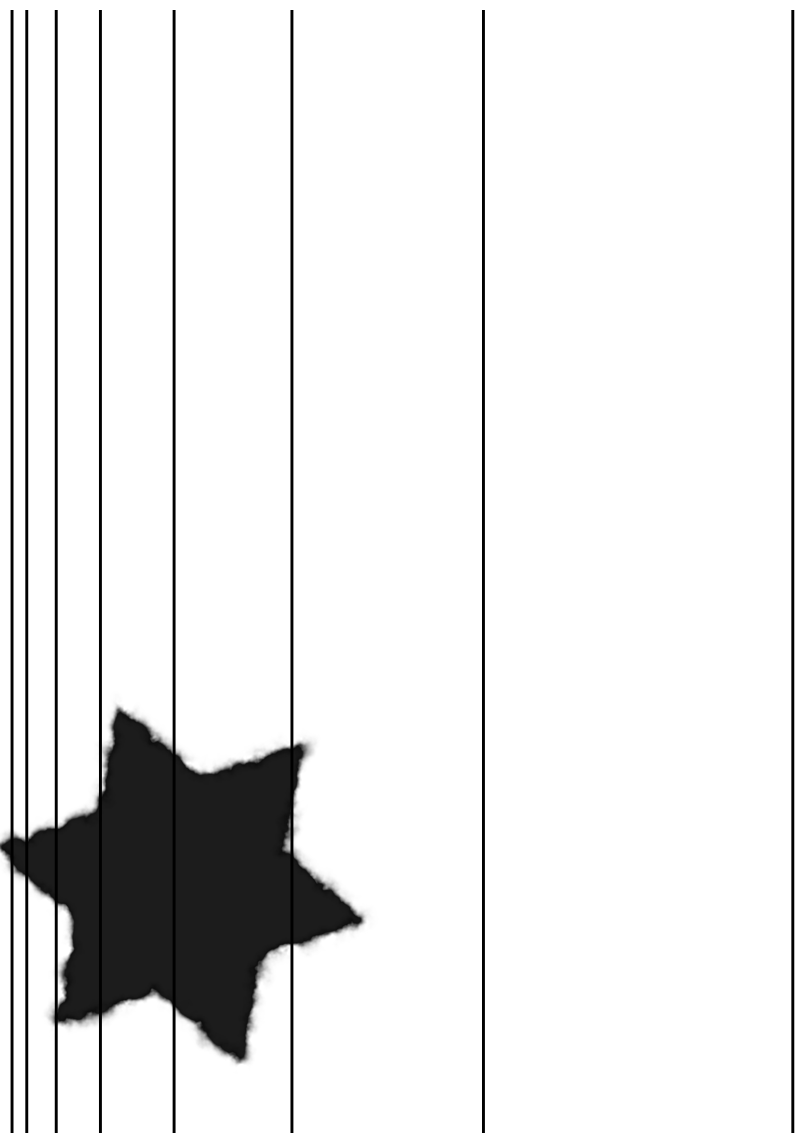


*The Star* by Vikenty Veresaev

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# The Star

A SAGA FROM THE TOMORROWLAND

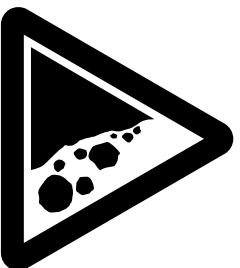
*by Vikenty Veresaev*

*The Star*

by Vikenty Veresaev

Original in Russian, 1903.

Translated via the Dutch by J. de Vries.



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Lompoc, CA • 2012

grandparents had been in the resistance. They were part of an underground publishing outfit that produced forged ration cards, IDs, and other needed documents. They also put out children's books to sell on the open market to fund their resistance work. At the end of 1944—just months before the German occupation would end—they made, for their friends, 1,000 copies of a booklet, much like the one you are currently holding, containing Vikenty Veresaev's *The Star* and the two linocuts reproduced herein.

I have always wondered why they chose to publish this particular story.

## Afterword

Vikenty Veresaev (1867—1945) was a Russian/Soviet physician and author, primarily of the social-realist school. In 1901 he was fired from his job as doctor in St. Petersburg for his political views and activities, and was banished for a period of two years to his rural home town. He wrote *The Star* in 1903, after moving to Moscow.

This text, however, was not translated from the original Russian, but from Dutch. During World War II my

*I commanded in the very lowest parts,  
that visible things should come down  
from invisible, and Adoïl came down  
very great, and I beheld him, and lo!  
he had a belly of great light.*

*And I said to him: "Become undone,  
Adoïl, and let the visible come out of  
thee." And he came undone, and a  
great light came out.*

*Second book of Enoch 25:1-3*



peered into the horizon, searching for the trembling budding of a new light coming forth.

IT WAS AN OLD AND ANCIENT TIME IN A DISTANT, long since forgotten land. Eternal night hung over the earth; marsh-fumes rose languidly from the swampy land and filled the atmosphere. People were born, grew up, fell in love, and died. Only seldom did the wind's breath chase away the heavy vapors and then, high above, sparkling stars could be seen.

From time to time, a great feast was given. From their hovels the lonely people came forth, gathered in a clearing, and sung a hymn for the heavens. Parents showed their children the stars and taught them to look upward so that their hearts

would be glad.

Young boys and girls fixed their eyes on the heavens, and put into that gaze all the desires of their souls—which went out to light and space.

The priests prayed to the stars, the poets sung odes in their honor, and the scholars attempted to calculate their distance and number. They made a profound discovery. They saw that the heavenly lights, slowly but surely, were approaching the earth. It was known—from reliable sources—that in the past it was impossible to make out the smile on a child's face, while now one could do

pull a star from the heavens.

The parents taught the children that the flight to the stars was man's greatest joy. But they always let on, through their own doubts, that the light might be a blessing but it was foolish and fruitless to want to light the earth with them.

The priests and scholars taught the same, but in vain. Now and then there would be news that an older child had left the house. Where to? With dismay the people understood that they would have to undertake the great work to come when a star arrived. With fear and awe they



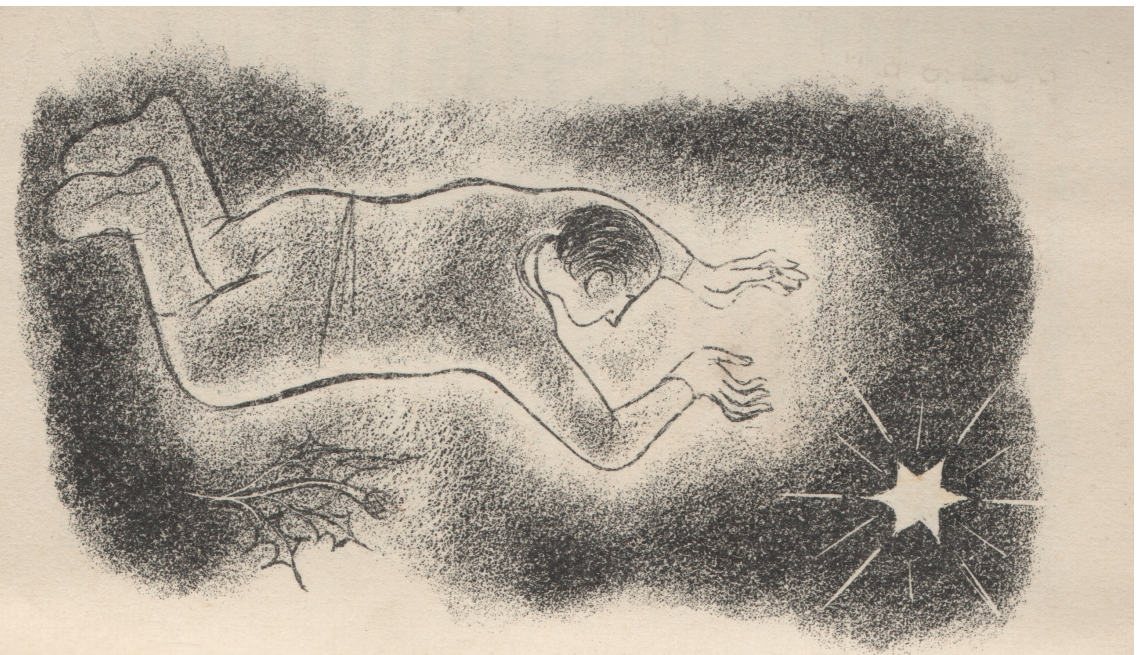
star, which shattered in the mud and melted...

Dark clouds again covered the earth and far away thousands of small lights twinkled harmlessly in the unreachable heavens.

MANY YEARS PASSED. AGAIN PEOPLE WERE born in the chilly dusk. They lived and died after a seemingly calm life. But the people could not forget that there once was a lucky star in their midst. Their small pleasures were poisoned and the lies consumed their hearts. While at prayer the people would think to themselves: maybe there will come another fool who will

so from three paces away. Thus came about the belief that, in a few million years, the entire sky would shine with a bright flame and the entire earth would be bathed in a golden radiant light. Everyone was waiting patiently for that appointed time, and still waiting they would each patiently exhale their last breath.

Many years passed. The lives of the people were quiet, unchanged, and lit only by the firm belief in the far away constellations. Once—unexpectedly—there shone on a summer evening countless flickering lights in the sky. The people poured into the streets, crowding one another, and in



have learned of the light and can no longer live in the darkness, go forth and win your own star. Follow the footsteps of the fallen pathfinders. You shall return with stars and then their light will not perish. The marshes will dry up, the mists will give way, the trees will become green, and the people will work together for change. Then life will be good and beautiful, bathed in the glow that will be fed by your blood. And the stars that will descend from the heavens will shine on the life of those who are worthy...”

His voice broke off. His face grew pale. He fell, and with him fell the

desirable so long as it is offered at a distance. On earth the darkness is more pleasant, because you can then better hide from each other and have peace with your shortcomings. But more so than ever I understand that this life is intolerable, that every breath silently cries out to heaven of the injustice that prevails and the cruelty that reigns ... but wait! My star will not shine much longer. The stars above shine on their own power, but a star ripped from the sky lives off of the blood of the one who carries it. My life will soon be drained, and with it the star. Another cannot inherit it, because each must conquer their own star. All you who

silent awe their souls went out to the eternal lights.

“Brothers!” called a voice from the crowd, “How glorious is the light up above, and how dark and bleak is it down here with us! I have lost all joy and lust for life in this twilight. What use it to us that in a million years our children’s children will live in the light? We—we have need of it now, more so than even air or food, more so than a mother and a wife. Who knows? Maybe there is way to the stars. Maybe there is a force that can pry them from the heavens and bring them down for the salvation of all creatures. Come! Let us find that way.

Let us find the light of life.”

“Who was it that spoke?” asked the people in a whisper.

“Adoil the fool. Adoil, the rebellious youth!”

Silence fell on the gathered people.

“Child,” at last said the old Tsoer, who knew the world’s wisdom, “Your discontent is understandable. Who hasn’t, in their youth, felt that way? But humankind is simply not able to rip the stars from the heavens. Beyond the earth lie gaping chasms, behind which rise steep rocky cliffs. A

But you can still make good. Smash your star and take one single splinter of it to illuminate life, where such light is needed to labor productively and fruitfully.”

“You have spoken the truth Tsoer,” replied Adoil, “The star brought neither joy nor peace. I couldn’t have predicted this when I scaled the steep cliffs without regard for my own life and saw my friends fall into the abyss. I thought, life will be good so long as there is one, just one, who reaches the goal. But as soon as I stood here and learned your wisdom I understood that my dreams were fruitless, and that the light is only

star from the heavens and with it wished to illuminate life, before it was fully developed. That is why everything looks so ugly and wrong. Had we not always suspected that it would be so? There is no wisdom in bringing down a star from the heavens to uncover the suffering of life.”

“No! Take on the dark and dirty work yourself to change the world. Then you will know whether, even with an ocean of light, it is easy to clean up the eons of dirt that have accumulated. You don’t know the life’s ways and rules. That is why you brought sadness instead of happiness, war and hate instead of peace and freedom.

path to the stars, you see, is there not possible. Experience and prudence speak from my mouth.

“I do not address myself to you philosophers,” replied Adoil, “Your knowledge clouds your vision. Your wisdom makes you blind. My words are for the young brave hearts that have not yet been stifled by your mouldering gray wisdom.”

He waited for a reply.

Some said: “We are the light and joy of our parents’ lives. We are loathe to bring them grief.”



Others said: “We would like to follow you, but we have just begun building our homes and wish to first finish them.”

But others said: “Yes, Adoïl, yes. We will go with you.”

And many young men and young women followed Adoïl to the dark uncertain horizon. And the darkness devoured them.

MANY YEARS PASSED. NO WORD CAME FROM THOSE who had gone out. Mothers mourned their reckless children, and went on with their lives. Again, children were born in the chilly dusk.

darkness is equally as holy. You have committed sacrilege with your cold hubris. Have remorse, my son, throw the light from you and return unto the earth her freedom.”

“And if I did, would freedom then not be lost forever?” asked Adoïl. And trembling, all felt that he had spoken the truth.

Tsoer, the teacher of the world’s wisdom spoke thus: “In truth, Adoïl, you have acted foolishly. You will reap no fruit. Everything must develop slowly. Slowly must the stars approach man’s life. You didn’t want to wait. You grabbed—on your own—a

at Adoil, but they didn't dare because of the bright shine of the murderous light.

“Come to your senses!” cried out the graying priest Satsovi, “If you curse the light then you bring down on your conscience a heavy sin. What have we always desired, but the light! But you, my son, Adoil have sinned by bringing a star down amongst us. The holy Goddess said: Blessed are they who aspire to the stars. The overreaching human mind has misunderstood the ruler of the world's words. Unready students have twisted the meaning of the words. Only our soul will rise up, but on earth

They fell in love and died with the silent certainty that in thousands of years a great light would rise over the earth.

Then, one day, there trembled a faint light on the gloomy horizon.

“What is that?” asked the people as they gathered outside. The sky became brighter and brighter. Blue rays broke through the clouds and danced on the mists. The people clung to each other apprehensively, and then broke and scattered to every corner. But they light kept growing.

“Such brightness can only be the

heavenly stars!” said Satsovi, the old priest. “How can such a light reach us?” asked Tsoer, the scholar of the world’s wisdom, “There is no path from the stars to us or from us to the stars.” But the sky became brighter and brighter until a bright, sparkling dot could be seen.

“A star! A star is coming!” The cry ran joyfully through the land and the people ran to meet the coming star. White bundles of light, like glowing beams, broke through the mists, tearing and breaking them so that they fell to earth.

Freed from its gloom, the whole earth

shameless, penetrating light. It reaches every cranny of our homes and sees how dirty it is there. We can’t look at each other anymore, because we do not see the person but their misery. We can live like this no longer. Down with the star-bringer! Down with the light! Down!” shouted the masses, “Long live the darkness.”

“The light brings poverty and misery! Down with the star-bringer!”

Threateningly the masses pushed forward, hungry to destroy the horrific blasphemy of the vile light. The people wanted to throw themselves



Someone hurried across the square, their eyes burning, their face contorted, bile spewing from their mouth.

“Down with the star! Down with the accursed star-bringer. I speak for everyone! Down with the light, that steals our life and joy! In the darkness there was no hate or strife, and now look! It has become light and peace has gone! The people are ugly and repulsive; the houses and trees are bleak and barren. And the earth! Covered in foul blood stains. The odor follows us when we eat and when we pray, sapping our strength. Everything is awful—and clear. Nowhere is there escape from the

had become visible and the people stood relieved that their brothers and sisters still lived. Everyone walked towards the coming light. Slowly Ad-oil came closer. High above him he held tightly to the ray of a star that he had ripped from the sky.

He was alone.

“Where are the others?” asked the people.

“They have perished,” he answered with a doleful voice.

Jubilantly the people gathered around him, the star-bringer.

“Praise Adoill! Praise be the light-bringer!”

FOR MANY DAYS ADOILL STAYED IN THE square, with his star held high, to illuminate the city. But gradually, the cheering died away. People walked past each other scowling and angry, avoiding each other's gaze. When they crossed the square where Adoill stood, their minds filled with anger towards him. Neither song nor prayer were heard any more. The mists were gone, but had been replaced with bitter envy and taut rage. It had become oppressive to live under such pressure.

