

## SHMO

They decided against discharging Dancer. It would be rather shameful to return home a venerable propagandist of war in such a miserable state. For military service, he was obviously unsuited. Having been released from the infirmary, he received an order: "immediately report to SHMO for further service."

"Who's this Shmo?" He asked the messenger.

"What's this Shmo, not who. Shmo is Military Unit Number 11 112. Support Headquarters for Material Operations. In simple terms, a laundry. They also have a bakery there. Well, they won't take you at the bakery, it is fully staffed. But there are not enough laundresses in the laundry. Even local people won't go there. Only prisoners. There, by the way, Nada got her start. The position, as it turns out, is promising..."

"What Nada?"

"Ah... I forgot that you have a hearing problem after the shell shock. Rumors, it seems, do not reach you," the messenger closed the topic.

A month later, Fraiser received a hysterical cryptogram from the Center with reproaches and reprimands for the inefficient use of human resources. He called the head of Military Unit 11 112:

"Listen here, the Center guys wrote me some bullshit that I'm making some great cultural figure toil away in the laundry, instead of using them for ideological causes. Do you really have writers working there? You have a laundry there or a ministry of culture, you motherfucker?"

"That's the first time I hear about it, Comrade Commander! Allow me to check and call back?"

"Go on. You have five minutes."

Four minutes later, the head-shmo called back:

"Yes, sir, it's true, Comrade Commander! Since November 8th, a former writer with the call signs Windbreaker and Dancer has been serving here. Shell-shocked. Radiola dropped him off, he is listed as a laundress."

"Why as a laundress? Is he a woman?"

"A man of the feminine type. We only have laundresses on the allowance list. The position of the launderer has not been provisioned for."

"What launderer?"

"Well, launderer. The masculine form of laundress."

"Came up with that word yourself?"

"Only assumed it, Comrade Commander. If necessary, we will introduce the position of launderer. So it matches."

"Wait a second. Send this Dancer to me."

## POEMS

After talking with the dancing writer and sighing heavily, Fraiser appointed him editor-in-chief of the army's electronic and paper magazine "Strike!". Once a month he called the chief editor to listen and admonish.

Jerking his legs and holding his hands in front of him, as if he was still carrying a dead man's head in them, Dancer entered. Fraiser did not offer him to sit down, because he knew that the writer could only sit down or even just stand still for more than a minute by taking two tablets of

Ultraseduxen. But, slowing down the chaotic movements of the limbs, the drug also slowed down the movement of thoughts and speech of the patient. Yet, the commander needed to talk to the chief editor.

"How is the situation on the ideological front?"

"Cornering the enemy, Comrade Commander, developing success!" - reported Dancer.

"More specifically?"

"The level of publications is growing, the quality of campaign materials improving. There's one fighter, our freelance correspondent, who wrote some beautiful poetry. I can read it to you."

"Not only can you, but you must."

"Yes, sir. Here are the poems." - Dancer read aloud from a crookedly folded piece of paper:

eat to the bottom  
wine with bread  
with one hand  
here!  
take the sky  
the other - land  
but the soul  
longing outwards  
behind soul  
a broken penny  
icon and knife  
pass for one of us

Dancer paused and, not waiting for a response, said:

"And here is another work, also not bad:"

You died for this dust, for this dirt  
called them your homeland.  
Longed so to not vanish in vain  
to rise above yourself somehow.

not as a star - too farfetched, you thought -  
but at least as a sprout of rye  
to ascend across the void  
to see where's the far and how's life.

You died for all this, for those of us  
a quick death, outpacing the pain.  
Longed so to not vanish in vain  
to somehow rise above yourself.

"Well?" said Fraiser. "Pardon?" did not understand Dancer. "What's next?" "Nothing, Comrade Commander." "Are these good poems?" "I can not know!" "Who composed them?" "A freelance newspaper correspondent, a tanker, a holder of the Order of the Black Lightning, call sign Track." "These are bad poems. High-browery and defeatism. About some yearning or other. What yearning? And how can you call your homeland dirt?"

"Not the homeland, but the land... it means that he is a simple guy from a province, a miner, or a tractor driver from a village where there are some streets without asphalt, it's dusty, and after the rain it gets dirty... and so on, but it's still the homeland all the same, and for it you could give your life... in principle..."

"Well, maybe in principle... Maybe he's even a good poet, just inexperienced. Give me the poems, I'll edit them a little..." interrupted the commander. He quickly scribbled and sketched something on the sheet given to him by the writer.

Dancer, in amazement, read large red letters over the previous texts:

You're a patriot. And I'm a patriot.

Russia is with us,

The People and God.

"What do you think? In my opinion, it has become much better," Freza smiled.

"Yes, sir," the Dancer said uncertainly.