

*И.ИЛЬФ, Е.ПЕТРОВ*

ДВЕНАДЦАТЬ СТУЛЬЕВ

*(отрывок)*

Гроссмейстер вошел в зал. Он чувствовал себя бодрым и твердо знал, что первый ход e2-e4 не грозит ему никакими осложнениями. Остальные ходы, правда, рисовались в совершенном уже тумане, но это нисколько не смущало великого комбинатора. У него был приготовлен совершенно неожиданный выход для спасения даже самой безнадежной партии.

Гроссмейстера встретили рукоплесканиями. Небольшой клубный зал был увешан разноцветными флажками. Неделю тому назад состоялся вечер «Общества спасения на водах», о чем свидетельствовал также лозунг на стене:

ДЕЛО ПОМОЩИ УТОПАЮЩИМ – ДЕЛО РУК САМИХ УТОПАЮЩИХ

Остап поклонился, протянул вперед руки, как бы отвергая не заслуженные им аплодисменты, и взшел на эстраду.

– Товарищи! – сказал он прекрасным голосом. – Товарищи и братья по шахматам, предметом моей сегодняшней лекции служит то, о чем я читал, и, должен признаться, не без успеха, в Нижнем Новгороде неделю тому назад. Предмет моей лекции – плодотворная дебютная идея. Что такое, товарищи, дебют и что такое, товарищи, идея? Дебют, товарищи, – это "Quasi una

*ILF AND PETROV*

THE TWELVE CHAIRS

*(excerpt)*

*Translated by John Richardson*

The Grossmeister entered the clubroom. He felt in good spirits and knew for certain that the first move – pawn to king four – would not cause him any complications. The remaining moves were, admittedly, rather more obscure, but that did not disturb the smooth operator in the least. He had worked out a surprise plan to extract him from the most hopeless game.

The Grossmeister was greeted with applause. The small clubroom was decorated with coloured flags left over from an evening held a week before by the lifeguard rescue service. This was clear, furthermore, from the slogan on the wall:

ASSISTANCE TO DROWNING PERSONS IS IN THE HANDS OF THOSE PERSONS THEMSELVES

Ostap bowed, stretched out his hands as though restraining the public from undeserved applause, and went on to the dais.

"Comrades and brother chess players," he said in a fine speaking voice: "the subject of my lecture today is one on which I spoke, not without certain success, I may add, in Nizhni-Novgorod a week ago. The subject of my lecture is 'A Fruitful Opening Idea'.

"What, Comrades, is an opening? And what, Comrades, is an idea? An opening, Comrades, is

*ILYA ILF & EVGENY PETROV*

THE 12 CHAIRS

*(excerpt)*

*Translated by Eric Konkol*

The grandmaster stepped into the hall. He felt invigorated and firmly knew that his first move, e2-e4, presented him with no complications. The rest of the moves, it is true, were enshrouded in a fog, but that in no way disturbed the great artful dodger. He had prepared a completely unexpected way of escape from even the most hopeless game.

The grandmaster was met with applause. The small club hall was decorated with little flags of various colors. A week ago there had been a meeting of the "Water Rescue Society", which was attested to by a slogan hanging on the wall:

THE TASK OF AIDING THE DROWNING IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DROWNING THEMSELVES

Ostap bowed, stretched his hands out forward as if dismissing undeserved applause, and stepped out onto the stage.

"Comrades!" he said in a fine voice. "Comrades and brothers in chess, the subject of my lecture today will be something I read about – and, I must confess, not without success – in Nizhni-Novgorod last week. The topic of my lecture is 'A Fruitful Opening Idea'. What, comrades, is an opening and what, comrades, is an idea? The opening, comrades, is Quasi una fantasia. And what, comrades, does an idea mean? An

fantasia". А что такое, товарищи, значит идея? Идея, товарищи, — это человеческая мысль, облеченная в логическую шахматную форму. Даже с ничтожными силами можно овладеть всей доской. Все зависит от каждого индивидуума в отдельности. Например, вон тот блондинчик в третьем ряду. Положим, он играет хорошо...

Блондин в третьем ряду зарделся.

— А вон тот брюнет, допустим, хуже.

Все повернулись и осмотрели также брюнета.

— Что же мы видим, товарищи? Мы видим, что блондин играет хорошо, а брюнет играет плохо. И никакие лекции не изменят этого соотношения сил, если каждый индивидуум в отдельности не будет постоянно тренироваться в шашк... то есть я хотел сказать — в шахматах... А теперь, товарищи, я расскажу вам несколько поучительных историй из практики наших уважаемых гипермодернистов Капабланки, Ласкера и доктора Григорьева.

Остап рассказал аудитории несколько ветхозаветных анекдотов, почерпнутых еще в детстве из «Синего журнала», и этим закончил интерлюдю.

Краткостью лекции все были слегка удивлены. И одноглазый не сводил своего единственного ока с гроссмейстеровой обуви.

Однако начавшийся сеанс одновременной игры задержал растущее подозрение одноглазого шахматиста. Вместе со всеми он расставлял столы покоем. Всего против гроссмейстера сели играть тридцать любителей. Многие из них были совершенно растеряны и поминутно глядели в шахматные учебники, освежая в памяти сложные

quasi una fantasia. And what, Comrades, is an idea? An idea, Comrades, is a human thought moulded in logical chess form. Even with insignificant forces you can master the whole of the chessboard. It all depends on each separate individual. Take, for example, the fair-haired young man sitting in the third row. Let's assume he plays well. . . ."

The fair-haired young man turned red.

"And let's suppose that the brown-haired fellow over there doesn't play very well."

Everyone turned around and looked at the brown-haired fellow.

"What do we see, Comrades? We see that the fair-haired fellow plays well and that the other one plays badly. And no amount of lecturing can change this correlation of forces unless each separate individual keeps practising his dra- I mean chess. And now, Comrades, I would like to tell you some instructive stories about our esteemed ultramodernists, Capablanca, Lasker and Dr Grigoryev."

Ostap told the audience a few antiquated anecdotes, gleaned in childhood from the Blue Magazine, and this completed the first half of the evening.

The brevity of the lecture caused certain surprise. The one-eyed man was keeping his single peeper firmly fixed on the Grossmeister.

The beginning of the simultaneous chess match, however, allayed the one-eyed chess player's growing suspicions. Together with the rest, he set up the tables along three sides of the room. Thirty enthusiasts in all took their places to play the Grossmeister. Many of them were in complete confusion and kept glancing at books on chess to refresh their knowledge of complicated variations, with the help of which they hoped

idea, comrades, is human thought, expressed in logical chess form. Even with insignificant forces, it's possible to control the entire board. It all depends on each individual taken separately. For example, take that blond man in the third row. Let's suppose that he plays well...."

The blond man in the third row blushed.

"And that brown-haired man over there, let's say he plays worse."

Everyone turned around and looked at the brown-haired man.

"What do we see, comrades? We see that the blond-haired man plays well and that the brown-haired man plays poorly. And no lecture will ever change this balance of power if each individual, taken separately, does not constantly practice checkers...that is, I mean to say...chess. And now, comrades, I will relate to you a few instructive stories from the practice of our respected hypermodernists Capablanca, Lasker, and Dr. Grigoriev."

Ostap told the auditorium a few antiquated anecdotes gleaned in his youth from the "Blue Journal" and then concluded with an interlude.

Everyone was somewhat surprised by the brevity of the lecture. And the one-eyed one did not take his single eye off the grandmaster's footwear.

However, the beginning of the exhibition of simultaneous games restrained the one-eyed chess player's growing suspicion. Along with everyone else, he set up the tables quietly. In total, 30 amateurs sat ready to play against the grandmaster. Many of them were complete nervous wrecks and kept glancing into chess textbooks, refreshing their memories about complicated variations with the aid of which

варианты, при помощи которых надеялись сдать гроссмейстеру хотя бы после двадцать второго хода.

Остап скользнул взглядом по шеренгам «черных», которые окружали его со всех сторон, по закрытой двери и неустрашимо принялся за работу. Он подошел к одноглазому, сидевшему за первой доской, и передвинул королевскую пешку с клетки e2 на клетку e4.

Одноглазый сейчас же схватил свои уши руками и стал напряженно думать. По рядам любителей прошелестело:

– Гроссмейстер сыграл e2-e4.

Остап не баловал своих противников разнообразием дебютов. На остальных двадцати девяти досках он проделал ту же операцию: перетащил королевскую пешку с e2 на e4. Один за другим любители хватались за волосы и погружались в лихорадочные рассуждения. Неиграющие переводили взоры за гроссмейстером. Единственный в городе фотолюбитель уже взгромоздился было на стул и собирался поджечь магний, но Остап сердито замахал руками и, прервав свое течение вдоль досок, громко закричал:

– Уберите фотографа! Он мешает моей шахматной мысли!

«С какой стати оставлять свою фотографию в этом жалком городишке. Я не люблю иметь дело с милицией», – решил он про себя.

Негодующее шиканье любителей заставило фотографа отказаться от своей попытки. Возмущение было так велико, что фотографа даже выперли из помещения.

not to have to resign before the twenty-second move, at least.

Ostap ran his eyes along the line of black chessmen surrounding him on three sides, looked at the door, and then began the game. He went up to the one-eyed man, who was sitting at the first board, and moved the king's pawn forward two squares.

One-eye immediately seized hold of his ears and began thinking hard.

A whisper passed along the line of players. "The Grossmeister has played pawn to king four."

Ostap did not pamper his opponents with a variety of openings. On the remaining twenty-nine boards he made the same move-pawn to king four. One after another the enthusiasts seized their heads and launched into feverish discussions. Those who were not playing followed the Grossmeister with their eyes. The only amateur photographer in the town was about to clamber on to a chair and light his magnesium flare when Ostap waved his arms angrily and, breaking off his drift along the boards, shouted loudly:

"Remove the photographer! He is disturbing my chess thought!"

What would be the point of leaving a photograph of myself in this miserable town, thought Ostap to himself. I don't much like having dealings with the militia.

Indignant hissing from the enthusiasts forced the photographer to abandon his attempt. In fact, their annoyance was so great that he was actually put outside the door.

At the third move it became clear that in eighteen games the Grossmeister was playing a Spanish gam-

they hoped to resign to the grandmaster, although after 22 moves.

Ostap slid his gaze along the ranks of the "blacks" who surrounded him on all sides, glanced at the closed door, and fearlessly set about his work. He stepped up to the one-eyed one, who was sitting at the first gameboard, and moved his king's pawn from square e2 to square e4.

"The grandmaster moved e2-e4!"

Ostap did not indulge his opponents with varied openings. On the remaining 29 boards he undertook exactly the same operation: he moved his king's pawn from e2 to e4. One after another, the amateurs started pulling out their hair and plunged themselves into feverish contemplation. The spectators followed the grandmaster closely with their eyes. The only amateur photographer in the city was already clambering up onto a chair and getting ready to set off the flash, but Ostap angrily waved his hands and, interrupting his movement along the boards, angrily shouted:

"Get rid of the photographer! He's disturbing my chess thought!"

"Why should I leave my photograph in this pitiful village. I have no desire to get involved in police matters," he thought to himself.

The indignant hissing of the chess lovers forced the photographer to abandon his attempt. The uproar was so great that they even shoved the photographer out of the premises.

By the third move it became clear that the grandmaster was playing 18 Ruy Lopez games. In the remaining 12 games, black undertook the somewhat old but sufficiently dependable Philador Defense. If Ostap knew that he was playing such an intelligent

<p>На третьем ходу выяснилось, что гроссмейстер играет восемнадцать испанских партий. В остальных двенадцати черные применили хотя и устаревшую, но довольно верную защиту Филидора. Если б Остап узнал, что он играет такие мудреные партии и сталкивается с такой испытанной защитой, он крайне бы удивился. Дело в том, что великий комбинатор играл в шахматы второй раз в жизни.</p> <p>Сперва любители, и первый среди них – одноглазый, пришли в ужас. Коварство гроссмейстера было несомненно.</p> <p>С необычайной легкостью и безусловно ехидничая в душе над отсталыми любителями города Васюки, гроссмейстер жертвовал пешки, тяжелые и легкие фигуры направо и налево. Обхаянному на лекции брюнету он пожертвовал даже ферзя. Брюнет пришел в ужас и хотел было немедленно сдаться, но только страшным усилием воли заставил себя продолжать игру.</p> <p>Гром среди ясного неба раздался через пять минут.</p> <p>– Мат! – пролепетал насмерть перепуганный брюнет. – Вам мат, товарищ гроссмейстер.</p> <p>Остап проанализировал положение, позорно назвал «ферзя» «королевой» и высокопарно поздравил брюнета с выигрышем. Гул пробежал по рядам любителей.</p> <p>«Пора удирать», – подумал Остап, спокойно расхаживая среди столов и небрежно переставляя фигуры.</p> <p>– Вы неправильно коня поставили, товарищ гроссмейстер, – залебезил одноглазый. – Конь так не ходит.</p>	<p>bit. In the other twelve the blacks played the old-fashioned, though fairly reliable, Philidor defence. If Ostap had known he was using such cunning gambits and countering such tested defences, he would have been most surprised. The truth of the matter was that he was playing chess for the second time in his life.</p> <p>At first the enthusiasts, and first and foremost one-eye, were terrified at the Grossmeister's obvious craftiness.</p> <p>With singular ease, and no doubt scoffing to himself at the backwardness of the Vasyuki enthusiasts, the Grossmeister sacrificed pawns and other pieces left and right. He even sacrificed his queen to the brown-haired fellow whose skill had been so belittled during the lecture. The man was horrified and about to resign; it was only by a terrific effort of will that he was able to continue.</p> <p>The storm broke about five minutes later. "Mate!" babbled the brown-haired fellow, terrified out of his wits. "You're checkmate, Comrade Grossmeister!"</p> <p>Ostap analysed the situation, shamefully called a rook a "castle" and pompously congratulated the fellow on his win. A hum broke out among the enthusiasts.</p> <p>Time to push off, thought Ostap, serenely wandering up and down the rows of tables and casually moving pieces about.</p> <p>"You've moved the knight wrong, Comrade Grossmeister," said one-eye, cringing. "A knight doesn't go like that."</p> <p>"So sorry," said the Grossmeister, "I'm rather tired after the lecture."</p> <p>During the next ten minutes the Grossmeister lost</p>	<p>opening and contending with such a well-tryed defense, he would have been very much surprised. The fact is that the artful dodger was playing chess for the second time in his life.</p> <p>At first, the amateurs – and first among them was the one-eyed one – were horror-struck. The craftiness of the grandmaster was undoubted.</p> <p>With incredible ease and, no doubt, laughing maliciously to himself at the residents of Vasiuki, the grandmaster sacrificed pawns as well as major and minor pieces left and right. To the brown-haired man whom he ridiculed at the lecture he even sacrificed his queen. The brown-haired man was terrified and wanted to resign immediately, but he made a great effort of will and forced himself to continue the game.</p> <p>After five minutes, thunder unexpectedly struck.</p> <p>"Mate," murmured the brown-haired man, who was deathly afraid. "I have mated you, comrade grandmaster."</p> <p>Ostap analyzed the position, disgracefully called the queen the "king's wife", and bombastically congratulated the brown-haired man on the win. A rumble moved through the rows of amateurs.</p> <p>"It's time to get out of here," thought Ostap, pacing among the tables and carelessly moving pieces.</p> <p>"You didn't mo your knight correctly, comrade grandmaster," cringed the one-eyed one. "The knight doesn't move like that."</p> <p>"Pardon, pardon, excuse me," answered the grandmaster. "I'm a little tired after the lecture."</p> <p>In the course of the next ten minutes, the grandmaster lost another ten games.</p> <p>Surprised cries resounded in the room of the</p>
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<p>– Пардон, пардон, извиняюсь, – ответил гроссмейстер, – после лекции я несколько устал.</p> <p>В течение ближайших десяти минут гроссмейстер проиграл еще десять партий.</p> <p>Удивленные крики раздавались в помещении клуба «Картонажник». Назревал конфликт.</p> <p>Остап проиграл подряд пятнадцать партий, а вскоре еще три. Оставался один одноглазый. В начале партии он от страха наделал множество ошибок и теперь с трудом вел игру к победному концу. Остап, незаметно для окружающих, украл с доски черную ладью и спрятал ее в карман.</p> <p>Толпа тесно сомкнулась вокруг играющих.</p> <p>– Только что на этом месте стояла моя ладья! – закричал одноглазый, осмотревшись, – а теперь ее уже нет!</p> <p>– Нет, значит, и не было! – грубовато ответил Остап.</p> <p>– Как же не было? Я ясно помню!</p> <p>– Конечно, не было!</p> <p>– Куда же она девалась? Вы ее выиграли?</p> <p>– Выиграл.</p> <p>– Когда? На каком ходу?</p> <p>– Что вы мне морочите голову с вашей ладьей? Если сдается, то так и говорите!</p> <p>– Позвольте, товарищи, у меня все ходы записаны!</p> <p>– Контора пишет, – сказал Остап.</p> <p>– Это возмутительно! – заорал одноглазый. – Отдайте мою ладью.</p> <p>– Сдавайтесь, сдавайтесь, что это за кошки-мышки такие!</p> <p>– Отдайте ладью!</p>	<p>a further ten games.</p> <p>Cries of surprise echoed through the Cardboard-worker club-room. Conflict was near. Ostap lost fifteen games in succession, and then another three.</p> <p>Only one-eye was left. At the beginning of the game he had made a large number of mistakes from nervousness and was only now bringing the game to a victorious conclusion. Unnoticed by those around, Ostap removed the black rook from the board and hid it in his pocket.</p> <p>A crowd of people pressed tightly around the players.</p> <p>"I had a rook on this square a moment ago," cried one-eye, looking round, "and now it's gone!"</p> <p>"If it's not there now, it wasn't there at all," said Ostap, rather rudely.</p> <p>"Of course it was. I remember it distinctly!"</p> <p>"Of course it wasn't!"</p> <p>"Where's it gone, then? Did you take it?"</p> <p>"Yes, I took it."</p> <p>"At which move?"</p> <p>"Don't try to confuse me with your rook. If you want to resign, say so!"</p> <p>"Wait a moment, Comrades, I have all the moves written down."</p> <p>"Written down my foot!"</p> <p>"This is disgraceful!" yelled one-eye. "Give me back the rook!"</p> <p>"Come on, resign, and stop this fooling about."</p> <p>"Give me back my rook!"</p> <p>At this point the Grossmeister, realizing that procrastination was the thief of time, seized a handful of chessmen and threw them in his one-eyed opponent's face.</p>	<p>Cardboard Factory Club. The conflict was coming to a head. Ostap lost 15 games in a row, then another three. There remained only the one-eyed one. At the beginning of the game, one-eye had made numerous errors out of fear, but now, with effort, he had brought the game to a winning position. Ostap, unseen by the crowd, stole the black rook off the board and hid it in his pocket.</p> <p>The crowd pressed close around the players.</p> <p>"My rook was standing right here!" shouted the one-eyed one. "Look! And now it's gone!"</p> <p>"Well, that means it wasn't there," Ostap answered crudely.</p> <p>"How could it not be there? I remember distinctly!"</p> <p>"Of course it wasn't there!"</p> <p>"Where did it go? Did you capture it?"</p> <p>"I captured it."</p> <p>"When? On what move?"</p> <p>"Why are you trying to distract me with this rook? Resign, and then you can talk to me."</p> <p>"Excuse me, comrade, I have all the moves written down here!"</p> <p>"Bureaucratic nonsense," said Ostap.</p> <p>"This is scandalous!" the one-eyed one began yelling. "Give me back my rook!"</p> <p>"Resign, resign! Stop this cat-and-mouse game!"</p> <p>"Give me back my rook!"</p> <p>With these words, the grandmaster, understanding that death was knocking at the door, scooped up a handful of pieces and flung them at the head of his one-eyed opponent.</p> <p>"Comrades!" squealed the one-eyed one. "Everyone, look! He's assaulting the amateurs!"</p>
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<p>С этими словами гроссмейстер, поняв, что промедление смерти подобно, зачерпнул в горсть несколько фигур и швырнул их в голову одноглазого противника.</p> <p>– Товарищи! – заверещал одноглазый. – Смотрите все! Любителя бьют!</p> <p>Шахматисты города Васюки опешили. Не теряя драгоценного времени, Остап швырнул шахматной доской в лампу и, ударя в наступившей темноте по чьим-то челюстям и лбам, выбежал на улицу. Васюкинские любители, падая друг на друга, ринулись за ним.</p> <p>Был лунный вечер. Остап неся по серебряной улице легко, как ангел, отталкиваясь от грешной земли. Ввиду несостоявшегося превращения Васюков в центр мироздания, бежать пришлось не среди дворцов, а среди бревенчатых домиков с наружными ставнями. Сзади неслись шахматные любители.</p> <p>– Держите гроссмейстера! – ревел одноглазый.</p> <p>– Жулье! – поддерживали остальные.</p> <p>– Пижоны! – огрызался гроссмейстер, увеличивая скорость.</p> <p>– Караул! – кричали избитые шахматисты. Остап запрыгал по лестнице, ведущей на пристань. Ему предстояло пробежать четырехста ступенек. На шестой площадке его уже поджидали два любителя, пробравшиеся сюда окольной тропинкой прямо по склону. Остап оглянулся. Сверху катилась собачьей стаей тесная группа разъяренных поклонников защиты Филидора.</p> <p>Отступления не было. Поэтому Остап</p>	<p>"Comrades!" shrieked one-eye. "Look, everyone, he's hitting an amateur!"</p> <p>The chess players of Vasyuki were aghast.</p> <p>Without wasting valuable time, Ostap hurled a chessboard at the lamp and, hitting out at jaws and faces in the ensuing darkness, ran out into the street. The Vasyuki chess enthusiasts, falling over each other, tore after him.</p> <p>It was a moonlit evening. Ostap bounded along the silvery street as lightly as an angel repelled from the sinful earth. On account of the interrupted transformation of Vasyuki into the centre of the world, it was not between palaces that Ostap had to run, but wooden houses with outside shutters.</p> <p>The chess enthusiasts raced along behind.</p> <p>"Catch the Grossmeister!" howled one-eye.</p> <p>"Twister!" added the others.</p> <p>"Jerks!" snapped back the Grossmeister, increasing his speed.</p> <p>"Stop him!" cried the outraged chess players.</p> <p>Ostap began running down the steps leading down to the quay. He had four hundred steps to go. Two enthusiasts, who had taken a short cut down the hillside, were waiting for him at the bottom of the sixth flight. Ostap looked over his shoulder. The advocates of Philidor's defence were pouring down the steps like a pack of wolves. There was no way back, so he kept on going.</p> <p>"Just wait till I get you, you bastards!" he shouted at the two-man advance party, hurtling down from the sixth flight.</p> <p>The frightened troopers gasped, fell over the balustrade, and rolled down into the darkness of mounds and slopes. The path was clear.</p>	<p>The chess players of Vasiuki were stunned.</p> <p>Not losing any valuable time, Ostap flung the chessboard at the lamp and, in the ensuing darkness, smashing a few jaws and foreheads, dashed out onto the street. The Vasiuki amateurs, falling over one another, took off after him.</p> <p>It was a moonlit night. Ostap darted along the silver street like an angel, leaving behind the sinful earth. In view of the unrealized transformation of Vasiuki into the center of the universe, Ostap had to run, not past palaces, but past wooden huts with shutters.</p> <p>Behind him rushed the chess amateurs.</p> <p>"Get the grandmaster!" roared the one-eyed one.</p> <p>"Scoundrel!" the rest shouted in support.</p> <p>"Twits!" snapped back the grandmaster, picking up speed.</p> <p>"Police!" shouted the insulted chess players.</p> <p>Ostap jumped down along the staircase leading to the pier. He had 400 more steps to go. On the sixth landing there were two amateurs already waiting for him. They had come by a short-cut along the slope. Ostap looked around. Bearing down on him from above, like a pack of dogs, came the thick crowd of enraged adherents of the Philidor Defense. There was no retreat. Therefore, Ostap rushed forward.</p> <p>"I'll get you now, you swine!" he yelped out at the warrior-scouts, leaping at them from the fifth landing. The frightened, dismounted Cossacks cried out, fell over the railings, and rolled off somewhere into the darkness over the knolls and slopes. Ostap's way was open.</p> <p>"Get the grandmaster!" came rolling down from above.</p> <p>The pursuers ran on, knocking against the wooden</p>
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побежал вперед.

– Вот я вас сейчас, сволочей! – гаркнул он храбрецам-разведчикам, бросаясь с пятой площадки.

Испуганные пластуны ухнули, перевалились за перила и покатались куда-то в темноту бугров и склонов. Путь был свободен.

– Держите гроссмейстера! – катилось сверху. Преследователи бежали, стуча по деревянной лестнице, как падающие кегельные шары.

Выбежав на берег, Остап уклонился вправо, ища глазами лодку с верным ему администратором.

Ипполит Матвеевич идилически сидел в лодочке. Остап бухнулся на скамейку и яростно стал выгребать от берега. Через минуту в лодку полетели камни. Одним из них был подбит Ипполит Матвеевич. Немного повыше вулканического прыща у него вырос темный желвак. Ипполит Матвеевич упрятал голову в плечи и захныкал.

– Вот еще шляпа! Мне чуть голову не оторвали, и я ничего: бодр и весел. А если принять во внимание еще пятьдесят рублей чистой прибыли, то за одну гулю на вашей голове – гонорар довольно приличный.

Между тем преследователи, которые только сейчас поняли, что план превращения Васюков в Нью-Москву рухнул и что гроссмейстер увозит из города пятьдесят кровных васюкинских рублей, погрузились в большую лодку и с криками выгребали на середину реки. В лодку набилось человек тридцать. Всем хотелось принять личное участие в расправе с гроссмейстером.

"Stop the Grossmeister !" echoed shouts from above.

The pursuers clattered down the wooden steps with a noise like falling skittle balls.

Reaching the river bank, Ostap made to the right, searching with his eyes for the boat containing his faithful manager.

Ippolit Matveyevich was sitting serenely in the boat. Ostap dropped heavily into a seat and began rowing for all he was worth. A minute later a shower of stones flew in the direction of the boat, one of them hitting Ippolit Matveyevich. A yellow bruise appeared on the side of his face just above the volcanic pimple. Ippolit Matveyevich hunched his shoulders and began whimpering.

"You are a softie! They practically lynched me, but I'm still happy and cheerful. And if you take the fifty roubles net profit into account, one bump on the head isn't such an unreasonable price to pay."

In the meantime, the pursuers, who had only just realized that their plans to turn Vasyuki into New Moscow had collapsed and that the Grossmeister was absconding with fifty vital Vasyukian roubles, piled into a barge and, with loud shouts, rowed out into midstream. Thirty people were crammed into the boat, all of whom were anxious to take a personal part in settling the score with the Grossmeister. The expedition was commanded by one-eye, whose single peeper shone in the night like a lighthouse.

"Stop the Grossmeister!" came shouts from the overloaded barge.

"We must step on it, Pussy!" said Ostap. "If they catch up with us, I won't be responsible for the state of your pince-nez."

staircase like falling bowling balls.

Coming out onto the shore, Ostap darted to the left, looking for the boat with his trusty administrator.

Ippolit Matveevich was sitting idyllically in the boat. Ostap leapt onto the seat and feverishly started rowing away from the shore. After a minute, rocks started flying toward the boat. Ippolit Matveevich was hit by one of them. A dark, twitching knot of muscle arose just above the volcanolike pimple on his face. Ippolit Matveevich pulled his head down and started whimpering.

"What a wimp! They nearly ripped my head off, and I'm just fine. Bold and happy. And if you take into consideration the 50 rubles of pure profit, for one little scratch on your head, the royalties are decent enough."

Meanwhile, the pursuers, who only now understood that the plan for transforming Vasiuki into New Moscow had collapsed and that the grandmaster was leaving town with 50 of their hard-earned rubles, piled into a large boat and, shouting, rowed out to the center of the river. Thirty people were crowded in the boat. All of them wanted to take part personally in the rematch against the grandmaster. The expeditionary force was being commanded by the one-eyed one. His one eye shone in the night like a lighthouse beacon.

"Get the grandmaster!" they wailed in the overcrowded barge.

"Row, Kisa!" Ostap said. "If they catch up, I can't guarantee the safety of your pince-nez."

Both boats followed the current. The distance between them kept shrinking and shrinking. Ostap was rowing as hard as he could.

<p>Экспедицией командовал одноглазый. Единственное его око сверкало в ночи, как маяк.</p> <p>– Держи гроссмейстера! – вопили в перегруженной барке.</p> <p>– Ходу, Киса! – сказал Остап. – Если они нас догонят, не смогу поручиться за целость вашего пенсне.</p> <p>Обе лодки шли вниз по течению. Расстояние между ними все уменьшалось. Остап выбивался из сил.</p> <p>– Не уйдете, сволочи! – кричали из барки. Остап не отвечал: было некогда. Весла вырывались из воды. Вода потоками вылетала из-под беснующихся весел и попадала в лодку.</p> <p>– Валяй, – шептал Остап самому себе. Ипполит Матвеевич маялся. Барка торжествовала. Высокий ее корпус уже обходил лодочку concessionеров с левой руки, чтобы прижать гроссмейстера к берегу. Конcessionеров ждала плачевная участь. Радость на барке была так велика, что все шахматисты перешли на правый борт, чтобы, поравнявшись с лодочкой, превосходными силами обрушиться на злодея-гроссмейстера.</p> <p>– Берегите пенсне, Киса! – в отчаянии крикнул Остап, бросая весла. – Сейчас начнется!</p> <p>– Господа! – воскликнул вдруг Ипполит Матвеевич петушиным голосом. – Неужели вы будете нас бить?</p> <p>– Еще как! – загремели васюкинские любители, собираясь прыгать в лодку.</p> <p>Но в это время произошло крайне обидное для честных шахматистов всего мира происшествие. Барка неожиданно накренилась и правым бортом</p>	<p>Both boats were moving downstream. The gap between them was narrowing. Ostap was going all out.</p> <p>"You won't escape, you rats!" people were shouting from the barge.</p> <p>Ostap had no time to answer. His oars flashed in and out of the water, churning it up so that it came down in floods in the boat.</p> <p>"Keep going!" whispered Ostap to himself.</p> <p>Ippolit Matveyevich had given up hope. The larger boat was gaining on them and its long hull was already flanking them to port in an attempt to force the Grossmeister over to the bank. A sorry fate awaited the concessionaires. The jubilation of the chess players in the barge was so great that they all moved across to the sides to be in a better position to attack the villainous Grossmeister in superior forces as soon as they drew alongside the smaller boat.</p> <p>"Watch out for your pince-nez, Pussy," shouted Ostap in despair, throwing aside the oars. "The fun is about to begin."</p> <p>"Gentlemen!" cried Ippolit Matveyevich in a croaking voice, "you wouldn't hit us, would you?"</p> <p>"You'll see!" roared the enthusiasts, getting ready to leap into the boat.</p> <p>But at that moment something happened which will outrage all honest chess players throughout the world. The barge listed heavily and took in water on the starboard side.</p> <p>"Careful!" squealed the one-eyed captain.</p> <p>But it was too late. There were too many enthusiasts on one side of the Vasyuki dreadnought. As the centre of gravity shifted, the boat stopped rocking, and, in full conformity with the laws of physics, cap-</p>	<p>"You're not going anywhere, swine!" they shouted from the barge.</p> <p>Ostap didn't answer. There was no time. The oars shot up out of the water. Streams of water flew up from under the raging oars and landed in the boat.</p> <p>"Keep going," Ostap whispered to himself.</p> <p>Ippolit Matveevich sniveled. The barge was celebrating. Its high hull was overtaking the concessionaires on the left side in order to force the grandmaster to the shore. A woeful fate awaited the concessionaires. The joy in the barge was so great that all the chess players moved to the starboard side so that, once they were even with the boat, they might rain down on the evil-doer/grandmaster with overpowering force.</p> <p>"Hold onto your pince-nez, Kisa!" Ostap shouted out in despair, throwing away the oars. "Now it begins."</p> <p>"Good Lord!" Ippolit Matveevich suddenly exclaimed like a rooster. "Are you really going to beat us?"</p> <p>"And how!" the Vasiuki amateurs thundered, getting ready to jump into the boat.</p> <p>But at that moment, something highly offensive to all honest chess players of the world occurred. The barge suddenly began to list and take in water on the starboard side.</p> <p>"Careful!" squealed the one-eyed captain.</p> <p>But it was too late. Too many chess amateurs had gathered on the starboard side of the Vasiuki dreadnought. Changing its center of gravity, the barge did not hesitate, but, in complete compliance with the laws of physics, overturned.</p> <p>A joint yelp broke the tranquility of the river.</p>
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<p>зачерпнула воду.</p> <p>– Осторожней! – пискнул одноглазый капитан. Но было уже поздно. Слишком много любителей скопилось на правом борту васюкинского дредноута. Переменив центр тяжести, барка не стала колебаться и в полном соответствии с законами физики перевернулась.</p> <p>Общий вопль нарушил спокойствие реки.</p> <p>– Уау! – протяжно стонали шахматисты. Целых тридцать любителей очутились в воде. Они быстро выплывали на поверхность и один за другим цеплялись за перевернутую барку. Последним причалил одноглазый.</p> <p>– Пижоны! – в восторге кричал Остап. – Что же вы не бьете вашего гроссмейстера? Вы, если не ошибаюсь, хотели меня бить?</p> <p>Остап описал вокруг потерпевших крушение круг.</p> <p>– Вы же понимаете, васюкинские индивидуумы, что я мог бы вас поодиночке утопить, но я дарю вам жизнь. Живите, граждане! Только, ради создателя, не играйте в шахматы! Вы же просто не умеете играть! Эх вы, пижоны, пижоны... Едем, Ипполит Матвеевич, дальше. Прощайте, одноглазые любители! Боюсь, что Васюки, центром мироздания не станут. Я не думаю, чтобы мастера шахмат приехали к таким дуракам, как вы, даже если бы я их об этом просил. Прощайте, любители сильных шахматных ощущений! Да здравствует «Клуб четырех коней»!</p>	<p>sized.</p> <p>A concerted wailing disturbed the tranquillity of the river.</p> <p>"Ooooooh!" groaned the chess players.</p> <p>All thirty enthusiasts disappeared under the water. They quickly came up one by one and seized hold of the upturned boat. The last to surface was one-eye.</p> <p>"You jerks!" cried Ostap in delight. "Why don't you come and get your Grossmeister? If I'm not mistaken, you intended to trounce me, didn't you? "</p> <p>Ostap made a circle around the shipwrecked mariners.</p> <p>"You realize, individuals of Vasyuki, that I could drown you all one by one, don't you? But I'm going to spare your lives. Live on, citizens! Only don't play chess any more, for God's sake. You're just no good at it, you jerks! Come on, Ippolit Matveyevich, let's go. Good-bye, you one-eyed amateurs! I'm afraid Vasyuki will never become a world centre. I doubt whether the masters of chess would ever visit fools like you, even if I asked them to. Good-bye, lovers of chess thrills! Long live the 'Four Knights Chess Club!'"</p>	<p>"Oo-ah-oo!" was the long, drawn-out groan of the chess players.</p> <p>All thirty amateurs found themselves under the water. They quickly swam to the surface and, one after another, latched onto the overturned barge. The last to moor himself was the one-eyed one.</p> <p>"Twits!" Ostap shouted in delight. "What, you're not going to beat your grandmaster? You, if I'm not mistaken, wanted to beat me?"</p> <p>Ostap made a circle around the disaster victims.</p> <p>"You understand, my Vasiuki individuals, that I could drown you one by one. But I give you your lives. Live, citizens! Only, please God, don't play chess! You simply don't know how to play! You twits, twits.... Let's go, Ippolit Matveevich. Good-bye, you one-eyed amateurs! I'm afraid that Vasiuki will not become the center of the universe. I don't think any chess masters would come to such fools like you even if I were to ask them. Good-bye, lovers of great chess sensations! Long live the 'Four Knights Club!'"</p>
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