

**SAMSON GELKVIDZE**

**NIGHTINGALES OF THE MONASTERY GARDEN  
( Novel )**



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**DEDICATED**

**in loving memory of my mother  
ETERI ALEXANDROVNA KURDADZE**

**Nightingales of the monastery garden,  
Like all nightingales on earth,  
They say that one is a consolation,  
And that this consolation is in love.**

**Igor Severyanin**

# NIGHTINGALES OF THE MONASTERY GARDEN

## PART 1

### I

"He loves, he doesn't love, he doesn't love, I won't meet ... I won't meet!" The last petal of a yellow-white chamomile smelling of fresh greenery flew off.

The crooked nose suddenly wrinkled and dejectedly tucked up his sponge. Fragile thin hands were about to throw aside the long green stem of the torn flower, but light blue eyes noticed a red ladybug climbing up it.

- Oh, - a smile slipped over the lips, - where did you come from here?

The bug's right little finger blocked the path of the bug, it willingly and without much hesitation climbed on it, scurried long and carelessly along the graceful thin fingers, sometimes froze and peered with curiosity at the lines on the palms.

- Can you at least say something definite? - the girl whispered to the messenger of heaven, frozen between the lines of life and love.

"You have beautiful hands and fingers," she seemed to hear in response, "so will your life be."

"Oh," the girl smiled again. - Well, okay, it's enough for you to admire them. Fly in peace.

She extended her left hand forward and spread her fingers.

The ladybug fumbled for a long time on the fold of the middle finger and was in no hurry to obey its owner.

- Your nails are the same color as me!

- Wow, - she smiled, - and you just now noticed it? - And I thought: "Not a bad idea, do you need to put black specks on them too?"

- Eka, Eka, - the voice of the girl's girlfriend was heard nearby, - come here, look at what flowers Vladik and I have collected.

- Well, okay, - strongly threw Eka to the cow, - fly! Hear my name.

Have to go.

The red dot spun a couple of times, soared up sharply and rushed. The girl looked after her for a long time, gradually losing sight of her:

- Have a good flight!

- Eka, this is for you, - was heard behind him, followed by the outstretched hand of a young man with a huge rich bouquet of wildflowers.

- Thank you, - breathed Eka freshness and fragrance.

- Like?

- Wonderful!  
- These are the color of your eyes, and these are lips. Eka thought, must have dreamed,

I woke up feeling a gentle, timid kiss.

- Levan, are you crazy?

- And what?

- What is it all of a sudden?

- This is not suddenly, - Levan blushed, - I love you, Eka ...

- Oh, hello, we're here! - Eka exclaimed. - When the session is on the nose.

- And what about the session?

- And despite the fact that all these sentiments interfere and slow down the matter.

- Eka, Levan! Quicker! Well, how long can you wait?! Vlad's voice was already heard.

- Let's go! And get that nonsense out of your head! Do you hear?!

Eka returned home from the hill in the evening flushed, tanned and very tired.

- Where do you run all day? - sarcastically asked her sister.

- What about you? Eka snapped.

- Probably, again with your Levanchik?

- Yes, you went!

- Eka, what a treat with a sister! their mother was outraged.

- And let him not be sarcastic and not envious!

- Oh, you bastard!

- Nata, what are you doing?

- You see, mom! And you didn't believe me.

Girls, you can't! You are sisters.

- Ma, is there hot water in the tank? Eka asked.

- Not! Nata has just taken a bath.

- As if she didn't know that I was about to return from a walk.

- All right, I'll put the water on gas! Mom sighed resignedly.

- I'll put it myself, - Eka went to the bedroom to change clothes. The phone rang.

- Well, how? - the voice in a tube has taken an interest.

- Abnormal, kissed me on the lips! Eka said indignantly.

- Well, he confessed his love to me!

- Maka, let's not take these idiots with us anymore!

- How about we go alone?

- Well!

Yes, it's kinda scary...

- Don't be afraid of anything! Who needs us!" Look how many girls, in bulk.

Whatever you want, take it! Now the problem is the man.

- Yah?! Maka laughed.

- OK, let's forget it! When is the university consultation tomorrow?

- At ten! The guys are coming too.

- Do me a favor, tell that cretin to get off me.

- Nu, that you so, Eka!

- I said forget it. OK, bye. See you tomorrow, we'll talk! - Eka abruptly hung up.

She glanced at her palms and fingers.

Why didn't I ask for a name?

Plunging into memories, she mentally flew after the ladybug over the motley carpet of the meadow, marveling at the desire of many to pluck, snatch, catch, hold, possess ... beautiful and beautiful.

"But why?" she wondered. - When it is possible and enough just to look and admire. Do not possess to have!?! - burst from the depths of the soul.

## II

Powerful jets of water from under the rounded border of the fountain doused a large gilded steel ball, surrounded by flying and also steel pigeons. The design seemed to repeat the composition "Pigeons picked up the globe" by the famous Zurab Tsereteli. "Steel pigeons" seemed to be trying to save the world from catastrophe, death, and fountain waters washed the planet non-stop and cleansed it.

In the heat, it was nice to walk past the fountain and feel the coolness of the spray.

They flew up to freshen up and admire their gilded steel relatives and real pigeons.

A group of theater performers passed by the fountain, led by a tall, handsome, bald-headed man of about fifty, who was playing merrily on a long children's flute.

After rehearsing a small scene, the artists gradually began to disperse.

- Excuse me, how can I find Otar Parmenovitch here? asked a young man of about thirty-seven who approached them.

- Here he is! This is our artist! - explained the young pretty actress, pointing with her eyes at the man with the flute.

- Otar Parmenovich, hello! I am Auto Chaduneli, - the young man introduced himself. Otar Parmenovich looked inquiringly at his interlocutor.

- If you remember, a few months ago I came to you with my play, did not find it, but left it to your deputy. It was handed over to you.

- Mention the name.

- Nightingales of the monastery garden.

- So, so, and what is it about?

- About love, of course, about heavenly and earthly love.

- So, then, about heavenly and earthly, - the artistic director thought, - let's go to the theater with me, we'll talk in my office, young man, if you have time.

Waving to the artists, the artistic director and the newcomer headed towards the theatre.

- Tea? Coffee? - suggested Otar Parmenovich.

- No, perhaps it's a bit hot, - thanked Auto.

- Then the tea is cold, - Otar Parmenovich took out a sweet carbonated drink in a half-liter plastic bottle from a small brand new refrigerator, - which, according to advertising, only champions drink.

- And we are with them, - added Auto, smiling.

- Marina, please find me Nodar Vladimirovich and ask me to come in, - Otar Parmenovich asked by phone.

- So, dear Avtandil...?

- You can just Auto.

- So, my dear Auto, we began to talk with you about heavenly and earthly love, and it's hard not to agree with you that in its original pure form it has been preserved to a greater extent in nature than in people. Why?

"Perhaps because the destroyer of the human soul activates the fight against the creation of the Creator," suggested Auto, drinking flavored tea, "and, in order to destroy the crown of creation, man, he tries to steal or weaken this feeling of him, replacing it with other, destructive ones. And the syllogism "I love, therefore I exist", that is, therefore I exist, seems to me more true than "I think, therefore I exist", although the latter is not without a certain meaning.

- Yes, perhaps, - Otar Parmenovich agreed. - From this, humanity is irresistibly rolling towards its catastrophe, and the speed of the desire for self-destruction is catastrophically growing. The second law of thermodynamics is inexorable. entropy law.

- This is the only feeling given to us from heaven, in the form of a lit candle that illuminates the path through earthly darkness to eternal heavenly life, and if this

candle goes out in a person, then he goes astray and wanders into impenetrable darkness.

- Yes, of course, - agreed Otar Parmenovich. - Therefore, a person does everything to keep this feeling and not to let the candle of life go out.

- And in this important weighty word should say culture, including her majesty true, and not pseudo-literature. Like this children's flute - which key you press, you will hear such a sound. Now there is such a decline in culture that it even hurts to look at. She lives as if separately from us, the bulk of the people. And there is a certain polarization: who is in the church, and who is outside it. Culture and art, this living connecting bridge, seemed to have collapsed.

- You know, Avto, I recently visited my friends, saw how their twelve-year-old granddaughter played Cossack robbers in the yard with her peers, and they regretfully stated that the current generation does not like to read books at all. Outside the house is a street, but at home there is music and TV. And the lessons are forced - with screams and fights. And how can one not recall the words of the great Leo Tolstoy that education is a complex and difficult matter only as long as we want, without educating ourselves, to educate our children or anyone else, and if an understanding comes that we can educate others only through ourselves, educating ourselves, then the question of education will also be abolished and only the question of life will remain - how to live oneself? Of course, there is a completely correct answer to it - a righteous life, at least to the best of one's ability. Yes, I understand very well that the best and first teachers of their children are their parents. I also understand that now many people work hard to feed their families and children and, as they say, climb out of their skins, children grow up on their own, unattended. But there, with my friends, this girl does not want to take an example from her parents!

- You yourself cannot do anything without me, the Creator warns us, - the author intervened, - maybe this is the solution to this problem, as well as many others?

- Yes, perhaps, perhaps, - Otar Parmenovich agreed again. - And what are you doing yourself, young man?

- Yes, really nothing, I spin, spin, it happens in different ways, but I earn a living for myself.

- Have you been writing for a long time?

- No, imagine, this play is my first work, and therefore I am very interested in your opinion.

- What are you talking about? - Otar Parmenovich was amazed. - Very good for the first time! Although there are significant flaws in a few places, but overall - great!



“Well, I called Nodar Vladimirovich, but he doesn’t come to us for some reason,” Otar Parmenovich was annoyed, looking at his watch.

Avto also looked at his watch and noticed with surprise that he had taken almost an hour from the artistic director.

- Nothing, Otar Parmenovich, don't worry. I just wanted to know if it makes sense to work on this play further, and if it is possible to stage it with you?

- Of course, it makes sense to work, but you should talk to the director first. He will direct you, and then we will meet with you and see what to do next.

"Good," agreed Avto, holding out his hand and shaking Otar Parmenovich's.

“Why do I need all this,” asked Avto. “As if I have little to do. Well, okay, you write, write for yourself, for the soul, but no, you still have to publish, stage, advertise, be interested. What will people say? And they say different things, to each his own. Oh, it's bad when a person breaks away from the main work, starts to rush about, take on everything. Wow, the play rolled back!

Leaving the theater building, Auto went to the fountain and rinsed his face with water. Not far above his head, with a squeak and a screech, large black swifts darted about like mad. Their cries sounded in time with the hubbub of children playing football not far from the pool.

Auto slowly moved on to a small stadium enclosed by a high wire-framed fence, and watched the gambling game for a while, remembering his own childhood. His glance accidentally fell on the boy on the opposite side of the street, who, with pleasure and caution, crossed his, apparently, the first steps in life. Not far away stood a mother with outstretched arms, ready to embrace her child.

- This is how the Creator waits for each of us, people, - Auto thought.

The child fell, rose to his haunches, rested his hands on the ground, got frightened, started crying, looked around, but, having found his mother with a glance, he got up and hobbled in her direction. Finally, he overcame his path and reached a safe and peaceful pier.

The car, lost in thought, walked down a wide, one-way street towards the central city square.

- Oh, Auto, hello, old man, - a familiar voice stopped him at a small supermarket.

He recognized his classmate from school, with whom, in general, he was not friends, but was simply familiar.

"Hello!" he greeted, not even remembering his name.

After a short excursion into the past and the present that followed from it, a classmate suggested that we celebrate the meeting.

"I can't," Avto apologized.

- What is it? He has become such an important bird that you consider it beneath your dignity to have a couple of drinks with old friends?

- No, I'm sorry, - Auto justified himself, surprised at the impudence of the interlocutor.

"Since when have we been friends?" he wondered to himself.

- Yes, leave you, for God's sake, this nonsense! What can be done today? Go downstairs and see what's going on in the square. Believe me, it's better to spend time with me than...

Auto had to resort to additional excuses:

- You know, and health is something fooling around. Doctors forbade drinking. The argument with the interlocutor dragged on.

- What if your gallbladder is bothering you? Describe the symptoms to me. We'll see.

Auto recalled recurrences of a long-standing disease of the gallbladder, describing them to his interlocutor to the smallest detail.

- Yes, it's him! He! A prostitute!" he suddenly exploded. You really need to stop drinking for a while, mate. Okay, I won't insist anymore. Or maybe at least a couple of rubles still toss? Not that I have such a terrible hangover that at least hang yourself.

Auto hastened to take advantage of the opportunity.

Below, on the main city square, in front of the city hall, a crowded meeting gathered, speakers with loudspeakers spoke in turn from a small balcony of the left wing of the two-story old, beautiful building of the city hall with a low, luxurious tower in the center.

- "Kmara"1, - the activists of the new social movement called, - we will no longer tolerate such a life. Now leading TV and radio journalists and commentators from all over Europe are here. They broadcast live to their countries. And let everyone know that we are not some kind of rabble, which for the past many years they have been trying to fool with empty stories and promises, but we are a modern civilized society that has the right to a healthy and fulfilling life...

The car did not stay on the square for long.

- Eh, he waved his hand and, drooping, moved on with the thought that settled in his head: Nothing in this world can be significantly changed.

### III

... But, having met with her embarrassed,  
you Suddenly stop involuntarily,  
Reverently pleading  
Before the shrine of beauty.

A.S. Pushkin

It was a stone's throw to the top of the most picturesque mountain right in the middle of the city. Its slopes are overgrown with mixed forest. Living and inanimate nature harmoniously and peacefully coexisted in it. Maples, acacias, mulberries, cypresses coexisted peacefully next to each other...

The divine forest silence was broken only by a weak warm breeze and rare exclamations of people coming from nearby.

The strange trills of songbirds attracted here only the most concentrated and inquisitive.

True, it flocked to listen to them and many other birds, in bewilderment trying to "figure out" their relatives in the general choir.

Meanwhile, a small portable tape recorder gleamed on a stump, and emitted these bird-like clicks and overflows.

The young girl, who imperceptibly approached the strange source of sound, looked around in amazement, and her gaze froze on a man behind a thick maple trunk, with small headphones on his ears, put on his head and held on a thin steel rim with a mini-microphone mounted on a short wooden twig.

Putting the index finger of his right hand to his lips, he called the girl, who was looking at him in amazement, to be silent. The singing of birds from the tape recorder was gradually replaced by live performance. The girl froze at the place where the man's index finger stopped her, and, fascinated by what was happening, she was more and more immersed in voluptuous sounds. The man, meanwhile, gave her a new order with a movement of his hands.

Easily guessing what he was getting at, she knelt down, pressed the stop button with a thin finger, and looked up at the person giving her more and more commands with facial expressions and hand movements. Obedient to them, she rewound the cassette, turned it over and pressed the record button.

- What a quick-witted one, - the hunter for bird voices was delighted, - just a clever one, - and sent her a kiss as a token of gratitude.

The girl smiled, also glad that she had guessed his wish.

Their negotiations lasted almost an hour, during which the girl successfully manipulated the tape buttons. She even managed to exclude long pauses between bird roulades from the recording with pinpoint accuracy.

- Clever, well done, - the man thanked in an undertone, approaching her, - this is an assistant, I understand!

- Yes, well? - She smiled sweetly. - Are these thrushes?

"No, nightingales," the man explained.

The girl peered mysteriously into his round face with brown eyes, and he barely managed to avoid her gaze.

"What a brave and brave..."

"Are you serious about them or is it your hobby?" the girl asked.

- Both that, and another, - there was a reply, - I am an ornithologist, for several years now I have been studying birds, if possible, I even think to defend myself, but if not, then it is not necessary. Their singing is enough for me.

- You probably understand their language too?

- Yes. - he smiled in response, - there is a little.

- And what do they sing about?

- About love, of course! About what else? The girl beamed with a smile.

He noticed how she was transformed and how her face became even more beautiful than before.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" he asked.

"How?" she asked.

- As if I'm a strange person.

- Is not it?

- You find?

- Yes, - she smiled again, lowering her eyes, - there is a little.

- What is your name?

- Eka Mindia!

- Well, Eka, let's get to know each other. I am Auto," he said, holding out his little finger, quickly met by the gentle little little finger of her hand.

- Let's be friends?

- We will.

- You have a very beautiful nose. Like birds. That is why I love them.

“Oh,” she shyly grabbed her nose with the palms of both hands, hiding it from her gaze. “How, but isn’t it because of the singing?” the girl asked in surprise, and her face immediately became serious.

- Okay, bye, - she threw with resentment and, turning her back, walked away.

- Eka, forgive me, I didn't mean to offend you, - Auto rushed after her, but she stopped him:

“Don’t, don’t follow me,” she almost commanded.

“Obedience for obedience,” he thought, and, chagrined at the fact that he had offended an innocent girl, dejectedly froze in place.

The ringing of the church bells near the place of their meeting sounded and spilled around, calling the townspeople to vespers.

Auto all enjoyed the singing of his birds, while Eka defended the service and listened to the melodic and consonant chorus, and from time to time the image of the recent “offender” popped up in her mind.

She felt and understood that she was not at all offended by him, but only played offended, without knowing why.

She drove away his image, tried to completely immerse herself in prayer, but ... This went on all day and evening, and even all night. She tossed and turned restlessly in bed, got up every now and then, walked, ate something ... and could not get rid of her memories even in the morning at lectures.

#### IV

There was half an hour left before the next lecture. In the teacher's college, in the corner, by the window, three teachers, middle-aged women, were talking at a table. At the creaking of the door, they turned and nodded affably to their young employee.

- Oh, Natalie, hello! Join us. Let's drink coffee. A smile followed the invitation.

- How elegant and beautiful you are today!

Glancing casually in the mirror, the newcomer sat down at the table of her colleagues talking.

A bottle of Bagrationi champagne unexpectedly emerged from under the table.

- O-oh! - She exclaimed with pleasure.

- Girls, do not stand before the lesson! - hesitated another.

- Nothing! One bottle for four - you can! - reassured her third. Natalie fished a bar of aerated chocolate out of her purse.

- What if someone else comes in?

- We'll invite you! Actually, we're fast!

- Well, let's! For us, for our work and patience! They clinked and sipped.

- So you were waiting for me? - asked Natalie.

- Yes! You are so pretty today. What's the matter? They drank some more, and the conversation continued.

- Is it something interesting?

- No, Veriko! No! - Natalie waved her hand.

"Well, isn't it time?" Mary interrupted her.

- It's time not time, get out of the yard! - Natalie smiled.

- Girls, well, so be active! - Maggie exclaimed. Help Nate! She's almost thirty now!

- Here is our director, Givi Dosifeevich! A good candidate, - Veriko said thoughtfully. - Free, and besides, if it burns out, there will be fewer attacks on us.

- Yes, but he's too old for her, he also has a son, Timoshka! From the first wife, - doubted Meggie.

- How old is he? - asked Mary, who managed to light a cigarette and take a deep puff.

- Like forty-five, - a little hesitation and thought, said Meggie. There were a few more nominations.

Natalie denied, was indignant, wondering in her soul the question: "Well, who asks them about this? Who"!?

Slowly, we started to deviate from the topic.

"Remember how stupid we ourselves were when we jumped out to get married," Veriko smiled.

- Do not speak! - Mary agreed with her.

- My faithful again took to drink. - Meggie looked down. Long drinking bouts are replaced by forced, for health reasons, moments of sobriety.

- You know, in Europe the system of guest love has been adopted. Husband and wife live separately, each on his own, and only go to visit each other! - Veriko remembered.

"Good," said Maggie.

- Yes, and, imagine, even psychologists say that such families are the most durable, - Veriko confirmed.

"What a horror," Natalie thought, "this is the same as a connection on the side. And what kind of children grow up in such families..?"

- And generally speaking, what are they, men for?! Let them really just come, do what they need... well, there... hammer in a nail, twist it, screw it up, and -

Good riddance! Veriko exclaimed passionately. - My darling is also good! Such numbers have been breaking off lately, just hold on and be patient!

- Yes, what?

- He gets up at night, wanders, wanders through the rooms, smokes one after another, ashes right on the floor! Can you imagine?

- What do I have better? Come home from work, eat up, and watch TV until late! Then he raves all night, zero attention to me! Neither the children are interested, nor the house! Well, at least he throws up food!

- God! Maybe he started on the side?

- Who knows!

- Follow! Just in case...

- What's the point? They can do anything, but we can't.

- Do not say! That's injustice!

- Divorce him, or something, "Mary suggested right off the bat.

"But what about the children," Veriko reminded her.

- And what about the children? "Mom will help, and they themselves are no longer small, they will soon graduate from the university, and let them choose their own path in life!

- Do not say! Also bastards! It gets on my nerves sometimes! Jealous of me to each other, and with such claims! Everyone thinks that you love him, and you pay less attention than the rest!

- Ouch! And my records have been beaten for a long time! thought Meggie. The son, as soon as he comes home, will scream: who came to my table, who touched the disks! ..

- In general, for our bastard life! And more patience and endurance for us! - suggested Veriko.

They laughed, clinked glasses, ate chocolate, coffee and cigarette smoke.

- So I want to do something of my own, a hobby! They don't give homemade. I can't even read before bed. You lie down so tired, and then there is your husband.

- I started knitting, I don't remember when, and I won't finish everything.

- I dream of getting into a beauty salon! - they laughed at each other.

"Well, they were remembered in connection with my fate!" Natalie smiled in her soul. The director, Givi Dosifeevich, looked in.

Greeted the employees, noticed and praised the updated look of Natalie.

- Come to me after the lectures, please, - he asked her and hurried back.

- Oh, girls, - Veriko drawled mystically, - it seems that something is pecking ...

- Stop it, please, - Natalie interrupted her, blushed, went to her desk and began to stir something and look in the boxes.

- Okay! Let's all go to our nesting dolls! - called Meggie, completing the cleaning of the table at which they had just been talking.

We dispersed to the audience. Natalie noticed in passing a student kneeling with his back to her, clutching his arms to his chest and singing a popular tune to a classmate.

The girl, standing on the bench of the desk, immediately noticed the teacher, but did not give her friend the slightest look, only the smile playing on her lips turned into a soft laugh that was hard to contain.

Natalie herself decided not to interrupt the young talent and froze in anticipation of the end of his solo.

- Oh, - as if feeling something, the soloist turned around, - excuse me, please!

- I did not know that you are such a skillful performer, - Natalie explained, sitting down at her teacher's table and looking around at the board, on which was a white emblem with the inscription "Kmara" on it.

- Ignorance! - attributed to Natalie and put a big exclamation mark at the end.

"And we can rearrange the person," she heard two or three soft exclamations behind her.

"And what's left for you?" she turned to the class. - Well? What remains after a person is rearranged?

The class is silent. Natalie quickly skimmed through the list and began the lesson in almost complete silence. She was easier than her colleagues to manage to rein in her wards.

"Ah, Natalie, is that you?" Come in, come in, - Givi Dosifeevich invited the visitor.

- Well, how were the classes? I hope, without special excesses?!

- Yes, yes! - confirmed Natalie.

"Emma, I went for a break," the director threw to his secretary, closed the door and even locked it with a key.

- In our time, an increase in the level and quality of teaching is accompanied by a decrease in the quality of perception and the number of people who want to acquire knowledge.

Natalie listened silently to the director's drawn-out preamble.

The conversation lasted twenty minutes. the director spoke mostly, while Natalie either agreed or disagreed, confining herself to short phrases.

Her fragrance aroused the director more and more, and he spent the end of the conversation pacing, for the most part, behind her back.



- Natalie, have you considered my proposal?

- Givi Dosifeevich, I beg you, let's not talk about it! I already told you... there is a man...

- What is his name? - he caught her on the fact that she was a little confused and confused.

"What does it matter?" she finally found herself.

Her pale yellow tank top jutted out spectacularly from her dark red mop of hair. A wide-open soft collar wrapped around her long neck, which wafted with delicate perfume and on which delicate long earrings fell.

He stopped behind her and suddenly with strong hands squeezed her shoulders and clung to her neck:

- I love you, Natalie!

She jumped up as if she had been stung, and from a half-turn cast an angry glance at him:

- What do you allow yourself?!

"Your luck that you are the director," she thought, but did not dare to say. "It would not have received a good slap in the face."

The director caught her thought.

- Natalie, I love you and will do everything to make you happy. As for the child... nothing... they'll look after him...

- Please get this nonsense out of your head!

- I need you, Natalie...

- Let me out of here, please! What nonsense? Here's to you!

- Nobody needs your Esperanto here.

-What? - Natalie was surprised. - This is news!

- Now you know what languages are relevant - English, French, German!

"Esperanto is the most relevant common European language," she said offended.

- The common European house is too far from us.

Are you doing me a favor by keeping it? There was no answer.

- Understandably! Well! I have private apprentices, so I can do without the paycheck here. Tomorrow you will receive my application...

- Natalie, calm down, I do not insist, but only ask. The rest is your business and your will.

- Let me out of here! Please!

"What shamelessness," she wondered, rushing up the wide stone stairs to the exit from the college.

Gradually, the outrage subsided noticeably.

"I understand him," she almost agreed, "but what have I got to do with it. Let him find the right one! I'm a fool, - she immediately objected to herself, - I shouldn't have refused at Vakho's graduation party. Everything would be fine now. But then it seemed that there was no need to rush, that the whole life was ahead, that someone more interesting might meet ... And now "The turkey thought and thought, and ended up in a soup! No, tomorrow I will leave him a statement.

Passers-by moved along the street, some towards her, some bypassing, some overtaking.

She plunged into memories - in school and student years. With horror, she mentally caught in her peers the difference from their former ones. How much and how little twelve years are for a person. A completely different generation has come, the so-called

"purple". They say it will reach an unprecedented level of development.

Time runs much faster than a person, but he does not keep up, but only regretfully throws after him, following his accusations.

## V

The bird market opened early in the morning, when the activity of birds reached its peak, and closed by noon, when the sun and buyers completely exhausted them with looking and feeling.

- Look, look, how handsome! a plump middle-aged man in jeans, a short-sleeved brown shirt and a sombrero hat admired his ward.

A small gray parrot, offended, languished in a high cage and looked around more than he looked at the seller, buyers and thin ropes on legs.

- Here, look at him, - the seller was crucifying, - he is so smart! He grew up in my arms, and I taught him a lot.

- And why does he need these ribbons? - the buyer inquired, giving his voice severity and winking at his two young companions.

- He mastered the science of communicating with people a long time ago, but he is just beginning to understand them, and therefore he sometimes needs help, - the seller explained, - that's why ...

The parrot suddenly chirped, as if addressing the owner.

- How cute he is, Nata! Isn't it?" the younger girl exclaimed in delight.

- How much are you asking for him? - asked the eldest, Nata.

The younger one put her thin index finger between the bars of the cage, to which the parrot instantly reacted with a slight peck.

- Eka, stop teasing him, - Nata stopped Eku.

- Yes, yes, girl, don't, - the seller joined in, - he doesn't like strangers, and he also feels that he is being sold, and this makes him upset.

- Ruben, come on, I need you, - a young man called out to the seller, who got out of the trailer not far from the place of the auction.

Ruben continued to praise his "product" and did not respond to the call.

Eka's heart fluttered, the caller's voice seemed very familiar, and she looked around.

"Can not be. where does he get here?"

"Ruben, can you hear me?" the call was repeated.

- Well, wait, Auto. You see, I have buyers, let them go and come. Eka froze.

"You don't need me here, apparently," she let herself take offense, "I'll go and walk along the rows. Meet me at the exit.

- Eka, well, wait a bit, you can't do it like that, - Nata was indignant.

- Let him go, - their father waved away, not looking up from the ranting of the seller.

- So, - Ruben spread, turning to the buyer, - if you pull the right string, he will speak politely and civilly, and if you use the left one, he can even obscene and send him to hell.

- Well!?

- Yes, yes, I assure you!

- And if you pull both at once? Ruben paused.

"Fool, what am I going to stand on then?" the parrot was indignant and pounced on the seller from behind the bars of the cage, "fool, fool, fool ...

- You see!?

- Yes, that's right, it's funny!

- Well, okay, that's enough for you! - Ruben shook his finger and hurried to pull the right rope.

- Forgive me, please, dear, forgive me ... - the parrot chattered.

Nata could barely contain her laughter, and her father took on an even more serious expression.

Ruben was wound up to the fullest and went to tell everything he knew about different types of parrots.

The door of the trailer opened cautiously. Eka cautiously approached a small writing table with stacks of papers, over which, bending his head and doing some calculations on his Notebook computer, he worked in a gray soiled T-shirt. He,

apparently, did not at all interfere with the chirping of different birds in cages hung on the walls of the trailer.

“Hello,” Eka murmured in an undertone hesitantly. Auto looked at the girl in bewilderment.

- Oh! - he finally recognized her. - Hello, blue-eyed! Where are you from and when did you get here?

Eka answered him with a smile.

- Your bird whispered in my ear that you were here...

- Fine, have a seat! - offered a glance Auto. Eka turned her gaze to the birds.

Auto looked up from the papers and led Eka to the cages.

Eka listened to his explanations with great attention and interest.

- And here, in a two-section cage with me, - Auto pointed to an oblong cage outside the trailer window, - a goldfinch!

- How beautiful, - Eka was amazed, looked up at a small wedge of birds flying across the sky, and she immediately heard the abrupt chirping of a goldfinch.

She noticed with amazement how one of the flying birds broke away from the wedge, landed on the twig of the cage and burst into sharp cries.

- Come on, come on! - barely audible, but impatiently egged her on.

Eka guessed that the twig could break under the weight, and then the half-open door would slam behind the victim. But the twig did not break off.

Having chirped a little and, apparently, urging his relative to fly, the bird flew away.

- See how the heart gives a call to the heart?

- I thought you love birds and study them, but it turns out that you earn money on them? - Eka was upset.

- What can you do? I combine the useful with the pleasant. You have to live for something.

Eka, upset, went to the exit, but Auto gently grabbed her by the shoulder and stopped her:

- Don't leave, please!

Eka turned around and looked him straight in the eyes.

- Let go, don't, everything is clear to me.

- Eka, you, you, - Auto's tongue stuttered, - you are the most beautiful bird that has fluttered into my heart.

- And the door slammed shut? Auto nodded.

- Let me go, please, - they insist Eka repeated more eloquently.

- But I'm not going to give you or sell you to anyone!

- Yes? We'll see.

- Well, well, help me in one matter.

- In what? - Eka delayed leaving.

Auto pulled out a broken twig from the half-open section of the cage, asked her to hold it, and began to look for an invisible thread.

While Eka held the twig, Auto fixed a colorless fishing line on it.

- That's it! - Satisfied, he exclaimed, mounting the twig in the previous working position and passing the end of the fishing line through the window into the trailer.

- Now it will be necessary to pull on it in time, without delay!

- Are you a roper!? - Eka concluded. - So bring the rope to the door ...

Auto smiled, pulled out a small lasso from one of the boxes on the table, and threw it at Eka's feet.

- Do you want to enter the circle!?

Eka looked at him questioningly. Several emotions were at play in her now. Against her own will, she scaredly pulled her left leg up to the noose. Only

the leg sank to the floor as far as Auto pulled the other end, and the rope wrapped around it tightly.

Eka lost her balance, fell to one side, but Auto picked her up and carried her deep into the trailer, onto the couch.

- Let me go, crazy. Let me go!" she screamed through laughter. He reached out to her, but she pushed him away abruptly.

- No need! she said decisively, recoiling and rising from the couch. She quickly freed her leg from captivity and headed for the exit.

- All right, all right, Eka! I promise that I won't lay a finger on you again! - Auto's voice overtook her at the almost flung open door.

She paused for a moment and turned around.

- One more question, one small request, I promise without hands... With a glance I agreed to listen.

"Here... I've sketched a little play, the first of my life... I'm interested in your opinion about it... if it interests you..."

I tensed up and thought.

"Where is she?" she asked after a short pause. Auto handed her a stack of sheets.

- "Nightingales of the monastery garden" - ran her eyes through the first, top page. - So thick, big?

- Yes, that's how it turned out. I wrote it a long time ago and did not dare to show it to anyone.

Ashamed somehow, they will still laugh.

- And when do you manage to do so much?

- Well, - Avto hesitated, - I don't know myself. Here is my brief biographical information.

- I'll read it with pleasure, - Eka put the play in a plastic bag, - but where to look for you next time?

Auto shrugged.

- And why, in fact, do you miss Sunday services and sometimes violate one of the ten commandments?

- I don't know, - Avto hesitated, - somehow it doesn't always work out ...

- Do you have more important things to do? What could it be? Auto looked at her in amazement.

- Promise to decide on this issue, if you want, so that I forgive your antics.

Auto happily nodded his head in agreement. For the sake of reconciliation, he was ready for a lot.

Eka got out of the trailer, straightened her clothes, as if shaking off the dust from her light, cotton, short gray skirt above the knees.

Auto looked after her, not looking up: "God, what a bony." Eka, as if sensing the gaze, turned around.

"Didn't I say I read minds from a distance?"

Father and Natalie watched the parting of Eka and Avto with irritation. Natalie held in her hand a cage with a parrot bought from Ruben.

"Who is he?" she asked Eka in amazement.

"None of your business," Eka snapped defiantly.

Ruben was already in a hurry to the trailer and said goodbye to the girls' father:

- Here is our chief ornithologist. It can deliver any, the most exotic bird from any country in the world, from hummingbirds to Magellanic penguins.

Father cast a stern look at Auto.

- Mamiya Sergeevich, - a respectable man with a large cage, in the corner of which a crow ruffled, exclaimed joyfully, - how many years, how many winters! Haven't seen you for a long, long time!

- Ah, Murman! Hello my dear. What fates?

- Yes, I bought a crow for my father and children. I'll take them to the dacha, let them have fun. Father asked, I'll see, he says how she will live for three hundred years.

- Go, girls, to the exit, I'll catch up with you, - the father stopped to talk a little with an old acquaintance.

At the exit, however, the girls were caught up by Auto with a beautiful, exotic bird in a small cage.

“This is a bird of happiness,” he nodded timidly to Natalie and turned to Eka, handing her the cage. Eka looked inquiringly, took the gift from him and peered at the captive chick. She carefully lured her out of the cage and took it in her palm. bird long,

calmly and fearlessly sat, not intending to take off.

- Why doesn't she fly away? - Eka was surprised.

- Who knows, - shrugged Auto.

- Sick, probably? - suggested Natalie.

“You yourself are sick,” Eka snapped. “Come on, take her in your arms,” she suggested, “my happiness!”

Natalie accepted the bird with pleasure, but it immediately started up and flew up.

All three looked after her with curiosity.

- Here's the patient, - Eka concluded, - she could not resist in your hands.

- Do not worry, Auto, - asked Eka, - consider that we have accepted your gift, - and leave the cage with you, it will still be useful to you.

- Fool, fool, what have you done ... - started the parrot.

Natalie was not at a loss and instantly pulled lightly for the right string.

- Excuse me, please, forgive me, - the parrot went back down.

- What smart, need to same! Natalie noticed.

“His school,” Eka explained, pointing to Auto. “Meet me, this is my sister Natalie,” she politely turned to him.

- Very nice, I'm Auto! - He shook hands with Natalie.

Auto dejectedly with an empty cage in his hands returned to the trailer, where Ruben was already impatiently waiting for him.

The girls stood at the exit, waiting for their father.

“What were you doing there for so long just now?” Natalie asked suspiciously.

- None of your business!

“His upbringing is lame!” Natalie warned.

- Where did you get it? - Eka asked, in some way agreeing with her sister in her soul.

- When they get acquainted with a girl, they don't stretch out their hands to her first!

- And when they get acquainted with a man, his gift is not called sick! - Eka retorted.

- Stop quarreling, - their father stopped them, - let's go home, otherwise we were late for something.

- And how do you know this young man from the trailer? - he asked Eka.

- I met him at church.

- Doesn't he drive up to you, huh? - his father looked at Eka inquiringly.

- Pa, we're just good, good friends, that's all!

"Yeah!" Natalie thought to herself.

Part of the family got into a brown OPEL, and it slowly drove away from the parking lot. A cheerful melody of a mobile phone was heard in a passenger car.

- Well, where are you still, Mamiya, - a gentle female voice was heard.

- We're on our way, Manana, calm down, we'll be home in fifteen minutes!

The city was filled with many cars, traffic jams formed every now and then, so it took quite a long time to get to the house.

## VI

The hysterical howl of the anti-theft siren came with increasing power. He was accompanied by a certain commotion, rapid movements around the room, frightened exclamations, frequent slamming of the front door.

"What the hell!" the sleeping man tried to wave away, pulling a blanket over his head, "the last minutes before morning are poisoning. They don't give a damn that how you sleep, you will spend the day."

On top of that, the alarm clock on the bedside table also rang.

The hand, protruding from under the blanket, tried in vain to find the button to stop the call. Desperate to find it, she grabbed the alarm clock and threw it into the far corner of the room.

- Ramaz, are you crazy? - an indignant female exclamation came in response.

- It's been a long time, - mentally agreed the culprit and rolled over from side to side.

- You almost hit me! - The voice continued to be indignant.

- Almost does not count - flashed through the brain in response.

- Come on, get up! There is nothing! I got out even when I got up, but you can't push him ... He basks here!

- Lord, well, why did I marry such a woman? - the sleeper was exhausted. What a choice then! I chose from a thousand, and here you are ... please! Ruthless!



- Liichka, my dear, it's enough for you to bother me in the morning. Turn off the radio or switch to another wave, this crazy siren has no strength, - Ramaz pleaded. - And at work it makes me sick!

- It's not a radio, it's a neighbor from the last floor built in his front door anti-robbery and anti-theft siren, - explained the female voice, - included, and he went to work. And now neither his elderly mother nor the neighbors can turn it off. Trouble for the whole house! Can you stand up and help?

- Tell them to unscrew the plugs from the inside! After a while, the siren went silent.

"Lord, what silence, what a whim," thoughts fell into a dream. "How little a person needs for happiness."

- Dad, dad, and what a submarine looks like! - After a while, a child's voice got out.

Ramaz closed his eyes, opened his eyelids at the count of three, turned over in bed and sat up. He glanced at his half-dressed seven-year-old son, moved him to the desk by the window, looking for an object suitable for the plan. I noticed a yellow-greenish, not yet cut medium-sized lemon near a cup of tea.

- There's a lemon! You see? - He showed his son with a look.

Little Akaki looked around in surprise and, shivering, nodded his father in agreement.

Well, she's not like that at all! It's clear? Akaki nodded in surprise.

Ramaz turned on his former side and tried to snatch the last minutes from the dream that had slipped away.

Soon, however, the crying of a five-year-old daughter was heard.

"It's good that at least the third one hasn't been born yet," Ramaz thought with satisfaction, "wish there was a concert! Morning organ music. Maybe refuse while there is time. "What nonsense," he was frightened of his thoughts. "Yes, and she will not agree."

- Ramaz, well, what are you, really, how small! You can not overpower yourself - groaned Leah, - even the children are ahead of you.

"Well, well, well," Ramaz agreed, surrendering his positions, "just ask like a human being!"

- Get up, count, great things await you, - as if guessing his thoughts, my daughter asked, - Ramses II, get up! - she added demandingly.

"I wonder how she knows about Ramses II," Ramaz was perplexed.

"Here are the people, they won't let you take a nap either at night or during the day," Ramaz rose with complaints, "everyone needs everything from me!"

A gray-golden lap dog ran out of the next room and ran at him barking.

- What are you, Bug, crazy. What do you need? - Ramaz was surprised.

- Come on, mother, here! What did you bring there? Look what's going on here.

Quiet! Here are rabid!

Subtly catching the indignation in the tone of the owner, the lapdog barked even more. Headlong rushed to the owner, grabbed his slipper with her teeth, pulled him to the side.

- Well, now give it back, stingy! - the owner grabbed the slipper, trying to win it back. The fight ended with the lapdog biting Ramaz's finger and rushing out the door with a slipper.

- What with her? - Ramaz was surprised.

- Heat. Forgot, or what? - Leah explained. - Now she needs to be treated kindly, politely.

- Yeah, - objected Ramaz. - And who treats me like that? Yes, I won't feed her and I'll kick her in the neck! Tell her, let her know!

- You promised to find a good groom for her. Here she is waiting!

- Hello, - objected Ramaz, - and blame me for this? Nobody helped me choose! Let her find it herself. Not small anymore!

- Do you need puppies, or what? - Leah was curious.

- No, really, - Ramaz caught on, but calm her down somehow! The angry grumbling outside the door did not stop.

"You must have torn up your slipper, you scoundrel!"

"Okay, I'll buy her more pills," Leah agreed.

- Well, give me something, otherwise I'll lie down again!

Akaki hurriedly threw his slippers at his father's feet, belatedly realizing that they did not fit him.

Father and son looked at each other knowingly.

- Eh, - Ramaz muttered doomedly and got up in one slipper.

The daughter took pity on her dad, brought another shoe, but was in no hurry to give it away, as if wanting to make her earn it.

- Pa, why does the smoke from the stove go where it is called a pipe, and where water and gas flows, is this also a pipe ?!

- Oh-ho! - sighed Ramaz. - And my life is also a pipe, Anechka!

- See, why?

Ramaz pointed to his feet. "Who knows him," he thought, "knows?"

- In life, many different things are called the same, Anechka. A person has a lot of questions, and life is given to him in order to correctly answer them. You will grow up, you will understand, and now help me if you can.

Satisfied with the answer, Anechka threw a pair of slippers at her father's feet, which she had been hiding behind her back until then.

"Yeah, it worked," thought Ramaz.

- Well, thank you, daughter!

The toothbrush mercilessly washed away the traces of their previous labor activity from the teeth.

Suddenly, the filling twitched and fell out of the back lower, "working" tooth, leaving a hollow in itself.

- Here are those on! Why is she suddenly?

"Pa, why is the Beetle's nose cold and wet all the time?" asked Akaki, who arrived in time.

- Akaki, well, you're not Anechka! I took the time to ask questions. Leah, get these whys away from me, I'm already late for work!

- Ah, - Leah drawled, - I beg, I beg to get up early, and you?! The bug needs to be walked. Forgot, right?

- Yes, well, her! And I don't think about leaving! I feed, I fumble, and she bites, and even steals slippers. Get out! - He noticed a shaggy offender looking out from behind the door, angrily barking at the owner.

- OK OK! I'll take it, so be it, - Ramaz softened, - it's enough for you to grow! The bug jumped out from behind the door, smugly wagging its tail and whining.

- Well, everyone is quick to go to the kitchen, have breakfast, - Leah commanded, - before it gets cold, - she added conciliatorily.

## VII

The bug condescendingly cowardly next to the owner. At the exit from the entrance, Ramaz glanced at the metal lattice door leading to the basement.

"See what they are doing, Ramaz Mikhailovich," the neighbor complained from the bottom floor, pointing to the grate bent at the bottom, locked at the middle level with a powerful lock on a steel carbon metal frame.

- Wow! - Ramaz was amazed. - And when did they manage it, Roza Grigorievna?

- At night, when! They went in, smashed the wooden common entrance door to pieces and broke the locks of literally all our cellars. Come down and see how you are...

- Nu, and took that? I have almost nothing there.
- They took it, how not to take it! For example, I have a drink. Found, in a word, what!
- They must have been drinking and walking all night! And there are plenty of used syringes!
- Did you report it to the police?
- Reported, but what's the point! They say they can't do anything. And one even joked that computes and they are very fond of.
- How so?
- That's how! If they are not caught red-handed, they say, they are powerless. They asked me to let you know when we got it.
- "Didn't anyone hear anything?"
- Let's say you heard. Well, so what. " There is no justice for anyone. Whoever wants, then creates! "How, after all, a person is drawn to everything nasty and bad, and how tragically
- his nature is predisposed to the unrighteous and fatal, - Ramaz thought sadly. - And where are we heading to?
- Already at the exit, he heard how a neighbor was indignant behind him:
- Surely our yard parasites! All day long they hang around the yard idle, drinking, playing cards, and at night they take a long walk.

## VIII

Not far from Ramaz's house, across the road, a dense garden miraculously survived from the pogrom, with a fenced stadium rarely empty in the back, turned green. Yard and street football teams of different age groups replaced one another there. Unless in the days of a sharp cold snap it was possible to find no one on the field.

The stadium began from a low retaining concrete wall, behind which rose a metal fence made of coarse mesh.

Not far from the wall, several abandoned booths-kiosks crowded, resuming work in the summer and selling soft and strong drinks and snacks.

The most active "mini-entrepreneurs" even managed to drag and install ping-pong tables next to the booths, which is why the "twitter" of the players almost completely absorbed the bird's.

Between the booths and the retaining wall of the stadium, stray dogs found shelter, which must have watched with envy the well-groomed, well-fed,

thoroughbred domestic, which were walked, mostly in the morning, by their no less well-groomed owners.

Stray dogs far from always remained indifferent to their domestic relatives, especially running closer in the territory developed by them.

The first flashing of the most evil and strong was picked up by the rest, down to the most seedy and weak.

But this time Zhuchka and Ramaz were barked by a black, shaggy little dog, almost trying to swallow them.

The bug started, froze in fright and clung to Ramaz's legs, looking up and as if begging for help.

The dog did not react to Ramaz's loud cries; moreover, he spun around Ramaz even more, trying to somehow get through to his pet.

The bug squealed, but then did not lose her head and jumped into the arms of Ramaz, who was not a little surprised at her agility.

- Oh, you skin! - he scolded the bug, - it was useful, I suppose, to you the owner! Look, don't forget!

Having successfully passed the "dangerous" place, Ramaz lowered the Beetle to the ground in the depths of the garden, and she, joyfully wagging her tail, rushed into the bushes.

From behind the trees, Ramaz and Zhuchka watched how, in the same place, the bully ran into another dog, accompanied by the owner.

A young yellowish-brown bulldog with a muzzle, sometimes decorated with greenery, for a long time endured the "shameless" barking falling on him with increasing force, but in the end he could not stand it and moved towards the bully, but the owner held him with a leash, from which he leaned on his side, and he was dragged a little on the ground.

The bully immediately took advantage of the opportunity and grabbed the dog's thigh.

"Ay, pug, know she's strong..." flashed through Ramaz's head.

The owner of the bulldog could not restrain himself either, loosened the leash, which allowed his pet to quickly jump to his feet and take a fighting position.

The dogs growled menacingly at each other, until at last the bulldog went behind the enemy with a quick maneuver, rushed at him and, clutching his neck, began to wag from side to side.

The bully squealed, whined, begging for mercy and indulgence. The owner took pity, pulling the bulldog by the leash.

“You see, Bug,” Ramaz explained to his pet, who was watching what was happening with curiosity, “a weak mind should yield.

The bully's frenzy, meanwhile, reached its climax, now she rushed at the offender and dug into his lower jaw. Her sharp teeth closed like a trap. The dogs circled for a long time, huddled in a ball. The owner got involved, tried to drive the bully away with punches and kicks. There was a moment when he even managed to drive her over a retaining wall, in the hope that, hanging over a height, she would unhook, but to no avail.

- the bully still hung on the lip of the bulldog.

I had to tighten the leash.

- What a horror! - alarmed Ramaz.

A tall man came to the aid of the owner of the bulldog, who thought to pour water over the dogs from a one and a half liter plastic bottle. It didn't help either. Then he grabbed the bully by the hind legs and tried to tear her away from the bulldog, which was dragged from the other end by the leash by its owner.

The bully sagged like a "hammock", but again did not unhook. A passer-by, without letting go of his legs, twirled the bully with a corkscrew, which is why, whining, she finally fell off the bulldog and rushed to flee, expressing her “undeserved” insult with her whole appearance.

The beetle, frightened, jumped on the knees of Ramaz, who was sitting on the garden bench.

“If influenza viruses persist and mutate, changing their serotype in the beaks of birds, and every winter they attack people with new species, then, probably, viciousness, ferocity ... also mutate into four- or two-legged ones and mow down people with no less ruthlessness strike a large part of society,” Ramaz suggested.

“Influenza and dog bites are saved with medicines, and human wounds are not often cured throughout life. You look at a person, outwardly it seems nothing, but inside, on the body and on the soul, you can't count the scars and scars.

A small group of people who had gathered discussed the incident indignantly.

- What's wrong with you? - Leah asked, meeting her puzzled husband at the entrance to the apartment.

“Let her tell you about everything,” Ramaz showed with a look at the Beetle.

The bug darted out the door, rushed into the depths of the apartment, quickly returned to the hall and unexpectedly barked at Ramaz.

- Oh, your, ungrateful creature! - Ramaz was indignant. - Stop it before I kick her out.

- OK Go! In peace, - Leah let him go, rewarding him with a kiss on the edge of her lips.

Some time later, Ramaz was sitting with a dentist, in a dental clinic, and had a short preliminary conversation with her.

- Well, what problems do you have, Ramaz? - she asked.

"Here," Ramaz demonstrated, opening his mouth and pointing to the injured tooth.

- And this one? - the doctor activated the instruments. - However, nothing, but I thought you had problems with my relative.

- With Leah? No, what are you! What problems can I have with her, because I have a world one, - Ramaz explained, thinking to himself: "Am I a fool, or what, before such a problem, complain to you about Leah?"

- Can you put a crown?

"Marinotchka, hello, dear," a young man greeted, coming up from the side of the street to the window open for airing the room.

- Ah, Sandro, hello! Well, how are you? - the doctor responded affably.

Ramaz looked with surprise at a man posing in front of a handsome young woman, who used the most refined expressions in his speech. And involuntarily remembered himself when he declared his love to Liana.

- Marina, he is madly in love with you! - Ramaz stated when the uninvited guest from the street left the open window. Like nothing, huh?

- No, he is kind because he has to treat his teeth, and he is afraid, - Marina smiled.

- That's it! - Ramaz drawled. "The fear of a toothache is perhaps stronger than love!" he added to himself. "Then it's understandable."

- Well, what do you advise me?

- So, - Marina concluded, - go to the right wing, to the therapeutic department, and show yourself there Tsitso. This is a doctor, an older woman with reddish hair. Say something from me, we'll see what she says, and then we'll see. Good?

- Good, - said Ramaz contentedly, rejoicing that the first barrier was given to him painlessly.

- So let's do it.

I solar seal. Yes? - suggested Tsitso, completing the preliminary processing of the patient's tooth.

Ramaz nodded.

- Actually, it costs twenty rubles with us, but since Marina sent you, I'll put you for ten. Just don't tell anyone about it!

Ramaz repeated the nod.

- Tiniko, - called Tsitso assistant, - please bring me a solution. Closing up the hollow, she suddenly felt ill:

- Oh, oh, something flew in, entered! Wave to me, Tiniko, with a fan ... wave, something suddenly became hot. Tamila didn't slow down with the fan.

"Just like in the pharaoh's tooth-stubble," thought Ramaz.

- Oh-ho-ho, oh-ho-ho! Wave, Tiniko, wave! Do not stop! And he ... he is also hot, - the doctor showed with a look at Ramaz.

"What?" - Ramaz was indignant to himself. This is still not enough! Why should I?"

"Wave, wave to him too," the doctor resisted, as if reading his thoughts.

## IX

From the courtyard, in the depths of which stood a small two-story U-shaped building, with a howl of a siren, a white ambulance flew out like a mad, white ambulance.

There were several people in white coats bustling about in front of the entrance to the building.

- Hello, - one of them greeted Ramaz.

- Hi, Merab, no one asked me?

- Chief!

- What does he want?

- It seems that you are being transferred to another car.

What difference does it make what car you drive?

- That's right, it's more important who rides in it. It seems that a new service is being formed. Emergency Comprehensive Assistance Group!

- Ah... Interesting!

- You know, it's always more profitable to have one multidisciplinary doctor like you than several - a surgeon, an internist, a cardiologist ...

- Yes of course! Only here in obstetricians I will not fit in any way. Merab smiled.

Going into the office, Ramaz abruptly lowered the zipper and threw off his jacket.

- Yes, I almost forgot the most important thing, - Merab threw him in the back, - go to the accounting department, get money for the last week.

"Grandma, where is it! I won't bring it home! - Ramaz grinned, - for a fifteen-ruble call they give only one ruble.



## X

The day was difficult. Calls followed one after another. I stayed late, and still had to ask Leah for more extra time.

"Sorry, but they ask you to stay on the night shift," he guiltily told her on the phone, "if you don't mind, of course ...

- Against! Of course, against it! - Leah was upset, - you don't help me at all. He dumped everything on me, and then at work, then at home, eat or sleep. Is that what you promised me when you asked for my hand...

- All right, all right, calm down! Why do you need me, tired, at night? Hold on somehow until morning, and there all tomorrow, until evening, I will be at your disposal.

- If you have someone there, it's better to say it straight, I won't be offended, - Leah bent her own.

- Oh, what nonsense! Check it out if you want!

- Yes, I'm going! I'll leave my children and come! .. You locked me up and keep me in a cage, like your brother his birds.

The unpleasant conversation continued for several minutes.

"And here is my brother," Ramaz was amazed.

- And despite the fact that a woman is not a bird to sit in a cage.

"Here is female logic! This means that a woman should fly, and a bird should sit in a cage "He gives ... "

- Well, what is there, Ramaz Mikhailovich? his young colleague called impatiently.

"You don't know women, do you?" Ramaz waved him off.

"How can he know, Mikhailovich, he's not married yet?" Intervened the ambulance driver, Uncle Vano, an elderly man of medium height and heavy build.

- And what, you definitely need to get married in order to know them! - Irakli Georgievich, who came to the rescue, laughed.

- Well, don't tell me! Married women are very different from unmarried women, - Uncle Vano objected, - it's not for me to teach you!

- Yes, - Ramaz agreed, - even the same woman after marriage is not the same as before him.

- Heaven and earth! - Uncle Vano confirmed.

- And everyone changes from better to worse? Or are there exceptions?" Merab asked.

- Do not listen to them, son, - Irakli Georgievich tried to divert attention to himself, - otherwise they will leave you a bachelor forever!

- Eh, woman, woman, inconstancy is your name, - Uncle Vano gritted through his teeth.

- Well, okay, go to the table, - invited Merab, - otherwise the tea will cool down completely.

The ambulance crew of the "combat vehicle" settled down at a small table in the left corner of the medical staff room.

- So! Let's eat a little, shall we? The snack on the table was quite rich.

"But in general, son, for example, the playwright Bernard Shaw remained unmarried until the age of forty, but then he trembled," continued Uncle Vano, which allowed him to later assert that women are brilliant in love and completely unbearable in everything else.

- Behind the back of every successful man is a good woman, - Irakli Georgievich concluded, - so that without them, in general, it's also bad.

- And what a woman is, such is a man, - added Ramaz.

- Francis Bacon, a philosopher, argued that it is impossible to love and be wise at the same time, - Uncle Vano remembered.

"But you still need to get married, Merab, and please don't delay with this," advised Irakli Georgievich.

- It's hard to choose, Irakli Georgievich! - Merab explained, smiling. - Kishmya teeming, one is better than the other. However... the price of a mistake is very high! How not to make a mistake in choosing?

- Don't worry, Socrates insisted: get married no matter what. If you get a good wife, you will find yourself an exception, a bad one, you will become a philosopher.

- Eh, - Ramaz drawled, - the poet correctly noted: "We choose those women who have already chosen us."

"But Tolstoy thinks it's even more interesting," Uncle Vano interrupted him, "If a person already lives a human, spiritual life, then falling in love, love, marriage is a fall for him. If he remains at the level of an animal - eats, drinks, works ... serves ... - then love is an upsurge for him, as for animals, fish, insects ...

- And it ends with the fact that women become the same, son, - Irakli Georgievich explained.

- Well, okay, enough about women, - Ramaz grimaced.

- Mikhailovich, what are you doing? We teach science to a young man. If necessary, it will come in handy, - Irakli Georgievich explained.

- Yes, not a little already, he will figure it out somehow! - from Ramaz waved.

- No, baby, don't listen to him, - Uncle Vano insisted, - and remember that women do not appreciate what comes easy to them. That's the way they are, and there's

nothing you can do about it. In addition, according to the same Leo Tolstoy, they often use words not to express their thoughts, but to achieve goals.

And finally: women are mistaken in believing that all men are the same, men are the same, that all women are different.

Ramaz looked at Uncle Vano in surprise: "And he should be a driver." Yes, with his knowledge, give lectures at the university ... "

- And I, Mikhailovich, worked there, but it became hard to live with the salary there, so I moved here ...

Ramaz stared at him in astonishment.

- You know... if you, of course, don't mind... just in case, I bought three bottles of our red vintage wine, - Merab offered carefully.

- Are you crazy? - Ramaz was furious. - While on duty!

- Ah ... think, three bottles, - after a pause, said Irakli Georgievich, - and even with such a good snack. On one and a bottle does not work ... let's warm up a little, huh?

The people at the table looked at each other.

- It's not worth it, Georgievich, the boss will find out, there will be problems, - Ramaz warned.

How will he know if we don't tell him!

- No, I won't, I'm driving, - Uncle Vano flatly refused.

- Let's get one bottle here, son! Let's see what it is, - Irakli Georgievich took responsibility, accepting the bottle.

our lives, friends, for our running around, - he offered the first toast. - Good, however ... fragrant ...

- As Hemingway said, our whole life is a bed, - Uncle Vano remembered.

- The essence of our whole life is to start all over again, someday, - Irakli Georgievich did not lag behind.

- Yes, especially ours, - Ramaz agreed.

"Actually, as the sages say, those who have penetrated the essence of life never rush anywhere," Uncle Vano concluded, "but how is this possible with our profession."

- Yes, - Ramaz assented to him, - and especially in our city, where such a palette of people lives. What only, admit, patients to us do not come across!

"Perhaps Tolstoy is right," Uncle Vano added, "life is a drama of a person, and it can change in an instant.

- The whole world is a theater, and our city is no exception. Okay, second toast! For our wives, - Irakli Georgievich screwed up.

- Oh, Georgievich, it's better for them, as for the mothers of our children, - Ramaz corrected him.

"Ha ha," everyone grinned.

- It's coming, - Irakli Georgievich agreed, - Marx also said that what a woman is - such is the family, and such is the family, such is the society.

The feast was gradually drawn into full swing.

- Georgievich, that's enough, perhaps enough, - Ramaz warned.

- Well, what are you! Leave the last bottle, or what? - Irakli Georgievich doubted.

- Let's drink up and finish. Let's switch to tea!

The third bottle went around.

- The main toast! For love - the queen of all virtues! There is nothing on earth stronger than love. Everything is driven by love. Freud spoke.

"And the Apostle John," Ramaz recalled.

- Yes ... but Tolstoy claims, - Uncle Vano dragged on, - that a person survives earthquakes, epidemics, wars more easily than failure in love.

And yet the poet wrote:

Love immensely, selflessly, with all the fullness of spiritual strength,  
Although no one repaid your love in return.

- Oh, - Uncle Vano drawled, - unrequited love, this is another big question, a special side of a person's life.

- Yes, yes ... Yes. Here is Tyutchev:

Oh, how deadly we love, As in the violent blindness of passions...

Wine was replaced by strong tea, but it was not possible to deviate from the topic.

- Still, our wives are sometimes unnecessarily demanding of us, - said Irakli Georgievich, - you must agree!

- Yes, - Uncle Vano confirmed, - and it is difficult because of this to save a family. All of them are not so yes not that way!

"Yes," Ramaz mentally confirmed, "I was sitting at home, driving me to work, I'm working, complaining that I'm not at home. Motley butterfly, don't fly away and don't fly in!" - he remembered a folk song.

- The most reliable and durable family is the one that does not exist, - Merab, inexperienced in family affairs, noticed.

- That's for sure! - Irakli Georgievich was forced to confirm.

The conversation dragged on into the afternoon. The cold intensified, and the electric stove could no longer cope with it.

- It must have snowed in the West and in the mountains, - Irakli Georgievich shivered.

- Ha, look, - Uncle Vano looked at the windows, - and he fell here!

- Indeed! - Merab was surprised. - There's still a long way to go before winter, and the weather is "here's to you"! All participants in the feast watched the first flakes with their eyes.

- If it's like this until the morning, it will sweep in order, - Uncle Vano remarked.

- It's good that at least there are no calls, - Ramaz answered somehow uncertainly.

- Maybe our dispatcher fell asleep? - suggested Irakli Georgievich.

- Come on, Georgievich, - Merab objected, - Temo has such an alert system there that it will wake up a bear sleeping in a den!

- What do you want, - Uncle Vano explained, - there are so many private services in the city, like ours, that there is more than enough. In addition, by inertia, they call more on the state. Out of habit, at zero-three, and there they don't miss their customers. And besides, calling them is much cheaper.

- Look, our second car and passed! - exclaimed Merab.

- From a call, or what? - Uncle Vano became interested. - Well, run away, son, to ours, find out what they have there ...

- Exactly, Uncle Vano, you were right, our guys have just returned from a call, - Merab said when he returned.

- Well, here, he said, it smells like a challenge, - Irakli Georgievich put his hips on his hips.

"Why didn't Temo tell us anything?" Ramaz exclaimed passionately.

- And who knows, - Merab replied, - they must have been the first to come under the arm.

Ushangi, the driver of the second car, ran in and warmed himself a little by the stove. They gave him something to eat.

Ushangi said something about the challenge.

- Call your people, let them come, warm up a little, eat, - suggested Irakli Georgievich.

- Yes, and women will decorate our society, - added Uncle Vano, - whatever you say, but it's still bad without them!

- Yah! Retired there, and okay! Your trali-wali ...

Half an hour later, one of them knocked, middle-aged and middle-aged, wearing a thin woolen scarf draped over her shoulders and with a makeshift electric stove on legs.

- Guys, would you fix it, huh? The girls are completely cold. On one tea and coffee until the morning we will not last!

- What are we talking about! - Irakli Georgievich responded warmly. - Come in, Zoya Ivanovna, sit down, warm yourself with us.

"Thank you," Zoya Ivanovna thanked plaintively, "the girls are waiting for me there. Now, if you can help with the electric stove.

- Come on, let me see, - Merab hurried, taking the heater from her.

- Of course, we will help! But it would be better to call them here, let's sit, talk, have a snack, warm up by our stove ... - Irakli Georgievich seduced.

- No, Georgievich, thank you, - Zoya Ivanovna thanked, - we ourselves ... better.

- Well, what to do with you! Here's a stubborn one! - Irakli Georgievich turned purple, but smiled. - Together, after all, it's warmer and more fun!

A short-haired nurse jumped into the room at the noise. Her eyes expressed a slight fright, and she, as if defending herself from something, wrapped herself in her, by no means thin, warm cloak.

- Well, how, Zoya Ivanovna, will something turn out? - she nodded at the electric stove.

- I don't know, Merab is busy with her on the couch.

- The spiral, Iya, is completely rotten. You see what's going on, - Merab explained. - Rubbish!

I'll try to shorten and fix. But it still won't work for long.

- What to do? - despondent Iya.

- How to do what? Join us! - exclaimed Irakli Georgievich in a tone that did not allow objections.

- No no! I, perhaps, will go, - Iya hesitated, and while she hesitated, the rest of the members of Zoya Ivanovna's brigade burst into the room.

- Oh, how warm and cozy you are!

- Well! And what am I talking about for so long? - Irakli Georgievich was delighted. - But who is listening!

- Come in, come in, girls, - Uncle Vano supported him, - in fact, we will move the table away from the corner, put it in the middle and we will spend the winter behind it.

Merab threw back the tile and rushed to the table.

"Ay... what will happen now!" - Ramaz thought with anguish.

The driver of the second car looked around the company and, lowering his head, headed for the door.

- What are you doing, Ushangi? - Irakli Georgievich threw him after him.

- Come on, Georgievich, - he apologized, - I'd better go to the control room, to Temo.

Something to sleep very much hunting.

- Are you breaking away from the team, Ushangi, right? - Uncle Vano called him to account.

- No, Vano, I'll go all the same, I'll go, - Ushangi firmly stood on his own, - I really want to sleep, I say.

The remaining male contingent of the service distributed and seated the ladies according to their age.

Out of nowhere, two half-litres, a couple of pot-bellied plastic bottles of Fanta and Coca-Cola floated out onto the table.

- You will make a good doctor, Merab, - Irakli Georgievich smiled and winked at his young employee.

Merab understandingly answered the same.

"Well done, Ushangi," Vano rejoiced in his soul, "you did the right thing by leaving.

He would have remained superfluous, there would not have been enough pairs for him.

- Mziya Georgievna! I ask everyone to have a snack, help yourself! - Irakli Georgievich suggested energetically, - all of your own, so be bold, do not be shy. Sophiko, please look after Ramaz, he is completely limp.

- From the cold, or what? - she was surprised.

- No, Arakelovna. There must be something wrong with his wife, - Uncle Vano hastened to explain.

"And why does he interfere in other people's affairs?" Ramaz was indignant, but refrained from remarking.

The party lasted until early morning. Two more were added to the first two half-litres. The fun was stopped only by a stern knock on the door.

- Do not open! - Irakli Georgievich cried out, circling in a slow melodic dance to the music from Merab's portable tape recorder in an embrace with Mzia Georgievna.

- This is Przhevalsky, he will break everything for us.

- Where does he get it now, Georgievich? Uncle Vano must have returned, Merab, dancing with Iya, doubted.

- What are you, fool, depressed - Sofiko lisped, trying to stir up Ramaz, who was sitting thoughtfully at the table, easily ruffling his long curls at the back of his head.

- I can't give her what she deserves and what I promised her... Perhaps she's right, - Ramaz spoke out.

- A woman needs only one thing from a man! - Sofiko confidently declared.

Ramaz abruptly raised his head and, astonished and stern, looked straight into her eyes. Sophiko caught the meaning of that look.

- Attention, attention! - she hurried to evade the topic, barely holding back a cracked smile.

“Zoya Ivanovna,” meanwhile Uncle Vano poured out, slowly going around the ambulance building in his car, “you will, of course, be surprised, but I also rolled my wife before our marriage.

- What are you trying to say? Are you going to marry me too?

- Oh, - Uncle Vano drawled, - if not for your husband ...

- How is your wife? My consent in the end?!

- A woman, as a rule, cannot figure out the essence of her desires for a long time, - Uncle Vano philosophized.

- What are you talking about? And the men?” Zoya Ivanovna grinned and asked:

-Slower, slower on the first road, on the first snow. Look how soft and tender it is!

- I can't slow down, the engine will stall, and the water in the radiator will freeze, and the radiator will be covered.

- What, you say? Radiator? - Zoya Ivanovna laughed, as if she had heard these words for the first time: - Motor, radiator, motor, radiator ...

- And what did I say that was so funny? - Uncle Vano, in turn, laughed.

The hard knock on the door was repeated.

- Do not open! - insisted Irakli Georgievich. - So what did I tell you about, Mzia Georgievna? - he seemed to remember. - The fact is that our fathers were, it turns out, namesakes ...

- What are you talking about? - Mzia Georgievna exclaimed in response, - somehow I didn't think about it!

- Yes, imagine, - Irakli Georgievich continued seriously, - and, perhaps, even friends.

- Well?

- Don't interrupt, please.

- Good.

- So we have to be with each other in an even closer relationship than before.

- Much closer, - smiled Zoya Ivanovna.

- You don't understand what I'm talking about, and for some reason you interrupt me all the time. And when your husband tolerates you...



- Iya, you know, I want to apologize to you, - Merab drawled timidly.

- And for what?

- Oh well...

- Be brave, don't be afraid, you're a doctor!

- Aren't you offended?

- It depends on what you say.

"You know, I never noticed you before.

- Like this?

- Well, yes, we've been working together for so long, but, you know...

- Well?!

- You know, there have always been so many beautiful young girls around me, and to this day they run around ... but ...

- Well, and ... what but? - Iya made her eyes, trying to pull out a long thread coming from his insides.

- Fool, she showered you with her worries and problems, and you blame yourself, - Sofiko explained to Ramazu.

- A man also needs one thing from his beloved woman.

- What? - Ramaz repeated his previous gesture even sharper. Sophiko startled, but immediately gathered herself:

- Calm down, fool, calm down! Of course, the same attention, affection, warmth ... That's all! And he will plow and plow.

- You're right, - Ramaz agreed sadly, - and also understanding... - he added a little later.

"Oh, first of all!" exclaimed Sofiko. Ramaz bent over the table.

Sophiko slowly, cautiously reached out to him, gently kissed the corner of his lips. Ramaz did not react in any way.

- Yes, yes! All clear! Not bad you are here, as I see it, settled down! - thundered like a bolt from the blue.

Unbeknownst to everyone in the room, a tall, densely built man suddenly appeared. Next to him stood half-asleep Ushangi.

Everyone suddenly froze in exhaustion and, in fright, standing at attention, rested their eyes on the early guest who had just entered.

- It's clear, - Irakli Georgievich gritted through his teeth, - treason in the headquarters.

- What's going on here anyway? Can someone explain?

- You see, Zaza Ilyich, - Irakli Georgievich began, not quite drunk, but not completely sober either, - we all got cold here during the night, and ...

- And decided, of course, to warm up a little?

The guilty men shook their heads, and the women, looking down, backed away to the corner of the room.

- You are all fired! - Zaza Ilyich chopped off. - Look for another job, - and, turning, quickly left the room with a hurried step.

- Zaza Ilyich! Zaza Ilyich, wait a minute! - Ramaz rushed after him.

- The boss is not joking! - stated Merab.

- I told you, don't open it, - reminded Irakli Georgievich, lowering his voice, - that's how it is at home and at work. They do not listen, and then they overwhelm both themselves and me with problems.

Snowflakes no longer circled the sky, but fell to the ground in a direct, free fall, significantly reducing its frequency.

In the city, the first snow was always met with great joy, which could also be the last in the coming winter.

## XI

Ramaz slowly approached his house, on the way sobering up and refreshing himself with snow-white lumps, replaying the events of the past stormy night duty in his head.

Silently and cautiously, he opened the door ajar and, entering, caught the persuasion of Leah, who was trying to raise half-asleep children from their beds.

The Beetle, which ran out to meet him, as if not recognizing, peered in amazement at its owner, from time to time looking around.

- What are you looking at, didn't you recognize it, or what? - Ramaz inquired, throwing off his shoes. Then he put the index finger of his left hand to his lips and demanded:

- Shh...

This was the impetus for the bug burst out barking. She misunderstood the requirement.

- Here's a fool, eh, - Ramaz was furious in an undertone, throwing a slipper that turned up under his arm at her, - I asked you about this ?!

- Are you drunk, or what? - meeting him, asked Leah.

- A little bit, - Ramaz hesitated, - it was cold... and... She helped him undress.

- It smells of perfume, - she was surprised, hanging his jacket on a hanger. - Where have you been?

- At work, - Ramaz also answered in surprise.

- Do not lie.  
- True true...  
- You have a good job!  
- Well... what already is... - shrugged Ramaz. Leah stared at him for a long time.  
"Go away," she finally said calmly.  
- What?  
- Leave.  
- Where?  
- Where did you come from?  
- But the shift at work has already ended ...  
- Then go to your Sonia Raquel.  
- What-oh?  
"What did you hear," Leah said blankly.  
"How did she know?" Ramaz was amazed.  
- But why! There's nothing between us," he blurted out. He immediately regretted it, but it was too late.  
- Anyway, go away.  
- Leah, I beg you, let me rest now, - Ramaz pleaded, - get some sleep... otherwise I'll fall down. You don't see, I didn't sleep all night... but when I wake up, I'll explain everything to you.  
I don't need your explanations.  
Leah, please.  
Leah was inexorable, but continued to maintain outward calm.  
- Get out of here! You already got us, - Anechka, who ran out half-naked, demanded.  
- Anechka, what are you? - cried Ramaz.  
"If you don't leave, then I will," Leah demanded again.  
- Leah, are you kicking me out of my own house? - Ramaz was perplexed.  
- Yes. So! - Leah confirmed. - You will raise the children, dress them, wash them, feed them, take them to school and kindergarten! Don't forget about the Bug. And I went! - She rushed into the bedroom to get ready.  
- Pa, you promised to take the story to the circus. When? - half-asleep Akaki appeared from behind the door.  
She continued to bark at Ramaz and the Beetle.  
- Soon, son, now it's soon! - Promised Ramaz. - Be patient a little more.  
- Hello, Rosa Grigoryevna, - Ramaz greeted, meeting a neighbor at the entrance,  
- well, how are we doing there?

- Well, how, what can be the case when yesterday ...

The neighbor wound up fundamentally for a long time. Ramaz descended without stopping.

He walked along the snow-covered street, not noticing anyone on the sides. I walked and thought about how lonely a person is in this life, and how, almost in an instant, he lost his home, and his job ... and his wife, and children ...

"How did she find out about this Sofiko," he wondered to himself. "Did she call work and the dispatcher or Ushangi blabbed? No, it can't be, it can't be, he assured himself uncertainly.

- It can't be, Ramaz?! How did it happen? Come on.

- I miss my brother. I think I'll go through it. What can't?

- How can you not? Come on.

- But to find you at home, Auto, this is really a great miracle.

- Hmm, - Auto smiled, - yes, you're right, you're lucky. True, the weather changed my plans a little, but I was about to leave the house. Coffee, tea?" he suggested, seating his brother at a small round table.

- No, that's enough, and for a long time. Can you get some sleep?

- What is it with you? - Avto was surprised. - Did you have a fight with Leah?

She kicked me out of the house.

- What? - Auto held out in amazement.

- Yes, - Ramaz nodded affirmatively, - and Anechka is at the same time with her

...

- Blimey! What a news! What, are they crazy?

- That's women's solidarity for you.

- Well... - despondent Auto. - Cool!

"Yes," agreed Ramaz. "You know what else Anechka told me."

- Well?

- I got them! Auto laughed.

"It's not funny," Ramaz remarked bitterly, launching into explanations:

- You know, Auto, none of us thought it could turn into something like this.

- And what do you want, - said Auto, - if the evil one does not sleep day or night, if he has no vacation, no rest, no break. He walks like a roaring lion and looks for some simple-hearted one to swallow? - he quoted the teaching of one of the holy fathers. - It could have ended worse. We must not despair, but rejoice that the chief showed up and stood over his head earlier than usual.

- Well, you are already going too far, - Ramaz concluded self-confidently, - nothing would have happened. What are we, little ones? And we've known each other for a long time.

- Well done, Uncle Vano, a real man after all, - for a long time he could not appease Auto's admiration.

"All this would be funny if it were not so sad," Ramaz Lermontov quoted in turn.

- Yes, that's it! You puzzled me, brother, early in the morning, - Auto exclaimed, - wow, two snows, two natural disasters in the morning on my head: one natural, the other domestic. It's good that you found me at home, otherwise where would you go?

Ramaz shrugged and twitched his lips.

"I don't know," he blurted out.

- Ouch!

- What to do? - Ramaz spread his hands inquiringly.

- Okay, sleep here, put yourself in order, and by the evening I'll be back and decide what to do next. Don't worry, we'll break through!

- Yeah, thank you, - Ramaz thanked, - I will never forget you.

- Come on, - said Avto already from behind the open door and, having slammed it, left Ramaz alone with himself.

- I wonder where he was going to break through? - Ramaz became interested.

Auto was in a hurry to meet Eka and felt light wings behind his back, helping him to go faster.

## XII

As if with iron, dipped in antimony, you were led by a cut  
To my heart...

B.Pasternak

For more than a year, friendly relations between Eka and Auto have already continued, mainly limited to meetings and short conversations before or after Saturday and Sunday services in the church. It happened that Eka or, more often, Auto did not come to the service, and both of them considered these passes to be idle. One way or another, however, time, which played on Eku, but not on Auto, flew inexorably forward. Happiness, as usual, was short-lived.

"You would make a good screenwriter," Eka assured, often returning to a conversation that was pleasant for Auto.

- Truth? I'm so glad you like this play.

Have you tried to contact someone with her?

- Yes, I tried. He took it to the drama theater, where they promised to stage it, but so far something is slowing down. Apparently financially tight. Time, you know, is like that... everyone thinks about himself. That's where they push their own.

- In addition, to write a good script, you need to be a talented artist, director, and to direct, almost a genius ...

- Well, there is no shortage of this in our country. Wherever you look, there are only geniuses everywhere, - Avto explained, - a country of geniuses!

- Yes, - Eka agreed, - but I, unlike you, strongly disagree with the words of Albert Camus that every person is alone in this world, and that everyone does not care about each other, and that all our suffering is a desert island.

- So these claims are not against me, but against Albert Camus!

- Then, maybe, they should not be given in your case at all?

- No, you don't understand... - Auto began to explain.

- Maybe we'll talk about it again in more detail somewhere in the city, in a secluded place, over a cup of coffee.

- No, no! - Eka dismissed. You already had an opportunity, but you didn't use it, she reminded caustically.

Auto started up.

- Yes, but then you did not have this script?

"But I was," Eka teased again.

- Give me, please, one more chance, - begged Avto.

- No, Auto, no! - she resolutely refused, holding back a smile.

- Well, why, Eka?

- I can not! And I ask you not to come back to this again. anyway, nothing will work out, only we will inflict more heart wounds on each other. Promise, please, that this will be the end of it.

The car froze in pain, as if a deadly arrow had pierced its heart.

Eka left with no less heaviness in her soul. Going down the narrow paved road leading from the church to the city, she recalled the recent, last battles over this issue with her family.

- Eka, are you completely crazy? So old, plain, what do you have in common with him?

- Birds and the sky! - convinced Eka.

- This is too little, and besides, you will soon find that they have taken off and left you.

- He will have fun with you for a short time and leave.

- He's not like that!

- How do you know? What? - joined in the skirmish and the mother.

- I know! - Eka insisted.

- I've lived with your father for how many lei, but I still don't know him completely. Mamiya Sergeevich looked at his wife in amazement. "Is it necessary?" he thought.

- Moreover, I'm not even sure that I know myself to the end and completely, and you vouch for a recent acquaintance.

Long, heavy, tedious arguments and tug-of-war each time ended in victory for the parents.

"He could still come up to Natalie," the mother inadvertently threw, "but even for this you need to find out thoroughly about everything and get to know him better. Little whether that? You know what time it is!

"If before the wedding the bride and groom knew each other to the end, then none of them would have taken place," he remembered, but said nothing Mamiya Sergeevich. Once this idea was expressed by one of his teachers of philosophy. "But you still need to know something about a person beforehand," he agreed, "especially if you are going to associate fate with him."

- He is a good guy and our family is very suitable.

- What difference does it make, if you succeed, you will do a good deed to your sister. Look, she's already sitting up. Yes, for myself too. Will be a son-in-law. Think! Love him like a Christian, who forbids you?

- He and Nata are like heaven and earth! - objected Eka.

- Nothing. If the Almighty wishes, it will come true.

Eka gave up positions with difficulty, with pain, with delay. Little by little, the feeling faded away. Natalie met the news at first as absolutely impossible.

"What did you do with him then in the trailer," she repeatedly asked her sister.

- You're little, aren't you? Can't you guess? What else to do alone with a man? - Eka snapped at her in the end.

- I knew it!" the startled Natalie shouted maliciously. "You little whore.

After all, you are also flirting with Levanchik!

- Come on, all of you! - Eka unexpectedly burst into tears and rushed to herself, loudly slamming the door.

"Stop it, Nata, stop it!" the father snapped at his eldest daughter. "You see what's happening to her."

- You are so unfair! - Natalie was indignant. - I suppose you don't say anything to her. So, she can do anything, but I can't?!

- Enough for you, Nata! - Shouted at her and the mother, rushing after Eka.
- And who will feed me, I wonder? - Mamiya Sergeevich sighed heavily.

With each meeting, not without pain, Avto noticed how Eka was moving away from him more and more and avoiding him.

Another arrow wounded his heart when, during one big church holiday, he saw her with a young guy and when, noticing his gaze, she leaned her forehead against the back of her companion and froze for a few moments.

“God,” Auto swept bitterly, “this arrow cannot be torn out of my heart even by you.”

To his amazement, however, by the end of the service, he noticed that he was wrong and the One to whom he turned in his soul, with imperceptible ease for him, coped with his difficulty. And he, with difficulty, but resigned himself to another “defeat”. Going out of the gates of the temple, he caught a cautious glance in his direction Natalie, who immediately turned away at the call of Eka, who asked her about a certain Levan unknown to him.

Time passed with lightening heaviness and viscous speed. Previously, irregularly, occasionally appearing in the church, Natalie frequented it.

Eka suddenly got into the habit of standing next to Nata, in the immediate vicinity of Avto, who did not immediately understand and guessed about the sisters' idea. It took almost half a year, until during one of the services it suddenly dawned on him. Warm bliss ran through his heart.

“What a kind and caring person she is,” he thought about Eka.

Slowly, reluctantly and heavily, he switched to Natalie. The last, decisive push was her barely noticeable air kiss with lips, eyes and a nod of her head.

“Oh, well, okay,” he firmly decided during one of the services, “God knows, I didn’t want this and I don’t want it, but since they are both at the same time, it’s not a pig I’m so stubbornly pushing away from their attention. A woman wants - God wants, - he remembered the saying. - For the sake of Eka, and in order to be with her, I will take this step too.

- Nata, - he looked up, - you know, I am very interested in you, and I would like to get to know you better.

- Yes? With pleasure, - Natalie immediately agreed.

- My brother and daughter-in-law want the same. Maybe we’ll go visit them sometime, when it’s convenient for you and Eka.”

- Next Saturday or Sunday. You can after the service, - Natalie specified in a businesslike manner.

- Live to see them - sighed Avto.



- Oh, - Nata laughed a little audibly.

On that day, after the service, Auto went up the hill to his favorite place in the forest, to listen to the birds singing and at the same time tell them unexpected and pleasant news.

## XII

A small rise leading to the house of his brother, Auto, under the pretense of delicate assistance to the ladies, went hand in hand with both of them.

On the right, Natalie moved easily, on the left, Eka fluttered. They slowed down a little, but made him happy, gave spiritual joy. He agreed to go with them, in their environment, for the rest of his life.

He already realized that he loved them equally and at the same time differently. Like a bird must love both its wings in order to live and fly freely and fully.

He suddenly imagined how in his heart, as if in two wagons, both sisters were sitting. And he was in those moments happy as never before in his life, and tried to prolong his happiness as much as possible.

The sisters moved side by side calmly, measuredly, not fluttering like freshly caught birds rushing out of captivity.

Auto felt at the pinnacle of earthly bliss.

"You can't wish for more," he thought, a little worried, "we are losing women because we want more and more, and whoever wants more loses what he has. This is the red line that must not be crossed.

He suddenly remembered the saying of Kozma Prutkov "If you want to be happy, then be it" and paraphrased it in his own way: "If you are happy, hold on to your happiness and do not wish for more." But how? A person is not a car that can slow down and avoid a collision. The acceleration of a car is stopped by the brakes, and a person is stopped by a collision, an accident, a collision ...

Even when they went up to the third floor and still, the three of them, approached the painted metal door, and it was necessary to press the bell button, he preferred to do this not with his hand, but with some other part of the body, he thought about his nose, then about which of the two elbows to let go "from under the handle", which to lose, and, to my joy, I immediately found the desired way out.

- Eka, please press the bell, - he asked without changing the coveted position and thus won a few extra seconds: "When will they still be together in my hands"?

- I'm coming, I'm coming, - a melodious female voice was heard from behind the door, joined by an annoyed dog barking.

- Oh, hello, hello! - warm greetings of the hostess were heard.  
- Hello, Leah, here we are, - said Auto.  
- Come in, please, please.  
- Meet Leah, this is Eka, this is Natalie! - Auto solemnly proclaimed. - And this is the culprit of our meeting today, our daughter-in-law and mistress Leah. Bug, fu, in place, be silent! - He shouted at the dog.

The bug immediately reacted and immediately changed barking to a friendly waving of a short, small fluffy tail.

The guests settled down at a small, low, rectangular table, not far from the fireplace, which rests in summer, in black leather armchairs.

- Heard about you, Auto buzzed my ears. As it was at last not to get acquainted, - Leah explained.

We also know you a little. Of course, in absentia, - Natalie smiled, - today it was difficult to choose a minute, but Avto insisted, and here we are ... we could not refuse him, we carved out half an hour.

"Why is that?" Leah asked.

- Unexpectedly, we learned about the illness of a close friend, hurried to him, and now ... - Eka explained.

- Anything serious?

- A bad spot was found on the lung.

- Does he know about it?

- Guess the doctor himself.

- Smoked?

- Before, now I quit, but ...

- Well, maybe they will operate.

- If it's not too late.

- Yes, the news, of course, is not pleasant.

- They want to fly to Moscow, they don't risk it here, but such expenses, a visa ...

- Yes, with these visas... They messed with their heads!

- Do not say, they lived for so long, as they say, did not grieve, and now they are on, - Natalie lamented.

"Well, it's beneficial for someone, so they introduced it, what extra profits," Leah agreed with her.

- Yes, of course, not without it ...

"Aunt, do you want to make coffee?" a young beauty of about thirty, of medium height, with dyed hair, in denim shorts, interrupted them.

- A little later, probably, yes, Tsitsino. True, girls, "the hostess asked the guests for advice, to which they answered her with an agreeable nod of their heads.

"This is my niece Tsitsino," Leah introduced everyone to each other, followed by kind greetings. "And this is my friend Lamzira," she pointed to a thin woman of about forty-five who appeared from behind the door.

The remaining children ran out of the kitchen, a boy and a girl.

- Oh, and these are our Cossack robbers, Akaki and Anechka, - Leah exclaimed, - and the smallest, Thea, is sleeping in the cradle.

The children, embarrassed, settled down near Avto, pulling him by the sleeve, then by the floor. The women were vying with each other, so that Auto was not even allowed to utter a word.

He had the feeling that he was either completely forgotten, or simply ignored.

"Well, am I not a person, emart1," he objected to himself in the words of his friend and assistant Ruben, "I also have the right to vote" Namus chunes, eli2. But he did not dare to express the objection aloud and therefore resorted to new tactics, tried to join in the flaring up female conversation unexpectedly, at the right moments, with separate, as it seemed to him, wise statements. But he was immediately interrupted and stopped.

"They are like birds, you can't shout them down. Too bad it's not here Rubena, otherwise he would have shown them how to speak. Everyone would immediately be silent, and maybe they would go on with him.

"Damatzadet, me tkven gachvenebt seirs," he threatened them. And then the children are dragging him from the chair:

- Come with us to the kitchen. Play! Are you here to talk?

- You see, we have guests, you can't do that! Let's take them and play.

Little by little, some sweets appeared on the table, cakes specially baked at home, a bonbonniere with chocolate, fruits, coffee, a light branded liqueur, red house wine

...

"Here, aunt, is the photograph sent by Guizot," handed Lia Tsitsino a small color photograph.

- Well, show me, - Leah became interested, taking a photo, - not bad, - and handed it over to the guests.

Eka and Natalie looked with interest at the photo, in which a small group of soldiers in uniform moved on a marching march.

"Here is the tallest of them, Gizo, brother of Tsitsino," Leah pointed out.

"Cute," Eka said.

- And why do they all have their mouths open, - Natalie asked.

- Hmm, - Tsitsino laughed, - it says on the back that they sing a song

“A nightingale, a nightingale is a little bird, a canary sings plaintively, once it sings, it sings twice ...”

- How, in Russian? - Nata was surprised.

- Yes, - Tsitsino laughed again, - so they, it turns out, are on strike when they are underfed or deprived of something.

- In fact, the horror that is now happening in our army, - Leah was indignant, - heard on TV ?!

“Yes,” Eka nodded her head, “soldiers are fleeing from hunger, they can’t stand it, they say that hazing is flourishing, it happens that it is fatal.

- And they criticized the Soviet army! - Lamzira exclaimed passionately.

- Well, this is still at the initial stage, - Avto stood up, - while the formation is underway.

“But Guizot says the only thing that keeps them there is the singing of nightingales and thrushes,” Tsitsino drawled in bewilderment, “it turns out they sing there like nowhere else.

- Well, you can ask me about it, - Auto connected again.

“You, Auto, you know how wonderfully they sing in the evenings, and especially in the mornings here too,” Leah added, “and lately there have been so many of them. There used to be less of them.

“Do you know, aunt, why?” Tsitsino explained. “Your neighbor explained to me. Previously, they were chased by squirrels, and after they themselves were devoured by your neighbors' cats, they became at ease.

“Here are the people, ah!” Avto was indignant to himself. “At least I understand this issue better than they do. No, to ask me, they themselves find out and listen to the neighbors. But I am consulted on the Internet almost from all over the world.

Somewhere nearby there was a squeal and laughter, and toys flew almost into Auto's face, one of which hit him.

Auto grabbed his head.

Eka and Natalie couldn't help but smile.

Leah chose the children. Lamzira and Tsitsino looked at them in amazement, and the Beetle barked from time to time.

- Eh, girls, I myself am very depressed, - Leah noticed, - probably Auto told you about it.

“What?” Nata asked.

- Yes, my brother went to the monastery, for the eighth month he has not returned, and our mother is so hurt that there is no way to calm her down.

- Yes, but this is God's mercy and grace, - Eka exclaimed with enthusiasm, - you should thank God for this, rejoice that he looked at your family so favorably. In the old days, when someone went to the monastery, the whole family celebrated and they even saw him off with a small and quiet, but joyful feast.

- Yes, of course, I understand everything perfectly, Eka, and I completely agree with you, but my mother is not ready to understand, and besides, he did not inform his father or father about his intention ahead of time. Disappeared without their blessing. Is it possible? Would you like paradise at the cost of suffering and, God forbid, the death of your parents?

- This is not an easy question, - Eka hurried to explain, - we, the laity, sometimes do not understand much. Well, so you need to turn to the clergy, the priests.

- Yes, of course, it is necessary, - Leah agreed, - but how to calm a mother's heart? She is not opposed to him serving God, but wants him to have a family, children. He is our only son, and if he takes the tonsure, he will no longer have the right to marry.

- But on the other hand, he will find a place in the kingdom of God and help you all enter there. It's so beautiful, - Eka insisted.

It was clear that the women spoke a variety of languages.

"Actually, I heard that now it has become widespread, and especially many girls from twenty to twenty-five years old go to monasteries," Lamzira intervened.

"To be honest, for some reason I have the feeling that this sinful and pernicious world of ours will soon swallow us all up," Auto said thoughtfully.

"Yes, the holy fathers say that by the second coming, all of us, the laity, will perish, we will destroy ourselves," Tsitsino confirmed, "only those who save themselves by going to monasteries will remain alive. They will come out purified and continue their life in the world!

- Yes, but now somehow you need to save your mother, - Leah shook her head.

- Convince her of the correctness of your brother's act, - advised Eka.

- Eh, - Leah sighed, - for example, St. John Chrysostom ... reckoned with the desire of his mother, and ... Please, girls, pray for my brother.

Eka and Natalie shook their heads approvingly head response. The cell phone in Natalie's bag rang.

First, Natalie, then Eka, then Natalie again had a short talk about something.

- Yes, we are visiting now and will be soon. Wait for us, - she asked and turned to Avto: - We, unfortunately, will have to leave soon.

- Of course of course! We have no right to detain you for a long time. Just a little,  
- asked Avto, - laying refreshments for the guests and pouring wine and liqueurs.

“Taking into account this domestic problem, I would like to marry at least Auto, and as soon as possible, otherwise he was too fussy with his birds,” Leah noticed, “but they gently and insinuatingly carry away his youth on their wings. Time is running so fast!

Natalie looked curiously at Auto, and his heart skipped a beat.

“No, she's no worse than Eka, if not even better,” flashed through her head, “and how she shoots with her eyes! Oh, what are you like, ”he suddenly remembered from Gennady Khazanov.

“Look, he’s kind of brave and resolute, but timid with girls,” Leah continued, “they used to follow him in herds, but with age everything decreases.

“And how does she know?” asked Auto.

- Get to know each other better, and then who knows, - Leah went on the offensive.

“Isn't it too early”? - Avto was alarmed. - How not to frighten it away?

“Actually, life itself will show and prompt,” Leah continued to teach. “But it’s not good to delay any business ...

Natalie kept glaring at Auto.

“Shvilo, ra ginda chemgan, amas hom mear vlaparakob, chemi rdzalia,” Auto was worried all the time.

The general, mostly female, conversation was interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Ramaz, who was quickly introduced to the guests.

Ramaz did not hesitate to put out a bottle of extravagant foreign champagne, poured it into glasses, offered a toast to the acquaintance and insisted that everyone drained them.

- Nu, us perishing quite it is time, - rose Natalie.

“Wait a minute, girls,” Ramaz objected, “what is it, I scared you or something”

- No, really, Ramaz Mikhailovich, we have already been delayed, and they are waiting for us, - Eka explained, - everyone can confirm this.

Ramaz, not without difficulty, managed to leave the girls for a few more minutes:

- I don't even remember when I saw my brother with girls, and even such beautiful ones as you. All with birds and with his Ruben!

Auto started up, but then the toy hit him in the head again. Eka and Natalie laughed.

- Yes, finally take the children away, - Avto jokingly pleaded. But the noise and throws continued with undiminished force.

- Akaki, - Eka shouted affectionately, stroking the Beetle sitting next to her, - come to me, I'll ask you!

- Wow! - the boy shook his head and rushed to seek protection from Auto.

- Anechka, come here, we'll say something good in your ear, - Natalie called, - don't you want to?

- Wow! - Anechka also refused.

- But why? You are smart, obedient, not like Akaki, - Natalie persuaded her.

- This is not an argument! - Anechka snapped.

- Look at her! - Lamzira was surprised. Barking, the bug rushed at Ramaz.

- What do you want from me, stupid? Am I touching you? - Ramaz was also amazed in his turn.

- Toast! Toast!

- Let's go for everyone! I have a feeling that we have known each other for a long time and that we are already one family!

"Cool!" thought Auto.

As time went on, the guests were seriously worried.

- Ha, - suddenly dropped Ramaz, - Leah, do you know who I met today? Merab with his lechka.

"Don't tell me?!" Leah exclaimed impatiently, waiting for her prediction to be confirmed.

- Shortly after he left us, they, imagine, got married.

- Well?! .. Wow! - Leah was delighted.

- Who are they talking about? - asked Lamzira.

- About Ramaz's former colleagues.

"He took all that feast upon himself, and only he was released, and then, as a sign of solidarity, she soon left for him," Ramaz said.

- I know.

- Not only did they get married, they even have a child! So, he lost his job and found a family.

- Here are the shameless ones, they are silent for so long! - Leah was offended.

- Justified by the fact that everything happened at lightning speed.

- Well done, Merab, here's a smart guy! - Auto laughed approvingly.

- Yes, it doesn't look like you, - Ramaz explained, - you're fooling around with it, it's already a shame. And here are the girls we have here.

The guests were embarrassed and blushed. Auto felt uncomfortable:

- Ramaz, what are you!

- Excuse me, girls, it's his fault, - Ramaz held out his index finger in the direction of Avto, - he forces him.

- We'll probably go already, excuse us, - Natalie got up, and Eka followed her.

- Here you go! You wanted this, did you achieve it? - Auto reproached his brother.

"Oh, girls, I beg you," Ramaz pleaded, "don't leave, otherwise he will eat me, he will say that I drove you away."

"But we really can't stay any longer," Natalie was confused.

- Ramaz, okay, let the girls go, they really need to hurry, - Leah demanded.

- Please, I don't hold, I don't hold, - Ramaz surrendered. The cell phone rang again.

- Nata, are you still visiting? - she heard a familiar male voice.

"Yes, but let's go," she promised.

- You can take your time, my mother and I did not wait for you and went on our own. Nothing.

There is no special need for your presence now.

- Well, well, well then, - Nata calmed down.

- Will you come soon?

- Yes, soon, horse wow!

"You see," Ramaz guessed what the conversation was about, "but you didn't listen to me, girls. It's not good to leave when you can stay, and therefore, before you run away, you need to have time to take a picture of you as a keepsake.

- Oh, really, girls, - Leah realized, took out a portable, digital, modern camera from the box and took several shots at once, the first of which fell on Eka, Natalie and Avto.

The footage was immediately viewed on the small screen of the camera.

- They can now be transferred to a computer, - Leah explained to the girls, - and then we will print them for you.

- And here the hot khinkali arrived in time, - announced Tsitsino, who came in with a large dish in her hands.

Natalie looked at Eka with a smile, asking her with her eyes:

- What do we do?

- Well, okay, let's sit a little longer, - Eka agreed, - since we are so asked about it.

"Just we won't drink anymore," Natalie set the condition.

- So it's better, - Ramaz, who achieved local success, was delighted.

- With such perseverance and perseverance, he won me, won me from my parents, - Leah explained, - not that I had a lot of admirers, and better than him.

- Do not mislead the guests, mother, - Ramaz demanded with a laugh.



- Yes, right! I'm not Ramaz! - retorted Leah.

- Only I can be better than me, - Ramaz did not give up in his turn.

- Okay, well, don't bother you!

- Well, girls, we take up the treat, - Ramaz closed the topic. Natalie took a few pieces, but Eka refused.

- Today is not a post, Eka!  
She doesn't eat meat at all...

A controversy erupted. Who was for and who was against giving up meat.

"The well-known church leader of antiquity, Tertullian, also at one time refused meat, moreover, he demanded the same from other believing Christians, with this he fell into fanaticism, and then into heresy," Ramaz recalled.

"Don't bother her about this," Natalie pleaded.

- Well!..

- Which of the old ones remained at your work, Ramaz? - Avto tried to change the direction of the conversation.

- Who, you say? I, Mziya Georgievna and Ushangi.

- This traitor?! - Auto was indignant, - who laid you down "

- Yes, it turned out that it was not him, but our dispatcher Temo accidentally let it out then. Well, we all forgave him.

- Can you imagine, Irakli Georgievich passed away last year. Merab told me.

"And they didn't tell you?!" Leah exclaimed.

- Who was to report? Merab himself did not recognize immediately.  
Well, family...

- Yes, leave it, for God's sake, Leah, you see how people are dying like flies ... and who cares who ...

- Yes, and Uncle Vano has been lying with a stroke for a month now. Merab says he got out, but the situation is still not stable.

- It will be necessary to see him, - took note of Avto.

- Definitely, - Ramaz nodded affirmatively.

- And Zoya Ivanovna? - asked Auto.

- Zoya Ivanovna retired.

"And Sonia Raquel?" Leah put in.

- I don't know, Leah, honestly!

- Who is it? - Auto asked with curiosity.

- Yes, Sofiko ... Arakelovna ...

- And why Sonia Raquel?

- Just ask her, - Ramaz waved towards Leah.

- Sonia Rakel is the most luxurious foreign perfume, - said Eka.

- Ah, - stretched Auto, - that's it!

- So that! These spirits almost killed my family, and I never thought that it could happen. All spirits are like one to me.

Leah smiled and shook her head.

- And she had to rub them into my collar?

- Well, where did Zaza Ilyich himself go?

- Then he forgave us after the explanations and departure of Merab and, after him, Ii. And recently, the new Minister of Health took him to the apparatus. On promotion, so he went.

- And who is your boss now?

- Yes, a new one, how many times I said, very young. These are in vogue now.

- Well, how is he?

- So far, nothing.

The conversation revived, captured everyone.

Leah's cell phone rang now.

"Yes, it's me," she answered shortly, fragmentarily. "Yes, here ... Very pretty ...

Well, you never know about anything, now there is so much going on ...

- Who is it? Ramaz asked her.

- Nino!

- What to her?

- He asks why Auto introduced the girls to you first, and not to me. Natalie and Eka looked at each other.

- Well, here's another, - Ramaz dismissed, - looking for a reason to argue!

- Demands that both her and Nukri be introduced.

- This is her husband, - Leah explained to the guests, - Na, talk to her yourself, - Leah could not stand it. - She is so attentive, sensitive, caring, but loves to command and teach.

The guests came to the aid of the struggling Ramaz:

- Tell her next time we'll go to her!

- Here, you hear, they promise. Well, leave me alone and hello to Nukri and the children.

- Let's! Fu, - he sighed with relief. - This is an onslaught, such an onslaught! Doesn't want to give up on anything! The day after tomorrow he is going to his father's cottage, do you want to go, "he asked Leah.

- How, and the child?

- Oh, yes, - Ramaz remembered, - well, and you? - he turned to Auto.

"Not with her," he pleaded.

- Oh, our swindler.

- Not a swindler, but a harpist, - Leah clarified for the guests, - she plays in our state symphony orchestra. Now she plays the violin, and before, she says, she played the harp, but now, when there is a shortage of harps throughout the country, she had to switch. She plays really well. We go to her concerts, including solo ones. And at the conservatory clothes. Very talented. But the most interesting thing is that she is absolutely convinced that we will not be able to build an independent, democratic state until the country has at least one harp.

The guests smiled.

"We used to have them at the opera," Lamzira said, "well, after the civil war, as nothing remained at all, so did they.

- Aunt, the child woke up, - whispered to Lie Tsitsino.

- I'm coming, I'm coming, excuse me, I'll soon...

- Well, now we'll go, - Natalie got up resolutely.

- Ts, - put his index finger to his lips Auto, - do you hear, nightingales?.

- Let's go to the balcony, - commanded Ramaz, - let's listen a little.

"Here they sing differently than they do in the church garden," Eka remarked.

"Yes, yes," Auto confirmed in an undertone.

- I wonder what they are now talking to each other about? - asked Lamzira.

- Make appointments...

- Well, okay, - Natalie concluded after a short silence. - This, apparently, for a long time ...

- Yeah, - Auto nodded, - it takes a long time to persuade women.

"Here we are," Leah returned with a baby, a little girl, in her arms.

- Oh, what a charm! - the guests rushed to the child.

- We are already starting to walk, but we are not talking yet, and here are the teeth, - Leah listed, - two lower front ones and one upper back, on both sides.

The little girl smiled broadly.

- Well, thank you for everything, thank you! - Natalie thanked. - We will meet more often.

- Of course, girls, come in more often, we will always be glad to see you, - Leah warmly said goodbye to them.

"I'll see them off in a taxi and I'll be back," Avto also got up.

Eka and Natalie, fluttering into the back seat of the car, resolutely refused further wires, and Avto, having paid their fare, turned back, waving his hand as he went in response to Natalie's smile.

Auto returned to Ramaz, but felt empty and bored there, all the more so since Ramaz himself caught and expressed this mood further in the words of Gogol:

- It's boring in this world, gentlemen, - and added after a short pause: - Without women?

- Well, how? sinking to his former place at the table, he asked Auto about the opinion of those present.

- Circumstances, my brother, bend a person so that sometimes it is impossible to make out where the mind speaks and where the heart enters, but in any case ...

- Oh, Ramaz, I beg you, do not philosophize, and do not drink anymore, - Leah asked, - very good girls. And you and Natalie are just a very suitable couple.

"Really?" Auto asked.

"True, true," Lamzira confirmed.

- Leah, where did you write down Nata's mobile phone number and e-mail address, "Auto asked.

- There is a leaf in a vase, - Leah showed with her eyes.

- I'll copy it in my notebook, and let the sheet remain with you, just in case ...

"Of two hearts, one is always warm, and the other is cold," Ramaz muttered, "the cold one is now more expensive than diamonds, the warm one is not valued at all, and it is thrown away.

- Look, Auto, stay on top, like a man, - Lamzira taught, - you know, women love strong and representative, and don't go in these botas, dress more impressively.

- No, no, Lamzira, - Leah interrupted her, - the botas had nothing to do with it, so the girls were in them. You just have to act wisely. I'll elaborate on it later...

- Keep them in sight, give Natalie more attention, more sensitivity, warmth, and it will be in the bag! - Tsitsino laughed.

Auto no longer listened to the conversation, but made plans for tomorrow and the future in his thoughts.

"The nightingales will tell me the way to you. But out of modesty, do not inadvertently say: no, "the mind formed.

## PART TWO

### I

Giant waves of universal globalization, one after another, rolled onto the planet, grabbing and washing away more and more countries. European ones were among the first. It all started with the unification of Europe.

"Want to live, don't starve"

You are welcome to us!? under such a slogan, the globalists stormed their goals. The hardest thing, of course, was to resist the small and economically weak.

All sorts of methods and tricks were used. Democratization processes were gaining unprecedented momentum. After the carrot and stick, they resorted to the most powerful propaganda and ideological attack of unemployment, the distribution of drugs, new alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, prostitution, incestuous sexual relations promoted by a bunch of different TV shows, and much more. Day and night, all sorts of gambling games with specially imported equipment were advertised, now in jest, now with humor, now seriously, now half-seriously, by all the media. These installations flooded cities and villages, tearing people away from work. The topic of moral decline was raised by the Internet, in which the same gambling games, erotic and pornographic products, and the most modern methods of physical and moral violence still prevailed. Everything was led to the cultivation of a single destroyer of the human race.

The tentacles of the octopus stretched everywhere, slipped into all the loopholes and cracks, into every area and sphere of human activity.

It seemed impossible to resist the rolling waves, and salvation was nowhere to be seen.

- When you think about it, it becomes scary to live like that. Truth? an indignant female voice sounded at a meeting of the teachers' council - we need to rebel against this process on our own, Givi Dosifeevich! Don't you think so?

A noisy rumble swept through the staff room.

- Hush, hush, I beg you, - the director called for calmness. - Unfortunately, we are not able to stop this process. We see on TV mass demonstrations and speeches of the opponents of globalization in one country or another. But I remember King Leonidas, and not from anywhere, but from the film "Three Hundred Spartans", who, with small forces, to the end resisted the formidable and numerous army at Thermopylae and, surrounded by enemies, before the last battle, turned to the soldiers with the words: "Spartans! We won't be able to keep Thermopylae, we'll try to kill King Xerxes"

So we will not be able to hold on to our previous positions. If we do not comply and accept the new training program, others will carry it out for us.

I believe that since the fall is inevitable and it has already begun in principle, it is more reasonable to think not about why we fall, but about how to make the fall less painful.

“But this is contrary to our principles, our morality and our entire internal constitution, Givi Dosifeevich,” some of those present objected, talking to each other.

- Try to understand me, - Givi Dosifeevich reasoned with them, - if we remain in our previous positions, we will try to be a strong filter of the proposed innovation.

- What kind of filters, Givi Dosifeevich, when we are directly instructed to teach children the rules of sex, and not to form moral principles, not to emphasize the sinfulness of these principles, not to warn against illness and retribution. This is absurdity, not a moral and ethical norm.

- And besides, to deny religious education, the teaching of the Law of God.

- How sad it all is, Veriko! - Natalie whispered to her neighbor colleague.

“Yes, Nata, it’s even terrible,” the colleague replied, “well, at least it won’t affect your subject very much ...

- No, Veriko, it will, of course, it will affect ...

- Well, it's still not the same as on us ...

- In my class, one student asked to be released from the lesson, and she felt sick in the toilet, - Mary said with concern in her voice, - then they barely brought her to her senses.

- And my students - both girls and boys - refused to learn this, - added Mega, - and what marks should they put?

- The main asset of democracy and the democratic principle has always been considered not only freedom of speech and thought, but also freedom of action, - Natalie exclaimed passionately, - where is the vaunted universal principle "Not Press", why people are forced to accept what they do not want, moreover - disgusting...

“This is a hidden conspiracy of enemies against a country that they want to pulverize and suppress its population,” the most daring voices were heard.

- Well, well, not so loudly, - Givi Dosifeevich reassured, - we will not solve the problems of the whole country, this is the business of politicians, and it is better for us to limit ourselves to our sphere and our immediate business. But one thing, perhaps, is indisputable: everything is far from unambiguous, and you cannot paint a picture in black colors alone. Let's remember the difficult years that we have

experienced, hunger, cold, devastation, civil and interethnic wars, food stamps... And long lines for bread in winter! We stood all the long winter nights without a break. Friends from friendly countries helped, donated the most modern medical facilities. And only if ... We ourselves robbed and dismantled our equipment, our factories, plants ... You can't all row under the same brush. We must learn to differentiate and distinguish friends from foes and understand that not everything that comes to us from the "West" is only good or only bad.

"It is better to die of hunger than of iron," a sharp cry was heard.

- Well, this is not at all in the style of Spartak and his warriors, - Givi Dosifeevich stopped him.

That's why they died...

Noisy disputes dragged on for a long time, but the director finally managed to translate them into a different direction.

- It's enough for us to analyze the world's global processes. They will never end. We will confine ourselves to problems close to us. I would like to ask you to express your thoughts on mitigating and reducing the harmful effects of new teaching methods and new subjects. Let's get to know them at the teachers' council and try to ensure that, as they say, both the wolves are fed and the sheep are safe.

Disputes immediately resumed, but the director closed the debate, and everyone began to disperse little by little, but without stopping the discussion.

- Nata, please make me some coffee, - Givi Dosifeevich asked, going to his room, - my head ached, I can't accept anyone.

The coffee was ready in a few minutes. The principal was browsing the Internet news bulletins on one of the many computers that had been sent to him and the college as gifts from foreign friends.

- Nata, tell me, please, - he asked, - will this iron box be to blame if we use it to preach sin or not for its intended purpose?

He returned mentally to Spartak mentioned at the teachers' council. "How interesting: the slogans remain, only the tools of man change."

"No, of course not," Natalie interrupted his thoughts.

- Well, that's what I'm talking about. How not to distinguish what is acceptable to us and what is not. Should we cancel college computer courses? Well, then the children will not learn from us, but somewhere else and still get into the computer. Look at how many Internet cafes have sprung up in our city. There they learn about all the so-called "this", around which we buzzed at the teachers' council, besides in a more rude form. So wouldn't it be better for them to get information in a much more reasonable and cultural presentation?

Natalie shrugged and nodded.

- The head is splitting into pieces, - Givi Dosifeevich complained, - try to explain to them. Do they really think that I do not see and do not understand, do not realize what is happening around?

- You have pressure, Givi Dosifeevich, - Natalie admitted, slowly folding the device and returning it to the case. - You shouldn't have had coffee. This is my mistake, she said.

- You didn't know...

Yes, but you didn't feel it either?

- Oh, leave it, Nata! What can you feel with this...

As he was leaving, Givi Dosifeevich turned around and, as a precaution, glanced around the office.

- Here, you see, an imported metal hammer! They also sent it to us ... what do you think, for what?

- I think, not to hit them on the head! - Natalie smiled.

- Here's a good girl! - Givi Dosifeevich agreed. - I think so too, but I can't answer for others. Do you know what, according to the classification, category our country was assigned to?

Natalie shook her head.

- To the third, to the one in which the most economically backward countries are enrolled. Can you imagine? They even grow bananas there, but what about us? By the way, how much do we have now?

- I know. Fifty tetri a piece.

- What about pineapples?

- I don't know about that. I think there are thirteen or fifteen chests.

- They say they are very useful?

"To be honest, I like our own fruits much better. They are juicier, more nutritious and tastier.

- Certainly! But they are not that cheap either. Okay, this is a long, albeit interesting conversation, - Givi Dosifeevich smiled bitterly. - I will not lock the door. If you want, work on the computer. Just remember to turn everything off and lock it when you leave.

- Well, - Nata was delighted, - thank you, Givi Dosifeevich. I will do as you said.

- Come on!

Of course, Natalie had no problems with the computer. The city was crammed with internet cafes, but she saw no need to turn down the opportunity.



She suddenly remembered how fifteen years ago, in high school, a certain Vakho was courting her, inviting her for walks, to cafes, where, over a cup of coffee and cakes, she listened to his loving “twitter” with pleasure.

“It’s a pity that I broke up with him so thoughtlessly,” she thought, sitting down at the device and “climbing” into the Internet.

“Then, for some reason, I didn’t take him seriously ... However,” she regretted her memories, “I thought that I shouldn’t rush to conclusions, my whole life is still ahead. I always hoped to meet someone better, prettier than him, smarter ... So I’m waiting to this day ... Before, everything was different. And now in the same cafe, but with the prefix “Internet” you can meet with the chosen one outside of his physical presence, through a computer, and talk with him about anything. In the future, they will probably even think of conceiving via the Internet, without direct contact.”

Natalie quickly skimmed through Avtandil’s new e-mail, in which he said that his sister, whose acquaintance she each time pushed back to the future, would soon become so fat from the khachapuri<sup>1</sup> and cakes baked every now and then that he himself would not recognize her and would not be able to imagine...

Natalie laughed involuntarily. She delicately refused dates, invitations.

“Don’t hurry,” she recalled her mother’s teachings, “that is, hurry slowly. Get to know him better, while still through correspondence. A person has what’s on his mind, then on his tongue. Keep him at a distance for a while, don’t give in to him right away, don’t sell him cheap. Know your worth!

The father is forced to follow his wife’s lead, and Eka fundamentally does not interfere. Only once did she suggest that she be simpler and more frank with him.

- The place where we met is not a bar, not a restaurant or a dance floor ... In general, do as you know yourself. Each person is the smith of his own happiness.

For the first time, Natalie preferred the advice of her mother to her sister’s advice. She shied away from meetings in every possible way, under all sorts of pretexts, and even avoided attending Sunday services in order to keep Auto in suspense.

“No,” she thought suddenly, “well, at least for the attention and for such an expensive present, it’s worth writing him a warm letter.”

She changed the beginning of all previous letters “Hello Auto” to “Dear Auto”. The letter really turned out big, warm and iridescent. She herself liked

and, having read it again, she breathed it into the screen. After digging a little more in the net, locking the door behind her, in a complacent and pleasant mood, she left the college building.

## II

Buildings are like people when they are born  
And live a healthy life, They glow and radiate  
health and light. And before death they get sick  
and cry, suggesting people to leave  
myself.

The old three-story building of the conservatory, built of red brick, which released more than one generation of talented musicians from its walls, was now in an unenviable position.

The cracks spreading along the facade from the uneven settlement of the foundation threatened to increase their influence under the influence of even the smallest shocks of an earthquake and any others.

- What a beautiful building, what architecture, what a magnificent facade! - a modestly dressed woman in her fifties admired.

"It's strange," she was surprised, "for how many years I have been working here, but I have never felt it so acutely. On dilapidated buildings, a person, apparently, begins to pay more attention when some kind of illness or injury is discovered.

How many decades it has been standing here, how much it has seen in its lifetime. How strong it always was and how it fascinated with its massiveness and monumentality. And now it squinted, leaned to one side, as if before death. Just like a human.

In buildings, as in people, the foundation is more important than the core itself. Well, what is the use of luxury and even charms if the power, the foundation is damaged? No better, of course, and dilapidated walls on a solid foundation.

"Oh, soon I'll probably switch to the husband's profession," she caught herself in unusual thoughts, "he doesn't stop enlightening me in her, so I'm going a little out of my path and out of my mind. How interesting, though, is it possible to help this building and how." I'll have to ask him. But why didn't I do it sooner? In any case, apparently, it will be necessary to tie and strengthen the walls with anti-seismic belts. People also need the same belts, although their purpose may be different?

Climbing the stairs, she suddenly remembered with horror a story twenty years ago, when, under Soviet rule, her husband had to stay all night at a crumbling, well-known building in one of the prestigious districts of the city. The building, the

strengthening of which was carried out by a group of engineers allocated by the city council.

In the morning, she could not stand it and, together with the children, nine-year-old Bondo and six-year-old Rusiko, went to the scene.

- Well, Nino, you see what is happening, - her husband said in a cracked voice, meeting her.

"Can't you save it?" she asked.

- I doubt! Listen... It makes death creaks and throws off the debris.

The rescue service of the City Council girded the building-sufferer with special red narrow strips of fabric, warning signs.

Workers in overalls and helmets scurried along the bright ribbon, vigilantly followed the course of the collapse of the building, the distribution zone, and did not let the curious come closer to the border.

- But what about ... so much labor, building materials, financial costs? - She then asked.

- We don't think about it anymore ... They wanted to save it, but if it collapses, it's not our fault.

Fortunately, the commission of inquiry subsequently came to the same conclusion.

"God forbid," thought Nino, "that this should happen to the building of the conservatory." She entered the classroom with an uneasy feeling.

- Hello, prepa Nino! - first-year students George and Mzia greeted her.

She glanced around the walls of the classroom and was pleased to note that there was no damage to them.

- Today we'll start with the composition "storm", - suggested Nino.

- Georgy, lead her more vigorously! Are you sleeping, or what?! Imagine that you love her, and she dies in a storm on a yacht, you fight a storm on a speedboat and try to save her yacht.

The students looked at each other.

- Mziya, you also do not sleep, rush after him, as if for the only guiding thread. And you seem to think, but as if only about saving your life, and not about your loved one. Well, let's get started!

The students nodded in agreement.

Nino waved her conductor's baton.

- We are playing asynchronously for now, and then we will try together. Not bad, not bad, do the rest at home, now our favorite "Toccatà @ Fugue In D Minor".

Nino nodded in satisfaction and waved her wand around, then stopped and made corrections.

"You'll have to take your violin. An indispensable tool! What else will help to explain, show and interpret the depth and colorfulness of feelings, - she added already aloud. - And so do you.

Gia and Mzia stood drooping.

"Nothing, nothing," Nino encouraged them, if you work hard, Nicolo Paganini and Vanessa May will come out of you. Only I do not promise to play the "music of disappearing strings", it is not available to anyone except the maestro to this day. Well, okay, let's try the composition "Devil's Trill". Georgy, while you look more at a music book than at an instrument, otherwise you are behind, but Mzia is ahead of you. When you learn the composition like the back of your hand, you can glance at the notes occasionally, and often at the instrument. So ... Let's go to "Wide Screen". Imagine that after a heavy rain you are riding bicycles on a wide paved road... or not, it is better to imagine yourself as butterflies fluttering over a meadow overgrown with flowers, over which a heavy rain has passed... Butterflies that live only one day. Oh, what a charm ... Well done, Georgy, lead, lead, - Nino praised, - and you interrupt him with small inclusions. Mzia, well, come on, .. So, so, well done, girl! So, I'll play "Tequila Mockingbird" for you now! It will be difficult at first, but listen. Isn't it wonderful?

She was answered with admiring silence.

- What else can so masterfully lead today's person away from everyday life, if not a beautifully performed classical composition. It's a pity, she added sadly, that drug addicts and drinkers do not own this instrument, otherwise they would very easily get rid of addictions.

A melody in the hands of a virtuoso heals, guys, remember this for the rest of your life... You are healers of human souls, and your "surgical operations" on human souls must be the most precise and subtle. The aerobatics of the human soul, over which only angels can be...

The students still responded with silent nods.

- Well, now let's try "Bach Street Prelude". After our lessons, I see^ your neck will ache from nodding, well, of course, your fingers, but your soul should fly. Should!

They also played "Winter Allegro Non Molto".

- All right, all right, George, lead! Lead slowly... And you, Mziya, connect incrementally... and now leave him alone again, connect fragmentarily. Lead, Georgy, carefully... thinner, thinner! Well, now you get connected too, Mzia... Well! God, how wonderful ... - she rejoiced at the slightest accurate sound.

- Now listen. I will perform "Contradanza".

The students, unexpectedly for Nino, timidly joined her.

"Don't be afraid, be bolder!" she encouraged and suddenly stopped, nodded to Mzia, leaving only George, who at first hesitated, but did not lose his head, he led the solo, and led until Nino and Mzia joined.

The second hour of the lesson Nino devoted to fragments from the Musistory, life events of the world's outstanding violinists.

After class, she went to the teacher's office to clarify the schedule of lessons for the week.

"No, Auto is still wrong," she thought, "no nightingales can compete with a violin in the hands of a skilled performer. A violin in a symphony orchestra! Oh... this is the queen of tools. Only the violin can be stronger than the violin... if there is no harp in the country, she concluded sadly.

He also gave me canaries in a luxurious cage. Why do I need canaries if I have a violin! What a wonderful! He convinces that they absorb the negative energy of a person, calm the nerves, besides, they can teach a lot in the field of music and even help to compose it. I also found Strauss! And the fact that they need such painstaking care is nothing? As if I don't have other things to worry about. Look, he doesn't even go to his father's dacha ... to visit a seventy-three-year-old old man. Except occasionally. Although I looked after my mother in her last years, what is true is true.

With such thoughts, Nino left the conservatory.

"Half past one, before the break I will have time to pay for gas, and then for the phone." On the way to the savings bank, she mentally replayed the melodies played in the lesson.

"How much more do they need. You suffer, you work with them, you work for a penny to bring everyone to their cherished goal, to real mastery, you lead them on the road to musical life, and only a few come out on the stage or in the orchestra, or as soloists. Today, the price of any art has dropped amazingly sharply. People are more and more drawn to money, pleasures, entertainment, and the sphere of the spirit has turned into

frightening abyss. Church life seems to be on the rise, but only those who managed to come into it, now the influx into it has decreased. But ... the great Stanislavsky once argued that it was worth messing around with the whole course and we can assume that it took place if at least one capable and talented artist came out of it," Nino reassured herself.

At the entrance a long queue of pensioners lined up in the so-newly called People's Bank, waiting for their "pension kopecks".

- I have to pay for the gas, - Nino explained to the young guard, who slightly opened the metal door.

There were several guards in black trousers, blue shirts with special stripes on shoulder straps, on the shoulders, on top and on the side of the front pockets, with pistols in a holster and walkie-talkies. Some stood at the entrance, others inside, others regulated and directed the flow of pensioners to the corresponding compartments and windows.

- Demand receipts from them, - they shouted nervously from the queue, - otherwise they say gas, but in fact they receive a pension without a queue by a notarized power of attorney.

"Come in," the young policeman allowed, letting Nino through the gas bill she had provided.

- I would never have thought of such a trick, - Nino was surprised and indignant, leaving the bank.

Soon she was paying a debt in the central part of the city for a home telephone, transferred according to her own desire a few years ago to the so-called "new lines". "What a horror," she was dumbfounded by the amount indicated on the receipt, which was printed out to her by a young computer operator girl.

- Girl, it can't be! So much to say in a month?! - Nino objected to her hotly.

- Claims should not be addressed to me, but to the bureau, - the girl rapped out loudly and added, - the next one!

- Ma'am, please don't delay the queue, - they demanded irritably from Nino and from the queue.

Nino rushed to look for the claims bureau.

- Pay three lari, and we will print out all the conversations to you with the accuracy of minutes and days, - another operator offered her there.

- Hello! Three more lari?!" Nino gasped in indignation. "I know that the computer will knock you out!" The same as in the receipt. And I will prove to you that I could not say so much. Besides here, in the receipt, numbers of mobile phones unknown to me are specified.

- I don't know anything, madam, apply with claims to the director!

- And where he?

- At the end of the hall, the door to the left!

Squeezing into a noisy and crowded hall, where long-distance network telephone calls were paid for by a variety of new telephone services-codes, was not so easy.

Such noise, hubbub, cries could not be heard even in the market.

The director was not there. Nino got nervous, swore in a good way and hurried to leave the buzzing hall.

In special buildings - premises of power grid services, she decided to pay for the light, which was turned off the other day.

"There is always no time for Nukri, you can't interrogate children," Nino was indignant to herself. "When they were very small and depended on me, it was like that, but now families themselves, children, even more so. And everyone demands from me, I owe everyone, and no one owes me anything. It's wonderful, isn't it, Nino?" she asked herself.

- Yes, but why did you turn it off? - she impatiently asked the operator of the same computer.

The operator instantly, by pressing the keys, knocked out the name given to her on the screen and went into long and tedious explanations.

- All right, all right, knock out the receipt, - Nino immediately gave up, - there is no more strength to compete with you.

- Oh, hello! - the operator was indignant, - just look. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of people like you a day!

- So when will you turn it on? - Nino asked, having paid at the cash desk.

- If they have time, tonight, - the operator threw offensively.

"So, it's the beginning of the fourth," Nino glanced at her watch at the exit, "I still have time to slip into the dry cleaners, to the other end of the city, pick up Rusiko's jacket from there, I hope it's ready, repainted, I'll get another five laris."

After dry cleaning, Nino turned to the market.

Perhaps he was one of the few places that was never empty, except at night.

The main city food market was located on the territory near the railway station and consisted of a huge two-story covered and the same, next to it, open areas. On the open, however, under a special canopy, fruit and vegetables were mainly traded.

Nino deftly made her way between the stalls, bought what she needed, and was surprised at the high cost, especially of fruits, compared to previous years.

- And what do you want, lady? - one of the merchants explained to her, - bad weather, and even such a long one, did its job!

From fruits, perhaps, watermelons came at an affordable price.

- Oh, no, I can't handle, probably, with such a load, - Nino estimated, looking sideways at two large, full, black plastic bags and mentally adding what else needed to be bought.

"Hello, Nukri, hello," she greeted on her cell phone.

- Where are you? - asked Nukri.

- At the market!
  - What are you doing there? - Nukri was amazed.
  - I'm looking for a gentleman.
  - And why should I in this case?
  - I want to ask your permission.
  - Ah ... well, then it's clear, go ahead!
  - Wait, what time is it to joke?
- I don't know, you started on your own.
- Can you send me a car?
  - Why?
  - Yes, it's gathered here ... heavy ...
  - The car is not my property, and besides, Shalva is at Davidovich's dacha.
- "Which Davidovich?" Nino didn't immediately realize.
- Your father!
  - Ah...

What is he doing there today?

- His pipe burst, but what are you doing there aesh" The day before yesterday I was at the market.

- The day before yesterday, yes, I was, I sent a little to my father, Bondo took it, we finished off the rest ourselves, and Rusiko was left with a nose.

What is her husband doing?

- Well, Bezhan is now having difficulties with work, you don't know, but Rusiko can't.

- And Ketino?

- And what about Ketino? She has two children around her neck, she is busy with them. And Bondo comes home from work so late, barely able to eat dinner and go to bed.

- Well settled, do not say anything, I'm sorry, but I can not help ...

"Okay, okay, you're always like this..." Nino cut off the connection.

I'll have to push myself even today, - she moved on, to buy the necessary things.

In the minibus, she got a seat in the very back seat. The passengers, apparently, were just waiting for her and noted with sighs of relief that the minibus was full, without which the driver, despite requests and persuasion, did not agree to leave.

The car moved forward, making its way along Vokzalnaya Square with a barely noticeable move through countless rows of others plying around the city and

"combing" its streets up and down.



In the city, most of the rest of the transport, buses, trolleybuses, trams, was canceled long ago, and private cabs prevailed more and more tangibly and assertively.

The approaching minibuses interfered with the push. Maneuvering, they tried to squeeze into the vacant seats of the rows and went around the pedestrians who were not afraid of collisions with them freely walking around the square.

Having driven away from the square, the driver turned on a tape recorder with a cassette to celebrate

"thieves' songs", the most difficult of which was about cannabis and the buzz from it.

"Horrible! How many beautiful even pop things we have, but you have to listen to this!

She leaned forward, unable to endure this tedious filth any longer in order to get out halfway, but, remembering the load, she restrained the impulse, gained patience and covered her ears with her hands.

The driver braked, and two rednecks got into the car, which Nino did not like very much. There was nowhere to sit, and they, half-bent, stood with their backs to the driver, peering intently at the passengers.

One, standing behind, shook his head negatively, making a sign to his comrade ...

"It won't work," Nino caught his thought, but, not knowing how to react to this, subconsciously, not knowing why, she convinced herself and reinforced the hope that she would come out earlier, but still having reached the right place.

As luck would have it, the passenger sitting behind the driver soon got out, and as soon as the minibus moved again, one of the people who entered made a movement with his hand, and the second one instantly found himself in the vacant seat.

- Only without panic and shouting! - half-standing boomed in a bass voice. And voluntarily, peacefully ... money or gold ... so that without victims ...

The two young guys sitting in front of Nino, the only men left in the car, were about to get up from their seats, but they were stopped by the muzzle of a pistol sticking out from behind the robber's bosom.

- Do not be afraid, - one of the guys encouraged the other, - it is gas!

- That, that, that, that ... If you want, we'll check it, only then blame yourself! The boys reluctantly sank into their seats.

- Do not stop, - threatened the driver with a push-button knife of the second, - lay out what you got there.

- Yes, nothing special, just took a shift change!

In response, the knife hand dropped, allowing the other to pick out the driver's pockets.

In the salon, the first one was already accepting voluntary contributions into his pockets.

When it was Nino's turn, she opened her half-empty purse, in which only the remaining metal coins jingled.

- This is not necessary, madam! - the robber explained to her. - Your earrings ...

- Why do you need them? - Nino blushed. - They are inexpensive, and besides, this is a gift from her husband. The robber put his hand to the earrings.

- Okay, - Nino could not hold back her tears, - I'll take it off ... myself! The robbers left the bus in a hurry.

- Keep in mind, tell the police, we'll find you by the number, and the head ... - held one, jumping out of the car, on the neck. - Now come on, tick!

The door slammed noisily, and the passengers also felt a kick on the board.

The stunned driver and passengers with indignant exclamations and sighs drove away from the place where the raiders had landed.

- Insolent!

- Complete arbitrariness!

- They have no control!

- Whatever they want, they do, bastards ...

- Unlimited...

Nino, somehow dragging her load home, came to her senses until evening. Took a little soul, talking on the phone with her daughter.

- And no one could do anything, mom?

- Against armed robbers, Rusiko?

- What about the driver?

- What a driver! He himself, the poor fellow, was robbed...

- Yes perishing, far there! Probably was with them in collusion! Everything will be returned to him, but to you ...

- Can not be! He was so frightened that he went right off his face, - Nino was amazed.

- Mom, when will you grow up?!

- No, - thought Nino, - it can't be, - she didn't believe her daughter.

- Okay, don't despair, we'll buy you a better one.

- No, it's just embarrassing. After all, a gift from your father...

- Okay, don't think about them anymore. What do you hear from Bondo?

I don't know, I'm going to them...

- Probably again with provisions?

- So what to do?

- This Ketino is completely lazy, does not want to do anything.

- Behind her children!

- Yes, but there is something really, both for her and for the children, if not for her husband!

- Not in this case. Bondo just likes the way I cook.

- Oh, yes, well, them! News: Auto flew to Barcelona today.

- What are you doing! Why didn't he tell me?

- Yes, unexpectedly! There, it turns out, some congress of ornithologists.

- Probably, Ruben took with him?

- Not! This time I went with other guys.

- And when will he arrive?

- I don't know, in a week for sure! Well, okay, hold on, and hello from me to the Bondoshkins.

"Come on," Nino agreed.

Two hours later, Nino, already at her son's house, with her grandson and granddaughter, was gradually coming out of the recently experienced shock.

Returned home late in the evening. My husband watched TV with enthusiasm.

"It's good that at least they gave the light," she thought with joy, "let him look, today I won't tell him anything, there's no need to spoil the evening."

- Dinner?

- Yes, thank you very much, delicious, delicious! - He said without looking up from the TV.

"I wonder what men would do if there were no football and TV"?

Having had a bite and sipped some tea, with a heavy heart I remembered that washing was soaked in the bathroom. "I don't feel like it, and it's uncomfortable in front of Nukri."

Gathering the rest of her strength, she went to the bathroom.

- No, I can't, - she moaned, trying to squeeze the tourniquet, - Nukri, come here, help.

- Wait, ma, here is such a moment! You'd better get yourself in here. See what they're doing" Wow...

- Yah!

- Great movie! And how are they not ashamed. "Suddenly the children will look?

- Look, don't worry! That's why they became painfully smart because they watch and listen ... In addition, everyone except their parents.

Without waiting for her husband, she squeezed out her last strength and hung the linen on the balcony.

"Here's luck," she looked down, "it's good, the neighbors don't hang anything, it will dry out before morning."

By one o'clock in the morning, Nino, completely exhausted, was lying in bed without her hind legs and was slowly sinking into sleep.

- I beg you, Nukri, only without nonsense, you see how tired I am, - I had to reject the tenderness of my husband.

"Go to sleep, I won't disturb you." Sleep to yourself, - Nukri, however, did not deviate from his own.

Further resist was possible only mentally. She remembered how she stepped in the kitchen the other day, and even crushed a large black cockroach, and considered the current test a punishment for him.

In the morning she got up all beaten and rumpled, with a dull pain in her head and lower back. Nukri was no longer at home.

As soon as she began to complain to herself about her fate, as she noticed on the bedside table - at the head of a small case, like for jewelry. Startled in surprise. Hesitantly, she leaned towards him. Bringing it very close to her face, she pressed a tiny white button, carefully lifted it, and opened the lid. And suddenly her pupils dilated, a warm smile floated across her face, and a shiver of pleasure ran through her body, as just before, when she had not been able to fight off her husband.

On a narrow strip of paper, words far more important than a gift were read - "I love you." Tears welled up and welled up in his eyes. She tried on new expensive earrings for a long time, could not look enough at them and look at herself in the mirror.

In high spirits, having had time to take a shower and have breakfast, she headed for the small hall of the conservatory, where a painstaking rehearsal was ahead before an imminent performance with a concert, in an ensemble of four people - a quartet.

"I wonder how he knew right away," she wondered on the road, recovering from a joyful shock, "and when did he have time? Surely Rusoshka was sneaking around, wonderful?"

- Mom, where are you? - asked Rusiko on the mobile phone.

- On the road... to work... going...

- And I'm surprised, I call home, no one picks up the phone ... Well, how did you like it?

- Very. But you shouldn't have disturbed your father, Ruso.

- I'm happy for you. We won't let you get hurt.

- Thanks.

- Come on!

"Nukri should also be called and thanked," she dialed her husband's cell phone number.

On the way further, she somehow decided to analyze yesterday and the beginning of today, noticed, noticed how many times the state of her soul changed.

She remembered the method of change described in a recently read book, widely known in China. He provided for sixty-four states of the human soul, predicted the development of the individual, society as a whole, described bipolar contrasts.

"It seems that by the end of today, this number will exceed the Chinese state of mind limit."

She was already afraid of a change in a good, joyful, elated mood, drove away fear from herself, felt a surge of good spirits, in anticipation of her favorite tunes that she was now to listen to and play in the lessons.

"How nevertheless the violin refines the soul, and how life itself, vanity and turmoil, coarsens. And what happens to the metal twig, which is bent and bent first to one side, then to the other ... "she recalled, not without fright.

### III

And the parishioners swayed

Warm candles in the morning...

The bright tongues of flame from the many candles burning on the chandeliers more and more covered her soul and body. Closing her eyes, she sank deeper and deeper into the chant, into the voices of the singers and dissolved into them.

She felt how little by little they, soul and body, melted, how she lost weight, and how, overcoming earthly gravity, her soul followed the vapors of melting wax and smoking incense that engulfed and filled everything around.

"They sing amazingly, like nowhere else," gentle sounds penetrated into the most intimate corners of her being.

She was becoming more and more detached not only from the outside world outside the walls of the church, but also from herself.

“Lord,” she cried in her soul, “what bliss, grace. What earthly feeling can argue with him, well, let alone surpass ... There is bliss of the body and soul, and the latter is much, much higher than the first. Her heart was filled with indescribable joy, and it seemed to her that no one in her life could take it away.

“You are my refuge, my only hope and joy, the highest good,” she moaned. “You are everything!”

Suddenly, a drop of hot wax from the candle she was holding fell on her hand and burned it.

“Ay,” she cried out involuntarily, but immediately came to her senses, “let it, let it! Let it burn, it's even better.”

A poem escaped from her soul.

Burn me, my love, Burn me, my joy.

Her feelings grew stronger and deeper.

And finally, mercy descended, the sun entered the soul, and it trembled with bliss.

His heart trembled with frequent convulsive beats.

“Lord, I thank you for your good,” she prayed, “please, hold him at my gates so that I don't burn to ashes and lose my mind from joy.”

Little by little, she came out of the super-extreme state, but suddenly she felt a sharp blow to her leg, which nearly knocked her off her feet.

In amazement, she opened her eyes and noticed a very pretty little girl of about five years old, with pigtails and bows, running around the church during the service, who, as if running away from someone, ran into the worshipers.

An unsuccessful attempt to catch her suddenly resulted in a kind smile.

- Eka, please pass this memorial leaf forward, - she suddenly heard the whisper of a familiar church servant from behind.

Eka turned around half-turned and, accepting the scribbled piece of paper, exchanged a smile with her.

“What a nimble, wonderful, truth,” whispered behind him again. Eka looked up and down in agreement.

The girl circled a couple more times, flying up to the place where Eka was standing, but immediately slipped away.

Finally, she stopped herself and, squatting down at the feet of Eka, took up the long skirt of the praying woman standing next to her.

Eka did not immediately realize what was the matter. But, looking more closely, I noticed that small colorful flowers were sewn to the neighbor's skirt, which the girl tried in vain to pick and collect in a bouquet. She did not succeed and she soon ran away.

Eka and her neighbor looked at each other and also exchanged smiles.

Eki's gaze shifted to the right, to two young women with children, a girl of three and a boy of two, in their arms. The girl now and then stretched out her little hands and stroked the boy with them, who looked at her in surprise and waved him timidly.

This went on until the boy grimaced and cried, and the mother had to leave the church with him, and the girl got it in order.

Eka was again captured by the service and suffered. A gray-bearded priest, Father Parnavaz, a handsome man of about sixty, began to preach on Sunday from the pulpit.

- The crown of creation, man, was created in such a way that he cannot live without Him, the Lord, and is doomed to constantly look for him in order to achieve unity with him. We all need a living Savior, and he is always with us, and lives in our souls and pours out his love on us, if only we do not turn away from Him. He does not require much knowledge from us, He needs only our mutual love. The soul of each person is dearer to him than the universe. And, as the apostle Paul says in his epistle to the Galatians: "... there is no male or female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal., 3,28).

All people are equal before each other.

The basis of the foundations is peace and harmony between husband and wife.

We have a universal commandment to bear each other's burdens.

The purpose of marriage, according to the spiritual father Mitrofan Serebryansky, is the salvation of the soul of the wife and husband.

I want to end my sermon with an appeal to husbands with the words of St. John Chrysostom: "If you want your wife to obey you, as the church obeys Christ, take care of her yourself, as Christ does the church."

Do not excommunicate from the church, lest the enemy and sin overcome you. And love each other.

The service is over. The parishioners slowly left the temple. They talked, lingered in groups, waited for each other.

Eka looked in vain for Auto and Natalie and was annoyed that they missed the services.

Several people surrounded Father Parnavaz, bombarded with many questions about universal globalization, another attempt by globalists to build a new Tower of

Babel, about the desire of some for bliss and prosperity without Christ, an unattainable idea. Difficult questions about ecumenism and the unification of churches were discussed.

Eka, not waiting for the end of the conversation, slowly moved to the gate. She was stopped by a flock of peer friends, with whom she sometimes shared theological observations and considerations, news and everyday problems.

“Do you know what was broadcast to the patriarchy yesterday?” one of her acquaintances asked her.

“No, but what, Natia?” she asked curiously.

- What the holy fathers say: our world was created in order for the church of Christ to be established in it.

- How magnificent, isn't it? - Khatuna admired.

“There are such interesting programs in general, you learn so much new things through them that you are simply amazed,” another parishioner intervened.

- Yes, Zhanna, - Natia agreed, - just to listen.

- Yes, it is very interesting, the history of Christianity, - Eka pointed out instructively, - and the more you immerse yourself in it, the more it captures.

- Yes, Christianity does not allow us to stand still, - Elguja, who has been silent until now, said softly, - a person either goes forward, or ... rolls back every day.

“The issues of churching are really relevant and important now,” Eka said thoughtfully, “you can't talk about it freely and openly with everyone, they perceive it differently ...

- In principle, because of these indulgences and deviations from the original rules and knowledge, all kinds of sects and heresies arise. They serve the purposes and interests of demons who are trying to imperceptibly and implicitly lead people away from the true path.

- That is the so-called aberration, - said Elguja.

- That's it! - confirmed Eka.

- Yes, but not to fight really with a lot of sects, as the well-known priest excommunicated from the church, often mentioned on TV, did! - Elguja flashed.

- No, of course! - Jeanne smiled conciliatorily.

- Father Parnavaz told us a lot about this, - as if Eka concluded, looking at her watch, - well, all the best ...

- Yeah, everything, - in one voice they all said goodbye to each other. Descending into the city center, Eka walked past the large church of Kashveti, opposite the government house, through the main Rustaveli Avenue.



She stopped in awe, crossed herself with a wide cross, entered, placed candles in front of the Savior and the Most Holy Theotokos. And already leaving through the side gate, she saw something that shocked her mind. The side wall, trimmed with expensive white stone, was riddled with automatic bursts. The potholes are from the civil war that broke out twelve years ago.

“The Church is the mystical body of Christ, and we shot at him,” she flashed, “and we paid the price.

And suddenly she read on the shelled wall of the church the words: "Hating each other, you hated me."

Eka, in fright, closed her eyes and stepped back a little. When I opened my eyes, I didn't see the inscription anymore.

The buildings of the government house and the first gymnasium opposite were repaired and restored. And the church keeps the memory of those terrible times.

Doesn't anyone see this?

With a leisurely step, she crossed the avenue along the underground passage and, passing the former Palace of Pioneers, and the current Youth House, rows of stands with many brand new books, almost in all branches of human activity, approached the metro.

In a small open stall with soft drinks, unable to resist a terrible thirst, I bought a bottle of Coca-Cola.

The Church advises to abstain, and I ... - complained to herself, having drunk almost to the bottom of the bottle.

Not far away, by the benches around a tall luxurious spruce, she noticed a fountain from which, as she remembered, pure water spouted. “Soon there will be no price for it in the whole world, it will become worth its weight in gold, more expensive than oil itself,” she thought, “and in our daily life we neglect it, we want to sell the water utility and the entire water industry to some foreign rich investor, to do so same as with gas and electricity. Shall we get drunk then?

Having finished her Coca-Cola, Eka went up to a bench under the fir trees, on which she saw a friend selling a bird of prey tied by the leg with a strong and thick white rope.

“Looks like a hawk,” thought Eka, “but how do I remember this man?”

The bird greedily inhaled the warm air with its open beak, fidgeted, jumped from one hand of the seller to the other, flew into his lap, moved to the bench and settled down on it next to the owner.

The owner leaned towards her, peered into the pink membranes of her eyes.

- I'm tired, my poor...

The bird maintained a proud, calm silence.

“She has eyes like a person,” Eka looked at the bird more closely, “brown ... But on the other hand, her eyes, claws, beak ...”

- And how much are you selling it, my friend? - asked one of the few inquisitive passers-by gathered near the bird.

- Well, how much, how much, - the owner hesitated to answer, - her brother, for example, was sold for a hundred bucks, and she ... we will agree with the buyer.

- If there is for such a price - said the second passerby.

- Yes, you better let her go, - advised the third, - her place, you know where ... in heaven.

- I'll let go, of course, - the seller agreed, - if I don't find a buyer.

“Is she a girl or a boy?” asked one of the crowd.

- Girl!

“Voice, and what a familiar voice,” Eka was surprised.

- Where are you from?

eat?

- How come from...

“Let her go now,” advised another observer.

“She won't fly away from here, I'll let her out of my yard,” the owner explained. “But in general, if I let her go, she'll fly back to me. See how tame.

- And if you let her go here, will she find your home?

- Not from here.

- Where did you get it from?

- From a nest in the mountains. Together with the chief climbed up there. True, he does not know about it. Took her and her two brothers as tiny chicks. I have already sold my brothers, and she was left with me alone.

- Will she obey the one who buys her? - asked a curious voice.

- It will, of course, it will, - the owner answered in the affirmative, - where will it go. Who will feed, and that will obey. “Really?” he turned with a question to the bird, again leaning towards it and falling to its head.

It seemed that the bird was really well tamed, knew its owner well, especially his voice, and was not averse to listening to him.

“You know, for example, I heard that when such a bird of prey changes its owner, in order to accustom it to it, they hang it upside down for a day,” the observer, who had stood silent until now, suddenly declared.

“What is she, a bat, or something,” they objected to him.

“You should be hung upside down for a day,” Eka was indignant in her soul, “so that such thoughts would not be born.”

“Listen, do you know the anecdote about crocodiles, when one asks the other why the females bury their eggs in the sand and then cry?” the owner of the bird asked the presumptuous interlocutor. “So,” he added, after a pause, “the second advised him first do the same, in hot, forty-degree sand, and then see what makes them cry. Their brains are not wired like humans.

- That's what I'm saying - confirmed inquisitive.

“That's right, Ruben! Of course, he, - Eka was delighted, having recognized Auto's assistant, - how could I not recognize him right away. Interestingly, he recognized me.” Hardly, judging by the way he looked. If I had difficulty recognizing him, how does he feel about recognizing me? So many customers every day. Maybe I should remind myself, ask where Auto is now? - But then she changed her mind. - What does it matter now? And the bird is beautiful. So, Auto is hunting for girls and hunting in the mountains?” she smiled.

After admiring the hawk a little more, I decided to walk along the city avenue and turned back to the government house and the church fired from machine guns. After walking a little, I stopped at the store "Orthodox Book" and could not restrain myself from entering it.

The shop consisted of two small, external and internal halls.

Outside, church utensils were full of color and sparkling, icons were placed on the shelves.

In the second, internal, one was amazed by the multitude of religious, Orthodox literature, various editions of the Old and New Testaments, the lives of the holy fathers, apologists and church leaders.

“It's boring in this world, gentlemen,” she recalled Gogol's words with irony, “and added, “without God, of course, not to the threshold, and not only boring, but unbearably hard. But when you see such a wealth of light and bliss, - she thought of the books crowding before her eyes, - what kind of boredom can we talk about?

“Go, well, be bold,” an inner voice prompted her. “If you want to reach the goal, go alone,” she remembered the old wise advice. “Everything and everything in this life has its own purpose.”

She cautiously reached for the first book that came to hand, carefully took it in her soft palms, carefully leafed through and gradually immersed herself in reading.

One was followed by another, then a third. Sweet tears of bliss rolled up to her eyes. The deeper I went in, the harder it was to break away.

After staying in the bookstore for over an hour, I left with a few purchased books and brochures.

"There will be something to please the soul of the house. Now, if the prices were a little more affordable, it would be quite good."

Her thoughts were interrupted by the ringing of a mobile phone to the melody of the song "But we don't care ..."

- I'm listening, - she guessed by the highlighted number, with whom she was talking.

"Hi, Eka," a familiar voice greeted her.

- Hey, Sophie.

- Where are you now?

- In the city. And what?

- No, nothing. I just wanted to know if you have a free evening today.

- And what?

- The guys are invited to the theater, they say, a good performance.

- Who?

- Like who? Goga and Dato.

- I'm asking about the director?

- Ah! How do I know... What's the difference?

- Like what?

- Come on, you don't care, do you?

Eka looked with some annoyance at the plastic bag with the books.

"Here you are! I did not have time to buy, as an unexpected obstacle.

- I'm sorry, Sophie. I probably can't.

- Come on, Eka! When else will this happen. The guys asked for it. Such hard and long work awaits at the computer from Monday, even though today we will be discharged, we will take our souls away.

- What job?

- How, don't you know?

No, I wasn't there on Saturday.

- Oh, yes, I completely forgot. New foreign firms ask our firm to assist in establishing commercial relations and contacts with subsidiaries, local private firms and organizations. They promise good income. The guys say that you need to try to hook them on other issues, on image-making, advertising ... They even wanted we started on Sunday, but then agreed to Monday. so you see what kind of flurry we have planned?

- I don't know, Sofiko, I don't know! Call me back later.

"If you don't go, then I won't either," Sofiko said.

"Oh, this computer work," Eka sighed, lowering the mobile phone into a small white handbag hanging over her shoulder, "depletes and knocks out strength. Everything hurts after a few hours. It happens that it starts to stir up. But... what to do, work is work. And now I'm being asked to go to the theatre. After the heavenly temple, the earthly temple does not pull. But how do you explain it?"

Already approaching the Rustaveli metro station, at a small waterfall-fountain under a square with a monument to the great poet, I noticed a photographer tied to a wooden podium, a handsome peacock named Bacho. Having admired from afar, she approached him and asked the photographer to take a quick photo with the bird for her.

The second call on the mobile phone interrupted the examination of the finished picture.

- Eka, it's me! - The voice was familiar again.

- Yes, I recognized you, Maka. How do you?

- Nothing! Well, how are we going?

- Where? - Eka was amazed.

- How? Forgotten, right? Today is Vlad's birthday!

"Oh yes," she groaned to herself, "I really forgot. What to do"?

"Can't you move it?" she suddenly added aloud, and immediately caught herself saying something stupid.

- What are you? The guys have already decided. And in general, they always decide, not us, - Maka objected in surprise.

- I don't know, Maka, I don't know! Now I can't say anything. Call me later at home. I'm not at all ready for this.

- Well, get ready. I'll call you later. Bye!

"Oh ... you can go crazy," Eka protested mentally, "you won't reach the house. How, after all, worldly people are looking for entertainment, noisy gatherings. And I am drawn to solitude, silence, peace. I try to avoid them, go deep into my thoughts, focus them on the important issues of life, which modern man consciously avoids.

They rush into entertainment, trying to escape from the complex problems of life, from its trials and hardships, but from this they get deeper into the swamp silence of inconsistencies.

A person does everything to avoid annoying thoughts. We act more than we think. We consume and accept everything, without bothering to ask where it comes from, what it is made of, by whom it is made, and what consequences it may have.

It seems that Thomas Edison said that a person is ready to do anything in order not to expend mental effort. After his death, more than two thousand five hundred notebooks were discovered, stuffed with facts that he encountered.

In the evening, Eka stood at the appointed place on the subway platform and watched the moving escalator, throwing out crowds of people.

"Life is also a ladder ... Some are thrown up, others are thrown down. Some walk underground, in the dark, while others walk on the ground, under the sun. But it happens that underground in the light and on the ground in darkness. What a horror, she was afraid of her thoughts.

Two thugs who got together, attracting the attention of passengers with loud shouts and foul language, ran down the moving escalator, knocking on the sides and pushing the standing ones.

The attendant in the metal-plastic cabin immediately reacted sharply to the revelry with a remark and a warning, to which the thugs reacted very violently.

An unequal skirmish ensued, developing into a brawl, and the lean duty officer, a woman in her fifties, did not yield and threatened to call the police.

"What are they doing!" Eka was amazed. "And no justice. Why, I wonder, is the police not visible?"

Fortunately, the more sober of the thugs managed to drag the less sober one off duty and forcibly push him into the car.

Soon Levan appeared.

"Hey," he kissed Eka on the cheek.

- Hey!

- How interesting you are today! - Levan hurried with a compliment.

- Only today?

- Always, of course, but especially today.

- Where's Maka?

- That's right.

"He's late," Eka glanced at her watch.

- It's her style.

The ongoing conversation was interrupted by the return to the station of the offended and departed youngsters.

"I don't give a damn, I'm now her ... Dispersed, teaches!" With unheard-of abuse, the thugs moved to the booth, but, fortunately, the duty officer, this time, heard and recognized the voice of the offenders ahead of time and managed to report to the upper hall. Soon, a young policeman, in civilian uniform, joined the already ensuing conflict, with difficulty separating the fighters.

“Who are you and where did you come from here?” one of the dispersing young men shouted, breaking free from the hands that were holding him and waving his fists.

Eka was visibly frightened.

- What a disgrace! - She screamed. - What's going on! Well, at least someone intervene, stop them!

Levan leaned forward, but Eka grabbed his sleeve:

- You stay where you are!

- Let me go, Eka!

- Also me, the defender was found!

Levan escaped from Eka's holding hand and rushed into the fray. Twice he was thrown away like a chip by a powerful hand.

“How weak and desperate he is!” Eka jumped up to her chosen one, thrown by this hand.

Levan was in no hurry to get up, prolonging Eka's sympathetic caresses. She, leaning over him, anxiously asked:

- Hurt yourself? Does it hurt? - and stroked her face and shoulders am. And he, like a kitten, curled up into a ball and moaned and grunted softly.

A second policeman ran up and joined the fight, instantly, to everyone's surprise, grabbed the buzzers by the arms and dragged them to the exit.

- Calmly! Follow me! Let's talk like a man.

The youngsters, in accordance with the circumstances, quickly tuned in to a peaceful mood and began to quite sensibly assure the guard that they had been offended, insulted and even the first to raise their hand against them.

Eka was indignant, demanded to call for reinforcements in order to appease and punish the ugly.

- If I had three hundred bucks now, I myself would not refuse to beat them. And so ... it's worth it because of them to fall under the trial, - the policeman dismissed.

“But what, there are only two on duty here,” Levan inquired, who managed to get up and held Ekin's handkerchief under his bruised eye.

“Yes, there are two here, and at the next station there is a whole section,” the policeman straightened his blue shirt, which had fallen out in a mess, “If it happened there, they would have been shown muscular guys.

Eka still did not let up, demanded detention, transfer to the police station.

- Uh, sister, - the second policeman arrived in time, who sent the youngsters in peace on the approaching train, - who corrects himself in prison? Unfortunately, it's getting worse. What, you don't know?

- But after all they can return? - Levan intervened.

"They won't come back!" the policeman confidently objected to him. "I gave them such a lecture in their ear that they won't return for a long time. But they will try, and the conversation will be completely different.

- You saw how busy they are. There is no doubt that someone else will be approached today," Eka did not calm down.

- I look forward to my lecture! But no, they will teach them a lesson at the next station, God forbid. They will remember for a long time, - the second policeman insisted stubbornly. - I am still more a supporter of peace negotiations than an adherent of drastic measures.

The missing Maka finally appeared.

- What's the matter with you? - she rushed in amazement to Levan, but he instantly averted his eyes and looked down.

But Eka looked at her friend with all her eyes, who was both perplexed and tried to evade remarks about the delay.

"That's what it means to be late," Eka murmured in a barely audible voice.

- Are you crazy? - Maka pounced on her. - What did you do with him?

Eka and Levan looked at each other, smiled slightly and, as if by mutual agreement, patiently kept silent in response to Maki's hint.

- Yes, you're just crazy! Look at him! What's under his eye," she inflated more and more. that they kiss, and almost make love in front of people.

"But we don't have Europe," Eka fought back.

"So what do you think we are, Asians?" Maka resisted.

- The main thing is that we be Christians ... Orthodox ... real.

The dispute lasted until the very house of Vladik, who was no less amazed at the state of Levan. They fussed, rushed to put cold lotions on the bruises.

"I hope you won't treat me so ruthlessly," Vladik cheerfully asked Maki during a slow dance.

"If you behave well," Maka smiled enigmatically.

.....

- Poor thing, - Eka sympathized with Levan during the same dance, - you are still weak and helpless.

- Without you, yes, - Levan agreed, - you should always be by my side.

- Yes, but I was with you today? In addition, "Do not promise the virgin young love eternal on earth," Eka sang in a barely audible voice.

- Eka, I love you, - Levan admitted sadly.



- I love you too, Levan, - Eka sighed too. They were silent. They huddled closer to each other.

- Levan, don't rush me, - Eka asked, - I need time to understand life, people, myself, and in general in many ways. We're not old yet.

- Well, - Levan agreed, - as you say. But... Keep in mind, no one but me.

- How presumptuous!

.....

Confessions continued on the way home. Countless stars sparkled, setting in a cheerful mood.

Levan made Eka laugh, he laughed out loud himself:

- You noticed the frozen faces of Maki and Vladik when they found out where my bruises came from, - Levan laughed.

- Yes, - Eka smiled restrainedly. - They are wonderful.

We went down to the square with a huge circular lawn, approached the recently erected three-piece reinforced concrete wall, which was already being finished with white stone.

"Why is she?" Eka asked curiously.

- This is a memorial wall, the names of those who died for the independence of our country will be carved on it, - Levan explained.

- And here, probably ...

- Yes, you are right, the eternal flame will burn, and in general this and the nearby territory are going to be planted and landscaped.

- And thank God, - Eka concluded, - but there is still no monument to those who died on April 9th.

- Levan, don't be angry with me, - Eka asked at parting. My feelings for you are sincere and friendly. But it's still hard for me to cross that line.

- What is it oh mean? Is it no? Is this a refusal? - Levan was upset and drooped.

She looked at a loving man with a sad black eye, and her heart was filled with warmth.

- What are you, I'm not saying no ... Just wait and see. Agree, Levan, not everything that happens to people depends on them...

A little discouraged, Levan said goodbye to Eka, still with hope for himself and for the future.

Eka, on the other hand, believed that this Sunday was happy, it began with heavenly love, and ended with earthly love.

"Although it would be better the other way around," she remarked to herself, rising home, preparing for a meeting and conversation with her family.

## IV

Fortunately for Tbilisi residents, that year, compared to the previous ones, the summer days were not very hot, and those who remained in the city could not complain.

On the contrary, in their free time they were happy to be distracted from the bustle of the city and traveled outside for a day or two.

- One ticket for an adult, please, the second for a child, - a male voice said at the low latticed metal gates to the zoo, holding out his hand with money to the cashier.

- Uncle Avto, can I ask you for ice cream? - a girl in a light blue dress and an elegant wicker hat drawled in a thin voice.

- Of course, Anechka, what are we talking about, - said Avto, - but where will we get it? Here or inside?

Anya pointed with her finger to the side, where, not far from the entrance, there was a compact refrigerator cabinet with a varied assortment of ice cream.

- What do you want? Choose, - Auto brought her to the window.

- Here it is, - Anechka pointed to strawberries in a glass and a shiny wrapper. The wrapper was unwrapped on one of the many green garden benches near the entrance.

Anechka held out a cardboard box with a surprise on the back, licking the sticky delicacy off it with her tongue, Auto:

- Since they refused ice cream, then at least the prize will be yours!

- Agreed, thank you, - thanked Auto, accepting the gift. - Let's see what is written here.

After reading it, Auto became discouraged and thoughtful.

- Well, what's there? - Anechka asked again, not looking up from her ice cream. - If you don't like the prize, we'll give it to Akaki. Good?

Auto smiled.

- No, why, I like it very much. It says here that the Motherland is better when the son is better than the father.

- And the daughter?

- A daughter is better than a mother.

"No one can be better than my mother, she is the most wonderful in the world,"

Anechka objected passionately.

- And why does she scold you when you study?

- But because she wants me to do more.

- And you?

- I prefer to play. Let me play a little on the hill.
- Okay. Just eat ice cream.
- We'll get there. I'll watch the kids play.
- Come on, just be careful.

Literally a minute later, Auto saw how Anechka was treating some unfamiliar boy, her peer, with the remains of ice cream from her hand, he was whispering something in response to her ear, and she agreed, shaking her head.

Then they climbed the hill by the hands, rolled down from it on their haunches and rushed up again.

“Don’t sit on your dress, don’t get it dirty,” Auto shouted loudly, getting up from the bench, and ran towards the hill.

Anya did not have time to rise to meet him, when a new acquaintance rushing down the hill ran into her and knocked her down.

- Fool, - Anechka snapped, jumping to her feet and hit the boy.
- The very fool! - He was offended and gave change. Anechka rushed to Auto and burst into tears.

- Aren't you ashamed, boy, to beat a girl? - Avto got angry. - I'll take you now and lock you up in a cage with bears, they will show you how to offend girls.

The boy also burst into tears and ran up to a young woman hurriedly going to help him.

“Why are you scaring the children?” this woman asked as she walked.

- Nata? - Avto exclaimed in surprise.
- Auto? - Natalie was no less amazed. - Anya, my God, how she has grown, - she softened a little. - But what happened?

“Nothing,” Auto defuses the situation, “the children did not understand each other, they will reconcile ...

“I don’t want to put up with him, he’s not good,” Anya protested. “I’m his ... and he ... Auto and Natalie exchanged glances with a smile.

“I didn’t want to,” the boy burst into tears again, “it’s not my fault that she didn’t have time to move away ...

- What a wonderful boy. Whose is he? - asked Auto with some foreboding.
- This is Timoshka, the son of my director, - Natalie explained, - he himself stayed at the college, it took him, and he asked me to bring him here so as not to interfere.
- Cleverly thought, - escaped from Auto.
- And what? Should he have refused the request? - Natalie was alert.
- Well... - Avto hesitated.
- He has no wife, she died when the child was still quite small.

- Ah, - stretched Auto, - and who looks after him at home?
- Grandmother. Father's mother...
- Then everything is clear!
- And what? What is clear?!
- Nothing... Let's walk a bit.
- "Probably," Natalie agreed.

They walked side by side, and the children, long forgotten about the recent quarrel, ran from one cage to another on both sides of the path.

- You look how the boy is courting our Anechka. He probably does it better than me, - added Avto after a short pause.

- Don't, Auto, - Natalie smiled, - it's enough that I like your company.

Thanks, but that's not enough for me.

- Then I will have to leave Temo to you, and retire myself. Arranges?

- Only not this! - frightened objected Avto.

- Uncle, I want toasted corn, - Anechka asked, stopping in front of the cabinet of the unit with the inscription "popcorn".

Auto treated them to children and Natalie.

"He will partially protect me," Natalie was delighted, although she did not really like popcorn.

They walked slowly, without haste, a wide avenue lined with huge tall sprawling fir trees.

The children skipped ahead a little.

- How is Eka, how is Mamiya Sergeevmch? - Auto was interested.

- How to say, - Natalie shrugged her shoulders. - Eka is killed every day at work at the computer, her father plows a little at seasonal work. They install a heating system, mainly in private apartments. Work is not always available.

- And how is mom? What is her name, by the way?

- Manana Georgievna, - Natalie was surprised, because her mother remembered Auto well and believed that he knew her well.

- Torn between work and home. But there is not much left before retirement.

- Where does she work?

- In the community. There, too, there is enough hassle for all the employees. Is it easy with elderly, half-starved, often sick people. You can't explain everything to everyone, but you need to. How are you?" Natalie translated the conversation.

We understood each other well, were interested in everything vividly.

Auto more and more seized the initiative in the conversation, Natalie dutifully walked by, crunching popcorn from time to time and offering it to Auto.

Paid for everything in the Auto park. Natalie protested and laughed:

- Wow! Savings for the boss!

- Eh, boss? How is it? - Startled Auto.

- Givi Dosifeevich, - she answered, but then she thought: Why would he need to know this?

I felt that Auto wanted to ask more about him, made an effort and restrained himself.

We went into a large glass pavilion with enclosures for amphibians. Small crocodiles brought from the banks of the Nile, all kinds of lizards, snakes and other reptiles of various sizes and shapes basked in them. Sea, river, ocean, lake, ornamental fish, crabs, crustaceans and, almost from all over the world, lobsters swam in the aquariums.

- That's the collection! - Natalie admired.

- Yes, wow, - Auto agreed with her, - well done zoo, great job!

"It's even more interesting downstairs, and there are rides," Natalie remembered.

- Yes, I, frankly speaking, did not expect, - Avto admitted. - I haven't come here for a long time.

- How? - Natalie was surprised. - What about bird affairs? Didn't have to either?

- Well, it happened, so I sent Ruben ... or the director of the zoo himself came to us when it was necessary.

Remembering, we decided to go and with pleasure admired the kingdom of birds in the farthest part of the zoo, where eagles, hawks, black grouse, peacocks were fluffed up in cages from a metal lattice.

Auto got carried away to the point that he began to make notes in a notebook, read the texts on the tablets, and did not even notice how Natalie and the children quietly walked away, because of which they had to catch up.

With each step, there was a feeling of some kind of simple, close, family connection, deepened by the presence of children, stops at attractions, short halts in secluded squares with benches before new throws to distant, newly erected enclosures, pens, cages and aquariums.

Noticeable fatigue was removed by Fanta and Coca-Cola through a straw.

Deer evoked Natalie's special delight with her article, calmness, gentleness. Not predatory animals. Auto noticed how her eyes widened and flashed at the sight of them, and he picked and gave her some fresh grass. Natalie went to the wire fence of the paddock and tried to call the deer to her.

"And my uncle said that you can't feed the animals in the zoo," Anechka warned.

- You can get a little grass, - Natalie smiled and again waved her hand to the deer.

Several animals indeed answered the call, approached the net, trustingly accepted fresh tufts of grass from soft hands.

"Her hands are very beautiful," thought Auto, coming very close to Natalie and smelling the scent of her blond hair.

- You can, and I'll stroke them, - Auto murmured a little audibly and walked his palms along the withers, as if inadvertently hitting and stroking the tender hand from elbow to fingers.

The warmth that flew through her body seemed to frighten Natalie, but she overcame herself, recoiled, pulled away from Auto, freed her hand from his captivity.

The animals also started, bouncing off the mesh fence. The children looked at them in surprise.

Natalie shuddered, blushed, and Auto, offended, bowed his head, moved away from her.

Without saying a word, all four embarrassedly moved towards the enclosure, to the pool of the hippopotamus. The hulk lay in the water, his head resting on the top of the steps leading to the pool. He lay motionless, staring at the visitors. Children squealed with delight, bombarded adults with a mass of questions about the animal.

Under the guise of Auto, again furtively and hesitantly, tried to approach Natalie, but she seemed to be moving away, dissociating herself from him, although she did not move from her place. He took another step, another half step. With a slight movement of her shoulder, she stopped the further development of events.

- You're like this beast ... Exactly ... That's who you are! - burst out from Auto. - You don't rejoice yourself, you don't give to others.

Natalie was embarrassed, forced smile in the answer.

The beast finally opened its huge mouth and made a powerful loud yawn.

The alley from the hippo enclosure led to a playground with many attractions for children and adults..

To please the children, we decided to take them on a boat. Auto remembered his old friend working here. He was instructed to look after the guys on the ship. They returned for splashed, but happy, and shared their impressions of "seafaring" for a long time.

It was not possible to pass by the shooting gallery. Natalie knocked out a prize from a rotating roulette -

toy, cloth, nightingale, and Temo bear cub. Anechka and Avto struck past in "milk". They made fun of the losers, calling them muffs.

- Nothing, we will defeat you another time and in another place, - Anechka was upset and threatened, - right, Uncle Avto?

Auto blinked conspiratorially at her. Both success and failure were celebrated with ice cream. Let's move on, trying not to miss anything.

Auto kept regretting that he hadn't looked at the zoo for so long. Natalie was perplexed and teased him: and also an ornithologist!

The children all rushed to the rides that came across expensive. Their favorite ride was in the yellow-and-black wagons that raced up and down the serpentine steel railroad across the hillock.

Anechka squealed with delight, and Temo seemed to be afraid of falling out of the trailer.

Natalie was also pretty frightened, noticing an overturned trailer near the lawn along the highway. The car rushed to the station duty officer: is it really an accident?

- Why do you think so? - he was offended. - Can't you see they're running?

In response to Avto's questioning glance at the trailer, he explained that it had been unhooked for repair and painting, but there was no accident and no.

Natalie nevertheless hurried to take the children away, despite their obstinacy and requests.

They consoled themselves on electric cars with vertical bars resting against the mesh ceiling. True, Anechka complained that Temo was banging his car on hers. And then women's solidarity put Natalie in a car, next to Anechka, in response to which Auto got hooked on Temo. Children drove the autocars, adults only prompted and advised.

- Come on, Anya, press on them, - Natalie urged, - let them not hit us! We better hit them ourselves!

Anechka gladly responded to the calls. The car suddenly jumped out of the car on the move.

- And now, Anechka, try it yourself, - he suggested, - you and Temo, well, and I'm with Aunt Nata! Coming? Temo is waiting for you.

Anechka immediately moved. They connected the current, and the cars moved along the steel deck.

Auto again on the move sat down with Natalie, plunging her into bewilderment:

- Who asked you about it?

- How, aren't you glad? - Auto tried to be surprised.

- You could ask!

- All right, Nata! We are not children!

- It looks like you jumped into my bed. It's so tight in here.

- Well, everything has its time! - Avto blurted out recklessly.
- Now stop the car! - Natalie flashed.
- But how?
- I don't know... whatever you want!
- The car has no brakes.

Temo and Anechka overtook them and sharply knocked on the side. Startled by the impact, Natalie couldn't resist the urge to jump out, but Auto held her back and stepped on the gas.

- Going on the go, until the process of movement of autocars is completely stopped according to the safety instructions, - he laughed conciliatorily and softly.

- What unheard-of shamelessness!
- Sorry, mademoiselle!

The cars before stopping were noticeably slower.

Nata, going out, was forced to lean on Auto's prudently handed hand, while saying in an undertone:

- Do not wait!

Auto was genuinely upset:

- What are you speaking about?!

But the offended Nata was already hastily moving away, grabbing Temo by the arm, and Anechka was running after them, looking back at Auto and not understanding what had happened. Auto, dejected, wandered after them.

How quickly things change, he thought, especially with women.

The children also urged to ride them on the rotating tables attached to the slanted lattice wheel.

Nata rode alone with the children. Auto, embarrassed, was waiting for them at the starting point.

The children's faces were joyful and enthusiastic, while Natalie frowned and must have held back her tears.

"Yes," Avto admitted to himself, "either I really went too far, or she really is touchy. No, rather shy and strict. But after all, we are no longer children, and she is well aware of my serious intentions. It is not clear, too, too modest!

Already at the exit from the zoo, the children, looking down, asked for airy sugar ice cream in parting. Nata bought them.

Helping themselves, the children bombarded the manufacturer with questions about how the unit works, and peered into the metal cauldron with curiosity.



A small foreign car, a brown passenger car, drove along the curb and right next to the sidewalk and stopped, and a young man of medium height, with a slight bald patch, got out of it.

- Papa, Papa has arrived! - cried Temo and ran to meet him.

- Well, how did you spend your time here? - asked Givi Dosifeevich.

Natalie looked back at Auto and walked uncertainly towards Givi.

- Goodbye, Anechka, I hope to see you again, - she said dryly to the girl.

Givi greeted and kissed deliberately defiantly, and quietly, but audibly, and for Auto said something unusual:

- Hi dear!

- Hello, - Givi Dosifeevich repeated in confusion.

Soon he caught Auto's gaze and wanted to inquire about him, but Nata interrupted him:

- Let's go, Givi, Temo and I have been here for more than two hours and we are very tired.

- OK, - Givi Dosifeevich immediately agreed, heading to the car, - let's go.

- Uncle Auto, why didn't she say goodbye to you mi," Anechka asked when the foreign car drove off.

"I don't know," he hesitated.

"I didn't like them at all," Anechka encouraged him, "don't be upset.

When I grow up, I will not marry Temo, and you will not marry Aunt Nata.

"And how do you know that I want to marry her," said Auto, squatting down in front of the child.

- I think so!

- Do not think badly about people, and in such cases it is always better to look for the cause of their resentment towards us in ourselves. It's clear?

- It's clear, - Anechka rapped out, adding: - True, not very much. And I will still have a better fiance Temo!

- Here you are, please, the fruits of the TV! Let's run!

On the run, they ran into a woman with children, with a large exotic chick wrapped in a rag in her hands.

- Tell me, where is the directorate here? - she asked the controller at the entrance. - Do you know what kind of bird it is?

The controller showed where to go, but she could not determine what kind of chick the woman had.

- This is a bee-eater, - Avto explained and was surprised: "How did the bird get to this woman"?

“Here we are leaving, Anechka, but we haven’t seen the birds!” he complained, hoping to intrigue the child.

- Nothing, Uncle Auto, they won't fly away from the cages! We'll see! Then! And now let's go home, Teechka is waiting for us there.

## V

The modern toy pendulum, although it oscillated with a seemingly non-decreasing frequency, nevertheless had to be pushed from time to time so that it would not stop under the influence of external and internal friction forces and move in the initially set resonance.

“Everything in life requires renewal,” a thought flashed through my head, “where can we get this unfailing source of movement.”

- Mamiya Sergeevich, did you call? there was a knock at the door.

- Ah, Malkhaz, come in! Come in and sit down, - Mamiya Sergeevich invited the newcomer, rising from his work chair, seating the guest at the writing table and passing into the far corner of his spacious office.

- It will be better, - he turned off the air conditioner and a small, slightly rotating ceiling fan, - not that something is blowing strongly.

- Yes, it is more convenient with air conditioning, - Malkhaz cautiously confirmed.

“This is our life,” Mamiya Sergeevich concluded, “in the summer we starve in warmth, and in the winter we freeze in satiety, although at work we have adjusted something with heating. And in the whole city? The rich have everything - light, heat and everything you need. And the have-nots?”

- Nothing can be done, Mamiya Sergeevich, capitalism. Little by little, everyone needs to get used to it, too, - Malkhaz explained.

- Gaining something, we lose something. What if we lose more than we gain?

- Life makes its own adjustments, it has its own rules and laws of development.

- Or, on the contrary, we make our own adjustments to life, distorting its course by imitation of who will have to?

- The small, sooner or later, is absorbed by the big, and we are not able to resist it.

- Perhaps, - Mamiya Sergeevich agreed, - but the very awareness of this process also plays an important role.

- Hmm, - Malkhaz smiled, - what does it matter what is on your mind, if you are already on a spoon and will soon fall into the mouth of a predator and be swallowed by it.

- That's the crux of the program! - Exclaimed Mamiya Sergeevich. - That's just the point, that you can swallow the physical and visible, but not the spiritual and invisible, because the visible is temporary, and the invisible is eternal.

- To our misfortune, we belong to the first group, - sadly concluded Malkhaz.

Or do we consider ourselves one of them? You strive for material well-being and comfort, and willy-nilly you lose in the sphere of the spirit. What gives capitalism to humanity? Polarization of society?

- Daily bread!

- Didn't socialism give it?

- Mamiya Sergeevich! You can't forbid people to live beautifully and comfortably. In addition, today we need to somehow survive.

- Yes, both for us and for the country as a whole, - Mamiya Sergeevich agreed, rummaging through the papers spread out on the table in search of glasses.

- Here, Malkhaz, this is a list of our objects, transferred to us by the mayor's office, which remained non-privatized and are being agreed with us. Please, consider these lists and report the considerations of the department, - Mamiya Sergeevich extended his hand to Malkhaz with a small pile of papers.

- Oh, this, I think, is timely and by the way, at least somehow we will last until the winter! - Malkhaz was delighted. - In general, it is always better to get rid of the superfluous in a timely manner, and combine the useful with the pleasant.

- In general, yes, - Mamiya Sergeevich agreed, - that's how a person works, the more property he owns, the more worries and hassles he has and less peace of mind. But it is one thing to dispose of one's own property, and another - public. But how right this is, only time will tell. And yet, in any case, the final decision is not a matter of the near future. Now we need to solve our own problems. The mayor's office is drastically cutting our funding, we will have to make cuts.

- How, again? - Malkhaz was indignant.

- And what do you suggest?

- Mamiya Sergeevich, I have, I have something on my mind, - Malkhaz began hesitantly, - to be honest, I was in no hurry to tell you, but since barrels were rolled at us, then maybe ... - he hesitated.

- Well, speak, speak, do not be afraid! - Mamiya Sergeevich encouraged him.

- Maybe, after all, to win back some of the abandoned objects from the mayor's office for our future projects?

“But how,” Mamiya Sergeevich was surprised.

- I have some ideas on this score, - Malkhaz timidly pulled from the top pocket of his bobbed shirt a few sheets of paper, fastened with a metal staple.

“Interesting,” Mamiya Sergeevich scanned them briefly through his glasses. There was an unexpected call on the selector internal phone.

“Yes, Raya, I’m listening,” Mamiya Sergeevich replied.

- They came to you from the Ministry of Real Estate ... They want to talk, - the secretary's brisk voice rumbled.

- All right, let them in!

Malkhaz had already risen from the table, ready to leave.

- Yes, here's another thing, Malkhaz, - Mamiya Sergeevich handed him his notes. - Here are the lists of employees who are transferred to half the staff. Review, please, and let, just in case, look for another job. If we do not get out of the crisis, we will still have to dissolve them sooner or later.

Malkhaz hesitated and hesitated, not taking his eyes off his sheets on the table.

- All right, all right, I'll look through them, - Mamiya Sergeevich caught on, - we'll talk later.

Representatives of the ministries arrived two men and a woman with branded folders and briefcases, one of which contained a modern portable computer "Nootbook".

Malkhaz came out dejected with a pile of papers from the boss.

“Well, how is it?” Raya caught the sour expression on his face.

- Rubbish, - Malkhaz waved it off, - again cuts.

“Who will be left then?” Raya jumped up.

- I don't know, - Malkhaz shook his head, retreating to the door and ignoring the loud exclamations from the chief's office.

The visitors stayed at Mamiya Sergeevich's for almost an hour. I had to call the chief engineer:

- See, Iveri, what's going on? Everything is put up for sale, at auction. And we do not have the right to purchase our own decommissioned objects at reasonable prices. As if we did not build them and we did not support the operation of equipment and units.

- Maybe write a letter to the government or parliament?

- What's the point?

- Well, let's try.

- Useless! Do you have time now?

- And what? - Iveri looked at his watch.

- Go to City Hall.

- Let's skip, only with my car there are problems, it's hard to start, I'm exhausted today, - Iveri explained.

- Let's go, someone will find it! - Mamiya Sergeevich picked up a folder with the necessary documents.

- Mamiya Sergeevich, I want to ask you all the time, but I forget, - Iveri dragged on and faltered, going down the side attached metal stairs.

- Well?

- Murman Vasilyevich, from the sixth precinct, remember?

- Murman? As same, of course, remember. And what?

- Killed himself!

- What? - involuntarily grabbed his head and froze in surprise Mamiya Sergeevich.

- When "

- Buried yesterday.

- How? But why didn't anyone tell me?

- I found out the day before. He retired a long time ago, and everyone somehow forgot about him.

- Yes, I met him at the bird market, like a couple of years ago. he was so cheerful and joyful. It seems that he bought a crow, - Mamiya Sergeevich recalled, - he carried it to his father, he said, he asked for everything, he wanted to see how she would live for three hundred years.

- Here ... the father and the crow are alive, but he is no longer there.

- But how, why? - Mamiya Sergeevich could not calm down.

- Yes, they say that the son had problems, then it seems that he was heavily scammed, and a month before that, it turns out that his wife committed suicide.

Mamiya Sergeevich literally opened his mouth in surprise. All the way to the mayor's office he was silent in the car, except that occasionally he brushed it off with annoyance.

In the evening, the family waited for him with a watermelon.

- They had dinner without you, - his wife met him, - but they didn't cut the watermelon without you.

- In vain, - complained Mamiya Sergeevich, - the guys and I stayed in the khinkal1, or rather, in the khinkal center.

- Wow, they have lived to such a point! - Manana Georgievna exclaimed. The conversation continued around the table in the kitchen.

- Yes, their khinkali are really excellent. At the same time, they also mentioned a friend.

"Who?" the wife asked.

- Do you remember Murman from the sixth precinct?

- Yes Yes!

- Pa, this is not the one we met at the bird market by chance," Eka asked.

- The same one, daughter, the same one, - Mamiya Sergeevich lamented, - we got into such troubles at work. And you know, Eka, it turns out that his father and the crow are still alive, but he ... And the worst thing is that his wife committed suicide a month ago, and now he himself.

- Lord, have mercy, what a sin! - cried Eka. - Yes, even the church could not sing him. But why?! What prompted him to take such a step?

- There were problems with my son. Then he and himself were scammed for a large sum.

- Drug addiction, or what? - suggested Eka.

- Maybe! Who knows, they have it there!

- Yes... - drawled Eka, - just recently I was listening to the Patriarch's speech about this on the radio. He said that drug addiction is one of the most formidable weapons in the hands of the enemy of human salvation, with which he mows down people, killing soul and body.

- Yes, who immediately, and who gradually, - Nata agreed, - for the sake of momentary relief, people actually doom themselves to eternal torment.

- He also reminded, - continued Eka, - that four factors are very important for healing - the desire of the patient to be cured, faith and hope for a cure with God's help, churching and church life, and socially useful work.

- Yes, work. Patience and work will grind everything, - Mamiya Sergeevich agreed.

"Do you remember," Manana Georgievna recalled, "how some visitors, foreign investors and businessmen a few years ago actively agitated us not to start large enterprises and our own production, they promised to feed us.

- To knock out his work from the hands of a person is in fact the same as the earth from under his feet, and ultimately doom him to a martyr's life and death.

- Of course, - Manana Georgievna agreed with her husband, - work created a person and ennobles him.

"Earlier, in Soviet times, the slogan "Glory to Labor" was very fashionable," Nata recalled, "it was often carried out on banners and demonstrations. And again: "Who does not work, he does not eat."

- And all these slogans were borrowed from the church, - said Eka. - Even when the Apostle Paul said that whoever does not work should not eat.

- Well, - Nata smiled, - and in our college one employee rearranges the concepts.

Who, he says, does not eat, he may not work.

- The Lord God commanded us to get our daily bread in the sweat of our face, - reminded Eka.

if we find it in labor. Not hardworking

blessed by Him. Only hardworking. For Newton, genius is work, and for Salvador Dali, laziness has no masterpieces, ...

- Yes, but work can also be different, - Nata intervened, - physical, mental ... And it is most reasonable to combine them. Combined labor encourages, but monotonous labor tires.

"The spiritual is the most important," Eka insisted, "prayer, worship, church sacraments are important, if not the most important work.

- Yes, and besides, a person becomes limp without difficulty, and even everything he has accumulated, if any, is reduced to nothing and somehow imperceptibly disappears and disappears, - observed Mamiya Sergeevich. that it is better to work in vain than to sit idly by.

- If it weren't for this consciousness, how many would work for such pennies? For what? To stay in shape and not fall? - Manana Georgievna doubted.

"Yes, but money is also needed," Nata intervened sadly.

"A lover of money," Eka snapped at her.

"Nun," Natalie replied.

- Girls, stop teasing each other, - Manana Georgievna demanded, - a person needs everything in moderation, and what is beyond measure is from the evil one.

- So, Murman and I often recalled that at school and at the university we were taught a lot of superfluous things, well, in the sense of an unsuitable person for his further professional activity, - said Mamiya Sergeevich.

"But what about compulsory general education?" Nata intervened.

"Don't interrupt," Manana Georgievna objected to her.

- And now I understand that it is not so much the process of learning that is important, but the process of instilling in a person love for work, diligence, diligence, from which, as I think, all virtues ultimately come. Note! As a rule, a person who studies well, then works well, and an unskilled lazy person remains such forever and often becomes an inveterate drunkard.

"Diligent and industrious is the same in church life," Eka assented to her father.

- Well, this is if faith is added to diligence, - Manana Georgievna intervened, - after all, how many decent, intelligent, and hardworking people do not believe.

“This is how Murman, for example,” Mamiya Sergeevich seemed to remember, “what a decent and intelligent person and citizen he was, and how he ruined himself. No one knows who, how and when the spit will overtake.

- Here, as you can see, all these good qualities are worthless if there is no faith, - Eka explained, - the meaning of a person's life is in the salvation and resurrection of the soul, which are impossible without faith.

- This is for a believer, but for an atheist who wants to live the earthly life provided to him calmly and in contentment, it is quite enough to be a law-abiding and hardworking person, - Nata added to her, - in the end, and this is not enough.

- Not a little, - Eka agreed not quite confidently, - but not enough. A believer receives dormancy, and an unbeliever - death.

- Yes ... In general, life, of course, is not an easy thing, and that's why I'm so worried about you, - admitted Mamiya Sergeevich, - I really hope that you won't let us down and won't force you to be annoyed and worried. Mom and I are so much for you ...

“That is why it is important to know the rules of the game of life,” Manana Georgievna interrupted him, embarrassed.

The watermelon, cut in the Yugoslav style, zigzag along the equator, was not very good, but still edible.

- And the seller swore, promised and vouched with his head, - Mamiya Sergeevich was annoyed, cutting the watermelon and handing out hefty pieces.

- Watermelon should be checked by sound, - said Manana Georgievna.

- They say that watermelons-girls, which are determined by the stem, are never bad, - Nata added.

“Here,” Eka, who had just retired from the table, ran running with a piece of paper, “I recently wrote out from the journal Science and Life, which happened to be under my arm, for the eighty-fifth year, how to choose a watermelon. Look at the empirical dependence of the weight of a ripe watermelon on the length of its girth, in which “a” is the length of the watermelon's equator in centimeters, and “em” is the mass in kilograms. Further on this schedule, it is easy to determine the ripeness of a watermelon.

- My daughter is just smart, - praised Manana Georgievna.

- Love mathematics, my dears, and she will thank you, our mathematician warned us every time in her lectures, - Eka recalled.

- Yeah, now you will need to go to the market for watermelon, not only with your weights, but also with your “meter”? - Manana Georgievna laughed.

- And with this chart, and with a small calculator - Natalie smiled in turn.



- No, girls, it's easier to take on the cut, - Mamiya Sergeevich snapped.

- If there is immediately, then yes, but he will not last long, - Manana Georgievna complained.

- And you don't keep it for a long time, - suggested Mamiya Sergeevich, - there are so many of us in the house, and thank God, otherwise, you see, we'll wait for replenishment.

The girls crumpled at the mention of sore. Eka, out of habit, tightened the muscles of her nose and lips, and Natalie, slightly turning away, waved her hand.

Arbus was in full swing into use.

- Tell me, Nata, how are you doing with your ...? - Mamiya Sergeevich did not remember the name.

- Auto, - Eka hastened to help.

- Why mine? - Nata was tensely surprised.

"Whose one?" Mamiya Sergeevich asked.

- He's not mine at all, - Nata explained, - we just met through Eka, and I tried to be friends with him. But...

"What?" asked the father.

- He, unfortunately, turned out to be too harsh and shameless towards me.

- Yes, there is a little in him, - Eka agreed to herself.

- Has he really allowed himself too much? - Mamiya Sergeevich was surprised.

- Well ... a little, - Natalie looked down.

- When and where? - Manana Georgievna got excited.

- We recently, quite by chance, met at the zoo, - explained Nata.

"At the zoo?" the mother was surprised, "what were you both doing there?"

- Givi Dosifeevich asked me and left there for a walk with Timoshka, and he came with his niece Anechka.

"Well?" asked her mother impatiently.

- No ... in principle, I was not bad with him and the children, but he is in too much of a hurry in his intentions, even if they are good.

- Ah, - Manana Georgievna drawled, - this is a typical disease of all men. Your father was also a hasty man in this matter.

- Is it? - Mamiya Sergeevich objected. - I remember something the other way around.

- Stop it, Mamiya, - Manana Georgievna did not consider it necessary to go into details.

- Business, know, in what? - Eka has brought clarity to a question. - In the fact that Givi Dosifeevich is still following her, drawing her with tentacles into his affairs,

problems, family. She communicates with him almost every day, and with Avto less often, and mostly via the Internet, so it's easy to guess who has the initiative...

- It's none of your business, - Natalie protested, as if she had stepped on a corn, - you better look after your Levanchik so that he is not taken away from under your nose. Last time I saw him in the city with a very pretty girl.

- Oh, to your health, I don't mind, - Eka quickly retorted with a slight annoyance. The topic was delicately suspended by Mamiya Sergeevich:

- Okay, don't quarrel, it's not worth it, my mother and I really count on your prudence. Look again, time will show and tell everything. Well, if you need our help, we are right here!

The girls expressed tacit consent.

The watermelon was coming to an end when the news started on TV. They talked about the next action of the recently revived new movement "Kmara" and the responses of activists from other political parties and movements. They demanded that all international norms and standards be observed in the forthcoming parliamentary elections in the near future.

The atmosphere was aggravated by the fact that many were strongly in favor of reducing the number of seats in parliament.

In this regard, in order to avoid falsification of elections, juggling of ballots, for the first time an innovation was introduced, proposed by foreign assistants to the organization of elections - marking each voter who came to the polling station with a special marking mixture that could stay on the voter's finger for a whole day.

- Of course, this is both good and bad, - Mamiya Sergeevich lamented.

- Oh, Mamiya, leave it, for God's sake, - Manana Georgievna waved it off, - as if you don't know that they will still find other ways to achieve their goal.

- We, for example, in college, many are for labeling, - Natalie said, - especially since it has already been studied for safety for the human body and will prevent at least major fraud.

- And in the church, the parishioners do not have a unanimous opinion on this matter, - Eka noticed, - our father, for example, also does not welcome marking, says that they have no right to touch the human body.

From behind the window to the street came, at short intervals, four powerful explosions in a row. And a little later, the sirens of fire engines, one after another, drive up to the explosion site.

On the opposite corner of the street from their house, a private household goods store caught fire, which had to be extinguished for a very long time.

The rest of the evening was spent discussing what had happened with the residents of the houses adjacent to the territory of the store and its warehouses.

Before going to bed, everyone went about their daily business.

Manana Georgievna fussed about in the kitchen. Eka delved into reading theological literature, Natalie looked through lists and tables taken from work.

Mamiya Sergeevich kemar in front of the TV, waiting for the twelve o'clock news at night, after which he was the last to go to the bedroom.

His quiet conversation with his wife, already falling asleep, was suddenly interrupted by a strange chirp. He listened, but sleep overpowered him. Twitter repeated itself.

- Who is this, mother, twittering here? Are you not? muttered Mamiya Sergeevich half-awake.

The chirping didn't stop.

He pushed back the covers from his wife's face. Surprised:

- Why are you smiling? Twitter has intensified.

- Not you, therefore! - he exclaimed in astonishment, listened, looked in the direction from which, it seemed to him, the sounds were coming.

- Chzhik, - asked the parrot, bought at the bird market, - what are you doing here?

- The girls refused him, - explained Manana Georgievna.

- Why? - asked Mamiya Sergeevich.

- They say that he peeps when they change clothes, and they are embarrassed.

- What is this nonsense?

- Yes, imagine, you need to buy him a girlfriend.

- Girlfriend! Girlfriend! - Picked up the parrot.

- Just like in the movie "Amarcord", just think, huh? - Mamiya Sergeevich was amazed. - And what have I got to do with it?

- Chzhik, shut up, you don't know what you're asking. There are so many troubles and troubles with them that you will lose peace, the most precious thing we have.

Manana Georgievna could hardly contain her laughter.

"Let me take him out into the living room or into the kitchen," suggested Mamiya Sergeevich.

- It's useless, it will get worse, he can't stand being alone.

- And here he, in your opinion, will not peep?

"I won't, I won't," the parrot promised plaintively.

- Okay, cover him with that big towel, - agreed Manana Georgievna.

Having covered the cage, Mamiya Sergeevich just collapsed onto the bed and instantly began to snore. Through his sleep he heard a prayer:

- Open me, I won't tell anyone.

## VI

"... didn't God choose the poor of the world..."

(Iak 2:5)

A small steel trolley with slatted walls rolled with a roar and a creak along the asphalt pavement of the yard, knocking out a peculiar melody with the blows of glass on glass.

"We accept bottles and other glass containers," the cart driver shouted several times.

"It will be necessary to lubricate the wheels," he thought. And what was to be done "How to earn, even a penny, but your own. At least it's better than stealing, speculating, or, God forbid, picking trash cans. After all, there is nothing to look at these days. I wonder how long this polarization of society will continue." Obviously, until some kind of explosion. However, it is said that patience is the mother of all blessings. And, besides, the Lord usually does not send wealth to his slaves that is dangerous for a person. But you still have to earn your piece of bread?

- How much do you take glass containers, "a female voice was heard from the balcony.

- For half the price at the reception points! - He looked up.

- Look how smart you are! - the woman was indignant. - Are there many smart people like you, your father has?

- There are no people like me, I'm the only one with him, - the guy answered in an undertone.

- Well, okay, so be it, I'll go down, since you are so frank, - the woman complained, - wait a bit.

The guy rolled his "wheelbarrow" to a wooden bench in the middle of the yard, sank down on it, fumbled in his pocket for a crumpled pack of "Astra", straightened it out and, having driven a cigarette into a small holder, found that he had nothing to light it with.

With an unlit cigarette in his mouthpiece, he leaned forward and peered at his shoes, which were kept on his feet literally "on parole."

"I'll buy new ones from the first paycheck."

Arrived in time with glass containers in cellophane bags and a woman from the balcony.

"Here, take what you can, I'll take the rest back," she put the bags on the bench.

The guy buried his nose in them and began to extract bottles and cans one by one.

"Well, how much did it wind up there," the woman inquired.

- Now, - the guy took out a microcalculator from his shirt pocket.

- So, it means that there were so many bottles ... so many cans ... In total, you are entitled to ninety-five kopecks, but I will give you a ruble, because I really liked you as a person.

- What are you talking about? Thank you for such a wonderful morning compliment, - the woman smiled, - now it is such a rarity.

"Yes, today much of the former use goes into the book of rarities," the bottle collector agreed, holding out a worn-out ruble to the woman.

"Don't say," she agreed, "people don't look like people!" Wild and mad! Masters of cursing and "barking" at your neighbor, but to say a kind word ... Tell me, please, do you not accept broken glass?

- No, madam, only glass containers!

"Sorry, I got so many. The children are so ruthless, they beat them mercilessly, and you go out to scold them or make a remark, just then parents appear and a mountain for them. I wonder how they find out so instantly?

"The children have also deteriorated now, madam," the collector stated, "there is no one to look after them and educate them.

- Their spiritual upbringing is an endless game of football. Well, it's still at least some benefit for them. Well, what about cards, joker? What does it give? And how do you not get tired of the same thing every day, you just wonder!? And mat, obscene?!

What else can they do if there is nothing else to do?

- How is it nothing? Look around! Ruin and desolation all around.

- That's what money is for.

"I don't think so," the woman raised her hand, "not everything is done with money alone. What about a good deed, a good word and a good soul? They sometimes do more than money.

The conversation would probably have gone on longer if, fortunately, the thrushmaid had not appeared, and she took her customer away.

I need her empty demagogu!?" the assembler muttered under his breath.

“Could you throw the matches out of the window for me when you get home?”  
he asked the woman.

She turned halfway to the milkmaid and looked in amazement at the collector.

- Well, - she agreed after a short pause, - only now I'll manage with matsoni.

- Thank you, - thanked the collector and, returning to the bench, resumed his cries:

- We accept empty bottles and other glass containers!

- Leah, where is the glass container? After all, we have a lot of it?

- Leave me alone, Ramaz, let me sleep!

- Well, tell me where you put the bags, and sleep to your health.

- Leave me alone, look for yourself.

- What are you kicking, interesting to know?

You snored all night and I didn't sleep for a minute.

- And who bothered you?

- Did not interfere, but simply did not help me in what I asked you to.

Yes, but I didn't refuse.

- He did not refuse, but blurted out and fell asleep. Back off, they tell you!

"If you don't stop kicking now, I'll tie your feet."

- Ramaz, are you human or not human? Let me get some more sleep before the kids wake up.

- Ah! And when you mock me in the morning, okay?

- Enough for you!

- Or you, or glass containers, choose! - Ramaz delivered an ultimatum.

“Get away from me, there she is, there, in the closet,” Leah finally shrugged off him.

“I will never wish any man to marry a “horse” according to the horoscope,” thought Ramaz, getting up and heading towards the closet. But then she rushed at him with barking Bug.

- Leah, get this animal away from me right now, otherwise I can't vouch for myself.

- Phew, doesn't let, well, doesn't let you sleep! Bug, come to me!

The bug, snarling and barking at Ramaz, ran to Leah and crawled under her bed.

Even when he was walking out the door with his bags, the calling voices of awakened children could be heard.

“Poor Leah,” Ramaz complained to himself, “didn't let her sleep, although what difference does it make, the children woke her up a few minutes later,” he consoled himself a little later.

- Don't be in a hurry to hand over the glass containers, Ramaz Mikhailovich, if you have a lot of them, - advised a female voice, - he accepted me for only half the price.

- I don't care, Roza Grigorievna, I want to get rid of her as soon as possible. And besides, remember the Soviet proverb: "A penny saves a ruble"?

- And how, of course, I remember. Today I bought two cans of matsoni with this ruble. In general, it is surprising that the country collapsed a long time ago, but its slogans are alive.

- Well, go, all right, I only ask you, give him these matches, - she handed the boxes to the neighbor.

"I haven't seen you for a long time, Ramaz Mikhailovich?" Rosa Grigorievna complained to her neighbor, pleased with the fact that she had freed herself from glass containers, "has something happened to you?"

"How does she know?" Ramaz thought with surprise. "A clairvoyant, or what?"

"Yes, there are minor health problems," Ramaz agreed with her.

- What are you talking about? Ramaz Mikhailovich, you need to go somewhere to rest.

At least not for long!

- What are you talking about? Is it with my family?

- Nothing! The family will somehow endure, after all, after all, she needs you safe and sound.

- Yes, if I tell Leah about this, she will faint.

- There will be someone ... let, say, your relatives help a little ...

- Yes, I have probably not gone anywhere to rest for about fifteen years, except for my honeymoon trip.

- You see, wedding wedding, and single - single?

- What are you implying?

- That's it! I recently read that it is necessary to maintain a balance of positive and negative emotions in a person. And as soon as an imbalance sets in, his sores immediately begin to crawl out, if he doesn't get sick at all, God forbid, seriously, - the neighbor tried to recover.

"Wow, how smart"? - Ramaz was surprised to himself.

"Ramaz, please go get some bread, otherwise it won't be enough for the morning," Leah's voice asked from the upper platform, "I'll throw money to you from the window."

- Don't, it's enough that I'll help you out, but leave your bag, - Ramaz agreed with relief, mentally thanking his wife for rescuing her neighbor from society.

- Well, okay, Ramaz Mikhailovich, go, I won't detain you any longer, - Roza Grigoryevna herself agreed, - just tell me, don't mosquitoes overwhelm you?

- Yes, no, it seems, - Ramaz answered in surprise.

- Oh, what are you talking about? And I was directly seized, bastards, - Rosa Grigorievna complained, - and in general, many complain. It's strange that you don't care.

- You are worried because you are the sweetest in the stairwell, - Ramaz made a compliment.

- Yes, right, - Roza Grigorievna waved it off, - you know, this year they are as healthy as ever. Apparently a new breed. You need to kill only on the fly, and if they sit down, you beat them, you beat them, and there's no point!

- Nu-u! - Ramaz was surprised. - You bastards!

- Yes ... even some, - Rosa Grigorievna agreed, - they even came here from the sanitary and epidemiological station, examined our entire house!

- Well?

- They determined that water had accumulated in that last entrance in the basement. Until they get it out, nothing will work.

- Well, okay, Rosa Grigoryevna, they are like that, they don't want it to happen. And I ran, otherwise Leah was waiting.

- Well, in peace, I'll go to my place to read!

- To read! And what are you reading, Roza Grigoryevna? - Ramaz was intrigued. - Wow, he reads!

Roza Grigorievna looked around:

- You won't tell anyone? Do you promise?

- Promise!

- Not that they will say that Roza Grigorievna has survived from her mind.

- But who would dare such a thing, Rosa Grigorievna?

- Shh, - she lowered her voice, - Emmanuel Kant, "The Philosophy of Knowledge."

- Well?! Blimey! Well done, Rosa Grigoryevna, by God!

- Yes, imagine, - the neighbor explained in a half-whisper, - a very interesting book.

If you want, I can borrow it when I'm done.

- No, Rosa Grigoryevna, thank you, I don't have time to read. Better you then, somehow, on occasion, briefly tell me the content.

- Yeah, come to tea sometime, I'll tell you. Only this, of course, will not have the same effect as if you read it yourself.

- Yes, but...



- I know, this is our trouble today. People have stopped reading altogether or read very little. Yes, and why, when they can get everything on a silver platter from a TV, radio, player ... And no one thinks about what programs they show all day long. Corrupt society and, most importantly, young people, with all sorts of serials that stupefy, push to sinful thoughts and actions. But everything eventually comes and leads to the result. And sooner or later this will turn into a boomerang for society.

- And what do you suggest?

- Refuse such transfers. Television should control what passes through it.

“Are you advocating censorship, Roza Grigorievna?” Why are you! Control this product flow! Both his own and incoming from -abroad! In addition, all this can be obtained on a video recorder, individual, own, which is now completely fashionable. And on the internet in general...

- Oh, no, Ramaz Mikhailovich, you are wrong here. If television is state-owned, then it should take care of the cleanliness and health of the nation. And if a single person deals with himself, this is his concern and grief.

- But after all someone else's grief does not happen?

- That's it! Therefore, a correct state line is needed to protect the people and the nation from all filth. And in general, I am amazed why we should be allowed to corrupt ourselves, instead of returning others to the origins of human values, purity, decency, chastity ... They pull us into the pool, and we succumb, and not ourselves try to pull them out of the pool. At the end of the day, not all money decides, but the extra ones generally corrupt.

- I will please you, Roza Grigorievna. Now the church is doing a lot of work in this direction. It is said, where sin comes, let grace be added there. The youth and many in general were drawn, of course, to the church. But her efforts alone are not enough.

- Well, okay, Roza Grigorievna, I ran.

- Yeah, okay, go in peace, and carefully cross the street.

- Ramaz, well, where have you been for so long! - Liya was indignant at the window, - the children are waiting hungry, and you are sharpening your fringes? What, I wonder? - flew down to him bag.

Ramaz ran to the super-shop and recalled with horror the previous conversation.

“That's it,” he thought, “work all your life, suffer for the sake of children, raise them, take care, educate, and where what kind of scythe will overtake them is unknown. It's scary to live in such a country. Where is better? Everywhere is equally bad. Lord, deliver us from corruption and destruction, and from the misfortunes of the enemy of the salvation of mankind. It will be necessary to go to church today,

pray, light candles. Someone he knew said, he tried to remember, that the devil, like a roaring lion, was looking for someone to swallow from the gap. Very scary!

Already in the yard, another mobile wheelbarrow caught his eye, the owners from it were selling onions, potatoes, and eggplants laid in rows in bags.

Loaded with purchases, Ramaz hurriedly asked Leah to let him go to work as soon as possible.

"I should have talked less with Rosochka," Leah quipped, already wrapped up in morning fuss with the children and the kitchen, "and what kind of conversations do you have with her like that?"

- Come on, Leah, she's old.
- But a woman, and also a widow!
- Oh, yes, you!
- At least feed the bug.
- And who will walk her?

The beetle wagged its little tail pleadingly.

"Ah, you cunning!" Ramaz shook his finger at her.

- Still need to pick up and carry the bag, which I prepared and put in the front.
- What else is it?
- How, you don't know? The one I cooked all day yesterday for your father.
- Leave it, Leah, I can't drag her to work?
- And what? It is not very heavy, a minibus there and a minibus to Nino's house, without any transfers.
- Nino probably cooked too. I think it would be redundant.
- And what to do with it? Don't throw it out the window. I should have warned you at least yesterday.
- Let's leave it to ourselves. There are few of us, right?
- No, Ramaz, take it anyway. Mikhail Davidovich will be delighted, in the end the attention is worth a lot.
- Okay, okay, it's useless to argue with you. And you're not going to Nino"
- What about children?
- Well, I'll come and pick you up, at the same time you won't have to carry your bag.
- Yes that you, Ramaz, where with such collective farm?
- Father will be pleased to see everyone.
- I know! But today I can't. I ran out of breath, Ramaz, completely exhausted.

What do you think, I'm iron? Yes?

- Well, well ... calm down, okay, let it be as you want, - Ramaz lightly embraced and patted Leah on the shoulder.

- You do not want to help me at all! - Leah was touched and immediately burst into tears.

- Well, why not? I'm doing what I can!

- What can I do! This is not enough. You need what you need, - Leah explained, brushing away her tears. - I wanted a lot of children, a lot of children! And what do they need a lot, did not think about it?

- Okay, Leah, let's not quarrel!? - suggested Ramaz, deep down wondering at women's logic.

- Wash your hands and have breakfast! - Leah shouted to the children. - And you still have a snack. You will succeed!

Ramaz believed that a person should earn breakfast first, and only then eat. In addition, after a morning meal, he felt lethargic, sometimes even at work he was sleepy. And not having breakfast, peppy, much more nimble and efficient. However, when and how is not always the same.

## VII

A dark green Niva passenger car, having emerged from under the bridge, turned to the right and took off along a steep and not long climb onto the highway leading to the airport.

The saloon radio was playing a popular radio show. Each other was replaced by pop and foreign songs, interspersed with news bulletins.

- Ruben, switch, for God's sake - asked the driver sitting next to him - I can not stand these jokes!

- Why are you, Avto Mikhailovich! - Ruben was surprised. - They are doing a great program!

- Switch, switch, - Avto insisted, - and add gas, otherwise we'll be late. The driver didn't mind.

Soon they were overtaken by a dark-colored foreign car and a hand sticking out of it made them a sign to stop on the side of the road when overtaking.

- Who are they? - Ruben jumped up. - What do they want?

- Stop at the curb - smiled Auto.

- Yes? - Ruben protested. - And if it's rackets! The hitch did not go unnoticed by the pursuers.

- Stop, - insisted Auto.

Three young men in civilian clothes who got out of the foreign car asked to see their documents.

- "Bird life" means. Since the life of a bird, then you fly like birds, right? - One of the three asked Avto. - It's good to be on the bird's rights!

- Sorry, brother, we are in a hurry to the airport, - Auto justified, - we meet guests.

- Well well! Come on, come with me to the car.

The second one was already checking the documents of Ruben, who was arguing with him furiously, in a foreign car.

- The driver says that they are going to the airport to meet some cargo from Stockholm, - Ruben's interrogator explained.

"So you are going to meet the cargo or guests, finally," the interrogator Avto stubbornly solicited.

"Here's a talker, a" - thought Avto about Ruben. - Who pulled him by the tongue? Now there's no point in locking up, is there?

- Both that, and another, - Avto has explained to the interrogator.

- Look, he deftly got out, - he was amazed, hastily flipping through the documents of Auto. - And what kind of cargo? - asked a little later.

- Special cargo sent to us by the Greenpeace organization for a mixed expedition along the route of the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline. Understandably? In that part of the territory that passes through our country, - gave an excessive explanation of Avto.

- And who oversees your work, and who are you by profession?

- Isn't it written there? Ornithologist. I take care of migratory birds. And the work is supervised by one of the academic institutions. Under the appropriate grant.

- Ah... on a grant? Understandable, understandable...

- And who are you, in fact, yourself? - asked now Auto. The interrogator showed Auto his ID.

- It's clear, - Auto calmed down, - but what did we do wrong?

- Nothing. Just an operational raid, the current verification of documents.

- We have all the documents in order, - Avto exclaimed with conviction, fumbled in his thin black folder and pulled out another not thick pile of documents.

- And the driver? With you? Or did you hire him as a taxi?

- With me, - Auto answered in surprise, - he is one of the strongest teriologists in the country.

- Yes? What is it?!" the interrogator asked.

- Handles small rodents.

"But you said that you are ornithologists and deal with migratory birds."

- I'm an ornithologist, and Rubeneriologist.

- His name is Ruben?

- Yes, why?! Listen, I beg you, we are not robbers-violators, we are in a hurry to get to the airport on business. Our plane has arrived a long time ago, and anything can happen to our special cargo without supervision, and you will be responsible for this to our leadership, the director of the institute, to whom I am obliged to report what happened if you do not release us in time.

- No one is afraid of your director and superiors, and nothing will happen to your cargo either. Wait a little...

- And what do the teriologists do? - the questions continued.

- Small predators. And what? - Avto pricked up his ears. - "Go and explain to them ..." - I thought to myself.

- And what is the connection between you?

- The most direct and close. Birds feed on rodents.

- What about rodents?

- Even smaller rodents!

- That is, birds carry what rodents do? And themselves too?

- Well, if you want, you can understand it that way. And what?

- Is it clear. You will have to come with us to the branch.

- What kind of news? - Auto was indignant.

- I assure you, it won't be long.

It was pointless to resist, and Auto and Ruben followed the foreign car.

Having lost a couple of hours to travel to and from the department and to sort things out, they finally got to the airport and taxied to the baggage compartment of the airport terminal, where two employees of the institute were already waiting for them.

- Tamila has been waiting for us, probably, - Ruben pointed to the new airport building designed according to modern international standards. - What slender legs she still has! What about Mikhailovich?

- Ruben, stop it, - Auto demanded, - what time is it!

- And what, just right! She only gets so naked in summer, you won't see her like that at other times of the year. Why am I married? - Ruben was jokingly annoyed.

- Not what? - Picked up his tone Auto.

- And then he would start to drive up to her.

So she is married and with a child.

- It's already gone!

- When?

- Recently. What, don't you know?

- No, how should I know, - Avto justified himself, - if I don't ask anyone about it and nobody tells me anything about it. So what, get ah, already for the second time?

- Yes, - Ruben confirmed, - the girl is unlucky, that's all! A chrysalis is a chrysalis, and the character, they say, is quarrelsome, very obstinate!

- So why are you like this?

- Yes, I would get along!

Self-confident what? - Thought Auto.

- Auto, they arrested our cargo! Due to the insufficiency of admission documents, a thin young woman of medium height, in a short colored cotton dress, rushed to them with complaints.

- Now let's figure it out, Tamila! Calm down and don't be nervous, - Avto answered her. - And where is Gela?

- He's with the deputy head of the airport. Achieves easing of penalties for cargo.

The arrested cargo was transferred to a special room, and Gela was spinning at its door, not losing sight of the boxes.

- Mikhailovich, hello, - he greeted joyfully, - do you see what they are doing?

Tamila told you? My arguments and documents were not enough, otherwise the cargo would have been at the institute long ago, and you would not have been disturbed. Especially since something like happened to you?!

- Well, why not, - objected Avto, - I told Tamila on my mobile phone that you should wait for me here.

- Yes, but... still. Time is also money, Gela insisted.

- Wait here, - asked Avto, - I'll go alone to the head of the terminal and explain everything to him. And I will present the necessary documents. Ruben, you stay too...

- Why, Mikhailovich! What, am I bothering you? Negro, or what? - protested Ruben.

- I asked you not to sunbathe at sea, - Auto looked closely at him. Tamila, barely holding back her laughter, exchanged glances with the smiling Gela.

- Wa, "es inch balika"1, - Ruben drawled resentfully, - you know, Mikhailovich, that I am such things "than sirum"2.

- Ruben, I'm joking, - Avto reassured him, - simply, the less people are explained by the boss, the better. Believe me.

- As you wish, Mikhailovich, - Ruben agreed, - but it's not my fault. Yes, and these cops! How impudently they behaved, eli3.

While Avto was explaining himself to his superiors, Ruben was smoking a cigarette at the outer entrance to the building and muttering something under his breath in displeasure.

Tamila and Gela were waiting for him in the hall of the city's main air terminal, luxuriously renovated by foreigners.

Finally, smiling Auto left the office together with the head of the terminal, and together they went to the next wing.

Tamila and Reuben followed them.

"Where is Gela?" asked Auto, half turning around.

- I went to the toilet, Mikhailovich. - Ruben gritted through his teeth.

- He's always on time!

"He waited and endured too long," smiled Tamila.

- So, Ruben, quickly to the parking lot, hire a small truck and drive it closer to the luggage compartment, - Avto ordered.

- Uh-huh! - Tamila nodded her head and turned back. Ruben was already heading for the exit.

An hour later, a dark green Niva was paving the way for a truck a few meters behind it with several, larger and smaller wooden boxes of cargo in the back.

Gela was sitting in the cab of the truck. Tamila moved into Reuben's car.

At a busy section of the highway, a familiar foreign car overtook them and for some time walked side by side, side to side.

Her passengers looked at them - then to Tamila, then to Ruben.

- They get high on me, Mikhailovich, I them ... - Ruben scolded in Armenian.

- No, - explained Avto, - they do not get high on you, but stare at Tamilochna. Tamila looked around curiously.

The car pulled itself forward, towards the foreign car, and even waved its hand, after which the foreign car picked up speed, bypassed them, and soon completely disappeared from sight ...

Auto, already out of Ruben's car, sent over his mobile phone to Eric, his new friend from Stockholm, whom he met recently, at the world conference of ornithologists in Barcelona, gratitude for the special cargo sent to them, which they needed so much, without which the upcoming mixed expedition could have failed and the fulfillment of an important task on time grant.

- Stop at the underpass, - he asked, having finished, - I'll go down to the subway. Well, I hope you get the cargo safe and sound.

- How? You will not go to the institute with us?" Tamila was surprised.

- No, Tamilochka! Unfortunately, I can't, - Avto apologized, - today is my father's birthday. We are meeting with my sister. Ruben knows and will tell everything.

"Then I'll move forward," Tamila exclaimed with childlike joy.

- Ruben, Tamilochka, - asked Avto, - please unpack very carefully and check their inventory with ours. I have all the necessary documents in my folder. See do not lose! Then, Reuben, put it on my table. Find the guys, they will help to carry.

- Well, how can I count on you? - he exclaimed in his heart, noticing how Ruben's gaze now and then runs away from him to the slender legs half-naked above the knees of Tamila sitting next to him.

- Ruben, look at me! - he warned. - I'll call later. Ruben nodded sadly.

- "Use" will be in order, chief! We'll do as you say.

Auto did not understand from Tamila's reaction whether she had caught the hints or not, but just in case, he decided to warn her too.

- Tamila, look, stay away from him! To which she replied with a laugh.

Auto slammed the door of Ruben's departing Niva, and, a little more post He came and waited for the truck with the cargo, gestured to Gela, who was sitting next to the driver, on the clock when he should make a phone call.

Gela nodded in agreement, but not without surprise.

Leisurely descending into the underground passage, Auto turned and merged with the flow moving into the subway past numerous small home-grown stalls with a variety of goods.

"It was always crowded here anyway," he thought, "and those stalls too! Don't go straight." On the platform, he waited for the train for a long time, occasionally looking around.

- So I finally caught you! - He suddenly exclaimed at point-blank range, approaching a woman of about forty who was standing nearby, deeply thoughtful.

- Auto?! Long time no see! What fates? How did you get here?

- Hello, Lysiko! Hello, my dear Liza, - kissed her Auto.

As they waited for the train, they exchanged warm pleasantries, common between old classmates who had not seen each other for several long years. We walked through all our classmates, commemorated all the living and the dead, learned from each other a lot of new things about personal plans, successes in life.

Lysiko complained:

- Not one job had to change. At first, they are accepted with great joy, politely, treated with respect, and then they begin to look askance.

- Why is this, Lisa? - Curious Auto.



- Well, why, if a gynecologist works nearby, charging one hundred to one hundred and fifty lari for abortions, and I do them for thirty to forty. Clients, of course, run away from him to me ... from here all the troubles begin.

"Fuu," Auto drawled, thoughtfully, he wanted to offer her something like something sensible, but he caught himself in time and transferred the advice to a different plane:

- In general, you need to tie up with this case, Lisa. It's a crime," he said carefully.

What am I supposed to do to support my family. So many operations in a row had to do son ...

- Refuse. Go to church, ask God for help and forgiveness. He will help put his son on his feet... Well, and then... you have such a bright head, you are well versed in other areas of medicine, that's enough for you.

"By the way, I once spoke on this subject with church people," Liza justified herself, "and they told me that this does not concern them.

"What nonsense she is talking about," Auto was indignant to himself, realizing the futility of his motives, and, in order not to break loose and break relations, he switched to new questions.

- Well, do you accumulate a lot of clients per appointment? That is, sorry, clients.

- Many, among them there are also clients.

- What? .. - Auto's eyes popped into his forehead. "That's exactly what we were missing."

- Yes, yes, - Lisa confirmed, - well, husbands, fathers or sons come for advice if their wives, daughters or mothers are ill or shy about something. And we had another such case in the clinic. The son of an eighty-year-old patient now and then dragged her urine for analysis, and since she was an old railway worker and passed through the first category of diseases, she was supposed to do tests for free.

Once he somehow needed an analysis, he decided to take advantage of his mother's benefits "on the sly".

The girls from the laboratory were amazed that at her age and during her illnesses, spermatozoa were found in the urine.

Auto laughed so loudly that he drew the attention of those waiting for the train. Lisa smiled too.

- In general, of course, one has to do one's professional work not without mental pain, looking at young girls, and sometimes even teenagers, - Lisiko sighed.

- And they go as if nothing had happened ... with such ease and simplicity, as if pulling out a tooth, otherwise it's even easier. And as once they blaze a path, then

they will become frequent. I remember that an elderly man brought a schoolgirl himself, and then she got so comfortable that ...

"But this is a criminal offense," Auto exploded.

- Oh, leave, please, who now remembers this ...

The conversation continued on the train, albeit with less vivacity, right up to the station, where they said goodbye and dispersed.

The car, thinking, walked along the main square of the city, turned right at the mayor's office and went up the hill.

On the opposite side of the street, I noticed an old acquaintance of mine, a woman in her late forties, walking with a white poodle on a leash.

- Hello, Barbara, - he ran across the pavement.

"Hi," they kissed affectionately on the cheeks.

- What are you doing?

- Walking with the dog, as you can see. Well, where are you?

- Yes, that's all business and business - tried to dissuade Auto.

- Not married, by any chance?

- Well no...

- And what?

- No time. And you didn't get married?

- Also no.

- What are you? What a good girl, and you're wasting your time.

- This may be good for you, but you ask others. Reminds me of old mutual friends.

Barbara tried to catch his eye, or even thought, and Auto successfully and prudently turned away.

They seemed to be attracted to each other, but Avto believed that they should have drawn a conclusion from this about fifteen years ago, when she made a mistake in choosing and, as they say, did not bet on him. Everything can repeat itself in the same fifteen years, but certainly not now.

"Interesting philosophy, a" – at he knew in his mind to himself. - And now I have another in my mind?

"Let's walk a little?" suggested Barbara.

- I don't have much time, - admitted Avto, glancing at his watch, but nevertheless, to some extent, he responded and succumbed.

We approached the window of a store with a window sill-counter from which dairy products were sold.

- How much cheese? - asked Barbara. Auto, bending down, got acquainted with her poodle.

"The lady with the dog... how cute both of them," flashed through his mind.

"Let's go," Barbara returned from the counter.

- Aren't we going to buy cheese?

- No... It is very tasty and expensive. We eat it at home in one sitting. Once, and finished off with my brother and mother. You could at least invite me somewhere.

- Oh, Barbara, I said, there's no time.

- Well, not now, when there will be time, - Barbara agreed peacefully. - Do you have the same phone?

"Yes," Auto lied.

- You never call me, so at least I'll be there sometimes.

- Don't, Barbara, please, don't bother!

- You don't want me to call you?

- I have no time, busy up to my neck!

- Well OK, whatever you want. But if there is an opportunity, keep me in mind... Maybe you will be able to send students. I don't want to advertise in the newspaper, so as not to pay taxes later. And so, according to acquaintances ... please ...

- Okay, I'll keep in mind - agreed Auto.

- Which way are you going now? Auto pointed.

- Who are you going to?

- To a woman.

- To what, I know everyone there?

"Well, and impotunity," - Auto was surprised to himself.

Auto finally said goodbye to the half-offended Barbara. Without ceasing to resent her assertiveness, he entered the building of the drama theater.

- Who do you want, young man? - the watchman asked, a thin old man of about eighty.

- Otar Parmenovich, - Avto answered in confusion, surprised by the age of the watchman. "This is what need does to a person!"

"Call him on the phone, I don't have the right to let anyone into the theater building without his permission," he heard.

No one answered the call to the number from the list on the watchman's desk.

Probably got out...

Or maybe he left altogether?

- No, I should have seen it! True, even though the theater has an emergency exit, but why should it use it when here it is the main one, the main one. Several artists were talking nearby.

- In the evening, a rehearsal ... He said that he would be present.

- What time is the rehearsal? - asked Auto.

- At seven, probably.

- No, at seven I, unfortunately, can not.

- Misha, - the interlocutor called, - there is no my role at the evening rehearsal. So I'll go to the dressing room, have a drink with the guys. If they ask, I'm not here anymore.

- Understandably!

- And on what issue do you actually need it? - the watchman asked.

- More than two years ago, I offered him my play. After talking with him, I showed it to more than one of your screenwriters. They liked it. Corrected, polished. Maybe, I think, Otar Parmenovich will still stage it in his theater?

- Of course, most likely, - the watchman suggested, - why disagree, if the scriptwriters read, polished and approved.

"If"? thought Auto,

- And what is your play called? - the janitor asked curiously.

"What does it matter," thought Auto with annoyance, but added aloud, "Nightingales of the monastery garden."

- A good name, - thinking, the watchman noticed. - Nightingales, nightingales, do not sing, do not ... - he sang almost sadly.

- Why is that, father? - Asked Auto.

- Yes, there is such a sad song, - he explained, - nightingales, nightingales, do not sing anymore, nightingales ... the Salaspils children's camp, who saw it, did not forget ... This is about the children's concentration camp that the Nazis had in the Baltics during Great Patriotic War...

The watchman thought:

- Yes, we experienced a lot then ... during the war.

- The war touched our generation too, - added Avto.

- So this is compared to that one! Although the war, whatever it may be, is still a war, with its monstrous rules and laws. People can't get along with each other... why?

- Eh, father, - drawled Auto, - the whole history of mankind is the history of wars, and even more so in our time, when bitterness has reached such a limit ... So I decided to write a play about love.

"About love ... that's good," the watchman agreed, "it is necessary for people, and even more so for the younger, rising generation, to instill this feeling, often to remind about it ...

Auto waited for forty minutes, and then unsuccessfully searched for Otar Parmenovich, who had evaporated in an unknown direction.

Convinced of the futility of his attempts, he left the theater building in thought and headed towards the confectionery, where his old friend worked, in the past the head teacher of the secondary school, which he once graduated from, and in high school took

active in public life. Their class became very friendly with the then young teacher, who had just been sent by the Ministry of Education.

Then we were friends with guys from schools in other cities. Went to visit each other in whole classes. Class Avto went on excursions, went hiking, and the young head teacher tried not to infringe on the desires and initiatives of high school students in any way.

Many years have passed since then. Auto had not seen her for a long time until recently, before one of the beautiful evenings she did not move towards me on one of the streets and did not remind herself of herself.

“What, you don’t recognize old acquaintances?” she asked, surprised and smiling.

Auto recognized her then with difficulty. We didn't talk for long then.

- Over there, you see, - she pointed with her hand, - I have a small candy store called Leo. Ask, find, come in when there is time. Let's sit and chat.

Auto could not but respond, especially since today he needed it.

In a cozy candy store, he immediately noticed a familiar figure at a small work table with a pretty telephone and a microcalculator on a pile of scribbled and scribbled papers.

“Almost has not changed,” he noted to himself, “the same pretty, charming, radiant, perhaps a little. How wonderful that everything is subject to time, except for the human soul, - lingered at the entrance, watching the usual life of the confectionery, Avto. - And the same energetic and, apparently, with a twinkle. Effective woman.

The meeting of old acquaintances was extremely warm with hugs and kisses.

- With whom are you, Tiniko? - a young, plump girl, a saleswoman, was curious.

- This is my student, - Tiniko said with joy and pride, - Auto Chaduneli, a medalist of our school.

“Wow, who would have thought,” the saleswoman was surprised in an undertone.

Tina seated Auto at her work table, next to her, putting aside the microcalculator and the stationery book with entries.

- Well, tell me. Long time no see!

The phone did not stop ringing, she answered, called herself. Orders for a variety of products were received and transferred.

Tiniko seemed like a great conductor, directing all the work of the store.

- That's the head teacher! - Auto noticed with some annoyance.

- So what to do? What is life, such is the rhythm!

- Do not run into rackets? Never?

- Oh, don't ask about it! There was something terrible, but now I put everyone around me in their place. Although the guys no, no, but from time to time they visit, beg. Well, imagine, a guy arrives, high, in a taxi and asks me to treat him to cake and brownies.

- That is OK! In moderation, you can still respond!

- But why? After all, I explain to them that from each piece I get from ten to twenty tetras. Two or three of these treats a day, and it turns out that I work for them?! But I also have a family! Here's another case. One bull is rolling up to me, they say, your son-in-law sent me to take everything I want.

- Well? - Auto was surprised.

- And I tell him: here my son-in-law has nothing, everything is earned by me, and if he wants to give you something, then let him give from his home.

The salesgirl brought and set some cakes and coffee.

- What's the difference who will racket, old friends or new strangers?

What changes from this? - Auto asked with a smile.

- Shame on you! - Followed by a protesting exclamation and a smile.

- Just kidding!

After exchanging a few more phrases, Auto got up:

- I'm in a hurry! Today we are celebrating my father's birthday. I have to go. If you pick up something suitable for this occasion, I will be grateful.

- And how old was he?

- Seventy five...

- Look, what a fine fellow, - admired Tiniko, - now it is such a rarity!

- That's why I want to present something extravagant.

They chose the best of what was available: a three-story cake, on which the girl-seller applied the number seventy-five through a tube with white cream.

- It was the order of one client, but we will make another one for him a little later. And take this one for your father and congratulate him from me too. Maybe he will remember me, a couple of times he seemed to visit the school. At least I remember him.

- Thanks. But... customer's order... - hesitated Auto.

- Nothing, nothing, no problem - reassured Tiniko.

Saying goodbye, Auto, carefully supporting the cardboard box from below, went down the slope to the square. At the crossroads, flower girls bent over bouquets. Auto picked up what he thought was the best one, and after asking the flower girl to hold his three-story cake for a while, he returned to the pastry shop.

The cake being put into a box for another customer trembled:

- My boy!

A fresh bouquet until the evening aroused the best feelings in her and squeezed out hot tears.

## VIII

The gaze slowly glided along the lines, carefully and accurately drawn with a black pencil on small white sheets.

The smallest details, applied by design graphite to whatman paper, were viewed.

Yes, Soso! Therefore, we settled on the fact that we will not pour a thick high concrete wall under the foundation of the reconstructed building. We confine ourselves to a reinforced concrete pad under the foundation, with reinforcement from profiled metal brackets, through a certain step. So"

- Yes, Nukri Karlovich, I think it would be more reasonable, - the design engineer immediately agreed, - and less building material will be needed, and the load on the weakened foundation will be lightened.

- And we will also remove the one-story superstructure, in the most emergency part of the building, as agreed, in order to reduce pressure on the most damaged parts of the building. Is not it?

- Of course, - confirmed Soso, a man of average height, forty-five years old, with extensive bald patches.

- Anti-seismic belts of reinforcing bars will be installed bilateral, along closed contours, - Nukri explained.

- Yes, only in one part of the building the line turns out to be broken, - reminded Soso.

- No, it's still holding up. According to the consumable specifications of materials, we have a very small overspending of metals. But can we make it smaller?

- It's not worth the risk, Karlovich, - Soso objected, - the building is old, depreciated, with massive walls, and another earthquake can be expected at any time. After all, the farther from the previous, the closer the next.

- Yes, don't talk! Even the most insignificant of them in terms of the strength of the impact cause such damage and such damage that the buildings, if not destroyed, then become completely unusable. It is not advisable to restore and strengthen everyone, but even this costs a pretty penny.

- In general, the housing stock is very dilapidated. New private construction is still going on in some places, but, alas, they do not solve the problem of renewing the housing stock in the city as a whole and throughout the country.

- Yes. And we ourselves God knows how we treat them, and even earthquakes get from time to time.

- If only us, Karlovich! Shakes the whole of Europe and the whole world.

- Yes, there is no peace, although by their mercy the work is added.

- And why are they so frequent lately, huh?

- Who knows. You know for yourself how many forecasters and researchers work in this area, but still no one can say with certainty where, when and with what force it will shake. And separate successes of weather forecasters do not do.

"Here, Karlovich, what little book has recently turned up under my arm," Soso leafed through a small pamphlet "Why Disasters Occur."

- Curious, - Nukri accepted it, paying special attention to the words of the holy righteous John of Kronstadt that the world is in a state of slumber, a sinful sleep. The Lord God wakes him up with wars, world plagues, fires, storms, devastating earthquakes, floods, crop failures.

- Wow! - Nukri doubted, leafing through the book and tearing out separate phrases about the reasons for the sorrows and sufferings sent down to people.

- Interesting! Won't you give me a read?

"Of course," Soso agreed at once.

- I recently came across prayers that prevent earthquakes. It's like how the father of one of my acquaintances, back in Soviet times, designed cars for off-road driving. Can you imagine, - he complained bitterly, - instead of arranging roads, they design cars for off-road.

Soso smiled.

- So we, instead of preventing earthquakes with prayers and a righteous life, are struggling with their manifestations and consequences.

- How to say. But in general, I hear more and more often that the world stands on the prayers of the righteous fathers, otherwise there would be nothing left of it.

- And what about the builders? - Nukri switched to the specifics.

"The work has already begun," Soso explained.



- How? Without a project?  
- I filmed preliminary drawings for them on a copier and allowed them to begin the preparatory stage.  
- You might as well let me know.  
- Rather, they themselves asked, so as not to waste time in vain. By the way, they are waiting for us at the facility this morning.  
- Okay, let's start. However, you can go, - Nukri agreed without unnecessary objections.

The cell phone rang.

- Yes, Nino, what do you have there? - Nukri learned the call.

- Can you send Shalva with a car to go to the market?

- Slut is not at work today.

"Then, can we skip with you?" Nino asked.

- When?

- Now, if you can!

- Now? - Nukri thought. - Will the builders wait a couple of hours? - he asked Soso.

- They'll wait...

- All right, let's go.

"And I'll wait for you here," suggested Soso.

- Yes ... and remove all unnecessary dimension lines from the drawings. This is still a design drawing for strengthening and restoring an emergency building, and not an architectural new one. And fit the stamps in the lower right corners of the frames to our previous projects.

Despite the working day, there were enough people in the central market. Nukri and Nino dodgily made their way through the rows and aisles between the counters.

Bargained and bought mostly Nino. Nukri at the back was waiting for her with bags and looked around with curiosity.

So he fixed his gaze on the high ceiling of the building, made in a beam-and-beam system, based on high, massive reinforced concrete columns, covered with reinforced concrete slabs,

"Yes," he involuntarily thought, "of course, this ceiling is much simpler than what we designed and installed thirty years ago over the Sukhum collective farm market, when we managed to cover the internal, significant area - forty-two by forty-two meters.

- How difficult it was to build this unique structure, and with what ease it was destroyed during our fratricidal war, - he was upset and annoyed, - yes, it's really not to build.

It is hard to see when the original engineering structures collapse, but it is even harder to break good brotherly relations between peoples.

- Nukri, what are you? Are you floating in the clouds? Get down on the ground and help me, - Nino called him, - take this bag, put it in your bag ... and see what's next on the list.

- You have to buy cornmeal, - Nukri reminded.

One of the sellers of snow-white flour, as if guessing their intention, waved her hand invitingly.

"Look, strangers are already waving at you," Nino laughed.

Why strangers? I know her very well, I buy from her all the time!

- And I'm with another couple, husband and wife, in the next row. But since this one has already seen us, let's go. At the same time you will get acquainted.

Meanwhile, the saleswoman was already walking towards them with a cellophane bag and a handmade scoop from a 1.5-liter Coca-Cola bottle. But then she, and at the same time Nino and Nukri, out of nowhere, were attacked with foul language by the seller from the next row, whom Nino was talking about.

- What are you doing, huh? Shameless, impudent! - he shouted. - How dare you poach our customers, as if you don't have enough of your own!

The merchant froze in place, Nukri and Nino looked at each other in bewilderment.

"What, do we need to take your permission?" Nino murmured.

"It's not nice to do that, citizen! You always take from us. And what now? - an ardent, thin, but chubby merchant was tearing himself up. - We, well, offended you or something." Maybe they slipped poor-quality flour?

"No," Nino said in surprise.

- You see! So why...

"The village," Nino was upset, "tell them whatever you want, they don't care about their own ..."

- Nino, I'll show this impudent type now! - Nukri exploded, threatening the offender who was leaving them.

- All right, Nukri, calm down! You know what day it is today, so let's not get on our nerves in vain. In addition, a weak mind should yield. Let's go to him, here, apparently, there are also their own orders.

Nino politely apologized to the tradeswoman from whom she was just about to buy flour, and dragged her husband to the brawler.

- No, no, for God's sake, I have nothing against it, - the merchant obediently agreed, - go to him, since you buy from them all the time. But in general, my flour is no worse ... and maybe even better. Ask your husband, he will confirm.

- I know, Nargiza, - Nukri agreed, - I know, but you see for yourself ... I submit to my wife only because you won't have any problems later.

"Oh, yes, I'm not afraid of him," Nargiza replied, "I'm not homeless here either, and there is someone to stand up for me.

"If you want, I'll buy a part from you, and for the other I'll send my wife to him," suggested Nukri, "to each his own," a smile crept onto his face.

- You're even dumber than that psycho, - Nino was dumbfounded, - well, hurry up and run away from here.

- Go, go! - smiling and waving, threw them after Nargiza.

- I'll come another time! - Nukri looked around.

- This prickly humor of yours will not work, - Nino warned, - I know perfectly well that you like young, not old nags.

.....

- Salam alaikum, badji1, - Nukri greeted, approaching one of the stalls with greens. - Here they come to you with my khanuma2.

- Ai, salam alaikum, kardash3. Where are you, why did you not come for so long. Already bored. What a beautiful khanuma you have. And how are your children?

Nino looked at her husband in amazement. Nukri, barely restraining his laughter, continued to lavish sweet compliments on the greengrocer.

"Do you know everyone here?" Nino asked.

- Almost, - Nukri answered with satisfaction, - but what's wrong with that? But they sell everything to me at a discount.

- Yes, but why do you need these acquaintances?

- Now you'll see! How much do you have greens today, badji? - Nukri interrupted the initiative to purchase from Nino.

- A bunch of five kopecks, - the badji blurted out in a smile.

- Five bunches - twenty, - bargained Nukri.

- Oh, what a janjal1 kardash, - objected badji, - where did you see it here, and who has such prices? Well, well, let alal2 be for you.

Now Nino was trying to keep up with her husband, to show that she was not a fool.

Likho chose and threw the meat on the scales of her former student at the conservatory.

"God, what a horror, after the conservatory to go to the market as a butcher," Nukri shuddered.

- Until recently, he was the conductor of a small ensemble of violinists, - meanwhile reported Nino.

"From where to!" - Nukri became more and more mournful, - after the conductor's baton, the ax of the cutter.

- What now? Cheese! - Nino checked the list, - I will introduce you to one more of my students, this time with a harpist.

- No, - exclaimed Nukri, - that's enough! I can't take it anymore. Deal with your students yourself.

"What can't you do?" Nino asked.

"It's more heavy," Nukri thought, "you see, the bags are full," he pointed out with a glance. "If there are not many purchases left, I'll take this load to the car and come back for you." Nino glanced down her list and agreed.

- OK Go! I'll buy the rest myself. Just drive the car to the lower entrance.

- Oh, kay! - Nukri was delighted, running back with a jerk and already on the move throwing: - I will do everything as ordered!

Coming out of the upper, side entrance, he was already quite out of breath and was forced to reduce his speed. A purse stuck out from under his arm, in which he kept money, documents, keys. Sweat flooding his face urgently demanded a handkerchief.

Nukri tensed up under the load, looked longingly at the Zhiguli waiting for him, was about to put the bags on the ground for a while, to take a break, but the approaching target attracted and beckoned. Still had to make a stop halfway to the car. Somehow he got there and put the load partly in the trunk, partly occupying almost half a cabin, he began to slowly leave the row of those standing in the parking lot, when he suddenly heard a hand clapping on the side.

- Wait, buddy, where are you going? You've got a flat rear tire, - an unfamiliar male voice warned him.

Getting out of the car, Nukri found with chagrin that the side of the right rear wheel had been cut through, and rushed to replace it with a spare.

Having managed, with some delay, he drove up to the lower main entrance, where, looking around, he saw his wife waiting for him.

"Where are you still?" she asked surprised.

- The tire was cut, - explained Nukri.

- Like this?

- I wish I knew how! He probably ran into the glass, there is so much rubbish and garbage around.

- It would be nice if this near-market trade was moved somewhere.

“But what to do with these poor merchants?” How can they get a piece of bread for themselves?

- Though sanitary days would suit!

- Don't you need money for this?

- Traders' own forces. And where are we headed anyway?

- To democracy! How is it where?!

- And everywhere this democracy is like that?

- Within the limits of the former Union everywhere, perhaps. But in the West and in the states, for example, I think not.

- This west with its civilization will carry us away in its powerful stream.

They argued, then agreed with each other almost to the house. And only when he arrived, Nukri missed the purse with money, house keys and documents, and there he realized what had happened to him.

## IX

A pair of white dice with black dots on six sides, like hail of ice, fell from the hands of one or another of the players, and, bouncing, rolled out over a small wooden field decorated with marquetry patterns.

- Du shash1, - shouted one of the combatants and, according to the combination of points that fell out, moved the checkers from bend to bend along the edge of the field.

- Sevay du2, - exclaimed the second and made the same movement.

An old single-engine, four-winged, two-seat aircraft, a “maize” aircraft, ran along a small track along the sown furrows, several times before takeoff, stalling and freezing during the run.

“That's it, the last, hundredth jump attempt!” the parachutist despaired, leaning back from the pilot's seat, “if it doesn't open this time, I'll tie it up forever.”

The corn plant, which usually pollinated crops from the air with biochemical preparations, rumbled with a working motor, freely hovered over its native places.

“I wouldn't have stalled in the air,” the pilot, who had suffered with the engine, thought with anguish.

From a bird's eye view, a wonderful panorama of fields hugging hills and hillocks opened up.

“Should I drop you in the same place, in the same place?” Turning slightly around, the pilot asked the paratrooper.

- Yes, on the same one, - the parachutist confirmed.

- Well, only not on this approach, but from the second round, - the pilot explained, - but for now, admire the nature and the weather.

Unexpectedly, massive fire was opened from the ground from recoilless rifles of the type

"hail" by hail clouds.

“Only this was not enough for us now,” the pilot and parachutist thought at the same time, “they would not please us.”

“What is it to him,” the pilot continued his thoughts, “he is with a parachute, but I am without.”

Meanwhile, downstairs, in a large vineyard, a small group of people, among whom were foreign investors who were trying to invest in a promising branch of agriculture - winemaking, a considerable investment, were discussing what was sore.

- Here, look carefully, - the chairman of the village board inspired foreign guests, - what our vineyards, once known to the whole world, have turned into. Either hail falls on them, then drought torments them, then earthquakes, floods, mudflows ... - the chairman of the board enthusiastically listed natural and social disasters that haunt the plantings, - and there is almost no one left to work. Young people run away to the city, eager for a luxurious, carefree and easy life, pleasures and pleasant pastime, and the old generation, what can they do now? The prices for the grapes that we sell to the state have also fallen sharply. Already many no-no, and they are even thinking about cutting down vineyards with axes and planting them with other crops. It's okay that these unkind thoughts remain only thoughts, out of malice, but it still doesn't get to the point. After all, the same thoughts overcame many of our historical enemies who broke into our country and exterminated, destroyed and burned everything living and inanimate in their path.

Entering into a rage in a minor, true, tone, the chairman suddenly heard behind him the noise and crackling of breaking plantations. Guitar strings rang out, strung between low reinforced concrete columns between rows of vines, steel wire for tying branches.

The whole delegation shuddered and turned to the noise.

On the ground, between the rows of vines, groaning in pain, the unfortunate parachutist rolled from side to side.

- And this one hesitated us at all, - waving his hand in his direction, the chairman of the board stated with annoyance.

Loud laughter from both players and observers rolled across the playing field.

- Well, you give, Tristan, - rolling with laughter, the hero of the day Mikhail Davidovich threw out of harmony, - wow, this is a joke, I understand. And what is the share of truth and pain in it? Directly both laughter and sin.

- Yes, here, like Lermontov, "all this would be funny if it weren't so sad," remarked a little later Mikhail Davidovich's neighbor in the area, Tristan, a strong man of about sixty-five. "This, of course, is sick humor, but in fact, Davidovich, of course, we should have a good harvest of grapes in the east of the country today.

- Eh-heh, - with annoyance and still choking on laughter, the hero of the day insisted: - What if this accursed city again or whatever it is? This unfortunate skydiver will not interfere or harm us.

- And last year they harvested a lot of grapes. The wine turned out excellent. I compared the wine from the harvest of my site with the wine from the grapes bought at the market. So the bought came out better, - admitted Tristan.

- I don't know about you, but mine is still better than anyone, - the hero of the day boasted, - today we'll just try.

- Red or white, Davidovich? - asked Nukri's colleague - Soso.

- Red, of course. But there is also some white.

- I hope it's natural? - Tristan asked cautiously.

- You offend, neighbor! - the hero of the occasion blushed. - So, in your opinion, I can put you a fake one on such a day?

The conversation on this important topic could have gone on for a long time if it had not been interrupted by the bustling women at the table.

"And how many people are we covering, mother?" Rusiko, as thin as a reed, asked in a clear voice.

- How much, you say? - thought Nino. - Man, apparently, at fifteen. And more will come, we will add devices. How many places. What two large tables moved together.

- And where did they get the second one from? - asked Rusiko's husband, Bezhan, a short young, somewhat nondescript man.

- They asked Dali, - Nino pointed to a miniature elderly woman, her neighbor. - And in general, she helped me a lot. Without her, I certainly would not have been able to do anything. You only rely on you!

- Well, what are you! What you! Please, the neighbor replied modestly. Rusiko and Ketino - Nino's daughter-in-law - looked at each other and winked.

- Why, mom? Are we doing something too?

- Yes, of course, daughter, - Nino did not mind, - of course. Young people have so many worries and problems that there is no time left for parents.

- This is a fact, Nino, so do not be surprised and do not be upset, - Dali's neighbor closed the topic.

- Should the wine be bottled or poured into jugs? - Bondo, Nino's eldest son, a strong guy in his thirties, asked an important question.

- Well, ask your father about it, - Nino redirected him admonishingly. The doorbell rang, and Nino rushed to unlock it.

- Hello, Ramaz, - she kissed her brother, - what is this?

- Yes, Leah sent it, - Ramaz lifted the bag in his hand, - dragged her to work, and from work right here.

- An interesting woman, - Nino was surprised, - it would be better if she came herself with the children, than to send them. Wow, we've got a lot of stuff.

But she also wanted something from herself.

Ramaz greeted those present, heartily congratulated his father, handed him a small bundle.

- Thank you, son, - Mikhail Davidovich was deeply moved, - thank you! But why didn't Leah and the children come? I so wanted to see them here today.

Yes, father, thank you. But she was so tired. She asked me to convey my heartfelt congratulations and apologies. See you soon.

- Nukri, please deal with the wine, - ordered Nino, - and you girls, lively cover.

- I will help them, - Tristan's wife Lela responded.

"I don't think we'll bother you," Nino smiled at her, "there's enough of us already," she dragged her daughter, daughter-in-law and neighbor, who rushed from the kitchen to the dining room and back.

The table was gradually decorated and flourished.

Bones banged, children ran, women flashed with dishes.

Noise and din merged with the melody from a small audio tape recorder with light music.

- Something Auto is delayed, - Nino was perplexed, - I hope it will come?

- Of course, he will come, where will he go, - Ramaz answered her with confidence, playing with bones in his fist and waiting for the opponent to move the checkers, none other than the hero of the day, who has already won more than one game and replaced more than one partner according to the principle "the loser gets up".

"Maybe at least you, Ramaz, will win?" Nukri exclaimed hopefully.



- It's easy to say! - Ramaz snapped.

Finally, following the lingering bell, Auto appeared with his three-story cake.

- We are already waiting, - Mikhail Davidovich was delighted, - but here you are!  
"Where are your girls?" Nino asked curiously.

- What? - Auto was surprised.

- Well, these are like them, - I thought, but I remembered Nino, - Eka and Natalie.

- It's better to take the cake from me, - Auto waved his free hand.

- Are you alone too? - the hero of the day repeated in bewilderment, and I thought you would come with your girlfriend and introduce us.

- Later somehow, dad, - absently stretched Auto, switching to congratulations and handing his father a gift package. He met and greeted guests whom he had never seen before. Went into the kitchen to see how Nino was doing.

"Even though Natalie would have invited," Nino regretted, "we won't lure her to me."

- For some reason she was offended and now avoids me, - explained Avto.

- Yes, she was not offended by anything, but she leads you by the nose and fills her price. That's all, - suggested Nino, - do you have her cell phone number?

- Well, there is - hesitated Auto.

- Call her now and invite her.

She won't come alone.

- Come and bring it!

- Come on, Nino, I have no reason to call!

- Yes? But it's good that she has been torturing you for so long." Does she think that since you don't have a mother, you are homeless?

- And here it is?

- And despite the fact that if I can sometimes, out of good intentions, accidentally offend you, then I won't allow it. He wants us, you are welcome, but no, let him roll on all four sides. I saw you in the picture together, in the computer, she is not so beautiful. Not such remain unmarried, in old maids.

- Well ... it, for example, does not threaten her, - Auto admitted.

- How to say, how to say! - sneered Nino.

- She, in my opinion, already has a fan.

- So what? At one time I also had a lot of fans, but I settled on Nukri. Or rather, he did not give me rest more often than others. In general, know that all girls are like that ... whoever doesn't give them rest anymore, they end up marrying for that.

- And not only that, Nino, - Ramaz intervened in the conversation, - a woman should at least in some way depend on her chosen one, in business, in work ... in

something else. This is much more effective than making yourself known from time to time.

"We need her like that," Nino was offended, "don't be afraid," she reassured Auto, "I'll introduce you ... well, in general, you'll see ...

- Oh-oh, - stretched Auto, - yes, I'm not afraid of anything, and I don't know anyone It's not necessary to go, I'll figure it out myself somehow, not a little one ...

- When? You're almost forty.

- How interesting! - Avto startled, suddenly catching a catchy similarity between these "soon" and "forty" and only a slightly noticeable difference in the arrangement of letters. "Isn't it a providential sign?" he thought.

- Yes, joke, joke! Time for this up to the throat! Well, okay, we'll talk later! - She turned to her neighbor Dali, who ran in for some additions to the table.

The car made its way through a small side loggia, buzzing with children playing in it, and here, in solitude, called on a mobile phone.

Ruben, how are you?

- Everything is in order, - Ruben pleased him, - safe and sound!

- Have you checked everything on the list?

- Everything! And now let's clarify.

- Who is with you?

- Tamila! - in voice Ruben rang joy.

What about Gela?

- I was in a hurry to do business. Tamilochka and I let him go.

- Look there I have! If you offend her, I'll take your head off.

- Yes you that, Mikhailovich! Offend?

- Well, okay, sort what you can ... put it. Till tomorrow!

On the way back to the dining room, he joked, lingered with the children: "I wish I had some of my own."

- Isn't it time for the table? - meanwhile, the hero of the occasion called on the guests.

- Yes! Yes! The rest will wait for him and we will!" Nino supported her father.

- Nino, - the hero of the day asked her in an undertone, - I think we should call Dali's husband - Gaga, it's not that inconvenient ...

- I already said. When he comes back from work, he will come in.

Mikhail Davidovich took a place of honor at the head of the feast on a luxurious high-backed chair and reserved a more modest chair next to him for Nino when she had a minute to sit down between meals.

Dali and her husband Gaga, who arrived in time, were seated opposite them.

And Bondo was already bringing and seating Nukri, Soso, Ramaz on one side of the table, not forgetting himself and his wife Ketino, and on the other - Tristan, Lela, Avto, Rusiko and her husband Bezhan. So fourteen people fit at one large table.

“Almost the same number of us used to gather every evening at dinner in the village,” Mikhail Davidovich noted nostalgically.

- This is together with fellow villagers, or what? - Tristan teased him.

- Well no! My father had a large family, and we also often had very close relatives visiting us.

- And how many of you were in the family itself? - Tristan pestered him.

- Six brothers and three sisters, - proudly announced the hero of the day.

- Oh wow, that's it!

- Yes, my father was always very proud of this, he even liked to boast, to explain the features of the then village life, early, in particular, winter sunsets.

A cheerful wave passed over the table.

- That's why our government, apparently, so often deprives us of light, and it is in winter! - Nukri screwed up.

- Not without that, - the hero of the day agreed to him, - and we are still unhappy. Meanwhile, the ringing of instruments began to drown out the flaring conversation.

- Gentlemen! - Nukri stood up. - We are here on a well-known important occasion. So who will glorify Mikhail Davidovich dear to all of us and lead the feast as a toastmaster<sup>1</sup>.

- You started so well, - praised Tristan, - that we all agree and are glad to see you in this role.

Nukri broke down a little and sneered, but under the pressure of the feast, he nevertheless bowed his head.

He put so much soul into the first main solemn toast that everyone, as if electrified, vied with each other to pick it up.

- Good wishes, but the strengths are not the same, - the hero of the day complained, which caused a hail of objections and denials.

“At your age,” his son-in-law cited evidence to the contrary, “our legendary king Heraclius II, on September 11, 1795, with an army of five thousand, fought on the field of Krtsanis with more than twenty thousand of the Iranian Shah's army and would have defeated him, if not for betrayal.” .

The reminder somewhat encouraged the hero of the day:

- Yes, but he had three hundred Aragvinians, and I have only three of them, - he emphasized, referring to his children.

- Oh, but you should have thought about this at one time, - Tristan reproached him, - and take an example from your parents!

- Well, nothing, - Nukri picked up, - what you have not completed, your children and grandchildren will compensate!

“Unfortunately, I don’t see any particular zeal in them,” the hero of the day stated sadly, referring to his youngest son Auto.

- Well, not all at once, Davidovich, - Nukri consoled him.

- Oh, sorry, I’m not young!

- Well, dad, we won’t be offended! - Nino laughed.

“Maybe then Auto will decide,” Ramaz added.

- No, my children, I do not need anyone. For whom will I exchange it? - the hero of the day shed tears.

- Well, okay, okay, - Nukri changed the subject, - the toast to the hero of the day continues. Let’s not get ahead of things.

The toast gradually turned into a thank you.

The hero of the day spoke slowly, instructively, weightily. He was cordial and grateful for this warm evening, which added to him, as he specifically emphasized, and more than once, twenty years of life.

- And we give you at least a hundred, and there, as you know yourself! - Nukri screwed in.

- Don’t interrupt, don’t! - Nino stopped him.

- I’m far from young, - continued the hero of the day.

“But not so old either,” Nukri intervened again.

- Yes, wait! - Nino raised her voice,

- And I need in the remaining years to see all of you in health and well-being and more often next to me. One of our great the writer wrote that a person’s life is communication, and one hundred grams of meat is enough to saturate the stomach. And where can people not gather and communicate, if not at the table. Let’s see each other more and more often.

And I also want to note that our national table is a wonderful institution in its depth and humanity. He gathers different people, both by age, and by profession, and views.

We enrich each other, complement each other with our life experience and personalities.

And this is not at all what science, technology, this vaunted Internet and mobile phones offer us in return for this, depleting the positive energy of a person. Live

communication is completely different! The difference is about the same as between natural and artificial products.

The feast gradually gained energy and strength.

The toastmaster raised the second toast to the memory of the deceased wife of the hero of the day, and Ramaz supported him with great feeling. He bitterly reminded them that it is necessary to endure this severe test and set an example of resilience for children.

- And we will have to look for her in constant warm communication, - Auto emphasized based on the old words of his father.

Nino's eyes and facial expressions urged Auto to finish as soon as possible, so as not to upset her father too much.

- It's okay, Nino, - guessed the intentions of his older sister Auto, - men sometimes have to cry, it's not useless for us. They say that tears wash away mistakes and miscalculations, make amends for our guilt to each other and, imagine, sometimes even prolong our lives.

- Okay, Auto! - Nukri was also alert.

- Well, okay, okay! - agreed Avto. - But I'll tell you one thing. Statistics from American sociologists state that, in percentage terms, a person receives the most stress when he loses his spouse. Even more than with the loss of parents or, God forbid, children or material damage.

- Grandpa, for my grandmother, the kingdom of heaven to her. And you hold on, because we are near, - Bondo and Rusiko joined in more cheerfully.

Everyone was sorry to leave the past, but Nukri, with a strong-willed gesture, turning his attention to the children, turned to his father:

- Alaverdi1 to you.

- I put my strength on you, - he picked up, - you will have the same thing in more difficult, but also in something easier conditions. Raise worthy people. I wish you a joyful result of your efforts. I already see him.

- Let's not praise our children. Let's wait and see, - Ramaz warned. Meanwhile, the hero of the day said:

- In our summer cottage, every morning or in the evening, one unfortunate person passes with a stick, whom the children drove out of his own house, and for more than seven years he has been living in wrecked houses behind the most distant plots. He earns for bread than he has to, and we, the neighbors, also help. He tries, however, to cope with his own

problems, but he has a hard time. It happens that from the cold and drinks. You watch how it gradually lowers, the heart shrinks.

- What are you, father? - Nukri looked at him questioningly.

- No, God forbid, of course... But what is it like to see?!

- Do not worry, we will think of something for him, - promised Nukri.

- No, I mean to emphasize your warmth to me. You, Nukri, are also my child!

- No doubt. You could even say older.

- Of course, the first one, - the hero of the day smiled. - Well, for all my dear children.

Auto worries me the most.

- Nothing, nothing! - Father-in-law Nukri encouraged. - Where will he go, fall in love and get married.

"That's it! For love, and not for acquaintance, "Auto recalled the words of the Apostle Paul:

"Let everything be done with love."

"He doesn't have time for that," Nino explained. - Flutters! Either for their migratory birds, or with them, and when he returns, the chosen ones have already jumped out to get married.

- He needs to find the same migratory bird as himself, - found Tristan.

Showered advice, considerations, promises. Auto closed his eyes, briefly turned off, plunged into the past, recalling happy moments for himself.

He mentally approached Natalie from behind, touched her head with his cheek, took her hand, held it in his, and then together they fed the magnificent spotted deer with fresh grass.

Natalie is as gentle and shy as they are.

Why does she accept me, and avoid me, and reject me, and bring me closer? Why this game? Oh, this pride and arrogance, the desire to immediately defeat the chosen one, so that later, for the rest of our life together, keep him in our hands and under the heel. After all, nothing can be higher than love, and no one and nothing can rise above it, and even more so the pride that no one needs, which always precedes the death of a person, both physical and spiritual. The loss of all the best qualities, so that from a person, even if he survives, only one case remains.

- In view of the noise and commotion at the table, I have to break the order of toasts and offer to drink a toast for love in the broadest sense of the word, - there was a toastmaster, after listening to the hectic thanksgiving speeches of the children of the hero of the day.

- No wonder the Holy Scripture teaches us - love, the rest will follow, - Nukri recalled.

"Love never ceases," the hero of the day picked up, "although prophecies will cease, and tongues will be silent, and knowledge will be abolished," the Apostle Paul tells us. Well, and right everything earthly is short-lived, but love never ceases. The Almighty creates the human heart first of all, and everything else surrounds it later. It is the only thing over which time has no power, in this universe everything else is depleted and worn out. Our strength is weakening, our memory is becoming dull... but the heart remains unchanged and must remain open to the lofty and beautiful.

- It must be so ... heaven and earth will disappear, but love will remain forever, - Ramaz supported the toast.

- But, on the other hand, if you don't give love, you won't get anything in return, - Tristan intervened.

"Yes, it's vague, but it's usually a two-way feeling," Nino confirmed.

"Love is like fire from a candle," thought Auto, "no matter how much you give it away, it won't decrease."

From love for the Almighty, they moved on to love for their neighbor, for the Motherland, little by little men and women crept up to love.

- As I see it, a toast to women is ripe, - the toastmaster caught on, rising to his feet, - I will ask all the men to drink for women while standing. Women can proclaim a toast to us without getting up.

- Well, let's drink to women, our mothers, wives, daughters, granddaughters, finally, to the flowers of our life, without which it would be boring.

- Yes, - the hero of the day joined him, - they are our fortress, our beauty and glory. As they say, if the husband is the head of the family, then the wife is her neck. Our mothers give us life, wives - happiness, daughters - joy, and granddaughters - longevity!

- With rare exceptions, too, drink? - Asked Tristan.

- This is for what? - looked down Nino.

- Like what! - Tristan hesitated. - For some women who sometimes appear as men!

- That is, for the fighters? - Nukri realized.

- Well, yes - again hesitated Tristan.

- For example? - asked Nino, smiling.

- We will not name names, - neighbor Gaga, Dali's husband, hastened to help Tristan.

- In this case, we will have to raise the congratulations for men, who sometimes appear in the form of women, - protested Rusiko.

- Calm down, woman! - tried to stop her husband, Bezhan.

- Guys, let's live together, - toastmaster whined, - let's love and respect each other.

"Yes, peaceful parity is above all," Dali squeaked conciliatorily.

- No, after all, I think it's better for the wife, and for the husband, and, moreover, for the family, when the wife is submissive to her husband, - Nukri put forward the postulate.

"Depending on what," Nino interrupted him.

- In everything! - the toastmaster smiled with conviction.

- No! It won't work," Nino protested.

- Here's modern pluralism and democracy, - Nukri Ramaz turned to, - you see what they lead to even within one small feast, and what they can do and do within large, well, let's say, one country, state, even a small one. like ours.

- Yes, Ramaz, this has ruined and is ruining not only our current country, but also the former one. Barely having coped with the disputants who went into a rage, the toastmaster switched to a relatively calm toast to work and diligence, to the work of each person and

the whole society.

-For the conscientiousness and dedication of everyone at his work post, that is, the workplace ... And not only in the allotted time!

"Grandfather is gradually weaning us from the eight-hour working day and accustoming us to the American style of work," Rusiko added.

- Yes, granddaughter, but earlier, during the war, we worked day and night for the Motherland, and now you are for American dollars, and I do not believe in the productivity of such work. Much depends on the ultimate goal for which you work and live.

- Yes, but the well-being of the family and loved ones is also not a small goal, - Rusiko shook her head.

- The well-being of the motherland is higher, - the hero of the day interrupted his granddaughter. - Here you need to go from the general to the individual, and not vice versa.

- I agree, Davidovich - confirmed Tristan.

- The well-being of individual families cannot always lead to the general well-being of the motherland, while the opposite picture will ensure the well-being of



everyone, everyone ... hence the order, and culture, and science, and enlightenment ...

It turned out that controversy ensued on this issue.

Nino and Dali continually brought in new dishes and went around the feast with them.

- Mom, how are the children? - Bondo asked softly.

"Don't worry, I'm watching," his mother reassured him.

Auto sat thoughtful, he remembered the words of the Apostle Paul, once used by the communists, that whoever does not work should not eat.

Nukri asked the hero of the day for permission to tell about how former employees at the plant came to the latter and asked to return to the position of director.

- It's not worth it, what's interesting in this? - the hero of the day denied, but Nukri, supported by others, nevertheless insisted on his own.

"More than ten years ago," he began hurriedly and chokingly, "when various popular patriotic movements were just beginning, our hero of the day looked into the water, calculated the future situation and voluntarily resigned as director of the metallurgical plant, to the delight of a small part of the staff, then activists, and went to his dacha to engage in agriculture.

A few years later, after civil strife and tragic events began to emerge, you know what trends, those same "activists" who were glad to be left behind Davidovich, asked him for forgiveness and return to the already shaken factory. In response, Davidovich led his guests to the site, assuring the road that if they knew what a cool cabbage he had born in the garden, they would not have turned to him with their request.

- Well, yes? - Tristan was amazed. - Although the cabbage is really excellent with us.

- Yes, but, a little later, I find out that at one time, it turns out, Emperor Diocletian did exactly the same thing, with the difference that he was the emperor of the great Roman Empire, and our Davidovich was just a factory director.

The hero of the day lowered his eyes, smiled smugly and muttered in an undertone:

- I am glad that I was not mistaken in my decision then! A cheerful animation swept through the feast.

- My dears, - the toastmaster began his next toast, calming the noisy ones, - I want to raise an important, adjacent and akin to the previous toast to the goodness and good deeds.

- Oh-oh! - Significantly held out a few companions.

- Man was created by the Almighty in his own image and likeness only in order to do good to his neighbors.

- Each person is considered to be a neighbor, - the hero of the day corrected the toastmaster, - to serve your neighbor means to serve the Lord himself.

“Besides, every person, even of a different religion, is nominally considered a Christian,” Tristan added.

- Of course, - Nukri agreed, - and therefore the Almighty obliges us to do good, as long as we have the strength, time and opportunities for that, not expecting prompting and gratitude, but only according to the prescription of duty. It is said that every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

- This is so, and everyone who does good does it for himself, - the hero of the day supported the toastmaster. - And this is not a sermon, but a reminder, first of all to himself and to each of us, of the primary human civic duty.

- And now let's drink to the neighbors of the hero of the day, - proclaimed the toastmaster, inexhaustible on toasts.

- For which? - Asked Tristan. - For the local or the site?

- And for those, and for others, - Nukri picked up, - at one time, it seems, Nikita Sergeevich said - yes, father? - that a person should choose not a house, but neighbors?

- Yes! - Mikhail Davidovich confirmed. - Nikita Sergeevich himself!

- Well, so for them, - the toastmaster repeated, - we wish them happiness, health and all the best.

Nukri just now felt the effect of the wine and began to drink a little less from the glass.

“They won't notice, it's good,” he thought, “no, there's nothing to do like that, you'll have to drink to the end.”

“You have wine, Davidovich, like a cannon,” he admitted to the hero of the day.

- Yes, well ... seasoned, three years ago. Specially kept for today. I really hoped that I would live, and now, fortunately, I did.

“If there is still left, save it until your eightieth birthday!” the toastmaster offered him with a cheerful laugh.

- Eh-eh ... - the hero of the day drawled, raising his gaze at him.

- I guarantee and answer for it! - the toastmaster firmly rapped out.

- Hands? - the hero of the day extended his hand to him.

- Hands! - Toastmaster shook her.

- At the expense of neighbors and environment, I was always lucky. I will drink to them in the person of Tristan and Lela, who look after me in the absence of my children there, on the site.

- Well, neighbors are also different, dad, - Nino shook her head, - you shouldn't still look at the world through rose-colored glasses. For example, a neighbor recently came to me and either jokingly or seriously stated that since I don't have cockroaches in my house, but she does, she will bring me a sweet couple as a sign of solidarity to breed. Can you imagine? - and looked conspiratorially in the direction of Dali.

- And there is another example, - the daughter-in-law of the hero of the day, Ketino, passionately declared. - The children and I were in the village with our parents, and Bondo came to us just on the day when our rubber tank hose, covered with woven metal mesh, burst. They flooded themselves and their neighbors with water. The whole parquet rose and fell apart both in ours and in theirs, besides, the ceiling of the neighbors also collapsed. So what?" The neighbors only delicately hinted at what had happened. Of course, we promised them to restore everything, but it is interesting that when Bondo told about all this, he said that mother gave birth to this "goat" when she was under fifty, - Ketino gasped with laughter, - and I told him: we flooded, and we are to blame for it. So why call him a "goat". What would Bondo call it if they flooded us?

Bondo smiled shyly and kept quiet.

The toastmaster, in order to dispel the confusion, hastened to raise a united toast to the motherland and its future.

Ramaz amused those present with some statements of his daughter.

- In general, the children are now very erudite - confirmed Tristan.

- They also say that children born after the year 2000 will make up the violet race of mankind, the most developed in comparison with all previous ones, - said Nukri's collaborator - Soso.

- The age of universal computerization will naturally bear fruit, - Nukri agreed with him.

- I think that soon our country will merge into a single, economically developed and comprehensive "old woman" Europe and will catch up with it in terms of development, - said Ramaz.

- And how many investors are literally rushing to us with various commercial proposals iyami, - gave the voice of Gaga, Dali's husband, - but it seems that someone in our country is artificially slowing down this process. And, to the shame of us foreigners who are ready to invest, they are beaten and robbed.

- And what's more interesting, - Nukri remembered with a laugh, - I even heard that some foreign businessmen offer us the production of local, national frogs and their canning, and claim that they are much tastier than foreign ones. They only ask for permission to build special enterprises, and they will supposedly build them themselves. They also say that our canned food will raise prices on the world market from twenty-seven to thirty dollars a can.

- No, we will not give our frogs to them! - Tristan already openly burst out laughing, - Davidovich, who will croak in our area then, huh?

- Well! - the hero of the day expressed his solidarity to his neighbor. - Let them raise our economy without them. And they start with agriculture. A strong village is the well-being of the city and the whole country as a whole.

- Eh, Davidovich, I keep thinking, especially in recent years, - asked Tristan, - what is still better, an atheistic state with divine laws or a religious one, but with godless ones?

- The believer and with the divine! - the hero of the day exclaimed passionately.

- Eh, Davidovich, it would be nice, yes ... - the toastmaster shrugged.

"Well, then," the hero of the day interrupted him hesitantly, "there will probably be ... one always follows the other. The second of these states still has more chances for survival and prospects than the first. Happiness and prosperity constantly alternate with sorrows and trials.

"Perhaps, Davidovich," Nukri almost agreed with him, "after all, it was not for nothing that the philosophers of antiquity claimed that only one thing is constant - inconstancy.

- Well, now this toast is also inevitable ... for our enemies, offenders, enemies, - the toastmaster distracted everyone from further disputes, urging them to empty their glasses.

- Oh, - picked up Tristan, - really excellent toast!

- "Love your enemies, like..." It is not for nothing that the commandment was given to us from above, - reminded the toastmaster, - we wish them to come to their senses and turn out to be good for us. It is not easy, of course, to achieve this, but there is nothing impossible in this either. And in general, not

it is worth showing reproaches to the offenders, because the more you show them, the more you will calm the pangs of conscience in them, which in essence is the voice of God in man.

"Oh, father, it doesn't always work out that way, and for some it's much more useful to point out than to remain silent," Nino objected.

- It is clear that giving advice is the same as rolling stones from a height, and carrying them out is the same as carrying them uphill.

- The third day, a young punk tore off Rusiko right on the go, on the street, a mobile phone from her neck, - Nino insisted, - and she got upset because of this and had problems.

- Mom, well, why are you talking about this? - Rusiko flashed.

- Because this punks committed not only theft!

- You're crazy! - burst into tears and ran away from the table Rusiko. Bejan rushed after her. Nukri also got up from his seat.

- What else to talk about, when even from the house-museum of the father of all nations they managed to steal a copper samovar, - Ramaz tried to defuse the situation.

- What a horror - screamed Lela.

- They would have tried during his lifetime! - the hero of the day winked at her.

- I'll tell you even better, Davidovich! Our neighbor in the area, lame, pulled a duralumin stick in front of his nose, - Tristan remembered.

- And what do you want, when the system of reception and sale of scrap metal in general, and especially non-ferrous metals, is so well established in the country, - Bondo unexpectedly joined the conversation.

"Yes, Bondo is right," Ramaz confirmed.

Nukri returned, but without Bezhan and Rusiko, after which Nino left.

- Well, what is there? - the hero of the day asked Nukri.

- Nothing, a little upset!

"Maybe go after her?" He looked inquiringly at those present.

"No need, Davidovich, you'll only upset the feast," the toastmaster expressed his fears. The hero of the day nevertheless got up and left under the pretext of the necessary call.

The toastmaster's fears were justified, the feast really began to get a little upset, those sitting behind it began to fuss and bustle. They broke up into groups, privately tied up protracted conversations with each other.

"You can't do without upsetting me!" Meanwhile, the hero of the day blamed his daughter and granddaughter, leaving them with a grumble to return to the table.

It was getting dark quickly outside the window.

The celebration of the anniversary dragged on, it was getting dark outside.

One of the last toastmasters raised a toast to the meaning of life, finding it in living for others, and therefore, in vouchsafed freedom and the highest good.

- Who lives for others, he lives for himself, and who lives for God, he lives for everyone, and who lives only for himself, he does not live at all, - Ramaz recalled Tolstoy's words.

Quite the last after the already thinned feast was a toast to the Holy Trinity and its grace.

The guests dispersed.

Avto, Ramaz and Soso were the last to leave.

Rusiko and her husband slipped away without actually reconciling with their mother.

Nino, with great difficulty, put to bed drunken father and husband, who declared their sincere love to each other, gradually cleared the table, tried to give leftover food, clogged the refrigerator, but she could not distract herself from thoughts and anxiety for an inadvertently offended daughter, son, not quite healthy father, husband, brothers. She shamed, reproached herself, complained about the mistakes and blunders, without which not a single day of her life could do.

“Only he is not mistaken who does nothing, although this is the biggest mistake,” she recalled the words of the leader of the revolution.

Sleep literally collapsed late at night, but until morning she could not dismiss and switch off from the heavy male snoring, which was not drowned out either by the violin and vocal roudades pouring from the open window, or by the restless cricket, amiable with her girlfriend.

## PART THREE

### I

Feelings have Smell, color and taste,  
And depth, and sound...  
And the echo of the heart.

Summer was counting down the last days, autumn was a little crowded, taking away its beginning, and the townspeople, each in their own way, tried to meet them and catch up with what was planned and planned.

Who moved out of the city, to the sea, to the mountains, who whiled away their leisure time without leaving anywhere and was content with local ups and downs, artificial reservoirs and surrounding villages.

"It seems that even our Ilyich himself said that whoever does not know how to relax, he does not know how to work," exclaimed a thin, unshaven young man in shabby jeans, a gray sleeveless T-shirt and a straw hat, biting off a piece of fishing line and spitting it on the shore of the reservoir .

- Yes, Vova, you are probably right, - a young man sitting next to him agreed with him, making a sharp hooking with a long, nine-knee imported rod, - you can't even fish a fish out of a pond without difficulty.

A crucian, the size of a man's hand, emerged from the water, frantically fluttering on a hook.

- Wow! Well, you give, Artem, - continuing to fiddle with his tackle, cheered up his friend Vova, - you caught a good handsome man.

- And what else can I do! - Artyom retorted. - Watch how you and Grisha are messing around and messing around? Tackle should be collected at home, at sea you need to catch. Look, the neighbor has a great peck, and he leads, leads, there is a fish on the hook, and he is well done!

- Well done, Ruben, - Auto was surprised at the first fish caught, - well, and who do we have there?

- Fisherman, - said Ruben, pulling the fish to the shore, - Mikhailovich, we have a fish tank in our backpack. Get it, please.

- Grisha, deepen there a little bit and change the hook. The bite will go right away, "Artem advised.

- I do not need a bite, but a large fish, - Grisha stubbornly, - because of such a small thing, it's not worth messing around.

- Well, as you know, - Artem did not insist, - I told you mine!

“Mikhailovich, don’t throw tackle into a reedy clearing,” Ruben followed Artem’s advice, “there the bite might be better, but you won’t be able to hook it, and every now and then there will be hooks. I would advise you to throw next to the reeds.

- Hush, Ruben, I’m hunting carp, - put his finger to his lips Auto.

Artyom and Ruben dragged little fish, Grigory patiently waited for his

“Big luck”, Vova either threw, then took out the tackle from the fishing rod and fiddled with it, reworking it every time in a new way, Auto now and then went into the reed clearing and released the tackle from the hooks, and the hook from the clinging reeds.

- Eh, unfortunate fishermen, - Artem was upset, looking at Ruben sitting nearby, - no, everyone should mind their own business!

- Nothing! It’s better that way than wandering aimlessly and idle around the yard or slaughtering a goat, then drinking it down, ”Grigory replied,“ at least you can swallow fresh air and breathe.

- Yes, they say, soon they will come up with meters for it, as well as for gas, electricity and water, - Vova joined the conversation.

“It’s okay for you,” Artyom objected to them, “it’s still a long way off, but if meters are put on drinking water, we’ll definitely be a khan!”

“They won’t dare,” suggested Ruben.

- No matter how it is! - Artyom exclaimed mockingly, - they are already conducting an experiment in several houses in our district, let’s see what will come of it.

“The people will rebel,” Grigory said, “it’s better to raise pensions.

- And what do you care about that? - Artem was surprised. - You still have to plow and plow until retirement.

“Yes, I do, but my father gets it,” Grisha explained.

- Yes, don’t talk! Pensioners are now unprofitable people, - Vova agreed, - they require investments from us, but there is no work in the city. Where to get money from, steal, or something ”Do not bring, Lord, it is better to die of hunger.

- Well, why not? And the fish? - was heard from all sides.

“And what about a fish, you won’t go far on it,” Grisha waved his hand.

“Besides, our “jigits” are jamming it with grenades, they scared it all away and exterminated it,” Vova complained, “I saw it myself last week. Yes, and she will get tired of her wife, she will kick me out!

- Well? What, is she so demanding with you? - Artem asked.



- Even some! Only knows to remind her that I promised her before the wedding!  
And in my opinion abuses my forgetfulness!

“Ah, women are such a people,” Artem confirmed, “and especially wives. Whatever you do, everything is not enough for them, they immediately give as an example others, more “sly” and enterprising. Sometimes they bring it to such a point that, it seems, you inadvertently drop: but you, my dear, if you don’t like me, would go to such a place!

- Well, - Vova agreed to him. - You can’t cook porridge with them at all! Alexander the Great conquered almost half the world, but he could not win the hearts of his beloved.

- This is because we choose them incorrectly from the very beginning, - Artem explained. - We must take as wives those who choose us themselves. They have further requirements where

less. Like my Rosita. And for those that we like, all our lives we have to pay and endure reproaches.

“Perhaps he is right,” Auto said to himself, “it will be necessary to take it into service.”

- Yes, but what is it like to live with an unloved and unchosen one? - Vova objected.

“It’s better to be the chosen one yourself and live in peace, rather than vice versa,” Artyom objected in response.

- For the sake of a pretty woman, you can’t stand anything. Ugh, - again Vova spat a piece of fishing line bitten off by his teeth and changed the old hook to a new one.

- Beautiful woman, friend this is an earthworm for a man, bait for fish, - he held the fat red worm with his fingers, trying to fasten it to the hook of his fishing rod.

The conversations went along with the fishing and, to the surprise of Auto and Ruben, did not spoil the fishing for many.

- Eh! .. - Avto started up. - Again hooked on the reeds!

“I’m telling you, Mikhailovich, but you don’t obey,” Ruben reproached him offensively, “now climb into the reeds.

- Nothing, I’ll suffer a little, and then I’ll cut off and change the leash with a hook, - he stood on his Auto.

- Look, Ruben, what a beauty sat on the end of my rod, - Auto exclaimed enthusiastically after repeated pulling up and releasing the caught fishing line with a hook.

Ruben tried through the stalks of reeds, spread out on a small island of the reservoir, to determine the location of Auto’s fishing rod and suddenly, downright

frozen from what he saw. A small white heron was indeed fluttering on the baited hook.

"It doesn't look like the hook is stuck in her throat, more like at the base of her beak," Reuben suggested.

- Yes, perhaps so! - Auto confirmed. - Ruben, help me catch her, only carefully.

A few minutes were enough to not only carefully catch and remove the snow-white winged beauty from the hook, but also to ring her.

- Mikhailovich! We went fishing, not birding. Why did you take with you the ringing material and the necessary devices for this? - Ruben was surprised.

"Oh, Ruben, I'm teaching you, I'm teaching you, but you still haven't learned that experts in their field must be ready to fulfill their professional duty anywhere, at any time, under any circumstances, at the proper level," Avto explained. hunters who go for small game, but take with them at least a couple of cartridge cases with large shot.

- This, as they say, just in case?

- Yes, - confirmed Avto, - but the case is always different, - and showed off his index finger.

In the hands of Auto, the bird soon stopped beating and escaping, as if sensing its true owner. On the shore, she looked around in surprise for quite a long time, as if looking for someone or not believing her sudden quick release.

- Come on, go, fly, you're free again, - Auto slightly pushed the bird.

The heron, after walking a few steps, ran up and suddenly shot up sharply, moving away from the place of captivity, and after several landings and take-offs, it sank and remained on the opposite bank.

- Yes, - thoughtfully stretched Avto, - our sponsors will have to work here as well.

What do you think, Reuben?

- I think it will be nice if they agree, - Ruben confirmed, - but do you think she will recover, survive?

- He will survive, where will he go, - Auto answered with confidence, looking after his flying away joy and happiness.

Ruben watched as Auto reached for the bird, and his soul, as if leaving him, flew after the bird and flew with it until it was out of sight. For the first time he saw with his own eyes that invisible feeling, or rather the queen of feelings that he had to experience more than once in his life. I saw how Auto flew with all his soul, with all his heart and with all his essence and essence rather than for the bird itself, but for the love he felt for it, and how he began to realize that a person falls in love first of all with love itself, with the highest impulses and feelings he can't help but follow. So

one love leads to another, another to a third, ad infinitum, until you reach the main and blissful one, for which it is not scary and not a pity even to die, and not only not scary, but also sublime for the soul. To die, as moths die, flying to the warmth, heat and light of the source, burning themselves on it and happily sacrificing their lives.

Ruben followed sideways the rushing gaze and the whole essence and gut of the Avto bird and for the first time saw and perceived him in the form of a bird, ready to soar up and fly after his beloved.

He even remembered a fragment from the film with the great Charlie Chaplin's "Gold Rush", when his starving friend, gold digger Joe, the unfortunate and little Charlie, was seen as a fat turkey and, grabbing an ax, rushed at him to tear off his head and immediately to eat, but, fortunately, his mind instantly cleared up and he asked for forgiveness at his feet ...

But, unlike Joe, he was not tormented by hunger and was not hit on the head with a shovel.

Rather, now a feeling of slight envy for Auto rose in him, looking at which, looking down sadly, he noticed and realized that he did not feel such great love even for the most beloved people. "It's always clearer from the outside," he thought.

At that moment, watching Auto from the side, he realized that what makes a person "great" is love of the same strength and level. Whether to a beloved business, beloved people, beloved ... and, finally, to the most important and important thing, to the Almighty, for everything except this love is subject to decay, disappearance and erasure from memory in this world.

Ruben noticed how Auto continued to fish, as if devastated after this feeling that had flown out of his soul. There was a feeling in him that Auto had lost something, he had gained and enriched himself. Gained knowledge and understanding of what was previously hidden from his eyes.

"It is one thing to see invisible feelings, and another to experience them," he thought, and was also amazed that for the first time in his life he saw, understood and distinguished aroma, taste, shades of sensations, their charm.

He concluded from further cautious conversation with Auto that he did not know anything, but he did not dare to talk to him about it, fearing that Auto would think

that he, although under the morning sun, had received a heat stroke and was talking nonsense and incomprehensibility. In addition, I was not sure whether it was necessary to go so deeply into the knowledge and definition of my feelings and whether it was not enough to be limited only to their sensation?

One way or another, in Ruben something was clearly changing and moving, a certain silence and melancholy was transmitted to him from Auto, who thoughtfully mechanically continued to throw and pull his tackle into the reed clearing.

Soon he caught the first smile on the face of Auto, who was pleased with the caught carp.

- If you suffer for a long time, something will work out, - Auto muttered in an undertone, turning towards Ruben.

Little by little, step by step, both Avto and Ruben were again drawn into the environment, into the aura, into the noisy and cheerful conversations of simple-minded fishermen, as if according to the principle "who will you go with ...?"

"So that I can see the mother of modern agrochemistry at the market," Artyom blurted out his favorite curse, "look, how long I live in the world, and I see such a strange cucumber with such strange longitudinal voids for the first time!"

Vova and Grisha responded to him with laughter.

- And the tomato, look at the tomato, what a handsome man! How Michurinsky! What's inside, what does it taste like? Ugh!

- And what do you want? For the first time, you hear, appearances are often deceptive, - Grisha explained, - you see, this applies not only to people.

- They say that the markets of Europe and even America abound with such beautiful fruits, - Vova supported the conversation, - look, feast for the eyes, your mouth is flowing, and try to bite off, or you will break a tooth, or you will choke.

Artem started up in his hearts and once again successfully and timely hooked, carefully turning the handle picked up the spinning reel and pulled the next caught fish closer to him. Surprised:

- Wow! Look how he resists!?

- And what, life is a sweet thing, - Grisha noted philosophically.

- And our fish is much better than theirs, - Vova stated.

- In fact, what kind of tackle and bait, such is the caught fish, - added Grisha.

- Not at all! What a fisherman is, such is a caught fish and a catch, - Artyom corrected him.

"Well, and not only that," repeated Grisha, "I, for example, am not a very good fisherman, let's say, an average one, but I can catch a fish with my own good.

- Nu-u? - Vova was surprised.

Artyom, bulging his eyes, stared at Grisha. Auto and Ruben looked at each other.

- Well, you, of course, pour and tremble. That's all! - concluded Vova.

- For sure! - Artem supported him.

"Well, then we'll bet whatever you want," Grigory ventured into a bet.

- Come on! - Vova agreed.
- For a good mogarych, a drink and a snack, - suggested Artyom.
- Goes! - Grigory agreed. - Hands?

"Hands!" Artyom shook Grigory's hand. The handshake was "cut" with a weak blow from Vova.

Puzzled, Auto and Ruben continued to exchange glances. Soon Gregory got up and headed from the reservoir up a small slope to the nearest green spaces. Vova accompanied him as an expert observer.

From afar, from the shore, one could see how the snow-white sitting place of the unfortunate fisherman, squatting in the bushes, flashed.

- Ruben, now I think I'm going to vomit, - Avto got worried.
- Do not look, Mikhailovich, our business is fishing, - Ruben warned him.

"Perhaps you are right," agreed Avto, "I'd better climb through the clearing into the thickets of reeds and see if there is also a second heron there, because they rarely fly out alone.

While Auto, contrary to Ruben's requests and persuasion, made his way through the clearing to the island and conducted a futile search there, Ruben gradually dragged small fish together with Artyom, who kept gazing intently at those hiding behind the bushes.

Auto arrived in time, having got out of the reeds after a vain, fruitless search, and almost simultaneously with him triumphant Grigory with his fist clenched and shouting: "Caught, caught!" who kept the fly from "the good he did." Vova could barely keep up with him.

"Here," he showed Artyom a huge fly, mercilessly tore off its wings, hurriedly hooked his rod on the hook and threw the tackle as far as possible from the shore.

The result was not long in coming.

Soon Grigory, carefully and with caution, was dragging the hefty shamaya he had caught, which strove to cut off his tackle and throw him in an started dispute.

After some bickering, by a majority of votes, they decided to award the victory to Grigory, who immediately offered to bring Mogarych from the nearest super-mini-market.

"The devil knows what," Ruben was indignant to himself, "not fishing, but downright some kind of madhouse. And why go fishing when funny, funny situations can develop at home, in the yard, at work, anywhere?"

"Let's tick away from here, Ruben," suggested Avto, "for now, back to what some other "joy" was not pleased with these cheerful "adventurers" - as if guessing his thoughts.

- Exactly, Mikhailovich, he himself wanted to hint to you, but you got ahead of yourself, - Ruben immediately agreed, - but where?

Auto silently with a look and a gesture went after the recently released freed bird.

"Well, of course," Ruben thought, "where else?" And why did you have to ask about it, - and added aloud:

- Let's go, right?

Collecting personal belongings of Avto and Ruben did not take much time, although it upset the neighbors, the "unfortunate fishermen", who made a futile and fruitless, however, short-lived and not persistent attempt to keep them in their company.

Soon, Ruben, on his "Niva", together with Avto, crossed along the burned, ring and ring road around the city reservoir to the other, opposite side of it, to the beach, where several fugitives found shelter, apparently from city hustle and bustle and the sunbathing townspeople who have found peace and tranquility here.

While Ruben was choosing a place and parked his car on a dirt cinder slope, under sparsely planted trees, Avto ran to the shore of the reservoir and subjected the place to an inspection with a view to a possible basing in the future.

He suddenly remembered with regret that he had not taken with him the powerful optical modern binoculars sent to him personally by Eric, which would be useful to him now for studying the area, in the hope of somehow determining the traces of a waterfowl that had flown away from them in the morning, or, perhaps, some her relative, but with the naked eye it was much more difficult to do.

Finding no traces of the object he was looking for, he began to unhurriedly unwind the tackle.

"Maybe we'll set up a couple of donks, Mikhailovich," suggested Ruben, who had gone down to the shore.

Auto looked up at the clear sky.

- Is it worth it? The wind is picking up, he said.

- An attempt is not torture, - Ruben did not back down.

Time passed, the fish in the chosen place stubbornly did not want to peck.

From the distance came the cheerful exclamations of young people playing volleyball.

Auto, tired of keeping his spinning idle, set it on the sand, pressing down the end with a large stone.

"Let him lie, he won't go anywhere, there's still no bite," he thought, "if only I, an amateur, didn't bite, otherwise Ruben still doesn't shine with success."

From behind him he suddenly heard the approaching laughter of a young girl, which for some reason suddenly subsided.

Auto, immediately forgetting about him, returned to his thoughts, peering into the slightly agitated, blue water surface. Suddenly, not by ear, but rather by intuition, he caught that someone abruptly stopped behind his shoulder. Out of curiosity, he half turned around, looked up and was stunned by surprise.

- It turns out that you are also a fisherman? - A young girl in blue denim trousers, a plaid tank top and a fashionable beret asked in surprise.

"Eh-kah?" he blurted out.

- Yes! She! - coquettishly confirmed girl.

- What fate? - continued to be surprised Auto, getting up.

- Why, we went up here to rest a little with my sister and with a friend.

- Ah, - stretched Auto, - fine ... and here we are also fishing a little with a friend, while away our leisure time. Here is this friend, Ruben, meet!

Eka, hugging the white volleyball with both hands and pressing it to her, twitched slightly and dropped it.

- And we already know each other, - she muttered, looking from one to the other, and nodded her head towards Ruben.

- Yes? - Auto was surprised. - When did you meet?

"A few years ago, in the bird market, then ... well, remember"

- When in the trailer ...? - did not finish Auto.

- Yes, yes, - Eka confirmed quickly. - When you sold a parrot to my father and sister, I met him in the trailer.

Ruben, with difficulty, but remembered both her and this incident.

"Crazy!" Auto concluded to himself.

- What's the matter with you? - Eka was surprised. - You don't have a face! What did I say?

- No, nothing, - corrected Auto, slightly confused.

- Well, okay, I went, otherwise they are waiting for me there, - she suddenly threw out decisively, - if you want, join us, just there is not enough partner - the fourth player, and Nata, I think, will be glad to see you.

And Eka with a light gait went to her.

"Are you sure about this?" Auto threw after her.

- About what?

- About Nata.

- Ah? Oh yes! I guarantee!

“She has noticeably matured and prettier,” Auto looked after her. She, as if feeling, turned around for a moment, hesitated, and, sharply accelerating her pace, went on.

Auto was reminded of her old mention that she read minds from a distance.

“Surely she caught what I was thinking, and, to let me know, she turned around. How difficult it is to be a soccer ball, even for two players, and especially when the ball wants to stay longer with each of them, and they happily throw it towards each other, getting rid of it and causing him great pain.

Auto glanced at Ruben.

“That’s it, fishing has obviously come to ruin,” Ruben, meanwhile, thought, not without reason, adding with understanding aloud:

- Go, Mikhailovich, this is more important. Besides, they are already waiting for you.

- You think?

- Yes, yes, go, and I'll look after your gear somehow.

Thanks Ruben, you a true friend, - Auto admitted with joy and added a saying from the most famous cartoon as a joke, - when the water truce is over, it will be credited to you.

- You offend, boss, - Ruben winked at him with a smile.

The car was still halfway to the invitees, when a large fish pecked sharply at its spinning.

“It’s always like this in life,” Ruben was indignant in his soul, running up to the Auto spinning rod and barely having time to make a sharp cut, “we always leave at the wrong time, but this is more important than arriving on time ... Come to me, my dear Tamilochka , - he made a reservation, sensing the size of the caught fish, raising the end of the rod and pulling his next “floating” live prize towards him.

- Meet Levan, my friend, - Eka introduced the company to Auto, who joined her, - and this is my sister Natalie, whom I hope you know.

Auto silently shook hands with Levan, whom he had also known for a long time from the church.

- You arrived just in time, - Levan admitted, - otherwise these two sisters shot through me already.

The fight between the two couples ensued interesting and, as they say, not on the stomach, but "to the death." Natalie, who at first did not greet Auto very kindly, gradually thawed out.



Girls, unlike men, were not very fond of rescuing difficult serves, but tried, especially Natalie, not to miss the slightest opportunity to direct the firebox to Auto, which he took not without difficulty and stress, even in complex acrobatic jumps, which made her laugh and delivered great pleasure.

"Oh sport!" Auto admired himself, rushing along the dirt bank, reflecting the furnaces and smiles on her face. "You are truly the world! You reconcile people and nations!"

They played for a long time.

The next taking of Natalie's strong blow in the fall ended for Auto with a slight shoulder injury.

Natalie quickly ran up to him in fright.

"Are you hurt?" she asked, dropping to her knees and holding out her hand to his shoulder. Auto grimaced in pain and also reached for his shoulder.

Their hands met, as then, in the zoo. He was in no hurry to let go of her hand.

"Does it hurt?" she asked.

"It hurts," he confirmed, "only it hurts more here," he added, grabbing and pressing her hand to his heart.

She looked deep into his eyes for a long time, and a warm shiver ran through his body.

"Why are you torturing me, Nata?" he said in an undertone.

- Let's go for a swim, - Levan called, - otherwise it became hot.

- You will not go swimming? - Nata asked, freeing her hand from captivity.

- I'm afraid my shoulder won't allow it, - Avto hesitated.

- Well, look, - Natalie said indifferently and got up.

- Go with them, and I'll wait for you here.

- With whom with them? Eka does not bathe, Natalie explained.

- Why? - surprised Auto.

- Religion hit hard.

- So what?

- I don't know, talk to her, maybe convince her? The Church does not recommend being naked .. - Nata chuckled.

Throwing off their extra clothes, he and Levan slowly walked towards the water.

- She's really beautiful, isn't she? - Eka asked Auto, following Levan and Natalie in bathing suits with her eyes.

- Like any desirable and unattainable peak, - Auto agreed with her.

"If she had the same soft and even character as her figure, then ..." he suggested.

- How amazing it would be, right? - Eka seemed to finish his thought. - If life was built according to our scenarios, - she added, after a little hesitation.

Auto looked at her with a slight apprehension.

- In any case, Auto, hold on steadfastly, - Eka advised, - for those who love are blessed, not those who are loved. I'm going to the monastery for a little while this week," she added for some reason.

- And I'm going to Rome, to the international seminar-school of ornithologists.

And who knows when we'll meet again?

- Go to church, Auto, more often, we'll meet there for sure. I say the same to Natalie, but both of you are so hard to convince and persuade. Reasons and pretexts can be found as many as you like, but we should not forget that outside the church there is neither life nor salvation. She's like Noah's Ark, which has everything that a person needs.

- If only it could be changed a little bit, - Auto complained sadly.

- Do you really have such a hard time with her? - asked Eka.

- I confess, it is much easier for me to communicate with you, - Auto admitted.

You just have to accept her for who she is. That's all!

"Why not?" Auto asked.

Because you want her more than she wants you.

- But that's not enough.

- And what else? - asked Eka in turn.

- Each person has his own principles, his own views ... And much more besides desires.

- You lose her in time.

And does she use it?

"Perhaps," Eka admitted, "although I do not advise you to especially listen to my advice. After all, I can't completely, to the very depths, penetrate and look into the soul, even my own, not like someone else's, even sisters.

- I do not consider it justified the desire to admire the feelings of another person, to put before my own feelings, especially if this person is your chosen one, who, as you just noticed, is in time trouble.

- Auto, listen to my advice, - Eka suggested despite her earlier appeal. - I know for sure: if you don't accept her game, you will lose it. At the same time is not worth it to indulge in everything. For the sake of friendship with people, do not betray the Almighty, be the leader, not the follower.

It was as if the car had been doused with a tub of cold water.

"I'm used to losses," he said with pain in his soul.

- You may not be able to bear this loss, because you are not with Him.
- How do you know this?
- I not only read minds, but also see a lot.
- And you do not exaggerate your capabilities?
- Do you think Levan loves me?

“Otherwise he wouldn’t be here now,” Auto exclaimed with confidence, and then, as if choking, fell silent.

“I admit, I don’t like him either. But nevertheless, if there was a choice between him and Him, - Eka looked at the sky ... - it will not fall in his favor.

Both suddenly fell silent at once and focused on the swims of Levan and Natalie.

A little further away from them, a boat was sailing at high speed, dragging two young guys on water skis on a cable, figuratively cutting through the waves and now and then doing different tricks.

- Not bad? - Eka did not slow down with the question.

“Yeah, I guess so,” Auto confirmed.

- I would love to go water skiing too, - Nata said dreamily, leaving the water with Levan and running up to Auto and Eka sitting on the mat.

- How thin, snow-white and transparent, - Auto smiled in his soul, - like a freshly dried vobla in the sunlight.

She was really walking now, blocking the sun, the rays of which made their way through her body, like X-rays, highlighting the internal organs.

- Can you do it? - Auto was amazed.

- She has a category in skiing, - Eka confirmed.

- What about water skiing?

- Isn't it the same thing? - Natalie laughed. - The water is both there and here, only frozen there, but warm here. That's the whole difference.

- I would like to try it, then? - Auto specified.

- Well! - Nata nodded her head thoughtfully. - Actually, of course, I want to try, but to be honest, I wonder how I can do it?!

Less than an hour later, Natalie was warming up on water skis with the help of a boat brought by Auto from the pier.

At first, it didn’t go quite smoothly, but, through numerous trials and errors, falls and rises, as well as the advice of the helmsman and instructor at the same time, she improved and improved her skills with each next attempt. In the end, I was visibly tired, I felt how the muscles of my legs and arms ached, and my strength diminished.

She complicated her regular race, as it turned out later, with a sweeping abduction of her arms to the sides, but on a flat surface, having grown bolder, she

tried to perform a trick with a turn around herself on the go. She released the wooden handle of the towing cable from her hand, already began to turn around herself, but the second hand did not hold her back. Having missed the towline, she flopped into the water and, although she floundered as best she could, she felt with horror that she was being pulled to the bottom.

The car, as if expecting this, jumped into the water and, ahead of the boat, jerkily swam up to it literally in an instant.

She threw herself on his neck and hung on it.

“It would be nice if it was like that on land,” he muttered loudly enough.

“Help me get rid of the skis,” Nata asked.

Auto rushed to comply with her request, although she still clung to him in fear. He gladly took advantage of the opportunity and responded to her in the same way.

They never approached each other so closely. But happiness, as usual, did not last long. Soon he felt the full burden of their mutual, earthly love, which gave joy and pleasure, and, at the same time, mixed up all their dreams and plans for a future life. They were drawn to one another, and to the bottom of the reservoir.

He could not fail to understand that now she belonged entirely to him and would not even refuse anything, but also not to realize that, gaining her, he was losing himself. The desire to survive exceeded love, despite the fact that she, on the contrary, clinging to him with all her might, was ready to sacrifice herself, to die with him.

It suddenly dawned on him that now, here, in the water, she loved him more than he loved her, although on land he saw the situation as completely opposite.

“Stop hanging on me and hugging me,” he demanded for the last time, “otherwise we will both go to the bottom and the sailing boat will get only air bubbles.

“I’ll remind you of this on land,” she threatened, smiling and shuddering at the same time with fear, “and she also aims for cavaliers, strives to court.

- I wonder how, huh? - He was inspired afloat, - for the first time you mentioned the nature of our relationship. They say you don't lie in the face of death.

“Where did your gallantry disappear to?” she quipped, “and indeed, apparently, friends are known in trouble.

- With dear Levanchik you swim much better than with me.

- How observant you are! I'm just tired.

- At sea, as in life, you need to move your arms and legs all the time so as not to drown, - he reminded me instructively.

- Yes you?! And I thought it was better all the same brains. If I knew you from such a side, I would not have dared to take such a risky pleasure.

- For pleasure it is necessary to pay.

- Oh, - she suddenly cried out, - my calf muscle cramped!

- So, without panic, - he strictly commanded, - take in as much air as possible, stretch the heel as much as possible and lie on your back, spreading your limbs like wings. Hold on a little longer. I will support you. Now the boat is sailing. He will take us.

He helped her stretch her leg afloat.

- Well, how, let go a little?

"Yes, it's easier now, thank you," she sighed with relief.

"Well, that's how it is better," he calmed down, supporting her and gradually trawling towards the approaching boat.

She, overcoming fear, calmly lay on her back, looked at the clear and clear sunny sky with several small cirrus clouds spread over it, admitted in her soul:

"How beautiful life is, and how good it is in this world," and quietly, but audibly, she babbled aloud:

- I want you to know about it, just in case if we don't swim and I can't confess to you, I...

- Curious?..

- No, I want to say it in your ear.

"It's better to tell about it on the shore," he interrupted her, "and now stop basking, grab the edge of the side of the boat and climb on it.

Frightened Eka and Levan were waiting for them on the shore. Those terrible few minutes seemed like an eternity to them.

- Well, how are you? - Eka rushed in horror to her sister.

- Normally, - stolid Nata phlegmatically, with the help of Auto disembarking from the boat and slightly limping.

- Muscle cramped, - explained Avto.

Avto and Levan clasped their hands together, sat Natalie down, carried her over and dropped her off on a wide bedding on a dirt bank not far from the water.

- Okay, you shouldn't make a drama out of the case, - Natalie said with a slightly strained nonchalance, - everything is in order, nothing special happened.

- Well, all right, chief, - the steering boat calmed down, - I'll go. Auto paid him with an overpayment:

- Keep the change!

- Well, thank you, - the captain moved towards the boat.

- You wanted to ride it too, didn't you? - Levan asked Eku.

- Okay, now is not the time, - Eka dismissed it indifferently, - some other time.

"But why in another," Nata objected to her. "Such a good case. The helmsman paused and looked back.

- Take them for a walk, - Nata asked him, instructed Ek Levan, joked:

- Watch out, don't drop it in the water.

- All right, Nata, - Levan agreed with joy, dragging Eka by the hand, slightly resting on his reins and looking back every now and then.

- You can take your time, admire the most beautiful coastal territory to your heart's content, - Avto admonished them.

- All right, all right, - Levan was already responding from the boat.

- Massage my right calf, please, - Natalie asked Auto, trying to stretch her leg and hiding behind a wide-brimmed hat.

- How do you like Levan? - obviously enjoying the works of Auto, she suddenly threw languidly.

- Not a bad guy, it seems, - suggested Auto.

- Not bad, - Nata agreed, - but too rustic and not wiser with life experience. But love...? And the sea, and Homer?... everything is moved by love...

- Life teaches everything. And the fact that he is next to Eka will bear fruit.

- The philosophy of the presence of the German philosopher Heidegger that a person ...

"Yes," he agreed, interrupting her, "swimming next to big ships makes even small ones big. And by the way, your skin turned pretty red, no matter how it turned out to be a burn.

"I completely forgot about sunscreen," she thought, rummaging through her wicker summer purse, found the right tube and threw it back behind him.

- I still believe that you need to rely on what you know, and not on what you see. Each person has its own trail and gravity to represent everything visually and objectively.

"And at the same time, it forms again and again every time," he settled comfortably on his knees, taking up the procedure.

- It would be nice to have a light massage, - she asked, - I really want to relax, otherwise my muscles ache. Well, this is a prop... At the same time, she continued, it is difficult to deprive a person of the vital need to feel alive, unique, irreplaceable, not superfluous, after all.

"And to put it simply, understand and be understood," he corrected, smoothing her shoulders.

- Naturally, - she agreed, - after all, even Aristotle, in my opinion, said that a person is a political being, which, in essence, differs from an animal.

- Rather and more accurately, I think, to call it a biosocial creature.

- Biopsychosociological, - she corrected, - as psychologists like to say now, given his craving for sociability. You can untie the ribbon from the bra if it interferes.

- Humanity is communication skills, according to Kant.

- One of his misfortunes is that people, like a herd, tend to follow leaders, leaders, ideals, not giving themselves the trouble to think once again for themselves, to look for the truth and the right path for their further development.

- How nice... Thank you, Auto. You look at what has been happening in our country in recent years and what is happening now. How quickly everything in life is changing, almost with cosmic speed, and still not in our favor. Where did we go as one, and where did we come as divided?

“Alas, this is the whole point of the law of decomposition,” he explained, “when one decomposition leads to another, and so on.” Social reality, alas, interferes with the implementation of the ideal but into reality. One decomposes with another, the other with a third ... Feet to miss? - He digressed from the topic.

- And what, aren't they part of my body? - she was surprised, turning back in his direction. - Of course, the ideal is not something connected only with objective reality, and even with subjective. But he is always, as it were, above her, and this helps him to be a stimulator of spiritual movement.

There is always a huge gap between reality and the ideal, which at first may not be as noticeable as at the end, when events unfold.

“Still, I think that society, even if it is disappointed in its ideal-chosen one, should reckon with and respect at least its early opinion, or, more precisely, its choice, and patiently wait for the expiration of its choice,” he remarked with conviction.

- Monotony kills life - she complained - especially unwanted.

- After all, even Tolstoy once noticed that no significant and high-profile deeds are done under the noise, rumble and roar, but imperceptibly, quietly, and as Seneca claimed, everything truly great is born by slow, imperceptible growth. After all, civilization itself implies an aversion to violence and murder in general, as well as to war and terror.

- Haven't you noticed, Auto, that we often welcome the same thing in one situation, and reject it in another, depending on when and what we prefer.

- Yes, these are the greatest words of Marx that the actions of some often collide with the actions of others, and the result is something that no one wanted.

- Times and people change. And yet, I think, it's not particularly pleasant when you don't control yourself and when they decide for you where to be and what to do. What to do for people for whom the chosen system does not suit or begins to not suit. If there are far from a few of them, they should not move in large numbers from the country.

"And what is happening now, isn't that?" he interrupted her.

- Escape from hunger and want, I think, is not the same as flight from the system of an ingrained psychosocial worldview. Don't you find? Lubricate this side too," she half-turned.

- Carousel of ordeals! You can see different things in the same thing, - he insisted on his own, fundamentally and conscientiously doing his job, generously lubricating his hands and switching to her neck.

"Academician Sakharov argued that society exists for people and for good," she recalled, putting her hand to her chest and holding the untied bra.

- It is impossible to be perfect in everything.

"In that case, maybe you should listen to your nearest sentient surroundings.

- Which can now and then let you down?

"Well, each person chooses and generates an environment around himself," she exclaimed with joyful conviction.

- It's easy to proclaim a republic, as the French say, but where can you find true republicans? There is no prophet in his own country.

- On the contrary, Chekhov believes that true geniuses always sit in the dark. The feat of one, as a rule, is the result of the bungling of the other, - she noticed. - More important than victories is sometimes perseverance, and life is constantly changing its traditions.

"Perfection is a path, not a goal," he expressed his opinion, also not without confidence.

- Any extreme is the sister of limitation, as Belinsky claims, and is it possible to disagree with him on this?

- In the end, no one has power over anyone or anything. Essence of the Hippocratic Oath

"Do no harm!" has equal force, I think, both in medicine and in politics, if not more in the latter, since the extent of damage is greater in it than in medicine.

- Absurdity is not the final, but the starting point of our reasoning, says Camus, - he remembered.

- That's it! But even absurdity, apparently, like a stick, has at least two ends, - she retorted. - But one positive phenomenon in everything that happens in our country,



perhaps, cannot be overlooked. It is possible to reveal the true essence of a person only in extreme situations, which in our country were, as they say, more than enough, and the mask was torn off from almost everyone and everyone appeared before society and the country in its true form. Only, apparently, it is not necessary to blame and scold each other for this. After all, we, each of us, came into this world, was born in this country, with our own specific mission, and, in addition, we are called to complement and help each other, but only in good deeds and undertakings, and not in evil deeds.

- Reality, brought to the point of absurdity, is fantasy, - Avto noticed, recalled Pushkin's: - Experience, son of difficult mistakes.

"There are many ways to set up and equip your garden," Chekhov believed, but the best of them is to invite a good gardener ... Oh, well, her ... and God bless her, with this policy, enough about her, better anoint me and hands," she asked, throwing them around her neck.

He pulled himself closer, lubricated his arms along the entire length.

She, throwing her head to one side and closing her eyes, quietly and obediently reclined and almost purred with pleasure. Measured movements lulled, languor spread through her body, and she gradually sank into drowsiness. Rapid breathing rhythmically shook her chest.

The conversation on political and spontaneous general social and philosophical topics somehow withered at once.

He continued methodically rubbing the ointment into her and suddenly felt a heat rise in her blood. It was possible to look away from her body, but with her hands it was more difficult.

Having completed the procedure at the neck, he focused his attention on the boat already approaching the shore, but unruly palms involuntarily slid down from his forearms, and with amazement bordering on horror, he felt under them a small elastic chest with a hard cool tip. Her low, drawn-out moan accompanied the touch.

He froze. She came to her senses in the blink of an eye, and their eyes met. Her bra, with the straps untied, slid down over her stomach, and not two, but four eyes were staring at him.

- What do you allow yourself? - numb, she whispered.

He took his hands away in fright, and what they had just felt was revealed.

She jumped up as if stung, leaned forward, covered herself with her hands, somehow put on her bra and asked to tie it from behind.

- What unheard of rudeness! - she gasped.

"But is it part of your body, too?" he joked unsuccessfully and blushed.

- Yes, but covered! Interesting! So, if I hadn't woken up, you might have...

Ham! Leave now!

He got up heavily, drooping like a boy, and began to collect his things.

She continued to be indignant, muttering something under her breath, endowing the offender with humiliating epithets, until cheerful and contented Eka and Levan ran up with joyful smiles on their faces.

- What happened? - Eka looked inquiringly and slightly puzzled at the indignant Natalie and the confused Avto. - Did you quarrel?

- Well no! I just lingered here too long," Avto explained despondently. "I need to go, Ruben was already waiting for me there.

Avto finally gathered his things and, saying goodbye to everyone, and shaking hands with Levan, went to Ruben, who had almost lost patience and almost half filled the fish tank with fish of various sizes.

- And we, probably, it's time, Eka, - Natalie got up, and began to get ready. - It's late ... you see, the sun is already at its zenith.

- Yes, please, as you say! - Eka did not object, exchanging puzzled glances with Levan.

The wind on the sea usually increased by noon and subsided, as a rule, in the evening.

The fishermen mostly did not disperse, they waited for the evening bite, sunbathing and swimming townspeople and guests hurried about their business, especially since the water under the scorching sun noticeably decreased, exposing the vast area around the reservoir.

## II

On July 14, 1789, King Louis XVI of France wrote one word in his diary: "Nothing."

However, on this day, the French took the Bastille and the French Revolution began. (From the history)

"The revolution, the necessity of which the Bolsheviks have been repeating for so long, is finally happened."

V.I. Lenin

Numerous and tense pre-election parliamentary battles between many old and new parties and national and other movements for

a month before the elections to the parliament, the countries received a certain, three-four-week lull in anticipation of the vote and the announcement of its results.

But this confrontation and the struggle for the triumph of justice in the country not only did not end, but, on the contrary, flared up with renewed vigor.

Among the parties contesting parliamentary mandates, accusing the existing authorities of electoral fraud, the most zealous were the activists of the Kmar, the national movement of the country, whose speeches and demonstrations were gaining more and more strength every day, attracting more and more segments of the population and covering all new districts and regions of the country.

Everything went and moved towards an inevitable denouement with all the signs of a revolution.

The situation was heating up and leading to an inevitable explosion, which both sides were wary of, remembering that the country had been fed up with bloodshed for the previous twelve years.

One way or another, this common desire of both sides was realized in favor of the future, in favor of those who did not want to live under the old foundations and conditions of life.

Finally, a revolution happened, fortunately for the country - a peaceful one, later called the velvet or rose revolution, which filled with glimmers of hope for many people, many sections of the country's population, and, which is significant, happened on the day of the holy Great Martyr George.

The inertia of the past was still too great, many things did not immediately lend themselves to correction and in some cases even offered stubborn resistance to the new.

As they say, "breaking is not building", and what has been built for many decades is easily destroyed in a matter of hours.

It is sometimes difficult for people to give up what was useful and necessary in the past. On the contrary, overthrowing that of the old that once was not to their liking, they sweep away the paths, destroy and destroy, and much that could come in handy, and even very much, in the future.

One way or another, the beginning was laid. The country completely refused to live in the old way. Having chosen a new president at the beginning of the next, new, year, it turned over a new page in the history of its development and, in a new way, with new hopes for a new president, began to gradually pick up the pace of movement. It was necessary to approach the solution of each issue in a new way, and, as you know, you can't take on everything at once and you can't fix everything.

Lay unbelievers, as usual, met the new year on the first of January, allowing themselves to break the fast on this day, while the believers celebrated it on the night of the fourteenth of January, after the Nativity of Christ, when the fast ends.

This religious holiday is loved and celebrated by young people, and they prepare for it no less than for the New Year's Eve in a new style.

### III

The ski slope of medium difficulty was marked with flags, so that the participants of unofficial, amateur competitions had to face a lot of tasks, puzzles and needed to show special skills for its full and complete passage.

"No, it's too complicated for women," thought the annoyed skier, approaching the finish line and looking back at the path she had traveled along the track, and in life in general.

At least two flags are set too close to each other.

- If you don't like it, don't eat it, - as if guessing her thoughts, another skier advised her who had traveled around her.

"Whose cow would moo, and yours would be silent," the first one mentally reproached her adviser, whose descent she watched from above.

She felt, but did not want to admit even to herself, that her speed, maneuverability, class and, finally, skill since last year's skating had sharply decreased and fallen.

"No," she was stubborn in her soul, "I still have to go through this route, because last year it was even more difficult."

She slowly climbed to the top, once again using the services of a belt rope lift, deeply immersed in thoughts and once again mentally passing the entire route, past each flag, as if past every life test.

She analyzed her mistakes, scolded herself for them, and tried to pass "failed exams", that is, failed or poorly passed flags again and again, until she got at least a relative sense of satisfaction. I was happy to feel and note the parallels, dissimilarities and similarities found and discovered right now, correlating them with life situations, and making sure that unexpected falls on the track with bruises or injuries could be worse than missing the flags, or even, who knows, with a lethal outcome. But who forced the skiers to pass the track at all?

Of course, in this case, no one. Driven by personal, subjective desire, fueled by sensation and pleasure, which gives a dizzying descent along the track.

Taking off to the top, the skier in special equipment for some reason thought about how a person, growing up, with increasing years begins to capture life's problems, aspects and relevance of the tasks facing modern man and society, to make a lot of work and effort to catch up, not lose time and keep up with it.

The most successful, industrious and lucky people manage to do this through painstaking, in some cases hard labor, and, fortunately, they eventually catch up with time and the "front line" of the scientific and technological process, and for a long time they even manage to keep pace with it.

But sooner or later there comes a time when even outstanding lucky people still realize that they are starting to lag behind life a little. And this inexorably grows in spite of their desire and efforts, and in the end it becomes obvious that time and life have greatly surpassed them and it is impossible to overtake and grab onto anything, but you can only cast a glance after them, give up on the futility of your attempts and continue moving first along inertia, and then to the best of their ability and strength.

More than one attempt by a young skier was crowned with far from absolute success.

And now she walks with a slow heavy gait along the snowy road, to the boarding house, alone, alone, defeated, crushed, shifting from one ski to another, leaning on sticks. He walks, swallowing tears and reproaching himself: "You need to crack less sweets, drink coffee and indulge in cigarettes ... then there will be no such failures." She thinks with horror what will happen to her results next year if she is lucky to come here again, and from behind her came the ringing of the bells of a trio of horses harnessed to the sledge. Just then, a familiar male voice rang out:

- Do not worry, beauty! When life closes its doors to you in one field, it means that it will open it in another. The question is small - to find this door.

"He found the door, and everything in it changed!" she remembered, and without waiting for the sleigh to go around her, she turned around on the go, took aback and fell.

The sleigh stopped immediately.

Unable to rise to her feet, which were intertwined from an unsuccessful and unexpected fall, she automatically grabbed hold of the strong male hands that instantly lifted her.

With amazement, recognizing her assistant, already standing on her feet and brushing off the stuck snow, she exclaimed passionately:

- I don't need your help!

- It's enough for you, Natalie, to sulk, I really didn't want to offend you then, it just happened, - smiling, the man wrapped in a warm padded jacket asked for mercy, - well, forgive me at least after time.

Natalie walked for a long time upset, annoyed at her "savior", overtaking the sleigh alone, rebellious, unshakable, but she drove up to the boarding house already in her arms and in a padded jacket.

"Thank you," she muttered reluctantly, "for giving me a ride. But don't count on anything else.

- Except for one evening, today, in a cozy restaurant, - the "savior" invited Natalie with a smile.

- Not in any way! - She objected. - Thank you, and that's all over.

- OK! So we agreed. I'll be waiting for you at Natalie's at seven o'clock in the evening," the savior clarified gallantly, heading for the sleigh.

"It's interesting," she felt intrigued, "it's clear that they really opened a new restaurant, it's necessary, after all, my namesake, but anyway I'm not going anywhere with this boor," she resisted herself, hastily taking off her padded jacket, throwing her into the sled and staring into the eyes of the "savior".

"They are kind and beautiful," she thought involuntarily.

The "Savior" hesitated at first, but immediately came to his senses, grabbed her by the elbows, pulled her to him and bowed to her lips. I felt frequent blows and an onslaught in the chest, but in the kiss there was a certain response and length.

"Why does she need this game" Who doesn't want to confess? Yourself? To me?.. To whom?!" He was sobered up by a strong slap in the face, such that she even cried out.

"I didn't know that you had such sweet lips and such a strong hand!"

"savior", contorted in pain and clutching his cheek with his hand.

- Let's go! - he threw and, looking around, managed to notice how she, exhausted, followed him with her eyes.

"He will come, he will certainly come," he thought with joy, already losing sight of her.

In the evening, they sat at a small table in a restaurant, with glasses of champagne, facing each other and talked about everything that should have started acquaintance, and, most importantly, replenished information about the life of one and the other in the past, about its interesting events. and outlook on the future.

The evening turned out to be warm, cozy, there was a lot of champagne, red wine, snacks, sweets, music, dancing.

Natalie, to make him a little surprise, slightly tinted her left cheek in pandan to his victim.

This did not go unnoticed by a few eyes from neighboring tables, who perceived the stain as just another fashion.

Natalie, on the other hand, stroked the trace of her temper with her eyes, often repeated the word

"savior", since she even uttered "dear", by the end of the evening, before parting, when he found out what fate she had got here.

- Came with colleagues. The director arranged for us, through the union, an almost week-long weekend during the winter holidays.

- Trade unions still exist? - Avto was surprised.

- As you see! I'm here. How did you get here?"

- I have only one opportunity to get where I am. In connection with work. I am not alone here either, I came to the regional conference of ornithologists.

- Oh, is that it? And I thought...

- And correctly thought. Engine work... Nata laughed.

Although, I confess to you, this has never happened to me before.

"So what are we doing now in this restaurant?"

I'm trying to find a chance...

- Ah, well, then let's go dancing, I invite you.

- The price of a mistake is sometimes too high, - Auto opened up in a slow dance with Natalie, - there are two dilemmas: how to keep someone who wants to leave you ...

- And how to drive away the one who does not want to leave!

- How do you know this?

Whoever ties the knot, untie it. Nothing comes easy! I don't play, no This is fate and life playing with me and everyone. Tragedy is not originally in a person, but outside him, in everything that surrounds him.

- I can't agree with that. Nothing interferes with true feeling like reason, and nothing interferes with real reason so much as emotions.

- What is this, Krylov's fable - about a swan, a cancer and a pike? - Natalie's hand slid over his arm.

- In the struggle between reason and feeling, sooner or later either one or the other wins. How could it be otherwise?

- Yes, - Natalie agreed, - there is logic with a very strong emotional sphere, but at the same time it plays a subordinate role, feelings act as servants of the mind. But

there are a lot of these people, with a strong mind, but subject to feelings. What type are you?"

- I'm an ornithologist. Only. And I prefer feelings, spirit, flesh and mind to direct in one direction.

- Oh, and how do you do it?

- The sky helps me in this.

- It's funny. But what about us, not birds?

- Aim for the sky. Too!

- But how, we do not have wings?

- It is enough for this one desire and a pure heart, from which the mind becomes pure.

- Well, let's say I want to take off right now. And how to do it?

Natalie removed her hands from his neck and waved them in time with the melodious music, which attracted the attention of others.

- The head should participate in this, - Avto smiled, - I can arrange a flight for those who wish, which will be remembered for a lifetime.

- Curious! - thought Natalie. - I wish. And when?

- Tomorrow morning. Sunday and our section is closed.

- Deal. But it won't be ski jumping upside down."

- Not really. Tomorrow everything will be clear.

- Open the door, and you will know everything.

Sad music and sad times. It goes on and everything changes. Irrepressible and elusive... Why is Auto so boring to live in this world? Thoughts, and those are incredibly old. You get tired and dumb from work, from the hustle and bustle, from the crowd ... what to do?

- Avoid crowds, as Plato called for. And the holy fathers in general advise only to work, avoid people and keep silent, and by this you can be saved.

But it's not for everyone, is it? To each his own...

- Changing states by the method of change also sometimes gives a little respite.

- I think, yes. This is the simple remedy we all use. What happens if boiled water is not allowed to steam out.

- The next dance is too energetic. I do not love him. Shall we return to the table?

- And yet, whatever you say, a bad peace is better than any quarrel. Isn't it?" she asked, sitting down.

- And there, you look, and maybe ... - Auto answered hopefully.

- Ability to wait.

- Or in love? - He looked into her eyes.



- Impatience will not help the cause. Desperate love sees only the external and does not penetrate the essence of things, - she looked away, sipping from an elegant crystal glass of champagne.

"We still need to make mutual concessions," he insisted.

- In any case, even if you want to quit the game, you need to play the game you started to the end.

- Force recognizes the force, the heart - the heart.

And pain knows pain. In life, sometimes you have to make not only mutual, but also complete concessions.

- Self-sacrifice? - said Auto sadly.

- Yes! But do not worry, I am not inclined to this, and without mutual feeling I can be for some time complaisant, submissive, but heartless.

- Lawless Heart?

- Yes, definitely. Although sometimes because of this we lose a lot. They love the eyes, and it is noticeable, - she consoled him with a look.

"Scientists are also talking about some indirect treatment that occurs through communication and the presence of a close, desired person," he caught this look. "To be honest, Nata, my feeling exists in my imagination. I have become attached to you, and, oddly enough, I really want to ring you.

- Just like the birds?

- Yes! So that, wherever you fly, you have my ring, or rather my rings, as a memory of me.

He took two small cases out of his pocket. She took them both curiously.

He spoke, she did not answer, tried on rings, one of which was expensive jewelry, and the second was simple, for ringing birds, engraved with her full name with a surname, dates.

She liked it, one was closer to the soul, the other to the mind.

- Me Count Cagliostro would certainly help a lot now, - Auto suggested in an undertone, - the great magician of the realization and materialization of feelings.

"A true artist copies not nature, but his imagination and feeling, and you have now surpassed the great magician in many ways," a tear rolled down her cheek.

She rose from her seat and lightly touched his lips across the table.

- I love, my Count Cagliostro, - she tightened the touch, which again attracted the attention of neighboring tables.

- Gold arises from mercury on the tenth day, and love arises from hostility on the fifteenth. It took me much more time, so I'm far behind the count.

Natalie, with joy and a restrained smile, put a ring on the finger of her right hand.

After a pause, she timidly reached out to the second one, put it on the finger of her other hand:

- Thanks! Very, very beautiful! - waving her hands in the air, she again reached across the table to him.

Auto's cell phone rang.

"Mikhailovich, where are you and how are you, we are worried about you here," a voice was heard.

- It's okay, it's okay, Ruben. I ring the main bird in my life.

- Wow! Well, and fine! - exclaimed a voice.

Do you remember the bird at the reservoir?

- Well! Do you need my help there?

- Not. And mine? - Asked Avto. - In short, look at me, keep an eye on me properly.

- Good good! Everything will be OK. The connection was suddenly interrupted.

Avto and Natalie talked for a long time, almost until midnight, in a cozy small, recently opened restaurant.

The auto accompanied the revived Natalie to the very door of her room in the boarding house, however, located not far from the restaurant.

They walked, slowly, unhurriedly. Auto told funny stories from his nomadic ornithological life. He tried to choose the funniest one, because he liked her laughter more than her conversations.

- Well, see you tomorrow? - he addressed her semi-questioningly at the very door.

- Until tomorrow! - she answered loudly, piercing him with a fixed, somehow magical look.

He touched her lips and, as if tearing a kiss from them, was already moving away, when suddenly she slightly pulled him by the tie towards her.

"Don't go," she breathed out almost in a whisper, "stay today." I'll ask my friend to move downstairs, and you stay.

"I don't know, Nata," he hesitated, embarrassedly, "tomorrow is going to be a very interesting but difficult day.

"Not tomorrow, today," she whispered into his ear. Drinking disturbed her, while he, having wiped his face with snow a couple of times along the way, partly got out of his influence.

"Today... today," Auto handed her a pamphlet.

"What is it?" she recoiled.

- Read.

- What is it?! Learn to fly on... I don't see, it's dark here, - Natalie muttered in a capricious tone, lowering the brochure into the spacious pocket of her warm jacket.

- Tomorrow!

- Yes?

- Yes.

"Well, look," she shook her index finger, pushed him away, and noisily went to her room.

## IV

In the morning, Natalie was awakened by the inviting voice of Auto, who rolled up under her window on a troika with a sledge in the company of a couple.

"It dawned so quickly?" Natalie was surprised, looking out the window, shivering and not daring to go out onto a small balcony. "But I didn't get enough sleep!" She pointed to the clock and explained with gestures that she could be ready no earlier than in half an hour.

Auto nodded his head.

"Yes, you need to preen yourself in order," Natalie thought, looking at herself in the bathroom mirror. "It's good for men: he jumped up, dressed like a soldier and went. You can not even comb your hair and not wash.

- Get acquainted, this is Ruben, and this is Tamila, - Auto introduced her to her after half an hour of his companions.

"We are familiar with Ruben, but not with Tamila," she clarified, getting settled in the sleigh and greeting.

Women very soon found a common language.

- And where are we, in fact, going? - Nata realized halfway.

- Surprise, - put his index finger to his lips Auto.

The troika rolled up to two long warehouses on the crest of a low hill near the outskirts of a small winter resort town.

Nata remembered yesterday's little book, which Avto handed her in the semi-darkness, in the corridor of the boarding house.

She fumbled for it in her jacket pocket and read the title.

"Learn to fly a hang-glider!" she repeated aloud. "I'm crazy."

- Did you read it?

- When would I have time?

- It's a pity, it would be useful in the sky, - Auto looked up.

- I'm not going to fly!

Soon, Ruben and Tamila, and then Auto, who came to the rescue, prepared two small double hang gliders for flight.

- Yes, but I don't know how at all, - Nata murmured with fear, theoretically assessing the possibilities of flight in her mind.

- The main thing is not skill, but desire, - Ruben explained.

"If you dare, you won't regret it," Tamila began to persuade, flashing her eyes, "obey him in the air, if you want him to obey you on the ground. It's not scary with him. He's the one who taught us.

Natalie shot an inquiring look at Auto.

"Really crazy! Well, okay, but I forgot my helmet and skis," she tried to cling to the reason for Natalie's refusal, "dug out" spontaneously.

"Do you want me to give you mine?" Tamila suggested.

- Don't you need it?

I have two, one spare. Go to the warehouse, try it on, choose one. At the same time pick up goggles, skis and everything that is useful in flight and landing. There is a complete set of equipment.

Two feelings were fighting now in Natalie.

On the one hand, she wanted to experience the feeling of an open flight, to compare it with skiing, when you jump from small springboard towers, on the other hand, the fear of her inexperience and the primacy of flight still prevailed.

"Trust me, ski jumping is much more dangerous and more difficult than flying like a bird on a hang glider," Auto convinced her.

- Yes, but I'm not even insured, - Natalie put forward a new reason, but immediately concentrated: "Good idea, you will need to insure. At least in case you are lucky enough to come here again."

- Do not insist, Mikhailovich. She's obviously looking for reasons not to fly, - Ruben was offended.

- I should have taken Gela with me, - Auto said with annoyance.

"Yes, but he was really unwell," Tamila exclaimed in bewilderment.

- Well, all right, guys, you are flying, and Nata and I will return to the boarding house, - Auto became despondent. For a while they were despondently silent.

"Flying like birds is a man's old and eternal dream," Ruben suddenly dropped.

- Well, well, I'll take a chance, - Natalie decided with horror.

- Here is a good fellow, - Tamila encouraged her, - you will see, there is nothing terrible, but the pleasure is indescribable. When else such an opportunity will turn up.

- A free will, - Ruben also encouraged, - a big ship has a great voyage.

Sorry, aeronautics!

- Whoever wants, he can! - Vysotsky seemed to say so, - Avto remembered, - however, I will still conduct a little consultation on this little book, well, the so-called digression. And I will ask Tamila to pick up full equipment for Nata.

Ruben continued to fiddle with hang gliders.

Auto and Nata looked through the pamphlet. The most difficult thing was to perceive and explain the cases and nature of possible injuries during hang-gliding.

Nata was perplexed, did not understand everything from half hints.

- You're not averse to ... - Auto proceeded in a roundabout way. Natalie nodded reluctantly.

So, in the air...

- Ah...

A little more than half an hour later, the hang gliders were almost ready to start from a not very high slope. The success of their upcoming flight largely depended on the accuracy of the most difficult stage.

The commanders of the "liners" were, to be sure, men. Soon they were already checking the direction of the wind by the ribbons on the front guy wires and mentally replaying the entire flight and their actions in possible situations.

- Ruben, we will take off first, and you follow us. Fly without moving away, - ordered Avto. - Be extremely collected, attentive to Tamila and ready for any unexpected situation.

Tamila smiled, and Auto activated in instructions:

- Sensitively fix the change in the angles of attack of air flows, transmit control actions to the steering linkage in time.

There was a fear of exposing the flight participants to some kind of blemishes or injuries.

- Auto, I'm afraid, - Nata mumbled in horror.

- Yes? And I thought that...

- Both that, and another, - with the growing fright admitted Natalie.

- So what's more?

- Just in case, - she touched Auto's cheek with her lips, - who knows, suddenly there will not be such an opportunity.

Only now did they feel all the sharpness and depth of their feelings, realized that they were made for each other, and a little later they realized that they were made for the sky.

- Well, with God, let's go! - Auto waved his hand, as once the leader of the rebels Spartak, who moved them forward after him.

From a steep snow-covered hill they descended on skis against the wind, in the necessary full equipment, gradually increasing the speed of the descent, until they finally broke away from the slope and shot up into the air.

They flew for a long time and beautifully, in gliding mode over the surroundings of the resort town, and each had, as the famous song says, "... a huge sky, a huge sky, one for two."

Fortunately, the flight for both couples was successful and safe.

Natalie experienced true bliss. Goosebumps ran through her body. She internally squealed with pleasure and happiness. Flying in the sky with your loved one. What is it?

The best events and moments of a past life flashed through my head and now seemed negligible and colorless compared to the pleasure I now experience from flying.

Every now and then the car pointed with gestures and facial expressions to clearings running below, lakes and copses, villages and a town with scattered clusters of gardens, yards and buildings. Lovely moving mosaic!

"But I was afraid!" Natalie reproached herself.

We started to decline little by little. Fifteen meters from the Earth, having completed the turns, went against the wind, leveling the rolls and withstanding the hang gliders, landed on the snow-white expanse on skis, having swept them for several tens of meters.

- Happy landing, Natalie, - congratulated Auto.

- It was wonderful, fantastic, - she exclaimed in delight, - thank you!

- Well, Tamilochka, with another successful flight and landing! - congratulated his couple and Ruben, - you can unfasten the belts. A couple more such flights, and, I think, it will be possible to try oneself in joint flights on the Shuttle, under the NASA astronaut program, he suggested.

Tamila smiled in response and squinted with pleasure.

Having rolled the hang-gliders to a flat place nearby, they began to fold them and push them into special cases.

The nearest building was up to an hour skiing, so they approached him already pretty tired.

The owners of a small wooden house turned out to be cordial people and met the arrivals, if not with enthusiasm, then quite friendly.

Travelers were invited to the fireplace, where the branches of trees, which they had stored up in the forest ahead of time, were crackling in the fire.

- There is also a quota for felling, for which we pay a certain amount, - explained the owner, an old man of about seventy.

They offered fresh milk and khachapuri. The travelers refused, asking to rest and warm up for a few minutes, and then continue on their way to get before dark.

- In time, in time, - the owner objected, - God himself sent you to me. - We have children like you. They forgot something about us, they used to visit us from the city more often, but now much less often, so we live with a woman from arrival to arrival.

- Do not keep promises? - laughed Tamila.

- Come on, if only they were alive, healthy, and we'll hold out here.

- How, they don't help at all? - Ruben was taken aback.

- They help a little, if possible, - the hostess, who arrived in time with a jug of milk and khachapuri, intervened, - but is it really a matter of money. Help yourself while the milk is warm, and now we will warm khachapuri on ketsakh1!

- Thank you, thank you, no need to worry, - resisted Auto.

- I don't offer a drink, - the owner drowned him out, - the road is not yet small, besides, you are with the ladies.

- Well, what are you, father, - Ruben thanked, - and this is too much.

"Well, you won't try such milk in the city," the owner assured.

- Where is it! - agreed with him. - Everything is powdered, carcinogenic, coded with the letter "E". And other products too. And different preservatives cause different serious, sometimes fatal diseases.

- We are rushing to an easy, carefree life at the cost of our health.

- In our village, the air is cleaner and the food is better.

"But the pension has become smaller," the hostess objected to her husband with a smile.

- What is the fat foam of your milk, - Natalie was amazed, - what do you feed the cows in winter?

- Straw, what else, - responded the owner, - well, and what we have left.

- And where is the straw from? - Tamila was interested.

"We prepare a little ourselves, we buy a little more," the owner explained.

- Well, at least the children help you with this? - Avto sought.

- Help! They come to relax in the summer with their families and at the same time help ... a little.

They sat warming up for about an hour and again set off on their skis.

The road ahead was hard and long.

Natalie was the most tired of all. She trudged behind the group, and Auto had to move from the leading, front position to the trailing, rear one, encouraging the tired woman with either words or ski poles.

- Move, Nata, don't stop if you want to live. Movement is the way matter exists!  
– smile he tal.

Natalie complained, begged to make a short halt, to which everyone agreed, almost on the outskirts of the resort town.

Even from a distance, Natalie noticed how several residents were burning worn-out huge tractor tires right on the road and warming themselves by the fire. She mustered her last strength and on one of the stretches of the path even pulled ahead.

"Don't fight off the group," Tamila warned her.

- Let, let! Leave her alone," Ruben interrupted her in a calm tone, "there the villagers have such huge dogs running around in the wild and they love women with sticks so much that they are ready for a lot for such a living!"

Natalie slowed down in fright and returned to her original position.

- Interesting! - She was indignant. - You, peasants, will not please. If you go ahead - do not run, if you are behind - do not crawl. But how, how to go?!

- Exactly and in step with everyone, - Auto offered his version with a smile. At the very approaches to the boarding house, Nata was completely exhausted.

- The right knee jammed! - she complained. Saying goodbye to Ruben and Tamila, not without the help of Auto hobbled to the room, leaning and half-embracing him by the neck and shoulders.

- Get to know, Veriko, this is my friend Avto, - she threw, entering, sitting on the bed and reading a book to a woman who met her with a surprised look. - And this is my

colleague Veriko, - turned to her companion. Almost on one leg, she skipped to her bed covered with a blanket and almost fell on it.

"What did you do to her?" Veriko cried in amazement.

- Nothing, a small overload, it will pass, - Nata reassured her. - Help me take off my jacket.

- With pleasure, - volunteered Auto.

- I won't disturb you, - muttered Veriko, - I'll go downstairs.

- You do not interfere with us, - Nata tried to keep her, freeing herself from the order of wet outerwear.

Veriko left, slamming the door behind her.



Natalie, right in her overalls, darted under the covers and closed her eyelids in exhaustion:

- Thank God, I thought for a moment that we would never get there.
- Forgive me, - Auto justified himself, - it was necessary to consider another plan for returning.

But I did not expect such difficulties.

- My knee hurts, - Nata complained, - massage, please.

Auto was taken aback, but instantly felt his knee under the blanket and ran a strong hand over it.

- And all the same, everything was wonderful today, - she insistently repeated. - Please, a little lower, huh? - she asked, rising and sitting down in bed.

- How well they heat here, - noticed Avto, - what, and hot water goes?

- Well, how about it? For such money! It's cold outside, the Epiphany frost crackles, although you don't feel it when you move. You realize only when you take a hot shower and go to bed in a warm room. This is a miracle, if only we had heating at home in the city.

- Central?

- Of course, the central one! Thanks to dad, we have no problems with this. Individual heating! What about others? You cannot fully accept the taste of food, nor the light and warmth, when next to you many loved ones are deprived of this.

- They didn't want Soviet power, and now ...

- Yes, but even without it, the world manages not to starve and not get cold. It's just that when you do something, let alone destroy it, you have to think and act wisely.

- The destruction of the mind can not be - explained Auto.

- Do you mean "We will destroy the whole world of violence to the ground, and then we are ours, we will build a new world"?

- It's hard to argue with you.

- Don't argue, just do what you need to do. Don't overstep the bounds, she warned.

How did you manage to get tickets? Because unions don't have them.

- How? - Nata chuckled. - Our Givi Dosifeevich is our trade union.

- This is the one who then came to the zoo for you.

- Yes. And what?

- Never mind. In order not to overstep the bounds of what is permitted, I finished.

- What is it suddenly with you? - Nata was confused.

- Yes, - said Auto sadly.

- Are you jealous? - Nata paused a little.

"He's following you," said Auto curtly.

- Well, let! What's bad about it? You never know how many fans a girl can have.

- I, perhaps, will go, - Avto was gathering.

Nata held his hand and looked into his eyes.

- It is impossible for a person to forbid to desire and achieve his own?

"Of course not," Auto agreed.

- His desires and aspirations are understandable, but these are his problems. And mine are mine. I have repeatedly refused him and stated that between us there can be nothing but friendship. That's all! As they say, the "red line" has been drawn. I do not like a double game, and even more so I am not going to play it with you. And I really hope the same from you.

Auto glared at her.

"At least we agree on something," he said with relief, stroking her cheek with a half-bent brush.

Nata caught his bewilderment and hesitation:

- Stay a while.

- Not. I won't interfere, - Auto decisively rejected her offer, - you need to take a warm shower, put yourself in order and be in time for dinner.

- I'll make it!

- I'm not inviting you anywhere tonight.

- Oh yeah! Right, that's enough for today.

- And tomorrow?

- Tomorrow! Tomorrow is like a working day.

- Tomorrow I'm making a presentation. If you want, come. I have been preparing for this day for a long time.

- And the leg? - Nata winced. - I doubt it.

- As you want!

- And in the evening? Better evening.

- After noon. Want?! If you want to ...

- Want.

- All right, agreed. So it was afternoon.

- Goes. Yes! - Nata agreed with joy and coyly. The car turned and headed for the door.

- Well, goodbye! - slightly surprised, Auto returned to her headboard and, bending down, touched her lips.

- After a shower, put a tolerably tight bandage on your knee and do not take it off longer.

He somehow distantly closed the door behind him and headed down the corridor to the stairwell. Dear, he also felt quite tired.

"It's still a hassle with women!"

On the stairwell I met the returning Veriko and politely said goodbye to her.

"Okay, I'll keep an eye on it."

In the morning, something completely unexpected happened. He did not make a presentation at the conference, for which he had been preparing all the last time and all yesterday evening. He even escorted Ruben out of the room so as not to interfere.

Having instructed Ruben to read his report, and Tamila and Gela to control it, in the morning he moved to Nata. For the first time in his life, he disobeyed reason and acted at the behest of his heart.

That for which he had recently lived, created, prepared and waited, he now carried at the feet of his chosen one: "Well, such a happy day is coming for every man," he thought on the way.

At the knock on the door, Nata woke up and responded reluctantly.

"So early?" she was surprised to see him on the doorstep. "And with flowers." But I'm still sleeping!

However, you can put the flowers in a vase, - she skipped back to the bed.

"Where's Veriko?" asked Auto.

- I'm probably going to have breakfast.

- And you? - Auto remembered a joke from the movie "Afonya". - A camel, or something"

- The camel itself! - Nata threw a pillow at him with a laugh. A short playful fight ensued between them.

"They don't beat a lying person!" she squealed.

- It depends on who is recumbent, - Auto restrained her onslaught.

- Well, wait for me! - Natalie was really angry. - Let me go, otherwise I'll bite!

"And she's strong!" thought Auto. Grasping and joining both her hands in his, he finally "nailed" her to the bed, as an overcoming wrestler puts the opponent on both shoulder blades.

- That's it, I give up! - she finally admitted defeat, finally exhausted, and shamed him: - I won! Sleepy woman! Well done! A real man!

- And she has nothing to fight with men, anyway you won't defeat them! - The winner freed her rival from captivity.

- What are you doing so early? - She asked, putting herself in order.

- Aren't you happy?

- Of course not!

- Yeah, well, well, then I went.

- Well, go!

- And not to come more?

- Do not come!

- Well, - he went to the door and just grabbed the handle of the exit door, when a disheveled beauty in a night pajama suit appeared in front of him in all its glory:

- Wait downstairs in the lobby, I'll be right there.

- Yeah, okay!

- Just keep in mind, I will never forgive you for this disturbed morning.

- It's coming!

Through the large windows of the lobby of the boarding house, the car watched the snowflakes falling from the sky.

"Wow! Scientists have calculated that in the course of a lifetime a person is happy in total for only a few hours, he recalled, "who knows, maybe these are the minutes that make up happy hours"?

Nata approached stealthily from behind, and covered his eyes with her hands.

- Tamila, Ruben, - deliberately straining, listed Avto and stopped at Veriko.

- Me too, guesser! - mockingly exclaimed Nata. - Nightmare, what a weather! And where are you going?" she asked in an uncertain tone.

- You'll see! - he mysteriously lowered his voice.

They stood in the yard, watching with curiosity as the children rolled up a large snowball. Unexpectedly, they launched a lump from the hill. At increasing speed, it was enveloped in snow along the way and increased in size before our eyes.

- What were you thinking about? - Nata pushed Auto by the elbow.

- Just like the fall of a man ... The further, the worse. And only a big obstacle can stop him...

- Why stop? Isn't it more interesting to watch how and where it rolls? - Nata was surprised.

- Even if to death?

- Okay! You can't philosophize all the time. You can also have some fun while on vacation!

"Perhaps at your age," he said uncertainly.

- Also me, the old man was found!

- You know, I've never felt that time is running so fast. Further, this feeling must be felt more with time, grow, like this snowball.

- And what do you suggest? Time can be, if not paused, then at least slowed down. Auto looked at the cloudy sky, noticed a small flock of small migratory birds.

- I'm trying to find out from them.

- Who have them?

- In migratory birds that cross all time zones with such ease.

- Perhaps, you are right, time and a person wins in flight. Take astronauts who go on long flights to distant civilizations.

- How you want to have time to know not the universe, no, but at least yourself, completely ...

- What for?

- Well, - Auto hesitated - perhaps to learn more and better about the creator who created us and the universe.

- Is it possible?

- I think, partly yes.

- I doubt. do not try to embrace the immensity, advises Kozma Prutkov.

The argument and conversation continued right up to riding a troika with bells, walking and racing on white single horses, flying on motor sanyah, on a simple sledge from a hill and with springboards along the way, a hurried dinner in a small, stylized as a fabulous restaurant, an evening gathering in the cafe-bar of a boarding house with music, light music, half-whisper conversations at a secluded, cozy, secluded table.

Auto slowly, half-hint, seemed to be preparing Nata for the most important event in her life, while she felt that he was slowing down, dragging on, that she had decided long ago, and that everything else was already superfluous, albeit pleasant. She felt good next to him, she felt free, liberated, and, most importantly, the confidence was growing that in further relationships he would easily give way to her primacy and was ready for a lot for her. Of course, she can become the most important, and maybe the firebird, in turn, ready to shower him with golden feathers of happiness.

She did not understand why he hesitated, why these delays, when the choice on both sides was made and obvious.

She achieved what no other woman in his life could. He put it ahead of even his favorite migratory birds, which carried around the world in boundless aeronautics in a circle pieces of his heart, soul and love for them.

"What's happened"? What is he pulling? - she was perplexed after another unsuccessful attempt to get closer and explain herself.

She was ready, not without fear, to cross even the line of shame and possible gossip.

"Let's not get ahead of events, Nata," he again discouraged her after a farewell kiss at her door, "everything has its time.

"But you really want to be together," she protested in amazement.

- My love for you is much greater than the desire to be with you. It would be nice if you understood and felt it more deeply.

- And for the sake of this you decide on such cruelty?

- We, people, have no right, for the sake of our love and friendship, to betray love and friendship with Him.

- With whom is it with him? - Nata shuddered. Auto raised his eyes to the sky.

"You really are crazy!" she concluded, and her slight amusement was replaced by a slight sadness.

- Okay, Nata, - Auto reassured her, - the new year is coming soon according to the old style, you shouldn't be upset ...

"Will we be together again tomorrow?" she asked hopefully.

Tomorrow and forever from now on. Truth?

- Truth!

She clung to his chest.

- So, is it true?

- Truth!

"You will never change for anyone."

- Never! To no one!

He shook himself, for some reason remembering the old, but not forgotten song that it is not a trace to promise "the virgin of young love eternal on earth."

They parted at the door, through which she passed somewhat sad, but still joyful and happy, and spent most of the night sharing her feelings with Veriko.

In the morning, she did not leave her place, impatiently waiting for his appearance. He didn't even show up for dinner.

Dejected, she went in dismay to look for him herself. Tamila and Gela said that in the early morning he received an unexpected call, together with Ruben he urgently left for the city and asked them to apologize to her for him, which they intended to do soon.

Natalie felt like this news broke her from the inside, like a thin branch of a tree, without the slightest prospect of restoring her original integrity.

She froze in surprise. Dejected, she headed back, back to her boarding house, perplexed and unable to appreciate his act.

“What would you like to call in for a minute and say goodbye”? The shock lasted for a long time, several days.

## V

In the evening, on the eve of the old new year, unexpectedly for everyone, Givi Dosifeevich and his son arrived at the boarding house.

- Aunt Nata, - the child rushed to her with joy.
- Timoshka, did not forget me? - she squatted down and hugged him.
- No, no ... what are you? After all, you are like a mother to me.

“Better tell me how you are, how you are doing at home and at school.” The child melted her heart a little.

She greeted Givi Dosifeevich, unlike her co-workers, very dryly and soon retired to her room.

“What about her?” he asked.

- Her lover left her, - Veriko explained.
- How did you throw it?
- And so, I took it and threw it away. He walked, walked, had fun with her all these days, and one fine morning he took it and left without even saying goodbye.
- Bastard! - Givi Dosifeevich was indignant. - Tortured! I did warn you!
- Aren't there enough of them? - Veriko supported him.
- All right, don't start, - Mary stopped her, - Givi Dosifeevich has just arrived, you need to give him a rest.

- By what right do you insult a person? - Nata returned to the audience. Givi Dosifeevich froze and even turned slightly pale.

- Not to be loved is just a failure, not to love is a misfortune, - Veriko quoted from Albert Camus, - you should not quarrel and spoil the joy of the meeting, - she tried to soften the situation.

- Aunt Nata, where do you live? - Temo ran up to Nata.

- Let's go, I'll show you, - Nata asked permission from Givi Dosifeevich with a glance.

“Is Anna with you too?” the boy asked.

“Look, she remembers her,” Nata picked him up in her arms and took him to her room.

- Well, girls, do you really feel so bad here? - Givi Dosifeevich laughed, heading with a bag over his shoulder to the administrator.

- Well, what are you, Givi Dosifeevich! - A flock of employees who followed him interrupted each other, vying with each other about the delights of their short, but such a fun winter holiday.

Givi Dosifeevich got a room on the second floor, where Mary lived with one village teacher, and on the floor above Nata and Veriko.

After settling in and resting for a while, he went downstairs to watch TV, and at the same time invited all his employees to celebrate the old New Year together at twelve o'clock in the morning in the dining room of the boarding house, where the dismantled Christmas tree was already full of color and shimmering.

The employees preened and dressed up in the room of Nata and Veriko. Nata did not take part in the general turmoil and refused to go to the meeting.

- How is it possible? - Veriko protested.

"He could perfectly celebrate this holiday, anywhere and with anyone," Mary supported her, "but he went so far ...

Timoshka was also confused.

The fights continued and got nowhere. Mary tried on the earrings one by one in front of the mirror. Veriko was combing her hair with a cylindrical comb.

Nata, sitting in the "lotus" position on the bed, was sorting out cards from the children's game "Collect Me" with Temo and putting together a winter landscape with him.

Shortly before twelve o'clock in the morning, the daring trio - Veriko, Mary and Temo - almost forcibly dragged the reluctant Natalie behind them.

- Well, I think the New Year will not be offended by us if we refresh ourselves a little earlier, - said Givi Dosifeevich, who must have been hungry for a busy day.

- No, of course! - the whole feast agreed with him.

In pitch darkness and silence, it was heard how a box walked along the sulfur path and a match was lit with a bright flame, brought to a long gilded rod held by a hand.

The rod flared up with a hiss and suddenly began to scatter multi-colored sparks around.

- How beautiful! - cried a female voice.

- It's great, you won't say anything, - the man agreed with him.

Burning with catastrophic speed, a pin from colored sparklers hovered over a small laid table, illuminating four people sitting at it.

The burning pins succeeded each other, passing through the hands of each, and, finally, again concentrated at one.



- Maka, come on, that's enough! We indulged a little, completely, - a male voice reasoned.

But the singed pin moved closer and closer to a small artificial Christmas tree not far from the table, as if curious what the consequences of his tricks might be.

"Don't be afraid, Vladik, it won't catch fire from sparklers," Maka assured.

"But who told you that?!" Simultaneously with Vladik's objection, a bright flame flared up from the burning pin of Bengal lights brought to the branch of the Christmas tree.

- Levan, hurry up, we're on fire! - Vladik shouted.

- Eka, move away from the table and turn on the light! - Levan threw into the darkness. Vlad picked up a Pepsi-Cola bottle and doused the burning Christmas tree. Maka and Eka squealed.

Levan, estimating that the fire could reach the curtains on the doors to the next room, took off his jacket and covered the blazing beauty with it.

- Let's go to! Let's leave soon, dear, we have nothing to do here, - as if persuading, he carried the burning Christmas tree to the landing of his own house.

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief at once, but they couldn't get out of the state that gripped them completely and imagined in shock what could happen.

"Here, such a naughty one," Vladik scolded Maka, who was silent from fright and felt guilty behind her, "the house would have burned down in a jiffy. Your parents might still have had time to run out of the first floor, but the elder sister would have burned down for sure.

- Well, okay, Vlad, that's enough, enough to scare her. It worked out, and thank God. You see, and so there is no face on her, and we are all upset, - Eka conciliatorily convinced, - it will never happen again. Really, Maka?

Maka lowered her head and remained silent.

Levan, meanwhile, brushed off his jacket and peered at the traces of the recent flame from an arm's length.

- Yes, the suit, of course, covered itself, - he stated with regret.

- It's okay, Levan, we'll buy you a better one, - Vladik did not stint on the promise.

- Yes, I'll manage somehow, there will be another one at home, the main thing is that they coped with the fire, - Levan dismissed with relief.

- You, brother, should have gone to the fire department, and not to computer scientists, - Vladik encouraged him with a smile.

- Yeah!

The girls quickly cleaned up the traces of the fire.

- Well, that's enough! Maka, turn on the TV, you probably already missed the old New Year, - Vladik missed it.

- A long chain of atrocities led Black Larsen to inevitable death, - was heard from the TV.

- Maka, this is about you, - Levan chuckled.

- So this is a movie with Charlie Chaplin.

- Well! "Gold Rush," Maka confirmed.

"It's good that the parents didn't hear anything and the sister is sleeping, otherwise it would have been a good catch up," Eka thought anxiously.

- Okay! The film is already old, and the year is new. Switch to another program and let's go to the table.

The cannonade of modern pyrotechnics was supported in some places by rifle shots, and at the New Year's tables, of course, those who had such an opportunity were supplemented by volleys of champagne corks.

- Well, guys, with a real, final New Year's - solemnly proclaimed Vladik, clinking glasses with unanimously raised glasses.

- For all of us and for our relatives and friends, - Levan supported the toast.

- Yes! For those who are sleeping now and who are awake now, who are on the first floor and who are on the last, who are in the city and who are outside the city ... - Eka detailed it.

- For everyone, for everyone, - Maka also came out of her stupor.

- Well, my dears, for all of you, - Givi Dosifeevich proclaimed, clinking glasses first with his son's glass filled with modern Sprite lemonade, and then with the glasses of his colleagues who had run over the center of the table, who exclaimed in one voice:

- And for you and Timoshka!

- All the best for the whole year, and so that the old troubles, sorrows, worries and problems are left behind, - sounded from all the tables.

Little by little, toasts were replaced by dances, songs, and even light arguments.

By one in the morning the child pecked and asked to sleep.

"I'll go with Aunt Nata, not with dad," he stubbornly responded to his father's strict objections.

- Let's go, Timoshka, okay. I'm tired too, - Nata agreed.

- Givi Dosifeevich, do not scold the child, let him sleep with us today, - Veriko was delighted.

"Well, let it be your way," my father had to yield.

- You are with us too, - capricious Temo.

- Well, let's go! And you, - he turned to Veriko and Mary, who remained at the table, - wait for me. I'll be back soon.

- Go, and we, if invited, will dance!

- You look! Well, if so, I'm staying! Temo was capricious again.

- Go, Nata, Mary and I will also rise soon, - promised Veriko, - leave the doors open.

Givi really surprisingly soon returned, but in the meantime Mary managed to accept an invitation to dance.

- You see, Givi Dosifeevich, how some of your employees obey you, - Veriko laughed.

- Yes I see! You need an eye and an eye! - the director depicted ferocity on his face.

Nata told Temo tale after tale until he fell asleep, and then lay down herself.

Turning from side to side and unable to close her eyes from fatigue, she decided to take a warm shower, remembering how it has a beneficial effect on well-being, relieves fatigue and cheers up.

The shower was followed by a bath, then another shower, through which she caught the sound of the front door slamming shut. "So Veriko arrived in time!"

- Veriko! - she called. - Give me, please, a large towel ...

There was a muffled creak of the door opening, she was about to pull her hand for a towel, and suddenly she felt strong male hands behind her back.

- Ay, - she cried out in horror and made out through the steam the already implacable Givi Dosifeevich.

She begged him not to touch her, to leave, resisted, but was forced to obey.

Light, washed, but broken and depressed, she lay without closing her eyes, almost until morning, but by dawn, exhausted under the weight of murderous stress, she nevertheless fell asleep.

She could have expected everything, but that for the first time it would happen so unexpectedly, so banally, in a hurry, with an almost unwanted man, it was impossible to imagine.

She hid the incident from Veriko.

In the morning, when Givi Dosifeevich came for the child, she pretended to be asleep.

"Have you woken up yet?" he asked Veriko in a whisper.

- Not yet! She tossed and turned all night, apparently, she is now falling asleep, - she said. - I will help you dress the child. Did you manage to give him medicine yesterday when you got up for the second time?

- No, he was already asleep, - he sighed heavily.

He stayed at the boarding house for only one more day, although he expected to stay for a few more.

In order to avoid possible suspicions, citing a business call from the city, as well as the need for Mary to leave, he hurriedly left with her by car the next morning.

A day later Nata and Veriko also left the resort town.

- Well, now let's drink to the newly betrothed, - Levan beamed, - who barely endured until the end of the fast, and we wish them to have time and get married before the Great Lent.

He was supported by a low "cheers".

Vladik and Maka looked at each other, kissed abruptly and briefly, and Maka added:

- And to congratulate Levan and Eka on the same.

- That would be, - Levan drawled with sadness, - I'm ready, but Eka ...

- What is Eka?

- What to tighten?! Maybe we can plan a honeymoon trip together?

- Are you ready to ask for my hand from my spiritual parents, the Mother Church, Christ the Savior Father? - Eka smiled at Levan.

- Well, why not! After all, sometimes I go there with you, - Levan justified himself.

- Sometimes it's not enough.

- Yes, but I cannot become a fanatically religious person, - Levan was confused.

If you knew what fanaticism is, you wouldn't say that.

- Why do you always translate the conversation into this plane? Do you want a quarrel or are you testing my patience? - Levan was upset.

- Unfortunately, we speak different languages, - Eka was also upset.

What's stopping us from speaking the same language?

- Your stubbornness! Remember: "Let everyone be rewarded according to his faith"?

"We won't quarrel, right?" Maka said.

- They do not quarrel, but argue, - Vladik interrupted her. - And they do it right. Relationships are best sorted out before tying fate. In an argument, in the end of end oh, the truth is born.

- Truth has long been born, even before the creation of the world. This truth is Jesus Christ, as life, as the primordial light, as the path that should be followed by those who desire life, happiness, and resurrection.

- And what about those who believe in moderation?

- It is not difficult to distinguish a believer from an unbeliever. The first has a lot of internal energy, fire, or spirit, and the unbeliever is like a squeezed lemon.

- Eka, that's enough for you, I know very many non-believers who live very even nothing and even clover, with ease and fun, - Maka intervened, - just don't think that I welcome this, I'm just stating a fact.

The time will come when their laughter will turn into weeping.

- Eka, why this theological dispute on New Year's Eve? - Levan became despondent.

"To the fact that everything has its own laws and rules," Eka explained.

if someone likes any sheep in the flock, then he goes and talks about it first of all not with the parents of the sheep, although this cannot be done without, but with the shepherd of the flock, and only the latter has the right and is free to give the requested sheep. And after the negotiations, my spiritual shepherd is my father.

- But you're not a sheep, are you?

- And who do you think?

- Bird!

- Migratory? Flying from one chosen one to another?

- You are a chicken, that's who, - Levan threw her offendedly, - and I wish you to finally come to your senses this year, otherwise my patience may turn out to be not infinite.

- Well, roll on all four sides!

- And I'll ride! Come on, Maka, dance.

"Eka, maybe you shouldn't escalate the relationship like that." He loves you so much, Vladik doubted.

Eka was completely upset.

- Let's go, - Vladik almost by force carried her away to dance.

He danced with his fiancée's best friend, who in turn danced with his friend.

"The circle is closed," Vladik thought for some reason, "in any case, no matter how hard we try, not in one, but in another combination, we are destined to be together."

- How long? - as if reading his mind, asked Eka.

- For a long time, for a long time! For the rest of her life, Vladik consoled her.

- But life is short.

- But words and love, as well as fame, can be eternal.

- Mark Tullius Cicero"

- Yes.

- The ancient Greeks equipped grandiose round-the-world sea voyages on ships just to hear, learn at least one new thought, one new word and bring them to their homeland, and we are even too lazy to go on foot to the nearest church, at least on Sunday, to hear, learn, understand, accept and feel something new, useful for the soul, flesh and mind.

- Yes, Eka, you are right, - Vladik agreed, - but you can't lure anyone there by force. After all, you yourself say that no one will come to God the Son unless there is the will of God the Father.

- Well, it's enough for you to bicker with Eka, - meanwhile, Maka reproached Levan, - well, give in to her a little, well, at least in something. Do you remember Churchill's words that it is worth giving in to a woman for several months in order to possess her all your life?

"It's not about concessions, firstly, it's about courtship," Levan caught her on inaccuracies, "and secondly, it's worth giving in only once, and in the future it will be ...

- It won't, it won't! - Maka interrupted him. - I promise!

- Blimey! She promises for her friend! People can't always vouch for themselves, but she...

At the table, contrary to reasoning, the topic nevertheless continued.

Levan, despite the requests and persuasion of Eka, more than the rest, pressed on the drink.

- And here, - Maka noticed sadly, - this infection has spread very much. They drink without measure, with or without reason.

"The main reason is "out of grief," Vladik explained.

- Yes, - Maka held out, - grief comes just from drinking. Diseases and misfortunes creep up unnoticed, they wrap around the body like a snake, stronger and stronger, the danger is discovered, as a rule, belatedly, and the snake no longer lets go of the victim.

- Do not be afraid, I know the measure, - Levan stood his ground.

"Even when the Apostle Paul called not to get drunk even with wine, but to compensate for it with the grace of the Holy Spirit," Eka joined the conversation.

"Listen, Vladik," Levan defended himself laughing, "your future wife is promoting anti-alcohol propaganda, but how much booze did you put on the table?"

- Is it in the Soviet way? - Vladik joked in his tone.

- Yes, - Levan was delighted with the support, - not at all in the Soviet way, - and he lit a cigarette, which the girls just now, not without difficulty, took away from him.

- Each person comes into the world with his own specific mission, and you should fulfill it, and not indulge in a senseless pastime, for which you will have to answer to the Almighty.

- And our today's meeting is also a meaningless pastime? - Maka exclaimed passionately.

- No, it's just that Levan needs to learn something, - Eka relented.

- Yes? I thought that a person has only two educators, - Levan flashed again, - his parents, someone else - that's too much.

- Well, it will be, Eka, - Vladik pleaded, - when we still manage to stay together.

- Then stop him, - Eka hesitated, - look ... he can't drink anymore.

- Okay, Eka, today is the New Year. Vlad will take you.

- For those - resounded conciliatory and even sadly - who did not live to see the New Year, may the kingdom of heaven be opened to them.

- Yes, there are many of them ... who could not stand the devastation and hunger ... and now they are dying in batches. As recently as yesterday I heard on TV that two twenty-two-year-old guys were killed ...

- Well!

- Father Parnavaz in his sermon remarked that not a week goes by without at least one young guy having to be buried.

- Guys die, and their girlfriends jump out to marry foreigners. What will be next? It got a little chilly by morning.

- Oh! - Levan exclaimed, getting behind the wheel, - here is the first New Year's surprise, instead of the first snow.

Eka anxiously tried to pull him away from the wheel.

- Come on, Levan, get down, be a man, - Vladik asked, - I'll take you.

- I also found a sober one! - Maka intervened. - I'll take it, otherwise what am I right for.

- Who gave you rights, I shook my soul! - Vladik burst out laughing.

- Shut up, you fool, - Maka was offended, resorting to the help of a slap on the back of the head.

- Yes, they have a fight worse than ours! - Levan looked into the salon mirror. Eka looked around in surprise.

- Levan, are you my friend after all or not? - Vladik jokingly fought back from Maki.

- Let her drive, otherwise she took me with might and main.

- What can you do for a friend! - Levan sighed, giving way to Maka. Maka hastened to take it.

- Then you, Eka, come here, and I will instruct, - Vladik expediently seated everyone.

"Just don't bother me and don't point me out," warned Maka Vlad, who meekly raised his "hands up."

- No, what are you? I'll just turn on the music.

Levan soon dropped his head on Eka's shoulder. She tried to move away from him, to which he threatened her to go on foot. The threat worked, and soon he loosened his belt a little and lightly hugged his neighbor.

The car moved at the same time as the music floated through the cabin.

- It was necessary to warm it up a little more, then it would not peck at you on the go, - Vladik remarked instructively.

- Oh, well, nothing!

- Maka, for God's sake, slowly, - asked Eka.

- Don't worry, no more than sixty kilometers per hour.

- Yes, go faster, just don't drag, I'm responsible for the car, - Levan got excited.

## VII

"Me... u... Ma... u... Ma... u... u... u..." the yard cats began to chant in the thickening evening twilight.

- Aav, woof, woof! - the dogs that had taken root in the yard snarled at them. Recently, such dialogues lasted until the morning.

- And what are they, Leah? March, perhaps, now or in the end January? - Ramaz was surprised. - I don't understand why it all went wrong and moved.

The bug did not fail to give a voice, barking ahead of the hostess with the answer.

- Wait, Bug, - Ramaz threatened her, - I'm asking Leah, not you.

- Let her, Ramaz... let her answer. How am I supposed to know? What, have I ever been a cat?

- A cat is not a cat, but on the nose is the old New Year, the month of January. It doesn't seem to be that cold outside. So they howl in a new style, like wolves.

The bug confirmed his reasoning with a bark.

- Come on, you, - Ramaz waved her off.

- Dad, will Santa Claus also come on the old New Year? - Akaki ran in with a question.

- Netushki, you want what you want! Run up! Santa Claus comes once a year. In New...

- And on the old who? - Anechka did not slow down with a question.



- And on the old New Year, a dog walks around the yard, - Ramaz growled intimidatingly, - when the cat sees him, he will claw the dog with his paw ...

- Dad, Santa Claus let us down this year, brought unimportant gifts, - Akaki suddenly complained.

- Why is that? - Ramaz was wary.

We have sweets too. But sparklers, firecrackers, fireworks ... Pa, next time you're Santa Claus, better give us money. We ourselves know better what we need.

- Mother, did you hear what they weave? - Ramaz was dumbfounded by surprise. Leah smiled at her children's resourcefulness.

Soon the parents were listening to a small impromptu children's concert by a lighted, brightly decorated small artificial Christmas tree.

Suddenly the phone rang.

- Hello, Ramaz Mikhailovich, is that you? - asked a familiar voice.

- Good evening, Roza Grigorievna, how are you?

- I'm fine, but how are you?

- Well, we're fine, puffing with Leah a little.

"So you don't know what to do in such cases?"

- And what?

- With the left hand, reach the right shoulder and knock on it twelve times, and then the same with the other hand. Then do a little breathing exercise. Twelve slow breaths with raising both hands and the same number of exhalations with lowering. In general, it's a good idea to put both feet in a bucket of warm water.

- Leah, help me, what did I do wrong? - Ramaz whined in an undertone, barely audible, moving away from the receiver.

Leah listened with pleasure to the children's concert and looked inquiringly at Ramaz.

- In such cases, the heart has a big load, and what if we unload it a little, huh? Really, okay?

- It's good that you are green and flat, - the words from the famous cartoon were heard on TV.

- Well, why, why is it good? - asked the crocodile Gena, this time in one voice with Ramaz.

- But because when you lie in green lawns, no one will notice you ... but we take a purse and tie a rope to it ...

- Roza Grigorievna, my heart does not bother ...

Who am I telling this in such detail?

- I don't know, by God!

- And what worries you then? Head?

- No, that is, yes, that is, no, yes ...

- The fact is that there are explosions in the sun these days, and this affected the health of almost every person, the cold cyclone even cleaned up many, and now it wagged its tail and ordered to live long. What is it that worries you anyway?

- Eyes, a little, - after thinking, Ramaz decided to stop.

- Oh, oh, - Roza Grigoryevna drawled joyfully, - so I have an excellent yogic trick on this score: you need to look at the sun point-blank for a few seconds, and then ...

Ramaz put his hand to the pipe and asked Leah in an undertone:

- Does Rosa Grigoryevna have a paid phone?

In response, she shrugged her shoulders, but Anechka loudly repeated the answer:

- Paid, baby, paid, but sons let me talk to interesting people as much as I want.

Ramaz's hair stood up visibly, but he continued to listen to his neighbor's instructive and informative arguments.

- And one more important question, Ramaz Mikhailovich. In the second floor, water seeped through the interfloor overlap. It's leaking from somewhere upstairs. Not from you, by any chance?

- No, Roza Grigorievna, not from us!

How do you know maybe...

- How from where? I don't live in my own house? Or am I blind?" he broke off, remembering that just recently he had jokingly complained to her that he was suffering from eyes.

- Yes, but the leak can also occur in the thickness of the wall!

Maybe... but I'm not sure...

- Shouldn't we call the police?

- Why is that?

"Well, why?" They have very broad powers. So let them establish the place and cause of the leak!

- Roza Grigoryevna, what are you talking about? They do not cope with their direct duties, they cannot catch thieves, and you want them to also perform the functions of Zhekov plumbers for you?

- Well, okay, okay, excuse me, please! You may be right. It's not leaking on my side, why am I worried? I just want to do good to people. In general ... you do something good once or twice, and you will immediately be charged with it as a duty ... and with with a belt they will completely forget about the good that has already been done.

- Roza Grigorievna, my milk ran away in the kitchen ... do you want me to give the phone to Leah?! Leah convulsively waved her outstretched fingers.

- All right, all right, Ramaz Mikhailovich, no need for Leah, I'll go too, - Rosa Grigoryevna agreed.

Just before the New Year, Ramaz got a call from work. They said that his shift was ill, and asked to go on night duty. Leah reluctantly submitted, and when he managed to put the children to bed, he set off.

## VIII

A brand new private ambulance car, equipped with modern technological medical equipment, raced at breakneck speed through the empty streets of a sleeping city at dawn. Those who sat in it prepared to face the tragedy that had occurred.

- Mikhailovich, look what's going on there, - the driver showed with a look at the signs of a traffic accident.

The Zhiguli had crashed into a massive, brightly decorated cedar tree and were now wheeled up by the side of the road.

There were a few onlookers and traffic policemen crowding around, who were the first to arrive in time.

Ramaz and his brigade jumped out of the almost stopped car and ran up to the victims, who were laid down on the lawn on the mats that came to hand.

Ramaz recognized the familiar voice before he saw the one from whom it came, and when he saw it, he froze in horror.

"Eka, what's the matter with you?" he exclaimed.

- They hit the open hatch, Uncle Ramaz, - Eka shuddered and burst into tears, smearing dirt and blood from bruises and scratches on her face.

He tried to pick her up and carry her to the car, but she, frightened, squealed, sobbed and begged for urgent help first to her friends who were sitting in the front seats before the accident:

- Levan and I are okay, we'll manage somehow. Save Vlad and Maka! Ramaz, at the sight of the friends whom Eka asked to take, was horrified.

He quickly figured out the situation, responding to Eka's request, rushed to Maka, who suffered the most while driving and now lay unconscious on the lawn. Vladik was also without feelings, in contrast to the miraculously saved passengers who were sitting in the back seat and jumped out of the open back door.

Ramaz quickly checked the pulses of both seriously injured.

- Thank God, they are alive, - he felt a little relieved from his heart, - quickly, a stretcher, and into the car!

- Yes, but both of them will not fit with us? - Colleagues objected to him in fear.

- The girl to us, and the guy to the police car. Fast! Lieutenant, you'll have to take him and one of our doctors to your place. Follow us to the trauma clinic. This is a matter of life and death.

The lieutenant in a special beautiful black civilian uniform nodded to his assistant.

- But what about them? - the driver of the police car was surprised, like his boss, a young man in his thirties.

- They are out of danger, we will call, and other cars will come for them, - Ramaz explained, - although we have one place ahead of us, - he realized, deciding to take Eka with him.

"Well, girl, hold on," Ramaz persuaded Maka, who was unconscious in the intensive care unit, "Look, don't tarnish my reputation," he injected into a vein and into the shoulder muscle.

"You will live, how you will be ... you will be like a pretty girl, we will take a walk at your wedding. I have not a single fatal case in my entire medical practice."

"Save her, Uncle Ramaz, I beg you," Levan groaned, sitting in the front seat instead of Eka.

Ramaz thought Maki's lips twitched slightly, as if trying to fake a smile.

- Well, here, you see how smart you are. I told you that everything would be fine!  
- Ramaz assured her and himself. - Take out the pieces of glass with tweezers and start cleaning her face.

He cut off part of her outer clothing, revealing a snow-white chest, and in horror he closed his eyes and lifted her head.

"Damn steering wheel, pretty crushed it," he thought.

Couldn't resist. Tears welled up in my eyes again. An effort of will helped, and he almost shouted some order to the nurse. She rushed to do it.

- Another shot! Still, - he furtively wiped away a few leaked tears.

All the way he lowered his eyes, fussed, got confused, sometimes got lost, but he was armed with trouble-free work experience, knowledge, the latest medical equipment, medicines ...

For two more days and two nights, the struggle of doctors, the most famous and eminent professors, and the medical staff of the intensive care unit for the lives of such severely injured continued.

"No-o-o! No-o-o! No!" - the heart-rending cries of the sufferer's girlfriend, trembling in the hands of her companion, were heard throughout the clinic on the

third day: "How could this happen? Wasn't her life worth the fifteen lari that the manhole cover thieves got out of? I should have died, - she burst into tears, but she gave me her place and I escaped with bruises and scratches!

She was hardly taken away by friends and relatives.

Barely alive, haggard, bloodless, she hid in her room, not responding to any exhortations.

The news of the death of Vladik literally finished her off.

It turned out that he wrote poems, published them not under his last name in magazines and newspapers, and, what was most striking of all, foresaw his quick and such an unexpected death, though not together with Maka.

"That's why I was in a hurry," a strong try Eka, - he felt, hurried Maku, tried to snatch at least a piece of earthly changeable happiness.

Sometimes, having come to her senses, she rushed to the hospital to Levan, where he waited for the healing of fractures of his arm and leg. In my heart I blamed him for what happened.

He, in turn, blamed whims and obsession:

- I would be driving, even if I was a little drunk, I would never hit the front driver's wheel in an open hatch, - he argued and convinced Eka of this, - but I would certainly go around.

Eka for insurance was also comprehensively examined, X-ray and echoscopy were done.

Ramaz remembered the conversation with the cardiologist and the picture of the heart.

"Look," the cardiologist, professor at a well-known diagnostic clinic, concentrated his attention, "do you notice anything?"

- No, really, - admitted Ramaz.

- The patient's heart has an unusual shape, doesn't it remind you of the outlines of our church?

- Indeed, - Ramaz was surprised, - you are right, professor, - he agreed with a slight hesitation, - how could such a thing be imprinted?

"But the proof is there, the fact is a stubborn thing," insisted the professor.

- And what are the main cardiologist characteristics? - Ramaz asked.

- Everything is okay. I even think to do a good job on this material.

- So you think? .. - Ramaz started up.

- Quite right, colleague. Perhaps a new observation in cardiology, and even in practice, because science and practice are inseparable?

“But I beg you, professor, don't make the patient's name public. I doubt she'll be enthusiastic about it, especially in her current state.

- And over time?

“I think it's better that she doesn't find out at all. Yes, and everything else too. It's not visible from the side.

Well, it depends on who...

- Please...for the time being...

- And what if this news will change her life radically, - Ramaz looked at the professor intently, - and it is not yet known in what direction. And you, and not someone else, will bear responsibility for it, - Ramaz tried to cast doubt on the professor.

The professor paced thoughtfully from corner to corner around the office.

“After all, it is not the shape of the heart that is important, but its spiritual content,” Ramaz explained.

- Colleague, I think you should know from philosophy the closest connection between form and content.

- Yes, but why is it sometimes difficult for us, people, to understand and even admit that processes are taking place in life that our mind cannot yet perceive. After all, it is ambition and conceit.

- Facts, colleague, sometimes prompt us to be guided by completely different categories. This discovery, no doubt, can serve many patients in the future, who hopefully expect if not a complete cure, then at least partial relief.

“But in any case, professor, if this fact, as you say, is unique not only in your long medical practice, but also, perhaps, in the world,” Ramaz approached from a different angle, “in any case, you should be interested in the health and preservation of such a heart. Isn't it true? And in an increase in the number of such hearts, which can appear only in the offspring of the original?

- Possibly! - the professor became interested in Ramaz's train of thought.

“And what will happen if you kill its bearer by publishing the name?”

- Well said. Let's try to cooperate not to the detriment of our fundamental goals. Here is my business card,” the professor pulled out a white card with emblems and inscriptions from the pocket of his cleanly bleached, starched and polished white coat. “You can call me from time to time. We need each other like keepers of a secret.

- Is that a deal?

- Gentleman's contract! Agree, colleague, that I could not inform you, but I did not sacrifice our collegiality. That's why we and colleagues are to cooperate, not to bicker.

Ramaz tensed up from an internal protest, which did not escape the attention of the professor:

- I promise you not to ask you for anything above and beyond your capabilities, based on the same principle of collegiality. And at first I will ask you to help me, under any pretext, to examine the members of her family, especially her parents, to see if they have anything similar to what is observed in her.

- Well, well, - Ramaz agreed not without hesitation, - but the examination should be free, and its results should remain between us.

- Well, you see how easily and simply we got along, - the professor said with a satisfied smile, - I think and hope that our cooperation will continue in the same direction.

They parted with a friendly handshake.

"Bastard," thought Ramaz about a recent interlocutor, "if he talks like that with me, with a colleague, then what about with patients and subordinates."

With such, far from orderly thoughts about his colleague and people in general, Ramaz left the professor's waiting room, wandering along a long corridor lined with a narrow brown-red with white carpet. The path looked like a runway, and maybe even an airfield runway.

## VIII

The runner, stumbling every now and then, held his cap so as not to be blown away by the wind. Having exhausted himself with this occupation, in impatience he tore it off his head, put it in a wide pocket of his overalls. A man ran towards the poultry farm, and ran headlong. So he finally ran out to the burned area, leading along the slope to the goal of his impulse. Now he was rushing, already steering with both elbows, either trying to maintain balance, or fearing a lack of coordination of movement. Already almost out of breath, struggling with shortness of breath, with the last jerk he reached the wooden gate and paused to catch his breath. He was greeted by a heart-rending, drawn-out barking of dogs.

- Yes, I you! .. - impatiently threatened the four-legged inhabitants of the inversion space and loudly called:

- Zakharych! Zakharych, - he shouted, approaching with a quick step to those gathered under a canopy.

There were four of them, and they were hotly discussing something.

- What happened? - the man in the insulated raincoat cried out in surprise, turning to the one who ran up.

A slender posture, slow and confident movements, a strict penetrating look testified to his life experience, awareness and deep knowledge of his business.

“Zakharych, it’s good that I found you here,” the one who came running breathed out.

“What happened?” the man in the cloak frowned.

- At the second poultry farm, ducks took to the air.

- What? Like this?

- They must have run wild, Zakharych!

- Are you out of your mind?

- Yes, Zakharych, at first I didn’t believe it either, but when I looked after him, I almost went crazy myself.

Gregory ordered to inform you about what happened.

- What kind of nonsense?

- Go and see for yourself.

- What will I see? Are they still up and running? And how much?

- How much? - asked the man who came running, greedily leaning to the glass of water brought by the watchman of the poultry farm.

- How many of them, I ask, have risen? - the man in the raincoat raised his voice.

- All sixty-four wings.

- Where did they fly to? In which direction? - the man in the raincoat took out a tablet with a map of the area, himself, however, surprised at the absurdity of his own question.

- To the west, it must be, Zakharych, I don’t know for sure.

- Do not you know! And what do you know?

- So you call the first farm too, let them know about what happened, all our ground and coastal services. Maybe they will lure you into their networks. Should the birds turn north? Anyway! And see to it that by the day after tomorrow what I have ordered has been done. I’ll come and check in person.

- All right, Zakharych!

- Valera, let's go!



## IX

A non-strict wedge of feral ducks, heading up the river, was noticed that morning by the inhabitants of a small village near the poultry farm itself.

The stiffness and unnaturalness of the flight of the wedge could only be determined by the eye of an experienced ornithologist or hunter. The miracle performed by the birds, as it were, equipped each with two additional wings. And the joy of discovery knocked them into a strict and clear geometric figure of flight. The joy that, according to the leader, every bird should have experienced at least once in a lifetime.

Yes, it was he who prepared the flock for flight for a long time. But not everyone managed to take to the air. Only those who believed in him took off. Faith, hope and love for freedom gave them strength. Some, having gained altitude, lost their orientation and fell to the ground, breaking to death. Others saw off those who took off, ignited with faith in their future.

Yes, the joy of the birds flying up the river knew no bounds now. Only the leader, who did not dare to believe in a miracle, flying in the head of the wedge, cautiously listened to the rustle of wings behind him. Having believed in their own strength, not all birds considered it necessary to reckon with the "leader" in everything.

Called by the leader to strictly keep the row, the flock smoothly turned from the suddenly receding riverbed to the north, and suddenly there was a loud enumeration of rifle shots.

The leader shuddered, sensing the place where the hunters habitually waited for their luck. Without landing a flock, he led it around the feeders with nets, deciding to fly as long as he had enough strength.

The instinct told the leader that the birds would not be able to fly to infinity, that the flock would have to sit down, but that the taste of freedom would spur it on, give it strength, and rushed forward, neglecting the danger of running into the barrels of hunting rifles.

Birds recklessly surrender to self-forgetfulness, ready to give their lives, as is sometimes characteristic of people, for a moment of free flight and longed-for freedom.

## X

- Mikhailovich, what do you think about this? - the puzzled director of the poultry farm asked, returning with his employees from the place of the unique event, where

they additionally checked the accuracy of the facts reported by Grigory, and taking a glass of hot strong tea in the office.

- You should think about it, Zakharych, - Avto drawled uncertainly, bending over a small colored relief map of the region. - And what did they drape from you? Did they feed them poorly, or did they not take them out to swim, or did they interfere with each other? BUT?

"I won't say anything," the director sighed, "let Grigory say it himself.

- Come on, what are you, Avto Mikhailovich! Everything was staged well, in all respects ... almost at the European level, despite the difficulties of the time.

- Then why not? - solicited Avto.

"Maybe not only people live by bread alone, but also some ducks?" the director suggested.

- A good idea was expressed, - Avto started up, - therefore, they lacked something like that ... But what?

- Joy and happiness, maybe spiritual? - the driver intervened. - They still didn't give them a hundred grams!

- Wait, Valera, - the director stopped him, - it's not up to your jokes now.

Valera, putting down his glass, returned to the stove - to turn the firewood and from there listen to the conversation of two of his colleagues and their guest.

"Fire! In order for the fire, like love, to warm constantly, it must be cherished and cherished, monitored, put firewood, sweep away the ashes ... otherwise it will go out," he thought to himself.

- Zakharych! I remember that your predecessor told me that when he took over the poultry farm, his friends brought him an unusual gift, - Grigory recalled.

"So what?" Zakharych exclaimed impatiently.

- Several wild migratory ducks caught alive in the net and brought in several portable containers.

- Well?..

- Then he, I remember, clipped their wings and sent us to our second, experimental, poultry farm, to live with our family ... To improve their biological performance. And in the offspring, you see, the genes still showed up.

- Blimey! So that's what it is? - picked up Avto, - this is already becoming interesting, - it turns out that those born to fly cannot crawl?!

"He limited himself to the experiment only on the second farm," Zakharych asked with concern.

"I'm not sure," Gregory hesitated.

- That is, how is it not sure? - Zakharych raised his voice.

- I think that the experience, voluntarily or involuntarily, subsequently affected the first poultry farm. Wild grouse could get there both by accident and intentionally. Sometimes, the number of wings was coordinated.

- Have any materials or documents on this subject been preserved? - Auto asked Grigory.

"There must be some, we need to look for them," he answered after a little thought.

- Well, look for it, - suggested Avto, - and send it to us at the institute in the name of the director or mine. All the same, these materials will get to our department, we will study them and inform you of our conclusion, and at the same time we will send recommendations. Is it coming?!

- Well! - Zakharych held out his hand to Auto.

In parting, he admitted that he accepted almost ruined farms, put them on their feet in a difficult time for the country, raised and bred more than one livestock of birds, and already considers them family.

Auto responded in a singsong verse:

Do not invest your soul in migratory birds - They give birth only to sadness ...

The chicks will be brought up - big worries! - And the birds are carried away into the distance!

They are only guests in our open spaces, Their home is where the ring of the route is...

Love them! A cruel mistake, Like a fairy tale with a strange end!

- Oh, - Zakharych drawled, - so you are also a poet?

- How to say! It's a moment of melancholy.

- Perhaps, perhaps, - Zakharych agreed for a moment, thinking, - I would partly attribute this to my children, but ... There is a big but.

- What is it? - Auto was keenly interested.

- It is difficult to do something without investing your soul. Judge for yourself, Avto Mikhailovich, what happens even when you invest your soul, well, and even if you don't invest ...

- Yes, I have to admit, - nodded Avto, - but ... again, this is a but ... we often do this with a subconscious hope in the future to receive some benefit for ourselves. A good deed must be done free of charge, without expecting gratitude for it. then there will be no disappointment, though ...

Auto thought.

- Without grief, like life itself, nothing can do. The road to heaven, to Paradise, is paved with sorrows, and nothing can be done about it.

- I understand you, Auto, although sometimes understanding and empathizing are far from the same thing.

Back to the city, Auto was thrown by Ruben, who all the time of a short business trip was busy with mini-repairs of his car and complained on the road that it could not withstand long trips without a major overhaul.

- But we will get to the city? - Avto was alarmed.

- Must, - not quite confidently said Ruben.

- Well, a car is a car, but what about Tamilochka? - Auto seemed to catch on.

- How? Just please don't get excited...

- And what?

We explained...

- Well?

- Yes!

- And when?

- There, in the sky, on a hang glider.

- So?

"I don't know," Ruben hesitated.

- I hope you are not going to divorce Karina? Ruben hesitated and hesitated.

- Are you crazy? Did I warn you for nothing?

- I'm nothing ... Yes, I ... - Ruben looked down and justified himself.

- So who is she? Tell me too!

Well, I can't...

- And you?

- What himself?

- How are you?

- To be honest,...

- Look at me, Ruben!

- Look! Well, don't you love Tamil yourself?

- I love, of course, but as an old colleague, friend.

- Well, here I am too, - Ruben smiled with a wide smile, - but not like you do this teacher ... but by the way, how is she? I must have returned to the city a long time ago, the holidays are over.

- Yes, it will be necessary to call her, - Avto was embarrassed at the reminder.

- So call now.

- No, now it's somehow uncomfortable.

- Why, Mikhailovich?

- You think?

- Surely!

- She's offended, Reuben. You can't tell everything over the phone, and it's embarrassing to make excuses. Will need to see you. But when? Tomorrow morning I urgently fly to Stockholm, from there to the States. You know how many things. Coming after arrival...

- And when will it be?

- It will be when it will be, - Avto sighed.

That's why call right now.

It was not easy to resist Reuben's assertiveness.

He dialed Natalie's cell phone several times, but it cut off suspiciously.

The green "Niva" Ruben rushed through the road slush, spilled over the new asphalt pavement of the road.

Auto made plans for the evening before the morning flight to Stockholm, to Eric.

- I'll come home, "I'll sit in a hot bath," he recalled the exclamation of one of the movie characters and added from himself, "and then I'll fall asleep." Joke!

## PART FOUR

### I

At the end of the first month of the New Year, a solemn ceremony of inauguration of the newly elected president took place in Western Georgia, which was shown on television not only within the country.

The colorful ceremony ended with a no less colorful concert of folk art, designed to raise the spirit of the population.

Soon there was a wave of exposure of officials and business people who warmed their hands on misappropriations. Many, however, managed to officially pay off by transferring more than one million to the state. Such a decisive and uncompromising measure was greeted enthusiastically and with hope not only within the country, but also abroad, from where investments and assistance, both material and moral, poured in.

The country seemed to sigh.

The first decisive steps and the first fruits of the velvet revolution. Young as ever and nowhere, the president. Everything is in motion. New roads are being laid and old ones are being restored. They remind of the ancient saying that all great powers became such due to their connections and binders. Little by little, but pensions are increasing. The treasury is also full of ransoms of corrupt officials who are in a hurry to pay off the state and go free. The supply of basic energy resources is improving. Young leaders are appointed to leadership positions in certain regions and cities. They are counting not on some temporary campaign, but on a long-term perspective.

A wave of inspiration awakens the latent forces of the people that were dormant.

### II

Two young girls, dressed according to the latest, but local fashion, with a leisurely, uninhibited step made their way between the long, dense rows of foreign cars in the huge central car market. For a long time they lingered at the models they liked, looked closely, asked the price. The sellers readily answered their questions, praised the cars, slammed the doors and hoods.

- Nata, do you remember anything in German? - one girl asked the other.

- Perhaps not, - Nata responded, - I don't remember German. And you, Eka, you learned this language longer.

- Well, what did you teach? As I taught, so I learned. Some individual words, perhaps, I remember, but this is too little.

- Try to ask them if there is an interpreter at least from what to what? The sellers caught the same question, kindly responded, phoned someone, they explained, mostly with gestures, that the right person would not appear on the spot earlier than in an hour.

"Wait?" Natalie hesitated.

- Probably, yes! It's better to wait, - Eka sighed with relief, - we'll sit in a cafe, have a bite, talk.

Nata somehow explained to the interlocutor where to look for them, and soon the sisters were already sitting in a small cozy cafe-restaurant for cups of coffee and cakes.

"Maybe you could ask for a glass of Bavarian?" Natalie suggested.

- And if you manage to buy a car, how will you get behind the wheel?

- Come on! Then you...

- No, it's without me! - Eka abruptly threw.

- No, what are you! I'm joking, - remembering what happened, Nata flushed with embarrassment. - How they, the Germans, everything is organized ... not like ours.

- Well, we're good.

- What? What's not bad? - Nata exclaimed passionately.

- Life! - Eka was not taken aback.

- Do you like to vegetate in a pigsty and poverty?

- Not. I like being at home.

What happened to her in recent years?

- Everything is in our hands!

"Would you agree to live here or in Paris, which we admired so much a few days ago?" Of course, if you know the language?

- No, I wouldn't.

- Well, at least not for long? - Nata was surprised.

- No, not even a little! On an excursion, on a tour, yes, and as often as possible! But there is no living.

- And I, Eka, to be honest, I'm tired of living the way we live. Look at these people. I know they have a hard time at work. she is tense. But after work... Look how free, happy, free they are, and, most importantly, feel like people. They know their rights and responsibilities. From them you recharge yourself, you feel like any European.

- But all this is not necessary for happiness, - Eka protested, - in the Motherland, the time of trials is gratifying, but in a foreign land, even earthly paradise is a burden.

- I do not agree with you.

- Alas, but you and I are very, very different people, - Eka sighed, - although we came from the same parents.

- Or maybe fortunately! - Natalie doubted.

"Perhaps," agreed Eka, "and yet I do not advise you to buy a car here and drag yourself behind the wheel to such a distance. Especially since you just got your license. I can't replace you!

- Nothing, we will go slowly, we will drive through most of Europe, we will see Germany, France, Italy, we will take a ferry ride across the Adriatic Sea to Turkey. When else will such happiness fall in life! And will it fall out at all?

Eka thought a little, hesitated, realized that one cannot but agree with her sister on this, even though the road by car frightened her. Memorable tragic days made themselves felt, even though almost six months had passed since then.

- Do not be afraid! - Nata reassured. - We will get to Sarpi and Batumi, and there we will be met. Eka understood who Nata meant.

- But the road to Sarpi is not short either! I would prefer to fly back, as well as to Paris, by plane - She objected to her sister not very persistently.

- Eka, you know, I can't do without a car, - Nata explained, - I don't want to be dependent on someone anymore. In life, you have to pay handsomely for everything. You can't buy a car from us, it's too expensive. And from next year, duties on imported goods will be raised.

- But after all, customs clearance is expensive, - Eka clung to a straw.

- Certainly! But you are not in vain a mathematician-programmer. Make me a small program, run it, calculate it, brainstorm it, and go. For nothing, I brought you here with me.

- Oh, that's it? - Eka broke into a smile.

- Well! Remember your "favorite" mathematician at the institute, who told you in lectures that if you love mathematics, she will certainly thank you.

And I didn't forget her!

They continued to discuss their problem in the automotive market, where, to their unspeakable joy, an interpreter was already waiting for them, who turned out to be not even a Russian, but a Georgian.

Sandro, a guy of about thirty, quickly brought the sisters up to date on their business and, advising them not to rush, but to postpone the purchase until the morning, helped them a lot by picking up a slightly used, but seemingly completely new, beautiful four-door BMW at a reasonable price.

- The owner drove it brand new for only a year and a half, and now it is small for him, he bought



"Mercedes," Sandro explained.

- Wonderful! Yes, even the same color as his father's "OPEL", - Nata was delighted.

"Beauty is not the most important thing," Eka pricked up her ears, "but how is it with the running gear and everything inside in general"

- Offend, sisters! Why should I deceive my countrymen? Here are our business cards, mine and the owner's. Besides, everyone here has known us for more than a year!" Sandro was offended.

- Look, Sandro, we have our own people everywhere and great connections. If you cheat, we'll get it out of the ground, - Eka threatened him half-jokingly, half-seriously.

Nata was surprised at such an unexpected aggressiveness of her sister. The paperwork did not take much time at the bureau, and under the resolute pressure of Eka, they decided to set off the next morning. The rest of the evening walked for several hours, examined the city, sat in the city park in a cafe.

Early in the morning, Nata looked at her old purchase from the balcony of her room and gasped. She stood for some time, as if spellbound, then rushed into the room and attacked her sister.

- How did he get here? - Eke, who had just fluttered out of bed, threw a stern tone.

- Who is he?

- Do not pretend! You told him where we are!

"I was thinking of making a pleasant surprise," Eka murmured in a barely audible voice, after hesitating.

- The turkey thought, thought ... - Nata screamed sharply. - Well, who asked you?! Why didn't you tell me?! Why?

- How why? What happened? Are you not friends anymore? Did a black cat run between you?

- Stop it, - Nata suddenly burst into tears, burying her face in the palms of her hands, - you ruined the whole trip for me!

- Well, what are you! What did I do? - Eka was perplexed. - On the very first evening, when you insisted on buying a car, I made a call on my mobile phone, accidentally found him in Munich, and said that we were in Frankfurt am Main. He was very happy and said that he would definitely come for us.

- But how did you find out the number of his European mobile phone?

- Don't you know how easy it is to do it? In Paris, in an Internet cafe, via e-mail!

"And now you're negotiating with him behind my back?"

- Well, I told you: I wanted to please you! Plus, he can help us along the way!

- What? - Nata cried in horror. - Is he also going to accompany us home?

No, let him go back to Munich! Also me, attracted!

Eka, stunned and astonished, looked at her sister, who was raging and raging and could not calm down.

- Well, why, Nata? - Eka whispered in fright.

- Everything! Basta! All he knew was that he was playing with me like a cat with a mouse. I caught it, and then ... - Nata sobbed without restraining herself.

"Well, give him one more chance," Eka suggested.

The proceedings did not last long. Going down to the car, Nata warned Eka:

- She called him, and communicate yourself! Understandably?

- I see, I understand! - Eka's lips and nose trembled. She happily rushed over to the man in the gray suit who was waiting for them.

- Hello, Auto, did you manage so quickly?

- Hello, blue-eyed! - Auto was also delighted and, hugging her tightly, thought that this was the first time with him.

"Hello, Nata," he greeted Natalie guiltily and therefore dryly.

- Hello! - Nata turned away coldly from him. - Talk to the one who invited you here. Understandably?!

- I see! - Auto drooped sadly. - Nata, forgive me, but ...

- Keep your apologies to yourself! And if you don't agree to my terms, one of us will step off the car along the way. For the duration of the trip, I declare a moratorium on temporary communication, even though you are not worthy of it.

"They don't get off their car," Auto muttered in an undertone.

- That's it! How perceptive! At home, we will lift the moratorium.

- Let's go, Auto, - Auto took Eka's hand, pulled her behind her and pushed her into the car, into the back seat. - Don't pay attention, she will grumble and calm down. Where will it go?

- Do you think? - shrugged his shoulder with the duffel bag thrown over him Auto.

- Sure.

- I'm right I'm guilty before her. It turned out like this.

- Well, okay! - Eka put her finger to her lips. The car moved with great difficulty.

"Remove the handbrake," Auto reminded cautiously.

- I know without you, - Nata snapped, irritated by her own forgetfulness. Soon the car left the city on the Frankfurt-Mannheim-Saarbrücken highway, to the German-French border.

In the evening, travelers from Geneva admired the lake, and a day later they reached Milan.

Auto and Nata, between whom purely pragmatic, business relations were established, replaced each other at the wheel.

Nata gradually softened, and was sure that relaxation was possible only up to a certain, red line, beyond which she would not allow to go.

“Let yourself! As they say, I am neither cold nor hot because of this, I need a working donkey everywhere and in everything,” she thought in her soul, admiring the free communication of Avto and Eki, who were in opposition to her.

They led on different parts of the path in different ways, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, depending on the colorfulness and attractiveness of the places passing by. By the end of the third day they reached Florence, and a day later they were already in Rome. We drove through Naples, admiring the surroundings of Vesuvius on the road, then Salerno, turned towards Taranto and in the evening drove up to the famous Bari in the southeastern part of Italy, the so-called Bargrad, where we decided to stay until morning, settling in a small cozy and quiet hotel.

In the morning we hurried to a small Latin basilica, where the relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker rested to this day, to bow to them.

All the way, from Frankfurt am Main to Bari, they were accompanied by clear, sunny summer weather.

But in the morning a light rain drizzled.

Eka, still in her morning long colored dressing gown, silently approached the wide stained-glass window and looked out into the street.

- Drizzling rain, the same as on that ill-fated morning, - she thought and shivered shiveringly.

Involuntarily, as if starting a conversation with the rain, she sang inaudibly: Night rain,

After all, you sing, When, probably, it is necessary to cry!

What will you take in this life, if you live and do not understand,

What is the highest meaning, And you will not find -

Your true path ... But what is the consolation ?!

- What are you mumbling about? - Nata asked in a sleepy voice, raising her head from the pillow.

- I whisper with the rain! - Eka answered in an undertone.

- Lie down. It's still early, - Nata muttered, again plunging into sleep, - otherwise you'll catch a cold.

Against the background of the dimly flickering nightlight, Eka resembled a thin, fragile fairy, frozen at the window and peering into the mysterious distance stitched with jets of rain.

"I'm to blame for everything," she suddenly shed tears, standing half-turned to the beds, on one of which her sister was already sleeping.

"If I hadn't been capricious and hadn't insisted, maybe Levan would have really gone around this terrible hatch, and we wouldn't have landed in it, and Maka and Vlad would have remained alive."

Tears flowed from Eka's eyes in time with the raindrops:

"Probably, the rain is guilty before us and before someone else"?

- Well, stop killing yourself, - Nata threw her awake, - go to bed, you'll catch a cold.

- What are you! So warm. A stuffy, damp summer night, - reluctantly obeying, Eka went to the bed, buried her face in the pillow, her shoulder on Nata's hand and almost burst into tears.

- Enough, Eka, enough, - Nata soothed her dumbfounded, - well, who could have foreseen such a thing? If you know where you will fall, then stock up on a pillow or bedding.

- But what should I do? The feeling of guilt before them does not leave me, I will probably go to the monastery.

- Oh, please don't talk nonsense. You will marry Levanchik, you will have children and you will name them. And memory, and joy, and benefit for the country. And talk to the priest at home.

- Already said!

- And what?

- Said I wasn't guilty.

- Well that's all!

- And you don't know Levan enough. He is stubborn, willful and self-willed. It's hard with him. It feels like he is always trying to squeeze you into some kind of vise, - Eka said sadly, - it's one thing when you give your life voluntarily, and another when they push you to it by force.

- Well! All men are the same. They love power! And there will be children, you yourself will take him into your vise.

"It's easy to give advice," Eka thought, "but how does she deal with Auto?"

"I don't want to devote my life to him," Eka said in an undertone but firmly, wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her nightgown.

- And to whom?

- God! Only to God!

- Fine, fine! As you wish. This is not the time to deal with such important issues. Let's put them aside, and now we'll sleep a little, so as not to peck on the road tomorrow.

Eka obediently obeyed, turned her back on her sister, but for a long time she could not fall asleep, surrendering to memories and plans for the future.

Natalie, in turn, turning her back on her younger sister, commanded herself with an effort of will and gave herself to sleep.

The next morning, once again bowing to the relics of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker and taking, in small sealed vessels, consecrated oil from the lamps over the shrine, we set off further.

The ferry, which was to sail along with the car to the Turkish port of Cesme, had to wait until almost evening.

A storm arose at night, the ferry noticeably lost its course, and communication with coastal services was interrupted.

Luckily, even if it's too late but the next day, in the late afternoon, safely reached.

Auto sat behind the wheel, and two of his kind, beautiful fairies, pretty tired from the night rolling, fell asleep in the back seat of Izmir.

Auto listened with a smile to their sniffing and through the saloon mirror saw how their bodies were breathing slightly noticeably.

He was greatly pleased by the sense of responsibility for each to himself, to their parents and, most importantly, to the Almighty. Two innocent beauties voluntarily and fearlessly entrusted their lives and their destinies to him alone.

He had never experienced such a feeling before. He prayed in his soul and dreamed that these moments would last as long as possible. Now he realized that he loves them both, at least in different ways, but equally strong, and for each of them he is ready to give his life at any second.

"What sweet, beautiful, gentle, beloved ... But, alas, at the same time, stupid ..."

- Himself like that, - Eka objected in a dream, turning from side to side.

"She really reads thoughts at a distance," Auto recalled her long-standing confession, "even in a dream."

- And what? What happened? - awakened to the exclamation of Eki Nata.

- Ss, - stretched Auto, - nothing, nothing! Sleep well...

- Where are we? - Nata rubbed her eyes, raising her head and trying to make out in the semi-darkness the oncoming cars with headlights on their way around them.

- We drive up to the city of Usak.

- Have you already passed Izmir?

- Almost two hundred kilometers drove off.

- What-oh? Slow down!" Natalie suddenly demanded sharply. "Why didn't you wake me up."

- What happened? - surprised Auto.

- Turn back to Izmir!

- Why? - continued to be surprised Auto.

- There is a person waiting for our arrival.

- Who? What kind of person? - asked Auto.

"What do you care, and what's the difference," Nata cut him off sharply. "Do what they say.

Turn around and that's it! You can't leave him there!

- Where?

- In Izmir, in the hotel where he is waiting for us.

"But why didn't you warn me?"

- I did not foresee that I would fall asleep by accident. It doesn't matter, turn around!

Early in the morning, a car of auto travelers drove up to one of the inexpensive hotels in the central part of Izmir.

- Wait for me here, I'll be there soon, - Nata slammed the car door behind her in front of her entrance.

- If only this person did not turn out to be her director, - Auto was worried all the way back and now he feared with trepidation that Nata would return, accompanied by a man unknown to him.

Natalie really showed up very soon. She walked to the car with a quick and confident step, and behind her, completing her toilet on the go, tucking her vest into trousers, hurried none other than Levan.

"I got out of bed," thought Avto with relief, "thank God, we were understaffed and you can safely set off on a further journey."

Levan was hoisted up to his chosen one, who half-awake curled up in his arms, and Nata moved forward.

- Everyone, let's go! In peace! - she threw Auto. - I want to go through Istanbul this time.

I don't think any of us will mind.

- As you command! - Auto agreed with a smile, smoothly taxiing onto the wide main highway of Izmir.

After about an hour of driving in the back seat, Levan Ek fidgeted in the arms.

Levan did not miss the opportunity to stroke her head, forehead, pat her aquiline nose.

"How lovely she is when she sleeps," he thought, smiling under Auto's gaze in the mirror.

Eka, without opening her eyes, stretched out and unconsciously, but willingly accepted Levan's kiss on her half-open lips and slid her hand over the back of her head, leaning towards her.

- You-s?! - opening her eyes, she jumped up, as if stung, and recoiled to the window. - Where?!

Levan rolled his eyes to the sky.

Eka rubbed her eyes in bewilderment, tried to somehow explain the unexpected appearance of Levan and, suddenly realizing what was the matter, ran into her older sister, who was sitting in front, with her fists.

- Changer! Lousy! Vengeful vixen! .. - she squealed, leaning forward and more and more dispersing.

Auto deftly slowed down, took the car to the right of the highway and stopped it on the cinder roadside.

It took him and Levan a lot of time to calm down the angry tigresses.

- And you generally leave me alone! - Eka yelled, pushing Levan away. - Don't come close to me and don't touch me, murderer!

Levan drooped and drooped. But, seeing that Eka jumped out of the car, he rushed after her, forcing Nata and Auto to get out.

The disassembly continued on the side of the road, not far from the car.

- Gurgi, why didn't you share it? Women, or what? - Passers-by were curious, slowing down and offering help.

- Well, that's enough, - even Avto raised his voice. - Disgrace yourself here in front of the local people! Be ashamed! A moratorium on communication is announced to you until you arrive home, and then ... there things will show ...

Both fell silent at once, and silence reigned.

- Are you borrowing my methods of influence? - Nata broke it in an undertone, looking askance at Levan.

- For the benefit of! For a successful return home. All hand movements agreed with him. Only Eka remained indifferent.

- I'll never forgive you, - she gritted through her teeth in the direction of Natalie.

"Don't do to another what you don't want for yourself," Nata snapped almost inaudibly.

- Well, once got back, and that's enough! In the car, in places! - Auto summed up.

Eka slid into the front seat first, forcing Natalie into the back seat next to Levan.

- Well! Partners have changed! - stated Avto.

- What can not be done for the sake of peace! - Levan supported him.

- It seems that everyone is happy and happy. Why not stop at this option forever," joked Avto, glancing at the rear salon mirror.

- I don't mind, - Levan murmured.

"You're both crazy," Natalie said.

- And in my opinion, we, too, - said Eka.

Outwardly peaceful and solid Mercedes, seething inside, unhurriedly moved off.

"In such an atmosphere, you won't go far," Auto suggested, "I suggest

"celebrate" reconciliation, even if it is a temporary truce, in the nearest restaurant.

- A great offer! - Eka shouted passionately. - Let's pull there, take the wheel, arrange an accident and go after Maka and Vladik. Great offer! Wonderful!

- Don't worry, Eka! No one is going to get drunk, let's have a bite to eat, drink hot morning tea and move on.

After an early breakfast in Balikesir, we drove up to a small ferry crossing near Bursa, where Auto took a little breath away, watching a small flock of seagulls accompanying them through the entire crossing and tossing them pieces of bread. He listened and seemed to hear and understand their abrupt cries.

"If I hadn't been born as a human, I would certainly have been a bird," he mentally smiled, kept closing his eyes, in his dreams he completely disconnected from his surroundings, rose above the ferry, hovering in the air, and soared along with seagulls. Greater joy than to see and be with birds did not exist for him, and he admitted with horror to himself that even Natalie prefers them.

Natalie, in turn, followed with surprise his gaze fixed on the birds, tried to catch his thoughts, guess his feelings, and also regretted that she was not a bird.

"Maybe he himself is still a bird, but in human form," she suggested.

Now he, immersed in the contemplation of the wedge and shuddering after almost every cry, seemed to her much more beautiful and interesting than ever.

Eka noticed his condition and also concentrated.

"How many subtleties, graces are in them ... Unique creations! What can we say about the absoluteness of their creator and creator, "Auto plunged deeper and deeper into his thoughts.

For a long time after the crossing, he did not disconnect from the experienced, trying to keep in himself the sweetness of the feeling that had engulfed him.



The car was now driven by Levan, obeying the instructions of the cautious Natalie. I had to make a small detour to get to delightful Istanbul, ride along the famous suspension bridge across the Bosphorus, along narrow and wide streets and driveways.

The beginning of summer was not very hot, but sunny. If a slight coolness was still felt in Frankfurt, then in Turkey summer fully came into its own and, of course, the southern coast of the Black Sea turned out to be much warmer than the coasts of the seas washing Italy.

In Samsun, all car travelers, except for Eka, ventured to the opening of the swimming season.

Then there was their favorite beach volleyball, the memories of old rivals about last year's game on the banks of the reservoir of their hometown.

The whole trip basically fell on the shoulders of Auto and Nata.

Levan, having squandered the money he had left, almost completely submitted to Nate.

Later, Eka, for the same reason, moored to Avto.

In addition, all the way to his first foreign tour, Levan had a great appetite and he ate with great pleasure, without the slightest embarrassment, what his companion and companions had left.

The male half of the crew, mindful of the imposed moratorium, tried in every possible way to extend and drag out the tour, despite the fact that they had to spend the night in the car, unlike the girls who were rented rooms in small private hotels in passing towns.

Auto reminded the sisters of the wise saying that those who understand life - they never rush anywhere, to which the girls answered him: to be in time means to win.

The last foreign point of the trip was the bilateral customs in Sarpi, which they managed to pass almost painlessly, but in the western part of their own country, the car was stopped every now and then by all sorts of posts posted by no one knows who they got rid of, in addition to long verbal and documentary altercations, also with duties of different merit.

- All's well that ends well - Nata said with relief when they drove up to the capital.

"Long live the Soviet court, the most humane and fairest in the world," Levan shouted out to either the village or the city.

- Guys, maybe not to interrupt the moratorium ?! - Auto asked plaintively. Nata and Eka looked at each other questioningly.

- It is necessary, guys, it is necessary! - they exclaimed, after a short hitch, in one voice.

- Guys, let's live together? - now Levan was confused.

The girls could hardly contain their laughter, already excited and alarmed by the upcoming meetings with their parents, home and work.

### III

Every person is guilty before every person ...

F. Dostoevsky

and before God and himself  
yourself.

Time flew inexorably forward and, alas, far from being in favor of Auto. His main rival in relations with Natalie, the director of the college, Givi Dosifeevich, managed to meet and visit her much more often and longer than he did. In addition, he much more skillfully enveloped her, as if with tentacles, dragged her into numerous problems and events of his life, connected with his relatives and relatives. He steadily put into practice, albeit gradually, monotonously, imperceptibly, step by step, his far-reaching plans, as if erasing and erasing everything that was connected with Auto from her life with an almighty rubber band, nullifying all his efforts, eliminating anyone, accidentally caught in her path.

Natalie got bogged down deeper and deeper, as if in a whirlpool, in the life and life of Givi Dosifeevich, she was aware of this, but she could not do anything. At first she tried to resist, but she inevitably realized that the more stubbornly she flounders, the more quickly she plunges into mud, or rather, she obeys fate, puts up with it and agrees - let it be what will be.

The efforts that she made on the eve of the old New Year, when meeting with Avto in the snowy resort village, were perhaps her most resolute and energetic actions, but, alas, they were not crowned with her release from the life of Givi Dosifeevich.

"How amazing and filigree the masters are when it comes to complete destruction or the rejection of their earthly happiness," she was surprised. "No living creature, except people, possesses such skill. Everyone, as a rule, gets one, the only chance for true happiness, and, as a rule, they always miss it.

I was amazed at the blindness and naivety of human consciousness. To leave happiness, even falling into sin, to lock and board up the doors in front of it, not to let it in when it persistently knocks! But it does not wait long and behaves decisively.

“Well, why, why are we so blind,” she tormented herself. “But with quasi-happiness, which appears before a person in the guise of happiness, we very quickly and decisively, cordially open all the doors and windows of the soul. Well, what else did he need when I had completely, finally, forever brought myself to him on a tray. all that remained was to reach out, by will and desire, without the slightest resistance, ”she analyzed Auto’s behavior, given his more frequent attempts after the tour to get in touch with her, whether by mobile phone, by e-mail, random meetings in church. ..

“That's it, stupid, it's all over already,” she answered him during a recent fleeting conversation before the Sunday service, when he tried to clarify his intentions in the presence of the priest. “The train had already left long ago. everything went to ... we ... but you left me, and he did not yawn, relentlessly and resolutely followed and followed me, everywhere and everywhere, against my initial desire and will, as if waiting for you to drop me and give in, long and patiently, like a fox waiting for a coveted piece of cheese. Forgive me and take it back, - she returned to him the rings given to her in those memorable days.

Auto was taken aback, tried to wait for the final answer, because this one seemed to him inconclusive, to evade the smashing blow with the help of a clergyman, to endure the beginning Sunday service to the end.

“The sweetest and sweetest thing for us has always been and is the Lord God, Jesus Christ, but our spiritual eyes are so darkened that we don’t see and don’t feel it,” Father Parnavaz began his sermon. “A strong earthly feeling, the image of a loved one can obscure Christ. Blinding a person, love sometimes becomes a cruel avenger for those who fall into its embrace, because a person's heart is alive only by unity with the Creator and Creator. Our true love is directed to him.

Isn't that why so often, finding the desired, achieving the cherished goal, lovers hurt each other, and those who seemed yesterday an ideal, today inspire only cold alienation. And all because the commandment is violated - do not make yourself an idol. We should not sacrifice the Lord to anything, even earthly love - the most beautiful feeling of people.

Lately, love has been receding, and we need to inspire it in people so that they don't shoot and kill each other...

## IV

Auto waited for the end of the service. While the sermon was going on, from time to time he looked in the direction of the unconquered and unshakable Natalie, who stood in a black vestment and strictly and attentively listened to the overflowing voice of the priest.

"Here's another cross," flashed through his mind, "which must be carried."

He felt a clear unbearable burden. For a moment he was seized by the desire not to finish listening to the sermon, to leave, to slip away through the side door. But an unknown force held him back.

"Lord, help!" he pleaded, fixing his eyes on the icon of the Savior, on the cascade of candles burning in front of it, and imagining himself as a big candle burning and melting with love.

From the vision, he suddenly felt relief. The pain subsided and did not dig like an awl. Fire the soul flared up, and combustible, pacifying tears involuntarily flowed from the eyes, like drops of melting wax from burning candles. It was warm inside. A previously unknown force, joy, took possession of my heart, my face blushed, a burning flame ran through my whole body. He fell into an indescribable bliss.

"Well, of course, everything is as it should be," came to mind, "everything returns to normal. Earthly love once again crashed against the world and its customs. But where does this lightness come from?" "Thank you, Lord, for hearing me ?."

Unable to contain his feelings any longer, he ran out onto the slope of the mountain, overgrown with coniferous trees and beckoning to its height.

With joy, realizing freedom, looking around, fearing that they would not be noticed, spreading his arms, he clung to the wall of the temple. Bliss spread throughout the body. He shook, but held himself back. I managed to lower the rings returned by Natalie onto a low marble ledge in the wall.

- Accept me, Lord, bring the walls of your temple into the body, - he called from the very depths of his soul.

Eka, who appeared from around the corner of the temple, was stunned, noticed how a magpie landed on a ledge not far from the rings, picked up one and flew away towards the forest.

The car was not visible. Oshalev, she rushed back to the temple, interrupted the priest in a whisper:

- Father, help!.. There... one entered the wall of the temple and remained in it.

Father Parnavaz and the parishioners who remained in the church looked at her with surprise. As proof of what she saw, she showed a simple hoop left on the ledge

for ringing birds. She was persuaded, exhorted, assured that it seemed to her that Avto did not enter the wall, but simply left the church.

She did not let up, lamented, blamed herself for everything that had happened. Stubbornly stated:

Time will pass and you will see that I am telling the truth...

She walked home with Natalie, who noticed with horror that her sister's mind was fading away.

For its part, the resentment to the depths of the soul of the wounded Eka grew and escalated.

- There was nothing to fool your head and lead by the nose, if you did not think to marry him, - she was inflamed.

- I live with another person, - Natalie looked down, - I belong to him, but with Auto we did not succeed and will not succeed. He will find another for himself, and he will be a khan without me.

"To whom?" Eka exclaimed passionately. Natalie looked away from her silently.

"Really Givi?" she whispered in horror, changing her face. Natalie didn't answer.

- You are crazy? Old, with a child?!

- It happened, - Nata breathed out. - Everything has its result.

- For a long time?

- How long ago?

- How long has this happened?

- On the old New Year.

- Before the accident? Natalie nodded.

- What will be next?

- I do not know. Time will show.

- Do you love him a little?

- I'd rather hang.

But you can break up with him if...

- I told you...

- So what? Is this what you wished for?

- What does it matter now?! And in general, we will hush up this conversation, if the parents did not find out ...

Eka, stunned by her sister's confessions, tried in vain, but still tried to get on the trail of Auto. However, not without Natalie's help, she found out only that Avto's brother Ramaz and his family had gone to rest on the sea and that Ruben and Tamila had also left, taking Gela, who was on the bulletin, with them.

Natalie did not want to go far in search of her, and Eke did not advise:

- I don't think you should bother and worry people. Especially bring to the attention of the father or sister. But what if he really, as some of his acquaintances say, drove off on a new business trip? It's in his style, to leave and leave unexpectedly, without saying goodbye, and disappear ...

- No! Why don't you believe me," Eka resisted. "If they had just told me this, I would not have insisted. But I saw everything with my own eyes!

- What did you see, Eka? What an absurdity! For God's sake, don't repeat yourself. They'll say you're crazy, - tried to scare her younger sister Natalie. - He just went back to the church and went out through another door. And you thought...

- No! Not! Everything was as I say - Eka did not give up and more and more retired.

## V

A light plastic four-winged rocket with the inscription "Boomerang" descended along a curve with increasing speed onto a transparent smooth surface of the water. She poked her red nose and almost silently, with a soft splash, lay down.

- Look, Akaki, how great it turned out! Despite the wings and a massive rubber nose, it was possible to direct it to the desired flight path. Unlike you, the rocket is obedient. In general, remember: as you launch, so it will fly.

Akaki looked at his father intently, from the bottom up. He straightened his fashionable blue swimming trunks, pulled off his head a white cloth cap with a sun visor, scratched the back of his head meaningfully and sharply, as if recollecting himself, rushed into the sea after the rocket.

"Lower the end slowly and smoothly," his father warned before starting again, "and so that the water does not completely cover the hole from below. Only partially, so that it penetrates inside with air and up to a certain mark.

- Well, pa, - joyfully answered Akaki already afloat.

- Well, well done! - praise was not slow to sound. - Now put it on the pump and clamp it with a holder from below, - my father came up to the very edge of the coast.

- Ramaz, for God's sake, be careful, - a woman's voice was heard from the beach, - do not grab anyone with this stupid rocket of yours.

- Not stupid, but winged, - snapped Akaki.

"Don't be afraid mother, MCC1 is in charge of security!"

- Ramaz, you're not a child, - Leah was indignant, to whom the voice that sounded just now belonged, - you can do this when there is almost no one on the sea, that is, in the early morning!

“Don’t be afraid, ma, we won’t hurt anyone,” Akaki also answered in the tone of his father.

- All right, for the last time, - promised Ramaz.

- Not bad, Akaki, not bad! Good girl! - Father encouraged. - Pump up the air with a pump, carefully. Do not rush! Watch the water mark inside.

Akaki nodded, but, no longer able to overcome the hydrostatic resistance of the pump, slowly extended both hands forward, turned around and looked inquiringly at his father.

- Let's! Well!

Akaki slowly, cautiously, narrowing his eyes slightly, pressed the lever of the holding bracket, and the toy four-winged rocket, opening and spinning around its axis, suddenly shot up into the blue sky, freeing itself from excess earthly cargo in the form of air and sea salt water, connivance of which everything earthly, living and inanimate, is kept on earth.

“Pa, look how beautifully it flies,” Akaki cried out in delight, following with his eyes the naked soaring into the heavenly heights.

- Aha! - Father agreed with him, watching the flight with no less pleasure.

The rocket took off, it was barely visible at the top of the flight. Shimmering and flirting with the rays of the summer sun that had not yet reached the zenith, she seemed to be in no hurry to return home to the earth.

Obedying, however, the indisputable laws of gravity, she slowly changed her flight path, went nose down and began to descend with increasing speed onto the quiet sea surface.

The landing was successful. Without hitting any of the people floating in the sea, the rocket successfully flopped into the water a few meters from a red buoy floating nearby.

- Here you go! Swim after her now! - Leah was not slow to note the tiny miscalculation. - Hunting?

Ramaz slowly and unhurriedly - there was nothing else left for him - he swam into the next one, there was no count, for which time he pulled the apparatus out of the water.

- That's it, Akaki, I can't do it anymore! - he reproached his son. - That's enough for today!

- One more time, pa, please!

- Well, everything! Enough is said! Look how many people there are already! - shouted Leah.

“Akaky, you want us to be beaten,” Ramaz supported her.

“Well, please,” Akaki moaned plaintively and twitched convulsively.

Leah went up to the child, grabbed him by the arm and dragged him deep into the beach, under a canopy.

Akaki resisted, dragged along the golden sand of the beach, and twitched more and more vigorously.

Decisive actions of Leah unexpectedly stopped, standing in her way, Ramaz:

- Let's go again. Last!

- Not!

- Oh please!

- Absolutely no!

“Ask for whatever you want!” Ramaz offered with a smile.

- I don't need anything!

“Nothing, nothing?!” Ramaz squinted doubtfully.

- Nothing!

- Akaki, did you hear? - he turned to his son, who suddenly stopped resisting. - Remember! Let it be the way she wants now, but she will also ask us for something.

Leah looked at Ramaz in surprise.

“Times ar changej,” he warned.

- What?

- Like what, mom? Times are changing, - Akaki hurried with the translation from English.

- Why are you spoiling the child? - Leah threw herself at Ramaz.

- Who spoils? I?! Akaki, you give the word of a man that this is the last time for today “Akaky jumped up sharply and stretched out in the rack:

- Of course, pa, I give!

- Well, how? - cautiously exchanged glances with Leah Ramaz.

A small smile floated across her lips, softening the recent aggression.

- Well, okay, - she agreed, - let's look at you, what kind of men you are.

Akaki, already with considerable knowledge of the matter, rushed to repeat what he had already done several times this morning, with the slight difference that this time he added a little golden beach sand to the rocket, as if whispering some mysterious word in her ear and kissed her. Before the immediate I suddenly noticed with my mouth how mysterious flickering lights began to play inside it, in the water with the sand. Unable to take his eyes off them, he closed his eyes, blinked, and suddenly saw how the entire rocket in an instant burst into the brightest fire, turned into a flaming ball, and instantly pressed the lever of the rocket holder.



The rocket with a roar, at a slower pace than during previous launches, soared up, driven by the five elements: air, water, earth, fire and love, easily overcoming the gravity of the earth.

Akaki was stupefied by the beauty that appeared to his eyes, amazed and depressed by it, with his heart trembling from fear “she will not return”.

“What nonsense?” the surprised voice of his father interrupted his stupor, as if he had guessed his thoughts.

- Pa, did you see?

- What?

How did she fly?

- But as?

- Kind of weird...

- How strange is that?

Like it's on fire...

- You thought, son! You've seen enough launches of real rockets from Baikonur on TV.

- No, it didn't! I have seen...

- Okay! I was joking. We'd better see how and where it lands.

He shaded his eyes with the palm of his hand and strained his eyes, trying to find the rocket that had disappeared from sight.

- Come on, you! - Akaki brought him out of his concentrated reverie.

- What's okay?

- Look for her in the sky.

- Why so?

- Yes, she will not return anyway!

How is it not coming back?

- That's how!

- Well, you give, Akaki! But what about the law of gravity, which I have told you so many times?

- And metaphysics? - Akaki answered the question with his eyes screwed up and looking at his father from the bottom up.

“How do you know about her?” Ramaz was dumbfounded.

- I know, - Akaki waved him off and went deep into the beach, to the trestle beds, where his mother and sisters Anechka and Thea were sunbathing.

Vain searches throughout the likely area of splashdown did not lead to results.

Ramaz even connected a rescue boat to the search.

- That's it, I can't do it anymore! - in complete exhaustion, he collapsed on the couch.

- Yes, she drowned, probably, or flew far away and got lost, - Leah tried to calm him down.

- I couldn't drown, because the plastic one, and when sliding down from a great height, sticks its massive rubber nose into the water. And the bottom hole is raised above its surface.

- She said, it's okay for you to start. Don't listen, so be patient. Get ready. Time to go home!

"Pa, do you know why she didn't come back?" Akaki whispered to his father before going to bed.

- No, Ramaz shook his head.

"Because I kissed her and poured love into her empty cavity, along with the four elements, and asked me to take her up to heaven and hide and save her there, because with age she gradually fades and dies. And I thought, it would be better if he lives in heaven and overshadows me all my life.

Ramaz's eyes widened in surprise. For a moment he froze and did not know what to say to his ten-year-old son.

His eldest daughter came to the rescue.

- I, too, when we left here, to the sea, kissed Bug goodbye and whispered in her ear that I love her. Will she also not return from Aunt Nino and stay with her?

"What will happen when they grow up?" Ramaz thought with horror and at the same time with pride.

Slowly sinking into sleep, he could not brush aside thoughts about the greatest queen of human feelings, love, in the broadest sense of the word, for the sake of which it was only worth coming into this world, being born, living and dying ... and around which they revolve, - no, perhaps, they should rotate, - he corrected himself, - all relationships, the whole environment of a person, living and inanimate nature.

## VI

The man's feet stepped on the ground with apprehension and unintentional caution.

"Children advise me to use a stick for greater confidence and reliability," he thought as he walked, "but for now I will not do this, and God forbid that the obvious need for it does not come soon. After all, my brother manages without her ... and after all, he is ten years older than me. Yes, he managed to save himself! Succeeded.

The village better preserves the health and life of people, although it is more difficult to live and survive in it. It turns out that the harder a person lives, the better for him? Does everyone know about it? Sometimes, yes, they know, but they still argue that it is better to live much less than they are allotted, but on the other hand, as they want, or even better. You can't say anything, there is no limit to the insolence of a person ... Who are you, man, to think of yourself like that! We are sometimes touchy and vulnerable. It hurts us that our own children are not always submissive to us and do many things in their own way, and not in our way. They don't visit us very often, though perhaps they often think of us. So what kind of pain and insult do we inflict on the Creator and Creator when we do not come to him on Sundays to bow and thank him for giving us all living nature into our possession, so that we take care of it and take care of it, like a gardener his garden.

As if to confirm his thoughts, at the top of the tree, among green leaves and yellowing fruits, a lone thrush began to sing a sad melody.

"Yes," the man sympathized with him, "if my beloved, youngest son were next to me, he would sing along to you, yellow-billed, in this. But who knows where he is? And how I would like to see him, and wait for his grandson and granddaughters.

A song thrush came to life on a branch, flapped its wings and flew off into a neighboring garden.

- Shalva, please throw the hoses to where the distant trees are near the fence along the road. We have not watered them for a long time, - the voice of the gardener was heard.

- Well, Davidovich, - they answered him from a not very distant, but invisible distance.

"Or maybe the whole point is how well-groomed a person is in old age," Davidovich continued his reflections, "my brother's wife is still alive and well, and my ... poor thing ... by the end of her life she even offended her loved ones, who took good care of her. Neither sickness nor old age is joy. But, as our blessed life testifies, the mother of the family, albeit weak, is her main powerful support. It attracts, unites and gives vitality.

Fragments of sharp, and even nervous squabbles could be heard from neighboring yards and plots.

- Because of what they quarrel, Shalva?

- And who knows, Davidovich! Looks like they didn't share anything.

- My father, Shalva, was a very pious and hardworking man and enjoyed great respect and love of almost all his fellow villagers, - Davidovich considered it necessary to remind. - So, he often used to say that all showdowns and fights happen

when people have a lack of work and employment . That is, you understand, simply from idleness. There is time, why not fight?! The workers, too, no, no, and controversial issues pop up, and so they solve them peacefully. A fight is the work of a parasite, he inspired us. And sadness too. The worker bee does not have a minute for all this. Without work, she quickly dies. And yes, it is bad for humans.

- That's good, Davidovich, but working for nothing is also not very to my liking. Look how many tomatoes were planted, and the tarantula, or whatever it is, gnawed through everything and ruined it. You will not understand why he cuts the pegs. Fortunately, I would eat them, otherwise? .. - Shalva was perplexed.

"Ah," drawled Davdovich, "that's what a pest is for, to harm. But nothing, they have control. Here the children brought me a remedy last week, a new agrochemical preparation "BI-58". They say it cuts clean. It is still possible to fight with rodents, but it is more difficult with non-hardworking people. They are, after all, parasites. Labor, if it did not create a person, then forms it. Both the Savior and his apostles worked. And the apostle Paul also said that whoever does not work should not eat. Labor awakens and affirms honesty, decency, sincerity in a person...

What do you think, Shalva, why did I run away from my children, from city life in buildings, from the bustle of the city?

Shalva shrugged and hesitated.

- Because there is more work, returns. Staying here is more cost effective. What do you think? - Davidovich asked him, pouring into the tub a bucket brought by Shalva from the kitchen with a new portion of warm food from boiled fruits fallen from trees to the ground.

"If I were you, I would do the same myself, Davidovich," Shalva agreed with him.

- Oh, and indeed a national tragedy. We will not get back on our feet until such an attitude towards him, also partly instilled by some foreign entrepreneurs, changes. And so we will make do with imported products.

But who's to blame...

- I myself am not a fan of blaming everything on others. Ninety-nine percent of the fault is ours. Well, one, like one in the field, is not a warrior.

The tub filled to the brim, and the lamb and the young sow caught on to this circumstance.

The lamb, tearing itself away from the green grass around the pelvis, rested its forehead on the sow, rubbed itself with a tender, must be, feeling for a neighbor that was not rejected by her, and both in languor sank their snouts to the satiety and warmth that had fallen on them from nowhere.

Absorption, however, did not eclipse the past sensations of warmth other than from food, and they now and then broke away from the prison in order to rub their sides and foreheads again and confirm the old observation that every creature does not live by bread alone.

Neighbors watched with surprise the expression of feelings, silently assuring that there is nothing warmer and more valuable than sensitivity in relationships and the mutual attachment of souls.

- It is necessary to release a big pig, too, - Davidovich remembered and asked Shalva to open the door of her barn, - let him dig in the ground and nibble the grass, otherwise he will crush everything. To hold out until the end of the year, and then we will slaughter - we will feast. Meat and fat up to the throat, enough for everyone, and for you and me, Shalva, too.

While the neighbors were going around the young trees planted in the spring, probing them for a fortress, a boar released from the pigsty was getting used to the garden plot. Shalva noticed that he was chasing a peacefully grazing lamb and knocked him over on his side.

"Look, Davidovich!" he cried.

"Lord, we must help out the poor fellow, otherwise this glutton ate our chicken last week," Davidovich was alarmed.

"Can he really cope with a lamb too?" He cautiously hurried after Shalva to the place of conflict.

- Blimey! What has he done! - Shalva bent over the lamb victim, bitten by a boar. The boar himself became so insolent that he did not even run away, but stood still in the impudent hope that he would be allowed to finish eating. get prey.

The lamb was bleeding with eyes still open, wheezing and convulsing.

- Well, your mother! .. - Davidovich could not restrain himself and threw a stone at the boar. - I raise you, feed you, you scoundrel, and you ...

- It's okay for you to get excited, Davidovich, - Shalva stopped him, - you need to have time to slaughter a ram.

- Big knives in the kitchen, Shalva, - the owner of the living creature cooled down a little.

While Shalva ran after knives, he affectionately said goodbye to his harmless pet.

"I really wanted to keep you until the New Year, and this is what happened and how," he seemed to justify himself.

When Davidovich's daughter and son-in-law unexpectedly drove up to the dacha in a car, the headless carcass was already hanging on a branch and Shalva deftly skinned it.

- Why are you in a hurry, Davidovich? - Nukri smiled puzzled.

- Yes, something happened here! - choking, Davidovich began to tell.

- Well, you, father, just bred cannibals at home! - Nino clasped her hands. - I don't know, I don't know if they are edible or not.

- In vain I contacted them! - Davidovich had to admit. - It would be calmer without them.

- And we brought you two more ducks, - Nino's son, Bondo, slyly winked.

- Yes, in vain! My own couple bothers me too. They only know that they are chasing chickens!

And why didn't you take the children, you missed them.

- And with them there are more troubles than with living creatures, - Bondo joked all the time, - they were sent with their mother to their grandmother!

- But they took the Bug. She directly barked at all of us, I want, she says, to see Davidovich. Take me, stick me with you, take me!" laughed Nino, unloading food, clothes, and some utensils brought to her father from the trunk.

The bug jumped out of the car, happily rushed to Mikhail Davidovich, wagging her tail, sniffed him, ran to Shalva to get acquainted, yapped a couple of times at the almost skinned ram carcass.

- Take the dog away, as if the meat is not enough! - Shalva squealed.

- To me! Let's go treat you! - Nino Zhuchka beckoned to the kitchen.

"Wait, how did you get her?" Davidovich caught on.

- Ramaz and Leah went to the sea with their children, - Nino explained, - but they left the dog to us, she does not tolerate the road well.

- Look at you, what a sissy!

Nukri appeared, grabbing two young ducks by the legs.

- Oh, don't! Why do I need them? - Davidovich protested. - You need to feed them, take care of them!

- And we also brought food! - Bondo kept winking.

- Bondo, granddaughter, I left a small sweet cherry untouched for you. Go, drag a stepladder, feast on it. And save the basket, there it is, I have prepared it. Collect for father and mother.

Bondo hesitated.

- Grandpa, I'm wearing a suit for three hundred dollars, and I'm perfumed with cologne for fifty. Do you think I'll climb a tree for a penny cherry?

- Shameless! A penny, - Nino was indignant, - yes, it is environmentally friendly, pure. Still, your own! Run to the house, there is something to change into.

- Mom, why do you insist, - Bondo got nervous, - I don't want to climb a tree now.

- All right, daughter! He doesn't want to, he doesn't need to, "Davidovich shook his head conciliatorily, together with Nukri heading towards the chicken coop.

"Chickens, Nukri, are much more productive than ducks," he explained as he walked, "they lay eggs and give meat, but ducks ...

- Well, why, Davidovich, your duck is hatching now, - objected Nukri, - you look, they will hatch soon. So fluffy and yellow. Pure pleasure!

- May she not sit out! So reckless and irresponsible, there's nowhere else to go. And she herself broke a few eggs, and they steal them from her when she walks around, only two testicles are left.

- How? - Nukri was surprised. - Out of nine?

Yes, what did you think! Shalva suspects that this is our cat being naughty. And eats eggs, and hunts for chickens.

- That's a parasite. You don't feed him, do you?

- I feed a little. Let him do the rest. Full of mice and rats, he does not touch them, but give chickens and eggs!

- Thief! Take him to hell! - ordered Nukri.

- How many times the neighbors took him to God knows where, but he keeps coming back. Lost! In general, to whom only I did good, then everyone repaid with evil.

- Se la vie, Davidovich, nothing can be done! - Nukri released two young ducks into the chicken coop. - And today we will take the cat away by car.

- Do me a favor! Though, to admit, it is a pity for this parasite. I got used to it, I got used to it. Before him, I had a cat, his mother, by the way. And beautiful, black and white, and fought with mice and rats, but I don't know who this one was born into.

The ducks dusted themselves off, settled in the chicken coop, but they still did not know what test awaited them - the old drake did not let them come to their senses, began to drive around the yard and tap on the backs of their heads.

- Come on, stop your tricks! - Nukri reined him in, driving him into the chicken coop.

- The brat pecked at me a couple of beautiful laying hens until he got used to and got used to the rest. Now here you go! By the way, when you leave, do not forget to grab fresh eggs for the children, I collected them and laid them out in the basement in the cool.

- Thank you, Davidovich, thank you, never forget us, - Nukri thanked.

- Dad, Nukri, Shalva, go to the kitchen, let's have a bite, I've already covered, - Nino's voice was heard.

Mikhail Davidovich took out his signature red wine from last year's harvest.

- This year's grape harvest, it seems, will not be rich, - he admitted at the table, - nothing, we'll buy and add a little white.

- Let's add, Davidovich, - Nukri reassured him, - where can we go!

- And what do you hear from Auto? - Davidovich asked, - how is his girlfriend? What is the name of Nato?

- What do you hear? Can't hear anything! - answered Nino. He disappeared again, as if he fell through the ground. And I really don't like this Nato.

- Again, probably, he disappeared somewhere on another business trip, - Nukri explained.

- How many times I begged him not to drag around so recklessly on these business trips of his. But since you are traveling, I say, son, then at least tell your brother or sister when, where, with whom and for how long you are going.

- And he is, dad! What, did you recognize him today? Doesn't put us in anything, - complained Nino.

- Well, he doesn't put it, Nino, - Nukri intervened, - he simply explains it by the fact that his business trips are so frequent, unforeseen and uncertain, that it's easier to go and return than to ring about them.

- Yes, you leave this man alone, - Bondo got excited. - Unmarried, free! Where he wants, when he wants and with whom he wants to go. He will keep you informed about it. Maybe even look at the girls.

- Come on, - Nino smiled, - as if you don't know what he is.

"No one knows at all, ma, who, when and what," Bondo fumed, "we don't even really know ourselves, but we talk about others and for others.

- Yes, but he still can report about himself, Bondo? - Nino did not agree with her son.

- Wait, give him time. Marries, settles down, and also sits at home, you can't kick him out!

"Come on, Davidovich, in the face of Avto, let's drink to those who are not with us now, who are on a business trip, who are at home, who are in the sea, who are in the sky," Nukri offered a toast, clinking glasses with him and Shalva.

- You, dad, lean not so much on wine as on medicine, - Nino screwed in, clinging to the reason to switch to her favorite topic.

- Come on! Am I a crow, or something, to live a hundred years ?!

- Crows, Davidovich, live not a hundred, but three hundred years, - Nukri specified.



- The fact of the matter is that, according to the latest average statistics and surveys of the population, scientists relatively recently managed to find out that the life expectancy of crows has dropped sharply and dropped to the mark of one hundred years.

- Well, - Nukri was surprised. - Have you really started smoking and walking?

- No, they began to look closely at people and worry about them. Having had a snack and skipping, they set to work on some things.

Nukri went to help Shalva butcher the lamb, sprinkle pieces of meat with coarse salt.

Bondo took care of the car, removed the trunk after unloading. Nino was busy in the kitchen.

Mikhail Davidovich himself quietly went into the garden, taking with him a small stepladder with a hinged opener on top and a basket along the way.

He went to the desired tree, slowly put a stepladder to it, opened it to one hundred and eighty degrees and began to climb the steps. In the middle of the path, the stepladder suddenly leaned forward sharply, the hinge worked, the branch swayed, the confused Davidovich, recoiling back, flew along with the stepladder from a height of more than two meters, crashed onto his back with all his weight and bruised the back of his head.

Pain shot through him wildly, and he disconnected from the outside world. He was brought to life with the help of ammonia. He came to his senses hard and for a long time, as if swinging on a carousel. Nino scolded, blamed both father and son at the same time, but her anger did not bypass the others.

Fortunately, everything went without fractures, concussions and abrasions. They were horrified that only a few centimeters from the place of the fall, a stump from a tree that had recently been felled by a strong wind and then cut down was sticking out of the ground.

"If only..." they cried out, and immediately fell silent. Mikhail Davidovich was taken into the house and put to bed. Cherries had to be harvested by Shalva.

The terrorist cat that scratched Nukri was caught by a complex "technical" method, which culminated in the fact that the tomboy was lowered by the scruff of the neck into a bag with holes, where he thrashed and twitched, forcing Nino to sing a lullaby in the car and calm him down. They wanted to take Davidovich with them to the city for several days, but he protested and categorically refused to leave the farm and the plot.

When the car driven by Bondo drove away from the dacha, twilight was already thickening, but Shalva remained with the victim for another hour and, returning home, looked around for a long time.

In the car, a conflict was brewing between the eternal enemies who smelled the smell of fresh meat - a cat and a dog.

"Sdreyfil," Bondo teased the cat, "and I suppose you've done well to steal?" Such a loafer.

There are so many mice around, and you are dragging chickens!

- Get it now, we'll drop you off in the city center. Here, get out! They dropped us off and in fact in the center, near a row of garbage cans.

Once free, the cat shook itself in bewilderment, not believing the release, stood still, not moving, and, resigned to the fate, began to look around and look at the features and attractions of the new habitat.

- And what did you think, we'll take you home and cheat on soup with a cat? - Bondo was waiting in the car.

The cat rushed into the nooks between the garbage cans and disappeared from sight.

## VII

With great difficulty, the kitten climbed onto the edge of the bordering the walls of an almost empty garbage can, cautiously, gropingly stepped over it with its paws and plaintively meowed from the severe hunger that tormented the soul.

He spotted at the bottom of the tank the remains of already disassembled waste, of which the smell of fish bones and gills irritated the smell of fish bones and gills most of all attracted his attention and irritated his sense of smell, in itself capable of at least slightly satisfying the melancholy in the stomach.

The mother of the kitten anxiously watched the progress of her child along the edge to the desired goal.

"What an indecisive one, poor fellow! He does not understand that hunger is much worse than bruises.

It's time to study. It's time! Not that..."

The cat jumped up on the tank with a sharp throw and rolled up to the kitten. She tried to gently push him, speeded up her movements for example, stroked, licked, jumped into the tank herself, returned with a quick take-off upstairs, but in vain. The kitten could not overcome the feelings of fear and preferred to meow to ask the mother for help.

The mother finally decided on a drastic act. Having licked the muzzle of the child, she pushed him sideways to the bottom of the tank and jumped after him herself. Following her, a large old white-brown cat, recently brought to the city from the suburbs, rushed down and watched the whole picture. But he rushed into the next tank, so as not to overeat the mother and her child.

A little later, a foreign car, a brown OPEL, rolled up to the tanks, from which a man of about sixty got out with unhurried movements. He dragged a cellophane sack of garbage from under the seat and lowered it into one of the bins.

- So! This is also so! - as if summing up something, he muttered. - Oh, those women! They are too lazy to throw it away nearby, and take it to such a distance. There was one, and now there are three girls.

"Daughters have grown up, anxiety has increased. Well! You love to ride, love to carry sleds," the edifications of his wife surfaced in his memory.

The thrown plastic bag of "happiness" almost hit the head of the kitten, already abandoned by its mother. He huddled in a corner, huddled and waited for his heart to move away from it, almost bursting from the throw that brought him life.

For special food for parrots, Mamiya Sergeevich had to go to a pet store that abounded with a rich assortment of goods, both feathered, mainly Australian parrots, budgerigar nymphs, royal Jacos and African browntails, as well as food for them.

"Maybe I should buy fish?" Mamiya Sergeevich thought at the aquarium with a variety of exotic species, "after all, they calm the nerves, awaken the thought, suggest philosophical reflections and, most importantly, encourage calmness and concentration."

"Yes, but they need care and attention," interrupted his thoughts, as if reading them, the approaching seller.

- You think?
- Certainly. Beauty requires sacrifice.
- More than parrots?
- Maybe. They are more refined beings.

Mamiya Sergeevich was slightly offended and turned the record over, inwardly defending his feathered pets:

"Finer than my parrots? Finer and smarter than my chizhik? Well, no, I don't believe it."

"Unfortunately, I am not familiar with your chizhik," the pet store salesman justified himself.

- That's it! He is the best for me ... - Mamiya Sergeevich stopped and thought.

“Perhaps I don’t argue,” the seller continued peacefully, “how I can serve you.”

“Pick up the best feed, please, for my parrots,” Mamiya Sergeevich demanded passionately.

- Now, - the seller was somewhat taken aback and turned to the shelves.

From behind Mamiya Sergeevich, amazing overflows of a canary were suddenly heard.

He froze in surprise.

“What bliss!” He closed his eyelids and surrendered himself to the incoming sensations, special, born from the merger of a healthy thought and a soft feeling.

“Wonderful! Unfortunately, he can’t do that, ”he got annoyed and, turning around, began to look for the soloist. The cage of that one hung over the aviary with cats and kittens of different breeds and colors, licking their lips and directing their eyes and thoughts to the top, to the neighbors on the top floor.

- This is inhuman! - Mamiya Sergeevich drew the attention of the seller to this, taking from him a pound of food for parrots and paying. - Why do you mock such beautiful cats? Well, at least move the canary somewhere away from them.

The seller smiled.

- Who cares? If they don't see it, they'll hear it! In addition, the greater the distance to the desired object, the stronger the zeal.

- Well, here I would argue with you, - Mamiya Sergeevich was surprised.

- Yes it is! And then, in this way, we are trying to maintain in cats their basic, feline instinct, alertness and desire for prey. Otherwise, this instinct is dulled in them and they are content only with handouts from outside.

- It's clear, - Mamiya Sergeevich answered, thinking, - in this regard, a person is like them. If he is constantly fed at the same time, then he gradually loses the desire to work and earn his own living.

- But recently there was a TV show, - the seller remembered, - they showed an unemployed man in France, who was sheltered by the Red Cross Society. Another unemployed person existed and lived on social security and unemployment benefits. Both are happy, and have no desire to work, to find at least some source of income.

- Excuse me, why should we work? - They declared in one voice. - This is not profitable for us, since we will lose social support and benefits. Moreover, you will have to pay taxes.

- Encouragement of unemployment? - asked Mamiya Sergeevich.

- They call it differently - a program to protect the social needs of the poor and unemployed, low-income segments of the population, - the seller explained.

- It would be nice to use such a program in full force with us, - Mamiya Sergeevich expressed his wish.

- Well, it partially, on a small scale, operates in our country, - the seller continued, - I mean some benefits for electricity, water, gas, telephone, transport, partial medical care for a certain part of the population. And the main part is subject to the principle of self-regulation: who is helped by close relatives, who

- friends, to whom some humanitarian and commercial services flaunting handouts under the veil of charity, and, of course, theft, theft, small and large, unfortunately, alas, prospering in such a lush color lately.

"Yes, it's better not to talk about this vice at all," Mamiya Sergeevich agreed, "in our country it has taken on a truly catastrophic character. It is spreading like a plague, drawing more and more people into its networks, and mostly the younger generation.

There was an unexpected booming horn from a police car.

- Here is one of our many hopes for the fight against theft and all kinds of offenses, - Mamiya Sergeevich quoted with pride.

- Yes, - the seller drawled, - what is the signal, such are the hopes for them!

- Well, why not! Their signal is what they need, - Mamiya Sergeevich objected, - deaf, but perfectly audible. And, most importantly, from one end of the city to the other. Reminds the townspeople that the law enforcement officer does not sleep, but is on a continuous post. And if we also take into account that so many new police cars have been brought into the country that, perhaps, we can rely on some optimistic forecasts to correct the crime situation. I don't think it will take too long. Look how much the new president managed to do in a short time. Perhaps things will get better in the future?

- It's good that you are an optimist, - the seller doubted, - but it is difficult to put the country on its feet so quickly. We have been breaking and destroying everything for too long and thoroughly.

The conversation lasted for some time, and soon Mamiya Sergeevich with the purchase was heading by car towards the market, to buy and grab the necessary products.

On the outskirts of the market, a certain crazy woman, apparently irritated by today's failure, zealously swept the sidewalk, scolded the government, accused him of the disasters of most of the population, while using a considerable arsenal of obscene words in her arsenal.

Suddenly she stopped, stood up on her toes, stretched out to her full height and, having fished out a branded metal police whistle from her pocket, blew into it and

called on passers-by to stop for a minute to listen to the solemn whistle in honor of Stalin!

- He would never allow this, - she squealed, - he would still have all of you ... A triad of whistles was heard, a short pause and again a triad.

- Beer cap, beer cap, - came the voice of a poorly dressed man of respectable age walking in passing, with a transparent bag full of red boiled crayfish in one hand and a half-empty backpack in the other.

A porter was driving his three-wheeled empty metal wheelbarrow along the partially freed carriageway of the street, from time to time leaning his stomach and whole body on the back of the wheelbarrow frame, so that its two front wheels rose and it rolled down the sloping asphalt road at rather high speed.

- The road, the road! - Shouted the driver, warning of pedestrians and thereby releasing a track for his transport.

The attention of Mamiya Sergeevich at one of the market stalls was attracted by a metal thimble used in sewing, and he bought it at a penny price.

"Let it be in the house. It is now in short supply. Recently needed, missed, but nowhere to be found. And it's all my fault, my business is to buy, bring, and use them."

Further, Mamiya Sergeevich's gaze settled on dry lobio beans. To take a few kilograms, as it was not to ask the price, to bargain. Bargained, and while the seller was weighing the goods, he fiddled with the old purchase on his index finger.

- What is it with you? - the merchant was curious.

- Ah, this, - drawled Mamiya Sergeevich, - a thimble for sewing.

- Ho-ho! - just like Ellochka Schukina, the saleswoman exclaimed. - What a spicy piece of jewelry! You know, my mother-in-law has been asking me to buy such a thing for a long time, but I can't find it anywhere for sale. Can you hold?

Mamiya Sergeevich mechanically held out his hand with a thimble to the saleswoman, who, with sparkling eyes, was delightedly examining the product.

"He will probably give everything for him, whatever you ask for," thought Mamiya Sergeevich for some reason.

- Well, okay, so be it, I give it to you.

- he hesitated a little, he announced.

- Really? - the merchant exclaimed joyfully, - thank you very much. Here's your beans. Please! Take change too.

Mamiya Sergeevich estimated the change, according to which it turned out that, although he bargained, the price remained the same.

"Here you go, huh? And she tore it off to the fullest, and didn't even think about a reciprocal gesture."

However, Mamiya Sergeevich was not upset for long. His thoughts were captured by the purchase, from which Manana Georgievna knew how to create something from which one could lick her fingers, and then remember and dream for a long, long time. Character is character, and she is a master of cooking.

Beans are for us what pies are for Russia. At all times she has been a savior and deserves a monument, a monument.

"Glavproduct, Russian quality, excellent taste" - a billboard towered near the entrance to the market.

- Ah, - drawled Mamiya Sergeevich, - kittens covered themselves. Longing for good quality food. So you need it, continue to eat poor quality with additives from the "C" group, all kinds of dyes and emulsifiers. You will be healthier and longer lasting. They didn't want milk and natural cheese, so here you are, for some reason, he suddenly became inflamed.

Downcast gloomily, he scurried along the aisles between rows of stalls.

Meanwhile, his equally minded wife, Manana Georgievna, was sorting through folders of cases in her room at work in search of the right surname.

"Maybe you did take his case after all?" she turned to the tall middle-aged woman who was waiting for an answer.

- No! I took it, but immediately returned it to you, - she answered confidently.

- Well, I don't know, - Manana Georgievna was lost, - your father's case is not here, look in another department.

- Where in the other, when I couldn't take him out of here?

- Well, how do I know!

- And then who knows?

"If you don't believe me, come here and look for yourself," suggested Manana Georgievna.

- I'd better go to your director.

- Go.

- What does she want? - a colleague from the next table asked Manana Georgievna when the petitioner left.

- I don't know. She took her father's file from me several times and probably left it somewhere. And he demands from me.

- Well, okay, don't worry, there will be. It got stuck somewhere.

- There is, of course. But see how impatient.

- Catch up from the boss, we'll probably get it.

- Well, let, for the first time, or what? Yes, it seems that he doesn't have it now,  
- Manana Georgievna waved it off. - But what an interesting old newspaper I dug up.  
- What newspaper? - a colleague asked, putting coffee for two, for herself and Manana.

- Here, please, "Komsomolskaya Pravda" for the fourteenth of May, two thousand and one.

- And what is there?

- Here, look! - Manana Georgievna pointed to the heading "The Nightingales sing in Moscow, but no one hears them", over the material that today's lovers prefer completely different songs.

- What are these?

- I'll read it and tell you! - Manana Georgievna drank a couple of sips of hot coffee.

"You have a piece of chocolate on you too," a colleague pushed the saucer towards her.

"Yeah, thanks," Manana thanked her for everything and, burying herself impatiently in the article, the main place in which was given a photo of a girl hugging a punk, cut like a boy with an extensive tattoo on her arm, chips on her lips and on her nose, and several pairs of earrings on ears and a virtual ranking of the best love songs.

Modern hits and domestic and foreign performers were listed.

"And these loving children probably caught all the nightingales, fried and ate them," the author of the article noted with apprehension, hurrying down the Vorobyovs to take a break from "these stunners", whose shrieks and cries as they moved away became weaker and weaker.

But from the thickets of the park, the trills of nightingales were heard more and more clearly, causing bewilderment, who had the idea to call the Nightingale Mountains Sparrows.

The fact was stated with regret that "nightingales and other romance are not in fashion today."

- Yes, - Manana Georgievna drawled, - I don't know, I don't know, but my girls still fall for this romance.

- Well, show me, Manana, - asked a colleague.

- Here, look! - Manana held out the newspaper. - But when you read it, return it to me, I'll take it to my girls.

- I'll return it, of course, but why do your girls need it? What, are they also fond of nightingales?



- No, not they, but their admirer, - Manana Georgievna stood up to meet the boss who unexpectedly appeared at the door with a long-standing complainant.

She prepared to explain herself, not without emotion, but the chief himself stopped her.

- I already know everything and explained the state of affairs to the citizen. Give her the necessary certificates, and for her next visit, we will prepare everything and lend her documentation for a while.

- What a good fellow our new chief is! - Colleagues were delighted with one voice, being left alone again. - How quick-witted and tactful.

- New shots of the new president! - Manana Georgievna noted with pride.

- Yes, now, as they say, in leadership positions everywhere there are such smart, savvy guys from his team. Old forty-forty-five years are not kept. And all honest, sensible, knowledgeable about.

- Perhaps, with such personnel, our affairs will be advanced? BUT?

- We'll see. However, cadres alone do not solve everything, although a lot. Perhaps, we also need a material and technical base. We all need a computer on the table, modern, personal, and no business will disappear from us.

- But then all of us, who do not know the computer, will be asked from work, - Manana Georgievna got excited.

- Well, why all - corrected her friend - those who do not master the computer.

- Where should I study it at my age, - Manana Georgievna was even more alarmed, - I would have to hold on for a couple of years until retirement, and then let it be, what will be.

- Well, we won't see computers until your retirement, and only there ...

Surprisingly, out of nowhere, gypsies appeared, a man and a woman, with large bags, samples of goods, offered to buy them, which the inhabitants of the working room completely refused.

- Here are the people! Clever, practical, energetic! - Manana Georgievna noticed. - Everyone is in time. They are raising a bunch of children, and soon, probably, they will catch up with us in terms of population and overtake us, then, you see, they will completely occupy the whole city.

"In our time, nothing can be surprised," agreed a colleague.

"For as long as I can remember, they have always carried out commercial activities, which they have recently begun to master in the country," Manana Georgievna admired.

- And I wonder how they get out of the current difficulties? In such a tough market competition?!

- Don't worry, we get out, and they know their business.

- Amazing and very interesting people, - the employee had to confirm, - only they are prone to swearing, the most dirty swearing. That's who is really anti-nightingale. If you hear this, your ears will dry up. In our school, they usually did not study for a long time. Who went into trade from the third grade, who somehow made it to the eighth.

I remember we had one in the eighth grade, "the last of the Mohicans," she didn't get out of the deuces. Parents were called, but they did not go and did not go. Later, much later, her father listened for a long time to reproaches addressed to his daughter, was silent, shrugged his shoulders, and under

the end, unable to restrain himself, shouted to the teacher: "What time to study, when the next trading season has opened." But then there was still Soviet power.

- It's true! Once, relatively recently, Mamiya and I traveled by train from Batumi in a shared carriage. A whole crowd of gypsies and a few gypsies sat down. The matter went to the night, everyone laid out the beds, prepared to go to bed. So...you know...

In the evening, they waited until late for Mamiya Sergeevich from work and already began to worry. Several control and verification calls to relatives, employees and acquaintances did not lead to a trace.

Manana Georgievna did not leave the phone. Natalie, hoping to hear at least a message, was sitting at the TV, and Eka, not finding a place for herself, rushed from corner to corner, went around all the rooms, rushed to the slightest rustle to the doors.

- Well, how is it? Nothing new? - Manana Georgievna kept asking her eldest daughter.

- According to the program "Video Patrol", they told about the operation of the special forces under the code name "Zhuzhuna two thousand and four," Nata said, "twenty-eight prostitutes were detained in the city, taken in special police cars to

"Venical dispensaries", where they conducted a free medical examination, as a result of which it turned out that twenty of them were infected with severe venereal diseases. And here they are, - Nata pointed to the TV screen with a long-range plan of disembarkation of the detained women by the police.

"Oh God," Manana Georgievna pleaded, "I hope Mamiya isn't among them," she turned her head to the screen.

Nata and Eka could barely contain their laughter.

Later, they showed how the special forces dispersed a long demonstration of women, who in turn complained of ill-treatment, the use of terrible rubber batons.

In response to this, the head of the special forces indignantly remarked in front of the camera that the willfulness of even women refugees from areas of recent hostilities will not be allowed.

The ranks of the demonstrators also included men, mostly refugees.

Manana Georgievna gazed intently at every face in front of the camera and on the screen, hoping to at least accidentally see her husband somewhere.

- Yes, I went, probably, somewhere to go on a spree with friends, - Eka reasoned with her family, but by no means herself.

- And did not tell us about it? - Manana Georgievna doubted.

- Well, maybe not in time? - suggested Eka.

- And why did you turn off your mobile phone? - Manana Georgievna reasonably objected to her.

"Maybe they stole from him or lost it?" Nata asked.

- Yes, he could, he could somehow tell! - Manana Georgievna was getting more and more worried. - No, this is a serious matter, and I don't want to tell the police yet. I'll wait until the morning, well, but if ... then I have to ...

- Ay, leave, mom, come, not a little one! Do not worry...

Mamiya Sergeevich appeared after twelve, a little tipsy, a little dusty and disheveled, even slightly skinned. Manana Georgievna screamed in horror when she saw him in such a state.

- Who do you look like?! Just look at yourself in the mirror, Mamiya! - she cried, while the girls joyfully hugged their father.

- And what? I'm not that bad. Not true I and, girls? - Mamiya tried to enlist at least some support. - Get out, old goat, they gave me a kick in the ass. But am I really that old, even if I really am a goat? And, girls? - Mamiya Sergeevich did not agree with the invisible opponent, glancing sideways in the mirror and putting himself in order a little.

- Who are they, dad? - Nata and Eka cried out in one voice.

- How did you, so drunk, drive a car? - Manana Georgievna put forward reasons.

- Drove a car! I came from the sea on foot, - Mamiya Sergeevich said with a grin.

- How to walk? And where is the car? - Nata asked discouraged.

- And the car, daughter, was taken away by world guys ... and ordered me to be silent if I want to live.

- How did they take you away? - Eka was dumbfounded now.

- Here it is, here it is! Taken away and everything! They took you exactly the way you brought your car.

Mamiya Sergeevich was not as drunk as he imitated the behavior of such.

His body's defense system kicked in automatically. In order not to fall into a neuro-psychological shock from the robbery that happened, he turned the stressful state into a humorous, philosophical series, recalling an old lecture by a philosophy teacher on the example of a ship sinking on the high seas with people who fell into panic and hysteria next to a calm and well-fed pig, at the sight of which the philosopher exclaimed: "Here is a true philosopher!"

- The main thing is that you returned alive, safe and sound, - Nata came to the conclusion.

- This means that the second car was superfluous for us, and the Almighty took it away, - Eka found an explanation for what had happened.

Everyone froze in a daze, unable to take their eyes off her.

No, I won't leave it like this! I will immediately inform the police! - Manana Georgievna raged.

- Leave it, mom! No need. I'll give my dad my car, - Nata restrained her ardor.

You can't explain everything to them over the phone anyway. I must go there and tell you everything in detail," Mamiya Sergeevich objected more and more quietly, as if resigning and submitting, "but now I'm not in a position to go anywhere.

- Nothing, but they are able to come to us! - Manana Georgievna insisted. - Do not interfere, I myself know perfectly well what and how to do.

"Guard, rob, rape, kill!" the parrot suddenly yelled when his girlfriend Sherry pecked him on the head and drove him off the perch on the side wall of the cage.

- Oh, chizhik, hello, - Mamiya Sergeevich was delighted, rushing to the birds.

- Pa, what time! - Nata stopped him in a stern tone, - let's go, put yourself in order.

"Wait," Mamiya Sergeevich stopped his daughter, "just a minute," he promised, and, as if taking advantage of the fact that his wife went to make a phone call, he ran up to the cage:

- Sherry, what are you doing? Don't you dare offend my pet siskin, otherwise I'll kick you out of the cage. By the way, we had a chizhik before, and then, much later, you appeared. And remember that a woman was created for a man, and not vice versa.

Eka was surprised and looked closely at her father, admired how he tried to make it easier for them to perceive what had happened, to pretend to be carefree. The girls took him to his room. And half an hour later, he, also joking, told in detail how everything happened, and Nata and Eka listened to the narration, horrified and heartbroken.

“And do you believe, Manana, that these young guys will be able to do something.” Find or apprehend these heavily armed bandits? Yes they...

- And what do you suggest? Sit with folded hands? - Manana pressed.

- I will now make the necessary call, much more weighty and effective than the inquiries of these squishy ones.

- No need to insult young guys, dad, - Eka flashed, - will you like it if they say that about me?

- No, of course not, - Mamiya Sergeevich was embarrassed, - the guys are good, nice. I just don't believe in the effectiveness of their work... The old shots look much more reliable. Well, now I'll make one necessary call ... if it helps, it will help, but no, so ...

The nightly turmoil in the family dragged on almost until morning.

And in the morning, Mamiya Sergeevich, having risen from his sleep, made long phone calls and only after that he left the house.

## VIII

- Whoo-lo-lo-lo-lo! Whoo-lu-lu-lu-lu! Hoo-lu-lu-lu-lu...

- That's done in the morning! - Slightly half-opened awake eyes, turning their eyes to the flown live alarm clock. On the windowsill, covered with a metal sheet, they scurried about freely, now and then running up on clay pots and trampling flowers and wild pigeons in them.

“What kind of news is this?” A gentle female voice sounded from the depths of the room. “Well, march from here, both of you!”

Turtle doves instantly jumped to the roof of the house opposite.

The girl followed their flight with her eyes until she noticed the gaze from the opposite window of an unfamiliar man.

“I wonder what this one is staring at?” she wondered, but immediately caught herself when she looked at her nightgown.

“Oh, those male eyes, and running around the girls,” she capriciously pushed the thick curtain, quickly dived under a light blanket, turned her back to the window and completely obeyed the irresistible desire to sleep.

After some time, from behind the windowsill, the cooing of the arrived turtledoves was heard again.

“Must have liked my flowers,” listening, the girl rose on her elbow, “just think, everyone likes them, except my mother and Nata, and they don't like them just

because they need painstaking care. But how much joy and tenderness they are able to give a person.

She decided not to drive away the doves, but to quietly observe them and find out their intentions. At the same time, I delved into, not for the first time, emerging thoughts about how everything in this world is interdependent and interconnected by the subtlest, invisible

to the human eye, threads, and even their accidental breaking can bring chaos and imbalance into the world.

- What a person is in a small and one thing, such is he in a big and another, and it is not known when and what the deed and intention at the given moment can turn into.

A person participates in his house-building both in heaven and on earth, and depending on which stone, block and brick he puts into the walls of his future building today, tomorrow, every day, every hour, with every deed, thought or deed, such a house will eventually receive.

"Does a person come into the world as into a dead life or as into a living death?" she asked herself a strange question, and answered herself: "Probably in both."

"It's still impossible to live in the world today, because whether you like it or not, whether you avoid traps or not, it's still no, no, and you fall into them."

"No, I can't do this anymore," she caught herself thinking, "to get caught every time, and then again and again to repent of my deed."

"It is impossible today to live in the world in a non-worldly way," she firmly concluded to herself. "Everyone has their own place in life. My place is there, in the monastery. And here they are, - she added, noticing how the turtledoves began to carry twigs, stems, straws to the place chosen in the corner of the windowsill.

"Here are the parasites, huh?" she smiled. "If only they asked for permission. Unceremonious!

Rather, she herself became ceremonial. She walked, getting out of bed, with caution, so as not to somehow frighten off the birds, did not open the doors, did not touch objects.

"If chicks hatch here, they will be my children."

The next morning, she discovered a cozy nest outside the window, on the bottom of which a small bright egg was full of color and shimmered. Immeasurable joy filled her whole being.

"Well, that's it, now you are mine, and you can't get away from me anywhere," she thought about the dove. "You will fly in and be with me. You will not leave your

unhatched child. And I'll probably remove all the flowers, except for the one that rests on the nest."

Carefully, one at a time, she transferred her flowers from the outside of the window sill to the inside, all under the same persistent gaze of an unfamiliar man from the house opposite.

- Y-s, - she stuck out her tongue and made a grimace, dragging already, however, the last flower, in response to which a wide smile followed.

"I wonder who it is." It doesn't seem like a neighbor, I don't remember this. Probably a guest of the neighbors.

The phone rang, she was called to the receiver. Levan called, and the conversation was heavy, viscous and long. She refused him a date with an eye to meetings in general.

"Cretin," she thought to herself and immediately caught herself, caught herself in the sin of rejecting a loving person. "Where is there, loving! Not listening to any of her desires and feelings. It is now, and then what will happen? He, like any other person, however, has a short memory, alas.

"I am His sheep, and without Him no one will get me," she assured herself more and more firmly.

"Why didn't Nata and Auto succeed? Because they did not associate themselves with the church, did not attend it. Well, how are we?.. Me?! Only the Almighty connects the destinies of people. True, strong and durable is not available to people themselves, since

all love dies without Him. Without the Creator, no one can be happy. But just visiting the temple is not enough. One must come into contact with Him, at least through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, but in essence with love itself.

People come to church cold and leave warm. It was not possible to advance Levan towards it. And everything went topsy-turvy, not like I would like him and me.

Prince Myshkin was truly an idiot, and he was one because he was looking for love where it no longer existed, among people, society, vain earthly life, even against the backdrop of beautiful nature, and not where it lives, in the church and partly in the sky! Maybe even among the birds.

The Church is heaven on earth, she thought again.

With a new phone call, Eka was attacked by her classmate with complaints about disconnecting from friends.

"You know what psychologists have been saying lately" That people who stop communicating with friends most often come to them now.

- Believe me, it doesn't threaten me.

- But why? Because you're overconfident?
- I am sure not in myself, but in Him.
- Who's in it? Did he show up? When?
- Appeared in the church, and he is stronger than any psychologist.
- Yes, but, - a classmate choked, - not everyone has it.
- That's it.

Yes, but friends...

- And I want to see them all at once, all together.
- Well, come on! So many have left. Do you want everyone to scatter in the corners?

- Universal computer network Internet! Only he can bring us down.

- Well, it's not far off!

Saying goodbye to her classmate, Eka, in order to dissipate and disconnect from something, began to do a little cleaning in the house.

Two days after the appearance of the first testicle, a second, slightly smaller one, was found next to it.

The female turtle dove was the main incubator, although sometimes a male came to replace her.

A little later, Eka began to pour crumbs of fresh bread into the nest, closer to the testicles.

Turtle doves hatched their eggs for exactly two weeks. After this time, two small chicks hatched one after another, on which only the beak and eyes were visible, which would not grow, would not change during their entire subsequent life.

So I discovered them, first one, and then the other, one fine morning in Eka's nest. Her joy knew no bounds.

She fed the dove with bread crumbs and watched for a long time how it warms and protects the chicks.

Often other freeloaders, mostly sparrows and large gray doves, flew up to the nest on the windowsill to feast on Eka's treat. And with particular curiosity and excitement, Eka watched how the dove fearlessly fought off uninvited winged visitors, sharply stuck out her reliable beak and

drove them away from the nest and from the chicks, and it happened, and pecked on the heads of too persistent sparrows.

After two weeks, the chicks grew up in order, matured, fearlessly got out of the nest, freely walked along the short window sill and more and more often looked down from the edge at the opening world around them, into which they so unexpectedly, unexpectedly, against desire and will, got into, peered with curiosity



and all they more clearly distinguished its charms and imperfections, caught the dissimilarity of earth and sky, reveled in the charming range of animate and inanimate nature, unconsciously rejoiced at this gift of hers, which included their own adaptation to this world.

During the last days of their dwelling in the nest on the windowsill, the dove more and more often left the chicks alone to bask in the sun, sort out and dry their feathers, and flew with the male only to feed the offspring who met them with a cheerful squeak and shaking their wings. The turtledove opened its beak wide, and the chicks both at once almost climbed into her larynx - they fished out the food already half-processed in the esophagus.

One late evening, a sudden heavy rain, pouring at an acute angle, flooded the nest in the previously seemingly secluded corner of the windowsill and the chicks abandoned in it to the mercy of fate and nature.

Eka refrained for a long time, did not dare to touch them, but compassion, pity and urgent advice from her family prompted her to cross this forced step.

She covered a small basket with a double layer of soft flannel, carefully, so as not to frighten away the chicks, put her hand under the powerful jets and extended it to two trembling, pressed one to the other lumps. They did not even move from the touched hand, apparently mistaking it for the body of their mother.

"Yes, mother," Eka thought meanwhile, "where is it! So it will fly in such bad weather. He probably sleeps somewhere in a secluded and warm place, probably with a friend. Well, nothing, in the morning, early in the morning, he will rush to feed and snuggle you. Until the morning, however, no matter how you are washed away from here. She took the still motionless lump in her palm, and he, frightened of the loss of support, shuddered and fluttered. Anxiety and fear were transmitted to Eka, and her heart began to beat in unison with the bird's. For the first time in her life, she held a living spirit in her hand, which, as she suddenly remembered, weighs, according to reliable experimental data from American scientists, from seven to nine grams. She knew that this number was set on the modern most accurate electronic scales of one of the famous scientific and experimental clinics at the moment when the departing took his last breath.

Having exhausted himself in vain attempts to free himself from the captivity of the human hand, the chick calmed down, quieted down and showed complete obedience to his future fate.

Eka carefully dropped him from her hand into a new, dry, homely nest, planting him in such a aner and the second chick, stroked her finger for a long time, catching how their legs rested more and more firmly on the bottom of the basket, and putting

love and goodwill into every movement, which they met with great interest and understanding. Then she wiped them with a cloth, blew warm air from her mouth to dry her light feathers, to which they answered her with a silent, sweet fading, a kind of inner insight, a premonition that they were being caressed for the first and last time in their lives, and with a calm, wise acceptance of what fell on them. their share of the gift.

In the harsh darkness of the window-sill, they indulged not even in sleep, but half-asleep, with their eyes closed, and then suddenly they were brought to the light of a night lamp nailed to the wall.

In the early morning, outside the window of Eka, there was a piercing screech and a cry of a turtledove-mother who had flown in and did not find her beloved children.

- ABOUT! She came, she didn't get dusty, - Eka showed her tongue through the glass, - but where were you when your children got wet here in the rain?

The dove thrashed about the windowsill with increasing anxiety.

Eka picked up the basket with the chicks standing on legs in the nest and rolled it up to the glass behind the old nest. The turtle dove fluttered in fear, flew away from the window, but soon returned and, finding the chicks returned by Eka to their original place, whole and unharmed, she busily began to feed them from her beak. On this day, she flew in later, for the second time, but she did not find one of the offspring. He ventured to leave the nest a little ahead of time, making it clear to Eka and mother that after him his brother would not be slow to merge with heaven and firmament.

During the day, Eka did not dare to open the window, so as not to frighten away the one who remained and save him from temptation, but on the other hand, she took him to her place for both nights. The last time she was especially affectionate with him, tugging at him, stroking his head, above his beak, on his back, and whispering something. The chick flapped its wings, seemed to listen attentively and was thrilled with languor.

At the end of the conversation with the chick, who already believed that he was born only so that all his life in the evenings, by the light of a wall lamp, chat with Eka, and during the day run back and forth on the windowsill, sometimes raising a squeak calling for his mother, Eka found the preserved she has a ring for ringing birds, once presented by Auto to her sister Nata, but then left by him on the high wall of one of the graves not far from the unfinished brick wall of the church.

The chick turned out to be the first bird ringed by her. She cut off the excess part of the plate of the ring with scissors, first with her fingers, and then with thin pliers,

she pressed it so that the fetter freely envelops the leg and does not really squeeze it.

- Well, now you are ringed, - Eka instructed the chick at parting, - you will fly away tomorrow morning, and I will again be left alone in my room. Fly in peace, fly into the world, fly into the sky and tell everyone that although love in people is fading, it still smolders and sparkles in their souls, and you need to skillfully fan the coals so that, as the great the leader of the Bolsheviks, "a spark ignited a flame," and perhaps that is why many wild forest birds fly to our city more and more often to remind us of the origins, of the past, when love was much sincere and hot.

The next morning, Eka got up earlier than usual, so as not to miss the moment of the chick's departure. He was no longer running a little on the windowsill and even managed to flutter up to a low edge.

The parent arrived in time to the chick with reinforcements before its flight to the spacious seductive, but by no means simple and not easy world. He flew to her, ate, received the last lesson before his most important first take-off and looked around his mother with a farewell glance.

"Now it will take off," Eka waited, leaning far ahead of the window. The chick wiggled its legs, flapped its wings, bent down, tensed up, and... suddenly it really took off, flew towards the nearest branches of high, old, fifty-year-old poplars, rustling with large dense foliage. He sank down and sat down in a conspicuous place. Eka ran out into the loggia, to the windows into the yard, into the garden, easily found him sitting with a proud and

contented view on the pet branch. He turned his head, urging those around him to look at how brave, determined and handsome he was.

Eka did not take her eyes off him for a long time, admonishing and blessing him in her soul.

- Fly! Fly and remember that on your leg is the ring of Auto, the only one to whom you, birds, were dearer than your own happiness and life.

## IX

Eka caught herself on the word "were" in the past tense.

"Because they were," she whispered bitterly in thought, and tears involuntarily rolled out of her eyes. "I gave him up, first to my sister, and then to the Almighty," she froze for a moment, "but ... I will appear to the creator and there, with Him, I will meet him. There he will be mine and I will never give him up to anyone for anything.

The dove flew for a long time in the mornings to Eka's window, rushed along the window sill, as if in gratitude, tried to attract her attention or catch her eye, flew up to the top of the lattice, tapped on the glass, as if every time she called to follow her on a flight.

"I know, I know that I will soon leave my house," Eka readily responded to her, "but I need to finish something here!"

Eka really finished something, often left work, closed herself, almost did not communicate with anyone. She only went to church, but apart from it, she devoted herself all day and night to prayers, reading the Holy Scriptures and books on theology. She received the blessing of the priest to shut herself up, but at home she did not mention her decision, and the family only knew that she was going to go to the nearest monastery for a short time.

On the last night, she prayed at home in front of the icons longer than usual. She stood on her knees with a lit candle in her hand in the soft light of the lamps, and the night vigil strengthened her in her decision.

"He is there, he is with Him, so where can I be? .."

The unknown and invisible poured into her heart, soul, filled them and spread warmth throughout her body, washed away bitter regret about how rudely her sister treated the love given to her, and appealed for forgiveness. She was slightly shaken, bliss grew with every minute and second, sweet tears flowed from her eyes in a hail, her breath became wide and free:

- Accept me, Lord...

The strange force that suddenly filled her gave a tangible impetus, and she realized with fear that she was breaking away and slightly rising above the floor, almost hovering in the air and finally floated. She tried to comprehend what was happening, managed to realize that she was touching the window sill with her feet, and recoiled back.

"Why are you afraid and doubtful?" a soft, humble voice sounded somewhere nearby.

Surprised, perplexed, in view of the open space under the windowsill, she quickly jumped to the floor.

Recently experienced feelings suddenly left her and were replaced by emptiness.

At dawn, looking out of the window of the loggia into the garden, she noticed flocks of amazingly beautiful graceful bee-eaters perched in the trees, and also finches, apparently descending to a halt before a long-distance flight.

Eka made the last, as she now imagined, entry in her diary:

To live in the world Not in a worldly way Became impossible for me. And I made up my mind!

Please, dear ones,

Don't judge me harshly! I see the purpose of life

Only in unity with the creator!

Leaving by bus from the city in which she was born, performed the highest good, she caught the dear words of the well-known song: "How beautiful this world is ..."

In obedience to the call, she looked back, looked at the floating city, but immediately looked down and made the sign of the cross three times.

## X

Time passed quickly. At first, there were no special changes in the family of Mamiya Sergeevich. He never managed to find his beloved brown OPEL stolen by armed masked bandits. Now he was driving a car, which was given to him by his eldest daughter Nata.

Eka occasionally called, but obviously she was not going to return home. Manana Georgievna was deeply worried about this and did not dry her tears. It came to the attention of Mamiya Sergeevich and Nata that Eka firmly decided to take the tonsure and devote herself completely to the creator, but they did not talk about this to Manana Georgievna, who still hoped to take care of the child of her Eka, moreover, they hid it from her in every possible way.

But the main surprise for Mamiya Sergeevich and Manana Georgievna was yet to come. Their eldest daughter Nata, by the end of the year, one fine evening announced that she was marrying Vakho, her first, school love, and now a widower.

"In the life of every person there is only one true love, the rest are all options," she reminded her parents of Foucault's words.

- Well, you rejected Auto for some personal reasons! Well, what about Givi Dosifeevich? - her father asked her.

"Daddy, he's not going to marry me," she snapped dryly, "says that he's already fine with me. Pulls, more and more burdening me with their worries. Not a bad person in principle, but I have my own life.

Nata insisted on her own, married Vakho, and soon drove away with him and his children to America.

- Sorry, dad, - she justified herself to her father shortly before her departure, - I can't live in this country anymore ... you see ... We will work there, run into here. I promise you. Of course, help, call and write.

- Yes ... but who do you leave, daughter, us, the elderly? - Manana Georgievna asked sadly.

- Enough for you, mom! What kind of old are you? You are the youngest of all with me, and then, ma, we are not leaving there forever, but only for a while. We'll live, earn some money for ourselves, we'll help you, and then we'll see, maybe we'll come back in a few years.

- In a few years? - Manana Georgievna completely wilted.

On New Year's Eka congratulated her parents on the phone and was surprised to learn about Nata's act.

Nata sent a beautiful postcard, called a couple of times and talked to her mother and father for quite some time. They rejoiced, and grieved, and annoyed.

- What is it, Mamiya! Have we spent our lives together in vain?

- Well, why, - Mamiya Sergeevich kept external calm, - some time will pass, our chicks will return to us. In addition, I decided to start life anew, Abraham and Sarah had a son at the age of ninety-three, he joked.

- Oh, come on, I'm not in the mood for jokes now, - Manana Georgievna waved her off.

"No one is indebted to anyone ... no one owes anything to anyone ..." Mamiya Sergeevich took up soul-saving edifications, but he could not get Manana Georgievna out of her sad reverie. "Unbeknownst to us, the girls grew up. We have no right to prevent them from living as they want, in the end - it pleases. Everyone leaves the origins...

Mamiya Sergeevich had to calm and comfort his precious wife for a long time, feeding her each time with new hopes and promises.

## XI

Reclusion did not bother Ek.

In the typicon of monastic life, in addition to services and prayers, an important role is given to work, and here everyone does what he can.

Labor in its own way is caring for neighbors, for each other, something without which a person is depressed and oppressed.

But one cannot become slaves of labor, and here, in the monastery, they were guided by the rule of the golden mean, given that this is, first of all, divine permission.

With the blessing of her mother, Eka loved to sit with a book in her hands in the monastery garden, enjoy the singing of birds, and especially her favorite nightingales, selflessly flooded in the mornings and evenings. She repeated the lines of Igor Severyanin's poem, as if written especially for her:

The nightingales of the monastery garden, Like all nightingales on earth, They say that there is only one joy, And that this joy is in love.

She recalled all the few cases when she managed to listen to nightingale trills live, and came to the conclusion that it was here, in the monastery garden, that nightingales sang like nowhere else and never anywhere else. Every time, under their modulations, Auto came to mind, as if he appeared somewhere nearby, it was possible to talk with him, for the most part about meetings and previous conversations.

She was convinced that if everything could be returned, she would have acted completely differently and would not listen to anyone. She discarded these thoughts and turned to more stable, fulfilling forces, giving her support - to God's providence, guiding everything, she was convinced that everything in a person's life happens, as it happens, and that three wills participate in the fulfillment of fate: God's, human and enemy . She immersed herself more and more in theology, visited the rich monastery library, picked up books, and sat for a long time in the reading room reading. She took walks, most often to a small pond in the far part of the garden, where white swans swam and strange, half-wild, half-domestic ducks, twenty-four wings, which, according to the abbess, flew here at the end of the winter of last year and took root so much that they do not fly anywhere . It was rumored that they were able to speak and communicate with each other in some way.

Eka came with a pail of bait and fed the dammed winged game, enjoying the beauty and grace of her movements on land and water.

The ducks refused to fly, although they could fly away, as if feeling that they could not find a better place.

Many birds, woodpeckers, bullfinches, goldfinches, warblers, thrushes, jays nested in the vast garden, squirrels ran through the trees, sometimes shy hares ran out of the forest, at the sight of people they took to their heels. Somehow, at the pond, Eka's attention was attracted by a strange oblong plastic product with a red nose-tip and four small wings. It turned out to be a rocket with the inscription "Boomerang"

"The boomerang that did not return," Eka suggested, looking around and making sure that it could not have been launched from nearby places, almost deserted, far from the settlements.

“No,” she assured me sadly, “not everything returns to normal and not all roads lead to Rome, but, on the contrary, everything leads and returns to the sources from which we originally came, and all paths lead to them, and if we stubbornly do not want to see this and, like blind kittens, we do not leave the roads beaten by ourselves, then this is already our problem.

As everything has an end, so the road always reaches the end point. And a person should foresee in advance what final goal this or that track will lead to, and, if necessary, be able to switch to the necessary, useful, necessary, serving the salvation and resurrection of the soul.

Thoughts about death, about the meaning, purpose of life, did not bypass her, and then a person she often met came to her memory. He hunted, he fished, he built himself a house, he was going to establish himself here. on earth, and did not even think about the fact that our home is in heaven, happiness is in Christ, and he himself is universal love.

And for her there was no life without love.

She became more and more accustomed to life in the monastery, and everything else seemed to her empty, meaningless and aimless.

## XII

Life tirelessly brought innovations to the destinies of everyone and everyone.

Ramaz Mikhailovich was sensitively promoted, and now he was none other than the deputy chief ambulance doctor, and although now he did not go on calls, he bent under the weight of numerous loads that the head of the service gladly dumped from his shoulders on his shoulders. Worries increased, but a separate office and two young assistants appeared.

True, the usual regime of his life was violated, the worries and anxieties at work and at home were mixed and crossed. On top of everything else, the restless Roza Grigorievna pestered me with ideas, problems and instructions that came up from her every now and then. But, annoyingly, she encouraged him to think about himself, sobered him up, gave him, the doctor, advice on maintaining health, and once even suggested that he shout less at his family.

“How does she know this,” Ramaz wondered. “What a strange observation.” Maybe change your place of residence?

Well, you can still get away from Rosa Grigorievna, but from the family, it’s a real madhouse, and also this crazy Bug, growls, bites and looks with an evil eye.



There is only one way out - you need to be at work more often and longer, since there is a good reason -

promotion, even though you get tired there.

But the children grew up, noticeably matured, even wiser, and now he is only in them, perhaps. found relief.

Yes, it happened to visit Nino and Nukri. They were still doing business as usual. Nino persuaded Nukri and his company to carry out partial strengthening work and cosmetically finish the building of the conservatory, after which she was approved for the post of rector. The incentive was very powerful, she had many plans. With all their diversity, she did not forget about her old crystal professional dream - to acquire at least one harp - and has already done a lot of work in this direction. In many ways, she contributed and rejoiced at the success of students at international and domestic competitions. She devoted less and less time to her family, accustomed her family to greater independence.

The hardest hit was Nukri, who was already beginning to regret that he had rushed to repair the conservatory. He worked as best he could, joined in the household, went to Mikhail Davidovich, who still lived his full of adventures, garden life, which slowed down slightly and wilted in winter, when he basically made new plans and waited for spring to carry them out.

He was helped in this for the most part by the driver Nukri, Shalva, and sometimes visiting children, grandchildren and granddaughters.

Sometimes thought and remembered Auto. No one really knew about his true, real, real whereabouts, and everyone relied on the canard information released by Ruben to reassure family and friends that he had left to work on a contract, either in Canada or in the States.

Ruben himself, taking advantage of the absence of his strict and kind friend and boss, and leaving his wife and children, was in a hurry with the wedding with Tamilochka, who agreed to take him to the third and last, as she convinced everyone, husbands, after last year's joint hang-gliding flight.

As a witness, he called Gela, who promised to be cured by the day of the wedding and finally withdraw from the ballot.

And on the posters of one of the major drama theaters of the city appeared the name of the play "The Nightingales of the Monastery Garden" based on the old play Auto.

### XIII

The first two months of winter were unusually warm and sunny. But February made itself felt with rare frosts for these places and snowfalls from the sky covered with thick gray clouds. But the townspeople, to their joy, did not have to suffer, in contrast to the previous decade, with a shortage of gas, electricity and water, and their salaries and pensions slightly increased. Forgetting considerable difficulties, however, for a while, was helped either by promising projects, or by a slightly increased number of jobs, or by a newly erected building.

And, of course, over the city, as a consolation and encouragement, every day a huge domed church rose higher and higher - the most beautiful Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. And all around they were already nesting, in every tree, in every shoot, birds were fussing, birds, mostly songbirds, were arranged, and in the mornings and evenings the flooding, charming nightingale trills were heard and carried.

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1 "Kmara" (Georgian) - that's enough, that's enough.

1 Emart - man (Armenian).

2 Namus chunes, eli- have a conscience (arm.).

1 Damatsadet, me tkven gachvenebt seirs - wait, I'll show you (gr.).

1 Shvilo, ra ginda chemgan, amas me hom ar vlaparakob, chemi rdzalia- What do you want from me, girl, it's not me, but my daughter-in-law says (Georgian).

1 Khachapuri - Georgian dish, cheese pie.

1 Khinkali - (Georgian) national dish, reminiscent of dumplings.

1 Matsoni - (load) sour milk, kefir, yogurt

1 Es inch balika (arm.) - What kind of child is this

2 Than sirum (arm.) - I don't like

3 Eli (arm.) - Well, well

1 Salam alaikum, badji (Azerb.) - hello, sister.

2 Khanuma (Azerb.) - here, wife. 3. Kardash (Azerbaijani) - brother.

1 Janjal (Azerb.) - fisted. 2 Alal (Azerb.) - to health.

1 Du shash (Arabic) - six and six. 2 Se wai du (Arabic) - three and two.

1 Toastmaster (Georgian) - a person leading a feast.

1 Alaverdi (Georgian) - here it means the transfer of a toast. 1 Ketsi (gr.) - small clay pans.

1 MCC - Mission Control Center.

სამსონ გელხვიძე

დაკარგული სამოთხე

(რომანი)

თბილისი, 2022

**Самсон Гелхвидзе**

**ПОТЕРЯННЫЙ РАЙ**

**(Роман)**

**Тбилиси – 2022**

The author expresses his deep gratitude and gratitude for the help in publishing the book:

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The cover and title page of the book are based on photographs taken from the Internet.

The author expresses his gratitude to all those readers who had the patience and time to read this novel to the end.

And also the author apologizes to the reader for not being able to fully and fully convey the whole gamut and palette of feelings as well as his favorite melodies would have done in his place.

## **Samson Gelkhvidze - links list**

to literary editions of the author

<https://proza.ru/avtor/alekssandr>

<https://stihi.ru>

### **1. COLLECTIONS OF POEMS AND POEMS:**

1.1 The sacrament of confession or confession in verse

<https://proza.ru/2019/05/04/407>

1.2 Pain and Faith

<https://proza.ru/2019/05/04/73>

1.3 The soul longs for the Word

<https://proza.ru/2019/05/04/86>

### **2. STORY BOOK:**

2.1 Pain merchants

<https://proza.ru/2019/05/04/515>

2.2 Return

<https://www.litmir.me/bd/?b=645232>

2.3 Winds of change

<https://proza.ru/2019/05/04/79>

### **3. NOVEL:**

3.1 Nightingales of the monastery garden

<https://proza.ru/2019/05/04/113>

3.2 Budapest Moonlight Sonata

<https://proza.ru/2019/05/04/59>

3.3 Paradise Lost

<https://proza.ru/2022/05/31/1459>

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## 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.

Nominated for the Literary Prize "Writer of the Year" - 2021, and "Poet of the Year" - 2022. Awarded the Medal of F.M. 200th birthday of Dostoevsky