

Kríník in Khurbn

Chapter 6 / Pages 91 - 96



Drawing courtesy of the painter, Zdzislaw Nitka

In Captivity

<p>ven ikh hob oyfgemakht di oygn iz shoyn geven likhtik. arum mir zaynen gelegn soldatn un tsivile, yeder farvundet, ver laykhter un ver shverer. der gantser kerper tsitert mir far kelt. ikh fil di shtarke veytik in fus. ikh rays op a shtikl leyvnt fun mayn hemd un bind arum di vund. ikh druk aroys a shtikl shpliter un vish op dos blut mitn hemd un vikl arum dem fus.</p>	<p>When I have opened my eyes, it has been already light. Soldiers and civilians were lying around me, all wounded, one lighter, the other heavier. My whole body is shivering with cold. I feel severe pain in my leg. I tear a piece of linen off my shirt and tie it around the wound. I squeeze out a piece of splinter, wipe the blood with my shirt and wrap it around my leg.</p>	
<p>ikh vil zikh oyfshteln. shtreng on ale kreftn un ken nisht. di fis zaynen mir geshvoln un nokh yedn rir geyt mir di veytik iber untern hartsn un far di oygn vert mir shvarts.</p>	<p>I want to rise, exerting all my strength, but I cannot. My feet are swollen, and after every movement the pain radiates to below my heart, and my eyes go black.</p>	
<p>ikh her a royshn fun oytos, velkhe forn arayn glaykh in di mentshn vos lign oyf der erd. rusishe sanitarn shteyen arum di oytos. un plutslung ze ikh daytshn. daytshn shteyen mit di biksn getsilt tsu di sanitarn unz zeyere</p>	<p>I hear the noise of trucks that are about to drive up to the people lying on the ground. Russian paramedics are standing around the trucks. And suddenly I see Germans! The Germans are standing there with their rifles pointed at the medics, and their</p>	

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<p>merderishe oygn glantsn in ale zaytn. ikh her vi zey shrayen: -shneler, farflukhte shvaynen! un di sanitarn shlepn aroyf di farvundete oyf di oytos un forn avek.</p>	<p>murderous eyes are glistening in all directions. I can hear them yelling, "Faster, damn pigs!" And the paramedics drag the wounded onto the trucks and drive away.</p>	
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<p>di daytshn blaybn shteyn arum undz, haltndik di biksn kegn undz.</p> <p>ikh shtreng on mayne letste kreftn un vil oyfshteyn, nor s'iz umzist yede onshtrungung. ikh zukh mayn revolver un di granatn, nor keyn zakh iz nishto. arum mir lign nokh soldatn un yederer lozt aroys ale mol a tifn krekhts un ver es ligt ingantsn shtil vi a klots.</p> <p>di oytos kumen vider un itst zaynen zey shoy'n leben mir. tsvey sanitarn loyfn tsu un leygn mikh aroyf oyfn trog-betl un trogn mikh aroyf oyfn oyto. eyner blaybt leben mir un viklt mir iber di vunt, vasht mir op dos blut un leygt epes tsu. me hot undz gebrakht oyf a frayen feld tsvishn tsvey velder. dos groz iz nas.</p> <p>arum shteyen Daytshn mit mashin-gever. yede tsvey meter- a Daytsh. dos gantse feld iz baleygt mit soldatn un tsivile. nisht ale zaynen farvundete. zeyer fil lign gebrokhene, mutloze, oyfn groz.</p> <p>daytshn dreyen zikh tsvishn di gefangene un zeyere oygn shtekhn a yedn durkh un durkh. ikh lig oyfn groz. arum mir lign soldatn. di oygn tif farzunkn in kop. dos gezikht- gel. yeder zet oys vi geshtorbn. ikh veys nisht vu es zaynen mayne khaveyrim, vu es iz mayn bruder, vu zaynen ale? ikh zukh tsvishn di makhnes soldatn un ken keynem nisht gefinen.</p>	<p>The Germans stop around us, rifles pointed at us.</p> <p>I exert the last of my strength and want to get up, but every effort is in vain. I look for my revolver and my grenades, but nothing is left. Soldiers are still lying around me, each one groaning deeply from time to time; one is lying there completely still like a log.</p> <p>The trucks return, and now they are already next to me. Two paramedics come running, put me on a stretcher and carry me onto the truck. One of them stays next to me, wraps a bandage over the wound, washes off the blood and puts on some more gauze. We have been taken to an open field between two forests. The grass is wet.</p> <p>Germans with machine guns are standing around - every two meters a German. The whole field is occupied by soldiers and civilians. Not all of them are wounded. Many are lying broken and despondent on the grass.</p> <p>Soldiers lie around me, their eyes deep in their sockets, their faces yellow, each looking as if he had already died. I don't know where my comrades are, where is my brother, where are all of them? I search among the crowds of soldiers, but I can't find anyone.</p>	
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<p>yeder soldat iz mutloz, dershlogn. keyner redt nisht eyner tsum tsveytn. yeder ligt oyfn groz mitn ponim tsu der erd, fartift in di gedanken.</p> <p>der gantses shetekh vos mayn oyg farkhapt iz ful mit soldatn. eynike zitsn arum a fayer, vu es brent zikh papir un shmates. ikh vikl oyf di bandazsh un ze mayn vund fun velkher es rint nokh blut. mayn shokhn zogt mir ikh zol tsuleygn grine bleter (podrozshnikes) vet di vunt shnel farheylyt vern, vayl zi iz nisht keyn tife. er brengt mir etlekhe bleter un farbindt mir di vund. ikh fil</p>	<p>Every soldier is despondent, depressed. No one talks to the other. Each is lying on the grass with his face to the ground, absorbed in his thoughts.</p> <p>The whole territory that my eyes can see is full of soldiers. Some sit around a fire where paper and rags burn. I unwrap my bandages and look at my wound, which is still bleeding. My neighbor advises me that I should put "green leaves" (chicory?) on it, then the wound will heal quickly, because it is not deep. He brings me several leaves and bandages the wound. I feel</p>	
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<p>vi es vert mir kiler arum der vund, vos hot frier gebrent vi fayer.</p> <p>oz kumt an oytomobil oyf velkhn es lign etelkhe geshosene rusishe ferd, fun velkhe es filt zikh fun der vaytns a reyekh. di ferd lign oyfn groz un di daytshn heysn dos esn. a por tsend(l)ik rusn faln glaykh tsu tsu di ferd mit mesers un shnaydn shtiker.</p> <p>bald brotn zikh shtiker fleysh oyfn fayer un men est halb roy.</p> <p>der ershter tog iz farbay.</p> <p>di nakht iz a kalte, a kleyn regendl kapet un mir lign untern frayen himl.</p>	<p>the wound cooling down that was burning like fire before.</p> <p>A truck is arriving, on which several shot Russian horses are lying, from which a smell emanates already from a distance. The horses are now lying on the grass, and the Germans order to eat them. A few dozen Russians are going for them right away with knives, cutting off pieces of the horses.</p> <p>Soon, they roast pieces of meat on the fire and eat them half-raw.</p> <p>The first day is over.</p> <p>The night is cold, a rain drizzles and we lie under the open sky.</p>	
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<p>oyfn tsveytn tog, gants fri, kumen tsuforn etlekhe oytos mit daytshn un leben zey shteyt a shvarts-gekleydeter yunger mentsh, velkher trogt a teke in hant.</p> <p>eyn daytsh redt epes tsu im un bald hert zikh a fayfn un shrayen, ale zoln zikh tsunoyfzamlen oyf eyn plats.</p> <p>ikh fil zikh shoyn badaytndik beser vi nekhtn. di bleter hobn mir zeyer fil geholfn di veytik iz shoyn ariber. ikh shtreng on ale mayne koykhes un pruv zikh oyfshteln. es geyt. ikh ken shoyn shteyn un shteln a trot foroys, nor nisht aza festn, azoy vi mit dem gezuntn fus.</p> <p>ikh gey tsu nenter tsu di oytos, bay velkhe es shteyt shoyn itst kimat der gantser lager. der punkt vu mir hobn zikh gefunen iz geven a zamlager un fun dort hot men opgefirt in andere lagern.</p> <p>der tsiviler mentsh shteyt itst oyfn oyto un redt tsu di gefangene. di ershte verter zayne zaynen geven:</p> <p>-ale yidn zoln zikh oysshteln bazunder, rusn bazunder, totern</p> <p>-bazunder, uzbekn-bazunder a.a.v.</p> <p>es iz glyaykh gevorn a shtupenish, a falenish. eyner loyft oyfn tsveytn. men shrayt „rusn-do“, totern-do un do.</p> <p>un do shteyen etlekhe tsendlik yidn un shrayen:</p> <p>yidn-do!</p>	<p>On the second day, very early, several trucks with Germans arrive, and next to them stands a young man dressed in black, holding a folder in his hand.</p> <p>A German speaks to him, and soon you hear whistling and shouting for everyone to gather in one place.</p> <p>I already feel significantly better than yesterday. The leaves have helped me a lot, I already have no more pain. I exert all my strength and try to stand up. It works! I can already stand and take a step forward, but not a firm one, like with my healthy leg.</p> <p>I go closer to the trucks, where now almost the whole camp is already standing. The place where we have been was a collection camp, and from there people have been taken to other camps.</p> <p>The man in civilian clothes is now standing on the truck and speaking to the prisoners. His first words are:</p> <p>"All Jews should line up separately, Russians too, Tatars too, Uzbeks too," and so on.</p> <p>Immediately, there is pushing and falling. One steps on the other. There are shouts: "Russians - here!", "Tatars - here and there!"</p> <p>And there are several dozen Jews standing there shouting:</p> <p>"Jews - here!"</p>	
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<p>-vos zol ikh itst ton? aroysgeyn tsu der grupe fun di yidn tsu geyn? neyn, bashlis ikh, ikh vel nisht geyn tsu di yidn. ikh veys</p>	<p>What should I do now? Should I go to the group of Jews? No, I decide, I will not go to the Jews. I know only</p>	
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<p>gut vos der merder vil do makhn. zayn tsvishn di yidn- drot a gefar. ikh bashlis zikh tsu shteln tsvishn di tatarn, velkhe zaynen enlekh tsu yidn un oykh gemalt.</p> <p>ikh shtey shoyn in der hintershter ray tsvishn di tatarn. keyner varft oyf mir nit keyn oyfmerkzamkeyt. yederer iz basheftikt mit zikh aleyn. ikh ze vi tsvey hoykhe daytshn geyen un zeyere farshikerte oygn glantsn oyf di grupn, velkhe shteyen opgezundert eyne fun der tsveyter.</p> <p>ot falt zeyer merderisher blik oyf mir. zey geyen vayter fun grupe tsu grupe un batrakhtn a yedn fun kop biz di fis. ot zaynen zey bay der yidisher grupe. es git mir a tsiter in hartsn. es derhert zikh a merderishe shtime, vekhe falt vi shtiker oysgebrent blay: -ale yudn oyf di oytos!</p> <p>es loyfn eyner hintern andern yidishe soldatn, ofitsirn, komisarn un fil tsivile eltere mentshn. zey vern getribn fun daytshn velkhe haltn di biksn</p>	<p>too well what the murderer will do to them. When you are among the Jews, there is danger. I decide to stand among the Tatars, who are similar to the Jews and also circumcised.</p> <p>I am already standing in the back row, between the Tatars. No one is paying attention to me. Everyone is only busy with himself. I see two tall Germans standing around and their intoxicated eyes sparkle at the groups, which stand apart from each other.</p> <p>Right now, their murderous gaze fall on me. They go from group to group , looking at everyone from head to toe. Now they are with the Jewish group.</p> <p>It gives me a stab in my heart. A murderous voice is heard, spat out like cauterised pieces of lead: "All Jews on the trucks!"</p> <p>One after the other, the Jewish soldiers, officers, commissars and many civilian elderly people run, driven by the Germans, who beat the heads and backs of the refugees with their rifle butts.</p>	
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<p>farkert un shlogn iber di kep un rukns fun di antloyfndike. der letster blik iz gefaln oyf di iberike khaveyrim fun di yidn, vos men hot itst opgefirt ergets un keyner veyst nit vuhin. glaykh kumen vider di zelbe oytos un itst shrayen di merder oyf daytsh un der mentsh mitn shvartsn ontsug oyf rusih:</p> <p>-ale ofitsirn, fun oberleytenants biz polkovnik, zoln aroysgeyn fun di grupes. ale politishe komisarn zoln oykh aroysgeyn bazunder.</p> <p>etlekhe tsendlik zaynen aroysgekumen. tsvishn zey der polikovnik, vos iz geforn oyfn ferd, der ershter in shlakht. glaykh kumt vider a bafel „ale oyf di oytos“ un zey forn avek in an umbakanter rikhtung. zey lozn hinter zikh volkns shtoyb, vos flien fun unter di reder aroys. di oytos farshvindn fun undzer blik in der rikhtung tsum gedikhtn sosne-vald. nokh a tog iz avek.</p>	<p>My last glance falls on the remaining Jewish comrades, who are now being deported to who knows where. Immediately after that, the same trucks come again, and now the murderers shout in German, and the man with the black suit in Russian:</p> <p>"All officers from the First Lieutenant to the colonel, have to come out of the group! All political commissars are to come forward as well!"</p> <p>A few dozen men came out. Among them the colonel, who was the first to enter the battle on horseback. Immediately, another order follows: "Everyone on the trucks!", and they drive off in an unknown direction, leaving behind clouds of dust, swirling up from the wheels.</p> <p>The trucks disappear from our view towards the dense pine forest. Another day has passed.</p>	
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<p>ikh fil a shtarkn hunger un dursht. shoyn drey teg gornisht gegesn. di lipn zaynen mir fartriknt un tsheshpoltn. rusn grobn mit di lefl in der erd un tsapn aroys a bisele shmutsik vaser. nor tsu a lokh ken men zikh nisht dershlogn.</p>	<p>I feel a strong hunger and thirst. I have not eaten for three days. My lips are dried up and cracked. The Russians dig in the earth with spoons and draw out a little dirty water. But to dig a whole hole, they do not manage.</p>	
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ikh fil zikh shoyn fil beser vi frier.di veytik iz avek.
ikh bayt yede sho bleter tsu der vund. dos iz do
oyfn feld genug.

ikh ze vi a kirgiz zitst un bakt shtiklekh fleysh,
velkhe zaynen aroyfgetsoygn oyf a farzshavertn
drot. er shlept aroys fun keshene a shtik vays
fleysh un leygt dos arayn in fayer.

bay mir vakst der hunger nokh shtarker, ven ikh
ze vi der kleyner kirgiz mit di fargosene, kleyne
eygelekh, nemt aroys shtiklekh opgebrot n fleysh
un leygt dos in a torbe.

-khaver, gib mir a shtikl fleysh. ikh hob shoyn
drey teg gornisht gegesn, zog ikh tsu dem kirgiz.

er varft oyf mir a blik fun di kleyne eygelekh un
redt unter der noz: gey breng mir papir oder
holts, vel ikh dir gebn a shtikl fleysh.“

ikh bin oyfgeschprungen, haltndik eyn fus abisl
oyfgehoybn un hob gezukht arum un tsvishn di
mentshn shtiklekh papir, shmatkes, alte tserisene
shikh.

ven ikh hob im dos alts gebrakht, hot er mir
opgerisn a shtik shvarts fleysh, velkhe iz geven
nor fun oybn abisl tsugebrent un in mitn-royt un
hart vi beyn. nor ikh nem es on, mit di hungerike
tsey n rays ikh shtiklekh roy fleysh.

-anu, ober es ikh geshmak?-fregt mikh der kirgiz.
yo, avade, itst iz alts gut, entfer ikh.

I already feel much better than before. The pain
is gone. I change the green leaves on the wound
every hour. There are enough of them in the
field.

I see a Kyrgyz, sitting and frying pieces of meat,
which are impaled on a long, rusted wire. He
pulls out a piece of white meat from his pocket,
and places it in the fire.

My hunger grows even more when I see the
Kyrgyz with the watery little eyes take pieces of
roasted meat and put them in
his provision bag.

"Comrade, give me a piece of meat! I haven't
eaten for three days," I say to the Kyrgyz.

He gives me a look with his small eyes and then
answers nasally:"Go and bring me paper or
wood, and I will give you a piece of meat!"

I have jumped up, keeping one foot raised a
little, and have searched around and between
people, pieces of paper, rags, and old, torn
shoes. After I have brought him all this, he has
torn off a piece of black meat, which is only a
little burnt on the surface, but inside red and
hard as bone.

But I accept it, and with hungry teeth I tear off
pieces of raw meat.

"Well, did you like it?" the Kirghiz asks me. "Yes,
certainly, now everything tastes good!", I answer.

<p>-na zshe dir nokh a shtikl, oyb s'iz gut, zogt er mir. ikh nem un bahalt es oyf shpeter. -khaver, vos iz dos far a fleysh? fun a ferd, oder fun a ku? freg ikh im. -dos iz mentshn-fleysh, entfert er mir mit a shmeykhl. -vos? vos? mentshn-fleysh? freg ikh im iber un shpay glaykh aroys dem bisn fun moyl, velkher iz shoyn geven der letster fun ershtn shtik.</p>	<p>"If you like it, I'll give you another piece!" he tells me. I accept it and hide it for later. "Comrade, what kind of meat is this? From a horse or a cow?" I ask him. "It's human flesh," he answers me with a smile. "What? Human meat?", I ask him again, and immediately spit the bite out of my mouth, which is already the last of the first piece.</p>	
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<p>-yo, yo khaver, dos iz mentshn-fleysh. ikh hob dos opgeshnitn fun di toyte, vos lign dort. ikh blayb shteyn vi farglivert: ikh hob gegesn mentshn-fleysh! ikh vil es alts tsurik aroysshpayen, aroysraysn mit di kishkes tsuzamen, tsurik aroys fun mayn boykh.- s'iz rikhtik, khaver? dos iz take mentshn-fleysh? freg ikh nokhamol iber un mayn nokh, az efsher hot er mikh dos opgenart. -yo, dos iz mentshn-fleysh, khazert er nokhamol iber un lakht nokh fun mir, vos ikh hob zikh azoy dershrokn un gevorn azoy blas vi kalkh. -kum, vel ikh dir vayzn vu ikh hob dos opgeshnitn. mir zaynen tsugekumen tsu di toyte, velkhe zaynen gelegn eyner oyfn andern in mitn feld un</p>	<p>"Yes, yes, comrade, this is human flesh. I cut that from the dead lying there." I stand still as if frozen. I have eaten human flesh! I want to spit it all out again, rip it out of my stomach along with the intestines! "But is that really true, comrade? Is it really manflesh?", I ask again, thinking that he was just making a fool of me. "Yes, it's human flesh," he repeats, still laughing at me for being so startled and turning pale as lime. "Come on, I want to show you where I cut this off". We approached the dead, who were lying one on top of the other in the middle of the field, and</p>	
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<p>ot ze ikh vi der kirgiz shrayt oys tsu mir un vayzt mir mit der hant oyf a fus: fun der polke iz opgeschundn a shtik vaykh fleysh. es vert mir shvarts far di oygn tsukukndik zikh. der kirgiz iz aroyf oyf di toyte un hot vider geshnitn fun a tsveytn toytn soldat shtiker fleysh. ikh bin gefaln oyfn groz mitn ponim tsu der erd un fun mayne oygn hobn zikh gegosn groyse trern, velkhe zaynen gefaln oyfn grinem groz.</p> <p>-haynt shnaydt men shtiker fleysh fun a khaver un morgn-fun mir! neyn, ikh vel do mer nisht zayn. ikh ken mer nisht zen di mentshn-freser un di merderishe ponimer fun di shikere daytshn. ikh muz zen an oysveg, alts ton un antloyfn. faln fun a koyl oder vern fray!</p>	<p>now I see the Kyrgyz shouting something to me and pointing to a foot with his hand: "From this Polish woman I pulled off a piece of soft flesh!" My eyes go black as I watch: The Kyrgyz is back on the dead, cutting off pieces of flesh from a second soldier. I fell on the grass with my face to the ground, and great tears poured out of my eyes onto the green grass.</p> <p>"Today they cut pieces of meat from a comrade, and tomorrow from me! No, I don't want to stay here anymore. I can't stand the man-eaters and the murderous faces of the drunken Germans anymore. I must find a way out, do everything to escape. Either fall from a bullet or be free!"</p>	
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