

HOW TO BE RUSSIAN

Buy your bread from a store on the corner whose walls are mostly concrete
Whose smell is like yeast staying too long, whose people are not looking up
Don't look in the eyes of anyone while you pay with not enough currency for
Yesterday's bread & the thought that if you break this loaf into 34 pieces you may feed
Your family & the neighbor's several dinners for many days
Travel down to Red Square to get cigarettes under the bridge from the man who
Before the fall of Russia used to punch rivets in steel for twelve hours a day
But now stocks Dunhills (the most requested brand) & distinctly American tobaccos
For less discerning palates in less discerning shadow undergrounds with their
Silly mob passwords reflecting Western culture, boasting a first world new black market Mafia
Accepted as the elite class with their sable Mercedes 7-series & fine Italian suits
And that walk skipping one step with the left foot, stucco gait & shifty stride
Winters that come on like freezer burn with puffy, fur hats & wool jackets thick enough
To cover the stone souls & make sad faces hide under ski masks & earmuffs &
The silent children snuggling against their mothers thick thighs, hidden like Russian dolls
Crack apart the first layer of clothes & find child flower petals wilting in the snow
Wilting under the weight of extended families living in the tenement homes
On the spackled outskirts of austere tundras spread out over St. Petersburg
Drinking vodka like water, drinking water after vodka & using vodka to clean
The stains of oil-slick coffee off a husband's clothes after he spilled while stumbling
Down the stairs mumbling about USSR & the greatest of Mother countries, motherfuckers
Who fell in love with CNN images of a dying country spitting up blood after swallowing glass
Choking on the mirror-image of the simultaneous fall of the Cold War &
The Red Curtain & the devaluation of a country's money like their spirit & now confined to
A few ornate buildings sitting in an immense square of wandering lust & fragments of conversation
Which drop onto the blue brick ground & dissolve into the cold air never to be conjoined again
Artifice of Byzantine culture smashed away coldly, run over by government re-imaging itself
In the angry winters of Siberia, oil flows over frozen lakes & across wastelands uninhabitable
Sick blood of industrialization then privatization then the desire of comrades to make sweetheart deals
To strip-mine a countryside already plagued by the Ural Mountains insistence that
People who live here far from the industry of undermarkets spend days warming themselves
By fires lit in damaged coal ovens which alternately cook food & warm people
Remember nuclear blasts singeing the farmlands around Chernobyl & livestock left cell-broken
Rotten on the inside from microwave ovens & plutonium breaking down into slush
No meat on the shelves of country stores, no storage of rations or substance
Farms of potatoes used to make everything: batter, bread, alcohol, ammonia
Hiding potatoes under the bed & out in muddy ground, in children's closets
Telling mythology of princesses taking potatoes to market, selling them for love
A sell-out agricultural effort designed to keep low-income low & fill the shot glasses
Of elite businessmen & travelers who have no time to buy goods & services in
The former Soviet Union, everything past & past tense & colored gray & celebrated brown
I'm a little bit Russian, my grandmother told me that her parents were from a little town
That bought its groceries out of carts hauled by huge oxen & washed in the river
They filtered water over twenty feet of rocks smoothed making a crick-crack sound as they banged
Without reorganizing just slight moves & slight sounds yielding crystals
A town I will never know, the royalty of Socialism, the meaning of circles & spires
That scissor the skyline providing blankets of quiet laying over a city pumping slow blood
Forced to rebuild so many times that they shouldn't bother creating anymore forward motion
But they do, we do & you will be proud again & you will be Russian



АДАМ БРЕССОН

Adam Bresson believes in magical, mystical worlds of wonder as seen through a young child's eyes. Also, he hosts ReallyBIGShow (www.reallybigshow.org) at the UnUrban Coffeehouse each and every Wednesday night. Adam started ReallyBIGShow two long, long years ago. ReallyBIGShow publishes a yearly Anthology of poets and now offers a weekly podcast of live performances, put together by Adam. Adam's funny stuff has been featured in several humor magazines, or so their title's say. His poetry has been featured in some print publications. His speeches and escapades to crowds of cunning computer hackers can be seen online at www.defcon.org Please note, Adam has never done any drugs, smoked a cigarette or posed nude for cash. He's kind of a square in a circle world. Say hello to him and you might go, "Oh, THAT Adam." Now, for the moral of the story: fight for what you believe in and do the right thing.

