**Vitaly Dudko**

**HERE AND NOW**

**Play**

**Translated from Russian by Translation Agency «Universal»**

**Original title: *Здесь и сейчас***

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**PLAY**

Characters

**Aurelia**, bank operator

**Kostya**, her older son

**Olga**, her daughter

**Philipре**, her younger son

**Yuri**, their young neighbour

**Elena**, a friend of Aurelia

**Nikita**, Kostya's classmate

**Svetlana**, Nikita's wife

**Colonel**, the organizer of the ceremonial session

Aurelia's **colleagues**

**Woman**, Aurelia's acquaintance

**Waiter**

**Girl**, later **Nadezhda**, Kostya's wife

**Psychiatrist**

**Psychologist**

**Traumatologist**

**Ophthalmologist**

**Staff** of Pretrial detention centre, including **Senior Officers**

**Old Man**, a participant of the ceremonial session

**Policeman**

**She-wolf**

**Three wolf cubs**

**Scene 1**

*Bank customer service office.*

*Four operators are at their workplaces in glass cubicles. One of them is* ***Aurelia****, in the far cubicle, and her friend* ***Elena*** *is next to her in another cubicle. There are very few customers in the bank.* ***Aurelia*** *is serving a customer. He is being overly reverent and attentive in the way he speaks to the operator and gives her the papers, keeping her in his sight. It doesn't escape* ***Aurelia****.*

**Customer**. Thank you very much. You are diligent. I thought it was going to take much longer. Turns out it only takes a minute. Would you do me a favour and give me your business card?

***Aurelia*** *takes a business card, writes something on it and gives it to the customer. He reads, makes a sound of satisfaction, puts the card in his pocket and quickly leaves.* ***Aurelia*** *and* ***Elena*** *both set out the signs ''Service break'' and walk out.*

**Elena**. When is a good time to come?

**Aurelia**. How about tomorrow?

**Elena**. It's a weird day today. No customers.

**Aurelia.** (*She looks back and meets the recent customer’s eyes*). They'll come thick and fast by the end of the day.

**Elena**. (*Catches her eye*). Big shot?

**Aurelia.** I wouldn't say so. Average. I see hundreds like him.

**Colleague 1**. (*In the office, speaking to another Colleague*). Girls planning to rob the bank?

**Colleague 2**. They're friends.

**Colleague 1**. Always whispering. Never make you feel welcomed.

**Colleague 2**. If I was them I wouldn't either.

**Colleague 1**. (*offended*). Why not?

**Colleague 2**. Doesn't matter. Forget it.

**Colleague 1**. What a fancy name – **Aurelia Eduardovna**. There are so many ordinary names starting with A: **Anna, Alla, Alice**… Even the name is a show-off.

**Colleague 2**. Nobody calls her **Aurelia**. It's only in her passport. There are some cute nicknames… My friend's name was **Garik**. When he got his passport I discovered his real name was **Vitaly**. Anyway, she gave very simple names to her children: **Kosteek, Olga, Philipре**...

**Colleague 1**. Friends… One is married, no kids. The other one is single, with kids. Crazy she cranked out so many.

**Colleague 2**. Are you jealous? She adores her children. She gave her whole life to them. By the way, do you know what's the mother's background? She has a degree in philosophy.

**Colleague 1**. Do philosophers exist nowadays? What do they do?

**Colleague 2**. Philosophize.

**Colleague 1**. Haven't philosophers discovered all the truths yet? Is there something they're still hiding from humanity?

**Colleague 2**. They act high and mighty in order to utter some more, complementary certainties to save our souls. Sacred knowledge! It is supposed to make our life better. The men of wisdom have been looking for truth for thousands years. They seemed to have found it even. But the weird thing is that what they found didn't have the meaning they'd been looking for, and new searches start.

**Colleague 1**. Is there any use in them?

**Colleague 2**. **Nihil**. As I understand it, the humanity is constantly looking to changes in life. Improvement. It doesn't improve though, for some reason... Too bad. Nothing is getting better. It will always be like this.

**Aurelia** and **Elena** are coming back to the office.

**Scene 2**

**Aurelia** *is taking her baby out of the little bath, wrapping him in a sheet and putting him down on his belly. The baby is trying to raise his head but in vain. The mum is wiping his body, massaging his back gently, kissing his bum and putting some powder on his diaper rash.*

***Elena*** *comes to Aurelia's with a bottle of wine.*

**Aurelia.** I'm still breastfeeding. Don't be shy, pour yourself one.

*She is taking some cheese out of the fridge and pouring a glass of white wine. The baby is sitting on a run in the corner. He is eleven months old. The two women are standing in front of the window, watering flowers.* ***Elena*** *is drinking wine. Suddenly they hear an unfamiliar sound - the sound of little steps. They look back. The baby is walking towards them confidently, murmuring something. Both are looking at the baby, astonished.*

**Elena**. He is walking! Yes, he is walking!

**Aurelia**. He is not even walking! He is running!

*They are hugging him, both want to take him in their hands, squeeze him and play with him.*

*Early morning. Aurelia is walking at the forest skirt with her first baby in a pram. She is struggling to keep her eyes open. She made herself comfortable at a small snag. Suddenly a thick fog filled up the park. The mother closed her eyes and felt drowsy. A black shadow approached stealthily, without making a sound, and leaned over the pram. Through the daze, she saw someone’s furry head looming over the pram and listening to the baby’s breath. In a moment, she fully came to her senses and realized: there was a beast right there, standing at the pram. She jumped to her feet immediately, took out her whistle and blew with as much force as she could. In a second, she could hear people whistling back at her from different corners of the park. She stared at the place where the monster had been just a few seconds ago. There was no one. The black shadow was gone. She clung on the pram and walked fast towards home. When she reached her block of apartments, she bumped into her neighbour. She was walking out of the block with a pram as well. “Was it you whistling? You alarmed the whole park. What happened?”*

**Aurelia.** I thought I saw a horrible monster. I must have been dreaming. Nobody's out there in the forest so early. Especially in this fog.

**Scene 3**

*The daughter is taking wraps out of her mother's shopping bag.*

**Daughter**. You bought a new bag? What about me?

**Kostya**. You'll manage.

**Daughter**. Stick to your knitting. And, be quick with the bathroom. You're not alone here.

**Mum**. I'll get you one next time.

**Daughter**. There is a rule. For everyone. Buy one for yourself - buy one for your daughter.

***Kostya*** *and* ***Philipре*** *are walking down the street. It's Philipр's least favourite street - there's a barber shop here. He notices the enemy's house from far away and starts whining, trying to get away and hiding in the nearest shop.*

**Barber**: (*kindly*). Look who's coming! Our little Philipре who loves having his hair cut! Your hair is so long, it needs to be just a little shorter, otherwise you'll look like a little bear.

*The other barbers and hairdressers surrounded him, trying to entertain him. They're giving him toys to distract him from the process of cutting his hair. Finally, he relaxed. He is looking at himself in the huge mirror. The haircut is done, he is happy with it, he is twisting and turning, glancing at the other armchairs. There is a girl over there. Just entered the college and wants to cut her plaits off not to look like a child there. She had been waiting in the queue for a while, and now she’s finally in the armchair before the mirror. The hairdresser got suspicious, her other colleagues came up too, and they were asking the girl: “Did you get your mum’s permission? You’ve got money, alright. But did they let you do it?” Philipрok is listening carefully and looking at the girl closely.*

**Philipрok**. Naughty girl!

**Gigl**. Timid boy! You're not only the naughtiest from the block but from the entire ocean.

**Philipрok**. There's too much water in the ocean. It's cold and salty. Sharks are bothering you. I don't swim because I'll freeze. I'll tell your mum how mean you are.

*The barbers are standing around and listening to the children's squabble. Suddenly one of them said that she had found the girl's mum's phone number. I'm gonna call her mum, she said.*

*As soon as the girl heard it, she jumped off the armchair and rushed out of the barbershop.*

*Everyone in the barbershop burst out laughing, and* ***Philipрok*** *was the one laughing the loudest.*

**Philipрok**. Naughty kids. Who walks around with long hair like this. It's not nice! Not hygienic!

*Mum, Olga and Philipрok are walking around in front of their block of apartments. He is running along the street curb.*

**Sister**. Stop it right now. No need for performance. Go run on the grass. *(She grabs his hand, and Philipрok breaks away from her. Sister slaps his butt slightly)*. Wanna more? I'll slap you more. There, you little brat. What a naughty boy! Right, mum? Who doesn't listen to the adults? Who is going wild? Right, mum? I'll teach you a lesson in a blink of an eye. *(The little boy protrudes his butt, waiting for another slap)*. When you're little you can act like a monkey. Little ones can be naughty. They're always forgiven. This is what childhood is. Then they grow up and become serious and boring. Waiting outside. Nobody's gonna help. Running around like a headless chicken. Sweating it out. This is one too small, that one is too big. You can only rely on yourself.

*Suddenly the little boy trips, falls down and cuts his eyebrow. ''Well done, you had it coming! Didn't I warn you?'' Mum grabs him, wipes the wound with her handkerchief, then stops the taxi that passes by.*

*They arrive at the emergency centre.* ***Philipрok*** *touches the shiny tools. The doctor is shouting from the next room: ''Don't touch the tools! They are sterile''.*

*A young doctor comes out. He cleans the wound, applies a bandage, and then quickly and aptly gives him a tetanus injection. Then he says: ''Bye, and don't trip anymore! Otherwise, there's gonna be another painful injection. Take care!'' Phillip frantically waves goodbye to the doctor: ''Bye, bye, bye!''*

*They are walking back home. The sister is carrying her little brother in her arms. They enter the apartment.*

**Philipрok**. I'm freezing. Make me warm.

**Olga**. What a sissy. Do you need a wee?

**Philipрok**. I don't need anything. I just want to get warm... warm... (*He wraps his arms around his sister's neck. He stretches, yawns cavernously, and immediately falls asleep).*

**Olga** (*to* ***Mum***). Look at this weirdo! Just fell asleep mid-sentence.

**Mum**. It's the medicine. (*Sister puts him down on the couch carefully, takes off his little boots and covers him with a blanket. Then she sits and listens to his smooth breath*).

*They are cooking dumplings together.*

**Olga** (*to her younger brother*). Don't grab. Just look and learn, you babyface. Right, **mum**? Is he still a baby? He is all thumbs, right?

**Mum**. He is still my little darling. Anyway, let him try.

**Olga**. Our Philipрok has got chubby hands. Right, **mum**?

*Olga comes up to the child's table, puts three dumplings on a plate there and spreads some flour around. The little darling is trying to get the dumpling together with his tiny fingers.*

**Olga**. It's time to do the bills. (*Takes the papers*.) The electricity is getting **more** expensive. So much trouble. Another thing, I slapped Philipрok. He is naughty. He thinks he's big. I think I didn't slap him enough. Shall I slap him **more**? Are we going to get old too?

**Mum**. It's inevitable.

**Olga**. I really don't fancy it. I've had a hard day: I've made some dumplings, I watered flowers, I swept the room, filled out the bills, washed the toilet and watched Phillip so that he didn't get into trouble. Right, **mum**?

*Philipрok is standing at the toilet.*

**Mum**. You're missing it again. You're three years old already, it's time to learn it. You're missing it all the time. Take your willy and aim right there
.

*Daughter's voice:*

**Olga**. Let me aim it.

**Mum**. You are a girl!

**Olga**. So if I am a girl I have to spy on him.

**Mum**. Oh, stop it. Go away.

**Olga**. No need to hide. I've seen it many times. Also Phillip fards very loud.

**Mum**. He is little. It's ok.

**Scene 4**

*Kostik is nine years old.* ***Mum*** *sends him to the village for a month. His backpack is ready.*

**Mum**. He is an old grandpa. His name is Kivenya. Do what he says.

**Kostya**. Kivenya?

**Mum**. It's a village nickname.

**Kostya.** Does he have a real name?

**Mum**. I don't know. His family call him Kivenya, Kivenya. You can ask him if he has a real name.

*Kostya and Kivenya are on the way to the village, driving a horse drawn cart on a rural road. As far as the eye could see, there are corn and cabbage fields, or endless open spaces of sunflowers.*

*Kostya is examining the traditional Russian log house and climbing up the wood stove.*

*He is wandering around the cherry garden. He is biting the glue off the bark of the cherry trees. Kivenya brought him along to the field. He had to harrow the field that day. He gave the reins to Kostya and walked to the far end of the field. Kostya put the reins over his neck and walked steadily step by step, following the huge heavy harrow. Suddenly the reins got trapped by the harrow and started to wrap around it, becoming shorter and shorter and pulling Kostya down to the ground. Hoarsely, Kostya was trying hard to stop the horse: wo! wo! He was already on his knees, his head was nearly touching the harrow. The horse finally obeyed and stopped. Kivenya, scared to death, panic in his eyes, is rushing to him across the field.*

*At the ophthalmologist's. The doctor comes in. ''Shall we start? Make yourself comfortable. I'll ask you a few questions, and you'll answer, alright?''*

**Doctor**. (*Takes a few pictures*). What do you see in this picture?

**Phillip**. What do I see?

**Doctor**. I am asking you: what do you see? What are the shapes in this picture? What colour are they?

**Phillip**. See? What do I see?

**Doctor**. He is a cheeky little boy. Doesn't want to answer. Where is the square? Where is the ball? Where are the birds? Show me in the picture.

**Phillip**. Do I see them here?

**Doctor**. Well. That's enough for today. I'll see you in a month.

**Scene 5**

*At the skating rink a boy is looking at Olga with interest.*

**Olga**. What do you want?

**Boy**. What a rude kid.

*Olga is skating and watching the boy at a distance. She skated towards him.*

**Olga**. I won't do it again. Would you like to skate together and hold my hand?

**Boy**. Yes, I do. (*They're skating together*.)

**Olga**. Why did you call me a kid?

**Boy**. Do you not like it?

**Olga**. It's funny. Another two years, and I'll be an actual young lady.

**Boy**. I'll still call you a kid for now. I find it cute. Even affectionate.

**Olga**. Will you? How come? Will we see each other again?

**Boy**. We are neighbours. (***Olga*** *is looking at him closely.*) You live in the 6th block, and I'm from the 4th. I noticed you a long time ago, and your brothers too. Your name is Olga.

**Olga**. And yours?

**Boy**. I'm Yura.

**Olga**. From the 4th?

**Boy**. Yes, from the 4th. The sixteen-floors tower, just like yours.

**Olga**. So we can go skating together and come back together.

**Boy**. You are from a very close-knit family.

*Olga kisses the boy on his lips and skates away from him to the far end of the rink. The boy is staring after her, confused.*

*Aurelia is in the park, sitting on a bench. A middle-aged woman sits down next to her. The woman is beautiful and slender.*

**Aurelia**. Don't follow me. Get yourself a man. Not from me. I've got none. I'll hook you guys up if I've got one.

**Woman**. I want to help you. I agree to work for you.

**Aurelia**. Thank you. I'll cope.

**Woman**. Urgent household routines. I agree to do some spadework.

**Aurelia**. We manage alright.

**Woman**. A household is always a bunch of troubles. You are always barely on time. It never ends. You are way too busy. Things to do are always in abundance. I agree to do nasty jobs.

**Aurelia**. True, I'm barely on time. My kids help though. I know you are a philologist. So many synonyms per minute.

**Woman**. I could play with your children.

**Aurelia**. Of course. They often remember you.

**Woman**. Can I visit you sometime?

**Aurelia**. No, not yet.

**Woman**. Why not?

**Aurelia**. You'll get carried away. You need to have your own kids.

**Woman**. Charming! Flabby ugly flesh somehow gets hard.

**Aurelia**. Are you out of your mind? Blissfully daydreaming?

**Woman**. I'm simply reflecting upon the subject. Speculating. (*To the children*.) Who's gonna catch me? (*they're happily running after one another, making a lot of noise.*)

**Scene 6**

*A teenage girl with a horse is standing at the metro station and shouting, trying to attract people's attention: ''Please! Please! Just a ruble to feed my horse. Please!'' There is a plastic bag in front of her where people put small money. The horse looks somewhat exotic: it's taller than a pony but shorter than a normal horse.*

*The older son is glancing at his mum who is standing aside. She nods. He gives the bawler one hundred rubles. The girl is surprised. She hides the money in her pocket.*

**Girl**. Thank you. (*Olga comes up*.) Is it your sister?

**Olga**. Yes, sister.

**Girl**. So pretty. (*Ольга wriggles and rolls her eyes. Philipрok comes up*.) Is it your little brother?

**Olga.** (*bragging*). Yes, our little brother.

**Girl**. What a wonderful family. So many kids brought into the world. I am an only child. Would your child like to go for a ride? I love playing with children.

**Olga**. Is it well-behaved?

**Girl**. She loves children. She is obedient too.

**Olga**. What is this colour?

**Girl**. Dappled.

**Olga**. Dappled. Never heard.

**Girl**. You're a city girl.

**Olga**. And you?

**Girl**. I spend more time in the countryside. I'm so happy with this colour and its name.

**Olga**. Of course. It's your horse. Who will lead it?

**Girl**. I'll be here, and your older brother on the other side.

**Olga**. Let's just make a small circle. We're in a bit of a rush.

*The older son looks back at mum, she nods as if she heard what the children were talking about. He helps the younger brother to sit in the saddle and walks next to the horse, holding the boy steady. They make a small circle and help him down.*

**Girl**. Wonderful family. Where is your dad?

**Older brother**. That's not everyone's business.

**Girl**. No more tittle-tattle.

**Older brother**. You're too nosy.

**Girl**. Telling you, I shut up. (*Starts whimpering*.)

**Older brother**. What's wrong with you?

**Girl**. I wish I had a dad.

**Older brother**. Many wish.

**Olga**. Not everyone's lucky.

**Girl**. Goodbye. Come here again. Please. Are you allowed to go for a walk alone? Do you know the town well? Will you come tomorrow? Promise? Come on, promise me! Promise! I'll wait. (*She takes the older brother's hand and doesn't let it go. She puts the other hand above his. Olga is watching. Finally, the Girl releases his hand. They're leaving.*) Bye.

**Kostya**. (*Olga stares at her brother's face*). What is it?

**Olga**. Nothing. She fell in love with you.

**Kostya**. Enough...

**Olga**. I was watching... I'll grow up and fall in love too.

**Younger brother**. Me too.

***Mum*** *is helping* ***Olga*** *to get dressed for the date: she is going to the cinema with Yura.* ***Mum*** *is taking a new set of elegant underwear out of the wardrobe: a black waistband, black panties, stockings, and a bra.* ***Olga*** *is standing upright in the middle of the room, naked.* ***Mum*** *is helping her to put the things on. Adjusts, steps back, looks at the daughter with admiration.*

*Her brother is sitting in the armchair with his legs tucked up under him. He can’t take his eyes off his sister.*

**Mum**. You're not ashamed of your brother at all! He is a man!

**Olga**. Big deal! Man! I don't mind, let him gawk. He is my brother, not a stranger. Anyway, I am ashamed of the older one.

**Mum**. You are a girl! You should be shy and modest.

**Olga** (*to Philippe*). Don't you have anything to do? Enough hanging out. Get lost!

**Mum**. Enjoying yourself? Go to the kitchen. Peel some potatoes. Off you go!

*Olga is outside walking with her head held up. She pretends not to notice that people are giving her admiring glances. She is walking across the outside apartment block area with a proud air. She takes Yuri by the hand. Everyone in the neighbourhood looks mesmerized when they're watching the young beautiful couple walk away. Mum and brother are peeping from behind the curtain. Mum is about to cry: ''My little daughter is becoming a lady''.*

*When Olga and Yuri are alone in the alley, Olga looks around, snuggles her head against Yuri, takes his hands and puts them on her chest. They are standing like this for a few seconds.*

**Olga**. Alright. Got stuck? We're gonna be late for the movie. (*Pushes Yuri away*.) Are we gonna kiss in the cinema?

**Yuri**. If there are not too many people.

**Olga**. What are you scared of?

**Scene 7**

*Konstantin, Olga and Philipрok are in the room.*

**Olga**. Give me your tablet for an hour.

**Kostya**. I will need it.

**Olga**. It's for everyone. It was a present for all of us.

**Kostya**. There's no such thing as a present for everyone.

**Olga**. Cheapskate.

**Kostya**. Shut your face.

**Philipрok**. You should share when you're asked.

**Kostya**. Nobody asked your opinion, you pipsqueak.

**Philipрok**. Pipsqueak who's smarter than you.

**Olga**. The horsegirl is out there.

**Kostya** (*makes an angry movement towards his sister*). Why didn't you tell me straight away?

**Olga**. Just touch me, and I'll never tell you again. I was expecting the tablet.

**Kostya**. You wish…

**Philipрok**. Get out of here. Go to your horsegirl.

**Kostya** (*flicks his finger on Phillip's forehead*). The tablet is in the drawer. (*Rushing outside*.)

*A family event at a fancy restaurant.*

*The children are dressed up. They sit down next to each other by seniority on one side of the table. Mum sits down opposite them. It's a formal atmosphere, and the children are acting in a serious and dignified manner. The waiter approaches them.*

**Waiter**. Good evening.

**Everyone** (*all together*): Hello.

**Waiter**. As usual?

**Mum**. Please, bring them some food. Salads, some bread and butter. Some water, not cold. And then, the dessert and a cappuccino.

**Waiter**. Sure. (*to Kostya*.) What's for mum?

**Kostya**. A shot of the vodka, fried king prawns, a jacket potato and a little bit of black caviar.

**Waiter**. As usual then?

**Kostya**. Yes, please.

*Olga glances at her mum sneakily, copying her manners: she minds her posture, she rolls her eyes and pretends she doesn't care about the table being set for them. Kostya hisses at her without even turning his head:*

**Kostya**. Ape.

**Olga**. You're the same.

**Kostya**. Faker.

**Olga**. You faker yourself.

*Mum drinks the shot of vodka, slices the ideally clean jacket potato, puts some black caviar on each slice with a knife and tastes it with pleasure. The children are struggling not to stare at their mum's plate. They're trying to look indifferent but still watching mum's every move. They are examining lamps, crystal chandeliers and stained-glass windows as if they came here for the first time. It's the fancy delicacies and the solemn atmosphere of the place that brought them here. The waiter is standing behind Aurelia's back. She is following the family ritual. It's now the children's turn, and she nods to the waiter.*

**Waiter**. Sure. As usual.

*Now everyone is getting a jacket potato and a portion of black caviar. All three children are smiling, excited. Olga starts helping the younger brother first of all: she slices the potato for him, puts some caviar and brings it close to his mouth. He is waiting with his mouth open. But she is teasing him and keeps taking it away. The brother is frowning and picking her leg. Finally, his sister puts the fancy sandwich in his little mouth and starts eating her portion too.*

**Waiter**. Will you have your cappuccino now or after the dance?

**Mum**. After.

*She is walking to the centre of the dance floor and dancing Libertango by Piazzolla accompanied by a violin, a viola and a cello. She is moving in beautiful, elegant way, looking inspired. She grabs her older son, and they're both dancing with abandon. They finish the dance. Everyone in the restaurant applauds.*

**Scene 8**

**Aurelia**. Shall we drive to the forest quickly?

**Elena** (*looks at her watch*). Not enough time. Only if we drive really fast. Still not enough time though.

**Aurelia**. Then we lose the whole week.

**Elena**. What time does she expect us?

**Aurelia**. In the afternoon.

**Elena**. We can try. Shall we take Kostik?

**Aurelia**. I promised I would. He hasn't been there. He only heard about her kindness.

(*to Konstantin.*) Wanna feel the wind in your hair?

**Konstantin**. Deffo!

*The three of them are in the car on the way to the forest. Aurelia is driving at high speed.*

**Elena** (*shouting*). Stop, where are you going? We missed it.

*They are going in reverse to reach a small exit to the forest which is hard to notice even when you know it. They take a turn and find themselves in a hidden clearing. In the bushes there are a few things stashed aside: a metal grid, a plastic dish and a stick to fight potential enemies. Just in case, Aurelia leaves the doors of the car open. She looks around and takes a bag with food out of the trunk. Then she puts on a pair of thick leather gloves. The grid isn't just a grid: it has metal clips so it is turned into some kind of cage, and it is not possible to open it. In other words, it is not possible to turn it around. The grid cage is dead attached to the ground and looks a bit like a portable stage for a performance. The cage is attached with a tight rope to three trees and can't be turned over. It is safely fixed at each side. A person is safe inside it.*

**Elena**. Is she not here today?

**Aurelia**. She is here. I can feel. We are little late. She is waiting. Come on in.

**Kostya**. What do you mean?

**Aurelia**. Get inside the cage.

**Kostya**. You don't love me at all… You don't have any pity. You just throw me here to be torn to pieces.

**Mum** (*hugs Kostya*). What are you talking about? This cage couldn't be broken by a truck! Construction workers made it for me. I was myself many times.

**Kostya** (*ashamed*). I see. I'll get in.

***Kostya*** *gets into the cage and quickly does the clips. He can't stop feeling scared.*

***Aurelia*** *is slowly walking to the centre of the clearing. She puts some food on the plate: sausages, cheese, bread and two pieces of chopped meat. She pours some fruit drink into a wide enameled bowl. She walks to the car backwards, without turning her back to the clearing.*

**Elena**. What did you just pour out there?

**Aurelia**. Her favourite drink.

**Elena**. You should have let us try if it's so tasty.

**Aurelia**. Cornel-berry drink. Freshly made.

**Kostya**. Why does she like it?

**Aurelia**. It's a bit sour, a bit spicy.

**Kostya**. Too good for us?

**Aurelia.** I'll make you some tonight. I already did. You forgot.

*A cautious face of the she-wolf appears slowly out of the bushes. She is smelling and examining the visitors. She comes close to the grid and stares at the newcomer. She sits opposite the young guy and looks him in the eyes.*

**Kostya**. I'm scared. Shall I get out of the cage?

**Aurelia**. No way! She is much faster than you.

*Suddenly the she-wolf jumps up in the air and barks like a dog. She acts as if she is overly excited and runs around the cage where Kostya is snuggling.*

**Aurelia** (*laughs*). She recognized Kostik! She identified him! She was smelling you when I was walking with you in the pram! She remembers you. She remembers.

**Kostya**. Shall I just lie low? Shall I not move?

**Aurelia**. Stick your finger out of the cage, carefully.

**Kostya**. What? She'll tear my arm off!

**Aurelia**. That's why you've got a stick and a popgun. She knows about the stick.

**Kostya** *is sticking his finger out of the cage, between the bars, very-very slowly, a millimeter after a millimeter. The she-wolf licked his finger in excitement immediately. She continues jumping around the cafe playfully.*

**Aurelia**. She identified Kostik. She recognized him.

**Kostya**. I will stroke her face with all my hand.

**Aurelia** (*strictly*). Don't even think of it. She is a wild beast. Let's get inside the car. She will calm down. (*With utmost care, Kostya opens the cage slightly and quickly dives into the car. They lock the doors.)* Let's go. It feels weird today.

**Elena**. What about the plates?

**Aurelia**. She'll take care of them. (*Kostya starts crying in the back seat*.)

**Elena**. Let me sit next to him.

***Kostya*** *is crying in the car hysterically.*

*He is weeping for real and shaking as if he had fever.* ***Elena*** *is hugging him, squeezing him in her arms and kissing. It doesn't look motherly at all.* ***Aurelia*** *watches it in the rear-view mirror and wags her finger warningly at* ***Elena****.*

**Kostya** (*through tears*). You threw me to the wolves. You wanted to get rid of me. You don't need me at all.

**Aurelia** (*stops the car, sits down next to her son*). We were right there for you. We had a popgun to scare her. Wolves know them. But it doesn't matter. She remembered that you were that baby. She remembered and was happy to see you.

**Kostya**. I don't need these wild friends.

**Aurelia**. Were you so scared? Now we are safe. We are far away...

**Kostya**. You don't love me… You let her smell me, the she-wolf with her teeth... Olga is a pretty girl... I love her. I love Philipрok even more... He is well-behaved and likes being with the family... You didn't love me since I was a baby.

**Aurelia** *(terrified*). What are you talking about? You are all my children, my dearest and nearest ones...

**Kostya**. The dearest is that guy of yours… You keep seeing him…

**Aurelia**. What guy? I don't have a guy! (*Aurelia and Elena exchange glances now and then.)*

*They are finally back. All three of them got out of the car. Aurelia drew Elena aside.*

**Aurelia**. If you don't stop groping and kissing him, we will break up for good. The kid is thirteen, and you're shaking your boobs in front of him. He has no idea what you're doing acting like this, torturing him with your body. You're literally trying to get into his pants. He is already turned on, he doesn't understand what to do and how he should act, and you're only happy about it.

**Elena**. You seem to be really jealous!

**Aurelia**. I'm not jealous. He is my son. I just know how it ends. More tears, more crying.

**Elena**. He himself is jerking. Shivering in my arms.

**Aurelia**. I seriously warn you. It's not the first time you provoke him. You never miss a chance. You know, I do kickboxing. I'll count your teeth before you know it. You're an easy lay. I don't care that you're my bestie. I'll tear your pussy apart.

**Elena**. You're out of your mind!

**Aurelia**. You're nuts. And always horny.

*Elena got really scared and ran away, looking back from time to time.*

**Scene 9**

*Public holiday. City Day. Girls are taking turns in ''milking the cow''. There are milk churns next to them to fill ''the udder''. It's a festive atmosphere at the school yard. Ten distinguished officers are granted new apartments. There are a lot of guests: parents, teachers, construction workers. The members of the executive committee - the local authorities, the colonel, some community activists - are all together at a small table covered with red canvas. There are piles of paper and boxes with keys on the table. They are getting ready for the ceremony where the apartment keys will be handed to the officers with all the honours and celebrations. The officer in charge gives the last instructions. There’s music on. Some people are making light dancing motions. Kostya hears two women talking behind his back:*

**Woman** **1**. Who is this young guy?

**Woman** **2**. Nikita, the new director. He finished this school. Very smart. Children like him. Teachers also do.

**Colonel** (*joyfully*). Time to start. Where's our fresh-baked director?

**Svetlana**. I'll look for him. He must be inside.

**Colonel**. Who are you?

**Svetlana**. I'm his wife.

**Colonel**. Very well. We'll wait.

*An old retired man is excited about taking part in the ceremony.* ***Konstantin*** *is in his military uniform, speaking to him in a rude manner:*

**Konstantin**. Stop clapping!

**Old man**. Why?

**Konstantin**. You're violating public order.

**Old man**. How's that?

**Konstantin**. Because you're clapping.

**Old man**. Is there military emergency in town?

**Konstantin**. You're loving it, you brainy? Disturbing the public peace? Stop clapping. (*Threatening him with his baton*.)

***Konstantin.***  *Konstantin leaves the group unnoticed and hurries after the director. Together they are walking into the school building.*

**Nikita** (*hugs Kostya*). Hi Kostik! Congratulations on the citation. You’re gonna have a promotion.

I was happy to see your name on the list. You deserve it. Blood, sweat and tears. I never hear from you though. There it is. Our gym. Let's have a look. *(They enter the gym. Kostya get on the “horse” and easily performs a few clean swings. )* You're in perfect shape. Do you remember about school sometimes? I think about it every day.

**Kostya**. Me too… Especially the seventh grade when you got stingy with the algebra test...

**Nikita**. Algebra test? I'm surprised you remembered.

**Kostya**. I have a good memory. I got a bad mark.

**Nikita**. I'd never been stingy. The whole class was copying from me. If I didn't let you copy I must have had some reasons to do that.

**Kostya**. Yes, you did.

**Nikita**. You can remind me if you want.

**Kostya**. The reason is standing in the first row over there. Right now.

**Nikita**. I don't get it.

**Kostya**. Over there in the school yard… In the first row…

**Nikita** (*gets it and starts laughing*). Are you talking about Sveta? Yeah, we both fancied her… She made her choice eventually...

**Kostya** (*his voice trembling nervously*). If I wasn't the strongest student, does it mean I had to be scolded and nagged at? The weakest ones have to be bullied, right?

**Nikita**. What? Everybody liked you. The girls in our class were mad about you! Handsome, athletic, a good singer... They wondered sometimes why you are so different... why you don't care about anyone... Why did you seem to be interested only in the other class... That older grade was your only concern. Especially one sophisticated girl. A little older, really pretty one. Do you remember Belyakova?

**Kostya**. Buried in oblivion...

**Nikita**. You're accompanied by a beautiful girl, she is hiding behind. I noticed.

**Kostya**. Not your damn business, daddy's boy. Why was the director licking the dust before that patron? He was just a pen-pusher. We didn't even have money for a tutor.

**Nikita**. Yes, a pen-pusher. But he helped the school. Computers, for instance. The tutor was our family's friend. He was just helping me with math. For free.

**Kostya**. The biggest insult in the sixth grade. The trip to Prague. Only the richest and the people pleasers. The wealthiest were well taken care after. We all suspected that there is some kind of patron but didn't know his actual role. Anyway, equal rights were out of the question. It didn't bother anyone though. What a trifle. No biggie. Nobody dared to raise their voice and speak about how unfair it was. My mum didn't say anything so we got nothing. On the other hand, three children...

**Nikita**. It was the director and the teachers' board who chose them. The most advanced students. We didn't understand why they chose them exactly. They were chosen, and the rest were to enjoy their stories about beautiful Prague.

**Kostya**. Who appointed you as a director? The family friend? He is large and in charge in the region now.

**Nikita**. He quit. I achieved everything myself. I was appointed by the local education committee. They appreciate my teaching skills. I graduated from the Institute of Pedagogy with excellent marks. I majored in geography. There aren't many guys who study to become teachers. I always loved geography. It's been my passion since school.

**Kostya**. I remember.

**Nikita**. It's the most interesting science.

**Kostya** (*laughing*). What's the highest place on Earth?

**Nikita**. Mount Everest, 8 848 meters and a few centimeters.

**Kostya**. I don't even doubt your knowledge. Just wanna catch you somewhere.

**Nikita**. Try again.

**Kostya**. What's the deepest place?

**Nikita**. Mariana Trench, 10 994 meters.

**Kostya**. Are there any living things?

**Nikita**. Highly unlikely. Maybe some silly lobsters and mollusks can hide there.

**Kostya**. Would you like to go down there? You are pushy, overzealous.

**Nikita**. Every man on Earth would love to.

**Kostya**. Do you have any siblings?

**Nikita**. I am an only child.

**Kostya**. Your parents adore you. Just in case, though, ask your dad, maybe he does have some incidental kids somewhere.... Just saying.

**Nikita**. What do you hinting at?

**Kostya**. Nothing... No reason... No consequences...

**Nikita**. No, asshole, go on. You started, you will have to finish. Come on, let the gossip out… And then go dream about good marks in algebra...

*Konstantin grabs Nikita by his collar with both hands and hits him in the face violently. Nikita falls on his back, hitting his head on the floor. Konstantin bends over him and hits him like a professional. He hits him in the head and chest. A memory flashed before his eyes. An endless open field. He's got reins around his neck. The horse is slowly moving in front of him, crumbling the soft lumps of soil. At some point, the reins are pulled into the harrow, they keep winding and pulling the boy down, closer and closer to the ground. He is already on his knees, unable to get rid of the reins. His grandpa is running across the field towards him and screaming in terror. The horse stopped. The memory vanished into the mist of the childhood past. Nikita twitched a few times in agony and died. At the end of the sports hall someone opened the door slightly and immediately closed it. Konstantin stands up, looks around and quickly leaves the gym. He joins his group unnoticed as if he never left. Svetlana is looking for her husband in the school yard. Her mum and daughter are there too.*

**Scene 10**

***Mum****,* ***Daughter****, and* ***Psychiatrist*** *are in the apartment. Psychiatrist is a middle-aged woman.*

**Mum**. It's the first time I'm calling a psychiatrist.

**Doctor**. Who is the patient?

**Mum**. My daughter. In this room.

**Doctor**. Are you registered in hospital?

**Mum**. Not yet.

**Doctor**. How old is she?

**Mum**. Eighteen.

**Doctor**. I'll talk to her first. Then you'll tell me what you need to.

*Doctor enters the room. Olga is wearing three sweaters and a warm jacket on top of them. She has a pair of warm sweatpants on and a hat on her head. Sweat is streaming down her face.*

**Doctor** (*kindly*). Hello, my name is Tatyana Sergeevna, what's yours?

**Olga**. Who are you?

**Doctor**. I am a doctor.

**Olga**. I'm not sick.

**Doctor**. Nobody's saying that you are sick. Let's just have a talk. Whatever decision we will make, it will be only upon our mutual agreement.

**Olga**. No decisions. I am healthy. You are sick.

**Doctor**. What is your name?

**Olga**. Olga.

**Doctor**. Olga, I need to ask you something. It's summer now. It's plus thirty degrees outside but you are wearing so much clothes. Can you please tell me why?

**Olga**. It's chilly.

**Doctor**. Do you take it all off when you go to bed?

**Olga**. No, why? It's quite cool at night.

**Doctor**. Have you tried taking off these clothes and putting on something lighter?

**Olga**. I have. There's too much draft in the room. It's freezing.

**Doctor**. Shall we try and do it together? It's plus thirty.

**Olga**. You go ahead and undress if you want. Especially at night. When I go to bed I wear the same things.

**Doctor**. When was the last time you took a shower?

**Olga**. I don't like wasting my time. Getting dressed, getting undressed. It's totally fine sleeping in clothes.

**Doctor**. Do you remember when was it though?

**Olga**. No, it's hard to remember. I forgot.

**Doctor**. Yesterday? The day before?

**Olga**. No, around half a year maybe.

**Doctor**. Why is that?

**Olga**. What's the point?

**Doctor**. Please get undressed. Let's have a look at your body.

**Olga**. I've got scabs on my body.

**Doctor**. They must be itchy. It's annoying.

**Olga**. Yes, they are. I'm used to it.

**Doctor**. Scabs can get deep under your skin. It will be hard to get rid of them. They will get sore.

**Olga**. I don't care. I won't take a shower. I like the smell. I like myself as I am.

**Doctor**. Please tell me about your studies. Do you study?

**Olga**. Yes. I study history. I am on academic leave now.

**Doctor**. Do you like the subjects that you study? Is it easy for you to learn new things?

**Olga**. You're talking to me like I'm stupid. I am a student, for your information.

**Doctor**. Do you take pills?

**Olga**. What?! Pills! Take them yourself. I'm perfectly fine.

**Doctor**. I'll visit you again soon if you don't mind.

*The doctor leaves the room.*

**Doctor** (*to Mother*). What happened?

**Mum**. Nervous agitation. Tears and screams. She threatened me with a knife. She also refuses to keep the door closed.

**Olga** (*behind the door*). Well! Let it be open. Whoever needs to come in here will come in even if it's locked.

**Mum**. I'm worried when I'm at work. She doesn't answer the phone.

**Olga**. You want me to run around the apartment every time? It stops ringing before I can reach it.

**Mum**. She wears the same clothes in bed and outside.

**Doctor**. She can come to the PND [[1]](#footnote-1)on her own. Let's make an appointment.

**Mum**. It's out of the question. She needs to be accompanied. Let's see. Either me or her brother will take her there.

**Doctor**. I'll visit you again the day after tomorrow. The hospital department manager will come too. It's a complicated case. Good job you've called us. It's about time to address it seriously. See you later.

*It's quiet outside. Suddenly, Olga, completely naked, springs out of the apartment. Astride a wooden horse for children with a toy sword, she is making circles around the area. She is waving the sword like a brave horserider and singing the old song ''Farewell to Slavyanka'' loudly.*

The minute of farewell beginneth,
Thou look'st into my eyes with anxiety.
I catch thy dear breath,
A storm is forming far away already.

Farewell, homeland,
Remember us.
Farewell, o dear gaze,
Not all of us will come back.

*Kostya and Yuri with a blanket in his hands rush out of the building. They catch Olga, wrap her up in the blanket and carry her to the building.*

**Kostya**. Don't be silly. Did you take your pills? Wanna surprise the world again?

*Someone's ringing at the door at night. Mum and both sons rush out to the hall. Their daughter and sister is at the doorstep even though they can barely recognize her at first sight: there's some weird shawl or a scarf covering her hair, or maybe even someone's hat. She's wearing a light sweater with someone else's fur-trimmed jacket on top of it; she has socks on her feet; they're torn to shreds.*

**Mum**. Did you walk barefoot outside?

**Olga**. Big deal.

**Mum**. Where is all your clothes? Where are your high boots? The hat?

**Olga**. I don't know.

**Mum**. It's so dark outside. It's night. It's minus ten degrees. How did you get here?

**Olga**. I am a fast walker. I was also running now and then. My feet are cold. Freezing.

**Mum**. Did you escape?

**Olga**. I did. I'm feeling well.

*The younger brother takes his sister to the bathroom, washes her face and hands and dries them out. Then he takes her back to the room and helps her sit down on the bed. He brings a tub of warm water and takes someone else's dirty sweatpants, tights and underpants off her. He shoves it all into a plastic bag with an air of disgust. He tries to put clean underpants on her.* ***Olga*** *pulls them up in an abrupt movement.*

**Olga**. Don't stare.

*Her brother washes her feet in the soapy water, each toe and up to her knees. Mum is trying to comb her messy hair.*

**Mum**. Where did you get those tights and sweatpants?

**Olga**. No idea.

**Mum**. Picked them up on the street?

**Olga**. Maybe. Well, actually, I stole them from a ward in hospital.

***Kostya*** (*standing and watching*). Local idiot. (*Leaves the room*).

**Olga**. You're an idiot.

**Mum**. Don't you argue.

**Olga**. I'm chilled to the marrow .

**Philipрok**. You can go. I'll put her to bed. The little girl can catch a cold and die. I don't want it. Where are those warm pantaloons? I also need the warmest socks we have.

**Mum**. They're on the same shelf.

**Philipрok** (*helps her put on the pajamas*). Are you in pain?

**Olga**. No.

**Philipрok**. Are you hungry?

**Olga**. I'm sleepy.

**Philipрok** (*brings her a cup of tea and honey*). Are you going to bed now?

**Olga**. Yes. I need to sleep.

**Philipрok**. Do you think you've got fever?

**Olga**. Dunno.

**Philipрok** (*touches her forehead with his lips*). No fever. (*Trying to make her feel comfortable in bed, tucks in the blanket and snuggles up next to her*.)

**Philipрok**. I'll just lie here until you fall asleep. (*Turns the light off. Bursts out crying.)*

*Early in the morning someone's ringing at the door again. Philippe opens the door and sees the* ***Policeman****.*

**Policeman**. I am your local police officer. Does Olga Goncharova live here?

**Philippe**. Yes, she does.

**Policeman**. Is she home now?

**Philippe**. Yes, she is.

**Policeman**. Did she escape from hospital?

**Philippe**. Apparently she did. We didn't figure out yet what exactly happened. She is tired. Sleeping.

**Policeman**. Who are you?

**Philippe**. I am her brother. When she wakes up I'll sort it out. I'll call the hospital now.

**Policeman**. I have to take a look. That's the law.

**Philippe**. Come on in. She is sleeping though.

**Policeman**. I am not going to wake her up. (*It takes him a long time to wipe his feet on the rug. Finally he comes in*.) Where shall I... ?

**Philippe**. Follow me.

***Philippe*** *raises the blanket slightly.* ***Policeman*** *looks at the sleeping girl.*

**Policeman**. No passport, of course?

**Philippe**. That's right. They keep it in the hospital.

**Policeman**. Who else might confirm that it's her…

Aurelia's voice from another room.

**Mum**. I am her mother, and I confirm that it's my daughter here.

**Policeman**. Alright. Please call the hospital. They are really worried there. Thank you. I am sorry to bother you. Goodbye. (***Policeman*** *walks out*).

**Scene 11**

*A messy room, a messy bed, a messy woman. The fire in* ***Aurelia'****s eyes faded. She is wandering around the room purposelessly in her underwear, moving the furniture, arranging things. Someone rings at the door. She throws on her robe and opens the door. It's Nadezhda. She is pregnant. Aurelia stares at her belly in surprise.*

**Aurelia** (*anxiously*). Oh, sorry, I didn't expect anyone. Come in, come in. (*A short pause*). Nobody told me... Nobody warned (*She means her pregnancy*. *Hugs Nadezhda*.)

**Nadezhda**. I wanted to surprise you. I wanted you to feel better.

**Aurelia**. I'm so surprised that my heart is about to stop. This is a great joy indeed. Well done. Is it the eighth month?

**Nadezhda**. Yes, the eighth.

*Philipp is here too. Aurelia and Phillip are looking at pregnant Nadezhda with admiration.*

**Aurelia**. Good job. You've been hiding it for ages. Kostik will be so happy.

**Nadezhda**. I'm going to visit him in the prison camp. You can write him a letter if you want. I've brought some envelopes. (*Takes them out of her bag*.) I'll wait. I want to go see him before I give birth. Wanna show him. I'm even ready to spend some time in the camp with him. I love him. I'll wait.

**Aurelia**. Let's go to the kitchen (*to her son*.) Set the table.

**Nadezhda**. Thank you. We're not hungry.

*The executives of the prison camp are in the office.*

**The first executive**. They called from the ministry. Asked to take care of him. They sympathize him. He was a good officer. They've been hesitating about the pregnancy for so long... Didn't even tell him.

**The second executive**. What did he do? I didn't have time to go through the case.

**The first executive**. Murder. Homicide by negligence. Accidental. He had a fight with his classmate. He fell down and hit his head. Of course, it's a pity that the guy died. He was appointed a school director. Died for nothing. They used to be friends in school. That guy was married with two kids. They were barely on time to save his wife. She was taken to intensive care.

**The second executive**. What a story. Yes, I do feel sorry for everyone involved.

**The first executive**. No matter which way you look at it, it's murder.

**The second executive**. How long was he sentenced for?

**The first executive**. Ten years.

*A long empty prison yard. Konstantin and his pregnant wife are walking towards each other from opposite ends. Getting closer. Konstantin gets down on his knees and starts howling like a wolf, his face up to the sky.*

**Nadezhda** (*stroking her husband's hair*). There, there. You'll scare our son. Let's go. Everyone must be watching. Where is our room?

*Kostik stands up, takes the bag from his wife and holds her hand. The executives and the other prisoners are watching them through the bars of the windows. Many feel like crying.*

*Next, they are in the room. Their lunch is already on the table, covered with a tissue. The wife raises the tissue, looks at the food and covers it again.*

**Nadezhda**. They feed you well here.

**Kostya**. Today. Because I have a visitor.

**Nadezhda** (*Takes off her skirt and underwear, lies down on the bed and covers herself with the blanket*). We'll talk later. Come here. Come on... while we can... Just careful... (*Kostya takes off his clothes and stands in his underwear*).

**Nadezhda**. Are you shy? Take them off, come here…

**Kostya** (*indecisively*). Wait a second. (*Walking around the room. She gets up from the bed*.)

**Nadezhda**. Is something wrong?

**Kostya**. No.

**Nadezhda**. No, there is something.

**Kostya**. I think they've got cameras in here.

**Nadezhda**. We will hide under the blanket. Aren't you happy that I'm here?

**Kostya**. How can you..?

**Nadezhda**. Are you feeling disgusted because I'm pregnant?

**Kostya**. No, I'm not feeling anything like that.

**Nadezhda**. You're not happy. I see it. I'll go soon. (*Kostya doesn't say anything*.) We'll just lie down together. I thought you'd love too.

**Kostya**. Let's eat first.

**Nadezhda**. Let's eat. (*She puts on her skirt. They sit down at table. None of them says anything).*

**Kostya**. I don't feel like eating. Let's eat later.

***Kostya*** *hugs his wife, holds her. Together they get under the blanket. Her face looks enlightened. She slightly moans... They lie down like this for a while.*

**Nadezhda**. I'm so tired after the trip. I need to sleep. At least for one hour. Wake me up. Then we'll eat.

*She dozes off in a second.* ***Kostya*** *is looking at her face closely.*

*There was a continuous howl of a wolf outside the gates. All the officers rushed to the main office.*

- This is magic! I've never seen anything like this before.

- He is not leaving. He isn't scared.

- He is looking for someone. He's never been here before.

- He's not scared of people. Is he tamed?

- It's not him, it's a she-wolf. She's got cubs.

- She's come to see Goncharov, I guess. They've been friends, right?

- It's a marvellous story. I'll report to the senior. It's never happened before. Get Kostya here.

***Konstantin*** *is coming in with a weird muzzle in his hands. He grasps her snout so that she didn't bite and grabs her front legs so that she couldn't attack anyone.*

- Have you met her before?

**Kostya**. We've met once. Accidentally.

- She's come to see you.

**Kostya**. I know. It means she needs me. She will howl for the whole night. I can speak to her though.

- Only if the seniors allow.

*The executive is calling another senior.*

* Valery Alexandrovich, this Goncharov turns out to be the wolf's best friend. He had found the way here... it means he really needs something, otherwise he won't stop howling. It's a mysterious story. Something extraordinary. Konstantin is ready to speak to the wolf. I am in no position to decide about things like this. What do you say?

- What would you say? *(Pause*.)

- I'd say yes. If you agree.

 - Me too. I agree with you too. Go ahead, Goncharov. You've got the green light.

*The wolf stopped howling. Instead of walking, she is crawling on her belly towards the gates, demonstrating obedience. She crawls close to the bars and pushes her tongue through. Konstantin sticks his hand out carefully. The wolf licks it in excitement. Konstantin jerks his hand away, waits and carefully stretches his arm out again between the bars. Suddenly the wolf started moaning. The brave man moved his hand close to her snout, the wolf licked his hand again and turned over on her back, exposing her neck and belly for strokes. Konstantin jerks his hand away, puts on his gloves, shouts to the guards with guns “Let her in!” and starts opening the gates slowly, holding a trap close to the wolf’s face. Still on her belly, the wolf smiles and quickly thrusts her head into the trap. Konstantin kneels down. Human and She-Wolf look each other in the eyes. Everything around them is dead silent. The brave man overcomes his fear and pats her furry neck before pulling the over her front paws. Now the she-wolf’s head and front paws are fully isolated by the “harness”. The she-wolf gets up on her feet and steps into the camp territory.*

**Guard** (*on mic, overly excited*). The wolf is in the camp.

Someone shouts in response: Is the wolf insane? Wanna chill behind the bars?

**Guard**. She is at the door. She is not leaving. Waiting.

**Senior officer**. I'll call the deputy minister. Record her every step. We will make an educational movie.

*At the opposite end of the training yard a military platoon is marching to the music: it's ''Farewell to Slavyanka'' by Dasha Zhitkova. Nadezhda comes out of the door and walks towards the marching soldiers. The she-wolf dashed in her direction. Kostya holds the lead tight. Together Kostya and she-wolf come close to Nadezhda. She-wolf is jumping around the woman, excited.*

**Nadezhda**. Let me lead her.

**Kostya**. Only together. (*He gives her the lead but still holds it too).*

*She-wolf is walking next to Nadezhda. She stands on her hind legs and wants to look her in the eyes. She looks cheerful. Then she calms down and walks along the perimeter according to the regulations. She squeezes herself up to Nadezda's belly obediently.*

**Nadezhda**. Can I stroke her?

**Kostya**. Just a little. That's all she wants.

*Nadezhda stroke her furry neck. She-wolf raised her head immediately and smiled. Then she moved towards the gates.*

**Kostya**. She is leaving now. She got what she wanted. She remembered the time she was pregnant too. She said goodbye to you. Now she is going to die.

*At the door she ''bumped'' into the lieutenant colonel - the prison director. She-wolf growls.*

**Lieutenant Colonel**. You don't like the stars? Smart.

*In the field the she-wolf is crawling towards her three cubs. Half-way through she stops not to get up again. Forever.*

**Guard** (*looking into the binoculars, shouting from the control towers*). That's it. She-wolf is gone. Dead.

*Goncharov, the lieutenant colonel and some other seniors walk out of the camp gates. They bend over the dead she-wolf.*

**Lieutenant Colonel** (*in a loud sonorous voice*). Order! Attention to order! The she-wolf should be buried in a proper coffin on the outskirts of the local cemetery. Konstantin Goncharov is responsible for it. The she-wolf left the cubs so we people should take care of them. Don't touch them yet. I'll call the vets and the zoo right away. The first thing to do will be to provide all the necessary vaccines - whatever the vets say - feed them and decide what to do next. At ease, everyone. Go back to the camp immediately. Go back to your duties.

**Scene 12**

*Nadezhda and Olga are sitting in the hospital park, hugging each other. Both look prettier and more mature than before.*

**Nadezhda**. What shall I bring? What would you like? What fruit?

**Olga**. I have no appetite. Don't want anything. I can barely eat. Everyone's trying to convince. The doctor talked to me too. I understand one needs to eat. Get me some apples. Not too firm. Also I'd like some dried apricots and prunes. (*She snuggles up to Nadezhda and hugs her*). Oh, I know. Can you bring me a blancmange? I haven't eaten something so sweet and whipped for ages. I like being with you. I can hug you like a sister. I love you. I don't hug them guys, just in case. Someone can see and make things up... You are so soft and round... My brother is lucky to have you... He is so mean, I'm scared of him. He is kinder when he's with you. He doesn't love me. He doesn't love anyone. Not mum, for sure. Maybe he loves you. (*They hug and stroke each other*). When I'm with you, I feel calmer. No medicines needed. The doctor noticed. I feel better, and I'm in a better mood after your visits. There was a very experienced psychiatrist here to see me. He is already retired. He is an outstanding specialist. A guru. One can feel he is an important person. Very nice, polite and knowledgeable. He spent three hours with me. All the same questions. How I was born. How I was growing up. About my relationships with mum and brothers. When was I off the trolley for the first time. He still couldn't convince me that it was summer and there was no point in wearing two warm jackets. He had a heart attack. They called the ambulance.

***Doctor*** *is walking towards the girls.*

**Doctor** (*looking closely at both*). How is it going? How are you feeling?

**Olga**. Feeling good. (*Show the bag*.) She's brought me some fruit: apples, pears, bananas. They're already washed.

**Doctor**. Can I have a look? (*Looks inside the bag*.) Perfect. I will no longer bother you. Have a good chat. (*Leaves*.)

*Olga and Psychologist are in the hospital park.*

**Psychologist** (*young woman*). I feel like I'm forty years old. If you know a man it doesn't mean it's gonna be a success. It's good to have one. They will hug you, and kiss you, and caress you. I also kiss him. Nothing else. A woman I know couldn't spend a day without apples and tomatoes when she was pregnant. When the baby was born he was mad about apples and tomatoes. Squealing with delight.

**Olga**. Mum is getting a divorce. Tell her she shouldn't. It's my dad. I love him. Why break up only to get back together again?

**Psychologist** (*strictly*). Unfortunately, there is no dad in your loving family anyway.

**Olga**. He can show up at any moment. Today is Tuesday. Kostik came here. He was hiding behind the tree, so cheeky, he thought I wouldn't see. I'm sharp-eyed, I've seen him straight away. We had a long chat. He is so well-bread, a noble young man. He brought me some fruit and a red rose. He didn't have the heart to give me a kiss. He bent over me. I was waiting, cuddling up to him. Kostik is nice. I love it when I have people around me.

**Psychologist**. Do you love your big brother?

**Olga**. Little one too. I love them both.

**Psychologist**. Let's talk about you. I'd like to help you. The doctors are at a loss. Who knows, maybe you and I will see some progress together if we cooperate. Tell me what makes you happy. Tell me what bothers you.

**Olga**. My goal is to live in seclusion. In the forest where I wouldn't have to see or listen to anyone. Pointless trips by suburb trains or long-distance buses. To come out and wander around the forest.

**Psychologist**. Tell me, Olechka, have you just made it up? It's a lie, isn't it?

**Olga**. No, it's true. I'd like to escape.

**Psychologist**. You threatened your mum and your younger brother. They are so kind. They love you so much. Your family’s attention is focused on you.

**Olga**. I'm alone in this world. Let Kostik have everything. I don't mind. He is the oldest. The oldest should have everything. Kostik is strong and reasonable. He protects us.

**Psychologist**. Would you like to go home for 2-3 days?

**Olga**. They talk to me like I'm nuts. But I can feel it. They can't hide it from me.

**Psychologist**. The doctors here are annoyed by your constant lying. You are very capable of making things up. They talk to you very gently. They try to tune in with you. However, people can also change their good attitude. For example, why were you chasing your brother with a knife? Why did you spend the whole night in the deep forest? Why did you even go there by train in the first place? Why did you try to make a fire? Does your mum have this spiky stick? Does she regularly beat you up with it? Does she? Why do you never ever have a single bruise on your body? Why did you try to jump out of the window? Why do they have to hide every sharp object in the house from you? Why do you run around the neighbourhood naked? Your kinks are countless. Go to your ward and get some rest. Think about your behaviour. Some doctors even refuse to treat you.

*Psychologist locks the door, fills the syringe, puts up her skirt and injects something into hip. Then she hides the syringe in the cupboard, washes her face, makes herself a cup of coffee, sits down and closes her eyes. Falls into a doze.*

*Olga and Psychologist continue the conversation.*

**Olga** (*shouting*): Mum, don't beat me! What did I do? Why am I here? Don't beat me!

**Psychologist**. Calm down, Olenka. No one beats you. Mum has never beaten you. (*Hugs her.)* Mum loves her little daughter. Kostik and Philipрok love you too.

**Olga**. Does mum love me too?

**Psychologist**. Of course, she does. I do too.

**Olga**. You love everyone. That's your job. I've revealed the secret of our family. Shall I tell you this big secret? Strictly confidential. Can you keep a secret?

**Psychologist**. Yes, I can. (*Olga stands up, looks around checking if there is no one near them*.)

**Olga**. Can you, really?

**Psychologist**. I swear.

**Olga**. Mum had a special man. It wasn't a routine love story. She couldn't imagine herself without that man. If you love someone that much, you're doomed. Something terrible will happen. One should always save some love for oneself. She was overwhelmed by him. Loving desperately is a losing battle. Mum decided to prove that she was able to bring up her children on her own. He is wandering somewhere near. I'm feeling it. (*Stands up, runs along the park alley, looks into the bushes, comes back*.)

**Psychologist**. What's the secret?

**Olga**. What do you mean? An irresistible man!

**Psychologist**. An irresistible man?

**Olga**. She just can't forget him!

**Psychologist**. That's why she has so many children?

**Olga**. Well, yes! I wish I could meet my dad. I haven't shared it with anyone. Even with mum. She will get offended. I've recently started to be scared of her. She is very distant. Children take the second place. When we were little she adored us. Now she can't manage. I'd like to have a little daughter. A princess. They treat me like I'm mad. I'm pretty smart though. I'm the smartest in the clinic. I'm smarter than the chief physician. They ask me stupid questions. As if I don't get it.

**Psychologist**. Can I read you a short medical article?

**Olga**. Of course. I'm happy to listen.

**Psychologist** (*reading*): This is from a medical encyclopedia:

''Most families who have to face the slow onset of schizophrenia can guess that their relative is experiencing something more than just mood swings. Here are some early warning signs:

* withdrawal from others and wanting to spend time alone;
* poor personal hygiene;
* insomnia, other changes in day-night rhythm;
* frequent change of place; purposeless trips or extremely long walks;
* grumpiness and impatience; feeling overly sensitive to sights and sounds etc''.

Do you recognize yourself a little? Feeling annoyed and dissatisfied? Being grumpy?

**Olga**. Doesn't sound like Olga.

**Psychologist**. Constant screaming without any reason. You're here at the psychiatric hospital for the first time. Doctors hope that you will be understanding and cooperate. They feel sorry for you. Why have you put on three sweaters and a jacket today?

**Olga**. The wind is too strong, it will blow me away.

**Psychologist**. Blow you away where?

**Olga**. Onto the road. I'm gonna roll down the road. I'd rather be cautious and wear three sweaters at once.

**Psychologist**. There's sweat coming down your face. It is streaming down into your eyes, irritating your skin. Your skin doesn't breathe. We should enjoy every warm day of summer. In autumn it will already be cold and even frosty. Let's try it together. Let's try to get rid of unnecessary clothes, take a deep breath and have a little run around the park. We might even see a curious rabbit hiding in the bushes. We'll follow the little rabbit. Take your jacket off. You don't need it in summer.

**Olga**. I won't take anything off. It's much cozier like this. Much warmer. You go ahead. Take your clothes off.

**Psychologist**. Olga, how has it been with your family members? How would you describe your relationships?

**Olga**. We've always had amazing relationships. They would beat me up from time to time but I was able to put up with it.

**Psychologist**. Who would beat you up?

**Olga**. Mum and my older brother mostly. Very painful. I was able to put up with it though.

**Psychologist.** Why would your older brother beat you up?

**Olga**. Something would come into his head, he would just grab me and smash me off the wall.

**Psychologist**. Who can protect you?

**Olga**. Nobody. I protect myself. I'm clingy like a cat.

**Psychologist**. People don't beat others up for no reason.

**Olga**. They do when they can't stand it anymore.

**Psychologist**. I doubt it. I don't believe you. Your family adores you… You've been examined by PhDs, professors, various experts. They are all confused. They have nothing else to say. Have you heard the word ''schizophrenia''?

**Olga**. That's when a Human acts wrong.

**Psychologist**. Who tells them they act wrong?

**Olga**. Another Human who acts right.

**Psychologist**. Have you already got new friends? Anyone you can trust, anyone you can share things with?

**Olga**. No, and I won't. I like being alone. You will not convince me that it is hot now because it's summer. Don't waste your time. You'd better look at yourself as well. People are aware of your addiction.

*A big group of people is walking down a lush green alley to visit their relative in the psychiatric hospital.* ***Olga*** *is standing at the doorstep surrounded by doctors. They are looking at the crowd.* ***Aurelia*** *is walking in front,* ***Phillip*** *and his girlfriend follow her; next comes* ***Nadezhda*** *with the baby in her arms, then* ***Elena****, then other relatives, acquaintances, university female friends.* ***Men****, looking weak and submissive, their heads down, are walking in the back.*

**Relatives, friends and just people who care are walking towards each other to help and support each other and to meet new friends.**

**Fadeout**

**[Optional: Curtain call: Aurelia, Kostya, Olga and Phillip come up on stage again and kneel down.]**

1. Psychneurologic dispensary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)