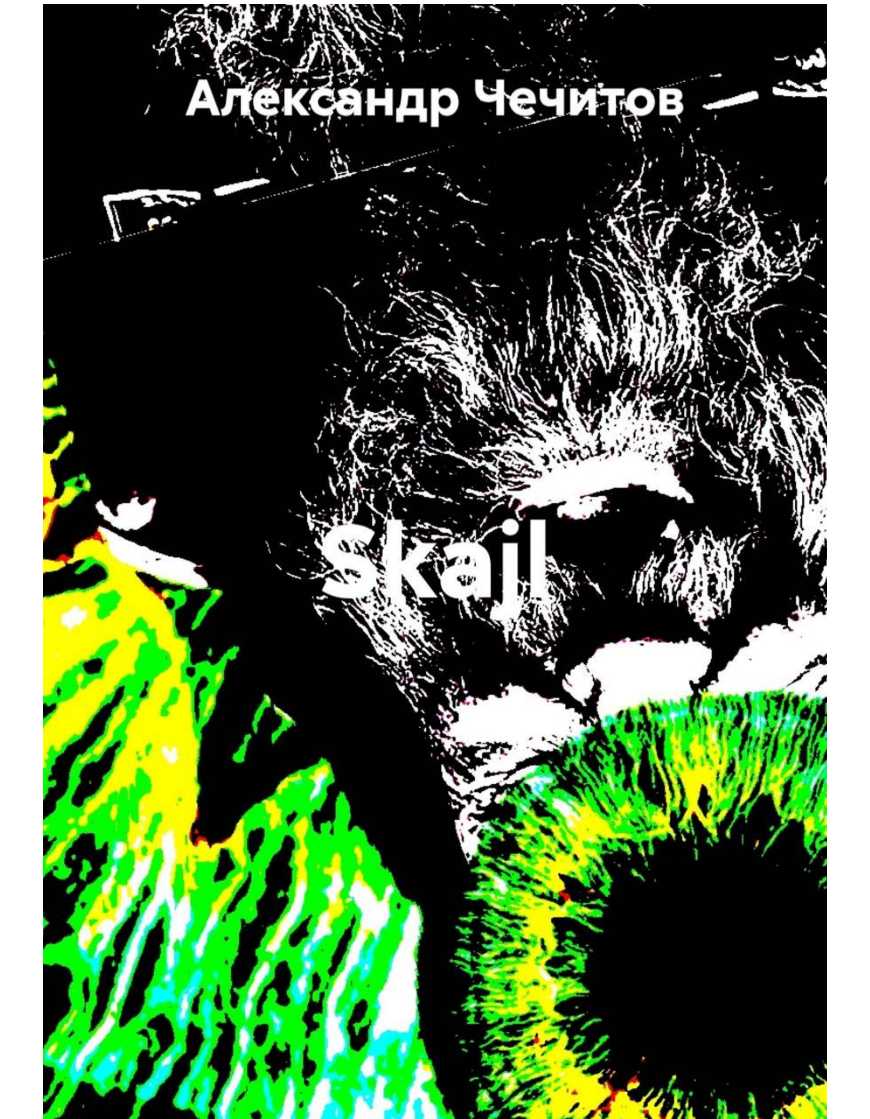




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skajl

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Аннотация

A story told from the perspective of a tree named Skajl. He remembers his first ray of sunlight, the death of a brave fledgling, the mocking words of his proud neighbor Ord, and his sudden end, cut short by the crash of a car. Yet even in the final moments, there's no despair—only a quiet faith: the great rebirth goes on. A poignant tale about the fragility of life, the strength of roots, and how nature answers human cruelty with new life.

Александр Чечитов

Skajl

I was born as a tree and hoped to live a long, happy life—the kind that, it seemed, was meant for any branching creature like me. My dreams were cut short by a human, who ruthlessly ended my journey midway. Let me start from the very beginning. My name is Skajl. I don't know what name the people gave me, or if they gave me one at all. It doesn't matter, though. For as long as I can remember, I've been Skajl. A tree's first memories are nothing like a human's. Whether you like it or not, I'll have to mention humans from time to time—our kind is tightly bound to theirs.

People use memories as tools: to stroke their own ego, to amuse someone or themselves, or sometimes just to feel sad. It's oddly amusing to realize that people suffer for one reason or another, yet keep repeating the same actions their whole lives, hoping for a different outcome. We trees don't know that kind of suffering. My brothers and I grow upward patiently, stretching our branches to embrace the sun and sky, and we only truly suffer for a few reasons. For example, I tremble slightly from the cold—but only a little, and only in winter. About memories: mine begin the moment I emerged as a slender sprout. Dozens of impossibly tiny brothers, along with me, crept slowly between the pebbles for years, stubbornly pushing aside the dense soil ahead. We overcame all sorts of obstacles whose names I never

came up with. Our long silence underground gave way to quiet joy on the surface. Not everyone made it, but those who did were beautiful. I remember the first time my body met the sun's rays, which seemed to embrace every blade of grass around me. The air, warm and damp, felt as if it existed only for me in that magical moment.

Now I understand that thousands of beautiful creatures were enjoying that spring alongside me—perhaps even many more. Near me, just a sprouts length away, a yellowbilled fledgling fell that day. It tumbled out of a low nest, unafraid of the giant height of the old tree where it had been. It must have been a very brave little bird and could have grown into an equally bold adult. The impact made it roll its eyes and give a faint, pitiful peep. Somewhere beneath the thin canopy of thinning leaves, its siblings kept calling for it. They cried very loudly, but I'm not sure their cries were born of grief for their dying brother. Maybe they were just hungry, and the poor thing, whose feathers hadn't even fully formed, died because of hunger. I don't know. In any case, if you're curious, the fledgling didn't suffer for long. Soon after, a large rat appeared, bobbing its long nose. As far as my conscience allows me to judge, it didn't torment the little bird. Gripping its bright pink neck with two pairs of broken, yellowed teeth, the rat sent the baby to bird heaven. The other yellowbeaks survived. I got to see their interesting, full lives unfold in vivid colors. The time came when each of them found their own unique path, leaping out of the parental home. I think nothing in the whole

world can compare to a young birds first flight. Its a thrilling and at the same time terribly anxious step for the bird—and for us trees, too. We cant experience that feeling, but we are the ones who give them a home, and its from our branches that they set off into a wondrous unknown.

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