

Maksym Kurochkin's

VODKA, FUCKING, AND TELEVISION

(2003)

Translated by John J. Hanlon

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The translation was revised during rehearsals for the 2007 staged reading at Dad's Garage in Atlanta, GA. It was published in the Winter/Spring 2008 issue of *THEATREFORUM* and produced in 2009 as part of the Center for International Theatre Development's New Russian Drama festival in Baltimore, MD. In 2012, additional changes were made to the text for the Breaking String Theatre production in Austin, TX.

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The author considers it necessary to make the following explanation:

The author is not represented by the Hero in this play. Cognac and the author's private life have nothing in common with Vodka and Fucking. Television (a Sony) bears only a slight resemblance to the author's television (a Phillips). The Hero has no morals, the author does. Several, in fact. The author hardly ever uses obscenities in his personal life or his artistic creations. Even in the army, he steadfastly refused to curse for the first two and a half months, to which Private Leonov and Corporal Pampookha can bear witness. The author is incapable of speaking disrespectfully about women, which often gets him into sticky situations. The author never experiences artistic crises; he writes with ease and inspiration; he completes all the assignments he accepts on time. When the author hears the phrase "The Sixties Generation," he, like many of his peers, wants to puke.

Hero. I'm an old man. I'm 33 and according to science I haven't been able to learn anything new for the past eight years. After 25, people don't change. Everyone knows this, but the hero is the only one who accepts it. I, obviously, am the hero. Studying after the age of 25 is a waste of time. Not long ago, someone suggested I take a course – a freebie, with classes four times a week. I went with the fool, but later I wasn't even able to recall what they taught there. It might have been English, or how to scrawl some special tantric forms. I can't remember to save my life. I wasted three months on it. So here's how it is – I have to make a choice. I'm not some

ageless fag! In order to live in harmony with my refined sense of beauty, I have to renounce something. When an old fart makes himself out to be an Ophelia, it's not pretty. But when he honestly and calmly declares – I am an aging aesthete who's been beaten down by life – that elicits, at a minimum, respect. And so now, at this very moment, I will decide – what I shall renounce. In order to.... Well, you get the idea.

Fucking. I'm Fucking. What he wouldn't say there is that he'll hold onto me to the end. That's why I'm so calm. I'm not threatened by anything.

Hero. As I said, everything will be decided openly. A choice is a choice.

Fucking. Go on...

Hero. Plug it, will you. I hardly have any principles. But if you raise doubts about my integrity – I might start to lose my shit.

Fucking. I could shut up, or I could spout off, like Putin – it doesn't fucking matter. People don't voluntarily renounce fucking.

Hero. Are you that certain?

Fucking. Yes, I'm that certain.

Hero. So certain even that you won't hide?

Fucking. What do I have to hide from?

Hero. Fine. We'll see.

Fucking. We'll see.

Hero. Now where are the others?

Vodka. We're right here.

Television. Good evening. Good evening. Good evening.

Hero. Take a seat.

Fucking. Guys, are you aware that one of you has got to go?

Vodka. Hold on. It was clearly stated that one of the *three* has got to go.

Television. That's what I heard too.

Fucking. Well right... But that's a ... formality, like "fair elections." In point of fact, it's one of you that's under the bus.

Hero. Gentlemen, don't listen to this nympho. I'm facing a difficult, sobering choice. But goddamnit, I swear by my mother – I will decide fairly...

Fucking. In brief, if I were in your place I'd cut a deal.

Vodka. Meaning what?

Fucking. Well, each one gets reduced by 50 percent and everyone stays.

Vodka. Did I hear you correctly – you're proposing to cut us in half?

Fucking. That would be the wisest thing to do. He's being serious here.

Vodka. And you would stay as you are?

Fucking. I'm staying regardless. That's not under discussion.

Vodka. We'd better think about this.

Television. I disagree. They don't show shit on me as it is.

Hero. That's not true. There's the news, the Simpsons, boxing, championship soccer...

Television. Compared to last year, I've gone to seed.

Hero. Let's be fair. Last year I was on the dole at the Red Army Theater. These days I have to engage in piracy in order to support you all.

Television. Television doesn't cost you a single cent.

Hero. My little friend... In order for you to stick your slim adaptable plug into an outlet, someone has to pay for an apartment where an outlet exists. And he has to do it without dying from hunger.

Vodka. And without dying from thirst.

Fucking. No comment.

Hero. You've sucked up my whole brain, like that monster from... uhh... that movie...

Vodka. Starship Troopers.

Hero. Right, Starship Troopers. You really have destroyed me.

Television. In other words, you've already determined who the scapegoat will be.

Hero. I haven't determined anything. It's just that you started waving your rights in the air...

Vodka. Yeah, flat-face, that's pointless. It seems to me that Fucking has proposed a fine alternative. We cut back by 50 percent and both stay.

Hero. Honestly guys, I've organized this whole thing out of hopelessness. I can't go on with all three of you... My health is already shot – remember how last Easter –

Fucking. Yes of course we remember. The question is do *you* remember?

Vodka. I was thinking the same thing that day. Well sure, he can survive at this pace for another five years or so. But then what? He'd get some kind of blood clot – and I'd be out on the streets. It'd be better for me if he showed some restraint and lived longer.

Television. Those are your worries. I'm not in the same boat as you guys. You're killers.

Nobody has ever died from TV.

Hero. That's really weak.

Vodka. It's impertinent bullshit.

Fucking. I'm not able to disagree.

Television. Okay, fine. But statistically speaking – I'm in the better position.

Vodka. How sick I am of the word "statistics," you can't imagine.

Hero. Here's what I think. We have to somehow discuss everything calmly, properly. To make an objective decision.

Vodka. Now that's a sober proposal.

Hero. With whom shall we begin?

Fucking. We'll begin with Television.

Hero. We'll begin with Television.

Television. Did you see that? Word for word.

Hero. Don't you start with me.

Vodka. Really, mellow out...

Television. What – you don't see it? He dances to her fiddle.

Vodka. Listen... Everyone's on his own here.

Television. Right.... It's people like you who caused –

Vodka. I'm the cause of Auschwitz, of Samashki... That's an old saw.

Television. Moral relativists! I hate them!!!

Hero. Hey guys, please don't fight. I... honestly. I love all of you.

Vodka. We know. Don't get upset...

Hero. Right. Well.... I can't do this anymore! I don't have the strength.

Television. Okay, fine. I agree.

Vodka. That's more like it.

Television. But I have one condition...

Hero. No conditions.

Fucking. Now this is interesting...

Hero. What sort of condition?

Television. First – we draw lots – to see who goes first. In order to be fair.

Hero. Well... sure, why not.

Television. And also. I agree to take part in this, but I demand to be treated respectfully and without any bias.

Hero. As you wish... Look – you're all absolutely the same to me. I don't have a preference. It's a completely open situation.

Television. And without any profanity, please.

Hero. How can I deal with you guys without profanity?

Fucking. I, by the way, also believe that profanity doesn't suit you.

Hero. Really? Well, maybe...

Fucking. You swear like a well-raised little boy: "Homo! Whore!" An intellectual having sex for the first time.

Hero. I swear just fine.

Fucking. It's not natural. Tell him.

Vodka. It's good enough for the beer hall.

Fucking. Hey, look. I've said what I think. Whether or not you accept the terms is your affair.

Hero. All right, all right. I can go without swearing. But then you guys also – have to take this seriously. Today, one way or another, one of you is gonna get fucked!

Fucking. And I even know who.

Television. How can anyone make a deal with you guys?!

Vodka. Sit!

Television. This is a farce. I don't want to be a part of this.

Vodka. You leave, and then what?

Television. Decide without me.

Fucking. Those who are absent are never in the right.

Television. Why not?

Fucking. I don't know. That's what Cardinal Mazarin said.

Television. Really?...

Vodka. Well if Mazarin says so then that's it.

Television. I'll stay, but...

Hero. Three matches. Whoever gets the short one – we discuss first. After that we'll see what happens.

Vodka. Long.

Hero. Now you.

Television. Let her go.

Hero. What's the difference. Draw.

Television. I knew it.

Hero. Easy, easy...

Television. Television is a magical window onto the natural world, a source of knowledge, a reliable friend in times of sadness and depression –

Hero. Thank you. What a crock of shit.

Television. Well what did you expect?

Hero. Okay, look, someone's got to talk some sense here –

Television. No, come on, say – what you expected out of me...

Hero. Listen, you ugly mug, you're wearing on my nerves. You're constantly dissatisfied with something...

Television. Of course I'm dissatisfied.

Hero. You cast doubt upon my requests. What does that reveal? Your whole attitude. To you I'm – a spineless, undeserving, wacko writer – Don't interrupt. I explained it all: we're talking here about life and death. I can no longer drink, fuck and watch television. That is, I can. But I cannot do so and remain a creative individual. I must, must renounce something. If I do not undertake this operation, I'll simply collapse. How come you don't get that? Why don't you respect my decision?

Television. How can you respect someone who willingly puts a hole in his head? Do you have to do something so stupid as to renounce television?

Hero. And who said that it's you I'm renouncing?

Television. It's not me that you're renouncing. You're renouncing Svetochka Sorokina, Flarkovskii...

Hero. Your Flarkovskii is shit.

Television. And Sorokina?

Hero. Sorokina – no.

Television. What did she ever do to you?

Hero. I repeat once again –

Television. Have you seen her little legs?

Hero. Her little legs... yes.

Television. The slim – but not skinny – strong, beautiful legs of a weary woman. They're miraculous!

Hero. Am I arguing?

Television. But what are you doing? You're preparing to say to her – I don't want you anymore, Sorokina, you're fired, you're an old, jack-off screen whore. Can you really say that to her?

Hero. Nowadays she's usually in slacks.

Television. Who cares. Can you really say that to her?

Hero. I can't!

Television. That's it. Discussion ended. Who's next over there? Heads or tails – call it.

Hero. We're not done with you yet.

Television. Sure we're done.

Hero. Who will speak up? Vodka, you?

Vodka. Well I would say –

Hero. Let's have it.

Vodka. I'm not feeling well. After yesterday's...

Hero. Okay then you...

Fucking. What's there to say? Everything's clear now.

Hero. What's clear?

Fucking. The one who's got to go.

Hero. Who?

Fucking. Well it's not me for god's sake...

Hero. You guys don't want to speak – I understand. Always look out for number one.... Is that it?

Fucking. Fuck you.

Hero. You both want to stay clean. Fine. But afterwards there'll be no excuses...

Fucking. I'm terrified!

Hero. All right, everyone shut up...

Vodka. He's made up his mind.

Fucking. Here comes the bullshit.

Hero. My profession provides me with freedom. I don't have to go to an office. My wife gets ready for work, and I lay in bed, waiting for her to leave. Then I get up for a bit, and afterwards I lie down again. I have at my disposal two blankets and two pillows. Sometimes I grab a third one, which is in the wicker chest from Ikea. When the fox shows up, I bury myself deeper in the pillows and sand, and it can't get to me, because the fox doesn't see me. It sniffs about, but it can't find me and when the phone stops ringing, I leap out of the burrow and run barefoot to the jack and disconnect it. In the evening my wife comes in and asks what I did all day. I reply – "I worked." And that, basically, is the truth.

Fucking. The groundhog's monologue was performed by the National Artist of the Ukraine –

Vodka. It was a gopher, bitch.

Fucking. The gopher's monologue –

Television. Can someone explain to me what any of this has to do with television?

Hero. I'll explain.

Fucking. No I think I'd better explain.

Hero. Go for it.

Fucking. Listen here, you Trinitron weenie, I didn't want to hurt you; it's none of my business, and up to a certain point you had me... It makes no difference to me which of you they knock

off, but in all honesty I hope you get throttled. Because you haven't yet uttered a single word of truth. You understand it all perfectly, but you play dumb to obstruct things.

Television. You know I've always wondered – what compels a person to open his mouth when no one has asked him to?

Fucking. You may laugh, but it's the natural love of justice.

Television. Who says that? Miss Just Fucking?

Fucking. Yes, imagine.

Vodka. Either explain or cuss him out. One or the other.

Fucking. I'm explaining. With his monologue the man wanted to tell us how hard he's got it, how he's a tender and delicate instrument of feeling... How difficult it is for him to get in the mood to work and how easy it is for his instrument to get rattled. For this type of person, turning on the TV is like a boxer turning to pluck his eyebrows in the middle of a match.

Television. Are you saying boxers pluck their eyebrows?

Hero. It's a simile.

Television. A simile? Oh, forgive me... It's a simile of course. And I, I'm just a fool... I'm obtuse, yes?

Fucking. You're obtuse, yes.

Television. Good, I'm obtuse. May I ask a question?

Hero. Go right ahead.

Television. When did you stop reading?

Hero. I read a lot.

Television. I don't mean magazines on the toilet.

Hero. I'm a writer, I read a lot. I study documents.

Television. But when was the last time you clambered up into a garret and, having seated yourself in a well-worn armchair, gulped down the delicate pages, laughing wholeheartedly and jumping out of your seat at the moments when the hero was in danger?

Hero. Basically it's never been like that. I've never read anything in a garret.

Television. Bright streaks of sunlight paint the floor, playful dust floats in the air, which is a pleasure to breathe. It smells of old wood, and you are reading and you cannot stop. You hold a piece of straw in your teeth.

Hero. It was never like that. I always read on the sofa. Even when I stopped reading lying down. I sat and read. There were snacks and tea nearby, and there wasn't any straw or dust... Well, there was dust but not that kind, a different kind of dust. And as for the sun. The sun was there. But never any garrets.

Television. In your whole life there wasn't one garret?

Hero. Well, right – there wasn't.

Television. Fine, there wasn't. Then answer this simple question... Why, why didn't I – monster and brainsucker that you claim I am... Why didn't I enslave you, cripple you – back then! In your childhood? You – the little boy who didn't have a garret full of old books! Why, tell me.

Hero. My parents forbade me from watching television.

Television. It was I who allowed them to forbid you. From morning to night I showed communist party proceedings, tractors, and meetings with foreign delegations... Do you think I enjoyed doing that? Do you really think they could have forbidden Disney? No fucking way. You would have cried, scratched and clawed, refused to eat... Tractors weren't worth all that. And I showed tractors. Ask me – why did I do that?

Hero. Why?

Television. I wanted you to come to me when you were fully conscious, so that you would choose me willingly... A slave is of no use to me.

Hero. I'm your slave now.

Television. That's not my fault. You didn't start watching TV until after the Soviet Union collapsed.

Hero. I was able to go for weeks without TV.

Television. Except Saturdays.

Hero. Saturdays?

Television. Uncle Scrooge.

Hero. Which means...?

Television. Duck Tales. And Rescue Rangers.

Hero. But when was that... Before I went into the army.

Television. Actually – it was after. From the time you were 20 until you were 24. Every Saturday. Disney. Duck Tales. And Rescue Rangers.

Hero. Chip and Dale rush to the scene.

Television. That's right...

Hero. I was like that when I was 24?

Television. You don't need to be ashamed of that. To be a late bloomer is – a blessing. People of the future will reach maturity in their forties.

Vodka. If they drink one hundred proof.

Television. What did you say?

Vodka. And they'll live to a hundred and two.

Television. Well yes...

Hero. Okay... I think you've made a strong case. The late bloomer – that's my favorite motif.

Television. I am your friend.

Hero. The Discovery Channel. That I respect.

Television. Science programs... Enormous windows onto the past, the mysteries of the deep blue sea...

Hero. All right, all right... I'm convinced. We're moving on to the next candidate.

Vodka. We're not going to draw lots?

Hero. No.

Vodka. Well okay...

Hero. Let's go – get right to the point.

Vodka. Right to the point. Man cannot live without vodka.

Hero. Yes he can.

Vodka. Easier said... than done.

Hero. Are you planning to construct your whole defense on ancient proverbs?

Vodka. What's the problem?

Hero. You don't respect me, you don't respect your colleagues...

Vodka. Why do you say that? I do.

Hero. You do not. And that's because you are – a tsar. There is certainty in your every gesture, in your every word. I'm nothing to you; my needs, the needs of the theater to you are – so much dust.

Vodka. You sound convincing, but you have no proof for what you're saying.

Hero. I am the hero. Yes? However, in essence, I don't have a will of my own. I – am not an actor, I'm the writer. Which is to say, I am an actor... But I'm more the writer. Well, let's say about 80 percent. But yes, I look like an actor. And as an actor I will continue to shove my ideas down your throats for a little while, but as the writer I'm going to put away my laptop right now – by the way, what do you think, does it have a harmful effect on your nuts if a laptop is sitting on them?

Fucking. It's harmful.

Hero. I thought so. They need to invent something... I don't get it, why don't they come out with special little tables – a desk with some clips – so you can write without frying your nuts? And some sort of foil screen – to protect against radiation. Hey! Ikea! Where are the nut-protecting environmentally friendly lap-desks?

Fucking. Stay on task.

Hero. All right then, I'm going to put away my laptop right now, take it off my thoroughly radiated nuts and go down to the nearest kiosk. Hey you people! I haven't left yet. You capitalist people – it's you I'm talking to. Because there aren't any other types left. There's little chance they'll produce this play in North Korea or Cuba. Capitalist people! Brothers! I'm still sober here. In Moscow they don't sell vodka from little kiosks anymore. Or "little tents" – as the locals call them. But I'm not a local, and therefore I say – kiosks. These days around my building you can only buy beer, while for vodka you have to walk another 150 or 200 meters. I have lived in many apartments and this distance is approximately the same everywhere you go. In earlier times they sold vodka from mobile trading posts. Today you can only get it in stores. This is very... bad. Brothers! I know that this situation is also not acceptable to you. But you've gotten used to it, you've submitted. But for us there's still time. It pains me to walk

these 200 meters, when I recollect how marvelous it was to buy vodka right around the corner. It was only a few years ago. I can say this quite calmly right now, but the truth is I'm weeping inside.

Fucking. So have you gone?

Hero. Not yet. Okay, I'm hitting "save"... I've gone.

Fucking. And how did it go.

Hero. Poorly.

Vodka. Well, go on...

Hero. Is it really not obvious?

Vodka. It's obvious to me. Tell the story to the audience.

Hero. I'll tell it just for the sake of the audience. I went the wrong way. The kiosk was closed.

I should have gone to the left.

Vodka. You might have gone back.

Hero. Thanks – an extra 400 meters.

Vodka. So what did you do?

Hero. I bought beer. I'll poison myself. That is, I've already poisoned myself with one bottle, now I'll open a second... I've opened it. Beer. I don't like beer. I was born in the USSR, I lived in a country where the vodka tradition was an important element of the culture. And what can I do about... A month went by. Well, to be honest – two months. We're moving on to fucking.

Vodka. That's all I get?

Hero. Yes, for now that's all.

Vodka. Which means what?

Hero. Everything's clear to me.

Vodka. But I didn't get to say anything in my defense.

Hero. What kind of defense could there be? Because of you I put off writing plays for my esteemed theatrical partners for an eternity. I lost several fiancées, I lost time, money, talent, my conscience, my ideas; I've got silicone glue in my eyes, I've got headaches which I had before but not like this, I'm stupid, I'm accessible, I fell in love with scum, I haven't written everything that I was capable of not writing, I cleverly found time for the hair of the dog so nobody would notice... I think people who drink Scotch are amusing. Because vodka is cheaper, and there's also sherry. A week passed – there's a bottle of Scotch on the table, I say – OK – but no way am I going to pay for the fancy stuff. There's not going to be any Black Label. Don't think of yourself as poor – economize. An alcoholic has to live a long time. In order to live long you need money. I proclaim a month of sobriety – only the best Chilean wine. The deadline approaches. I will let my partners down. And there's still Australia – yes! The French are on their last legs, the Italians got their butts kicked a long time ago. The old regions are becoming obsolete. Don't expect me to weep all over again for the Neorealists and the Eternal fucking city. Deliveries are expected from Tunisia. An Islamic country, but there's a powerful winemaking tradition. Only the dry stuff, though. Nothing stronger than 9 percent... 21 percent... 23 percent... With whites and reds, how can people drink that sweet, sticky vileness? Getting hard liquor is impossible. But I got some. Anyone who'd like to know how – talk to me after the show. I have a wife. Yes – I still have her. No I don't. I can get it all back. There's nothing I can't get back. It's getting easier, easier by the day. I've clicked on that icon so many times. Microsoft Word. Microsoft Word – is a fraud, Gates – is a fraud. He's an unhappy man, I can sense it. Click, click, click – senselessly. Never a year without a line. A letter from

Norway. Theater people... I love my wife. I can't take this, I have to have a drink. I'm not going to write anything anyway. Goodbye Norwaaaaaaaay, oh-oh-oh!!!!!! I feel vodka! Vodka is my enemy.

Vodka. He's delirious.

Television. Delirious, I agree.

Hero. My dear little Fucking – a word from you.

Fucking. You know, my little friend – I do have something to say.

Hero. Well then say it.

Fucking. Do you want me to?

Hero. Well, of course... not. I mean I do. But...

Fucking. You're not ready?

Hero. No, I'm ready. Well, to tell the truth, not completely.

Fucking. Well then why bother? There's no special need after all.

Hero. There is.

Fucking. There's not.

Hero. I have to prove to myself that I can speak the truth.

Fucking. What for?

Hero. Well, I don't know. Tolstoy could.

Fucking. I don't want to shock you. But...

Hero. I'm not Tolstoy???

Fucking. ... you've got ketchup on your cheek.

Hero. Thanks.

Fucking. What do you want?

Hero. Can you tell us – in what ways, with whom, how many times, and why the hero has fucked?

Fucking. I can.

Hero. Well... tell us.

Fucking. Okay.

Hero. Come on.

Fucking. I will tell you.

Hero. What are you afraid of?

Fucking. Am I afraid?

Hero. Well I'm not...

Fucking. Okay.

Hero. Proceed!

Fucking. Well...

Hero. Everything – I want it all!

Fucking. I'll tell you everything.

Hero. Don't be so nervous. I won't get upset.

Fucking. Why, in what ways, how many times and with whom... the hero?

Hero. Yes – why... et cetera. The whole truth.

Fucking. Now... Alexander Volodin. "Our mothers placed us in the hands."

“Our mothers placed us in the hands

of a brief and glorious war.

We were dolefully entreated by Stalin.

Who is this we? It is I.

As bombs so hatefully screech,
As women torment us in dreams.
A century of women won't suffice us.
Who is this us? It is I."

Hero. ...

Television. Why is he silent?

Vodka. Dunno.

Television. What's Stalin got to do with this?

Vodka. Dunno.

Television. What's Stalin got to do with this?

Fucking. Stalin's got nothing to do with this.

Hero. Stalin's got nothing to do with this.

Television. Now why did he get quiet again?

Hero. We're moving on to the final part of our discussion.

Television. You mean we're done with Fucking?

Hero. We're done with Fucking.

Fucking. We're done.

Television. And everything's clear to you two?

Fucking. Yes.

Hero. Everything's clear to me.

Television. Well it's not to me. Is it clear to us?

Vodka. No.

Television. We don't understand.

Hero. What in particular don't you understand?

Television. Farce! Farce! This is a farce! I warned you. This is a farce! We're in the midst of a farce!

Hero. What in particular didn't you understand?

Television. His voice – how it's changed!!! Ah?

Vodka. It's as if they've had contact with something sacred!

Hero. You didn't understand the verse of the ingenious poet and playwright Alexander Volodin?

Television. No, we didn't understand the verse of the ingenious poet and playwright Alexander Volodin. Did we understand?

Vodka. We didn't understand. Stalin and fucking! What's the connection?

Television. This we understood precisely, that there is no connection. However, what's all the other stuff got to do with this?

Hero. Alexander Volodin. A veteran. A poet. He made it through the entirety of World War Two. The central theme of his work – surviving a little piece of life. It's for those who don't make it, for the slain, for those who are torn to shreds by bullets and by humanity. To live, to love, to fuck, ultimately. What do you whores not understand?

Television. We don't understand this – what's spooked you into fancying yourself a Volodin?

Hero. I'm not saying that I'm a Volodin. I am not a Volodin, unfortunately. He was a super-talent, an ideal human being. A god practically. I admire him more than anyone else. More than Vampilov.

Television. You! Are Not! Volodin! You're a little shit!

Hero. By comparison with Volodin I am – a little shit!

Television. A little shit! Even without any comparison. Simply a little shit.

Hero. Hey I'm not arguing, I'm not arguing...

Television. Then what are we talking about here? You're a little shit. That's your problem.

Hero. I'm a little shit. But that's *your* problem. Because one of you – all the same, has got to go.

Television. You could get rid of all of us. It won't help.

Hero. That's possible.

Television. It definitely won't help. You're already beyond the realm of good and evil. There's no pleasure in the fact that such a fuckhead got addicted to me.

Hero. All the more sad it will be to see the joy of those who remain.

Fucking. “Goodbye life, goodbye happiness!!!”

Vodka. Why are you so cheery?

Fucking. What's there for me to be sad about?

Vodka. Of course he won't get rid of you.

Fucking. Of course not.

Hero. Now how have you determined that? Have I given you some cause to doubt my impartiality?

Television. A thousand causes! A thousand!

Hero. If you really want to know, fucking – is my scourge.

Fucking. “They drank. So that he who survived
would remember this faded, white day
and return home for his friend

in order to live two great lives!

He had a hole in his back.

It was a small hole, but it was deep.”

Hero. Don't torment me with your Volodin. I don't want to feel like that anymore, I don't want to. I can't! The Sixties Generation paid for those who died. Paid for them all – overpaid even. This is the 21st century! – fucking has become unseemly. Life is not only... It's not all about fucking... Life is also... interconnection. And computer games and racing simulators... the NHL, the NBA, DVDs, Dostoevsky...

Vodka. The study of foreign languages...

Hero. And it's not necessary to gorge oneself.

Vodka. It's not necessary. They sat down – and drank. Just fine.

Hero. I will heed my limits better, I'll visit people.

Fucking. There will be girls there.

Hero. I'll take my wife! I could go without fucking... If I wanted to.

Fucking. Well, well.

Hero. I'm a poet, bitch. You exploit that. It's impossible for me not to value deviations. I even fall in love with the ugly ones! I fall in love with everyone. With beauties, too. Take a look, take a look at this face... It's a bloody catastrophe! Eternal life... Who am I kidding? – eternal life! I'd give away my salary for one good fuck. My wife –

Fucking. You don't get a salary. You get honorariums. You're such an extraordinary being.

Hero. I wouldn't give away an honorarium.

Fucking. You don't have a wife anymore.

Hero. I wouldn't give away an honorarium. My salary I... would give. But not an honorarium.

Fucking. And if your salary were larger than your honorarium?

Hero. Doesn't matter – it's psychological. My salary I would give away, my honorarium – I can't. I wouldn't be able to.

Television. You know, fella, you really are a depraved sort.

Vodka. You fucked over your wife, plain and simple. You dealt with her very unfairly and improperly.

Hero. But all the same I'm loyal to her. In spite of the facts. Can't you believe that?

Fucking. I believe it.

Hero. Facts – are shit.

Vodka. Absolutely.

Hero. I love my wife, I'm loyal to her, I... Don't think that... I'm discrediting myself here. I'm creating a image of an incorrigible, red-hot sex-addict... But it's not like that, that's just a show... At heart I'm – a theorist. A mild-mannered theater worker, a level-headed naturalist. Of course, if you judge me by the facts... Then, yes – I'm a red-hot sex-addict! But that would be a mistake. At heart I'm – an asexual person.

Television. Simply an angel in sheep's clothing.

Hero. Well put. Exactly – an angel in sheep's clothing... You don't understand what a deep thing you've just said... An angel in sheep's clothing. That's very deep. Very deep, very... Very deep. Think about what a fine thing you've just said.

Fucking. In general, this is a very dangerous theme, a piercing theme.

Vodka. What are you talking about?

Fucking. I'm talking about the soul.

Television. The soul – that's shit.

Fucking. The higher soul...

Television. All the more shit.

Fucking. And you – are the little abortions of civilization. If he winds up on an uninhabited island, there won't be any vodka or television there.

Television. But there will be fucking?

Fucking. But there will be me.

Vodka. There's some fine fucking on an uninhabited island.

Fucking. Quality – is another question. But I'll be with him until the very end...

Vodka. Now don't you go misrepresenting things too. Even I can't make that claim. And by the way, from that perspective it's this wretched box that stands the best chance. Well, that's the truth...

Fucking. Right now we're talking about how things are today.

Television. Then what's all this about an uninhabited island?

Fucking. We're past that.

Television. Admit that that was a red herring...

Fucking. I'm not going to admit to anything.

Hero. Fucking, my little friend... You know what? Go fuck yourself!

Fucking. Meaning?

Hero. I totally understand it now – you are the cause of all my personal and romantic disappointments.

Fucking. Don't make me laugh.

Hero. You are my fundamental problem.

Fucking. Ha-ha.

Hero. I don't want to have anything to do with you anymore.

Fucking. Are you serious?

Hero. Get out, get out, get out... Leave me alone... Leave me, please... I beseech you. Do you want... Anything you want... My little cross... No, I won't give away my cross. Just go. Be decent.

Fucking. I'm not leaving.

Hero. Let's part as friends. I have lots of good associations with you. Let's at least preserve the good memories, and forgive one another everything else...

Fucking. You're 33 years old. How are you going to live without me?

Hero. I'll survive somehow. Thanks for your concern.

Fucking. You won't be able to.

Hero. Hey, you know I'm – a bit crazy. If something gets in my head, you can't stop me. I'll survive even without fucking. After all, I've lived without meat.

Fucking. For two weeks.

Hero. So it was two weeks. Fundamentally – didn't I survive?

Fucking. You survived.

Hero. Get out.

Fucking. I'm not leaving.

Hero. You're leaving.

Fucking. I'm not leaving.

Hero. Go a-way!

Fucking. I can't.

Hero. I'm telling you for the last time.

Fucking. You can't get rid of me.

Hero. Why not?

Fucking. I'm not fucking.

Hero. Then who are you?

Fucking. I didn't want to tell you. I'm your wife.

Hero. My wife?

Fucking. Yes, your wife.

Hero. I don't understand...

Fucking. You thought that I was fucking, but I'm your wife.

Hero. My wife? And I wanted to get rid of you?

Fucking. Imagine, and you wanted to get rid of me... Don't kick me out.

Hero. How could I kick you out? I thought that you were just fucking, but it turns out that you're my wife.

Fucking. Yes.

Hero. I'm loyal to you.

Fucking. I know.

Hero. But I'm a bit crazy.

Fucking. I know.

Hero. I'm a poet.

Fucking. I know.

Hero. What am I supposed to do? I still have to make a decision about fucking. My life is going downhill.

Fucking. Just say: fucking means my wife.

Hero. Fucking means my wife. It's that simple?

Fucking. It's that simple.

Hero. Fucking means my wife.

Fucking. All the others are dirty sluts.

Hero. All the others are dir... Dir...

Fucking. Dirty sluts.

Hero. Dir...

Fucking. Come on.

Hero. Dir... I can't.

Fucking. Fucking means my wife. All the others are dirty sluts.

Hero. Fucking means my wife...

Fucking. That's not enough.

Hero. Fucking means my wife.

Fucking. All the others...

Hero. All the others... Fucking means my wife. That's not enough?

Fucking. No.

Hero. Listen. Do you remember the first lunar lander? That was 1970, the last year of the Sixties. That's when I was born. So strictly speaking I'm – a man of the Sixties. One of the last.

Fucking. Well so what. Why does that matter?

Hero. I don't know. It seems to matter. I feel that it does.

Fucking. And if someone were forming a team of financially insolvent toilet-cleaners, you'd rush to sign up for that too, right?

Hero. We were children during the Seventies. Now we're dangling between two self-satisfied generations, like an absurd pair of camel nuts. We are nobodies, we're nothing – we work in advertising and magazines, we're a bunch of archaic, spastic crabs. We're not entirely of this earth, although we'd like to be. Our sheets are not soiled with petroleum. But with the sperm of our wives' former lovers. We shake hands with our friends who can't even get jobs in advertising. We like the smell of their palms. We lap up their blood. We could be, we should be in their place. But Boeing has now forbidden refueling with blood and stains. Only kerosene or faith. We didn't inherit enough of either. We're already nothing, we never existed. But we will. Only we will! Because without faith, without land and petroleum – we – are free. They can't buy us, we sell ourselves only for money. They'll compose legends about us. We are ancient fighting robots on a planet of plush disposable heiresses. We're only using 10 percent of the power of our computers. In our generation there are no lawyers. We – are a division of the SS "Little Prince"! We – are the chosen Brezhnevite Don Quixotes and hard-boiled eggs! We are free of any brand, style, morals, collective letters, editorials, shit-atorials, novelties and all the other shit. As in ancient times, as in the Stone Age, we are guided by simple gods – Vodka, Fucking and Television. We are knights without goals or dreams, our shoguns got fucked, on our banner – good old gonorrhea! We are galloping on well-maintained Toyotas into Eternity. We give hope to our species. Therefore there's no need to force me to say bad things about women.

Fucking. You can't call a dirty slut a dirty slut – it doesn't matter. I'm not going to force you. And have you think that I'm some dense cunt.

Hero. I don't think that.

Fucking. I don't want you to.

Hero. It never crossed my mind.

Fucking. Just understand – I want to help you. I believe in you, you are dear to me. But you are very, very strange. And admit it – you like them.

Hero. That's no reason to call them –

Fucking. But if that's what they call themselves?

Hero. Who cares.

Fucking. You've got it really hard. You strike up conversations with waitresses and the chicks at the blue port-a-lets. It's pathological.

Hero. Maybe I just like to talk?

Fucking. It's not that you like to talk, it's that you like to fuck.

Hero. I've never done anything with the port-a-let chicks.

Fucking. Or with waitresses?

Hero. Nothing.

Fucking. But why do you sound so uncertain?

Hero. Nothing.

Fucking. You have. You've done it with everyone, you've done it with Pamela Anderson.

Hero. I have not.

Fucking. Swear it.

Hero. I swear by my mother.

Fucking. I don't believe you. You've done it with the shampoo commercial.

Hero. With the shampoo commercial I did. I don't deny it. But not with Pamela Anderson.

Fucking. Stop protecting her.

Hero. Fine. I did.

Fucking. There, you see.

Hero. It happened by accident.

Fucking. And you swore by your mother. You little swine.

Hero. I got carried away.

Fucking. Listen, hero! If you don't embrace the simple truth that Pamela Anderson is not fucking, things are going to be very hard for you.

Hero. Fucking is my wife.

Fucking. Correct. Fucking is your wife. But your classmates and the beautiful big-bottomed actresses from the Red Army Theater – are not fucking.

Hero. The beautiful actresses are not fucking.

Fucking. Soccer, cartoons, beer, computer games, the mysteries of the Third Reich – are not fucking.

Hero. They're all – dirty sluts!

Fucking. Your colleagues are not fucking, your first love is not fucking...

Hero. My second love is not fucking...

Fucking. The girl who's your traveling companion...

Hero. She's a motorcross champion.

Fucking. I don't care if she's a blow-job champion. She's not fucking. Fucking is your wife.

Hero. Fucking is my wife.

Fucking. Women who you treated not so well and women who you treated badly – are not fucking. So your conscience doesn't start blathering.

Hero. Fucking is my wife.

Fucking. Yes! Yes! Now you are free. You don't need to make friends with Park Avenue types or any fucking types, you don't have to wash your pants every month, you can sleep in your socks and you don't have to get the phone... You're even free from a personal resume, from poor and wealthy poets, you are a private self-sufficient alky, you stand proudly and firmly against the winds of all fucking opportunities... You spit in the face of those winds...

Hero. Not always, unfortunately.

Fucking. Okay, not always! You're not a robot.

Hero. I'm not a robot.

Fucking. You're not a robot, no. But why do you grovel the way you do before strangers' thighs? Why does any more or less articulate little fool have such power over you? What do you need someone else's bottomless brown eyes for, when you have the bottomless brown eyes of your own wife? Look into them, bitch, you'll find everything there... It's time you liberated yourself.

Television. Aren't you folks sick of this?

Fucking. And don't leave me. You know I'm only going to get worse.

Vodka. Hey, remember us...

Hero. How could I possibly leave you.

Fucking. Don't leave me.

Hero. Don't you leave me.

Fucking. I won't leave you.

Hero. My beloved.

Fucking. My beloved.

Vodka. It seems someone's tone has shifted.

Television. If they start kissing, I'll throw up. Ugh-uh-uh.

Vodka. They're deep in love, you whore.

Hero. All right, all right... I haven't forgotten about you guys.

Television. You can't scare us now. It's over, we're not afraid anymore.

Vodka. It's a big world out there, there are lots of people –

Hero. Today I looked in the mirror. I saw there... I saw a man dazed by the news and commercials, a drunk, fucking, in-love-with-his-wife brute. I thought – is this not success? Can there really be happiness even for a well-raised little boy? You don't understand such things. This is beautiful. As beautiful as the heavens. This is an honest, hard-won motherfucker – this is freedom.

Vodka. I don't get it – what's the moral?

Television. Everyone gets to stay. Is that right?

Hero. That's right. For now, that's right.

Television. You had to ruin our nerves.

Hero. You'll be the first to go.

Television. Ha-ha!

CURTAIN