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The Experiment

A pensioner, former history teacher Oleg Vasilyevich Gorchenko, tall and gray-haired, in a long white coat and a huge, somehow ridiculous black hat, with a cane in his right hand, slowly walked through a dull, deserted autumn park. However, how is he a former teacher? If a person has worked with children for decades, having a calling for his profession, then you can't say of him: "former teacher." Gorchenko is one of those people about whom others say, "a teacher from God."

Oleg Vasilyevich taught children for 45 years, and now, at 67, he could no longer teach, despite the fact that he would like to. His heart, which had been working properly for many years, began to remind him of itself sometimes with severe pain.

That day, Gorchenko left the house for the first time since his heart attack. He left alone, without anyone to accompany him. Since childhood, he had loved to do everything himself, without relying on relatives or friends. However, the several hundred post-heart attack steps taken by Oleg Vasilyevich through the dead, senselessly rustling foliage tired the teacher, and he decided to sit down on the nearest bench to rest.

Of course, the teacher didn't know that the bench was being watched, and the observer was a tall seventh-grader named Vasya Korotkov, hiding behind a tree in worn jeans, a sports jacket, and a funny, multi-colored woolen cap. He lived next door to Gorchenko and was skipping school that day. A few minutes before Oleg Vasilyevich appeared in the park, the boy had smeared the entire bench with transparent glue. He had enough glue. Vasya's father worked at a furniture factory and could sometimes take a jar or two of varnish, glue, or paint home from work, saying it would come in handy around the house.

Vasya certainly recognized the teacher who was slowly approaching the bench right away. Oleg Vasilyevich had taught the boy history the previous year, but the idea of stopping the teacher had not occurred to the seventh-grader. Sometimes, children's behavior turns out to be inexplicable. Why? Because Gorchenko was the only teacher at school to whom the hooligan Vasya treated with some respect, and not because he was interested in history. No, the seventh-grader did not like studying at all, but Oleg Vasilyevich always presented the material so enthusiastically that Vasya, as if spellbound, not only sat quietly in class but also looked attentively at the teacher and listened to him. He listened about the ancient people hunting mammoths, about the slave rebellion led by Spartacus, and about the greatness and fall of the Roman Empire, about Cleopatra and Julius Caesar. And sometimes it seemed to the teacher that sparks of interest flared up in the eyes of a pupil whom other teachers considered negligent. It was Oleg Vasilyevich who spoke out at the teachers' council against Korotkov being left for a second year; that is, he helped him. Many schoolchildren loved Gorchenko for his human, rather than formal, attitude towards them. Unlike some of the history teacher's colleagues, on the one hand, he was able to show the children that, despite his position and age, he did not consider himself above them; on the other hand, he did not

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/3

find himself on the slippery level of cheap familiarity with the pupils. But despite all this, hiding behind a spreading willow, the boy calmly watched as Oleg Vasilyevich, leaning on a wooden stick, slowly lowered himself onto a bench smeared with glue.

“I wonder how he’ll get up?” the young experimenter thought coldly about the history teacher. Likely at that moment, the schoolboy perceived the old teacher not as a living person, but as an object on which a cruel experiment was being conducted. Or maybe Vasya thought, “Just an experiment?”

Sitting on the bench, Oleg Vasilyevich thoughtfully looked somewhere into the distance. Vasya, of course, could not read the teacher’s thoughts but simply waited to see what would happen next.

Gorchenko, having rested for about fifteen minutes, slowly tried to get up to continue his walk, but his light raincoat, to the teacher’s surprise, did not come off the wooden surface. Vasya, watching the teacher’s actions attentively and with pleasure, barely held back from laughing out loud. Gorchenko, having with difficulty freed himself from the embrace of the raincoat glued to the bench, looked at it in bewilderment, glanced around, lingering for a moment with his gaze on the tree behind which Vasya was hiding, and finally, leaning on his cane, slowly wandered towards his house. Did he notice the boy behind the weeping willow or not? Who knows. – Yurii Tokar, Ukraine