

Valentina Fidelman



This is I in youth, in the institute [1950s]. I was 22, in my 3rd year, and I was pregnant. I was photographed in the institute.

We had such a wonderful photographer - Vladimir Volfovich, he liked to take pictures of my friend Maya and me. He worked in the institute.

After the war we lived in 74 Nevsky Avenue, on the 4th floor, opposite the cinema-theater "Òitan"15, the windows were facing it. There my student years have passed.

We all walked along Nevsky Avenue. I worked about one year at a factory. There were very good people there, and one engineer said: "Valya, you are so gifted, you should enter an institute".

I answered him: "It will be very difficult, because the war has just ended, it's 1947, lots of young people are eager to enter". I passed all entrance exams with excellent marks, however strange it may seem, and entered the Pediatric Institute, which I graduated from with specialty "pediatrician". Because I followed father's career...

At the preparatory courses in my institute in 1947 I got acquainted with my very good friend Maya Gross. I had an open dress, almost all my back open, and she wrote on my back (we were not allowed to talk at lectures): "What's your name?" Someone asked me: "Do you know, what is written on your back?" I said: "No, I don't". - "That girl asks, what is your name, she likes you so much". That's how our friendship began.

Maya was very beautiful. She had dark blue eyes, black curly hair, she was slim and tall. Now Maya is in Germany, in Cologne, living somewhere in the suburbs, with a park nearby and a lake, she writes that she is walking there.

She has found some Jewish friends. There is a synagogue there, which she visits. She writes about it in her letters. She left in 1999. But I personally do not want to go, after so many Jews died in the war, I consider it a crime, and I keep telling so to all my relatives, my cousins [Valentin and Feliks Zaretsky], who are in Germany.

I maintain that it is a crime against our nation to live in Germany. In spite of all the difficulties we encounter here... I frequently receive letters from Maya, I am going to answer her again closer to March 8, to congratulate her with our holidays. She is a wonderful person, from a good Jewish family.

In 1947 I was visiting my grandmother [Tamara] in the Caucasus. Once, when I had just come from a walk, I saw a boy - a Greek boy - who I met in the train. He vowed love, and I said: "All right, let's go to Terek, and if you swim across Terek in the evening, then I'll believe that you are really in love with me".

That's what kind of girl I was. He swam across Terek, I was very impressed, but when I came home to grandmother's house I ... stopped in the doorway. There was my Mum sitting there in the company of a young man, very handsome, blue-eyed, blond, very attractive, with a high forehead.

I was stuck there in the doorway and fell in love with him literally from the first glance. We had been dating for one year. His mother wanted us to get married. And he was a student of the Aviation Institute, and came to the Caucasus to have a rest in his Mum's home.

His mother, her name was Bratislava, knew my grandmother very well. Bratislava was a dressmaker and sewed for them. And that was how we met. We had an ordinary secular wedding. He was born in Donbass, but his family moved to another place when he was just a small boy.

He suffered from famine in childhood, it was in 1933, and there was something wrong with food supplies there. During the war they left for Frunze in Uzbekistan [evacuation]. At 16 years of age he finished the 9th and 10th grades of school as an external student and went to another town to enter an institute.

We got married in 1948. We had no place to live, our room in Nevsky Avenue was very small, and we rented apartments for almost ten years. Our family life was very difficult.

We got married not having an accommodation, we didn't even have a room, but we loved each other. He was born in 1927 like me, only he - in January, and I - in May. He was studying in Aviation Institute, he was a very capable, I would even say, a talented boy.

Because he was a very respectable and honest person, he was expelled from the 4th year of the institute. He voted against the director. The director was an awful man, he did not understand the students, there was a voting, and when he voted "against", he was "dismissed from the institute for ideological degeneration".

Those were difficult years. Then he entered correspondence department of Technological Institute and later graduated from the Technological Institute. He worked and studied at one and the same time. He had a good job, he worked as an engineer although he had no diploma at first, but he was very talented. He worked in Pavlív Street, where there was a secret defense factory, just with his specialty - operating airplanes and ships.

And, indeed, he could pursue a good professional career. At the age of 26 years he was already the chief of laboratory. He developed new planes, and his aircraft never had been in wrecks or catastrophes.

He was always away on business trips, but this could have been beneficial for our life. "Separation is the same for love, as wind is for fire, it blows out small love, but it heats up the big one!" and that's exactly the way it was with our love - he came from business trips, and our life began anew.

Only when our daughter turned 10, and our marriage was 12 years old, we had received a room. Later he worked in a huge institute near Smolny¹⁷. It was also a secret research institution, something to do with radio broadcasting.

When the director told him: "Fidelman, you are allotted an apartment", he answered: "No, not everyone in my laboratory has apartments, a room will be enough for me". And we were happy, that we received a room in Moscow Avenue.