JULY by Ivan Vyrypaev

(the first text in the trilogy 'Disappearance')

Characters:

The performer of the text – a woman

Stage direction

A WOMAN appears on the stage. She has appeared only in order to perform this text.

The text

A house burnt down, and in the house were two dogs.

One was black, a mongrel bitch, and the other was an Alsatian, a six month old puppy. I kept both of them in the shed, locked in, so they couldn't escape before I finished the fence around the house, and only five metres left to stretch the wire fence, and everything done, but then, a fire, and the house, like a cardboard box, burnt to the ground in twenty minutes flat, and the shed, and the dogs, and everything I had gathered over the long years, papers, money, all my plans for the future, all of it turned to grey ash, nothing remained, only me and the month of July, in the middle of which all this cruel shit happened to me.

Curse you, wretched July! Curse you forever, month of July!

I asked Nikolai, my neighbour, I said to him: Go on Kolya, let me stay with you two months while I get the forms together for the Smolensk madhouse. Just two months and then, when they send all my new cards and papers to me, I'll be sure to get a place for life in the Smolensk madhouse, I'll vouch for this, and I swear to God that I won't stay with you for more than two months.

But Nikolai, my neighbour, a pensioner and long time shite swore at me long and hard over his paling fence and wouldn't even let me into his yard, so I stood there in the street, head to foot shat-upon by him, although only six months before I had asked the head of our village for a stake of steel for Kolya's little dog, so that it could run about on a chain, fixed to this stake and stretched out across the whole yard, guarding his shitty master's few pathetic belongings. So I went and sorted it all out and was given the stake, as I had expected, although no one would have given that shite Kolya as much as a nail, especially the head of our village, whose arse flows purple with diarrhoea at the mere appearance of Kolya, even at the furthest corner of his field of vision, so it does, the arse of the head of our village. And then, at the rolling torrent of insults, the injustice, at the obscenities this fucker addressed to me, I threw myself over his rotting gate, went into his house without knocking and caught the shit-spiller in the middle of his kitchen with an empty plate in his hand and surely about to make his way towards the pan on the stove for some soup, whereupon I seized a knife, the first thing I found, and stuck it between the shite's lips, ripping open his mouth right down to his neck, so the misdirected obscenities would no longer scatter from him, and then I finished the job with a chair leg, so that once and for all he would cease insulting those who had offered him a hand, and who had helped him out, and had even asked the head of the village, on his behalf, for the sake of his little dog, for that stake, and how it stuck in the gullet now, that stake, and how it had eaten away at the last of my nerves, that stake, wanted by no one else, but him, Nikolai, dead before his birthday, wanted by no one else, and now not even by him.

Two days after I buried Nikolai, whom I killed, buried him in his own cellar, the dog in the yard, attached by a chain to my stake, suddenly began howling and whining, although I fed her all the time, although I threw her tasty morsels from the window, but no doubt she felt something in her animal heart and was grieving for her master. And because I had been hiding all this time in Kolya's house, without making any sign that I was there, the howling of that blasted dog was not welcome to me, and as the uncontrollable bitch kept on howling and howling and showed no signs of letting up, I was forced then to throw her a piece of meat all filled with finely splintered glass, so that by the evening she was bringing up blood by her kennel, and by the next morning she was lying in a far corner of the yard, as if at my bidding, so that no one from the street could see her, lying there at the back of the yard, stiffly, as corpses are wont to do. But I could not yet decide whether to leave Kolya's house and make my way to Smolensk to get together all the papers for the madhouse, or stay there a little while, until everything settled down, until the din of tin bells in my head had ceased, which had been going on some two weeks, jangling and jangling, somewhere by my

right ear, and through to my bald nape. So may it be cursed, that hateful enemy of mine, that bastard July!

On the fifth day of hiding in dead Nikolai's house, the little children from next door appeared, looking in from behind the palings, and they must have been sent by their parents to find out if Uncle Kolya was ill, seeing as he hadn't been seen around much lately? But then I was fairly shitting myself, because if just one of the boys had come in to find out, had come into the house to me, into dead Kolya's house, then I would have quietly caught him in a sack, and stifled him there and then, and that would have been that, I'd have thrown the sack with the little boy's body in it down into the cellar, onto Uncle Kolya's cold breast, and I would just have managed to get to the bus on the high road before seven, and by the time they were finding the boy and weeping and wailing I would have been approaching Smolensk on the bus. But there were six of the little devils and, as if to spite me, they were all of them different ages and sexes, so I couldn't have possibly done for them all and I had to make a decision immediately: either down and into the embrace of the very reverent body of Nikolai, or across the gardens and out onto the high road to catch the Smolensk bus, as it was just coming up to seven?

What to do?

At seven exactly I was already waiting on the high road and the bus appeared without a minute's delay and at eight thirty I was there, in Smolensk. A large town that, and nowhere for a man like me to go and nowhere for a man like me to sleep. And here there was just one law, in the big town, one law for everyone, and that was: the strongest have the right on their side. And I had the right on my side, because I gathered my strengths and applied my skill, although I was over sixty two, and I went and twisted the head off some friendless dosser living under the bridge and I tossed it – the head, and the body of him, too, hardly wanted to make a keepsake of the fucker, the whole filthy lot, into the river and I took his place, his mattress and few boxes, under the railway bridge, for the moment, to doss down there for a few days, settle in, take a good look round, and then afterwards, once I had gathered my energies I could leave the bridge and go into the town and begin looking for my precious madhouse, because I had already decided that I would go straight there, without any of those documents or papers, just as I am, and ask for a place, even just for a short

time, and then, when they've taken me for a short time, that's when I'll ask for a permanent place, just like in the Russian saying: the fox asked if she might only put her tail inside the door, but no sooner was her tail inside the door than the whole fox lay on the hearth.

For long days and nights the trains passed above me and on the third day of living under this bridge, when I was no longer able to lift a hand, nor a leg, through weakness, hunger and the constant noise of the trains, on that third day, as in the very same saying, as if she had indeed just stepped out of it, came a sly raggedy old fox, or rather a dog and not a fox, but she behaved just like that fox in the saying, at first she put her tail up on my legs and then there she was lying on the hearth, pressing her worm-eaten flank against my face, and breathing like she was being inflated with a bicycle pump. Well that was a nerve and I couldn't have put up with it for long and although I didn't have any strength left and although I hadn't even stood up in three days, or eaten or drunk anything except rainwater from an empty tin can, all the same I found something there inside myself, from somewhere between my back and my heart, something that once again arose in me: the thirst to live a little longer, and hunger, and such a hunger, that lying there on my back as I was, without getting up, I throttled the dog right there on my chest, and when I'd throttled her, without moving from my back, I straightaway took and ate the good half of her, starting with her head, and ending with half her body. And then I lay there for almost half a day in a puddle of dog's blood and as if on purpose, as if it had been specially arranged, although of course it was quite by chance, all that time, whilst I was eating the dog, and then the half day when I lay in the warm streams of dog's blood, all that time, as if it had been specially arranged, above my head on the railway bridge, not a single train passed. Not even a local train, or a freight train, nothing. Silence. Silence.

No sky above me. Above me the bridge.

Silence.

Not a single train. Silence.

And in the tin bell jangling of this silence, I got up at last off the dosser's mattress and crawled out of the bloody cardboard boxes and left the railway bridge, looked around to see where I should go and when I saw a church on a hill at the edge of Smolensk I decided to go

there, because as I saw it, in Christ's own church, that was where the people would know better than anyone where the town's madhouse was.

It was completely dark when I walked up to the monastery gates and first of all I thought, 'this is no simple ordinary church, but a big fucking monastery. Who's going to let me in looking like this, and at this time of night', but then I see that they've left the gates open and I go in and there's no one around, and I look at the church, and there's no one there either and the door's wide open. I go in. No one inside. So then I think, 'There it is, either this is a trap, or they're all dead, or they've all been killed, or who the hell fucking knows what's going on.' And with these fearful thoughts in my mind I walk towards the altar, the sanctuary gates are wide open, I go up to the altar, straight through the sanctuary gates, I go. And I see a table, and on it a tablecloth, made of something that's supposed to look like gold, but isn't gold, a fake, I can see from here, and then I hear from behind, I hear a woman's voice shouting at me, I hear her shouting along the lines of I shouldn't be in there, and she's shouting in a very frightened voice, as if I wasn't just standing there, but I was taking a piss right on their empty altar, but I'm not taking a piss, I'm just standing there in a ordinary sort of way, ordinary run-of-the-mill, if you follow me. So then I turn around and I see, and there's a sight, I see a woman about forty and this woman hasn't got a nose on her face. I take another look. Nothing. It must have been there once upon a time, and traces of its one-time presence haven't completely disappeared but now this nose, for some reason, is suddenly melted and plastered across her face like yellow paraffin, smeared around her whole face so her whole face is a plate of grubby, gleaming waxy shit. This woman goes shouting at me, running towards me, I jump back into the sanctuary, away from the door, and the woman stops and won't go any further. She shouts and prays, and threatens me, but she can't make up her mind to come in on me, either she's too scared, or that God of hers won't let her, and I've sat down by then on their altar with the golden tablecloth and I'm waiting for the old girl to leave off, but my nerves are already twitching, although I'm waiting still. Who the fuck knows how it would have ended, I probably would have broken the old lady into small bits and eaten her, like that dog under the bridge, but then out came this priest, from where I do not know, a priest in a blue tracksuit top, like town people wear, and in town trousers, too, with lines down the side, with a long beard, and that's how I knew he was a priest. Father July, that's what I thought the very first instant, Father July,

that's what I thought, but afterwards, a long time after, it turned out that this priest's name was not July, but Misha, but that was a long time after, when the fuck knows we were past names.

I was born in 1950. And although I'm well into my seventh decade I am still very strong: strong in my body and my will and my gaze. When I celebrated my fiftieth, thirteen years ago I brought out our cow, and then in front of all our guests I knocked her down with one blow to the head. That's nothing new! That's nothing new! That's nothing new! That's nothing new! I know. That's nothing new! I know, I know. So why scream it out that it's nothing new, I know myself, it's nothing new, so why scream like that in front of the whole village, why open your filthy gob like that, why, I'm asking you. And because my wife shouted out back then that it was nothing new, knocking a cow down, just because of her shouting like that, not her words, that it was nothing new, but because of her herself, her shouting, I took her, and just the same as the cow, I punched her in the head. I took her and I punched her. I was thinking of that, because now, thirteen years later, and my strength is much less, of course, and I'd hardly be able to knock over a frail old cow, but all the same, there's something there, I have some strength, at least for a single priest, in his trousers with lines up them, I had enough for him. So as soon as he took me by the collar of my jacket I broke his arm right away, almost in two I broke it. And then I went for him, and my legs were needles and I stitched him a cruel vest with these needles, and then I placed the bright carpet of Father July right by the gates of their heavenly sanctuary. And actually it was a good thing that I decided to do for him with my legs, because if I'd started to eat him, well I would have chewed out his throat and then I would never have had the chance to carry out my heavenly duty to Father Mikhail afterwards. His God must have saved him then, and praise be. Because afterwards, when he came round, and we struck up conversation, and only after we had talked did I understand that here was a man who was near enough a saint, and so praise be once again that he lived back on that occasion, and only a broken arm, yes, he got away with only a broken arm.

While the priest was lying by the sanctuary gates I sat there, not stirring a hair, unable to take my eyes off the woman-without-a-nose, and there any normal woman-with-a-nose would have run for the police, but she, when she saw I had laid out her priest like a carpet on the ground, she fell onto her knees straightaway and starts off praying in a quiet, quiet

voice, not to the heavens or to the icons, but as if to someone standing in the very sanctuary gates, right there in the centre, although there was no one there, just emptiness and that was all.

The Priest stood up, his face twisted with the pain in his arm, but he didn't faint, quite the opposite, as if this pain in his arm had given him strength, he came right over to me and sat down there beside me just like we'd been friends for a hundred years, and not like you would to a person who had just broken your arm and kicked your kidneys into next year. He came over like that, calm and friendly, and he sat down beside me. And the woman-without-a-nose saw that everything was alright and peaceful and she got up off her knees and went off. And after her I didn't meet any more women-without-noses on my way.

An hour passed or maybe more, and Father July, who was in fact Mikhail, and me, we talked and talked, and we couldn't stop talking. And I didn't notice how it happened that I was telling him the story of my life, almost from my birth right up to this day. I told him about the incident with the cow and my wife, how she was mad for two whole years after her blow to the head, and then how she suddenly and without warning, found her wits again, said goodbye to all of us and left, so that to this day no one can find her and where she's gone, nobody knows. And how I brought my three sons into the world and fed them and stood them on their feet, and now all three of them are working as watchmen in Arkhangelsk and not a word been said against them to this day.

Father July then told me why all the doors were wide open when I came in. It so happened that they were poisoning rats that day. They'd been overrun with disease-carrying rats and the council told them to get rid of them or the whole place would be shut down, and no God would help them. So they sprayed the whole place with rat poison and they were letting the air in, so it didn't do for them as well. So I say to Father July, now you see, Mikhail, I wasn't to blame for walking straight in and up to the altar. Who was I supposed to ask? The rats? The rats are all dead and gone, and there isn't a soul left to ask. July listened to my arguments and agreed with them. And then he did a wonderful thing, get under the altar and hide there, he said. And I was so much in his thrall by then, this man July, Father Mikhail, such a wonderful man, that I was ready to do anything for him. So of course I slipped under the altar table and as soon as I was under, the whole church was full of

security men, who had come to tie me up and shoot me on the spot, but two fingers to them. Father July told those security men, he told them that they had all come running too late and that whilst they had been getting themselves ready, the psycho, that was me, that was, had made off and go and look for him wherever you like, but get out of the temple of god. That was the sort of person that July turned out to be. July – month of marvel-workers!

Three months I hid out with Father Mikhail under his bed. I only went outside at night. During the day, when Father Mikhail was out, I lay on his bed and read the books he told me to read and at night, when Father Mikhail was asleep, I sat on the steps to his cell and thought. Every night for three months, I sat and thought and I thought and then, when I had suddenly thought my way to where I wanted, I woke Father Mikhail and I asked him a question, which I had carefully prepared. "Mikhail Valer'evich," by then he had risen in my eyes so much that I addressed him properly like this, although Father Mikhail was younger than me by thirty four years. "Mikhail Valer'evich, tell me, would an innocent priest who had suffered a terrible death go to heaven or hell?" and he answered, to heaven, but he added that that was only if the priest was truly innocent and blameless in his own death. This answer was quite enough for me, and the books which I had forced myself to read, upon Father Mikhail's orders, those books were on my side, too. I love you Father July. You are holy, and more deserving of heaven than anyone else. And so that everything was done properly I spent four hours cutting him into small pieces, causing most clearly unheard of torment, but doing it so that Father Mikhail did not lose consciousness and suffered in his right mind and in sober reason. By dawn Father Mikhail was in Heaven without a doubt. I placed the bits of his body into a black plastic sack and put the sack on my shoulder and left the cell and headed for the cathedral.

The month of July passed. Winter changed to spring.

There was no one in the church at this hour, apart from the tall altar angel, which was there always. I went into the sanctuary through the side door and began taking the pieces of Father Mikhail's body out of the sack and placing them carefully on the altar, trying hard not to look at the angel. When I had taken everything out I crumpled the sack into a little black ball and set off for the door. But before I went out of the sanctuary I looked back at the angel, it was standing there motionless, in the same place as always, right in the centre,

with its face turned towards the closed sanctuary gates. It was always there, standing just like that. During these three months I had been in the church several times at night, and it was always standing there, in the same place, completely motionless, but showing not the faintest sign of strain. I looked at the angel, opened the door to leave the sanctuary and suddenly I heard a soft voice, almost a child's voice, "that's nothing new," said the angel and it was the first and the last time I ever heard an angel speak. And it was the last voice I ever heard and the last thing my ears heard, because at almost the same moment, straight after the angel spoke, straight after it turned away from me, I received a terrible heavy blow on the back of my head and all sound was ended. And apart from my hearing I lost a good half, and maybe more, of all my bodily organs, because they beat me until I was a piece of bloody meat. But I lost my sound after the first blow. Father Mikhail's friend, Father Grigorii, went into his cell and saw all the blood and ran to follow the trail and burst into the sanctuary just as the angel finished speaking and turned away from me, and by then Father Grigorii was holding a crowbar, the one they use to break the ice on the church steps in the morning, and with the blunt edge Father Grigorii bashed me on the back of the head without a second's thought, and so doing, turned out my hearing for ever, and then afterwards they beat me, the workers at the monastery first, but not the monks of course, and then the Smolensk police arrived and by then I don't remember what happened. The next time I saw myself was a good few months later, I was in a coma for three months, in filthy conditions, because no one could be bothered with me, of course, and I rotted like a wet potato in a cellar, but then, God only knows why, one fine day I came round, and I went and got better, to everyone's dismay, because they had to look after me then: put a muzzle on me, lead me round in chains, clear up my shit and my piss. So there you are, the month of July, the middle of the summer, and not a single sunny day.

And as there was no telling now where my own blood flowed through my veins and my head, and where strange needle-thoughts floated down the red, the red blood inside my arms and legs, the red blood inside me, through, or rather through the fault of those needles, needles like strange bees, only without the honey, and no point in expecting honey, because there is no honey now. There is no honey in July. And there's nothing I can do about it. There's no honey in July and that is that. There is no honey in July.

- Who's that there, who unfastened me, who is it, who unfastened me from my bed, who, unfastened me and wasn't afraid, who's so very brave, then, come on, tell me?
- Me.
- I can't see anything yet. Who?
- Me. Look up and you'll see.

So I looked where I was told to look, upwards, and saw only a white sheet and plenty of holes, and nobody.

- Who are you? Tell me who you are? Who are you?
- You look up, the voice said to me look up. Eight times in a row or maybe nine it repeated this.
- There's no one there. Who are you? I'm looking up, who are you? I'm looking. Who?

And I started looking and looking, looking and looking. Upwards. I looked and looked and. Nothing. Who is it, speaking? Who is it?

No one.

- Me.
- Who is it saying that, who?
- You look up. It's me.

And over and over, the same thing, the same plea, the same old plea, and the same old plea again.

That plea. That plea. Over and over. So I had a good look.

And I'd looked at it before, oh yes, but I hadn't seen it, there's the thing.

I'd looked at it before, but only saw it then... and there's the thing

- So who are you then, my almost-and-near-enough-bald-spider, who are you then, up there on my ceiling, tell me who are you?
- Me.
- Who, I didn't hear, who are you?

- Me, it said, quieter than before, but all the same I heard every letter.
- Who?
- It's me, me. Can you see who I am? Me. It's me, it said, quieter still, but it's voice echoed louder still down my spinal cord, It's me, it echoed, Me, it's me.
- There! I threw myself on it and I hit it, three times, or maybe two, I hit it, or maybe five times or more I hit it, and that was that. Five, or three, or even two of my blows would have been quite enough for this me-spider, brought it down from its scabby ceiling, dropped its weight down onto my wooden floor, and then my former self was returned to me, to stamp, with my legs and my arms, to grind this brazen little me-spider into the black floor, stamp, but not stamp out the me-spider, for that me-spider was me. That was me, near-enough-bald-head-fluff. And there was an end then.

So after staying in there three months, or perhaps four, and if you count the spider, and if you count all the needles, then a whole six years, years, yes years, because we're talking about years now and not months anymore, not for a long time about months. So six years together with the spider and the needles and me, six years later, and all these six years and maybe more, and look! blood no longer trickles from my nose in the morning, after all this time I suddenly came round, got up, stretched, yawned, went out, and they could see me then, but after that they never could see me again, although my body still lay on that bed, my body may have lain there, but I was gone. So it was.

Stage Direction:

Djanna M. (from my childhood) appears in a scene set in an ice rink, and it is most certainly her because I am dying, I am dying and she skates on and on across the ice, my Djanna M. The action halts for a moment and then carries on, missing a second. And we, Djanna M, me and all the rest, we're all skating round the rink in a circle, and under our feet is ice, thick ice, ice, very thick ice, and nothing more. Scene: a winter ice rink, or maybe a summer ice rink, with concrete in place of the ice, or perhaps no ice rink at all, or artificial ice in the autumn, and if not that, then there is honey in July, I take my words back, there is honey in July, if you can't go any further, because you never started out in

the first place, then there is honey in July, even if before this I said differently, (for those who are going further): There is no honey in July.

Djanna M. from my childhood came in to me, there, where I lay harnessed in chains and straitjackets fastened with leather belts, she came in to me in the stifling stinking cell and asked her first question right there:

- Want a pee?
- I can't hear. I'm deaf. I can't hear. There is no sound in my head and I haven't yet learnt to read lips, so I don't know what she's saying. I see she's talking to me, but I don't know, I don't know what she's saying, I don't know and I can't guess yet, and there we are.
- Do you?
- Who are you then? I still haven't guessed yet.
- Will you or will you not have a pee, I'm asking you?
- What are you saying? I can't guess, and there we are. But I haven't made a sound yet, as if I wasn't just deaf, but dumb as well, although she's probably read in my files that I can speak.
- Well pee yourself then if you're stupid, but if you're clever you'll use the pot. Who
 else apart from me would offer you a pot, use it, whilst I'm here, or you'll stay all
 covered in shit, inside and out, you pig.

She can't see my face, because I've got a mask like a hockey goalkeeper (only no puck they don't keep pucks in madhouses), and she can't see my body because I'm wearing a white, white shirt, brown with shit and phlegm and the sleeves are tied in a bow round the back, like a birthday present. And she can't see my legs, but I can see hers and what do I realise? Fucking weird legs. Fuck knows what sort of love this is. What sort of love, this love of mine, and not a cleaner at all. That's what I saw straightaway when I looked at Djanna M. This is love! When I first saw Djanna M.'s funny legs that is what I knew.

I know you're listening to me, so don't give me all that fucking around, fuck around with the nurse or the doctor, but I'm nothing to do with the medical people in your mental home, so don't you mess me about, all that 'I can't hear' – you can hear

everything. And you know it all. Who I am, and why and what this is. So have a pee in here, get on with it, and stop pretending to be some deaf idiot, you can pretend all you like with the duty doctors and the auxiliaries, act the deaf shit-plastered maniac, but that doesn't do nothing for me. Pee in here, before I change my mind, because if I walk out of here now, you'll have another six years rolling around in your own shit and piss, come on you animal, pee, when you're offered a pot like a human.

And I said to her: Undress me, will you? Undress me. Please, please undress me.

And these were my first words in all that time. In six years I hadn't made a single sound, not a single sound, although I could have – after all my tongue was still there, wasn't it, in my mouth. And my deafness was no barrier to speaking words (deaf, I was, and not dumb), but I uttered neither squeak nor groan, not a sound. Six years I lay there tied to the bed, or sat fastened to a metal bracket bolted to the wall in my cell, six years flew past like one day, I closed my eyes on Tuesday and woke up Wednesday, and not a sound. The silence of Tuesday melted into the silence of Wednesday. Or if there was something, then it happened without me willing it, without me willing it or wanting it. Or, if I did make any words or sounds then I don't remember, and I never opened my mouth consciously, and if I said anything or groaned, then it happened without me, because for over six years I was not there, I was not there myself, within myself. For six years and six weeks I was not there, and that means my voice wasn't there (and if it was, then it wasn't mine), and my breath (not mine either), if my breath came out of my mouth, then it had nothing whatsoever to do with me, because although my body was lying here on the bunk, in a prison madhouse, my soul was in a very very different place. My body lay in the shit, on a bunk, in a high security wing for psychopaths, but my soul, all those six years, was stepping onto the ice rink, artificial ice and then real ice, and sliding on skates made in the town of Arkhangelsk, where as it happens, my three sons are working as watchmen and not been a word against them to this day. Good watchmen, they must be, with no mucking around on the job!

Well Djanna M. was struck dumb when she heard the real words breaking out of my mouth, struck with the wordless confusion of a young girl, raped for the first time in a dark alleyway by five beasts going by the name of man. And so she should be, an event like this – not a word from the psychopath and murderer in six years, lying in his own shit, and suddenly,

just like that, he speaks. Well I never! And although it was this Djanna M.'s first day at work in the madhouse, as I found out from her later when we'd talked a bit, (poverty would make anyone shovel shit in a nuthouse, especially when there's a little child waiting at home for you, and no husband around, never has been, never will be) and all these six years she hadn't been around to watch me (all these years she'd been working in different shops on the tills, until she was thrown out for one reason or another, so when this job came up, shitshoveller at the nuthouse, she was very delighted – all she wanted was for her little son not to shrivel up on the pot noodles, what did she care if it was all nutters, shit didn't scare her, and hadn't for a long time now). So she hadn't seen me sleeping here, for six years and six months without ever waking (not me, of course, but my body, I was, as is already known, scraping the ice of the unconscious with my stellar skate-boots, far, far away, in the furthest and most hidden place in my brain, on an artificial ice-rink), and although this Djanna M. had, on this day, come for the first time into my stinking vacuum of a cell, called a chamber in this place, but in fact a cell, two by two, with a bunk in it, coated in my shit, as a church bell is coated in clay when it is cast, but of course she had been warned straightaway who I was and what I was, and not even the duty doctor (who was, I later found out, near enough a saint who gave generous alms to the poor and to drug addicts), no one, no one could have imagined that this piece of six year old half-rotten shit could suddenly find himself in his surroundings, and even speak. But I suddenly did that. I found myself and spoke.

- Undress me, please, undress me.
- Who are you talking to, are you talking to me?
- Undress me, or undress yourself. It can't go on like this.
- Do you know what I'm holding? Djanna says to me.
- Do you know what I've got for you? I've got a pot for you. A pot for your shit, do you know what that is, shit?
- Or undress yourself. Undress me or yourself, whoever you want. Who do you want, me or yourself?
- Do you know who you are?
- Here it is, the second half of July and no rains yet and no hope of rain.
- Do you know who I am, or should I call the doctor? Do you know who that is, the doctor? I suggest you remember fast, or he'll shove such a needle into you that you'll

be here another six years, rotting away in your own shit and piss, or probably you'll never wake up, who am I? Do you know who I am? Answer me or say goodbye to your last chance of ever getting up out of bed and looking out of the window.

- You're Djanna M.
- Right. And you? Answer me, or I'll call the doctor and that'll be the end of your recovery.
- Undress me, please, or undress yourself.
- There, see. You can when you want to. And I'll call you Pyotr. How old are you then,
 Pyotr, can you remember?
- Yes, I remember, sixty three. I was born in 1950. I had my fiftieth birthday only thirteen years ago.
- Well then. Seeing as you did something for me, I'll do something for you. I'll undress you.

Stage direction:

And then Nelya (because this woman was really called Nelya and not Djanna and she wasn't M. and she wasn't from my childhood. but she was from another, a completely different life. Nelya, and her surname began with a D., although what difference does it make, who's called what in real life, because you can be Nelya D. three times over in your adult life, but if someone thinks of you as Djanna M. from their childhood, then that is how it actually is. If someone names you, then that is what you really are, and there is an end to the matter.) Then this Nelya D., named Djanna M. approaches Pyotr, lying on a bed in the middle of a frozen lake (in the cell), and takes off his mask, and unfastens his hands from the frame of the bed, and takes all his clothes off. And now this Pyotr is guite naked, naked as the day he was born, and they are no longer on the ice, but on the level concrete. Concrete, concrete, wherever you look, to the left or the right, grey concrete everywhere and nothing else. Naked Pyotr and thirty five year old Nelya with the strange legs, and the concrete. And now we can guite happily put away our skates in the attic, because we won't be needing them for the next six years for sure. There's no skating on concrete: we need the ice for that.

What did I think in the first second all this happened? I thought about many things. In only one second a hundred and fifty thousand thoughts streamed past on special skates, through the concreted area in the back of my head near my nape (that part at the back is concreted, and at the front, behind my forehead, I have foam insulation). An enormous number of thoughts, well if not precisely one hundred and fifty thousand, then at least three:

First thought:

To eat this Djanna M., my own Djanna M., completely and absolutely, as they'll fasten me back up soon enough, anyway, and maybe they'll even do away with me, I don't suppose they'll be treating me with kid gloves, and this way at least she'll be inside me, my Djanna M. with her strange legs, and her breasts, which are quite to my taste. And what is valued in a man, if not that he takes a woman and carries her within himself right until the end, right up to the moment when either she or he dies. After all love is just the taking and the eating, two hours should see it through, no more, or at the most, three.

Second thought:

Break the neck of the old man in the left hand corner of my cell who has been terrorising me for the last six years, break it, because I had thought, through all the six years of my absence from my own head, that the old man was just a vision, or a dream, and as soon as I woke up he would disappear, but it wasn't to be, the first thing I saw, after the strange legs of Djanna M., in a nasty fiery instant, was this very same old man of mine, who had gone nowhere, nor had he remained within the bounds of my six-year Vaseline jar (now there I have just the phrase –'Vaseline jar', never a better one for where I was all those six years and six weeks – in a small green jar of Vaseline, and right in the middle of the gluey stuff, up to the knees in it, like a bog, and that old man with a beard spent all those six years and forty one days with me, quite flaying my bald head with his stare, old man with a boy's face and ancient eyes, like Mona Lisa's in the picture, which, when I was still married, I did as a jigsaw with my sons.) and now this old man, here he is, in the left-hand corner of my tiny prison, just standing there, looking at me as a moneylender looks at a debtor, so

perhaps I should just get up and bring an end to this idea, this old man who has given me no peace for six Vaseline-filled years. Break the neck of this spell, so it might never come visiting people like me, troubled enough as we are, embarrassing me and lying to me and teasing me with cheap promises to the value of a child's tear or a nickel-plated cross, go and rid myself of this spell, after all, it would have been nothing to get up and go across to the left hand corner of my cell and seize hold of him, and he, the miserable old bloke, all through the six years, he'd been telling me that if I one day went to stifle him, or break his neck, then he would be, well, go ahead, he wouldn't resist me: 'You beat me, you kill me, I won't interfere in the deeds of others, if you want to kill me then that's your own business, you decide,' that's what he said to me, this being made out of my wife's jigsaw puzzle pieces, half eternal Mona Lisa, half toyshop cardboard, and all imbued with Vaseline, this LordGodAlmightyCreatorofHeavenandEarth-old man.

Third Thought:

Talk to her. Perhaps there'll be a miracle, the likes of which has never before happened to me (I've never known a miracle, I don't believe in them), and right here, all of a sudden, in this odd situation, it will drop upon me, like a custard tart drops onto the head of a man wearing a hat in a funny film, all of a sudden?! I'll be walking along, walking along this funny film street, and I'll pass, not once, but hundreds and thousands of times, under the windows of the sort of tall buildings you see in these funny films, and suddenly... suddenly, like it happens in these films, suddenly from the least conspicuous window on the fourth floor, it will slip from the sill, a custard tart, all beautifully made for someone or other's birthday party and waiting its moment of glory out on the window ledge. Talk to her. A custard tart only falls like that once in a lifetime, so a miracle might just happen! Talk to her. What if she should turn out to be, just like that, the first person in the whole world capable of understanding me from beginning to end. It's not every day there's the opportunity to meet Djanna M. with her weird legs and her to my taste ripe little breasts, so she might just understand. Fall upon me, custard tart. Listen to me, Djanna, hear me out. I've lived sixty three years and not once in that time have I spoken to someone, and they have understood me.

Of these three thoughts which flashed through my head in one single moment, I chose the third. But then I had a fall-back, because if it didn't work with the talking, if Djanna M. from my childhood, for some reason didn't want to listen to me, or for some reason a miracle didn't happen and no custard tart fell on my hat, then if no one stopped me (and who would stop me, after all didn't everyone think I was still unconscious?) I would calmly and surely, and without losing my self-control or giving rein to my temper, in fact quite the opposite, joyously and with a sense of dignity, first of all I would break the neck of the idea of the life-after-death-vaseline-filled-repulsive-old-man, and then after that, for two hours, and at most three, I would chew over the principal parts of the body of my love, Djanna M., and when she was quite inside (love is the taking and eating) I would stand before the duty doctor and the auxiliaries and may God be their judge: 'You beat me, you kill me, I won't interfere in the deeds of others, if you want to kill me then that's your own business, you decide...'

No need to eat me, I'm listening to you. Speak.

... and for seven years I have heard not a note, no bell, no alarm and even when I slept, even in the Vaseline jar, I heard not a single sound, and that is why the old man did not address himself to my ears, knowing that I was deaf, but sent his words to stream cold down my spine, so that after every one of his sermons, for two hours, and sometimes three, and sometimes more, five, six, seven, I went with wet pants, as if I had pissed myself, or had lain (after all I never left my bed), lain there all wet, and the auxiliaries and the shift doctor (who near abouts a saint), thought nothing more, but that all this water in my pants was piss. And so it was (piss), but not trickled from my penis, trickled from the old man's sermons which ran down my back and into my pants like water into a rain butt during a storm. And what do you see in this rain butt after the storm, at the very bottom, in its very depths, what do you see? July, and nothing more at the bottom of the rain butt. July and nothing more. July and nothing.

Stage direction:

And at that, straight after the words 'July and nothing' the first half of everything that has passed here has come to an end and the second half and what is still to come, has begun. The ice and the concrete have disappeared for ever, and have been replaced by sticky August honey, August honey of course, and not July honey, because as we have heard more than once, there is no honey in July.

- Why are you doing all this, why are you untying me and setting me free, why?
- I can't explain. I'm doing what I need to do, and for now that is all the reason I have.
- But what you're doing, it's a risk, you're risking your life, do you understand, or perhaps you don't fully understand where it might lead, all this you're doing now?
- I don't know. I'm doing what I need to do, and for now that is all the reason I have.

Stage direction:

Nelya lay down on the flat surface and lay there motionless. She lay there. What did she do? She lay there. She lay on the top of a vast table, because this surface upon which they both found themselves, had changed into a vast table a few moments before, a vast table, and the edge of this table could not be reached by any person. The edges of this table were beyond view, and what was under the table could be seen, as before us there is only an enormous lid, a lid which stretches to the very horizon. The table. Nelya lay down on the table, like food offered up for dinner, food, lying on the table and it surprised no one. Food should be on the table, there is nothing surprising in this – this is what the table is for, that food might lie upon it.

Nelya lies down on the surface, in readiness. She lies on the surface in such a way that it becomes clear from the first that before us lies a woman who is ready for anything, absolutely anything, anything, in the sense that there is nothing on earth for which she is not ready. She is ready for anything.

So she spoke, and lay down on the ground, right by my feet, she lay down like the old fox with her tail inside the door, so everyone would become used to her and

forget she was there, and stop paying her attention, and then all at once the cunning fox would be over by the hearth, and then it would be in front of the fire and on it would go until it had occupied the whole house and thrown the owners out onto the street. See, the man had only let the fox put its tail in the door, and he'd hardly turned his back, but the cunning vixen had taken over his whole house, and now where was he to go, the rightful owner of the house? But we know this cunning, you can't get around us as easy as that.

The strangest thing in all of this is that I could just get up and leave. Or if he attacks me I could scream and in ten seconds the auxiliaries would be here and all his thoughts about ice in July, and even him himself, would soon be nothing more than a lump of bloody shit. The strangest thing is that I could have gone out twenty minutes ago, or not spoken to him at all, or, and this is the strangest, strangest thing, I could have not worked in this hospital at all, because they don't pay all that well here and it's nothing but stress. But here I am for some reason lying on the floor, in a cell with a dangerous criminal, a maniac, who's spent the last six years tied to his bed, wearing a muzzle. And I'm lying here at his feet, putting my own life in terrible danger, although at home I have a little boy waiting for me, who needs me, who won't survive without me. So here I am lying here, like a piece of salami waiting to be eaten, and there's not even a soul to talk to, because my only companion is a man who is not only utterly out of his mind, but is also deaf. Actually, even if he hadn't been deaf, he still wouldn't have understood what I'm saying, although in fact I'm not saying anything, I haven't got anything to say actually. I'm lying down and I don't know what's happening, or why it's happening, or whether it's happening or if it's about to start happening, or if it's already done happening, I don't know. I know one thing only, I'm lying down. I myself, for some inexplicable and never to be explained reason, I want to lie here a little longer, and not leave, just be here a bit, I don't know why, there isn't an answer, because I have this feeling as if I'd been searching through Grandmother's chest a long time, a long time, looking for Grandmother's old wedding dress, I'd been searching a long time, many days and nights, and then suddenly I found it. But what I want it for I can't say. But I need it. I need it very much. I searched for it for many years and I found it. Well then, will you talk to me,

or is that it? What are we going to do now, I mean, what plans have we, are we going to talk or are you going to decide straightaway that that is it.

I see you, I see you looking, in a far corner of my consciousness, I see you looking at me and mocking me, Vaseline-man. And although I'm busy with other things at the moment, with Djanna M. from my childhood, in spite of that, I haven't let you out of my consciousness. And I saw how you laughed and made faces at me. And believe this, take my word, or don't if you don't want to in this matter, it's all the same to me, after I and this auxiliary, Djanna M., have decided what her fate will be, and it will happen soon, because there's no reason to draw it all out, then as soon as her fate is settled, I will turn to yours, without any hesitation. And I will decide your fate, and you can believe this as you like, I will decide your fate not just for a little while, but for once and for all. Because if you really are the Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, you stinking little Vaseline-man, and I really do believe you are, yes, I'm glad, very glad to believe you are God. Then I will, with great joy in my heart, I will fix you such a blow, I will finish with you, and I will be rid of you and your Vaseline stench, and I will breathe deep, and then make this the day of the great Riddance. But this will come later, just a little, but not yet, so for now, you stay sitting there where you are, pulling faces, and count your last minutes, you still have a little time left to be God, so use it wisely, because very soon, very soon, there will be neither time, nor God, only me, and the rest of the world around me.

Stage Direction

He lies down on top of her and she disappears under his body. The surface of the hospital floor becomes, in the same second, dark water.

- And after these words he goes and lies down on me with all his sick and swollen body. He lays himself down and then he lies there. I am on the floor, and he is on me, and not a single train can be heard. Silence.
- Can you hear me, Djanna? I want to tell you something very very important.
- Tell me.
- I saw you, by the fence, your fence, I suppose, and you were exactly thirteen years and four days old. How do I know about the four days? You told me. I went over to

you and looked at your legs, saw that they were very strange, I said, strange legs, and you answered for some reason, that you were exactly thirteen years and four days on that day. Remember?

- Not I.
- Why not, Djanna? How come I remember, and you don't, how come?
- Because I'm not Djanna. I have a different name. I'm quite a different woman, not
 Djanna M. from your childhood, but from your life now, and my name is Nelya, and
 my surname begins with the letter D.
- I believe you Djanna, I believe your every word. I believe that you are Nelya D., I believe that you aren't you. I believe you, but I want to hear an answer to my question. Why don't you remember anything that happened, Djanna?
- I remember everything, except what I don't know. I haven't forgotten anything, but I don't yet know anything about that. Tell me, and then I'll know, and I'll remember forever.
- It's very simple Djanna. It's a simple story. For you it's simple, but for me it's very long, fifty years long. I asked you if you weren't a bit young. If you weren't a bit young, back then at thirteen, even with the four days, if you weren't a bit young to be showing off in front of such a young boy (I was only fourteen, no more, myself), to be showing off your strange legs to all and sundry in front of such a susceptible young boy as I, I think it was a bit young, a girl might wait till eighteen for her showing off.
- Please, don't go on. I'm not your Djanna. Do what you want with me, but please, stop.
- Too late for stopping, let's have more. You answered me back then: that's why girls have got girly knees, so they can sparkle and shine them about, blinding the eyes of susceptible young boys. But not at thirteen, little baby, not by the age of thirteen, shining your strange legs about in front of me, you might have waited at least two years for that.
- It's got nothing to do with me, it's my legs decide when they're ready to shine. I can't go and cut them off can I, just because they started shining, and they appeared before they should have done, from beneath my skirt and in front of you?

- No, no need to cut them off. But what am I to do then? See even now I would take those legs of yours to be my wife, but those legs, along with you, are only thirteen and four days old and I'm not allowed to marry them, and I'm only fourteen myself, two years till I get my passport, so by the law and by the rules I'm not allowed.
- Well then, and even if marrying were allowed, I still wouldn't give you my legs to be your wife, not now, not at sixteen, not at sixty five.
- Why? Don't your legs like me, I'm a good looking man, I'm a real man, I know how to love, to really, truly love.
- I know. I know you're capable of love, I saw that straightaway, as soon as I came into your cell. Even though you were lying there, covered in shit, and strapped to the bed, somehow I knew straightaway that you were capable of real, true love.
- Girls' legs, like red caviar, sparkle playfully in the sunlight, but like caviar they are sticky, one little egg cleaving to the next, and even their shapeliness, their enticing silhouette in black stockings, none of that divides them, two women's legs is in fact one whole, tight-bound in black nylon, a thing of itself without any body, independent of the sort of body, not depending on any body at all, women's legs in black stockings they're a self-sufficient whole, and that is why you can love them separately, without the woman they belong to.

Stage direction

A short pause interrupts their dialogue.

So much water has collected in my head, after all these years of searching. Great deep puddles in my brain. I wandered through them in rain boots, but still the water came in over the top of the boots, and my feet got wet. And spring keeps coming and coming, it gets warmer and warmer, the snow melts and melts, and the water in the puddles becomes deeper and deeper. It no longer comes to my knees, but up to my very throat. And the doors are all shut and the gates are all locked, and all the love is there, beyond the doors and the gates, and I'm up to my throat in a spring puddle, and I don't possess a single key. And now – You. Monster of a person, offering me a hand and opening the fist slowly. What is he holding? The monster opens his fist, and there on the palm – are the keys.

- There, Djanna. You've come. Enter.
- Madness must swallow deceit and blood destroy falsehood. The doors are opening.
 Summer is coming in place of spring, July follows March, the puddles are drying up, the water is going, the doors and gates are opening and I may enter. I enter. And all this love is mine now. July, here it is! Here is July and here am I. It is hot, but quite bearable, terrible, but beautiful. And the boots are no longer needed, the puddles are gone and I'm here.
- Come in Djanna, make yourself at home, and now I will do to you everything I judge necessary.
- And I am here. And now everything to come will be that which is judged necessary. I am ready for anything, except honey, because I know well that there is no honey in July.
- My heart caught light, and in it were two dogs. One was a little stray who feared me _ always, and the other was a great bitch, whom I feared all my life. It burnt with a blue flame until nothing was left in my chest, so for a whole hour and a bit, I lived with an icy emptiness in me, a hole in my breast in place of a heart. A whole hour and a bit the wind blew through, and there was an empty space in my breast, but a place like that is not empty for long, and something new has already appeared, a new heart perhaps, or perhaps a new wall clock, with a pendulum. The pendulum is swinging, swinging. My head is spinning. Love, which came forth from a dirty spring puddle has been transformed into the summer month of July. The water in my head has gone. All fear and expectation are past. I have become love, I am love, all of me. Here I am love – lying on the table. Love is sustenance. Love is a dish at a joyous feast. Here I am: love – slightly underdone, waiting my hour, like a wiener schnitzel on the table. I lie on a table laid for a feast, like July summer love, and I wait my hour, I wait for the moment when those who like such sustenance have had their fill of me. I lie like bread and wine on the dinner table and wait to be eaten. I am ready for anything. In place of my burnt heart are sacred offerings. Do to me all you must do. I am ready for it all, I am come.
- Can you hear? Music, can you hear the music? That is me, playing on the French horn inside me. Those are my sounds. They mean that I am coming closer, that I am already very, very close, I am near, I am somewhere very, very here. I have come, I'm

here, this is my music, the sounds of my French horn. There, we're here. Our movement is done. We are ready to disappear. Djanna M. from my childhood, are you ready to disappear?

My name is Nelya, I am ready to disappear, I am ready for anything. We have come.

Stage direction

Pause

And then I threw myself into the upper corner of my cell, I threw myself onto the very ceiling, up there, where my old friend, the Vaseline God was hiding, I threw myself upon him, and in a second I broke the neck of his godhead. And there was no longer an old man –maker-of-heaven-and-earth, his tiny body dropped to the ground, like a dead Vaseline Jesus Christ. And I dropped down on top of him with my own bodily knife and fork in my hands. I dropped down on him, like some greedy fat bastard falls on his chicken Kiev, I dropped on this Vaseline 'Fool-in-Christ'-Christ, I dropped down onto him and I ate him all without once stopping. I ate it all, down to the last crumb. I filled my belly with bread and wine, I stuffed myself with divine food, I filled myself with divinity and became myself this same divinity. Divinity without and divinity within. And now it's your turn Djanna to become one undivided whole. It's your turn Djanna to become a whole from all the parts. An undivided whole, Djanna, undivided and whole within me. And this is the word of the old Russian proverb: The old grey wolf went out one day and ate everyone up. So there it is July, now upon us, and no one sowed the seed, and yet the harvest is more than we can gather.

Stage direction

From now on everything happens as it might in a very beautiful dream. But it isn't a dream, any of it, it's real, quite real. That rare and almost impossible state when beauty in real life becomes so wondrous, that it's impossible to believe it's not a dream. But it isn't.

We hear a man's voice. It sounds as if it's a loudspeaker or a radio. The man's voice is not familiar. We may not know him, but the person to whom he speaks does. It is the voice of his eldest son.

GLEB'S VOICE. Dear Father. This is your three sons, all watchmen in Arkhangelsk. We have at last managed to track you down. We have devoted many years to working out where you've been and where you are. And now we're on our way to you, we set off tomorrow and then it'll be two days before we get to you. The plane is a bit dear for us unfortunately, your average watchman in Arkhangelsk doesn't earn a packet, so we're on the train. It's the twenty ninth today and we'll be travelling on the thirtieth and we'll be with you by the first of July. It will be great. 'Course if you were to meet one of us on the street I doubt you'd recognise us. It's been a while since we were kids, we're all big blokes now. Sasha's twenty four, Oleg is thirty and Gleb, that's me, I'm thirty five. Your kids are quite grown up, Dad, and you must be in your sixties by now after all, time's arrow flies on... time's cruel arrow. We know, Dad, we know. We know about all your misfortunes and your suffering , your life hasn't been an easy one, not the sort of thing you'd wish upon your worst enemy as they say. Still thank goodness it's all behind us now and we can start a new life together. We'll take you back with us to Arkhangelsk and we can carry on working and you can rest out your days.

- What about wives, boys, surely one of you at least has a family by now?

GLEB'S VOICE. No Dad. None of us are married. There's been no time for the ladies, as we're on duty day and night. Our work takes up all our time and energy, but for all that we're champion watchmen and you can be very proud of your sons, there are no better watchmen in all Archangelsk, and maybe even in any other town of our country, and maybe even in foreign parts. Say what you like but there's no messing around on the job with us.

 Where would you have a gift like that from, boys, I wonder. No one in our family has even been the most average watchman, my father, my grandfather, my great grandfather, none of them ever worked as watchmen, so who have you taken after, surely not your Mother?

GLEB'S VOICE. We don't know Dad, maybe our Mother, but how will we ever find out, we can't ask her, can we, seeing as she left home straight after you knocked her senseless, and has never come back. Perhaps we have taken after her.

And after these words he gripped my neck so tightly that I didn't even manage to scream, I felt no fear, and then he tightened his grip more and more, until all the colours fell from my eyes and it became dark, dark as the starless night, and then he gripped as hard as he could, and everything that had been and happened in my life was torn away in a moment. There was once a woman Nelya who had strange legs, and resembled another woman Djanna M. from someone else's childhood, there was once, and there is no more. Just a second ago she was there, and now she is gone.

GLEB'S VOICE. Well, and for now, Dad, that's all from us. We'll tell you the rest when we meet. We'll be with you on the first of July, so pack your stuff and get ready for a move and a change of scene. Love, your sons, Sanya, Oleg and Gleb.

And straight after the woman ceased to be, and only her body and its strange legs lolled like a ragdoll on the floor, and where her soul was, nobody knew, for there was no asking her now, straight after, with no undue delay or hesitation her skin was laid open just under her right breast, the flesh was laid open and the fabric was undone, and relinquished was the thing every lover demands of his beloved, and then the wrist was separated from the hand and effort was needed for this and teeth were used, but then a second part of her was in the arms of her lover. It was done.

I ask for your hand and heart, said the man.

Take it, said the woman, and already her heart and her hand, with the silver ring on the ring finger, were tight in his grasp.

And now it was time to call the auxiliaries and the saintly duty doctor, that events might follow their inevitable course. And here they were, as soon as they were thought of, charging into the room, and they saw what had happened and they set to their work, they set to me, for I was their work, their favourite work, and the ceiling heaved and became the floor, but that was nothing new, there is nothing new for me, just as there is

no honey in July, what's more, July, that long awaited month, had by then begun, my three sons had come to me, the first day of July, all my bags were packed and it was time to leave for Archangelsk, no time to waste, or my own trinity of watchmen would be late for work, the floor, the walls and the ceiling, knock knock knock.

Stage Direction

The floor, the walls and the ceiling opened their wings in a second and were gone.

I can't hear what you're saying to me, I'm deaf, I can't hear anything, and it's pointless shouting, the sound in my ears was broken six years ago, and now the sight in my eyes is no longer functioning, a dark sky has come over and there is not a single star, darkness from the very beginning to the very end, July – eternal, throughout the ages, endless and unending.

Stage Direction

All movement ceases, the world is hushed, we wait. Autumn, winter, spring, and now summer. The very middle of summer: July. Everything is changed, but not started anew, just further on its course. 'Everything' takes its course. And we follow.

MAN'S VOICE. Who are you who have come for him?

GLEB'S VOICE. We are his children.

MAN'S VOICE. What all three of you?

GLEB'S VOICE. Yes, all three. Can we take him now or do we need to wait?

MAN'S VOICE. Might as well take him, what's there to wait for?

GLEB'S VOICE. Come on then, boys, up he goes.

MAN'S VOICE. Where are you going to bury him, have you decided on a place?

GLEB'S VOICE. In Archangelsk, where else would we take him. Our Dad dreamed his whole life of going there, so it's a dream come true. He'll make it where he wanted.

Have you got him boys? Well then dad, we'll take you to our Archangelsk, and the faster we get there the better. Time isn't on our side, day after tomorrow we're back at work. San'ka, Oleg you take the legs and I'll hold his back. Right, one two three and there we go. We're off.

Stage Direction

The woman performing the play leaves the stage.

Curtain