

## From Slavery to Freedom

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**Abstract:** Transformative learning refers to the transformation of a problematic field of reference, so as to provide more justified interpretations. One way of problem solution is through critical thinking. Creative writing on the other hand, either according to the narrower definition of the Detailed Program in force, which speaks about familiarization with literary techniques or according to the wider acceptance of M. Soulioti's point of view, that writing is always creative, requires the awakening or the students creative skills, which may be expanded even more, through art. This particular teaching scenario, attempts to combine the principles of transformative learning on the one side with the principles of creative writing on the other, in order to correlate the concepts of slavery and freedom in a critical and creative way. The students become critical observers, creative and co-authors.

**Key words:** transformative learning, critical thinking, creative writing, slavery, freedom

*And may the slaves who will offer their help, win their freedom*  
*Plato, Laws 88 1b-e*

### 1. Introduction

The present assignment attempts to combine the principles of transformative learning with the principles of creative writing. Transformative learning is focused on the way we learn to negotiate and act according to our own goals and principles, instead of what we have uncritically assimilated from others. The stages of transformative learning are the following:

- \* Acknowledgement of a dysfunctional or incorrect Framework of Reference,
- \* Critical Evaluation of assertions,
- \* Self-examination of emotions,
- \* Individuals recognize the source of their dissatisfaction and share the transformative process with the others
- \* Exploring options for new roles, relationships and actions and for an Action Program Plan,
- \* Acquisition of knowledge and skills for the implementation of the plan,
- \* Trial of new roles,
- \* Building capacity and self-confidence for the new roles and relationships,
- \* Reintegration into life according to the new framework that has been shaped.

**Assertions reflect nothing more than our perceptions for the world.** Some assertions may however be

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incorrect or dysfunctional. Furthermore, a creative mind, which is not based on uncritical assertions, is a prerequisite for creative writing.

The school where this specific educational scenario was implemented has a few students (both males and females) and there groups of students in every class are small. The students came from, a small village in Greece, a closed society since they live far from urban areas. They usually live an environment that is relatively deprived of educational stimuli. A significant rate of mothers are either underemployed or they are housewives, while fathers, are in their majority active in the field of agriculture and husbandry. The rate of parents, who hold diplomas from Technical Institutes and Universities is particular low. The rate of students who have access to a computer at home and internet connection is also low. A very small rate of students is involved in organised extracurricular activities. It should be mentioned, that no lessons, such as visual arts and music are not taught in this school unit. The relationship with art and culture was therefore pleasant if not mandatory. Critical observation of work of arts aims at reframing concepts such as “Slavery” and “Freedom” and (co)-authorship of texts.

## 2. First Stage

### 2.1 Determination of the Need to Investigate This Topic

The curriculum of Second Grade in High School in Ancient Greek includes Section 11, with bears the title: “Respect towards parents is a legal concern”.

Ὅς ἂν τολμήσῃ πατέρα ἢ μητέρα	Whoever dares to
ἢ τούτων πατέρας ἢ μητέρας τύπτειν,	Lay a hand on their father or mother or their fathers or their mothers
πρῶτον μὲν ὁ προστυγχάνων βοηθεῖτω,	May they be helped by the first man who runs across them (the victim)
καὶ ὁ μὲν μέτοικος ἢ ξένος εἰς προεδρίαν τῶν ἀγῶνων καλεῖσθω βοηθῶν,	And in the event that a metic or a foreigner offer their help, let them be provided a honorary position in the games
μὴ βοηθήσας δὲ ἀειφυγίαν ἐκ τῆς χώρας φευγέτω·	If however they do not offer any help, they should be expelled from the country for the rest of their lives.
ὁ δὲ μὴ μέτοικος βοηθῶν μὲν ἔπαινον ἐχέτω,	If a metic offers help, then let he or she be honored
μὴ βοηθῶν δὲ, ψόγον·	If not, let he or she be blamed·
δοῦλος δὲ βοηθήσας μὲν ἐλεύθερος γιγνέσθω,	And may the slaves who will offer their help, win their freedom
μὴ βοηθήσας δὲ πηλὴ γὰς ἐκατὸν τῆ μαστίγι τυπτέσθω.	But if not, may they be beaten a hundred blows with a whip.
Ἐὰν δὲ τις ὄφλη δίκην αἰκίας γονέων,	If someone is convicted of an assault against their parents
πρῶτον μὲν φευγέτω ἀειφυγίαν ἐξ ἅστεως	May they be forever expelled from their country
εἰς τὴν ἄλλην χώραν καὶ πᾶν τῶν ἱερῶν εἰργέσθω,	to another country and be excluded from any sacred ceremony,
κατελθῶν δὲ θανάτῳ ζημιούσθω.	And if they return from exile, may they be sentenced to death
Ἐὰν δὲ τις ἐλεύθερος τῷ τοιοῦτῳ συμφάγη	And if they dine with a free man
ἢ συμπίη ἢ τίνα τοιαύτην ἄλλην κοινωνίαν κοινωνήσῃ	Or drink with him or is otherwise related to him
ἢ καὶ μόνον ἐν τυγχάνων που προσάπτῃται ἐκῶν,	Or coming across him they come in touch with him upon their will,
μήτε εἰς ἱερὸν ἔλθῃ μηδὲν μήτ' εἰς ἀγορὰν	Then he should not be allowed in the alter or the agora
μήτ' εἰς πόλιν ὅλως πρότερον ἢ καθήρηται.	Or in the city, unless they have been purified first

Plato, Laws 88 1b-e (adaptation), translation from ancient Greek language: *Giannis Papathanasiou*

The students' perceptions regarding work have been linked to the state of the country, where the citizens live in. They have also been linked to the knowledge emphasized in the detailed curriculum and not to the attitudes or the skills. The topic "slavery" and its relationship to "freedom" was considered an issue of critical research.

### **3. Second Stage**

#### **3.1 Report**

This report aims at answering an open question: "What is our opinion on slavery?" The students were separated in (3) groups, which differed as to the gender and the performance of the students. The initial responses were registered. Indicatevally we quote the answer of the first group: " Teenagers feel free when they are not suppressed by their parents. Moreover a person is not a slave, when they have an opinion on the public issues as well as for what they want to do."

### **4. Third Stage**

#### **4.1 Sub-Subjects and Critical Questions**

It is obvious from the answers that no attempt has been made to connect the concept of slavery to the individual choices, but only to the state of liberty on a state or national level or to the dependence from the others and not to our self-determination. Another case of potential redefinition relates to the contemporary aspects of this phenomenon, if any, although slavery has typically been officially abolished according to the law. A third issue that no group mentioned is the issue of exploitation of man by man for profit, what constitutes the major cause of slavery. Moreover no mention has been made to the gender, the age or the race, as factors of different forms of slavery.

The said sub-subjects and critical questions have been formulated as following:

Sub-subjects

- 1) Slavery: Prerequisites/Relation to Freedom/Aspects
- 2) Slavery: Causes

(Focus on individual level and the two sub-subjects)

Questions

- 1) When/ under which conditions do I feel free?
- 2) Why is there exploitation of man by man in slavery.

### **5. Fourth Stage**

#### **5.1 Work of Art Selection—Correlation Between Works of Art and the Critical Questions**

In order to explore the critical questions we selected a few works of art. The criteria for their selection were the following:

a) their relation to the subject, b) their artistic value, c) the representation of many and different works of art [literature (prose and poetry)/sculpture/painting/cinema], d) the degree to which the works of art are representative, so that it is not too difficult to be approached, since it was one of the first or one of the few times that the groups came in touch with artistic creations (the cinematographic work could be characterized as comprehensible but the

scene which was selected relates the concept of truth to the one of freedom),e) the works that have been selected were mainly works of contemporary Greek artists, since art has a reason of a existence in societyf)the possibility of multiple works of art.

The works of art which were selected are:

1) Tou Nekrou Aderfou (Folk Greek Poetry)(q.v. Annex)

Mother with your nine sonsand with your one and only daughter,  
Your only daughter, your beloved one,  
Who was only twelve years old and the sun did not see her!  
In the dark you wash her hair, and in the dark you comb them,  
Underneath the stars and themorning starshe braids her hair.  
Matchmakers came from Babylon,  
To take Areti far away in a foreign land...



Vaso Katraki, engraving

2) Vanka, by Anton Chekhov (q.v. Annex)

Vanka Zhukov, is a nine year old child, who had been apprenticed to Alyakhin the shoemaker three months ago. On Christmas Eve he did not go to bed. He waited until his master and the senior apprentices had gone to church. And when he was left all alone in the store, he took the bottle of ink and a pen with rusty nib from his master's cupboard, opened the crumpled sheet of paper on the old table with the tools and prepared to write. Before writing down the first letter, he turned his head many times to the door and the window, throwing furtive, scary glances, and squinting at the dark icon, which was stuck between the shelves with the lasts and sighted, in an attempt to be released from the lump in his throat, which was choking him. Then he nealed in from of the workbench and started writing: *Dear Grandpa, [...] I am writing you about my torments, grandpa. Yesterday the boss grabbed me from the hair, dragged me out to the yard and beat me to death because while I was rocking the baby I fell asleep. Last week the Mistress asked me to clean a herring and I started from the tail. Then she grabbed the herring and rubbed it on my face. And the other apprentices of the store, they all torture me. [...] I am*

*begging you, all my life I'll be praying to God to protect you, please take me away from here, because I will die...*



**The Shadow of Child Labour, Photo/Personal File**

3) Taurus , Natalia Mela



4) The Elementary , Christos Bokoros



5) Driving Miss Daisy, Bruce Beresford

The film, “Driving Miss Daisy”, is a 1989 dramatic comedy, by Bruce Beresford. The film which was awarded four Oscars, among which the Oscar for the Best Movie is based on the homonymous theatrical play of Alfred Uhry, who was awarded a Pulitzer Prize. In Atlanta of 1948, an old rich Jewish lady Miss Daisy (Jessica Tandy), hires a chauffeur the “African-American” Hoke Colburn. In the lapse of time they develop a deep relation based on communication/understanding and friendship between them.



Correlation Table

Works of Art	Critical Question A Conditions of Freedom	Critical Question B Causes of Slavery
Tou Nekrou Aderfou	V	
Vanka	V	V
Taurus	V	
The Elementary	V	V
Driving Miss Daisy	V	V

## 6. Fifth Stage

### 6.1 Part A

The literary work *Tou Nekrou Aderfou* as well as the literary work *Vanka* were analyzed as to the point of view and the expression of storytelling, the narrative space, the narrative time, the structure, the vocabulary as well as the style and the symbols. Emphasis was given, however, to the conceptional rendition of the texts, and their relation to the concepts of slavery and freedom. Emphasis was also given, to the causes: “Why do or why don’t the main actors or actresses feel free?” “What is the role of the gender, age, migration to foreign lands, lack of education, lack of financial independence?”

The work of art, titled *The Taurus, Natalia Mela* was analyzed according to the four stages of Perkins technique. This technique lies on the systematic observation of a work of art according to the questions - triggers. In the first stage: Giving time for observation, the indicative answers given were: “It is angry”, “It is ready to attack”, “An interesting feature is readiness”, “Interesting details are the ear, and the horn”, “One can mainly distinguish the muscles”, “Any new features? I think it looks as if it is posing”, “Does it defend itself or attack. In the second phase: wide observation, indicative answers that were given are: “The Symbol, the forcefulness”, “It reminds me of ancient rituals and taurokathapsia”. In the third phase: Detailed and in-depth observation, interesting answers given are: “What would have happened if it were green? Would it symbolize nature?”. In the fourth phase: What does it want to tell us, indicative observations and thoughts given: “We should love animals, “Be close to my nature”.

The technique of Visible Thinking which, basically relies on a question of interpretation: “What do you see” and a question of documentation: “What makes you say that?” and takes less time, was applied in order to analyze the second work of art, *The Elementary, Christos Bokoros*. In the meanwhile students familiarized with the observation techniques on a sculpture. Some of the eliciting answers that were given to the questions are: “We

must pay attention to the veins on his hands”, “He is a man that has worked very hard”, “I am thinking that he is desperate and alone”.

The Film *Driving Miss Daisy* was not released in full length, but for the scenes, in which the main actor — the chauffeur tells the truth regarding the lack of a can from the kitchen. Dignity and truth as features of a free character were analyzed more. We focused on how the heroes were presented, on the subjectivity or not of the narration as well as on the appearance, the costumes of the heroes. We also discussed the sound and up to a certain point the lighting.

## 6.2 Part B

All the ideas that came out from the 5<sup>th</sup> stage are related to the critical questions. Indicative answers for the critical question 1: “When I can be in my country” (Tou nekrou aderfou). “When my loved ones are near me” (Vanka). “I feel free when my soul is free” (Taurus). “When I am strong enough to face difficulties without falling” (The Elementary). “When I accept the truth without feeling shamed” (Driving Miss Daisy). Indicative answers for critical question 2: “He/She exploited Vanka in order to do the jobs and win money” (Vanka).

## 7. Sixth Stage

At last creative writing:

After the action, the group wrote down their point of view, for the two critical questions. Indicative reference to the answers of the first group: “*Freedom is something that everyone needs and is entitled to. When I am not literary and mentally imprisoned, then I am truly free. In order to be free I must not be subjected to exploitation and my rights must be respected. When I can do whatever I want without thinking about the opinion of others, then I am more free. When I am in my country with my own people it is much easier. It is important to be strong enough to face the difficulties without falling. On the other side, I must have the basics in order to survive. The law is not enough*”.

## 8. Implications

Implications of creative writing:

I write a calendar page from Areti’s calendar. / Areti writes a letter to her mother. / Konstantin’s horse replies to the birds. I note the verses. / I can only image, where Vanka’s letter eventually ended up/ I choose to give the sculpture another name “The Taurus”. / I draw up an imaginary interview of the sculptor. / “The Taurus” comes to life. I write the sequel of its course. The “Man of Bokoros” has a dream. Which dream? / I think about what is the most necessary thing for me, I write a poem about it, without naming it. / Miss Daisy calls a friend of her to tell her about stealing the can. I write the dialogue. / I write a commercial text for the promotion of the can. / I embrace a work of art, I write a caption underneath and bring it to classroom. / I read epigrams and write a humorous epigram, waving goodbye to the can in the film or another utilitarian objects. I complete the verse of Solomos “Hail oh Hail ...” with another noun.

From the graves of our slain  
Shall thy valour prevail  
As we greet thee again  
Hail, Liberty, Hail!

(Translation by Joseph Rudyard Kipling)

## 9. Evaluation

If what the painter and sculptor Edgar Degas (1834–1917) has said, that art is not what you see, but what you make the others see, then maybe that can be accomplished through the art of pedagogy and particularly through the enactment of the particular teaching scenario, throughout the duration of the said action. It seems that children “show” aspects of the phenomenon and developed their critical thinking in relation to the concepts of Slavery and Freedom to a satisfactory degree. They also created some texts. As to the aim of the action, the evaluation was therefore positive. Exquisite were also the participation of the children and their interpretations of the works of art. It was difficult for them to give all possible interpretations but they tried to approach the works of art in an experiential way. For example, even when they learned about the title of Ch. Bokoros painting “The Elementary” the students did not think about slavery which arises from the constantly increasing attempt to cover fake needs, and money as a form of slavery. Not only knowledge but also attitudes such as respect as to the self-determination of the individuals, aversion to exploitation of man by man and positive approach to the works of art were influenced. As far as it concerns the skills, cooperation skills were increased, as it is the case in many teamwork activities as well as skills, such as the ones regarding observation and imagination. As far as it concerns the role of the teacher, it has been stirring and cooperative, despite the innermost anxiety for the way the action would be handled. To the disadvantages we must, however, include, time management, which finally exceeded the two teaching hours and reached the four hours.

### In place of an Epilogue

We followed a course and ...

“...and the end of this research will be to reach where we started from and get to know the place for the first time”. T. S. Eliot.

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ANNEX

Tou Nekrou aderfou (folk poetry)

Mother with your nine sons and with your one and only daughter,  
Your only daughter, your beloved one,  
Who was only twelve years old and the sun did not see her!  
In the dark you wash her hair, and in the dark you comb them,  
5 Underneath the stars and the morning stars she braids her hair.  
Matchmakers came from Babylon,  
To take Areti far away in a foreign land.  
Eight of her brothers say no but Konstantin says yes.  
“Mother, let Areti go far away,  
10 To the foreign land I walk towards, to the foreign land I head to,  
When us too will go abroad, not take us for foreigners.  
- A reasonable man, you are Konstantin, but the words you spoke were not right.  
And if, my son, death falls upon and if, my son diseases  
And if sorrow or happiness occurs, who shall bring her back?  
15 - Let the sky be a judge and the saints be witnesses,  
If the death comes of disease  
If sorrow or happiness occurs, I will go bring her back.  
20 But upon Aretis marriage in the foreign land,  
Miserable years followed and months full of rage  
that brought death, and the nine brothers died,  
Then the mother was left all alone like stubble in the plain.  
Over their graves she mourns, and she sings dirges,  
25 Over the grave of Konstantin she pulls and hair.  
“God damn you, Konstantin, a hundred times God damn you,  
That you sent my Areti abroad!  
The promise that you gave me, when are you going to keep it?  
You set the sky as a judge and the saints as witnesses,  
30 If sorrow or happiness occurred, you’d be the one to bring her back.  
And from the mother’s heavy curse,  
The earth shook and Konstantin came out.  
He turns the cloud into a horse and the star into a bridle  
And with the moon accompanying him he goes to bring her back.

He crosses the mountains and leaves them behind.  
He finds her combing her hair out in the moonlight.  
35 From far away he waves at her and coming closer he tells her:  
“My sister, let’s go home, let’s go to our mother”.  
- Alas!, my brother, and what time is this?  
If the news you bring are happy, let me groom myself, and come  
But if the news are bad, tell me, so that I wear black and come.  
40 - Come, Areti, to our house, and don’t mind the outfit.  
- The horse bends down and the young woman seats on its back.

As they were riding along they heard the birds singing,  
45 They were singing neither as birds, nor as swallows,  
But they were singing and in a human speech they said:

50 “Whoever show a beautiful daughter being carried by a dead man!  
- Did you hear, my Konstantin, what the birds are saying?  
- They are only birds, let them sing they are only birds, let them speak”.  
But as they were riding further on they hear more birds singing:  
“Isn’t it shame and unfair, remarkably strange,  
To see the living men walk along with the deceased ones!  
- Did you hear my Konstantin, what the birds are saying  
That living men are walking with the dead ones.  
55 - It is April and they sing. It is May let them nest.  
- I am afraid my brother and you smell after incense too.  
- Last night we drove up to Saint George,  
The priest burned more incense than he should”.  
But on their way as they move on, they hear more birds saying:  
60 “Did you see miracles happening in the world,  
Such a slender beauty be carried by a dead man!”  
Areti heard it again and her heart broke.  
“Did you hear my Konstantin what the birds are saying?  
- Oh my Areti, never mind the birds.  
65 - Tell me, where did your beauty go, and where is your masculinity,  
And the blond hair of yours and the beautiful mustache?  
- It’s been a long time I am sick and I lost all my hair”.

They finally arrive at church.  
He whipped his horse heavily and disappeared from the face of the earth.  
And she hears the plate rasp, and the soil moan.  
70 And sets off to go home all alone.  
And sees the gardens naked, and the trees withered  
And she sees the balsam dry, and the cloveblack,  
And at the doorstep she sees grasses sprouted.  
And she finds the door locked and the keys taken,  
75 And the house’s windows shuttered.  
She knocks on the door, and the windows shutter.  
“If you are a friend come inside, and if you are an enemy go away  
And if you are bitter Death I do not have more children,  
And my poor daughter Aretoula, has gone away, to foreign lands.  
80 - Stand up my mother, open then door, stand up, my sweet mother.  
- Who is knocking on my door and who is calling me mother?  
- Open, my mother, open the door, it’s me, your Areti”.  
She came down, they embraced and died in each other’s arms.

### Vanka

Vanka Zhukov, is a nine year old child, who had been apprenticed to Alyakhin the shoemaker three months ago. On Christmas Eve he did not go to bed. He waited until his master and the senior apprentices had gone to church. And when he was left all alone in the store, he took the bottle of ink and a pen with rusty nib from his master's cupboard, opened the crumpled sheet of paper on the old table with the tools and prepared to write. Before writing down the first letter, he turned his head many times to the door and the window, throwing furtive, scary glances, and squinting at the dark icon, which was stuck between the shelves with the lasts and sighted, in an attempt to be released from the lump in his throat, which was choking him. Then he leaned in from of the workbench and started writing:

*Dear Grandpa Konstantin Makarich.*

*I am writing you a letter. I wish you Merry Christmas and hope God will send you his blessings. I have no father or mother and you are the only one left for me.*

Vanka raised his eyes to the dark window and on the dark frame, where the candle light trembled he imagined the figure of his grandfather Konstantin Makarich, watchman on the estate of Mr and Mrs Zhivarev. He was a short and lanky old man, but very fast and agile, approximately sixty five years old. His face was always smiling and his eyes were shining. In the day he was sleeping in the kitchen or chutting with the cooks and in the night wrapped in a sheepskin coat, he was walking around in the estate, sounding his rattle. He was followed by his dogs, the old Kashtanka and Eel, that was his name, on account of his dark hair and long body. Eel was a very obedient and playful dog, ogling at the whole world, strangers and friends but couldn't be trusted. The childish glances and the humbleness were a cloak for the most Jesuitical spite and malice! It was an adept in secretly creeping and biting the passenger's foot, in sneaking at the cellar and snatching a peasant's chicken from the throat. Its hind-legs had been slashed again and again. Twice it had been strung up from the tree, and every week it was beaten and thrown lifeless in the ditch. But it always survived! It seemed to have nine lives! Grandpa would probably be standing in front of the gate right now, screwing up his eyes and gazing at the deep red windows of the village's church, pounding his shoes on the doorstep to warm up and chatting with the servants. The rattle is fastened to his belt. He rubs his hands, curls up from the cold and with his old man's titter he teases the maid and sometimes the cook.

— Will you take a hit? he tells the women holding out his snuffbox.

The women smoke tobacco and sneeze and grandpa is delighted and breaks out into jolly laughter. The dogs take a draft. Kashtanka sneezes, pouts and sneaks into a corner whining. Eel, respectful as always, does not sneeze, only shakes its tale... And the weather is wonderful. Everything is quiet, clear and cool. The night is dark, but one can still recognize the whole village with its white roofs and the smoke that goes up the chimneys, the trees silver with frost, and the piles of snow. The sky is sprinkled with gaily twinkling stars and the galaxy shines, as if it has been scrubbed and polished with snow for holidays ...

Vanka sighed, dipped his pen in the ink and continued writing his letter:

*I am writing you about my torments, grandpa. Yesterday the boss grabbed me from the hair, dragged me out to the yard and beat me to death because while I was rocking the baby I fell asleep. Last week the Mistress asked me to clean a herring and I started from the tail. Then she grabbed the herring and rubbed it on my face. And the other apprentices of the store, they all torture me. They send me to the tavern to buy vodka and force me to steal the masters cucumbers and he hits me with the first thing he holds in his hands. As for the food, it sucks! In the morning they feed me with bread, in the noon with gruel, and in the night with bread again. No tea, or cabbage soup, they guzzle it all themselves.*

*They make me sleep in front of the door and when the baby cries, I don't get any sleep, because I have to rock the swing. My dear grandpa, for God's sake, please do me a favor: take me away from here, take me home, to the village, I can't take it any more... I am begging you, all my life I'll be praying to God to protect you, please take me away from here, because I will die...*

Vanka twitched his lips, wiped his eyes with his smeared fist from the ink and gave a sob.

*I will rub your snuff, I will be praying to God for you and if I don't listen to you, you can beat me as much as you like. And if you have no job for me to do, to polish the masters boots or help the shepherd in Fyedka. My dear Grandpa, I can't hold on any more. I will die, be aware! I would come to the village on foot, but I don't have shoes and I'm afraid of cold. When I grow up, I will be feeding you and I won't let anyone harm you. And when you'll die, I will pray to God to rest your soul, as I do for my mother, Pelagia.*

*So Grandpa, Moscow is a big town. Full of rich houses and horses, so many horses! But I didn't see any sheep and the dogs don't bite.*

*The children here don't go from house to house to sing the carols, nor do they chant in the church and you know, one day I have seen a store, that was selling hooks with bait on them, and you can catch any fish you want. They are very expensive and I show a hook that can catch a sheatfish weighing 30 pounds. I have also seen shops which sell guns. All sorts of them like the one the master owns. These must cost at least a hundred rubles each. And the butchers' shops sell grouse and hoopoes and rabbits, but where do*

*they kill them? And the storekeepers don't say anything.*

*My dear Grandpa, when we will be decorating the Christmas tree at the master's house with the sweets, ask for me a golden walnut and hide it in the green chest. Ask Miss Olga Ignatjevna and tell her: "it is for Vanka".*

He took a deep breath and raised his eyes again at the window. He remembered Grandpa going to the woods to cut a fir for the master and taking his grandson with him. What a happy days those had been! Grandpa was whistling, and you could hear the frost squeak and Vanka was hearing everything and was whistling too. Many times before he cut the fir, Grandpa smoked his pipe or sniffed and made fun of his grandson who was freezing. The small firs covered in snow, frosted, were standing still and waiting: Which one's turn was to be cut? Suddenly, a rabbit leaps over the snow drifts. Grandpa can't help it, and starts shouting:

— Get it, Get it! Oh, you stub-tailed devil!

Grandpa would drag the cut fir to the master's house where the decoration was about to take place. Miss Olga Ignatjevna, Vanka's favorite was the busiest of all. While Pelagia, Vanka's mother was still alive, the Mistresses maid and Mrs Olga were stuffing Vanka with sweets and amused herself by teaching him to read, write and count to hundred. And not just that! She taught him how to dance the quadrille. But when Pelagia died, they sent the orphan to his Grandfather in the kitchen and from there to Moscow, to Alyakhin the shoemaker.

*Hurry up, my dear Grandpa, for God's sake. Please, take me away from here! Have mercy on the poor orphan, because everyone beats me and I am very hungry. I am so miserable that I don't know what to say. I cry all the time Grandpa. And one day the master hit me on the head with the last, so hard that I fell down and thought I'd never get up again. That's no life, it's worse than the dog's... Give my best to Alyona, one-eyed Yegor and the coachman. And don't give my concertina to anyone. Your grandson, Ivan Zhukov, my dear Grandpa, please come.*

Vanka folded the letter in four and put it into the envelop he had bought the previous day for a kopek. Then he thought for a while, dipped his pen into the ink-pot and wrote the address:

For Grandpa. At the village.

He scratched his head again, gave it another thought and added to the envelop:

To Konstantin Makarich.

Pleased that no one disturbed him, he put on his cap and without putting on his fur coat, run into the street with just a shirt. The men at the butcher's who had been asked by him the previous day, had told him that they were throwing the letters in a box and from there they were taken to the whole world with mail coaches with jingling bells and drunk drivers. Vanka run fast to the nearest mail box and dropped his precious message into the slit. An hour later, he was fast asleep with his fists tight lulled by his sweet hopes. He was dreaming of the stove in the village. Grandpa is sitting on the stove-ledge and his feet are dangling. He is reading a letter to the maids... and Eel is walking up and down the stove wagging his tail...