

Mikhail Krasnyansky

Tree Lives or The New Exodus

(Synopsis)

1. The Blind Man and His Guide

About 200 years ago they were hauling a giant piece of rock from some far away place to a certain capital of the country. The rock was to be a part of some monument to a czar or imperatrix. The rock had been travelling to this capital for several years—We can see hundreds of horses harnessed with thick ropes pulling huge wooden rollers made of trees so thick it would take there men to lock their arms around the tree. The rollers tend to sink now and then under the weight of the huge rock. Thousands of soldiers and common folks move this arrangement a tiny distance amidst the sounds of loud commands, pitiful whining of animals and screeching of rollers. One can see here and there carcasses of dead horses sticking out of mud of the surroundings marshes. People die too from injuries, typhus of impossible life... Somewhere along the way people setup a "Station". They stayed there after the "watch" (workday) to treat their wounds. And each night every single participant of this endeavor would get insanely drunk. One day a blind old man with a young boy, his guide came to this Station. The blind man played his instrument and sang, with the boy following. They were sad songs they sang. They were treated well: they were allowed to have a warm room free of charge and the food was free too in appreciation of their singing. What could be better than that? Several days passed and the blind man got sick and could not play and sing anymore. His guide tried to play and sing those sad songs by himself alone. Only he was not the blind old man - he was a young boy and with good eyesight too for that matter. So they did not give him food and money. They went to bed hungry that day. The old man could not steep anticipating that he will die very soon and he cried for the boy whom he loved so much and whom he will leave soon to this cruel world, to starvation, cold and eventual death... What can one do? Suddenly a revelation visited upon him. He was a blind man, wasn't he? This condition always provided him with food, roof over the head and kept him away from many misfortunes common in the lives of folks with good eyes. The old man made a decision. He gathered all the strength that was left in him he picked a knife from his knapsack and ever so quietly, as only a blind could, he crawled to the sleeping boy. The boy was not asleep either and he was crying, crying for the old blind man. When he saw the old man with a knife he ran out of the shed and into the rainy night screaming in horror. The blind man tried to follow the boy imploring him to come back. There was a very rough terrain over there - marshland, ravines, and trees torn off the ground - any moment the blind man could perish. Over the years the boy developed a habit to protect the old man. He could not abandon the blind old man and run away. So he kept a safe distance of two or three yards. Meanwhile the blind man was suddenly near the very edge of the ravine. When he was about to step down to his fall, the boy instinctively grabbed him. At this moment the blind man holding on to the boy have put the knife against the boy's eyes.

"Don't do it! Spare my eyes!" the boy cried in horror.

"You shall die of cold or human cruelty. You'll starve to death if you have your sight! Be blind and you will always have food and shelter."

"I want to see everything!" the boy cried.

"What? What do you want to see? You want to see this horrible, senseless life around you?"

The observer can see torches throwing light upon multitudes of people, horses, ropes around the giant chunk of rock. And the incessant rain pouring all over the world.

“Why do they pull some rock somewhere?” the old man asked the boy. “Why do the people and animals have to die? For what reason is? And you want to see all this?”

“I want to see everything! I want to live this life! I do, I do, I do!” the boy despaired.

2. The Line

A huge, dense crowd winding out as a long long line of people who want to get something, anything. To get what?... There are all races of people, white, black and yellow speaking in many tongues. The more visible end of the line shows mostly younger people, both male and female and at the other, invisible end we shall later see just elderly people, old men and women. A beautiful girl takes her place at the end of the line and asks the man next in line if he is the last in line. After her a handsome young man just joined the crowd. He asks the girl: “Are you the last in line?” “Yes.” she answered.

“Which is my number?” He writes the number on the palm of his hand: “4,896,216,770.”

“Where are you from?”

“I have finished high school.”

“And I have finished a Music College.”

“Do you like music?”

“As I remember myself, in my previous life, I had been a guide for the blind minstrel. I have frequent flashbacks from that last life.” Then, quite unexpectedly the young man started singing an old forgotten folksong from the first novella about the Blind Man.

Meanwhile this strange long line is moving. It is winding through the woods, mountains, deserts, motels, fields and ranches and railway stations in the cities. It makes its way through factories, office buildings, McDonalds, movie theaters, warehouses. Someone from the line leaves it and starts doing something at a factory, others leave the line to stay in a movie theater, and some go to cafe to sip coffee. At the same time the new people appear and join the line. Sometimes some strangers who do not look as if they "belong" to this well organized and comfortable "line" will settle nearby.

A woman in rags nursing her sick, degenerated baby begs for something. Her baby would start crying loudly now and then and the woman would start beating the child. A naked man with long unkempt hair is playing the violin. He throws the violin to the ground and starts urinating on it. A young woman approached a group of men standing in line. She lifts her skirt, there is nothing under it. She squats slowly. Men stare at her, salivating. The woman sits there for a while with indifferent expression on her face. She stands up quietly, smartens her skirt and leaves walking along "the line".

“Are we going to stay in line for long?” the girl asks.

“They say for very long.” the boy answers.

“Who to ask what all is that for?” the girl sighs.

“Who to ask, what do you mean?” the boy says angrily. “Everybody lives like that people lived like that, they live like that and they will continue to live like that and we are not different.”

“What if I don't want to live like that?” the girl asks.

“They won't let you.”

“Who won't?”

At this moment far away along the line in the desert sands a man detached from the line and started to run away; someone tried to stop him but the man managed to get free. He was seen running between the dunes for quite a while then a helicopter appeared in the sky right above the man. A rope with a noose at the end was thrown from the helicopter. The noose is deftly lowered right on the man's neck. The helicopter soared up with the man hanging on the rope. It hovers above the ground and people watch the swinging

corpse of the man with the blue tongue hanging out of mouth. The crowd cheers and jeers and spits on the corpse.

“Death to the traitor!” the crowd roared.

“I think they hanged someone.” the girl says in horror.

“Yes, that's what they do.” the boy says. “Don't mess with them. He hugs her trying to protect her from the gruesome sight.”

The girl and the boy decided to find out the purpose and direction of this line and whether there is an end to it.. Not just stand in line and move along. They get out of the Line and try to move forward. Some more people join them and the boy leads the team toward the goal. Moving along the line they see that people in line are getting older and older. All the members of the team die during the battle with the helicopters. The boy and his girlfriend came out alive and reached the end of the line. It appears that all the people at the end of the line are very old men and women willingly entering the gates of the crematorium where they know they will be cremated because their lives came to an end.

The boy tries and tries to persuade them not to go through the gate and they ask him:

“Where shall we go?” He cannot answer their question. The boy and his girlfriend are desperate. They move back along the line telling the people what they had seen at the end. The boy shouts that their obedience is senseless that today's activities of mankind on Earth is a way to self-destruction that in the end the whole result of their life will be death. - "Seek the meaning of life inside yourselves then you will not need the Line". People did not believe him or they were afraid to listen. And again the helicopter started to hunt him and his girlfriend down.

A drunkard came up to them with swaying in his drunken stupor. He says:

“I am not an astronaut or an Olympics champion. I'm just a common man and all I am worth is a price of a drink.”

“I wrote a poem. Listen to” the boy says. “It is not a destiny or fate that shall await us... They'll simply use us as sitting duck to practice their shooting skills... And that is our end... Yet we're reluctant to accept the facts and make decisions... Cause we're bewitched and scared...” The drunkard runs away in horror.

Meanwhile we see the following development in the line. Some people started to pass one to other miniature portraits of the boy and some people would sell them in secret. His stories and poems were passed on through the underground grapevine...

During their next hunting round the helicopter managed to get the noose around the neck of our boy. The helicopter soars up. Then there is no helicopter in the sky but over the line there is our boy flying over the line. The people in the crowd drop on their knees seeing the young man flying. They stretch their arms to the skies crying "Amen, amen! Hosanna!" More battle helicopter appears in the skies and more fire is coming from the military guns from the ground aiming at the boy. But bullets do not hurt him coming through him. And the whole line to the end of the world is stretching their arms up into the air...

3. The Beachkeeper

There is a long long stretch of sand beach but for some unknown reason we cannot see the sea. People enjoy themselves at this beach. They play ball, drink and eat. Part of the beach is filled with nudists. There are artists doing bodyart. A small band is playing. A handsome bearded man in a dark suit is walking between bodies and chez-lounges collecting garbage. He picks up cans and plastic bags and takes them to the dumpster. Some vacationing women are trying to start a chat with this strange and handsome man. Others offer him to change to beach attire and join them to have fun in the sun have a

drink with them. Some women even offer him themselves for a quickie. The man declines the favors. "Why not?" these women ask.

"You are asking for pleasures from outside. And I am looking into myself for amusement. You depend on outside world and you are worldly enslaved. I am not. I am free."

One woman tries to start an intellectual talk and it seems to work in the beginning.

"Did you find the meaning of life?"

"The meaning of life, madam, is life in itself and there could be no other meaning."

"Before you came here, what did you do?"

"In one of past lives I was a guide to the blind old minstrel. (He sings a few bars from the old familiar song). In my other life after that I was a dissident. And in this present life I came as my true self. A Messenger."

"Then why your God would teach the people how to cure all illnesses?"

"You see, ma'am, God does not teach how to cure diseases He teaches us how to live with them."

A huge tow truck enters the beach pulling a big beautiful yacht set on a platform. The truck slows down. The driver steps down from the truck.

"How far it's to the sea? I need pier 6."

"We do not have sea here. We heard it is five hundred miles from here."

The truck is moving along maneuvering with great difficulty because of all the obstacles in its way. People give way to the truck in a hurry trying to save their things from being ruined by the moving truck. They pull out of the way the chair, the umbrellas, and other things. Things that people were not quick enough to take out of the way are ruined by the wheels. Suddenly some naked guy jumps on the yacht. The driver sees it in his rear view mirror and shouts something to the stowaway. But the guy disappears into the yacht cabins and would not go back to the beach. Gradually all the occupants of the beach climb onto the yacht and settle themselves on the deck. They are going to sail! Now there are people sunbathing on the deck in suits and without, they treat themselves with drinks. The little band is playing. The whole arrangement is moving towards the sea.

The beach is now deserted and the beach-keeper is running after the moving yacht calling for his congregation to come back. He shouts there is no need to go so far away to have fun, to be happy, to have serenity or for anything else; that one cannot run away from himself; that it is all within us - all it takes is to look inside oneself..

"More rich is not who has more, but the one to whom is necessary less" he appealed. No one listens to him. Everyone wants to go to entertainment. "Aspiring for new entertainment is the dead end" he invoked.

A woman, the one that talked to him before gets off the yacht and walks slowly on the sand towards the Beachkeeper.

"Will I ever get to paradise if I follow you?" she coquettishly asked.

"Both paradise and hell are inside of us" the Beachkeeper seriously answered.

Another person from yacht has approached to Beachkeeper, then another... and another... And there is now a group of 20-25 people surrounding him. The rest (there are hundreds of them) continue their journey on a yacht pulled by the truck.

The Beachkeeper turns his back towards the truck and leads this small band of people into the vast sands...

...And where this Exodus shall take them?

P.S. It is a short opinion about my synopsis from Chicago office that cooperated with Hollywood (I have lived then in Ukraine and correspondence was fulfilled by my son living in the USA):

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Dear Mr. Krasnyansky;

Your father has written what appears to be an interesting 3-part screenplay that reminded us of the days when this type of thoughtful picture could be promoted with ease. The allegorical work of Kurasawa ('Dreams'); Fellini's '81/2'; even Preston Sturgess' 'Sullivan's Travels'.

However, despite the intellectual appeal of 'Three Lives', I'm afraid we just wouldn't have a place to submit it so, reluctantly, we must pass.

Much good luck to you and your father.

Cordially,
H. Kravetz *H.K.*

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