked around, as if he wanted to see something extraordinary here. Burlin understood the futility of such desires of his comrade. There were no other guests here, and the sexual immediately approached friends who took a seat at the table.

— What, gentlemen... I can offer a rural hodgepodge, and a beautiful jellied meat with horseradish. Everything that is.

— And, perhaps, a tub of beer, Albrecht added graciously.

— We'll do everything... You won't have to wait long.

And, soon they were already treating themselves to a beautifully cooked dish with appetite. It is clear that there could not be pickled olives, but smoked ham, salted cucumbers, mushrooms, all this was available. And with fresh bread, even such simple food seemed just a treat. Jellied meat, or jelly, seems to be peasant food, for those who understand, is always a joy or pleasure. Horseradish soaked in vinegar adds sharpness to this food, and even subtlety to the taste.

— In Peterhof everything will be simply amazing, life, as if in the native estate, fresh air, river, lakes are nice. True, he himself has not been there yet, but captain Lunin told. And a lot more. A whole staff of maids of honor, so we won't get bored.

— Yes, I, as it were, already represented by one good young lady.. Burlin replied very slowly.

— Nothing, it's just like an adventure. Even the holy duty of the officers of the regiment. That test you have to pass. Remember, the motto of our regiment: "The position obliges!"

Alexey, without answering a friend, took a big sip of beer from a clay mug. What was the answer? Albrecht spoke so confidently, and Burlin was born and grew up in a village, far from the Light, and all the wisdom associated with him. Somehow vaguely, all this seemed...

Any road, any path always have a beginning and an end. Infinity, in general, does not happen. And they, past the barrier, a soldier of the garrison regiment raised a log painted in black and white, giving them a way.

"Here we are. New village, the location of our regiment. Now, we must go to introduce ourselves to the chief of the regiment, Adjutant General Count Uvarov.

Burlin could answer nothing. He only handed over Coal to Fedor. Here, at the headquarters, he only continuously managed to salute the officers of the regiment, to whom he had not yet been introduced. Some, apparently appointed to serve in the sovereign's palace, were dressed in supervests over white columns. And the cross of John of Jerusalem seemed to sparkle on scarlet cloth.

Well, who did not know about the differences between Count Uvarov? Fyodor Pavlovich Uvarov received his first baptism of fire in Poland, where in 1794 an uprising broke out under the leadership of Tadeusz Kosciuszko. The dragoon squadron, under the command of the count, is surrounded, and within 36 hours repels the attacks of the Poles, after which it risks a breakthrough and soon connects with the main Russian troops. For this feat, Uvarov receives the rank of prime major (assistant regiment commander). And a year later, Alexander Suvorov, whose troops crushed the uprising, produces him as lieutenant colonel. Apparently, Alexander Sergeevich himself favored the dashing horseman. And after the death of Catherine II, Paul I ascends to the Russian throne. For Uvarov, the first "happy time" comes. In 1797 he was transferred to St. Petersburg by the colonel of the Yekaterinoslav cuirassier regiment. The next year he was already a major general, and from 1799 he was the chief of the cavalry guard regiment. In 1800 — a new promotion — to lieutenant general, and then, adjutant general. Gossips, however, whispered that the matter was in the patronage of Lopukhina, the royal property. Well, Burlin did not want to think about this.

— What, come in, you're expected, "Albrecht interrupted his thoughts.

"I'm going," and Burlin pulled his hat under his left hand, and calmly went inside, through the open door.

The general was sitting at the table, looking through the papers. What to say? Their dashing commander was young, handsome. An excellent uniform, undoubtedly expensive English cloth, was impeccable.

— Junker Burlin? Glad I arrived on time...

Then there was a knock, and an ordinary regiment entered, a messenger, a tall soldier and with a carbine on his belt, in his right hand he held a package in a brown envelope.

— Your Excellency, there was an order to deliver the package without delay.

— How good, Prokofiev, go. And don't let anyone in here.

— Will be executed! — and the soldier famously trumped, holding two fingers to the visor of his leather helmet with a copper forehead.

Uvarov waited. until the door closes. He looked attentively at the cadet, as if assessing the young man. It is not clear what this prince, the favorite of the young emperor, wanted to say. But, he continued the conversation.

— So here... You understand, the service is not easy, in front of the sovereign. No omissions can be justified, and the view is strictly consistent with the Charter. Yes, I see that both the braid and the hair powder are all present. In the location of the regiment, the uniform is required. This white prick, not a burden, but the dignity and privilege of those who serve in the regiment. Do you understand that?

— Yes, of course, Your Excellency.

— And, you must be very delicate, be able not to deliver what you hear in the Palace... And, society... I mean I will give the High Light... For the officers of the regiment to appear at the balls of the Sovereign is not just a privilege, but an obligation... And, you must be able to entertain the ladies. Now you not only serve the Sovereign, but also became a Knight, moreover, under the banner of Ioann of Jerusalem. And the Knight must be gallant, that is, truly Brilliant in everything... Here, and the motto of our regiment: "Nobless obligade" Exclusivity calls... We true aristocrats, Burlin...

— I will try to justify, Your Excellency!

— I hope in two years, graduate to my regiment cornet. But, as you will know, not all cornets remain in the Cavalier Guards. In the shelf, only two vacancies will open, nothing more.

— I understand!

— You are appointed to the fourth squadron, under the command of Prince Repnin-Volkonsky, Nikolai Alexandrovich. As I heard, your horse is a raven, this is just the suit of your squadron. And, you will also receive a combat horse from the treasury. Further, in the service... The head of the entire Life Guards is irreplaceable with us Sovereign Tsesarevich, Konstantin Pavlovich. He is demanding and strict on business. He follows, and delves into everything, delves into all the little things, so be sure that he will not ignore a single mistake and omission. And you will be quartered with other cadets of the regiment, today you will get to know them. Mr. Albrecht will accompany you and familiarize you with the daily routine in the regiment.

— Thank you, Your Excellency!

— Well, go junker. Hope for your diligence in the service. Introduce yourself to your squadron chief!

— So exactly, Your Excellency!

Then the door creaked again, and Burlin rose again, and briskly stretched out into the string. Colonel Repnin-Volkonsky himself entered the office of the chief of the regiment. The officer who accepted him into the regiment.

— Your highness! Arrived in the regiment, assigned to your squadron! Burlin reported without making a fuss.

— Glad about it, junker. Albrecht will familiarize you with the daily routine. Delve into the little things of the service. Go.

More reassured by this conversation, Alexei was finally able to leave the office of the chief of the regiment.

— What, Alexey?

— Introduced to the chief of the regiment, and the head of the squadron, Nikolai Alexandrovich Reprin-Volkonsky. Now, like you, the standard junker in the regiment. Everything is going all right.

— So the regiment commander, Major General Nikolai Ivanovich Depreradovich, is absent. What? Everything is great. Let's go to the location, see where our apartments are.

They walked past the parade ground, where non-commissioned officers were engaged with privates, practicing combat movements. Here the brave, mustachioed wahmister watched these exercises performed to the sounds of flutes... Yes, shouted, encouraging subordinates:

— Zinoviev, Radov! Watch how you walk! Do not break out of order! Grigoriev, fix the helmet! Well done!

However, which was surprising, they did without areal expressions, and pokes. Quite, that is, okay and beautiful.

— And equestrian classes, Alexander? — Burlin did not really understand, — our regiment, the cavalry?

— Horses are relaxed, now on free grazing. They still rest for four weeks. And yours, which is for building, grazes with everyone. Therefore, the soldiers are trained to maneuver on foot, but, as for horses, in order to remember all the rebuilding. Equestrian exercises will begin closer to autumn.

— And to the guards, to the palace? Put it up?

— There, at the emperor's chambers, only regiment officers serve. And, not in white uniforms, but in red. Well, we junkers are not appointed there. Don't worry, Burlin... Some battle awaits us tonight...

— Wher? And where, Albrecht? he asked with dashing voice.

— For this battle, we need some equipment. Here, get acquainted.

Alex opened the envelope and read:

“Twenty bottles of champagne, three pounds of oranges and a pound of lemons.”

— Actually, this is not a pair of pistols, a carbine or a ceremonial uniform, Burlin said modestly.

— Required part, ceremonial of regiment junkers. You could say champagne is now a true weapon.

— Well, maybe... — Burlin answered uncertainly, and looked at the batman.

— In an hour I will turn around your nobility, only I will take your brick.

Alexey nodded, shrugged his shoulders for fidelity. What should I do? If necessary, then it is necessary, as Burlin decided for himself without hesitation.

The table and treat was quite simple, however, Fedor was able to get good glass. Burlin looked around and was pleased.

— Thank you, Fedor. Here, for work, — and forcibly put a whole in the hand of the batman, — you can rest.

The room was lit by a dozen tallow candles, so it was not dark, it turned out decently. But now, the door opened, and the soulmates began to come in, led by Albrecht.

— Junker Timrot sixth, Christopher Andreevich, the first squadron. Juncker Zimin second, Luka Fomic, also from the first. Minich, Julius Richardovich, from the second, Essen, Karl Ludwigovich, from the second. Shchukin, Nikolai Ivanovich and Korenev Grigory Ivanovich, from the third. Astaire, William Johannovich and Shukhov Ivan Ilyich from the fifth. So, everything is assembled.

Burlin shook hands with each of the guests with feeling. Everyone sat down, and Alexey began not too deftly to free the bottles from the foil.

— While inexperienced, he will learn so soon, — Albrecht noticed, coming to the aid of a friend, — only to us and decided!

Alexander deftly began to fill the wine glasses with a foaming drink, and the first got up.

— Well, here, and another comrade entered our glorious ranks! So we raise our glasses, and wish Burlin good luck!

Alexey, drank a little, almost choked out of habit. Sparkling wine shaving in the nose, and at once in the head out of habit. Previously, a young man, and did not touch the bottle, avoiding the networks of the evil Bacchus. And he put the glass on the table unfinished.

— No, it's not good, — Zimin said sternly, — you, brother, must drink for us, for each. As usual among the cavlegards.

— Exactly. As is customary among true knights! And real crusaders! Minich nodded stubbornly, shaking his dark curls.

Yes, here in the memory of the convert appeared the flag of St. John of Jerusalem, the White Cross on a Red background, the banner of their privileged regiment, so brilliant to the Sovereign.

There was nowhere to go, and, Burlin calling for help all his luck, proceeded...

I drank the first two glasses easily, I felt only the fresh taste of this aged, sparkling wine. The third, fourth and fifth were hard going... The sixth, seventh and eighth, felt like part of a medieval torture. The ninth and tenth, were like water...

— Well done! You're accepted! Timrot laughed.

“So I knew it would go well, and I grabbed three bottles of wine,” Essen said with maliciously in his voice.

— So and I, prepared. How Albrecht reported today's couture. I have a couple of bottles of Hungarian! Korenev remarked.

Here Burlin only moved his eyebrows miserably and looked up to the ceiling of their modest home. I could not see anything there, except for the yellowed whitewash. Of course, I did not feel feelings. The answer to him was only the loud laughter of the audience.

Service

— Barin, get up... Get up, master... The horn sounded, the formation... We need to hurry...

Fedor's voice just beat on the ears. Mercilessly, without condescension, he snatched Burlin from the sweet captivity of Morpheus. He hardly opened his eyes, as it seemed to him, adamantly and proudly nodded his head. But, did not even rise from the mattress.

“Wash...” he whispered.

— What did they say? -I did not understand the owner's money.

— Carry a bowl of water! Burlin almost shouted, and dropped his legs to the floor.

Boots, for some reason, was not, which Alexey was surprised at. Yesterday, for sure, he was in boots, he remembered. Therefore, he hit his bare heels on the boardwalk.

— What, your nobility. And here, I cleaned the boots, — the batman immediately explained.

Fedor sat down, and deftly shod the master, and then fastened small buttons on his cuirassier ratings. Then, he hung a cuirassier white colet on the back of his chair, with a crimson collar decorated with gold guard buttonholes. Burlin noticed Alexey, taking off his shirt, began to wash quickly, putting himself in order. The cold water had a wonderful effect, the action was truly magical. Immediately it felt better, and he quickly sat down on a free chair. Fedor, without hesitation, got down to business, combed his hair with a comb, and then sprinkled them with powder. Junker, looking in the mirror, looked as gray, right before our eyes.

Finally. everything was ready. He, with the help of a batman, put on a colet, hooked and tied with a broadsword, and the helmet was not forgotten. Here, he went out into the courtyard, where

Albrecht was already waiting for him. Alexander smoked a pipe, blowing gray smoke into the morning sky.

— We went, we have to go. Sidor, pick up my phone.

His batman, with the equanimity of a marble statue, took the smoking device and hid it in a bag. The servant was not particularly talkative, as Alexey noted. Albrecht himself was fully equipped, with a broadsword and a veneer in a sling, in a helmet, already ready for construction.

Well, the walmister of their fourth squadron, did not lose a second. All combat soldiers, fulfilling the order of the Unters, stood in three ranks, forty people in a row. Gentlemen officers, captain, staff captain, lieutenants and cornets, Sukhtelen and

Then Colonel Repnin-Volkonsky himself came up. Junkers stood slightly behind. Repnin nodded, and immediately introduced Burlin:

— Gospoda, we have a considerable replenishment. I want to introduce you to Alexei Mikhailovich Burlin, now he is a cadet in our squadron.

Alexei was shaken by each of these brilliant officers, and he remembered each of his new colleagues:

Captain Ivan Dmitrievich Dmitriev, staff captain Prince Ivan Alekseevich Kropotkin, lieutenants Platon Ivanovich Kablukov 1st, Evdokim Vasilyevich Davydov 3rd, cornets Pavel Petrovich Sukhtelen and Lunin Nikita Sergeevich 2nd.

— Vakhmister Matyushin! Repnin said, our new cadet, Burlin. For a week, in the morning with the soldiers, let him walk in the ranks, study the rebuilding. I must understand the place in the ranks, but to feel the service.

— So exactly, your highness! I'll do everything! — Vahmister answered vividly.

Alexey once again looked around Matyushin, who was prominent. Slender, mustachioed, with perfect alignment, a direct example of a zealous frunzovik.

So now I didn't have to get bored. Burlin, spozaranku, marched from morning until lunchtime as part of the first platoon of his squadron. It used to seem that it was difficult here? But, science was not quite simple, walking in step, but famously turning with everyone at the same time. I also remembered all the signals of the copper horn. And then, in battle, can the soldiers, in the roar of cannons and guns, hear the commander's voice? Ah, the sonorous and demanding sound of the horn is another matter. And then, each signal is trumpeted differently.

After the march, Matyushin led a platoon to wooden tables on which carbines and pistols lay. Well, to this, Burlin and at home. He grabbed a carbine, habitually examined the castle, trigger and screwed flint, opened the castle shelf.

— Remove, junker! — the walmister shouted, — that's it, only at my command! The main thing, in the handling of guns and pistols, is not to shoot each other out of stupidity. And especially when on horseback, in yes rows. But the junker did everything right. There is nothing to look into the trunk, look for what is not there... It is clear that first you should check the lock so that the trigger is not cocked. Then, by mistake, the gun will not shoot. Ramrod, check the barrel, clean, and then charge, moreover, do not leave the ramrod in the barrel. He loaded, poured gunpowder on the shelf, and removed the carbine to the saddle, and the pistols into the alters. Is it clear to everyone?

Nobody asked unnecessary questions. Actually, as Burlin noted, the soldiers were sensible and obligatory in the regiment, fast in mind. And, the lesson continued. Cuirassiers repeatedly made reproaches with a carbine. And, only then, the walmister laid out a box with cartridges on the table. Ordered:

— Charge!

Here Burlin managed quickly, charged. Walmister walked along the line, meticulously examining the locks of weapons. Then, rising from the right flank, he ordered:

— To the leg!

And the carbines were lowered, the butts of the guns rested on the ground at the right foot of each private.

— Apply! Fall!

And a number of soldiers standing here were enveloped in gunpowder smoke. They shot without aiming.

“To the leg! Carbines, on hand! Shelf, open!

Wahmister was demanding, and checked with everyone whether the carbine was discharged after the shooting.

— Clean the carbines, then hand them over to Unter Levkin! He will strictly check everything! After, classes with edged weapons, fencing!

Junker took his weapon, and calmly and slowly wiped the steel lock. I checked the ignition hole with a needle, and with a ramrod, I began to clean the short barrel. Soon, everything was ready, and Burlin calmly and confidently handed over the gun to the unter. He, busily taking a white board of fabric, slowly checked the purity of the weapon. Satisfied, he nodded to the cadet. Burlin was delighted.

It was still too early to rest, and, as if knowing this, it arose, from nowhere, vakhmister Matyushin.

— Become! — he commanded, — in two lines, become! Front row, all around!

The Gaardeans found themselves facing each other. But, Burlin appreciated the training. Deftly, without unnecessary vision, but the platoon acted like a single organism.

— Palashi, out of scabbard, out! Get in position! Do slowly, behind me...

And, Matyushin himself, taking out his broadsword, began to show blows, departures, repulses with a coin and a hilt. It was evident that the wahmister was not only a Fruntian, but also an excellent fencer. Burlin also repeated movements, noticing something new for himself, unknown to his fencing teacher, who remained in his native estate.

— So... Junker, get in front of me! ‘wahmister ordered.

Burlin stood up, blade down. Matyushin took the position, saluted, and put the blade in front of him. Alexey, did the same. Wahmister, alternately, showing ordinary vision with his feet and hands, attacked. Burlin, accepting the rules of the game, willingly played along, easily beating the steel blade. Of course, the broadsword is much heavier than the usual rapier, but the junker tried. Vakhmister, looking at him, fenced with a new ward, until Alexei began to get tired and painted.

: Enough for today, — said Matyushin, — to rest! Unter Zemtsov, go to the dining room!

— Eat! ‘the dozen guardsman barked back.

The soldiers quickly formed into a column of three, and quickly left the puddle. Along the path they reached a wooden house, and in front of it stood large tables and benches. Non-combatant carried bowls and spoons, exposed clay mugs. The soldiers began to feed, judging by the smell, thick and rich cabbage soup, and on the second, they gave enough to taste buckwheat porridge.

Juncker, settled on the sidelines. And then, could not the nobleman sit at the same table with the lower ranks? It's not the case. So, sitting on a churbachka, and ate. I appreciated how well cooks prepare in the shelf, with a soul simply. And then, and got a full mug of good rye kvass, and it became very good. I even regretted that the meal was over.

Well, the soldiers, having finished such an important business, sat down on the grass. Someone took out their pipes, bluish tobacco smoke hung over the meadow. It is clear that the lower ranks did not have cigars, but used themselves with shag or the strongest samosad. Burlin looked for a long time, a little jealous. Here, of course, he regretted that he himself did not smoke, and firmly ordered himself to acquire a pipe with a long chubuk, made in the Hungarian manner. I decided that such a thing would definitely suit him.

Horse guard and maids of honor

— Are you here, Burlin? — comrade distracted him from important thoughts, — today we have one thing to do, and the most important... Captain Dmitriev himself ordered.

And Alexey was looking at two pipes for tobacco. With a long chubuk, like the Hungarians, and short, which is comfortable to hold in your hand. It was difficult to decide, and the junker put all this aside, and answered with calmness:

— Delighted, Albrecht. I can't say anything. And what, put us in the post at the sovereign's chambers?

— No, we found a more important thing today. Horse guard, on the road, by the forest. Under the command of the cornet of Lunin 2nd.

— Really...

— Well, did you learn from Matyushin today?

— You can't say anything, sensible wahmister. A real frontian, he knows the service like no one else.

— So in our regiment do not keep bad. In the ranks of the cavalry guards only the best, — Albrecht confidently noted.

Burlin did not find something to say. And then, the words were true and accurate.

— Okay, let's go, we'll drink a cup of coffee, but it's time to get ready, to divorce the posts. Today, the duty officer, Cornet Sukhtelen himself. He's strict.

And exactly, there was a thick aroma of freshly brewed coffee in the room. And just shining with joy Sidor, already poured a fragrant drink over the cups.

Alexey just nodded, but smiled. The smell, of course, was just spinning.

At home, because the mother always brewed coffee, usually on weekends. Everyone sat at the dinner table, and, in silence, waited for the hostess to come with a tray lined with small, blue cups and a coffee pot. The holiday was complete when fruits and nuts boiled in honey were taken out of the cellar. We usually sat until late, sang pies, and, happiness was just complete.

Well, the taste of coffee created by Sidor was amazing. With cinnamon, with cloves, with a small fraction of Jamaican sugar. Alexey took another sip, and also, trying to fully taste the magic drink.

— One more cup?

The question was rather rhetorical, Burlin could not refuse anyway. I finished it to the end, now feeling just extraordinary vigor in myself.

— Well, everything, perhaps, — Albrecht said doubtfully, examining the room, — we have to go.

And then, two comrades quickly got to the gathering place, where the cuirassiers were already standing, holding their horses about.

“Your stallions are in a horse tie,” the junker warned the young men.

The regiment and state horses were good, as Burlin noticed. He waited until Albrecht chose a stallion for himself, and took the rest for himself. Here Lunin just drove up and cornet. It was noticeable. that the officer was frankly bored.

“Are you here, then, junkers?” Let's go. We are entrusted with the honorable duty of protecting summer residents from some dashing life guards. The chief of the regiment conveyed the news of numerous complaints from ordinary people, loyal to the Sovereign.

Burlin and Albrecht did not respond. Alexey did not know anything about the quiet difficulties, and his friend preferred to keep quiet. He smiled only meaningfully at the words of the cornet. Apparently, I understood what.

We drove, however, not very long. Burlin, in fact, had heard before about the baths arranged for their regiment. On the stream itself for soldiers, and separately, in warm lakes, for officers. And, of course, he knew about the dachas broken in the picturesque surroundings of the imperial palace.

The places here are really beautiful and prestigious. The Sovereign himself was often shown in the summer theater, and singers from distant Italy were invited to perform in Peterhof. True, sometimes Count Sheremetev or Musin-Pushkin brought singers from their own home theaters.

However, as always, there was a certain embarrassment. Moreover, completely unexpectedly. They creaked, sprouted branches of bushes by the road, and came out, but rather, a rather strange, one might say popular, character fell out. Burlin, of course, was not afraid, but was confused. Actually, there was why. This gentleman, with a smile on his face, was dressed terribly impotently, so to say, in the ancient Roman manner. It was an image of a patrician caught during... But, just this man was wrapped in a sheet, and the outfit was complemented by a hat and boots.

Lunin barely restrained himself, so as not to laugh, and held a scarf to his lips. After a moment, however, I woke up from such a hassle and asked:

— So what do you need, Valuev. needed boots and hat?

— An important question, — and the “patrician” was proudly biased, — I can’t, in fact, violate the orders of my superiors. Follow with swimming without headgear and shoes.

— The argument is no doubt strong. But, it is better to follow that path, — and Lunin showed, waving his hand, — and then certainly, do not avoid your arrest. And do not dry your explanations.

— We’ll have to go there, apparently. Kuzmich, let’s go, — he ordered the batman.

And he did not walk empty-handed, but with the uniform of a master, holding a white outfit in the manner of a banner, raising his clothes above him. All this came out, of course, very picturesque. And, soon this procession disappeared among the bushes.

— Well, and thank God. And then, the regimental authorities are angry, — explained the cornet, — here, it happens, the Sovereign himself will deign to take a horse ride. Okay, then let’s go.

Here they followed the road to the intersection, slowly and step. The sun did not heat up much, the breeze, weak and slow, slightly swayed small branches in the trees, playing with leaves. Everything tuned in a lyrical way. And everything would be fine, but Burlin’s head sweated under his helmet, and he wiped his face with a batiste scarf more than once or twice.

— Nothing, junker, get used to it — as if encouraged the cornet.

And then the crew drove by, rattling wheels on bumps. The carriage was open, summer time. Sat, comfortably settled, four ladies, with hats, covered from the sun with summer umbrellas. Only a coachman sat on the goats. And behind I drove and wagon simpler, with the maids of these cute ladies. Gaiduks, ordinary before, accompanying people of a noble rank on the way, did not exist. Well, the big-eyed Burlin noticed that the wheel on the rear axle of the carriage was rattling, and was about to jump off.

— Cornet, I’m in for a second... “the junker shouted. and spurred his horse.

He went with a heavy trot, and in two counts caught up with the carriage. The ladies noticed the prigozhy cavalry guard, waved him enthusiastically.

— Stay up! Burlin shouted.

— What is it for? — answered one of the ladies, — You, dear knight, can come to the salon of Countess Reinhardt, and will be gladly received!

“Madame, stop! The carriage will crash! — losing patience, noticed Junker.

— Yes? — the lady did not believe too much, — Savely, stop! — and tapped the irradiation demanding.

The coachman, pulling up the reins, stopped a couple of horses of his team. Those immediately stood rooted to the spot. And Savely, shaking his left foot, scaring the butterfly, reluctantly climbed to the ground. Reached out and hobbled along the road, to the carriage. He stared at the wheel that had almost jumped off, and rubbed his chin.

— And checked after all today, and check and axis and, on you! — and threw up his hands, as if he was going to take off — now, which one I will find...

And, dragged to the thickets, constantly sighing and complaining about life.

No, of course, Burlin appreciated the couture manner of the coachman, such theatricality of the stage. But, he did not like everything. They tormented just very nasty premonitions. Alexey threw the reins to the private, and hastily jumped out of the saddle, just rushed, ate to the carriage to the carriage. I didn't even pay attention to how the broadsword scabbed him in the legs.

— Ladies, sorry, but better get off the ground! 'he shouted, catching his breath.

— Oh, young man, how persistent you are! And, is it possible to refuse in this case? 'one of the women replied with a smile.

— Yes, if you help us? another asked, and in French.

— Such a cute cavalry guard, — the third smiled, — soon the ball in the Palace, and I would be glad to dance with you.

The fourth was silent, frowned, often looked at the young guardsman. But, the first one gave a demanding hand to the cadet. He supported her, and the lady went to the ground, rustling the hem of a silk dress. Then, Burlin helped both the second and the foreign beauty with black curls, so cute framing her dark, chiseled face. And he managed to catch in his arms a lady, his interlocutor. Everyone in the carriage escaped danger.

The rear axle still fell off the carriage, and such a pompous structure with a crash settled on the ground, fell on its side, confusing the frames. Horsho that the soldiers were able to grab the reins, tempering the ardor of the horses from the team. Burlin turned his head and heard:

— What are you turning away, my savior? 'the woman said with a smile.. — or, am I in your captivity now?

— What are you... Just couldn't do it any other way.

Burlin felt everything in her arms, she was not at all weightless. He smelled perfume, her strong hand on his shoulder. I suddenly realized that I was painfully red, and hurriedly lowered the beauty to the ground. Everything, however, ended very quickly, but it seemed to him that an eternity had passed.

"You are very sweet, my knight," the lady remarked calmly, "I will be glad if you visit our house on the second line." Princess Glinskaya, Elizaveta Ivanovna.

— Junker of the Cavalier Guard regiment Alexey Burlin.

— Your Excellency, I sent a soldier for a carriage, — added the cornet that arrived, — Lunin 2nd, at your service!

— We will be grateful to you, cornet! — Glinskaya noticed, — my salon, of course, is a pleasant place to communicate. And, Isabella Lancini herself, a singer from Italy, is visiting me. Kindly agreed to visit our northern Palestine.

The countess nodded very sweetly to the black-haired woman. She, apparently, realized that they were talking about her, and with some flirtatiousness made kniksen. And this lady was unusually good-looking, full of charm and charm of alien, southern beauty.

It was even funnier to look at Lunin. He did not sit, and instantly dismounted, getting off his black horse. I didn't even look to see if the private picked up the occasion. But, kissed the hands of all the ladies, considering it his first duty.

True, this idyll, on a forest path, stopped with the arrival of an open wagon. On the goats sat the batman, everywhere the successful Fedor. He was calm, as if he was preparing to do such an important thing all day. Well, the cornet, as a senior in rank, took over the most important business — he supported the ladies, helping them settle in the wagon. Well, Burlin, went up to the batman, and calmly said:

— Then, Fedor, go back to the apartment, do not hesitate. And take a closer look on the road.

— I will do everything, master, do not hesitate.

Yes, Burlin had no doubts, of course. He just showed these beauties that this is his batman. So to speak, there would be no doubt, or there, what inaccuracies.

Finally, the wagon started, Alexey bowed a little, as well as Lunin.

— It happens, — Alexey said a little shaken.

“It doesn’t happen here, Burlin. However, junker, now the ladies will not forget you with their mercies. Glinskaya, and even that, silent, Orlova, they are the maids of honor of the empress herself. So your zeal will certainly not be forgotten. Okay, let’s move on, our watch is not over yet.

Junker nodded, and calmly sat down again in the saddle. He played with a stirrup, shaking his foot, and sent his horse forward, step. He looked after the departing carriage. Now I was thinking about Glinskaya, but thoughts about Anna Grigorievna completely disappeared from my head. And Burlin, even did not want to scold himself for this or could not. Although, of course, I would be glad to see the girl to whom I wrote every week, sending messages on purpose.

New party for Anna Grigorievna Kurolesva

Anna was slowly and calmly doing business. In general, nothing of the kind, just slowly, without haste, embroidered. I must say, she did not consider such an occupation to be work, but rather, attraction. It was nice to disassemble the silk threads, cook the heels, pulling delicate fabric on the steel rings. Further, slowly sit down on the couch, or settle in a chair, cover your legs with a soft cover, and start embroidery. Papenka, Grigory Ilyich, never prevented this, but even supported his daughter. He personally brought silk threads, cuts, from Astrakhan, where he was sent as needed.

Anna habitually prepared a thread with a needle, made several test stitches. She looked at her preparations again. I was quite pleased with myself. Here, however, it was not without help, although the young lady loved to do everything herself, as her heart told her. However, this time the figure from French magazine brought her a friend, Maria Semibratova. And so she said, goodbye:

“In this simple flower, there is a deep philosophical meaning, understandable, but not to everyone!”

And, as she left, she nodded her head for a long time. she smiled mysteriously, and Anna, almost laughing, saw such difficulties.

The girl sighed, and continued to embroider the painted thistle flower. Its inflorescence came out bright, bright, blood-red, surrounded by dense green spiny leaves. And for them there were shiny silk threads. But, the drawing itself, again attracted her attention. Such a dull beauty, but so passionately defending herself... Anna in thoughtfulness carefully ran the pad of her index finger across the silk surface of the flower, as if she was afraid to prick herself on a sharp thorn.

And then, in the room, her parents, Grigory Alekseevich, and Zoya Pavlovna entered. Both smiled as if something unusually good had happened. It was strange, usually, at such a time no one bothered her.

Well, and their daughter, in alarm, jumped up, and the veil and sewing fell to the floor. Anna, hurriedly rushed to raise.

— Wait, daughter... Let’s share great joy with you... Daddy began to say.

However, he was also worried, agitated, and endlessly pulled the gates of his silk dressing gown. Mamenka looked at her father with concern, and led her shoulder a little nervously.

— Yes, here, Annushka... A good, rich groom, Colonel of the Ladoga Infantry Regiment, Mikhail Arkadyevich Kostetsky himself, is wooing you. Mr. Kurolesov began his speech.

— He has five hundred souls of serfs, and several villages, a linen factory, — added the mother, — income comes out, rather big. And a prominent man. Handsome... Everyone will envy you.

— How old is he? ‘the girl asked uncertainly.

“Forty just turned. Stately and prominent, a great game for you, — explained the mother, — From a good family, influence.

— Yes, I... Here, Alexey Mikhailovich Burlin, writes to me all the time. And you, he was received in the house... He is also a young man from a good, rich family... And so pleasant...

— So he is still young, — and Grigory Ilyich, sat down on a chair, looking at his daughter as an unreasonable child, — you are with him, your peers... Is this suitable? Where can he start a family, in his years? And you have already entered age, sixteen have already turned. You will not get such a groom anymore... He is a good officer, in full view of the sovereign. You look, in five years, Kostetsky will be promoted to general.

“I don’t like him... Anna broke down in tears.

Father and mother looked at each other, sighed in agreement. And, mother began to console the unreasonable child

— You will not immediately understand that the groom is good for you... — and Zoya Pavlovna kissed her daughter on the forehead, reassuring, — Look closely, think. And they only say good things about him. And we will be calmer. Think about us too, daughter... You will always follow such a spouse in peace.

— I brought his portrait, — Grigory Ilch quietly said, putting a small image on the table, — look. A prominent, responsible person.

Anna looked at the picture through tears. A thin strong-willed face looked at her, with expressive eyes. Judging by the portrait, Kostetsky was not bad, for his age, of course.

“We’ll have dinner tomorrow. You, come out, accept the dear guest, — did not order, namely, Grigory Ilyich asked.

— Be clever, daughter. — said Zoya Pavlovna, adding her penny, and kissed, calming a cute baby on the cheek.

Both parents left their daughter’s bedroom looking at each other with a sense of accomplishment. And Anna, falling to her knees, burst into tears, in severe exhaustion. Hands and feet seemed numb, I could not even get up from the floor. For a long time she stroked the burdock embroidered by her, shining with purple and greenery on white silk, and whispered quietly to herself:

“You, here, although beautiful, yes, you can stand up for yourself... And I... I’m completely weak...”

First Watch

— Good day, gentlemen! — loudly said Lunin, attracting attention to himself, — Prince Repnin reminds that today, by ten o’clock, the squadron officers should be at the grand palace of the Sovereign. His Majesty follows the service to the church next to the Grand Palace.

Burlin had already seen this five-domed cathedral of Peter and Paul, erected in the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna by Bartolomeo Rastrelli himself, but had not yet been inside. According to rumors, everything shines there with beauty and exquisite luxury. He ordered himself that he would certainly visit this place.

— And, today in a ceremonial, red uniform. You will see our service.

Fedor was not in the bag, he removed the red uniform from the chest, and, armed with a brush, began to put in order all this ammunition. Alexey slowly put on a fresh shirt.

But here, on horseback went to the road, where they joined the squadron officers. They ate with a lynx, led by Prince Repnin, the squadron commander.

They dismounted at the horse-drawn horse, the palace grenadiers took up the horses. And the cavalry guards, bypassing the guards, lined up at the Front Entrance.

“Stand still, gentlemen! We will be in front of the emperor himself! Repnin recalled.

The colonel bypassed the ranks of officers and cadets, and, it seems, was quite pleased with the alignment of his subordinates. They lined up, and prepared, waiting...

The Sovereign himself left the Parade at exactly nine o'clock. The eyes of all the courtiers were riveted to him, because, no doubt, he was so young and handsome. Clean, right face, was poor and focused. Superbly complex, noble posture distinguished him from the generals of the retinue. True, judging by the manners, Alexander Pavlovich felt trapped, as if locked even here, in the beautiful Peterhof Park, in his own palace. He quietly and courteously said something to General Arakcheev, and then to General Uvarov. He nodded, and quickly walked to the guard of the cavalry guards, and said:

— Good day, gentlemen. The sovereign is very pleased with your alignment and zeal for service, and brings his gratitude. Thank you, Prince, “he said for Repnin.

“Lestna praise from the Sovereign,” replied the squadron commander.

— And, I see zeal for service and junkers, — added Count Uvarov.

The adjutant general returned to his retinue, and Burlin felt how he smiled. And then, praise from the chief of the regiment was so pleasant! Well, here, all the officers stretched out in a string.

The doors were opened, and Burlin at first thought that he had visited them today, on this bright morning, the Angel of the Lord himself. Empress Elizaveta Alekseevna herself descended the stairs, shining with unearthly beauty. She wore a white morning dress, a straw hat covered her lovely blonde hair. The facial features were striking in beauty and correctness, this perfect Greek profile, large blue eyes, was combined with a clear oval face. The figure, surprised by grace and grace, flying gait, she passed by her honorary guard.

Well, then, stats ladies followed, and among them the powerful Golovina, and a little behind, among other maids of honor, Alexei noticed his friend, Countess Glinskaya. I regretted that now he was hiding his face in a helmet, I thought that he would not be recognized at such a moment. But no, this gorgeous lady smiled sweetly at him, and hastily turned away. Nearby walked, and that, a little gloomy woman, whom he also remembered. And, the first helped to get out of the carriage.

When the retinue of the empress disappeared into the church portal, Albrecht turned to a friend and quietly asked:

— Yes, you brother, already got into the higher spheres? Met Elizaveta Ivanovna Glinskaya and Princess Natalia Petrovna Drubetskaya?

— Perhaps only with Princess Glinskaya. And that, the second? Who is this lady?

— Well, the one that frowned displeased when Elizaveta Ivanovna gave you signs of attention. She is, Natalya Petrovna Drubetskaya.

— And, I understood... A little here, it's hot, in supervest on top of the colet, — Burlin answered out of place.

The young man corrected the red cape with a white cross. She squirmed a little, losing her impressive appearance.

“That's our service. Red uniform, and supervest in addition, — said Albrecht, — And in the evening, a ball awaits us... Be ready, Alexey.

First ball

Let's just say Burlin, I've heard of balls before. Usually, such celebrations were arranged by their neighbors, Kamensky. Guests on beautiful carriages gathered at the large pavilion of the Main Palace of their estate. Noble gentlemen and ladies tried to surprise each other with expensive horses, the ladies shone with silk newfangled dresses and thousands of jewelry.

They, still boys, could only watch all this bustle from behind the bushes, imagining how they themselves would enter this hall, brightened with lights, with festive illumination. How their outfits will shine in the light of hundreds of candles, and their shoes will slide on wax-rubbed parquet, spin in dance with cute young ladies. After all, there, on the balcony, a wonderful orchestra will play, giving

out the best melodies for the audience. Polonaise, Gavot, Landler, Mazurka, and, Cotillion, maybe, will be performed by some kind of charm and pas de shale (Pas de Shal).

— Fedor, is the uniform ready for the ball?

— So everything is in order, master, — the batman answered with a sense of accomplishment.

He looked at the young man encouragingly, and Alexei expected that he would stroke him on the head, calming him down. As happened in that distant childhood. But, Burlin, he said to himself that he was calm and collected. Indeed, what were those wacky doubts about? No wonder he was taught by real french governer, all dance figures.. Well, of course, and fencing. True, Monsieur Jastine Verdier, in order to probably set aside his efforts, voiced for him the most sophisticated French curses. So, Alexei Mikhailovich felt sowing to the publication of a completely prepared person.

Looking in the mirror again, Burlin was pleased with himself. Iundir, pantaloons, ball shoes, everything was in order.

— Barin, and a sword? The clerk gave his voice again.

— At the ball, they don't take it. Like pistols, Fedor. Now prepare my dipole, and wait for Alexander Ivanovich.

— Of course, master. Already going.

— Don't forget the clean shirt.

“It will be done, sir.

Well, in the yard Burlin took up an important matter. Armed only with a purchased pipe, and began to stuff it with glorious, “captain's” tobacco. Exhaled, anxious, and still lit a cigarette. He immediately coughed, but did not think to quit.

— Personal handset. Good morning, Alexey, — Albrecht greeted him.

— Good morning, Alexander. Now Fdor will give us a crew and go.

— Sidor will stand on commas. Where am I without a batman?

— I agree, Burlin added.

He tightened again from the tube, and coughed again. Albrecht allowed himself complete equanimity, pretending that nothing like this happens... Burlin, as if in conceit, left a smoking pipe on the table, and, a little shamefully retreated.

— Une journee de merde! (what a shitty day) — burst out at him.

— Ce n'est as si mal. (not so bad) — answered Albrecht with a smile.

Then the wagon rolled up, with Fedor sitting on the goats. Junkers settled down for a shine, and Sidor stood on the steps.

— But, sick! — the batman cheered up the horse, — “He lives in good, who has a horse in the yard”! — Fedor gave his next opus.

However, the couple in the harness ran quite cheerfully, and reached the Grand Palace quickly. Then society gathered, the carriages drove away, dropping off the ladies and gentlemen at the entrance to the hall. I met the guests, of course, not the owner of the celebration, but the butler in elegant livery. Couple after couple climbed the marble staircase, already illuminated by lanterns. True, the guests were families, like the ladies, without companions, only with the Donnes. They also noticed the officers of the regiment, some were with their spouses. Well, Burlin and Albrecht, cheerfully walked up the stairs, not thinking about the dangers, as true knights should do.

It was believed that the ball was not held by the emperor at all, but by Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumyantsev, Minister of Commerce in the Committee of Ministers. And now, Count Rumyantsev, at the entrance to the hall, met the guests of the holiday. Surprisingly, this important dignitary was alone.

“Good evening, gentlemen of the cavalry guards,” said the count, “it's nice to see you here.”

— Thank you for the invitation, Your Excellency! Albrecht replied.

— I will say hello from you, young man, to your father, — was Rumyantsev's answer, — have fun this summer night! Carpi diem, gentlemen!

Burlin understood the words of an important dignitary. Live real, live while you are alive! What could be more true than these words! True, the cavalry guard was surprised. How is it that Count Rumyantsev, such a rich and noble nobleman, was not married? And, quietly said, so I would only hear Albrecht:

— Why is the count not married?

— Big mystery, Alexey. However, known to everyone. But, I warn you, they don't talk about it out loud.

— I will be silent like everyone else...

— Rumyantsev is in connection with Empress Maria Fedorovna, widow of Pavel Petrovich. Such a sad story...

Albrecht said this, casually, calmly, which finally struck Burlin. On the other hand, the cadet recalled Potemkin of Tauride, Count Orlov, and some more... Favorites of Empress Catherine. Razumovsky, favorite of Elizaveta Petrovna. But, there was no time for that, they met Lunin, Nikita Sergeevich. He went up to his comrades.

— What are gentlemen? Fine wine is served there in the room. Soblan is too big, and you need to do something... I suggest, drink a glass, and not slow! Cornet offered.

Junker looked at each other. And then, the offer was too explicit and strong to refuse it. And both, without saying a word, nodded in agreement.

A beautifully trained footman in livery, with white gloves hiding his hands, poured wine over his glasses. Perfectly chilled, honey-colored, attracting and promising rest from all pains and worries. The ringing of Murano glass and then a couple of sips of wine lifted Burlin's spirits.

— Maybe more? Lunin remarked.

Albrecht shook his head negatively and looked at Alexei. He created a concerned person, and gave out:

— An important thing, Lunin. You understand. We have to go.

And while the cornet, having thought, was looking for a suitable and reasonable answer, the cadets retreated, left this battlefield. Actually, a court orchestra began to play, located on the balcony of the dance hall. Comrades stood against the wall, watching the audience.

— Gentlemen, you are here, — said the important prince Reprin-Volkonsky, their commander, — my wife, Varvara Alekseevna.

The young men bowed, clicking their heels, and in turn attached themselves to the hand of such an important lady. Yes, the Reprin-Volkonsky family was the richest and most famous, and Varvara Alekseevna was marked by the attention of Empress Elizaveta Alekseevna, wife of Alexander Pavlovich. Indeed, Madame Princess was extremely beautiful, that bright, brilliant beauty that distinguishes women with stump hair. The right features, bright, brown expressive eyes were simply extraordinary.

— Very pleasant young men, — Varvara Alekseevna favorably noted, — now the dance will begin, and you should find yourself suitable ladies. Otherwise, here they will consider that the cavalry guards are too shy.

— Yes, Albrecht and Burlin, the cavalry guards have a reputation, and you must comply, — noted the prince.

— Untimely, — said Alexander, — looked after the party better!

Varvara Alekseevna smiled kindly, however, hiding her face behind an open fan. True, fortunately, the squadron commander and his wife left them, hurrying to Count Rumyantsev.

“Really, it's time to act, Burlin.

— No doubt...

Either lucky, or just so happened, the stars apparently converged, but Alexey noticed the lady he knew, Princess Elizaveta Ivanovna Glinskaya. Not one, in the society of a prominent and elderly

dignitary, with orders and ribbons. It would be impossible to get lost, especially since he was noticed. The young man with a vigorous step approached, nodded, introduced himself:

— Junker of the Cavalier Guard regiment Burlin, let me invite your lady to the dance!

— I told you, Fedor Ivanovich, here is our savior! Helped us safely get to our dacha!

— I am grateful to you, young man! I will be glad to see you in my house! And, — he smiled, — your batman, very busy!

“Too much communication with my tutor Verdier, your ladyship. I mastered French and Latin, almost better than me. But, very executive and sensible.

— Elizaveta Ivanovna, please, — the husband kissed his wife’s hand, and handed it over, like the greatest jewel, to the cadet.

Alexey, bowed, and led the lady to the couples who were already gathering. Steward, with a rod in his hands, stood and expected. The conductor, just expected, and now, followed... Three blows with a rod on the floor, and the violins and waves began to bring out the solemn melody of Polonaise... Here Burlin did not believe his eyes — Alexander Pavlovich himself opened the ball with his wife, Elizaveta Alekseevna. And behind him, Count Rumyantsev and the Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna marched. Prince Repnin-Volkonsky was not deprived of honor, with his wife, Varvara Alekseevna, following them.

Burlin tried to show some distraction, maybe satiety, detachment. What they say, he is not so impressed by the light reflected from crystal chandeliers, wonderful music, and even more so, the secular society that gathered here. But, only as long as he did not cast an admiring glance at his lady.

Princess Glinskaya proudly marched under feathers, decorated with flowers and diamonds, sometimes casting glances with the appearance of seeming innocence, easily controlling the waves of silk, slightly tapping the heels of her brocade shoes. The typesetting oak parquet of this hall, it is true, was unworthy to carry this beauty on itself. Sometimes the princess fanned herself, as if sliding in her flexible thin fingers. She walked, as if not noticing the gaze, admiring and envious glances from the gallery, like a true lady Godiva. She was very proud to be here and happy about what was happening. And the gentleman who set off her beauty, like an excellent frame for precious stones, was handsome. The princess even praised herself for this wonderful choice.

Elizaveta Ivanovna was simply magnificent, and Alexei recalled the proverb, and quietly spoke aloud, wanting to flatter the woman:

— **Et vera icessu patuiit dea**, the Goddess can be seen by her gait, as Virgil himself said.

The woman quickly threw a bright look from under the slightly lowered eyelashes, and slightly squeezed his fingers in response.

The dance did not seem to want to end. The orchestra wanted to surpass itself, trying to impress high society, and especially Alexander Pavlovich.

Landler to Mozart’s music. They walked along the line of dance, raised, they made a complete turn without separating their hands. Alexey circled the lady around him, holding his right hand and his left, then, touched each other’s palms. Elizabeth, spinning, slightly moved away from Burlin to the right, walked a little forward, and turned to him. Alexey, sliding to the music, stood with his back to the lady, and, with a sharp movement, found themselves facing each other, and Glinskaya put right hand to cavalier on right shoulder. The dance continued, Burlin, saw the beautiful eyes of the princess burning with heavy fire, she did not take her gaze away from him.

“You know how to impress, Alexey,” whispered the princess.

— Always at your service, — the young man accepted this game.

The woman nodded, in the last figure of the dance. Junker, slowly, slightly holding Elizabeth by the fingertips, brought her to her husband. He nodded quickly, and honestly, very honestly said:

“Thank you, Prince.

“You dance excellently, Burlin. I am glad to meet us, — Fedor Ivanovich Glinsky answered favorably.

Junker, in high spirits, approached the table at which the other junkers were standing. Albrecht, was near, with an empty glass in his hand, and looked, a little to the side. Alexey saw who his friend was looking at. It was that Italian, Isabella Lancini, who was in the possession of two junkers, in the uniforms of the Life Hussar Regiment.

— Burlin, don't you waste any time? Timrot remarked.

“You're a genius in the Landler!” That's right, partner, was crazy! — added Zimin, — yes, I drove you into the paint, Burlin! Excuse me...

And, junker with a laugh, he bowed a little. It didn't even make much sense to be angry here. Moreover, they were junkers of their regiment. Well, here, there were junkers from the label hussar? And Burlin grinned, having conceived a kind of caverza.

— Albrecht, come on? Alexey said quietly, “Mrs. Lancini said there.

— Why not? Junker readily answered.

Two cavalry guards approached, Albrecht nodded ceremoniously to the lady, and said loudly:

— I beg you for a catillon, my kindest lady.

“That would be nice,” the black-eyed beauty answered.

“But, Seniorita Lancini, did you want to dance with me?” Hussar intervened.

But, Albrecht hastily carried the lady to the floor. Music sounded, a ringing melody of a perky cotillon rang out. Couples swirled in the dance.

— Apparently, you could not convince the lady, — Alexey reminded of himself, — Junker Burlin, at your service, gentlemen...

“Would you like to walk to the pond towards dawn?” There is a great place. Juncker Shemnitsky, at your service. I suppose your mate would keep us company? And this, and my friend, Junker Reader.

“Don't mind. It's a great evening, and the company is nice. I understand that there will be pistols, gentlemen?

Burlin, as he himself believed now, spoke briefly and harshly. It was not enough to drop the honor in front of the life hussars! He didn't think about the rest now. To be honest, he was angered by the very appearance of this hussar cadet.

— Yes, and I wouldn't want to waste time on swords, — Alexey added.

“Excellent thought. Reader, come on, there is a beautiful Rhine! — Shemnitsky remembered the important, — and you, Burlin. Should we get to know each other properly? And then it is completely indecent to shoot with a stranger!

At the table, everything was burning with hussar raspberry mentics. Here, only fellow soldiers of Alexey's new acquaintances gathered.

— Ah, knight, and all in white! — the officer spoke loudly and laughed, — Rotmister Tsyganov! — called the cordial khoyain of the table, — Here, and your glass of wine! Shemnitsky, I look, do you find new friends?

“Not without that,” the young man remarked a little evasively.

Well, Burlin, without a shadow of somneia, drained a glass of wine. However, immediately filled again. While intoxication did not take him. Rather, he was getting a little hot.

However, here, like a certain uninvited angel, another acquaintance, Princess Natalya Drubetskaya, appeared. She frowned a little, watching such a funny gathering. Fanned, sighed with displeasure, folded this decoration at once, touching her left hand. I made one small step towards the cavalry guard in a white colet. To hesitate would be just an insult, and the junker could not do this. Burlin, hastily got rid of the glass here, and went up to the princess, and politely, with meaning, bowed.

— Alexey, I remember, promised you a cotillon, — she said imperiously, — come on, here we are not interested.

— Of course, Natalia Petrovna!

Junker led the lady to the dancers, and they also joined this cheerful army. It was the first cotillion at the ball, but apparently not the last.

— Be careful, Alexey. That hussar, Shemnitsky, a fair *zabiyaka*. Already fought in duels a dozen times. If not for his mother, so long ago he would have been sent from the Life Guards to the Sumy Regiment, and maybe to the Orenburg line.

“We just talked. Brought acquaintance. Quite a pleasant interlocutor.

— And Mr. Albrecht is dancing with this Italian woman? This will anger Baroness Wolf. It’s so careless.

“Why?” Burlin did not understand.

Drubetskaya changed a little in her face, smiling mysteriously. Yes, it painted her so much, making her almost beautiful. Her dark eyes settled on the junker’s face, and she hurriedly lowered them and slowly said:

— Baroness has three daughters to issue... Your friend, this is an absolutely important party for the Wolf family. The widow has to take over the family’s affairs. But, don’t tell Albrecht about it, I hope for your delicacy, knight...

— Just impassable wilds for me... Above all intelligence.

“Nothing too complicated. Here, the career of your squadron chief was decided thanks to the influence of his wife, — the princess noted condescendingly.

— I noticed how Varvara Alekseevna is very attached to her husband. It does not really resemble a marriage of convenience, excuse me.

— Of course... But, she is from Razumovsky... The most influential, richest family at the court of the sovereign.

And, Natalya Petrovna, smiling kindly, interrupted the conversation. She made a graceful turn here, holding only her fingertips on his palm. This girl was sweet and attractive, and very smart, judging by the words. Burlin, however, decided that Anna Grigorievna was much more beautiful than Princess Drubetskaya. Let’s say, like a rose lush with beauty, and a cute, pleasant snowdrop. And who was Glinkskaya? What kind of flower could you compare it with, choose the right words? Such a question just turned around in his head, depriving him of peace. Well, rather, an orchid, passionate and dangerous for its heavy beauty.

Here, however, Princess Drubetskaya smiled so charmingly and sweetly at him. Her full lips curved a little, becoming so attractive, unique.

“Are you thinking again?” — asked Drubetskaya, again tearing Alexei out of his dreams, — is it possible to be bored at the ball?

— No... Rather, there was the thought of my Coal, my horse, you know...

The answer was given with the expectation of arousing the wrath of the girl... But she only smiled slyly.

— At the ball, you dream of a stallion... However, Alexey, so you will surpass everyone with wit.

But then, the orchestra came to the aid of the cadet, stopping in order to rest a little. The cavaliers took the ladies, where slightly tired pretenders could sit a little on the sofas, and taste the cool *crewchon*. Burlin also bowed to Drubetskaya, thanks to the girl for the dance, and also seated the princess next to the maids of honor. Those threw assessing glances at him, and, the junker, slightly cheekily flicking his heels, then hastily retreated, leaving Natalia alone.

Drubetskaya turned to Countess Orlova, calmly said:

— Glad you’re here... Agree, Count Rumyantsev made a great ball. Such a wonderful evening.

— Yes, fine. And most importantly, Natalie, that you are not wasting time, — agreed the countess, — spend time in such an excellent society.

“Yes, in the end, the Cavalier Guards not only protect the peace of the Sovereign,” noted Tatishcheva, who was sitting next to Orlova, “but also do not miss the ladies from society. Pamper, they do it best. And your gentleman is very good with himself. Very sweet boy.

The two state ladies looked at each other, smiling in agreement. Natalia was a little hurt by their words, but why, she knew the morals of the court. And I should not pay attention to every barb.

Then Drubetskaya looked around, looking for Burlin. She noticed that he went with Albrecht to the door with the life hussars. I got up, about to leave, as I heard:

— Natalia Petrovna, but you promised to tell what happened to Countess Sheremeteva? Is that really true? How is this possible?

The gofmasterina herself spoke, and Drubetskaya could not leave, it would be just an insult to this lady. And, at that moment, her heart just shrank painfully, she felt that she was turning pale, and hastily covered her face with a fan. I tried to breathe deeper, but the corset pressed so hard on the ribs, it was simply unbearable. I could not calm down. What did this evil boy do to her! She did not want others to see her weakness. All that remained was to hope that everything would work out. She sat, trying to restrain herself, listened to Tatishcheva’s stupid speeches, and read a prayer to herself.

Duel

— Here is a good place, Albrecht, agree, — Shemnitsky calmly said, — the moon shines better than any lantern. There will be no need to light a fire.

Hussar walked along the trampled grass, as if he often visited this place. It was not noticeable that he was at least a little afraid of the undesirable outcome of the fight, as if he considered himself conspiratorial.

— Yes, glade, quite glorious. It suits us, — the cavalry guard deliberately calmly answered, looking around, — we will not give a miss.

The sky was indeed completely cloudless, the moon, shining with a yellowish disk, hung high above them. And her silver light perfectly illuminated everything around, however, it also generated long, deep black shadows, stretching, like greedy hands, from the trees that stood nearby. The thickets of hazel looked just charcoal, and their leaves sparkled with silver. The view turned out to be more mysterious than frightening.

— Two more will be seconds. They will charge two pairs of pistols. Do you mind? Shemnitsky asked.

— Two more will be seconds. They will charge two pairs of pistols. Do you mind? Shemnitsky asked.

— As well as these rules will suit, — agreed Albrecht.

Hussar nodded. Duelists stood by the trees, but the seconds were located on the stump, quickly loading two pairs of excellent pistols.

“Don’t worry, gentlemen. These pistols are Littich, excellent work, do not give misfires, — Reeder assured.

— It’s nice to hear, — Alexey noted.

I saw how calm Albrecht was, and the junker tried to follow the example of a friend. At these moments I did not want to show weakness in front of the life hussars, and especially in front of myself. True, Burlin heard the hasty whisper of another hussar:

— It’s against the rules, gentlemen... Doubles duel? I have not heard of such a thing!

— Nothing, it will cost... Kobrin, measure in steps...

And the hussar, nodding, began to wander. Ten steps later he stuck the saber into the ground, and another fifteen or two. Such an unpretentious action did not take much time. Then the seconds came, with open boxes, giving you the choice of pistols.

— This, perhaps, will do! Albrecht remarked.

— Well, this, me... — added Burlin.

Both stood on one side of the field, holding pistols in their right hands, so that the blue muzzle looked up. Opposite stood Reader and Shemnitsky. Their crimson uniforms seemed black in the moonlight.

One of the seconds came forward, taking over the duties of the manager, and spoke loudly:

— Gentlemen, you can agree on my command. You can shoot at will. Stop are obliged about fifteen steps, where sabers are stuck. Would you like to reconcile?

Actually, these words were an empty formality. No one even deigned to answer.

— Okay... — Kobrin continued loudly, — Converge, gentlemen!

Burlin walked calmly, however, was afraid to stumble, and seem ridiculous. I hoped that his legs would not tremble, or, this is not noticeable to others. However, he was excited, and his heart beat just furiously.

Opposite him was the enemy, Reader, still holding the pistol with the barrel up. Now Alexey remembered all the lessons of the governor Verdier, and with considerable gratitude. He argued that you should always shoot first:

“Alexis, understand... A person is always afraid... By this you will immediately deprive the enemy of peace. You miss it, well, but he will be excited, and almost certainly will not fall. Hands will shake... This is also chess, like any fight. And you have to think what you’re doing.”

Then Burlin stopped, stood in a rack, sideways, putting his right leg forward, for stability, and began to aim. Reader did not stop. His mentic, crimson in color, seemed black, like a raven wing, and shiny in the moonlight. A little fluttered in the wind. But, there was no time to hesitate, as they indulge in doubts, and, at once pulling the trigger, Burlin fired. Thundered, white smoke rose, glistened, as if woven from foil. Junker, looked at the enemy, he felt the sleeve of the mentic. Alexey stood sideways at the saber, covering his chest with a pistol. And Reader, and rightly so, hesitated. Nearly dropped his gun, but then took aim and fired a shot. The bullet whistled somewhere nearby, Burlin, did not pay much attention to it.

Well, their comrades converged on the barrier itself. Shemnitsky fired first, knocking his hat off Albrecht. The same, after a little thought, discharged his pistol, firing into the air.

— Not otherwise, Albrecht, did you want to go to the moon? ‘the hussar joked.

“Why?” I shot you, Shemnitsky. I suddenly thought you were just floating in the clouds...

“How poetic,” chuckled the life hussar.

— Gentlemen! Do you think the duel is over? — the manager intervened.

— If, gentlemen Shemnitsky and Reader don’t mind? Burlin replied, as the gentlemen of the hussars would like.

“No, we’ve had enough. I, personally, am very happy to meet the cavalry guards!

Shemnitsky came closer, and, removing the glove of his right mouth, extended his hand to Albrecht. He, without hesitation, shook hands with a new comrade.

— Burlin hits perfectly from twenty steps. Remember, Eugene, — said Reader, with a laugh showing his friend a hole from a bullet in the sleeve of a mentic.

Alexey was a little embarrassed by what had happened. Well, just a little. Here, accidentally spoiled the new festive uniform of a new comrade. True, this man would have killed him without doubt and worries, but, the mentality was really beautiful, perfectly sewn, English cloth.

— Moreover, gentlemen... A great reason to drink. By the way, I propose to note our acquaintance! Shemnitsky suggested.

— It will be far from “Red Zucchini,” Shemnitsky, — Albrecht noted, — we will not have time to turn around.

— There is a public house and closer. With good wine, — replied the hussar, removing the pistols.

The main instigator looked thoughtfully at the boxes with discharged, still acutely smelling burnt gunpowder, and said loudly:

— Kobrin, do mercy, be kind, shout my batman, let him take the pistols.

— Now.

As Burlin noted, among the life hussars of his rank, Shemnitsky had considerable authority, and enjoyed this without hesitation. Modesty and shyness, of course, greatly bypassed him.

— Well, gentlemen? Will we continue the evening? Shemnitsky asked with a grin.

— Why not? Albrecht answered calmly.

To be honest, Burlin did not hurt all this, but it was not suitable to retreat in front of the hussars. Moreover, I already felt that this evening would not end with anything good.

New day

Who claimed that mornings could be kind? This is a completely stupid thought of a retrained philosopher. In fact, waking up from the dream world is always cruel. In place of sweet dreams comes cruel reality. The sound of the signal horn simply cut his ears desperately, and, the unfortunate Burlin sat on the edge of his bed and in complete exhaustion and grabbed his head. I had to get up, and before my eyes there were such magical dreams...

— Here, master, drink brine. Very, you know, helps. From the best cucumbers, only a new keg was opened...

— Thank you, Fedor.. And, wash. Uniform cook! Narrowing, brother...

A large clay mug was in the hand of a junker who was tired after last night. He carefully took one sip, then another, and drank everything to the bottom. Excellent brine, with currant leaf, with horseradish, the taste seemed simply extraordinary. He even closed his eyes from pleasure. But there was no time to bask, and Alexei instantly tore off a stale shirt that stuck to his body. And then, the batman brought a bowl and a jug of water, the young man began to wash. Splashed a little, immediately fatigue as a hand removed. And then the caring Fedor rubbed his back with a towel, so everything went away.

— Coffee, master? asked about the important batman.

— Yes, give a couple of cups at once. And, I'm in the service

— You would sing... And then all day on the parade ground, but on the Manege later, I heard from Vakhmister Matyushin...

— Right, carry... — showed the mercy of Burlin.

No, now I wanted to eat scary. Yes, to admit that Fedor was again right, there was abstinence over the strength of the young man. Just, he said nothing, but took up the silver fork and knife.

The food was unwise but hearty. Boiled beef with bread, and a little mustard, to arouse appetite. The young man ate everything, leaving the plate clean. Indeed, it felt better, and the strength increased. Junker washed his hands, and undertook to equip himself. Now again, stabs, but ratings on buttons, with short boots. Not at the ball, I was going to the service. And Fedor combed, but powdered his head. He didn't like it, but he had to endure it.

— Carry the sword, — recalled Burlin, — why froze?

— Now, sir... Yes, here's another... When you left the hall, with the hussars, important ladies were looking for you. Not personally, but their servants. Here, Prokhor handed over letters from Princess Glinkaya, and Ivan, from Princess Drubetskaya. Very polite people, exactly...

— Why was he silent? — and Burlin strictly looked at the batman, — I always told you that you would start with the main thing, Fedor.

“Yes, Princess Drubetskaya was very worried. Personally came to your crew, threatened... In general... I forgot, worried.

Denshchik folded his hands in front of him, which he always did, as he was worried. And he did not want to upset the master.

— You, Fedka, as the face of the dastardly class, should not worry. I was just scared, so say so, — Burlin said harshly.

— And then... Lady, she is so strict... Well, the one that is younger. I kept quiet. Well, I listened, so... Agreed, did not mind.

— Well done, Fedor. Today I will write a letter, take Princess Drubetskaya.

— And then Prokhor said, in words, that on Sunday, Princess Glinskaya is waiting for you in her salon.

Here Burlin, moved his eyebrows, kind of angry. Well, the daddy in the estate has seen enough of how to impose severity on himself... Although, of course, it's nice when the ladies pay more attention. After pausing, he calmly said:

“And I'll write to her.

Burlin looked again at the letters, in almost identical brown envelopes, sealed with wax seals. Everything was safe and sound, and you won't stick. All one, strictly looked at the batman, so as not to think of himself too much.

I sat down at the table and composed two messages. One for Glinskaya, the other for Drubetskaya. Even became pleased with his work,

— What, Fedor! I'm in the service, and you are serving by mail. Do not lose letters only.

— Got it, master. And who?

— This is for Princess Drubetskaya, and this is for Princess Glinskaya. Look, don't mix it up!

Burlin said this, and strictly waved his finger in front of the denman's nose. He did everything like Burlin Sr., and, calmed down, left the apartment. He was expected by the faithful and obedient, already saddled, Sooty, and the royal service.

Postman of Destiny

And the batman Fedor rubbed his chin in thoughtfulness, sighed heavily, and began to shave himself. He used, without any demand, a porcelain basin and a master's razor. After all, the master sent to rich houses, and not he himself volunteered for such a service. I had to match, and therefore easily got rid of unnecessary doubts. Calmly soaked his cheeks and chin, and sat down in front of the mirror to enjoy the procedure. The blade glided across his skin like ice skates in winter. And, after some labors, he began to look quite adventurous, as his new friend Sidor, cadet Albrecht, liked to say. He put on a uniform, albeit not white, but gray, laid down by a non-combatant cavalry guard regiment. I prepared a brick, but slowly rolled along the road. The people were not surprised, did not pay much attention to him. Say the batman is going for himself, which means that he needs it. A lot of here on the affairs of servants on the roads walked, who on the case, and who and so, empty-handed schlendral. Fedor asked one of these:

— Hear, good man, you, here, don't know where the house of princes Drubetsky?

— So in St. Petersburg, serving. And here, only Princess Natalya Petrovna Drubetskaya lives, since she serves the Empress Elizaveta Alekseevna herself.

— Thanks.

The clerk slapped the reins, sent forward his coward. The horse stubbornly shook his tail like a Sivka-Burka from a fairy tale, and, made mercy, took him to the fence. Well, like a fence — a solid painted carved palisade. Fedor got off the wagon, knocked on the gate. A janitor quickly approached, sober, and a representative child, with a blue caftan, black harem pants, in an apron and in a case with a visor.

— A letter to the lady Drubetskaya, from Alexei Mikhailovich Burlin, my master.

— Now, — the janitor muttered like a bear on a chain, — I will call the butler. It is necessary to report, the Lady is strict, ordered, not to accept any letters from the gentlemen of the officers.

— How did I come? Should I go home?

“I’ll go and ask. And then, Natalya Petrovna suddenly suffers. For me, here, to lose a wine portion because of you, is not at all a reason.

— I’m waiting...

Fedor, out of boredom and for greater solidity, took out his straw, stuffed it with shag, and lit it. And time went faster. But then the door in the house disappeared noisily, and the lady herself escaped from the stairs, and the butler hurried after her, judging by the bright livery.

— Yes, where are you young lady herself, I myself would... — the butler muttered, — none of the matter... And then your father will suffer...

— Silence Stepan, and that one I’m overshadowing... — a sharp answer was given.

Fedor is from sin, he removed the phone immediately, He put it on the gate. Not scared, of course, but just in case. I decided what was better...

— Ah, you, Fedor, — said the young lady.

She recognized him immediately. It was evident that the girl was straight, that she herself was not her own. Pale, yes blackening shadows under the eyes. It looked like a word, they put more beautiful in the coffin. His hands were shaking at the angry one, but she, so that the messenger would not see, quickly removed them behind her back.

— What is there? — strictly said, almost shouted, — killed?... Answer!

She spoke and although very sharply, but, with difficulty restrained, and the sponges are scarlet, gentle, already bit, waiting for the response of the Denchik. Eyes, brown, wide open...

— No, young lady, Christ, apparently, kept my master. Everything is fine, nothing happened. And he instructed me to convey the letter to you. You, here, are not angry only...

And, Fedor with a bow (I suppose the back will not break), handed out a brown envelope. Actually, there were two in the bag that the master gave him today. But the addressee was not signed. But, the batman was confident in himself, and knew that he could not make a mistake.

“Come here,” the young lady quickly scouted and reached out.

And the princess eagerly broke the seal, unfolded the message, and began to read. And Fedor would not have believed if he had not seen for himself how the lady’s face immediately changed. Her face froze, the shadows under her eyes disappeared, as if their napkin had been erased. Drubetskaya turned to the butler, he instantly ran up, obediently bowed, waiting for the words of the hostess.

— Stepan, give the batman a ruble, and feed in human. Drive the wagon into the yard.

“Now, lady,” said the butler.

He removed a worn silver coin from his pocket, and put it in Fedor’s hand. The money was, for him, much like a lot. The clerk hid the gift in his leather bag. The princess, holding the letter in her hand, instantly climbed the stairs and disappeared into the house. And the butler silently waited for Fedor to follow him. Impatiently only asked, then:

— What? So will you stand?

Fedor looked back, looked again at the princess’s house. I felt an envelope with a message for Glinskaya, in a leather bag. He touched with doubt, felt with strong fingers the hard and rough thick paper, the seal of the master. I thought, nevertheless, why didn’t Alexei Mikhailovich sign the messages? He introduced him directly into excitement, in doubt. And what is he? As they say, he does so, with all possible diligence. To say the truth, it’s good that they fed him here, honor by honor. Noble cabbage soup, with govyadinka, and millet porridge, good and berry jelly. Now, already for the whole day he gained strength, and he sat confidently in the cart.

And his horse Kaurai rode calmly, waved his tail, and Fedor, and did not drive especially, felt sorry for the cattle. And she, she felt the attitude, did not mischievous. So they drove to the house of Princess Glinskaya.

Nothing special, let's say, Fedor did not feel. Manor as a manor, small in size. Nevertheless, the house was not princely, but the tsar, given for a while. Everyone, consisting of the retinue of the emperor and empress, from the Office of Palace Property, was given such estates for a while. Fedor got smart here, learned to understand all these intricacies, he had already seen enough of everything.

He rolled to the fence, made an important face to cheer up the servant, but knocked on the wicket with a whip.

“What do you want?” the gatekeeper asked.

— An important message from my owner, Alexei Mikhailovich Burlin. Here, a letter for the lady, Elizabeth Ivanovna herself.

— Come on, I'll tell you.

The man, what can I say, was prominent, but solid. Trust, inspired, no words. I didn't want to argue with him.

— You won't report to your brother? — Nevertheless, Fedor decided.

“Don't be afraid. How do they call you at least? the lady's man answered.

— So the batman, Fedor Ivanovich Alekseev.

“That's it, I'll tell you. I am the gatekeeper, Evgraf Kuzmich. Okay, it's time for me, in a hurry.

Fedor corrected his cap, and, thinking, got into the master's wagon, got comfortable there.

— But, let's go! — cheered up his non-combatant horse.

She, at once, pulled sharply, rather rushed from her place, almost throwing off a slightly stunned saddle. Fedor was about to pull a coward lash along the ridge, but he thought about it. And then, after all, it's a pity... And the horse did not like this place either, and he, to be honest, did too. Uncomfortable was here, alarming.

He sighed, somehow he did not understand these ladies. Here, one was directly killed, and the other, as if she still had it, did not deign to go out.

Well, Fedor, after all, did everything as the master ordered. He remembered this clearly. This means that Princess Glinskaya herself decided, and not his Denshchitsky business, to discuss the decision of the noble person. Fedor convinced himself of such thoughts, and calmed down. And he was already driving calmly, however, regretting that he was not fed here.

Lunch at the Kurolesovs. Colonel Kostetsky

— Come to the table, Mikhail Arkadyevich! Everything is already ready! — Zoya Pavlovna said in a sweet, simply sugar tone.

— I'm very glad. Very nice in your apartment, the kindest Grigory Ilyich, — answered the officer.

— Yes, you know, service, for the Mining Department. And so they would live in our village, in the Tver province. Beautifully very, forest, and pond available.

— And I, in the Pskov province, near Gdov two villages. Yes, I can't be often, service. And now, in such times, I'm afraid I won't achieve vacation, if only next summer.

— Why so, Mikhail Arkadyevich? Zoya Pavlovna asked again.

— Not brought to us. And the duties of the chief of the regiment impinge on me considerable duties, — said Kostetsky, often looking at the silent Anna, — you know, great difficulties with the delivery of food. All the time you have to remind local landowners of their duties, according to the layout. They strive to hold the grain until winter. when the price is higher. It happens that Prince Bagration himself has to intervene, shame the landowners.

— Well, let's go to the dining room, everything is ready there! — Mr. Kurolesov recalled the tone of the cordial owner.

— Of course!

And the colonel stood up himself, stretched out his hand, helping Anna Grigorievna to rise. He felt that her fingers were colder than ice, and his eye did not lift him. However, Kostetsky was glad of this turn of events. The bride was marvelous. And, even if they did not give a lot of dowry for her, but all one thing, she would be the only heiress of the estate. Yes, and Grigory Ilyich Kurolesov, as Kostetsky knew, was in full view of Count Rumyantsev himself, the head of the Mining Department, and, with the rank of state councilor, and there, even before the rank of real privy councilor, there were very few.

— Come on, Anna Grigorievna. See me off, “the colonel added.

— Yes, of course, — the girl barely opened her mouth, hardly answered the prominent gentleman.

And the colonel looked very impressive, as Anna Grigorievna nevertheless noticed. The order turned white in its buttonhole, shading the red gate of the military frock coat. The picturesque gray hair turned white on the temples, thick hair fell on the very eyebrows of Mikhail Arkadyevich, adding something lion-like to the image, and breathing courage.

But now, the Kurolesov family and their guest sat down at the dinner table. Efim Ilyich, already elderly, served, topping up wine in empty glasses, and delivered snacks perfectly arranged on porcelain dishes.

After they served excellent coffee, perfectly brewed by Efim. The servant sharpened in this matter, accompanying Grigory Ilyich on long trips.

— Simply excellent, — Mikhail Arkadyevich praised, — perhaps, better than I in Milan tried.

— Have you ever been to Italy? said Anna.

— Of course, in the campaign of Generalissimo Suvorov himself. I was then in the rank of lieutenant, and participated in the Italian company, under the command of General Bagration. The places there are really beautiful, but there was no time to admire. The marches were heavy, but they were able to surprise the Frenchman... And, they beat General Moreau on the Adde River. The terrain is not easy, mountainous, but nothing, managed. They captured the troops of General Serurier. And there, the city of Milan opened the gates for us... Italians greeted us just enthusiastically...

Anna listened to this, and tried to imagine such distant places about which she had only read. I knew for sure that this was a seasoned warrior, a true hero who had looked death in the eye more than once. Standing at the same time without shooting under enemy bullets and cores. Not some figlar from Nevsky, flanking the Palace Embankment in search of invented jokes. And now she looked at Kostetsky, with completely different eyes. This slim, fit colonel seemed to her already significant, interesting, inspiring confidence.

— And then, the battle of Trebia, the pursuit of MacDonald. The heat, already terrible, was very difficult for us. And on the fourth of August, Novi had a battle, we defeated the French, General Joubert himself was killed. Well, I was wounded in the arm, and dropped out of the army. And, in the Swiss campaign did not participate, maybe God took me, saved...

Soon, Colonel Kostetsky bowed out and left the Kurolesovs' apartment. Grigory Ilyich settled in a chair, imposingly laying his legs on a bench. I filled the tube and lit it with pleasure. Zoya Pavlovna smiled patronizingly, but coughed, and waved her palm in front of her, dispersing tobacco smoke.

“What are you, Grigory Ilyich,” the woman said reproachfully.

— The day passed perfectly, Zoya Pavlovna, — Kurolesov noted.

— You really think so?

— Undoubtedly.

— What will Annushka say? Mama asked her daughter with a smile.

— Good man Mr. Kostetsky, — the young lady said with difficulty, — I am not against this marriage. Once you like it.

— Ah, my daughter! Zoya Pavlovna replied with delight.

The woman was already going to kiss her daughter in abundance of feelings, but she got up from the table, and stubbornly added:

— All one thing, I don't like him! — at the same time, stamped her foot.

She said that, and hurriedly left the living room, and then just ran down the corridor. Ksenia, with a tray in her hands, simply pressed herself against the wall, saving the master's porcelain, and Anna, having torn the handle of the door to her bedroom, rushed to the bed, covering her head with a pillow. I sobbed, endlessly feeling sorry for myself at that moment. I remembered Alexei again, but then I squeezed my eyes with my hands, as if I could make myself forget, get out of myself this impossible love. Lay for so long. Here, still calming down, she was able to fall asleep. Only everything felt how cold her legs were.

Squadron on exercise

Alexey sat on Ugolka, sometimes adjusting the stirrups. Yesterday, they played ball with Albrecht, and he slightly pulled his leg. Now, this interfered with him a little, he could not feel the stirrups. And today, after all, he was in the ranks, among the officers of the squadron.

The field was chosen excellent, without potholes and rifts, the best for horse exercises. Not only a squadron, but a whole regiment and even a division could be built and maneuvered here.

— Disband the flankers! Colonel Repnin commanded loudly.

The bugler, in a helmet with a red crest, sounded loudly, giving this signal to the shooters. And, twelve cuirassiers each, with carbines, had already trotted on the flanks of the squadron.

— Broadsword, out! 'the following order followed.

And, with a clang, the huge blades left the cold sheaths of the huge riders, and were already shining over the formation, as if forming another line. Albrecht and Burlin rode behind the squadron officers, on the right flank, also with broadswords overhead. Alexey felt the full weight of this serious weapon, clutching the steel handle with his palm, covered with a white leather glove. We had to get used to it, stay in the saddle, control a mighty horse, and be ready to fight with cold weapons.

And, I must say, this whole system, one hundred and thirty fighters on black horses, simply shocked. A squadron badge roared over the cavalry guards, with a Jerusalem white cross on a red background. And the horsemen, not just reminded, but were the true knights of the Order, crusaders. Three rows of horsemen. skillfully maneuvered, obeying a skillful commander, without slowing down the pace. During turns to the left, to the right, the formation was not violated, the cavalry guards jumped with a trot, built in three rows, with a line of forty horses. They were truly indescribable...

Here, Burlin, noticed a small retinue traveling to them, and Prince Repnin hastily commanded:

— What!

The fourth squadron stopped. The captains hastily deployed the lines, and Burlin finally understood why. Ahead of the retinue of two generals — Depreradovich and Count Uvarov, Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich himself rode on a thundering bay stallion.

“Well, again,” Albrecht said quietly with a touch of annoyance.

It was not noticeable that Alexander was glad to see the chief. As if he had a premonition of trouble.

— What is it? Alexey did not understand.

— Constantine Pavlovich again in equestrian uniform... Look, again we will get nuts... Something, but bad, will find... Or, again, one of the gentlemen of the officers was caught on what cover.

Well, the young man knew about the long-standing rivalry between the regiments and their chiefs. Moreover, Konstantin commanded the entire imperial guard, and, of course, the authority was higher than Count Fyodor Petrovich Uvarov. True, Alexander Pavlovich himself favored the Cavalier Guards more, which further hurt the Horse Guards. And, their boss, Konstantin Pavlovich.

— Entrusted to me the fourth squadron on horse exercises! — Nikolai Grigorievich Repnin gave a report, approaching the Grand Duke.

— I see, I see, — Konstantin answered, — your Cavalier Guards are in perfect order, Prince. The alignment is excellent. Horses, very good. Thank you!

But, the Grand Duke, it seems, was in good spirits, and favorably listened to the report of the squadron commander, Prince Repnin. Depreradovich drove forward to the horse formation, and loudly said to the soldiers:

— Thank you, brothers, for diligence!

— Yay! Hooray! Hooray! — in response, according to the Life Guards.

Then, Depreradovich drove up to the officers, nodded to the squadron commanders.

— Great alignment, gentlemen. You keep the system in perfect order. And I am pleased with your diligence, and, Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich as well. Count Uvarov today will certainly report to the sovereign himself about such successes.

“We are trying to justify the favors of the Sovereign,” Repnin was already responsible for all.

— I was always sure of you, Nikolai Grigorievich, — said Depreradovich, and returned to the retinue.

Yes, the regiment commander was doing well, sitting on his thousandth stallion. And the horse, for sure, was like his saddle, was also with character. Flaunted, got hot, raising his tail. As if he understood and was proud of his place in the ranks.

The Grand Duke and his companions went on to check the teachings of the cavalry. And, Repnin, adjusting the belt of his helmet, raised his hand, giving a signal to the bugler. The squadron began to rebuild in marching order, with a badge, in the form of the Jerusalem cross, at the head of the column. Here Alexei presented himself as a knight, a crusader, going on a campaign to the Holy Land, under the sacred banner. I regretted, however, that he did not have a shiny cuirass on his chest, so it would be completely fine.

Theater, love and swords

— So what, Alexey? And we, junkers, are allowed into the theater today.

— Maybe if necessary. I'll come for a while, “Burlin answered evasively.

To tell the truth, he expected some news, especially possible after yesterday's note, which read with Spartan brevity: "Wait." And, familiar with discipline, Junker, patiently waited. Moreover, the letter was from Elizabeth Ivanovna herself, Princess Glinskaya, and he smiled dreamily. Albrecht made a surprised face and made another argument:

— Mrs. Lancini herself will sing today. Isabella is extremely beautiful, isn't she?

— Undoubtedly. True, a whole swarm of cavaliers winds around it, — Alexey noted a little carefully.

— That's understandable. Beauty attracts.

— Yes, around her the boyfriends curl like flies.

— Do you, Alexey, think that Isabella, washes only flies? You know, another word, and I'll call you! Alexander spoke with the threat made in his voice.

— Not really... I wanted to compare it with sweet honey. Well, like “flies on honey,” you know the proverb?

But it seems that Albrecht did not even notice these words. In front of a small mirror, he carefully studied his uniform. It seems that only now the person offered to do business, take a walk,

shoot at each other. And here, as if he had forgotten about everything. Here Burlin only spread his arms in amazement.

— Sidor, cleaned my hat? Boots? Alexander Ivanovich asked sternly, without stopping to check the buttons of the colet.

— So everything is ready, your nobility. In the best possible way, you can appear in front of the young lady. Just handsome...

— Why did you decide so?

“How else?”

“I’m going to the opera.

— But what to do in the theater, except not on a date with a young lady? — the batman was sincerely surprised, — you love horses more, your nobility!

“The voice of the people, the voice of God,” Burlin said immodestly.

Juncker could hardly restrain himself, so as not to laugh at the top of his voice. Especially, as a comrade’s stretched face noticed at once.

“You don’t know too much about art, Burlin. Here you understand, you need some refinement, and you lack it. Therefore, you need to go to the opera.

“The arguments are quite convincing.

— And, our junkers from the regiment also gathered. And I need to accomplish some feat...

— Are you longing to win the heart of Sophia Vladimirovna herself, Countess Stroganova?

— I, of course, not Hercules and not Theseus to reach the gates of Hell for the sake of beauty. You just need to get a bouquet of flowers.

— The way is simple, non-winding, Albrecht. Let’s send my wretched orderly, not burdened with excessive throwing of conscience. And, here, for you, five rubles. I think it will be enough to seduce the greenhouse servant with a small gift.

Burlin, in fact, knew that Ivan Lvovich was not too pampering his son with money.

— I will be obliged, Alexey. Call your hero, — Albrecht readily agreed.

— Fedor, come. I suppose I heard everything already? Burlin said loudly.

The Denshchik appeared from the fence, not letting go of the master’s boots, which he almost lovingly cleaned with black wax. Diligently pretended to be a snoop, which is terribly busy now. Even my face was dirty.

— So, of course, Alexey Mikhailovich, — he began, — Famous places. There the Pomeranians grow, they have already ripe, — the batman gave a whole speech, — but flowers, which means flowers. There are also pink bushes... And, my friend, Proshka, he works there in gardeners. Will sell flowers, only, of course, not a whole basket. Well, from the heels, probably...

Colored paper, too, is not difficult to get, it will get into a two-mannered stand, — he slyly looked at the master. — and what kind of bouquet without paper?

— At you and two-green.

— Well, then I’ll go, once you send. Only, here, I will change into a particular dress. It’s not a reason for me to go under the rods if I come across a guard.

— Give, hurry, cunning... — Burlin lost patience.

— And Sidor, we will cook dinner. There are provisions, here, corned beef and potatoes, — Albrecht noted, — let’s eat, just Fedor will return.

Juncker seems to have calmed down, and sat down at the table. Well, Sidor began to fuss at the stove, and soon appeared with a tray, from which he deftly put out a ready-made treat. There was nothing to complain about, and why not. The young people quickly ate, the batman only cleaned the dishes, as they knocked loudly.

— Sidor, look, who’s there?

— Now, your nobility...

The batman went to the door, but quickly returned to the living room. The face of NGO became, a little concerned.

— So, your nobility, cadets from the regiment came...

Three fellow servicemen, Timrot, Minich and Zimin, piled noisily into the room.

— What are you? Still here? It's time to get ready, — Minich began from place to place in the quarry, — Melpomene is not pies, she will not wait! All the more so you, Albrecht. We all thought that you were wandering at the back entrance of this pavilion with the most mysterious view...

— Give up, Minich, right word, not funny...

— Are you in love with Senorina Lancini?

— Not signorina, but senorita, Lancini. She is single, which means senorita.

— What a pity! Minich laughed, I love to look after married ladies!

— Minich, aren't you in love with Isabella? Timrot added.

— No, I just dream of ardent passion. I'm courting, I'm courting this lady, and you, aren't you? I remember how you sent her a box of marzipans? Or, am I wrong?

Albrecht blushed and jumped out of his chair. He came closer to his comrades with the most decisive look and said:

— I don't like the way you say it, Minich...

Juncker in response slightly bowed his head, looked at the interlocutor, then, slapped him on the shoulder, and calmly replied:

— I would agree with you to fight on schlegers, Albrecht, with that Paukanten didn't leave a place.

— Goth to cross a blade with you, Minich.

— However... No, I would not want your chosen one to admire shmiss, the scars on your face, Albrecht...

He paused for a minute, then, thinking, reached out. Alexander readily shrugged it.

— Everything is quite chivalrous... Undoubtedly, I can respect your feelings, — Minich said calmly, — but only as the lady herself decides! 'he finished with a laugh.

And, three junkers, just rolling with laughter, rolled out of the comrades' room. Burlin, not understanding much, shook the stoves, and said:

— What kind of duel on schlegers? I have not heard of this.

— Fight in armor, with an open face, not leaving the place. Injections are applied precisely to the face, — Albrecht answered quite casually, — I'm afraid the authorities will be furious if they find out.

Alexey hardly imagined such a fight. Yes, the fight would require complete concentration, dexterity and iron will. And, a steel blade in front of your eyes...

— Let's go Alexey, it's time. Yes, Fedor is late.

— There, at the theater we catch up. We will go on a two-wheeler, Sidor rules the horses perfectly.

Fedor dressed up in a simple dress, becoming like a tradesman. and the leather apron only complemented his image. And the wheelbarrow, with heavy wheels, was very appropriate. The dipping batman decided that this was very suitable for his image, a craftsman who came on business. In the wheelbarrow lay a voluminous bag, an empty tub, and a brush. He rolled his instrument, sometimes bowing to other workers who passed him. Those sometimes answered back, or simply passed. In front of passing or passing bars, Fedka, without a doubt, broke his hat and bowed low. The case, for the former serf, was very familiar. Here, a white front garden appeared, from flat boards, painted with fresh twists, and nearby, his friend, Prokhor, was walking, with garden scissors in his hands. Just in front of the stone greenhouse, with huge windows allowing so much light inside. Fedor

was simply tormented by doubts, but now, the money given by the owner unspeakably warmed the soul, and encouraged him to feats. Denshchik sighed, coughed for solidity.

— Oh, Fedor, are you here?

— Fyodor Nikitich, for you. Well, I came to the case, Proshka, for a reason. Do you want to buy a bouquet of roses for three rubles.

— You're a sly... No flowers. Everything has been sold out. And they ordered a whole basket from the palace.

— Come on, Prokhor Fomich, surely you won't sell seven flowers for two rubles? You have how much grows.

— There is a village... You can't, I say...

— And look what I have...

And Fedor, slowly, slowly, put a large silver round with the face of the Russian emperor. And how Proshka's eyes do not come off such a seductive coin.

— There are three of them, Fedor. And get your flowers.

— Right now?

— Of course. Wait a bit, I'll take it all out. Give your tub that would be imperceptible.

The gardener briskly grabbed the handle, so much so that the side hit him on the knee. He cried out so offended, but ran inside. And Fedor with a smart look took up the panicle, and began to preen the garden path.

— Good day, Fedor, you're good at it. What did you forget here? Or, do you want to taste the rose?

The voice seemed vaguely familiar, so much so that the batman almost dropped the broom. It's important to sweat all...

— So on the case, Natalya Petrovna... — he said quietly.

Actually, in front of him stood Princess Drubetskaya, in a dark velvet dress. It went to her unusually, but Fedka was afraid to waste compliments, it was not the case. And not the time, and not the place, but who was he?

And the princess's face stretched out, her lips were pursed, and her eyes, as if embers from the stove were burning. She held a fan in her hand as if it were a sharp knife, and with this blade she seemed to want to stick it in his heart.

— You, dear, here not otherwise, for flowers, for this Italian came? she said very softly.

Fedor noticed how angry the young lady was. It means that it is his master's business to keep her evil. It's good that a lady of noble rank, there is a hope that she will not throw herself with a knife or an ax, but then, as she sparkles with her eyes, he thought cautiously.

— I won't lie, young lady... For flowers... — the batman answered carefully.

Drubetskaya stamped her foot, turned away, and it seemed to the batman, it seemed that she was crying. Just whispered:

— I'm going to check...

Fedor to be honest, fooled. Yes, I noticed that the girl was not joking, and began to explain:

— So it is possible, young lady... Only Mr. Albrecht sent me for flowers, not Alexei Mikhailovich... Such a thing, you are not angry.

The princess, quite simply, quietly sniffed. She had her back to him. She wiped her face with a handkerchief, unfolded the fan, hiding behind it, and only then turned around to him.

— Do not lie? she said quietly.

She said, in such a tone, as if she had threatened at once and immediately hoped that the batman would not deceive her, would not turn and play with words.

— Well, as you can, young lady... — Fedor answered calmly, — the true truth, here is the holy cross for you! — and dawned on himself.

— Okay... Here, just keep silent about everything. That I met, and about the conversation it is also silent. And then you can't buy it, do not doubt it, and put a heavy coin in his hand.

Fedor, by the simplicity of his soul, sadly thought that such a small coin would be stuck in his hand. Even now, it became a shame, listened, nodded, agreed with everything, but far away — only two-faced. But, he looked quickly, a yellow round flashed dimly, and all his grievances seemed to have melted away. There was also a real "lobanchik," a chervonets, so cool and beautiful.

Here the Denchik with a big hunt bowed. He would have shuffled with his leg, but he did not know how to do it foldably, he did not want to spoil the impression.

— And the flowers? — he remembered with difficulty about the assignment of the master, — it is very necessary... For Mr. Albrecht.

— Okay, I'll leave, but you quickly leave, as the gardener will endure the flowers. And that's what, tell Alexey... 'she began, but immediately waved hastily and left quickly.

Fedor sighed here. True, the door of the greenhouse opened with a terrible creak, and Proshka's nose leaned out, and then, extremely frightened face.

— Are you a maid of honor? 'he asked, with clear doubt and hope in his voice.

— You see, no. Color come on!

— There are two rubles.

— Here, the ruble, as promised. Do not fool, you cut the flowers, back, you will not stick now!

— You are, clever what! Okay, take it. Remember my kindness!

Fedor parted with the money, and quickly hid the flowers in a tub, covering them with colored paper. Actually, I didn't have to buy it, the two-mannered batman considered it honestly earned. Like two rubles that I received from the master. A fair price for work and fears such.

I picked up my wheelbarrow and rolled it away from here. I barely held out so as not to run away from here. And then, while here he was engaged in business, two carriages arrived, with emblems. And the dozen guides who stood on the steps stared at him with obvious suspicion. And then, the crew door opened, and the unfortunate Fedor saw the smiling face of Princess Glinskaya, Elizabeth Ivanovna herself.

The unfortunate batman almost spat out of annoyance, but came to his senses in time, bowed so low. And Glinskaya beckoned him with her finger. Fedor, with a wheelbarrow, approached closer.

— What is there, your owner does not come to visit me? I heard that Alexey will be present at the concert today? Is the master yours?

— Exactly so... — Fedor answered uncertainly.

— "You'll give him that note, please. And in words, let him stay in the lobby, wait for me. Did you understand well?

— As you please, your ladyship...

— Wow, you for your work.

— So of course, — the batman answered cheerfully, having received another coin, — I will fulfill everything, in the best possible form.

— Right, go.

Fedor wiped the sweat from his nose with his sleeve, but quickly went back to his home. I thought, otherwise, he won't have to meet anyone else, so for sure, until the end of the day. The greed car jumped on bumps, but the batman did not pay attention to such small obstacles. He walked, but looked around, all expecting what else could happen to him here. However, God was merciful, and the batman fatally rolled his load to the fence of the theater. And, then I heard the long-awaited words of the master:

— And, Fedor, the sight of the master suits you.

Denshchik turned around, habitually removed the cap from his head and bowed. Hesitating a little, he replied:

— All that you are joking, master... But now, that's it, for Alexander Ivanovich. He brought it as promised.

— Let me look, — the junker continued impatiently, — do not pull...

— So here, in the tub, everything is laid out, in the best possible way.

Burlin opened the paper, freed the bundle. He gasped only, pricking his fingers with spikes on the stem. He nodded to Albrecht, who was standing next to him. He looked at these seven beautiful roses with pleasure, then carefully wrapped them in colored paper and took them away.

— Well, thank you, Fedor.

And not just a “thank you,” but another whole one was felt in his tenacious hand by the batman. He was now extremely pleased with himself.

“Right word, today is absolutely wonderful, he thought, — he earned no less than four rubles. Yes, and a real chervonets, from the kindest Natalia Petrovna... And, here, I forgot to give the letter, the head is garden...”

— Barin, master! Fedka shouted, and ran with all his feet, catching up with Burlin.

He ran, so he did not immediately catch his breath, and, looking around, pulled off his cap, and from under the lining, solemnly handed the message to Burlin.

— So Alexey Mikhailovich, a letter to you, from Elizaveta Ivanovna. And in words, here, she said to wait for her in the lobby. I can't know what it is.

“Be quiet, fool,” Alexey almost whispered.

— So silent, your nobility. Always and about everything.

— Go home, eat, rest, — Burlin added in another tone, — yes, keep quiet, look.. That's it, go away quickly, do not pillar.

Resolutely, the day was not bad. as Fedor finally decided. They shouted, but for that, they send home to eat and sleep. No, he will certainly cope with such an order, grinning, decided for himself the batman.

Burlin, with a troubled conscience, eluded his comrades who rushed to the buffet. The selected guests of this action proceeded to the boxes. Juncker was able to look around a little, being left alone for now. Well, not to count two footmen standing at the entrance?

This theater, built for the imperial family in Peterhof, was called proudly “Opera House’. This masterpiece was erected by the great Rasstreli himself during the reign of Elizaveta Petrovna. The building adjoined the Western fence of the Upper Garden, and looked very picturesque. Even the entrance itself was good, with ceilings decorated with stucco and murals. As Burlin understood, the artist depicted Melpomene herself and her exploits. More, in the amorous field than in the field of art.

— Come here, Alexey, — the lady spoke strictly and exactly.

It was difficult not to recognize Princess Glinskaya, in such a beautiful outfit. Elizaveta Ivanovna is incredibly good now, in this dress made of silver brocade.

She quickly opened a small door, jerked her young gentleman inside, and quickly entered herself, and locked this shelter from the inside.

— Are you cute? Elizaveta Alekseevna demanded, wanting praise for herself.

The room was small, with a window tightly curtained with dark curtains. On the table, as if hidden in one corner, a lantern burned, flooding this shelter with reddish light. And against the wall, taking up most of the space, a bed shone in gold. A kind of work, as if coming from Poussin's paintings. On the bedspread, picturesquely sagging to the floor, Glinskaya sat down.

— And so cute cavalier will stand? she cooed, I waited.

The lady was not going to wait long, took Alexei's hand, and dug into his lips with a long kiss. Burlin felt the sweet taste of lipstick and the smell of his lady's real perfume.

— Well, that's it, my handsome man, go to your cadets, — the woman whispered.

She carefully rubbed his face from the traces of ardent kisses. Alexey helped tighten the lady's corset, she jokingly lured herself onto it with a fan and smiled.

“We must go. In the week, I will help quench your ardor, my dear knight. And now, we need to be in time in the box. Stats-dama is dressed, — she noticed, looking at her small watch in a gold frame.

Alexey quickly left, passed the foyer, and was able to enter from the other side of the building. He went through the buffet to the auditorium, to the gallery. Here, in the twilight, stood his friends, and the cadets of other guards regiments.

And from the stage, built with incredible decorations by Rasstrelli himself, the beautiful Isabella Lancini sang. The sound of her angelic voice was reflected from the walls, covered with gilding, from the figured ceiling. The musicians of the orchestra brought out the divine aria of Beranadetto Marcello, “The Flame of the Heart” “Quella fiamma che m’assende,”. . “From the heart of the flame in my soul is warmly poured, and I will not let him die out.”

Il miobel foco,
my passion fire,
denza cangiar mai tempre,
will never go out...

He listened, and could not take his eyes off the source of such a sweet song. Poems, music, as if it were about him, about what he felt now, felt with all his heart...

“Quella fiamma che m’assende,
The flame that burns me will never go out,
piace tanto all’alma mia,
So dear to my soul...

And he is not alone, all the spectators who gathered in the hall that evening simply froze in admiration. The song was like a prayer ascended by an Angel to God, and this Angel was standing on stage now. Isabella fell silent, having finished singing, tried to catch her breath.

And then Albrecht managed with a bouquet of lush scarlet roses. Junker bowed gracefully, and handed them to Senorita Lancini. She took them with both hands, as if the greatest gift. It was so amazing — red roses, tinted by the brilliance of the red brocade of her dress. Like the scarlet blood of the heart spilled on gold. The audience erupted in applause, everyone stood up, unable to hide their admiration. They brought whole baskets of flowers, but all this was not as bright and not as bold as with Albrecht's bouquet. It looked like a kind of something important and beautiful, but only as a copy.

Actually, part of the applause was intended for this brave cadet, who was able to show the general experiences and admiration of the audience. Well, Burlin, only recently held captive by Cupid, was infinitely glad that he was here, in these moments. Well, Albrecht returned to the gallery.

“Albrecht, you are magnificent,” Comrade Minich praised.

— This was the act of a true cavalry guard, — Kropotkin also appreciated.

The rest of the cadets, in abundance of feelings, only shook hands with their comrade. Well, he himself, quietly said to Alexei:

— I owe you a lot, Burlin.

The concert continued, the singer with her heavenly voice led the audience farther and farther, as if into a wonderful paradise garden.

The concert ended, but the merry junkers settled down here, next to the theater. Rather, in the thickets of bushes adjacent to the building. Timrot got hold of a couple of bottles of wine, and junkers were applied to this dionysal moisture until they were completely emptied.

— Listen, Albrecht, — Timrot broadcast again, — here, next to it is an exit for theater ministers. Your beauty will come out, fall in front of her legs, ask for leniency. Why suffer so much?

— Yes, you should show madness, — Minich said uncertainly, — The regulation obliges..

His drunk wine penetrated more than others, he turned very red and often smiled. Repents, for no reason. However, he has not yet rampaged. The romantic hero himself was now silent.

An elegant black carriage drove up to the entrance, without emblems, but with rich and prominent horses drawn into it. Three ministers jumped off the steps, in dark clothes. Simple, philistine, but well sewn. They, these people, quickly, without a doubt and koleani, entered the door of the theater, as if to their home. We returned quickly, but not alone. Here Alexey shuddered, and Albrecht rushed forward, but he was stopped by Timrot and Minich.

— Wait, we are even without weapons. And these, they did not forget about pistols, — Minikh commanded, — Kropotkin, you are driving behind a carriage, without losing sight. And we, now, will capture sabers, raincoats and pistols. It will be stupid if we are recognized. Drive, Timrot, hurry.

— I'll be back quickly!

Junker disappeared into the bushes, rushed to the horses standing at the leash. Only the roar of hooves on the ground could be heard.

— What did you think, Baron?

— Albrecht, we took the oath... — answered Minich, — But, as true knights, we can help not fall too low to Tsesarevich. And, our dignity will not suffer. And we will save the radiant person from this sin.

Kropotkin threw a frock coat over the stake, and drove after the black crew of the kidnappers.

Tsesarevich often behaved unworthily. He slandered his wife, Anna Fedorovna, slandered her, they say, she is in connection with captain Ivan Linev. What is even more shameful is that Linev served in the Cavalier Guard regiment. And Konstantin Pavlovich was now comforted in the arms of Princess Zhanetta Chetvertinskaya, like his brother Alexander, in the company of his sister, Maria Antonovna Naryshkina. The vile incident with Madame Araujo was heard by the whole world, as was her terrible death. So everyone knew the name of Major General Karl Fedorovich Bour, adjutant Konstantin Pavlovich, a participant in all these nastiness. It was just incredible, a descendant of an associate of Peter the Great, was involved in such worthless things.

— I will not let this happen, do not even hope! Albrecht whispered.

Minich nodded, agreeing. Actually, Burlin was entirely on the side of his comrade. They were simply obliged to act. And to stand and wait was simply unbearable.

— Here, gentlemen, brought everything! Timrot shouted triumphantly

Junker dropped two large coolies to the ground, one of which rang guho with steel. Minich turned his cool, looked at his sabers.

— Timrot, what crypt did you get it from? Blades are one hundred years old!

— What should I do? He took it off the walls. I couldn't go to the tseikhgauz, I'm afraid. You can't agree with the wahmister. I don't want to spend another month in four walls.

— You are an excellent student with us, Timrot, — Minich praised him with a laugh, — now, hurry!

It has already begun to darken. Yes, such clothes, black and gray, were by the way, especially for such already dense dusk. They rode quickly, not sparing their thousandth horses. But for no reason, Minich raised his hand, urging him to stop.

— What is it? Albrecht asked impatiently, pale as death itself.

— Vot, Kropotkin's stallion. Hurry up, gentlemen. Who will stay here to guard the horses? I suggest Essen.

— But, gentlemen...

“No time. Sorry, your friend decided so! Timrot muttered.

And young people, with sabers bald, moved along the path. Voices seem to be heard in the distance, and without saying a word, they moved on. Everything was perceived as a funny adventure. They did not doubt the success of this case.

— Do not fire from pistols right away, otherwise the young lady may suffer, — Timrot explained everything, — we will take a saber!

And their comrade came out to meet them, and led the horse about him.

“Are you here?” — the delighted Kropotkin noticed the cavalry guards, — here! They lead the girl to the hunting lodge! I followed them. But, carefully, I was not noticed!

“Well done to you. Okay, you can’t bother! Albrecht shouted, and rushed forward with a saber.

The rest did not even think. just ran after their mate. Who leaves friends in battle?

By a huge tree, they saw the unprecedented. Isabella was tied, tied, with her face covered with a sheet, only her black curls hanging out. The girl did not even break out, she was silent in exhaustion.

And these, three, with hidden faces, with swords in their hands, went to meet. Burlin, and not thinking about anything, only feeling the handle of an old blade in his hand, stood next to Albrecht, preparing to fight.

The tallest of them, raised his left hand up, and his right, with a sword in his hand. Slowly removed the mask from his face, and looked at the cavalry guards, without turning away.

— What do you say? Are you surprised, right? Yes, it happens. I see that you are so brave... And whoever wishes can cross a blade with me!

Albrecht, saluted with a saber, putting the hilt to his forehead, and stood in a rack, pointing the blade in front of him.

— What, I was always sure of you, junker. In your joy and valor. Well, it’s time for us, perhaps! said the man loudly, addressing his companions.

He never doubted his power. Self-confidence was just absolute, unshakable. He passed the cavalry guards, as if past inanimate marble statues in the Summer Garden.

Albrecht did not pay too much attention to this, but rushed to untie the Italian young lady from the tree. Burlin, putting the saber into the scabbard, was about to help, but Minich kept him.

— It is better to leave our George here alone with this Lesophia. The feat is accomplished, and there is no need to prevent the knight from receiving his reward. Gentlemen, we are right, we should leave, — Minich broadcast confidently here.

Yes, this reckless junker was now clearly in his true hypostasis. Fun, fast, controlled very deftly, commanding comrades. But, no one was against it, they recognized his authority. Actually, they were happy to go after this young man.

— Minich, you are right, as always, — a little thought, added Kropotkin, — the true hero needs privacy. And good Essen will bring Rocinante to our knight. But what will we do? Will we report to the authorities? What do you say, Minich? And, Albrecht exposed the blade... How will it all end?

— Let’s go, gentlemen, what is there to stand... The character of this master is known to everyone... Albrecht will probably be asked to become an adjutant... It is clear that the epaulettes of the cornet have already been provided to him. And, most likely, he will be transferred to the first squadron, to the chef. Under the personal supervision of the highest persons.

— Why? Nevertheless, you exaggerate, Minich, — the junker said carelessly.

— It’s easy that he doesn’t talk too much. And forgot about today’s incident.

— Gospoda, excuse me, — Burlin intervened in the conversation, — what kind of face is this? Chief, among these dark personalities, from the carriage?

“Yes, I like you, Burlin,” Minich laughed, “such a mixture of thoughtless courage, readiness for risk, and a kind of innocence. I suspect you will be wildly successful with women.

— What are you... Right, you, Minich, noticed how I danced polonaise with...

— How can you, Burlin... Timroth and I were playing cards that night. It was foolish, I lost seventy rubles. Why do we need your ladies? That is, you are not joking, and really did not recognize that master?

— Sideburns in the floor of the face, tall... — slowly said the junker, trying to remember, — No, I did not understand who was...

— Ah, Burlin, you disappoint me... — and the sarcastic Minich burst out laughing, unable to restrain himself anymore — this is Sovereign Tsesarevich himself, his imperial highness Grand Duke Konstantin! You and Albrecht had a case of crossing blades with special imperial blood.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «Литрес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на Литрес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.