Spring had set in, and even the milk in the bowl no longer froze over. Yet everyone knows how insidious are the habits of spring, that beautiful season. It can become so unexpectedly cold that the wind penetrates to the very marrow of your bones.

Although the Path of Lenin agricultural cooperative had stored enough hay and fodder to take care of any emergency and its livestock had not lost any weight during the winter, the coop members did not remain idle. They were ready to meet any challenge that spring might have in store for them.

In the past twenty years the number of camel mares belonging to this cooperative had increased continually and the young were raised successfully. I had occasion to meet and talk with an outstanding camel breeder of the cooperative by the name of Alima, who had not lost a single young camel and had successfully completed the artificial insemination of the camel mares.

The sun had set beyond the mountain ranges and a faint evening light came into the ger. Suddenly the sheep stamped their hoofs, as if alarmed by something, and dogs began to bark.

"Aren't the dogs around here rather vicious?" I asked.

"No, our dogs are gentle," the old woman replied. But then she suddenly stopped, her face turning gray as she apparently recalled some terrible incident.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Of the wolves," she replied barely audibly and closed her eyes.
The fire in the hearth was burning low. It was dark and cold in the ger. I threw several small logs into the stove. Again the fire burned brightly, lighting up the face of my hostess. It was still pale and pensive. A moment or two later she seemed to shake off that feeling of horror and she told me the story of one terrible day.

"Well, my son, just listen," she began. "Have you ever seen how wolves make short shrift of a whole flock of helpless animals? Believe me, they are our dreadful enemies. In early summer of 1945 we moved, as usual, to our summer camp. It is amazing how suddenly the weather can change in summer! After all, it was summer, our beautiful summer, but suddenly out of nowhere there came thunder and lightning and also hail, and then there was a real snowstorm.

"Just five steps away it was pitch dark. I rushed through that raging white mess to the baby camels which had been grazing not far away before the storm began.

"The steppe, which had just been covered with a green silky carpet and which had shone in all its splendor, became transformed into a white desert in just a few minutes. It was real winter!

"And then I saw something which I cannot forget to this day. At the bottom of a deep ravine a pack of wolves was torturing my baby camels. Yelling and not even hearing my own voice, I ran over to the edge of the ravine. Those beasts, drunk with the blood, did not even notice that I was there.

"The air rang out with the pitiful cries of the poor baby camels. I can still see the flow of those huge black eyes, their vain attempt to keep on their feet which were still very weak, when the fangs of the beasts sank into the necks of the camels. What beasts they are, wolves!"

Alima's eyes filled with tears.

"How many baby camels were there?" I asked.

"Over a hundred," Alima continued, sighing deeply. "The wolves gnawed over thirty to death, and many more were wounded and crippled."
"I ran home weeping and told them what I had seen. My oldest brother took his gun, silently saddled his horse and set off in the direction I showed him. Several other people from the neighboring rode off after him. I mounted an unsaddled horse and also followed them.

"The wolves scattered, and one large pack ran off to the eastern range. That pack was completely wiped out. Two wolves of another pack that rushed westward were able to save themselves, but not before they had got a bullet in them..."

The old woman frowned in anger and whispered: "Wolves are the enemies of us all..."

After a while she continued: "Camels are the wisest animals. You can't imagine how they love their little ones. All summer long they wailed pitifully and continually, those that had lost their foals. It was hard to look at their moist eyes. And how much weight they lost! They looked like living skeletons..."

Alima wiped off a tear that had run down her cheek. I did not feel any better.

"Our camels were always known for their fine condition," she said, renewing her story. "And that year their wool also shone on them. But they wouldn't move a step away from that terrible ravine. They guarded the dead bodies of their foals until they themselves became terribly skinny. Many of them did not live through the winter..."

"Are there still wolves here in this region?" I asked.

"Almost none. Sometimes one or two appear here, but our young people are always on the watch, and not a single wolf gets away alive. But we can't let up on our vigilance. Wolves are capable of anything, they are such terrible creatures!" she said, finishing her story, and she pressed her lips together grimly.