

## Krinik in Khurbn

*Chapter 5, pages 67-78*



*Drawing courtesy of the painter, Zdzisław Nitka*

## On the Way

<p>Oyfn mark shteyen mentshn, oysgemisht tsivile mit militer. di merste mit rukzek oyf di pleytses. di bavegung fun oytos un tanken vert shtarker fun minut tsu minut. ikh shtel shnele trit un kum tsu leben der N.K.V.D., vu es shteyen shoyn drey khaveyrim un vartn oyf mir.</p>	<p>In the market are standing both civilians and military people, most of them with backpacks on their shoulders. The movement of trucks and tanks is getting stronger every minute. I walk with quick steps and arrive next to the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), where three comrades of mine are already standing and waiting for me.</p>	
<p>der geveer-magazin iz ofn far alemen. yederer vos geyt aroys in veg arayn, nemt mit vos er vil: a biks, a revolver, granatn. der soldat vos arbet in geveer-magazin ruft yedn fun gas un git aroys geveer, velkhe eyner vil nor.</p>	<p>The armory is open to all; anyone who sets out, takes what they want: a rifle, a revolver, grenades. The soldier working at the armory calls everyone from the street in and hands out any weapons that are requested.</p>	
<p>mir fir geyen arayn un yeder eyner nemt a revolver un tsu tsvey granatn. der magazinier drikt undz di hent un vintsht undz mir zoln di koyln gut farnitsn: mit yeder koyl trefn in kop fun soyne.</p>	<p>The four of us go in, and each of us takes a revolver and two grenades to go with it. The armory man squeezes our hands and wishes us to use the bullets well: each bullet should hit the enemy's head.</p>	
<p>bay undz iz di freyd groys vos mir hobn bakumen geveer un mir veln hobn mit vos tsu kemfn. der kamfs-mut iz bay undz gevaksn kukndik oyfn revolver un oyf di granatn.</p>	<p>We are very pleased that we have received weapons, and thus something to fight with. As well as looking at the revolvers and the grenades, our courage to fight grows.</p>	
<p>arum undz iz shvarts fun mentshn. mames bagleytn di kinder mit trenn in di oygn. tates lozn aroys shvere ziftn fun tifn hartsn. ot derze ikh mayn tatn leben mir. oyf zayn gezikht iz aroysgetsoygn a troyer. di lipn tsitern bay im, ven</p>	<p>Around us, it is black with people. Mothers accompany their children with tears in their eyes. Deep sighs escape the fathers from the depths of their hearts. I see my father next to me. Sadness is written all over his face. His lips tremble as he</p>	

<p>er redt aroys tsu mir di ershte verter: du geyst oykh mit alemen!  -<i>yo</i> tate, ikh gey tsuzamen mit mayne khaveyrim, entfere ikh,</p> <p>-nem mit <i>Perestn.</i> zol er oykh geyn mit dir, zikh rateven, zogt tsu mir der tate.  -gut, ikh vel im nehmen. nor s'iz shoyne shpet. mir muzn nokh haynt opgeyn 50 kilometer.</p>	<p>speaks the first words to me: "You're going with everyone, too!?"  "Yes, Dad, I'm going with my comrades," I answer.</p> <p>"Take <i>Peretz</i> with you. Let him go with you and save himself!" my father says.  "All right, I'll take him with me. But it's already late. We still have 50 kilometers to go today!"</p>	
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<p>-ikh gey im brengen, vart do! entferte mir der tate.  -zog es nisht der mamen. zi vet dos nisht oyshaltn!-shray ikh nokh dem taten, velkher iz shnel avek in der rikhtung tsu undzer hoyz.</p> <p>in 5 minut arum iz shoyne leben mir geshtanen mayn yingere Bruder, Peretz, mit a torbe untern orem. ikh loyf shnel arayn in gever-magazin un nem aroys a revolver far im.  mir varfn nokh a blik oyf der mase vos shteyt arum undz. ikh ze mayn foter shteyn leben undz. zayne letste verter tsu undz zaynen: geyt, geyt, ratevet ayer leben!...</p> <p>mir shteln di ershte trit in veg arayn, in der rikhtung Volkovisk-Slonim-Baranovitsh-Minsk. foroyse kumt undz oyfn veg a vayser shosey. bay di zaytn groyse felder mit halb-tsaytike zangen.</p>	<p>"I'll go and bring him, wait there!", Dad replies.  "Don't tell mom! She wouldn't be able to stand it!", I yell after Dad, who quickly leaves in the direction of our house.</p> <p>After 5 minutes, my younger brother, Peretz, is already standing next to me, with a small sack under his arm. I quickly run into the armory and take out a revolver for him.  We take one last look at the crowd standing around us. My dad's next to us.  His last words to us are: "Go, go, save your lives!"</p> <p>We take the first steps of the road toward Wolkowysk-Slonim-Baranavichy-Minsk. In front of us, we see a white highway; on both sides there are large fields with half-ripe ears of grain.</p>	
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<p>hinter undz vert farshvundn dos shtetl. mir varfn a blik oyf di letste heyzer un kumen arayn in vald arayn.</p> <p>mir hern an ekho fun a flier-alarm un iber undzere kep flien gants niderik drey daytshishe avyonen in der rikhtung tsum shtetl. es dertrogt zikh tsu undz a langer shos fun mashin-gever. dos shisn di avyonen oyf di loyfdike oytos un tanken. in vaysn horizont shlengt zikh a shvartser roykh fun velkh es zeen zikh aroys groyse fayer-tsungen vos raysn zikh tsum himl. mir leygn zikh oys oyf der erd un vartn biz di avyonen veln durkhflien.</p> <p>etlekhe minut hot zikh gehert dos fayfn fun di koyln un der shtarker geroysh. mir lign in di roves fun shosey. vayter abisl fun undz lign roytarmeyer, velkhe hobn ibergelozt di oytos un tanken oyfn shosey.</p> <p>vayter fun undz oyf di bayde zaytn fun veg, tsit zikh a gedikhter vald in velkh es lign itst fil soldatn un zeyere blikn zaynen gevendet tsum himl fun vanen es trogt zikh der geroysh. azoy zaynen mir opgelegn a halbe sho un es iz shtil gevorn.</p> <p>arum hot zikh geshlengt a vayser roykh fun di brenendike heyzer, fun velkhe mir hobn zikh dervaytert. ot farlirn mir shoyn fun</p>	<p>Behind us, our shtetl disappears from view. We take a last look at its houses and enter a forest.</p> <p>We hear the echo of an air raid alarm, and above our heads three German planes are flying very low in the direction of our shtetl. A machine gun salvo echoes towards us. These are the projectiles of the planes aimed at the moving trucks and tanks. On the white horizon, black smoke curls, from which large tongues of fire reach up to the sky. We lie down on the ground and wait until the planes have flown through.</p> <p>For several minutes, we hear the whistling of the bullets and the loud noises. We are lying in the ditches of the highway. A little further from us, are lying Red Army soldiers who had to leave their trucks and tanks on the highway.</p> <p>A bit away from us, on both sides of the path, there is a dense forest, in which many soldiers are now lying, looking up to the sky to see where the sounds are coming from. In this way, we have lain for half an hour, until it became quiet.</p> <p>In the surrounding area, white smoke has curled from burning houses, from which we are seperating. And just now, we already lose ...</p>	
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7 Волковыскъ - Бульварная улица.



*Wolkowysk, old postcard courtesy of Tomek Wisniewski*

<p>oyg di letste kleyne heyzkes un far undz ligt a griner, vayser feld, velkher tsit zikh in der rikhtung tsum gedikhtn sosne-vald.</p> <p>mir bashlisen tsu geyn shnel, zikh nit optsuhaltn oyf eyn minut, vayl yeder rege iz tayer. mir tuen oys di shikh un farvarfn zey oyfn aksl. men farkashert di hoyzn un azoy lozn mir zikh mitn shosey, in gedikhtn vald.</p> <p>der veg iz ful mit loyfdike oytos un tanken. bay di zaytn-ibergeshrokene mentshn, tsivile un soldatn velkhe hobn farloyrn zeyere polkn un geyen zey itst zukhn. di zun kargt undz nit tsu shikh ire heyse shtraln. es brent dos zamd un di shteyner unter di fis.</p> <p>mir geyen shnel. dervayl yogen mir on di ale vos marshirn far undz. eyner kukt nisht oyfn tsveytn. yeder loyft haltndik dem kop abisele oyf foroys ayngeloygt di oygn tsu di fis, oyfn aksl, mit a shtrikl tsuzamengebundn- tsvey shikh oder shtivl, a vayshe torbe oyf a senkevate vald-shtekn.</p> <p>mit yeder minut vert undz alts shverer un shverer dos vos mir trogn oyf zikh. eyner varft shoyne avek a shvern vinter-mantl, vos di muter hot im mitgegebn, az „dos kind“ zol zikh kholile nisht farkiln oyfn veg.</p>	<p>sight of the last little houses. In front of us is a green, white speckled field, which stretches to the dense pine forest.</p> <p>We decide to go quickly, not stopping for a single minute, because every moment is precious. We take off our shoes and throw them over our shoulders. With our pants rolled up, we follow the highway into the dense forest.</p> <p>The road is full of moving trucks and tanks. On the sides, frightened people, civilians and soldiers who have lost their regiments and are now going to look for them. The sun is not stingy to send us its hot rays. The sand and the stones under our feet are burning.</p> <p>We walk fast, meanwhile driving all those who walk ahead of us. We do not look at each other, each walks with his head bent forward, eyes fixed on his feet; and on his shoulders, tied with a rope, each wears two shoes or boots, plus a white sack on a knotty stick from the forest.</p> <p>With every minute, all the things we carry with us, become heavier and heavier. One of us is already throwing away his heavy winter coat that his mother gave him, so that "the child, God forbid, should not catch cold on the way".</p>	
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<p>dervayl zaynen mir nokh alts fun di beste geyers.</p> <p>yederer kukt oyf undz un zagt undz: geyt langzamer, vet ir vayter geyn. mir hern keynems eytses nisht. mir tuen vos mir viln un vi mir farshteyen. eyner yogt dem tsveytn un shrayt: forys, foroys! mir muzn haynt makhn hundert kilometer!</p> <p>mir zaynen fir, velkhe geyen in der breyt fun shosey: ikh, mayn bruder un tsvey khaveyrim. mir tseykhenen on a veg fun vanen mir veln shneler kenen dergreykhn undzer tsil. der tsil iz geven-Minsk.</p> <p>in Minsk-hot men gezogt-veln di rusn shteln a shtarkn vidershtand un mir veln zayn oyf der rusisher zayt.</p> <p>mir moln zikh oys plener, vi mir veln tsurikkumen in shtetl un bafrayen di eltern un der kamfs-mut vakst bay undz mit yeder minut.</p>	<p>Still we are the fastest of the pedestrians.</p> <p>Everyone looks at us and says: "go slower, then you will get further!" But we don't listen to their advice. We do what we want and what we think is right. One is pushing the other, shouting, "Ahead, ahead! We still have 100 kilometers to go today!"</p> <p>The four of us walk the full width of the highway: Me, my brother and two comrades. We mark a path on which we can reach our destination more quickly - and our destination is Minsk!</p> <p>Because in Minsk, they said, the Russians would be able to maintain a strong resistance - and we would be on the Russian side.</p> <p>We are already drawing up plans to return to our shtetl and free our parents, and our courage to fight is growing within us with every passing moment.</p>	
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*Minsk - old postcard, courtesy of Tomek Wisniewski*

<p>mir zaynen shoyn opgegangen 20 kilometer un keyner filt nisht keynt midkeyt. yeder shrayt: shneler, shneler!...</p> <p>plutslung hern mir a shtim fun vald: khaveyrim, vos loyft ir azoy shnel? kumt, zetst zikh. rut aykh op abisl!...</p> <p>mir zeen far zikh drey, in der linker zayt, unter a gedikhtn, grinem kust - drey rusn, velkhe betn bay undz a shtikl broyt oder a papiros. mir blaybn shteyn un gibn zey broyt un abisl tabak. zey fregn undz ver mir zaynen un vuhin mir geyen. mir zetsn zikh oys oyfn groz leben zey un in a por minut arum zaynen mir shoyn khaveyrim.</p> <p>dos zaynen di rusishe fliers, velkhe hobn farloyrn zeyer avyon oyfn Bialystoker aerodrom un itst geyen zey tsuzamen mit ale loyfdike. zey fregn undz tsi mir viln geyn mit zey tsuzamen. zey veln undz firn durkh a luft-linye. yeder fun zey hot a mape un a kompas un gepakte ruk-zek, velkhe lign itst tsukopns oyfn groz.</p> <p>mir bashlisn tsu geyn tsuzamen mit zey. ershtns vet undz zayn heymllekher un tsveytns veysn zey gut dem veg, nisht durkh keyn shoseyen, vu s'iz</p>	<p>We have already walked 20 kilometers, but none of us feels tired. Everyone is shouting, "Faster, faster!"</p> <p>Suddenly, we hear a voice from the forest: "Comrades, what are you running for? Come, sit down, rest a little!"</p> <p>We see three people in front of us - on the left side, under a dense green bush - three Russians! They ask us for a piece of bread and a cigarette. We stop and give them bread and some tobacco. They ask us who we are and where we are going. We sit down next to them in the grass and after a few minutes, we are already friends!</p> <p>They are the Russian pilots who lost their plane at the Bialystok airport, and now they are leaving together with all the fugitives. They ask us, if we want to come with them, they would lead us to the destination as straight as the crow flies. Each of them has a map, a compass and full backpacks, which now are lying under their heads, in the grass.</p> <p>We decide to join them. Firstly, we will be more comfortable, and secondly, they know the way well, which does not lead along the highways -</p>	
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<p>itst zeyer shver tsu geyn iber di ofte ongrifn fun der avyantsye un ibern groysn farker fun oytos, tanken un mototsikletn.</p> <p>-nu, khaveyrim, mir veln zikh shteln un in veg arayn! bafelt eyner fun di rusn, a leytenant.</p> <p>mir veysn shoyn di nemen fun alemen. itst zaynen mir shoyn zibn perzon. der leytenant heyst <i>Kuzin</i>.</p> <p>er halt far undz a kurtse rede, mir zoln zayn distsiplinirt un geyn vos shneler. eyner muz hitn dem tsveytn, ey(n)er muz helfn dem tsveytn. mir darfn oysmeydn derfer un poyerim vayl di Daytshn hobn do aropgelozt parachutistn velkhe zaynen gekleydt als poyerim un soldatn.</p> <p>-nu khaveyrim, in veg arayn! mir muzn shnel dergreykh Minsk und dan di Berezine, vayl dort, oyfn taykh Berezine, vet zikh shteln der front. azoy zogt undz der leytenant. mir marshirn glaykh aroys oyf di felder, velkhe zaynen farzeyt mit korn un kartofl. mir krikhn tsvishn di goldene zangen.</p>	<p>where it is very difficult to walk now, because of the frequent air raids and the dense traffic of trucks, tanks and motorcycles.</p> <p>"Well, comrades, let's set out and get moving!" orders one of the Russians, a lieutenant.</p> <p>We already know the names of all of them. We are now seven people in total. The lieutenant's name is '<i>Kuzin</i>'.</p> <p>He gives us a short speech: we should be disciplined and walk as fast as possible. We are to protect and help each other. We have to avoid villages and farmers because the Germans have landed parachutists there, disguised as farmers and soldiers.</p> <p>"So, comrades, on the way! We must quickly reach Minsk, and then to Berezina, because there on the river Berezina, the front will line up". So the lieutenant tells us, and we march right away across the fields where grain and potatoes have been sown. We crawl among the golden ears of corn.</p>	
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<p>Der veg iz fil shverer vi oyfn shosey, nor s'iz fil nenter un yeder minut iz a shod.</p> <p>ot kumen mir tsu a kleynem taykhl, vos flist ruik tsvishn di felder. mir trinken zikh on. ver fun a tepl un ver glaykh fun taykh, haltndik di noz in vaser. di zun tunkt zikh shoyn un a kil vintl glet undz iber di opgebrente ponimer.</p> <p>-Foroys! Foroys!-shrayt fun tsayt tsu tsayt der leytenant un di iberike helfn unter. eynike fun undz vern mid un shlepn shoyn di fis vi shvere kletser. me tut on di shikh tsulib di shpitsike shteyner vos shtekhn in di nakete fis vi nodlen.</p> <p>mayn bruder vert mid un bet zikh bay mir, mir zoln zikh abisl opruen, ober oyf ruen muz gebn a bafel der leytenant. mir kenen aley nisht ruen. zey veln nisht vartn oyf undz un blaybn aley n vi frier viln mir oykh nisht, vayl mir zaynen itst tsvishn feld, vald un himl.</p> <p>mir veysn nisht vu a dorf un vu a shtot. ober di rusn vern oykh mid un der leytenant shlogt for zikh tsu zetsn opruen oyf tsen minut. dos vert fun</p>	<p>The path is much more burdensome to walk than the main road, but it is much shorter, and every minute is precious.</p> <p>We come to a small river that flows silently between the fields and quench our thirst; one drinks from a top, the other directly from the river, with his nose in the water. The sun is already setting, and a cool breeze brushes our sunburned faces.</p> <p>"Ahead! Ahead!" shouts the lieutenant from time to time, and the others assist him. Some of us get tired and already drag their feet like heavy blocks. We put our shoes back on because of the sharp stones that prick our feet like needles.</p> <p>My brother gets tired and asks me to rest a little; but to rest the lieutenant has to give an order, we can't just do that, because the others would not wait for us. And we do not want to stay alone again as before, because we are now somewhere between fields, forest and sky.</p> <p>We do not know where there is a village or a town. But the Russians are also getting tired, and the lieutenant suggests that we sit down and rest for 10 minutes. This is quickly implemented by all</p>	
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<p>alemen shnel ongenumen. fun undz yidn- nokh shneler, vayl mir zaynen shoyn ale geven mid.</p> <p>es hobn zikh opgerufn di ershte 20 kilometer velkhe mir hobn durkhgemakht „fliendik“ un bavizn undzer kraft, vos mir hobn shoyn itst farloyrn...</p> <p>mir lign itst tsvishn hoykhe zangen mit rayfe kerner. der leytenant nemt aroys di mape un dem kompas. mir veysn glaykh vu mir gefinen zikh in der velt.mir zaynen shoyn arum Slonim. ot zeen mir di shtot oyfn papir un mir tsaykhenen on a linye, vi vayter tsu geyn azoy az mir zoln nisht araynkumen in shtot arayn.</p> <p>di nakht-fintsternish hot undz arumgenumen. s'hot zikh oyfgegoshn a shvartse Fliskeyt, vos farshtelt undz dem vayterdikn veg. nor der laykhtndiker vayzer fun kompas firt undz in der fintsterkeyt. mir geyen itst mit langzame tritn. me shrayt shoyn mer nit: „Faroys, shneler!“</p> <p>mir zaynen aroys fun korn un aroyfgekumen oyf a groysn shetekh vu es vaksn kartofl. fun kartofl-feld in a feld fun hober.</p>	<p>- by us Jews even faster, because we were indeed all exhausted.</p> <p>At this point, we notice the consequences of the first 20 kilometers that we had virtually "flown" to show our strength - which we now have already lost.</p> <p>We are lying among tall ears with ripe grains. The lieutenant takes out the map and the compass, and we immediately know where in the world we are, namely in the vicinity of Slonim. We see the city on the paper and draw a line to bypass it.</p> <p>The gloom of the night has embraced us like black liquid, blocking our way in its flow. But the luminous pointer of the compass is guiding us through the darkness. We are now walking with slow steps, there is already no more shouting "Forward, faster!"</p> <p>We leave the grain and enter a large area where potatoes are growing. And after the potatoes, comes a field of oats.</p>	
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<p>ot zaynen mir in kleynem, yungn veldl un fun tsayt tsu tsayt shlogt zikh <i>an anderer</i> on mitn gantsn kerper in a beyml un „tsekusht zikh“ dermit...</p> <p>azoy zaynen mir gegangen biz s’hot zikh bavizn oyfn vaytn, tunkeln horizont a heler, groyer pas, vos iz langzam gevorn greser un greser un vos amol alts mer aroysgeshtoysn di shvartskeyt fun arum. mir zaynen aroysgekumen oyf a nayem grinem feld, vu di erd, a veykhe, hot geshtert undzer aylkn gang.</p> <p>itst iz shoyn likhtik, a kil luftl loyft farbay un flit ergets in der vistkeyt avek. mir geyen itst in a gendzn-ray, eyner hintern tsveytn. der ershter geyt der leytenant. der letster gey ikh. far mir geyt a rus, velkher vendet tsu mir di oygn, nokh yede por trit.</p> <p>-khaveyrim, varnt undz der leytenant, do iz a zumpike gegnt un yeder darf zayn gut forzikhtik, zikh nit aroptsulozn in der gedikhter, tifer blote. der himl vert mit yeder minut alts loyterer un es bavayzt zikh a royter pas, velkher fartsit zikh fun untn aroyf.</p> <p>mir geyen. yeder halt aropgelozt dem midn kop tsu der erd. mir geyen borvese. di shvartse blote shpřitst fun tsvishn di finger aroys un farshpřitst di hoyzn. eyner farshpřitst dem tsveytn. der leytenant git a farordenung mir zoln oyston di hoyzn un geyn halb nakete. azoy vet undz zayn</p>	<p>Here we are in a small, young grove, and every now and then one of us bumps his whole body against a little tree (<i>that is swinging back?</i>), and they both "kiss each other off."</p> <p>So we walked until a bright, gray streak appeared on the vast, dark horizon, slowly growing wider and wider, pushing away more and more of the surrounding blackness.</p> <p>We reach a new green field where the softness of the earth bothers us from hurrying further at a fast pace.</p> <p>It's already light, a cool breeze blows by and dissipates somewhere away into the wasteland. We are now marching in single file, one behind the other. The first to go is the lieutenant, the last is me. In front of me is walking a Russian, who turns to me after every few steps.</p> <p>"Comrades," the lieutenant warns us, "a swampy area is coming, and everyone must be very careful not to sink into the thick mud!"</p> <p>The sky becomes clearer with each passing minute, and a red streak appears, extending from the bottom to the top.</p> <p>We go on. Everyone keeps his tired head lowered to the earth. We walk barefoot. The black mud splashes out between our toes and against our pants. We splash each other full of mud. The lieutenant decrees that we should take off our pants and go on half naked, this will make it</p>	
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<p>laykhter tsu geyn iber dem zumpikn veg vos tsit zikh nokh zeyer vayt.  alemol dakht zikh undz az mir kumen shoy n aroys oyf der „trikenish“. ot ot dergraykhn mir shoy n dem himl, velkher ligt dort far undz tsuzamengegosn mit der erd. ober der himl shpilt zikh mit undz. vos nenter mir kumen tsu tsu im, alts vayter antloyft er fun undz.  ot shtelt eyner a fus in a shvartsn blotikn grub un shlept im tsurik aroys mit di letste, farborgene koykhes.  mir derhern a shtarkn geroysh fun avyonen velkhe flien iber undzer kop in der riktung tsu Minsk tsu.  der leytenant git a bafel: avekleygn zikh!</p>	<p>easier for us to walk over the swampy path that still stretches on for a long time.  Again and again we think that we are already getting out now, into the "dry".  Soon we reach the sky that lies over yonder before us, merged with the earth. But heaven plays its little games with us. The closer we get to him, the further he runs away from us!  Just now, one of us puts his foot in a black mud pit and can only pull it out again by summoning up his last reserves of strength.  We hear a loud sound of planes flying over our heads in the direction of Minsk. The lieutenant orders:  "Everybody lay down!"</p>	
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<p>mir varfn zikh arayn in der blote, ikh fal arayn in der blote bizn kop.  es flien tsu drey avyonen in a rey. zey flien zeyer hoykh. mir lign ale-mit di kep farbahaltn eyner hintern andern.  -farshtelt di vayse torbes, zey veln undz bamerkn! ruft oys der leytenant. yeder khapt zayn torbe un farbahaltn zi unter zikh, oder in der blote.  di avyonen zaynen avek in der vaytkeyt un ingantsn farshvundn fun undzer blik, an opklang fun zeyer geroysh klingt nokh op in der shtilkeyt fun arum.</p>	<p>We throw ourselves into the swamp, and I get up to my head in the mud. Three planes approach in a row. They fly very high. We are all lying there with our heads hidden behind each other.    "Mask the white sacks, or they'll notice us!" the lieutenant exclaims. Everyone reaches for their provision sacks and hides them under themselves or in the mud.  The planes have disappeared in the distance and out of our field of vision; their noise is still reverberating in the silence of the surroundings.</p>	
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<p>mir steyen vider oyf un nehmen di torbes un di shikh oyfn aksl. fun yedn rinen pasn blote. di ponimer-farshvitst.</p> <p>men muz ober vos gikher aroys fun di zumpn un ankumen keyn Minsk, tsu zayn oyser gefar.</p> <p>itst veysn mir gornisht vos es tut zikh arum undz. mir gefinen zikh tsvishn himl un erd. mir zeen nisht keyn mentshn bay vemen tsu kenen fregn. yeder eyner fun undz veyst nor, az vos frier mir veln kumen keyn Minsk-alts zikherer un beser vet dos zayn far undz.</p> <p>yeder marshirt mit langzame trit, shveygdik. ale trakhtn itst dos eygene: ven vet zikh dos endikn? ven vet shoyt zayn oys zump, mir zoln shoyt aroyskumen oyf trukenem bodn un kenen shteln fest un zikher undzere trit?</p> <p>ober der veg iz nokh a vayter un shverer. fil veln nokh oyf dem dozikh vegn farlirn dos leben. andere veln dem trukenem veg, dos veg fun frayd un glik-dergreykh.</p> <p>-foroys, foroys khaveyrim! mir muzn nokh haynt banakht zayn in Minsk! morgn inderfri muzn mir shoyt zayn bay der Berezine! muntert undz alts unter der leytenant, shoyt aleyn mit a shvakhn kol. er iz shoyt oykh mid un shlept shoyt koym di fis, tsu velkhe es zaynen tsugetshepet shvere shtiker blote vos viln nit aropfaln.</p> <p>eyner treyst dem andern, az ot bald veln mir dergreykh trukene erd, dan abisl ruen un vayter geyn tsum ongetsaykhnetn tsil.</p> <p>ikh gey der letster un shtel yedn trot, dort vu es hot</p>	<p>We rise, taking our little sacks and shoes on our shoulders. Trickles of mud run down from everything; our faces are sweaty.</p> <p>But it's essential that we get through the swamps faster and arrive in Minsk to be out of danger.</p> <p>We, who are in between heaven and earth, do not know what is going on around us at the moment. We don't see anyone to ask. Each and every one of us only knows that the sooner we arrive in Minsk, the safer and better it will be for us.</p> <p>Everyone marches with slow steps, silently. All think only one thing: When will this end? When will we finally get out of the swamp and onto dry ground, so that we can tread firmly and safely again?</p> <p>But the road is still long and difficult. Many will lose their lives along the way. Others will reach the dry path - and a path of joy and happiness.</p> <p>"Ahead, ahead, comrades! We must be in Minsk tonight! Tomorrow morning we must already arrive in the Berezine!", the lieutenant is motivating us, already himself with a weak voice. He is also already tired and can barely lift his feet, which have heavy clumps of mud stuck to them that won't fall off.</p> <p>One comforts the other: Soon we will reach dry ground, then we can rest a little and continue to the marked destination.</p> <p>I go last and step in where another has already ...</p>	
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*Drawing courtesy of the painter, Zdzisław Nitka*

<p>shoyn geshtelt a fus emitser far mir. ikh gey shoyn, heyst es, oyf an „oysgetrotenem veg“.</p> <p>un ot shtel ikh a fus un ikh derfil, az er zinkt, tifer un tifer in der shvartse blote. ikh shtreng on ale mayne koykhes un vil im aroystsien, ober der tsveyter fus hot oykh unter zikh nit keyn festn grunt un ikh loz zikh arop alts tifer un tifer in der gedikhter, shvartser smetene.</p> <p>mayne khaveyrim zaynen avek foroys un hobn nisht bamerkt vi ikh bin geblibn zinken eyner aley n in der blote. ot bin ikh shoyn iber di kni in zump. ot bin ikh shoyn tifer. mit yeder minut greykht mir der zump alts hekher un hekher. ale mayne onshtrengungen zaynen umzist. ikh shtek shoyn bizn hal dz. ersht itst rayst zikh aroys bay mir a fartsveyflter geshray;</p> <p>khaveyrim ratevet!- ober keyner ruft zikh nisht op oyf mayn ruf. ale zaynen shoyn vayt fun mir un ikh ze zey shoyn nisht. ikh pruv vider mit ale kreftn aley n zikh tsu bafrayen, ober umzist. ikh shtek shoyn biz der gombe un ot krikht mir shoyn di flisike, shvartse erd in moyl arayn. ikh pruv nokhamol shrayen: khaveyrim, ratevet, ratevet!</p> <p>ikh her vi in der shtilkeyt fun arum hilkhht dos kol fun mayne khaveyrim. -hey, hey, Alyosha, vu bistu? derher ikh dos kol fun leytenant un nokh tsvey khaveyrim, velkhe kumen tsuloyfn tsu mir. zey hobn derzen mayn</p>	<p>left his footprints. I am walking, so to speak, on a "well-trodden path".</p> <p>And just now, I put my foot down and feel it sink, deeper and deeper into the black swamp. I muster all my strength and want to pull it out, but now the second foot has no solid ground under it either and I sink deeper and deeper into the dense, black muck.</p> <p>My comrades have hurried ahead and have not noticed how I, sinking into the mud, have remained behind alone. Just now I have found myself in the swamp up to above the knees, and now even deeper! With every moment the mud reaches me higher and higher! All my efforts are in vain. I'm already stuck up to my neck. Only now does a desperate cry escape me,</p> <p>"Comrades, save me!" But no one answers my call. Everyone is already far away and I don't even see them anymore. Again, I try to free myself by mustering all my strength alone, but in vain. I'm already stuck up to my chin and now even the liquid, black earth is already creeping into my mouth. I try to shout one more time, "Comrades, save me, save me!"</p> <p>I hear the echo of my comrades' voices in the silence of the surroundings: "Hey, hey, Alyosha, where are you?" - that's the lieutenant and two comrades, who come running to me! They have recognized my situation and</p>	
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<p>lage un shnel gerufn di iberike khaveyrim, velkhe zaynen geblibn shteyn un vartn oyfn leytenant.</p> <p>ot shteyen shoyn ale leben mir un yeder pruvt aroystsushlepn, umzist. zey zinken oykh in der zumperiker tifkeyt.</p> <p>-git mir di gumene lodke!- ruft oys der leytenant. di lodke vos iz gelegn tsunoyfgeleygt in eynems a ruk-zak vert oysgesprayt leben mir. tsvey khaveyrim hobn genumen un tsunoyfgebundn di arbl fun fir marinarkes. dos zol dinen onshtot a shtrik. ikh hob zikh fest ongekapt in shtrik un di khaveyrim hobn ongehoyn tsu shlepn.</p> <p>nokh drey feste tsi, bagleyt fun: ra-az, dva-a-a, tri!!!- bin ikh shoyn gelegn oyfn gumenem shifl, ingantsn an ayngetunkener</p>	<p>quickly have called the other comrades, who have stopped, waiting for the lieutenant.</p> <p>Now, everyone is already standing next to me, and everyone is trying to pull me out, but in vain. They are also sinking into the depths of the swamp.</p> <p>"Give me the rubber boat!" shouts the lieutenant. The boat, which was folded up in one of the backpacks, is spread out next to me. Two comrades have taken the sleeves of four jackets and have tied them together to use as rope. I have held on tightly to the rope, and the comrades have already started to pull.</p> <p>After pulling hard three more times, accompanied by : "Ra-az, dva-a-a, tri!!! (One-two-three)!", I have already lain on the rubber boat, covered all over</p>	
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<p>in blote. me hot mir oysgeton di kleyder, mit a hemd arumgevisht di blote.</p> <p>mir leygn tsunoyf dos shifl un lozn zikh vayter in veg arayn. itst bin ikh shoyn gegangen der tsveyter hintern leytenant un ale khaveyrim hobn gelakht un shpas gemakht, vos ikh bin aza shlimazl.</p>	<p>with mud. They have taken off my clothes, wiping away the muck with a shirt.</p> <p>We fold the boat again and continue our way. Now, I'm walking second behind the lieutenant, and all the comrades are laughing and making fun of me for being such a jinx.</p>	
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<p>di erd heybt on tsu vern shtayfer unterm undzere fis. mir dergraykhn gants trukenem bodn. itst marshirn mir shoyn mit shtayfe trit. vemen geyt es on vos yeder iz fun di fis bizn kop bashpritst mit blote!..</p>	<p>The earth begins to get harder under our feet until we reach completely dry ground. Now, we can already march with firm steps. Who cares that we are splattered with mud from head to toe!...</p>	
<p>ikh gey in di untermhoyn. mayne hoyzn hob ikh aropgevorfn, dort vu ikh bin arayn in zump, zaynen zey shoyn dort geblibn. mir kumen arayn in a veldl un faln ale avek oyfn groz, toyt-mide. azoy zaynen mir geblibn lign gantse tsvey sho. bay yedn eynem zaynen di fis shver vi kletser un keyner vil nisht der ershter dermonen, az me darf marshirn vayter. di zun bakt un brot. mir zaynen ale hungerik un durshtik.</p>	<p>I go in my underpants. I threw away my long pants where I entered the swamp, and that's where they have remained. We enter a forest and all drop into the grass, dead tired. In this way, we remain lying for a whole two hours. With each of us, the legs are heavy as blocks, and no one wants to be the first to remind that we must march on. The sun is baking and roasting. We are all hungry and thirsty.</p>	
<p>yeder nemt zikh tsu di „vayse“ torbes, vos zaynen shoyn itst shvarts fun blote. mir esn ale kolektiv. trinken hobn mir nisht vos. keyner vil geyn zukhn keyn vaser.</p>	<p>We grab our "white" sacks, which are now all black from the mud. We all eat together, but we have nothing to drink. Anyway, no one wants to go out to look for water.</p>	
<p>der leytenant iz oyfgeshtanen un zikh gefregt, tsi mir viln marshirn vayter. eynike fun undz zaynen shoyn antshlofn gevorn, ober der leytenant vekt alemen oyf. yeder genetst, haltndik di farshlofene oygn halb farmakht.</p>	<p>The lieutenant has already stood up, wondering, if we don't want to march on. Some of us have already fallen asleep, but the lieutenant wakes everyone up. Everyone yawns, their sleepy eyes still half closed.</p>	
<p>-nu, khaveyrim, mir veln geyn vayter. itst vet shoyn der veg zayn laykhter, muntert undz der leytenant. yederer bet zikh me zol lozn lign nokh a minut, ober me muz dokh geyn.</p>	<p>"Well, comrades, let's move on! Now the way will be easier for us," the lieutenant encourages us. Everyone asks if we can lie down for another minute, but eventually, we have to go.</p>	

<p>mir shteyen oyf. di fis zaynen shver un geshvoln, nor geyn muz men. men darf dergraykhn dem tsil. s'iz a shod di tsayt.</p>	<p>We stand up. Our feet are heavy and swollen, but we must go on! We have to reach our destination and time is precious.</p>	
<p>mir veysn nisht vos es loyert arum undz. mir marshirn aroys mit langzame trit. der himl iz tifbloy. di zun tunkt zikh. der farnakht rukt zikh nenter un nenter, mit yedn trot vos mir shteln foroys.</p>	<p>We do not know what is lurking around us and march out (of the forest) with slow steps. The sky is deep blue, the sun is sinking. The evening is getting closer and closer, with every step we take ahead.</p>	

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<p>di nakht iz tsugefaln. mir zaynen aroys fun vald un vider arayn in a feld fun hoykhe halb-fartike zangen, vu mir hobn gemuzt ontou di shikh oyf di farshvolene fis iber di shteyner.</p>	<p>Night has fallen. We have left the forest and come back to a field with high, half-ripe ears of corn, where we have to put on our shoes over our swollen feet for the walk over the stones.</p>	
<p>der leytenant khapt a blik oyf der mape un oyfn kompas un zet az mir zaynen shoyn nit vayt fun Minsk. ingantsn a fertsik kilometer. mir zaynen shoyn ariber di alte poylish-rusishe grenets. itst marshirn mir oyf rusisher erd.</p>	<p>The lieutenant takes a look at the map and the compass and sees that we are already not far from Minsk. All in all, there are still 40 kilometers to go. We have already crossed the old Polish-Russian border and are now marching on Russian soil.</p>	
<p>in der vaytkeyt fun feld zeen mir a dorf mit shiter-tsevorfene heyzlekh oyf a bergl. mir bashlisen, az eyner zol arayngeyn in dorf, zikh dervishn vos es hert zikh un brengen vaser far itlekh.</p>	<p>Looking across the wide field, we spot a village with a few scattered cottages on a small mountain. We decide that one of us should go to the village, ask what's going on, and bring water for all of us.</p>	

<p>der leytenant geyt avek in dorf arayn. mir ale blaybn oyfn feld tsvishn di kartofl. in tsen minut arum iz er tsurik gekumen mitbrendendik a fuln hiltsernem emer mit vaser. fundervaytns nokh, hot er gemakht mit der hant, mir zoln kumen tsu im.</p> <p>mir loyfn tsu.</p> <p>-vos iz geshen? fregn mir ale in eyn otem. khaveyrim, shrayt er mit a tsiterndiker shtim, trinkt shnel dos vaser. mir muzn shnel avek fun danen.</p> <p>di Daytshn zaynen do zeyer noent.</p> <p>-vos? Daytshn? fegn ale dershtoynt.</p> <p>-Daytshn, Daytshn, parachutistn! entfert der leytenant mit a tsiterndiker shtim.-shneler, khaveyrim, shneler, zey zaynen do in dem rayom. yeder fun undz nemt aroys dem revolver un leygt arayn in keshene.</p> <p>mayn revolver iz gelegn in torbe. mir vishn gut arum di revolvern fun der blote un lodn zey on mit naye koyln. azoy lozn mir zikh in veg arayn. arum iz fintster khoyshekh. bay yedn shorkh vos mir derhern blaybn mir shteyn un haltn greyt di revolvern.</p> <p>mir zaynen vider aroyfgekumen oyf a langer, frayer lonke, velkhe iz bavaksn mit hoykh, grinem groz. dos groz iz nas un kalt. mir tuen vider on di shikh. di fun undz, bay vemen di fis</p>	<p>It is the lieutenant who goes to the village. We all remain in the field among the potatoes. After ten minutes he comes back, bringing a full wooden bucket with water. Still far away, he has already waved his hand that we should come to him.</p> <p>We run up to him and all ask in the same breath: "What's going on?"</p> <p>"Comrades," he shouts in a trembling voice, "drink the water quickly. We have to get out of here, immediately. The Germans are very close to us!"</p> <p>"What, Germans?" everyone asks in astonishment.</p> <p>"Germans, Germans, parachutists!" the lieutenant answers in a quivering voice, "faster, comrades, faster, they are here in this area. Take out all your revolvers and put them in your pockets!"</p> <p>My revolver is lying in the little sack. We all wipe the mud off our revolvers and load them with new bullets. Thus we go on, around us dark gloom. At every snort we hear, we stop with our revolvers drawn.</p> <p>We reach again a long, open meadow, overgrown with tall green grass. The grass is cold and wet; we put on our shoes again. Those of us,</p>	
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zaynen geshvoln- viklen zey nor eyn in shmates un azoy marshirn mir foroys, nor zeyer langzam, vayl mir muzn zayn forzikhtik. mir veysn nisht vos es shtekt hinter undzere pleytses.

der leytenant dertseylt, az a poyer hot im gezogt, az haynt inderfri zaynen do, oyfn feld, arum dem dorf, aropgefaln parashutistn, velkhe shisn yedn vemen zey trefn, say soldatn, say tsivile. oyf der tsveyter zayt fun dorf lign shoyn fil tsivile un soldatn toyt. haynt inderfri hot men plutsim oyf zey geshosn mit mashin-gever fun korn.

der leytenant zukht oys a zumpikn veg oyf velkhn mir zoln zikh kenen durkhshlogn tsu Minsk oder ergets hinter Minsk.  
mir farnemen zikh oyf rekhts un geyen vi der leytenant firt undz. ikh gey leben leytenant un baken zikh mit der mape un mitn kompas.

di drite nakht iz a kalte. a naser vint fayft arum. mir marshirn vider iber a feld, vu der fus treft nisht keyn mindeste shtikl erd oyf avektsushteln a festn trot. itst zaynen mir forzikhtik un geyen langzam vider eyner hintern tsveytn.  
di erd vigt zikh vi groyse ayz-kri(y)es oyf a vaser in friling.

whose feet are swollen, just wrap them in rags. And so we march ahead, though very slowly, because we have to be careful. We do not know what is hiding behind our backs.

The lieutenant informs us about a farmer, who told him that this morning there, in the field around the village, parachutists landed, shooting at anyone they met, whether civilians or soldiers. Thus, on the other side of the village, there would already lie many dead civilians and soldiers. Today in the morning, they were suddenly shot at with machine guns from the cornfields.

The lieutenant chooses a swampy path on which we can make our way to Minsk, or somewhere beyond it.  
We turn right and walk as the lieutenant leads us. I walk next to the lieutenant and familiarize myself with the map and compass.

The third night is cold. A damp wind whistles around us and we march again across a field where the foot does not meet the smallest piece of solid earth to tread firmly. We are careful and go slowly again, one behind the second. The earth is swaying like large ice floes in spring, floating on the water.

<p>der leytenant varft a blik oyfn kompas un vayzt on mit der hant in velkher rikhtung mir zoln geyn. itst shrayt er vider:  foroys, khaveyrim! mir muzn undzer tsil dergreykhn! kukt nisht oyf der midkeyt fun ayere fis! gikher geyt foroys, veln mir tsukumen tsu undzer tsil, vos mir hobn zikh geshtelt!</p> <p>der leytenant fregt vemen s'iz shver tsu trogn di hoyzn, oder di mantlen, zol men alts avekvarfn, vet dan zayn fil laykhter tsu geyn. di merhayt fun undz hot im glaykh gefolgt un mir hobn alts avekgevorf, vos es iz nor geven tsu shver.</p> <p>-foroys, foroys! hert zikh di shtime in der fintsterkeyt fun arum. yedn eynem iz kalt un shver tsu shteln a fus. ober der impet yogt.</p> <p>fun hintn yogt undz nokh der toyt, umdermidlekh vi a shotn. yeder veyst vos im dervart, oyb er falt arayn in di hent fun di merder. keyner filt deriber nisht vi zayne fis zaynen geshvoln un azoy shver tsum ufheybn. keyner geyt shoyn</p>	<p>The lieutenant takes a look at the compass, points with his hand the direction in which we have to go, and shouts again: "Ahead, ahead, comrades! We must reach our destination! Pay no attention to your tired feet! If you go ahead faster, we will achieve the goal we have set for ourselves!"</p> <p>The lieutenant advises that those who find it too difficult to carry their trousers or coats with them, should just throw everything away so that they can walk more easily. The majority of us follow him right away, dropping anything that is just an unnecessary burden.</p> <p>"Ahead, ahead," sounds the voice in the darkness of the surroundings. We are all cold and we find it difficult to take the next step. But the inner momentum drives us.</p> <p>Death chases us from behind, tirelessly like a shadow. Everyone knows what to expect when they fall into the hands of the murderers. Thus, nobody feels anymore, how swollen and lame their feet are. Now, nobody has any strength to keep going.</p>	
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*Drawing courtesy of the painter, Zdzisław Nitka*

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itst nisht mit zayne kreftn, nor der impet un di shrek farn „shotn“ vos loyert fun ale zaytn-treybt yedn foroys, foroys, tsum rateven zayn leben.	Only their inner impetus and their fear of the "shadow" that lurks on all sides is driving all ahead, ahead to save their lives.	
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