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12

Contents

Be Ready, Your Highness!—Lev Kazil 3
I Must Tell You—Marija Rodzinaite 64

POETRY

The Poetry of Vassil Kazin—Zinos Paperny 136
Worker's May: It's so long since the sun hung sickly yellow... My Plane, The Accordionist: To strike a match and watch its unpretentious... My Mother's Grave: Renewal—Vassil Kazin 138

LITERARY CRITICISM

Literary Form and Content—Alexander Ninos 143
"History of World Literature" in Preparation—Irina Neschilyeva 150
What the Scholars Say...—Academician Nikolai Konrad and Boris Rybakov 153

ANNIVERSARIES

Konstantin Simonov—Lazur Lazarev 157

THE ARTS

What Is a Film for Audiences?—Alexander Karagunov 163
Young Graphic Artists of Estonia—Eugenia Burtina 173
Vladimir Tokarev's "Spring Flowers"—Palitra Tomruchi 177

REVIEWS AND NEWS

Faulkner in the Soviet Union—Mikhail Landor 178

NEW BOOKS 196

INDEX 194
LEV KASSIL

BE READY, YOUR HIGNNESS!
CHAPTER 1

The Prince From Jungahore

"I'm a prince, now that's all I need," said the summer camp manager into the telephone.

All eyes turned to him. Some thought they had not heard aright, others took it for one of his jokes; he was known for his humour all along the coast. But there was no humour in his face; the urgent call from Moscow which had interrupted the discussion in the Spartak Young Pioneer Camp manager's office was evidently important.

He signed to the bookkeeper to shut the window. The waves made too much noise. The bookkeeper Makarychev shut it tightly and the room suddenly became quiet and rather stuffy; but the waves, which ran almost up to the house, rose on tiptoe as though trying to peep in.

Moscow too was apparently not certain of his answer, because he repeated it loudly, with a sardonic look at the others:

"I said the one thing we lack here is a prince."

But Moscow, it seemed, was not in a jesting mood. "Ku-kekeki-kokoky," the receiver quacked sternly and the manager rapped back, "Very well. I understand."

Mikhail Borisovich Kravchuk received the head for a moment, looking at it as though expecting some new surprise to jump out, then with a swing returned it to old-fashioned books like an antelope's horns. He turned to the others. He looked disturbed, but he puffed out his cheeks to encourage himself and gave a wink.

"Well, congratulations," he said. "I have news for you. A prince is coming here."

"How do you mean?"

"Literally. Just what the words say. A prince. A Royal Highness—damn him! The younger brother of the King of Jungahore at present reigning in majesty, and so on and so forth. The heir apparent to the throne. How do you like it? Ought we to ring up Artek?—They could give us a few hints, they've had some princes and princesses from Luos or Cambodion, I believe. At least, I heard they had. M'yes, the one thing I've dreamed of all my life, to educate this august personage in our summer camp...."

"But why August?" the bookkeeper asked alertly. "It's only July. Will it be part of the August plan?"
certain somebody called Taraska Bobunov. Everybody knew this small round-checked boy, and he knew absolutely everybody, because a more inquisitive little rattlepate it would have been hard to find in the whole camp, and perhaps along the whole coast. It was not for nothing he was nicknamed Tararin of Tarascon, and Town Crier, and Transistor. So when the manager did notice him, he shook his head sadly.

"So you're here, of course—you would be. Now look, Taras, do you think you can keep from chattering about what you've heard here—for a little while, at least?"

"I can for a little while," said Taraska firmly.

"A little while" is a very relative concept, and in a very little while indeed the secret was almost bursting out of him. At last it was too much, and pulled him straight to his tent, Number Four. This was where the most hardy boys lived, a friendly company who had earned the right to live right by the beach instead of in the cottages that stood in the park.

"Listen to me, boys," Taraska began (his voice promised something really startling). "If you'll promise to keep mum for the present, I'll tell you something that'll knock you silly. Only it's a secret, you know."

Nobody even glanced at Taraska, all went right on with what they were doing. From inside the tent a voice said, "Huh! I can imagine!"

"All right, you can call me gab-language." Taraska retorted in the direction of the tent.

"Thanx for the permission—we do." "Go ahead. And rattlepate."

"That too."

"And Tararin. And Town Crier."

"We don't need telling," came inflexibly through the canvas.

"But you'll see that it's all true what I tell you."

Taraska addressed all this to the tent wall, but secretly eyed the boys sitting behind him.

"Spite it out and get done, can't you?" Slava Nesmetnov, the most serious and stolid Pioneer in Number Four, raised his head from the chess-board on which he had just checkmated his opponent.

"But you don't give me a chance!" Taraska protested. "Now listen—we're going to have a prince here. He's from Jungahore."

It fell remarkably flat.

"Well, and what?" said Slava Nesmetnov. "Let him come if he wants, it won't hurt us. I don't suppose their Young Pioneer camps are up to much."

"Some la-di-da prince, I couldn't care less," Slava's opponent backed him up.

"But it's not his fault he was born a prince," said Taraska stubbornly.

"He could abdicate if he's against the monarchy."

Taraska, who for some reason had taken the prince under his wing without even seeing him, was indignant.

"You don't know anything about it! Give him a chance, maybe he will when it's time for him to be a king."

A boy who had been reading by the tent door looked up.

"Where is Jungahore, anyway—in Africa, or Australia, or what?"

"You're off, coo-ee!" said Slava. "Don't lose your way back!"

The boy rose and stretched.

"All the same, I'll go to the library. There's a book there about all sorts of places, it was left over from the Festival. Called Briefs About Countries."

"Just what you need—brief and clear," said Slava Nesmetnov, his eyes on the board, and added to his opponent, "I don't know about princes, but I'm taking your queen."

The girls, too, showed no extraordinary excitement about Taraska's news. They were sitting on the porch of a big white cottage knitting, or reading, or arranging collections of coloured pebbles on the steps.

"Listen, girls," said Taraska mysteriously, "I've got some news for you. Only quiet, don't squeal." He put his hands over his ears as a precaution and then came out with his sensation.

Only there was no sensation, let alone squeals. Taraska dropped his hands and stated.

"Tell another," said the tallest of the girls. Her name was Antonida but she was generally called Tonida, or just Tonya.

Tonya Pashukhina had come from a children's home not far from Gorky on the Volga. This slender girl, quick and agile, with a slow glance from under long lashes and eyebrows that made a severely straight line, was a natural leader. The girls respected her strict sense of fairness but were a little afraid of her; she had no use for sentimentality and any girl who tried to hug her after she had
shown some swimming trick would be put firmly away with “Get off. Don’t slobber.”

The boys preferred to keep a respectful distance after their first attempt to tease her had taught them the strength of both her character and her fists. She aroused general envy by the way she swam and made flat pebbles skip over the water. One day, challenged by the boys, she jumped from a high cliff into the sea, to the squeals of her room-mates and the admiring whispers of the crowd on the beach below. However, during the talk with the camp manager which followed, admiration was not a marked feature.

“We can’t have that sort of thing here, young lady,” said Mikhail Borisovich decidedly. “What if you break your neck, or smash yourself up?”

“Well, and so what?” Tonida answered stubbornly in her deep voice. “Who’d care? Who wants me?”

Then the manager rose from his table, took Tonida by the shoulders and seated her in the big armchair, sat down opposite her and took both hands in his big strong ones.

“Now, that’s no good. It’s not good to talk like that. Not right. And not sensible. I know your story, I know you grew up without parents. But you’re not the only one. Our people have gone through difficult times. A great many children lost their fathers and mothers in the war.”

“It wasn’t the war with mine,” said Tonida.

“I know. I know, dear, how you lost your father and mother. But they were traced, and their name was discovered, and you hear that name, you hear it with honour—I know that too. And haven’t you got friends, good comrades? What sort of talk is that—‘who wants you?’ Aren’t you ashamed? It all depends on you—whether people will need you or whether you’ll just live for yourself. And I’ve heard about your activities in the Home, I read about you in the Pionerskaya Pravda. And when I found your name in our list I was glad. Here’s Antonida Pashukhina coming, I thought. And now you start acting foolishly and talking foolishly. And think so little of yourself that you run silly risks. Honestly, Tonya, that’s not the way. You mustn’t.”

In the camp she was nicknamed Tonida-Torpedo or General, because all the girls accepted her just although sometimes rather peremptory leadership. Now she glanced at Taraska from under straight brows that gave her a look of unbending sternness.

“A prince—and so what!” she said, took a semi-circular comb from her head and drew it through her hair backwards from the forehead as though pushing back the visor of a helmet. The challenging disapproval in her big grey eyes as they rested on Taraska made him wriggle and wish he had not come. “I couldn’t care less. You can tell your prince when he comes that we aren’t going to be his subjects.”

“Our camp’s going down,” observed Zuuya Makhilakova, the sharpest-tongued of the girls. “Next thing we’ll be having tsars.”

“I thought there weren’t any more princes anywhere,” said another girl. “A king or two, maybe, here and there, hanging on—but what’s a prince got to expect? Silly….”

“All the same, girls, it is interesting to have a prince,” a small girl sorting out pebbles on her knees said shyly.

“Gosh, as if we’d never seen any!”

“Where have you seen princes?”

“Plenty of times. . . . In Cinderella, going about with that shoe. . . . A court shoe, awfully pretty, with a gold spike heel and so tiny. And he tried it on all the girls.”

“Don’t be a fool. This won’t be in the theatre, it’s real.”

“Well, what if it is?”

Tonida’s eyes moved slowly, ominously round.

“Personally,” she said, “I think, girls, we ought to show him right away at once—make him understand—that we’re not the sort of servile, slavish creatures he’s always had round him. He’s probably used to people bowing and scraping, but I for one certainly don’t intend to do any ‘with your permission, and if it pleases you and ah and oh and by your leave—not me!’”

“Mashka Serebrovskaya’s father’s Chief Marshal of the most important forces, and she doesn’t put on airs,” Zuuya observed.

All this was too much for Taraska.

“I know you girls. That’s the way you talk now, but when he comes it’ll be ‘Oh, isn’t he handsome! Oh, isn’t he sweet! Please give me your autograph! Please let me be photographed with you!’—and all the rest of it!”

Tonida rose unhurriedly from the veranda steps.

“Now then, you,” she said slowly, “get going before it’s too late. You can be glad we’ve listened to you at all—now jump for it or you’ll get something that’ll make you a sprinter. Fade, and quick—you hear me?”

Back at his tent, however, Taraska found the boys in a huddle over Briefs About Countries. Slava Nesmetnov was reading aloud.

“Jungahore. Area 194,000 square kilometres. Population over five million. Capital Hairajamba, famous for the Jaigadang Royal Palace built by folk craftsmen in ancient times. Jungahore lies in a broad fertile valley bordered by the ocean and in the north-west by high mountains which protect it from the north winds. Jungahore is a constitutional monarchy and the king is the head of the state. For decisions on important questions the king summons, in addition to parliament, a council of tribal leaders and other prominent personalities, the Great Jurga. There are no political parties, trade unions or other public organizations. A fine way to organize a country!” Slava concluded.
Then they opened an atlas from the library and with heads together and shoulders jostling gazed for a long time at the map of that distant, hot country, Jungahore, the heir apparent of which was to come to the Spartak Camp.

CHAPTER 4

Two Former Young Pioneers and One Future King

"Well, can you beat it!" Mikhail Borisovich rolled his head and looked gaily at his companion.

"Yes, wouldn't think it up in a hundred years."

They had already said something of the kind a dozen times.

The point was that when his guide delivered the prince at the camp, the Soviet Ambassador to Jungahore, Pavel Andreyevich Shchedrintsev, who was spending his holidays at a sanatorium not far away, came to meet him and pay his respects; and this Shchedrintsev was an old school friend and subsequently frontline comrade of the camp manager. So while the Senior Pioneer Yura took charge of the prince, the two friends settled down for a talk, delighted at the encounter.

"You're just the same. Fit as a king," said the ambassador.

"Well, you're the expert in kings."

"No, really, you look fine. Only your hair seems to be changing colour, you used to be pitch black."

"Well, you don't need to worry, got rid of your hair in good time. But you know, my dear Ambassador, what I really would like is to see you all dressed up in a frock coat!—See what you look like."

"Like everyone else. It's a sort of diplomatic uniform. Now, what I'd like to see is you going round looking after the kids, a combined nursemaid and teacher and lord knows what not. How on earth did you get on to the pedagogical track?"

"Well, you know, I was always fond of kids. Remember, in the partisan group in the Bryansk woods, they dogged me all the time. My own—you know—lost near Smolensk. And I never had any more. So somehow I got into this kind of work. Kids—they don't care a rap about us adults when we're there beside them, but if we aren't, then they miss us, and how! They really need adult sympathy, adult attention. There's one girl here, she's from a children's home. She never saw her parents to remember, but the thought of them—it's almost an obsession. She was considered a waif, abandoned, until good people found everything out and gave her back her own name and a pride in her father and mother. I always feel it means so much to her, when adults talk to her, take her seriously. Well, enough of that. I want to know more about your heir apparent. How did the guide manage with him on the way? All right?"

"Nothing to speak of. At first, he says, the prince expected him to hand him his trousers in the morning, but then he started to get them himself. Got used to things. In general, he's quite a decent kid. I knew him in Jungahore. Of course, they've done all they could to spoil him ever since he was born, but he's good stuff."

"Here, stop a bit, tell me more details. I've got to know."

From the other side of the wall came the sound of splashing, the voice of Yura and the merry voice of the prince taking a bath.

"Well then," said the ambassador, "I'll read you a popular lecture. You have to understand that the situation there's extremely complicated. The king, Jutang Surambiar, is really quite a decent fellow, but weak. Putty, whoever gets close to him can mould him any way. Tzar Fyodor in a play at the Art Theatre. Government circles pull all ways. Actually, it's foreign capital that really pulls the strings. The people call all imperialists merkhango. The old king, Shardanyah Surambon, was hand in glove with them. That was a real brutal tyrant, the terror of all. He drove his own wife to her death. So this prince—his name is Delihyar Surambok, remember it—grew up without a mother. His grandfather brought him up and she—please note—was Russian. At one time the heir apparent of Jungahore studied at the Royal Lyceum in St. Petersburg, and fell in love with a girl there. She became the betrothed of the king of Jungahore and then the lawful queen. They say she was a splendid woman. But all her life she was homesick for Russia and even taught her grandson to talk a little Russian. So Delihyar can make himself understood quite well and even sang me a Russian song his grandmother had taught him—Fly, Troika, Through the Soft White Snow. Can you beat it? And of course he's never snow in his life. But his grandfather was the great influence in his upbringing. Granny Shura, he called her—her name was Alexandra, Shura for short. At first, of course, he wasn't regarded as the heir apparent, there was his elder brother, the present king. So nobody in the court took much notice of the younger, Delihyar. After his grandfather died, the boy was left more or less to himself. His brother the king had no time to bother with his education. He spoke about it to me once, and that was when I had this idea. 'Your Majesty,' I said, 'what if His Royal Highness spent a little while with our children, in an ordinary Young Pioneer camp? We've had some experience of the kind.' I told him. Princes and princesses from friendly countries have stayed in Artek, in the International Young Pioneer Camp, and they seemed pleased with their stay."

"My pal," groaned the manager. "Done me a good turn, haven't you? Many thanks!"

"Anyway, I knew what I was doing when I spoke of your camp, I knew whose hands the prince would be in. So don't let me down."

"What am I supposed to do with that prince of yours, just tell me that!" said the manager.
"No more than with your other fledglings. Well, of course, you'll have to take some things into consideration, see that the surroundings are suitable and so on. But no special conditions. That was what I told the king: 'Let the lad rob we're building a hydro-power station there, you know, the Shardai Cascade. I'll weren't any before me, and you simply can't imagine what it was like when I same in the streets we passed along. All carrying flowers and palm branches. And you'd never guess what they sung in my honour—Katysta and Black Eyes, if you please! All night long there were young people under my window calling up greetings and playing a kind of horn they have, and dancing, and singing Katysta.

"Well, as I said, things aren't very quiet generally in the country. The king's sickly and isn't expected to live long. He's not married, so the heir to the throne is this prince splashing about in the bath here. By the way, the king wants him to go to one of our Suvorov cadet schools in the autumn. Negotiations are going on about it now."

There was a knock and Yura brought the prince in. Mikhail Borisovich looked at him keenly. The prince was swarthy, with large eyes and a small, rather broad nose with nostrils that looked as though they were pulled to either side by his protruberant cheekbones. The chin showed a long vertical fold, like that on an apricot. From the wide bridge of his nose very mobile eyebrows slanted up towards his temples; at the moment they were set in a look of haughty indifference.

"Well, Prince, had a good wash after your journey?" asked the manager.

"I think so," said the prince with a rather nasal accent; he fastened a button and said: "We've been living in the bath here."

"Sealed you a long time, I thought they must be making soup of you," the manager joked.

"It is not so," said the prince graciously. "Now I go to sea."

"For the time being we'll put you in the first cottage, close to the Senior Pioneer. I think it'll be better, Yura, if he's near you. He'll look round, get used to everything, and then we can settle how we'll go on—all right?"

"Only please tell him, Mikhail Borisovich, that I don't have to fan him."

"How's that—fan him?"

"When he feels hot he told me to fan him... Well, I can turn on the electric fan if he wants, but I'm not going to be his fan-bearer."

The ambassador said something to the prince in Jungaborian. The prince flushed darkly but made no reply, only for an instant his brows drew closer over his nose.

"Well, now, go and introduce him to the others."

"Zey will selves introduce to me." The prince swelled his small chest and threw back his head. "And ny is no flag here?"

"Because your visit is unofficial," said the ambassador. "I explained it to you, Your Highness, you should remember and understand."

"Yes, my friend, you'll have to drop all that," said the manager. "Let's have it clear. Here, all are equal, each one is a prince as much as you are. All this was earned by their fathers, everything you see. With a gesture he indicated the park and the cottages outside the window. "For the present, you are a guest. If you turn out the right sort, you'll be one of the bunch. Clear? Now, the ambassador is bound because of his position to address you as Your Highness, but for all the others you're just our Delikyars, a friend and comrade in the camp. And I advise you not to try turning up your nose at people. Make friends, live with the others and enjoy yourself. Well, that's that." And the manager gave an energetic, kindly shake to the prince's small, supple hand.

CHAPTER 5

Flags, Coats of Arms, Elephants

"Here, lads, here's the new boy," said Yura when they came to Number Four.

"You know who he is. I hope you'll be friends. Show him the camp—I've got to go."

So the boys took the prince along the shady paths of the camp park. They showed him Camp-Fire Square by the sea, and the big flagstaff and flag, with the sentry standing by it under a sun shelter. Then they took him to the volleyball courts, and to the big canteen terrace. They told him how many times a week there were film shows, and explained to him the bugle calls and what they meant. The prince listened very carefully and seemed to understand; it was only now and again he asked, "Uff? Uff is what?" Then the explanations tumbled over one another.

The boys were much interested in the amulet the prince wore round his neck—the mother-of-pearl elephant on a golden sun with a pearl moon in his raised trunk.

They went down to the Marine Promenade. The waves rolled up over the beach, broke, and retreated hissing, rattling the pebbles, to rise and advance again. The horizon was a clear line against the cloudless sky. A ship was moving over its very edge, trailing a plume of smoke. Then it slipped down the other side. The prince watched it until the smoke too vanished. And the boys were quiet; they guessed he was thinking about his distant, so awfully distant country somewhere on the other side of the world. The silence was broken by little Rostik Makarychev, the bookkeeper's son, who had been trailing after the bigger boys. He was longing to talk to a real prince but had been too shy. But now, when they all stood quietly, he took his chance and crept quietly up.

"Are you a really, truly prince?" he breathed.
Deliyar nodded.

"I say?" Rostik was delighted.

"Here, cut off," kissed Taraska. He felt it was not the thing at all to start bang off with such personal questions. But Rostik was not to be suppressed.

"Is it nice to be a prince?"

Deliyar shrugged and smiled awkwardly.

"Well, what do you think? Would you like to be one?" Slava Nesmetnov asked Rostik.

"Ooowee!" Rostik shook his head vigorously. "I guess they all tease him in the street!"

After that Nesmetnov took Rostik by the hand, led him behind the bushes, gave him a light slap in the place provided by nature for that purpose and then helped him away with a shove of his knee, shaking his fist to make everything perfectly plain. To anticipate slightly I can tell you that from this moment on Rostik managed to range up to the prince at least once every day. One day he would intercept him by the canteen and snigger quietly.

"I know—you're a prince—he-he-he!"

Another time he waited for him by the entrance to the beach, walked beside him in silence for some minutes and then asked confidentially: "What'll you be when you're grown-up? A king? Yes? And will you wear a crown?" Or it would be, "Are all kings against us? And do they all want war? Or are there some who want peace?" Or a couple of days later, "Are there anti-eaters where you live?"

Now, however, the talk by the balustrade was general as the boys got better acquainted. Both sides felt they had to keep their end up. At first the advantage lay definitely with the prince. From a small leather case he extracted a tiny transistor set, and the many tongues of the world came pouring out of an apparatus no bigger than a camera. Music played and songs came from afar, although it was impossible to get Jungalhore. Evidently the distance was too great.

But that was not all. The prince unrolled a thin white wire and plugged it into the set. At the ends of the wire were tiny capsules—earphones. The prince took one end and went behind a thick clump of laurels, telling Taraska to place the capsule at the other end in his ear. Then Taraska heard the quiet voice of the prince, hidden behind the laurels. So the transistor set could be a telephone, too! Now, that was something! The boys had never seen anything like this before.

Lest the prince think altogether too much of himself, pale, limp Gelik Pafnuliov, whose father was director of a household servicing centre and according to Gelik a most important man, suddenly spoke up.

"Well, and so what? My dad has a specially built Volga car, all trimmed with chrome. A car, you understand?"

The prince was naturally not impressed. He cast a condescending glance at Gelik and his brows rose.

"I have an elephant."

All shut their mouths quickly on a gasp.

"Your own—just for you?" asked Taraska, recovering himself.

"How?" asked the prince. "My brozer, ze king, he give it me."

"Is it many horse-power, an elephant?" asked Nesmetnov.

"Ooh, big white. It calls Bundji. I say him, 'Bundji, Bundji,' and he come to me and do zis niz ze trunk. And zen I sit down on it and he—up! And I ride on him. High up zero. Is a howdan—uah is it—a cabin—on his back."

There was a long silence. This had flattened them. His own elephant—think of it! Things had to be evened up somehow.

"You still have tsarism there, then?" asked Taraska.

"Uat is zat—tsarism?"

"Well—when a king rules, and capitalists. Here we shall soon have Communism."

"Uat is zat?"

"Well—it means everyone will work as much as he can, do what he knows how, and he'll get all he needs."

The prince nodded happily.

"Zat, I have it now, Communism. Uat I know I do, uat I not know I not do. And uat I want—zey give me, I have it."

Slava Nesmetnov gave a condescending smile.

"You've got it all upside down—and a prince, too! That's daft. Communism is for everybody, not just for one."

"If it's only for one, then that's tsarism," Taraska summed up.

"Where do you have your lessons?" asked Nesmetnov. "Is there a school at court or do you go to the ordinary school?"

The prince sighed and said he studied at home, at the court, he had a lot of lessons and he did his preparation with a special teacher, a court usher.

The boys sympathized with this. To have your lessons alone with the teacher there in front of you all the time—and nobody near to whisper a word if you don't know an answer—awful!

"Yes, kids have a rotten time everywhere," Taraska sighed.

Gelik Pafnuliov nudged him quietly and indicated the prince with his eyes.

"Here," he said didactically, "children have had happy childhood for a long time."

"Happy!" Taraska hooted. "And they don't let us bathe more than half an hour. Go take a running jump at yourself!"

Gelik moved away, offended, indicating to the others with significant looks and brow-raisings that Taraska ought not to talk like that in front of the prince.

But the prince was interested.

"Uere you send him?"
“He can go jump in the river.”
“It is good. In my country un zey drive one away, zey say: ‘Go to zee pit of zee yellow ants.’”
“That’s not bad, either,” Taraska approved.
Then the prince showed them stamps with the picture of his brother, King Jutang. And when they gave him the Briefs About Countries handbook and he found the Jungahorian flag and coat-of-arms, he explained what the design meant. The Jungahorians, it appeared, believed that pearls were made by the moon’s rays reflected in the sea, so on the Jungahorian flag the sun hung in a crimson belt, but the moon lay on a blue sea. And on a lower blue strip lay a shell with a pearl. The prince translated a Jungahorian proverb: “The sun shines on all from on high, the moon guides the wakeful, but the pearl is only for those who do not fear the depths.”
Then the prince explained the significance of the coat-of-arms embroidered on his shirt. In a large circle with a crown at the top and the sun shining on it stood an elephant trampling a snake and strangling another with its trunk. The prince explained that it meant “One mighty elephant of virtue can trample a hundred poisonous snakes of evil.” The boys were interested and the prince evidently felt that now his position was secure. To make his authority final, however, he said with a sly glance round, “And I can—out is it—srying my eyebrows—one ris, ozer zat!”
The brows on his round dark face began moving quickly—one up, the other down—up and down, like the plates of scales. The boys tried to do the same, but none of them could manage their eyebrows with such agility. They frowned, screwed up their eyes, made faces, while the prince with zest displayed his art for which he had got into trouble more than once at the court.
The boys had decided by now that the prince was all right. A real fellow, in fact.
But this was not enough for Delihyar. From a most beautiful notebook embroidered with gold and pearls he took a photograph. There he stood, Prince Delihyar Surambak of Jungahore, and beside him—whom do you think? Yuri Gagarin, none other! They had been photographed together in front of the Jaigadang Palace under coconut palms. The first cosmonaut in the world had arm round the prince’s shoulders, and there was his autograph at the bottom—“Best wishes from Yuri Gagarin.”
Everybody was stunned. Think of it—Gagarin’s own autograph!
* “He was in us, in Jaigadang. Ye went to sail on zee sea.”
The prince had won, finally and completely. Who had a photograph taken with Yuri Gagarin, and autographed?
Taraska saved the situation; he had to keep up the reputation of the camp somehow.

“By the way,” he threw out casually, “my uncle’s chief designer of those cosmic rockets, if it interests you.”
It did interest the prince and he made no secret of it.
“Oh, zat is very ripping! You make me to see him. Me, I shall be cosmoneer too.”
“Cosmonaut,” Nesmetnov corrected him. “Got big ideas, it’s not everyone can.”
“But I am King I shall order it.”
“Takes more than a king’s orders to fly in space.”
The prince was gazing at Taraska with undisguised admiration and Taraska, already well rounded, swelled still more with pride. But when they all began to move towards the canteen for dinner Tonida, erect and sturdy, appeared from behind the oleanders and beckoned to Taraska with an imperious finger.
“I heard what you said—why didn’t you ever tell us before about your uncle?” she asked, impressed.
“Well, you see—well, he’s really a sort of third cousin, not a real uncle,” Taraska mumbled, avoiding her eyes. “And of course, it’s a state secret.”
“Then why did you blab it out now, if it’s secret?”
“Listen, Tonida,” said Taraska almost in a whisper. “Lay off me, can’t you? I had to say something or that prince would have been too cocky. Though maybe I wouldn’t have made it up out of nothing, even to him. But my dad’s got a second cousin—that is a kind of uncle—and he really is a professor and an inventor, and he does something or other that’s secret. So maybe he is the chief constructor. He wouldn’t tell me, would he? So I really can think it if I want, can’t I?”
“You can think it, but not say it. Rattlepate!” said Tonida and snapped her fingers on Taraska’s round forehead.

**CHAPTER 6**

**Stepping on a Shadow**

They were all on the sports ground. First they played volleyball, with Ekaterina Vasilyevna as umpire. The prince whistled and clapped and urged on the boys—but in spite of frenzied efforts the girls won. It was very difficult to stop the balls that flew like bullets from Tonida’s strong hand to slam down on the court. So the boys lost and found it difficult to shout the proper “physcult-hurrah!” to the winners.

Then Ekaterina Vasilyevna went away and the boys began showing off their winning numbers. Delihyar saw that here too lie could shine.

Among the few children permitted in the palace grounds, Delihyar had always been called a splendid athlete. He could jump farther than any others, and in wrestling he could get the strongest opponent down.

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Now the children began long-jumping with a running start. And not only Tonya Fashukhina, the best jumper in the camp, but Slava Nesmetov, and Taraska Bobunov, and other children too—all flung their heels into the sand far beyond the mark which was the best Delihyar could manage. And when the prince offered to wrestle with Slava he was down on the grass in a couple of seconds.

The sun was sinking into the sea, and the waves slowly rolling up the beach were purple-tinted in their hollows. On the sports ground the children playing and fooling about cast elongated shadows. The strip of sand where they had just been jumping was cut by a long narrow shadow starting from the prince's feet. Tonida, crossing the ground to leave, stepped on it, doubling its length. With a sudden imperious gesture the prince flung out a hand with a finger pointing at Tonida.

"You no dare stand ere ze sun not fall by me," he said. "Zat is my shadow. You no dare stand ere my shadow."

There was a puzzled silence. Tonida stepped aside with a shrug of her straight shoulders.

"Zat is law—not stand ere is shadow of king, and prince," Delihyar continued. Then Taraska, beseeching Taraska, deliberately jumped on the long shadow of the prince and began dancing about on it, churning up the sand. The prince rushed at him and dealt him a sound box on the ear. For an instant all stood in frozen indignation. But Tonida turned and marched back. Silently she grabbed the prince by the scruff of the neck, bent him over and before he knew what was happening, had dealt him three sharp slaps on the place intended for a throne.

Delihyar tore himself from her hands. His healthily dark face had turned an ashen grey. His brows jumped convulsively and tears filled his eyes.

"Sharaahunga!" he yelled, shaking his balled fists over his head; this was probably a most terrible Jumghahorian curse. "Daughter of snake! Your soul is toad! I speak my brozer, ze king. He will fight you, shoot, kill—" He rushed furiously away down the path.

He left confusion behind him. However you looked at it, it was a nasty business. After all, he was a guest, and a prince. And now—on the very first day—Taraska dropped the hand he had clapped to his cheek.

"You'd no business to do that, Antonida." Slava Nesmetov looked gloomily down the path where the prince had disappeared. "That's being a hooligan."

"What was he, then?—Biting out!" Tonida was not to be put down.

"And you too—why did you have to jump on his shadow if they think so much about it there," Slava turned to Taraska.

"All right for them, on the equator," Taraska protested. "The sun's right over their heads, they've hardly any shadows at all. So no one walks on them."

They had to tell Yura what had happened. They all felt rather bad about it. That was not the way to re-educate princes.

After supper Delihyar flung himself on his bed, but Yura made him get up. "First open up your bedding, prepare your bed the way I taught you," said Yura. "You want to go to a Suvorov School, so I've heard, but you don't want to do things properly, army style. An officer has to be able to prepare his bed himself, as they do on campaign. What sort of an officer will you be if you can't make your own bed ready, and fold everything up in the morning? You went off today leaving all your things scattered about. That's no good. Come, I'll show you."

"And will you teach me to wrestle zem all?"

"Everything in its turn. I'll teach you to wrestle too. There's holds I know—nobody'll be able to stand up to you."

They made up the bed together; now and then a last sob burst out of the prince. "Uly did zey all frow me unz we wrestled? Alouas I frow all ozers, now zey frow me... Is it zat ze earf does not pull like wiz us?"

"It's not a case of gravity, lad. Now, don't you take it wrong if I tell you the truth. There, in the court, they just let you win. You're the prince, so they had to jump shorter than you and when you wrestled they flopped down at once. That was how you won. There's your gravity—get it?"

The prince sobbed again and nodded. For a moment or two they smoothed sheets and plumped pillows in silence. Then the prince spoke again.

"Grannyshtu—zat uz uat I call my grandmozer—Grannyshtu taught me to play Russian draughts. And it uz like zat too. Zeiy play so I winning."

"So you won," Yura corrected him. "You talk well. Yes, they always played to let you win. But here with us you'll get some training, get stronger, and it'll all be quite different, you'll win honestly."

"But how I live here now?"

"Why, there's nothing to all that," Yura soothed him. "A shadow—what does that matter! Tomorrow I'll get the three of you together, you'll all apologize and that'll be the end of it. You're all to blame, so there's nothing to be stubborn about. But that's only after you tidy your own bed tomorrow morning, of course."

"I will do it," the prince promised.

CHAPTER 7
"Savage" and "Waft"

In the morning the prince made his own bed; he put everything in applepie order with the light quilt neatly folded, the pillows plumped up, the night table and everything in the room neat and the towel hanging straight on its roller. Then Taraska and Tonida appeared, sent for by Yura. But Tonya showed up badly.
“Why must I apologize?” she mumbled. “He can hit someone because he’s a prince and no one must hit him back?”

“Being a prince has nothing to do with it.” Yura was angry. “Whoever it was in his place, you’ve got to hit him.”

“I didn’t hit him,” said Tonya. “I just gave him a slap.”

“You slap free times,” the prince corrected her.

“I didn’t count,” Tonya snapped obnoxiously.

“You ought to be ashamed,” said Yura. “Here’s a boy come from a country that’s fighting against oppressors, he’s always heard that here we have fair play and nobody lays a finger on anyone, and you go and lash out.”

“Why did he lash out at Taraska?”

“He wants to apologize,” said Yura. “You do want to apologize, don’t you, Delihyar?”

“Unt is zat—apo’gize?”

“Well, say you’re sorry, you know it was wrong. You do, don’t you?”

“Yes, wrong.” The prince turned away.

“Well, there you are,” said Yura. “Delihyar himself realizes he was wrong. He’s sorry. And you, Taraska—you were wrong to tease him—weren’t you?”

“Yes,” Taraska said unwillingly. “Only I didn’t mean to tease him. I was just joking. I didn’t step on his foot, only his shadow.”

“All right, all right,” said Yura hurriedly. “That’s all settled, then. Now, hold out your hands to each other—here, let me have them.” He took Taraska’s hand, then Tonida’s, joined them, laid the prince’s hand on top and covered them all with his own. “And now off with you all to the beach.”

Avoiding one another’s eyes they went to the door and as soon as they were outside quickly made off in different directions without once turning round.

On one of the paths leading to the sea Gelik Pafnutin overtook the prince.

“Don’t bother about her,” said Gelik, evidently referring to Tonida. “Nobody does. She’s rough, had no proper bringing up, worse than a hooligan—it’s because she comes from a home. Like your places for waifs. No family, no tribe—a waif, left on somebody’s doorstep.”

The prince listened gloomily and continued his way to the beach, with Gelik trotting along after him.

“Listen, let’s stick together, us two,” Gelik persisted. “You know what? You give me your transistor and I’ll look after you. I know all the tricks of things, I’ll see you’re all right. Uh?”

The prince shook his head decisively.

“They’ll send you another from the court. You’re just a greedy-guts.”

“I not greedy-guts,” said the prince angrily. “You greedy-guts yourself. And you not say zat to me.”

“All right, all right,” said Gelik conciliately. “We’ll see later. You keep close to me, you’ll do better. They’re not such a grand lot here, I don’t mind telling you. I could have stayed somewhere else for my holidays, but they told mum I’d be better in a community. They said it would be a good influence for me. Well, let them try. I suppose they sent you to be influenced, too. But don’t you give in to them, don’t take any notice of them. Look here, would you like to wrestle me down in front of them all? You’ll look fine. Only you must give me the transistor for it. You can get another, anyway. And then you can wrestle me down which they can all see, I don’t mind.”

“I do it wizout you let me,” said the prince with acute dislike in his voice; he made a sudden rush at Gelik and, using the hold Yura had shown him the previous evening, got him down on the ground—somewhat to his own surprise.

Gelik rose and shook the sand from his clothes.

“Well, and so what?” he persisted, “nobody’ll believe that you really threw me, anyway. They’ll just say I let you. They’re always at me anyway, saying I suck up. I’ll just tell them I let you.”

It was true, nobody did believe it. The boys who had seen it from a distance, on their way to the sea, stopped and shouted back.

“Started already? Go on, crawl, be a doormat! Sucking up!”

Gelik at last lost his temper.

“Suck up to that? I see myself! A coconut, a yellow-skinned native, a savage!”

The prince made an abrupt movement but just as abruptly stopped himself; evidently he had remembered something. So he said quietly, “You not dare talk like zat. Only merihyango talk like zat. Bad men... And you are bad, too.”

“You’re a savage, a savage, a wild man!” Gelik shouted. “Chief of a savage tribe!”

By this time the boys were all round them. Slava Nesmetnov pushed through to the front saying, “That’ll do, Gelik, drop it, quick!”

Tonida suddenly popped up from somewhere.

“Less of it, Gelik! Your parents have come in their car. And they told the watchman at the gate, ‘Call our little boy, tell him we’ve come as ’savages’ for a day or two. So you’re the savage, a real horn savage.”

“And who do you think you are, a princess? Huh?”

Tonida moved towards him threateningly.

“I don’t know who I am, but I don’t pester people and it’s not my fault if your dear daddy and mummy call themselves savages.”

Gelik decided to hit the sorest spot he could think of.

1 Current Russian slang, for people coming to summer resorts without previous arrangements at hotels or sanatoriums—Fr.
“Said it yourself—you don’t know who you are! Heard it, all of you? Let it out! Doesn’t know who she is! Savage or not, I’ve got parents who come to see me, but no one wants you! You’re a waif, got no one, don’t even know who you are!”

Tonida—that spirited Tonida who could always give as good as she got or better, blushed crimson and looked helplessly at the boys. With one hand she grasped her shoulder as though it hurt and pressed her bitten lips into the crook of her elbow.

Taraska looked at her, then at Gelik.

“Big-mouth! It’s you doesn’t belong to anyone, always crawling after someone or other. Licksplittle!”

“I’m not talking to you, kid,” said Gelik haughtily; he glanced apprehensively at the other boys and ran towards the gate where his parents were waiting.

The boys hovered awkwardly for a moment round Tonida, who stood with her face hidden in the crook of her arm, and then slowly drifted off to the sea. Only Prince Delihyar remained. He went softly up to Tonida and coughed. Then he moved away again. And again approached.

“Zat—you must not,” he almost whispered. “Me, I have no fuzzer or mozer, too. Like you, I have no one.”

Tonida turned slowly and looked earnestly at the prince. The severe line of her brows softened and her face was open and trusting. The prince—as soon as he was born he had his place. But she—for a long time she had not even known where she was born, or who her parents were. Yet it seemed they had something in common. Strange, but this sad-eyed, dark-skinned boy from a land beyond the seas, born in a palace but a stranger to a mother’s love, seemed very close to her in this moment.

“Don’t be angry with me for yesterday,” he said in a muffled voice. “You can hit me back if you like.” She raised her head and presented her cheek. “Only not just because you’re a prince, of course.”

“No, no, I no want!” mumbled the prince, shaking his head. “Uliz us, a servant speak so uen you hit him on ze face. I not want zat!”

“All right.” She turned a look on him that was suddenly gaily intimate. “Then let’s go and collect pebbles, maybe we’ll find a cornelian or a ‘chicken’s eye’. Let’s go!”

They ran down to the beach.

Meanwhile, Gelik’s mother was making a scene in the camp manager’s office, irritably opening and snapping shut the mouth of her huge flowered bag.

“And you don’t find it strange, to say the least, that my boy, the son of a Soviet official in a prominent position, should live in a canvas tent with draughts blowing through, where any centipede, or even scorpion, could crawl in?! And some prince, a foreigner, obviously of capitalist origin, is housed in a cottage with all conveniences!—Royal conditions, indeed!”

“I ought to explain—excuse me, I don’t know your name and patronymic—Olga Fyodorovna?—Well, Olga Fyodorovna, we try to provide royal conditions, as you call it, for all the children here. But the strongest boys prefer real camping, in tents, by the sea, with the waves beating up close by. In the cottages we put the weaker ones, the ones who are less hardy. But as you wish… I can put your son in a cottage too. Please don’t be offended, but I have to say that your son is a thousand times more pampered than that Delihyar from Jungahore.”

“Yes,” replied Gelik’s mother, unmoved by these words, with another menacing click from the catch of her bag. “It’s no secret, we try to bring our son up to be refined.”

So Gelik Pafnulin, much to his own disgust, was transferred from the tent where Slava Nesmetnov, Taraska Bobunov and the other boys lived to one of the cottages where, as the hardy ones said scornfully, they put the “sissies.”

As soon as the prince heard of it he began to pester Yura, and then the manager, to give him the vacant place in Number Four, with Taraska and Slava. The manager talked it over with Yura and at last agreed.

“All right, let him live with his friends. He seems the right sort of kid. And he’ll get well toughened up. Only you talk to them first, Yura. And of course get the doctor’s permission.”

No special ceremonies accompanied the transfer to the tent. Only Taraska, after talking it over with Yura, asked the girls to make a Jungahorian flag. He did not have to ask twice. Tonya willingly undertook the job. So now by Number Four the Jungahorian flag waved beside the pennant. And I will not hide the fact that flag or none, the first night was arranged for the prince. A dead frog in his bed. When he began to prepare the bed the boys waited, hardly breathing, to see how he would take it, and what court etiquette demanded in such a tricky situation.

Delihyar unfolded his sheets and blankets quickly, eager to show off to the boys, singing his favourite song Fly Troika, Through the Soft White Snow that his grandmother had taught him. Suddenly the song broke off short.

Everything stopped in Number Four.

“Oh, poor sing,” cried Delihyar. “It no living. In Jungahore we eat zen, wiz banana sauce. But no, it is not zat sort.” He held up the frog in two fingers by the leg, examined it carefully, shook his head, went to the tent flap, threw it back and tossed the frog out.

Another five days, and the prince was one of the most eager searchers for the “special” stones found among the pebbles. Tossing away the striped green pebbles known as frogs, he sought and found the more valued cornelians and chalcedonies. He learned the art of “nosing” stones, polishing them to a fine lustre against the wings of his own nose. And alongside the amulet with the golden sun, mother-of-
pearl elephant and pearl moon swung a “chicken’s eye” on a cord—a stone with a hole drilled through it by the sea. When he found a second “chicken’s eye,” he offered it to Tonida who graciously accepted the gift.

Everyone forgot that he was a prince and the heir to a throne. A boy would shout, “Delik, nose this cornelian for me, will you? My nose is peeling, it’s all dry,” or “Delik, come to the shallows to catch crabs!” or “Delik, when you learned to see your eyebrows, did you move them with your fingers first?”

The prince’s voice, high and melodious, with a very individual timbre, rang out clearly in the evenings when he went with the other boys from Number Four to sing in front of the “sissies’” cottage:

Pafnutil, respected papa,
Pafnutila, careful mama
Had a son all smooth and prissy.
He was mama’s precious boy,
He was papa’s pride and joy,
But he’s grown up a sissy.

CHAPTER 8
By the Back Door

Children are quick to make friends, and in a summer camp friendship firms as quickly as plaster of Paris. Yesterday they did not know each other’s names, today they are old comrades. Of course, camp friendships are not lasting like school friendships that become stronger year by year, class by class. Plaster hardens quickly and breaks just as quickly. But there can be no delay in summer friendships. Time is short, before you know where you are the last days approach. Nevertheless, Tonida marvelled at herself: how was it that she, usually prickly and reserved, had made friends so quickly and easily with the prince? It was only friendship, of course, real friendship, nothing more, despite the significant coughs and looks the girls exchanged behind her back when the prince came to the girls’ cottage.

“Quick, princess, your prince has come,” they giggled and ducked quickly away to avoid a cuff from Tonida’s strong hand.

“Stow it. Talking daft.”

Incidentally, there was a noticeable change in Tonida-Torpedo. She had become much quieter. Once she even asked the girls to make her a fashionable high hair-do.

“Thank goodness, you’re waking up at last,” said Zuza Makhlakov as she skilfully piled up a kind of cocoon on Tonida’s head, where there had previously been only a round comb.

When the girls had done her hair and made her put on Zuza’s nylon blouse for the evening, and then fastened on the “chicken’s eye” the prince had given her, you would never have known her.

“Oh, Tonya,” cried Zuza in unfeigned admiration, “you’re really beautiful! Girls, just look at her! Honest, I’m afraid there’s going to be an earthquake in Jungashore!”

“Oh, shut up,” said Tonida, flattered; she blushed, and really did look very pretty, indeed when she glanced in the mirror Zuza held before her; she dropped her long lashes over a shiny sparkle in her big eyes.

Tonya and the prince, who was now called simply Delik or Delka, collected stones and “nosed” them to a fine polish. And the prince, who wore a huge diamond on his finger and at home had a gold belt with a buckle studded with precious stones, dashed eagerly into the transparent green waves whenever he spotted some tiny cornelian no bigger than his fingernail.

They strolled slowly by the edge of the sea, jumping back with gasps of laughter when the wind tore the foam from the wave crests and splashed them, while the waves raced up to their feet. The louder the sea, the more openly they talked, because the sea drowned their words and they could only guess what was said.

Tonida taught the prince a grand song somebody had made up on a long hike. And they sang it at the top of their voices, trying to drown out the sea.

“We do not know, we cannot guess
When we shall meet again.
The globe swings round with oceans blue,
With mountain, hill and plain,
Country, city, town and village,
Forest thick and fertile tillage.
Only one road is yet unknown,
The distant road to be our own.

“Do they ever tease you?” Tonya asked one day.

“Tease—what is zat?”

“Well, call you nicknames... They call me Torpedo.”

“Oooh! Zat, much much times,” Deliyyar answered gladly, “Like zis... Son of ze sun and moon. Pearl of ze crown. And sometimes, young elephant of wisdom.”

“Oh, Delka, you are funny,” Tonya laughed affectionately, “That’s not teasing, that’s—that’s honouring you.”

“Me, I not like it then zey honour.”

The children were now quite familiar and easy with him. He learned to dive and even got Yura’s permission to swim for a few minutes with flippers and
aqulung. He marched in a column with the other boys on long hikes and took part in Cosmos Day and Sea Day. At camp parade he saluted with zeal. The children made up a special greeting for him; when they met him they shouted, "Moon and sun!"

He flung up his hand in the Young Pioneer salute and shouted back, "Hammer and sickle!"

Then they were mightily pleased with themselves and one another.

There was considerable confusion, however, in the mind of the prince. Delihiyar firmly believed, for instance, that if you dragged a long liana across three rivers it would turn into a snake. He also believed that bad people had snake poison in them and suspected that one of these was Gelijk Pafulin who now avoided Number Four.

One day when they came to the highway that ran past the camp on their way back from a hike in the hills, they heard the loud hooting of cars or motorcycles. Then three motorcyclists in smooth white egg-like helmets swept round the curve, hooting vigorously and gesturing to right and left with white-gloved hands. And all the cars going in either direction obediently drew in to the sides, leaving the way clear. Soon a small open car appeared, with a crimson banner streaming out in the wind, its golden tassels swinging, and a little way behind, blue and red motor-coaches, one after the other, with flags on the bonnets.

"Stop," said Yura. "Let them by."

The prince stared at the grand procession with its escort of motorcyclists.

"Uat is zat, who coming?" he asked eagerly. "Is it a king?"

"I don't know about kings, it's our princes and princesses," one of the children joked, but Yura stopped him.

"Don't act the fool. That's the next group going to the Seagull Camp, our neighbours, Deli," he explained. "They've come later than us because the camp's new, it's only just opened."

"It was better when we came," Taraska boasted. "We had a band. On a separate coach, and they played marches all the way. Everything stopped all along the road. They always give Pioneers a clear road. Step on it, search all you want!"

The decorated coaches passed with children swept past the excited prince. Children leaned out of the windows to wave, some shouted, others were singing. Each coach tossed a fragment of its song to them as it passed.

Fr-rrr! A coach passed with a gust of hot air.

Fr-rrr! "Good morning, dear potato, tato, tato, here's the lowest bow to you..."

Fr-rrr! "Soar up high, cosmonaut, and sing a song on your way..."

Fr-rrr! "Blaze up, camp-fire, in the night! Burn for Pioneers, burn up bright!"

Fr-rrr! "Oh dear me, how I love you, oh dear me, you never speak a word..."

Fr-rrr! "Hi-hi-hi, get the anchor up! Hi-hi-hi, keep the compass course..."

The head of the deafened prince swirvelled from side to side as he watched the coaches race past.

The children were strolling in the park one day, singing a song about the grasshopper "with his knees bent the wrong way," and fooling about with dance steps of their own invention in which knees played a big part. At the point where the cypress walk crossed the path leading to the rose garden they almost collided with a stranger. He was wearing an embroidered Ukrainian shirt and a straw hat, and home-spun trousers so wide they flapped round his legs and almost covered his sandals.

"Hallo, good day," he addressed them, smiling with all his teeth. "Is that the latest Western dance?"

"No fear, that's not Western," said Taraska, "it's Eastern. The dance of tigers."

"Well, well, well," said Wide Trouseras. "Well, how are you enjoying yourselves here, children? Going for walks, lying in the sun? How's the food? All satisfied?"

The children told him in a confused chorus that they were all satisfied and in general, everything was fine.

"I see... Let's get acquainted. I'm from a commission at the regional centre. The regional leadership is interested in your life here. Let us sit down on this bench and have a talk. Well, you, for instance..." He jerked a finger towards Tonida who promptly got behind Slava Nesmetnov with a morose look. "Now, why are you hiding? Don't be shy, we want to know your personal impressions. Out of the mouths of babies and sucklings, as the saying is..." He took a thick notebook from a briefcase which he carried so hunched up under his arm that it was creased.

"Now don't edge away, let's begin with you. What do your parents do?"

Tonida said nothing.

"I see you're not very sociable, you shut yourself in, that's not good in a community. Well, and you?" He pointed at the prince and the children became very quiet, anticipating something good. "Come, sit down here, that's right, beside me. Now just relax, and I'll write one or two things down. Well, let's start. I'll just ask you some questions, in the proper order. First question—your name and surname and so on."

"Delihiyar Surambuk."

"Not Russian, I take it? Well, that makes no difference. Please repeat it, so I get it clear."

The prince did repeat it and the children almost burst with suppressed giggles.

"Delihiyar—interesting. And who are your parents?"

The children, serious now, tumbled over one another to tell him in whispers that Delihiyar's parents were both dead.
"You did not inform me of your intended visit," Mikhail Borisovich cut him short. "Decided to slip in by the back door. Now, I thought that if you came it would be by the front way. I apologize."

"I wished, Comrade Kravchukov, to do things democratically, from below, especially as there had been a complaint. Parents. They came here and then came to us."

"Very good, we'll settle all that later in my office," the manager cut him short, and turned to the now silent children. "Well, have you finished your talk?"

"Zat is heel, dirtypenooper," said the prince suddenly. The poor manager stopped short just as he was turning to walk away with the inspector."

"What language is that?" he asked.

"Russian, same all talk."

"Ve-ry nice!" The manager looked at the shamefaced children and shook his head. "So you disgrace the Russian language, do you? Is that the thing to teach our guest? And one who is to be a king, perhaps, some day! I trusted you, and you—!"

**CHAPTER 9**

**Heart of the Fifth**

There was another encounter, a very different one, which the Spartak Camp children remembered for a long time.

Evening was falling. The great fiery orange sun, very slightly flattened, lay upon the horizon. The children had climbed the high cliff over the sea, as they often did, to say good night to it and look at the glowing colours it left. On this particular evening the sunset was unusually glorious. Sky and sea were purple-blue, and a broad crimson band rested upon the line which separated the sweep of sea from the sweep of sky, with the heavy red-gold sun in its centre.

"Look, boys, look," the prince whispered with a catch of his breath. "Zat, it is like our Junghore flag."

A tall, very thin man dressed in white, grey-headed, dark-skinned, wearing dark glasses, turned quickly. He was standing close by with a small group of elderly people who had probably been brought by the coach waiting down below from a nearby sanatorium.

"Junghore?... Fari to jor?" he asked the prince quickly.

Hearing his own language so unexpectedly the prince turned quickly with a smile, but then checked himself and gave his name—briefly and with dignity.

The tall stranger came slowly up to the prince, stopped and looked hard into his eyes.
“Prince Delihyar?” he nodded quickly and went on, “well, let’s get acquainted. I’m Tongao, Tongao Bairang.”

The prince stepped back and frowned. In the Jaiagad Palace that name was never mentioned. The children’s talk stopped and that clustered round the two. Of course, like all children in this country, they had long known the name of the fearless Jungahorian revolutionary poet Tongao. Taraska devoured him with his eyes, trying quietly to edge closer. So this was Tongao Bairang! For almost ten years the poet had been held in solitary confinement in the darkness of a terible prison pit by the tyrant Shardayah, the former king. But the songs and poems of Tongao, buried alive in the stinking pit where he had been thrown to rot till he died, slipped by past all the prison guards and resounded throughout the world.

“Do you hear?! My secret code!... I tap my message to the world, to all who love, truth and freedom, with the beating of my angry heart!” said one of Tongao’s songs. And the answering beat of the hearts of millions at last throve through the world with a menacing rumble and compelled Shardayah’s government to bring the courageous revolutionary up from the prison pit and send him out of the country. But the years spent underground, deprived of light and freedom, had robbed the poet of his health. Now he was taking a course of treatment in a sanatorium close to the Spartak Camp.

“Probably I am not supposed to talk to you,” Tongao said to the prince, “or rather, you’re probably not allowed to talk to me. Eh? I am a Communist. I have always been against you kings, and I always shall be, I do not hide it. But to you, or rather to your name, I owe a debt.”

He spoke quietly but his voice was so deep and impressive that one wanted to listen. His Russian was good, but held a very slight trace of that sing-song intonation and nasal accent familiar to the children from hearing the prince.

Tongao told them that when King Shardayah had to release and exile him, it was intended that the rebellious poet, brought up from the depth of the prison pit, should perish at the bottom of the sea. When they were well away from the coast a small, leaky boat was lowered from the ship, he was placed in it and the ship made off. There was a brisk wind and the waves rose higher and higher, tossing the little boat like a coconut shell. Tongao would certainly have been drowned had he not been seen by the sailors on a passing tanker, the Prince Delihyar, on her way to the Soviet Union for oil.

The children listened, hardly breathing. Tonida never took her eyes off Tongao except for a furious glance if anybody moved.

“During the voyage the captain became my very good friend,” Tongao continued. “The tanker’s port of registration was Rambai. And you, my boy, ought to know what the Rambai sailors are like. I have many friends there. When the Prince Delihyar comes to this coast for oil the captain always brings letters for me. A great many. They are good men, bold men on the Prince Delihyar. Your name is in safe hands. And I am sure you too will not betray them. But just a minute!” Tongao cried suddenly. “In a week your ship will be in port. The captain will come to see me. Would you like to meet him? Or no, better if I bring him to the camp.”

The sun slipped down into the sea, leaving the sky a blazing grandeur of colour. Against its flaming light that seemed to shine through him, the tall, thin, erect figure of this man with his dark skin and white hair took on a rare beauty. He stood by the edge of the cliff with the children round him, gazing out to sea. The sun sank farther, and slipped down over the horizon. For a moment it sent farewell rays slanting over the sky, for a moment a fiery point burned on the horizon where the rays converged, as though the last light of day were being drawn into the sea. Then that point of fire too vanished.

The quietness of evening enveloped them.

Tongao laid his hand gently but firmly on Delihyar’s shoulder and led him aside. For a little while they stood talking in their own language, the heir apparent to the throne of Jungahore and the proud Communist poet whose youth had been swallowed up in Shardayah’s prison pit. What they spoke about, of course, nobody knew, but the prince did not try to free his shoulder from Tongao’s hand. This man who a few minutes ago had been a stranger, an enemy, now exercised a strange attraction. To Delihyar he seemed something between a magician and a sage. But how different he was from those sages in the Jaiagad Palace with majestic beards and a men of slow dignity, who for long and tedious hours instructed the heir to the throne in the six elements of the world and the four foundations of existence.

After some minutes they came back to the children, standing very quiet at a little distance.

“We all wanted to sign a protest about you, too, when I was in the second form at school,” said Taraska drinking in Tongao with his eyes.

“I thank you and your schoolmates,” Tongao answered. And he shook Taraska’s hand very gravely. The poet was tall and had to look down at Taraska, but he did not stoop, only bent his head respectfully.

“Will you please recite us some of your verses,” Tonida ventured. “I listened when you read them over the radio—about the cosmonauts.”

“Oh yes—please—please!” The children crowded closer and some clapped in anticipation.

“About the cosmonauts?” said Tongao. “But you must have heard that one. You understand those things better than I do.”

“Would you like to be a cosmonaut?” asked Taraska, breathless with respect.

“I’m too old for that, and then, too, I left my health under the ground. I can never rise so high above it.” Tongao raised his head and gazed—with envy, it seemed, to the children—into the sky.

“But still,” insisted Slava Nesmetnov, rather gruffly as always, “what’s it more interesting to be—a writer or a cosmonaut?”
Tongaor smiled wryly.

"I don't know. I don't know, children. So far I've never tried flying in space. But a poet... Wait, I'll tell you one of my parables if you like... Yes? Well, sit down here, round me."

The children found places in an instant, some on ledges of the cliff, others on boulders. The people from the sanatorium came quietly closer. And Tongaor, after a slow look round about, told them his Parable of the Five.

"Once five men came together," Tongaor began. "One knew whence all things originated, he knew their composition, their structure, the secrets hidden within them, and the rotation of the minute particles which composed them. He was the Great Physicist.

"Another looked at him and saw the flow of blood in his veins, and the ganglia of nerves, saw all within him and by his breathing knew about his lungs, knew the heating of his heart, and the length of his life. That was the Great Physician.

"The third looked at these two and thought how small and perishable they were in comparison with the worlds he saw and counted in his telescopes. He was the Famous Astronomer.

"One more standing there thought how brief were the steps of these people in comparison with the steps of history and how negligible their age in the count of the centuries. This was the Wise Chronicler.

"But the fifth thought: Yes, I have probably learned much less than they. But with my heart I feel how wide is the world, how great the mind of man, how all-encompassing his spirit. I do not know how he is made nor the length of his life, but I can tell of it so that happiness and harmony will enter it, I can move him to new and daring deeds, and in my words he will become immortal."

"That was the Poet."

Such a peaceful beauty lay over land and sea, a hush that seemed to flow from the cooling horizon to lay its quietness upon the world of evening, that nobody even clapped. The elderly people who had come with Tongaor only bent their heads and nodded.

The children, although they did not perhaps understand everything, felt that they had been permitted to touch something very great and ineffably dear to this tall, thin, white-headed man. But Tongaor suddenly coughed and raised a handkerchief to his finely-cut mouth. He turned away and spasm of coughing shook him. When he removed the handkerchief the children saw crimson spots before he had time to crumple it and slip it apologetically into his pocket.

"Many things in life are strange, and sometimes absurd," said Tongaor, turning again to the prince and looking at him with a kind of bitter tenderness. "If you only knew how much you resemble my son! He remained back there—in Jungahore. With his mother. They aren't allowed to leave the country. No, you're amazingly alike! Only my son is a little older... Are you ever homesick—" he hesitated—"well, for your palace, maybe?"

The prince shook his head gloomily and said something in Jungahonian. Tongaor sighed.

"But I'm homesick. Very... After all, one's own country, my dear prince, isn't only your palace and my prison pit. It is the dearest thing of all. It holds your heart as long as you live. And since you love it—you love it for it." He stopped, quickly put on his dark glasses, then with an abrupt movement took them off again and once more looked into the prince's face. "Would you like me to send you my book? Only it came out in Russian—but you understand Russian quite well, don't you? The queen, your grandmother, was Russian, wasn't she, Grannyahura? Is that right?"

The prince nodded, pleased.

"I have dedicated that book to my son. That is the name I gave it—Remember, My Son! Would you like it?"

The prince again nodded quickly.

"But tell me—" This was Taraska, with a sideways glance at the prince. "Tell me, Comrade Tongaor, do you teach your son, too, that nobody must step on his shadow?"

The prince flushed darkly and cast a furious glance at the rattled plate. But the poet evidently guessed at once what it was all about.

"What is a shadow? Your shadow—it is merely the place from which you shut off the sun. To my mind you must be proud not when you keep the light away, but when you let in light where there was darkness."

"You must live so that you shut off the sun from nobody. So that your footprints should lead people to the sun. You understand? Those you must allow nobody to trample, lad."

One of the elderly men from the sanatorium came up to Tongaor, angrily tapped the watch on his sunburnt wrist, then silently took Tongaor's wrist, turned away and stood as though listening to something. He shook his head and dropped Tongaor's wrist.

The coach standing at the foot of the cliff gave three imperative hoots. And Tongaor, after the Jungahorian custom, closed his flattened palms before him, brought them to his heart and bowed ceremoniously to the little prince. The prince was about to reply with the same movement, but Tongaor took him gaily by the shoulders, gave him a friendly shake and very lightly touched the boy's forehead with his palm.

Then he straightened up and gave the Young Pioneer salute to the children, who gaily flung up their arms in reply.

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"Remember that the power of the people is law and justice. Power over the people is lawlessness and wickedness."

"For all that comes to pass in the world of men, you too must answer! Do not reject your responsibility, for this is conscience."

"And know that the pangs of conscience cannot be drowned by the song of flatterers, or noisy shouts in your honour, or the soothing whispers of self-consolation, or the guns fired to celebrate your victories."

"You cannot appease your conscience with petty bribes. It demands payment in full. And your whole life long you are its debtor."

"Do not permit yourself to take from life more than you give. When the scale of your taking out weighs the scale of your giving, then you too will go downwards."

"Live erect, head high, leaving no gap between yourself and the ceiling of your possibilities, never weakly sagging."

"Preserve your own self! No, not in work, nor in struggle, nor in love. In these give boundlessly. But should they demand that you debase your soul, harden your heart, trample, dull, shatter that which is your very self—then be careful, do not surrender yourself."

" Sail against the wind too! But know from whence it blows that you may set your sails accordingly."

"Do not live as chance ordains, but as you think it well to live. Do not be a servant to life, or trail behind it on a rope, lead by yourself. It is not without cause that they ask about a man: 'What kind of life does he lead?'

"Let your heart turn to goodness. Be able to forgive the small evils which hurt only you, but do not endure those great evils which hurt all.'"

"He who revels in his own happiness amidst the miserable is like the gluton who draws a sheet over him to stuff himself with dainties, hiding himself from the starving. When you are happy together with others, then your happiness has an open face."

"It is said: 'The soul of another is a dark cavern.' Know you how to find in it the light of goodness."

"Whatever you may do, make no show of it, think only of the worthiness of your aim."

"When for you it is hard, do not flatter yourself that for others it is easier. It is still hard for all. But if you ease even by a little the life of another, then let your own heart be lightened."

"The lower the position a person occupies, the greater the attention you should give him. To stand stiffly before a general is no great virtue; know how to honour a common soldier."

"In all you offer to people, seek response. Love unreturned is sky without earth; it is a cosmic flight with no desire to return."

"To believe in God is impotence. To believe in nothing is amorality."
The children read a number of times the lines in which the poet spoke about the arts:

"The true artist is one with a divine passion for creation, an angelic patience in work, the devil's own obstinacy in the struggle for truth and a mighty human love of life."

"Talent is the gift for startling all with truth."

The book passed from hand to hand round the circle and each one read aloud the part that fell to his turn. Anything not clear was read again. And Slava Nesmeynov's voice rang out solemnly in Number Four when he read:

"And remember, my son: immortality usually has to be paid for with one's life!"

One maxim particularly pleased Taraska.

"If adults remembered more often what they were as children, and children thought more often about what they would be as adults, age would not come early and wisdom would not delay."

"Yes, your Tongoor is a man, a real man," Taraska cried admiringly after hearing the poet's maxims. "I wish we'd been able to sign the protest for him. You'd better learn wisdom from him, Delik. Or you'll just stay a prince and nothing else."

After Tongoor's book the children felt no urge to hear the prince's tales from the Book of the Six Elements of the World, according to which everything consisted of fire, water, the heavens, the earth, life and death. As for the Four Foundations of Existence—Faith, Strength, Work and Friendship, symbolized by the four stars on the Jungahovian flag, they had their own ideas about these.

"Well now," said Nesmeynov, "faith—I take that to be a person's understanding—well, all he's learned, all he knows in general. With us, that means science. Strength—that's health. So it fits our ideas, too. Right, lads? Now—work. Well, that's quite all right. And friendship—that's friendship everywhere. So there's good sense in it all, Delik." Taraska thought the same. "Yes, your sages have got good heads. Some things they've got right."

Tonida asked the prince to let her have the book for a day and copied out some of the things in it.

"It says here, 'Remember, My Son!'," she said with a confiding look as she returned the book to the prince. "But I think it concerns daughters, too. Doesn't it, Delik?"

CHAPTER 11

The Waves of a Distant Storm

The days were beginning to shorten and the time of departure was drawing close. One did not want to remember it, but one had to. More often now the children thought of home, wondered what people were doing there and showed each other or read aloud the letters from their families and friends—letters full of all kinds of good news. News about the good apple crop expected, about the opening of new streets and renaming the old, the visits of relatives and interesting new films. Bad news there seemed to be none; probably people did not write about any there might be, so as not to spoil the children's holidays—though it is a fact that it is good news one hears more about all the time.

Tonya Pashkivina, too, received a good many letters from her friends at the children's home, who were spending the summer by the Volga. They asked her to be sure and bring pebbles for their collections. And the teacher Klavdia Vasilyeva wrote in a postscript that she missed Tonya and was looking forward to the new term when they would all be together again.

The children, it is true, did not have so much to say about looking forward to school, but nevertheless hardly a day passed when their thoughts did not turn to the real life which awaited them at home after these camp days—these gay, sunny days which, nevertheless, one could get just a tiny bit tired of after a while. Only the prince had no place he wanted to go, nor did he receive any letters. The embassy rang up the manager several times to enquire about him. And that was all.

After the yoga tent warmed by the sun and fresh with the sea breeze, he did not want to return to the dimness of Jaigadang. But no news had come about entering a Suvorov Cadet School. The Court Minister did not write, and the manager said that so far he had received no information.

On the final Sunday it was decided to award the prince a Young Pioneer tie. He had wanted it for a long time but the children felt that first he had to prove himself worthy, to prove whether he, a future king, was worthy to wear the red emblem of the Young Pioneers. Now it was clear to all—he was.

All the children gathered on Camp-Fire Square where the red flag waved on its tall staff.

Mikhail Borisovich, the manager, wore a freshly-pressed white suit for the occasion, with decorations clinking on his jacket with every step. And what a lot he had! The children stared—they had never guessed their manager had so many wartime and peace-time decorations.

"Dear children, dear guests, Young Pioneers," said the manager. "Today we are presenting the red Pioneer tie to a guest from a distant land, Jungahore. He has shown himself to be a good comrade and worthy of wearing it. Isn't that right?"

"Yes! Right! He is!" came from the lines of children drawn up in a square round the flag.

"I think so, too," Mikhail Borisovich continued. "Of course, under our rules we cannot accept him into our organization as a full member, but there is a motion to consider him a friend of our Spartak Camp forever, a member at a distance, so to speak. We do not know how his life will shape, but I believe, and I am sure you all believe, that he will lead a life that is honest, guided by conscience, respecting
They met as arranged by the high wicker beach booths. Their idea was to go into neighbouring booths, contact each other through the wire that plugged into the prince’s small transistor set and talk to one another as though they were in space, as “Falcon” and “Seagull” had talked among the stars. After all, those tiny cone-shaped booths were rather like rockets. At least, so Delihyar and Tonida thought.

They really did feel as though they were far away from everything and everybody. The moon seemed to be flying to meet them and stars appeared through a rift in the clouds, as though the clouds had parted to make way for them as they flew side by side through space, talking quietly to one another.

“Lut you love more zan anything in ze world—Over to you.”

“Our Volga. When the sun sinks in Corky, there’s such a wonderful view from the high bank... It’s as if you could see everything, everything there is, right to the end of the world. And you?—Over to you.”

“Me—ze morning, un all asleep, and I not sleep. And I can see everything, when no ozzer see. Me—it is day, and all ozzer—still night. You understand wut I say? Over to you.”

“Of course I do. You said it very clearly. I can hear you quite plainly, and I could just imagine it, when you said it. May I ask you something more?—Over to you.”

“Yes, of course, wut you wish. Over to you.”

“What’s been your very happiest time of all?—Over.”

Tonya had to wait a long time for a reply, she even blew into the receiver and repeated, “Over to you, over.” At last the answer came.

“I never been—happy, all wus dull, boring. But today I am happy, ze happiest time.”

“But why?—Over.”

“Because you talk like zis wiz me.”

There was probably something wrong with the transistor because voices from the air interrupted their talk. The world charged into their ears, it sang, howled and humbled. The prince turned a small screw on the transistor and then could not hear Tonya at all. There was a confusion of sounds, they broke off and again came thin and fine in his very ear.

Suddenly he heard, clearly, someone speak his name. Yes, it was quite clear, a deep far-off voice saying “Delihyar Surambuk...”

Somebody had called him from the mysterious distance. He heard words in English. He knew English fairly well. And some unknown station announced: “...as a result of which King Jutang Surambyar has abdicated in favour of his younger brother, Prince Delihyar Surambuk. At the present time the prince is not in Jungahore. But according to reports from Hairajamba, the prince will return to the capital in a few days and occupy the throne of Jungahore as King Delihyar the Fifth.”

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1 Greeting of Young Pioneers—Tr.
The voice faded, a song sounded in his ear, then atmospheres. In vain Tonya in her cabin kept calling, "Over, over!"

Delihyar did not answer. Miserably he twisted the screw. Several times he heard his own name in various languages: Kleiner Fürst Delihyar... "Petit Prince Delihyar..." "Prince Delihyar..." The world was calling him, calling him to power. He felt lost and bewildered—what was he supposed to do now? He ran out, made for the hut where Tonya was, seized her hand and pulled her out. "Tonya! Tonya dear," he mumbled, panting with agitation and tenderness. "Listen, listen—" he pressed the transistor to the ear of the startled Tonya. "I am king! You understand? My brozer, he not king now, say said it, I hear. King now is me. Now I will do all good, so very, very good."

Tonya said nothing. She took the squeaking, quacking, croaking headphone from her ear and gave the transistor back to Delihyar.

"So you won't be going to our Suworov School," she asked.

The prince did not know what to say. He was thinking of quite different things now, thinking that he would have to go back to Jungahore, and about what he would do there so that everything would be better for people, so that things would not be as they had been. So that nobody would ever again be flung into the pit, and Tongoor could come home again to his son, and perhaps he, Delihyar, could make friends with that boy, the poet's son. And so that those thin, ragged boys whom the police always drove away from the Jaiagadang palace with sticks would be able to ride elephants. And so that the mitryango should not have everything all their own way in Jungahore. And perhaps Tonya would come to Jungahore too?

"You come too, wiz me, to Jungahore," he said pleadingly. "Ue will be like brozer and sister. I will say you shall live wiz us in Jaiagand."

The moon again slipped behind the clouds and in the darkness Delihyar could no longer see Tonya's eyes, but he knew she was looking at him.

"Uill you come?" he asked again.

No. At this moment she did not think of the boys in the house who had made fun of her till she was frantic, or old miseries—which had not been few, or those difficult days when they were transferred to a different building and for two days everything had been cold and damp and the food bad because the kitchen was not working properly and they had to eat everything cold, and then there was a big row at the Education Office. She did not think of the time when she had been given a frock that was too small right from the beginning and the others had laughed at her and called her "goose." Previously she would have remembered such things, but now her thoughts were quite different. She saw before her the Volga, great, quiet and majestic. The stars and the lights on the boats were reflected in her eyes. And somewhere far beyond the sandbanks, vanishing over the water, a ship called and called her: "To-to-to-to-na!" Or she was marching with the other children to the music of a band. People waved to them from the spectators' stands, and the banner fluttered silkily against her cheek and nose, then flew out like a sail, leading them forward. Once they wrote a letter to Valya, the cosmonaut, and she wrote back that perhaps they would someday be cosmonauts too. She remembered, too, how they had gone on an excursion to the automobile works, and an elderly woman worker in dark-blue overalls has said to her, "Come here and learn the job. I'll soon be time for me to retire and rest, you take my place. Not right away at once, of course, but bit by bit. I can see you're quick on the uptake, you could be trusted."

Her teacher Lydia Vladimiriva, too, often said when something seemed difficult, "You're a good girl, Antonida, I respect you. And I believe in you. You understand, I believe in you. You'll cope with everything."

They believed in her. Could she do anything that would make them think they had been mistaken in her? This was the best and dearest thing in her life. Nothing could ever, anywhere, be more important and precious. How could she renounce it, fail them? She felt adult, curiously mature, much, much older than little Delihyar, even though Delihyar was now a king.

"Oh, Delik, Delik," she said very softly. "It's a crazy idea. You may be a king, but your head still works badly. Now, where are you wanting me to go?"

He gave himself a shake.

"Uood you like me not to go, eizer? Uood you like me to, uat is it—abideicate?"

"Why, of course not, Delka." Her voice sounded weary. "It's your duty, you have to go. And act the right way."

He moved close to her and gazed apologetically into her eyes. The moon swam out from the clouds again. And Tonya's eyes gazed with unwinking, stern sadness at the little king under their straight brows.

"Put your hand here, uree ze heart is, so we do in Jungahore, if good friend, real friend," said Delihyar; he took her hand gently and laid it on his left side. "And ze ozer, you—you—like zat. And I—on my forehead and yours." He laid his palm gently on her cool forehead. "Zat is ze uay. And now we know all of one annoer. Yes?"

"Uuhl, she half agreed, half sighed. "What's in the mind and what's in the heart."

"You—Tonya," said the king, "dear Tonya. Do I say it uell?"

CHAPTER 12

The Night of the Grand Council

The transistor clutched with both hands against his wildly beating heart, he ran to the tent and burst in. And halted. The tent was dark and silent. The failure of the electricity had sent all to bed early.
"Uy, boys," the prince panted, peering through the darkness. He sounded apologetic. "Are you all in bed?"

"Who's that?" came a voice from the darkness. "Is it you, Delik? Why aren't you asleep? Where've you been?"

"Uell—I—I can tell you in ze morning. Only I—uella..."

"Oh, can it—Uell, uella—talk sense since you've wakened us anyway. What have you been doing?"

From the darkness came the hesitant voice of Delihyar who seemed to be feeling very much embarrassed.

"Uell—I—uella, I do not myself. I—uella, zey make me king."

"What's that—you're not joking?" came a voice from a far corner.

"Urld of honour! I sneer by sun and moon, may zey turn zezr face from me! I hear it—ze radio."

"Oh rot! What radio? There's no current in camp." There was a rustle and bump as Slava Nesmetnov turned over in bed.

"It was my transistor, word of honour as Pioneer! Or word of honour as king if you want!"

That was a "word of honour" which Number Four had never before heard and suddenly the news became real.

"Gosh, I sa-a-aay!—Your Majesty!—That's a lark!" howled Taraska.

Now somebody remembered that the late news from Moscow ought to be coming over in a minute. Delihyar quickly tuned in his set. Just in time.

First there was home news, and then—

"Following a military coup in Jungahore, King Jutang Surambhyar has abdicated in favour of his younger brother Prince Delihyar Surambuk, who will shortly ascend the throne as King Delihyar the Fifth..."

"So that's that," said Taraska. "What are we going to do now?"

The news had a rather stunning effect. They were all used to having a prince in the tent with them, but a king—! The ruler of a country! How should they treat him now? No guide-books for Pioneer leaders had a word to say about a situation like this.

"Boys," Delihyar said quietly. "You—uella—tell me... Maybe I'm not, uella, very wise yet. You help me, you are Pioneers."

So that night the king held, a Grand Council, in Number Four of the Spartak Camp by the Black Sea. After all, they had to help a fellow who'd just been made a king.

"What if he abdicates? Let the people rule for themselves," suggested the agile-minded Taraska.

"Don't be in a rush." Thoughtful Slava nudged Taraska's face with the beam of his pocket torch. "We've got to look at this all round. So long as he's king he can give orders. But if he lets that go, no one knows what'll happen there."

It was decided that the new king ought first of all to issue a manifesto and have it in all the big newspapers. That was what kings and tsars always did in such cases. They set to work drawing it up by the light of the pocket torch on a sheet torn from an exercise book which had served as the log on Cosmonaut Day recently.

"Greetings to you, citizens of Jungahore! Highly respected people! This is written to you by the ex-prince Delihyar Surambuk; now I am to be your king, Delihyar the Fifth. I have always stood on the side of the people. I will always stand for peace. I promise you I will always rule just..."

"No, correct that to justly..."

"... and not order people about too much." Taraska prompted.

"... and not order people about too much," the king wrote obediently.

"But you know what?" Slava suddenly interrupted the conference. "There's this. Sometimes kings have promised things to start with, but then when they started to rule they forgot them all. Now see here, you put on your tie and swear to us, here and now, that you'll rule by the law you promised us: 'Elephants for all! Nobody in the prison pits! Merihyango—get out!'"

All the boys applauded and agreed that the royal manifesto must say that elephants, which only the wealthy hiara had been able to own, should now become the property of the people. The new king swore that nobody ever again should be thrown into the prison pits with the stinging yellow ants.

The king put on his red tie. Slava Nesmetnov shone the pocket torch on him so that the knot would be correctly fastened. Delihyar gave the Pioneer salute and pronounced the oath they demanded. And all the boys joined their hands to those of the king and softly but solemnly repeated together: "Elephants for all! Nobody in the pits! Merihyango—get out!" Altogether, under King Delihyar the Fifth Jungahore wouldn't know itself.

A great many reforms the king would make were discussed that night. For instance, a High Council of Children would be instituted at court. After some debate it was decided that representatives of parents could be admitted, too.

There were differences of opinion about schools. At first everything was clear: all Jungahorian children must go to school. But then Taraska opposed the idea of having girls in the same schools as the boys.

"They're just a nuisance," he said. "I don't advise it, Delka. Look at us, we've had Socialism for a long time, and still there's no living with them."

But after thinking it over, and perhaps remembering someone in Number Five Cottage, the king said definitely that in Jungahore boys and girls would study in the same schools.

"But boys," he suddenly said carefully, ingratiatingly, "maybe I, well, I could have just one elephant for myself?"
"Aha!" Taraska cut in triumphantly. "When it comes to elephants you're weakening!"

Slaava shut his mouth with the beam from the torch—Taraska almost choked on a word. The rest, too, were against Taraska. And it was decided that one state elephant could be allocated to the king of Junghahore.

"Hurra-a-ah!" shouted the king and stood on his head the way Taraska had taught him a week before.

Then His Majesty got a cuff, as a hint not to make such a noise; it was night, everybody in the camp was supposed to be asleep long ago.

CHAPTER 13

The First Morning as King

Elephants were walking, walking, stepping softly with their thick legs. On the first, under a canopy, sat the king and Tonya. Because, as Tongaor had said, wherever a person is born, in a palace or a hut, he is born the lawful heir of all the wealth mankind has garnered.

Music was playing. It thrilled him, his heart surged like the waves of the sea, like the rounded back of the great elephant.

_We do not know, we cannot guess_
_Where we shall meet again._
_The globe swings round with oceans blue,_
_With mountain, hill and plain..._

It was the young king’s favourite song. And the people all shouted:
"Long live King Delihyar the Fifth! Elephants for all! Nobody in the pits!
Merihyango—get out!"
"Merihyango, jungo tabatang! Tabatang, jungo rongo tabatang!"
Guns fired and their echo rolled back from the mountains: "Tabatang! Tabatang!"

Somebody called the king’s name loudly, right in his ear, and Delihyar opened his eyes.
"Tabatang!" a wave growled quite close by, smashed down on the beach close to the tent and as it retreated, rumbled: "Merihyango..."

The elephants vanished.

The bugle call was sounding.
"You’ve overslept, Delihyar," said Yura, pulling at his shoulder. He wanted to say, "Delik," but caught himself up; he was not quite sure how he ought to address his fledgling who had now become a king. "Get up quick, the manager wants to see you."

The electricity was working again and probably everyone had heard the news from Junghahore over the radio. Boys and girls came out on to the verandas and others peered out of the tents, looking at Yura and Delihyar. Yura said nothing. He simply did not know what to say to the little king.

Mikhail Borisovich was seriously disturbed. He paced up and down his office, from corner to corner, brought his arms round with a swing to clutch at his own shoulders. Several telegrams lay on his table. Some were marked "Urgent," or "Official," others were "Foreign."

When he saw Yura and the king Mikhail Borisovich swung quickly round the table, took Delihyar by the shoulders, seated him in an armchair and himself took the one opposite.

"Well now... You know all about it, I'm told. You're going to mount a throne, my dear little king. So now I suppose I ought to address you as Your Majesty—eh? I don't know..." He stood up and looked helplessly at the Senior Pioneer. Yura said nothing. "Well, tell me, dear lad, do you think it will help you a little, having lived with us and breathed our air, and all the things the other children have told you? Have you learned something worth having?"

"Oh, zat—I learn much," said the king quickly. "Peace and friendship I learn. And zat I make my bed myself, night and morning. And zat we must all be togezer. One person, anozer person—all peoples, zen everying is well. And I learn zat is good man, comrade to ozzers, and zat is bad man, he say 'give, give,' but himself he give noizing, zat is bad. I learn everying. And in Junghahore I do everying, zat we decided today, all zat boys in our tent, we all decided it togezer."

"Eh, lad," sighed the manager, "I'm afraid you won't be able to do very much right away. That uncle of yours—he'll see to that."

The little king looked at him with alert alarm.

"Don't be offended," said Mikhail Borisovich. "Here's the local paper, just come. I'll read you what it says."

The prince glanced at the paper and on the last page saw a big headline: "Coup d'Etat in Junghahore." And unhurriedly, every word distinct, Mikhail Borisovich read out to Delihyar that ruling circles had carried out a coup d'état. King Jutang Surambyr had been forced to abdicate in favour of Prince Delihyar Surambuk. But until the new king came of age, the regent and actual ruler of Junghahore would be General Dambial Surahong, brother of the former tyrant King Shardayah.

The little king's full lips trembled, he jumped up and balled his fists.
"I not want zat! I not want zat my uncle rule... He is not good man, very bad, he like merihyango, he is all bad for us. I will frow him out!" He grabbed
the manager's hand. "But maybe not go up—I mean not get up—not be on ze
trone? I want more to be here wiz ze boys, and zen, well, go to ze Suvorov School.
I not want to go zere. No! You not give me to him!"

The manager sighed deeply, then shook his head, went to the table, picked
up a telegram and gave it to Delihiyar. It stated that the new Ambassador of Jungahor
appointed by the Prince Regent Surahong, who had flown to Moscow the previous
night, would arrive at the Spartak Camp that day.

"I not want if it is my uncle. I will stay here wiz you. You will hide me!"

"I can't do that, dear boy; there'd be such an international scandal, it's hard to
see the end of it. You're a sensible boy, you can understand yourself."

"But vat can I do? Tell me."

"No, I can't undertake to advise you, and I haven't the right. Try to understand
for yourself. Why shouldn't you take the throne? Take it, and when the time
comes, rule, only with justice and fairness, honestly. Think about other people. And
use your brains, act wisely. At present they won't let you do as you want, but when
you grow up, then act as the people wish. In these years the people will learn a
lot too, and for that matter you have to learn and learn."

The rustle of wheels on the gravel sounded behind the house; a car drew up
and stopped. The Jungahorian Ambassador climbed out, accompanied by an official
from the regional centre. The manager led the king out on to the veranda and
stood back.

The ambassador approached, bowing low. The morning shadows were still long;
the king's shadow cut across the sanded path and the ambassador carefully walked
round it, to approach the king from the side. His face twitched—a small, wrinkled,
brown face like a dry pear, and its expression was sourish-sweet as though he had
bitten into himself and did not like the taste.

What the ambassador said to the king, and the king to the ambassador, nobody
knew because they spoke in Jungahorian. Then they both disappeared into the
manager's office.

Soon the news flew round the camp that King Delihiyar was to return that very
day to his own country, where his coronation would soon take place.

Yura, gloomy, went to Number Four for the king's belongings when the other
boys were on the beach. Delihiyar himself was not allowed out of the cottage where
the ambassador had taken him.

Then came a report from the airport; bad weather, the king's departure would
have to be postponed until the next day. But at dawn he and the ambassador would
leave for Moscow, and from there for Huirajamba.

Hour by hour, things looked worse.

In the evening the radio newscast said that in Jungahorn Communists and all
who had opposed the mervyango were being arrested. The ubiquitous Tane
discovered which was the room where the king was held, guarded by the ambassador,
and found the right moment to toss a note wrapped round a stone through the
window. Let him know what was happening in his country.

C H A P T E R  1 4

The Moon Hid her Face

At last that day, so unhappy for the little king and his friends, came to an end.
The Spartak Camp lay quiet, but in Number Four nobody could sleep.

It was very late when footsteps were suddenly heard outside, then somebody
thrust a head into the tent.

"Who's that? Who's there?"

The boys' surprise was considerable when they heard the voice of Gelik
Pafnutin.

"It's me, boys, only quiet. I'm on duty at the First Cottage."

"You, Gelik?" Slava said, surprised.

"Congratulations, we're getting moon-struck in camp now. That came from
Taraska.

"This is serious," hissed Gelik. "I haven't come here for fooling. Look here,
if you take me back—there's a bed vacant now and I can speak to Yura tomorrow—
then I can tell you something important. It's about your Delik."

"He's not Delik to you, he's the king. That's the first thing," Slavka cut him
short. "And secondly, if you've come here to make conditions and drive bargains,
you can just make a right-about turn and evaporate into the mists of night. We
can do without you. Get it?"

Gelik said nothing. He was thinking.

"All right," he decided at last. "You can kick me out if you like, instead of
collectively helping to re-educate a person... all right, you can call me what
you like, but I'm not it. You'll see for yourselves. Only quiet. Can I come in?"

They let him in and he told them in a whisper that the king had decided to
run away from the ambassador. The electricians had left a ladder they had been
using, and he had asked Gelik to bring it up to the window of the room where the
ambassador had left him locked in. But it was too heavy for Gelik to carry alone,
he had to have help.

The boys all jumped out of beds.

"Stop, not all of us," said Slava. "I'll go. Only if you let us down—you'll be
for it." He directed the beam from the pocket torch on to Gelik, slid it from his
belt to his head and saw that he really was wearing the red armband of the boy
on duty. "You go ahead. If there's any trouble, if we meet anyone, you'll have
to think up something. I'll follow you."
And will you take me back into the tent?"

"A nice time you've picked for clever bargains, I must say. Can't do a thing without looking out for number one—ugh!"

"But it's not my fault if I was brought up that way," Gelik had his excuse ready.

"Oh, stop wriggling. Delik was brought up in a palace, but he's a real fellow just the same. While you—! Something depends on yourself, too—you're not just a cypher!"

"Clever boy, aren't you?"

"Boys, I'm not bargaining. I'm only asking. I promise you—I'll go anyway, I'll do everything, only please do take me back."

"Oh, all right, we'll take you back," said Slava graciously. "Only just remember, if you go on as you have, nobody'll ever let you in on anything good! Come on—the rest of you stay here."

The whole thing probably took no more than fifteen minutes, although to the waiting boys it seemed at least an hour before at last they heard quick footsteps by the beach, and then in came Slava, Gelik and the king.

"I don't want to go," Deliyyar whispered. "I got out ze windou, zey give me ladder. I not want to go, I want to come back to you."

Nobody answered. Nobody knew what to do. They had all heard the terrible reports of arrests and executions in Jungahore. Hundreds had been thrown into the stinking pits surrounded by barbed wire and seething with yellow ants. And all their sympathy was with the king.

"Look, boys," said Taraska, "what if he sent a telegram to Moscow and asked for—what is it—madhouse?"

"What?" asked Slava.

"I read it somewhere, someone asked for—oh, what was it—I know—asylum, the right of asylum."

"No, that won't work." Slava cooled him very quickly. "That's only for adults."

Wise Slava already had a better idea; the first thing was to get Tongaor's advice. He would know what to do. And the sanatorium where he was staying was not such a long way off, they could walk there by morning. But who would take the king? They could get him out of the camp without being seen, the boys knew a secret way in a far corner of the park, and for that matter Gelik with his arm-band could be useful, too. But they could not send the king alone to the sanatorium.

"Tonya, let her say yat is ze right way," the king said suddenly. "I want, well, to tell all to Tonya."

That was a surprise, but there was no time for much discussion. Besides, the king's voice had suddenly become very firm. So they decided to do as he said.

Taraska went with Gelik to the girls' cottage—he could find his way anywhere—and before another quarter of an hour had passed the two were back again with Tonya. She already knew everything, and when her quiet voice was heard in the tent the boys felt that she had already decided everything, too. It was evidently not for nothing that the girls followed her lead. There was no time for argument and here too her authority carried the day.

"Listen, boys," she said. "We can't let Delik go alone, that's clear. He doesn't know the way, he talks with an accent, he'll be caught at once. So I'll go with him. Yes. Quiet! I've made it plain, I think. I'm going. Especially as they won't expel me from the Home for it. And they won't start fussing right away. But you'll get into trouble with your parents, there'll be telegrams home and all the rest of it. So that's settled—I'll go."

Settled it was. Tonya was to take the king to the sanatorium where the poet was staying, and his wisdom would decide what the king ought to do.

So the boys quietly saw Tonya and the king off. It was a warm night but all were shivering. After all, it was a daring thing, a breach of all camp rules, and there would certainly be a babblealoo. But it was better to keep the grown-ups out of things like that. Of course, Tongaor did not count as an ordinary grown-up here, it was to him the king was going.

Before leaving, however, Tonya paused in front of Taraska.

"Listen, gab-tongue... Think you can keep quiet this time, at least?"

"Better if you took me with you," Taraska pleaded. "Be decent! And I'd feel safer. Tomorrow they'll all start asking—what's happened and all the rest of it."

"Can't you hold your tongue just once in your life?" The boys were indignant.

"Oh, all right, I'll manage it somehow—this time," Taraska promised firmly.

"I'll stick it. And if I feel just can't, then I'll heat up a thermometer, go to the doctor, say I've got a headache and let him put me in the isolation ward. They won't let anyone in there, it's safe. I wouldn't tell the doctor!"

"If you like, I'll go to the ward with you." This was Gelik, prepared now for any magnanimous sacrifice. "It won't be so dull for you, and the doctor'll be more likely to believe us—mum told them all I'm not strong."

Deliyyar and Tonya crept through the gap in the fence and replaced the board. It was a bright night with a great polished moon high in the sky. This, according to Jungahorian belief, was a good omen and pleased the king.

Everything was very quiet; even the sea barely murmured as they made their way to the shore. All sleepiness had gone. Suddenly the king stopped and clutched Tonya's arm.

"Look, look zere," he whispered, pointing up at the sky. "Look! Uly is it like zat?"

Tonya threw her head back; she could not see anything. But the king was trembling and his eyes were wide and frightened. Then Tonya too noticed that the
moon, which had been so round and bright, was flattened, as though a slice had been cut off one side.

Voices came to them. Some distance away they saw a small group of people, by the look of them visitors. They were standing on the high ridge by the beach, round something that gleamed, something that looked at first glance like a small anti-aircraft gun. But when the two came closer they saw it was a mobile telescope. An elderly man was adjusting it; his linen jacket gleamed in the light of the moon, which had already narrowed perceptibly.

"You keep quiet," Tonya warned the king. "I'll find out all about it."

She slipped inconspicuously into the group round the telescope. One after another they were going up to it and peering up through it, while the elderly man quietly explained something. After a moment Tonya returned to the king.

"What are you scared of? You are silly sometimes, Delik, even though you're a king now. It's just an ordinary eclipse of the moon. I just remembered—it's marked in all the calendars. Come on, let's take a look through the telescope."

The king first shook his head stubbornly, but strong-willed Tonya grabbed his arm and pulled him up to the telescope.

"Please may we look too?" she very politely asked the elderly man.

Of course he agreed at once, showed them how to look and helped them to focus it to their eyes.

Tonya peered through the small glass, followed by the king. The huge, rough-looking moon, with a bite out of one side, almost filled the black emptiness on which the telescope was trained. It was a bad omen. The king was terrified. It was obviously an unlucky hour in which he had left the camp, in which he was beginning his reign.

CHAPTER 15

A Lecture on the International Situation

Our runaways trudged along the road, trying not to know they were getting tired. The eclipse continued. But the sun ought soon to rise over the hills and put an end to the fears of night.

Early in the morning, weary and hollow-eyed, they knocked at the porter's lodge of the Arrow Sanatorium. But bitter disappointment awaited them.

"Who are you wanting so early? Comrade Tongoar?" asked the porter. "He's left. Two days ago. They say he got a telegram from his own country, packed his things and was gone. Haven't you been listening to the radio? The things going on there! Well, so he wanted to get back quick. He left me a book to remember him by. Signed it, too, and with thanks for all I'd done. . . . But what were you wanting him for—to come to some camp? A lot of you Young Pioneers have been coming for that. And they came to see him from one of their ships, too. No, my dears, you're too late."

For a long time Tonya and the king stood there in the road by the sanatorium. What could they do now? Whom could they ask for advice? Tonya said at last that they'd better go back to the camp.

They were both dead tired and ravenously hungry, even more hungry than sleepy.

Suddenly the king gave a jump and clapped his hands.

"Tonya, stop! Ze port—us not far away now, isn't it? Yes? You remember, Tongoar said my ship would be zere soon, ze Prince Delikyhar, and zat old man said men come from ship. Ze captain is friend of Tongoar. Ue go zere. Tongoar said it come today. You remember ut he say?"

"Well, and so what?" Tonya did not get the idea. "What if you do go with the ship? It'll be the same thing as flying, only it'll take longer."

"No, you don't understand!" cried the king. "Tongoar say me zen, 'Uen ship come, remember zey are good men zere. Zey are from Rambai.' You remember how ze Santa Maria not want to go to war. Zei raise ze flag and go to Brazil. Remember, you told me? I hear, too, uat radio say. Uel he like ze Santa Maria. Ue go to sea. I send radio to uncle. He must do ut I say or ze ship not go to Hairajamba, it go to Rambai. It is my ship."

The port was quite a distance, however, half a day in the bus. They needed something to eat first. It was a good thing that practical, far-sighted Slava had persuaded Tonya to take some money from the boys without the king's knowledge. It came in very handy now. They found the bus terminus near a cluster of holiday cottages not far from the park. Tonya enquired how much the tickets would cost and laid the money aside. Then they went to the refreshment room and had a bun and a cup of cocoa each. After that they felt much more cheerful.

It was a Sunday and there were a good many people in the park. On an open stage a visiting lecturer was to speak on the international situation. The lecture was announced on a big poster at the entrance to the park.

"Let's go and listen," Tonya suggested. "It may come in useful. And it's four hours before the bus goes."

The two children sat down on the end of one of the benches arranged in a semi-circle round the small stage. It was a hot day and the lecturer, pacing up and down the creaking boards of the stage shaded by a shell-shaped roof, kept fanning himself with a paper, glancing at it from time to time as he outlined the international situation. From his stage he seemed to observe the whole world, he knew everything, what was happening and where.

When he had finished he invited questions.

"I say, Delik," Tonya whispered. "Let's send him a note, ask him to explain all about your Jungahore."
She asked the people sitting near for a piece of paper. An elderly man beside her tore a sheet from his notebook without even looking at her. She had a pencil with her. She sucked it thoughtfully, scratched some words on the paper, tapped one of the people in front on the shoulder and held out the note. It went along the rows like a chip over the waves until it floated up to the stage.

"I am asked to speak in more detail about the situation in Jungahore," said the lecturer when he received Tonya's note. "What can I say? The situation there is extremely tense. Reports of harsh repressions have come from many sources. As you already know from the newspapers, power in Jungahore has again been seized by adherents of the imperialists. It is true, there is resistance among the people, particularly active in the southern town of Rambai." The king nudged Tonya. "The port of Rambai," the lecturer continued, "is in the hands of insurgents, guerillas. As a blind, to deceive the population, Prince Delihyar, a child who of course understands nothing, has been proclaimed king; he is completely helpless, naturally, held in leading strings by General Dambya Suraong who has been appointed regent, who in other words is the actual ruler of the country. The ex-king Jutang, who was sympathetic to the progressive forces, was unable to retain power and was compelled to surrender it to the reaction. And the child-king is of course a puppet, unable to alter anything."

Delihyar gave a squeal of anger when he was called a child who understood nothing and a puppet. "Was it me he meant?" he kept asking Tonya. She could hardly keep him quiet in his seat.

"But how dare he say that?" Delihyar seethed. "He understand nosing himself, he is a fool! Sharaunga!"

People were beginning to look at them and "shush" them; they certainly could not afford to attract attention, for the prince's disappearance must have caused a big stir in the camp. It was not hard to imagine the ambassador's fury at the king slipping through his fingers. A search was probably going on along the whole coast.

To pacify Delihyar, however, Tonya sent the lecturer another note before leaving the park. The king insisted stubbornly on it.

"You should not say such things when you do not know," Tonya wrote this time. "King Delihyar of Jungahore stands for peace and friendship. He is against the imperialists. He is for us."

They were already at the park gates when they heard the voice of the lecturer, augmented by the microphone, saying ironically, "I do not know why the comrade who sent this note assumed that the present juvenile king of Jungahore is so progressively minded. Evidently, the author of this note..."

Tonya felt a thrill of pride at being called an author, but decided not to hang about the park; better get back to the bus terminus without loss of time.

CHAPTER 16
The Flag on the Horizon

The journey took a very long time, at least it seemed very long to the children. The bus stopped and waited at too many places. Then it stopped at a filling station, the driver vanished somewhere, and Tonya and the king walked about near the empty bus, tormented with impatience.

"You know what I say Zen?" the king whispered. "I say: you are sailors of Rambai. Tonggoor say Rambai sailors are good sailors, very brave, and 'merihyungo tabatong!' I am ze same! Tonggoor is my big, big friend. I am king, and also your big, big friend. Ue will go to Rambai. Ue will do everything very, very good."

Then they got back into the bus, filled with passengers again, and travelled on, endlessly. But now the king was silent.

The evening shadows were falling when they arrived at the town. It was a considerable distance from the bus terminus to the port itself, but Tonya had no more money so they had to walk. The king, unused to such hard exertions, was very tired. With every step something seemed to hammer inside his head, and his legs began to ache. Tonya encouraged him as best she could.

"Stick it just a little longer," she said gently. "There's only a bit left—just a bit and we're there. Stick it. We'll be there in no time, I'll see you on to the ship, and wish you luck—and then you must try to act wisely."

"Tonya... You will, you don't want to come with me, Zen?" the king began. But she cut him short.

"I've told you, and that's the end of it. Don't be offended, Delik, try to understand. It's impossible. Later on we'll see, but now there can't be any question of it."

"I'm afraid, alone... All alone it will be very difficult, hard."

"D'you think it's easy for me?" Tonya turned away quickly.

The sun had set when they came to the shore. A little way off, on one side, masts, funnels and crates rose. There was a metallic clanking. Squeaking little locomotives exchanged remarks. The port was quite close. Dusk was gathering over the quiet sea and the water darkened responsively. A red spark glowed at the end of the breakwater. And from there suddenly came the deep, prolonged hooting of a ship's siren. A big vessel was rounding the breakwater on her way out.

The king and Tonya stood still.

From the stern floated a three-striped flag. The ship was turning, on her bows gilt letters showed but not sufficiently clearly to read the words. But they knew this was the Prince Delihyar. And the flag at the stern—there could be no mistake there—was the Jungahorian flag, with its crimson stripe and a sun in the middle sending out rays, and blue stripes above and below it. And she was leaving, that ship, leaving for Jungahore. She sent out puffs of steam and hoisted a farewell signal.
She was not more than five hundred metres away, but that half kilometre was an impassable gulf between the little king and his desperate dream.

The ship rounded the breakwater and turned towards the mouth of the bay. Her course could be seen by the curved feather of smoke. The coast and this curve pointed to the spit where the bay ended. It was by this spit that our runaways had come to the shore. It was clear now that the ship would pass close by this spit beyond which lay the open sea. If only... 

"A boat!" cried Tonya. "A boat! Come here, quick!" Her voice already sounded from below; she had jumped down from the dunes and was by the water. Yes, a small rowboat lay drying close to the water. Whoever had brought it had evidently gone only for a short time.

Without properly understanding what Tonya had in mind, the king too jumped down on to the pebbles.

"Quick, lend a hand," Tonya gasped, bracing shoulder, side and arms against the boat, pushing it towards the water.

The king obediently joined his efforts to hers; she waded in fearlessly up to her knees, pushing and pulling until the boat was afloat.

"Get in," she ordered curtly.

The king scrambled over the side and tumbled on to the bottom. Tonya was already on the front seat; with two sharp jerks of the oars in opposite directions she turned the boat, gave a whistle and bore down on the dunes. One good sweep, another, another, and the boat moved lightly, springily, in time with the strokes.

"Sit by me, help, take an oar," Tonya ordered, moving to one side. "Go on, row! That's right, lean back more. Oh dear, what shall I do with you? Why do you twist the oars? Come on, row, row—oh, please—!"

But how could he keep pace with the strong, sweeping strokes of this girl from the Volga, swinging her oar lightly back and then bearing on it with a strong, steady pull? The flat grey waves rose and sank, rose and sank like the back of a great elephant. So his dream had come true. Only there was no music, no happy shouts of the populace. And his body ached unbearably, his arms were like lead, his hands were swollen and blisters began to come up on his soft palms.

But the ship, steering for the spit, seemed to be coming to meet them. She was clearly visible although the darkness was deepening over the sea. Just a little more and the boat should lie right before her.

Tonya rowed with every last ounce of strength. She was panting from the effort.

"Wave to them... shout," she said.

"Fari tor!" The king jumped up, made a trumpet of his hands and began shouting in Jugahorian. The boat tossed, he could barely keep his feet as he waved and shouted.

At last somebody on the ship seemed to have seen them.

A puff of white steam came from the siren, and a brief hoot of greeting.

The same moment the ship turned away from them and veered for the horizon to the open sea. Probably the sailors thought the boat had simply come out to give a send-off to the Jugahorians as they left for home.

Tonya stopped rowing. For a long time they sat staring hopelessly after the ship as she drew away. The wind dissipated the smoke trailing in a curving line, or perhaps the darkness swallowed it.

Farther and farther went the ship's lights—away from them. Soon there was just a vague glimmer on the horizon, and then everything was empty and dark.

CHAPTER 17

Wind and Darkness

It was only now the children realized how far they were from the shore. They felt frighteningly alone. The lights of town and port seemed almost as far away as the horizon where the ship had vanished. The mountains looked very distant and much smaller. Suddenly from those mountains came a gust of wind, and another, carrying cold, damp and darkness. The wind settled down to a steady, hard blow and with every minute the sky grew blacker and the waves bigger and heavier.

When Tonya turned the boat they threatened to capsize it. Water poured in and wet the children to the skin. Water sloshed in the bottom of the boat.

"This is bad, Delik," said Tonya. "Help me row back. Gosh, I have dragged you into a mess... No, don't row. I'll do better alone. Try to scoop some of the water out with your hands or we'll swamp."

With both hands the king began splashing water out of the boat. But more came in. The waves were no longer smoothly swaying elephants; like great savage dogs they growled and snarled, bristled up, fell back on front paws, they retreated for another leap, choking in foaming rage, baring the teeth in their gaping mouths. They came charging from the shore and drove the little boat farther and farther out to sea. From behind the mountains black clouds hurled their weight at the moon which was trying to rise over the horizon and extricate itself from all this turmoil. The wind swooped down like a wall of blackness that swallowed everything, it whistled in nostrils and ears and made you choke as soon as you opened your mouth. Tonya and the king had to turn their heads from it to snatch a little breath.

Then came the rain in a dense curtain that hid the shore. Fine needles that gleamed in the fitful light of the moon pierced the darkness.

"Zere ull never again be sun, never any more," the king groaned.

"What?" Tonya shouted through the windy darkness.
“I say,” the king shouted with all his strength, “zevill never again be sun. Never again be morning. Zevill be darkness forever.”

“Oh, for goodness’ sake shut up, Delik. That’s rubbish. Stop it. Try to get some of the water out.”

But the king no longer had any strength in his numbed hands. Long ago in Jungahore he had had tropical malaria, he had nearly died, and every now and again he had a reminder of it. One was evidently on the way now. He felt as though a thousand needles were piercing him all over.

Gasping and coughing, summoning the last of her strength, Tonya rowed stubbornly, blowing the water off her face and glancing back now and then to see if the shore was any closer. It wasn’t.

Just when she felt she could no longer move the oars, a long ray of light from the shore stabbed the darkness. It swayed to one side, swung over to the other, probed among the waves it lighted, leaped like fish and came to rest on the sea quite close to the boat. Another moment, and the two in it were blinded by its icy-blue light. The rain turned to crystal needles and seemed to part as though driven away by the beam. Soon there came the quick beat of an engine, closer and closer, and a border patrol launch came racing up, swung in a curve round the boat as though cutting off all the dangers seeking in the dark expanse that extended to the horizon, reversed engines and stopped abruptly. Boat and launch rose and fell alternately like Delikyara’s eyebrows when he showed the boys his trick. Now, however, he had not the strength even to twitch them.

In the small cabin a man in a white coat bent over the king as he lay on the bunk. Opening his eyes, the king saw a shining needle poised over him.

“Needles! I not want! No needle!” He struggled, wriggled away towards the wall, pushed away the man in the white coat. But the man held his arm down on the bed.

It was not a bad needle at all. It gave just one tiny prick. And then the king felt very good. It was the last thing he saw before he fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER 18
When the King Is Powerless

The next morning the manager of the Spartak Camp Mikhail Borisovich and the Jungahorian ambassador were at the door of the private ward where the king lay.

Tonya tried to edge in with them; she had been cared for by Maya Lazarevna Beletskaia, the head doctor, a round, rosy-cheeked woman, very stout and very agile. But now she was told to stay outside in the corridor. And she simply had to see the king at once and tell him what she had learned during the night on the launch. As she was falling asleep she had heard the sailors saying that Tongaor, who had returned to his own people in their difficult hour, had been arrested and sentenced to death. And the execution could be carried out at any time, there was not a moment to be lost.

When the king saw the ambassador in a flapping white hospital coat far too big for him, he turned with a jerk to the wall and pulled the quilt over his head. Every line of his body said plainly that he wanted nothing to do with any ambassador appointed by Dambial, that heartily disliked uncle who had always plagued him with continual admonitions about good manners and had not wanted to let him go to a Soviet children’s camp.

“Your Royal Majesty”—the ambassador began, but the king jerked his shoulder, kicked until his legs tangled in the quilt and buried his head deeper in the pillow, refusing to listen to anything.

“Permit me, Mr. Ambassador”—Mikhail Borisovich put in.

When he heard the camp manager’s voice the king raised his head and looked behind him mistrustfully. And the manager felt a pang of pity when he saw the boy’s eyes red and swollen from crying, the mobile brows now limp and dependent.

“I not want to go uiz him! I want to go uiz you!” The king burst out crying, buried his face in the pillow again and without turning, grasped blindly at the hospital coat thrown over Mikhail Borisovich’s shoulders.

“Mikhail Borisovich! Tell him about Tongaor,” came in a loud whisper from the door.

“That’ll do!” said the manager sharply. “You take yourself off. I’ll deal with you later, young lady!”

Maya Lazarevna ran to the door and silently pushed Tonya out. But she succeeded in saying her word all the same.

“Delik! They’ve sentenced Tongaor—they’ve got him! They want to kill him!”

The king jumped up in bed. Maya Lazarevna and Mikhail Borisovich could not hold him. He swung his bare feet on to the floor, stamped, broke out into loud crying and began tearing off his pyjamas. He flung all the medicines off the night table and shouted in Jungahorian at the ambassador that he demanded the release of Tongaor and would never go back again, never, if Tongaor was killed. He cried, stormed, pleaded and demanded, he buried his face in the pillow and screamed that he would not take any medicine. Tonya took advantage of the confusion to slip back into the room where she stood a little distance from the bed, biting her lips, her eyebrows meeting completely in angry sympathy.

Nobody can say how it would all have ended if Pavel Andreyevich Shchedrin- tes, the Soviet ambassador to Jungahore, who had met the prince a month earlier on his arrival at the camp, had not arrived just at the right moment.

His calm, unhurried but very distinct voice brought something like quietness.
"Excuse me, Mr. Ambassador, and please do not take it as interference in your affairs, but if you wish to accept some good, friendly advice, I would permit myself to recommend you to convey His Majesty's wishes to His Highness the Prince Regent without delay. The world press is filled with reports from Jungahore which assert that the people are highly angered by the repressions and, in particular, the arrest of Tongaor. I would not, of course, venture to prompt you, but to me it seems that the best way to settle matters would be to quote the demand of the new king who, if I understand him rightly, proposes an amnesty for those who have suffered repression."

The Jungahorian ambassador tried to raise objections first in his own language, then in Russian, but the king beat his fists on the pillow, then butted it with his head.

"You not listen to him at all!" he cried. "I dismissed him—now! I recall him. He not ambassador any more, only—" the king spat on the floor by the bed.

"Please excuse me," the Soviet Ambassador then said to his Jungahorian colleague. "But I think, Mr. Ambassador, there is nothing to be gained by accentuating this conflict. Particularly as His Majesty refuses to recognize you as persona grata in the present situation."

"I cannot accept such a decision," the Jungahorian protested. "He has not yet ascended the throne. It is not legal."

"Yes, you are right, your objection is valid. But one has to take public opinion into account too. Isn't that right, Mr. Ambassador? Of course, you must act as you think best, but—"

Then the king, who had lain down again, raised the quilt to shield him from the eyes of our ambassador and from behind it put out his tongue at the dismissed Jungahorian, then cocked a snook at him. But that was not enough. He brought the edge of his hand up to his ear and flapped his fingers, bending and straightening them.

"Flap-ears," said the king. "Fadie!"

"I see that His Majesty's stay in the Soviet Union has not been ineffective," said the ambassador acidly. "You have taught him some pretty manners here."

"It wasn't zem at all!" shouted the king, throwing off the quilt. "Not zem! I learned it all before! From Miss Laura Hart, zee one from Helleywood—ze star. She dance in Jaigadang uen my brozer was king. She want to marry him. And zem, uen she was sent away, she turn back at ze door and do zis uiz ze tongue, and then zis by ze nose and zen wiz ze hand to ze ear. Uord of honour as Pioneer!—Uell, uord of honour as king!"

By this time journalists from a number of West-European papers were clomoring at the hospital door; the news of the king's presence there had leaked out and they had flown over. But the head doctor said the king must be kept quiet and would not let them past the doors.

The ambassador came out and with a sour face displayed a telegram which he was sending to Jungahore on the king's orders. The king demanded the immediate release of Tongaor.

Tonya, too, got her way: she had to be allowed into the room because the king refused to eat or take his medicine if she were not there.

Tonya was now in a white hospital coat with a nurse's kerchief round her head, which suited her very well. His agitation had left the king very weak. He lay on his back feeling decidedly sorry for himself. He looked so sadly at Tonya that everything turned over inside her. And even the attendant who brought his lunch, who had seen much in her time, turned back at the door and sighed deeply.

"What capitalism does to children! Won't our people really do anything to help him?"

Tonya fed the king with a spoon. Of course, he could quite well have held it himself, but he was feeling so sorry for himself and it was so pleasant to have Tonya bring the spoonful of beef soup to his mouth... He could not refuse himself that small enjoyment. After all, a king did have a right to something, especially when he was ill! Even stern Slava Nemtsov would not have scolded him.

"You look very pretty, quite very pretty today," said the king and opened his mouth for the spoon without taking his eyes off Tonya. "It is very, very, like zat. Like Grannynshura. Will you be doctor when you grow up? It suit you. You are doctor, zen you will come to Jungahore, yes? And you will make all well. Ue will make a big, fine hospital."

"All right, we'll see when the time comes," Tonya answered sternly, pushing the spoon into his mouth. "You mustn't talk so much or your temperature'll go up."

An answering telegram came from the Regent Surahong that evening, saying that the ungrateful Tongaor had refused a pardon.

"Your Royal Majesty," Tongaor answered, asking that his words to the new king be made known to the world, "I cannot accept life from the mercy of a king. Only the law can give me my life, and only the people have the right to make that law. I am guilty of nothing and I refuse to beg for mercy from anybody whatsoever, even if it is a question of my life. Let the people decide. I recognize only the power of the people and to my last hour I shall fight against power over the people."

Evidently, the Regent had played a clever trick, he had concealed the true state of affairs and pretended that the king was willing to grant the poet his life if he begged for pardon.

Again the little king cried as he pictured Tongaor in the royal prison, in a deep stinking pit surrounded by a high wall topped with steel spikes.

Ambassador Shchedrintsev explained things as well as he could to the king, who could not understand Tongaor's answer and was even offended because
the proud Communist poet did not want to ask for mercy at a time when thousands were held in the pits. That was why he had refused when the Regent Surahong sent the request for pardon for his signature. Tongaor demanded an open trial by the people. It must be pushed through before it was too late. But the king was so tired with agitation and crying that he had no strength left and soon fell asleep.

That evening Tonya got into his room again, in spite of the floor nurse's efforts to stop her, and pursued by the head doctor. She told him what she had just heard over the radio. The whole people had risen in defence of Tongaor. Tens of thousands had moved on the royal prison. And the Regent Surahong to quieten the people's anger somewhat, had been forced to reverse the sentence passed on Tongaor and proclaim a royal amnesty. Hundreds had already been released, and the bold revolutionary poet had been sent out of the country, accompanied by his family, who previously had been held in Jungahore.

"Oh, Delik, Delik!" cried Tonya and whirled round the room in a wild dance. And the king, throwing off the quilt, jumped and bounded on the bed while both howled, "Elephants for all! Nobody in the pits! Merihyungo—get out!" until Maya Lazarevna burst in and stamped her foot.

"What sort of circus is this?" she shouted. "Are you both crazy, or what?! Be so kind, Your Majesty, as to behave yourself. You can carry on like that in your own palace in Jungahore if you want. Prance on your throne all you like, but now you're on my territory and a patient, not a king. Quiet, at once! Kindly submit to my law here, be so good!"

"No, zat is not ze right sing to say! You must say, 'I'm ready!'" cried the king, laughing, quite unsubdued. "And zen I say, 'Efer ready!'"

All the same, the king had to do as he was told and lie down again.

The next day, in the presence of Ambassador Shchedrinsevic, the manager of the Spartak Camp and the head doctor, the king gave a brief press conference in the head doctor's office to the eager journalists.

But let it be told by one of the Western journalists who were present, as reported in his newspaper.

"King Delibyier still looked somewhat ill after his adventure at sea, but was very gracious and appeared to be well educated to exercise supreme power. The young king said he preferred to conduct the press conference in Russian, as he had almost forgotten his English and, in addition, he wanted all he said to be understood by those who had been so kind to him. On the king's breast, alongside the royal family amulet with the sun, moon and elephant, we saw an irregularly shaped stone with a hole in the middle, hanging from a rough cord. Asked the significance of this medallion, the king said it was a "chicken's eye" which according to the ancient belief among the Black Sea coast would bring luck. It may be concluded from this that during his stay in the Soviet Union the future king came into contact with various influences, not only Communist in character but some connected with certain existing religious sects.

"In reply to questions, the king explained the intended basis of his future rule. 'If my uncle lets me,' said the king, referring to the Prince Regent Dambial Surahong who holds full power until the young king comes of age.

"What are your relations with the Prince Regent?" the king was asked. His reply was brief:

"He is my uncle."

"Have you had any differences with him, any conflicts?"

"On Moon Day I splashed paint on his new uniform when I was making a rocket—accidentally. But he thought I did it on purpose."

"The king refused to comment further on this incident.

"I will say more later, when my uncle and all his meriyungo get it on the neck, the king added after a brief hesitation. ('To get it on the neck' is an untranslatable expression. It means to hang decorations on all necks. Probably a hint at the future resignation of the Regent on a royal pension.)"

"What will be your guiding principles as king of Jungahore?"

"Elephants for all! Nobody in the pits! Merihyungo—get out!" was the king's answer. At this point the young king looked expectantly at the Soviet Ambassador to Jungahore, Mr. Shchedrinsevic, who was present at the press conference.

"Asked whether and in what way he intended to continue his education, the king answered quickly, 'A king needs to study, too. That's what Yura said.' (It is not clear to whom the king was referring.)"

"What is your favourite occupation?" our correspondent asked.

"Nosing stones," answered the king.

"(To nose stones is a method known only to Black Sea coastal dwellers of bringing precious stones to great brilliance.)"

"Asked how the king had enjoyed his summer holiday in the Spartak Camp, the king said he had enjoyed it very much, because everybody had been very good to him.

"Were you subjected to any propaganda?" we asked. "Were any attempts made to influence you?"

"Yes!" cried the young king with animation. 'They taught me to make my own bed and to collect stones. I collected a lot of stones.' (This is apparently a reference to a Communist agitator's formula at the beginning of the century: 'The stone is the weapon of the proletariat.')"

"So you were subjected to propaganda, then, Your Majesty?"

"No," the king answered. 'I myself propo-poganda them (that was how he pronounced the word), I propo-poganda them about elephants. I propo-poganda them all the time.'
"The king stated that on his return to Jungahore he would award the Order of the Moon and Sun to the manager of the Spartak Camp and the senior Pioneer. And he would decorate the girl Tonya (Antonia) with the Order of the Lion’s Heart for saving his life on the Black Sea.

"The king was asked whether he intended to submit this decision to the Prince Regent. The king then stated that, as he put it, he had to go somewhere, and accompanied by the doctor left in the direction of the toilet. The doctor then returned and informed us that the press conference was over."

Ah, my friends, if only this were a made-up story. I would soon think out a happy ending for you! But what can I do—in real life not all tales have a happy ending.

Is it worth while to tell you how Ambassador Shechedrintsev and the ambassador of Jungahore came for the king in a car the next day and took him to the airport?

I do not want to describe his parting with Tonya, either. I do not want to make you sad, and to tell the truth, I do not want to make myself sad. I only wish to add that when the Spartak children were preparing to leave at the end of their holidays, a deep roar in the sky brought them running out of tents and cottages. And a large aeroplane circled over the camp and waggled its wings. It was the little king’s goodbye to his friends of the summer.

Down below, in the corner of an empty room, a tall girl cried, her face pressed against a knapsack.

CHAPTER 19

Be Ready, Your Majesty!

That is all I have the right to tell you for the present about Prince Surambok, now occupying the throne of Jungahore as King Delihyar the Fifth. For the present.

Let the grown-ups think it is just a tale. They don’t need to believe that Tonya Pushkhnina recently received a letter from the king with a stamp bearing his head. In that letter he said that he never let anyone prepare his bed at night or make it in the morning, and that he had introduced a morning parade for all the ministers and courtiers. The king greeted his suite with the words, “Are ready!” and all of them had to answer, “Efer ready!” He wrote that Tonya ought to understand the meaning of those words, which was kept secret from the courtiers.

The king wrote that alongside the amulet of the Sun, Moon and Elephant he still wore the “chicken’s eye,” and on holidays he put on his red Pioneer tie; he insisted on this, although it made his uncle the Regent very angry.

The poor king also wrote that it was very, very dull in the royal palace Juangadang, where there were three hundred rooms but not a single friend. He said he had made great improvements in wagging his eyebrows, had taught the Minister of the Court to play shove ha’penny, and decorated his personal apartments with a full collection of picture postcards of Soviet cosmonauts.

Evidently, King Delihyar had not succeeded in carrying out any other reforms. And I can tell you nothing more—not for the present. Have a little patience. I do not think you will have long to wait. In this world people are becoming wiser every day, and man is wresting more secrets from nature. As the days pass man will have fewer secrets from man, people from people, and frontiers will cease to divide heart from heart.

The days will come when I can disclose the secret, the real name of the land of the Sun and Moon, hot Jungahore. I will show it to you on the map, tell you the real name of the king, and it may possibly help you to get good marks in geography, and perhaps history too.

Everything is going to be fine! And the laws which the Young Pioneers and the king wrote on a page from an exercise book that night by the Black Sea will be confirmed. Because it is not only Delihyar who will learn wisdom but also—and this is the most important thing—the people of Jungahore, who will make their own lives after the pattern they consider the best.

And then—be ready, Your Majesty!

Illustrated by David Khaikin
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