

SAMSON GELKHVIDZE

**PAIN DEALERS
(Storybook)**



Tbilisi - 2022

SAMSON GELKHVIDZE

PAIN DEALERS
(Storybook)

Tbilisi
2022

UDC (უკ) 821.353.1-32
G-34

© Samson Gelkhvidze, 2022

ISBN 978-9941-8-4430-0

Table of Contents

FORGIVE ME TAMARA	4
ALL WILL PASS	10
Better to be a victim than an executioner.....	10
SMOG WOMAN.....	15
WANDERING.....	20
SO SIMPLE.....	25
FUGITIVE	53
VERONICA	66
PAIN DEALERS.....	71
ORGASM.....	84
SHOUT, MY FRIEND, SHOUT, PLEASE, WHO WILL HEAR	88
“PAIN MERCHANTS”	119

PAIN DEALERS (Storybook)

FORGIVE ME TAMARA

Coughing, moving with difficulty around the room, almost spilling a cup of hot tea, almost without joy reaching the crumpled bed, Sidamon put the cup on the nightstand, fell into bed and screamed from the unexpected pain that shot through his lower back.

“Oh God, this will end someday,” he thought wistfully.

The head was splitting into pieces, the body was thrown into heat, then into cold, the sides, swollen from prolonged lying, were moaning, begging for mercy.

He didn't move. With his eyes closed, he mentally produced an informative express flight of the body, listening to the complaints of each organ.

“Well, thanks for that,” he concluded, finishing his self-examination, “it could have been worse.

Yes, he really became helpless, self-intolerant at moments when his health was clearly shaky and failing.

Cretin, you idiot! In the pursuit of health, you lose it, you will never learn this simple truth, which you once managed to accidentally discover.

A hand floated in the darkness over the bedside table, and before the tabletop switch was turned on, there was a ringing noise of falling potion bottles. They were accompanied by an acrid and prolonged cough.

“Oh Lord,” Sidamon pleaded, “have pity.

He began to pick up medicines, but, immediately resigning himself to what had happened, abandoned the idea.

- So, therefore, it is necessary, - I thought, - at least at least a little space has been vacated.

Like smoke from Aladdin's lamp, steam rose from the cup.

- And all this energy is enough to raise one building structure to at least the fifth floor,

- he calculated in his mind - but not enough to cure himself.

He fixed twenty-three thirty on the clock and again stared at the floor.

Medicines between low stacks of books, large brown worn-out chusts, a radiogram, a telephone set hiding behind it, and, finally, dust flakes under a massive writing desk merged and merged with the general chaos that had long established itself in his room and in the house. For a long time he could not find

a thermometer and a syringe, although he was not going to use either one or the other now.

- I left the syringe on the gas, and the thermometer ... To catch a cold to such an extent, in the summer! Yes to this...

The cough shook him again.

Fumbling behind his back, he felt for the plug of the electric heating pad and on the first try hit it in the plug. But, alas, this did not cause him any other desire than to quickly move the touch switch of the electrical appliance to mark three.

- It's my own fault

- Sidamon did not let up, - and it will be worse further.

The phone rang.

- Hello. Is this a boiler room?

- was heard in the receiver in response to his reluctant "hello".

He glanced around the room again, and was suddenly seized with inexplicable amusement.

- No, it's more like a laundry room than a boiler room!

"I don't care for jokes," a male voice said rudely.

"Me too," Sidamon sighed. "Listen, buddy, could you give me a couple of minutes?"

"I don't care about empty talk! Tu-tu-tu, the connection was broken.

"It's always like this, and no one cares about you."

Sidamon had eighteen years of study and several years of work experience behind him. At school, he was never left for the second year of study, and at work he did not receive any reproaches and remarks. Everywhere and everywhere he was almost exemplary and moderately modest. Time passed through and past him in order. Many, if not all, of those around him seemed to be his friends. But he somehow missed everyone, bringing communication to "hello and goodbye" with rare chance meetings.

- It seems that he didn't offend anyone ... and they didn't offend me, - Sidamon was annoyed, - on the contrary, they stood for each other with their breasts, and now you can only find out belated news about them.

"One died," he sighed, "the other moved, the third got married, the fourth ...

"But you stayed like that, Sid."

amon, neither here nor there, alone in a lonely environment, in this cold and gloomy stone kingdom.

- Thank God, parents, sister and brother are alive ... They have families, worries.

It's time for you to start a family, - an inner voice joined.

“I know,” Sidamon agreed with him, “that’s just what you’ve been saying all these last years. But where the hell were you before, when you dismissed all your best friends right and left, trusting them to others? Why didn't you ever stop and ask me that question? No, you were waiting for this very day to reproach me for what I am innocent of.

“Tamara, my poor Tamara, it’s only now that every gesture of yours, an act aimed at making it dawn on me, reaches me. Forgive me, Tamara, forgive me for my blindness. That evening, tired of unsuccessful attempts, confused, irritated, you left me. And now I see what I did not see then - your sad smile of farewell to the last hope. I heard that you are married and have two children, that you moved to live in some distant city.

- In which?

I don't know, I didn't care.

- Why?

- Late.

“But I once loved you, didn’t I?”

- Loved? No, I didn't fall in love.

- Well, well, what then is our friendship?

“I don’t know, don’t torment me, Tamara, it doesn’t matter anymore.

“I don’t believe that you don’t want to at least see me again... someday.”

“Unfortunately, at least not now. Well, in general, out of curiosity, to be honest ... I don’t know, no. Now this is no longer necessary, Tamara.

“Curiosity in love is a bad mask.

“You're out of your mind,” he cried, and the cough seized him again with its powerful chain. “I’m sorry, it's not your fault, it's all my fault.

Life has pursued me always and everywhere, and it seems that now it has caught up with me. And will he let him out of his trap so easily? And for what, to start chasing me again. No, I am too insignificant for her, and, alas, she is much higher than me in experience and knowledge. Besides, there’s nowhere for me to run now, and, I must admit, there’s no need to run away. Anything, Tamara, happened. Both women and men are drunk, and I have already learned a lot. I began to forget a lot, even my treasury - childhood. But I couldn't forget you, forget your face, Tamara.

On that warm spring evening, hiding from the pouring rain, leaning close to me, you whispered something, getting wet, shuddering from the cold, talking, talking. Having you by my side, I, absurd, was thinking about something else, about what had already been discovered by scientists, about a gray experiment coming up in a chemical laboratory. Of course, nothing was lost for nothing, now

I know which of the medicines will harm me less, but if this is so, I still hurt myself a lot in my life, Tamara, I lost you. Nor did your naive kiss on my unshaven and rough cheek wake me up when I walked you home. What did you then find in me, blind, Tamara? In appearance, perhaps, you were not Queen Tamara, but your soul ... Alas, then I did not go further than appearance ... He indulged in oblivion. Woke up. I wonder what she is now? He picked up the speedo from the floor, turned it on, and glided along different bands in search of his favorite melodies, tormented himself with memories of the recent past for a long time.

“They ruined all the programs,” he stated with displeasure. “Oh my head,” he whimpered, bringing a cup of cold tea to his lips.

The phone rang.

A little later, Maya's sad voice.

- Why didn't you come to Archil's today? After all, you promised.

- I couldn't.

- You have a hoarse voice, - Maya was alarmed, - are you unwell?

- No, everything is okay.

- Don't lie, please.

- Well, I caught a little cold.

- The temperature is?

“Oh, my God, no, no.

- Why are you yelling at me?

“Because it's already late, I'm tired and I want to sleep.

- Do you want me to come to you now?

No, Maya, no.

“You don't love me anymore,” Maya's voice became more and more despondent.

“I love you, Maya, I love you more than anyone.”

- Truth?

- Well, of course.

- Well then...

- Well, then - it will be tomorrow, agreed? - Sidamon interrupted.

“Okay,” Maya agreed, “I'll call you tomorrow.

- No, I'll call you myself.

- Do you have someone there?

“What nonsense, I have no one but you, and you know it very well.

Sidamon felt that he was not lying to Maya and this made him happy.

- I love you very much, but now I can't see you, I'm terribly sleepy.

- Well, well, - Maya happily agreed, - then see you tomorrow.
- Yeah, see you tomorrow.
- Kisses.
- I also.

Tu-tu-tu...

Oh, those women! With admiration, they accept their signature dish “I love you” from any man at any time of the day and in any form, even from those who are not loved. They like how famously they hit men. And they don’t think about the fact that, getting this dish from their beloved men, they themselves are defeated.

- Well, that's enough, to hell with it! Now sleep and only sleep.

He was no longer tormented by the light of the night lamp and importunate self-willed thoughts. He slowly sank into the world of sleep. In an embrace with a ticking alarm clock, he moved farther and farther away from himself along a wide, clear road, somewhere beyond the horizon, losing the features of a dream.

In a dream, the phone rang, in a dream, “hello” was said.

- Hello, Sidamon, dear, hello! Hello, can you hear me shh? - an alarming female voice was heard in the tube.

“I hear,” Sidamon muttered indifferently.

- Sidamon, can you hear me? Marina is talking to you. I'm calling from the airport. We were stopped here in transit. Our flight leaves in an hour.

What is Marina?

- Classmate, remember!

- I don't know any Marina! And in general, stop worrying everyone, it's already midnight.

He hung up the phone in annoyance.

- Idiot! You see, she is Marina and I am Sidamon. Well, now what of that.

He again began to sink into drowsiness, he dreamed of the voice of a certain Marina who called him. And suddenly something stirred him, squeezed his heart, doubts overpowered him, his voice seemed familiar and close.

- Can not be.
- But why then did she call herself Marina?
- And in general, no Marina studied with me.

But this voice?

“Anyway, you can't get to the airport in an hour. And generally some nonsense.

He turned on the nightlight, raised himself on his elbows, coughed.

- Oh my head, where are you? All this is a lie and provoking the patient.

He took a white pill with his lips and washed it down with the rest of the tea. It helped take my mind off my mind for a second.

“The medicine is washed down with plain water,” the instruction flashed through my head.

“I know,” he snapped at himself, turning off the nightlight.

- All this is nonsense, terrible nightly nonsense. Cursed head, before morning it will split into a hundred pieces.

He turned on his side, pushed a pillow under his head, wished himself good night and sweet sleep as usual.

A couple of minutes later, a tall, thin man in a hat and raincoat came out of the entrance of Sidamon, from under whose collar a dark scarf was emerging. He looked at the starry sky and found the moon without difficulty.

“Today is a new moon,” he thought, “they say how you meet a week, so you will spend it.

Pulling up his collar and leaning on a stick in his right hand, the man walked slowly down the low, gentle steps.

His dry cough broke the stillness of the night less and less.

01.09.1984

ALL WILL PASS

Better to be a victim than an executioner

A.P. Chekhov

- No, I can't take it anymore, I don't have the strength to carry this load. I had suffered from this condition before, but I did not understand what it came from.

- And now?

Now I suffer doubly. It turns out that everything that happens to me, around me, is an objective reality. Now I understand that this is how it should be.

Everything brings and takes away time!

- That's it! Objective reality - it brings me sadness, sadness and longing. She pushed such a heavy stone on my soul that it becomes more and more difficult to carry it every time.

"You're not the only one in this position, Nick.

- Wait, Salomka, don't go. Let's talk a little.

- I have to go.

- Oh please.

"That won't make it any easier.

It's like the ground is slipping out from under your feet. The heart shudders, as in an airplane from sudden changes, and feels sick, as after a heavy shaking.

"It's too early for you to allow such feelings, Nick. You are still young. All the best is ahead of you, trust me.

- Like the worst. HM! I bet you are deceiving me, just as you were deceived in your time.

Salome smoked. She was sitting in her coat and was ready to get up and leave as soon as Nick let her go.

However, Nick was not the only one holding her back. She had to go for a long time, but her legs did not obey.

- How we, people, are used to lying to each other, - continued Nick. - Even in good deeds, sometimes we can't do without a lie.

Salome smoked "her life" with deep puffs, filling her lungs with her "aroma". Warm, white, light smoke fell on the soul with cold, pain, black smog and anxiety from a still kind of unfamiliar, incomprehensible fatigue.

"Get busy, Nick," Salome advised, putting out her cigarette on a glass ashtray, with such heaviness, sigh and pain that Nick became even gloomier.

"The devil knows," he thought, "just some kind of dark kingdom.

“Get busy, and everything will pass,” Salome repeated, rising from her chair. Reluctantly, unhurriedly, she went to the door, as if she felt and with quivering interest she was waiting for something vaguely guessed and mysterious from Nick. She struggled to quietly draw out of him words that he had never spoken to her, but which she saw behind his soul.

Nick's strong hand stopped her movement.

“Wait, I won't make up my mind, understand.

Nick's heart jumped and fluttered again.

“What are you talking about,” Salome inquired, as if not guessing.

They looked into each other's faces.

– What are you looking at?

- Don't you do the same?

Nick was sad again.

The frequent and major defeats that happened in his life taught him to come to terms not only with his bad luck, but also with his fears and fears, he even began to notice in himself at times that joyful curiosity that he experienced even when he had just put himself in the position of the defeated, beaten, injured.

He unclenched his hands and slowly returned to the window. He was pushed there not by his own indecision, but by the game of Salome, which she so skillfully led. Great life experience in such situations was, of course, on her side, and she used it. In the depths of her soul, she even enjoyed, flaunted her superiority.

He couldn't figure it out in any way - either she didn't understand him, or she understood and choked her victim, brought her to the last breath, finally tried to open the curtain between their relationship, destroy the alternativeness, uncertainty, vagueness, abstractness and comicality of contacting with another representative of the sex to which she was clearly unfriendly.

Nick had no way out, he had to tell her, otherwise the unsaid could shatter him from the inside.

“I thought about you all the time I was away,” he decided in a low voice to start.

Salome took a breath and pretended that this was news to her.

“Don't you see, don't you feel anything? Nick lashed out at her in annoyance.

– And you yourself? You also don't feel or understand anything, ”Salome responded just as nervously.

- So what's the deal?

– And in what?

A pause separated them again.

Nick turned away from her gaze, stared at the dark waters of the river that flowed through the very center of the city, and at the unflooded islands in its channel.

“I can’t do this anymore,” Nick groaned plaintively and, unable to say anything more, hurriedly left the room.

For a long time he stood silently outside the door, trying to calm the tears that were rising to his eyes.

My heart was heavy, but still warm. For a long time he could not really understand - were these happy moments of bad weather or rainy moments of happiness?

What are you thinking, Nick? - building an expression of nothing guilty and not understanding what is happening between them, Salome came out after him. ! And how could such a thing come to your mind.

But who in the world managed to drown out the feelings that Nick was now experiencing with didactic amazement.

Salome's attempt ended in failure, Nick parried it easily.

- That's it, Salomka, I've arrived!

“You can destroy our friendship and our bright and pure feelings and relationships,” Salome warned him.

- I can not bear what is happening to me through your and not through your fault.

Don't talk about your feelings, remember that. Their m

They carry the olcha within themselves,” Salome said with a sigh. “But you are too young and you don’t understand much.

- So, everything that has been with us all this time is a fiction?

- What happened?

- How? Nothing?

- Nothing.

It was a blow. All these last years he distinctly felt how their feelings subtly, tenderly and imperceptibly caressed and amused each other.

And the feeling of this feeling gave him bliss, experienced for the first time. He also felt how these feelings slowly and gradually filled the bowl of his feelings to the very brim.

No physical or biological bliss could come close or compare to this bliss. He understood, and that the process of filling the cup of feelings is far from endless, that some day or a moment will come when this cup will overflow and something will happen that he could not yet imagine, but that did not bother him then.

Events unfolded with a gradual involvement in the sphere of sensual relations, and he answered himself then: "What will be, will be."

"It's clear that I'm disgusting to you, and everything that seemed to me feeling for me was something like pity, but in that case, save it for yourself, you will need it for the future," Nick said offensively, and like a stone fell from his soul.

The score was clearly not in his favor, he was losing to her and thereby winning from her. He always succeeded in losing games, he felt himself in them like a fish in water, and this gave him pleasure.

"I treat you quite well, and appreciate you very much," Salome said affirmatively.

- Thank you very much and thank you!

- You're forgetting!

It was like being doused with cold water.

"Okay, sorry, I didn't say anything. In the end, it is much easier to imagine than the fact that nothing happened. "Everything that was with me was not with me. All that was - it was not, but maybe it will be ... "

I have to go, Nick! Calm down. Believe me, everything will pass, - Salome again resorted to a lot of life experience, which gave her a permanent advantage over Nick.

- Of course, if you consider that life also passes.

Nick didn't hear anything else.

Unable to excuse herself any longer, Salome disappeared through the door. That day, she left work two hours earlier than usual. The working day ended at six in the evening.

- Everything is logical, - Nick thought, - the practice and experience of my past are repeated.

"Don't try to help yourself, dummy, or it will get worse." Indeed, smart people say - carry your cross and believe. And yet, no matter what happens, I will not change my feelings for you, - Nick gloated, - I will treat you as before, that's all. And I will also perceive you as no one, no one, ever.

After all, my feelings for you belong to me too. And the last even more.

Today I realized that you will never be mine. My feelings for you will be long, alive until then, as long as I live, for that which had no beginning cannot have an end. I am grateful to fate for not giving me your love and you, and not only you. She still lacked a lot, she deprived me of a lot, she rewarded me with even more. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything. And offended only for what gave me - Life.

It was another, one of the many former defeats of Nick, and a brewing link in the future.

“To live among nature is much easier than among people,” he thought.

People can hurt more than nature. He considered bodily pain much more tolerable than mental pain.

He recalled the words he once heard in response to his complaints: “No, restless souls will not find rest, everywhere is cramped. Everything is looking for perfection, not suspecting that perfection is completion, and completion, perhaps, is the outcome of another beginning, but alas, no longer earthly.

So, suffer, Nick, while you are alive, pay for your life with pain. Suffer yourself, but do not torment others, Nick's inner voice reassured him.

- Do not look for peace in this world for your soul, Nick.

- I'm not looking for him! I'm just in pain and I'm trying to heal my wound.

“Well, come on,” his inner voice agreed, “just remember that by calming her down, you will more and more tease and annoy her.

- Well, then kill me, why do you torment me like that.

- Everyone is his own best servant!

“I see, you are taking advantage of my weakness. But there must be a time when I decide to do that too.

- Everything has its time!

- It seems that we have come to something in common and let's end this today.

- Your will!

A purple-red sunset hovered over the horizon, as if resisting time, pulling it along into the abyss of circulation and movement.

“It's bad when a person has no faith, but it's worse when this disbelief in oneself turns into the certainty of one's eternal defeat,” Nick thought, “life is violence, and gloating, and savagery.

One another, another third, and off you go. I'm wrong, maybe. But who will refute me? And if he refutes, he will not understand. And whoever does not understand me will understand absolutely nothing or almost nothing in life.

What is life? Test, punishment or reward?

15/16.02.1987

SMOG WOMAN

- Whoever has drunk a sip from the cup of Hegel's dialectic cannot give up the desire to drink it to the bottom. Um, dialectic is really good. You don't get attached to anything or anyone. Everything is momentary, beyond absoluteness and ideality. Sang with dialectics and relativity. Why is philosophy not taught from an early age?

Rings of snow-white smoke soared smoothly upwards, losing shape and controllability with height, until they spread and dissolved in the silence enclosed in four walls.

- Yes, you won once again, dialectic, and besides, history is your ally.

"But, forgive me, I am in love with metaphysics, for which I am now paying. But, even if I loved you, all the same, retribution could not be avoided. I'm not the first, I'm not the last. How is Dante? And I, like everyone else, did not escape retribution.

Smog maliciously penetrated through the respiratory tract into the lungs, burning and charring on its way not only that which supported life, but also the heaviness that hung somewhere, deep in the chest, over the organ, in close connection with which the consciousness was now, which, in addition to the will and desire of the owner, every now and then extracted from the past separate, carried away by time, fragments.

Everything is logical, everything is clear. All life, taken together, is a long chain of cause and effect relationships. The mind understands everything, only the heart refuses to accept or understand it all.

Concepts are foreign to him. Can you tell your heart? However, Count Cagliostro succeeded in this as well.

Well, God be with him, with the past.

This thought was interrupted by a sharp, dry cough, which he barely got rid of.

—God, how can one live with dialectics? Better with a drunk! Yes, but how to live without dialectics? After all, metaphysics will bury?! Where is the beginning? In the end? Or does the end come from the beginning?

Empty thoughts, empty speeches, empty passions, empty sadness, empty life!

- What have I done wrong before life? Why does she beat me and punish me?

Matter is objective, intelligent, hell yes, but are intelligence, reality and objectivity themselves intelligent? And if so, then where, from what, from whom cruelty and injustice?

Thin long fingers gently clung to the glass ashtray, extinguishing the cigarette butt on its wall.

- Well, dirty! I wonder what she really is?

Against the background of daylight, the chaotic movement of light puffs of tobacco smoke was barely distinguishable. The moment seemed to stop, and time slowed down.

The door opened slightly, and the figure of a thin woman clearly floated out of the smog.

Smog woman.

Besotted by those around her, she, as if in shock, like a wounded bird, barely hobbled, headed into the dark depths of the corridor. Her figure was enviably slender, but her movements were wrong and uncertain.

"If you don't know the cause, you don't understand the effect!" And vice versa. No one is to blame for what is happening in the outside world, but at the same time, everyone is guilty of this. And to blame, to condemn, to justify, to defend is just as well as unfair.

"Poor thing, you are not so bad as you look or appear.

Turning the washed ashtray in the light caught her smile in the playful rays.

"If water were all-powerful..."

Thoughts were interrupted by a strange rustle from the dark depths of the corridor. For a moment, fear gripped my soul. The hand squeezed the ashtray with all its might.

"Ha-ah-ah-ah," a voice shot piercingly into the invisible and unknown. The source of the rustle subsided for a moment, hid, and suddenly, with increasing speed and power of sound, slipped at the woman's feet. It was possible to catch its outlines at the moment of a flash in the bright, now far end of the corridor. It was a cat.

"I wonder which one of us was more frightened?"

Following the clatter of the shutter, the window swung open.

A light cool breeze blew over the woman, then over the papers, one by one picking up the sheets from the table and carrying them across the expanses of the room prison. The woman caught them on the fly, and when her hands flew up, the membranes of the blouse were exposed and stretched, tying the elbows to the body and similar to duck interdigital clutches. It seemed that she artificially endowed herself with what nature subtracted from her. In pursuit of flying leaves, she threw back her head, again stretched her arms forward. It wasn't a woman, no, it was a huge bird that flapped its wings once, twice, three times... ran faster, faster, leaned up and forward, lifted heavily off the ground and

surrendered itself to the clear and clear sky. Having circled the gulls soaring in a circle, she climbed alone.

The wind shook the tops of the trees. Enchanted firs mysteriously waved their broad, dense branches after the flying bird.

A large flock of crows raced against the wind.

The wind of these places has adopted the habit of picking up everything, bringing it and taking it away. Anyone who knew his language and listened to him could penetrate his passions and feelings.

Somewhere in the distance, in a deserted and waterless hot desert, a large caravan of camels was walking. The long chain obediently and silently stretched along the hot golden sand. Like a snake crawling towards its target. The wind tossed and whirled the sand, falling asleep to the eyes, worsening visibility, concealing the boundless expanse.

The wind broke, flew away from the sands, walked along the surface of the seas and oceans, breaking it, raising waves into millions of cubic meters of water. His unbridledness, outrage

, shamelessness had no boundaries, no wit.

“Everything in the world is subject to me,” he whistled everywhere, rushing along a furious path. Everything exists for me, in my feelings. All the fruit of my feelings. For what is outside of me is not for me and therefore loses its meaning. It's clear as God's day. And this is as clear as two times two is four. The question, fortunately, is who is in power at a given moment in a given space, as Humpty Dumpty once said.

- I ... I am now the ruler here, - the wind was growing stronger, its strength was coming, the ferocity was gaining momentum, accompanied by revelry, howling and chaos.

“Now is my time, and no one can stop me from enjoying it to the fullest. I am everywhere, I am omnipotent, omnipresent and rebellious!

The wavy slate was torn from the roof of the house, carried away and smashed to smithereens on the ground.

The windows were held on latch, the door opened a crack. The room was calm and quiet. The fresh air imprisoned in it was imbued with a certain humility. Everything seemed to freeze.

Only a thin hand ran a ballpoint pen over snow-white sheets of paper with long fingers, leaving a fancy ligature.

The remaining cigarette and a couple of matches inspired hope and consolation on the way to the future, which lay among the numerous notebooks, books and albums spread out on the three tables of the room.

"No, it doesn't fit, not at all. I write in a completely different way than I feel, although, perhaps, about that. What then is the point of writing? Or is it all meaning in the absence of meaning?"

A hand reached for a cigarette.

- No, the last one, let it stay for now. Where is your obsession, Anna? Call Mike? Although, wow, they are not here now, because yesterday I gave them the invitation of the guys, but I didn't go myself. No one welcomes me so cordially, and nowhere do I find such a shelter for myself as in solitude.

Her eyes went back to the window.

She had not felt as empty as she did now for a long time, involuntarily got up, went to a tall cabinet in the left corner of the room adjacent to her table, removed a mirror from a nail driven into its side wall and placed it in front of her.

Are we getting old, Anna?

Wrinkles conquered the skin of her face.

Despite thinness, the chin sagged and doubled. Gray hair crept into the base of her dyed hair.

- I need to paint, and my lips are chapped.

She ran her index finger over her lower lip several times, reached out her hand to her purse, and covered the crevices and cracks with lipstick.

- I won't go to the academic secretary on Monday. Nothing to go with. It turns out not what I want. Although he might like it. Mediocrity in science is not at all the same as mediocrity in art. Not only can they not understand and not recognize, you can also do great harm to yourself and others. As you approach the final chord, you start to dislike the first one. You have to start all over again, and sometimes it seems that there is no end to this. All your life study, suffer and languish. Nature is unequivocal and insistent in its demands on society. "I only want some of you, it doesn't matter who." That's where it all starts. This is where it ends.

The phone rang in the next room. Anna did not move for a long time, then decided to answer. She went to the PC point, opened the door ajar and, taking the keys, went to the ringing telephone. At the door she heard the last call.

- I'm late. How late have I been in my life?! Maybe mostly because she was in a hurry?! How is it now, huh?!

Outside the windows, two orange-billed thrushes, teasing each other, could hardly be distinguished on the branches of the spruce.

Usually they started the morning with songs, and by the evening they gradually became furious and moved on to serious battles.

The door of the room opened. In the evening twilight, you could barely see the smog woman.

04.05.1987

WANDERING

The chase seemed to go on for an eternity. Twilight and obstacles, which every now and then had to come across, made running more and more difficult. Here and there a group of submachine gunners, several at a time, in black overalls, appeared from around the corner whenever it seemed that they had managed to escape from them. As soon as the fugitive was in their field of vision, they launched long bursts of machine guns.

There were misses and hits.

It was both painful and scary. But fear, perhaps, dominated both the pain and everything.

"Well, thank God," the fugitive pleaded hopefully, picking up a machine gun thrown by one of his pursuers, "now I'll show you, striped devils, where the crayfish hibernate!"

The very first meeting with the attackers revealed the inferiority of the weapons found.

"Damn it, it seems to be the same as theirs, and it shoots, sometimes even hits, and does not mow down the bloodsuckers. Are they immortal, or what? - I had to think with annoyance. "Surely this chase must ever end?"

A light touch followed, with which all hope of liberation was associated.

The touch was repeated.

"Wake up," said a soft female voice.

I had to open my eyes already in the light.

The underpants slipped from the hips as if on their own, without coercion. A woman's hand passed several times over the bare part of the body. The unbuttoned bottom button of the dressing gown exposed her white, smooth, slender legs almost to the very hips.

The sharp contrast between what happened and the events being experienced seemed to transfer everything from reality to a dream.

A little later, a sharp tingling sensation was felt, accompanied by an intermittent scream.

- Don't, no! Do it elsewhere.

- Okay, calm down.

A second tingle followed.

The pain was more tolerable.

- Everyone, calm down! You are free until tomorrow morning.

Through the pain of the eyes carried out a light gait of a roll. Then the light went out.

- Wow, what beautiful legs this yoke has! - consciousness faded in a dream.

Then there was morning. Behind him is the already familiar gait.

Nice smile. And after the gentle "good morning" again familiar tingling.

The eyes no longer followed the walk, but tried to keep up with the thoughts. The purulent furuncle near the cervical vertebra noticeably decreased in size.

For some reason, only Guram was struck down by tea drinking with surrogate honey at work.

“Here it is, retribution for life and for your valiant work. The needles bend, damn it. One of two things: either they or the nurse are not suitable. Perhaps the third: they do not know how to stab. In any case, it's not easy.

- And try to say that they do not know how to stab! They'll just go on the attack, they say, you strain your muscles yourself, and this causes pain.

To whom will you prove it!

- Well, Guram, does it hurt? - the neighbor in the bed, elderly Abo, noticed with a malicious smile.

“Listen, Guram, how can you not understand that when you are pricked, you need to relax,” young Beso shrugged.

“Here they are against me,” Guram thought, “I just didn't have enough of them. If only Beso had kept quiet. Only thirty-one, and for the second time they open the stomach. And everything from booze, from horse doses. Drunkard! Oh, yes, let them say what they want, what do I care!

Outside the windows, tall poplars gently swayed their tops. Light gray clouds rushed across the sunless, gloomy sky. This was all that could be seen lying in bed, except for perhaps a corner of a small hospital ward.

Beso again launched into his vain heresy about the past, associated with constant, uninterrupted drinking and subsequent debauchery resulting from them. And all those present in the ward, as every time, plunged into the vicissitudes of his adventures.

- Everything is logical and true, - thought Guram, distracting himself from the boring story of Beso, - it should have happened anyway, sooner or later! Sadly, my fears came true.

The terrible warning, realized and discovered by Guram in his mind, acted, as it seemed to him, without fail, to a greater or lesser extent everywhere, everything turned out to be subjectivity, the objectivity of which was expressed in one way or another in the postulate that “social old age inevitably leads to biological old age, even at a young physical age.”

Social death leads to biological death.

- The world, full of mysteries and contradictions, prepares for those who want to know its essence through the fusion of the sensual and the rational, it brings harm, which seems to be endowed and stuffed with any good.

"Knowledge does not always help, sometimes it is burdensome..."

Guram realized this not so long ago, and whenever he retired with incoming thoughts, he was overcome by anger and anger. Among the remembered instructions of the past, childhood and youth, he never heard the warning: "Beware of knowledge." Although he was grateful for what he managed to realize and understand in this world.

He repeatedly lost and again found the path that he walked through his life. After the last loss, he seemed to be lost for a long time, wandered, as it seemed to him, into a dead end, did not know how to get out of it, and could not do anything.

He never knew where he was going. And you know, it is said: who does not know where he is going, he will go the farthest! - Beso explained.

"Thank God," Guram thought hopefully.

Managed to hear from a drunkard at least one clever phrase.

True, not quite and not always. When you don't know where you are going, or even when you know, you often think and stop. Hands do not rise, and legs do not move.

But motion is the mode of existence of matter. Physical movement, mental movement. And it is in their jointness that this movement is felt.

If a person exists as a common biological and social, then it becomes clear why, without any indicated side, a person does not exist at all.

- Yes, this is a passive position, - Guram agreed with himself, - otherwise I would not be here now.

"Hmm," he chuckled. "Listen to your father, the point is to change yourself. And that a person cannot change otherwise than through his being, he does not even suspect. Philosophy is needed by many only in order to brush it aside. Did you need it to get here? - Guram caught himself in contradiction.

The barmaid came in and invited the patients to dinner.

- Live your whole life as your parents want! Always and in everything, as they want. The romance is good, of course. And now a new ultimatum - as soon as you get better, we'll marry. I wonder how and on whom? And they don't care much, even on Baba Yaga. Yes, they went...

Man is born into slavery. It lives and dies in it. Relativity difference. Some more, some less. It is also true that the desired comes true in exceptional cases.

Slave man. Someone or something. It seems to be a difference, but the essence is unchanged. Happy is he who does not suspect this. Only in this lies the true happiness of a person ?! And the one who did not feel it and did not experience it does not know.

“Like Marx,” thought Guram. “The desire of one collides with the numerous aspirations of others, and the result is something that no one wanted. Some survive, the other breaks down once, twice, a third ... and ultimately social death. And it leads to inevitable biological death. A philosophy of pessimism and despair? No - one of the realities of that totality of objective facets that make up human life with no less severe and cruel laws than the life of nature.

- When you didn't hear, didn't see, didn't feel, didn't ... then you don't know!

A tall, thin old man in hospital pajamas, bearded and pale-faced, squeezed into the ward, barely moving with the help of a stick. A real walking scarecrow.

“Well, Abo,” Beso asked him with a mocking smile, “did you take a photo with a nurse?”

- He took off, but what's the point, the stomach hurts again.

“So you have back pain.

- Oh, leave me alone, do you have anything to do, no! O Allah! the old man muttered.

“Leave him alone, Beso,” reasoned his wife, who nursed her alcoholic husband day and night, trying to knock out a terrible illness from him with the help of doctors and blackcurrant tea.

- Yes, what are you really, and you can't joke! - Beso was indignant.

You see, your jokes are unpleasant to him.

“Why do I need this X-ray of the lower back, if my stomach is killing me!” meanwhile the old man muttered to himself.

“So, Uncle Abo,” Beso started up in a new circle, “I remember there was a case in our village ...

Hypocrisy, cynicism and self-satisfaction of one and humility and obedience of the others again reigned in the hospital ward.

- How happy and at the same time unhappy are people like Beso, - thought Guram, - how easy it is for him to give a damn about those around him, to interrupt, to shout over them. With what perseverance he draws them into primitive stories about his mediocre past.

Outside the window, up against the current of the river flowing through the city, a huge flock of wild ducks flew in a triangular wedge.

“Interesting,” thought Guram, “probably their leader is just like Beso. Yes, of course, with such a leader ...

“Nature does not harm itself or man, it is intended to serve him, while this man is capable of harming himself, others, and nature.

– What is it, imperfection, irrationality, inability, or simply ignorance of the meaning and purpose of life?

The more and longer I had to listen involuntarily to the outpourings of Beso, the faster Guram was carried away into a happy past. And now it was already difficult for him to determine what lulled him to sleep, whether it was Beso's stories, or a happy memory of the past, or maybe both?!

Life in the hospital complex was in full swing. Some patients were discharged, others only arrived. Cars kept leaving and driving into the yard.

To the song thrushes, it was no different from other parts of the vast city.

Their everyday problems were mainly limited to getting food and singing, with the help of which they not only talked to each other, but also tried to please each other. Divine harmony and beauty in nature held firmer than in the minds and relationships between the people of this city. Nature turned out to be more obedient than people who wandered through the great circles of life and by detours made their way to what was under their noses. And only the luckiest managed to get to the desired stop.

Nobody demanded to invent a bicycle from them. Everything was invented before them. All they had to do was find the right track, but that was yet to be done.

24.08.1987

SO SIMPLE

And when what seemed very large suddenly seemed very small, tiny, a naive and stupid smile crept through the sadness. Everything turned out to be as simple as it seemed to be complex and unattainable once before.

All the obstacles skillfully erected in his path were deliberately extolled to a level exceeding the ultimate goal itself.

They remained, however, in the same places where they were so diligently erected by the hands of tortured, unjustly offended, and, moreover, ambitious people pursued by a sorrowful life and fate. Sad and distressed by their insubordination, the barriers looked in surprise after the conqueror, who had won a victory above all, it seemed to them, over himself.

“To conquer the summit means to kill and conquer oneself,” they silently shouted after him.

- No, - he answered, - for height-height.

And in response he heard:

“Fool, beyond the heights is the low.

The soul tried in vain to calm the ardor of the mind:

“Look, fool! Cool down, don't listen to the rumours. As long as I'm alive, I'm warm. As long as I'm warm, your life is safe.

- Calm down, soul, - she heard in response, - I'm worried about your fate. With your warmth, you will bring cold on yourself, and to me with him in this world Khan.

Having got out of the dense forest of achieved goals, he gasped at the open light space that spread out before his eyes. In bewilderment, joy, strange confusion, as if from a fright, he hobbled a few steps, stumbling over hillocks and stones scattered in some places.

He landed on the largest of them, which was very conveniently tucked under his right side.

“Batiushki!” he exclaimed, and lowering his head, he embraced her in his arms.

The sudden realization that he was completely lost and lost took possession of him, burdening him with a heavy burden. It was much better and easier to navigate the wilds, because he was eager for freedom, space, the very one that he now felt, sitting on a cold, gray, uneven saddle-like stone, and not knowing where to go next. Nimble greenish lizards running out of holes, darting past him, paused for a moment, looked around with curiosity, bulging dark, round eyes, unnaturally arched their necks, marveling at the appearance of a certain figure

casting a shapeless spot of shadow on the Earth. They must have tried to delve into what was happening, to grasp the dimensions of the unknown or long forgotten.

Convinced of the futility of the undertaking, they took air into their cheeks, likening them to swollen pillows and set off on a creeping run away from the uninvited guest. And the grasshopper, which found itself on the shoulder of the traveler and not showing the slightest interest in where, or rather on whom, was fussily looking for a platform for the next march-jump.

There was a whiff of an invisible city chimney, either a factory or factory chimney, and a distant, quiet rumble was heard. The traveler turned his gaze back, towards the just-left hell, through which he had been roaming hungry and cold for so long.

Terrified by the memory that came to mind, he muttered something and almost fell to the ground on his back.

Why, why did they leave me? Why did they leave one? - he wondered, - somehow they acted not in the Soviet way, - he borrowed a phrase from the cartoon, - where to move now and how to get out? Who knows?

- Sergey, Sergey, Serezhenka! It's good that I saw you! - a joyful female voice came from behind.

- Who else is this? - the traveler was curious, turning around at the exclamation. - Oh God! I just missed her now! It fell on my head!

A woman of about forty, of flawed appearance, in glasses, with a small backpack behind her back, was approaching him in quick steps in zigzags, as if afraid to lose sight of him.

- Where did everyone go? Well, how is it possible! How long have I been spinning around in the forest, walking in circles, screaming, calling, and no one responds. It's good that I met at least you,"the woman complained.

- I would be asked if it's good or not? - Sergei silently objected to her.

- What's happened? Are you also behind the group?

- No, I was looking for you, - Sergey was flattered.

- Oh, really, Sergey ?! Thank you very much. You are so kind and considerate, and you are not like the others. I was so frightened, - she poured without a break, - can you imagine, it's almost evening, and I'm alone in the forest, you never know what? At home, I told my parents that I was not going alone, and here you are!

"And to whom did you give yourself up, even in the forest, alone?" Sergei silently flew into a rage again.

She talked for a long time and he was already thinking, among other things, about how to get rid of her.

“God, she’s already grown up, but what a fool!” Say what you like, but there are no chemists, no, but in some way they all resemble one another.

Sergei remembered a classmate, much smarter and more attractive than his current companion, who also climbed on him all the time “on the rampage”, and he only thought about how to evade and resorted to the most ingenious tricks. She had an animal instinct for the “fleeing fox”, and she pursued him in every possible way and everywhere and lagged behind only after she got hooked on a less experienced “fox” and she married him.

True, even now he still has a feeling of some embarrassment for one incident in the school cafeteria. I remember it as if it happened only yesterday. A certain Levka, a classmate, teased him, caught showing pleasure from food and from many things in general.

- Sergei! Here, look, - Levka twisted a long, thin hunting sausage in front of his nose. Twisting it, he bit off the end of it, and put the rest into a jar of still untouched sour cream, busily stirred it, pulled the sausage back and bit off again.

Sergei smiled, remembering his state then.

And then he got very excited. You could say angry. Levka managed to dodge and rush out the door. So the contents of the jar spilled out after him. And their classmate, the future chemist, turned out to be doused, and doused from head to toe. All in all, there was an uproar.

Another case came to mind. When friends and classmates were having fun in the chemistry room by shooting burning matches from the last desks to the first, diagonally, from special designed devices. One burning match, changing its trajectory, hit a suede curtain, which instantly flared up. Sergei and a classmate rushed to extinguish it. The bell rang for change. The whole class rushed out of the classroom. Sergey and his classmate, tearing off the burning curtain, trampled it underfoot, and the teacher ran back and forth in confusion and shouted something in a thin, squeaky voice. Thanks to the quickness of the guys, the fire was avoided. But they themselves later had to prove their innocence in the director's office.

In general, although Sergei treated the subject with great sympathy and knew him “excellently”, his relationship with the chemists was clearly not attractive. And he extended this attitude to professional rails, believing that in general all physicists and mathematicians have similar feelings for chemists.

Now Sergei, apparently, had to endure another test by another chemist-companion with a one-day experience of acquaintance.

After some hesitation and hesitation, they finally set off on their further journey. Both seemed to be dead tired. Sergey walked a little ahead, his companion was a little behind him and was talking excitedly about something.

Both admitted to themselves in their hearts that going together is much more fun and easier than alone. Sergey was already planning for tomorrow a plan for a raid on employees who had so shamelessly abandoned him alone in the middle of an unfamiliar area, and even slipped such a companion into the bargain.

The couple moved through an unknown area in the hope of finding at least some path leading either to a highway, or to a city, or to some village, or in extreme cases, at least to something that shows some signs of life.

We walked for a long time, in exhausting serpentine. Either they went out to the edges, then again they went deep into small forests.

Finally, a hut loomed ahead. It didn't take long for hope to flare up. They glanced at each other, smiled, quickened their pace, and soon found themselves inside the hut.

The shack looked abandoned. A human foot must not have set foot in it for a long time. The travelers, however, were glad to have any shelter over their heads. Both were well aware that there was not the slightest sense in continuing their journey in the approaching twilight.

The woman brought her feminine order into the new, temporary shelter, and soon they were sitting at a light supper hastily prepared from the contents of backpacks.

An old, compassionate cricket tapped with a long branch on the music table, turning the pages of the music book, as if looking for the place where he had stopped yesterday. In the night hall, he navigated thanks to his own autonomous lighting in the back of his body.

- Attention, colleagues, attention! Please pay attention! - He addressed the night orchestra members, continuing to tap with a conductor's baton. - Get together, please, we will start soon! So, very late, but let's get started!

The staccato sounds of various musical instruments were heard in the hall. It was felt that the musicians were in the last stage of preparations.

"The unfortunate ones," the old conductor thought, what would happen to them if something suddenly happened to me?! Without me, they are Khan! However, it must be admitted that each of them is a rather tolerable musician, well, that's how they get together and sit down together, and each will blow into his instrument, and run over others with his music, because the devil knows what is happening then! Musical porridge turns little by little into verbal mat-taram and ends with bodily battles. And only to the sounds of "save yourself, who can"

can you defuse the situation, and then watch how the orchestra members scatter through the bushes, barely dragging their own, or even, in addition, like a “trophy weapon”, and someone else’s musical instrument to the sound of fanfare or cries of war.

This old conductor had seen more than once, however, in the role of a casual observer from the outside.

He was closely acquainted with almost every one of the orchestra members, his soul ached for each of them, and he took care of each one to the best of his ability.

“Without me, they will die and scatter,” the old conductor was annoyed, “because they fight each other like the most honest people!” Everyone flaunts himself and achieves career success by suppressing others. It’s a pity! After all, how much time and work it cost me to assemble such a composition!

sorry to annoy the conductor.

- Well, that’s it, that’s it! - he knocked for the last time with his conductor’s baton. - And - they began!

And it began, it began, and how it began!

- Listen, listen, Sergey, how well they beat to the beat. They chirp and creak, as if they were led by some most experienced conductor! - Sergey’s companion admired.

Large water mosquitoes whirred and squeaked about their ears, fearful of the coming night.

“Zhanna, give me some bread, please,” Sergei held on stoically.

The table for dinner was quite decent, which even surprised Sergey a little. ‘Here! If you want, drink a little, - Jeanne handed him the lid of the flask, with white moisture inside. - You’ll get warm!

“Actually, I don’t drink!” Sergey answered, accepting the travel vessel from her and becoming more and more surprised. Even stocked up on this.

“Drink, drink, nothing will happen to you!” If I have not melted, then you will survive, - Zhanna insisted smiling. - You will warm up a little. See, it’s getting cold.

Sergei closed his eyes, gulped down the contents of the flask lid and almost immediately felt a pleasant warmth engulf his body.

The “healing liquid”, it seemed, having got into the pancreas, for some reason turned not to the left, into the stomach, as it should, but to the right, spilling into the cavity of the liver and gallbladder. He could not explain this circumstance for many years now. He did not dare to ask anyone about this, he was ashamed to betray his ignorance in this area. And therefore, he tried to put forward his own

version of the justification for the phenomenon and felt for it. With a feeling of joyful satisfaction, he either persistently convinced, or deceived himself, that this happens to all candidates of physical and mathematical sciences, because before defending his dissertation he never drank, and after it, only occasionally. He was very afraid to sleep and resorted to alcohol only in exceptional situations. True, wine, gradually allowed himself sometimes more boldly.

Jeanne gradually tamed Sergei and even pulled the reins. He grew more and more accustomed to her and to her homeliness. And if before he was treated with great hostility, now - according to the formula "because-insofar". What to do if everything happened and turned around like that! Although, if it was possible to bring life back a little, then he would do everything possible not to get into this situation.

After a rather tasty dinner, Sergei, having relieved himself around the corner of the hut, began to prepare for the night. He looked for himself a place, pulled out some rags from a backpack, straightened and spread them out.

Jeanne was cleaning the table.

"Where are you staying?" he asked her.

"Over there!" she pointed to the opposite corner.

- Do you have anything to put on?

- Yes, I have.

- Throw some foam rubber just in case, do you hear?

"Yes," she replied, as if not saying something.

- Well, okay, let's sleep! - Sergey turned to the wall.

Fatigue instantly plunged him into a deep sleep.

He did not remember how long he slept, but woke up only when he felt that a woman's hand was gently shaking him.

- Sergei! Sergei, please!

- What do you want? - waking up waved Sergey.

- Excuse me please. I need to go out, but I'm afraid. Come, please, with me to nature.

"Ay," thought Sergey, "and they won't let you sleep at night," but obediently obeyed her request.

"Wait here, please," she asked in a low voice, leading him to the bushes, "and don't go far."

- Yeah, - Sergey thought. - Well, of course, to hear how you do it.

Jeanne moved behind the bushes, but Sergei saw her lower her trousers and squat down.

He immediately averted his eyes, but somehow he did not realize how to plug his ears. So I had to listen to everything.

- That's crazy! - Thought Sergei.

Jeanne, happy, laughing, jumped back to him.

Sergey looked at the starry sky, at the moon and oriented himself a little on the ground.

- What a beautiful sky, right? - Jeanne exclaimed.

"Yes," Sergey agreed.

A large part of his memories connected him with the night sky. He fished from the age of eight in ports, on rivers, lakes, reservoirs, reservoirs, often at night. I had to hunt at a later time.

- It was a happy time! - Sergei plunged into the past.

Yes, in fact, there was something to remember.

On one of these starry nights, he went fishing with a friend. There was no cool at all at night. By midnight, and especially in the early morning, they shivered from the cold, so much so that they found an abandoned boat near the shore, lay down in it and, embracing, waited for dawn.

And the next morning, completely frozen, they wandered along the shore, hoping to penetrate at least some coastal building and warm themselves.

The first such building was a billiard room, which opened in the early morning and the first visitors of which were them. The owner greeted the visitors with a joyful smile, but when they, frozen and half asleep, climbed to fit under the billiard table, he did not like it. Their departure from the billiard room was less rosy than the reception.

Not having time to lie down with these thoughts in his bed, Sergei again heard Zhanna's plaintive exclamations.

"Sergey!" she groaned.

"Oh," Sergei drawled, turning around, "well, what else do you need?"

- I'm cold, I'm all cold, and besides, I'm afraid to sleep alone.

- Well, take it, drink another cup.

- Does not help.

- Well, what should I do?

- Come here to me.

- Well, here's more! It just wasn't enough.

There was a long pause.

- Are you afraid of me? I won't eat you, don't be afraid.

"What else, why should I be afraid of you?" Sergey was surprised.

He reluctantly moved in with her, combining all the rags they had into one bed.

- Hug me please.

- Well, it begins!

“No, really, I’m cold.

“Just promise me that you won’t be stupid,” Sergey demanded quite seriously and sternly.

“I promise,” Jeanne said with equal confidence.

They both lay on their side. He hugged the girl and felt the warmth of her body. But as soon as he pressed his head to her shoulder, he instantly passed out and fell asleep. At night he had nightmares. They were interrupted by caressing female hands.

Marina knew how to do it with extraordinary beauty and romance. She gently hugged him and kissed him non-stop.

- Marina, don't, - he fought back, - just not now, well, you see, in what condition I am? Dirty, unshaven. Leave me alone, I want to sleep.

- And you sleep, sleep, I'll do everything myself.

- Oh, leave it alone, for God's sake.

Sergei no longer remembered how his battles with his wife ended, he finally fell into a dream.

Then he, half asleep, unhappy, either in a dream or in reality, was taken out of need by some woman, and he plaintively asked: “Well, will you finally let me sleep?”

The next morning he woke up all disheveled, almost with a square head. Looked around. Jeanne was not around.

After a while, he already put himself in order. After a terrible half-sleepless night, it hurt, and even swayed a little to the sides. Having completed his morning toilet in full, he remembered Jeanne. Called her a couple of times, but she didn't answer. He went out and not far from the hut, at the very edge of the forest, saw her in action.

Above the fire hung a cauldron with food being cooked in it. A rope with rags drying on it was stretched between the trees, and Jeanne herself, bending over a basin, was washing something. He stood behind a wooden wall and, in a state of stupefaction, half-hidden, half-open, began to watch her.

A smile crossed his face.

These women are amazing creatures! They amaze with the absolute non-standard thinking and actions. Well, she managed to open such a front of work

now! Why does she need this fire, this washing ... and where did the cauldron with a lid, a basin, water come from? ... - he was amazed.

Zhanna kept busy, rinsed something, hung it up. She knocked the dust out of her clothes with a stick.

It seemed that everything was happening not at a random forced halt, but in the village, on vacation.

Looks like she's not going anywhere.

"Marina," Sergey called out in some oblivion.

She didn't respond. He repeated the name, but a little louder.

- What? - Jeanne finally turned around with a beaming smile. - What did you call me?

- Marina! - Sergey was surprised.

- Who is this Marina? - Jeanne asked curiously.

"My wife," Sergey explained.

- Do you still have a wife?

- Yes, why?

- No, nothing, just like that.

- What is so simple?

- No, nothing, just like that. Nothing and everything!

- Are you going home today?

- Going to.

- When?

- When you say.

"What's the point of all this fuss then?"

"You were just sleeping, and I decided not to wake you up.

- And if I slept until the evening?

"We would have stayed for the second night," Zhanna smiled all the time.

"I see you like it here very much.

- Yes! Don't you?

- Okay, that's enough, let's get ready, - Sergey advised, pointing at the emerging sun, - you see how high it has risen!

He looked at his watch. It was the beginning of the twelfth.

- What do we have in the pot?

- Mushroom soup.

- Soup? - Sergey admired. - Suitable, however, breakfast!

By twelve o'clock a group of two men set off, leaving behind the edge of the forest and the hospitable hut.

The night orchestra, having completed its work watch, slept off in anticipation of the next night. The sun did not spare the rays and roasted the unfortunate travelers, whose desires for returning home did not agree with each other. If one was clearly in a hurry, then the second, on the contrary, was inclined to equally clear delay. But both were moving forward at an accelerated pace.

The sun was at full zenith when the marching group of two approached a small noisy waterfall.

The heat and thirst quickened their steps, and soon they were enjoying the cold mountain water, the coolness, and relaxing on the rocks under the cold spray.

Sergey dried himself with a towel and did not take his eyes off the sun. His location disturbed, hurried and even unnerved.

- That's it, - he said in the affirmative, - let's take a break a little, and again on the road!

"Sergei, I want to swim," Jeanne added cautiously.

- There is nothing, - Sergey objected, - you will swim at home.

"It's far from home, but I need it now," Jeanne insisted with some stubbornness.

- What do you mean it is necessary! - Sergey was indignant.

- It must be, it must be. And that's all! - Jeanne did not retreat.

"And I need to get home as soon as possible.

- Well, you have to, so go, no one is holding you! And I'll swim here, "she began to unfasten her upper pugs.

blouse sheep.

- Here, a stubborn fool, a horned goat! - Sergey became furious. - Well, stay alone, the wolves to eat!

- The goat! So I'll stay, and you, go ahead, but hurry up, to your Marina.

- What? Sergei screamed. Well, that's it, I'm not going to endure it!

He waved his hand and quickly walked away.

Dear, he never ceased to be surprised at Jeanne's impudence.

You see, she needs it! What kind of stubbornness and self-will! - he was indignant. - That's why she has neither a husband nor children. Because of the bad temper! And it won't be until he comes to his senses and at least changes a little. Indeed, the fate of a person is in his character.

For about an hour he moved forward, but his anger did not subside. He suddenly caught himself thinking that he was moving from one woman to another like a soccer ball.

“Hmm,” I was amazed at the discovery, “women walk around me like a pawn, and I move at their behest and insistence. Can you imagine it, Sergey?”

“Calm down, calm down,” his inner voice answered him, “women move not only you, but also very many, if not all, men, and even the whole world.

- What impudence, - he now objected to his inner voice, - we, the “stronger sex”, dance to their tune! Okay, others, but I'm not going to do this.

- Fool, - the voice grinned, - how are you going to! You will even order music yourself and at the same time ask them to play it for you.

- Well, everything! Stop it, shut up!

He remembered Marina, imagined how she would meet him, and arrange a showdown about a long fun, as she would insist, mushroom picking, which was supposed to last until the evening, and still continues, and the devil knows how long. The most terrible seemed the inevitable explanations that Marina had to give.

Suddenly he stopped and froze.

“What happened?” asked his inner voice.

- I left, one might say, abandoned, a woman alone!

- You did not leave her, she drove you away.

“Is there anything that could happen to her?”

- Yes, but she called you a goat, and Marina threatens you with the same thing!

Two women with incredible force were pulling him towards them now, as if pulling a rope, each to its own side.

After some thought, he waved his hand doomedly, turned his back on the strong, passionate lawful and turned towards the weak, tender and illegal, which, as it seemed to him, now needed him more.

I recalled the words of a certain film director who characterized life as the most magnificent screenwriter who knows how to throw up such plots that no writer would come up with.

Marina pulled him towards her, Zhanna drove him away from her.

“In such cases, they go to the third one,” for some reason it struck Sergey in the head, apparently from anger, “what if she was attacked by people or wolves,” Sergey was already thinking, but immediately reassured himself, “who needs it, God, such a freak! Fu, yes, she herself will bite any wolf, even a two-legged one, even a four-legged one.

He was already approaching the place where he had left Jeanne the other day. The forest appeared, and a noise was heard.

Sergei suddenly froze, his lower jaw dropped.

- Blimey! Ay ugly! Who said you're ugly!

Jeanne stood under the waterfall completely naked. Sergei froze, as if bewitched, and admired the beauty of her body.

- She even defeated my Marina!

Jeanne gradually got out from under the streams of the waterfall, plunged into the pond several times, went out, stopped to sunbathe, spreading her legs and raising her hands towards the caressing rays of the sun.

Without glasses, she either did not see Sergei, or pretended not to see. There was a slightly mischievous smile on her face.

Here she turned her back.

But then Marina spoke up.

- Now I'll show her! - He thought with irritation and tenderness at the same time. Two feelings that reached an extreme level, collided, broke into many separate particles, scattered to the corners of his soul and consciousness.

Slowly and smoothly, like a cat, he crept up and stood behind Jeanne.

She caught him moving, stopping, but didn't even move.

- Well, what can you say?

- You are wonderful!

- Truth? And so? She turned to face him and looked straight into his eyes, smiling.

He tried to stay still and not move. She pressed her lips to his and froze. He tenderly took her small, rounded right breast and pressed his lips to hers with the same tenderness. He kissed her briefly.

"Well, how?" she asked, not without interest, when he pulled away. Am I better than her?

- Did you "need" for this? - He answered the question with a question.

Jeanne looked away, silently moved away from him.

Sergei looked at her intently. What worried him now was not so much her nakedness as the desire to guess at least some answer in the movements of her body.

She, already dressed, sat motionless on a stone, not raising her eyes to Sergei, who was sitting next to her.

Tears rolled down her cheeks. She wiped them off with her palm and gave a barely audible sob.

Sergei realized that she had used all the military arsenal she had in service to achieve her goal. Now she had no choice but to wait.

She was not so much interested in him as a man, but in what his response would be. Animal interest and impatience overcame her now most of all. These

chu she experienced things for the first time in her life and tried to revel in them to the fullest, fearing to miss the slightest detail and detail.

- And what will happen next? What will be your next steps? - she teased herself with a question and expectation of an answer to it. And tensed, the more, the longer the pause dragged on.

Sergey clearly caught her feelings and decided to prolong the established lull, like a budarazh and kindling them more and more.

- "I want" a woman is much stronger than "I want" a man! - he stated, of course, implying relations not in the camp of savages, but in a normal society of any of the civilized countries, the level of culture of which he assessed by the degree of attitude of a man to a woman.

He stood up, walked with measured steps to the edge of the reservoir, rinsed his face, and just as slowly returned.

He really did not want to offend the woman in her feelings.

He sank down on the rock, resting his forehead on her cool shoulder.

Jeanne, listen to me. You are a good person. We are no longer children. I have a wife younger than you and a child. You are not married yet. Do not despair, you will meet another good person. Why do we need these whims and nonsense, from which there will be nothing but problems. You understand that I will never be yours, and I can lose my wife. For what? For the sake of one of your "I want", and that's all? All of us, people, want and desire a lot, but our life is not built according to the scenario "I want, and that's it". She has a different scenario - "it's necessary, that's all" and "it's possible, but this is impossible."

He caught himself on a sudden recollection that not so long ago Zhanna had uttered the same words - "it is necessary, and that's all," which he so passionately refuted, and he was dumbfounded and fell silent from confusion.

Jeanne seized on his slip. For a while they looked at each other questioningly. "What did I say?" Zhanna asked silently.

- How did I get myself into trouble? I'm also a philosopher! - Sergey was surprised.

Jeanne smiled, Sergei answered her the same. Smiles gradually grew, until they finally turned into laughter.

"What can be stronger than the love of a man and a woman?" asked their inner voice.

Two lovers stood in front of each other. Now it seemed to them that they were the discoverers of a new feeling. Both caught themselves on the fact that their love is much stronger and more sublime than just the mutual attraction of a man and a woman. Yes, that's right, that's exactly what they were saying to

themselves now. Yes, the love of a person for a person is more sublime than the love of a man and a woman. And the joy of discovering this for themselves overwhelmed their souls. They seized the bliss that descended to them from heaven. Now they felt more than they understood. The feeling seemed to overshadow their mind for a while.

Joyful sensations again overwhelmed her soul, tears gushed like a fountain from her eyes, she threw herself into his arms, pressed herself tightly to her chest, from the depths of her soul expelling the same words: "I love you, I love you."

She was no longer a candidate of chemical sciences, and he of physical and mathematical sciences. Both at once, in an instant, suddenly became doctors of heavenly sciences.

But this feeling also came to them, as they say, not out of nowhere, they went to that all their past life, as if ascending to a peak, the name of which they did not know, and even then they could not know, but they foresaw with all their soul and with all their heart, and both obeyed the call of their souls.

Those who go to the call of a single soul on a heavenly peak will inevitably meet and converge, and the paths of their lives will definitely cross.

"They will intersect... They will intersect at least once, but... forever," they repeated with joy, like parrots, this discovery.

They also understood that many do not understand the full depth of this feeling. To fly, you have to be a pilot. And to understand, you need to think correctly. And whoever does not know how to assimilate this can call this feeling whatever you like, even completely humiliating.

"I don't regret anything," Jeanne exclaimed with joy, looking into Sergei's eyes. - I do not regret a single minute with you and I will love and remember you always, all my life. And I don't need anyone else in my life.

At these words, something stirred and shuddered inside her. She had never experienced such a power of feeling and had never known it before.

"And I will always love you," Sergey responded with confidence to the heavenly feeling, wondering how deceptive appearance can be. "Just please, put the last words out of your head. You can't be alone! You need a family, children. You can still make it.

- Hmm, - Zhanna grinned, not answering his teachings, - you know, I often think about the meaning of life and even developed my own HFJ.

- What is this?

- HFJ is a chemical philosophy of life.

- Yes? Interesting! Well, what is it?

Can you help me do a little chemistry experiment?

- What is the problem?

- Well look!

After some preparations, Zhanna was already demonstrating her HFJ on a simple chemical reaction.

At the very waterfall, she picked up a clean transparent glass, filled it with water, drank a little herself and asked Sergey to do the same.

“You see how clean and transparent the water is,” she explained, “and how pleasant it is to drink it.

Sergei nodded in agreement.

- This is her birth and formation, - Zhanna continued. - Look and listen further. This is sugar, she poured into a glass.

a little granulated sugar - sugar impurities get into the water.

Little by little, at intervals, she poured more and more impurities into the glass. And after each addition she gave Sergey a try. The solution contained salt, pepper, cereals, soda, potassium permanganate, iodine, etc. Water changed not only taste, but also color. In the end, it got to the point that Sergei grimaced and completely refused to try and drink this - as he already called the water in a glass - a bucket.

- You see, Sergey. The same thing, whether we like it or not, is happening in our souls, hearts and minds.

If this water is not purified now, it's not only to drink it, but just to see it is sickening.

- But how to clean it up to its previous state? - Sergei asked.

- That's how! Very simply, she explained, returned to the waterfall, brought a glass of polluted water to a clean stream flowing weakly from the side, that is, to the primary source.

- You can't leave it for a long time, you need to return from time to time ...

Sergei saw how clean water gradually filled the container of the glass, and the excess contaminated liquid was forced out and poured out of it.

- Do you see what's happening? Until you let clean water in, you won't get rid of dirty water!

She kept the glass under the tap until the water was completely clear. Then she took a sip, drank a couple of sips and handed it to Sergei. He tried a little at first, and then drank it whole, in one gulp, to the bottom.

- Wow, - Sergey said approvingly, - I understand this!

“Did you like it?” Jeanne asked.

- Yes, it was great! - Sergey explained.

- What exactly? - Jeanne was curious. - Water or HFJ?

- Both. And where can one better cleanse oneself of all sediments and dirt that settles in tons in our hearts, souls, minds?!

- I still don't know for sure, I still haven't found a definitive answer, but I think that most likely in natural, wild nature, it doesn't matter, on the plain or in the mountains. After all, we humans are children of nature.

- Yes, - Sergei confirmed, - all this, of course, is very clear, interesting and convincing, but, you know, I also conducted similar searches and explanations of life. And he also built a theory, however, with a somewhat materialistic bias and a starting point, taking into account his profession.

- Seriously? - Jeanne smiled. - Curious! Tell me, please, at least briefly.

Marina somehow disappeared from Sergei's memory, and he, no longer considering time, began to plunge into preparations for explaining life from his materialistic positions.

- Well, now look and listen to me carefully, you, - he took out pasta and a thin school notebook from his backpack. - So, so! I hope that just as mathematicians and physicists study chemistry, so chemists study physics and mathematics at least a little. My mathematical philosophy of life (MFZH), based on the essence of human behavior, is this.

Jeanne smiled.

"So," Sergei continued, "I represent human life mathematically in a primitive, simplest form through the following elementary matrix equation

$(A(x(- B$, where $(A$ (two-dimensional, $N \times N$ in size, where $N - 2$ ((individually for each person) matrix of internal initial parameters, which includes parameters of a person's character, his genetic characteristics, all kinds initial biochemical initial parameters, etc.,

- $(B$ (- column matrix of external human factors that directly affect a person, this is, first of all, his environment, physical, mechanical and chemical factors, medical factors, etc.,

- $(x(-$ matrix of behavior or actions in life.

Or, freeing, leaving the matrix $(x$ (on one side of equality, we get the following mathematical record of human behavior in life in matrix form

$(x(- (A(-1 (B($

Understandably?

Jeanne nodded thoughtfully at him.

- Thus, it turns out that, knowing the initial parameters of a person and the external ones acting on him, it is possible to determine the nature of a person's behavior. Moreover, it is possible to obtain the desired behavior of a person by manipulating the matrix parameters of the matrices $(A($ and $(B($. That is, for

example, in order to obtain or achieve from this or that individual the act I want, I can select the external factors and conditions.

“Yes,” Jeanne said meaningfully, “all this, of course, is very, very interesting.

- Well, and to diversify this mathematical concept, developed by me personally, you can, of course, add to the matrices (A (and (B (all kinds of other matrices that complement or correct the individual characteristics of each individual. That's it! - Sergey rounded off, completing their explanations. - But, to be honest, your HFJ interested me no less, if not more.

- Oh, thank you! - Zhanna was delighted, without being distracted, however, and trying to delve deeper into the rubbish she heard.

- Your theory of HFJ is celestial and cosmic, and my theory of IFJ is earthly, and therefore yours is eternal, while mine is temporary, transient. - Sergei explained. So, consider yourself defeated!

There was a moment of silence.

Sergei again remembered about Marina.

- All this is good, but what should we do, Jeanne? It's past noon a long time ago and we don't seem to be getting out of here and getting home tonight, oh he exclaimed bitterly.

“Not bad,” Jeanne thought, “happiness is extended for another day.

Dual feelings entered the struggle in Sergey as well – the call of Marina and the impulse to immediately set off on the road and the oppression of fatigue, hopelessness and humility in the situation in which he found himself.

Both were silent for a long time, sitting side by side, leaning against each other, throwing small pebbles into the waterfall and watching the circles of waves on the surface of the water.

Jeanne suddenly started up and tensed, as if listening to something.

- What is it? - Sergey was surprised.

- Shh, - Zhanna raised her index finger. - Listen.

From afar came the barely audible ringing of bells. They got up, moved in the direction of the ringing, listened, froze.

- Glory to you, Lord, and gratitude, - Sergei turned his gaze to the heavens, - now we know where and in which direction we should go. There must be some village or town there.

“Yes, of course,” Jeanne instantly agreed with him.

In the evening, the travelers were already in the city. A rural passing bus took them to one of the subway stations. Sergey, one might say, did not feel his legs, treacherously buckling at the knees. In Zhanna, he did not notice such a strong

fatigue. They parted without further ado. Kissing each other on the cheeks and shaking hands, they exchanged wishes and parted ways.

Jeanne looked after him for a long time. Sergei walked towards Marina without turning around.

Sergei slowly and wearily opened the heavy steel door of the house. I threw my backpack at the entrance, hung my windbreaker and cap on a hanger. Shutting the door noisily behind him, he began to take off his shoes.

“Daddy, daddy is here!” - there was a joyful exclamation of little Oleg, who ran out to meet Sergei.

- Ah, ah ... ah, - Marina's drawn-out greeting was heard from the kitchen, - he appeared, not dusty. Might not show up at all. You can go back to the one you came from...

- Well, now it will begin, - Sergei thought, - in full.

Marina really turned on to the fullest.

She could hear another female voice stopping her every now and then.

- Marina, stop it now! What do you allow yourself, - he supported Sergei.

Sergey was already fiddling with Oleg and trying not to take swearing at him, although he could not completely get rid of the noise near his ears.

Vera Vasilievna greeted Sergei kindly, smiling affably and winking with one eye as a token of complete solidarity and understanding.

- Hello, mother, - Sergey greeted her with the same friendly smile, - mother, help me out, otherwise she will eat me alive.

- Nothing, it won't stick. Don't be afraid, I'm here.

What does she want from me? Yes, I agree, it's my fault that I was late, but she is not even interested in what happened to me.

“With you and with this Zhanna,” Marina added, going out to meet him, “and it was necessary to think so cleverly. I went, you see, with the guys for mushrooms.

- Lord, how does she know her name? - Sergei was amazed.

“Come on, that's enough for you, calm down,” her mother consoled.

Noticing that she was putting on her shoes in the hallway, she asked:

- Where are you going?

- To the river, - Marina threw angrily, - a live fresh fish goes to the mushrooms.

- What river is this? Why? - asked Vera Vasilievna.

- Catch yourself a ha-ha!

Sergei was about to get up from his chair, he was about to go up and stop her, but Vera Vasilievna stopped him with a look and a raised hand.

“All right,” she said with Olympian calm, “let her go.” The maximum where she can go is to Svetka, our neighbor from the fifth floor. He sharpens his hair, scratches his tongue - calms down and returns.

- Who wound it up like that? - Sergei asked.

The hallway door slammed.

“Mom, mom,” Olezhka rushed after her.

- Come to me now, do you hear, Olezhka! Mom went to Aunt Sveta, took something from her and returned.

- Anka called several times, asked if you returned or not. She said that she and the guys were very worried. Apparently, she screwed up, - Vera Vasilievna explained.

- I want my mother! Mommy, mommy! - Oleg's bitter crying was heard.

- Olezhek, come to me, - Vera Vasilievna returned with her grandson and with his school bag in her hands. Let's show dad right away what we're going to school with on the first of September.

Grandmother took out the school supplies of the future grader one by one, reminding him what each of them is like.

“It would be better if they didn't leave us alone in an unfamiliar area, then we wouldn't have to sharpen the laces,” Sergey was nervous.

- They said that you divided into pairs and went to pick mushrooms, each in your own direction, and at the appointed time it was necessary to gather at the appointed place. But since you and this, what is it, Zhanna, were very much delayed, did not wait for you, they say they are not small, they themselves will find their way home. Apparently, they didn't want to disturb you, - Vera Vasilievna grinned.

- Interfere? Full of you, mom! How to interfere? I have never seen a girl more beautiful than Marina, and for whom should I change her, for this ugly thing? ”Sergey objected indignantly. True, his heart sank at his last words. He reproached himself for him, but what was said cannot be taken back, and events unfolded in a completely different direction.

“Calm down, calm down, son,” Vera Va smiled.

Silievna, - I am more than sure that there was nothing between you and Jeanne.

- Here's a cross for you, mom! - Sergey crossed himself and convinced himself that light kisses, which he had plenty of in his life, do not count.

- It's just, you know, in such situations, many women can't stand it and break down, who is external, who is internal, and you should rejoice at her reaction - this is a sign of love for you.

- Wow, love without mutual understanding, - Sergey did not agree.

Oleg no longer cried, he shifted the contents of his bag, looked at it and kept asking his grandmother about the purpose of each little thing.

Sergei and Vera Vasilievna talked for a long time, making sure of complete mutual understanding.

“These women are amazing creatures,” Sergey admired her to himself.

He also caught himself thinking that fate seemed to be flirting with him, often tossing and slipping beautiful, smart women who did not understand him for the eyes and mind, and ugly, less intelligent, but sincere women for the soul. Therefore, he often had to shy away from side to side between women of different character, mindset and worldview. Conventionally, he divided them into different types and categories and believed that each man should be surrounded by several women or even wives at the same time. One is needed only for work and around work, the second is for the kitchen, the third - and only she is alone, and no one else - for love and bed, the fourth is to take him by car to work and on various matters, the fifth is to sit at the computer, the sixth to do household chores, the seventh to the mother-in-law, the eighth to the personal attending physicians, the ninth - Jeanne, he thought for some reason, yes, but for what? Oh, yes, to go hiking with her and talk on various philosophical topics, including flights into space, to the moon, etc.

“Sergey, go take a bath, wash yourself properly, relax and calm down, I have already prepared everything for you there,” Vera Vasilievna interrupted his thoughts.

- Thank you, mom, - Sergey thanked, went up to her, kissed her on the cheek, then hesitated a little and still decided - he hugged and pressed her to his heart. Tears fell from his eyes: - I love you, mom. Understand me correctly, but sometimes it seems to me that you are my wife, and she is my mother-in-law.

“Ha-ha-ha!” Vera Vasilievna laughed, “I love you too, Seryozhka, like a son, and not like a son-in-law,” and patted his back with her hand.

- I tell all my friends and acquaintances that I have a world mother-in-law, and no one in the world has such a mother-in-law as mine.

Sergei and his mother-in-law stood in front of each other, crying, kissing and confessing their love.

- Look at them, what they are doing! - Marina, who returned from her neighbor, was perplexed. - Just like two idiots!

The couple, noticing the return of Marina, decided to pick up the pace and add to their feelings of intensity.

Why do we need her at all? We are fine without her!” they exclaimed in one voice and pretended not to notice the newcomer.

- Mom, look, - continued Sergey, tearing up, taking out his wallet from his jacket, - you see, I carry your photo in my pocket.

It really seemed to Vera Vasilievna that she was rather Sergei's mother than Marina's.

- Yes, yes, my beloved son, can you imagine? - she said, looking at a group photo. - How wonderful we all turned out here.

Marina looked from the side, holding her hands on her waist, perplexed, and with the toe of her right foot advanced slightly forward, tapping on the parquet floor, as if maintaining the general heat.

“It's your own fault,” Vera Vasilievna accused him, “after all, you knew her very well before marriage ... you knew that she was a “scorpion”.

“Yes, mother, but you know very well that I married her only out of great love for you,” Sergei continued the performance.

- Mom, - cried Marina, unable to stand it, - yes, you all went crazy here!

- Mom, mom, me too? - Little Oleshka was interested, pulling his mother by the hem.

- Oh, so, yes ?! - Marina finally became furious, with her fists ran into Sergei, drummed on his head, while strong male hands grabbed weak female hands, restricting and restricting their movements.

A real hand-to-hand fight ensued.

“Mom, call the doctor as soon as possible,” Sergey called, winking at his mother-in-law, “she broke down again.

“Yeah, I understand,” Vera Vasilyevna nodded, “I'm already on my way,” and, tearing off her grandson, who grabbed Sergei and hit him with his fists with the words: “Leave mom alone, when I grow up, I'll kill you,” she moved by the hand with him away from the room.

The noise of falling and beating objects coming from behind the door was soon replaced by the crunch of tearing fabric and the tender words of Marina that followed:

- No, please, don't. Just not now! They are there at the door.

Marina was lying on the sofa in a half-torn dress.

Sergei looked at her intently.

“She really is very beautiful,” he thought.

- Ay, - there was a weak cry of Marina, - wait a minute!

The cry once again reminded Sergei why he loves her like no one else ever.

Satisfied, Vera Vasilievna went out into the next room, leading her grandson by the hand.

“Only a tamer knows how to tame his lion,” she thought, “thank God, now they’ll at least make peace.”

After some time, Marina splashed in the bath prepared by her mother-in-law for Sergei.

- Mom, tell her something, she takes away my turn for swimming, - Sergei complained.

“Nothing,” Marina answered, “you’ll get by!” In the end, I’m more important than you.

At night, before going to bed, Marina pulled everything out of Sergei to the smallest detail about his pastime with Zhanna.

"Did you really have anything to do with her?"

- Are you out of your mind? Do you think I'll trade you for another? Especially for such a freak?

My heart sank for the second time. He betrayed his feelings for Jeanne, which made him uncomfortable. True, he tried to justify himself by the fact that it was so necessary to calm Marina, but the sediment settled deep in his soul and in his brain.

"What's wrong with you?" Marina suspected something.

"Nothing, nothing," Sergei assured her, "I'm just very tired these days.

"Alright, I'll fix you up now."

- Oh, Marina, stop.

- You lie still, I will do everything myself.

Everything was going exactly as he had dreamed last night. Only much worse. He clearly caught the difference even in the slightest nuances.

The next morning was sunny, and Sergei got out of bed in an excellent mood.

- Beloved, - he said, getting up and kissing his sleeping beauty between the eye and ear.

Soon he was already leaving for work, in a hurry, without having breakfast, with the thought of how he would “treat” the guys for their trick.

At the morning breakfast, Olezhka took an exam on self-catering.

“Grandma, have you heard what they say at school?” Marina said in a warning tone.

- No, what do they say there? - Vera Vasilievna feigned curiosity.

“They say those who cannot eat on their own will not be accepted.

- Truth?

Olezhka tried hard to please adults.

“Have you already told him about this?” Vera Vasilievna asked.

- Not yet, - Marina thought about it. - Maybe I won't tell at all.

- Why, daughter? The child is yours and belongs to both of you. He must know.

- Mom, I asked you not to interfere in our affairs. He doesn't need to know about it at all.

- Don't do it, baby!

- Mom, do you think it was easy for me to decide on this step?

- Understand, daughter, a man should have his own child.

- He has it.

- Yes, there is, but he needs his own. And besides, with this child you will tie him to you.

“They also tie him well to me,” Marina looked at her legs.

- Why are not you listening to me? You are almost thirty, he is already over forty. When will you be able to do something else?

“Someday, Mom, someday, but not now. I don't trust peasants anymore, Slavka also swore to me in many ways, which he didn't promise me, but he himself left us, and he doesn't need us, neither me nor his child. He doesn't even look in our direction. Waiting, probably, when I ask him for alimony.

Don't do this, I beg you.

“Now is not the time, mom, you see how hard it is for us now, we can barely make ends meet.

“It's okay, we'll hold on somehow, God will help.”

- All right, Mom, all right. Go with Olezhka to the park.

In the park, the grandmother enjoyed the rides no less than her grandson.

Marina, thinking, went where her legs did not want to lead her.

“If I don't do it now, it will be too late,” she thought, “someday... but not now.

She still had some time to think. She remembered her past, present and tried to penetrate into the future.

The ferris wheel spun uninterruptedly in the park and life, played with people, brought them either great joy, or grief and disappointment. With different speeds, it raised and lowered luxurious, hanging and spinning baskets, as if condemning and explaining to someone. It's not my fault, they came to me on their own, and I'm free to do whatever I please with them.

The nursing home maintained a strict daily routine. Breakfast was followed by a tour of the medical staff and familiarization with the general condition of its residents.

Work was carried out with each patient according to an individual program. At noon, after dinner, the hours of rest came. Then, with the permission of doctors, sports and recreational activities. After dinner, watching movies, dancing, musical evenings, and even poetic, historical, philosophical and other meetings.

They went to bed at ten o'clock in the evening. Some guests were allowed to read books before going to bed.

- Serge, well, will you finally walk or not. You think so much as if you are playing at the World Championship! - the opponent was indignant.

- Sergei, come on, go! Go, horse, and that's it, - suggested another voice.

"Go, Keres, go!" a third encouraged.

- Did you hear the news? We have received new recruits from the medical institute, they will be undergoing residency here, - someone announced in a serious tone.

Loud cheers and the clatter of dominoes came from the next table. Rolling dice, beating chips and cheerful voices of backgammon players from distant tables.

- Hello, guys, - Zoya Mikhailovna, deputy chief physician, greeted encouragingly, - how are you? No problem?

"Yes, Zoya Mikhailovna, they don't serve booze at the table!" Those sitting at the gaming tables complained in unison.

- Oh, - Zoya Mikhailovna drawled, - well, this is only for the holiday.

- Taniel, sit down, finish the game for me, - Sergey asked, - I'll go to rest, something doesn't feel right to me. Only look - do not lose.

"Serge, can I go with you?" asked a voice nearby.

"No, you don't have to, somehow on your own," Sergey muttered in a barely audible voice.

With difficulty, he got up from his seat and stooped down the corridor. Something inside stirred and twisted.

Three girls in white coats easily caught up and overtook Sergei. They were talking merrily and laughing softly.

"What gentle and soft voices they have," thought Sergey, looking after him.

"Anna," Sergei heard Zoya Mikhailovna's voice behind him.

One of the three girls turned around. Sergei raised his head with difficulty and looked into her face. She glanced at him for a moment. Sergei seemed to be struck by lightning. The lower jaw sagged. Young Jeanne stood before him. He stared at her intently, unblinkingly.

"I'm listening, Zoya Mikhailovna," she was surprised at the fixed gaze.

- Annushka, come to me later, we need to talk.

"All right, Zoya Mikhailovna," Anna turned her eyes back to Sergei.

He still stood in complete stupor and exhaustion.

"Jeanne," he murmured plaintively, as if waiting for an answer.

"My name is Anna, not Zhanna," the girl corrected him apologetically.

- Anna, what are you doing? What are you staring at? - the call of her friends came to her.

"It can't be," Sergey was amazed.

"Excuse me, please, I'll go," she said apologetically and hurried forward to her friends.

- God, how similar she is, - Sergey continued to be surprised, - but what if this is a daughter? I wonder how old she is? - Questions attacked Sergei, squeezing his heart. The last thing he felt was how he was swayed and he lost consciousness.

"What is the matter with you, Sergei Vladimirovich, are you feeling unwell?" Zoya Mikhailovna's voice was heard.

Sergei slowly opened his eyes, for a long time he could not come to his senses, to understand where he was.

- Sergey Vladimirovich, what are you thinking and why are you frightening us? - Zoya Mikhailovna complained. - Are you feeling better now?

Sergei slowly closed both eyes in approval and just as slowly opened them again. Zoya Mikhailovna ordered to take him to a room and establish surveillance.

- What is it with you, Sergey Vladimirovich, do you miss the young girls? Did you like Annushka? Tomorrow I will introduce you to her, but get well soon.

Sergei spent most of the night thinking and waiting for tomorrow's meeting.

The next morning Zoya Mikhailovna warned Anna:

"Be nice to him, Anna. He has endured a lot of hardship.

"Very well, Zoya Mikhailovna," Anna agreed with her.

The shining morning sun illuminated the ward where Sergei and his two companions lived with a bright light.

He stared intently at the front door, behind which stood Anna. He looked at her and remembered how on the day of the campaign, returning to Jeanne, he found her just as beautiful, naked, white and illuminated by a bright light.

Anna stood, smiling broadly, adjusting her glasses on the bridge of her nose, straightening her dressing gown and already walking towards Sergei's bunk.

- Well, how do you feel today, Sergey Vladimirovich?

Sergei smiled at her with a soft kind smile:

- Thank you, daughter!

“Well, now let’s get to know each other thoroughly,” Anna continued to smile, holding out her hand to him.

Sergei gently shook her. And it was like an electric shock again.

- Sergey Vladimirovich, you embarrass me. Everyone here is already talking about me ... as if I shocked you and because of me you fainted.

Sergei smiled back at her.

“It’s not your fault in my shattered health, daughter,” he explained.

- That’s good! But with your swoon you have attached me to you. Now I am your doctor. Let’s get to know each other little by little. We will still have time for this. You must tell me about all your problems and burning issues.

- There is not so much time, - Sergey thought for some reason.

“How old are you, Anna?” he asked in a barely audible voice.

“Thirty soon,” Anna replied smiling.

- Are you married?

Not yet, but I think soon.

- Do you have parents?

This question dramatically changed her mood. She drooped and drooped.

“No,” she said sadly, “I’m from the orphanage. I don’t know my father, but my mother died in childbirth. The first birth at an elderly age killed her.

What was her name, do you remember?

- No Unfortunately. I grew up in an orphanage, I got on my own feet, kind people helped me to graduate from a medical school. And now, as you can see, I’m sitting next to you. Our group is experimental, it has developed a new method of treatment, pursuing the goal of not only treating a particular disease, but the patient as a whole. In short, the treatment is not of the disease, but of the patient. Plus, we are trying to connect to our methodology a system for squeezing out of the patient’s consciousness and heart of all the negative, unpleasant and painful sensations that a person has experienced in his life.

Anna went into detail about the details of the new technique.

Sergei listened very carefully, but did not hear anything, he looked at her more, trying to catch the moments of behavior that unite her with Jeanne. He was more and more amazed at their resemblance.

Friendship and joint work continued for a little more than six months.

Christmas preparations were in full swing. Sergei Vladimirovich stood near the window of the assembly hall and watched how the Christmas tree was decorated. The hall was crowded, almost everyone who was healthy allowed oveye, and the medical staff, were busy with festive chores.

“Sergei Vladimirovich, you have a letter,” Anna handed him an envelope.

He accepted it with a silent smile. He stood a little longer at the window, reading the congratulations and the tiny letter. Anna watched him silently. She saw how at the end of the letter he shed tears, wiped away a tear. Then he slowly slipped the envelope containing the letter and postcard into his jacket pocket and dejectedly walked towards his room.

For a long time Anna did not dare to go in to him, so as not to disturb his solitude, but she nevertheless made up her mind and went in. He was lying on his back, his arm dangling from the bed, a letter lying next to him.

Frightened, she ran to the bed. He was barely alive.

- No, Uncle Sergei, do not! No! - she shouted, pressing the emergency call button.

Sergei barely heard her voice. He caught the first time Anna called him.

“No, Uncle Seryozha, don’t die, don’t, just not now,” she pleaded hysterically through tears in fright, still pressing the red emergency button.

Horrified, deciding not to wait for anyone, she herself took emergency measures to save.

“I don’t need anyone,” she continued through tears, “I’ll do everything perfectly myself. You don’t have to do anything.

Sergei Vladimirovich barely perceptibly smiled, catching familiar intonations.

Anna tried to determine his temperature with her lips. She stroked his face, forehead, eyes, cheeks, mouth with gentle hands. She cut the sweater with scissors, with sharp movements of both hands tore off the buttons of the shirt, T-shirt, bared her chest, moistened the rag with water from the decanter, applied it, sharply squeezed and released the heart muscle with both palms of her hands, then again and again, several times in a row. She tried to do artificial respiration, screamed, sobbed, prayed, writhed over him in exhaustion.

Sergei Vladimirovich was already in a trance, did not see her, but with all his soul and body he had no doubts, with the great confidence of an experienced person he was convinced that he was being caressed by none other than Zhanna, her lips were being applied to his lips, her heart was beating near him, trying to keep him in this world, but then her voice was heard from the other, opposite side, already from another world. His last thought and feeling was that he was again, for the umpteenth time in his life, between two women who loved him. He watched the duel with curiosity, who would outweigh and win whom, the young strong Anna or the sick, just operated Zhanna.

- Who will win this time, power, knowledge or love?

Jeanne was right. Everything in life is as simple as it is difficult... to be born, to live and...

The fight for life was still going on.

Is it worth leaving, is it worth staying? That is the question?

In Zoya Mikhailovna's room, the deputy head physician insistently demanded to read the contents of the envelope.

"In the end, we are obliged to know the reason for what served as the impetus for his experiences," Zoya Mikhailovna explained.

Anna, after a short resistance, gave up.

The letter was sent from the Nth part of the Navy (Navy), signed by a certain Oleg Vyacheslavovich. After the New Year's congratulations, there was a request to forgive the act of his mother, who at one time left him with a famous composer and moved to another city, a message that the sender's officer service ends in two or three years, and then he will certainly come, visit him and even if he agrees, he will take him to live with him and with his young wife.

- And who is Oleg Vyacheslavovich? - Anna asked.

- It seems that the son of his ex-wife, - explained Zoya Mikhailovna.

It turns out that he is to blame for everything.

Who knows, who knows!

On one of the ships of the Navy, a command was heard from the mouthpiece for everyone to take their places.

- Full speed ahead!

The warship sailed from the port to carry out the next combat mission. A group of seagulls accompanied the military sailors on a long voyage.

For today, weather forecasters announced windy cold and stormy weather and seagulls could hardly carry military sailors far into the sea.

08.1989

FUGITIVE

The dazzling whiteness of her slender and long legs shook the eyes of passers-by turned towards her. The tenderness and gracefulness of her gait fascinated everyone who had even the slightest understanding of girlish beauty. The harmony of the figure was expressively complemented by somewhat emaciated, narrow hips. She didn't walk, she swam. The little face barely moved. Only eyes thoughtfully rushed into the distance, as if into non-existence, transcendence, seeing the invisible. Small nose and mouth emphasized their mystery and mystery. Divine!

A melody was heard along the street: "Oh, what a woman, what a woman, I would like that."

- My God, to catch up with her, to take her in my arms, to hug her with all my strength.

- Leave it! It's like you don't know what they bite!

- Yes, you look! It's the same deity! I'm sorry, but I'll still follow her.

- Stop!

- I'm running. You see, he's leaving. I'll call you in the evening.

But she's not yours!

- Well, then I'll find out whose!

She very quickly discovered the pursuer, decided to break away immediately and turned sharply around the corner. In vain. It was not possible to leave, even fleeing. His charm was faster than her tender legs. She ran to the newly painted light blue fence, almost flew up on it, hesitated a little, trying on, and, holding on, jumped to the other side.

"Oh, what a shame!" exclaimed the pursuer. He pushed unsuccessfully against the wooden wall, and cursed his "luck". Having lost hope at least to see the fugitive once again, drooping, wandered along the fence. Fate, taking pity on him, sympathetically knocked out an uneven window in the timber.

From the garbage can, the already familiar eyes of the fugitive stared at him intently. Convinced of her safety, she complacently and leisurely resorted to the eternal "meow, meow."

"What a thoroughbred she is!" the pursuer was annoyed. That would be to catch her and take her home. But if you do it by force, it can really scratch. Or at least get her a kitten. They say that cats are good at relieving blood pressure, but mothers sometimes have such high blood pressure! However, she will probably have to be persuaded. And what did I do?!

"Achiko, is that you?" the mother asked, hearing the front door slam.

Yes, mom, me!

“Where are you, son, still?” How long can you wait?!

“No one came, ma, or maybe someone called?”

- No, dear, no, sit down to eat, I didn't wait for you.

Archil was sitting at the window and peered thoughtfully from the height of the sixth floor into the small yard in front of his large-panel house. Around, next to, opposite, modern residential eight-story buildings huddled and rose.

“Better a terrible end than horror without end,” Archil went over in his mind all sorts of options for continuing his labor activity.

The new chief sent a request and obtained consent to transfer Archil to his old job, and he himself drove off on a long business trip to one of the European cities for an international symposium. At the old job, having received this information, they fussed, fussed in the hope of keeping Archil permanently and began to fuss about it in every possible way, although officially the go-ahead for his translation was given.

And now, for a long time, Archil was without official work, although he attended both jobs, sometimes even on the same day.

From his last work, Archil did not take even a piece of paper with him, he left there all the reports, calculations, articles that came out of his hands, and on the former he did not even have a table.

- A new working life will begin with new leaves, - he thought, savoring the moment when he completely said goodbye to the recent past, almost still present. Although the parting seemed almost painful, because he loved his team and even noticed a reciprocal sympathy for himself.

- Work is not glued here, and that's it! Outside the window are new times, perhaps you need to try them on and fit in, - he convinced himself, everything goes on as usual and, in general, for the better.

But, of course, Ketino put the last point in the decision. He could not comprehend the secret of her final "no" and was lost in conjecture.

- What was it? - he was perplexed, - And why did she suddenly turn away from me?

Sooner or later it had to happen. At one fine moment, the equality of identities was violated, and he took a step, alas, in the wrong direction, crossed the line, after which the inner world began.

Behind the brilliance of her inner world, which opened to his eyes, he did not even hear or notice how the door slammed shut behind him. Yes, it was much easier to enter this world than to leave its many labyrinths, although in general

they were not very strongly invited there and it was possible to penetrate with considerable difficulty and ordeal.

Was it worth it, however, to climb into a colorful labyrinth, then to get lost in it and die from exhaustion? Was it worth it to lose yourself and join the unknown, mysterious, unpredictable?

He was very lucky, as he considered, he got on a successful circle and in the end went to the same line, from where he started, he began his journey. The internal alarm and self-defense system worked, which itself expelled the foreign body right through the front door. Of course, he managed to catch something in this system, to figure it out, far from everything he equally liked, but in general, he recognized he himself, in the interior of Japanese technology and the inner world of a woman, swarming around - even if walking around as a sightseer around their most attractive sights - is an unattractive and unsafe occupation.

He had to deal with such closed internal systems of Japanese technology, covered with a gypsum shell, that if the integrity of this shell was violated, the system crumbled into small screws and parts with the impossibility of reassembling them.

- Well done Japanese! They thought to keep the secret of their designs, - Archil admired. - In any case, it is much more honest than to act like some kind of wild plant that lures insects into the charming depths of its wonderful fragrant flowers, and then squeezing the petals and easily killing under them the unfortunate one who has lost sense of danger victim.

“Yes, but how did it happen that the system didn’t swallow me, but spit it back out,” he wondered, “and then completely turned away from me, refused. Why would she let me in then?”

“Perhaps, with your help, she washed herself, cleansed herself,” an inner voice prompted her version, “perhaps, together with you, she rejected, spit out all the unnecessary, superfluous, unwanted that lurked in her and what she wanted to get rid of?”

- Yes, but why me? - Archil was interested.

“You will never know this,” an inner voice responded, “she just looked closely, searched, and finally decided to choose you.

- It turns out that I am her chosen one ?!

- In a way, but just for this case.

“Understood,” Archil seemed to conclude.

“Probably not,” the inner voice continued its conclusions, “most likely she wanted to appear in all her glory, and then, noticing that she liked it, she immediately truncated it, the system worked and spit me out. She didn’t gobble

it up, she didn't leave it inside herself, but she spat it out so as not to frighten off the next maturing one.

- What, in this case, feeds it? - Archil thought, but it immediately cleared up in the brain, - ah, ..., ah, - he drawled, it's understandable! - The system feeds on the energy of visitors. Here's a screen for you. That's why I feel tired after that and as if rumbled.

What kind of nonsense to rack your brains in an attempt to guess the intention in the behavior of women. Sometimes they themselves do not know, and sometimes they forget why they acted that way in a given situation. As for the future, there is nothing to talk about. Here they are guided by Kafka's assumption and think one thing, say another, and do a third.

- Lord, - Archil brushed himself off the oncoming thoughts. - Just a headache! He was still looking out the window, watching the boys playing football.

Tall old poplar trees gently waved their tops, barely rustling their green foliage.

Swifts recently flown into the city circled the sky in large circles with a terrifying scream, squeak and wail that terrified people.

- Directly hysterical flying cows, - Archil concluded, - and not tender swallows. Skins flying and selling! As we have difficulties, cold, winter, problems, so they don't want to know you and, without asking anyone, every year at the appointed hour, they break down and fly away to warm countries, not like faithful sparrows.

They rush about like mad, in the vault of heaven. What drives them? Is it really just that people in life are hungry! But not only, but also a thirst for profit? As if there are no birds in the world, except for them. Why such hysteria, excitement, when you can do everything calmly and without too much noise?

Under the roof of the upper, technical floor of the eight-story building opposite, between the upper and lower panels of the attic, a small groove darkened, a niche into which the same crazy swift flew in and out with terrible speed.

"Here, you brainless fool," Archil was indignant, "he will hit his head against the wall and go later, remember your name!"

After one of the unsuccessful departures from the niche, the bird hesitated, slid down to accelerate for takeoff, got its foot into a wire loop and, sensing that it had fallen into a trap, raised a panicked scream, squeal and squeak to the whole neighborhood.

- What a fool, your mother, - Archil could not restrain himself, - what did you need there, you couldn't find a better place!

The bird fluttered uninterruptedly, squeaked tirelessly, tried to free its leg, which was stuck in a trap.

From all sides flocked pichuga. Sparrows were the first. They sat down near the victim, on vertical wires running from the floors to the roof, looked with curiosity at the sufferer, tried to help at least something, could not do anything, flew off to the side, then flew up again, jumped in place, flew off again, and so several times.

Pigeons appeared from other birds, perched on the flat roof of the house, some even on the ledge of the interfloor ceiling. Thrushes and other trifles also flew up, but, alas, they turned out to be only observers and, in essence, did not help the victim in any way.

“Poor thing, she can’t get out anymore,” sighed her mother, who was standing next to Archil, watching what happened.

- But how and with what can one help her? - Archil was interested.

“Nothing now,” his mother answered him with conviction.

“Not yet,” Archil said stubbornly.

The vain efforts and attempts of Archil and the neighbors from the last floor of the house opposite turned out to be fruitless. To misfortune As a matter of fact for the poor fellow, already in weakness hanging head down on the injured leg, the nearest window opening was blocked with brickwork long before the incident, so it was impossible to get close to the victim. We tried the method that Archil directed from his window, directing the actions of a neighbor from the house opposite, who, first with a mop, and then with some kind of bizarre tool made of tied mop, stick and wire, tried either to pick up the poor fellow with a wire, then to plant her, raise her and, in the meantime, free her leg from captivity. This took the rest of the day and evening, until it got dark, but the attempts did not bring the slightest result.

The bird felt that they were trying to help her. Every time when the end of the stick lifted her up, she rested her free foot against the edge of the panel with a deafening squeak, held this position for a long time, and when the stick was removed, she again hung upside down.

“It’s a pity for the bird, and there will be no rest from it all night,” Archil assumed and lamented.

He made the last attempt himself, running around the residents of the lower floors of both houses. One of the neighbors said that she would not let her, to be sure, clever and agile husband on the roof, because, although the swift was very sorry, her husband was dearer to her.

Old and young, as a sign of impotence, shrugged.

“Lord,” Archil prayed in his soul, “do not let her die, because she is your creation.”

In the end, everyone resigned themselves to the inevitable, both birds and people, and went home.

All night long, the unfortunate victim hung upside down on his leg, without making a sound.

And all night Archil was prevented from sleeping by a festering wound on the toe of his left foot, throbbing, aching and abscessing.

“God forbid you have to go to a surgeon,” Archil thought with horror, “and then another laser to dry the pus.”

He recently underwent such a procedure in a new commercial clinic and the sensations from the mini-operation were still fresh and alive. I remember what it cost him.

- No, not now! Now it is impossible, - Archil dismissed, - now there is neither physical strength, nor financial opportunities. But the situation could worsen at any time.

The next morning Archil got up upset and gloomy.

“Probably already that one,” he thought about the haircut.

He walked around the room in which his mother slept and whose windows looked at the old depressing picture.

- You know, - his mother delighted, - and your swallow is still alive!

Archil's heart skipped a beat with happiness. He ran to the window and looked out. The poor thing clung to the edge of the floor slab with her healthy leg, sat head up, as if nothing had happened, and stared at the longed-for sky, where her relatives chirped happily, rushed with pleasure under the cloudless clear dome.

Everything inside of him tossed and turned upside down.

- If I were not a man ... - he rushed out of the room, speeding up the steps preceding the exit from the house.

“Where are you going so early?” - his mother threw him anxiously after him, “at least have breakfast!”

“Thank you, ma,” Archil slammed the door behind him, “save breakfast for dinner.”

Limping, he went out onto the track to catch a fixed-route taxi. He looked at the sky with a smile.

- I agree to exchange my health for the release of her leg.

Having specified the route and destination to himself, he waited for the desired number.

In one of the district fire departments it was not crowded. Firefighters, cheerful, healthy young guys, dispersed throughout the territory of the PO. Who washed the only car in the garage, a red ZIL, who loitered in the control room, who killed the goat.

Seeing a stranger, they asked him, ahead of counter questions.

Archil preferred to speak with the leader of the "red" brigade, identifying him immediately, before he introduced himself and said that the chief and his deputy were not in place.

"They are a bit late in the morning," he explained to the interlocutor.

- Shalva, help me out, brother! There is one thing, - the interlocutor explained in turn.

Shalva listened attentively to Archil and, on reflection, cut off any hope of fulfilling the request.

- Archil, understand, after several districts were united, ours was left with one car. Her stairs only reach the fifth floor, and you don't need water! We need attack aircraft with a special belt and a good, long, strong rope. We, perhaps, will find stormtroopers at home, but there is no rope.

"Firstly, I'll buy you a rope," Archil promised, "and secondly, where can I temporarily remove it from. From the barrier, at the entrance.

- Are you crazy? So thin! It needs a special, strong and thick one.

"Maybe we should wait and talk to the boss?"

- What's the point? They will tell you the same thing, the fireman doubted.

Archil was upset.

- Well, here's the thing, buddy, don't hang your nose, but go to the central unified fire station, try your luck there. I think they definitely have a rope.

On the way, Archil met a friend, after a greeting and the usual questions, he inquired:

- Where are you going?

I'm looking for rope! Behind the rope, - Archil informed him.

"Hmm," the friend chuckled, "but why do you need it? Don't say you were going to hang yourself.

"I don't want it for myself, but for others!"

Seems you asked?

- Yes. Needed for business.

- Well, then it's clear, come on, be healthy orov.

In the central united regional substation, the conversation with the dispatcher also turned out to be difficult.

- In principle, there is a rope, and you can find guys, but what are you, a citizen? What time is it to mess with swallows? Imagine, I took off a team for this case, and here is a challenge. What then?

“Batono Guram, come up with something, otherwise I won’t leave here,” Archil sat down on a chair that turned up.

- Well, sit as long as you like.

Pretty soon, convinced of the determination and perseverance of the visitor, the dispatcher internally responded to his spiritual impulse.

“Call Levan to me!” he ordered. - Levan, that’s the way it is. Swift needs to be saved. Will you go?

- I’ll go, Guram Vladimirovich, - the fireman agreed somewhat hesitantly.

- Yes, and by the way, how much will you pay for this business? - the chief dispatcher, as if casually, threw.

Archil took all the remaining pocket money out of his pocket ...

- Are you kidding or joking? For such shisha to climb to the top floor?

- All that is, - Archil confessed sadly and frankly.

Trades have been delayed.

- And you know that if the guys fly off the top of the tower, then I face a prison.

- Guram Vladimirovich, let’s go with Levan for now, let’s see, it will be visible there, on the spot. It’s risky, but possible and doable.

The chief realized that there was no point in arguing with Archil. He once again exchanged glances with Levan. He hesitated, nodding his head slightly.

- Well, okay, go for now, figure it out on the spot. And yet, Levan, look there! If the matter is super-serious, do not ruin yourself because of the bird. Grab someone else and a quick car from the guys! Archil pays for the road. Well, let’s.

- Here is a swindler, but, - Archil was surprised, - he achieved his goal ..

“Anzor, come here, there’s something to do,” Levan called a short guy, “the swift needs to be saved, the unfortunate one hangs on the ledge by the leg.

- No, I will never save them on principle! - he resolutely refused. - They are predators, last year they ate eggs in the nests of sparrows.

- Zaza, help me out, - Levan turned to another, light, slender walker, - gasoline is behind them!

Zaza, without hesitation, agreed, and soon three zhurny rushed in a passenger car.

The unfortunate victim floundered all the time, breaking out of the last waning strength.

Levan backed up the young light-bodied Zazu, who was tied around a special belt with a thick rope. Levan gradually let go of her end, and Zaza slowly and carefully approached the captive from the roof of the technical floor. It was already reached, the bird fluttered with renewed vigor in fright. Zaza pulled a pair of wire cutters out of his pocket, pulled himself up, and cut the protruding ends of the wire.

The bird began to fall down, but immediately, with enviable ease, emerging from a corkscrew, shot up like a bullet into the heavenly expanse, uttering a joyful triumphant cry, as if believing and not believing in liberation.

Rescuers have already gathered below, near the car. Zaza recounted the details of the operation with infectious joy.

“He turned out to be painfully healthy and lucky,” he explained cheerfully, “only on his left leg there was still a deep dent from the wire and futile attempts to free him, well, nothing, now he will live a long time.

Levan smiled happily.

- Well, - Archil addressed him, - how long did your mini-chef hesitate about this operation? Now what do you say, hand on heart? Should it have been done or not?

“Of course, Archil, no doubt,” Levan answered with conviction.

- Here, Levan, is all I have, and thank you guys very much. Zaza, you get it, - Archil thanked, handing out the last money.

- Archil, I'm sorry we're taking it, - Levan justified himself. - You know what a difficult situation we have now. The salary has been knocked down to a minimum, and even that is not given out on time, they are delayed and dragged for months. In general, if you want to know, there is almost no work at all in the summer, and we only hold on to such challenges. Recently, a dove was filmed from a high tree.

We talked a little more and finally parted ways.

- Well, now, you can calm down, - Archil sighed and looked at the sky with hope.

He glanced at his watch - perhaps it's too late to go to the clinic, no one will be there anymore. And tomorrow... tomorrow we'll see.

By the next morning, almost a miracle had happened. The finger stopped hurting. The leg began to improve, and the trip to the clinic was canceled.

- It really turned out to be an exchange, foot for foot, - Archil grinned.

A couple of days later, at night, either in a dream, or in the intervals between awakenings and falling asleep, Archil had a vision, a blurry face with brightly shining eyes, tirelessly looking at him.

“Don't be afraid,” Archil's inner voice reassured him.

- Swift? - Archil was surprised.

His eyes closed in agreement and reopened. Strizh thanked Archil for saving him.

- This is nonsense, no thanks, I had to do this, - Archil was embarrassed, - what I did in my past is much worse. I hunted birds and killed them in abundance when I was not at all hungry.

“But you already repented of this and confessed to the priest,” objected the swift, “and these sins have already been forgiven you.

“Now listen to me, Archil, I don't have much time. I am your new hope, unfulfilled dream, freedom of thought, exit and resolution. I know it Yu. And you saved not only me, but yourself. I have to be here all summer, and before I fly away with my relatives to warm countries, you must trust me with your innermost dream, which I will take on my wings with me to where it is destined to come true and come true. Think it over and open up to me. Without it, I won't fly. Understandably?

- It's clear, - Archil agreed either in a dream or waking up.

“I will also tell you something that I am not ordered to talk about and that could cost me my life. The time is not far off when troubled times will begin in your country. And everything that you dreamed about in this life, it is desirable to be in time before these times.

Archil was already asleep and did not hear the end of the conversation with a mysterious voice.

More than a month have passed. The new chief, immediately upon his return from a business trip, took a vacation and disappeared, believing that the issue of Archil had long been resolved.

Archil, in order to avoid various bites, took the remaining vacation days and money from his old job and went to the mountains with a small friendly group of comrades.

When he returned, he noticed that the city was nervous and worried. The struggle for independence, various new parties, the growing national liberation movement in his and neighboring countries.

By the beginning of September, the new chief was surprised to find that the involved transfer to the World Research Center of the person he wanted had been put on hold. It didn't take much effort to push and speed it up.

On one of the clear sunny autumn days, Archil left early for a new job. He hurried to the meeting.

Between the buildings of eight-story buildings, he noticed something vague and black, lying on the road. Approaching, peered and cried out in horror. A sharp, burning pain shot through his heart.

- My God, swift! - he gasped, bent down, picked up the lifeless body of a bird in his arms. The pain ran through his heart and did not leave him. He wept bitterly - a deep dent was felt on the left leg of the bird.

- Why? Why did you do this?" Archil whispered through tears. "It was a dream, just some kind of ridiculous dream..."

- What happens? What was the point of saving you? Forgive me, forgive me for being late with the answer, and, to be honest, I forgot about everything a long time ago, did not attach any importance to sleep.

To the death of many birds on the hunt was added the death of this one.

Everything in life ran away from me. I was betrayed at every turn. Well, why, why did you act like they did?

He betrayed the swift to the ground in a secluded, easily remembered place.

Archil was late for the morning meeting. Moreover, on that day he did not go to work at all, for which he had to write an explanation and assurances that this would not happen again.

A couple of years later, incessant internecine wars broke out in the country: civil, interethnic, hunger, cold, and many other hardships. They lasted a long time, destroyed many lives, crippled many destinies, pushed many out of the country. The country was gradually devastated, people fled like rats from a sinking ship. The most daring, like musicians from the mighty Titanic, managed to fearlessly look death in the eye and, knowing about their doom, masterfully play their instrument.

History recalls that only those who descended from it managed to escape from the great Titanic, just as only those who ascended Noah's Ark survived during the flood.

The bright, but fading rays of the early autumn sun caressed the sleeping beauty, prompting from time to time to forced mimic movements. It looks like she begged the luminary to leave her alone. But the rays of the sun this morning were particularly intrusive and gradually turned the sleeping beauty into an awakening one.

Finally, finally awake, she got up from her bed and began her morning stretches. Then she walked to the bathroom with her gentle and soft step. Passing by a large trellis mirror, she suddenly stopped and looked at herself from the side. She stood in front of the mirror absolutely naked, in which her mother gave

birth, and admired the beauty of her body. For a long time she looked at herself from different angles and agreed with herself that she was really irresistible.

“Now I’m beginning to understand peasants,” she thought, not without self-satisfaction, “but they don’t know one thing - that I’m running away from those who reach out to me and are about to take possession of me. I linger only in front of those who deserve it with their patience and work and long for me. And I stay with him for a long time, if not forever.

“A really excellent figure, beautiful breasts and pretty legs,” the beauty continued to enjoy her appearance. “Well, okay, everything is clear with men, but what do women find in me? Many people are crazy about me, although they do not know me well and completely. To be honest, I don't even really know myself. Sometimes I even feel like I'm not me at all. Or not only me, but also someone else. I know one thing for sure: I do not love those who love and thirst for me. And I come unexpectedly, unexpectedly to those who do not wait at all and do not want me.

The furniture store's working day began early in the morning with brisk sales contracts. There was a trade in imported furniture, advertised by various TV and radio programs, and, in addition to the constant visitors, drivers of vehicles were also jostling, wishing to receive at least some order for the transportation of purchased furniture.

- Wano, what are you doing there! Free the trellis with the mirror and take it out for loading on that light green truck, - the dry voice of one of the shop assistants dressed in overalls was heard.

- Mikhailovich, look what a beauty is staring into the mirror! For the first time in my life I see this.

“Yes, throw it aside with your foot, and take out the trellis,” Mikhailovich answered angrily.

- Throw yourself away. What if it's luck or wish fulfillment?" Vano protested.

“A cretin,” Mikhailovich muttered and, flying up, with a sharp movement of his leg, threw the beauty aside. She moaned plaintively and lingeringly: "Meow ...".

- Well, come on and let's take it out. You see, people are waiting! - Mikhailovich was indignant.

The bruised beauty was recovering from the pain inflicted on her by a man. What worried her now, however, was not the physical pain still felt, but a new word thrown by a man.

“Luck,” she repeated, “good luck!” I wonder what she is and what she is like? - she hurried to run out of the store and, moaning, went to the cliff, from where

the panorama of the city river embankment opened. she loved these places and took her soul here when people offended her.

"Luck," she kept repeating. "So that's my name... so that's my name?" But what does it mean?

And in response there was a loud chirping and she raised her head. High in the sky I saw a flock of migratory birds flying in a loose wedge up the river. They flew, as it seemed to her, from nowhere to nowhere.

"I don't know about luck," looking at the migratory birds, "but happiness is something that flies past you, over your head."

10.1989

VERONICA

Carlo was coming out of the front door of the Bryusovs. He turned up the collar of his light jacket and looked up at the sky.

The breeze gently drove islands of white clouds to the north.

“Now it will be soon,” Carlo said to himself, gazing appraisingly at the small rise ahead.

“And with that, it’s all right,” he continued with inner satisfaction, taking out scraps of newspaper from his pocket and dropping them into a trash can on the sidewalk, “one more good deed has been done, and it’s somehow more pleasant in my soul, at least with something, but they supported people in a difficult minute. The only pity is that they themselves are unaware that this difficult, lengthy minute of several months could, in principle, have been avoided. Damn it, is the real really reasonable?”

“No, no, not at all,” the consciousness immediately protested.

It was about two hundred meters upstairs to the bus stop, and much more downstairs.

Carlo chose the last route.

- Everything! For today, all plans are fully implemented, you can go home to read with peace of mind - well, it has accumulated lately! - write - no less. Entire colonnades of paper pile up over the shelves, over the table, over the nightstand, over the double bed.

“Now just go home, go home!” he gave commands to himself, although he was in no hurry to add a step.

The road at that moment led past the park, where, much more than on the streets of the city, one could feel the awakening of nature, the breath of spring, fussy sparrows called loudly to each other and their chirping was now and then interrupted by the soulful melodies of black yellow-billed blackbirds.

In the depths of the park, from a great height, a huge cascade of water ran down the natural steps of the mountainside, ringing with mysterious motifs. Two little girls enjoyed the attempts of a white lap dog to intercept a rubber ball flying over her head.

Several people were walking in the park. There was no need to sit on benches for a long time reading newspapers or talking, as happens in late spring, summer, and especially autumn, now.

- My God! What perfection, what harmony! - Carlo was delighted. - And much more than in people! The one-sided, incomplete truths of each of them collide and break this bliss with the storm of their anger and the lightning of

indignation, and then, as if trying to calm down and calm down, fall on everyone like a pouring rain.

- How did my namesake write there? - he tried to remember. - It seems like this: "You can't explain life with consciousness, you need to try to understand that certain living conditions form a certain human consciousness" ... And yet, being, they say, determines human consciousness. Yes, that seems to be the case. Perhaps this is the key to a partial unraveling of the reason for the enmity that flared up with renewed vigor between groups of employees of the institute? ...

- May be.

- And how well, quietly and peacefully it all began. What enthusiasm suddenly went out. It must be, indeed, this ill-fated "suddenly" of Dostoevsky.

"Wait, Carlo, wait," an inner voice sobered, "something seems to be missing here. What else did your namesake Karl Marx have? Oh yes! "Doubt everything." Or this: "I know only one thing, that I am not a Marxist." It turns out that he felt that he partly contradicted and denied himself. What was it expressed in, at least in those words that hastily come to my head now? Is it not that he uttered them as according to Tyutchev: "A thought uttered is a lie." In any case, not in the fact that human activity and life is determined by its purposeful action, only at the order and call of the rational. So reasonable is reasonable.

"Well done, Carlo," he praised his own inner voice, not without irony, and, catching an unpleasant feeling of realizing the stupidity of the methods of his conclusions, tried to escape from himself, again plunge into the pleasure of the surrounding noisy, but blissful calm. Carlo always felt happier outside of himself, and this depressed him. He decided to skip this stop and moved on to the next one.

Thoughts about troubles in the service, however, did not leave him and pursued him.

- But, I remember, even in the recent past, the leaders of the opposing factions were on good terms, went almost as friends, despite the difference in age. Times change, people change. Everything disappears, and friendship, and even love.

When pronouncing the last word, the name Veronica surfaced in my memory.

"Beloved Nika," Carlo muttered maliciously. "Who would have thought!" he complained sadly. "God, how I loved her. And love is fleeting. Whatever I did for her, and all in vain, she threw it all into the water. And endless remarks and reproaches! Cynical and hypocritical tone! Demonstration of alleged superiority, bullying over trifles..

Much more came to mind and mind.

The feeling of constant pain for the fact that he was often not fully understood, more and more filled one side of the communicating vessel - its other side was overflowing with disgust and disgust.

- These constant trials, swearing and scrapes in the presence of strangers. God, what rubbish!

It got darker and darker.

And again the desire to be out of himself took possession of him. He looked back and saw a trolley bus catching up with him. It was almost full, but not crowded, so him with those boo the passengers who were waiting at the bus stop had to fill in some voids and gaps in the electric car. It was not possible to get up in front, and Carlo found himself on the back platform, where he easily and selflessly indulged in involuntary eavesdropping on the conversations of passengers.

After a couple of stops, it became a little looser, which allowed Carlo to slowly move towards the middle platform.

His hearing was suddenly cut through by the energetic appeals of a certain lady.

- Gena, come on! What are you doing there? You don't know what, now there's a stop at the market, the driver won't open the back door, so we'll stay, to hell, we won't have time to get off.

- Well, Lenchka, you see how many people there are. You won't pass right away, and even with these buckets! Young man, either go through, or somehow let me through, - Gena called in turn.

"Look, these young people are standing there, so indifferent, if only they could help the elderly," the plump old woman on the bench by the window was indignant. They rise in front and stand there. They completely lost their conscience.

Carlo moved on to the front landing, and settled down not far from the doors. Meanwhile, a woman in a headscarf and a dressing gown, Gena's companion, ahead of Carlo, got out onto the sidewalk and began to wait with two large bags.

- Gena, well, you live there! - she commanded.

"Yes, I can't," Gene answered with anguish.

- Oh, how clumsy! My God! Two buckets of potatoes are not able to carry. Well, come on over here!

Rude cries were heard addressed to the driver: "Drive on, what have you become, like a donkey! You don't see, you close the movement", which turned into a protracted howl of sirens.

The trolleybus suddenly started moving, so that the driver did not have time to release all the passengers and close the doors. He was taken aback and, barely coming to his senses, braked sharply.

- If the speech of a friend hurts your hearing, there is no longer the slightest need for it! - Carlo stated to himself.

Here Gena could not keep his balance and leaned forward with a bucket of potatoes in his raised hand.

Carlo felt a sharp blow to the head.

For a moment he lost consciousness, passed out.

He woke up under a tree, against which an unfamiliar guy propped up and supported him, while an unfamiliar woman also applied a wet handkerchief to his head.

“Son, can you call an ambulance?” the woman suggested, looking pitifully at him.

Carlo noticed traces of blood on the handkerchief. He put his hand on the wound and pulled back to look at her. There was little blood.

- No, no, thank you, - Carlo said embarrassedly and tried to take the first steps.

Walking a little way, he noticed the column, got to it, refreshed the compress and sat down on a box lying unattended nearby. I sat down and slowly came to my senses. On the opposite side, near the very territory of the market, I noticed an advertisement for the Veronika cooperative.

- Something new! - He noted to himself and decided to inquire.

The stall door was locked. Women's clothes on hangers were visible through the window.

Squeezing between the stalls of the collective farm market, partly interested in the prices of products, Carlo imperceptibly approached the rows where they sold flowers:

- How do you sell, father, your red carnations?

- As usual on such a holiday, - the seller named the price and immediately added: - I can make you a discount.

- I don't need your discount, it's better to wrap this bouquet for me more beautifully.

- How, all?

- Yes, all! - I understand this, a real man! - the delighted seller admired.

Carlo walked down the street in an embrace with a bouquet of scarlet carnations and was perplexed.

“God, what a fool I am!” No, It is Impossible. Ultimately, this is unwise. Is it reasonable and unreasonable?

Tormented by doubts and internal confrontation, Carlo approached the wide and high door and, under the bell, found the surname.

- Yes, it is, this surname! So I'm wrong, he thought.

He stood in front of the door for some more time in a daze. Then he made up his mind and rang twice in four cycles: "Ve-ro-no-ka", "Ve-ro-no-ka". So he always called when he came to her in this house.

There was no answer.

Carlo again, just like the first time, kissed the bell.

Again there was no answer.

He waited a few minutes, repeated his action again, and suddenly felt his heart shrink into a ball, his knees trembled, and his strength left his body.

- Veronica! Well, where are you?! Please come and open the door for me. I miss you so much and I want to see you," he squealed silently in exhaustion and, as if knocked down, with a bouquet of red joy and life, bowed slightly in front of her door in the hope of catching even the slightest rustle behind her, but in vain.

Everything was the same as in the past, long ago, when she did not open the doors of her heart to him. He loved her and it amused her. So much time has passed. He placed a bouquet of flowers near her door and headed for the exit.

"This ill-fated blow to the head is to blame for everything," he went out of the entrance, bowing his head.

On the street, according to custom, there was an unpleasant and annoying noise, the screech of sirens of chaotically rushing cars. Street life was in full swing.

Someone was in a hurry somewhere, someone was talking to someone, someone was looking for something. A sober mind and a third-party look could not appreciate and understand the origin dressing around and now.

03.1990

PAIN DEALERS

Earth, Earth! This native firmament is too unsteady to stand on it for a long time in the same place.

In this case, it seems to be leaving, slipping out from under the feet, bending, falling under their weight, and therefore it is best to move along it, running, as desired in the song with the words: "to run barefoot through the dew ..." It is the same in life, it is impossible to stop, and sometimes he did not have time to come, take root in the workplace or other biosocial living space, and it is already time to leave. That must be why, Tom supposed, and he won every time he had to leave, just when he had to. However, this departure, to be honest, was prepared by the entire course of social and life circumstances. The next of them was invariably justified by the upcoming one, and only when leaving did he manage to stay. But he did not leave artificially and not in order to stay, but remained because he had to, involuntarily, out of compulsion to leave.

He was aware that one day, probably, he would have to or would have to leave life as well. Perhaps he somehow prepared himself for the future in this way, it may well be. But with each departure, parting with people turned out to be the most painful of all, which, in general, as he believed, if he counted, then one or two and counted, in which, however, there remained a living, torn piece of his heart. And if he loved this life, then love was love for these people. Sometimes love, as it turned out later, was not enough for him, although theoretically Tom did not agree with this, and then incompatibility came into play. It happens that two good people meet, get close, fall in love and suddenly (this is Dostoevsky's "suddenly") ... as they say - no luck. However, sooner or later, no matter how hard it is, no matter how painful it is, one of the two or of several always leaves. And the worst thing for Tom turned out to be not that he had to come to terms with the objectivity of what was happening, but that he even managed to fall in love! - to leave defeated, defeated, and the more pain he experienced from this feeling, the sweeter this inner feeling seemed to him. He had heard that when you repeatedly fall, you learn to fall, but that you fall in love with it - never. Moreover, he often sniffed out an unfavorable, losing situation for himself, and, as if to spite himself, he got into it with arms and legs, all the way.

"But why?" he often asked himself and categorically disagreed with himself when he responded to his own question: in order to grow inside, from within, in compensation.

He was neither a masochist nor a melancholic, nor was he a loser, perhaps more of a romantic seeker?

Maybe, maybe, at least he didn't know that himself. And he considered himself a failure most of the time.

At night, precisely at night, and most often at deep nights, a wave of hopelessness came over him, and he slowly, but with more and more noticeably increasing speed, began to rush about as if in a closed social space surrounding him with cold, high, thick reinforced concrete walls. . And each time, again and again, he discovered the same social formula, the wild interconnectedness of what is happening in the sphere that envelops it, in the event that at least one event falls out of the ensemble, leading to fragility and variability, and even the collapse of everything.

And then, with a shot from a pistol in the temple, the highest saying, advice, thundered and rumbled:

"Write, Tom, about it, write. Yes Yes! Right now here. Get up and write - it will save you.

He often followed the advice, the voice of a higher beginning, and it happened all night long until the morning - and sometimes and often, as if also to spite himself, succumbed to temptation, even if in the morning and all the next day extremely serious things at work. He could not deny himself that joy, that consolation and, one might say, pleasure, which he later called to himself "social orgasm", which, like the being to which he likened this phenomenon, had never existed either in the past or in the past. in the future, but only at that moment and always. And then the sounds of music and the multicolored light, the smells of rivers, forests and fields in one majestic wave smashed all the fences to smithereens, pulled them out, released them from captivity, until the next time. But when he neglected the call, hoping that he would write about the sensations and thoughts that visited him tomorrow or at another time, he lost, lost his instant treasure, acquisition, forgot about him as a single, integral organism, because it, like many other , crashed into pieces, crashed against those mighty rocks, whose name is life. It was possible, of course, to work on their restoration later, bringing together the particles, but that seemed to be an artificial process and its product, of course, was significantly inferior to its natural predecessor and rival. And, in general, it lost its meaning, because what was sore and unspoken soon made itself felt with annoying pain, like an abscess trying to escape, flow out, and this evacuation took place, of course, again at night, though already in a completely different ok race and context. And even on this, Tom became more and more convinced that what was destined to happen and what did not happen

would never happen again, and with each rediscovery of this formula, he froze for a moment, and then concentrated all his strength to failure and, without uttering a sound, maintaining an absolute external silence, shouted in silence, shouted as no one had ever shouted even aloud in the world.

Yes, the fate and life of a person are as majestic as they are cruel and insidious, and not everyone is forgiven for mistakes and mistakes. He considered it one of the most cruel of all the other numerous that the game called “life” offered him, rules and regulations, or rather even installations. And this argument, as it seemed to him, was enough not to love her, especially since in such cases, at numerous crossroads, she left him, as it happened, a minimum of time, and sometimes she didn’t give him at all and this or that the decision had to be taken simply on the go, including on the most complex issues, on which much later began to depend. It turned out that he measured seven times, and then, when it was necessary to cut off, it turned out that it was already too late, that there was nothing to cut and solve, the train left and it was impossible to catch up.

Yes, he understood that a white sheet of paper captures precisely those traces that you leave, those lines that you write, and not any others, just as some remain witnesses of one side of one and the same event, while others of its sides are different. Maybe that's why he left in his manuscripts, as a kind of gaps, blank blank sheets, containing nothing and at the same time containing everything, often did not agree on much, did not finish writing, did not complete, believing that it was not uncommon for cases and moments when both everyone can be told, hinted at, pointed out - without uttering a word, without writing a single line, or even a letter. What is it like for an artist to paint a picture without once brushing across the canvas? Silence seemed to him all-encompassing, all-containing and integral, and, having mentioned one or the other, one could miss everything else.

But in any case, the exception was, perhaps, that he would very much not want to live life in such a way that he did not live at all.

Another of his saddest misfortunes, Tom considered the environment at the place of residence, and in the family, which, it seemed to him, he discovered, to his chagrin, rather late. A bit late, later he learned that most manifestations, if not all in life, from the subjective side, are selective. Prior to that, he simply succumbed to the inner voice, the call of the heart, or something natural instinct that pushed him precisely onto the social path that he had to go through. And for this he was in many ways grateful to fate, which had not deceived him, who had chosen him.

He communicated and swam like a fish in an environment and environment completely different from what he later observed more and more clearly, the one that surrounded him in the distant and close neighborhood and at home. And he did not forget to thank the Almighty for not making him like many of them, even though he sometimes attacked those who deserved his respect.

“God, save and save,” he cried out in prayers with a feeling of wild fear and horror.

The environment, he believed, should also be selected brick by brick, as if from the world by thread, in order to weave something lovely, on which will depend on what you will be like in the future, your inner world, your creed, your worldview ...

But the social divergence with members of his own family, with relatives and friends was most offensive and painful for him, and the only, perhaps, the only limiter in the case of “spreading scissors” - growing opposites in views - he recognized only duties in relation to these people.

Another rule revealed to him accompanied processes, coincidences of circumstances that appeared before him in a completely logical and concise form from practice, the experience of his own life, convincing him that if the process is initially established, finds a hook and, having managed to gain a foothold, begins to develop, then it begins to be characterized by an indispensable the growth of inertia, mass and speed of its further movement and upon reaching a certain development, becomes irreversible. By virtue of the circumstances that had opened up, and earlier, obviously, purely intuitively, he tried to avoid contacts and contacts with other individuals that he did not like at first, and it never occurred to him for a second to doubt the correctness of his assessments and his choice, although he considered himself far from irreproachable in this area.

Well, what about Tom? In principle, she was right in that she considered herself a girl with a good appearance, especially since Tom did not attach paramount importance to the factor of appearance. What he could not say about her frivolous, and sometimes even vulgar, behavior.

Hee hee, ha ha, swearing, obscenities, expressions were used. From her foul language, the whole environment shied away. For greater expressiveness, she made faces, built grimaces, depicting different animals, mostly both zyan from the era of the primitive communal system. Figures from both hands were also used, and with minimal intervals.

And most importantly, she was characterized by inner arrogance and a surprisingly high opinion of herself, as the most knowledgeable, understanding

and treating others with condescension, decent indeed standing much higher than others. In a word, this constituted for Tom a set, a clot and a complex of wildness, leading him into a terrible inner irreconcilability and rage.

If virginity exists, Tom thought, then it is only of a social nature and woe to the person who loses it.

For almost ten years now, Tom had been in their house, rarely, but still, like a close friend of his sister.

And everything would have been the same as it used to be, like ships disperse in the sea, if it weren't for ...

Tom stood against the wall for a long time and looked at the picture, an amateur painter, given to his sister, a picture that, as the Chinese say, was worth as much as ten thousand words.

The man, standing with his back to the viewer, peered hopefully into the horizon, from where a pink-blue light sailboat surfaced - the hope of his soul. Here he approaches him, coincides with his gaze, stays alone with him for a long time, manages to run around the innermost corners of the heart, fulfills all whims and dreams. God, after all, if it happens in life, it's only once, and once this one rushes so fast that you don't have time, as they say, even to blink an eye, and, oh God, the first seconds of feeling that the sailboat is going a little faster yours, and you can't keep up with him, he is already leaving you, oh God, how is it, because he is leaving, well, stop him, well, at least someone ... And in pursuit of the lost silhouette, after the tears of pain in the eyes - be you damned forever, why did you even appear to me in this world. And silence, and again a tornado of violent pain that swept through the earth, and the groan of the soul, having aroused a gust of wind, again, for the umpteenth time, inspired and overtook arrays of black clouds, burst out with a terrible sudden thunder, a roar, shelling the promised land with hail and rain, all of it. riddled. However, this has been the custom for a long time, and it always happened when the soul perished and when it was unceremoniously, as if nothing had happened, was destroyed and killed.

- Yes, - thought Tom, - if a person dies, then first of all, when it happens socially.

For a long time he stood at the picture, which literally struck him. Although the skill of her performance was far from ideal, but what he read and saw in her ... Oh no, my God, this is absolutely impossible, - Tom resisted himself, - she could not have done such a thing. Is it something with her character? 1 Tom confusedly, uncertainly and dejectedly shook his head around, not understanding anything, and for the first time in his life it seemed to him that he really felt what it means to be in the forest and not see the trees behind it.

“No, no,” he later assured himself, “after all, what I saw, felt, read does not necessarily reflect the feelings and mindsets of the artist in this volume and in this context. No, I do not believe. Perhaps she slipped someone else's work to her sister in order to elevate herself ... but maybe ...

Doubt tore at his mind.

The subconscious suggested that far, far inside, somewhere behind the N-th door, this person is completely different from what his superficial, external mantle is perceived to be. But how can you get to this, N-th door, when you are completely rejected already on the outskirts of the very first one?

“Rejected or rejected?” asked Tom.

However, both of these concepts and definitions, expressing actions and being an attribute of what His Majesty called “impossibility” by Tom, were for him a kind of guarantor and shield against all kinds of attacks and speeches against him, which gave him some courage and protection from social upheavals and cataclysms, and a guide when deciding to enter a dark, mysterious and cold winding labyrinth unknown to him until now.

He could not risk anything, because the Impossibility is an impossibility, it is majestic and contains many complexes, contradictions and inconsistencies, which still smash a person even worse than death, all the posts are diluted. What pushed Tom to the decision to enter and go through this infernal labyrinth?

“Ah, I know,” Toma replied with her usual vulgarity and impudence, “you wanted to taste my donuts. Maybe you would like to stay with us today?”

“Fie on you,” Tom broke out in his soul, scolding, barely resisting the temptation to express it.

A wild desire to spit on everything, to swear at the artist, to get away from her, and forever, resisted and fought with no less wild and hellish desire to meet, see, gently touch her pain on the field, energy level, with the pain with which he already touched her, or rather in her picture, when he struggled to determine her true address, location in her soul. After all, this was so familiar to Tom, and therefore important, that it, this circumstance, obliged and called him to hellish patience. He was clearly aware that he, albeit with difficulty, would have to accept all her conditions.

Different in different manifests itself in different ways, and because, in part, one can judge the generality of a certain which traits, consistencies, according to the same results of the final manifestations. Pain, like a breath of wind, permeates everything and everything in this world with numerous energy fields, it also passes through the souls and bodies of all people and other living beings, but it clings and finds refuge not in every person and not in every creature. In different

ways happy and sad, rich and poor, are those for whom these winds pass without a trace, and those in whom they leave traces and imprints.

Yes, both Tom and Tom, in this respect, were the children of the same parents, the children of those hurricane winds that, having passed through their souls, burned their hearts in earnest. Perhaps this pain made them related in some way, despite the external and some internal absolute dissimilarity. Perhaps it was she who made them both great artists - her from the brush, and him from the pen, forever connecting and fettering their souls with an indestructible chain, invisible and weightless, but extremely strong. It is not given to words, they only felt it when they shied away from each other in different directions, barely catching the answer: both stand and do not scatter, do not forget, you are different, but my children, but otherwise behave as you wish. Plus, Tom was unmarried, Tom was unmarried, both looked forward to and wanted to meet the ideal, with the sailboat of hope, and in return ...

Tom went down the path of melancholy and sadness, quiet, silent and outwardly invisible dreams. But he soon discovered that the pain brought him, among other things, majesty and fortitude. He often took up the pen, like a saber, took off into the saddle of the most zealous horse and, furiously brandishing a "saber", trotted along the front of white paper, ink or paste, like blood, pouring out all the pain, again and again, fuller and fuller. . And this act was his forte, here he was an ace and equal to him, in this, as it seemed, there was no one on earth. He perceived every blow of fate, every failure, as a lightning strike, the pain that followed him swept up in his soul, after the battle, with rage, and the sheets of paper dotted with lines of pain brought the pleasure of newfound freedom and release.

The soul, completely poured out in ecstasy of what had happened, reveled in the sweetness of sensations. He won only by the consciousness that he had experienced defeat. And so always, again and again. But every time, with every battle and battle, his strength dried up, and no one except the Lord God knew how much more they would be enough for him.

As for Toma, she chose a completely different path, the path of outward cheerfulness, frivolity, indifference, recklessness, and many other negative things that, in her opinion, helped her survive. She could not lie only to herself, and when she was alone with herself, the tears falling from her eyes rang, responding to her mute questions: "Come to your senses, Tom, what is it to you? To flaunt oneself from the worst side is deliberate, because not a single normal and sane person does this. And then you are not a tomboy and not a boy, you are a girl who deserves more softness, femininity and tenderness," to which, to spite

herself, she impatiently dismissed: “No, I still won’t overpower myself and won’t remain even and monotonous.

- Damn this world with its cruelty and inhumanity, which made you so beautiful and made you unbearable, - Tom was indignant, - this is all from tactlessness and lack of culture. Blame the material and spiritual poverty and all the rest. And most of all he was infuriated by the company of short-grass males, constantly surrounding and pursuing her, striving to take advantage of the opportunity presented to them.

“Damn them,” Tom yelled at the top of his lungs, “damn them!” They taught her to look at the peasants as if they were scum and wild animals!

“No, Tom, you are wrong,” Tamara thought meanwhile, “and I will try to prove it to you. You only hide behind beautiful words and good deeds, but on occasion you will split, very simply and quickly, like a walnut, it is worth making only a mini-maximum of effort.

“Well, tell me, do you want to stay with us today?” A loud question sounded.

Everything rose in Tom's soul, he rushed to run, but an invisible thread held him tightly and did not let go.

"Tell me, where have you been all day today?"

Having sobered up, as if from a cold shower, Toma fell silent for a moment:

“You know, yesterday I managed to sell my painting, the one over there, remember, which you liked...”

There was a pause.

“For how much?” Tom asked, shuddering in his soul. “But why? Really you so supported existence?”

“Almost for next to nothing!” Toma fell silent, got up from her chair, went to the hanging bookshelves and, running her long, straight fingers along the rows of spines, counted them with a movement of tender lips, digging into the titles and quickly shifting her gaze from one to another.

“Tom,” she suddenly said, turning to him and lifting the end of the dress with movements of both hands, “do you like my legs?”

Tom briefly glanced at her legs, but quickly looked away, looked down with resentment and said to himself: “I like everything about you, except your behavior. And how can you explain and make it clear to you what is clear to you just like God's day, what is most important to me is your soul, which I will take out ayu from you that you sometimes feel with such pain. If I'm trying to steal, draw out of you, deprive you of the most important thing - your deadly sweet soul that I love, then what for me after that and in comparison with it are your

legs, and all your other girlish charms? Absolutely nothing. Well, how can you, fool, do not understand this?

Tom was angry, complained bitterly, offended, but was silent. He was insulted in the best of feelings, but he endured, for his soul made love with her soul, unknown to her and without her permission, as if she did not belong to her.

“You know, my relatives don’t like my legs, but here is one artist with whom I knew only one day, after the exhibition in my studio, he praised them very much and even kissed them,” she chirped with delight, especially the last words.

Tom was very upset by this confession of hers, it kind of broke him.

He became irritated, experienced hopeless pain and lost all control over himself. But I decided to satisfy her curiosity and please her with an allegedly correct assessment of herself.

“Yes, I am a male, a beast, an animal, and I really want to sleep with you,” Tom roared, “are you happy now?”

There was no force in the world that would have prompted Tom to raise his hand to her even a millimeter. She was sacred to him, he felt that he could never do this, never, under any circumstances, because he madly loved her soul and always yearned for her soul.

At the noise, Toma's mother and brother entered the room. Their faces showed awkwardness. Tom thought they heard his false confession. He was confused.

- Father, Tom! This is so unlike you, - Toma exclaimed with joy and surprise and even clapped, jumping up on the spot. - Mom, mom, I forced him to make a confession.

“Shameless,” her mother answered her sternly, and, without having time to glance at Tom, she heard in response from her:

- Well, what happened, mom! We're joking.

- Hmm, - mother shook her head, - wow jokes, - and together with her son she went to the kitchen.

After this incident, Tom did not stay with Toma, and this time he left almost silently, without saying goodbye to anyone, except for throwing Toma: "Farewell."

It was raining heavily that late autumn evening. Tom looked at the sky in the hope of seeing at least one star or a gap, but in vain. Throwing the hood of his short, dark blue jacket over his head, he took a deep breath, together with fresh air, gathered up a reserve of patience and drooped his head on his way through the deserted night city. The metro closed at one in the morning, it was still a long time to go, he figured it out and decided that, in principle, in order to be in time,

he needed to speed up. All the way in the rain he thought about many things, and the most painful thing that burned his heart most of all was the thought of how cheaply his pain and Toma's pain cost, how cheaply his manuscripts and her paintings were valued and sold, how low their feelings were valued. and feelings towards people and their modest contribution to great art, because their pain, in fact and by nature, was never their own pain, it was pain for the tormented and trampled fates and mutilated, crippled souls of people. It was the cruelty of life towards them. And just as in Rilke's words, "Foreign destinies, having become their destinies, recognizing them, led them away," so other people's destinies became their destinies, their pain.

The rain intensified, and there was still quite a lot to shove to the metro station. Tom often recalled the first meetings and telephone conversations with Toma, which became a habit ten years after they met, from the day mutual interest suddenly ignited between them, and thought with curiosity about the reason for reciprocity, that is, the reciprocity of her interest, about which he could just guess.

And that "first" conversation on the phone and that first admission that when meeting guys she usually tries to show and invariably turns out to be smarter than them, but he turned out to be smarter than her, and, as a result, the usual invitation to her house for a party "Czech fool. And Tom tried in vain to explain to her that the mind is usually not put on a par with feelings, that the path to the rational lies through the sensual, which is smarter, obviously, the one who is more vulnerable, touching and sensitive. Just as decisive was Tom's dismissal of the topic of interest in her as a sexual object and the sexual question in general.

Tom, in this case, really did not care about this issue. In addition, his essentially academic upbringing did not allow him to perceive her words, her speeches and the categories she used without any appreciable irritation at all. But the soul of a person, as he believed, is attracted not by the mind, and not vice versa, but again by the human soul. Besides, it was not in Tom's rules to judge a subject as a whole by its first impression. Excavations were needed, which required, in addition to overcoming the distance, great skill, subtlety, diligence and patience. Tom accepted the invitation.

And now he was already on his way to meet the invitation, according to which not only the party of the "Czech fool" was waiting for him. Unless God and he knew how he hated cards, and especially games of this kind, but ...

On that warm autumn evening, he had to pass by a garden located near her house, modestly colorful in autumn and beautiful in the evening sun, iridescent and intertwined with red, yellow, yellow-green, green and many other colors

and shades of leaves. Indescribable and indescribable beauty was fenced off from the side of the street with a large-mesh steel mesh fence and protecting its clients from massive pilgrimages.

Tom was happy to discover in himself another reason that justified his coming here. This wonderful reason interrupted his thoughts about the impossibility of interpreting and explaining by one person to another person, people and humanity in all their integrity and completeness of the range and totality of sensations and perceptions that you experience, and it is much easier to agree with the assumption of the interlocutor or opponent.

The injustice and cruelty of fate and life, caused by the fact that a person, in his environment, constantly has to lose relatives, friends, acquaintances, as well as friends for one reason or another, in biological or social terms, and, as a rule, loss are always irreplaceable and irreplaceable.

As a rule, there is never a replacement, at least not an equivalent replacement, and yet, with each loss, Tom tried more and more fiercely and irrepressibly to replenish the thinned environment with new acquisitions.

Although this process, like many other things in life, and not only for him, was selective, it was by no means always protected and guaranteed against failures, blunders and disappointments, which, nevertheless, could not suppress the spirit of new passionate searches in him. and discoveries.

In any case, this was evidenced by the experience of the past, the reflections of which fragmentarily and episodically surfaced at different times, at different moments and in different ways, in order to draw it in, draw it into itself, and then sink it, driving it deeper and deeper, into the densest layers. his bowels, and he, sometimes consciously, succumbed to them, but each time he forgot how he managed to escape and protect himself in previous cases.

During the games of the "Czech fool" he often heard from her, both alone and in the presence of others, the opposite - that she was many times smarter than him, that he was the chief gynecologist, and other, stunning and utter nonsense. She answered all kinds of invitations with dry refusals, convincing him that he was only a match for her in the party of the "Czech fool", and nothing more. So she always overshadowed the finals of their meetings, and he left.

And each time his departure with another disappointment was marked by heavy rain.

"Nature cries with rain when you come to me," Tom said tremulously and tenderly, carefully touching his right cheek with her palm, stroking it several times, and then lowering her palm on Tom's hand.

Tom couldn't help but return a caress for a caress. He bowed his bluish cheek and began gently stroking the shrew's snow-white hand with it. But the other layers of his formed, like a layer cake, feelings for her pushed him into a vile lie, and that was part of the feeling that was born with him.

"Toma, forgive me," he muttered, "I can't help confessing to you that ..." and at that moment I clearly felt how Toma was dumbfounded and cold, as if she had a presentiment of his subsequent words, "that I played with you and played with yours and mine feelings.

These words struck even himself, he regretted that he had spoken them, but it was already too late.

With a sense of dignity withstanding this smashing blow, Toma was not at a loss and retorted with outward ease:

"I knew this a long time ago, don't worry.

- Are you sure about that?

- Yes, because I am stronger than you and it is impossible to overpower and deceive me.

- How? In that case, did you play with me?

Yes, just imagine.

- Yes, but I lied, I decided to test you, and you ...

In fact, with these words, he gave her a slap in the face, directing her to come to her senses and stop her games.

Here I was confused and came to a complete dismay of Tom.

- I considered one of the biggest weaknesses in myself that I could never play with my feelings, deceive them, or rather, I probably could, but I never allowed myself to do this. You played on it. Well, I think you'll have plenty of time to make sure that's not the case.

Tom said goodbye and left her. He again left defeated.

The next time he did not respond to her invitation. It was a party in honor of her seeing off, the next morning she flew across the cordon, abroad, where she was going to stay as long as possible. There she was promised to get a job, to provide an easy, fun, carefree life. She failed to refuse this temptation, although she considered herself, and swore this to Tom, a 100% Hare Krishna, for whom the material is allegedly absolutely nothing. She was not deterred either by Tom's requests not to leave, to stay with him, and his promise that he would buy her here everything that she wanted and that she intended to "attack" there.

"No, Tom, judge for yourself, it's not serious," she answered, "I have been preparing for this trip for more than a year, and now, when I have a ticket in my hands, when they are waiting for me there ... I'll come back, then we'll see. Yes

and you see ... the severity of your feelings from the fact that I'm leaving. If it wasn't for this, things would be different.

Tom had no more questions or interest in her. All her paths unknown to him were completely blocked, and the followers were completely overshadowed on the basis of which, he considered his presence at the airport with her seeing off unnecessary and even worthless, but the rules of decency and etiquette nevertheless forced him to go.

Before the gate, she, as before, with the usual ease and simplicity, threw herself into his arms, Tom accepted her, but felt that it was no longer him, but someone else.

The liner, rapidly running through the treadmill, took off from the runway, gained altitude and, swaying, waved its wings to Tom.

"It's always like this," thought Tom, "one of the two leaves, and the very impossibility, like the inevitability, is both subjective and objective.

Did they meet in the future? Unknown.

While the liner was gaining altitude, Tom's mind stubbornly tapped out the same phrase: "Everything is for the better ... my friend, for the better."

His heart was pounding with pain. He was surprised at the confrontation in himself of different feelings and asked himself a single ambivalent question: "How can you love the unloved?"

04.1992

ORGASM

**True freedom is in the freedom of speech,
Speech and writing, in the soaring of the heart.**

S. Gelkhvidze

For many years now, he has been anxiously noticing in himself the futility and senselessness of his efforts, whether in the labor field, in the family or in public life, even when he had to put the maximum of his mind, effort and heart into the work he had begun.

No, after all, something was always missing in life, something was missing, and the search for this unknown, missing feeling and sensation led him either into a rage because of the failure of the search, then into fatigue, devastation and despondency, coupled with the bitterness of hopelessness and impossibility of success of these searches. The only thing that illuminated his soul and gave him a little bit of hope was that he was clearly and clearly aware of and was even sure that the path to this mysterious discovery of himself was not in the biological, but in the social realm.

He knew where to look, but he could only guess what he was looking for. He was convinced of the contiguity of feelings of biological pleasure with social, and finally silently and strongly assured himself of the undoubted conjecture that if a biological orgasm exists and is fixed, then some kind of social, spiritual orgasm is inevitable and indispensable, which, like a biological one, and even in a certain sense to an even greater extent, perhaps not experienced by many of the people, even those who have lived a long life.

– No, since I am so excited and tormented, haunted, by my thoughts and the search for this unknown, promising in a sense something similar to the joy of discovery or communication with a person, then this cannot but end in finding this miracle, the work of my mind cannot and heart, the work of my soul to go through without results, just as not a single deed and not a single work in life ends in vain, - he persistently and stubbornly repeated and assured himself.

And as if in confirmation of his attempts and aspirations, nature took pity on him. He came across a man with whom at first he had almost nothing in common. It was an employee from a neighboring department, who had been watching his behavior for a long time, and one day, either in jest or in earnest, she threw in his face in a ringing half-voice:

“Listen, why are you wandering around the corridors of our institute to no avail? After all, there is little sense from simple running around. Now, if at the

same time you were still flapping your wings, then, you see, you would have taken off - and smiling.

He was literally overwhelmed by her tactlessness and, as it seemed to him, impudent trick, because she did not know about the complexities of the project of national importance ordered by the Academy of Sciences to their institute, and even the last to their department, in which his experience and knowledge played far from the last role. . And now, when he ran into her greeting, he was in a hurry to a meeting with the director of the institute about the interim report on the work done, and his hands were busy with piles of papers and formats.

"An unintelligent fool and, besides, impudent," he thought, and, slowing down his pace, he kept a surprised look on her, after which he took him aside, without responding, he added a step. "So I need it!" There is no need to keep a friendly tone in dealing with unfamiliar people. And what is she up to?

In the evening, in a state of yet another bout of melancholy blues due to the lack of electricity, gas, radio, telephone transmissions and water, he went over in his memory all the details of the encounter with the "impudent" that surprised and struck his imagination. Meanwhile, nothing that could give her a pretext for such an outburst was found or remembered. And he was more and more surprised and astounded by her, as it were, clairvoyance, or rather, his vision. She seemed to be sitting in his thoughts, participating in his worries and torments, and this phrase of hers turned around for him as if advice and a way out.

- Yes, but even if it is so, how? - he asked a corrosive question. - It's easy to say! Flap your wings and take off! But how?

He remembered Michelangelo's answer to the question of how he manages to create such masterpieces: "There is nothing easier, you take a stone and cut off the excess with a hammer and chisel." Bravo, bravo! Of course, it is extremely simple and ingenious. He liked the explanation of the great master very much.

To great joy and surprise that evening they gave light for a while. Ostankino was broadcasting an analysis of one of the latest masterpiece films by maestro Konchalovsky, on the theme of village life in the early years of perestroika.

The speech of one rural worker, who scolded the maestro for completely distorting the life of the village and its inhabitants, warned him and reminded him that they feed and water him, especially resonated with the ear.

- Thank you, - the maestro answered, - I thank you too.

And then the floodgates opened, then the water gushed, it was then that he felt a surge of extraordinary energy and strength, and then the soul began to accelerate with greater and greater speed. Well, of course - bravo, by God, bravo! - well, of course, you also feed the spectators and all the people, and even, I would

say, - he emphasized to himself, - not you too, but you, and only people like you feed people in the first place. After all, this is the food of the soul and mind, which is just as necessary for the vital activity of the organism of any kind.

an intelligent being, like food for the stomach. Oh yes, maestro! - he admired, meanwhile, as his soul continued to pick up speed, and it seemed to him that it was running up a certain runway ... then suddenly, unexpectedly, he remembered a meeting with an impudent one and subconsciously flashed in his thoughts: what, if you really try? And before the thought had time to take shape and round off, as spontaneously, out of nowhere, it released huge wings from under itself, a few small flaps, and, lo and behold! It's done! The soul left the runway and took off. She was still gaining height when he stated with unearthly joy: there is, there is, damn it, there is a social orgasm, and I just experienced it!

He didn't have to wait long, and the light was turned off, but even in the darkness and cold, the soul continued to soar in the sky, in an instant all the doors opened in front of him, into which he so furiously beat his head and still didn't break through.

And in the darkness he found and saw as much light and colors, colors and shades as he had never seen anywhere and never in his life.

On this cold evening, he felt as much warmth and heat as, it seemed to him, not a single planet experienced. He caught fire with an uncontrollable desire to meet the "impudent" as soon as possible and thank her for the joy that she gave him. All evening, night and the next day, until the next meeting with her, he was possessed by some kind of heavenly joy, his soul purred, and a sweet-joyful melody rang in his heart.

- Hey! You know, I love you ... - he blurted out to the "impudent" immediately after he ran into her, as usual, in the corridor of the institute.

And without having time to finish, he was stopped.

- What? - she drawled in surprise from surprise and confusion, and after a short pause she added, with a rise in her voice. - Fool!

And, having made a sharp turn away from the offender, angry, she went to the office, entering the current documents for signature.

Her last word caught the attention of several employees standing at the end of the corridor, looking at them in amazement.

He had to, bashfully looking away from them, retire in the opposite direction, sadly agreeing: really a fool!

I also remembered the advice read once from a certain brochure that if you want to humiliate, insult someone, and especially scare to death, you need to turn to this very word.

“What nonsense!” he waved. Wings, somehow immediately, at once, instantly cut off, and he fell down somewhere, as if in shit.

“Now I know what it is necessary to take off for,” he thought with a grin and sarcasm.

13.12.1994

SHOUT, MY FRIEND, SHOUT, PLEASE, WHO WILL HEAR

The morning of a working day at the station square turned out to be quite lively and lively. People hurrying to work, at a fast pace, chaotically moved in different directions, barely, with considerable difficulty, managing to bypass each other in order to avoid a collision.

The most fortunate managed to manage to take in buses and trolleybuses, if not sitting, then standing places, the less fortunate hung on the open rear or front doors, and even on the back walls or roofs of trolleybuses.

Those who entered from the back platform had to squeeze through the crowd of people squeezing from all sides before they stopped, just as Signor Robinson had to pass between huge boulders swinging on ropes in the famous film "Signor Robinson". Those who managed to do this, and also remain unharmed, went out through the front door, paying the driver both the fare and the morning mini-erotic workout.

But this was only the initial stage of going to work, in the final one, after leaving the transport, it was necessary to have time to run: employees to their institution in order to sign in time in the turnout journal, which closed at exactly nine, and students before the bell for a lecture in the audience. After the bell rang, the entrance doors of one of the leading institutes of the country were tightly closed and guarded by Komsomol activists who did not let late classmates into the audience, and opened after a lecture, that is, after an hour and a half.

The foyer, a large pillared hall, was crowded with students. The activists made lists of those who missed the first lecture.

- You can't wait for the pipes, - Stas said and rushed out into the street to the bypass approaches known to him to the institute building.

Penetration into the spare entrance, open to him, took a lot of time, but he managed to get to the lecture at last.

He stopped in front of the entrance to the right auditorium. Noisy conversations between the lecturer and the students could be heard from behind the door.

"Again they are mocking this unfortunate old man," thought Stas and smoothed his hair before entering the audience.

"Give me back my notebook with records of attendance and academic performance of your group," the elderly front-line soldier Matvey Nikolayevich insistently demanded.

- Matvey, we didn't take it from you, - the most mischievous guys answered, - it's better to look for her at home.

Stas asked permission to enter and sit at the desk, for which he received the approval of the lecturer in the form of a nod of his head.

While Stas was recovering, the heavy and noisy bargaining between the lecturer and the students continued.

“You are all anti-Soviet and anti-Soviet,” the angry lecturer charged aloud.

“Matvey, aren’t you ashamed to say such things about your students,” the youth objected to him.

“Idlers, give me back my notebook,” the lecturer insisted.

For some reason, Matvey Nikolayevich did not recognize the general journal of progress and attendance, which was kept by the head of the group and which he was obliged to present to each lecturer before the start of classes, he trusted his journal and his notes in it more, which students calmly let him keep during the semester, and in the end, before the session, because of the marks accumulated in him about omissions and unsatisfactory assessments of knowledge and behavior, he was invariably kidnapped, which Matvey Nikolaevich was very painful every time.

One of the most zealous students, rising to his feet, made a short speech:

- For distrust of students, on their behalf, Matvey Nikolayevich is declared an oral public censure, picked up by the whole group:

“U-u... u... bitch!”

Matvei Nikolayevich was deliberately silent throughout his speech, sharpening his hearing and giving the students the opportunity to fully express their opinion about him.

“The zarmatsuka is making noise,” he finally answered loudly, with a satisfied smile.

“Guys, stop mocking the old man,” Stas demanded categorically, rising from his desk.

Different voices answered him from different parts of the audience.

- Stas, it still needs to be clarified who is mocking whom.

“Come on, Stas, you know very well that if we don’t touch him, he will touch us and molest our girls.”

- All the same, finish the market! - Stas demanded.

For a while, a certain relative calm reigned, as if the students agreed to give Stas one more opportunity to prove their statement.

Matvey Nikolayevich looked around in bewilderment, as if he could not believe the silence that had reigned. He got up and slowly moved between the desks, until he approached those sitting in the back *) zarmatsuka, zarmatsi - in Georgian - lazy rows of student girls and did not peer at them from a short

distance and wink. The girls were embarrassed, blushed and, as one, looked down.

- Oh, oh ... - Matvey Nikolayevich drawled. - Anashidze! Do you smoke marijuana, girls? You have such a look.

The girls were completely embarrassed.

- Matvey Nikolaevich, what do you allow yourself? Stas interrupted the lecturer.

- Give me back my notebook, anti-soviet, enemies, traitors and crushers of Soviet power.

- Matvey, why are you always imagining enemies and destroyers of Soviet power. These times are long gone went and sunk into eternity. Our generation has long lived in the era of developed socialism, - one of the students explained with frank and sincere firmness.

“Your generation and such young people pose a great danger to Soviet power, which you can destroy if you are not taught a lesson in time,” Matvey Nikolayevich explained in turn with confidence and firmness in his voice, “so I will teach you a lesson.

Smoking and marijuana for some reason were his favorite topic, and the students knew about it.

Suddenly, from behind the audience door that was kicked open from the outside, he broke in and ran to the pulpit, behind which the lecturer began to read another short fragment of his lecture, one of the students threw himself on his knees in front of him and, joining the palms of his hands together, took a touching pose.

- Matvey, - he turned to the lecturer, - be a friend! You are an old front-line soldier, an eyewitness and a participant in two wars and a member of the party, the owner of orders ... - Then came the enumeration of regalia, merit, awards he deserved, and the old lecturer listened to this list with great joy and satisfaction, wondering how and from where the student could own such valuable information and completely forgetting that at almost every lecture he dwelled on his achievements and services to the party and government.

“Well, tell me, what do you want?” he finally decided to interrupt the flow of information.

- Matvey, I beg you, as a brother, - the student begged with enviable acting skills, without getting up from his knees. - I have marijuana, and the police are chasing me. Take and hide marijuana at your place. You, an old party member, no one will ever suspect of anything.

“It’s nothing,” the old lecturer rejected the plea with a proud and self-satisfied smile, “they’ll arrest you, serve your time, and then come back and pass my exam. I will accept you as an external student, and you will finish your studies at the institute.

“Well then, if they ask, tell me something good about me, okay?” the student, still on his knees, continued to insist, who, of course, had nothing to do with the above-named smoker.

“Give me back my notebook,” Matvei Nikolayevich persistently repeated his demands, heading for the door, “otherwise I’ll go to the dean’s office right now and tell the dean about everything.

Several students, frightened, jumped up from their seats, surrounded the lecturer in a tight circle, joined hands and began to dance.

“Unlock!” demanded Matvey Nikolayevich, and he was just bending down to slip under the students’ hands, when they squatted and he could not escape from the encirclement.

“Let me go, or I’ll call the police!” he threatened.

“Go ahead and call,” the students agreed, and let him near the open windows overlooking a two-way street, the roar of engines and sirens and horns drowning out any nearby sounds.

“Police, police!” shouted Matvey Nikolaevich in vain.

“Shout, my friend, shout, maybe someone will hear,” his voice from the audience soothed.

Matvey Nikolayevich was saved by the ringing bell for recess, after which he returned to the auditorium with the dean.

Ten years later, the fears and subconscious predictions of Matvey Nikolayevich came true, the Land of Soviets ceased to exist, and even earlier Matvey Nikolayevich himself died, who now and then with great confidence declared that he would live for a long time and almost up to more than three hundred years.

Waves of national liberation movements swept through almost every country cut out of the great Union. The entire previously existing system of external and internal state relations and structures was destroyed very quickly, while the establishment and construction of new ones was given with great difficulty.

The country began to fall into a black streak, in an era of economic, physical and moral crisis, in an era of great unrest and change, the entire burden of which fell on the shoulders of the people.

The entire main backbone of the Stasova group, in the worst premonition of the future, went to disperse and move in all directions. The same attempts were

made by his school friends. Gradually, the problem of dialogue began to emerge. The lack of communication became more and more evident, there was no one to go to and no one to talk to. Several waves of layoffs swept across jobs, unemployment rose, trifling jobs remained with meager salaries and cut staff, the birth rate dropped sharply, and population growth stopped. The country filed a cry for help, but for a long time there was nowhere to wait for help.

Great internal professional patriotism did not allow Stas to say goodbye to work in one of the research institutes, although he was territorially moved to the other end of the city, and his salary was reduced to a minimum, despite significant cuts in the department.

I had to walk to work, both there and back, from the nearest metro station at an average pace of about an hour. There was no transport. And in the case of traveling by bus, after the final stop, it was required to take long detours. Going to work could no longer be justified in any way.

If something else kept Stas at work, it was a tender relationship with Katherine, which he had been trying in vain for several years to translate into what he wanted.

his direction. Katherine did not completely succumb to his intentions, and did not reject him, but simply tried with all her might to drag out a certain pause.

- What else do you need? - asked Stas, walking with Kate past a small corn plot.

Kat was silent for a long time, unsuccessfully trying to cope with internal laughter.

- What, what? - she answered. - There is corn. Better go and pick some cobs.

While Stas was picking soft cobs, Katherine noticed how the owner of the crops was slowly emerging from the thick of the cult plants.

"Be careful, he's coming at you," she murmured in a fright, barely audible.

Stas continued his work without excitement and haste.

- Well, here, I caught you, - the owner of the crop said with a satisfied tone.

- Caught, caught, - Stas agreed, - you, brother, have no idea, my girl asked for three or four ears, and for this you are going to quarrel with me?

The owner was dumbfounded by the unexpected question, but, immediately gathering himself and recollecting himself, answered:

"Do you know how many people like you come here. There will be nothing left for me.

- OK OK! Maybe pay you some?

- All right, go in peace.

Approaching the bridge over the river, Kate suddenly suggested:

- You know, Stas, so be it, I'll go fishing with you. Just tell me when.

These words, heard from her at any other time, would have given him joy and pleasure, but now for some reason he took them without enthusiasm.

"I've been fishing almost all my life, since I was eight years old," he thought, "but lately I've abandoned everything, go and find and put in order gear, and even for two."

But that wasn't the point right now. The long-term siege of the fortress by Stas finally brought results. He took these words for surrender, for a white flag on the tower.

In commemoration of the victory, he smiled smugly.

"Look, Kate," he pointed with his hand, "there, on the other side, there are two pelican storks.

Kat smiled as she saw the beautiful, large, long-legged birds.

At this point in the city, the riverbed was noticeably widened, and many picturesque tiny islands appeared on it.

"Let's go downstairs," Kat suggested.

Running down the slope to the island of the riverbed, Kate slipped and rolled down. Stas was not at a loss, took her in his arms, but could not hold her, and both of them rushed head over heels to the shore with a laugh.

"What beautiful legs you have," Stas said, finding himself, together with Kat, at the lowest point of the fall.

Kat quickly covered her bare knees with her skirt.

"Don't look," she ordered sternly.

- What is this scar on your right leg? - Asked Stas, putting his hand over her skirt on her leg above the knee.

"I burned myself with an iron as a child," Kat replied sternly, removing his hand from her thigh.

They spent some more time together on one of the most beautiful islands in the river.

- What marvelous backwaters are here, - Stas was surprised, - maybe it really is worth coming here to go fishing?

From the islet they got out, overwhelmed with a sense of joy from the beauty of the surroundings.

For some time, Kat waited for the fishing with fishing rods promised by Stas in the backwaters they had chosen. But Stas for some reason hesitated. He wanted to communicate with her not there, but in other places. She still resisted his desires, and the maximum that she agreed to, and even then under some pressure and pressure, was to walk along the main street of the city, which for some

reason, in most cases, it turned out, took place in the presence of her friend Rita . These walks tended to turn into shopping trips, where he often felt like the third wheel.

“Well, did you need this?” asked Kate. “Are you satisfied?”

“Fool,” Stas called himself silently, “move in the direction where the movement is open, where she lets you through.

The tug-of-war situations between them continued in the same vein as before.

Stas incessantly tormented and tormented himself with thoughts that overwhelmed his consciousness.

“Good God, will anyone on this earth finally hear me, my cry?” Will he understand me, will he want to listen? After all, I have been silently screaming at the top of my lungs for so many years ... I am exhausted, exhausted. God, what has become of the world that you once created! What else to talk about when elementary humanity is in such a terrible deficit. People don't want to live by the laws you set. They arranged life on Earth in their own way. And she beats them methodically, variously and inventively, and then they themselves complain about her.

I'm tired of everything, of life. Has he grown old already, or what? - Stas complained.

“It's strange that it's you who is talking about this,” Dick was surprised.

- Understand, Dick, there are no bad and good people, there are only such circumstances. But the original natural humanity disappears. The social genotype of a person is changing.

- Stas, my advice to you, do not be wiser and do not complicate your life. All this, believe me, is useless. Especially in our time. Live like everyone else, easier.

“No, Dick, that's not it.

- You need a good woman, Stas, that's all! It will help you forget about all your old problems, although it will add new ones. Take Katherine, what are you saying? Girl what you need.

“Take it, it's easy to say,” thought Stas, “you can't take anything you want in this life, it's impossible. Only she herself can give but how to take away. How can you not, Dick, understand this? One loves the other, the other loves the third, the third loves the fourth, and so on and so forth... And reciprocity is the destiny of the lucky and happy. Either of the two is one - the second, at best, only allows you to love.

- Yes, what are you really, Stas, are you crazy about her? What are you doing with her? Lured, caressed, fucked - and that's it! She's not going anywhere with

you. Well, think about it, at first she will cry a little, and then she will calm down.

"Don't you dare talk about her like that!" Do you hear? - Stas fiercely attacked Dick, lifting him over the sides of his jacket and shaking him with all his might.

- Well, good, good! You are full of excitement. You can't joke, can't you?" Dick resisted. "Okay, then we'll help you kidnap her. Now it is fashionable. Well, you gotta do something, damn it!

- Dick, please go away, leave me, for God's sake, alone. And if you want to remain my friend, never talk to me about it!

Dick silently turned away from Stas. He paused for a moment, then turned to leave. Dear, suddenly remembering something, he stopped, thought a little, turned and went back to Stas. The idea that dawned on him, however, did not accompany him for long. Just as suddenly, he stopped. He spat on the ground in anger. With a gesture of disappointment, he brushed himself off something and resolutely turned back - no, that was also useless.

"Maybe Stas is right when he says that no one in life, by and large, can help anyone either physically or morally, but, finally, he can't help in any way, he's not able to," he thought. "Then what? It turns out, like the French, that each one is not only his own best servant, but also an assistant? And no one is able to fully understand anyone. For to do this, everyone must go through exactly what the one they want to understand went through.

No, you see, this does not always respond to those who came out to call or rush to help. And you can't blame the blizzard for the fact that the leaves flew away from the handsome poplars. In life, indeed, everything is easy and simple, and at the same time, everything is not so simple and easy.

Before turning into an alleyway, Dick was passed at high speed by an ambulance with a deafening siren and a hysterically spinning blue flasher.

Soon he noticed a dense crowd of people ahead. He approached the crowd anxiously.

- What happened? - Passers-by were talking.

- Yes, they say, a young guy was stabbed to death.

- Who? For what?

"The devil knows, do you understand? Now it's all over the place.

- Have you heard, they say, did you get fresh fruits in the grocery?

- Not. Come on, they were standing behind butter and sugar in the morning, and that's enough for me. Inside out all the nerves.

- Yes, everyone is a little tight with nerves now.

- Yesterday I spent the whole day in the dispensary. There was something to be done in the car on the electrical wiring, and the work was not so long. At first I waited while the master fiddled with one, then he played with me for several minutes. The most laborious thing he did was to connect two thick wires. And what do you think, he took a quarter for this job!

- Yes, they are all like that, that's why they live better than us.

- Yes! Further, therefore, I leave for the embankment, turn into a green light. The traffic cop stops, there were two of them - and what do you think? - charges that he drove a red one, created an emergency situation and committed a heinous crime. Well, it was already beyond any fairness and any patience. But he could not prove his justice and rightness in any way, and all because he decided to lure a gold piece from me. Yes, let them choke on it! And I didn't have to argue with him, I just patted my nerves in vain.

- So here it is! And what is left for them to do? Life and work do not give them anything, so they select and take away everything they can, by force. Piss off violence and all those who resort to it.

Stas got out of the crowd and left the scene. He walked towards the descent to the embankment and was going to cross the bridge in order to get into that part of the city that was on the opposite bank of the city river.

On the bridge and under the bridge, along the embankments of both banks, behind the pedestrian part, there were restless fishermen, deftly wielding their gear - various spinning rods and snacks.

- How can you fish in such a dirty river? - Stas was perplexed, - Such water in the city can infect a person with any disease.

One of the fishermen who fished from the bridge pulled out of his backpack a three-liter glass jar with a white plastic lid and with black-and-brown creatures moving chaotically under it.

Stepping closer, Dick peered into the contents of the jar. The unfortunate captives of the unfortunate fisherman turned out to be some of the cleanest insects - cockroaches, large black and brown with long whiskers. It seemed that they perfectly understood the reason for their confinement and that is why they rush about in panic along the bottom of the jar and over each other. And besides, for sure, each of them shouted at the top of his lungs and that was urine, crying out for help and salvation and hoping that at least other relatives, swarming in the distance of hearing their cries, would hear their cry, moreover, thereby warning them of danger and warning about t own fate. They screamed, but no one in the world heard their cry and not only did not think about their salvation, but did not even show regret.

- A hopeless plea for salvation, - thought Stas, - probably no one hears us, people, just like the soundless cries of unfortunate creatures imprisoned in glass.

The owner of the jar bravely unscrewed the white plastic lid, removed a large black mustache from the bottom of the jar, cut it in half with a small knife, threw one half back into the jar, put the other half on the powerful hook of his spinning rod and threw it from the bridge into the river.

“They are great for big fish,” he explained, smiling at Stas.

Stas was still impressed by what he saw. He recalled in slow motion how the hand sank to the bottom of the jar, fumbled in search of prey, catching mortal panic on the unfortunate and doomed creatures and causing a commotion. Each instinctively grasped that before the end of the day this cup would not pass even him, but he tried with all his might, even now, even at this moment, to dodge, even a little to delay his end.

- What difference does it make to leave a minute earlier or later, if this fate cannot be avoided at all.

Stas crossed the bridge and headed for the nearest metro station. He looked up at the sky and caught in it a confirmation of his thought about the similarity of the fate of man and the doomed creatures he saw.

Whom and when death will take to itself, we are not given to know. She doesn't give a damn about old and young, strong and weak, smart and stupid. All the same, the same prey! And we are doomed, even though, in the manner of those creatures, we swarm, flounder, we hope that the fateful hour will strike not for us, not now, someday after, in the far, far future, but maybe ...

Suddenly, almost from the other side of the city, came a wild, desperate male cry, almost a scream. The scream shook the city several more times. Stas recognized the voice.

“Well, here,” he grimaced, “again, poor Archil is being forced to scream for money. Curious what he ordered today? I'll have to ask the guys.

In the evening, having somehow washed himself with almost completely cold water, Stas sipped the hot coffee prepared for him by his sister and smoked his favorite Marlboro.

“What else, I wonder, does she need more,” the thought of Kate haunted him. One thing is clear, one love is not enough for her. These current girls want to get everything ready, but they don't want to create anything with their work. How she agreed to my proposal, in case she gets my daddy's car! God, if she only knew what a wreck it was. But, as a rule, they are not interested in the inside. The main thing for them, that in a man, then in a car, is appearance. They can instantly give consent for the appearance, and then all their lives in the hardest torment

to pay for the inside! And only in the last, dying years to openly admit: “And why the hell did I need his beauty?” However, we, men, are not far from the women in this. We know, we understand, we realize that appearances are deceptive, but we are indefatigably striving for this stunningly. Well, deceptions, seconds and minutes of today's bliss shield us from indescribable torment for the rest of our lives.

- What? - Stas responded to an intractable inner voice. - Can you break up with a person officially or unofficially ?! Bluff it all! No one else in this life has ever been able to leave anyone. All the same, some seemingly abandoned biofield will haunt you until the last breath.

The phone suddenly rang in the hallway.

- Stas, hello again! Well, how did you get there?

- And it's you? Never mind.

Did you hear a scream in the city?

- Yes.

“They tortured poor Archil again. Heraclius must have been paid at work. Otherwise, he would not have screamed in vain.

- Maybe.

- I'll have to visit him.

- Perhaps.

- What's happening with you? Do you need extra pay? Or are you still thinking the same thing?

- Don't, Dick.

- Fine, fine! I'll make an agreement with Irakli and if I don't call you back, we'll meet him at work tomorrow morning, all right?

- Good.

The next morning, workers and employees of the construction department gathered in the yard in the hope of receiving at least some part of the salary for the work completed a month and a half ago. Orders were searched all over the city, often cheap, insignificant, but payments for them had to wait for months.

The half-witted Archil, surrounded by laughing merry fellows, skillfully and gracefully danced a kind of overseas dance.

“And now howl like a wolf!” One of the crowd ordered him, “here's a penny for you.”

Archil howled.

“Look what they're doing,” Dick wondered, pointing in the direction of the merry fellows, “it's good that the wolves don't hear, otherwise they would speak like a human in response.

Stas was completely discouraged by the depressing picture of a human fall that appeared to his eyes - they amused themselves selflessly and to the point of falling.

- Guys, come here! The line for the salary came up, - Irakli called from the threshold of the office.

- Ira, look what they are doing, - Dick rushed to him, - somehow stop them.

- Yah! See, everyone loves it. First time, right? Archil not only here, but also in other places earns the same!

- I wonder how he finds out where, from whom and when is the salary paid out? - Viktor intervened.

- And who knows, - Irakli laughed it off, - it must be his own agent network!

- I bet he earns much more than any of us, - Dick exclaimed with conviction, - collects a thread from the world.

“He knows how to live!” Victor concluded.

- And why did he have to yell at the whole city yesterday? - Stas asked.

- Ah ... ah! Irakli drawled with a grin.

- Okay, guys, let's go, otherwise the cashier was already waiting for us, - Irakli hurried.

“No, you first answer the question,” Dick insisted.

- I do not know! Yesterday I was no longer here, but the guys say that they allegedly asked him to imagine how he would scream if a crowd of naked men were chasing him in the forest, trying to rape him. Here he, apparently, imagined this picture in all its glory, and yelled so that the whole city shuddered.

The guys, laughing, amicably went to the cashier.

On that day, Archil had to fulfill many more orders to the delight of those who made fun of him and did not really understand that they were torturing themselves first of all. Archil was teased, and Archil, in turn, was amused by their laughter and jokes.

At the terminal station of one of the branches of the city subway, it was alternately crowded. Fussy people with worried faces hurriedly left the train cars and rushed to the escalator. The crowd on the opposite side waited patiently for the empty train to emerge from the depot. The electronic clock above the tunnel at the entrance of the train to the dark track labyrinth seemed to count the time twice as fast as usual.

Stas looked first at them, then at the stream of trains leaving the cars, looking for a familiar face.

“Late,” he thought, turning his gaze now to his wrist watch.

Where he now stood, at the top of the escalator, in the foyer of the station, there were many kiosks, booths and just counters with a large assortment of goods for various purposes.

At the press kiosk, he had already managed to go over the main, front pages of many newspapers and magazines, and now he was standing in front of a booth with a variety of bijouterie. At the sight of the rings, his heart fluttered.

“Well, how long can you pull the strap,” he thought, and for some reason, suddenly, on the move, he made the appropriate, necessary, in his opinion, and the right decision, “we must finally decide this way or that!”

Joyful from the perfect purchase, he went down the escalator with redoubled pleasure to wait for her appearance in the lower hall.

And finally, when another dense crowd fell out of the cars and began to quickly spread and dissolve like a mushroom, a familiar shape appeared. It was definitely her. Their eyes met.

- Now, if we could get her a job now, how great it would be! - Stas thought, - There would be additional livelihoods.

- There's nothing you can do, - he mentally continued. - Everyone strives for what he lacks most of all ... some for strength, some for power, some for love, some for money ... But where to look for the key points of intersection of human destinies and lives? Where they converge only once, and then in order to disperse.

Stas's friends, with whom he associated the possibility of working for Kat, liked her in principle, although the lack of a free computer on which they could work smoothly and seamlessly cooled her down a bit and restrained her own ardor.

- Let's see, - she answered meaningfully, walking along the spacious alley of the central street of one of the districts of the city adjacent to the place of the new work, - as soon as an order appears, I will call them and visit them from time to time.

They walked at a slow, unhurried pace. Two impulses were now fighting in Stas's soul and agitated him like a sea under the wind. He hesitated for a long time, but in the end he made up his mind.

“You know, Kate, I have an unusual present for you.

- Yes? Oh, how good, - Kate was delighted.

Yes, but to get it you need to fulfill certain requirements.

- Yes? What?

- You need to close your eyes, stretch your right hand in my direction, and do not open your eyes until I allow it. Good?

Kat, without listening to the end, had already begun to gladly follow his instructions.

While Stas was fumbling in his dense pockets in search of a gift he had just bought, Kat, with her eyes closed, slowly moving forward, suddenly came across a tree and hit her head lightly on it.

- Oh, no! - Stas exclaimed. - I didn't ask you to butt with trees at all! Hurt badly?

"No, nothing," Kate reassured him, touching her small head with her thin fingers and the small palm of her left hand. The right one continues to be held in a half-stretched position.

- Well, now, close your eyes again, - Stas repeated his command.

Kat felt the touch of Stas's strong hands and how a ring-shaped body slid along one of the fingers of her right hand.

She suddenly trembled in surprise and began to resist, tearing her hand out of Stas's. Stas had to use a little force.

"That's it, now you're mine forever!" he said with relief, finishing pulling on Kat's finger a recent acquisition.

Kat continued to resist and struggle.

- Okay, okay, calm down! Say hot I would, whether it fits you in size or not.

"Yes, yes, it's coming, let me go!" Kate pushed away.

She instantly pulled the ring off her finger, slipped it into her pocket, and was clearly confused.

"Forgive me, but you left me no other choice!" On the one hand, you play cat and mouse with me, and on the other hand, you completely refuse all my solid invitations and offers.

Kate continued walking in silence.

- What if I refuse?

"Then throw away the ring and don't give it back to me."

"I don't think, to be honest, that anything will come of this venture," Kat said thoughtfully.

- Well, well, can I hope for at least the future for your indulgence and favor?

"No, of course!" Kate retorted with conviction.

Stas hesitated, turned away from her for a moment, looked at the sky and prayed to him with closed eyes: "Lord, help me, you know how much I love her."

After a while, he was already standing at the bus stop and watching the bus, which took away from him his ardent love and an impromptu gift, which, as it turned out later, turned out to be too simple for her, too expensive for him.

A week later, after the first meeting at work, Kat returned the gift to him.

That day, he stayed at work longer than usual and returned home late at night.

Stopping on the bridge, he peered into the familiar landscape, the islands where he had once been with Kate, where the herons walked in search of food, where, frozen in immobility, the fishermen sat at the riffles and where the river forked into small branches, channels and streams. .

The sky was cloudless, but individual silhouettes of stars twinkled dimly.

Stas's gift, like a fluff, flew down from the bridge, along a circular path, flew slowly, smoothly and beautifully, carrying away the best feelings for the second time in his life into the fast flow of the waters of the river and leaving with nothing.

He once again looked up at the sky and the barely visible stars and drooped sadly:

“And they say you don’t have to believe in the stars!” Why, they kept repeating so much and repeating all about the same thing: they say, a fisherman and a mermaid, not a couple, not a couple, not a couple. The most famous modern pop singer sings about this.

From afar, from the side of the stretching ridge of mountains, the lingering roar of an unknown beast was heard, and now it seemed that this cry was his cry.

- Shout, my friend, shout, maybe someone will hear - I suddenly remembered the words of youth, a cry for help, a cry of pain and weakness.

“At best, they can listen to you absent-mindedly and express their regret. But in general, no one is able and able to help anyone, and in the face of real misfortune and serious esoteric problems, everyone is left alone with himself.

A few years later, Stas, who was in a hurry on a very important matter, accidentally noticed Rita and her friend hurrying somewhere on the opposite side of the street from him.

Stas recognized Rita before she knew him. He is her at first sight, she is him at the third. Between the official “hello, well, how are you” and “well, goodbye to you all,” Stas found out from her that Katherine had a successful marriage and now lives with her husband in Moscow, and asked, on occasion, to convey his congratulations to her. I was surprised at how coldly he took the news.

- She came out, therefore, that’s how she needs it, - he stated languidly, - she’s the road there! It’s good that we didn’t get anything good with her. With such a stubborn, rebellious, selfish disposition, it is not so easy to get along. In life there are many vain meetings. Millions of stars in the sky meet and diverge.

The only main lesson learned from the relationship with Kat was the realization that with women - if a man has serious intentions - you need to be careful, selective in gifts, prefer not to give anything and thus save the only

chance for the rest of your life, rather than take a rash step and present what they don't like and can block all paths and approaches to them for life.

"Dick was right," Stas thought, "when he said that for many of them the assessment of values was turned upside down. Less valuable, secondary, they put much higher than the main thing that lies behind it. In the same gift, some see an adequate attitude towards them, while others simply have a relationship. They are too demanding and hasty and forget or do not know at all that they do not jump from the first step to the tenth. If you fall from a horse, then from a good one is their motto, and time, unfortunately, many who share it, are thrown off donkeys, and even camels. Well, yes, in the end, perhaps, who deserves what he gets.

In the evening, returning home, Stas searched for Rita's phone number for a long time, was interested in Kat's chosen one, or rather, his merits, how satisfied she was with her choice. Not finding it, he waved his hand indifferently:

- What does it matter now?

A strange, hitherto unknown feeling rose from within, protested, gave rise to inner discomfort. He could not overcome him in any way, but he did not want to give up without a fight.

Ten most difficult years have passed since the beginning of a new life, to which they gradually began to get used to, they tried to somehow get settled, to find places in it.

echko. The past, although still rolling by inertia, but its ardor noticeably and imperceptibly faded away. More and more people came to the conclusion that now is not the time to mourn him, it is better to keep him in yourself, adapt and survive.

A passer-by was walking through the vast beautiful park of the capital city, moving at a leisurely pace, examining the area, enjoying the purity of the cool autumn air. He suddenly heard snippets of a loud chaotic speech, and, walking towards the sounds, he came across one of the rallies of Communist Party activists that have recently become more frequent. The rally was guarded by a police squad.

"Comrades!" the speaker shouted. "Our eternal and sworn enemies, the bourgeois and capitalists, through the hands of local traitors and traitors to the Motherland, destroyed our country, which our ancestors and relatives had been building with blood and labor for many decades now. These anti-Soviet and anti-co-traitors continue to oppress us. We will not stop before our main task and the goal of the Party to restore the dictatorship of the proletariat in our country...

The mobile phone rang with a cheerful melody.

- Yes, I'm listening to you, - a passer-by found a mobile phone in one of the inner pockets of his jacket and pressed the corresponding button.

- Stas, hello, - a voice was heard, - this is Dick. Well, how are things?

"Hey, Dick, it's all right!" I got the job, a copy of the contract and other necessary documents will be sent by fax one of these days. Tell Heraclius to prepare and send our exact details.

The conversation on the cell phone lasted up to ten minutes. All this time, Stas stood with his back to the crowd, slightly going behind a large spreading tree. After talking, he turned off the phone, put it back in its original place, and again he heard cries calling for help.

- Police, police! Help!

Stas turned around and saw how someone in civilian clothes grabbed the speaker, trying to remove him from the podium.

"Anti-Soviet, anti-Soviet salesmen, traitors, traitors," the speaker continued to shout, who was already being pulled away by another person. The policemen ran up and began to separate.

Stas smiled sadly, remembered the past, and for some reason felt a very keen sense of pity for Matvey Nikolaevich, sharper than when he was tormented by his classmates.

Leaving the Park of Culture and Leisure, at the very gates, he dialed a few more numbers on his mobile, but could not get through to anyone, stopped a taxi and ordered to take himself to the city center.

Already after noon, Stas drove up to the hotel adjacent to the airport. There were still a few small things left. From the hotel I managed to get through to one of the numbers:

- Hello, Oksana, hello! Well, what do you have there?

- Oh, Stas, hello! - answered a joyful voice.

- Where are you?! I've been calling all day and can't get through!

- And yesterday, after talking with you, my mobile was turned off, allegedly for a delay in payment. Well, how are you?

- I'm flying out tonight. Everything that you entrusted to me, I did and I will bring with me. What are you crying for, fool?

Silence followed.

- What, hard of hearing?

- You know, the brothers dissuade me again, they again took up the old song.

- Yes, I understand. Of course, I'm old for you.

"And besides, they keep saying that you won't be here by the wedding day tomorrow." That you won't be in time if you come at all.

- Yes, but I called the day before yesterday and promised. The beginning of the visa regime, you yourself understand, no one will be kept here for a long time, even if you linger, they will be discovered and deported by force. Don't cry, everything will be fine. I'm flying in tonight.

I'll be waiting for your call all night. I love you very much and I am very worried.

- Okay, kiss you, wait! - Stas rounded with relief, lowering the phone and smiling with satisfaction.

On my way to the airport building, I passed by many different structures. A familiar voice came from behind one of them, standing almost right next to the terminal. He paused for a moment.

- No! - escaped from him. - It can not be!

Coming closer to the corner, from behind which a familiar timbre was heard, Stas saw several people surrounding the middle-aged tall man. For some time I thought about whether to approach or not, but nevertheless I decided.

"Hello, Archil," he said dryly, approaching a group of people.

- Are we familiar? - Archil was surprised and looked at the stranger with suspicion.

Stas introduced himself and started explaining how and since when they really knew each other. Archil listened patiently, shaking his head from time to time.

- Perhaps, perhaps, Stas, but you understand, I have been to so many jobs and talked with so many people that I really don't remember everyone. Well, I remember your friend's work. Of course I remember. Often visited them.

- What are you doing here?

- The same as ours.

- How? Have you already moved here?

- Yes. Since then, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge. I managed to relocate here with the money earned by my art. Here I was very lucky, married a foreigner, even managed to give birth to my child. So now I'm a family man. I go around my work points on a foreign car.

Archil gestured towards his car in the parking lot.

- And how much do you earn per day?

- For food

enough, and more. I am raising money for a childhood dream. We want to go with my wife to Rio de Janeiro, first on a tour, and then we'll see.

- Well done, Archil! We can say that "Aurora" in the seventeenth year fired for you.

- Well, yes.

- I wonder if the repertoire for ours and those here is different in any way?

- Yah! Everything is the same, with the only difference that in these places, shouting very loudly is not allowed. Somehow I even had to write an explanatory note at the police station. In general, I pay them and I have almost no problems with them. On the contrary, there were cases of attacks, harassment and even attempts to bully me, they protect me so well. Now they recognize me almost everywhere and do not touch me.

Archil, in turn, asked Stas about his life, work, the purpose of his visit and many other little things.

- Oh, old man, in vain you butt heads with life, - Archil was alarmed, - Do you want me to offer a case?

“Well?” Stas asked.

- Stay here with me. We will work together, earnings will be more than there. We'll marry you, and there, you see, if you're a good boy, we'll take you with us to Rio.

Stas looked suspiciously at Archil and was perplexed. He seemed to him alternately either a half-witted or a completely serious business man.

“Well?” Archil persuaded.

Stas decided not to disappoint him and not to say a word about what he thinks of him, but simply to play the role of a partner thinking about a seductive offer.

- No, Archil, thank you very much. I can't live without my homeland.

- Oh, leave it for God's sake! Home is where you live well.

- No, Archil, no, she is where you grew up, where you were born and where you became a man. For me, a hard life and death in the homeland is better than a sweet life in a foreign land.

- Well, okay, unfortunate patriot! You know, look, you know better. Excuse me please. I'm in a hurry, I have to hurry to work somewhere else. But you still think about what I talked to you about, and if you decide, then here's my business card for you, call or come in. Well, be healthy!

Clothing and gait gave Archil the appearance of a solid modern man, but betrayed his facial expressions and language.

He shook hands with Stas, said goodbye and hurriedly went to his Volvo.

- I wonder who issues the rights to such? - Stas was surprised.

Before getting into the car, Archil talked to someone on his mobile phone, once again raised his hand in farewell to Stas, slammed the door of the foreign car and took off like a bullet.

Stas stood motionless for a long time. Bewitched and dumbfounded by what he saw, he was speechless for a while. He looked at the sky, covered with dense white clouds, and mentally said to himself: "Lord, what is happening to us?"

Having arranged things in the storage room and made some additional information about the departing flight, Stas decided to spend the remaining time before departure in the terminal building.

A few hours later it snowed again. Through the display windows, Stas followed with his eyes how gently and smoothly the whitest flakes fell from the sky and, falling to the ground, turned into black mud.

- They, like people, - thought Stas, - descend from heaven clean, clear, beautiful, white, and when they get to the ground, they get dirty and stray into clods. On earth it is impossible to stay clean for a long time, even if you do nothing and do nothing, but day and night take care of your purity, both physical and spiritual. The people themselves, noticing your efforts, will forcibly soil and denigrate you. Well, of course, you still need to try and hold on to the last, so as not to be swept away by a powerful stream of destruction. There are excellent resources for this. Then he remembered his lecturer, who loved the saying: "Patience and work will grind everything." And, of course, without fail, faith in God, faith in yourself and in your own strength.

He admitted, of course, that in life, in the brain and even in the heart, everything did not turn out at all as he would like, but he could not do anything about it.

Stas met the beginning of the registration with great joy and in a slowly crawling long queue. The number of flights on the line was sharply reduced due to the confusion between the airlines of the two countries, which explained the influx of passengers who did not fly away.

Stas was talking animatedly on some abstract topic with one of the passengers. Suddenly he fixed his eyes on the neighbor of the interlocutor. It was like an electric shock. He also caught a reciprocal, intent, rather a glimpse than a glance, of a woman hastily leaving in the depths of the hall.

- Kate? - Stas babbled in surprise and froze in place, exhausted. - It can't be.

Apologizing, he pushed his interlocutor away with his hand and moved after her.

"Catherine!" he called from close range. "Catherine!"

The woman continued walking without turning around. He overtook her, stood, blocking her path. She looked at him in surprise.

- Sorry?

"Kate, don't you recognize me?" I'm Stas, - he tore off his hat.

“Forgive me, but I don't know you.

- Kate, stop! I know that you are offended. But give me a chance to at least explain myself to you.

“Let me through, please,” the woman interrupted rudely, pushing him out of the way.

Stas continued to follow her, babbled some explanations, but she did not even try to serve him.

sew.

“Man, get away from me!” she insisted calmly and imperturbably. “You were quite intelligibly told that I am not the one whose name you named. Get away from me. Otherwise, I will be forced to seek help and call the police.

Stas stopped and looked after her for a long time. He managed to notice that their conversation had attracted the attention of some waiting for different flights.

- What a bitch! - Stas was indignant. - He does not even agree to a simple human conversation.

At a sufficient distance from him, she seemed to hear his thoughts, turned around on the move and once again looked at Stas with an instant look.

Stas, as if off the chain, first went after her, then, noticing that she was starting to run away from him, he also ran with one single thought: "I'll prove to you now who you are."

In the waiting room, some separate loud exclamations were already heard about the chase taking place before their eyes. Among them, of course, women predominated.

Stas very quickly caught up with the fleeing woman, grabbed her hand, dragged her to the side and pressed her hard against the wall. With one hand, he began to unbutton her coat, with the other he continued to press against the wall.

- For help! Help, police, rob, rape, kill! - a heart-rending voice rang out from the waiting room. The woman almost did not resist, she only repeated the same words: “Who are you, what do you need, what do you allow yourself?!”

He had already lifted her bottom clothes and began to pull off her warm breeches.

Now I will show you who I am and what I need.

As soon as Stas managed to lower her leggings to her knees, he felt a sharp blow from behind on the head and immediately lost consciousness.

Without remembering what had happened and how long he had lain in complete prostration, he slowly came to his senses. The first thing I felt was a sharp, incessant pain in my head. His clothes were torn, and the marks of beatings

were evidently imprinted on his face. To bring him to a more intelligible state, he was doused with water.

Some time later, together with the injured woman, he was already testifying at the police station about what had happened in the airport building. - First name, surname, patronymic? - Asked a young police officer.

"Rina Ryder," the woman replied.

What was the purpose of arriving at the airport?

- I came to meet my husband and daughter, flying in from England.

- Wow, - for the first time, doubts crept into Stas's mind, - maybe it really isn't her? - But immediately they were replaced by confidence in their rightness.

"Are you familiar with this man?" the officer asked, pointing to Stas, who had already fully come to his senses.

"I see him for the first time.

- So that the devils see you like that! - Stas muttered.

- And you are silent until you are asked, - the officer ordered him sternly.

What did he want from you?

The woman hesitated, as if not knowing what to answer, but then suddenly spoke:

How should I know, ask him.

Did he try to rape you?

- What are you talking about?! Is this possible with humans? I do not understand so deeply in male psychology.

- And then what?

The conversation with the victim did not last long.

"I have no more time, sir!" Urgent business, unfortunately.

"Yes, yes, of course," the officer said knowingly. "Here is your testimony. Please sign.

The woman instantly signed the piece of paper with the printed text pushed towards her and immediately got up from her chair.

- If I still have questions, I am ready to answer them together with my lawyer. All the best, mister officer," she said sternly, holding out her business card.

Then came the turn of Stas. He answered most of the questions with silence, but he had to sign some text under some pressure.

Every minute his situation worsened. He appeared in the eyes of those interrogating anyone - a rapist, and a possible terrorist, and a maniac ... Almost everything that was with him was taken away from him.

"Where did you fly to and where did you land," thought Stas when he was transported in a special vehicle to the city police station.

The hallway door slowly opened and just as slowly closed. There was the sound of falling lightning. Thin female legs threw off fashionable boots and were captured by fluffy slippers. There was the sound of clothes being thrown off. A fashionable long ladies' coat obediently hung on a hanger next to the men's and children's coats.

- Dad, dad, mom came, - there was a joyful and affectionate childish exclamation. The child ran up to the mother, who had already fallen on her knees, and threw herself into her arms.

“Liza, my girl,” the woman said, hugging the child.

Immediately a man of average height appeared, wearing glasses and a sports uniform.

“Oh, hello, my dear,” he said to the woman, hugging and kissing her.

“Hello, Michael, dear,” the woman responded kindly to the greeting, “how did you arrive?”

- Yes, as you can see. We hoped you would meet us at the airport, but we didn't wait, we got by taxi.

- Mom, mom, dad bought me a doll in London! the little girl boasted as she carried the toy out of the room and showed it to her mother.

- Not in London, but in London, how much can you teach! - The mother corrected the child. - Forgive me, Michael. I really wanted to meet you, but I couldn't, things are at work, you know?

- Yes, yes, I know.

. Nothing, nothing, come in, Alice and I invite you to tea. It's so cold outside.

- Thanks. Here I will wash, change clothes and instantly with you.

After some time, Michael repeated the invitation.

- Rina, are you coming soon or not?

“Michael, I'm sorry, I have a couple more calls to make!”

Rina remained locked up in her room for more than ten minutes, talking on the phone before going out for home tea.

As time went. Stas's case remained uncertain. Everything was clearly not in his favor. The most experienced specialists were involved in the investigation.

On the morning of the next, next working day, Rina got up early. It was necessary to feed the family, prepare Michael for work, take the girl to kindergarten and not be late for work herself.

“Rina, did you iron my shirt and trousers?” Michael asked as he washed his face.

- No, Michael. But I'm already heating the iron.

- Please hurry. How can I not be late.

Rina busied herself with various petty matters.

"Mom, mom, can I iron dad's shirt and trousers?" the girl asked, grabbing the handle of a hot electrical appliance.

"Get away from the hot iron right now," Rina shouted nervously, "you will burn yourself, and there will be a big vava for life!"

- Like the one on your leg?

"Look how long her tongue is!" Ah, well, get out of here.

After escorting Michael, Rina took up the child. There was a call on the mobile. She retired to herself:

How are you, Arthur?

- It's bad, Rina. Nothing will work without you.

- Why? I said I'll pay as much as I need.

"They want to change the initial readings.

- So what's the deal?! No problems.

"Yes, but they want it exactly the way I told you.

- No, I can't do that. Arthur, use your brains and do something. Only at the pace, please, I don't cry so much for you either.

Explanations with Michael were also difficult.

- Yes, but you said that your first husband's name was Sasha. And now some Stas? - Michael was interested.

- He sought me out for a long time in his youth and, annoyed by my refusal at that time, as you see, he messed up.

"So you were at the airport that evening?" But why did you hide it from us?

Questions rained down on Rina like stones, and she was unable to withstand their onslaught to the end. She rushed into the bedroom, fell face down on the bed and sobbed.

Michael's anger gradually subsided. He quietly approached her, lay down next to her, bent his head on her thin fragile back and stroked her small head, reassuring her. She, confused and tearful, plaintively looked into his eyes.

"Are you sure you didn't have anything with him?"

- No, nothing, I swear to you, I swear! - Rina assured him with tears in her eyes. - Please, believe me.

- I believe, I believe, my love, just calm down.

- Here you go!

"And you never loved him?"

"No, no, never, never!" Rina swore, although suddenly, unexpectedly even for herself, she broke off and became thoughtful.

Fearing that Michael would not catch this momentary confusion, she got up from the bed, straightened her clothes and quietly slipped into the bathroom to wash.

“Oh, those women!” Michael sighed. - You won't run into problems with them. The late mother must have been right when she advised me to stay longer as a bachelor. So, I assured you, you will achieve much more in life ...

Rina spent a couple more days in painful thoughts and hidden nervous searches for a way out of this situation. To her husband's renewed questions, what was the matter and what finally worries her, she referred to difficulties at work.

- Idiot, cretin, - she was angry, lamenting, - and he ruined his life and me - what a fool he was, such a donkey he remained.

She locked herself more than once at work and at home, in her room, and wept bitterly. For the first time in my life, I caught myself feeling for Stas, something that I hadn't seen or felt for almost eight-odd years of his courtship. Having cooled down after one of the next experiences, she repeated the call to Arthur.

- Yes, Rina, I'm listening to you ...

Arthur, I agree.

“Fu...,” Arthur drawled, “it's better that way, Rina!” Don't worry, everything will be fine, the main thing is that you calmly talk to Michael. In the end, he is the most intelligent and madly loving person, and he will understand you.

- He will understand, of course, he will understand, - Rina confirmed doubtfully. - When will the next court session be?

- I think that now, since you have decided, it will be soon. I'll tell. Maybe you will have to come here at least once.

- Well, look, keep me informed.

The next session of the court turned out to be longer than the previous ones. The accusation was made on several points at once.

Lawyer Arthur, Rina's acquaintance, held his own, and it was evident that his confidence and determination were unshakable.

Michael nervously delved into all the vicissitudes and details of the proceedings.

- Wow! - He was surprised. - Oh yes Rina, oh yes well done! It must be something that got me into it. Know did not know what it is, and here are those on!

However, he behaved with honor and a little feigned composure right up to one word, uttered by Rina almost to the end.

Stas sat in the dock and suffered terribly. He would rather spend the rest of his life behind bars than contemplate Rina with m already in the courtroom, and besides, create such serious problems for her. But now little depended on him, his fate was decided by other people.

Stas was especially shocked when his old acquaintance Archil came to the courtroom as a witness.

- My God, where did he come from? - And how did he know about everything? Some kind of madhouse here, by God.

After a long hearing, it was the turn to answer questions from the judges and the prosecution. Rina fought back steadfastly and bravely until one of the questions brought the turning point closer.

“Victim, did you ever love him?” the judge asked.

There was a long pause.

Rina glanced at Michael, who was losing his former presence of mind in front of his eyes.

“Oh God,” she pleaded, looking up, “help me.” I beg you, Lord, tell me what to do.” Hot tears slid down both her cheeks. A warm languor passed through the body, the consciousness cleared up and a strange voice was heard.

- Tell the truth, Rina! For once in your life, confess out loud. Tell the truth and don't be afraid of anyone or anything!

She stood, amazed and confused. I felt my tongue go numb and my heart speak instead:

Yes, I loved him. And I love him now. And, unfortunately, I realized it too late.

Hall gasped. Michael's pupils dilated, he choked, could not stand the crushing blow and quickly rushed out.

The lawyer asked to stop interrogating Rina, referring to her state of mind. The judge granted his request. Rina was taken out.

Conducted a meeting of the board, made a conclusion.

Absolutely all charges were dropped from Stas. He was released right in the hall, however, a hefty fine was imposed as compensation for moral damage in favor of those in relation to whom his act caused so much trouble and problems.

Stas left the courtroom dejected and dejected. Everyone came up to him, cheerfully and joyfully congratulated him, but he remained dry and sad.

The thought that he had ruined Katherine's life was killing him, and he, more than ever in his life, now wanted to die. He had never been so bad.

At the exit, Arthur overtook him and clapped him on the shoulder in a friendly manner.

“Don’t be sad, old man, the main thing is done, you are free, and the rest will be settled.

It seemed that the vast majority of those present were pleased and pleased with the decision made by the court.

Stas suddenly started up, a tiny grain of hope seemed to break into his mind:
- Maybe not everything is lost and something can be corrected?

He drove away from the courthouse in Archil's foreign car, who never stopped smiling and retelling all the details and details of today's trial.

“Don’t worry about the ransom either, I’ll settle everything,” he offered sincerely.

- How is it, my friend? - Stas was interested. - What about Rio?

- Oh, - Archil waved it off, - perish this childhood dream! Who needs it now? This is first. And secondly, - well, you will go there a few years earlier ... or later ... what does it matter?! - he laughed. - Only, my friend, now you are mine! I bought you from them. Now you have to work off my debt.

Stas looked at Archil with varying feelings - amazement, suspicion, admiration, but, of course, the main thing that he now felt was a huge gratitude for what was done for him.

“Do you really want to make me scream like myself?” Keep in mind, I can’t do this as skillfully as you.

- Come on, no one will make fun of you! So be it! If you want, you can be my image maker or manager.

“And how did you find out about my case, Archil?”

“Ay, I told you that I have many friends and acquaintances here, and especially in the police. My police protect me, save and protect me.

Stas was shocked and stunned by Archil's personality. He saw in him such a harmonious combination of the conscious and the unconscious that his surprise knew no bounds.

On this day he became a guest in Archil's house. Didn't sleep all night long. The night was always the best time for him to think. And he had a lot of thoughts. I remembered a lot, however, mixed and interspersed. The most important, however, remained thoughts about the future fate of Catherine. He continued to tirelessly torment and torment himself, and the only thing that was holding him back now were the words of consolation, so sincerely and sincerely expressed by Archil.

Several times Stas got up, wrapped himself in a blanket and went out onto the balcony to smoke. Having smoked, he gazed into the distance and, without

opening his mouth, silently, with all his strength and strength, loudly, like no one ever, shouted, Shouted and prayed that at least someone would hear him.

For more than a week, Archil, not without pain, watched the state of mind of Stas, who was left with nothing, lost a lot and continued to live with him. Stas avoided communicating with people, talking on any topic. Suh was even with Archil, he was burdened that he was sitting on his neck.

Returning home after his labors, Archil found Stas in an ever-deepening dejected state.

At the cost of incredible efforts, he managed to extort from him the cause of depression and despondency. And at the same time, he could not forgive himself for one mistake, although he understood that it was not at all about her and everything would have happened without from that. On the very first day, leaving home, he left Stas his mobile phone with permission to call anywhere.

Stas got through to his family, friends, acquaintances and told them that he was delayed for an indefinite time on urgent matters. Except for Dick, no one dared to tell him about the fate of Oksana. Without waiting for his arrival, she succumbed to the insistent demands of the brothers, who gave her in marriage to a suitor they pleased.

- Here are fools! - trying to soften the sadness of Stas, Archil pretended to be carefree. - I swear to you, you have not seen real girls yet. I'll beat you back here so that the whole country will rock.

Stas was completely smitten. He lost two beloved women at once, both of them pretty much ruining their lives. And besides, he perfectly understood that it was not at all about the girls, for whom, as they say, he never, as they say, "went crazy", as happens with some men, but that it is not a man who needs a woman and not a woman who needs man, and a loved one needs a loved one. And if you return to a person what was originally given to him by the creator and what he later partially lost, and what a person essentially ceases to be a person without - love, then the above formula of human existence shared by Stas turned into a banal and short phrase about that a person needs a person. To be more precise, the triad "man-God-man" is the only vital energy force that can help a person in life. Yes, Stas met this formula from other famous classics, but he did not borrow it, and he himself came to it, independently, on his own, and only then found it from others.

Archil was confused. Stas put him in a hopeless position. He had never experienced such a thing for a long time in his life and always boasted that he got out of the most difficult situations. And now ... now he felt that he was slipping himself.

No conversations, persuasions, promises and other tricks of Archil had an effect on Stas, and Archil began to feel that he was losing him and that Stas was moving away from him and from everyone further and further, into some unknown and unknown depth of the otherworldly facet of human existence.

One day Archil returned home earlier than usual.

“Well, it’s okay for you to drool,” he began to scold Stas, who was lying in clothes on the bed and smoking a cigarette. Like a woman, already sickening to watch. Come on, get up, receive guests.

- What kind of guests are these? - Stas was surprised.

And suddenly he heard a woman's voice from behind the door, a voice that would have been able to lift him even from the grave. He hesitated a little, his heart almost burst with happiness, then jumped to his feet like a bullet and rushed to the door.

“Kat?” Stas exclaimed in amazement, suppressing a strange feeling that the whole planet shuddered along with his gut. Tears welled up from his eyes. They threw themselves into each other's arms. He squeezed the fingers of both hands behind her back into the castle and, as it were, held her in a vise.

“No one, no one will ever take you away from me!”

Archil, meanwhile, jumped out onto the balcony, leaving the door open behind him, and, in commemoration of his next victory, uttered a cry of strength that he had never achieved before, the real cry of Mowgli.

Stas caressed, kissed Kate's face and head, and for the first time in her life she answered him. Gradually calming down, they finally felt the cold breaking into the room.

- Hey, you there, Mowgli! - Stas affectionately ran into Archil. - How long are you going to freeze us?! Close the door and come to us soon!

Kate smiled blissfully, tightly squeezed by Stas's hand.

“Well, well,” Archil stated a little sadly. “Perhaps, it really is time already ...”

Kat closed her eyes in agreement and parted the corners of her lips to her ears in a smile.

- And now, another little surprise! - Archil continued and commanded towards the next room. - Now you can, come out!

A man came in with a little girl. Stas continued to squeeze hold Kate in his arms. Seeing the man's face, he froze and became numb.

“Michael?” - flashed through his mind and he began to slowly remove his hand from Kat.

- Yes, Stas, this is Michael, - Kat answered his silent question with a sigh.

- Mom mom! Who is this uncle? - Little Lisa asked her without ceasing.

Kat picked up her daughter.

- Meet Uncle Stas, she explained. - Say hello to his hand. Well!

- Rina, introduce us too! - Michael extended his hand to Stas.

Stas, in indecision and in complete confusion, shook it.

Michael smiled. Stas stood puzzled and perplexed about what was happening. It seemed to him a play skillfully staged by Arthur. In his homeland, the men in this situation, at least, would probably have fought, and he was even afraid to imagine what could happen to the maximum. But now he was staring in surprise at Michael's smiling face, and he surprisingly subtly caught the cause of his shock and tried to somehow explain and clarify something.

- Yes, yes, Stas! Rina told me all about you. Completely and frankly. And I was amazed by the dynamics of your relationship from the first minutes of your acquaintance until today. The way you, at the cost of mutual unforgivable mistakes and omissions, alas, even misfortunes, and to the peak, to the pinnacle of your love and life. You, obviously, will be surprised at our worldview, but Rina and I have been having endless negotiations all this time about our future destinies. We are no longer children, although I am a little older than you. I believe Rina that nothing like this has ever happened between you.

Stas shook his head in both directions in agreement.

"Although, I think that this could not have changed anything significantly," Michael continued. father. And the real first love, and not even the first who did not have it! I also had a beloved girl in my homeland, whom I continue to love, and, perhaps, I will love until the end of my life, even though she is married, and I never had anything like that with her and, of course, now I won't, and I would be very happy if her husband treated all this in the same way that I treat your love. I know enough about your beautiful country from Rina. I also know how many of your men would now respond about me, as I know - in order to understand the French, one must be a true Frenchman. *Se la vi*-such is life, and there's nothing to be done. We, people, need to grow morally and put common human values above our pride and above our self.

Stas was shocked. Michael spoke the words he should have spoken.

- Well, who is to blame for the fact that everything happened between you? And now that everything is over, what to do? Shoot and kill? Well, why can't people calmly and peacefully explain themselves in case of some complications? What is the need to fight, if everyone still remains in his opinion. There are many opinions, but there is only one way out, the only one, and it must be sought together.

- Well, okay, you will philosophize! Everything else will be discussed at the table!

At a well-laid table, the debate continued for a long time. Archil's wife, a beautiful, normal, pretty woman, managed to both serve the table and sit at it, along with the guests.

Stas gradually freed himself from tension and almost resigned himself to the way things were going. I realized that the decision made now is the only one acceptable to all of them, correct and reasonable. And for the sake of Catherine, for the sake of her family happiness and well-being, he must sacrifice himself. Yes, and can no longer be tormented by a terrible sense of guilt before her. He clearly understood to himself that now he would not have a life either with her or without her.

The conversation dragged on, and they sat at the table until morning.

Before dispersing, Michael presented his main surprise, said something that even Katherine did not know - he, as a producer and director, was offered a script for a very interesting film with a plot reminiscent of the story that happened to them themselves.

- And most importantly ... - Michael paused.

All with drooping jaws, frozen, waiting for this chief.

- And what, what is the most important thing?!

"And the most important thing is that..."

"All right, Michael, don't torment and torment us," Katherine pleaded.

- Well, okay, so be it, I won't torture you for a long time, - Michael took pity.

- The most important thing is that we are going to shoot most of the film ... where do you think?

- Michael! Well, stop it! - Katherine pleaded.

- In Ree, in Ree, in Ree ...

"Lie yourself if you really want it," Catherine was offended.

- In Rio-oh-oh ... - Michael screamed loudly, and everyone picked up this inhuman cry, which seemed to be heard by the whole planet. And, of course, among all the voices, Archil's voice stood out sharply, velvety shimmering from key to key.

07.1992/10.1999

“PAIN MERCHANTS”

The publishing house "Deda Ena" published a collection of stories by Samson Gelkhvidze "Dealers in Pain".

A few words about the author. He is a civil engineer by profession. In 1989 he defended his Ph.D. thesis, since 1980 to the present day he has been working in various educational institutions and research institutes of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, and is the author of many scientific papers and inventions. He began to take his first steps in poetry and prose in 1984. "Dealers in Pain" is his first collection, in which Samson Gelkhvidze, by his own admission, tries to stop the "flying time with an arrow".

The heroes of his stories are our contemporaries who, by the will of historical destinies, found themselves in the difficult socio-economic conditions of the post-Soviet space. This is also a kind of "lost generation", to use a well-known literary term. It tries in vain to sort out its relations with the world. Lermontov's lines also come to mind: "I look sadly at our generation, its future is either empty or dark." Our contemporary experiences similar feelings: "After all, something was always missing in life ... and the search for this unknown, missing ... led him either into a rage, then into fatigue, devastation and despondency, coupled with the bitterness of hopelessness and the impossibility of success these searches.

The heroes of Gelkhvidze cannot find their place in life, they are doomed to throwing, wandering ... They listen to their inner voice, think a lot, philosophize, but they are not able to experience a "social, spiritual orgasm", that is, to free themselves, take off, feel the fullness of life, be realized. The fleeting time, the impossibility to hold the moment, the frailty of being - the realization of this causes Gelkhvidze's heroes a sharp pain. In one of the stories, an image of a pink-blue sailboat appears - hope ... But, alas, it floats by so quickly that a person barely has time to realize the significance of the moment. "The moment runs uncontrollably, but we wring our hands and again we are condemned to go all the way by," - again the classic, this time Gumilev.

Another futility, according to Gelkhvidze, is the relationship between a man and a woman. The heroes of his story, as a rule, cannot find personal happiness, break up or are simply unloved by their chosen ones.

The minor intonation of his stories refers us to the era of romanticism, because the poets and writers of that time also experienced a keen sense of incompatibility with the surrounding reality. "And we hate, and we love by accident," wrote the same Lermontov, a melancholic poet who never managed to come to terms with life.

The reason for the spiritual impasse in which the heroes of Samson Gelkhvidze found themselves is social unfulfillment. And yet - the eternal human problem: the impossibility of finding happiness on earth. This is what the book "Merchants of Pain" is about.

Inna BEZIRGANOVA

**Newspaper "Free
Georgia", 13.12.2002, N273**

Gelkhvidze Samson
(Tbilisi, March 26, 1958)



In 1975 he graduated from the 9th secondary school in Tbilisi and in that the same year he entered the Georgian Polytechnic Institute Faculty of Civil Engineering, graduated with honors in 1980 year in the specialty "Industrial and civil construction".

In 1989 he defended his PhD thesis.

In 2006 awarded the degree of Doctor of Technical Sciences.

From 1980 to the present day, he has been working in various educational institutions and research institutes of the Academy of Sciences of Georgia. He is the author of many scientific papers and inventions.

He began to take his first steps in poetry and prose in 1984.

In 2002, the first collections of short stories and poems were published. S. Gelkhvidze "Dealers in Pain" and "The Sacrament of Confessions, or confession in verse.

In 2004, a collection of short stories "Return" was published, and in 2005 year a collection of poems and poems "Pain and Faith" and the first author's novel: Nightingales of the Monastery Garden.

In 2014, the author's second novel, Moonlight Sonata Budapest".

In 2015, a collection of poems and poems by the author "The soul strives for the word" and a collection of short stories "Wind of Change".

The author's third novel is offered to the readers' judgment "PARADISE LOST". 2021 year.