

Zhdanovka

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No books have ever been written about my town.

Zhdanovka. Search!

Search!—a crucial word when you are looking for something.

Zhdanovka in images!

Images found: 16 . . .

“Excuse me, fellows, which way to the sea over here?”

“There is no sea here.”

“This is the city of Zhdanov?”

“No, this is Zhdanovka.”

“Damn it!”

That passer-by was on his way to the seashore, to the city of Zhdanov, and ended up in Zhdanovka instead. He mixed up the signs on the buses. There was no sea; there was not even a river in Zhdanovka.

“Is it raining over there?”

“Uh-hu.”

“You see, and in this goddamn Zhdanovka there’s no rain. Potatoes are wilting.”

“And they told me that Zhdanovka was the name of a river.”

Zhdanovka. Search!

Zhdanovka is the name of a branch of the Lesser Neva River that separates the Petrovsky Island from the Petrogradsky. In the past the banks of this river were low and swampy, and the area around them was known by the characteristic name of Mokrusha (from the Russian mokryi, ‘wet’). It was also sometimes called the Nikolskaya (St. Nicholas) River, because of the name of a side-chapel at the Assumption Church, the Petrovskaya River, from the Petrovsky Island, and most often simply the swampy channel . . .

The Zhdanovka River flowed through the territory of the Zhdanov district, so named in honour of the First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the CPSU Zhdanov . . .

Should we rename it perhaps?—Zhdanov’s arms, as everyone knows, were up to their elbows in blood . . .

The river was named not after the party functionary but after a merchant by the name of Zhdanov who long before there was a Communist Party built his storage barns on its banks . . .

In the past week the rivers and canals in the central part of the city (the Lebyazhya Canal, the Kronverk Passage, the Zhdanovka) have become much cleaner and deeper.

Attention! This page contains a list of terms with similar headlines. If you have arrived here through a link, please go back and correct the link, so that it points directly to the required term.

Zhdanovka. Search!

Zhdanovka in St. Petersburg . . .

Zhdanovka, Orenburg region . . .

Zhdanovka, Saratov region . . .

Zhdanovka, Vinnytsia region . . .

Zhdanovka, Donetsk region . . .

Zhdanovka, Yurgamysh district . . .
Zhdanovka near Nizhny Novgorod . . .
Zhdanovka, Dnipropetrovsk region . . .
Zhdanovka near the Armenian border . . .
Zhdanovka, Bryansk region . . .
Zhdanovka, Kostanai region . . .
Zhdanovka, Pechenga district . . .
Zhdanovka, Simbirsk province . . .
Zhdanovka, Novo-Moskovsk district . . .
Zhdanovka, Vladimir region . . .
Zhdanovka, Mordovia . . .
Zhdanovka, Zemetchino district . . .
Zhdanovka, Vitebsk region . . .
Zhdanovka, Meleuz district . . .

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As for the name of the town Zhdanovka, there exists a version adduced by the late former principal, and later history teacher from the Zhdanovka Secondary School No. 16 (currently the General Education School No.1), Heorhiy Pavlovych Tatarenko, a passionate local history buff and patriot of his hometown: the town got its name from a chieftain of the Don Cossack Host named Zhdanov . . .

The town was named not after the party functionary Zhdanov but after a chieftain by the name of Zhdanov?

Zhdanovka. Search!

The town of Zhdanovka was founded as a result of the coal mining industry boom . . .

But calling Zhdanovka a town still would be stretching it. Dilapidated houses, potholed roads, malfunctioning utility services, dirt, alcohol abuse, foul language. A typical miners' settlement, built in a rush, temporarily as it were, just to extract the coal . . .

“You always seem to run into trouble. You dug them up to give them away? You want to be kind, don’t you? Did you dig them up just to give them away? They were meant for Tania. A person came especially for these strawberry plants, and they are gone.”

“Mommy, the schoolteacher refuses to return our book. I tell her, give it back, we are not reading it in our extracurricular reading class, we are doing maths.”

“Ah, so you are from Zhdanovka? Here when we meet some crazy person, we tell this person, are you from Zhdanovka or what?—there’s the regional mental institution where you guys live.”

There was also either a transfer detention facility or an assembly station for army conscripts, and this was where people waited for a chance to see their relatives, hence the name Zhdanovka (from the Russian ‘zhdat’—‘to wait’) . . .

This means that the name has nothing to do with party functionary Zhdanov?

The second claim to fame is that last century a certain husband drowned his much-hated wife Lukeria in the Zhdanovka River . . .

“You told me that in Zhdanovka a wife had killed her husband, not the other way around. The next day you were afraid to go to class.”

These are the versions of the origin of the name “Zhdanovka” presently available. Determining which one of them corresponds to reality, or whether none of them is correct, requires additional research . . .

We depart again at 11 a.m. We intend to reach the stations Zhdanovka or Troepolye on the Pavelets-Uzunovo rail line. They are about 16 km off. We take a break by a haystack. We fool around and climb inside it. The weather is perfect: sunny but not hot, a gentle breeze. We also play tags (going almost through the entire alphabet in the end). Then again, fields, shrubbery, ravines . . .

Lola sat at the stern, and I grabbed the oars; from the narrow Zhdanovka I quickly rowed out to the wide Lesser Neva. It was again a gray, warm, windless day. The boat easily floated downstream—by the stadium, by the Petrovsky Island and its tall trees. We slowed down next to a dark mass of ships that sailed in a cove next to a wharf. I went back and forth looking at the city and at Lola. She had a preoccupied, sad face, and I wanted to tell her something good and cheerful, but I did not know what exactly I should say. Soon we entered the mouth of the Zhdanovka; a tasty bittersweet aroma of malt wafted from the Red Bavaria Brewery. I again grabbed the oars, and while we were changing places, managed to give Lola a quick embrace.

“Don’t you dare do that,” she said, this time with a smile. “One shouldn’t embrace in a boat. Have you read Koni?”

Last century a certain husband drowned his much-hated wife Lukeria in the Zhdanovka River. This real-life tragedy entered history thanks to the memoirs of Anatoly Fedorovich Koni, a prosecutor and chairman of the District Court, famous for having managed, with clever speeches, to influence the jurors in such a way that they

acquitted the terrorist Zsulich who had fired at the governor-general in full view of the public. On the basis of Koni's memoirs I was not able to locate the exact spot of the incident: last century working-class tenement houses were erected practically all along the banks of the Zhdanovka, both downstream from Novoladozhskaya Street, and upstream, all the way to the building of the Second Cadet Corps, which later housed the Mozhaisky Academy. Walking on for some three hundred meters and observing these redbrick tenements, we reach the point where the Zhdanovka curves slightly . . .

"In Zhdanovka a wife had killed her husband, not the other way around. The next day I was afraid to go to class. The murder happened directly across from the school."

. . . flowing down the valley to the north of the Sok Mountains and bypassing them from the east, it turned south in that river valley area where one now finds the settlements Starosemeikino (on the Sok River), Smyshliaevka, and Zhdanovka (on the Padovka and the Samara rivers) . . .

Over the course of the elapsed period numerous cadre changes took place within the leadership of the local branches of power, industries, and organizations. The analysis of information provided demonstrates that in the majority of cases the concrete measures aimed at the realization of the programme were neither developed nor approved at the local level. Certain executive councils (Debaltsevo, Novogrodovka, Zhdanovka) approached the programme in a purely formal way, noting that there were no rivers or bodies of water on their territory . . .

And then Sanya decided to solve the problem with the means at hand. "Last night," he tells me, "I filled the bathtub with cold water. And today I got up, went there—splash!—and lay down . . ."

You will say that one could go bathe in the Zhdanovka River . . . Yes, that's true, but a strict ban on bathing in the river was imposed across the entire neighbourhood. I don't know how it was accomplished, but in the time I've been living there, and it is eleven years now, I have never seen a single bather . . .

Taking advantage of Sologub leaving for the pharmacist's to get some bromide, she ran away from home and jumped off the ramp of the Tuchkov Bridge into the Zhdanovka. Precisely off the Tuchkov Bridge . . . The following day Otsup visited Sologub at 10th Street. "How's Anastasiya Nikolaevna's health?" he asked. "She's not here anymore," the other man answered . . .

The vacant lot where the several-thousand-strong crowd of gawkers had gathered was built up long ago . . .

And in the environs of the nearby Makeyevka an early Paleolithic silicone axe was found, dating back some three hundred to one hundred thousand years; therefore early human habitation in the area where Zhdanovka is now located is quite probable . . .

These were illustrations to *Solaris* by Stanislaw Lem and to *All Flesh Is Grass* by Clifford Simak. Hung at the school, in the hallway, without glass, just with

thumbtacks—they were scribbled on the same day—someone drew genitals for all of Simak’s and Lem’s characters.

Re: art galleries in Zhdanovka?

Date: Wed, 11 May 2005.

Hello. Zhdanovka is a very small town, of cultural institutions there’s only the palace of culture and leisure and the music school. At the palace there is a museum room dedicated to the town’s history. There is no art museum or picture gallery in this town.

I asked about art galleries, not picture galleries!

According to the archival collection *History of the Cities, Towns, and Villages of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic* (Kyiv, 1976), p. 729, the town of Zhdanovka was founded in 1924. No other information available.

Zhdanovka. Search!

Those drawings that got scribbled on—I don’t know what has happened to them since, only one of them remains: Kris sitting by the ocean . . . I think there wasn’t a scene like this in the book, there definitely wasn’t one in Tarkovsky’s film; nor was there one in the *Solaris* with George Clooney. Although I could have just invented it, that one could simply set off and go to that ocean.

Zhdanovka, a town. Pop. 14.8 thousand. Coal mining . . .

No cultural or historical monuments, no museums, no theatres, no hotels, no art galleries, no parks, no river.

From a school essay by Alexander S.: “Zhdanovka is a typical miners’ settlement where the miners constitute the majority of the population. The town is dirty. You can see it when you look at any of its streets. There is trash everywhere, cigarette butts, scraps of paper—everything that people discarded with. Apparently there aren’t enough garbage containers and transportation to take it all out. Or the people simply don’t get to it. Because of this situation many people feel really ashamed. I think this is why many passers-by have such a sullen expression on their faces. In the middle of all this dirt the town is adorned by the palace of culture, the stadium, and the monument to the fallen warriors.”

“Dediukhin fell over.”

“Which Dediukhin?”

“The monument to the fallen warriors, Alexander Dediukhin and the two unknown soldiers.”

“Esteemed residents of the town of Zhdanovka, to pay respects to the Memory of the fallen warriors of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, the town council of war veterans requests that you take part in the charitable collection of funds to restore the monument to the fallen warriors. You can donate money through the sign-up sheet daily from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., in the palace of culture, except Saturday and Sunday.”

They have started fixing up houses and roads, and clearing the trash off the streets. I don't know if they are serious or joking, but they say Zhdanovka now holds the first place in the number of public trash bins per capita. They have worked out a general plan of town development. It includes the construction of more housing, a sports and recreation facility, a film theatre, a convention centre, a hotel, and many other things. All this in a town that has neither a public bathhouse nor, excuse me, a public toilet.

“Is there now a hotel in town?”

“No.”

“And what about the monument to the fallen warriors?”

“Everyone says, we used to have one, now we have two, so that they don't get bored!”

“Meaning?”

“Well, there used to be one soldier, one figure of a soldier standing there. That monument fell down, and they have erected a different one: two soldiers, two soldier figures standing there. Now everyone says, there used to be one, now there's two, so that they don't get bored!”

Unfortunately, among the submissions for the contest My Native Land and Its Beauty there was not a single photo of our native Zhdanovka and its surrounding area. Apparently, failing to discover anything worthy of attention, the authors of the photographs sang praises of the beauty of other cities, towns, and regions of Ukraine. But this is not the case. As a lifelong resident of Zhdanovka who has not parted with his camera for years, I insist that we have things worthy of capturing on film. You just have to have an eye for these “things” . . .

“I am done with the door and the lock. Take a look please.”

“What is your full name and surname?”

“Why do you need this?”

“You know, I keep a journal where I note down the names of good people, so, I'd like to enter yours too.”

Kris Kelvin, the explorer of Solaris . . .

When I attended school, Solaris, in connection with the facts established later, was believed to be an inhabited planet, but with only one inhabitant . . .

It was the ocean that became the focus of the argument. On the basis of lab analyses it was recognized as organic matter (no one dared as yet to call it a life form). But whereas the biologists saw it as a rather primitive organism, something like a single monstrously expanded liquid cell (they called it a “pre-biological formation”) that surrounded the entire planet with a jelly-like coating several miles thick in some places, the astronomers and physicists claimed . . .

The legions of researchers into and theories about the “mystery of Solaris” continued to multiply . . .

Kris was the one researcher who simply wanted to sit down by the ocean . . .

“And why not? I’ll take a small helicopter. It would be simply ridiculous if back on Earth I would have to confess at some point that I, a solarist, never set foot on the surface of Solaris . . .”

Behind the public garden there stood a tight group of old, soot-covered houses, absurd, irregularly shaped, with blind walls facing most unexpected directions. The corner of this built-up area facing Zhdanovka and the garden was taken by firewood storage sheds, their roofs all covered with dovecots. Fans of pigeon chasing did it up to the mid-sixties. With the decrease of the numbers of these fans and their eventual disappearance the pigeons degenerated, and by the sixties the town was chock full of fat, insolent, sluggish pigeons of an unknown breed . . .

“I’m thirsty. Did you buy water?”

“No. She was picking through the ice cream. I waited and waited, and then I couldn’t any more: could you please sell me some water? And she, don’t you see, I am busy.”

“This is a dark place. A miner was on his way back from the night shift; here at the corner he fell into a sewer manhole, broke his arm. This is what you get when there’s no lighting in the streets.”

The manhole cover was probably taken by someone to a scrap metal recycling joint.

Metal recycling joint: “Black metal (anything that a magnet works on) costs 30 kopecks per kilo . . .”

Many people probably spoke up about the insufficient lighting of the streets. But my dear Zhdanovites, try recalling the years 1998–1999: the entire town was lit up. However, there appeared some “good people” who used electric wires for their own purposes, cutting them and apparently selling them to metal recycling offices. The newly laid cable lasted only a few days before it met with the same fate . . .

Electric wires cost more than black metal.

Metal recycling joint: “Black metal (anything that a magnet works on) costs 30 kopecks per kilo. Bronze, stainless steel, brass—4 hryvnias per kilo; aluminium—4.50; copper—8; titanium, nichrome—20 hryvnias.”

“Things like that never happened before.”

“They did happen.”

“English classes began with one of the girls in our class, the most adult-looking one, being sent by our English teacher to fetch a rag and some water. The lesson went on, and that girl dusted the windowsills and washed the floors. When she reached the desk of each one of us, we’d get up to let her sweep under our desks. Our school probably did not have enough janitors, and our English teacher was really into cleanliness.”

“Don’t get upset, please, I’m getting upset too.”

After a week you no longer notice that sewer manholes have no covers and are topped with slabs of concrete, sheets of plywood, or pieces of cardboard.

“Still, no one falls in.”

“And what about the aesthetic feeling?”

It is a fleeting, fragile state of the soul, but it is understandable to all. Or perhaps it is not a state of the soul but a state of the world that surrounds us?

(From the collection of standard school essays: What Is Beauty? Version 1)

Beauty is more than just symmetry, harmony, or proportionality. It is an invisible foundation of Being; it is a great force that will save the world.

(From the collection of standard school essays: What Is Beauty? Version 2)

And for now?

Plates on the table match—what a beauty—we have money for a dinner service!

“I re-hung the clothes in my closet according to colour.”

“That’s something different.”

“And I, when it rained, I thought of Sochi. After the rains there was no water in the streets, in spite of the city’s tropical downpour.”

“That’s something different.”

“And can one have a cup of coffee in Zhdanovka?”

“I think not. They’d concoct something disgusting out there. Let me make one for you at my place.”

“That’s something different.”

“This is what I wanted to ask. About that horrific story, about the murder on School St.”

“That murder which happened directly across from the school? The next day you were afraid to go to class.”

“No, not about that one, but about a different one, but also close to the school, right on School St.”

“How did you find out about it?”

“It sits on the Internet.”

“And what else sits there?”

To marry a rich foreigner.

Name: Marina.

City: Zhdanovka.

Sex: female.

Zodiac sign: Libra.

Looking for: a man.

Goal: forming a married couple.

A little about you: kind, tender blonde with green eyes.
Ideal way for two people to spend some time: seashore.
What do you value most in a partner: beauty . . .

“Here is a question for you. Tell me please, why did people use to call our region ‘an unwed province’?”

No rich foreigners, no sea, no beauty.

“We do have the sea, in Zhdanov.”

Zhdanov—the name of the city of Mariupol, on the Azov Sea, 1949–1989 . . .

Do you remember that passer-by we ran into? He was on his way to the seashore, to the city of Zhdanov, and ended up in Zhdanovka instead. He mixed up the signs on the buses.

“Excuse me, fellows, which way to the sea over here?”

“There is no sea here.”

“This is the city of Zhdanov?”

“No, this is Zhdanovka.”

“Damn it!”

Our Zhdanovka is a small town. Its economic potential is comprised by three coal mining enterprises and one enterprise producing consumer goods, the Zhdanovka Correctional Facility No. 3 . . .

Everything is made from the same coal. “And gasoline, and rubber from coal, and magenta from coal, and saccharine from coal. R-e-a-l-l-y?” Mikhail Petrovich fixed his eyes, dilated from emaciation and surprise, staring at Lyonya’s. “This is fantastic!” And now beginning to get infected by his son’s enthusiasm, the father started speaking loudly and excitedly, “This would be a poem, wouldn’t it? You can write one heck of a poem about this . . . And how about paintings? You can do a whole series of paintings too. Starting with this very forest that you were talking about: giant ferns and blue lotuses . . .”

“Just don’t pretend that you are some kind of hero, that you are an artist or something! There are artists, there are bankers, and there are workers.”

And what if there are no artists?

Meanwhile Mikhail Petrovich tirelessly glued together various useful toys of papier-mâché and then painted them. He even found time to paint the diagram of the dissection of a cow’s udder. Now he was lively again, and talked as much as he used to, prior to the war and its devastation, but now he only talked about a painting being unable to just hang in the air by itself and trill like a skylark in springtime: painting must be useful for someone. The dissection of a cow’s udder, a children’s toy, a poster for the crowds—that’s the true purpose of art. And if no one ordered any posters to be painted, and he did not have the right to invent a cow’s udder different from the one created by nature, he did propose several uncomplicated and sensible

toys, but to his surprise, for some reason they did not get approved, that is, they were allegedly sent to some central institution for permission and approval, but none was taken. But when a rabfak, a new school for workers, opened in town, he managed to get a job there as a drawing instructor . . .

“The Zhdanovka Music School announces open enrolment for the 2005–2006 academic year to take a drawing course. The term of instruction is seven years.”

And what after?

Dear readers, as you have correctly guessed by now, we did not begin a conversation about the works of this Ukrainian artist by accident. The fact is Alevtina is our compatriot. She was born in Zhdanovka, into an ordinary family . . .

“And without an accident you would not have started a conversation about the works of this Ukrainian artist?”

. . . and the numerous contest prizes and awards tell us that the work of the young artist from Zhdanovka . . .

“This is why Alevtina is “from Zhdanovka” and not “in” . . .”

Most likely there are no bankers either in Zhdanovka—there’s no bank, just a branch of one.

Olga Alekseyevna stuffed her fingers into her ears and, glancing earnestly at her husband and son, she said, for some reason in Ukrainian, as she used to back in Zhdanovka,

“Listen, eat silently now.”

She could not forget these two years she had spent in Zhdanovka; she became very embittered, and her health was seriously undermined. Besides, once in wintertime, having returned to Zhdanovka, she had to walk back some twenty miles to a village to get some flour; she walked straight across the Dnieper, right over the ice, by herself, fell through, barely got out, and then was ill for a long time. She who used to enjoy so much a merry company, jokes, and card games, now she looks at people with suspicions and expects to be attacked from everywhere . . .

“Why to pick green tomatoes?”

“They won’t let them get ripe. And this way I will spread them on the floor at home, and they’ll ripen.”

“Who won’t let them?”

“They’ve caught one, she stole from other people’s vegetable gardens.”

What can you do with tomatoes?

Stuffing: 5 sweet peppers, 3 horseradish roots, 5 carrots, 1 head of garlic. Wash and clean all the vegetables and put them through a meat grinder. Cut the tomatoes in half, stuff them with the ground vegetables, and tightly arrange them in glass jars. Pour hot marinade over them, can the jars and wrap them in blankets until they cool down

completely. Marinade: 6 litres of water, 0.5 litre 9% vinegar, 400 g sugar, 200 g salt. Result: 4 three-litre jars. L.H. Kabachii, Zhdanovka . . .

But inside the apartments, in the hallways, in the kitchens, in the family rooms, in the bedrooms—in a word, everywhere—tomatoes are ripening all over the floor, it is difficult to move around.

“And what do you do with tomatoes?”

“I’d sell two kilos of tomatoes, and I have enough to buy bread, I don’t need their money, their pension.”

“And how much is ‘their’ pension?”

“Three hundred and sixty-three hryvnias.”

“That’s too little!”

Poverty makes itself known everywhere, and its level is rather high. The things are at their worst in the district centres of Avdiyivka, Selidove, Kirovske and Zhdanovka . . .

“I tell my mom, I’m going to Kyiv and I’ll get baptized while I’m there. I don’t want to get baptized at the Electron.”

“What’s that, the Electron?”

“You don’t remember? It’s a store; they used to sell electric appliances there, now it’s a church.”

“This is not the biggest tragedy.”

“I was told that someone had shot a man at someone else’s vegetable garden using a handmade gun.”

“For a sack of potatoes? Yes, it happens. I think this man now wakes up every day with displeasure.”

Who of them is “this man”?

. . . according to the estimate by the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, in 2001, 22 percent of the residents of the Donbas region had an income per capita below the poverty level . . .

“They’ve caught one, she stole from other people’s vegetable gardens—they stripped her naked and tied her up next to the spring, for everyone to see. She stood there until her husband picked her up.”

During this turbulent period, all types of thievery happened. Of the various varieties, in Zhdanovka the stealing of electricity by the town residents flourished especially strongly . . .

(14 names)

. . . The ways of stealing are quite diverse. They include grounding through the radiator, not wiring up to the meter the exterior lighting, in the backyard summer kitchen, in the garage, as well as various manipulations of the meter itself: loosening the magnetic screw, various contraptions that slow down the disc, etc . . .

The persons mentioned above are billed the following amounts . . .

They would turn the electricity off for a while, usually in the evening, when people use it the most—all over the street, the neighbourhood, the town. Only the hospitals had power.

“But the sick are not only at the hospitals. Paralyzed older folks are ‘hospitalized’ at home; when it grows dark, they try to turn on the lamp, and there’s no light; they think the bulb has burned out and reach for another lamp, and fall down onto the floor. It is dark after all.”

On the palm of everyone’s hand, it turns out, this person’s entire biography is recorded. Using it, experienced palm-readers can calculate an approaching catastrophe down to the margin of error of one to two days; sometimes with their help one can avoid the sharp angles and find out an ‘emergency exit’ following the barely perceptible web of lines on the palm . . .

We, the kids, even liked this—we lit the candle and sat around it. Mom would come back from work and say, “It smells of wax yet again, there was once again a power cut.”

But still, was there any connection between the power cuts and those (14 names)?

“All of them (14 names) would have to live on the same street, on the same block, in the same town?”

Although earlier they would cut the power off first in the even-numbered buildings, and then in the odd-numbered ones: let’s say, we don’t have power, and the neighbours across from us do.

“Just click “Search!” and you’ll move on to the next page, then to the next one, and so on and so forth.”

The Telecom enterprise has organized an Internet-node to provide the subscribers in the town of Zhdanovka with access to the global Internet network . . .

The amazing thing about the Internet is that information is available to everyone, and it doesn’t matter where “your” Internet café is located.

“And could I print out the web page?”

“There’s no access.”

“And what about saving it on a diskette?”

“There’s no access.”

“The thing is, I have received an attachment in Word, and there is no Word on this computer. How could I view this document?”

“How many times do I need to repeat: there’s no access.”

“Please don’t raise your voice at me; you can simply say that your café does not provide such services.”

“And that’s what I’m saying—this is no Kyiv for you.”

In fact, it is not really surprising that Aleksei Tolstoy sent the spaceship to Mars precisely from the Zhdanovka embankment. First, as I have already mentioned, this area was a deserted and dreary place up until the sixties—seventies. Even despite the fact that approximately at this time they had built the stadium and that the Tuchkov Bridge had been reconstructed, traffic at the embankment of the Zhdanovka was light. For it did not lead anywhere . . .

Zhdanovka. Search!

The town of Zhdanovka is located in the steppe area of south-eastern Ukraine.

Distance from the regional capital: 53 km.

To the nearest seaport, the city of Mariupol (until 1989, Zhdanov): 187 km.

To the nearest airport: 71 km . . .

“Say again, what is the name of your town?”

“Zhdanovka.”

“There is a map of the town?”

“I have never seen one.”

“Are you sure that some map of the town doesn’t exist?”

“There aren’t any maps of town in its book shops.”

But this is not the biggest tragedy!

At the graduation prom I was the only one in a green dress; this made him feel uncomfortable. Other girls from the two Zhdanovka schools wore light pink and white.

“Compared to Zhdanovka Kyiv must be really something! How do they dress there?”

“They walk around all wrinkled and with holes in their clothes.”

“But that’s not nice.”

Although no, in that one drawing which did survive, where Kris sits by the ocean, I am not Kris, but rather the ocean. Its image feels the closest to me: my gestures are misunderstood, I suffer, and once again I do everything the wrong way, and it is again unclear.

“Well, yes, the processes cut off from all the other processes, self-enclosed, muffled fantasies, suppressed or not suppressed, some reminiscences . . . the ocean extracted this from us, fixed it, and then . . . you know what happened then . . .”

It took them as a recipe?

. . . what was discussed was an experimental reproduction, a reconstruction of certain (probably the most stable) traces in our memory. I know that this sounds fantastic; I know that I may turn out to be mistaken . . .

And we . . . or, rather, they?

“There’s too much negative stuff.”

“Give us at least some degree of hope.”

“Last winter I did not want to recall the past. This winter I don’t feel much like it either. I hope next winter you won’t ask me yet again why I did not like your green dress.”

And then they talked about prospects for the future, about a town drowning in greenery, in which there are no lawns trampled over like the one in front of the October Palace of Culture, and no buildings, like No. 5 on the first block, where every resident has his or her own plot of land fenced in, as a result of which the building came to resemble a prison barrack. And they also spoke about mushrooms: 5 tons of them would be harvested from the 450 m² of shelving in the mineshaft number four!

Today, 28 July 2005, at 4:10 a.m./p.m., in the town of Zhdanovka, at the mine of the Zhdanovskaya closed joint-stock company, at the level of 620m there was a flash of methane that led to the ignition of coal . . .

“Don’t forget that this is a miners’ town.”
“I remember.”

We would run to the mines to have some seltzer. You turn on the tap at the checkpoint, and it is the same as in the vending machines for one kopeck drink as much as you want.

“And do you remember, I found 10 roubles, and ran home to show mom. Not the 10 roubles, but how lucky I am.”

There are 350 small towns in Ukraine, home to 13% of the country’s population. According to the government’s data, only 22 of them actively developed in the last three years; 60% of the small towns develop sluggishly, and 33% are depressed . . .

All over Zhdanovka there is no power, fog every day—you can’t see anything; people when walking rush past one another.

“She tells me, what should I do, Liudmyla Andriyivna? Mother says, leave him. He frequently abused me, and I didn’t really love him at all. And now what? Who knew that he would end up like this in the mine, legless? Yes, tons of good from this progress-regress of theirs!”

“Hey, try shelling and drying eight buckets of sunflower seeds yourself instead of just taking the ready stuff. That year I planted sunflowers over half of my vegetable garden, the harvest was fantastic, I was beside myself with joy! And we made all kinds of jam, both strawberry and raspberry. In the morning we come: everything is open, locks removed from the doors, and there’s nothing there.”

“Ma’am, they are killing people over here, and you come to the police because of some potatoes and onions!”

“There was also garlic.”

Unsanctioned coal mining in the excavation of the Zuyevskaya Mine, in disuse for a long time, has ended in tragedy. The excavation was located a few dozen meters from the main mouth of the biggest shaft. This is where the illegal miner I. Lunevsky, a resident of the town of Zhdanovka, was trying to extract coal. It were his relatives who sounded the alarm. Death came as a result of suffocation: the concentration of methane in the abandoned excavation exceeded ten percent . . .

You know, as long as I remember, everyone around complained that it was bad in Zhdanovka.

Sometimes I think, and what if it is good there?

Zhdanovka. Search!

He often mentioned how his heart would beat when he was getting closer to his native town. How fine, how beautiful Zhdanovka was! Even from a short distance it was difficult to make out the contours of the buildings because of the poplar, oak, and maple trees that surrounded them. Along the street, on both sides there stretched picket fences and hedges made of acacias and flowers that gradually gave way to vegetable gardens. After the Great Patriotic War many new buildings appeared here, between two houses there would often rise up a new little white house. No one among the Zhdanovites wanted to leave the native place. On the first day after his arrival in Zhdanovka he photographed places important and dear to him, but first of all he visited the cemetery where his great-grandfather and other relatives are buried . . .

“In memory of the perished miners and Milochka a chapel (in Russian, ‘chasovnia’) will be built here.”

They did build a chapel at the cemetery, and this granite plaque was moved to the left.

This is a strangely imprecise gesture. If the chapel is built in memory of the perished miners, why aren’t their names there, and only the name of Milochka—she wasn’t the only woman miner, in fact, she wasn’t a miner at all? If the chapel is built in Milochka’s memory, what does this have to do with the nameless perished miners who can now be commemorated only after her death?

Zhdanovka. Search!

Thursday, 15 September, t. Zhdanovka. On 14 September one miner perished and five miners burnt. UNIAN . . .

On Monday, 12 December, in the town of Zhdanovka, a miner perished . . .

Today at the 60th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution Mine in the town of Zhdanovka an accident took place, as a result of which a 25-year-old worker died. During coal loading a shift of masses took place. When two detachments of rescue workers arrived at the mine, at 11:30 a.m. they were able to retrieve the body of the worker, already lifeless . . .

How many of them will perish—all of them are already commemorated in Zhdanovka: “In memory of the perished miners and Milochka a chapel will be built here.”

“Ah, you are from that Zhdanovka where wives kill their husbands with axes (and you were afraid to go to school the next day), women eat voting ballots, and some local bosses build chapels in memory of their mothers and then write that they are ‘in memory of the perished miners’?”

“You mean this chasovnia was built recently! I have asked because there are already enough churches in the West.”

Today the whole of Ukraine, experiences a renaissance of ecclesiastical cultural life, new churches and temples are being built, and monasteries are opening . . .

One hundred new Orthodox churches that have appeared in recent years were mentioned as an example of his other accomplishments . . .

“Whose accomplishments?”

“Some local boss.”

Question: And what can you tell us about the hot water supply? Answer: This is a rather ‘hot’ question for Zhdanovka. There’s no hot water. We resolve this situation through individual efforts. Question: Svitlana Ivanivna, as the head of such a complex branch of city services, would you like to take the position of the head of the regional office if you were offered? Answer: yes, I would. What soldier doesn’t dream of becoming a general . . .

And what about the hot water?

Zhdanovka local paper: the year 2004 has been proclaimed the year of spirituality . . .

This was a year ago, and how about at present?

“Everyone says, there’s no place to spend the evening out.”

In Zhdanovka there are both good and bad things. A good thing, for example, is that miners live in our town. A bad thing is that in our town, as in other towns, store shelves are empty.

(From a school essay by Olya R., Zhdanovka.)

There, back when I was a child, they wrote a number on my hand with a ballpoint pen. Everyone was saying, what a smart guy, came up with numbering everyone queuing up! This was to avoid any unnecessary flare-ups, if, say, someone tells someone else, you did not stand in line for 200 g butter (per person).

And we stood in line. And there were indeed no flare-ups.

“Tell me, who offended you at the store? Why these tears? Because of the number? We’ll wash it off right away. Look, you no longer have any number.”

I have though it is forever.

In the stores of the town of Zhdanovka, according to the vending norms per customer, you can buy: Bread and other baked goods—no more than 2 kg. Milk—3 l. Kefir—1 l. Ryazhenka—1 l. Potatoes—5 kg. Processed cheese—200 g. Butter—200 g. Margarine—500 g. Tea biscuits—2 packs. Mineral water—10 bottles. Juice (bulk)—no limit. Matches—3 boxes. Salt—1 kg. Corn chips and cornflakes—2 packs. School supplies—up to 2 roubles' worth. Paper goods, except toilet paper—up to 3 roubles' worth . . .

But I am not going to write now about my childhood and also about the various delicate issues related to 'the housing question'. Although I find this description of everyday life quite interesting, because now it is already difficult to imagine some of the life details . . .

The same day, 24 July, the results of the review at the store No. 18 were entered in the protocol: the sales personnel put away the following goods: tangerine syrup, green peas, refined sugar, Rossiisky cheese, Belomor cigarettes, cognac—the total amounting to 1231 roubles 34 kopecks. All these facts were considered on 26 July at the session of the administrative committee headed by V.P. Babkina: three salespersons were fined 50 and 100 roubles each. The named trade enterprise has been placed under special supervision by the committee members . . .

As you can see, everything seems to have been done correctly: violations have been revealed, the guilty have been punished, and their misdeeds have been publicized. But for some reason one does not feel certain that after this the hiding of goods in Zhdanovka stores is going to stop . . .

For the people who man the sales counters of our state stores are far too fearless! And thus the question arises: and what if they start manning the sales counters of their own private stores, would that make things better for us, the consumers? . .

“Once in a lifetime I felt like having a drink, went to the bar, and said, give me please 50 grams of vodka, and she: there are too few customers today, I am not going to open a fresh bottle just for you. Or buy the whole bottle if you wish.”

So much has been written in various newspapers and shown on television about the abuses by salespersons that many of them, it would seem, should start being afraid of doing things like this. But no. As recent reviews in Zhdanovka have shown, they are immune to fear . . .

When Startsev tried to talk to liberal citizens, saying, for instance, that humanity, thank God, was progressing, and that one day it would be possible to dispense with passports and capital punishment, the liberal citizen would look at him askance and ask him mistrustfully: “Then anyone could murder anyone upon impulse in the open street?”

“I see, you work at the newspaper,” Elena Tsezarevna smiles and keeps pushing on, “then write there, why did they make gold so expensive that for it people could murder in the street? ”

This Elena Tsezarevna works at our mine as a timekeeper; life tried to break her down, but she got through all the hardships. The smile vanishes from her face, and the wrinkles become more pronounced, “Why hide the goods? And what can we do with those 200 grams of butter? Spread it on our tongues, or on slices of bread? What sort of norms are these? The only thing on which there are no restrictions is ice cream . . .”

That’s because they have no freezers.

“The fantasies you have!”

Taking advantage of a gap in the civil rights, I would like to offer a more bloodless, and most importantly, quick and inexpensive plan for solving the foodstuffs programme. And this time all sorts of smooth operators and the various, excuse me, millionaires would not be able to escape! At X hours, or even better, at 12:00 a.m., we can mobilize our noble police force plus the ready for all (except working) civic activists and organize midnight expropriation from the population of the refrigerators and freezers. When it becomes impossible to store up supplies in advance, the store shelves will come alive again, like in a fairy tale that resists becoming a reality . . .

Fantasy is when you imagine something crazily improbable, and it turns out to be the truth . . .

The last time the following goods were brought to the mine and sold there: men’s suits—40, of them 19 purchased by employees of the mine; jackets—40, 38 purchased; refrigerators Donbass (5/5) and Saratov (21/21); washers—50/50; Mriya kitchen sets—15/15; cement mixers—10/7; TV sets—30/29 (one wasn’t purchased because it did not work); watches—250/128; umbrellas—1600/1090, altogether goods totalling 100 thousand roubles. How did they distribute them at different sections? This is what our correspondent was told at the second mining section: the workers pulled out pieces of paper; the lucky ones with the name of the goods, the rest blank ones. Those who won a large item got out of the lottery. At the transportation section the distribution was done somewhat differently. Here all the workers were divided into approximately six groups of equal size. The day before the goods are scheduled to arrive, once it becomes known what goods have been allotted to this section, the section committee calls a meeting with representatives of all six groups attending. For example, a refrigerator will be part of the lottery. First it is determined which group receives the refrigerator. For this chips are thrown with numbers from one to six. And then they switch to bingo, they pull out and name a number. The person listed at this number becomes the buyer of this item. Each time when a new shipment of goods arrives, all of the section’s workers take part. But if a person wins once, and then once again, a TV set or another large item, he does not get it. But if it is something small, like an umbrella, you can take it if you like . . .

. . . or if a child could see a learned lady as really an ogre, and this turned out to be true—this is also fantasy.

The museums in capitalist countries often display as exhibits ordinary items of industrial production or consumer goods. For example, Claes Oldenburg’s ‘Kitchen Stove’, which instead of an artistic image offers a random list of consumer items. Or a

painstakingly produced illusory copy of super-sized trousers, 'Giant Blue Pants', by the same artist. These and similar artworks are clearly advertising in character, and they mark the denigration of a human being's spiritual needs and catastrophic loss not only of meaning, but also of basic emotion in these works of art . . .

At the age of thirteen I read this article in the Young Artist magazine several times, but could not understand what it was saying—and I did like a lot those little bottles with wings depicted there.

“That's 'Coca-Cola' by Rauschenberg.”

And in Zhdanovka on 29 August the celebration of Miner's Day began with a set of entertainment, contest, and sports events, in which anyone willing could take part: by themselves or as a team to win some consumer goods . . .

And generally speaking, everyone we could talk to agreed that the best variant would be when a person could buy the items he or she needs at the store, for a reasonable price. And it doesn't matter whether this store would be privatized or state-owned: if only its shelves were plentifully stocked. It is difficult not to agree with this . . . (A survey of opinions of the employees of Zhdanovskaya Mine, 31 May 1991.)

Every person wants as much good stuff as possible and as little bad stuff as possible. (From a school essay by Olya R., Zhdanovka.)

It is just a short note, right now I am in Ukraine. I wanted to find something for you that somehow might illustrate the time of empty shops. It was difficult. The shops are already full of commodities, even full of shiny commodities. It is over! And in addition to this I had a strange dream about an empty ocean there. No, this was not just a strange one, but truly a terrifying dream. If you dream of clear water, that's a sign for good stuff; cloudy water is a sign for bad stuff. But here it was an empty ocean, an ocean without any water.

Entry date: 10 Aug. 2005.

In Zhdanovka we looked for the right street, I think, for some two hours! However, we saw two limousines in a row. I wonder who that could have been. . . . In our city that's a different story. We have there a big honcho nicknamed "Petrovich". He has eight Lincoln limousines and also a Hummer. Imagine, eight of them!!! He can probably tell anyone in town to go to hell. And on each of them the license plate indeed says "Petrovich" . . .

“I heard your Russian accent; could I have a seat here next to you? How do you like it here?”

“I don't live in France. I am visiting this place for a few days.”

“And I like it here, only the rich guys are somehow weird here, they try to be inconspicuous. They could buy a Hummer, and instead they buy Peugeot 206, and at the store they apologize to you two hundred times!”

This keeps turning into a mess: the story itself could be told in a handful of words, and it would even be a stretch to call it a story, but it drags along an incredible amount of explanations, additions, and clarifications . . .

“By the way, I meant to ask you and keep forgetting to do it, what kind of a car is Peugeot 206?”

“It’s not a bad car.”

“Well, I should be going. Does your freight elevator work? I like riding in the freight one.”

“Vika, why the freight one?” asked Sapozhnikov. “Are you a wardrobe or something?”

“It’s automatic,” said Vika. “Its doors open by themselves.”

“By the way, I meant to ask you and keep forgetting to do it, the Hummer’s doors do they open by themselves?”

“Yes,” confirmed the girl who sat on the sofa with a book in her hands.

When he heard the car pull up in front of the stairwell, Viktor got dressed and came down.

“Have a seat,” Lyosha invited him in.

The car door slammed. It was cold inside.

“How’s the beast?” asked Lyosha in an emphatically friendly tone, stroking his beard.

“It’s all right,” answered Viktor.

“I have some business for you,” continued Lyosha, changing his expression to a serious one. “I wanted to invite you and your beast to an event . . . Not a terribly cheerful one, but . . . In any case, this wouldn’t be for free.”

“What kind of event?” Viktor inquired.

“My friends’ boss was killed. The funeral is tomorrow. You know, a big deal funeral. The coffin with bronze handles costs a grand and a half. I told them about your penguin, and so they remembered . . . And they are now inviting you and him to the funeral.”

“Why?” Viktor showed surprise.

“How can I explain this to you . . .” Lyosha, lost in thought, pursed his lower lip.

“Every event should present itself in a particular way, have distinctive style . . . They simply thought that a funeral with a penguin would be stylish. A penguin looks as if it’s dressed for mourning, black-and white . . . You know what I’m saying?”

“Yes. They invited my friend and his car to the wedding. The one with the Union Jack painted on it. They simply thought he’d like it. He’s English after all.”

“Who is he, that English guy?”

“The groom at the wedding.”

Maybe that’s because the regional mental institution is located in this place?

When I was a child, my mother worked there. She once brought me close to little beds of patients with strange diseases: they were small like newborns but had adult-looking faces.

They even reported a case of eating voter ballots. At the presidential elections, in the 50th district, in the town of Zhdanovka, a woman broke the law by trying to cast four extra ballots, and then ate two of them. Police drew up a report on the two remaining ones . . .

And some people use fire not only to take care of their neighbours, wives, or personal property, but even to set themselves on fire, having doused themselves with gasoline first, as did a man in the town of Zhdanovka . . .

As it turned out, the apartment of A. Hnatiuk served as a refuge for various unemployed and dissolute persons. The apartment's doors were always open for them. It was not possible to ascertain who was here on the final day, but the bed sheet-covered sofa engulfed in flames could tell volumes about what went on in here . . .

“And are apartments like this few and far between here in Zhdanovka? Therefore, you can expect a fire any minute!”

Last night there was a fire . . .

“The smokers and the drinkers cause the greatest concern. They are to blame for every third fire!”

Thus on 2 May, in the town of Zhdanovka, G. Paltsev, intoxicated, doused himself with gasoline and died as a result of the burns he sustained . . .

No one can forbid a person to celebrate a holiday or anniversary, certainly. But one should know one's limits, and drink without losing human dignity . . .

A few days before his death I saw him crying: “Why am I dying? How vile this is! I only have begun to understand what life is about . . . Why? What for? How dare they? . . . this impersonal “How dare they?” imprinted itself in my memory . . .

This is because back at school they forced that useless book on you. It's clear why it had been gathering dust at the bookstore: these kinds of books were bought to give to kids as a reward for having participated in various contests.

“By the way, what was its title?”

“Problems of Student Hockey.”

“And was there a rink in town?”

“No.”

Lately the community organizations and labour collectives have completely withdrawn from conducting work aimed at eradicating alcoholism, leaving this issue in the hands of the police, the medics, and the relatives of the persons suffering from alcohol abuse . . .

It was determined that in the evening of 8 February in the town of Zhdanovka, at his mother's apartment a son beat his mother with his hands, causing her a head injury that led to her death. The quarrel took place during the joint consumption of alcoholic beverages . . .

“Say again, what is the name of your town?”

“Zhdanovka.”

“I knew a woman from Zhdanovka. She worked for me. She did a good job at washing dishes. Since you are from Zhdanovka too, you may be equally good at washing up. You might earn money here as she did.”

Custom dictionary: ‘acceptation’ (from Lat.) – 1) accept, approve; 2) admit, tolerate.

I always knew: sooner or later you’d have to explain what sort of Zhdanovka you were from.

But never from which one.

Zhdanovka. Search!

Zhdanovka in St. Petersburg . . .

Zhdanovka, Orenburg region . . .

Zhdanovka, Saratov region . . .

Zhdanovka, Vinnytsia region . . .

Zhdanovka, Donetsk region . . .

Zhdanovka Yurgamysh district . . .

Zhdanovka near Nizhny Novgorod . . .

Zhdanovka, Dnipropetrovsk region . . .

Zhdanovka , near the Armenian border . . .

Zhdanovka, Briansk region . . .

Zhdanovka , Kostanai region . . .

Zhdanovka, Pechenga district . . .

Zhdanovka, Simbirsk province . . .

Zhdanovka, Novo-Moskovsk district . . .

Zhdanovka, Vladimir region . . .

Zhdanovka, Mordovia . . .

Zhdanovka, Zemetchino district . . .

Zhdanovka, Vitebsk region . . .

Zhdanovka, Meleuz district . . .

Usually she talks a lot, cheerfully and freely, but today we are standing shoulder-to-shoulder and we are silent, behind us the heat-suffused houses on the Zhdanovka embankment, the article in a local newspaper about a murder that took place downtown, and on top of it all . . .

In the town Zhdanovka, a UFO was observed in the form of two spheres connected by phosphorescent intertwined threads . . .

Commentary on the topic of the UFOs: On top of our everyday life problems they also came up with this UFO stuff together with all the financial market relations that only lead to greed, hatred, quarrels, and murders . . .

In the settlement of Zhdanovka, a former military man decided to take a walk around the neighbourhood to collect empty bottles for deposit refund. Suddenly in the midst of a parking garage he saw a cardboard box. When he saw what was inside it, he gasped . . .

A woman from the town of Zhdanovka, while taking her child to school, stumbled upon a strange object: between a couple of two-storey houses on School St. there sat a large snow-covered sack. Upon arrival at the scene, the law enforcement officials retrieved from it the body of a man; his throat was slit, the internal organs, genitals, and parts of his legs were missing. As reported by the head of Zhdanovka town police Mr. Vasyl Rudnytsky, the investigators started making rounds through nearby buildings, granting particular attention to persons who'd had previous encounters with the law. Soon they came to check the apartment of an unemployed 36-year-old repeat offender who lived with his mother. Already at the door the officers realized they found the right address. Indeed! There was no need for a search for material evidence: right at the threshold there sat a bag with human innards, and on the stove . . . a piece of human flesh was cooking. According to Lieutenant Colonel Rudnytsky, even experienced investigative officers, who had seen a lot in their lives, were shocked by this picture, as nothing of the kind had ever happened in town before. Right away they were able to establish that the night before the mother of the unemployed man had received a visit from an acquaintance, a 53-year-old retired handicapped man. The company gathered at the table consisted of the guest, the hostess, her son, and a friend of the son's, a 34-year-old neighbour, previously convicted. All participants in the party actively abused alcohol. When the woman went to bed, an argument arose between the retiree and the two friends. It ended in homicide: one of the participants held the older man down, while the other stabbed him with a knife. We will skip the horrific details of what happened next. Let us only note that the murderers showed themselves to be experienced butchers, carving up the body and leaving some of its parts in the apartment. They then stuffed the corpse into a sack and dragged it into the street; however, they were so drunk that they abandoned their load nearby . . .

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“Gentlemen! Being an admirer of the great talent of my fellow-countrymen, I nevertheless found it possible to write the erotic poem (in verse) that appears below. Let us not be bigots, and the world will become more interesting!” Here the lamb got up, came up to Zinoviy's face, and perhaps out of a feeling of revenge urinated right on the hooligan's face. Overcome with disgust, Zinoviy grabbed the lamb by the . . .

spun it over his head and threw it with all his force against the rocks. Half an hour later Zinovy was already roasting the lamb. He first ate the lamb's genitals, then . . .

Add a story.

I approached the head of the Criminal Investigation Department of Regional Branch of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Colonel Mykola Stepchenkov, for comments: "A large share of premeditated murders that are committed is constituted by so-called domestic crimes. That is, those that easily fit the already traditional pattern: drinking—argument—murder" . . .

"And what about that old lady who distributes poison?" replied Victor from the town of Zhdanovka, which is situated some thirty kilometers away . . .

A 72-year-old female resident of the town of Zhdanovka was detained after 6 RGD-42 grenades, 35 electric detonators, and more than 250 bullets of various calibers were confiscated at her place of residence . . .

About a year ago squeaking and other noises appeared inside my head. I turned to the doctors, but the treatment did not help, and one neurologist suggested cutting off the head. I turn to you, fellow citizens: perhaps someone knows how to banish this nuisance from my head. I cannot sleep. I'd be really grateful. Podobedov, Anatoly Alekseyevich, block 1, building 10, apt. 99, Zhdanovka . . .

If you can, avoid the so-called 'rush hours', immediately after the stores open, during lunch breaks, and also at the end of the workday. Be especially attentive: during those times the customers are particularly vulnerable to trick. The same if you are making a purchase when there is little natural light, in bad weather, especially at the farmers' markets. Be alert to the prices of produce. A price that is too low should put you on guard: either the produce is of very poor quality or the scales have been tampered with. Always ask if the produce is fresh. The vendors often give truthful answers to this question. Watch to make sure that before weighing the scale's arrow points to zero, and during weighing wait for the arrow to stop completely. When selecting produce remember that it is the highest quality produce that is put on display; during weighing a change is possible, namely, addition of produce of lesser quality, especially vegetables, fruit, meat products . . .

"Mom, why did you allow Antonina Yakovlevna to keep my book?"

"I told you, never take anything to school. And you did take."

And this in our little Zhdanovka where everyone is in full view and people know each other well!

"I wanted other kids to read it too."

The teacher took my book to read it out loud at the extracurricular reading periods. But during those periods we did not read any books and did our maths homework instead. The teacher believed it was better to do the maths homework. Finally I told the teacher, please return my book, we are not reading it. And she, what book? And I,

my book, there it is, in your bookcase; and she, what kind of stories are you making up?

“When was this?”

Before “those financial market relations”.

“You are buying so many items, and I only have two, could I jump the queue?”

“But why?”

“But you’ve got so much stuff, and I only have two items.”

“But why?”

Find your school. Enter the school’s name or select a school from the list . . .

. . . Zhdanovka General Education School . . .

I wanted to illustrate my friend’s story ‘Famine’ in the school magazine in 1937. The teacher forbade it. He said I’d be shot. Harvylo Prokopenko, Zhdanovka . . .

People did not recall the famine except maybe when talking to family members. We all realize that only with the help of historical sources—official documents, letters, reminiscences by witnesses—one could reconstruct the true picture of the artificially engineered famine directed by the Stalinist regime against the Ukrainian peasantry . . .

“Remember you asked why we had moved to Zhdanovka? There was famine in 1933. As soon as the kids started swelling up, grandmother gathered all kids and came here. They were saying there was no famine here. And we never went back.”

And was there a river back there?

The thought to create Stalin, according to Harvard scholars, arises immediately after the creation of a special secret subdivision of the GPU (later, the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs). That’s where they invented the details of his heroic biography and family ties, wrote speeches and reports. Persons ‘serving as Stalin’ received ten thousand roubles per month . . .

“And how much is that, ten thousand roubles?”

The witnesses describe in detail what people were eating in those years of famine: linden tree buds, rotten potatoes, cats, dogs, loaves made of nettles, weeds, acacia blossoms. Older teens report cases of cannibalism. First and foremost the tragedy of the Ukrainian people, the events of that era need to be studied by scholars . . .

“And if someone in this particular generation, even if forced by circumstances, has already done it once, then . . .”

“You are talking about that horrible incident, the murder on School St?”

Nearly all December and January days this year were relatively warm and without snow. Except for the last three, when the frost—as if it had caught itself on being late—made the temperature go thoroughly negative. The ground became like stone,

and the air turned silvery and viscous, so that sometimes one needed to make an effort to inhale it. And this when you walk or wait for the mine bus to Zhdanovka . . .

The town of Zhdanovka has just seen the addition of three new residents at once: three sons were born to the family of Ivan Zvonkov, the electric welder of the neighbourhood maintenance office, and his wife Marina. The young woman experienced some problems during pregnancy, and a member of the regional council of last convocation took a decisive role in the young woman's fate. She was placed in the maternity department of the regional hospital named after Kalinin, where she stayed under prolonged and constant observation of highly qualified specialists. And a few days ago she successfully delivered three athletic-sized newborns weighing 2,500, 2,500, and 2,100 grams . . .

“Do you remember me as a little boy—I was so carefree: found ten roubles and ran home to show mom, not the ten roubles, but that I was lucky.”

Do you find the images of the protagonists, the brothers Sergei and Shura Chaprakov, attractive? Why did the younger brother Sergei choose to work at a mine and live in barracks rather than apprenticing for the dental technician Rozhkov?

This is also when the first pegs of what would become mine number two were hammered in. The new wave of miner settlement in Zhdanovka began in the mid-fifties, attracting young energetic workforce from the various points of our native land . . .

“All kinds of riffraff ended up coming to Zhdanovka then . . .”
“But granny!”

To feel confident during our economic difficulties the mine needs to produce 3,500 tons of coal per day. Now 2,800 tons are produced . . .

With the arrival of Nusenkis, the new director of the Zhdanovskaya Mine, the mine's output of coal doubled . . .

In August of the same year they began the construction of the third and the fourth one, in September the fifth one, and in October the sixth one. The mines and mine management offices received the names of miner settlements. To this day several mines bear the names of nearby towns and workers' settlements: “Kirovskaya”, “Ilovaiskaya”, “Kommuna-rovskaya”, “Zuyevskaya”, “Zhdanovskaya” . . .

The Krymskaya Mine is now only marked by its refuse heap. It was closed during the first wave of the so-called ‘restructuring’ . . .

“What interesting mountains you have!”
“Mine refuse heaps are no mountains, don't even think of trying to climb them.”

The mine refuse heaps, the burning waste banks, can be considered the principal source of harmful substances entering atmosphere at coal industry enterprises. Due to high temperatures a substantial amount of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, and the amount of oxygen decreases . . .

“Aunt Liuda, aunt Liuda, look, a man all made up!”

“Don’t scream, have you never seen a miner? This is coal dust that didn’t wash off the eyelashes.”

The human being always has been and will be the most curious phenomenon to human beings. (From the collection of standard school essays: What Makes an Interesting Person, What Is This Person Like? Version 1.)

“But you never liked the collections of standard school essays.”

. . . which allow one to prepare with maximum effectiveness to writing test essays in the 10th and 11th grades. For each type of topic—free, half-free, literary-analytical, creative—the collection provides alternative versions . . .

“Two versions of writing them!”

If we could immediately peek into someone’s inner world, to understand what fills their life, what they dream of, we would be able to understand them better. But a person opens up only in the process of communication, as well as in the process of observation of this person and their deeds and actions. (From the collection of standard school essays: What Makes an Interesting Person, What Is This Person Like? Version 2.)

“What, you don’t read in our language?”

“You meant to ask, why was I reading in a language other than Russian?”

“You want to say I was under the emission? Do you know what that is?”

“Yes I do, it is a flash of methane.”

“When methane is coming, the miner in the mine is like a wood chip, either you get out in time or you don’t. And if you don’t you won’t hear the music.”

“What music?”

“The kind they play at funerals, and you say you know what I’m talking about. You read books, are you a writer or something? Then why don’t you write about us miners?”

Today the owner of the neighbouring estate came to me and said,

“Priscus, son of Priscus, write down for me all you have told me about. These things weigh on my heart and are constantly on my mind. There are rumours around about a new invasion of the Sarmatians, and I am going to hide my most important valuables in a cache. But who knows what is valuable these days and what isn’t, when men have gone mad and kingdoms are shaking. Write down, Priscus, all you have told me, and we are going to hide the scroll in an amphora over which time has no power, and we’ll seal it with wax that has been seasoned in the sun. And then we’ll bury it in an inconspicuous spot, so that when the invasion is over or a new kingdom is established, we could sell your narration to the new ruler. For life experience shows us that . . .”

“But that wasn’t the reason why you started writing this book!”

And the title, you know, is somehow promising.

They lived in a veritable godforsaken village, from the point of view of amenities and quality of life, and it had a very promising name: Zhdanovka . . .

And what about the cultural level of those who write?

These are not my words; this is from the Internet.

“And what else is there on the Internet?”

Another interpretation of the origin of the name “Zhdanovka” links it to ancient times of the “Wild Field”, when an observation post was located here that protected the southern Russian lands from the raids by Crimean Tatars. Zhdanie, a version of the Russian word for ‘waiting’, ozhidanie, allegedly was the source for the name of the first small settlement Zhdanovka that arose here . . .

This means that the name has nothing to do with party functionary Zhdanov?

That is, from ‘to wait’—Waitingtown.

“But basically I have no time: I get up at half past five, have breakfast, run to work, and I’m there until late in the evening; I come home, wash up, and go to sleep. And it’s the same every day.”

“It only seems a long way, we’re in Zhdanovka already, see how quickly we made it.”

“Tell me, how are things over there? Are things as appallingly expensive?”

“You spend money on photocopying!”

“And what should one spend one’s money on?”

“On something else.”

“On what?”

“Well, enough, I beg you.”

“And I beg the mole, ‘Mole dear, don’t touch what is mine, I’ve put so much work into this, please!’ If there were no drought perhaps it would have enough to eat in the fields. And instead—see how wilted they are, that’s the mole’s doing, that’s it—the plant won’t grow any more! And in that little spot I’ve already dug out the potatoes, there it didn’t touch them. Everywhere where I planted, the feet just sink through, and there they don’t. If there were no drought!”

Zhdanovka. Search!

Zhdanovka, average temperature in January -7.2°C ; in July $+22^{\circ}\text{C}$. Annual rainfall 500 mm . . .

“Is it raining over there?”

“Uh-hu.”

“You see, and in this goddamn Zhdanovka there’s no rain. Potatoes are wilting.”

“They say this isn’t a mole but a blind mole rat.”

“Some sell potatoes for one hryvnia fifty, and I don’t. But the taste of it! I worked hard. And when we had a heat wave, I carried water in pails; we still don’t have running water at our vegetable garden. And when they allotted us garden plots, they promised they would take care of this.”

“When were you last at the seashore?”

“Before grandmother got sick.”

Grandmother died in 1997, so that was eight years ago.

“You remember, granny told me that on Parkhomenko St. they had collected five roubles per person, and on Chapaev St. only three; that’s why we have asphalt, and they have cobblestones.”

“What cobblestones, there’s nothing but slag there!”

“And I went to the class reunion, well of course many have died already, so it works out this way: they live somewhere else, and then come back to Borovaya if their parents are still alive, or their siblings, and there they die and there they are buried.”

“In Borovaya?”

“Yes. You can’t even compare Borovaya with Zhdanovka! There the roads are paved, there are no ruins.”

Zhdanovka. Search!

What should one do for Zhdanovka children to get preschool education? Vote by stating a number.

1. Re-erect the ruined buildings of former kindergartens . . .

“Still she decided not to sell the house, she says, I’ll go to Zhdanovka, and where can I stay, and I need to look after the graves.”

“And is there a river there?”

“Where?”

“In Borovaya.”

“Why are you stuck on this river? You said yourself that anything could be imagined . . . paint water on the wall, and put a sand-coloured rug next to it, and this would be the sea, and the river, and the ocean.”

But when summer came I whitewashed over the wall, rolled up the rug and went to the seashore.

“How much did it cost?”

“Less than 2 Euro.”

“That’s too little.”

“I only had one hour to spare, not a minute more . . .”

“How much was the entrance fee for the beach?”

“2.5 Euro.”

“That’s too much.”

That's also what they thought in Trieste, "For one hour of using the beach this is too much, take 1 Euro back . . . Say again, what is the name of your town?"

"Zhdanovka."

"I knew a man from Zhdanovka."

He often mentioned how his heart would beat when he was getting closer to his native village. How fine, how beautiful Zhdanovka was! Even from a short distance it was difficult to make out the contours of the buildings because of the poplar, oak, and maple trees that surrounded them. Along the street, on both sides picket fences and hedges made of acacias and flowers stretched that gradually gave way to vegetable gardens. After the Great Patriotic War many new buildings appeared here, between two houses there would often rise up a new little white house. No one among the Zhdanovites wanted to leave the native place . . .

"Engineer M.S. Los invites those who would like to fly with him to the planet Mars to come for the face-to-face negotiations from 6 to 8 p.m. to 11 Zhdanovka Embankment, inside the courtyard."

This was written ordinarily and simply, with an indelible pencil. Skyles's hand involuntarily reached for the pulse—it was normal. He looked at the watch: it was ten minutes past four, the calendar showed 14 August. With calm fortitude Skyles was ready to expect anything in this insane city—but the notice hammered to the peeling wall impacted him in a most painful manner . . .

If only I had a little ticket like this when I was a child, the reviewer began his remarks at the defense of the graduation project dedicated to the theme of the circus . . .

"So what, we can make a little ticket like that ourselves!"

And what about the circus?

"Why are you crying?"

"The drawing isn't coming out right."

"You know, there's a boy here, we get together to draw once a week. He is ill; he has been paralyzed since early childhood. A very nice boy. I come over, and his mother to me: what paint, what paper, I can't be bothered with this. And the boy to me, don't take offence at her, she's nice. Why are you crying even harder?"

The wind blew hard down deserted Red Dawns Avenue. The windows of multi-storey buildings, some broken, others boarded shut, displayed no traces of inhabitants—not a single head looked out into the street. A young woman, having put her basket down on the pavement, stood on the other side of the street and looked at Skyles. Her sweet-looking face appeared calm and exhausted . . .

"You know, I did not sell anything today, in this Zhdanovka they only buy roses and gladioluses. But surely a bouquet of chamomile flowers is not a bad thing?"

"No it isn't!"

"Easy for you to say that: you don't live here after all."

I used to live here. I opened this latch, standing on tiptoe and stretching my right arm, but now I just can't.

"You need to tighten up the screws there."

"No, we need to simply throw it away. How many years is it that you don't live here anymore?"

By the way, the heart of the matter isn't in those drawings that got scribbled on the same day—someone drew genitals for all of Simak's and Lem's characters. Now I am completely fine about it—and not because I am no longer interested in drawings in and of themselves. What matters is something totally different: You know, as long as I remember myself, everyone around complained that it was bad in Zhdanovka.

Sometimes I think, and what if it's good there?

"And leaving was the right thing to do—you did not lose anything!"

Sometimes I think, and what if . . . ?

"Perhaps it isn't worth it returning to this Zhdanovka."

Zhdanovka, a town. Pop. 14.8 thousand. Coal mining . . .

No cultural or historical monuments, no museums, no theatres, no hotels, no art galleries, no parks, no river.

The railway stations closest to the town are located 12 and 8 km away (in the city of Yenakieve and the settlement of Nyzhnie-Krynka respectively) . . .

There is a park in Yenakieve and a river in Nyzhnie-Krynka.

In this book excerpts were used from “Ionych” by Anton Chekhov, Death and the Penguin by Andrey Kurkov, Solaris by Stanislaw Lem, Boxwood Forest by Mikhail Ancharov, and Aelita by Alexsey Tolstoy, as well as texts by unknown authors, found through search systems typing in the name of the town “Zhdanovka”.

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