

Seva, wielding the camera, evidently wanted to capture my time in the ditch. Fumbling with the camera, he took a picture of me. (It turned out later that he should not have fumbled with it, as he just ruined it.) I instantly understood that I, too, should take a picture of whoever turned up in the ditch after me. After all of this, Seva withdrew in the direction of the other forest. I should note that the ditch was about fifty meters from the other forest's edge. And that is where the whole trick lies: the person thinks that he is at the forest's edge, but instead ends up in this ditch, right there behind the curtain.

And so I lay down in the ditch. I cannot say that I gazed at the sky while lying in this ditch. I simply rested there quietly; you could say that I was just lying around. I understood that somebody must be coming now of those friends remaining on the other shore, but for some reason I had no desire to know who it might be. I simply lay and waited for the moment when someone would come. So that in essence, I was busy lying in the ditch and had no curiosity about what would happen next or where Seva had gone.

When, by my supposition, enough time had passed and some character, some persona was supposed to appear, I peeked out of the ditch, turned, with even some dissatisfaction, and saw that approaching me was a lady in a fall cloak who, of course, did not know that I was lying in the ditch. But I had no desire to stare at what this lady would experience once she discovered the large ditch and myself in it—since, I repeat, the state of calm repose was the main thing.

And sure enough, the lady appeared above the edge of the ditch, but she did not show any particular surprise or shock upon seeing me. Hovering by the curtain, she began to inquire whether she should pull the curtain. I said, pull the curtain if you wish. I did not know her name. She began to pull it across. I said: it looks like it needs to be untied (the curtain was tied into a knot), you can probably leave it untied. It can just hang that way. But no, she carefully performed everything that was written (the curtain had a label saying that it should be untied and then later re-tied, which I had not done).

She did it all meticulously, for her own reasons, naturally. Then I told her to lie in the ditch, but she had figured it out herself anyway, that there was nothing left to do. She lay in the ditch and stretched out her booted legs. I did not fumble with the camera—I do not understand anything about cameras—and simply pressed the trigger to depress the shutter. And then, I remember, I placed it down carefully, didn't throw it—it's an expensive thing after all. After which I calmly, with the sense of a duty discharged, headed in the direction that Seva had gone.

The edge of the forest was already near. The slush on this side of the field, which, I repeat, was humped, had increased sharply; the well-trod and trampled path was almost all puddles. I jumped from mound to mound, but did not fall, though truthfully, my shoe was completely submerged in mud several times. Finally, I began to emerge onto the grass and to approach the edge of what was now a new forest. And here I saw a large group of people, naturally all familiar. I saw Erik, who was standing there, and I saw Seva.²⁵ I have to say that, from the first moment, I immediately had the feeling that all of this was taking place in another world. And I should say that he, too, asked me, laughing, how I liked it here in the other world. I said that it was very pleasant in this other world: first, it was all close friends and loved ones; second, I saw at once that there was a fire and that, if I was cold, I could warm myself. I was suffering from a terrible hunger and I asked if there was anything to eat. It turned out that there was something to eat: inside a transparent sack there were slices of bread and even some meat. I was experiencing an extraordinary happiness: first, I was in this other world, and second, it was so pleasant, so wonderful. But then I found that all was not so simple. I first had to go to this board. I don't remember who invited me, but in any case, there was a board right there nailed to a birch tree. I walked up to it. One of these "new-worlders"—that is how I would put it—was already standing by the board and reading carefully. I too started reading, but felt an extreme inability to read after the first line. Point A photographs Point B was the only thing I understood. Person E moves toward Point F. I must say that I even felt a pang at such a profanation of

25. Erik Bulatov (b. 1933), painter and close friend of Kabakov.



Fig. 59



Fig. 60

the “other world.” I am here practically post-mortem, I am practically flying, while here we are again accounting, re-accounting, the strict regimentation of everything that was taking place. Although, who knows, it must mean that such things exist here too.

I was full of pleasant sensations. I repeat, the experience of a mystery occurred, took place.

The lady who had lain in the ditch was already approaching, and someone else was lying in her place. In general, this sequence of events, this sequence of intervals was extremely pleasant. It was like suddenly seeing it in a dream, a constant, unavoidable stream, through this ditch over here, towards us, onto this forest’s edge.

Here Erik suggested that, while everyone was crossing over from that side to this one, we take a stroll in the autumn forest. And so we went, the



Fig. 61

three of us with Seva, talking quietly, mostly just rustling the leaves. Seva came upon two mushrooms and pinned them with a stick he had picked up. But there were no more mushrooms after that.

Then everyone crossed onto this forest's edge, started to mill around, to talk. Well anyway, everyone ended up here, on the other side. In essence, that's where all the experiences end—that's all there was that day. And after, we rode home on the commuter train.