

Last first snow

I am blinded. "Am I in heaven?" I murmured to myself standing in the middle of white nothing, white desert. Whichever way to look, the view does not change. The wind blows my hair, scattering it over my cold, freckled cheeks, which were hidden under a red woolen hat that my grandmother once knitted for me.

I stand still and do not believe in what is happening in front of me. For many years, I have been sure that I would never see snow again. Our last meeting with it was when I was nearly eight years old, but I still remember the joy and genuine admiration that I experienced then and which still lives in my soul.

My great-grandfather was an avid photographer. When he was still alive, he liked to occasionally brag about his old film stock and still developed old pictures from it. In the same way, my memory manifested that day in my mind.

On that cloudy day, as usual, after returning from school, I sat down for lessons. Carried away by them, I missed the onset of the evening, my parents returned home. I was playing with my robodog, recently presented by my parents to me for my birthday, while my fathers were watching the local news and discussing the recent temperature rise on the Earth. Normally, this should have been followed by a dinner of veggies, as no meat farms were left, because of ecological disasters all over the world, but suddenly Leo jumped up and rushed outside, in a couple of seconds, his husband Michael followed his direction. For the first few seconds, I could not get what had occurred, so I ran towards the door to see what happened. Patience was never my forte. Curiosity won.

I was stopped by one of my parents just near the door, I had to put on a protective mask and gloves to prevent my skin from toxic air and only then ran towards the yard. I expected to see anything but not what I saw. Strangely shaped white flakes were falling down from the red-gray sullen sky as they appeared out of nowhere, somewhere behind the heavy hanging clouds. Those snowflakes were melting as they touched the ground, and immediately faded out. When one of the snowflakes fell on me, I got goosebumps all over my body, and I inexplicably wanted to hug myself, a strange feeling, I never felt so before. I was cold, and after a couple of minutes of observing the white scene, my dad took me back home. Later I was told that it was snow.

What happened that evening was called "The Last Tears of the Almighty." It was the first snow in half a century of severe droughts. I spent the rest of the night, watching the snowfall and thinking how drastically people had changed the environment. The faceless, gray earth, without greenery, where faceless identical houses stood close to each other, was covered with snow, a blanket. Then those all abruptly ended and I was left alone with my thoughts. It left as suddenly as appeared and left behind only vague memories, just a dream...

It is not for nothing that it was called tears, the tears of humanity that have destroyed itself. And here is the meeting again. Something burning, like hot iron, flowed down my cheek. Those memories make my heart unbearably hurt, the blades of memories cut my soul into thousands of pieces. "Why are my parents not with me? They must see it, one more time, one more time..." - I desperately spoke to myself standing there, in the middle of the snow desert. But I have to be strong. How upset they would be when they saw me crying... I inhale, my hands clenched into fists, my back is straightened. The first step, the second, the third, and now, I already run, run towards the sun, as if everything depended on it. I run and do not stop, I run without looking back and scream from tearing happiness. I always knew

this day would come. The day will ensue and everything will be as beforehand - before we felt like masters there, where nothing belonged to us.

Suddenly, an eerie, sharp sound, like an evacuation siren, sounded. I stopped and looked around and the snow no longer seemed to be so harmless. I try to take a step, but the quick snow pulls me into its depths...

A peaky, frightened woman of forty-seven is who I am. I am lying in a sleeping bag in the middle of a survivor camp, holding my only daughter, Tuyet, close to me.

The dark steel walls of the bunker were pressing. The bunker was huge, just on the floor, next to each other, in the same sleeping bags lay hundreds or even thousands of people, there was no end in sight. There were almost no passages to reach the food distribution area, twice a day we had to wade through the crowd and not everyone always succeeded. There was always chaos.

Snow was a dream. Like a knife, longing cut through my heart. There is no more snow, no endless expanses, no frosty wind tickling your cheeks and blowing your hair, and none of this is destined to be seen, heard, or smelled by my Tuyet.

It ripples in the eyes. The head is cracking. The entire hall is flooded with red. It is not immediately possible to understand what is happening. "The building is crashing?", - I asked in the air, hoping for someone to answer. A sharp iron voice from the loudspeaker announces another volcanic eruption, even stronger than the previous one. The last glimmers of hope faded, I no longer hoped for a happy outcome. I was sure our fate was sealed. My heart did not listen to the arguments of the mind and beat

as if it would jump out of the chest. Tuyet clings even tighter to me, and I, trying to calm both her and myself, plunge into memories ...

When climate change had reached its maximum, it melted the glaciers, forming an incredible mass of water that covered more than half of the continents, billions of people were forced to flee to territories where water did not reach. Overpopulation, lack of resources, drinking water, food, fuel, space, made people monsters, a war began for the right to live. This moment came at the peak of the development of nuclear and atomic technologies, the outcome was a foregone conclusion. People were like children, carried away by a new toy and forgot about where they are doing and what they have already turned their home into. The war killed not only people, but it also destroyed the remnants of organic matter, life on the surface turned out to be impossible, everything was radioactive. The survivors united, building underground cities, separating people from the sun and sky.

After long years of existence underground, where we were driven by incredible heat and radiation of unimaginable strength, reigning supreme on the surface, even the frailest half-surfaced capsule house on the outskirts of the city seemed to us royal mansions. Even though the temperature and caustic smog seeped in, compared to the dungeons, it was something indescribable. Now everything was different, and we allowed ourselves to dream. Dreaming about things that were not destined to come true.

We knew it was going to happen, but we did not think it would happen so quickly. The ground split open into a thousand pieces, and magma gushed out of the resulting wounds like blood. For centuries, extracting resources from the bowels of the Earth, we broke the crust, broke its skin, plunged deeper and deeper, taking more and more, until an empty shell remained. Faults, abysses, shifts of tectonic plates, increased volcanic activity. We are the cause of all this.

Our salvation turned out to be our curse. I lost my husband, Tuyet father. Our hope died where it was born.

The piercing howl of a siren brought me out of the depths of the past. Tuyet still hugged me tightly. Prayers were heard from everywhere, people groaned, roared, shouted, this terrible noise merged with the siren in monotonous ecstasy. Shaking. Apathy. Hit. Second, third. Jolt. Everything is shaking. The ceiling is crumbling. Exactly like on that fateful night, the earth crumbles and fills everything around with its blood. The screams are deafening. Tuyet went limp in my hands. Something in my soul broke, a dull, growing pain appeared. She was named after snow, but she never saw it... Hit.

Darkness.

Snowless.

Silence.

Emptiness.

Are we ready to pay such a price for our actions? Are we ready to give up the snow, the feeling of cold, are we ready to forget what it is? We must act. Now. Before it is too late to stop. As long as we and our children can see the snow and feel how it blushes our cheeks.