

Victory Over the Sun

PROLOGUE

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People! Those who are born but have not yet died.
Hurry up into contemplation [m.] or contemplation [f.]

FUTURELANDMAN:

Contemplation [f.] will lead you,
Contemplationness [m.] is strongleader,
Assemblage of gloomy leaders
From tormenterers and horrorers to solidgaietyers
and foreign laughs and light-heartedgaietyers
will pass in front of intent seers
and contemplators and lookers:
past-timers, be-ers, singers, live-ers, go-ers, callers,
great-ers destiny argumenters and little ones.
Callers will call you, as half-celestial fromsomeplace-ers
Past-timers will tell you who you sometimes were in the past.
Live-ers who you are, be-ers who you would have been.
Little-ers tomorrow [m.]—tomorrow [f.] will tell you
who you are going to be.
Never will pass by like a quiet dream.
Little rulers imperiously will lead you.
There will be sometimers and imaginators.
With them sno and zno.
Pipers and songers will wipe your tear.

Soldier, merchant and ploughman. Dreamer, singer and
plougher thought for you.
Chatterers and doubler-singers will charm you.
Power will take place of puniness.
1st-contemplationsprouts—then contemplation is transformation.
Threateninglyloud fastprophesying go-ers will shake.
Appearancechangers of action will go by fully armed,
directed by pointer-magi of games, in wonderful costumes,
showing morning, evening deed-ive,

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conceived by the dreamer, this heavendweller of deedplaces [f.]
and deedplace [f.] and deedplace [m.].

Between young friendness of contempladuke "Willbeslav"
there is its own prompter.

He will take care to see to it that talkers and singers
go smoothly, not dragging themselves alone, but becoming
rulers over their listeners, and this could save the people
of contempladuke from the anger of Suzdalians.

Lookers painted by an artist, will create a change in
the look of nature.

Seats on clouds and on trees and on a whale shore take
them before the bell rings.

Sounds coming out of the hornhall reach you.

Dream-whistler of foamaker will fill up contemplationness [m.].

Sounders will obey freewheeling-merrymaker.

Seeds of Willbeslav! will fly into life.

Contemplationness [m.] is mouth!

Be a hearing (bigears) contemplator!

And look around.

Victor Khlebnikov

Overture

Raise it by quarter tone

Lower it by quarter tone

The layout of the text of *Victory Over the Sun* follows that of the Russian publication; the examples of Matyushin's music were copied by hand from the same source.

ACT I

First Scene

White and black—white walls and black floor.

Two STRONG MALE INHABITANTS of the future country tear the curtain.

THE FIRST ONE:

All is well that begins well!

THE SECOND ONE:

What about the end?

THE FIRST ONE:

There will be no end!

We are striking the universe

We are arming the world against ourselves

We are organizing the slaughter of scarecrows

Plenty of blood Plenty of sabers

And gun bodies!

We are submerging the mountains!

(They sing.)

We will lock the fat beauties

In the house

Letting these various drunkards

Walk stark-naked there

We don't have the songs

Sighs of prizes

That amused the moldiness

Of rotten naiads!...

(The FIRST STRONG MAN leaves slowly.)

SECOND STRONG MAN:

Sun, you gave birth to passions

And burned with an inflamed ray

We will throw a dustsheet over you

And confine you in a boarded-up concrete house!

(NERO and CALIGULA appear combined in one person with his single left arm held up and bent at a right angle.)

NERO AND CALIGULA:

(threateningly)

QuIn surrn der
 He drove without any luggage
 Last Thursday

Roast and tear apart what I didn't finish
 roasting. *(He freezes in a noble gesture; then sings. During the singing, the
 SECOND STRONG MAN leaves.)*

—I am eating a dog
 And white-legged
 A fried cutlet
 Dead potatoes
 The place is limited
 Stamp be quiet
 ZHUH SHUH CHUH

*(A TRAVELER THROUGH THE CENTURIES arrives in the wheels of an air-
 plane. He is covered with pieces of paper on which are written: stone age,
 middle ages, etc. . . . NERO talks into space.)*

NERO AND CALIGULA:

It should be forbidden to treat elders this way . . .
 The flying machines are unbearable . . .

TRAVELER:

—Denly all became
 Suddenly guns

(He sings.)

—The lake sleeps
 Plenty of dust
 Flood . . . Look
 Everything became masculine
 The lake is harder than iron
 Do not trust old measurements

(NERO cautiously looks through a lorgnette at the metal of the wheels.)

(The TRAVELER, still singing:)

—The storm began to seethe
 The shroud rolls
 Quickly, storm-measurer
 Do not trust former scales
 They will make you sit down on roe
 If you don't catch empty-heel

NERO AND CALIGULA:

It should be forbidden to treat elders this way! they like youth

Ugh I looked for a little scumm
 I looked for a little piece of glasses—everything
 was eaten even the bones weren't left . . .

But what should I do I will leave sideways into the 16th century in quota-
 tion marks here.

(He leaves, half-turning to the public.)

Everything is befouled even bones have been vomited

(He takes his boots off, leaves.)

TRAVELER:

—I will ride through all centuries, I was in the 35th where there is power with-
 out violence and rebels fight against the sun and even though there is no
 happiness there everybody looks happy and immortal . . . No wonder I am
 covered with dust and diametrical . . . Ghostly kingdom . . . I will ride
 through all centuries even though I have lost two baskets until I find the
 right place for myself.

(THE ILL-INTENTIONED ONE creeps up and listens.)

—In afeeba it is not enough for me in the underground dark . . . Shined
 . . . But I traveled all over *(to the audience)*: It smells like a rainy failure.

Sleepwalkers' eyes are overgrown with tea and blink on skyscrapers and
 on the spiral steps the marketwomen were accommodated . . . The camel-
 like factories already threaten us with fried fat and I didn't ride even
 through one side. Something is waiting at the station.

(He sings.)

—Not more not less
 How to slaughter threateners
 Grab, grab him
 Bullet* little pill
 Spinning top

Oh brave me I will finish my trip and leave no track behind . . . The New

THE ILL-INTENTIONED ONE:

—How is that, are you really going to fly?

*Command form of a verb that was formed from the noun.

TRAVELER:

—Why not? If my wheels won't find their nails?

(THE ILL INTENTIONED ONE shoots, the TRAVELER drives off, shouting:)

—Garison! Catch yon own
Seepeuh Zuh Zuh Zuh!—

(THE ILL INTENTIONED ONE lies down and lays the gun on top of himself.)

—Even I didn't shoot myself—because of shyness—
But I erected a monument to myself—that's not bad!
I'm the first to have a monument—wonderful!...
A black two-horse carriage is coming right at me.

(A machine gun of the future country appears on stage and stops at a telephone pole.)

—Oh sorrow! What a meaning this appearance has which
took its enemy by surprise... (He meditates.)
I without continuation and imitation.

(The SQUABBLER appears, walks about and sings:)

Lucost locust
lance drink
drink lance

Do not leave a gun for dinner at dinner time
Nor during the buckwheat porridge course

Won't you cut if off? Chase each other

(The ILL INTENTIONED ONE attacks [the SQUABBLER], shoots several times without a word.)

—Attack!

Ha-ha-ha! Enemies, did you get tired or don't you recognize us?

Enemies, attack from the cracks in the grating challenge me to a duel. I broke my throat myself, I will turn into powder, cottonwool, a hook and a loop... Do you think the hook is more dangerous than cottonwool? (He runs out and returns after a while.)

Headdress in the cabbage!...

And... behind the partition! Drag that blue-nosed corpse

(One of the enemies pulls his own hair—crawls on his knees.)

Coward, you are betraying and cheating yourself!

(The SQUABBLER laughs aside.)

Song of the Squabbler

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system has a vocal line with lyrics 'Luc-ost Lo-c-ust Lance drink drink lance' and a piano accompaniment. The second system has a vocal line with lyrics 'Luc-ost Lo-c-ust lance drink drink lance' and 'D-o N-ot leave a gun', with a 'Slowly' tempo marking. The third system has a vocal line with lyrics 'FOR din-ner at din-ner ti-me NOR during the buckwheat PORRIDGE COURSE' and a 'riten.' (ritardando) marking. The piano accompaniment features various rhythmic patterns and dynamics throughout.

SQUABBLER:

—Contemptible, how much grave dust and shavings are in you
shake out your fear and wash yourself otherwise...

(One enemy cries.)

ILL-INTENTIONED ONE:

Oh, the enemy's crown! You consider me a fork and you ridicule my thought
but I was waiting and didn't go at you with my sword.

I am the continuation of my tracks.

I was waiting... I had buried my sword carefully in the earth and I took
a new ball and threw it. (He moves like a soccer player.)

Into your herd . . . Now you are confused . . . Having fainted you can't distinguish between your smooth heads and the ball you are confused and you hug the bench and swords by themselves go into the earth out of fear the ball frightens them:

If you run unfaithful . . . you will knock your master's head off and he will run after it inside a flower sellery . . .

Second Scene

Green walls and floor.

(ENEMY SOLDIERS are passing by in Turkish costumes—one limping in every one hundred soldiers—with flags held low. Some of them are very fat. One of the soldiers comes forward and gives flowers to THE ILL-INTENTIONED ONE—he tramples on them.)

ILL-INTENTIONED ONE:

To come out to meet yourself with a skewbald horse with a gun under your arm . . . Eh!

I have been looking for you for a long time and finally a perspired mushroom—

(He starts fighting with himself. Appears SINGERS in sports clothes and STRONG MEN. One of the SPORTSMEN sings:)

The flower world doesn't exist anymore
 Sky cover yourself with rot
 (I am not talking to the enemies
 but to you friends)
 Every birth of autumn days
 And blemished fruit of summer
 Not about these, the newest bard
 Will sing

FIRST STRONG MAN:

—Go millions of streets—
 Or darkness will be truly Russian
 Crunching of cart runners
 And—should I say it?—Narrow heads
 Unexpectedly for them
 The sleepy-heads began to fight
 And raised so much dust
 It seemed Port-Author was being taken

CHORUS:

The triumphal car moves
 Two-horsed car of victories
 What a delight to fall
 Under its wheels

FIRST STRONG MAN:

—The mature victory
 Has been sealed with wax
 Nothing matters to us
 The sun lies slaughtered!
 Start the fight with guns
 Crush them with your fingernails
 Then I will say: Here you are
 Strong men boweeyeh!

CHORUS:

Let the red-rot horses
 Trample
 And hair will curl
 Into the smell of skin! . . .

SECOND STRONG MAN:

The salt crawls toward the herdsmen
 The horse fixed the bridge in the ear
 Who keeps you at your posts
 Run along the black ribs
 Through steam and smoke
 And little hooks of cranes
 People stood on the steps
 Tea-plant waves with switches

FIRST STRONG MAN:

—Do not cross the firing line
 The metal bird is flying
 The wood-goblin is flapping his beard
 Buried under a hoof
 The violets groan
 Under the firm heel
 And the stick becomes quiet
 In the sepulchral puddle

FIRST and SECOND STRONG MAN:

(sing:)

The sun hid
 Darkness fell
 We will all take knives
 And wait locked up

(curtain)

Third Scene*Black walls and floor.*

(GRAVEDIGGERS walk in. Their upper half is white and red. Their lower half is black.)

(They sing:)

To smash a turtle skull
 To fall on a cradle
 Of blood-thirsty turnips
 Welcome the cage
 The fat bed-bug smells like a grave. . .
 Black leg . . .
 A flattened coffin swings
 A lace of shavings curls.

Fourth Scene

SOMEONE TALKING ON THE TELEPHONE:

—What? The sun is imprisoned!
 Thank you.—

(People walk in carrying the sun—they are so crowded together that one can't see it:)

ONE:

—We came from Tenth Countries
 Frightful! . . .

Know that the earth doesn't turn around.

MANY:

—We pulled the sun out by its fresh roots
 These fat ones became permeated with arithmetics
 Here it is look

ONE:

—We ought to establish a holiday: A day for the victory over the sun.
 (They sing:)

CHORUS:

—We are free
 Broken sun. . .
 Long live darkness!
 And black gods
 And their favorite—pig!

ONE:

The sun of the iron century has died! The broken guns have fallen and wheels rims bend like wax under gazes!

SOMEONE TALKING ON THE TELEPHONE:

What? . . . Someone hoping for gun fire will be cooked in the porridge today!
 Listen!

ONE:

—For more compact stairs
 Forged not in fire
 Nor from iron nor marble
 Nor air slabs

In fumes and smoke
 And fat dust
 The blows strengthen
 We become as strong as pigs
 Our faces are dark
 Our light comes from inside
 We are warmed by the dead udder
 Of the red dawn

BRRUN BRRUN

(curtain)

ACT II

Fifth Scene

TENTH COUNTRY

Exterior walls of houses appear but the windows go toward the inside in a strange way as if they are pipes drilled through the walls. Many windows, placed in irregular rows and they seem to be moving in a suspicious way.

("MOTLEY EYE" appears:)

The past is leaving
As quick steam
And slides the bolt shut

And the skull in the form of a bench skipped through the doorway

(MOTLEY EYE runs away watching the skull.)

(The NEW ONES appear from one side of the stage, the COWARDS from the other side.)

THE NEW ONES:

We shot into the past

THE COWARDS:

was something left?

THE NEW ONES:

—not a sign

THE COWARDS:

—is emptiness deep?

THE NEW ONES:

—it ventilates the whole town. Everyone breathes lightly and many don't know what to do with themselves because of that extraordinary lightness. Some tried to drown, the weak ones went mad, saying: we might become terrible and strong you see.

That oppressed them.

THE COWARDS:

One shouldn't show them blazed trails, keep control of the crowd.

THE NEW ONES:

One brought his grief, take it I don't need it anymore! he also imagined that his insides were lighter than an udder
let him spin

(He shouts.)

ELOCUTIONIST:

how extraordinary life is without a past
With danger but without regrets and memories . . .
Forgotten are mistakes and failures boringly squeaking into one's ear you now become like a clear mirror or a rich reservoir where in a clear cave light-hearted goldfish wiggle their tails like grateful Turks

(The FAT MAN enters. He becomes anxious—he has been sleeping.)

FAT MAN:

My head is two steps behind my body—necessarily!
It continually lags behind!

Ah annoyance!

Where is the sunset? I will be off . . . the lights are on . . . everything is light in my house . . . quickly one must be off . . . (He picks something up) a piece of airplane or a samovar (He tries it with his teeth)

hydrogen sulphide!
It looks like a piece from hell I will take it and put it aside . . . (He hides.)

ELOCUTIONIST:

(in a hurry)

I want to relate everything—recall the past
full of the melancholy of mistakes . . .
breaking the bending knees . . . let's recall it and compare it with the present . . . what a joy:
liberated from the weight of the earth's gravitation we whimsically arrange our belongings as if a rich kingdom were moving

(The FAT MAN sings:)

being shy to shoot oneself
It's difficult on a journey
Frightening-gun and gallows
Control the roe . . .

ELOCUTIONIST:

(interrupting:)

or don't you feel how two balls live: one—a little sour and a little warm—is corked and the other one gushes out of the cave like an overturned volcano . . .

(Music.)

they are incompatible . . . (Music of strength)
only gnawed-at skulls run on just four legs---likely they are donkeys' skulls . . . (he walks away.)

Sixth Scene

FAT MAN:

10th countries . . . all the windows are built toward the inside, the house is fenced in try to live here if you can

What 10th countries! well I don't know I would have to live locked up one can't move one's head or hand something will become unscrewed or displaced and how that damned axe works clipping all of us we walk around bald and it's not hot it's only humot it's such a nasty climate that even cabbage and onions don't grow and a market---where is one? they say on the islands . . .

I wish to climb a ladder into that house's brain and to open there No. 35 door—oh they are miracles!

yes, everything here is not that simple though at first glance it seems to be a chest of drawers—and that's all! but then you roam and roam (He climbs up somewhere.)

no, not here all the routes become entangled and lead up toward the earth but there aren't any side paths . . . hello is there anybody of our side there . . . hand me string or voice shoot . . . shshshsh! guns made of birch—imagine!

OLD TIMER:

here, please this entrance will take you straight back . . . the other one doesn't exist or goes straight up to the earth

FAT MAN:

—but it's frightful

OLD TIMER:

—do as you wish . . .

FAT MAN:

I'd like to wind my watch

Look here dummy which way is your watch running? the hand?

ATTENTIVE WORKER:

both backwards at the same time before dinner and now only the tower, gears—you see?

(OLD TIMER leaves.)

FAT MAN:

oh, I am about to fall (He peeps inside the watch: the tower the sky the streets are upside down—as in a mirror.)
where should I pawn the watch?

WORKER:

do not dream they won't spare you! Why figure out yourself—speed you know is effective, if one puts the wagon filled up with old boxes on each of two molars and powder it with yellow sand and put all this in action then you will see yourself . . .

the simplest thing is that they will collide with some pipe in a chair but what if they don't? you see all the people there climbed so high that they don't care about how an engine feels how its hoofs and other parts feel it is natural!

the scythe's stove roams
when it will over-take an antelope
but the whole point is that
nobody is going to risk his headope

but however I am leaving everything as before (He leaves.)

(The FAT MAN from a window:)

yes, yes, very likely yesterday there was a telegraph pole here but today it is a snack bar, and tomorrow there will be bricks, I presume.
that happens here every day nobody knows where the bus stop is and where they will dine
hello you move your feet—(He leaves through an upper window.)

(Propeller noise behind the stage. A YOUNG MAN comes rushing in: frightened, he sings a pretty-bourgeois song:)

you	you	youk
you	you	youk
grr	grr	grr

eem
 eem
 drr drr ruhduh ruhduh
 oo oo oo
 kuhnúh kuhnúh likúh em
 ba ba ba ba

Petty Bourgeois Song

The musical score for 'Petty Bourgeois Song' is written in 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of three staves each. The first system includes vocal lines with lyrics: 'Zok Zo - Zok u u uk * grr grr grr eem eem'. The second system includes vocal lines with lyrics: 'Drr Drr Ruhduh Ruhduh oo oo oo Kuhnúh Kuhnúh Likúh Muh'. The bass line in the second system has a 'ritard' marking at the end.

*Sounds in first two bars are different from those in the text.

the homeland is perishing
 because of dragonflies
 lilies sketched by
 a locomotive

(The propeller noise can be heard.)
 I will not get caught in chains
 bird snare beauty
 absurd silk
 crude tricks

I am making my way quietly
 on the dark road
 on the narrow path
 a cow under my arm

black cows
 sign of mystery
 under a silk saddle
 a hidden treasure

I secretly
 admire it
 in the silence a thin needle
 hides in a neck

(SPORTSMEN march in time to the lines of the buildings:)

here . . . everything runs without resistance

here all roads come from all directions
 locomotiving hundreds of little hoofs
 overtaking and deceiving awkward people

by simply suffocating them
 beware of motley eyed
 monsters . . .

the future countries will exist
 if someone is worried by wires he must turn back

(They sing:)

from the height of skyscrapers
 how freely
 carriages pour
 even case-shots don't strike as strongly

from everywhere self-propels come icing
 death graves glasses and posters
 footsteps are hanged
 on sign-boards
 people run down
 like tumbling derby hats

(Music—machine rumble)

and crooked curtains
 overturn window panes
 grr zhmah
 kmah
 one seerg vrezoo
 gweh . . .

(An incredible noise—a plane crashes—a broken wing can be seen on the stage.)

(Shouting:)

z . . . z . . . knock knock a woman was crushed a bridge overturned *(After the crash some of the people run toward the airplane and some, looking at it, say:)*

FIRST ONE:

it looks like a big rear end
an about-to-somersaulter began to scratch himself

SECOND ONE:

lilac kooroza storrr dvan entol tee te

THIRD ONE:

amda snout too tee grasped sucked

(The AVIATOR laughs behind the set, comes on stage still laughing:)

Ha-ha-ha I am alive

(Everyone else laughs.)

I am alive only the wings are a little shabby and my shoe!

(He sings an army song:)

luh luh luh
kruuh krruh
tle
tloomtuh
krruh duh tuh rruh
krruh vwubra
doo doo
ra luh
kuh buh ee
zhuh
zeeda
deeba

(The STRONG MEN appear:)

everything is good that
has a good beginning

and doesn't have an end

the world will die but for us there is no
end!

(curtain)

Translated by EWA BARTOS and Victoria Nes Kirby