

into the snow very easily and take no harm. . . .

Two days later in the evening, Stepanovitch stood outside the cottage in which he had left Katinka. It seemed a year since he had left her, but it was only two nights he had walked all the time, and run, too, except in the daylight, when he had hidden himself in a straw stack. He had eaten nothing, and slept not a wink. All the time, while he walked and while he hid, he had thought of this moment and what a surprise it would be to Katinka. He would go very cautiously in, put his hand on her lips lest she would cry out, and taking his money from the place under the floor beckon her to fly with him. That very night they would cross the frontier with the help of the German agent; and in the morning he would sleep—sleep all the way to the land of gold. What a morning that would be!

It seemed, however, as he stood outside the cottage that there was a noise within—quite a long and loud noise, as of someone singing. It could not be that Katinka was singing with him away, as she thought, among the yellow imps in the Manchuria country. Nor, again, was it her voice. It was a man who was singing. What man had the right to be singing in his cottage? Stepanovitch licked his lips which were very dry with the cold wind, and went to a crack he knew of in the wall of the cottage. There was a light burning on the table—a bright, wasteful light, so bright and so wasteful that it showed everything in the room at a glance: the stone bottle of vodka on the table, the roubles he had hidden under the floor in

the very handkerchief in which he had them tied up—only it was untied now, so that you could see the money quite clearly, the man—Stepanovitch knew him—standing with his back to the door singing, and Katinka looking at him with large eyes, her chin upon her hands as she sat at the table plump and well-looking. It did not occur to Stepanovitch to wonder how she had discovered the place under the floor; or what she had intended to do with the money. He was aware only that the man had his back to the door, and that he Stepanovitch, had a bayonet in his belt. He had thrown his rifle away, as soon as he had leapt from the train, but he had his bayonet still. He crept round to the door very cautiously.

Ten minutes later the deserter came out from his cottage. He had not slept for two nights and more, and he rolled as he walked towards the frontier. In the morning he would sleep—in the morning when the German agent had put him on his way to the country where there was much gold. Sometimes, being very drowsy and forgetful, he would call to Katinka to hasten, before he recollected that Katinka was not with him, being already asleep.

The morning when it came was not quite so peaceful or so joyous as he expected. But it was better, he thought, than it would have been if the train had been taking him to the Manchurian country to be shot by the yellow imps instead of the land of gold.

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