

Dense inversion trails from four engines, curling in misty streams, were moving back at a great speed past the mighty, several-metres-high tail fin that rose above the smooth body of the airplane and behind which the full moon was shining with a phantasmal, greenish-blue light coloring the Tsiklon and its trails in some unreal gamut. Above, myriads of stars were glittering, and below us there was an abyss: darkness and eternal cold, where the arctic ice was in the grip of the polar night.

And suddenly, on the left along the course, high in the sky, a nacreous rain fell. The dragon tail of the aurora borealis wound above the pole like the folds of a gigantic curtain. And it was methodically pierced with short jabs by the emerald sword of the aircraft-laser. I was so fascinated by the unusual view that I forgot everything else. Too bad, because at that moment something unforeseen happened on board the Tsiklon... But let us proceed in an orderly fashion.

The preservation of the atmosphere's ozone layer is literally everybody's concern today. No wonder, life itself on earth depends on it. By screening the destructive ultraviolet radiation, the ozone prevents the sun from burning everything alive and from melting the ice. However, measurements made in recent years have shown that the amount of ozone is diminishing. In many instances, it is man's activity that is to blame. Nitrogen fertilizers and numerous household aerosols have led to the presence of a mass of so-called freons in the atmosphere - volatile compounds of nitrogen and chlorine. They are not dangerous by themselves but, reacting chemically with ozone, they destroy it.