

THE IDOL

A play by Vadim Kucherenko

Characters:

Victor Mancev - a mountaineer

Oleg Tomov - a mountaineer

Vasil Korobko – a mountaineer

Anna Korobko, Vasil's wife – a mountaineer.

Cyrill Sumyatov – a journalist

Alla Bjokova – a tourist

Levan – a bartender

Mikhalych – a postman.

The action is taking place at a mountain tourist camp.

ACT 1.

There is a canteen at a mountain tourist camp. It is evening. Levan is standing behind a bar counter, Alla Bokova is sitting at one of the tables. Cyril Sumyatov comes in.

Sumyatov. Good evening!

Levan. (*speaking with a Georgian accent*) You are welcome, dear, come in, be my guest!

Sumyatov. Thanks for your kind invitation..

Levan. What would you like? We have salad, cutlets...

Sumyatov. Nothing. I was wandering about in search of a living soul.

Levan. Are you a newcomer?

Sumyatov. Almost. Is it always so lonely here?

Levan. Hey, listen, are you bearing ill will to me?! Everybody has gone to the mountains. I wonder, what allures them there?

Sumyatov. Scientists know nothing about it. And what about you, aren't you allured there?

Levan. Everybody should know his own place in this life.

Sumyatov. You think so?

Levan. My grandfather used to say so. And he was the wisest in our village – anyone will tell you. Do you believe me or not?

Sumyatov. Oh, let's ask the lady, maybe she is going to judge between us. Do you have the same point of view?

Alla. I don't care.

Sumyatov. It's not possible.

Alla. Don't argue with a woman. You'd better pay a compliment to her.

Sumyatov. I am sorry. Don't you mind? (*sitting next to her*)

Alla. Please, take a seat. Are you hanging around doing nothing?

Sumyatov. Vice versa. I am here on business.

Alla. I am really surprised to hear that! Then if it's not a secret what brought you to this mountain camp in the middle of nowhere?

Sumyatov. What secrets can I have from such a charming lady?

Alla. You are not so bad. Keep going.

Sumyatov. Thank you.

Alla. Go on, I am looking forward to your answer.

Sumyatov. I have to meet with the four famous mountaineers.

Alla. Oh, I think I know who you are talking about. One of them is such a morose guy, isn't he?

Sumyatov. Most likely this is Vactor Mancev.

Alla. The other one is quite the opposite – a cherry fellow

Sumyatov. This is Oleg Tomov.

Alla. And a together couple of sweet-hearts.

Sumyatov. They are Vasil and Anna Korobko, the just-married.

Alla. Oh, I see then. And what are they famous for?

Sumyatov. Recently they have conquered the Devil's Fang? Have you heard about this peak before?

Alla. For the first time from you.

Sumyatov. It is considered to be a real feat.

Alla. How appearance might be deceiving! I would never look at those good guys as heroes.

Sumyatov. Are you a climber?

Alla. No, I am just a modest tourist guide. Besides, I am terribly afraid of height. And why are you asking me? Is there anything special about me?

Sumyatov. As far as I know this camp is for mountain climbers. It made me assume so.

Alla. Actually, my husband was suddenly offered a pass to this camp at his work. So, I am here near white peaks, floating eagles and heroes. I know I should be happy but in fact I am bored to death. Isn't it strange?

Sumyatov. And how long have you been getting bored here?

Alla. For two days already. I am not sure if I could spend at least a week here. And you, how long are you planning to stay?

Sumyatov. It depends on how soon I will get along with those four.

Alla. Are you going to tempt them for another climb?

Sumyatov. I am a journalist.

Alla. Oh, really? I have never met with journalists before.

Sumyatov. My purpose is to depict their feats.

Alla. How gloomy you said that! Aren't you looking forward to this meeting?

Sumyatov. Please, tell me the truth, do you have a feeling that our world has gone mad?

Alla. Oh yeah! And everybody would agree with that. All you can hear at every corner is "oh, this crazy crazy, crazy world"!

Sumyatov. Are you feeling good in such a world?

Alla. Yes, I can tell you. I must be also crazy?

Sumyatov. As for me to be honest I am not quite myself in this world...

Alla. Are you married?

Sumyatov. Yes. But what's the matter?

Alla. What makes you feel uneasy then?

Sumyatov. A loss of self-esteem, I would say.

Alla. It is nonsense!

Sumyatov. Just look around!

Alla. Okay...

Sumyatov. What do you see?

Alla. Frankly speaking, nothing interesting.

Sumyatov. That's it! However, they try to persuade us - you and me in the opposite.

Alla. Who tries? Persuade of what? It's bullshit!

Sumyatov. Bullshit?! Just switch on the radio. I am sure at this moment some feeble-voiced pop diva is trying to imitate a nightingale or maybe they are talking about some boxing champion. And let's take TV....

Alla. So, what do you have against TV?

Sumyatov. It is flooded with show-business stars and politicians of various types. I am not even mentioning newspapers!

Alla. Are you afraid to find an inferiority complex in yourself?

Sumyatov. I feel offended for my country. It looks like we really can not live without either God, tsar, or hero. And it would be better to have three of them at once.

Alla. What are you talking about? A Tsar was overthrown a long time ago, the God is terribly far from people, only a hero has remained. Please, don't deprive us of our last consolation!

Sumyatov. I can't understand, what are you driving at?

Mikhalych enters.

Mikhalych. All bon appetit!

Levan. *\speaking with a Georgian accent* Come in dear! We've been waiting for you for a long time. Do you believe me or not?

Mikhalych. I am like a clock – precise and inevitable.

Levan. What's new in the world, eh?

Mikhalych. Every minute something is happening in the world. How can I know about all?

Levan. But you know something anyway...

Mikhalych. The less we know, the more quiet we sleep. I advise you to learn this simple truth.

Levan. Thanks for advice, dear. Have you brought some mail or not?

Mikhalych. Here you go, if you really can't live without it. But please, don't blame me in case the news is bad.

Levan. I won't, don't worry.

Mikhalych. Hey guys, you see, I've warned him!

Sumyatov. Sure. You can refer to us as witnesses just in case.

Mikhalych. Absolutely! Can I learn your names?

Sumyatov. Cyrill Sumyatov.

Alla. Alla Bokova.

Mikhalych. You can call me Mikhalych. You have done me a favor I won't forget it. *(Leaves)*.

Levan. What a man he is, I can't understand...

Sumyatov. An odd fellow, I would say.

Alla. Or maybe another madman?

Sumyatov. It looks like. I am afraid I could go crazy here myself. The ambience and the landscape are quite suitable.

Alla. Do not worry, it's not going to happen with you.

Sumyatov. Then what is going to happen?

Alla. It's a secret. However, if you kindly ask me maybe I am going to open it.

Sumyatov. Please do me a favor. You have really intrigued me!

Alla. Okay, listen. And don't say that you haven't heard. For example, you, men, desperately need beauty contests...

Sumyatov. What for?

Alla. Come on, you are not a kid... Take a guess. Well, don't interrupt me!

Сумятов. Okay, I am as dumb as a fish.

Alla. However we, women, also need some kind of consolation in our lives, don't you think so?

Sumyatov. It's up to you.
 Alla. Believe me, this is true.
 Sumyatov. So, what can console you? I have no idea.
 Alla. A mere trifle.
 Sumyatov. So, what is it?
 Alla. It is enough for us to know there real men still exist in this world, and they haven't died out like mammoths.
 Sumyatov. You are talking about the tamers of mammoths?!

Alla. Let it be your way. And don't look at me so ironically.
 Sumyatov. Not at all, I assure you!
 Alla. I would say more. If such men don't exist they should be invented.
 Sumyatov. I guess modern men have done a bad turn to you...
 Alla. Oh, those modern men! These sad and tiresome creatures are enable to bring happiness even in bed, not to mention other things.
 Sumyatov. What are you talking about?
 Alla. I say what I think.
 Sumyatov. Then poor you...
 Alla. Oh, don't mention it. You'd better feel sorry for you.
 Sumyatov. Why?
 Alla. In case If we, women, would suddenly give up our romantic dreams. Who knows, where could it lead?
 Sumyatov. Most likely to the fine aggressive amazons?
 Alla. That's why I am saying: don't attempt upon dreams!
 Sumyatov. Is it so dangerous?
 Alla. Do not look so scared. I am not threatening you so far.
 Sumyatov. Thanks a lot.

Victor Mancev enters.

Mancev. Levan, was there an evening mail today?
 Levan. Sure there was, dear.
 Манцев. What about me? Is it a letter or a telegram?
 Levan. Sorry, my friend. Maybe tomorrow, eh?
 Mancev. Let's hope for the best.

Anna and Vasil Korobko, as well as Oleg Tomov enter.

Tomov. Oh, what a nice walk we just had, guys! (*Singing*). «A division was moving forward through the valleys and hills...»

Anna. It's so quiet in the mountains by the evening, isn't it, Vasil
 Vasil. *Ispeaking with a Ukrainian accent* It sure is, my sweat heart!
 Anna. I'd like some tea! I am feeling cold a bit.
 Vasil. Levan, two cups of tea, please!
 Levan. Would you like some cakes? They are absolutely fresh.
 Vasil. No, I don't need them.
 Levan. Don't need, don't need! Again, the cakes are going to get dry. Take your tea and go, got it?!

Vasil. Annushka, please drink your tea while it's hot.
 Anna. Thanks, my dear!
 Tomov. I'd have a stiffener now, what about you, Vasil? Just a little bit, since I am so tired.
 Vasil. That's true. But I don't need it.
 Tomov. Or maybe your wife makes you save money? So, just tell me the truth, don't wag the tail like a dog.

Anna. Shame on you, Oleg!
Tomov. Go, tell me!
Vasil. Yes, a wife is a wife.
Anna. Got it?!

Tomov. You are such boring people. One can't even have fun with you.
Anna. Why can't? You are welcome but mind your jokes. Levanchik, dear, was there some mail?
Levan. Are you also waiting for a letter, eh?
Anna. Don't be so curious. It doesn't become to you!
Levan. What have I said? Why are you getting angry? Would you like a newspaper?
Anna. Take a guess!
Levan. You think I spare it, eh?
Tomov. Anna, Levan is a good guy. Don't beat him, you will need him in future.
Anna. Go on, the floor is yours... (*taking a newspaper*).
Vasil. What are they saying, Annuska?
Tomov. What can they say? Just some idle things for emotional girls and old people.
Anna. Oleg, you are a pain in the neck. How many people told you this?
Tomov. Surprisingly, you are the only for today. Oh man! And she is my best friend's wife!
Alla. Aren't you going to defend honor?
Sumyatov. No, thanks.
Alla. Are you consoling yourself with the thought that it wasn't addressed to you?
Sumyatov. It might be to me also. Whatever!
Anna. Oh, guys, I can't believe it!
Levan. Hey, what's that? Why are you shouting, eh?
Vasil. Can I look at it?
Tomov. It's him! He looks so real.
Mancev. What's the matter?
Anna. (*reading*). «On the photo: an adventurous conqueror of the forbidding Devil's Fang mountain-climber Victor Mancev».
Tomov. Vityok, can I shake your brave hand?
Mancev. Why is there me only?
Vasil. Don't get upset, we don't mind at all.
Mancev. But why?!
Anna. Oh, there is an urgent message here.
Tomov. What's that?
Anna. Don't tear up the newspaper!
Mancev. Anna, read aloud.
Anna. (*reading*). «Avalanche in Mountains».
Tomov. Hey, everybody get silent!
Anna. (*reading*). «Last night the dwellers of the local villages heard a threatening rumble...» We heard nothing didn't we, Vasil?
Tomov. You were sleeping like gophers in their holes.
Anna. Hey, you!
Mancev. Anna, go on!
Anna. «A mighty avalanche fell down at midnight sharp. At that moment a radio connection with a group of mountaineers climbing up the Devil's Fang broke».
Tomov. The guys are totally screwed up!
Vasil. Don't croak!
Anna. Spit three times and knock at a piece of wood right away!

Tomov. Well, if it helps them... Vasil, where is your head to knock at?

Anna. «By morning several rescue brigades headed for the mountains. However, the group of climbers have not been found yet. Their traces are lost».

Levan. No wonder they are lost! The devil is going to break his neck there. Believe me or not?

Mancev. That's why it is called the Devil's Fang.

Tomov. This peak won't have mercy on anyone. And it won't let anyone back.

Anna. But we have gone through. Haven't you forgotten?

Tomov. It's by a fluke. Blind luck. I wouldn't take such a risk for the second time. *(Singing)*. «Hey, apple, where are you rolling? Should you get to the Devil's Fang you won't roll back»!

Anna. Vasil, Vitya, just tell him! Is there a hope?

Vasil. Just a slight one.

Mancev. In what area were they when the radio connection broke?

Anna. It doesn't say.

Levan. Is there anything else?

Anna. Yes, there is. *(Reading)*. «Before this accident the Devil's Fang was conquered only by a group of climbers headed by the famous mountaineer Victor Mancev...»

Sumyatov. Alla, you see? Here is a bright confirmation of my words!

Alla. What are you talking about?

Sumyatov. Victor Mancev! The others are not even mentioned.

Alla. Come on! Does it really matter now?

Sumyatov. What about fairness? Where is fairness, I ask you?

Anna. Vasil, from now on you won't go to the mountains without me, got it?!

Vasil. Without you - no way. Who am I going to look for there?

Tomov. God, damn those mountains!

Levan. Why are you saying that, eh? Listen, while we are coursing here they are perishing!

Tomov. That's true, Levan! We should go to rescue them.

Anna. Vasil! Why are you silent?

Vasil. What should I say? If we go, let's go then.

Levan. Aren't we men, eh?!

Anna. Sure we are! Vitya, tomorrow morning we are starting, right?

Mancev. You know what guys... I can't join you now.

Anna. Why?!

Tomov. What's the matter Vityok? Are you crazy?

Mancev. Crazy? No. I just need to stay at this camp for one or two days.

Vasil. How are we going to go without you?

Mancev. At least one day. Try to understand me, it is very important!

Levan. We do understand you, dear! Believe it or not.

Mancev. Oh, whatever! *(Leaving)*.

Sumyatov. You see, here is your idol in its true guise!

Alla. You think he got scared? I don't believe it! No way!

Sumyatov. Don't be such an idealist.

Alla. Okay! I bet you came here with a specific purpose and you are not going to give it up.

Sumyatov. With what purpose? Tell me! Don't be shy!

Alla. To overthrow the idols - here is your purpose! You don't even hide it.

Sumyatov. All or nobody. It would be just fair.

Alla. And the climber Victor Mancev is going to be the first victim of your noble intention?

Sumyatov. I guess, the victims are those whose fame he has appropriated.

Alla. Oh, you, journalists!

Sumyatov. Why are you so sarcastic?

Alla. Doesn't life seem boring to you with such a way of thinking?

Sumyatov. I can't understand you, Alla!

Alla. Bad for you.

Sumyatov. Sorry.

Alla. Did you get offended? Don't be a kid.

Sumyatov. Well, Let me leave you and have a glass of tomato juice (Coming up the bar counter). One glass of bloody Mary, please!

Tomov. You have a beautiful wife, buddy. I get envy you!

Sumyatov. Please, don't. We've just met.

Tomov. Lucky you! One can fall in love with such a lady at the first sight.

Sumyatov. And fall out of love after the first date.

Tomov. Whatever. You won't get offended if I run after her?

Sumyatov. It's up to you. (Leaves).

Tomov. Levan, two alcohol cocktails to the first meeting please!

Levan. Aren't you crazy, dear?

Tomov. Don't kill the rising fair feeling. Just as an exception! I will be your debtor till the end of my life, believe me!

Levan. Okay, but I am taking big risk. You know about the prohibition at our camp.

Tomov. I got you. I am not a fool. How much?

Levan. A double price.

Tomov. If only risk would always be paid like that where could we find cowards, Levan?

Levan. I am not insisting, dear.

Tomov. Take your coins, you the risky guy! (Coming up to Alla). Excuse me for intrusion...

Alla. Don't intrude and I won't have to excuse you.

Tomov. What a strict lady!

Alla. I am a very expensive lady.

Tomov. That's good. I don't like cheap stuff.

Alla. Are you sure you can afford me?

Tomov. I have a fat wallet, don't worry. Wouldn't you mind to have a drink with me?

Alla. You'd better start with it. To what are we going to have a drink?

Tomov. To you, my lady!

Alla. It's trite.

Tomov. Then...

Alla. Don't strain yourself. I have an idea. Let's drink to the real men, that they would still exist in our world!

Tomov. Terrific toast!

Anna. Vasil, listen! (reading a newspaper). «A house for sale. The house located in the suburban area faces the mountains, has five rooms and a garden of fifteen hundreds square meters...» It's great, isn't it?

Vasil. Terrific!

Anna. I wish I had such a house. We would take your mom there! The doctors tell her to walk more in the open air.

Vasil. How much is it?

Anna. It doesn't say. Levanchik, how much could be a house in this area?

Levan. It might be fifty or one hundred thousand dollars.

Anna. Oh, It's impossible!

Levan. Why should I tell lies?!

Anna. Come on, this is a daylight robbery!

Levan. Hey, money means nothing! Now you have money, tomorrow you are down on your luck. But a house means family, children, grandchildren. You are not going to spare any money for it, believe me.

Anna. Sure you won't spare! But where are you going to get money?

Levan. Money is just lying on the ground. Just take it, don't get lazy!

Анна. Oh, Levanchik where have you been while we together with Vasil were looking for our money on tops of the mountains?

Vasil. We were looking for them but didn't find.

Tomov. Are you sure you didn't?

Vasil. Well, there is some.

Anna. It's not your business!

Tomov. Anna, would you remind me: was there any information about a pigsty in that newspaper classified?

Anna. I think no.

Tomov. Then don't waste your time - it's not your variant.

Anna. Why do think so?

Tomov. Where are you going to breed your pigs? Right in the house?

Anna. Vasil, just listen!

Vasil. What's that, my sweat heart?

Anna. Oleg is laughing at us again.

Vasil. God damn him!

Tomov. Vasil, listen, here is a funny story! Allochka, you too. Once a photo reporter visited a young farmer at his place. Everything goes well: welcome dinner, photo session and stuff like that. On the next day, the farmer looks through the newspaper and sees a photo: he is embracing a pig. And there is a slug on the bottom: "Petka, the boar on the left, Vasil Korobko on the right".

Vasil. Hey, you, go to hell!

Alla. Are you serious?

Tomov. I told you this is an anecdote.

Alla. No, I mean are you serious that those guys are really going to change mountains for pigs?

Tomov. I am not kidding. Vasil, I saw you yesterday reading a book. What was the title?

Vasil. Yesterday? Oh, yes! It was «Breeding of Sows at the Arctic Circle».

Tomov. He is an expert, I told you! Are you also keen on these grunting creatures?

Alla. Are you crazy? I don't care about this pig's life!

Anna. What did you say!

Alla. What's the matter?

Anna. Aren't you a Muslim?

Alla. Oh, my God!

Anna. The Muslims can't stand pigs. The Koran forbids them. It says that pig is a dirty animal.

Alla. Such a prejudice!

Anna. And what do you know about them?

Alla. About pigs? Actually, I haven't thought of them...

Anna. In your opinion pigs are just dirt, stench and scream?

Alla. No, it's also lard and meat.

Anna. By the way, a pig is a very smart animal!

Alla. Smart?

Anna. And noble. There are even poems devoted to pigs.

Alla. I would never think!

Anna. And not bad poems, I tell you. Nobody would write such poems about you,
Oleg.

Tomov. You shot me dead, Anna!

Anna. Here you go!

Tomov. I promise you: when I get my own apartment I will buy a little piglet with a
pinky snout.

Anna. Are you going to keep it at your balcony?

Tomov. No way! On the rug at the corridor.

Anna. Vasil, did you hear that? What fun!

Vasil. Don't feel hurt, my girl! He is a good guy.

Anna. I am okay.

Vasil. Well, you said, fifteen hundreds square meters?

Anna. Yes, fifteen. Facing the mountains...

**Victor Mancev is sitting on a bench in front of the camp building. Cyril Sumyatov
comes out.**

Sumyatov. Wouldn't you mind?

Mancev. No, take a seat. Have you come out to smoke?

Sumyatov. To breath with fresh air.

Mancev. Anyway, help yourself. (Offers him a pack of cigarettes).

Sumyatov. I prefer pipe. (Shows his pipe).

Mancev. Amusing thingy!

Sumyatov. One craftsman carved it. You wouldn't believe it: when you hold it, it
warms you up like a stove. It is absolutely indispensable in the mountains. Especially at
nights.

Mancev. You are right, it's cold here at nights. Although, the stars are bigger and
brighter. You just can't take your eyes of them.

Sumyatov. Charming?

Mancev. I can't get used to such beauty for many years already.

Sumyatov. One can get used to everything.

Mancev. Eternal mountains, eternal stars, eternal peace – and a human small
and fussy. Such a big contrast. I feel it since my childhood.

Sumyatov. Where were you born?

Mancev. At one small town. If you look at the map you can see mountains
around it. But in fact it's located in a valley. There is no even a small hill around up to
the horizon.

Sumyatov. It's amazing!

Mancev. Life is even more amazing.

Sumyatov. So, you didn't see mountains in your childhood?

Mancev. Sometimes, on a sunny calm day I saw their vague outlines.

Sumyatov. Maybe it was a miracle?

Mancev. The mountains seemed to be painted on a big canvas. But should a
slight wind blow they disappeared immediately.

Sumyatov. Did anyone except you see them?

Mancev. Don't take me for a dreamer or madman.

Sumyatov. Oh, no, I didn't mean that!

Mancev. Everybody saw them. But most of people just didn't notice. They were
so common for them.

Sumyatov. I quite understand them. Our life is so short. A human doesn't care about eternal mountains.

Mancev. You might be right. But at that time I thought that I am eternal too. Did you have such feeling in your childhood?

Sumyatov. I did. But it faded away quickly.

Mancev. When I learnt that in fact it is not like that I started crying at nights. I used to bury my head in the pillow and howl. I have never felt such despair since that time.

Sumyatov. Have you tried to run away to the mountains?

Mancev. Not once. My poor father! He used to give me good smacking in order to knock this bullshit out of my head - as he used to say.

Sumyatov. I think he wished you only good.

Mancev. My parents wished I were a banker. It was their great dream.

Sumyatov. They can be proud of you even more after conquering the Devil's Fang.

Mancev. They haven't lived to see it.

Sumyatov. I am sorry.

Mancev. They passed away with a sad feeling that their son is loafer and loser.

Sumyatov. There is one more paradoxes of life.

Mancev. But you know what? Sometimes I am worried by a feeling that they were right.

Sumyatov. I'd rather have a smoke...

Mancev. Getting cold?

Sumyatov. I feel chilly.

Mancev. Then, smoke your stove quickly!

Sumyatov. Sorry, I have no tobacco.

Mancev. Then go back to the camp. It's warm there.

Sumyatov. And you?

Mancev. Me too. I am not quite myself today.

At the camp canteen.

Alla. Oh, how tiresome! Oleg?

Tomov. What's that?

Alla. Please do something! You are a man after all!

Tomov. As a man I would suggest to invite you at my place.

Alla. Where is it?

Tomov. It's not far from here. Just climb upstairs to the second floor.

Alla. What is there?

Tomov. Wine, music, intimate talking...

Alla. It's banal!

Tomov. Let's play forfeits then.

Alla. How is it?

Tomov. You'll see. My friends! Levan!

Levan. What, my dear?

Tomov. Who knows why there are no flies here?

Levan. It's not a right season for them. They are sleeping.

Tomov. The answer is not correct!

Anna. They are gone to the south.

Tomov. You are not right!

Alla. They are dead of boredom.

Tomov. That's right! I am afraid, my friends, that we are going to face the same sad end.

Levan. What can you suggest, dear?

Tomov. I suggest to play forfeits.

Anna. Any toy is okay that keeps a baby at play!

Vasil. What is it?

Tomov. The game is very simple. Let me explain you the rules. One person is waiting behind the door while the rest are changing something in their images. But, keep in mind, Anna you can change your hairstyle, for instance - not your husband.

Anna. Very witty!

Tomov. The most watchful and attentive will be a winner.

Alla. And a loser what is going to do?

Tomov. He has to sing or dance or at least tell a story if he is so mediocre.

Alla. Who is going to wait behind the door? Not me!

Tomov. A lot will tell us. Levan, a box of matches please!

Levan. One dollar!

Alla. Catch it! (Throwing him a box of matches).

Tomov. Okay... Now I am breaking one mach. Who pulls it out will wait behind the door. Let's start, Allochka!

Alla. Why would I be the first?

Tomov. Because you are the most beautiful!

Alla. Well, if it is so... then (Pulling out a match). A long one!

Tomov. Levan, take your chance!

Levan. It's going to be a long one, believe me! (pulling out). I told you, eh!

Tomov. Anna take your chance now.

Anna. I wonder, when will you grow up? (pulling out). A long one! You see, Vasil?

Vasil. I do. (pulling out).

Tomov. What do you have there?

Vasil. The same as Annushka.

Cyril Sumyatov enters.

Alla. Hey, you, a journalist - what's your name - come and join us!

Tomov. Pull it out. Don't get out!

Sumyatov. Well, whatever... (pulling out).

Tomov. A long one again! Well, it looks like I am to hang around behind the door.

Victor Mancev enters.

Tomov. Vitya, join the company!

Mancev. (Pulling out). A short one.

Tomov. It's your fate Vityok! Go out of the door.

Mancev. For how long?

Tomov. I guess five minutes will be enough for everybody to make drastic changes.

Mancev. Okay, time is running! (gets out of the door).

Tomov. Guys, quicker, quicker! Allochka, you are just charming! Levan, what about you?!

Levan. Don't worry, dear, Levan knows what he is doing.

Tomov. Anna, Vasil, what are you arguing about?

Anna. I want him to put on my skirt, but he wouldn't agree.

Tomov. Lovely idea! But you have little time for changing, come up with something easier. And you, why are you standing as pillar of salt like Lot's wife?

Sumyatov. I can seat down.

Tomov. Everybody has changed? Vityok, come in!

Victor Mancev enters.

Tomov. Vityok, be watchful!

Mancev. Levan, why have you put on a cap? Are you cold?

Levan. My friend, your eyes are as sharp as eagle's!

Mancev. Vasil, give Anna her beads back. They don't look good at you.

Vasil. That's what I told her!

Anna. Oh, just look at this dandy!

Mancev. I see a flower bloomed in your hear.

Alla. Isn't it charming?

Mancev. I think so. Oleg, get out a handkerchief out of your pocket. Since when do you wear a handkerchief?

Tomov. You, the sharp-eyed monster!

Mancev. What has changed to you, Cyril? I can't remember.

Sumyatov. The same as to everybody.

Mancev. Did you have mustaches?

Sumyatov. Don't you think that I have just shaved them away?

Mancev. You are a mysterious person to me. I give up.

Sumyatov. It's a pity. You forgot that I was holding a pipe when you went out of the door.

Levan. Oh, buddy!

Alla. Take a forfeit, take a forfeit!

Tomov. How's that, Vityok?

Alla. An immediate retribution! Don't even think to sneak away.

Mancev. One should be able to lose with dignity. I am at your service.

Tomov. I announce a contest for the best forfeit for him!

Levan. Let him eat five cakes.

Tomov. Levan, don't be so mercenary. It's not good, is it, Allochka?

Levan. Hey, what special did I say?!

Anna. Let's forgive him for the first time.

Alla. No way! Playing means playing. I want him to tell us some story.

Mancev. I am a terrible story-teller, I worn you.

Alla. A scary story so that blood would freeze!

Tomov. Allochka, you are irresistible! Any other ideas? So, Vityok, you have to accept this.

Mancev. Well, if you insist.

Alla. Will you begin like an adventurous novel. It happened one dark night. It was lightning and the thunder was growling... Go on!

Mancev. Keep in mind that I was just an oblique participant of those events. I witnessed myself just a part of the things, a great deal I have to guess only...

Alla. Listen, the door has creaked. Who is there?!

Levan. It's just wind, believe me. Let me close the door.

Mancev. Well, it happened by the end of winter. We were climbing a peak of eight thousand height using the Alpine style.

Alla. Uff, I am trembling with fear already!

Tomov. Just wait, there is worse to come, Allochka! Mountaineers are risky people.

Alla. But I didn't understand what is the eight thousand height peak?

Tomov. A small tumor on the mother Earth which is located eight thousand meters above the sea level.

Sumyatov. According to statistics, each conquering of such tumors involves death accidents.

Alla. Wow, it's so interesting! And what means this... how is it called?...

Tomov. Alpine style?

Alla. Exactly!

Tomov. Climbing up with all your provisions and outfit. In some cases the rucksack behind your shoulders is as heavy as you are.

Alla. Is it possible to climb some other way?

Tomov. In some cases there are special transit camps along all the route where you can pick up the necessary stuff placed there before. So, the climbers can enjoy walking with light baggage like fops in the downtown.

Sumyatov. It is really easier. Why to complicate things?

Anna. By the way, why to take such risks climbing the mountains at all? You can get there by plan after all.

Sumyatov. Seriously, why to take such risks?

Anna. Vasil, just listen!

Vasil. He thinks so, so what?

Levan. Hey, are we listening to the story or what?

Alla. Okay, I am silent. And all of you too! Go on, Victor!

Mancev. We were having devil's own luck during the most part of the route. It was a sunny day, a little frosty. We had not a trifling injury.

Alla. And when does the most scaring begin?

Tomov. It's coming soon, just wait.

Mancev. Several days were left before we reach the top of the mountain. Suddenly, the temperature got low, and a strong contrary wind started blowing. Our eyes got blind, it was difficult to breathe.

Alla. How terrible! Don't say a word more!

Mancev. It was too risky to climb further. But the aim seemed to be so close... Two friends, the young obsessed guys were annoyed most of all. And then an expedition guide told them: «Go, check it out and get back» warning: «It is dangerous». But the friends just laughed: «While we are together, nothing is dangerous for us. We will follow each other through fire and water». «And to abyss», - one of them added. So, they were gone.

Alla. Tell me just one thing: did they die?

Mancev. The worst thing happened to them.

Alla. What can be worse than death? I can't imagine!

Levan. To lose one's dignity as we say at our mountain area.

Anna. Let him finish the story after all!

Alla. Tell us what happened! Don't tire us out!

Mancev. Nothing special. Everybody who climb the mountains should be ready for this. One of the two friends fell down to the abyss.

Sumyatov. You are telling this so calmly!

Mancev. That guy was so much striving to the top as if he left something extremely important there. But he was hurrying too much. His foot slide down, he hardly had a second to scream or even realize what happened.

Sumyatov. But where was another one? He could see it and get help.

Mancev. Could he? I doubt it. They were climbing rope-tied. He fell down from a sharp jerk but was lucky to catch on a rock. While the one in front of him was hanging over the abyss.

Alla. I can imagine: a little man over big abyss. Scary picture! I saw this in some movie.

Mancev. It was exactly like this. One man is over the abyss, another one is gripping the rock like grim death. And there is only a thin rope between them. It was thin, but firm, a assure you.

Alla. I guess he immediately rushed to save his friend?

Mancev. Like I said it was sunny and warm day before the accident. But suddenly it got bitter cold.

Vasil. The surface got ice-crusting, got it?

Mancev. He was afraid to make an accidental movement and slide down to the abyss. And his friend... When falling he was about to cut his head open and was hanging without any life signs. Do you know what despair means? There were not cowards at all. But all they had is to wait without any hope for rescue...

Sumyatov. Early or later they were to be searched and rescued anyway.

Mancev. Or later... you are right. That was exactly what he must be thinking at the moment, holding his friend by the skin of his teeth and waiting for the moment when he gets exhausted and they fall down together.

Anna. Vitya, maybe that's enough for today.

Alla. Are you going to stop at the most absorbing moment?!

Mancev. Well, my throat got dry.

Levan. Just a second, dear. Here you go, drink it! It's free.

Mancev. Thank you... So, what I was talking about?

Sumyatov. About the tragic fate common for both.

Mancev. Yeah... But you know one of them could escape it if he cut off the rope.

Sumyatov. But who?

Mancev. What do you think?

Sumyatov. I have no idea. I have never been in such a scrape.

Mancev. The one who is above the abyss? Usually, there is a slight hope up to the last moment. However, when the self-preservation instinct dies it's too late already.

Sumyatov. And the one who was holding him? Do you think he could?

Mancev. Why not? How many suiciders have you met in your life?

Sumyatov. Not a single one fortunately.

Mancev. So, he was also young and wanted to live.

Alla. Therefore he let his friend fall to the bottom of the abyss?

Levan. What are you talking about, eh? Switch on your brain!

Mancev. When they were found he was holding a knife in his hand. The rescuers could hardly unclench his frozen fingers. There was a slight knife cut on the rope.

Anna. Oh, that's enough for me. I can't listen further. Vasil, let's go! I feel sick.

Vasil. As you say.

Anna. Good night to all. We are going to bed.

Alla. So early?

Anna. We've got accustomed to get asleep early. Am I right, Vasil?

Vasil. Sure, my dear.

Anna and Vasil leave.

Alla. What's the matter with them?

Tomov. They are just-married!

Alla. And with you?

Tomov. What do you mean?

Alla. You have turned pale!

Tomov. Get along with you!

Alla. Oh!..

Sumyatov. So, I can't understand why was he waiting? They were found not so soon, right? During this time he could cut the rope hundreds of times and save his own life.

Mancev. That's what I can't understand until now. What made his hand not to cut it?

Alla. To me all is clear. Most likely, the one who fell down was pleading him not to do it.

Mancev. I don't think so. He was unconscious. He could not plead to cut the rope. Do you understand?

Levan. Sure we do, dear!

Alla. As for me, not at all!

Sumyatov. Well, everything is so clear! Is He was left alone with his own conscience.

Mancev. I assure you they had a lot to talk about. At some moments the life preservation instinct was prevailing and then he took the knife. At others his conscience was overcoming and he dropped the knife.

Sumyatov. It was a life and death struggle. It could be a sensational headline!

Mancev. Fortunately, the snowstorm calmed down and other guys from the expedition got in time. You already know what they saw there.

Alla. So, nobody got injured?

Levan. Oh, you, lady!

Mancev. They got off with a scratch or two. Sorry if I have disappointed you.

Alla. You are kidding at me. Have I said something stupid?

Mancev. The rescuers called a helicopter by radio connection and brought everyone down to the camp. So, none of them got to the peak that day.

Sumyatov. I can't understand one thing.

Mancev. Which one?

Sumyatov. Who were you of those two?

Mancev. It doesn't matter... So, have I passed my forfeit?

Alla. I could listen for you till morning. It's so absorbing!

Mancev. Levan, buddy, have you by any chance put some soporific into my glass? My eyes are getting heavy.

Levan. Are you kidding, my friend?!

Sumyatov. Wait, you can't leave just like this!

Mancev. I can as you see.

Victor Mancev leaves. Cyril Sumyatov follows him.

Alla. Everybody has gone... Oleg, why are you silent?

Tomov. Thinking.

Alla. About what?

Tomov. I'd rather have another drink. Don't you mind, Allochka?

Alla. Get along with you! Are we going to play further?

Tomov. I guess everybody is full with this game.

Alla. I want to go on!

Tomov. Do you have only this desire?

Alla. A lady is getting bored next to you. Shame on you!

Tomov. I feel guilty.

Alla. What are you thinking about?

Tomov. It doesn't matter. Levan!

Levan. Hey, don't shout so loudly! I am not deaf.

Tomov. Do you have a guitar?

Levan. Sure I do.

Tomov. Get it here!

Levan. Sing us, dear. And then we are closing. It's night already.

Tomov. Don't hurry up time, Levan. Our night is just starting. Am I right Allochka?

Alla. It's amazing! I don't feel sleepy at all.

Tomov. Good girl. This night will be all ours! (Sings a song about mountaineers).

Light turns off. When it turns on again it is already morning.

Levan is making tables at the canteen. Mikhalych is sitting at one of the tables.

Levan. You know what day is it today?

Mikhalych. It's been Sunday since morning.

Levan. Why aren't you at home, eh?

Mikhalych. I feel comfortable among people. I am too lonely at the empty apartment.

Levan. I wish I had your problems!

Mikhalych. I wouldn't wish them on my bitter enemy. A person needs other people to feel their breathing next to him. Otherwise everything doesn't make sense.

Levan. Then why don't you get married? A man should have a family – a wife and children - believe me.

Mikhalych. I used to have family. Should I settle down with a new one? No, I wouldn't. And it's too late.

Levan. Oh, don't tell me! At the Caucasus a man might get married at one hundred years old and his wife delivers him a heir. Got it?

Mikhalych. You are good guy, Levan. Let me seat here for a while, okay? I wouldn't disturb you.

Levan. Am I turning you out? Please, seat, dear.

Mikhalych. Thank you.

Levan. Oh, don't mention it!

Anna and Vasil Korobko come in.

Anna. Good morning all!

Mikhalych. You are right, today's morning is really good. Look, how sunny it is!

Anna. That's why we got up so early. Levan, the guys haven't come downstairs yet?

Levan. No.

Anna. That's what I told you, Vasil. They are going to sleep till the lunch time. I bet, yesterday they left after midnight. Am I right, Levan?

Levan. Yeah.

Anna. So, we'll be able to get back in time, don't worry.

Vasil. I wish we could.

Anna. Levan, how long does it take to get to the city and get back?

Levan. One way takes a couple of hours, the round way is the same... Plus one hour is for this and that. So, just count.

Anna. And when are we starting?

Levan. Starting what?

Anna. To save those guys at the mountains. Didn't you forget?

Levan. Oh, how can I forget?...

Anna. Then what's the matter with you? Hey, look into my eyes!

Levan. My wife wouldn't let me go. She swore that if I go to the mountains she would grab a son and a daughter and leave for her parents. So, no way I can join you.

Anna. Here we go! Did you hear that, Vasil?

Vasil. Sure I did.

Levan. One person more, one person less – what a big deal!

Vasil. You are right actually...

Anna. And we shall go!

Levan. I would also go believe me! But I can't!

Vasil. Don't get upset, Levan. I understand you.

Mikhalych. Excuse me guys for interrupting you. I heard you are going to the city, am I right?

Anna. Actually we haven't decided yet. Of course we'd like to go, but I am afraid our guys would leave without us.

Mikhalych. What do you need at the city? Maybe I could be of some service to you.

Anna. We read a classified at the newspaper yesterday: a house for sale, five rooms and a garden... We've been dreaming of such a house for a long time.

Vasil. So, let's return from the mountains and then go to the city.

Anna. You think such house is going to wait for you? It's not a house - a palace!

Mikhalych. I would advise you not to postpone it for later. You might get nothing later, I know!

Vasil. Are you serious, daddy?

Mikhalych. I wish I were wrong! But unfortunately this is bitter truth. So, go immediately! I can see you off if you don't mind.

Anna. We really appreciate your help. However... we need to go to the mountains.

Mikhalych. That's what my son always used to tell me: «Dad, the mountains are waiting for me». And he was gone as if I were not waiting for him. One day he left and never came back...

Levan. Oh, why haven't you told us before, dear?

Mikhalych. He was the same age as you are. So, as a person who is as old as your fathers I have a right to warn you. Don't try to live only for high ideals. Live for a person next to you. You know, this is the only chance to be happy in our earthy world.

Anna. What do you think, Vasil?

Vasil. As you say.

Anna. And I will say! We are going to the city. Levan!

Levan. Don't shout so loudly, I beg you!

Anna. Tell the guys that we left for the city. Let them wait for us!

Levan. I will, I will...

Anna. So, are you going to join us?

Mikhalych. With great pleasure!

Anna. Sorry, I don't know your name.

Mikhalych. You can call me Mikhalych. My son used to call me like this. I am okay with it.

Levan. I am going to see you off to the bus, okay?

Vasil. Let's go Levan. It's more fun together.

Everybody is gone. Cyril Sumyatov and Alla Bokova come in.

Alla. So, you don't agree?

Sumyatov. Yes. You have to take another companion.

Alla. Here they are, our modern men!

Sumyatov. You forgot that I came here not for entertaining.

Alla. And I am just the other way around.

Sumyatov. Oh, poor your husband!

Алла. Come on... It's poor me. And him... Just be sure he lives to his own pleasure.

Sumyatov. Does he?

Alla. No doubt. Why do you think he sent off me here?

Sumyatov. Hopefully there was no violence.

Alla. I bet now he has been sitting at his favorite radio station day and night. It replaces him his home and wife.

Sumyatov. He doesn't love you?

Alla. You mean Pavel? He is crazy about me! Sure, I have no idea how to conquer a mountain but in conquering a man's heart I have no superior.

Sumyatov. Then I don't understand why he prefers some radio station instead of you.

Alla. Men are tired of monotony. Haven't you noticed it yourself?

Sumyatov. Perhaps.

Alla. And what can be more boring than a marriage-bed? That's why while a wife is cooking, washing, ironing, and nursing children a husband sneaks from home in search of adventures.

Sumyatov. You have a wired view on family life. And especially on man's role in it.

Alla. Yet my poor mother warned me about it. Oh, she has had bitter experience!

Sumyatov. Then why did you get married if you knew all that?

Alla. I can't say it now. But at that time... You know, men have one weak point and I was going to use it freely.

Sumyatov. You think only one?

Alla. Don't catch me on words. Each man has a whole bunch of weak points. But all without any exception are terribly jealous. The most scary thing for them is to lose something that belongs to them. Do you agree?

Sumyatov. I wouldn't take a risk to argue.

Alla. Good job. As soon as a man suspect his wife of cheating... he starts flying over her like a bumblebee over a flower drinking a nectar from her lips even if he refused from it just yesterday.

Sumyatov. Oh, I guess I got you! You came here to provoke a jealous instinct in your husband, right?

Alla. What else can I do?

Sumyatov. Indeed! A goal shall be reached by all means, right?

Alla. I want to get my husband back to the family and for this sake I am ready for all.

Sumyatov. Has he run away from you? It seems to me you've done this.

Alla. This is just seemingly. Should I consider a man who shows up at home late at night, has dinner and the next moment disappears at the bedroom terribly snoring to be my husband!? Oh, he gets so tired at his work!

Sumyatov. But if it has been always like that...

Alla. Oh, God what are you talking about?

Sumyatov. Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you.

Alla. It started when Pavel was appointed a chief of the radio station. He has changed drastically since that. He became reserved and silent.

Levan enters.

Sumyatov. Good morning Levan!

Levan. Hi dear! Aren't you hungry, eh? Would you like some cakes?

Sumyatov. No, thanks for nothing ... Alla, I am sorry, but I really have no time.

Alla. Oh, really?! I wonder, why I got so expansive with you?

Sumyatov. I have no idea.

Alla. You seem to be trustworthy. Such men are dangerous.

Sumyatov. Don't worry, I won't get you any harm.

Alla. I don't care. Hey there, what's your name?

Levan. Levan.

Alla. Listen, Levan, I'd like to get to the city. What is a shuttle schedule?

Levan. It leaves in five minutes.

Alla. What about the next one?

Levan. Only in the evening.

Alla. What should I do? I am going to get bored to death here.

Levan. You still can get there in time. It's quite close. Want me to see you off?

Alla. No, thanks, I know where it is. Okay, I really might get in time. Oh, whatever... Bye!

Sumyatov. Have fun there!

Alla Bokova leaves. She runs into Victor Mancev at the doorway.

Mancev. Excuse me... What's the matter with her, Levan?

Levan. Why are you asking me?!

Mancev. You might be the reason. Good morning!

Sumyatov. Morning.

Mancev. Have you got the mail today?

Levan. No, dear.

Mancev. Didn't you forget? I am expecting.

Levan. Sure I remember.

Mancev. So, there wasn't. And it is not going to be... Oh, no, it can't be so..

Levan. What are you talking about my friend?

Mancev. Oh, just nothing. The weather is fine since early morning, isn't it?

Sumyatov. You are a nice observer as usual.

Mancev. Please, don't exaggerate. Aren't you get offended on me yesterday?

Sumyatov. Not at all. Why should I?

Mancev. I really was too bally sleepy.

Sumyatov. I hope you had good sleep.

Mancev. Not bad, thanks. Do you want to get back own?

Sumyatov. How?

Mancev. To play chess. I suggest a shotgun game. Just ten minutes.

Sumyatov. To take a victory over Victor Mancev himself! It's tempting.

Mancev. First catch your hare, as our Vasil would say. Levan, could you please give us chess and a watch. Where do you hide them?

Levan. Just a second, dear. I don't hide them at all. (Carrying out a chess box and a watch)

Sumyatov. Do you prefer defense or offense?

Mancev. And what about you?

Sumyatov. I don't care. What matters is the final result. Left hand, please!

Mancev. Well, I have evil luck as always. Go rush!

Sumyatov. As they used to say in good old times I have an honor to attack you.

Mancev. You are a risky guy.

Sumyatov. Isn't a right to risk a priority of mountaineers only?

Mancev. Many people take risk. But few of them win.

Sumyatov. Is it an aphorism of your own?

Mancev. It is a mountain law.

Sumyatov. I wouldn't like to experience it on my own.

Mancev. Aren't you going to climb the mountains?

Sumyatov. No.

Mancev. Right. Run away from them.

Sumyatov. Is that you who tells me that!?

Mancev. Run away from them I tell you, until they drink you down as you drink your morning cup of coffee.

Sumyatov. Why don't you flee from the mountains?

Mancev. It's impossible to flee from yourself. The same thing will happen anywhere.

Sumyatov. What thing?

Mancev. A man comes into the world and passes away.

Sumyatov. Are you talking about the meaning of life?

Mancev. He is strong, healthy and ambitious at the beginning. But as time passes he turns into a decrepit gummer. And he realizes that all is vanity of vanities. But it is too late.

Sumyatov. But not all feel like this!

Mancev. This is an everybody's destiny. There are ambitious dreams at the beginning and then there is a bitter frustration.

Sumyatov. But what if not to dream of becoming heroes and idols? Just live quiet and modest life. Many people live like that.

Mancev. They are already just ashes remained from the big fires.

Sumyatov. You think so?

Mancev. I am not mentioning the presents.

Sumyatov. Tell me, what drives you?

Mancev. Hazard.

Sumyatov. And that's it?!

Mancev. What do you know about hazard?

Sumyatov. This feeling is familiar to everyone.

Mancev. But not everyone knows the truth about it.

Sumyatov. So, what is bad about hazard?

Mancev. It creeps up on you insensibly and just of a sudden grabs your throat.

Sumyatov. Just like robber!

Mancev. Even worse... A robber would grab your purse only while hazard deprives you of your brain and conscience.

Sumyatov. So, it's impossible to avoid?

Mancev. Why impossible? If you overcome yourself.

Sumyatov. To overcome your passion of adventure-seeking?

Mancev. You are reading my mind.

Sumyatov. But how to do it?

Mancev. You could for example climb down the mountain and stick to the bar stand.

Sumyatov. Just like that guy isn't it?

Mancev. Yes, he used to be a brave mountaineer. Hey, Levan, how many times have you tried to climb up the Devil's Fang? Three?

Levan. Why three?! Two.

Mancev. And you failed both times.

Levan. Hey, for the third time I would have won it, believe me!

Mancev. I remember I was sure that you would do it before me.

Levan. My wife used to say: "you will never have a son, I am not going to bring up the orphans". Am I an enemy to my children?

Sumyatov. Why did she say that?

Levan. Twice I broke my legs and arms, once I hardly survived. She is a human being after all, isn't she?

Mancev. Strong passions are harmful, Levan. Your wife is right.

Sumyatov. So, you deprive hazard of any merits of humanity?

Mancev. Of all merits except one.

Levan. Don't tell me about it. God damn it!

Sumyatov. Which one?

Mancev. Hazard is like Pygmalion.

Sumyatov. You mean that fabulous artist of Ancient Greece? In what way?

Mancev. It can turn an ordinary person into a hero able to climb any mountains.

Sumyatov. Here you go, you admit that!

Mancev. But the person has to pay for it too much.

Sumyatov. If you mean life then it's not excessive price. A person pays it for any trifle.

Mancev. You are right. Life is not worth regretting.

Sumyatov. Then what are you talking about?

Mancev. Here you go: mate four moves.

Sumyatov. You are kidding!

Mancev. Look!

Sumyatov. Damn it! (Sweep off the chess from the desk).

Mancev. Do you always take losses so impulsively?

Sumyatov. Sorry. I am going to get everything back, don't worry.

Mancev. I don't mean that. You see, you are impassioned with hazard too!

Sumyatov. I agree, I do have such a weakness.

Mancev. You think just weakness and that's it?

Sumyatov. What else?

Mancev. You find such behavior absolutely normal?

Sumyatov. I don't see what is unnatural about it.

Mancev. Don't you see with how wild passion you were longing to win?

Sumyatov. Oh, it's too emphatic. Don't you write poems by any chance?

Mancev. I hope nobody has ever called you a hypo maniac?

Sumyatov. Fortunately, no. Who is that?

Mancev. It's a manic at liberty, not yet locked in a felt-lined cell.

Sumyatov. You think that a little impatience during a game is the first sign of gravy madness?

Mancev. It's a delusion of victory.

Sumyatov. You are driving me mad really. What's the hell is that?

Mancev. It's a price for hazard.

Sumyatov. I see, but could you please be more concrete?

Mancev. Are you afraid of psychological disorders?

Sumyatov. As any normal person.

Mancev. And you know, there is certain charm about them. There is a feeling like some drafts are blowing through your empty skull or like rats dwell there.

Sumyatov. How disgusting! Hey, what do you mean by that?

Mancev. Nothing except I've just said. Levan, is there any news about the lost expedition?

Levan. There are no newspapers... How could I know?

Mancev. I wonder, what is going on there?

Levan. They will find them, don't worry, dear!

Mancev. You think so?

Levan. There are so many rescuers involved. Everybody is searching. I bet they will find them.

Mancev. Everybody but not all...

Levan. One person more, one person less - what does it change?

Mancev. Maybe nothing, but might be a lot... Was there any radio broadcasts?

Levan. Oh, I absolutely forgot about the radio believe it or not.

**Levan turns on the radio. An anchor is talking:
«The urgent message is to be repeated right after a music break».
Music is playing.**

Mancev. It looks like the message is going to be about them!

Levan. Oh, we missed it! Me, holey head...

Sumyatov. They are going to repeat it. Turn on the volume please!

Levan. It's on maximum.

Sumyatov. I can't believe that in this very moment people are dying somewhere.

Mancev. The weather today is not suitable for saying good-bye to life.

Sumyatov. Is there the suitable weather?

Mancev. It's up to ones mood. It might be for example raining heavily or snowing wet.

Sumyatov. To my mind, dying is always frightening at any weather.

Mancev. You must be an avid atheist.

Sumyatov. What about you? Do you believe in afterlife?

Mancev. It depends on what you mean by that.

Sumyatov. I mean the pastures of Heaven crowded with the righteous men playing harps. Or does the hellfire appeal to you more?

Mancev. Neither the first one nor the second. This all is not for me.

Sumyatov. Unfortunately we are not offered any other variant. There is either traditional concept of afterlife or a corpse being eaten by the worms. Dust and ashes...

Mancev. That's enough for me in case I am to be a stone in my future life.

Sumyatov. Why not a bird?

Mancev. If I had a chance to make my choice...

Sumyatov. Let's assume that it's up to you.

Mancev. Then I prefer to be an eagle. When I see how these proud birds are soaring above the tops of the mountains I have a heart longing. Could it be a presentment?

Sumyatov. I would say a reflection of what used to be. It means that it's not your first life in this world.

Mancev. That's a pity. If it is so, I don't remember anything.

A radio anchor speaking:

«And now we repeat the urgent message!»

Levan. Hey, listen everybody!

Alla Bokova enters.

Alla. Just imagine, the bus has left right from under my nose...

Mancev. Quiet!

Alla. I am not talking to you, by the way.

Sumyatov. Please, be quiet!

Alla. What's the matter?

An anchor's voice:

«Despite the desperate efforts of the rescuing crews the missing group of mountaineers has not been found yet. The connection failed after the avalanche fell down the top of the Devil's Fang. The last message which was broadcasted by Pavel Bokov the group radio operator was that they were hearing a strong roar».

Alla. What did he say?

Levan. God, will this woman ever keep her mouth shut or not?!

Alla. What did he say, I ask you!?

Mancev. Not found yet.

Alla. I don't mean that. The name! Did you hear the name?

Mancev. You mean the radio operator?

Alla. Yes!

Mancev. I think Pavel.

Levan. Bokov?

Sumyatov. Exactly. Pavel Bokov.

Alla. It's impossible. You misunderstood!

Sumyatov. I have professional memory for names.

Alla. But he is at home now. Do you hear me? Or he might be at his radio station.

Sumyatov. Isn't he your...

Alla. My husband!

Sumyatov. Calm down. It might be some mistake. I am not so sure now.

Alla. No, it's not a mistake. I felt it. My heart has been hurting me for three days. That was the reason why he sent me here. I couldn't understand his unusual patience and later why his mobile phone was silent...

Mancev. Levan, bring some water please!

Levan. Your husband is alive, believe me or not!

Alla. How do you know?! Oh, leave me alone. This is terrible! What has he done? I will never forgive him this! He used to go mountain climbing before our wedding, but he quit it. He never even said a word about it since that...

Mancev. Make a phone call home.

Alla. What did you say?

Mancev. Do you have a home phone?

Alla. Yes, I do.

Mancev. So, make a call! If nobody answers, call the neighbors or his office. Anyway somebody should know where he is and what happened to him.

Alla. How can I make a phone call here? My mobile is out of service. What a damned place!

Levan. Please don't curse, ok! Follow me. And don't cry, I beg you.

Levan and Alla Bokova leave.

Mancev. Are you sure that you heard it right?

Sumyatov. Absolutely. Pavel Bokov. Who could ever think that!

Mancev. One surprise after another.

Sumyatov. I hope no more surprises are following. It's more than enough.

Mancev. Never is a long day.

Levan enters.

Levan. The line is busy. She said she is going to wait till night.

Mancev. She will, Levan, be sure.

Levan. But why would she cry, hey? I can't stand woman's tears believe me or not?

Mancev. Neither do I.

Sumyatov. Women cry in any case. The reason is not needed.

Mancev. By the way, where are our guys? I haven't seen none of them for a long time.

Levan. The just married left for the city.

Mancev. What about Oleg?

Levan. I haven't seen him today.

Mancev. And you?

Sumyatov. Neither have I.

Mancev. It's almost afternoon... Didn't he say anything yesterday?

Levan. Just sang. Then went to bed. They left together with that lady.

Sumyatov. So, you assume...

Mancev. Do you have another guess?

Sumyatov. But why did he leave to save the missing expedition alone?

Mancev. Maybe because I didn't do that.

Sumyatov. But why? I can't understand!

Mancev. In order to prove.

Sumyatov. To whom?! To you? Or maybe to me? Or him?

Mancev. To all of us. And first of all - to himself.

ACT 2.

There is a canteen. At one of the tables Cyrill Sumyatov is writing in his notebook. Oleg Tomov comes in staggering

Tomov. Hey, is anybody alive here?

Sumyatov. You?!

Tomov. Me. Don't I look like? (Looking at the mirror on the wall). What a hanging face! With such a face even my mother would never recognize!

Sumyatov. I was about to send a message at the newspaper. Fortunately, the phone line was busy. We began to think...

ТОМОВ. To think! I don't care what you think of me. Mark my words, guy! I drink on my own money and don't ask you for lending.

Sumyatov. I don't mean that. You misunderstood me.

Tomov. Misunderstood? I've got you right just when I saw you for the first time. I didn't like you right away. You are hanging around here, sniffing out, pumping, getting into sole - you a cattle!

Sumyatov. Easy, easy cowboy!

Tomov. Go to hell! Where is Levan?

Sumyatov. He is cooking at the kitchen.

Tomov. Bad scan to him!

Sumyatov. Cooking for you also, by the way.

Tomov. You think I am going to eat his wish-wash? I wouldn't hold my breath. Hey, listen, do you have something to drink? I overrated my stocks yesterday and swilled all my bottles. Now I have nothing to freshen the nip.

Sumyatov. Well, have patience now.

Tomov. What the hell brought me here? I would be bored to death if not that chick. By the way, yesterday she told me something about you...Oh forgot... I was even going to wipe your nose. She didn't let me. Lucky you, guy!

Sumyatov. What for?

Tomov. I forgot I tell you.

Sumyatov. Use your bean

Tomov. Come on, guy... Hey, I've got it! You have something against Victor. You get jealous of his fame.

Sumyatov. You are a jerk.

Tomov. You know what?!

Sumyatov. I don't care about his fame. He deprived you – not me.

Tomov. Look at him, such a defender! Come on, tell me what's the matter or get out of here.

Sumyatov. What's the matter you ask me... The matter is that Mancev got everything: fame, photos in the newspapers, he is surrounded by journalists, girls. It looks like the rest of you has never been on that pick.

Tomov. You are telling lies. We sure have been there!

Sumyatov. That's what I'm saying. In what way he is better than you?

Tomov. Hey, listen, aren't you a psyche? You look like!

Sumyatov. So, you are not bitter about?

Tomov. Me? About Victor?! Do you know what he means for me? He saved my life. Why would I be bitter about him?

Sumyatov. Sorry, I didn't know.

Tomov. So, you ask me, in what way he is better? In all ways. Victor is a real man!

Sumyatov. Who is not real? Point with your finger, don't be shy!

Tomov. He cares not a snap on the fame and chicks. If he only wanted all this... Oh, shit, this headache!

Sumyatov. So, if he really wanted? And you, aren't you a man? Wouldn't you save him if there was a danger...

Tomov. Me? Don't know. Maybe not...

Sumyatov. Please think before you say something I would recommend you.

Tomov. You, shut up! Why didn't he cut the rope with the knife? I would' have blamed him. But he didn't do that.

Sumyatov. Anybody in his shoes...

Tomov. Hey, listen didn't you by any chance injure your head in your childhood?

Sumyatov. Don't worry, I am all right. Okay, he has saved you and you thank him very much. But are you going to prey for him till the end of your life?

Tomov. Actually, I should always kiss his hands which he frostbit while was holding the rope with me. And I should definitely strike you down as a mad dog. That is how I see it.

Sumyatov. So, Mancev is a hero, the only of all?

Tomov. I don't know, maybe there is somebody else. But I swear you: there are very few guys like him in the world.

Sumyatov. So, should we make an idol out of him?

Tomov. I would advice to set monuments and devote books to such people so that young boys followed their example and dreamed about them. And you don't mess up his name and don't get me into troubles, got it?

Alla rushes in.

Alla. This is him, him! Did you hear – he is there! What should I do?

Sumyatov. Did you get in touch?

Alla. Yes. At his radio station I was told that Pavel planned to return earlier before my arrival. Why did he do that?

Sumyatov. Perhaps not to worry you.

Alla. I am not an enemy to him. Why? Why was he silent?

Sumyatov. Ask him when you see him.

Alla. Don't calm me down. He won't come back!

Sumyatov. They will be saved, believe me.

Alla. You don't believe in it! Don't tell me lies. You do it not professionally.

Tomov. Hey, what are you talking about?

Alla. Oh, this is you...

Tomov. Finally, you deigned to notice me!

Alla. Sorry, I am busy now.

Tomov. (Singing). «We live in a city of brothers love. We are noticed until we interfere».

Alla. Why are you here?

Tomov. Where should I be?

Alla. In the mountains! You are a mountaineer.

Tomov. So what? Mountaineers dwell not only in the mountains.

Alla. You must save him!

Tomov. Who?

Alla. My husband!

Tomov. Oh, don't tell me about it. "Husband" sounds disgusting...

Alla. But yesterday you were going to go!

Tomov. Where? You mean to wipe nose to this guy? I am always ready!
 Alla. To the mountains!
 Tomov. I was dead drunk.
 Alla. You are drunk now!
 Tomov. But now I think better. Go to the mountains yourself if you need it so much. I am fed up with this romantic stuff.
 Sumyatov. And you, what do you need?
 Tomov. Vodka! Chicks!! Seaside!!! I do have all this, don't worry.
 Alla. You are a coward!
 Tomov. Last night you had different opinion. Should I remind you what exactly?
 Sumyatov. But this is your real chance, do you understand it?
 Tomov. Chance... What chance?
 Sumyatov. To become equal to Mancev. He saved you - you will save many.
 Tomov. There are enough volunteers without me there. I am giving way!
 Sumyatov. And what about fame passion? Doesn't it rankle in you?
 Tomov. And in you?
 Sumyatov. I am an average person. I don't conquer the mountain peaks, don't cross the oceans, don't fly to the stars. So, I am ensured from this.
 Tomov. You pretend to be such a mediocrity! As for me I don't need this fame at all. This is absolutely useless thing. .
 Sumyatov. One can neither sleep with it nor freshen the nip, right?
 Tomov. Exactly! There are only troubles with this fame.
 Алла. You are such a rascal!
 Tomov. It's better to be a rascal rather than a corpse. Remember it baby.
 Sumyatov. I got you now. You would rather share the fame with Mancev but with a certain condition.
 Tomov. Are you gonna shut up yourself or would I help you?
 Sumyatov. And this condition is that fame wouldn't require any effort from you. You have spent all your physical and spiritual energy on uncorking bottles.
 Tomov. You said all? Come on, you asshole! Let's see all energy or not!
 Алла. Oleg! (Grabbing him).
 Tomov. Come on I told you!
 Sumyatov. Don't shout! You are going to tear your vocal cords. How will you scare people then?
 Алла. Oh, keep your mouth shut!
 Tomov. I will screw you up!..

Victor Mancev and Levan come in.

Levan. His things are in the room. Hey, where did he go?
 Mancev. Here he is!
 Levan. Hey, dear! Why are you fighting with a woman? Aren't you a man?
 Mancev. Oleg, don't be a fool!
 Sumyatov. Let him go!
 Mancev. Keep silent, you Anika the Warrior.
 Tomov. Vitya, I wish you heard how they were screwing me up!
 Mancev. You'd better sleep for a while, Oleg.
 Tomov. You know that I am not a coward!
 Mancev. I know.
 Tomov. Then why are they saying that? I am ready to go to the mountains right away!
 Mancev. Okay, but get some sleep at first.
 Tomov. Just give me a wink and I will go through fire and water for you!

Sumyatov. And through the abyss?

Mancev. One more word and you will have to deal with me this time!

Levan. Let's go dear.

Tomov. Levan, my throat is burning. I'd rather take a glass to drink out the offense.

Levan. Let's go, let's go dear, it's all right, believe me.

Tomov. I do believe you, Levan, only you!

Levan and Oleg Tomov leave.

Mancev. You shouldn't have said that.

Sumyatov. Sorry, I got exited.

Alla. But he is a coward. Shameless and mean coward!

Mancev. It's not a reason for insulting him. Especially if you are mistaken.

Sumyatov. I also have such impression of him. He is afraid of mountains.

Mancev. You think that only heroes climb the mountains? There are a number of normal people there.

Sumyatov. You are speaking enigmatically again.

Манцев. No enigmas! He is a person just like any of us. He is neither worse nor better.

Sumyatov. You have a pretty unflattering opinion about people.

Mancev. My opinion of them is the one they deserve. Like it or not.

Alla. In that case I don't see any abnormal person around me. All are disgracefully normal.

Mancev. Are you sure?

Alla. All of you are cowards and babbles. People are perishing in the mountains! And you are gabbing like scolds here instead of rushing to rescue them.

Mancev. You are right.

Sumyatov. Don't blame her. Her husband is among them.

Mancev. I've figured it out.

Alla. I am going to the mountains myself. And I wish you to be in good relationship with your conscious!

Alla Bokova leaves. Levan enters.

Levan. He got asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow.

Mancev. That's good. One trouble less.

Sumyatov. It's a crazy day today. Is it going to finish or not?

Mancev. At least half a day has passed already.

Levan. Hey, are you going to have lunch or not?

Mancev. I can't eat a morsel.

Sumyatov. Neither can I.

Levan. Maybe some barbeque meat? It's a tickle of the plate! And not expensive at all. Hey, what kind of people you are!

Anna and Vasil Korobko enter.

Anna. Hi everybody! Oh, I am so tired. I am dropping with fatigue.

Sumyatov. Is it easier to walk in the mountains than in the streets?

Anna. Much easier. Why are you so sad? Has something happened while we were out?

Mancev. Nothing. What about you?

Vasil. Not much.

Levan. Are you going to have lunch?

Anna. I don't know... What do you have today?

Levan. Barbeque meat, it's yummy!

Anna. Vasil, what do you think?

Vasil. No barbeque!

Anna. Bread and water - that is all our food. Oh, Vasil, we live only once! Let's make it and have a feast!

Vasil. Okay, it's up to you.

Anna. Why should I always make decisions? Who is a man in our family?

Vasil. As you like.

Anna. He is driving me mad... Levan! Bring us your barbeque meat please. Two plates for each!

Vasil. Oh Annushka!

Anna. Keep silence! I was given a right of voice. Now it is my turn.

Levan. Wow, such a good girl!

Anna. What else do you have? I want a Georgian cheese pie!

Levan. I don't have it. There is some chicken soup. The chicken is soft like a young girl!

Anna. Okay, bring it too. And a bottle of wine! Let's go the limit!

Levan. Sorry, dear, there is no wine.

Anna. Okay, give us what you have. And hurry up otherwise I am going to change my mind!

Levan. Oh, don't say that! I am as swift as wind. (Leaves).

Mancev. What are you celebrating?

Anna. It's a commemoration dinner for our house. Vitya, I wish you could see what a house it was! This is a two-storied building, the roof is tiled, the chimney pipe is made of brick – the size is like that! One can't embrace it.

Vasil. And what an attic!

Anna. I wish your mom moved there, Vasil. She would like to live in the attic, that's for sure. What a view from there!

Vasil. That would be just fine.

Anna. And there is a big rock right near the porch. As big as a mountain!

Vasil. And the garden is like soccer field!

Anna. We could grow potatoes and tomatoes there...

Sumyatov. So, what's the matter? Go and buy it without thinking.

Vasil. Our purse is not heavy enough.

Anna. Just think – one hundred and twenty five thousands! Who has ever heard of such a thing?

Mancev. How much do you have?

Anna. We can hardly scarp fifty thousands. Maybe Vasil's mother would add a little more from her pension allowance.

Vasil. Actually, Mikhalych promised to lend us twenty thousands.

Anna. He said that has collected this sum for his funeral. We wanted to refuse but he got offended. He said that it's too early to bury him yet, that he is going to live on and take care of our future kids.

Sumyatov. Look at him! The old man is real gold although with some freaks!

Anna. I wish you saw how he was bargaining for us swearing and pleading. And he made it – they got five thousand down! But it doesn't help.

Vasil. Don't worry Annushka. We'll pull through.

Anna. I am okay Vasil. You also don't get upset about it. My husband was born in a village that's why he is so fond of earth.

Sumyatov. So, why did you move to city then?

Vasil. To enter the college... After that I followed Annushka to the mountains. So, I am traveling around like a vagabond.

Victor Mancev leaves.

Sumyatov. Now are you going to get to the mountains again?

Vasil. We have to earn money.

Sumyatov. Is it only for money? It doesn't worth it then!

Vasil. We have already gone through romantics.

Anna. You won't believe it, I used to be crazy about romantics. Love in the mountains seemed to me so sublime... What a foolish girl!

Sumyatov. It doesn't seem such any more?

Vasil. Now she has to think about other things which are more important. Am I right or not?

Anna. Vasil, shame on you! Don't listen to him!

Vasil. Is there anything to be ashamed of?

Sumyatov. Oh, I got it. My congratulations!

Vasil. First catch your hare.

Sumyatov. But anyway... Haven't you ever dreamed of seeing your photos at the newspapers, taking part in the TV shows and being famous for the whole country?

Vasil. What for do we need all that?

Sumyatov. I don't know. Other people do need that!

Vasil. Don't say if you don't understand it well. Life is easier. One works as it profitable to him.

Sumyatov. However, often people tend to ignore reasonable grounds preferring some fine gestures.

Vasil. It is really funny. Let's say for example that a snowman was noticed in the mountains. Do you think that a good farmer would leave his village and rush searching for him?

Sumyatov. Well, many people do search for him.

Vasil. I am surprised about such people. What are they going to do when they find him?

Sumyatov. You mean a snowman? I didn't think of it.

Vasil. I guess they are going to shoot him, then stuff and sell it to a museum.

Sumyatov. Why?

Vasil. They wouldn't lock him in a cage neither they leave him free. Stupid people!

Sumyatov. I'd say you are exaggerating...

Anna. Come on, stop it! Anyway, we have to go to the mountains Vasil. There is no need to tell fortune about it.

Vasil. That's true.

Anna. So, we will have a chance to look for a snowman and to wave a hand to our house from the mountain top...Hi house! How are you?

Mancev with a pack in hands comes in.

Mancev. Vasil, Anna, have you decided who is going to be a host in your house?

Anna. Who, Vasil?

Vasil. As you say.

Anna. Okay, let it be you.

Mancev. Then, take it, Vasil! (Giving him a pack).

Vasil. What is that?

Mancev. Fifty thousands.

Vasil. What do you mean - fifty thousands?

Mancev. The sum which you need to buy that house, got it?

Vasil. Well... Annushka, what's that?!

Anna. Vitya, don' play such jokes!

Mancev. Don't forget to invite me to your house-warming party.

Anna. Where did you get this money?

Mancev. Did you see a suitcase with which I arrived here?

Anna. Yes I did.

Mancev. This suitcase is my purse.

Anna. It's not funny.

Mancev. Don't worry, I am not going to change my mind.

Anna. I can't believe it! Isn't it a dream? Vasil, give me a pinch. Wow! Are you crazy?

Vasil. You asked me to pinch you .

Anna. Oh, you were happy to do that! You'd better take a pen and a sheet of paper and write.

Vasil. What for?

Anna. Write a receipt that we have received such and such money from such and such person. We promise to turn it back... when Vitya?

Mancev. Whenever you like. But please don't go in so formalities. Anyway I will lose this paper.

Anna. Vitenka!

Mancev. What else?!

Anna. May I kiss you? Oh, please!

Mancev. What do you think, Vasil?

Anna. I would kiss you too, Vitya. But why a hell you need it?

Mancev. Well, if it is so...

Anna. Vitya, you are such... (kissing him). such...oh, you know it yourself, right!

Levan with a plate in hands enters.

Levan. Oh, what a smell! I have no idea why I haven't eaten it myself, do you believe me?

Vasil. Go ahead, Levan! We don't need it.

Levan. What do you mean by "don't need it"?

Anna. I told you clearly: we don't need it! We have changed our minds.

Levan. Are you kidding me?

Anna. Such a slow-witted person!

Levan. Hey, who ordered four plates of barbeque meat?

Anna. Levanchik, dear, we are sorry but we have no money. Look here, there is not a single coin.

Levan. What did you think about before?

Anna. We were going to eat and then run away.

Levan. So, why didn't you eat then?

Anna. My conscience took me. How will I look into your eyes after that?

Levan. Oh, woman! What should I do with this barbeque now?

Sumyatov. I wonder, Victor, where did you get so much cash? As far as I know there is no any bank around here.

Mancev. Don't worry, I didn't rob anyone.

Sumyatov. I didn't think that.

Mancev. You did. Your eyes tell me that.

Sumyatov. You are either a false-coiner or a magician. So, who are you?

Mancev. Okay, I'll tell you. But please don't tell anyone!

Sumyatov. I promise.

Mancev. I was waiting for some person to come here. You might want to know who exactly...

Sumyatov. I'd like to.

Mancev. My wife. My own wife.

Sumyatov. You have appointed to meet at the mountain camp, right?

Mancev. Yes. And we were going to live here for a while and then take a tour abroad, somewhere away from the mountains maybe to the seaside. You understand that such plans require some money. So, I've arranged this question beforehand. You see, there is no mystery.

Sumyatov. Yeah...

Mancev. She is not going to come.

Сумятов. Did you get a message from her?

Mancev. It's my intuition. And please, don't ask me any more.

Anna. Levanchik, get some tea please.

Levan. Are you kidding me?

Anna. I am paying in advance. No cheating any more!

Levan. Would you like some cakes?

Anna. Okay, bring me one please?

Levan. Two.

Anna. Vasil, what do you think!

Vasil. Okay, let it be two. Let's go the limits!

Alla Bokova is sitting on a bench.

Oleg Tomov comes out of the door.

Tomov. (Singing). «Alla was walking on a bank...» Here I am! Aren't you waiting for me?

Alla. No.

Tomov. Why are so angry? Aren't you glad to see me?

Alla. Not at all.

Tomov. I was looking for you. I ran off my legs everywhere around the camp, then I looked out of the window and saw you sitting lonely and getting bored.

Alla. What do you need?

Tomov. Just to talk.

Alla. Go ahead.

Tomov. It's not convenient here. Let's go to my place.

Alla. No.

Tomov. Why not?

Alla. I don't want.

Tomov. But you did want yesterday.

Alla. Forget about it. There was nothing yesterday.

Tomov. Tell this to your husband in case he comes back.

Alla. Hey, listen, are you a human being or not?

Tomov. Sorry, Allochka! I don't know why I am saying that.

Alla. Leave me alone please.

Tomov. If I could... I love you, do you understand me?

Alla. Go and take a sleep, stupid womanizer!

Tomov. I am not drunk, Alla! Don't you understand why I behave like that?

Alla. I would tell you, but you'll get hurt.

Tomov. You can spit into my face – I won't get hurt. As soon as I saw you I felt that I am trapped. You know it's like swallowing vodka without any pickle. There was only you in my eyes as if you bewitched me.

Alla. Is that true?

Tomov. I swear! So, let's go to my place...

Alla. Don't touch me! Find some other foolish girl.

Tomov. Go to hell then! I didn't really want it much. Do you have a cigarette?

Alla. Just an empty pack.

Tomov. What a damned life! I can neither drinking, no smoking, no even sleeping with a girl.

Alla. I see, you have only one passion in life – have a good pleasure. I would go crazy from such boring life.

Tomov. Come on baby! What are you talking about? You haven't had real troubles in life. That's it.

Alla. You sure have had a lot of them.

Tomov. Pretty much, I tell you.

Alla. I wouldn't say that looking at you.

Tomov. You wouldn't say? Well, well... And you, have you ever dug your friends out of frozen snow?

Alla. Which friends?

Tomov. Answer the question when being asked! Have you ever crunched stones dying from famine?!

Alla. Why are you raving with fury at me?

Tomov. Have you ever damned your mother that she born you?

Alla. Don't shout at me!

Tomov. No, you have not, right? Then I have nothing to talk about with you! Anyway you would never understand it.

Alla. Do you understand it?

Tomov. Not much. I remember I used to piss myself with joy from just a thought that the next day I was going to the mountains. So impatient I was.

Alla. What is special about those mountains? All of you are just crazy!

Tomov. Now I got smarter. But one thing there is really good – nobody stands over you. I hate it. It's better to put my head in a noose than living on someone's will.

Alla. Are you a prominent individualism?

Tomov. I would say a romantic of spirit. Did you hear about it?

Alla. I read something about it in books. I wonder, where did you get all this stuff in your head? You look like a quite normal guy.

Tomov. Nowhere.

Alla. Weren't you born with all this?

Tomov. No, I wasn't. Actually, society educated me. You don't believe? I remember my childhood: once at school we were to write a composition on a topic "What to do in life?». Our teacher wrote this topic on a blackboard and put a thick question mark in the end.

Alla. Again telling me your fairy-tales?

Tomov. I swear it's true. So, I was looking at this question mark thinking that if I write the truth I would be expelled from school the next day. Do I want such troubles? No. So, I wrote that I want to be a politician and take care of people's needs.

Alla. Such a smarty boy!

Tomov. Sure! Eventually, the composition by Oleg Tomov was praised and announced in front of our class as a good example of how and what to dream about. And I was laughing in my soul that I fooled all of them around!

Alla. So, what did you dream about so that you couldn't even mention it?

Tomov. Aren't you by any chance from the police? You keep asking and asking me...

Alla. You may not answer.

Tomov. Okay, I'll tell you out of personal attraction. In that young age I already knew that work likes only fools. So, I preferred not to work but have much money and entertainments. I didn't care less about anything else.

Alla. You are such a unique individual!

Tomov. Well, it's not a secret that all people dream about it or something like that but they don't reveal it.

Alla. You think all?

Tomov. Absolutely. Those who say differently - tell lies.

Alla. So, what's the reason?

Tomov. They are simply afraid of.

Alla. So what were you afraid of, you, a schoolboy? Why didn't you write as you thought?

Tomov. My father had a high rank position at that time. He was well known and respected in our town. Do you imagine what a scandal could be out of it?

Alla. So, you preferred to have mercy on your father

Tomov. Exactly.

Alla. Are you sure that your father, not yourself?

Tomov. Why do you hate me so much, Allochka?

Alla. Why on earth should I love you? Look at him, such a man!

Tomov. Anyone can love for something... Why don't you try to love just for nothing?

Alla. Only real men are loved just for nothing. And those like you are loved either out of compassion or convenience.

Tomov. Out of compassion... Am I a wacky?

Alla. Bite on that while I am here. Who would ever tell you the truth?

Tomov. Hey you, a truth seeker! That is why your husband ran away from you to the mountains! He just couldn't stand it any more.

Alla. It's not your business!

Tomov. Who knows who are you now? Might be a widow. With such a tongue you might remain alone in poverty working at your museum. Well, I am a bachelor and do have all necessary stuff, you know.

Alla. I'd better jump into the abyss than live with you!

Tomov. So go ahead, jump!

Alla. I will! Nothing matters for me now. (running away).

Tomov. Hey, where are you going? Wait! Wait, you, the foolish woman, I tell you! There is a crack there! (running after her).

At the camp canteen. Anna and Vasil Korobko are drinking tea.

Victor Mancev is speaking with Levan.

Cyrill Sumyatov is making notes at his notebook.

Oleg Tomov enters holding Alla Bokova unconscious in his arms.

Levan. Listen, dear, why did you come here?

Tomov. She almost fell down into the crack. Come on, help me!

Anna. What's the matter with her? Put her cautiously here.

Tomov. She got unconscious. I grabbed her at the very edge of the crack. She just looked down and got unconscious right away.

Anna. Oh, please be quiet! Get some water for her.

Tomov. Water! Levan, get some water!

Levan. I am carrying. Hey, why are you drinking yourself?

Sumyatov. It's better for her to smell ammonia. She would come to herself immediately.

Levan. Where should I get it? There is some vodka, will it do?

Mancev. Unbutton her collar. Let her breathe with full breast.

Anna. Come on, give me a way! Hide your blushless eyes! Don't look like that!

Tomov. Is there anything I haven't seen before?

Mancev. How did it happen, Oleg?

Tomov. Some shit got into her head. Oh, those women... Look, while I was holding her she was trying to bite my hand. Here is a teeth print. She was crying like a crazy that her husband is dead and she doesn't want to live either.

Mancev. Who told her that her husband is dead?

Tomov. I told you some shit got into her head. Do you have a smoke?

Anna. Smoke outside please! Aren't you going to kill her with your smoke?

Sumyatov. What are we going to do with her?

Anna. I'll make it all right without you... She has come to herself finally!

Alla. Where am I?

Anna. Hold on, it's all right. Hey, guys, aren't you going to leave?

Mancev. Let's go folks, let's have a smoke.

Tomov. Give me a cigarette.

Men leave.

Alla. What's happened to me?

Anna. It's all over already. Next time don't look down at the edge of abyss. You are afraid of height.

Alla. Terribly!

Anna. Thanks to Oleg you are here. He has grabbed you.

Alla. Oh, this is him my noble rescuer...

Anna. So you decided to jump into the abyss because of your husband?

Alla. I don't know. I don't remember. Something got over my head.

Anna. You shouldn't do that. Don't bury a man beforehand. Just imagine what he would say when he comes back.

Alla. You think he is alive?

Anna. Of course he is. Such things happen in the mountains. I do know it well!

Alla. It's easy to say that. Your Vasil is beside you.

Anna. What's the problem with you? Why didn't you go with your husband?

Alla. I would have gone with him if he just called me.

Anna. And your pride didn't let you go without a call, right?

Alla. He kept his plan a secret. I got to know about it only here.

Anna. Sorry, but I can't believe it. Didn't he let it out accidentally for example in bed after having hot time?

Alla. We have been being silent with each other lately. We hardly say a word except "thank you" or "pass me salt please". Then we stick to the TV and there is no conversation at all.

Anna. What were you thinking about? For such things I would punish my Vasil!

Alla. Of course, you don't have to complain. I was thinking: what a life do I lead? It's grey and boring one. Only such people like you do live and we just exist.

Anna. You should have a baby. All this garbage will get out of your head right way.

Alla. I didn't want to have a baby from Pavel. I thought that I would meet a right man, fall in love with him so that I would forget everything and would follow him to the edge of the world.

Anna. Oh, what a fool you are!

Alla. My Pavel is quite a mediocre. He used to sit in front of TV dressed in a night suit and slippers. Each time when I look at him I feel pinching that I spend my youth on such a man.

Anna. He might be silent because of your attitude.

Alla. Don't hurt me any more. I think that he went to the mountains also because of that, in order to make me be proud of him.

Anna. Don't cry. He will come back.

Alla. I prey for that! All will be different then.

Anna. And you will deliver him a bunch of kids, believe me! My grandmother was a fortune teller so I learnt this craft from her.

Alla. Let him come back and let's see!

Mikhalych enters.

Mikhalych. I was wondering where my daughter is. Here she is!

Anna. Mikhalych, dear, what brought you here?

Mikhalych. I have an urgent business.

Anna. Don't scare me. Our house is sold, right?

Mikhalych. When?

Anna. I don't know.

Mikhalych. I strongly advised the hosts to wait. I will screw them up!

Anna. So they might not sell it yet?

Mikhalych. Who said that they sold it?

Anna. Not me. Seriously, not me!

Mikhalych. Uff... I was about to assume that...

Anna. Well, it's false alarm.

Mikhalych. They just can't sell it. We made a promise!

Anna. But if somebody offers them all money at once?

Mikhalych. Well, a bargain is a bargain.

Anna. You are our only hope Mikhalych. We can't make it without you.

Mikhalych. I've never failed anyone, my dear. Hey, listen, I've just talked to one of my fellows. He is quite a greedy guy, but agreed to help me and borrowed me five hundred dollars.

Anna. Oh, we don't need money!

Mikhalych. Don't worry! Little by little makes a mickle.

Anna. Oh, you don't know. We have found money! Now we've got enough.

Mikhalych. So, you are buying the house?

Anna. Sure!

Mikhalych. Yeah, the house is a real work of beauty...

Anna. Where are you going now, Mikhalych?

Mikhalych. Towards the house. It's better to hurry up just in case so that nobody would buy it.

Anna. But you have just said that...

Mikhalych. So what? I do have a tongue to say whatever I want to.

Anna. Mikhalych, dear please hurry up then! Tell them we are buying it!

Mikhalych. Oh, I almost forgot!

Anna. What's that?

Mikhalych. I almost forgot that I came here with some business!

Anna. What's the business?

Mikhalych. I have to hand in a letter. A registered one.

Anna. Okay, I'll hand it in!

Mikhalych. No way. Sorry, dear but I must hand it personally with a signature of a receiver.

Anna. And when you hand it then what?

Mikhalych. Then I am running like a horse! Don't worry. The house is already yours.

Anna. Tomorrow morning let's go and see it together again, okay?

Mikhalych. Okay, I'll be here early in the morning like a guard. You and Vasil will be still in bed. (Leaves).

Alla. Are you going to buy a house?

Anna. Oh, what will be will be! And finally, how long are we going to move from camps and hotels? I am fed up.

Alla. Yeah, it's high time for you.

Anna. Have you noticed already?

Alla. It's not very noticeable. But if you look more attentively...

Anna. It's growing like yeast! What if it's going to be twins?

Alla. You think your husband will fall out of love?

Anna. No way! Vasil loves me like I am. But if I deliver twins he will go crazy of happiness.

Alla. I think I will also go home. I am going mad here. Bad thoughts are getting to my mind out of doing nothing.

Anna. That's true. At home it's impossible to do nothing. There is always some work. And when your husband comes back there will be warm and cozy home smelling with pies. He will realize that you were waiting for him.

Alla. Waiting?

Anna. Of course!

Alla. You are a good girl... Will you see me off?

Anna. Sure!

Alla. Let's go. A bus is coming soon. I don't want to be late again.

Alla Bokova and Anna Korobko leave.

Levan and Mikhalych enter.

Levan. Oh, you don't have to worry about! He will be here.

Mikhalych. Please do understand me! I am in a hurry! I have an urgent business.

Cyrill Sumyatov enters.

Mikhalych. Hey, fellow, what's your last name?

Sumyatov. We have already introduced ourselves to each other. Search your memory, Mikhalych!

Mikhalych. I have no time.

Sumyatov. Well, Sumyatov.

Mikhalych. No, it's not him.

Sumyatov. Why not me?

Mikhalych. Don't argue with me. Not you – that's it.

Sumyatov. Okay, let it be.

Levan. Hey, dear, why are you so sullen?

Sumyatov. My business trip is coming to an end, but my notebook is still blank. Nobody wants to be a hero. There is nothing to write about.

Levan. Please, have a cake. All your worries will fade away, believe me!

Sumyatov. If it could help I would eat a hundred of them.

Victor Mancev enters.

Mancev. Are you a local postman?

Mikhalych. Yes I am, so what?

Mancev. There is nothing for me as usual?

Mikhalych. What is your last name please?

Mancev. Mancev. Victor Mancev.

Mikhalych. Do you have an ID?

Mancev. What for?

Mikhalych. To verify that you are the person you mentioned and not a different one.

Mancev. What do you mean a different one?

Mikhalych. It doesn't matter. My business is simple – to deliver, hand in and take a receipt.

Mancev. My ID is in my room. Should I get it?

Mikhalych. Yes please. As soon as possible, I am in a hurry.

Mancev. I'll be right back. Stay here okay!

Sumyatov. This is Victor Mancev in fact. I guarantee.

Levan. Hey, listen, why are you troubling the man? Give him a letter!

Mikhalych. Okay, okay! But only because the people who I know personally guaranteed me that you are Victor Mancev. Put your signature here. And now I am running away! (Leaves quickly).

Levan. You have been waiting for it, guy!

Mancev. You are right Levan. It looks like it's the long-awaited one. (Leaves).

Alla Bokova with a suit case enters.

Sumyatov. Are you leaving?

Alla. Yes, going home. I just wanted to say good-bye.

Sumyatov. Unfortunately, there is nobody here.

Alla. I was looking for you. Are you surprised?

Sumyatov. Frankly, not much.

Alla. Don't be too much self-confident. I am not going to confess in love.

Sumyatov. I didn't even think that.

Alla. Listen, haven't you quitted your idea yet?

Sumyatov. Which idea? What are you talking about?

Alla. Do you remember the evening when we met?

Sumyatov. Sure I do. You were sitting at that very table and were getting bored to death. I joined you...

Alla. You told me that you came here to uncrown the idols.

Sumyatov. I assume those words belonged to you.

Alla. Okay, let it be my words. But my guess is true, right?

Sumyatov. Well, well...

Alla. I want to ask you. Do you have an idea about what?

Sumyatov. I suppose that not to do that, right?

Alla. Vice versa. I pledge you: do fulfill your idea. Go on, write! Write so that those idols, those heroes of crowd would be completely screwed up.

Sumyatov. You are telling this!? I would never think that. But why?

Alla. Maybe it will help them to recover their sight and get ashamed.

Sumyatov. Are they supposed to be ashamed of those who incense them and make them blind like moles? This is so naïve.

Alla. No. I want them to be ashamed of themselves. I want them to see that a price for their vanity is a sorrow of their old mothers and tears of their abandoned children... If only something human sill remained in them...

Sumyatov. If...

Alla. I have thought much during today. Perhaps more than during my whole life. I understood that you were right. There is either all or nobody.

Sumyatov. Was I right?

Alla. Don't you doubt it yourself now?

Sumyatov. Who told you that? I don't change my beliefs so quickly.

Alla. It just seemed to me. Well, good-bye then!

Sumyatov. Will we see each other again?

Alla. I doubt it... at least in this life.

Sumyatov. Should I see you off?

Alla. Oh, no. There is another person.

Sumyatov. Sorry.

Alla. And please remember: one can't make his own happiness out of somebody's sorrow. There is a weak point of all those idols.

Sumyatov. Wait!

Alla. Good-bye! (Leaving).

Sumyatov. There is either one crazy less in this world or I am going crazy myself

Victor Mancev enters.

Mancev. Levan, do you have anything to drink?

Levan. Sure I do! There is coffee, tea, juice ...

Mancev. You misunderstood me. I told you: anything to drink!

Levan. Vitya, dear...

Mancev. Please don't say useless words. If you have nothing - that's okay.

Levan. What's the matter with you?

Mancev. Well, forget it.

Levan. Why are you saying that! You want to hurt me, right?

Mancev. No. I want to get drunk to insensibility.

Levan. I would go to the end of the earth to get a bottle for you, believe me.
(Getting out a bottle of cognac). Please, take it, you are welcome!

Mancev. Thank you, Levan.

Levan. Oh, don't mention it! I'll just close the door, okay?

Mancev. Yes please.

Levan. Hey, listen guy, get off please! It's closed.

Sumyatov. As you say.

Mancev. Let him in, Levan. Would you join me?

Sumyatov. Actually, I am not a good drinker.

Mancev. That's a pity. I would like to drink with you.

Sumyatov. Why with me?

Mancev. Not to drink alone.

Sumyatov. Okay, but with one condition.

Mancev. You are a funny guy, really. Whatever... go ahead!

Sumyatov. You have to tell me to what we are going to drink. I have a right to know that.

Mancev. To good luck. Don't you mind?

Sumyatov. Actually not. But to what luck?

Mancev. To the one which would let us avoid a delusion of victory including all the related consequences.

Sumyatov. Oh, this is your old song! But you know that it's a lie and not very successful by the way. You can't find a delusion of victory in any medical manuals. There is no such a disease!

Mancev. Are you sure?

Sumyatov. Yes. There is no such a disease.

Mancev. I agree, it is not mentioned in any medical manual. But this disease does exist in life.

Sumyatov. Again your paradoxes! I am tired of them.

Mancev. That is life. There are many such things in it which are not mentioned in any manuals.

Sumyatov. But life has nothing to do with it. I know it quite well.

Mancev. Be careful, don't draw troubles upon yourself.

Sumyatov. I am ready for many things to achieve my goals. But I can stop at any time and turn back.

Mancev. Don't be so naïve. It's true up to a certain time.

Sumyatov. So, to your mind, what can happen one day?

Mancev. One day a person realizes that he needs neither fame nor money and adoration of crowd. He is tempted only by a peak.

Sumyatov. Well, he has climbed that peak. What is next?

Mancev. Then he falls down with fatigue putting out his tongue and waits if his heart would burst or not.

Sumyatov. And nothing more? Neither joy, nor satisfaction or pride?

Mancev. He dreams only about a bed with clean cool linens. If there is no bed then wet soil will do. To forget oneself with a sleep – this is a real award. There is no another one and never will be.

Sumyatov. However, awakening is inevitable.

Mancev. Whenever he awakens there is only one thing that drives him – moving forward to another peak. There is no other choice for him because he has lost everything. And frankly doesn't want to have another one.

Sumyatov. It just can't be so!

Mancev. You don't believe me? Well, take it. You will see to what it comes eventually. (Throwing a letter on a table).

Sumyatov. What is in this letter?

Mancev. A verdict which is not subject to appeal.

Sumyatov. Whose verdict? Over whom? Oh, don't smile like that, please!

Mancev. A verdict made by me wife... Sorry, my ex-wife now. A verdict over me.

Sumyatov. Oh, that's it... Do you have children?

Mancev. Two little daughters. I adored them but always left remaining them alone. I thought there is something more important in life. I have recovered my sight but it's too late. Now I have nothing for what to climb down the mountains.

Light fades out.

When it is switched on again an action takes place in front of the tourist camp building.

Alla. You don't have to see me off further.

Anna. Okay, you just don't be sad! Everything will be fine!

Alla. Thank you for all.

Anna. Come to see us with your husband. To our house-warming party, right Vasil?

Vasil. We are always glad to our guests. .

Alla. I'd like to give you a piece of advice Vasil: don't let Anna get used to you. A habit kills everything in family life, remember it.

Vasil. I will.

Alla. Get her excited, surprised! Oh, my God, even terrified... as often as possible. Got me?

Vasil. Yes.

Alla. For the sake of your future children. Good-bye! (Leaving).

Anna. Good-bye Alla! Oh, Vasil, I really feel sorry for her. She is blaming herself in death of her husband.

Vasil. What death? Don't say this bullshit!

Anna. That's true! Oh, where is some wooden thing here to knock three times? (Knocking a wooden bench). You think everything will be all right?

Vasil. Let's see... Let's go back?

Anna. Let's sit here for a while? Look, what a beautiful view here!

Vasil. Just mountains... What is special about them? I can't understand.

Anna. You, the old grumbler! I bet you'd prefer to be in the middle of heath.

Vasil. That's right. Heath is real thing. There is so much space!

Anna. However, one can't live without mountains.

Vasil. What is useful about your mountains?

Anna. Just imagine: a man lives his life full of worries and troubles. Suddenly he sees a mountain in front of him. He can neither cross it nor drive through it. There is only one way - to climb it and pass above it. The man looks up at the top of the mountain. His eyes are following higher and higher until they reach the sky! The sky is so bright and huge that he feels choky! And here is no more worries and sorrows.

Vasil. You are so swift to imagine, Annushka!

Anna. Then why do people need mountains you think?

Vasil. There is only death from them. Mikhalych is right.

Anna. Hey, you! What a husband you are to me?!

Oleg Tomov comes up.

Vasil. Well, when we buy a house we'll never go to the mountains.

Anna. Not even once?

Vasil. No way! That's it!

Anna. Vasilyok, and how about saying good-bye to the mountains?

Vasil. No way! Don't look at me like that, my sweetheart. Am I an enemy to you?

Tomov. Hi the Korobkos! How are you?

Anna. Well, well...

Tomov. I was passing across the bus stop and saw Alla. Do you know where she is going?

Anna. Home.

Tomov. I waved her a hand but she turned from me as if we don't know each other. Here you go: I've saved her risking my life!

Anna. She might not notice you. I guess her thoughts are far away from here.

Tomov. Ha-ha, so she says. Didn't notice... In fact she just can't forgive me that I didn't let her jump into the abyss. Crazy woman!

Anna. Shame on you Oleg!

Tomov. Why on earth should I be ashamed?

Anna. Alla told me everything.

Tomov. What do you mean "everything"? Come on, tell me!

Anna. The reason why she was going to jump into the abyss. Should I remind you?

Tomov. She told you lies and you believe this psyche!

Anna. By the way, she didn't tell a single bad word about you but she could.

Tomov. Look at them! These birds are singing together! I see you, chicks quickly find a common language between each other.

Anna. Hey you!

Tomov. Oh, didn't she teach you some other things also? For example, how to flirt around not to get bored while husband is away, huh?

Anna. No she didn't.

Tomov. I guess you know it yourself. All chicks are alike!

Vasil. Oleg!

Tomov. What?

Vasil. Listen, you, stop insulting my wife.

Tomov. So what? Are you going to wipe my nose?

Vasil. Yes I am! And no matter that we have eaten from one pot.

Anna. Vasilyok, please don't!

Tomov. I don't care about her...

Vasil. Shut up then.

Tomov. Come on, easy cowboy! I am also a bold guy... Do you have a cigarette?

Vasil. No.

Tomov. Oh, Anka, Anka! You are a good woman, but too wicked. How is Vasil going to live with you?

Anna. Go away, Oleg. I don't want to talk to you.

Tomov. You should listen! It will be useful for you.

Anna. Why have you stuck to me like a limpet?

Tomov. I can't stand that you are making a heroin out of yourself.

Anna. I am not.

Tomov. That's lie! Just yesterday you were jumping like a nanny calling everyone to the mountains to save those guys! So, where are you today?

Anna. And today I will say the same.

Tomov. You say words too easily. But what's the use of it?

Anna. You think I won't go there?

Tomov. You will if Vasil lets you. But he doesn't need it.

Anna. How do you know?

Tomov. He will neither let you go nor will go himself. Am I right, Vasil?

Vasil. We will go if it's necessary.

Tomov. For whom is it necessary? Nobody needs it except your dear Allochka. She willingly will finish a dozen of men for the sake of her husband. She doesn't care that their wives and children are waiting for them at homes. There is no someone else's sorrow, right?

Anna. You are saying nonsense. You, the jerk!

Tomov. Well... Perhaps, you might go. But tomorrow morning you are hurrying to purchase a house. And the day after tomorrow you have to celebrate a house-warming party. Then, you are going to have kids... When will you climb the mountains then? It's so nice that this psyche Alla left. I am so tired of her that had insomnia last night.

Anna. My grandmother used to say that only people with clear conscience have good sleep at night.

Tomov. Oh conscience! I wish I knew what conscience is like. Do you know Anna? And you Vasil?

Vasil. I didn't see it.

Tomov. Neither did I. I never saw it and don't know how it looks like. Maybe it doesn't exist at all?

Light goes off. Then early morning comes. Light is switched on.

Levan is laying tables at the canteen.

Cyrill Sumyatov comes in.

Sumyatov. Good morning Levan!

Levan. Oh, dear, why did you get up so early? It's not ready yet.

Sumyatov. I wonder, do you have the bedbugs here at the camp?

Levan. Are you kidding me?!

Sumyatov. Well, it must be my nerves then... I'd rather have a cup of coffee now.

Levan. That's true. Otherwise you will feel sleepy the whole day like a chicken!

Sumyatov. Please make it double, okay? I'll be your debtor forever then.

Levan. Oh, don't forget it! (Leaving).

Sumyatov. Well, I came here like an eagle and now leaving like a chicken! Damn it!

Victor Mancev dressed in a traveling suit comes in.

Mancev. Here you are again!

Sumyatov. I guess our fortune makes us meet again and again. Where are you going at such an early hour? All decent people are still sleeping.

Mancev. Oh, this night has been lasting for a whole century.

Sumyatov. So, you didn't sleep either? I wish I knew that. We could have played chess together.

Mancev. I had a lot to think about... Where is Levan?

Sumyatov. He is making coffee. He is sure that it's the best remedy not to turn into a chicken after a sleepless night. Wouldn't you try?

Mancev. No. I prefer to walk breathing fresh air. It awakes you better than coffee.

Sumyatov. Up to the bus station?

Mancev. You are a penetrative person. Yesterday I told you so much bullshit... I hope you didn't take it serious?

Sumyatov. Of course not.

Mancev. Thank you for your understanding.

Sumyatov. Where are going now? You are not coming back, right?

Mancev. That's right. My way is calling me to the Devil's Fang.

Sumyatov. Really?!

Mancev. But please don't tell a word to the guys. I just left. That's it.

Sumyatov. But why?

Mancev. Because everyone has to make his own decisions.

Sumyatov. Then... Only one thing is left for me - to wish you good luck!

Mancev. Thank you. I do need luck. See you!

Sumyatov. Wait a second! Please take it. (Giving him a pipe).

Mancev. Your pipe? This is very generous gift.

Sumyatov. Keep it! You will really need it at the mountains. And I don't need it.

Mancev. I hope we will meet again. And I will have a chance to thank you.

Sumyatov. Okay, I take you up on that. When you come back you are going to answer all my questions frankly. And I will write about you.

Mancev. That's a deal. But only when I come back not earlier. (Leaving).

Sumyatov. I think I also have to go back home.

Levan enters.

Levan. Here is your coffee, dear! Aren't you sleeping?

Sumyatov. I didn't have a chance to get asleep... Your coffee is wonderful!

Levan. It sure is. Did you have doubts?

Oleg Tomov enters.

Tomov. Hi there!

Levan. Good morning dear! Would you like coffee?

Tomov. I'd rather have some brine.

Levan. Oh, there is no brine, dear. But coffee is fresh and hot !

Tomov. I have a disgusting taste in the mouth. The same is in my soul. (Sipping coffee). Oh, what a nasty thing!

Levan. Youuu! What a nasty man!

Anna and Vasil come in.

Anna. Good morning everybody! Has Mikhalych come?

Levan. No he hasn't.

Vasil. I told you it's too early.

Anna. It's better to wait here rather than slugging in bed. Levan, is that coffee?

Levan. It is absolutely fresh. Would you like some?

Anna. Two cups please. Vasil, should I take something to eat?

Vasil. No, I don't need it.

Anna. Neither do I. Let's drink bitter coffee.

Levan. Why bitter, huh? Take sugar as much as you like. It's my treat!

Mikhalych comes in hurrying.

Anna. Mikhalych, dear! We have been waiting for you.

Mikhalych. Sorry, daughter, I am a little late. I was waiting for the newspapers. There was an urgent message and they were printing the newspapers at night.

Anna. One more urgent message?! What has happened?!

Mikhalych. Don't worry, daughter - it's harmful for you. They have been found!

Tomov. Hey, old man, who has been found? Speak clearly.

Mikhalych. Those missing have been found.

Tomov. Oh, shit, who were missing? God damn you, old man!

Anna. You mean those guys!?

Mikhalych. Yes, exactly.

Anna. They didn't perish, right?

Mikhalych. All are alive! There were some problems with their communication devices and they couldn't report about themselves.

Levan. Wow, dear, such a good news! Would you like some coffee?

Tomov. What are you talking about, Levan? Give us champagne!

Levan. Oh, my poor head! There is no champagne, believe it or not.

Sumyatov. Mikhalych, aren't you mistaken?

Mikhalych. Here is a newspaper story.

Sumyatov. What about Mancev then?

Anna. Where is he? We should tell him!

Sumyatov. He is away.

Anna. Where is he?

Tomov. Hey, you, the journalist, stop shadowboxing! Answer when being asked.

Sumyatov. He left for the Devil's Fang.

Levan. Listen, we should turn him back. Now there is no need to go there.

Vasil. I'll go and search for him!

Mikhalych. It's too late, the bus has left already.

Anna. Oh my God!

Tomov. Hey, why have you got the hump? He will come back. There is no reason to worry!

Sumyatov. He won't come back.

Levan. How do you know?

Sumyatov. He won't come back I tell you! Now he left for the Devil's Fang, then for some other place. There are many peaks in the world.

Anna. How about us then? How about us, I ask you?!

Sumyatov. As usual. Has anything changed?

Act Drop.

The End.