At first the weather was fine and still. The thtushes were calling, and in the swamps close by something alive droned pitifully with a sound like blowing into an empty bottle. A snipe flew by , and the shot aimed at it rang out with a gray, resounding note in the spring air. But when it began to get dark in the forest a cold, penetrating wind blew inappropriately from the east. And everything sank into silence. Neddless of ice stretched across the pools, and it left cheerless, remote, and lonely in the forest. There were a whiff of winter.

Ivan Velikopolsky, the son of sacristan, and a student of clerical academy, returning home from shooting, kept walking on the path by the water-logged meadows. His fin