Trembling, tucked into myself like a small bird, I imagined Judgment Day, the icons on the wall. I cried a little. How helpless I was lying in Grandfather’s boat and how schooled of unpleasant and bad things. How unpleasant it is when Grandmother curses at me or when long rain pelts down and doesn’t want to stop. How unpleasant when a leech clings to your leg, or when strange dogs bark at you, or a goose hisses around your feet, nips at your pants with a red beak. And how unpleasant to carry with one hand a large bucket of water or to weed or tear off side-shoots of tobacco. How unpleasant when Father comes home drunk and fights with Grandfather, then with Mother, then throws plates. How unpleasant to walk barefoot over wheat stubs or to giggle in church when something strikes you as funny. Riding in a hay-filled wagon about to tip over is unpleasant. It’s unpleasant to look at a large fire, but pleasant to look at its embers. How pleasant it is to hug a foal. Or at daybreak to see your calf wandering in all by itself, to know it found its way home in the dark. How pleasant it is to wade in warm puddles after thunder or to catch a small pike with your bare hands, stir muddy water, or to watch someone slowly pull in a large net. How pleasant it is to find a bird’s nest in the grass, to eat Easter buns and eggs. How pleasant when spring waters flood the house and everyone wanders all over, how pleasant to fall asleep in Grandfather’s boat, like a mouse in grain, after harvest—rye, millet, and barley drying on the stove. And, of course, the smell of drying grain is pleasant. It’s pleasant to haul small heaps into large heaps, to walk around them, grain spilled everywhere. It’s pleasant when an apple thought sour turns out to be sweet. It’s pleasant when grandfather yawns, when bells ring out on a summer evening. It’s also pleasant—and this I loved most—when Grandfather talked with a horse or foal as if they were human. I loved when out of the darkness on the road a voice called out “Peace to you!” and Grandfather replied: “And may God grant you peace!” I loved when a big fish tossed in the lake or in the purple stillness of the Desna at sunset. I loved to lie in a wagon, returning home from the meadow, to look up at the star-filled sky. I loved to drift off to sleep—when the wagon pulled around to the house and I was carried, asleep, inside. I loved the sound of wheels screeching under wagons heavy with harvest in August. Birds chirping in the garden and in the field. I loved swallows in barns, corncrakes in meadows. I loved the splash of spring water. At twilight, the cry-croak of frogs during a rainfall in a bog. I loved the songs of girls—carols, songs of the New Year, the coming of spring, the harvest songs. I loved the thud of apples in the orchard at dusk when they fall unexpectedly into the grass. A certain mystery and sadness, the inevitability and law that out of what seemingly ends, come the pleasant things of this world. I loved thunder, although it scared Mother, the downpour and loud wind for the gifts they brought to the orchard.