THE EDUCATION OF A TRAITOR

A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia

Svetlana Grobman

Contact:

Musings Publishing
svetlanagrobman@gmail.com
Office: 573-445-7462
Mobile: 573-268-8994
http://svetlanagrobman.com
http://amazon.com/author/svetlanagrobman

Svetlana Grobman's memoir is an intimate look at a young person's struggle to find her own truth in a repressive society.

A story depicting how hypocrisy, totalitarianism and anti-Semitism affected the lives of Russian citizens during the Cold War.

Moscow, USSR, 1950s-1960s – Svetlana (Sveta) Grobman grew up in a cramped communal apartment with her mother, father, and sister. From a very young age, she found herself living in two contradictory worlds: the private world of a Jewish family struggling to live a decent life in a society rife with shortages and anti-Semitism; and the public world of an oppressive totalitarian regime.

Despite that, Svetlana was a dreamer who longed to do something significant for her country. Yet as she matured and learned about the persecution of her family and the tragic deaths of her Ukrainian relatives during WWII, she realized that the world around her was built on lies and corruption, and that she needed to be strong just to survive.

"I strongly believe that we must learn from history. That is why I want to show the American people what life behind the Iron Curtain was like," said author Svetlana Grobman. "My book describes the experience of one Jewish child coming of age at the height of the Cold War, but it also explains why millions of people chose to leave the Soviet Union when the Iron Curtain finally fell." *The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia* (Musings Publishing, March 15, 2015, $13.99, paperback; $4.99, Kindle edition) is available at Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, Powell's Books, Books-A-Million and independent bookstores.

Svetlana Grobman is a Jewish immigrant from Russia. Her book, *The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia*, describes what life was like in the Soviet Union in the 1950s -1960s.

Read about *The Education of a Traitor* at http://svetlanagrobman.com; see reviews (including Kirkus Reviews and Midwest Book Review) and sample chapters of the book at Amazon.com (see "*Look Inside*.")

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About the author:

Svetlana Grobman is a Jewish immigrant from Russia who was born in Moscow in 1951 and who moved to the United States in 1990. While living in Russia, Grobman was an engineer and an editor for the Soviet Encyclopedia. Now she is a librarian and freelance writer living in Columbia, Missouri. Grobman has published articles and personal stories in a variety of places, including the *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Kansas City Star, St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *Rural Missouri*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. In 2007, she won the grand prize at the "Your Family Garden" essay contest sponsored by Harlequin Press and the American Horticulture Society, and in 2013, she was the first place winner of the *Stories From the Heart* contest sponsored by JewishStoryWriting.com. Grobman maintains a personal blog at http://svetlanagrobman.com. She also writes for the blog of the Daniel Boone Regional Library (Columbia, MO), DBRL Next.

Besides writing, Svetlana loves photography. In 2014, she won a third place at the Rural Missouri Snapshot contest in the *Hit the Trails* category. She maintains her photo blog at https://svetlanagrobman.wordpress.com.

Grobman lives in Columbia, MO, with her husband, an emeritus professor of English. Her daughter and two charming grandchildren, age 6 and 10, live in London, UK.

The Education of a Traitor is Svetlana's first book, and she is currently working on her second.
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About the Book:

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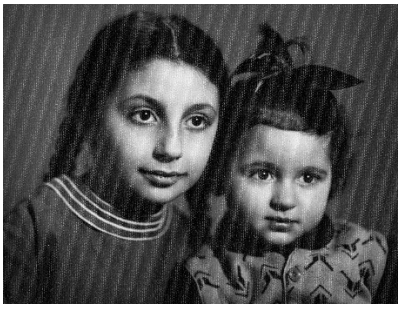
Praise for *The Education of a Traitor*

"A hard-hitting and involving story that delivers vignettes of change and survival using a powerful voice and a personal perspective that's hard to put down." —Diana Donovan, Senior Reviewer**,** *Midwest Book Review*

"Each chapter functions as a stand-alone tale, depicting not only a moment in Grobman's childhood, but also an aspect of Soviet life. … An intimate look at a young woman's struggle to find her own truth in a repressive society." ***—****Kirkus Reviews*

"This story turned my stomach, made me laugh out loud, and broke my heart, sometimes all in the same chapter. Grobman beautifully captures the childhood psyche in this touching story of family, the uncertainties of youth, and life in a forgotten, cloistered society" —Dianna Skowera, *Readers' Favorite*



Review Copies and Media Interviews:

For a review copy of *The Education of a Traitor* or an interview with the author, please contact Svetlana Grobman at svetlanagrobman@gmail.com, 573-445-7462 or 573-268-8994.

If you would like to receive this information as a Word document, please let us know.

2-line Bio:

Svetlana Grobman is a Russian immigrant and the author of "*The Education of a Traitor*." To learn more about Svetlana and her book, subscribe to her blog at http://svetlanagrobman.com.

Short Bio:

Svetlana Grobman is a Jewish immigrant from Russia who moved to the United States in 1990. Today, she is a librarian and the author of *The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia*. To learn more about Svetlana and her book, subscribe to her blog at http://svetlanagrobman.com.

Medium Bio:

Svetlana Grobman is a Jewish immigrant from Russia who was born in Moscow in 1951. She moved to the United States in 1990. While living in Russia, Grobman was an engineer and an editor for the Soviet Encyclopedia. Now, she is a librarian and freelance writer living in Columbia, Missouri. Grobman has published articles and personal stories in a variety of places, including the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *Rural Missouri*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. *The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia* is Grobman's first book, and she is currently working on her second. To learn more about Svetlana's experiences in Russia and the U.S., subscribe to her blog at http://svetlanagrobman.com.

Long Bio:

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Columbia, Missouri. Grobman has published articles and personal essays in a variety of places, including the *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Kansas City Star, St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *Rural Missouri*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. In 2007, she won the grand prize at the "Your Family Garden" essay contest sponsored by Harlequin Press and the American Horticulture Society, and in 2013, she won first prize in the *Stories From the Heart* contest sponsored by JewishStoryWriting.com.
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Besides writing, Svetlana loves photography. In 2014, she won third place at the Rural Missouri Snapshot contest in the *Hit the Trails* category. She maintains her photo blog at https://svetlanagrobman.wordpress.com.

Grobman's other hobbies include traveling, downhill skiing, bicycling and tennis. She lives in Columbia, MO, with her husband, an emeritus professor of English. Her daughter and two charming grandchildren, age 6 and 10, live in London, UK.

The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia is Svetlana's first book, and she is currently working on her second.

Speaker Introduction:

Svetlana Grobman is a Jewish immigrant from Russia who was born in Moscow in 1951 and who moved to the United States in 1990. While living in Russia, Svetlana was an engineer and an editor for the Soviet Encyclopedia. However, when Svetlana came to the United States, at the age of 39, she could not read or write in English.

Grobman's her first job in Columbia, MO, was as a night nurses' aid at a nursing home, which did not require much English. Her second job -- a shelver at the Columbia Public Library -- gave her an opportunity to be around books and to begin learning the language. Three years later, she enrolled for an MLS degree at the University of Missouri, and she's been working as a librarian at the Columbia Public Library since 1997.

Ever since Grobman came to this country, she wanted to write about her experiences. At first, she wrote short essays, some of which have been published in the *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Kansas City Star, St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *Rural Missouri*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

Later, she began writing her first book, *The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia*. This book covers the first fifteen years of Svetlana's life in Moscow, Russia. It took her five years to write. According to Grobman, she would never have finished it at all, if not for the encouragement of her American husband.

Grobman lives in Columbia, MO, with her husband, an emeritus professor of English. Her daughter and two charming grandchildren, age 6 and 10, live in London, UK.

5 Fun Facts You Didn't Know About Me:

1. I may be the only person in the history of the University of Missouri who misspelled the word "science" while applying for admission to its Library Science program.

2. The first time I heard about Groundhog Day, I thought that it must be a promotion day for ground pork. Also, the first time a library patron asked me how to "dress a deer," I asked if he was going to do it from inside – like turkey dressing – or outside – like putting on a piece of clothing.

3. I am one of the very few people in Columbia, MO, who rejoices when the weather forecast predicts snow, and our house may be the only one in our neighborhood with cross-country skis, downhill skis and skates.

4. I learned how to bicycle at the age of 32 while helping my daughter to learn, too, and I didn't know anything about Johnny Cash until I began dating my American husband.

5. When I'm in a good mood, I hum Beethoven's "Ode to Joy."

Synopsis for *The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia*

2-line Summary

The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia -- An intimate look at a young person's struggle to find her own truth in a repressive society.

Short Synopsis:

The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia -- A luminous memoir that describes the coming of age of a young Jewish girl in an oppressive totalitarian society rife with hypocrisy and anti-Semitism.

Medium Synopsis:

Svetlana (Sveta) Grobman grew up in a communal apartment in Moscow, Russia, during the Cold War with her mother, father and younger sister. From a very young age, she found herself living in two contradictory worlds: the private world of a Jewish family struggling to live a decent life in a society rife with shortages and anti-Semitism; and the public world of an oppressive totalitarian regime that brainwashed its citizens into believing that the Soviet Union was the best country in the world.

Despite being constantly bullied and insulted by playmates, neighbors, and teachers, Sveta was a dreamer. In the confinement of her cramped apartment, with a book in her hands, she dreamt about doing something significant for her country to earn its love and respect. Yet as Sveta matured and learned about the persecution of her family and the tragic deaths of her Ukrainian relatives during WWII, she realized that the world around her was built on lies and corruption, and that she needed to be strong just to survive.

Long Synopsis:

Svetlana (Sveta) Grobman grew up in a communal apartment in Moscow, Russia, during the Cold War with her mother, father and younger sister. From a very young age, she found herself living in two contradictory worlds: the private world of a Jewish family struggling to live a decent life in a society rife with shortages and anti-Semitism; and the public world of an

oppressive totalitarian regime that brainwashed its citizens into believing that the Soviet Union was the best country in the world.

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Composed of a series of poignant and sometimes humorous stories, *The Education of a Traitor* is a luminous memoir that not only describes the experience of one Jewish child coming of age at the height of the Cold War, but also helps explain why millions of people chose to leave the Soviet Union when the Iron Curtain finally fell.

Points of Interest About the Book's Story

1. **Point of Interest**

   Soviet children were encouraged to inform on their family members.

2. **Point of Interest**

   Children's social failures or religious affiliation could prevent them from joining organized Soviet youth groups, which, ultimately, could deny them the opportunity to get a higher education.

3. **Point of Interest**

   According to Soviet law, all Jews were identified as "Jewish" in their official papers, school and work records, medical reports, library registrations, etc.

4. **Point of Interest**

   Soviet mass media praised the country's economy despite its constant failures. The usual characterization of the West included words like "rotten" and "about to collapse."

5. **Point of Interest**

   Political events were distorted by the Soviet government and often hidden. For example, the Cuban Missile Crisis was never revealed.

6. **Point of Interest**

   Written from the point of view of a child, *The Education of a Traitor* shows what life in the Soviet Union was really like during the Cold War.

Book Details and Purchase Information

Book Title: *The Education of a Traitor: A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia*

By: Svetlana Grobman

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Book Website: http://svetlanagrobman.com

Author Website: http://svetlanagrobman.com or amazon.com/author/svetlanagrobman

Author Twitter: https://twitter.com/LanaGrobman

Author Google+: https://plus.google.com/u/0/106371584644048861382/posts

Contact Information for Svetlana Grobman

Mailing Address:

3212 S Old Ridge Rd.
Columbia, MO 65203

Office Phone: 573-445-7462
Mobile Phone: 573-268-8994

Skype: svetlanagrobman

Email: svetlanagrobman@gmail.com

Website: http://svetlanagrobman.com

Blog: http://svetlanagrobman.com/other-blogs/

Connect on Social Media:

Wordpress
http://svetlanagrobman.com

Twitter
https://twitter.com/LanaGrobman

LinkedIn
https://www.linkedin.com/profile/public-profile-settings?trk=prof-edit-edit-public_profile

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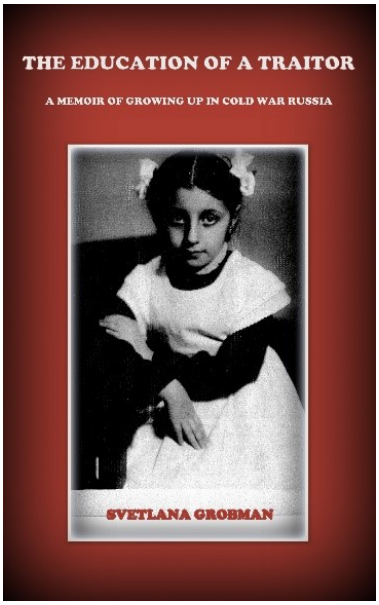
Sample Chapter

The Education of a Traitor:

A Memoir of Growing Up in Cold War Russia

By Svetlana Grobman



Chapter 16: YOUNG PIONEER

It is near the end of my third year of school, and we are preparing to become Young Pioneers.

"It's an honor," our teacher Maria Ivanovna tells us, "And it is a very important stage in your progress toward becoming conscientious Soviet citizens!"

Everybody in my class is excited, but I feel anxious. Young Pioneers are supposed to be ten, but since my parents sent me to school a year early, I am still nine, and I may have to wait till next year. My only hope is that Maria Ivanovna will make an exception for me—that is if, as she puts it, I "take it very seriously and study hard."

I am eager to do that. Joining the Pioneers is much more important than joining the *Octyabryata* ("Children of October," an organization for young school children), which took place two years ago. Two classes of first-graders were lined up in the school gym—girls in festive white aprons

and boys in freshly starched white shirts. The principal made a speech about the importance of being good students and how becoming *Octyabryata* was our "first step toward evolving into conscientious Soviet citizens." Then the teachers pinned *Octyabryata* badges with a portrait of *Dedushki* (Grandfather) Lenin on the girls' aprons and the boys' jackets, and the meeting was over.

This time, we are told, good and well-behaved students will get to go to Red Square, where thousands of students from all over Moscow will join the Young Pioneers in a festive ceremony. So, if I do not become a Pioneer this May, despite being a good student, I will be left behind with the hooligans and *dvoeshniki* (pupils with the lowest grades). That would be awful, since I am already a pariah in my class.

I am the only Jew there and, as if that is not bad enough, I am a hopeless athlete. I must be the worst runner in our school's history and the clumsiest gymnast in the whole school district. When I climb a rope, I grab it with both hands and, after a short struggle, place my feet on the knot at the end and gradually straighten my body. Then I clasp my hands above my head as far as I can reach and hang there, unable to pull myself any higher, to the roaring laughter of my classmates.

Also, every time I try to jump over a pommel horse, I land exactly in the middle of its slippery, black leather back—as if on a saddle—and make my way to the far end of the beast by wildly wiggling my whole body while wishing I had never been born. Failing to become a Young Pioneer would be my final catastrophe, from which I might never recover, even if I made nothing but A's for the rest of my school life.

There are many things I need to learn to achieve my cherished goal. The first is the Young Pioneer Oath, which goes like this:

"I, a Young Pioneer of the Soviet Union, in the presence of my comrades, solemnly promise to love my Soviet Motherland with all my heart and to live, learn, and struggle as the great Lenin bade us and the Communist Party teaches us."

There are also songs we rehearse during our music lessons, like "The Young Pioneers March," "Our Land," and "Gaidar Marching First." And, most importantly, we study the history of the Pioneers movement.

Much like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of the West, the Young Pioneers wear uniforms and neckerchiefs, go on campouts, and declare the importance of loyalty, honesty, and being prepared. In fact, Scout groups existed in our country even before the Russian Revolution, and a few of them soldiered on for a short time afterward. Yet since many Scouts fought against the Red Army, their groups were quickly eradicated after the Revolution, and the Young Pioneers sprouted in their place. The goal of this new organization is to take Soviet youth to a higher level of ideological consciousness.

We don't learn any of this. All we learn is that the Young Pioneers movement started in May 1922, and its first member, whom our textbook calls "Hero-Pioneer of the Soviet Union Number 001," was a peasant boy named Pavlik Morozov. Maria Ivanovna has already told us about him, and we have read a story of his short life. Now we are discussing it in class:

"Masha, tell us what you have learned," Maria Ivanovna says, crossing her arms across her ample bosom.

"Pavlik Morozov lived in a small Siberian village near Yekaterinburg, and he was thirteen, and he was a good student and a leader of the Young Pioneers in his school, and he overheard his father talking to *vragi naroda* (enemies of the people), and …" Masha recites breathlessly, her two scrawny braids bouncing off her narrow shoulders in time with every "and."

"Very good, Masha," Maria Ivanovna interrupts her. "You can sit down now. Seryozha, continue."

"Pavlik Morozov learned … that … his father hid … um … several sacks of … wheat from … from the authorities … and … and then sold them to … to the enemies," Seryozha slowly carries on, peeking at the open book in front of him.

"Well, Seryozha, what else?" Maria Ivanovna uncrosses her arms, takes off her glasses, and gives Seryozha a piercing glance.

"Pavlik was a good Pioneer." Seryozha is gaining speed now, happy to have arrived at the part of the story he actually remembers. "And he reported his father to the NKVD (Stalin's secret police)."

"Sit down, Seryozha. Nina, go ahead."

Nina gets up, adjusts her black apron, and studiously concludes the story. "Pavlik's family were all *kulaks*. They retaliated by killing him and his little brother while they were picking berries in the woods. But later, the murderers were caught and convicted."

Maria Ivanovna gives Nina an approving nod, and Nina sits down.

"Well, children," Maria Ivanovna says, slowly lifting her large body from the chair. "Do you understand the significance of Pavlik's heroic act?"

The room is still; only Maria Ivanovna's eyes roam from face to face like searchlights scanning the night sky during an air strike. Then, as if shrapnel has hit the room, Maria Ivanovna's clenched fist hits her desk, and her voice reaches its highest pitch, "Pavlik was a patriot! He sacrificed his life for the flourishing of communism and for the prosperity of our country!"

The class breaks into a discordant, "Yes, we understand." But Maria Ivanovna is not done yet.

"Pavlik is an example for all of you. Being loyal to your Motherland is more important than you, or your families, or anything else! Remember this!" With that, Maria Ivanovna puts her glasses back on and sinks into her dolefully protesting chair.

There is no way we can forget this lesson. The Hero-Pioneer of the Soviet Union Number 001 is ubiquitous. His image appears in museums, on postcards, and postage stamps. Stories and poems describing his courageous and tragically short life crowd the shelves of our bookstores. Songs, cantatas, and even operas eulogize his exploits. Streets, ships, and libraries are named after him. And his bronze statue, holding a stiffly streaming banner, looks forward to posterity from a tall pedestal in the park bearing his name less than two miles from the Kremlin.

Too bad Maria Ivanovna did not ask me a question. I know Pavlik's story by heart. I have even dreamed that *I* am Pavlik Morozov, risking *my* life by informing the authorities about enemies of the people. It happens to me often that stories I hear, books I read, or movies I watch come back to me at night as dreams. Some of them are nightmares really, like the ones about the Second World War.

Actually, it is often the same dream, which plays itself out like this: Moscow is being bombed. Screeching sirens split my head, thundering explosions raise geysers of dirt all around our house, and shrapnel flies outside our windows. I am under the dinner table, which seems to be the only safe place in this world gone mad. I try to shout. Where are my parents, where is my sister? But somebody puts a palm over my mouth, and I see a forefinger pressed to dark-purple lips, shushing me. Be quiet. Don't make a sound.

Through blinding tears, I cannot see the person's face; all I see is a figure hidden under a black, hooded gown. I strain my eyes, trying to discern the stranger's features, and, to my horror, I realize that it has no face! No face at all! Just dark-purple lips floating in a gloomy shadow under the hood. I scream, loudly and hopelessly. It's Death! Everybody's dead! I am all alone! And then … I wake up, sweaty and moaning, to Mom's "Wake up, wake up! It's just a bad dream, honey."

My dreams about Hero-Pioneer 001 are different, though, not agonizing, but angry and decisive. I am in a two-room apartment where I have never been before. There is a group of people in the next room, whispering conspiratorially. At first, I can hardly hear them, but when I get close to the doorway, I recognize familiar voices, although I cannot place them.

The voices are talking about now much they dislike our country, our leaders, and even our school teachers, who teach children "nonsense." They talk about "corrupt communists," the good life in America, travel documents, and other things I do not understand. I *do* understand, though, that these people are against us! They are against my school, against our government, against everything Maria Ivanovna calls "holy for every Soviet citizen." Who knows what could happen if these people succeed? They might enslave us, they might bomb Moscow, they might even kill us all! How dare they?! I have to stop them. I have to let somebody know!

I carefully walk out of the apartment and quietly close the door behind me. I'm going to inform the NKVD. This is my sacred duty and my destiny—even if I must die. And I think I will die. For a little while, I feel sad about that, but I tell myself that my death will be remembered. People will write books and compose songs about me, and my statue will be erected in a city park. I wipe away tears, take a deep breath, and continue my journey to the NKVD and into posterity.

When I wake up in my bed with my heart pounding, I feel disappointed. Although I am still alive, I am just a school girl and not a hero. Besides, it suddenly hits me, I do not even know where the NKVD is, and, if I ever need to find "the authorities," I have to learn that first.

"Mom," I say casually when my mother hands me a semolina-kasha breakfast smelling of burnt milk, "Where is the NKVD?"

"The NKVD? It doesn't exist anymore. We have the KGB now," Mom says. "What do you need them for, anyway?" she adds in a moment, nudging my sulking sister towards the table. "Just eat and go to school. I'm busy with Tanya. We'll talk later."

Well, here are my parents in a nutshell! Do they ever have *any* time for me? No. Do they ever do *anything* for me? No. Not even *today*, the day I am becoming a Young Pioneer! *Everything* is about Tanya. Or, it's about *them* being tired. What about *me*? Choking, I shove the kasha down my throat and moisten it with a glass of hot tea. Then I put on my new Pioneer's uniform (a white shirt and a dark-blue skirt that Mom ironed for me last night), slam the door of the apartment, and

leave, carrying with me a new flaming-red silk Pioneer *galstuk* (neckerchief) and a Pioneer *znachok* (badge).

As soon as I find myself on the street, the May sun bestows its warm embrace upon me, and a light wind playfully caresses my cheeks. I forget about the injuries my family causes me, my angry pace slows down, and my lips stretch unconsciously into a smile. After all, this is the day I've been waiting for. And we won't spend it in the classroom, but at Red Square, which, as *everyone* knows, is the most important place in the whole country and, quite likely, in the whole world!

Even before I approach the school building, I spot two buses. We third-graders board them with our teachers, and the buses carry us from our gloomy neighborhood to the taller buildings and wider streets of the city center. Everybody is cheerful, and laughter and singing spill from the open windows like foam from a bottle of champagne on New Year's Eve. About an hour later, we reach the red brick Kremlin walls. We get off, form two columns, and march to Red Square, where other festive columns of children are waiting to become troops of Young Pioneers.

Red Square is the focal point of the city, and the major streets of Moscow radiate from here like arteries delivering blood to all parts of the body. Numerous visitors come to Red Square to express their awe or satisfy their curiosity, and military parades and civil demonstrations roll over its ancient cobblestones in a display of our country's power and solidarity.

Today, the square is taken over by school children: boys and girls whose impatient hearts beat under their freshly starched white shirts. The day could not be any better: the sky is silky blue, the sun is aglow, and the air is filled with excitement and the sound of children's voices that echo through the square and bounce off the Kremlin walls and the marble stones of Lenin's Tomb.

After a while, silence falls on the disorderly formations—the ceremony has begun. A tall man with a red Pioneer neckerchief and two young drummers behind him goose-step to the center of the square.

"Today is the most important day in your life," the man proclaims—his amplified voice soaring high above our heads. "You are becoming members of the Young Pioneer Organization of the Soviet Union. From this day on, your life is dedicated to our great Motherland!"

The man stops and a group of young men and women in Pioneer neckerchiefs approach the columns of students to perform the initiation. The drums sound, and we take turns stepping forward. A scarlet neckerchief is wound around each skinny neck and a badge with Lenin's profile and the inscription "Always Ready!" is pinned to every white shirt.

When everybody gets back in line, the master of ceremonies raises his hand above his head in a Pioneer salute, and everybody follows his lead.

"Repeat after me!"

And hundreds of voices join him in excited unison: "I, a Young Pioneer of the Soviet Union, in the presence of my comrades, solemnly promise to love my Soviet Motherland …"

"Be ready!" The Master of Ceremony calls to us at the end.

"Always ready!" resounds mightily through the square as our assurance and energy rises to the blue sky.

My heart pounds inside my chest like a bell delivering great news. I'm a Young Pioneer! And now we are going to Lenin's mausoleum!

The line to the glossy red-and-gray mausoleum is long, but everybody is bubbling with excitement and a sense of self-importance. We are laughing and talking nonstop. In thirty minutes or so, our laugher weakens and the boisterous conversations die out. We shift from foot to foot and glance impatiently at the head of the line—feeling more tired with every shuffling step. For a while, apathy takes over, but then the animation picks up again. We are getting closer. We are only a few yards away from the entrance. We can almost touch the two armed guards standing rigidly on both sides of the entrance in full dress uniforms. Now it's our turn!

Having waited in the bright sunlight for about two hours, I am struck by the dimness of the interior.

"Like a grave," I hear somebody say behind me.

We *are* in a grave, I feel like responding, the most important and sacred grave of them all!

As soon as my eyes get used to the low lights, I spot more armed guards who keep the line moving. Several more steps, and we approach a large glass sarcophagus. I stand on tip-toes, trying to make out the dark-suited figure that lies there. From behind the people in front of me, I can see Lenin's silhouette, strangely small for somebody Maria Ivanovna calls the "father of our country" who "changed the course of world history." I try to get closer to discern the familiar features, but the crowd keeps moving, and a bright spotlight that illuminates Lenin's face makes it look like a papier-mâché mask. Also, this smell … the smell of chemicals and a hospital room, and … what else?… death? All of a sudden, I feel lightheaded and my stomach begins to turn.

"Move on, move on," I hear a voice say, and the force of the crowd picks me up and spits me out into the bright sunlight outside the mausoleum. It is over. I am still nauseated, but the fresh air makes me feel better. Then it hits me—I have missed my big moment! Maybe forever! Back there, behind the heavy doors, lies the man whose face I know as well as my own, whose life I studied in school and read about in books, and to whom, according to Maria Ivanovna, I owe my very existence. And I have barely seen him! How terribly unfair! What am I going to tell the neighborhood kids or my family?

I do not remember how I get home. In my mind, I keep going over the events of the day, getting ready to describe them to future listeners. Yet, as soon as I open our door, my mother shushes me and points to my sister's bed. Tanya is lying there. Her eyes are closed, her cheeks are the color of my new Pioneer neckerchief, and Mom's left hand holds a white compress on her forehead.

"It was really great!" I begin, but Mother interrupts me. "Quiet! I put your dinner on the table. You can eat it in the kitchen, if you want." Mom's voice is a whisper, and her posture, huddled on the chair by Tanya's bed, speaks of weariness and frustration.

"But Mom …"

"You'll tell me later."

"I just …"

"Later, later," Mother waves me off.

This is too much! Tanya is *always* sick. Does this mean that I will *never* get any attention? I was sick at her age, too. So, what did my parents do? They left me with Grandma! They "had to go to work." Is that fair? When is it *my* turn? Nobody ever talks about things that are important to *me*. They just demand that I make good grades, that's all. Just recently, Dad didn't want to speak with me about Pavlik Morozov. What did he say? "*Ne zabivay svoyu golovu chepuchoy*." (Don't take that nonsense into your head.) What's that supposed to mean?

Dark waves of anger flow over me. Blood rushes to my head, which, suddenly, is very clear, and a strange voice speaks from somewhere inside it.

"You *know* what that means. It means that your parents and grandparents, and your aunts and uncles are 'enemies of the people.' That's right. And this is why everything dear to the Soviet people is 'nonsense' to them. And now that you're a Young Pioneer, you *must* do what Pavlik Morozov did. You *must* report them to the authorities!"

I almost stop breathing. It's true! Those voices I heard in my dreams about Pavlik Morozov were not just *familiar* voices. They were *their* voices! And the conversations about corrupt communists, "this damn government," and life in America—I didn't just dream about them, I heard them! In fact, I hear them every time my relatives get together for birthdays or holidays. And I can prove it, too! Grandma herself told me that her parents owned a farm, and then there are those photographs in the top drawer of her dresser—pictures of relatives who live in New York, wear silky clothes, and have fancy haircuts.

No, maybe I shouldn't inform on my grandparents. I stay with them during my school breaks. Besides, Grandpa plays the guitar and sings sad songs, and Grandma makes my favorite strudel. If they are in prison, I won't have a place to go. Still, my parents are really awful! They're never happy with anything I do. They make me babysit Tanya, they force me to eat all that gross food, and … I *definitely* should turn them in!

I take a bowl of soup and storm out of the room, not willing even to look at Mom bending over Tanya's bed. I walk straight to the bathroom, pour the soup into the toilet and flush it. I don't need her food! And I don't want to talk to her *ever* again!

For a while, I mope around our small kitchen. Unfortunately, I cannot spend much time there. The neighbors, Klavdia Petrovna and Naúm Vasilievich, are already eyeing me suspiciously. I head back to our room.

"Sh-sh," Mom says again. "Did you finish your dinner?" Then she beckons me closer, puts her arms around my shoulders and whispers, "Congratulations! Did you have fun?"

I do not answer. Too late now! They think I'm stupid. They think I don't understand what's going on. But I'm a Young Pioneer now! I'm a patriot! I know that being loyal to our Motherland is more important than my family, especially such an awful family.

"Svetochka, what's wrong?" Mom says, peering into my eyes.

You are wrong! All of you!—I want to say, trying to extricate myself from Mom's embrace, nourishing my anger.

"Are you sick, too, honey?" Mom's palm lands on my dry forehead.

Her voice sounds so concerned, and her arms envelop me so tenderly that, for a moment, I feel like cuddling on her lap and telling her all about driving through Moscow, about Red Square, the ceremony, and my disappointment in the mausoleum. But … I won't! She's just *pretending*. She's *never* interested. Pavlik's father must've pretended to be nice to him, too, but Pavlik didn't let himself be fooled. He did what he had to do, and so will I, and no "Svetochka" will stop me!

A short cry comes from Tanya's bed, and we both turn to look at her. Tanya's breathing is laborious, but her eyes are still closed, and she appears to be sleeping. Suddenly, the thought goes through my head, what will happen to Tanya when my parents are gone? She could be put into an orphanage. Well, she's a pain. Why should I care? Of course, she's sick now. I'd better wait till she's better and *then* turn my parents in to the authorities.

But … what will happen to *me*? I guess I could live with my grandparents. No, wait. Will they want to kill me? That's what Pavlik's relatives did. My heart skips a bit, but I shake off the scary thought. *My* grandparents would not want to kill me. They love me! Still, what will they do when they find out about my deed? Will they take me in then? What if they won't? I can't live alone, can I? I have no money and I don't know how to cook. Also, who will buy me clothes or take care of me when I am sick? If my parents are taken away, I'll have *nobody*. It'll be the way it is in my war nightmares. I'll be under the table, scared and alone.

The room is quiet, and everything stands still, except Mom's hand stroking my hair. Her hands smell of medicine, and they are as soft and comforting as sun-rays breaking through the clouds after a long cold winter. I don't remember a time in my life without my mother's hands. These are the hands that cuddled me when I was little, these are the hands that woke me up from my nightmares, and these are the hands that ironed my new Pioneer uniform last night. How am I going to live without them?

Something starts to melt in my chest, dissolving my anger into streamlets of tears. Of course, being loyal to our Motherland is more important than my family, and of course my parents are not the kind of people Maria Ivanovna would hold up to us as an example. But, they're the *only* parents I have, and I do love them!

I wipe off my tears, bring my face closer to Mom's, and whisper, sniffling, into her ear, "I won't report you."

Mom looks at me blankly, "What are you talking about? Report? To whom?"

At this moment, another moan comes from Tanya's bed and, once again, Mom turns to my sister, forgetting about me. I follow her with my eyes, and my heart grows heavy. I recognize that I'll never be the center of Mom's attention, nor will I be a true Soviet patriot. Because, to my shame, all I can say to my mother's bent back—as well as to myself—is: "To anybody."

Tanya and me, 1961

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