

Mikhail Bulgakov

Shifting Accommodation

(From the Diary of an ingenious comrade
Polosukhin)

November 21.

Well, Moscow... What a city... Oh, I will tell you now. There are no available apartments here. Absolutely no vacant flats! I even had to send a telegram to my wife and tell her to stay home and wait for a while. I slept three nights in the bathtub at Karabuev's apartment. Well, what can I say, not that bad as it may seem, pretty comfortable, I would say, just water dripping from time to time. Then I slept two nights on a gas stove at Shchuevsky's apartment. In Yelabuga, my hometown, people say that this stove is a very convenient thing. Hell no, I say! Some screws are sticking in here and there, and the cookmaid is grumbling, obviously not happy about my sleeping there.

November 23.

Oh, carry me out, I can't take it any more! I exchanged some coins for tickets and took a bus. I drove six loops, and then the fare collector lady came to me and started picking on me: "So where are you

going, comrade?” – “Hell knows, – I said, – just going”. Indeed, where am I going? – I thought. – Nowhere. At half past 1 a.m. I went to the tram depot and spent the night there. Bitter cold.

November 24.

I made some sandwiches and went on my so-called tour. The air in the tram was warm with passengers’ breathing. I had lunch with some fare collectors on the Arbat.¹ They sympathized with me.

November 27.

One of the fare collectors clung to me like a limpet and nudged me: “You can’t use a kerosene stove in a tram!” And I said: “There is no such rule. There is a rule not to sing in a tram, and I don’t sing, as you see”. Then I treated him with hot tea and he left me alone.

December 2.

Dossers... now there are five of us. Nice people. We spread some blankets on the floor of a tramcar – as good as in the first class.

December 7.

Purtsman even settled in one of the trams with his family. He curtained one part of the car and made a so-called women’s or no-smoking area. He also luted

¹ The Arbat (or Arbat Street) is a pedestrian street in the historical center of Moscow.