

from the bicycle and stood for a while silently without knowing what to talk about. Next to them was a stable. The horses heard the people and grew impatient, tramping with their hooves on the planking. There was a strong and pleasant odor of manure and tar from the stable.

"Give me the matches," Popov said again.

He lit up and wiped the sweat from his face lengthily and with satisfaction. Then he unbuttoned the collar of his shirt entirely.

"Well how do you feel? Are you better?" he asked hopefully.

"Now it's nothing," Zhukov said hurriedly. "I drank some *kvas*. Probably that was it . . ."

They walked slowly down the street, listening to the quieting sounds of the big village.

"How are things in the club?" Popov asked.

"So, so . . . You know yourself. It's harvest time and people are busy," Zhukov answered absent-mindedly and all of a sudden remembered:

"Have you ever heard the word *kabiasy*?"

"What, what? *Kabiasy*?" Popov thought. "No, I've never heard it. And why do you need to know? For a play?"

"Just something that popped into my mind," Zhukov said evasively.

They came up beside the club and shook hands.

"Take the matches," said Zhukov. "I have some at home."

"Good!" Popov took the matches. "And you drink some milk—it helps a troubled stomach."

He got on his bicycle and rode off to the house of the farm chairman, and Zhukov went along the dark corridors and unlocked the door to his room. After drinking cold tea he smoked, listened to the radio in the darkness, opened the window, and lay down.

He had almost gone to sleep when everything in him turned upside down and, as if from above, from a hill, he saw the night-time fields, the empty lake, the dark rows of power towers with raised arms, the lonely bonfire, and heard the life which filled these enormous spaces in the deaf night hours.

He began to relive over again his whole journey, all the way, but this time with happiness, with a warm feeling for the night, for the stars, for the smells, for the rustlings and cries of the birds.

He wanted again to talk with someone about cultural things, high things—about eternity, for example. He thought about Lyubka and jumped up from his cot and pattered barefoot across the room. He pulled on his clothes and went out.

THE GHOSTS OF PEACOCKS

(November)

We have seen ghosts of the once green peacocks
Walking through the stubble of the cut wheat
And spreading their shady tails among the stalks.

Each certain of kept magnificence, they meet,
But out of kindness do not tell each other
Of their sickly feathers or of their dim beaks.

ANNE STEVENSON