

Tucked into his boot was a small flask of vodka. He extracted the flask and took a long swig. Lydia kept eating her rye bread. Lev wiped his mouth with the red handkerchief and saw his face reflected in the coach window. He looked away. Since the death of Marina, he didn't like to catch sight of his own reflection, because what he always saw in it was his own guilt at still being alive.

'Why did the sawmill at Baryn close?' asked Lydia.

'They ran out of trees,' said Lev.

'Very bad,' said Lydia. 'What other work can you do?'

Lev drank again. Someone had told him that in England vodka was too expensive to drink.

Immigrants made their own alcohol from potatoes and tap water, and when Lev thought about these industrious immigrants, he imagined them sitting by a coal fire in a tall house, talking and laughing, with rain falling outside the window and red buses going past and a television flickering in a corner of the room. He sighed and said: 'I will do any work at all. My daughter Maya needs clothes, shoes, books, toys, everything. England is my hope.'

Towards ten o'clock, red blankets were given out to the coach passengers, some of whom were already sleeping. Lydia put away the remnants of her meal, covered her body with the blanket and switched on a fierce little light above her under the baggage rack and began reading a faded old paperback, printed in English. Lev saw that the title of her book was *The Power and the Glory*. His longing for a cigarette had grown steadily since he'd drunk the vodka and now it was acute. He could feel the yearning in his lungs and in his blood, and his hands grew fidgety and he felt a tremor in his legs. How long before the next gas stop? It could be four or five hours. Everyone on the bus would be asleep by then, except him and one of the two drivers. Only they would keep a lonely, exhausting vigil, the driver's body tensed to the moods and alarms of the dark, unravelling road; his own aching for the comfort of nicotine or oblivion – and getting neither.

He envied Lydia, immersed in her English book. Lev knew he had to distract himself with something.... In desperation, he took from his wallet a brand new British twenty-pound note and reached up and switched on his own little reading light and began to examine the note. On one side, the frumpy Queen, E II R, with her diadem, her face grey on a purple ground, and on the other, a man, some personage from the past, with a dark drooping moustache and an angel blowing a trumpet above him and all the angel's radiance falling on him in vertical lines. 'The British venerate their history,' Lev had been told in his English class, 'chiefly because they have never been subjected to Occupation. Only intermittently do they see that some of their past deeds were not good.'

The indicated lifespan of the man on the note was 1857–1934. He looked like a banker, but what had he done to be on a twenty-pound note in the twenty-first century? Lev stared at his determined jaw, squinted at his name written out in a scrawl beneath the wing collar, but couldn't read it. He thought that this was a person who would never have known any other system of being alive but Capitalism. He would have heard the names Hitler and Stalin, but not been afraid – would have had no need to be afraid of anything except a little loss of capital in what Americans called the Crash,