

SPACE 0

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Space O. The English Translation

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Аннотация

An authorised English translation of a short-listed novella about David Bowie's composing one of his best-known songs, Space Oddity. This is a fictional account of a troubled musician meeting a troubled loader in a run-down pub in Beckenham in the summer of 1969 that led to a masterpiece song about love and space.

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Юлия Шувалова

Space O. The English Translation

Preface

I wrote the story “[Space O](#)” in Russian in late February 2021, upon learning about a literary contest dedicated to the 60th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin’s flight to space. The contest was organized by Litres.Samizdat, a Russian platform for self-published authors, and Roscosmos, the Russian Space Agency. It was shortlisted for the final and was eventually published in a separate collection of novellas by other contestants. Roscosmos eventually sent us a letter informing that the book had been added to their library.

As I was thinking about the subject for my story, I went through some notebooks but I did not find anything that would catch my attention. It had to be a short story or a novella. I began to think “outside the box”. I did not want to delve into too many technical aspects of space flights, nor did I want to populate the story with extraterrestrial characters. I wanted something creative, daring, and utterly humane. Suddenly *Space Oddity* came to mind..., and I wrote this story overnight.

This is obviously a fictional account of David Bowie's composing one of his most famous songs, but I did some research for the fictional part. All aspects of the first three chapters fell together almost by themselves, I only had to write it all down. Along the way I realized that I walked the same streets in Soho, and I lived in Bromley, accessed from Victoria Station, for 2 weeks in 2004, so I was a regular at Victoria Station, too. The pub I depicted was a beer hole I visited once, but it was probably in Greater Manchester where I lived between 2003 and 2010. And I saw many loaders, like "Major Tom", in my 7 years in England. After I submitted the story for the contest I decided to check when the first British person went to space. Turned out it was a woman, and her mission was mutually financed by the UK and the USSR, and it took place... on May 19th, 1991. 30 years after the first flight. "Majors" had to wait for a long time.

This is a story about dreams – and what breaks them. It is about love and poverty – the topics that Robert Burns was very much aware about. It is about inspiration and thirst for life. And it is about the Earth and space – for "*the whole space is about Earth.*"

Julia N. Shuvalova, January 8th, 2022

1

John was the last to leave. In the studio, where his friend was sitting on the floor, among pillows, guitars and sheets of paper, with his back on him, hung a heavy smell of cheap tobacco, in which they vainly tried to drown out despair. It was June 1969.

"Dave," he called softly.

The long-haired, skinny guy didn't turn around, but answered: "What do you want?"

John was uncomfortable. After all, he was just a guitarist, his job was to play music. But Dave composed it. He also sang and acted. John admired him, but now he felt sorry for him. He, John, will go home now, he doesn't need to prove anything, he'll just eat his dinner and go to bed.

"Maybe you should take a walk?"

"Maybe," Dave replied, still not turning around.

"Listen, no one meant to offend you," John walked across the room and sat by the window, opposite Dave. In the twilight that generously flooded the studio he noticed his friend's red eyes, but it was probably from tobacco. "Sorry, we smoked too much here." Dave waved him off, and John continued:

"Everyone just wants to do something already, you know. We play what no one listens to. You live by your music, but over there," he waved his hand into the London twilight, illuminated by a lantern, "nobody has even heard of Woodstock

or psychedelics. That's what the guys are saying: we need a song that the girls will listen to, like what the Beatles did. And then you can play whatever you want.”

Dave fell on his back with a loud groan.

"The Beatles can go to hell!" 'Play what you want' – no-one will let you play what you want if you start writing songs for girls! The Beatles know that very well, don't they?!"

Dave rolled over and buried his face in the pillow, and John heard faint sobs. He didn't know what to do, and it was awkward to leave now. The little finger suddenly began to itch, and John began to bite the burrs.

“Tony thinks I'm trying to hype on space. Like, everyone is waiting for the Apollo flight, and I want to get into the swing of things. He's an idiot: it's not about the Apollo, it's about me.” Dave propped himself up on the pillows and continued, wiping tears from his face, "You see, John, over there," he also pointed to the window, “it's not Woodstock alone that they know nothing about. They don't know about anything at all. They think only about how to earn money for food and clothes. London is now a bunch of freaks in the same rags. I'm so tired of this, John! How can you think about clothes when there is space all around you!?! Art is space, and music, poetry, cinema is space! ‘Odyssey’ does not get out of my head, Kubrick is a genius. On Portobello I found a record with Wagner, this is also space! But everyone wants The Monkeys. Yes, John, all that which I need is of no use to people THERE! And Hermie doesn't need it either! Parents

– they don't care at all, methinks. I'm tired, John, I'm tired of being the only one who needs me.”

“Come on, we all need you,” John shook his head. “No matter what Tony says, but tomorrow he will still come to the studio.” Looking thoughtfully into the translucent June evening, he continued, “One always wishes everything had been fine the day before. You should take a walk, this smoke will drive you nuts.”

“Maybe it's for the best,” Dave said. He was sitting cross-legged, with his long fingers wrapped around his face. John quietly left the studio.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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