

I approached my house. It was a small white house, with a thatched roof, very pleasant. I grew up in it.

*Pause.*

I stared at my front door; I remembered the first time I walked through that door. The first time my mother let me go down to town myself. I was eight. Feeling - me! - the world, the streets - me! -all for me! I can go where I like and always come home, and that's it. My home, the door I know, the stairs, the lights, the kitchen, the smells. My starting point, the point from which I go, to which I return, where I am happy. Was happy. So it was a shock to go back when I wasn't me. Is this my front door?

*Pause.*

I knocked and went in. Oh but I've told you this. The men, in chairs, stinking of my beer, joking, until I came in. Had they stayed there too long? Had my mother, my sisters and my nieces struggled as they were being killed, struggled longer than the estimated time set aside for struggling?

*Pause.*

Where's Marya? I felt stupid. I knew. But I wanted to hear them tell me.

*Pause.*

Where are my nieces?

*Pause.*

They were very polite. After a time, they were sorry, they said, but they had been told to do this - DON'T GO UPSTAIRS! No, sir, don't go upstairs, really, you'd hate it. You would hate the sight of it.

*Pause.*

Sir! They called me Sir! I thought politeness had died with old Russia, but no, here it was, deference, respect. Respect which I deserved, respect perhaps given to them in sealed orders, *show this man respect*, but respect for all that.

*Pause.*

And so, politeness being my weakness, I did not go upstairs. I did not look at the bins, where the children, in pieces, were neatly stacked. I turned from the room and walked to the door. My face was bandaged, with only a small gap to allow me to see, to navigate my own route with. And as I left, I saw that there was an armoured car outside.

*Pause.*

And two men and two women were stacking small dark green crates around the bottom of my house. In vain did I ask them what they were doing, were they delivering something, I am the owner of the house. They ignored me, stacking these small crates around the edge of my house, at regular, three foot intervals. Each box was linked to the other with two wires, and on one of the corners, the wires led to the van.

*Pause.*

My home. I used to live there.

*Pause.*

I got into the van, as instructed, and they had boarded up the door, the three soldiers' faces at the window, puzzled, waving once and then not again, and I knew that I was no longer to be who I was.

*Pause.*

We drove off at great speed, the van's back doors open, wires spilling off a spinning drum onto the road, and then; some distance down, we stopped. I looked at the sky. So still. The birds in the air, like small ashes above a bonfire, floating on the wind. And then (*a soft, distant, explosion is heard*) the soft crump of my house as it sucked itself in at the bottom and slowly, *majestically*, made its descent to the earth. And I am Joseph Stalin.

*Pause. Another small explosion, more shouts, running steps.*