

Thesis
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Preface. Experience

Protocol of experience or Not There or Not Alive or Memory and its tail or a weightless text

The following text is in English.

And it does not contain any humor or mistakes.

This would have been a text

No repetition would have been necessary in the text.

This is a text

There would have been a town, coming to life through collective memory. There would have been four characters and one bear, three cats and one landscape-cold, empty, naked; windy that would have united them all.

Do you see it?

The characters would have not been described; they would have shared one experience together.

They could have spoken of many things but they didn't. Neither have they ever met or existed.

Would you like to have a drink?

Is this a writing?

Yes

To both

It could have been a writing about dying or a weightless text, it could have been a script, a meditation, a performance.

We could have talked about Kharms, cats, Beckett, Dostojevski, yoga.

Instead .

It is a writing.

It is about being about nothing.

I am drinking my cold coffee while looking at Gogol's *Nose*.

It patiently looks back at me.

Silence. The writing is moving toward silence.

This writing is this writing.

Is this writing?

Yes. This is writing.

Is this a performance?
It is a performance.
A performance on the subject of writing.

Nothing is happening. Nothing could have happened. Because nothing is there.

I could have started the writing like that:
Once there was nothing..
Or.
Once there was everything, at the same time.

A weightless text that floats around and doesn't leave any trace on the surface of english language.

Chapter I. **Поезд, уходящий в небо** (A train disappearing in the sky)

I have been there a thousand times. Some of these times I would come back dead and others alive. Once I never came back.

Some scenes in the Taiga (also known as boreal forest, located two hours by car from Norilsk) have been taken out; they were there at first place but were later removed because it was too cold and too dark.

Norilsk—an oblivious phantom city with an emerging system of traps, the Zone.

A place that evokes hesitations and doubts in my interior, making me feel like a thing. Where no liquid thought is liquid and where old women fall out of their windows on a daily basis.

Collecting silences.

It was a cold and isolated island. A piece of a land incommensurable with humans. A land that reflects life but that is not life.

Hopeless Hope and a Black Dog

Stalker is a film (1977) directed by Andrei Tarkovsky. But the original text *Piknik na obochine* on which the movie Stalker is based, it has been written by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. *Piknik na obochine* landscape and inspiration for the Zone are based on Norilsk.

The Stalker is the only existing guide to the Zone, an abandoned village under strict military guard. The Zone is a deserted horrifying and calling place of obsessions or dreams of the most wretched, a place beyond human desires, a place that can be home for unspeakable, unimaginable, unreachable longing. In the center of the Zone is a sacred place called the Room, which will grant your deepest desire (if you only pass the system of traps and survive).

Stalker himself can only guide to the Room giving people an ambiguous and probably fatal hope. For Stalker the knowledge behind the door of the Room is forbidden.

Stalker is a guide through a deadly landscape of corpses and what is left of the Zone—the ruins.

In the end Stalker brings home a black dog. As he is doomed by his hope and belief, the dog is his Death.

Stalker's sadness is the unavoidable part of human joy. He has found his strength in his fragility because his hope is hopeless. For Stalker, immortality exists as long as one can breath, for as long as one denies death. But the black dog is only moving closer and

closer, through the frozen and abandoned landscape, through the black waters; silently and surely trotting closer.

The not-alive is not dead.
Dead is what is no longer there, it no longer is.

But not-alive is close to dead but not quite.

It is even more persistent than an alive one. An alive one could die when not alive one is not scared by death. Not-alive lives eternally. The difference between the two is that an alive one is thinking, the not-alive one is out of thought. It surely does struggle with almost the same ghostly problems as the alive one though. As if the not-alive is playing with the reversed part of the alive one. Instead of serious it gives you comedian, instead of refined it gives you rough, abstract-full of theatrical imagery, cruelty is shadowed by cold flow of thought.

The entrance to the city of Norilsk town is signified by a huge factory, standing proudly under heavy big red advertisement letters "HOPE". The pride of the Norilsk! But where is the hope?

Full of hope, not alive space of an island that reflects life. Its imprisoned silent inhabitants radiate truth.

Zombies

Are they hiding in the part of humanity that is not afraid of the full knowledge of humanity? There is a part of humanity that doesn't need a constant annoying proof of its own existence

Chapter II. Ghosts - unrealized ideas/deeds that haunt

Norilsk - an industrial city in Krasnoyarsk Krai, Russia, located between Yenisei River and the Taymyr Peninsula. Population: 175, 365.

Norilsk is the world's northernmost city with more than 100, 000 inhabitants`. Norilsk was historically founded at the end of the 1920s, official date of founding is traditionally 1935, when Norilsk was expanded as a settlement for the Norilsk mining-metallurgic complex and became the center of the Norillag system of *GULAG* labor camps.

Nostalgia. Standards. Old tea

Moscow suburban villages: Troparevo, Chertanovo, Medvedkovo and of course Cheremushki didn't think they would be immortalized on the same gruesome day, that they will be wiped off the face of the earth. The village Cheremushki gave its name a new neighborhood that grew in the South-Western part of Moscow. Nearly every Soviet city nowadays has its own Cheremushki neighborhood, also Norilsk. In bygone days when someone found himself in a strange city, he felt lost and lonely. Everything around was strange; houses, streets and life itself.

But it's all different now. A person comes to a new city, but feels at home there. To think what lengths of absurdity our ancestors went to, when they designed different architectural projects! Nowadays in every city you will find a standard movie theater called "Rocket" where you can see a standard film.

Names of the streets are not too inventive either. What city doesn't have a 1st Sadovaya or a 2nd Zagorodnaya, a 3rd Factory St., a Park St., a Industrial St., or a 3rd Constructors St.? Staircases that all look the same are all painted with a standard pleasant color. Standard apartments furnished with standard furniture, standard locks cut into blind featureless doors.

Totalitarianism is still present in the everyday life of people from Norilsk, or Norilchane as they are called. It is hiding in their apartments and it created the mines they are working in. Norilsk was built on death in the past but still produces death every moment, every single day via pollution.

In fact, Norilsk is producing 2% of the world's pollution.

When I sit in the audience of Taganka Theater in Moscow, I feel I am surrounded by 435 Aleksandr Brenners, screaming, making statements and coming on stage.
That is all.

A cut off island

Norilsk got its name after the place of its location: the river Norilskaya (Norilka) flows not far from the city. The city itself is built at the foot of Norilsk mountains.

The winters here are cold and long, summers are short. From January on one can witness the Northern Light an unnatural amount of times.

Because Norilsk is located on Taymyr peninsula, the rest of Russia is usually called the “continent”, locals use the phrase ‘cut off from the continent’ referring to themselves. It is impossible to get from Norilsk to any other city except the city of Dudinka. And the only railway connects the mining towns Talnakh, Norilsk and Kayerkan and is not for passenger traffic but is owned by Norilsk Nickel.

The railway was built on human skeletons. It is an outcome of horrifying labor camps that Stalin once created. Tens of thousands of dead human bodies were used as ballast for the railway tracks. Every year when spring comes, the skeletons emerge from under the frozen ground and in between the tracks, washed to the surface by waters. They emerge as a reminder of death that surrounds the town, that is the fundament of the Norilsk, as witnesses to a crime against humanity.

Here everything speeds up three times

Hell on Earth

A place where the snow is black, the air is tight of gas and the life expectancy for a factory worker is 10 years below Russian average.

On the second day of my stay in the city, during one of the rehearsals, a seemingly panicking girl asked me to close all the windows very fast. I asked her why. She asked me how come I didn't feel the gas that was released by one of the factories.

I ran to the windows and closed them all. Too late. The taste of thick, toxic air was clinging to our throats and one could hardly breath.

I was shocked, but on the fourth day of my stay, when beginning to realize that the gas is just floating in the air on a daily basis, depending on from which direction the wind is blowing, I got used to the thought of it. A bleeding nose; scarves around the whole face – the whole welcoming package, but in spite of all the horror there was something about the city that just evoked the human curiosity to discover more.

Besides the omnipresent death in every corner of the city there is the urge of life force, radiating from the inhabitants; radiating from the stubborn green grass that grows every spring hoping to survive but it is being washed out from the surface of the earth by the acid rains.

When driving on the road between the airport and the city, one will encounter a couple of apartment buildings in the middle of nowhere. It seems unthinkable that anybody ever lived there. According to our driver they had been built for the employees of Norilsk's minuscule airport, but he has also heard stories about the military using the buildings for

a few years in the 80's. The facades of the abandoned buildings that were built in mid-1970s, hold a color of tea that has been left to stand for a couple of days and has grown a fungi layer with a structure of a hairy carpet. The buildings used to be in an even color but most of it has faded, vanished due to heavy snowfall and freezing cold. In times that the buildings were still being used, they were repainted each year again and again, just like the buildings in the city. This is what has caused the hairiness.

Now they were just standing there, empty, stained, hopeless, ghostly, rotting, once meant to be a social project; a thing in which probably, once, someone lived or had to live. These ruins will keep on standing, surrounded by empty land and distant factories, providing still a shelter from cold for the animals; the ruins will not be torn down because there is no one to tear them down.

In 2001 Norilsk became a "closed town" where no foreigners were welcome. A town surrounded by the Soviet Iron Curtain. It remains "closed" also today.

The provision is delivered to the town once a week by an airplane. Sometimes the airplane does not come due to the released gases and low visibility. In such cases the airport is being shut down.

The speed goes back to normal

The Dead Theater

A frozen body of a cat on the street slightly covered by snow; The Dead Town contains something even deader than itself.

The picture of the dead body gave me an inevitable sense of Peter Brook's *Empty Space*: the deadly, holy, rough, immediate THEATER where everything is an empty stage and at any moment a performance might emerge.

"I CAN take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watch-ing him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" Peter Brooks.

Nearly 200 theater premieres per year would come to life in Gulag's camp barracks. Prisoners would act them out for other prisoners and later on even got a possibility to perform outside the barracks and the prison. This is how the Drama Theater of Norilsk emerged.

The theatre is still in use and was one of the first buildings in the city, before it was even officially called a city.

Question. If one thinks that something is, is one in a trap?

Well, I do not believe that something or anything is.

And now Gaza, my striped cat, is slowly moving towards the keyboard, smelling my eyelids, yawning.

“Why so much information about a city in Russia nobody has even been to?” she seems to say.

She tries to sit on my lap but I am too taken by writing so I give her a strict look and she goes across the table...into the sunbeam, turns her back to me and just sits, carefully smelling the corner of the brown wooden table.

She looks suspicious.

Chapter III. Arctic Circle (Заполярье). City sauna. Conversation between three middle aged working class men. Steam is everywhere, smell of beer in the tight air

“волк бывает максимум 120-130 кг. максимум! а медведь у тебя 200? как он будет по деревьям лазить? он же пискун! че мы спорим блядь? давайте у Миши спросим он его разделывал. Миша? Ну по габаритам ну 200 то есть наверное. Миша, ты на себя посмотри вот сколько ты весишь килограмм? ты помнишь сколько ты весишь? 70-80? 80 с говном. медведь был в три раза больше тебя нахуй? да. ты ебанутый или как? вот ты весишь 70 кг. или 80. умножь блядь на три. вот три таких как ты это было столько медведя блядь? ну так у него рыха должна быть как у тебя живот что ли блядь? че ты взелся? ну блядь ну врут я не могу когда люди врут блядь. когда правды нет блядь. какое справедливое сердце у человека! иди нахуй. пиздуны блядь! смех че ты взелся? вот шлюхи что делают с моральным обликом человека.”

“A wolf could weight 120-130 kg, maximum! But a bear you say weighs 200kg? How would he climb the trees in this case?”

“He is piskun! Why the hell are we arguing? Let’s ask Misha, he was butchering the bear. Misha?”

“Well, according to overall dimensions... well 200 probably somehow I would say...”

“Misha, take a good look at yourself, how much do you weight? Do you remember how much you weight? 70-80? 80 with turd? So the bear was three times bigger then you? Fucking shit!”

“Yes. Are you fucking insane or what? So you weight 70 kg, or 80. Fucking multiply your weight by three. So three of you would have been one bear? Shit..... Why are you fucking with me? Fuck, lies are everywhere. I can’t stand it when people lie. Can’t stand it when there is no truth... fuck! What a righteous heart one has got! Go fuck yourselves! Damn liars!”

Look, everything stopped. You are being looked at, do you see? Are you looking?
When are you looking and when do you see?

You are being looked at but are you being seen? Do you want to be looked at?
A gaze is invisible at the same time it is a relationship. Traces of absence.

Chapter IV. Da Vinci restaurant

Ljubov Alekseevna is the owner and the interior designer of Da Vinci as well as the creative head of the place. But she is also known as a saleswoman of KPS-kas, a magnetic multi-dimensional pocket bar that can help you connect with cosmos and the Intergalactic Cosmic Federation. The KPS-kas comes in various colors, depending on your own vibration and the dimension you would like to connect to.

Misha, the bartender and waiter, is in the beginning of his twenties; blue eyed and always wearing the same white shirt. On the first day we entered Da Vinci, Misha claimed that the cash machine had broken down and that he would have to write the receipts himself on an "official paper" and count everything with his calculator.

Misha is also responsible for hanging the customer's coats in the wardrobe. Once Misha said: "Come to Da Vinci again! It's always my pleasure to undress you!" Leaving the women speechless, but the men in the company were snickering.

The temperature in Norilsk can reach a freighting -60 °C in winter times. If you step in through the entrance door of Da Vinci, the temperature in the corridor feels like +60 °C and will slap you on the back of your head like an angry policeman with a rubber baton. On the left there would be a toilet for both females and males. This toilet would be a mysterious place where women would go in and would never return from. Like a portal or an elevator to outer space. Fifty years ago a lady with silver vamp heels went in and never came out. No one knows where she is since until today.

Misha: What would you like to eat today?

Customer 1 and 2: A surprise, please.

C3: Misha, could you just stop for a moment, there is something we need to ask you. Just sit down, Ljubov Alekseevna is not here yet, we are not going to tell her!

M: All right, but let's make it fast.

C3: Misha, do you believe in God?

M: It's a middle of the day and you ask me such a question. I guess I believe in something bigger out there. You see, I think there are people who want to believe and people that don't want to. Which means that people who don't want to believe already believe in something.

C3: But believe or not believe in what? In God?

M: No, not in God. They believe in immortality. This whole conversation is impolite and embarrassing.

C2: Misha, do you like beer. Do you drink vodka?

M: No, I am at work, I can't and in general I don't drink. But I love vodka. Maybe we could get together and drink vodka sometimes?

C4: Mihail, it's all a question of theatricality. It seems to me like a mismatch of internal and external data. I would like to order something homogeneous. 5 vodka shots! And 4 beers, of course. Vodka without beer is money thrown in the wind.

M: Let's drink to whatever is happening here! Na zdorovje!

C1, C2, C3, C4: Na zdorovje!

C2: Misha, do you read?

M: But yes, of course.

C4 looked at M, did not swear, instead he poured another glass of vodka, and so did C3

C2: Did you read Fjodor Mihaylovich Dostoevsky?

M: Dostoevsky was just sensing that art is not about life simply because life is not about life. Art for Dostoevsky is like life, which is about why humans come into existence. A great man he was, a little kuku though.

Vodka being drunk fast, beers slow, second round of shots, but silence...

M: So let's drink to whatever is happening here! Na zdorovje!

C1: Misha, why are we here?

M: Because we are supposed to be here. Why do you ask, what do you want me to say? Do you want to hear that there's something bigger out there, that you are destined, that you have a mission of some sort?

C4 looked at C1 and at M, did not swear, instead he had another drink and so did C3.

C2: But if we are here, it means we came from somewhere right? But we have no sense of belonging. Only a certain understanding that someone left us. And if somebody left us, it means they had to leave from somewhere, which means that we are somewhere as well...

M (aguishly): It is so dusty in here I go get a mop.

C3: Dust is the flesh and blood of time, Brodsky once said. So, sit!

Slowly sipping vodka and looking at a crooked black and white photograph hanging on the dirty yellow wall. It reminds of a sunset or of a melon. Neither can be found in this place, as nothing really grows in Norilsk, not even trees. And the amount of darkness in this town leaves very little space for a sunset to rise visibly through the layers of the constant gas clouds.

C4: It is all a question of theatricality. I for example try to become an object and try to be total in it.

The entrance door opens and a long row of seemingly drunk people enters, walking, talking, stepping on each other's heels and toes, tripping, and pushing each other's parts

through the narrow corridor. The mass of shapes and tones drains into one big body of a monster, mumbling something for years from under its nose, leaking desires or strategies of coexistence and co-creation. The Monster is moving rapidly, like an overtaking dream, leaving a grey slimy tail behind itself. The tail was like Joseph Brodsky once said: *A tail of memories that one can grab*. The process of remembering is never linear like the multi dimensional body of the beast. Besides that, the more it remembers the closer it is to Death. Or. Perhaps the soul of the Monster is Death like Koschei the Immortal's soul that is living outside of the body on another continent. The tail seemed to coordinate the movements of the Monster, including migration into the space.

And the monster disappears through a door in the ceiling.

Koschei the Immortal

Koschei's appearance has not been described in any of the existing texts. He is also known as Koschei the Deathless or Tsar Koschei. The way Koschei is spelled in Russian or other Slavic languages refers to the word 'kost' meaning 'bone', suggesting that Koschei has a skeletal appearance. Also he is very old.

Koschei the Deathless is not afraid of death, one can not kill him by traditional means. If you perform the act of killing on Koschei, he nor his body will die.

His soul or his life force (or death) is hidden outside of his body and inside a needle. The needle is located in an egg, the egg is inside of a duck, the duck is hiding in the hare, the hare is in an iron chest (sometimes the chest appears to be crystal or gold), the chest is buried under a Greek oak tree and the tree is on the island of Buyan in the ocean. Koschei stays immortal for as long as his soul is alive. A carefully planned system of traps is keeping him amongst the living. If the chest is dug up and opened, the hare will bolt away; if it is killed, the duck will try to fly off. Anyone who manages to possess the egg will have Koschei in their power. If Koschei is possessed by somebody, it will make him weaker, sicker and in the end he will lose his magic. If the egg will be thrown around, Koschei will be flying around involuntarily as well. If the needle or the egg will be broken, Koschei will die.

In Russian folklore Koschei is a representative of an evil force with terrifying appearance who gallops naked around the wild mountains of Caucasus. He is also a nature spirit of destruction.

He also happens to be a shape-shifter and is capable of taking any form. In a blink of an eye he can shift into a whirlwind, storm, mist or fog and can fly through the air.

He is a creature of horror that is freed from worldly constraints.

Letting in the space of human intonation.

Chapter V. The truth of life explained in a taxi ride:

Where do you come from?

Amsterdam.

Ah, it's where the whores are legal and so is marijuana?

Well, you can say that. Yes.

Have you been to Thailand?

No, why?

I have been.

I must tell you a secret. The prostitutes of there, oh, man. Not comparable to local ones. Don't take here prostitutes. I am telling you, here you pay 4 000 rubles. There you pay only 2 000 rubles. Here, a slut is demanding and very traditional. There-very untraditional, if you know what I mean, and with the pancakes in the morning. They make you pancakes, paradise. And overall, what the hell are you doing here?

Kitic is lying in the corridor for the whole day.

Nobody knows why. Until he runs in three circles around the apartment.

After that Wundic slappes him in the face.

Now it is clear that Kitic was blocking the entrance to the toilet for Wundic.

And that is how Kitic got slightly beaten up.

14.December 2013

Chapter VI. В одну реку два раза не входят. (One can not step twice into the same river)

Liquid / fluid time: the first second never stops, the second second contains the first one. They are not equal, the last second is the most important one: it contains all of the previous ones. The Matryoshka.

Fluid thinking is to be in a moment that has the beginning but no end.

Infinity has a tail. We understand the tail. Iosif Brodsky

There are two characters.
The first one has a name Per.
The other one is named Haps.
And there is not much more to add.

Translator - a mediator between the author and the reader. Like a medium - a mediator between the vanished and the existing.

A transmitter, a tool used to deliver or store the data.

Daniil Kharms is sitting at the roof of a five-floor apartment block that faces a river. He is smoking a pipe. He has a hat that overshadows his eyes. Or, maybe not. There is no hat. But Kharms is definitely there. Looking at the city, guarding and patrolling it.

Some of the days he would point to *this or that*, to those who take themselves too seriously.

Other days he would mock *this or that*, giving it a fresh portion of the reality check. And sometimes he would make all the streets disappear altogether, at once.

I forgot to mention that on the roof, Kharms would always have his typing machine with him, it is because he had to protocol everyday reality, the "slight errors", nonsense, *chush*, out of place happenings, the absurd and cruelty of the days. Every Wednesday at 10 p.m. he would say: "If you stop observing, immediately something will happen. Who would look after the city if not me?" And when he would read his texts, he would make two types of marks: red marker marks "so-so" and the blue ones "wrong" and "even worse" although he knew he could not publish any of them.

He had to see the environment in which he wrote with "naked eyes", the Soviet absurdity of life and the violence of power.

Full stop.

Crickets singing in harmony, slowed down 4 times. They remind us of a distant men choir, powerful, touching and absent. The soundtrack continues for 47 minutes:18 seconds.

Between the floor and a decade

I stayed once in a place that had an attic and the attic had a ghost. The place was over 150 years old and the attic was untouched, the ghost was heard for decades but never seen. Every morning at 5 o'clock sharp, footsteps would appear, coming from high heels, every time same tempo, same pattern. The steps would go one floor up, the tempo would slow down and the sound of furniture being moved would start to crawl around the floor under. Sometimes the footsteps would stop in front of my door. I would have opened the door to see how the ghost looked but the timing was always off.

Recently, due to construction works held in the building, the attic had to be emptied. Once the floors were taken out, a baby skeleton was found. A skeleton, that was less than 3 months old. It spent more than 150 years in between the floors, in between the times.

Since then nobody heard the footsteps anymore nor any doors being slapped, nor the furniture being moved.

Chapter VII. Tripping over Kharms and the collision of objects

Here appears Kharms. He was not Kharms at first; his real name was Daniil Ivanovich Yuyachev.

Later, in his 20-ies he starts to create pseudonyms for himself. In total around 30 of them but one the most popular turned out to be Daniil Kharms. Kharms is derived from the English words "harms", "charms" and "Holmes", as in Sherlock, the fictional detective whose sartorial style he followed as an example.

Let's start again.

Here appears Kharms. As he himself claimed, he was born twice.

First time he was born but then pushed back in. Second time he was born. Maybe he was never born at all. Perhaps *"we don't even know who we're talking about,"* as Kharms admitted about the redheaded man.

Kharms was sent to a very strict school in St. Petersburg, where he learned English and German.

The parents: the mother ran a refuge for women who were released from prison. The father was a former member of the People's Will revolutionary organization, who later became a pacifist.

Kharms – a kid finding himself first playing football in the middle of Revolution's field, after growing up into the civil war and joining the Red Army, later on hiding in the basements and smoky city bars from the terror of Stalin, in the very end loosing his comrades into Syberian labor camps, finally rotting away in a prison hospital during the Leningrad Blockade: unheard, unpublished, spitted on and erased from the surface of soviet reality.

The light in the room is blinking as if it is breathing

Kharms became an involved and active writer in the times of Great Terror of Stalin, a period of hunger, cruelty, censorship and poverty. Affected by everyday reality he started to become interested in nonsense that had no practical meaning. The Russian word "chush" (nonsense) stands for rubbish, a bunch of crap or something that happens by chance in the most everyday sense. It stands for something meaningless.

Seriousness was the fundament that held ideology together in the Soviet Union. And all of a sudden there is Kharms with his nonsensical writing. Nonsense was seen as a protest against the dictatorship of the proletariat. The roots of Kharms interest in nonsensical things and events would lead to unavoidable prison. Nevertheless Kharms kept on writing.

In Kharmsian reality, absurd life is real life. One can glimpse upon it only through the means of the oddest objects, through the weirdest gestures and through the events that make no rational sense.

In OBERIU manifesto Kharms wrote about himself:

'A poet and dramaturge who's attention is not focused on a static object but on the collision of objects and their correlation. In the moment of action an object takes new concrete outlines, full of actual meaning. The action converted into a new way holds in itself "the classical print" and at the same time represents a wide range of OBERIU's perception of the world.'

By the action of collision he would make an attempt to cleanse words of their "normal" meanings and "undress" the objects from their functions and uses. That reminds me of Kharms' credo about a poem where *'verses that are as concrete as things can, so that, if thrown at a window, the window would break'*. Here the two objects – the poem and the window collide and invite new meaning in.

Another thing in Kharmsian world is the sense of being right. According to Kharms, to be right, means also to be wrong, means to contain a slight error and only through mistakes and errors something or someone will be truly real.

For Kharms a work of art has to exist in the world as a rock, as a sun, as grass; as an object.

"When I write poetry, the most important thing for me is not the idea, not the contents and not the form and not the obscure notion of "quality", but something even more obscure and unintelligible to the rational mind, but understandable to me...This is--purity of order. This purity is the same in the sun, in the grass, in man, and in poetry. Real art stands side by side with the first reality. It creates the world and is its first reflection." Kharms wrote in a letter to a friend.

Once during a literary evening where Kharms performed his poetry he met Alexander Vvedensky (Russian poet and avant-garde artist). They soon became good friends and comrades. Later they both were invited to become members of the "Zaum" (literal translation from Russian – "beyond the mind") movement, founded in 1913 by Kruchenykh. Kruchenykh defined Zaum as *"a language which does not have any definite meaning, a trans rational language" that "allows for fuller expression and that can become a universal language, born originally and not artificially, like Esperanto"*.

Later on Kharms and Vvedensky formed a separate branch of Zaum, calling themselves the *Chinari*. Chinari's only one literal evening ended with the audience whistling, spitting on the performers and with brutal fights in the audience.

But that was not enough for their ambitions and in 1927 Kharms proposed the creation of an Academy of Left Classics. The aim of this movement would be to "struggle against hacks". And that is when OBERIU (Russian: ОБЭРИУ - Объединение реального искусства; English: the Union of Real Art or the Association for Real Art) was founded.

I miss Wundik very much.
Last time I saw him was in Tallinn, 18.08.2013
45 minutes in the green grass
He looked sick but same wise.

OBERIU – an avant-garde collective of Russian Futurist writers, musicians, artists, writers that lived in the late 1920's and 1930's, emerged in the times of "intense centralization of Soviet Culture" and the decline of the avant-garde culture of Leningrad, when "leftist" groups were increasingly repressed.

In its manifesto, the OBERIU said its main task was *"to portray the world in a clearly objectified manner."* "They called themselves a new avant-garde of the revolutionary Left in fine arts, theater, cinema, music and literature. *"Art is a cupboard,"* the group stated, and *"Poems aren't pies; we aren't herring."*

One year later Kharms started to work for the children's magazine "Yozh" ("Hedgehog"), edited by Marshak, in order to survive and have a chance to publish at least some of his texts in disguise.

It sounds strange, but kids really loved his stories, with all the irrationality, chance and cruelty that were so typical for Kharms. But Kharms himself really didn't like children just as he could not stand old women and corpses. Perhaps this was because Kharms sensed the presence of death on both edges of the age.

"I don't like children, old men, old women and the reasonable middle-aged. To poison children - that would be harsh. But, hell, something needs to be done with them! ..." -Daniil Kharms

Kharms played in his texts with the subject of the meaninglessness of human existence and at the same time the desire of people to have meaning in their lives. He played with hopeless hope.

Silence is moving towards the fog.

Can you hear it?

In 1938 Kharms hosted a musical-literary experiment evening in his apartment. At the entrance he placed a note "List of Persons Particularly Respected in This House". The list welcomed Bach, Gogol, Glinka, Goethe, Lewis Carroll and Knut Hamsun.

I happened to be reading an introduction by Matvei Yankelevich titled "The Real Kharms" from the book "Today I wrote Nothing", where Yankelevich writes that

Kharms believed that his poem-object exists not only as "another created object in the world" but also as a thing that does something. The written word passes the thing and becomes an action. If words create the world then something is "happening". The act of writing is an act in the world, a gesture - that opens the world up to the new possibility of the connections, to new objects, new events.

Taking the paragraph above into consideration, one might say that Kharms believed in destruction of the old in order to make space for new. In his texts he used interruption as a tool to avoid the logical order and to break the old meaning. Subjects such as death, violence, love, affection, heroism are flattened to be equal and of the same sense, being served through the prism of comedy. These subjects lose their qualities, properties and

become something else. Kharms would often say: "*... Little by little a man loses his shape and becomes a sphere. And once he is a sphere, a man loses all his desires.*"

Kharms consciously developed small performances for the NKVD agents who interrogated him. Performances consisting of strange hiccup-snorting seizures and the shielding of his thoughts from others by wearing all kind of objects on his head.

Interrogation No.2

... "Summing up my deposition, I confess that the activity of our group in the sphere of children's literature had an anti-Soviet character and did significant damage to the cause of forming the rising Soviet generation. Our books separated the reader from contemporary concrete reality and acted in a destructive way on the imagination of the child. In particular, from this point of view I can also point a poem entitled "Liar," published in the journal "Hedgehog," which contains elements devoid of sense."

-Daniil Kharms. December 23, 1931, Interrogator: A. Buznikov

On 23 August 1941, he was arrested third time. The doorman asked him to come down into the courtyard for something. After that Kharms disappeared; half-dressed, wearing slippers on his bare feet.

When is it going to stop?

Here everything stopped

Kharms died on 2 February 1942, in a prison hospital in Novosibirsk.

Or maybe Kharms never existed and instead Daniil Ivanovich Yuyachev died on 2 February 1942, in a prison hospital in Novosibirsk, leaving Kharms' traces of absence hidden in between the times and the black and white lines.

Not only he himself vanished from the surface of the earth, but also all of his works. They reappeared only after 30 years in Samizdat – a form that existed around the Soviet bloc, where individuals would reproduce "forbidden" publications by hand and pass the published materials from reader to reader.

"Bizarre violence, peculiar digressions and sudden twists; direct, visceral and yet with something hidden ..." - Daniil Kharms about himself

"Now the time has come to say that, not only at Nikolai Ivanovich's back, but also in front of him—at his chest, as it were—and all around him, there is nothing. A complete absence of any existence. Or, as someone once said in jest, an absence of any presence."

-Daniil Kharms

Is this Theater?

In the OBERIU manifesto Oberiuty (members of OBERIU) insist on the *“action turned inside out”*, that compared to the classical “action” in theater, lacks any logical pattern or plot.

“Let’s imagine: two people come to stage; they don’t speak but communicate to each other through a sequence of signs. At the same time they blow their celebrating cheeks. The audience is laughing. Is this theater? It is.

Or.

The stage is dark. A canvas is hanging on the stage; a village is drawn on it. It starts to get lighter. A person appears and plays a flute. Is it theater? It is.

A chair appears on the stage, a samovar appears on the chair. Water is boiling in it. Naked hands crawl out of samovar’s nose instead of the smoke.

All of it: a person, his movement, samovar and the village on the canvas, the light - are independent parts of theater.

Until now all of the elements were enslaved by one dramaturgical plot – a play. A play is a story about people or an event. Everything taking place on stage supports the story and illustrates and articulates it even clearer for the audience.

But theater is not about that.

If an actor, representing a minister all of a sudden starts to walk as a dog and howl like a wolf; or an actor acting a Russian man gives a long speech in Latin, - that is theater, that will interest the spectator without any dramatic plot.. Theater will be in these different moments. A sequence of organized moments like that will create a theater piece that will have its own meaning and its own stage presence.”

-OBERIU Manifesto, section OBERIU Theater by D. Kharms

The first OBERIU’s theatrical evening is called "Three Left Hours" and is held in 1928.

Rumours state that during the first hour of poetry reading Kharms would ride out onto stage on a black wardrobe rack. Two men hiding inside would animate the rack. On top of the wardrobe Kharms would sit, covered in white powder and wearing a long coat decorated with red triangles. He would say: “Phonetic poems: ...”

During the second hour of the evening a performance of Kharms’ play “Elizaveta Bam” would be shown. The play would reveal two forces; one would be trying to maintain the narrative and lead it to conclusion, the other would try to break the dramatic linearity of the subject, to destroy it. It would confuse and play with the attention of the audience. It would be sudden, interrupted and nonsensical. It would transform into circus, farce, joke and independent theatrical scenes. The first force would bring out disturbance; the second one - disruption. Both of the forces battle with each other in shifting success.

As I tumbled across Roberts Graham’s book - *The Last Soviet Avant-Garde: OBERIU - Fact, Fiction, Meta-fiction*, I would like to quote his analysis of ‘Elizaveta Bam’:

“Of all Kharms’s fiction, Elizaveta Bam is perhaps the most linguistically self-conscious. Elizaveta Bam presents us with a world where language shapes reality in a very real sense. The words, which the characters use both articulate and limit their world. They speak ‘in order to be’.”

Gaza is sitting on a sofa. She is staring at me

The interesting fact is that not all the characters are taking a chance to articulate the new realities, in fact, the character of Elizaveta has lost the right to speak therefore creating a new language game that creates her reality and that resists the old world. The role of the language is very important but it is not trapped into the system of a plot; the language is freed from the heavy chains of tradition of a play and released into the wild, into the possibilities of creation new meaning.

When Oberiuty were seeking for a shelter for rehearsals they found an auditorium room in Kazimir Malevich's newly created art institute. Rumors say that the creative process involved various intoxicants and hallucinogens). Malevich used to say to OBERIU members: "You are young trouble makers, and I am an old one. Let's see what we can do."

For many years in a row, Oberiuty would meet to sit in a room with closed windows and doors, smoke pipes and read to each other bits and pieces of their texts, carrying the believe of changing the reality by simply reading the words out loud, letting them float in the space.

They would keep lists on the walls, featuring the names of people who were welcome to the closed circle of trust.

The members of OBERIU were ready to admit only this much in their manifesto: "We can only say that our task is to render the world of concrete objects on the stage in their interrelations and collisions". This idea is clearly an idea Kharms brought into the group.

Laureatov 33

A nine-floor soviet apartment block

One porch where every floor is revealing the history of the previous evening, it has witnessed. Shot glasses standing on the dirty sticky stair; piss crawling down the corner, needles in the corners shining in the moonlight.

Third floor.

Inside of the apartment:

One long corridor, three separate rooms with uncomfortable sofas and stuffed animals, brown stillage occupying all the walls, reflecting the light from the surface of it's glass doors, one kitchen, way too many doors some of them cut in two, others leaning into a diagonal because of the not too straight floor and walls. Toilet that leaks and a bathroom. Four windows. They have to stay closed due to every day-released gas from the four factories that surround the town.

One table – the central piece of the apartment, the gathering point of love, delirium, drama and liquid amnesia, proudly standing in the kitchen.

One door chain.

“A man with a dirty coat and a big knife in his hands tried to get in through the window. When the dad noticed him, he closed the window and said:

- There is nobody.

*But, the man with a dirty coat was outside looking into the room through the window, and furthermore, he opened the window and got in.” –Kharms, *The Thing**

Everything is slowing down.

The not alive matter and a hammer

After the short life of OBERIU, Kharms didn't give up and took *the object* to the 'next level' and continued to transform it in his creative writing.

Kharms keeps the distinguishing feature of *OBERIU object* – its uselessness, and adds to it an abnormal sizing twist. Not only his objects resist any utilization or purpose, but the object's proportions start to get 'out of hands'.

In one of the unfinished and untitled dramatic scene, one character starts to take a small hammer from his mouth. When asked what he was doing, the character would answer that he was "just killing time". Then later in the scene a repetition of the same action with the hammer would occur. This time a different character pulls a hammer out of her mouth. When asked what she was doing, she would answer that the hammer "had been bothering her the all day". In this scene the hammer becomes a sign of the absence of language and memory.

As Branisla Jakovljevic stated in his books 'Daniil Kharms: Writing and the Event'

“The small hammer is not simply an objectified word. It is a piece, odd dead matter that is extracted from living body: it gets pulled out from a mouth like an improbable tooth. This gesture points toward the idea of the intermingling and combining of living beings and inanimate objects.

OBERIU objects are independent of human beings. The horror of this simple realization is best communicated through the image of a dead body that continues to "live". A dead body animated by an inhuman movement, a corpse that adopts the life of an object, is a frequent image in Kharms's work. These crawling corpses are no less dead because they are moving: it is precisely this inanimate movement that makes their death categorical and concrete.”

Here I notice a black crow that flies by the window

In Kharms's work the collision of objects continues to transform. The border between the dead matter and the organic life becomes thinner and almost no difference between the two can be found. People on crutches start to appear on the streets, dead old women start to crawl on the floors; human body parts start to live independent life from the body itself, objects start to become unavoidable parts of human bodies – they support the failing human body or bodies that are no longer alive. Corpses refuse to die; they appear or disappear whenever they wish. Wrist watches lose their hands and become 'readable' only for the dead. Windows and doors transform into the 'gates to the world beyond' or the world of God.

Coming back to B. Jakovljevic:

“What is horrifying here is not the unknowable power of the living dead, but precisely the opposite: the aimless and senseless progression of the corpse unprotected by any kind of life in it. This moving matter embodies a determination without will and an unyielding indestructibility. It does not engage with other objects: the absence of interaction with the immediate environment is a sure sign that the life of the object is inhuman.”

Considering the fact that Stalin times in Soviet Union were about the order of thought, movement and speech, we should not forget that this meant that there was no God, it was forbidden. If KGB would find an icon, a note or a letter that mentions religion or God, or overhear ones prayer, the outcome would be PRISON.

If one would be walking home from work and would see a cue formed somewhere, one would run and stand in it for hours, asking someone standing before him what the line was meant for. Nobody would know but one would stand anyway, because anything one could get was good enough. The shelves in the shops were empty, green coupons were given out to have the right to stand in a line. Everything was the same, standard, equal: same books, same food, same radio waves, same clothes, same subjects to talk about, same cars, same houses, same plates, and same soap. Identical, Inevitable, Soviet, Moral-Mortal-Moron.

Kharms however had the rare ability to cause laughter and cry at the same time. The cruelty of his texts, reflecting upon everyday reality with its mistakes and absurdity, left a lot of space for the reader to interpret the text. The mistakes, which were questioning the order of Soviet Regime. The mistakes, which had no right to occur as the regime was God and had no mistakes.

After that I did not write anything anymore.

Seemingly existing man

“There lived a redheaded man who had no eyes or ears. He didn't have hair either, so he was called a redhead arbitrarily. He couldn't talk because he had no mouth. He had no nose either...”

Let me just mention in respect to what I call a weightless text that in English language to have no does not reflect upon a Russian word that Kharms originally was building his sentences with. The English verb to have has to do with possession “he had no nose”.

The Russian verb being used is *byt'* (to be). So the literal translation would be there was no nose being. Even through non-being the being is emphasized and brought to front.

Pause.

What if he would have had a nose. And it would have happened to be Gogol's.

There would have lived a redheaded man who would have had no eyes or ears. He would have had no hair either, so he would have been called a redhead arbitrarily. He couldn't have had talked because he would have had no mouth. He would have had no nose either. He would have awakened to discover that his nose would have gone missing, leaving a smooth, flat patch of skin in its place. It would have happened on March 25. The redheaded man would have gone to the local newspaper to place an ad and to search for his nose. He would have gone to the police office too if he only would have had a set of eyes. Instead he would have gone to a market because he would have remembered he needed fresh milk. He would not have even had arms or legs. He would have stayed in. There would have not been any milk. He would not have had a stomach. On the 7th of April, redheaded man would have woken up with his nose re-attached. But that would not have happened because he would have had no back, he would have had no spine, and he would have had no innards at all. He wouldn't have had anything. So we would not have even known who we would have been talking about. It would have been better that we wouldn't have talked about him anymore.

The difficulty of knowing a man who seemingly exists but in fact does not, applies to Kharms' own biography.

Something about Pushkin

“It's hard to say something about Pushkin to a person who doesn't know anything about him. Pushkin is a great poet. Napoleon is not as great as Pushkin. Compared to Pushkin, Bismarck is a nobody. And the Alexanders, First, Second and Third, are just little kids compared to Pushkin. In fact, compared to Pushkin, all people are little kids, except Gogol. Compared to him, Pushkin is a little kid. And so, instead of writing about Pushkin, I would rather write about Gogol. But, Gogol is so great that not a thing can be written about him, so I'll write about Pushkin after all. Yet, after Gogol, it's a shame to have to write about Pushkin. But you can't write anything about Gogol. So I'd rather not write anything about anyone. “

-Kharms, December 15, 1936 [Translated by Eugene Ostashevsky and Matvei Yankelevich]

Pushkin and Gogol

GOGOL falls out from the wings on to the stage and quietly lies there.

PUSHKIN appears on stage, stumbles over GOGOL and falls.

PUSHKIN: What the devil! Seems I've tripped over Gogol!

GOGOL (Getting up): What a vile abomination! You can't even have a rest. (Walks off, stumbles over PUSHKIN and falls) Seems I've stumbled over Pushkin!

PUSHKIN (Getting up): Not a minute's peace! (Walks off, stumbles over GOGOL and falls) What the devil! Seems I've tripped over Gogol again!

GOGOL (Getting up): Always an obstacle in everything! (Walks off, stumbles over PUSHKIN and falls) It's a vile abomination! Tripped over Pushkin again!

PUSHKIN (Getting up): Hooliganism! Sheer hooliganism! (Walks off, stumbles over GOGOL and falls) What the devil! Tripped over Gogol again!

GOGOL (Getting up): It's sheer mockery! (Walks off, stumbles over PUSHKIN and falls) Tripped over Pushkin again!

PUSHKIN (Getting up): What the devil! Well, really, what the devil! (Walks off, stumbles over GOGOL and falls) Over Gogol!

GOGOL (Getting up): Vile abomination! (Walks off, stumbles over PUSHKIN and falls) Over Pushkin!

PUSHKIN (Getting up): What the devil! (Walks off, stumbles over GOGOL and falls into the wings) Over Gogol!

GOGOL (Getting up): Vile abomination! (Walks off into wings; from offstage) Over Pushkin!

- Daniil Kharms. Blue Notebook No. 10

Gaza tries to attack a street cat through the window

Chapter VIII. The excursion day...

The house that looked white and sick was facing the Black Tulip.

We are brought to the Norilsk Nickel ex-resort which is being represented in all its glory. In the middle of a flatland with half-alive trees, bent and curved from poison, above them a heavy low sky hangs, covered in grey tensed cloud of gas. Something that once used to be a white building now is emerging on a misty horizon or is rising from a smoky ground as a part of the history. We approach the middle of it. The closer we move in its direction, the more it reveals itself. It looked like a 70 year old body, covered with cancerous molds all over it. Rotten red cells under the façade, hiding streaming in the blood as back in the days, visitors of the resort used to circulate its veins. It used to pull from the inside...

. . .will reveal failure.

The guide of the excursion, a young and ambitious lady who followed her husband to the town of ghosts like swans do follow each other as a couple/never separating, decides to show us a caged bear as a starting point. She was rather short and had shiny dark hair that reminded me of an eggplant that disappears in the darkness of the oven.

Chapter IX. A tribute to Kharms

Blixa Bargeld steps to the stage; flutter for a moment in his eyes. He looks doubtful and has furry eyebrows. His half-opened lips start to move:

Death

Death Death

Death

Death

Death

Death

Death

Death

But here Blixa fell down and broke his neck.

“O O O O O O O O O O

O”
-Daniil Kharms

Догоняющий Сон

Gaza escapes from the house.
I wake up in the morning and find an open window. Gaza is gone.
I search the whole district, call her name, ask the neighbors, look at the side of the road
for corpses, cycle around with shrimps. Nothing.
I am smoking when Wundic shows up. He looks at me and starts to walk; slowly, making
sure I am following him.
He leads me to a far away street in the neighborhood. He disappears under the fence. I
climb the fence. We keep on walking. I keep on following.
We enter someone’s garden. Wundic sits down. His looks up. I look up too.
Up there Gaza is sitting on a branch of an old thick tree. In front of her a desperate
Sipsik is sitting too.
Since then I think Wundic is the wisest cat on earth. I love him very much.

Chapter X. Inside of the airplane.

-Excuse me, could I get a vegetarian meal, I specially ordered it. I gave your company a call few days ago to make sure there will be one.

Silence. Almost laughing face, the stewardess half opens her lips, leans in my direction arrogantly and says

-And who do you think is going to separate rice from meat for you?

The void

Its purpose is derived from its symbolic beginning, the beginning of all content. Its essence - is emptiness. Matryoshka literally contains the void. But the void is not a literal absence, negative denial or nothing. On the contrary - Matryoshka's emptiness is the symbol of possibility of creating events from the void. Matryoshka interior expresses the essential call of a human - a permission to be. In the deepest sense Matryoshka is a model of a man, his copy, as well and vice versa. Matryoshka - the Mother of a man is its symbol and the source. The root "Mother" is present in the word "matter" in Russian language. Matryoshka's void in this context means the emptiness that lies at the basis of any physical object, anything and every person. Peering into the void of Matryoshka, we look into the symbolic clearance of our own "I", into the abyss of our personal void, the abyss of possibilities.

When you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you.

“Beyond Good and Evil”, Friedrich Nietzsche, Aphorism 146 (1886)

Another day, With Nail

Inside of Da Vinci-a restaurant that feels more like a gate in the airport. Everybody passes through but never stays.

The interior design makes you speechless. Deep green and dark purple sofas and shiny puffed chairs, white tablecloth with fruity pictures, red carpets on the floors, curtains half transparent half silver with glitter, yellowish walls, black and white Campari photos on the walls, in black frames, TVs with silicon breasts and penis implants blinking on different frequencies.

I saw this commercial from the massive flat screen in the restaurant: “fixing teeth with the materials provided by the client. Denta Vita”.

It pretty much said it all.

Four characters (Flower, Broken glasses, Gold, With Nail) are participating in a deep conversation while With Nail suddenly stands up and walks straight to a picture that hangs on the wall, as if he had had talked to the photo all this time.

His steps are brave with no presence of doubt; he is sharp like a lightning. He reaches his arms to the down corners of the picture, clings his fingers into them, as if it is a matter of life and death.

The picture turns out not to be straight! Full stop!

With one fast movement he adjusts the corners and makes the bottom line perfectly straight. As if by this gesture he straightens the whole world.

Silence hangs in the smoky dry air. All the glances are turned on With Nail.

Now comes the slow motion part, where the rest of the people witness the fall of so promising gesture. The collapse of the system. The fall of the iron curtain..

“Falling as the opposite of jumping. If one has never fallen one has never jumped.”
Daniil Kharms

With Nail could not possibly imagine that because the walls were crooked, also the nails that were holding the picture were put into the wall diagonally. They witness the crash. Imagine ten cameras, filming from different angles so in the end you get 360-degree view.

Would you like a cigarette?

The picture falls to the perfectly well adjusted forks and knives, glasses, grabbing on its way the purple half transparent wrinkled curtain, the character trips over the electricity wires that drag along the TV-the center point of the restaurant. The chain reaction is activated...

When the picture engages into the process of falling..

Here I forgot what I was supposed to write about.

Blessed with a Golden Tooth

From another hall slowly is fading in a Russian song..

Women sitting around the table, holding hands, swinging and waving from side to side in one common tune. A tune that unites them, that makes them smile and cry at the same time. It seems to be dedicated to one person at the table and this shared moment means the world to them all.

Within a blink of an eye these women end up in the other part of the restaurant, hugging and moving hips, throwing their jackets on the floors.

Every single smile is blessed with at least one golden tooth . Fifteen dancing middle-aged women. Most of them wearing as much jewelry at the same time as possible, shirt skirts, fish stockings and tops with decollate. They dance. They drink, they scream. They hug, they kiss like there's no tomorrow. The sound of music is coming from a cd player, the singer happens to be the biggest superstar in Russian pop music industry: Verka Serdjuchka-a man that dresses like a woman and sings about love. Flying body parts, high pitched voices, tears and laughter. Rollercoaster of emotions, different faiths, lives interweaving into alienation at first and later they seem to disappear/dissolve in the music. Loosing themselves.

Chapter XI. That day. One event. Three and a half memories.

Memory of C1

Once in everyone's life *that day* will come.

Me and that day go way back, all the way to the Arctic Pole, to Norilsk.

To be more specific that day came on 25.09 at 04:55 a.m. local time.

Passed out from long conversations about choreography, difficult teenagers, pollution, northern lights, theatricality, fish, Black Tulip and social rooms of public institutions. Passed out, even knocked out by the gas, released by one of the 4 factories, surrounding the town. Knocked out by the black nakedness of the trees, by the absence of green, by the thought of Norilsk being responsible for producing 2% of world's pollution and acid rains.

At 04:55 a.m. precisely the doorbell starts to ring. !!!Rrrrrrr-iii-nnnnn-gggggg!!!

It rings for 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes. It rings in a repetitive pattern. 20 minutes it rings. I open my eyes, I am still in bed, thinking who it could be, who could be behind this door, what did he want?

Let's also not forget the fact that we were the only tourists allowed to the town.

Everyone around seemed to know everything about us. Whenever we took a cab, or entered a shop they would know our names, where we came from. As if the FSB posted a special article in a local newspaper about us, with our photos and profiles and dates of birth and names of our relatives, cats, wives. And the inhabitants of the city referred to us as to 'Those from the Main Land'.

We are back at Laureatov 33. The bell still ringing, 3 other people wake up and we all end up in one room, in the darkness, half naked and half buzzed from the evening, half asleep. We run to the window, thinking that the bell was some sort of a signal - a fire alarm. But no one is downstairs; the street is still asleep.

The situation is starting to get out of hands; the atmosphere is tensed.

Bad atmosphere is a nasty way to die.

We know he whoever he is behind the door he knows who we are. Maybe he wants money that we don't have, maybe he has a gun, maybe anything because it is Norilsk.

I start to search for the most comfortable pants that stretch, just in case.

At the same time others are running around the apartment, searching for a hummer and a big closet. The closet is being put in front of the door: creating a barricade.

All of a sudden everything stops. The bell goes quiet.

We take a deep breath.

BANG!

VOICE OF PETERSEN: I can hear you! But whatever's happened? And what are these spheres?

MAKAROV: Can you move?

VOICE OF PETERSEN: Makarov! Can you see these spheres?

MAKAROV: What spheres?

VOICE OF PETERSEN: Let me go! . . . Let me go! . . . Makarov!

Silence. MAKAROV stands in horror, then grabs the book and opens it.

MAKAROV: (Reads) . . . 'Gradually man loses his form and becomes a sphere. And, once a sphere, man loses all his desires.'

(Curtain)

Makarov and Petersen (subtitled 'No. 3') Daniil Kharmis

Now someone is hitting the door with something very heavy (like 200 kilogram body), the whole building is shaking. One of the others is calling the police, but they do not pick up. They don't answer because she is dialing Soviet Union Milicia's number, no wonder it doesn't connect. She calls the theater direction, production manager, everybody we know, but gets no answer.

We are left to hope for the best when one of us has an epiphany! He sees the door chain hanging loose. At this moment, when the door was almost broken down, pieces of it flying all over the hallway, no help coming from anywhere, we see the chain as a symbol of our last piece of hope! We crawl to it, we grab the end of it try to connect it to the other part on the wall.

And what a pity that was to realize that the chain is one link too short to be connected to the door.

In this desperate time, 200 kilos breaking the door, throwing the body on it, only closet still holding the door in its place and the chain is a mere butaforic decoration. Our worlds collapse. Everything that we have ever known, any of our systems of beliefs, values, aims everything comes to appoint of non-existence.

The chain is there but it just too short. A useless door chain!

Memory of C2

The painting felt like just another prop that was hung there to complete the stage design for this piece. When the fall was happening it felt like a stage assistant ninja in black might emerge and hang it back up while trying to not be seen by the cameras or the audience... it felt like the whole restaurant situation as well as the Asian looking (but Russian) taxi drivers, Russian-mini supermarket/alcohol-shop people and the random street hanging youngsters were hired to make an "alien" feel that everything was actually fine and normal as it was supposed to be.

The airport was covered in a layer of fog when we arrived from Moscow.

Which way is the way out of mind?

Naturally misty, like an early morning in Amsterdam when it is cold and foggy and the canals and streets are covered in a surreal layer of beauty. But after Norilsk, realizing that the fog there wasn't really fog, but the output of factories surrounding the town, misty mornings never feel the same.

Seriously, can you imagine living in a city that is almost constantly covered with a layer of fog, knowing that it's not really fog? Knowing that it is not even an inhabitable town. Knowing that it is a place where Stalin used to send his puppets to dig for coal, palladium and other valuable metals until they drop dead, but the people that live there now have made this choice themselves? Knowing that the average life expectancy of a male person working in the Nickel industry in Norilsk is 55? Even though it might not be right to think that one can judge people for their choices, not knowing anything about their lives, it seemed that people who choose to live in Norilsk must be either pretty inadequate, or suicidal.

Or maybe Norilskans think of themselves as *Hedgehogs in the fog*?

A Hedgehog takes raspberry jam to his friend - the bear cub, so they could sit by the bear's house, drink tea from samovar and count stars. But Hedgehog gets lost in the fog on his way. It is scary to be alone in the fog, especially when it is dark and there are all kinds of dangerous animals all around: bears, owls. Especially when one might drown in a river. There is Hedgehog's resignation to his fate in the river; he decides not to seek help from Bear Cub, who worriedly calls for him. In the fog the Hedgehog is going through a major transformation and meets his faith in the shape of a white horse...He makes it through the fog.

Although Hedgehog is now safe, he is forever changed; that lingering image of the horse in the fog never leaves the viewer. By the end of the dark and misty cartoon the Hedgehog comes to the bear cub, but they never speak neither their gazes ever meet. And we never understand fully whether the Hedgehog comes back dead or alive or whether he comes back at all.

That's the simple premise of this 1975 film by Russian animator Yuriy Norshteyn (Yuri Norstein), based on a children's story by Sergei Kozlov.

Many of the phrases from *Hedgehog in the fog* became «крылатые выражения» [proverbial expressions] or literally *expressions with wings*. Following the title itself, which took on a meaning of "being emotionally lost or adrift".

I overheard a cashier in the grocery shop of Norilsk quoting one:

"Like Hedgehog, we deceive ourselves by attributing our descent into the Fog to some curious fact or common nosiness. We are unable to admit the truth even to ourselves that those are but excuses and we are simply trying to hide in the Fog from our problems."

Here I am losing my voice

Maybe that is why people come to Norilsk.

Or maybe they seek transformation.

During our stay in Norilsk it felt like the community had been prepared a century old scheme of how to treat foreigners that come to visit the city. Picking us up with a taxi at a very strict time on each cold, grey morning at the rental apartment that looked like somebody is trying to make us believe it might actually be inhabited, ringing the bell and calling when you might be 5 minutes off schedule, driving you straight to the theatre for the rehearsal where the youngsters are already patiently waiting in the lobby. And picking us up after the rehearsal to bring us to the restaurant that seemed to exist just for us as there have been hardly any other guests in the 8 days in a row that we have been going there, even though we remembered noticing some other possible restaurants on the way from the airport the day we arrived....

Drunk, pissed and enormous. It sounds like the 'thing' is trying to break the freaking steal door that leads to the 2 apartments on the third floor of a freaking horrible building in some neighbourhood that is one of the poorest looking in town. Could it be for us? Doesn't each person in town know about this group of foreigners that is living here for the week?

Here I lost my voice completely

It started with just the ringing of our doorbell. But it was 5 o'clock in the night and everybody of the organisation that hosted us knew that we must have been seriously tired and finally sleeping after a day of travelling, 2 sleepless nights, a 9-hour jetlag and the first rehearsal day. The ringing doesn't stop. The pulses get longer and slowly all of us had gathered in the hallway of the apartment, not knowing whether to open the door or barricade it. The ringing went into banging and the banging went over into a pounding that sounded like somebody was throwing a horses body against the door.

Okay, now it is getting a bit scary, as the two girls in the group, who are supposed to be somehow a bit more local as they are Russian, started to panic and scream that we should call the cops. 112? 911? What the Russian number for police was nobody seemed to know as on the first try Olga had dialled the number for police from Soviet times and it didn't work. The second phone call was to our producer who was a local, but in panic Olga had dialled her mom's number instead, explaining the situation without knowing she was talking to her mother in Yekaterinburg, a town 3000 km away from us.

While searching for a weapon of some sort, the banging all of a sudden stopped. Through the peephole of the door, a half naked half-bear half-man was visible, dragging something from the floor into the apartment next door, or so it seemed... While the banging had been shaking up the whole damn building, no other neighbours or people had arrived to see what was happening and it seemed that it was a normal situation on a Tuesday night for anybody but us.

We disconnected the doorbell, barricaded the door, left a hammer and a steal pipe next to the door and tried to go back to sleep.

The painting fell as he tried to hang it straight. It was apparently not supposed to be seen straight. The talking stopped, paused and continued. Vodka.
-Where is my beer Misha?

Memory of C3

the restaurant

This place, A place

When I say 'This place or A place, I mean to say and I don't mean to say to mean but to clarify without being mean to say this place has been called many things, many things which isn't its name. For example, just by my own tongue it has gone by Nilinsk, Nibinsk, Norinsk, Nornisink and further palpitations. Many derogatory many complementary. I have a command of the language but there are certain and many words that are outside of my command. Nabanski is one of them and many of the things inside this city is another. Regardless, The restaurant.

there are three main points worth mentioning about the restaurant, they are
the wedding
the broken painting
and
the engraved spoon

all the points that are worth mentioning will appear through this text and will appear to have occurred in the restaurant. These headings are mentioned incrementally as a pose to time, periodic tests.

What used to be my voice, now floats independently in the space
From time to time it lands on some of the pages

the wedding

It is a Russian wedding, in Nostrink, in the restaurant.

A wedding, is about the woman, but not only the one about dressed in white. The women at these weddings, Russian weddings, oh the women, what a sight. Makeup is applied and reapplied throughout the night. Makeup made to make a man come into her bedroom through the dark of night and emerge 18 years later as their son has set and left leaving them half way up a mountain wearing matching crocks, and now looking like a sister and brother.

What happens in a Russian wedding? They drink, they dance the day in and the day out. They dance on tables they dance on each other, they dance on lifeless bodies, they dabble on themselves, they break their corset constricted bodies in two, fold flab to dance off the backs of themselves. All done in heavy makeup, heavy lips, heavy legs, heavy eyes, heavy fishnet tight stockings, light and preppy heads, bobble heads, blow dries. It all takes a while to take off in the morning.

As with occasions of heavy drinking memories do absolve themselves and find disguises as a way to leave our collective memory. As with this recollection, not enough of its parts remain for it to continue. Least we say, chairs don't have legs, cheers.

the broken painting

My other half, not referable to me as my better half, I'm a half of him and he is twice as tall as me. We were talking, conversing, compensating and importantly compromising, about...eggs. Yes, the conversation was about eggs. On a side note my other half being two full halves of me, was christened with the name, Renzo. In Norilistink the locals can't say or spell Renzo, so they chugged about when they came up with an alternative name based on his looks and the way his name sounded to their ears. Renzo became Rambo. In the turn of a bent out of shape ear my other half had turned into the better half off a 90's Hollywood action film franchise, he had become 1/3 of the fashionable chain restaurant 'Planet Hollywood'. Rambo, my mambo stood up in the middle of the eggs conversation, cast off the shackles of the house bound trivialities, just from standing up, just from walking away. As I watched on it became clear his attention was solely placed on a painting that sat upon a mantle cross, across the other side of the room. The painting was pulling him across the room and untoward it. He stopped a gentleman's pace away from the painting, he took an age looking over it, he took aim and began verdantly examining the posterior of the painting in question.

His wine glass nonchalantly placed in his left hand, swilling its contents around like the spinning of a planet in a god's hands. Stallone was a god. He reached out and with the index of a trunk finger placed it on the underside of the bottom left edge and with an unbelievable verve, nudged the painting three quarters of an inch to make it straight. As soon as he lifted that finger away that newly anchored painting came tumbling of the wall, like all the pots and all the pans chucked onto his head from a height greater than the sum of his parts.

He went from anchor to wanker, he turned around with a painting of Cézannes sun flowers impaled through his temples. He looked like he couldn't find shit on a blanket.

I later asked him why on god's green earth did he feel the desire to make this statement he told me

"well darling, I haven't told you this before, but I have a problem with alcohol, it's not a problem, it's a manageable problem, I have a certain penchant for the hard things in life, a dependency of sorts. Every time I see a painting which is crooked I correct it because all I want in life is to get straight"

Here "a certain old woman, out of excess curiosity, fell out of a window, plummeted to the ground, and was smashed to pieces." –Kharms, *THE PLUMMETING OLD WOMAN*

the engraved spoon

at the end of our time together in Norinstink having eaten 2 meals a day for 10 days, plus breakfast on Sundays all at the same restaurant all at the same table all with the same menu, the same waiter and chef, I wanted to thank the staff and in particular are waiter. Torbet had been our waiter. So I ventured back towards the kitchen, not seeing Tobey (I changed his name from Torbet to Tobey, sounds more of a friendly name for an eastern European chappie) Unable to see Tobey occupying his usual position at the entrance to the kitchen i decided in a way that made me put trust in the time that we had spent

together to venture into the kitchen. I opted to open the kitchen door and still feeling new and naive in this place where I'd been made to feel so welcome, I invited myself in.

Torbey/Tobey, my friend and yours, had poultry up his arse and the sky was on fire behind him.

he looked over at me, shrugged and said

what do you expect

I'm scum

you're my waiter!!!! I said

I'm your bater

you traitor

you backdoor bairer

you fainter

you lunar creator

you deflater

you bay stater

you dictator

you water skater

(I had been out on the lake that day)

you magnetic equator

you blond piece of paper

you've lost me, I don't know what those hay nay last words meant.

you'll know

you'll know when

when, when will turn into then

and you'll know then

because

I'm not gong to tell you now.

he waddled over and handed me a tea spoon wrapped in paper tissue. The spoon was inscribed with the following.

"this spoon is the deadliest of weapon, goodbye John"

we don't know anyone called john. on the other side of the spoon was a further inscription.

"this spoon belong to resturant 'dave'. if you fin tis pece of culter out of this restorant, plea brin it bak.

Hey, you can't blame them for there spelling, it's was a tea spoon.

Then it had the slogan of the restaurant on a third mysterious side angle of the spoon, never seen on a spoon, before and after.

"Throw me a life saver daver"

A final note (one separate from the restaurant...)

We prevail for a man who takes calls as comfortably and frequently from his mother as he does taking trips to the shoe shop. Winter booties my friend. Men tend not to grow up in front of their mothers. Well...I'm still acting like a child...good god man, good man. good child. good boy. god lad. good job, 'hopefully' our mother's and other half's will say when the task that still lays before us is complete. So we can begin another.

“Dad was undoubtedly an alcoholic. Furthermore, even the mom looked down on him. But that didn't prevent the dad from being a good man. He was smiling honestly while rocking in a chair.”

-Kharms. *The thing*

Half of a memory of C4

He did find a pair of boots by the way:

“I'm good, I did manage to find boots, but only at the very last minute, I went to a store in Brussels this morning just before going to the airport. Moscow greeted me with borsch and vodka, everything is wonderful”

Afterword.

Writing about the last Chapter that has not been written due to several excuses.

The last Chapter would have been about nothing or everything at the same time.

No repetition would have been necessary in the text.

Instead.

It is the last Chapter.

It is about nothing or everything at the same time.

Distant silence.

The last Chapter would have been about the three characters in Kharmsian city that exists in their collective memory. The characters would have lived in our times.

The first character would have visited the city and would have experienced it. He would have been tall.

The second one would have visited the city but because of his bad luck, he would have broken his glasses, therefore would have experienced the city blindly. He would have had blue eyes and would have smoked a pipe.

The third character would have never visited it but would have managed to overhear a conversation of the first two characters and would have written it down. He would have been a writer.

They could have existed. Instead. They have never met.

It could have been the last Chapter.

It is the last Chapter.

It could have been a writing.

Is this a writing?

Would you like to have another drink?

YES.

To both.

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