

Part One

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“What’s it going to be then, eh?”

There were: me, that is Alex, and my three **droogs**¹, that is Pete, Georgie, and Dim. Dim was really dim. We were sitting in the **Korova Milkbar**² and deciding what to do with the evening, that dark chill winter bastard evening. The Korova Milkbar was a **mesto**³, where they sold milk plus something else. They had no licence for selling liquor, but there was no law yet against prodding some of the new **veshches**⁴ which they put into the old **moloko**⁵. So you can **peet**⁶ it with one or two veshches which give you a nice quiet **horrorshow**⁷, you can admire

¹ **droogs** = friends

² **Korova Milkbar** — молочный бар «Korova»

³ **mesto** = place

⁴ **veshches** = things

⁵ **moloko** = milk

⁶ **peet** = drink

⁷ **horrorshow** = good, well, wonderful, excellent

Bog¹ And All His Holy Angels and Saints in your left shoe with lights all over your **mozg**². Or you could peet milk with knives in it, as we called it, and this makes you ready for everything. That was what we were peeting this evening.

Our pockets were full of **deng**³, so there was no real need to beat some old **veck**⁴ in an alley and make him swim in his blood, nor to do rob some old grey-haired **ptitsa**⁵ in a shop and run away. But, as they say, money isn't everything.

The four of us were dressed **in the height of fashion**⁶: a pair of black very tight trousers with the iron cup underneath. This was for protection and also a sort of a design you can **viddy**⁷ clear enough. I had one in the shape of a spider, Pete had a rooker (a hand, that is), Georgie had a very fancy one of a flower, and poor old Dim had a clown's litso (face, that is). Then we wore jackets without lapels but with these very big **built-up**

¹ **Bog** = God

² **mozg** = brain

³ **deng** = money

⁴ **veck** = man

⁵ **ptitsa** = bird

⁶ **in the height of fashion** — по последней моде

⁷ **viddy** = see

shoulders¹ ('pletchoes' we called them). Then, my brothers, we had white cravats which looked like **kartoffel**² or spud. We wore our hair not too long and we had flip horrorshow boots.

"What's it going to be then, eh?"

There were three **devotchkas**³ at the counter, but there were four of us **malchicks**⁴. These devotchkas were dressed in the height of fashion too, with expensive purple and green and orange wigs. Then they had long black very straight dresses, and on the **groody**⁵ part of them they had little silver badges with different malchicks' names on them—Joe and Mike and so on. These are the names of the different malchicks they **spatted**⁶ with before they were fourteen. They were looking at us, and I was going to offer them some fun and leave poor old Dim behind, because it was very easy to **kupet**⁷ Dim a demi-litre of white cocktail with something in it.

"What's it going to be then, eh?"

¹ **built-up shoulders** — накладные плечи

² **kartoffel** = potato

³ **devotchkas** = girls

⁴ **malchicks** = boys

⁵ **groody** = bosom

⁶ **spatted** = slept

⁷ **kupet** = buy

The stereo was on and the singer's **goloss**¹ was moving from one part of the bar to another. It was flying up to the ceiling and then falling down again and whizzing from wall to wall. One of the three ptitsas at the counter, the one with the green wig, was pushing her belly out and pulling it in. I could feel the knives in the old moloko, and now I was ready. So I yelled: "Out out out out!"

"Where out?" said Georgie.

"Oh, just to walk," I said, "and viddy, oh my little brothers."

So we went out into the big winter **nochy**² and walked down Marghanita Boulevard and then turned into Boothby Avenue, and there we found a dod-dery starry schoolmaster type veck. He had glasses on and his **rot**³ was open to the cold nochy air. He had books under his arm and a crappy umbrella. He was coming round the corner from the Public Library. So we came to him, and I said, very polite: "Pardon me, brother."

He looked a **malenky bit poogly**⁴ when he viddied us, but he said: "Yes? What is it?" in a very loud teacher-type goloss. I said:

¹ **goloss** = voice

² **nochy** = night

³ **rot** = mouth

⁴ **a malenky bit poogly** = a little bit scared

“I see you have books under your arm, brother. It is indeed a rare pleasure these days to meet somebody that still reads, brother.”

“Oh,” he said. “Is it? Oh, I see.”

“Yes,” I said. “It interests me greatly, brother. Please allow me to see what books you have under your arm. In this world, I like good clean books, brother.”

“Clean,” he said. “Clean, eh?” And then Pete took these three books from him.

The first book was called ‘Elementary Crystallography,’ so I opened it and said: “Excellent, really first-class.” Then I said: “But what is this here? What is this filthy **slovo**¹? I can’t look at it. You disappoint me, brother.”

“But,” he said, “but, but...”

“Now,” said Georgie, “here is what I call real dirt. There’s one slovo that begins with a letter F and another with a letter C.” He had a book called ‘The Miracle of the Snowflake.’

“Oh,” said poor old Dim, “it says here what he did to her, and there’s even a picture. Why,” he said, “you’re just a filthy-minded old **skitebird**².”

“An old man of your age, brother,” I said, and I started **to rip up**³ the book I had, and the others

¹ **slovo** = word

² **skitebird** = shithead

³ **to rip up** — рвать

did the same with the ones they had. Dim and Pete were ripping up ‘The Rhombohedral System.’ The **starry prof**¹ began to **creech**²:

“These books are not mine, they are the property of the municipality, this is sheer wantonness and vandal work!”

And he tried to wrest the books back, which was very funny.

“You deserve to have a lesson, brother,” I said. The book I had was very hard to rip up, it was really old. But I managed to rip the pages up and threw them up. They were falling down all over this old veck, like snowflakes, and then the others did the same with theirs. Old Dim was dancing like the clown. “There you are,” said Pete. “You dirty reader of filth and nastiness.”

“You naughty old veck, you,” I said, and then we began. Pete held his **rookers**³ and Georgie opened his rot and Dim yanked out his false **zoobies**⁴, upper and lower. He threw these down on the pavement and then I crushed them with my boots, though they were hard. The old veck began to mumble—“wuf waf wof”—so Georgie opened

¹ **starry prof** = old professor

² **creech** = cry

³ **rookers** = arms

⁴ **zoobies** = teeth

his **goobers**¹ and hit in the toothless rot with his fist. The old veck starts to moan, then out comes the blood, my brothers, it was really beautiful. Then we stripped him down to his vest and long underpants (very starry), and then Pete kicks him lovely in his pot. He went away, saying “Oh oh oh.” We laughed at him and searched his pockets. Dim was dancing round with his crappy umbrella, but there wasn’t much in them.

There were a few starry letters, “My dearest dearest” in them and all that **chepooka**², and a key ring and a starry leaky pen. Old Dim stopped his umbrella dance and of course began to read one of the letters. “My darling one,” he recited, in this very high goloss, “I shall think of you while you are away and hope you will remember **to wrap up warm**³ when you go out at night.”

Then he let out a **smeck**⁴—“Ho ho ho”— and started to wipe his **yahma**⁵ with it.

“All right,” I said. “Let’s go, my brothers.”

In the trousers of this starry veck there was only a malenky bit of cutter (money, that is)—so we threw all his little coins away. Then we smashed the

¹ **goobers** = lips

² **chepooka** = nonsense

³ **to wrap up warm** — одеваться теплее

⁴ **smeck** = laugh

⁵ **yahma** = hole

umbrella and **razrezed**¹ his clothes. We did not do much, I know, but that was only like the start of the evening. The knives in the milk plus were really sharp.

The next thing was to unload some of our cutter, to rob some shop, and to buy an alibi in advance, so we went into the Duke of New York on Amis Avenue. There were three or four old **baboochkas**² in the corner. Now we were very good malchicks, we were smiling to them all, though these baboochkas started to shake. Their old rookers were trembling.

“Leave us be, lads,” said one of them, she was nearly a thousand years old, “we’re only poor old women.”

But we just sat down, rang the bell, and waited for the waiter. When he came, very nervous, we ordered us four veterans. A veteran is a cocktail, rum and cherry brandy mixed, it was very popular then. Then I said to the boy:

“Give these poor old baboochkas something. Large Scotchmen and something to take away.”

And I poured my pocket of deng all over the table, and the other three did likewise, my brothers. The baboochkas did not know what to do or say. One of them said “Thanks, lads,” but they thought there was something dirty. Anyway, we gave them

¹ **razrezed** = cut

² **baboochkas** = old women

some bottles of cognac, and I gave them some money for the following morning. Then, my brothers, we bought all the meat pies, pretzels, cheese-snacks, crisps and chocolate bars in that mesto, and those too were for the old ladies. Then we said: “Back in a **minoota**¹,” and the old ptitsas were still saying: “Thanks, lads,” and “God bless you, boys,” and we were going out without one cent in our **carmans**².

“We are very **dobby**³,” said Pete. And poor old Dim didn’t understand anything, but he said nothing. He is afraid that they will call him **gloopy**⁴. Well, we went off now round the corner to Attlee Avenue, and we saw a little shop. The whole district was very quiet, no armed **millicents**⁵ nor **rozz**⁶ patrols. We put our **maskies**⁷ on; they were like faces of historical personalities. I had Disraeli, Pete had Elvis Presley, Georgie had Henry VIII and poor old Dim had a poet called Shelley. They were very special plastic veshch, you could roll them up eas-

¹ **minoota** = minute

² **carmans** = pockets

³ **dobby** = good

⁴ **gloopy** = stupid

⁵ **millicents** = police

⁶ **rozz** = policemen

⁷ **maskies** = masks

ily and hide them in your boot—then three of us went in.

Pete was outside. We went to Slouse who **ran the shop**¹, a big veck who viddied at once what was coming and ran inside where the telephone was and perhaps his **pooshka**². Dim jumped at Slouse, they were locked in a death struggle. Then you could **slooshy**³ panting and snoring and kicking behind the curtain. Veshches were falling down everywhere and then glass smashed. Mother Slouse, the wife, was behind the counter. I was round that counter very **skorry**⁴ and grabbed her. But this lady bit me and began to creech, and then she called the millicents. Well, I **tolchocked**⁵ her with one of the weights for the scales. So we threw her down on the floor and tore her **platties**⁶ for fun and hit her with our boots. I viddied her groodies, and I wondered should I or not, but that **was for later on**⁷ in the evening. Then we cleaned the till, and took something to smoke, then off we went, my brothers.

¹ **ran the shop** — управляя магазином

² **pooshka** = gun

³ **slooshy** = hear

⁴ **skorry** = fast

⁵ **tolchocked** = push

⁶ **platties** = dresses

⁷ **was for later on** — было намечено на потом

“A real big heavy great bastard he was,” Dim said.

I didn't like the look of Dim: he looked dirty and untidy. His **litso**¹ was dirty, his cravat and maskie were ruined. So we tidied him up a malenky bit, we **cheested**² the dirt off. We were back in the Duke of New York very skorry and I reckoned by my watch we were absent for ten minutes only. The starry old baboochkas were still there, they were drinking whisky, and we said: “Hallo there, girls, what's it going to be?”

They started on the old “Very kind, lads, God bless you, boys,” and so we rang the **collocol**³ and called a waiter. A different waiter arrived this time. We ordered beer with rum, and whatever the old ptitsas wanted. Then I said to the old baboochkas:

“We were here all the time, weren't we? We were here all the time, right?”

They all understood me skorry and said:

“That's right, lads. Here, of course. God bless you, boys.”

In about half an hour two very young rozzes came in. They were very pink under their big copper's **shlemmies**⁴. One said:

¹ **litso** = face

² **cheested** = washed

³ **collocol** = bell

⁴ **shlemmies** = helmets

“Do you know anything about the happenings at Slouse’s shop this night?”

“We?” I said, innocent. “Why, what happened?”

“Stealing and roughing. Two hospitalizations. Where were you this evening?”

“I don’t like that nasty tone,” I said. “I don’t care much for these nasty insinuations, my little brothers.”

“They stayed here all night, lads,” the old women started to creech out. “God bless them, these boys, for kindness and generosity. All the time they stayed here. Nobody ever left.”

“We’re only asking,” said the other young militant. “That’s just our job.”

But they gave us the nasty warning look before they went out. As they were going out we sang them: brrrrzzzzrrrr! But I was disappointed. I wanted to fight. Everything was easy. Still, the night was still very young.