

Motovilikhinskii Worker

Material of a Documentary Play

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Selected episodes only

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“Verbatim” is an incompletely solved puzzle, possibly not solved at all, but alluring: like Fermat’s theorem. In this it seems it always occupied the place on the edge of the theatrical process. But it seems this star shines faintly, not because she has little energy—she is just from another galaxy, the promise of something unattainable, alien, a new art. “Verbatim” is one of the techniques of the “Documentary Theater.” Its gist is building a spectacle and text from an interview with other people, and the literalness (Latin *verbatim*) must always be preserved. “Unplayable,” the author’s untouched element of such documentary theater, is a style of speech, the air of a phrase, the rhythm, the tempo and intonation, the speech individuality at the word level.

The results can vary a lot based on the styles of the author and of the subject. A montage of impersonal texts with fictional characters, like in Stephen Daldry’s *Body Talk* (1996). The equality of a stage spectacle to the original interview is Alvis Herman’s *Latvian Stories* (2007). A fictional history with a clear storyline is *Coal Basin* (2000) by the Lodge Theater. But in general there is always one thing in common: the attempt of actors and playwrights to preserve the unique fabric of someone else’s speech and to believe it with the usual perception of artistic reality, plot, speech, character. This is our ideal goal, although it is difficult to achieve.

The work of our group began with a test stage performance of interviews which we had gathered from the employees of the Motovilikha factories. Thinking about what could become the topic of the documentary theater workshop at the Perm edition of our “New Drama” festival, we recalled a story in a book about a huge old factory district, the same age as Perm.

But if the heart of the Perm, the Yegoshikhinskii plant, has dissolved into the center of the regional city, then the liver of Perm, Motovilikha, remains a perpetually working suburb, preserved almost untouched since the 19th century—both its layout and the purpose for the factory, and in its unchanging tradition and the psychology of its citizen-workers.

At Motovilikha we collided with an unexpected mottleness. The variegated image of the vivid, colorful, vast factory: gothic, similar to European church buildings of the old workshops and tired pastel boxes of Brezhnev’s era. The extreme variety of productions and professions at the

factory itself—electroplating and rubber products, secret gunsmiths and steelworkers... After the corporatization, this helped the plant to survive, [but] now on the country, the plant is trying to aggregate production and one-by-one discharges the subdivision stages into bankruptcy. Motovilikha itself, its small hills with brown old huts and colorful panel houses, and the fractionality of its historic districts—it is hard to tell from the outside, why for residents of one hill the neighboring one is already on the outskirts, and from one shore of the pond on the other our hero goes “from home to the dacha.” Combined with this, we met a few different and bright people.

And so, we could not finish work with one output, storyline, genre—it seemed that we needed to find out and understand more and more. Then we decided to continue the research, already without splitting “New Drama” into two projects. Every quarter we go to the Motovilikha plant for new interviews. Sometimes succeeding to trace the fate of one of our interlocutors. Changes and economic forecasts for the factory—every quarter births new waves of optimism and pessimism; we succeeded to catch even the change of general director—and to see how little has changed from the change in power.

Each time, by processing new materials, we do a one-time stage show of them, without repeating the former plot and method. After the first one in Perm, we showed summer materials at the “Lubimovka” festival for young playwrights in Moscow, fall materials at the “Flahertiana” festival in Perm and at “Theatre.doc” in December of 2009. Somewhere ahead is the bottom line of the observations: in March 2010 and only after that we will try to understand what kind of play we can create from a year’s worth of observations, what and how we can fix it in a type of spectacle-performance that is worth showing repeatedly. Concurrently with us are the documentary filmmakers—the students of Maria Razbezhkina—and playwrights of “Theater.doc” have united for the project “I am a Worker,” to explore today’s factories of Russia and the people working there by documentary means of theater and film. Now groups work at the plants at Tula, Surgut, Chelyabinsk, Magnitogorsk, and other cities. It is expected that the special festival “I am a Worker” will be held in the fall of 2010, at which one can see these films and spectacles.

Ever since we decided to carry on doing the play, our work on Motovilikha did not tie in with the Perm State Cultural Project, in part because it would be inadequate for our chosen method to commit ourselves to the state, and because we are not from Perm, so that means we can’t claim to be a part of Perm culture. But we found friends in Perm who supported us with their trust, advice and hospitality.

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Aleksander Rodionov

Episode 1. BTZ

A stern young woman comes into the office. Throughout the performance, she will live her own working life: leaving, returning, working at her desk. There is one pattern: when she appears, the people in her presence become mute and timid. And they pause. Sometimes they change the subject until she comes out again. Fortunately, she doesn't stay for a long time.

But now, in the beginning of the performance, she gives us some attention.

GIRL I'm the superior HR.¹ The Beaureau of Labor and Wages—I write documents, I keep everything, character references, when they are dismissed, character references, when they are awarded... when the reductions, then how to spend by code, who doesn't want and who does...

They underestimate us HR. Unkindly to us. They don't see our work. And what's more, we never receive a single award.

Because on the awards, we also write recommendations. And you will not write yourself. Parenting...

She leaves.

Episode 6. "What is bad and what is good in Perm"

They compel a tired, kind blacksmith to answer the questions. He is trying really hard.

—What's bad and what's good in Perm?

TIRED BLACKSMITH (*who readily thinks, gladly, deliberately responds*). Well, for one thing, we don't have much greenery. Bad roads. That is, the lights aren't everywhere. First and foremost... in the kindergarten we also have problems, of course... then schools, institutes... that is, first of all, the children were better off than... us.

—Well, then what is good?

TIRED BLACKSMITH. What's good? (*He thinks.*) Our people are uncultured, as it's said. Where you've eaten, you've left everything, that is... wherever you went — and now there's trash everywhere. I mean, and they think that in the normal course of things, it's normal, that is... or they smoked on the street, they opened the pack with the last cigarette — right, no, no, they throw it, right under your feet. I mean, even though there's an urn two meters away, that is.

¹ Бэтэээ in the original (БТЗ): Бюро труда и зарплаты.

—But in nature! What do you have that is good?

TIRED BLACKSMITH. What's in nature? Nature itself. Of course, we have little greenery... now they cut down many forests, and there's nothing in return, right? The plantings don't make up for it...

—Anything good in your nature?

TIRED BLACKSMITH (*he remains silent*). We have all the beautiful rivers.

—What's good in the city?

TIRED BLACKSMITH. What's in the city?... traffic jams. Morning, evening, traffic jams.

—And the good, what's good?

TIRED BLACKSMITH. There is, there is. In principle — there's many museums in the city. A circus. A zoo. A gallery... only little time, of course, for visits. We spend a lot of time... at work.

Episode 10. Savior

The man speaks with a harsh voice, with a constant smile on his tense face.

—What's to hide? There is in the 31st workshop such a good milling machine specialist, Grigory Grigorevich... His farm, there, the machines. Milling, slicing. When it's time for him to retire—when there was the wave that they were laying off all the retirees—him too, they offered to pay him back. Then we began to prove that without his work, Workshop 31 won't suffice. It's a quick change of firing pins. In other workshops we will not have time for machining these strikers! Then all the arguments were brought about to the managers, and the man was saved.

... A big workshop. A hot workshop. In my memory from the furnace department, when I ran the furnace department—the furnaces, the annealing furnaces, the instrument was also under my management... A locksmith. A competent locksmith, a good technician, everything.

He came in with a hangover. With a good hangover, to put it bluntly. And he got caught at the front desk, to put it bluntly.

... You know, Russian people... they can always afford to overindulge. One day he came to work hungover. There was a question of parting ways with him. At the time, well, you understand, what doesn't happen, everyone can, after all, we... and besides, he was in a tough situation over there, some problems with his wife. Well, it's kind of like—I've locked it up. I've got it locked up, locked up.

We stood up for the man. He solved his family problems. And he's still working!

Who defended [him]? Who did? And I went to the head of the workshop. I went to the foreman of the shop, who then was still Oparin, and said: “I need him! What he drank today... He is, let’s say, out of commission today. But he’s on Saturday, Sunday, when you need an emergency exit, you know he’ll do everything, he’ll do his duty...” That was all. Everything was solved within ten minutes.

When did it happen? I had no time to feel. When I took over this farm, there was devastation, half the furnaces stood, and I had no time to feel about lofty matters. I had to do it, and that was all. (*He is silent. With the same smile.*) In our furnace brigade there was such a comrade, a young literate partner, he studied at the institute, he was both technically and legally savvy, there was even some hope for him...

I put him in charge of the ventilators. The ventilators were a pain in the ass. He had to constantly replenish oil on the oil seals. The axles on the furnace broke, which he also had to lubricate. You see these shafts here? Two hundred millimeters in diameter—they broke, like matches, just in half! Do you see the oil seals? They have to be filled with consistent grease and constantly pumped into the slip-bearings. He was a big smartass, less occupied with work. Well... he starts to tell tales, that it’s forbidden to do this, until you do that... you go to him, show him with your own hands, how to do it quickly and soundly... He endlessly disappeared somewhere, I had to look for him for half the shift. Where did he run off to? To see girls? I don’t know, I didn’t have time to get distracted asking about his business.

And when we began to part ways with him—to fire him for his slothish behavior—he began to brandish his rights: you have no right to dismiss me... I know all the laws...

I had to process him. What’s the deal? Not much. When you set a goal to break up with a person—it doesn’t take long. This is two weeks, and that’s all, you can kick out the guy. The only pity—he distracts you from your work, when there is other work to do after all!

Episode 13. Ad

FIRST. I’m a hundred percent sure that those who remain are even worse. First they’re gonna stop paying a decent wage. Then willingly or unwillingly they will be laid off, because there will be no jobs.

SECOND. The company has no orders for the second half of the year!

FIRST. There’s no future here. The economy of Russia collapsed a long time ago; here it is the same economy, only in miniature.

THIRD. There’s one such big mystery that everyone knows, but if it’s called out loud, it would be so disgusting and decadent that how then to live... One sixth of the landmass, there’s so many folks there, and we can’t do anything. Three figures are enough. I am a financier, I understand

everything—such subsurface, such opportunities, but the handful of people who govern us, they are unable to connect it all, and we can't do anything, although we're such industrious, sturdy, normal guys.

The girl from BTZ appears, the three [people who are] talking ceases. She stands with papers in her hands and looks sternly at the three bosses. They become gingerly quiet.

GIRL FROM BTZ (*harshly*). I'll have all your charts and medical policies ready for you by Monday!

FIRST. What do you mean, you have to hand them in?

SECOND (*asks timidly*). Maybe we shouldn't turn in our policies?

GIRL FROM BTZ (*looks sternly, as if she is about to crush [them], but doesn't crush [them] yet.*) I don't know, but look... without cards for meals...

THIRD (*to placate, tries to joke*). Or we'll be given all the regalia...?

GIRL FROM BTZ (*still as sternly, but yet not crushed*). Well, it's supposed to be done, the company is closing!

FIRST. We agree to hand in the cards for meals, but the policies...

GIRL FROM BTZ (*even harsher*). Turn a blind eye to this?

SECOND (*in a pleading voice*). Close it!

GIRL FROM BTZ (*sternly, and only now it is understood that this is such a form of kindness.*) I'll close it!

All are happy.

GIRL FROM BTZ (*sternly*). But the cards! Or else!

She goes out of sight. Silence, until they're sure that she's gone. Then—in the same tone [of voice].

THIRD. The 69133 came... (*a short pause*). She's also fired. She's working her last day.

Episode 1. Performance

Semyon sits on an empty stage ([just] a table, a few stools). His performance begins in the audience.

SEMYON. Ah! I gave her a gerbera! A white one! Isn't a gerbera a big daisy? I'm confused: guessing on daisies, I wrote the same thing: "She loves," "She loves," "She loves," so that she would pull and break... I drew with a marker all night; I didn't have a pen.

Impression? Well, a little bit... yes, it worked, of course it did!

She was most of all pleased when I put the candy in her pocket, it's really cool, straight-up wow. "Toffee."

I'm happy! Whoohoo!

I also wrote her a paper letter! I forgot how to write already... I sent it by post... it came, wow, she received a letter! It's so cool!

How did we start? I promised to watch a movie! I said, we should surely see the movie. In a home theater. I decided that I've got to have a home theater. When I got divorced, I decided that I need to use it at least once—

To watch it already... The movie was Johnny Depp's "Dead Man." Whether the film had a translation, in my point of view, or without a translation—I don't remember. We didn't even watch the movie. The main thing is to begin...

She's awesome, wow!

She's totally different from my [ex-] wife. Even her hair color is different.

She's not jealous, she's very similar to me, we're even equally dumb. Like two... nuts!

I met her almost immediately. After I got divorced. You get tired of serious relations, you think only about yourself—you go out, have sex, everything! We got acquainted and broke up before New Year's. And now I'm ready to get serious! I decided to return to her. She was doubtful!

She doesn't believe me, she thinks that I'm puerile, like last time—she doesn't believe that I'm all available, like an item in a TV store: "Here I am, take me," I'm all over her...

Then I opened up all such and something offended her, and I decided to break up, and she straight away got so upset... Yes, everything's so difficult!

It was in February, I think. So I wrote a letter to her with a pen. I sat at work, [while] I wrote. *(He thinks whether to tell more or not, and tells all equally.)* And still what was cool, wow—one time I said to her: you don't want? Well, no and no. And she cries, "I wanna be with you!" And I [said]—no and no! Lucky, we went home on the autobike—she sits, she cries, she's crying a lil' bit—they're cunning! They cry immediately! [At] her stop, I say: "Let's leave!" And I've got a

bag, I thrust it to her, she drops it. “No, I’m not going,” all in disarray, I’m not a fool, I take the bag and leave, but she didn’t leave!

She didn’t get out, and drove onwards... And in the bag were her keys, telephone... *(A pause.)* That’s where she went, from “Kristall” to “October,” and I ran after the autobike, and she left like that—and I was at the stop.

She was absolutely delighted, it seems to me!!! *(A pause.)* I drove—I almost died, really... And people think that I stole a bag. A woman’s bag... well, on ice, yes—the incident was the 9th of March. And I ran a red [light]. But I escaped.

The owners, the workers, come onto the stage. Semyon turns away from the audience, he sits against the wall, he draws a technogenic scheme on the wall and will continue to work on it; when he finishes it, he erases it and draws a new one, and so forth.

Episode 2. Performances

Boris Fyodorovich speaks majestically, confidently, sometimes tapping his iron palm lightly on the table.

BORIS FYODOROVICH. And with those whom I communicate with, they know what Motovilikha is. Well, if it’s a kind of out-of-towner. That the Urals are a forge for the defense of the country. It seems to me that they all know this. Wherever I’d go... I was in Siberia, I was in Europe, I was in Belarus—everyone knows about this. As they say, Lenin’s five-order factory. That is, someone says something about Motovilikha... maybe so... and everyone knows about the plant anyway. The thing is, you see, this and films about the Urals. Many. They write a lot in the newspapers. There are a lot of books about this subject. Therefore those people of this generation, of the war and post-war years, know this. And yet, the younger generation... it’s more difficult with them in this regard.

GLOOMY MECHANIC *(suddenly starts to speak from his corner, everyone has forgotten about him)*. In life, everything’s so slow... fumbling. And so everything’s slow, everything’s without any... everything! *(He already feels that he’s not talking to himself, but to everyone.)* ...When was the last time something happened? It’s sooner of the all the birth of a daughter, more what? *(A pause.)* The daughter’s already eighteen. *(He rises, goes to the window sill, where he takes the questionnaire. He reads with hatred.)* “Conditionally, imagine and tell, what happened with you next. You come out of the checkpoint. A bus. You go to Kazakhstan. There they hire you for another job. Let’s suppose you settle down without hesitation. What’s the work?” *(He thinks.)* Why? *(He laughs.)*

I’m not going. I won’t even think about it. *(He continues to read.)* “Well, if after all... what was your profession?” *(With reluctance, he gives in to the game.)* A metallurgist. “What city?” Very big. A million. Million! “With whom did you befriend?” I made friends? I don’t know. My wife

is my best friend... “How long have you worked on the job... how many years...” (*He is silent, then with hatred and very sharply.*) Yes, some kind of garden. I don’t want something, I don’t want to talk about it! You want to fucking talk? I don’t want to. Yes, to talk some kind of bullshit! I’m fine here. Yes, everything’s good here. Yes, I like the climate. In winter—fishing! Skating! Skiing! Well...? In summer—summer. A dacha! A garden! Negroes mow the lawns!... I’m kidding, of course. Nobody mows laws... You do it yourself... but it’s the summer. You live and you rejoice. (*He wants to leave completely, but is forbidden—he ought to return “to his workshop.” He returns to his place.*) There was once a preventorium from Lenin’s factory. Now they sold it, I don’t know where it went. Procedures. They don’t take sick people—they treat their health, they do prevention of important organs. What’s the most important one? The spine. That’s all! What else is so important? There are no more important ones, probably.

Episode 9. Leaving

Everyone leaves, except Semoyon and the Gloomy Mechanic. The Gloomy Mechanic comes to the forestage.

GLOOMY MECHANIC (*he declares with hatred and aggression*). I have my own worldview! But I won’t tell you about it! (*After a pause, he continues nevertheless.*) I asked about the constitution of life of a thief. He thinks that there are thieves all around. That everyone’s a thief, and life—is a big zone. A chess player sees it as a chess game. (*He already speaks quickly, eagerly, as if in a hurry to get to the main idea.*) There’s pawns, queens, pieces on one side, others on the other, white, black—they can never finish the game, this game is never finished. Probably, death is a checkmate or a stalemate—whoever survives. (*He came to his main thought, he became totally serious.*) If you look from my point of view, life—it’s a big factory, life is a big factory—and this (*he shows the factory around him*) is a small factory, a man—the same lil’ details, just very complicated. The details in life are more complicated—that’s all there is to it. A screw won’t turn, and the whole machine will become. (*About the big press which is near him.*) At first, this press will become. (*With a threat.*) The shop will become, the factory will become, and somewhere it will regurgitate anyway in Moscow, abroad...because we export products (*suddenly, smoothly, he got on the wave of professional greatness*), wrought iron is several times better than ordinary cast iron with all the bubbles. This is just telling you information. (*A pause for a second, he surprised himself. Then with new aggression, with hatred.*) Here we’re all in prison. We work through it, just as we’re supposed to. It’s a prison! The body is a prison, as we say! But you are not just a body and not just meat. You are your thoughts and feelings. That’s who you are. Your essence – that’s the word I’m looking for. You have been crammed into your body for a some amount of time, and now you can’t get out and you just run around in circles (*He imagines filthy things and talks about them with pleasure.*) They took the soul. Tomorrow into a cat, then into an elephant, wherever they want, they’ll put it there—nothing, oh, you agree, and you’ll sit there! You don’t agree, yeah, they’ll stick you there anyway, and it will be worse than... without your choice. They won’t ask... (*He is silent.*) ...Death—leaving the factory? You

must have misunderstood something. There is a big factory—that is, the whole world, the whole universe, can be considered a factory. This is an even bigger factory. And this—it's a small factory. Well, you left one, you'll go to another: what's the difference? In parallel. *(He laughs.)* Don't need to think, I beseech only one thing: don't think, agree or disagree. To think—it's not good, in fact. Who thinks a lot, that...

He leaves. Semyon meanwhile erases the chalk from the wall. He comes onto the stage and delivers a monologue.

SEMYON. There's an apple tree. There's an apple tree... No, not just one, there are many apple trees! But that's exactly where the apples are small, and it's straight up very beautiful. You can also go for a walk by the river. There is a fence there, bad dogs, machine gunners - but all in all it is the bank of the river! And the church across the street with golden domes is pretty. When I was there for the first time, they took me to the workshop - I was amazed - colored castings there, blue flame! The copper makes it green; the gas is blue - I'm amazed, I'm scared, everything moves there, the cranes move - but it's also beautiful! Everything here is beautiful! Nothing is not beautiful! It's like in Warcraft, in short, you walk through the desert with a map and discover new places... And on that workshop, there's a sucker that freezes in winter! It's about a meter and a half or two meters wide and they use a jackhammer to knock it down. Once a year they knock it down, when they sort of punish someone. I don't mean punished by knocking it down but punished for the fact that it's formed. Once a year. Also, we have a green dog running around. Like a salad. She usually runs behind the walkway... They're red this season. That year the greens were green, as if they were made of zelyonka. This year they're red. I don't know what's wrong with them! A steam leak happens, and the buildings are all covered in frost: very beautiful! There's a green workshop on the 43rd floor, I accidentally took the elevator to the twelfth floor - it's very scary there! There's no telling how it all stands, but the elevator also goes there! It's scary. But it's beautiful.

When everyone realized that the monologue was over, Semyon goes to his "workplace" - writes on the "phone screen. After writing the first words staying silent, he begins to pronounce them rather than write them: "Hi, Sasha! This is Semyon from Perm. Just wanted to let you know that a couple of weeks ago I was offered a good job, I quit the factory after 20 minutes and am already working as a researcher. I'm not a factory worker anymore."

The "AWOL" story

Well, I was in Saratov once, and I got caught up in it. With a friend, yeah. He was local, from Saratov, and I wasn't. We went for a walk there and he got drunk, so he turned out to be an alcoholic. And there was nowhere else to go. And the thing was, I left the army. Voluntarily. And so, I lived there alone in the city itself, wandering around. That is, first of all I had to do something, I had to feed myself. I started earning money. I sold metal. Here. I collected metal

and turned it in, that is how I fed myself. I lived there in an abandoned dacha. Finally decided to go home, here, to Perm. By train.

I came to the station and began to punch in the electric trains. And there are now these machines where you can punch in any track. At the station. The price of the ticket and the route from where to where. Which trains go where. Looked in which direction, in our direction, what electric trains go. Went into the train, sat down. And it turned out that in some places there were only electric trains, and in some places, there were only diesel locomotives. In other words, no electric trains. So, there was no way to get there by electric train. And the diesel locomotives were no good, because the ticket is through a cashier's window. Yes, so by electric trains it's easier. True, at the station it's complicated to climb up there, because there, well, I jumped the case, got on the train. Anyway, I went. Going, going, and I was dropped off by the controllers. And the time is already night. So, at the station, where there's nothing at all, just wooden houses, I sat down beside a pillar, no one is there at all. I think what to do. I started to fall asleep already, and I saw an empty electric train pull up. I got in, and there was a door in the vestibule, a switchboard or something, I don't know. So, I went in and fell asleep. In the morning I woke up, it was going somewhere. I open the doors. I asked where we were headed: to Saratov, they said. So, it turned out that I went back to Saratov.

In general, I got off the train, walked away from the station, and a person of Caucasian nationality, in general, stops me. We got to chatting, and he said, "You'll have a job, here and there," he said. And he chatted me up somehow. So, he put me on the Moscow-Makhachkala train. He told the conductor: "That's it, no ticket." So, I got on and went. I sat down and the conductor fed me. I thought, okay, I'll have a free meal and then I'll think about it. The main thing was to eat something. In general, I ate, we are on this train, and the next station after Saratov, Obrukh or as it is called, I do not remember exactly. I think I have to get off. But he did not let me out, because he was told to take me to Astrakhan. That is, Astrakhan, and then Makhachkala further on, Dagestan. In general, I went and got into my seat. When the train took off, I jumped into the neighboring train car that had compartments, opened the window, and jumped out of the train. That's how it happens. Obrukh Station is two hundred kilometers from Saratov. I am thinking what to do, I have to go back to Saratov, Perm is on the other side.

I went on foot, and there was a road, a track along the railroad. I went on foot, I was walking, in general, there were fields, haystacks nearby, I lay down there, slept some more. Got up, went on. I thought, I had to do something, I had to go somehow. I look, there was a KAMAZ. I went up to the driver and said, "Can you take me to Saratov?" He says, "No, I don't have any space." In general, I went around the KAMAZ, it had just touched the road and I hitched on to it from behind. Anyway, I was riding like this. He's going, he's speeding up, he's got a lot of speed. I was thinking how not to get unhooked, not to fall. In general, we were driving, driving, I think, as it would be, cars behind me are driving, waving their hands. I think I don't have anything to wave about, I'm holding on. Just like that. Anyway, we were going and going, I could hardly get

over there, there was a trailer hook, I sat on it, I banged my head on the trailer, and I saw some car, an Audi or something, passing him from behind and slowing down.

That is, he just stops, I jump off him and run from there, in general, he didn't notice me. So, there you go. What to do? I had to keep going. I went on, and I thought: that's it, it's getting dark, we have to spend the night somewhere. Anyway, there was a stop there. I think I'll stay at this stop, but no, I went on to the next stop. I think I'll stop here now and sleep at the stop. And then, I was just walking up - and "Oka" pulls up. The guy's like, "What, where to?" I said, "Saratov." He said: "Get in, I'll take you to Engels. So, I sat down. I tell him I don't have any money. He says: "Come on, it's alright I'm from Shebashev, I drove the students back". I sat down with him, and he fed me, and we got chatting. He says: "You're not from the army?" I said, "No, from where, I was walking, I said, I was out with the boys. He says, "Yeah," he says, "but I had a few instances, I picked one up here," he says, "he turned out to be a runaway from the army. I said, "Nah, I'm all straight." So anyway, he drove me all the way to Engels.

I didn't go to Saratov, it was nighttime, about twelve o'clock. In general, I spent the night in a high-rise, just in the entryway. The next morning, I decided to go, and there Engels - Saratov, the river separates them, as in Perm, the city of Perm and Zakamsk. The same bridge. I reached the bridge, went to Saratov, and came back to the train station. To the station. So, I was thinking how to go home. So, I waited for that train from Perm. What do you call it, "Perm to Adler", only it went here to Perm from Adler. I made an agreement with the conductor, and it turned out that this conductor was also a student at an aviation college, and they took me to Perm. I spent a week there, and then went back to my unit. Anyway, that's how it happens.

Finally an explanation:

Anyway, my sister had a wedding, yes. August 11, 2006, and I wanted to go to the wedding. I said, "I'll sign the contract, and you'll let me go." Signed the contract, and they wouldn't let me go on vacation for the wedding. And that's how it happened.

And then there were circumstances, that the time was coming up, the conscripts had to leave, I was like a draftee, I had another year of service. They encouraged me to get money out of the young men who had just enlisted. Now, I didn't want to do that. That's how it happened. And many people say when they themselves, when they come into the army, like I will never do that, how they are bullied, and then it turns out the same way. Well it worked out for me so I said: "I will never do that." Stood my ground, anyway... And it even got to the point that in the guardhouse with machine guns, that is, everything was loaded, I was also getting harassed by one. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't left. So there you go.

Story

...We had a bakery named "Sasha" on the 905, where we had fun. Young, my God, we were eighteen or nineteen years old, and our crew of all three were the only non-drinkers. We had our own jokes, our own little tricks... There were four of us. Two guys and two girls.

There's basically nothing interesting in the bakery... But it was fun, fun is fun. It's not that it closed, but there was a fire. It was on fire. We didn't start the fire!

A technologist-experimentalist, and at someone else's expense, can go to anyone new and say, "Let's go experiment. But then all that... what didn't work out - they deduct it from your salary, and it's fine. And everybody's fine. She tried to experiment on me with some bread, with some fried onions, something like that. Anyway, the guys didn't let..."

Well, there were a lot of nuances. We were basically, what I'm saying, young, that's how we joked. Sometimes you could find an oil cap in our bread. Well, you pour the oil, put the cork on the table, leave it on the table, as it were. And there's a certain kind of process going on there. And you'd accidentally put it in there...

Accidentally. No, no one's ever put anything in there on purpose. It's like...

There was water throwing, dough throwing. It was crazy fun. Dough? Stuck, especially to the ceiling... Well, someone threw water at me with a ladle, me and Stas threw it back. They came running in with a bucket of water, splashed it on, while the water was flying, we turned away and everything flew into the furnace. Our veins went down. The tens are the spirals that are in the furnace, so it went down from a sharp drop. They said it broke, and then they repaired it. Well, there were a lot of different kinds of jokes... They could have slept on sacks of flour. We made the bed and slept on the sacks. It wasn't like sleeping on the floor. And they ate loaves with chocolate paste... You can bake a loaf hot, it's delicious. And we had, like, chocolate paste buns. You put the paste on the loaf. You gobble up half the paste, and then you have to make the rolls...

Once we had a dough mixer that wasn't ours, he managed to make it. The dough was put on white bread, and he got drunk, he was drunk, he took some raisins in there. That is, he kind of assumed that this dough was for the ones with raisins in them. So he poured raisins in there, and the technologist came and made us pry the raisins out. We started this procedure, then they told us that the farther you went, the better. We made a loaf of this dough and that was it. We don't have to dig out the raisins, for Christ's sake. There's 20 kilos of dough in there.

Here.

And then my dad told me to come here.

Story

There was an interesting story, I like to remember it with my friends! Two friends of mine had tractors, "twenty-footers", and so we, a group of ten people, were going to go up the river, off-road into the woods, on these tractors. And we were building a hunting hut, a cabin. And so we, when we built it, went home. We lived there for a few days, then we went home. Our tractor broke down. It was just so cold. And so all night long. We drove out in the evening, and we were stuck in that mud all night. Then we left one tractor behind. We drove a little bit more, and the second one got stuck. (The story is over. He smiles happily at the audience. Surprised at the thought that it might have seemed uninteresting, he begins to explain). But it's, you know, it's so ingrained in my memory, that memory, it was so interesting. I mean, we were just kids. And for us it was such an interesting adventure, driving machines, tractors, through the woods, off-the-road, in knee-deep dirt, and we broke down there, then got stuck, bugging out, in the end we walked home early in the morning, and then we went with our parents to pull out all those tractors. Unforgettable. To this day, when we sit with friends, when we meet, we always remember that story, that youthful adventure. It really is an adventure.

No, of course, everyone knows this story long ago... But we just sit there and just... It's always interesting to remember all the subtleties, all the things that happened. I remember, let's say, how a friend of ours got his boots caught on fire on this trip. And at the time when we were all pulling out that tractor, gurgling in that mud, pushing, cutting down trees, trying to get something somehow, he was sitting in the cart, on the tractor, in his socks at the time. We made him bags so he would not freeze. There was already frost. It was September or August. And there he was sitting there. It was also unforgettable.

He was drying, because his boots were burned. In general, of course! But it was okay, he made it home barefoot, because he didn't have a shift change. Everybody wanted to eat. There was one loaf of bread, it was already not before a fire. All were already tired. It was necessary to go at night. We repaired the equipment. The adventure was even better than Tom Sawyer's. In general it was great, of course!

That's the story we always remember. It's the best story ever!

...How old were we then? We were twelve, thirteen years old! And now? I've been since eighty-six. It's been fifteen years. That was fifteen years ago...

About a friend.

A big guy with a bad look starts out cheerful, then gets suddenly upset.

I have a friend. Since school, since kindergarten even. We were neighbors, we lived in the same house. He has parents: his father is a doctor... My father is a worker. So we had no common interests. But we were friends all the same. He was taken to another school... And we were friends.

And then we went to aviation school together... I mean we went together, only I didn't finish.

And the friend who graduated, yes, with whom I entered together. (I'm sorry.) We took entrance exams: math and Russian. We both passed math with "5" and Russian with "5". He got in on the state budget, but my grades were poor. (Surprised.) But I got in. I told my dad - I want to pay, my parents collected money, my father said: "Go for a fee." I got in. (Grimaces.) But you know, like, I guess the fact that I passed with two A's and didn't get in, it kind of broke me. I guess. There's one subject, anyway...

I left. (Gloomier still.) They were drawing and sketching diagrams. In general, you had to understand it. Here, let's say, the same scheme, it's hard, it's not for me... (Making excuses.) The main thing is to find a common language with the teacher. I got an "A" in English! I got an A in aviation!

I knew one phrase: " Vashington D.C. iz ze Capital of ze United States." Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States... And I got straight A's for that one phrase. So I went to my first class and told her that sentence right away. She started treating me like that! She even wanted to send me to the contest with this phrase! Although I do not understand English!

But the fact that I somehow got straight A's and didn't pass... that must have broken me. (Smiles merrily again.) But it's like you don't know who's doing better. Everybody's good. Like he's got an education and freedom, and I'm married and have a kid. I don't even know. I wonder. Then again, he bought a car there. He's got a car. I don't have a car, but I have a wife, a daughter. Life just works out differently. I went into the army, I did not finish technical school, let's say. He finished and is now completing higher education, I only study in a technical school. But I went to the army, I don't know, got married, and he, he doesn't have a girlfriend, hasn't married yet. People are different in different ways.

Status

The kid sits in the red corner and slowly answers, his eyes completely still.

I'm an equipment mechanic, but I'm learning. Well, it's like growing up for myself and, in general, in the service, maybe, it's not like I have to work as a negro for the rest of my life. With dirty hands. A negro.

First comes the power engineer, as it were, the workshop, and then the deputy chief for training. My boss is a former power engineer, who used to be an energy engineer, now he is a shop manager. I want to be an energy specialist. Why... Why... To grow up.

No, I don't want to be a worker. So grow up. (Pause.) It's hard to say what will change. The responsibility will change... I don't know. (Decides.) Rob's not going to carry laundry home.

It's hard to say what will change... not ready to answer the question, I guess. Status, understandably, will change. What will be associated with it next - I don't know.

Even the style of dress, probably. Now you can come in sportswear or appropriate clothing. With the status is no more, you can not come ... The face is smart... Probably the first thing is clothes, and then I don't know. I'm probably going to be a power engineer. Power engineers have cleaner clothes. Not like that.

I don't know, a hat, I guess you can't wear one.

You can't wear one now. You don't touch something, you don't touch your head... The hat's funny, with a skull. I'm an electrician. (Smiles.) If I become an electrician, I won't wear it. I won't get dirty. I won't work with machines. It's changing - there's more paperwork. (Grimaces.) There are all sorts of people to communicate with, who comes early... Cabinet... It's quiet... And friends are all friends - no, well, we will be, of course, if I become the boss, when I become the boss... But actually, of course, there's probably some other friends there. The ones in jackets are friends. I don't know, cheerful, no - what are they there, of course, cheerful, no, of course! Of course, not so much about the paperwork, but how would she... (Sincerely confesses.) It is more interesting, of course, to fix machine tools! (Pause.) I still want to grow. (Pause.) Why? Because I've had enough of the mud, I suppose. Where's the mud from?! Well!!! Here machines are dirty, everything, cabinets, dust! Well! Oil, dust... It's all one of a kind! Rob's laundry and laundry... Once a month I do it... Every day I wash my hands for five or fifteen minutes. Here, around the nails. It's black. But I scrape it all off. You can't tell by my hands that I'm a worker. You can't tell when I'm not here.

Behind Angor.

A strong man stands behind a riser after his shift and turns away so the workers at the other tables can't see when he's crying.

I was in the paratroopers when I was in the paratroopers. All for one. The rule was all for one. Now me... I'm cut down - and nobody! Nobody makes a squeak. They - all of them - won't squeak. Out of twelve in the brigade, there's three left... When you have a star behind you... it's a shame.

Men... they don't cry or get upset, but it hurts, it hurts. It's a shame, you see. You didn't do your mission. Oh! The mission, fuck knows... Nobody! There's a lot of guys like that, you know, a lot of... The rest of us. And why the fuck do they drink, because... It's hard, you know, in the chest, in the soul here... We don't give a fuck about Khodorkovsky. Here's Peter the Great, he is a fucking cannon! Our factory, it's a cannon factory. A cannon factory. Five orders.

Stars don't just hang up. They don't! Oh! You see, the stinking cunt who's new, I don't even know what it's called, fuck knows what it's called, Bulav.... Buh... Bukhvalov, Bukhvalov.

He's a fucking kid! When we made tanks here with gyroscope, fuck it, under the aiming platform, fuck it... He used to walk under the table. He was a blob on his dick!

And these ones (gestures around), they won't make a peep. Because mine, out of my twelve or twenty, they fired me, I didn't squeak. That's why I'm crying. Shame on me! (Pause. Clarifies to be understood correctly.) It's shameful to cry.

Future

M o l o d e c h o u n d e r s (answering survey questions). "What problems do you have at work?" At work, in principle, I am happy with everything, I am kind of satisfied with my work, I... and, in principle, I go to my work in the collective with joy. I am happy with my team, I love my team, my press, my brigade. Now, of course, times are tough. We have a lot of young people cut down.... In principle, it seems to me that we have not even cut down on the basis of age, I think, but just as if.... No, we haven't had layoffs for a long time. As if. We've had, probably, since August... since July. since August. we've been working every day without any downtime. Even if it did not affect our wages in any way, but we have work. This is the most important thing, that there is work.

"What do you do to keep us from being bored?" What do you do to keep us from being bored? We find some kind of entertainment. In principle, we have places to relax, places to go, a restaurant. Perm is a big, big city. I love the city of Perm, I adore the city of Perm. I've been to Moscow. Here is Moscow. here's the same city Perm. There's nothing in it. The only thing is, of course, it has some famous places, the Kremlin... The Tsar's cannon. We also have our own cannon, of course, from which we once in our youth all dreamed of shooting at a sixteen-story building: whether it would fly or not.... Perm is a good city, I love the city of Perm. We have Red Square. Behind the church. By the Motovilikhinsky Pond. By the bakery... (Smiling.) In principle, there are plenty of topics for communication. Someone has some questions about everything. On everyday life, on cars, any questions, and everyone tries to bring something up for general discussion right away.... and conversations arise very often, of course.

At work, we mostly talk. If we're working, we're working. But if we sit drinking tea, of course we talk, we try not to talk about work. But if, let's say, after work we went for a beer, it usually still goes to work. Stably, it goes to work. I gotta run.

"What do you have at home?" (Carefully begins to answer.) When we, when I bought the room, my first wish was to renovate it the way I wanted. I made the suspended ceiling by my own efforts, I did everything by my own efforts, the way I wanted. If, say, I come home from work and my wife has glued the ceiling and done something wrong, I will remove it all and do it the way I want. Because I don't like it, I'll clean it up and do it again... No, she's trying, she's trying. I can see she's trying, but it's still like this, because I wanted it like this, and it's like this.

I'm going to redo it and make it the way I wanted it. Because it was kind of my dream to do the renovation the way I wanted. And so I have everything in beige colors, I have all my furniture in a beige shade too. I like the color orange. To the beige shade I use orange colors. Let's say there's an armchair, a leather armchair there with orange inserts, with shades. The wallpaper is beige, well, sort of in such beige colors. It's nice. It's not dark or light, it's kind of like that, medium tone. That's what I'm looking forward to right now. I'll come home to a beige room.

Mortgage? Thirty years. I got a thirty-year mortgage. I pay ten thousand a month. That's okay. I expect to pay it off early.

...Beige room, hot coffee, hot soup, something for the second course.

And outside the window, we have the private sector of the second tower, the so-called Novogorodskie streets. Cottages, green, red roofs, red brick houses, beauty. And not a single person. Basically, you don't walk there, you mostly drive there.

"Do you ever feel sad?" Do we get sad?

"Do you personally get sad?" Do I feel sad? We get sad. No, we don't. We try not to be sad, we try to be positive. (Thinks.) In principle, I guess, it always works.

And when we sleep. In our sleep. after work we sleep hard and soundly. I rarely see the factory, it's when there are problems. Well, not problems, but something in your head, then, maybe, exactly. I don't even know, I see everything, a lot of things. I even try, I don't remember it all.

"What happens next?" I don't even know what will happen next. We'll live, work, achieve something in life. And... fifty years from now. (cheerfully)

I will retire, I will raise my children, they will be grown up, no, I don't have children yet, I've been living with my wife for eight years, I'll have children, I'll have them, I'll quietly go on vacation somewhere in the country, fishing, hunting, spend my personal time. What happens now sometimes... no opportunity.

Then it will be.

New Drama Festival, Perm', March 2009.

Festival of Young Dramaturgy, Moscow, September 2009.

"Flahertiana," Perm', October 2009.

"Teatr.doc," Moscow, December 2009.