

23/1/33

My dearest brother,

I would have you to know what had happened to me today and to see at least the circumstances under which I write !.....

Do you remember seeing "Journeys End" on the stage. Do you remember the dug out of the trenches ?....

Well, I am in one of them such a dug out, huge, cold, with two long broken tables and two ovens to warm up the place. But do they ?

No ! For in two corners lies snow, wind blown that does not melt. It is 10.45 at night. 19 picked men lie noiselessly round the oven. I, too, will join them. They lie undressed in skins, "Palushebki", "valiki" and keep quiet. They are dead tired and so am I. For we have ~~xxxx~~ all walked 21 kilometers in snow knees deep without roads. The temperature was - 18 ° C. - 22 ° C. and the snow storm, indiscribable. We left our job with 6 horses and 3 sleighs, but soon the wind and cold killed our horses. I left 4 and two sleighs and with the two better ones and our instruments and our instruments, winches etc. went on.

We all went on foot. All and arrived here at 8 p.m. i.e. 3 hours after dark. We did no more than 1½ - 2 miles per hour. I was worse dressed of all and felt the cold as never before !!! I am shivering now, but the circumstances and the setting is so unique, that I must forever fix it. Never in all my life have I ever experienced such a day !!!!! Never, never, and if I escape it alive, then--- well, I shall for ever remember !.....

"Why all this"---- you ask ? Yes, I suppose I better say something.

I choose my best gang, a wonderful gang !.... to come here to "Semenkino" station, offload 5 trucks filled with Machinery and Bridge details. All trucks (motors) of ours are dead and ~~xxxx~~ freeze in every part of the world. Our horses die daily and for every day's delay in offloading, I pay 1200 roubles !..... Thought I am no more "Prorab", I feel so horrible about it all, about these colossal losses !!!!!

I was just outside my dug out for natural purposes and it is shocking !..... I am sure I have never seen such snowhills before ! I cannot believe such weather here in the Ukraine ! Siberia and in driving snowstorm when there is no road seen at all to walk, painfully on and on !!!!! And my feet are cold and wet, and it is cold everywhere !!!!! One can get crazy !!!!!

I must tell you more about the day !!.. My men took bread with them for to-morrow. They cannot finish the work, never, never ! And bread you cannot get at all, for no money under the Sun !!! And there is no Stolovaia, either. So I shall just die of hunger if I and my men stay on !!!

I would love to tell you also whom I saw and how I spoke and what happened and so on and so on without an end !

What enormous difficulties in offloading 4 trucks. Here is the Russian idiosyncrasy, and the bad weather and the dislike and envy of one organisation to the other !!.. And lack of food, clothing and warmth !!!!!

I cannot tell you more !!... I am cold and shivering. So good bye ! I will get nearer to the fire.

Bye, Bye.

JERRY.