

**KONSTANTIN ILIEV**

**FRANCESCA**

Translated by VLADIMIR PHILIPOV

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE:**

GRANNY BONKA

STOYAN BOUKHTCHEV

LILYANA BOTCHEVSKA

PETER OF THE DZHAMALYS

NEDKA

LYUOBOMIR LANTSOV - LANTSY

Note of the Translator: Granny Bonka speaks a colourful local dialect, occasionally using obsolete words. The language of Peter and Lantsov is that of rough and vulgar people.

## PART ONE

*There is probably a sign outside saying MINI-BAR, MINI-SHOP or something else, aiming to give the place an American appearance. What the audience sees is the inside - the combination of a cafe and a grocery of the kind one finds in sparsely populated places in Bulgaria at the end of the twentieth century; there is a counter with a coffee maker; shelves with shining bottles of counterfeit brand-name alcoholic liquor; two or three tables with chairs.*

1.

PETER: That's the situation, Nedka, I'm gonna screw you.

NEDKA: I can't count because of you.

PETER: Counting don't matter, that's the situation.

NEDKA: Shut up for a while.

*(She is doing some calculations on the other side of the counter; he is leaning on it opposite her, with his back to the door.)*

PETER: I'm gonna screw you, there's no getting out of it.

NEDKA: Doesn't it occur to you I might tell Kiril?

PETER: What could Kiril possibly do to me?

NEDKA: So if nobody can do anything to you you'll take your dick out and will start your rounds? Is that it?

PETER: That's my intention.

NEDKA: I'm ten levs short.

PETER: How much?

NEDKA: Ten levs.

PETER: I took them.

NEDKA: Give them back.

PETER: Come and get them. *(He takes a banknote out of the pocket of his jacket, stretches the front of his belt with his thumb, pushes his shirt away and puts the banknote inside his trousers.)* Come and get them!

NEDKA: I wonder if I should hit you over the head with a bottle or a chair.

PETER: I watched a video last night. He was sitting on a high chair, something like a bar stool she got him like this, from below; do you understand?

NEDKA: Yeah.

PETER: You do.

NEDKA: Why don't you take a bath? You smell like a skunk.

PETER: Nedka, I really like you.

NEDKA: If you think I'm going to go after that money, then you think wrong. You'll have to give me another tenner.

PETER: You'll have to get it yourself; I'm not going to give you a different one.

NEDKA: If someone comes in and sees you scratching between your legs like a dirty dog, what will they think?

PETER: They'll think I'm dirty, what else? But who is going to come in? Everyone's watching the soap opera now. (*He looks at his watch.*) It's six o'clock. And look at the wind blowing outside. Nobody's going to come in.

2.

GRANNY BONKA: (*Comes in*): Oh, wha' weather, wha' an 'owl! The hell with it! (*Saying this she makes damning signs at the weather behind her, and then closes the door.*)

PETER: Who are you cursing at, you old thing?

GRANNY BONKA: The wind. I 'ate the wind.

PETER: What's the wind done to you?

GRANNY BONKA: I know wha'. (*She turns to Nedka.*) Gimme a kilo of rice.

NEDKA (*Puts a package of rice on the counter*): One sixty.

GRANNY BONKA: 'ow much?

PETER: One sixty.

GRANNY BONKA (*Pulls a handkerchief in which she has tied her money and unties it uncertainly*): Gimme one lev's worth.

NEDKA: How can I give you one lev's worth out of a package?

GRANNY BONKA: You know, child, it's very expensive.

PETER: Why is it expensive? It isn't expensive!

GRANNY BONKA: It's expensive, child, it's expensive.

PETER: Stop the “child” business! You’ll just have to eat less if you can’t pay for it.

GRANNY BONKA: I already eat little, as it is. Almost nothing.

PETER: That’s what you say! Do you know how people eat rice in China where more rice grows than anywhere else in the world? With a stick. How many grains of rice can a Chinaman pick up with a stick? When does he have enough? And what do you do - you eat rice with a spoon!

GRANNY BONKA: I don’t know, child.

PETER: You say you don’t know. If you don’t know, why did you say that the electric meter was at my place? Did you go in our house?

GRANNY BONKA: No, I didn’t.

PETER: Then why did you say it was there?

GRANNY BONKA: I took a sack to grind it at the mill. But they said, “The mill’s not working.”

PETER: And you, what did you do? You told them I’d stolen their electric meter.

GRANNY BONKA: Bad weather, the weather was bad, child. Rumbling and thunder, but there was no rain. Like it is now. You know, I’m like that when it starts to thunder.

PETER (*to Nedka*): Mladen, the miller, was on his way to our place. He even wanted the mayor to come. I would’ve wiped the floor with him if he had brought him. The dirty bastard wanted to search my house. To search me, of all people!

NEDKA: Granny Bonka, you almost caused a big mess.

GRANNY BONKA (*nodding in agreement*): A big mess, true? But ‘ow was I to go ‘ome without ‘aving the sack ground? I need to feed the pig.

PETER: And so - to Peter’s garage for the electric meter.

GRANNY BONKA: It wasn’t in the garage. You ‘id it in your grandfather’s barn, under the planks. On the side toward the well.

PETER: (*dumbfounded*): Ah, woman!

(*Thunder.*)

PETER: Ah, woman.

GRANNY BONKA: And the ten lev bill, Peter. Why is it in your pants? Why don’t you put the levs in your pocket? Why is it in your pants?

NEDKA: Granny Bonka!

GRANNY BONKA: Isn't it your money, Nedka?

PETER (*going towards the exit*): She's been watching us from outside. (*He examines the door and the window. While his back is to the two women, he takes the banknote from his trousers and puts it in his pocket.*) Where were you spying on us from?

GRANNY BONKA: Since you're at the window Peter, tell me, are cars coming?

PETER: What cars?

GRANNY BONKA: Don't you see 'em coming?

PETER: What do you mean? There's nothing out there, just the wind raising dust. Crazy Ghenko is now crossing the square. The wind'll knock him over. He just disappeared around the corner.

GRANNY BONKA: What do these people want from me? Why are they in such an 'urry? They go round and round me 'ouse. A man and a woman.

PETER: Bees are running round in your bonnet. Take your rice and get going.

NEDKA: Is it true you got ESP after your donkey died?

GRANNY BONKA: Life's 'ard without the donkey, Nedka, very 'ard. 'ow am I now going to get my wood home? It's very 'ard.

NEDKA: They say you've begun talking to the dead.

GRANNY BONKA: God forbid! Now gimme a kilo and an electric bulb.

NEDKA: What kind of a bulb do you want?

GRANNY BONKA: Not a strong one.

PETER: Now, who told you about the electric meter? That I had taken it? Come on! You'll tell me, because when something gets stolen in this village, I always get the blame.

GRANNY BONKA: Look at it, it's on! (*The moment she takes the cardboard box with the bulb in it from Nedka, strong light comes out of it.*)

NEDKA: What's going on?

GRANNY BONKA: Well, it 'appens sometimes. Without wires.

PETER: How's this possible, without wires? (*He grabs the electric bulb from her hands; the light goes off.*) Fuck it! (*He tries to give it back to the old woman.*)

GRANNY BONKA: (*Pulls away; she tells Nedka*): Gimme another one. This one's no good.

PETER: Nedka, what kind of brandy did you give me? Did I get drunk on just one brandy.

GRANNY BONKA: Peter, don't let them come in 'ere. Please, don't.

PETER: What are you taking about?

GRANNY BONKA: The man and the woman. Don't let them come in 'ere.

*(Thunder.)*

GRANNY BONKA: They're coming.

3.

*(A woman who is about forty appears at the door. She glances at the people inside, standing in profile she bursts out laughing.)*

THE WOMAN: Hold it!. Come on!...Catch it!...Try again!... *(She half closes the door.)* Hello, Granny Bonka.

GRANNY BONKA: And where is 'e?

THE WOMAN: He's running after his hat.

GRANNY BONKA: I'm going.

THE WOMAN: You shouldn't.

*(A man, who is about forty, appears at the door. He dusts his hat off on his knee.)*

THE MAN: Frigging storm!

PETER: You may have troubles because of those old poplar trees. One of them fell on a Moskvitch last autumn; squashed it flat.

THE WOMAN: Go out and put the car away.

THE MAN: You go!

THE WOMAN *(To Granny Bonka)*: You shouldn't go, because the wind will knock you over.

GRANNY BONKA: This wind. What does it want from me?

THE WOMAN *(Pointing at the man)*: Do you know this man?

GRANNY BONKA: No, I don't know 'im. And 'ho are you?

THE WOMAN: Come on! You chased me with a stick because of the plums.

THE MAN: Do you remember Stoyan Boukhtchev? The second house down the street from you?

GRANNY BONKA: Did you say Stoyan?

THE MAN: Boukhtchev. Stoyan Boukhtchev. A famous hunter.

GRANNY BONKA: The one 'ho was mayor 'ere?

THE MAN: Yes, he was mayor too.

GRANNY BONKA: That was a long time ago.

THE MAN: I'm one of his grandsons.

GRANNY BONKA: I see.

THE WOMAN: You beat me with the stick.

GRANNY BONKA: It wasn't because of the plums, Lilyana. It was because of the wire net. You tore an 'ole in it and the hens got out. You're Lilyana, aren't you? Lilyana Botchevska?

NEDKA: Don't you watch TV? She's on every night.

THE WOMAN: That's going a bit too far. I haven't been on it for about a year now.

*(Lightning and thunder.)*

4.

GRANNY BONKA *(Sitting on a chair.)* What d' you want from me?

LILYANA: We won't hurt you.

BOUKHTCHEV: You never know.

PETER: Sell these people your plot of land. What good is it to you?

NEDKA: Everybody knows everything in this village. You wanted to buy her plot of land at the Black Death Area, but she wouldn't sell it.

PETER: They're not the ones who want to buy it, but Lantsy. The problem is that one plot isn't good enough for him. He needs three, and hers happens to be between the other two. She's a stupid old woman.

LILYANA: What kind of coffee do you make?

NEDKA: Every kind.

LILYANA: Boukhtchev, do you want a coffee?

BOUKHTCHEV: Yes, I do.

LILYANA: Two coffees.

BOUKHTCHEV: Three. One for Granny Bonka.

NEDKA: I think she'll drink lemonade. Or do you want a cup of coffee, Granny Bonka?

GRANNY BONKA: I don't want anything.

PETER: Stupid woman. Lantsy could buy half of Bulgaria, if he wanted to. You could buy a truckfull of rice with the money Lantsy would give you. You'll have so much rice that you'll shit yourself eating it and not haggle over a handful of rice here.

LILYANA: And who are you? We're not acquainted.

PETER: I'm a friend of Lantsy.

LILYANA: Really?

BOUKHTCHEV (*ironically*): We've stumbled on to the right person.

NEDKA: Don't pay attention to him.

PETER: Why shouldn't they pay attention to me? Why shouldn't they? I was with Lantsy in Australia, in Sidney! Did you know that?

NEDKA: If you're so close to him, tell us why he wants to buy this land? What does he want it for?

PETER: Why should I tell you, of all people?

NEDKA: Because you know.

PETER: Of course I know.

NEDKA: Get off it. (*She serves the coffee.*) Here's the sugar, have as much as you like.

PETER: Give me a coffee too. Two highways cross at the Death Black Area . And the town is only four kilometers away. Does that mean anything to you?

NEDKA: Here's your lemonade, Granny Bonka.

GRANNY BONKA: Lilyana, you've come 'ere because of the toilet, right?

LILYANA: What toilet?

GRANNY BONKA: Your sister told me the 'ole of your outhouse was full. One of those things that clean them came, you know, a kind of truck, but its 'ose wasn't long enough.

BOUKHTCHEV: What is this woman talking about?

LILYANA: Do you remember, I told you that my sister uses the old house. She comes here from time to time in the summer.

GRANNY BONKA: She said, will you let the truck drive into your yard, because the 'ose is short and its doesn't get to the outhouse. It's better if it could go in your yard.

PETER: Shit-pump. Shit-pump, that's what they call the trucks they use to empty the outhouses. She wouldn't let it get into her yard. (*He points at the old woman*). The guy got angry and drove the shit-pump away.

BOUKHTCHEV (*Impatiently, looking at his watch*): We've got work to do; we're wasting our time here.

LILYANA: Why did you do that, Granny Bonka? Why didn't you let my sister have the toilet cleaned.

GRANNY BONKA: Radoy told me not to.

LILYANA: Who?

GRANNY BONKA: Radoy, my man.

LILYANA: I see.

PETER: What are you talking about? He's long dead.

GRANNY BONKA: 'E's dead, but 'e said, don't let 'em do it.

NEDKA: The-e-e-re! She's starting it again.

PETER: Give us the electric bulb.

NEDKA: The bulb lit up in her hands just before you came in.

GRANNY BONKA: I don't feel well, children, I don't feel well when it starts thundering and lightening. I feel very bad. Peter, look out and see if it's started raining.

PETER: It isn't raining.

GRANNY BONKA: When there's nobody with me, Radoy comes. But then sometimes a lot of other people come too... (*To Boukhtchev*): Call 'er up. Call up Dora, the secretary.

BOUKHTCHEV: Whom should I call?

GRANNY BONKA: Your grandfather Stoyan is afraid that you'll lose your job. The Minister said that you were fooling around... And also the thing you wrote about the English, 'e threw it out. Call up Dora.

GRANNY BONKA (*Not looking at anyone around her*): Stoyan, why are you barefoot? You've got a shirt, a tie and a coat, but you're barefoot. Why are you doing this?

BOUKHTCHEV (*Into the phone*): Dora?... This is Stoyan Boukhtchev. Is Mr. Nikolov there?... Why is he shouting? I told him that the conference would take two days... Was it you who phoned for me at the Listnitsa village?... Who was it then? Someone did... They told me here Dora, Dora, the secretary... Why at the hotel?... No I'm in Listnitsa. With Lilyana Botchevska, the journalist. We're here on some business, just for fifteen minutes... What's the situation with my report about the English offer?... Oh, is that so?... I'll ring him up. (*He switches off his cellular phone.*) What's going on here?

LILYANA (*Looking intently at Granny Bonka*): How did you know that the secretary had tried to get in touch with him?

GRANNY BONKA: Stoyan, Stoyan of the Bou'tchevs, 'is grandpa came, 'e told me.

LILYANA: Boukhtchev, is he that the grandfather you'd renounced?

BOUKHTCHEV: Nonsense.

LILYANA: She said, your grandfather Stoyan.

BOUKHTCHEV: My grandfather Stoyan was killed here fifty years ago.

NEDKA: Granny Bonka, why are you doing this? You've upset the lady and the gentleman.

PETER: A stupid old woman.

LILYANA: So what my sister told me is true. That you've started to talk ...with the dead.

GRANNY BONKA: With the dead and the living. It's bad, very bad.

NEDKA: It all started with the donkey. Tell them about it, Granny Bonka. Tell them about the donkey.

LILYANA: What donkey?

*(Thunder.)*

GRANNY BONKA: It 'appened some time ago, last autumn. I 'd loaded my donkey with pumpkins. We were passing the monastery fountain. And it was thundering, thundering and lightning, just like now. And I didn't put the 'oe away. It's made of iron. I learned when I was in the first form that lightning strikes where there's iron, but I didn't do anything. I went on my way, prodding the donkey to go faster. We were right in front of the monastery fountain. And I decided to fill a plastic bottle with water from it, because the water is good. You know they put something in the village water to make it clean and it smells. The 'oe was in front of the donkey - and I was filling the bottle. They say a lightning struck me. I didn't 'ear or see anything, no thunder no lightning. At first a very beautiful woman came - I'd never seen a woman like 'er. Young and beautiful. I'm Francesca, she said.

LILYANA: What?

GRANNY BONKA: Francesca. I'm Bulgarian, she said, and Italian too. I've come to look for my uncle. 'e got lost somewhere in these parts.

PETER: Nedka, give me,... give me a brandy, She's making me nervous.

NEDKA: Wait a minute! Go on Granny Bonka.

BOUKHTCHEV(*looks at his watch*): They told me Nikolov wants me to go back to Sofia.

LILYANA: Come on! What are you going to do in Sofia?

BOUKHTCHEV: Can you tell me what exactly I'm doing here?

LILYANA: Don't you find this interesting?

BOUKHTCHEV: It's very interesting. What will you call it? "Old Woman Speaks with Ghosts"? Is that what its title is going to be?

LILYANA: You got completely stupid since you became a politician.

BOUKHTCHEV: Well, what happened with the donkey, old lady?

GRANNY BONKA: The donkey died.

LILYANA: And what about Francesca?

GRANNY BONKA: Many other people came. Many.

BOUKHTCHEV: Italians?

GRANNY BONKA: All kinds. You know, people with long beards. I could tell they were monks, because their clothes were black like the clothes of monks and candles were burning. Many monks. They must've been from the monastery.

PETER: What are you talking about, old woman? (*To Lilyana and Boukhtchev*) It's called "The Monastery Fountain", but there's no monastery there.

NEDKA: There isn't now but there was in the past. I've heard people say that once there was a monastery there.

LILYANA: Go on, Granny Bonka.

GRANNY BONKA: And all these people started shrieking. Crying and weeping. Crying and weeping. It was 'heart-breaking!

BOUKHTCHEV: And the monks?

GRANNY BONKA: All of them. There were women and children. And old people too. But there were more monks than anyone else. Crying!

LILYANA: Crying what?

GRANNY BONKA: Crying fire, fire. And flames went up high. And there were 'orses around. And they didn't let the people go out. Some were inside and others outside. Crying and weeping.

LILYANA: And how were they dressed. What were their clothes like?

GRANNY BONKA: Their clothes. They were clothes of olden times.

LILYANA: In the seventeenth century, in sixteen hundred and I don't know what year there was a monastery here. It was burned down by the Kurjalees<sup>1</sup>.

GRANNY BONKA: There they are. Coming again.

PETER: Who's that?

BOUKHTCHEV: Not the Kurjalees.

*(The old woman's eyes are wide open but she is not looking at anyone.)*

BOUKHTCHEV: Is it the Italian woman?

LILYANA: Francesca... did she appear at the fountain?

GRANNY BONKA: There were piles of naked bodies over the fountain. Naked and bleeding.

*(A cellular phone rings.)*

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<sup>1</sup> Robbers – turkish deserters from the army

BOUKHTCHEV (*Putting the cellular telephone to his ear*): Yes... It's us.  
We're here... (*To Lilyana*) It's Lantsy.

PETER: Oh, Fuck!

BOUKHTCHEV: As far as we're concerned, everything's all right... The old woman's here too... We've just been talking about it... It's a place in the upper part of the village... (*To Nedka*) What's the name of your place?

NEDKA: It doesn't have a name. It just says "Mini-bar" outside.

BOUKHTCHEV: It says "Mini-bar"...The upper part of the village. There's something like a square. You'll see the car... Mercedes, a black Mercedes... As far as we are... It's not our fault... All right. (*He switches off the phone.*) He's coming.

LILYANA: Where is he now?

BOUKHTCHEV: At the petrol station. He'll be here in a couple of minutes.

LILYANA: Well, Granny Bonka. What do you say about it?

GRANNY BONKA: You mean the toilet?

LILYANA: Forget the toilet. The man wants to buy your land. What do you need it for? You've got your house and your garden. What good is that plot of land to you?

GRANNY BONKA: It's a very good piece of land.

BOUKHTCHEV: You'll be paid for it.

NEDKA: You don't grow anything on it, Granny Bonka. It just sits there.

GRANNY BONKA: I do. I grow onions. It's very good for onions.

PETER (*Whispers to Lilyana and Boukhtchev*): Leave it to me. (*He shouts at the old woman.*) Onions! What are you talking about, old woman? Onions! Lantsy will send two excavators and that'll be the end of your onions and everything. Onions! No policeman in this country dare say "boo" to him, and you're talking about your onions.

BOUKHTCHEV (*To Nedka*): Hasn't she got sons and daughters. Someone who we can talk to?

NEDKA: Her daughter died.

LILYANA: There was a boy; his name was Radoslav. We played together when we were small.

NEDKA: Yes, Radoslav. Her grandson. He went somewhere abroad. Some say he's in Canada. Who knows.

PETER: Onions!

BOUKHTCHEV (*To Lilyana*): What are we going to tell him?

LILYANA: Oh, to hell with him!

BOUKHTCHEV: What do you mean – to hell with him?

LILYANA: I mean exactly that – to hell with him.

BOUKHTCHEV: You just can't say – to hell with him.

LILYANA: And what is it for you? You're not getting anything from him You think you can get something from him?

BOUKHTCHEV: Well, I haven't got one spacious apartment from the nationalization and one from the restitution now. And two storehouses. I started in a one-room flat.

LILYANA: But you're no longer in that flat, right? No longer is it a one-room place. And I've told you a million times, that apartment wasn't from the nationalization.

BOUKHTCHEV: You're father once asked me if the previous owner had ever turned up? He came all the way upstairs to the attic to ask me that.

LILYANA: My father spoke to you?

BOUKHTCHEV: Twice. Once before the slap, once afterwards.

LILYANA: Forget that slap, will you! What did you say to each other?

BOUKHTCHEV: I didn't get to say much, he wouldn't let me, he spoke.

LILYANA: Why have you never told me up till now?

BOUKHTCHEV: What is there to tell.

LILYANA: That slap had nothing to do with politics, you know that very well.

BOUKHTCHEV: You think so?

LILYANA: He saw us on the balcony.

BOUKHTCHEV: If he'd seen you with somebody else and not with me, he wouldn't have struck you.

LILYANA: Please, let's leave the bones of our parents in peace.

NEDKA: Granny Bonka, you see what you did. The lady and the gentleman are quarreling because of you.

GRANNY BONKA (*gets up*): I'm going 'ome.

*(Lantsov appears at the door. He pulls up the nearest chair and sits down; he takes out his cellular phone and starts dialling; then as if he has remembered something, he gets up, shakes hands with Lilyana and Boukhtchev, he sits down again, and dials a number.)*

LILYANA: Granny Bonka, sit down, please.

LANTSOV *(into the phone)*: How is it going?... Who's their goal-keeper?... I told you... And how's the pitch?... The weather here's real shitty - thunder and lightning. Call me immediately if there's a penalty kick or something... *(He puts the phone away.)* Is that the old woman?

NEDKA: Sit down, Granny Bonka. Sit down.

LANTSOV: I've got ten lawyers, all of them lazy bastards. An important match is going on right now. And what am I doing? I had to come here in this fucking awful weather like an ordinary nobody to arrange things myself. Woman, how much do you want?

BOUKHTCHEV: The old woman doesn't feel well. Just now.

LANTSOV: I see. The blueprints are ready, the building material is on its way, and now the old woman doesn't feel well.

BOUKHTCHEV: We'll work things out with her.

LANTSOV: I don't feel well either. Let's just forget about the deal. *(To Peter)* You, Ice-cream-Pete. Why are you grinning?

PETER *(pointing with his head towards the window)*: The other one, the red one, was better.

LANTSOV: What are you talking about?

PETER: The Jeep. The red one. It was better.

LANTSOV: So now suddenly you're a car expert. *(He asks Granny Bonka bluntly)*: What's the price, old woman. How much do you want?

PETER: This won't do.

LANTSOV *(To Lilyana)*: What's the matter? Is she senile?

LILYANA: Boukhtchev has never lived here. I know her. I think I can persuade her.

LANTSOV: *(Looking at his watch)*: I've got to meet some people at the Hunters' Club. I have to be there in twenty minutes. Call me up on my cellphone. *(He glances at Granny Bonka)*: So you say she doesn't feel well.

GRANNY BONKA: Young man, don't go to the 'unters' Club. 'E won't show up there. It's no use going.

LANTSOV: Who won't?

GRANNY BONKA: I don't know. But why is this outhouse on my mind all the time... Something's going to 'appen there.

LANTSOV: What's going to happen there?

PETER: She isn't telling the truth about the outhouse either. Tell me, you old thing, why do you go to their outhouse to crap? You do, but you wouldn't let them have it cleaned.

GRANNY BONKA: If only you knew what you were talking about!

PETER: She does. I've seen her. Her crapper is far way - down in the gully, and this one is right there by the wall. She just opens the gate between the two yards, and she's there. At her neighbours' crapper.

GRANNY BONKA: What are you talking about, Peter!

PETER: But one day you'll fall in, you will. Because it's old. The floor boards are rotten. They haven't been replaced for at least fifty years. You'll fall into it while you're squatting there.

LANTSOV: What are you raving about?

LILYANA: We'll persuade her.

LANTSOV: Do you know why we call him "Ice-cream"? Ice-cream Pete.

PETER: Tell us what are you going to build at the Black Death Area? I say it's going to be a motel. But a big one, with a disco.

LANTSOV: You see, I was taking them to Sidney. A wrestling tournament. What year was it, Ice-cream?

PETER: Nineteen-eighty... (*He tries to remember the year.*)

LANTSOV: And something. It doesn't matter. A team of ten wrestlers. He was one of the promising members of the team. He hadn't started drinking yet.

PETER: I was the best.

LANTSOV: You weren't the best. A team of ten, their coach, a doctor and the usual number of hangers-on, lazy bastards. The state spent a lot of money for that sort of things at that time. I was in charge of them all.

PETER: Nineteen-eighty-three.

LANTSOV: It doesn't matter. You see, we landed at the Munich airport, where we had to make a connection. We were flying to Sidney. At one point he came, all flushed and excited, and said: "You know," he said, "everything here's free." What do you mean free? "Well," he said, "you can eat as much as you like and they don't charge anything." You know, at that time the Germans at the Munich airport had the following system. You take a nylon bag and you put whatever you want into it: bananas, sweets, coke, beer - you get on the plane with this bag. But you see, before I knew it the wide-eyed bastards stuffed their hand-luggage with all sorts of things. It said "ice-cream" on the outside, but who knew German? The covers were glossy, and it all went into their travelling-bags. They didn't fill up just their nylon bags, but their travelling-bags too. And then the ice-cream started melting... You see, the plane was climbing and our mood was climbing too, but then the ice-cream started running...

PETER: And the stewardesses just wiggled their asses.

LANTSOV: The stewardesses were in a fix. They had a helluva time cleaning up the mess. And this guy here was afraid that they wouldn't let him take enough ice-cream while we were still at the airport, and he ate.... How many ice-creams did you eat, you moron?

PETER: I didn't count them.

LANTSOV: He ate ten ice-creams.

PETER: Ten it was.

LANTSOV: And he got the trots. The coach pulled him off the team.

PETER: I could still wrestle. But I lost weight. It was the diarrhea. But I could fight.

LANTSOV: I could fight, he says. That's why I took you all the way to Australia, so that you could make a mess on the wrestling mat. Look where you are now, sitting around in bars, drinking cheap booze.

GRANNY BONKA: One to nothing.

LANTSOV: What?

GRANNY BONKA: The ball. One to nothing.

LANTSOV (*Takes out his cellular phone, but before he manages to dial the phone rings*): Yes... who? How did it happen?... Wasn't he off-side? Oh, that linesman will suffer!... The three of them will get it... An equalizer in the next five or six minutes, otherwise the three of them will regret it...Go somewhere... Somewhere

where no one will hear you... I'll be in the car...Call in a couple of minutes (*He goes in the direction of the door*).

NEDKA: Mr. Lantsov, it's raining. It's raining hard. You'll get drenched.

PETER: Give him an umbrella then. You've got one, haven't you?

10.

LANTSOV (*before pressing the handle of the door, he turns abruptly and asks*): Who said one to nothing?

LILYANA: Granny Bonka. She knows other things too.

BOUKHTCHEV: What are we going to do now? Is the deal still on?

LANTSOV: (*Keeping his eyes fixed on Granny Bonka*): And what else does she know?

GRANNY BONKA: Don't go there, young man. Give up the 'ole business. The Turk got killed, 'e's dead.

PETER: Now, now...

BOUKHTCHEV: This is a case for a doctor, Botchevska, a case for a doctor. Let's go to the car and leave.

LILYANA: Will you, please, be quiet for a while...

GRANNY BONKA: (*To Lantsov*): Why are you looking at me like that, young man? I don't know. Why are you looking at me like that? You're still young and 'andsome, but you scare me. I don't know why... Something's gonna 'appen... Your mind is in two different places, but there... the ball and it's now two... (*she points at the pocket where he keeps his cellular phone*). Two - zero.

(*The telephone in Lantsov's pocket rings.*)

LANTSOV (*Takes the phone out of his pocket and puts it to his ear*): Yes!... (*He furiously bangs the phone on the floor, starts going away, then he returns, picks it up and bangs it to the floor again.*) Who's got a cell phone? (*Boukhtchev nervously takes his telephone out of his pocket and gives it to him; he dials a number.*) Idiot! It's Lyubo Lantsov... I heard about the second one... Shut up!... Take him away during the break and tell him - a draw or a win!... All right, a draw!... Otherwise no tanker leaves Tripoli harbour. No tanker is going to go anywhere near the border,... not a single

one... I don't want any explanations!... I say, no explanations! You'll all be sorry you were ever born... *(He goes towards the door.)*

BOUKHTCHEV: Mr. Lantsov, my phone.

*(They give Lantsov his own phone; he places Boukhtchev's phone on the nearest table and goes out.)*

11.

*(Outside in front of the "Mini-bar". Peter is holding an open umbrella over Lantsov, who is smoking nervously.)*

PETER: Lyubo!

LANTSOV: I'm not Lyubo to you.

PETER: Lantsy.

LANTSOV: I'm not Lantsy either.

PETER: Mister Lantsov!

LANTSOV: Who is that old woman?

PETER: Who? Granny Bonka? Lantsy, she's out of her mind.

LANTSOV *(Goes on smoking.)*

PETER: Let's straighten things out.

LANTSOV: What things?

PETER: Give me another job.

LANTSOV: Give you a job?

PETER: Not as important as the one I had. Anything you want. I'll be careful, it won't happen again... I had had one whisky. Do I deserve to be fired because of one lousy drink?...

LANTSOV: Make yourself scarce, you jerk! *(He looks at his watch, takes some keys out of his pocket and walks in the rain towards his car.)*

PART TWO

*(Inside the Mini-bar.)*

1.

ILYANA: Can you imagine how much money that is, I mean, going on in front of us about it!

BOUKHTCHEV *(Remains silent.)*

LILYANA: Or he may just be taking us for airheads. Me – alright, but you?

BOUKHTCHEV: What about me?

LILYANA: You've got a million phones on your desk. A secretary. Airhead!?

BOUKHTCHEV: And you're a journalist. A representative of the Fourth Estate. Why wouldn't he be afraid of you?

LILYANA: Why should he be afraid of the Fourth Estate when he isn't afraid of any of the others?

BOUKHTCHEV: Right. He's not afraid of anything. Who put all these nonentities in expensive limousines and made it possible for them to become millionaires overnight?

LILYANA: I did. I made them millionaires.

BOUKHTCHEV: Wasn't your father in Bulgarian embassies in different parts of the world for twenty years?

LILYANA: My father died twenty years ago. And we're going to go on with this crap that comes up each day, we might as well leave it for tomorrow, right?

BOUKHTCHEV: Did that jerk mention any sum in that phone conversation you had?

LILYANA: No. He just said he's not prepared to bargain.

BOUKHTCHEV: Great. Let him think that by buying these five crappy acres of land he's buying me into the deal.

LILYANA: *(With irony.)* Right.

2.

GRANNY BONKA: Radoy wants me to tell you about the boots.

LILYANA: What, Granny Bonka?

GRANNY BONKA: Radoy. My old man. 'e says, tell them about the boots.

LILYANA: What boots?

GRANNY BONKA: All three of them are 'ere. Radoy, and Stoyan and Botcho.

LILYANA: Botcho who?

GRANNY BONKA: What's that, Radoy? 'ho aa ya yelling? Oh, you aa terrible!

BOUKHTCHEV: The sèance continues... (*He looks at his watch.*)

LILYANA. You can take the car and leave. It's up to you. I'm interested in what's going on here.

BOUKHTCHEV: I'm interested too.

LILYANA (toward Granny Bonka): Botcho who?

GRANNY BONKA: What's that, Lilyana?

LILYANA: You say Botcho. Botcho who?

GRANNY BONKA: Your father.

LILYANA: Do you see him?

GRANNY BONKA: Botcho, why are you staring at me like that? And why are you so puffed up? Lilyana's 'ere - Lilyana, your daughter. Telling me funny things - to sell my land to people from the city. I don't know why you do such things. You all go to different countries but you come back 'ere in the end. You're buried in Sofia, aren't you? In the Orlandovtsi cemetery. Wha'aa you doing 'ere? Or 'ave you come 'ere to visit Ganka? Why did you leave 'er for that snooty woman 'ho dyed 'er 'air and plucked 'er eyebrows? Ganka was too simple for you when you started going to other countries. I was simple too, but Radoy and you sang serenades under my window every night. Radoy at least could sing, but you, you brayed like a donkey, Botcho. Go away, go to your woman from Sofia!

BOUKHTCHEV: Do you know what she's talking about?

LILYANA: Yes, I do. The woman from Sofia who plucked her eyebrows is my mother.

BOUKHTCHEV: I think I know what her trick is. She simply...

LILYANA: Will you, please, keep quiet?

GRANNY BONKA: Why did you and Radoy become such enemies? You were friends, weren't you? Both of you were carpenters, working in the same workshop. How come you became such enemies?

You say you don't 'ate 'im? That's not true, you 'ate 'im.

Radoy, at least doesn't try to 'ide it. Tell me Radoy, when Botcho's daughter asked me to let them drive the truck into our yard to 'ave their outhouse cleaned, why did you tell me to say "no"? Tell me now, why? I'll tell you why - because you're nasty. *Why* are you staring at me with your blind eye? Do you want to eat me or wha'?

Why 'ave you come, you old guys? Once you appear young and 'andsome, and now you appear old and ugly. Botcho's leg is like wooden, 'e's walking with the 'elp of a stick. And you Radoy are both old and blind.

Damn that awful thunder. It's injured my brain, and I don't know if it's night or day - there, it's rumbling again in the sky. Damn that thunder!

Ah, the parties we 'ad at the community 'all, and the meetings there too. They said we'd 'ave equality - we would all be equal and good too. Equality, equality, but Radoy went down the mine pit and you got into a car.

No, 'e wasn't simple, no, 'e wasn't. Keep quiet, Botcho. I remember everything. When the teacher Getcho gave us a problem, Radoy was the first to do it. 'E'd solve the problem, and you'd do it after 'im.

Wha' about the ninth? When the ninth of September came, Radoy spoke at the rally. You weren't in the village

I know you were in prison, of course, I know. But do you remember the sweater. Radoy asked me to knit for you. Ganka and I went all the way to Pleven to give you the sweater. They didn't let me in, so I waited for 'er outside. Ganka returned with the sweater. A prison guard or someone there didn't let 'er give it to 'im. But you were pleased, because I 'ad knitted a sweater for you.

Don't talk about Ganka. You 'ave no right to talk about 'er, Botcho!

I don't know 'ow you established the new regime in Pleven. It was Radoy 'ho established it 'ere. Well, it wasn't any great thing. The Russians were crossing the Danube. wha'ever policemen and civilians were there, all ran away. The police station was locked, but the village 'all was left unlocked. Radoy and a couple of boys got in. The village field-keeper gave them a few guns. Yes, but the mayor wasn't there. The mayor Stoyan wasn't there. 'Is boots were by the table. There was a radio playing

music, as if playing to the boots. They were good boots. They all went to Stoyan's place. They looked for 'im everywhere but couldn't find 'im. Stoyan 'ad 'idden in the barn. Stoyan, you're under arrest. That's 'ow it was, Radoy, right? You've told me that story 'undreds of times..

I'll tell them about the boots too.

Stoyan was right 'ere. 'E stayed for awhile and then 'e went away. I don't know how you do it - you come and then you disappear. He came to see his grandson, young Stoyan, and there he is sitting there, but now the old Stoyan is gone.

LILYANA: Boukhtchev, you're the young Stoyan.

BOUKHTCHEV: I want to ask her something.

LILYANA: I want to ask her something too.

GRANNY BONKA: I'll tell them about the stud-'orse too. The stud-'orse belonged to the municipality. Its name was Bontcho. They brought all the mares to Bontcho, because 'is 'air was sleek and 'is instrument, oh, Lord, wha' a thing it was! We'd go through the village with copper kettles on a yoke on our shoulders, and we'd look at it. A great stud-'orse it was! People from the other villages brought their mares too. They would bring a mare in 'eat, she'd glance at Bontcho and she'd start trembling, the poor thing. Bontcho and only Bontcho. He was a great 'orse. Yes, but the Russians came. The village was full of Russians. With trucks and guns. And then they went away - yes, but they liked Bontcho. They left a Russian 'orse 'ere and took Bontcho to Pleven. Radoy was furious. 'E 'arnessed a 'orse to a gig. The gig belonged to Stoyan. Radoy, I told 'im, you're crazy. They'll kill you in Pleven. And then 'e returned from Pleven with Bontcho be'ind the gig. In Pleven 'e told them: Many 'ave plundered our people. If you do it too - fuck brotherhood, fuck equality, fuck evrything. The captain, or was it a major scolded 'is people there and told Radoy, the 'orse is yours, take it. But if you're a Bolshevik like me, 'e said, you must also take this book. It belongs to me, but I give it to you and you must read it and learn it by heart because Stalin wrote it. At 'ome Radoy laughed. I can't read this book, 'e said. It says on it, "a concise course", but it's long, it's very long, and it's in Russian. The Russian 'imself must 'ad a 'ard time with it - 'e 'as underlined it and marked it. Everything is underlined, this means it's all important. Radoy, you 'ad 'ard time with it but you tried to read it.

BOUKHTCHEV: Granny Bonka!

LILYANA: Wait a minute, please.

BOUKHTCHEV: The gig you mentioned...

LILYANA: Wait a minute...

BOUKHTCHEV: Whose was the gig?

GRANNY BONKA: Where 'ave all those damned people gone? They were right 'ere - now they're gone. Botcho, Radoy, where 'ave they gone?

LILYANA: What do you want to ask her?

BOUKHTCHEV: That's my business.

LILYANA: What do you care about a gig that was around fifty years ago? Who would keep such a thing so long!

BOUKHTCHEV: I'm not interested in the gig.

NEDKA: *(who has so far been silently listening to what has been going on)* If it's about gold or something like that - she won't tell you anything. A man from another village came; his grandfather had buried gold somewhere, and she sent him packing.

LILYANA: Was your grandfather rich?

BOUKHTCHEV: Of course he was rich.

LILYANA: Ask her what happened to him. He disappeared after the ninth of September, didn't he?

BOUKHTCHEV: You ask her what happened around the ninth of September. I'm not interested in it.

NEDKA: If you want, she and I can go to the back room. She might tell him something. About money if it's hidden somewhere.

LILYANA: Boukhtchev, just tell us. The two of us will go in the back room, and we'll leave you here with her to ask about the pot. Where you grandfather buried it. Is that all right?

BOUKHTCHEV: You know, you're getting on my nerves. You are.

LILYANA: *(to Nedka)*: Let's go.

GRANNY BONKA: There's no pot. But you, boy, listen to me. I've got something to tell you. The mayor, your grandpa, Zhetchko did 'im in.

BOUKHTCHEV: Who did?

GRANNY BONKA: Zhetchko.

NEDKA: I've heard that name.

GRANNY BONKA: Stoyan used to wear knee-breeches, 'is trousers were wide knee-breeches. That's what they called them. With a walking-stick. 'E was a

young man, and that was the fashion. 'E'd drop in at the village 'all, stay there for a while and then shoulder 'is gun and go shooting. Shooting rabbits. There was a woman, 'er name was Vassilka. She had an inn. The inn was up the road - damn good feasts Vassilka's were - 'unters from the town, and from all the villages. Food smelled damn good - rabbit and bay-leaves! Shooting, gramophones playing. Folks would work in the fields all day. Going home dead-beat they'd see them and they'd swear at them. But you know, 'unters are 'unters. They 'ad no problems - they feasted. And then the partisans came. One day a policeman would be killed, another day - a partisan - 'unting was no longer safe. Life at the inn died down too. And then the ninth of September. Stoyan wasn't a bad man but 'e wasn't bright. The Russians were at the Danube, the woods were teeming with partisans, but 'e'd go round the village repeating one and the same thing: "We'd rather put up with the Turks than with the Russians!" And then on the ninth so many people came out! Shouting, singing, rallies, meetings! And Stoyan stood in front of the village 'all twirling a chain round 'is finger. They locked him up for two days and then they let him go. Instead of going somewhere, 'ide somewhere until things would settle down, 'e stood there in front of the village 'all, twirling 'is chain. And then Zhetchko came. I'm commandant. Commandant of the village. How come you're commandant. I'm commandant, 'e said. Zhetchko was a wicked man. 'E studied to become a lawyer, but 'e never finished, and the 'ole world was to blame for it. 'E hadn't been in prison or in the woods, 'e 'ad lay low, 'e 'ad kept quiet, but on the ninth of September 'e was the most important man in all the village.

LILYANA: Zhetchko Zhetchev had been a police informer. I've heard my father say this.

BOUKHTCHEV: Really. All the murderers were policemen. There were no murders among your people. Why didn't they do away with him as they did with others if he'd worked for the police.

LILYANA: They didn't have enough proof.

BOUKHTCHEV: Because after the ninth of September they did this sort of thing only if they had enough proof. They didn't touch anyone if they didn't have the proof.

LILYANA: I'm just saying what I know.

BOUKHTCHEV: Nonsense!

NEDKA: Zhetchko was very old when he died. He had cancer.

BOUKHTCHEV: There.

GRANNY BONKA: 'As the rain stopped?

NEDKA: It stopped for a while, but then it started again.

*(Thunder.)*

GRANNY BONKA: Damn this weather! *(A pause.)* Lord, they're coming again! There's the village 'all. Stoyan is in the record room. Stoyan, poor thing, 'ho 'as beaten you like this? Your face is all swollen, poor thing! I can't see your eyes. Did my Radoy beat you? No 'e didn't. Did Botcho beat you? No 'e didn't. And wha' about the younger ones? Wha' a terrible thing! But you also beat. You put a radio on the village 'all so that people couldn't 'ear the screams of the arrested. Georgi Palikroushev beat them with a rod, beat them with a strip of rubber; 'e would stop to rest and then would beat again. And you stood in front of the village 'all spinning your chain. Where is Palikroushev now? On the ninth of September 'e got nine bullets in 'is 'ead... There, Zhetcho's coming. Good Lord, 'e looks fierce. Watch out, Stoyan! This man is fierce. Don't do this to the poor Stoyan! Don't! *(She holds her head between her hands.)* There's music outside. Young people are doing a round dance. There are young people and children, and old women too. And damned Vassilka, damned inn-keeper. She's not dancing. She danced for a wile just to turn on the men. And now she's standing there like a saint. Listen, Vassilka, you're a slut, that's wha' you are! Doesn't it occur to you Stoyan is going to die, right there, in the 'all. Now, 'ow many rabbits 'ave you roasted for 'im? Zhetchko likes 'er very much; from time to time 'e passes by to look at 'er. But when she looks at 'im, she looks as if she's seen 'er guts. There 'e is, running up the stairs in the village 'all, and there - beating Stoyan again, Don't do this! Why are you doing this to poor Stoyan?

NEDKA: Is he going to kill him?

GRANNY BONKA: Listen Radoy, wha don't you do something, wha don't you 'elp Stoyan? There are the two of them with Botcho. Preparing the gig to go to town to ask wha' to do with Stoyan. They 'arness the 'orse to the gig and then un'arness it again. Now they're at the telephone. What did they tell you, Botcho? Why are you so red in the face, why are you sweating? Wha' did they tell you, Botcho?

LILYANA: Is this my father?

GRANNY BONKA: Yes, your father; 'e's scolding Radoy. They'd told 'im on the phone not to protect a fascist if 'e doesn't want to go in where 'e is. Now, 'e and Radoy are arguing.

BOUKHTCHEV: What about him? What's going to happen with my grandfather?

GRANNY BONKA: Stoyan!... Where are you? Why did you disappear again? Stoyan!

4.

PETER (*bursting in noisily*): Fuck this rain! It doesn't want to stop!

GRANNY BONKA: All of them 'ave now disappeared.

PETER (*to Nedka*): Where's your radio? Don't you have a radio? I want to hear the results of the match.

NEDKA: Can't you come in in a more civilized way? Why all the noise and shouting!

PETER: Is the old woman still raving?

NEDKA: Sit down and shut up.

GRANNY BONKA (*speaking loudly; her eyes are wide open*): Is that you Francesca?...

BOUKHTCHEV: Ah!

LILYANA: The Italian.

PETER: The old woman is crazy.

NEDKA: You shut up!

GRANNY BONKA: I 'aven't seen you for a long time. Why are you quiet now that you're 'ere? Lord, you're so beautiful! You're dressed in silk. Are you in mourning? I don't know. I've never seen such clothes. when was the last time when they wore clothes like this?wha' was your uncle? Wha' was in 'im that made you come all the way to this godforsaken place to search for 'im and to ask about 'im?... I've 'eard people talking about the priest who, was it two or three 'undred years ago, the priest who came to convert the people in our parts. They said the Pope sent 'im. The Pope from Rome... So 'e was your uncle. They say 'e went around with a camel. They say so but they must be lying. What good is a camel 'ere? Did the people up there, at the Kaminishte village, tell you anything. Everybody around 'ere knows that

they killed 'im, being mean and all. They first killed 'is camel and then went after 'im. Poor man, 'e ran and ran, and they ran after 'im. They caught 'im down there in the gully, where the Cold Water well is. They killed 'im with clubs. That's where you should put the flowers... Nobody knows where 'is grave is... Is that so... You did good...Wha' 'appened, why did you turn pale?... Oh, you poor girl!

BOUKHTCHEV: What's going on now?

GRANNY BONKA: Are 'orses neighing? Wha' is it? There's the cart. What sort of a cart is this? Its wheels are so big. Its back is like the back of a cab. Lord! 'ho is this man, 'e looks like a Turk. Francesca 'as come too. And 'ho's that man next to 'er? 'Is clothes are of olden times. They're black like Francesca's. They're coming from the direction of Kaminishte. There's White stone. And there's the big rock. And what are those sheds, those 'uts? Look at all those trees, there aren't so many trees there. There's Guard Bridge Place. Guard Bridge, but there's no bridge. What is this small, tiny bridge? And what are all those 'orses by it? People with guns! Lord, they're 'ighwaymen! Lord, the cart's coming! Oh, Lord, they're going to shoot the Turk! Good Lord, the way the 'orse reared! It got scared! And 'ere is Francesca again! She's running through the snow. Wha' 'as 'appened to the rest of them? She can't run in those clothes. And where are the bandits? And the man with the Turk?... And now there's a table. There's a big dish on the table. They're sitting around it and are beginning to eat. All the men 'ave long beards, and the women - there's braiding and blue beads on their clothes. Their children are sickly - three of them are lying covered by blankets, and one of them is close to the table. The old man made the sign of the cross but the other man started eating right away. Good Lord, 'ow big 'e is, a big strong man. Peter, 'e looks like you but 'e's twice as big as you and 'as never shaved.

NEDKA: Who are they? What are they?

GRANNY BONKA: They're the Dzhamaly family. The Dzhamalys of many years ago, far in the past. The man's Peter Dzhamaly, 'is wife's Dzhamalkotsa. The village is the village of Listnitsa. Their 'ouse is on the outskirts of the village, close to the Monastery Fountain. Yesterday they buried someone and someone else was buried the day before. There's a black cloth over the plank fence. Lord. There, they've sat down to eat. Peter, there's asking me... The woman's asking me about you... How come you know Peter? You lived way back in the past?...Wha' should I tell 'em, Peter?

PETER: Enough, woman! You're getting on my nerves!

GRANNY BONKA: The dogs are so fierce! Look how they run, jumping over fences and thorn-bushes...There she is on the road, and she's now be'ind the door. 'Er 'air is tangled. She's so pale and so beautiful in 'er black clothes in the snow.

LILYANA: Is this Francesca again?

GRANNY BONKA: Don't! Keep quiet, Francesca! But, poor thing cried out. The dogs are running ahead, people are running after them. Dzhamalkotsa comes to the fence. Then Dzhamaly goes to her... They're both looking and trembling. They've never seen such a woman. So beautiful and so frightening . In 'er black clothes, torn to pieces... Damned old man 'as left the barn door open... Poor girl, she goes in the barn because of the dogs. Dzhamalkotsa, are you afraid you may lose your man because such a woman may cross your threshold or is it because of your three children that you've started shouting so loud: "Run, people, run. The plague got in the barn!" There's a brave young one, pulls out a stake from the fence and bars the barn door with it. Lord, don't do that. Don't do that, woman, don't do that!.. Don't set your barn on fire!.. But there she is - running with a torch. Oh, Lord, 'ow it burns and crackles. The flames are frightening. Oh, Lord, poor Francesca! ... Oh, Lord, poor girl! She's screaming. She's now stopped screaming. Outside they're jumping and shouting: "We've burned up the plague! We've got rid of the plague!"

NEDKA: What's the matter with you, Granny Bonka? Are you all right?

GRANNY BONKA (*holding her head with two hands and leaning forward*):  
Oh, God, why are we so ignorant?

NEDKA: I'm afraid something bad may happen to her here.

LILYANA: Give her something to drink.

GRANNY BONKA: Gimme a glass of water.

PETER: Woman, you had a transistor radio here. Where's it now? I want to hear the results of the match.

NEDKA: You and your match. Get lost!

PETER: Fuck it. I've got to go there again. (*He goes out.*)

GRANNY BONKA (*while drinking the water which Nedka has given her*):  
Bad! It's very bad

NEDKA: Yeah, but it's interesting to listen to.

GRANNY BONKA: I 'ope they won't come back. I 'ope they go somewhere and won't come back!

LILYANA: The rain has stopped now.

5.

GRANNY BONKA: Lilyana, one morning we met, you know the way we're now 'ere... All of us young people like you, younger than you, we met at school. Botcho, your father, and Ganka - 'is first wife, Radoy and me. And a few old people also. There was a boy, 'is name was Nikolay, 'ho volunteered to go to the front, 'e got killed in 'Ungary. I think we met in the school to send 'im off. And 'e stood in front of the blackboard with a map on it, jabbing it with a finger, saying: "Our troops," he said, "are 'ere now. It's not far from Berlin. Make sure you start the new life before I 'ave come back." And we were so 'appy that the good new life was beginning.

BOUKHTCHEV: It was idiotic.

LILYANA: What was idiotic, Boukhtchev?

BOUKHTCHEV: Bulgaria taking part in the Second World War. It was down right idiotic.

LILYANA: Why do you think so?

BOUKHTCHEV: Because in the autumn of nineteen forty four everything had already been decided. That's why.

LILYANA: There are people who think differently. (*To Granny Bonka*) But I want to know why my father and Uncle Radoy quarreled. Was it because people were killed on the ninth of September? Was it because of it, Granny Bonka?

GRANNY BONKA: No, it wasn't.

LILYANA: I've been curious about it. I've asked, and I know that at one time my father saved Uncle Radoy when they wanted to send him to a concentration camp in Belene.

GRANNY BONKA: 'E saved 'im as much as 'e was responsible for them wanting to send 'im to it.

LILYANA: This isn't true. It isn't true, Granny Bonka. It isn't true!

GRANNY BONKA: Radoy didn't go to Belene, but 'e went to a mine, 'e 'imself decided to go and work in it. But 'e didn't last long because 'e got blind.

LILYANA: My father wasn't here at that time.

GRANNY BONKA: No, 'e wasn't, 'e was in Russia - to study because 'e was going to be an important man and Radoy was in the mine.

BOUKHTCHEV: (*To Lilyana.*) Of course, he hated him. What else would you expect?

GRANNY BONKA: They met in the village 'all. Radoy was there, your father Botcho, the boy Nikolay, the volunteer 'ho got killed at the front. They were in Stoyan's room - the room of the mayor. Your father was something like a mayor at that time. They met to decide wha' to do. Stoyan's boots were there. And wha' did they decide? A lot of blood 'ad been shed on both sides. Let's give the boots to the poorest man in the village. They were good boots, and they wanted a really poor man to wear them. Yes, but there were many poor people in the village. One offered one name, someone else - another name. They couldn't agree 'ho should 'ave them, so they put it off till the next day - one day, it was an 'oliday. There was music, because that's 'ow it should be, people dancing a round dance in front of the village 'all. I passed by, Radoy told me, I passed by the dancing people and... fuck it, Radoy said, Fuck it... I passed by the dancers and... fuck it!...

LILYANA: What happened?

GRANNY BONKA: Wha' 'appened? Stoyan's boots. Botcho, your father, was there dolled up in Stoyan's boots. And was dancin'!

LILYANA: I see.

GRANNY BONKA: I felt a pang 'ere, Radoy said, a pang. In nineteen thirty one they gave me a letter, a secret letter which I 'ad to deliver personally. I walked for three 'undred kilometers - all the way from 'ere to Plovdiv, on foot, because that was safer. My feet were sore, but I was so eager that I almost ran - once we came to power... And when we did, wha' 'appened? - in Stoyan's boots.

*(A pause.)*

BOUKHTCHEV: Ye-e-es!

NEDKA: That's it.

LILYANA: I see.

6.

NEDKA: Kiril though saw a truck. Round your place. The Black Death Area. There was two of 'em, blue clothes. They loaded a chest. What they did there I don't

know, but there's no sign of digging. He went by there the next day, but there was no sign of digging. Why don't you check?

BOUKHTCHEV: Are you talking to me?

NEDKA: They had a truck and were taking care not to be seen much. So why hide, but you wouldn't dare ask. Kiril, who was looking from some distance, told the mayor. And the mayor told him – act as if you haven't seen anything. Because he's also scared. They'd been there earlier too, round your places, the Black Death and the Guard Bridge.

BOUKHTCHEV: Fine. Treasure-hunters.

NEDKA: (*Indicates Granny Bonka.*) Knows everything, only she won't tell. Won't you tell us, Granny Bonka?

LILYANA: Stoyan, let's go.

NEDKA: That man that supposedly came for his granddad's money, he came for the monastery's gold. Only she chased him away.

BOUKHTCHEV: So, what? Is that where they're searching, the fortune-hunters?

NEDKA: Round your land in the Black Death Area. There's a boundary stone there. Very large.

BOUKHTCHEV: Is there? And who put it up?

LILYANA: Stoyan, I've got a headache. I can't stand it any longer.

BOUKHTCHEV: Since when has your head become so sensitive?

LILYANA: Can't you see, you're being ridiculous.

BOUKHTCHEV: If I were you I'd just keep quiet. That's what I would do, if I were you, keep quiet.

LILYANA: You are so pathetic, can't sell yourself to a thug, now you'll be going after gold.

BOUKHTCHEV: Why don't you teach me to better sell myself? Why don't you teach me, eh?

LILYANA: Because you're not much of an item. You're not very interesting.

BOUKHTCHEV: I would just keep quiet if I were you.

LILYANA: Have you ever done anything but keep quiet?

BOUKHTCHEV: That's easy for you to say.

LILYANA (at the door.) I told you, my head began to ache. Are you leaving or not?

BOUKHTCHEV: Why don't you go to heck!

LILYANA: You can't even swear to save your life.

*(Exits.)*

BOUKHTCHEV: What a bonehead.

GRANNY BONKA: Go now, leave. Leave.

*(Is about to exit.)*

NEDKA: What about the coffee?

BOUKHTCHEV: Oh, yes, of course *(He opens his wallet and takes some money out of it.)* How much is it?

NEDKA: The same as everywhere else.

7.

NEDKA: Why did they leave so suddenly. *(She looks out the window.)* There, they're driving away.

GRANNY BONKA: They're arguing in the car.

NEDKA: What are they arguing about?

GRANNY BONKA: I don't know.

NEDKA: Maybe I shouldn't have told them about the boundary stone. They say there had been a highwayman – they called him Katchamatchko – and he hung about these places. He must have buried something there.

GRANNY BONKA: I 'aven't said there's anything there.

NEDKA: I'll call Kiril and tell him to get the car ready and then we'll go. It'll all be yours. We'll take whatever you give us.

GRANNY BONKA: There's nothing, Nedka, nothing.

NEDKA: He's strong. He'll dig. I'll dig too. You'll just watch, you'll direct us.

GRANNY BONKA: What a woman. She'll be the end of 'im. *(Sits, eyes half-closed.)* There she is. Sat behind the wheel. He's too shaken, can't drive.

NEDKA: Do you see them?

GRANNY BONKA *(covering her eyes with her hand)*: And they're arguing again... What do you want, woman? And wha' about you Stoyan?

NEDKA: They'll go back to town. They'll get a machine. Nowadays they have all kinds of computers; they'll dig it up. Tell me, Granny Bonka!

GRANNY BONKA: There's nothing there.

NEDKA: You're not telling the truth. What am I doing, staying here and listening to you? I have to close up and go. If Kiril has got home, it might get vicious, I haven't made dinner yet.

GRANNY BONKA: I've got to go 'ome too. I 'ave to take care of my goat. She's learned 'ow to open the front gate, but I don't know if I've closed the garden gate. There are two saplings in it and the damned goat will destroy them. My 'eart is throbbing. It's never done this before. I wonder why it's doing it now.

*(The honking of a car is heard.)*

NEDKA: They're coming back.

GRANNY BONKA: It's not them. *(A pause.)* It's not them, Nedka. It's someone else.

8.

LANTSOV *(appears at the door)*: Where have the fools gone?

NEDKA: Are you asking about the man and the woman who were here? They're gone.

LANTSOV: Are you sure?

NEDKA: Of course I'm sure

LANTSOV: Go out to see if they aren't still outside.

NEDKA: I heard them leave.

LANTSOV *(pointing at the door)*: Go out!

NEDKA *(confused she goes towards the door; she says even though she has not looked outside)*: The car isn't there either.

LANTSOV: You stay outside. The old woman will tell my fortune.

NEDKA: But why? I can stay inside. I'll go in the back room.

LANTSOV: You're wasting my time.

NEDKA *(goes out.)*

LANTSOV: And stay away from the door! *(He closes it behind her, goes up to Granny Bonka, pulls a chair out and sits on it.)* I was driving, driving up towards the Hunters' Club when I saw a Traffic Police car. Then another one. There were people around it, and I saw an overturned car with its wheels up in the air. And I told myself, it seems the old woman was telling the truth.

GRANNY BONKA: The Turk couldn't avoid 'is fate, young man. Fate it was 'e'd die like this.

LANTSOV: The only difference is that you said he was dead, but he died later on, in the ambulance.

GRANNY BONKA: I don't know. Must 'ave been the way you said, I don't know.

LANTSOV: I thought you know everything.

GRANNY BONKA: The white dust 'e sold to you, there's isn't any of it in the car. Don't be afraid.

LANTSOV: So there isn't any of it in the car?

GRANNY BONKA: No, there isn't, not in the car. Don't be afraid! But, Lyubo, it's so much!

LANTSOV: So much? What do you mean so much?

GRANNY BONKA: I don't know. I want to go 'ome now.

LANTSOV: Go ahead if you have to. You're a great woman, Granny... what was it, Donka?

GRANNY BONKA: Bonka.

LANTSOV: You're a great woman. I should set up an office for you. You'll have a reception area. And you'll see people there.

GRANNY BONKA: I don't need anything.

LANTSOV: You don't need anything, but other people need you. They'll come here and you'll cure them.

GRANNY BONKA: I can't cure anyone from the graveyard. And that's where I belong now.

9.

PETER (*appearing at the door*): The woman outside, Nedka, told me I shouldn't come in.

LANTSOV: Then, why did you?

PETER: I'll leave if you say so, Mr. Lantsov.

LANTSOV: Come here.

*(Granny Bonka goes out.)*

LANTSOV: Why did I fire you two years ago?

PETER: Because of a stupid whisky. Fucking false Johnnie Walker. And I got drunk in no time.

LANTSOV: It wasn't because of the drinking. What did I fire you for?

PETER: When we were to hit the guy from the bank. We didn't finish the job like we were supposed to.

LANTSOV: That's what it was. And you know I don't like it when you leave the job half done - half fucked, half hit! You do, don't you?

PETER: I do.

LANTSOV: I'll send the Monkey to the village tomorrow. I'll expect a clean job from you.

PETER: Who is it?

LANTSOV: *(Points at the door.)*

PETER: Nedka?

LANTSOV: *(Shakes his finger in the negative.)*

PETER: Those two who just left in the Mercedes?

LANTSOV: *(Shakes his finger in the negative.)*

PETER: The old woman!

LANTSOV: Sh-sh-sh!

PETER: I don't need the Monkey. It's no big deal.

LANTSOV: You do what the Monkey tells you to. If you leave any trace - both of you will get it. There'll be no forgiveness.

PETER: We'll think of something. Don't worry.

LANTSOV: Don't think. Don't even try to think. You do what the Monkey tells you to do. Didn't you say something about a toilet?

PETER: Why? Do you want to take a leak?

LANTSOV: You idiot, I'll beat you to a pulp. I will.

PETER: I get it. There's two of them. One is in her neighbours' yard.

LANTSOV: And she goes to it. That's what you said.

PETER: I don't know. But why shouldn't she go to it. It's easier for her.

LANTSOV: It doesn't matter.

PETER: The outhouse is old. With a wooden floor.

LANTSOV: I heard that.

PETER: The boards are rotten. And it's full of water now because of the rain.  
It fills up when it rains.

LANTSOV (*going in the direction of the door*): You do what the Monkey tells you to.

PETER: All right, Lantsy.

LANTSOV: I'm not Lantsy to you.

PETER: Sorry.

10.

LANTSOV (*at the door*): Where are you, madam? I've taken care of the cash drawer.

NEDKA (*from outside*): My cash drawer couldn't matter to you.

(*Peter goes after Lantsov. Nedka comes in. She opens the cash drawer. Peter comes in.*)

NEDKA: Peter, did you give me back my ten levs?

PETER: Of course I did.

NEDKA: You know, you're terrible.

PETER: Who's terrible, me?

NEDKA: Yes, you, who else?

PETER: Neda!

NEDKA: What do you mean "Neda"?

PETER: I'm gonna screw you.

NEDKA: Oh, shut up!

PETER: There's no getting out of it, I'll screw you.

The End.