

Mikhail Volokhov

LYUDMILA GURCHENKO LIVES

Images from memory

At the back of the stage looms a wooden gallows from the time of the 2nd World War.

A huge open-necked vase filled with roses has been placed on a stool under the gallows. A noose from the gallows is tightened around the vase's neck as if it were a human throat.

Lyudmila Gurchenko sits on a sofa

She sings the song 'In the Frontline Forest'

I am Lyudmila Gurchenko. The violation of loyalty is the central leitmotif of my work.

I can't stand cheating. For me life is based on loyalty. And on wonderful, gallant, talented men like my father, Mark Gavrilovich. I always sought a man like my Daddy, who, as he used to say, had a fist "with five fingers full of lead and the smell of death". Such a man was the Alain Delon standard of excellence.

But first of all, I tried to become a very good, loyal actress so that you, my dear audience, would be loyal and grateful to me all my life.

That's why I aspired to be always eternally young and beautiful. It's very important for my profession to always stay in shape – so you, the public in the auditorium, should also keep in good form like me – then you can be as successful, talented and beautiful as I am, you can be as happy as me... (*Wipes away a tear*).

You mustn't ask or complain. "In the morning almost a freak, in the evening a Goddess."
That's how Daddy described me.

I, Lyudmila Gurchenko, am a fragile woman with a powerful character – a truly Soviet lady born on the territory of the former, powerful, totalitarian Soviet Union, my Motherland, on November 12th, 1935.

And, apropos – this is very much apropos – my French, practically twin brother – yes, blood brother in spirit, Alain Delon, who I was madly in love with all my life, but very quietly, in fact soundlessly – was born just four days before me, on November 8th, 1935.

Delon is my dream in a vision of the most perfect love.

And we started working together in 1957.

The young, charming Delon, with the purity of love and tenderness in his soul, began to create his art so beautifully.

And of course, I constantly went to see films he acted in, where I could admire him as if he was my very own young beau – especially in the sad, even tragic Visconti film 'Rocco and His Brothers'.

Then Delon delighted me in 'The Swimming Pool' with Romy Schneider, 'Any Number Can Win' with Gabin, 'Borsalino & Co.' with Belmondo, in 'Farewell, Friend' with Charles Bronson.

And of course, in 'Red Sun', with Ursula Andress on horseback.

I would have played that role in 'Red Sun' – with Ursula Andress on horseback, with a fabulous thespian triangle of Delon, Bronson and Toshiro Mifune, Kurosawa's favourite actor – far more gracefully than Ursula Andress.

How I was captivated by the incendiary role of the flighty Christina, the girlfriend of Gauche, who was played by Alain Delon.

What happiness to ride a bay horse like that and knock them all senseless with your elastic juicy bosom jutting through the buttonholes of your

shirt! I assure you, my bust was a thousand times more wonderful than hers, in the years when I was young and active.

It's just amazing – Alain Delon is only four days older than me, and Rocco, my elder brother in fate, has the same actor's blood group as me.

After watching the film 'Rocco and His Brothers', where Delon played the strongest brother, I was completely enthralled by him. I wanted to be Annie Girardot in the movie. She is killed by Alain Delon's brother Simone, just because Delon loves her and she responds with fatal reciprocity.

Afterwards I was jealous of Mireille Darc's love affair with Delon.

You will remember this actress from the movie 'The Tall Blond Man with One Black Shoe', her cool, satin, naked ass peeking from a black satin dress, with a cutout at the back larger than her back and buttocks.

Yes, this blonde femme fatale Mireille Darc was with Delon for 18 years, but when she was unable to give him a child they split up.

I could have given Delon a child... Perhaps. But not after Delon began playing those police detectives of his without sincere love and tenderness in his soul... Just for money... That's fate...

I, Lyudmila Gurchenko, a self-sufficient actress, the elemental female, loved giving birth to roles more than anything in the world, above all to inspire my creative mood – to give birth to healthy, fully-fledged, unforgettable, eternal, female images.

And then, it turned out so naturally – these vivifying female images of mine lifted the spirit of wonderful ideal men and no less wonderful ideal women, for the sake of life and love.

By his self-love the actor becomes great – he helps everyone by means of the stage!

God gave me the talent to realise my Daddy's dream – to become a great actress with cheerful healthy companions, in the cheerful and healthy creative zone of my controlled cultural and blissful insanity.

And not in a mediocre, trivial zone of helpless vain self-affirmation – as with many of those quasi-bohemian thieves à la acting-complexed arseholes with family ties.

Here Delon understood me perfectly. And who wouldn't understand – Delon would have been very happy to stuff his face with these incompetent scoundrels, neurotics and schizoids in art.

They never calm down, these simulacrae of the imperfections of bastards – they are terminally sick from their incurable mediocrity and transfer this nervous, pernicious infection to others.

Truly businesslike killers prevent real talents from revealing their brilliant gift from heaven in a full peal of bells. And only the supreme gift of acting is able to convey to the nation, to the people – a saving Spiritual Insight for finding possible happiness in this so unbearably absurd life of ours.

But we are real, not those neurotic, creative Russian 'Brave People' always riding huge white war horses.

There is a contagiously gorgeous actor by the name of Seryozha Gurzo. Very lyrical and natural, like nature in the highlands, from which his horse gallops to the stars. I wanted to be like that.

I always wanted to be so beloved and heroic for my beloved daughter Masha the nurse, and for my heavenly grandson Marik, for my beloved Daddy Mark, and my Mama Elena Alexandrovna Simonova-Gurchenko.

Mama and I endured the entire German occupation of Kharkov. We even escaped death together in the mobile gas chamber.

This is a vile fascist vehicle for group execution, with an exhaust pipe channelled into the sealed interior. The fascists crammed about fifty people at a time into the vehicle, they were packed like sardines in a can.

And about fifty minutes after the car started to move, the same number, all fifty people in the gas chamber suffocated and died. A barbarous form of execution.

The Germans thought up these mass executions so they wouldn't feel guilty about pulling the trigger of a gun, and then one German soldier could kill hundreds of captives.

At the time Mama and I had a market stall in fascist Kharkov.

Then the second lot of SS Germans arrived, different from the first lot who weren't such evil Germans, who were at first defeated in a couple of weeks by just a few of our glorious but exhausted Red Army soldiers.

These new Germans who had already knocked out our heroic Red Army soldiers were very mean SS Germans with Alsatian dogs. They organized raids on the market where we, the children, mothers and old women of Kharkov, who lived a dog's life in the city they occupied, could sell something in the market to somehow, more or less, survive.

It was terrible how these SS fascist Germans, with their fanged fascist Alsatians, drove us hungry, cold, brave Kharkov residents into their infernal killing machines before we had time to escape from the market.

Their goal? That's how the fascists tried to reduce and suppress the proud people of Kharkov as they tried to resist. And my mother and I, who sold tobacco at the market so we wouldn't starve to death, nearly ended up in one of these hellish gas chambers after a fascist raid.

It was a terrible semblance of execution in the bull of Phalaris. Ancient Romans sentenced to death were placed naked in a hollow bull made of bronze. Under the belly of the bull a fire was lit. The people died in unbearable agony.

The spectators at this execution heard the bull bellow when a special apparatus in the brazen bull's nostrils made the human screams audible as the sound of a bull.

In the German gas chambers only those suffocating from the carbon monoxide fumes of the infernal fascist slaughterhouse heard the human groans, just for a while.

The Germans at this time preserved and tenderly cherished their own conscience and health.

As people were thrown into this infernal machine many took a final gasp of fresh air outside the trap door. But to no avail, of course.

I particularly remember one of our amazing blessed simpletons, who also fell under this murderous fascist dispensation.

He began to dance as he approached the infernal gas chamber.

The Germans were initially taken aback by the Russian buffoon's performance, but they let the blessed idiot cavort to the tune of his German accordion. Then, as he still laughed uncomprehendingly and they laughed at his plight, they pushed him into the slaughterhouse last and tightly slammed the door behind him.

I remember how the tears rolled from my eyes. I was shocked by this great, tragic, Shakespearean scene.

It was an outstanding deadly act by an unknown blessed Russian artist, the unknown soldier of our righteous Russian art, a noble and heroic performance before overfed frenzied Germans zombified into murder by Hitler the neuropath.

Then, in that dark year of 1943, I realized that an actor may be indulged by the public and allowed to play his unrivalled performance to the end, only to be ruthlessly destroyed amid the baying uproar of an all-male alehouse.

Just such a beery, masculine obliteration followed my extraordinary success in our beloved Soviet country, in the beloved popular film 'Carnival Night'.

It's the Chinese custom to burn carnival dragons! Our Russian version is when merrymaking clerks in boots with heels for riveting-snitching turnips turn successful Thumbelina-Lyudmila girls into informers.

If you resist, they torture and finish you off like an arrogant heifer after your cosmic cultural flight. While you dreamed that the glory of 'Carnival Night' had earned you an Eternity...

The Eternity of Gratitude, Love, Loyalty, Friendship and Devotion of all the people to whom the film gave hope to continue living with honesty and love.

But... If you achieve fame, that means you're a witch. Like in the Middle Ages, when the girl is met with rods and thorns, and then chop off her pretty head.

She sings the song 'Oh, the rocky roads...'

When the Germans occupied Kharkov I was just six years old. From the age of six I began my lifelong murderous Kafkaesque training in fascist executions.

During the German occupation the SS often forced us Kharkov residents to gather in the city square. Partisans and other worthy Soviet people who resisted the fascists were put to death there.

To begin with, at the age of six, I didn't understand what was happening when a living person was placed on a bench beneath a crossbar, under the gallows.

Then a rope with a noose from this crossbar-gallows was thrown around his neck.

Then the bench was knocked from under his feet and he found himself suspended in the air, hung by the neck on a rope.

Then the living person twitched and croaked the death rattle; our own, living, heroic compatriot grew still, hung by the Germans.

As a little girl of six I didn't realize what death was.

I didn't understand that these German executions of the heroic Soviet people were a punishment because they wished to remain free and honest.

I didn't understand that they brought our common victory closer, for one and all.

After victory, after we all became free and happy, we could learn to sing and dance, go to study at the acting faculty in the Gerasimov Film School.

And then I could walk through Mosfilm in a tight-waisted skirt, like Thumbelina, showing everyone my incomparable wasp waist.

And stepping forward to meet me – Ivan Pyriev!

He immediately took me to the set where Ryazanov was filming ‘Carnival Night’!

I was approved for this cosmic leading role, instead of some neurotic wannabe actress!

After four months of filming against the backdrop of the legendary Soviet Red Army Theatre the film was released and appeared on the screens of every Soviet cinema!

In an instant I, like Gagarin, became a deservedly famous actress all over the Soviet Union!

However... after the incomparable ‘Carnival Night’ the KGB invited me to sing for concerts featuring VIPs of the Soviet Union, so I could inform on them afterwards! And in 1957 I was directly recruited by the KGB to work at the World Festival of Youth and Students.

But in reply to their proposition I sent a message to every one of them, including that time-honoured word of four letters that everyone understands.

In retaliation my comrades told me that for this message of mine with a word of four letters I’d be ground into sawdust and branded as a bitch so that everyone understood.

And... those professional spies kept their word, those informers, those squealers and snitches. That life form stays true to their loud vows of fidelity.

At their instigation I was deprived of leading roles for 15 long years.

And every day for 15 years I dreamed of fascist executions.

Dreamed of how they lead me to execution barefoot across the prickly snow and hang me, like Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, for carrying out a feat of bravery in support of my people.

They hang me, hang me, hang me...

BUT! They hang me in peacetime too, right now, our native bloodhounds are our fellow creatures.

Back then, during the Kharkov fascist occupation, at the age of six, I still felt that death and execution is the most vile and disgusting thing that people can devise and inflict on others.

During these executions I pressed my face against my mother's belly so I shouldn't see anything terrible.

But the German who ensured that all the precise details of this execution were carried out came up to my mother and I, he twisted my face from my mother's belly with his whip handle. So I could see everything, remember everything – how really scary, unbearably scary it is to watch as jeering people in ironed German fascist uniforms hang others, our heroic Soviet relatives in torn, bloody, dirty old clothes.

I understood – those Germans were carrying out Hitler's orders that we, the Soviet Gaidar children, should not become, when we grow up, partisans who could fight these fascist monsters...

That's why, at the age of six, we had to see what happens when the partisans struggle against the German fascists.

But then I began to understand something completely different: the German fascists are worms that somehow crawled across our land and emerged in our backyard; they must be crushed, crushed and crushed like cockroaches, so they simply don't exist in the world.

So you understand, my formation made me quite different from a Tolstoyan girl who will turn the other side of her face when a hefty blow strikes blood on one cheek!

My character has been shaped by fascist executions since I was six years old. And precisely because of this I began to understand what is good, and what is bad.

This is the most important thing in life. To say, yes of course, or no, certainly not.

I clearly understood that the young Soviet hero who boldly and bravely shouted the victorious words "For the Motherland!" before his death on

the gallows is our most glorious Russian man, our soldier, just like my father, who went to the front as a volunteer.

Our partisan soldier with a cold...

Who suffered for us, gave his life for us, so that we can now speak together in our native Russian, understand each other from a half-word and love each other forever!

A soldier with a cold in a trench in winter, snow.
Three o'clock in the morning, enemy tanks on the attack.
The soldier has pneumonia, there's no penicillin,
No warm bed for him in the nearest infirmary.
The soldier with a cold no longer wants to live.
He spits blood on the snow as his temperature nears forty.
The nearest enemy tank is a hundred metres away
And with his barrel pointed at an infantryman
The soldier rises to his feet, advances to the tank with a grenade, smiling,
And it seems to him that his beloved flies towards him instead of the tank,
That he holds flowers in his hand and not a grenade,
He wants so much to embrace his beloved,
Even the tank is hypnotized and dares not shoot.
Time stopped the war for a moment of love for this soldier and the tank.
But the next moment a shell flies from the tank and pierces the soldier's breast.
No penicillin, it's no longer necessary.
The soldier has fallen, he's dead, his cold is gone

But the German soldier who knocked the bench from under our heroic boy was a worm, a vile snake, ignorant of what he was doing.

I remember how I was really upset I wasn't a boy – I wasn't fighting and couldn't kill the enemy in a fair fight on the battlefield.

But the paradox is that I didn't want to kill the Germans occupying Kharkov, with whom we lived in the city for two whole years.

I didn't even learn to hate them. And not because many Germans gave me food after I performed in front of them at children's concerts.
Thanks to that, my mother and I survived.

When the German film ‘The Girl of My Dreams’ with Marika Reck was shown in Kharkov in ’44, I fell madly in love with this German actress and began singing her songs to our occupiers in their native German.

I swore to myself I’d become a famous and charming actress too, but a Russian actress, just like this incomparable German Marika Reck, who, of course, was not exactly a Marlene Dietrich, she made a world name for herself on two octaves.

I really feel sorry for Jean Gabin, who loved that Dietrich diva festooned with ostrich feathers.

But no Marika Reck endured such excruciating Gestapo tortures from her male so-called fans as the ones I had to bear. No one understood anything. It seemed everything was fine. But you could be punched in the face, and no one knew where the fist came from...

Sentenced to death
For being yourself...
“You, boy, are a traitor to the motherland,”
The evil investigator told me.

“You will rot, you bastard, unknown
In the damp earth with a hole in your forehead,
For wanting to hang yourself
Rather than work in the taiga.

Because you eat macaroni,
Like you want to puke
At the sight of my shoulder straps
You want to throw up so much,

For the fact that, bitch, you smile,
For the fact that, whore, you sleep badly,
For the fact that you don’t repent, you bastard,
You dream seditious dreams.”

And now these bullets were flying
From the guns of scoundrels.
Who did the shooting – the fools don’t know...
“Someone’s finger pressed the trigger”...

We lived with all that... And for sure not one director offered me a starring role for the next fifteen years – from when I was twenty to thirty-five.

And this is the best and most productive age for a woman, and an actress.

What's more, the so-called tyranny of the 'Carnival Night' mask – the girl with a smile – began. None of the directors wanted to see me in another mask.

That's how your famous actress lived when she didn't want to betray her friends and acquaintances, telling who said what and who drank for what.

Naturally Daddy said whatever helpful, supportive words he could – “a good man is only shaken by fate, then let go”.

Daddy used to call me his 'cranberry girl', his 'goddess'.

I bought cranberries in white powdered sugar and... ate myself by myself. It was even sometimes very tasty – best of all with the Indian tea that came in a yellow pack. Makes me nostalgic!

But thank God, at the end of my life Fate gave me the best kind of happiness – sudden death.

How did it happen? It's a funny story.

On towering stilettos like these – I was already drowning in my bitter fame as an actress – in a mink fur coat, in the new Russia, at the young age of seventy-six, I was walking my two lap dogs in central Moscow, near my home, near my bureau of happiness.

After my dachshund Trump died I purchased two lap dogs. It was winter and I took them for a walk. I didn't notice the ice on the ground.

I slipped – that's the funny thing! And fell – it was hilarious!
I broke my hip joint – well, I'm laughing like crazy!

Then a month later my lungs were thick with blood clots – what weird, feeble tricks the old nag's body gets up to!

The ambulance didn't arrive for twenty endless minutes – the usual circus you hear about in anecdotes – well, of course, the ambulance didn't reach the actress beloved by her public in time to resuscitate me and bring me back from the next world.

That's how the movie ended – everyone's just roaring with laughter, and I'm also directing and editing, dying of laughter!

I gave my soul to God in a completely festive and cheerful mood – in the mood of 'Carnival Night'.

So I approached God and handed over my Soul in a closed, sealed envelope.

It was all very peaceful, at home, and God opened the envelope, pulled out my Soul, maybe took a bite and tasted it. Well, I don't know exactly what God does before dispatching a person to Heaven or Hell.

Maybe it's not so vulgar what God does with our Souls, of course – not like a secondhand goods dealer evaluating gold and diamond treasures or relics in our earthly kingdom of corrupt humanity.

Everything in the world is fairly balanced.

What did the mink give her soul for, when they skinned her to make my fur coat? That mink took revenge on me through my lap dogs when I took them for a walk.

The mink that took revenge on me was with my lap dogs on an astral dog-mink connection. Those little dogs pulled at the leash on purpose – so I stepped on the slippery ice and shattered my hip!

But, as Nikita Mikhalkov quite correctly said about my departure, if I were faced with the choice of dying instantly without suffering with a blood clot on the lungs, or like a houseplant with no one to look after it, then I'd prefer the first option for that lethal flight.

Only now, after death, taking flight isn't the same as when I rose to the heights way back then, when 'Carnival Night' made me a star! (*Weeps*).

In fact my real life ended before that – when Marik, my unique, beloved fifteen-year-old grandson died...

I didn't know Marik was into drugs.

Some people are keen on sport, some prefer the theatre, others like to fly planes, but Marik liked to fly with drugs. Well... he flew away altogether...

He's not the first.

Only, you understand – Marik is the first and the last – this is my only and eternally alive, immensely beloved grandson – Marik, my dear grandson. (*Weeps*).

I often visited my two Mariks at the Vagankovo Cemetery. Marik my father and Marik my grandson.

If I hadn't visited the cemetery for a long time, for more than a month, I used to feel downhearted.

But now my Mariks lie in Vagankovo Cemetery, and I'm at Novodevichy. For never was a story of more woe, my friend Horatio.

Now, from this eternal burial separation of our family, I'm eternally dying a cold, solitary death here at the Novodevichy Cemetery, without my Mariks, and they've been left alone at the Vagankovsky Cemetery, too.

This is the most unbearable torment – to die alone and forever in your own unbearable death from an insurmountable, beyond fatal separation.

Marik died at the age of fifteen. And after 'Carnival Night' I didn't get another role for fifteen years.

You, my public, were also deprived of my creative and human attention to you for three five-year periods.

I suffered during these years with no filming from the fact that my audience, through my screen images, didn't get the opportunity to see how, according to my bitter experience, we should rid ourselves of this monstrous internal, looped, nationwide suffering.

We can be saved by Love and Creativity. Only love and only creativity can save us.

Sings the song 'Accidental Waltz'

Although in fact it's better to get used to your suffering and derive the wisdom of life from it.

Without this suffering fertilizer of ours, our bitter Russian suffering, we will immediately turn ugly and wither, we'll die like flies.

We'll stupidly, happily eat Snickers, and like cattle we'll gaily and sweetly die from it!

But in those days, when I was still young, I didn't realize.
I was only a sad young girl who needed to survive, quite simply.

After all, I was a very proud and independent lady. And in a hurry to live, naturally.

I always raced ahead of my happiness. People usually fall behind their happiness. I ran far ahead and still couldn't reach my happiness.

But when you run ahead of your happiness, you catch up with the misery of those close to you who fall behind their happiness.

If you're a really strong and honest person, then you're certainly able to take your tardy loved one along with his misfortune, and bring him closer to his happiness.

Although you don't obtain your happiness at the same time, you're happy with the happiness of the friend you helped.

And if you're really capable of being happy from the happiness of your loved one, then you're an honest, pure person.

For those fifteen unhappy and stagnant years I flew around on Aeroflot planes and gave joyful, jolly concerts all over the Soviet Union – all over my Motherland.

I also learned how to sew and sell homemade dresses. And at this time, across the country, ‘Carnival Night’ was racking up its three hundred and fifty million viewings in the cinemas.

I bought myself a holiday in Sochi with the fee from ‘Carnival Night’, but didn’t have enough left for a cinema ticket to watch myself in ‘Carnival Night’.

At the same time Delon released a film with Gabin, ‘Any Number Can Win’.

Well, in the movie Gabin and Delon go to Monte Carlo to rob the casino. And they achieve everything in the most extraordinarily beautiful manner. This is the most gorgeous, intricate robbery, like Robin Hood.

You remember the final scene from this movie – they already have millions of stolen francs in two large bags.

Gabin asks Delon to bring the bags of money to the beach. Well, there’s a big, open beach in Monte Carlo, with pools and bars.

And here comes Delon with these huge sacks of money as Gabin sits and waits for him in the cafe opposite... but suddenly the police turn up.

Yes, my dear comrades – the most commonplace police to catch the most worthy people, Jean Gabin and Alain Delon, who hadn’t sleep the night before and had brilliantly robbed the Monte Carlo casino.

And, mind you, without a single shot – no blood was spilled. Well, Delon hit someone gently on the back of the head, so he kept still and behaved properly. After all, he and Gabin had robbed these nasty, half-corrupt casino bosses.

The arrival of the cops is like the way the KGB moved in on me after ‘Carnival Night’, as if I was whored out for commercial gain.

Such well-heeled but at the same time unpleasant types – all these police spies are always on the lookout.

They walk along the beach, past Delon, past the open-air cafe, the pool, past these bags of money that Delon must give to Gabin and hide from all these fascist policemen.

Jean Gabin has a very sweet and faithful wife waiting for him at home.

Alain Delon also needs to make a new life for himself after prison, where he was unjustly locked up for several years, they found drugs...

Like those that took Marik – poor Marik...

And so Delon has no choice but to very carefully submerge these bags of money in the pool.

Yes, these bags full of money slowly and silently sink to the bottom of the pool.

I was so happy for Delon. He found a solution right in front of several filthy policemen walking past him just two steps away – from what seemed a hopeless situation.

Alain Delon had found a way out!

Very quietly, gently and cautiously, he lowers the moneybags to the bottom of the pool.

And what do you think. One of the technicians that clean these facilities opens some kind of valve in the pool and sets off undercurrents at the bottom of the pool, near the bags with Delon and Gabin's hard-earned money.

The money starts floating out of the bags!!!

I really felt sick as I watched this scene play out before my eyes.

After 'Carnival Night' I really felt unable to watch as the money surfaces and never gets to the people who deserve it most.

That money is needed to prevent people getting drunk or addicted to drugs, to give them a haircut, dress them in clean shirts or dresses with tight waists and let them work, work, work.

An actor can't live without work. Without work an actor dies.

Can you imagine, my darlings, when the money earned by honest, hard labour, the nerve-fuelled labour of an actor, floats up and away.

Many millions of Western money in foreign currency are floating away, with that you can buy yachts, villas, ships, steamships, instead of sewing dresses in the evenings after ‘Carnival Night’, when all exits as an actress were cut off for me – exits to reach you, my beloved, heroic, Soviet viewers.

And practically the same deservedly earned money from ‘Carnival Night’, the classic Robin Hood carnival, the brilliant Delon robbery – this money begins to float and... disappear.

This is an absolutely accurate image of my state in those terrible years when, after the frenzied success of ‘Carnival Night’ – as well as after the chic robbery of a night casino in Monaco – all the money made by me and Delon surfaced and went to the police and the same crooks from the casino, who probably corruptly shared it with the necessary persons. The police.

Well, the difference between Delon and me was only that my Frenchman played this character with the money that surfaced in the cinema and received for this miracle movie from his actor’s box office decent currency fees for a well-deserved life as a filmstar.

And I, Lyudmila Gurchenko, lived my truly stellar life in almost utter poverty, without a well-deserved job or even a crust of stale bread.

Only in 1966 was I given a role with Oleg Borisov in the film ‘Workers’ Settlement’, and even that was a supporting role.

By then eleven rainy years had passed since ‘Carnival Night’. As a result, this semi-dissident film would then be shelved elsewhere.

Of course, later – I proved to them all that my years of suffering hadn’t been in vain – I learned to understand and love the Russian people who trail behind their legitimate happiness, running after their elusive happiness.

And I tried to help people suffering for the truth as heroine of the movie ‘Old Walls’.

There's a lot of God in the Old Walls of ruined churches.

I played a solo role in 'Old Walls'.

Dzhigarkhanyan accompanied me just at the beginning of the film, and the end. He personally, gratefully and nobly confessed to me that he couldn't fathom how I could reach such cosmic heights of acting just like that.

He's a bit of a long-haul pilot there. But of course I eclipsed my beloved Dzhigarkhanyan. Without intent or ill will.

Everything just turned out naturally. God supported me. Where God supports, there can be no feeling of cheap self-love, vanity, or especially, ill will.

The entire film is based on me and on God. Perhaps the only film based on me alone and God alone.

But I was also in a film about Divine Love – about me alone and God!

'The Mechanic Gavrilov's Beloved Woman'.

There I wait throughout the film for the incomparable drunken Russian knight, my Seryozhenka Shakurov... My Seryozhenka Senin was my real Russian Alain Delon, finally sent me by fate as a reward for endless torment.

Sings the song 'Heart in My Breast'

And before that, of course, there was Nikita Mikhalkov's 'Five Evenings'. There God really was in Everything!

And in 1979 Andron Konchalovsky's 'Sibiriade' was shown at the Cannes Film Festival. There I erotically and brilliantly acted with Nikita Mikhalkov, using Stanislavsky's psychological Acting Method.

I just magically, humanly and creatively merged with him, trembling and

resonating with our Russian Alain Delon, Nikita Mikhalkov.

In the frame I kissed Nikita incomparably – from the heart, according to Stanislavsky, like an Olympic champion the gymnastic actress turned an actor's somersault of love and felt no pain from her recently broken leg.

For which I received sincere and enviable praise from Andron Konchalovsky.

But I couldn't kiss Slava Lyubshin in 'Five Evenings' in front of the director Nikita Mikhalkov. Forgive me, Nikita, but in front of you, my beloved director who gave me the role in these 'Five Evenings', I couldn't kiss blessed Lyubshin according to Stanislavsky.

You wouldn't believe my only artificial possible kisses, Stanislavsky-Mikhalkov. But we made an excellent film. A black and white film like a rainbow of colour! And understandable for a lot of people. Almost everyone.

I always wanted to play images that everyone could understand.

I'm sorry, like Pushkin I wanted to create rich, unfading folk images over the years.

That's the most difficult thing in art.

In my work the heights I achieved as an actor and human being were like Gagarin's vertical ascent.

Then we had the year 1975 in Russia. When they released Eldar Ryazanov's film 'The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!' on the wide Soviet screen.

Of course I auditioned for the fatal role of Nadezhda in this film. Of course! But Ryazanov, after the infinitely successful 'Carnival Night' set at New Year's Eve, didn't audition me for the role.

As it turned out Ryazanov needed that over-refined Polish girl Barbara Brylska for the role of the Russian girl Nadya in the film.

And I, in Spirit and Mind, with my mortified Russian-Soviet fate, after ten years of downtime after his brilliant ‘Carnival Night’, when I ran through life ahead of my happiness for so many painful years, did not suit dear kind Ryazanov in his warm slippers at that moment.

But after all, in this film I would, as always, have been playing myself running ahead of my happiness – well, I would’ve slow down a little, Ryazanov would have condescended and helped chivalrously push Myagkov towards happiness, although he is always far behind this happiness – that’s his misfortune.

And then we’d have been so idyllically happy, him and I, in this movie.

And you, Ryazanov, would have achieved a great, courageous, lyrical film comparable with the level of heavenly suffering in your own ‘Station for Two’.

My God – the divine Ryazanov!

If I were shooting this film, I’d definitely put you in the role of Lukashin instead of Myagkov, and I would play with you in this film instead of Barbara Brylska. You would just become a Delon from my passions, Ryazanov!

Dear Ryazanov... My dear Ryazanov... For ‘Carnival Night’, not ‘Station for Two’, where I played the absolute vertical Gagarin space takeoff with Basilashvili, you didn’t settle accounts with me and with all compassionate humanity, in the person of the Russian people.

And I had to wait three years for ‘Five Evenings’ with Nikita Mikhalkov.

As a result I played my best role of love there with Slava Lyubshin. Lyubshin is a Christian superhuman Actor.

To exist with Lyubshin in the frame is like being in the frame with a child, you can’t overplay.

Then there’s another super-actor-child of ours, so similar to my Daddy, but there was only one incomparable folk peddler of anecdotes – Yura

Nikulin.

He was sent to me as my Salvation.

I acted in Alexei German's 'Twenty Days Without War' with Yura Nikulin.

In this movie I really like myself.

I fell under the spell of this wonderful man Yuri Nikulin, I wanted him to like me, and now I also really like myself, with my modesty and refined intelligence.

Usually I watch films with my participation, where I did something really super-extraordinary.

In 'Twenty Days Without War' by the documentarily accurate Alexei German, who's been making films for decades and staging plays for years, any actress or actor can play brilliantly.

Although they tell me that no one could have played better than me with Yuri Nikulin in 'Twenty Days without War'. Thank you, Lyosha German, for bringing me together in your war film for our beloved Motherland with Yuri Nikulin, my Actor Father. Thank you.

When the film was being shot, Nikulin endlessly thought up wartime jokes about Stirlitz:

Muller is walking down the street. Suddenly a brick falls on his head. "Once upon a time," thinks Muller. "And now twice," thinks Stirlitz, throwing the second brick.

Stirlitz leaves his home and sees some working ladies:
"You should go home, girls, there's a war on."

A shot rings out. By the whistling of the wind in his head, Stirlitz realizes the wound went straight through.

The wound went straight through...

And now Alain Delon's performing in Paris with his twenty-year-old daughter, for people who love and appreciate him. And I, with my beloved grandson Marik, see from the heavens the great happiness of Alain Delon and his beloved daughter – playing on stage with your closest and dearest, most beloved person on earth, playing for your beloved audience – and so happily continuing to live together!!!

The man who will die in my play –

Will remove his skin first and hang it on a chair.

And the chair will say: I shrug my shoulders,

Your death isn't my problem.

The rose in a vase will intervene

And cite as an example the crystal vase:

I'm dying in this vase and the vase doesn't care,

It only gleams, with all its facets.

And the chair will say: those are your problems.

Then the grumpy sofa will remember:

Once a man stood on this chair with a noose at his neck,

And the chair was joyful as it was kicked aside

And the man's legs hung in the air.

And the chair knew, knew, knew,

What would happen when the Man was left there.

And the chair will say: those are your problems.

The man who will die in my play

May remove his skin,

But respecting the chair,

May he throw it to the floor.

The chair has its own problems.

And after all, this is just a play.

She kicks the stool under the vase of flowers and the 'hung' vase of flowers dangles in the air from the gallows.

Nothing personal. It's just that I once lived in this world beside you –
Lyudmila Gurchenko lives.

She sings the song 'Evening on the Raid'

The lights dim

Moscow, 2017